

Herefordshire Climate and Nature Board

Minutes of meeting held 6.00-8.00pm – 1st November 2022

Chair: Cllr Ellie Chowns (EC)

Attendees: Jackie Jones (JJ), Gareth Williams (GW) James Marsden (JM), Richard Wells (RW), Kate Gathercole (KG), Gordon Coppock (GC), Ian Howie (IH), Elly Deacon-Smith (ES) and Anna Darwood (AD)

Herefordshire Council Support: Ben Boswell (BB), Liz Duberley (LD)

Apologies: Emily Partridge, Richard Vaughan

1. Welcome

EC welcomed the Board especially KG who was attending for the first time. KG introduced herself to the Board and JM, IH and AD introduced themselves to KG as they had not met before.

Update on Board members:

Board members to complete the Skills Matrix and fill in any gaps by end of the week. Sub-group to then take forward recruitment.

Steve Klenk has kindly volunteered to Chair the Farming and Land Use subgroup. It was agreed to invite Steve to Board meetings when he needs to report to the Board.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 27th September 2022

Matters Arising: “Agenda” to be changed to “Minutes”. Complete list of attendees.

Minutes to be agreed – Approved

3. Climate Conference

Originally it was hoped this would take place in November this year to coincide with COP27 and a year since the start of the Board, but agreed new date of Wednesday 18th January 2023.

All agreed the conference needs to be focused and have clear objectives and to focus on Energy and Business. Potential speakers have been suggested. To also include case studies e.g. from BEEP, information on audits, Q&A sessions and opportunity to remind people of the launch of further funding.

Further thoughts and suggestions would be welcomed to make this a success.

30 for 2030 - Focussing on businesses at the conference would enable us to promote the 30 for 2030 initiative. Herefordshire Council will have procured a delivery partner to undertake the 30 energy audits by the event.

The Board agreed that it needs to be prepared to be quite agile and ensure that it manages the risks of external events. Might face some businesses who are in extremis because of the current energy crisis and are focused on that rather than the longer term. Should be sympathetic, but need to ensure we keep focused on “2030 vision” and on the transition to renewable or carbon friendly energy. There is a risk of getting side-tracked by the immediacy of the economic impact of the cost of energy on businesses.

JJ notes that Shropshire Crest are working with businesses and are talking about supporting Herefordshire businesses as well at some stage, they might have some input into the event.

Action: JJ to find out further information about Crest and get back to BB.

AD – Appreciate that businesses are the target audience, but it would be nice for some youth engagement linked to the event. As the conference will take place during school time perhaps produce youth friendly info graphics/video explaining what has happened at the conference which could be sent to schools. Ask Key speaker to pre-record video which could also be available to schools. Younger people could be part of the conference without encroaching on the importance of engaging businesses. Although the focus will be on businesses and energy make it relatable to a wider audience so they can see the Council is engaged with what is happening

The Annual Youth Conference is in the February half term which is only a month following the Climate Conference so instead of having something specifically attached to the Climate Conference they could have a key speaker or someone from the Board speak at the Youth Conference. An opportunity to get their views on our agenda. Important to link up higher education as those young people looking for a future as the choices they are going to make will impact the environment. Also need to get a broad view as many young people are not interested in higher education, but have strong views on energy and the environment.

BB noted that it could be an opportunity to link in with apprenticeship skills/higher education transitioning into business. Should be in a position by then with the retro-fit skills to be promoting that as well.

EC suggested holding the conference at NMITE as part of its work with them and their students on business projects addressing their energy challenges.

Action: AD to send information to EC about the youth Conference as she would like to attend as so might other members of the Board.

It was noted that higher education institutes operate as businesses as well. Maybe AD and Principal of 6th Form or Estate Manager could do a two handed discussion on the challenges businesses are facing, how they are addressing these and how young people can help drive that and give their input.

