

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
COUNCIL

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

18 OCTOBER 2018

6

Report Title	Gloucestershire Green Infrastructure Pledge
Purpose of Report	To consider an invitation from the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP) to support their proposed Green Infrastructure Pledge.
Decision(s)	The Council RESOLVES to: (1) Support the Gloucestershire Green Infrastructure Pledge that recognises the importance of well planned green infrastructure and the five objectives of that pledge.
Consultation and Feedback	Council officers have worked with the Gloucestershire LNP since 2012. They have sat on the GI working group since 2014 reporting to the GLNP Board (of which SDC represents LPA interests). In this way it has input into the Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework and this Pledge drafting .
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Pledge is a public statement of recognition of the work that is currently carried out within planning. Adele Rudkin - Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email:adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	The pledge referred to in the report does not have any legal status and as such there are no legal implications which would arise as a direct result of signing up to it. Committee will however wish to be satisfied that the pledge is compatible with other relevant plans and policies. The implications of any proposed actions arising from the pledge would need to be considered separately. Mike Wallbank Solicitor Email: Mike.Wallbank@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Conrad Moore, Principal Planning Strategy Officer. Tel: 01453 754328 Email: Conrad.moore@stroud.gov.uk

Options	The Council may chose not to support this Pledge. However on 5 th September 2018 the County Council agreed to support this pledge, promising to develop, maintain and protect natural features in Gloucestershire. To not publically sign the Pledge may be interpreted as countering high quality design objectives set out within the NPPF and not delivering a clear and consistent message regarding the benefits of delivering GI maintenance and enhancement across the County and District. Good GI can improve water management, air quality, public safety, food and energy security, public health and well being along with climate change mitigation and adaptation. Many of the objectives are currently undertaken within this Councils core services and functions.
Performance Management Follow Up	The Council, GLNP and the other 6 Planning Authorities in Gloucestershire as well as any other relevant organisations will establish a Gloucestershire leadership group for green infrastructure. This group will meet regularly, with the aim of reporting in 12 months' time in order to share progress, exchange best practice and demonstrate measurable positive action. It will work with public, private and third sector bodies to align this green infrastructure initiative with the emerging conclusions of the Gloucestershire 2050 Vision, whilst taking on board developments in national policy, such as the revised National Planning Policy Framework, Clean Growth Strategy, Industrial Strategy and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.
Background Papers/ Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Green Infrastructure for Gloucestershire Pledge within this report 2. "Building with Nature" available at https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/ 3. More information about the GLNP can be found at http://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) is the network of natural and semi-natural features within and between our villages, towns and cities.. These features range in scale, from individual street trees, green roofs and private gardens through to parks, rivers and woodlands, transport corridors, verges and, at the larger scale, wetlands, forests and agricultural land. Green Infrastructure as a concept is referred to in the current Adopted Local Plan. The role and purpose of GI is recognised as have a number of benefits primarily:

Environmental and social benefits:

- Ensuring a more attractive place for people to live, work and visit
- Giving opportunities for outdoor relaxation, play and access to nature
- Improving health and well-being – lowering stress levels and providing opportunities for exercise
- Helping climate change adaptation, for example by flood alleviation and cooling urban heat islands
- Improving air and water quality
- Giving space for habitats and providing wildlife corridors and linkages
- Providing sustainable transport routes – for cycling and walking
- Enabling local food production - in allotments, gardens and through agriculture

Economic benefits:

- Attracting inward investment - a more attractive area to business investors and potential residents
- Attracting increased visitor spend - a more attractive area for tourists and visitors
- Generating employment - attracting new businesses and residents to the area, increasing office occupancy rates and increasing the number of jobs in the area
- Saving environmental costs - improving air quality, reducing the urban heat island effect, filtering diffuse pollution, helping to manage flood risk and storing water during droughts
- Providing health benefits - impacts on health through improved air quality and surroundings which encourage activity and improve mental health and well-being
- Promoting food production - enabling increased productivity

The key point is that green infrastructure provides a wide range of benefits simultaneously from the same area of land i.e. “multifunctionality”.

