

AUGUST 2020

ACTIONS REPORT

Environment and Climate Action Group

"We have an incredible opportunity to create entirely new sustainable industries, investing in nature as the true engine of the economy.

The current global crisis has disrupted every aspect of our lives, but it has also presented an extraordinary opportunity, a chance to reset and accelerate efforts to improve the state of our world. Changing our current trajectory will require bold and imaginative action together with determinations and decisive leadership.

In order to secure our future and to prosper we need to evolve our economic model, putting people and planet at the heart of global value creation. If there is one critical lesson we have to learn from this crisis, we need to put nature at the heart of how we operate.

We are on the verge of catalytic breakthroughs that will alter our view of what is possible and profitable within the framework of a sustainable future. We need nothing short of a paradigm shift, one that inspires actions at revolutionary levels and pace. We simply cannot waste any more time.

The only limit is our willingness to act. And the time to act is now."

HRH PRINCE CHARLES
DAVOS WORLD ECONOMIC
FORUM 3 JUNE 2020

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ECAG RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Quick wins

Build on existing / in progress

Regulation Preparedness

Future Ambition

1) Don't separate the 'green' from the 'economy' in decision making.

2) Get ready to accept funding for housing retrofit from central government.

3) Develop domestic renewable energy generation and improve efficiency measures for the 'fuel poor'.

4) Promote community engagement in, and ownership of, carbon reduction solutions, particularly renewable energy generation, alongside mainstream public sector and commercial investment.

5) Accelerate the Heat Network scoping work.

6) Invest in infrastructure to support Active Travel and the decarbonisation of transport.

7) Support more carbon intensive sectors such as Gloucestershire Airport to account for, publish and actively work towards reducing the environmental cost of their activities.

8) Ensure Local Transport Plan review is consistent with priorities for combating ecological, climate and Covid emergencies.

9) Encourage innovation in passenger transport, working with large employers/employment centres to maximise opportunities for modal shift.

10) Invest in new and existing green spaces for people and nature to meet and ideally exceed the Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) by 2030.

11) Through the application of Building with Nature standards, ensure delivery of high quality green infrastructure in all new developments.

AUGUST 2020

ECAG RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Continued...

Quick wins

Build on existing / in progress

Regulation Preparedness

Future Ambition

12) Develop a county-wide approach to Biodiversity Net Gain and visitor pressure mitigation.

13) Accelerate significant carbon sequestration activity e.g. woodland and wetland creation, whilst maximising co-benefits for people, nature and the economy.

14) Secure the Severn Vale as a Regional Park, investing in access to blue and green space maximising co-benefits for people, nature and the economy.

15) Collaborate with public health, economic development and environment partners to create and resource a Gloucestershire Food Strategy that ensures the population of Gloucestershire is fed sustainably, affordably and securely and that nutritious food is accessible to all.

16) Immediately roll-out Dynamic Procurement Systems.

17) Develop support for farmers to access facilitation, advice and support through a co-designed platform to improve the economic and ecological resilience of their activities in the face of rapidly changing regulation and the impacts of climate change.

18) Adopt a joined-up, systems-thinking approach to decision making in the county, which balances climate change mitigation with the principle of social justice, to maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits.

19) Ensure strategic development plans are climate- and environment-led.

20) Establish a Gloucestershire Natural Capital Investment Trust to lever multiple funding streams to enhance biodiversity, sequester carbon, reduce flood risk and increase access to green space.

21) Develop a suite of indicators for Gloucestershire to measure and publicly report progress towards the achievement of the county's shared climate and environmental goals

Background

This report was commissioned by the Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) of the Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF is not a legal entity in its own right but a coordinating function, bringing together multiple agencies across the county. Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, public authorities have a duty to co-operate and work collaboratively.

As part of the RCG generic plan preparation for recovery the Gloucestershire LRF standing recovery plan says that during the recovery phase:

There may be a strategic opportunity to go beyond 'recovery' and achieve longer-term regeneration and economic development.

This report includes recommendations to public authorities in Gloucestershire to assist them in making their own democratic decisions on the way forward. This report follows and is supported by the ECAG Evidence Report presented to the RCG in mid-July 2020.

Introduction: Build Back Better

“Never waste a crisis”¹. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to build in a transformational change to the economy, society and natural environment of Gloucestershire. Only 9% of people in the UK want everything to go back to how it was before². We need to build economic, societal and environmental resilience or we will bounce from the current crisis into the next, whether it’s climate-related flooding and drought (high likelihood), biodiversity collapse (high likelihood) or more zoonotic diseases/pandemics (medium likelihood).

To provide some perspective, by mid-June 2020 COVID-19 had tragically caused an estimated 502,000 deaths globally. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that climate change already causes 150,000 deaths per year and that this will rise to 250,000 by 2030. This is a best-case scenario and recent research suggests that the actual mortality rate will be closer to 1 million per year³.

We already know that the quadruple threats of COVID, recession and the climate and ecological emergencies will continue to disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged in society. The worse-off already suffer more from poor air quality, a poor diet and lack of access to nature than the better off. Actions taken to help us recover from this global pandemic must ensure that inequalities are reduced, improving outcomes for the worst off in society.

The Environment and Climate Action Group (ECAG), a sub-group of the Recovery Coordination Group of the Local Resilience Forum, has identified how COVID crisis presents a unique opportunity for all actors to take strong, bold action to deliver this change. Gloucestershire can create value from the public health crisis by placing itself at the forefront of the ‘Build Back Better’ movement in the UK, paving the way for greater investment in the county and reducing the likelihood of/increasing resilience to future crises.

What follows builds upon the Evidence Report produced by ECAG in June 2020. It summarises some key information and makes recommendations which, if acted upon swiftly, can help Gloucestershire to make the most of this extraordinary opportunity.

