

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9th July, 2024

10.00 am

Council Chamber





AGENDA

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9 July 2024 at 10.00 am
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone.

Ask for: **Emily Kennedy**
Telephone: **03000 419625**

Membership

Conservative:	Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr N J Collor (Vice-Chairman), Mr T Bond, Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M Dendor, Mr A R Hills, Mr H Rayner, Mr D Robey and Mr A Sandhu, MBE
Labour:	Ms M Dawkins and Mr B H Lewis
Liberal Democrat :	Mr I S Chittenden
Green and Independent:	Mr M Baldock and Mr M Hood

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

- 1 Introduction/Webcast announcement
- 2 Apologies and Substitutes
To receive apologies for absence and notification of any substitutes present
- 3 Declarations of Interest
- 4 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2024 (Pages 1 - 8)
- 5 Directorate Dashboard
To follow
- 6 Verbal Updates from Cabinet Members and Corporate Director
- 7 24/00067 - Kent County Council Adoption of the 4th Revision of the High Weald Area of Outstanding National Beauty Management Plan 2024- 2029 (Pages 9 - 114)
- 8 Annual Update on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (Pages 115 - 212)

- 9 24/00064 - Contract extension for the receipt and processing of organic waste in south west Kent (including Maidstone green waste) - (GW/2004/01) (Pages 213 - 224)
- 10 24/00066 - Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Pages 225 - 306)
- 11 24/00065 - Mixed Dry Recycling Contract (Pages 307 - 322)
- 12 24/00068 - KCC Heritage Conservation Strategy Revision - Change to Windmills Policy (Pages 323 - 342)
- 13 Southern Water presentation
- 14 Work Programme (Pages 343 - 344)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
03000 416814

Monday, 1 July 2024

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 21 May 2024.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr N J Collor (Vice-Chairman), Mr T Bond, Mr T Cannon, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr A R Hills, Mr M A J Hood, Mr H Rayner, Mr D Robey and Mr A Sandhu, MBE

ALSO PRESENT:

IN ATTENDANCE:

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**1. Apologies**

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Broadley, Mr Dendor, Mr Lewis and Ms Dawkins for whom Dr Sullivan was present.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2024

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held 5 March 2024 were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

4. Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director

(Item 5)

1) Mr Baker said that good progress was being made with the Highways Term Maintenance Contract and with the review of Joint Transportation Boards (JTBs).

Mr Baker met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the JTBs on 25 April. It was a productive meeting and he was pleased to report there was representation from across Kent and also from Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC).

There was a strong consensus that there should be a form of local engagement to give local residents a voice in local highway issues. Several issues were raised around the importance of effective communication, realistic planning, and strategic engagement to address transportation and highway-related challenges. The next steps would be for officers to use the discussion points to prepare a draft report by end of June 2024 for further consideration on future options.

It was planned that the A299 Thanet Way was to fully reopen eight weeks early on 1 June, instead of 20 July as originally anticipated. Thanks were given to the contractors for this achievement and KCC highways staff who have assisted, particularly Byron Lovell and his team.

The works would improve and stabilise the underlying subsoil of the road and to stop the heave effect caused by the underlying clay making it safer and more resilient for traffic users.

Mr Baker gave an update on the Entry Exit System. KCC was still awaiting the 'Reasonable Worst-Case Scenario' from government. Stakeholders had been advised to base planning on July 2020 when Kent had severe traffic congestion. This had been taken forward. Planning was being undertaken based on the system being implemented on 6 October, although this was yet to be confirmed.

KCC continued to work closely with Home Office and Department for Transport to ensure the best options for Kent and had submitted bids to government for works to mitigate the impact on Kent communities and were awaiting responses.

There had continued to be high demand for permits for street works. The Street Works Team was meeting the chair of Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee to discuss the impact this demand had on Kent's network.

2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- The quality of the pothole repairs being done had improved. Updates on the Pothole Blitz work were available on the webpage on KCC's website: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/roads/potholes/pothole-blitz>
- Streetworks notifications were causing frustrations where they were very last minute or where school traffic was being affected by road closures.

3) Mr Thomas said that a newsletter had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. David Beaver had retired from KCC and he was thanked for his efforts working for Kent. Sue Reddick, the new Head of service for Waste and Circular Economy was welcomed.

There was a workshop at Ashford Borough Council where there had been discussion on the high ambition 'Net Zero' target for 2050 that had been set by Kent council leaders. This was not a 'business as usual' measure but a high ambition pathway. A Members' group was due to be established and Larissa Reed, Chief Executive Officer from Swale Borough Council was leading on the work. It was hoped that work that had been achieved through the Waste Resource Partnership could be incorporated.

It was 'No Mow May' and an opportunity to cease mowing lawns and other areas of grass. Over the last few years, amazing results had been achieved with 130,000m², the equivalent of more than 500 tennis courts of vibrant wildflower meadows springing up across the county, nourishing Kent's pollinator population. Members participating in the scheme were encouraged to share photographs of the results.

Kent Plan Tree was policy which committed that one tree was to be established for every resident in the county. 17,000 whips (bare root trees) had been planted in the previous year. 30% of the trees planted were on farms and 17% were on school sites. In terms of who had planted the trees, 48% were from the local community and 30% were from schools. Mr Thomas was delighted with officers' efforts on the planting of trees and KCC was to submit a bid for round 4 of funding.

Partnership working was very important and one of the recent initiatives that had been uploaded to the website was a 'Repair, Recycle and Upcycling' map, encouraging residents to use the facilities: <https://lowcarbonkent.com/reuse-and-repair-locator/>

If businesses wanted to get involved, contact details were included in the Members' newsletter.

Upcoming events relating to the environment had been listed on the KCC environment webpages, the most recent being World Bee Day which was on 20 May 2024.

4) Further to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- It was clarified that whips are slightly smaller than saplings. Whips were not suitable for all locations. Whips were harder to establish in urban environments.
- Sightings of Asian Hornets should be reported. The government had made an announcement about the Asian Hornet: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-plant-health-officer-urges-increased-asian-hornet-vigilance> Members were also advised to consult the guide from Kent Wildlife Trust: <https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/blog/asian-hornet-guide-kent>
- Both webpages had details about how to report sightings and the importance of preventing them from establishing here in Kent and the UK.

5) Mr Jones said related to streetworks, he needed to correct the 30% non-compliance figure quoted in the previous verbal update on 7 March as it seemed the update could have been misconstrued and not clear.

Of the 59 sites audited the compliance rate was over 93%, that was across all areas that were audited. Recent audited performance had found that there continued to be good compliance on all closures:

- 100% of those audited required a closure for the works being undertaken.
- No sites were identified where the road had been closed but the works not started.
- 16 sites were identified where the repair works had been completed and were awaiting backfill. Six of these had reinstatement works in progress at the time of the inspection.
- No sites identified where the works were completed but the road was still closed at the time of the inspection.
- Two were identified as having incorrect diversions to that which had been agreed.
- Two were deemed to be unsafe.

There were three Road Closure Inspectors in post with a recruitment process underway for a fourth inspector.

There was to be a slight delay in implementing Moving Traffic Enforcement as the DVLA had refused KCC's application to access their system known as KADOE. This prevented KCC gaining access to the details of a vehicle's registered keeper and therefore, KCC was not able to issue warning notices or Penalty Charge Notices. It was understood to be due to the DVLA implementing a new system and the policy was not to permit any new access until the new system was operational.

Officers were meeting with DVLA on 28 May with the aim to resolve the matter and get on with using the enforcement powers that government designated to KCC to help manage our road network and support the movement of traffic across it.

On 22 February 2024, the Department for Transport (DfT) launched their latest consultation on night flight restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. The DfT was proposing to maintain the existing regime for a further three-year bridging period whilst they awaited the outcome of several noise studies they had commissioned. This bridging period was to be in place from October 2025 to October 2028.

Whilst KCC welcomed the work being undertaken to better understand the impacts of night noise, the proposals meant the restrictions remained unchanged since 2017.

Officers had drafted a response to the consultation which aligned with KCC's existing policy on Gatwick Airport, along with our responses to previous night flight restriction consultations.

Night flight restrictions had a positive impact on the wellbeing of residents and so KCC's response specifically requests for night movements and noise quota limits at Gatwick to be reduced in order to give adequate respite to communities under flight paths.

KCC's response was to be published on the [kent.gov.uk](https://www.kent.gov.uk) website after the consultation closes on the 22 May 2024.

Following the examination of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for a new Lower Thames Crossing which concluded in December 2023, the examining authority submitted its recommendation report to the Secretary of State on 20 March 2024. The Secretary of State was considering the recommendation.

It remained to be seen if there would be any further consultations, but the Secretary of State was required to take a decision on the DCO by 20 June, three months after receiving the examining authority's recommendation report.

There was then to be a six-week period when people could challenge the decision in the High Court through a judicial review. If the Lower Thames Crossing was granted consent, construction was to start in 2026 and the scheme was to be open for traffic in 2032.

KCC had gained access to Galley Hill and the route cause was being investigated, in order to understand what actions needed to be taken to reopen the road. KCC was working on the issue of HGV congestion and had reached out to Kent Police to enact a scheme to identify rogue HGVs and report back to operators.

The Kent Resource Partnership had received an award for our town 'binrastructure' project to promote and reward rubbish separation and recycling in Ashford Town Centre

The Resource Management and Circular Economy team had created a repair café network to encourage our community to consider whether their item could be reused and to help share best practice and standardise the reporting of carbon emission savings.

KCC had been accredited as an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessments (IEMA) training centre, that meant KCC could roll out a series of workshops to upskill staff in environmental awareness.

5. Performance Dashboard

(Item 6)

Matt Wagner, Interim Chief Analyst; Matthew Smyth, Director for Environment and Circular Economy and Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Wagner introduced the report and said that it was sixth performance dashboard of the financial year, 2023-2024. There were 19 key performance indicators (KPIs); 12 were rated green, 5 were rated amber and 2 were rated red.

There had not been any red RAG-rated indicators in the previous report to the committee. The indicators rated red both related to Highways and Transportation, the first was 'customer satisfaction with delivery' and the second was 'Member enquiries completed within 20 working days'. Demand for pothole repair and routine faults remained extremely high.

The report also showed the proposed changes to indicators for 2024-2025 following the annual review that had been carried out.

2) Further to Members' questions, it was noted:

- The KPI relating to 'customer satisfaction with routine Highways' service delivery (100 call back survey)' was being discontinued due to Agilisys resourcing issues and it was noted that the contract with Agilisys was not maintained by GET but by corporate services. The ability of residents to let KCC know if they were dissatisfied with services was not affected by the removal of the KPI.
- The KPIs showed street works permits were issued and the permitted duration for works to take place but the data was not available about how long the works took in all cases. Where the works exceeded the length of the permit, this was treated on a case-by-case basis.
- More details around KPIs, HT04 and HT14, were to be brought to the committee.

3) RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

6. 24/00038 - Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - 2024 Refresh

(Item 7)

Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport; Dan Bruce, Enhanced Partnership and Infrastructure Manager; and Stephen Pay, Planning and Operations Manager were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Mr Lightowler and Mr Bruce outlined the report.

3) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:

- There was a significant meeting structure countywide. District councils had been asked to form focus groups, similar to the Quality Bus Partnerships.
- The planning tool data helped officers to understand connectivity, showing gaps for particular groups and destinations. The data was used to then improve connectivity.
- There was a relationship with Amazon where staff used the FastTrack bus service for free, as part of the company's approach to sustainability. It meant their staff traveled by bus, not by car.

4) Mr Rayner proposed, Mr Chittenden seconded and Members agreed the recommendation as outlined in the report.

5) Dr Sullivan asked for her abstention from the vote to be noted in the minutes. Mr Baldock asked for his vote against the recommendation to be noted in the minutes.

7. 24/00043 - Road Asset Renewal Contract *(Item 8)*

Alan Casson, Strategic Asset Manager and Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Mr Casson outlined the report.

3) Members asked questions and it was noted that:

- An extension of the contract would warrant a discussion at Cabinet Committee.
- A request was made for an annual report on the contract performance. Concerns were raised about the quality of the work and assurances were asked for about how we know the contractor can deliver the work at the price they have quoted in their bid. There were selection questions, for potential contractors to demonstrate their history of good quality work. There were also specific questions asked around quality asking potential contractors to demonstrate skills around programming, costing and technical ability. Prices were only submitted after these questions had been answered and were scrutinised, comparing the market to ensure sustainability as well as what was most commercially advantageous.

4) Mr Rayner proposed, Mr Bond seconded and Members agreed to endorse the recommendation as outlined in the report subject to the removal of “+ up to 5 years extension”.

8. Kent Travel Saver - Pass Cost Increase - 2024

(Item 9)

Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Mr Lightowler outlined the report.

3) Members asked questions and it was noted that:

- The approach to bus services was different in areas across England and the United Kingdom. There were some places where bus travel was free for all young people under the age of 22 but it was recognised that there were financial constraints for Kent. It was also noted that many local authorities do not subsidise or run bus services.
- It was considered by some Members that the increase was too high. There were concerns about the timing of the proposed change. However, officers were commended for their work on the scheme. There was a clear environmental benefit to children travelling to school by bus.
- KCC did not run the bus services and did not have control over bus fares so this work was supporting residents to use buses for less.

4) Members resolved to note the report.

5) Dr Sullivan asked for it to be noted in the minutes that she voted against the motion.

9. 24/00035 - Contract for Receipt and Treatment of Street Sweepings and Highway Mechanical Arisings

(Item 11)

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment &Transport was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Thomas introduced the report.

2) Mr Jones advised that there was a correction to the recommendation outlined in the report. The delegation under part (ii) of the recommendation should refer to the Director for Environment, not the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services.

3) Members RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report, subject to the correction above.

10. Household Waste and Recycling Centres Contracts

(Item 12)

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Thomas introduced the report.

2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- The decision being considered was to commence a procurement process to award a contract for the sites that were operating in Kent. This was unrelated to any network review and the report referred to 17 sites, the same as was currently operational in Kent.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendation as outlined in the report.

11. Work Programme

(Item 13)

Members agreed to NOTE the work programme.

From: **Robert Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and
Transportation**

To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee
9th July 2024**

Subject: **Kent County Council Adoption of the 4th Revision of the High
Weald Area of Outstanding National Beauty Management Plan
2024- 2029**

Key decision: 24/00067

- *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions:*

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: none

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division:

**Cranbrook – Sean Holden
Maidstone Rural South – Lottie Parfitt-Reid
Maidstone Rural West – Simon Webb
Malling Rural East – Sarah Hudson
Sevenoaks Rural South – Margot McArthur
Tenterden – Mike Hill, OBE
Tunbridge Wells East – Paul Barrington-King
Tunbridge Wells North – Peter Oakford
Tunbridge Wells Rural – Sarah Hamilton
Tunbridge Wells West – James McInroy**

Summary: This report provides an overview of the revised High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2024 - 2029 in order to seek endorsement for its adoption by Kent County Council.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment regarding the proposed decision to

(i) ADOPT the revised High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2024-2029 on behalf of Kent County Council (Appendix 1).

(ii) To DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to refresh and/or make revisions to the Management Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan

(iii) To DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Growth, Environment and Transport to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and

entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 requires local authorities within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to act collaboratively to prepare and publish an up-to-date plan, which '*formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it*'. The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 has been prepared by the High Weald AONB Unit and the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee, a partnership which includes all 15 local authorities that have land within the High Weald AONB together with community, environment and land-based sector representatives for, and on behalf of, the borough and district councils of Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks, Ashford, Tonbridge and Malling, as well as Kent County Council, and councils across Surrey, West Sussex and East Sussex. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Rob Thomas, represents KCC on the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee, Helen Shulver, Head of Environment represents KCC on the High Weald Officers' Working Group.
- 1.2. On November 22nd 2023 all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales became National Landscapes. This change was brought about as a result of recommendations published in January 2022 following the Governments Landscapes reviews (National Parks and AONBs). The new name reflects the national importance of these protected landscapes and is endorsed by Natural England. The High Weald National Landscape remains an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty insofar as all policy, legislation and guidance applies to the designated landscape. For this reason, the management plan document is still titled and refers to the High Weald AONB Management Plan. Reference is made in the document to both the AONB and the High Weald National Landscape interchangeably. The statutory purpose of the designated landscape "to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscape" remains unchanged.
- 1.3. The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 is now with all the relevant authorities for adoption. This paper provides an outline of the revised Management Plan and seeks endorsement from the KCC Cabinet Committee for Environment and Transport for its adoption by the Cabinet Member for Environment.

2. Overview of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2024-2029

- 2.1. The High Weald AONB Management Plan was originally adopted by the County Council in April 2004 and set out a 20-year vision for the AONB. Revisions to the Management Plan were subsequently adopted in 2009, 2014 and 2019. This is the fourth revision.
- 2.2. The overall vision for the AONB remains largely unchanged. This revision seeks to respond to the changing context in which the 20-year vision operates – including the level of housing growth expected in Kent and climate,

agriculture and biodiversity challenges and opportunities including the restoration of historic character and nature recovery potential. Additional principles in this revision include the sustainable management of visitors, a strategy for revitalising the woodland economy, adoption of a net-zero future and the link between the High Weald landscape and health and well-being. The Government's 25-year Environment Plan and The Environment Act 2021 are also captured.

- 2.3. The document is supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (Appendix 2 and 2a), a Habitat Regulation Screening (Appendix 3 and 3a) and an Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 4).
- 2.4. The High Weald AONB Unit has overseen the consultation process for the Plan. Consultation on the revision of the plan commenced in January 2022 and has included:
 - Engagement with officers and elected members from the AONB Local Authorities (through the Joint Advisory Committee) through questionnaires, collaborative editing and a series of actions workshops with discussion and debate about the key issues and opportunities they wish to see addressed in this Plan and how to best present policies.
 - Expert engagement through meetings and partnerships from local stakeholders to government departments, running and attending courses and webinars, and convening events which bring together experts including site visits and steering groups.
 - Public engagement via online surveys to support to formation of the plan and a full formal public consultation that ran between the 25th September 2023 and 5th November 2023.
- 2.5. The plan was approved by the Joint Advisory Committee on 27th March 2024 for adoption by each of the Local Authorities
- 2.6. Key changes and additions to the Management Plan in this revision include:
 - Whilst the High Weald National Landscape is not a planning authority, the new Management Plan aims to better support local authorities, residents, parishes, and community groups to use the Management Plan in responding to planning applications through a dedicated planning section.
 - Dark Skies has become its own core component of the High Weald's natural beauty and is now reflected as such in the Management Plan, with objectives and actions for preserving the High Weald's dark skies.
 - The new climate and nature recovery sections will address nature-based and technological solutions to the net-zero carbon goals, including the use of natural flood management.
 - The condition of water ways, particularly pollution, has become one of the investment strategy principles for the Plan, and more overt actions targeted at water companies and other Section 85 organisations with duties to water ways have been included in the natural systems chapter.
- 2.7. Officers are satisfied that the County Council response has been adequately addressed and the proposed actions of the Management Plan do not place any new or unnecessary obligations on the County Council.
- 2.8. Policy Framework

The Management Plan supports the following priority actions for Infrastructure for Communities and Environmental Step Change as set out in Framing Kent's Future: Our Council Strategy 2022- 2026

- Ensure that new development provides the appropriate physical and social infrastructure to support new and existing communities' way of life through an Infrastructure First approach.
- Invest in Kent's high-quality landscapes and rural environment, protecting and enhancing productive farmland and protected landscapes and working with partners to tackle climate change challenges as the growing demands on water supply as our county grows.
- Improve access for our residents to green and natural spaces especially in urban and deprived areas and through our Public Rights of Way network to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. Kent County Council makes an annual revenue contribution of £9,500 towards the core funding of the High Weald AONB (as do the other local authorities within the boundaries of the High Weald AONB).
- 3.2. It is not anticipated that the adoption of the revised Management Plan will place any additional financial obligations on the County Council. However, on 26th December 2023 a strengthened duty for relevant authorities to 'seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape' came into force. This enhanced duty requires all relevant authorities, which includes KCC in relation to the High Weald National Landscape, to work together to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Therefore, future requirements or opportunities to contribute to the work of the AONB unit outside of the adoption of the Management Plan may be presented.
- 3.3. Relevant services within the County Council will need to consider the revised Management Plan in relation to their operations (as they are already bound to do). The plans are of particular relevance to services concerned with commissioning, climate change, planning, heritage and natural environment, economic development, highways and public rights of way. Any change to these services resulting from the Management Plan would be required to be within the existing funding envelope - unless part of a wider plan for supporting the Net Zero agenda, which will be considered on an invest-to-save and case-by-case basis. There will undoubtedly be burdens and obligations on KCC as such initiatives are progressed, but the Management Plan itself will not impose such burdens.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1. The High Weald National Landscape is recognised and protected nationally and internationally for its natural beauty as one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in north-west Europe. The High Weald has remained a unique and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years. A statutory requirement in the CRoW Act is placed on the council to act jointly with the other local authorities to prepare and review a management plan for the landscape.

4.2. The High Weald AONB Management Plan review has been undertaken by the High Weald AONB Unit and overseen by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee. The County Council is represented at a senior level on the Joint Advisory Committee by an elected Member and Officer.

5. Equalities implications

5.1. An Equality Impact Assessment of the Plan (Appendix 4) was carried out in February 2024 by the High Weald AONB Unit and concluded that the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024 – 2029 complies with the Equality Duty 2010.

6. Other Corporate Implications

6.1. Relevant services within the County Council will need to consider the revised Management Plan in relation to their operations (as they are already bound to do). The plans are of particular relevance to services concerned with commissioning, climate change, planning, heritage and natural environment, economic development, highways and public rights of way.

7. Governance

7.1. There are no new delegations as a result of the adoption of the Management Plan.

8. Conclusions

8.1. It is considered that the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 as amended can be adopted by KCC. It is not anticipated that the new Management Plan will place any additional obligations or burdens on the County Council in terms of finance or resources - relevant services within the County Council must continue to consider the Management Plan in relation to their operations and services and will need to familiarise themselves with the Plan as revised.

9. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment regarding the proposed decision to

(i) ADOPT the revised High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2024-2029 on behalf of Kent County Council (Appendix 1).

(ii) To DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to refresh and/or make revisions to the Management Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan

(iii) To DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Growth, Environment and Transport to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at appendix A.

10. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendix A -Proposed Record of Decision
Appendix 1 – High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029
Appendix 2 and 2a - Strategic Environmental Assessment
Appendix 3 and 3a - Habitat Regulation Screening
Appendix 4 - Equality Impact Assessment

11. Report Author

Nick Johannsen
National Landscape – Director
Economy

Relevant Director

Matthew Smyth
Director: Environment and Circular

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9. Contact details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rob Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment

DECISION NO:

24/00067

For publication /

Key decision: YES / NO

Subject Matter / Title of Decision:

Kent County Council Adoption of the 4th Revision of the High Weald Area of Outstanding National Beauty Management Plan 2024- 2029

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Environment, I agree to:

- (i) ADOPT the revised High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2024-2029 on behalf of Kent County Council (Appendix 1).
- (ii) To DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to refresh and/or make revisions to the Management Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan
- (iii) To DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Growth, Environment and Transport to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision .

Reason(s) for decision:

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 requires local authorities within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to act collaboratively to prepare and publish an up-to-date plan, which 'formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Members of Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee will consider the proposal at their meeting on 9 July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

This is a statutory obligation.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

.....
signed

.....
date

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029

Responsible Officer

Helen Shulver - GT - ECE

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Matthew Smyth - GT - ECE

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Environment

Responsible Head of Service

Matthew Smyth - GT - ECE

Responsible Director

Matthew Smyth - GT - ECE

Aims and Objectives

The High Weald AONB Management Plan identifies and sets management goals for the key features of the landscape that have survived and form the essential basis of its natural beauty. Local authorities with land in an AONB, acting jointly in the case of AONBs crossing administrative boundaries, are legally obliged under the

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare and publish a plan which 'formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it', and to review this plan every five years

Summary of Outcomes:

The strategy complies with equalities legislation, including the duty to promote race, disability and gender equality

There are no main areas requiring further attention

There are no recommendations for improvement

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes
Is there national evidence/data that you can use?
Yes
Have you consulted with stakeholders?
Yes
Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?
<p>East Sussex County Council Kent County Council Surrey County Council West Sussex County Council Ashford Borough Council Crawley Borough Council Hastings Borough Council Horsham District Council Mid Sussex District Council Rother District Council Sevenoaks District Council Tandridge District Council Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Wealden District Council Action in rural Sussex Country Land & Business Association Forestry Commission National Farmers Union Natural England</p>
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens Residents/communities/citizens
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
No
Details of Positive Impacts
Not Applicable
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
No
Details of negative impacts for Age
Not Applicable
Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Applicable
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Applicable
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No

Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable



High Weald
National
Landscape

The High Weald National Landscape an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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AONB Management Plan

A 20-year strategy for the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald's natural beauty

THIS EDITION: 2024-2029

A statutory plan adopted by 15 local authority partners setting out their policies for the management of the area and providing an agreed public policy vision for the High Weald 2024-2044

The High Weald

AONB Management Plan

2024-2029

Published by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, on behalf of:

- East Sussex County Council
- Kent County Council
- Surrey County Council
- West Sussex County Council
- Ashford Borough Council
- Crawley Borough Council
- Hastings Borough Council
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Horsham District Council
- Mid Sussex District Council
- Rother District Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- Tandridge District Council
- Wealden District Council



From November 22nd 2023, all AONBs are to be known as National Landscapes. The High Weald National Landscape remains designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is referred to as such in policy, legislation and guidance. For this reason, this document is still titled and referred to as the High Weald AONB Management Plan. Its statutory purpose remains unchanged.

This edition published 2024

- Fourth edition published 2019
- Third edition published 2014
- Second edition published 2009
- First edition published 2004

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Foreword

The High Weald is a remarkably beautiful and precious landscape. It has for centuries inspired artists and writers and been a joyous place for its residents and visitors. Its protection should be of importance to all, and threats to its character should be of concern to all.

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Future generations will view us very poorly if we fail to hand it on to them in good shape. Designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1983, the High Weald now enjoys the greater accolade of 'National Landscape' respecting its great significance beyond its own borders.

The High Weald is part of a family of landscapes which are so special, they have been recognised in law as being of national importance.

In today's rapidly changing world, our landscapes are facing unprecedented challenges. Climate change, habitat loss, and growing pressures from human development threaten the very essence of what makes our National Landscapes so special. As such, it is imperative that we take proactive measures to safeguard our natural heritage for future generations to enjoy.

In line with current policy priorities in landscape and natural beauty, this Management Plan sets out a clear vision for the future of the National Landscape. At its core, this vision aims to strike a balance between conserving the area's natural beauty and wildlife, while also supporting thriving communities and facilitating responsible and sustainable access for visitors and residents alike.

This Management Plan acknowledges the importance of partnership working in achieving our conservation goals. By collaborating, we can leverage our collective expertise and resources to implement effective strategies for protecting and enhancing the National Landscape.

We urgently need to recognise that natural beauty is not to be taken for granted and is an essential and life enhancing foundation for a healthy and sustainable future. Indeed, it is reckless to take it for granted; natural beauty and the landscapes that cradle it deserve to be cherished, protected and celebrated.

I am grateful to all those who have contributed to this excellent management plan. Your dedication and passion for the High Weald are truly commendable and I look forward to seeing the Plan's positive impact for years to come. While I encourage you to read the Plan, I equally encourage you to take every opportunity to get out and enjoy the special beauty of the High Weald.

Philip Hygate FRSA Chair of the National Landscapes Association



The High Weald is an outstandingly beautiful landscape cherished by people and celebrated for its scenery, tranquillity and wildlife. Its ridges and valleys are clothed with an intricate mosaic of small fields interspersed with farmsteads and surrounded by hedges and abundant woods, all arranged around a network of historic routeways. One of the best surviving medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, the High Weald has remained a unique and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years. Covering 1461 sq. km and close to London, this extensive area offers millions of people the opportunity to experience the beauty of nature within working countryside. It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1983, and is now known as the High Weald National Landscape.

‘A landscape not yet bulldozed for speed’

As I walked Out One Midsummer Morning, Laurie Lee, 1969

High Weald National Landscape Partnership

The High Weald Partnership is constituted as a Joint Advisory Committee involving the 15 local authorities that cover the National Landscape (AONB) and representatives of local communities and other stakeholders. Its role is to champion the National Landscape, prepare a joint management plan and coordinate delivery of the Plan's objectives. The Partnership was set up in 1989 as an advisory body. It does not own or manage land in the National Landscape.

Our commitment

- We will work together to recover nature and achieve a landscape-led net zero future for the High Weald through facilitating regenerative land management, encouraging pollution reduction and coordinating ambitious net-zero related planning policies.
- We will work together to protect the distinctive cultural character of the High Weald landscape and its human capital, supporting rural skills and a local economy for food and sustainable materials.
- We will work together to ensure fair access to the landscape as a natural health service, promote ecological literacy in schools and facilitate connections to nature in communities so everyone can enjoy the High Weald's natural beauty.
- We will use the Plan to inform plan-making and assess policies, proposals, and planning applications to fulfil our duty under Section 85 of the CRoW, Act 2000 to ensure they further the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.
- We will use the Plan to guide support for environmental land management and rural development to ensure they conserve and enhance the AONB.
- We will pursue best practice in governance of the Partnership in relation to equity, diversity and inclusion, seeking to engage and empower local communities in decision-making and giving a voice to young people and future generations.

Message from the Chairman

The High Weald Partnership has a vision to foster the restoration and reinvigoration of this beautiful cultural landscape for future generations to enjoy and for nature to thrive whilst supporting our journey towards net zero.

As part of our vision, sustainable activities, farming and community-scale land management will secure long-term economic and social benefits, creating more rural jobs and supporting vibrant community life. An unpolluted and biodiverse landscape will ensure food security, clean air and water, and healthy soil for our children and grandchildren.

Settlements designed around safe and accessible low carbon travel will provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy the health and happiness that the High Weald's natural beauty offers, with well planned housing, tailored to local needs and designed as a high quality response to the character of the area.

This Plan sets out a route map to achieve our vision. A successful outcome relies on all our actions, large and small, and our collaboration as a community.

I would like to thank all those that contributed to this Plan, particularly the staff and colleagues who have worked so diligently to produce it, and I commend it to our partners. We, in the High Weald Partnership will continue to lead and champion the protection of natural beauty so that the legacy bequeathed to us from past generations is passed on restored and renewed for the future.



Councillor Pete Bradbury

Chairman, High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

High Weald Partnership 20-year vision

The High Weald Partnership seeks to ensure that actions taken today leave the High Weald National Landscape as a beautiful and functioning biodiverse landscape for future generations, whether they work, live, or spend their leisure time here.

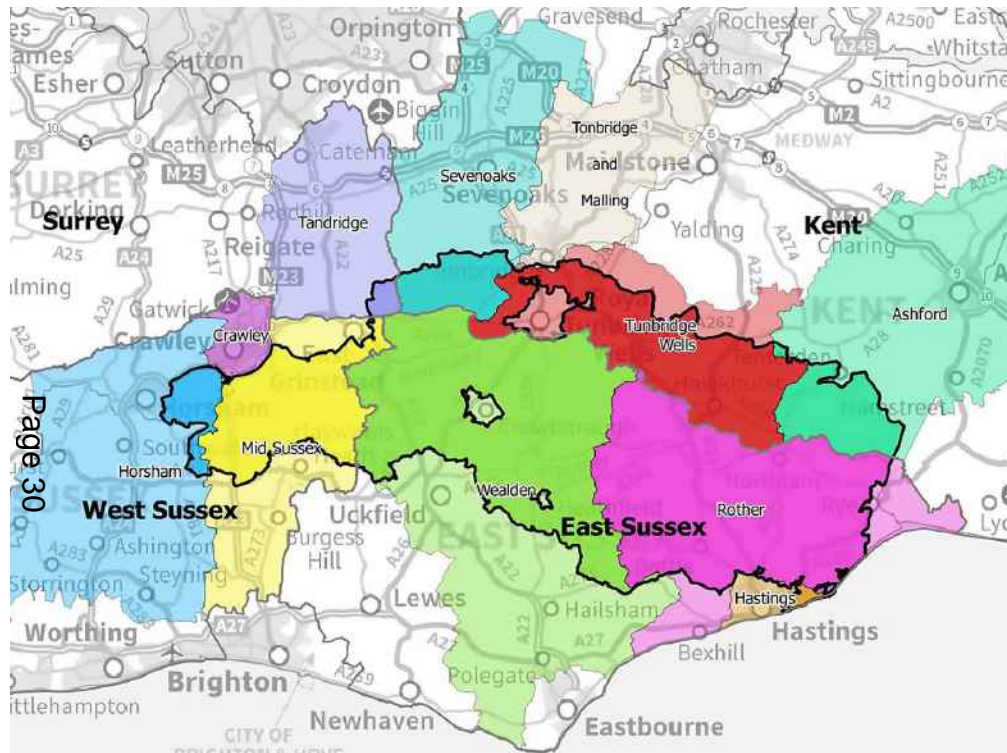
This will require transformational change at a cultural level, with a strengthened appreciation of National Landscape status amongst policymakers supported by increased investment and resources, and wider engagement and understanding. The High Weald Partnership seeks to respond proactively, ambitiously and urgently to ‘drivers of change’, including working towards the national goal of reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, reversing the biodiversity crisis, and reducing development pressure so that the High Weald:

- Page 29
- Retains its distinctive historic character and beauty as a small-scale anciently enclosed working landscape, with a mosaic of landscape features and habitats including woodland, shaws, native hedgerows, gill streams, traditional meadows, lowland heath and built heritage, and has halted the incremental erosion of natural beauty.
 - Has restored its rich biodiversity and abundance of characteristic species, and reinstated healthy water, air and soil systems improving habitat connectivity, condition and ecological resilience.
 - Is maintained as a thriving working landscape with mixed farming and livestock producing nutrient-dense food through sustainable land management practices, such as regenerative agriculture supplemented by leaving land to nature and agro-forestry, with activities and appropriate infrastructure supported and nurtured where they deliver public benefits.
 - Celebrates its woodland history and has revitalised its woodland economy producing highly valued timber products sustained by sensitive small-scale woodland management.
 - Sustains a diverse range of people and more young people working in farming, forestry and rural land management, supported by appropriate workspace, skills training and business investment.
 - Retains its innate sense of rurality, tranquillity and perception of remoteness, allowing people to experience the sounds of nature and changing seasons.
 - Has protected its historic landscape features and heritage assets, allowing people to experience the sense of history everywhere and the visibility of the medieval landscape.
 - Has maintained and enhanced the quality of its dark skies and the ability to see the stars.
 - Exhibits appropriate high quality and landscape-led new housing, including affordable housing, and workspace to support thriving rural communities, and which does not compromise the High Weald’s character, aided by a consistent approach to planning across the National Landscape.
 - Facilitates active participation by people, their communities and businesses, in conserving the area and managing change.
 - Has adopted a net-zero future, relying on nature-based solutions to aid climate cooling and adapt to flooding and extreme weather events, with landscape-led green and renewable technologies, and non-fossil fuel transport underpinning a strong rural economy and thriving communities.
 - Provides a warm welcome and high-quality experience for residents and visitors, and is a more accessible landscape, with modal shifts in transport and more opportunities for walking and cycling, allowing people to engage with nature and enjoy the ‘natural health service’ benefits offered by the landscape.
 - Provides inspiration and enjoyment for people, businesses and communities, and is valued and understood by them and championed by the High Weald Partnership.
- To help achieve this, the Management Plan sets out a 20-year strategy for the High Weald National Landscape, supported by a five-year implementation strategy 2024-2029 with recommended actions to guide the activities of the partnership, partners, stakeholders and communities, along with investment priorities under a number of cross-cutting themes.

Members of the High Weald National Landscape Partnership: Ashford Borough Council, Country Land and Business Association, Crawley Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, Forestry Commission, Hastings Borough Council, Horsham District Council, Kent County Council, Mid Sussex District Council, the National Farmers Union, Natural England, Rother District Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Surrey County Council, Tandridge District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Wealden District Council, West Sussex County Council.

About the High Weald

High Weald AONB counties, districts and boroughs



Fifteen local authorities have adopted the Plan as their policy for the AONB.

AONB boundaries were drawn so as to include land of outstanding scientific value to ensure:

‘The preservation of large tracts of country too large for strict preservation as National Nature Reserves, but yet of great value either physiographically or geologically or as containing complex communities of plant and animal life’.

The Report of the National Parks Committee 1947

Local Authority		% of the HW AONB within each local authority	% of each local authority that is within the HW AONB
County Councils	East Sussex	60.19	50.99
	Kent	25.41	10.21
	West Sussex	13.68	9.87
	Surrey	0.7	0.61
Districts & Boroughs	Wealden	30.53	53.36
	Rother	29.29	82.6
	Tunbridge Wells	15.61	68.88
	Mid Sussex	11.19	48.96
	Ashford	5.69	14.34
	Sevenoaks	4.05	16.0
	Horsham	2.46	6.77
	Tandridge	0.7	4.11
	Hastings	0.37	17.63
	Tonbridge & Malling	0.07	0.39
	Crawley	0.03	1.05



High Weald National Landscape

High Weald in facts and figures

2,570 km of public footpaths, bridleways and byways

Ashdown Forest the largest public open space in South East England

Over 13,000 man-made ponds

>700,000 people within 5km

68 Conservation Areas

100 parishes

57 Medieval Parish Churches

124,000 residents

174,000 hectares in environmental land management schemes

Dissected by 4,613 of small streams

1,562 farm holdings average size 36ha, half the national average size

3,500 historic farmsteads

>12,500km OF HEDGEROWS AND FIELD BOUNDARIES

40% of fields managed with low chemical inputs

639 recorded historic iron working sites

671 inland sandstone outcrops

272 sqkm of ancient woodland highest coverage in any protected landscape

15% designated as wildlife sites

Covering 4 Counties Across 11 Districts

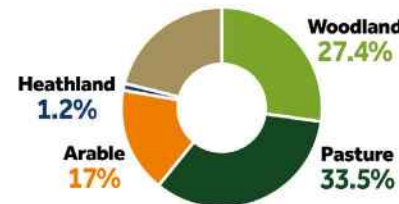
4th largest AONB

>1,800 sites of internationally important gill woodland

5 reservoirs

29 Historic parks & gardens open to the public

Land use



71 Parishes with intrinsically rural Dark Skies

41km of heritage railways

5,296 listed buildings

9.5 Million tonnes of carbon sequestered in trees
18.6 Million tonnes of carbon stored in soils



About our Plan

What is a National Landscape or AONB?

'National Landscape' is the informal term adopted in 2023 to describe an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB) is the legal term for the designation. An AONB is an area of countryside designated by the government to protect its landscape character and the wildlife, natural systems and cultural associations on which it depends in order that people, now and in the future, can enjoy its natural beauty. AONBs (National Landscapes) are protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act), which sets out the legal purpose of AONB designation as being to "conserve and enhance natural beauty".¹

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There are 34 National Landscapes in England, a further four wholly in Wales and eight in Northern Ireland. The 46 National Landscapes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland cover approximately 18% of the land surface.

Together with National Parks, National Landscapes represent our finest landscapes; unique and irreplaceable national assets, each with such distinctive character, biodiversity and natural beauty that they are recognised internationally as part of the global family of protected areas to be managed in the interest of everyone. The distinctive character and outstanding natural beauty of National Landscapes make them some of the most special and loved places in the UK.

National Landscapes are living, working landscapes that contribute some £16bn every year to the national economy. Land in National Landscapes is mostly owned and managed privately with limited ownership by third sector or public bodies. The commitment of all these communities is critical to the designation's success.

1 & 2. [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

What is the purpose of the Plan?

AONB Management Plans are policy documents for the whole of the protected landscape. They are evidence based, locally owned and democratically accountable strategies for looking after these beautiful places in the interests of both people and natural systems. They are formulated to coordinate ambition, policy, investment and action to achieve the legal purpose of 'conserving and enhancing natural beauty' for the benefit of current and future generations, and to set out how people's enjoyment of the area's special qualities can be fostered. The Management Plan is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purposes of the protected landscape are met.

Who prepares the Plan and what is its status?

AONB Management Plans are statutory documents. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities with land in an AONB (National Landscape) to prepare and publish an up-to-date plan which

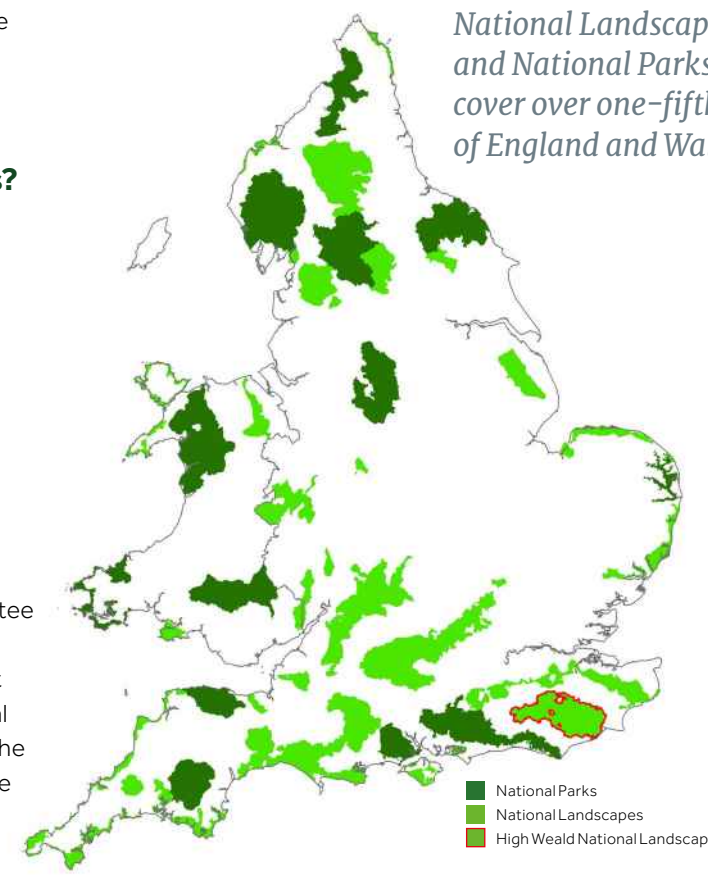
'formulates their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'.²

Where National Landscapes cross administrative boundaries, local authorities are required to act jointly to prepare the plan. In the High Weald, this requirement is delivered through the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), a partnership which includes 15 local authorities covering the area together with community, environment and land-based sector representatives. Following a formal consultation process, the High Weald JAC recommends the Plan to individual local authorities who then each adopt the Plan as their policy for the management of the National Landscape. The Plan is reviewed every five years.

Who is the Plan for and how should it be used?

The Management Plan is relevant to everyone. It guides local authority plan-making and decision-taking, and also has a wider role, setting a 20-year strategy for everyone who lives or works in the High Weald, or visits it, to work towards. The Management Plan defines the Natural Beauty of the High Weald AONB, and sets out the management policy for its conservation and enhancement.

National Landscapes and National Parks cover over one-fifth of England and Wales



The Plan is divided into two parts. The first part describes the core components of natural beauty to be conserved and enhanced, providing long term objectives supported by five-year ambitions and proposed actions to guide the activities of the partnership, partners, and stakeholders during the Plan period. The second part addresses the main drivers of change (or cross-cutting themes) affecting the High Weald in the Plan period, providing principles to underpin activities and a strategy for investment 2024-2029. The ambitions and actions in Part 1, and principles and investment strategy in Part 2, constitute the five-year implementation strategy of this Plan.

Government, statutory undertakers and other public bodies (such as NHS England, Forestry Commission and Natural England) or person holding public office can use the Management Plan to help ensure they are fulfilling their Section 85 duty to 'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of the High Weald AONB³. Additionally, the public can use the Management Plan to highlight to relevant bodies the natural beauty and needs of the AONB, and the actions that should be taken to protect it.

AONB 'setting'

The Management Plan may also be applied to the area's 'setting'. The term 'setting' is used to refer to areas outside the National Landscape where development and other activities may affect land within a National Landscape. Its extent will vary depending upon the issues considered, however, due to the high synergy in character between the National Landscape boundary and the wider High Weald National Character Area (NCA)⁴, land within the NCA should be considered as falling within the setting of the National Landscape. Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 requires

public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in an AONB. Not all activities will be detrimental; conservation practices and economic activities outside the National Landscape can support the National Landscape's conservation purpose.

How was the Plan prepared?

Management Plan preparation follows a formal process requiring preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment and other appropriate assessments to comply with UK law. Public comment and engagement were sought throughout the Plan preparation, and a formal consultation process undertaken in October 2023.

The following documents have been prepared in support of this Plan:

AONB Management Plan Review (2023)

Strategic Environmental Assessment. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

AONB Management Plan Review (2023)

Habitats Regulations Assessment. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

AONB Management Plan Review (2023)

Equality Impact Assessment Screening Report. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

Savanta (2022)

Visitors to the High Weald AONB. High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

The above documents can be found at www.highweald.org

The AONB Management Plan and local authority functions

The Management Plan is relevant to any local authority function that may have an influence upon the natural beauty of the AONB, including:

- Planning and development, including neighbourhood planning
- Scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas
- Building regulations and energy efficiency
- Waste, environment protection, pesticides and pollution
- Libraries and museums
- Animal health and welfare, biodiversity, flooding and marine areas
- Rights of way and coastal access
- Food and food safety
- Public health, mental health, social care and young people
- Highways, traffic management, public transport and parking
- Education

A full list can be found at Statutory duties placed on local government – data.gov.uk

³ Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (legislation.gov.uk)

⁴ NCA Profile:122 High Weald – NE508 (naturalengland.org.uk)



The High Weald's landscape

The High Weald occupies the ridged and faulted sandstone core of an area known from Saxon times as the Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in Northern Europe. The mosaic of small mixed farms and woodlands is considered to represent a quintessentially English landscape.

At first glance the High Weald appears to be a densely wooded landscape, but closer examination reveals a detailed agricultural tapestry of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads. Everything in the High Weald landscape is human scale. Wildflower meadows, alive with bees and grasshoppers, are now a rare delight, but the medieval pattern of small fields with sinuous edges surrounded by thick wooded hedges remain. Extensive views punctuated by church spires can be glimpsed along the ridge-top roads. Around almost every corner, a harmonious group of traditional farm buildings comes into view with their distinctive steep, clay tile and hipped roofs.

The High Weald is crossed by one of the most famous routeways in English history, the one that took King Harold's army from victory at Stamford Bridge to defeat at Hastings in 1066. Today, its rich detail is still best explored through the myriad of interconnecting paths and tracks. Here you can walk in the footsteps of our medieval and Anglo-Saxon ancestors, who used this dense network of routeways to move between the wooded Weald and settlements on its fringes where farming was easier. These tracks remain a visible legacy of the value communities placed on the resources of the forest.

Woodland still covers nearly a third of the area in an intricate network of farm woods, wooded shaws, pits and gills, and larger wooded estates. Medieval forests and deer parks were extensive, with significant remnants surviving in Ashdown Forest, Worth Forest, Waterdown (Broadwater) Forest, St Leonard's Forest and Dallington Forests. Most of the woodland is ancient, managed in the past as coppice and swept with magnificent carpets of bluebells and wood anemones in the spring. Of the mature oaks for which the Weald was once famous, few remain. The drier sandy soils favour pine and birch within a patchwork of lowland heath.

More ancient woodland survives in the High Weald than anywhere else in the country owing to the small size of Wealden holdings, the importance of crafts to supplement the income from agriculture on poor soils and the high economic value of timber for ships and buildings, and to fuel the iron, glass and cloth industries. Woods were enclosed and managed as coppice with standards, producing underwood and construction timber. Large, widely spaced trees in hedgerows and parklands produced the crooked boughs required for shipbuilding. In the 17th and 18th centuries, when hop growing expanded so did the extent of chestnut coppice for hop poles.

Indications of the area's busy industrial past are everywhere, from the large houses built by wealthy ironmasters and clothmakers, to the charcoal hearths, pits and ponds of the iron industry scattered through ancient woodlands.

The small scale and historical patterning of the landscape, with intermingling woodland, wetland and open habitats, and many interconnected linear features supporting semi-natural vegetation makes for a rich and accessible landscape for wildlife. Sandstone exposed as outcrops or along the wooded gills is a nationally rare habitat and supports a rich community of ferns, bryophytes and lichens. The High Weald meets the sea at Hastings cliffs, an area of undeveloped coastline consisting of actively eroding soft cliffs of sands and clays. The numerous gill streams of the High Weald give rise to the headwaters and upper reaches of rivers, with those to the east

important in the past as trade routes for timber, iron and wool out to the coastal ports on Romney Marsh.

The High Weald is well-known nationally for its wealth of historic houses and gardens including Sheffield Park and Ashburnham Place, both of whose landscaped gardens were designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown; the ruined 13th-century Bayham Abbey, with grounds landscaped by Repton; the follies at Brightling created by 18th-century eccentric 'Mad Jack' Fuller; Bodiam Castle, moated and dating from the 14th century, Standen, the Arts & Crafts house designed by Philip Webb; the Jacobean house Batemans, home to Rudyard Kipling; Great Dixter, restored by Lutyens with an internationally-renowned garden created by Christopher Lloyd; and Great Maytham, home to Frances Hodgson Burnett, whose walled garden provided the inspiration for

97% of people find the High Weald's scenery, tranquillity and proximity to nature appealing

High Weald Public Survey, 2018

her classic children's book *The Secret Garden*.

Such accents stand out against the backdrop of a rich tapestry of vernacular architecture composed of materials distinct to the High Weald and which contribute to the unique sense of place, cultural identity and local distinctiveness of both the area as a whole, and its individual settlements.

Wilder elements reminiscent of the former forest survive amid this beautiful small-scale landscape, shaped by man, inspiring many notable people. These include the architect Norman Shaw, painter William Holman Hunt, and William Robinson, who pioneered the creation of the English natural garden, as well as writers Rudyard Kipling and A.A. Milne, who set his much-loved stories about Winnie the Pooh in Ashdown Forest.

The High Weald forms the central core of a geological landform of sedimentary rocks, the Wealden anticline, which underpins the south east. The unique geology of the Weald is shared with only three places in Europe – the northern part of the Isle of Wight, and parts of the Boulonnais and Pays de Bray in France. The Purbeck Beds, which lie along the Battle ridge, form the oldest sediments, having been laid down in shallow lagoons at the end of the Jurassic period (142 million years ago). Iron-rich clays and sandstones followed as the landscape changed to one of flood plains and rivers. The area gradually sank below the sea and around 75 million years ago the great uplift began, followed by compression which folded and faulted the strata. Subsequent weathering has cut through the strata, exposing the layers as sandstone ridges and clay valleys. The amazing variability of soils produced has shaped the Weald's economic and therefore social history.

With rising temperatures at the beginning of the post-glacial period, and the continuing land link to Europe, arboreal species were able to expand with birch, hazel and pine being followed by oak, elm, alder, ash and lime. There is some evidence for small-scale, sporadic and temporary clearance by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. From c6000 BC, when Britain became separated from Europe, people had already begun to change the landscape; this is evidenced by the scatter of flints used for hunting and the use of fire to make clearings to entice prey. Periodic woodland clearance continued with Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age hill forts indicating active communities in Ashdown Forest, but it was the medieval practice of transhumance – the seasonal movement of people and animals between the settlements on the borders of the Weald and its interior – coupled with exploitation of the valuable resources of the forest, that transformed the Weald into the settled landscape we see today.

*Edited and adapted from *The Kent and Sussex Weald*, Peter Brandon, 2003*

Natural Beauty and the legislative purpose of AONBs (National Landscapes)

The legal purpose of AONB designation is to **conserve and enhance natural beauty**⁵ (CRoW 2000). Section 85 of the CRoW Act sets out the general duties of public bodies ('relevant authorities'):

*“In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.”*⁶

In the first half of the 20th century, cultural landscapes such as the High Weald were considered to be 'natural' countryside reflecting centuries of human interaction with nature which pre-dated industrial farming. Their distinctive patterns of land cover (landscape character) included unique settlement patterns, building forms and material palettes, and they were enriched by features of scientific (wildlife and geology) and geographic interest and cultural associations originating from centuries of non-mechanised land management.

The 1949 Act summed up this combination of character and interest as 'natural beauty'. Access to natural beauty was seen as a right for everyone now and in the future, with the pleasurable aesthetic experience and sense of wellbeing gained from immersion in nature considered a societal good and a necessary precursor of health and happiness for all.⁷

'Natural beauty' has been the basis for the designation of both AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 Act. Natural beauty is a holistic concept, and whilst the term has never been exhaustively defined in legislation, over the years, qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage but is not restricted by them.

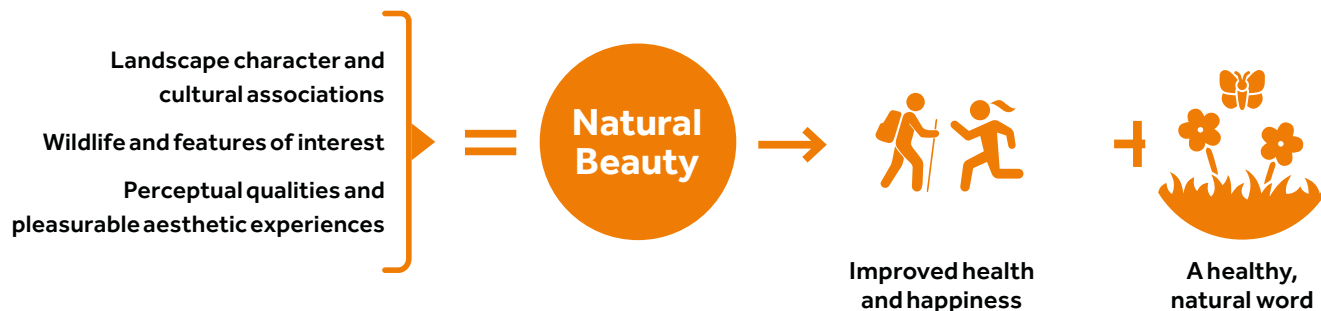
Government guidance relating to AONBs provides a useful non-technical definition:

'Natural beauty' is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features, and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries.⁸

This includes scenic quality, tranquillity and cultural heritage (including the built environment), that makes the area unique.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land used for agriculture, woodlands, parkland or with physiographical features is not prevented from being treated as an area of 'natural beauty'.

For the purposes of this Plan, the High Weald's natural beauty is defined by the Statement of Significance overleaf and expanded in the character component sections of this plan.



5. Updated from 'preserve and enhance natural beauty' in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

6. Amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023

7. (Dower 1945).

8. Guide for AONB partnership members 2001 CA24, available to view at [National Landscapes - Historical Papers \(national-landscapes.org.uk\)](http://National Landscapes - Historical Papers (national-landscapes.org.uk)).

“What aspects of the High Weald do you value most?”

Public Survey 2022



Scenic beautiful walks

Rolling hills

Its natural light

Tranquillity

Unspoiled views

The greenery

Wooded countryside

The peacefulness

Diverse flora and fauna

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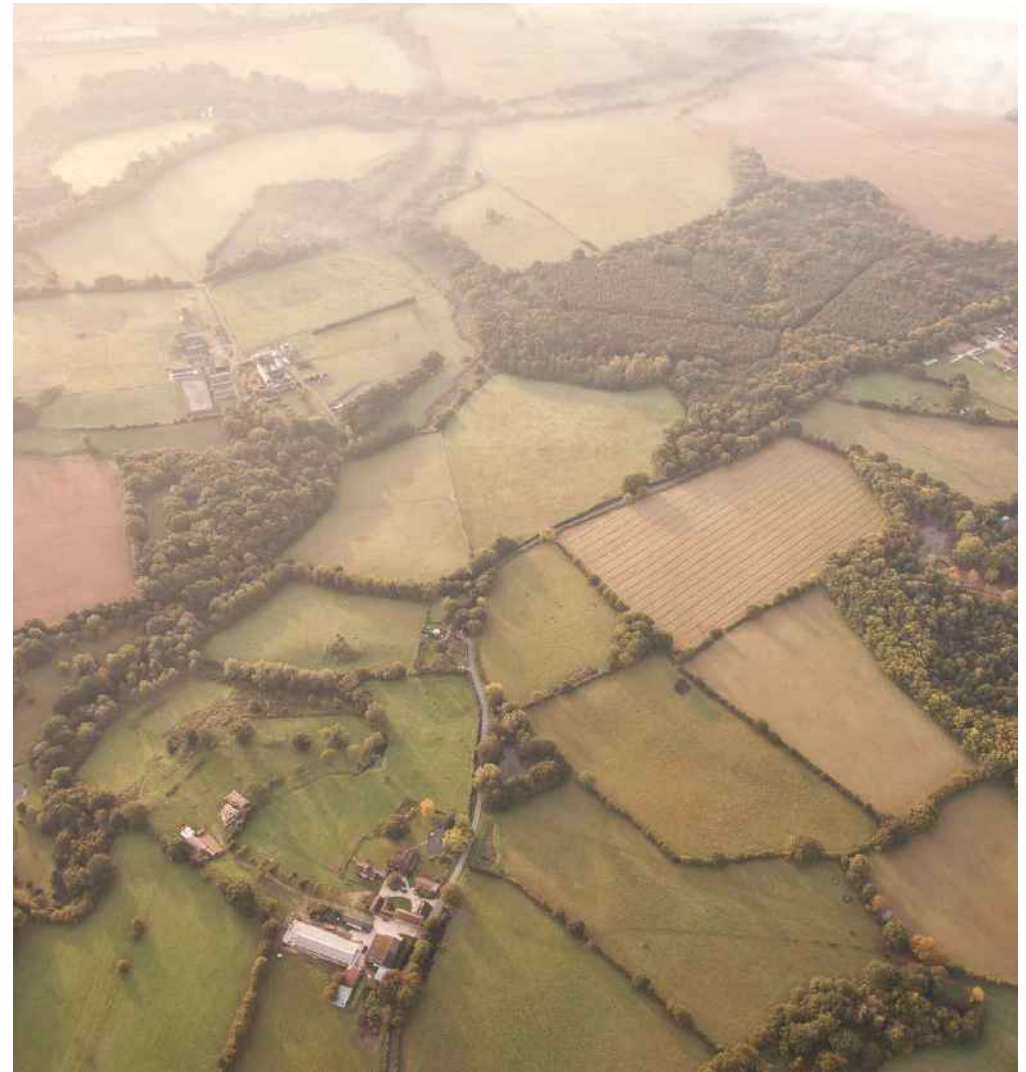
High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Statement of Significance

The High Weald is one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe. Despite its large size (1,461 sq.km) and proximity to London, its landscape has remained relatively unchanged since the 14th century, surviving major historical events and accommodating significant social and technological changes.

The natural beauty of the High Weald AONB is derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character, rich in wildlife and cultural features. It has been created by historic and locally distinctive agricultural and forestry practices, with the story of its past visible throughout. The extensive survival of woodland and traditional mixed farming supports an exceptionally well-connected green and blue infrastructure, with a high proportion of natural surfaces. Food production and semi-natural habitat are interwoven in a structurally diverse, permeable and complex mosaic supporting a rich diversity of wildlife. A dense network of historic routeways and public rights of way provides access for people to get close to nature and experience its natural beauty. The pattern and landscape setting of dispersed historic settlements enriches its natural beauty, with small, irregular fields and pasture, hedgerows and ancient woodlands interspersed with the rich clay-tiled roofscapes of historic buildings. Greenness, a sense of tranquillity and dark skies contribute to the perceptual and scenic qualities people enjoy.

The Plan articulates natural beauty through eight core character components which are rooted in the historic characterisation of the High Weald landscape as a whole, and represent the cultural imprint of generations on the natural inheritance of the area. These components encompass finer-grained key characteristics which include habitats, features of interest and cultural associations, and all combine to create a distinct and recognisable landscape whose natural beauty exceeds the sum of its parts.

Each core component of natural beauty is of equal and stand-alone importance in its own right, (i.e., they cannot be ranked) and any policy or action may be considered harmful to the AONB if it results in the loss of, or material harm to, any of these components of character. *All* of the AONB is important; any areas perceived as 'degraded' should be seen as opportunities for enhancement of natural beauty contributing positively to the purpose of designation and objectives of the Management Plan.



Core Character Components of the High Weald's natural beauty comprise

1

Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate) – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.

2

Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets and late-medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

3

Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).

4

Woodland – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.

5

Fieldscapes and heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).

6

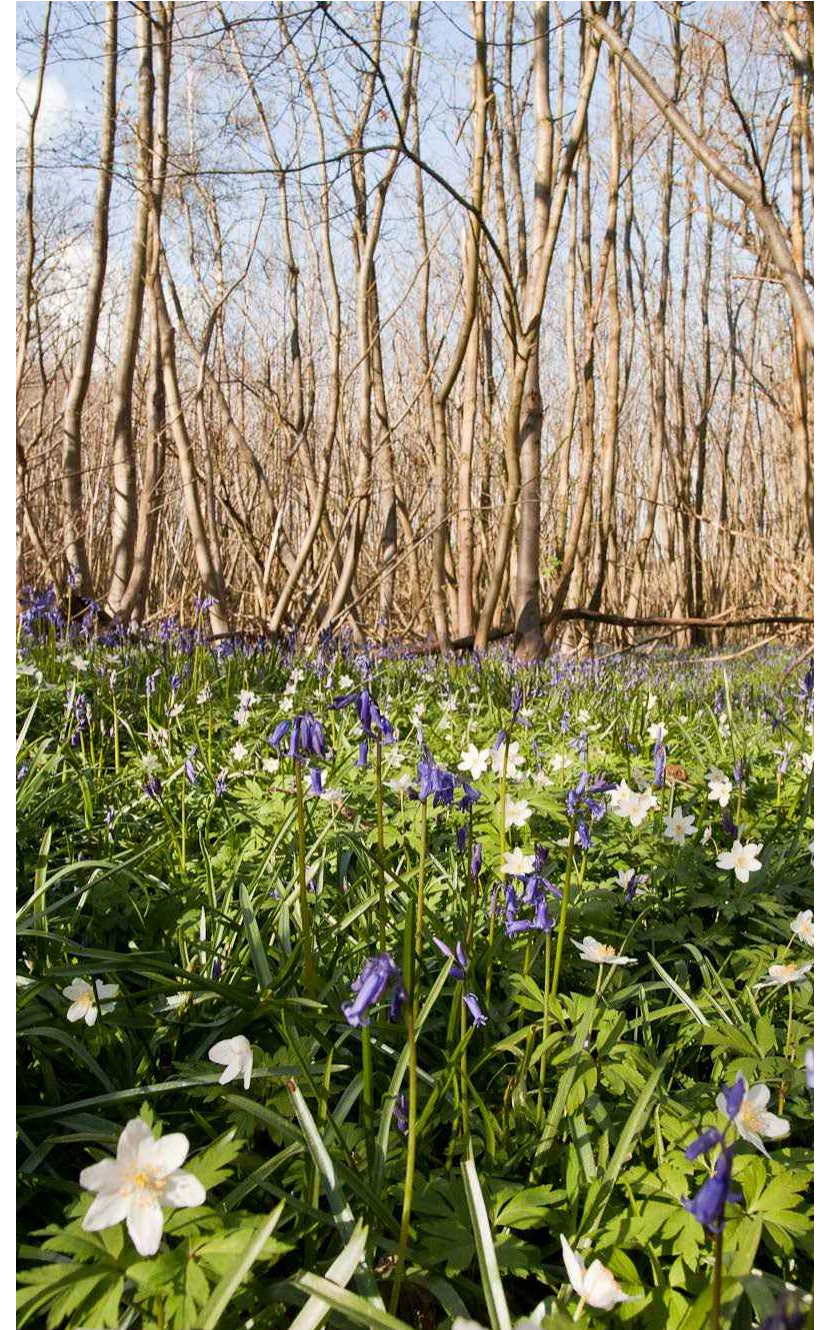
Dark night skies – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.

