Hampshire Climate Action Network

Notes of meeting 29 February 2020

Present: Charles Burns, Ben Collins, Angela Cotton, Graham Crane, Phil Gagg, Steve Hallett, Mark Hancock, Gill Hickman, Christine Holloway, Roger Huxstep, Sue James, Rick Kimber, Susie Laan, Malcolm MacInnes, Anna Mellor, Norman Pasley, Sheila Peacock, Katherine Wilcox

Apologies: Karen Barratt, Carol Bartholomew, Greg Ford, Fiona Rogers, Frack Free Isle of Wight, XR Southampton, Hannah Terrey

Greg from E Hants sent a briefing because he couldn't get to the meeting - attached at the end of these minutes. Otherwise, these notes don't include the valuable updates from each area, sorry.

1. Declarations of Climate Emergency

Hart, Havant and New Forest are the only local Councils that have not declared. Hart's position is that it is more important to take action than make declarations.

South East Climate Alliance is keeping track of who's declared - https://seclimatealliance.uk/about/. All are encouraged to sign up for SECA newsletters

Local Government doesn't have power, or funding, to do all it would like to. They use networks to influence Government e.g. the Local Government Association South East 7; South East Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport; Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport; and Local Adaptation Advisory Panel to agree priorities and asks from government, feed that to Government.

The May local government elections are an opportunity to encourage voters to ask candidates what they intend to do on climate change. Here is what WinACC did in the past: https://www.winacc.org.uk/make-climate-change-an-issue-in-the-may-2016-local-elections/ Anyone who prepares information is invited to share it

Greg Ford (from East Hants) sent a useful table comparing different declarations – attached / [url to follow]

Malcolm Macinnes from Basingstoke has written an Excel spreadsheet that enables community groups to score planning applications for sustainability - attached / [url to follow]

2. District-wide climate action networks

District-wide networks are being set up, or considered, in Alton, Havant New Forest and Petersfield. This may be a good way to create a united voice to influence at District level.

3. Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council climate emergency action plan is still being written, unlikely to be approved by the end of financial year 2019/2020. Latest reports:

- to HCC Cabinet 6 January http://democracy.hants.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=5496&Ver=4)
- to HCC Policy and Resources Select Committee (https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/g5516/Public%20reports%20pack%205th-Mar-2020%2010.00%20Policy%20and%20Resources%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=10)

HCC has allocated £2m for climate change and has recruited 8 new staff. None are scientists.

HCC is setting up an "expert panel" which we hope to be invited to join.

HCC is bringing Councils and other public bodies together across the county in the Hampshire Partnership, to work together on climate change, implementing the recommendations on the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Hampshire in 2050 - https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/visionforhampshire2050/hampshire-2050-partnership. **It would be worth asking your Council Leader how they plan to get involved.**

HCC held a workshop for parish councils early in 2020. Martin Heath of Basingstoke gave the previously circulated presentation about how they could set up community renewable projects, but the presentation by Terena Plowright of the Greening Campaign was more attractive to parishes. HCC is facilitating links with, but isn't funding, the Greening Campaign' Terena's offer will be rolled out through the Districts who may provide funding.
More http://www.greening-campaign.org/.

Minors (under 18) are now permitted to take issues to HCC meetings. Details at https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/councillors/speakatmeeting. Given the importance of listening to young people about climate change, Roger agreed to find out if there is a Hampshire Youth Parliament and if not, if HCC might have any interests in one. (A Youth Climate Parliament is taking place in Winchester Guildhall this March.)

Hampshire Climate Action Network sent some suggestions abut what should be in the Council's plan – attached / [url to follow]

HCC Climate Action Plan should include extinction of wildlife. Apparently Pennington Common (an SSSI) has been treated with glyphosate in February, and is cut in July meaning that rare autumn flowering species cannot appear. Roger will forward concerns to the Leader and chief executive of HCC to ask if they include such issues when appointing contractors to maintain and cut verges.

4. Hampshire Pension Fund

Interest grows in pressing the Hampshire Pension Fund to shift investment from fossil fuels to "green" investment. Wiltshire and Brunel Pension Funds have acted already: see https://www.wiltshirepensionfund.org.uk/wiltshire-pension-fund/client-area/news/wiltshire-pension-fund-moves-over-500m-of-assets-into-brunel-s-low-carbon-passive-equities-portfolio/

Please encourage anyone with money in Hampshire Pension Fund (whether employee or pensioner) to add their names to the group of members who are lobbying the Pension Fund – email HCAN@winacc.org.uk to be put in touch.

5. HampshireCAN

In theory it would be good for HampshireCAN to have its own website but no-one has time to set it up or maintain it.

Please continue to publicise your events on the Facebook page.

Those present asked for notes of this meeting to be sent to them using cc not bcc, as it is useful to see each other's email addresses. Chris will circulate people who often attend meetings to ask if they would like to be on a register showing their name, group, district, interests and email address.

