

Reading Climate Change Partnership
Board Meeting Minutes, 20th July 2023

MS TEAMS meeting online, 10 AM - 12 PM

<u>Attendees</u> Tracey Rawling-Church (Co-chair and chaired meeting) Peter Moore	Chris Maddocks Nick West-Oram Alison Foster Ben Burfoot	Scott Witchalls Cllr John Ennis Dylan Parkes Heather Marshall	Brian Grady Tricia Marcouse Gudrun Freese (Minutes)
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Item	Actions
<p>1. Welcome, introductions and staff changes Welcome to Councillor John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport at Reading Borough Council.</p> <p>Heather Marshall has changed organisations from Thames Water to Mott Macdonald (where she will continue to do some work on behalf of Thames Water in a client capacity). The board were supportive of Heather continuing to hold the water theme lead seat.</p> <p>Apologies: Brian Puszkur, Rachel Hazell, Scott Witchalls, Paul Ducker</p>	
<p>2. Staff changes Two new volunteers were onboarded in July to support with newsletter subscriber growth and social media.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of last meeting – approval Minutes were approved by the board.</p>	
<p>4. Election of co-chair Dylan Parkes was voted in (unanimously) as co-chair of RCCP.</p>	
<p>5. Reading Borough Emissions Data (BB) Ben presented GHG emissions data for the whole of Reading Borough, for the calendar year 2021, sourced from UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics, 2005 to 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) There is an 18-month lag on this data so it only appeared in June 2023.</p> <p>This measures scope 1 and 2 emissions using data from energy meters (electricity and gas), a combination of vehicle emissions and fuel sales, land use, methane and a number of other sources.</p> <p>Emissions in 2021 went up compared with 2020 but were similar to 2019. This was expected as 2020 emissions were lower due to the pandemic.</p> <p>In 2020 Reading was 4th best for local authority area emissions reductions since the baseline year in the UK. In 2021 Reading was 8th best, out of 374.</p>	<p>PM/BB: Publish synopsis of data with context.</p> <p>GF: Share Heather’s idea with cycling group.</p>

Biggest emissions reductions achieved in commercial electricity, due in part to decarbonisation of national grid + efficiency of appliances and LED lighting. As a result, vehicle emissions and domestic gas now represent a much larger percentage of emissions in the borough.

The biggest opportunities for reduction are wherever fossil fuels are used, including vehicles and gas boilers.

2021 was slightly colder than 2020, which accounts for some of the increase.

Decreases in commercial electricity emissions in 2020 is probably partially related to an increase in home working.

Data shows that retrofit should be a key focus on the Council and the wider borough's approach to emissions reduction.

Peter added: Reading has much lower per capita emissions than other Berkshire authorities which reflects its dense urban nature and also its relative deprivation in comparison with relatively wealthy neighbouring boroughs. Ben pointed out whilst this is generally true there are also significant issues for the rural fuel poor in neighbouring boroughs who may rely on car travel and who may have difficult 'eat, heat or travel' choices to make.

General discussion:

Emissions data includes transport into Reading for work, but only the part of the journey in the Borough. These car journeys often start in neighbouring boroughs where public transport is not as good as Reading and those boroughs will count the majority of those journeys in their emissions data.

Transition to EV is key to emissions reduction in Reading, but converting more car journeys to walking and cycling and public transport is even more important.

Heather: TfL has updated their journey planning website to show walk and cycle times before car, train and bus options. Would be great to identify the best walking and cycling routes in our area that are alternatives to car journeys and publicise these locally.

Overall Reading is a successful economy, but some are getting left behind. Reading is doing better in relative terms vs absolute emissions reduction.

Schools: Opening of a new secondary school in September 2024 will impact transport emissions. How can we embed new approaches to school travel right from the beginning?

Going forward how can we prioritise retrofitting approaches for older schools as well as high standards in new school building provision?

A synopsis of the data with added context published with these minutes.

