

**Hastings Community Network – 20th November 2020**

**Climate Change**

**Introduction**

**HCN is an overarching network comprising of local voluntary community and faith groups, networks and forums**. It offers communication channels between the voluntary and community sector and those who make decisions locally. We identify ways in which members can participate and influence decisions affecting the delivery of services.

HCN links with Hastings Borough Council, East Sussex County Council and is a member of the Local Strategic Partnership.

HCN events take place every 12 weeks and aim to create meaningful opportunities to share ideas, gain inspiration and collaborate in new and exciting ways. These sessions are open to all and bring together participants from across voluntary, community, public and independent sectors.

**HCN’s are either:**

* **Market place and “open-mic” sessions**, which are flexible and predominately unstructured. Offering a full morning of informal networking and relationship building.
* **Themed sessions arranged around ‘Hot Topics’** identified by HCN members and/or through feedback at previous events. Over the last year Hot Topics that have been explored include Social Prescribing, Ageing Well and Loneliness.

Each event emphasises the connectivity between all ‘Hot Topics’ and encourages participants to think, and work across boundaries, build on shared resources and value local assets.

This November event was a themed around Climate Change. Within the event we held three themed workshops.

The event brought together 38 representatives from across the community, voluntary, independent and public sectors to explore the ‘Hot Topic’ Climate Change.

Carole Dixon in her role as Chair of the HCN Executive group opened the event welcoming participants. This was followed by a talk from Cllr Kim Forward who by stressed the Councils Commitment to making Climate Change a key priority, saying:

In February 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and as part of the declaration, committed to “make Hastings carbon neutral by 2030”. This action would require significant work on the part of the local authority. It was recognised that achieving progress requires change and support on the part of residents, businesses, voluntary organisations  
and other public bodies. Partnership working is crucial in driving forward this agenda and the HCN Climate Change event was key to building awareness and promoting positive change.

There was then a PowerPoint presentation from Chantal Lass the Tackling Climate Change Programme Manager showing the impact of climate change on Hastings.

The participants were then allocated to the workshop of their choice:

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| --- | --- |
| **PUBLIC HEALTH** | |
| **NAME** | **ORGANISATION** |
| Terry Hume (Facilitator) | East Sussex County Council |
| Steve Manwaring (Facilitator) | Hastings Voluntary Action |
| Su Barnicoat | Hastings Voluntary Action |
| Shar Brown | Education Futures Trust |
| Sherry Clark | Transition Town Hastings |
| Shelley Feldman | Heart of Hastings |
| Chantal Lass | Hastings Borough Council |
| Clementine Manning | Sussex Prisoners Families |
| Michael Moor | Friends of Hastings Country Park |
| Tracey Rose | Fellowship of St Nicholas |
| Jackie Suall-Hunt | Rother Voluntary Action |
| Eveline Tijs |  |
| Lee Warren | Caring Homes Group |
| **TRANSPORT** | |
| Kevin Boorman (Facilitator | Hastings Borough Council |
| Anna Card | East Sussex County Council |
| Kim Kelly | Hastings Voluntary Action |
| Francesca Hill |  |
| Julia Hilton | Hastings Greenway Trust |
| Annette Holmes | Rother Voluntary Action |
| Marina Littek | Sustrans |
| Fiona Morton | Southeast Communities Rail Partnership |
| La Pethick | Southeast Communities Rail Partnership |
| Ian Sier | Hastings Sustainable Transport |
| Harry Sievewright | Southeast Communities Rail Partnership |
| Catherine Simmons | Southeast Communities Rail Partnership |
| Virginia Vilela | West St Leonards Forum |
| **ENERGY & FUEL POVERTY** | |
| Tracy Dighton (Facilitator | Citizens Advice 1066 |
| Andrew Colquhoun | HCN Executive |
| Ken Davis | Hastings Urban Design Group |
| William Duke-Oddy | Catch22 |
| Cllr Kim Forward | Hastings Borough Council |
| Ernie Grice |  |
| Micky Jackson |  |
| Amanda Jobson |  |
| Jacy Kilvert | MIND |
| Kate Meakin | Energise Sussex Coast |
| Richard Oaten | Oaten Architects |
| Catherine Taylor |  |

The participants were then brought back together and the workshop facilitators gave feedback from their respective workshops:

