

Reading Climate Change Partnership

Board Meeting Minutes, 20th April 2023

MS TEAMS meeting online and recorded, 10 AM-12 PM

<u>Attendees</u> Tracey Rawling-Church (co-Chair and chaired meeting) Tim Dixon (co-Chair) Peter Moore	Chris Maddocks Brian Puszkar Nick West-Oram Alison Foster Ben Burfoot	Scott Witchalls Tony Page Paul Ducker Dylan Parkes Heather Marshall	Rachel Hazell Brian Grady Tricia Marcouse
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Item	Action- Who?
<p>1. Welcome and introductions Welcome to Brian Puszkar (BP) Customer Relationship Manager for SSEN. BP will represent DNO / electricity perspective on the board.</p> <p>Apologies: Grace Andrews, Rachel Spencer, Shreeya Paudal, Mike Waddelove</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of last meeting – approval Minutes were approved by the board.</p>	
<p>3. Leavers: Tim Dixon and Tony Page TD’s final board meeting representing University of Reading and as co-Chair of RCCP. Dylan Parkes will now represent the UoR.</p> <p>TD encouraged members to contact him (TD) if he can assist after his departure.</p> <p>Councillor TP announced that after five decades on the Council he is standing down as Deputy Leader of the Council, as Lead Member for Climate Strategy and Transport and as the Council’s representative on the RCCP board. He continues to be a councillor until May 2024 and hopes to confirm soon that in this final year with the Council he will be standing for election as Mayor of Reading.</p> <p>TRC: Succession plan needed to fill this gap on the RCCP board.</p> <p>TP thanked TD and UoR on behalf of Reading Borough Council (RBC) and offered to host an in-person farewell event in the Mayor’s parlour at the Civic Offices, date TBC.</p> <p>Board members voted to hold some board meetings in person going forward and TP said RBC is willing to host meetings onsite or facilitate meeting rooms offsite.</p>	<p>PM: Succession plan for TP</p> <p>TP: Farewell celebration for TP and TD</p> <p>TRC/BB: Arrange future In-person (hybrid) board meetings</p>
<p>4. Recruitment/election of Co-chair PM formally opened nominations for role of co-chair and encouraged board members to put themselves forward or nominate others outside the board (with the nominee’s approval). If there is more than one candidate elections will be held at next board meeting. PM will send a follow-up email about the nominations process. TRC is in post as co-chair for another year.</p>	<p>PM: Send nominations email</p>

<p>5. Appointment of RCCP Co-ordinator Sarah Parker left role of RCCP Coordinator in February. Her replacement Gudrun Freese is due to start in May. (Update: GF started on 3 May 2023.)</p>	
<p>6. Reading Climate Festival 2023 - TRC Eventbrite link for festival events is continually updated: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/reading-climate-festival-31664834047</p> <p>This year's festival is part of larger initiative between RBC, UoR and REDA to bring <i>Gaia</i> installation to Reading Town Hall: https://whatsonreading.com/gaia</p> <p>The festival will be extended to 21st June to include UoR's Show your Stripes Day: https://www.internationaldays.co/event/show-your-stripes-day/r/recAKuGPDA84qPKNu</p> <p>What's On Reading listing has given the festival a higher profile this year: https://whatsonreading.com/venues/reading-climate-action-network/whats-on/reading-climate-festival-2023</p> <p>Theme leads are encouraged to curate talks / events / content related to their themes. Contact Tracey with suggestions and questions. Request to all board members to follow Reading CAN social media accounts and boost with your own accounts. Hannah Laidley from RBC Arts and Culture team is supporting with festival content for young people.</p> <p>DP spoke about an emerging UoR partnership with Reading Football Club and schools – a physical enactment of the climate stripes on Show Your Stripes Day (kids in appropriately coloured clothes lining up), which may also be covered live by a national broadcaster. It is also possible that a Youth Climate Summit will be held at the same venue.</p> <p>DP sees this as an opportunity for UoR and schools to inspire and mobilise schools across the country and internationally to replicate these activities, using the stripes as a visual meme. Note: DP will alert team when public announcements about these events can be made.</p> <p>BG: Request to be CC'd in school events to ensure attendance and engagement is maximised amongst the 60 schools he represents.</p> <p>DP: Some key UoR events are not yet listed on the Eventbrite page, include: an event on what the average person / family can do, fronted by a high-profile person; and an event on policy and progress at national level, with high-profile front-person. UoR not ready to announce these yet.</p>	<p>All: Submit theme-related content for festival to TRC</p> <p>All: Amplify festival social media (Insta; Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) via your own accounts</p> <p>TRC: Ask HL to keep BG in loop for schools events</p> <p>DP: Update group on UoR events once confirmed</p>
<p>7. Updates from Theme Leads (verbal)</p> <p>ENERGY (BB): Retrofit is a big challenge for the borough. The Council has completed over 100 Reading retrofits in the last year, tapping into government schemes and grants. Progress is too slow but Reading has delivered more retrofit than our national funding allocation. Further grant funding will follow but are not well suited to Reading.</p>	<p>BB: Meet with BP on: network capacity; smart tech; peak smoothing</p> <p>BB: Set up subgroup on</p>

