Excellence in Place Leadership Programme

Session 4: Leadership in a Climate Emergency

Introduction

Session four brought the 2020 Excellence in Place Leadership programme to a close, tackling a substantial challenge which will shape and influence places for decades to come: climate change.

The Masterclass format heard from three expert contributors before the challenge was brought into sharp focus with a real-world case study in the form of Gloucestershire. The aim of the session was to provide Gloucestershire with a series of carbon recommendations, and the EiPL cohort didn't disappoint.

## Leading the response to the Climate Emergency in Gloucestershire

About Gloucestershire

Kath Haworth, from Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), set the scene for the cohort. Gloucestershire is on the edge of the South West, West Midlands and Wales, nestling between pretty Cotswold villages and the Forest of Dean, with the M5 motorway bisecting the county along the 'Severn Vale sandwich' populated by organisations ranging from the docks and GCHQ to a major university, forestry, agriculture and aerospace specialists. A real county of contrasts.

Gloucestershire has an ageing population and is a net exporter of 18-24 year olds, the county also has a need to improve productivity. The central belt is the focus of growth including 25,000 new homes and the need to deliver 89 hectares of employment land by 2031.

There are good transport links including rail into London, serving 33,500 businesses generating £16.5bn in economic output – contributing 12.5% to the South West economy and representing 1% of UK output.

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in May 2019 along with 260 other local authorities, setting the target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 for local authority activities, with the aim of achieving carbon neutral status
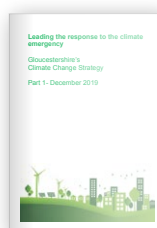
for the county by 2050.

Gloucestershire's Climate Change Strategy

The key challenge for the county is to put climate change at the heart of decision making. This is challenging because 17% of the population are not connected to the gas network, including 39% of the Forest of Dean residents. Public transport accounts for 6% of journeys in the Vale, and journeys by car dominate the transport landscape. On the positive front, 11% of journeys in Gloucester city are by bike.

Kath's perspective was the scale of the challenge is so huge it needs different thinking.

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The Gloucestershire Youth Panel Perspective (Yolande Booyse and Billy Wassell)

The County's Youth Panel was set up with the purpose of challenging thinking. Yolande and Billy lay down their challenge to the cohort with a few short sharp messages about tackling climate change in Gloucestershire:

- *Collaboration is the new power to tackle climate change*

- *Treat change with honesty and transparency*

- *Don't use virgin resources*

- *Reduce consumption and waste production*

- *Don't design 'pretty' deserts in our towns and communities, design productive spaces*

- *Let's have bold and creative politics*

Kath set the brief for the cohort, to be tested through three masterclass workshops, aided by the Masters.

"To apply the Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy ambition to the urban areas of the Central Severn Vale which together generates 46% of the carbon generated in the county; and to make specific investable and deliverable recommendations on how to tackle carbon reductions in the growing sectors of transport and business/economy by 2030."

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The Masters

Three 'Masters' then gave leading examples of how both the public and private sector have:

- *Developed well evidenced approaches to sustainable strategy, delivery and impact monitoring;*
- *Brought about significant changes in public perception and behaviours;*
- *Produced business cases for change.*

Master 1: Jon Furley, University of Gloucestershire

The University of Gloucestershire is the UK's number 1 most sustainable university in the People and Planet League, with 9,000 students and 850 staff. This reputation drives commitment where regulatory requirements are a given.

Climate change drives costs and carbon offsetting could cost the University c. £1m pa by 2035. The University has cut emissions in half over the last 15 years, partly via decarbonisation of the grid, but half (400t) is from travel, so we need to invest further and to implement change in travel.

Most of the carbon reduction activity at the moment is driven by the climate change team, this needs to shift, to embed in departments, in people, and in actions. This needs to be driven by cultural change – a multiple year journey.

The university is currently in the process of establishing the baseline of emissions from all scopes and setting targets with minimal offsetting. Getting the baseline for 'Scope 3' of procured services is really hard!

"If you are asking people to change how they work or travel, you have to show what's in it for them – time, cost and lifestyle"

Local authorities need to be engaging with businesses, employers and the community. Infrastructure change needs to be paralleled and aligned with cultural and behavioural change.

