



Power in the City

Transcript E02: Feeling Climate Change

Intro

Britt: Hi, and welcome to Power in the City. This is a podcast about the everyday and on the ground ways that people are responding to the climate emergency.

[electro ambient sounds]

Mix of voices from the episode: Because when I had spoken originally to my family about climate change and being vegan, they actually kind of laughed about it. Really?

Um, so I love litter picking. I do so many things, but I love litter picking . . . Fantastic. Yeah.

I was always concerned about what was happening to mother Earth, particularly in relation to the amount of pollution.

You didn't meet the Cycling Iman? I heard so much about the Cycling Imam, he is quite famous.

So basically, climate change is a big thing in a sense. There's a lot of topics that we could talk about.

Hannah: The first season is based in Oldham and has five episodes. My name is Hannah.

Britt: And I'm Britt. - Hannah, do you actually know that Oldham is not a city?

Main episode

Britt: Hello.

Hannah: Hi, Britt. Welcome back.

Britt: Thank you. It's really nice to be here. So what did you bring us today?

Hannah: So this episode is going to be all about climate change.

Britt: Oh, I've been looking forward to this.

Hannah: So climate change is something that we obviously all know about, but it's also something that in a funny way, we often don't have the opportunity to really talk about it directly. So in the context of this podcast, we've got lots of things. We're talking about walking, we're talking about solar energy, we're talking about insulating our homes, but, I think it's really important to have a space to actually think about: Why are we having these conversations? What is the backdrop? Why is all this stuff so important?

Britt: I agree.

Hannah: But different people have different senses of why it's happening, and so I thought it'd be interesting to have one episode where we actually find out in Oldham what people think about climate change. How are people relating to it? What do people think? What are they doing and why are they thinking about it?

Britt: Okay, let's do it.

Hannah: So I wanted to start this episode by playing you a clip from a song.

[soundpiece with two types of sounds intensifying over time to end sounding like a siren]

Britt: Wow! What was that?

Hannah: So you might be surprised to hear that that was the sound of climate change.

Britt: You are kidding.

Hannah: No, it's what's called a sonification of climate data, and it's a depiction of the changes in the atmosphere since before the Industrial Revolution until the present day.

Britt: So, what kind of changes and what kind of data are we talking about here?

Hannah: There are two kinds of data in the sonification and the first is the concentration of carbon emissions, which are in the atmosphere. So the loud drony noise that you can hear at the bottom of the recording is the sound of carbon concentrations in the atmosphere. And as it gets closer to the end of the tune or to the end of the clip, you can hear those concentrations rising and rising more and more intensely as the drone noise goes up and up and up and up. And the second sound in the recording is a kind of bloopy noise, and that is the noise of temperature. And similarly, if we listen to it, you can hear that the temperature is going up and down, up and down, but as it gets closer to the end of the clip, it starts to go up and up and up and up even more in a more accelerated way. So the effect of the whole clip is that you really feel that climate change is kind of happening more rapidly now.

Britt: Wow. So, drony noises - carbon emissions rising, and then bloopy noises - temperature getting warmer and warmer and warmer and warmer. So, um, that's incredible! I'm still quite intrigued, like why do you bring this?

Hannah: So I've been researching climate change for many years. I've talked to loads of people, but it's quite hard to communicate the kind of complexity of climate change. There's lots of detail in there, but really there's just a story there, that's really, really important and that is that the burning of fossil fuels has just increased massively over the past decades and that has increased the carbon dioxide concentrations and it has been increasing the temperature and it is going to continue increasing the temperature.

When I heard this song, this sonification of that data, the rapidity of that increase really brought it home to me.

Britt: Can I hear it one more time?

Hannah: Yeah, sure.

[soundpiece again]

Britt: Yeah, it's really urgent. No, it sounds like a siren or something.

Hannah: It is urgent, and if that is urgency in sound, I wanted to share with you the words of someone who conveys that urgency.

Chris: I'm Professor Chris Rapley. I'm professor of Climate Science at University College London.

Hannah: So I have known Professor Rapley for a few years and he has worked for over 40 years as a climate scientist. He has monitored glaciers, he has extracted ice cores. And he has also done lots of work to try to tell the story of climate change.

Chris: The evidence from 40 years of science, well, you could argue 150 years of science, but certainly the last 40 years of science, is that it's happening. It's real unquestionably, you know, there is absolutely no doubt about it.