7

Aesthetic and perceptual qualities – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.

8

Land-based economy and rural living – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.



Character Components

The following sections of the Plan describe each of the core components that underpin the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB in more detail, including **key characteristics** for conservation and enhancement, and the **top five issues**. It sets out for each component a series of **objectives** along with **actions** recommended to guide the activities of partners and stakeholders.

The Actions are set under three headings:

“The partnership will...”

this means actions for the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

“Public bodies should ...”

this means actions for all relevant authorities⁹ including Local Authorities, Parish Councils, Highways Authorities, Statutory undertakers (such as telecoms, water and energy companies etc), and government departments and ALBs (arm’s length bodies) – such as Defra, Natural England, Historic England, Highways England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission.

“Others can assist conservation and enhancement of natural systems by...”

this means actions for landowners, farmers, community groups and other organisations including environmental NGOs.

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Cross-cutting themes

Over the next 20 years, the High Weald AONB is facing a number of drivers of change which have the capacity to impact significantly on its core character, and which need to be addressed in this plan period.

Addressing the interconnected threats of the climate emergency, biodiversity, and soil health are priorities for everyone over the next five years, as we can mitigate many of these threats if real-world action is taken now. The challenge will be to capitalise on the High Weald AONB’s ability to restore nature, grow healthy food and reduce carbon emissions while supporting vibrant and diverse rural communities.

The **drivers of change** set out in Part 2 of the Plan are cross-cutting issues which can affect each of the core character components and their objectives. That section of the Plan sets out our strategic principles and priorities for focusing resources and targeting investment on cross-cutting programmes that address these themes.



9. As defined in Section 85 of the CRoW Act

Cross-cutting themes: Drivers of change 2024-2029



Loss of soil and degradation of soil health

Soil is an essential resource. Soil loss and degradation affect the AONB's ability to produce healthy food, but soil also provides a huge array of other benefits from carbon sequestration and nutrient cycling to restoring the water cycle and flood mitigation. Degraded soil biology affects the health and biodiversity of above and below ground ecosystems that depend upon it, with soil erosion causing sediment loss which undermines the health of our river systems.



People and Access

Inequitable access to the countryside means missing out on the range of health and wellbeing benefits associated with being able to spend time in nature and unequal access to the experience of living and working in the countryside. It concerns everyone today, as well as future generations. Disengagement with the natural world because of a lack of fair access impedes societies' ability to robustly tackle issues affecting the natural world.



Biodiversity crisis

While the High Weald retains rich assemblages of species (particularly associated with its patchwork historic countryside), habitat loss, pollution, pesticide use and inappropriate/lack of management of habitats have cumulatively harmed species diversity and abundance across key habitats such as ancient woodland and permanent grassland. The loss of plant and animal species affects the High Weald's ability to be a functioning and resilient landscape.



Planning & Development

The scale of housebuilding in the High Weald AONB is currently at an unprecedented level; the High Weald is experiencing the highest level of housing growth of any AONB in England.^{10, 11} Pressure from ever increasing numbers of new developments is eroding the historic settlement pattern of the High Weald and the rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness. Meeting the climate, biodiversity and inequality challenges of the next 20 years will require transformational change in the way that development is planned for and delivered in the High Weald AONB. Being nationally designated for their outstanding natural beauty, AONB landscapes should be exemplars of sustainable planning and design.



Climate Emergency

This global issue threatens almost every aspect of the planet and our lives from economics to biodiversity, human health and wellbeing, to infrastructure and food production. The High Weald is already seeing changes in economic land use, more harmful tree diseases and increased flooding. The UK has committed to a legally binding net zero target by 2050 with interim targets to achieve a 68% reduction in UK carbon emissions by 2030 on 1990 levels (Climate Change Conference COP26).

10. [An-independent-review-of-housing-in-Englands-AONBs-2012-17.pdf\(cpre.org.uk\)](#)

11. [Beauty-still-betrayed.pdf\(cpre.org.uk\)](#)



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CHARACTER COMPONENT

Natural Systems (Geology, Soils, Water and Climate)

The High Weald AONB is characterised by a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone creating soils which are highly variable over short distances. The ridges tend east-west, and from them spring numerous gill streams that form the headwaters of rivers. Wide river valleys dominate the eastern part of the AONB. The landform and water systems are subject to, and influence, a local variant of the British sub oceanic climate.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Impressive coastal cliffs of interbedded sandstones and clays (Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach SSSI and Hastings Cliffs Special Area of Conservation); natural, dynamic, evolving and rich in Lower Cretaceous fossils.
- A principal ridge (Forest Ridge) running east – west from Horsham to Cranbrook with an attached ridge (Battle Ridge) extending to the sea at Fairlight.
- A pattern of faults and folds that distinguishes the High Weald from the rest of the south and east of England, with a high concentration of springs associated with fault lines.
- Numerous small streams descending the main ridges in narrow steep-sided valleys (gills), historically often dammed to power industry with many 'pond bays' and 'hammer ponds' surviving.
- Distinctive outcrops of sandstone in the form of crags (popular with climbers) and inland sea cliffs, gill stream bed and banks, old quarries, and along road edges associated with the survival of rare cryptogam communities (ferns, lichens, liverworts and mosses).
- A high density of pits, quarries and ponds resulting from a long history of stone quarrying, surface mining and marl extraction.
- Locally-distinctive geological materials – sandstone, clay bricks and tiles, and Horsham stone – contributing to high-quality vernacular architecture.
- Carbon-rich soils, often undisturbed, that are distinguished by their variability over short distances – characterised as slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acidic clayey soils, with pockets of sandy acidic soils.
- Heavily channelised and intensively managed river valleys in the eastern High Weald (Rother, Brede and Tillingham) originating in the medieval period, with natural floodplain wetlands rare.
- A high density of ponds, five times higher than the national average, with a wide range of pond types supporting significant species such as great crested newts and emerald dragonflies.
- An oceanic climate featuring cool temperatures relative to the latitude, a narrow annual temperature range with few extremes, and rain throughout the year.

Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures

● 7.6km of eroding sea cliffs designated an SSSI in recognition of the considerable biological, palaeontological and geological interest. ● A unique Lower Cretaceous mammal fauna at Fairlight, one of a handful of localities in the world to have yielded early Cretaceous mammal remains. ● 671 inland sandstone outcrops. ● >315sq km of undisturbed soils. ● 18.6 million tonnes of carbon stored in High Weald soils (to 150cm depth). ● Crowborough Beacon, the highest point at 242m above sea level. ● Headwaters of seven river catchments – Medway (Beult, Eden and Teise), Rother (Brede and Tillingham), Thames (Mole), Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere. ● 253km of main river channel supporting nationally rare species such as otter and water vole; and coarse and salmonid fisheries. ● A European hotspot for gills. ● 4,613km of water courses in total, including tributaries and streams. ● 13,401 ponds (9/sq. km compared with a national average of 1.8/sq. km) with an estimated 1600 supporting great crested newts. ● 769 springs. ● Five reservoirs including Bewl Water, the largest body of inland water in the South East. ● 20 sq. km of wetlands including reedbeds, lowland fens, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, purple moor grass and rush pastures. Home to a rich array of birds, including reed warbler and marsh harrier.



TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Climate crisis – the impact of rising temperatures and extreme weather events such as flooding, drought, inundation, tidal surges and storms.

2

Pressure on sensitive geological features from invasive species and recreation.

3

Soil health, the need to improve soil conservation and prevent detrimental soil erosion.

4

Pollution (and diffuse pollution) affecting biodiversity – including from public and private sewage treatment facilities; artificial fertilisers, pesticide and fine sediment run-off into ponds, streams and rivers.

5

Invasive species in rivers, water bodies, wetlands and bankside vegetation.

OBJECTIVE G1

To restore the natural function of rivers, water courses and water bodies.

Rationale

To improve water quality, water resource and structural habitats associated with water; to enhance the role of rivers, water courses and water bodies in supporting and increasing biodiversity, cooling the environment, protecting people and communities from flooding, and promoting enjoyment of wetlands.

OBJECTIVE G2

To protect landform and geological features including sandstone outcrops.

Rationale

To conserve landform and topography on which the High Weald’s character depends, and maintain nationally important geological exposures, allowing for erosion where appropriate, conserving the fern, moss and liverwort communities they support, and protecting their value as significant sites of prehistoric archaeology in the AONB.

OBJECTIVE G3

To pursue net zero across the High Weald without compromising its characteristic landscape beauty.

Rationale

To ensure that transformative mitigation and adaption policies are tailored to the High Weald’s defining landscape character.

OBJECTIVE G4

To restore soil health across the High Weald.

Rationale

To increase carbon sequestration and storage potential of soils, as well as water holding capacity to reduce flooding following high rainfall. Improve the soil ecosystem which supports above-ground and below-ground biodiversity and habitats across the High Weald. Healthy soil has higher nutrients for plants, which reduces the need for artificial fertilizer use in the long-term.

Ambitions for 2029

Harnessing the regenerative power of natural systems and restoring their health will need to be the focus of land-use policy to prevent climate and ecological collapse. Monitoring of pollutants and operations damaging to water, air and soil will need to be improved, enforcement strengthened, and government support targeted at best practice. Climate mitigation and adaptation policies at a local level will need to be guided by the Management Plan in order that solutions are tailored to protect natural beauty.

Further information on maintaining the natural systems of the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org.

ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Produce a climate cooling and net-zero plan for their own operations utilising near-term science-based targets, with the intention of achieving net zero for its own operations by spring 2029.
- b. Work with partners to develop a climate cooling and net-zero vision for the High Weald landscape, taking into account the particular character components of the natural beauty of the High Weald, to inform and guide partner decision-making (refer to Cross-cutting theme: Climate Crisis Priorities for detail).
- c. Promote regenerative land management (including maintaining woodland cover) focusing on soil health.

Public bodies should ...

- d. Ensure developments seek to avoid substantive alterations to landform.
- e. Ensure new developments and land use changes protect undisturbed soils, minimise use of permanent impermeable surfaces, and ensure best practice is complied with to protect soils during construction from compaction, pollution and erosion.
- f. Design for new development to maintain and improve natural geomorphological processes (i.e. natural bank erosion) and natural flood capacity.
- g. Ensure water is retained / slowed e.g., by sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), being aware of possible impacts on vulnerable heritage assets, and supporting grey water recycling schemes.
- h. Seek solutions (such as clear-span bridges) for crossing water courses that minimise adverse impacts on river and stream habitats; avoiding new culverts and remove existing culverts where possible.
- i. Work with landowners and other organisations to agree an invasive species control plan for water systems and geological sites.

- j. Resist the use of carbon credit offsetting where the technologies exist to reduce carbon emissions on-site.
- k. Promote ambitious climate cooling scenarios that lead to the earliest reductions in emissions and urban temperatures (refer to Cross-cutting theme: Climate Crisis Priorities for detail).
- l. Support the recovery of High Weald watercourses, including headwaters, by restoring natural processes in order to benefit a range of aquatic and riparian habitats and associated wildlife.
- m. Support fossil fuel-free and public transport initiatives, encouraging walking, cycling and other travel alternatives where possible.

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of natural systems by...

- n. Leaving buffer zones of minimum 5m (10m on slopes) along streams, rivers and ponds.
- o. Encouraging rivers, streams and ponds to develop naturally, with targeted support for vulnerable species such as water vole and rare habitats such as floodplain woodland.
- p. Allowing natural processes and adopt approaches that allow nature to express its capacity to sequester carbon e.g., natural regeneration.
- q. Producing protection plans for ferns, mosses and liverworts at vulnerable sandrock sites.
- r. Adopting soil regeneration approaches to the management of farmland, public spaces and gardens, to prioritise soil health, including minimal soil disturbance practices e.g., no ploughing.
- s. Avoiding run-off of sediment, inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and pollutants into streams, rivers and ponds.
- t. Pursuing appropriate management of ditches and ponds for wildlife and farming.
- u. Allowing targeted riparian woodland creation in appropriate locations primarily through natural regeneration.



CHARACTER COMPONENT

Settlement

The High Weald AONB is characterised by dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads, hamlets, and late medieval villages and market towns founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries. The landscape setting of these settlements underpins the distinct and picturesque small-scale landscape character, with rolling pastures and small ancient woodlands of the countryside interspersed with the rich clay-tiled roofscapes of historic buildings.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- High density of historic farmsteads surrounded by their own fields, with a long continuity of settlement in the same place; their position strongly influenced by topography and routeways.
- Villages and towns mostly of medieval origin located at historic focal points or along ridge top roads, typically centred around open areas used for meeting places and trade, with markets' charters granted in the 13th and 14th centuries.
- Hamlets occurring around the junction of routeways or small commons (which became greens or forstals), or as clusters of cottages serving a particular industry.
- No significant nucleation prior to the 13th century (apart from Battle).
- Large-scale settlement extensions after AONB designation in 1983 are uncharacteristic.
- Pockets of small wayside cottages (peasant settlement enclosing roadside commons or later worker cottages) interspaced with fields.
- Distinctive settlement types and pattern in the eastern High Weald relating to history of the Rother Estuary and river trade.
- Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with individual historic farmsteads, and historic field systems abutting and containing historic settlement.
- Frequent interconnected green spaces within villages linking to the countryside and offering glimpse views to countryside beyond.
- Verdant character of settlements, with substantial soft landscaping; grass verges, lush hedgerows edging front curtilages, and full tree canopies breaking up the built form.
- Frequent – den and – fold place names echoing the area's history of pasturing cattle and pigs.
- Farmsteads typically arranged around routeways, with loose courtyard plan-types common and dispersed plan-types particularly characteristic. Tend to be relatively modest, typically comprising a farmhouse and a barn, often aisled to at least one side with small-scale ancillary structures, mostly for cattle, which face into their own, generally small, yards.
- High numbers of pre-1750 timber-framed farm buildings with typologies representing locally-distinctive historic agricultural practices, including oast houses and other structures associated with the hop industry (hop-pickers' huts); where a complete range exists, these are rare and particularly significant.
- High concentrations of historic buildings in all settlement types, many listed, whose form and appearance reflects historic and socio-cultural functions (such as the prevalence of craft industries), with locally distinctive typologies, including medieval Wealden Hall Houses (found either as rural farmhouses, or incorporated into the fabric of villages and towns, and often much disguised through later alterations), and features such as catslide roofs.
- Villages and hamlets typically unlit contributing to intrinsically dark skies landscapes.
- A limited palette of local materials intrinsically linked to geology and landscape character, reinforcing local distinctiveness: clay as tiles and brick, timber as weatherboard and framing, and some localised instances of stone.

Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures

- 17 market towns and villages with populations >2,000, the largest being Battle with a population >6,000.
- 11% households classified as isolated farms (compared with an average of 8% across all protected landscapes).
- 98.3% households in areas classified as rural.
- >3,500 historic farmsteads.
- 5,274 listed buildings.
- 57 medieval parish churches.
- 50 registered parks and gardens on Historic England register.
- 64 village conservation areas.
- 91 scheduled ancient monuments.



TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Increase in greenfield development pressure for housing, threatening the character of the AONB.

2

Generic layout and design of new housing developments failing to reinforce AONB character.

3

Erosion of AONB character through the cumulative effects of suburbanisation, including the residential fragmentation of farmsteads; the extension of residential curtilage boundaries, additional annexes and outbuildings, inappropriate boundary treatments, hard surfacing and kerbing, and large intrusive replacement buildings.

4

Declining housing affordability, including lack of social housing and key worker housing suitable for land-based workers.

5

Infill development eroding the greenness and open space of villages, threatening the character of settlement and reducing green connectivity and opportunities for community enjoyment.

OBJECTIVE S1

To protect the historic pattern and character of settlements.

Rationale

To protect the distinctive character and landscape settings of towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads, remove despoiling influences, and maintain the hinterlands and other relationships (including separation and green infrastructure) between settlements that contribute to local identity.

OBJECTIVE S3

To conserve the distinct built heritage of the High Weald.

Rationale

To protect and preserve the character and setting of heritage assets (designated and non-designated); historic traditional buildings and built features distinct to the High Weald area, including the historic public realm (e.g., traditional signs, railings, milestones and paving treatments).

OBJECTIVE S2

To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure new development reflects the character of the High Weald in its siting, scale, layout and design.

Rationale

To enhance the beauty and quality of buildings in the High Weald, and ensure new development reflects intrinsic High Weald character and place-making, embedded with a true sense of place, along with re-establishing the use of local materials and rich colour palette as a means of protecting the environment and adding to local distinctiveness.

‘[development should be] fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the land use and local building style’.

Lord Strang, Chairman of the National Parks Commission, speaking about designated landscapes in 1959.

‘Places and buildings... tend to be enriching elements in the sum of scenic beauty’.

Report on National Parks 1945

Ambitions for 2029

Conserving the dispersed historic settlement pattern, which arose before the advent of the private car, will require positive planning and innovative sustainable transport strategies. New housing development will be small-scale and in keeping with the character of the area. Its location and design will be based on meeting local needs (including affordability and housing mix) through high quality and landscape-led place-making and design principles that reflect intrinsic High Weald character, embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity in the use of local materials and net zero technologies. The energy performance of existing housing stock will be upgraded, whilst still preserving the special character and local distinctiveness of the historic built environment and heritage assets.

Further information on maintaining the settlement pattern of the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org

ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Develop technical appendices to support the High Weald Housing Design Guide, on topics such as sustainable and net zero design, soft landscaping, and the public realm.
- b. Develop and deliver training and capacity-building programmes for LPAs and other partners regarding the Housing Design Guide, to improve design scrutiny in planning decision-making.
- c. Seek to support LPAs in developing landscape-led planning policies that contribute to net zero regarding settlement in the AONB, including location of development and sustainable transport strategies (refer to Cross-cutting theme: Climate Crisis Priorities for detail).
- d. Support neighbourhood planning groups to utilise the AONB Management Plan, data and guidance.
- e. Promote the desirability of the reduction of housing pressure and pressure for greenfield development in the AONB.

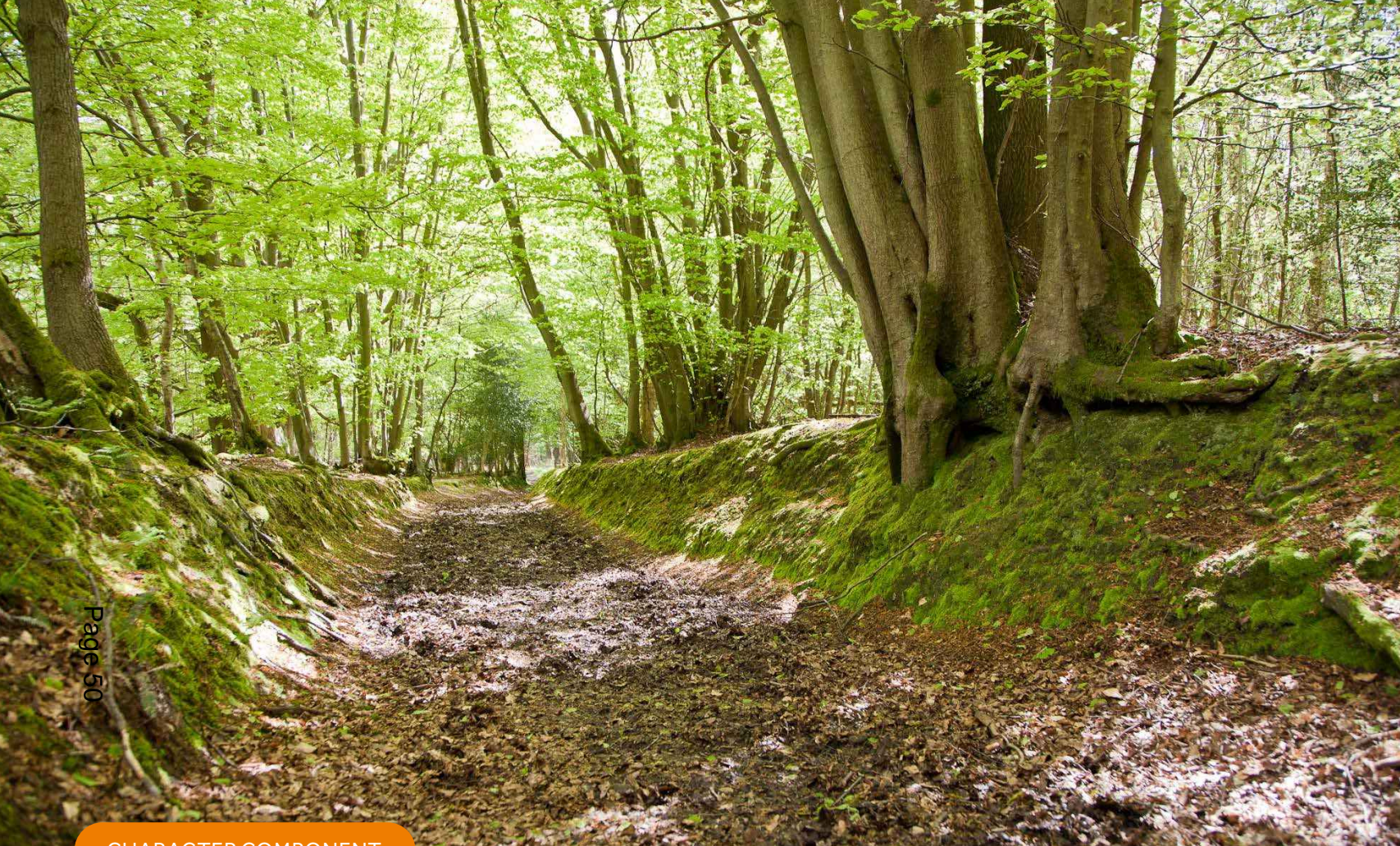
Public bodies should ...

- f. Promote use of the High Weald Housing Design Guide and historic landscape characterisation to guide settlement planning and to help avoid generic approaches to layout and design of new development.
- g. Ensure there is reference to the AONB Management Plan and to the AONB Housing Design Guide in local plans, neighbourhood plans and other public documents, and ensure its use as material consideration in planning decisions; planning policy, site allocations and development management.
- h. Pursue landscape-led positive planning approaches to settlement planning and housing delivery in the AONB, seeking to prioritise the delivery of new housing primarily through small-scale development consistent with AONB character, recognising the potential for harm through the cumulative effects of separate developments on the designated landscape.
- i. Seek to deliver a mix of housing sizes and types that respond to local needs, including the specific requirements of land-based workers and affordable housing.

- j. Identify and protect areas of separation between settlements and green/blue infrastructure connections across settlements, for both landscape setting and ecological values.
- k. Seek to minimise erosion of AONB character through suburbanisation in rural areas, including landscape-intrusive replacement dwellings, extensions to residential curtilages, annexes, and smaller interventions such as new accesses and solid fences, which have a cumulative effect.
- l. Ensure the design and maintenance of highways and the public realm, including street furniture, has regard to local distinctive character and avoids suburbanisation or generic approaches.
- m. Protect and preserve the character and setting of historic traditional buildings and features distinct to the High Weald area, including medieval hall houses, catslide roofs, oast houses and other traditional agricultural buildings, structures such as cattle sheds and hoppers' huts, and the compositional qualities of farmsteads.
- n. Pursue a listed building review to tackle the under-listing of historic farm buildings, along with seeking to increase local listing.

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of High Weald settlement by ...

- o. Using the High Weald Housing Design Guide in the earliest stages of the process of developing proposals to inform High Weald specific, landscape-led approaches to layout.
- p. Adopting a local and renewable materials first procurement policy, and supporting activities which celebrate and promote local products and services.
- q. Making space for wildlife to thrive around buildings, gardens and urban spaces and the public realm, and encouraging planting for nature with native species of local provenance and pollinator-friendly plants.
- r. Avoiding operations which sterilise soil or cover it with impermeable materials or plastic grass.



CHARACTER COMPONENT

Routeways

The High Weald AONB is characterised by historic routeways (now roads, tracks, bridleways and paths), the oldest being in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways. These are often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees, hedges, wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks. These locally distinctive lanes and rights of way often display quietness and rurality in their visual and perceptual character, and they are valuable green infrastructure, creating high public accessibility within the AONB and good connections between settlements.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A dense, radiating network with a variety of origins including:
 - Droveways, used for moving livestock, radiating out to pre-historic sites on the edge of the Weald.
 - Ridgeways on high ground and often running east-west, closely associated with pre-historic sites and medieval trading settlements.
 - Roman roads cutting across these patterns and strongly associated with iron-working sites.
- Typically present by the 14th century, with many extending back into pre-history and pre-dating settlements.
- Sunken routeways ('holloways') found on sloping land as a result of long use and erosion combined with water run-off.
- 'Braiding' common resulting from people, animals and vehicles finding alternative routes through impassable areas.
- Earth banks, lynchets and ditches typically indicating the former width of the routeway or to separate users from farmland or woodland.
- Wide grass verges common, indicating the historic width of routeways and their function as linear common grazing.
- Species-rich verges as well-preserved relics of their woodland or grassland habitat.
- Small-scale variations in habitat associated with a complex mixture of substrates, aspects and moisture levels supporting a rich biodiversity, especially invertebrates.
- Frequent sandstone exposures, adding diverse assemblages of specialist plants and animals.
- Linear nature facilitating foraging and dispersal and contributing significantly to the ecological interconnectedness of the High Weald.
- Veteran trees and ancient roadside coppice (often showing evidence of laying) frequent, providing niches for lichens and deadwood-dependent beetles.
- Many lost, stopped or diverted routeways evidenced by holloways, earth banks and depressions in the ground.
- Associated heritage public realm features – pre-1964 fingerposts, 'black and white' road signs, roadside milestones.
- Archaeology and cultural associations in the eastern High Weald from trade and the practice of exporting heavy goods (e.g., timber and iron) by floating them at high tide on waterways navigable until the late 13th century.

Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures

- 2,570km of public rights of way. ● More than 75% of public rights of way are historic (i.e., present on Ordnance Survey maps from at least 1860). ● 1,873km roads.
- More than 80% of roads are historic (i.e., in existence since at least 1800). ● The High Weald is crossed by one the most famous routeways in English history – the one that took King Harold's army from victory at Stamford Bridge to defeat at Hastings in 1066. ● Two main Roman roads (London-Lewes and London-Hassocks/Brighton). ● Droveways dating to the Anglo-Saxon period and earlier for moving livestock (pigs and cattle). ● More than 4,400km of highly interconnected green infrastructure bounded by flower-rich verges, hedges and woods.



TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Extinguishments of public rights of way (PRoWs) and diversions away from the historic route.

2

Loss of historic roadside character through development and erosion from motor vehicles and wide agricultural machinery, particularly in wet conditions

3

Damage to paths, tracks and Byways Open to All Traffic from the erection of fences; erosion from off-road vehicles, inappropriate surfacing and planting, fly-tipping, and ploughing up of lost routeways.

4

Insensitive management of veteran trees/roadside coppice and poorly planned verge cutting regimes and ditch clearance, resulting in the smothering of woodland flora on shady banks with wood chip, and of wildflowers on relic grassland verges with grass cuttings/spoil.

5

Insensitive highway engineering including passing bays, deep visibility splays to entrances, and urbanising features such as roundabouts, signage and lighting.

OBJECTIVE R1

To maintain the historic pattern, morphology and features of routeways.

Rationale

To maintain and restore a routeway network that has a symbiotic relationship with settlement location, hinterlands and identity, and is a rare UK survival of an essentially medieval landscape; to protect the individual archaeological features of historic routeways such as sunken lanes; and to avoid harming character of routeways with urbanising features.

OBJECTIVE R2

To protect and enhance the ecological function of routeways.

Rationale

To protect, and improve the condition of, the complex mix of small-scale habitats along routeways, including verges, for wildlife and nature recovery, and maintain routeway boundaries as part of a highly interconnected habitat mosaic.



Ambitions for 2029

Routeways walked for hundreds of years will need protection from unnecessary diversions, alterations, or suburbanisation, while the historic and ecological importance of associated routeway features such as verges, hedges, ditch and bank systems, and roadside coppice, to connect and restore nature will need to be recognised, protected and appropriately managed. A re-prioritised hierarchy of routes, with functional routes for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, and other active travel, connecting homes, schools, services and businesses may be needed to meet the net zero challenge, along with improved public access to the countryside for leisure.

ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Provide training for highway management engineers and contractors to ensure all roadside verges are managed sensitively for landscape character, including biodiversity and archaeology.
- b. Provide guidance to PRow teams in local highway authorities for considering historic routeways in the High Weald in diversion/ extinguishment applications.

Public bodies should ...

- c. Identify historic routeways in highway improvement plans (including Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs)) and consider management tailored to enhance their historic character, including early intervention to protect banks.
- d. Ensure there is reference to the AONB Management Plan in Local Transport Plans (LTPs), and ensure its use to inform highways works and to support funding bids
- e. Avoid diversion of historic routeways and have regard in decision-making and in the planning process, to the historic alignment of roads, tracks and paths, .
- f. Assess, and where appropriate recognise, historic routeways as non-designated heritage assets in the planning process.
- g. Resist new access points that would damage the character of sunken routeways.
- h. Discourage lane widening, the introduction of lay-bys, or casual parking that erodes or dilutes the pattern of routeways.
- i. Identify ecologically rich historic routeways in biodiversity and green infrastructure planning.

- j. Prioritise the specialist management of ecologically rich road verges in highway management, including following best practice advice¹²; implementing appropriate cutting regimes, avoiding smothering with chip piles or grass cuttings and ditch dredging, and refraining from planting non-native species.
- k. Support the identification, retention and restoration of traditional fingerposts, railings, boundary stones and turnpike features (e.g., milestone and toll houses), adding to the relevant Historic Environment Record where appropriate.
- l. Adopt careful approaches to any upgrading proposals to historic routeways as part of access enhancement, and seek to take enforcement action against unauthorised works, to ensure proposals do not adversely affect the natural beauty of the High Weald (refer to Cross-cutting theme: People & Access Principles for detail).

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of High Weald routeways by

- m. Avoiding fencing and other activity such as the use of machinery which damages routeway archaeology (including ditches and banks) or that alters its historic alignment.
- n. Encouraging the identification and protection of ecologically rich roadside verges and alerting the relevant Highways Authority to their presence or damage.

¹² [Managing-grassland-road-verges-2020.pdf\(plantlife.org.uk\)](https://www.plantlife.org.uk/management/12-managing-grassland-road-verges-2020.pdf)

Further information on maintaining the historic routeways of the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org.



CHARACTER COMPONENT

Woodland

The High Weald AONB is characterised by the great extent of woodland including ancient woods, gills and shaws, the product of traditional long-term management. The nationally important assemblage of ancient woodland in the High Weald has immense wildlife, landscape and historical value, while the wider cumulative visual character of trees and hedgerows dividing small irregular fields is fundamental to the verdant nature and appearance of the landscape.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods, larger forests and numerous linear gill woodlands, shaws, wooded routeways and outgrown hedges, and isolated trees.
- High proportion of woodland is categorised as ancient woodland (46%), typically broadleaved coppice with a rich ground flora, with many more woodlands equivalent in conservation interest. A further fifth of woodland is protected 'plantations on ancient woodlands' (PAWS), much of which is under restoration.
- Many irregularly shaped small woodlands interlinked with shaws, isolated trees, thick hedges and wooded sunken lanes, forming an intimate part of the farmed landscape.
- A number of very large woods lying mostly along the high sandy ridges, such as Dallington and Bedgebury; and remnants of the area's medieval hunting forests, including at Worth Forest and Ashdown Forest.
- Visible evidence of historic use and exploitation (including coppice stools, stubs, pollards, boundary bank and ditch systems, routes and tracks; remains of Roman and medieval iron-working such as slag heaps and ponds, and large earthworks relating to the harnessing of waterpower to fuel furnaces, forges and mills).
- High density of gill woodlands (deeply incised ravines with particularly humid and relatively stable microclimates) – the oldest and least disturbed woodland in the south east supporting a community of plants, vascular and non-vascular, not found together anywhere else in Europe, and important for rare plant species such as small-leaved lime, hay-scented buckler fern, Tunbridge filmy-fern, and rare invertebrates including beetles and molluscs.
- Frequent patches of wet woodland associated with surface water in the form of steep sided streams, springs, wet flushes and water-filled extraction pits, important for regionally distinctive species such as smooth-stalked sedge.
- Large numbers of isolated trees (often remnants from lost woodlands or hedges), such as in-field trees that provide additional connectivity to the wider landscape, as well as shelter and food source to a wide range of species.
- A stronghold for characteristic species such as dormice, and remnant populations of rare species such as pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.
- Open woodland mosaics of wooded heath, which support both heath plants such as heathers and trees, and act as a transitional habitat.
- Considerable variability in woodland types and tree forms over short distances reflecting the variety of soils, micro-climates and drainage conditions (Principle National Vegetation Classification communities are W10 and W8 with some W15 and W16 on sandier ridges).
- Wood-pasture and parkland, mostly originating from once extensive historic deer parks; an archaeological and cultural feature, open habitats or open heath supporting veteran/ancient trees and their associated wildlife.
- Nationally significant resource of epiphytic (plants that grow on other plants rather than the soil) and dead-wood dependent species supported by a wealth of veteran trees.
- A traditionally strong commercial woodland industry focused on coppice and locally grown hardwoods.
- A culture of small-scale management by people using hand tools to produce a wide variety of products mostly for local use.
- Trees used for boundary markers (including outgrown old laid hedges, stubs and pollards), many of which are accessible on public rights of way.

Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures

● 28% woodland cover (nearly 3x English average). ● 83% broadleaved woodland, the majority as coppice. ● Highest coverage of ancient woodland in any protected landscape (3/4 all woodland or 19% land cover) covering 273sq km of undisturbed woodland soil. ● >2,800 parcels of ancient woodland under 2ha. ● Nationally significant: 8% of England's ancient woodland resource. ● <22% ancient woodland classified as Plantations on Ancient Woodlands (PAWS). ● 191sq km gill woodland in > 1,800 sites supporting internationally rare cryptogams. ● 56sq km UK BAP priority habitat: wood pasture and parkland. ● More than 7.5m tonnes of carbon stored in woodlands and their soils with an additional > 0.75m tonnes sequestered every year. ● 3sq km traditional orchards containing 34 apple varieties.



CLICK FOR MAPS

TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Predicted increase in tree diseases such as ash dieback and spruce bark beetle, partly through imported stock or soil, and continued damage from invasive species including rhododendron, grey squirrel and deer damage from over-population of deer across the High Weald.

2

Procurement practices and lack of investment restricting market growth for higher value locally sourced wood products.

3

Lack of management where needed, particularly cessation of traditional coppicing affecting ground flora, and fauna species such as fritillaries.

4

Impact of increasing mechanisation and machinery size on soils, the variation and structural complexity of woodlands, and archaeology.

5

Impact of development close to ancient woodland resulting in increased noise and disturbance, and pressure to fell trees and hedgerows as part of development, (including post-development) with a cumulative impact on ecology and reduction in tree cover.

OBJECTIVE W1

To maintain and restore the existing extent and pattern of woodland cover and particularly ancient woodland.

Rationale

To ensure irreplaceable habitats and biodiversity loss are repaired for the benefit of nature and future generations. To maintain a key component of the cultural landscape, and to preserve the high levels of carbon storage in woodland soils and biomass.

OBJECTIVE W3

To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.

Rationale

To protect the historic environment of the AONB woodlands.

OBJECTIVE W2

To protect and restore the ecological quality and functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.

Rationale

To increase the viability of the woodland habitat for wildlife, by identifying and extending the area of appropriately managed woodland (including restoring plantations on ancient woodland) to link and enhance isolated habitats and species populations, providing greater connectivity between woodlands and other important wildlife areas, and helping to facilitate species' response to climate change.

OBJECTIVE W4

To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.

Rationale

To achieve the most effective management that will deliver the other objectives for woodland, to contribute to sustainable domestic timber production, and to support a working countryside.

Ambitions for 2029

With the beauty and biodiversity of woodlands in the High Weald already under threat from a combination of pests and diseases, disturbance, a warming climate and invasive species, protection will need to focus on fostering healthy and resilient woodlands and buffering through natural regeneration to allow nature to thrive. Tackling invasive species and deer will be a priority. Non-intervention approaches will become more common unless traditional coppice regimes are being maintained or woodlands are being managed for high-quality timber. In these cases, management will be predominantly small-scale with industrialised mechanical harvesting avoided to protect archaeology and soils. Local timber and underwood will once again be essential materials for buildings, fencing and other uses.

ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Support landscape scale initiatives and nature recovery projects to reverse the decline in key woodland species and protect and enhance vulnerable habitats such as gill woodlands and wet woodland.
- b. Seek to ensure agri-environmental schemes and similar grant schemes are tailored to the specific needs of the High Weald woodland.

Public bodies should ...

- c. Resist development that risks the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland or veteran trees, including ASNW and PAWS, through direct and indirect impacts as set out in the Natural England and Forestry Commission 'standing advice' **Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions**
- d. Ensure appropriate buffer zones to woodland, (minimum 15m zones, when justified by survey, otherwise 25m) to protect from the detrimental direct and indirect impacts of nearby developments, including activity and light spill.
- e. Recognise the ecological and landscape value of non-designated woodland and trees, and ensure design of new housing development retains existing woodlands, shaws and other trees in and adjacent to schemes, for ecological and landscape character benefits.
- f. Require woodland archaeology assessments for woodland which would be affected by development, and provide data to county Historic Environment Records, ensuring this is used in the planning process.
- g. Protect ancient woodland soil and ground flora from inappropriate management practices such as heavy machinery damage and chipping-to-mulch, and to consider such practices as part of assessments of felling licence applications and in highways management / statutory undertakers' protocols.
- h. Enhance and restore shaws and gill woodlands.

- i. Support appropriate commercial woodland management, in particular tailored support for a vibrant timber economy in the High Weald woodland landscape.
- j. Promote the use of small dimension roundwood timber in construction and use of untreated local timber for traditional purposes such as fencing, public realm seating, signs and weatherboard.
- k. Adopt UK tree and plant health biosecurity policies and support local provenance tree nurseries.
- l. Tailor environmental land management support to control invasive species, including landscape-scale deer management; grey squirrel eradication; and removal of rhododendron and other damaging invasive plants from ancient woodland, particularly gill woodland.

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of woodlands by:

- m. Controlling invasive species such as rhododendron, grey squirrels and deer.
- n. Avoiding activities, such as fencing or use of heavy machinery, which damage archaeological features (e.g., ditch and bank systems, holloways and saw pits).
- o. Maintaining stock-proof fences and hedgerows around ancient woodland to avoid livestock damage.
- p. Avoiding use of large-scale machinery and instead using traditional techniques such as hand cutting, horses or small-scale machinery for woodland management to avoid damage to High Weald woodland.
- q. Allowing natural regeneration in and around woodland where appropriate.
- r. Keeping woodlands, including buffer zones, free of litter, garden waste and ornamental plants.
- s. Demonstrate responsible woodland access; avoiding disturbance to breeding birds or trampling damage to ground flora.

Further information on maintaining woodland in the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org.



CHARACTER COMPONENT

Fieldscape and Heath

The High Weald AONB is characterised by an intricate and scenic mosaic of small, irregularly shaped and productive fields often bounded by hedgerows, shaws and small woodlands and in-field trees, and typically used for livestock grazing and small-scale horticulture; within which can be found distinctive zones of lowland heath and inned / reclaimed river valleys. Predominantly undisturbed and highly productive Grade 3 good agricultural grazing land, reflecting the typical and historic agricultural practices of the area, and as such is intrinsically valuable to the landscape character.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small (less than three hectares).
- Fieldscape characterised by historic farmsteads surrounded by their own fields resulting from medieval farming in severalty i.e., land held by individuals rather than in common.
- Strong influence exerted by topography with many field systems aligned to or 'hanging' from (at right angles to) linear features such as watercourses or ridge-top roads.
- Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale livestock farming, and undisturbed soils contributing to carbon sequestration.
- Fields, mostly permanent pasture, used for grazing livestock with some small-scale horticulture and cropping.
- Medieval fieldscape character dominant, with a high proportion of field systems created by assarting (woodland clearance) with sinuous mixed woody boundaries and shaws, and thick hedges common.
- Boundary ditch and bank features typical, along woodland edges or topped with hedges and veteran trees.
- A rich, extensive network of ancient mixed species hedgerows of high ecological and landscape character value.
- Wide, verdant historic hedgerows traditionally managed by laying.
- Unmanaged fields quickly succeed back towards woodland because of abundant tree seeds from the pattern of small woodlands bounding many fields.
- Nationally important fragments of species-rich grassland (such as NVC MG5), supporting an incredibly rich variety of plants, animals, and grassland fungi.
- High proportion of fragmented species-rich grassland scattered within a landscape containing a high proportion of good quality semi-improved grasslands.
- Traditional orchards and hop gardens scattered across the landscape forming part of the visual fieldscape and also providing dead and decaying wood for invertebrates, and a mosaic of other habitats.
- A frequency of deer parks and later 18th-century estates.
- Ashdown Forest (an extensive area of common land and one of the largest continuous blocks of lowland heath, semi-natural woodland and valley bog in the south east) supporting internationally important populations of nightjar and Dartford warbler.
- Distinctive areas of wooded heath and lowland heath scattered along the sandy ridges supporting a complex mosaic of plant communities, rare species such as marsh clubmoss, and more than half of UK's dragonfly species.
- Fragmented grass and ericaceous heath is found particularly on old forest ride systems and along woodland ridges and old hedge banks throughout the High Weald.

'The existence of a flourishing and progressive agriculture is fundamental to...the preservation and enhancement of the characteristic landscape.'

Report of the National Parks Committee, Sir Arthur Hobhouse, 1947



CLICK FOR MAPS

Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures

- >1,500 farm holdings (2nd highest number of holdings in an AONB) with >750 livestock holdings.
- 17,000 RPA registered parcels of land <1.5ha.
- Average farm size is less than half the national average.
- 70% of fields remain unaffected by reorganisation in the late 20th century.
- >12,500km of hedgerows and field boundaries providing homes for pollinating insects and a source of wild food.
- 220sq km land owned by conservation organisations or designated under international or UK law to protect wildlife, including 64sq km internationally important sites and 51 SSSI's covering 55sq km.
- <3% land cover known wildflower meadows with estimated <40% fields semi-improved grassland with potential for enhancement.
- Nearly 50% of AONB supported by government-funded schemes to encourage environmentally sensitive land management.
- 85% of land is Grade 3 and 4 under the Agricultural Land Classification.
- <5% agricultural holders under 35 years old.
- Steep decline in livestock numbers, with sheep and cattle numbers down by one-third since 2000.

TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Fragmentation of farm holdings due to an increase in non-farming land ownership and loss of farm infrastructure e.g., barns at a holding level

2

Declining agricultural workforce and consequential reduction in sustainable food production

3

Increasing costs of maintaining grazing infrastructure (including reducing supporting agricultural infrastructure such as livestock markets and abattoirs) and costs of managing significant levels of associated habitats such as hedgerows.

4

Loss of green fields to development and infrastructure, or conversion to other land uses such as woodland.

5

Loss of high value grasslands (unimproved and semi-improved) and hedgerows through land use change, inappropriate management and lack of management, leading to fragmentation of habitats, affecting biodiversity and species resilience.

OBJECTIVE FH1

To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.

Rationale

To contribute to sustainable domestic food and non-food agricultural production, to support a working countryside, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to reduce the dependency of the UK on non-sustainably managed agricultural land and the need for long-distance transport that produces air pollutants, causing harm to health and the environment.

OBJECTIVE FH2

To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.

Rationale

To maintain fields and field boundaries that form a part of the habitat mosaic of the High Weald; and to maintain this key component of what is a rare UK survival of an essentially medieval landscape.

OBJECTIVE FH4

To protect individual archaeological features as well as historic assets and pattern of fields and heath.

Rationale

To protect the historic environment of the AONB that includes the pattern of fields, and individual archaeological features.

OBJECTIVE FH3

To protect and enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.

Rationale

To improve the condition, landscape permeability and connectivity of fields and heaths and their associated and interrelated habitats (such as hedges, trees, woodlands, ditches, ponds and water systems) for wildlife.

Ambitions for 2029

The management of fieldscapes will need to change substantially over the next five years, with regenerative approaches to food production and nature recovery becoming the norm. The comprehensive decline in biodiversity will not be reversed by focusing on nature reserves only. Fieldscapes will need to be restored so wildlife can thrive there. The small-scale nature of the High Weald's fields are ideally suited for productive farming using regenerative agricultural practices. The smaller, permanent grass fields suiting holistic planned livestock grazing with the grass and surrounding trees and hedges providing nutrient-rich forage for cows, sheep and other livestock. These will need to be interspersed with wilder areas providing reservoirs for pollinators and other wildlife. New and innovative approaches, such as agroforestry, will need to be trialled with layered production of nuts, soft and top fruit becoming more common, taking advantage of the High Weald's ability to grow trees and grass well. Small-scale vegetable production using regenerative agriculture practices to supply local markets will need to increase, drawing on the High Weald's mixed farming history. Chemical input from pesticides and artificial fertilizers will need to be drastically cut. There may be a small increase in tree cover and scrub, but most of the fieldscapes and heathy areas will remain as open habitats.

ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Seek to ensure agri-environment schemes and other farming support schemes are tailored to the specific needs of the High Weald landscape.
- b. Prepare best practice guidance for sustainable land management of the High Weald.
- c. Facilitate landscape scale initiatives aimed at reversing biodiversity loss associated with field and heath management.
- d. Continue to provide a High Weald specific land management advisory service (specialising in regenerative approaches) to landowners and managers, including providing support to farmers entering agri-environment schemes.
- e. Support and facilitate scientific research in collaboration with academic institutions to further knowledge and understanding of the semi-improved grassland spectrum, and support dissemination of best practice management to advisors and site managers.
- f. Provide specialist advice to support the management of boundary features including hedgerows, coppice and veteran trees.

Public bodies should...

- g. Require development to protect and enhance existing field patterns, including hedges, ditches or other boundary features, and where possible to restore them when lost, and in particular avoid harm to medieval field systems in planning and decision-making, especially where there is a high degree of intactness or relationship with other notable landscape and heritage features.
- h. Develop and deliver tailored support for pasture-fed livestock farming utilising regenerative grazing and soil conservation management techniques.

- i. Recognise in decision-making the food productivity value and quality of grade 3a and 3b soils as being of greater importance to the High Weald's pastoral agriculture economy and landscape character than simply the ALC grade.
- j. Promote and enforce the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, in recognition of the importance of hedgerows in the High Weald.
- k. Foster small-scale horticulture (soft and top fruit, nuts and vegetables) and associated necessary infrastructure.
- l. Support development of an audit of unimproved and semi-improved meadows.

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of fieldscapes and heath by...

- m. Developing veteran tree replacement plans for hedges and shaws.
- n. Utilising local provenance wildflower seeds and plant plugs to create or enhance grassland.
- o. Restoring, protecting and managing hedgerows as part of a diverse hedgerow mosaic, reinstating lost hedgerows, and ensuring hedges are cut only between September and March to avoid damage to wildlife
- p. Avoiding new woodland planting on medieval fieldscapes and heath, and on species-rich grassland, to protect grassland and heathland biodiversity.
- q. Protecting local and heritage breeds and crop varieties to preserve genetic diversity.
- r. Proactively encourage management and monitoring of local wildlife sites and review the designation of new sites.
- s. Sensitively managing and restoring lowland heathland as a key habitat.

Further information on maintaining the fieldscapes of the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org.

CHARACTER COMPONENT

Dark Skies

The High Weald AONB is characterised by having some of the darkest skies in the south-east of England. This gives the AONB a sense of remoteness and peacefulness and connects the natural environment to the cultural and historic landscape.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Intrinsically dark landscapes with a sense of naturalness.
- Some of the intrinsically darkest skies in Southern England, with the least skyglow.
- Our own galaxy, the Milky Way, is observable, as well as the planetary bodies.
- Key constellations such as Orion, Ursa Major and Cassiopeia are visible to the naked eye.
- Deep sky objects are visible to the naked eye, such as the Andromeda Galaxy and Orion Nebula.
- Many rural villages with few street lamps or no street lighting.
- Numerous unlit roads, including A-roads, throughout the High Weald.
- A range of nocturnal species which are dependent on dark skies for feeding, including Natterer's bat, serotine bat, brown long-eared bat, common pipistrelle, noctule bat, Bechstein's bat, dormice, hedgehog, the heart and marsh mallow moths, and glow-worms.

**Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures**

● 41 of the 99 parishes within the AONB have wholly dark or intrinsically dark skies. ● A further 15 having 95% coverage of intrinsically dark skies. ● 20 parishes in the AONB have collected light meter readings. ● 15 of the 17 UK bat species are found in the High Weald, all of which are protected.



TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Lack of minimum standards for external lighting that can be enforced. Standards are needed to set out basic principles of dark skies lighting and signpost to guidance and advice where needed.

2

Increased light pollution in rural areas from a variety of buildings and structures including new developments (street lighting and domestic light spill); housing designed with extensive glazing, such as wrap-around or floor-to-ceiling windows; external security lighting; rural out-buildings; public buildings and spaces such as railway stations; camping and glamping sites, and domestic lighting used to light-up homes and gardens at night.

3

Sky glow from adjacent built-up areas (including areas adjacent to the AONB), which reduces views of celestial bodies such as the Milky Way and Orion, leading to a loss of public connection and enjoyment of night skies.

4

Impacts on local wildlife, with light pollution disrupting circadian rhythms, migration, feeding and breeding across all animal groups including invertebrates, mammals, birds and amphibians.

5

Lack of education on the importance of dark skies to human health and wellbeing, as well as their significance to the natural environment.

OBJECTIVE DS1

To preserve the dark skies of the High Weald AONB by minimising light pollution, obtrusive external lighting and internal light spill from domestic, commercial and public premises in both existing and new developments within the High Weald, and from highways lighting.

Rationale

To protect and maintain the existing dark skies within the High Weald for the benefit of all, including future generations, for our health, wellbeing and enjoyment, to increase our understanding and sense of place in the universe; and for the benefit of wildlife and to reduce energy consumption.

OBJECTIVE DS2

To protect wildlife and habitats from light pollution across the High Weald.

Rationale

Light pollution affects a wide range of nocturnal species and those out during the day, from feeding to finding a mate and the ability to safely migrate. Light pollution is an additional stress to habitat loss for already declining populations of many species across the High Weald.

‘Artificial light at night has revolutionized the way we live and work outdoors, but it has come at a price. When used thoughtlessly, lighting disrupts wildlife, damages human health, wastes money and energy, contributing to climate change, and it blocks our view of the starry sky’.

International Dark-Sky Association

Ambitions for 2029

Protection of the night-time environment of the High Weald, for nature, and to ensure astronomical dark sky objects such as the Milky Way remain visible to the naked eye, will require the level of artificial light at night to stay at its present low level, with everyone (individuals, communities, businesses including developers and public bodies such as Highways Authorities) committed to environmentally responsible approaches to outdoor lighting, and adopting new technologies.

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ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Promote dark skies awareness and education, including walks and talks aimed at a diverse range of people and organisations, across different geographical areas of the High Weald, and the promotion of International Dark Skies Week.

Public bodies should ...

- b. Include 'Dark Skies' policies in Local Plans and support their inclusion in neighbourhood plans, which seek to maintain dark skies in rural areas and reduce dark skies light pollution in urban areas in the AONB, and ensure the use of such policies in the decision-making process.
- c. Follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) guidance on reducing obtrusive lighting, and other relevant guidance to aid protecting dark skies, including ensuring that lighting designers use exterior light control environmental zone E1 to inform any proposed lighting in, or affecting the setting of, the AONB.
- d. Protect wildlife-rich habitats such as ancient semi-natural woodland from external lighting, and where lighting is needed, require minimised and ecologically informed lighting schemes regarding location, direction, lux levels, colour temperature and light fitting design.
- e. Seek to reduce light pollution by ensuring that flood-lit facilities such as sports pitches and car parks are turned off when not in use, through agreements and planning conditions.
- f. Work with organisers of light festivals to reduce impacts, including avoiding light and illumination shows in or near to wildlife sensitive areas.

- g. Avoid new street lighting where possible and ensure any street lighting required for junctions on adopted roads is kept to the minimum necessary and adheres to best practice in terms of location, illuminance and equipment design and light temperature, to avoid unnecessary skyglow and light spill.
- h. Resist large areas of glazing in new building designs, especially wrap-around glazing and floor-to-ceiling windows, to minimise light spill, especially in rural areas with intrinsically dark skies.

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of dark skies by ...

- i. Following best practice for external lighting on domestic premises including gardens and garages, to minimise light pollution.
- j. Ensuring new external lighting is installed at the lowest height possible to achieve lighting levels, and is angled downwards (including roof lighting), and using dark sky friendly fixtures.
- k. By using sensors to switch off lighting when not needed, to reduce light pollution and save energy.
- l. Collecting local light meter readings and using satellite data to inform policies at a parish level and highlight light pollution hot spots.

Further information on maintaining the dark skies of the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org.



CHARACTER COMPONENT

Aesthetic and Perceptual Qualities

Aesthetic and perceptual qualities are sense based, and are experienced as a result of people's interaction with natural beauty and their immersion in it, within the High Weald's landscape.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS¹³**History-related qualities such as ...**

- a. a sense of history and timelessness arising from an ancient countryside with a human-scale agricultural tapestry; veteran and ancient trees; medieval forests, heaths and commons; churches, historic buildings
- b. tangible legacies from the iron and wood industries (such as hammer ponds and place names) and major historic events such as the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Qualities associated with emotion and imagination such as ...

- c. a sense of intimacy, enclosure and remoteness owing to the heavily treed landscape.
- d. a sense of wonder, renewal and connection with the natural world arising from the proximity of wildlife and opportunities for immersion in nature.
- e. a sense of freedom arising from access to a dense network of public rights of way and quiet roads suitable for walking, cycling and horse riding, and opportunities to discover many accessible green spaces (including sandrock areas and rivers, reservoirs and coast) and unexpected features such as the 'mini-landscapes' of gill streams.
- f. a deep sense of rurality unusual in South East England.

Character and gestalt qualities such as ...

- g. the homely, pastoral feel to the whole landscape arising from its human-scale pattern and productivity.
- h. colour palette of greens (vegetation) and browns (clay, timber and iron) representing the materials from which the landscape is constructed.
- i. a rich and varied biodiversity.
- j. a recognisable and unifying mosaic of open field and wooded habitats.

Sensory qualities such as ...

- k. unexpected panoramic and long views, often uninterrupted, extending out along the valleys beyond the High Weald with natural skylines and forested ridges occasionally punctuated by church spires, and often framed by field gates and wooded holloways.
- l. quietude and tranquillity, with large areas of natural rural soundscape and perceived distance from urban noise.
- m. natural soundscapes including the ability to enjoy varied birdsong.
- n. exposure to seasonal sensations such as wind and warmth, and diurnal fluctuations in light and dark.
- o. Vivid seasonal changes including the whites and blues of ancient woodland ground flora in the spring and the oranges and browns of autumnal trees and woodlands.

Symbolic and inspiration qualities such as ...

- p. the idea of the High Weald as a 'quintessential English pastoral landscape'
- q. the association of dark autumnal nights and local tradition of High Weald village bonfire societies.
- r. the legacy of physical features and ideas left by writers, artists, poets, gardeners and craftspeople inspired by the landscape such as Kipling's house at Batemans, Christopher Lloyd's house and garden at Great Dixter, the Cranbrook Colony of artists, and A.A. Milne.
- s. traditions illustrating the close relationship between nature and place including skills and crafts, agricultural shows, traditional breeds, and locally produced food and drink.
- t. distinctive public realm features such as fingerposts and milestones.

13. Quality categories based on Brady 2003

Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures

● >120,000 residents in the AONB and >700,000 people living within 5km of the National Landscape boundary. ● 2,126km footpaths, 383km bridleway, 61km byway (density 1.8km per sq.km). ● 83% population within 5km of a ≤100ha natural greenspace site. ● 4 disused railway lines – Cuckoo Trail, Forest Way, Worth Way and The Hop Pickers Line. ● 87.3km of mainline railway and 41km of heritage railway line. ● 30 manor houses, castles and gardens open to the public, including Battle Abbey (the most visited English Heritage site after Stonehenge). ● 2km of climbable sandrock.



TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Declining knowledge, connection and involvement with the countryside and its role in producing food and materials.

2

Increasing visitor numbers leading to urbanising infrastructure around villages and popular sites, and lack of awareness of the countryside code by new users, creating tension between different user groups.

3

Difficult accessibility for many, particularly those from urban areas, with declining or expensive public transport services and lack of travel routes for pedestrians, cyclists and riders, declining rights of way maintenance, and lack of signage.

4

Erosion of rurality and tranquillity through 'urbanising' development including new housing, camping/ glamping accommodation and activity, telecoms equipment, traffic and noise (including aircraft), including cumulative impacts.

5

Degradation of nature, including biodiversity decline, erosion of habitats and damage to natural systems reducing people's rich experience of nature.

OBJECTIVE PQ1

To increase opportunities for learning about and celebrating the High Weald's character and aesthetic qualities, and to promote and facilitate contributions by communities and individuals to the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald.

Rationale

To help develop emotional connection to the landscape, encouraging and enabling people to care for the High Weald and support its conservation.

OBJECTIVE PQ2

To protect the unspoilt rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness, valued views, and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity.

Rationale

To prevent the loss of contained green space, glimpsed and long views, and tree-canopied skylines, especially regarding developments that fringe existing settlements in the High Weald, which would impinge on people's perception of greenness and rurality.

OBJECTIVE PQ3

To foster and promote equitable access and informal enjoyment of the High Weald landscape and the integrated management of its resources for the enjoyment of natural beauty by all.

Rationale

To meet the demand for informal recreation from residents and those living close to the AONB, whilst ensuring infrastructure, services and activities are consistent with conserving and enhancing natural beauty and its quiet enjoyment for this and future generations.

N.B. For clarity, the pursuance of the above objectives or actions set out in this section should not harm the other character components or be at the expense of their contribution to the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB.

Ambitions for 2029

Policy and actions will need to protect the physical features that experiencing natural beauty relies on, as well as enabling fair access to it. Conserving and enhancing the High Weald will increase its contribution to a 'Natural Health Service' for people now and in the future, drawing on the area's aesthetic qualities to foster enjoyment and wellbeing, and encourage access for everyone to so that everyone feels welcome and included, while ensuring that nature and beauty are not harmed. Improved and fair access will not just relate to opportunities for recreation but to everything that a naturally functioning healthy countryside can provide including clean air, clean water, healthy food, and the opportunity to learn new skills and interact with nature.

ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Convene relevant stakeholders to develop best practice and collaborative approaches to managing High Weald greenspaces, including an access strategy that sets out areas for strategic investment to meet increasing population needs and increase access for all users in the High Weald AONB
- b. Coordinate and deliver the primary school education programme to encourage children to enjoy and understand the landscape, including its history and wildlife.
- c. Promote health walks, celebratory landscape-inspired outdoor events, self-guided trails and other outdoor activities encouraging the wider community into the landscape (refer to Cross-cutting theme: People & Access Principles for detail).
- d. Develop and manage the High Weald website and produce information and interpretation promoting the High Weald and its special qualities.

Public bodies should...

- e. Include information about the High Weald AONB on websites and help to promote the purpose and objectives of the AONB Management Plan and the High Weald Charter for Residents and Visitors, encouraging care for the countryside and community engagement.
- f. Recognise and seek to address the potential harm to landscape character, including tranquillity and wildlife, from intensified recreational and tourism related activity (refer to Cross-cutting theme: People & Access Principles for detail).
- g. Ensure that planning decisions (site allocations and development management decisions) consider the impact of development on the intrinsic rural character of the landscape and seek to avoid intrusive development.

- h. Use the High Weald Housing Design Guide for best practice on incorporating green-ness into new developments, by including grass verges, trees and shrubs, and greenspaces, to ensure a strong sense of place and help minimise noise intrusion.
- i. Ensure that installations of infrastructure and equipment for telecoms and utilities services are located and designed so as to avoid introducing urbanising features (such as security fencing, lighting etc) into the rural landscape.

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of aesthetic and perceptual qualities by...

- j. Promoting, sustaining and expanding volunteer heritage and conservation groups.
- k. Sharing best practice in visitor management, and producing visitor management plans for sensitive sites and areas.
- l. Promoting the rich cultural, artistic and historical associations with the landscape, and highlighting local distinctiveness in the visitor 'offer', including those associated with farming and forestry.
- m. Maintaining rights of way, particularly promoted routes, and enable responsible and fair access for all to the landscape.
- n. Seeking to retain and enhance panoramic long-distance public viewpoints to enable people to connect with the High Weald and its natural beauty.
- o. Choosing native hedges, shrubs and trees for boundaries for domestic curtilages.
- p. Supporting conservation measures that protect a wide variety of bird species.

Further information on maintaining the aesthetic and perceptual qualities of the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org.



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CHARACTER COMPONENT

Land-based Economy and Rural Living

The High Weald AONB is characterised by a broad-based economy but with a significant land-based sector and related community life focused on mixed farming (particularly family farms and smaller holdings), woodland management and rural crafts.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Land-based workers at a proportion higher than the rural average.
- Strong historic relationship with London and other employment areas on social character and commuting patterns.
- Tendency for greater self-sufficiency in smaller communities to the east of the area, away from major population centres.
- Retention of woodland workers and their families who have a multi-generational relationship with, and whose livelihoods rely on, the area's coppice woodlands.
- A landscape that suits traditional management owing to its small-scale nature and hedged bank and ditch boundaries.
- Strong rural community life based around small towns and villages supported by a network of valued and accessible local services and amenities, such as village halls, shops and post offices, clubs and societies, and infrastructure including bus services.
- Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale farming.
- Other traditional mixed and well-integrated land-uses including orchards, hops, vineyards and soft fruit, and land-based crafts and processing.



Lord Strang, Chairman of the National Parks Commission in 1959 called on the government to

‘Secure modern standards of living in the countryside with improved rural housing and new small rural industries to provide employment’ but observed that these must be ‘fully sympathetic to, and in scale with, the landscape and local style of building’.

Natural and cultural capital – fact and figures

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing account for 13% of businesses (employing 8% of the workforce) compared with 3% in the south east (employing 1% of the workforce).
- 38% of employment is in micro businesses compared with 17% in the south east.
- 29% of the working age population are retired compared with 21% in the south east.
- Rural incomes are slightly lower than those in the south east but average house prices are 42% higher.
- Self-sufficient in cereals, fruit and lamb but an under-supply of potatoes, beef, fresh vegetables and salads.



TOP 5 ISSUES

1

Low wages and lack of affordable housing and well-designed workspace affecting recruitment and retention of workers and constraining ability of land-based businesses to thrive.

2

Holdings which are typically small (by national standards) struggling to remain economic in the current market under traditional livestock management regimes and uncertainty over future agri-environmental schemes; compounded by reducing agricultural infrastructure, such as livestock markets and abattoirs, while high cost of land and decline in affordable farm tenancies are a barrier to new entrants to agriculture.

3

Changing land use away from traditional agricultural enterprises, which cumulatively threatens long-term food production.

4

Loss of traditional skills owing to ageing workforce and contracting farm and woodland economies, and lack of economic value in land-based products constraining innovation.

5

Closures and cuts to rural services and amenities, including bus services, Post Offices, village shops, pubs and banks.

