

Reading Climate Change Partnership

Board Meeting Minutes, January 2024

MS TEAMS meeting online, 10 AM - 12 PM

<u>Attendees</u> Tracey Rawling Church (co-chair) Dylan Parkes (co-chair) 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, apologies and staff changes</p> <p>Apologies: Brian Puszkas</p> <p>Staff changes: the RCCP Co-ordinator (Gudrun Freese) has stepped into the role of Comms and Engagement Lead for RCCP, taking on the role from Rachel Hazell who has had to step down due to other commitments. The Board expressed its appreciation for Rachel’s support and looked forward to her continued involvement in RCCP once her time frees up again.</p> <p>The RCCP Co-ordinator's hours have been increased from 2.5 to 4 days a week for a two-year period to support the increased focus on Comms and Engagement – primarily project managing the Year of Climate Engagement as part of the Climate Strategy review and update.</p> <p>The Council has transferred funding from its climate change reserve to RCCP to enable it to manage an effective engagement process, including the cost of the increased hours.</p> <p>TRC asked to minute RCCP’s appreciation for the investment from the Council.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of previous meeting and actions</p> <p>Actions from previous minutes included:</p> <p>BB and BP had an action to meet to discuss LAEP and connection requirements:</p> <p>BB and BP met to discuss energy connection issues in Reading. Also agreed that RBC will attend the onboarding workshop for SSEN’s new platform.</p> <p>TRC: actions for all of us to complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check out HACK’D to see if you can use retrofit offset credits in your organisation to help with local area emissions reductions and taking pressure off the grid • A call for event and content proposals for Reading Climate Festival 2024 has been published and we encourage Board members to respond to this, to help us shape an effective and enjoyable Festival 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help expand the readership of the latest Annual Report by circulating the link among your networks (GF emailed the Board a link) <p>An action for theme leads was to make a note of obstacles, barriers, opportunities for impact, both local and national, related to progress on current action plans, as input into the stakeholder engagement process.</p> <p>GF to set up a cross-theme meeting. [This was held with 20 attendees and the outputs have been circulated to attendees.]</p>	
<p>3. Reading Leaders’ Summit on Climate Change 2024</p> <p>PM shared a draft statement of purpose for the proposed Leaders’ Summit on Climate Change and asked the Board to respond by email with suggestions for additional invitees/comments.</p> <p><u>What the Leaders’ Summit is:</u> it is one of many events within a ‘Year of Climate Engagement’ which will result in an updated Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025 - 2030.</p> <p>The purpose of the Leaders’ Summit is to bring together influential leaders from organisations and communities that have a key role to play in our town’s net zero challenge, to get their commitment to engage in the review, and to get their commitment to take ownership of the priority actions that result from this year-long process, e.g. as delivery partners for specific actions and the overall plan.</p> <p>A gap analysis of our current plan identified ‘lack of high-level ownership’ as a weakness in the current plan and this Leaders’ Summit seeks in part to stimulate this sense of ownership and commitment at this level.</p> <p>All RCCP Board Members are invited to attend the Summit. This is an invitation-only event, but we will announce it with a press release immediately after the event to signal to the wider community that discussion is happening at the top level in Reading and there's more discussion to come.</p>	<p>GF: Circulate Summit documents</p> <p>GF: Send calendar invite.</p> <p>ALL: Comment on Leaders’ Summit document and invitation list</p> <p>BG: Propose school heads for Summit</p> <p>ALL: Examples of where collaboration could have resulted in better outcomes</p>
<p>4. Succession Plan for Co-Chair</p> <p>TRC’s term as co-Chair of RCCP will end in April but she will continue to be involved as a Board member. DP formally opened the process for electing TRC’s successor, with a deadline for nominations Thursday 29th February 2024. Nominations will be shared at the next Board Meeting in mid-April and put to a vote.</p> <p>All Board members invited to nominate themselves or others around the table – but with their consent. DP emphasised the preference to stick with the Co-Chairing model because it has worked well, particularly when co-Chairs represent different sectors.</p>	<p>ALL: Submit nominations for co-Chair by 29 February 2024</p>

