

How to...organise a Climate Café

At its simplest, a Climate Café is a chat about climate change and climate action with a cup of tea and a bun. It can be held in a community hall, but an actual café is ideal. In theory it sounds a bit worthy or highbrow, but in reality, it is just friends and neighbours having the chats about gardening, cycling, saving energy and money and ideas for making your community an even better place to live.



Planning

Deciding whether to have it in a community space or a café is probably the biggest consideration. An existing café is fully set up for people sitting around together and has a customer base, while a community hall gives you the flexibility to lay it out any way you want, and you may feel more in control of the event in your own space.

Based on who you would like to come along, and what is of interest to the organisers, pick topics that will be easy to manage. Having a theme or main talking point gives you some direction and makes it easier to promote. You might keep it more general, such as 'an introduction to climate change' or be more specific like 'growing your own food at home'. You will already have knowledge of your chosen topics within the group, but it is no harm to find a few other people to bulk out the 'expertise'.

A Climate Café can take different formats. There should be a host who introduces the evening and organises the chats. There could be a short explanation of the topic, or a presentation with slides or a guest speaker. This sets the scene for the subsequent discussion. You might allow general chat to follow the topic, or you might break it up into blocks of time, giving a specific question to discuss in each one.

Promoting

If the venue is a café, get them involved in the promotion as well through posters and their own social media. Their regular customers are a very good target market for this event. In your promotion, emphasize the informal nature of the event and maybe go heavy on the treats and drinks available!

In order to attract people who may not normally come to such an event, you could link in with another activity, such as an art exhibition at the same venue.

On the day

Your job on the day is to get people talking. Arrange people into small groups around their own tables. Keep it light and encouraging and intervene where necessary to get over shyness or awkward silences. People who come along together may wish to stay together or move to a different table. Towards the end, get people talking about what they could do themselves on the topic, or what should be done more widely. This is a way of pulling together what was discussed and ending on a positive note.

Afterwards

Follow up with the people who attended the event; they may wish to get involved in similar events in the future and might even help to run them. Equally, the chat might have sparked something for them, and they would like to take action as an individual or work with others in the community on a follow-up project, such as a community garden or gathering a group of neighbours to install solar PV at the same time.



Why?

One of the most powerful things any of us can do about Climate Change is talk about it. The majority of Waterford people are concerned about the issue but because they are not sure what they can do to address it, they are less likely to talk about it. Giving them a chance to learn more in a comfortable setting will empower them to take action themselves.



Pitfalls?

Getting people to turn up to something which they might not be totally comfortable with is never easy. Figuring what might be of interest to your community and focussing on that topic is a good starting point.

Once the tea is poured and the topic is introduced, an awkward silence could descend. Break the ice with simple games, ask specific but easy questions to start with, and even pull up a chair to a specific group to stimulate the chats.



What's Next?

After running a single Climate Café, it is easy to do another. If you have the option, you could hold the next one in a different venue and maybe draw in some new people as well.

The topic could change for future events, increasing the knowledge and understanding of the regulars while attracting more people with different interests.

Could something new grow out of these chats?

Let's get this sorted! Share out the jobs, starting with these. Add in more to be sure that everything is covered



- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Arrange the venue | ☐ The host should make a plan for the evening, including timings |
| ☐ Do up the flier/poster/social media posts | ☐ Gather contact details and feedback for follow-up |
| ☐ Line up a speaker or just some visitors with good knowledge of the topic | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ Do up the flier/poster/social media posts | ☐ _____ |