



## The Phoenix Future Programme

THIRD WORKSHOP – TUESDAY 19TH MARCH

**Youth, Innovation and the Economy**

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**Building a sustainable tomorrow.**

## Workshop context

The Phoenix Futures Programme is inspired by new local plans being created by Huntingdonshire and Peterborough City Councils, to shape our region through to 2040.

In light of aspirations for 'good' growth; the commitment to high quality design codes and legal obligations to achieve net zero communities by 2035; our Programme asks – what will the communities and enterprises of the future look like?

After two engaging workshops in 2023, our third workshop – **Youth, Innovation and the Economy** – explored what local young people feel about the future, the possible impacts of AI on our society and the outlook for our local economy.

### Event Speakers

The workshop was shaped by talks from three keynote speakers, discussing our central topics.



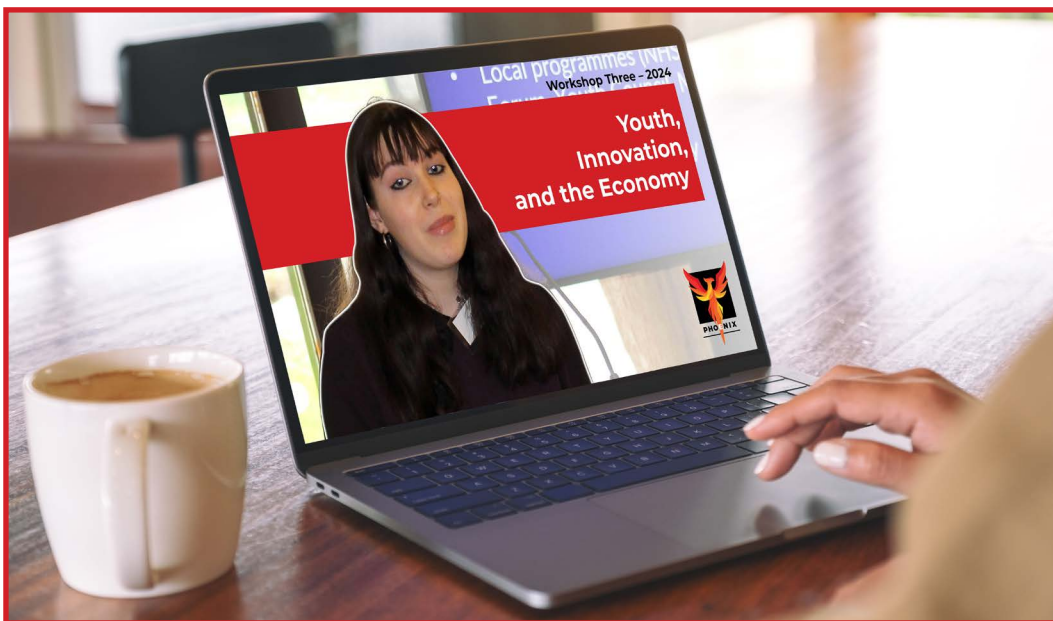
■ **Eva Woods**  
[Peterborough Youth MP](#)



■ **Dr Faraz Janan**  
[Anglia Ruskin University](#)



■ **Al Kingsley**  
[Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority](#)



 **YouTube** [View the whole Workshop on YouTube](#)

# The voice of youth

## Eva Woods, the Phoenix survey and youth panel

To begin the event, Eva Woods, a former Youth Parliament member for Peterborough, presented key findings from a survey commissioned by Phoenix to gather young people's perspectives on the key aspects of the local plans for Peterborough and Huntingdonshire.

Eva highlighted both the concerns and aspirations of young people in the region, while pressing public and private sector representatives in the room to incorporate youth voices into future planning. To ensure the region can create a more positive and inclusive future for its young residents.



Eva Woods

## Highlights from the Phoenix youth survey

- When asked how aware they were of the possible impacts of climate change where they live, **46% of young people said that they were 'not so aware'**. Despite more than half (54%) being 'very aware' of the wider global impacts of climate change.
- When asked what their **main barrier to using public transport more frequently was, 30% of young people said 'availability'**, whilst 26% said the main barrier was 'expensive', and 21% said 'anti-social behaviour'.
- **63% of respondents answered 'yes' when asked if they had used artificial intelligence before.** While 34% said that they were 'somewhat worried' about the potential impacts of artificial intelligence.
- When asked **how much climate change will impact their major decisions in the future, 41% said 'a moderate amount'**, and 21% said 'a lot'.
- **41% of respondents said it was either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to discover new job opportunities locally.**



Full stats from the survey can be seen in Eva's presentation.