The ideas presented here are not new, nor is the case for action. Evidence of the need to pivot to a low carbon, more sustainable economy, a more just society, with more importance placed on the natural environment has existed for decades. This report argues that we have a unique opportunity to deliver existing priorities more efficiently and more swiftly than was possible before COVID, or than will be possible once the immediate crisis is over. Taking each of the actions recommended here will be good for people and good for the economy, as well as being good for the environment.

¹ Comment from GLNP partners survey

² <https://flo.uri.sh/story/262445/embed#slide-1>

³ IPCC, 2018: Global Warming of 1.5°C. Masson-Delmotte et al. In Press

1. Building a low-carbon, resilient economy

Evidence Summary

- Creating a strong green economy is good for business⁴, the planet⁵ and people⁶
- People across Gloucestershire⁷, the UK⁸ and the world⁹ see the environment and climate change as THE top priority for government
- Gloucestershire has the opportunity to be a leader in this area¹⁰
- The costs of inaction far outweigh the costs of action¹¹.

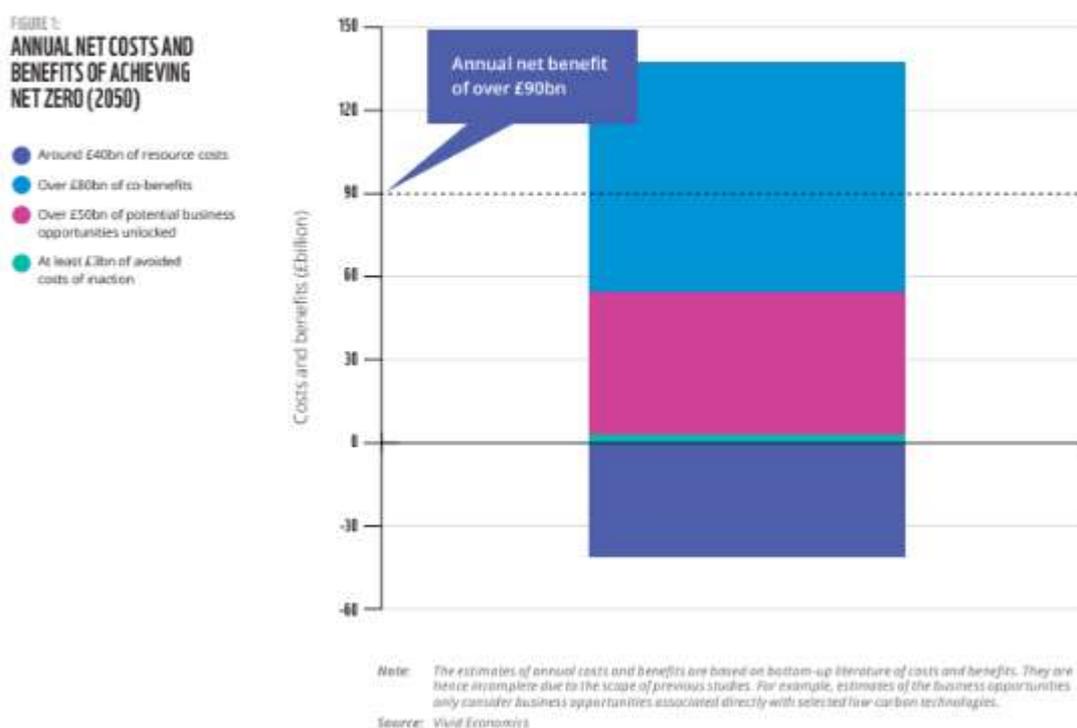


Figure 1. Vivid Economics study showing economic costs and benefits of developing a green economy

⁴ Stern, N. (2007). The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511817434

⁵ https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/towards-green-growth_9789264111318-en#page1

⁶ https://twitter.com/_JamesGriffiths/status/1272999637314666496

⁷ Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (2020) Life after lockdown survey of public opinion in Gloucestershire on environmental recovery post-covid. Results from 748 responses as of 12/06/2020. Gloucester, UK.

⁸ <https://news.sky.com/story/after-the-pandemic-britons-want-a-significantly-different-post-virus-economy-11998793>

⁹ https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2020-06/now_what_-_climate_change_and_coronavirus.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.gfirstep.com/industrial-strategy/>

¹¹ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/>

Recommendations:

1.1. Don't separate the 'green' from the 'economy' in decision making

There is a welcome emphasis on 'green', 'low carbon', 'resilient' growth for the economy and ECAG feels that there is huge scope for achieving this. We recommend that to make the most of the opportunities we have, there should be no 'siloeing' of objectives and activities focused on 'nature', 'climate' and 'economy'. Strategic partnerships and decision-making need to be more joined up and representative voices of both the economy and the environment must come together more than they currently meet in separately 'themed' groups.

In conjunction with this, there is a role for the public sector to ensure that formal decision- and policy-making processes consistently and effectively consider environmental impacts. All decisions made by local authorities should be made in the context of their climate emergency declarations and stated ambitions for achieving net zero i.e. not making any decisions that go against this objective (i.e. the net impact is to increase carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions).

In order to ensure the best approaches to nature, economy and recovery, climate emergency strategies must incorporate ecological as well as climate related targets.

Furthermore, public sector bodies should prioritise green credentials in their procurement processes, sending the right signals to the market.

The UK Government has made £40million available as part of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. This money is to support job creation in charities and the environmental sector to restore nature and tackle climate change. This fund could be leveraged to support pipeline projects within Gloucestershire, such as the Severn Vale Regional Park or the Great Gloucestershire Forest.

