
Climate Change and Leisure Committee MINUTES

**Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on
Wednesday, 2 July 2025 from 7.30 pm - 9.17 pm.**

Present: Councillors

Chris Lloyd (Co-Chair in the Chair), Jon Tankard (Co-Chair), Raj Khiroya, Abbas Merali,
Reena Ranger, Mike Sims, Tom Smith and Cheryl Stungo

Officers in Attendance:

Kelly Barnard, Leisure Assets Manager
Charlotte Gomes, Head of Leisure & Natural Infrastructure
Joanna Hewitson, Climate Change and Sustainability Manager
Jess Hodges, Natural Infrastructure Programme Manager
Emma Sheridan, Associate Director for Environment
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer

External in Attendance:

John Sewell, Everyone Active
Mark Leahy, Everyone Active

CCLC1/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joan King.

CCLC2/25 MINUTES

Members raised concerns about the accuracy of the minutes from the Climate Change, Leisure & Housing Committee meeting, held on 12 March 2025, related to previous discussions on the Aquadrome project updates, noting a discrepancy between the frequency of the updates, which they stated should be every two months by the work programme and what is reflected in the minutes. The Chair responded by stating that the minutes were correct and explained that the work programme is generated from a system with officer input, and emphasised that reports will appear on the work programme when they are formally submitted in the system. Officers added that no definitive decision was taken on the exact timing of the updates at the last meeting, as there were differing suggestions, and the committee deferred to the Monitoring Officer's advice on remit. It was confirmed that an update report on the Aquadrome project will be presented at the October Climate Change & Leisure Committee meeting, although committing to a strict six-month schedule is challenging due to committee cycle timings.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved; on being put to the committee the minutes of the Climate Change, Leisure & Housing Committee, held on 12 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct

record and signed by the Chair of the meeting, the voting being For 5, Against 2, Abstentions 1.

RESOLVED:

To confirm, as being a correct record, the minutes of the Climate Change, Leisure & Housing Committee, held on 12 March 2025 and for them to be signed by the Chair

CCLC3/25 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

CCLC4/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CCLC5/25 LEISURE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

The Leisure Assets Manager introduced the external attendees; John Sewell, Contract Manager and Mark Leahy, Regional Contract Manager from Everyone Active.

The Contract Manager and the Regional Contract Manager provided highlights of the report, which covers the period of April 2024 to March 2025.

Members raised concerns regarding the accuracy of the maintenance statement of the report, specifically the replacement of the shower heads at the leisure centre, stating that several of them remain non-functional, contrary to the statement in the report. Members also acknowledged the positive impact of solar panels, but suggested that larger carbon savings might be realised through other projects, such as demolishing older buildings at the Skanska site. The Chair redirected the discussion, emphasising the committee's focus on the leisure report and requested that questions remain relevant to the topic at hand.

Members enquired about the factors contributing to the solar panels' outperformance, and the increased usage at the leisure centres, to which the Contract Manager explained that the panels have exceeded industry standard predictions based on weather conditions. Additionally, they explained the impact of introducing new sports, particularly pickleball, which has significantly increased usage at both William Penn and South Oxhey Leisure Centres. However, it was noted that while pickleball contributed to higher attendance, it has also replaced some badminton court usage, implying that the rise in attendance is due to multiple factors.

Members also raised questions about the accuracy of gas usage figures at the Rickmansworth Golf Club due to a software miscalculation and the impact of the clubhouse reopening. They also enquired about swimming lessons availability, and expressed concerns about irrigation and drainage issues at the golf course affecting nearby residential areas. The Contract Manager responded by clarifying that the inflated figures were due to event attendance being counted hourly rather than as totals, and confirmed the increase in gas usage is mainly from the kitchen reopening with gas appliances. On irrigation, the Contract Manager outlined recent improvements, including securing a mains water supply and drainage enhancements to prevent water damage to homes. With regards to swimming lessons, the Contract Manager explained ongoing efforts to optimise lesson availability by adjusting entry-level spaces and working with schools to manage demand. In response to questions raised regarding the planned refurbishment at the South Oxhey Leisure Centre, the Contract Manager advised that the refurbishment will include new gym equipment, redecoration, and upgrades to studios to match the look and feel of William Penn's facilities. During any temporary closures, members of the leisure centre will have access to nearby local facilities at no extra cost. The SPIN facility will receive only light redecoration as it remains in good condition. Additionally, the centre is continuing its partnership with local schools through the 'Adopt a School' scheme,

offering free access to families, and expanding efforts to include adopting local sports or community clubs to increase participation and membership.

