

Tuesday 31st July, 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

REF: Gloucestershire 2050 Consultation Response

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Gloucestershire 2050 Vision consultation. We wholly welcome the opportunity to think big and are pleased to offer here the views of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership.

The Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP) is formed of over 30 organisations from public, private and third sector bodies from across the county, all working together to recognise the importance of embedding nature's value in local decisions for the benefit of the nature, people and the economy. Our partnership provides a strong and innovative voice for the environment sector and is seen by DEFRA as a key figure in the local delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Our Partners include all six district councils and the county council, Cotswolds Conservation Board, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirst LEP), Public Health, CPRE, FWAG, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, GRCC, National Trust, WWT, Cotswold Water Park Trust, Severn Rivers Trust, University of Gloucestershire (UoG), Royal Agricultural University (RAU), a senior representative of farming and landowning interests, and more.

Below, we set out our response to the proposed ideas and ambitions in the consultation and suggest some new ones. These views were arrived at after conducting a highly productive Partner's workshop, followed up by email exchanges. While it is not a text that Partners have formally signed up to, it does represent a distillation of the points made about what the individuals attending felt should be reflected to strengthen the 2050 Vision. We structure the response broadly in line with the consultation questionnaire for your convenience.

We would be grateful to be kept informed about what happens next and will be more than happy to answer more questions in the future. As the GLNP, we have the ability to play a significant role in developing and delivering the vision for the benefits of nature, people and the economy and look forward to seeing the vision progress beyond the campaign and consultation.

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1. What do you like most about living in, working in, studying in or visiting Gloucestershire?

1.1. Natural diversity

Gloucestershire is a highly diverse county in terms of its geology, landscape and biodiversity, as well as its community diversity. It has three major rivers of the Severn, the Thames and the Wye, over a third of the county is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and includes areas of high biodiversity such as the Forest of Dean, Severn Vale, Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods and Cotswold Water Park, with the Cotswolds recognised as a nationally and internationally recognised landscape. A combined landscape character assessment for the whole of the administrative county of Gloucestershire identified a total of 38 landscape character types¹. This makes the county one of the most ecologically diverse in England.

Our natural environment is an attraction for inward investment, a considerable draw for tourism and enriches the lives of those who live here. As an example, there are an estimated 250–300 million day visits to woodlands each year² making them a hugely valued recreational resource. As such, many parts of the county's diverse landscape not only provide havens for our declining wildlife, they also support outdoor recreation of all kinds which underpins people's health and wellbeing.

1.2. History and culture

The county displays evidence of many thousands of years of history, which adds a cultural dimension to the county's diversity. A great example of how this asset can be used is the Gloucester Cathedral Pilgrim Project³, an ambitious ten-year programme of capital development, regeneration and community engagement that reveals the rich legacy of Gloucester city and its magnificent cathedral. The Cheltenham Festivals are world renowned and Stroud Fringe Festival has become so popular it saw over 25,000 visitors in 2017⁴. More broadly, many of our richest historic landscapes coincide with areas of richest natural environment. Nowhere is this more so than with the characteristic Cotswold stone and other natural resources which create our unique Cotswold, Vale and Forest landscape as well as buildings.

1.3. Towns and villages

The county has many thriving market towns and villages that support the character of the county, often sited among the most beautiful parts of Gloucestershire, including the Cotswolds. Yet, we consider that the towns and rural communities beyond Cheltenham and Gloucester have been overlooked within the current ideas and ambitions of the 2050 vision, neglecting the important role they play in the economic stability of the county, the creative industries and businesses they harbour and the flourishing communities that live there. These towns and villages are much more than just tourist destinations and the next 30 years will be critical to their survival. Their presence is also central

¹ https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/6797/glca_county_types_figure_2002-51672.pdf

² https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/sites/default/files/state_of_nature_report_tcm15-345472_0.pdf

³ <http://www.gloucestercathedral.org.uk/project-pilgrim/how/>

⁴ <https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/whats-on/music-nightlife/stroud-fringe-festival-2018-been-1273262>

to what makes us Gloucestershire. They will face great pressures in the years up to 2050 so we need to ensure we are in the best position to futureproof them. Frome, Somerset, is a great example of local scale work that has been undertaken to revive what was previously a “down-at-heel town”, to be now listed as one of the best places to live in the UK⁵.

To further add to this, the CPRE 2050 ‘alternative vision’ also suggests more of a focus on investing in the county’s smaller towns so that they become self-standing vibrant places where people live and work, not sleep and commute. We support their appeal for the need to retain and enhance the provision of some of the best food, fibre and timber for the nation from the countryside while maintaining the most loved and distinctive landscapes.

1.4. Farming

Food and farming are of great importance to the county. Gloucestershire has always been an agricultural centre, yet the spotlight is ever more focused on the sector with its uncertain future in the face of Brexit. But there are positive trends too; a growing interest in farmers' markets for locally sourced and produced food and drink, recognition of the need to reduce ‘food miles’, and demands for improved animal welfare.

Our unique, rich and varied farming heritage includes forestry and small mixed farming in West Gloucestershire; gentle rolling arable and sheep grazing in the Cotswolds and Stroud Valleys; milk and cheese as well as pig production were renowned in the Vales of Gloucester and Berkeley; while the orchards of the Leadon Valley provided the fruit for top class cider and perry⁶. There has been a considerable shift in consumer habits over recent years as people seek local produce and aim to minimise their global footprint to a local one. People want to know where their food comes from, how it was made and by whom. Many people are willing to pay a little more for the confidence that their food purchases help to create jobs and promote local economies; safeguard the environment, protect groundwater and preserve local farmland; as well as support proper animal treatment. As such, there has been an astonishing 65 per cent rise in independent supermarkets across the UK⁷. Gloucestershire’s farming sector must be supported to grow in ways that respond to this changing market.

