

CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERSHIP

Wednesday 21st May, 2025 – Land and Nature

PRESENT

Deborah Harkins – Chair

Councillor Patient – Co-Chair

Councillors: Foster, Hey

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

Claire Whiteley, Pete Keal, Roisin Cavanagh, Andy Bray

YOUTH COUNCIL: Two members of Youth Council

BUSINESS SECTOR: Alex Christoforou

LOCAL HOUSING: Patrick Berry, Together Housing

OFFICERS: Sam Saxby, Owen Brear

SPEAKERS: Luke Steele, CMBC Ecological Emergency Officer, Aine Douglas Calderdale Food Network and Dr Antony Arak Bridestones Rewilded

1. SUBSTITUTES NOMINATED FOR THIS MEETING AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Helen Brundell

SUBSTITUTES PRESENT

Not applicable

2. MINUTES OF THE CABINET CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIP HELD ON 22nd JANUARY 2025

Members through the Chair approved the minutes.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Climate Action Partnership held on 22nd January 2025 with minor amendments be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN 2024-2030

The Partnership were pleased to learn about Calderdale Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan working in partnership with the Wilder Calderdale Network which is a group of stakeholder organisations involved in the preservation and conservation of Calderdale's wildlife.

The Wilder Calderdale Network consists of partners such as:

- Environment Agency
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- Calderdale Council
- Local Landowners and Farmers
- White Rose Forest
- Woodland Trust
- Yorkshire Water
- Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group
- Moors for the Future Partnership

This list is not exhaustive. Luke Steele explained how nature is in recovery in Calderdale and is delivering more benefits to the people of Calderdale.

Luke explained, for example, how there has been early success from a swift bird box project, and a key aspect of Wilder Calderdale is to reconnect the rivers and waterways and the network is involved in a scrutiny panel on water quality. They are working closely with the Environment Agency and wish to rewet peatlands on a landscape scale. Peatlands in the area are degraded and they are working with major landowners not only to restore the quality of the peatlands but to ensure they can act as water retainers and act as a functional means of reducing flooding in the valley.

Work on the sphagnum moss project, led by Council Officer Gill Wrigley, is a key part of the peatland restoration.

Reviving ancient grasslands and more wood meadows, in addition to tree planting to replicate carbon storing is also a key part of the plan.

Luke also provided examples of target recovery species which is a long list of species which require conservation action in Calderdale. On this list are, for example, species such as swifts, hedgehogs, long-eared owls and white-clawed crayfish which members of Wilder Calderdale are currently surveying as part of ongoing work.

The Co-Chair expressed his gratitude to Luke for the work he has done in bringing funding into these projects and expressed that the equivalent White Rose Forest Plan is a key part of the process and is an accompaniment to the Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP).

The White Rose Forest Action Plan can be found here:

<http://whiteroseforest.org/about/actionplan>

Luke detailed how the acreage of land signed up for restoration is large and how he has been contacting farmers and landowners.

Pete Keal raised a query regarding the detail of the EEAP in the appendix of the document. Pete suggested there should be 100% in terms of commitment to conservation on land. Luke responded that some commitment from landowners for conservation is better than none in terms of progress and landowners are under financial pressure. The purpose of wildlife sites is statutory.

Luke detailed how funding for nature and natural capital-based projects can be extensive. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a statutory duty, there are environmental stewardship programs and there is a broad range of funding based on what is suitable on a case-by-case basis.

Roisin Cavanagh enquired regarding community engagement and whether there is a methodology of doing this regarding engagement in the natural world.

Luke identified there are existing approaches such as '10 things you can do with nature' and there is a bottom-up approach to active engagement on the countryside code in Calderdale. Luke suggested more work can be done regarding volunteering within the wider strategy.

Cllr Foster described the importance of community gardens and bringing the feel of nature close to urban areas and within communities. Rather than going out into the countryside to experience nature, bringing nature more into urban areas was considered vital.

Cllr Patient has an example of a community garden and can share details.

Andy Bray identified community ownership can be exciting but there are financial restrictions. There is a social side to nature recovery.

Roisin responded there are lots of individuals and communities who wish to purchase small pockets of land but access to funding is the primary concern.

It was agreed the Partnership consider an access guide to community funding.

An additional point was raised regarding the balance between nature conservation and land use for land based renewables particularly in reference to the proposed Calderdale Wind Farm/Calderdale Energy Park.

Luke Steele expressed how there is a need to work proactively on this across different stakeholders. The Calderdale Energy Park is a complicated issue but we have got to accept we need green energy whilst at the same time there is a need to restore our degraded peatland.

Chair suggested a separate session of the Climate Action Partnership inviting the Calderdale Wind Farm/Calderdale Energy Park to speak on their proposal could be a possibility. This has been discussed previously and remains a possibility.

Cllr Foster raised the point regarding rights for nature and whether rivers should be classified as 'alive'. Luke expressed how rivers have many benefits for people and the water quality of the River Calder is of significant importance to Wilder Calderdale and high level talks with Yorkshire Water are occurring.

