

# Gloucestershire Climate Change Summit

2019 Gloucestershire  
carbon neutral by 2050

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**Tuesday 21st May 2019**  
**The Growth Hub, Gloucester**

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*The event, held at the University of Gloucestershire, was facilitated by Simon Roberts, Chief Executive of the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and author of the Gloucestershire Energy Strategy 2019.*

*The event was jointly hosted by Gfirst Local Enterprise Partnership and Gloucestershire County Council (GCC).*

## Welcome

Welcome and introduction from CSE's Simon Roberts – Simon speaks of how timely the event is and how it is building on work that has been going on for some time. Despite the event being a Climate Change Summit and the recognition that the focus of the day is around energy and carbon emissions.

“Climate change isn't someone else's problem; it requires everyone in the room and everyone beyond the room to take action.”

Adam Starkey, Vice Chair of Gfirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board, thanked Simon for authoring the Gloucestershire Energy Strategy 2019 and detailed that the report highlights the poor situation we are starting from and the great challenge we face. The event is about giving thanks to successful projects and working together to achieve further success. Whether we aim for carbon neutrality by 2030 or 2050, he claimed there is no point in arguing the difference in aiming for those targets if we are currently not heading towards achieving either. Adam reiterated that we need to “achieve more and achieve it faster.”

## Introduction

Introduction was given by Councillor Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, GCC. He highlighted the recent vote from GCC declaring a climate emergency and backing the council to play its part in global carbon reduction, providing a fantastic platform to work from and signalling a great step forward.

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is currently being worked on and will be consulted on later this year. Cllr Moor highlighted that the changes that are necessary to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 may have economic and social loss and these impacts are not to be ignored. However, becoming a carbon neutral county by 2050 is a step change that GCC is committed to. The LTP will be considering decarbonising road and rail freight by 2050 and new forms of public transport. A focus may be placed on thriving local centres to reduce the

need for travel and will be looked at for major housing schemes. See presentation for more details.

Cllr Moor went on to state that 60,000 new homes will be built over the next 10 years and lots of work is needed within the planning system to change the objectives and ambitions of housebuilders.

Cllr Moor closed with “Let’s be genius, let’s not be defeated. Human beings are part of the problem but also the answer.”

### **Q&A**

The following questions were put to Cllr Moor from the listed delegates:

*Q “Where is your tree planting plan?” – Yolande*

*Q “What can you do to put covenants on land you own and may sell to ensure developers tied to low carbon housing?” – Councillor Rachel Coxcoon, Cotswold District Council*

*Q “Is there a plan for county-wide strategy for offsite housing?” - Sarah Daly, SD21*

### National Policy and Funded Support

Sviatlana Istamianok of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Local Energy Team spoke about national policy and the funded support available. Sviatlana manages central Government’s £20 million local energy programme. She stated that climate change is the most important challenge we face which requires strong leadership; however she stated that top down action can only get us so far and local actions are required as we aim to achieve a future energy system which will be increasingly localised/decentralised. She stated that we can no longer assume a one way energy system and that flexibility and adaptability is required.

Sviatlana explained that the Smart Export Guarantee, announced by The Rt Hon Claire Perry MP, is a bridge to smart energy of the future and that strong local leadership, through local transport, waste and housing, is also required to ensure success.

Over 80 local authorities have committed to clean energy by 2050 and Sviatlana said that GCC shows great ambition. She went on to provide further details of the Government’s £20 million local energy programme which aims to drive the development of green growth and funding and mobilise green finance to fund local projects that wouldn’t otherwise happen. £1.6 million is allocated to 38 LEPs to develop local energy strategies, £8 million allocated to

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fund 5 energy hubs across England and £10 million allocated to a rural energy fund. The rural energy fund is to be administered by the Local Energy Hubs and opens on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019. The fund will provide stage 1 grants for feasibility up to £40,000 and stage 2 grants of up to £100,000 to develop community-led projects.

Sviatlana closed by confirming that BEIS is considering the recent report from the Committee on Climate Change and is committed to responding to it in a way which reflects the urgency of the issue.

Rachel Brain, SW Energy Hub (who is based with the West of England Combined Authority - WECA), then went on to discuss the key role and function of each energy hub being to secure better integration/ scale-up of energy projects. Rachel expressed a need for greater collaboration and clearer, integrated approaches to policy. She stated that each regional energy hub will actively support groups/projects to move beyond business case and each hub will act as part of a network of hubs so to enable access to a broad range of expertise. See presentation for more details.