<p>5. Reading Climate Festival</p> <p>A Festival steering group up and running. The call for expressions of interest in hosting events or offering venues or other resources during the festival has been issued and Board members were encouraged to consider whether they and their organisations can make a submission to this call for event hosts.</p> <p>Dates will be confirmed shortly as 8 June – 21 June 2024, with the 8th being the Council’s Water Fest event and the 21st being the University of Reading’s Show Your Stripes Day.</p> <p>Some of the stakeholder engagement events (for the Year of Stakeholder Engagement / climate strategy review) will be held during Reading Climate Festival as well.</p> <p>Cllr JE flagged the possible co-incidence of Reading Buses Day and suggested we try to link this into the Festival, suggesting a theme of ‘bussing our way to net zero’ / encouraging families to use the bus to avert climate change.</p> <p>Building on this, DP suggested we get a list of Council and University events that that might provide an opportunity to talk about our climate work, before, during and after the Festival. He agreed to supply a list from the University. This could also support our stakeholder engagement work, making it more efficient.</p> <p>TRC suggested we look at possibilities to integrate East Reading Festival and Reading Cycle Festival and also encouraged theme leads to consider how their theme might be showcased during the festival and to submit expressions of interest.</p>	<p>ALL: Submit event ideas for the festival</p> <p>THEME LEADS: Ideas for showcasing their theme’s actions / goals</p> <p>GF: Follow up JE’s Reading Buses Day idea</p> <p>DP: Supply list of UoR events to fold into Festival and wider engagement</p> <p>ALL: Send GF ideas for existing events that could be integrated into stakeholder engagement</p> <p>GF: ERF and Reading Cycle Festival</p>
<p>6. Stakeholder Engagement Process</p> <p>GF flagged decision to use the term ‘Year of Climate Engagement’ in public-facing comms, to cover all activities and events that are part of the engagement component of the climate emergency strategy review and update for 2025 – 2030.</p> <p>GF summarised the status of hte procurement process for specialist support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions from four potential suppliers received with successful bidder to be appointed before the end of January 2024. • Contract developed with the Council’s legal team and procurement advice followed. • The purpose of the stakeholder engagement process is to convene people from across Reading to negotiate a set of priority actions for the town’s journey to net zero, and to secure widespread commitment, ownership and where necessary, funding. We will engage a wide range of groups bringing a range of perspectives and top-of-mind-concerns into the process, including 	<p>GF: Invite theme leads to kick-off meeting with appointed SE supplier</p> <p>THEME LEADS: Prep for stakeholder mapping</p> <p>GF: Contact SSEN about stakeholder mapping (via BB?)</p>

<p>those previously marginalised. The idea is to build on existing action plans, not recreate them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process will also include a listening and visioning component, as well as climate literacy training. • Theme leads will be supported by the appointed supplier and included every step of the way. • In the meantime, we have: prepared a draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan, begun work on the Leaders’ Summit, started work on a Net Zero Reading Dashboard and started to seed informed contributors, e.g. by sharing the Annual Report. • BB is working on science-based targets; PM is working on a summary of what can be done locally vs what our ask of national government might be. <p>Suggestions for board members who want to prepare for stakeholder mapping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who would you want working with you on your Theme’s priority actions? Invite them to read the Annual Report as preparation. • What delivery partners were missing from past actions? • Inspiring examples of marketplace and enterprise opportunities in your policy area e.g. from other cities (note HM’s marketplace for waste water) • How to frame some of our obstacles as innovation challenges (e.g. Community Benefit Fund approach to insulation and energy demand reduction) • Systems mapping – do you know of any mapping that has already been done for your policy area, for Reading or other towns? <p>Engaging businesses: GF proposed to convene heads of local business networks (not just sustainable businesses groups) to mobilise them around the Reading Climate Pledge for Organisations as a single unifying concept for local business contribution to Reading’s journey to net zero. Future business events RCAN convenes (+ the LinkedIn group Reading Business CAN) should support businesses to comply with the 10-point Pledge.</p> <p>HM: Flagged need for strong stakeholder mapping to ensure effective Leaders’ Summit and subsequent process, e.g. top 50 businesses in Reading by revenue.</p> <p>BB: There are a lot of large organisations doing a lot of stakeholder mapping already, e.g. SSEN have a good track record of local engagement. Could we integrate some of these engagement operations into our own?</p> <p>DP: Biggest need is to look at those organisations that are most influential in our borough, regardless of their expertise in the climate space, e.g. the University’s partnership with the football club enabled us to engage and reach their fans with a climate message, which we wouldn’t otherwise have done.</p>	<p>GF: Convene business network leads around Pledge and plan Festival events to support Pledge actions</p>
<p>7. Proposed new theme: Food</p> <p>GF met with Sabine Mayeux and Yasmine Illsley (both RBC public health team) who are forming a Reading Food Partnership together with Malcolm Fowles (advising).</p>	<p>GF to invite a food rep to April Board Meeting.</p> <p>DP: Report back on meeting with UoR colleagues</p>

