

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Meeting #10: 06/06/2023, Meeting Notes

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire

Notes and actions of the meeting

1. Attendance

The following partners were in attendance:

Partner organisation	Attendees	Apologies
Cheltenham Borough Council	Cllr Ed Chidley (standing in for Cllr Alisha Lewis) Mike Redman	
Cotswold District Council	Cllr Mike McKeown Chris Crookall-Fallon (standing in for Rob Weaver)	
Forest of Dean District Council	Cllr Chris McFarling Nick Murray (standing in for Andrew Grant)	
Gloucester City Council	Cllr Richard Cook Jon McGinty	
Gloucestershire County Council	Cllr David Gray Lusia Senft-Hayward and Orlagh Stoner (presenting)	Colin Chick
Stroud District Council	Cllr Chloe Turner (Chair) Brendan Cleere	
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Cllr Sarah Hands Chris Atkinson (standing in for Alistair Cunningham)	
Hospitals Trusts	Jen Cleary	Deborah Lee
Clinical Commissioning Group		Mary Hutton
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and Gloucestershire Constabulary	Mandy Gibbs	

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GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership	Sarah Danson	Emma Hanby
Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership	Doug Hulyer Nicola Hillary	
Secretariat	Afriqnmun Lovejoy	
Observers	Jenny Youngs – Environmental Performance Officer – Stroud District Council Geordie Milligan – Gloucestershire County Council Economic Strategy team	
Presenters	Nathan Cole and Peter Boait – Gloucestershire Community Energy Coop Matt Phillips – National Grid	

2. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed new members representing Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Cheltenham District Council and Tewksbury Borough Council.

The Chair also thanked and recognised the prior contributions of Cllr Jim Mason, Cllr Rachel Coxcoom and Cllr Chris Hiett in their absence.

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Turner declared an interest in the Minchinhampton School solar project.

Updates from Chair

- a. **Vice Chair election:** The Chair informed the group of the decision to delay recruitment of Vice Chair until new councillors have settled into their roles. The election for Vice Chair will now be held in September.
- b. **New starter:** The Chair notified the group that David Sharman is joining the second Secretariat role from 24th July.

4. Approval of meeting notes: April CLG meeting (paper 2)

The Chair sought agreement to the minutes of the April meeting of this group. The Chair reminded attendees that the minutes of these meetings are shared via the Greener Gloucestershire web pages and therefore are available to the public.

Decision: Climate Leadership Gloucestershire approved the April meeting notes.

5. CLG draft vision and EOI process (presentation)

The Secretariat introduced the draft vision statement and notified the group of the proposed timelines for consulting on the document via existing CLG networks and externally, via the County Council's Economic Strategy.

The Secretariat also updated on the process for agreeing spend from the Central CLG central fund. At the April meeting of CLG the bid application form was approved, and it was agreed that a short form Expression of Interest (EOI) be developed to capture initial ideas before full bid documents were completed.

The Secretariat reminded the group of the proposal relating to full project bids discussed at the April meeting. That bids should include specific criteria to help ensure that CLG is presented with sufficient information to allow a decision on whether a project should be funded and for comparison against competing bids. The full bid template includes amongst key criteria, for the applicant to identify: how the bid relates to the CLG action plan, how the project benefits other thematic areas, any impacts beyond the project lifetime, the expected project carbon savings, and costs, and methods for monitoring and measuring the project impacts. Project bids must also be clear on both costs and opportunities and be able to clarify where they have sought out opportunities to fund, match or bolster funding from alternative sources.

The Secretariat then informed attendees that Strategic Directors had agreed to review and provide recommendations on the project proposals (EOIs) submitted for CLG funding. The process flow for developing and reviewing bids was presented with a likely timeline of up to 6 months for final approval of bids.

The Secretariat also informed the group that Strategic Directors had agreed to recommend options for alternative funding sources to progress bids prioritised for approval, and which were not fundable from the existing envelope.

Key points arising from the discussion:

A number of attendees agreed with the process but sought for the timeframes for approval of bids to be escalated.

On the vision the target date for net zero as a county was debated, with a recognition that there may need to revisit this discussion in advance of a final vision being agreed. This is due to the current varied net zero target dates of the partner organisations within CLG.

The Secretariat also raised the revised ToR (paper 3) and advised members to review this and respond by the next meeting date if there are any amendments needed.

Action 23/12 CLG members to notify of the Secretariat of any amendments to the Terms of Reference.

6. Energy theme

a. Energy theme introduction – Nick Murray (Forest of Dean District Council)

Nick Murray introduced his role at the Forest of Dean District Council and as the Energy theme lead for CLG. He highlighted the importance of the theme and low carbon generation as a core part of a local and sustainable transition to net zero for Gloucestershire.

The energy theme though still being explored is likely to focus on renewable energy, including transition to a decentralised grid and generation of renewable energy through solar PV, wind and other sources. This includes large ground mounted solar schemes and wind turbines, as well as rooftop solar on commercial and domestic properties. Its implementation will be through a variety of means, including commercial developments, community energy and public and private sector deployment on individual properties.

