

Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC) Meeting

07/03/2023 11:00-13:00 Via Zoom

Attendees:

Adam Scott
Catharine Cameron
Chanelle Field
Clive Gipson
Cllr Holly Whitbread
Cllr Ivan Henderson
Cllr Paul Thorogood
Cllr Peter Davey
Cllr Peter Schwier
Debbie Townsley
Denise Beedell
Dr Poone Yazdanpanah
Dr Simon Lyster
Ellis Shelton
Graham Thomas (Speaker)
Heather Hilburn
Jason Searles (Speaker)
Jerry Stokes (Speaker)
Jo Roberts
John Meehan (Speaker)
Josie Falco
Kerry Burgess (Speaker)
Kris Radley
Laura Mansel-Thomas
Liam Ashford
Lois Bowser
Louise Tennekoon
Luciana Almeida (Speaker)
Mark Wilson
Matthew Thomas
Nicola Melville
Ollie Pendered (Speaker)
Prajwal Pandey
Prof. Jules Pretty (Chair)
Renata Lins
Rob Pilley
Rob Wise
Robert Mitchell
Rosalyn Murphy
Sam Kennedy
Sarah Howard
Sel Sanger
Sukhi Binns
Tim Simpson
Tom Day (Speaker)
Tracey Vickers (Speaker)
Tristan Smith (Speaker).
Yarema Ronish

Apologies:

Adam Read
Aled Jones
Chris Howlett
Claire Williamson
Cllr David King
Cllr Sue Lissimore
Graham J C Underwood
Ian Davidson
Jillian Anable
John Lippe
Mark Nowers
Rt Revd Roger Morris
Victoria Hills

1. Welcome and Opening

The chair (Prof. Jules Pretty) welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the agenda. The chair remarked that it is three years since the Commission was established, progress has been made and 100 recommendations were established and taken on board regionally.

2. Updates from SIG leads

Land Use & Green Infrastructure

- Climate Focus Area (CFA)'s Communications Strategy, which is being developed by Genesis, is now in draft form. It will contain the CFA's aims/objectives, key message, priority audiences, secondary audiences, primary activity, and milestones. A CFA logo has been
- As part of a bottom-up approach to the CFA, we are working with Involve to create three Parish Nature Plans in Stisted, Tiptree and Wivenhoe. This will be a participative, co-creation project with the first set of workshops planned for May 2023.
- As part of the comms package, work has been done on the CFA identity and logo.
- Bio-diversity Net Gain (BNG) will come into law in November 2023. Essex County Council (ECC) has put aside two sites to pilot this, but ultimately there will need to be BNG sites in all twelve Local Authority areas. BNG is a great mechanism for creating nature areas across Essex. A business case has been done on BNG which has shown financial and environmental benefits.

Energy

- Solar Together 2022 campaign is close to wrapping up and is expected to deliver over 600 solar installations. Solar Together 2023 is now open, contracts have been awarded to two installers and as of yesterday registrations are over 6,000.
- Community Energy programme is going to extend support to community groups until March 2024.
- Community Climate Action Challenge Fund (CACF) has now been fully allocated. 41 organisations have been awarded funding.
- Community Energy Pathway Project has received national recognition. Community Energy South and ECC received two Community Energy England awards. We have also been successful in our bid for Innovate UK's "Pioneering Places" fund, as well as our supporting bid with Rochford District Council, "Fast Followers" fund.
- CommuniPower is exploring how we can decarbonise whole villages, retrofitting whole streets and whole communities in one go.
- We have bid into the next round of the Home Upgrade Grant and expect to receive £25m over two years, which will help with energy efficiency measures in low-income households. In the same vein, we are now exploring working with Districts to access ECO4 (the Energy Company Obligation) which we hope will bring further energy efficiency into low-income households in Essex.
- Our bid for Project SHIELD's Ofgem Strategic Innovation Fund has been submitted, it will help us decarbonise heat and power for low-income households.

Waste

- A new Joint Vision and Strategy for the county is being developed for all 13 Essex Councils. Consultation is planned for Summer 2023. The strategy will align with the Climate Action Commission recommendations by having a focus on circular economy, reducing waste, maximising the waste that is sent to recycling, and embedding the issue of tackling greenhouse emissions within everything we do. The strategy will position Essex as a leading authority in the country for tackling waste.

