
RUSPIDGE & SOUDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING held on Tuesday 14th April 2026.

(These minutes remain in draft form until approved at the next meeting of the Council)

Parish Councillors Present:

Cllrs. Tony Matthews, Norman Snell, Denis Bagwell-Johnson, Nicky Packer, Priya Shukla.

County Councillors Present:

None Present.

District Councillors Present:

None Present.

Parish Council Clerk – Roland Dowding.

Apologies:

Cllr. William Acland Chairman, Helen Medcraft, Paul Firth, Bernie O’Neill, Andy Moore, Beki Hoyland, Ray Donaghue, Richard Burton.

Standing Declarations of Interest

- a) Ruspidge Memorial Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Denis Bagwell-Johnston.
- b) St Whites School - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. William Acland.
- c) Soudley Village Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Norman Snell.

Public Present: Nigel Salter, Tony Smith, Rob Stubbs.

- 4.1. **Apologies** received and recorded from absent members.
- 4.2. No declaration of prejudicial interest was declared by members present.
- 4.3. **Minutes** - The minutes of the council meeting held on the **10th of March, 2026** were **ACCEPTED** as a true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Acting Chairman, Cllr. Tony Matthews.
- 4.4. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- 4.5. **District Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.
- 4.6. **County Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.
- 4.7. **Planning** – The completed schedule for **April** is attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.
- 4.8. Following a report by the Honorary Treasurer, Cllr. Norman Snell the council **APPROVED** the accounts presented for **April**, payment totalling **£4,741.53**. These figures are inclusive of confidential expenditure. A financial report is included for April in the appendix to these minutes.

- 4.9. **White Horse Inn Soudley – Nomination request for Community Asset.** Mr. Nigel Salter, of Soudley made a short presentation, noting 35 Soudley residents had put their names forward in support of the White Horse Inn being Nominated as a Community Asset. Mr. Salter requested the Parish Council support the bid and lead on said bid. The members present voted unanimously in favour of this action and instructed the Clerk. Mr. Dowding to attend to the nomination submission with the support of Mr. Salter.
- 4.10. **FoDDC. Nature & Climate Emergency Strategy – Town & Parish Consultation.** The members present elected to complete the first two sections of the consultation. Strategy Principles, responding ‘agree’ to this section, with NO comments. Strategy Targets, responding ‘agree’ to this section, with NO comments.
- 4.11. **Atlas Tower Group – Mobile Phone Mast.** Cllr. Nicky Packer informed the members present she had been in discussion with the Atlas Tower Group regarding an enquiry to Council initially directed to the Chairman, Cllr. Acland. Atlas Tower Group have expressed an interest in securing Parish Council support to site a mobile phone mast in the village of Ruspidge. After deliberating the subject, the members present concluded they could not at this time give support without first being provided with a suitable location within the village and attending to public consultation should a suitable location be found. Cllr. Packer will draft a response to Atlas Tower Group, submitting it to the members for approval prior to submission.
- 4.12. **Correspondence** - The council **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the following correspondence:
 - **FoDDC** Nature & Climate Emergency Strategy – Town & Parish Response Pack.
No concerns regarding receipt of emails by the members were recorded.
- 4.13. **Presentation to Council By Mr. Steve Grindle.** Mr. Grindle updated the members present regarding development plans around Sneyd Wood/St Whites Farm Ruspidge. Mr. Grindle is still garnering support for some of the proposed development which include a full-size BMX track, a Nursing home and an Aldi store. Mr. Grindle proposed to keep the members updated on said proposals. Cllr. Nicky Packer opposed an Aldi store being sited in this area. The Chairman noted, the Council would formally comment on any developments once the Parish Council receives formal request as a planning consultee via Forest of Dean District Council Planning Dept.
- 4.14. **Next Meeting** - the next meeting of the council will be held in the **Ruspidge Memorial Hall at 7.00 p.m. Tuesday, 12th May 2026.** This will be the Annual Parish Meeting, followed by a full Council meeting. The agenda deadline for the full council meeting is **Monday, 4th of May 2026.**
- 4.15. **Exclusion of the Press and the Public** - The council **RESOLVED** that for any remaining business of a confidential nature, the press and the public should be excluded from the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 10.xi (2020).

The meeting closed at 8:45 p.m.

Signed:.....Chairman.

Dated:.....

