

# York Climate Commission

## Steering Group Meeting – Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday, 15 July 2026

**Venue:** City of York Council West Offices

**Present:** Jennifer Potter (co-chair), Hetty Stock (co-chair), Katy Brooke, Katie Thomas (Governance), James Shipley (Infrastructure), Sian Goodwin (People), Jenny Kent (City of York Council / Combined Authority), Paul McCabe (City of York Council, standing in for Shaun Gibbons)

**Apologies:** Katrina Snelling (Ecology), Shaun Gibbons

## Actions

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Owner                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| If WG leads struggling with engagement, advise to write to everyone on the working group list saying that for those who haven't attended, they will be moved to the YCC newsletter list to stay abreast of what's happening. That those actively engaged will receive WG emails. Give people one week to confirm they want to stay on your list and be engaged. Let Katy know of anyone who might need to go on the general list. | WG leads                 |
| Share the community engagement report from the York Community Woodland work with Sian / the group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Paul McCabe              |
| Speak to Angela Purdham at the university to confirm next steps before progressing the sustainable business guide.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | James Shipley            |
| Draw up a wish list of people and organisations to invite into the infrastructure group, then invite them directly. Speak to Jen if need support.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | James Shipley            |
| Finish drafting the charity policies and share as they come.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Katie Thomas / Georgiana |
| Pull together the list of governance assets and templates (terms of reference, project initiation docs, comms request template) after tomorrow's governance meeting and share with the group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Katie Thomas             |
| Send Katie what's been drafted of the members' pack so a decision can be made on where it sits.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Jennifer Potter          |
| Share governance templates, including the draft behaviour policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Katie Thomas             |
| Feed back to Katie anything felt to be missing on the governance side from each working group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | All working group leads  |
| Explore a minute-taker for working group meetings – ask whether Louisa could support in Infrastructure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Paul McCabe              |

| Action                                                                                                                                                      | Owner                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Send the water quality scrutiny paper (council meeting 21 July) to Katy, and include it in this week's roundup with the registration details.               | Jenny Kent and Katy Brooke                                                                                |
| Add a standing slot to steering group meetings for a Combined Authority / council update, and flag upcoming relevant council papers and decisions.          | Co-Chairs / Jenny Kent / Katy Brooke                                                                      |
| Talk to Faye at Poesis about a possible collaboration on a 'long table' food event for York Environment Week.                                               | Sian Goodwin                                                                                              |
| Talk to digital agency/ social media experts and ask about being a charity partner and donating one day a month or more to support doing more social media. | James Shipley (ask friend); All WG leads to consider their network. Jennifer to consider a LinkedIn post. |

## Updates and apologies

Truzaar has stepped down from the Comms Working Group, and Juliet has stepped down as chair of the trustee board – in both cases a question of capacity rather than commitment. The co-chairs are looking at stepping in as co-chairs of the board for now, with support from Vicki Blakey Archer (St Nick's CEO), who has strong charity governance experience. Jenny confirmed she is happy to represent the Combined Authority for now, though the group may want to keep an eye out for someone else in future.

## Minutes and actions from the last meeting

Katy took the group through the outstanding actions. Most are complete or ongoing. Shaun has shared the current City of York Council climate action plan and identified council representatives within his team. The zero waste strategy work has had an initial meeting but there is no draft yet. The main piece of ongoing work – working groups identifying priority actions against the doughnut areas and the council's climate action plan – carries into today's session.

## Co-chairs' update

The meeting with Rachael Maskell was positive and useful for connections. The key takeaway was that the city strategic leaders' meeting isn't the only way to reach strategic leaders – the 20-minute slot on offer wouldn't have done the People's Emergency Briefing justice, and Rachel suggested other ways of bringing leaders together. The youth event that was run was a good idea but not as well attended as hoped, partly down to a short run-up and summer timing; worth repeating in the autumn with more notice.

The meeting with Richard Webb was encouraging – more of a first conversation and a pat on the back for the commission than anything with specific outputs, though there's something for us to take back to him with requests. The doughnut community work continues, with two workshops planned for August (vision and future picture) and a separate strand looking at what data is already available to build the doughnut picture, with help from the University.

Jennifer flagged a broader reflection on the movement around certain roles, particularly comms, and a wish to think more systemically about what might give those roles more stability.