Nick then identified the next steps in moving the theme forward. He suggested initial steps to survey CLG partner organisations to gain a sense of the scale of the challenge in Gloucestershire and the current aspirations, plans and activities in the individual districts and boroughs. The survey will seek to identify:

- current renewable energy generation and future aspirations;
- planned investment and constraints affecting this;
- current capacity and plans for future investment in the grid;
- individual Council objectives, targets, strategies, policies, actions.

Finally, Nick flagged the focus nationally on Local Area Energy Planning and the potential to explore this further with support from the South West Net Zero Hub.

b. Community energy case study – Nathan Cole and Peter Boait (Gloucestershire Community Energy Co-op)

Peter Boait introduced the Gloucestershire Community Energy Fund and an example project which includes a 50 kw solar array on a warehouse rooftop in Gloucester, supporting a range of social enterprises housed in the building.

He identified the broad benefits of the community energy model and how the investments (often of small scale) can provide a modest rate of return to investors while supporting the deployment of renewable energy assets. With benefits to the community and building owner/occupier including the reduced cost of electricity supplied by the installation via the co-op. The installation then becomes the asset of the building owner after the contract term and the investment is paid off.

He highlighted that community energy co-ops are like traditional building societies because you know people making an ethical investment are most likely to do that in a local project that they can engage with and understand. The level of investment is typically smaller than might be expected with contributions of between £250 and £10,000. The benefit of this is mobilising finance beyond the traditional sources and with lots of very small contributions from members across society this extends our ability to fund the transition to net zero.

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Peter then identified the points to consider when identifying projects which might be suitable for community energy funding. Particularly for solar, a suitable roof, consideration of structural integrity but also any potential planning or heritage concerns. Preferably an owner or occupier with long term lease who will want to stay in the property for the duration of the investment period (around 25 years).

The only other area which has proven challenging is the need for legal resource to review the lease and contract documentation. In the case of Minchinhampton School, Gloucestershire Community Energy Co-op themselves provided support to this process.

Peter also notified the group that Gloucestershire Community Energy Coop have been actively lobbying the government to change Ofgem regulations to allow community energy projects such as Minchinhampton School to sell excess energy to local residents instead of, allowing them to benefit from lower cost electricity.

Peter finished the presentation with an ask for engagement around the potential for schemes on council owned school buildings. Nathan Cole added that it was important not to restrict thinking to potential schemes for schools but also to consider leisure centres, swimming pools and any buildings expected to stay in use for that purpose for a long time and with a high energy consumption.

The Chair thanked Gloucestershire Community Energy Co-op for the presentation.

Key points arising from the discussion:

Clarification was sought on the lifespan of solar panels and therefore the value of the array to the building owner or occupants beyond the term of the contract (25 years). It was clarified that solar panels do have a longer lifespan than 25 years and that assets are likely to be performing at not far from initial levels, when ownership is handed to the building owner.

The importance of grid capacity for new installations as a consideration when discussing the viability of larger sites was noted by participants.

The types of schools applicable for the funding model was discussed at length with strong interest in pursuing conversations around council owned school buildings including for primary schools. It was noted the strong positive response to the scheme at Minchinhampton and how this was already encouraging other local schools to explore the model.

The role of participants around the table was discussed, in particular how the CLG community could help progress more deployment of this kind. Peter Boait suggested a strategic view of the volume and type of such installations that the county wanted to achieve would help to direct organisations such as the Gloucestershire Community Energy Coop to work with partners to deploy more schemes of this kind.

The benefits of battery storage as part of scheme designs were discussed. Peter acknowledged that batteries can be good for energy systems generally but the economics of them for community funded projects are slightly more complicated than for solar panels themselves, in part due to significantly shorter lifespans of batteries vs panels. He emphasised that this did not rule out their inclusion in future installations and that they should continue to be considered on a case by case basis.

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Participants discussed and acknowledged the benefits to the building owner of full ownership of the asset after the end of the contract and also the benefits to investors of the modest rate of return.

The group also considered whether installations for heat production including e.g. for crematoriums might be a consideration under this funding model. The group agreed this would be an interesting area to explore in future.

c. Matt Phillips (Western Power Distribution/National Grid)

The Chair thanked the presenters and moved to welcome the next session from Matt Phillips of National Grid Electricity Distribution.

Matt Phillips introduced himself and the recent changes at Western Power Distribution (now part of National Grid) and now called National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED). He highlighted that the work of his team focuses on local distribution of electricity beyond the stages traditionally managed by National Grid. Strategy and demand planning is now managed centrally within National Grid with the management beyond the local substation handed to the local distribution team. The NGED team based in Gloucester therefore deal with anything related to local connections, diversions, maintenance, faults, repairs replacements etc.

Matt drew attention to the challenges working locally with a distribution network 40-60 years old which is gradually reaching its capacity. Furthermore, challenges in rural areas with lower capacity overhead lines means that areas where we know we need to increase capacity e.g. to install EV charges etc are already some of the lowest capacity and most stretched parts of the network. Furthermore, these may not be designed for energy input just distribution and therefore cannot support new solar installations or other small local generation activities.