OBJECTIVE LBE1

To improve returns from, and thereby increase entry and retention in, farming, forestry, horticulture and other land management activities that conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Rationale

To sustain an economically viable land management sector, with a particular emphasis on sustainable and small-scale farming and forestry.

OBJECTIVE LBE2

To reconnect settlements and residents with the surrounding countryside, and maintain and improve rural amenities and services that support communities within the context of the rural settlement pattern.

Rationale

To foster community life, and enhance the synergy of the local economy, society and environment, and the relationship with the surrounding countryside and wild species that defines sustainable rural settlement.

OBJECTIVE LBE3

To improve agricultural and forestry infrastructure (including the provision of appropriate affordable housing and workspaces for land-based workers), along with skills development for rural communities and related sectors that contribute positively to conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

Rationale

To foster land-based economic activities – including heritage conservation, sustainable tourism and outdoor education – that support conservation of the AONB. To provide opportunities for economic activity that supports appropriate land management objectives and AONB designation.

N.B. For clarity, the pursuance of the above objectives or actions set out in this section should not harm the other character components or be at the expense of their contribution to the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB.

Ambitions for 2029

A renaissance in land-based activity and rural living will be needed to meet the net-zero challenge. Support should be focused on reconnecting people with the land and driving innovation in carbon-neutral agricultural and timber infrastructure, small-scale food production, and forestry and rural skills development. Investment in land-based education, skills, and businesses will need to be significantly enhanced to ensure sufficient land management capacity is created alongside the resilient and flexible skills required to adapt to a warming, more unpredictable climate. Innovative mechanisms to deliver affordable housing for local people, including land-based workers, will need to be explored, such as developing local criteria for key workers, exploring local thresholds for First Homes, and supporting local community land trust ambitions (whilst still having regard to the other Management Plan objective, particularly those relating to Settlement). Increased working from home will continue to stimulate community activities, rural services, and demand for access to countryside resources creating opportunities for new relationships with nature.

ACTIONS

The Partnership will ...

- a. Work collaboratively with local authorities to ensure rural business strategies and investments meet the requirements of the AONB management plan.
- b. Work collaboratively with partners to support and promote apprenticeships and training in rural skills.
- c. Promote the need for national policy and support to be tailored to maintain viable farming and forestry in the High Weald.

Public bodies should ...

- d. Plan for appropriate development to ensure continuing vitality of local communities and viability of community services, including seeking to deliver a mix of housing sizes that responds to local needs and key worker housing, including for land-based workers.
- e. Engage positively with mechanisms capable of delivering affordable housing and housing tailored to the specific needs of land-based workers for rural housing needs.
- f. Seek to retain and support rural services and amenities including bus services, village shops, pubs and Post Offices, and support investment in rural services such as improved rural broadband and digital connectivity across rural areas and community transport initiatives.
- g. Ensure that proposals for farm diversification projects, (including camping /glamping sites), conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald, and would support, and not adversely impact on, the agricultural viability of a holding in terms of retention of sufficient productive land and compatible uses.

- h. Support maintenance and development of agricultural infrastructure and food processing facilities e.g., abattoirs and livestock markets.
- i. Promote, use, and resist removal of, agricultural occupancy conditions and seek to retain capacity for land management within farmsteads.
- j. Ensure support for farming and associated rural development is tailored to the particular needs of the High Weald.
- k. Support organisations offering career introductions to the land-based sector, and explore opportunities to work collaboratively with others to offer viable longer-term tenancies to young farmers and new entrants.
- l. Collate and maintain AONB level data on farming and forestry.

Others can assist conservation and enhancement of the land-based economy by...

- m. Supporting and investing in improved working conditions and manufacturing technology for land-based businesses.
- n. Retaining affordable farm tenancies and seeking creating new affordable tenancies, jobs and accommodation for new entrants to land-based businesses.
- o. Facilitating and encouraging collaborative farming, food processing, and marketing enterprises.
- p. Supporting initiatives that develop skills in land management and rural crafts, and promoting and celebrating local crafts.
- q. Establishing buy-local procurement policies and choosing locally produced food, fencing and furniture.

Further information on supporting the land-based economy in the High Weald landscape, including best practice guidance and practical advice, can be found at www.highweald.org.

Cross cutting themes: programmes, principles for action, and investment strategy 2024-2029

Achieving the Management Plan’s objectives and its 2029 targets will require urgent and ambitious action by all to address the main drivers of change and cross-cutting themes.

This section of the Plan sets out our strategic aims for focusing resources and targeting investment on cross-cutting programmes that address these main drivers and can deliver multiple benefits across the High Weald’s character components.

To change course on climate and nature recovery, and to improve equality, inclusivity and diversity of access for people to enjoy nature, participate in the countryside and sustain a decent living, there will need to be action and investment at multiple levels, and new collaborative partnerships within the AONB and connecting to adjacent areas. There is a need to address ‘Shifting Baseline Syndrome’ through education and understanding; recognising that the human-led biodiversity crisis has shifted people’s perception of what good environmental condition looks like. Local creative solutions will need to be found to

reconcile competing national priorities at a High Weald level, while conserving its distinctive character, but key threats are national and long term, requiring action at a national level.

Despite current threats, there are many actions and policy solutions that will help the High Weald AONB landscape remain culturally and environmentally important for future generations. To do so, this Management Plan recommends that actions by all stakeholders should adopt the following hierarchy:

1. **Avoid** harm to wildlife, climate and natural systems.
2. **Restore** and regenerate nature and natural systems.
3. **Transform** our relationship with nature at multiple levels, such that nature and beauty are protected for their non-instrumental value as well as the joy they bring and services they provide to people.¹⁴



14. (Based on the mitigation hierarchy used by Environmental Impact Assessment and the action framework proposed by the Global Commons Alliance)



The key drivers are interconnected; the climate crisis is in part driving the biodiversity crisis. But loss of biodiversity is exacerbating climate change. Extreme weather events, such as flooding and increased surface water run-off, erode soil, soil erosion releases carbon dioxide back into the atmosphere, and so it goes on. However, this means that a solution or mitigation

for one of the drivers is often part of the solution or mitigation for another priority, especially regarding more nature-focused solutions which result in win-win outcomes. A good example of this is the reinstatement of lost hedgerows, which confers multiple benefits:

EXAMPLE

Multi-benefits of hedgerow restoration; hedge-laying, replanting lost hedgerows and gapping-up

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- **Provides habitats** – shelter and food resource for multiple wild species above and below ground, including for pollinators
- **Protects freshwater ecosystems** – slows soil run-off and pollution
- **Improves connectivity between habitats** – provides corridors for species to move along between patches of habitat
- **Reduces the need for pesticide use** – by providing a habitat for common pest predators
- **Protects soils from erosion** – reduces runoff, improves soil health
- **Provides protection for crops** – provides shelter from wind
- **Improves structure and drainage of soils** – improves soil health and increases soil biota



- **Increases carbon storage and sequestration** – in both the soil and plant biomass
- **Cuts down wind speeds** – protects crops and other habitats, reduces wind throw of trees
- **Provides natural flood prevention** – soil can hold more water and reduces runoff
- **Helps regulate water supply to crops** – better water storage capacity of the soil
- **Enhances and maintains a key characteristic of the High Weald’s cultural landscape** – hedges are an integral landscape feature to the High Weald
- **Absorbs noise and pollution** – increases tranquillity
- **Provides shelter and winter feed for livestock** – supports farmers to keep livestock outside all year round and reduces costs
- **Makes available ‘wild’ food for foraging** – provides access for people to experience the rural environment

Delivery & Investment Strategy

The following sections of the Plan set out our principles and priorities for focusing resources and targeting investment on each of the cross-cutting themes.

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Effective delivery of the Management Plan is dependent upon:

Statutory regulation and enforcement of national minimum standards for air, soil and water quality, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Adequate resourcing for the public bodies, including the High Weald Partnership, responsible for coordinating and implementing necessary actions.

Alignment of rural support and environmental land management schemes with the character of the High Weald and aims of this Management Plan.

Alignment of planning policy, including local development plans, neighbourhood plans, and development management decision-making, with the character of the High Weald and aims of this Management Plan.

Alignment of strategies and investment plans of other Section 85 relevant authorities (for example Local Transport Plans, Climate Change Action Plans, Economic Growth strategies, Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans) with the character of the High Weald and aims of this Management Plan.

Appropriate regulatory protection for landscape character and biodiversity.

Suitable data and forecasting to aid monitoring and review.

The primary means through which the Plan's cross-cutting investment priorities for soil health, biodiversity and nature recovery, achieving net zero, and improving access, will be delivered is through the range of targeted national investment programmes, agri-environmental schemes, local grant programmes, along with strategic and project-based funding allocations through partner agencies, which should be informed by the specific investment priorities under each cross-cutting theme.

Further details and up-to-date information on current grant schemes can be found on the High Weald AONB website at [Grants – High Weald](#).



DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Restoring Soil Health and Regenerative Land Management

Soil health underpins the unique character and distinct form of the High Weald's landscape and biodiversity. Soils are one of the most valuable natural resources we have and are critical to life on Earth. Recognising the importance of soil and its linchpin role in planetary health means prioritising soils and soil health across the High Weald AONB.

Healthy soil, like any other ecosystem, is complex with abundant biodiversity. Soil biodiversity is made up of thousands of species such as springtails, nematodes, fungi and bacteria, many of which are microscopic. These species account for between a quarter and a third of all species on Earth. A teaspoon of healthy soil is estimated to contain billions of organisms from thousands of different species.

Protecting and enhancing soil health provides better food security through increased self-sufficiency. Healthy soil provides a medium in which to grow our food, and underpins many ecosystem services that sustain life, including healthy water systems. The loss or degradation of healthy soils has a knock-on effect to these services and is a major problem because soil creation is an extremely slow process, taking anywhere between 100 to 1,000 years for one inch of soil to form.

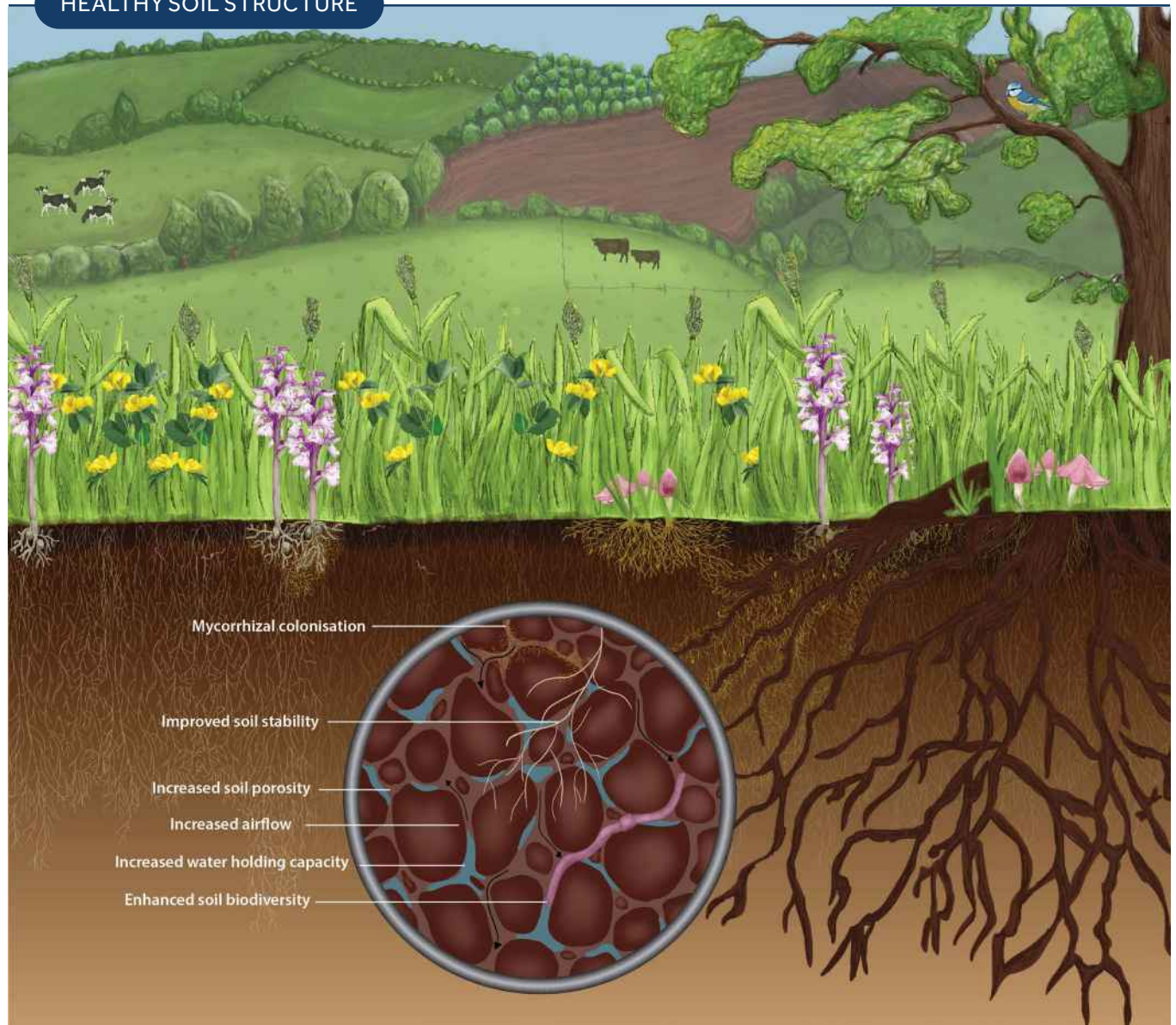
Damage to soils from compaction, erosion and use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides degrades soil structure, affects its ability to absorb and hold water, depletes soil biodiversity, reduces plant growth capacity, and affects nutrient flow to below ground food webs. This leads to a reduction in soil functioning which compromises its ability to store carbon and imbalances soil nutrient content,

Soil and soil health underpins all the character components of natural beauty in the High Weald. Protecting and restoring soils helps restore natural systems, enhances the ecological function of fields, and improves food production and the economic returns from farming and horticulture.

“The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. Without proper care for it, we can have no life.”

Wendell Berry (writer and farmer)

HEALTHY SOIL STRUCTURE



SOIL HEALTH: PRINCIPLES & INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 2029

The priority for delivering soil health in the High Weald AONB over the next five years is through the continued investment in the promotion and guidance of soil monitoring and regenerative agricultural practices for soil health and restoration. This will help conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald landscape by helping to deliver objectives of the Management Plan character components.

The High Weald AONB Partnership recommends that the following practices and actions are pursued in the High Weald in relation to soil health:

Regenerative agriculture and horticulture practices

Many of the techniques associated with regenerative agricultural practices will lead to pastures becoming more resilient to the climate crisis and reduce their vulnerability to droughts; mitigate for flooding by increasing water infiltration in the soil; reducing sediment run-off, and increase carbon storage because of healthier root and fungal networks. Helpful practices include:

Practising no- or min-till farming – reducing or stopping mechanical disturbance by ploughing and discing helps to rebuild the soil ecosystem. Reducing or eliminating the reliance on chemical pesticides and artificial fertilizers, to improve soil health

Adopting rotational grazing practices – short duration high-density grazing techniques, which improve pasture and grazing productivity, increase water retention and the drawdown of carbon from the air and its storage in the soil, and enhance the soil ecosystem.

Increasing agroforestry and multi-layered growing – incorporating trees and hedges into the farm enterprise, growing trees for their fruit or nuts, planting crops between rows of trees, or grazing livestock amongst rows of trees.

Utilising cover cropping – growing a non-commercial crop for the benefit of the soil, both to prevent soil erosion, and to improve the soil health for future crops.

Adopting companion / intercropping – growing two complementary crops together to utilize space and ensure soil coverage.

These techniques can be underpinned by assessing and monitoring soil health; collecting baseline data which can be used to adjust management approaches.



SPOTLIGHT ON ...

Regenerative Agriculture

Regenerative agriculture is a suite of practices that put soil health front and centre, allowing farming to be more in tune with nature. As a result, it is seen as a more climate resilient approach to farming whilst also supporting nature recovery.

Regenerative agriculture starts with building healthy soil by focusing on rebuilding organic matter and the natural living biodiversity in the soil. This improves the ground's ability to:

- draw down carbon from the air and store it underground,
- hold and clean water,
- help wildlife above and below the ground,
- produce nutrient-dense food year after year.

Regenerative agriculture also delivers on climate change via minimally disturbing soils, which improves soil carbon storage and sequestration, and aids nature recovery from the ground up. The High Weald landscape of small, irregularly shaped fields is ideally suited to regenerative agriculture, and a growing number of farms across the High Weald are incorporating regenerative practices, particularly with livestock grazing.



DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Nature Recovery and Biodiversity

Biodiversity is a fundamental component of natural beauty and enriches the distinctive landscape patterns of the High Weald AONB. Biodiversity drives opportunities for people to access and engage with the natural world and fosters understanding of the importance of the High Weald AONB. In 2020, the UK Government committed to the UN target of protecting 30% of the UK's land for nature by 2030. Recovering nature in the High Weald AONB means giving nature more space, providing quality, well-managed habitats and ensuring connectivity between those habitats; in other words, providing bigger, better, more and joined-up places for nature.



The High Weald AONB contains many different habitats and landscape features that collectively support a wide diversity of species. Habitats range from broadleaf woodland to wildflower meadows, open heath and sandstone outcrops to ponds, rivers and coastal cliffs. The importance of the region's biodiversity stems not only from the rarity and variety of species, but also from the ancientness, interconnectedness and assortment of the habitats that support them, and the quality and tranquillity of these habitats. The essentially medieval origin of the High Weald landscape, with its patchwork of small-scale and linear features created through long-standing human-environment interactions, significantly enhances the region's ecological connectivity and its resilience. In the High Weald, the biodiversity value of its landscape is greater than the sum of its parts.

All areas and habitats in the High Weald are valuable for supporting nature recovery, and nature recovery is fundamental to conserving all the character components of natural beauty, from ancient woodlands which support a wide range of plants, and animals including birds, bats and invertebrates, to the numerous undisturbed pastures that support wildflower species and waxcap communities. This plan supports the protection and recovery of all characteristic species, from the small invertebrates to reintroductions of charismatic fauna.

Statutory requirements relevant to Nature Recovery

The Environment Act (2021) has brought with it responsibilities for local authorities in the fight to halt biodiversity loss, and it is important that this Management Plan is utilised to ensure appropriate and consistent delivery of the statutory duties arising from the Environment Act (2021):

LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGIES (LNRS)¹³

- LNRS are prepared by 'responsible authorities'; in the High Weald National Landscape these are East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Kent County Council and Surrey County Council.
- LNRS underpin the national Nature Recovery Network (NRN) by establishing spatial mapping and planning tools to identify existing and potential habitat for wildlife and agreeing local priorities for enhancing biodiversity.
- LNRS identify investment opportunities for nature locally, rather than being the delivery mechanism for nature recovery.
- All public bodies must have regard for any relevant LNRS.

The LNRS regulations require responsible authorities to engage with supporting authorities, as well as other local partners (such as National Landscape partnerships), to develop their strategy so that it can build on existing or planned nature recovery and environmental work and align with relevant strategies.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

BNG is legal mandate for a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity associated with new developments. Developers must demonstrate this net gain in biodiversity for new developments from early 2024 onwards. The gains should be achieved on site. Where this is not possible, off-site gains can be considered and agreed with the LPA.

Importantly, the provision of BNG does not override the 'mitigation hierarchy' set out in paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The National Planning Policy Guidance makes it clear that "*Biodiversity net gain complements and works with the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy set out in NPPF paragraph 175a [now 186a]. It does not override the protection for designated sites, protected or priority species and irreplaceable or priority habitats set out in the NPPF. Local planning authorities need to ensure that habitat improvement will be a genuine additional benefit and go further than measures already required to implement a compensation strategy.*" (Paragraph: 024 Reference ID: 8-024-20190721).

Within the High Weald AONB, it is important that BNG proposals are informed by a robust understanding of the habitat typologies and systems of the High Weald, evidenced by accurate baseline survey information regarding habitat condition and protected species, in order that they are designed to provide a genuine positive contribution to local biodiversity and habitats. Proposed enhanced or new habitats should function as a meaningful part of the wider connected High Weald habitat mosaic, with reference to the components of natural beauty set out in the Management Plan, and should support the Nature Recovery principles set out in the Management Plan. Importantly, the pursuance of 'biodiversity units' within the metric should not inadvertently harm existing on-site or site-adjacent habitats through their loss or reduction in their connectivity to wider habitat networks, nor should the pursuance of BNG result in works that would cause wider harms to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

13. Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

High Weald habitat and 30x30

In 2022, the UK Government joined the international commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, known as 30x30. The target requires areas to be effectively conserved and managed while integrated into the wider landscape and respecting the rights of local communities.¹⁴

Protected areas such as the High Weald AONB, and their dedicated Partnerships, are at the forefront of national work to conserve, protect and restore nature-rich habitats across our landscapes. The High Weald already has complex and interconnected nature-rich habitat with many areas in sympathetic low input management. Through protecting these areas and their inter-connectivity, along with improving the quality of habitats through investment via agri-environmental schemes, wilding and adoption of regenerative land management, the High Weald could further contribute to 30x30 objectives, creating a wildlife-rich heart at the centre of the south-east.

The approach in the High Weald should:

- Identify, protect and prevent damage to wildlife-rich core sites (including semi-natural habitats such as ancient woodland) from pollution, pesticides, poor management, over-exploitation, invasive species, disturbance, and habitat destruction and development, and manage appropriately to enhance biodiversity
- Buffer and link core sites, and manage nature, to support a connected and resilient ecological network
- Restore wildlife richness to its pre-industrialised farming baseline across the wider landscape by, for example, fostering management of land for multiple objectives, investing in approaches that maximise nature recovery alongside food production, allowing natural processes to flourish, and creating structural diversity.

14. An extraordinary challenge: Restoring 30 per cent of our land and sea by 2030 (parliament.uk)

The High Weald Partnership will therefore look to promote land management and habitat restoration schemes delivering healthy soils and quality habitats that will benefit species of flora and fauna characteristic of the High Weald. For example:

the characteristic structural woodland and hedgerow flora of the High Weald, such as oak, chestnut, beech, hazel, hornbeam and hawthorn, along with wood anemone, bluebell, wood melick, coralroot bittercress and black bryony, and lichens and fungi such as chicken-of-the woods, supporting fauna including the dormouse, greater spotted woodpecker, marsh tit, flycatcher; white admiral, brown hairstreak and silver washed fritillary butterflies, and a number of bat species, including Bechstein's bat, Natterer's bat and noctule bat.

fields, including grassland flora such as Dyer's greenweed, green-winged orchid and waxcap fungi, supporting fauna such as the barn owl, fieldfare, yellow meadow ant, and a number of grasshopper species; and arable field species such as the brown hare and skylark.

lowland heath, with its carefully balanced mosaic of different vegetation including heather, acid grassland, bare ground, gorse and scrub, and supporting flora such as marsh gentian and marsh clubmoss, supporting fauna such the common lizard, adder, nightjar, linnet and Dartford warbler.

routeways and road verges with their characteristic flora such as primrose, cuckoo flower, common spotted orchid, oxeye daisy, birds foot trefoil; supporting fauna such as the orange tip butterfly and glow worms.

river and wetland-based habitats, including wet grasslands, ditches, ponds, floodplains and gill woodlands, supporting a range of bryophytes (mosses and liverworts, including handsome woollywort) along with other flora such as frogbit, scaly male fern, marsh violet, ragged robin, and fox sedge and tufted sedge, supporting fauna including snipe, woodcock, lapwing wild brown trout, bullhead, brook lamprey, great crested newt, and insect species including caddis flies and beautiful demoiselle, along with foraging opportunities for a number of bat species such as Daubenton's.

historic buildings and gardens, farmsteads and churchyards, supporting birds such as the house martin, swallow, swift, and lesser spotted woodpecker, along with a number of bat species (including common pipistrelle, serotine and brown long-eared) and the hedgehog, slow worm and red mason bee.

N.B. many species of fauna rely on a combination of these habitats for different purposes, e.g. nesting, foraging, roosting, and so the interconnected nature of these habitats is important.

Further information can be found in the High Weald AONB Biodiversity Statement 2014: [High Weald Biodiversity Report](#) Detailed advice regarding the management / restoration of each of these habitat types can be found at www.highweald.org

RECOVERING NATURE: PRINCIPLES AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 2029

Delivering nature recovery within the High Weald over the next five years is through investment in programmes and actions which enhance habitats, increase biodiversity, and build a more resilient and connected network for wildlife across the area. These actions feed into Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and are the nature recovery priorities for agri-environment schemes in the High Weald AONB, both of which help to deliver global ambitions to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 (known as 30x30). These also deliver the largest gains towards nature, stack benefits for climate change and soil health, and conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the High Weald landscape by helping to deliver objectives for character components.

The High Weald Partnership recommends that the following priorities are pursued in relation to nature recovery:

Restoration of species rich grasslands – identification, audit and appropriate management of our most threatened habitat in the High Weald (often undervalued, under recognised and over or under managed) with buffering and improved connectivity achieved by protecting semi-natural grassland and enhancing modified grassland.

Recovery of the abundance of characteristic High Weald species and habitats – focusing on understanding the specific habitat needs of the range of species and adapting management accordingly.

Deer management – active strategies to reduce deer numbers to prevent over-population of deer having a significant impact on the flora of High Weald woodlands and other habitats.

Hedge restoration and reinstatement – hedge-laying, gapping-up and replanting lost hedgerows, including intermittent hedgerow trees, to provide habitat for a variety of species, and provide connectivity between parcels of woodland and species rich grasslands.

Creation and management of scrub and wilder boundaries – allowing for outgrown hedges, scrub and tall grasses which provide structural diversity between different habitats, and support wildlife by providing additional shelter, feeding and breeding sites, as well as being valuable habitats with their own ecosystem and dependant species.

Restoration of a pesticide and pollution free environment – avoidance of air, soil and water pollution (especially water pollution from septic tanks and sewage treatment plants) and significant reduction in the use of chemical pesticides and artificial fertilisers to allow freshwater ecosystems and insect populations in the High Weald's rivers and tributaries and ponds to recover.



SPOTLIGHT ON ...

Wilding

Wilding allows restoration of naturally functioning ecosystems at nature's pace. It does not always equate to abandonment and can be far more nuanced. Expert guidance may be needed, and species introduction should be carried out with careful planning and in collaboration with landowners and neighbours. Projects in the High Weald AONB should consider:

- Small-scale wilding projects which help buffer other core habitats, provide connectivity across the landscape, but do not adversely impact on land which is needed for agriculture or is being managed to enhance other vulnerable habitats such as species-rich grassland.
- Agricultural wilding projects using livestock, preferably traditional breeds such as Sussex cattle.
- Working with adjacent landowners to explore the reintroductions of lost species and expansion of diminished species (such as beavers, pine martens and white-letter hairstreak).
- Wilding which complements the existing medieval landscape character.



DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The Climate Crisis: Achieving Net Zero

The High Weald AONBs distinctive Atlantic climate is found nowhere else in the south east of England. These cool and wet conditions which are found predominantly in gill woodlands are a distinctive part of the natural beauty of the High Weald, however climate change threatens these Atlantic microclimates.

A dramatic reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is required to prevent the world reaching an unassailable tipping point. To ensure the UK reaches its target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, the UK carbon budget target is an emissions reduction of 68% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2030, which includes shipping and aviation emissions, as a stepping stone towards the 2050 goal.

Tackling the climate crisis in the High Weald AONB requires a net-zero emissions, rather than a carbon neutral, strategy. Referring to emissions seeks to tackle all greenhouse gas emissions, not just carbon dioxide. Net-zero strategies actively work to reduce emissions by setting targets, rather than off-setting or compensating current emissions.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES' DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Since 2019, local authorities nationally have been declaring climate emergencies and producing action plans to tackle the emergency. Most of the fifteen local authority partners to the High Weald AONB have produced plans and set net-zero carbon targets.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION IN THE HIGH WEALD

The High Weald AONB already stores large amounts of carbon in its soils owing to the undisturbed nature of many grasslands (fields) and ancient semi-natural woodlands, making a sizeable contribution to climate mitigation:

- Up to 26.8 million tons of carbon (0-150cm depth) is stored in High Weald soils.
- Woodland covers 28% of the High Weald AONB, well above the national average, and as such the amount of carbon dioxide sequestered across this landscape is substantial, averaging 149,910 tons of carbon a year.

Predicted changes in the climate for the south east of England suggest hotter, drier summers, and warmer wetter winters. Extreme weather events will also become more frequent, of longer duration and greater intensity. These changes pose a threat to the character of the High Weald landscape, impacting both its cultural and natural heritage.

For example, increases in damaging storm events are likely to exacerbate erosion of the coastal cliffs at Hastings, and cause further tree loss, escalating flooding of properties and infrastructure. The changes to our climate will alter the delicate biodiversity found in the High Weald's woodlands, grasslands and heathlands, as some species struggle to adapt and survive whilst others move in, with the potential for increased pests and tree diseases in woodlands. Some habitats found across the High Weald AONB are particularly sensitive to the climate crisis, such as rivers and gill streams, and other wetter habitats. Woodland and grassland will also be affected by hotter, drier summers and wetter winters.

The climate crisis will affect all the character components of natural beauty in the High Weald in different ways, but the AONB can support climate change mitigation; trees and soils are crucial to carbon sequestration. As a nationally protected landscape, the AONB's priority for climate change mitigation is nature-based solutions which simultaneously work to mitigate aspects of the climate crisis, cool the local environment and restore naturally functioning systems; while changes in agricultural practices, such as regenerative farming practices, can improve carbon sequestration and lead to greater water-holding capacities in soils.

CLIMATE CRISIS: PRINCIPLES AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 2029

Whilst the High Weald AONB stores and sequesters large amounts of carbon dioxide, this is not a replacement for continued work towards net-zero emissions targets.

The priority for addressing the climate crisis in the High Weald AONB over the next five years is building a resilient landscape for future generations through investment in nature-based solutions, modal shifts in transport, and landscape-led renewable energy solutions.

The High Weald AONB Partnership recommends that the following practices and actions are pursued in the High Weald in relation to the climate crisis:

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Development of nature-based solutions

i.e., those solutions which provide mitigation to the climate crisis through rebuilding the natural functioning of ecosystems. For example, floodwater attenuation (e.g., ‘slow-the-flow’ projects), natural cooling systems, and increasing carbon storage in soils and woody plants.

Developing renewable energy appropriate to the landscape

Renewable energy systems in the High Weald can be best accommodated into this small-scale landscape through smaller scale and domestic projects, and small-scale shared community installations, for example prioritising solar panels on roofs of existing development, (particularly on the larger roofscapes of modern commercial and agricultural buildings, and avoiding external roofscapes of historic and listed buildings), in gardens and on brownfield land (depending on visibility in the landscape), rather than solar fields.

Promoting modal shifts in transport

Including shifts away from car-centric thinking in planning and development, supporting continued investment in existing public transport options and development of other community transport initiatives, coupled with reductions in speed limits to support walking and cycling options.

Achieving net zero in housing design

Including following the principles of whole life carbon assessment, considering not just energy efficiency measures in the in-use operation of buildings, but also embodied energy (including use of existing building stock and sustainable use of materials such as sustainably sourced timber in new buildings), water recycling, and site-wide design strategies such as sustainable drainage systems, layouts that minimise natural resource requirements, and soft landscaping to support climate resilience.



SPOTLIGHT ON ...

Tree Cover

Increasing tree cover is a nature-based solution to help mitigate the climate crisis through helping to store more carbon dioxide. The High Weald already has the highest cover of woodland in England. However, increases in tree cover can be accommodated in the High Weald through increased scrub habitat (managed), thickened hedgerows, in-field trees, wood pasture (ideally by natural regeneration) and the planting of fruit or nut trees. The importance of the High Weald’s small-scale medieval fieldscape means large woodland creation schemes are usually unsuitable. Instead:

- Hedges can accommodate trees either directly planted or left to mature through natural regeneration.
- Agroforestry – introducing trees to the farmed landscape within fields. These trees can also provide shelter for livestock.
- Instead of new planting, land can be left to naturally return to woodland through natural regeneration.
- Urban tree planting within towns and villages throughout the High Weald.
- Reinstating traditional woodland management, such as coppicing, where it has been lost is often more important than planting new woodlands.

Right tree, right place, right reason.

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

People and Access

The High Weald AONB provides respite from the highly developed south east of England, spread over four counties, with over 700,000 people living within 5km of the High Weald AONB, as well as being accessible to those in London, Brighton and other cities in the south east. The AONB contains a high amount of publicly accessible countryside, along with a range of landscape-based leisure destinations popular with both residents and visitors alike.



There is a wealth of countryside with public access across the High Weald which includes 2,570 km of Public Rights of Way, Country Parks at Hastings and Buchan, long distance trails such as the Cuckoo Trail and the Forest Way, Forestry Commission woodlands, and both council and eNGO-run reserves such as Crane Valley, Brede High Woods, Broadwater Warren and St Leonard’s Forest. Popular leisure destinations include Ashdown Forest, the largest area of open access land in the south east; Bewl Water, the largest area of inland water in the south east; Harrison’s Rocks, a 1.5km sandstone climbing crag, and Bedgebury Forest, with its 22km of cycle tracks, along with a number of parks, gardens and estates throughout the AONB. Meanwhile, the heritage railways that operate within the High Weald provide a further means of viewing and enjoying the countryside.

We are intimately connected to the natural world, and it is now readily accepted that exposure to nature and natural environments, especially those of good quality, confers many benefits to human health at every age, socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity. Meanwhile, a deeper understanding of biodiversity and the natural world affects our connection to it and how we interact with it. Understanding how the rural environment is managed increases environmental awareness and supports appreciation of countryside.

People’s opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the High Weald relies on fair access – for example, to experience the tranquillity of woodlands, to be able to afford to farm or work land within the High Weald, or to use the extensive network of public rights of way. However, for a variety of reasons not everyone has equitable access to the natural environment. Barriers may include disabilities which prevent access or limit interpretation and enjoyment, lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure, including transport, and financial barriers. Improving equity, inclusivity and diversity of access for people to enjoy nature in the countryside, and to farm and sustain a decent living there, requires transformational policies at a national level, along with innovative local solutions and collaborative partnerships that empower communities.

Increased access, however, also brings additional pressures on the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB and its character components, particularly around popular visitor destinations. Pressures include disturbance of habitats, increased activity, traffic and pollution, and additional infrastructure such as car-parking facilities, hard-surfacing, lighting and signage. Innovative and landscape-led solutions, including sustainable transport plans and carefully tailored visitor management, will be required to balance the positive benefits of improved access with the duty of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.

Maintaining and improving access to the High Weald in a landscape-led manner sensitive to local character, and with responsible behaviours, will help support objectives relating to historic routeways, public enjoyment objectives to experience rurality and tranquillity, including dark skies, and the reconnection of settlements to the surrounding countryside. The public network of historic routeways can also play a valuable role in meeting the net-zero challenge in association with sustainable transport options.

COUNTRYSIDE CODE

The new Countryside Code, relaunched in 2021^{15,16}, seeks to help people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits that nature offers, while affording nature the respect it deserves. It aims to help everyone enjoy the countryside in a safe way, encouraging people to act responsibly when visiting the outdoors, by respecting those who manage the land, and by looking after our natural environments and the livelihoods of those who work there.



15. The Countryside Code: advice for countryside visitors – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

16. The Countryside Code: advice for land managers – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

PEOPLE & ACCESS PRINCIPLES AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 2029

The priorities for delivering People and Access within the High Weald AONB over the next five years are set out below.

Investment is required to enable the High Weald to offer fair access to the widest range of people. Although the High Weald AONB has a rich network of public rights of way and nature reserves, not all people are able to reach these, or use them. The following priorities and actions will help people to access the High Weald and secure a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits, whilst conserving and enhancing its natural beauty. Pursuance of any of these priorities or actions should not involve harm to any of the character components set out in Part 1 of this Plan, nor cause harm to the biodiversity of the area.

Promotion and maintenance of the High Weald's extensive public rights of way network – including:

- mitigating damage from the effects of climate change
- encouraging their use for active travel for recreation, short journeys connecting to towns and villages, wellbeing, and appreciation of the historic and cultural landscape
- designating quiet lanes
- keeping bridleways and footpaths clear, ensuring paths, gates, bridges and benches are in working condition, and signposts and other signage are maintained, and
- promoting responsible public access, supporting promotion of adherence to the countryside code.

Improving transport into and around the High Weald – developing innovative solutions to active and shared transport solutions for those who live and work in and close to the AONB.

Management and landscape-sensitive improvement of green space infrastructure – to support a range of access needs and recreation opportunities, whilst ensuring infrastructure and activities are consistent with conserving and enhancing the High Weald's natural beauty and its quiet enjoyment – including

- the development of holistic, landscape-led visitor management strategies for larger tourism destinations, and
- catering for a range of needs including ethnically diverse and socially deprived groups, and those with mobility or visual impairments, including the provision of disabled parking spaces, wheelchair/mobility scooter friendly paths and routes, rest points such as benches, and interpretation boards, waymarked trails or routes.

The quantum, siting and design of onsite infrastructure and furniture must be carefully planned to be consistent with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the High Weald.

Development of training programmes – in traditional land management practices and skills, and supporting community-led growing initiatives.

Promotion of celebratory landscape-inspired outdoor events and cultural activities – including developing public engagement programmes to address barriers, and promoting the enjoyment of dark skies, and walking festivals, that benefit health and wellbeing, and increase understanding of the natural world.



SPOTLIGHT ON ...

Woodlands and people

Woodlands contribute to a sense of place and provide a link to our past which make them culturally and spiritually important, as well as offering healthy environments to get immersed in.

The High Weald AONB has the highest cover of woodland in England at 28%, which is well above the average of 10% for the rest of the country.

Woodlands often hold a special place in people's hearts and can be awe inspiring places to visit. Research shows that woodlands are also especially good for our wellbeing. Because of their physical structure they are able to screen out noise and other intrusions from the modern world, absorb large numbers of people without feeling crowded, and offer a wide range of activities (Forestry Commission, 2005). The mental health benefits of woodlands are estimated to be worth around £141 million in England alone. This is thought to arise from more natural sounds such as bird song, being physically active and lower air pollution levels (see e.g., Saraev et al., 2020).



DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Planning and Development in the High Weald AONB

Meeting the climate, biodiversity and inequality challenges of the next 20 years will require transformational change in the way that development is planned for and delivered in the High Weald AONB. Being nationally designated for their outstanding natural beauty, AONB landscapes should be exemplars of sustainable planning and design. As the AONB continues to evolve to meet the needs of current and future generations, this must happen in a way that respects its landscape character, natural resources and cultural heritage.



Local Plan Policies and the AONB

Responsibility for planning in AONBs lies with the relevant local authority. The AONB Management Plan does not form part of the statutory development plan, but local planning authorities and neighbourhood planning bodies should take the AONB Management Plan into account when preparing local and neighbourhood plans. AONB Management Plans are also material considerations for making decisions on planning applications within AONBs and their setting.

The 11 districts and boroughs with land in the High Weald AONB each have local plans and strategies that contain policies specific to the AONB, as do many of the parishes that have a 'Made' Neighbourhood Plan. The waste, mineral and highway strategies prepared by the four county councils with land in the AONB may also have AONB specific policies.

As part of their shared ambition to coordinate policies across the AONB, High Weald partners commit to providing a representative with sufficient experience and seniority from each local authority to the Officers' Steering Group (OSG) which meets regularly during the year to build policy consensus and develop joint working initiatives.

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AONB Setting

It is not only development within the boundary of the High Weald AONB that needs to be informed by consideration of the Management Plan; national planning policy and guidance make clear that land within the setting of AONBs often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and here poorly located or designed development can do harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and AONBs

National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023¹⁷. The NPPF applies as a whole to AONBs as it does to non-designated areas and sets out that planning policies and decisions should [inter alia] recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside¹⁸. However, two paragraphs refer specifically to AONBs: paragraphs 182 and 183.

The NPPF and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance form important material considerations with regard to development management and confirm that:

- **The scale and extent of development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) should be limited¹⁹**
- **The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not automatically apply within the High Weald AONB (where the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, OR where any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the Framework taken as a whole)²⁰**
- **There is a presumption that planning permission should be refused for major development in AONBs other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest²¹**
- **Policies for protecting AONBs may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for housing and other development in full (where the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area)²²**
- **AONBs are unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs arising from adjoining, non-designated, areas.²³**

17. References to NPPF paragraphs refer to the December 2023 version of the NPPF

18. NPPF 2023 para 180

19. NPPF 2023 para 182

20. NPPF 2023 para 11 (d) and its footnote 7

21. NPPF 2023 para 183

22. NPPF 2023 para 11 (b) (i)

23. NPPG Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 8-041-20190721

Development in the High Weald AONB

Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states:

‘Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.’

PLANNING PRINCIPLE

1

In order to demonstrate that planning applications are consistent with national policy, and in particular reflect the great weight to be given to the protection of the AONB in the NPPF para 182, and to ensure planning decisions take full account of the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB, the High Weald Partnership recommends that proposals be accompanied by suitable assessment reports which:

- specifically set out how proposals have been informed early in the process by the Management Plan and, where relevant, the High Weald Housing Design Guide;
- set out how any adverse impacts on the character and conservation purpose of the AONB, and on the specific components of character as set out in this Plan, including cumulative impacts, have been avoided or minimised in the proposals. LVIA reports, assessments of impact on scenic beauty, and Design & Access Statements are all useful tools in this regard;
- are used to clearly inform planning decision-makers in considering the scale, extent, location and design of development, in accordance with para 182;

and that production of local plans, site allocation proposals and Neighbourhood Plans should be informed by similar assessments.

Major Development in the High Weald AONB

Paragraph 183 of the NPPF states:

‘When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a. the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b. the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c. any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreation opportunities and the extent to which they can be moderated.’*

Major development as referred to in paragraph 183 of the NPPF is not defined, but Footnote 64 of the NPPF explains:

‘For the purposes of paragraphs 182 and 183, whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.’

PLANNING PRINCIPLE

2

Noting that whether development is major or not in the context of the AONB (under para 183 of the NPPF) is a matter of planning judgement for the decision maker, the High Weald Partnership recommends that, in forming that judgement, specific consideration be given to the following:

- The potential of the proposal to have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty for which the AONB is designated and defined, as set out in this Management Plan, for example, where the nature, scale and setting of the proposal could significantly harm any of the character components.
- The potential for such adverse impact from cumulative development

and that on a precautionary basis, such consideration is also applied to the plan-making stage and any proposed allocations for development in the AONB.

N.B. It is important to remember that even where development is not considered to be ‘major’ under para 183, the provisions of para 182 still apply.

New Housing Development in the High Weald AONB

The built character of the High Weald, in terms of settlement form and structure, siting in the landscape, the relationships of buildings to streets, and building form and massing, is highly important to the natural and scenic beauty of the High Weald.

The High Weald Partnership recommends that new development should be 'landscape-led' and consistent with the objectives set out in this Plan and expanded on in the **High Weald Housing Design Guide**²⁴. The Guide sets out the urban design expectations for all new housing developments within the High Weald AONB, with the objective of achieving higher quality and landscape-led design that reflects intrinsic High Weald character, that steers away from generic or suburban layout and design approaches, and that is instead embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity.

Landscape-led design means using landscape as a framework to understand the site and formulate a design response. The term landscape used here includes landscape history, physical character and perceived qualities, and socio-economic and ecological functioning – all of which contribute to understanding a place. A design response includes issues such as site capacity, layout, form, scale and detailing as well as any landscaping and ecology plans which combine to make a place beautiful and distinctive and integrate it into the surrounding AONB.

As well as providing a brief explanation of the High Weald AONB and its settlement character, the Design Guide format is intended to help structure the design process, with ten Design Themes ranging from **Responding to Site & Landscape Context**, **Layout & Structuring the Site**, and **The Right Built Form**, to more detailed matters such as **Parking Strategies**, **Building Appearance**, and **Reinforcing Local Planting Character**. Each Design Theme contains detailed analysis and advice, illustrated with photographs and diagrams, and a summary checklist, with a particular emphasis on tailoring design approaches to support the overall character and identity of the High Weald. As such, it aligns with the advice in the NPPF (para 133) and in the National Design Guide advocating locally-based design guides and regarding their scope and purpose.



24. Design Guide and Colour Study – High Weald

PLANNING PRINCIPLE 3

The High Weald Partnership recommends that:

- the High Weald Housing Design Guide is used by developers and designers to create schemes which contribute positively to the character and natural beauty of the High Weald AONB, and by Neighbourhood Plan groups to help inform Neighbourhood Plans, and by LPAs to inform planning policies, site allocations and development management decision-making.
- local plan policies for new housing development in the High Weald should aim towards net-zero standards.
- new development should contribute positively to nature recovery, ensuring that the functioning of existing on-site and site-adjacent features and natural processes are protected and enhanced; whilst noting that 10% BNG is a statutory requirement for all relevant development, and achieving gains in biodiversity does not necessarily mean a development meets the wider requirements of planning policy in AONBs.
- local plan policies consider alternative mechanisms to improve delivery and affordability while minimising land take, to help deliver housing within the AONB in a manner that complies with the NPPF, and which can help conserve the character and beauty of the High Weald AONB. For instance, encouraging the subdivision of larger homes into smaller ones and the efficient utilisation of the existing building stock and brownfield sites, along with ensuring that energy-efficient new development makes the most efficient use of land, whilst still having appropriate regard to retaining and incorporating landscape features.

Historic Built Environment in the High Weald AONB

The historic environment is fundamental to the distinctive character, sense of place and natural beauty of AONBs²⁵. The rich built heritage greatly informs the character of the High Weald AONB; historic hamlets and farmsteads are an intrinsic part of the distinct and picturesque landscape, with the rolling pastureland and small ancient woodlands of the countryside interspersed with the rich clay-tiled roofs of historic buildings. Along with the domestic building stock of farmhouses and cottages, building typologies reflect locally distinct historic agricultural practices, for example the distinctive brick roundels of the hop industry’s oast-houses, fine timber-framed barns and modest brick cowsheds, dairies and outbuildings.

National planning policy places great importance on the conservation of these Heritage Assets (Chapter 16 of the NPPF) which can be classified as:

- **‘designated’** – i.e., those benefiting from statutory designation, such as Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, and
- **‘non-designated’** – other historic features and structures which contribute positively to the physical, historic and socio-cultural character of the area, and which warrant retention and interpretation, and which can be identified in ‘Local Lists’ (prepared by LPAs or via Neighbourhood Plans), or during the decision-making process.

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PLANNING PRINCIPLE 4

The High Weald Partnership recommends that, with reference to the contribution that Heritage Assets and their settings make to the cultural value, character and natural beauty of the National Landscape, appropriate regard is given to their conservation in the planning process, including in planning policy and site allocations process, neighbourhood planning and in decision-making.



Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings

To help meet net zero ambitions, the energy efficiency of historic buildings is an important consideration; Historic England recognises the urgent need for climate action and believe that England’s existing buildings have an essential role to play in fighting climate change. Sustainability in building is not just associated with operational energy consumption, but also the embodied energy used in the construction of buildings, and to meet carbon neutral targets we must recycle, reuse and responsibly adapt our existing historic buildings. Continuing to upgrade, repair and maintain historic buildings makes good social, economic and environmental sense, and will help conserve and enhance the AONB, contributing to the Management Plan objectives and Climate Change priorities.

It is important to recognise that retrofitting measures which may be suitable for modern (post-war) housing stock can be damaging to older buildings, either through causing unacceptable damage to the character and appearance of historic buildings, or through causing damaging technical conflicts with traditional construction.

Historic England’s extensive research in the complex area of understanding and improving the energy performance of historic buildings has led to their overarching guidance: **Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: How to Improve Energy Efficiency | Historic England**. This sets out their holistic ‘whole building approach’ which can help in meeting the combined objectives of increasing energy efficiency and sustaining significance in heritage assets while avoiding unintended consequences, and is supported by a more detailed suite of guidance on practical measures.

PLANNING PRINCIPLE 5

The High Weald Partnership recommends that energy efficiency planning policies and decision-making affecting the historic built environment should follow best practice advice from Historic England, in order that energy conservation measures are balanced with conserving the historic environment that contributes to the natural beauty of the AONB.

25. Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty | Historic England

Public Realm in the High Weald AONB

The historic public realm across the High Weald plays an important role in defining the special character of the AONB. Historic features such as locally distinctive paving, railings, milestones and historic fingerpost signs, along with red telephone kiosks and letterboxes, contribute positively to the character of the rural public realm. The materials, finishes and elements used within the public realm often make a significant contribution to an area's sense of place, and the retention, sensitive repair, and, where appropriate, reinstatement of such features is important in maintaining the AONB's character.

Rural areas can also suffer suburbanisation through inappropriate creation of footways with raised kerbs, the loss of verges, the introduction of excessive road signage, or of signage and railings in inappropriate modern and generic styles and materials, and the introduction of street lighting. Meanwhile, wildflower verges are part of the High Weald's natural beauty and often a refuge for wildlife that has disappeared elsewhere, and the appropriate management of both woodland verges and grassland verges is important for ecology.

The public realm is also important to the quality of everyday life throughout the AONB, from the accessibility and convenience of bus stops, benches and litter bins, to the community activities and events enabled by quality public spaces.

Meanwhile, considerable new public realm is created in new developments, which offers the opportunity to enhance the landscape character and ecological value of existing retained green infrastructure on-site or adjacent, as well as providing new positive planting to meet BNG requirements. Within new developments, existing site features such as trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams should be retained as part of the public realm to embed a genuine local sense of place in new schemes, while new green spaces and habitats for wildlife should be maximised, with a range of native plantings. Further, green spaces within sites can actively contribute to climate adaptation, and bring with them opportunities to enhance the locality through their management, drawing on local traditional land-management skills (e.g., coppicing) and supporting local industry.

PLANNING PRINCIPLE 6

The High Weald Partnership recommends that:

- Historic public realm features in the AONB are given consideration as Heritage Assets, and should be retained in-situ and repaired appropriately, in order to conserve their contribution to the natural beauty of the AONB.
- Partners responsible for management of roadside verges and works in their vicinity follow best practice advice, including [Managing grassland road verges 2020 \(plantlife.org.uk\)](#).
- Existing trees in villages and towns, including street trees, are retained, managed well, and supplemented where appropriate, to reinforce the verdant character of High Weald settlements and to help with climate adaptation.
- Design choices for new or replacement public realm infrastructure, including paving, signage and lighting, are sensitive to the character of the AONB, use traditional designs and materials, and have regard to the objectives of the Management Plan.
- New public realm soft landscaping schemes are informed by the advice in the High Weald Housing Design Guide regarding creating multi-layered planting strategies of native trees, (including street trees), hedging plants and wildflowers, avoiding ubiquitous, suburbanising planting of ornamental ground-cover shrubs or locally non-native or invasive species.



High Weald Charter for residents and visitors

The following are actions that all residents, visitors and businesses can take to help care for this nationally important landscape.



Buy local products and services from farmers and woodland managers who actively manage their land to benefit the environment

The landscape and wildlife value of the area's woodlands, hedges, meadows, heathlands and field margins are dependent on traditional management. Money invested in products and services that help support this management is money invested in conserving the AONB and its local economy.

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Take pride in the High Weald – promote its special features and places to family, friends and visitors

Promoting what you find special about the High Weald is the best way of encouraging commitment and action by others to the area.



Slow down for people, horses and wildlife

Traffic spoils enjoyment of the High Weald for 80 per cent of its residents. Speeding cars kill people, horses, badgers, deer and foxes, and ancient routeways and their rare plants are damaged by inconsiderate driving and parking.



Help prevent the spread of invasive and harmful plant and animal species

Introduced plant, animal and fish species spread rapidly in the High Weald countryside, competing with our native wildlife and leading to its loss.



Have a say

Your views can influence care of the area – use consultation processes operating at parish, district, county and AONB level to steer policy and action that affects the area.



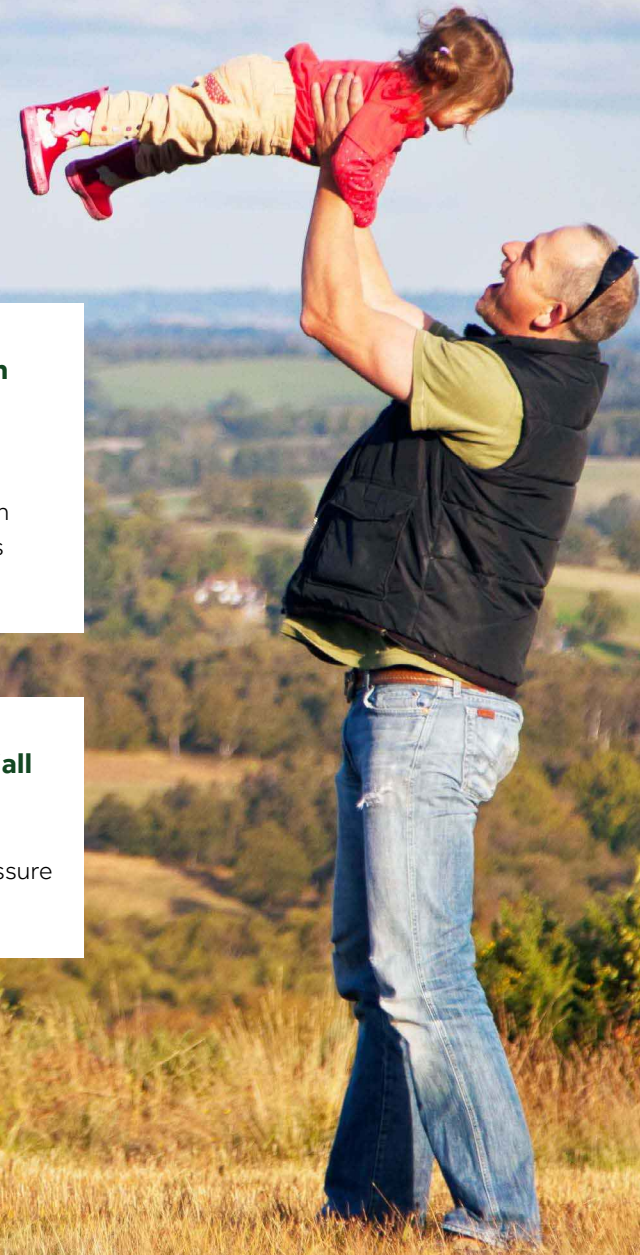
Use less water

Demands for water lead to high levels of water extraction, damaging the wildlife of the AONB's streams, rivers and wet grasslands. Increased demand in future will create pressure for new reservoirs within the AONB.



Avoid using the car where possible and consider using renewable energy in your home

Emissions from petrol and other non-renewable fossil fuels contribute to climate change and lead to degradation of valuable habitats such as sandrock, and gradual loss of wildlife such as bluebells.



Get involved – support local conservation organisations

With your financial and practical support, local conservation organisations can take action to care for the area such as monitoring threatened wildlife, undertaking practical conservation tasks, and lobbying government.



Manage your land for wildlife and maintain the rural nature of your property

Fields, woodland, paddocks and gardens support valuable and threatened wildlife. Inappropriate materials and features, often associated with urban areas, are leading to the gradual loss of the AONB's valued rural feel.



Respect other users – follow the Countryside Code

Through responsible behaviour we can all use and enjoy the countryside without damaging the enjoyment or livelihoods of others.



Reduce, reuse and recycle, and dispose of all litter responsibly

Litter spoils enjoyment of the countryside for the majority of residents. Less rubbish means less pressure for landfill sites and incinerators in the AONB.

Monitoring

National Monitoring

The government is currently developing a new outcomes framework for Protected Landscapes, including AONBs, which will set targets for their contributions to national environment and climate commitments. Targets set by national government²⁶ will form part of a subsequent Monitoring Addendum to this Management Plan.

Local Monitoring – Indicators of Success

Local Monitoring for the duration of the Management Plan will remain specific to the High Weald landscape, associated with the objectives set out in the Plan.

The Partnership will look to develop a programme to identify appropriate, effective and proportionate mechanisms to measure or judge progress towards the indicators of success, and will seek to work with wider partners to secure a long-term programme of monitoring along with appropriate resources.

Natural Systems

- All water bodies with either a 'good' or 'high' ecological and chemical status.
- 100 per cent geological SSSIs in favourable condition.
- Earthworm numbers consistently high across the High Weald.

Settlement

- Increase in percentage of new developments that accord with High Weald AONB Housing Design Guidance.
- High level of planning appeals dismissed where grounds of refusal were adverse impact on AONB, including non-compliance with High Weald Housing Design Guide.
- Physical and perceived separation between settlements maintained.

Routeways

- Greater proportion of new homes delivered through re-development or small developments.
- Increase in retention of historic public realm features in highways management regimes.
- Fewer public rights of way diversions on historic routeways.
- Increase in proportion of designated wildlife verges with tailored management regimes.

Woodland

- No loss of ancient woodland.
- Increase in proportion of woodland managed to remove invasive species.
- Increase in woodland dependent butterflies.
- Length of hedges restored or replanted.
- Increase in Historic Environment Records (HER) for woodlands.
- Increase in scale and numbers of businesses milling local timber.

Fieldsapes and Heath

- Maintenance of land registered for grazing animals.
- Increase in hedges restored and new hedges planted.
- No loss of Medieval field systems.
- No loss of species rich grassland.
- No loss of lowland heath.
- Increase in connectivity of species-rich grassland.

Dark Skies

- Increased number of LPA development plans (including neighbourhood plans) that include specific dark skies policies.
- No loss of dark skies or tranquillity.

Aesthetic & Perceptual Qualities

- Maintaining the number and frequency of schools undertaking outdoor learning activities.
- Number of volunteer days supporting AONB conservation.
- Proportion of rights of way in good condition.
- Increase in High Weald Walking Festival participants.

Land-based Economy and Rural Life

- Improved conditions for land-based businesses to flourish.
- Increased procurement by public bodies of goods and services which support AONB landscape conservation.
- Increase in average rural incomes.
- High retention of agricultural occupancy conditions.
- Maintained numbers of people employed in land-based and craft sectors.
- No loss of strategic agricultural or land-management infrastructure (e.g. abattoirs, livestock markets, sawmills).
- Improved levels of rural public transport.
- No loss of rural amenities (e.g. Post Offices, pubs).

26. Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).



Definition of terms

Aesthetic – Concerned with beauty, or the appreciation of beauty.

Assart – Land enclosed from woodland, often still with numerous trees on boundaries.

Biodiversity – In this context covers species richness and abundance, along with genetic diversity and diversity of traits.

Character – A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements (or components) that makes an area different from other areas.

Conservation – The preservation, protection or restoration of the landscape.

Cryptogam – A plant that reproduces through spores rather than seeds or blooms, such as algae, lichens, mosses and ferns.

Culture – The sum total of people's beliefs, customs, social groupings, knowledge and technology, not inherited through biology.

Dark skies – Where you can see starry skies and our own galaxy, the Milky Way.

Diffuse Pollution – The release of potential pollutants from a range of activities that, individually, may have no effect on the water environment, but, at the scale of a catchment, can have a significant effect.

Field – An area of land, often enclosed, traditionally used for cultivation or the grazing of livestock.

Field system – A group or complex of fields sharing a common character, which appears to form a coherent whole (in the High Weald, this usually results from the influence of topography and land use but also historic features).

Forest – Derives from the Latin nova foresta (literally 'new hunting ground') and originally denoted an area defined by the Normans where deer and other animals were kept for hunting. Forest in this sense does not necessarily refer to a wooded area in the modern meaning of the word but also to heathlands, moorlands, and wetlands.

Geomorphology – Landform origins, and the processes which shape or modify them, such as erosion.

Gestalt qualities – Concepts which refer to the essential nature of a perceptual experience, where the whole is greater than the parts.

Gill – A deep cleft or ravine, usually wooded and forming the course of a stream.

Greenhouse gases – Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. The gases are water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases.

Green and Blue Infrastructure – All the individual parcels of natural space and features that, when connected, deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities and the nature that thrives within them. Green infrastructure usually refers to land; fields, woods and hedgerows, while blue infrastructure includes water bodies.

Heritage Asset – Defined in the NPPF as a building, monument, site, place, area, or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and non-designated assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic Landscape Characterisation – Method of identification and interpretation of the varying historic character within an area, looking beyond individual heritage assets to an understanding of the whole landscape.

Holloways – Sunken routeways generally in wooded areas.

Human-scale – A pre-industrial farming landscape managed by human labour using traditional tools, created prior to heavily mechanised farming and intensive agricultural practices.

Inned rivers – Reclaimed often marshy land through draining and other engineering techniques of the day.

Key characteristics – Combinations of elements particularly important to character that help make that character distinctive.

Landform – Natural features in the landscape that make up the terrain, such as hills, valleys and plains.

Landscape – An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

Landscape-led – Shaped and informed by an understanding of the High Weald's landscape as described in this Management Plan. Landscape-led design means using landscape as a framework to both understand the site – its context, character, qualities and functioning – and to formulate a design response in terms of site capacity, layout and design.

Natural and Cultural Capital – in the context of this Plan, natural capital is the natural resources and habitat of the area, including geology, soils, water, vegetation, and wildlife, while cultural capital includes employment, skills, knowledge, experience and enjoyment.

Natural beauty – For the High Weald AONB, natural beauty is defined by the Statement of Significance.

Natural assets – Biological assets, land and water areas with their ecosystems, subsoil assets and air.

Near-term targets – These outline how organisations will reduce their emissions, usually over the next 5-10 years, to galvanise the action required for longer-term targets.

Net zero – Net zero means that any greenhouse gas emissions created are balanced (cancelled out) by taking the same amount out of the atmosphere. In 2019, the UK government became the first major economy to pass a net zero emissions law with a target that will require the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Oceanic Climate – A climate sub-type typical of much of north-west Europe, characterised by cool summers and mild winters, with a narrow annual temperature range and few extremes due to maritime influence.

Public Realm – All external spaces that are publicly accessible, such as streets, lanes and paths, verges, village greens and squares, and the features within them, such as signage, lighting and street furniture.

Regenerative agriculture – A system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity above and below the soil's surface, restores soil health, rebuilds soil organic matter, improves watersheds and enhances ecosystem services.

Routeway – Any route between places across either land or water.

Setting – The surroundings in which the AONB is experienced by people.

Shaw – A narrow strip of woodland.

Shifting Baseline Syndrome – The generational loss of historic understanding, knowledge and experience of environmental conditions and the acceptance of more recent ecological conditions, erodes sustainable baselines for nature recovery. In practice this means that environmental targets set today would have been considered poor yesterday, whilst what is considered a poor baseline today may sadly be considered a good target in the future if shifting baseline syndrome persists.

Significance – What is special and valued about the AONB to this and future generations.

Species-rich grassland – A grassland displaying a wide variety of wildflowers and grasses with the exact composition varying according to the dynamic interaction of factors such as management, drainage, history and soils.

Sustainable land management – Farming and other land management activity that conserves the character of the AONB, enhances the diversity and biomass of characteristic wildlife, improves soil quality and the functioning of natural systems; and supports local livelihoods and social structure.

Topography – The arrangement of the physical features of an area, including both natural and artificial.

Undisturbed soils – Soils that haven't been disturbed over the long term by activities such as ploughing/chemical input/construction works.

Wooded pasture – The product of historic land management resulting in a typical vegetation structure of large, open-grown or high forest trees (often pollards) at various densities in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland or woodland.

Zero carbon – Zero carbon means that no carbon emissions are being produced from a product or service.