The Board reviewed the terms of reference about what the Board is trying to do and what the Annual Assembly/Conference is about i.e. mobilising more engagement and getting businesses to make a commitment themselves. We need to clarify that the aim is to provide direction, inspiration and hand-holding like BEEP+ to businesses to help them address the practical problems they are facing.

The Board thanked Professor Dieter Helm (author of a book called “On Net Zero” and is a Professor of Economics at Oxford University) for his offer to pre-record a keynote address. However, due to other commitments he is unlikely to be able to attend in person.

IH is attending a conference in Llandrindod Wells on 3rd November to discuss ‘Sustainability Challenges, how do we move beyond the carbon to look at the whole picture’ where the speaker will be Professor Jude Capper. IH to report back to the Board.

The Board agreed that as there are going to be at least three events happening in a short space of time - Herefordshire Retrofit Skills Summit in January, the Youth Conference and the Climate Conference covering a range of different subjects it is important they are given their own platform and show the strength of activities going on in Herefordshire.

Action: BB to contact HC Comms to make them aware.

The Board agreed it can cover a number of bases by having a view between different types of businesses i.e. a retailer, manufacturer, farming. We could highlight those case studies. Clear ask about signing up and using the support and taking action.

Action: BB to Contact the Duchy re: Prince of Wales do a pre-record intro as the largest land owner in the county

EC noted that the Board's Terms of Reference includes "Annual conference at which members of the partnership are able to ask the Board questions". Agreed to have a half hour session after lunch for those who want to sit down with the Board and discuss what is happening.

Action - BB will get ideas/suggestions drafted up and sent round and will feed in any information about speakers and invitees. Please keep sending through ideas/info. An agenda will be drafted.

4. Priorities for next 12 months:-

Process for electing new Chair.

EC has checked the Terms of Reference which specifically sets out process for electing new Chair. Nominations to be received. You can nominate yourself and have up to two Vice-Chairs. If there is a contested election there should be a secret ballot organised by the secretariat. EC will write to Board members shortly asking them to either put themselves forward or someone else (check with them first!). Nominations will be left open for one week and there will be a secret ballot if necessary.

EC confirmed that could be considered as Terms of Reference can be interpreted flexibly. The Board can choose to update Terms of Reference.

Key messages from last meeting

- JJ – Pleased that EC is looking at the ToR and it is something all Board members should do. Really enjoyed the face to face meeting and perhaps this could be done on a quarterly basis and the break-out groups worked well. Looking at the Minutes and following discussion with GW there are a number of threads which need to be looked at:
- Discussion about the vision – we are not going to change the vision unless Herefordshire Council change the vision. Outstanding question about the Board's remit and governance, this needs to be nailed down. What if any representational roles the members of the Board have? Is this specified in ToR?
- EC confirmed that this Board does not represent the Council, but we can represent the Board e.g. when IH went out to talk to people as a member of Board to the Farming and Land owners sub-group. All of us can represent the Board which is separate from the Council. This Board is not the Council, but is something the Council is supporting and needs to take on a life of its own.
- Need to have discussions about how we really gain traction. Plans we inherited exist and the sub-groups have been asked to submit revisions of the plans.
- The proposal is that on the back of the September meeting, ahead of the Conference, we should have another face to face meeting in December and to do some more work together as a Board around ToR, the remit, the responsibilities and accountabilities ahead of the excellent proposal about seeing to be accountable and engaging with the business attendees at the Conference.
- EC is in favour of meeting quarterly face to face, if meeting six weekly maybe alternatively. If change meetings to four weekly then quarterly and in the meantime meet briefly on Zoom.
Representational role – Different people have interpreted this in different ways. Suggest as a modus operandi for the Board putting forward a written proposal which clarifies what it is we are suggesting.
- Action Plans – Buildings Working Group are making progress updating strategies and engaging in project proposals. Central to our roles as Board members is to review and up-date the Action Plan and propose projects and initiatives and help move them forward.
- GC – These discussions are useful to reflect on case studies e.g. we have gelled and had feedback from the Council on the AD document which the Energy Group have been working on. The Energy Mapping project would not have gone so well (which is now supported by HC in terms of funding) without the HCNP Board and without the group so that is another tangible example.
- RW suggested a face to face meeting schedule for more than two hours to enable in depth discussions about **what each group is doing, where we can have the biggest impact which might not be the things we are targeting**. This needs to happen before the Conference so we can focus on the two or three things which are really important to us and which will unleash the biggest gains.

