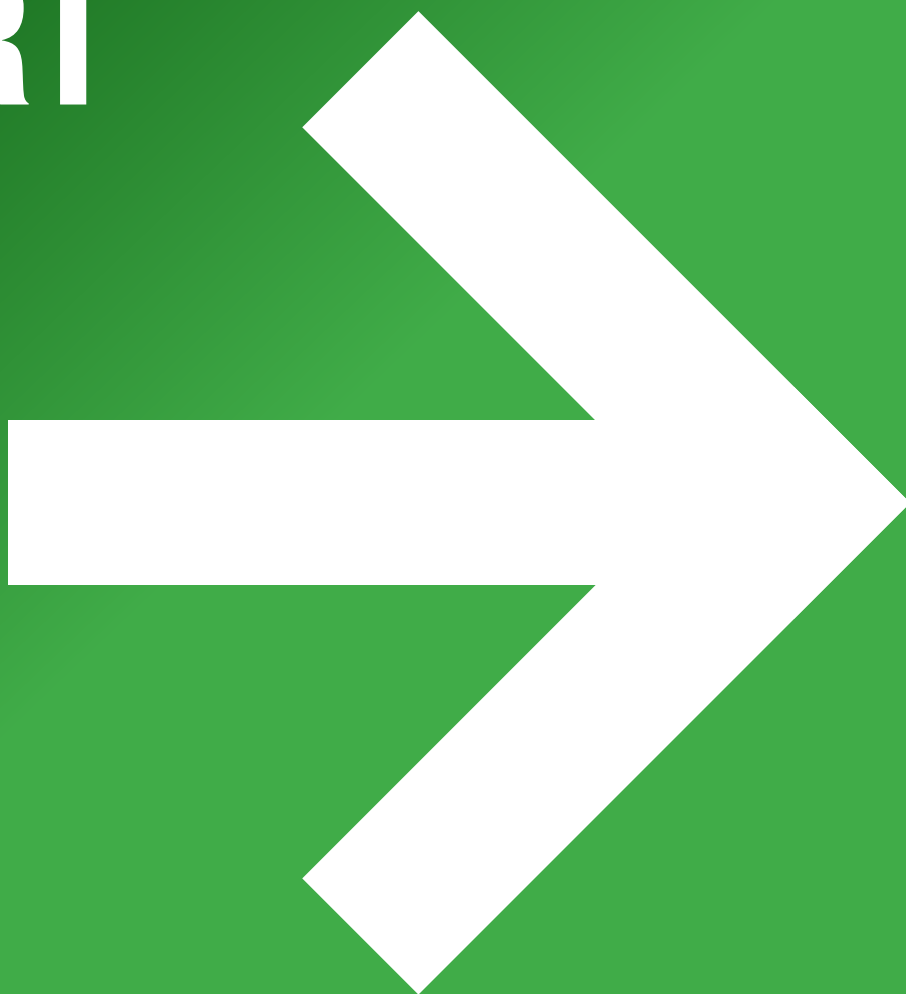




HULL AND EAST YORKSHIRE SUB-REGIONAL REPORT

2025





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1 — INTRODUCTION

The University of Hull is the sole Y-PERN university partner located in Hull and East Yorkshire. Y-PERN is represented by Policy Fellow, Dr Juan Pablo Winter Sepulveda and Professor Stuart McLelland, who sits on the Y-PERN Academic Steering Group. They work closely with the University's Executive Director of Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Commercialisation, Sarah Duckering, and her team in enhancing regional engagement at an important period of political change as the new Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority comes on stream.

Dr Juan Pablo Winter and Professor Stuart McLelland also collaborate extensively with the Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP) team based at the University of Hull who are led by Professor Joe Cook, Kate Macdonald (Timebank Hull and East Riding), and Dr Gill Hughes. The University of Hull is internationally regarded as a centre of excellence in community engagement and coproduction, with groundbreaking projects such as the Ideas Fund and the Poverty Truth Commission shaping a unique 'flipped university'. The following report provides a summary of some of the key activities undertaken by Y-PERN in association with colleagues across the University of Hull and its policy and community stakeholders.



