



Axminster Town Council Event Report

People's Emergency Briefing Community Screenings

Axminster Guildhall | Monday, August 3rd 2026

Hosted by Axminster Town Council

Presented by Fiona Anderson and Bernie Steadman, Axminster Climate Action Group.

1. Executive Summary

This report summarises the People's Emergency Briefing (PEB) community screenings held at Axminster Guildhall by Axminster Town Council on August 3rd 2026. The event brought together residents, community leaders and elected representatives to explore the challenges posed by climate change and biodiversity loss, while also highlighting practical solutions and opportunities for positive action.

The event took place across two free-to-attend screenings, with approximately **130 people** attending in total. This represents strong community engagement. The screenings were followed by facilitated round-table discussions that enabled participants to reflect on the film's messages, share their reactions, and identify actions they could take locally and which were most important nationally.

Event Details

- **Event:** People's Emergency Briefing Community Screenings
- **Date:** Monday, August 3rd 2026
- **Venue:** Axminster Guildhall
- **Host:** Axminster Town Council
- **Presenters:** Fiona Anderson and Bernie Steadman (Axminster Climate Action Group)
- **Attendance:** Approximately 130 people spread across two screenings
- **Format:** 50-minute film followed by a facilitated discussion.

Purpose of the Event

The purpose of the screenings was to raise awareness of the climate and nature emergency, share the latest scientific evidence on climate change and biodiversity loss, encourage informed public discussion, highlight practical solutions available to Government, communities and individuals and support the People's Emergency Briefing campaign's call for a national public broadcast informing the general public about climate change and the actions required to address it both nationally, locally and personally.

The event was considered a great success and well received by those in attendance, who spoke positively of their experience and about having had an opportunity to meet and discuss the subject as a community. The Council has also received a lot of positive feedback in the weeks after the event, and has received new volunteer requests to participate in the Axminster Climate Action Group, Community Orchard and Footpath Steward Schemes. We are confident that other climate- and nature-focused organisations present will also have received new volunteer requests, as the enthusiasm to take positive action was evident at both sessions.

2. The National Emergency Briefing Campaign

The National Emergency Briefing campaign seeks to communicate the urgency of the climate and nature crisis to the wider public through the People's Emergency Briefing film.

A central campaign objective is to encourage the UK Government to provide a major public briefing, broadcast through national media platforms, so that citizens are kept informed about:

- The scale of environmental challenges facing the UK.
- Emerging climate impacts.
- Risks to health, food, infrastructure and security.
- Actions currently being undertaken nationally and locally.
- Practical solutions available to society.

The campaign argues that informed citizens are better equipped to participate in decision-making and support the changes required to build a resilient future.

3. About the People's Emergency Briefing Film

The People's Emergency Briefing is based on the **National Emergency Briefing**, held in Westminster on **November 27th 2025**, where leading climate and nature experts presented evidence on the implications of climate change and environmental degradation for the UK. The film presents these messages in an accessible "Gogglebox-style" format, featuring members of the public and well-known public figures responding to presentations from scientists and experts.

Key Themes Covered in the Film

The film addressed a range of interconnected issues, including:

- Weather extremes
- Climate change
- Climate tipping points
- Nature and biodiversity loss
- Food security
- Public health
- National security
- Economic impacts
- Energy transition and decarbonisation

The film highlighted not only the seriousness and speed of environmental change, but also the many solutions available, provided there is sufficient political leadership, investment and public support. Given the strength of public feeling at these sessions, Councillors who were unable to attend have been encouraged to watch the People's Emergency Briefing in their own time, at the earliest opportunity, or attend a similar event elsewhere.

Literature was available at the event encouraging completion of the follow-up Bath Survey, provided by the film producers, which gauges the film's impact. Literature was available with information about the Town Council's Community Orchard, Allotments and the new Footpath Steward Scheme, all of which help people to engage with the outdoors and nature in positive ways.