<p>They're keen to take on ownership of a new food theme within the RCCP Board and lead co-creation of an action plan for food, for the 2025 – 2030 climate strategy.</p> <p>PM recommended we invite them to have a seat at the table in some form – beginning as guests at Board meetings.</p> <p>HM: Given the University's expertise, a food, soil and farming focus within RCCP could offer an incredible opportunity for something unique to Reading.</p> <p>TM spoke with Malcolm Fowles who would be willing to lead up a food theme. He balances component issues of climate, food and diet and has been teaching on climate and food for a long time.</p> <p>BG: identified opportunity to integrate existing education roles that support vulnerable learners into a broader food theme. For example around provision of courses and career pathways for sustainable farming and other climate-friendly food-related skill sets. Some learners are not able to travel to access existing possibilities. Could we do something in town to support people with additional needs, possibly in partnership with Berkshire Agricultural College and University of Reading?</p> <p>DP said the UoR has very strong research around sustainable farming, sustainable food and health impacts of that, so making 'food' a discrete theme may help tease out some of those untapped opportunities at the University. There might be individuals at university who are potential candidates to lead this work for RCCP.</p> <p>DP will report back on a meeting with colleagues around land-use options and issues.</p> <p>PM said he could plug BG into existing conversations on the topic of skills for a low-carbon economy at the Council and noted that we should invite Andrea (Wood) to a future board meeting to discuss skills. PM requested 'skills' as an agenda item for a future Board meeting.</p>	<p>around land-use.</p> <p>GF: Add skills as agenda item to future Board Meeting and invite Andrea Wood.</p>
<p>8. Themes</p> <p>Tricia Marcouse: NATURE</p> <p>TM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations and displays were up in Reading Minster for 2.5 weeks before Christmas to coincide with the Carol concerts. • Extended hedge at Peppard Rd outside the shops. • Problem with hedge on Emmer Green playing fields. Local volunteers had raised the money for new plants to thicken up one hedge. While they were doing that RBC cut down another part of the hedge which the volunteers had been working on for the previous two years. • Weather has prevented volunteers from doing much more over the last quarter. • New appointment in for the RBC Environment service who TM will be meeting with soon. <p>Chris Maddocks: TRANSPORT</p>	<p>GF: Advise engagement partner of bus lane issue</p> <p>GF: Comms to emphasise the benefits of car-free travel?</p> <p>GF to invite Lucy Daniels to next Board meeting to discuss green code for events</p> <p>GF to invite Joe Cuthbertson to brief us at next Board Meeting</p>

<p>JE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBC has approved 6 new bus lanes for the borough – some negative press. • This work will be funded nationally and will need to happen this financial year. Bus lanes are an important in part of the transport theme and part of how the Council is trying to achieve the switch from cars to public transport, alongside walking and cycling. • Some of these lanes have the potential to impact traffic. What can the partnership do to help emphasise the fact that this is all part of the climate agenda and includes co-benefits for air quality, health and well-being as well? <p>JE emphasised that from now on, with much of the ‘easy stuff’ done to reduce missions, additional measures like these lanes may come with significant opposition. People may not be opposed to bus lanes per se, but ‘not in my backyard’. There are more projects in the pipeline and there is no going back, despite this kind of opposition. Any support the partnership can offer would be very much welcome.</p> <p>TRC recommended the Council should emphasise the positives, offer extremely clear signposting to car-free methods of travel that help people go about their daily lives and clear communication of the benefits of active travel and the air quality benefits of reduced car use. The RCAN website can help to promote the benefits of car-free travel and be trusted source of information on low-carbon travel.</p>	<p>GF to curate poster campaign challenge for Reading Climate Festival with HM</p> <p>GF to set interim brand guidelines for RCAN and Festival</p> <p>GF to update messaging on homepage + source support for structural changes GF to convene comms alliance & cascade model of outreach</p>
<p>Paul Ducker – RESOURCES & CONSUMPTION</p>	
<p>PD: Overall goal of the theme is for Reading to be a zero-waste town by 2025, actively innovating to find new ways of using resources more efficiently and thereby minimising our contribution to climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RCCP actions for resources & consumption fall into: ‘ticking over’; ‘need a boost’; ‘shooting stars’; and ‘slow-burners’. • ‘Ticking over’ actions were already in the pipeline: domestic recycling, including food waste, is a good example, which the Council and RE3 are working on. • Actions needing a boost are actions that lack drivers or sources of data for measurement, including commercial recycling and food waste. There is legislation and regulation coming down the track which may help. • Shooting stars: some actions have been delivered quickly, but then burnt out. Plastic-free Reading / Plastic-free Caversham achieved its goal and then disbanded, which is the nature of much volunteer-led activist work. • Circular Economy Club Reading did a fantastic job during COVID but then the driving forces behind this project during COVID went back to focus on their ‘day jobs’ again. • Food Waste Action week is growing each year. • Reading has been invited to be part of a national pilot for a green events code of practice for outdoor festivals. Lucy Daniels, the Council’s events manager, is leading on the project for Reading. The pilot involves 10 local authorities around the country and is led by Vision 2025 and Julie’s bicycle. • GF recommend asking Lucy Daniels to join a future RCCP meeting to share progress on this. • Erica Purvis is looking at shaping a role for a circularity projects person locally. • Circularity in the construction industry needs more work locally. 	<p>ALL: Can any of your website teams offer a few hours a month to support us on structural web changes or email marketing spam issues</p> <p>ALL: Please share newsletter sign-up link</p> <p>ALL: If you have expenses related to comms, please ask GF to pay for them in advance using the visa card,</p>

