

Notes from SECA Steering Group Zoom meeting 26/5/20

1. Present: Jay Mercer (Chair), Alison Marshall, Sally Barnard, Viviane Doussy, Tony Whitbread, Geoff Barnard, Helen Whittington, Anne Davies, Pauline Cory, Carrie Cort, Brenda Pollack, Liz Thorns, Tom Broughton, Karen Park, Ollie Pendered.

Apologies: David Johnson, Pat Smith, Paul Hannam

'Rules' of engagement on zoom: here's the FoE rules for zoom etiquette, as requested :https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DpsNKDMDVQkbb-dSRJKCMWwMdh_R-U19/view?usp=sharing

2. Introductions: welcome to Ollie Pendered who has joined the Steering Group (Community Energy South)

3. Councils Working Group: Letters from SECA have gone out to all 57 county, unitary, district and borough councils in our region. (See the separate email that came round with a sample letter). The aim was to introduce SECA, send the Covid recovery/climate action blog, ask them to check the SECA survey of council action and build up our council contacts for the future. We aimed at a 'friendly, constructive prod'. All SECA member groups in each district were copied in. Jay, Alison and Sally have been involved. We are starting to get positive replies.

Discussion: Our region has predominantly Conservative run councils. So it would be good to have examples of conservative councils making good progress with action plans so that these could be used to encourage other conservative councils.

ACTION: SALLY and others to send round examples. (Worthing and Adur were mentioned as a great example, they are about to appoint 3 new climate posts, and plan to set up a climate assembly.)

The Conservative Environment Network seems a very useful contact.

<https://www.cen.uk.com/> Sally has been in touch with them and they were positive about SECA, they have signed up to our newsletter. Both MPs and councillors can be members of CEN. It would be useful to have a list of SE councillors who are members. (NB Sally has now contacted CEN – they say their members are mostly MPs, there are only a handful of councillors so far, but they would appreciate our help in trying to get more) .

ACTION: ALL- encourage our local Conservative councillors to join CEN

<https://www.cen.uk.com/cencouncillor>

GEOFF will send out info in SECA newsletter

Updates on County Councils:

WEST SUSSEX CC Geoff/Tony reported that they have seen a second draft of their climate strategy, which is much better than the earlier version. It's being kept deliberately high level and overall and says a lot of the right stuff. A separate detailed carbon reduction plan will follow, but could take a while. There is a danger that the strategy may be open to criticism of waffle if the carbon reduction detail is not available at the same time. Fracking, Gatwick and divestment have deliberately not been mentioned in the strategy, but there's a strong overarching statement saying climate will be taken into account in all decision making which officers say they hope covers this. It's a delicate balance. A consultation process will start shortly.

Discussion: Jay- it's important to get things in the strategy and/or action plan or they won't happen. Brenda- in her experience it's best to focus more on the council action plan detail, rather than the strategy. Appointing staff to a project is a good sign that it's taken seriously.

NB Update since steering group meeting: WSCC has decided to compress the consultation process in order to get the strategy agreed ASAP, so it can help shape Covid recovery plans. SECA will be included in the first round of consultation, starting soon. They have asked for us to respond on behalf of our members. After a quick round of emails, we agreed we'll send the draft out to all W.Sussex SECA groups and ask them to get back to us. **ACTION: Geoff to coordinate, and work with Tony to compile responses.**

SURREY CC Message from Pat Smith, who was unable to be at the meeting: "Dorking Climate Emergency has sent an initial response re the Surrey Greener Future Plan to all stakeholders: it's on our website at [Response to Surrey County Council's Climate Change Strategy](#). Briefly, we think the first part, analysing the situation and establishing aims, is v good, especially their target to reach a 46% reduction in carbon emissions by 2025. But the actions don't measure up: superficially they sound good but there are a lot of 'weasel words' which are vague. We've set up working groups for each section (eg Housing / Transport & Emissions) to analyse in more detail to send them a second response in c5 weeks." **ACTION: Surrey members** Anyone who'd like to join a working group can email contact@dorking-climate-emergency.net Transport is full but other areas such as Housing / Energy / Infrastructure could do with a few more people. Paul Street is on the Surrey Climate Commission core group and Pat has joined a SCCommission working group on outreach.

EAST SUSSEX CC We have very little information on the progress of ESCC. However Ollie Pendered is involved in the Greater Brighton City Region <https://greaterbrighton.com/>. He co-chairs the Greater Brighton Infrastructure Panel alongside the Chief Exec of Southern Water. The panel looks at water and energy for the City Region (Gatwick down to the coast) and works with all the local councils involved <https://greaterbrighton.com/ambitious-water-and-energy-plans-revealed-by-greater-brighton/>. They are aiming for 10 pledges from the chief execs of all the councils.

