

Minutes

Meeting:	Climate Change Board
Venue	One Friargate/ Microsoft Teams (Hybrid Meeting)
Date:	Thursday 25 th September, 2025
Time:	13.30pm – 15:30pm
Attendees:	<p>Margot James (Chair) Rachel Jones – CEO, Act On Energy Helen Wheatley – Director Institute of Engagement, University of Warwick Clare Wightman – CEO, Grapevine Matthew Rhodes – Director, Camirus Paul Warrington – Relationship Director, Lloyds Banking Adam Denny – Citizen Housing John Martin – Solution Strategy & Coordination Lead, E.ON Samantha Taylor – Ecologist, Canal and Rivers Trust Prof. Stephanie Panichelli-Batalla – Academic Lead for Sustainability, University of Warwick Selina Fletcher – Coventry University Tom Rouse – National Trust Karl Curtis – Warks Wildlife Trust</p> <p>Coventry City Council Cllr Jim O'Boyle - (Vice Chair and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change) Rhian Palmer- Strategic Lead - Green Futures Bret Willers - Head of Climate Change & Sustainability Julie Fairbrother – Communications Manager Sam Pinfield- Divisional Support Mgr. (Regeneration & Economy) (Support) Kieran O'Sullivan - Executive Support Officer (Support)</p>
Apologies:	<p>Julie Nugent- Chief Executive, Coventry City Council Andy Williams– Director of Regeneration & Economy Colin Knight - Director of Innovation Russ Hall - Lead for Sustainable Manufacturing, WMG - University of Warwick Ed Green – CEO, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Duncan Healey– Highways Environmental Lead, Galliford Try, Faye Rouse – Severn Trent Water Vijay Tank – E.ON Marguerite Nugent – Culture Coventry Lisa Hofen- Coventry University Liz Hopkins – West Midlands Fire Service</p>

	<p>Louise Woollen- West Midlands Police Kevin Rodgers – CEO, Citizen Housing Suzanne Ward – Area Environment Manager, Environment Agency Corin Crane – Coventry & Warks Chamber of Commerce Sarah Windrum – Future Mobility Cluster Lead, Horiba Mira Sophie Mason – Coventry Building Society</p>
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1.	<p>Welcome & apologies – Margot James - Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MJ welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted (as above). • MJ congratulated Rhian and her team on securing recent Nature Towns and Cities funding
2.	<p>Strategic Energy Partnership Update – John Martin, E.ON & Rhian Palmer</p> <p>JM and RP presented their slides to the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JM provided a recap of the partnership and the 4 strategic themes, using Coventry as a "living lab" for testing new technologies and innovations, particularly targeting vulnerable communities, addressing fuel poverty and environmental projects. The partnership aims to ensure direct community benefits and engagement. • Achievements highlighted include scanning 4,000 properties with drones to assess heat loss (a world first for Coventry), significant carbon savings and £1.3 million committed from the Social Value Fund to various city projects. • Key programme areas were outlined, informed by a local energy plan, with a focus on local needs and barriers. • Projects were discussed, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Solar farm development (Lentons Lane) to increase local renewable energy, with community engagement and planning underway. ○ Place-based approaches in Hillfields, integrating housing, transport, decarbonisation and SME support, with a focus on cost of living and renewable energy alignment. ○ Drone-based property surveys to identify heat loss, with plans to compare drone data to traditional site visits and develop modelling for future work. ○ The Mayoral Renewal Fund, with Coventry successfully securing funding for solar installations at Coventry College and Sidney Stringer School, aiming for future heat network connections. ○ A trial with E.ON to write off household energy debt, provide efficient white goods and batteries and shift households from a cycle of debt to energy opportunity. ○ The Coventry Grows programme, turning derelict land into community growing spaces, supported by E.ON and the Council, with a toolkit developed for wider replication.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next steps include expanding heat networks, increasing rooftop solar, developing additional solar farms and focusing on schools and community energy. There is ongoing work with the National Wealth Fund and efforts to attract further investment. Apprenticeships and local supply chain development are also priorities. The Board was encouraged to bring forward ideas and partnerships, with an open invitation to collaborate and participate in upcoming events such as an "ideathon" to be held in December. Prof. Stephanie Panichelli-Batalla expressed interest in partnering on projects and asked about collaboration with UoW colleagues, particularly regarding behavioural change in the drone and battery affordability areas. RP confirmed some collaboration with UoW, mentioning projects using virtual reality headsets to showcase retrofitted homes and a schools engagement programme called 'Retrofit Rocks', which also involves parents and raises energy efficiency awareness. Prof. Stephanie Panichelli-Batalla suggested departments at Warwick could support the battery affordability trial, offering student or academic involvement. RP noted an unsuccessful funding application for market segmentation analysis to improve targeted communication and increase resident buy-in for retrofit programs, with plans to revisit this approach. The idea of incorporating a deep dive on behavioural change into the upcoming ideathon was discussed. Helen commented on the partnership's commitment to Just Transition and asked about linking biodiversity projects at the Lentons Lane Solar Farm with UoW experience on their own solar farm plan. Rhian welcomed the idea of sharing learning and maximising biodiversity benefits. Cllr. O'Boyle raised concerns about misinformation and negativity around solar farms, particularly health concerns and community opposition, emphasising the need for effective communication and learning from past attempts. Rachel highlighted the broader issue of misinformation and the importance of addressing it, noting it would be covered further in her section. MJ thanked RP and JM for their update and asked if there were any further questions, none were received.
