

Medway Climate Change Action Plan

2025 – 2028

Foreword

A statement from Cllr Maple, Leader of the Council and Cllr Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration

Executive Summary to be incorporated into the Foreword from Vince/Simon

Executive Summary

Climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our time. In recognition of this, Medway Council declared a Climate Emergency in April 2019. The Council committed to reducing our carbon footprint, providing the local community with a clean, green future, and creating a sustainable place where people want to live and work.

To achieve this, the Council developed a climate change action plan for Medway, setting an ambition of net zero emissions by 2050 and increased resilience to climate change. The action plan is a dynamic document, evolving through reviews and updates to reflect progress and learning.

This third iteration of the Climate Change Action plan for Medway covers the period from 2025 to 2028. It provides an overview of Medway's progress in responding to the climate emergency, outlines our future ambitions, and details the actions which are being taken and will undertaken over the coming four years to maintain progress.

New priority areas for action reflect our understanding of the greatest sources of emissions in Medway and our need to develop resilience to the already changing climate and are also informed by the views of our local communities and other stakeholders.

Our ambitions for climate action align with the One Medway Council Plan 2024-2028, and the priority to '*enjoying clean, green, safe and connected communities*'.

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Introduction

The Need for Change

Climate change is the long-term shift in the earth's temperatures and weather patterns. However, human activity since the industrial revolution has driven this change at a much faster pace than would naturally occur. This is because the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas, generates greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions sit in the atmosphere, trapping the sun's heat and therefore increasing the temperatures on earth. This increase in temperature is causing our glaciers to melt and is affecting our weather patterns. This in turn is leading to sea level rise and more frequent and extreme weather events such as heatwaves and storms.

In 2019, the [Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway](#) (CCRIA) was published, looking at the changes Kent might face as a result of climate change and the potential risks to our society, economy and environment. Kent's location in the South-East of England along with its long coastline means that the impacts of climate change are likely to be felt more acutely, with rising summer temperatures and large numbers of properties at risk of flooding.

Global climate data shows that 2024 was officially the hottest year on record, with the past ten years (2015-2024) the ten warmest years on record (ref. United Nations). We are already starting to see and experience the impacts of this in Kent and Medway today. It is therefore crucial to prioritise taking action that will safeguard our communities and protect our environment.

The Wider Benefits of Taking Action

Taking action to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the changing climate will be challenging but it also has the potential to deliver numerous other local benefits,

- ❖ Improved public health and wellbeing
 - ❖ Improved resource quality and security (air, soil, water, food)
 - ❖ Savings on energy bills and a reduction in fuel poverty
- ❖ Reduced congestion
 - ❖ Community cohesion and reduced social isolation
 - ❖ Economic growth and job creation
 - ❖ Nature recovery, supporting biodiversity