**Public Health**

**The group was asked what inspired them about local activities relating to the environment currently.**

* People are using the outside more because of COVID
* People are more appreciative of the outside
* Two local Green Fairs were mentioned as being great for information and enthusiasm
* The natural world absorbs CO2
* The use of the two local Country Parks has increased
* Everyone coming together here and adapting to what is coming and how we can prepare for a mental health crisis
* ‘Emerging Futures’ has been a positive space to share thoughts about the positive impact for wellbeing when people engage in the natural environment
* Examples of work being done at Great Dixter etc bring joy and beauty
* COVID – mutual aid activity has spawned local energy to start up projects like the ‘Library of Things’
* The natural world brings families and people together, with projects to get involved with
* There is an orchard being planned for Hollington – a community space where people will be able to pick their own
* Young people are showing their passion for the wider topic of climate change
* Re-wilding grass verges
* Up-skilling people into green employment

**Climate change is a health crisis – with health inequalities affecting physical and mental health, what do we want to see happen?**

* Connectedness
* Guerrilla gardening – random planting and spreading of seeds – do we need permission?
* Community feeling in Hastings is strong, with many small gardens
* Interdependencies need to be reviewed and behaviour change is required
* Low income families often have the lowest carbon footprint because they have less access to car ownership etc
* Rental properties and an aging population make change harder, maybe? Action needs to be easy and supported
* Hastings is deprived but has a lot of people that are caring and generous
* Are there low levels of COVID locally because we are an independent town?
* Arteries of green space could be threaded throughout the urban parts of the town – these can be linked to the parks, country parks and the sea
* Hastings can do more to promote itself as an eco-destination with tourism linked to the green economy
* The local care industry could link more to solar panels and making itself more efficient
* Hastings could promote itself as a wellbeing and convalescence destination which could encourage visits from a wider ageing population
* Our open spaces are assets
* Inequality – people need support from organisations to access some outdoor activities ans spaces
* Timebanks – reciprocal skill sharing (eg. 1 hour of time for I hour of time given in return)
* The Local Development Plan needs ‘A right to access the natural world’ to be embedded into it
* Volunteering and people sharing their own stories and sharing skills made easier
* Children and families – there needs to be projects and support to access the natural environment as part of the Early Years provision
* How can we encourage people to ‘just get on’ with environmental activities? “You can plant here” signs could be placed on verges. Liaising with Optivo/Orbit who are responsible for some grounds can be a challenge
* John Little of ‘The Grass Roof Company’ is an expert on community allotments being created on verges etc
* Local residents in Hollington remember when the area was full of grass fields and made up of farms
* There needs to be a ‘Next Steps Townwide Approach’
* Do we need a central place to share what we are doing – creating a momentum?

Community cohesion can be encouraged through environmental and outdoor activities and opportunities

* Growing food
* Football & sports
* Forest bathing
* ‘Carbon Neutral Indiana’ [www.carbonneutralindiana.org](http://www.carbonneutralindiana.org) pays people to offset
* Useful website: <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/carbon-neutral-cornwall>

**Transport**

This workshop looked at three areas of travel:

* Active Travel – cycling & walking
* Use of sustainable/public transport
* Private Transport – The reduction of/more sustainable safety limits – all transport

**Active Travel – Cycling & Walking**

* Improvements to existing cycle routes is needed, the concept of connecting cycle routes is 25yrs old but progress has been slow.
* Hastings has barriers to cycling – unsafe roads (potholes etc), lots of hills, lots of traffic.
* Money from the County Local Enterprise grant has been diverted to road improvements so there was less money to spend on cycle routes.
* The Emergency plan lacks collaborative working between the County Council and Hastings Borough Council.
* Schemes have been put forward to the Town Deal Board.
* Brighton have different and commitments to cycling, they have a culture of cycling. They are also more committed to green and sustainable transport.
* Joint working is key.
* Improvements to the streets and the environment that could be made are: more trees planted, more benches, connect up the green spaces/rail routes.
* Things are difficult at ESCC because they are under staffed and there is no money coming in.
* People have opposed the cycle routes that sprang up in the lockdown.
* People are concerned about safety on the roads for cyclists and a fear of their cycles being stolen if they have to ‘park’ them somewhere. Bike racks can be expensive; Hastings Station has a bike rack but no safe route to get there. There are 4 stations and 1 other location where there are bike racks.

