

# Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Meeting #23 21/09/2025, Meeting Notes

## Climate Leadership Gloucestershire

### Notes and actions of the meeting

#### Attendance

The following partners were in attendance:

Partner organisation	Attendees	Apologies
Cheltenham Borough Council	Cllr Richard Pineger Maizy McCann	
Cotswold District Council	Cllr Mike McKeown Olivia McGregor	
Forest of Dean District Council	Cllr Chris McFarling Alastair Chapman	
Gloucester City Council	Cllr Sebastian Field (incoming Chair) Jon McGinty	
Gloucestershire County Council	Cllr Martin Horwood Sarah Danson Jon Hickman Sarah Williams	Colin Chick
Stroud District Council	Cllr Chloe Turner Cllr Martin Pearcy James Brain	
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Cllr Cate Cody (outgoing Chair) Graeme Simpson	Simon Dix
Hospitals Trusts		Jen Cleary
Integrated Care Board		Mary Hutton, Catherine Leech
Universities	Jackie Jobes (Hartpury) Ola Balzejewicz (Hartpury)	Alex Cottrell Graham Pollard
Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership	Nicola Hillary	Stephanie Sargeant
Gloucestershire Youth Climate Group	Polly Gannaway-Pitts Megan Land	
Secretariat	Afriqnmun Lovejoy	

	David Sharman	
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## 1) Hartpury spotlight

Mick Axtel, Chief Operating Officer, welcomed CLG to Hartpury and the Agritech Centre. He also confirmed the new approach to sustainability being taken by Hartpury and introduced Jackie Jobes, Sustainability Director.

Jackie went on to outline the new sustainability strategy for the University & College:

- The strategy will imbed sustainability through purposeful education of both students and faculty.
- Many of the strategy's activities align with CLG-themes and actions, for example-
  - Behaviour change alignment - the event WellFest has now been running for 10 years, offering support and content on sustainability to students.
  - Short form training via 'Stickerbook' platform- on sustainability and carbon literacy training.
  - Food and farming alignment – particularly regarding work and research on soil carbon sequestration in agriculture.
- Jackie also outlined the climate resilience that the institution was building-
  - 5000 trees and hedgerows have been planted on the estate
  - 10 hectares of land were devoted to No Mow May
  - Creation of a pioneering Hartpury Herd index, looking at sustainable breeding traits to reduce emission from cattle.
  - Site specific Climate Risk & Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA) based on the CLG countywide approach is being explored.
  - A New SOS-UK (Students Organising for Sustainability) sustainable grounds programme bid was currently in development.
- Jackie also outlined the objective to be a rural energy demonstrator site utilising specialisms to harness renewables and waste-to-energy solutions; work that others can hopefully replicate. DESNZ's Heat Network Development Unit (HNDU) funding being sought for a campus district heat network; over 400 solar panels have been installed on the estate so far, plus biomass boilers and air source Heat Pumps; 41 EV charging point installed on campus.

### Questions

A query was raised on if any work had been done at Hartpury on the trialling eco plastics in farming. It was confirmed that there was a project in train trialling degradable plastics.

The point was made that tree planting didn't necessarily capture a clear indication of biodiversity health and it was asked if any further biodiversity indicators were in use at Hartpury- it was confirmed that biodiversity monitoring bids were in train to explore biodiversity in more depth. The SOS-UK project would also be part of building that evidence.

## 2) Welcome, apologies and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and began by thanking Jackie for her presentation and confirming that CLG were proud to have Hartpury as members.

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As there are new elected representatives and officers joining CLG the Chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

The Chair expressed her thanks to Cllr Turner who will be leaving the role of Stroud CLG rep as she is now Leader of Stroud DC. Cllr Turner will be succeeded by Cllr Martin Pearcy as the Chair of Stroud DC's Environment Committee.

Cllr Cody outlined some of the key CLG successes during her tenure as Chair:

- Funding and recruitment of a new countywide Climate Change and Planning Manager.
- Successful delivery of new retrofit engagement activities across the county.
- Development of the first Gloucestershire Green Skills Strategy.
- Support and funding of University of Gloucestershire's Countryside and Community Research Institute to deliver report on integrating food and farming policy.
- The in-person workshops to take forward the local area energy and risk and vulnerability assessment projects.
- Further work to make meetings more sustainable particularly in relation to sustainable travel options and vegan and vegetarian menus.