<p>6. Reading Climate Festival 2023 (TRC)</p> <p>TRC shared a synopsis of 2023 Reading Climate Festival statistics (see attachment), for a subset of festival events (i.e. not including Gaia and Gaia satellite events and not including University of Reading events).</p> <p>TRC was thanked for originating the festival and for her countless volunteer hours towards it again this year and she in turn thanked Hannah Laidley and Gudrun Freese for their contributions to the Festival.</p> <p>The figures for 2023 show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fewer events attracted a larger overall audience compared with last year - <i>What's On Reading</i> was RCAN's key referring website - there is work to do to improve the diversity of the ReadingCAN community <p>Planning has started for next year's festival and the intent is to join up all festival event hosts (Council, RCCP, Univ of Reading and others) and user journeys under one umbrella.</p> <p>Dylan P reported that the UoR's tweet showing the climate stripes projected onto the Cliffs of Dover has had 1.2 million views. Gaia had 12,000 ticketed visitors.</p> <p>Request to all: Please submit ideas for a centrepiece for 2024 (to replace Gaia). Please send ideas to Gudrun.</p> <p><i>Consideration for 2024:</i> Should we still hook our festival dates to Green Great Britain Week in June? There was no benefit this year in terms of funding and we may need to consider possibility of future heatwaves during this period. Increasing uncertainty about impact of weather on outdoor events suggests we should maintain a good balance of online and in-person events.</p> <p>Idea to incorporate other events throughout the year under the festival / RCAN / climate pledge brand – e.g. Ramadan is often linked to climate and stewardship of nature and a partnership will help us diversify our climate community.</p>	<p>ALL: Submit ideas for centrepiece for 2024 Reading Festival to GF</p>
<p>7. Stakeholder Engagement for Climate Strategy (PM & GF)</p> <p>Peter M presented a detailed timeline for the Stakeholder Engagement process leading up to the publication of a revised Climate Strategy for Reading for the period 2025 – 2030.</p> <p>Milestones in the timeline include the 3rd, 4th and 5th Annual Reports for RCCP; the next two climate festivals, and the net zero scenario tool pilot.</p> <p>PM also reported back on The Strategy Room Project. Reading's 6 events had the highest participation of any LA area in the country. Note – incentives were offered. This is a tool we can roll out during the SE process and Peter has an Expression of Interest form.</p> <p>PM will circulate Reading data from the project before the next board meeting.</p>	<p>ALL: Share link to newsletter as widely as possible to encourage new sign-ups.</p> <p>ALL: Add comments to Miro Board "What do we want to achieve with stakeholder engagement events?"</p>

GF presented a progress update showing Phase 1 stakeholder engagement to date + new community-building initiatives designed to grow our reach in advance of launching stakeholder engagement events later this year and throughout next year.

New initiatives include:

- Communications Superstructure to align all RCAN comms channels with the Stakeholder Engagement Process (see Stakeholder Engagement Slides)
- RCAN Newsletter (**ReadingCAN Updates**) – launched late July. See first edition – and sign up to future editions – here: <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=e39502fb149639fdb4c865ed5&id=f2451ad6ac>
- New RCAN blog series (to be included in each newsletter): “Who’s doing what about climate & biodiversity in Reading” – **please send Gudrun any concrete / newsworthy examples to include in the blog.** This blog’s aim is to help the Reading climate community ‘see itself’ as one collective, supporting the mission in different ways (businesses, the Council, University, schools, students, neighbourhood initiatives, green groups, local eco-heroes, sector organisations, individual actions, etc)
- Social Media – Another new volunteer has been onboarded and will start creating content for RCAN Instagram in late July 2023
- New webinar series: How to Engage Citizens in Climate Change Strategy – RCAN will host guests to showcase inspiring examples of citizen engagement. This can run throughout the 18-month consultation period and beyond.
- Creatives for Climate – RCAN will initiate a new Reading chapter of this international movement to help mobilise our local creative community around local climate action, and bring them into the stakeholder engagement and delivery process for the new strategy
- New Pledge Campaign – Zsuzsi Lindsay, Readings, Cultural Development Officer has offered to work on a campaign to increase RCAN’s climate action pledges. She has been briefed and is preparing a proposal.
- Stakeholder Engagement Working Group – Kick-off meeting was held 13 July 2023. We agreed:
 - The next strategy should aim at transformative and exponential effects, and include a strong but not exclusive focus on what’s achievable by 2030
 - We need an education component in the SE process so that those consulted can understand the diverse challenges and opportunities related to mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity in Reading
 - At least some of the events could be innovation challenges that deliver new solutions for Reading and more ‘agency’
 - To do some audience analysis so we can target audiences with the biggest impact potential with the right events

PM: Circulate Reading data from The Strategy Room Project

ALL: Send examples of newsworthy climate initiatives from your sector or org to GF, for new blog series

ALL: Add ideas to Stakeholder Engagement Miro Board or email to GF.