2 — COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION IN HULL

It has become common practice for academics and policymakers to seek to engage and work with communities through building strong partnerships that develop collaboration, co-production and power-sharing. Involving individuals with a stake in the project who are not researchers can enhance the quality of the research and help it bring about positive change for society and the economy. (UKRI, 2024). Co-production goes beyond collaborative design as it involves sharing power well (breaking down hierarchies), valuing the skills and knowledge of all those involved and offering value for all concerned. (CAPE, 2024). The Hull Community Plan (2024-2034) notes that 'strong partnerships are essential to the success of our city and will be key to the success of our Community Plan. Recognising this, everyone who has a stake in the future of our city is being invited to play a part'. However, communities have raised concerns about these processes of shared learnings when they discover their participation is tokenistic (because decisions have already been made) or the promised engagement in research processes is extractive (with academics disappearing at the end of the funding).

The University of Hull has innovated in a range of approaches that adopt an inclusive and democratic approach to community engagement built on two interrelated aspects: Relational engagement and shifting and sharing power for action and change. Increasingly, the University sought to revise its research and knowledge exchange strategies to ensure that engagement with community partners focuses on creating equitable and relational encounters, which start from needs identified by partners and involves them throughout the process.

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This approach enables a more cooperative and collaborative way of working that shifts power and culture in academia to be more responsive by generating a 'flipped university model'. This innovative new approach has been successfully trialled in the [Ideas Fund \(IF\)](#) – a programme funded by the [Wellcome Trust](#) and delivered through the [British Science Association](#), and other successful projects

in the university, such as [Risky Cities](#) (Energy & Environment Institute).

Aligned with this approach, the Y-PERN team based at the university has been involved in a number of academic policy and community engagement projects over the past year, building trust and long-term relationships and developing knowledge about how the university can undertake more inclusive and empowering forms of policy engagement. These initiatives include the Hull Poverty Truth Commission (HPTC), Town Anywhere, the Water & Coasts Community Futures Network, and the work with Hull & East Riding Councils towards a Mayoral Combined Authority in 2025.

3 — HULL POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION (HPTC)

Poverty Truth Commissions seek to discover the answer to the question, 'What if people who struggled against poverty were involved in making decisions about tackling poverty?' The commissioners for each Commission comprise two groups of people. Around half of the commissioners have lived experiences of disadvantage and poverty [Community Commissioners]. The other half are political, public sector and civil society leaders [Civic Commissioners]. Collectively, they work to understand and explore the nature of poverty, the underlying issues that create poverty, and then explore creative ways of addressing issues that create poverty. Commissions enact change as the process unfolds rather than waiting for the end of the project.

The Hull Poverty Truth Commission (HPTC) was set up in 2022 to identify key issues that create or compound peoples' experiences of poverty. This relates to a model that is not about addressing one person's experience of poverty on an individual level but addressing the issue on a collective level. While the story of poverty may arise from an individual experience, that experience is often commonplace to others. By addressing the issue, the solution will benefit multiple people, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among all involved.

Dr Gill Hughes and Y-PERN Policy Fellow Dr Juan Pablo Winter were asked to evaluate this first HPTC. The evaluation approach is part of a novel two-year journey conducted using Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Transformative Participatory Evaluation (TPE). Its foundations align with the HPTC ethos and respond to a long-term relationship between the commissioners,

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facilitators, and evaluators based on trust, commitment, and mutual respect, valuing everyone's unique perspectives and contributions. Hence, this evaluation is not a one-off report written at the end of the project but a part of its extensive journey.

The evaluation team was there each time the civic and community commissioners met. Relationships and trust grew supported by facilitation from The Forum, Timebank and Groundwork, who were part of the voluntary and community sector consortium, which convened the commission. The evaluation process also adopted participant observation, informal conversations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

The first Hull Poverty Truth Commission [HPTC] officially ended in July 2024, but there are plans to continue this important work. The leader of the City Council, Councillor Mike Ross, was one of the civic commissioners, and stated that the approach of the HPTC should become the new 'business as usual'. The HPTC has instigated a major cultural shift, ensuring that people who experience the impact of decisions are part of the decision-making. This also stands for enhancing or creating policies, influencing practice and changing systems. This change, in turn, could ensure that how services are rolled out would be fully informed



Above:
Hull Poverty Truth
Commission

through engaging with the people who do and will experience them.