The following terms are used in the document:

CRoW Act	Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
JAC/HWJAC	High Weald Joint Advisory Committee
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LVIA	Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment
NLA	National Landscapes Association (Formerly the National Association of AONBs)
NP & AC Act	National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
NVC	National Vegetation Classification
PAWs	Plantations on Ancient Woodlands
RIGs	Regionally Important Geological Sites
RPA	Rural Payments Agency
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

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- [Managing-grassland-road-verges-2020.pdf \(plantlife.org.uk\)](#)

Monitoring

- Defra. (2024) [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Defra. (2023) [Complying with the biodiversity duty – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Defra. (2023) [Reporting your biodiversity duty actions – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Disclaimer

Adoption of this management plan by partner authorities does not necessarily imply endorsement of the views and conclusions of documents identified in this Plan as ‘Evidence and further reading’.



Appendix 1:

AONB designation, policy and legal framework

Purpose of designation

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to 'conserve and enhance natural beauty'²⁷ but the architects of the 1949 Act recognised other underlying principles which were important aspects of the designations' success. These included the need to maintain a 'thriving community life' with particular emphasis on farming and forestry, and the need to promote understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities by people.

These subsidiary purposes – in effect, qualifications of the primary purpose – are those defined in the Countryside Commission statement 1991²⁸, restated in 2006²⁹. The basis for the wording of the subsidiary purposes can be found in the Countryside Act 1968 (section 37):

In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

Although AONBs do not currently have the statutory second purpose of National Parks, which is 'to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the area] by the public', the 1949 Act assumed that AONBs would also fulfil this function^{30, 31}, and this intent is reflected in the subsequent duty placed on AONB conservation boards by Section 87 of the CRoW Act 2000 which adopts the same language³².

High Weald designation history³³

The report of the first National Park Committee, set up in 1929, mentioned the wooded hill country of the High Weald, essentially Ashdown Forest, as an area requiring measures to protect its bird interest. A subsequent report in 1945, the Dower Report, included the 'Forest Ridges (Horsham to Battle)' in its list of 'Other Amenity Areas not suggested as National Parks'. Dower had recognised that some areas might not be suitable for National Park status because of their size or lack of 'wildness', but they nonetheless required safeguarding for their 'characteristic landscape beauty'. A follow-up report, the Hobhouse Report, in 1947 included the Forest Ridges in a list of 52 Conservation Areas (largely based on Dower's 'Other Amenity Areas...') which, it proposed, should be designated for their high landscape quality, scientific interest and recreational value. It wasn't until 1969, following coordinated landscape surveys by county and district councils, that the wider High Weald was put forward to the Countryside Commission for consideration as an AONB. Detailed work on the boundaries was then carried out and designation of the High Weald was confirmed in 1983.

From 22nd November 2023, all AONBs are to be known as National Landscapes. The High Weald National Landscape remains designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is referred to as such in policy, legislation and guidance. For this reason, this document is still titled and referred to as the High Weald AONB Management Plan. Its statutory purpose remains unchanged.

27. [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

28. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A policy statement. (Countryside Commission, CCP 356, 1991)

29. Guidance for the review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency, CA 221, 2006, p.6)

30. [ukpga_19490097_en.pdf \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

31. Report of the National Parks Committee 1947, available to view at [National Landscapes - Historical Papers \(national-landscapes.org.uk\)](#).

32. [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

33. Woolmore, R (2013). Designation History Series: High Weald. High Weald JAC

Responsibility for conservation and enhancement of AONBs: the legal framework

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War.

- **The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act** made provision for the designation of AONBs and National Parks. It provided AONBs with protection, under planning law, against inappropriate development and gave local authorities permissive powers to take action for ‘preserving and enhancing natural beauty’.
- **The Countryside Act 1968 (Section 37)** placed a responsibility on local authorities, statutory conservation bodies, and civil servants, in exercising their functions under the 1949 Act (as amended by subsequent legislation) to ‘have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas.’ Within AONBs this means a responsibility to acknowledge and, where appropriate, to promote farming, forestry and the rural economic and social context wherever this can be done without compromising the primary purpose of conserving natural beauty.
- **The Environment Act 1995** confirmed replacement of ‘preserve and enhance’ with ‘conserve and enhance’ in relation to the purpose of National Parks and duties of public bodies towards them.
- **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)**, amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, subsumed and strengthened the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It brought the primary purpose in line with that of National Parks, clarified the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their protection and management, giving responsibility for their conservation and enhancement primarily to local authorities. In particular:
 - **Section 82** reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
 - **Section 83** establishes the procedure for designating or revising the boundaries of an AONB, including Natural England’s duty to consult with local authorities and to facilitate public engagement.
 - **Section 84** confirms the powers of local authorities to take ‘all such action as appears to them expedient’ to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.

- **Section 85** places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities ‘...in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land [in an AONB] must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty...’. ‘Relevant authorities’ include all public bodies (county, borough, district, parish and community councils, joint planning boards and other statutory committees); statutory undertakers (such as energy and water utilities, licensed telecommunications companies, nationalised companies such as Network Rail and other bodies established under statute responsible for railways, roads and canals); government ministers and civil servants. Activities and developments outside the boundaries of AONBs that have an impact within the designated area are also covered by the duty.
- **Sections 86 to 88** allow for the establishment in an AONB of a Conservation Board to which the AONB functions of the local authority (including development planning) can be transferred. Conservation boards have the additional but secondary function of seeking to increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB’s special qualities. They also have an obligation to ‘seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities’ in co-operation with local authorities and other public bodies.
- **Sections 89 and 90** create a statutory duty on all AONB partnerships (local authorities and Conservation Boards) to prepare a management plan ‘which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it’, and thereafter to review adopted and published Plans at intervals of not more than five years. Where an AONB involves more than one local authority, they are required to do this ‘acting jointly’. Section 90 also sets out that the Secretary of State may by regulations make provision requiring AONB Management Plans to contribute to the meeting of any target set under Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Environment Act 2021, and setting out how such a plan must contribute to the meeting of such targets, and setting out how AONB Management Plans must further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.
- **Section 90A** sets out that the Secretary of State may by regulations make provision requiring relevant authorities to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review of AONB Management Plans, and setting out how such a relevant authority may or must do so.
- **Section 92** makes clear that the conservation of natural beauty includes the conservation of ‘flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.’

● **The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC):**

- **Section 99** formally clarifies in law that the fact that an area consists of or includes land used for agriculture or woodlands, or as a park, or ‘any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape’ does not prevent it from being treated, for legal purposes, ‘as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty).’
- **Schedule 7** asserts that an AONB joint committee of two or more local authorities, or a conservation board, can constitute a ‘designated body’ for the performance of functions allocated to Defra.

The international context

AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are part of the international family of protected areas. As cultural landscapes, produced through the interaction of humans with nature over time, they have a special significance (together with UK National Parks) of being recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as ‘Category V – Protected Landscapes’. These offer a unique contribution to the conservation of biological diversity, particularly where conservation objectives need to be met over a large area with a range of ownership patterns and governance. They can act as models of sustainability, promoting traditional systems of management that support key species.

Category V protected landscapes are defined by IUCN as:

‘A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.’

The Council of Europe Landscape Convention (2000), ratified by the UK government in 2006, provides a definition of landscape as ‘An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.’ This is a rich concept that puts people at the heart of landscape (the commonplace and ‘degraded’ as well as the eminent), each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning to those who inhabit or visit it.

Since the 1949 Act there has been continuous development in the policy and legislative context of AONBs, shaped by a number of key policy documents including:

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Policy Statement (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, CCP356, 1991)

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Guide for Members of Joint Advisory Committees (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, CCP461, 1994)

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Providing for the future (Countryside Commission, CCWP 08, 1998)

Protecting our finest countryside: Advice to Government (Countryside Commission, CCP352, 1998)

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans: A Guide (Countryside Agency, CA23, 2001)

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: A Guide for AONB partnership members (Countryside Agency, CA24, 2001)

Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency, CA221, 2006)

Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England (Natural England, 2011)

Appendix 2:

A brief history of the High Weald

Termed Anderida silva by the Romans, it was referred to as Andredesleah ('leah' suggesting wood pasture) in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and later as Andredesweald (the high forest of Andred) shortened to Weald in Saxon charters (sometimes associated with weald-bera or den-bera – a right to feed swine in the forest). The Weald is one of the longest lasting regional names in Britain.

Prehistory

It is possible that the system of moving livestock into seasonal grazing areas in the Weald from the surrounding downs and vales originated in the Neolithic period, or even earlier. Mesolithic and Palaeolithic flint scatters are concentrated close to springs and on the drier ridgetops. There is significant evidence for communities using and clearing woodland, cultivating land and for the formation of heathland by the Bronze Age.

Iron Age ironworks are concentrated around the northern and eastern fringes of the High Weald, enabling the export of iron via tributaries of the River Thames and the Brede and Rother. The location of routeways close to Iron Age forts and camps suggest a degree of control and supervision over trade in livestock, and also the export of iron and other products out of the Weald.

The Roman period (AD 43-420)

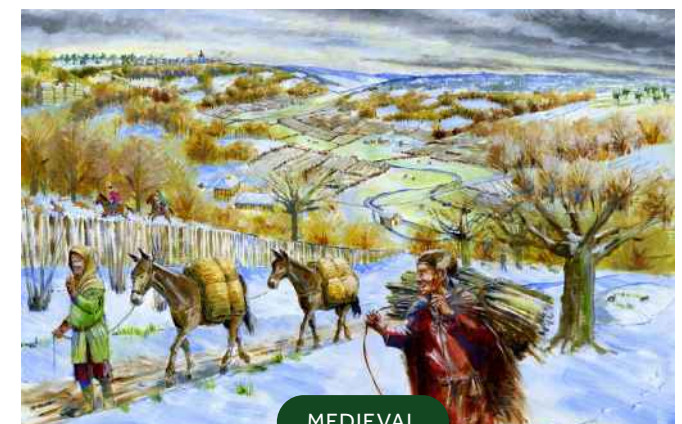
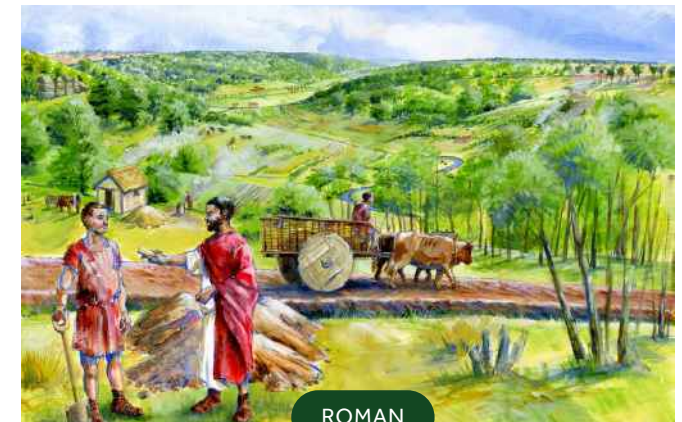
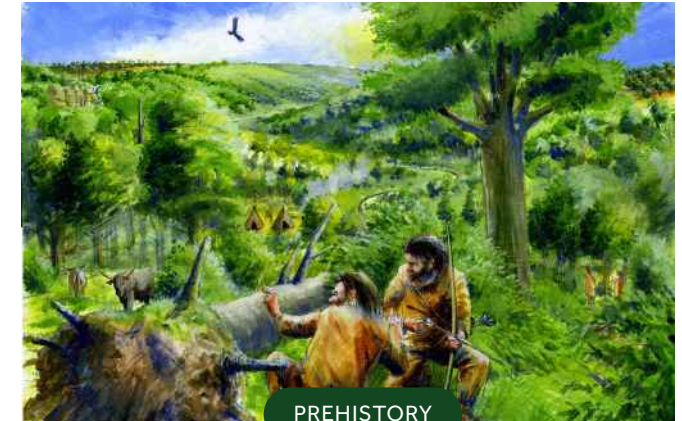
The High Weald was the premier iron producing district in Britannia during the Roman occupation, with up to 2,000 bloomeries scattered across the area and nine industrial scale sites. Iron production, which peaked in the 2nd and first half of the 3rd centuries AD, was located within 3.5km of

known Roman roads and concentrated to the east, where it was managed as an Imperial estate by the Roman Fleet (the Classis Britannica). Here it had good access to the navigable waterways of the Brede and Rother, and to major highways linking to both the London market and the wealthy villas and cornlands of the South Downs.

The Roman roads that intersect the High Weald, and which enabled the movement of military force and the extraction of iron, broadly correspond in their alignment with earlier routeways and in some cases intersect them. Unlike most routeways which avoid boggy ground, Roman roads drove across the landscape and required paved fording points where they crossed rivers and streams. Recorded Roman villas are very rare in the High Weald because the control of the Roman Fleet inhibited the development of private estates.

'Unless a man understands the Weald, he cannot write about the beginnings of England...'

Hilaire Belloc



The Saxon period (420-1066)

Routeways provided the framework for territorial units – called ‘lathes’ in Kent and Surrey, and ‘rapes’ in Sussex – that developed after the Roman period and up to the adoption of counties and then the parish system from the 8th and 9th centuries. These routeways connected parent manors in surrounding arable landscapes to the woodland resources and rich pastures of the Weald, often at distances of 20 or 30 miles apart. These included the temporary swine pastures or ‘dens’ (concentrated in Kent) where pigs and sometimes cattle and sheep were herded to feed on acorns and beech mast in the autumn.

The surveyors for the Domesday Book (1086-7) used pigs as a way of calculating the value and extent of woodland. The right of tenants to graze pigs in wood pasture areas (called ‘pannage’) developed from the 9th century and continued into the 14th and 15th centuries. Other areas along routeways were used as seasonal pastures or stopping-off points, including ‘folds’ and areas which became greens and forstals within farming settlements.

The medieval period (1066-1540)

The practice of temporary grazing from outlying manors had declined by the 11th century, probably owing to the gradual break-up of the large estates by the Saxon kings through granting of lands to secular and ecclesiastical holders. Between the 9th and 12th centuries, seasonal pastures had developed into individual and clustered groups of farmsteads as more land was enclosed for growing crops and pasturing cattle. By the 14th century, the High Weald’s characteristic dispersed settlement pattern was well established, with the land mostly worked from individual family farms set in anciently enclosed fields for managing crops and pasturing animals carved out of woodland and wood pasture.

The numbers of permanent farmsteads increased until the 14th century, requiring an increasingly dense network of routeways to link them and provide access to fields and common land. A number of new farms were created out

of the woodland from the 11th century. By the late 13th century, the Wealden landscape comprised a scattering of gentry properties intermingled with a mass of small peasant holdings, many of which developed – as a result of amalgamation – in the 14th and 15th centuries into larger freehold properties. Yards in farmsteads were used to manage pigs, which continued as an important part of the local farming economy, and cattle, which continued to be driven out of the area on the hoof for finishing. Cattle became an increasingly important export between the 14th and 18th centuries, and most locally produced corn was produced as animal feed and for home consumption rather than as an export crop.

Villages, such as Goudhurst, Burwash (planned along a ridgeway), Wadhurst and Ticehurst, with marketplaces for trading local products (iron, livestock, cattle hides and woodland products) developed in the 13th century along and at the meeting point of routeways. Fine medieval houses attest to their relative wealth, and their occupants often combined farming with trade.

For five hundred years the rivers of the Eastern High Weald were an important link for trade and war between the wooded interior and the seaports of Winchelsea and Rye, which after the storms of 1285 and into the early 14th century gradually silted. Many routeways connected the Weald to navigable rivers and ports. Timber and firewood, mostly bound for France and Flanders, were the major exports from Kent and Sussex ports through to the 16th century, and the relative ease of export stimulated the woodland industry in this part of the Weald. Up to the late 15th century, the river Rother was navigable to Reading Street, Smallhythe and Newenden, with Henry V’s 1000-ton ship, *The Jesus*, built at Smallhythe in 1414. The last Royal Commission at Smallhythe was Henry VIII’s great ship, the 300-ton *Great Gallyon*, ordered in 1546. Silt and the great storm of 1636 saw the end of the shipbuilding industry, but wooden barges were still moving timber and goods from the interior of the High Weald until the end of the 19th century when the last barge, *Primrose*, was built.

The post-medieval period (1540-1750)

Some colonisation of the woodland continued up to the 17th century, by which time there was a considerable growth in population linked to the growth of industries such as broadcloth manufacture and iron founding. More houses were built along routeways, enclosing areas of common land along them. In some areas, as many as a quarter of families were housed in areas enclosed from wayside common.

The Weald again became a centre of British iron making from the early 16th century, following the successful import of blast furnace technology from the Low Countries in the 1490s, concentrated in the eastern and central Weald but with significant expansion to the north and west. Interconnecting chains of leats, dams and hammer ponds were constructed to provide sufficient head of water for the forges, and wealthy ironmasters built notable mansions such as Gravetye and Great Shoesmiths. The industry declined in the late 17th and 18th centuries as a result of cheaper imports, the rising price of fuel, the successful development of the use of coke, and the loss of naval contracts to provide cannons.

Most of the wool for dyeing was imported from Romney Marsh into the main cloth manufacturing areas around Cranbrook and Tenterden. Cloth was then transported overland by packhorse and, more rarely, wheeled transport to dealers in London. Smaller items including ironwork such as horseshoes and glass were also exported in this way. By the end of the 17th century, many clothiers and ironmasters were moving into cattle rearing in response to the increasing demand for beef. The hop industry developed on an industrial scale from this period, supplying maltings and breweries and stimulating the management of woodlands and shaws for fuel, and the growing of chestnut for hop poles.

The Industrial Revolution (1750-1914)

Over this period, the Weald shifted from a diverse industrial and farming economy to one that was more linked to the development of capital in London and the coastal resorts, and the enjoyment of its landscape by new residents and visitors.

Social commentators Arthur Young, William Cobbet and others noted the ornamental landscapes of the new gentry and admired the area's wayside cottages with their gardens. As droving of livestock continued to decline, there was further enclosure of roadside commons and greens for new houses (called 'purpesture' settlement), mostly driven by the large numbers of smallholders who were bereft of employment on account of the decline in the cloth and iron industries.

Most turnpikes in the High Weald were built on pre-existing highways between the 1730s and 1770s. They were of particular importance in easing the export of timber and corn, and in supplying goods and services for the burgeoning south coast resorts such as Brighton and Hastings. Although many turnpike trusts had closed down by the 1880s, they stimulated property transactions and enabled significant amounts of residential development. These were concentrated in the areas south of Tunbridge Wells and around the Brighton-London road to the west. From the 18th century, a trend in 'pleasure farms' saw some farmsteads converted into residential use, with routeways diverted and made into private drives, which were approached through new ornamental landscapes.

Farmland was reorganised with enlarged fields, existing or straightened hedgerows dotted with trees. Farmsteads were also reorganised often around courtyards to help produce manure for fields yielding more corn for export.

The railway network intensified these developments, often increasing the demand for improved roads to connect new housing to railway stations. Additional cattle yards were built around railway stations (for example at Hawkhurst and Paddock Wood) and rail was increasingly used for

exporting livestock, hops and milk. Railways, and at the end of this period motor cars and buses, also enabled tourism accompanied by guides and books such as Arthur Beckett's *The Wonderful Weald* (1911).

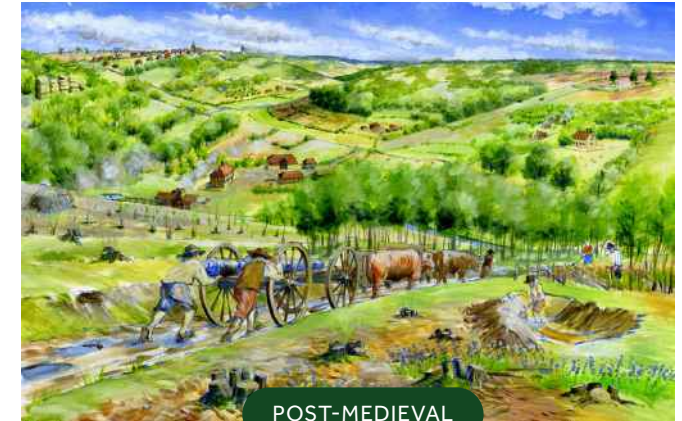
The last hundred years, 1914 to the present

The increased appreciation of the High Weald's historic landscape and heritage has been accompanied by the decline of traditional agriculture, cattle droving (cattle were still being driven to markets in the 1930s) and woodland management. Car ownership increased dramatically, leading to the further decoupling of settlement from land use. The building of bungalows and renovation of historic houses became common, and the areas around the Weald experienced a substantial and disproportionate increase in housing compared to the rest of England in the inter-war period.

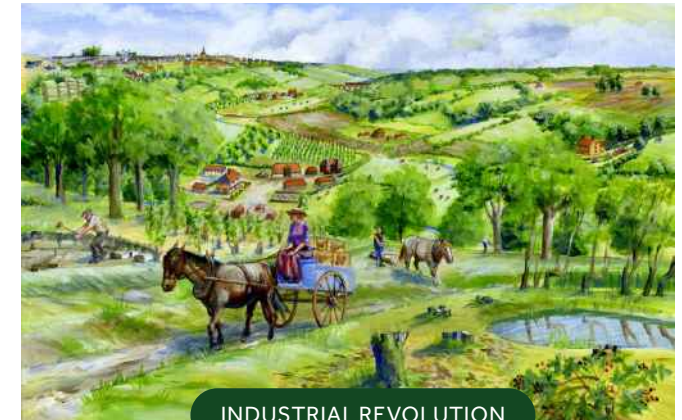
Until the 1950s, the Weald changed at a slower pace than most other regions in Britain. For 700 years prior to this, agriculture and the pattern of fields, hedges and surrounding woodland remained relatively unaltered. Since then, farming and forestry, always difficult on the poor soils, have been pushed further to the economic margins. This decline in mixed farming and woodland management is a major threat to the long-term survival of the High Weald's distinctive landscape character.

Edited and adapted from:

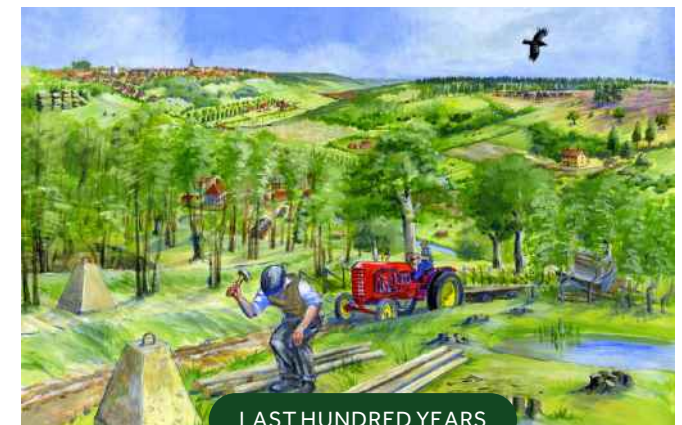
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POST-MEDIEVAL



INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



LAST HUNDRED YEARS

Notes



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High Weald
National
Landscape
Partnership

www.highweald.org

From: **Robert Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment**
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 9 July 2024**

Subject: **Annual update on the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy**

Non-Key decision

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: **None**

Future Pathway of report: **None**

Electoral Division: **ALL**

Summary: This report provides the third annual update on the implementation of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy.

Overall, delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is again RAG rated as Amber. This reflects that broadly the strategy is on track, and there have been many successful completed projects, but there are significant risks and issues in some areas. It should be noted that this is a partnership strategy, and as such the risks and issues do not sit solely with KCC but apply across the partnership.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note the third year of progress on delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy for Kent and Medway and to endorse:

- 1) the refresh of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Implementation Plan to align with sector emission data and the agreed Kent High Ambition Pathway and
- 2) the creation of a new Kent and Medway Environment Members Group to sit alongside the Kent and Medway Environment Group (Environment Directors' Group).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The [Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy](#), adopted in 2020, sets out how all local authorities in Kent and Medway will respond to the UK climate emergency and drive clean, resilient economic recovery across the county. The overarching vision is for the county of Kent to reduce its emissions to net-zero by 2050 and to benefit from a competitive, innovative, and resilient low carbon economy, with no deaths associated with poor air quality. The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sits within the framework of, and supports, the Kent Environment Strategy, published in 2016. The 2050 target sits alongside, but is separate to, KCC's commitment to achieving net-zero by 2030 for its own estate.

- 1.2 The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is supplemented by an [implementation plan](#), which sets out the detailed actions required between October 2020 and December 2023 (Appendix 2). This report updates on delivery against that implementation plan for 2023.
- 1.3 All districts, as well as Medway, have either formally endorsed, or recognised the strategy and have been involved in developing and updating the implementation plan. Partners have taken different approaches to how they view the implementation plan, with some endorsing the plan through their formal governance systems, and others continuing to be involved in delivery without formally adopting the plan.
- 1.4 The actions within the 2020-2023 implementation plan were reviewed in 2023 and the [2024-2027 Implementation plan](#) was written (Appendix 3). Where actions from the previous plan have been completed, they have been removed or replaced. This remains a live document.
- 1.5 The Implementation plan is formally monitored on an annual basis at financial year end and reported to the Kent and Medway Environment Group, the Kent Environment Board and Kent Leaders.

2. Delivery to date

- 2.1 A full report covering delivery to date for 2023 on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (the ELES progress report) is available at Appendix 1. This report has been compiled through extensive engagement with all delivery partners and named priority leads.
- 2.2 Overall, delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is RAG rated as amber. This reflects that broadly the strategy is on track, but there are significant risks and issues in some areas. Of the 78 actions, 12 are RAG rated red, 26 amber and 40 green. This shows an improvement on year 1 and year 2 (year 2 figures for comparison were 13 red, 29 amber and 36 green).

In many cases the red RAG rating reflects gaps, both in terms of the staff or resources to deliver the actions and the finance required to deliver projects and outputs across local authorities. The resourcing issues are across the partnership and have been raised as a key issue with the Kent and Medway Environment Group who are exploring opportunities to address some of the gaps. KCC has invested in an expanded team focused on the delivery of this agenda and this has enabled more progress to be made, however the scale of funding required from government to support the delivery of the Environment Act 2021 and by association this strategy is large and growing.

Summary of Achievements 2023

- 2.3 Priority 1 – Emission Reduction Pathways to 2050
 - KCC achieved a reduction in core emissions by 53% in 2023 from a 2019 baseline and Medway Council achieved a 31.4% reduction compared to the 2019 baseline.

- All local authorities in Kent have published their own climate action plans with most aiming to be Net Zero by 2030 within their core emissions or have a reduction target agreed.
- The evidence base for Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) considers carbon emissions from the managed highway network in terms of the road assets themselves and the emissions from road users across Kent.

2.4 Priority 2 – Public Sector Decision Making

- Five Local Authorities in Kent now require that decision-making reports include a section to prompt officers to consider the carbon impacts of projects.
- The Kent Climate Change Network procurement sub-group has relaunched with support from all Local Authorities and is sharing best practice to support the inclusion of net zero and adaptation measures in procurement and contract documents across the partnership.
- A draft contract procedure is in development with detailed references to all areas of Net Zero commissioning work including waste management, reducing road miles and helping to decarbonise the supply chain.
- Stronger climate change commitments have been included in a number of key contracts issued within the partnership.

2.5 Priority 3 – Planning and Development

- 11 Local Authorities in Kent now include net zero carbon considerations in their adopted and emerging local plans.

2.6 Priority 4 – Climate Emergency Investment Fund

- Work on the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) funded Accelerating Nature Based Climate Solutions project continued with Kent Wildlife Trust commissioned to deliver much of the work. New resources include a guide for buyers and sellers of nature-based carbon offsets.
- The Environment Act introduced a mandatory approach to biodiversity net gain that applied from late 2023 following delays to secondary legislation.
- Kent and Medway Plan Tree Partnership is managing the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund project which will support new biodiversity net gain measures.
- SELEP has been replaced by the Greater South East Net Zero hub through which future Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNEZ) funding will be channelled for the south-east.
- Kent and Medway Environment Group membership has been expanded to include the Kent Chamber of Commerce.

2.7 Priority 5 – Building Retrofit Programme

- All Local Authorities have published carbon reduction plans for their estate with most implementing public sector building retrofit programmes.
- Kent Police, Kent NHS, and Kent Fire & Rescue Service all have carbon reduction plans for their estate.
- Residential housing retrofitting funding bids were applied for and allocated across Kent from the Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2), HUG 2 for park homes, Energy Company Obligations (ECO) scheme 4, UK Power Networks (UKPN) funded initiatives, Solar Together schemes, The Behaviour Change Initiative and Green Doctors.

- Six energy lectures for residents have been delivered across Kent and Medway working with the University of Greenwich, KCC, Tonbridge and Malling BC, Gravesham BC, and Swale BC.
- The eight Kent stock-holding local authorities continue to work on stock condition surveys and modelling of their social housing to identify how they can reduce emissions from each housing type and build retrofit into their planned maintenance. Three Local Authorities have a target for EPCs to be rated C or above by 2035.
- The Hyde Group South-East New Energy project with Osborne Energy and the University of East London was supported to retrofit 46 homes in Kent.
- LoCASE funding, (which ended in June 23), supported 47 Kent and Medway Small and Midsize Enterprises (SME)s with £333,101 to fund energy efficiency projects in this period, with project savings totalling over 426 tonnes of CO₂e annually.

2.8 Priority 6 – Transport, Travel and Digital Connectivity

- Mobility as a Service (MaaS) funding has been agreed to develop a multi-operator digital transport technology platform which will help modal shift away from private car ownership to more use of public transport, active travel & shared transport and allow planning, booking and payment for multimodal journeys in a new way.
- Most Local Authorities have developed plans to transition their own fleet to zero carbon vehicles.
- The next section of the King Charles III England Coast path opened from Ramsgate to Whitstable.
- Priority routes agreed within the Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Two school streets schemes were launched.
- £12 million capital funding from the Local Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding has been awarded to support on-street charging infrastructure.

2.9 Priority 7 – Renewable Energy Generation

- 1090 Kent homes have had solar PV and/or battery storage installed as part of phase 3 of the Solar Together project.
- UK Power Networks has run briefing sessions for all Local Authorities to demonstrate their free energy mapping tool to support development plans.
- 25 MWh capacity of solar farm generation has been developed.
- Local Area Energy Plans are being progressed with two Local Authorities conducting formal research for their local areas being supported by the Climate Change Network Energy subgroup.

2.10 Priority 8 – Green Infrastructure

- Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway is working with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively establish shared priorities for the delivery of nature recovery and environmental improvements across the county.
- Kent and Medway Plan Tree Partnership developed and delivered tree planting schemes at 61 sites and planted 62,565 trees.

- Phase 2 (2023-2025) of the Trees Outside Woodlands programme has enabled the launch of several grant funds supporting landowners to restore historic tree features.

2.11 Priority 9 – Supporting Low Carbon Business

- Steps to Environment Management (STEM) workshops helped 24 Kent firms develop environmental management systems and benchmark their environmental footprint.
- 131 SMEs in the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) region were supported with £1,038,811 of claimed funding in this period, saving over 472 tonnes of CO₂e per year.

2.12 Priority 10 - Communications

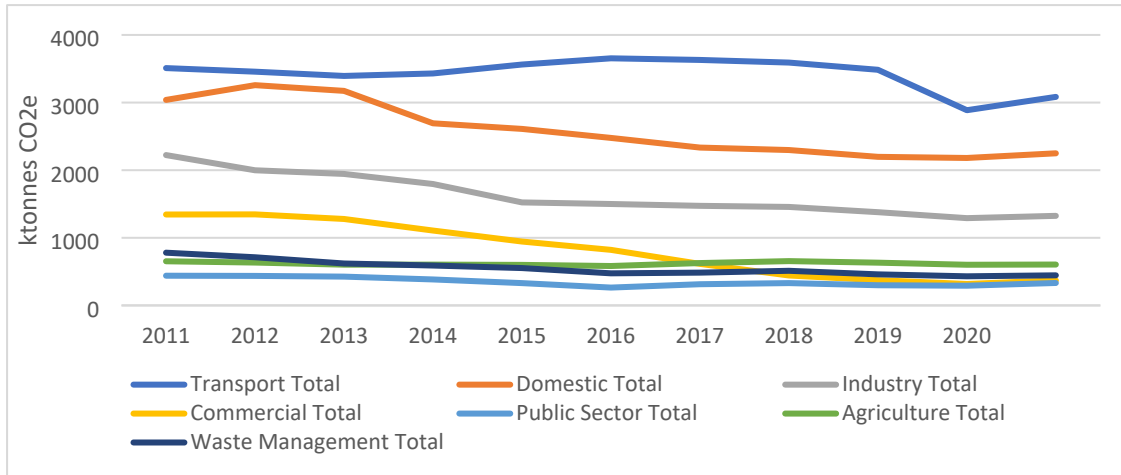
- All partners promoted “The Great Big Green Week” in September, with 39 events mapped and shared.
- Two new walking campaigns for primary and secondary schools in support of International Walk to School Month were delivered. Across both campaigns, participation doubled to 16 schools compared to the 2022 competition.
- A successful campaign with South East Water (SEW) and Southern Water saved water and reduced residents’ bills. A social media campaign supported a leaflet drop from SEW encouraging people to make savings for financial benefit. Approximately 100,000 leaflets were delivered and this drove ~4,500 clicks through to their webpages for more tips and support.
- A successful application for funding from environmental charity Hubbub to support on-street recycling.
- A campaign with Kitche to collect data on food wastage across the county was undertaken. 673 residents completed a related survey, and 691 Kent residents used the Kitche food waste app.
- Members of the Kent & Medway Air Quality Partnership worked together to promote the annual Kent Air Week.

Measuring progress

2.13 The most important indicator for progress on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is the total greenhouse gas emissions produced directly in Kent and Medway. The data is compiled by the Department for Energy and Net-Zero and there is a two-year lag. The most up to date emissions data is from 2021 which was published in July 2023.

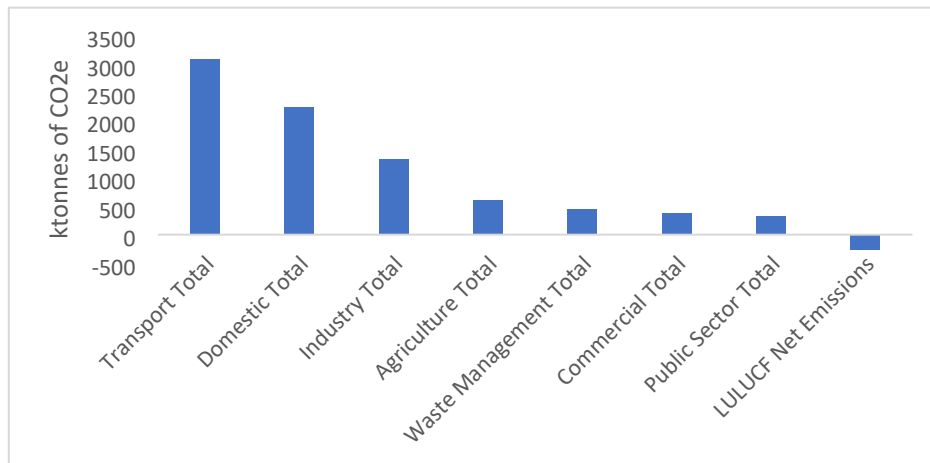
2.14 This covers emissions which are directly produced in Kent (terrestrial emissions) such as those from gas boilers and vehicles. It includes carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide and is reported as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e).

2.15 The government data shows that sector emissions have generally been decreasing in Kent. The following figure shows the emissions in ktonnes of CO₂e from 2011 to 2021. The top emitters in Kent are transport (dark blue line), housing (orange line) and industry (grey line). Emissions from the commercial sector, public sector, agriculture and waste are small compared to these three top sectors.



Source: [UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics)

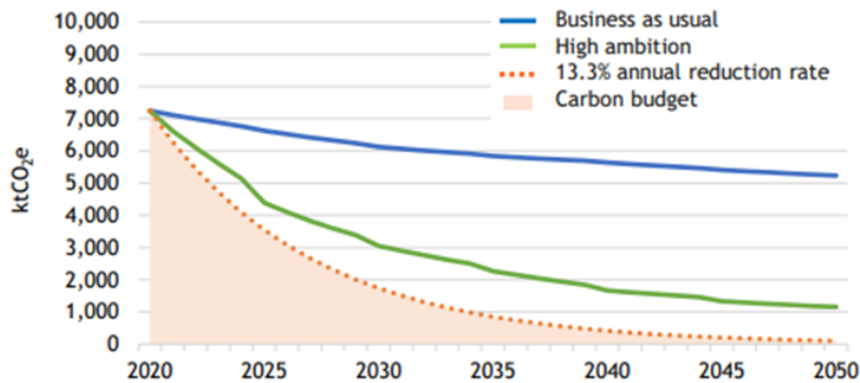
2.16 The following figure shows the most up to date data for Kent's terrestrial emissions from 2021. The majority of these direct emissions come from transport, resident's homes, other non-residential buildings and industry.



LULUCF is the emissions absorbed within Kent, mainly from woodland. Note the size compared to the other bars, showing the importance of reducing emissions first.

Next Steps

2.17 In 2022, this committee, the Kent Chiefs and Kent Leaders agreed to follow an emission reduction pathway to 2050 called the Kent and Medway High Ambition Pathway. This pathway was created by consultants Anthesis, based on currently available emissions factors, current legislation, government policy, published emission scenarios and proven technologies. This pathway is shown as the green line on the figure below.



- 2.18 It was agreed that a refresh of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and implementation plan should therefore align with the agreed high ambition pathway and set out actions to reduce emissions in line with the pathway.
- 2.19 The refresh was again endorsed by Kent Chiefs and Leaders at a Kent Chief's Away day in 2023 and by the Kent and Medway Environment group in March of 2024. The extra resource within the new KCC Energy and Climate Change Team means that this action can now start to progress.
- 2.20 Furthermore, in March, the Kent and Medway Environment group proposed that a new Kent and Medway Environment Members Group should be formed and sit as a reporting line for the Kent and Medway Environment Group to monitor progress of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy mapped against the High Ambition Pathway.
- 2.21 Kent wide lead Members for climate change who attended a High Ambition Pathway workshop on 24th April 2024, led by the Kent and Medway Environment Group, unanimously endorsed the proposal for the new Kent and Medway Environment Members Group.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.17 This is an update report so does not in itself have financial implications, but it does highlight areas where finance will impact future implementation. Any project specific financial implications will be raised with Members as required.
- 3.18 Through a significant service redesign process KCC has invested core funding into the Environment and Circular Economy division which included additional permanent posts within the Energy and Climate Change Team. The new structure went live in June 2023, with recruitment completed in November 2023. This team is working with colleagues from across the partnership to leverage additional resources from both the public and private sector to support the delivery of this strategy as one of its core aims.

4 Legal implications

- 4.1 No legal implications have been identified. Legal advice will be sought where necessary for any delivery under the strategy.

5 Equalities implications

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken when the strategy was developed and was updated following public consultation. This has been reviewed in the preparation of this report and no material changes have been identified following the modified action plan. As this strategy is aimed at improving health outcomes, there are likely to be more positive equality impacts than negative, particularly for age, maternity, and disability.

6 Other corporate implications

The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is at the heart a partnership strategy and covers multiple themes. Within KCC, the delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is dependent on teams from across the organisation working together to support the delivery of this strategy.

7 Governance

- 7.1 There are no new delegations as a result of the annual update.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The annual review process, detailed in Appendix 1, has highlighted significant successes over the past year and is testament to the collaborative approach being taken by partners across Kent and Medway. Whilst these successes should be celebrated, the scale of the challenge and pace of change needed over the coming years to meet our ambitions cannot be overstated. The gaps in resourcing to deliver against the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan represent a real risk to delivery and to net-zero targets for the county. Activity to address these gaps remains the key priority for delivery of the strategy. Future work with colleagues from across the partnership to leverage additional resources from both the public and private sector to support the delivery of this strategy is fundamental.

9. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note the third year of progress on delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy for Kent & Medway and to endorse:

- 1) the refresh of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Implementation Plan to align with sector emission data and the agreed Kent High Ambition Pathway and
- 2) the creation of a new Kent and Medway Environment Cross Party Members Group to sit alongside the Kent and Medway Environment Group (Environment Directors'

10. Background Documents

Kent Environment Strategy – www.kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy

Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Page – [Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy - Kent County Council](#)

Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy: Implementation Plan 2020-2023 – [Kent-and-Medway-Energy-and-Low-Emissions-Strategy-Implementation-Plan-2020-2023.pdf](#)

Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy : Implementation Plan 2024-2027 - https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/163717/ELES-Implementation-Plan-2024-to-2027.pdf

Kent & Medway Emissions Analysis and Pathways to net-zero - https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/122898/Kent-Emissions-Pathway-Report.pdf

Appendix 1 : Appendix 1 ELES Progress report 2023

Appendix 2 : [ELES Implementation Plan 2020-2023](#)

Appendix 3 : [ELES Implementation plan 2024 - 2027](#) (to be refreshed)

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Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan 2020-2023

ELES Progress Report

January 2023 – December 2023

Executive Summary of Achievements

Priority 1 Emission Reduction Pathways to 2050

- Council core estates and activities

Kent County Council (KCC) set a Net Zero target for 2030. This target includes emissions from owned estates, owned fleet, street lighting, traffic light signals as well as emissions from the grey fleet. KCC can report a reduction in core emissions by 50% in 2023 from a 2019 baseline.

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Medway Council (Medway C) set a 95% carbon reduction on emissions target by 2030 and aim to reach net zero carbon by 2050. They achieved a 31.4% reduction in carbon emissions by 2021 compared to the 2019 baseline.

All local authorities (LA)s have published their own estate and core activities climate action plans, with a focus on emissions from buildings that they own and their owned fleet. Most LAs also include emissions from water use, grey fleet, and emission from their leisure centres for this target. Most LAs aim to be net zero by 2030 within these core emissions or have a reduction target agreed.

- Scope 3

Scope 3 emissions are covered in plans by KCC, Ashford Borough Council (Ashford BC), Canterbury City Council (Canterbury CC), Dartford Borough Council (Dartford BC), Gravesham Borough Council (Gravesham BC), Maidstone Borough Council (Maidstone BC), Medway Council (Medway C), Swale Borough Council (Swale BC), Thanet District Council (Thanet DC), Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Tonbridge and Malling BC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Tunbridge Wells BC).

Both Folkestone and Hythe District Council (Folkestone and Hythe DC) and Sevenoaks District Council (Sevenoaks DC) are looking at covering these emissions more fully as their plans progress.



Review times for all documents vary, but most are being reviewed annually as a minimum.

- Area wide emissions

The Kent Emissions Pathway Report set out a high ambition pathway based on tangible measures published in 2021 and was agreed to by all partner authorities following meetings of Kent Leaders and Chief Executives in 2022.

KCC's Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee also agreed to track progress against the high ambition pathway. Future reporting will track against the high ambition pathway and the Tyndall Centre pathway.

The evidence base for Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) considers carbon emissions from the managed highway network in terms of the road assets themselves and the emissions from road users across Kent.

Priority 2 Public Sector Decision Making

Page 126 Many LAs in Kent now ask that all decision-making reports should include a section to prompt officers to consider the carbon impacts of projects.

- Ashford Borough Council piloted a Climate Change (CC) Assessment tool to link in with larger scale decision making.
- Folkestone and Hythe DC require that every cabinet paper and Leadership Team submission includes a carbon impact assessment.
- Dartford BC ensure that every Committee report includes a CC Impact Assessment.
- Dover DC require that every Cabinet and CMT paper requires a CC section which is review by the CC officer.
- Sevenoaks DC require all committee reports to have a mandatory section on CC impact.

The Kent Climate Change Network (CCN) procurement sub-group has been relaunched with direct support from members of the KCC procurement team following a restructure. The group will continue to share best practice and support the inclusion of net zero and adaptation measures in procurement and contract documents across all Kent local authorities.

Kent contracts that include stronger climate change commitments include an energy retrofit contract at Folkestone and Hythe DC, a LASER renewal contract at Gravesham BC, and LED lighting and energy contracts at Swale BC. The draft Contract Procedure being developed at Gravesham BC has detailed references to all areas of Net Zero commissioning work including waste management, reducing road miles, and help to decarbonise the supply chain.

Priority 3 Planning and Development

- 10 of the 12 Kent district and borough councils and Medway Council have commented that they now include net zero carbon considerations in their adopted and emerging local plans.
- KCC has developed draft building standards for both new and refurbished public sector buildings.

Priority 4 Climate Emergency Investment Fund

Work on the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) funded 'Accelerating Nature Based Climate Solutions' project continued. Kent Wildlife Trust is commissioned to deliver much of the work. New resources include a guide for buyers and sellers of nature-based carbon offsets.

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The Environment Act introduced a mandatory approach to biodiversity net gain (BNG) that applied from late 2023 following delays to secondary legislation.

Kent and Medway Plan Tree Partnership is managing the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF) project which will support new BNG measures.

SELEP has been replaced by the Greater SE NZ hub through which future Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNEZ) funding will be channelled for the south-east. KCC and Medway will be represented on the board.

Kent and Medway Environment Group (KMEG) membership has been expanded to include the Kent Chamber of Commerce.

Priority 5 Building Retrofit Programme

All LAs have published carbon reduction plans for their estate. Most councils are implementing public sector building retrofit programmes.

Kent Police, Kent NHS, and Kent Fire & Rescue Service all have carbon reduction plans for their estate.

Regarding residential housing retrofitting, funding bids were applied for and allocated across Kent from the Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2), HUG 2 for park homes, Energy Company Obligations (ECO) scheme 4, UK Power Networks (UKPN) funded initiatives, Solar Together schemes, The Behaviour Change Initiative and Green Doctors.

Medway C led on the delivery of six residents' energy lectures across Kent and Medway working with the University of Greenwich, KCC, Tonbridge and Malling BC, Gravesham BC, and Swale BC.

With regards to social housing, the eight Kent stock-holding local authorities continue to work on stock condition surveys and modelling to identify how they can reduce emissions from each housing type and build retrofit into their stock maintenance. Dover DC, Folkestone and Hythe DC and Dartford BC all have a target for EPCs to be rated C or above by 2035.

KCC supported the Hyde Group South-East New Energy project with Osborne Energy and the University of East London to retrofit 46 homes in Kent.

For the business retrofit program, the LoCASE funding, (which ended in June 23), supported 47 Kent and Medway Small and Midsize Enterprises (SME)s with £333,101 to fund energy efficiency projects in this period, with project savings totalling over 426 tonnes of CO2e annually.

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Priority 6 Transport, Travel and Digital Connectivity

KCC has funding agreed to introduce Mobility as a Service (MaaS), a multi-operator digital transport technology platform for Ebbsfleet, Dartford and Gravesend areas. MaaS will help modal shift away from private car ownership to more use of public transport, active travel & shared transport. MaaS will allow people to plan, book and pay for multimodal journeys in a way that's not been possible before.

Almost all Kent LAs have plans to transition their owned fleet to electric vehicles.

The next section of the King Charles III England Coast path opened from Ramsgate to Whitstable.

KCC developed the Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan further during 2023 with priority routes agreed.

Both Medway C and KCC have launched school streets schemes.

KCC has been allocated £12 million from the Local Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) in capital funding to support on-street charging infrastructure. Medway Council has submitted an expression of interest for £2.1 million for similar LEVI funding.

Priority 7 Renewable Energy Generation

1,090 Kent homes have had Solar PV and/or battery storage installed as part of the Solar Together 2023 project. This group purchasing scheme is supported by all LAs across Kent.

All LA officers have been offered briefing sessions run by UK Power Networks (UKPN) regarding access to their free energy mapping tool to assist development plans.

All LAs are continuously developing a pipeline of renewable technology projects, solar farm, and wind opportunities, to prepare for future funding bids.

KCC solar array in Somerset (Bowerhouse II) produces 22,000 MWh per year.

KCC Kings Hill Solar Farm started operating in Nov 2023 and is expected to produce 3,000 MWh per year.

Ashford and Folkestone have started researching a Local Area Energy Plan (LEAP) for their districts. KCC has started a CCN energy sub-group to move forward a Kent -wide LEAP and support partnership working on renewable energy generation.

Priority 8 Green Infrastructure

Page 129
Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway is working with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively establish shared priorities for the delivery of nature recovery and environmental improvements, to create a network of wildlife-rich places across the county. This local nature recovery strategy will be one of 48 – together these will cover the whole of England, with no gaps or overlaps, to deliver the government's commitment to ending the decline of nature and supporting its recovery. This work is due to be completed in 2025.

Kent and Medway Plan Tree Partnership developed and delivered over 61 sites and planted 62,565 trees.

Phase 2 (2023-2025) of the Trees Outside Woodlands programme has enabled the launch of several grant funds supporting landowners across Dover to restore historic tree features.

Kent Plan Tree is managing three rounds of the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF).

Priority 9 Supporting Low Carbon Business

KCC's refreshed Steps to Environment Management (STEM) workshops helped a further 24 Kent firms develop environmental management systems and benchmark their environmental footprint.

131 SMEs in the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) region were supported with £1,038,811 of claimed funding in this period, saving over 472 tonnes of CO2e per year.

94 Kent and Medway LoCASE grant applications (including needs assessments & energy audits) totalling £768,768 were approved for Kent and Medway SMEs.

The final Upcycle Your Waste (UYW) report was sent by KCC to all 247 SMEs actively engaged in the project. This included follow-up contact with 49 active circular economy businesses.

Priority 10 Communications

All LAs promoted “The Great Big Green Week” in September, with 39 events mapped out to be shared.

Medway Council:

- launched a water a tree scheme.
- ran a Free Bus Weekend campaign (9-10 December 2023) in conjunction with local bus operators.
- delivered two new walking campaigns for primary and secondary schools in support of International Walk to School Month. Across both campaigns, participation doubled to 16 schools compared to the 2022 competition.

Page 130
KCC ran a successful campaign with South East Water (SEW) and Southern Water which saved water and reduced residents’ bills. KCC’s social media campaign supported a leaflet drop from SEW encouraging people to make savings for financial benefit. Approximately 100,000 leaflets were delivered and this drove ~4,500 clicks through to their webpages for more tips and support.

KCC made a successful application for funding from environmental charity Hubbub to increase on-street recycling in Ashford Town Centre.

KCC worked with Kitche on a campaign to collect data on food wastage across the county. 673 residents completed a related survey, and 691 Kent residents use the Kitche food waste app.

LAs members of the Kent & Medway Air Quality Partnership worked together to promote the annual Kent Air Week.

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Priority 1 Emission Reduction Pathways to 2050

Set five-year carbon budgets and emission reduction pathways to 2050 for Kent and Medway, with significant reduction by 2030.

RED (1) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (4) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (1) Activity on track or completed
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Table 1: Priority 1 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

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Action	Progress	RAG
<p>1.1: Agree evidence/baseline and set 5 yearly carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole.</p> <p><i>LEAD partner: KCC</i></p>	<p>The Anthesis Kent Emissions Pathway Report was published in March 2021 and contains the carbon emissions' baseline for Kent and Medway. 5 yearly carbon budgets were set for Kent and Medway as a whole. However, the Kent and Medway five-year carbon budget for the agreed high ambition pathway is missing from the Anthesis Pathways to Net Zero report.</p> <p><i>Additional wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Monitor delivery against the five-year carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole.</i></p> <p>RISK: Resource is required to extend the Kent Emissions Pathway Report to include Kent and Medway five-year carbon budget for the agreed high ambition pathway</p>	amber

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>1.2 Develop Kent and Medway emission reduction pathway to Net Zero by 2050.</p> <p><i>LEAD partner: KCC</i></p>	<p>The Kent Emissions Pathway Report set out a high ambition pathway based on tangible measures published in 2021 and was agreed to by all partner authorities following meetings of Kent Leaders and Chief Executives. Future reporting will track both against the high ambition pathway and the Tyndall Centre pathway.</p> <p>However, as mentioned above, the Kent and Medway five-year carbon budget for the agreed high ambition pathway is missing from the Emissions report, further work in this area is required.</p> <p>Additional wording for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Monitor delivery against the high ambition pathway and the 1.5° compliant pathway set by the Tyndall Centre.</p> <p>RISK: Resource is required to extend the Kent Emissions Pathway Report to include Kent and Medway five-year carbon budget for the agreed high ambition pathway.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>1.3 Develop local strategies that set out how Net Zero will be achieved in their area, using carbon budgets and emission reduction pathway report to inform the evidence base where appropriate.</p> <p><i>LEAD partner: All local authorities</i></p>	<p>Kent County Council (KCC) set a Net Zero target for 2030. This target includes emissions from owned estates, owned fleet, street lighting, traffic light signals as well as emissions from the grey fleet. KCC can report a reduction in core emissions by 50% in 2023 from a 2019 baseline.</p> <p>Medway Council (Medway C) set a 95% carbon reduction on emissions target by 2030 and aim to reach net zero carbon by 2050. They achieved a 31.4% reduction in carbon emissions by 2021 compared to the 2019 baseline.</p> <p>All Kent districts and boroughs have published their own estate and core activities climate action plans, with a focus on emissions from buildings that they own and their owned fleet. Most LAs also include emissions from water use, grey fleet, and emission from their leisure centres for this target. Most LAs aim to be net zero by 2030 within these core emissions or have a reduction target agreed.</p> <p>In terms of scope 3 emissions, which are harder for a local authority to influence: KCC is working on reducing emissions from buildings that they lease out. Many LAs are working on recording the emissions from the buildings that they lease out, from social housing and from contracts and procurement. Work on reducing emission in all these areas is at the early stages. Scope 3 emissions are covered in plans by Ashford Borough Council (Ashford BC), Canterbury City Council (Canterbury CC), Dartford Borough Council (Dartford BC), Gravesham Borough Council (Gravesham BC), Maidstone Borough Council (Maidstone BC), Medway Council (Medway C), Swale Borough Council (Swale BC), Thanet District Council (Thanet DC), Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Tonbridge and Malling BC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (Tunbridge Wells BC). Both Folkestone and Hythe District Council (Folkestone and Hythe DC) and Sevenoaks District Council (Sevenoaks DC) are looking at covering these emissions more fully as their plans progress. Review times for all documents vary, but most are being reviewed annually as a minimum.</p> <p>Adaptation plan: The NHS in Kent have set up a partner working group to progress an adaptation plan for the county. KCC is developing an adaptation plan for its buildings and services, which is due to be adopted in 2024/25</p> <p>RISK: Scarcity of staff resource in many LAs to monitor and measure emissions in a consistent and co-ordinated manner. Also lack of resources in many to create effective action plans.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>1.4 Continue to develop and refine detailed emission reduction pathways for key sectors based on emerging policy and good practice, incorporating estimated costs where possible.</p> <p><i>LEAD partner: TBC</i></p>	<p>This action remains outstanding. The intention is to develop more detailed emissions reduction pathways and actions for key sectors which will marry up with DESNEZ data sets e.g. emissions from transport, residential housing, commercial and industry, public sector buildings, agriculture, waste, land use change and forestry. The highest emitting sector in Kent is transport and the second highest is housing.</p> <p>The evidence base for Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) considers carbon emissions from the managed Highway network in terms of the road assets themselves and the emissions from road users across Kent.</p> <p>RISK: Focusing on sector emissions is a policy adopted by DEFRA after the ELES was first adopted. Different sectors are further ahead in developing detailed emission reduction pathways. There is a limited Kent-wide approach to address the emissions from housing.</p>	red
<p>1.5 Monitor and publicly report progress against net zero targets.</p> <p><i>LEAD partner: All local authorities</i></p>	<p>The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) implementation plan is monitored bi-annually, and an annual report (this document) will be published in summer 2024. Most of the districts and boroughs plan to report annually or more often on their area-wide carbon reduction plans.</p> <p>RISK: Some local authorities include different scope 3 measurements when monitoring their core carbon footprint. Lack of consistency could affect this reporting process.</p>	green
<p>1.6 Consider how emissions from consumption could be calculated and incorporated into future area pathways/targets.</p> <p><i>LEAD partner: TBC</i></p>	<p>Previously targets and pathways were focused on production emissions, in line with the UK's targets. These are the emissions occurring within our territorial boundaries. However, we must also consider the impact of consumption-based emissions, Consumption-based emissions can be defined as all emissions along the economic supply chain, no matter where they occur. This method allocates emissions to the area where the consumer of the final good or service is based. We are now using DEFRA data to track consumption-based emissions locally. However, these do not formally form part of our targets or implementation plan.</p> <p>Additional wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Incorporate consumption-based emissions into ELES targets and implementation plan.</p> <p>RISK: Discussions on how to incorporate this into the 2024 version of the implementation plan and ELES targets are required</p>	amber

Priority 2 Public Sector Decision Making

Develop a consistent approach across Kent and Medway, to assess, manage and mitigate environmental impacts (both positive and negative), resulting from public sector policies, strategies, service delivery, commissioning, and procurement.

RED (0) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (3) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (2) Activity on track or completed
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Table 2: Priority 2 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>2.1 Develop a simple checklist to identify where significant environmental issues and opportunities may arise in response to Covid-19 recovery.</p> <p>LEAD: KCC</p>	<p>This action has been completed.</p> <p>This action has been removed from the 2024 implementation plan.</p> <p>RISK: None. Action completed.</p>	green
<p>2.2 Develop recommended requirements to be included within public sector contracts to align to net-zero ambition and support use of local goods and services where possible.</p> <p>LEAD: Kent Climate Change Network</p>	<p>The Kent Climate Change Network (CCN) procurement sub-group has been relaunched with direct support from members of the KCC procurement team following a restructure. The group will continue to share best practice and support the inclusion of net zero and adaptation measures in procurement and contract documents across Kent and Medway local authorities. The KCC restructure has recruited into two new posts in 2024: A Commercial Ethics and Sustainability Lead and supporting Officer role. One of the key areas of focus for these roles is to develop and embed procurement policies and processes on Net Zero across KCC.</p> <p>RISK: Embedding net zero into contracts and commissioning processes is a new area, is resource intensive and may require dedicated procurement officers. Tightening tender processes too quickly will risk disenfranchising smaller, local businesses, so an open, supportive approach is needed. (Hence larger value contracts could be targeted first).</p>	amber

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>2.3 Review contracts and commissioning processes to implement recommended requirements (see 2.2), tailored to organisational/local needs, as necessary.</p> <p><i>LEAD: All local Authorities</i></p>	<p>All L.A.s are considering their current procurement and commissioning processes in line with including the requirement of net zero policies for high value contract suppliers and potential expansion of social value policy.</p> <p>Kent contracts that include stronger climate change commitments include an energy retrofit contract at Folkestone and Hythe DC, a LASER renewal contract at Gravesham BC, and LED lighting and energy contracts at Swale BC. The draft Contract Procedure being developed at Gravesham BC has detailed references to all areas of Net Zero commissioning work including waste management, reducing road miles, and help to decarbonise the supply chain.</p> <p>RISK: Lack of staff and training on sustainable procurement within councils could mean that net zero requirements may not be fully embedded in contracts and time sensitive opportunities could be lost.</p>	amber
<p>2.4 Develop, test, and roll out a comprehensive climate change impact assessment and social value framework for public sector decision making, with associated policies, guidance, training, and support.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>Many LAs in Kent now ask that all decision-making reports should include a section to prompt officers to consider the carbon impacts of projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashford Borough Council piloted a Climate Change (CC) Assessment tool to link in with larger scale decision making. • Folkestone and Hythe DC require that every cabinet paper and Leadership Team submission includes a carbon impact assessment. • Dartford BC ensure that every Committee report includes a CC Impact Assessment. • Dover DC require that every Cabinet and CMT paper requires a CC section which is reviewed by the CC officer. • Sevenoaks DC require all committee reports to have a mandatory section on CC impact. <p>RISK: Whilst some work in this area has started, this is the beginning of a major change to working practices.</p>	amber

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>2.5 Encourage and support SMEs within public sector supply chains to effect positive environmental change by utilising LoCASE and STEM support programmes (see 9.2 and 9.3).</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>The European Union funded Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) program which began in 2016 ended in June 2023.</p> <p>During 2023, 131 small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) region were supported with £1 038 811 of claimed funding in this period, saving over 472 tonnes of CO2e per year.</p> <p>LoCASE and other Low Carbon Kent project legacy work led to more case studies being developed to update environmental toolkits for use in 2023 and 2024.</p> <p>Replacement wording for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Encourage and support SMEs within public sector supply chains to effect positive environmental change by utilising Low Carbon Kent and linked support programmes across the county.</p> <p>RISK: Tightening tender processes too much, too quickly, will risk disenfranchising the smaller, less-prepared SMEs. An open, supportive approach is needed to bring our supply chains with us on the net zero journey, alongside practical, relatable, local examples from those already engaged. The ending of the LoCASE funding in 2023 with no obvious replacement funding means that there is no continuation of support currently for SMEs in Kent and Medway to further decarbonise their business practices.</p>	<p>green</p>

Priority 3 Planning and Development

Ensure climate change, energy, air quality and environmental considerations are integrated into Local Plans, policies, and developments, by developing a clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework for Kent and Medway, to drive down emissions and incorporate climate resilience.

RED (5) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (1) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	X GREEN (0) Activity on track or completed
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Table 3: Priority 3 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
3.1 Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net zero targets and climate change adaptation. LEAD: KCC	The Kent Design Guide was produced by the Kent Design Initiative in 2005/2006 and was aimed at developers. Many LAs had adopted this document as supplementary planning guidance. KCC initiated work to refresh this guide in 2022. This work is currently stalled due to lack of resource at KCC. RISK: Significant as it is referenced in the Framing Kent's Future strategy document. This action is currently paused and at risk of non-completion due to lack of staff resources.	red
3.2 Adopt and/or reference the refreshed Kent Design Guide as Supplementary Planning Documents, in line with Local Plan updates. LEAD: All Local Authorities	As the document is not completed it could not be adopted and so has not been directly referenced as a Supplementary Planning Document in Local Plan updates. RISK: High as it could take a minimum of 12 months for the Kent Design Guide to be adopted.	red

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Action	Progress	RAG
<p>3.3 Secure agreement and identify scope and resource requirements to develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth evidence-base and strategic planning policy and guidance framework.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>Resource requirements were identified with KCC, however recruitment to a newly created 'Senior Climate Change Officer' role in 2023 was unsuccessful. The scope of the role is still under review.</p> <p>RISK: This action is at risk of non-completion due to lack of staff resource.</p>	red
<p>3.4 Using the outputs from action 3.3, to develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework that identifies latest evidence, good practice, position statements and policies for Local Plans and Development Management.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>Given 3.3, policy and guidance has yet to be prepared but best practice in terms of evidence, guidance and policy is routinely shared through well-established officer networks including Kent Chief Planners and the Kent Planning Policy Forum.</p> <p>Medway C. Canterbury CC, Dartford BC, Dover DC, Gravesham BC, Maidstone BC, Medway C, Sevenoaks BC, Swale BC Tonbridge and Malling BC and Tunbridge Wells BC have commented that they now include net zero carbon considerations in their adopted and emerging local plans.</p> <p>RISK: Lack of resource in many district and borough councils to embed net zero in Local Plans. The National Planning Policy Framework does not meet full net zero standards at present.</p>	amber
<p>3.5 Raise clean growth/climate change awareness and skills of planners, planning committees, developers, and supply chain.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>This action has started, see notes for 3.4, but further resource is required.</p> <p>RISK: This action is at risk of non-completion due to lack of staff resource and time to train the target audience of planners, planning committee members, developers, and supply chain staff. However, these aspects will be raised at Kent and Medway Environment Group and Kent Planning Policy Forum.</p>	red

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>3.6 Develop tailored Kent and Medway public sector building design guidance for new build and refurbishment.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>KCC have developed draft Building Standards for both new and refurbished public sector buildings. The standards are ambitious, with performance-based targets and a focus on carbon reduction, health and wellbeing, and climate adaptation. The Standards need to be tested and further refined to ensure they address the whole-building approach. Current lack of resourcing means that further development of the Standards has been paused.</p> <p>RISK: Whilst a draft has been produced, with the current lack of staff, this work has stalled.</p>	<p>red</p>

Priority 4 Climate Emergency Investment Fund

Establish a trusted Kent and Medway 'Climate Emergency' carbon sequestration, offset, and renewable energy investment scheme and fund.

