

# 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 Liam Jones (presenting)	
Cotswold District Council	James Brain (presenting)	
Forest of Dean District Council	Peter Williams Cllr Paul Hiett	
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	
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Cllr Jim Mason Simon Dix	Peter Tonge
Hospitals Trusts	Jen Cleary	Deborah Lee
Clinical Commissioning Group	Andrew Hughes	Mary Hutton Cath Leech
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and Gloucestershire Constabulary	Mandy Gibbs	
GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership	Sarah Danson Emma Hanby	
Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership		Doug Hulyer
Countywide resource and Secretariat	Julian Atkins	
Head of Employment & Skills Gloucestershire County Council	Pete Carr (Guest)	
UBICO	Chris Urwin (Guest) Ian Boughton (presenting)	

## 2. Welcome and Introductions

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

### 3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of Interest

### 4. Planning Theme (Paper 1)

Liam Jones (Head of Planning, Cheltenham Borough Council) and James Brain (Forward Planning Manager, Cotswold District Council) led the Planning theme presentation and discussion. They set out the current state of play with each of the planning authorities' Local Plans and specialist plans (Local Minerals Plan and the Core Waste Strategy) within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The presentation highlighted that planning can be a tool or an enabler in addressing climate change, but the challenge was in identifying what more can be done collectively, over and above what planning authorities are doing currently, to achieve the best climate change outcomes through the planning process.

The County Planning Officers Group had convened an inception meeting to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the current planning system and identify what actions could be taken to deliver positive change.

Cheltenham's new climate change Supplementary Planning Document was cited as a good example of planning guidance which seeks to proactively drive positive climate action through the planning process but the policy framework which underpins it needs to be strengthened in the emerging JSP.

Gloucestershire's planning authorities and the LEP have signed up to a Statement of Common Ground which seeks to develop, at a strategic level, common approaches to planning policy development and addressing climate change is central to that document.

Four issues were identified for Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG) to consider:

1. The Local Plans currently adopted do not really offer a good policy basis for us to go above and beyond national policy and building regulations in setting out our climate action ambitions.
2. At a county level our goals are pretty well aligned and the Statement of Common Ground offers a sound mechanism for coordinating, coordinating, planning, policy interventions. However, the devil is in the detail.
3. We need a clearer understanding of the things which are getting in the way of the plan making and development control processes delivering the climate change interventions that we need.
4. And we need to identify what actions can be taken now and in the future.

The results of a SWOT analysis were presented which identified the following:

#### Strengths

The Statement of Common Ground for Gloucestershire provides a clear mandate and sets out an effective framework and the governance arrangements needed to quantify the issues and identify possible solutions.

#### Weaknesses

We do not yet fully understand what interventions are needed or how we will then secure and implement these. Some authorities are further advanced in their thinking due to where

they are in their plan making cycle and we can learn from what others are doing but there is a lack of climate change expertise to support the planning process.

### Opportunities

The opportunity exists to coordinate a whole range of planning activities, from plan making and evidence gathering through to the development management process which could benefit all of the planning authorities. Aligning planning policies in partner's respective plans would improve consistency across the county and this is something the development industry are calling for to help speed growth.

The development of consistent tools and checklists would support development management teams and applicants by again having a consistent approach which would help to build resilience across Gloucestershire.

### Threats

A lack of resources across local authorities, and the lack of specialist expertise on climate change and sustainability in particular, in both planning policy and development management is constraining more proactive approaches. The drive for timely decisions on planning applications coupled with the lack of access to expert advice has an effect on the quality the schemes which are approved.

Passing the test of soundness at examination is a key threat and the challenge of maintaining a 5 year housing land supply has an impact on planning applications being won on appeal.

Finally, financial viability arguments will constrain what developers can be asked to do in addressing climate change in some parts of the county unless a stronger national planning framework comes into force.

Working collectively to establish a robust evidence base will be crucial in developing planning policy which is more responsive to climate change.

The presentation proposed three initial recommendations that Gloucestershire's Planning Authorities should act upon:

1. Work to align and coordinate evidence gathering across the county.
2. Consider opportunities to prepare common guidance notes, toolkits and checklists, building on: the Statement of Common Ground; Cheltenham's Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document; and the work Publica (Forest of Dean, Cotswold and West Oxfordshire) have done to develop a Zero Carbon toolkit for use at the pre-application stage.
3. Secure additional countywide climate specialist resource to support the review of local plans and in particular the assessment of major applications.