Action – Next meeting on Tuesday 6th December 2022 from 5.00pm to 8.00pm to be face to face with a light agenda to enable full discussion of the above. KG to facilitate the meeting unless someone else is able to do this.

5. Sub Groups

About to award just under £1.6m for projects that came out of the work carried out by the Climate Assembly as well as projects put forward by the Board. The renewables mapping, 30 for 2030 carbon audits and farm carbon audits are included in this.

The below summarises the projects:

- Active Travel walking project – including lots on walking, cycling and behavioural change.
- A study to understand how Herefordshire can decarbonise/electrify school transport fleet.
- Grant support for on street residential charging points, working with communities that have been identified and designed to supplement the existing government grant.
- Resources for the Climate Conference enabling us to do this for a number of years.
- Business case development to support taxis and private hire organisations with transitioning to electric vehicles. Feasibility study looking at how we can develop a new capital business case and finance mechanism to potentially loan money to those industries to help them accelerate their switch.
- Farm Carbon Audit – 30 farms will receive audits to help them improve efficiency and reduce their environmental impact.
- Mapping of the counties renewable energy potential including live electric grid information both displayed on a publically available interactive map.
- 30 for 2030 business to receive free energy efficiency audits.
- An update to the local climate impact profile. The council did a big piece on this 10 years ago which will be looked at again, where are we now compared to where we thought we would be. How do we address climate change? How do we protect services, communities and businesses?
- A three year project to support domestic retrofit as well as help develop the supply chain. 320 properties in the able to pay market will receive free energy audits and retrofit plans, grants of up to £2,000 to deliver outcomes will be available to eligible applicants.
- Decarbonisation studies for public buildings followed by business case development to enable the retrofit works.
- PAS 2035 Training – Recognising that we are supporting much greater levels of retrofit and the supply chain needs to be developed. This training will qualify local installers to PAS 2035 retrofit levels.
- School Travel Plan support – A dedicated officer will work with schools for the next three years to develop their plans. Grant support for schools to put measures in place will also be provided.

These are the first tranche of projects, there are many more in development. In total £1.6m has been allocated. There is a lot more work to be done including nature recovery networks, tree strategies, the tree management plan, a Jubilee forest feasibility and more. Projects will be commissioned as we go.

Action - BB to circulate a list.

JM – List to be themed with the Action Plan and possibly use as a poster for the Conference.

JJ – Board can't take credit for what the Council has done, not entirely logical.

BB – Board can take some credit for the shaping of the Assembly, they have given feedback and suggestions which have been used to develop projects. We have taken the Citizen Assembly project, ideas from the Board, ideas from best practice and ideas from officers and tried to make it coherent. We didn't have enough money to do all the projects, but now we are able to do more. We can also bolster the priority ones e.g. retrofit and the farm carbon audits. We have very much tried to use the Board to inform that.

EC – It is important to have people in the Council who are committed to this so that when opportunities come up we can steer decision making in certain directions e.g. new homes bonus, Covid money what do we spend it on.

EC – Need to manage expectations. Council has a funding gap of £20m just to keep delivering same services. We have been able to mobilise some one-off sources of funding and will keep doing this. At the same time

we are facing some difficult decisions due to shrinking budgets. While the Council has been able to help this year it would be very helpful if this Board could look at what other possibilities there are for funding and mobilising resources towards our collective ambitions which are not Council funding.

