

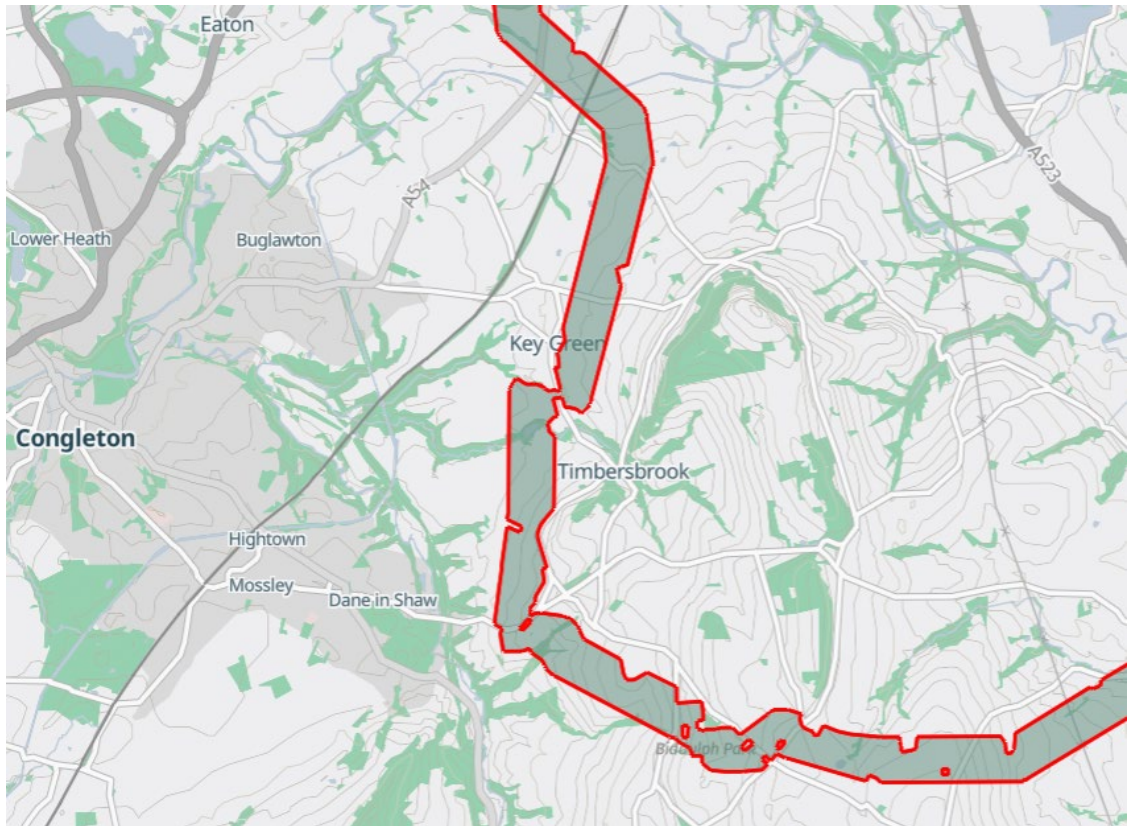
**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>	
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> February 2026 7.00 pm</b>	<b>LOCATION</b> <b>Congleton Town Hall</b>
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	<b>Cllr Suzy Firkin – (Environment Committee Chair) Cathy Dean, Communities Manager</b>	
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>9 Peak Cluster Projects – Consultation Response</b>	
<b>Background</b>	<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 24-36 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 renaturalised, 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.</p> <p>As a consultee we are currently being asked <b>To comment on the Scoping Document for the Environmental Impact Assessment</b>, a paper went to the Environment committee in the 6<sup>th</sup> Feb who agreed to submit the following comment by the 11<sup>th</sup> February:</p>	