The Royal Agricultural University has put Gloucestershire at the forefront of agricultural education for more than 170 years, connecting the county with experts from the food supply chain, farming, land management, banking and NGOs⁸. It is important that the 2050 Vision supports the university in their ambition to develop programmes that reflect the emerging needs of the sector, offering leadership in food and agri-business, rural policy and strategy, agro-ecology, sustainability and innovative land management. This investment in our farming community is critical as we face the implications presented by both Brexit and climate change.

1.5. Strategic Location

Gloucestershire benefits from having three large cities – Bristol, Birmingham and Cardiff – within 1-2 hours of the county, and the internationally important centres of culture in Oxford, Stratford and Bath, with London about 2 hours away. These transport connections outside and into the county make it a hugely attractive location to visit as well as a strategic base for businesses. Yet, some transport connections could be improved to maximise the attractions of the county and draw in more investment, further boosting economic activity, particularly among the younger generations where public transport is seen as an important factor in their decisions to move.

⁵ <http://www.theweek.co.uk/92384/where-is-the-best-place-to-live-in-the-uk-in-2018>

⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/content/articles/2008/06/18/farming_100_feature.shtml

⁷ <http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/smallbusiness/article-2573750/New-figures-SURGE-High-Street-shops-despite.html>

⁸ <https://www.rau.ac.uk/about-us>

2. What do you like least about living in, working in, studying in or visiting Gloucestershire?

2.1. Weak identity

Whilst our natural environment plays a considerable part in the reasons why people live, work, study and visit the county, as a partnership we feel that the county may be lacking a clear identity that could unite the different parts – notably the Cotswolds, the Forest of Dean, the Severn Vale and the Wye Valley. Whilst independently each area is a well-known entity, they do not compare to areas such as the Lake District or the Norfolk Broads. Gloucestershire has a higher diversity of landscapes than either of these places, yet a legacy of unvaluing and underinvesting the natural environment has meant we underplay its potential to provide identity in the public mind with the county of Gloucestershire. Prioritising and investing in our natural environment through enhancement, restoration and increased awareness, and through initiatives like green infrastructure and Regional Parks, will help to create a distinctive identity and lifestyle that could drive opportunities to capture new residents, tourists and business, as well as grow pride and a stronger sense of place and community.

2.2. Neglect of smaller towns and rural community

Our market towns and villages are of huge value to the county and it is imperative that they are respected and acknowledged within the 2050 Vision. A key focus should be on the challenges they face, which includes the lack of local jobs and community infrastructure and poor connectivity, both in terms of digital communication and transportation. They are also facing big pressures to meet housing demand. If these are to be accommodated, they must be developed in ways which balance their natural assets and culture, building in green infrastructure which will make new developments more sympathetic to the surrounding countryside and reduce the decline in wildlife by making rich habitats part of community living.

2.3. Poor transport and internet networks

Transportation is a significant limitation across the county. This critically reduces the ability of some of our residents – particularly the young and old – to meet their basic needs. Many appear to be less car dependent and less likely to have a driving licence. Without the infrastructure needed to match this culture shift we are likely to see more of our young people leave the county for better connected destinations. Furthermore, the poor, disconnected system of public transport forces residents and tourists to resort to using cars, leading to increased pollution, congestion and planning constraints on parking allocations when competition for land is already under increasing pressures. We ought to seek a solution to transportation that moves away from cars and fossil fuels and is centred on clean, green and inter-connected public transportation systems, that prioritises improved provision for cycling and walking.

It has been quoted in the Independent that the “worst place in the UK for broadband is the village of Miserden in Gloucestershire where the internet speed is lower than base camp at Mount Everest”⁹. We need to ensure that our

⁹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/the-worst-uk-broadband-areas-have-slower-internet-speeds-than-mount-everest-base-camp-a6912176.html>

smaller communities are not left stranded and further isolated by the failures in upgrading the county with superfast broadband – to the detriment of both themselves and their local economies.

2.4. Stark differences between wealth and poverty

The county suffers from a worrying imbalance between poverty and prosperity, with key areas of deprivation and isolation that desperately need regeneration and social support, and other areas of great wealth. These do not just exist in urban areas, but are often hidden as pockets of deprivation in rural communities; these are even more isolated due to the limited public transport, poor internet capacity, few jobs and restricted access to health services. A major focus is needed on the areas at risk of, or are already, being “left-behind”. The 2050 Vision should not only consider the provision of housing for new residents, but also the retrofit and regeneration of existing older, rundown areas. This would provide much needed improved living conditions for current residents. This is already being benchmarked for Matson and Podsmead in Gloucester over the next 30 years¹⁰.

Considerable research has been done on the links between deprivation and access to green space, with many of the poorest communities having no access to green space within walking distance, or it is of poor quality, deemed as unsafe and attracting anti-social behaviours. Research conducted by University of Glasgow and the University of St. Andrews over a decade ago, whose value has been acknowledged by the NHS, stated that the inequality in health between the rich and the poor can be halved with the help of better access to green spaces¹¹.