ACTION: Ollie will show a presentation of the 10 pledges at the next SECA Steering Group.

KENT & HAMPSHIRE CC SECA has written to both councils, awaiting replies. It would be good to hear from SECA members who are involved with these councils.

4. Other working groups

Education Group: Carrie is in touch with the group.

Circular Economy Group: Karen is planning to be in contact with them soon.

Networking Group: **Update on using Slack** So far 18 SECA members have signed up to join Slack, the Friends of the Earth's online networking platform. But activity on the #secasharing channel we created has been fairly minimal, with few people posting or commenting. To increase our chances of sparking a useful discussion, Brenda suggested we merge this channel with the #south-east-networking channel, which is designed to serve a similar purpose and has more members (67). (This will therefore include a mixture of SECA members and other climate action groups in the SE)

This has now been agreed and the #secasharing channel will be retired for now, having alerted people and checked they are all signed up to the #south-east-networking channel.

Steering Group members are urged to start making use of Slack for sharing questions and interesting links. A concerted push from a bunch of us should get us over the hump, and get the conversation going so others will want to join in. We will continue to point SECA members to the introductory blog showing how to join, which has been updated to reflect these changes. <https://seclimatealliance.uk/april-action-lets-stay-in-touch-using-slack/>

ACTION: ALL try out Slack

5. Discussion: where does SECA go from here, in the light of the Covid crisis?

Jay- it feels as though SECA is having success in developing a role with councils to catalyse action, help them engage with communities, share info and tie loose ends together.

Tony- we need to be light on our feet and respond to the changing world- the future won't be like the past.

Brenda- now is a rare opportunity to act on transport with the Grant Shapps money available for councils to encourage active travel. FoE is encouraging all members to write to their councils to make space for safe active travel. Hampshire Climate Action

Network is currently organising to lobby Hants CC on this. Heres the FoE blog and template letter to councils : <https://takeclimateaction.uk/take-action/urgent-get-your-council-do-more-active-travel>

Meetings using Zoom etc are suddenly possible and successful, this may have wide effects- organisations will see ways of cutting management costs/travel costs/ office space needs etc etc

Geoff's blog on Building Back Better and Tony's blog The End of the Me Too Society (both on SECA website home page) have both had a lot of interest and many online hits. Now we need to collect actual examples of things being done differently post Covid to share **ACTION: ALL**

Ollie- Community Energy South is finding a heightened interest in local groups owning/operating their own energy. They are working with Essex CC and now East Sussex CC to help other groups get started. CES would like to link with FoE and HCAN (Hampshire Climate action Network). **ACTION: Ollie and Brenda to link up**

Tony- we need to follow the trend toward re-localising. It should be the role of councils to help what's coming, not help what used to happen.

Brenda- SECA could organise webinars to share good stuff that's happening in the SE **ACTION: consider at a future meeting**

Next meeting of SECA Steering Group: in 4 or 5 weeks
ACTION: SALLY will send out a doodle poll

NB The Steering Group has had only a few people taking part from outside West Sussex, due to difficulty in travelling. Now we are having meetings by Zoom there is no barrier to seeking more input from other counties.
ACTION: ALL to actively seek out and welcome steering group members from further afield.

AOB: See notices below

WSCC Divest petition: Message from Mark Francis/XR groups: Please sign and share "WSCC Pensions to divest from fossil fuels and invest in sustainable energy" petition. Especially if you are a WSCC pensions holder by signing in with your work email address! We are going to be targeting WSCC pension holders but every signature counts!

https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/wsc-pensions-to-divest-from-fossil-fuels-and-invest-in-sustainable-energy?share=34ab5b95-0443-40c8-88fc-1b2d4906f637&source=email-share-button&utm_source=email

FoE Climate Action Group webinars:

Welcome webinar: Monday 1 June (19:30 - 20:45)

Next up: Monday 15 June (20:00 - 21:15)**Ways of working together for effective campaigning: Tuesday 2 June (19:00 - 20:30) Making your emails and digital petitions stand out: Monday 8 June (19:00 - 20:00) Mapping power & influence in your community: Thursday 11 June (18:00 - 19:30)**

Next up: Thursday 18 June (18:00 - 19:30)**Introduction to social media: Wednesday 17 June (19:00 - 20:00)**

Register here - <https://act.friendsoftheearth.uk/act/register-webinar>