As we look to get the economy back on its feet, all economic growth must be green, both to create jobs and to build resilience against future shocks. The UK Government has been urged by hundreds of leading UK companies, investors and organisations to ensure taxpayer support is prioritised for those firms committed to decarbonisation¹²¹³. Gloucestershire should explore this approach to ensure that we don't waste this opportunity. ECAG members are ready to work with GFirst LEP to consider the policy possibilities further and indeed to identify exactly what a 'green' business offering looks like in Gloucestershire. In light of the 'green' emphasis in our future growth it would be useful to have guidance agreed as to what constitutes a 'green business' as a basis for decision making on any funds directed to 'green growth' in the county, both in terms of the types of product/service offered; the business/financing models employed and the operational plans and premises of that business.

1.2. Get ready to accept funding for housing retrofit from central government

The chancellor has announced an ambitious green investment economic stimulus plan¹⁴ and this includes housing retrofit stimuli. Modelling from the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) shows that retrofit will produce more jobs, more quickly and with a greater environmental benefit than any other scheme of its kind (Figure 2). If the county invests in modelling to show where the greatest need

¹² <https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4015865/200-british-firms-urge-government-align-economic-recovery-net-zero-climate-goal>

¹³ <https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/system/files/documents/ADEPT%20Clean%20Growth%20Policy%20Position%20June%202020.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/may/21/government-will-push-for-green-coronavirus-recovery-says-tory-mp>

for retrofit is and understands the likely local employment effects from such a program, we will be better prepared to move quickly when such central government stimulus funding becomes available.

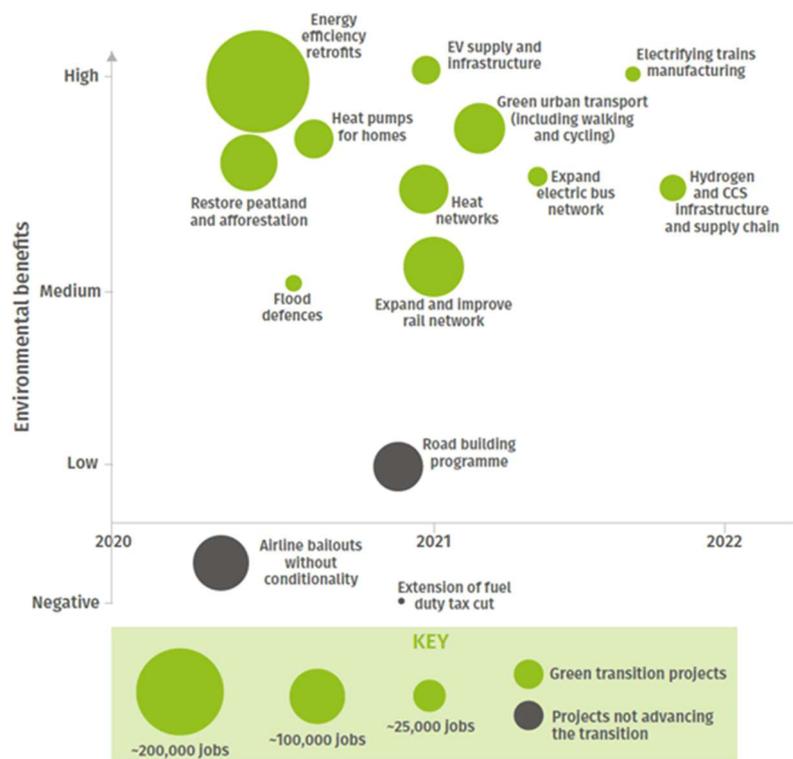


Figure 2. IPPR modelling rates programs by jobs created, environmental benefits delivered, and speed of potential delivery

[Parity Projects](#) runs a sophisticated housing stock model, which scrapes data on housing from various sources to produce an area-wide overview on the opportunity for low-carbon retrofit to reach specific performance targets, for example zero carbon. The costs of such modelling for the county would be relatively modest but would provide the necessary employment / skills estimates. Further, local communities need to be readied to take action on this type of information and complementary commercial schemes and other incentives need to be in place that support them to do so (see for example <http://www.ncat.btck.co.uk/>).

1.3. Develop domestic renewable energy generation and improve efficiency measures for the ‘fuel poor’.

The pandemic exposed a significant risk to those with respiratory conditions and other existing health issues and there is a well evidenced link between housing and health with seasonally cold, damp or warm and humid homes posing significant risk for the vulnerable. There is a clear link between the need to reduce domestic carbon emissions for the sake of the environment and the issues around pandemic resilience and recovery.

Micro-generation of renewable electricity, in conjunction with energy efficiency improvement, can tackle social inequality, health and wellbeing and the carbon neutral agenda simultaneously. Locally a strategic partnership of the county’s local authorities has been ensuring the provision of advice and

grant support to the vulnerable for 20 years through the Warm and Well¹⁵ programme run by Severn Wye Energy Agency.

This service has supported the installation of more than 60,000 energy efficiency measures in the domestic sector and has leveraged millions for the county in terms of grant funding for retrofit. Approaches such as this are vital to achieving the Just Transition but even with 20 years of support there is still much work to do.

A greater number of emerging initiatives such as the County Council's partnership with Swindon Borough Council's 'Public Power Solutions' for solar panels in deprived areas are required. Schemes that tackle fuel poverty need to be carefully considered alongside carbon neutral aims as it must be noted that the fuel poor may be best advised to actually increase consumption, alongside more efficient systems, to ensure a healthy living environment.