What's more, it is us through our emissions of greenhouse gases and to some extent the way that we are changing the surface of the planet through agriculture and urbanisation. It's serious. You've only got to look at the growing costs in terms of insurance costs and so on of major damaging storms.

But it's serious in terms of loss of life, loss of habitat, you know, there are climate migrants moving out of California for goodness sake, because either their houses have been incinerated or they can no longer insure their houses because they may be incinerated. So it is very serious.

Certainly the places that the news channels concentrate on, that has really brought home that this is absolutely real and it is absolutely happening. Very scary. We need to do something about it and there are many things that we can do about it, but we are not doing them at the rate and scale that we need to.

Britt: Well, I think the message definitely hit home. It's serious. It makes me feel a bit depressed actually.

Hannah: Yeah. I mean, it makes me feel depressed too. But Chris did have something to say about that.

Chris: It's very easy to get a bit gloomy about it all. You know, it seems a bit overwhelming and, and it's clear that we're in a desperate state and that we are not doing, you know, anything like, as well as we should do.

But you know, people have been saying, if we go over one and a half degrees, which as you know, is the target, we're trying to keep warming to - less than one and a half

degrees. Now the next target isn't two degrees, you know, it's 1.55 degrees or 1.56 degrees. You know, every single point one of a degree matters.

And so, if we miss one target, well, okay. You know, we are adults, let's figure out how we still get a grip on things. And somebody said, the important thing about having delivered the story, is the aftertaste half an hour or half a day or a week later. What is the aftertaste? If the aftertaste is gloomy, then you failed.

You know, the aftertaste needs to be: Well, come on, then let's roll up our sleeves and do something about it.

Hannah: So I think what we get from Chris is that one of the real challenges of having conversations about climate change and also doing anything about climate change is just that, it's really hard to engage with something that just often feels really gloomy and really scary.

Sometimes I think it just makes us wanna switch off and just bury our head in the sand and say: "I just want anything to do with that". At the same time, you know, we can't just bury our heads in the sand. So I wanted to see if I could find some people in Oldham who were not burying their heads in the sand, they were confronting climate change and see how they were doing it.

Like how are people engaging with the theme of climate change? So I went to Oldham, really to find some people to talk to, and it didn't take long for me to come across an organisation called Crossing Footprints, who it turned out have been doing loads and loads of work over the past few years, and they've been really trying hard to develop what they call a creative conversation in Oldham about climate change.

Kooj: My name is Kooj Chuhan. I'm the director of an organisation called Crossing Footprints. I've been working on anti-racist, cultural, artistic, and activist projects and activities for about 30, 35 years.

Hannah: So this is Kooj and he's been working in and around Greater Manchester for quite a few years now working with video and with art as a way of engaging communities and educating people about big issues of the day.

He has worked on lots of different things. He has worked on migration and he started talking to people who had moved to the UK. Sometimes they had come from places that he realised were really badly affected by climate change. And he realised that although people often had lots of experiences of climate change, the kinds of people he was engaging were often being really left out of the kind of public conversations about climate change and left out of the climate movement or climate activism.

So Kooj told me one of the challenges that he had experienced working with these people who are not already in the climate conversation is that actually, you need to find a really different way of talking about and thinking about climate change.

Kooj: Thinking of different narratives and different entry points and different ways of framing what the issues are and where and how they've arisen and what kind of wider solutions there may be. I think it's a constant dynamic to try and shift our minds into something that isn't the dominant way of thinking about climate change.

Hannah: So what he was telling me was basically, I think, where we are at in this podcast in terms of trying to think of different ways of talking about climate change. So chatting to Kooj, it turned out that his organisation Crossing Footprints were actually gonna be running an event at Oldham Library.

And so Kooj invited me to come along as a way of seeing some of the work that they have been doing and also to see if I could find any ways of talking about climate change differently.

So it's Saturday morning and I have just taken the tram out to Oldham and down to the smart new library which is in the City Centre. And I've arrived at the library and I can't really see where to go at first. It doesn't really obviously look like there is anything going on, but then I can see this kind of weird object at the back of the hall. So I start to walk through. As I get closer, I can see it's like a stack of boxes and it's all draped with a kind of twine as if the boxes have been hauled into the library by some kind of fishing net or something.

And so I see that there is someone standing next to the boxes. It's an artist. It turns out that her name's Rabia Begum and she is the artist who actually made the installation and it is part of the Crossing Footprints project. And she starts to tell me a bit about it.