### 3) Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest received.

### 4) Approval of meeting notes: 23<sup>rd</sup> June CLG meeting (Paper 2)

Meeting notes approved by members as a true and accurate record.

**Decision:** Climate Leadership Gloucestershire approved the June meeting notes.

### 5) Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2025/26

No objections were made to Cllr Field's assumption to Chair of CLG.

**Decision:** Cllr Field began his tenure as CLG Chair until the February AGM meeting.

Cllr Field began his tenure by thanking all for the opportunity to act as CLG Chair and expressed his thanks to Cllr Cody for her tenure as Chair, confirming appreciation for the personal approach that she took to the meetings, reminding all of the importance of the choices we take as people- on an individual basis in our everyday lives.

It was confirmed that one nomination for the Vice-Chair role had been received ahead of the meeting- Cllr Richard Pineger. Cllr Pineger introduced himself to the group, confirming an interest and passion for climate change stemming from his childhood.

Cllr Pineger was confirmed as the new Vice Chair of CLG following a vote.

**Decision:** Cllr Pineger will serve as CLG Vice Chair, to assume the role of CLG Chair at the February AGM meeting (subject to agreement of partners).

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### 6) Secretariat update

#### Action Plan review

The Secretariat confirmed that the Action Plan would be published after this meeting and therefore it was important to ensure that this version especially was as up to date as possible.

They went on to outline some of the key updates in the September version of the Plan:

Adaptation Theme - Action 0102	<b>Action:</b> Theme lead and countywide coordinator to manage CRVA contract to completion. <b>Progress:</b> Final recommendations will be presented to October CLG ready for publication in November, potentially alongside a wider piece of media around CLG and climate action to coincide with COP30.
Biodiversity Theme - Action 0201	<b>Action:</b> Gloucestershire to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. <b>Progress:</b> Public consultation now live (8 September) until the 19 October 2025.
Energy Theme - Action 0501	<b>Action:</b> To contribute to the successful delivery of the SWNZH project to carry out stages 1-3 of the Local Area Energy Plan process. <b>Progress:</b> Continuation funding being sought for stages 4-7, via a bid to SEDF for continuation works – including a full-time energy manager post – the outcome of the bid will be determined by the CRB 14th Nov and reported to CLG 17th Nov).
Planning Theme - Action 0702	<b>Action:</b> Recruitment of a centralised resource to coordinate activity, share best practice and draft and review policies. <b>Progress:</b> Post holder expected to start on 10 <sup>th</sup> November.

There were no objections to the plan, though some queries were received (see below)

**Decision:** This version of the Action Plan will be published on the CLG webpages following the meeting.

#### Funding update – request for use of Greener Gloucestershire Action Fund (GGAF) underspend

The Secretariat outlined the spend to date from the Greener Gloucestershire Action Fund (GGAF), and the additional spend leveraged from partners to further CLG objectives.

It was confirmed that a small underspend remained from the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the fund. A request to reallocate this fund - to the further development of the Cheltenham Heat Network, to be used as match funding for an expression of interest for the detailed project development phase, which will be submitted to DESNZ's Heat Network Delivery Unit fund.

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After some discussion and queries raised (see below), partners expressed support for this project to receive the GCAF underspend available.

**Decision:** GCAF underspend to be allocated as match funding to Cheltenham Borough Council's HNDU bid for the project development of the town centre heat network.

### Forward Look

Secretariat confirmed the upcoming items for discussion at the October and November meetings.

### Questions and Discussion

On the Action Plan update-

It was asked how much interaction CLG had with the drafting of the Local Growth Plan – It was confirmed that the spatial planning team had been engaged, specifically on integrating LAEP and green skills strategy content to the plan. District partners and the Local Nature Partnership have also been in touch with Ben Watts within the team on this and will look to continue to influence the final draft.