2.5. Vital need for more green spaces for wildlife

Gloucestershire contains a remarkable diversity of wildlife, including nationally and internationally notable species and designated sites. Despite this it is lagging behind other parts of the UK in terms of land area that is protected for wildlife, which stands at less than half of the national average of 7%¹². Since the 1970s, there have been significant declines in vital habitats such as flower-rich grassland (< 83%), traditional orchards (<67%) and ancient woodland (<78%), primarily driven by increased pressure on land use, particularly from agriculture but also from development. We are fast approaching the point of no return where some habitats and species will be lost from the county forever.

Threats to wildlife come from various sources: development proposals, new roads, changes in land ownership, inappropriate management and even neglect. These all reduce the species and habitat diversity which the county supports. In Gloucestershire, we now have over 850 Key Wildlife Sites (KWS). These are areas with a rich diversity of habitats that provide refuges and corridors for wildlife across Gloucestershire. Yet, they cover just 1% of the county’s land area, a clear indication that although we have many biodiversity-rich sites, they are small and fragmented and they have no legal protection¹³.

It is well documented that urban green spaces such as domestic gardens, parks and woodlands provide a multitude of benefits to human urban populations and vital habitat for wildlife¹⁴. There is also strong evidence that urban green spaces can be home to many species more commonly associated with rural settings¹⁵, including some that are rare or threatened¹⁶. There is urgent need to protect our precious urban green spaces across the county and create green connections that allow for the ease of movement for those species between town and country. Environmental

¹⁰ <https://www.shapethefutureglos.co.uk/>

¹¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/news/lifestyle-and-exercise/green-space-and-health/>

¹² <http://www.gloucestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk/what-we-do/research-and-publications/state-natural-environment/2011-habitat-decline>

¹³ <http://www.gloucestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk/what-we-do/local-nature-conservation/conservation-areas/key-wildlife-sites>

¹⁴ http://leaf.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/LEAF_benefits_of_urban_green_space_2015_upd.pdf

¹⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2003.10.038>

¹⁶ <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1472-4642.2008.00537.x>

concerns are strong amongst young people, the majority considering protecting and enhancing nature as one of their top priorities for government policy.

Climate change and urbanisation are contributing to a great decline in our wildlife. One example is the increased rate at which front gardens are being paved for driveways – tripling in the past 10 years¹⁷. Impervious paving increases the risk of flash flooding, overwhelming drainage systems – this should be a considerable concern for a county where parts are at serious risk of flooding. Utilising the concept of Building with Nature¹⁸ could provide a solution to infrastructure demands that respects the importance of wellbeing, water and wildlife for the benefit of all.

3. Which ambitions are most important to you, explaining your responses?

3.1. A magnet county

In order to attract and/or retain economically active people to the county, we need to offer fulfilling jobs. In 2015, 42% of the UK workforce wanted to work for organisations that are committed to values and ethics and have a positive impact on the world, with that figure growing year on year. For millennials, that figure was 62%, with over half valuing meaningful work to a high salary¹⁹. As a county we need to encourage behavioural changes in our local businesses to reconsider their ethical policies and values, otherwise we will be unable to attract the core workforce that will underpin our society over the next 30 years.

In turn, the provision of jobs needs to be balanced with affordable housing that reflects the demographic of the people we seek to attract or retain. Whilst affordability is key, it seems people are becoming less concerned about the house itself and more about what the property is close to. According to Santander Mortgages²⁰, priorities include being close to where you work, with good access to public transport routes, school catchments, green space, sports facilities, shops, bars and restaurants, family, broadband and all set in a safe neighbourhood.

3.2. An innovative county

Innovation must not just be for the privileged, but should occur in all manner of places and work for the benefit of all industries and people of all kinds, seeking to embed, cultivate and grow innovation into everyday lives, into schools, workplaces, communities and public open spaces.

We have existing environmental innovations that are national exemplars but still require further investment and endorsement within the county. These include the Building with Nature²¹ benchmark, embedding green infrastructure into our developments, and our natural flood management (NFM) schemes where a partnership of 16 landowners, charities, councils and Environment Agency have constructed or implemented over 300 different types of intervention to slow peak flows and reduce floods in the Stroud Valleys. Interventions include large woody debris

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-32780242>

¹⁸ <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk>

¹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/may/05/millennials-employment-employers-values-ethics-jobs>

²⁰ <http://uk.businessinsider.com/the-16-most-important-things-britons-want-when-buying-a-house-2015-6/#-safer-neighbourhood-surprisingly-low-on-the-list-only-7-say-this-is-a-top-priority-when-buying-a-new-home-1>

²¹ <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/>

leaky dams in streams and dry valleys, earth bunds in grasslands, dry ponds, silt traps, drainage diversions and tree planting²².

The agricultural sector is one such area that will require critical innovation in the coming years with exit from the European Union and the Common Agricultural Policy. As stated in our Farming section above, it is important that the farming industry receives the support and innovation it requires to provide a viable future for the sector and for Gloucestershire, whilst supporting it to move to a low-input, multi-benefit model that allows for ecological restoration and enhancement.

Furthermore, the Vision's current ideas do not appear to reflect the state of 'smart' functionality – where systems and technologies integrate independently to reduce the need for human intervention – that is unfolding rapidly and will guide future developments both rural and urban as highlighted within the consultation response submitted by the Regional Centre of Expertise in Sustainability Education – Severn network (RCE Severn).

3.3. A skilled county

All too often we see up-skilling as a question of developing a high level of skill for relatively few people, whereas what the county needs is a raising of skills across the board, with the acknowledgement that 'non-skilled' jobs are just as important and provide critical support to highly skilled industries. A skilled county goes hand-in-hand with being inclusive and innovative.

