

York Climate Commission

Steering Group Meeting – Minutes

Wednesday 29 April 2026, 08:30–10:30, Homestead Pavilion

Present

Jennifer Potter (Co-chair); Henrietta (Hetty) Stock (Co-chair); Truzaar Dordi (Comms WG Chair); Katrina Snelling (Ecology WG Chair); James Shipley (Infrastructure WG Chair); Sian Goodwin (People WG Chair); Cllr Jenny Kent (Executive Member for Environment & Climate Emergency, City of York Council); Shaun Gibbons (Head of Carbon Reduction, City of York Council); Juliet Koprowska (Chair of Trustee Board); Katy Brooke (Project Coordinator, SEI)

Apologies

Katie Thomas (Governance Working Group Chair)

1. Welcome and Check-in

Each steering group member spoke briefly to how they were arriving, what was going well in their working group, what was challenging, and what they needed from the co-chairs.

Jennifer Potter (Co-chair)

- Feels positive about resourcing as the new structure beds in; main challenge is prioritisation.
- Raised how YCC fits alongside the Combined Authority sustainability consultation and City of York Council's sustainability plan, and where there's duplication.

Sian Goodwin (People)

- Met with groups now sitting under People – Health, Education, Food and Future Economy – to understand current activity. Plenty of enthusiasm – the question is what to focus on.
- Different formats across groups; emerging themes: focus, the volunteer role, and aligning activity with parallel City of York Council work.

James Shipley (Infrastructure)

- Held an informal first gathering of the Infrastructure group on 16 April with around 10 attendees. Good conversation, harder to identify concrete actions.
- Buildings sub-group has met and progressing well, including a discussion with Helen Ball (Broadacres Housing Association) on industry challenges. Other sub-groups (Transport, Waste, Energy) yet to meet.
- Some volunteer-led work, e.g. monitoring traffic light pedestrian activity, may sit more naturally with the council.
- Future Economy group's draft business guide from a previous student project still needs work before it can be launched.

- Need from co-chairs: support with a recruitment drive for action-orientated volunteers, including outreach to Indie York, York BID and the Chamber of Commerce.

Jenny Kent (City of York Council)

- Currently focussed on bins and waste collection; alongside a circular economy paper.
- An energy independence paper is going to Executive on 5 May.
- Council capacity is tight and comms not always well received; asked working group leads to tell her clearly what comms support would help.

Truzaar Dordi (Communications)

- Highlighted the importance of comms being championed across the commission.
- Main challenge: comms is nebulous – the group needs to define what "we need comms" means and identify clear metrics (audiences, channels, reach).
- Need from co-chairs: 1:1 time to clarify what the commission wants communicated.

Katrina Snelling (Ecology)

- First Ecology group meeting scheduled for the following week.
- Has a list of c.20 members but only a small number are actively engaged, with some not responding to emails. Asked if there's a way to check whether unresponsive contacts are engaged elsewhere in YCC before continuing to chase.
- Had a useful conversation with Holly about the doughnut work and is keen to align Ecology with other groups, particularly Infrastructure.

Juliet Koprowska (Trustee Board)

- Attending as nominal Chair of the new Trustee Board, meeting for the first time next week.
- Framed the structure as three levels: working groups doing the work, co-chairs setting direction with Trustee Board input, and feedback loops between them.
- Given the Charity Commission position, the Trustee Board is not yet formally constituted.

Shaun Gibbons (City of York Council)

- The council's project pipeline maps well to YCC's working group structure, and Shaun's team has a strong contact book and city networks.
- Council comms resourcing constraints – can no longer support the monthly climate change e-newsletter – a possible space for the Comms working group.
- In some groups, people are waiting to be told what to do – the commission may need to be more directive in allocating actions, while also better recognising those already delivering.

Hetty Stock (Co-chair)

- Excited about the strength of the new working group leads.
- Main challenge is time – a lot in motion, including the Trustee Board's first meeting the following week.

2. Co-chair update

Hetty Stock provided an update under three areas: charity set-up, keeping things moving, and beyond York. Jennifer and Hetty also covered the National / People's Emergency Briefing.

2.1 Charity set-up

- The use of the word "Commission" in the charity name was initially refused by Companies House and then approved.
- The Charity Commission is currently questioning YCC's charitable purposes and asking for more detail on the public benefit and financial planning.
- A business plan has been suggested by the Charity Commission; optional but would help demonstrate expected funding and use of funds.
- The first Trustee Board meeting is scheduled for 6 May.
- Draft Terms of Reference for the Trustee Board and Steering Group were circulated in advance and are included in the pack for discussion later.