The point was made that the new Spatial Development Strategy will become one of the key planning documents within the county, and should be considered as an additional focus for the incoming Climate Change and Planning Manager.

The secretariat offered a special session for interrogation of the full action plan for new (and existing) Members.

On the underspend request-

The point was made that all the councils should benefit from CLG, not just those who have had more funds or resources to deliver. It was requested that it should be considered that the GCAF 2<sup>nd</sup> round be geared towards partners that have not been in receipt of projects so far.

The point was made that it should be ensured that knowledge sharing and support for further heat network development in the county occurs if any bid is successful.

It was queried whether all Districts with an interest in pursuing the waste fleet decarbonisation infrastructure research work had budget in place for this, ahead of any decision on this underspend. It was confirmed that the budget was already in place for this at respective Districts.

Finally it was queried as to which organisations would be beneficiaries of the heat network, and if this would include lower income houses/residents? It was suggested that housing near the Golden Valley could benefit from the network. It was clarified that the Golden Valley feasibility had been tested and was found not to be viable, and so the town centre network was the focus due to its linear heat density. At this stage large scale users were identified, and it would be planned to add to and expand the network to support residential

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at a future stage. The offer from Cheltenham was made to provide further information on the heat network development at a separate session.

Point on forward look-

There was some discussion on the need to manoeuvre through LGR, in terms of ensuring this climate group needs is maintained. It was reported that CLG was mentioned in recent sessions on LGR. It was discussed that a two unitary model would have a clear need for CLG to continue. If a single unitary is pursued then a different option would need to be discussed- around the external partnership function between one council and other partners.

**Action:** The Officer from Cheltenham offered to share further details on the heat network work to date with any interested parties.

### 7) Retrofit update

#### Retrofit engagement project

The Secretariat began the item by outlining the achievements of the retrofit engagement project, funded by the South West Net Zero Hub, and Cotswold, Cheltenham Borough, and Forest of Dean District Councils. Some of the learnings and activities launched as part of the project will remain and expand- such as a Forest thermal imagining camera loan scheme, and heat pump demos and green open buildings network will continue countywide as part of the upcoming County Council energy campaign.

Representatives from Cotswold and Forest of Dean confirmed their satisfaction with the project. Forest were asked what hubs had been used to distribute thermal imagining cameras- it was confirmed that this had been done mainly via local libraries.

#### Partnership with Furbnow

Jamie Leverton, Product Lead at Furbnow presented an update on the Furbnow contract. Jamie confirmed the performance of the platform to date- with 87 customers registered, 29 households onboard with the process, and two having started projects. There have been 561 unique visitors to the platform with £1.25m upgrades recommended to customers so far.

It has perhaps been a slower start than hoped, due to the challenges of engaging the able to pay market but there are opportunities. Jamie outlined the engagement so far, including mail outs, events attendance, and discount offer launch.

Jamie also recapped the Furbnow process via the platform, and the approach to supplier onboarding and engagement- with a target for 50% of work conducted via Furbnow vetted suppliers to be from the local supply chain. At the moment only 12% is made up of that local supply chain, and assessments and coordination have had to be provided from existing Furbnow suppliers and further demand is needed to onboard local installers.

Jamie also confirmed the new approach to marketing and communications, with new Marketing Manager Khalid in post, a relaunch 'Energy Smart' event in Cheltenham on 4<sup>th</sup> October, and further event support and engagements in the other districts to follow that. Jamie also confirmed that further private investment into Furbnow had been secured- likely enabling increased marketing spend and more online digital advertising for Gloucestershire.

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Furbnow are also exploring the idea of renovating as an opportunity to engage households-introducing the idea of retrofit when renovations are pursued. Trials of a free EPC certificate offer are going forward in Birmingham and Gloucestershire to spark engagement. Initial results in Birmingham confirm a high engagement and conversion rate to retrofit projects from free EPCs.

### Questions and discussion

The cost of the house survey report/ plans was queried, with confirmation that the cost was £750 though Furbnow are currently offering a discount price of £375 for the plan. Later stages of project management and coordination come in at around 10-15% of the cost of the works. It was suggested that Furbnow should do all they can to reduce price barriers for their services to see more customers come forward. Jamie confirmed that they hoped to make elements of their process more accessible in the future.