**Use of Sustainable/Public Transport**

* There is no cycle route on the road all the way along the seafront.
* The train service is in danger of collapse because of lack of travellers.
* The Government are telling people not to use public transport; buses & trains. People were using trains until COVID happened, the train use has dropped by 97% which is not sustainable. It is possible that there will be big cuts to the infrastructure, which means that people will go back to using their cars.
* The roads are much busier now, bus services need to improve.
* Walking, cycling and trains all need connecting, they are not at the moment.
* Train journeys often used to be (before COVID) taken for leisure.
* There is a stigma towards bus users in Hastings.
* A dedicated bus service for supermarkets would be useful.
* Bus fares can be expensive.
* Ore Valley Greenway could be used as a feeder route.

**Private/Domestic Transport**

* A lot of people don’t own cars, share resources eg. carshare (electric or hydrogen cars)
* Lack of parking in some areas of the town can be a problem
* A road tax that sees people pay for the use of a car my mileage.
* People do not always think of the cost of having a car versus using other transport.
* A car is needed if people have to move equipment.
* Bus journeys can take much longer to get to places.

**General Feedback**

* The funding for Transition Town has come in.
* The debate needs to carry on.
* This event has led to a wide ranging conversation in relation to Public Health.
* Awareness needs to be raised about the benefits of access to nature on peoples mental health.
* Hastings is rich in assets.
* There is an inequality in peoples access to green space in Hastings.
* Share ideas and inspiration to develop a positive vision of assets.

**Energy & Fuel Poverty**

* What is happening in Hastings to tackle energy and fuel poverty?
* What is important for us as individuals and organisations?
* Sustainability plan?

**Initial discussion covered the following:**

* How does Hastings convert and equip old buildings with new sustainable green fuel options?
* Planning permission is really complex and a long winded process
* Green grants –organisations and HBC should work together to get the green grants
* Organisations are interested in working with the council to get the information out and promote green energy options
* HBC does want to work together on new fuel initiatives and green energy solutions
* Wellbeing and fuel poverty goes hand in hand and we need to link into the support that is available locally
* Local engineers, architects and surveyors are interested in how we can work together with the council to make change happen
* Identified that there is a hole in the green grants regarding replacement boilers
* Green home grants – HBC website has the information and links for the green home grants and local authority delivery scheme
* How can we join up the dots and work with other grant schemes to make a real and meaningful difference?
* The HBC grant funding has been extended until March 2022

**Some headlines from our workshop include:**

* Housing structural issues framework need to be developed
* Information links in one place
* Scaling up a local structural approach for green sustainable energy improvement
* Create a list of streets to identify housing stock and a development plan
* Hastings lead could be putting this together?
* Shouldn’t have to rely on grants it should be a government approach for sustainable fuel initiatives
* Scaling up a structural energy approach across Hastings
* Hastings energy and fuel lead to pull all this together?
* There is a surplus of sites public and private ownership – can we build environmentally friendly social housing on land sites in Hastings?
* HBC recognises there is a climate emergency – can green materials be considered when building new homes – can this be a standard?
* Can the local council put this as a condition?

**Wellbeing and mental health**

* There is an uptake of hospital admissions after a very cold spell which indicates that heating and keeping warm have a huge impact on wellbeing and health
* We can tackle this by talking to people about how they heat their homes and point them to energise Sussex Coast who offer information and advice on energy solutions
* Due to Covid-19 its harder to get into people’s homes to do energy checks
* Cold does hurt people and often insulating and creating a warmer home is not straightforward as structural work needs to be completed on homes
* The energy improvements programme should be a rolling programme not a fixed term programme

**Recommendations**

* Local council to have more power to support home improvements and put in measures for green energy and warmer homes
* Conversations about repairing housing stock which includes green energy options and a clear code of measures with local private landlords
* Government to feed down to local level with clear language and a much better programme of green energy and fuel poverty outcomes for local people
* A plan to reduce local domestic energy usage
* This is a complex issue and patching up housing stock is a sticking plaster need longer term goals and a more serious approach for local housing stock, local authority and the private sector
* Have a look at planning regulations and make it easier to make energy improvements that are longer term and meaningful

**Local fuel and energy websites:**

* Warm Home Check
* Energise Sussex Coast
* Warmer Homes
* HBC Fuel Poverty Information

Steve Manwaring closed the event thanking everyone that took part and a reminder about two upcoming events:

* Friday 4th December, 1.30pm-3.30pm, HCN - Looking at Future Priorities
* Monday 18th January 2021, 11am-12.30pm, HBC Budget Setting Meeting

To book yourself a place to take part in either of these events, please follow the link: <https://www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/events>

Both of these events will take place on Zoom