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INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Environmental Justice
Framework

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About the Authors



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After graduating with a Law degree from Oxford University, Chantal Davies qualified as a solicitor with Eversheds in Cardiff specialising in Employment, Human Rights and Discrimination Law. In 1998, she moved to work as a solicitor for the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in Manchester heading up a department tackling strategic and wider enforcement of the gender equality legislation. Chantal is now Professor of Law, Equality and Diversity in the School of Law and Social Justice at the University of Chester. She has also developed and is Director of the Forum for Research into Equality and Diversity. Past research focuses on the experiences of minority ethnic students within HE and the use of positive action by organisations in the UK. Chantal has also completed a funded project looking at the gendered obstacles to research activity faced by academics in the UK. More recently Chantal has been funded by the Young Women's Trust and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to research the use of positive action in apprenticeships. Chantal has also worked with the Higher Education Authority in Ireland to roll out a groundbreaking positive action initiative aimed at increasing female representation within professorships. She has sat on the board of Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre and the Equality Challenge Unit and in this latter role worked with them to develop institutional confidence in developing positive action initiatives within higher education. Chantal also sat on the review panel for the national Subject Benchmark Statement for Law. Chantal currently sits on the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission and is Co Vice Chair of the Law Society's Women's Solicitors Network Committee. She also sits on AdvanceHE's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee.



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Dr Holly White is the Head of the Social and Political Science Division and is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Chester. Holly's primary areas of interest and expertise are public social science, challenging social harm and injustice with a particular focus on poverty, and universities making positive contributions to local communities and region. Holly was a trustee of Cheshire West Voluntary Action with responsibilities for research and strategic partnerships. Holly was also a Board member of the Trussell Trust Changing Minds on Poverty Board, utilising her research and voluntary experience to inform the organisation's national strategy on public sense-making of poverty. Holly holds a PhD in Social Science from Edge Hill University. Holly recently produced 'Principles for Co-Production' which are being piloted by local third sector organisations.



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Dr Kim Ross is a Deputy Head of the Social and Political Science Division and is a Criminology Senior Lecturer at the University of Chester. Kim's research interests include public social science, harm reduction and health risk behaviours in addition to the development of creative research methods. Before joining the University of Chester, Kim was a Senior Researcher in the Public Health Institute at Liverpool John Moores University where she specialized in research with vulnerable communities. Kim holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Liverpool. Kim recently led a research exhibition that was co-produced with research partners from the West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission which presented research findings that explored the lived experience of poverty to a public audience. Kim also collaborated with Dr White in producing the 'Principles for Co-Production'.



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Dr Eghosa Ekhaton is an Associate Professor in law at the University of Derby, United Kingdom. His main research areas include International Environmental Law, African International Legal History, and Natural Resources Governance. Dr Ekhaton has published extensively on his research areas and his academic papers have been cited by a plethora of public and international agencies including the United Kingdom Parliament's International Trade Committee and the United Nations Refugee Council. Dr Ekhaton is also the Convenor, Comparative Law Section (Society of Legal Scholars), Chair Committee on the Teaching of International Law and the SDGs - International Law Association (Nigerian Branch) and Senior Fellow Environmental Law and Sustainable Development – Institute for Oil, Gas, Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development (OGEEES Institute) Afe Babalola University Nigeria. Dr Ekhaton is the current Deputy Editor-in-Chief, the Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy, Afe Babalola University, Nigeria and the Co-Lead of the International Law, Environment and Human Rights Research Cluster University of Derby Law School.

Helpful Definitions

“ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE is ‘the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other...activities that affect human health and the environment’ ”

US Executive Order, 2023

“ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUALITIES are ‘the unequal distribution of environmental risks and hazards and access to environmental goods and services.’ ”

Sustainable Development Research Network, 2005

“EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS ‘are assessments that public authorities often carry out prior to implementing policies, with a view to predicting their impact on equality.’ ”

House of Commons Research Briefing, 2020

“ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY can be defined ‘as meeting the resource and services needs of current and future generations without compromising the health of the ecosystems that provide them...’ ”

Morelli, 2011

“CO-PRODUCTION ‘is the building of respectful and empowering relationships alongside the sharing of ideas between those with lived experience and other stakeholders. Both contribute their knowledge, skills and experiences to co-create actionable change.’ ”

White & Ross, 2023

“MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES: ‘People can be marginalised in many ways, with marginalisation embracing factors such as material deprivation, inadequate housing, low educational levels, high unemployment, poor health as well as discrimination and prejudice.’ ”

European Parliamentary Research Service, 2016

“The PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY (PSED) is a legal requirement for public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions. The purpose of the PSED is to make sure that public authorities and organisations carrying out public functions think about how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect their day-to-day business. ”

Equality and Human Rights Commission

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT



The Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission

Sustainable and Inclusive Growth SIGC

In November 2020, the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth SIGC ('the SIGC') was set up by the Sub regional Leaders' Board, with the aim of building on progress to date to help realise Cheshire and Warrington's ambition of becoming the most sustainable and inclusive subregion in the UK. The SIGC has been working on four themes: Inclusive Economy, Sustainable Transport, Sustainable Land Use, and Net Zero. For each of these themes the SIGC developed an evidence base for Cheshire and Warrington's current position, a vision representing where the SIGC believes the subregion should aim to be and a set of recommended actions to achieve these visions. The SIGC sought to ensure that inclusivity was mainstreamed through all projects and promoted at every stage. Therefore, an internal Inclusivity Assessment Toolkit was developed to assess proposed projects across each of the core themes. This toolkit built upon existing Equality Impact Assessment methodology and broadened out beyond the 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 to include socio-economic status and other marginalised groups.

In September 2022, the SIGC published its report and recommendations (Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington: Final Report). One of the core recommendations in the report was to ensure inclusivity assessment informs decision making across the subregion in relation to environmental sustainability and to encourage the extension of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 (utilising appropriate Equality Impact Assessments) and to include consideration of socio-economic disadvantage.

A consultation phase for the SIGC report was held with a wide range of people and organisations across the subregion (including members of the public, public and private sector organisations, civil society and local interest groups). A key point made by many of those who engaged was the need for co-creation and co-production as an essential part of addressing the environmental challenges to achieve the goals and recommendations set out in the report.

This Environmental Justice Framework and the research upon which it is based seeks to respond to the SIGC report and recommendation to promote inclusive assessment of environmental sustainability decision making and ensure that the consultation call for community engagement and co-production is at the heart of this process.



Background Context

Background context, environmental inequalities and environmental justice

As we move on from COP28 and the world continues to seek to demonstrate commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals in a meaningful way, there is a clear need to ensure that disproportionate environmental burdens don't continue to fall on already marginalised groups within society.

This increased focus on addressing environmental inequalities is welcome and much needed globally and nationally. It is increasingly recognised that marginalised communities are not only being disproportionately impacted by environmental issues but they are also being excluded from environmental decision making. Inequality is bad for both the economy and the environment as inequality erodes social cohesion and reduces the willingness to cooperate to protect common resources. However, more recently there is growing cautionary recognition that environmental sustainability policies themselves can increase inequality if not accompanied by measures to address such inequalities.