Plans for **district energy** for Reading town centre are progressing, with grant support from the government's Heat Network Delivery Unit. The university is also progressing with next phase of its own district energy scheme. The Council is looking into including specifications on district energy for bidders as part of the new development around the theatre and Minster Quarter.

The Council has put **large scale heat pumps** into leisure centres and will also install them into the Civic and Hexagon as part of a successful Levelling Up Fund bid. There have been network capacity challenges with installing heat pumps in Reading and this is a growing area for concern.

Large scale electric vehicles: half of the Council's fleet of bin lorries are now electric and this has been evident to residents and has received some press coverage. This is part of the zero-carbon **depot project** which is progressing.

Challenges in terms of **network capacity:** BB keen to engage with BP on key challenges for Reading. Developers are currently not able to install heat pumps at scale in line with planning policy because of network capacity issues and this poses threat to delivery of climate change strategy.

Challenges in terms of **national policy** which prevent delivery at scale:

- Still waiting to find out what happens with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) which will bring forward new EPC levels for buildings
- The national programme on retrofit falls well short of the recommendations of the UK Committee on Climate Change – funding and grant programmes for retrofit come out in small batches for relatively small amounts, which puts pressure on supply chains
- Smart energy: We are doing small projects using Internet of Things. BB wants to touch base with BP on smart tech challenges and peak smoothing challenges which need to be overcome to deliver energy objectives for the climate change strategy.

TRANSPORT (CM):

Buses: Funding received from government for our Bus Service Improvement Plan. As part of this a ticket discount scheme was launched in partnership with operators a few weeks ago – £3.50 for an all-day bus ticket on any of the three main operators. The national scheme for a £2.00 single ticket continues.

Active travel: Some government funding secured:

- Shinfield Road cycle scheme in construction phase, currently building the route from the university up to the borough boundary / The Maidens. See recent [press release](#).
- Bath Road scheme in design phase, construction will start this summer.
- Schools: Crescent Road scheme has introduced afternoon sessions thanks to additional volunteer marshals.

Rail:

- Reading West station: New station building on the Oxford Road will open Summer 2023.
- Green Park station due to open soon, date TBC shortly.

local area energy planning and report back at next board meeting. Invite South East Net Zero Energy Hub to present their work.

EV charging: Some government funding was received recently (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure – LEVI funding) with an opportunity to bid for future money to put in some charging infrastructure. RBC will be consulting on EV charging strategy in summer / autumn.

Transport plan: RBC are preparing a new Local Transport Plan, which is the town’s statutory transport document, and will consult on that in the autumn. Both will feed into the update of the climate change strategy.

RESOURCES AND CONSUMPTION (PD):

PD: Theme on ‘amber’ status for delivery. Reading **recycling rate** remains above 50%; RBC and RE3 are continuing to innovate with new services and messaging. Lots of groups committing to climate action but the challenge is making connections and **aligning efforts** and finding investment to address gaps and unlock innovation.

Strong support on social media for **Food Waste Action Week** in March and some of this was a direct result of the Reading Museum’s presentation at the last RCCP meeting. Would be great to have some offline activities next year. ReadingCAN events team and RE3 have identified some funding for **recycling pilot** at their own events this year with the idea of developing a package that could be rolled out more widely. They will launch a working group of local festival organisers.

New connections are emerging, e.g. Reading **Public Health** team member whose focus is on food poverty and healthy eating is keen to broaden focus to sustainable food systems more generally.

New Directions College is partnering with John Lewis to offer a series of **sustainable fashion workshops** culminating in an exhibition during Climate Festival, working with schools. Additional notes are attached with email.

WATER (HM):

Water is also on an ‘amber’ when taking a more **local Reading-specific action on water**, vs entire Thames Valley (which Thames Water cover). PM and HM continuing to progress investigation of **biodiversity** enhancement opportunities at Kennet Meadows and HM has meetings in diary with colleagues at Thames Water.