### Key points arising from the discussion:

There was support for developing a consistent approach across Gloucestershire and having common checklists, advice notes and toolkits across the county would improve our ability to convince developers what is expected in Gloucestershire.

The importance of having policies which deliver change on the ground was highlighted in terms of issues such as air quality, sustainable urban drainage, trees and hedgerows, sites

suitable for renewable energy and battery storage, natural flood management, and sustainable and regenerative farming.

The specialist climate change resource was queried and whether, given the current labour market, the planning authorities collectively needed to employ a role full time or create a pot of money through which everyone preparing local plans could buy-in the expertise as necessary.

In response it was noted that each planning authority has a climate change lead of some sort but it has become very clear that there are already a lot of calls on those individuals' time in terms of progressing each organisation's own net zero journey. And development management teams do not have access to the specialist expertise to support them in driving net-zero developments forwards. On issues such as highways or flooding advice, there are officers working centrally to provide that expertise and if they were working to similar policies, similar types of guidance and tools, that would help to smooth the planning process. Having a call-off contract arrangement might work initially but in the longer term a dedicated resource would probably be needed.

It was noted, as a guide to what such a resource might look like, that the gross annual cost of a post providing such a function would be likely to be in the region of £55-65k per year across all of the partners though some non-planning authority CLG members might feel it was not something they could contribute to. The potential difficulty of recruiting into such a role was also noted. Recruitment for local authority planners is proving extremely challenging at present and the climate expertise required is a new area of specialism.

The point was made that resourcing 1 post across the County would not be enough to service the workload which undoubtedly would be generated given the complexity of the issues and time needed to satisfy policy requirements and appeals processes as and when they arose. Any role description or call off arrangement would need to be very carefully specified and the status of any advice given would need to be clear.

The idea of planning performance agreements was put forwards as a tool which could be used to generate revenue to support the function, especially for big applications and a starting point could be the large sites allocated in respective local plans. The draw for developers was that in paying for specialist support they get a better scheme at the end of the process.

It was suggested that the problem be dealt with in two chunks. One, the plan making resource and common support tools/guidance documents and then the Development Management process.

Developing training resources and support for planning staff was also suggested as a way of developing capacity around a guiding framework to build self-sufficiency.

**CLG endorsed the three recommendations proposed.**

**Action 22/28 The Secretariat to incorporate the recommendations into the recommendations summary paper for each theme (see also Action 22/33).**

**Action 22/29 Secretariat to work with the Planning Theme Lead/County Planning Officers Group to set out options for delivering the proposed specialist resource support and how this might be resourced.**

## 5. Presentation from Ubico

Ian Boughton (Head of Fleet Operations) gave an update on the work Ubico are doing to reduce the emissions from their fleet and other initiatives that they are working on to deliver waste and grounds management services as environmentally efficiently as possible.

Ubico provides services to around 300,000 residents, including household and commercial waste collections, street cleaning, processing and recycling and grounds maintenance. Ubico operates a vehicle fleet consisting of 380 road registered vehicles and over 700 pieces of kit including lawnmowers, tractors, trailers, and machinery.

A significant number of these vehicles and plant run on diesel or petrol and the company is always looking for practical ways to reduce the negative impacts of its operations on the climate and on air quality.

Ubico has been implementing carbon emissions reduction measures where it can do so without requiring additional funding or additional shareholders decisions. But there are other carbon reduction activities which require the approval of and additional funding from the shareholders.

Examples of the projects Ubico have been implementing include:

Using **route optimisation software** to determine the most efficient operational rounds to reduce mileage/wear and tear and achieve the efficient use of the equipment. Optimising routes saves fuel and reduces the carbon impacts of a particular round.

Working with shareholders on **vehicle procurement** and specifications to procure the most efficient and lowest polluting vehicle engines that are available within their budgets. Carbon reduction is specifically built into the process to achieve emissions reductions through vehicle modifications/optimisation, alternative fuel options, all the way through to electric vehicles. Opportunities to retrofit existing vehicles with greener technology are also explored.

**Maximizing tyre life** as tyres produce carbon emissions and use a significant amount of oil when they're manufactured. Ubico applies a comprehensive tyre policy, especially on heavy goods vehicles and manages tyre wear closely. Worn tyres are re-treaded and when new tyres are bought, the correct compounds and tread patterns for the job the vehicle does are chosen to reduce wear. With the introduction of the policy alone the company has saved over 96 tons of carbon since it was introduced.