APPENDIX

FINANCIAL REPORT for the meeting in: April 2026					
1. Reconciliation of Account as at: end March 2026					
Ledger		£		Bank	£
Balance b/f		112,867.51		(Com Acc) Lloyds Current A/c.	2,119.30
Intrest Lloyds		16.63		(Com Instant) Lloyds Inst. Access A/c.	35,664.12
Intrest Unity Trust		330.89		Unity Current A/c	906.00
Module IT		115.20		Unity Inst Access A/c	64,487.96
<i>*On March ledger, payment not taken until 1st April</i>					
Total		113,330.23		Total	103,177.38
Less Expenditure Mar		10,152.85			
Balance		103,177.38		Balance	103,177.38
2. Accounts for Payment					
<i># = Paid in March but on April's ledger.</i>					
Module IT	01 (DD)	19.79	3.30	VOIP & Broadband	
Module IT	02 (DD)	158.50	26.42	IT Support	
EE Ltd	03 (DD)	18.56		Mobile Phone	
Parish Services Ltd	4	19.00		Annual Parish Directory Listings	
Lloyds Bank	05 (SC)	4.25		Bank Service charge	
Soudley Village Hall	7	250.00		Bugle Grant Y2	
St Johns Church	8	250.00		Grass Cutting Grant Y2	
Merlin Waste	9	360.00		Dog Waste Bins	
Ruspidge Memorial Hall	10	18.00		Hall Rental	
FoDDC Rate Demand	12	-		Domestic Rate Demand	
Clear Councils	13	71.03		Insurance Amendment	
Complete Landscapes	14	1,032.00	172.00	Parish Grass Cutting	
Soudley Village Hall	15	25.00		Grounds Maintenance	
Tim Harris	16	480.51		St Clean, Reports, Defibs, Bus Shelters, Cullimore Bridge Checks.	
SJs Book Keeping	17	30.00	5.00	Payroll	
	TOTAL:	2,558.35	177.00		

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

Planning Schedule April, 2026

	<u>Planning Reference</u>	<u>Parish</u>
	<u>Site Address & Detail</u>	<u>Comment</u>
sub	P1361/25/FUL	no obj
	82 Ruspidge Road, Ruspidge, Cinderford, Gloucestershire.	
	Erection of a 3 bedroom chalet bungalow with associated landscaping, parking and works.	
	Demolition of existing garage and outbuilding.	
sub	P0310/26/FUL	no obj
	1 Eastern Way, Ruspidge, Cinderford, Gloucestershire.	
	Erection of a side extension and raising of roof to form a first floor extension along with the demolition and erection of replacement detached garage	
sub	P0381/26/FUL	no obj
	Agricultural Building (Bradley Villa), Lower Soudley, Gloucestershire, GL14 2UD.	
	Conversion of a barn to a single self-build dwellinghouse, alterations to the access and associated works	

April 2026 -County Report

beki.hoyland@gloucestershire.gov.uk

07815660013

Transport

Please continue to use and promote the use of [FixMyStreet](#) to report issues on the roads.

I am now chair of the [Forest of Dean Road Safety Group](#) which brings together highways, fire, police, councillors from parish, town, district and county, Forestry England and others as required. The aim of this meeting is to highlight areas in the whole district that need attention and work done to improve safety. [If there is something you would like to add to this agenda do let me know.](#)

I thought rather than only letting you know about roads I would highlight public transport availability in the Forest. It is still capped at £3 for a single journey on stagecoach busses. With fuel costs increasing it may be worth considering taking the bus.

[About 5 — FoDCAP](#) to download the transport map of the Forest of Dean, including links to all the timetables.

[traveline sw - welcome](#)

[County bus network maps | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

[How to book a journey | Gloucestershire County Council](#) The Robin

Closed Roads

- 9th February to August 2026 Lydney to Whitecroft road is closed for structural maintenance. The no. 23 bus is rerouted as follows: Lydney, Bream, Whitecroft, Parkend, Sling.
- 26th March – 9th April Ruspidge Road for resurfacing. 72 bus is re routed as follows: Blakeney, Newnham, Elton, Littledean Cinderford.
- 13th - 15th April The Ruffitt.
- 5th May -12th June. Corner Road, Pillowell, for wall reconstruction
- 18th to 22nd May from A48 to Awre, Bullo end for drainage works.

