



## Main Commission Meeting

20 March 2024, 3.00 – 5.30pm, ZOOM

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

- This was the final meeting of Phase 1 of the Commission. The Commission is mid-way through the recruitment process for Commissioners, with some new Commissioners joining officially from April onwards, and some Commissioners stepping down.

#### Apologies:

Oliver Coppard (pre election workload), Jack Hemingway (Full Council meeting clash), Phil Holdgate, Helen Slinger, Melanie Taylor, Oliver Harmer, Martin Budd (leave).

- Welcome back to Andy Gouldson, who has had an extended period away from work due to ill health, and whilst he is stepping down from his roles at the University of Leeds, he is keen to continue to support the Commission as a Commissioner.
- Rosa has formally been appointed by the University of Leeds as Climate Commissions' Director, where she will be Director for both the YHCC and Leeds Climate Commission and lead the Climate Commissions' team. This will bring an end to her time at the Environment Agency – 21 years to the day!

#### 2. Meeting action log and minutes from the last meeting

No actions were outstanding to review. The Minutes were agreed.

#### 3. Review of Phase 1

##### a. Final Progress Report on Phase 1 Actions

A presentation from Rosa – see Paper 1 - Phase 1 YHCC Specific Actions Final Progress Report

##### b. Thank you

- Commissioners and Commission Members have given so much time to help the Commission not only establish itself quickly, but also to deliver.

Collectively we have:

- Developed the first Climate Action Plan from a standing still start within 9 months, then transitioned into our early delivery phase, recruiting our modest (but excellent!) Commissions' team...
- Collaboratively developed and delivered a comprehensive programme of expert led sessions – 22 in 11 months across all four pillars of climate action with 94 speakers. All of which has provided a strong foundation and is being used to support our Phase 2 work.
- Established the Climate Action Pledge – which has so much potential in Phase 2 – having 84 signatories already.
- And so much engagement work – in our first three years we have genuinely grown, supported and facilitated critically important discussions on climate action at a range of levels and scales, and we are actively learning and reflecting on these, getting better and more effective.

One of the other key messages that we have heard and indeed discussed in various of our panel and main Commission meetings is the need to have a clear ambition of what we are aiming for here.

We know that the current systems are very complex and messy – and the future is going to be complex and messy too. So we need to anchor ourselves behind something more tangible than targets and numbers – important though those are – and start articulating clearly what the future we want to aim for and create looks like... Critically this needs to not be a utopian vision as these often switch people off, seeming too remote, or seem completely unattainable.

#### 4. Communications Overview & Update

Kate Lock presented Paper 2 the Comms Update.

- There are quite a few conferences and events coming up that the team are involved in: Yorkshire Sustainability Conference, the Priestley relaunch, Parliamentary Evidence week.
- Commissioners were asked for their support at the regional symposiums in June with events across the region.
- Peter O'Brien mentioned the Student Sustainability conference where over 500 students had attended with fantastic ideas
- Commissioners were asked who would be attending UKREiiF. Kate Josephs confirmed that colleagues were involved from Sheffield and so they can feed in YHCC content into it.

#### 5. Preparing for Phase 2

- Verbal update from Rosa Foster
- Leadership Group, Commission Groups, & Flagship Projects
- Rosa thanked Robyn for her work on the Research and Evidence Panel and shaping the new Regional Picture and Evidence Group.

- The Leadership group had a first workshop to develop the Flagship Projects and Groups structure for Phase 2 and this is continuing to evolve
- Recruitment
  - Rosa shared a slide showing the areas of interest in the Flagship Projects and Groups emerging from the Commissioner Application process
- Products – Progress
  - Website
  - Carbon Reduction Pathways
  - Our Carbon Story
- How does YHCC work on carbon relate to the WYCA carbon pathways work? There is discussion between the two teams but the methodology is very different, they are serving different purposes. YHCC are asking what's cost beneficial at scale. In the next round YHCC want to find out how useful it would be to take a more nested approach. The YHCC work is almost finished and WYCA are just starting.