Whilst 'cyber' has taken a leading role in the link to a skilled county, this is already here and already a dominant industry that will continue to grow and thrive, if supported. What we also need to think of are the skills required for the future and the likely challenges facing the county. In this context, we strongly encourage embarking on the pursuit of green jobs and green technologies to draw them in to the county. This is already a growth market and its further growth will be essential if we are to meet the burden posed by climate change and the increase in the demand for natural resources and energy. We have great potential to be leaders in the green economy and green-technologies, particularly within eco-tourism, but we need to plant the seeds now for our future generations to learn and build on.

Our universities and colleges also have a core role to play in the up-skilling of our county. Engaging in more cutting-edge research opportunities would help grow the reputation of the university and the county both in the UK and internationally. Recent and significant examples of such developments include the Cirencester Growth Hub at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU). This is promoting entrepreneurship, innovation and business growth in Gloucestershire, and provides space, services and business advice funded by Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirst LEP) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Also at the RAU, and associated with the Hub, is Farm491. This is a space for innovators to grow their businesses by applying technology to growing environments. The high-spec facilities foster entrepreneurship, ideas generation, and collaboration, with the potential to influence and benefit the wider agricultural and food production industries²³.

Despite these interventions to support entrepreneurship, we are losing too many young people from the county. Yet, while 1/3 of graduates from the University of Gloucestershire (UoG) find work in the county, 2/3 would like to stay but the skilled jobs are not available to them, therefore forcing them to seek work elsewhere.

3.4. A prosperous county

This ambition seems to be carrying the most weight in terms of its importance in the current messaging, yet it is underpinned by the success of all other ambitions. In addition, continued growth and prosperity is not sustainable if

²² <https://www.governmentbusiness.co.uk/features/natural-flood-management-stroud-valleys>

²³ <https://farm491.com/>

little regard is given to environmental considerations and social consequences. For example, greater material prosperity that causes more pollution or creates other public health hazards, or which increases the gap between rich and poor, is of little long term value. Therefore, we should only aspire for greater wealth and affluence if it brings our communities together and supports a nature rich environment.

3.5. An inclusive county

In order to build inclusivity, we need to break down barriers that exist culturally throughout the county – including ethnicity, age, sexuality, income or gender. We need to view our diversity as an asset. High-quality, natural green spaces play a vital role in the social and economic life of communities, providing intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, and recreation benefits, they make people feel comfortable and at ease, increasing social interaction and reducing antisocial behaviour, isolation and stress²⁴.

Urban parks have always been an important setting for cultural programs; they drive tourism in many communities; provide measurable health benefits; and are accessible to the whole community. Yet, a report from the Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE) found that despite those people living in deprived urban areas recognising and appreciating the value of local green spaces, they underuse those most convenient to them as they are often poor quality and feel unsafe. They also found that less than 1% of people living in social housing reported using the green space on their estate. In those areas where more than 40% of residents are black or minority ethnic, there is 11 times less green space than in areas where residents are largely white, and the spaces they do have are likely to be of a poorer quality²⁵.

A key example of the impact green space can have on inclusive communities is The Greenlink in Scotland's former capital of steel production, Motherwell, where many of the neighbourhoods are defined as being among the 15 per cent most deprived in Scotland. Here, they have introduced a 7km cycleway which has created enormous improvements to the area and is changing lives. A study found that the benefits of increased exercise, a safer, greener community and the opportunity for people to learn new skills, is delivering a social return of £7 for every £1 invested²⁶.

Another example of social inclusion and maximising the current housing stock is by introducing cohousing²⁷. Cohousing is a way of resolving the isolation many people experience today and building strong local communities. Sharing provision of a community space, with common facilities with a balance of privacy and community, encourages social interaction, it also reduces the necessity of cars by ensuring the community has the local amenities it needs.

3.6. A healthier, happier county

As a partnership, we are in agreement that this is a primary ambition for Gloucestershire, but we feel it essential to place prevention and self-care at the heart of creating that healthier, happier county. The NHS is in a critical state and so saving vital funds by investing in preventative care will be essential for the county's health over the next 30 years, as well as reducing the loss to the economy and local businesses.

Inactivity is costing the NHS around £7.4 billion a year²⁸. Long-term mental health problems are forcing over 300,000 people a year to leave their jobs costing the economy an estimated £99 billion a year²⁹. The Government's revised

²⁴ https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/PublicHealthandLandscape_CreatingHealthyPlaces_FINAL.pdf

²⁵ <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/community-green-full-report.pdf>

²⁶ https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/PublicHealthandLandscape_CreatingHealthyPlaces_FINAL.pdf

²⁷ <https://cohousing.org.uk/>

²⁸ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/3964/spe003-active-design-published-october-2015-high-quality-for-web-2.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.nhs.uk/news/2017/10/October/Pages/Report-calls-for-better-mental-health-support-in-the-workplace.aspx>

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National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2018 states, “Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.” We need to design our county so that it is easier to live healthier, happier lives. Active Gloucestershire reported that where houses are built, how houses are built and the transport infrastructure between them is the biggest issue that determines the degree of activity in Gloucestershire’s population. This means our future county must work to provide the correct infrastructure design to support active lifestyles, and the connectivity that facilitates easy access by foot or on bike, both at home and work, to life’s necessities, as well as to nature, art, culture and recreation.