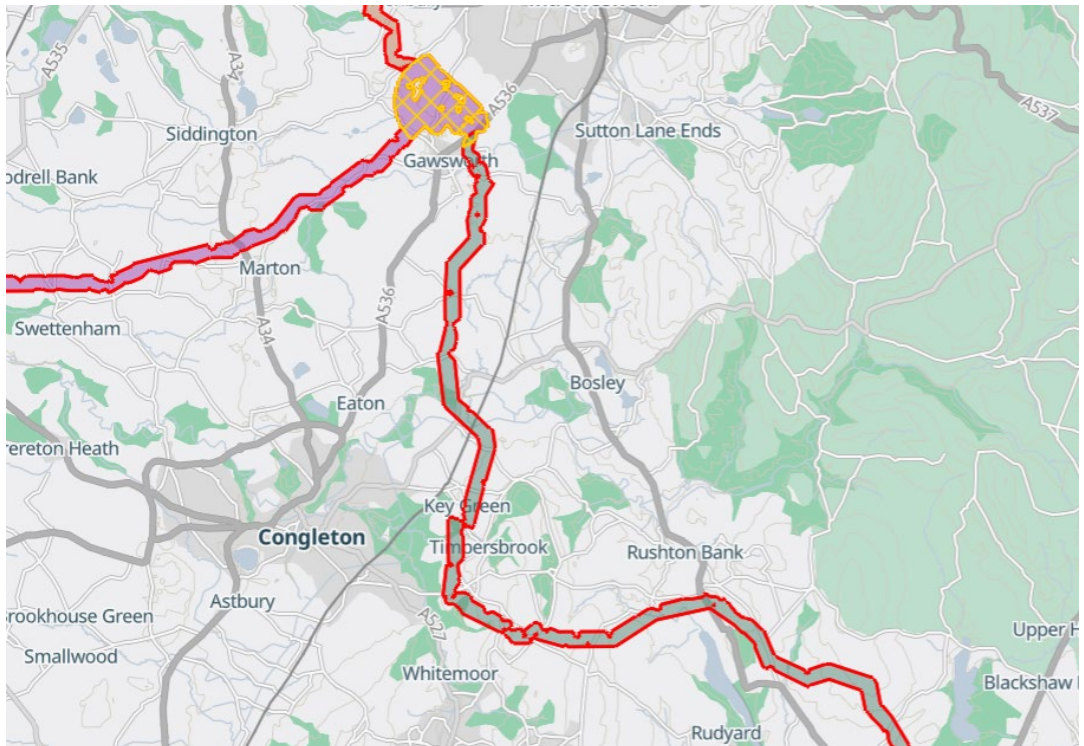
**ENV/33/2526 resolved to** submit a comment that calls for a specific local consultation opportunity for Timbersbrook by 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

**ENV/34 /2526 resolved to** submit a response agreed by the Planning Committee and encourage councillors to make individual submissions to the consultation

The purpose of this paper is to agree Congleton Town Council's response to the Phase 1 Consultation.



Wider context:



**Local Concerns:**

While Peak Cluster documentation refers to “temporary” disturbance, the Council notes that:

- Construction corridors of up to 30 metres wide represent a substantial intervention in a semi-rural landscape.
- Timbersbrook contains established habitats, including hedgerows, mature trees, grassland, watercourses, and associated wildlife, which cannot be quickly or fully recreated once disturbed.
- Soil structure, hydrology, and ecological connectivity may be altered for many years, even if surface features are reinstated.
- Whether any claimed Bio diversity Net Gain will be delivered within or adjacent to the Timbersbrook area, rather than offset at distant sites.
- How “net gain” will account for the loss of mature habitats, which cannot be replaced on a like-for-like basis in the short or medium term.
- Public funding contributes to early development and risk reduction, yet local communities do not share proportionately in the economic benefits claimed. Is there a model/mechanism by which investment into the local community is required for those most impacted, in a similar way to S106 monies?

**Suggested Congleton Town Council Response:**

Congleton Town Council supports, in principle, projects that contribute to meaningful and measurable reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and the transition to a low-carbon economy.

However, any infrastructure associated with such objectives must comply fully with national planning policy and environmental legislation, particularly where it affects sensitive rural and Green Belt locations such as Timbersbrook.

Any route affecting Green Belt land must clearly demonstrate that impacts are minimised and that no reasonable alternatives exist.

The project must deliver at least a 10% measurable biodiversity net gain. We seek clarity on:

- How is temporary habitat loss during construction accounted for?
- Where net gain will be delivered, will this be local to Timbersbrook?
- How will long-term monitoring and enforcement be secured?

The Timbersbrook area contains hedgerows, woodland and watercourses which may support protected species. Congleton Town Council has commented on the scoping document for the Ecological Impact Assessment.

**Key Concerns for the Timbersbrook Section**

- Potential impact on Green Belt openness and rural landscape character.
- Disturbance of established hedgerows, soils, watercourses and associated habitats during trenching operations (corridors reportedly ~30m wide).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty regarding the effectiveness and enforceability of land restoration and biodiversity enhancement commitments.</li> </ul> <p>In light of the above, Congleton Town Council requests that a dedicated, in-person community consultation event be held locally to ensure that residents have a meaningful opportunity to provide input and concerns. Particular attention should be given to the potential impact on The Cloud vista, which is an important and valued local viewpoint, and where there may be significant visual and environmental disruption during the construction phase.</p> <p>Congleton Town Council would like to see firm commitments to the use of trenchless construction techniques beneath watercourses and ecologically sensitive areas where possible, and require Biodiversity Net Gain delivery within, or directly benefiting, the local area, supported by robust long-term monitoring and compliance arrangements.</p>
<b>Environmental</b>	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 for 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.
<b>Equality</b>	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.
<b>Financial</b>	No financial impact for the Town Council beyond dissemination of information to councillors and residents.
<b>Decision Requested</b>	To decide on the Council's response to the Phase 1 Consultation.