As part of the evaluation of the first HPTC, the University of Hull commissioned My Pockets, a film production company and arts organisation based in East Yorkshire, to work with the community and civic commissioners to tell its story. The film identifies HTPC as an 'engine switch', not a 'paint job' as it adopts participatory needs-led approach that shifts power through equitable trusting relationships to create transformative system change. Community commissioners and civic commissioners narrate this film. Read more about Y-PERN's work with the HPTC here: <https://y-pern.org.uk/reflections-and-lessonslearned-from-the-hull-truth-poverty-commission>.

An evaluation report was published in October 2024. It includes the history of the Poverty Truth Commission, context, approach, process, main themes, findings, layers of individual, community, organisation, policy, and system change, overall outcomes, and recommendations for the next Poverty Truth Commission. Between December 2024 and January 2025 the team hosted an exhibition in the city centre, sharing the film and other material with the public (200 attendees approx). Part of the exhibition will also be shown at Hull University

Library between March and April 2025. Depending on funding, we would also like to invite some of our community commissioners to present the work we've co-produced at academic conferences across the region. Three community commissioners already presented at the Action on Poverty Conference in Stoke-on-Trent in October 2024.

The HPTC team have joined the recently formed Poverty Stigma Insight Network, led by the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP). The Network aims to drive societal change, unlocking the human and social potential harmed by poverty stigma. It will seek to influence local and national decision-making in addressing poverty stigma by using evidence and insight, raising awareness and understanding of poverty stigma, and challenge myths about poverty. It will also seek to influence changing the attitudes and practices of professionals, organisations, and public services. The Network aims to share ideas, good practices, and examples of 'what works', centring the voices of people with lived experience of poverty stigma and drawing on their expertise to find solutions. It will also support the co-production of anti-poverty initiatives and services with those who have lived experience of poverty and build a strong and confident collective voice to influence and campaign for change.

4 — TOWN ANYWHERE

Working with The Ideas Fund Infrastructure programme based at the University of Hull, Y-PERN has supported the hosting of three 'Town Anywhere' events which seek to build relationships between communities, partners, and the university in identifying and addressing key policy issues by sharing knowledge and experiences. The first Town Anywhere event, held in November 2023 at Hull Minster, sought to explore salient issues to be addressed at individual, neighbour and street levels. Working in small groups, the event developed a range of ideas and actions on issues such as public services, food, finance livelihoods, climate and ecology governance, infrastructure, civic and cultural networks and communications. Using immersive future scenarios, large-scale model-making and timed challenges, the Town Anywhere process helped participants play and practice community visioning, creativity and storytelling in a virtual but tangible environment. A film of the first Town Anywhere event is available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRvhY4S94ic

The second Town Anywhere event, held in April 2024, followed a similar structure with a

smaller group comprised of Y-PERN, YPIP and community representatives. The third and final Town Anywhere event was held in July 2024. It targeted representatives of the Arts and Culture sector and aimed to produce data to feed the Hull Culture Strategy 2025. The second and third Town Anywhere events were delivered by a group of 'community apprentices' (including the Y-PERN Policy Fellow) who were trained over eight months to capture the ethos of Town Anywhere and learn the valuable tools of an innovative approach to be used as a creative and efficient method of community engagement.

Below:
Town Anywhere Event



5 — WATER AND COASTS COMMUNITY FUTURES NETWORK

As a joint initiative between Risky Cities, and Living with Water (LWW), Y-PERN co-hosted an event to involve the different projects working with communities related to living well with water in Hull and East Riding in July 2023. The event sought to create a network for projects that are working with communities and a welcome opportunity to inform future collaborative research, policy activities, and funding applications using participatory, responsive, proactive, and needs-led approaches. Risky Cities and Y-PERN initiatives provided a connection point for projects at the University, while Living with Water offered a partnership approach to simultaneously establish the evidence base and policy gaps and needs of those living with water and flood risk and coastal erosion.