#### 6. Climate Action Plan Commissioner Insight: Big Nature Impact Fund

Rob Hall provided the Commission with an update on his work creating an investment fund to support nature's recovery (Action I), with opportunity for Q&A afterwards

- Rob is heading up the natural capital division at Federated Hermes and has spent 3 years designing capital for UK Nature Impact Fund.
- The Nature Impact Fund (Investment by DEFRA) has passed the government's due diligence, and they have drafted UK nature market principles along with Finance Earth and will be managing it with them, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB plus others. The aim is for it to be a holistic, scientific, socially beneficial transition of management of land in the emerging land management sector. Academia will also advise the fund.
- The scheme recognises that monoculture has a bad impact on biodiversity. It will blend timber production and native trees. It will encourage peatland restoration, wetland restoration, biodiverse habitats.
- It is driven by Biodiversity Net Gain and is reliant on this framework to finance it. It does need to generate an income for the pension scheme. Other categories are harder to make commercially viable.
- Limits are skills and management.

#### Discussion points

- It needs a small number of entities at county level that act as a network.
- There are a lot of small-scale partnerships who've been waiting for this kind of investment.

- There is a lot of enthusiasm on the supply side, most of it is about access to land, and lots of enthusiasm on the demand side with the money. There needs to be clear confident channels between those 2 sides. The issues are complex landowner expectations, and how our land system works in the UK.
- YHCC Flagship Project the Strategic Land and Water Use Framework is very relevant.
- There is a reluctance of government to step in and regulate.
- Accreditation is acting as a barrier.
- There are huge opportunities at regional level, through devolution, so it's possible to get this working locally.
- How do you make a return on a peat bog? Peatland carbon has been taxonomised. Carbon credits are quasi regulated. The value is driven by those restoring a peat bog. There is a hierarchy with carbon credits. Peat bogs value is in avoiding releasing carbon – you can't use avoidance credits to offset. You sell them to a company operating in the food sector for example.
- That means the overall impact is neutral - somebody has to be doing something bad to be buying these credits
- But there is a natural degrading of Carbon sinks in the world therefore doing nothing is not neutral.
- There are ethical questions about selling a carbon credit, drawing in traders that we all need to consider: Who owns the credit - the landowner or the person who did the restoration?
- There is challenge around a lack of capacity; capacity building will be needed for the fund. Is there a role for the Commission to help build that capacity?
- There is a NERF programme to increase capacity in the market to become investment ready. The fund acts as an accelerator, putting cash into technical assistance funded programmes where we can give out grants to get education / skilled up.
- Community groups don't need to develop their own SPV model – in fact that can make accessing this investment harder. They need to be ready to deliver (capacity, skills, pipeline of sites).

BREAK

## 7. Climate Action Plan – Steers for Vision, Reflections on Outcomes

Jon Kedwards provided an update on the work done to date, reviewing and refreshing the Climate Action Plan. See the slide pack Climate Action Plan update.

The meeting split into 4 breakout groups each supported by a facilitator from the Commissions' Team to discuss two questions.

Qn1: "What is Yorkshire & Humber known for now (positive or negative) and what do we want to be known for in 20 years time?"

Qn 2: “What would be key signs of progress?”

The output from these workshop discussions will be collated by the team and developed into the draft Goals for the refreshed and updated Climate Action Plan. The Commissioners requested to see a good working draft of the revised plan, so that they can comment, input and help shape the content.

Commissioners rejoined the main meeting for 5 minutes of reflection on the group sessions

#### 8. AOB

Emma Bridge – They are recruiting a Heat and Retrofit Coordinator. Commissioners were asked to share the post with networks.

#### 9. Final thank you’s marking the end of Phase 1 and Close

So that marks the end of Phase 1 – looking ahead to the future that we need to create together and with our partners across the region, country and internationally.

The Chair thanked Commissioners for all contributions to date and looked forward to seeing people at the first Phase 2 meeting on the 10 July.

#### **Next meeting: Face to face meeting in Sheffield on the 10 July.**

The meeting is in the afternoon with a tour of the [Green Estate](#) starting at 12.45. The Green Estate is an urban adaptation exemplar and a demonstrator within the [Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership](#), one of our Phase 2 flagship projects. Details on this will follow shortly, but for now please hold the 10 July free.