The Masters

Master 2: Ola Gustaffson, Gehl

Gehl has focused on the human dimension to sustainable urban development and is based on the fifty-year experience and research of Jan Gehl focused on the question – how do cities affect people?

Aligning human behaviour with the sustainability measures needed to combat climate change is critical. The environment influences our behaviour, such as using an escalator to access a fitness centre.

Key requirements underpinning the Gehl approach:

- *Understand people - measure what you care about; make people visible and give people a voice in urban planning. Look, think and act at 'eye level'.*

- *Strategise and create incremental change – changing a city takes a long time; measure, test, refine.*

- *Think holistically – space is one of the most precious resources we have.*

Copenhagen is a great example. It is the most liveable city in the world (ECA International report 2018) and aims to be carbon neutral by 2025. In the 1960s it was car dominated/infested; the city has worked to gradually increase car free spaces, created an extensive bicycle network, and has continuously upgraded the city over 30 years transitioning to a more playful use of space.

It has embedded metrics that reflect values and conducts 'public life surveys' that give politicians the information and ability to make informed decisions for the city. Cycling is a key dynamic with 49% of journeys to work made by bike, and 70% of journeys continue through winter. The train network also allows and encourages the use of bikes. There has been a 38% reduction in car journeys over the last twenty years, in a growing economy.

Conclusion – designing Place is about the human experience and how we use the spaces we have. Behaviour is the main driver for change. How we live is how we should build, make people visible, meet them and take it from there.


Bike parking

Local street

Church square

Schoolyard

The Masters

Master 3: John Twitchen, Circular Economy

There are no free magic bullets but there is a clear need to extend the cycle of materials and maximise value from the 'dinosaur juice' that we harvest from the earth.

Materials need to go round in a longer, slower but tighter loop – used again close to the point of first use/disposal, working closely with indigenous industries to adapt and grow.
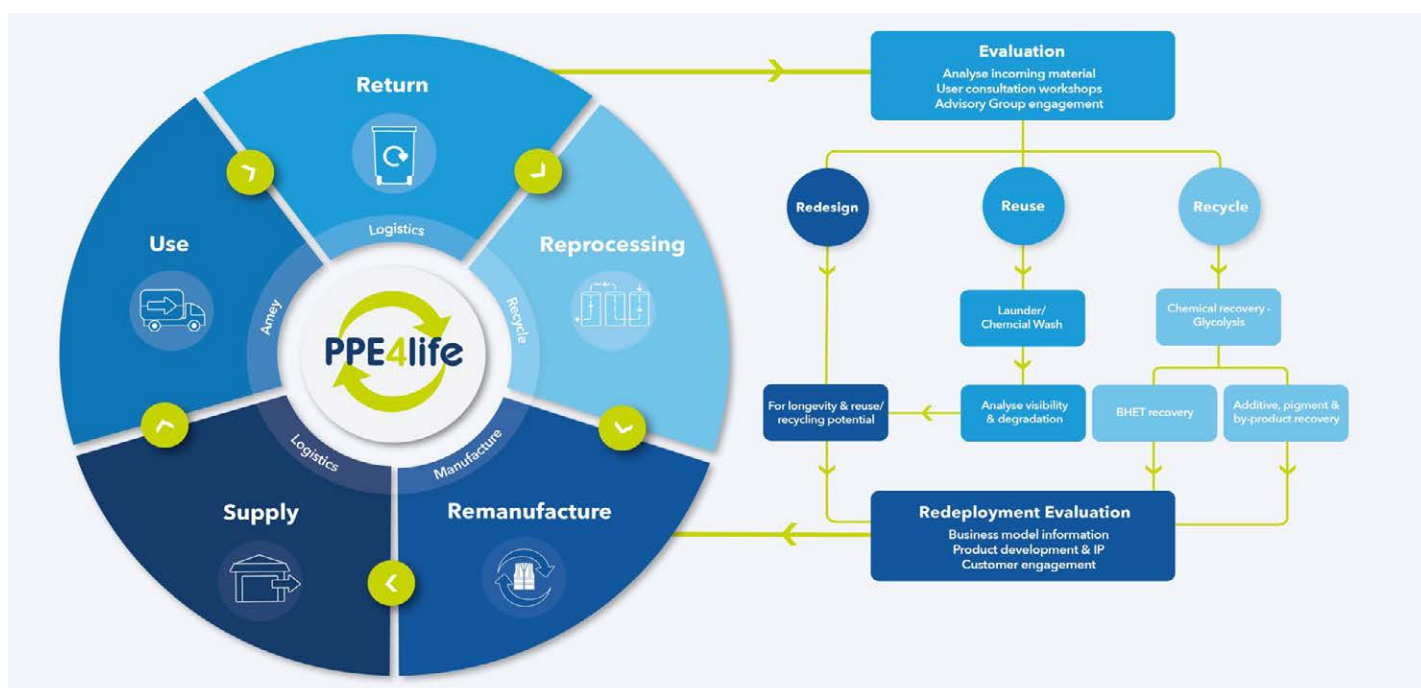
Wasted energy is a wasted opportunity, especially heat – from industry, from energy recovery, or through poor design and decision making; the key might just be a pipe in the road, connections, and a plan that decision makers can focus on turning into a reality.