It is widely acknowledged that access to nature and high quality green spaces and other nature-based solutions (NBS)³⁰ can increase local health and physical activity. In particular, research suggests that lower socioeconomic groups, such as elderly, youth, and secondary educated people in large cities seem to benefit more in their health from presence of green areas in their living environment than other groups in large cities³¹.

This is why we also support the plans of the Gloucestershire Moves campaign which is a “whole system approach” to raise physical activity levels across the county³². Furthermore, this integrates with the launch of Sport England’s ‘Active Design’ campaign³³ – a set of design guidelines to get more people moving through suitable design and layout. This campaign complements the Building with Nature benchmark, established in Gloucestershire and taking shape across the UK, linking together the infrastructure required to make happier, healthier people that are integrated into the natural environment.

With this, we propose the creation of a Naturally Healthy Strategy for Gloucestershire – adopting innovative approaches to address health inequalities, particularly those surrounding environmental factors and lifestyle choices that can be influenced by access to nature and the outdoors, and supporting people to manage their own health and happiness. This is critical if the ambition of a healthier, happier county is to be achieved over the next 30 years.

3.7. A connected county

This is a very important ambition and one of the core shortcomings in the county at present. We feel it is critical to the success of other ambitions. We think it is time to downgrade the priority given to cars in the planning agenda and ensure our communities have the public transport and digital connections they need to maintain and grow their communities and our wildlife has the ability to move freely, among wildlife corridors that seamlessly connect the built environment to the countryside.

A connected county should:

- Seek opportunities to increase connectivity not just for people, but also for wildlife. Encouraging nature among the green elements of transport infrastructure, alongside roads, railways, canals and cycle routes, at roundabouts and transport interchanges;
- Strive towards a society that walks, cycles and utilises sustainable public transport solutions above all, with the aim to reduce greatly our dependence on car travel over the next 30 years;
- Prioritise sustainable transport solutions so that our better connected county is also a healthier, happier county, a sustainable county and an inclusive county;

³⁰ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0013935117310241>

³¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2566234/>

³² <https://www.activegloucestershire.org/events-and-campaigns/gloucestershire-moves.php>

³³ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/3964/spe003-active-design-published-october-2015-high-quality-for-web-2.pdf>

- Increase the rate at which our rural communities have access to high speed internet connections so that people can communicate more readily, have greater capacity for working at home and support growth of local business, in turn helping maintain rural communities.

3.8. A sustainable county

Whilst this ambition is certainly welcome, we feel the term ‘sustainability’ must be clear in its objective as well as metrics with which to aim for and measure against to ensure the county’s success. If this is addressed, Gloucestershire will have considerable potential for positioning sustainability centrally in the region’s development agenda and as a ‘USP’ for the county to be harnessed in business and economic development, as well as responsible tourism development.

One definition of ‘sustainability’ is “capable of being maintained at a steady level without exhausting natural resources or causing severe ecological damage”. The United Nations definition of ‘sustainable development’ is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)³⁴.

As a county we need the courage to take the bold and transformative steps that will help shift our small part of the world onto a more sustainable and resilient path, incorporating the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our future ambitions and ideas. They provide us with a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. As a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations in 2015 to be achieved by 2030, they cover many of the areas of social and economic development in Gloucestershire’s 2050 Vision including poverty, health, education, climate change, water, energy, cities, infrastructure, consumption and biodiversity.

We are in agreement with the RCE Severn consultation response, promoting the point that the green economy or ‘bioeconomy’ is expected to be a key driver in the next 20 years or so and Gloucestershire has the potential be at the forefront of this. If we invest and expand the existing pool of talent within the sustainability sector and intentionally support businesses to develop and promote this unique foundation it would position the county very favourably.

4. Tell us about any other ambitions you have for Gloucestershire in 2050.

4.1. A resilient and futureproof county

Gloucestershire is particularly vulnerable to climate change, yet there is no reference to flooding and water management within the suggested vision. The county faces a double-danger; too much water and too little. In our vision for 2050, we should include an ambition to futureproof the county against flood and drought, protecting our homes, our businesses and our farming industries.

³⁴ <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/65/issues/sustdev.shtml>

Climate change also raises many other concerns that will become bigger issues for the county over the next 30 years. Below are some areas in which to lead the ambition to becoming a resilient and futureproof county:

- Integrating natural capital into the planning system, so that the provision of ecosystem services can be enhanced to counter the impacts of climate change.
- Creating a Circular Economy by innovating in product design upstream and waste management downstream to support the recycling of 100% of all waste – in effect eliminating the concept of waste altogether. This will only be achieved by combining up-stream changes in manufacturing with downstream innovation in recycling, whilst supporting businesses, not penalising them for recycling and initiating behavioural change programmes.
- Moving to 100% reliance on renewables – wind, solar, tidal etc. It is the only solution to providing a long term, sustainable solution to our energy needs – supporting the Clean Growth Strategy.
- Making all developments fit for the next generation, achieving Building with Nature accreditation, considering the essential factors needed for resilience including water, wellbeing and wildlife, as well as connectivity and accessibility.
- Becoming a self-sufficient and multi-functional county, valuing our land for the capacity it has to deliver multiple benefits (as expanded below).
- Developing digital and ‘smart’ innovation in technology to support the move to a low-carbon economy.

