

Paper 3 - Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Meeting 5: 7/9/2022 14.00-16.00

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire

Notes and actions of the meeting

1. Attendance

The following partners were in attendance:

Partner organisation	Attendees	Apologies
Cheltenham Borough Council	Mike Redman	
Cotswold District Council	Rob Weaver Chris Crookall-Fallon	
Forest of Dean District Council	Cllr Chris McFarling (Vice-Chair)	Peter Williams
Gloucester City Council	Cllr Richard Cook Jon McGinty	
Gloucestershire County Council	Cllr David Gray (Chair) Wayne Lewis	Colin Chick
Stroud District Council	Cllr Chloe Turner Brendan Cleere	
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Cllr Jim Mason Simon Dix	
Hospitals Trusts	Jen Cleary	Deborah Lee
Clinical Commissioning Group	Andrew Hughes	Mary Hutton
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and Gloucestershire Constabulary	Mandy Gibbs	Gary Thompson
GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership	David Owen	Sarah Danson Emma Hanby
Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership	Doug Hulyer	Roger Mortlock
Countywide resource and Secretariat	Julian Atkins	
Adaptation Theme	Jon Burke	
Food and Farming Theme	Mike Elliott	
Food and Farming Theme	Jenny Phelps	

2. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr McFarling chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone. Apologies were noted (see above).

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest

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4. Adaptation Theme (Paper 1)

Richard introduced Jon Burke, Climate Change Manager for Gloucester City Council, and Jon took CLG members through a presentation which set out the issues which Gloucestershire will need to address in adapting to the impacts and effects of climate change.

The following key points were made:

Surface temperatures have increased globally by over 1 degree centigrade since the beginning of the industrial revolution and this is having profound impacts on ecosystems and the stability of agricultural systems, as well as presenting significant threats to human life and the essential infrastructure that enables our societies to function.

In the past four years alone the UK has seen some remarkable extreme weather events, from hotter and drier summers to wetter milder winters. Temperatures exceeded 40 degrees centigrade for the first time this year and 2020 saw the wettest February on record. And weather events are increasing in their magnitude and duration.

The UK Climate Change Committee has identified that, irrespective of geographical location in the UK, we can expect to experience in the coming decades hotter and drier summers, warmer and wetter winters and continued sea level rise and all of these will pose threats to public health, public safety, and the resilience of infrastructure.

While the major threat in Gloucestershire will be exposure to tidal, fluvial and surface water flooding, the magnitude and frequency of all of these risks has not yet been established.

The UK Climate Change Committee has emphasised the importance of understanding the probability of climate risks occurring and their likely impacts in order to prioritise which risks need to be tackled in the first instance. The Committee has produced a useful guide on what needs to be done in the first instance:

- Identify the current and future level of risk in respect of extreme weather events.
- Determine the extent to which, if any, these risks are already being mitigated.
- Determine the extent to which further action can improve resilience and reduce the threat of greater climate related risks in the future.

Climate change adaptation solutions come in a wide variety of forms: from engineering projects (e.g. flood defences) to nature-based interventions (e.g. wetland/woodland management) in the landscape. They can be small in scale, such as rainwater gardens and urban forestry to reduce the impact of urban heat and extreme precipitation events, or large scale. They can be about new and emerging technologies such as drip irrigation, which is now routinely using the agricultural industry to mitigate against the effects of droughts, and they can be behavioural.

And the decisions made by the different tiers of local government, through planning policies and development/investment decisions can make our county more or less resilient. The need to undertake adaptation interventions in ways which reduce inequalities or doesn't exacerbate them was also stressed.

It was noted that there is a lot that can be done already to mitigate against global warming and climate change at low or even zero marginal cost in terms of no regret, low regret and quick win adaptations. But in order for the county to be confident that more costly interventions are being focussed on the high priority risks in the right locations it was proposed that CLG commissions a climate risk and vulnerability assessment exercise to categorize, measure and prioritize the range of climate change risks we are facing.

It was stressed that once we have a better fix on the risks then we will need to cost and fund the adaptation actions that are required now and into the future.

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It was noted that we need to adapt to the two degrees centigrade of warming that we already know are baked in, but also that we apply a precautionary principle and consider whether or not we should be preparing for up to four degrees of warming. The implication of four degrees of warming for certain categories of risk in this county are significant and there is a need to avoid policies that lock us in to emissions which then become costly to tackle. As an example, our current built environments have been built in a high degree of car dependency and therefore there are built in and locked in future surface transport emissions which will be difficult to reduce.

