



## Emerging themes from children and young people - January 2025

By December 2024, AFW through their involvement with the NESCAN JTCP had drawn up;

- 16 place plans representing the views of almost 5,000 children and young people in schools in the following areas of Aberdeen (St Machar and Lochside) and Aberdeenshire (Banff/Macduff, Huntly, Inverurie, Banchory)
- gathered the views of almost 600 others in the form of wishes for a 'wishing tree'

Looking across the views expressed by children and young people through a range of active, deliberative and participative processes AFW has drawn out a number of emerging themes. As well as the themes themselves AFW has tried to capture the way in which children and young people have expressed their ideas.

Children and young people in particular speak about it being "unfair" to kill plants and destroy animals' homes to make way for housing, pylons and roads. They tell us; "people should be nice to each other" or "there should be more kindness shown to all people and animals" or "homeless people should have somewhere warm to stay" or "people should not be mean to each other". It is adults who often need this translated and put it into boxes such as "biodiversity", "wellbeing" etc.

Youngsters also speak clearly about "power" and how things happen without them having a say. In one case a youngster described how giant pylons "above their heads" were "taking power from their area" to somewhere else with no benefit to them. As they spoke it was clear they were speaking not only of the physical infrastructure which was planned but also of the powerlessness and unfairness they felt about what was happening.

"Fairness" is perhaps the key word in so much of what young people say. Fairness for everyone in the community and fairness for living creatures and the environment as a whole. Fairness which takes the form of people who are able to help those who are isolated, or in need. Children used "fairness" to describe things adults sometimes refer to as "social justice", "tackling inequality" or "just transition" .

In our notes below AFW has tried to use both the words we heard from children and corresponding adult terms in order to convey a sense of the "feelings" behind what children and young people said but to group themes under broad themes under which AFW chose to group them.

- **Nature, plants, animals (Biodiversity)**  
Protect nature, greenspace and biodiversity. Everyone needed to value and look after plants, animals and their habitats and stop destroying them with more housing, roads and giant pylons
- **Play and fun (Play and outdoor spaces)**  
Play areas should be accessible and well maintained. They should be fun and active, not covered in dog mess or litter. Equipment should be suitable for different ages and interests and different groups including people who are disabled
- **Jobs and opportunities (Education, jobs and skills)**

Learning more about our environment. Having opportunities for volunteering, part time jobs that can help access college and training and pathways to well paid jobs in the future. Learning more about the different sorts of jobs there will be in the future.

- **Homes for everyone (Housing)**  
Providing shelter for those in need, thinking about greenspace, shops, services and transport when building houses and making sure housing areas are energy efficient, have car charging and are child/[pedestrian friendly.
- **Places to meet (Public places)**  
Public buildings people can access and use as social spaces to meet up; cafes, youth and intergenerational spaces. Help for people to get to these public spaces especially people who do not stay close, connected paths and dial-a-bus.
- **Looking after people (Public services and resilience)**  
Access to doctor, dentist, healthcare, childcare, leisure, culture and other key services like public toilets, public seats and signage, swings and flowers. Having power and wi-fi in storms is also important especially in rural areas. Being ready for storms so they don't cause so much harm and we cope better when they happen.
- **Getting around (Transport)**  
Safer less dangerous roads, paths that better connect people and services they use, reliable public transport
- **Litter and rubbish (Circularity)**  
Everyone should try to recycle more and litter less. There should be less packaging and much less use of plastic which is polluting the sea and beaches. Adults need to follow rules like cleaning up dog poo and how they dispose of vapes
- **Feeding people (Food poverty and security)**  
Meal deals on junk food should be replaced with good deals on healthy food. People who need food should be able to get it, nobody should go hungry.
- **Events and celebrations (Heritage/identity)**  
Community and cultural events, celebrations, signs and routes to places of interest. Events which help link people to their past, bring them together now or help connect them to each other and to the future.
- **Kindness and happiness (Wellbeing)**  
Kindness, happiness, being nice, not being mean, listening to each other, respecting everyone, fairness and feeling safe at home and in the community. Feeling our views will be listened to and being seen as part of our communities.

Children and young people are members of our communities, listening to their views enables their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to be respected.

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