2.2 Keeping things moving

- York Community Consulting (a University of York student consulting group) is undertaking a piece of work on YCC's website infrastructure and potential grant funding routes once charitable status is achieved. Their final presentation to YCC is on 11 May (on Teams).
- Jennifer arranged a separate website audit, completed by a colleague with relevant expertise.
- Doughnut economics project group has met several times. Marco (incoming trustee) is contributing relevant expertise. Discussion is ongoing about how to involve the wider community in the doughnut work, given resource implications.
- Initial conversations have started with some working group leads, and draft TORs have been prepared.
- A meeting with Rachael Maskell MP is being arranged following the January event. A meeting with Richard Webb is now scheduled for early June.

2.3 Beyond York

- First meeting held in March with other Yorkshire PCAN climate commission chairs – useful exchange on structures, recruitment and approaches across the region.
- York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority sustainability consultation is open.

2.4 National / People's Emergency Briefing

- Purpose: to call on UK government to declare a national emergency, with a supporting media briefing broadcast on TV; cut through disinformation and support constructive civic engagement.
- Originally launched in London in November 2026 to MPs and key organisations. A 45-minute film summary has since been produced in a "gogglebox"-style format to support local screenings.

- A York city-wide screening and panel event will take place on Saturday 9 May. Panel includes Rachael Maskell MP, Richard Bramley (NFU regional environmental lead), Rosie from Parents for Future, and a professor from Leeds University.
- YCC is supporting rather than presenting at the event; keen for local community groups to attend for practical follow-up actions.
- A pitch to the City Strategic Leaders Forum was unsuccessful (concerns about length); co-chairs exploring a business-focused version that could be presented via the Green Business Forum.

2.5 Discussion

- Shaun supported YCC issuing collective responses to consultations such as the Combined Authority sustainability consultation. Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission do this regularly via short task-and-finish working groups, and it gives responses meaningful weight.
- Not clear yet whether YCC can respond to the current consultation as a commission, but agreeing how YCC forms a collective view (and who decides what goes into it) is a TOR-level question to work through.

3. Forward planning

Hetty walked through the timeline shared at the January event. The commission is broadly tracking the timeline, with new working group leads now in place, some groups having met and others still to meet, and the doughnut and governance strands progressing in parallel.

For the next steering group, the co-chairs would like to start to pull together a higher-level plan of activity covering the next 12–24 months, showing how the commission will Collaborate, Champion and Challenge across the doughnut areas (Ecology, Infrastructure, People), with Communications and Governance running across the top. This will support development of a combined communications plan and an impact measurement framework.

Discussion

- City of York Council is refreshing the York Climate Change Action Plan, on which YCC is listed as one of the actors for several actions. A number of these actions are unfunded and unresourced – where YCC working groups have appetite, this could be a productive starting point rather than generating new initiatives.
- Truzaar proposed each working group land on three to five clear metrics they will stand behind, to give the steering group a tractable view of what is being focused on.
- Katrina will take Champion / Collaborate / Challenge into her first Ecology meeting next week as a framing for what the group could work on this year, alongside the doughnut indicators on the environmental side.
- Doughnut project team is aiming to produce a current city portrait based on the 28 doughnut indicators. A future portrait piece will follow but has not yet been scoped. The resulting gap analysis is likely to inform 2027 planning rather than this year, so the YCC needs to identify meaningful work for this year while remaining open to pivoting once the doughnut data lands.

- Sian and Katrina noted that part of YCC's contribution can be a more positive, less government-style tone in engagement and communications – community-based social marketing was raised as an approach worth exploring.

4. Ways of working, roles and responsibilities

- Sian suggested using the shared folder more deliberately so its structure reflects the organisation – a central place for agreed initiatives as the YCC develops. The view was that clarifying what YCC does should come before fully defining how it works.
- Discussion on YCC's identity as a change agent – whether it's mainly campaigning, policy-influencing or grassroots. Co-chairs want to take this to the Trustee Board, noting the Champion / Collaborate / Challenge framing already provides three routes for action, and working groups don't have to do all three.
- Truzaar suggested the steering group itself should consistently champion whatever is decided, so the messaging members carry into their groups and externally is singular and clear.
- No formal decision rule was agreed. For "let's try this" operational decisions, co-chairs can lead, with members feeling able to push back if something does not work; more important decisions will need a more structured approach.
- No appetite expressed for a WhatsApp group at this stage; comms will continue via email and the shared folder, with the monthly informal check-in providing a midpoint touchpoint.

5. Dates for future meetings and AOB

5.1 Meeting dates

- Four steering groups per year plus the annual event. Wednesdays preferred, alternating between 08:30–10:00 and 16:00–17:30.
- Provisional months: June, September, December (December tbc).
- Locations to alternate – next meeting possibly at West Offices (City of York Council).
- Three-month trial of a one-hour informal monthly check-in between steering groups (coffee or after-work drink).