Our Progress and Achievements to Date

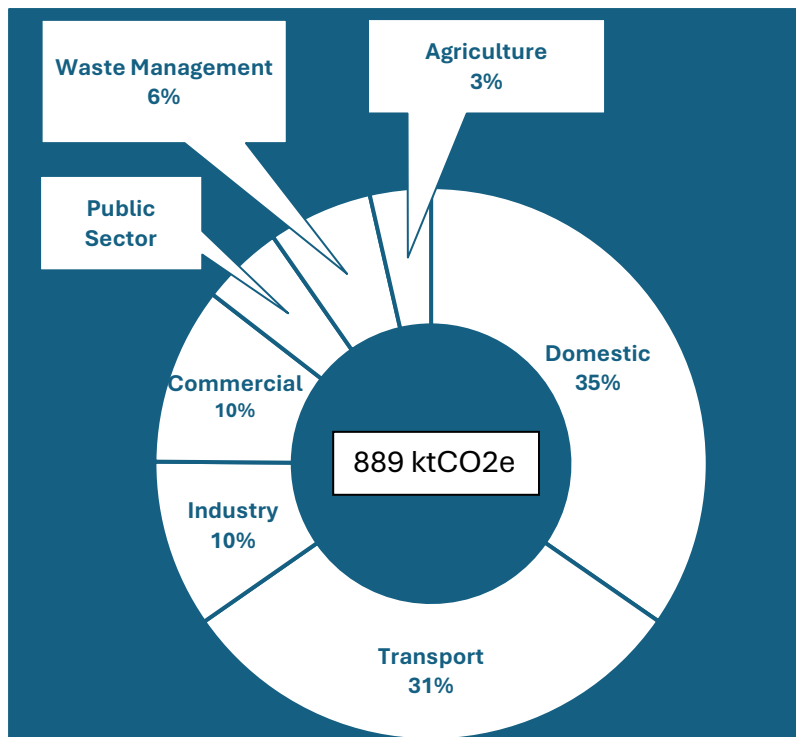
- Medway Council emissions reduced by 31.8% since 2018
- Community Climate Working Group set up
- Over £29,000 awarded to 13 businesses for energy efficiency improvements through the Partners for Green Growth grant and 31 businesses completed a net zero audit
- 15 schools supported to become an Eco-School
- 2 Heat Network Studies completed – supported by almost £400,000 funding from central government
- Invested £11million in LED streetlighting replacement programme. 70% energy reduction, 76.5% carbon saving –
- £1million awarded by central government (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) to improve energy efficiency of 190 council owned homes to EPC C and cut down people’s heating bills
- 78 residents attended 6 home retrofitting information sessions since 2023
- Energy saving measures installed in 229 homes supported by over £2million of central government funding
- Solar Together Kent – Promoted since 2020. 235 solar panels installed, totalling 2343 panels and saving over 200 tonnes of CO2 in their first year
- 2 weekends of free bus travel in 2024 – a 38% increase on bus passenger numbers than expected
- School Streets in place at 7 schools, supported by £486,000 funding from central government
- 5 electric vehicles in council fleet
- Medway’s first electric vehicle event held at Rochester Castle
- 34 publicly accessible electric vehicle charge points installed
- £2.1million awarded to install 140 on street EV charge points
- 26 Medway businesses supported to try an electric vehicle for free in partnership with Kent County Council
- Medway Food Partnership set up to create a Medway food system that is good for people and the planet
- 69 organisations signed up to the water Refill scheme to support a reduction in plastic waste
- Bronze Sustainable Food Places Award achieved
- Monthly Repair Cafés set up across Medway’s libraries and hubs
- Medway’s libraries have collected 12 tonnes of small waste electrical and electronic items for recycling since 2023
- Living roof bus shelter and vertical meadow installed on Intra, Chatham
- Water a Tree scheme set up to encourage our communities to help young trees during dry weather, by giving top up water
- 75 tree whips given to Medway’s residents to plant in their gardens, as part of National Tree Week

Medway Wide Emissions

The Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) produces an annual breakdown of [Greenhouse gas emissions data](#) by local authority area.

The latest data available is for 2022 and shows Medway's emissions as 889 ktCO₂e, a **22% reduction on 2018 emissions**.

Medway Council has a crucial role to play in leading on climate action in Medway through their policies and partnerships, have a strong influence over more than a third of emissions in their area.



Our Progress in Cutting Emissions from the Council's Estate and Operations

Annual emissions reports, for the Council's estate and operations, are published on our climate change web pages here: www.medway.gov.uk/carbonemissionreports

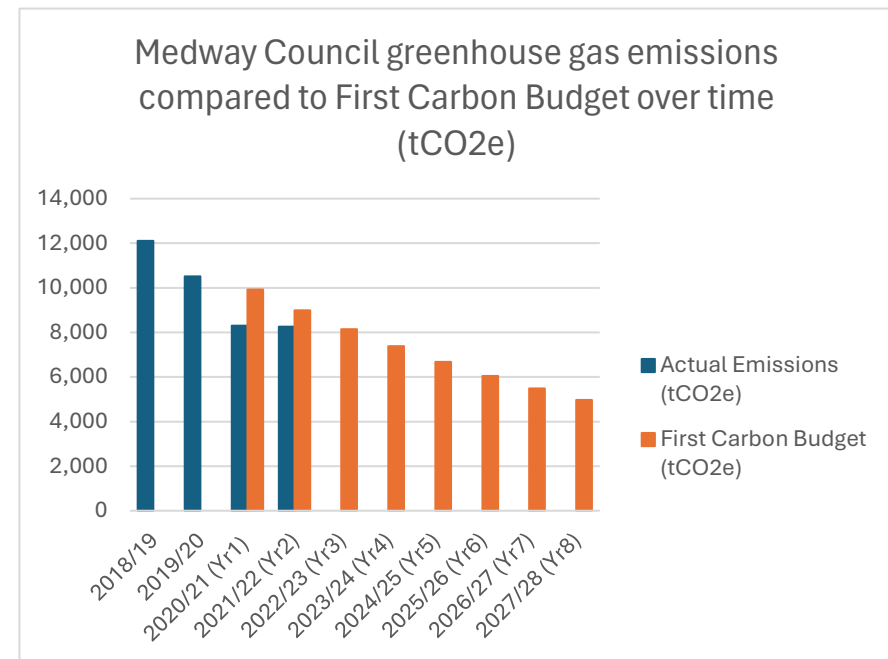
Our carbon footprint includes our use of energy (to power and heat our buildings), our water use, the electricity to power streetlights, the fuel used in our fleet vehicles and emissions from staff travel.