The Chair expressed the Climate Action Partnership should be able to give added value to the EEAP and showed support for the actions in the Plan. There is a conversation to be had regarding Vision 2034.

4. CALDERDALE FOOD NETWORK

Aine Douglas of the Calderdale Food Network outlined the work they are implementing in Calderdale to deliver a sustainable food system on a place-based level.

They operate on a collaborative working model with a wide range of Partners. Aine described how they have 200 members in their Partner network all of whom share the objective of changing the food system in Calderdale.

There is a strong climate-focused element which applies to food across Calderdale. Some key sections of the Calderdale Food Network's philosophy apply to Food Governance and Strategy, the Good Food Movement, Healthy Food for All and building a Sustainable Food Economy which applies to businesses in catering and procurement.

The Calderdale Food Strategy is launching later this year. The strategy comprises of numerous themes such as outlined above, but also food waste which is key to this agenda.

A climate friendly diet is vital to these objectives. Eating mostly vegetables that are in season along with some dairy is considered by the Calderdale Food Network as an acceptable part of a sustainable diet. Biodiversity protection also requires consideration within the wider context of agroecological land use, sustainable local food production, community growing systems and overall engagement with nature which can lead to prolonged health benefits.

A land use framework needs to be cautious with what we can and cannot allow on our land.

The Calderdale Food Charter is working together to establish a sustainable food system for all. Numerous schools within the Calder Valley have already signed up to the Charter.

Aine outlined there will be Calderdale Summer Food Gathering in Halifax on Friday 20th June.

Cllr Foster expressed thanks to Aine Douglas for her presentation and expressed concern at the affordability of such measures. Bridging the gap between poverty and

food especially within the context of rising food prices is vital, but that there are projects already such as Pennine Cropshare in Hebden Bridge who are working on this.

Aine responded by saying the Calderdale Food Network engage with farmers and that farmers want a sustainable food system that has food that is affordable. Farmers are beginning to adapt but these projects will take time. Farmers need to be respected as the cost of living effects them directly as well as their customers. Alternative funding options for farmers and their communities need to be taken into account as being a food supplier in the UK is difficult enough.

The Partnership thanked Aine Douglas and looks forward to supporting the Calderdale Food Network.

5. BRIDESTONES REWILDED

Dr Anthony Arak is a Director of Bridestones Rewilded, a not-for-profit community organisation/company dedicated to the preservation and conservation of the Bridestones Moor.

Bridestones has degraded peat bog which can be a vital component in managing water flows down the valley, can sequester carbon as well as providing a vital habitat for a range of species.

There are 6 people in the group which consists of a variety of individuals.

Dr Arak began by saying the greatest threat to climate change is those who are not involved. A survey of people within the UK said that a focus on nature recovery was strong and necessary. The countryside is a place to enjoy the outdoors and nature is a classroom. It is a place where Citizen Science can take place and people in Calderdale wish for Bridestones to remain as it is and unchanged by human behaviour.

Bridestones is a blanket peat bog. Purple moor grass can be found everywhere. The peat on the moor is 1m deep – and this is the definition of what is known as ‘deep peat’. There is a diverse range of flora and fauna. A rare species called Moonwort has been rediscovered on the moor and sphagnum moss is an important component of the bog.

Other species such miniature tardigrades, a wide range of birds for example pipits, larks, plovers, grouse all use the moor as do many species of insects.

Sphagnum moss growing has begun on the moor. The project is managing livestock with rotational grazing. Some species are being introduced, for example bog asphodel and berry species. Dr Arak mentioned that selling ‘biodiversity units’ could potentially raise £1.2m in funds for the moor.

Deborah Harkins asked how the Climate Action Partnership could support the work on Bridestones Moor. Luke Steele responded by saying if the Partnership hears of any land becoming available for sale please let him know. Support is available in the buying and negotiating process. Community ownership is key to the future of the moor.

Roisin Cavanagh raised the point that community licensing is an issue, as is public liability on community asset transfers. There are blockers in the system preventing this.

It was agreed the Climate Action Partnership can research on community asset transfers and understand how influencing on the blockers can be undertaken.

Thanks were expressed to Dr Anthony Arak for the wonderful work his team are doing in partnership with landowners, the Council, farmers and experts in restoring the degraded bog.

6. 6-MONTH CLIMATE ACTION REVIEW

It was resolved by the Partnership that a 6-month review of the Climate Action Plan would take place. The Chair's will be responsible for providing an update to the Partnership on the actions in the plan and a report will be generated for internal-use only. This report will not be published for the public.

7. COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION COMMUNICATIONS

Roisin Cavanagh, Chair of the Community Climate Action theme group, expressed a point on how to promote climate communications through use of existing Facebook groups and information on climate action could be disseminated more widely than the Climate Newsletter.

It was resolved that Roisin could investigate options and other Partnerships could be used as examples of what can be utilised in promoting climate action.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The next Climate Action Partnership meeting on 8th July will be Transport and Getting Around themed - Tom Jones Senior Transport Planner at Calderdale Council will be discussing the Council's Transport Strategy.