4. Opening Address from the Mayor

The event opened with a welcome from the Mayor of Axminster, who reflected on the actions undertaken by Axminster Town Council over the past five years to:

- Acknowledgement of Climate Change and the impact it will likely have upon our community – through the climate emergency declaration and formation of the Axminster Climate Action Group.
- Reduce the Town Council's carbon footprint. – Decarbonise the Guildhall through the removal of the gas heating system and the installation of solar panels to heat and power the building.
- Protect and enhance local nature – Through land management strategies such as no longer using glyphosate for weed management, and new initiatives and projects such as the Community Orchard and Wildflower Meadow.
- Embed environmental considerations into decision-making.
- Demonstrate leadership through responsible and sustainable practices - such as reduction of single-use plastics where possible, providing a water bottle refilling station at the guildhall.
- Supporting and promoting other environmentally focused community-based initiatives – such as the Plastic Free Axminster litter picks and campaigns.
- Supporting the community to be more resilient – through the creation of the emerging Axminster Community Emergency Plan, which is a work in progress but seeks to put in place an emergency support protocol for those affected by things like extreme weather events.

The Mayor emphasised the importance of local action and the role that town and parish councils can play in helping communities respond to environmental challenges.

5. Contribution from MP Richard Foord

Richard Foord MP attended the afternoon screening and addressed the audience after the film. In his remarks, Mr Foord:

- Reflected on several facts and findings from the film that had particularly impacted him.
- Discussed the increasing division within Parliament on climate change – and particularly the shift in position of one of the major parties on Net Zero. He regretted the breakdown of the consensus that existed until a few years ago between political parties – brought on by climate change denialism by one of the newer political parties, but also by those representing commercial interests. Stakeholders with much to lose from major climate-focused policy change have, of course, been exerting pressure to maintain their interests.
- Outlined actions he has personally undertaken in support of climate and environmental initiatives, including backing the Climate and Nature Bill, a letter to the Culture Secretary to urge that the People's Emergency Briefing be aired on prime-time TV and a meeting with the Minister for Climate to discuss Carbon Budget 7. He has committed to following up on this request.
- Encouraged continued public engagement with him on the issue, and others related to it.

6. Round-Table Discussion

Many different feelings were expressed after the film. People responded in very different ways. A handful of people left the auditorium due to anxiety and were unable to face the scale of the problem being communicated, with others expressing disbelief in climate change as a current and increasingly urgent situation. However, most participants stayed until the end of the event.

Following each screening, attendees participated in facilitated discussions centred around 5 key questions.

1. How has this film made you feel?
2. What did you think, or know about climate change before attending the event, and did your views change?
3. What has stayed with you most from the film?
4. What questions are you left with?
5. What actions do you think you and others could do personally to help?

In addition to political representatives, invitations were sent to a range of organisations and individuals who would either have their own expertise or lived experience of how climate change, or more accurately the pace of climate change, is having a detrimental impact on our communities and our environment. The purpose was not only to help inform discussions, but also to offer positive opportunities for those looking for ways to get involved.

Discussion analysis

Key themes:

6.1. Strong emotional response, balanced by hope

The film prompted a wide range of emotions. Many participants described feeling sad, angry, frustrated, frightened, guilty or overwhelmed by the scale and urgency of climate change. However, these feelings were often balanced by hope and motivation, particularly through discussing practical actions with others and seeing community engagement.

Several participants commented that coming together as a community helped turn concern into a sense that collective action is possible.

6.2. Greater understanding and a stronger sense of urgency

Even participants who considered themselves well-informed said they learned new information. Key points that stood out included:

- the speed at which climate impacts are progressing;
- declining costs of renewable energy;
- China – often seen as the problem and a justification not to take national and personal action – has made the most significant improvements and invested heavily in the development of green technologies;
- the UK's worrying loss of biodiversity and low biodiversity ranking internationally;
- potential risks associated with the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC); and
- wider impacts on food security and public health.

Many said the film reinforced the message that action is needed now and that future climate impacts are expected to become increasingly severe – there is no way back, so the only option is to slow climate change down to more manageable speeds.

6.3. Communication and public engagement

A recurring theme was that Central Government does not consistently communicate climate change as an emergency. Participants felt messaging is fragmented across news and media, public understanding of the scale of the issue is limited, and Government and the PEB campaign need to reach people beyond those already engaged.