Single-solution schemes such as Photovoltaic (PV) rollouts have their contribution but more significant impacts and added value are needed to achieve the scale of carbon commitments. In this respect technical steer needs to ensure that a PV solution, for example, is adequately sized to allow for decarbonizing heat solutions such as heat pumps to be provided for. Measures to improve fabric energy performance must, as well as bill savings, address ventilation and protection against summer overheating. Domestic energy retrofit is a complex area, where multiple technology options exist, and where requirements for heating, ventilation, insulation, and energy generation are building specific. This poses a significant logistical challenge, including skills investment, but is also a huge economic and green opportunity.

ECAG partners support a pro-active, joined up approach to developing these schemes but note that revenue to promote, educate and manage the roll out of schemes to those that need it most is vital.

1.4. Promote community engagement in, and ownership of, carbon reduction solutions, particularly renewable energy generation, alongside mainstream public sector and commercial investment

It is well understood that technology alone will not deliver the enormous reduction in GHG emissions required for a liveable climate. There is also a need for citizens to understand and embrace the personal and society-wide behaviour changes necessary to deliver a zero-carbon future¹⁶.

For citizens to feel empowered, they must have opportunities to take personal action which has a material, demonstrable impact on the climate problem. Taking personal action of this sort has been shown to increase the appetite for and confidence of those citizens to both talk to and influence others to change their behaviour, and to take further steps themselves.

Community energy businesses raise investment from and pay interest to members of the public who choose to take part, and typically focus on small, medium and large-scale renewable energy generation projects and related activity. As not-for-profit-distribution businesses, often taking the legal form of Community Benefit Societies (a kind of limited liability co-operative with explicit social aims), they offer a high degree of trust to participants and all stakeholders.

¹⁵ www.warmandwell.co.uk

¹⁶ https://energypost.eu/we-need-behaviour-change-and-life-efficiency-because-efficiency-gains-and-clean-energy-will-never-be-enough/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=socialnetwork



Figure 3. Solar array on Oldfield Park Infants School, one of six solar arrays installed by Bath and West Community Energy in the B&NES district. The school gets free electricity and the panels are used as an educational resource. Image credit: Bath Chronicle. Photo taken from the Bathnes Community Energy Strategy.

The most successful community energy businesses provide a platform for individual and collective action which delivers substantial emissions reduction benefits, alongside modest income to social and community objectives. Importantly, they also strengthen social cohesion, increase public discourse about the need for stronger and faster action on carbon reduction, increase confidence and ambition for further action, and catalyse the creation of new projects.

Community energy businesses are often pioneers in pushing for greater nature recovery benefits to be built-in to renewable generation projects, such as adopting active wildlife and wild flower management strategies on community-owned solar farms, and providing education opportunities by inviting schools to use solar farms as a teaching resource.

Direct community investment into climate and energy solutions, particularly renewable energy generation projects, should be actively supported, with the aim of achieving a rapid expansion across the county. Such community initiatives can comfortably complement and combine with 'mainstream' public sector or commercial investment, whilst leveraging much more significant social, environmental and behaviour change benefits.

1.5. Accelerate the Heat Network scoping work

This emerging industry has recently created a representative body, which has lost no time lobbying government for inclusion in its support package¹⁷. Gloucestershire County Council secured funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to carry out a high-level feasibility study into the potential of heat networks within Gloucester. Gloucester City and Gloucestershire County Councils working closely with the consultants have identified the Canal/Dock basin area of the city and the Barnwood Park commercial area as potential heat network locations. A more detailed study should be undertaken which would allow this local low-carbon form of heat to be secured.

¹⁷ <https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4016017/heat-networks-industry-council-launches-plan-create-35-green-jobs>

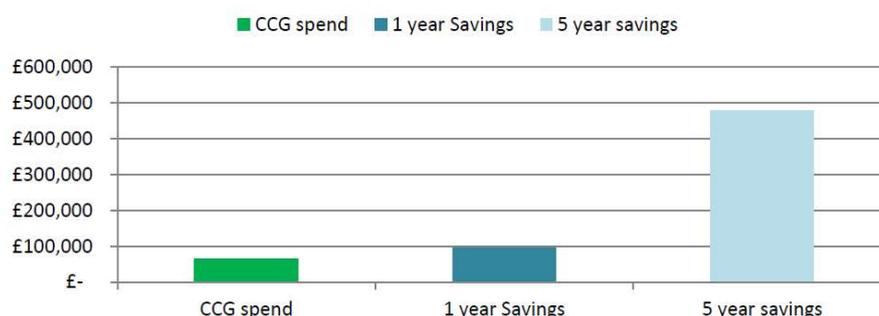
Case Study 1. Warm and Well

Warm and Well is a telephone-based service managed locally by Severn Wye Energy Agency. It provides free, impartial advice to households across the county and secures and administers funding to support the installation of measures to improve household comfort, efficiency and reduce running costs.

Activity	Annual Target	Actual	17/18
No. households receiving advice	2530*	2548	1646
No. referrals to other agencies and funding streams	337	243	17
No. installed measures by type	586	639 +185 WHF	478
No. of marketing activities undertaken	94	96	106
No. home visits	255	337	151
No. training places delivered	350	304	370

The below figure from the same report illustrates how Building Research Establishment methodology is used to demonstrate the benefits of the health funding for Warm and Well:

Figure 9 Shows the health savings, based on 129 central heating installs where pre and post EPCs have been completed. £65,000 of CCG funding has led to an estimated £95,835 annual saving to the NHS, nearly £500,000 over 5 years.



EPC = Energy Performance Certificate
 CCG = Clinical Commissioning Group

2. Changes in how we get around

Evidence Summary

(see ECAG Evidence Report)

- Lockdown profoundly changed people's travel behaviours with a UK-wide 75% reduction in car use¹⁸
- As of 15th June 2020, the number of UK deaths from Coronavirus is only slightly higher (41,700) than the annual avoidable deaths from air pollution (40,000)¹⁹.
- Air quality has improved by around 50% during lockdown in Stroud Town Centre²⁰
- Poor air quality disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged in society²¹
- Half of motorists say they will walk more, four in ten vow to drive less, a quarter will work from home and one fifth will cycle more²²
- Swift action is needed to help to mainstream and normalise the more positive behaviours witnessed since 23rd March 2020²³.