Therefore, over the last few decades, there has been an increasing focus on ensuring that organisations (both public and private) seek to ensure that decision making around environmental challenges and sustainability is carried out in accordance with an 'environmental justice' approach.

In May 2019, the Institute for Public Policy Research established an Environmental Justice Commission. The central aim of the Commission was 'to present an ambitious, positive vision shaped around people's experiences and needs, and develop a plan of action that integrates policy both to address the climate and environmental emergencies and to deliver economic and social justice' (Environmental Justice Commission, 2021, p. 1). The Environmental Justice Commission's report placed people at the centre of the recommendations made but also in relation to the approach to developing them.

In simple terms, when making decisions around environmental sustainability, all possible efforts should be made to hear not only the widest range of voices. Environmental justice also means including these voices at the earliest stages of the decision making process and thinking ahead to ensure that future generations are not burdened with the impact of these decisions. In recent years the emergence of dialogue around 'Just Transitions' has emerged from the climate and environmental justice movements and indeed the terms are often used interchangeably and overlap.

An environmental justice approach towards environmental sustainability decision making requires:

1. an assessment of the impact of the environmental crisis and any measures introduced to address these impacts on marginalised communities ('Distributive Justice') AND
2. ensuring marginalised communities are part of the decision making process in developing, implementing and monitoring environmental sustainability measures ('Procedural Justice').



The legal framework

There are very few laws and institutions created to specifically tackle environmental injustice in the UK. Some very limited regulatory mechanisms on environmental justice, especially access to environmental justice and public participation in environmental decision making, are localised in the environmental legislative framework including the Environment Act 2021 and the Aarhus Convention.

The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters is an international treaty which 'acknowledges the role that members of the public play in protecting the environment. The Convention gives individuals and civil society groups, including environmental charities, certain rights and imposes obligations on signatory Parties (such as the UK government) and public authorities regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice' (ClientEarth, 2022). Even though the UK is a party to the Aarhus Convention, it has not been fully implemented into UK law.

The UK human rights framework also has a role in promoting and protecting marginalised communities from environmental inequalities.

Although neither the Human Rights Act 1998 nor the European Convention on Human Rights makes specific reference to environmental rights, the convention has been used increasingly frequently in recent years to protect environmental rights.

It is considered that existing impact assessment tools could be better used to address environmental inequalities and promote environmental justice. In particular, Equality Impact Assessments (supporting the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010) could be adapted for public and private sector use as a dual pronged approach to enable greater community and stakeholder participation in environmental sustainability decision making whilst also assessing the negative impacts and benefits of environmental policy and measures. Equality Impact Assessments are a process by which public bodies can assess the impact that a policy or practice is having, or is likely to have, on equality. However, there is little evidence of systematic use of such assessments to assess impact in environmental decision making.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination in relation to a range of protected characteristics and therefore it is important to ensure that any actions or initiatives are developed to ensure they do not breach this legislation. The Act covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, places a 'general duty' on public authorities in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Whilst socio-economic status (SES) is not specifically covered under the Equality Act 2010, it is considered that it is vital to include reference to this within this Framework as a key indicator of disadvantage.



Co-production and environmental justice

At the heart of emerging discussion around environmental justice is the need for co-production approaches in developing and implementing environmental sustainability measures. Indeed, it is considered that an Equality Impact Assessment based framework around environmental sustainability requires but doesn't often (in practice) provide a co-production approach to understand impacts and ensure co-creation and community engagement.

White and Ross (2023) have suggested that 'Coproduction is the building of respectful and empowering relationships alongside the sharing of ideas between those with lived experience and other stakeholders. Both contribute their knowledge, skills and experiences to cocreate actionable change.'

Central to the environmental justice movement is a call for organisations to redress inequalities within environmental policy and facilitate marginalised communities to not only benefit from but also shape, implement and evaluate interventions.



A vibrant photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees and a dense canopy of bright green leaves. Sunlight filters through the branches, creating a dappled light effect. In the foreground, there is a carpet of small purple flowers. The overall scene is bright and natural.

THE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS RESEARCH

A new framework for environmental justice: the Inclusive Environments research

The Inclusive Environments research upon which this Framework is based was carried out in two phases between April 2023 - July 2023. Phase one involved landscaping and evidence collation to establish the literature, existing challenges and good practice around approaches to inclusive environmental sustainability decision making (across the subregion of Cheshire and Warrington and beyond). This was followed by phase 2 which involved a series of community engagement focus groups with community partners and marginalised voices together with a number of in depth interviews with key stakeholders/decision makers involved with developing and implementing environmental sustainability measures and policy across the subregion.

The findings from this research are set out in the **Inclusive Environments: designing an environmental justice framework Report** together with a series of recommendations for the public and private sector aimed at ensuring an inclusive approach towards environmental sustainability decision making. In particular, this evidence base has been used to develop this Environmental Justice Framework for use by public and private sector decision makers to ensure inclusivity and environmental justice is mainstreamed throughout the development, implementation, and monitoring of environmental sustainability policy and actions.

A co-produced Framework

The following Environmental Justice Framework has been developed with stakeholders and community partners. At the heart of emerging discussion around environmental justice is the need for co-production approaches in developing and implementing environmental sustainability measures.

Therefore, it was considered vital that the principles of co-production developed by White & Ross (2023) should underpin development of this Framework. Across June - July 2024, workshops were held with those who had been involved with the community engagement

focus groups during phase 2 of the research. The purpose of these workshops was to work with those with expertise by experience to develop this Environmental Justice Framework. Interview Stakeholders were also given the opportunity to feedback on a draft of this Framework and a day long workshop was held at the University of Derby in July 2024 with representatives from the public and private sector and community groups attending to further explore development of the Framework.

Data from these workshops was then used to modify this Framework to ensure it reflected the knowledge generated.



OVERVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK



The following **Environmental Justice Framework** will seek to reduce inequalities in environmental sustainability development and implementation across the subregion of Cheshire and Warrington and beyond and ensure that such measures are built on inclusive foundations of environmental justice to ensure equity, efficacy, and impact.