HM is discussing **flood mitigation** opportunities at Stone Street with Sam Shean (RBC) and considering customer-side and resident initiatives that might help to alleviate flooding and deliver additional benefit in drought conditions e.g possible water butt campaign, with Reading as a test-and-learn opportunity.

HM proposed setting up sessions to facilitate joined-up action across themes. HM has been talking to Johnson Matthey about **biogas and synthetic gas** opportunities and thinks a subcommittee of theme leads would yield additional fruitful overlaps.

HM: Share links to new water campaign videos

Education and raising public awareness: Thames Water has new videos (HM will share link) and are using YouTube more effectively. Deploying more targeted brand and marketing campaign around sewer misuse, leakage and how to use water more wisely.

Deadline: Developing next 5-year Thames Water **business plan** which must be submitted to regulator (Ofwat) by 2 October 2023. It includes **roll-out of smart-metres** with target of 74% by 2030 which will encourage more effective use of water in the home.

NATURE AND GREEN SPACES: TM

TM to PD: Sue Ryder and motor neurone disease group run second hand clothes events. Could John Lewis help to promote?

TM: Draughtbusters will apply for funding this week to support **DIY draught proofing**, including a 'how-to' video. Can Draughtbusters promote their campaigns on the RCAN website and via the weekly Council newsletter? Councillor TP confirmed that this is possible, and inputs should be submitted via Peter.

Nature and Green spaces: Our £10,000 **lottery fund** will be spent by end of May 2023.

Planting activity completed with over 250 kids in Victoria Park off Great Knolly St and at Shinfield Rd rec ground. The Council has put in standard trees there as well. Final event 7th May with lottery fund money on Coronation weekend.

Completed **butterfly monitoring** package with Ridgeway Primary School and will do another with Civitas. Nature Design delivering project on **how trees and nature can provide shade in the future**. Will share Erica's poster on this via email.

Continuing to trial different **management options for RBC land** – looking at four different plots each year. The Council are doing a lot of work at South Whitley Park and for 2023; looking at Prospect Park, Kings Meadow, Emmer Green playing field and Emmer Green Pond. Planted more hedging at Emmer Green shops. Keep Emmer Green have planted shrub borders.

Slow progress in these areas – support needed from team:

Work on looking for biodiversity offsets is not progressing. The Council should be leading on this.

Work with the business sector to improve the local area around buildings is not progressing – so would be grateful for help creating opportunities here. TRC offered to introduce TM to the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce sustainability meetings.

HEALTH (AF):

All: Feed biodiversity offset options to TM

TRC: Introduce TM to Chamber of Commerce re managing land around offices and buildings

Climate impact of the Royal Berkshire Hospital: Currently assessing whether our projects over the last year achieved carbon reduction targets and reviewing Green Plan. Results will be shared at next board meeting.

New hospital: Announcement delayed but due by end May. New hospital is scheduled for delivery using 'Hospital 2.0' standards and design. Funding was secured for whole new hospital – not for refurbishing or repurposing. It must be fit for purpose for next 50 – 60 years. This will impact the options for achieving the target to be net zero by 2030.

It's unlikely Hospital 2.0 can be delivered on the current site because: 2.0 is fully single rooms, not wards therefore the same number of beds requires considerably more space. It must be fully digitally enabled. There are problems with sinkholes on the current site, including below the Grade II listed building. There is a practical issue of moving people out while demolishing and re-building. Challenges if RBH move to new site: carbon footprint; how to decontaminate and demolish current site.

RCCP partnership has been helpful and instrumental in facing challenges: School of the Built Environment at the UoR did a site visit this week and will report back on how they might be able to help and support; student offered to do dissertation on how we might achieve net zero by 2030; RBH is participating in research on heat resilience and other areas that will grow and develop.

BB and AF have discussed district heat pumps for new hospital. The University and the Council are both investing in them. Sinkholes are likely to mean a new hospital will be needed sooner rather than later so further conversation around district heat pumps is timely.

COMMUNICATIONS: (RH)

Meetings will resume next week. What realistically can comms and engagement achieve with limited support? Need to focus on areas that can make the most difference.

Discussion related to Themes:

PM: Local area energy planning is an important gap to fill in next strategy; proposed session at future board meeting on big strategic questions that will affect whole group. SW endorsed this; availability of electricity influences what can be achieved – if we need to reset, the whole group must understand practical constraints.