Installation of **telematic systems** on vehicles to reduce emissions and unnecessary journeys. The systems also aid vehicle maintenance as each vehicle can signal when it needs an oil change rather than it coming in on a schedule. One of the most significant successes of using real time telematics has been in eco coaching and driver training in how to drive vehicles in an environmentally friendly way. The technology has been deployed across Cotswold's and Cheltenham's heavy fleets and has resulted in carbon savings of 105 tonnes to date plus softer benefits including lower accidents and less stress on drivers.

**Biofuels.** Second generation biofuels (HVO – hydrogenated vegetable oil) are being used on one of the contracts (49 vehicles are running on HVO) and this is expected to save around 80 to 85% in carbon and other greenhouse gases. All of the biofuel used is certified by the Renewable Fuel Assurance Scheme and the data from the telematics systems is being used to monitor performance.

**Low emission vehicles.** Ubico have invested electric vehicle charging points within depots to start to create the infrastructure needed for EV fleets and have also purchased 15 full battery electric vehicles with another four on order. The vehicles range from a 16 ton truck-

mounted sweeper operating in Stroud down to small vans that are operating in Stroud, West Oxfordshire and Cheltenham. Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) are likely to be the better option for vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes in the near future with hydrogen fuel cells being more suited to the heavier vehicles.

**Air quality.** While the projects/initiatives above are focussed on net zero they also have the benefit of helping to improve air quality by reducing pollutants and nitrous oxides from vehicle tail pipes.

There are challenges to making further progress. Ubico's shareholders face budget constraints, the infrastructure to support BEVs and Hydrogen vehicles is still in its infancy and technology is evolving all the time. There isn't a one size fits all solution. Battery electric vehicles won't look the same in the future and autonomous vehicles will become more prevalent on our roads.

Chris Urwin noted that Ubico want to work in partnership with the authorities in helping to do the strategic thinking on what the road maps to net zero look like for those wanting to be early adopters and those wanting to learn from those that go first in terms of low carbon approaches to waste and environmental service delivery. Ubico are working on a number of options which will be presented at a later date.

**Key points arising from the discussion:**

The issue of locating waste transfer stations was raised as where they are located is a critical climate change question.

A question was asked regarding the current price differential between a fully electric curb side sorting vehicle and a biofuel one. And whether the market was big enough yet for authorities to seriously consider them? Only a few manufacturers have developed EV curb side sort vehicles. An existing model modified to EV is approx. £340 – 420k against £205k for a diesel vehicle. For a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle the cost is around £680k with little infrastructure to support it at present but that is where the future is.

The issue of hydrogen refuelling points and where they will be located was raised. Depots will likely have hydrogen storage/refuelling points in much the same way as now. Ubico could support a hydrogen vehicle now with just in time refuelling but the investment in solid state batteries will solve the range anxiety problem.

A point was made about the public sector using other heavy vehicles such as the fire and ambulance services. Can the work that Ubico have put in to researching HVO be shared with other services?

**Action 22/30 Secretariat to work with Ubico, NHS, Police and fire and rescue services on the best means of sharing the learning points from Ubico's decarbonisation work.**

## 6. Economy (Green Skills) Theme Revisit (Paper 2)

The recommendations from the green skills discussion at October's meeting were revisited as CLG had been short of time to give them full consideration. There were 12 recommendations, and these needed to be prioritised. They were presented in order to collate what needs to happen as a starting point in order to move this very challenging area forward and form a strategy for Gloucestershire.

It was recognised that the recommendations, while all very valid, require resources to be effectively progressed. Developing the green skills sector will be critical for delivering local retrofit activity and there are economic opportunities for Gloucestershire which arise from that.

It was noted that the discussion last time raised the issue of green skills being too broad in its scope and the suggestion was made that the initial focus should be on retrofit skills because the Retrofit theme had identified training, delivery capacity and supply chain issues for retrofit projects as being particular challenges.

The point was made that there is a clear role for the private sector to contribute to the resourcing of the green skills agenda and it should not be seen as solely the responsibility of those bodies in CLG to identify the funding that would be necessary. The focus should be on developing a public/private partnership of some kind.

It was noted that there is quite a lot going on and the challenge is making sure the work is joined up and developing the green skills priorities for the county.

The green skills involved in the agricultural sector were highlighted and the point was made that developing regenerative farming skills is just as important as developing agritech skills and harnessing new technology.

The recommendations also included the need to expand carbon literacy training as a core green skill.

CLG endorsed the recommendations but felt further work was required to refine, prioritise and cost them with the initial focus being on developing what the green skills forum and green skills lead role would look like in more detail.

