

Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission

Commission Panel updates: 6 December 2023

This paper is for information. It provides a brief update of the work of the Communities and Engagement Panel and the Regional Policy Forum, as these are the groups that have been active in the last quarter, to provide transparency and visibility across the Commission.

1. Communities & Engagement

1.1 Focus during last 3 months

The panel has reflected on the Commission's public engagement events and guided the development of a new approach to the quarterly online events. This includes opening up the events to greater participant input and a proposal to work with partners to deliver at least one of these as an in-person event.

The panel has also helped shape the Transport online event on Dec 4th which will be the first event developed under the new approach

The panel has also discussed the future Communities Climate Engagement workstream and made a number of recommendations.

The Commonplace consultation process has been reviewed by the panel following concerns about consultation fatigue, with the panel recommending more space between consultation social media campaigns, and more flexibility about how the programme of Delivering Impact work is processed moving forward.

1.2. Key reflections for the Commission's awareness

The panel will be reviewing membership and recruiting new members in the New Year as the new workstreams develop, to ensure we have the right mix of skills and representation. In particular we will be seeking to improve local authority input.

The final composition and work of the panel will depend upon the workstreams selected as the focus for next year's work, as it is anticipated that the majority of these will include a need for some type of community engagement.

1.4. Forward look

The main focus of the panel is in developing a flexible, dynamic work programme for the next phase of the Commission. This includes identifying priority initiatives (under broad headings already identified), identifying

appropriate new members of the panel and developing governance for work projects.

2. Regional Policy Forum

Focus during last 3 months

The summer and autumn have been very busy for the Regional Policy Forum. First, building on the July RPF meeting, we prepared a paper on how to take forward the economic transformation agenda. This will form the basis of a task and finish exercise which was originally planned for October/November but will now begin in early 2024. Secondly, our October RPF meeting focused on Local Nature Recovery Strategies, where we are collaborating with the four LNRS leads and other partners; ideally we will be able to form a regional spatial picture of the nature recovery baseline and opportunities. Together these activities mean we have made progress in a short time against two of our regional policy principles.

2.2 Progress on any key actions that the Forum is enabling

The Yorkshire Leaders' Board's endorsement of the Regional Policy Principles in July is a significant milestone, because it shows that there is substantial common ground across the region's local and combined authorities on what the policy conditions for effective climate action. These fall into two categories: those which can be pursued now by actors within the region; and those which are contingent on better evidence and on national policy change. The latter category informs our advocacy agenda, and we know that the Yorkshire Leaders' Board is also looking at policy advocacy so there is an opportunity for closer collaboration.

On planning, we have maintained engagement with the Leeds Local Plan and have also participated directly in a workshop with North Yorkshire Council to inform their new Local Plan.

On economic transformation, we have worked with Y-PERN colleagues and our forthcoming task & finish exercise will further develop the narrative for economy and climate progress being closely intertwined. There is a need to look more closely at the social justice, public health and resilience aspects.

On nature recovery, it is clear that the Environment Act 2021 creates new policy and regulatory hooks for enhancing nature that authorities need support to make the most of.

2.3 Key reflections for the Commission's awareness

Whilst the regional policy principles were developed specifically for the planning system, it has become clear that they can have applications in other areas of public policy, and – as has been shown for economic strategy – they offer a basis for opening up new multi-disciplinary conversations. However the planning system is a direct regulatory function for local authorities, so we need to get the right balance between maintaining a planning focus and exploring other policy avenues.

2.4 Forward look

We have a draft new work plan for RPF in 2024 which will be shared with RPF participants shortly. The proposed approach reduces the core RPF meetings from four to three per year, but adds in a flexible programme of in-detail workshops. This will hopefully help us to broaden the range of local councillors who can engage in RPF, beyond those with an explicitly climate action remit. The principal subject matter for RPF will be to continue building detail and momentum around the policy principles, and to develop our advocacy priorities.