RED (1) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (2) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (3) Activity on track or completed
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Table 4: Priority 4 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>4.1 Review existing internal and external funding streams, expertise and opportunities that could be used to deliver ELES actions. Develop into a central collaborative resource.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC/Kent Climate Change Network</i></p>	<p>A review of existing internal and external funding streams that could be used to deliver ELES actions was conducted and a resource was developed which was published on the Climate Change Network (CCN) Teams site for collaborative use. A monthly funding update continues to be shared with the CCN group.</p> <p>South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) has been replaced by the Greater SE Net Zero hub through which future Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNEZ) funding will be channelled for the south east. KCC and Medway C will be represented on the board.</p> <p>Also, Kent and Medway Environment Group (KMEG) membership has been expanded to include Kent Chamber of Commerce.</p> <p>RISK: There is limited staff resource within districts and boroughs to investigate investment opportunities. Some councils do not have a system to ringfence income from net zero projects to fund future net zero projects.</p>	green

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Action	Progress	RAG
<p>4.2 Accelerate the ‘supply and demand’ of nature-based climate solutions (understand demand, assess skills/capacity gaps, develop resources to support delivery).</p> <p><i>LEAD: East Sussex County Council</i></p>	<p>Work on the SELEP funded “Accelerating Nature-Based Climate Solutions” project continued through the year. The project is led by East Sussex, but Kent Wildlife Trust are commissioned to deliver much of the work. The project has created a number of resources including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An introductory guide for buyers and sellers of nature-based carbon offsets. - Project synthesis report. - Natural Capital Carbon Offsetting. - Resources for Sellers of Nature-based Carbon Offsets. - <p>RISK: None. The project is on time.</p>	green
<p>4.3 Create the framework for a South East wide ‘brokerage hub’ that can bring together ‘buyers’ and ‘sellers’ to co-develop nature-based carbon sequestration projects.</p> <p><i>LEAD: East Sussex County Council</i></p>	<p>Please see project outputs detailed in 4.2.</p> <p>RISK: None. The project is on time.</p>	green
<p>4.4 Establish a working group and evaluate options for a Kent and Medway climate emergency investment fund/offset fund to support local natural capital and renewable energy projects.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>No working group has been created. See the agreed amended wording below for this action.</p> <p style="color: red;">Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Review and act on the outcomes of the SELEP Sector Support Fund project, and Accelerating Nature Based Climate Solutions conclusions. (Note that SELEP has been replaced by the Greater SE Net Zero Hub.)</p> <p>RISK: There has been no dedicated resource for the rapid development of a climate emergency investment fund, however significant work is being carried out to understand the various funding sources for climate related activity, particularly around green finance.</p>	red

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>4.5 Develop a portfolio of 'shovel-ready' domestic retrofit and renewable energy projects suitable for external funding.</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>KCC have several renewable energy projects that have been developed further. The difficulty is keep these up to date at a time when project costs and feasibility change so rapidly. Regarding domestic retrofit, districts, and boroughs along with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub continue to apply for external funding for both private and social domestic properties.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Grow and maintain a portfolio of 'shovel-ready' renewable energy projects suitable for external funding.</p> <p>RISK: There is a lack of resources for the retrofitting agenda in the majority of councils across Kent. Discussions are ongoing as to whether funding can be found to appoint a dedicated Retrofit Officer to work countywide.</p>	<p>amber</p>
<p>4.6 Develop a portfolio of quick wins and 'shovel-ready' natural capital / carbon sequestration projects suitable for delivery through Net Gain or other external funding.</p> <p><i>LEAD: Kent Nature Partnership</i></p>	<p>The Environment Act introduced a mandatory approach to biodiversity net gain (BNG) that applied from late 2023 following delays to secondary legislation. Kent and Medway Plan Tree Partnership is managing the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF) project which will support this area.</p> <p>RISK: There are multiple demands on land to deliver nature-based solutions and several organisations and authorities looking to secure land for different purposes and so going forward a co-ordinated approach is needed.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Priority 5 Building Retrofit Programme

Develop Kent and Medway net zero buildings retrofit plans and programmes for public sector, domestic and businesses.

RED (2) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (7) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (2) Activity on track or completed
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Table 5: Priority 5 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.1 Develop organisational action plans to deliver net zero public sector estate by 2030 at the latest. Monitor and report progress.</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>All local authority areas have designated carbon targets for their estates and the majority also have carbon reduction plans for their estate with annual progress to be measured.</p> <p>Kent Police, the NHS, and Kent Fire & Rescue Service all have carbon reduction plans for their estate.</p> <p>RISK: Ongoing challenges of resourcing within council estates teams for the development and monitoring of estates heat decarbonisation and estates net zero plans.</p>	green

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Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.2 Implement a public sector building retrofit programme (energy and water), identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where possible.</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>KCC awarded £1,824,830 from Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) 3b. Changes to scope result in the grant amount later being reduced to £1,081,821.</p> <p>Dartford BC awarded £1,508,475 from PSDS 3b.</p> <p>Gravesham BC awarded £22,000 from the Material Focus Electrical Recycling Fund.</p> <p>Gravesham BC installed control flow regulators to water appliances at 13 of their highest consuming sites, with expected yearly savings of 292,000 litres of water and energy savings of 9,840 kWh.</p> <p>Medway C awarded £4,270,429 from PSDS 3b.</p> <p>Canterbury CC awarded £644,975 from PSDS 3b.</p> <p>Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust received £543,167 from PSDS 3b.</p> <p>MidKent college awarded £5,010,254 from PSDS 3b.</p> <p>Kent Fire and Rescue awarded £77,000 SALIX Finance Ltd. Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) 4</p> <p>Most local authority areas are implementing public sector building retrofit programmes.</p> <p>RISK: Lack of resources in teams to deliver public sector decarbonisation projects in climate change teams and in estates departments.</p> <p>Short timescales and the competitive nature of public sector decarbonisation scheme funding means that LAs need to be prepared with 'shovel-ready' projects for when funding rounds open and have limited time for joined-up approaches across Kent and Medway.</p> <p>PSDS is no longer 100% funded and many projects currently need up to 50% match funding.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.3 Develop a comprehensive Kent and Medway Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (excluding social housing) that identifies the actions and financial mechanisms for all income levels, to reduce emissions (from electricity, heat, and water) from all property types, with evidence-led targets and costed actions where possible.</p> <p><i>LEAD: Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership/Greater SE Energy Hub</i></p>	<p>A Strategic Domestic Retrofit Group (sub-group of Kent Housing Partnership) has taken ownership of delivering this action point. This group has created a paper identifying gaps to progress.</p> <p>The newly formed KCC Energy and Climate Change team has recruited a community and domestic energy support officer who is leading on Solar Together.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing as to whether funding can be found to appoint a dedicated Retrofit Officer to work countywide.</p> <p>RISK: Whilst some L.A.s collaborate in this area to progress bids and delivery; this is not always possible as the bids can be short notice and complex.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.4 Secure funding and implement projects identified in the Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (excluding social housing)</p> <p><i>LEAD: Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership/SE Energy Hub</i></p>	<p>Funding bids were applied for and allocated from Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2), HUG 2 for park homes, Energy Company Obligations (ECO) scheme 4 schemes, UK Power Networks (UKPN) funded initiatives, Solar Together schemes, The Behaviour Change Initiative and Green Doctors. There has been funding received in this area for the various advice services in the county, marketing activities, local parish schemes, schools, and community groups.</p> <p>Medway C led on the delivery of six residents' energy events across Kent and Medway working in collaboration with the University of Greenwich, KCC, Tonbridge and Malling BC, Gravesham BC, and Swale BC. This program provided a post event FAQ sheet/signposting. The program evaluation report was used to support a further joined-up bid led by the University of Greenwich.</p> <p>Medway C have rolled out three energy efficiency schemes: Energy Company Obligation (ECO4), Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2). All focus on energy efficiency and insulation in private residential properties. They also worked with the University of Kent on the Net Zero Innovation Programme. This included an event for Medway landlords in May 2023 to understand the barriers and challenges to retrofitting their properties.</p> <p>RISK: Short timescales and the complexity of bidding processes, with tight time scales for delivery mean that progress in this area can be delayed. There is a lack of resources for the retrofitting agenda in the majority of councils across Kent. Discussions are ongoing as to whether funding can be found to appoint a dedicated Retrofit Officer to work countywide.</p>	<p>RAG</p> <p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.5 Develop costed action plans to deliver net zero social housing by 2030. Monitor and report progress.</p> <p><i>LEAD: Stock holding authorities (Medway C, Ashford BC, Canterbury CC, Dartford BC, Dover DC, Gravesham BC, Folkestone & Hythe DC, Thanet DC)</i></p>	<p>The eight Kent stock-holding local authorities continue to work on stock condition surveys and modelling to identify how they can reduce emissions from each housing type and build retrofit into their stock maintenance.</p> <p>Folkestone and Hythe DC's social housing target is for a minimum rating of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C for rented properties by 2035. They have implemented a pilot scheme that has delivered EPC A to selected properties.</p> <p>Gravesham BC has a social housing target for a minimum rating of EPC C for rented properties by 2035.</p> <p>Dover DC have a target of 2035 for all social housing to have an EPC rating of C or above.</p> <p>Medway C. completed an exercise to understand the current energy rating of council owned homes and the cost to retrofit them to EPC rating C by 2030, (currently 68.6% of homes are rated C or above).</p> <p>Additional wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: For new builds as well as existing housing stock.</p> <p>RISK: Resource to complete the surveys and modelling studies ahead of the development of action plans is required. In addition, concerns have been raised about the lack of resource, supply chain issues, increasing costs and lack of skills to deliver social housing retrofit.</p>	amber
<p>5.6 Support and facilitate registered providers to develop costed action plans to decarbonise their housing stock.</p> <p><i>LEAD: Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership/Registered Providers</i></p>	<p>The Kent Housing Group (KHG) asset management sub-group discuss energy efficiency works regularly. The decarbonisation of stock is a regular topic for the group. Members with a costed action plan have been sharing their experience as to what is involved, such as the importance of data. Regular discussion has taken place at the group in regard to the rising costs associated with this type of work.</p> <p>Additional wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: This should include the costs of material and labour.</p> <p>RISK: The cost of works has continued to increase during 2023 along with scarcity of trained workforce and material availability.</p>	amber

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.7 Implement projects to improve the energy efficiency of social housing, focusing on whole house retrofit to PAS2035 standards and identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where possible.</p> <p><i>LEAD: Stock holding authorities/Registered Providers</i></p>	<p>Medway C awarded over £1million from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) to improve the energy efficiency rating of 190 council owned homes with current energy efficiency rating of D or below. The planned upgrades will also help to lower residents' energy bills.</p> <p>Dartford BC awarded £1 700 000 from SHDF to complete external wall insulation (EWI) on 200 properties. Also, through the Dartford Low Carbon Exchange Project, Dartford BC partnered with Low Carbon Exchange to deliver an EWI upgrade programme to approximately 75 homes.</p> <p>Folkestone and Hythe DC awarded SHDF to complete whole house retrofits, some of which include renewable generation and air source heat pumps (ASHP). Wave 1 totalled £2.5m and treated 125 homes. Wave 2.1 is £4.48m and will treat 300 homes in the same way over 2 years. The programmes outcomes include ensuring that the resident's energy use falls.</p> <p>Gravesham BC completed communal LED lighting replacement programme at Pegasus Court, Portreeve Court and Longferry Court and this will result in annual carbon savings of 56 tonnes. The programme of heat pumps and solar panel installation for 15 homes at Springvale Court has also been completed. All 15 homes have net zero energy, an EPC of A, and an annual carbon savings of 83 tonnes. Gravesham BC improved the energy efficiency of its housing stock with an EPC Rating of C or above to 79%, (up from 73% in 2022 and 58% in 2021).</p> <p>RISK: The cost of works has continued to increase during 2023 along with a reduction in workforce and material availability. Again, concerns have been raised about the lack of resource, supply chain issues, increasing costs and lack of skills to deliver social housing retrofit. Due to the location of stock, joint projects are hard to identify.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.8 Update and deliver the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy (in association with action 5.3); supporting vulnerable and fuel-poor households to access affordable energy. LEAD: Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership</p>	<p>KHG began work in 2022 to update the existing Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy.</p> <p>KCC analytics published a Fuel Poverty Bulletin in July 2023 providing analysis of 2021 Kent fuel poverty data.</p> <p>RISK: Further resource in this area is required if a full review of the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy is required.</p>	red
<p>5.9 Support and enforce private sector landlords to make improvements to rental properties.</p> <p>LEAD: District/Borough (Private Sector Housing/Environmental Health)</p>	<p>Various measures continue to be taken across all Kent LAs, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of category 1 and 2 hazards including damp and mould growth and excess cold. • Working with landlords to improve the EPC of properties, and enforcement action under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) Regulations where necessary. • West Kent Landlords' Forum (Sevenoaks DC, Tonbridge, and Malling BC & Tunbridge Wells BC) in March 2023 covered a legal update, an update on energy efficiency schemes and damp and mould issues. • Folkestone & Hythe DC held a Landlord Forum in March which included a guest speaker on alleviating damp and mould. • Participation in bids for government funded energy efficiency schemes and delivery, currently Sustainable Warmth and HUG2, and signposting residents to schemes. • Use of Housing Assistance policies to provide grants/financial assistance for energy efficiency improvements. • Several local authorities are exploring working with an energy provider on ECO4 and ECO flex. <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Provide advice and guidance to private sector property owners, taking enforcement action where necessary, to ensure improvements are made on privately rented properties.</p> <p>RISK: The current funding climate for domestic energy efficiency improvements is complex, with government funded programmes taking time to set up and having limited delivery windows and specific (and varying) criteria. Dedicated energy efficiency officer roles are not available in all councils, with this work often being undertaken alongside the delivery of other priority areas of work, further impacting on the opportunity to be proactive.</p>	green

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>5.10 Support SMEs to retrofit energy efficiency and renewable technologies in business premises through LOCASE grant funding.</p> <p>LEAD: KCC</p>	<p>The LoCASE funding which ended in June 23, supported 47 Kent and Medway SMEs with £333 101 to fund energy efficiency projects in this period, with project savings totalling over 426 tonnes of CO2e annually.</p> <p>LoCASE and other Low Carbon Kent project legacy work was set to update environmental toolkits for 2024 use.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Support SMEs to retrofit energy efficiency and renewable technologies in business premises through Low Carbon Kent support and signposting to local solutions. (LoCASE grant funding ended in June 2023.)</p> <p>RISK: There is no identified funding stream to replace the LoCASE funding or similar support for SMEs.</p>	<p>amber</p>
<p>5.11 Assess the feasibility and funding mechanisms for ‘place-based’ retrofit schemes (e.g. street-by-street, whole business park, community scale), combining business, residential, public realm retrofit schemes.</p> <p>LEAD: TBC</p>	<p>The action has not commenced yet.</p>	<p>red</p>

Priority 6 Transport, Travel and Digital Connectivity

Set up a smart connectivity and mobility modal shift programme – linking sustainable transport, transport innovations, active travel, virtual working, broadband, digital services, artificial intelligence, and behaviour change.

RED (0) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (4) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (11) Activity on track or completed
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Table 6: Priority 6 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.1 Review business mileage, set challenging reduction targets in light of COVID ways of working and expand sustainable travel polices that reduce the need to travel, encourage modal shift to active travel/public transport or increase car sharing.</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>There are numerous initiatives being developed by public sector organisations in Kent to encourage modal shift to active travel or public transport. These include: developing sustainable staff travel plans, car sharing, staff travel planning, electric car lease schemes, reviewing business mileage policies, developing hybrid working practices, cycle to work and cycle hire schemes and employer travel clubs.</p> <p>KCC continues to work towards a reduction target of 35% across business miles. Teams across KCC follow hybrid working practices and embed a hot desk process to enable a more flexible process to where staff work.</p> <p>Gravesham BC implemented a hybrid working policy and implemented a “cycle-to-work” scheme. They implemented an Employer Travel Club linked with Arriva which provides discounted bus travel.</p> <p>Ashford BC completed staff travel plans.</p> <p>Canterbury CC and Ashford BC developed plans to move lead offices and have considered how to encourage active travel for staff and visitors within these plans.</p> <p>RISK: There is a lack of co-ordination, and actions plans to reduce business mileage and emissions across LAs. Environmental sub-groups or task and finish groups to influence this area are required.</p>	amber

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Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.2 Work in partnership to influence and develop plans to transition public sector fleets to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>Almost all Kent LAs have plans to transition public sector fleets to electric vehicles (EV).</p> <p>Some authorities have set targets e.g., Medway C plan for their car/van fleet (not including Refuse Collection Vehicles) to be electric by 2027 and KCC by 2030. KCC has progressed work to electrify its fleet in 2023 to now include 10 electric vans.</p> <p>Gravesham BC have installed 18 EV charge points at their Brookvale site and have electrified 15 % of their fleet vehicles.</p> <p>Maidstone BC has a Green Fleet Strategy which uses a Cost Viability Matrix to analysis the viability of buying any new fleet EVs.</p> <p>Other public sector organisations such as the NHS, Kent Police and Kent Fire & Rescue Service also have plans to move to commercial EVs.</p> <p>RISK: EV replacement vehicles can be considerably more expensive, the improvements planned in the EV charging infrastructure have not yet been fully delivered.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.3 Implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plans for <u>Kent</u> and for <u>Medway</u>; to develop motor-vehicle free routes for walking and cycling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas where most benefit will be achieved. • Identify gaps in the network and develop schemes to join up existing routes. • Identify opportunities linked to new developments. <p>Work in partnership to access government funding and maximise developer contributions to fund new schemes.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC & Medway Council</i></p>	<p>Medway C's cycle counter data indicated an increase in cycle trips across Medway in Q1 2023.</p> <p>Details of Medway C's 81 miles of cycle network have been made available online as a new mapping layer which also shows cycle storage locations.</p> <p>Medway C's Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 bid has delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New advanced stop line and segregation for an on-carriageway cycle lane on Dock Road j/w Khartoum Road. • Wand segregation, resurfacing and widening of the on-carriageway cycle lanes on Dock Road. • Dropped kerb/tactile paving installations on strategic routes, 18 junction improvements in total. • Installation of approximately 20 cycle storage hoops across various sites in Medway <p>KCC Public rights of Way (PROW) team completed the three year "Experience" project, delivering access improvements to PROW within the Kent Down Area totalling over £600 000. This work included the removal of many sets of steps. A new cliff top path was constructed linking Langdon Bay to the St Margarets lighthouse, supporting the increase in visitor numbers, and protecting an ecologically sensitive area. Funding secured to upgrade to cycle routes a section of England Coastal path along the Thames at Dartford and also MR474 (Medway Towpath extension at Mill Hall), Aylesford.</p> <p>The next section of the King Charles III England Coast path opened from Ramsgate to Whitstable.</p> <p>RISK: There are local issues with recruitment of experienced staff. High inflation is causing cost increase in labour, fuel, and materials. Funding for projects is insufficient to meet the demand for improvements.</p>	<p>RAG</p> <p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.4 Update and implement the <u>Kent Active Travel Strategy</u> and implement the <u>Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy</u> to promote and incentivise walking and cycling through the provision of infrastructure, facilities, training and engagement.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC & Medway Council</i></p>	<p>(The Kent Active Travel Strategy has not been updated since 2019). To fulfil the KCC county-wide role as the Local Transport Authority, to supplement the existing Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure Plans (LCWIP)s and to aid future LCWIP development in parts of Kent, KCC are developing a KCWIP. This is to ensure that the public and stakeholders are clear about where priorities are for improvements to walking, wheeling, and cycling and to ensure that each district LCWIP forms a coherent county-wide plan for delivery.</p> <p>KCC are running the WOW scheme with Living Streets in 11 schools. WOW is a pupil-led initiative where children self-report how they get to school every day using the interactive WOW Travel Tracker. If they travel sustainably (walk/wheel, cycle, or scoot) once a week for a month they get rewarded with a badge. On average, WOW schools see a 30% reduction in car journeys taken to the school gate and a 23% increase in walking rates.</p> <p>The Medway WOW initiative recorded a 117% increase in participation by children in summer 2023. Medway schools achieved 7th and 8th place nationally for the Sustrans Big walk and Wheel campaign.</p> <p>The Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy will be updated in 2024.</p> <p>Both Medway C and KCC have progressed School Streets initiatives.</p> <p>During 2023 Medway C delivered Bikeability and Scooter skills training to 1212 children. Medway C delivered road safety training to 6852 pupils across 75 schools during the 22/23 budget year. KCC Member training to train and educate elected members on active travel has been developed.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Update and implement the Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP) and related strategies and the Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy to promote and incentivise walking, wheeling, and cycling through the provision of infrastructure, facilities, training, and engagement.</p> <p>RISK: Active travel schemes can attract local opposition, which then impacts on the delivery of final Schemes. The behaviour change required by residents to reduce emissions has a number of barriers.</p>	<p>RAG</p> <p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.5 Work in partnership to prepare and implement local walking and cycling strategies.</p> <p><i>LEAD: ALL</i></p>	<p>KCC is working with all 12 districts and boroughs to promote walking and cycling through improved infrastructure.</p> <p>They are also working with districts and boroughs on their Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP)s. All Kent districts are currently engaged in this process.</p> <p>KCC consulted on a Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. During 2023 KCC worked on the plan with the consultants AECOM and ran a public consultation exercise. Priority routes have been decided for further development in 2024.</p> <p>Medway C are developing a Medway LCWIP with Systra planned for consultation in 2024.</p> <p>KCC are developing an air quality corridor hierarchy taking account of Kent Air Quality Management Areas, and plan to use this as the basis on which to prioritise future funding for zero emission corridors.</p> <p>Additional wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Measure the amount of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure delivered in Kent.</p> <p>RISK: Whilst this is currently green in recognition of the partnership working that has gone into getting to this stage with LCWIPs or similar being worked towards in all LAs, consideration needs to be given to the actual implementation of route improvements identified in development plans, hence the amended implementation wording above.</p>	<p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.6 Work with public transport providers to achieve EURO VI emissions standards or better.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>During 22/23 KCC established a BSIP workstream to research air quality bus corridor hierarchy to prioritise future external funding bids for zero emission corridors and further refining of the hierarchy with other factors. The top three worst air quality areas in Kent are Maidstone's Upper Stone Street/A20 Sutton Road corridor, Sittingbourne's A2/A249 crossroads bus corridor and Dartford's Homes Gardens bus corridor. Currently, KCC is awaiting DfT ZEBRA funding or other external funding opportunities to bid for future ZEBRA funding for the top three priority bus corridors identified. The original BSIP bid requested £16.5m funding towards these three bus corridors.</p> <p>Targets are framed as the percentage of buses meeting at least the Euro 6 standard for diesel bus emissions or zero-emission technology. The baseline is 2019/20 when 26.1% of vehicles in the local bus fleet met this standard. There are no zero emission buses in Kent.</p> <p>The target for 2024/25 is for 40% of vehicles in the local bus fleet to meet this standard with more zero emission buses.</p> <p>The target is unlikely to be met due to lack of investment by bus operators in moving to electric whilst they try to survive financially post Covid. Fastrack Thameside & Dover electrification will help this target with 33 zero emission buses due to be operational during 2024/25 using KCC ZEBRA funding.</p> <p>RISK: The pandemic has had an impact on the bus industry and efforts are focussed on providing services. Funding for low emissions buses remains a challenge.</p>	amber
<p>6.7 Trial new transport projects that drive the transition to Ultra Low Emission Vehicle public transport.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>KCC received ZEBRA funding from the DfT for the electrification of the Fastrack BRT Thameside electric bus service and new Fastrack Dover BRT electric service. Procurement commenced during 2022 for both the Fastrack Electric Thameside operations including 28 Zero Emission buses and for the Fastrack Opp Charger Electric Charging Solution Contractor in Thameside & Dover. There will be five zero emission buses for Dover Fastrack. These procurements were targeting contract award during Sept 2023 for Fastrack Thameside electric operator and Nov 2023 for Fastrack electric charging solution Contractor. The Fastrack Dover electric services are to be launched during 2024 and Fastrack Thameside electric service is to be launched during Spring 2025.</p> <p>RISK: Further procurement and trials are dependent on further funding bids which may require match funding. There may be short time scales for bid writing and delivery.</p>	green

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.8 Trial and implement projects that support modal shift away from car ownership and/or reduce car dependency.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>KCC are planning to introduce a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) multimodal multi-operator digital transport technology platform as a new type of service to the Thameside area and then continue roll out for the rest of Kent. KCC have received funding for Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in March 2023 which includes funding for introduction of MaaS to the Ebbsfleet area. KCC started procuring a MaaS technology partner and initiating a marketing and behavioural change campaign in winter 2023 (completing Summer 2024) to introduce MaaS to the Thameside area initially during 2025. MaaS will help modal shift away from private car ownership to more use of public transport, active travel & shared transport. MaaS will allow people to plan, book and pay for multimodal journeys in a way that's not been possible before.</p> <p>The digital platform will integrate real-time data from all forms of transport in or out of the MaaS zone, including all public transport, cycling walking, bike/e bike hire, electric car club & shared transport. Ebbsfleet is KCC's home grown 'Future Transport Zone' built around Fastrack Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and local public transport in the Dartford, Ebbsfleet Garden City & Gravesend area. The aim is to roll out MaaS across Kent & Medway in the future subject to National Highways funding decision due Autumn 23.</p> <p>Three districts (Canterbury CC, Maidstone BC, and Tunbridge Wells BC) have set up successful car clubs which they are hoping to expand. Several other districts are looking to set up their own schemes.</p> <p>RISK:</p> <p>Electric Car club: Electric Car club for MaaS Ebbsfleet is on hold until the MaaS scheme procurement progresses.</p> <p>Bike/ebike hire scheme: Bike/ebike hire scheme for MaaS Ebbsfleet zone is dependent on separate grants which are due to be agreed during Autumn 2023. (These projects rely on external funding, not KCC funds.)</p>	<p>RAG</p> <p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.9 Work with private transport sector, including school transport providers and taxi licencing to incentivise and switch to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles.</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>All Kent districts and boroughs and Medway C. have separate taxi licencing policies. Taxi licencing officers from these LAs meet at the CCN EV taxi licence sub-group and work together to develop their licencing policies to further support Kent-based taxi and private hire vehicle drivers to move to Electric Vehicles (EV)s and/or Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV)s.</p> <p>Medway C. have progressed a successful funding bid from the DEFRA Air Quality Grant to carry out a comprehensive taxi and private hire EV feasibility study looking at the barriers and opportunities for EV uptake by the trade in Medway. The results of this including the measuring of taxi vehicle emissions and behaviour change work will inform future incentivisation schemes.</p> <p>KCC regularly rationalises all hired client school transport services to minimise the number of services operating and thereby reduce carbon emissions. KCC will explore ways to incentivise school transport providers to switch to EVs. However, this will require financial support from budget holders and is unlikely to progress until the charging infrastructure is developed and suitable vehicles become readily available. Progress should be made once the licencing framework is developed.</p> <p>Please see details in 6.11 regarding the Kent LEVI funding of £12m and Medway LEVI funding regarding improving EV infrastructure.</p> <p>RISK: EVs remain expensive up front, compared to internal combustion engine. Vehicles for taxi companies and ULEV Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) are particularly expensive. There are limited national grants available to support EV purchase and private charge points. Moreover, there is a global shortage of EVs leading to supply issues. There are issues with insufficient charging infrastructure and electricity supply issues.</p> <p>RISK:</p> <p>School travel: Students are travelling longer distances to school. This creates an additional cost to KCC reflecting increased costs to the trade. Recent significant increases in client numbers, contracted services being operated, and increased distances travelled by operators all have an adverse impact on emissions.</p> <p>EV taxi uptake: National licencing regulations enable Kent-based drivers to be licensed outside of Kent and hence avoid Kent councils' licencing requirements. Lack of government requirements for EV taxi uptake within licencing regulations.</p>	<p>RAG</p> <p>amber</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.10 Consider future opportunities and interventions for reducing emissions from freight and international traffic including use of rivers and wharfs, improved journey efficiency, improved efficiency of vehicles and FORS and ECOStars schemes.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC & Medway Council</i></p>	<p>KCC is supporting the activity of the Sub-National Transport Body (STB) – Transport for the South East (TfSE) – in its implementation of its freight strategy. KCC is also supporting the planned convening of its freight forum which aims to find opportunities for improving freight transport in Kent and the whole region that sector, government, and wider partnership working could address.</p> <p>KCC is also supporting a low carbon approach to construction of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC), including making the case for the use of the River Thames for construction and removal of spoil, should this scheme be granted development consent. National Highways have made the construction of the LTC their pilot scheme for embedding low carbon procurement and construction methods within large scale Highway improvements.</p> <p>KCC freight officers are working to clarify the baseline data to work from in terms of reducing the emissions of freight vehicles. They have identified all road haulage companies in Kent that have Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) accreditation. Consideration is being given as to how to approach those who do not yet have this accreditation.</p> <p>RISK: Freight fleet in Kent is operated largely by the private sector. As such, understanding the progress on fleet management towards low emission vehicles and practices is difficult for public sector organisations, like KCC and Medway C., to track.</p>	<p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.11 Work collaboratively with the public and private sector to roll out electric charging points across Kent and Medway, in line with local EV strategies.</p>	<p>Medway C awarded £68 000 Local Electrical Vehicle infrastructure (LEVI) Capability funding to secure a dedicated Project Officer to help deliver EV charging infrastructure. An Expression of Interest for £2.1m capital funding has been submitted for the implementation of EV charging infrastructure in Medway. Funding due to be allocated in 2024.</p> <p>KCC EV Chargepoint Network, work to date up to December 2023:</p> <p>Chargers in District car parks - 137 charge point sockets have been installed and are operational across 3 Districts (Folkestone and Hythe DC, Gravesham BC and Tonbridge and Malling BC). 27,730 charging sessions have been recorded across the network, delivering 433,700 kWhs of electricity providing 1,517,950 driving miles (On average, EVs have an efficiency of 3.5 miles per kWh).</p> <p>Parish Charger Network - Chargers in rural locations, including Parish Council car parks. To date, 56 charge point sockets have been installed across 22 locations across the county. 12,833 charging sessions have been recorded across the network, delivering 196,910 kWhs of electricity providing 689,185 driving miles (On average, EVs have an efficiency of 3.5 miles per kWh)</p> <p>Rapid taxi charger Network - 50kWh rapid chargers installed across 12 locations. Hackney carriage and private hire access is prioritised, but some allow for public charging as well. Across the network, 15,649 charging sessions have been recorded, delivering 332,872 kWhs of electricity, providing 1,165,052 driving miles (On average, EVs have an efficiency of 3.5 miles per kWh)</p> <p>New Thanet Parkway rail station - 10 x 7kWh sockets have been installed, – 181 charging sessions delivering 2,481 kWhs of electricity.</p> <p>Ultra rapid charger project - Officers continue to develop a business case to use KCC owned land at locations on the strategic road network to facilitate ultra rapid EV charging hubs.</p> <p>LEVI Pilot - Three public sector destination car park sites have been identified to deliver charging hubs of various speeds for use by residents and visitors.</p> <p>LEVI capital funding - KCC allocated £12m in LEVI capital funding. Officers are building a business case to deliver primarily low power, on-street charging infrastructure in Kent to help accelerate the commercialisation of and investment in, the local charging infrastructure sector.</p> <p>KCC received £80 000 from the On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme (ORCS) grant fund.</p>	<p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>Swale BC received £106 506 from the ORCS fund. Gravesham BC installed two 22kWh electric vehicle chargers at Valley Drive for resident's use, to support residents in converting to electric vehicles.</p> <p>RISK: Development and installation of electric charging points is dependent upon the availability of grant funding. Electrical connection costs can be prohibitive, however, imminent changes to how connection chargers are implemented is expected to reduce the overall costs. There is a risk of not keeping up with forecast demand and some locations may have insufficient electricity supply.</p>	
<p>6.12 Support local SMEs to switch to ULEV vans through the Kent REVS Up for Cleaner Air scheme.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>The Kent REVs (electric van loan scheme) concluded in January 2023 with 335 electric van loans to Kent SMEs over the two-year period.</p> <p>All LAs promoted the Kent REVS scheme to local businesses.</p> <p>The LoCASE EU grant scheme concluded in June 2023. The grant supported ten SMEs in 2023 with £75K towards a range of EVs, from vans and taxis through to e-bikes and a street-cleaner.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Support further measures to encourage Kent business to switch to electric vehicles.</p> <p>RISK: Without designated grant schemes to support this program, LAs do not have the start-up funding to support such measures and SMEs may not have the initial investment funding for replacement electric vehicles and charging infrastructure installation.</p>	green

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.13 Assess the feasibility of developing 'low carbon transport hubs' for EV cars, e-bikes, and push bikes.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC & Medway</i></p>	<p>Ebbsfleet- As part of the Fastrack Living Roof Bus shelters project & Introduction of MaaS Ebbsfleet there was an intention to develop Multimodal transport hubs at strategic locations in the Ebbsfleet Garden City, Dartford & Gravesend town centres & surrounding residential areas. There has been an ongoing procurement during 2022/2023 for a Fastrack Living Roof Bus shelter Contractor who is expected to have the ability to create ' Multimodal Mobility Hubs'. There have been ongoing funding bids led by the KCC public transport team for the introduction of an ebike/bike hire scheme for the MaaS Ebbsfleet zone. A draft Concession specification has been developed ready to go to tender for an electric car club for the MaaS zone once the MaaS partner procurement is further progressed. The intention is to establish the new bike/ebike hire and electric car club physical infrastructure and service in the MaaS Ebbsfleet zone then integrate these new travel modes into the MaaS multimodal technology platform.</p> <p>The Otterpool residential development also has a planning condition & S106 obligations to provide multimodal mobility hubs in the development of the new residential areas in the Folkestone and Hythe district to encourage sustainable travel behaviours as people move into the new residential developments. This is expected to include electric car clubs, bike/ebike hire and EV charging infrastructure co-located with bus services in low carbon transport hubs.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Support progress in Kent regarding "low carbon multimodal transport hubs" to include measures such as multimodal integrated transport next to Fastrack electric BRT network, train stations, key bus corridors, public EV infrastructure, bike/e-bike share schemes, secure bike storage, electric car clubs with associated EV infrastructure, e-cargo bike trials.</p> <p>RISK: Lack of planning policy influencing developments to expand in this area.</p>	<p>RAG</p> <p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>6.14 Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Action Plans.</p> <p><i>LEAD: Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>Each Kent LA where there are declared Air Quality Management Areas will have their own Air Quality Action Plans to tackle areas of poor air quality. Full details of the relevant authorities' actions can be found in their Annual Status Reports published every year. A full library of these documents can be found at https://www.kentair.org.uk/ with Sevenoaks using https://londonair.org.uk/london/asp/lahome.asp</p> <p>A group meets quarterly for district air quality officers in Kent to share best practice and develop partnership working in this area. There are also groups that meet to support measures focusing on air quality improvements around schools and support air quality communication campaigns.</p> <p>RISK: The Environment Act 2021 requires government to set new targets to reduce air pollution by particulate matter (PM2.5) and councils will be required to work together more closely to tackle local air quality issues. It is unclear what these changes will mean in practice for the LAs in Kent and whether extra resourcing will be required for implementation.</p>	green
<p>6.15 Continue to work with government to increase the number of homes and businesses with access to fast broadband.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>This action has been removed for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan due to the closure of the national superfast programme in 2022.</p> <p>(The successor 'Project Gigabit' programme will be led centrally and will not be devolved.)</p>	green

Priority 7 Renewable Energy Generation

Set up an opportunities and investment programme for renewable electricity and heat energy.

RED (2) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (2) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (4) Activity on track or completed
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Table 7: Priority 7 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>7.1 Undertake a renewable energy (and storage) opportunities study for Kent and Medway focusing on all existing and emerging technologies and avoiding unintended negative impacts.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC/Medway Council</i></p>	<p>Kent County Council commissioned a Kent-wide Geospatial insights solar and wind mapping tool. A training session for district staff to use the tool has been held.</p> <p>A district energy group (as a sub-group of the Climate Change Network) has met three times to discuss and share progress in the areas of Local Area Energy Plans (LEAP), Heat Network Zoning and funding opportunities. The group will move forward a Kent-wide LEAP and support partnership working on renewable energy generation.</p> <p>All L.A. officers have been offered briefing sessions run by UKPN regarding access to the beta version of their energy mapping tool and explanation as to how this may assist county-wide development and bidding processes.</p> <p>Ashford BC and Folkestone and Hythe DC have initiated a pilot LEAP for Kent working with companies piloting supportive mapping tools in this expanding area.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Undertake a LEAP for Kent (or multiple smaller LAEP's) that focus on all existing and emerging technologies.</p> <p>RISK: Support for developing LEAPs is a new area with limited companies able to support the development of such plans. The rapid release of Government funding, with short timescales for bidding and delivery in this area, has meant that partners are focused on responding to these immediate funding calls, rather than looking at longer-term planning opportunities.</p>	green

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>7.2 Work in partnership to identify, support and promote new renewable energy projects across Kent and Medway, maximising funding from the Growth Fund, future Prosperity Fund and SE Energy Hub.</p> <p>LEAD: KCC</p>	<p>KCC bid to DESNZ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Fund (PSDS) Phase 3b and were awarded £1 824 832 which covers conversions from gas boilers to air source heat pumps for five buildings (including one which is still reliant on oil), and also includes other measures such as new double glazing, new Building Management Systems (BMS), LED lighting, and solar PV.</p> <p>These projects will see annual direct and indirect carbon savings of 113.87 tonnes per annum. (Annual direct carbon savings in tnCO2e per annum for direct emissions, i.e. fossil fuels, and annual indirect carbon savings in tnCO2e per annum for traded emissions, i.e. electricity).</p> <p>KCC solar array in Somerset (Bowerhouse II) produces 22 000 MWh per year.</p> <p>KCC Kings Hill Solar Farm started operating in Nov 2023 and is expected to produce 3 000 MWh per year.</p> <p>All LAs are continuously developing a pipeline of renewable technology projects, solar farm, and wind opportunities, to prepare for future funding bids.</p> <p>Folkestone and Hythe DC, Sevenoaks DC and Swale BC are at the early stages of implementing specific renewable energy projects.</p> <p>RISK: As renewable energy projects often have no internal core funding allocated, they are reliant on external funding.</p>	green
<p>7.3 Continue to install solar panels on suitable public sector buildings and land, including offices, schools, and landfill sites.</p> <p>LEAD: All Local Authorities</p>	<p>The solar panels on KCC buildings produced 405 960 kW during 2023.</p> <p>Dartford BC implemented works to decarbonise Fairfield Leisure Centre including the installation of a 500KW solar panel system to provide electricity to the building.</p> <p>Gravesham BC: Carl Ekman House, Chantry Court, and Springvale Court (all social housing stock,) produce 38 863 kW of Solar PV per annum.</p> <p>Solar PV projects often return on investment within 10 years.</p> <p>RISK: Availability of funding opportunities for solar PV across government is reducing with more stringent criteria on funding agreements. Capacity issues with the local grid can cause delays to projects.</p>	green

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>7.4 Develop and implement the Maidstone Heat Project.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>This project was halted through 2023 due to rising costs in all areas. The program is being reconsidered, with renewed partners, during 2024.</p> <p>RISK: Rising costs outweigh the benefits. Reliant on external funds.</p>	<p>red</p>
<p>7.5 Identify the barriers and local authority role in supporting households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies. Incorporate findings into action 5.3 (domestic retrofit strategy).</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>KCC supported the Hyde Group South-East New Energy (SENE) project with Osborne Energy and the University of East London (UEL) to retrofit 46 homes in Kent. The homes had energy saving measures such as LED lighting, roof insulation, underfloor insulation and smart heating systems installed. The project achieved 130.4 tonnes of carbon savings and provided a detailed report regarding barriers and issues.</p> <p>RISK: Availability of funding opportunities across government is reducing with more stringent criteria on funding agreements. Lack of understanding around air and ground source heat pumps.</p>	<p>amber</p>
<p>7.6 Develop and implement projects to support households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies (linked to action 5.4 – deliver domestic retrofit strategy).</p> <p><i>LEAD: All Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>Solar Together Kent is a solar panel and battery storage group-purchase scheme. It enables householders and small businesses to install solar panels on their homes and businesses at a competitive price. The scheme is supported and promoted by KCC, Medway C and all Kent district and borough councils.</p> <p>During 2023, Solar Together Kent recorded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,090 Kent homes have had Solar PV and/or battery storage installed as part of the Solar Together 2023 project. • 1 460 roof surveys have been delivered. • For comparison, during 2022, Solar Together Kent facilitated over £13.8m investment in renewables by Kent residents, which is set to deliver approximately 39 000 tonnes of carbon reduction over 25 years. <p>RISK: Funding for future retrofit schemes is uncertain and the simpler, most cost-effective interventions have been addressed in previous schemes, leaving more costly and complex retrofit for future schemes to tackle.</p>	<p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>7.7 Provide technical support for community renewable energy projects.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>KCC commissioned Community Energy South to complete an initial investigation into the possibilities for community renewable energy opportunities in Swale, Dover, Ashford, Canterbury, and Thanet districts.</p> <p>KCC Energy team has begun initial conversations in this area with several groups in a variety of locations.</p> <p>Swale BC are progressing with Orchard Community Energy and a solar array community energy project.</p> <p><i>Additional wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan to include recommendations from Community Energy South on how to support community energy generation across Kent and Medway.</i></p> <p>RISK: Funding for project implementation and long planning timescales.</p>	<p>amber</p>
<p>7.8 Support the development of future housing micro-grids, smart energy grids, and low carbon heat networks for new build homes.</p> <p><i>LEAD: TBC</i></p>	<p>The action has not yet been progressed.</p>	<p>red</p>

GOVERNMENT

Priority 8 Green Infrastructure

Develop and implement a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme – focusing on environmental projects that store carbon, increase climate change resilience, improve air quality, and soil health, and increase biodiversity.

RED (0) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (1) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (3) Activity on track or completed
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Table 8: Priority 8 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

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Action	Progress	RAG
8.1 Undertake an assessment of Kent and Medway’s opportunities for natural solutions to climate change. LEAD: KCC	Burro Happold were commissioned by KCC to research and write the Natural Solutions to Climate Change Report, which was published in Spring 2021. RISK: None, action completed.	green
8.2 Using the results of the opportunity study, develop a framework for natural solutions to climate change, considering both mitigation and adaptation. LEAD: KCC	KCC launched a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Kent which is planned to conclude in 2025. LNRS maps existing and potential opportunities for nature-based solutions and supports local planning authorities. Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway that agrees priorities for nature recovery, maps the most valuable existing areas for nature, and maps opportunities for creating or improving habitat for nature and delivering wider environmental goals (nature-based solutions). RISK: Dependency on the outstanding secondary legislation and statutory guidance. Engagement in the strategy's development by all relevant stakeholders. Ability to build capacity/commission services to deliver LNRS. Consideration of carbon credits needs to embed into the planning stages of projects, but further resource is required in this area.	amber

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>8.3 Develop and implement a strategy to establish 1.5 million new trees (or their carbon sequestration equivalent) in Kent and Medway.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC with support of all Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>The Kent and Medway Plan Tree Partnership was adopted in 2022 and work is ongoing in respect of tree establishment. The Partnership developed and delivered over 61 sites and planted 62 565 trees during 2023.</p> <p>Dartford BC planted 290 trees, Gravesham BC 160 trees and Maidstone BC 6000 trees. Swale BC planted 295 trees and 14053 tree whips and Thanet DC 293 trees and 14053 tree whips.</p> <p>RISK: The implementation of the Tree Establishment Strategy is dependent upon resources, funding, and the active participation of Plan Tree partners. Additionally, finding suitable land for tree establishment remains challenging. Uncertainty where the next tranche of funding will come from.</p>	green
<p>8.4 Develop cost effective and innovative approaches to establishing trees outside woodlands whilst strengthening biosecurity, through the Promoting Trees Outside Woodlands Project.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>The Trees Outside Woodlands programme has been extended to March 2025.</p> <p>Phase 2 (2023-2025) of the Trees Outside Woodlands programme has enabled the launch of several grant funds supporting landowners across Dover to restore historic tree features, funding the development of community tree nursery projects across the county, and helping Kent-based commercial tree nurseries to improve their biosecurity measures. New trial planting plots (phase 2) are continuing to be developed, while the monitoring and maintenance of Phase 1 trial plots continues.</p> <p>Kent Plan Tree is managing three rounds of the Local Authority Treescape Fund (LATF).</p> <p>RISK: The implementation of the Tree Establishment Strategy is dependent upon resources, funding, and the active participation of Plan Tree partners. Additionally, finding suitable land for tree establishment remains challenging.</p>	green

Priority 9 Supporting Low Carbon Business

Develop and implement a business recovery and support programme for Kent and Medway businesses to cut costs and win new business.

RED (0) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	X AMBER (2) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	X GREEN (3) Activity on track or completed
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Table 9: Priority 9 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>9.1 Undertake a supply chain analysis of the economic opportunities from the low carbon sector in Kent and the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area.</p> <p>LEAD: KCC</p>	<p>This piece of work, funded by South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), was completed in October 2022 with a final report and two interim reports published separately.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Utilise and build on the Clean Growth South East supply chain analysis to help realise and link the economic opportunities from the low carbon sector across Kent and the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area.</p> <p>RISK: None, action complete</p>	green
<p>9.2 Support local SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) and public sector suppliers to complete Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) training.</p> <p>LEAD: KCC</p>	<p>KCC's refreshed Steps to Environment Management (STEM) workshops, helped a further 24 Kent firms with environmental management systems and benchmarking their footprint.</p> <p>Revision of STEM course and anticipated combining and adapting IEMA course content was underway with a view to 2024 offerings in this regard for LA supply chains.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Support local SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) and public sector suppliers to progress through Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) training accreditation and enhance their knowledge of the key themes through Low Carbon Kent's Sustainable Business Toolkit.</p> <p>RISK: With the closure of LoCASE funding, few similar sized funding schemes are open for bid application.</p>	green

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Action	Progress	RAG
<p>9.3 Offer a low carbon support programme (LOCASE), for SMEs, including grants to reduce costs and carbon, and contribute to growth of the low carbon goods and environmental services sector.</p> <p>LEAD: KCC</p>	<p>94 Kent and Medway LoCASE grant applications (including needs assessments & energy audits) totalling £768 768 were approved for Kent and Medway SMEs in this period.</p> <p>Medway C have launched a Green Growth grant, using a Shared Prosperity Fund allocation, to offer up to £2,500 to businesses who have a decarbonisation plan and want to implement it and take a step further towards net-zero. To compliment this, a Green Audit scheme has been launched with Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, to offer free audits and decarbonisation plans for businesses who want to start their net-zero journey.</p> <p>Experiences and process advice has fed into localised UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Regional Prosperity fund (RPF) projects being delivered in pockets of Kent and Medway.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Offer a low carbon support programme for SMEs, including support to highlight and signpost to funding, reduce costs, and carbon, and actively contribute to growth of the low carbon and renewable energy economy (LCREE) and environmental goods and services sectors (EGSS) through tailored support and collaboration.</p> <p>RISK: Funding for LoCASE business support program ended in June 2023 and no equivalent funding stream has been identified.</p>	green
<p>9.4 Support the development of the offshore wind sector and local supply chain.</p> <p>LEAD: KCC</p>	<p>Due to post Brexit changes, the UK is no longer a full partner in the Inn2POWER project. Previously there was a potential funding stream supporting the UK offshore wind market and green hydrogen companies. However, Kent companies can still access the linked business directory and events.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Support the continued development of the onshore & offshore wind sector, green hydrogen, and related local supply chain.</p> <p>RISK: The risk of marginalisation and wider political policy could mask the 'on the ground' opportunity of supporting wind as a cost-effective part of the renewable energy mix and how best to innovate and integrate green hydrogen production and infrastructure in the region to realise a sea change in transportation and infrastructure improvements.</p>	amber

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>9.5 Drive an increase in the local circular economy within SMEs and Social Enterprises.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>The final Upcycle Your Waste (UYW) report was sent by KCC to all 247 SMEs actively engaged in the project across Kent and Medway. This included follow-up contact with 49 active circular economy businesses.</p> <p>Further engagement and collaboration undertaken with circular economy firms to complete case studies and populate a searchable database using the GIS team for publishing on Low Carbon Kent site in February 2024.</p> <p>Following the KCC Environment and Waste group redesign in 2023, there are now postholders in place re-focused on considering circular economy projects and opportunities across Kent into 2024.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Drive an increase in the local circular economy within Kent's resident and business communities through effective support, benchmarking, collaboration, and business case support.</p> <p>RISK: Valuable resource opportunities are being missed when recyclable materials are not separated for recycling and instead sent for disposal.</p>	<p>amber</p>

Priority 10 Communications

Develop a comprehensive communications, engagement and behaviour change programme targeted at residents, employees, businesses and visitors.

RED (1) Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	AMBER (0) Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of ELES 2023	GREEN (11) Activity on track or completed
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Table 10: Priority 10 action RAG status (Delivery of actions as set out in the 2020 Implementation Plan)

Action	Progress	RAG
10.1 Develop a joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy and action plan. LEAD: KCC	Completed in 2021 - but planned for review when resource allows. RISK: Nil, as action complete	green
10.2a Develop a communication working group/network to ensure consistency of messages and facilitate joint working. LEAD: KCC	'Kent Green Action' is a communication subgroup of the CCN set up in June 2021. It includes climate change officers and communication officers from all Kent district councils and Medway C. Meetings held to support specific campaigns and a Teams site facilitated joint working and consistency of messaging. Engagement and communications meetings during 2023 held regarding schools, active travel promotion and Great Big Green Week held. RISK: Attendance is variable and does not currently include all relevant communications professionals. Resource and agreement across districts and boroughs to deliver messaging and joint projects.	green
10.2b Hold an annual environment conference to raise the profile and facilitate cross-sector collaboration and collective action. LEAD: KCC	Due to budget and resourcing issues, a conference was not held in 2023. Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Consider the impact of reviewing and potentially rebranding the annual environment conference. RISK: The extra expense and resource needed to host in-person events. No-shows can be high for in-person events and events cancelled at short notice due unexpected circumstances.	red

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>10.3 Maximise the impact of COP26 by developing and promoting a shared calendar of events and resources.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>A calendar of events produced for Great Big Green Week 2023. 39 events were cited, and the on-line site was visited 1 373 times with 68 people contributing ideas, completing the survey and adding further events. (For comparison, 2022 saw 82 events taking place, mainly due to funding being available to support organisers to host activities and higher engagement, with 1 700 visits to the site.)</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Maximise the impact of Great Big Green Week in Kent by promoting a shared calendar of events and supporting local activities.</p> <p>RISK: Funding to host events and promote activities effectively. External factors affecting the promotion and attendance at events at short notice.</p>	green
<p>10.4 Implement joint communication campaigns to reduce air pollution around schools and children's centres.</p> <p><i>LEAD: Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership, KCC/Medway Council</i></p>	<p>Kent Air Week ran again in 2023, content was created to celebrate actions and initiatives to improve air quality. At least four partners shared the content on social media, but the campaign coincided with elections and so some districts and boroughs were not able to participate. Social media stats for 2023, (reach is the number of times the post was seen on individuals' feeds and engagement is any action taken because of that post e.g. clicking on a link, liking or sharing that post):</p> <p>Facebook reach 24 127 Twitter engagement 5 675 Instagram reach 3 097</p> <p>The campaign had no funding to boost posts on social media.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Implement joint communication campaigns to raise awareness of the health impacts of air pollution and ways to protect health and improve air quality. Include progress on Kent air quality funding projects/programmes.</p> <p>RISK: Limited resources to maintain and develop the activities of this group.</p>	green

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>10.5 Implement joint communication campaigns to increase modal shift to active travel/public transport.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC & Medway Council</i></p>	<p>KCC supports the Kent Connected travel planner and linked active travel promotion sites and works with Explore Kent to promote measures to Kent residents. The travel planner had additional start and end journeys added in 2023, such as KCC owned buildings. The planner has a built-in carbon calculator and compares different options for journeys. KCC held meetings with NHS staff in Kent, so that Kent hospital local travel websites can link to the Kent Connected travel planner to assist patients and staff travel more sustainably. Social media accounts in the control of KCC such as Explore Kent, Kent Green Action and Kent Connected continued throughout 2023 to promote events and resources supporting active travel widely without extra funds to target these marketing campaigns.</p> <p>Medway C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a Free Bus Weekend (9-10 December 2023) in conjunction with local bus operators. • Delivered two new walking campaigns for primary and secondary schools in support of International Walk to School Month. Across both campaigns, participation doubled to 16 schools compared to last year's competitions. <p>RISK: Funding remains a risk as ongoing revenue is required for continued paid-for social media advertising.</p>	green
<p>10.6 Implement joint communication campaigns to help residents reduce their fuel bills/save energy (linked to action 5.4).</p> <p><i>LEAD: Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership</i></p>	<p>Share the Warmth energy saving campaign successfully ran during winter 2022.</p> <p>Replacement wording added for the 2024 - 2027 implementation plan: Support joint communication campaigns on behaviour change projects focused on tackling residents' carbon emissions.</p> <p>RISK: Funding remains a risk as ongoing revenue is required for continued paid-for social media advertising. Communication resources vary across districts and boroughs to support joint campaigns.</p>	green

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>10.7 Implement joint communication campaigns to help residents reduce their water bills/save water</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC, Southern Water, South East Water, Affinity Water</i></p>	<p>Campaign with South East Water (SEW) and Southern Water to save water and money. In total for the 2023 portion of the campaign we received 567 898 impressions with a reach of 329 644 and 709 engagements derived from our sponsored posts. The social media campaign supported a leaflet drop campaign from SEW encouraging people to make savings for financial benefit. Approximately 100 000 leaflets were dropped in their catchment and this drove ~4 500 clicks through to their webpages for more tips and support.</p> <p>RISK: Difficulty measuring water saved by these campaigns. Buy-in from water companies required who have other compelling priorities for communications.</p>	<p>RAG</p> <p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>10.8 Implement joint communication campaigns to reduce residents' environmental impact (Kent Green Action and District-level campaigns).</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>KCC made a successful application for funding from environmental charity Hubbub to increase on-street recycling in Ashford Town Centre.</p> <p>KCC worked with Kitche on a campaign to collect data on food wastage across the county. 673 residents completed a related survey, and 691 Kent residents use the Kitche food waste app. This data and seven in-depth qualitative studies collated to inform future food waste campaigns.</p> <p>Medway C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued to promote #small changes campaign in monthly climate change e-newsletter. • launched a 23 community actions for 2023 campaign. • Ran the prelaunch of our 2024 campaign "What's good for the climate is good for me" in Medway Matters, the free magazine delivered to every household in Medway. The campaign provides examples of healthy lifestyle changes that also help residents reduce their carbon footprint. • Environmental Engagement team have provided an information programme and talks to schools, colleges, and youth groups about the effects of waste on the environment. In total they spoke to 6207 young people (aged 4-19 years). • Launched a water a tree scheme: https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200348/climate_change/1696/water_a_tree_scheme • Continued to promote the Climate Change Staff Volunteering Initiative to staff, which enables them to take one days paid leave each year to support the delivery of actions in the climate change action plan. <p>RISK: Ensuring that we are gathering and utilising insight to supplement generic messaging with more targeted campaigns. This requires more resource and analysis in advance of campaigns, to develop specific messaging via the most appropriate channels to a target audience, to support behaviour change in future.</p>	<p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>10.9 Implement joint communication campaigns to encourage and support SMEs to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>As part of the multi-LEP programme covering the wider South and East, a range of methods were employed in this period in this regard. This covered not just LA partners but also the University of Brighton through their NetZero360 set of workshops. Though the LoCASE funding did not need any more promotion, there was awareness raising of the Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy (LCREE) and Environmental Goods and Services Sector (EGSS) with case studies including circular economy and retrofit featuring heavily, rather than just energy efficiency project support. Some dissemination of case studies and business cases on re-use and upcycling linked to Upcycle Your Waste and BLUEPRINT to a Circular Economy had begun in this period, as well as reporting of wider effects and results of INN2power (offshore wind and green hydrogen supply chain engagement).</p> <p>Total Low Carbon Kent Tweet Impressions for the period: 3 527.</p> <p>Low Carbon Kent LinkedIn Page Views for Period: 174</p> <p>Follow on work as part of project legacy for the Low Carbon Kent portfolio has included dissemination of case studies and best practice examples as well as some speaker engagements (including Circular Economy week and a SELEP lesson learned seminar), augmented by revision and publication of more best practice examples from the Low Carbon Kent portfolio.</p> <p>The SME program is developing further case studies which can then be shared in future.</p> <p>RISK: Limited staff resource to implement a campaign at present. LoCASE business support funding ended in June 2023 and has not been replaced with similar funding streams.</p>	<p>green</p>

Action	Progress	RAG
<p>10.10 Develop shared resources for public sector staff engagement.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>A KCC Carbon Literacy Training pilot scheme was completed with 11 KCC officers trained and accredited and 1 staff member accredited as a Carbon Literacy Facilitator. KCC also shared resources for staff to run events within the KCC Environmental Champion network of volunteers. The KCC Environmental Behaviour Change team actively engaged with partners across CCN to promote events such as numerous tree planting and maintenance sessions. Many L.A.s across Kent have delivered further carbon literacy training to officers, councillors, and businesses. Maidstone BC trained 46 officers, Gravesham C 15 officers and Swale C trained over 50 staff in Carbon Literacy.</p> <p>RISK: Lack of resource for implementing campaigns and costs for accredited training schemes.</p>	green
<p>10.11 Monitor and review effectiveness of communication campaigns and develop targeted behaviour change programmes.</p> <p><i>LEAD: KCC</i></p>	<p>KCC carried out a continual, annual review of Kent Green Action campaigns with evaluation of all supportive communication campaigns carried out at the end of each project.</p> <p>At time of review (January 2023): Total Twitter Followers: 631 Total Facebook Followers: 864 Total Facebook Reach for Period: 341 835 Total Twitter Impressions for Period: 23 907</p> <p>RISK: Currently our audiences reached by social media and newsletters are skewed towards a much older and predominantly female demographic. As a result, it is also likely that they are not diverse in respect of other protected characteristics, but we do not have data to confirm that. They also highlight the lack of measurement of the behaviour change or difference made by the campaign, as it is far more efficient in terms of time, effort, and money to measure how many people have seen a campaign or message, rather than the impact of the campaign.</p>	green

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Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy: Implementation Plan 2020-2023

Version: May 2021

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets out how we will respond to the UK climate emergency and promote clean and resilient economic recovery that eliminates poor air quality, reduces fuel poverty and promotes the development of an affordable, clean and secure energy supply across Kent and Medway. The strategy was adopted by Kent Leaders in October 2020 and can be viewed online at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-and-medway-energy-and-low-emissions-strategy>

The Strategy identifies ten high-level priorities for collaborative action in the short- and medium-term:

Priority 1: Emission Reduction Pathways To 2050

Priority 2: Public Sector Decision Making

Priority 3: Planning and Development

Priority 4: Climate Emergency Investment Fund

Priority 5: Building Retrofit Programme

Priority 6: Transport, Travel and Digital Connectivity

Priority 7: Renewable Energy Generation

Priority 8: Green Infrastructure

Priority 9: Supporting Low Carbon Business

Priority 10: Communications








This document sets out the detailed actions that will be taken between October 2020 and December 2023 to support these priorities. Monitoring and evaluation of progress will be carried out annually, with any new actions being added to the implementation as appropriate.



PRIORITY 1: EMISSION REDUCTION PATHWAYS TO 2050

Set five-year carbon budgets and emission reduction pathways to 2050 for Kent and Medway, with significant reduction by 2030.

RATIONALE

Carbon budgets will set quotas for the amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted in five-year periods. These can then be used to identify the actions (or pathways), that will allow us to stay within our carbon budgets. Such evidence-based pathways will ensure we prioritise the most cost-effective activities and will support more collaborative working with partners across the county, region and nationally. It will also highlight where appropriate engagement is needed to influence aspects outside local authorities' control.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
1.1 Agree evidence/baseline and set 5-yearly carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Climate Change Network • Anthesis 	Carbon budgets for 2018-22 and future 5-yearly budgets through to 2050	Everyone in Kent and Medway can see the scale of action required to achieve net-zero emission by 2050. Decision makers understand where action and resources should be targeted and make evidence-based decisions.	Dec 2020	 
1.2 Develop Kent and Medway emission reduction pathway to Net Zero by 2050	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Climate Change Network • Anthesis 	Emission reduction pathway analysis report		Dec 2020	 
1.3 Develop local strategies that set out how Net Zero will be achieved in their area, using carbon budgets and emission reduction pathway report to inform the evidence base where appropriate	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • KALC • Town / Parish Councils 	Local authority strategies to achieve Net Zero for their area		Dec 2021	
1.4 Continue to develop and refine detailed emission reduction pathways for key sectors based on emerging policy and good practice, incorporating estimated costs where possible	Various (sector specific)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Climate Change Network • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • Kent Estates Partnership • Kent Resource Partnership • KCC (Highways) • Sector experts 	Sectoral emission reduction pathways Environmental data for Kent		Ongoing	
1.5 Monitor and publicly report progress against net-zero targets	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • Kent Climate Change Network 	Council progress papers / reports ELES annual monitoring report	Progress is monitored and publicly reported.	Annual from Dec 2021	






Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
1.6 Consider how emissions from consumption could be calculated and incorporated into future area pathways / targets	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Climate Change Network 	Discussion paper and decision on next steps taken by KMEG.	Actions to address consumption-based emissions incorporated into next iteration of action plan.	2023	 



PRIORITY 2: PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION MAKING

Develop a consistent approach across Kent and Medway, to assess, manage and mitigate environmental impacts (both positive and negative), resulting from public sector policies, strategies, service delivery, commissioning and procurement.

RATIONALE

The decisions made by Kent and Medway's public sector affect the environment and everyone living and working in the area. Developing a simple way to assess, manage and mitigate these impacts will ensure public sector policies, services and spending support our environmental targets. In addition, the public sector's influence and spending power will help drive demand and support innovation during economic recovery and beyond.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
2.1 Develop a simple checklist to identify where significant environmental issues and opportunities may arise in response to Covid-19 recovery.	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (EPE) • Kent Downs AONB Unit • Kent Nature Partnership • Kent Climate Change Network 	Principles for Green Recovery Support for ELES and Net Zero included in local recovery plans and strategies	Covid-19 recovery spending and decisions support Net Zero / sustainable ambitions.	Complete	
2.2 Develop recommended requirements to be included within public sector contracts to align to net-zero ambition and support use of local goods and services where possible.	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Climate Change Network • Kent Procurement Officer's Group 	Recommended requirements for public sector procurement / contracts Shared examples and good practice	Greater consistency of environmental standards across Kent's public sector contracts. Greater use of local goods and services.	June 2021	
2.3 Review contracts and commissioning processes to implement recommended requirements (see 2.2), tailored to organisation / local needs as necessary	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • Kent Police • Kent Fire and Rescue • NHS • Other public sector bodies • Kent Climate Change Network 	Contracts revised to include stronger climate change commitments where possible	The negative environmental impact of public sector spending and decisions are reduced.	Ongoing	
2.4 Develop, test and rollout a comprehensive climate change impact assessment and social value framework for public sector decision making, with associated policies, guidance, training and support	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Estates Partnership • Kent and Medway Environment Group • Kent Climate Change Network • Kent Nature Partnership 	Climate change impact assessment tool and social value framework Policies, guidance and training materials	Public sector decisions and spending are consistent with our net-zero and low carbon recovery targets	2021 (develop and test) 2022 – 23 (roll-out)	 







Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
2.5 Encourage and support SMEs within public sector supply chains to effect positive environmental change by utilising LoCASE and STEM support programmes (see 9.2 and 9.3)	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • All Local Authorities • Kent Chamber of Commerce 	More public sector supply chain SMEs utilising LoCASE and STEM support programmes	<p>Public sector spending supports and drives expansion of the clean growth sector.</p> <p>SMEs reduce costs, lower emissions and win new public sector business</p>	2021-23	 





PRIORITY 3: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Ensure climate change, energy, air quality and environmental considerations are integrated into Local Plans, policies and developments, by developing a clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework for Kent and Medway, to drive down emissions and incorporate climate resilience.