ALL: Let GF know if you would like to be included in funding sub-group.

GF: Include funding brainstorm event in SE process.

DP: Enquire about UoR support for research on (1) Reading target audiences for climate action (2) dashboard and metrics for local area emissions (3) examples of hyperlocal adaptation challenges and climate effects

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To identify and initiate research projects with UoR to support the strategy process and delivery against net zero (e.g. audience analysis, dashboard, climate literacy baselines, other) ○ RCAN should be the face of the stakeholder engagement process rather than the Council, and we should consider updates to the RCAN brand ○ Budget is available from the Council for the stakeholder engagement process ○ Given the urgency, our stakeholder engagement process should also – in addition to listening – aim to facilitate the emergence of new projects and campaigns, widespread climate literacy and ownership of the component challenges of net zero. ○ Are there some campaigns we could identify, where Reading residents make specific asks of national government? Please send ideas to Gudrun. <p><u>Inputs:</u> “What do we want to achieve with stakeholder engagement events / what are they for?” Please add your thoughts to the Stakeholder Engagement Events Miro Board or send ideas to Gudrun via email. To comment on this Miro Board you will be prompted to set up a free account.</p>	
<p>8. Updates from Theme Leads (verbal)</p> <p>ENERGY (BB):</p> <p><i>Key takeaways:</i> Decarbonising heat is a key challenge in Reading. We need to replace fossil fuels used in boilers with electrically powered heat pumps.</p> <p>Local area energy planning: Engagement between the Council and SSEN is improving. However, on grid capacity issues, SSEN’s planned upgrades up to 2028 will not be sufficient to support the quantity of EV and heat pumps needed to meet decarbonisation targets in Reading.</p> <p>Solar: The Council-endorsed Solar Together project has launched. Good sign-ups achieved for first participation deadline.</p> <p>Retrofit: The Sustainable Warmth Grant scheme has now finished. The Home Upgrade Scheme continues in its place but this is more difficult for residents to access. Reading had a pipeline of over 100 homes that were eligible for the old scheme but which may not be eligible for the new scheme. The new money (allocation) for retrofit in Reading from government is well below what is needed to meet demand and very far from what is needed to meet the 2030 target.</p> <p>Heat networks: Feasibility study is complete. North of the station is viable. Ben is trying to get a Minster Quarter Heat Network integrated into the redevelopment plans and secure grant funding to help develop this.</p> <p>Council Levelling Up Fund successes: Money has been awarded for:</p>	

- Bringing the Central Library into the Civic Offices and installing heat pumps in place of the existing boilers and chillers. This will complete the decarbonisation of the Civic and Library buildings.
- The Hexagon Theatre project to add a new community and live music space to the existing theatre, to be built to net-zero standard. The project will supply heat to the old and new parts using ground source heat pumps, as well as a number of retrofit and renewable energy measures to the existing building.

TRANSPORT (CM):

Apologies sent

RESOURCES AND CONSUMPTION (PD):

Update emailed by Paul Ducker:

Not a lot of changes to report since the last update (in April), but enough to inspire a gentle feeling of optimism.

Developments from the last quarter to highlight:

- New Directions College students' Upcycled Fashion designs exhibited during Reading Climate Festival. There were some stunning creations showing great skill and creativity. Although it is something that developed completely independently of the RCCP/RCAN plan, it is exciting to see this sort of initiative happening. How can we encourage and support other similar initiatives?
- Incredible Edible Reading growing conversations. IER is currently developing a vision to connect initiatives around food growing, food poverty, healthy eating and sustainability, inspired by other towns and boroughs that have developed sustainable food strategies. How can we best support approaches that cut across themes?
- Reading Festival keen to do more on sustainability. I have been so impressed by the enthusiasm that Reading's local festival organisers have brought to the challenge of reducing their event's negative impacts. Particular mention must go to the Readipop team the East Reading Festival committee. But almost as impressive as the efforts of organisers are the barriers they experience to doing things differently. It shouldn't be this hard! What can we do to help 'de-risk' innovation as well as ensure that the infrastructure in public spaces used for events is supportive of sustainability?
- Tapping into networks that facilitate reuse. The call out from Rivermead Leisure Centre, via Peter Moore, to find a new home for 300 chairs and the response from Connect Reading was a reminder of the active networks we have in Reading. As with previous updates, the further we get away from the original action plan the more the highlighted actions are not those envisaged at the time the plan was written. This is to be expected. But can also be seen as an indication of the momentum of the strategy and its success in connecting aligned activities.