This Framework will assist in identifying the likely positive and negative impacts that environmental sustainability measures may have on marginalised groups. In particular, it will seek to ensure that:

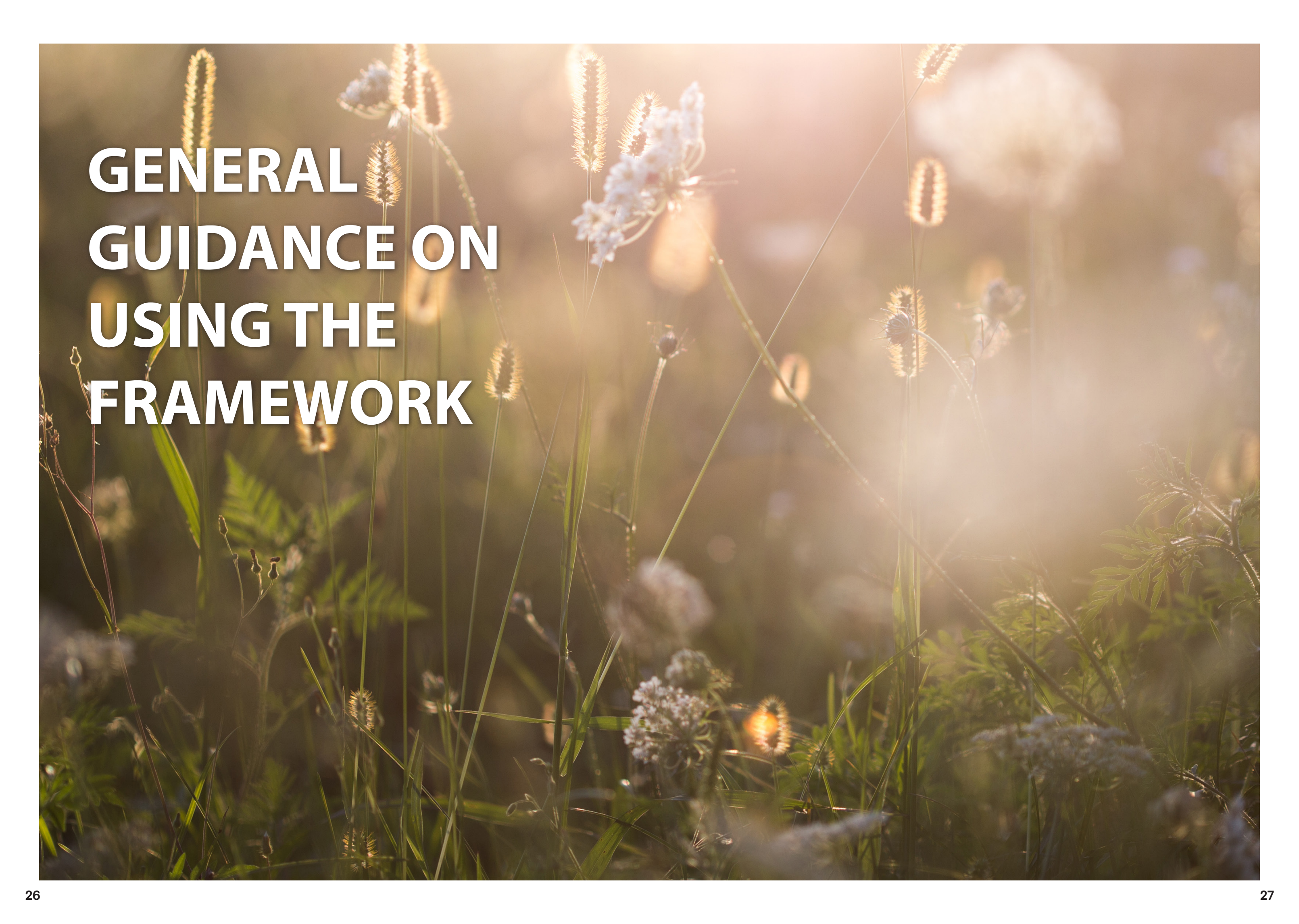
- measures are planned and developed through early engagement with community voices from the marginalised groups;
- inclusivity is mainstreamed through the planning and development of environmental sustainability measures;
- wherever possible consideration is given not just to alleviating detrimental impacts on disadvantaged protected communities but to advancing equality of opportunity and benefits for marginalised groups in the development, planning and implementation of environmental sustainability measures.

This Framework has been developed based on an analysis of the evidence from the Inclusive Environments research, and applies an underpinning Equality Impact Assessment approach (as recommended by the findings of the research). It is also underpinned by principles of co-production and particularly those set out in the **Local Voices Framework**.

An **Environmental Justice Template** is included at Appendix B which can be used to assist in recording the assessment and consultation carried out in line with this Framework. This Template is intended as a guide and organisations are encouraged to use this to develop their own context driven approaches towards collecting data, assessing and consulting. Appendix A provides a simple **Environmental Justice Flowchart** to assist in using the Template. Again, organisations are encouraged to consider and adapt this to their own contexts.

It is intended that the following Framework will be a dynamic tool and use will be evaluated to develop this further and provide case studies around good practice.





GENERAL GUIDANCE ON USING THE FRAMEWORK

General Guidance on Environmentally Just Decision Making

General considerations

Some general things to think about when using the Framework:

- It is intended to provide an accessible resource for the public and private sector.
- It is not intended to be excessively onerous and encourages contextual responses including recognising use of existing networks and processes. For public bodies, this may mean existing Equality Impact Assessment approaches can be adapted. For the private sector this Framework will complement existing approaches to decision making such as the Plan-Do-Check-Act Deming model. Although the Framework seeks to advocate as an aspiration principles of co-production throughout the process, it is recognised that this may not be possible or appropriate in all circumstances.
- Wherever possible the Framework seeks to inform and support the business case for use.
- All community engagement carried out in line with the Framework should recognise the value of community participant time via appropriate mechanisms.
- Where possible, organisations should seek to engage with community groups in their own context and space in order to build trust and encourage dialogue.

Private sector considerations

Private sector bodies should seek to:

- develop and promote greater understanding of environmental justice and environmental inequalities within their organisations.
- engage with community voices (wherever possible underpinned by co-production principles) at each stage of environmental sustainability decision making.
- collect data on the impact of environmental issues and environmental sustainability measures they have/are seeking to develop on marginalised communities.
- better understand and communicate the business case supporting environmentally just approaches to environmental sustainability decision making.
- ensure any transferable learning and understanding of any global community engagement on environmental sustainability decision making is recognised and used at a national level.
- explore opportunities to work with local government/other organisations to support environmentally just approaches to environmental sustainability decision making.

Public sector considerations

Public sector bodies should seek to:

- develop and promote greater public sector understanding of environmental justice and environmental inequalities.
- develop and improve links and communication between local government and marginalised communities on environmental sustainability challenges.
- improve communication synergies around EDI, environmental, planning, and economic development.
- develop and improve approaches towards building community knowledge and understanding of environmental sustainability to empower marginalised communities to be able to work with the public and private sector to build equitable and appropriate environmental solutions.
- seek to collect data on the impact of environmental issues and environmental sustainability measures on marginalised communities. Particular focus should be on intersectional disadvantage and socio-economic impact.
- engage with community voices (wherever possible underpinned by co-production principles) at each stage of environmental sustainability decision making.
- explore opportunities to work with local industry and the private sector to support environmentally just approaches to environmental sustainability decision making.

UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES OF CO-PRODUCTION

Local Voices Framework: Co-production Definition and Principles

In 2023, a set of principles of co-production based on a systematic literature review, semi structured interviews and workshops with practitioners and experts by experiences was published as the Local Voices Framework. The following principles should be central to use of this Environmental Justice Framework and (wherever possible) should underpin environmental sustainability decision making. However, it is recognised that the Environmental Justice Framework can be adapted to focus on consultation with marginalised groups rather than co-production. This will be referenced throughout as an option but organisations are strongly recommended to engage with deep co-production wherever possible.

