



Gloucestershire Group Newsletter 15 July 2025

Welcome to the summer edition Newsletter which brings you up to date with what's been happening in the Group and at HQ.

Regrettably we have had to change the date of the next meeting from 4 September to the **Thursday 18 September** because of a clash of holiday arrangements. I hope it does not inconvenience you too much and offer my apologies to those who may not be able to attend because of the date change.

The last Group meeting was in June when we welcomed Carolyn Ferguson from Keir Construction, the firm responsible for the major A417 road scheme known locally as the "Air Balloon" project. She emphasised that the project was being done "off line" which means that it is undertaken with the least amount of time that the road has to be closed. She also described the care that is being taken to protect the environment. It is difficult to accept when cuttings are being excavated and embankments built. The spoil from the cutting provides the basis for the embankments so nothing is wasted and additional aggregate not required. Thousands of trees will be planted, a green bridge built for wild life as well as to accommodate the Cotswold Way and other paths. From what I have seen this is what is actually happening. It was a very interesting talk and we had 34 members in attendance. If there is enough interest we will try and arrange a site visit, please let me know if you are interested either by email or at the next meeting on 18 September.

We also had the pleasure of our Regional Representative, Kevin Billson who brought us up to date on the latest business at HQ.

At the meeting the Group approved the nominations of Les Priestley as Chair of the EC, Roisin Lilley as Vice Chair, Richard West and Stuart Tarr as Committee members on EC. Kevin Billson as our Regional representative and Eileen Turner for the SOC (Standing Orders Committee). The Group

also approved a motion on the problem of repayments of the carer's allowance if additional earnings exceed the permitted limit. This can amount to the whole of the carer's allowance being reclaimed when the permitted earnings are exceeded by only £1 per week so instead of £52 being repaid the year's carer allowance of £4,258.80 is re-claimed, a real cliff edge shock. This motion and the EC nominations have been submitted for consideration at the AGM in October.

Maureen Smith attended the Midlands Regional Meeting in June and learned that our Group was not the only one not receiving new members welcome letters from HQ. Kevin will take this up with HQ something we have been doing for some of years. To be fair the website and membership data base has improved.

The latest Group Circular No 972 has just been issued and is available for you to read on the CSPA website www.cspa.co.uk and is in the members area.

It covers a variety of subjects including Certificates of Merit where groups are reminded that they can nominate a postholder who has been in office for at least 10 years. In our group the Chairman has already been awarded a Certificate and last year our Treasurer Ken Lovett received his Certificate from the General Secretary Sally Tsoukaris so we are pretty well up to date.

A motion at last year's AGM was to reintroduce the Newsletter Award but so far there have been no volunteers to go on the judging panel. If anyone would like to be on it please let me know.

On Civil Service Pensions HQ learned that the national Audit Office (NAO) was investigating complaints on MyCSP's services about delayed call answering times, late or non-existent email responses, the late issue of their Remedy 2015 "choice packs" and general slowness in dealing with personal cases. These points were all put to the NAO by the GS, DGS and Pensions and Personal Case Officer, Christine Haswell. In June the NAO published their report "Investigation into the Administration of the Civil Service Pension Scheme" highlighting that Capita had missed 3 significant milestones in the transition to taking on the administration of the Scheme from December 2025. The report also said that the Cabinet Office had withheld £9.6 million in transition payments due to Capita due to their failure to meet agreed deliverables associated with the design and

development phase and user readiness. These milestones have now been achieved but this does not give us much confidence on the future service from December. The CSPA team of the GS, DGS and Personal Case officer are having regular meetings with the Cabinet Office and Capita directly on the transition and future service.

CSPA has been invited to participate on Capita's scheme for member focus groups (see GC 975). Any members interested in participating in these focus groups are asked to submit their names to Head Office. This is probably best done through our Committee, so names to me please.

Carer Poverty Coalition (CPC) response to Welfare Reforms

As part of the CPC, CSPA lobbied very hard against the proposed Welfare cuts proposed by the Government and as a result the Government have made concessions. The CPC campaign has therefore been halted.

Bus Services Bill (No 2) and PAC Inquiry into local bus services

The GS and DGS have been actively supporting the National Federation for the Blind UK's campaign against "floating bus stops". This is where a person and not necessarily a blind person is boarding a bus but has to cross a cycle lane or car lane to get on the bus. At the AGM there was a motion on this at which I spoke on the need for good design which is what has happened but not all the time, in the new cycle path between Cheltenham and Gloucester soon to be extended to Bishops Cleeve and Stroud as the images below show.



Person has to cross cycle path



No need to cross cycle path

NHS Ten Year Plan

The government published its ten year plan for the NHS to get the NHS back on its feet. Basically it is emphasising care at home rather than in hospital. HQ are still considering it and will be commenting in due course but if anyone has ideas or suggestions please let me know.

Our next meeting is on **18 September (change of date)** when we will hear about the good work that the Star Centre at Ullenwood do in helping disabled young people train for appropriate work largely in the hospitality trade. We will also be considering Motions to be debated at the AGM and mandating our Delegate on how they should vote. Our December meeting on 4 December will be a show by the Cheltenham Camera Club so expect some dazzling photography.

Please put these dates in your diary including the change of date from 4 September to **Thursday 18 September**. Looking forward to seeing you at these meetings. As usual they will be held on Thursdays at 10.00 for 10.30 at the Civil Service Club, Tewkesbury Road, Cheltenham GL51 9SL.

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