3	<p>West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy & Local Investment in Natural Capital – <i>Mike Webb, Senior Programme Manager – Natural Capital, WMCA</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MW presented on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the West Midlands, highlighting the region's unique geography, which includes nearly 3 million people, high levels of deprivation (about a third in the top 10% most deprived), and a significant lack of accessible green space and tree canopy, especially in urban and suburban areas. The LNRS is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act, aiming to map and prioritise important habitats, identify actions and inform local

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	<p>planning. About 11% of land is under some form of protection, but only 4% is legally protected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy includes a GIS-based mapping tool to identify areas of importance and target areas for action, with the ability to drill down to local authority level (e.g. Coventry) for detailed habitat breakdowns. • The LNRS document sets out a vision, 10 key themes and 62 actions, covering nature recovery (habitats and species), climate adaptation (using nature-based solutions for about 30% of adaptation needs), health and wellbeing (improving green space access and tree canopy) and enabling delivery (including green finance and business engagement). • MW emphasised the need for new funding mechanisms, as there is a £5.6 billion annual shortfall for nature recovery nationally, which cannot be met by central government alone. The region is piloting nature markets and a Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme, aiming to attract investment from corporates and other sources for measurable outcomes (e.g. carbon, biodiversity net gain). • Over 200 projects are in the pipeline, covering 42,000 hectares, with 25 projects ready for immediate investment after due diligence. The investment hub will act as a shopfront for funders and ensure projects are credible and deliverable. • The region is also developing a regional Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) habitat bank, with 8 potential sites identified, aiming to keep nature recovery local and provide revenue for councils to manage land for 30 years. • MW noted that the LNRS is not a one-off document; Defra is expected to mandate responsible authorities to continue convening, supporting delivery and developing project pipelines. The West Midlands is ahead of other regions in this work. • MJ thanked MW for his update and asked if there were any further questions, none were received.
4	<p>Nature Towns and Cities – <i>Rhian Palmer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP introduced the Nature Towns and Cities funding stream, a £15 million partnership with the National Trust, Natural England and Heritage Lottery Fund, aimed at creating large-scale change linked to nature in urban spaces. Coventry has received £1 million, not for direct capital project delivery but revenue to build data, a project pipeline, capacity, skills and planning for future nature ambitions, which will require much more funding to implement. • The programme's focus is on breaking down barriers for communities to access and activate local green spaces, supporting under-utilised areas, and developing new delivery models and partnerships for long-term investment in nature. • The ambition is to put nature at the heart of local placemaking, ensuring it is valued in planning and development and to work with communities to understand their needs and perceptions of nature. The approach is to co-produce strategies and implementation plans with diverse and inclusive engagement.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coventry's project, "Green for All," is driven by the city's green space strategy map, which shows significant inequality in access to nature; red and orange areas indicate poor access, mostly in inner-city communities. The project aims to turn the whole map green by creating new green spaces where possible, incorporating nature into everyday environments (e.g. street trees, rain gardens, community growing) and improving the useability and safety of existing spaces. • Deliverables over the 3 year project include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A consolidated green and blue map of opportunities for new and improved spaces, informed by the LNRS and community input. ○ Community involvement led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and a community organiser, focusing on engaging red and orange communities to understand barriers and support connection with nature. ○ A training and skills programme for council staff, partner organisations, volunteers and residents, aiming to upskill and diversify those involved in green space management and community action. ○ A legacy "green and blue plan" for adoption in planning policy, supported by a sustainable finance strategy. • RP thanked the board and the Nature-Based Pathway Group for their support in developing the bid, noting the importance of partnership and the involvement of multiple delivery partners. • Opportunities for board and pathway group involvement include joining the new Green for All partnership board, supporting the creation of the nature network (e.g. identifying land or community