County News

[County Council team recognised in national SEND awards](#)

A team at Gloucestershire County Council that supports young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has been shortlisted for a national award.

[Growth Hub network receives funding approval](#)

Gloucestershire's network of Growth Hubs will continue to provide free business support in every district after funding was approved to keep the countywide service open.

[County to begin work on roll out of 20mph speed limits](#)

Gloucestershire County Council is set to begin introducing community-backed 20mph speed limits and other road safety measures as part of a major new road safety programme.

[New countywide bus map launched for Gloucestershire](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has published a new bus map showing all the main bus routes across the county, operated by all the major operators.

[Residents invited to help shape the future of Gloucestershire's public paths and countryside access](#)

Gloucestershire County Council is starting work on an important update to its Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) – the long term strategy that guides how the county looks after and improves its network of public footpaths, bridleways, byways and access routes.

[New climate report shows county emissions fall](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has published its sixth annual Climate Change Report, setting out progress made and strengthening its long-term commitment to tackling climate change.

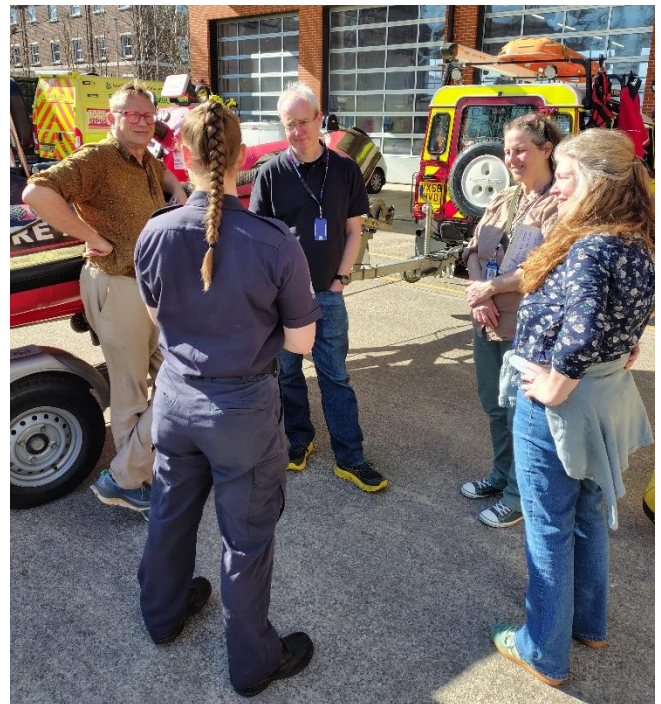
Visit to Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Services (GFRS) SkillZONE

On Wednesday 18th March, County Councillors were invited to visit Gloucester South Community Fire Station to meet staff from the Trading Standards and Coroners and GFRS departments and learn more about the services they provide to the community. Members also had the opportunity to tour SkillZONE, an interactive life skills village which teaches young people how to keep themselves safe at home and in their communities.

GCC Meetings

Full Council

During this month's Full Council meeting, a debate was held in response to the Government's invitation to submit an expression of interest in forming a Foundation Strategic Authority, as part of the Government mandated process of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). A vote was held to seek support for the option of joining the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). The Greens proposed an amendment which would ensure Cabinet took the necessary steps to ensure a fair, reasonable and transparent, including preparing for a judicial review. This was partly accepted, with the detail of preparing for a judicial review rejected by the LDs.



Two motions were also debated. The Greens proposed a motion calling for a Task-and-Finish group to urgently look into opportunities for expanding publicly renewable energy across Gloucestershire. The motion argued that doing so was vital for energy security and reducing carbon emissions while providing financial benefits to local authorities and communities. The LDs refused to grant a Task-and-Finish group for this purpose. However, an amended version of the motion which instead referred the matter to Climate Leadership Gloucestershire was passed. The full text of the original motion can be viewed [here](#).

The second motion was proposed by the Conservative Group and called on Cabinet to strengthen support for Gloucestershire's farmers and rural communities by prioritising local procurement and produce and enhancing Public Health efforts to address rural mental health. The full text can also be viewed [here](#).