Embed Co-production: Co-production should be embedded from the beginning to the end of the project when possible. When feasible co-production should be embedded at different stages of a project, and at all levels including strategic, governance, and operational, across areas of public relevance. For example: opportunities to engage across the life course of a project such as being involved in bids and project plans, co-evaluate projects, co-commission services, co-design systems, dissemination.

Plan Appropriate Infrastructure and Resources: Co-production needs to be rooted in the structure of organisations. Co-production should be supported by organisational systems and processes in addition to necessary resources for effective sustainable practices. Training and support may be needed to embed co-production in organisations. For example: Human resources policies, reward and recognition policies, long term funding opportunities.

Promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Co-production should be an accessible opportunity, where difference between people is valued and respected, and practices are inclusive. A range of opportunities for those with lived experiences and other relevant stakeholders should be provided to celebrate difference and recognise the different skills people have and contributions that they can make. For example: outreach work through networks to reach marginalised groups, inclusive and flexible methods and formats for involvement reflecting personal and challenging circumstances.


Build Empowering and Equal Relationships: Co-production should be underpinned by trusting, respectful, and empowering relationships. Co-production should focus on the value of reciprocal knowledge exchange and collaborative decision making between those with lived experience and other stakeholders to meet shared responsibilities as equal partners. For example: openly challenge stigma and assumptions, promote conscious presence, promote empathy not sympathy when people share experiences.

Foster Open and Transparent Communication: Co-production should be based on honesty and transparency. Co-production should be supported with approaches that foster active listening, wider awareness and deeper understanding, informed decision making, and collaborative production of policies, plans, and outputs. For example: construct clear role descriptions and person specifications, avoid jargon and acronyms, identify any need for confidentiality and why, be clear about limitations, manage expectations.

Provide Ongoing Support: Support should be made available for those with lived experience and other stakeholders who are involved with co-production. It is important that support is available for those with lived experiences and other stakeholders to opt into based on individual and collective needs to help ensure safety, development and wellbeing. For example: peer to peer networks, skilled facilitation, training, mentoring, building on existing skills, sharing next step opportunities, crisis support, emotional support and awareness of advanced support services, maintaining communication.

Learn, Reflect, Adapt with Partners: Co-production should be an ongoing and collaborative learning process. Co-production should be supported by collaborative knowledge shared across networks, reflexivity, and piloting of alternative approaches to enhance practice. Those involved in co-production should be able to recognise when an idea is not working and use this as an opportunity to grow and move forwards in an alternative way. For example: share and celebrate impact and lessons learnt, disseminate learning through webinars, reduce duplication through mapping what is known.

Share a Vision of Meaningful Change: Co-production should be recognised as a social movement. Co-production should be a catalyst of a movement of positive social change, with those with lived experience and other stakeholders seeking opportunities to build a far-reaching network of influence. For example: influence organisations locally, nationally, and internationally across diverse sectors. Encourage others to embed co-production by sharing its value and impact.

A close-up photograph of a field of white flowers, possibly daisies, with a bright sun flare in the background. The sun is positioned at the top center, creating a strong lens flare effect that illuminates the scene. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus field of similar flowers. The overall color palette is warm and golden, dominated by the sunlight and the white petals.

WHY USE THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK?

The business case...

- Transparently communicating the environmental, social and economic benefits of use of the Environmental Justice Framework is fundamental to achieving environmental justice. Environmental justice, co-production and inclusion are processes of valuing diversity and supporting marginalised people to access opportunity; including economic growth. For organisations, an environmentally just approach to environmental sustainability facilitates environmental, social, legal and financial benefits which are attractive to investors, clients and customers. This Framework encourages consideration and evidencing not only of impacts but also benefits of environmental sustainability projects, from project conception to implementation and beyond.
- When a project documents a comprehensive understanding of Stakeholders and is designed in collaboration with the communities impacted, outlining the benefits or barriers to success for those protected by the Equality Act 2010 and beyond, investors recognise risk mitigation, value is added to the project and its viability is improved. Projects failing to understand their community stakeholders and how the work impacts them may be at risk of rejection at the financial stage of any investment process or facing costing failures as a result of failed implementation.

The wider benefits...

Wider benefits of using the Environmental Justice Framework include:

- For public bodies, ensuring compliance with legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Avoiding discrimination claims by individuals
- Increased public trust, knowledge and resilience around environmental sustainability
- Improved and more successful environmental sustainability policy and practice
- Identification of where groups are excluded and direct/indirect discrimination
- Promotion of good relations between people of different marginalised groups
- Promotion of inclusivity
- Adherence to Social Value regulation
- Adherence to the Sustainable Development Goals
- Improved reputation with community, stakeholders and investors.





**ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE: EDUCATE,
EXPLORE, GATHER,
ASSESS, ACT,
REVIEW**

The Environmental Justice Cycle



Introducing the 'Lived Experience Lead'

The Environmental Justice framework highly recommends the appointment of a person to carry out the role as a **'Lived Experience Lead'**. As co-production initiatives develop in private, public and community sectors there is a growing number of people with expertise in co-production practice who are in a position to share learnings and advise others and their associated projects on how to co-produce ('a Lived Experience Lead'). A Lived Experience Lead is a person with lived experience of a social issue and experience of co-producing projects. For example, Cheshire West Voluntary Action has a Lived Experienced Lead, operating on a consultative basis, who holds lived experience of poverty and experience of co-producing a range of projects with the Local Authority such as the Poverty Truth Commission. For the purposes of the Environmental Justice Framework, a Lived Experience Lead should hold lived experience of social marginalisation, knowledge and awareness of environmental justice, and where possible, previous experience of co-producing a project. Cheshire West Voluntary Action has created a Local Voices Network supporting organisations to access prospective lived experience leads and details can be accessed by contacting Cheshire West Voluntary Action (<https://cwva.org.uk/>). A Lived Experience Lead is recommended to co-lead the delivery of each stage of this Environmental Justice Framework and will be referred to throughout. It is possible to engage with the Framework without the Lived Experience Lead but it is considered the most effective means of ensuring a level of co-production at every stage.

Educate and Empower

Organisations should develop and pursue active opportunities to work with communities to develop knowledge around environmental sustainability. The Inclusive Environments research points to the need to build the capacity and knowledge of communities and organisations around environmental issues at a local, national and global level. Organisations and the Lived Experience Lead should work with communities to share knowledge about environmental sustainability and environmental impacts on those who hold lived experience of a social issue/vulnerability and the issues faced by public and private sector organisations. This will ensure opportunities to share knowledge and promote mutual education and awareness around environmental sustainability. In this way, organisations and individuals (and in particular marginalised communities) will be empowered to better understand environmental sustainability and environmental inequalities and provide for mutual creation of effective and fairer solutions to these inequalities. Through engaging in knowledge sharing, organisations can build trust between the public and private sector and those communities and provide a foundation for implementation of this Environmental Justice Framework to ensure transparent and just environmental sustainability decision making.