The renovation engagement approach was confirmed as a good and suitable approach that should be explored.

There was some concern about the slowness of performance so far, and a query on why only two projects had resulted from the 29 customers in train- it was confirmed that, as is often the case with homeowners considering retrofit, many needed to go away and consider potential measures with quite a long lag from plan received to measures going forward.

It was asked if a breakdown by District for the 29 current customers could be provided.

**Action:** Furbnow to provide breakdown of customers by District for Secretariat to circulate.

The point was made that EPCs were a poor indicator of a property's actual energy efficiency and we should consider the possibility of lobbying Government for a suitable replacement system to be put in place.

It was suggested by some District representatives that more comms assets were needed on the October 4<sup>th</sup> events and in general to promote the service, and that District comms colleagues were waiting on Furbnow for this.

**Action:** Furbnow/Secretariat to liaise with Furbnow Marketing Manager again on comms needs and recirculate the assets produced for the October relaunch event.

The point was made that from the discussion today it was clear that financing and affordability is the main barrier for residents, and that we need to explore financing models and loan options as a priority within the action plan.

**Action:** Secretariat to explore options for retrofit financing and loan offers for residents, working with Green Skills Coordinator and Furbnow as appropriate, to add this as a key action under the Retrofit theme.

In addition it was suggested that the platform, and further engagement should make efforts to explain the benefits of these options i.e that efficiency savings matching may well match or lessen the impact of the interest from any loan.

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It was asked how long we had to further develop the project with Furbnow. It was confirmed that we are in month 9 of a 3-year contract, with an option to extend for two further years.

It was asked what engagement was planned for Gloucester, an area that had seen less activity than other Districts. It was confirmed that one of the upcoming heat pump demos would take place in Gloucester, which Furbnow would look to support, and that further opportunities for po-ups/events in the Eastgate Centre were being explored.

It was asked, from the perspective of younger people/those that can't afford the Furbnow service if there was any follow up support for them? It was confirmed that individuals were directed to the Fairer Warmth app, which is hosted on the Gloucestershire Furbnow page, which includes advice on grants, support and advice on low-cost measures, links to the Warm & Well service along with tailored content from Districts.

It was queried whether there had been any specific youth/young person engagement on retrofit in the county. It was confirmed that this had not taken place as the target demographic tended to be older.

The value for money of Furbnow was queried and it was asked how the partnership with Gloucestershire councils went forward. It was confirmed that the partnership with the Districts was via a rigorous procurement evaluation process, and that costs for services were analogous to other providers. Further background to the procurement process was offered to any interested partner.

It was queried whether landlord engagement on retrofit had taken place or was a likely prospect? It was confirmed that given the changes to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for rental properties, landlord may well seek further retrofit services. Jamie confirmed that Furbnow would potentially be open to working with landlords.

It was asked whether there were further proactive marketing approaches being explored, which utilised data to map and target the desired able to pay demographic such as use of ACORN Experian data, which the County Council has access to. Jamie confirmed that Furbnow have done postcode focussed marketing in the past with mixed results.

**Action:** Furbnow to continue general awareness building approach, but consider further options for targeted direct marketing, based on data sets such as income, property value and EPC.

### 8) Green Skills Strategy

Jon Hickman, Green Skills Coordinator presented the emerging green skills strategy for Gloucestershire.

Jon started by confirming the different KPIs that need addressing within this strategy, related both to the net zero ambitions of CLG; and maximising employment opportunities within the County as per the Skills Hub objectives.

The draft strategy has been informed by emissions data, and aligned to carbon budget and reduction trends. Much of the work to further reduce emissions will see the demand for electrification quadruple by 2050. These are the driving components of the strategy.

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Skills within the strategy are categorised into 'Existing' -ramping up existing skills development; 'Enhanced'- sectors with a changing focus such as with home heating: moving from gas to heat pumps; and 'Emerging'- new sectors like clean energy and energy storage, with the strategy looking to anticipate the needs of those industries.