BB will organise energy subgroup to report back to board. Will invite [Greater South East Net Zero Energy Hub](#) to present work on cohesive local area energy planning at regional level, to help Reading plan and progress in tandem with neighbouring authorities.

BP: New price control from 1 April 2023 includes £1 billion investment earmarked for transition to net zero. From SSEN perspective local area energy plans useful for guiding this spend – e.g. putting in bigger cables where it meets needs. Hopes to open doors where group is experiencing network constraints.

<p>8. The Strategy Room National Pilot Project (PM)</p> <p>Project developed by NESTA, UCL, Innovation Agency and a local agency who invited us to participate. Perfect fit with the engagement we need to do for next strategy review. RBC set up 6 workshops in Reading over a week (3 for residents; one for elected members; one for RCCP; one set up by UoR) to talk to people about potential climate policy options for the future. Reading had the highest participation rates in the country. Pilot project team (external) will present results to decision makers on the Council and possibly also to RCCP board. Likely to inform local policy going forward.</p>	<p>PM: Set up presentation to the RCCP board</p>
<p>9. Finance Report (BB)</p> <p>Deferred, report to be circulated by email.</p>	<p>BB: Circulate Finance Report</p>
<p>10. Communications and Engagement Plan for Strategy Review (PM)</p> <p>RBC/RCCP will use the Climate Festival as starting point for engagement / start climate conversations. Working group proposed: Peter, Gudrun, Rachel, Shreeya, comms leads across Council and Dylan. This group will develop a plan for this work and present it at next board meeting.</p>	<p>PM: Convene working group and report back at next board meeting</p>
<p>11. AOB</p> <p><u>REDA Green Skills Report</u> SW: REDA launched their Green Skills Report, commissioned from Shared Intelligence (full title: <i>Towards a green jobs and skills roadmap for Reading: https://www.visit-reading.com/business/news/2023/3/29/20-000-potential-new-green-jobs-for-reading-by-2050</i>). It sets out interventions in the local economy that could generate up to 20,000 green jobs in Reading by 2050 (or up to 50,000 by some metrics). Next steps (1) develop action plan with Activate Learning and others to embed skills (2) engagement plan to get green skills high up business agenda. It will be presented to REDA board next week with an ask to invest in core green skills needed to deliver net zero targets.</p> <p><u>Interfaith Groups – connections needed</u> TD: Interfaith groups are a gap in RCAN partnership outreach and also opportunity to reach diverse ethnic groups. Churches are keen to bring climate change message to congregations. RCAN already connected with Reading Green Christians. Any engagement leads for other / interfaith groups? Could DP connect us into groups at UoR? TRC will ask Connect Reading.</p> <p><u>Sport England Funding</u> NWO: Sport and physical activity world is getting more direction at national level, vs local groups left to decide for themselves whether to have governance on sustainability. Sport England funding will now come with requirement to offer sustainability policies, which will force whole sector to consider</p>	<p>All: Share your connections with interfaith group leaders with Gudrun and Tracey</p>

sustainability more formally. Get Berkshire Active will look into developing terms of reference around sustainability policies and will work with RCCP to shape opportunities and action in the sector.

Reading Football Club

TRC: Reading Football Club will have a climate change theme at match on 29 April and has asked if we want a stand at the stadium. DP: Invitation is the result of the club's partnership with UoR (including climate stripes on uniform). Plan was for bigger climate event but has been scaled back. DP will be there with a banner and flyers – plus climate stripes bus. AF will also support. TRC will connect them with Zsuzsi Lindsay.

TRC: Connect DP and AF with ZL re football stand

Theme synergies

Theme leads endorsed idea of subgroup to explore cross-cutting issues. TRC to offer meeting options.

TRC: Circulate meeting options for cross-theme meetings

Raising awareness of successes

HM: Notes the inspiration value of the group's activities for the wider community – even small-scale improvements like planting new hedges. Nudge to members to share their activities more widely and to do more collective comms too.

RCAN Marquee for voluntary groups at Waterfest

TM: RCCP has limited display material. Could theme leads provide additional materials e.g. posters or info sheets etc?

MJ Awards Shortlist

PM: RBC has been nominated and shortlisted for Municipal Journal Awards 2023 for leadership in responding to climate emergency. Interview on 4th May 2023 will decide winner. PM to set up pre-meeting for TRC, TP and PM. There is a shortlist badge we can use in comms.

PM: to set up pre-meeting for TRC, TP and PM.