

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Environment Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	5th February 2026 7.00 pm	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Cllr Suzy Firkin – Environment Committee Chair		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	12 Peak Cluster Projects – Environmental Impact Assessment and Consultation Response		
Background	<p>The UK’s cement and lime industry concentrated in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, produces about 40% of the nation’s cement supply. However, the manufacturing process releases significant amounts of carbon dioxide.</p> <p>To tackle this challenge, four leading cement and lime producers have joined together to deliver Peak Cluster. Using proven carbon capture technology, the project will capture CO₂ at source, compress it and transport is via a new pipeline to the coast and beyond to safe, permanent storage in the depleted Morecombe gas caverns.</p> <p>The project is a National Strategic Infrastructure Project and so does not go through the standard planning process. It must be granted consent for construction and operation by DESNZ. Peak Cluster therefore are required to submit a type of planning application called a Development Consent Order to the Planning Inspectorate who will then make their recommendation to DESNZ.</p> <p>A key requirement of this process is for extensive consultation with national and local stakeholders. Cheshire East, ourselves and most of our surrounding parishes are consultees.</p> <p>The proposed route for the pipeline has now been published, and it affects Congleton in as much as it passes through Timbersbrook and Key Green alongside the edge of The Cloud. It will also go under many of our main highways (Manchester, Macclesfield and Buxton Roads).</p> <p>To lay the 22.5cm (9-inch pipeline), a construction corridor of approx. 30m is required. This will be fenced and allow safe access and construction to dig the necessary trench. The trench itself will only be open for a couple of weeks, but the construction corridor will be present for about 6 months on each stretch of the pipeline. It will be like having a temporary access road but one that goes through an area of open countryside and will be visible from our most famous viewpoint The Cloud.</p> <p>Once complete, and re-naturalised, little will be visible and there is the opportunity for new tree planting and habitat improvement along the route to mitigate for any disturbance.</p> <p>The nearest Above Ground Installations (AGI) will be in the Gawsworth and Cranage areas, so outside our boundary. These are basically monitoring and inspection stations at junctions of the various pipelines.</p> <p>As a consultee, we are currently being asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To comment on the Scoping Document for the Environmental Impact Assessment that will be a key component of the submission to the Planning Inspectorate. This response it required by 11th Feb. The document is extensive (557 pages) and to the untrained eye appears impressive and comprehensive. If 		

	<p>we do not respond they will assume we have ‘no comment’ or we can formally respond ‘no comment’. Alternatively, I have identified that there is no allowance for hyper-local consultation at particularly sensitive areas. The nearest face to face meeting being in Middlewich. Given The Cloud is acknowledged as a key viewpoint from which the pipeline’s impact is to be assessed, we could request the need for a Timbersbrook forum/meeting to ensure the impact of the project on the relevant section is minimised.</p> <p>2. Respond to the full Phase 1 Consultation. This response is required by 27th February. This is where we can make detailed comments on the pipeline route, local disruption and impact on highways and communities. We can submit a response as a council or as individual councillors. The feedback forms or online portal allow for either. We only need to respond to the section of the route that most impacts Congleton – this being Section 4, Holcim Caudon capture facility to the Central Feeder AGI.</p>
Environmental	The Peak Cluster Project is a decarbonisation project to reduce the carbon footprint and pollution generated by the Peak District-based cement industry. During the construction phase, there will be a visible environmental impact on some of our surrounding countryside but once the pipeline is complete and buried there will be little long-term damage and there will be an opportunity for BNG in some areas.
Equality	Securing the future of the cement industry guarantees the provision of jobs both at the cement works affected and on the pipeline work required. These jobs are important, manufacturing and construction-based employment that are accessible across a wide range of socio-economic groups within Congleton and the surrounding area. As an NSIP, equality, inclusion and social value will be closely monitored.
Financial	No financial impact for the Town Council beyond dissemination of information to councillors and residents.
Decision Requested	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To decide upon the Council’s response to the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Document. Option 1: No Comment. Option 2: Submit a comment that calls for a specific local consultation opportunity for Timbersbrook. 2. To decide on the Council’s response to the Phase 1 Consultation. Option 1: Council response agreed by Planning Committee to Section 4 of the Consultation Feedback document. Option 2: Councillors to make individual submissions to the Consultation.