Suggestions included asking the PEB to develop materials for younger audiences, encouraging those present to consider showing the film more widely through their own community groups, and considering how different messengers and trusted voices can broaden engagement across other platforms.

6.4. Leadership, policy and collective responsibility

Participants frequently discussed the role of governments, businesses and other organisations. Common themes included stronger legislation, better national prioritisation, long-term climate-focused policymaking, better climate resilience in new housing, greater accountability for major polluters, and support for farmers during the transition to more sustainable food production.

At the same time, many recognised that individual actions remain important and that small changes can make a meaningful difference when adopted collectively.

6.5. Local resilience

Several participants reflected on local resilience, expressing concern about how prepared Axminster may be for flooding, fire and other climate-related emergencies. This led to wider discussions about strengthening community preparedness alongside efforts to reduce emissions.

Axminster Town Council is already working with East Devon District Council to develop a Community Emergency Plan, which will provide a safety net during weather events such as flooding when higher-tier authorities or emergency services are unable to attend or are spread too thin.

This will be a community-driven plan and has its limitations, but in due course, there will likely be a call for volunteers who can assist in a variety of ways during such events.

Remaining questions and information needs

One of the clearest outcomes from the discussions was that participants left wanting to know more. The most common unanswered questions centred on:

- **Public engagement:** How can climate information reach people who are not already engaged, and how can younger people be better involved?
- **Leadership:** How can governments communicate more openly about climate change, and how much influence do large companies have over climate policy?
- **Practical solutions:** Could some climate technologies create future environmental problems, particularly around disposal of materials and chemicals?
- **Food security:** How secure is the UK's food supply, and how can farmers be supported in transitioning towards more sustainable food production?
- **Next steps:** Several participants simply asked, "When do we start?" and "What can we do at home?" reflecting a desire to move from discussion to action.

7. Other Observations

Across both sessions, participants consistently highlighted three overarching themes: the urgency of climate action, the importance of clear and honest communication, and the value of collective action by individuals, communities, businesses and governments. While many left feeling concerned about the challenges ahead, the discussions also generated a strong sense that practical action and community collaboration can play a meaningful role in building a more resilient future.

8. Small Actions Add Up.

A key theme emerging from both the film and post-screening discussions was that **small actions, multiplied across thousands of individuals and communities, can create significant positive change**. While many solutions require action from governments and institutions, individuals also play an important role. Some attendees shared feedback that the film didn't include enough information about actions individuals can take at home. Below is a summary of actions individuals could take, based on notes from the discussion groups.

Actions Individuals Can Take Now:

At Home

- Improve home insulation and energy efficiency.
- Switch to renewable electricity tariffs.
- Reduce unnecessary energy and water use.
- Install water-saving devices such as water butts and low-water-use toilet flushes.
- Review financial investments, such as pensions and savings products, to ensure money is invested in sustainable and climate-friendly industries.

Travel

- Walk or cycle for short journeys wherever possible – good for you and good for the climate and advocate for improved active travel routes!
- Use public transport where available, and challenge MP's, community leaders and transport companies on how a more comprehensive rural public transport network could be achieved.
- Reduce car use where practical or car share where you can.
- Consider lower-emission vehicle options when replacing vehicles.

Food

- Reduce food waste.
- Eat more seasonal produce and less ultra-processed food.
- Increase consumption of plant-based foods (you do not have to give up meat and dairy entirely).

- Support local food producers, farming and young farmer groups wherever possible.
- Consider growing your own fruit and vegetables at home or on an allotment and sharing your skills and produce with others – Axminster Town Council has plenty of information about renting an allotment on its website and the Axminster Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association offers advice and discounts as part of its membership.

Nature

- Create wildlife-friendly gardens.
- Plant native trees and hedgerows.
- Avoid pesticides where possible.
- Participate in local conservation projects – this could mean becoming a volunteer for the Community Orchard Group, or joining the Axe Vale and District Conservation Society, Rivers Run Through Us, or Wild East Devon.

