

Climate Action Group

Minutes of Meeting

Date: Wednesday 14 January 2026

Time: 7.30pm

Venue: Steyning Centre

Attendees: Vicci Johnson, Ann Blakelock, Frank Bull, Mick Tilley, Mike Croker (representing Horsham District Council), Geoff Barnard (representing Greening Steyning), Simon Birnstingl

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jill Cannon

2. Review of Parish Climate Action Plans

Bramber Parish

- Bramber confirmed their climate action plan is complete and remains in a simple, locally owned format rather than being re-uploaded to OnePlanet.
- Key actions reviewed:
 - Community Highway Scheme application for a safer crossing at Castle Lane (positive early feedback received; preliminary work underway).
 - Footpath safety improvements at Beeding Bridge access to the Western River footpath; acknowledged as currently hazardous and under investigation.
 - Speedwatch activity ongoing with two teams (The Street and Clay's Hill), with perceived reductions in vehicle speeds.
 - Emergency plan update in progress in partnership with the Bramber Society, focusing on serviced equipment and a register of skills and vehicles.
 - Bramber Castle Orchard progressing well; plans to expand tree planting.
 - Youth project at Bramber car park beds noted as stalled; hope to re-engage.
 - Communications to residents now via twice-yearly magazine articles rather than printed leaflets.

- Solar panels on Bramber toilet block remain a long-term aspiration.

Discussion

- Concerns were raised about promoting the “Plan Builder” tool due to limitations and inconsistencies in EPC data. Members agreed it may be useful as a general awareness tool but should be approached cautiously.
- Emphasis placed on keeping messaging simple and avoiding undermining public confidence.

Upper Beeding Parish

- Upper Beeding’s climate action plan was reviewed. Updating has been delayed due to cancelled meetings.
- The walking and cycling plan was highlighted as a key climate action due to its carbon reduction benefits.
- The sports hall was identified as the most significant challenge:
 - It is highly energy inefficient and costly to retrofit or replace.
 - Previous funding bids had been unsuccessful.
 - Members discussed whether this could become a cross-parish or multi-club project to strengthen funding bids.

Steyping

It was noted that progress on some actions has stalled due to capacity pressures. The planned move to ethical banking has been deferred, given the volume of Council transactions and competing demands arising from devolution and asset transfers. Members also emphasised the need to monitor energy contract end dates and to seek the greenest available energy suppliers within financial constraints, linking this to wider work on improving the energy efficiency of parish buildings.

3. Climate Resilience Planning

- Members agreed resilience needs greater focus alongside mitigation, recognising climate impacts are unavoidable.
- Key risks identified:
 - Flooding and water management, particularly in Bramber.
 - Overheating of homes during summer months, especially affecting older residents.

- Power outages, mobile black spots, and implications of digital phone line changes.
- Potential actions discussed:
 - Developing parish buildings (including churches) as community resilience hubs, offering cool/warm refuge, charging points, and emergency facilities.
 - Tree planting at scale to reduce urban heat, noting cost and infrastructure challenges.
 - Exploring longer-term community land projects (eg wetlands, tree planting, allotments) as resilience and carbon capture measures.
- Members agreed to dedicate a future meeting specifically to brainstorming and prioritising resilience actions.

4. Heating Upgrade of Steyning Centre

- The group reviewed proposals previously received, noting estimated costs of full upgrades were currently unaffordable.
- Discussion focused on phased approaches rather than an all-or-nothing solution:
 - Improving controls and temperature management.
 - Reducing energy use through operational changes.
 - Exploring solar and battery storage options as intermediate steps.
 - Using thermal imaging to identify heat loss and support future grant applications.
- It was agreed further detailed discussions would take place outside the meeting.

5. Review of NALC “Green Growth” Course

- Feedback from the course highlighted:
 - The value of carbon literacy training in driving cultural change.
 - The importance of engaging schools, noting schools are required to have climate action plans.
- Members discussed challenges in reaching residents who are less engaged with climate messaging.

- Suggestions included:
 - Focusing on practical, cost-saving actions.
 - Using local examples and resident stories.
 - Avoiding messaging perceived as lecturing or judgemental.

6. Any Other Business

- Southeast Climate Alliance Annual Gathering scheduled for 28 March in Guildford; members expressed interest in attending.
- It was agreed to contact local schools to request copies of their climate action plans.
- Walking and cycling updates to become a standing agenda item at future meetings.
- Greening group update:
 - Intention to apply for charitable status.
 - Eco Open House event planned for April.
 - Thermal imaging camera purchase planned, subject to training and appropriate use.