

CPRE's Policy Position on the Climate Emergency A Statement from CPRE Gloucestershire

During 2019, national CPRE developed a policy position on the climate emergency in a thorough exercise involving the local CPRE Network and working groups on key issues. The work focussed on four areas where major, transformative change will be needed if the UK's greenhouse gas emissions are to be reduced to the extent necessary. These areas are: Land Use, Farming and Forestry; Building and Planning; Energy; and Transport.

The policy position was to have been published in April 2020 but the Covid – 19 pandemic intervened. It was finally published on 8 July 2020, having taken into account the urgent need for a strategy to secure a successful economic recovery from the impact of the pandemic and that addressing the climate emergency should be part of that strategy.

Titled ***Greener, better, faster: Countryside solutions to the climate emergency and for a green recovery*** the statement can be found on the CPRE Gloucestershire website at – <https://www.cpreglos.org.uk/what-we-care-about/current-campaigns/greener-better-faster-countryside-solutions-for-a-green-recovery/>

The following summarises the main points from a CPRE Gloucestershire perspective.

Land Use, Farming and Forestry

Significant changes in land use and management in agriculture, horticulture and forestry will be needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote better management of soils, whilst maintaining economic viability and sufficient food production. We are calling for these changes to be carried out in a way that enhances landscape and wildlife habitats and supports sustainable rural communities.

There is a need to retain the carbon already in soils and to store more by minimising soil disturbance; methane (greenhouse gas) emissions from livestock may be reduced by use of feed additives; nitrous oxide emissions could be cut by more targeted use of fertilisers; and there is scope to boost generation of renewable energy on the farm. We have welcomed the commitment of the NFU to pursue such an approach with the goal of reaching net zero emissions by 2040.

Income support for farming is changing. Now the UK has left the European Union the government is no longer bound by the requirements of the Common Agriculture Policy which provided farm income support mainly on the basis of the area of land farmed. A new payment scheme - the Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) - will provide public money for public benefits from farming. We have welcomed this major policy shift which is likely to be one of the main mechanisms for achieving climate change goals in agriculture. Gloucestershire is leading the way with a number of trials for the development of ELMS.

In addressing climate change, innovation will be essential. CPRE Gloucestershire is a member of the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership's agri-tech and rural business group. We have welcomed the emphasis on innovation and developing "agri-tech" in the Gloucestershire Industrial Strategy, building on the excellent work of the Royal Agricultural University, Hartpury University and College, and Campden BRI.

We have said that we will support woodland expansion where this is consistent with food production, landscape quality and biodiversity and we will support projects to protect and restore hedgerows and walls where they are important visual elements of the local landscape. Through our membership of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership we are pleased to promote initiatives in this area and to be part of partnership projects.

We have updated our Position Statement on Farming and Land Management in the light of the climate emergency. It can be found on the website

<https://www.cpreglos.org.uk/about-us/resources/our-position-statements/farming-and-land-management>

Building and Planning

Local planning authorities have a duty to ensure that development plans "contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change." CPRE contends that this legal duty should outweigh the requirements in the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is guidance not statute.

Much development is taking place at low densities on greenfield sites on the edge of towns and in open countryside, including in or harming areas that should be protected, increasing distances between homes, services and places of work.

We advocate that priority should be given to redevelopment of suitable urban sites and under-used land, co-locating homes, services and jobs as far as possible and making the best use of existing transport infrastructure.

New construction, alterations to existing buildings and retrofitting buildings to make them more energy efficient must meet zero carbon standards which relate not just to emissions from the building itself but also to the construction of the building. Standards are specified in building regulations. We advocate the introduction of mandatory new standards along the lines of an enhanced Code for Sustainable Homes which is a method for assessing and certifying the sustainable design and construction of new homes.

Much more could be done now to make new buildings more energy efficient through greater use, where visually appropriate, of in-roof solar thermal and photovoltaic panels, ground/water and air source heat pumps, and care with the orientation of buildings to maximise solar gain. Improvements in battery storage technology look promising and would further increase the usefulness of photovoltaic panels by enabling any excess of electricity produced when the sun shines to be stored and then used later, when it is dark.