Rabia: So with this exhibition today, it's an installation piece made up of 19 cardboard boxes which go into the shape of almost like a pyramid. It's called Future Roots and it's supposed to be a growing tree.

Hannah: So Kooj has invited Rabia to come to this event to share with people some of the ways that she's been thinking about climate change. Rabia herself is from Oldham, so she hasn't had far to come. She's now at university in Liverpool, but recently she's been working with art galleries in Manchester and exhibiting her work there.

So she tells me that she has put together this installation as a way of inviting people to think about and talk about climate change. She has made it like a tree, so that it doesn't feel scary. It is something that is quite receptive. And then there is a sign which asks people to put their thoughts or stick their thoughts onto the installation. I'm quite intrigued to hear how people are actually responding to the installation. So I ask Rabia to tell me a bit more about it.

Rabia: I found a few people today quite - What's the word now? -Oh God, what's the word? - Really insecure, I suppose, about their artwork and about their piece and making sure that it looks a particular way or that it is executed and looks well and not feeling like it compares to what other people have written, which I found interesting. But actually most of those times what people have then said, and their insecurities have been interesting because they've had the most interesting contributions. I had a lady earlier who was talking about helping poor people within climate justice and reaching out to them and she was like: "Well, I don't think it goes well enough with the other pieces."

And I thought that was so important because that is climate justice. So I think those ideas do kind of develop and work and having those conversations really does help.

Hannah: Rabia's installation then seems to be something that's really prompting people to talk about climate change. Not just as this sort of scientific problem, but as something that in that last clip she calls climate justice.

Britt: Can we talk about this idea of climate justice for a moment?

Hannah: Yeah, I think we should, because it really comes through in a lot of the conversations that I am having with people in this podcast. So according to Kooj and Rabia who both see themselves as working on climate justice, they tell me that climate justice is really realising that climate change is not something that affects us as just individuals, but that actually some people are gonna be much more affected by climate change than other people. That it is really kind of differentiated. So it will affect poor people more than rich people, and it's really likely to affect people who are currently living in the global south more than those who might feel a sort of insulated from climate change, who are living in the global north.

Kooj: You know, the people who are struggling with agriculture in Zimbabwe or Bangladesh, which is going to face sea level rises, where a lot of it is going to be submerged. You know and the islands that are sinking.

Hannah: So here Kooj is talking about the way that different people are affected differently by climate change. And he talks about this as a way of telling me what

climate justice is. And Rabia also describes herself to me in terms of climate justice. So she tells me that she is a climate justice activist as well as an artist. And whilst we are talking, she says that she has got an interesting story to tell me about how she became a climate justice activist.

So I'm really interested. I say to her, come on, tell me the story. It sounds really interesting. But rather than starting with climate science, which is where I think she's going to start, she starts by telling me all about her stomach.

Rabia: So when I was 16, 17, my stomach went through a really bad episode of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. So I suppose gut health really affected me and I had to change my diet.

Hannah: So Rabia tells me how her diet had been a bit rubbish. It was based on eating loads of meat and loads of junk food. And she tells me, she sort of admits that she didn't really have much nutrition in her diet,

Rabia: So I had to go vegan and veggie. I had to go to those diets to help my stomach and the issues that I was going through, which it did. From that, I started to look into, um, your kind of Netflix shows like Forks Over Knives...

Hannah: So that's Forks Over Knives. That's a film about how getting rid of animal products in your diet can cure chronic diseases.

Rabia: Cowspiracy...

Hannah: Cowspiracy is another show, and this one's about how the meat industry is responsible for loads of environmental destruction.

Rabia: I looked at the minimalists...

Hannah: Ah, the minimalists are two guys who've done these TED talks about how to live with less stuff in your life. So Rabia was really inspired by all these different shows, and it was really making her start to think about the way that the modern life that she was living actually .

Rabia: Like, consume, consume, consume, not thinking about our decisions. And eventually it led me on to doing kind of more research, being curious and I started working on climate change. Because when I had spoken originally to my family about climate change and being vegan, they actually kind of laughed about it really.

So they were like, it's a bit extreme, especially coming from a South Asian family in Oldham that's working class. It was just things that you hadn't kind of heard of yet or introduced. And then now in turn them being aware of it. So that's I suppose a long story of how I got into what I'm doing now.