Recommendations:

2.1. Invest in infrastructure to support Active Travel and the decarbonisation of transport

The AA's survey of motorists shows us that half say they will walk more; four in ten vow to drive less; a quarter will work from home more and one fifth will cycle more. Evidence has shown that cyclists visit shops more regularly and spend more than most other modes of transport, furthermore, per square metre, cycle parking delivers five times higher retail spend than the same area of car parking²⁴ A report for Transport for London reports that high street walking, cycling and public realm improvements can increase retail sales by up to 30%²⁵. In England 42% of journeys are under 2 miles, but over 60% of these journeys are made by car²⁶.

Local Authorities should follow the example set in London and explore pedestrianisation (or 'access only') of city- and town-centre streets. Further, the following five actions should be taken:

- Support the newly established employers' active and sustainable travel group. Experience in North Bristol testifies to the power of such an approach
- Deliver 'activation work' (community engagement work to ensure assets are used) for new transport infrastructure
- Support and engage in systems leadership workshops - working across the physical activity, climate change and transport systems. This has worked well in Greater Manchester and is explored in more detail on Page 11.

¹⁸https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886865/2020-05-21_COVID-19_Press_Conference_Slides_-_for_publication.pdf

¹⁹<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/27/one-in-19-deaths-uk-cities-air-pollution>

²⁰ Personal email, SDC

²¹https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/reports/cat09/0701110944_AQinequalitiesFNL_AEAT_0506.pdf

²²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886865/2020-05-21_COVID-19_Press_Conference_Slides_-_for_publication.pdf

²³<http://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/SB/BehavioralChangeTheories/BehavioralChangeTheories6.html>

²⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509587/value-of-cycling.pdf

²⁵ TfL (2019) Walking & Cycling: the economic benefits. <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/walking-cycling-economic-benefits-summary-pack.pdf>

²⁶<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1487/148705.htm>

- Adding secure, covered cycle storage facilities to Park and Ride hubs and rail stations.
- Most cyclists are affluent, white men²⁷. To ensure equality of access to active travel, priority should be given to working with people outside this demographic.
- Ensure new developments countywide are planned with pedestrian and cycle connectivity and infrastructure as a fundamental consideration in their initial design, prioritising their road space requirements, safety and movement over those of motor vehicles.

2.2. Support more carbon intensive sectors such as Gloucestershire Airport to account for, publish and actively work towards reducing the environmental cost of their activities

The UK saw a 93% drop in the number of flights to and from the UK during April and May 2020 compared to the same period in 2019²⁸. However, more than 1,800 private planes landed at UK airports during Lockdown²⁹. Gloucestershire Airport is owned by Gloucester City and Cheltenham Borough Councils, who currently receive no rental income from the businesses that operate there. Importantly, the opportunity value of the site lost, which could otherwise be the most sustainable site in the county to deliver new housing growth. There has been no truly independent, open review of sustainable alternative uses for the site and the potential environmental and financial benefits for local people.

Unlike petrol for cars, aviation fuel is not taxed, and VAT is not levied, providing a hidden subsidy for those who wish to use this very polluting and noisy form of transport.

Partners should work with the airport and users to encourage more sustainable practices and financial contribution to offset their impact. Similarly, current financial support should be withdrawn. All this revenue should go directly to carbon reduction projects. This could be a mechanism for driving the woodland creation agenda, or simultaneously alleviating fuel poverty whilst reducing carbon emissions by supporting whole house retrofit. Alternatively, money could be spent to support travel agencies to specialize in offering alternatives. If the business cannot pay for the true environmental cost and stay afloat, then alternative more sustainable uses should be found for what is a valuable site.

2.3. Local Transport Plan review is consistent with priorities for combatting ecological, climate and COVID emergencies

The Local Transport plan is being reviewed to reflect the opportunities presented by the last few months, as well as to match the county's CN2030/2050 ambitions. Road transport emissions account for 12% of national carbon emissions³⁰, and contribute significantly to poor air quality. This leads to the reduced attractiveness of urban areas and poor health outcomes, disproportionately affects low-income and BAME communities and individuals. Any transport plan should have a clear carbon budget and reduction pathway – projects that do not fit within this should not go ahead. A hierarchy for all future transport investment should be followed, with active travel first and car travel last. Any highway projects that are implemented should simultaneously implement improvements for pedestrian and cycle connectivity.

²⁷ https://researchonline.lshrm.ac.uk/id/eprint/1179/1/Cycling_and_the_city_published_author_copy.pdf

²⁸ <https://www.oag.com/coronavirus-airline-schedules-data>

²⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/18/more-than-1800-private-planes-landed-in-uk-during-covid-19-lockdown>

³⁰ http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/37981/1/1201517_Al-Habaibeh.pdf

Within this workstream, the Gloucestershire needs a debate about what level of teleworking is desirable. While several environmental benefits exist, these need to be weighed-up against the mental-health dis-benefits. Such a debate, to be held within the Local Resilience Forum or LEP, with input from this group (or LNP/CN2030 Network) and the Health & Wellbeing Board, would aid the LEP in their economic planning and the Local Authorities in their carbon management and management of capacity and costs relating to public buildings/offices.