It was noted that the proposed climate risk and vulnerability assessment (CRVA) would consider the future impacts of climate change on all areas of the County and it makes sense to undertake a core assessment of the risks as they can't be isolated within any single district. A coordinated approach to this work across Climate Leadership Gloucestershire partners would enable information-sharing, reduce marginal costs, and having a county-wide CRVA would enable more informed prioritisation and support stronger business cases for investment in adaptation.

The first step in this process should be for Climate Leadership Gloucestershire to agree funding for the delivery – by third-party technical experts – of a CRVA for the County. It was noted that it could also be inclusive or exclusive of South Gloucestershire given previous cross-county collaboration. Preliminary soft market testing with consultancies experienced in delivering CRVAs, suggests that the cost of county-wide CRVA, exclusive of South Gloucestershire, would not exceed £200k.

The paper presented 4 recommendations:

Recommendation I – Climate Leadership Gloucestershire members should seek to formally adopt a localized version of the Climate Change Committee's ten principles for good adaptation policy:

1. Set out a vision for a well-adapted Gloucestershire.
2. Integrate adaptation into other policies, particularly decarbonisation.
3. Adapt to 2C; assess the risks up to 4C*.
4. Avoid policies that lock-in avoidable emissions and climate risks.
5. Prepare for unpredictable extremes.
6. Assess interdependencies between risks.
7. Understand threshold effects on the locality.
8. Undertake an approach to adaptation that reduces inequalities or, as a minimum, does not exacerbate them.
9. Consider opportunities from climate change
10. Support the implementation of adaptation through funding, resources, indicators, and research to link adaptation actions to reductions in risk.

Recommendation II – While the geographical attributes, built environment composition, and demographics of the County's various districts may very well require bespoke climate adaptation risk assessments and plans, there is a pressing need for a county-level document, since risks cannot be isolated within districts.

Recommendation III – Subject to approval of recommendation 2, and prior to its commencement, governance arrangements for the delivery of a county-wide CRVA be established. This may be through a sub-group of officers drawn from some/all of the districts and the County Council, in addition to and Lead Member, for example. The purpose of this group would be to prepare the tender scope for the delivery of the CRVA, monitor and contribute to its development, and report in on progress to CLG.

Recommendation IV – In recognition of the cross-cutting nature of climate change adaptation with CLG's other workstreams, ensure that all future thematic updates contain details of climate change mitigation *and* adaptation measures being undertaken within the scope of the theme.

The following comments were made in response to the paper and presentation:

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Trying to adapt a four degree centigrade rise globally is likely to be extremely difficult as it would potentially lead to a virtually uninhabitable planet.

While the focus of the presentation was centred around local government it was clarified that collaborative action on climate adaptation was of interest to all members of CLG and all could benefit from a collaborative approach to understanding the risks and their likelihood and impact better.

It was noted that for 1 degree above 23 degrees Celsius, hospital admissions amongst the over 60s with respiratory illnesses increased by around 11 percent which has profound impacts on beds, on costs associated with and treating people and also reintegrating back to their home.

While it is important to understand the risks we also need to have access to the right levers and tools to address them and many of the levers lie outside our direct control as CLG members (the national planning policy framework and building regulations being just two examples)

The need better to understand the climate risks we are likely to face is important so that we can make well-informed decisions and prioritize where those adaptation measures will be most cost effective.

It was noted that the cost the estimate set out in the paper was a very cautious estimate and is at the very top end. The figure was put into context as the 2014 floods has cost £50 million in damage to highways infrastructure alone and the point was made that if we could implement measures that could mitigate 10 or 20% of the costs of highways damaged during a similar flooding event in future that such a climate risk and vulnerability assessment process would have paid for itself many times over. The question was more whether we can afford not to undertake the work proposed.

It was noted that in the 2007 floods the NHS had had to run Cheltenham Hospital without any mains water and the impact the river Severn flooding had on patients was significant. The NHS had incurred significant disruption as patients had to be transferred down to Bristol, Oxford, or to anywhere where they could get the treatment they needed. Elective surgery was suspended and there were also significant impacts on staff trying to get to work, whose homes and families were also affected. So NHS partners were likely to be supportive of the work proposed.

A query was raised regarding how the work would be funded but it was also noted many of the themes which Climate Leadership Gloucestershire is working on are starting to identify staff capacity and resource constraints. So there is a need to look at funding levels and what gets prioritised.