Hannah: So, once Rabia had become aware of climate change through this kind of diet and then watching these TV programs, she started to become something of a climate activist. And so her work now is really focused on talking from her own personal experiences and specifically from her own personal background about climate change.

Rabia: I don't feel like I'm representing, but I'm bringing an element of the experiences and what I know from my community into those conversations because it is really important that when we talk about the global south and those voices, someone is present. You can't talk on behalf of someone.

Hannah: So as we are talking about who you can speak on behalf of, Rabia mentions that during lockdown she'd actually made a spoken word video about climate change and climate justice, when she was doing work at Manchester Art Gallery. So I ask her to share the poem with me. And this poem captures something really unique about how for her climate change is about injustice and inequality and who has access to resources.

Rabia: I can try and get it open on my phone and read the actual spoken word poetry.

Hannah: Oh, that would be amazing.

Rabia: Yeah, I can get it out. That'll just be a minute. So this is called, 'As we see' by Rabia Begum.

As we see the intricacies and the delicate bees disappear. Who are we?

As we see the intricacies, the many levels of you and me, the intersection. Social injustice please. Who are we?

As we see the intricacies, Europe thrown into a freeze, the young suffer the elders' deeds. Who are we?

As we see the intricacies, born unequally, let us take for what we can. Now, bring me your tea. Who are we?

As we see the intricacies, decolonize your galleries, understanding our history, who are we?

As we see the intricacies, Rushford school meal breeze, Boris falling to his knees. Food security, food sovereignty, the global south, you know who I mean, who are we?

As we see the intricacies, Bangladesh under seas, migration, how we run and we flee land, sea, arctic, and freeze. Who are we?

As we see flooding, frequently extinct species, it'll be the mirror to our own realities. Work together, can we? To shape the future for you and for me.

Hannah [within interview]: Wow. That's very moving. It made me shiver. That's beautiful.

Britt: It is. Um, it made me, it made me well up a bit for a moment.

Hannah: Yeah, me too. The event at the library, it really made me think about how climate change didn't just have to be something abstract and distant and it could actually be something really personal. And so for the next group of people that I met, in my search for other ways of thinking and talking about climate change, I found it was another kind of really local and personal thing that people were talking about.

Saleh: I'm Saleh Uddin, My Coldhurst volunteer. So I love litter picking. I do so many things, but I love litter picking

Sadrul: Hi, I'm Sadrul Alam. I'm also a My Coldhurst volunteer. Enjoying giving back to the community, and especially making sure the children play a lot of football, but as much giving back to the community as possible.

Kamal: Hi, my name is Kamal Rob. I'm a My Coldhurst volunteer and I'm a local businessman as well. Just giving back as much as I can to the community and making it safe.

Hannah: So I've been invited down to Coldhurst by My Coldhurst community group and I'm accompanying Sadrul and the others on one of their regular litter picks.

I had met Sadrul a couple of months earlier at a workshop called Oldham Energy Futures. And after the workshop he agreed to speak to me about climate change and he said: "Well come down to the litter pick and meet me there and you can meet the other volunteers and we'll all tell you about climate change."

So my Cold Hurst volunteers had started out as a group that was first of all focused on basically trying to make the area of Coldhurst in central Oldham a nicer place to live.

Saleh: We try to engage in and involve with every little thing what we can do. But main priority for this group mission and vision is, we want to see Coldhurst a spotless

place. We want to show people we care and if you don't care, at least care to not throw anything. Cause like I think over the years we managed to achieve that.

Hannah: So Coldhurst is an area that is just to the west of Oldham Town Center and it's just off the dual carriageway, which cuts the area off from the neighbouring area of Westwood. Now the streets around here are mainly sort of red brick terrace houses and there are little pockets of green space around. There is a library and there's a great little cafe that opened up earlier in the year and a few small shops along the road. The area scores pretty highly on the indices of multiple deprivation, but I'm getting the sense from being with the litter pickers that there's a real pride in this area and it really emanates from everything that the My Coldhurst volunteers talk to me about.

So one thing the volunteers have been doing recently is transforming alleyways behind the terraces of the houses. So they've been cleaning them up and really trying to make them into spaces that people can use. And we pass by one of these alleyways on the litter pick.

Sadrul: Before it was basically a no-go area, wasn't it? Cause there's like, it was full of rubbish and fly tipping. But now I'd say that it's like... in June lockdown people used it as an area to do their regular walks. The kids play here as well.