RATIONALE

Almost 180,000 new homes will have been built in Kent and Medway by 2031 and will still be in use after 2050. To ensure the buildings and infrastructure we construct today are fit for the zero-carbon future, we need to ensure planning policies and decisions embrace clean growth, support good quality sustainable design and promote low carbon travel, transport and digital connectivity. A joint evidence base and planning resource, together with shared position statements, guidance and policies will help inform planning decisions and future-proof new developments.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
3.1 Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net-zero targets and climate change adaptation	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (EPE and ED) • Kent Planning Authorities • Developers 	Public consultation Refreshed Kent Design Guide Launch event	Planners and developers can access the latest sustainable design guidance	Autumn 2021	 
3.2 Adopt and/or reference the refreshed Kent Design Guide as Supplementary Planning Documents, in line with Local Plan updates	Kent Planning Officers Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Planning Authorities 	Refreshed Kent Design Guide included in Supplementary Planning Documents	Local Plans promote and encourage sustainable design	Ongoing from Autumn 2021	
3.3 Secure agreement and identify scope and resource requirements to develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth evidence-base and strategic planning policy and guidance framework	Kent Planning Officers Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Planning Authorities 	Scoping workshop Scoping document with resource requirements identified	Political consensus for clean growth planning policy Resource requirements identified	Oct 2021	
3.4 Using the outputs from action 3.3, develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework that identifies latest evidence, good practice, position statements and policies for Local Plans and Development Management	Kent Planning Officers Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (EPE and ED) • Kent Planning Authorities • Kent Developers Group • Design South East • Kent and Medway Economic Partnership 	Evidence, guidance, case studies, position statements, policies, training materials	New developments are sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient	Oct 2023	 








Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
3.5 Raise clean growth / climate change awareness and skills of planners, planning committees, developers and supply chain	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Planning Officers Group • LA Planning Committees • Kent Climate Change Network • Kent Developers Group • LoCASE 	Net-zero planning seminar / CPD training events	The planning community, developers and supply chain are more aware of clean growth opportunities and champion low carbon and climate resilient developments	Ongoing	 
3.6 Develop tailored Kent and Medway public sector buildings design guidance for new build and refurbishment.	Kent Estates Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities / Infrastructure) • All Local Authorities • Kent Police • Kent Fire and Rescue • NHS • Schools 	Design guidance for public sector new buildings and refurbishment	New public sector buildings and refurbishment projects will have sustainability designed into them from the start, reducing the cost of later retrofit and reducing emissions.	March 2022	 



PRIORITY 4: CLIMATE EMERGENCY INVESTMENT FUND

Establish a trusted Kent and Medway 'Climate Emergency' carbon sequestration, offset and renewable energy investment scheme and fund.

RATIONALE

Before the coronavirus pandemic, funding for climate emergency actions came from many disparate sources. There is likely to be significantly less funding available for environmental projects in the short to medium term, so ensuring money is invested in projects that have the greatest impact and bring multiple benefits will become increasingly important. A climate emergency investment fund for Kent and Medway will pool the funding available and match it to the most cost effective and biggest impact schemes. The fund will be informed by renewable energy and natural capital opportunities studies.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
4.1 Review existing internal and external funding streams, expertise and opportunities that could be used to deliver ELES actions. Develop into a central collaborative resource.	Kent Climate Change Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Climate Change Network • Kent Nature Partnership • SE Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) 	All potential funding streams identified, and key contacts established. Information hosted on CCN Teams site.	New opportunities for external funding and collaboration identified Increased access to finance	July 2021	
4.2 Accelerate the 'supply and demand' of nature-based climate solutions (understand demand, assess skills/capacity gaps, develop resources to support delivery)	SE Nature Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Kent County Council • Kent Wildlife Trust • SE Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) 	Engagement with businesses, farm clusters, councils, NGOs Synthesis report Interim standards / metrics Guidelines and training resources	Nature-based organisations, are better able to monetise their services Increased carbon sequestration and improved climate resilience	April 2021 – March 2022	 
4.3 Create the framework for a SE-wide 'brokerage hub' that can bring together 'buyers' and 'sellers' to co-develop nature-based carbon sequestration projects	SE Nature Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Sussex County Council • Kent County Council • Kent Wildlife Trust • SE Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) 	Review of existing brokerage hub models Identification of business model for development of a SE brokerage hub	Increased carbon sequestration and improved climate resilience New income streams for the rural economy	April 2021 – March 2022	 
4.4 Establish a working group and evaluate options for a Kent and Medway climate emergency investment fund / offset fund to support local natural capital and renewable energy projects.	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Finance Officers Group • SE / Kent Nature Partnership • Kent and Medway Environment Group • Kent and Medway Economic Partnership 	Working Group set up Options appraisal / business case for Kent and Medway Carbon Offset Fund	A preferred option to attract investment in environmental projects in Kent and Medway has been identified. Political buy-in and resources to progress project can be secured.	March 2023	 






Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
4.5 Develop a portfolio of 'shovel-ready' domestic retrofit and renewable energy projects suitable for external funding	Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • Registered Providers • Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership • SE Energy Hub Utilities 	<p>Portfolio of investment-ready projects</p> <p>External funding bids</p>	External funding and finance opportunities are maximised	Ongoing	
4.6 Develop a portfolio of quick wins and 'shovel-ready' natural capital / carbon sequestration projects suitable for delivery through Net Gain or other external funding	Kent Nature Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Nature Partnership • Kent Downs and High Weald AONB Units • Medway Flood Partnership • Catchment Partnerships 	<p>Portfolio of investment-ready projects</p> <p>Net Gain pipeline of projects</p> <p>External funding bids</p>	External funding and finance opportunities are maximised	Ongoing	











PRIORITY 5: BUILDING RETROFIT PROGRAMME


Develop Kent and Medway net-zero buildings retrofit plans and programmes for public sector, domestic and businesses.

RATIONALE

Over the next 30 years, most of the emissions from the built environment will be from buildings or communities that are already in existence today. In addition, some of our most vulnerable residents are living in cold, energy inefficient homes which are expensive to run; worsening health problems and causing fuel poverty. Funding for building improvements is fragmented and complicated by property ownership issues, and projects often need to be done at scale to attract the investment needed.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
5.1 Develop organisational action plans to deliver Net Zero public sector estate by 2030 at the latest. Monitor and report progress.	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • NHS • Kent Police • Kent Fire and Rescue • LASER 	<p>Individual public sector estate Net Zero plans</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports / progress papers</p>	<p>Emissions from public sector estate are significantly reduced</p> <p>Reduced public sector spending on energy and water</p>	Dec 2021	
5.2 Implement a public sector building retrofit programme (energy and water), identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where possible.	Kent Estates Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • NHS • Kent Police • Kent Fire and Rescue • Kent Connects • LASER 	<p>Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund bids</p> <p>Public sector carbon reduction projects delivered in partnership and maximising public sector funding</p>	<p>New infrastructure and facilities increase up take of electric vehicles and active travel</p>	Ongoing	 
5.3 Develop a comprehensive Kent and Medway Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (excluding social housing) that identifies the actions and financial mechanisms for all income levels, to reduce emissions (from electricity, heat and water) from all property types, with evidence-led targets and costed actions where possible.	Kent Housing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • SE Energy Hub • Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership • Utilities • National Residential Landlords Association • Public Health (KCC and Medway Council) • Trading Standards (KCC and Medway Council) 	<p>Engagement workshops</p> <p>C-Path project tool and analysis</p> <p>Evidence base and strategic analysis of Net Zero pathway</p> <p>Domestic retrofit strategy and action plan</p> <p>Identification of preferred finance model(s)</p>	<p>Barriers identified</p> <p>Delivery partners understand the scale of action and investment required to decarbonise the domestic sector</p> <p>Resources prioritised and economies of scale utilised</p> <p>Retrofitting skills and jobs attracted into Kent</p>	Sept 2022	 

5.4 Secure funding and implement projects identified in the Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (excluding social housing)	Kent Housing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • SE Energy Hub • Utilities • Public Health (KCC and Medway Council) • Trading Standards (KCC and Medway Council) 	<p>Funding bids</p> <p>Retrofit projects</p> <p>Targeted advice</p>	<p>Reduction in carbon emissions from the domestic sector</p> <p>Reduced levels of fuel poverty</p> <p>Reduction in the number of privately owned homes with an EPC rating below D and more at C</p>	Sept 2022 onwards	 
5.5 Develop costed action plans to deliver Net Zero social housing by 2030. Monitor and report progress.	Kent Housing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock holding authorities (Medway, Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Dover, Gravesham, Folkestone & Hythe, Thanet) 	<p>Action Plans for each stock holding authority</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports / progress papers</p>	<p>Reduction in carbon emissions from the domestic sector</p> <p>Reduced levels of fuel poverty</p>	March 2022	 
5.6 Support and facilitate Registered Providers to develop costed action plans to decarbonise their housing stock	Kent Housing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • Registered Providers 	<p>Action plans and strategies</p> <p>Archetype assessments</p>	<p>No social housing with an EPC rating below D and more at C</p> <p>Resources prioritised and economies of scale utilised</p> <p>Stimulation of local whole house retrofit market</p>	March 2022	 
5.7 Implement projects to improve the energy efficiency of social housing, focusing on whole house retrofit to PAS2035 standards and identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where possible.	Kent Housing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock holding authorities • Registered Providers • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership 	<p>Funding bids</p> <p>Retrofit projects</p> <p>Delivery of LAD1 and LAD2 retrofit schemes</p>	<p>Sustained growth of the retrofitting sector, supply chain and skills</p>	Ongoing to 2030	 
5.8 Update and deliver the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy (in association with action 5.3); supporting vulnerable and fuel poor households to access affordable energy	Kent Housing Group - Private Sector Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • Public Health (KCC/Medway) • Utilities 	<p>Updated Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy</p> <p>Kent Warm Homes scheme</p> <p>Collective switching scheme</p> <p>Off-gas connections scheme</p> <p>Delivery of LAD1 and LAD2 retrofit schemes</p>	<p>Reduced levels of fuel poverty</p> <p>Reduction in health problems linked to cold, damp homes</p>	Ongoing	 





			Targeted advice			
5.9 Support and enforce private sector landlords to make improvements to rental properties	Kent Housing Group - Private Sector Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District/Borough (Private Sector Housing / Environmental Health)(• Trading Standards (KCC and Medway Council) • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • National Residential Landlords Association 	<p>Awareness raising, training and engagement material</p> <p>Enforcement of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) Regulations</p> <p>Reports to Trading Standards where sub-standard rented accommodation is found</p>	<p>Reduced levels of fuel poverty</p> <p>Reduction in emissions from the domestic sector</p> <p>Improved quality of rental accommodation and subsequent improvements to health</p>	Ongoing	 
5.10 Support SMEs to retrofit energy efficiency and renewable technologies in business premises through LOCASE grant funding	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • All Local Authorities • LOCASE partners • Low Carbon Kent 	LOCASE support programme (SEE PRIORITY 9)	<p>Reduction in emissions from the non-domestic sector</p> <p>Market stimulation</p> <p>Cost reduction for SMEs</p>	From Oct 2020	 
5.11 Assess the feasibility and funding mechanisms for 'place-based' retrofit schemes (eg. street-by-street, whole business park, community scale), combining business, residential, public realm retrofit schemes	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • All Local Authorities • Kent and Medway Economic Partnership • Low Carbon Kent • SE Energy Hub 	Place based retrofit opportunity study	Increased understanding of future retrofit opportunities	2023	







PRIORITY 6: TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY











Set up a smart connectivity and mobility modal shift programme – linking sustainable transport, transport innovations, active travel, virtual working, broadband, digital services, artificial intelligence and behaviour change.



RATIONALE

Tackling poor air quality and achieving safe and effective transport networks that support low carbon economic recovery are key challenges for Kent and Medway. Greenhouse gas emissions from transport have remained stubbornly high, but the coronavirus pandemic triggered a change in digital and travel behaviours that could be utilised to ensure emissions from transport are reduced permanently. Tackling these issues and opportunities will require a combination of measures that improve infrastructure and facilities to encourage low carbon travel and drive behaviour change. We must also continue to tackle poor air quality hotspots, through the implementation of Air Quality Management Plans.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
6.1 Review business mileage, set challenging reduction targets in light of COVID ways of working and expand sustainable travel polices that reduce the need to travel, encourage modal shift to active travel/public transport or increase car sharing.	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • NHS • Kent Police • Kent Fire and Rescue 	Business milage reduction targets for public sector organisations New/revised sustainable travel policies	Greenhouse gas emissions from business travel is reduced	Dec 2021	
6.2 Work in partnership to influence and develop plans to transition public sector fleets to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • NHS • Kent Police • Kent Fire and Rescue • Kent Estates Partnership 	Plans and targets to transition public sector fleets to ULEV Good practice shared Joint funding bids	Increasing numbers of ULEVs in public sector fleets Reduced greenhouse gas emissions from fleet mileage	Ongoing	
6.3 Implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plans for <u>Kent</u> and for <u>Medway</u> ; to develop motor-vehicle free routes for walking and cycling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas where most benefit will be achieved • Identify gaps in the network and develop schemes to join up existing routes • Identify opportunities linked to new developments 	Kent County Council Medway Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Public Rights of Way / Highways) • Medway Council (Public Rights of Way / Highways) • Planning Authorities • Developers • Public Health 	More good quality walking and cycling commuter routes	More people walking and cycling for trips less than 2 miles Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from local travel Improved air quality	Ongoing until 2028	 

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership to access government funding and maximise developer contributions to fund new schemes 						
6.4 Update and implement the <u>Kent Active Travel Strategy</u> and implement the <u>Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy</u> to promote and incentivise walking and cycling through the provision of infrastructure, facilities, training and engagement	Kent County Council Medway Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KCC (Transport Innovations) Medway Council Public Health District and Borough Councils Developers 	Bids to Access Fund / Emergency Active Travel Fund More good quality walking and cycling commuter routes More/improved facilities for active travel Training	More people walking and cycling to school/work Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from commuting (work and school) Improved air quality	Ongoing with update by 2022 (Kent) Ongoing until 2023 (Medway)	 
6.5 Work in partnership to prepare and implement local walking and cycling strategies	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District / Borough Councils Kent County Council (Transport Innovations) 	Local walking and cycling strategies	More people walking and cycling for trips less than 2 miles Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from local travel Improved air quality	Ongoing	
6.6 Work with public transport providers to achieve EURO VI emissions standards or better	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KCC (Public Transport) Public transport providers (via Quality Bus Partnerships) 	More EURO VI (or better) vehicles on Kent and Medway's roads	Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from public transport Improved air quality	Dec 2022	
6.7 Trial new transport projects that drive the transition to Ultra Low Emission Vehicle public transport	Kent County Council Medway Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KCC (Public Transport) Medway Council District / Borough Councils Parish and Town Councils Bus manufacturers/operators COMPAID – voluntary sector 	Fully electric bus routes in Dartford and Dover (FastTrack) and Canterbury Electric minibus trial in partnership with COMPAID and evaluation report Hydrogen fuelled bus trials (linked to green Hydrogen facility in Canterbury District) Small scale electric bus trial with ASD and BYD (Medway)	Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from public transport Improved air quality Better business case for future electric or hydrogen bus adoption	2020-23	 

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
6.8 Trial and implement projects that support modal shift away from car ownership and/or reduce car dependency	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Council • District / Borough Councils • Fast Track • Public Transport providers 	<p>Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in Ebbsfleet</p> <p>District rural transport pilots and evaluation reports</p>	<p>Seamless journey planning and connectivity</p> <p>Improved access to public transport in rural communities</p>	2021-23	 
6.9 Work with private transport sector, including school transport providers and taxi licencing to incentivise and switch to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities (Taxi licencing / Highways) • School transport providers • Taxi companies • Low Carbon Kent 	<p>Reviewed / updated taxi licencing</p> <p>Engagement with private transport sector</p>	<p>Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from private transport sector</p> <p>Improved air quality</p>	Ongoing	
6.10 Consider future opportunities and interventions for reducing emissions from freight and international traffic including use of rivers and wharfs, improved journey efficiency, improved efficiency of vehicles and FORS and ECOSTars schemes	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Highways) • Medway Council (Highways) • Road Haulage Association • Freight Transport Association • Port of Dover • Port of London Authority • Eurotunnel • Highways England • Cross River Partnership • Dartford Borough Council 	<p>Engagement with large freight/distribution companies, haulage industry and Ports</p> <p>Delivery of Cross River Partnership's Clean Air Villages 4 project (Dartford)</p>	<p>Better understanding of issues, opportunities and required interventions – for future development and implementation</p>	2023	
6.11 Work collaboratively with the public and private sector to roll out electric charging points across Kent and Medway, in line with local EV strategies	Kent County Council Medway Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • Kent Estates Partnership • Kent and Medway Environment Group • KALC • Schools 	<p>Local EV strategies</p> <p>More EV chargers in Kent and Medway</p>	<p>Increased EV charging capacity in Kent and Medway</p> <p>Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport</p> <p>Improved air quality</p>	ongoing	 
6.12 Support local SMEs to switch to ULEV vans through the Kent REVS Up for Cleaner Air scheme	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • All Local Authorities • Commercial Services Kent Ltd • Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce 	<p>Local business trials of electric vans (Kent REVS project)</p> <p>Redistribution of electric vans at end of project</p>	<p>Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport</p> <p>Improved air quality</p> <p>Increased number of electric vans on Kent's roads</p>	Feb 2021-Jan 2023	 
6.13 Assess the feasibility of developing 'low carbon transport hubs' for EV cars, e-bikes and push bikes	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Highways) • Medway Council (Highways) • District / Borough Councils • Parish / Town Councils 	<p>Project concept and funding bid</p>	<p>Concept feasibility understood and roles identified</p>	2023	 








Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
6.14 Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Action Plans	Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership London Air Quality Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities with Air Quality Management Areas • KCC / Medway Council (Highways and Public Health) 	<p>Initiatives to improve air quality</p> <p>Partnership funding bids to deliver county wide action</p>	Improved air quality in hotspot areas	Ongoing	
6.15 Continue to work with government to increase the number of homes and businesses with access to fast broadband	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Economic Development) • BDUK • Openreach Ltd 	5,000 rural homes and businesses connected with fibre through BDUK project extension	Faster and more reliable broadband service to support more home/flexible working practices	June 2023	 £






PRIORITY 7: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

Set up an opportunities and investment programme for renewable electricity and heat energy generation

RATIONALE

Securing a low carbon, sustainable economic recovery will require us to transform the way we generate energy. Whilst some of this will be done at the national level, we must also support new low-carbon energy infrastructure opportunities, such as those presented in the Tri-LEP Energy Strategy. We will focus on supporting opportunities that allow more of our energy to be produced locally and from renewable sources and increasing the number of new developments supplied by local energy centres and district heating schemes.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
7.1 Undertake a renewable energy (and storage) opportunities study for Kent and Medway focusing on all existing and emerging technologies and avoiding unintended negative impacts	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC / Medway Council • All Local Authorities • UKPN 	Renewable energy opportunities study	Evidence can be utilised to develop better funding bids and projects	2021-22	 
7.2 Work in partnership to identify, support and promote new renewable energy projects across Kent and Medway, maximising funding from the Growth Fund, future Prosperity Fund and SE Energy Hub	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • All Local Authorities • South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) • SE Energy Hub • BEIS 	Funding bids and renewable energy projects (if successful)	Market stimulation of renewable energy sector Increased energy security	Ongoing	
7.3 Continue to install solar panels on suitable public sector buildings and land, including offices, schools and landfill sites	Kent Estates Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Local Authorities • NHS • Kent Fire and Rescue • Kent Police • Schools • Saalex / BEIS 	Solar panel installations	Reduction in greenhouse emissions from public sector estate Reduction in public sector energy costs	Ongoing	 
7.4 Develop and implement the Maidstone Heat Project	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • UK Government Heat Network Delivery Unit • Maidstone Borough Council • Maidstone Prison • Network Rail 	Maidstone Heat Network is operational Potential for expansion identified pending further funding/feasibility	Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for public sector and commercial buildings in Maidstone	Completion April 2023	 









7.5 Identify the barriers and local authority role in supporting households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies. Incorporate findings into action 5.3 (domestic retrofit strategy)	Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • SE Energy Hub • All Local Authorities • Utilities • Low Carbon Homes 	Workshop and report to identify barriers, public sector role and priority next steps	Barriers to roll-out identified	March 2022	
7.6 Develop and implement projects to support households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies. (linked to action 5.4 – deliver domestic retrofit strategy)	Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • All Local Authorities • SE Energy Hub • Utilities • Trading Standards (KCC / Medway Council) 	Solar Together Kent scheme Pilot solar and battery storage project (Triple-A) Pilot heat-pump project concept and funding bid	More homes using renewable technologies Reduction in emissions from the domestic sector Market stimulation	Ongoing	 
7.7 Provide technical support for community renewable energy projects		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • SE Energy Hub • Community groups 	Successful community renewable energy projects	More community renewable energy projects	Ongoing	
7.8 Support the development of future housing micro-grids, smart energy grids, and low carbon heat networks for new build homes	Kent Housing Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership • Kent Developers Group • Kent Planning Officers Group • All Local Authorities • Business and supply chain 	Good practice, guidance, case studies and technical seminar	Increased awareness and support for emerging low carbon and smart energy	2022	

PRIORITY 8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Develop and implement a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme – focusing on environmental projects that store carbon, increase climate change resilience, improve air quality and soil health, and increase biodiversity.

RATIONALE

Soil, trees, hedgerows, grassland, wetlands and maritime habitats all store carbon, so improving land management practices and increasing coverage of these habitats will be essential if we are to achieve our net-zero target. In addition, our actions to increase carbon storage can also support our efforts to respond to the ecological emergency, support the Kent Biodiversity Strategy and increase resilience to climate change. The development of an opportunity and investment programme will ensure resources can be targeted at the most appropriate projects, capable of generating the most benefits.











Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
8.1 Undertake an assessment of Kent and Medway's opportunities for natural solutions to climate change	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Natural Env. and Coast) • Burro Happold • Kent Nature Partnership • Local Authorities 	<p>Natural solutions to climate change assessment report</p> <p>Results fed into Kent Nature Recovery Strategy</p>	There is increased capacity for Kent and Medway's natural environment to store carbon and offset the county's greenhouse gas emissions: bringing additional benefits such as reduced air and water pollution, increased flood storage capacity, improved biodiversity and providing health, cultural and leisure opportunities for local communities.	March 2021 (complete)	 
8.2 Using the results of the opportunity study, develop a framework for natural solutions to climate change, considering both mitigation and adaptation	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Natural Env. and Coast) • Kent Nature Partnership • Kent and Medway Environment Group • All Local Authorities 	Framework for natural solutions to climate change, linked to Kent Nature Recovery Strategy		March 2023	 
8.3 Develop and implement a strategy to establish 1.5 million new trees (or their carbon sequestration equivalent) in Kent and Medway	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Trees Group) • All Local Authorities • Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs • Forestry Commission • Kent Wildlife Trust • Woodland Trust • National Trust 	1.5 million trees (or equivalent) planted		Ongoing	 
8.4 Develop cost effective and innovative approaches to establishing trees outside woodlands whilst strengthening biosecurity, through the Promoting Trees Outside Woodlands Project	Department for Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Natural Environment and Coast / Highways) • Highways England • Forestry Commission • Natural England • Tree Council • Network Rail 	<p>Urban tree establishment pilot</p> <p>Study into boosting community tree nurseries</p> <p>Study into subsidised new tree schemes</p>		Oct 2020 – March 2023	 

PRIORITY 9: SUPPORTING LOW CARBON BUSINESS

Develop and implement a business recovery and support programme for Kent and Medway businesses to cut costs and win new business

RATIONALE

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on local businesses, and many will need support to recover. In addition, whilst many local businesses have already taken action to save money and reduce their impact on the environment, our evidence shows that this activity needs to be expanded and rapidly accelerated if we are to achieve our low carbon vision. A dual pronged approach to local business support, which utilises the considerable purchasing power of Kent and Medway's public sector and supports businesses to reduce their environmental impact will help drive a low carbon economic recovery.






Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
9.1 Undertake a supply chain analysis of the economic opportunities from the low carbon sector in Kent and the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) 	Supply chain mapping analysis	Evidence can be utilised to attract funding and grow the low carbon economy within Kent and Medway	Dec 2021	 
9.2 Support local SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) and public sector suppliers to complete Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) training	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • All Local Authorities • Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce 	STEM training and support	<p>SMEs and public sector suppliers are supported to increase resource efficiency</p> <p>Public sector supply chain emissions are identified</p>	Ongoing	 
9.3 Offer a low carbon support programme (LOCASE), for SMEs, including grants to reduce costs and carbon, and contribute to growth of the low carbon goods and environmental services sector	Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • All Local Authorities • Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce 	Low carbon support programme for SMEs	<p>Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from local SMEs</p> <p>Increased resource efficiency of SMEs</p> <p>Job/business creation and retention</p>	Ongoing until July 2023	 
9.4 Support the development of the offshore wind sector and local supply chain	Low Carbon Kent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) 	Inn2Power project	<p>Market stimulation of local supply chain</p> <p>Increased trans-national collaboration</p>	Ongoing until April 2021	 
9.5 Drive an increase in the local circular economy within SMEs and Social Enterprises	Low Carbon Kent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) 	Upcycle Your Waste project BLUEPRINT project	Increased waste recovery / reuse	Ongoing until June 2023	 

PRIORITY 10: COMMUNICATIONS

Develop a comprehensive communications, engagement and behaviour change programme targeted at residents, employees, businesses and visitors.

RATIONALE

We will not tackle the climate emergency through technology alone: our net-zero future will only be achieved if we successfully change perceptions, behaviour and social norms. Despite a recent surge in public interest in climate change there remain many psychological, social and cultural barriers to behaviour change, alongside a lack of physical capability or opportunity. These barriers are compounded by many competing voices seeking to advance their own part of the environmental agenda. We will need to work closely with our partners to develop simple, tailored and targeted communications that raise awareness and encourage a change in perceptions and behaviour.

Action	Champion	Delivery partner (lead in bold)	Output	Outcome	Timeline	Resource
10.1 Develop a joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy and action plan	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Climate Change Network 	Joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy	Collaboration extends the reach and impact of messages and maximises the effectiveness of resources	March 2021 (complete)	
10.2 Develop a communications working group/network to ensure consistency of messages and facilitate joint working	Kent Climate Change Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Public sector communication and engagement officers 	Working group and shared Microsoft Teams site		April 2021 (complete)	
10.2 Hold an annual environment conference to raise the profile and facilitate cross-sector collaboration and collective action	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent and Medway Environment Group 	Annual conference	Decision makers recognise the scale of action required to reduce emissions to net-zero and are motivated to take action in partnership.	Annual	 £
10.3 Maximise the impact of COP26 by developing and promoting a shared calendar of events and resources	Kent and Medway Environment Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Climate Change Network • Charities, communities, groups and partnerships with environmental interests 	COP26 Kent and Medway / SE calendar of events and resources	Collaboration maximises resources	Dec 2021	 £
10.4 Implement joint communication campaigns to reduce air pollution around schools and children's centres	Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership / Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership • KCC / Medway (Public Health) • NHS • KCC (Transport Innovations) • KM Group 	Targeted communications and engagement campaign for Clean Air Day and evaluation report	Residents, employees, elected members, businesses and visitors to Kent and Medway understand how their actions impact the environment; are aware of the risks of climate	2021-22	 £

10.5 Implement joint communication campaigns to increase modal shift to active travel / public transport	Kent County Council / Medway Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Transport Innovations) • Medway Council • Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership • KCC (Public Health) 	Targeted communications and engagement campaign evaluation report Kent Connected website	change and poor air quality; appreciate the value of the natural environment; and are sufficiently well informed and motivated to adopt more sustainable and low carbon behaviours. This increased awareness and engagement increases the impact of the other programmes developed through this Strategy.	Ongoing	 
10.6 Implement joint communication campaigns to help residents reduce their fuel bills / save energy (linked to action 5.4)	Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership • All Local Authorities • Energy companies 	Targeted communications and engagement campaign and evaluation report		Ongoing	 
10.7 Implement joint communication campaigns to help residents reduce their water bills / save water	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Southern Water • South East Water • Affinity Water 	Targeted communications and engagement campaign and evaluation report		2021	 
10.8 Implement joint communication campaigns to reduce resident's environmental impact (Kent Green Action and District-level campaigns)	Kent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Kent Climate Change Network • Kent Resource Partnership 	Kent Green Action digital campaigns District-level campaigns (eg. Planet Dartford) Evaluation reports		Ongoing	 
10.9 Implement joint communication campaigns to encourage and support SMEs to adopt environmentally sustainable practices	Low Carbon Kent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • All Local Authorities • Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce 	Targeted communications and engagement campaign and evaluation report Low Carbon Kent website and Linked In group		Ongoing	 
10.10 Develop shared resources for public sector staff engagement	Kent Climate Change Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities) • Public sector communications officers 	Communication and engagement material for public sector staff		2021-22	
10.11 Monitor and review effectiveness of communication campaigns and develop targeted behaviour change programmes.	KCC (Sustainable Business and Communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All delivery leads and partners for this priority 	Evaluation report Business case / funding applications for targeted behaviour change programme		Future resources are directed at the most cost-effective campaigns. Behaviour change campaigns continually improve.	March 2022

Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan Actions Jan 2024 – Dec 2027

ACTIONS

Priority 1 Emission Reduction Pathways to 2050

- 1.1 Agree evidence/baseline and set 5-yearly carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole. Monitor delivery against the five-year carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole.
- 1.2 Develop Kent and Medway emission reduction pathway to Net Zero by 2050. Monitor delivery against the high ambition pathway and the 1.5° compliant pathway set by the Tyndall Centre.
- 1.3 Develop local strategies that set out how Net Zero will be achieved in their area, using carbon budgets and emission reduction pathway report to inform the evidence base where appropriate.
- 1.4 Continue to develop and refine detailed emission reduction pathways for key sectors based on emerging policy and good practice, incorporating estimated costs where possible.
- 1.5 Monitor and publicly report progress against net-zero targets.
- 1.6 Consider how emissions from consumption could be calculated and incorporated into future area pathways / targets. Incorporate consumption-based emissions into ELES targets and implementation plan.

Priority 2 Public Sector Decision Making

- 2.2 Develop recommended requirements to be included within public sector contracts to align to net-zero ambition and support use of local goods and services where possible.
- 2.3 Review contracts and commissioning processes to implement recommended requirements (see 2.2), tailored to organisation / local needs as necessary.

- 2.4 Develop, test and rollout a comprehensive climate change impact assessment and social value framework for public sector decision making, with associated policies, guidance, training, and support. Rollout timeframe is 2023/24.
- 2.5 Encourage and support SMEs within public sector supply chains to effect positive environmental change by utilising Low Carbon Kent and linked support programmes across the county.
- 2.6 Conduct policy and service reviews to align policy, spending, and functions with net-zero commitments at both national and local level. Identify challenges/misalignment, then put in place mitigation plans to align them at a future date and reduce emissions in the meantime. Develop project and financial appraisal systems that include emissions and climate impacts.

Priority 3 Planning & Development

- 3.1 Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net-zero targets, and climate change adaptation.
- 3.2 Adopt and/or reference the refreshed Kent Design Guide as Supplementary Planning Documents, in line with Local Plan updates.
- 3.3 Secure agreement and identify scope and resource requirements to develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth evidence-base and strategic planning policy and guidance framework.
- 3.4 Using the outputs from action 3.3, develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework that identifies latest evidence, good practice, position statements and policies for Local Plans and Development Management.
- 3.5 Raise clean growth / climate change awareness and skills of planners, planning committees, developers, and supply chain.
- 3.6 Develop tailored Kent and Medway public sector buildings design guidance for new build and refurbishment.

Priority 4 Climate Emergency Investment Fund

- 4.1 Review existing internal and external funding streams, expertise and opportunities that could be used to deliver ELES actions. Develop into a central collaborative resource.
- 4.2 Accelerate the 'supply and demand' of nature-based climate solutions (understand demand, assess skills/capacity gaps, develop resources to support delivery).
- 4.3 Create the framework for a SE-wide 'brokerage hub' that can bring together 'buyers' and 'sellers' to co-develop nature-based carbon sequestration projects.
- 4.4 Review and act on the outcomes of the SELEP Sector Support Fund project, and Accelerating Nature Based Climate Solutions conclusions.
- 4.5 Grow and maintain a portfolio of 'shovel-ready' renewable energy projects suitable for external funding.
- 4.6 Develop a portfolio of quick wins and 'shovel-ready' natural capital / carbon sequestration projects suitable for delivery through Net Gain or other external funding.

Priority 5 Building Retrofit Programme

- 5.1 Develop organisational action plans to deliver net-zero public sector estate by 2030 at the latest. Monitor and report progress.
- 5.2 Implement a public sector building retrofit programme (energy and water), identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where possible.
- 5.3 Develop a comprehensive Kent and Medway Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (excluding social housing) that identifies the actions and financial mechanisms for all income levels, to reduce emissions (from electricity, heat, and water) from all property types, with evidence-led targets and costed actions where possible.
- 5.4 Secure funding and implement projects identified in the Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (excluding social housing).

- 5.5 Develop costed action plans to deliver net-zero social housing by 2030. Monitor and report progress. For new builds as well as existing housing stock.
- 5.6 Support and facilitate Registered Providers to develop costed action plans to decarbonise their housing stock. This should include the costs of material and labour.
- 5.7 Implement projects to improve the energy efficiency of social housing, focusing on whole house retrofit to PAS2035 standards and identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where possible.
- 5.8 Update and deliver the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy (in association with action 5.3); supporting vulnerable and fuel poor households to access affordable energy.
- 5.9 Provide advice and guidance to private sector property owners, taking enforcement action where necessary, to ensure improvements are made on privately rented properties.
- 5.10 Support SMEs to retrofit energy efficiency and renewable technologies in business premises through Low Carbon Kent support and signposting to local solutions.
- 5.11 Assess the feasibility and funding mechanisms for ‘place-based’ retrofit schemes (e.g. street-by-street, whole business park, community scale), combining business, residential, public realm retrofit schemes.

Priority 6 Transport, Travel & Digital Connectivity

- 6.1 Review business mileage, set challenging reduction targets in light of COVID ways of working and expand sustainable travel polices that reduce the need to travel, encourage modal shift to active travel/public transport or increase car sharing.
- 6.2 Work in partnership to influence and develop plans to transition public sector fleets to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).
- 6.3 Implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Kent and for Medway; to develop motor-vehicle free routes for walking and cycling.

- 6.4 Update and implement the Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP) and related strategies and the Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy to promote and incentivise walking, wheeling, and cycling through the provision of infrastructure, facilities, training, and engagement.
- 6.5 Work in partnership to prepare and implement local walking and cycling strategies. Measure the amount of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure delivered in Kent.
- 6.6 Work with public transport providers to achieve EURO VI emissions standards or better.
- 6.7 Trial new transport projects that drive the transition to Ultra Low Emission Vehicle public transport.
- 6.8 Trial and implement projects that support modal shift away from car ownership and/or reduce car dependency.
- 6.9 Work with private transport sector, including school transport providers and taxi licencing to incentivise and switch to Electric Vehicles
- 6.10 Consider future opportunities and interventions for reducing emissions from freight and international traffic including use of rivers and wharfs, improved journey efficiency, improved efficiency of vehicles and Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme and ECOStars schemes.
- 6.11 Work collaboratively with the public and private sector to roll out electric charging points across Kent and Medway, in line with local EV strategies.
- 6.12 Support local SMEs to switch to ULEV vans through the Kent REVS Up for Cleaner Air scheme. : Support further measures to encourage Kent business to switch to electric vehicles.
- 6.13 Support progress in Kent regarding “low carbon multimodal transport hubs” to include measures such as multimodal integrated transport next to Fastrack electric BRT network, train stations, key bus corridors, public EV infrastructure, bike/e-bike share schemes, secure bike storage, electric car clubs with associated EV infrastructure, ecargo bike trials.
- 6.14 Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Action Plans.

Priority 7 Renewable Energy Generation

- 7.1 Undertake a Local Area Energy Plan for Kent (or multiple smaller LAEP's) that focus on all existing and emerging technologies.
- 7.2 Work in partnership to identify, support and promote new renewable energy projects across Kent and Medway, maximising funding from the Growth Fund, future Prosperity Fund and SE Energy Hub.
- 7.3 Continue to install solar panels on suitable public sector buildings and land, including offices, schools, and landfill sites.
- 7.4 Develop and implement the Maidstone Heat Project.
- 7.5 Identify the barriers and local authority role in supporting households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies. Incorporate findings into action 5.3 (domestic retrofit strategy).
- 7.6 Develop and implement projects to support households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies. (linked to action 5.4 – deliver domestic retrofit strategy).
- 7.7 Provide technical support for community renewable energy projects to include recommendations from Community Energy South on how to support community energy generation across Kent and Medway.
- 7.8 Support the development of future housing micro-grids, smart energy grids, and low carbon heat networks for new build homes.

Priority 8 Green Infrastructure

- 8.1 Undertake an assessment of Kent and Medway's opportunities for natural solutions to climate change.
- 8.2 Develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway that agrees priorities for nature recovery, maps the most valuable existing areas for nature, and maps opportunities for creating or improving habitat for nature and delivering wider environmental goals (nature-based solutions).
- 8.3 Develop and implement a strategy to establish 1.5 million new trees (or their carbon sequestration equivalent) in Kent and Medway.
- 8.4 Develop cost effective and innovative approaches to establishing trees outside woodlands whilst strengthening biosecurity, through the Promoting Trees Outside Woodlands Project.

Priority 9 Supporting Low Carbon Business:

- 9.1 Utilise and build on the Clean Growth South East supply chain analysis to help realise and link the economic opportunities from the low carbon sector across Kent and the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area.
- 9.2 Support local SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) and public sector suppliers to progress through Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) training accreditation and enhance their knowledge of the key themes through Low Carbon Kent's Sustainable Business Toolkit.
- 9.3 Offer a low carbon support programme for SMEs, including support to highlight and signpost to funding, reduce costs, and carbon, and actively contribute to growth of the low carbon and renewable energy economy (LCREE) and environmental goods and services sectors (EGSS) through tailored support and collaboration.
- 9.4 Support the continued development of the onshore & offshore wind sector, green hydrogen, and related local supply chain.
- 9.5 Drive an increase in the local circular economy within Kent's resident and business communities through effective support, benchmarking, collaboration, and business case support.

9.6 Investigate workforce upskill/ training requirements for retrofit and green business.

9.7 To consider the environmental impact of tourism in Kent and work with partners to measure the impact and benefit of tourism. Also, support tourist business to be more sustainable.

Priority 10 Communications

10.1 Develop a joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy and action plan.

10.2a Develop a communication working group/network to ensure consistency of messages and facilitate joint working.

10.2b Consider the impact of reviewing and potentially rebranding the annual environment conference.

10.3 Maximise the impact of Great Big Green Week in Kent by promoting a shared calendar of events and supporting local activities.

10.4 Implement joint communication campaigns to raise awareness of the health impacts of air pollution and ways to protect health and improve air quality. Include progress on Kent air quality funding projects/programmes.

10.5 Implement joint communication campaigns to increase modal shift to active travel / public transport.

10.6 Support joint communication campaigns on behaviour change projects focused on tackling residents carbon emissions.

10.7 Implement joint communication campaigns to help residents reduce their water bills / save water.

10.8 Implement joint communication campaigns to reduce resident's environmental impact (Kent Green Action and District-level campaigns).

10.9 Implement joint communication campaigns to encourage and support SMEs to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

10.10 Develop shared resources for public sector staff engagement.

10.11 Monitor and review effectiveness of communication campaigns and develop targeted behaviour change programmes.

10.12 Investigate the training, skills and education needs for climate awareness for Kent & Medway (including schools, residents).

From: Rob Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 9 July 2024

Subject: **Contract extension for the receipt and processing of organic waste in south west Kent (including Maidstone green waste) – (gw/2004/01)**

Decision Number: 24/00064

Decision Title: Approval to extend the contractual arrangement for the receipt and processing of organic waste – (gw/2004/01)

Key decision: Yes

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone.

Summary: This report seeks Member approval to extend a contractual arrangement for the receipt and processing of organic waste.

Recommendation(s): For Cabinet Committee – The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for the Environment on the proposed decision to:

- (i) EXTEND the existing contract for the receipt and processing of organic waste for up to 19 Months.
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision; as shown at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC holds three contracts with Envar Composting Ltd, (previously held by New Earth Solutions) based in West Malling for managing organic waste in mid and south west Kent using an in-vessel composting system.
- 1.2 This report provides information concerning the option to extend one of those contracts which is due to expire on 31st August 2024. The remaining contracts are due to cease in March 2026.

2 Background

- 2.1 KCC is achieving less than 1% waste to landfill, by continuing to divert approximately 25,840 tonnes of organic waste per year from landfill by using treatment and recycling facilities.
- 2.2 There are limited in-vessel composting and windrow facilities in Kent which can accept the tonnages of green waste that HWRCs and collection authorities produce.
- 2.3 The South West Kent contract GW/2004/01 (commenced 2009) was initially set up to manage garden, veg, food and cardboard waste which was the accepted mix at the time from Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells.
- 2.4 Maidstone Borough Council had been accessing the site on an earlier phase of the contract attracting a separate gate fee, as food was not included in their garden mix.
- 2.5 As garden waste collections increased, in 2014, two further contracts were awarded (via a competitive process) to New Earth Solutions to manage kerbside green from Ashford and Sittingbourne and from various household waste recycling centres across Kent. These are due to expire 31st March 2026.
- 2.6 Over the ensuing years, KCC varied the contracts in light of changing composition, collection methodology and government reforms to remove food and cardboard and to migrate those materials into other facilities.
- 2.7 It should be noted that whilst the facility's 'in-vessel' composting system offers benefits such as quality control, faster processing and reduced risk of infection due to high temperature operating methods, the technology involved means it tends to be more expensive than windrow composting (open air aerobic processing).
- 2.8 The current contract is for the processing of organic waste collected by the waste collection authorities from households in south west Kent, and Maidstone, as well as deposited by residents at Tunbridge Wells (North Farm) household waste recycling centre.
- 2.9 The contract had an option to be extended for a further period of up to 60 months and KCC's intention is to extend the contract based on negotiated terms.

3 Issues, options and analysis of options

- 3.1 In December 2023, KCC negotiated an extension to the incumbent (New Earth Solutions) on the proviso that the gate fees associated with the contract were rebased.
- 3.2 After a protracted period of negotiation on the extension, KCC was notified that the facility had been sold to Envar Composting Ltd and the contract was being novated to the new owners. As such, the extension negotiation was suspended

until the contract novation was agreed and KCC could recommence discussions with the new owners.

- 3.3 In order for KCC to determine the best course of action during negotiations with New Earth Solutions, market engagement and benchmarking took place to understand whether the gate fees at that time were in line with market rates and to determine market appetite for this material.
- 3.4 The results were that indicative prices supplied by the market, including from the incumbent, highlighted that there is a limited market within Kent to process the volumes of organic waste that KCC manages, and that the gate fee on this contract is above market value and rebasing was recommended.
- 3.5 During negotiations with the new owners, it has been confirmed that they are unable to rebase due to the extensive investment required in the facility. The gate fee has not been increased and an option for a profit share on composting sales has been offered.
- 3.6 **The following options have been considered:**
- 3.7 **Option 1 - Do nothing – the current arrangements will cease and KCC will be unable to accept the waste** - this is not an option due to KCC's obligation to receive this material under waste legislation and dispose of it as per the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 3.8 **Option 2 - Continue to accept the waste but utilise alternative disposal options by using landfill or incineration** - This is not an option as there is a desire and obligation to move material up the waste hierarchy where possible, and to meet recycling and landfill diversion targets. Furthermore, to send this material to incineration would be costly against a treatment option.
- 3.9 **Option 3 - Commence a full procurement exercise before the end of the contract** – this is not an option as there is insufficient time to undertake a commissioning activity due to the unforeseen sale of the facility and subsequent cessation of negotiations.
- 3.10 **Option 4 - Extend for a period between 24 and 60 months (full extension)** - This is not discounted and has been considered as a proposal put forward by the new owners; however, it is felt that to align all organic contracts to one end date may produce economies of scale when a full county re-procurement is undertaken.
- 3.11 **Option 5 The recommended option - Extend for 19 months (to April 2026) and undertake a commissioning activity.** This is the preferred option to enable the undertaking of market research and a commissioning activity to secure a provider who can treat and utilise the waste material meeting the circular economy desired outcomes.

4. Reasons for recommendation

- 4.1 A 19-month extension will give the Authority time to:

- a) Further understand the current organic waste market and providers.
- b) Research new technologies for managing Kent's organic waste such as high temperature pyrolysis for soil improvement or energy generation.
- c) Seek opportunities for developing windrow composting sites within Kent.
- d) Align to the remaining contracts due to end in March 2026; and
- e) Carry out a full commissioning activity for all organic contracts in Mid, West Kent and East Kent

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Commercial and Procurement Division have supported the service in extension discussions with the incumbent provider and have recommended that an extension period granted, followed by a competitive procurement process, so that a new contract is in place for 31 March 2026.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Budget for 24-25 is £1,564,300.
- 6.2 The estimated annual cost for 24-25 £2,008,742. There is a budget impact regarding the MTFP as the budget was reduced due to the anticipated savings that can no longer be delivered following the sale of the composting plant.
- 6.3 Negotiations have delivered a profit share for KCC for the sale of the composted material, although this will not completely reduce the budget gap, it will contribute to reducing it. In addition, if this waste is not processed through this contract, it will be sent via the FCC contract for energy from waste at a greatly increased gate fee, therefore increasing the overall budget pressure.
- 6.4 The cost of the 19-month extension is £3,180,500.
- 6.5 Haulage costs are accounted for within the HWRC & Transfer Station contracts.
- 6.6 A subsequent full retender which aligns all the organic contracts, will achieve synergies and economies of scale.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The extension period is permissible under the contract terms and conditions.
- 7.2 A key function of the waste disposal authority operating under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 51 states that:

It shall be the duty of each Waste Disposal Authority to arrange:

- a) for the disposal of the controlled waste collected in its area by the waste collection authorities.
- b) for places to be provided at which persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste and for the disposal of waste so deposited.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken concluded that no Protected Characteristics will be impacted upon either positively or negatively as a result of this contract award. This is due to the contract delivering a business-to-business service.

9. Governance

- 9.1 The Service Director will inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation due to the potential financial value of this contract.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 This is a necessary route with the expiry of the Authority's current contract, to reduce the risk of unbudgeted incurred costs and to offer KCC best available market value whilst enabling the Authority to discharge its statutory duty as the Waste Disposal Authority.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for the Environment on the proposed decision to:
- (i) EXTEND the existing contract for the receipt and processing of organic waste for up to 19 Months.
 - (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision; as shown at Appendix A.

12. Background Documents

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents>

Report Author

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Relevant Director:

- Matthew Smyth, Director of Environment and Circular Economy
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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rob Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment

DECISION NO:

24/00064

For publication**Key decision: YES / NO**

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: Contract extension for the receipt and processing of organic waste in south west Kent (including Maidstone green waste) – (GW/2004/01)

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Environment, I agree to:

(i) EXTEND the existing contract for the receipt and processing of organic waste for up to 19 Months; and

(ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

KCC currently has in place a contractual arrangement that is due to expire 31st August 2024, and therefore is seeking an extension for the processing of organic waste material currently collected by the waste collection authorities in south west Kent and Maidstone

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Members of Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee will consider the proposal at their meeting on 9 July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Option 1 - Do nothing – the current arrangements will cease and KCC will be unable to accept the waste - this is not an option due to KCC's obligation to receive this material under waste legislation and dispose of it as per the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Option 2 - Continue to accept the waste but utilise alternative disposal options by using landfill or incineration - This is not an option as there is a desire and obligation to move material up the waste hierarchy where possible, and to meet recycling and landfill diversion targets. Furthermore, to send this material to incineration would be costly against a treatment option.

Option 3 - Commence a full procurement exercise before the end of the contract – this is not an option as there is insufficient time to undertake a commissioning activity due to the unforeseen sale of the facility and subsequent cessation of negotiations.

Option 4 - Extend for a period between 24 and 60 months (full extension) - This is not discounted and has been considered as a proposal put forward by the new owners; however, it is felt that to align all organic contracts to one end date may produce economies of scale when a full county re-procurement is undertaken.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

.....
signed

.....
date

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Receipt and processing of organics for south west Kent

Responsible Officer

Kay Groves - GT - ECE

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Susan Reddick - ECE

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

Commissioning/Procurement

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Resource management and circular economy/service delivery

Responsible Head of Service

Susan Reddick - ECE

Responsible Director

Matthew Smyth - GT - ECE

Aims and Objectives

Kent County Council currently has in place a contract to receive and process organic waste arisings from household kerbside collections and green waste deposited at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) by Kent residents. KCC is seeking an extension of 19 months to April 2026 to align to other green waste contracts in the county.

As a Waste Disposal Authority, the provision of such waste processing services is a statutory obligation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Aims and Objectives

From 1st Sept 2024, Kent County Council will:

- Continue to secure a provider to process organic waste arisings from kerbside collections within the Authority.
- Continue to secure a Provider to process garden waste delivered to Household Waste Recycling Centres within the County.

Beneficiaries

This EQIA supports the commission and its intended beneficiaries, being the householders as users of the Household Waste Recycling Centre service in Kent and recipients of the district and borough council kerbside collection services.

As the Waste Disposal Authority, Kent County Council is responsible for ensuring that all waste collected in Kent is disposed of correctly in the most financially efficient way. The disposal of this waste is a 'back office' procedure, with all 'customer facing' elements of this process the responsibility of the Waste Collection Authority (WCA), or at the Household Waste Recycling Centres of which there is a separate EQIA for their operation.

No impact either positively or negatively on Protected Characteristics for residents - No Change.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

No

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Incumbent
Market place and industry
Contract and Compliance Officers
Wider team and Senior Management
Members

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

No

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

No

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

No

Details of Positive Impacts

Not Applicable

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
No
Details of negative impacts for Age
Not Applicable
Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Applicable
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Applicable
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

From: Robert Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transportation Cabinet Committee – 9 July 2024

Subject: Decision 24/00066 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Key decision *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: none

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Whole council

Summary: The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy sets out how local flooding (flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses) will be managed in the county over the next ten years. It presents the progress since the previous Local Strategy and identifies challenges that remain to the effective delivery of local flood risk management. These inform the objectives and actions for local flood risk management that are set out in the Local Strategy along with targets and metrics to measure delivery of the Local Strategy. These targets and metrics will be reported on annually. The Local Strategy has been consulted on with the public and stakeholders. 148 responses were received to this consultation. The final draft reflects the comments received.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment on the proposed decision:

- to adopt the Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (dates) on behalf of Kent County Council.
- to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to refresh and/or make revisions to the Strategy as appropriate during the lifetime of the strategy.
- to delegate authority to the Corporate Growth, Environment and Transport to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision

as attached at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 makes Kent County Council (KCC) the Lead Local Flood Authority for Kent with a remit to oversee local flooding. Local flooding is flooding that is caused by surface runoff, ordinary watercourses and groundwater.
- 1.2 As Lead Local Flood Authority, KCC is required to prepare a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Local Strategy) that sets out how local flood risks will be managed in the county.
- 1.3 KCC adopted a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in 2013 then another in 2017, which can be found on our [Local Flood Risk Management Strategy webpage](#).
- 1.4 The last local strategy was intended to last six years and it now needs to be updated. A new Local Strategy for 10 years has been prepared and has been consulted on. The Local Strategy and the consultation report are attached.

2. Local Strategy

- 2.1 The latest Local Strategy follows from the previous one, in that it is shorter than its predecessor, focussing on the strategic overview and objectives and leaving the detail to other documents. The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is attached at Appendix B.
- 2.2 The previous Local Strategy, adopted in 2017, was shorter than the first, it was a more focused document that centred on the strategic approach to local flood risk management, whereas the previous version had been broader in scope, as the Lead Local Flood Authority role was new. The latest version continues this trend and is shorter and more focused still.
- 2.3 The previous Local Strategy was supported by other policy documents, including the [Land Drainage Strategy](#) and the [Section 19](#) strategy, which set out how we will exercise some of the powers and duties we have as a Lead Local Flood Authority.
- 2.4 It is also supported by the [Flood Risk to Communities Documents](#) that set out, for each district and borough council in Kent, more details of flood risk, for all sources, and the roles that risk management authorities play in managing those risks in those areas. This allowed the Local Strategy to be shorter than the first one, as detail about flood risk management authorities and flood risk in the county was covered in another document.
- 2.5 We have updated these documents as part of preparing the latest Local Strategy to correct some areas that are out of date now and update links. A further, more comprehensive update will be undertaken once the Environment Agency has launched its updated flood mapping, which is currently due later this year. The latest Local Strategy also relies on the Flood Risk to Communities documents.
- 2.6 The Local Strategy focusses on the objectives and measures to improve the management of local flooding in Kent.

3. Aim and objectives

3.1 The work we have done over the previous Local Strategy period has led to further progress and improvements in local flood risk management. In particular, there have been improvements in our understanding of how to get funding for local flood risk management schemes and our ability to deliver them. This is partly due to changes in funding rules for flood projects. The projects that we have delivered can be found on KCC's Flooding Project webpage. There have also been improved opportunities for partnership working, particularly from Southern Water, who are focussing on partnership opportunities to help reduce storm overflows.

3.2 Challenges remain in delivering local flood risk management schemes. In particular, funding and resources available to deliver local flood risk management measures affects the scale of the flood risk management we can achieve. Climate change is also having a significant effect on surface water flood risks. Heavier and more frequent rainfall events are leading to more surface water flooding.

3.3 This Local Strategy will build upon this progress and try to address the challenges we have identified, where we can.

3.4 The aim of the Local Strategy is:

to improve the safety and wellbeing of Kent's residents and the economy of Kent through appropriate local flood risk management.

3.5 To do this we will:

work effectively with communities and partners, incorporate climate adaptation, and utilise natural processes to provide multiple benefits, where possible.

3.6 The Local Strategy has four objectives, which are similar objectives to the previous Local Strategy. They are:

3.6.1 Understanding flood risks

Risk Management Authorities in Kent have a clear understanding of local flood risk mechanisms including risks resulting from climate change, and will share these with partners to create an evidence base for flood risk and climate adaptation.

3.6.2 Reduce the risk of flooding

To protect the people and businesses of Kent from flooding through the delivery of flood risk management projects and programmes using new or innovative techniques where appropriate.

3.6.3 Resilient planning

Development and infrastructure delivery in Kent takes an active role in flood risk management, taking opportunities to manage on-site and off-site flood risk.

3.6.4 Support resilient communities

Residents and businesses of Kent are able to help themselves to understand and manage their own flood risk, as appropriate, by having access to relevant

flood risk information and support from risk management authorities. Communities and individuals are empowered to act to protect themselves from flooding through individual efforts, partnerships and joint working.

- 3.7 These objectives each have measures set out in the Local Strategy that will help to deliver them.

4. Monitoring the delivery of the Local Strategy

- 4.1 For this version of the Local Strategy, we have committed to measures that help to show how the delivery of the strategy is progressing. These are set out in Section 6 and Appendix 1 of the Local Strategy. We will provide an annual monitoring report of the Local Strategy that will report the metrics for the previous year and other activities that we have undertaken to deliver the Local Strategy.
- 4.2 The measures that support the delivery of the objectives will be reviewed as part of the annual report, as will the metrics and activities we report on.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Local Strategy was consulted on publicly over the winter. The consultation opened on 22 November 2023 and ran to 30 January 2024. The Consultation Report is attached at Appendix C.
- 5.2 148 responses were received via the consultation page and via email. The response to the consultation was generally positive, of the 137 respondents that completed the survey, 56% agreed or strongly agreed with the Local Strategy, 22% of respondents either tended to disagree or strongly disagreed and 19% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 5.3 We received a large number of comments on the Local Strategy. Many of the comments referred to issues outside the scope of the Local Strategy, particularly on some planning matters and oversight of other parties, notably Water Companies.
- 5.4 Many of the comments highlighted areas of the Local Strategy that lacked clarity or enough information and we have improved the text and content to provide more details and links to other resources. There were also a number of comments on the metrics we have proposed to measure the delivery of the Local Strategy. Some respondents pointed out that the metrics we had proposed did not indicate the delivery of the Local Strategy, merely demonstrated work the Flood and Water Management Team was doing. We have removed some metrics and revised others so that they show how we are delivering the Local Strategy.
- 5.5 Respondents also pointed out that the Local Strategy lacked specific targets for delivery. In response, we have introduced targets for some of the metrics. It is not possible to introduce targets for all of them, as we do not control all the factors involved and for others we do not currently have a baseline to assess a reasonable target. We have introduced targets for:

- Community engagement on Section 19 investigations

- Number of flood risk management studies undertaken in the next five years
- Number of properties better protected from flood risk in the next five years
- Area of land disconnected from the foul or combined sewer
- Number of new community flood action groups formed

5.6 As part of the annual review, will review the metrics and targets and assess whether they need to be amended or new ones introduced.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications from the Local Strategy. Any costs associated with the delivery of the Local Strategy will be met through the base budget of the Flood and Water Management Team or from bidding for external funds. The Local Strategy does not commit us to any additional spending.

7. Legal implications

7.1 There are no legal implications from the Local Strategy. Adopting a Local Strategy is a duty for KCC, not adopting one would have legal implications.

8. Equalities implications

8.1 An EqIA has been undertaken and no equalities impacts have been identified.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 There are no specific implications on other areas of KCC. However, delivering the Local Strategy will require support from other areas of KCC, notably Highways, to support improving how surface water is managed. There are no expectations for any additional spending.

10. Conclusions

10.1 KCC has prepared a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for 2024-2034 that sets out how we will manage local flood risk in the Kent and monitor the delivery of the Local Strategy. We have consulted with the public and stakeholders on this Local Strategy and made amendments accordingly. The new Local Strategy is ready to be adopted.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment on the proposed decision:

- to adopt the Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (dates) on behalf of Kent County Council.
- to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to refresh and/or make revisions to the Strategy as appropriate during the lifetime of the strategy.

- to delegate authority to the Corporate Growth, Environment and Transport to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision
as attached at Appendix A

11. Appendices and Background documents

Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
Appendix B: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
Appendix C: Consultation Report
Appendix D: Equality Impact Assessment

12. Contact details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rob Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment

DECISION NO:

24/00066

For publication

Key decision: YES / NO

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Environment, I agree to:

- to adopt the Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (dates) on behalf of Kent County Council;
- to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to refresh and/or make revisions to the Strategy as appropriate during the lifetime of the strategy; and
- to delegate authority to the Corporate Growth, Environment and Transport to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

As Lead Local Flood Authority, KCC is required to prepare a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Local Strategy) that sets out how local flood risks will be managed in the county.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Members of Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee will consider the proposal at their meeting on 9 July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

This is statutory obligation.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

.....
signed

.....
date

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Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

2024 – 2034

Final Draft

June 2024

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1 Introduction

Kent County Council (KCC) is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Kent. As the LLFA, we have an overview role for local flooding, which is flooding that arises from these sources:

- **Surface runoff**
- **Ordinary watercourses**
- **Groundwater**

One of our duties as the LLFA is to develop, maintain, apply, and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Local Strategy) that sets out how we will propose to manage these flood risks.

Local flooding is generally more localised than flooding from rivers and the sea, and managing it often relies on several systems working together effectively; especially drainage networks, sewers, and ordinary watercourses. These systems are often managed by different authorities, so cooperation and integrated planning are required from these authorities to manage local flooding effectively, which this Local Strategy aims to support.

This is the third Local Strategy that KCC has adopted, it will build upon the lessons we have learned from past Local Strategies (see Section 5). It has been developed in partnership with the other risk management authorities in Kent and other stakeholders to help us to work together and continue to reduce local flood risks, to develop our understanding of flood risk and to further improve our working relationships with partners and communities. It also reflects the Environment Agency's [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#).

The Local Strategy sets out the flood risk in the county, the roles and responsibilities of risk management authorities operating in the county, the aims and objectives of the strategy, progress and ongoing challenges since the previous Local Strategy, and how we will deliver and monitor it.

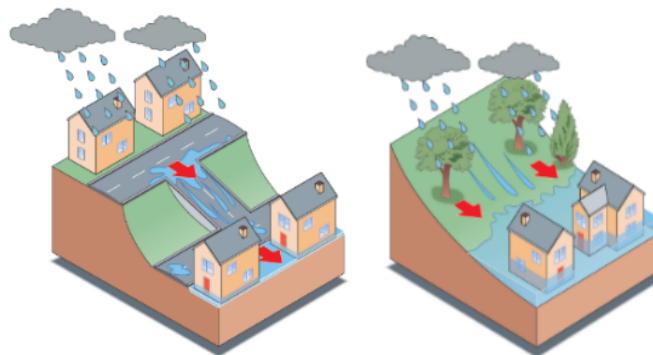
2 Flood Risk

2.1 Sources of flood risk

All sources of flood risk are described below. Please note that the Local Strategy focuses on local flooding, flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses.

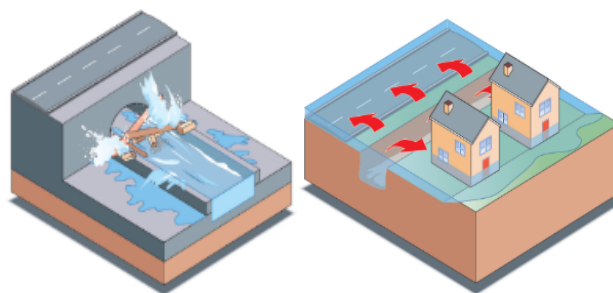
Surface water

Flooding occurs when the rate of rainfall is higher than the rate at which water can drain into the ground or enter a drainage system, creating runoff, running downhill, and pooling in low points.



Main river and ordinary watercourses (fluvial)

There are two categories of watercourse: main rivers (those that present the greatest risk to life and property) and ordinary watercourses (which covers all other watercourses, such as streams and ditches). Floods occur when the water flowing in a watercourse (which may be culverted), exceeds the capacity of the channel and goes over its banks. The capacity of the watercourse may be reduced by blockages and debris in the channel.



Sewers (including foul sewers)

Floods occur when the sewerage system fails due to blockages or is overwhelmed by surface water.



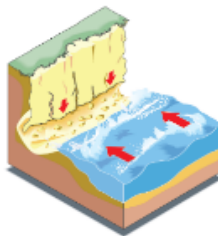
Groundwater

Floods may occur when water stored in the ground rises to the surface. This is most likely in areas with porous underlying rock (such as, chalk).