Getting serious about funding: Paul is thinking about -funding. 2030 is approaching fast. Relying on voluntary effort alone is not going to be enough. How can we unlock

different types of funding to ensure delivery capacity matches ambition? Also, there is a question about people who work in purpose driven organisations that want to do good but also make a living. As indicated above, one of the areas that is exercising me is how best to support organisations, like festivals, that want to do something different (like use reusable bar cups) but who cannot afford to take the risk of trying something that could cost more than the 'business as usual' model of single use, disposable cups. Do we need a funding sub-group?

WATER (HM):

Heather Marshall has moved to Mott MacDonald from Thames Water but is still working with Thames a few days a week, on secondment.

Thames Water has now published their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan, covering key challenges and how they propose to tackle them. Heather will share consumption data for Reading compared with other Boroughs.

Developer incentives, which guide developers on how to be more water friendly, offer up to 2k per property. Thames Water is looking at how businesses could be given same incentives for efficiencies.

Reading should incorporate **biodiversity net gain** into climate strategy – e.g. sustainable drainage through urban greening not only slows down water build-up but also offers positive health benefits.

Could Reading aim to be on the Top 10 Urban Green Spaces list? Board members would have to pool objectives and work together.

NATURE AND GREEN SPACES: TM

Apologies sent

HEALTH (AF):

AF: The Trust is finalising their Carbon Reduction Report for 2022/2023. It shows a 27% reduction in carbon compared with 2021/2022 for the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust. This rate of reduction is not expected to continue, as it represents the 'low-hanging fruit' of the impact of the implementation of our de-steaming across the main site as being the main reason.

Areas to improve include further improvements in our energy use such as reducing our heating and lighting use, particularly out of main hours.

COMMUNICATIONS: (RH)

Apologies sent

GENERAL DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THEME UPDATES

<p><i>Funding:</i> TRC asked members for an expression of interest in a funding sub-group. Please contact Gudrun if you would like to join.</p> <p>PM: We can't rely on volunteers for core functions or for fundraising. Ideally we need to embed resources and funding into organisations.</p> <p>GF: Suggested a funding discussion as one of our stakeholder engagement events.</p>	
<p>9. Climate Strategy Annual Report 2022/2023 PM will be in touch shortly to ask for inputs. The Report will be published in November. These inputs will also be very useful for the education component of the Stakeholder Engagement process.</p>	<p>PM: Send brief for inputs.</p>
<p>10. Finance Report (BB) Annual budget (income from solar generation) is £26,400 which covers salary of part-time coordinator plus all operating costs, e.g. monthly fees for website, email distribution, Zoom, etc.; branding assets such as banners or leaflets; furniture hire; freelance support, etc.</p> <p>£4,700 spent so far this year (first quarter).</p> <p>We have ringfenced £35,000 unspent budget from previous years.</p>	<p>BB: Circulate Finance Report</p>
<p>11. AOB</p> <p>JE: A consultation is planned on local transport in the Borough and this should help reduce emissions. A second strategy consultation will cover EV.</p> <p>Request for RCAN to promote these.</p> <p>PM: Carbon Literacy training will become a more fundamental part of New Directions. PM delivered a course to first group of Council managers.</p> <p>Urged members to check our Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) and see if you can adopt it in your organisation.</p> <p>NWO: Offering Systems Thinking courses to teams.</p> <p>HM: Do guides exist for car owners, gardeners, etc. that set out the opportunities for efficiency, regeneration etc, i.e. best opportunities?</p>	<p>JE: Send details to Gudrun so we can promote.</p> <p>ALL: Have a look at CLP and see if you can adopt in your organisations.</p>