Transport Sub-Group

- AD has tried very hard to push school e-bikes, but has had trouble with getting responses from the schools. Would welcome ideas and thoughts as to how we can encourage/prompt responses from the schools. Do not want to make it into more of a project until feedback has been received. Possibly contact governors, parents, and children.
- Cycle Green Ways Projects across the county which coincides with a longer term plan for hubs across the county. Have consulted with some cycle groups about this. Cycle green ways and cycle routes going in a 7 mile radius of the market towns. 7 miles is roughly equal to a 30 minute cycle ride and more people could be encouraged to use e-bikes for commuting. A way to get across the county from a holiday, commuting and cycle green ways point of view. Will liaise with cross border areas in the future. Golden Valley to be included. Three groups supporting use of old railway lines from Leominster to Worcester, Hereford to Pontrilas and Hereford to Hay-on-Wye would fit in with this.

EC – has received a large package of material from people who are opposed to the Worcester- Bromyard one.

GC – these ideas very loosely follow the path of the original train lines. In other areas of the country when opposed land owners have been taken to see a good example they have been turned.

EC – is this something that could be fitted into the Council process somewhere?

BB – Tie in to the local Cycling/Walking infrastructure which is something we will be doing more work on with the Transport team.

Action - Geoff Pickford is leading on this and BB will put GC in touch with him.

Action: EC asked BB to ensure Transport group is connected to the various groups.

Energy Sub Group

- GC –Received useful feedback from Council from original documents on AD from May/June 2022. Set of proposals/guidelines to try and limit potential damage of AD plants. Not to oppose them, but to constrict them. While this is going on there is a massive planning application going in with the Council from a very large group to the east of the county for a somewhat experimental large project. GC has written a short think piece around the phosphates which has been share with Richard who is going to set up a meeting for myself with the planners, perhaps Liz will be involved? Look at the combination and cumulatively effects because unless we are careful AD becomes a process of moving muck around and generating energy from muck and not being careful enough about where the Phosphate ends up. If the Phosphate isn't removed from the digestate and the digestate is spread on the land then we would have a surplus of 3,000 tons of Phosphate per annum, which is 17kg per hectare in the Wye catchment. There is risk in promoting AD and we are shuffling cards while the problem gets worse.
- GW – Understand from speaking to people from Avara and Martin Williams that the whole point of the project is to set up a plant that removes phosphates from the chicken muck so it addresses the issue. Thought we would be favour of it, not thinking it is a problem. Perhaps there is a misunderstanding of the application?

EC – has put a link in to the application in the chat. It is indeed to process all of the chicken muck from Herefordshire, Gloucester and parts of Powys and then export the residue with phosphates. One HGV movement every 10 minutes, 10 hours a day, 365 days a year.

GW – At the moment the same muck is transferred around the county by tractor and trailer. Trying to solve the phosphate issue.

EC – This is a substantial industry in its current form and should building a waste plant of that type to facilitate the continuance and extension of that industry be the way we should be going?

LD – Rachel Joy from the Council is picking this up as part of the Phosphate Commission. The view is held it needs to be looked at on a strategic level. Need to understand a lot of the detail first.

JJ – Within the Energy Group I think what was clear to us was that we need to have a policy/set of guidelines when it comes to any AD planning application or development. Ideally we would be working hand in hand with the Land Management group which I suppose James is fulfilling at the moment. Needs to be a strategy as to how to deal with this for so many reasons. We all know that it can be potentially useful for dealing with bio waste, it is afterwards that matters.

GC – If we stick to what we are trying to do as a Group for a specific pre-existing AD unit then I think that where we started from is fairly solid and we will continue to pursue that. Do not think it is probably useful to comment on this particular application at the moment. It certainly needs a lot of investigation as it is massive and experimental and just burning the stuff and releasing it out to air just creates a whole load of other problems. On a good news point there is other work going on with the DSO (*Distribution System Operator*) and DNO (*Distribution Network Operator*) trying to summarise and pull together for the Energy Group and will share it around and should have some overall really good snippets of good news in that direction about the electricity grid.