Possible means of an organisation and communities sharing knowledge might include:

- Working with local schools and colleges to support environmental education.
- Supporting local schools and colleges in developing parent and carer education around environmental sustainability.
- Sponsoring community events and projects that address place based environmental challenges.
- Holding workshops on environmental topics.
- Supporting volunteer programs and opportunities for community members.
- Attend meetings of community groups to access and share information on environmental sustainability.
- Use social media to share information on local environmental topics.
- Partner with other organisations on rolling out environmental education initiatives which offer the opportunity to share knowledge.



Explore

Having sought to develop and roll out opportunities to work with the local community to share knowledge around environmental sustainability, the Explore stage builds upon this. At the heart of an environmental justice approach to environmental sustainability decision making is the need for organisations to ensure that community voices are central to developing and reviewing such measures. Therefore, the Explore stage of this Framework recommends that organisations and the Lived Experience Lead should co-explore:

- the impact of the environmental crisis on marginalised groups and
- potential environmental sustainability solutions.

Where possible, the Lived Experience Lead and the organisation could facilitate wider community engagement events to support this exploration. Where an organisation has specific remit for implementing environmental sustainability measures then regular liaison with the Lived Experience Lead and community engagement events will provide the opportunity to bring marginalised voices into the pre-design stages of such initiatives. In particular, organisations and the Lived Experience Lead should seek to reach out to marginalised groups across the local community to encourage participation in these events. Networks established through supporting Education and Empowerment may be utilised.

Explore events may take the form of community workshops, community liaison groups, online community hubs etc. Organisations are encouraged to develop existing mechanisms for community liaison for this purpose. It may be that a standing agenda at an existing event will suffice.

As the Framework is intended to encourage a cyclical approach to environmental sustainability decision making, organisations are encouraged to utilise the Explore stage to monitor and review together with communities the impact of existing measures and where necessary to explore with impacted communities the need for potential changes to such measures. Wherever possible, organisations should seek to carry out the Explore stage in line with the principles of co-production as suggested by the Local Voices Framework.

Note

According to White and Ross (2023), co-production should serve as an ideal to aspire to, recognising that its principles may not always be fully integrated into a project or framework. What remains crucial, however, is ensuring transparency in the processes involved. Those invited to contribute and engage in co-production during specific stages of this Framework should understand how their input shapes subsequent stages, even when full co-production is not feasible. For instance, while this Explore stage of the Framework firmly incorporates co-production, later stages may only aspire to embed co-production principles, requiring additional time and resources for full realisation. In essence, the Framework aims to embrace co-production as an overarching goal, adjusted proportionally to each stage's requirements and the available resources and time.



Scoping

The Scoping assessment process should be considered at the development/review stages of any new environmental sustainability measure/change (whether arising from the Explore stage or otherwise). Wherever possible, Scoping should involve an assessment of any potential negative or positive impacts on marginalised communities by both the Lived Experience Lead and the organisation and any assessment should be collaborative where possible. Where it is the Explore stage which has suggested an environmental issue and possible environmental sustainability measure/change to a measure to address this issue, several potential solutions may have emerged from the Explore stage and Scoping may provide an opportunity to narrow down these suggestions.

Scoping is likely to be based on the information an organisation and the Lived Experience Lead already possesses in relation to the proposed measure/change through gathering of existing available evidence and knowledge shared during the Explore stage. For this Scoping stage, a sense of proportion is appropriate and the size/importance of the measure/change will determine how extensive an initial Scoping assessment needs to be. However, an objective evidence based consideration is vital. The purpose of the measure/change to be implemented should be clearly articulated by the Lived Experience Lead and the organisation to enable objective assessment.

Questions to ask when Scoping

The Environmental Justice Template should be completed and similar questions considered to those which will be addressed more fully at later stages of the process:

- What is the purpose of the proposed measure/change to be implemented/change proposed?
- How will the proposed measure/change seek to achieve this purpose?
- Who will benefit from the proposed measure/change and how?
- Who may be negatively impacted from the proposed measure/change and why?
- Are there any 'associated aims' attached to the proposed measure/change which may benefit or negatively impact on particular groups?

If following Scoping there is evidence of a negative impact or an opportunity for a positive impact on a particular community group then it will be necessary to proceed to the next stage of the process. If following the initial Scoping, no negative impact or opportunity for positive impact on protected groups is determined, then a justification for not pursuing a full assessment should be recorded. It may be that for more complex environmental issues and proposed measures, the Explore stage may have already involved gathering and analysis of detailed information and evidence and therefore the Scoping assessment will be fairly detailed. For other measures Scoping may be a quick straightforward exercise in which it is clear that further exploration is not required as there is no potential impact to explore.

Some examples of 'environmental sustainability' measures may include the creation of Urban Green Space, introducing a workplace parking levy in city centres, upgrading public housing to improve energy efficiency, natural restoration schemes, public transport decarbonisation schemes etc.



Information Gathering

If the Scoping assessment stage suggests that there are potential negative/positive impacts of the environmental sustainability measure/change to be introduced, Information Gathering can commence to more fully understand the wider impact of the potential measure/change on marginalised communities. This Information Gathering should be a collaborative process between the organisation and the Lived Experience Lead. Some information may have already been gathered during the Explore and Scoping stages and some of the relevant questions will have already been asked to a more limited degree at this earlier point. However, Information Gathering should focus upon developing a wider awareness and deeper understanding of the potential impact and if required lead to the gathering of further information that can inform decision making and lead to collaborative production of policies, plans and outputs.

Questions to ask when Information Gathering

The Environmental Justice Template should be completed and the following questions addressed:

- What do we need/want to know?
- Who can assist in deciding what evidence of potential impact is required and where can it be located?
- What existing evidence of potential impact is available within the organisation and outside of the organisation?
- What evidence is needed to ensure all relevant perspectives are considered?
- What additional information is required/where are the gaps in evidence regarding potential impact and how can this be gathered?

Quantitative data is information that can be quantified i.e. counted or measured and given a numerical value.

Qualitative data is non-numerical information that can be collected using questionnaires, interviews or observation and may be difficult to precisely measure and analyse.

The range of Information Gathered should include relevant quantitative and qualitative data. The information should cover all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, socio-economic groups and other relevant marginalised communities and where possible provide an understanding of how these identities intersect.

A lack of information will not be a reason for failing to assess impact at the later stages. Gaps in information should be filled wherever possible. For new proposed environmental sustainability measures there may well be little information about impact available beyond that provided in the Explore and Scoping stages. In these situations, a judgement may need to be made that is as reliable as possible and this is where the next stage will strengthen these judgements.



