

Attended by:

- Heather Marshall (Chair)
- Gudrun Freese
- Ben Burfoot
- Chris Maddocks
- John Ennis (Councillor)
- Adrian Lawson
- Dylan Parkes
- Michael Waddelove
- Tricia Marcouse
- Eugene Mohareb
- Bryan Puszkas

People changes

Tricia (outgoing Nature Theme Lead)

- There was grateful recognition of Tricia's exceptional contribution to making Reading a greener place to live and celebration of the significant legacy of her work and impact across Reading. Notably
 - Community leadership and convening over several decades
 - Results including tree planting, community gardens and improvement of green spaces
 - Strategic contribution and collaboration with Council
- Tricia will continue to represent GREN on the RCCP Board

Adrian Lawson (new Nature Theme Lead)

- Joined from the field, literally, overseeing project to plant 3000 trees
- Strong track record of local environmental work, campaigning and community action
- Emphasised preference for focus on action now over rethinking RCCP's structure and fundraising efforts; funding opportunities will emerge as projects and initiatives take shape within / between working groups

Reading Borough Council (RBC) restructure

- BB shared RBC's new org chart
- Head of Climate Strategy role formally deleted but will be replaced with **Director of Transport & Climate** – a more senior role than the Head of Climate Strategy role
- Benefits: Raises profile of climate at senior level; improved integration with transport; more joined-up decision-making
- Risks: Could narrow climate action focus to measurable, technical aspects of net zero

- Cllr Ennis & Chris Maddocks provided strong reassurance:
 - Climate is embedded across all council functions
 - Capacity and funding remain a constraint, but not intent
- **Board action (GF to gather inputs from Board; co-chairs to shape and submit):** As a key “conscience” and accountability partner of RBC’s climate work, RCCP will canvas Board opinions and respond formally to RBC’s restructure

Bringing the Action Plan to life: Update on Theme Leads & Working Groups

- Each theme will have a **Council co-lead** and a **Community co-lead**
- Still waiting to hear from RBC who will take the Council co-lead roles for the 2025 – 2030 action plan period
- Community co-lead roles are filled for Nature, Energy, Water, Food
- We have a potential community co-lead candidate for Beyond Waste – meeting scheduled
- We have a potential community co-lead candidate for Transport. Subject to budget for childcare. **Action:** RCCP co-Chairs to explore options
- Purpose of Theme Lead roles:
 - Drive delivery and evolution of action plans
 - Convene working groups / host a space for collaboration and innovation
 - Oversee RAG rating of actions plans for Annual Report, plus commentary and recommendations
 - **Theme Lead action:** Ben, Heather, Chris, Eugene and Adrian to each email Gudrun a date and 1hr time slot for their own theme’s Working Group kick-off meeting – during the second week of Reading Climate Festival (15 – 19 June 2026); please offer 2 to 3 options so I can avoid clashes with other events
 - GF can support Theme Leads to plan a kick-off meeting, but broadly:
 - Named delivery partners introduce the actions they are overseeing
 - Some activities to support prioritisation of existing actions or arguments for replacing any of these with new actions
 - Agree an approach to deciding some targets and milestones for priority actions if these are missing
 - Some activity to agree next steps
 - Share news and opportunities to get involved in action
 - Theme Leads encouraged to meet with each other informally to explore overlaps and opportunities to collaborate

Partnership Agreement Review for 2025 - 2030

- **Challenges with outgoing 2020 – 2025 Partnership Agreement:**
 - Partner disengagement / attrition (nearly 50% of previous signatories no longer active)

- Mismatch between non-executive governance structure vs delivery expectations; nearly 50% of actions are listed as “led by RCCP”; there is a growing set of ReadingCAN assets to maintain and develop; there is public-facing messaging about becoming an ReadingCAN member but there are no mechanisms to service this in a consistent way
 - Expectations from core partners and public that RCCP will raise funds / enable funds to be raised, engage businesses and marginalised communities, run individual behaviour change campaigns, etc.
 - RCCP presents as a resourced delivery body; expectations have been raised due to past investments in Festival, Pledges, website, comms channels, etc.
- **Funding discussion:**
 - There was consensus to avoid creating complex new organisation structure
 - Acknowledgement that RCCP would need additional central resource if it wants to develop the reach and impact potential of current assets, deliver new projects, support ongoing fundraising or provide additional support to Theme Groups and co-Chairs as part of its purpose
 - The option to become a charity was rejected (note – this is not necessarily a prerequisite to raising money; RBC or another partner can accept funds on RCCP’s behalf)
 - Project-based funding preferred (onus on volunteers to raise funds for their own projects)
 - Keen to explore member contributions to a central pot
 - Keen to explore crowdfunding opportunities
 - Suggestion that RCCP should enable partners to access funding
 - **Action:** Operations Group to decide next steps regarding funding options
 - New comms working group will address some of these shortfalls and may lead to fundable comms-led projects (e.g. our Advent of Good & Green Deeds campaign was launched as a beta campaign in 2025 without funding; this enabled us to win funding for it in 2026)
- **RCCP’s unique value?** Something to consider as RCCP and RBC both restructure and as REDA seeks to develop a ‘green’ business improvement district: How can RCCP offer value to core partners? What would make it worth their while to contribute financially? What gap could we fill? We could be championing and owning the concept of **place-based transformation in line with the climate and nature emergencies** – going far beyond the narrower and more technical (Scope 1 and 2) definition of net zero. There is still work to do to bring REDA, RBC, UoR and RCCP into that broader and more ambitious framing of the climate and nature emergency. We could offer value by holding the space for that discussion,

commissioning more granular, local, decision-grade data to guide joined-up action for systemic change, and shaping climate innovation challenges to surface local solutions to local challenges, in the Business Improvement Districts and across the borough.

Decision, agreed with a strong majority:

- Retain existing partnership structure
- Focus on updating and strengthening agreement

ACTION: Co-chairs to continue leading this process

Update on National Lottery bid

- Heard last week that our bid for £1.5m was **unsuccessful**. This was disappointing but not unexpected as our proposal was about funding a way of working but the fund was looking for a more singular focus.
- What now?: Consider breaking the bid proposal into smaller fundable components and gather alternative funding sources.
- **ACTION:** Operations team to decide and take next steps
- **New Funding Opportunities:** Eugene highlighted new **National Lottery** food-related fund; Bryan shared **Powering Communities to Net Zero fund (£20k grants)**