JJ – ADs one of the things we have been looking at is a set of guide lines for existing AD plants so their function and waste management is optimised as well. Good practice.

GW – Energy Training Facilities have got a couple of lots of grant funding for Holme Lacy. They will be training installers to MCS standard which is very important for the country. Retrofit training is taking place and heard at a Chamber event from someone from NMite about building stuff, is there perhaps a danger even in Herefordshire there are several things going on about skills which might not be as joined up as they might be? We have limited resources it would be good to ensure we are not re-inventing the wheel.

JJ – The whole point is to try and flush out of the system anybody who has any kind of interest and them all in the same place and share where they are and where we are headed.

Action - JJ to share details of Retrofit Conference (possibly to be held January 2023) and liaise with GW and group and present it to the Buildings Sub-group. Also liaise with BB about mapping he is doing of all stakeholders and also include Judith Whateley so the JBP can be picked up and also get support from Comms.

Buildings Sub-group

- JJ – Working on a renewed action plan. JJ had one face to face meeting when we started essentially from scratch and people who could not make the meeting are adding their input and it is all being collated at the moment. Meetings are now fortnightly. The groups has also been reviewing the retrofit strategy which was drawn up for the Council by consultants as the group now includes Ellie Deacon Smith (an Architect) and we have now seconded Gervaise M. into the group from Waxwing Energy who has a huge amount of expertise in retrofit so have been able to provide some feedback to the Council team on the retrofit strategy and wait to hear what happens next. In the meantime main aim is to focus the Action Plan.
- RW reported that £20+ million has been allocated. There is a business case going through Hospital Management Board in December. Centrica are going to own existing boards to put up PR and communications as to what is going on. It is going to be a really good advertising space and provide an opportunity to showcase Herefordshire hospital and also to try and link up some of the activities that are happening.

Action: EC – Possible talk by RW about the Hospital at the Conference – to be discussed further.

Farming & Land Use Sub-Group

- JM - Need to convene group under Steve Klenk Chairmanship and reprise priorities against the Action Plan. Pleased to hear about the funding for the carbon farm audits and this will make a big difference. My perception is that Herefordshire farmers are making good progress in the arable sector and that is being borne out by the field visits that IH organised and some of us have attended and that continues through Farm Herefordshire. There is a huge gap between that and the nature rich part. LD and JM have been discussing this in relation to the Nature Recovery strategy. The scale of the challenge to achieve 30 by 30 (and that is the other 30 by 30) Board members will remember that there is a legal commitment in the Environment Act for 30% of UK seas and land to be protected and managed for nature by 2030. The Government has just missed the opportunity to meet its own deadline of yesterday to publish its target under the Environment Act and if it does not hurry up it will be taken to judicial review by its own regulator. The big positive is the transition with the arable sector which is visible now. The livestock sector lags way behind and there is a big gap in ambition between carbon nutrient and nature and the nutrient/nature lags behind the carbon.
- EC – Invited to speak at Hereford WI, but could not attend. Andrew Mottram (former vicar of All Saints, Hereford) did attend and took along Greener Footprint materials and also Low carbon Farm Guides. He gave very favourable feedback on these materials which the WI were interested in. EC had also attended a visit to Billy Lewis’ farm in Dilwyn. He has recently won Mixed Soil Farmer of the Year Award (sponsored by Farm Carbon Tool Kits and others). Around 100 people attended, mostly Herefordshire farmers and others from further afield.
- In April this year the Board supported an application through the Council to get 30 carbon audits done. It has taken a little longer than hoped. First 14 projects have gone for rubber stamping. Funding is available for repeating the audits in three years so there will be a base line and transition data. As we do the carbon audits we will say that as part of taking part we would want the farms to share success, case studies. Although we need to have data we can’t ask for data Company’s may hold that is not publically available. However we can ensure that permissions are written in to our own contracting for the work we are about to do.
- LD would like to attend the Land Use Sub-group.