6. Hampshire voluntary and community sector

Action Hampshire is the umbrella body for voluntary and community groups across Hampshire. They convene a forum for leaders of voluntary and community organisations, which sends someone to the Hampshire Partnership, which is now majoring on climate change. So we need someone attending their meetings who knows what's happening on climate change. Chris will attend the next meeting of Hampshire Leaders Forum and ask for them to include a climate representative.

7. Natural climate solutions

Hannah Terrey, Hampshire & IoW Wildlife Trust, would welcome contact from anyone interested in this: Hannah.Terrey@hiwwt.org.uk

8. Coastal impact due to increasing storm surges medium term, and sea level rise long term

Ben Collins, New Forest, is organising a vigil at Milford-on-Sea Promenade & Cliff Top on Sunday 15th March 2.30-3.30 pm (by Needles Eye Café). It is to press for a curb on fossil fuel emissions by the end of this decade and prevent dangerous run away sea level rise and storm surges. He hopes this will turn into a national movement. Open to all – all welcome. Flyer attached.

9. Air pollution monitors

Rick Kimber's air pollution monitor costs only £50 but only works well indoors. There is a particular need to monitor particulates. [Since the meeting, Chris got this useful briefing from colleagues in Southampton:

…low cost air quality monitors are at best a rough proxy of very local conditions and at worst show false readings. This is what the scientists have consistently told me.

…At present, the best quality monitoring is done by DEFRA and local authorities and it is best to start with them. Here is a link to the monitoring done by Southampton City Council: http://southampton.my-air.uk/graphs/ - it would be worth asking your local authority for their data. They have an obligation to designate Air Quality Management Areas (where kerbside nitrogen dioxide is known to be high). This, of course, is a very partial set of data (because there are so many other components of air quality).

…There are examples of citizen science being mobilised, and providing indicative local data. Here in Southampton we have the St Denys Breathing Spaces project, which is supported by both Universities, one of whom has provided 12 hand built particulate matter monitors. You can read about it here: https://breathingspaces.org.uk/about/

There is an active community air quality monitoring project in Eastbourne: https://www.eastbourneherald.co.uk/news/eastbourne-residents-take-air-quality-monitoring-their-own-hands-1037807

What this suggests is that, to get as close as possible to a near-reliable reading, the scientists and community activists are resorting to building their own monitors.

I have an Airvisual node which measures indoor air quality and also displays via wifi the reading from my nearest DEFRA monitor. It could be mounted outdoors but would need weather-proofing. I also bought a Plume Flow which I found quite complicated to use, and although providing personal readings wherever I went, didn't always feel intuitively correct. A work in progress I think!

The most accurate readings I have seen were when we were visited by the Smogmobile in Southampton in April 2016:https://www.et.co.uk/the-smogmobile . It is an electric van with very expensive monitoring equipment on board. It gave us a clear picture of the pollution suffered along the main commuter routes in the city. .

… Another company that is providing more accurate monitoring is often featured on TV - Earthsense which uses Zephyr monitors (also supplied by Enviro Tech who own the Smogmobile). Here's an introduction to them: https://www.earthsense.co.uk/post/comparing-air-pollution-levels-with-itv

10. Clean Air Day

Schools are now getting parental complaints about air quality. School Travel Teams in Southampton City Council, Portsmouth CC, HCC and districts are producing Clean Air Day packs for schools based on Global Action Plan's themes for this year - two key messages used across the region on banners etc. to give consistent messages wherever people live and work. The focus is the health impacts of air pollution across the life span, the key message about giving your car the day off. The packs will offer a menu of activities for schools to choose.

All are encouraged to tell schools and suggest that schools register an interest with Hazel.Agombar@southampton.gov.uk /jean.macgrory1@hants.gov.uk

11. Airport expansions

Objections have been made by Highways England, Natural England. South Downs National Park, Southampton City Council and Winchester City Council. Eastleigh Borough Council, the planning authority, has asked for more information. AXO reported that when Southampton Airport responds to the request for more information, there will be another opportunity to public comment.

The application will be considered by Eastleigh in May. Sign up for emails from foesoton@gmail.com or see so'ton FoE or AXo Facebook.

12. Next meetings

16 May 2020 9.45 coffee, 10-1.00 at Brockenhurst Village Hall, Highwood Rd, Brockenhurst SO42 7RY, free WiFi throughout (a few minutes' walk from Brockenhurst mainline rail station, and if you have to drive, free car parking).