Conversations

Conversations with any potentially impacted marginalised communities should be carried out by the Lived Experience Lead around the detail and impact of the proposed environmental sustainability measure/change. This is vital if the Information Gathered points to real concerns in terms of a negative impact of the proposed measure/change on particular marginalised groups. These Conversations will develop further understanding of how the proposed measure could impact upon those with lived experience of a social issue/vulnerability that have not previously been identified at the early stages. Conversations with potentially impacted marginalised groups may also add important further information where it becomes apparent at the Information Gathering stage that there are gaps in knowledge and data.

Whilst engaging in Conversation with potentially impacted groups is key to demonstrating that an organisation is acting in an environmentally just way, it also needs to be relevant and proportionate to the complexity and importance of the measure/change to be implemented and the likely impact on marginalised groups.

Conversations should include inclusive and flexible methods. This should promote equality, diversity and inclusion and enable a wider range of individuals with lived experience to participate. If a Lived Experience Lead has not been appointed then an organisation may facilitate these conversations themselves but this may move away from a co-production approach and may be more correctly termed 'consultation'.

Existing community engagement networks and methods may be accessed together with those already involved in the Explore stage. Conversations with marginalised groups may be carried out in various ways and an organisation will be guided by their Lived Experience Lead. However, methods of engaging in the Conversations may include individual meetings, focus groups, workshops, adding as an agenda item to a pre-existing community meeting, attending a Parish Council meeting etc. Wherever possible, organisations should be willing to accommodate participants within their own space rather than requiring them to come to the organisation. This will help build trust and confidence. The Conversations should be carried out (so far as is possible) in accordance with the principles of coproduction (set out above). Details of the Conversations should be recorded in the Environmental Justice Template.



Assessing Impact

Having gathered all of the relevant information together regarding the potential impact of the environmental sustainability measure/change and considered the Conversation responses, then the next stage is to Assess the Impact of the measure/change. Based on the Information Gathered, the Lived Experience Lead and the organisation need to co-assess whether the impact of the proposed measure/change could have a positive, negative or neutral effect on marginalised communities and consider whether this is contrary to the findings from the Scoping assessment. This should be a reflective process and should be viewed as an opportunity to consider how the proposed measure/change could move forwards in an alternative form which has less impact or more effectively promotes beneficial impacts.

Impact assessment outcomes

Positive impact:

The evidence demonstrates that there is no potential for discrimination or any negative impact on marginalised groups and that all opportunities to promote benefits of the proposed measure/change for such groups should be taken.

Negative impact:

The evidence identifies potential negative impact of the proposed measure/change on marginalised groups.

Neutral impact:

The evidence identifies that the proposed measure/change does not have a negative or positive impact on marginalised groups (contrary to initial Scoping evidence). Record on the Environmental Justice Template.

An environmental sustainability measure/change may include a range of positive, negative and neutral impacts particularly where there are various elements to the measure/change.

Depending on the complexity of the environmental sustainability measure/change, a deeper impact analysis might be needed to explore the detailed specific effects/impacts that the measure/change could have on the identified marginalised communities. In some situations it may be necessary to consider whether further Information Gathering or Conversations are appropriate and proportionate or whether the measure/change will trigger changes in other areas not previously anticipated or whether there are other measures that might conflict with the proposed measure/change.

Although further exploration may be considered appropriate, it should be noted that this environmental justice process is not intended to cover every single event that could happen. It is also worth noting that although differential impact between distinct groups has been identified, not all difference is negative. Details of the gathered information and Impact Assessment should be recorded in the Environmental Justice Template.



Create an Action Plan

The Lived Experience Lead and organisation should, having considered the information gathered in the previous stages, develop and co-create an Action Plan for the proposed measure/change. This Action Plan should include details of any identified positive or negative potential impacts on marginalised communities and provide justification for decisions made to ensure honesty and transparency. If a positive or neutral impact has been found following Impact Assessment, then the environmental sustainability measure/change can proceed as proposed and any benefit shared and published. This should be recorded in the Environmental Justice Template. If a negative impact has been found then so far as it is possible to do so the measure/change needs to be adapted to reduce or eliminate this impact. If actual or potential unlawful discrimination is evident then the measure/change must be stopped or changed immediately.

Impact assessment outcomes

There are three options which will need to be supported by a clear co-created Action Plan if a negative impact has been found:

Change the measure/change by identifying Changes that reduce or eliminate the negative impact. This may have been explored with marginalised communities at earlier stages. However, you may need to engage in further community conversations led by the Lived Experience Lead on how this might be achieved in practice.

Decide to stop the measure/change because the evidence demonstrates a negative impact and this outweighs the overriding purpose of the measure/change.

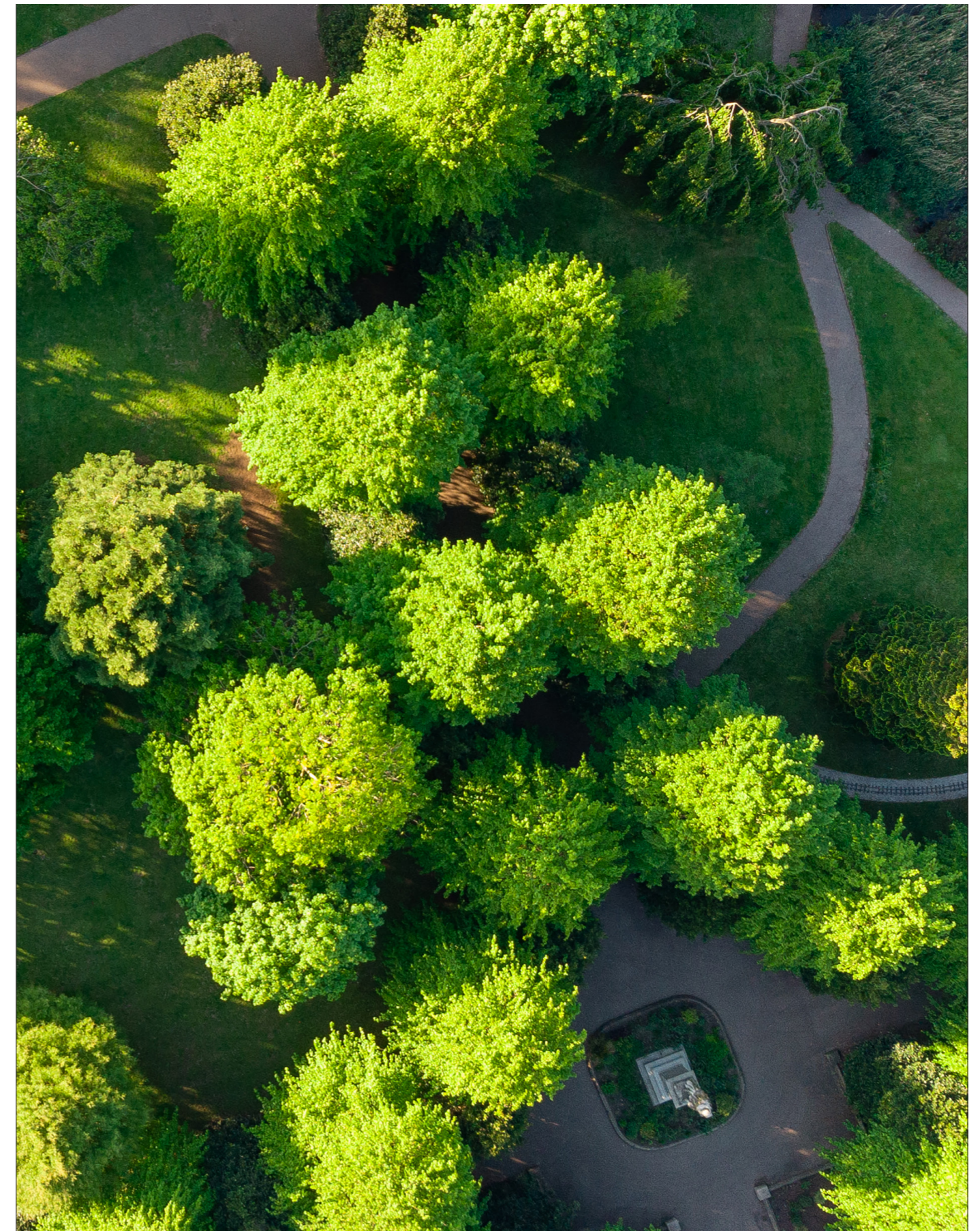
Justify the negative impact if the measure/change cannot be adapted to eliminate or reduce the impact and there is an overriding need to implement the measure/change. However, justification should always be a last resort and attempts to eliminate or reduce the negative impact should have been fully explored first.