Coastal erosion

Flooding can occur when the coastline is eroded by the action of the sea, leading to land loss. Whilst coastal protection works are not the same as coastal flood defences, they can contribute to the effectiveness of flood defence along a shoreline.



Coastlines

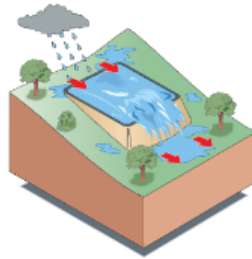
Flooding occurs when the coastline and/or coastal flood defences are either overwhelmed or breached by high tides or a storm surge.



Reservoirs

Reservoir flooding is extremely unlikely. When the amount of water entering the reservoir is greater than the amount being discharged, water may overtop the reservoir and flow downstream (some reservoirs are designed to manage excess

flows in this way). Occasionally, a poorly designed reservoir structure can fail, releasing water.



2.2 Flood risk in Kent

Kent has a resident population of over 1.5 million (2021 census).

The county has a land area of 1,368 square miles and approximately 350 miles of coastline. Nine of Kent's districts and boroughs have a higher proportion of land within National Flood Zone 3¹ than the national average². This presents unique flood risk management challenges.

Over 20,000 properties in Kent are estimated to be at risk of flooding from **surface water runoff**. Kent has one of the highest risks of surface water runoff of LLFAs in England. All areas in Kent are at some risk of surface water flooding, but risks tend to be concentrated in urban areas.

Ordinary watercourses (from small ditches to small rivers) are a significant source of flood risk in Kent. However, at present there is no national estimate of the risk from this source.

In Kent, there are many areas with numerous ordinary watercourses within a concentrated area. This is often because the watercourses play an important role in land drainage and for flood risk management in flat impermeable areas. Ordinary watercourses in locations with steep topography can also present significant flood risk to towns and villages.

Groundwater also presents a significant source of flooding in parts of Kent, due to large areas of permeable bedrock, such as the chalk aquifers of the North Downs (most notably along the Elham Valley, where the Nailbourne chalk stream flows when groundwater is high).

There are over 60,000 properties estimated to be at risk of flooding from **coastal and fluvial flooding** in Kent. Romney Marshes, Dartford, and Gravesend are at particular high risk of coastal and tidal flooding. To reduce this risk, the Environment Agency operate and manage flood defences in many coastal and tidal areas.

¹ National Flood Zone 3 is defined by the Environment Agency as land having a 1 in 100 greater annual probability of river flooding or land having a 1 in 200 or greater annual probability of sea flooding.

² [Land Use in Kent](#)

Further information about flood risk in Kent is available in the draft [Flood Risk to Communities](#) documents.

2.3 Development planning applications

New developments, such as housing, have the potential to increase flood risk. Guidance for new developments is set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and local policy documents (such as, Local Plans), that may include more localised planning guidance on flood risk. Planning applications should set out how this is assessed and describe how any risks are mitigated.

As the LLFA, KCC is consulted on the surface water drainage aspects of all major planning³ applications in the county. Our Drainage and Planning Policy can be obtained by emailing suds.gov.uk.

³ Major development is defined within Part 1, Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 ([‘major development’ definition](#)).

3 Roles and Responsibilities

Managing local flooding often relies on several systems working effectively, especially drainage networks, sewers, and ordinary watercourses, which may be managed by different authorities. Bodies with flood risk management roles are known as risk management authorities, these include KCC, Environment Agency (EA), district and borough councils, internal drainage boards, water companies and sewerage companies. Cooperation and integrated planning are required from these authorities to manage local flooding effectively. A summary of the responsibilities of the different risk management authorities in Kent is set out in Table 1.

It is important to note that whilst risk management authorities manage flood risk, there is no duty on any of them to prevent flooding. Flooding is recognised as a natural phenomenon that cannot always be prevented. Risk management authorities exercise permissive powers to undertake flood risk management works, and they have access to funding to investigate and deliver flood risk management activities. In spending these funds, their work has to be cost effective and value to the taxpayer, they do not have an obligation to prevent all floods.

Table 1: Kent’s Risk Management Authorities and a summary of their responsibilities.

Risk Management Authority	Responsibilities
Kent County Council: Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic overview of local flooding from ordinary watercourses, surface water and groundwater. • Investigate significant flood events within Kent in Section 19 reports, where five or more properties are internally flooded, critical infrastructure is affected, or the flood mechanism is complex. • Permissive powers to implement the Land Drainage Act (1991) and consent for works on ordinary watercourses. • Maintain an asset register. • Develop and maintain a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. • Statutory consultee role to provide technical advice and guidance on surface water drainage strategies, designs and maintenance arrangements put forward by developers for any new major development.
Kent County Council: Highway Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of highway drainage systems. • Emergency responders during flood events on the highway.
Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local public authority that manages water levels, flood risk and land drainage within areas of special drainage need.

Risk Management Authority	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permissive powers to implement the Land Drainage Act (1991) and consent for works on ordinary watercourses. • Under their Byelaws they are also able to consent new surface and treated foul discharges into any ordinary watercourse within their Internal Drainage District as well as consent works within 8 metres of any ordinary watercourse designated as 'Adopted' by the Board.
Environment Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing flood risk from main rivers, seas, and reservoirs. • Strategic overview of all forms of flooding. • Provides a flood warning service.
Water Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing and processing wastewater. • Manage leaks from clean water supplies and manage flooding from sewers.
District and Borough Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead on coastal erosion (where they have a coastline). • Carry out works on ordinary watercourses. • Apply flood risk guidance in determining planning applications.

4 Aim and Objectives

4.1 Aim

Through this Local Strategy for Kent, our aim is:

- to improve the safety and wellbeing of Kent's residents and the economy of Kent through appropriate local flood risk management.

To do this we will:

- work effectively with communities and partners, incorporate climate adaptation, and utilise natural processes to provide multiple benefits, where possible.

4.2 Objectives

Our objectives for local flood risk management are: 'understanding flood risk', 'reduce the risk of flooding', 'resilient planning', and 'resilient communities'. Actions supporting the delivery of each objective were also identified from the review.

Objective 1: Understanding of Flood Risk

Improve Risk Management Authorities' understanding of local flood risk mechanisms in Kent including the risks resulting from climate change, and to share this understanding with partners to create an evidence base for flood risk and climate adaptation.

To achieve this we will...

- improve communication and data sharing between risk management authorities following flood events
- continue to undertake Section 19 investigations of significant floods in Kent
- support the next round of water company Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans
- include climate change assessments in flood risk investigations

Objective 2: Reduce the Risk of Flooding

Protect the people and businesses of Kent from flooding through the delivery of flood risk management projects and programmes using new or innovative techniques where appropriate.

To achieve this we will...

- deliver more schemes to reduce the risk of local flooding
- work with partners to co-deliver schemes
- support Southern Water's Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce
- ensure multiple benefits are included in flood risk management schemes
- continue to provide advice on land drainage and riparian responsibilities
- Support IDB expansion

Objective 3: Resilient Planning

Development and infrastructure delivery in Kent takes an active role in flood risk management, taking opportunities to manage on-site and off-site flood risk.

To achieve this we will...

- continue to encourage and support planning applications to appropriately consider the delivery of Sustainable Drainage Systems and reduce flood risk where possible
- implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- work with local planning authorities to ensure local flood risk is considered in local plan making and opportunities to proactively reduce flood risk are included

Objective 4: Resilient Communities

Residents and businesses of Kent are able to better prepare, understand and manage their own flood risk as appropriate, by having access to relevant flood risk information and support from risk management authorities. Communities and individuals are empowered to act to protect themselves from flooding through individual efforts, partnerships and joint working.

To achieve this we will...

- improve communities' access to appropriate data and information to understand flood risk in their area and support them to manage it
- support communities to establish and maintain Flood Action Groups
- continue to promote the voluntary role of flood warden within flood risk communities, in partnership with the Environment Agency
- encourage communities to prepare local flood plans
- engage with local communities and their flood risk representatives, when we are delivering flood risk management schemes

The Local Strategy objectives and activities will be measured against the targets and metrics found in Appendix 1. An annual review will be published in April of each year and report on the progress of the strategy for the previous year.

5 Progress since previous Local Strategy

5.1 Local Strategy 2017-2023

The 2017 Local Strategy included four objectives: 'Understanding Risk', 'Reducing the Risk of Flooding', 'Resilient Planning' and 'Resilient Communities'. We have reviewed the delivery of the previous Local Strategy under each of these objectives since 2017, to identify where we have made progress and where work is still required.

5.1.1 Objective 1: Understanding of flood risk

Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans have helped to improve our understanding of sewer flooding and how it is planned and invested in, which was an important gap at the time of the previous Local Strategy. These plans have shown that surface water in foul and combined sewers contributes to many issues sewerage undertakers are dealing with, including flooding and sewage discharges to the environment. This should provide opportunities to work with sewerage undertakers to jointly manage surface water, and we hope that as these plans develop, collaborative opportunities will arise from them.

Our improved understanding of the economic benefits of schemes that we deliver, and the changes made by the Environment Agency to the funding criteria, mean that we are expecting more schemes to be deliverable through partnership funding. In the previous Local Strategy, we had only developed one business case using these new criteria. This has shown that the new criteria may provide more funding for the kind of schemes we need to deliver, and we will continue to develop more business cases with them.

Overall, there is improved understanding of joint risks, however, more can still be done to improve our understanding.

5.1.2 Objective 2: Reducing the risk of flood

KCC has delivered more projects that reduce flood risk in the county, the projects we have delivered can be found [here](#). However, these projects have been fairly small scale to date, this is due to the availability of staff to project manage these schemes and capital to fund the delivery (see Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.4).

The Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans and storm overflow requirements in the [Environment Act 2021](#) have increased focus on surface water management for wastewater management benefits. Sewerage undertakers are taking an increased interest in surface water management because of this Act, which has led to more significant partnership projects.

We have improved the delivery of natural flood management schemes since the last Local Strategy. Natural flood management techniques offer a relatively low-cost

option to manage flood risk in rural areas, where landowners are willing to provide land and maintain them. These schemes are usually dependent on landowners being willing to adapt the use of their land. There have been improvements to landowner incentives which seek to compensate them for land given to natural flood management. There are also more initiatives to increase landowners' understanding of the benefits of nature-based solutions; but these have only recently been introduced and it is unclear if they will incentivise landowners to employ these measure. More incentives for landowners to adopt these measures are needed to increase their uptake.

Property flood resilience is a useful way to manage flood risk where there are no effective strategic options, but the resources required to administer these measures creates barriers for wider implementation.

We need to continue to work with partners to deliver local flood risk management at an increased scale.

5.1.3 Objective 3: Resilient planning

[Sustainable drainage systems](#) in new major developments are commonplace in Kent for managing surface water through KCC's role as a statutory consultee for drainage in planning. Through this role, we promote sustainable drainage techniques to prevent increases in flood risk from new developments. By promoting the drainage hierarchy we have reduced the number of developments that discharge surface water to the foul and combined sewer and, where these connections remain, we have reduced the amount of surface water that is discharged to the foul and combined sewer, which helps to reduce raw sewage discharges to the environment.

A more strategic approach to flood risk management from new developments would be beneficial, where new developments actively contribute to reducing flood risk downstream. Sometimes we are able to achieve this, however a change to planning policy is required to implement this for all developments. KCC will continue to work with planning authorities to encourage developers to consider wider flood risk management in planning and contribute to the reduction of flood risk off-site.

KCC has conducted regular training workshops with developers to ensure sustainable drainage continue to be used effectively and is well-integrated into development. However, we cannot become complacent; we know further training is required for planners and developers to promote the benefits of sustainable , especially those that provide multiple benefits.

5.1.4 Objective 4: Resilient communities

More communities have established Flood Action Groups, five new groups have been established, enabling local communities to engage more directly with risk management authorities. To further support Flood Action Groups, a Kent-wide group of Flood Action Groups has been established. We recognise there are still many communities and residents that have a need for an improved understanding of their local flood risk. We also acknowledge that there are gaps in residents' understanding of flood risk and drainage principles.

The voluntary [role of flood wardens](#) working alongside risk management authorities has had various levels of uptake from local communities. The EA had focused on increasing enrolment, which was met with some success. However, the main challenge is keeping flood wardens engaged over a long period of time and replacing those that leave the role.

The EA has also been working with local communities to improve the uptake of community flood plans. Many communities at risk of flooding lack a local plan that sets out who does what and who to contact in the event of a flood in their community. More work is required to encourage communities at risk of flooding to develop a community flood plan.

5.2 Challenges

5.2.1 Scale of delivery

There is a significant level of surface water flood risk in Kent, at the present scale of delivery it is not possible to set a timeframe on when this will be well managed. The schemes we deliver are useful at managing flood risk in a local context, but they usually benefit a small number of properties, typically 12 or fewer and we are only able to deliver two or three of these a year. We need to increase the scale at which we can deliver schemes to be able to make a meaningful impact on surface water flood risk at a countywide scale. This requires more resources, which is often out of our control, such as land and funding (see Section 5.2.2). However, we can use opportunities to work more effectively with partners and encourage as many parties as possible to contribute to flood risk management.

In particular, the requirements for reducing combined sewer overflows in the [Environment Act 2021](#) present an opportunity to work with water companies to manage surface water more effectively. Water companies have identified that surface water in combined sewers is a significant cause of overflows; managing surface water more sustainably presents an opportunity to deliver multiple benefits.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies and biodiversity net gain present opportunities to integrate natural flood management and sustainable drainage with measures to deliver ecological improvements. These opportunities may not realise significant improvements of delivery, but they do present a further opportunity to deliver measures like this and to increase awareness of their benefits.

5.2.2 Funding

The delivery of flood risk management requires resources to manage projects and funding to pay for project delivery. More funding is required for both aspects in order to increase the delivery of flood risk management mitigation. The government has changed what it pays for in Flood Defence Grant in Aid so that surface water management schemes are easier to fund, which is welcome. However, funding is still provided for on a project-by-project basis, which increases the resources required to fund it and makes small projects difficult to fund.

Improved access to funding and more resources are necessary, unfortunately these are out of our control. The recent [National Infrastructure Commission \(NIC\) report on](#)

[surface water flooding](#) highlighted similar issues and proposed solutions to improving this, which we support. In the government response to this report, they have said that they are not intending to accept the NIC's recommendation to support Lead Local Flood Authorities as "the Environment Agency is working to enable them to better access funding for relevant projects". This is likely to be revisions to the existing funding mechanisms, which will be welcome, but fall short of what we and the NIC believe will be the most effective funding mechanism.

We await any revised funding opportunities, in the meantime, we will continue to make the most of the opportunities Flood Defence Grant in Aid provides us and work with partners to maximise opportunities to manage flood risk.

5.2.3 Climate change

We are already seeing evidence of more frequent and more severe weather events. This is particularly significant for surface water flooding, as it results directly from intense rainfall. Surface water flooding is becoming both more common and more severe, impacting both Kent's economy and people's mental health. Adaptation to climate change must include surface water alongside other climate risks.

At present there is no assessment of the impacts of climate change on surface water flood risk, so there is no way to quantify what the possible impacts are. The Environment Agency is producing an updated set of surface water flood maps that will include climate change scenarios, these are due to be published in 2024. We will review these when they are available.

In the meantime, we must continue to ensure we embed surface water management in climate adaptation plans and prioritise these when more data is available.

5.2.4 Staff resources

The flood risk management profession is a relatively niche area that requires specific technical skills and training. It is currently under-resourced with multiple vacancies across the sector in all risk management authorities, not just LLFAs. This makes increasing our capacity to deliver more activities difficult and puts pressure on us when we have vacancies. Increasing the attractiveness of the flood risk management sector is outside the scope of KCC, however we will try to broaden the appeal of our work to attract more entrants to our sector.

5.2.5 Sustainable drainage adoption - Schedule 3

The government has announced that it is planning to implement [Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#), which means LLFAs must adopt and maintain sustainable drainage in new developments. The adoption and maintenance of sustainable drainage is welcome; however, this process presents challenges to LLFAs, particularly county councils who do not own public open spaces where many sustainable drainage systems are located. Many of the details of how Schedule 3 will be implemented are yet to be determined at the time of drafting this strategy, so we cannot be certain exactly what further challenges we may face. However, implementing this new requirement will be of vital importance and presents an

opportunity to promote the type of sustainable drainage we want to see in the county.

Significantly more staff resources will be required, which is a challenge in itself (see Section 5.2.4), as well as new processes and policies to manage this. We will work with the government and counterparts nationally to ensure that we are well prepared to implement this new requirement.

5.2.6 Land use changes

Major developments are required to consider the impacts on flooding as part of planning policy (see Section 5.1.3) and new requirements will improve this (see Section 5.2.5), however land use changes continue to increase flood risk. Planning permission is not required for many land use changes and flood risk assessments are not required for all planning permissions, for instance minor developments.

The increased densification of urban areas, for instance through the paving of gardens, increases the risk of surface water flooding or runoff entering sewers. Diversifying land activities in rural areas, such as removing hedgerows and changing the crops that are grown can change how surface water runs off the land, affecting flood risk.

Many of these land changes are permitted and there is often no requirement to assess or mitigate any increased flood risk. Changing this is beyond the scope of this strategy. However, we will continue to work with partners to raise awareness of the potential impacts of land use changes and encourage measures that do not increase flood risk.

5.2.7 Integration

Effective flood risk management will best be achieved through a more integrated approach, where only the most severe or extreme issues are dealt with through flood risk management projects. The general incorporation of flood risk management measures in all activities is a more efficient approach.

At present new developments are only required to consider how they increase flood risk and how to manage that. This often means that areas that might be useful for flood risk management to the wider area cannot be realised (notwithstanding issues of funding and land ownership). An approach that requires new developments to reduce flood risk in the local area, irrespective of their impact on it, would make flood mitigation and climate adaptation easier.

An approach like this would require a change to national policy and is out of scope for this strategy. However, we will work with partners to explore opportunities to adopt a policy that proactively manages flood risk through new developments.

6 Delivering the Local Strategy

KCC is the LLFA for Kent and responsible for this Local Strategy; however, delivering this strategy will rely on working with partners and stakeholders. It will also rely on financial and staff resources.

6.1 Partnerships

Kent County Council works closely with a variety of risk management authorities and partners, to manage flood risk in Kent. We work with partners to deliver flood risk management in Kent by collaborating on projects, providing resources (such as funding), and sharing information. Partnerships are particularly important in helping us understand flood risk better and share information. They are also important in supporting local communities, allowing risk management authorities to work together to provide communities with joined up information to improve resilience.

To ensure the risk management authorities have an opportunity to network and share ideas, KCC hosts a Strategic Flood Risk Management Group. This group holds regular meetings to provide updates, discuss challenges, and coordinate the allocation of resources among its members. They will have a role in overseeing the progress of the Local Strategy.

Details on the projects KCC have delivered with partners can be found on our [flood project webpage](#).

6.2 Flood risk management priorities

There are areas of Kent that we recognise as needing further investigation or intervention to manage flood risk. In the previous strategy, we identified priority areas for focus, and we made progress in these areas to varying degrees. These areas are still places we will continue to focus on; however, other areas were brought to our attention during the delivery of the previous strategy, and we have since directed resources to these areas too. This reflects the high level of flood risk in the county, with our priorities for flood risk management changing alongside our increased understanding of the risks and opportunities. The priorities of partners also influence our priorities for flood risk management. Given the length of time this Local Strategy spans, and the likelihood that new information and priorities will arise within this time, we have not identified specific areas to focus on.

This section sets out how we assess and prioritise flood risk management opportunities in the county:

6.2.1 Section 19 investigations

Section 19 investigations are one of the main ways we identify new areas for further investigation. Under [Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#), Lead local flood authorities have a duty to undertake investigations for some incidents of flooding in their area. The purpose of a Section 19 investigation is to determine which Risk Management Authorities are responsible for managing the flood in

question and whether they have fulfilled those responsibilities. [KCC's Section 19 investigations reports](#) also set out the facts of the flood event and provide some background to the drainage in the area; a report of the findings is then published. They do not include modelling or assessments of options to manage flood risk, though they may highlight opportunities for further investigation.

6.2.2 Flood risk studies

[Surface Water Management Plans](#) and other flood studies are undertaken over relatively large areas to assess flood risks where we are aware of flood risk management issues and wish to understand these in more detail. They may be used to provide an overview of flooding in a large area (for instance, a district or borough) to identify areas for further investigation or may be more localised (for instance, a town) to identify more specific flood risk management options. These plans are ultimately used to devise an action plan for reducing flood risk in the defined area as well as providing useful information for our planning consultee role.

More detailed investigations and assessments are required to understand flood risk management at a local level. These investigations are required to develop and deliver flood risk management schemes with multiple benefits.

These studies will use the latest relevant data on flood risk and climate change.

6.2.3 Partners

Partner priorities may differ from KCC's, though this may still represent an important opportunity to realise our flood risk management objectives. KCC will continue to work with partners on flood risk management projects to help support the delivery of this Local Strategy.

6.3 Statutory roles

6.3.1 Planning consultee

As a statutory consultee for major planning applications in the county, we provide advice to planning authorities on the surface water management aspects of major planning applications. This provides us with an opportunity to influence how new development manages surface water, ensuring it does not increase flood risk downstream through the promotion of sustainable drainage. As part of this role we encourage the disconnection of surface water from the foul and combined sewer network, which helps to reduce sewer overflows. We will continue to do this, and, where possible, we will work with planning authorities in the county to promote additional reductions in surface water discharges to reduce flood risk.

6.3.2 Land drainage authority

As the land drainage authority for Kent, we provide advice and guidance on land drainage issues and consent works in ordinary watercourses (outside of Internal Drainage Board areas). This gives us the opportunity to promote good land drainage advice and ensure new structures in watercourse do not increase flood risk. This role provides an opportunity to increase awareness of flood risk and how landowners and communities can help to manage it.

6.4 Funding

The government has a grant fund for flood risk management works, known as Flood Defence Grant in Aid. This fund will pay towards flood risk management outcomes; however, this may not be enough to cover the full costs of the project. If this is the case, additional funding from partners must be found for the project to be undertaken, this scheme is called partnership funding. Partnership funding also provides funding for multiple benefits, including health and biodiversity benefits, though the flood risk management benefits must outweigh the costs of the project to be eligible for Flood Defence Grant in Aid. A business case must be prepared to receive partnership funding contributions, which sets out how the scheme is cost beneficial and how it will be financed.

KCC has allocated funding to surface water management works annually in the capital budget. This funding is for the delivery of projects to reduce local flood risks and support adaptation to the increased risks of local flooding from climate change. It can be used to provide partnership funding contributions to schemes to unlock government contributions and to fund smaller schemes where the cost of developing a business case is too high to justify.

KCC flood risk management projects need to demonstrate how they achieve multiple environmental and social benefits for Kent communities, whilst reducing flood risk to properties and businesses. They also need to demonstrate how they will be cost beneficial.

6.5 Monitoring and review

KCC will publish an annual summary progress report on the delivery of the Local Strategy. Metrics that record the progress of the Local Strategy have been developed that will be reported on annually, these are set out in Appendix 1. We will also provide an overview of other activities that we will deliver that cannot be measured with metrics, these are also set out in Appendix 1.

The activities to support the delivery of the objectives and the metrics we report on will be reviewed annually and updated as needed, to ensure they remain relevant and useful in measuring the progress of the Local Strategy. Where appropriate new activities will be added, and new metrics developed, for us to report on annually. Changes to the activities and metrics will be agreed with the Kent Strategic Flood Risk Management Group.

We will publish a five year report to review the progress of the Local Strategy. We have set targets to review and measure the metrics.

APPENDIX 1: Reporting progress

The annual review on the progress of the Local Strategy will include the targets and metrics set out in Table A1-1, will also include a written summary of the flood risk management activities set out in Table A1-2.

Table A1-1: Targets and metrics used to measure activities of each objective within the Local Strategy.

Objective 1 Activities	Objective 1 Metrics and Targets
Section 19 reports published	Number of reports published Number of properties flooded in each event Number of Section 19s commented on by the local community Target: Consult the affected local community on all Section 19s before the report is published.
Flood risk studies	Number of studies completed Number of studies with climate change assessment included Target: To undertake 10 new flood studies within the first 5 years of the Local Strategy
Objective 2 Activities	Objective 2 Metrics and Targets
Flood risk management schemes	Number of flood risk management schemes delivered Number of properties better protected Scheme costs and estimated benefits Partnership funding Target: 100 at risk properties are better protected from flooding within the first 5 years of the Local Strategy Area disconnected from foul and combined sewer Target: Disconnected 2 hectares of land or roofs from the sewer network within the first 5 years of the Local Strategy
Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce schemes	Number of schemes delivered Area of land better managed previously draining to foul and combined sewer
Land drainage	Number of land drainage consents provided with advice for betterment Number of land drainage consents amended following KCC advice
Objective 3 Activities	Objective 3 Metrics

Planning application consultations	Number of consultations Number of consultation responses provided in 21 days Number of sites disconnected from the foul/combined sewer Number of sites with a connection to the foul/combined sewer Reduction in discharge rate to the foul/combined sewer
Objective 4 Activities	Objective 4 Metrics and Targets
Flood Action Groups	Number of Flood Action Groups active in Kent Number of new Flood Action Groups established Number of flood plans across Kent Target: To establish four new flood action group within the first 5 years of the local strategy and support them in developing a flood action plan
Flood wardens	Number of flood wardens in Kent Number of communities with flood wardens Number of communities in Kent requiring flood wardens Number of communities in Kent requiring flood wardens with flood wardens Number of people attending flood warden training
Community resilience/flood plans	Number of communities with flood plans in Kent Number of communities with flood risk without a flood plan in Kent
Flood warnings	Percentage of Kent residents, in at risk areas, signing up to receive flood alerts

Table A1-2: Flood risk management activities to be reported on each year, for the Local Strategy objectives.

Objective 1 Activities
Work to improve communication following a flood event
Objective 2 Activities
Multiple benefits delivered through flood risk management schemes
Continuing to support Southern Water in the Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce
Objective 3 Activities

Progress implementing Schedule 3

Continue to work with developers to ensure sustainable drainage continues to be used effectively.

Objective 4 Activities

Support the recruitment and training of flood wardens in at risk communities

Work to improve communities' access to flood risk data and information

Supporting the production of flood plans in at risk communities

Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034

Consultation Report

June 2024

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1 Introduction

Kent County Council (KCC) is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Kent. As the LLFA, we have an overview role for local flooding, which is flooding that arises from surface water runoff, ordinary watercourses, and groundwater. Further information on our statutory duties as a LLFA is outlined in [Section 9 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#).

We are developing a new Kent Flood Risk Management Strategy (“Local Strategy”) for the period 2024-2034. This will replace the second Local Strategy adopted by KCC in 2017, which was intended to last until 2023. The latest version is the third Local Strategy which will build upon the lessons we have learned from previous Local Strategies.

The Local Strategy has been developed in partnership with other risk management authorities in Kent and stakeholders to help us work together and continue to:

- reduce local flood risks
- develop our understanding of flood risk
- further improve our working relationships with partners and communities.

It also reflects the Environment Agency’s [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#).

The aim of the Local Strategy is:

“Through this Local Strategy for Kent, our aim is to improve the safety and wellbeing of Kent’s residents and the economy of Kent through appropriate local flood risk management.”

We plan on delivering this aim by working effectively with communities and partners, incorporating climate adaptation, and utilising natural processes to provide multiple benefits, where possible.

The document describes the flood risk in the county; the roles and responsibilities of risk management authorities operating in the county; the aims and objectives of the strategy; progress and ongoing challenges since the previous Local Strategy (2017-2023); and how we will deliver and monitor our progress.

The objectives of the Local Strategy are:

- Understanding flood risk
- Reduce the risk of flooding
- Resilient planning
- Resilient communities

We have identified actions to support the delivery of the objectives. We have also set out metrics and targets so that we can report on the delivery of the Local Strategy.

These metrics and targets are outlined in Table A1-1 and Table A1-2 of the Local Strategy.

We worked with other Risk Management Authorities in the county to set the objectives and the proposed actions. We also sought their input to the extended timeframe the Local Strategy would cover.

This report provides the results of the consultation on the draft Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 as well as an overview of the updates made to the strategy and our responses to the themes and comments that arose. Appendix 1 provides more detail about the categorisation of comments into each theme.

2 Consultation process

Prior to the public consultation, the draft Local Strategy was presented to the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee on the 14 November 2023. A recording of committee meetings can be found on [Kent.gov.uk](https://www.kent.gov.uk). This was the first time the full draft of the Local Strategy was available to the public, as it was added as an appendix to the committee agenda.

The draft Local Strategy for 2024-2034 then went to consultation for 10-weeks, from 22 November 2023 to 30 January 2024.

The consultation provided the opportunity for residents and stakeholders to find out about the draft strategy and provide feedback. Feedback was captured via a consultation questionnaire which was available on the KCC engagement website 'Let's talk Kent' - www.kent.gov.uk/localfloodrisk. Hard copies of the consultation questionnaire were also available on request.

At consultation stage, an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out to assess the impact the strategy could have on those with protected characteristics. The EqIA was available as one of the consultation documents and the questionnaire invited respondents to comment on the assessment that had been carried out. The draft Local Strategy and large print version of the draft Local Strategy, along with the EqIA were available to download. A Microsoft Word version of the online questionnaire could also be downloaded and sent back either by post or email.

Emails sharing details of the consultation were sent directly to key stakeholders, shown in Table 1.

Table 1: List of key stakeholders contacted using email to share the consultation details.

- ADEPT Flood and Water Management Group
- District and Borough Councils in Kent
- Environment Agency
- Thames Water
- Southern Water
- Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board
- Wider KCC Members

- KCC Highways
- Kent Association of Local Councils
- Kent Flood Action Group Forum
- Kent Flood Risk Management Network
- Kent Resilience Forum
- Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board
- North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board
- River Stour Internal Drainage Board
- Romney Marshes Internal Drainage Board
- High Weald
- Kent Downs
- Kent Greenpeace
- Kent Local Extinction Rebellion Groups
- Kent Local Friends of the Earth Groups
- Kent Local Transition Groups
- Kent Wildlife Trust
- South East Rivers Trust
- Town and Parish Councils in Kent
- Wildwood Trust

Social media posts were created at regular intervals during the consultation period. The posts were on KCC’s corporate social media channels; X/Twitter, Facebook, Nextdoor, and LinkedIn. An example of the social media posts promoting the consultation is shown in Figure 1. The social media posts were seen by 176,200 people and generated 429 clicks to the consultation page.



Figure 1: Kent County Council social media post on twitter.com/Kent_cc to promote the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 consultation. This social media post was produced on the 17 January 2024.

An email banner was created and used by colleagues within the Flood and Water Management team to promote the Local Strategy consultation, shown in Figure 2.

Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034

Public consultation

Find out more and have your say by visiting:

www.kent.gov.uk/localfloodrisk



Figure 2: Email banner used to promote the Local Strategy consultation.

A [media release](#) was issued on the 22 November 2023. An article was included in KCC's resident e-newsletter [edition 75](#) which was sent out on the 23 November 2023. The Kent Association of Local Council (KALC) newsletter, website and social media channels displayed information about the Local Strategy consultation, on our behalf. An invitation to participate in the consultation was sent to 8,774 people registered with Let's Talk Kent who have expressed an interest in being kept informed of consultations regarding the environment and countryside. Water Magazine published an [article](#) to promote the consultation, on the 20 December 2023.

Promotion of the consultation to KCC staff was undertaken via internal staff communication platforms, such as Viva Engage.

In total there were 6,811 page views by 2,191 visitors, with 1,074 document downloads (including 865 downloads of the draft Local Strategy and 132 downloads of the questionnaire). We received a total of 148 responses for this consultation. A total of 137 responses were made using the online consultation questionnaire provided. A further 11 free text responses were received by email.

Respondents were asked how they found out about this consultation, 137 respondents answered this question with most visitors being directed to the consultation webpage from an email from Let's Talk Kent / KCC's Engagement and Consultation Team (74 respondents), or an email from KCC's Flood and Water Management Team (23 respondents). 3 respondents were directed by a friend or relative, with a further 3 respondents being directed by a KCC County Councillor, 2 people found out about the consultation by visiting Kent.gov.uk website. Social media also played a role in directing visitors to the webpage, especially Facebook (11 respondents) and Nextdoor (3 respondents). 12 people were directed to the consultation by their parish, town, borough or district council.

3 Information about consultation respondents

We asked respondents the capacity in which they were responding to the consultation/ Table 2 shows everyone who responded (a total of 148 respondents including both email and questionnaire responses):

Table 2: Answers to the question: Please tell us in what capacity you are completing this questionnaire. The table includes data from the consultation questionnaire responses and free text email responses.

Type of respondent	Number of responses (148)	Proportion of total responses
Kent Resident (living in the Kent County Council authority area)	114	77%
On behalf of a District or Borough Council, in an official capacity	5	3%
On behalf of a Town or Parish Council, in an official capacity	19	13%
Resident from somewhere else, such as Medway	1	1%
Risk Management Authority	2	1%
Flood Action Group	2	1%
Flood Warden	1	1%
Other organisations	3	2%
Unknown	1	1%

Most responses to the consultation were from residents (115 responses, 78%). 32 responses were from organisations acting in an official capacity (21% of all responses).

3.1 'More About You' data analysis

The tables and graphs within this section show the profile of respondents who completed the online consultation questionnaire. Please note that the demographic questions were optional and only asked of those who indicated they are responding as an individual rather than on behalf of an organisation. The proportion of responders who left these questions blank or indicated they did not want to disclose this information have also been included.

Table 3 shows the genders represented within the responses (137 responses). The sum of the percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3: Consultation questionnaire respondent demographics.

Gender	Number of responses	Percentage
Female	30	22%
Male	50	37%
Responding on behalf of an organisation	16	12%
Do not want to take part	38	28%
Undisclosed	1	1%

57% of the 137 people who provided a response also stated that they had the same gender of which they were assigned at birth. No respondents disclosed that they were not of the same gender of which they were assigned at birth, with 2 respondents leaving this answer blank and 1 respondent preferring not to say.

Table 4 shows the age groups represented within the responses. There were 82 responses to this question, with all respondents being over 35 years of age. 82% of respondents were between 50-84 years of age.

Table 4: Age groups of respondents to the online consultation questionnaire.

Age group	Number of responses	Proportion of total
35-49	4	5%
50-59	20	24%
60-64	13	16%
65-74	26	32%
75-84	16	20%
85 and over	2	2%
Prefer not to say	1	1%

Table 5 shows how many respondents regard themselves as belonging to a particular religion or holding a particular belief. All 28 respondents who disclosed that they do regard themselves as belonging to a particular religion of belief were Christian.

Table 5: Percentage of respondents to the consultation question - Do you regard yourself as belonging to a particular religion or holding a belief?

Religion or holding a belief	Number of responses	Proportion of total
Yes	28	34%
No	50	61%
Prefer not to say	4	5%

Table 6 shows how many respondents consider themselves as having a disability as set out under The Equality Act 2010. 82 respondents answered this question.

Table 6: Percentage of respondents to the consultation questionnaire - Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?	Number of responses	Proportion of total
Yes	10	12%
No	68	83%
Prefer not to say	4	5%

Of those respondents that indicated that they do have a disability, there were 6 with a longstanding illness, 2 with a mental health condition, 1 with a sensory impairment, and 6 with a physical impairment. Respondents were able to select more than one answer for this question, so one respondent may be represented as having more than one disability and/or health condition.

Table 7 shows which ethnic groups respondents felt they belonged to. The majority of respondents identified as White English (70 respondents, 86%) with 79 respondents identifying as White (97% of respondents).

Table 7: Responses to the online consultation question (81 respondents) - To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong?

Ethnic group	Number of responses	Proportion of total
British/Irish	1	1%
White Australian	1	1%
White British	5	6%

Ethnic group	Number of responses	Proportion of total
White English	70	86%
White European	1	1%
White Irish Traveller	1	1%
White Scottish	1	1%
Prefer not to say	1	1%

We asked respondents to provide the first five characters of their postcode so that we could determine the spread of responses. This information is shown in Figure 3.

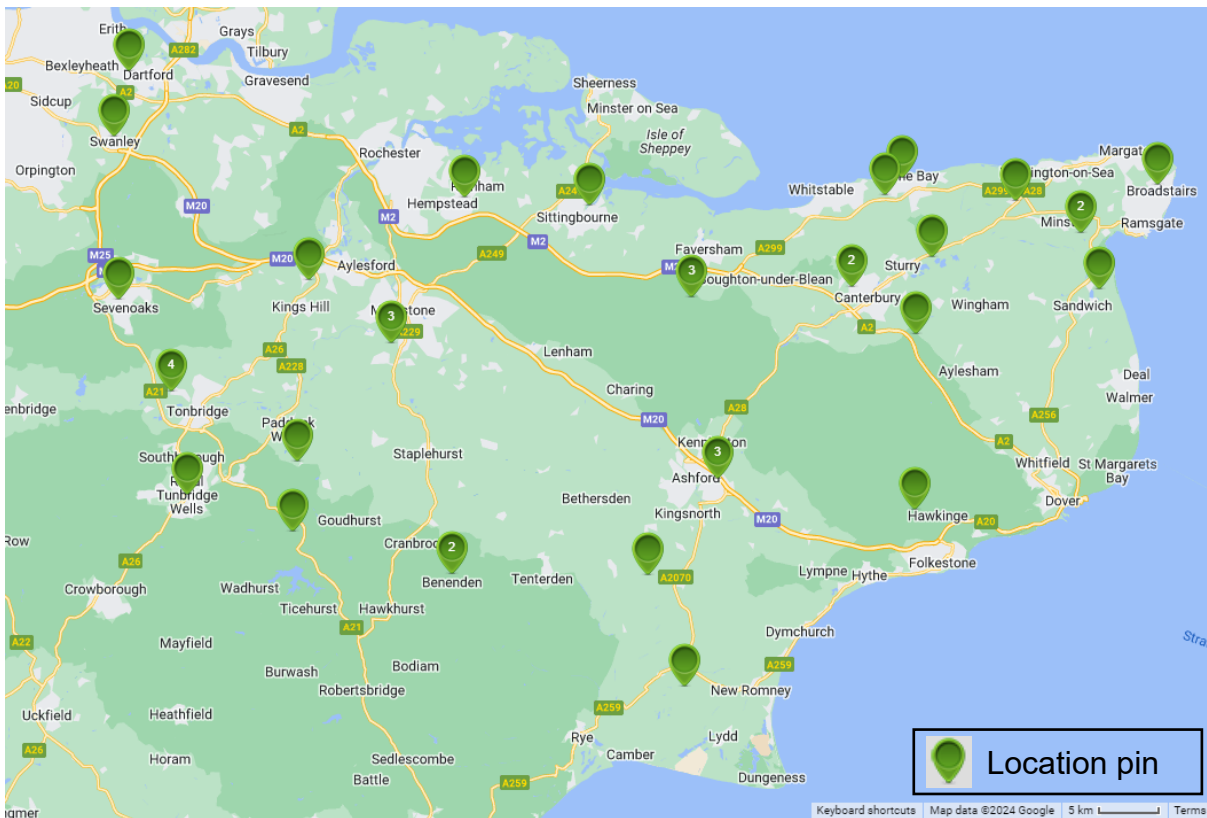


Figure 3: Map to show the locations of respondents using the first five characters of their postcode. The map was created using <https://fortress.maptive.com>.

Figure 3 shows a wide spread of responses across Kent. Respondents who stated their postcode began with CT had a much broader opinion on “To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 (Local Strategy) clearly sets out our strategy for local flood risk management in Kent?” Whereas, respondents who stated their postcode began with TN mainly tended to agree (25 respondents).

The majority of respondents who stated their postcode began with ME also tended to agree (13 respondents), with 5 respondents tending not to agree, and no respondents strongly disagreeing.

4 Consultation responses

This section of the report sets out the responses to the questions about specific content of the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The responses received have helped us to understand where we may need to make amendments to the draft Local Strategy before finalising it for adoption.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of proposals put forward in the consultation document.

Not many residents had a strong opinion towards the question “To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 (Local Strategy) clearly sets out our strategy for local flood risk management in Kent?”, with most residents tending to agree (18 respondents), which was closely followed by residents neither agreeing or disagreeing (11 respondents) and tending to disagree (11 respondents).

Appendix 1 gives details of the themes that arose from the free text comments with an explanation on how comments were themed. A free text response may cross over more than one theme.

4.1 Overall agreement or disagreement with the Local Strategy

4.1.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 (Local Strategy) clearly sets out our strategy for local flood risk management in Kent?

Figure 4 shows 56% of 137 respondents agreed that the draft Local Strategy clearly set out our strategy for local flood risk management, with 12% strongly agreeing. 22% of respondents answered that they either tended to disagree or strongly disagreed and 19% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

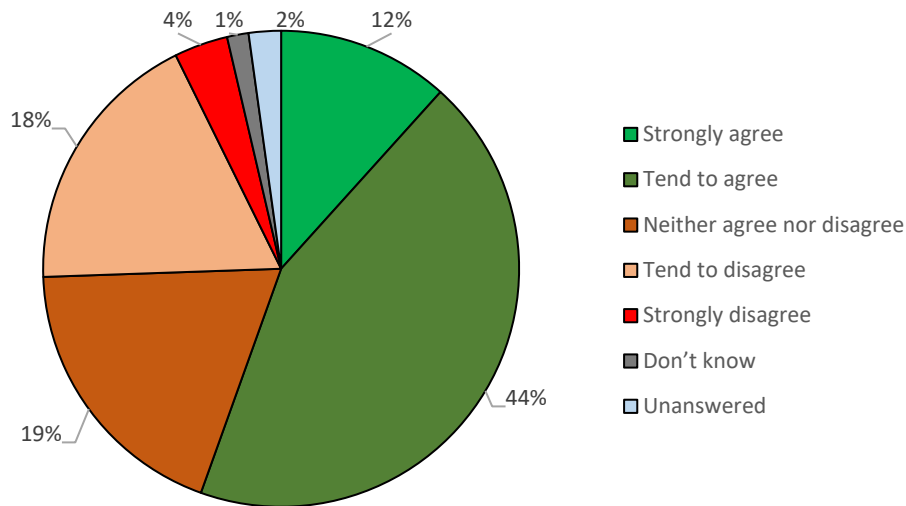


Figure 4: Pie chart showing responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 (Local Strategy) clearly sets out our strategy for local flood risk management in Kent?

4.1.2 General Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide a reason for their response to this question. The responses provided to the consultation covered a range of themes, these are shown in Table 8. Some responses contained more than one theme.

Table 8: Emerging themes for comments regarding 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 (Local Strategy) clearly sets out our strategy for local flood risk management in Kent?'

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	19	11%
Out of scope	26	13%
Highways drainage	4	2%
Land drainage	5	3%
Powers (water companies etc)	4	2%
Powers (other)	3	2%
Powers (development, planning)	5	3%
Planning	11	6%
Community resilience	2	1%
Actions/metrics/review/data	30	17%
Location specific	16	9%
General/positive comments	51	29%

Two key themes emerged from these responses, 17% of comments were regarding the lack of an action plan to deliver the Local Strategy and how the success of the strategy will be measured; and 13% are in the theme of responses that are out of scope of the strategy. The following quotes are examples of the responses we received:

“lacks any content that one might think it refers to Kent”

“there is too much about the process and too little about action.”

“no clear actions or measurement on the success of the strategies.”

29% of the comments were general/positive comments for example:

“The strategy is clearly structured and addresses relevant issues.”

“I think this document is a good template going forward.”

4.1.3 You said, we did

Kent faces extensive flood risk and setting it out in detail would make the document very large. We have prepared the Flood Risk to Communities documents that set out the flood risks in the county on a borough-by-borough basis and provide more detailed, local information. We will make the links to these documents more prominent within the Local Strategy and their role alongside it clearer.

It is difficult to set out an action plan for a 10-year strategy that will be realistic and deliverable, especially as we are reliant on partners to help us achieve many of the objectives. However, we recognise that some aspects of the Local Strategy require more clarity around how we will achieve them. We will set out our annual action plans in the Annual Review that we will prepare each year, to report on the success of the Local Strategy.

We also recognise that the success of the Local Strategy needs to be measurable, and targets are an important way to measure success. In some areas this is difficult, as we do not have enough data to benchmark a target or we cannot influence enough of the factors of success to confidently set a target. Where we can, we have set out targets and we will collect data in other areas so that we can set targets in a future review of the Local Strategy.

4.2 Objective 1

4.2.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 1 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

69% of respondents indicated they agree with Objective 1 as set out in the draft Local Strategy, with 27% strongly agreeing. 16% of respondents indicated they disagreed with Objective 1 and 11% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 5 shows the responses within a pie chart. The respondents displayed used the questionnaire (a total of 137 respondents). The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

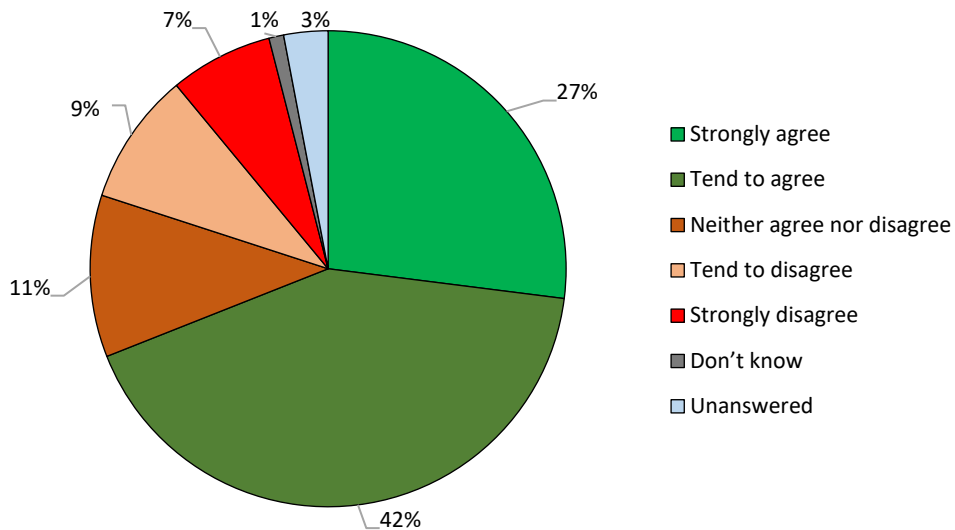


Figure 5: Pie chart showing responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 1 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

4.2.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will...' section for Objective 1?

Figures 6 to 10 show a summary of responses to the consultation questionnaire regarding each action set out to achieve Objective 1. Over 60% of respondents agreed with each of the actions conveyed to achieve Objective 1.

Figure 6 shows 70% of respondents indicated they agree with the action 'to improve communication and data sharing between risk management authorities following flood events' as set out in Objective 1 in the draft Local Strategy, with 39% strongly agreeing. 8% of respondents indicated they disagreed with this action and 18% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.

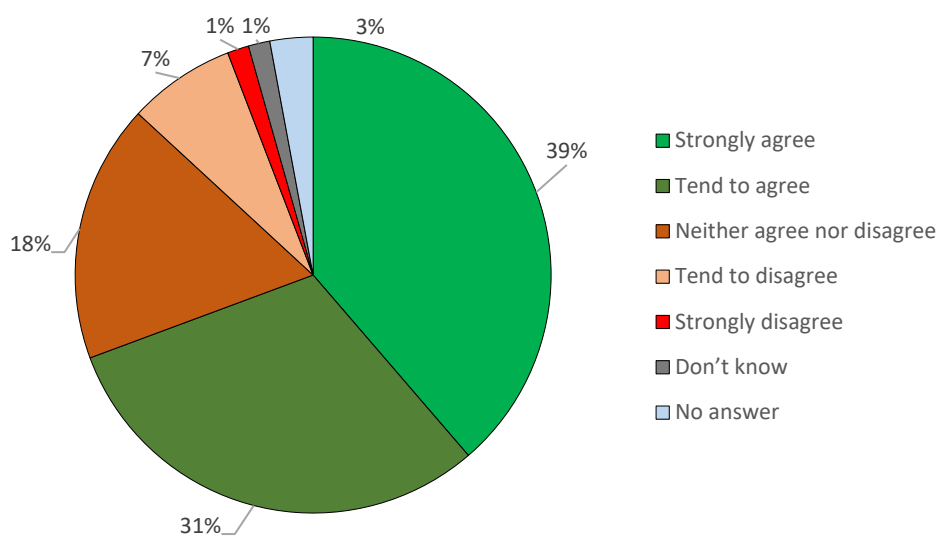


Figure 6 3: Pie chart showing responses to: Improve communication and data sharing between risk management authorities following flood events.

Figure 7 shows 75% of respondents indicated they agree with the action 'to continue to undertake Section 19 investigations of significant floods in Kent' as set out in Objective 1 in the draft Local Strategy, with 39% strongly agreeing. 6% of respondents indicated they disagreed with this action and 13% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.

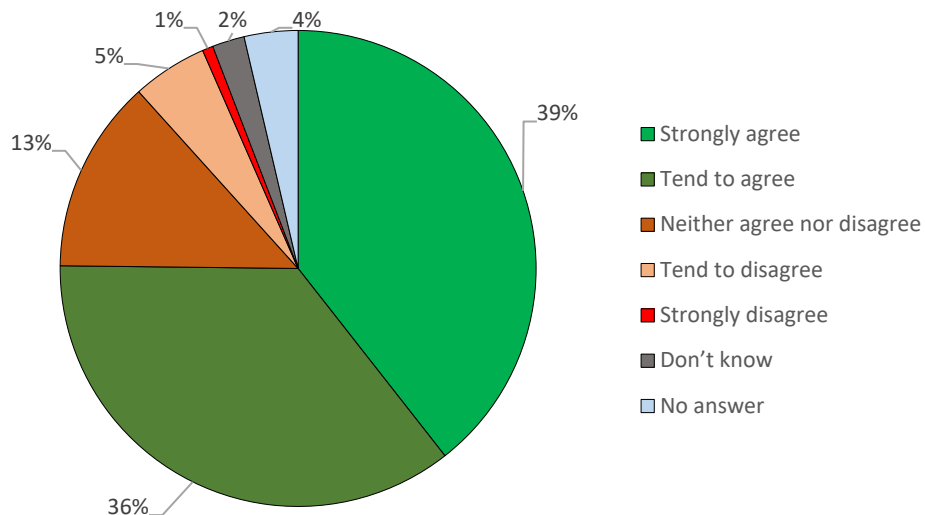


Figure 7: Pie chart showing responses to: Continue to undertake Section 19 investigations of significant floods in Kent.

Figure 8 shows 63% of respondents indicated they agree with the action 'to support the next round of water company Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans', as set out in Objective 1 in the draft Local Strategy, with 31% strongly agreeing. 11% of respondents indicated they disagreed with this action and 20% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.

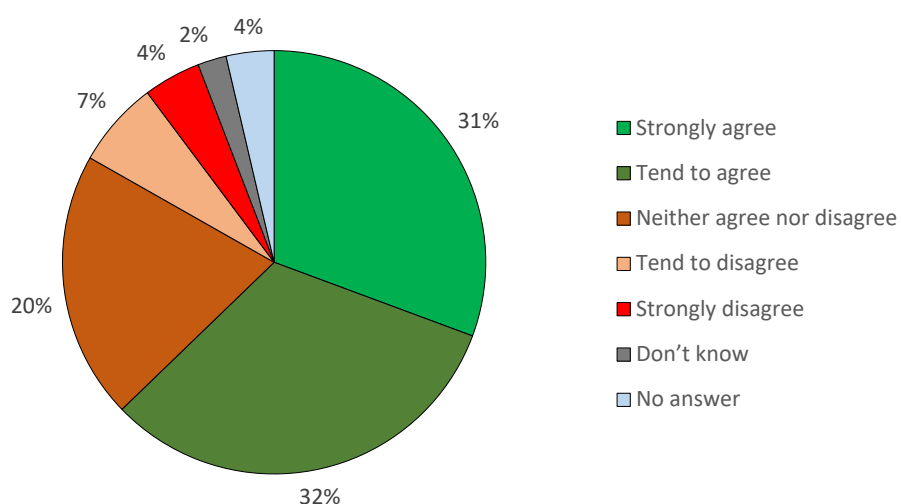


Figure 8: Pie chart showing responses to: Support the next round of water company Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans.

Figure 9 shows 72% of respondents indicated they agree with the action 'to maintain the asset register and work with partners to understand opportunities to improve it', as set out in Objective 1 in the draft Local Strategy, with 37% strongly agreeing. 7% of respondents indicated they disagreed with this action and 15% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.

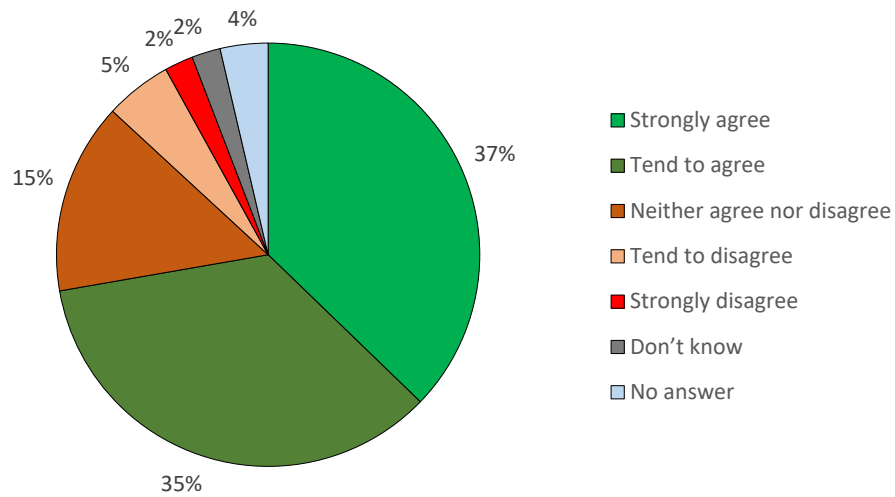


Figure 9: Pie chart showing responses to: Maintain the asset register and work with partners to understand opportunities to improve it.

Figure 10 shows 69% of respondents indicated they agree with the action 'Include climate change assessments in flood risk investigations', as set out in Objective 1 in the draft Local Strategy, with 43% strongly agreeing. 11% of respondents indicated they disagreed with this action and 14% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed.

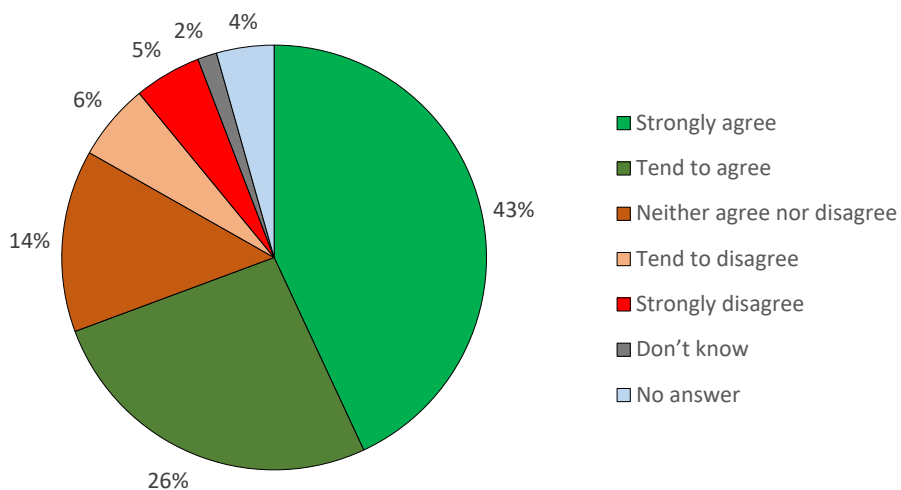


Figure 104: Pie chart showing responses to: Include climate change assessments in flood risk investigations.

4.2.3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 1?

Figure 11 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 65% of 137 respondents agreed with how we propose to measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 1, with 23% strongly agreeing. 11% of respondents disagreed with how we propose to measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 1, as set out within the draft Local Strategy. 20% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

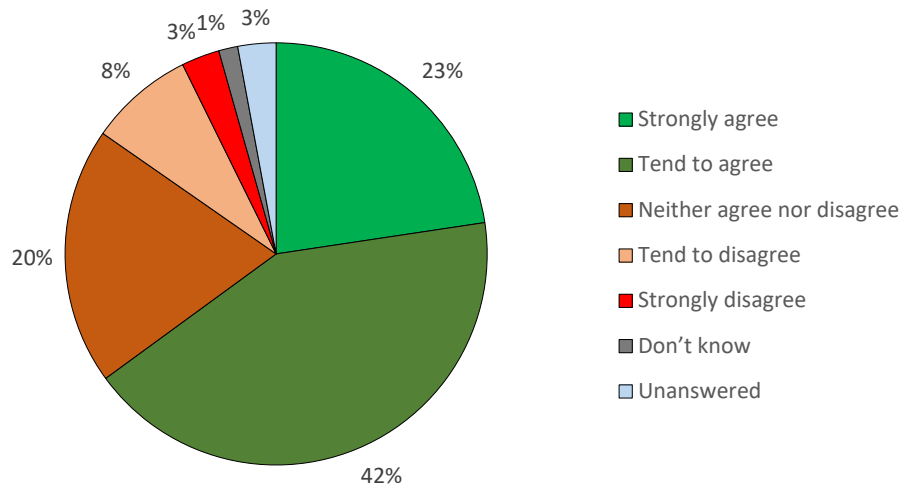


Figure 11: Pie chart showing responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 1?

4.2.4 Objective 1 comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments on Objective 1, including any actions or activities we have missed that could help to achieve this objective. The responses provided covered a range of themes, these are shown in Table 9. Some responses contained more than one theme.

Table 9: Emerging themes for comments regarding 'If you would like to provide comments on Objective 1, including any of the actions and/or activities we will undertake to achieve this objective, please tell us... If you have any suggestions on other actions, activities or metrics you would like us to report on annually, please include these in your answer.'

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	14	13%
Out of scope	13	12%
Highways drainage	7	6%
Land drainage	3	3%
Powers (water companies)	4	4%
Powers (other)	3	3%
Powers (development, planning)	2	2%
Planning	2	2%

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Community resilience	3	3%
Actions/metrics/review/data	31	28%
Location specific	9	8%
General/positive comments	19	17%

The key theme that emerged from the comments regarding Objective 1, with 28% of comments in this theme, is the lack of an action plan to deliver Objective 1 and how the success of the strategy will be measured.

“although I agree with the actions listed - they are not enough to lead to me agreeing with the objective and action plan overall”

“For Objective 1 - There are no targets in the metrics. However the metrics appear logical and sound.”

This is followed by 13% of comments within the theme of a misunderstanding or lack of clarity in the strategy and 12% of comments regarding concerns that are out of scope.

Comments on this section also indicate that the meaning of “understand” in this objective may have been misunderstood, with some respondents seeing it as referring to the understanding of the general population. Whereas, we are referring to the gathering and improving data and information about flood risk to improve the understanding of it, principally by risk management authorities. We have clarified the text within Objective 1 of the Local Strategy to better reflect this. Supporting communities and residents to access this information is in Objective 4.

“Educate/advise residents of the ways they can protect themselves against flood risks”

Some responders to Objective 1 focussed on water companies and our relationship with them, particularly our role in regulating them.

“Are we able to penalise water companies?”

KCC does not have powers to regulate water companies, but we do work closely with them. We are working with them to reduce the amount of highway runoff that enters their sewers and causes sewage overflows, and we work with them to develop their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans. Management of surface water is important for water companies to meet their targets under the Environment Act 2022 to reduce sewage overflows. This provides an opportunity for Lead Local Flood Authorities to work more closely with water companies, which we are keen to do.

Respondents also commented on Section 19 Investigations. Some respondents asked that the criteria for Section 19s to be clearer. Others have suggested that these investigations are undertaken more quickly and that they are prepared in conjunction with the local communities. Others have also asked that they be used as a learning opportunity for all risk management authorities.

“Better define the purpose of the S.19 Investigations and when we would commission a S.19 investigation. Are we able to penalise water companies?”

“S.19s process should be quicker”

“linked to improving comms and data sharing of RMAs following flood events”

Respondents also asked for more details about the asset register and what role it played in delivering the Local Strategy, for example:

“Define the asset register”

17% of the comments were general/positive comments, for example:

“I think you will struggle to beat nature and believe that most action taken will only move the problem”

“The basics need to be done before anything else can be accomplished”

4.2.5 You said, we did

We have clarified the purpose of Objective 1, to make it clear that it is about the gathering and improvement of data and information on flood risk. Access to this information by communities and residents is set out in Objective 4.

We have improved the Local Strategy by including links to websites with more information; for example, to add detail about Section 19 investigations. We have been working to make delivering Section 19 Investigation Reports quicker and we hope that this will be achieved soon.

Local communities are always engaged in the Section 19 investigations. This engagement may vary depending on who in the community takes an interest and who is impacted by the flooding. We will improve this engagement with local communities and add a measure of their engagement to the Local Strategy.

Not all risk management authorities are impacted by, or mentioned in Section 19 investigations and subsequent reports, however, we always liaise with the risk management authorities that are impacted or mentioned. There are sometimes broader issues that emerge from these investigations that we discuss with other risk management authorities and flood responders.

We have removed the asset register and the associated metrics from the Local Strategy, as this is a part of our role as the Lead Local Flood Authority, it is not a direct measure of the effectiveness of the Local Strategy.

4.3 Objective 2

4.3.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 2 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

Figure 12 shows the percentage of responses to the questionnaire (total of 137 respondents). 70% of respondents indicated that they agree with Objective 2 as set out in the draft Local Strategy, half of which strongly agreed. 12% of respondents disagreed with Objective 2 of the draft Local Strategy and 12% neither agreed nor disagreed. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

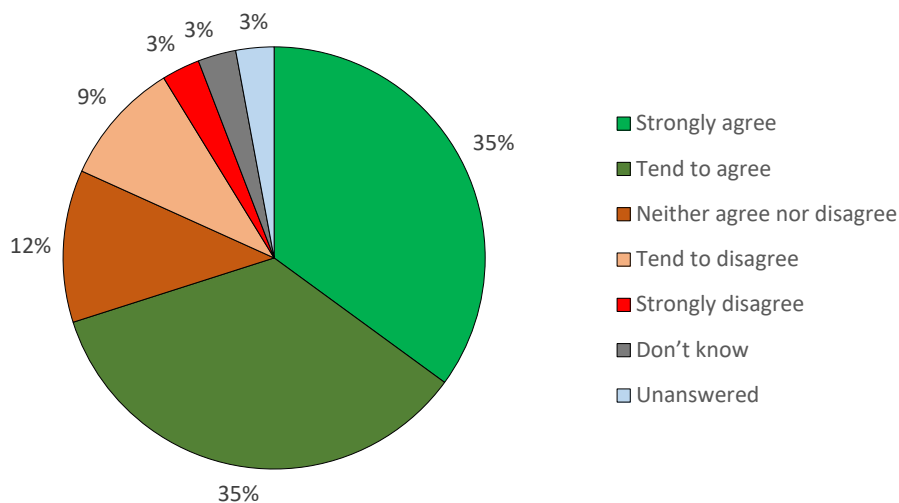


Figure 125: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 2 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

4.3.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will...' section for Objective 2?

Figures 13 to 17 show the percentages of responses to the consultation questionnaire regarding each action set out to achieve Objective 2. Over 60% of respondents agreed with each of the actions conveyed to achieve Objective 2.