Matt shared highlights from the [National Grid Electricity Distribution business plan](#) and updated the group on the new regulatory price control activity. This sets the level of investment Ofgem allows local electricity distribution networks (DNOs) to make in the 2023-28 period and which will see increased investment and a focus on greener generation. The business plan then sets out how this investment will be used to ramp up in investment in reinforcement projects to increase capacity over the coming 12-18 months.

Finally, Matt referenced a number of recently completed local projects with completed repairs to the cables at Tuffley and increasing capacity to local service stations with increased deployment of fast charging bays.

Key points arising from the discussion:

Attendees discussed the need for continued engagement on connection capacity along the strategic road network, highlighting the huge challenge on grid capacity on the strategic road network as well as rurally throughout the county.

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The importance of a continued relationship between National Grid and Western Gateway was flagged, specifically the Western Gateway workstream on freight, which in future will include electric vehicles and therefore increased charging needs.

Matt clarified that National Grid is focused on future policy and are developing a toolkit to help identify locations for future charging hubs and offered to be the point of contact to put members of his team in touch with CLG leads and Western Gateway working groups.

7. Transport theme (presentation and paper 5)

The Chair moved to the transport section of the agenda and invited Orlagh Stoner and Luisa Senft-Hayward to speak.

Orlagh Stoner highlighted the County Councils work on [transport carbon reduction pathways](#) and how this had identified that transport accounts for 43% of Gloucestershire's CO2 emissions. 34% of this is on the local road network.

Previously the transport sector has been one of the more challenging, compared to some other sectors, in terms of carbon reduction. Gloucestershire is already committed to the UK100 pledge to be carbon neutral by 2045 (earlier than the [UK wide target of 2050](#)) and this target is confirmed in Gloucestershire's adopted [local transport plan](#).

Following a recent project to bring key stakeholder together via a roundtable in July last year, Gloucestershire authorities have now jointly agreed an ambition of 80% reduction in transport emissions by 2030 and net zero for the sector by 2050.

Along with the [UK100 Shared Statement of Intent](#) a draft annex sets out the interventions needed to achieve this target and to set Gloucestershire up to become an exemplar on reducing transport emissions. This annex is currently being agreed by the partner authorities and will be brought back to CLG for final approval.

A key step in making progress will be a review of the adopted local transport plan. Included in this and key to reducing transport emissions will be the placement of new sustainable neighbourhoods. Furthermore, it will need to also bring services closer to existing neighbourhoods to reduce the need for car journeys, and finally include the building of more active and public transport options.

The strategy to achieve this will be through a focus on encouraging avoiding and reducing journeys, shifting to more sustainable modes and improving the sustainability of the journeys that still require a private car (e.g. due to the rural nature of the county a focus on the placement of EV charge points).

Orlagh highlighted the likely areas of focus within the annex, including around active travel and accessibility, new developments, public transport improvements, parking management and working better together on freight.

Orlagh then invited comments on the progress presented, regarding further work on the annex and timeframes for delivery of a final version.

Key points arising from the discussion:

The good work on fleet and charge points already delivered by the Constabulary was highlighted. Followed by the need for this to be supported by improved collaboration with partners to develop a wider network of chargers if the full Constabulary and wider emergency services fleets were to be fully electrified. Luisa Senft-Hayward highlighted a project already in action between the County Council and the NHS and invited other services to join these discussions.

The need for the approval of the UK100 Statement of Shared Intent's supporting annex to follow internal processes within each partner authority before returning to CLG for sign off was discussed, and the potential impacts of these approval processes on the proposed timeline were acknowledged.

The term parking management and what can be interpreted from this was discussed. It was agreed that the term was a broad term used to consider everything from allocating spaces for parking, charging for parking and residential parking zones. If referenced in the final version of the annex it is likely that consideration would be at a high level with any specific measures discussed and delivered locally.

The importance of more investment into transport modes before using measures to discourage individual car use was stressed, in particular to ensure we do not lose the engagement of, and trust of, communities during the transition to a net zero transport system.

The wider importance of the behaviour change aspect of the transition was then discussed with attendees suggesting that this should a priority across all the changes proposed. More investment of resources will be needed to engage and build trust with the public if we want them to behaviour differently to help to enact the breadth of the changes needed.

The work that the County Council had already done to consult the public on the decarbonisation pathways and also the work to bring community engagement through the work on the Statement of Common Ground was highlighted. Furthermore and since this, there has been further significant investment from Gloucestershire County Council to identify and deliver climate focused behaviour change interventions.

The need to develop metrics to measure the delivery of progress towards our decarbonisation targets was discussed. Examples such as the number of EV charges deployed per area or per capita were suggested as was the rate of deployment by certain dates.

Finally, the role of districts in delivering the transport decarbonisation ambition of the county was discussed, particularly the role of local planning to provide for general principals which will help to ensure that new developments and support services are appropriately sited to reduce individual journeys and associated carbon costs. The emerging Joint Core Strategy being a perfect example of where these considerations will be taken forward.

Any other Climate Business:

The Chair invited any final areas of comment. No other business was raised.