2.4 Encourage innovation in passenger transport, working with large employers/employment centres to maximise opportunities for modal shift

Whilst in the short-term public transport is set to continue the lockdown trend or significantly lower usage due to public health concerns, this will be reversed once the health risks are reduced. There is an opportunity to work with industrial centres and business parks which could provide a Covid-19 Secure bus service from key commuter points (like the Gloucester Transport hub) free to their workforce and cheap for public to use. It could be offered as a limited service but with the potential to increase routes in remote places where large depots, or business parks maybe e.g. Gloucestershire Services; Bath - Wessex Water bus.

3. Blue and green spaces for a healthy society, thriving wildlife and a resilient economy

Evidence Summary

(see ECAG Evidence Report)

- Green spaces deliver multiple benefits for society and the economy, including reducing flood risk, sequestering carbon, urban cooling, placemaking, improved health and wellbeing outcomes and much more³¹.
- People in Gloucestershire would like better access to green space and see it as a priority
- The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world³²
- Providing access to high quality green spaces is vital for good health and wellbeing³³
- The least advantaged in society have less access to green space than the better off³⁴

Recommendations:

3.1. Invest in new and existing green spaces for people and nature, to at least meet and ideally exceed the Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) by 2030, and through the application of Building with Nature standards to ensure delivery of high quality green infrastructure in all new developments.

During lockdown the need for people to have access to high quality blue (water) and green spaces for recreation near where they live and work became extremely apparent. As lockdown began to ease, the need for more strategic green spaces in the wider countryside also came to the fore. Natural England is reported to have £25million set aside to connect the countryside with urban areas. Gloucestershire should position itself to take advantage of this funding as and when it becomes available.

Urban blue and green infrastructure and parks deliver benefits for public health and wellbeing. These spaces add to the attractiveness of Gloucestershire as a place to live and work, seen as a priority from the LEP's Youth Survey and the Local Industrial Strategy. Furthermore, they help to support biodiversity, can reduce flood risk, improve air and water quality and reduce the urban heat island effect. This fits with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions, among which is:

³¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869801/natural-capital-enca-guidance_2_March.pdf

³² IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany

³³ Mensah, C. A., Andres, L., Perera, U., & Roji, A. (2016). Enhancing quality of life through the lens of green spaces: A systematic review approach. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 6(1).

³⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/oneineightbritishhouseholdshasnogarden/2020-05-14>

Making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing³⁵.

Blue and green space contributes to, and is vital for, economic growth³⁶. Some housing schemes in the County are being delayed due to the anticipated visitor pressure of the owners of those houses on high nature value sites. The creation of new strategic green spaces for recreation is also important to unlock this development potential. Further, the likelihood of ongoing reduced air travel stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity for a significant expansion in nature-based tourism, already worth approximately £14billion per year in England³⁷.

3.2. Develop a County-wide approach to Biodiversity Net Gain and Visitor Pressure Mitigation

Local Authorities have suffered huge drops in revenue, including through ceasing to charge business rates, lost income from car parking and other services, as well as increased social support costs related to lockdown. However, various potential funding mechanisms exists, such as the emergent planning policy Biodiversity Net Gain, exist to deliver on some of these opportunities.

Developing a consistent approach to delivering offsite Biodiversity Net Gain across the six Local Planning Authorities will enable a strategic approach to habitat creation. Similarly, a county-wide approach to raising funds to mitigate the visitor pressures from new developments on nature will generate funds that can be spent on new areas for recreation. Both funding streams could be managed through the Natural Capital Investment Fund detailed in action 5.3.

3.3. Accelerate significant carbon sequestration activity e.g. woodland and wetland creation, whilst maximising co-benefits for people, nature, and the economy

All Local Authorities in Gloucestershire have declared a Climate Emergency. Some have specific pledges on tree planting/growing. The UK government is bringing forward its ambitions for woodland creation, including through recruitment and funding, as well as through the development of a Tree Strategy for England which paints a picture of accelerating tree planting. Further, the government has announced a £640million Nature for Climate fund to support woodland and peatland initiatives, and the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) is likely to provide financial support farmers to grow trees.

To make the most of this opportunity it is necessary for stakeholders to work together to support small-scale and large-scale projects such as the Ourboretum and the Great Gloucestershire Forest. All partners should commit to using the Nature Recovery Network and Natural Capital Map to guide a multi-benefit approach to spatial prioritisation of woodland creation and tree planting.

³⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

³⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/uknaturalcapital/ecosystemaccountsforurbanareas>

³⁷ Evidence submitted by NFU to the Environment Farming and Rural Affairs Committee, *The potential of England's Rural Economy*: Eleventh Report of the Session 2007-8, Volume II

3.4. Secure the Severn Vale as a Regional Park, investing in access to blue and green space for current and future residents of Gloucestershire’s largest conurbations, maximising co-benefits for people, nature and the economy

An existing workstream through Vision 2050 and the Joint core Strategy, this project has the potential to deliver multiple policy objectives. All partners should support and work towards the establishment of the Severn Vale Regional Park. This project would benefit, and likely be eligible for support from central Government’s £40million Green Recovery Challenge Fund designed to support job creation and retention in the charity and environmental sectors to restore nature and tackle climate change³⁸.

Case Study 2. A Regional Park in the Severn Vale

Primarily, such a designation would allow for greater realisation of the value of the area for recreation and human interaction with nature. This is important to mitigate existing visitor pressures on some of the specially designated nature sites in the area, including SSSIs and Ramsar sites, as well as providing recreation space for future residents, which would help unlock the planned development of many thousands of homes in and near the Vale.

A Severn Vale Regional Park could see a mosaic of dynamic habitats created, including wetlands, wet woodland and floodplain meadow. This would deliver many policy objectives, including flood prevention, water quality enhancement, carbon sequestration, access to green space and habitat connectivity.