- Work is being done on how we deliver better services and systems, but also enhancing access for all. ECC, working with District & Boroughs, has rolled up enhanced services over the last year with further improvements happening this year and next. This includes not only access to waste reduction and recycling services but also ensuring we have secured long term treatment capacity for the materials that are being collected. The programme is well advanced to deliver the ECAC recommendation of zero waste to landfill by 2030.
- Greenhouse gas emission targets and mitigation measures are now embedded into ECC's waste procurement activity, and we are working with partners and anchor organisations to get it embedded within their procurement activities as well.
- A number of waste reduction campaigns are planned for 2023 to take the public on this journey. Waste reduction is a primary outcome that needs to be delivered.

Built Environment

- One of the Climate Commission recommendations was for all new schools to be carbon zero by 2022. This target has been achieved. All new schools now commissioned going forward into 2023 will be at a net zero carbon operational standard.
- The Climate Commission recommendation for new build homes (all new homes consented to be carbon zero by 2025) is unlikely to be met. But there are some good steps being made. In some places and with some housebuilders we will be able to meet this target.
 - Viability work has been completed: this confirms that it is viable in most areas of Essex to build new homes to exemplary energy efficiency standards (based on the world renowned Passivhaus building standard.)
 - The difference in cost between building to the Government's Future Homes Standard and a Passivhaus style development is only about £2-3,000.
 - Councils can exceed the Building Regulations to require Net Zero Carbon homes.
 - If a Stamp Duty Exemption were to be applied to net zero carbon new homes, a Passivhaus style home would be cheaper than Future Homes Standard.

Transport

- Active Travel: £1M allocation for behaviour change and capacity building, and round 4 bid for the Active Travel Fund (ATF) has been submitted.
- Cycling: Cycling Strategy is being refreshed, last written in 2016, due for public consultation in May/ June. Two more districts have signed up for their Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), with a couple more having verbally agreed to progress their LCWIPs.
- Schools Streets: five have now been delivered and three more have been submitted for ATF4.
- Electric Vehicles (EV): draft EV strategy has been developed, Mitie have produced proposals for electric vehicle charge points at ECC properties, and Office of Zero Emission Vehicle bid for On Street Residential Chargepoints has been submitted.
- Policy: development of our Local Transport Plan 4 (key statutory transport document) is underway, with four themes that aligns with Everyone's Essex. A new road user hierarchy is being developed.
- Passenger Transport: we are consulting on Chelmer Valley Park & Ride expansion, which is part of the Army and Navy project. DigiGo, our elective demand minibus, is now delivering 600+ passengers per week. We did not win our Levelling Up bid for Transport, but Colchester did win £20M funding for St. Botolphs, redesigning the roundabout in the public realm.

Community Engagement

- Events and visits: Great Clacton School (11/11), EA Sustain event (14-15/01), Great Bentley Primary School (23/01), RCCE Webinar (26/01), Ambitious Essex Innovation Summit (27/01), East London Biogas visit (21/02), and Go Green Uttlesford (06/03).

- Climate Action Challenge Fund: £500k has been awarded to 41 out of 89 applications. Colchester (20) and Chelmsford (15) are the regions with the most applications, while Basildon (2), Brentwood (3) and Harlow (3) had the least. Most applications came from registered charity groups (35) and schools (20).
- Involve's Local Climate Engagement Programme: Involve and ECC will work with three local parish councils in the Climate Focus Area (Stisted, Tiptree and Wivenhoe). The purpose of the project is for each parish to have a community powered Local Nature Plan. Workshops will allow residents to put forward recommendations for their parish council, which will, in turn, influence their local nature plans. Involve will then create a toolkit for this process for the rest of the parish councils in the CFA to create their own plan.
- Carbon Literacy training: available to all ECC members and employees, involves pledging to undertake new and significant actions, 500+ have registered so far, and 180+ accreditations earned. ECC has been awarded bronze accreditation as a carbon literate organisation.