The charity status is still in progress. The application has moved past the point where it was previously rejected as incomplete, and the Charity Commission has confirmed it will look at it in detail – with a wait of up to around 25 weeks. Very much a foundation-laying year. Sian made the point that the slower, disproportionate work at the start – untangling how the commission works before diving into delivery – gives a far better chance of success later.

## **Project Priorities Workshop / Working group updates**

### **Ecology (Katrina, via Jennifer)**

Three project ideas to discuss: short 'favourite green space' video vignettes for social media; climate messages; and connecting the many groups already working on green spaces. Paul noted the council's York Community Woodland engagement generated around 700 responses on why people value woodlands and nature, quantified in a publicly available report he offered to share.

### **Infrastructure (James)**

The group narrowed a long list to two focus areas: a sustainable business guide and helping schools with their own climate action plans. On schools, the most useful role is using the commission's own voices – governors, pupils, climate ambassadors – to get in the door, with an infrastructure lens (buildings, energy, transport, heat, water) rather than duplicating the education group's student-focused work. Paul shared headline messages from a Combined Authority risk assessment (due to be published shortly), with heat and water scarcity as the standout risks – a strong steer that project choices should be grounded in the evidence base. Heat came up as a good, topical, citizen-facing focus that could be carried through existing council communications channels. On the business guide, a call to action drew limited take-up, so James wants to broaden the invitation across the commission.

### **People (Sian)**

Sian's focus has been on what the group is for and how it works – shared in a paper – alongside a strand on bringing communities and those who govern together, and a specific idea for a 'long table' food event at York Environment Festival, drawing on conversations with Peter Roderick (public health) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Jennifer noted Poesis run exactly this kind of 'listen then break bread together' event and suggested speaking to Faye there. Sian also proposed a model of time-limited, project-based teams with clear purpose, roles and support, and wants to broaden recruitment beyond the same 30 people to get the right skill set.

### **Governance (Katie)**

Two productive meetings, with a third tomorrow. Governance has a helpfully narrow focus and clear objectives. Four strands: drafting the policies needed to become a charity (Georgiana aiming for the coming month); a package of shared assets and templates – terms of reference, project initiation documents, a simple comms request template – held on Google Drive to make it easier for people to move things forward; an impact evaluation framework built on the doughnut work (dependent on that work progressing); and, later in the year, looking at how governance can enable collaboration across the city. Hetty added that the last meeting usefully worked through processes such as what to do when an external party asks the commission to repost something.

### **Cross-cutting themes**

- Important to avoid duplication and not create work for the sake of it.

- YCC should stay focused on its unique purpose and support good work already happening across the city.
- Ideas included putting out calls for evidence on specific topics (heat, water) to identify and champion good practice; collating case studies of what organisations across York are already doing; and making sure those organisations are connected to the commission's comms so a call for evidence reaches them.
- Paul noted the council used to publish an annual best-practice document doing much of this.
- On comms more widely, there was discussion that comms has become the place things get pinned when progress stalls.
- Truzaar suggested making comms a shared responsibility across working groups.
- The website needs replacing – hosting has been carried for a year, but it isn't secure and a proper rebuild will need funding and expertise, ideally with a plan in place by this time next year.
- In the short term, ideas included a digital PR agency charity partner donating a junior person's time, and finding a volunteer to keep social media (currently mainly LinkedIn) active, with guidance.

### **Roles and the Combined Authority**

- Jenny asked for clarification on her role within the commission.
- The group agreed her role is to provide strategic direction, share insight into developments within the Combined Authority, and act as a link between the commission and key stakeholders.
- Jennifer said the commission exists to support the city's climate emergency response by championing good work while also providing independent challenge where needed.
- Jenny encouraged the commission to keep its focus on York rather than trying to influence the wider Combined Authority, given the different political priorities and climate plans across the region.
- It was agreed that Jenny would provide a standing update at future meetings and flag relevant council papers and upcoming decisions. The council's forward plan was suggested as a useful starting point.
- Jenny highlighted a water quality scrutiny paper due to be considered by the council on 21 July, with Yorkshire Water attending. Members interested in the topic can read the papers or register to speak.
- Discussed creating a more formal way for the commission to feed into council decisions, similar to the Civic Trust's approach. This could involve Jenny highlighting upcoming items for consideration, with the commission deciding when and how to contribute.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, 23 September 2026 (online)