## Q&A

The following questions were put to Sviatlana and Rachel from the listed delegates:

*Q "When will SEG become available? The feed-in-tariff has been cancelled and 15% VAT increase in solar energy as of Oct 2019." – Melissa Briggs, S.E. Generator*

*Q "Can colleges claim VAT on environment projects? Please don't lump this on to what we already do, sustainability comes at a cost, we need more funding." - Andy Slaney, SGS*

*Q "Clarity needed on what is happening with SEG and what rates will be." – Jeremy Drew, Newland Homes*

Sviatlana will take these questions and comments back to BEIS and will feedback the responses in due course. In the meantime local authorities should register on 'Huddle' [GCC is already a member] to gain access to a spreadsheet of relevant Government funding and/or contact Svitliana with any other comments or queries: [localenergy@beis.gov.uk](mailto:localenergy@beis.gov.uk)

## Rising to the Challenge: Gloucestershire's Energy Strategy

Simon Roberts, CSE and chair of the event, introduced Gloucestershire's Energy Strategy in more detail, with a focus on the strategic ambitions of Gloucestershire. Simon stated that the county spends £1 billion per annum on fossil fuels, at least 2/3rds of which goes straight out of the county. He pressed for increased investment in efficiency and in-county

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renewable energy generation. Simon also highlighted that we need to stop building houses which will need retrofitting in the future because they are not built to standards which align with the severity of the climate crisis. Please see presentation and/or the [Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy 2019](#) for more details.

## Q&A

The following questions were put to Simon from the listed delegates:

*Q Is it not important to also consider biodiversity and nature when aiming for carbon neutral by 2050?*

*Q “What about the river Severn and potential for baseload generation?” - Rod Nelson (Simon referred to weakness on p.8 of Energy Strategy)*

*Q “Biggest barriers short termism of energy market - no certainty, need somewhere to be able to de-risk investment. How do we decide where to prioritise and where to take action?” – Philip, GCC*

## Table discussions and associated outputs: what we will commit to do now

Tables of 4/5 delegates discussed what they as individuals can do to contribute to tackling climate change and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 in Gloucestershire. Actions which they can take **now** ‘at home’, ‘at work’, and ‘in their community’ were discussed.

Of the 61 personal commitments collected, 41% committed to an action ‘at home’ surrounding transport, 26% committed to an action surrounding diet and likewise, 18% for energy. Examples ranged from ‘buying an electric car’ and ‘stop flying’ to ‘eat less meat’ and ‘turn the thermostat down by 1°C’.

Personal commitments at work and in the community largely consisted of increased local activism and improved communication/engagement. For example, ‘use social media to promote behaviour change’, ‘attend local climate meetings’, ‘use work car pool more’ and ‘home working’.

## What Gloucestershire County Council is already doing

Peter Wiggins, Outcome Manager – Community Infrastructure for GCC, spoke regarding the county’s past and present actions to reduce carbon emissions and provided case studies, such as Shire Hall, Gloucester and LED Street Lighting.

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Peter stated that measures adopted so far are saving the county >£2 million per year and GCC is continuing to investigate generating renewable energy on its own estate. It was announced that the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is currently being revised and outcomes from the event will help to guide the process. The draft strategy will be released in July 2019, with public consultation taking place over the summer.

Please see the accompanying presentation for more detail.

## Q&A

The following questions were put to Peter from the listed delegates:

*Q "Is GCC going to be reviewing existing policies which will increase emissions?" – Sarah Lennon, XR Stroud*

*Q "Are you going to look at other ways of storing power?" – Nicky P, Forest of Dean and Green Party*

## Perspective from the next generation

After lunch delegates heard from Yolande Booyse, an Ecology and Environmental Science student from the University of Gloucestershire, and Dan Green, a youth activist from Stroud's Youth Strike 4 Climate.

Yolande gave a very compelling presentation of what actions her, and her fellow students, want to see business leaders and decision makers taking, along with what actions young people are taking themselves. These actions included incentivising local businesses, active awareness campaigns and utilising social media platforms. Yolande pleaded with local decision makers to not be afraid to upset the status quo and highlighted the need for urgent and joint action. She concluded "Let's do what humans do best. Let's change the world. Let's change it for the benefit of others." See the presentation and [accompanying video](#) for more details.

Dan Green, aged 15, followed Yolande with a speech detailing why young people are choosing to take to the streets to protest, over sitting in lessons in school. Dan expressed that young people feel that not enough is being done and as they can't vote there is not much else they can do, bar protesting, to get their voices heard in a significant way. He described taking part in the Youth Strikes 4 Climate as learning in a new way and as an opportunity to learn first-hand about activism. Dan expressed that young people are terrified for themselves and for all life, as it is their future that is being destroyed. He said it is this fear that spurs young people to action and they hope that it spurs others into action

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too, as young people cannot do this alone. Despite expressing great anxiety over the issue, Dan said “a spark has been lit that shows great hope for our future.”

Dan listed many suggestions for GCC, please see below:

- Make schools greener as there is great potential
  - Increase onsite biodiversity
  - Recycling
  - Increase environmental consideration
  - Produce own energy onsite
- Review all developments and transport schemes - missing link funding used on other initiative
- Offsetting - rewild 25% of the UK
- Hard targets for all businesses in the council, all businesses should be held to high standards
- Action must be transparent and give everyone the opportunity to join and have their say (especially the youth)

A suggestion was made for delegates to mentor someone young and provide them with knowledge to help make contributions.

## What is best practice in the shaping of places to live and work, planning and new development

Paul Fong, Equity Partner at Ridge and Partners LLP, spoke about best practices in shaping places to live and work regarding planning and new developments, using Sharpness as a case study. Paul detailed that the primary focus of the development in Sharpness is to get people out of their cars and to plan the settlement around cycling and walking. Mr Fong went on to highlight the issues within the current planning system and how there needs to be a system shift which allows planned growth and certainty for the future. Please see presentation for more detail.

## **Q&A**

The following question was put to Paul from the listed delegates:

*Q “How do you de-incentivise people living there from commuting into Bristol?”*

Air Quality and Health – Developing a strategy for Gloucestershire

Dave McConalogue, a consultant in Public Health, and Philip Williams, Lead Commissioner – Community Infrastructure, GCC, highlighted the similarities between the issues of air pollution and climate change and detailed actions GCC and individuals can take to improve air quality. Dave stated that air quality now features in the NHS long term plan and there is a growing national and health interest in the issue. UK air pollution is currently the equivalent as each individual smoking a cigarette a day. Their suggestions for Gloucestershire included: cleaner fleets and partner/contractor fleets, reducing car trips and invest in cleaner vehicles, monitors for air quality in home/offices/cars and Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles. Please see presentation for further details.

**Q&A**

It was suggested that GCC again works with schools to enable younger generations to adopt greener travelling behaviours and carry these on into adult life.

Table discussions and associated outputs: What we need from others to support our action

Delegates reviewed their previous personal commitments to helping Gloucestershire achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and then discussed what they would like to see in the next Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy to make the most of their actions and help other people to contribute more.

117 suggestions were made from across the 25 tables of delegates. Of those 117 suggestions, 27% related to transport/travel, 19% to communication and engagement, 13% to energy and 10% to planning. 15% related to agriculture/biodiversity, waste and targets collectively. The remainder of suggestions (16%) have been categorised as 'other' but consisted of suggestions surrounding home working and behaviour change.

Key suggestions included: sustainability on the school curriculum, free advice for retrofitting schemes, traffic free days in town centres, youth panel for consulting on the new strategy, monitor energy use in new builds (polluter pays principle), install onshore wind on council land, provide a clear set of priorities, improve recycling, support neighbourhood planning, biodiversity in strategy name and confidence in lobbying central government.

There was strong support from delegates for onshore wind and a desire for improved support for domestic home retrofitting. There was also strong support for improved EV infrastructure and a desire for cycling/walking to be prioritised.

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From the delegates suggestions it was also evidence that there is a collective desire for communication and engagement to be improved, especially regarding the use of social media platforms and the engagement of the younger generation.

## Panel Q&A Session

The following questions were put to the Q&A panel consisting of: Yolande Booyse, Undergraduate, University of Gloucestershire; Gareth Jones, Director of Development, Severn Wye Energy Agency; Cllr Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning, GCC; Simon Pickering, Principal Ecologist, Ecotricity and Councillor, Stroud District Council; Andy Slaney, Chief Operations Officer, SGS College and Chair of GFirst LEP Energy Business Group; Barry Wyatt, Director of Development Services, Stroud District Council

*Q "How can local authorities in our county best work together to force up building standard requirements for new homes and other buildings in Gloucestershire – specifically on CO<sub>2</sub>." – Councillor Iain Dobie*

*Q "What will all this look and feel like to the public or will it be largely invisible - what will the public visibly see in 10 years' time?"*

*Q "Why do we see more interest in capital funded big projects and low-cost initiatives get ignored? How do we bring equivalent media push in energy to smoking ban?"*

*Q "Does the panel believe that current targets for growth in Gloucestershire are compatible with carbon neutrality?" – Mike Redman, Cheltenham Borough Council*

## Close

Councillor Nigel Moor, GCC, gave thanks to Simon Roberts for chairing and closed the event, citing this as a great opportunity for ambitious and engaged action. Cllr Moor stated that he will task the communications team with producing an engagement plan, including setting up a youth panel to inform the county's actions.

Note of meeting provided by Charlotte Leaman and Simon Roberts, Centre for Sustainable Energy.

May 2019