A Just Transition for a Green Economy

- Green Entrepreneurs Programme: short programme to support people with entrepreneurial ideas to create green start-ups. The project plan has been developed and mentors are currently being recruited. Recruitment will start at the end of March and the programme will run until Summer 2023. Continued evaluation and monitoring will take place to look at the outcomes and benefits, so that we can establish whether this programme should be repeated in the future.
- Essex Heroes Youth Movement: to promote economic growth opportunities in the green growth sectors. Taking the learning and evidence from Shujaaz, the project is about creating a social movement, engaging young people, and improving awareness of green issues and green career opportunities. This is being led by ECC's Skills team, working closely with Green Growth. The project will launch in Canvey Island, which is one of our Levelling Up areas. We will begin by engaging a group of young people to come up with a name and branding, as well as where they want the project to head to. All engagement will be digitally badged.
- A Great Start – Business Accreditation Scheme: encouraging businesses to make small changes to reduce their environmental impact. We are working with Provide, who already have a similar scheme focusing on workplace wellbeing scheme. We are now working with businesses, providers and with our district and borough colleagues to establish: (1) what businesses and providers are already doing in this space, (2) what more they could do (3) common KPIs to measure progress and (4) what others could offer to incentivise these small environmental changes. There will be a soft launch in Braintree this year.

3. Enabling Community Energy

A strategic overview of community energy: opportunities and challenges - Ollie Pendered (speaker), Chief Executive, Community Energy South.

The work on community energy that is being done in Essex has been recognised at national level and is influencing emerging government policy. Essex is in a really good position to take forward the proposals set out in the Skidmore Review and align the push for community energy with Levelling Up.

Community energy has 3 elements:

- Powering Up: helping communities understand their energy needs and identify what renewables can be embedded within their locality. Groups are set up as a community interest group or community benefit society so they can raise money from the community to invest in renewable energy projects. This community financing can be blended with public finance later on.

- Powering Down: training up our communities to give them the skills to provide local trusted energy advice. In doing so, supporting both the middle income and the more vulnerable. And so, enabling community resilience.
- Energy Planning: based on neighbourhood planning and local area energy plans, where communities have their own decarbonisation plan that they own.

Pathways Programme: developed for Essex as a step-by-step approach to developing an area and a county-wide community energy movement. In doing so, this creates a local resource of renewable energy and grows community-led local energy awareness.

There are currently 4 community energy groups in Essex (Saffron Waldon, Colchester, Tollesbury and Danbury). The long-term ambition is for every District and Borough to host their own community energy group.

Saffron Waldon Community Energy: working with Uttlesford District Council and ECC, [Littlebury](#) has now a detailed decarbonisation plan for 500 homes.

Modelling has been done around all the 4 community groups in Essex, their governance is in place to deliver community energy, outreach and local energy services. We are starting to look at bringing in those parishes into a Market Town Parish approach, helping all the parishes have decarbonisation plans that fit with the community energy pathway strategy, so governance and the outreach can be built out.

Essex case studies – Luciana Almeida (speaker), Energy and Low Carbon Project Officer, ECC.

Policy changes:

- Local Electricity Bill has got support from over 300 MPs. If passed, it will create a stable tariff for small scale renewable generators and a mechanism for community-led renewable energy generators to sell energy directly to local people.
- Onshore Wind Consultation will help reduce barriers for onshore wind projects, which could also help drive more growth in this sector in Essex.
- Chris Skidmore Review includes significant support for community energy.

Tollesbury Climate Partnership:

- Involved in a lot of community engagement, not only energy but also biodiversity, marine conservation, and climate action.
- Leading on the Tollesbury Primary School Decarbonisation project: community energy share offer to be launched early March.
- Helped 133 households this winter with energy advice and are looking at the solar energy generation potential in the whole Parish.

Community Energy Colchester:

- Has installed free energy saving measures in 124 households this winter.
- Helped 2 Parish Councils with the installation of EV charge points.
- Supporting 2 primary schools with energy saving and educational activities.

South East New Energy: working with 16 Parishes to unlock renewable energy opportunities using data and delivering feasibility studies which focus on the local priorities of the group.

Renewable Energy Resource Assessment: this study identifies the potential for solar generation in Essex on rooftops and land parcels, so each community will be provided with data and a feasibility review that will help them take forward future projects.