Community Involvement and Civic Engagement

- Write to MP Richard Ford to thank him for backing the campaign, but to ensure he understands your concerns for the climate, our environment and our future.
- Support environmental initiatives in Axminster, such as Plastic Free Axminster, Axminster Climate Action Group or Friends of the River Axe.
- Volunteer with community organisations.
- Attend local consultations and public meetings on the subject of the environment and the climate – be heard!
- Share what you have learned, and other reliable information with friends and family.
- Help local organisations and community groups identify grants that could enable them to undertake climate- and nature-focused projects.
- Appoint climate champions at your business, organisation, club, or community group to help keep the climate part of any decision-making process.
- Host your own screening of the People's Emergency Briefing at another organisation or community group. You can find out how to book a screening via the website: <https://www.nebriefing.org/>
- Write to and directly engage with those organisations who are the biggest polluters and responsible for the largest emissions.
- Encourage the development of climate education for young people.

9. What will the Town Council do following this event?

The Town Council has encouraged all councillors who could not attend the screenings to view the Emergency Briefing at their earliest possible opportunity.

To tackle the Climate Emergency, a collective global effort far greater than the Town Council, or indeed any single individual, organisation, or nation, can deliver in isolation is needed; however, just as small actions by individuals add up, the Council recognises it has a part to play in that effort. Similarly, it acknowledges that climate change will continue to affect the Axminster residents and the Council will need to respond or provide support in new and evolving ways over time.

At the Full Council meeting on October 5th, the Town Council considered next steps following the screenings and the community's clear concerns.

The Emergency Plan Working Group will continue to develop an emergency plan that considers a community-led response in the event of a widespread emergency (such as flooding), where emergency services and higher authorities may be stretched too thin to provide adequate and timely support, or where access to Axminster is made impossible.

The Council will also continue to support the work of the Axminster Climate Action Group (ACAG), another Council working group largely made up of members of the public. Since the screenings, the Working Group has reformalised its structural arrangements and welcomed several new members, bringing renewed energy and additional expertise.

Verbal updates from the Axminster Climate Action Group's Councillor representative remain a standing agenda item at Full Council meetings. These updates will now be complemented by more comprehensive written reports on the Group's activities and initiatives, which ACAG's chairperson (or a nominated representative) will present to the Council at periodic intervals throughout the year. These reports will then be made publicly available on the Climate page of the Town Council's website.

At the October 5th meeting, the Council also delegated authority to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Council to take action when opportunities arise which are in keeping with the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and bring forward any initiatives that may require more significant Council support or funding, as well as to continue supporting both working Groups to facilitate their ongoing work.

Axminster Town Council already has a modest sum set aside in reserves for both Emergency Planning and ACAG activities. The Council has also committed to considering an additional sum to support new ACAG initiatives in its 2026/2027 budget discussions.

On October 19th 2026, the Axminster Climate Action Group is hosting a summit focused on climate-related food resilience at a local level. The initial event is a closed discussion between local food charities, suppliers, and producers to exchange observations and ideas on how to build climate resilience into our local food supply chain; however, it is expected to lead to further events in which members of the public can participate.

The Council will also write to MP Richard Foord in the coming months to request an update and hear if any of his efforts and the commitments made by other members of Parliament have borne fruit.

10. Conclusion

The People's Emergency Briefing screenings at Axminster Guildhall attracted a strong audience and demonstrated significant local interest in climate and environmental issues. The event successfully combined expert evidence, community discussion and political engagement, helping participants better understand both the challenges ahead and the opportunities for collective action.

The participation of local residents, Richard Foord MP, Axminster Town Council and Axminster Climate Action Group, as well as the attendance of a number of representatives from other organisations, highlighted the value of partnership working in addressing environmental challenges.

The discussions reinforced the message that while the scale of the challenge is substantial, meaningful action remains possible at national, local and individual levels.

To find out how to get involved with Axminster Climate Action Group, the Community Emergency Plan Working Group, the Community Orchard, Council-led biodiversity improvement projects, or the Footpath Steward Scheme, don't hesitate to get in touch with the Town Council at the details below and ask for the Deputy Clerk.