Food Sub-group

- Herefordshire Sustainable Food Partnership has got some funding and have some part-time workers Peter Norton and Rebecca Tully and they are doing a lot of outreach work getting people to sign up to a pledge.

Action: EC will circulate a link so the Board can also pledge.

The Board discussed expanding the Food Sub-group and bringing external people in. EC encouraged everyone in Sub-groups to think actively about co-opting external people to help take the work forward.

6. County-wide action plans

Reminder to return updated actions plans to climate@herefordshire.gov.uk please highlight changes. Those leading each of the Sub-groups to make a plan to review your plan and take that forward. To be discussed further in detail when we next meet face to face in December.

7. Communications Update

BB – JBP have produced a One Year Review. JBP are a dedicated Comms agency which we have a two year contract to support the programme. As part of the wider package we are doing an additional business case for three years support. It is a little behind as we wanted to go bigger/bolder/better and doing some more work to put into getting it. JBP are currently supporting us and we will be looking as to how we can take this forward.

Action - BB will be able to report further on this shortly and a list of options is being considered.

8. Co-operation around Great Collaboration

EC – To be discussed further in detail when we next meet face to face in December.

KG – To decide which sub-group/s she might like to join.

Action: BB & JW to recirculate list of who is on which sub-group and details of the Big Economic Plan.

9. AOB & Good News Items and Funding Opportunities

JJ – The Great Collaboration Website (link to be circulated). Creating a focus group to give feedback to go to our funders and also about improvements. Could be interesting if anyone in this group would be willing to be a focus group member or simply fill in a survey once you have engaged with the website, join, create an account, choose some actions to take or actions you have already taken. A report will be created available to local councils or groups. It is a way of informing local policies and at some stage this group would more closely with it.

BB – Will be able to report on the City Masterplan in the very near future.

BB – Today we are accepting ~£900,000 worth of grants for activity in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Beauty.

Luston Wetlands nearing completion (BB circulated picture).

Pulling together funding application for Home Upgrade grant. At the moment we are looking to apply for approximately £4million for the next few years of home retrofit. Found out recently that we have been invited to apply for up to £7million. We are thinking how we can up delivery of that.

IH – Any chance of Herefordshire Rural Hub getting some funding to promote new regenerative farming? BB suggested IH put forward a proposal as indicating what would be beneficial and we can add it to the list of projects.

IH – Suggested a one day or part day Conference with someone explaining what it is all about and someone explaining what they have done and the benefits of it. It is a grey area as far as farmer are concerned

BB – Perhaps this is something the Sub-group could develop into a proposal and we can work on it.

IH – How long will the wetlands work for? What happens when it can't absorb any more phosphates?

LD – Have looked at wetlands in operation in Norfolk (not used for off-setting) , but a similar process and to date they have not had to re-plant. It will be constantly monitored. When it reaches saturation point the waste will be cleared and replanting will potentially take place. IH & LD to discuss this further.

EC – We need to reflect how we use our time as a Board to maximise effect.

EC – Will be speaking at the 6th Form this week about Cop27 and Climate Action etc. Anna invited to input/suggestions and to share the platform.

Action - EC and AD to follow up post meeting.

EC – The Big Economic Plan – process facilitated by external consultants around visioning for the county as a whole for 2050. There is a business engagement workshop on Thursday. GC is involved in the process and hoping to attend. The consultants have been asked to engage with the Board. If there is anyone who would like to go along and perhaps represent the Board this would be welcome and helpful. **Please contact EC if you would like to attend.**

LD – New Principal Ecologist from Lancaster is starting in post tomorrow and a graduate ecologist has also been recruited who will be starting at the end of the month.

10. Date/ Time of future Board Meetings & Agenda Items

Tuesday 6th December – 5.00 – 8.00 pm