Other initiatives that will support this growth: CommuniHeat, Essex Community Energy CIC, and EssNet (Essex Net Zero Task Force).

4. Solar power: maximising the benefit to local communities – Jerry Stokes (speaker), Executive Chairman, Gridserve.

For us to reach net zero, we need to take a portfolio approach, bringing in different renewable energy technologies. Solar is more readily deployable across a wider space, across a wider number of application areas.

When looking at ground-mounted systems, you have to ask – is there a better use for the land? Solar is a good use for smaller packets of land which would not normally be chosen for large scale commercial build outs.

Agrivoltaics (Solar + Agriculture) – how can farmers derive the best value for their land? Combining solar with its physical benefits, e.g. solar as roofs of agriculture buildings and solar at a height that allows grazing. Bi-facial solar modules also allow for solar fences to restrict movement of animals and to be co-deployed in a field.

Solar Sound Barriers – perform a double function of acting as a sound barrier and generating energy. Bi-facial solar modules make it so that mounting them vertically does not have a massive disadvantage in terms of energy generation.

Community benefits:

- Employment, progressive skills development.
- Improved air quality, bio-diversity, local environment.
- Greater awareness of the broader climate change dialogue and action.

Community Ownership:

- Financial investment and return benefitting local people and communities.
- Engagement in broader climate change dialogue and action.
- Creates a catalyst for “buy-in” to additional local initiatives.

Devolution:

- Creates local sense of decision making and ownership.
- Devolved planning could mandate solar on all new buildings.
- Whole system approach – zero carbon transport, Smart Local Energy Systems.

Discussion: The presentations prompted a discussion around Solar together and new buildings legislation and policies.

5. AOB and Chair’s closing remarks

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 06 June 2023**.

Items from the Chat

Samantha.Kennedy to Everyone 11:00

S

<https://www.braintreeandwithamtimes.co.uk/news/11882105.braintree-council-makes-huge-savings-with-solar-panel-array/>

[Braintree Council](#)

[makes huge savings with solar panel array | Braintree and Witham Times](#)

Samantha.Kennedy to Everyone 11:05

S

<https://disneylandparis-news.com/en/disneyland-paris-begins-operating-the-first-section-of-its-solar-canopy-plant/>

[Disneyland Paris](#)

[begins operating the first section of its solar canopy plant - DisneylandParis News \(disneylandparis-news.com\)](#)

Samantha.Kennedy to Everyone 11:08

S

<https://ourworldindata.org/death-uk-coal>

[The death of UK](#)

[coal in five charts - Our World in Data](#)

Robert Mitchell to Everyone 11:11

RM

Nothing very obvious on google maps yet! here's Braintree swimming pool, with plenty of industrial roof space, as well as possible car park PV canopy space!? <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Braintree+Swimming+%26+Fitness/@51.868073,0.5707352,427m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m6!3m5!1s0x47d8f00a59494693:0xfdd2cf53312ada4!8m2!3d51.8671926!4d0.5703637!16s%2Fg%2F1tdxv8p6>

[Braintree](#)

[Swimming & Fitness - Google Maps](#)

Peter Davey to Everyone 12:00



Hi Jason, thank you for the update. As you are aware there is currently a trial taking place lead by Cllr Malcolm Buckley, Portfolio Holder for Waste Reduction and Recycling, to introduce an appointment only system for the public into recycling centres, so how does this link into and encourage the reduction of waste and increase in recycling whilst avoiding an increase in fly tipping. thank you, Peter

Ollie Pendered, Community Energy South to Everyone 12:34

OP

@Jules answer to the exam question is that communities can work together to group buy and reduce the cost of retrofit and solar (Solar Together is a good example) - if we are going to come off oil heating in the rural areas we need to appreciate that our electricity bills will go up but oil bills won't be a concern! With community decarbonisation plan and with local trusted energy champions then households can share learning and work together to get the best tariffs and reduce their energy usage - we can also then look at local community energy that can supply cheaper energy locally through 'Energy Local'.