Technology is moving fast, particularly in the transport sector with EVs and alternative fuels, and there is a very clear opportunity for local authorities to lead by example through choices.

The transition to a low carbon economy can only be achieved through partnership and making both different and difficult decisions, and through engaging with the silent majority.

Whilst some changes will be very long term, others are immediate, short term and tangible – but both require different ways of working, procuring and financing (fortunately, all subjects of previous EiPL sessions!).

Workshops

Split into two workshop groups focusing on either transport or economy, the cohort drew on 'the Master' contributions and their learning from the previous EiPL sessions:

- *Outcome-based approaches to commissioning supply chains*
- *Green finance*
- *Customer centric service design*

After each of the three workshops there was a gateway review session during which the two groups presented their workshop findings for review by the Master Panel.

Workshop 1: Discovery
Purpose: For the two groups to get into and understand their transport and economy challenge in Central Severn Vale.

Transport Group – key points:

1. Political situation – Members need to be prepared, brought on board and ready to go, perhaps through pilot projects that people can get behind.

2. Are people accepting the need for the level of connectivity and type of travel, and do we know the best ways of gaining this acceptance? More information is also needed on the type of industry in the area, need for travel etc – mapping resources, energy, needs, deliverables.

3. Work at home scenario – impact on the economy, town centre SMEs etc versus travel and carbon; noted the major impact in terms of journeys is not commuting but leisure and shopping.

Economy Group – key points:

1. Shift in attitudes to walking/cycling resulting from Covid-19 – is this short term? Initial keenness to view spaces differently is ebbing away with a 'return to normal'

2. Green is good for business – green recovery and catching the next wave of growth is key, but green policies need to be tangible for business.

3. Resistance and objection – do we know enough about what the residents of Gloucestershire want? Is the Council having a conversation about what people want?

Workshop 2: Optioning

Purpose: To produce options for Transport and Economy in Central Severn Vale and assess potential impact.

Transport Group – key points:

1. It is clear that local authorities must focus on the issues with biggest impact, both in their direct control (staff travel, parking charges, waste policies etc); indirectly (travel plans, cycling infrastructure, local planning policy etc); and taking care to also act on those issues not in their control but with a role in influencing, e.g. logistics, EVs etc.

2. Create the vision of what it might look like – a digital twin to envision change, ensure strong voices e.g. youth council are involved in this.

3. The danger of creating yet another strategy can be overcome by delivering quick wins, tangible change, leading by example, demonstrate what good/future good looks like

Economy Group – key points:

1. Engagement is key – need to do more in terms of political, business and community engagement; listening, understanding, updating.

2. This informs behaviour change and communication (collective – communities and businesses); consistent 'green is good' messages – wake people up.

3. Adapting, collaborating and measuring – being brave in the creation of new spaces, homes, district heating, masterplans; creating business cases for change; ensuring learning and action isn't carried out in isolation but is joined up between urban areas and across regional boundaries (e.g. Bristol green capital, Welsh Government, Cheltenham and Gloucester).

Workshop 3

Purpose: To work up in more detail the preferred option with deliverable recommendations for transport and economy in Central Severn Vale.