**Action 22/31: Secretariat to work with GFirstLEP, as economy theme lead, to hone the recommendations into priority order and articulate what resources would be required to implement them, focussing on the green skills forum and green skills lead role initially.**

**Action 22/32: Secretariat to work with CN2030, to develop a carbon literacy training model for broader roll out across partners.**

## 7. Recommendations Approved by CLG to date (Paper 3)

The paper presented was in response to an action from the October meeting. It brings together all of the recommendations/actions/position statements that CLG have agreed to date so that partners can see the progress that has been made across the various themes to date.

The Secretariat suggested that the paper should form the basis of a briefing paper back to partners highlighting what has been agreed at CLG and requesting that partners consider how best to absorb and embed the recommendations in corporate plans and work programs for next year.

CLG agreed the proposal put forward by the Secretariat.

**Action 22/33: Secretariat to produce and circulate a briefing paper and disseminate to partners**

## **8. Meeting Notes of the Last Meeting (Paper 4)**

The Secretariat highlighted that Meeting Notes for October's meeting had been amended following feedback from the NHS. The updated version was now presented for final sign off.

CLG approved the amended October Meeting Notes.

## **9. Thematic Update Report (Paper 5)**

CLG noted the quarterly Thematic Update Report

## **10. Action Tracking Paper (Paper 6)**

The Secretariat presented the latest action tracking report and noted that reasonably good progress was being made. There were two themes where progress was stalled due to staff departures and difficulties with recruitment. One was the biodiversity theme where the Local Nature Partnership have been finding it difficult to recruit a new Local Nature Partnership Manager despite concerted efforts to do so. There was also an action (Action 22/16) for partners to feed in project/site proposals for green infrastructure and nature-based solutions projects and progressing this had also been hampered by the lack of staff capacity. The second theme is the Energy theme being led by the Forest of Dean which again has been affected by the departure of the officer leading the theme but it was noted that the Forest of Dean should have a climate emergency officer in post by the time of the next meeting.

It was also noted that the County Council were providing administrative support to the Local Nature Partnership and were helping the LNP to put out the regular newsletters and keep up their engagement and contact databases. The County Council had also recently recruited a biodiversity officer who will be able to provide some additional capacity.

The County Council were also working to identify some resource to help move the energy theme forward and the Secretariat was exploring what role the GFirstLEP Energy and Business Group could play in supporting the theme and the Forest of Dean.

## **11. CLG Forward Look (Paper 7)**

The Forward Look report was presented for information only. All of the meetings for next year should already be in people's diaries. The next meeting is the AGM at the end of January and it will be an in-person meeting in Gloucester. The main items of business will be the business support element of the economy theme and the countywide engagement element of the behaviour change theme.

## **12. Any other climate business**

The Secretariat highlighted that he and the Chair had both attended a meeting hosted by the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils. The Secretariat gave a short presentation on the work of CLG and there were several other really good presentations on what is happening at the local level to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

There was some criticism at the meeting of CLG and the County Council's visibility in terms of communications/messaging and the support and guidance that is given to parish and town councils.

CLG has discussed the issue of community engagement and communications previously and countywide engagement is on the agenda for the next meeting.

In response to the feedback, the Secretariat had arranged a meeting with the Police and the NHS, as the behaviour change theme leads, along with County Council's sustainability team, to incorporate the points that were made into what is brought to the next meeting on that theme.

The Chair noted that hundreds of thousands of people live in Gloucestershire and at the parish level there are lots of people with enthusiasm for pursuing a positive agenda around climate change and who are willing to actually deliver things. It was important for CLG to be demonstrating the strategic leadership that is necessary but it was also important to look at how we can assist, facilitate and capture some of that local energy. Several parishes were talking about how to raise finance at the local level for local energy schemes or car sharing schemes and this is entirely aligned with our vision of how we get to net zero. As CLG, we do need to pay attention to how we work with the parishes and engage local groups and residents ultimately.

The work being done in Stroud to support Climate Action Networks was highlighted and it was suggested that CLG find out a bit more about how Stroud's climate action networks work and how the model might be replicated across the County.

**Action 22/34: Secretariat to contact the Coordinator of Stroud's Climate Action Network regarding a presentation on their work at a future CLG meeting or as part of a separate workshop.**

It was noted that the Forest of Dean have a Parish and Town Council Forum which could be used as a conduit for information exchange and engagement and Cllr Hiett extended an invitation for CLG to be represented at a future.

**Action 22/35: Secretariat to liaise with Cllr Hiett over attending a future meeting of the Forum.**