- 1.2** Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) bring together local organisations, businesses and people who want to improve their local natural environment. LNPs are recognised by the government who intend that LNPs will help their local area to manage the natural environment and embed its value in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. The Gloucestershire LNP was created in July 2012 and comprises a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people to work with, and influence, other local strategic decision makers. All seven Gloucestershire local authorities are among the partners in the GLNP and the Strategic Head of Environmental Services is a member of the LNP Board.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1** The GLNP wish for partners to sign up to a Green Infrastructure Pledge. This will commit partners to develop, and maintain the significant green infrastructure within Gloucestershire by considering it within local authority core business activities and services. It will take place at the GLNP conference on 26th

October 2018. Officers have worked with GLNP to make sure that the pledge is consistent with national planning policy. It is also timely for this Council as consultants have been commissioned and are currently undertaking work to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy and evidence base to accompany the Local Plan Review. The Council is already a member of the GLNP GI working group.

2.2 As such the GLNP pledge is an opportunity for each of the member Councils to consider re-confirming their support for well planned Green Infrastructure and the benefits that brings to new and existing communities. That said it is for each Council to make its own decision on whether to sign the pledge or not, either before the GLNP conference or at a convenient time thereafter. It is considered that it would be appropriate for this Council to publically recognise the importance of well planned green infrastructure and support the objectives of the pledge. As part of this Pledge commitment it is important that the Council are able to demonstrate how the pledge and 5 objectives are being taken forward in this District. This will be a practical way of maintaining oversight of an important issue that underpins the delivery of good quality development. The Planning Strategy Team would continue to undertake the monitoring and delivery aspects of GI as part of the Monitoring Report and Duty to Cooperate processes in Planning. The Council also was involved in developing and testing the GWT “Building with Nature” initiative referred to in Appendix Two.

2.3 The GLNP pledge will provide a useful addition to work currently being undertaken by this Council through the Green Infrastructure commissioned work with our consultants Ethos. It will help provide a context and focus for continued action by the 7 Councils in Gloucestershire and ensure a co-ordinated approach to and a shared vision for green infrastructure across the county and beyond. The Pledge will also emphasise our continued commitment to the Strategic Framework for Green Infrastructure developed and endorsed by the Board of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership in 2015 to provide a strategic green infrastructure framework that can form part of the evidence base for local and other plans. It provided a useful start point for more detailed green infrastructure work being undertaken at the local level where the multi-functional benefits of green infrastructure were recognised. The work with consultants Ethos on GI is an existing Local Plan Review evidence base commitment and signing the pledge will not have any direct additional resource or cost implications.

3 CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

3.1 Officers recommend that the Council recognises the importance of well planned green infrastructure and supports the progression and delivery of this Gloucestershire LNP GI pledge by signing up to it at the GLNP conference on 26th October 2018. The accompanying 5 objectives will help shape and inform future GI policy and its delivery as part of our Local Plan Review process. As such the pledge is an opportunity for this member Council to re-confirm their continued support for well planned Green Infrastructure and the benefits that brings to new and existing communities in accordance with the latest National Planning Policy Framework.

Appendix 1

Gloucestershire **GREEN** **INFRASTRUCTURE** Pledge

MAKING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE WORK FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE - FOR OUR COMMUNITIES, WILDLIFE AND ECONOMY. OUR PLEDGE, CREATED BY THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP, IS A PROMISE TO COMMIT TO MAKING GLOUCESTERSHIRE A PIONEER OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, CREATING A BETTER, MORE ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT, AS WELL AS BECOMING AN EXEMPLAR FOR THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.

OUR COMMITMENT TO A GREENER GLOUCESTERSHIRE

As our population grows and becomes wealthier, so do the demands we make for land, water and other natural resources. Our natural assets provide a wide range of services essential to society and the economy and so need to be safeguarded to ensure their longevity. Through investment in green infrastructure, we can help to square this circle, since this approach allows development to take place in ways that work with the grain of nature.

WHY GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE?