In addition to these emissions, the Council is also responsible for causing emissions from sources it does not directly control. These are called scope 3* emissions and are more difficult to measure.

The Council has a target to reduce its emissions by 95% by 2050 against a baseline year of 2018/19, the remaining 5% being met by carbon offsetting. This is a science-based target approach to reduce emissions at a rate that is in line with keeping global temperature rises below 1.5°C. This means halving emissions every ten years as opposed to reducing emissions by a fixed amount every year. This pathway sets the first carbon budget for 2020-28 as 57,631 tonnes of carbon dioxide emission equivalent (tCO2e) for the Council's estate and operations.

This graph shows the Council's current progress against the first carbon budget and to date, we are on target.

Before the end of the first carbon budget period (2028), we intend to seek an independent review of progress against the pathway and set a new carbon budget (from 2028) and identify further actions to achieve the 2050 target.



Climate Adaptation and Resilience

We are part of the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum and supported the development of the Kent Community Risk Register. This register identifies and assesses the greatest risks to Kent. Many risks identified relate to natural hazards linked climate change. Major coastal and tidal flooding is currently assessed as 'very high risk' with other severe weather events rated as 'high' and 'medium' risk.

Flood and Water Management

Medway is a lead Local Flood Authority and Coastal Protection Authority. We manage local flood risk from surface water, ground water and ordinary watercourses. As a Coastal Protection Authority, we protect the coast from erosion and sea encroachment. Flood defence management, like at Rochester Riverside, is largely carried out through a Kent Framework. These responsibilities are statutory duties reported by the Environment Agency via the Shoreline Management Plan process.

Severe Weather Planning

Medway's emergency planning includes hot and cold weather plans to reduce weather-related health impacts. National guidance is regularly reviewed and services from across the council implement the plan upon a Met Office alert.

Currently weather planning is primarily responsive. We will be seeking to undertake work to assess vulnerability and increase the resilience of our communities to extreme weather. The 2024 Climate Service Report from the Met Office provides climate projections for Medway, which will inform our risk assessments and actions.

2025-2028 Action Plan

This latest version of the Climate Change Action Plan takes into consideration progress achieved to date, feedback, the key issues facing Medway and adhering to current best practice for local authorities.

Our Aims

The 2021 and 2022 Climate Change Action Plans for Medway had a strong focus on achieving net zero through the reduction and elimination of greenhouse gas emissions. However, this is only half of the story. Our climate is already changing, we are starting to experience more frequent and severe weather events, and it is crucial that we adapt to these changes to ensure Medway remains a resilient place to live and work.

This latest version of our action plan therefore has two distinct aims:

1. Reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions to reach net zero
2. Increasing resilience against the impacts of climate change

These aims apply to Medway the Place as well as the Council's estate and operations. It is therefore essential the Council demonstrates strong leadership and collaborates with our communities and partners to drive climate action forward in the coming years and so deliver on our vision for Medway.

Priority Areas

To achieve our action plan aims, we have identified five key themes that will serve as priority areas for action in Medway.

- ❖ Knowledge and Empowerment
- ❖ Clean, Efficient and Equitable Energy
- ❖ Sustainable Travel and Transport
- ❖ Resource Efficiency
- ❖ Green and Resilient Medway

In developing these priorities, the main considerations were the greatest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Medway, the need to make our communities more resilient to the changing climate, and empowering community action for which the Council is a key enabler. These priority areas will guide our efforts and ensure we focus on the most impactful strategies to create a sustainable and resilient Medway.