5.2 AOB – Zero-waste strategy

- City zero-waste strategy is in development under Jenny's portfolio (council has an operational policy but not a waste strategy), alongside North Yorkshire's circular economy work.
- James offered to help, noting waste is part of his day job. Sian highlighted litter as a practical focus, using council newsletters for simple individual actions alongside wider measures like the forthcoming national Deposit Return Scheme.

6. Actions

Owner	Action	Timing
All WG leads	Hold a more substantive working group meeting and start to identify priority actions, framed against Champion / Collaborate / Challenge and aligned with the doughnut areas, the City of York Council climate action plan and the Combined Authority sustainability work.	Before next steering group
All WG leads	Bring back to the next steering group at least one (ideally two to three) specific actions the working group has agreed to focus on for the next few months.	Next steering group
Co-chairs	Propose dates for four steering groups across the year (alternating 08:30–10:00 and 16:00–17:30 Wednesdays) and circulate.	ASAP
Co-chairs	Propose a recurring day and time for the monthly informal check-in (3-month trial) and send a first date c.3–4 weeks out. Likely around 17:30 start. Avoid Wed evenings (Katrina); Mon / Tue may not work for Sian. Thursdays generally workable.	ASAP
Co-chairs	Schedule a meeting with the new City of York Council Chief Executive to introduce YCC.	In due course
Hetty	Send Truzaar and Juliet invites to the York Community Consulting final presentation on 11 May.	Before 11 May
Co-chairs	Continue work on the business plan for the Charity Commission; invite input from Truzaar on funding scope and use.	Ongoing
Co-chairs	Continue dialogue with Charity Commission on charitable purposes and public benefit.	Ongoing
All	Promote the People's Emergency Briefing screening and panel on Saturday 9 May, 14:30–16:30 at Tempest Anderson Hall, via working group and personal networks.	Before 9 May
Co-chairs	Follow up on the Heworth screening of the People's Emergency Briefing film to learn how it went.	ASAP
Co-chairs	Continue exploring a business-focused version of the Emergency Briefing via the Green Business Forum.	Ongoing

Owner	Action	Timing
Shaun	Share a copy of the current City of York Council climate action plan with the steering group.	ASAP
Shaun	Identify council representatives for any working groups that don't yet have one.	Ongoing
Working group leads	Flag to Shaun where their working group does not yet have a council representative.	ASAP
James / Sian / Jenny	Connect on the council's emerging zero-waste strategy, with Sam, to bring wider input into the draft.	Ongoing
All	Send any feedback on the Trustee Board TOR (and any further feedback on the Steering Group TOR or today's meeting) directly to the co-chairs.	ASAP
All	Send the co-chairs ideas for project starters / focus topics that could anchor a future workshop-style social session (e.g. role of the volunteer).	Ongoing

7. AOB

Update from Katie Thomas, Governance Working Group Lead

What's going well?

- We had a positive first meeting of the governance group on the 14th April – with the group bringing together a broad mix of expertise and experience (incl. climate change adaptation, engaging & supporting business decarbonisation, valuing lived experience, doughnut economics, climate change policy, governance models, and performance & monitoring approaches).
- There was a real sense of shared purpose around WG members wanting to give back to the city.
- There was strong alignment around the focus for the WG:
 1. Internal governance (inward-looking) – supporting the set-up of the charity, ensuring clear communication & collaboration between WGs (& the SG);
 2. External governance – looking at how we can provide the supporting structure & processes to join-up existing climate change activities in York & enable greater collaboration;

3. Monitoring & measurement (wrapping around the internal & external governance strands) – developing & implementing an effective measurement framework to capture the impacts of YCC’s activities & progress towards our vision.

What is challenging?

- How can we best collaborate with other WGs? In our previous WG meeting we discussed that the Steering Group has a role for having oversight for the different groups, and that it would also be used to have members of the Governance WG sitting on the other WGs to support collaboration.
- Outside of the WG meeting, I have had members talk to me about Drax (potentially due to my background at the Combined Authority). I suggest that YCC develop a position statement around Drax – being really clear about what they want from key stakeholders (e.g., the Combined Authority), cognisant that it is a significant employer in the region and the UK is currently reliant on Drax for energy security. I think this sits under the “challenge” strand of YCC’s remit, but I also feel it’s important it is not a distraction for us - preventing us from reducing GHG emissions in York!

What we need from the co-chairs

Within the WG meeting, there were a few questions around the purpose & strategy for YCC (which Hetty explained in the meeting). But I do wonder if there’s a potted summary of YCC that could be produced to avoid us keep needing to back over old ground?

SG responsibilities look clear & happy with the elements proposed for ways of working.

Communication - I think it would be good practice for WG Chairs to share the minutes from the SG with our members to ensure they have sight of what’s been discussed. I have had a question around whether the SG meetings could be recorded.

AOB - Are YCC planning to respond to the CA’s consultation on YNY’s Strategy for a Sustainable Future?