Green infrastructure is not just about providing space for wildlife and recreation. It is truly multi-functional. It can improve water management, air quality, public safety, food and energy security, public health and wellbeing, social cohesion, along with climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Green infrastructure is as important as the buildings themselves, the roads that connect them, the power and water that supplies them – all provide the essential ingredients that go into making a place function effectively. In brief, people need green infrastructure to help lead more fulfilling lives and be resilient for future challenges – and nature needs it to survive in our increasingly humanised world.

A PROMISE

Yet, if we are to bring about the required shift in favour of green infrastructure it will require clear leadership and a vision that is shared by all involved in every aspect of development. This is what our

pledge seeks to achieve. It commits all sectors to embed green infrastructure into how we plan for Gloucestershire's future development and regeneration.

Gloucestershire has already led the way in developing the Building with Nature benchmark **(1)** and several innovative green infrastructure projects, for example, those funded through European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) administered by the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (Gfirst LEP), and the Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects throughout the Stroud Valley. The pledge will take forward this pioneering work by committing all parties to action. If we succeed in this, our communities, economy and wildlife will benefit immeasurably.

OUR GREEN VISION

Our vision is of a greener Gloucestershire. Where nature-based solutions are threaded through urban areas, providing a multi-functional approach to the design and management of urban infrastructure, open spaces and recreation grounds; where the benefits of nature create a more resilient county for both people and wildlife, not just to protect but to support growth, whether that is environmentally, socially or economically; where consideration is given to upstream and downstream solutions and services that nature provides; where environmental net gain **(2)** is demonstrated through green infrastructure; and where this is brought about by numerous joined-up, local level initiatives across the county.

Gloucestershire GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE Pledge

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE SHARED RESOURCES ON WHICH WE RELY. WE UNDERSTAND WE MUST MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PRESENT WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE ABILITY OF FUTURE GENERATIONS TO MEET THEIR OWN NEEDS. EACH OF US WILL PROMOTE, CREATE AND ENHANCE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL, WORKING IN CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIP WHEREVER POSSIBLE TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

- 01** We will commit to working in favour of sustainable development, delivering against the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018) where it states development and policies should make sufficient provision for "conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation." [para. 20].
- 02** We will aim to utilise appropriate, high-quality green infrastructure, wherever possible, to protect lives, communities, wildlife and economic growth from the likely effects of development and climate change – including flooding and pollution – through such methods as natural flood management systems, street trees and sustainable drainage systems.
- 03** We accept to delivering healthy, inclusive and safe places as required in chapter 8 of the revised NPPF, acknowledging the importance of green and blue spaces as essential components to health and happiness of our communities. We seek to utilise tools that help us identify what 'good' green infrastructure looks like and ensure sufficient thought is put into providing relevant, high-quality, safe and accessible green space for people that encourages active lifestyles, social inclusion and community engagement with nature.
- 04** We will take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure, minimising impacts on the natural environment, whilst providing net gains for biodiversity and enhancing natural capital on a landscape scale – as outlined within the revised NPPF [para. 170/171]. In doing so we will also contribute to the Nature Recovery Network' outlined within the 25 Year Environment Plan, utilising green infrastructure to link habitats for the recovery of our wildlife and the wider range of public benefits this network will provide.
- 05** We will seek to apply high quality green infrastructure principles to the retrofit of buildings as well as to new developments. We understand that green infrastructure can help build a strong, competitive economy whilst positively impacting lives through regeneration initiatives. Green infrastructure can make properties more sustainable, increase housing value, boost climate resilience, promote social inclusion, and improve desirability of local areas.



To support the progression and delivery of this pledge, we will establish a Gloucestershire leadership group for green infrastructure. This group will meet regularly, with the aim of reporting in 12 months' time in order to share progress, exchange best practice and demonstrate measurable positive action. It will work with public, private and third sector bodies to align this green infrastructure initiative with the emerging conclusions of the Gloucestershire 2050 Vision, whilst taking on board developments in national policy, such as the revised National Planning Policy Framework, Clean Growth Strategy, Industrial Strategy and the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.