Alison Foster – HEALTH

- RNH has had two unsuccessful attempts to recruit an energy manager. This is now a priority.
- The new hospital programme is currently evaluating build site options and looking at the impacts on the Trust's net zero carbon ambitions of each option. AF is hoping to share progress at next RCCP meeting in April.
- RBH has put in a bid for the PSDS (Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme) and hopes to have more news on that soon.

Ben Burfoot - ENERGY

BB:

- BB attended a Local Area Energy Plan event at the University of Reading, which brought many partners together.
- Reading has signed on to the LENZA (Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator), a tool SSEN is rolling out to help councils identify the changes and resources needed to achieve net zero at a local level within a specific timeframe, including decarbonising the local supply network.

Projects:

- With heat decarbonisation key for the borough, the Council is focused on putting heat pumps in leisure centres as well as into new Levelling Up projects funded by the government at the Hexagon Theatre and the Civic Offices.
- RBC is planning to drill bore holes for ground-source heat pumps from aquifers, at the Hexagon Theatre and for the town centre, which should link into our district energy network.
- RBC has applied to extend its heat network plans (which have government funding), to the Minster quarter area. It's a slow process and a year of detailed planning is expected.
- RBC is getting ready to start solar deployment around car parks and working with CM and his team on the EV charging network. The government has provided some EV funding but it is looking primarily to the private sector to fund the network. The Council will ensure this connects in with our broader energy supply challenges.
- This quarter the Council will bring on its last six electric bin lorries as part of its 'Net Zero Depot' project at Bennet Rd. The Council is not only moving its own fleet over to EVs but also trying to make sure that those strategic energy assets are utilised in the local networks.
- Reading Community Energy Society has launched a local solar share offer.

Heather Marshall – WATER

- HM suggested we invite the lead local flood authority representative, the Environment Agency's Joe Cuthbertson, to brief the Board at a future meeting.
- HM proposed a few water-themed project and campaign ideas:
 - To get people involved in mitigating future flood risk could we encourage local water retention schemes like water butts?

which is much easier than claiming expenses later.

- Stormwater credit marketplaces and schemes are another option for Reading and there are comparable schemes in Philadelphia and in Washington. London is looking to assign a value to the water - people are financially incentivized to capture that water and store it and hold it for a period of time. This may not be a solution when groundwater levels are high, but it is a useful thing that householders and businesses can do. So there is potentially some work to do around how to can encourage the community to make better use of stormwater and rainwater.

HM - The football network would be very helpful in appealing to the community to manage flood water, and rainwater because they are directly affected. Flooding has caused sports to be cancelled and dry training fields are difficult to find. An ask to contribute not to some climate agenda, but to your kid being able to play football at the weekend, is perhaps an easier sell for a rainwater scheme.

For our comms and storytelling more generally, how can we align what we're trying to achieve with what other people value, and from a more positive perspective? How can we adapt our narrative to make it more palatable to others?