Accountability and ownership of the Action Plan is vital. The resulting actions should be allocated to an accountable person against an achievable timescale. It is also important that senior management are ultimately accountable for these actions. Importantly, progress against these actions should be subject to a monitoring and review process.

Details of the Impact Assessment outcomes together with action to minimise negative/maximise positive impacts on marginalised groups should be recorded in the Environmental Justice Template.

Note

In developing an Action Plan where your assessment demonstrates a positive impact make sure these are fully developed, realised and promoted by clear actions. Also make sure to publish and share these benefits.



Publish and Share, Monitor and Review

Publish and Share

Before the environmental sustainability measure/change is published to the public, it should be signed off at a senior management level and shared with those potential impacted communities identified during the evidence gathering and conversation stages as relevant rights holders. Full details of any positive impacts on identified communities should also be shared prior to publication. Any remaining potential negative impacts of the environmental sustainability measure/change should be communicated to impacted communities together with details of action seeking to reduce such impact. Where negative impact remains, justification for continuing with the environmental sustainability measure/change should be clearly and transparently provided and a commitment provided to keep any identified negative impact under monitoring and review in order to seek to reduce this.

The Lived-Experience Lead and organisation should continue to reflect on their shared learning from the process and consider what has worked well and what could be done differently in the future.

It is then vital to publicly Publish and Share the environmental sustainability measure/change across wider networks together with the details of the environmental justice assessment (including positive and negative impacts and attempts to address). This will help to build trust, demonstrate transparency and a commitment to environmental justice within the organisation, and share good practice to encourage other organisations to follow the Environmental Justice Framework.

Details of this Publication and Sharing should be recorded in the Environmental Justice Template.

Monitor and Review

It is tempting to consider that implementation of an environmental sustainability measure developed in line with this Environmental Justice Framework completes the process. However, it is vital that steps are taken to ensure Monitoring and Review mechanisms are in place. The environmental justice process will be most effective as part of a cyclical process. Environmental sustainability measures/changes developed under this Framework should be subject to regular scrutiny and monitoring by the organisation and the Lived Experience Lead. It is also intended that the Explore stage will provide a means of continuous review and adaptation of measures (wherever possible in line with the principles of co-production).

Details of this Monitoring and Review process should be set out in the Environmental Justice Template.





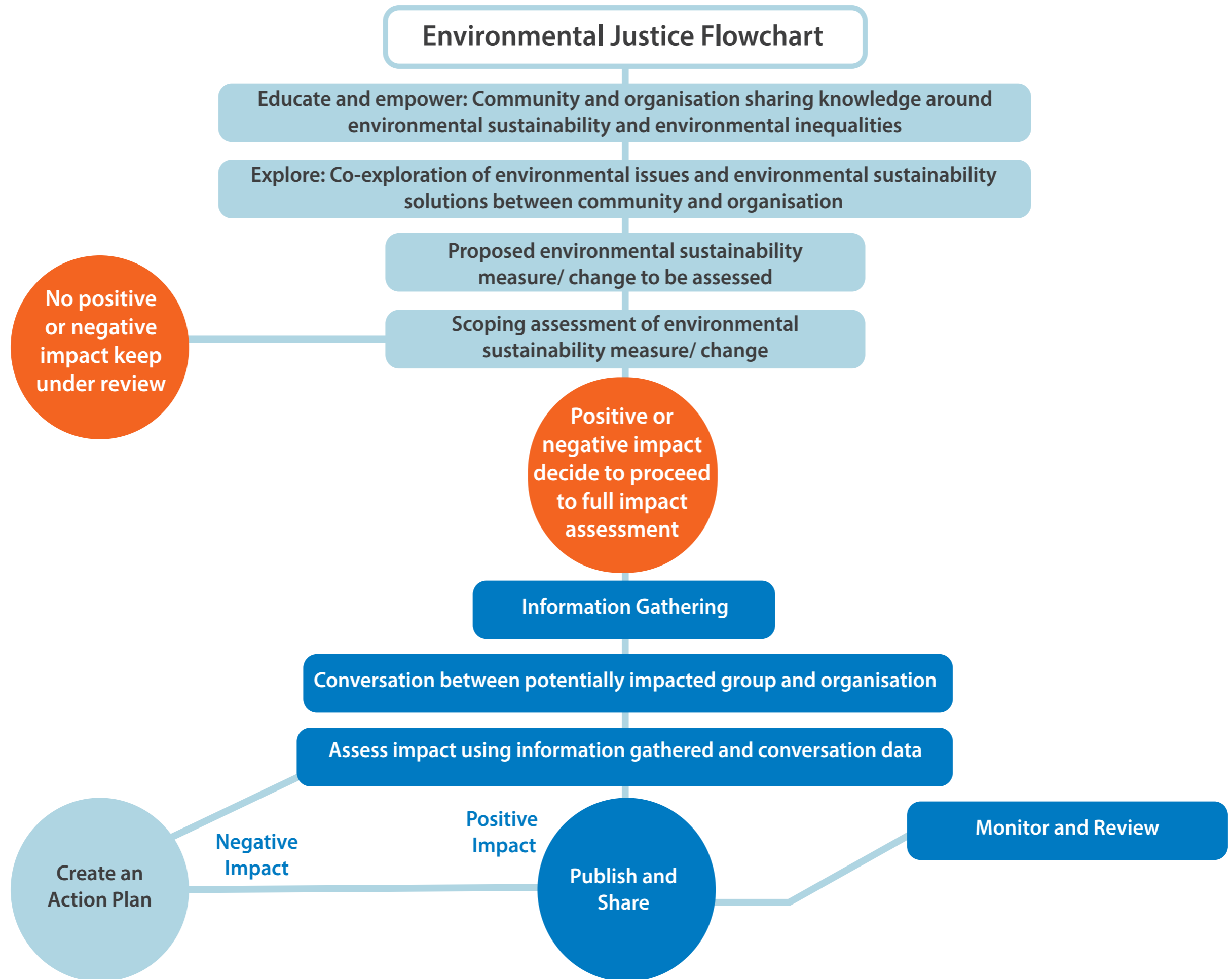
GOOD PRACTICE BEYOND THE FRAMEWORK

Good practice beyond the Framework...