Actions

The plan is a framework for action. If additional opportunities are identified during the period of the plan, then these may also be implemented where possible.

Each action in the plan will have a different level of impact. Actions which will enable a sustained long term change or delivery of climate action, such as updated planning policies to guide sustainable development or funding awarded to businesses to carry out energy efficiency improvements, are considered to have the potential to be high impact. Actions where the impact on greenhouse gas emissions or resilience is one step removed i.e. reliant on other actors or actions, would be considered medium impact. Actions related to the Council's

carbon reduction initiatives are considered low impact as the Council's emissions are only a small amount of Medway's area wide emissions. This assessment has been based on [Climate Emergency UK's methodology](#) for climate actions scorecards (2025).

In addition, there are several actions arising from earlier versions of the action plan that are considered business as usual and are now embedded in our daily work.

Engagement and Consultation on the 2025 Plan

This action plan has been informed through engagement and consultation, including internally within the Council, public consultations and with input from our working groups.

Public Consultation

During 2024, more than 400 people responded to an online survey and questions in our Citizen's Panel survey about the proposed aims and priorities for the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan.

- 78-80% of respondents agreed with the proposed aims of the plan.
- 79-84% of respondents agreed with the proposed priorities for the plan.

The full survey results can be found at: www.medway.gov.uk/xxxxxx

The Council has also received feedback through the Climate Community Working Group, made up of organisations across Medway including the NHS, Brompton Barracks, Medway's Eco Hubs, Medway Voluntary Action, faith communities and more

Priority 1: Knowledge and Empowerment

Realising the ambition of a net zero and climate resilient Medway will be a collective effort as the actions of everyone who lives and works in Medway contributes to our emissions and overall resilience. Ensuring that everyone in Medway understands what a changing climate means for them, the benefits of taking action, how to take action and where to go for guidance and support is therefore essential to achieving this goal.

To achieve this the Council has a significant leadership role to play in engagement, education and influence. We must seek to embed climate action across all our services, ensuring that all members of Medway's communities are engaged and that we have a good understanding of the differential impacts of climate change on Medway's communities to create a just transition for all.

We will continue to build partnerships and identify funding opportunities for climate action, ensuring these are effectively communicated to stakeholders.

Promoting local climate action and encouraging the sharing of best practice and solutions will also be important responsibilities for the Council.

Our Ambition

Medway Council and local communities understand what causes climate change, how it affects us, and what can be done about it. They are empowered to take steps to lower their carbon footprint and adapt to its effects.

Medway Council plays a leading role in local climate action and works to help create the right conditions for change.

People and organisations across Medway and Kent are working together to tackle climate change and create stronger, more resilient communities.

Our Sub Priorities,

- ❖ Engage Medway communities to build collective knowledge and develop understanding of local solutions to provide a meaningful response to the climate emergency
- ❖ The Council understands its own carbon footprint and vulnerability to climate change and has a pathway to net zero and climate resilience, supporting Council staff to embed effective climate response actions in their work
- ❖ Effective partnership working with stakeholders and strong community collaboration to align good practice

Priority 2: Clean, Efficient and Equitable Energy

This priority seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy used to power Medway's buildings and infrastructure by improving energy efficiency and switching to renewable forms of energy such as solar.

Energy used in our homes is the largest contributor to Medway's greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 35% of the total. Medway is a densely populated area which creates a high energy demand however we could be using energy more efficiently. Many homes are poorly insulated and use a lot of energy in heating. This not only increases greenhouse gas emissions but high energy prices are creating fuel poverty, impacting on health. Non-domestic buildings also need to be considered, from businesses to schools and our public buildings.

There will always be a requirement for energy and so we must also move away from the use of coal and gas towards renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar and ensure a resilient and equitable energy supply.

Challenges faced include our diverse and aging housing stock, the need for significant investment from external funding sources, a potential national skills gap and disruption to residents from home improvements.

The Council must lead by example, ensuring its own housing stock, commercial buildings and operations use energy efficiently and transition to cleaner sources, while also empowering others to do the same. By working in partnership across the authority area, we can address energy challenges and support residents in private and social housing to reduce energy use.

Our Ambition

Buildings and assets/structures use energy more efficiently and need less power to run.