Sewer info campaign: HM asked could we run or catalyse a campaign targeting local schools that helps to inform younger people as to the appropriate use of toilets and drains?

Drain connection campaign: When new extensions and garden offices etc are built it is important to ensure connection of foul and surface water to appropriate networks. Could this info be shared via existing planning avenues within the Council? How do we create demand, i.e. people actually asking that question? Can we work with local estate agents – e.g. to encourage them to build these conversations into their buying and selling conversations; or developers and builders?

GF suggested turning these water issues into ‘poster campaign challenges’ in partnership with a local art charity + poster dissemination partners.

Gudrun Freese – COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

GF:

Priority 1: Progressing the **stakeholder engagement** component of the climate strategy review and update – appoint and onboard preferred supplier

Priority 2: Agreeing **branding guidelines** for the newsletter, socials, website and Festival is a priority; we’ve initiated a larger brand refresh project with the University but in the meantime, we need to strengthen the brand and use it consistently.

Priority 3: In terms of **public-facing positioning / messaging**, RCAN has not yet achieved clarity about what ReadingCAN does and doesn't do, and this can lead to unrealistic expectations from partners / public. The website will be an important site for this messaging and this will be a comms priority – e.g. positioning RCAN as: an independent partnership – run on a volunteer basis by local climate leaders – helping to convene people from across Reading to identify and act on priority climate actions

for Reading's journey to net zero; the convener of a Year of Climate Engagement; the convener of Reading Climate Festival; etc.

Priority 4: Structural changes to the RCAN website are needed to support this messaging (e.g. replacing the home page banner with a news carousel + new large text section) but we have struggled to find a volunteer with WordPress skills to create these structural changes. **A day's support from a partner web team if possible would be welcome.**

Priority 5: Create a comms alliance of comms leads from all organisations represented by the Board plus other key outreach organisations in Reading, so that we can promote each other's efforts in an organised way.

Priority 6: Launched the **RCAN newsletter** which is proving to be an effective channel for two-way engagement with our existing community; we are getting good responses to callouts. Please share the newsletter [sign-up link](#) to help grow the readership beyond our existing community.

Priority 7: RCAN's social media volunteer has moved to Edinburgh so social posts have come back inhouse. Currently looking for social media support and have posted a job on the RVA site.

Expenses: If volunteers have expenses related to comms, please ask GF to pay for them using the visa card, which is much easier than claiming expenses later.

9. Pathways to Net Zero

BB outlined the need for a stronger evidence base for Reading's pathway to net zero. Reading can get its emissions down by roughly 2/3 if we 'max out' on building up our renewable energy infrastructure and move away from fossil fuels. So there is a (climate/social vs technical) innovation challenge – how do we get to net zero from this position? How might we better utilise times on the grid when there is less carbon in grid electricity? How might we work with neighbouring boroughs who might have a surplus of renewable energy, and so forth? BB is working with the University to identify some of the data sets which can be used to understand the landscape in more detail and develop a more scientific pathway to net zero.

10. Tomato Energy

PM advised that Tomato Energy had approached various people on the Board and that Tomato is a registered energy supplier offering 'free' solar and battery installations for households and fixed rate energy prices for 10 years.

As Tomato is subject of an ongoing Ofgem investigation, Board members were advised to treat their approaches with caution and to refer any approach to PM or BB

11. AOB

Scott Witchalls will feed back at the next Board meeting on which programmes and priorities were voted in for the BID – so far these are not looking likely to relate to climate emergency but concern issues such as safety and security, cleanliness etc.

SW’s question for RCCP – how can we hook climate concerns into what people actually care about, and a ‘vision’ for the town? Board can follow up on this at next meeting when SW reports back. There will also be a new consultation on the refresh of Reading 2050, which may present an opportunity for the RCAN engagement programme.

JE: Recent flooding in Reading – and more regular future flooding – suggests a need for closer engagement between our Council, Environment Agency, Thames Water and Natural England – e.g. in terms of how they are going to work together to concentrate minds of general public on the role of climate change in this more frequent flooding.

TRC said there was a lot of citizen social media activity trying to make sure people understood what water was coming their way and helping to signpost sources of guidance because lots of people had no idea what to do if their property was at risk of flooding. People did not know what number to call for emergencies. And the number that was published, no one was answering. People need to feel supported during flood events and this should be a priority.

GF add SW to next meeting agenda