4.2. A multi-functional county

We have a competing and contrasting landscape where the huge and varied demands on land use are growing fast – and will continue to grow in the future. It is becoming a luxury to think of land as being apportioned for different, single-use purposes. Instead, the unifying ambition should be ‘multi-functionality’, a long word for a simple idea: each piece of land has to serve a range of purposes. We need a multi-functional approach to the design and management of built-up areas, infrastructure, open spaces and recreation grounds, and productive farmland, thereby utilising the ecosystem services our land provides us to optimise their benefits to create a more resilient county for both people and wildlife. The approach should be part of a ‘Natural Growth Plan’ that identifies our natural capital, not just to protect but to support growth, whether that is environmentally, socially or economically.

Multi-functional infrastructure need not cost more than typical grey infrastructure and will provide longer term benefits to the place and community. Supporting projects that demonstrate the affordability and benefits of eco-development would help speed up the green infrastructure agenda and convince developers and investors, along with councils and planners, that this approach to development should be the norm. Building with Nature is a fundamental player that helps set the standard for good green infrastructure implementation.

One such example of an approach to applying the multi-functional concept is the thinking behind the Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs) from 3Keel LLP³⁵, as endorsed within the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan³⁶. This harnesses commercial interest in how landscapes function, so helping to attract investment and innovation towards the management of strategic assets like soils, aquifers, access infrastructure, habitats and tree cover.

Farmers will need to innovate, adapt and develop new income streams and government needs to support a market-facing sector, resilient to environmental change and external volatility. In the context of multi-functionality, however, farming is also about offering farmers and land managers the opportunity to benefit from the protection and enhancement of natural services like clean water, flood risk management and healthy soils, on which the long-term future of farming depends; and from playing a part in reversing the decline in wildlife seen over recent decades,

³⁵ <http://www.3keel.com/landscape-innovation/>

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

helping once common species to recover across England. It means too, a farming sector which plays its part in climate change mitigation and adaptation, has high environmental and animal welfare standards at its core, and helps to help build a brand that people can trust. Finally, a beautiful and sustainably managed farm landscape is essential to key economic sectors such as tourism and recreation.

4.3. A self-sufficient county

We aspire to create a county that is much more self-sufficient with regards to food, energy, waste and water. Greater self-sufficiency means that Gloucestershire is able to produce more of what people need locally and is less reliant on importing – promoting local food for local people for instance. Of course, full self-reliance is neither possible nor desirable but localising production more, reducing the need to move goods around, generating more of our own energy, recycling our own waste – in these and other ways Gloucestershire can be more self-reliant and resilient. Some examples of what could be done:

- grow our technical capabilities in both green-tech and agri-tech to lead the transformation of the county to be more self-sufficient in these areas;
- boost local food production and promote the benefit of reducing food miles;
- generate more of our own energy in-county;
- drive our own Gloucestershire recycling businesses and encourage businesses to recycle beyond the ‘duty of care’, e.g. by considering waste charges; and
- promote the better, more efficient use of water in homes, in factories and on farms.

When it comes to local food production, CPRE, a partner of the GLNP, has a key ambition in local food businesses to enable them to flourish and provide readily available produce at an affordable price for consumers and a fair one for farmers. CPRE are eager to demonstrate to both businesses and Government that there is a huge opportunity and an urgent need to take steps to develop and promote the local food industry³⁷. Their definition of local food is ‘that the product should be produced within 30 miles of where it is sold’. A thriving local food industry has the potential to deliver great benefits, it can:

- encourage a varied and seasonal diet of fresh food;
- reconnect communities with farmers;
- create jobs and supports local rural economies;
- revitalise town centres and high streets;
- reduce traffic congestion, noise and pollution from food miles; and
- encourage a more sustainable use of land.

A Defra survey in 2015 indicated that nearly 80% of British consumers believed that buying local produce was important – but only 30% managed to do so³⁸, which is why we need to increase accessibility and support our local farmers to compete with the larger supermarkets. The investment in food and farming enterprises has the capacity to garner considerable financial returns as well as create value for other stakeholders, make positive social impacts, support healthy communities, build strong local economies, and maintain environmental resilience.

When considering energy, the county already has a wide range of companies and skills in the area of renewables that could provide a strong platform for further growth in this area. These companies include Progressive Energy,

³⁷ <http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/farming-and-food/local-foods>

³⁸ <http://www.producebusinessuk.com/purchasing/stories/2016/04/18/consumer-interest-in-buying-local-produce-returns-to-limelight>

EcoVision, and NexGen, many of which are specialist in certain aspects of renewables, such as Tidal Lagoon Power and Renewables First (hydro and wind), and Ecotricity (solar and wind) and EDF Energy.

5. Which of the six big ideas do you agree or disagree with, explaining your responses.

We welcomed the suggested ideas as a means to stimulate our imaginations and spur debate about what should or could be important to the county in the future. However, all of the big ideas are place-based and predominantly infrastructure focused. We emphasise the need for any further review to look beyond these types of ideas. We have outlined our feedback on each of the provided ideas and have shared further thoughts and ideas below for your consideration.

5.1. Super City

We recognise this could be a more sustainable way to provide the much needed housing, but it raises conflicting views about the loss of green belt land. It would also mean the joining of two highly diverse cultures of Cheltenham and Gloucester, the benefits of which have been much debated. We suggest an examination of the benefits of this green belt beyond its core function to stop urban sprawl and how this spatial planning concept could be rethought to deliver multiple benefits for people, the environment and the economy.