The Chair stated that the earlier question on shower heads replacements had not been answered and requested a response. The Contract Manager responded that he will look into it. In response to questions raised on feedback, the Contract Manager advised that feedback is provided as part of the monthly report to the Council. The Chair advised that the feedback can be forwarded to the Leisure Assets Manager who can circulate them to all Councillors.

Members highlighted paddle as a rapidly growing sport with low barriers to entry and emphasised the importance of affordable access for the community. The Regional Contract Manager acknowledged the popularity of paddle but outlined significant changes in finding suitable locations for paddle courts, citing space constraints, planning complications related to floodlighting and canopies, and the need for covered courts to maintain year-round use. They expressed willingness to collaborate with local organisations to identify potential sites with Three Rivers. The discussion then shifted to the golf pod project where the regional Contract Manager explained delays due to planning requirements, lease agreements and Section 106 payments, despite strong ambitions to establish the facility. The golf pod is expected to enhance community engagement by making golf more accessible, similar to paddle sports, allowing people to try golf without significant equipment purchase.

The Chair requested a call to be facilitated with the Contract and Regional Contract Managers at the end of July, beginning of August via the Leisure Assets Manager.

The Chair offered a brief comfort break to all at 19:57.

The meeting resumed at 19:59.

The Chair requested that the committee move onto one of the reports by the Climate Change and Sustainability Officer.

RESOLVED:

Recommendation

- i. That the 12-month work plan presented by Sports and Leisure Management is noted.
- ii. That the 12-month work plan presented by Sports and Leisure Management be made available as part of the minutes of the meeting.

CCLC6/25 CROXLEY COMMON MOOR MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-2030

The Leisure and Assets Manager introduced the report.

Members enquired about the likelihood and history of securing external funding and its adequacy for the management plan's ambitions. There was appreciation expressed for the rich biodiversity of the site, including species like moths and butterflies. Concerns were raised, however, about the condition and safety of less known entrances to the site, where pallets have deteriorated due to wet conditions. Officers highlighted the community's positive reception of the new paths, which encourage direct commuting routes and help protect wildlife by reducing trampling on informal paths. Officers also provided an update on the volunteer-led repair efforts to replace pallets with more durable materials, emphasising collaboration with the Countryside Management Service and local volunteers. Additionally, they mentioned the receipt of stewardship grants that partly fund cattle grazing and other site works, and also noting ongoing efforts to seek external funding for specific projects as part of the management plan's work programme.

Members also questioned the effectiveness and cost efficiency of using contractors for scrub control, suggesting that supporting local volunteers, specifically the friends of Croxley

Common Moor, with tools and publicity, could achieve better results and community engagement. In response, officers explained that while volunteers are enthusiastic and contribute significantly, the scale and intensity of the scrub work required exceed their capacity, especially since many volunteers lack training or licensing to use power equipment. The contractors are necessary to do the high-level scrub clearance that volunteers cannot do, particularly given restrictions like nesting seasons. In addition, volunteers' manual clearing cannot keep pace with scrub growth, justifying the budget allocations for contractor services.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation, with an amendment to include the Associate Director for Environment in the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Jon Tankard.

On being put to the committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Climate Change & Leisure Committee:

Adopt the new five-year Management Plan for Croxley Common Moor.

Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance *and Associate Director for Environment* to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding to facilitate works to support the implementation of the Management Plans. That public access to the report be immediate.

CCLC7/25 WITHEY BEDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Leisure Assets Manager introduced the report, which was followed by a presentation on the ecological importance and conservation efforts of the Withey Beds, by the Natural Infrastructure Programme Manager.

Mrs. Jillian Christensen spoke on the item emphasising the importance of retaining the existing boardwalk, even if temporarily closed, to allow for phased reopening, reduce environmental impact, and save demolishing costs.

Concerns were raised about the Withey Bed's pillbox's preservation, its role as a bat habitat, and the impact of bats on the structure. Members enquired about maintenance protection, and educational opportunities related to the pillbox. The importance of restoring and maintaining the 240-meter path around the site is emphasised, highlighting its role in public access and education while protecting the habitat. Funding challenges were discussed, including the high cost of replacing the deteriorating wooden boardwalk with more durable composite materials.