The Lea Valley Regional Park in London was established in the 1966 through an act of parliament and has contributions in the form of levies on council tax bills. Managed for wildlife and people around a river valley, part of the park was used to hold the 2012 Olympics and it is now a primary visitor attraction for the capital.

³⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-40-million-green-jobs-challenge-fund>

4. Food, farming and the rural economy

Evidence Summary

- The fragility of the Just-in-time, food-from-anywhere approach to our food system in Britain was exposed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic due to disruptions to long, insecure supply chains and panic-buying and stockpiling³⁹.
- Consumers have been buying more local food pointing to its higher resilience than food sources via long supply chains. This is despite government support focusing on large retailers^{40 41}.
- Food related illness costs the UK £9billion per year⁴², disproportionately affecting poorer sections of the community⁴³.
- Farming is one of the UK's largest influences on both carbon emissions and biodiversity⁴⁴.

Recommendations:

- 4.1. Collaborate with public health, economic development and environment partners to create and resource a Gloucestershire Food Strategy that ensures the population of Gloucestershire is fed sustainably, affordably and securely and that nutritious food is accessible to all.

COVID-19 and lockdown has led to mass unemployment, with the ONS reporting income-support payments rocketing by £856,000 in April. This is likely to lead to an increased reliance on food banks, and increased diet-related poor health outcomes. It has also been acknowledged that obesity raises an individual's risk of complications from COVID-19 and, in recognition of this, Government has launched a new Obesity Strategy⁴⁵. Many of the recommendations in this report focus at a national level but there is an opportunity to address this issue at a local community level in Gloucestershire.

Early work to develop a Gloucestershire Food Strategy has already commenced, led by GFirst LEP from an agri-food sector perspective, but with input from both the Local Nature Partnership and Public Health. The impact of COVID-19 makes this work not only more pressing but also creates an opportunity to put access to local, sustainable, and nutritious food at the heart of economic, environmental and health recovery plans.

- 4.2. Immediately roll out Dynamic Procurement Systems

An opportunity exists to roll-out Dynamic Procurement Systems (DPS) in Gloucestershire to support the creation of secure local food supply chains, in turn supporting local businesses to thrive. A DPS is similar to a framework contract with multiple suppliers, but allows new suppliers to join at any time, provided

³⁹ <http://www.ccri.ac.uk/covid-19-food-system/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/covid-19-consumer-tracker-waves-one-and-two-report-published>

⁴¹ <https://www.ffcc.co.uk/lockdown-survey>

⁴² <https://www.food.gov.uk/research/research-projects/the-burden-of-foodborne-disease-in-the-uk-2018>

⁴³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13549830802478736?mobileUi=0&journalCode=cloe20>

⁴⁴ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/ccf-farming-needs-revolution-for-uk-meet-climate-goals>

⁴⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives>

they meet the selection criteria established. This would have multiple benefits, if inclusion in these DPSs required businesses to sign-up to or fulfil some sustainability criteria.

4.3. Develop support for farmers to access facilitation, advice and support through a co-designed platform to improve the economic and ecological resilience of their activities in the face of rapidly changing regulation and the impacts of climate change

Farming in the UK is going through a period of near-unprecedented change, with the removal of the Common Agricultural Policy's Basic Payment leading to huge financial uncertainty. COVID-19 has placed additional pressure and insecurity on farmers and exposed the inadequacy of food policy in the UK. With the advent of multiple new environment and climate-related funding streams, farmers in Gloucestershire need tailored business advice to navigate this landscape. Advice should cover business, market opportunities (food and ecosystem services), diversification, policy (e.g. ELM-specific) and land management practices.

Gfirst LEP already provides an excellent Business Hub network across the county, offering advice and support to SMEs in a range of sectors. These Hubs, however, are not equipped to offer the specialist advice and knowledge exchange required by farmers and landowners. Organisations such as the Countryside Landowners Association⁴⁶, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Farmer Led Innovation Network already operate a shared problem-solving approach for the sector, including peer-to-peer learning to ensure farm advice is not divorced from the practicalities of running a farm business. This report recommends support for farmers to access facilitation advice and support through a co-designed platform. Much evidence exists to support the value for money of such spending⁴⁷.

Case Study 3. Dynamic Procurement Systems

In 2016, Bath and North East Somerset Council (BaNES) implemented a dynamic procurement system for the provision of 7,000 school meals daily. Its aim was to increase use of suppliers and producers in the region to provide healthy and sustainable products. The total cost was £515,000 per annum, for 5 years.

The implementation of the System was cost neutral compared with the previous contracts, whilst delivering annual CO₂ reductions of >6 tonnes per annum due to reduced transportation distance. Social impacts include increased employment locally, increased fresh produce use in catering for children and increased awareness of food related health for children.

For more information see this video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0InhF8zNwk>

⁴⁶<https://www.cla.org.uk/sites/default/files/PDF%20Documents/CLA%20Agricultural%20transition%20policy%20briefing%20October%202019.pdf>
⁴⁷ <https://www.fwagsw.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fa6976bc-77d6-4621-8f88-0ae70440e3cf>

5. Mainstreaming the environment and climate through strong leadership and good governance

Evidence Summary

- All aspects of society influence, and are influenced by, the natural environment and climate⁴⁸
- All policy areas have a part to play in addressing these twin emergencies
- Research from the National Academy of Sciences shows systems thinking to be vital to addressing climate change and an ecological ethic⁴⁹
- By showing strong leadership Gloucestershire has an opportunity to become a national leader in developing a Green Recovery.