# The Youth Panel

## – an expansive and collaborative conversation

- **Kelly Jesus**, Student Union representative at ARU Peterborough
- **Daisy Blakemore-Creedon**, Press Officer for Peterborough Youth Council
- **Aryan Nahata**, Chairman Peterborough Youth Council
- **Eva Woods**, Former Youth MP for Peterborough



### Opening remarks

Following Eva's insightful presentation, she was joined by fellow young people on our youth panel. In facilitating, Richard Astle began by asking the panel about some of their experiences:

- Daisy shared her experience growing up in social housing and the lack of knowledge she had about navigating the housing market.
- The discussion shifted to the unrealistic expectation placed on schools to equip students with all the life skills they need, including housing knowledge.
- Daisy emphasised the shift in priorities for young people today. Homeownership is no longer seen as an automatic next step after education and work due to its high cost.

### Additional opening remarks from the panel included:

- Transportation is a significant barrier for young people, especially those without access to reliable public transport or parents who can drive them regularly.
- Young people feel their voices are not always heard by decision-makers. They question the impact of their participation and whether their concerns are genuinely considered.

Overall, the opening remarks focused on the difficulties young people face in securing housing and the need for better support systems to equip them with the knowledge and resources they need.



Karl Hick

# Highlights from the panel Q&A

The opening remarks from the panel began an engaging and expansive conversation in the room between public and private sector attendees and young people – both on the panel and in the audience.

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## Apprenticeship Degrees

Councillor Liz Ayres expressed her interest in apprenticeship degrees, highlighting the lack of awareness about them and potential benefits for both students (no student loans) and employers (skilled workforce). She asked the panel for their thoughts:

### ■ Benefits of Apprenticeship Degrees:

- No student loans for graduates.
- Provides work experience alongside academic learning.

### ■ Challenges of Apprenticeship Degrees:

- Limited availability (just 20 degrees currently available).
- Risk for students unsure of their career path.
- Potential for exploitation in poorly managed programs.
- Difficulty for employers to set up and manage due to funding limitations and lack of knowledge.
- Recent school leavers might lack necessary work skills for some apprenticeships.
- Going into vocational pathway currently disadvantages young people on child benefits.

## Proposed Solutions:

- **Better information dissemination:** Provide career guidance and information about apprenticeship degrees at a younger age and throughout the school years, not just all at once.
- **Increased employer awareness:** Encourage businesses to explore offering apprenticeships and provide resources to facilitate them.
- **Legislative changes:** Review policies to remove barriers for young people on child benefit who might prefer vocational training.

# Anti-social behaviour

A member of the audience shared their concern about the prominence of anti-social behaviour in the survey findings presented by Eva Woods. And asked the panel for their thoughts and suggestions on what is the cause and potential solutions:

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## Observations from the Panel

- **Lack of youth spaces:** Closures of community centres and youth clubs contribute to anti-social behaviour as young people have fewer positive outlets.
- **Funding cuts:** Reduced funding for youth services makes it harder to create and maintain positive spaces for young people.

## Solutions Proposed by the Panel

- **Creating more youth spaces:** Provide safe, accessible, and affordable places for young people to spend their time outside of school.
- **Focus on education:** Instil respect and positive social behaviour in young people from a young age.

## A Huntingdonshire perspective from Abbey College students

Students from Abbey College secondary school in attendance gave their perspective from Huntingdonshire on the themes shared in Eva's talk.

Jacob Calver, Head Student at Abbey College, highlighted the disconnect between the local authorities' actions and the needs of the community, stating,

**"It doesn't feel like there's much thought going into it."**

He elaborated, pointing out that while minor initiatives occasionally emerge in Ramsey, such as the installation of a basketball hoop in a park, there's a pervasive sense that these decisions are made without consulting or considering the perspectives of young people.

## Another student added:

**"Personally, before I got my driving license, accessing anything was a challenge. Living in Warboys, just outside Ramsey, my options were limited. Without my license, relying on transport was essential, and as Jacob mentioned, we have seen buses cancelled and needing bailouts from private companies."**

**"Before we think about creating more entertainment options for young people, addressing the transport issue is crucial."**

## Closing remarks

In closing, the panellists were asked by an audience member for a single 'wish' for a change they would like to see that could most benefit young people.

In addition, Richard Astle asked them for a parting message to the room of public and private sector stakeholders and decision-makers.

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### Aryan Nahata

Chairman Peterborough Youth Council

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**His wish:** For an improved education system that prepares young people for the workforce and reduces anti-social behaviour.