The event helped to map what is already happening (places, spaces and trails which relate to our projects to share with the public), identify gaps for development, share good practice and learning and tools of engagement (e.g., arts, history, culture, science), and explore ways to provide opportunities for communities to engage beyond the life of projects. Most projects shared an element of community engagement, which is critical to creating agency for proactive approaches to resist flooding with sustainable and transformative change. The event established a developing Network focused on Flood and Coast Resilience which has co-hosted three further events in December 2023, May 2024, and October 2024. These highlighted the importance of maintaining multi-partner networks to support the development of research and engagement opportunities to share information, develop activities and community engagement.

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6 — DEVOLUTION: TOWARDS A HULL AND EAST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY 2025

The devolution deal for Hull and East Riding, first announced in the Autumn Statement 2023 and outlined in the subsequent devolution agreement, will provide a new layer of government with additional powers and funding. The 'deal' will see an elected mayor, to be elected in May 2025, given control over funding for housing, job creation and public transport, and will include £400m in investment over 30 years. After both councils ratified the deal, an eight-week public consultation was launched on 2nd January 2024. A team of university academics (including the Y-PERN Policy Fellow) supported the consultation by facilitating a number of focus groups with underrepresented groups. This evidenced the growing relationship between the university, Y-PERN, the two local authorities (Hull and East Riding), and the nascent mayoral combined authority.

Together with Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kevin Kerrigan, and the University of Hull's Knowledge Exchange Team, Y-PERN co-hosted several meetings with the mayoral combined authority transition teams of Hull and East Riding Councils. Y-PERN also co-hosted an invitational devolution event in June 2024 with university colleagues and regional political, public and private sector stakeholders including Hull City Council leader, Councillor Mike Ross. The event discussed how to strengthen collaboration and plan next steps in the context of the forthcoming mayoral combined authority, and the role the university could play in that process. Read about this session here: https://y-pern.org.uk/blog/hull_east_yorkshire_devolution

Y-PERN has also met John Latham, Director of Regional Engagement at the University of Lincoln on a number of occasions in the past year. In light of the devolution deals for both Lincolnshire and

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engagement has been widely recognised, and the Y-PERN team helped organise and facilitate two YPIP workshops with community groups in July 2023.

Finally, in collaboration with the Research & Knowledge Exchange team, the Y-PERN team are working on developing a Policy Engagement Hub for the University (to be implemented in the second semester of 2025). We believe that a coordinated approach to research-policy engagement will enable the university to engage effectively and strategically with regional developments in Hull, East Yorkshire and the Humber. The hub aims include drawing together, networking and building a community of policy-engaged researchers at the university, enhancing communication of policy-engaged research, and building capability through training opportunities.

Hull & East Riding, discussions focused on how the universities of Hull and Lincoln could support policy engagement and policy transfer, and community engagement.

Since the Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership (YPIP) came on stream in early 2024, the Y-PERN team at Hull have been working with YPIP on their 'community in their places' theme. The importance of Y-PERN's work to develop infrastructure, community engagement, and systems-based approaches to policy

Below:
Devolution Event



7 — NEXT STEPS IN HULL AND EAST YORKSHIRE

Over the next 12 months, Y-PERN will support the university in developing further its role as a hub and a facilitator, shaping research to policy pathways and building capacity, understanding, trust, and relationships that support systems-based policy and community engagement. Regular meetings between strategic leads from the University of Hull and the transition team building the Hull and East Yorkshire MCA will be held in the period leading up to the election of a mayor in May 2025. A series of training and capacity-building workshops will also be held, with support from Dr Andy Mycock, Y-PERN Chief Policy Fellow, and other policy fellows from across the Y-PERN network.

These will leverage the university's expertise to deliver results in specific areas of strategic and thematic collaboration, such as Net Zero and health technology, flood resilience and regeneration in coastal communities, and skills development across Hull and East Riding and the Humber more widely. Collaboration will be key to these events, and policy fellows and local and combined authority partners from other parts of Yorkshire and Humber will contribute to the development of policy engagement in Hull and East Riding, drawing on the experiences and learnings from devolution elsewhere. Y-PERN will also continue to work with the University of Lincoln as the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority also holds its election for a mayor in May 2025.