Transport Group – key points:

1. There is a clear need to make a very bold statement, moving away from designing around cars, for example 'we are not going to invest in infrastructure for single occupancy journeys by car' presenting alternatives and why we are investing in them; capture and retain the impact of Covid-19, and use digitalisation and data to understand it and delve into the why.

2. Larger businesses are important but there are very many SMEs which are different in how they engage with travel, and this is clearly influenced by the quality of broadband communication at home and at work in order to reduce the need to travel and embed the ability to work remotely. This will enable the development of secondary industries around delivering products/services locally – cleaning, food delivery and supply, services 'at home'.

3. Infrastructure decisions can be used to make the bold statements, quick wins demonstrate the art of the possible; trial things – it's okay to fail as long as lessons are learnt. 2030 is not that far away, so letting contracts etc won't be enough to meet (as time goes by) targets.

Economy Group – key points:

1. Recognising the good work GCC has done in bringing people together around climate change, there is a need to demonstrate best practice and the art of the possible building on good examples in places like North Devon and Southend. The county must rejuvenate the conversation and build new structures to drive this forward, with specific commitments that people and businesses can sign up to (which provides measurement), and potentially extend beyond the county border.

2. Updating plans, policies, strategies and capital delivery programmes, but not so that people are off the hook on the need to make and drive commitments. There are plenty of ways of driving this, especially through planning and procurement, and there is a clear need to maintain the pace and emergency nature of what's necessary. Decisions that need to be made must be made obvious, and communicated clearly – the County Council has to be really strong on this, with genuine leadership through setting and making itself an example.

3. Creating new places has two key components:

   - *Updating capital and master plans, looking through an updated lens post-Covid-19, with young people taking more accountability as they will be living with changes and/ or consequences much longer than middle-age/older members of the public including senior managers and councillors*

   - *Whilst recognising there are many reasons why this is difficult e.g. planning changes. Nevertheless, it is important to bring all the parties together – landowners, developers, employers, customers – in a room and get them to agree how to do things for the benefit of Gloucestershire.*

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Places that are created and shaped in Central Severn Vale will drive the transition to a net zero carbon economy, but these cannot be delivered in isolation. Collaboration is key. The cohort made general recommendations in four key areas and some specific recommendations for economy and transport.

Engagement

To tackle carbon reduction in the growing sectors of transport and the economy in Central Severn Vale by 2030, the local authorities both play a central role not only in delivering action on aspects within their control, but also in bringing together the key stakeholders required to deliver the changes necessary across society and the economy.

Stakeholder and influencer mapping should be updated and 'everyone in the room' will need to sign up to individual and collective actions, checking performance against agreed KPIs.

Engaging through and beyond existing political or artificial regional boundaries will encourage more joined up ownership of problems and solutions, especially larger infrastructure conundrums and where cause and/or effect, outcomes and benefits bridge between places. Equally, learning from, sharing and adopting good practice will improve dramatically, along with a much clearer picture of the shared responsibility and speed of learning, adaptation and adoption.

Communication

Organisations will need to be brave in making decisions, and this requires the urgency, ambition and opportunity to be clearly communicated through continuous engagement of key audiences, partners and advocates.

Updating and summarising strategic and critical path documents will help to clearly set out priorities, opportunities and objectives, which can be used to engage and communicate the direction of travel over the short, medium and long term and setting out KPIs.

Implementation

Making, creating and/or adapting places to become more human centred is a critical area of work, an opportunity to lead and to demonstrate what good looks like. There have been mixed reactions to some of the short-term active travel measures implemented by local authorities, however these sorts of schemes are a great way of testing, engaging and consulting local communities and other key stakeholders.

Organisations will need to be brave in accepting that it is possible to learn from experience – and failure – and decision makers in particular will need to adjust their attitude towards learning and committing funding/matching and supporting the actions of partners and key stakeholders.

New developments offer an opportunity to test, explain and signal the scale and nature of changes required, particularly those where the public sector is a partner, investor or otherwise has 'flesh in the game' – such as land ownership. Existing clauses in contracts with suppliers and partners which offer the potential for research and development or innovation, should be used positively and proactively.

Measurement

Adopt a matrix approach to measurement. Each set of measures both tells a story and tracks changes, success and learning, and ensuring these measures are adopted and co-owned by partners and local stakeholders is essential.