26 Sept in Fareham – Norman Pasley to find venue

13. AOB

Someone recommended two books:

- How to Save the World For Free Hardcover – 21 Oct 2019 by Natalie Fee
- Turning the Tide on Plastic: How Humanity (And You) Can Make Our Globe Clean Again Paperback – 13 Dec 2018 by Lucy Siegle

14. Update from East Hampshire

This week EHDC approved a new budget:

- includes £50k new funding and reallocates £43k of existing funding for environmental projects *=> this is too little for infrastructure projects and does not cover development of climate strategy. Compare this with Chichester District Council, which has created a new full time position @60k/year just to develop and deliver a climate strategy and action plan*

- as a council keen on reducing council tax, EHDC (Conservative control) plans to borrow up to £200m from Public Works Loan Board to buy commercial real estate, with the aim of creating an income stream to fund most (~ 2/3) of the council's costs *=> Whatever you think of the model, this illustrates the possibility for councils to raise significant funding for climate investment from government funding using a facility that already exists. The PWLB loans are unsecured and could be spent on any capital projects provided the debt can be serviced. So instead of just buying shop freeholds etc. as EHDC is doing, the PWLB loans could also be used to invest millions in energy generation and storage schemes. EHDC has no plans to this at present (=> lobbying opportunity). Also, the future income streams could be used to feed an annual climate fund (e.g. 200k a year) but again there are no plans at EHDC to do this (=> lobbying opportunity). The Treasury recently increased PWLB borrowing rates from 1.8% to 2.8% which could indicate this opportunity is closing or at least becoming less attractive. Other councils are using PWLB to build property portfolios, including Eastleigh (Lib Dem control). Perhaps we could lobby for them and others to consider using PWLB loans for large climate projects?*

EHDC is due to publish a climate and environment strategy and a new corporate strategy soon *=> indications so far are that these key docs will contain no climate targets. EHDC is the only council above town/parish level in Hampshire to have declared a climate emergency but not to set any net zero targets (not even 2050). We expect this will result in a weak action plan with the result that EHDC will lose out on competitive grant funding, be less able to coordinate with other LAs and less able to rally the public. We are lobbying EHDC leadership on this but no progress so far. We have prepared a comparison of climate emergency declaration targets among Hampshire councils using SECA data and our own analysis – see attachments. These might be useful for those involved with other councils in Hampshire.*

Petersfield Town Council

Two meetings were convened in Feb by Councillors Russell Oppenheimer (EHDC and HCC, Conservative) and John Palmer (PTC, Greens) to discuss creating a Petersfield Climate Action

Network >50 people interested. Some funding is available for a part-time coordinator (2 days/week, 15k pa). Projects discussed include bulk purchase of solar PV and providing energy efficiency advice, among others. Expect more developments in Q2 and Q3.

Three PTC councillors have drafted a climate strategy to put to the town council. They eventually want to push for a climate emergency but only after the strategy is developed. There are 12 councillors, divided 50/50 on climate so it could go either way!

Controversy over PTC choosing to fund an expensive landscaping project at the Heath lake and to borrow millions to redevelop the Festival Hall (but not to a high energy efficiency standard), instead of spending on climate projects *=> PTC annual meeting is on Monday this could be raised. Any projects identified in the climate strategy and to be developed by PeCAN could show that there are better uses for these funds*

Other info

Jess Britton from Exeter University has been researching councils' climate responses (see Guardian English councils set to miss carbon emission targets, 27 Jan 2020). She is lobbying government to set a statutory duty on councils to meet the national 2050 net zero target. *=> her suggestion is that local residents and businesses should try to meet their MPs to lobby for this. Is this something HCC would consider promoting?*

Other info from Jess:

- Funding sources that councils should investigate include LEPs, which have funding for energy strategies, and the govt backed Local Energy Hubs which administer Rural Community Energy Funding
- Cornwall and Bristol have developed formal processes for assessing net zero options, which could be a model for others
- Oxford and others have used Citizens' Assemblies for same
- Also check out UK100 and APSE

Councils across S E England

South East Climate Alliance (which we subscribe to) has created a spreadsheet summarising what's happening across S E England http://bit.ly/SECAclimateactionsurvey There's an introductory tab explaining how it works, and separate tabs for each county. They hope groups can use this information to chart progress, spot trends, and nudge their local council by showing what's being done elsewhere. If you hear of developments not yet featured, or spot any corrections needed, do let them know by emailing: southeastclimatealliance@gmail.com

UK-wide discussion forum

The Climate Emergency UK discussion forum has moved from Basecamp to a new platform called Discourse. This is a great way of connecting with councillors, council officers, and climate activists. User friendly, with threaded discussions around different topics. It's free to join and you can choose how often you receive updates. Details here.

Warwick District Council

Warwick DC referendum over council tax rise to fund its £30m Climate Emergency Action Programme. Warwick District Council proposes an average £1 per week extra on council tax bills to raise £3m a year for a Climate Action Fund, for the next 10 years. It will help the Council to be carbon-neutral by 2025 and the district to be carbon-neutral by 2030. It is required to hold a referendum to seek approval from voters – on 7 May.