There are local opportunities to produce, use and share renewable energy at affordable costs.

Our Sub Priorities,

- ❖ Energy management plans have been put in place by the Council (across council-owned homes, corporate buildings, council-managed schools and highway assets)
- ❖ Support is offered to Medway residents on measures to reduce energy usage
- ❖ The Council's energy use is powered by renewable energy (corporate buildings, council managed schools, assets and activities).

Priority 3: Sustainable Travel and Transport

Transport is the second largest contributor to Medway's emissions at 31% and affects our air quality. It also accounts for nearly a fifth of the Council's emissions through fleet vehicles and staff business travel. To address this, we need to facilitate a shift to sustainable transport and increase active travel.

This transition is challenging due to several factors specific to Medway. This includes car-centric post-war development, the river separating our road network, existing commuting patterns, travel behaviour and the current public transport offer. The emerging Local Plan aims to improve access and movement around Medway and reduce transport emissions through updated planning policy.

To reduce transport emissions, we aim to increase bus passengers in Medway from 7.7 million by making services accessible to all. We will make our streets safer and healthier to encourage active travel as the preferred choice by expanding cycle lanes and safe walking routes. We'll continue to promote active travel initiatives to our residents and communities, including schools. Digital technology will also help reduce the need to travel and support access to transport services.

We also have a role to increase the number of electric vehicles in use, by providing and promoting fair access to charge points across Medway.

Achieving net zero in this sector requires significant change. Delivering accessible and affordable public transport and active travel options is reliant on major infrastructure, partnerships, funding and national

policy. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will guide our efforts, and our Local Transport Plan (2011-2026), which sets the strategic direction for transport in Medway, will be updated by 2026 to align with Medway's ambitions.

Reducing transport emissions will help achieve the objectives of the Air Quality Action Plan. It will increase community resilience, improve health and wellbeing and benefit the economy by reducing congestion.

Ambitions

Walking, cycling, public and shared transport are the top travel choices for people living, working or visiting Medway.

Medway supports the switch to ultra-low emission vehicles by providing fair access to infrastructure.

Our Sub Priorities

- ❖ Public transport is improved and increased active travel is enabled and supported through infrastructure and usage encouraged through engagement.
- ❖ Traffic/parking management is improved, and road space is reallocated for active travel through spatial/land use planning to reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- ❖ Enable and support the transition to ultra-low emission transport.

Priority 4: Resource Efficiency

This priority area seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting our communities to use resources more sustainably and through reduced waste to landfill.

Using resources sustainably

Natural resources are materials or substances found in the environment such as water, land, air, and fossil fuels. Extracting and processing them to produce food and consumer products creates significant greenhouse gas emissions. In the UK, 16% of a person's carbon footprint comes from purchased products and 24% from food waste and production. Sustainable practices like reusing, repurposing, repairing and redistributing are essential to preserve resources and reduce emissions. We have a role to play in normalising these behaviours but recognise that sustainable choices can be less accessible to some people.

Waste collection and disposal in Medway

Waste collection and disposal processes release carbon dioxide and methane, both greenhouse gases. Landfills produce methane when organic waste breaks down and transporting waste also adds to greenhouse gas emissions. Incinerating waste provides an opportunity to recover energy in the form of heat and electricity.

Medway Council is responsible for and has direct control over household waste collections and disposal, as well as the collection and disposal of waste generated through its own operations and activities. We release an annual report showing what happens to

Medway's household waste. Commercial waste (from Medway's businesses, schools and public buildings such as hospitals) is collected and disposed of by various private waste operators, rather than the Council. Commercial waste accounts for approximately one-fifth of total UK waste (compared to household waste at 12%).

National and Local Policy

The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from waste management is part of the Government's net zero emissions strategy. Major policy shifts are underway which will reshape local authority operations. The Council has a key role to play in delivering national waste reduction policies and will develop our own Waste Strategy to provide the framework for a low-carbon waste management system.

Ambition

Medway benefits from a low-carbon waste management system.

Everyone uses resources sustainably by following steps like refusing, reducing, reusing, repairing, and recycling, to help cut down waste

Sub Priorities

- ❖ Waste is reduced and recycling increased
- ❖ Medway's communities are supported to use resources sustainably

Priority 5: Green and Resilient Medway

To ensure Medway is a clean, green, safe and connected place to live, we must make our communities and infrastructure resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Medway's natural environment, from our parks and street trees to our farmland and the River Medway, provides us with many essential ecosystem services, such as the provision of food and supporting our health and wellbeing. It also plays a critical role in helping to address climate change.