The Secretariat noted that the intention is to produce an annual report with the recommendations that we've arrived at over the course of this first year's work and where we've identified resource calls that will have to be fed into that in time for the AGM in January. CLGe will then need to have a discussion about what we resource and in what order. But the climate risk and vulnerability assessment needs to be very near the top of one of the first things that we fund.

It was noted that business continuity planning and emergency planning in response to climate related issues is becoming more prevalent. The adaptation paper offers a chance to break that cycle and will help to establish a baseline which informs joint planning that so that we're better placed to prevent these incidents which are occurring with ever increasing frequency. The example of household recycling centres had to be closed for the first time ever due to extreme heat affecting staff stood out on concrete surfaces in high 30 degree temperatures all day was used to illustrate the new challenges we are all facing.

It was noted that cash wouldn't necessarily have to be committed at this stage as further work is required to firm up what the costs are likely to be. Recommendation three is to convene a subgroup of key officers to work up the proposal and brief in more detail and report back before progressing further.

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire endorsed the 3 recommendations set out in the paper.

5. Food & Farming Theme (Paper 2)

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Chris McFarling introduced Rob Weaver, Chief Executive, Cotswold District Council.

Robert Weaver introduced the work being done on the Food & Farming theme and explained the rationale behind Cotswold District Council leading on the theme. 70 or 81% of the Cotswold district is rural and something like 95% of the land within Cotswold District is owned by less than 20 big land owners.

Work has been undertaken to gather evidence from partners to establish what is already in place, what is working well, and this will feed into the strategic action plan and help identify further work where CLG can add value. Partners including the LEP, the NFU, RAU, Cotswold National Landscape and others have been asked what CLG could do to support, enhance or facilitate things that they would like to do if they had more scope or resource or the potential to do more. There is some brilliant work already going on out there by partners and so we need to ensure we are not reinventing the wheel.

CLG received two presentations: Mike Elliott presented the work Cotswold National Landscape have been doing to map carbon pathways for the farming sector within the AONB and set the scene for the key issues which are core to the food & farming theme. And Jenny Phelps presented work being undertaken by the Farming Wildlife Advisory Group and the Gloucestershire Food & Farming Partnership on regenerative farming, biodiversity and climate action-oriented farming practices and the scope to integrate land management and community development/resilience work in response to the twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Mike Elliott's presentation highlighted that the UK is a net importer of food and so is vulnerable to impacts that extreme weather, drought, storm, wildfires have on the global food production system. The world relies on five or six core food producing regions for most of its food production and when multiples of these breakdown, the global food market suffers - impacting our food security and increasing trade disruptions and geopolitical tensions as natural resources become scarcer.

At a national level rising sea levels, flooding, and the soil contamination that comes from flooding and the loss of agricultural land are risks to our food security. The loss of groundwater and topsoil is another threat to our food system. And biodiversity losses as result of shrinking habitats and shifting seasons as a result of climate change, will all have an impact on yields as a result of key pollinators not emerging at the right time or having access to the food sources they need.

The spread of pests and disease is increasing and the increase in atmospheric levels of CO₂ are weakening our crop defences and reducing nutrient levels in our crops. And wild food stores are being depleted for similar reasons. So in summary, climate ecological emergency posed massive threat to the UK food system and also our food security here in Gloucestershire.

At the same time our food system – how we feed ourselves - is also exacerbating climate change. Cotswolds National Landscape have therefore been working with Small World Consulting to undertake a study to assess what the baseline GHG emissions for the AONB are.

For the Cotswolds, 64% of which is within Gloucestershire, the food and drink sector accounts for largest proportion of residents' total GHG emissions (23.4%). In addition, the food and drink consumed by visitors to the Cotswolds accounts for 52% of their carbon footprint while they're here.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing is the second largest industrial emitter at 22%.

Small World Consulting have charted a potential pathway to net zero based on emission reduction targets across different sectors and it is clear that food and drink based emissions need to reduce.

In order to achieve that a shift in diets is needed and society also needs to move towards:

- more seasonal eating

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- higher consumption of fruit and vegetables (but not all plant based foods are automatically climate or nature friendly).
- reducing our consumption of grain, sugar and starchy vegetables
- eating animal products in smaller quantities and less often which are sourced from high quality, extensively grazed animals.

The report also looked at land management options in order to reduce emissions and sequester carbon in the Cotswolds, including the planting of new woodland and peatland restoration.