We will promote the above principles in responding to consultations on development plans and planning applications.

Energy

National CPRE is calling for:

- A transition to a decentralised, zero carbon energy system that empowers and benefits local communities, that is delivered in harmony with our natural environment and landscapes.
- Renewable energy to be delivered in the right way. This means the strategic planning of renewable energy assets at national, sub-regional and local levels, and local communities empowered to help shape their local energy response.
- Affordable low carbon heating. We will support rural communities to make the transition to low carbon heating solutions, such as heat pumps, in a way that addresses fuel poverty and delivers better comfort and health outcomes for residents.

In Gloucestershire, the most important issues concern electricity supply. The main sources of supply are likely to continue to lie outside the county and the potential of renewable energy generation is relatively low. We therefore consider that the pursuit of renewable energy targets should not be at the expense of the unique environmental assets of landscape and biodiversity in the county.

The issues which are most pressing concern renewable energy projects in all their forms; the possible resurrection of proposals for some sort of Severn Barrage or tidal lagoons; the potential for new transmission lines from major generation sources outside the county; and the seriously limited agricultural use to which farm land that has been utilised for solar PV farms can be put, set against the need to maintain food production.

We advocate that the highest priority should be given to reducing energy consumption.

For renewable energy, we argue that the focus should be on dispersed, small scale facilities generating power on a continuous basis, viz: anaerobic digestion, ground/water source and air source heating, energy from waste, hydro power and burning biomass.

Technologies which provide intermittently available electricity (wind power and solar power) should play a less significant role in Gloucestershire. Economies of scale may be required to make them commercially viable with consequential risks and major adverse effects on landscape and wildlife as well as diversion of farmland from agricultural production. However, well designed solar energy installations on roofs of industrial, agricultural and domestic buildings are to be encouraged.

The landscape of Gloucestershire is fine-grained and its ability to absorb development can only be judged on a localised basis. We are therefore opposed to the idea of local authorities designating areas suitable for renewable energy. Instead we will seek to persuade them to develop criteria-based policies including landscape assessment. We will

consider development proposals on a case by case basis, assessing issues such as scale, visual impact, and land quality.

We have updated our Position Statement on Energy Production in the light of the climate emergency. It can be found on the website

<https://www.cpreglos.org.uk/about-us/resources/our-position-statements/energy>

Transport

With the transport sector the main contributor in the UK to greenhouse gas emissions at 27% of the total, and the only sector where emissions are still increasing, transformational changes are needed. These include eliminating fossil fuels as the source of power for road vehicles, achieving far greater use of public transport and active travel (cycling and walking), and reducing the need for travel.

CPRE has welcomed the Government's intention to ban the sale of new petrol, diesel or hybrid cars in the UK, bringing forward the target date to 2035 at the latest. In Gloucestershire, we are concerned that uptake of electric vehicles could be constrained by a slow roll out of charging facilities which need to provide a comprehensive network across the county.

Encouraging greater use of public transport will be essential. This means providing high quality public transport services, including at least a basic network of bus services in rural areas and improved station facilities and rail timetables, together with better integration of transport modes through development of transport hubs offering seamless journeys. If they are to be used more, bus services will need to be reliable in terms of journey times which means the provision of more dedicated bus lanes and other bus priority measures.

An aim should be to limit traffic growth as far as possible by ensuring that most new development is located in places that minimise the need to travel altogether by co-locating housing and jobs. Development should be accessible by foot, cycle and public transport with traffic management policies in place to ensure that travel costs reflect the impact of different travel options on the environment.

Gloucestershire County Council is reviewing its Local Transport Plan with the new plan covering the period to 2041. We have welcomed much of what the plan contains. It aligns with the principles we advocate with an aspiration to achieve a significant modal shift from use of private cars to sustainable transport options not just to solve the increasing problem of congestion but also to contribute to the global efforts to mitigate climate change. However, we do not think the proposed actions in the plan follow through on this vision with sufficient energy, incisiveness or early commitment of funds.

We have updated our Position Statement on Transport in the light of the climate emergency. It can be found on the website

<https://www.cpreglos.org.uk/about-us/resources/our-position-statements/transport>