



Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>CABINET – 10 MARCH 2025</b>
Subject	<b>ADOPTION OF REFRESHED GREEN ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY 2025-29</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Tristan Wilkinson Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment Email: <a href="mailto:tristan.wilkinson@cotswold.gov.uk">tristan.wilkinson@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Joseph Walker, Head of Economic Development and Communities Email: <a href="mailto:Joseph.Walker@Cotswold.gov.uk">Joseph.Walker@Cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Paul James, Economic Development Lead Email: <a href="mailto:Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk">Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To update Cabinet on the results of the consultation on the refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy and to propose adoption of the strategy following minor amendments.
Annexes	Annex A – Green Economic Growth Strategy consultation draft. Annex B – List of proposed amendments.
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the results of the consultation on the Green Economic Growth Strategy 2025-29.</li><li>2. Agree to adopt the strategy subject to the changes set out in Section 4 of the report.</li><li>3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Environment, to make final amendments to the strategy before publication.</li></ol>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting the Economy</li></ul>



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Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Consultation has taken place through the Cotswold Economic Advisory Group, through an event for stakeholders held at Cirencester Growth Hub and through an open survey publicised on social media and via a press release.



## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**1.1** Cabinet approved a draft of a refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy for consultation in October 2024. Since then, consultation has taken place in a variety of ways as set out in section 3 of the report. The response to the consultation was limited, perhaps unsurprisingly given the non-contentious nature of it, but a number of constructive comments have been received as set out in section 4. It is recommended that Cabinet agree to adopt the strategy, subject to these minor changes, and delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Environment to make final amendments to the strategy before it is published.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

**2.1** At its meeting in October 2024, Cabinet approved the draft of a refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy for consultation. The document is, in many ways, a continuation of the Council's Green Economic Growth Strategy adopted in December 2020 for a four-year period but updated to take account of the current economic and political context.

**2.2** The strategy acknowledged that a great deal has changed in the context of economic policy since 2020 with the effect of the Covid pandemic and the resulting changes in behavioural patterns, the impact of Brexit becoming clearer, the onset of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the election of a new government being just a few examples. The refreshed strategy maintains the objective of low environmental impact, high value jobs being created to provide career opportunities for young people.

**2.3** The identification of key growth sectors in agricultural sustainability, cyber/digital and net zero high growth industries is largely a continuation of the 2020 strategy, albeit with some nuanced changes. The strategy also recognises the continued importance of town centres, transport and infrastructure, the visitor economy and business support, with a higher profile for workforce-related issues given the challenges that have been faced since the Covid pandemic.

## **3. CONSULTATION**

**3.1** Consultation on the strategy has taken place in a number of different ways. The Cotswold Economic Advisory Group, which is made up of key stakeholders in the



local economy, has been involved throughout its evolution. The refreshed strategy was developed to take account of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy, which was adopted by the County Council in May 2024 and on which considerable consultation was undertaken. An event was held jointly with Gloucestershire County Council, who were undertaking early-stage consultation on a Local Growth Plan for the county, on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at Cirencester Growth Hub and attended by around 20 key stakeholders.

- 3.2** A short survey was developed and added to the Council's website and promoted via social media and a press release. There was limited response, with only six surveys completed, which is perhaps not surprising given that the strategy is largely a continuation of the 2020-2024 strategy and consultation took place in other ways, both on the refreshed document and the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy.

#### **4. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND PROPOSED CHANGES**

- 4.1** As mentioned above, the response to the online survey was limited, but of those who responded, 50% agreed with the vision in the strategy (with 17% disagreeing and 33% being unsure), 67% agreed with SWOT analysis in the document (with the remaining 33% being unsure) and 66% agreed with the proposed actions (with 17% disagreeing and 17% unsure).
- 4.2** Of the individual comments made, several wanted the strategy to express support for the Together Gloucestershire project, which aims to keep spend from large organisations within the county. The Council has been supporting this project, which was initiated by the Cirencester and Cheltenham Chambers of Commerce, since its inception, so it is proposed that this is added to the list of actions. Respondents recognised that the matters under the Council's direct control were limited and relied upon influencing external partners. The importance of culture was recognised, as was the need for more housing to reverse the decline of the working-age population. One respondent suggested the creation of Municipal Bonds to give local people a stake in their area. In 2022, the Council successfully launched the Cotswold Climate Investment to finance green initiatives. Undertaking this on a wider basis would be a major undertaking and is not recommended at this stage, but the Council will continue to keep under review how local people can feel a greater sense of ownership of the local economy.



- 4.3** At the Cabinet meeting in October when the draft strategy was approved for consultation, Cabinet Members made a number of comments. These were largely supportive of the strategy, but also asked for the need for more young people to be encouraged to enter trades to be considered. This has become particularly relevant recently with the Government's ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes. It is proposed that the Council works with local colleges and training providers on this issue. It is proposed that this is added to the actions in the strategy document
- 4.4** In addition to the above responses, an email representation was received from a resident prior to the consultation commencing asking for the strategy to acknowledge the role that housing growth plays in the local economy and requesting a link is made between the Green Economic Growth Strategy and the review of the Council's Local Plan. It is recommended that the text of the strategy is amended to reflect this, but it is not necessary to duplicate the detail that will be set out in the Local Plan review.
- 4.5** The Local Growth Plan event identified a number of priorities, including transport and connectivity, the visitor economy, planning and housing, business growth, education and skills and making use of natural assets. We judge these to be consistent with the strategy as written and do not propose making any amendments as a result.
- 4.6** Finally, whilst the document is entitled a 'Green Economic *Growth* Strategy' it is acknowledged, for businesses in some sectors in particular, that survival rather than growth is a more realistic ambition in the short-term and there needs to be a focus on business resilience. It is suggested that the text is changed in the 'What has changed?' section on P2 of the strategy is amended to reflect this.

## **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1** The Council could choose not to adopt a new Green Economic Growth Strategy and rely entirely on the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy. This is not recommended as the county strategy does not address district-level issues, including bringing forward specific sites for development.
- 5.2** The Council could choose to rely on the existing strategy. This is not recommended as the economic context has changed considerably since the existing strategy was adopted in 2020.



## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

**6.1** The response to the consultation on the refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy has been largely supportive of the strategy's objectives and the measures proposed to deliver them. There are a number of minor amendments to make to the strategy document as a result of representations received and it is recommended that authority is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Environment to make the final changes before the strategy is published.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** All activities in the strategy will be funded from existing budgets. There are no other financial implications.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**8.1** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**9.1** Not having a current economic strategy in place could lead to business not having the clarity and confidence needed to make investment decisions. In addition, it could make it more difficult to secure government and other external funding. There is also a reputational risk to the Council of not having a current strategy in place.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**10.1** The Green Economic Growth Strategy seeks to deliver inclusive growth which benefits all people within the Cotswold District.

## **11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

**11.1** Business has a significant role to play in the journey to net zero and this strategy sets out how the Council and its partners will support businesses in the transition. Measures to combat climate change represent an opportunity for business and the environmental technology sector is seen as a potential high growth sector for the district.



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## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**12.1** None.

(END)