A full recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Cabinet

This month's GCC meeting of the Cabinet took the following decisions related to LGR:

- Approved the strategic case for joining the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) as Gloucestershire's preferred option in response to the Government's invitation to submit an expression of interest in forming a foundation strategic authority.
- Approved the establishment of a joint programme with Gloucestershire's District Councils to deliver Local Government Reorganisation across Gloucestershire.

They also approved the following reports:

- Approved the Council Strategy Action Plan to deliver the priorities set out in the Council Strategy.
- Approved the County Council's Commercial Strategy.
- Approved the annual update of the Council's progress with its Gloucestershire Climate Change Report and recommendations on net zero commitments.

In addition, Cabinet took the following decisions:

- Confirmed the implementation of the Safer Roads and Sustainable Transport and Strategic Highways Public Health, Community 20s programme.
- Approved the allocation of Local Authority Bus Grant funding—awarded by the Department for Transport (DfT)—for use in the Sustainable Transport and Strategic Highways period 2026-2030 and also to re-procure existing bus services and home to school transport services when those contracts expire between April 2026 and 31 August 2027.
- Noted the Council's Performance and Risk Monitoring Report.
- Approved the delegation of authority to procure services for the supply of social care and health community equipment.
- Approved GCC accepting the use of the Best Start Family Hubs grant during the period 2026–2029 and delivering the programme.
- Approved taking receipt of and delegating authority for the Crisis and Resilience Fund grant provided by the Department of Work and Pensions for the purpose of the funding as described in this report for the period 2026–2029.



FIGURE 1: IAN CAMERON PRESENTING GREEN MOTION

- Approved recommissioning and procuring a contract for the supply of Children and Young Adult Carers Support Services.

A recording of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

Also held this month were meetings of the Appointments Committee, Adult, Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee, Environment Scrutiny Committee, Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee, Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Planning Committee, Police and Crime Panel, Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee, and Commons and Rights of Way Committee.


Full recordings can be found [here](#).

Community climate change fund - applications now OPEN for 2026

Following the Green Group's amendment at last month's budget, the fourth round of the [community climate change fund](#) is now live.

[The fund has previously granted up to £150,000 since January 2024, supporting 35 projects across the county](#), including installing bike shelters to encourage cycling, LED lights, energy saving measures for vulnerable people in homes, composting and growing local produce, repair cafe and bike repair workshops, carbon literacy training and installing solar panels or batteries.

Eligible groups don't have to be climate experts to apply. The fund can be used to support communities who are starting their journey to take action and protect their local environment, increase the health of their local community and help cut costs.

Priority will be given to projects that are able to reduce the most carbon, reach the most people and provide the best value for money. 

Applications will close on 29 April 2026 at 5pm

 Help spread the word! 

Petitions – We delivered a petition with 483 signatures for a crossing in Steam Mills. I am chasing up the next steps from here. This is non political. I am also still working with the Cinderford High St Action Group and will focus on the next petition regarding the speed cushions near the hospital.

Town Centre Regeneration – the centre has been jet washed, the lining (yellow) has been done early at my request, a section of pavement has been tarmacked on the corner of Heywood Rd/High St (I have asked for the slabs taken from here to go to replace broken/missing slabs in the centre). I am paying for some Heritage Stones from the budget that can be placed around Cinderford that will display the history. Catherine, Graham and myself met with Gloucestershire Live to discuss the plans and work being done in the centre so are hoping for some positive coverage when its published!

I have been going out with our fixmystreet volunteer. I am hoping to go out with a new volunteer doing little clean ups – clearing paths, cutting back undergrowth etc. Anyone who wants to volunteer let me know 😊 .

Speedwatch – I am helping coordinate a local speedwatch campaign. We have sessions booked for Sunday the 12th of March for Station St. We have another person (at least one) who has requested to be trained who wishes to do regular sessions on Belle Vue Rd. Could all Councillors who are trained please consider volunteering.

Graham kindly attended panel that looks at the deprivation issues if the Forest along with key stakeholders from GCC, FODDC last month as I could not make it. We are both booked on the next one 11/05. We have also requested the FODDC to look into Brownfield Regeneration Grants for some of the long term derelict sites in Cinderford.

There have been lots of applications for the fund County Councillors can access and many have been approved or are on the way. These include children’s park play furniture, outdoor gym equipment, walking groups, youth clubs, sensory projects and office IT equipment.