To add - we are seeing low interest loan facilities for homeowners to retrofit - seen this in Suffolk and in East Hants recently. But also if we can create local energy markets for retrofit there will be private investment opportunities as well

adamscott to Everyone 12:38

A

We like the green energy from wind turbines but what we have trouble with is the less than green infrastructure ie pylons that get that energy to London

Rob Wise, NFU to Everyone 11:22

RW

I share Simon's view

Cllr. Peter Schwier - Essex CC- Climate Czar to Everyone 11:23

CP

Look after the soil and the soil will look after you

adamscott to Everyone 11:23

A

There are great opportunities for nature but food is still key - a balancing act is needed and i am sure we can achieve it

Cllr.Paul.Thorogood to Everyone 11:33

C

How does the Rivenhall waste incinerator that is set to be operational by 2026 drive down carbon emissions? It will emit 600,000 tonnes of Co2 per year and all waste will be transported there by lorry. I understand Hertfordshire has already signed up to Rivenhall and Cambridgeshire (which rejected plans for a waste incinerator that was upheld by the SoS) is in talks with Rivenhall. Will Essex sign up to it?

Denise Beedell - Logistics UK to Everyone 11:44

DB

Logistics UK would be keen to work with the Transport SIG on the EV strategy. dbeedell@logistics.org.uk and eshelton@logistics.org.uk - please do drop us an email.

lois bowser to Everyone 11:44

LB

Uttlesford LCWIP underway with funding from Uttlesford Council Climate Action FUND money

JerryStokes to Everyone 11:45

J

GRIDSERVE very happy to support the EV and EV Charging work jerry.stokes@gridservice.com

jason.searles to Everyone 11:49

J

All waste treatment approaches will have a carbon impact - the focus therefore is on minimising waste and then using the lowest carbon impact solutions. Recycling and composting will have lower GHG emissions than disposal. So minimising the amount of waste we generate, maximising the proportion that is recycled/composted and sending as little as possible to disposal (i.e. landfill or EfW) is the best approach to reducing the whole system carbon impact of waste. Although EfW emit CO2 the whole system carbon impact of using EfW combined with heat capture remains lower than the alternate disposal system of landfill.

Yarema Ronish to Everyone 12:40



I was really impressed with the Littlebury Energy Report which sets out a deliverable renewable energy strategy at village scale
https://www.swce.co.uk/downloads/LittleburyEnergyPlan_Report.pdf

[LittleburyEnergyPlan_Report.pdf \(swce.co.uk\)](https://www.swce.co.uk/downloads/LittleburyEnergyPlan_Report.pdf)

Tracey Vickers to Everyone 12:50



We will be exploring parish EV hubs under the new LEVI fund (local EV infrastructure)

Graham Thomas to Everyone 12:50

GT

Getting the Net Zero carbon (in operation) planning policies in Local Plans right will be key to moving the house building market in Essex forward. However, if we can influence the Chancellor to provide a stamp duty exemption for NZ carbon (in operation) new homes, this could well be the game changer which moves the market faster than simply applying a new policy standard.

Rob Wise, NFU to Everyone 12:58

RW

Please can you circulate the letter that has been sent to the Chancellor?

Catherine Cameron to Everyone 12:59



Thank you for some excellent updates from the team. Really positive and helpful session with so much detail on the progress being made across Essex.

Graham Thomas to Everyone 13:00

GT

The mortgage providers are already asking the Chancellor for this stamp duty exemption for NZ carbon new homes.

jason.searles to Everyone 11:49

All waste treatment approaches will have a carbon impact - the focus therefore is on minimising waste and then using the lowest carbon impact solutions. Recycling and composting will have lower GHG emissions than disposal. So minimising the amount of waste we generate, maximising the proportion that is recycled/composted and sending as little as possible to disposal (i.e. landfill or EfW) is the best approach to reducing the whole system carbon impact of waste. Although EfW emit CO2 the whole system carbon impact of using EfW combined with heat capture remains lower than the alternate disposal system of landfill.

Collapse All ^  

Cllr.Paul.Thorogood 12:31

"Waste-to-energy" is often described as a positive way to produce energy, but it works against the circular economy, by producing toxic waste, air pollution and contributing to climate change.

Investing more in separate collection, recycling and waste prevention policies, and preventing county authorities from getting locked into long-term contracts with waste burning facilities, in my view is crucial to ensure the shift toward a true circular economy