Beyond the application of this Environmental Justice Framework, there are a number of other potential good practice improvement opportunities to consider to ensure the most effective approach to developing, implementing and monitoring environmental sustainability measures:

- Tackle negative perceptions or lack of awareness of environmental justice and highlight benefits to communities and organisations.
- Focus of any approach under this Framework should not just be on minimising risks but on improving practice and service.
- Ensure sufficient time is allocated to the Environmental Justice Framework process and seek efficiency by building this into existing processes.
- Seek opportunities to share examples with other organisations of how an environmental justice approach to environmental sustainability measures have led to change/benefits.
- Build diverse community engagement networks of rightsholders to ensure regular opportunities (wherever possible based on co-production principles) to explore opportunities to address environmental impacts and develop environmental sustainability solutions.
- Recognise the value of community participants time and input at every stage of the process and explore possibilities of compensating for time. This is particularly important when dealing with those from socio-economically deprived communities.
- Develop a focus and understanding of the importance of cumulative impacts on particular groups and recognise this in the application of this Framework. In particular this allows focus on those marginalised groups facing disadvantage that might be affected multiple times by different environmental impacts and measures.
- Seek to ensure greater focus and understanding of intersectional disadvantage and impacts on marginalised groups is included in applying the Framework. Focusing on individual characteristics can result in the intersectional impacts and disadvantage being ignored.
- When carrying out community engagement and conversations, consider the diversity of those representing the organisation in this engagement and conversation.
- When carrying out community engagement and conversation at the Explore and later stages, ensure that discussion includes focus on the detail of the environmental sustainability measure/change as well as the potential impacts of any measure/change.

APPENDIX A: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FLOWCHART



APPENDIX B: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TEMPLATE



Environmental issue to be addressed and evidence (e.g. include evidence of environmental issue including evidence arising from Educate and Explore stages of the Environmental Justice Framework)

Description of proposed environmental sustainability measure/change to be considered to address this environmental issue and how developed (include evidence arising from Educate and Explore stages of the Environmental Justice Framework if relevant)

Scoping assessment of proposed environmental sustainability measure/change

What is the purpose of the proposed measure/change?

How will the proposed measure/change seek to achieve this purpose?

Who will benefit from the proposed measure/change and how?

Who may be negatively impacted from the proposed measure/change and why?

Are there any 'associated aims' attached to the proposed measure/change and why?

Are there any 'associated aims' attached to the proposed measure/change which may benefit or negatively impact on particular groups?

N/B if no negative or positive impact record justification for not pursuing a full assessment.

Information gathering around potential impact on particular community groups of proposed environmental sustainability measure/change

What do we need/want to know?

Who can assist in deciding what evidence of potential impact is required and where can it be located?

What existing evidence of potential impact is available within the organisation and outside of the organisation?

What evidence is needed to ensure all perspectives are considered?

What additional information is required/where are the gaps in evidence regarding potential impact and how can this be gathered?

Details of conversations about proposed measure/change with relevant community voices from identified potentially impacted marginalised groups

Socio-economic	Areas of deprivation	
	Rural communities	
Protected groups	Age	
	Disability or carers of people who are disabled	
	Culture or ethnicity	
	Sex, gender and gender identity	
	Sexual orientation	
Other groups	Parish councils	
	Partners or other liaison groups	

Assessing impact and action SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Communities of interest	Details of community conversation evidence (including further optional conversation if appropriate)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)
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Areas of Deprivation

Potential impact

Neutral	Positive	Negative
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Assessing impact and action SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Communities of interest	Details of community conversation evidence (including optional further conversation)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)
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Rural Communities

Potential impact

Neutral	Positive	Negative
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Assessing impact and action PROTECTED GROUPS

Communities of interest	Details of community conversation evidence (including further optional conversation if appropriate)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)
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Age (consider young and elderly)

Potential impact

Neutral	Positive	Negative
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Assessing impact and action PROTECTED GROUPS

Communities of interest	Details of community conversation evidence (including further optional conversation if appropriate)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)
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Disability and carers of disabled people (physical or mental impairment that has a substantial long term adverse effect on person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)

Potential impact

Neutral	Positive	Negative
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Assessing impact and action PROTECTED GROUPS

Communities of interest	Details of community conversation evidence (including further optional conversation if appropriate)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)
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Culture and ethnicity (nationality/national origin, ethnic origin/race, skin colour, religion or belief)

Potential impact

Neutral	Positive	Negative
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Assessing impact and action PROTECTED GROUPS

Communities of interest	Details of community conversation evidence (including further optional conversation if appropriate)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)
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Sex, gender and gender identity (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people, and pregnancy and maternity)

Potential impact

Neutral	Positive	Negative
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Assessing impact and action PROTECTED GROUPS

Communities of interest	Details of community conversation evidence (including further optional conversation if appropriate)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)		
Sexual orientation						
Potential impact						
	Neutral	Positive	Negative			

Assessing impact and action PROTECTED GROUPS

Communities of interest			Details of community conversation evidence (including further optional conversation if appropriate)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) of the proposed measure/change on this group	Detail of impact data considered (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s)
Parish Councils						
Potential impact						
Neutral	Positive	Negative				

Assessing impact and action OVERARCHING EVIDENCE

Community Group			Details of community conversation evidence (including optional further conversation)	Detail of potential/actual impact(s) the proposed measure/change on community represented	Detail of impact data considered on community represented (e.g. mapping data)	Actions taken to minimise negative and maximise positive impact(s) on community represented
Partners/other liaison groups						
Potential impact						
Neutral	Positive	Negative				

Final decision/action on proposed environmental sustainability measure/change

Proceed no further with proposed measure/change (set out reasons)

Adapt proposed measure/change based on impact assessment and conversations (set out detail)

Continue with proposed measure/change as planned and justify any negative impact

How will the environmental sustainability measure/change (together with any potential benefits/negative impacts on community groups) be published and shared?

How will the environmental sustainability measure/change be monitored and reviewed?

Further Reading

Inclusive Environments: designing a framework for environmental justice (summary report)

Inclusive Environments: designing a framework for environmental justice (full report)

Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington (Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission)

Local Voices Framework: Co-production Definition and Principles (Cheshire West Voluntary Action & University of Chester)

Fairness and Opportunity: a people-powered plan for the green transition (Final Report of the IPPR Environmental Justice Commission)