Hannah: Yeah, it's nice, you get a bike up and down here as a child.

Sadrul: Yeah, it's a massive change. From what it was and what it used to be. Yeah. Yeah. Definitely. So when it's summer, loads of children playing and what you see in the corners, there's nothing being dumped here anymore. Yeah. Whereas people just used to think it would be okay to leave a black bin liner full of rubbish. Yeah. And things like that.

Hannah: So I'm here on a litter pick, but I've come to be here because I had asked Sadrul to tell me about climate change. And as we're talking about litter picking, it sort of feels a long way from climate change. So I ask the litter pickers explicitly to talk to me about what they see as the link between the My Coldhurst volunteer activities and the climate.

Kamal: Yeah. So basically, climate change is a big thing. Like I said, there are a lot of topics that we could talk about.

Hannah: Remember Kamal? He introduced himself at the beginning. He's the businessman, so his business is a restaurant. And he's got some quite ambitious plans coming up about how to think about producing food more locally.

Kamal: But I think, we can see the changes that's happening even in the UK like I think it was last week or the week before the storms that we had one after the other. So the storm that we had and then the changes, it's like, where's the snow? We can see that things are changing.

So the little bit of contribution that we are making, like even, you know, flower pots we're putting out in the alleyways and stuff like that. So these contributions, even in my restaurant, I'm thinking of the eco side of it, where we can, grow local veggies.

Hannah: Kamal runs a number of businesses and one of them is a local restaurant. And the restaurant is one of the areas where they've really been trying to change how they're running the business to make it more sustainable.

Kamal: So what, what I started doing is, I started to get my own chilli plants. So I use my own chillies at this moment. So that's where the idea came from. And I'm working with someone locally as well to see if we can get a space where we can actually grow tomatoes, potatoes, and stuff like that. So and then using a local farmer to supply us with eggs. Yeah. You know, things like that. So you work with your own, rather than buying it out from other countries. So that's what we are trying to do, these little things. It takes time. But yes, surely if we contribute as a team, as a community, we can make a big change. Find little ways. So there's a lot of things that we could actually do, but without support from others, we can't really get anywhere. So it has to be like-minded people, like minded community spirit, community support. That's what we need to look out for and work together. We can!

Sadrul: You know, environmentally as part of this project.

Hannah: So Sadrul is bringing the conversation back here to the My Coldhurst volunteers project.

Sadrul: One of the things was about growing your own. So that's why we do the vegetables. But what you'll notice is here. So, you know, these lights, they are solar powered.

Hannah: Sadrul is pointing out the security lights to me along the alleyway, which I hadn't noticed before.

Sadrul: So and they're all LED. You know, the long lasting LED. And then if you look on the walls here, you've got the little lights, solar lights. So those were like part of the eco element of the project that we had.

Hannah Sadrul tells me about these things they've been doing in the alleyways, but he also wants to tell me more about why he cares about climate change.

Sadrul: I think personally for me... Shall I go for it? I go to Bangladesh quite on a regular basis. And then I see, so, so for example, just before you land, when you go in summer, August, July, just before you land, it's like the whole, like all you can see is water everywhere. So the impact that we have is we always talk about climate change and how it affects people that are completely further away from you.

I always think about Bangladesh. And the sea rising. I'm like thinking, you know, it's one of the most densely populated countries in the world and it's forecast to lose about a quarter to a third of its land mass.

Hannah: Let's just pause there for a second. A quarter to a third of its land mass.

Britt: I know...

Hannah: That's like, I was thinking, if you compare that to England, that's like losing everything west of the Pennines from Birmingham, right up to the Scottish borders or something like that. It's a huge amount of land.

Sadrul: Every time I go there, I think, you know what's gonna happen in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years time?

Cause people just aren't taking it seriously. So, so like cycling and these environmental activities that we do with litter picking, for me it's just like a small personal contribution, you know? Yeah. To sort of make the local environment a better place but at the same time recognize that there are wider other issues going on as well.

Hannah: Suddenly as we are talking, Sadrul notices a car pulling up and he tells me that I have to talk to the person who's in that car.

Sadrul: This is the cycling Imam. [Hannah: Oh, wow, amazing!]

Hannah: Yep. You heard correctly. It's the cycling Imam.

Britt: No, you didn't meet the cycling Imam! I heard so much about the cycling Imam. You know, he's quite famous.