Officers advised that external funding had been sought for two years, securing partial funding of £75,000, which prioritises habitat restoration alongside infrastructure. The discussion also covered the limitations of using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for this project and the active engagement with parish councils and partners to seek financial support.

The Chair spoke about a long-standing commitment to preserve pillboxes within the district, referencing past efforts, and expressed his willingness to take proactive steps by consulting with the Three Rivers Museum for expert advice.

Officers argued the importance of maintaining areas where nature can be the priority, though such places are rare due to frequent human interaction. They highlighted the health benefits of engaging with nature while advocating for careful management to protect natural habitats in the area. They also raised concerns about the public creating informal footpaths, and as a result, damaging sensitive areas. They emphasised the importance of formalised routes to minimise harm. Officers also explained the importance of the management of invasive species and natural processes like the decay of trees.

While acknowledging improvements to biodiversity, Members emphasised their concern about the importance of the boardwalk in directing visitors, especially in sensitive areas like near the pillbox, which now has bats in it. They worried that without proper guidance, visitors might wander and cause harm to the landscape. They also raised concerns about the potential damage caused by removing the boardwalk itself. Members suggested retaining part of the existing boardwalk to minimise disruption and reduce removal costs, pending health and safety approval. This approach could allow for better funding allocation towards extending and replacing sections of the boardwalk, ensuring safer and more controlled visitor access.

The Chair then summarised that the plan will be revised to incorporate the points raised and will be circulated to the committee and to the Friends of the Withey Bed for review within a week. The Chair also requested this to be included in the recommendation.

Further points were then raised emphasising the importance of incorporating the replacement costs into the plan. Officers responded by explaining the challenges of specifying a fixed amount for the boardwalk replacement in the recommendation, noting that doing so could limit bidding and planning flexibility. They advised that funding will be sought as available, with the boardwalk replacement potentially occurring in phases, depending on the funds accessed and procurement processes. Officers confirmed that the commitment to replace the boardwalk remains firm, but the exact scope and timing depend on financial resources and procedures.

Members reiterated the preciousness of places such as the Withey Beds and advocated for the elected Councillors, rather than officers, to decide on project costs and approvals. Officers responded by explaining the necessity of delegations that allow officers to act quickly in securing and implementing funding, especially when opportunities arise with short notice. This delegation process is intended to prevent the loss of funding due to procedural delays.

In response to the final question raised, officers confirmed that the plan is to proceed with as much construction as funding allows, without removing the possibility of future extension. Furthermore, the current reference to the 80-meter length in the report will be removed and the plan will be revised with the points raised by the committee.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation with the proposed amendment that the revised plan be circulated to the committee and the Friends of Withey Bed by officers for review, seconded by Councillor Reena Ranger.

On being put to the committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Climate Change and Leisure Committee:

- i. Adopt the new ten-year Management Plan for The Withey Beds.
- ii. Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding to facilitate works to support the implementation of the Management Plans.
- iii. *The revised plan to be circulated to committee and the Friends of Withey Beds for review.*

CCLC8/25 HERTFORDSHIRE RETROFIT STRATEGY

The Climate Change and Sustainability Manager introduced the report.

Members emphasised the importance of collaboration to expand retrofitting efforts and accelerate the process. Increasing the number of local builders proficient in retrofitting is

crucial to reducing costs and improving efficiency. Additionally, working together could lead to cheaper materials and broader benefits for homeowners, despite current funding limitations.

Members also raised some concerns about the high costs associated with retrofitting, particularly comparing the expense and lifespan of heat pumps versus traditional gas boilers, emphasising the financial burden on working class household. There is a concern about the Council potentially committing to significant financial obligations without clear cost transparency. Officers responded by clarifying that bulk purchasing schemes are facilitator-led and not funded directly by the Council, citing examples like the Solar Together project and Transition Streets programme where collective homeowner action enables cost savings. The retrofit strategy targets homeowners who are financially able to pay, encouraging access to financing options such as green mortgages and loans. Grants like the Warmer Homes grant are acknowledged as current funding sources for the private sector, but future funding streams remain uncertain. Furthermore, officers spoke about past initiatives such as conducting surveys and retrofit projects that have seen some success, with 23 residents making home improvements. The transition is difficult, with upfront costs being a significant barrier, although a £7,500 grant is available to all households to help offset air source heat pump installations. They noted that the second time a heat pump is installed is less expensive as radiators and insulation are often improved when a heat pump is installed, but these adaptations will not be required the second time. Officers also confirmed that there is no financial commitment required from the Council or residents and emphasised that the strategy focuses on collaboration across public and private sectors, including local authorities, housing associations, builders and education providers. The strategy aims to make retrofit more affordable and accessible without prescribing specific measures. Additionally, there was a significant emphasis on addressing the skills gap in the workforce to support retrofit work, highlighting the importance of upskilling and local employment creation.