Many residents of new housing built beyond green belts end up commuting further to work, creating more traffic and emitting more pollution, in more isolated communities, putting more strain on public services, local wildlife and the environment as a whole. We can see the advantages of a merge of city boundaries should it lead to; the implementation of green infrastructure in all developments; more common urban facilities, such as high quality green spaces, parks and playgrounds; allows people to commute less, reducing traffic and pollution, and; utilises biodiversity net-gain to enhance other areas of better quality land within the county. We also see potential for the creation of a new university campus, a business district, and new land for the hospital as well as a much needed transport hub between the two towns. Yet, we fear that it might just become an exercise in allocation of land for more housing and therefore misses the bigger opportunities that exist for the county and our wildlife.

Therefore, we feel that any decision to create a super city should be based on a large-scale study to explore the pros and cons of bringing Cheltenham and Gloucester together for the benefit of the county – and if were to happen, what form this should take. The study should look at other joined cities, in Britain such as Newcastle and Gateshead, and elsewhere such as Budapest. Whilst we can learn from elsewhere, our aim should not just to copy other thriving cities like Bristol, but to create a city that the county needs and aligns with our culture, ambitions and future resilience.

5.2. Cyber Park

Gloucestershire already has a strong base around global cyber security, in Cheltenham especially, and we endorse the growth in this sector which gives us international credibility and enhances national protection. However, many of our local communities still lack sufficient internet capacity and education around cybercrime needs to draw from the expertise that we are housing in the county.

5.3. Regional Parks

This is a positive contribution to the ideas that acknowledges the importance of our natural environment to our economy and the part it plays in people's health and wellbeing. However, if this idea is to be taken forward there needs to be clear understanding as to what a Regional Park is and how it should be developed. For example, what protections would it give to local ecology; how would this align with current designations and limits of publicly accessible land; how would we balance the agricultural needs that may compete with the proposed land in these areas, and; what would it involve in terms of landscape scale management? The experience of the Scottish Regional Parks (e.g. the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park) should be considered.

Large Regional Parks have considerable potential to deliver measurable whole ecosystem restoration and enhancement for wildlife, plus multiple benefits across a landscape scale. We urge that they be designed to include relatively large areas given over to nature, so that they can play their part in and safeguarding wildlife, whilst being easily accessible to the public.

These parks need to be aligned to a wider environmental strategy for the county, not just as independent assets, as well as being linked to a wider county accessibility and transportation strategy so the increase in eco-tourism and recreational activities does not lead to car saturation and sacrificing park land for parking spaces. They also need to ensure that they do not risk the further inflation of house prices, reducing affordability for young people and increasing the prevalence of second homes across the county. Finally, we consider that the Cotswold Water Park is in fact a regional park as it is commonly understood.

5.4. Lydney Sharpness

The Severn Estuary is a unique and sensitive landscape, so this bridge would raise considerable ecological concerns should the idea be pursued. If evidence suggests that a bridge would lead to increased quality of life for the current residents along with better employment, ecological net gain, business investment and economic growth then the connectivity of the two sides of the river should be supported by sustainable, carbon-free transport, with the bridge supporting rail, cycling, walking and bus connections from the west to the rest of the county, not cars.

5.5. A Cotswold Airport

Our view is that the development of an airport would have a negative impact on the natural environment of Gloucestershire and is not in the best interests of the county, undermining our efforts to combat climate change. With strong links to neighbouring international airports of Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff, we can take advantage of these local connections, without the expense and impact of building an airport in the county along with its related infrastructure, such as large car parks, new motorway connections etc. It is felt that we are better off investing in connectivity within the county, seeking to increase in walking, cycling and carbon-free public transportation solutions, such as trams and more electric buses.

5.6. Cotswold Water Park

The GLNP are in favour of increasing the profile of the Cotswold Water Park as a major eco-tourism destination if delivered in a sensitive manner that balances the unique biodiversity with the increase in footfall. The water park is already a huge asset to the county and one that should receive more support and investment for people, wildlife and the economy. It is in effect the county's first Regional Park (as stated above). However, if this is an idea that is taken forward, we seek to contribute to a comprehensive master plan in order to manage the different interests of the park.

The idea behind high quality conferencing and meeting facilities is positive, but we urge a range of facilities to be provided that meet the needs of local communities as well the incoming tourist trade and that doesn't continue to support the increase in second homes within the area, pricing out local people and putting local communities at risk.

The park already has great potential for Olympic-level training facilities should the lakes be re-designed to create larger bodies that accommodate the needs of British rowing, canoeing, sailing and other water sports. This, in turn would bring in considerable revenue opportunities and help gain recognition of the county and the water park as a prized international destination.

6. Tell us about any alternative ideas you have to achieve the ambitions for Gloucestershire in 2050

6.1. Green Gloucestershire

Our big idea for Gloucestershire is that nature should play a central part in its future development. It should aspire to become a county that is part of nature – not apart from it.

Nature is one of Gloucestershire's biggest assets. We should make every effort to protect and promote the beauty and significant value it brings to our people. The Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership's vision is of a 'Green Gloucestershire' that has strong connections between town, city and the countryside; where nature-rich green space penetrates the towns, boundaries are blended and accessibility to the landscape is easy no matter where you live.

As part of this big idea, we want the people of Gloucestershire to be proud of their county, creating a sense of 'pride of place'. The aim should be to foster a society that understands and knows how nature works and is proud of their local green spaces and those within the wider countryside. They will want to protect nature, enhance it and invest in it, as well as being motivated to live within the carrying capacity of a finite planet.