Recommendations:

- 5.1. Adopt a joined-up, systems-thinking approach to decision making in the county, which balances climate change mitigation with the principle of social justice, to maximise the economic, environmental, and social benefits

ECAG recognises the interrelated nature of many of the challenges and opportunities presented by COVID. This is true of the climate and ecological emergencies too. Working in partnership can deliver multiple benefits for society, the environment, and the economy, leveraging resource beyond the scope of any single organization. Further, approaching multiple policy areas concurrently can deliver co-benefits, economies of scale and increased organisational efficiency. The natural capital approach is designed to facilitate exactly that.

The Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP), facilitating collaboration by a wide range of stakeholders, is clear that the natural environment is vital not just for wildlife, but also for economic resilience, climate resilience, societal wellbeing, and community cohesion.

Decision-makers in Gloucestershire should consider the environmental, climate-related, and social inequality impacts of their decisions in recovering from COVID. By reviewing everything through this triple-lens we will ensure not only the establishment of a way of making decisions that is more holistic, but also deliver improved outcomes for Gloucestershire as a whole. This should include a review of the Local Transport Plan, Vision 2050, Gloucestershire Economic Recovery Plan and other council plans and strategic documents to ensure they contribute to the delivery of a fit-for-the-future Gloucestershire. Representatives of the LNP, CN2030 Network and Health and Wellbeing Board should be involved directly in the review process, rather than consulted with after the process has been completed.

⁴⁸ https://f55bc3b4-dbac-4e43-8254-a45b43ca06b3.filesusr.com/ugd/49624c_475090bde4af45b29b39ac7872d5d211.pdf?index=true
⁴⁹ <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/17/8214>

5.2. Ensure strategic development plans are both climate- and environment-led

Over the coming decades the Gloucestershire authorities will be required to deliver a significant amount of housing and employment development. For housing this is expected to be in the order of 100,000 new homes up to 2050. It is critical that this level of development is delivered sustainably and that it contributes to a net carbon-zero society. As such, this group considers that climate change and carbon zero need to be at the forefront of the creation of strategic development plans in the county.

At the highest level this should include locating development in places that enable the most sustainable lifestyles, such as providing easy access to essential services, reducing the need to travel and prioritising active travel and public transport usage. Sites should be adaptable to climate change and designed in an appropriate form and orientation that forms an energy positive development, to optimize solar gain.

It should involve requiring new development to be delivered to a high standard of building energy efficiency, incorporating renewable and low-carbon energy technology (such as solar panels and air source heat pumps), using sustainable materials and promoting waste minimisation. All new developments should also incorporate high quality Green Infrastructure – most local planning documents in the county require compliance with Building with Nature standards, a framework developed in this county. Local Authorities and Gfirst LEP should not support, or allow, schemes that do not meet the Building with Nature criteria and should enforce delivery on the ground.

All developments should demonstrate an Environmental Net Gain. Gfirst LEP and the Local Authorities have supported and invested in the Natural Capital Baseline Map which enables the assessment of the environmental impact of developments. Its application would lead to the delivery of environmental enhancements through every development, improving the resilience of Gloucestershire's economy, society and wildlife.

5.3. Establish a Gloucestershire Natural Capital Investment Trust to lever multiple funding streams to enhance biodiversity, sequester carbon, reduce flood risk, and increase access to green space

Biodiversity declines and climate change will not be stopped with public money alone. This was true before the COVID pandemic-made recession looked extremely likely but is even more apparent now – most respondents to a recent LNP survey stated funding as one of the primary challenges for the natural environment post-lockdown. Further, a recent BBC investigation found a huge budget shortfall for many Local Authorities⁵⁰. The same is true anecdotally in Gloucestershire. We need to put the programme infrastructure in place to be ready to leverage investment in our natural environment to deliver on multiple policy priorities.

⁵⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53069772>

The 25 Year Environment Plan states that the UK will:

... set gold standards in protecting and growing natural capital – leading the world in using this approach as a tool in decision-making⁵¹.

Establishment of a Natural Capital Investment Fund in Gloucestershire to secure investment from public and private sector and charitable funds for natural solutions to economic, societal, and environmental resilience is underway, through a partnership between the LEP and the LNP. All partners should work together to expedite this process, to ensure that funding for the natural environment can be leveraged to deliver holistic ecosystem services that are vital to people, wildlife, and the economy.

Through this model investment in the natural environment can be accelerated to deliver carbon sequestration projects, biodiversity enhancement and flood risk reduction whilst promoting the eco-tourism sector and supporting the rural economy.

Case Study 4. River Severn Partnership

The River Severn Partnership unites public and private organisations around a shared ambition for growth directed at market drivers for a green economy and founded on the unique strengths of Britain’s longest river network.

Through an innovative partnership approach this catchment-wide programme will deliver sustainable and resilient place-based growth with a strong foundation of environmental resilience. The Partnership aims for transformative change, creating system level stewardship with a shared commitment to delivering environmental infrastructure that shares benefits and risks to unlock diverse sources of investment.

5.4. Develop a suite of indicators for Gloucestershire to measure and publicly report progress towards the achievement of the county’s shared climate and environmental goals

Many good policies and regulations exist, at both a national and county-level, that will help deliver against environmental and climate-related objectives. It is of paramount importance to ensure transparent delivery on these commitments.

⁵¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

This report recommends an annual review and reporting process which assesses progress against stated aims and goals.

The Natural Capital Baseline can be used for this purpose.

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ABOUT THE GROUP

The Environment and Climate Action Group (ECAG) is a sub-group of the Gloucestershire Recovery Coordination Group within the Local Resilience Forum structure.

Group consists of representatives from the following organisations:

Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership

Gfirst LEP

Gloucestershire County Council

GCHO

Gloucestershire Police

Gloucester City Council

Cheltenham Borough Council

Tewkesbury Borough Council

Forest of Dean District Council

Cotswold District Council

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Environment Agency

Royal Agricultural University

University of Gloucestershire

Active Gloucestershire