Jon outlined the matrix of skills presented in the strategy- plotted against impact on GHGs, and the skills position- in terms on Existing to Emerging skills. The group was asked if this was an appropriate scope for a green skills strategy:

### Discussion

It was asked why nature recovery and preservation of the natural environment was not included within the scope- it was confirmed that further work was needed on exploring the employment opportunity within the nature recovery sphere before this could be included in the strategy. Many CLG members made the point that there were clear skills and role needs and shortages in this area, such as the need for ecologists and the difficulties in filling these key roles, and that this should be added to the strategy.

**Action:** Green Skills Coordinator to further consider the integration of nature recovery skills within the strategy.

It was further noted that many of these nature-related skillsets, pertaining to biodiversity and ecology, are dying out as younger generations have not embraced this knowledge. It takes significant time to drive up skills in this area, compared to retraining heat engineers, as an example. The length of time to develop skills should be considered and a pipeline for skills going forward.

Support was expressed for the focus on retrofit and heat pump installations presented in the strategy slides, as there seemed to be resistance from engineers to boiler replacement with heat pumps. Jon confirmed that heat pump engagement with plumbers and engineers, encouraging would be a key area of activity, and promotion of the Nesta heat pump programme for engineers.

It was suggested that energy storage was a similarly high priority to retrofit and heat pumps. Jon concurred that this could be an equally important area to consider.

It was also suggested that agri-tech could perhaps be a higher priority, particularly around waste and methane management.

Similarly natural flood risk management and adaptation skills should be included in the strategy

**Action:** Green Skills Coordinator to reconsider prioritisation, particularly with consideration to energy storage, adaptation and agritech skills.

It was noted that there was nothing included at present on teaching opportunities, or skillsets related to creativity, the arts, and holistic living which have green sector relevance.

There was some debate over the inclusion of nuclear, and SMR development as it was felt that this was not necessarily a clean energy and therefore may not be considered appropriate for this strategy. There may be further consideration of this within the County Council.

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Jon went on to outline the strategy priority actions based on the matrix -

1. Promotion of all green skills through Pathways platform
2. Skills or retrofit
3. Skills to support local and national energy strategy.

Finally Jon outlined the proposed Green Skills Summit- sharing an initial draft agenda and confirming this would likely go forward in Q1 of 26/27.

It was asked what the format of the summit would be, and who the target audience would be? Jon confirmed that the summit would be aimed at a wide range of stakeholders in the sectors- industry representatives, training providers, job seekers and up-skillers. The format was still up for debate, but would likely include both plenary and breakout sessions. .

Gloucestershire Climate Youth Group members expressed an interest in feeding into summit planning further, from the perspective of the job seeker audience.

The Green Skills Coordinator would welcome further comment and input into the plans for the summit.

### 9) AOB

Member forum proposal - Cllr Cody suggested Cllr Members have a further forum to share best practice and coordinate further. It was also suggested that the previously suggested online channel for CLG could be instigated.

**Action:** Secretariat to set up an initial optional member best practice sharing session (possibly to include launch of the Member forum).

Progress on GNCF Biodiversity Net Gain s106 agreements - An update on this was asked for, given how slow the process has been and that investment in the County that has been lost as a result. It was confirmed that the template was now ready to go out to landowners in OneLegal Authorities (Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud and Tewksbury), work is continuing to unify this with the existing template in use by Cotswold and Forest of Dean District councils.

Representatives agreed that their respective Chief Executives were all absolutely committed to using a single template across the county to streamline the process going forward. The Secretariat, Afriqnun Lovejoy, is now managing a weekly meeting with legal colleagues to support continued collaboration.

This update was welcomed but it was suggested that we should reflect on the lost income and huge delay; in future Members should be better kept apprised so that political engagement can be utilised if needed.

Taxi licensing – A further request was made to coordinate efforts to ensure low/zero emission taxi licensing is pursued consistently across the county. It was agreed that this request would be considered in the review of work under the Transport theme and an update be brought to CLG when that theme next reports in November 2025.

Jackie Jobes raised a final matter- thanking all again for attending today at Hartpury Agritech Centre and offering return visits for partners.

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