**His message:** To realise the value for the public and private sector in networking and collaborating with young people.

### Kelly Jesus

Student Union representative at ARU Peterborough

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**Her wish:** For young people to be given the resources and support to make good decisions about their future.

**Her message:** Advised the audience to evaluate their existing youth engagement efforts and focus on initiatives that truly benefit young people.

### Daisy Blakemore-Creedon

Press Officer for Peterborough Youth Council

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**Her wish:** For us to overcome barriers to entry in education, creating more opportunities for everyone.

**Her message:** Emphasised the need to raise awareness about existing youth participation opportunities.

### Eva Woods

Former Youth MP for Peterborough

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**Her wish:** For a guaranteed living wage for all.

**Her message:** highlighted the importance of inclusive and proactive consultation with young people, ensuring their voices are heard.

“We are planning communities for the youth, the youth of tomorrow. Developers, planning consultants, and councils really need to engage with young people and get them involved in designing these communities. They are the homeowners of tomorrow, and their voices are currently missing in these conversations.”

**Michael Hardware**, Essex Councillor and Cabinet Member for Planning



# The Impacts of AI

Dr Faraz Janan, Senior Lecturer on Computing and AI, Anglia Ruskin University

Dr Faraz Janan provided an enlightening and engaging talk, diving into the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it will reshape our world. AI is experiencing a period of rapid advancement, and its impact will be felt across various aspects of society:

While AI excels at automating repetitive tasks, it currently lacks human-like creativity and problem-solving skills. This means many jobs involving repetitive tasks, like data entry or assembly line work, are at risk of being replaced by AI.

However, the good news is that AI will also create new job opportunities. Fields like AI development, data science, and cybersecurity will see a surge in demand for skilled professionals.

## The rise of soft skills

In addressing the young people in the room, Dr Janan emphasised the importance of “soft skills” in the future workplace.

As AI improves, currently skilled requirements like programmers may become obsolete. But ‘soft’ skills are uniquely human and difficult for AI to replicate.



Dr Faraz Janan

## The challenge of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)

Dr Janan’s talk introduced the concept of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). This is a hypothetical future version of AI that would possess human-level intelligence and capabilities. It could learn, reason, solve problems, and adapt to new situations in a way that current AI cannot.

The development of AGI presents both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, AGI could help us solve complex problems like climate change or disease. However, there are also concerns about the potential dangers of AGI, such as the possibility of AI surpassing human control.

## Preparing for the future

Dr Janan concluded by urging us to consider the future and how AI will impact our lives. By focusing on developing strong soft skills and staying informed about AI advancements, we can prepare ourselves to thrive in this new era.

While at a higher level, there must be regulations and safeguards to ensure responsible AI development. By acknowledging these challenges and opportunities, we can work towards a future where AI benefits all of humanity.

Skills you  
need to  
survive?



Strong verbal and written communication



Creativity



People management



Emotional intelligence



Critical thinking and problem-solving

A still from Dr Janan’s presentation.



# The Local Economy and Technology in Education

Al Kingsley, Chair of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Business Board

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Tying together the themes of both Eva and Dr Janan's presentation, Al Kingsley closed the presentations with a talk spanning the potential for growth in the region, challenges to be overcome and how AI is impacting education.

- **An economic powerhouse:** The region boasts world-class strengths in bioscience, technology, and agritech (agriculture technology). These sectors position the region for significant economic development.
- **Connecting the dots:** While these centres of excellence exist, better infrastructure is needed to connect them effectively. Affordable transportation options are crucial to ensure a skilled workforce can move around the region to access job opportunities.
- **The education and skills gap:** The education system needs to adapt to equip students with the skills employers seek. This goes beyond just technical skills. Soft skills like communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving are equally important.
- **Personalised learning with AI:** AI can be a powerful tool to personalise learning experiences for each student. It can identify knowledge gaps and recommend interventions to address them. This allows educators to focus on more individualised instruction and support.
- **The power of collaboration:** Businesses should be active participants in shaping the region's future. Their voice provides valuable insights and ensures policies are practical for economic growth.
- **Including youth perspectives:** The views and aspirations of young people should be considered when making decisions about the region's future. They are the future workforce and their needs should be reflected in planning.



Al Kingsley

## A Call to Action

Al closed by emphasising the importance of collaboration between different stakeholders – businesses, educators, policymakers, and young people.

By working together and leveraging the region's strengths, the Cambridge and Peterborough area can achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth.