

Cabinet

4 August 2026

Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028: Year 1 (January - December 2025) Update

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Strategic Regeneration

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Summary

In August 2025, the Cabinet approved the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028, representing the third update since the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. The vision of the Climate Change Action Plan aligns with the One Medway Council Plan priority "enjoying clean, green, safe and connected communities."

The aims of the plan are to reduce carbon emissions to achieve net zero by 2050 and increase resilience against the impacts of climate change for both Medway Council and Medway "the Place".

This report marks the first annual update on progress against the plan. A progress report, highlighting key achievements in 2025, can be found in Appendix 1 to the report.

The report was previously considered by the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 June 2026, the minutes of which are set out at section 7 of this report below.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Cabinet is recommended to note the comments of the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out at section 7 of this report.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is asked to note Year 1 progress against the Climate Change Action Plan (2025-28).

2. Suggested reasons for decision

- 2.1. Regular monitoring of progress against the Climate Change Action Plan is best practice, providing transparency and accountability and supporting achievement of the aims and objectives of the plan.

3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1. A number of strategies and legislation support the climate agenda:

- The UK Climate Change Act (2008) and the Climate Change Committee (CCC).
- The Paris Agreement (2015) and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals including "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" (Goal 13).
- The UK Government responses (2025) to the CCC's 2025 Progress Report, and the CCC's 2025 Adaptation Progress Report setting direction on carbon budgets, clean energy, nature recovery and local authority roles in adaptation.
- The CCC's Seventh Carbon Budget analysis (2026), highlighting net societal benefits of climate action.
- The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2022 set out the risks and opportunities facing the UK from climate change, alongside the CCC's "A Well-Adapted UK" report, highlighting the need to strengthen national and local resilience.
- The UK Government's Warm Homes Plan, supporting energy efficiency and lower bills.
- The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) (2021) and ELES Implementation Plan (2026/27), guiding regional action on emissions and clean growth, with oversight from the Kent and Medway Environment Group (KMEG).
- The One Medway Council Plan 2024/28 embedding climate action and the 2050 net zero ambition.

4. Background

- 4.1. Medway Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019 and passed a motion committing to establish a clear action plan for Medway to deal with climate change, setting out an achievable and clear timeline.
- 4.2. The Council's first Climate Change Action Plan was approved by the Cabinet in June 2021, a "light touch" refreshed version was published in 2022 and the current [Climate Change Action Plan \(2025-28\)](#) was approved by the Cabinet in August 2026.
- 4.3. The plan has five priority areas, based on Medway's emissions sources and opportunities for delivering the most impactful actions. These are:
 - Knowledge and Empowerment.
 - Clean, Efficient and Equitable Energy.

- Sustainable Travel and Transport.
- Resource Efficiency.
- Green and Resilient Medway.

4.4. The Climate Change Action Plan is a corporate plan owned and delivered by the whole organisation, with each action assigned to a specific lead officer. These actions have been integrated into the relevant service delivery plans to support effective implementation.

5. Advice and analysis

5.1. Year One (January-December 2025) has delivered measurable progress across each of the plan's five priority areas including:

- **Knowledge and Empowerment**
 - Medway hosted its first Climate Business event, attended by more than 100 participants. A Net Zero panel discussion was also included at the Medway Business and Skills Showcase. Both events promoted the Partners for Green Growth Grants, which support SME's to implement energy efficiency improvements. Six '*Partners for Green Growth*' grants were awarded in 2025.
 - A Better Medway Schools Award continued to include core pledges focused on climate-related actions and the Medway Healthy Early Years (HEY) award criteria were updated so that climate change and sustainability are now embedded within the HEY policy. Two climate change training sessions were delivered to 27 early years practitioners across 22 settings.
 - Residents were further supported to return community equipment they no longer need through the Medway Integrated Community Equipment Service. A total of 4,511 loan items were collected, with 54% recycled and 45% broken down for parts or recycled.
- **Clean, Efficient and Equitable Energy**
 - Energy improvements were carried out in council-owned homes including cavity wall insulation for 88 properties. Other measures included new windows and doors, loft insulation, and LED lighting installations.
 - New schools continue to be designed with effective energy efficient measures. Plans were developed to install solar PV at Burnt Oak Primary School in early 2026. Recycling, landscaping and active travel are considered in the design and build of new schools.
- **Sustainable Travel and Transport**
 - School participation in the Walk on Wednesday (WOW) active travel scheme increased significantly. 22 schools registered for the scheme (≈50% increase), the Autumn competition produced national top-10 rankings for Medway schools and full-year data showed a 15.48% increase in active travel and nearly a 15% reduction in car trips on monitored days.

- **Resource Efficiency**
 - Work began to identify and clear allotment sites in preparation for bringing existing plots back into use and opening new sites from summer 2026.
 - All Public Health events were delivered with a focus on minimising waste. A refresh of the Medway Food Strategy action plan priorities began, and progress remains on track to achieve the Sustainable Food Award by 2028, building on the Silver level achieved in 2024.
- **Green and Resilient Medway**
 - More than 3,500 trees were planted at Deangate park by community volunteers and Medway Council Staff. At the end of 2025, Medway received an award from the Tree Council to plant 1,300 trees at Burnham Walk as part of the National Highways Tree Programme.
 - Work progressed on the creation of a new Community Tree Nursery at Cozenton Park supported by the Friends of Cozenton Park, with the official opening held on Sunday, 19 April 2026.

5.2. The following table provides an overview of the number of actions underway in Year One (January-December 2025) and highlights actions not yet started:

Climate Change Action Plan Priority Area (Total number of actions per priority area)	Year 1 (2025): Number of actions underway/ Number of actions in plan due to start	Year 1 (2025): Actions not yet started
Knowledge and Empowerment (16)	12/15	Develop and implement a State of the Environment report - A State of the Environment Power BI dashboard is already established. It requires refinement to better align with the refreshed Climate Change Action Plan. The Climate Response team will progress this work in 2026 in collaboration with Business Intelligence. Develop a carbon reduction and climate change resilience costed plan for our council buildings – Facilities Management team commenced a procurement exercise during Q1 2026/27 for x9 Building Energy Efficiency Reports. Implement process for accurately assessing action needed for Medway to reach net zero - Started reviewing approaches to enable implementation by the due date (March 2027).
Clean, Efficient and	6/7	Integrate energy efficiency measures into the Council property maintenance strategy and monitor the

Climate Change Action Plan Priority Area (Total number of actions per priority area)	Year 1 (2025): Number of actions underway/ Number of actions in plan due to start	Year 1 (2025): Actions not yet started
Equitable Energy (8)		effectiveness of energy performance measures across Council buildings (includes Q4 2025/26 update) – this work has been rescheduled to commence in 2026 due to additional priorities, including the Gun Wharf Improvement Programme. The first Building Energy Efficiency Report (for Capstone Country Park) was completed in Q4 2025/26.
Sustainable Travel and Transport (8)	8/8	n/a
Resource Efficiency (7)	5/6	Commission a Waste Strategy to identify and appraise options for domestic waste collection and disposal in Medway - with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) forthcoming, it would not be appropriate or cost-effective to develop a long-term Waste strategy for Medway as a single unitary authority when future waste governance arrangements are likely to change. Instead, the Council has continued to progress a Waste Improvement Programme, focused on delivering tangible environmental, operational and financial improvements in the short to medium term, while retaining flexibility for future strategic alignment post-LGR. The Council has completed the rollout of food waste recycling to approximately 26,000 flats in Q4 2025/26, enabling Medway to achieve full coverage for household food waste recycling across the authority, enabling full household coverage for food waste recycling. This remains a priority and represents a significant step forward in reducing food waste sent for disposal, supporting both the Climate Change Action Plan and wider environmental objectives.
Green and Resilient Medway (7)	4/6	Assess Medway's current tree stock, composition and condition – Currently working with Planning colleagues on how best to undertake the survey. Create minimum 100 miles of roadside nature reserves - Proposing an amendment of this target as no realistic measurement system for this action. Revised target proposed to be “creation of 100 new

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		wildflower meadows across Medway's parks and open spaces".

5.3. Since the Climate Change Action Plan (2025-2028) was published, some additional opportunities, in support of the climate agenda, have emerged:

- **Warm Homes Local Grant (WH:LG)** – work started during this reporting period to mobilise the WH:LG scheme which will provide over £1million from 2026 to help families, with a household income of less than £36,000 and living in energy in-efficient homes (EPC D-G), with essential energy efficiency improvements. The grant is currently being promoted to residents in conjunction with our delivery partners E.ON. The WH:LG scheme is part of the wider policy direction of the government's Warm Homes Plan, which is anticipated to unlock further opportunities to support our communities.
- **Medway Community Energy Project Working Group** – the Climate Response and Regeneration teams have supported several members of the Community Climate Working group to form the Medway Community Energy Project Working Group, with the aim of exploring the feasibility of a community energy project in Medway. The volunteer group comprises local residents and community representatives who bring relevant expertise in net zero, renewable technologies and community engagement, alongside individuals with a strong personal commitment to climate action. The group is currently in the initial project scoping stage.
- **Domestic Retrofit** – the Climate Response team presented a report to COIB outlining Medway's current position on domestic retrofit support and setting out a series of options for action. Work to date has included providing insight on the development of a Kent and Medway Homes Retrofit Action Plan (HRAP).
- **Hoo Heat Network Study** – Medway successfully secured £100,000 of Heat Network (Round 15) funding for a Detailed Planning and Development study for a heat network in Hoo. On completion, this will bring it to the same stage as the Chatham Heat Network study and will enable officers to look at moving both schemes to commercialisation stage.
- **River Strategy** – A River Strategy was developed and approved by the Cabinet in February 2026. The strategy sets out a partnership-led approach to enhancing the river's environmental, social and economic value and provides a strong framework for climate action. Staff resourcing to commence delivery of the strategy was secured through

2026/27 budget setting. Early engagement has commenced with the Community Climate Working Group to gain feedback on the strategy.

- **Marmot Place ambitions** – the Climate Response team have commenced work with Public Health colleagues to identify opportunities to reduce health inequalities, in support of the Marmot principles. Initial scoping has included learning from other local authorities who have implemented Integrated Impact Assessment Tools to support the consideration of a wide range of inequalities to improve council decision making.
- **Horsted Valley** – Cabinet has given approval to seek Local Nature Reserve status for the Horsted Valley; designation can be granted by Medway Council following formal discussions with Natural England, which are currently being undertaken.
- **Tree Strategy** – work on a new tree strategy has begun, with a public 9 week consultation launched in June to seek views.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1. The proposed Climate Change Action Plan sets out two clear aims to achieve net zero and improve resilience, to be achieved through carbon reduction and climate adaptation measures and strong leadership. Not achieving these aims poses a risk to the organisation and this is reflected in the Council's corporate risk register, which is updated quarterly (Appendix 2).

7. Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 7.1. The Committee considered the report on 18 June 2026 and the minutes of the discussion were as follows:
- 7.2. **Service based actions** – in response to a request that Members receive contact information for the relevant services, the Chief Leisure and Environment Officer agreed to provide the information to the Committee.
- 7.3. **Financing** – it was asked what monies were provided by external grants and what was funded by the Council and what would the effect be if funding was withdrawn. The Chief Leisure and Environmental Officer stated that applications for grants and the management of the budgets were the responsibility of the relevant service manager, and they were aware of the four year action plan and the importance of funding for that period when managing those actions.
- 7.4. The Chief Operating Officer added that there was a great deal of activity taking place within a range of services, which was covered by existing resources and it would be necessary to estimate how much of that resource was delivering the Climate Change Action Plan. It was agreed that the Chief Leisure and Environment Officer would collate an analysis of the activity and estimated costs as a briefing note for the committee.

- 7.5. **Burnham Wood** – A Member noted that 1,300 trees had been planted in Burnham Wood, he asked if there was a management plan to ensure the trees become properly established as he was concerned that their growth had been hampered. The Chief Leisure and Environment Officer stated that there was a 3-year management plan to support the establishment of the trees in the area. He undertook to provide further detail about the specific scheme following the meeting.
- 7.6. **Tree coverage** – it was asked how the Council measured the tree coverage in the area. The Chief Leisure and Environment Officer stated that the service worked closely with the tree officers in the planning department and Medway Norse tree officers now reported to him to provide a streamlined approach. A tree survey was scheduled to take place to provide a baseline, however, the timing of this was dependent upon resources within the Planning Department.
- 7.7. **Wild flowers** – A Member commented that in their ward were rare species of orchid and asked what could be done to ensure they thrived, the Chief Leisure and Environment Officer undertook to review the situation and provide an update to the Member.
- 7.8. **Emissions** – the Committee discussed emissions. It was asked if the Council had measurements on its emissions, emissions in the area and use of resources including the effect of the Council's investment in AI. The Chief Leisure and Environmental Officer stated that some of the information was difficult to source but would endeavour to provide updates where possible. Further information was also requested regarding how much emissions had been reduced by through the various schemes the Council had undertaken and the cost of those schemes. The Chief Leisure and Environmental Officer undertook to provide further information regarding emissions following the meeting.
- 7.9. **Partnership Working** – in response to a Member question regarding partnership working within the Council to ensure services worked together effectively, the Chief Leisure and Environmental Officer explained that there was an Officer Oversight and Implementation Board, which had senior management representation and took responsibility for effective co-working between departments. Meetings were held six weekly and every second meeting all service managers attended to report on progress in their area. Thus, the Board was able to ensure that the different services worked together in tandem.
- 7.10. **Procurement** – a Member asked if there were sustainability targets in relation to procurement and suppliers with a strong environmental record were prioritised. The Chief Leisure and Environmental Officer stated that the issues would be for the procurement service.
- 7.11. **Decision:**
- a) The Committee noted the Year One progress update against the Climate Change Action Plan and recommends it is progressed through the

appropriate governance processes for reporting Year One progress to Cabinet.

- b) The Committee requested a briefing paper providing an analysis of the activity and budget via the relevant services including the impact on the council's climate change goals.
- c) The Committee requested a briefing paper outlining sustainability in procurement services in line with the Council's climate change goals and prioritising sustainable suppliers.

8. Emissions reporting

8.1. The following actions are existing commitments within the Climate Change Action Plan (2025/2028). The actions also align with the request from the Business Support and Digital Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 June 2026 to better understand the impact of climate action.

- **Undertake an assessment of progress against the current Carbon Budget Pathway (2020–2028) and provide an updated Carbon Pathway:** An assessment is required to review the progress against the council's existing carbon budget pathway for the period 2020–2028, providing an independent and updated understanding of emissions performance. The report will identify key trends, highlight areas of significant change since the pathway was developed, and, where appropriate, recommend updates to the carbon pathway to ensure it remains robust, realistic and reflective of the latest available data and organisational priorities. This report will be undertaken by an external specialist and completed by the end of March 2027. The most recent Council carbon emission reports are published on the Council website [here](#).
- **Assessment of Scope 3 Supply Chain Emissions:** This assessment will establish a baseline understanding of the council's supply chain emissions by quantifying the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the procurement of goods, services and works. The report will identify the most significant sources of supply chain emissions and provide insight into where the greatest carbon reduction opportunities lie across the council's supplier base. It will help inform a targeted approach to supplier engagement, support the development of proportionate carbon reporting and performance expectations, and identify opportunities to embed sustainability requirements and accountability within procurement and contract management processes, with the aim of reducing emissions and improving efficiencies. This report will be undertaken by an external specialist and commence in Q4 2026/27.
- **Implement a process for accurately assessing action needed for Medway to reach net zero.** Greenhouse gas emissions estimates for all UK local authority areas are published annually by the Department

for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). A summary of the latest dataset for Medway, published in June 2026, can be found in Appendix 3 to the report. The data enables the council to track long-term emissions trends and assess progress towards Medway Council's net zero target for Medway "The Place."

9. Consultation

- 9.1. Oversight for the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan is led by the Climate Oversight and Implementation Board (COIB), chaired by the Director of Place. The Board considered quarterly reports on progress in August and October 2025, and April and July 2026.
- 9.2. The operational model and Terms of Reference for the COIB were reviewed at the end of 2025 to strengthen its decision-making role and secure greater engagement from all services.
- 9.3. Year One (January-December 2025) progress updates have been received from Heads of Service responsible for each action. A new SharePoint site has been created to enable SMART reporting on all actions from the end of Q1 2026/27 and to facilitate the efficient collation of monitoring reports for presenting to COIB each quarter.
- 9.4. Appendix 1 provides a detailed progress summary. The report will be published to the council's climate change web pages [here](#).

10. Climate change implications

- 10.1. The Climate Change Action Plan (2025-28) supports the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and improving resilience to the impacts of climate change. Individual actions in the plan will have varying levels of impact on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or improved resilience. The actions which are intended to have a sustained long-term impact, such as improvements to bus infrastructure and services to encourage increased bus passenger numbers, will clearly have the biggest impact on greenhouse gas emission reductions. The scientific evidence shows that our climate is changing which will inevitably have consequences on our service delivery and an increased demand for a pro-active response. Continued implementation and monitoring of the Plan will help ensure the Council is well placed to meet its climate priorities, respond to the challenges and risks associated with a changing climate, maintain good quality service and protect the health and wellbeing of Medway's residents and communities.

11. Financial implications

- 11.1. The goal of achieving net zero carbon by 2050 for both the Council and the area itself is a challenging task, coupled with supporting all of our communities to become resilient to the impacts of climate change. The pace and scale of action required, far exceeds our own resources, and is dependent on government policy and funding to achieve it. Actions within the

proposed Climate Change Action Plan are funded through relevant service budgets and external grant funding. Delivery of some of the actions contained within the plan may have financial implications and business cases will be developed and presented for consideration through the relevant governance processes where this is the case.

12. Legal implications

- 12.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Local authorities undertake a key role in addressing climate change at a local level and are able to decide how best to address these challenges. The publication of a Climate Change Action Plan is lawful under the Localism Act 2011.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Climate Change Annual Progress Report 2025
Appendix 2 – Q4 2025/26 Summary of Risk Performance
Appendix 3 – Medway Area Greenhouse Gas Emissions Estimates 2024

Background papers

[Climate Emergency Declaration – Full Council - April 2019](#)

[Climate Change Action Plan \(2025-28\)](#)

[Climate Change Action Plan \(2025-28\) Tables](#)