There are many emerging ideas within Gloucestershire that could form part of a network of initiatives toward a broader Green and Sustainable vision. There are five big ideas within this concept:

6.1.1. The county-wide adoption of **green infrastructure** will help deliver a wide range of societal and environmental benefits to the county. Having a commitment to green infrastructure will allow us to regenerate and grow our communities with a distinct identity that also provides sustainable travel, flood management, healthy living, wildlife havens, and characteristic destinations, whilst generating economic and social uplift. By integrating the principles surrounding the Building with Nature benchmark we can create a county that meets the needs of people, the environment and the economy for generations to come.

Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership

- 6.1.2. We support the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust in their suggestion of creating a **‘Natural Growth Plan’** that identifies our natural capital, not just to protect nature but to support growth. This requires a different way of approaching economic growth that includes triple-bottom line accounting and ‘doughnut economics’³⁹. Through this we should seek to grow our environmental assets alongside our economic and social capital.
- 6.1.3. We will play our part in the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan for a **Nature Recovery Network** that creates 500,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat across England. This network will restore ecosystems, reverse declines in willdlife and provide resilience against future threats. Based upon a well-research programme of Nature Improvement Areas, developing and delivering a Nature Recovery Network for Gloucestershire will cement the county’s reputation as an environmental leader and strengthen its identity as a place where people can enjoy a fantastic quality of life enriched by high quality natural places.
- 6.1.4. Our future should be one which is not led by the consumption of fossil-fuels and shaped by cars, but where sustainable transportation systems are advocated, creating active, healthy, happy and connected communities. We should seek to become a **VeloCounty** that champions accessibility for all by encouraging walking, cycling, car-sharing and fossil-free public transportation, such as trams and electric buses, linking our urban environments seamlessly with our countryside.

By taking ideas from the winning concept from The Cambridge to Oxford Connection: Ideas Competition – VeloCity – the future of Gloucestershire could share this vision for our settlements – from city, to town, to village – to be connected to one another by a fine-grained network of cycle routes. We share the vision of cycling as the mainstream form of movement, shaping the way places are planned and the way people move, communicate and relate to one another, creating a sense of place and pride. Cycling networks would be within cycling distance of new/existing rail stations and supported by ‘bike-bus’ networks – where buses have the capacity to carry bikes as well as people to make travelling by bike more achievable. These would also be suitable for walking and would also include invaluable wildlife corridors, leading on environmental net-gain initiatives, making multi-functional networks across the county whilst allowing our people to generate a closer relationship to the natural world and thus their appreciation and protection.

- 6.1.5. Our VeloCounty links with the whole system approach of **‘Gloucestershire Moves’** which is being promoted by Active Gloucestershire, aiming to raise physical activity levels across the county⁴⁰. We believe a ‘happy, healthy county’ must be an active county. The Building with Nature benchmark has the ability to set the standard for multi-functional development that meets the needs of an active, connected community, with the potential to integrate with the launch of Sport England’s ‘Active Design’ campaign⁴¹ – a set of design guidelines to get more people moving through suitable design and layout.

A truly Green Gloucestershire could be created building upon ideas suggested in above. Similar initiatives focussed upon energy, water, food, shelter and community could be developed over the coming years and the GLNP would be happy to play a facilitating role in their development.

³⁹ <http://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.activegloucestershire.org/events-and-campaigns/gloucestershire-moves.php>

⁴¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/3964/spe003-active-design-published-october-2015-high-quality-for-web-2.pdf>

7. In summary

The Glos 2050 campaign has been a great opportunity to engage the public in shaping their future. However, the campaign has focused more on debating the big, physical projects rather than encouraging people to think about new ways we want to live in our county in the future, i.e. more sustainably, more committed to reducing inequalities, and more self-sufficient. The big ideas in the consultation document are all manifestations of “business as usual”, essentially 20th century solutions, whereas a 30-plus year vision should be inviting us to think “out of the box” of previous experience.

It is also important that in the 2050 Vision we don't lose touch with the basic components of life for the people of Gloucestershire – Food, Water, Shelter, Energy. Some of our residents today are not able to meet those basic needs. The aim of our 2050 economic activity should be meeting the needs of all, within the capacity of the our environment, not necessarily seeking the need for continuous economic growth that could risk further segregation, but promoting an economy that allows people and business to thrive, regardless of whether they ‘grow’ or not.

As the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, we seek to create a ‘Green Gloucestershire’ that acknowledges nature is one its biggest assets; has strong connections between town, city and the countryside; where nature-rich green space penetrates the towns, and accessibility to the landscape is easy no matter where you live. We should make every effort to protect our biodiversity and promote the beauty and significant value our environment brings to our people. Where transportation is not driven by fossil fuels but by green energy; where walking and cycling are the primary transport options; where natural growth is the driver to prosperity; where green-tech and ethical business practices underpin our society, and; where green infrastructure and environmental net-gain is part of everyday development. This approach will attract and retain young people, address the issues surrounding our ageing population, boost the local economy and create a healthier, happier community.

The capacity of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership

The UK's Local Nature Partnerships have been identified by Defra to play a key role in the local delivery of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. As such, the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership will be well placed to provide the link between the environment, health and the economy with respect to developing the Glos 2050 Vision following the consultation.

Whilst our national LNP network has the means to pull in resources and information from initiatives across the UK, the Gloucestershire network has the local knowledge, influence and expertise to support the next stage of the 2050 Vision. We will actively support the development of the Vision and the suggested plans such as; a natural growth strategy, a naturally healthy strategy, the next generation of agri-environment schemes, and a clear plan for the delivery of Regional Parks.

We look forward to seeing the vision progress beyond the campaign and consultation and supporting the outcomes.

Sincerely,

Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership

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