Hannah: Yeah. Well, I hadn't heard about him, but he definitely seemed like a celebrity. So Sadrul called him over for me.

Sadrul, Saleh and Hannah (talk excitedly over each other): His dad lives on my street and he was involved in the barbecue, so, so maybe I'm, I'm gonna grab him for a few questions....Yeah ...Yeah.... In the alleyway group as well! ...Oh, really? So all overlaps ?Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, that would be great.

Hannah: So during lockdown, it turned out that the appearance of the cycling Imam had been quite this talk of the neighbourhood.

Cycling Imam: So my name is Atiqur Rahman. I'm currently serving as an Imam and I'm also a full-time teacher Monday to Friday at a secondary school. I teach English and I'm a cyclist.

It started off as a personal fitness journey, to be honest with you. I used to weigh 17 stones going back in just, uh, as soon as lockdown started, so end of 2019, June, July, August. And we went to the beach, uh, Blackpool Beach once, and my missus, she took a few pictures of myself, you know, with the, uh, with the a top on on the beach. And I looked at my belly, forget everything else, I can see a massive belly standing out! So I thought I need to do something, uh, with work. My workplace is half an hour in terms of walking or 15 minutes ride from my house to my workplace. So I thought, why not start cycling, do something different. Do something where I can continue it.

And since then, 2019, what is it - 2022 now? I've been cycling ever since. (Hannah) Amazing. (Sadrul) Yeah. It's quite momentous....

(Cycling Imam again) Well, yeah, we have a group going. We've got a club officially. So we registered ourselves as a club. We've got over 40 members. So every weekend we have a few guys that go out. Every morning, Saturday, Sunday they're going out for a few rides. So it's growing. It's growing. I

Hannah: Is it alright cycling around here? Cause I noticed it's not many cycle paths.

Cycling Imam: Yes. We go towards Manchester. So towards Manchester, Salford, Bury. There's a few more cycling paths there and roads.. We're actually working with the council just to improve this area in terms of Oldham Central, Coldhurst, Werneth, to get a few more cycling roads and paths. We need it

Hannah: Just as we are wrapping up, another famous person joins the litter pick.

Mohammed Ali: Mohammad Ali! (laughter)I'm just a friend of these guys. I champion everything that they're doing. And I think the initiative of my Coldhurst is phenomenal. Kamal and Sadrul Bhā'i, they are more eloquent than I am. Like I said,

he's got more purple hearts and more budgies. (laughter, Sadrul:) You've got more followers on Facebook. (Mohammed Ali:) Followers on Facebook? No. That's just either most of 'em occurring to each or what,

Sadrul: Let's be honest about what he does. Can I just say what you do? Listen, he's like a, he's like an eco warrior. So, you know, in a good sense. (Mohammed Ali protests, Sadrul continues). What you do is, you highlight issues within the community and you give a perspective to it.

Mohammed Ali: Well, to be honest, per a person like myself, we've been very fortunate that we have come from the trenches. We were built from the trenches upwards, not the way around. So we don't have a hierarchy looking down, telling the people what to do. We would actually... my dad, love him to bits, threw me in the trenches. You don't think, you just carry on. So, with the resources: when you have resources of certain things, you're supposed to help your fellow man.

And sometimes some people take you for granted or don't understand it because they expect somebody else to clean up your mess. Which is wrong. Our parents, grandparents were first generation or some of us are first generation. I was born in Lincoln in 1981. Right. Uh, but 35 years here in Oldham, so this is home. And we've seen the good, the bad and the ugly. And what was fortunate about us people, we were born with two feet on two different continents. So we see everything in between. So we're very fortunate in that respect, that we have two feet on two different continents and we get to see everything.

We're in a very privileged position as opposed to someone that was just born on one side. They only get to hear or see what the media portrays. But they don't actually get to live it.

Hannah: So I felt like I was learning something really interesting here about climate change from talking to people in Oldham. In some ways their activities were really local. Cleaning up alleyways and they are doing litter picking. But at the same time they were telling me that the reason they were doing it was because they had two feet in two different continents. They had this really global outlook and I thought that's something really important to learn about how we think about climate change.