The Hull-based Y-PERN team will continue to work closely with YPIP and ensure that our activities are complementary and supportive to each other. This connective work will be increasingly significant as YPIPs three work pillars develop programmes of work and outputs to feed into local and combined authority

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policy-making. Moreover, the potential to connect outputs from applied community engagement programmes will require input from Y-PERN's team of policy fellows to ensure the voices and ideas of citizens and communities resonate strongly. With this in mind, Y-PERN, working

with other participants in the Town Anywhere programme, will continue to develop conversations with policymakers about how to use it as a tool and method for community engagement in the region. Furthermore, funding has been secured to run a second and third Poverty Truth Commission over the next five years. At the time of this report conversations with involved stakeholders are taking place regarding what role the university will have.

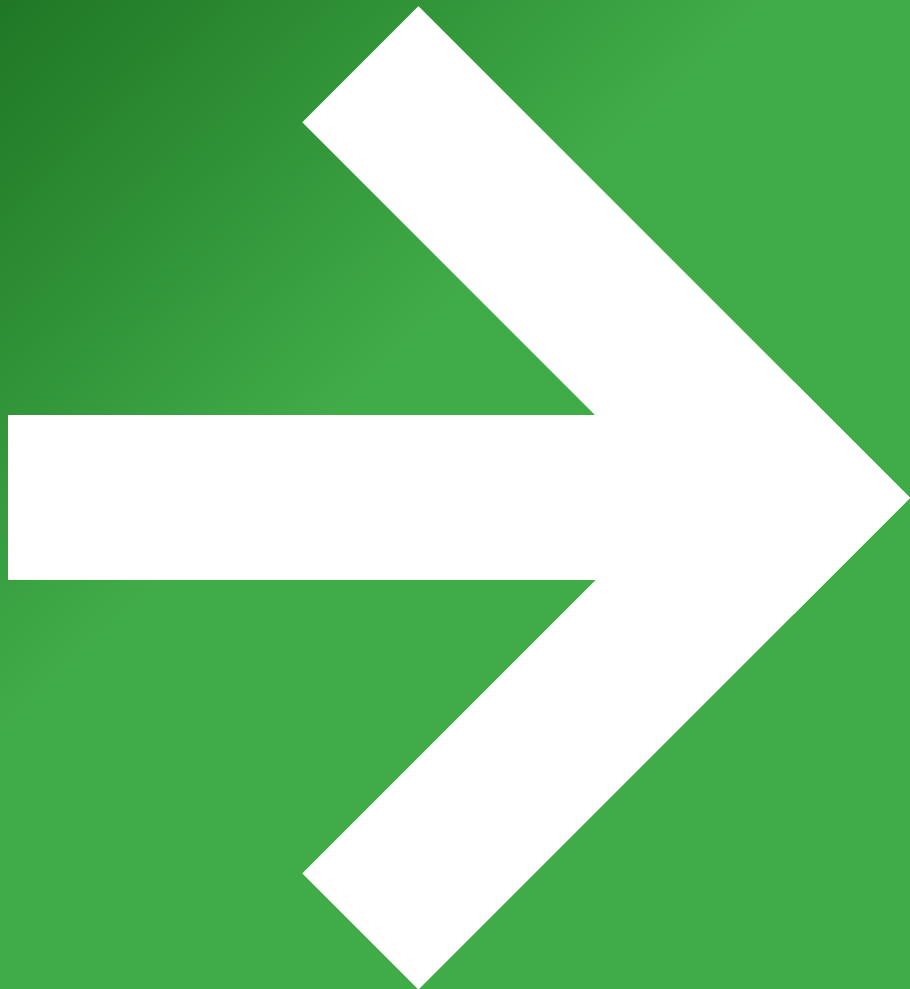
Next steps for the innovative Flood and Coast Resilience participatory network will focus on connecting with other regional partners across the Yorkshire and Humber region, including combined and local authorities, and other vested networks to feed their work simultaneously to identify research and community evidence gaps and needs around living with water and flood resilience to inform our future research.

For further information, email:
contact@y-pern.org.uk



Above:
Hull Poverty Truth
Commission, University
of Hull team

Left:
YPIP launch



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