I have the third of my regular meetings with Police on May 7th – please pass on to me any issues you wish to bring up. I am invited to the Countywide Community Drugs Partnership in June. This will compliment the work I am trying to do on rural substance misuse support.

A Neighbourhood Watch meeting is booked for the 28th of April. I am now able to pick this up a little more. We are hoping for a good attendance.

I (along with Darren) will be attending the Polcie meeting with Inspector Nick Cook.

The Road Safety Group is on the 29th and I intend to be present.

I am trying to establish a link with 2 different members of the Roma community in the hope they may be able to become informal liaisons with us.

Other constituent work includes highways, planning and policing issues. That includes –

Part of Multi Agency approach to ASB in Rowandene.

Working with the Trading Standards with regards to potential illegal sales in shops.

Getting updates on Forest High School.

Advocating and trying to arrange joint working around Youth ASB and the potential for a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).

Attending public meetings arranged by the Commoners Association to help look at the potential challenges and concerns they are facing with the proposed Biosphere.

Working on flooding issues in Valley Rd and Albion Rd. Work has started in Valley Rd and we are trying to get a survey done on the flood drainage system in Albion Rd/Springfield Drive.

Requested Parking Enforcement to get patrols for persistent dangerous parking outside schools and takeaways.

Other work I have been doing at a GCC level is:

I have come off the planning committee and am now on a new Highways Panel.

Some useful info from GCC below:

LGR - A decision is expected in summer 2026, with elections for the new unitary authority or authorities planned for May 2027. Any new structure will come into effect no earlier than April 2028.

Safer Roads and Community 20s Update

At its meeting on Wednesday 18 March 2026, Gloucestershire County Council Cabinet approved recommendations setting out how locations will be prioritised, communities will be engaged and how decisions will be made as part of the Safer Roads and Community 20s programme, as well as confirming the approach to its delivery.

As part of this decision, the Cabinet also confirmed the first locations to be taken forward for public engagement, which are:

- Cirencester and adjacent areas
- Cheltenham
- Stroud
- Cainscross
- Tewkesbury and adjacent areas
- Cinderford and adjacent areas
- West Dean
- Coleford

It is intended that early engagement on proposals for these locations will be completed during 2026, with the formal Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation process for each area concluded by the end of the 2026/27 financial year (March 2027).

Engagement for Cirencester and adjacent areas will launch on Monday 13 April. Residents will be invited to share their views on proposed speed reductions through an interactive map and survey hosted on the council's *Have Your Say* platform. This online engagement will be supported by events, promotional activity, and direct engagement with local community groups and organisations, helping to ensure everyone has the opportunity to get involved.

Cheltenham will be the second location to move into public engagement. Dates will be confirmed following the Cheltenham Borough Council election.

Further information about the Safer Roads and Community 20s initiative is available on the [cabinet's decision page](#).

Road resurfacing update

We're pleased to share a provisional list of 55 roads scheduled for resurfacing between April and June, during the first quarter of the new financial year. While we aim to complete all schemes as listed, some dates may need to change due to weather conditions, material availability, or other unforeseen factors. When dates are confirmed for each road, they will be added to our [resurfacing webpage](#) — please check this page regularly for updates.

Resurfacing is carried out overnight or during the daytime, in some circumstances with restricted working hours (typically between 9.30am and 3pm) to help minimise disruption to residents, businesses, and road users.

Because resurfacing is highly weather-dependent, schedules may need to change at short notice. Residents are advised to look out for updates on local road signage and follow [Gloucestershire Roads](#) on Facebook or [@GlosRoads](#) on X for the latest information.

The resurfacing programme will continue throughout the year. Additional roads planned for future resurfacing can be viewed on our online [resurfacing map](#).

Please see table of scheduled road resurfacing locations here: [Road resurfacing update March 2026 | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has published a new bus map showing all the main bus routes across the county, operated by all the major operators.

It allows residents and visitors to see, at a glance, where the main bus routes go, where rail stations are located, and how services connect — making it easier to plan journeys.

The map is available to download and print in full colour. It also includes a QR code linking to Traveline (other providers are available), where people can check timetables and view live departure information to track their bus.

The map also shows all areas covered by the innovative on-demand transport service the Robin. The Robin connects rural communities with flexible, reliable, and accessible public transport, offering a lifeline to residents with limited access to timetabled public transport. Robin buses are bookable services, costing a standard £3 fare.