It was noted that there is much uncertainty as the food system is extremely complex. Given the urgency of the situation we need a management approach that embraces that uncertainty. This means taking action, receiving feedback, and constantly adapting the approach, instead of just waiting for better data.

We all have a role to play as consumers and food producers. For farmers, it will mean switching to more extensive livestock systems, eliminating or limiting imported feed, switching to arable horticultural systems, or diversifying the types of food that they produce and releasing grazed or arable land for woodland creation.

For businesses, it means buying local and seasonal foods, taking a climate literate approach to stocking shelves and developing menus, charging more for admission, intensive foods and reducing waste through waste prevention schemes or utilizing or preserving excess foods.

For public services and local authorities it means reviewing procurement processes and contracting with companies that can guarantee the sourcing of local seasonal food that is high quality, and using extensively grazed animal protein in smaller quantities. It also requires introducing schemes to give low income households greater access to high quality, extensively produced animal products and developing food waste prevention schemes.

In planning it means not approving any more intensive livestock systems and cracking down on pollution from the existing livestock systems.

And for consumers it means buying locally produced food that is seasonal, reducing our intake of emission-intensive foods, paying more for high quality, extensive extensively grazed animal products, learning to utilize and preserve foods and joining food waste prevention schemes as well.

The following points were raised:

The findings from the study need to be more widely circulated.

Reducing livestock numbers in the landscape and shifting to more extensive grazing systems would buy us some time in terms of global warming because the methane generated by livestock, though short lived, is a potent greenhouse gas.

For every £1.00 that we spend on food in the UK we're also spending £1.00 in terms of externalized costs because of the environmental and health impacts of what we're eating.

The affordability of food and food security are often cited as the main reasons for a continuing the existing systems yet the poorest are already being hit the hardest. The focus should be on putting schemes in place that will allow us to pay the true cost of food while ensuring that we have greater equity in terms of access affordable food through pay what you can afford schemes, food subsidies, or voucher schemes.

Jenny Phelps gave a presentation which highlighted the work of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership and noted that there were many reasons to be optimistic as a lot of work was already underway to develop an integrated approach to

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farming and land management across the county which enables societal transformation and the development of a circular economy based around sustainable food, fibre and fuel systems.

The importance of soils was stressed as they are at the heart of what we can do to make a rapid difference. If we transform our food system, we will deliver multiple benefits across multiple agendas: health and wellbeing, climate adaptation, biodiversity and ecological recovery, exposure to climate driven risks etc..

The work the Government are doing to drive change through the environment land management scheme was noted, but farmers are really feeling the pinch and the climate emergency is already having a massive impact on their profitability. Farmers are really ready for a change in the system, they just need help to be able to get there.

The Environment Act presents an enormous opportunity to help farmers to understand that farming in a different way will deliver multiple benefits because there's a recognition that high organic matter in soils can deliver on the climate change and biodiversity recovery agendas while also producing nutrient dense food as well. At the same time the polluter pays principle is the stick which could leave farmers vulnerable if they do not change farming practices.

The importance of regenerative farming was highlighted as a global movement which is seeking to maximize the sequestration of trillions of tons that carbon in the atmosphere and put it back into soils through improving the amount of organic matter in the soil. And it was noted that Gloucestershire has some of the best regenerative farmers in the country.

The importance of crop diversity and keeping the ground covered was highlighted. Minimizing soil disturbance is also important as soils release greenhouse gases and become more vulnerable to erosion, especially if linked with flooding, when disturbed. The aim needs to be to farm in a way that produces nutrient dense food across landscapes that also prevents flooding and enables ecological recovery. And the integration of livestock as part of that equation is absolutely critical.

The challenges posed by the Environmental Land Management scheme and the various support mechanisms available to both farmers and communities was highlighted and these are making it difficult to develop integrated approaches and to access the advice and guidance that is needed.

FWAG has worked with farmers across the county and with CCRI and others to trial projects which have become international case studies and have fed into European policy. The importance of having baseline data and regular monitoring was stressed and the work that has been undertaken with the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership to establish environmental baselines for the county was highlighted as it provides a foundation upon which to measure change.

A number of projects and initiatives were touched upon in the presentation which highlight the potential for integrating agendas.

The approach of government has been to provide a lot of funding across multiple different national government departments and there is a real need for stronger integration. Local Authorities working with FWAG and others can help make the connections and by developing integrated approaches we can help ecology and biodiversity to recover while producing nutrient dense food. The goal is to restore the ecosystem function of land and to grow food in ways which reinforces that functionality and the prize in doing so is to effectively make food affordable for everyone across society.