Trees, plants and even the soil absorb and lock away carbon, helping to mitigate against our emissions. Our mature woodlands and salt marsh are particularly good at this. The natural environment also plays a key role in alleviating against extreme weather, regulating local air temperature, providing shade and reducing the likelihood of flooding by absorbing and slowing down water.

Nature is also vulnerable to climate change. After habitat loss caused by humans, climate change is one of the key threats to biodiversity with more animal and plant species now threatened with extinction than ever before in human history.

It is therefore essential that we work to protect and increase the resilience of Medway's existing natural assets and seek to increase greening and tree planting throughout our urban areas to support adaptation to climate change.

Beyond our natural environment, it is crucial to ensure our homes and infrastructure can withstand extremes in weather, supported by sustainable development and a resilient economy. The emerging Local plan will have a critical role to play in building resilient communities in Medway.

Ambition

Medway's natural environment is protected, is resilient to climate change, and continues to absorb carbon.

Medway can handle the effects of climate change and remains a good place to live/has a liveable urban environment.

Sub Priorities

- ❖ Medway's greenspaces are protected and enhanced with opportunities sought to enhance existing habitats and their resilience to climate change.
- ❖ Sustainable development is led by local and neighbourhood plans

Delivery

Communications and Engagement

Further information on our proposed communications and engagement approach for each year can be found in our annual Climate Change Communications and Engagement Strategy, published on our website

Funding

The pace and scale of action required to adapt to climate change and achieve net zero emissions by 2050, for both Medway Council and Medway “The Place”, will far exceed the Council’s own resources. While the full cost of achieving net zero is currently unknown, it is clear significant levels of funding or investment will be required over the coming years.

Resource

Ensuring we have sufficient organisational capacity and empowered staff will be key to the delivery of the plan. Thew Council will make sure climate action is embedded into service delivery plans and staff have the necessary information to deal with climate change as it relates to their work.

Stakeholders and Partnerships

Collaborative action is key to driving forward action towards net zero emissions and increased resilience for Medway “The Place,” enabled by strong partnership working with a range of stakeholders. These include:

- Community Climate Working Group
- Member Climate Change Working Party
- Kent and Medway Environment Group

- Kent Climate Change Network
- Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway Board
- Schools, colleges and universities
- Developers
- Utility and service providers
- Public sector partners, for example:
 - local NHS trusts
 - Kent Fire and Rescue Service
- Transport providers
- National government and government departments
- National bodies such as the Environment Agency
- Supporting bodies such as the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH)

Supporting strategies and plans

Delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan will be supported by new and emerging Council and county wide strategies and plans:

- One Medway Council Plan
- One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan
- Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy
- Local Plan 2040 (emerging)
- Medway’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2028
- Child Friendly Medway Action Plan

- Medway Cultural Strategy
- Housing Strategy to 2030 - 2024
- Bus Service Implementation Plan – updated 2024
- Local Walking and Cycling Implementation Plan – 2025
- EV Strategy (emerging)
- Air Quality Action Plan (2025-2030) – 2025
- Waste Strategy (emerging)
- Food Strategy (2024-2030) - 2024
- Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (emerging)
- Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust Green Plan

Governance

Climate Oversight and Implementation Board (COIB)

A new governance group was set up in 2024 to scrutinise delivery of the 2022 Climate Change Action Plan. Chaired by the Council's Director of

Place and made up of senior officers, the role of the Board is to ensure that actions are advanced, progress is reported accurately at regular intervals and accurate risk management plans are maintained. The Board also has a role to recommend practical measures to support delivery of the plan including identifying opportunities for cross-county working through their representation on Kent wide groups.

Corporate Risk Strategy

The work to develop and monitor progress against the Climate Change Action Plan has already been subject to scrutiny through our internal audit process. A review of work to date was undertaken and recommendations made to ensure effective management of the plan.

Climate Change is included within the Council's Corporate Risk Management plan. It recognises the need for clear outputs and timescales for measurable change, strong leadership and governance. The risk rating and controls are reviewed quarterly and updated where necessary.