- *Deliverables – e.g. projects implemented, policies adopted, schemes completed etc*

- *Quantitative – e.g. tonnes of carbon, observation such as journeys by car/bike etc*

- *Sentiment – e.g. public attitudes, uptake of new offers/practice, issue recognition etc*

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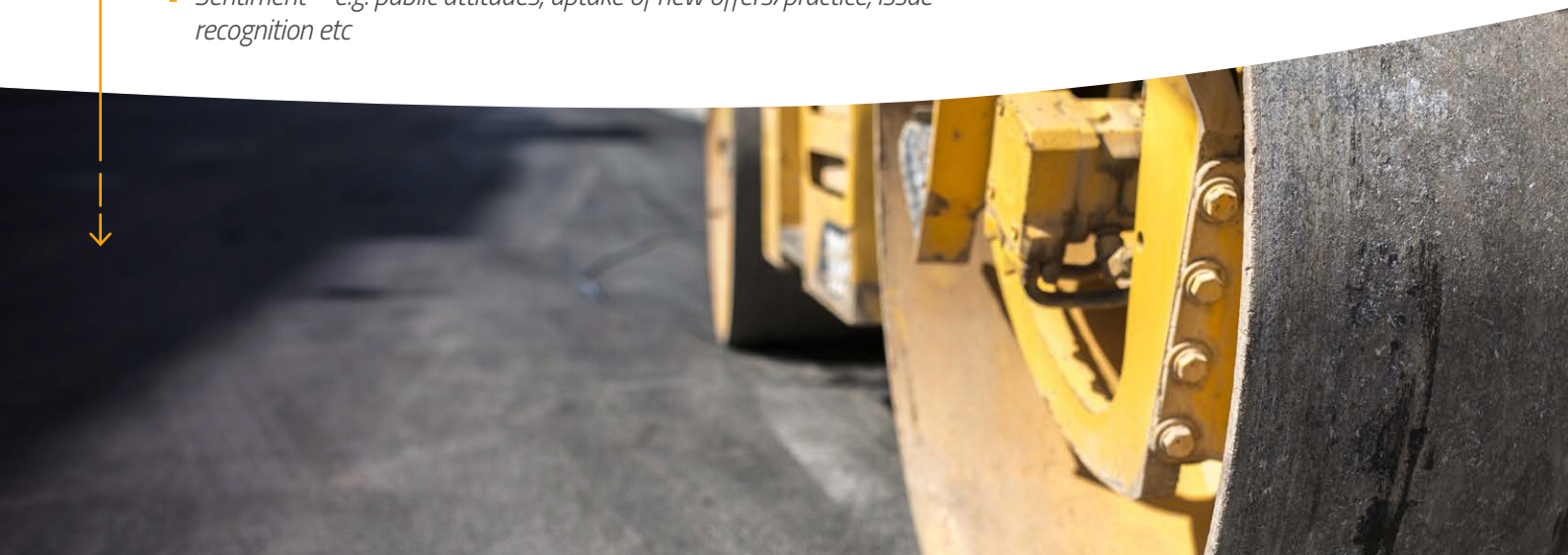
Economy

Promote best carbon reduction practice in business around the art of the possible. The Council to stimulate and drive the pace by bringing citizens, businesses and politicians together in a rejuvenation conversation leading to sustainable and committed business leadership governance with specific commitments and actions. Links to extend beyond the Central Severn Vale and Gloucestershire borders if need be.

Update all plans, policies and programmes linked to economic growth and build in carbon policies, objectives and targets as necessary. GCC to look at the carbon impact of their planning and procurement 'downstream activity', with boosted 'gateways' to ensure activity is climate friendly.

When creating new places for economic and housing growth, look at these places through the eyes of the community and the youth. Bring all parties together (developers, landowners, consumers, planners) to co-design at 'eye level'.

Transport

Make bold statements. Do not invest in any infrastructure for the sole use of the car.

Build on the change in travel patterns and active travel growth during Covid-19. Be clear about why the change happened and what needs to happen to sustain the shift in future.

Talk to business and their employees about the compelling reason to reduce the need to travel, either completely, or by car. Engage with businesses at both corporate and SME levels.

Adopt a trial and error approach to the solutions to what works and what doesn't.

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