It was noted that while current technology like air source heat pumps may not be suitable for every home, advancements are moving rapidly. The high costs are attributed to the marginal cost of electricity rather than the technology not being green.

Councillor Jon Tankard moved the recommendation as set out in the report, seconded by Councillor Raj Khirya.

On being put to the committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That Members agree to:

- i. To approve TRDC formally endorsing and adopting the Hertfordshire Retrofit Commitment (Appendix 1) and Strategy (appendix 2) to facilitate knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and funding collaboration across local authorities and other key stakeholders in Hertfordshire.
- ii. To note the development of the action plan within the Strategy, which will be refined through multi-agency collaboration to establish a robust, long-term delivery model.
- iii. To note that officer time may be required to support the development of the Hertfordshire Retrofit body and the Action Plan.

CCLC9/25 SOUTH OXHEY LEISURE CENTRE SOLAR PANELS BUSINESS CASE

The Climate Change and Sustainability Manager introduced the report.

Members expressed strong support for this project. They highlighted the financial viability of the project, noting that it pays for itself quickly and can generate positive returns that may be reinvested into capital funding. Emphasis was placed on the strategic importance of energy independence, reducing reliance on electricity imports from other countries, and aligning with

sustainability goals. Members advocated for moving forward with procurement while continuing to review repayment details.

Members discussed that the rooftop solar has a break-even point of approximately four to four and a half years, while the car park solar canopy reaches break even after nine years. Officers explained that the solar panels come with a typical warranty of 25 years, and the inverter has a shorter warranty 10 - 25 years, with a potential replacement cost factored into the business case, or extended warranties secured. A full structural survey of the roof will be conducted to ensure its suitability and to assess maintenance needs. Roof maintenance, excluding solar related issues, is covered under the SLM contract. The solar canopy project is still under feasibility review, supported by grant funding, and is considered a separate initiative. The rooftop solar project is prioritised based on previous studies and feasibility findings. Members expressed approval of concentrating on the roof rather than the canopy, noting prior reservation about the latter. Members asked about the payback period and investment viability, comparing the current project to the previous one at William Penn. Officers responded by highlighting the fact that unlike the William Penn project, which was funded by a Sport England grant, the current roof project lacks grant funding and must be financially self-sustaining. Despite this, usage patterns and operational times of the leisure centre appear similar, suggesting that the payback period for the current investment would be comparable to what it would have been for William Penn if it has required full payment. Members noted concerns about the deterioration of panel efficiency after 25 years and questioned if this has been accounted for in the business case. Officers responded that while the current business case typically spans 25 years, modern solar panels can last up to 40 years, potentially providing additional benefits beyond the initial period. There was also mention of a possible future report to the Council recommending repowering or replacing the panels when efficiency declines, although such long-term planning is currently uncertain.

The Chair read out the recommendation and requested that the abbreviation OBC be changed to Outline Business Case in the recommendation.

Councillor Jon Tankard moved the recommendation with the amendment, seconded by Councillor Raj Khirya.

On being put to the committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i. The Climate Change and Leisure Committee recommend officers seek contractor quotations and then recommend the *Outline Business Case* to the Policy & Resources Committee.

CCLC10/25 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed the work programme generated from the report writing system, noting that it is still being updated early in the municipal year. Officers confirmed plans to present a progress report on the Aquadrome project at the October Climate Change & Leisure Committee meeting, including lottery bid outcomes and capital works updates. Members discussed the desire for a rolling 12-month work programme to improve planning and transparency. Officers clarified that the nature of the work programme is fluid due to unforeseen reports such as funding bids and government policies. Officers suggested creating a manually updated work programme after each meeting to ensure actions are tracked and not forgotten, with agreement for the Committee Officer to circulate this list to the committee.

In response to a question regarding the absence of any housing reports on the committee's agenda, the Chair clarified that the housing portfolio had been removed from this committee and is now under a different committee.

RESOLVED:

To receive the Committee's Work programme.

CCLC11/25 OTHER BUSINESS - IF APPROVED UNDER ITEM 3 ABOVE

None

CCLC12/25 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

CHAIR