Britt: Yeah, absolutely. I also really appreciate their approach of starting at home with something that improves their and their neighbours lives. And, you know, without being too cheesy, I am a great believer in starting with the immediate and the most obvious, like litter picking or greening the alleyway and then taking it from there, like Sadrul was saying. You know, that quote: "The next big thing will be a lot of small

things". I dunno. You know, like, I think, um, this is very unscientific, but then... I was listening to Kevin Anderson the other day. He is a climate scientist and he was talking about, you know, all kinds of things that were quite depressing and in the end when somebody asked him if he has hope at all, he said yes. And he has hope because he doesn't quite know, if all of those small things might not just accumulate to like a, what he sort of called a social tipping point, which I think is something that people talk about a lot now. But, um, you know, I was interested in that. I was like, yeah, we don't know. You know, at some point something might just swell the ground with the Sadruls and the Rabias of this world and moving something maybe.

Hannah: I was also really interested in how you take these day to day activities and make them into something bigger. You know, how do you move from those everyday activities into making something into a kind of tipping point and so I went to speak to someone who I kept hearing about when I was talking to people in Oldham, who seemed to be holding that position of turning these local activities into something bigger.

Cllr Jabbar: My name is Councillor Abdul Jabbar. I'm deputy leader of Oldham council, and I also have cabinet responsibility for finance and low carbon.

Hannah: So Cllr Jabbar was born in Bangladesh in a rural village, and he lived in the countryside in an area surrounded by rivers.

Cllr Jabbar: And then when, uh, the monsoon season came, virtually all the footpaths and the area used to get flooded. And I remember, we used to make rafts, to go and play in the area that was flooded in the water. So we had great fun.

Hannah: So when Cllr Jabbar came to this country, he stayed in contact with his family back in Bangladesh, and gradually he realised that the floods and also droughts that were in the area were becoming more and more frequent, and they were starting to destroy people's homes and people were dying and he thought:

Cllr Jabbar: Why this is happening and why is it happening so frequently?

Hannah: So during his adult life, um, Cllr Jabbar continued to be really concerned about climate change and pollution.

Cllr Jabbar: So then when you look at all that and then say, well, actually what can I do as an individual? And certainly what can I do in my role as a councillor? Then going back more than a decade, when I was first appointed as a cabinet member of finance, I asked specifically for low carbon to be given to me. Usually when there's a, uh, you know, opportunity for a cabinet position, there's a big bum fight about who

wants it and who doesn't want it. But nobody fought about that because to be honest, not many people going back 10, 12 years were that interested in climate change. So I've had that portfolio since then.

Hannah: So over the years, Cllr Jabar has been looking at various technologies, things like wind and solar, and he's used his position as cabinet member for finance to do things like invest in local power. The council have adopted a Green New Deal strategy, which means that the green agenda is now incorporated into everything that the council does. And he's also done things like support the development of an energy efficiency service, make proposals for a heat network and develop green space projects like the Northern Roots Project in Oldham City Center.

Cllr Jabbar: So we set a target to become carbon neutral as a borough by 2030, so 20 years ahead of the government target, and eight years ahead of the Greater Manchester target.

So if I had the money, would I bring in additional measures to achieve that target? Absolutely. Then I don't see any reason why Oldham Council in the next five to seven years can't be completely sufficient in energy. So are we thinking about this? Is this our priority? Absolutely. Are we ambitious in this area? Completely. Have we got the capacity to deliver? Absolutely. All we need is really a bit of a helping hand to go over this transition period where we are trying to desperately make business cases positive.

Hannah: What Cllr Jabbar fundamentally believes in is that we're all custodians of Mother Earth and we have a collective responsibility to make sure that we all do everything in our power to protect future generations.

Cllr Jabbar: So that's the reason, that's the message that we need to give to everyone, that it's not just me as a cabinet member for finance, not me as a deputy leader of Oldham Council, it's me, citizen of this earth to do everything I can to help protect it for the future generations.

Britt: It feels to me like we've come a long way from that eerie sonification of climate change we started with.

Hannah: I think you're right. That was so powerful and for me, it really gave me an emotional connection to climate change. Actually, the conversations that I had in making this podcast, I think are going to resonate and stick with me longer than the sonification in a funny way.

Britt: Same here, actually. So thank you.

Hannah: Thanks. It's been fun.

Britt: All right. Bye Hannah.

Hannah: Bye.

Outro

Thanks for listening. Do you want to join in the conversation? This week's question is: How does climate change feel? Drop us an email at powerinthecity@carbon.coop. We will share in one of the upcoming episodes.

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You can find a list of all episode contributors and lots of additional information and links in the show notes.

Tune in for our next episode on the 12th of January, 2023. It's about solar.