groups), participating in the training programme, collaborating on campaigns and events and sponsoring or volunteering for nature projects. • Recruitment for a full-time post to lead the project is underway. • The project will run for three years, with ongoing governance development and plans for further updates at future meetings. • Helen referenced a New Economics Foundation report highlighting Coventry's poor access to green space compared to the region, noting it is identified as a key target in the West Midlands risk strategy. • Helen asked how the stakeholder engagement work described by Mike Webb aligns with Coventry's own community involvement under the Nature Towns and Cities project, seeking clarification on overlap and coordination. • MW explained that the Combined Authority's engagement phase is complete and learnings are being shared with Coventry to support local projects. He noted their engagement mostly reached established groups, while Coventry's current work aims to empower less engaged communities. • RP discussed the importance of balancing engagement with both experienced and less-engaged groups, the need for visibility, accessibility and clear communication about how people can get involved. Plans were mentioned for launching web pages and connecting experienced groups with newer ones to share learning and support.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group recognised the momentum behind these efforts and anticipated further updates at future meetings. MJ thanked RP for her update and asked if there were any further questions, none were received.
5.0	<p>Funding – Rhian Palmer/ Bret Willers</p> <p>BW provided an overview of recent funding bids and outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coventry, in partnership with the University of Birmingham and Citizen Housing, secured £7.3 million UKRI funding for research on how retrofit affects indoor air quality in homes, with Coventry properties included in the study. A National Lottery “Our Shared Future” bid to support local community action and funding access was unsuccessful, despite positive feedback and support from the Heart of England Community Foundation. BW highlighted ongoing challenges in understanding local success rates for lottery funding and the need for more support for community groups to apply. There is still an opportunity to re-apply and the team is considering which projects to push forward. A National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) bid focused on overcoming barriers to uptake of retrofit grants for health benefits was also unsuccessful. The team is exploring alternative funders such as the Wellcome Trust. Coventry is involved in a Horizon 2020 project with European partners to link food growing, cookery skills and healthy eating, supporting the development of a “landed kitchen” at Foleshill Community Centre. A small fund with Warwick University is supporting research on community engagement and neighbourhood resilience, with the final application submitted. RP discussed current and upcoming funding streams for Hillfields and related projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £4.1 million from the Combined Authority for domestic retrofit and the Hillfields Neighbourhood Improvement programme, targeting 250 homes, street greening and active travel measures. Nearly £5 million in Public Sector Decarbonisation funding for retrofitting Sidney Stringer School, Coventry College and other sites. Engagement with social housing providers to access Social Housing Decarbonisation Funds for Hillfields, and work with private landlords to address retrofit barriers and grant access. Additional funding for EV infrastructure pilots and plans to bring the Hillfields city farm site back into community use. Both BW and RP noted the need for continued funding efforts, with a short timeline for some bids and plans to resubmit or pursue new opportunities before year-end. MJ thanked BW and RP for their update and asked if there were any further questions, none were received.
6.0	Bamboo House – Rhian Palmer

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RP provided an update on the bamboo house initiative, which was first presented by Chris Matthews in January. The project aims to pilot the UK's first bamboo house in Coventry, using bamboo as a sustainable material for modular home construction. Coventry University has offered a site for the prototype house and several workshops have been held with partners from housing, building control, academia and engineering to develop a detailed project scope. A funding request has been made to take the project to the next stage, focusing on defining the programme and next steps for delivery. Innovate UK is involved and considering potential grants. There is an open call for additional partners and funding sources, with Citizen already involved and interest from Urban Splash (a major regeneration company). Board members are encouraged to join if interested or to suggest funding opportunities. The UK Bamboo Summit will be held on 10th October in Stoke-on-Trent, bringing together artists and the construction industry to discuss bamboo's potential. The project is generating excitement in the construction sector and further updates will be provided as it progresses. MJ thanked RP for the update and asked the Board if there were any questions none were received.