CLG were asked to support the Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership as a nexus between the LNP and the LEP and there was no opposition to CLG giving its support in this way.

The following comments were made in response to the presentation:

A question was asked about the things CLG could do to the agenda forward. And the response was that there is a need to develop the network of rural facilitators to help support communities develop local climate action and strengthen coordination across the multiple strands of activity.

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CLG could explore how it could support the development of an integrated framework which supports the farming sector to be able to make the changes which are needed.

The need to support community energy initiatives was highlighted, including supporting further work on generating community energy from human waste through the production of off grid biomethane.

Support for the research into quantifying the ecosystem service benefits that come from our landscapes and water catchments is also needed. If we can make them investable and use that green investment as a revenue stream to support farmers and our local communities then everyone benefits.

The importance of including young people in decision making and ensuring that they are there at the table to challenge whether or not what is being proposed is ambitious enough and to ground the discussion not just our own futures, but also their futures, was highlighted.

The importance of climate literacy training was stressed because until everyone understands the urgency and the scale of the challenge, we aren't going to be able to move hearts and minds.

A question was asked about the ability of farmers to sell into the public sector and whether the public sector is being proactive enough in seeking out local producers.

It was noted that various projects have already been undertaken, through the South West food hub for example, and work is underway to map the food produced in Gloucestershire but it hasn't yet gathered momentum. The challenge has been that procurement processes to date haven't taken heightened environmental requirements into account as part of the tender evaluation process. Adjusting procurement rules locally would be the ambition.

The issue of food poverty was raised. Coupled with the energy crisis, people seem to be moving away from healthy foods toward convenience foods which are perceived as being cheaper.

FWAG have just secured 7 acres of land to enable food growing to be taught through the Royal Agricultural University and the ambition is to expand across the county with similar sites with the aim of connecting people in food and fuel poverty with the people producing food, fuel and fiber.

The next stage for the Food and Farming theme is to identify gaps and bring a set of proposals/key asks back to CLG to prioritise which ones are taken forward in the first instance with CLG's help.

It was noted that the Hospitals Trusts do try to procure food as locally as possible but a lot of the procurement is done nationally through big suppliers that are so much cheaper than the local producers given the volume of food which hospitals require. The hope is that the new 10% social value criterion that's coming in will allow more flexibility.

It was suggested that Climate Leadership Gloucestershire should explore establishing a Citizen's Climate Assembly. Experience elsewhere, from places like Oxford, it that is has been quite powerfully transformative.

CLG were reminded that the behaviour change theme has two components to it. One is looking internally at our organizational behaviours and cultures. But the second strand of is focussed on citizen engagement and community engagement.

The secretariat has identified that how CLG involves and connects with young people and the numerous groups undertaking fantastic work at grassroots levels, and links them with what we're trying to do strategically is something that will be picked that up as part of the annual report and further discussions when we get to the behaviour change theme.

It was noted that Gloucestershire Food and Farming Partnership is one vehicle through which those connections could be made as the partnership has been engaging with parish councils and community groups across the county to ask them about food and resilience and local food supply chains.

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6. Thematic Updates Report (Paper 3)

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire noted the Thematic Updates Report:

7. Meeting Notes of the Last Meeting (Paper 4)

The Secretariat highlighted that Meeting Notes for June's meeting were on the agenda for final sign off. Members of the Group had previously had the opportunity to review them.

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire approved the June Meeting Notes for publishing on the website.

8. CLG Action Tracking Report (Paper 5)

The Chair noted the action tracking report and encouraged members to review the progress that is being made.

9. CLG Revised Forward Look (Paper 6)

The Chair noted the Forward Look and the AGM in January which will be an in person meeting.

The Secretariat noted that dates for next year's programme of meetings were in the process of being scheduled. Two Councils are having full elections next year and the schedule is taking that into account. It was accepted that since CLG is an independent advisory group and not a decision making body then there wasn't need to pause its work.

Any other climate business

The Secretariat reminded those attending the meeting of the site visit to Tewkesbury Borough Council's new solar canopy, scheduled for the afternoon of September 15th.

The Secretariat briefed CLG on the approved Terms of Reference as they apply to engaging in external communications/correspondence. The Terms of Reference allow CLG to demonstrate leadership in lobbying on matters relevant to its remit without the need for prior approval from individual partners.

A request was made that the presentations from the meeting be circulated to members and this was agreed.