To view the new bus map, please see: [County bus network maps | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

Cllr Roger Whyborn, cabinet member for sustainable transport and road safety at Gloucestershire County Council, said: “One of the biggest barriers for people using the bus is simply knowing where services go and how they link together. This new map tackles that head-on by bringing everything into one clear picture for the whole county.

“It’s about giving people confidence to try the bus, whether they’re travelling locally, connecting with rail, or using our Robin services in rural areas. There’s more to come, such as day tickets which allow people to change buses between bus companies’ routes without having to pay again. And we want to improve connections between bus routes, and with rail.

“This map lays the foundations for further planned improvements, including better ticketing and stronger connections between services, as we continue to make public transport a more practical and appealing choice for everyday journeys.”

ENDS

Issued by – Communications team, Gloucestershire County Council, 01452 427554, communications@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Gloucestershire County Council is exploring all options to secure a sustainable, long-term future for Lydbrook Bridge in the Forest of Dean, ensuring the best possible value for local residents.

Built in 1875, Lydbrook Bridge is an important historic structure. It is currently closed due to safety concerns linked to the temporary scaffolding that provides pedestrian access. The bridge is jointly owned by Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council, and the temporary scaffolding has been in place since 2016.

That scaffolding has now reached the end of its safe working life and needs replacing. Due to the complex and historic nature of the bridge, alongside the need to keep the public safe at height, the cost of installing new scaffolding for a further five years is estimated at an eye watering £600,000. This would only offer a short-term fix, would not address the underlying structural issues, and would not extend the bridge’s lifespan – making it a poor use of public money.

Instead, Gloucestershire County Council is focused on securing a long-term, sustainable solution that will protect the bridge and allow it to be safely used for many years to come.

For safety reasons, the bridge will need to remain closed until further notice. The existing scaffolding will be removed to prevent the risk of falling scaffold debris and to protect river users below while the bridge is closed.

The council is working hard with partners to secure the funding needed to deliver a permanent solution that balances safety, heritage and value for money.

Initial plans would be to retain the current structure into the future. However, a new bridge is an option that may be considered to provide a more sustainable structure in keeping with the surrounding area.

Cllr Joe Harris, Cabinet Member for Highways at Gloucestershire County Council, said “We understand the frustration of the community with the Lydbrook Bridge closure and we’re sorry for the inconvenience this causes.

“Working closely with Herefordshire Council, we are determined to find a long-term solution that represents good value for residents while protecting this much-loved historic bridge and its setting.

“Safety must always come first, but we are committed to doing everything we can to secure a lasting future for Lydbrook Bridge and will continue to explore all available funding opportunities to make that happen.”

ENDS

Community feedback sought on Nature and Climate Emergency Strategy

Forest of Dean District Council invites residents, businesses and organisations to submit their thoughts on the new Nature and Climate Emergency strategy, with a consultation open until 04 May 2026.

The Forest of Dean Nature and Climate Emergency Strategy represents a significant step in the council's commitment to protecting the Forest's unique landscapes, enhancing biodiversity, and reducing carbon emissions in line with national and regional ambitions.

Alongside the online consultation, residents who wish to discuss the proposals in person can attend any of the four drop-in sessions being held in venues across the district. Further information below:

- 13 April - Forest of Dean District Council Office, High St, Coleford GL16 8HG
- 15 April - Cinderford Town Council Offices, 6 Belle Vue Rd, Cinderford GL14 2AB
- 20 April - Lydney Youth & Community Centre, Naas Ln, Lydney GL15 5AT
- 21 April - Newent Community Pavilion, Newent GL18 1QA

All sessions are 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

The consultation is open until 04 May 2026. More information, along with the consultation survey can be found on the Council's website: <https://fdean.gov.uk/natureandclimateconsultation2026/>

LIFT helps Forest of Dean District Council secure over £219,000 in financial support for local residents

Forest of Dean District Council has delivered more than £219,400 in annual financial support to residents and helped 2,575 people improve their financial resilience for the future, thanks to the council's targeted use of the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) analytics platform.

Over a nine-month period, council officers used LIFT – an advanced data tool developed by Policy in Practice - to identify residents missing out on financial support and to run 18 targeted campaigns aimed at increasing benefit take-up, reducing debt and supporting households with the rising cost of living.

For more information on the Council's support services, visit: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/>