7.0	<p>Pathway Group Updates (all Chairs)</p> <p>Route to Net Zero - Rachel Jones (CEO- Act on Energy)</p> <p>RJ presented her slides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group's focus is on building partnerships and targeting key areas, with the last meeting held recently. Hillfields Neighbourhood Improvements Programme – the emphasis is on community engagement, skills and green jobs. Challenges noted in engaging communities, with plans to upskill local groups and link to schools through the Retrofit Rocks programme. Discussion on the “Treekly App” (tree planting incentive for steps walked), with interest in expanding to wider communities and linking to NHS asthma-friendly school initiatives. Heat Networks: The group wants to understand challenges, especially from Citizen's experience and plans to involve Bring Energy for broader discussion and engagement. Green Skills: Identified need for bootcamp training for local supply chains on procurement and social value, as many struggle to win contracts. Also exploring bite-sized courses for broader understanding of energy efficiency and climate jobs. SME Support: Piloting energy bill checks for SMEs to build trust and identify savings, with an example of £50,000/month saved for a care home provider. Communications: Discussed the need to review terminology (e.g., “net zero”) and align messaging, as some communities respond better to health and economic benefits than climate language.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event Tracker: Agreed to track events to avoid duplication and improve coordination. MJ thanked RJ for her update. MJ asked the group if anyone had any further questions, none were received.
7.2.	<p>Adaptation & Resilience – Bret Willers on behalf of Suzanne Ward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group has a strategy, risk assessment and has submitted the ARP4 report to Defra, influencing national thinking on local authority roles in adaptation. Focus areas are oversight of plan delivery, monitoring impacts, sharing lessons, identifying funding and lobbying for resources. Working with the Combined Authority on heat mapping, economic impact scenarios, and a climate risk/vulnerability tool Planning a workshop with infrastructure providers (e.g. National Grid, Severn Trent) to assess local resilience and inform future planning cycles. Supported a Hillfields workshop and “World Cafes” in four Coventry neighbourhoods to identify local issues and set up neighbourhood groups. MJ thanked BW for his update. MJ asked the group if anyone had any further questions, none were received.
7.2	<p>Circular Economy – Bret Willers for Dr Russ Hall (Lead, WMG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coventry Connects: A national exemplar project for digital inclusion, redistributing 4,000+ refurbished laptops from universities, NHS, and council to those in need. Steel Recycling: Exploring a pilot with 7 Steel in Cardiff to recycle construction steel locally, especially from upcoming regeneration projects, aiming to keep value in the UK. MJ thanked BW for the update.
7.3	<p>Fairer Green Futures Pathway – Helen Wheatley and Clare Wightman</p> <p>HW and CW provided their update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group’s goal is to ensure a fair transition for Coventry residents, focusing on lowering bills, providing good jobs and warmer homes for those most in need. HW/ CW recognised that Just Transition work is embedded across all pathway groups, but there is a need for oversight and coordinated reporting. Announced a workshop on 23rd October (also online) to develop an action plan and resource a dedicated person for data capture and audit of Just Transition progress. Other pathway chairs and national experts will be invited. Encouraged all to attend and contribute to the workshop. MJ thanked HW / CW for their presentation and update. MJ asked the group if anyone had any further questions, none were received.
7.4	<p>Nature Based – Rhian Palmer CCC and Karl Curtis, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RP provided an update on Brandon Wood Golf Course. There are plans to convert the former golf course into a major nature reserve and community asset. The business case development is underway, including biodiversity net gain options, accessibility and potential for an outdoor education and wellbeing hub (though the nature reserve remains the priority). Aiming for Wildlife Trust trustee approval in autumn and Council Cabinet approval by year-end, with habitat enhancement to begin in about 18 months. The education hub is still in early planning, with concerns raised about ensuring it does not undermine the biodiversity focus. MJ thanked RP for her presentation and update. MJ asked the group if anyone had any further questions, none were received
8.0	<p>AoB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RJ thanked Rhian and the team for organising site visits over the summer, highlighting the value of seeing projects like Charterhouse in action and suggesting more visits before year-end. RJ mentioned plans to submit another funding bid to the Energy Saving Trust to continue the “Keeping Coventry Warm” initiative, which is ending soon due to the energy crisis. Updates on this are expected in the new year. MJ thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting. <p>Date of next meeting Q3, 28 Jan 2026 – 1:00-3:30 Friargate</p>