Figure 13 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 67% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 2 'we will deliver more schemes to reduce the risk of local flooding', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 41% strongly agreeing. 10% of respondents disagreed with this action and 16% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

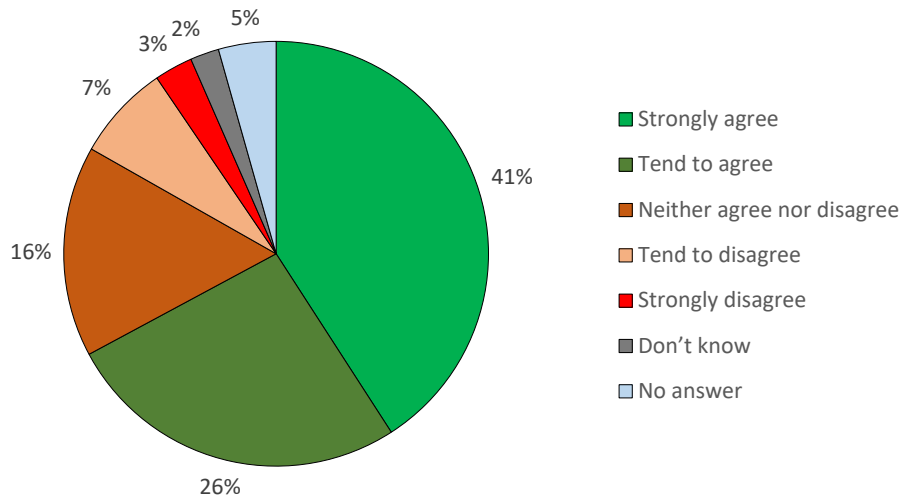


Figure 13: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will deliver more schemes to reduce the risk of local flooding'.

Figure 14 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 73% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 2 'we will work with partners to co-deliver schemes', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 44% strongly agreeing. 9% of respondents disagreed with this action and 12% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

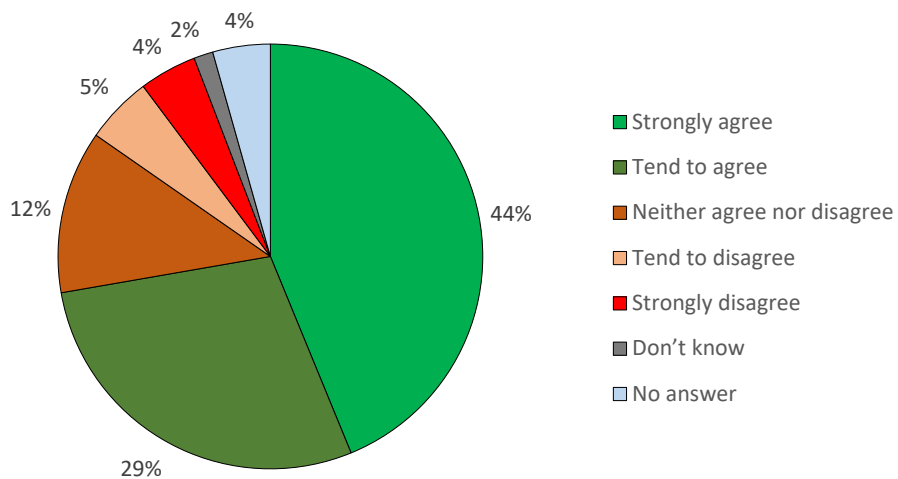


Figure 14: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... work with partners to co-deliver schemes'.

Figure 15 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 60% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 2 'we will support Southern Water's Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 37% strongly agreeing. 12% of respondents disagreed with this action and 21% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

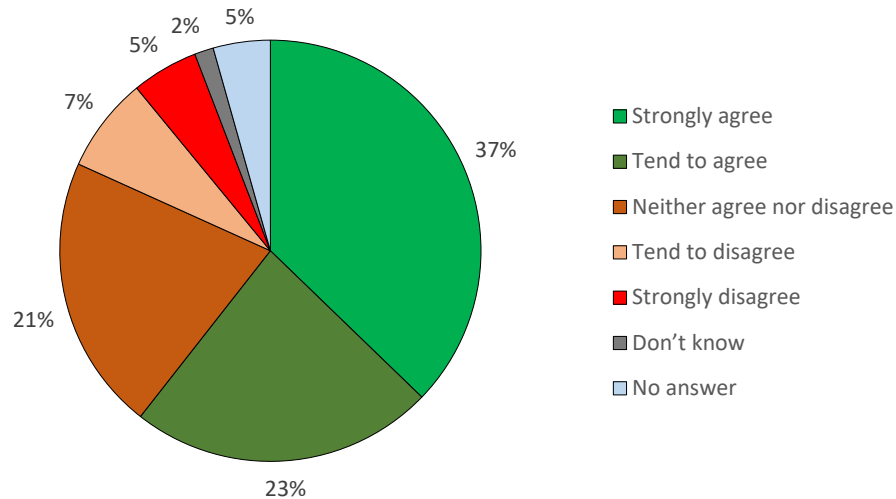


Figure 15: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... support Southern Water's Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce'.

Figure 16 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 66% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 2 'we will ensure multiple benefits are included in flood risk management schemes', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 35% strongly agreeing. 9% of respondents disagreed with this action and 18% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

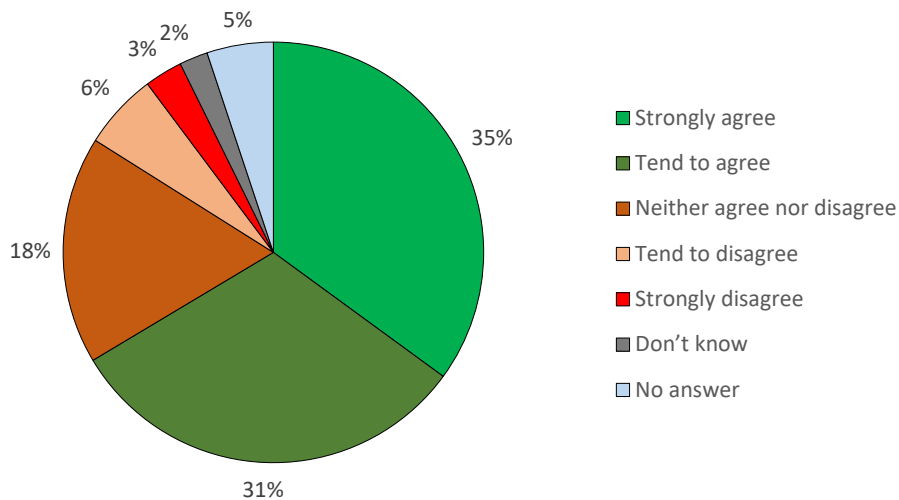


Figure 16: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... ensure multiple benefits are included in flood risk management schemes.'

Figure 17 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 72% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 2 'we will continue to provide advice on land drainage and riparian responsibilities', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 47% strongly agreeing. 7% of respondents disagreed with this action and 14% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

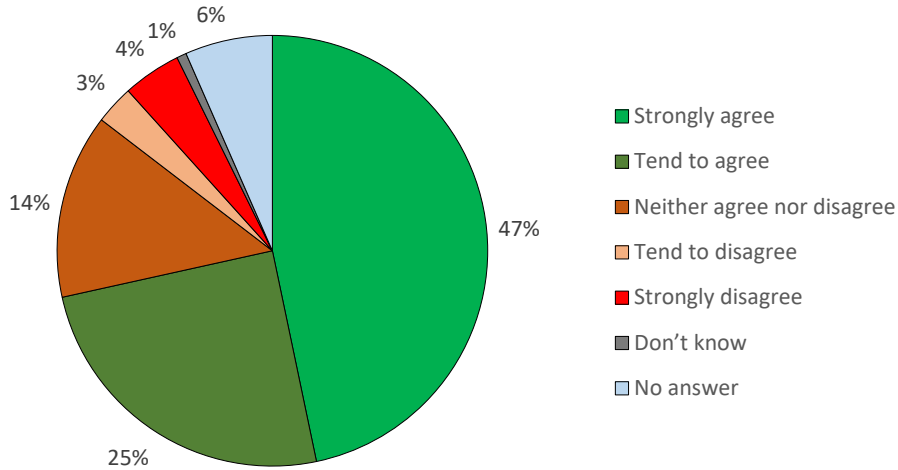


Figure 176: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... continue to provide advice on land drainage and riparian responsibilities.'

4.3.3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 2?

Figure 18 shows the percentage of responses to the questionnaire. 59% of 132 respondents agreed with 'how we will measure the activities to achieve the delivery of Objective 2' with 20% strongly agreeing. 13% of respondents disagreed with how we propose to measure the activities to achieve the delivery of Objective 2. Plus, 21% of respondents neither agree nor disagree. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

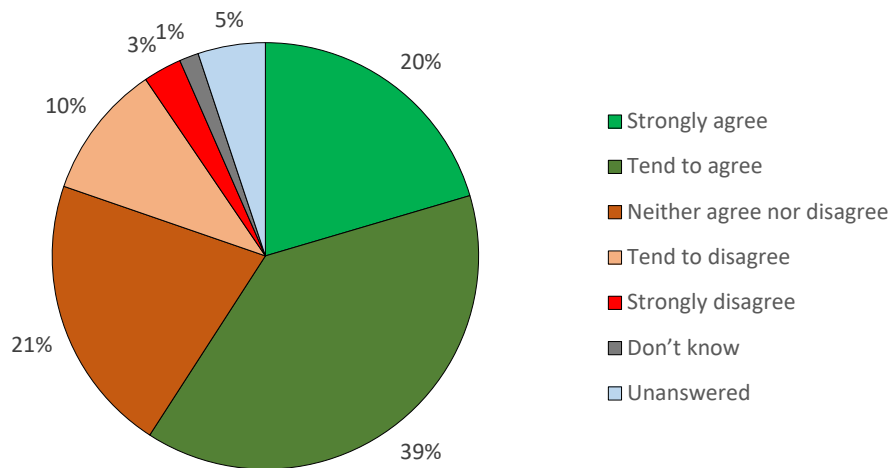


Figure 18: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 2?

4.3.4 Objective 2 comments

There were a significant range of themes for comments for Objective 2, shown in Table 10, including comments on planning, and about the maintenance of highway drainage assets. Planning comments have been responded to under the Objective 3 discussion (Section 4.4). Highways drainage assets are managed through the highways division and is not part of the scope for this Local Strategy.

Table 10: Emerging themes for comments regarding ‘If you would like to provide comments on Objective 2, including any of the actions and/or activities we will undertake to achieve this objective, please tell us... If you have any suggestions on other actions, activities or metrics you would like us to report on annually, please include these in your answer.’

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	19	16%
Out of scope	10	8%
Highways drainage	11	9%
Land drainage	12	10%
Powers (water companies)	2	2%
Powers (other)	1	1%
Powers (development, planning)	1	1%
Planning	8	7%
Community resilience	3	3%
Actions/metrics/review/data	26	22%
Location specific	8	7%
General/positive comments	17	14%

Some responses contained more than one theme, but the key theme that emerges from the comments regarding Objective 2, with 22% of comments, is the lack of an action plan to deliver the Local Strategy and how the success of the strategy will be measured.

There are also a number of comments on the measures set out for this objective. In particular, there are several comments about how the measures reflected the success of the Local Strategy, and whether we were measuring the appropriate metrics.

“While it is helpful to count the number of schemes delivered - it would be more meaningful to know how many homes and businesses that were at risk of flooding have had that risk removed or reduced”

“the number of schemes delivered as part of the Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce - we feel it needs a further reporting metric to give the scale of the schemes”

For Objective 2, 16% of the comments are within the theme of a misunderstanding or lack of clarity in the strategy, 10% regarding land drainage and 9% regarding Highway drainage maintenance. Comments tended to focus on the need for more

maintenance. KCC is one of the land drainage authorities in the county, however, we do not undertake regular maintenance of watercourses as it is not within our powers, similarly this strategy does not cover the maintenance of highway assets and maintenance activities falls outside the scope of this Local Strategy.

Some of the comments for this objective noted that the measures on our land drainage role do not give a sense of the flood risk management benefit we are able to provide.

“advice on land drainage will be helpful - it is not a useful measure - it would be more meaningful to know about the impact of advice”

There are further comments about water companies, some of these are similar to the comments under Objective 1 in Section 4.2. Comments under this objective also included whether KCC should be working with them and whether it affects our ability to comment on their plans.

“Supporting Southern Waters Clear Rivers etc Taskforce - does this include critical examination of Southern Waters plans?”

“Working with a fined water company does not inspire confidence. Do we trust the water companies?”

KCC’s work with Southern Water does not compromise our role as a consultee for their plans, any comments we make on these will be as robust as they would be if we were not partners with them. We understand the strong feelings about Southern Water and their track record, however, they remain the sewerage undertaker for the majority of the county, and only they can lead the reduction of sewage overflows that are necessary to improve the environment in Kent. KCC has a key role as a partner in supporting this work, choosing not to work with them on principle is likely to lead to worse outcomes for the environment.

17% of the comments were general/positive comments for example:

“Collecting data and running support schemes is all very well but positive action needs to be taken.”

“Surely any evidence will be self evident by matters getting better or deteriorating.”

4.3.5 You said, we did:

We have reviewed the measures we are proposing and have considered targets for some of these to make measuring the success of Objective 2 more comparable each year. We have introduced targets for the schemes we deliver, setting a target of 100 properties better protected within one year, and 2 hectares of impermeable surface is to be disconnected from the foul and/or combined sewer networks.

Given that the Clean River’s and Seas Taskforce is a Southern Water led programme, we did not feel it appropriate to set a target for this. Similarly, we won’t report any wider benefits from this programme, for instance benefits to the

environment, as this is for Southern Water to measure. However, we will provide links to where they publish this information in the Annual Review.

We will also include a metric to measure the effect that our land drainage advice has on flood risk. This will include betterment to land drainage consent applications as a result of our comments.

We have considered targets in other areas, however, we currently lack a robust baseline for some of these metrics, therefore, we cannot set a sensible target. We will continue to measure these metrics and will review the targets annually.

We have provided links to more information about highways drainage in the Local Strategy.

4.4 Objective 3

4.4.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 3 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

Figure 19 shows the percentages of responses to the consultation questionnaire. 68% of respondents indicated that they agree with Objective 3 as set out in the draft Local Strategy, with 39% strongly agreeing. 11% of respondents indicated that they disagreed with Objective 3, with 12% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

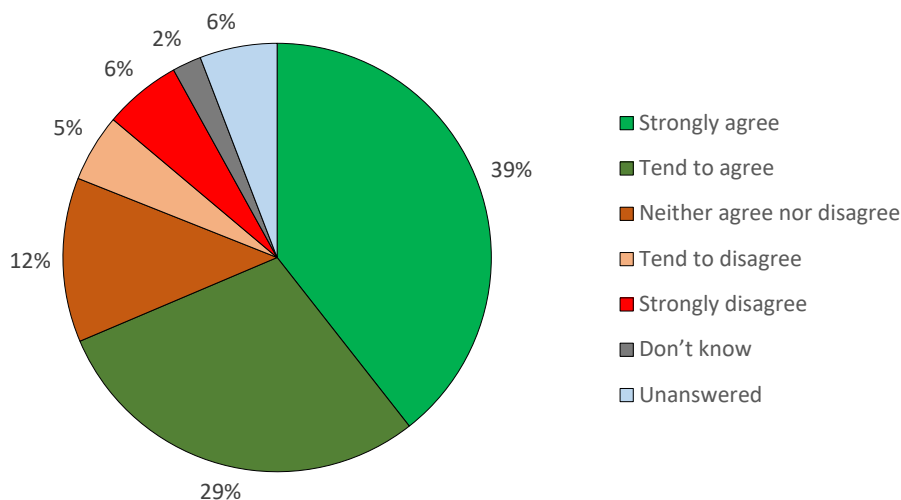


Figure 19: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 3 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

4.4.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will...' section for Objective 3?

Figures 20 to 22 show the percentages of responses to the consultation questionnaire regarding each action set out to achieve Objective 3. Over 60% of 137 respondents agreed with each of the actions conveyed to achieve Objective 3. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 20 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 71% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 3 ‘we will continue to encourage and support planning applications to appropriately consider the delivery of Sustainable Drainage Systems and reduce flood risk where possible’, as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 48% strongly agreeing. 12% of respondents disagreed with this action and 9% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

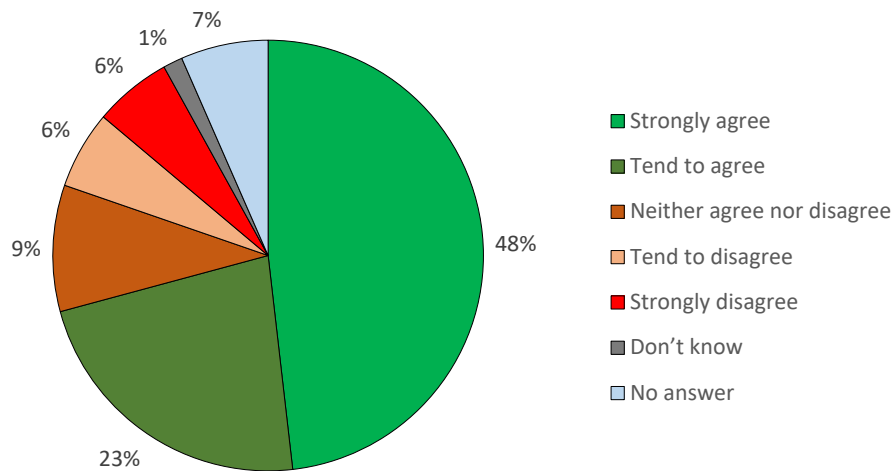


Figure 20: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the ‘To achieve this we will... continue to encourage and support planning applications to appropriately consider the delivery of Sustainable Drainage Systems and reduce flood risk where possible.’

Figure 21 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 63% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 3 ‘we will implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010’, as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 42% strongly agreeing. 8% of respondents disagreed with this action and 16% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

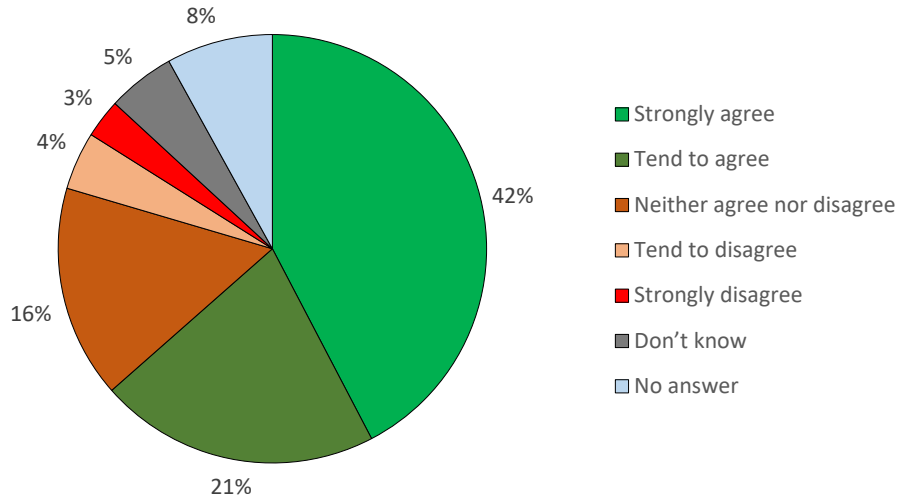


Figure 21: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.'

Figure 22 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 73% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 3 'we will work with local planning authorities to ensure local flood risk is considered in local plan making and opportunities to proactively reduce flood risk are included', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 56% strongly agreeing. 12% of respondents disagreed with this action and 7% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

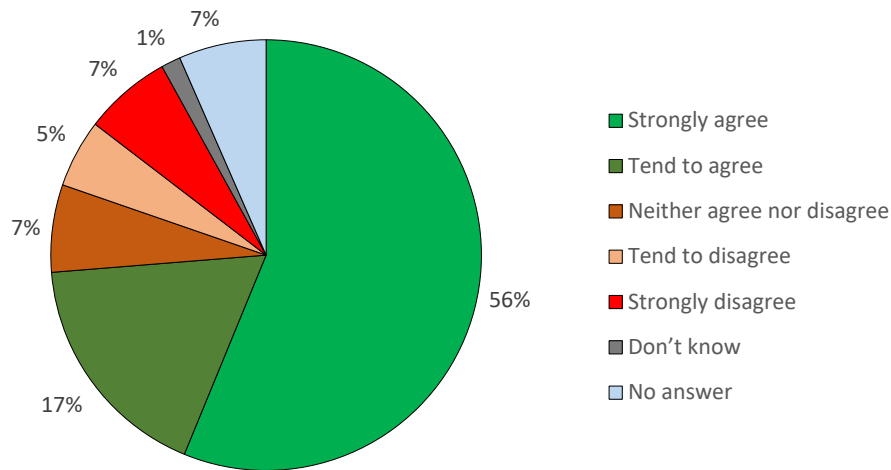


Figure 22: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... work with local planning authorities to ensure local flood risk is considered in local plan making and opportunities to proactively reduce flood risk are included.'

4.4.3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 3?

Figure 23 shows the percentage of responses to the consultation questionnaire. 62% of respondents agree with how we propose to measure the activities we will

undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 3, as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 31% strongly agreeing. 14% of respondents disagreed, with 7% strongly disagreeing and 17% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

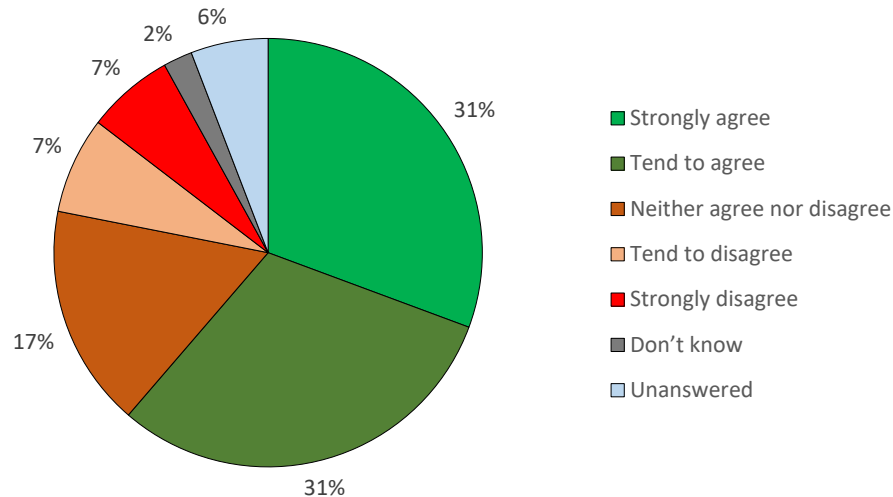


Figure 23: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 3?

4.4.4 Objective 3 comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide a reason for their response to this question. The responses provided cover a range of themes, these are shown in Table 11. Some responses contained more than one theme.

Table 11: Emerging themes for comments regarding 'If you would like to provide comments on Objective 3, including any of the actions and/or activities we will undertake to achieve this objective, please tell us... If you have any suggestions on other actions, activities or metrics you would like us to report on annually, please include these in your answer.'

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	9	6%
Out of scope	33	23%
Highways drainage	2	1%
Land drainage	7	5%
Powers (water companies)	1	1%
Powers (other)	3	2%
Powers (development, planning)	8	6%
Planning	31	22%
Community resilience	1	1%
Actions/metrics/review/data	15	10%
Location specific	14	10%
General/positive comments	20	14%

Two key themes emerged from the responses regarding Objective 3, 23% of comments are within the theme of concerns that are out of scope of the Local Strategy and 22% were regarding planning.

Many of the comments suggested that the planning process should consider flood risk and require developments to account for flooding in the way that it currently does.

“stop building on flood plain land”

“This needs to be a rigorous and robust process that gives full weight to flood management.”

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) requires new developments to consider flood risk and avoid floodplains. There are exceptions, for instance critical infrastructure or regeneration where existing settlements are currently in the flooding plain. However, national planning guidance requires developers to mitigate any increase in flood risk.

Some of the respondent comments asked KCC to implement measures that are beyond our power to deliver or are not achievable within national planning guidance.

“Make developers accountable if new developments continue to have on going flooding issues”

“Reduce the amount of housing development until infrastructure is in place.”

“Relating to “continue to encourage and support planning applications to “appropriately consider the delivery of Sustainable Drainage Systems and reduce flood risk where possible” – it is considered that this should be more robustly worded so that this is an expectation rather than something to be merely encouraged/supported”

“You need to do more than just consider these things, you need to enforce proper adoption and sustainable development”

As a statutory consultee in the planning process, not the planning authority, there are limits on what we can achieve in planning. We are reliant on being consulted, and reliant on the planning authority implementing our recommendations in the planning approval (should there be one). The planning authority then has the powers to enforce any recommendations if they are not actioned by the developer. We are not in a position to impose any expectations within the current planning regime.

Some comments ask us to go further than planning guidance currently allows, though many of these suggestions would be achieved with the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act.

“Planning application responses by KCC to Kent’s planning authorities need to be more robust to ensure that the Suds last for

the lifetime of the development, i.e. 100 years – and Suds need monitoring/visits/to regulate and review.”

“Pressure for a change in the requirements for minor planning developments to have a flood risk assessment especially in areas of high risk”

If Schedule 3 is implemented as it has been drafted, we will be able to impose more expectations on developments and consider a broader range of developments, it will also give us powers of enforcement. However, within the current planning guidance, measures like this are not possible.

14% of the comments were general/positive comments, for example:

“Again, communication between various KCC departments is critical”

“It is important that planning authorities understand flood management.”

4.4.5 You said, we did:

To provide more detail about Schedule 3 we have added appropriate links, including links to [Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#). We have also added a link to our KCC [Sustainable drainage in planning](#) webpage, where sustainable drainage and our role in planning is explained further. We will improve this page to help explain our role and that of other risk management authorities in the planning process.

We have considered targets for this objective; however, our role is dependent on the developments we are consulted on, and on other parties implementing what we recommend; achieving any targets set would be out of our control at present. We also lack a baseline for some measures. We will review the metrics annually and determine whether targets are appropriate, similarly if Schedule 3 is implemented we will consider targets for the delivery of the new role.

4.5 Objective 4

4.5.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 4 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

Figure 24 shows the percentages of responses to the consultation questionnaire. 69% of 137 respondents indicated they agree with Objective 4 as set out in the Local Strategy, with 42% strongly agreeing. 13% of respondents indicated they disagree with Objective 4; with 11% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

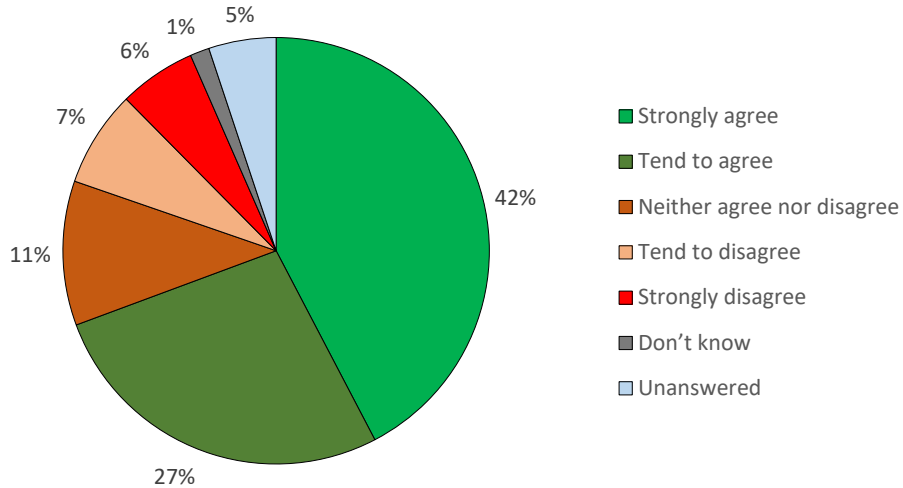


Figure 24: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with Objective 4 as set out in the draft Local Strategy?

4.5.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the ‘To achieve this we will...’ section for Objective 4?

Over 60% of 137 respondents agreed with each of the actions conveyed to achieve Objective 4. Figures 25 to 28 show the percentages of responses to the consultation questionnaire regarding each action set out to achieve Objective 4. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 25 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 73% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 4 ‘we will improve communities’ access to appropriate data and information to understand flood risk in their area’, as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 54% strongly agreeing. 7% of respondents disagreed with this action and 12% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

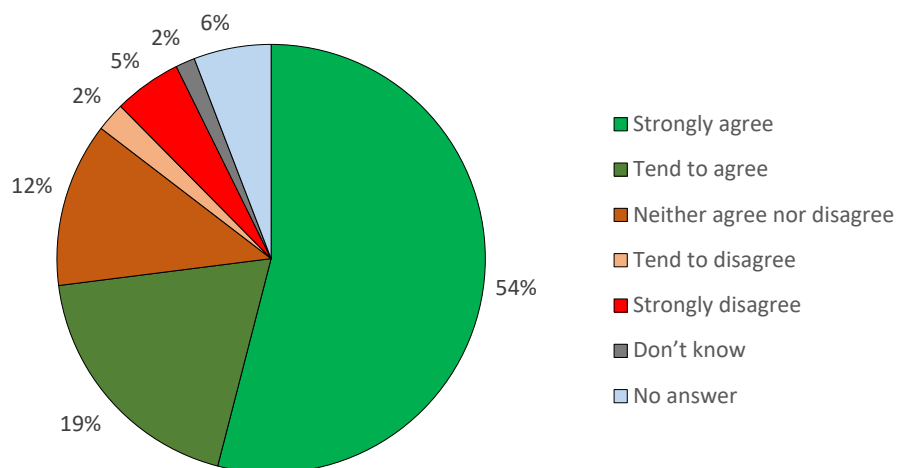


Figure 25: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the ‘To achieve this we will... improve communities’ access to appropriate data and information to understand flood risk in their area.’

Figure 26 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 71% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 4 'we will support communities to establish and maintain Flood Action Groups', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 42% strongly agreeing. 9% of respondents disagreed with this action and 13% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

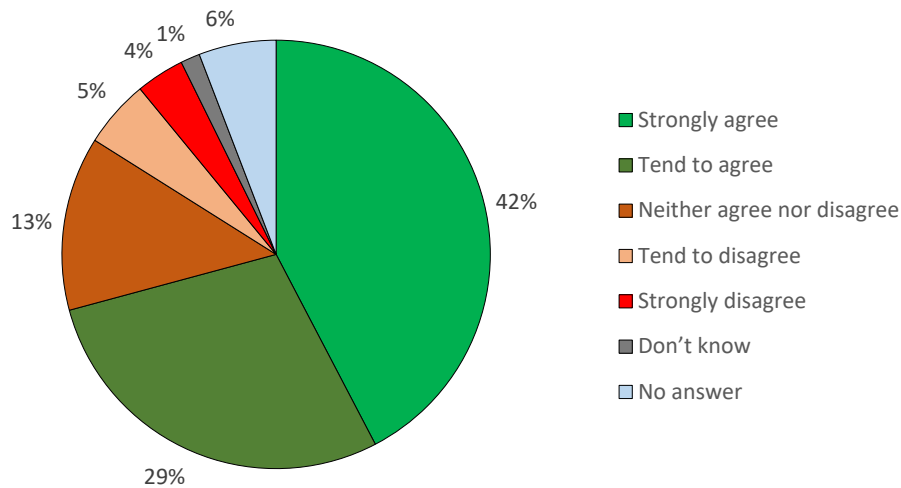


Figure 26: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... support communities to establish and maintain Flood Action Groups.'

Figure 27 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 68% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 4 'we will continue to promote the voluntary role of flood warden within flood risk communities, in partnership with the Environment Agency', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 39% strongly agreeing. 8% of respondents disagreed with this action and 16% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

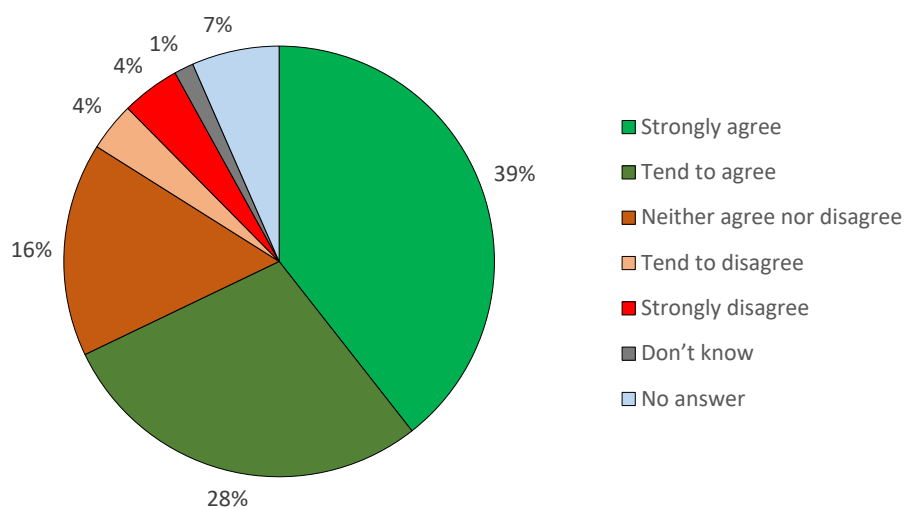


Figure 27: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... continue to promote the

voluntary role of flood warden within flood risk communities, in partnership with the Environment Agency.'

Figure 28 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 68% of 137 respondents agreed to achieve Objective 4 'we will encourage communities to prepare local flood plans', as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 39% strongly agreeing. 9% of respondents disagreed with this action and 15% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

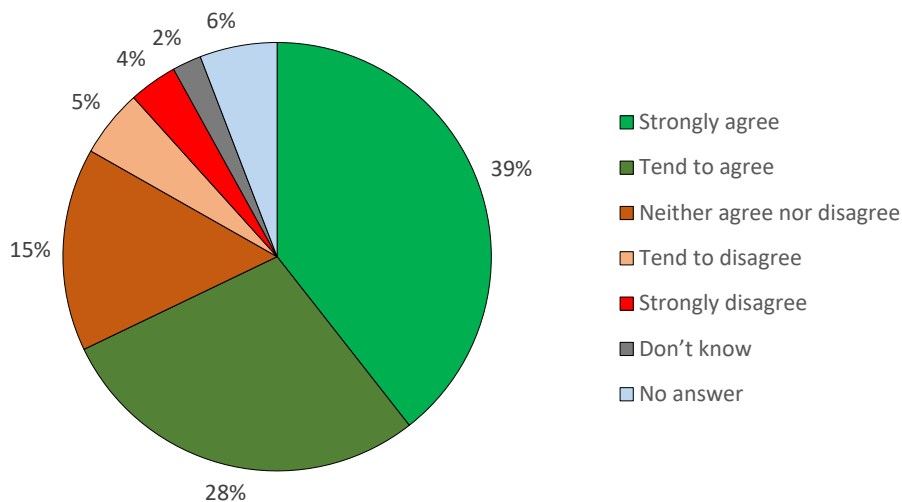


Figure 28: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions set out in the 'To achieve this we will... encourage communities to prepare local flood plans.'

4.5.3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 4?

Figure 29 shows the percentage of responses to this question. 62% of respondents agree with how we propose to measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 4, as set out within the draft Local Strategy, with 28% strongly agreeing. 6% of respondents disagree with how we propose to measure the activities that we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 4, with 2% strongly disagreeing. 22% neither agreed nor disagreed. The sum of individual percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

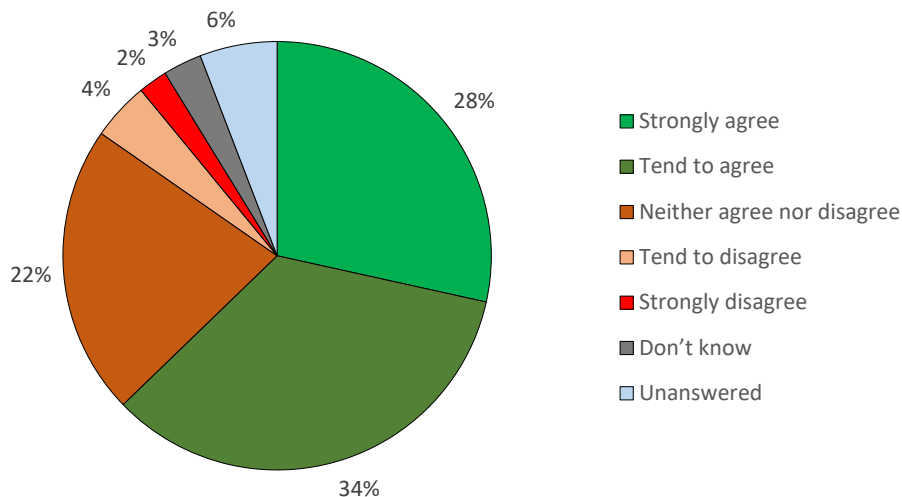


Figure 29: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree with how we will measure the activities we will undertake to achieve the delivery of Objective 4?

4.5.4 Objective 4 comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide a reason for their response to this question. The responses provided cover a range of themes, these are shown in Table 12. Some responses contained more than one theme.

Table 12: Emerging themes for comments regarding 'If you would like to provide comments on Objective 4 including any of the actions and/or activities we will undertake to achieve this objective, please tell us... If you have any suggestions on other actions, activities or metrics you would like us to report on annually, please include these in your answer.'

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	23	19%
Out of scope	15	12%
Highways drainage	2	2%
Land drainage	2	2%
Powers (water companies)	1	1%
Powers (other)	1	1%
Powers (development, planning)	0	0%
Planning	2	2%
Community resilience	32	26%
Actions/metrics/review/data	16	13%
Location specific	7	6%
General/positive comments	23	19%

The key themes that emerged from the comments is based upon community resilience with 26% of comments expanding on the question asked and 19% are within the theme of a misunderstanding or lack of clarity in the draft Local Strategy. Some comments on Objective 4 indicted concern that promoting community flood

plans and flood wardens was a way for flood risk management authorities to abrogate their responsibility for responding to a flood event.

“Given the seriousness of flooding in this area - should we be relying on voluntary wardens only?”

Community flood plans are a key tool that support local communities in a flood event, they are usually a simple guide that lets local communities know who to speak to in the event of a flood, and which authorities will help them. They are not a way to pass responsibilities on to local communities. A good flood plan will help a local community manage more effectively in a flood. Similarly, Flood Wardens have a key role to support local communities in the event of a flood. Flood Wardens warn and support vulnerable residents, which risk management authorities have never had the resources to do, particularly in large scale floods.

Other comments showed that readers were concerned about the need for Flood Wardens and how they would be trained and retained.

“More effort on maintaining wardens will be needed.”

“Will competent, capable volunteers come forward in the volumes needed?”

Several comments were concerned about the availability and quality of flood risk data.

“More readily available flood data and information for the public would be helpful.”

“It is essential that local residents have quick and free access to maps of local infrastructure relative to flooding issues.”

Other comments requested more engagement with communities when delivering flood risk management services.

“should you be looking to work more closely with local communities”

“All action to be taken on the flood risks in each area must be carried out with consultation with the local community”

Some comments felt that the metrics needed more data so that they could be understood in context. For instance, the number of flood wardens should be placed in the context of how many areas the risk management authorities considered a need for flood wardens. Similarly, the number of homes signed up for flood warnings needed to be understood in the context of how many homes were eligible for flood warnings.

“Metrics should probably start with Number of flood areas requiring action and nominated 'Wardens'. No of wardens required; locations without wardens or community groups.”

“You probably need a metric for communities around risk likelihood and risk impact if it occurs.”

19% of the comments were general/positive comments, for example:

“I think this has been well thought out and I welcome more information and flood wardens as this risk increases.”

“This is where technology needs to take over humans. Even community volunteers can be costly at some stage. Also maybe AI would have a place in monitoring such tech to provide prediction abilities.”

4.5.5 You said, we did:

We have updated the text under 4.1.4 Objective 4: Resilient communities so that it is clearer that flood plans and flood wardens play a vital role in helping manage flood risk and they are not used as an alternative to the roles that risk management authorities. We have updated the Local Strategy to include more information on the roles and responsibilities of flood wardens and flood plans and provided links to the Kent Prepared website with more information. Through the Local Strategy we hope to support this role and improve the uptake of flood wardens and flood plans.

We have also added to the metrics under Objective 1 and 4 to show that we are committed to working alongside communities when we undertake studies, investigations and projects in their area.

We have also added a measure to work with local community representatives, such as KALC and the Kent Flood Risk Action Forum, to understand what data and information they would like about flood risk and how we can help them access it.

We have added metrics to help put the uptake of flood plans and flood wardens in context of flood risk. To do this, we have added the number of priority flood areas, as well as, the number of priority flood areas with flood wardens, and with flood plans.

4.6 Consultation responses concerning the challenges to delivering local flood risk management in Kent

4.6.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Local Strategy has identified the right challenges to delivering local flood risk management in Kent?

Figure 30 shows the percentages of responses to the consultation questionnaire. 65% of 137 respondents indicated they agree that the draft Local Strategy has identified the right challenges, with 24% of respondents strongly agreeing. 14% of respondents indicated that they disagree, with 5% strongly disagreeing. With, 15% of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

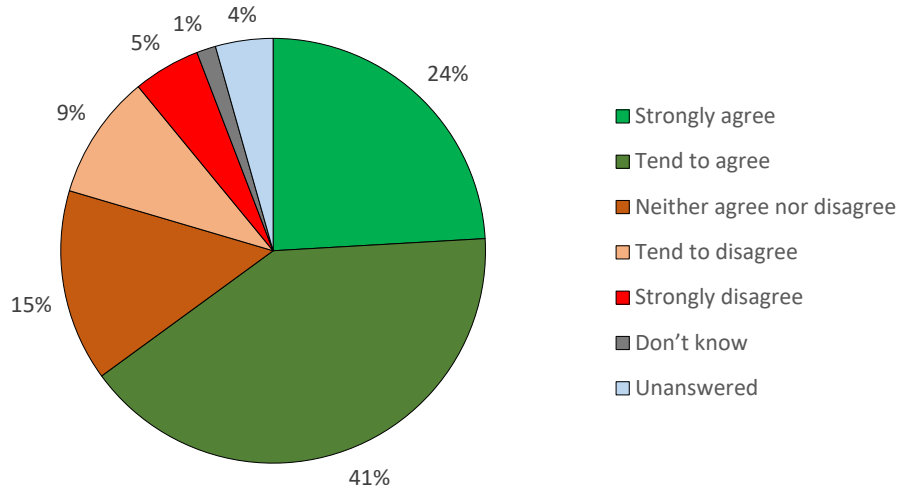


Figure 30: Pie chart to show responses to: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the draft Local Strategy has identified the right challenges to delivering local flood risk management in Kent?

4.6.2 Challenges comments

Comments on the challenges, shown in Table 13, generally reflect the comments throughout the responses we received. There were a large number that commented on flood risk in planning (responded to under Objective 3), many that commented on the maintenance of highway drainage and watercourses, (responded to under Objective 2), and a number of comments about water companies, (responded to under Objectives 1 and 2).

Table 13: Emerging themes for comments regarding challenges in delivering the Local Strategy

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	34	22%
Out of scope	27	18%
Highways drainage	6	4%
Land drainage	9	6%
Powers (water companies)	2	1%
Powers (other)	3	2%
Powers (development, planning)	3	2%
Planning	17	11%
Community resilience	4	3%
Actions/metrics/review/data	11	7%
Location specific	17	11%
General/positive comments	19	13%

Some responses contained more than one theme. The two key themes that emerged from the comments were misunderstanding or lack of clarity in the strategy (22%), and 18% related to comments that are out of the scope of the Local Strategy. Some of the comments noted that the challenges have not necessarily been carried through into the objectives.

“Not all the challenges are carried through into the action plan and measures.”

This is because some of the challenges, particularly on resources and funding, were outside of the scope of the Local Strategy, and many were outside the scope of KCC to influence directly.

“Have you got an apprenticeship programme to train people for the vacant posts?”

“Perhaps no great progress until Central Government can devote additional funds”

These challenges are included in the Local Strategy to highlight the difficulties in delivering it, but managing some challenges is outside the scope of the Local Strategy. Whilst KCC has views on these challenges, our voice alone does not carry much weight and we do not have the resources to develop new training and apprenticeship standards ourselves, for instance. We are part of a national network of Lead Local Flood Authorities, through these we work with the Environment Agency and the government to discuss new and revised policies, guidance, funding, training and other aspects of managing local flood risks. Changes in these areas take time as there are many competing objectives at a national level.

13% of the comments were general/positive comments for example:

“The strategy is admirably clear. The link to climate change is well-founded.”

4.6.3 You said, we did:

We have updated the text within the Challenges section of the Local Strategy to clarify that the challenges we have identified include challenges to the delivery of the Local Strategy as well as challenges that are not within the scope of the Local Strategy to manage (such as funding and staff resources).

5 General comments

At the end of the consultation questionnaire, respondents were invited ‘to make any other comments about the draft Local Strategy, including any other information, details or links that you feel should be included’. There were 47 responses, some responses contained more than one theme, these are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Emerging themes for general comments

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	25	28%
Out of scope	6	7%
Highways drainage	4	4%
Land drainage	2	2%
Powers (water companies)	3	3%
Powers (other)	3	3%

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Powers (development, planning)	0	0%
Planning	8	9%
Community resilience	3	3%
Actions/metrics/review/data	6	7%
Location specific	13	14%
General/positive comments	17	19%

The key emerging theme had 28% of comments regarding a misunderstanding or lack of clarity in the strategy.

“I have no idea from this whether there is any risk in the area where I live”

19% of responses were general/positive comments for example:

“We like the fact that the strategy summarises progress since the previous strategy and what it intends to do next”

“The proposed content is considered appropriate and proportionate to the strategy’s remit”

5.1.1 You said, we did:

We have added links to resources that provide more details about flood risks.

6 Email responses

There was an opportunity for open comments via email, we received 11 responses via email. The email responses cover a range of themes, these are shown in Table 15. These comments have been dealt with in the appropriate section.

Table 15: Emerging themes for comments in email responses

Themes	Number of comments	Percentage
Misunderstanding/clarity	4	11%
Out of scope	7	19%
Highways drainage	1	3%
Land drainage	1	3%
Powers (water companies)	3	8%
Powers (other)	3	8%
Powers (development, planning)	1	3%
Planning	2	6%
Community resilience	1	3%
Actions/metrics/review/data	3	8%
Location specific	3	8%
General/positive comments	7	19%

The key theme regards concerns that are out of scope for the Local Strategy, with 19% of responses within this theme. Some responses contained more than one theme.

“greater clarification of what resilience will be created for flood issues associated with the potential of further development of housing, particularly where communities are reliant on historic combined drainage systems”

19% of responses were general/positive comments, for example:

“The strategy sets out clear direction and outlines the strategic intent and deliverables for the next 10 years”

“We are happy with the contents of the draft document.”

7 Equality Impact Assessment

An EqlA is a tool to assess the impact any proposals would have on the protected characteristics: age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, and carer’s responsibilities.

As part of the consultation, we published our results of the EqlA for the draft Local Strategy. This can be found on our consultation page on [Let’s talk Kent](#).

Our assessment found that some small positive impacts could arise for some protected groups as a result of the emerging Local Strategy (2024 – 2034). The protected groups that may experience the small positive impacts were found to be age, disability and pregnancy/maternity. We felt the Local Strategy would have a small positive impact on these groups due to setting out our actions to achieving its objectives – ‘to better understand flood risk in Kent’, ‘reduce the risk of flooding in Kent’, ‘increase resilient planning’ and ‘help communities to become more flood resilient’.

Alongside the small positive impacts, the EqlA found there could also be some negative impacts felt by specific protected characteristics. After identifying the possible negative impacts, we found ways to best mitigate them.

For example, the negative impact on protected groups; age, disability, and race, could be an individual’s ability to read an online English version of the consultation documents. To mitigate this negative impact, we ensured the following were true:

- Using alternative text (Alt Text) to describe any images within the consultation documents so that a page reader (text-to-speech) could read the description aloud;
- A point of contact to verbally discuss the consultation documents;
- Printed copies of consultation documents to be available on request;
- Large print copies of the documents to be available on request;
- Available option for the consultation website that the documents are published on to be read by an automated voice, and;
- All consultation documents are available in different languages on request.

Responding to questions about the EqIA was not compulsory. We received 31 responses to the EqIA questions from the 137 questionnaire responses, none of the email responses mentioned the EqIA.

We asked for respondents views on our equality analysis and if individuals felt there is anything we should consider relating to equality and diversity within the consultation questionnaire. This was provided as a free text answer, so that the opinions of individuals could be freely expressed.

When reviewing the responses it was found that there were no appropriate comments that indicated we should amend the EqIA. Therefore, no changes have been made to the EqIA for the Local Strategy based on the responses to this section of the consultation.

8 Amendments to the Local Strategy 2024-2034

The consultation has been useful to identify shortcomings in the Local Strategy. Following on from the responses, amendments have been made to the Local Strategy, these are listed in Table 16.

Table 16: Summary of the amendments made to the Local Strategy 2024-2034.

Amendment description	Brief explanation
Removal of asset register information	Inappropriate for a strategy document
Addition of links	Provides further detail to reduce common miscommunication/misconceptions
Clarified text within Objective 1	Comments indicated a misunderstanding of Objective 1 therefore it was reworded for clarification.
Addition of a target to receive comments from local communities on Section 19's before publishing	A target was required to improve engagement with the local community regarding Section 19 reports.
Addition of a target for better protected properties and disconnection from foul/combined sewers, due to delivered projects	A target was required to measure the effectiveness of Objective 2.
Addition of further information regarding flood wardens	Comments indicted a misunderstanding of the role of flood wardens.
Clarified text in the Challenges section of the Local Strategy	Challenges that are out of scope, of the those that can be managed by the Local Strategy, have been amended for clarity.
Additional data collected within the land drainage reporting table	Shows the betterment to land drainage consents due to advice given.

Amendment description	Brief explanation
Additional metrics regarding flood wardens and flood plans	Metrics will be reported on to show where flood wardens and flood plans are still required across Kent.

9 Conclusions and Next Steps

The Local Strategy was generally supported by the respondents to the consultation, with 56% of respondents indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed with the Local Strategy. The other questions also received majority support from the respondents that provided a response.

The feedback we received have been helpful in amending the Local Strategy. The consultation also highlighted that the Local Strategy needed more robust metrics and targets to make clear how the monitoring demonstrated the delivery of the Local Strategy. We have revised the metrics and introduced targets to show how the Local Strategy is being delivered.

The consultation showed that some areas of the Local Strategy were not clear. We have clarified the role of voluntary groups within Kent, such as Flood Wardens and Flood Action Groups. We have amended the Local Strategy to include links to additional information on voluntary roles related to flooding in the community. We have also included links to further information around planning to aid understanding, as the scope of our role was not fully communicated.

This report, alongside the final version of the Local Strategy 2024-2034, will be presented to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 9 July 2024.

Each year we will produce an Annual Review to report on our progress to achieving the metrics, activities and targets described within the Appendix of the Local Strategy. This will be published on [Kent.gov.uk](https://www.kent.gov.uk).

Appendix 1

Table 17 shows the themes that arose from the free text comments of both the questionnaire and email responses. The table has an explanation for each theme to provide an insight on how comments were categorised. A free text response may cross over more than one theme.

These themes were used to determine what the biggest public pressures were for possible amendments to the draft Local Strategy.

Table 17: Themes from free text comments along with an explanation as to what comments would fit within that theme.

Themes	Explanation
Misunderstanding/clarity	Comments from respondents that have misunderstood the Local Strategy, possibly due to a lack of clarity within the report.
Out of scope	Comments from respondents that have understood the Local Strategy but feel we should achieve or add something outside of KCC/LLFA scope.
Highways drainage	Comments that specifically mention or refer to highways drainage.
Land drainage	Comments that specifically mention or refer to land drainage.
Powers (water companies)	Comments that assume we have powers to influence decisions or outcomes, regarding water companies.
Powers (other)	Comments that assume we have powers to influence decisions or outcomes, for example other Local Authorities.
Powers (development, planning)	Comments that assume we have powers to influence decisions or outcomes, regarding development and planning.
Planning	Comments towards planning applications and/or the planning system.
Community resilience	Comments that discuss flood wardens, volunteer groups, flood action plans, and/or similar community engagement or resilience practices.

Themes	Explanation
Actions/metrics/review/data/review/data	Comments discussing the actions and metrics within the Appendix of the draft Local Strategy 2024-2034.
Location specific	Comments that reference a specific location, such as Minster Marshes.
General/positive comments	Statements, comments unrelated to a specific part of the Strategy, supporting comments.

Any comments that we felt were out of scope for the Local Strategy and/or out of scope for KCC powers were omitted from this document; that included comments that were very specific to a location as the Local Strategy focuses on Kent as a whole. Our Flood Risk to Communities documents provide detailed information for each of the 12 boroughs within Kent, which may be of benefit to those who responded with comments specific to a location.

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Responsible Officer

Abbi Gosling - GT EW

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Flood and Water Management Team

Responsible Head of Service

Max Tant - GT ECE

Responsible Director

Matthew Smyth - GT ECE

Aims and Objectives

KCC has a duty to develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in Kent under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. This strategy will set out how local flooding will be managed in the county.

Kent has a large population and a dynamic economy. Due to the historic development of the county around waterways and along the coastline, and its geography, steep hills and areas of impermeable soils, there is a significant risk of flooding from many sources. This includes local flooding sources, which are significant in Kent and threaten the safety and wellbeing of Kent's residents, and the sustainability of its economy.

Through this Local Strategy for Kent, we aim to improve the safety and wellbeing of Kent's residents and the economy of Kent through appropriate flood risk management. To do this we will work effectively with communities and partners, adapt to climate change, and utilise natural processes to provide multiple benefits, where possible. Any projects that are as a direct result of this Local Strategy will be subjected to a separate EQIA.

This Local Strategy will build upon the lessons KCC have learned from previous local strategies for Kent to reduce flood risk in the areas identified as at risk, will enable KCC to continue to develop an understanding of flood risk, and improve how we work together with partners and communities.

The objectives for this Local Strategy reflect the need to build on the improvements achieved to date and to

address the challenges that we face now, and in the future. The objectives include: understanding flood risk, reduce the risk of flooding, resilient planning, and resilient communities.

All actions stated within this Local Strategy for Kent have been analysed to determine any potential positive or negative impacts on the protected characteristics. We have found that the actions stated to achieve Objective 4 may have potential impacts on protected characteristics, including age and disability; this is discussed further in Section C of this EQIA.

Kent's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy will be available on the KCC website and can be produced in other formats, if requested. We have considered whether the detail provided within the Local Strategy would have a negative or positive impact for the nine protected characteristics; we did not find any evidence to suggest this and have ensured the document is comprehensive for the general population of Kent with links to further information. For evidence, the county wide equalities data was reviewed to ensure the general population of Kent was considered.

Overall, the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy will continue to provide information in an accessible way for all protected groups, whilst fulfilling our obligations as laid out in the Flood and Water Management Act, and the 2013 Kent County Council Strategy.

Outcome of the analysis: No change.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

The concept of the Strategy was presented to the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee on the 12 July 2023.

Risk Management Authorities were asked for feedback prior to formal consultation.

Risk Management Authorities:

Water Companies (Southern Water)

Environment Agency

Internal Drainage Boards (Lower Medway, River Stour, Upper Medway)

KCC Highways Authority

Canterbury City Council

Members of Council (Tony Hills, Mike Dendor, Neil Baker)

The draft Strategy was taken to the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee (14 November 2023) prior to consultation. Following the consultation of the final draft Local Strategy, a consultation report will be presented to Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee (7 March or 21 May) or the Kent Flood Risk Management Committee on 14 March 2024 or 26 June 2024 before adoption.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for the Strategy will be consulted on during public consultation. Public Consultation will run from 22 November 2023 to 30 January 2024 (10 weeks).

Hard copies, alternative formats or languages of any of the consultation documents will be made available

upon request. Contact details will be available on all material.
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens Residents/communities/citizens
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
The Local Strategy will set out actions to better understand flood risk in Kent, reduce the risk of flooding in Kent, increase resilient planning and help communities to become more flood resilient. This is likely to have small positive impacts for protected groups at risk of flooding in Kent, such as age, disability, pregnancy and maternity.
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Age
According to the 2021 mid-year population estimates for age and sex, most of Kent's population (roughly 14%) are aged between 50 - 59 years. Within this data set, people aged 60 years and over, represents approximately 26% of Kent's population. Plus, almost 18% of the population, within this data set, is represented by people aged 14 years and younger.
This group may have difficulty reading material published to advise about flood risk and mitigation measures, or reporting flood events due to poor eyesight, reduced access to the internet, and/or a lesser technical ability.
Mitigating Actions for Age
It needs to be ensured that any publications or reporting mechanisms are accessible.
For example, using Alt Text to describe any images within the document, a point of contact to verbally discuss the Local Strategy, printed publications to be available on request, Large Print copies available and for the website that the document is published on to have the option to be read by an automated voice.
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Max Tant
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
Yes
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
The 2021 census tables for disability states 281,423 (17.9%) residents in Kent were termed disabled under the Equality Act.
This group may have difficulty reading material published to advise about flood risk and mitigation measures, or reporting flood events due to poor eyesight, reduced access to the internet, and/or a lesser

technical ability.
Mitigating actions for Disability
It needs to be ensured that any publications or reporting mechanisms are accessible.
For example, using Alt Text to describe any images within the document, a point of contact to verbally discuss the Local Strategy, printed publications to be available on request, Large Print copies available and for the website that the document is published on to have the option to be read by an automated voice.
Responsible Officer for Disability
Max Tant
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No. Note: If Question 21a is "No", Questions 21b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Completed
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No. Note: If Question 22a is "No", Questions 22b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
Yes
Negative impacts for Race
According to the census of 2021, the percentage of people living in Kent that did not have English as a main language within the household was 2.9%. Within this census, the percentage of people living in Kent who had at least one person within the household with English as a main language, regardless of age, was 3.6%.
Data from the 2021 census also shows results for proficiency in English. It stated that approximately 1% of people in Kent could not speak English well or at all. With 5.8% of people stating their main language was not English.
If the person accessing the information does not have a good level of English they may not understand the document.
Mitigating actions for Race
The document will be made available in different languages, on request. This will be clear on the website.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Max Tant
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No. Note: If Question 24a is "No", Questions 24b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval

Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Completed
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No. Note: If Question 25a is "No", Questions 25b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No. Note: If Question 26a is "No", Questions 26b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No. Note: If Question 27a is "No", Questions 27b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No. Note: If Question 28a is "No", Questions 28b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed

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From: Rob Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 9 July 2024**

Subject: Approval to award a new contractual arrangement for the receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclable waste (with fibre and glass) for Mid Kent, West Kent, Thanet and Canterbury (SC240042)

Key decision: 24/00065

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Mid Kent, West Kent, Thanet & Canterbury Divisions are affected

Summary: This report seeks Member approval to award a contract via the CSKL waste management services framework for the receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclables.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment regarding the proposed decision to award a contract to

APPROVE the procurement and contract award to N+P via the CSKL Framework for the receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclables for an initial period of 24 months, with up to a further 36 months extension period.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity;

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision; and

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to award extensions of the contract in accordance with the extension clauses within the contract (up to 36 months) as shown at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides information concerning the award of a contract through a framework, for dry mixed recyclable (DMR) materials collected by the waste collection authorities in Mid Kent, West Kent, Thanet and Canterbury.
- 1.2 The current contract with N+P Group commenced 3rd July 2021 and has seen an extension period of 12 months from 21st October 2023 to 21st October 2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 DMR is a mix of recyclable items which typically arise from local authorities collecting co-mingled waste from households, such as paper and card, cans, plastics and glass.
- 2.2 These materials are collected together in the same kerbside container to be sorted at a material recycling facility (MRF).
- 2.3 At the MRF there are various mechanical and hand sorted processes to ensure the waste is correctly segregated.
- 2.4 Once the waste streams are separated, they are distributed to reprocessing plants where they are fed back to manufacturers to be processed into new products as demonstrated in Appendix 1.
- 2.5 The technology is extremely sophisticated and can sort over 95% of the materials that are processed at the facility for onwards recycling.
- 2.6 The sorting and processing of DMR falls under KCC's statutory remit to make provision for the receipt and treatment of this material under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 2.7 No further extensions are permitted, therefore, to ensure KCC's statutory obligations are met as the waste disposal authority and to provide continuity of service, a commissioning activity is required.

3. Issues, options and analysis of options

- 3.1 The expiry of this contract occurs during a period of legislative instability, with several reforms occurring that will impact the risk profile of future contractual arrangements. These are:
 - i. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislated through Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations 2023.
 - ii. Simpler Recycling which although is legislated through the Environment Act 2021, there are remaining provisions and statutory guidance that have been delayed

- iii. Deposit Return Scheme, this has been delayed until 2027.
- 3.2 The unknown operational and financial impacts of these reforms make it difficult to predict the future volume and composition of DMR material and subsequently on contractual arrangements. Considerations to the contract term have therefore been paramount and are considered in the options.
- 3.3 KCC is seeking local disposal arrangements, (where waste infrastructure allows) to reduce its carbon footprint and haulage costs in delivering these materials, and as such haulage rates are considered as part of the tender evaluation.
- 3.4 KCC is committed to working towards the zero to landfill target, by continuing to divert approximately 75,000 tonnes of DMR per year from landfill by using treatment and recycling facilities under this contract.
- 3.5 Market engagement has determined that there are limited suppliers who are able to take the mix of DMR outlined in the scope within a reasonable haulage distance of Kent's transfer station network.
- 3.6 **Option 1: Do nothing** and discontinue accepting the DMR waste from the collection authorities; this is not an option as when the contract ceases on 21st October 2024, KCC will be in breach of its statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 3.7 **Option 2: Continue to accept the waste**, but utilise alternative disposal methods by using landfill or incineration; this is not an option as there is a priority to move this material up the waste hierarchy to meet landfill diversion targets, improve recycling rates, achieve better value via a contractual arrangement with a contractor who specialises in managing DMR waste, and avoid incineration as it is costly in comparison.
- 3.8 **Option 3 - To award a contract via the CSKL Framework to the incumbent contractor N+P for seven years via CSKL Framework.** The new legislation poses unquantified outcomes which will impact the risk profile of the contract post 2026. These risks will be costed into the pricing mechanism to minimise risk for the contractor, making this a more expensive option.
- 3.9 **Option 4: The recommended preferred option – To award a contract via the CSKL Framework to the incumbent contractor N+P for 24 months with a 36-month extension via the CSKL Framework.** This shorter-term contract with a flexible extension period will allow for the outcomes of the reforms to be assessed without the risk being costed into the contract.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.10 **Option 4** delivers outcomes that are financially beneficial for the authority for the following reasons:

- i. The shorter-term contract will ensure that risks from the waste reforms (see section 3.1) can be evaluated once known and written in to subsequent procurements. This option avoids this unknown risk being costed into a longer-term contract.
- ii. This method allows the Council to procure effectively and efficiently in a market with limited providers and limited capacity for this material.
- iii. This option delivers flexibility to negotiate during the term of the contract (and extension period).

3.11 Whilst option 3 has equal environmental benefits to option 4, the contract will be more expensive due to the unknown risks being costed into the contract.

3.12 Procurement via the CSKL framework is a route to market from a list of suppliers that have tendered competitively for the specialist type of work required for this contract. They are pre-assessed on the basis of service standards, price and pre-agreed terms and conditions.

3.13 Within a market as limited as DMR, the award via a framework is resource efficient.

5 Risk

3.14 The pricing of this contract is subject to variation due to the changes within the commodity market.

3.15 Any extension periods will be progressed in line with an assessment of this risk profile and the performance of the contract. This assessment will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Environment and agreed before extension periods are awarded.

6 Financial Implications

3.16 The 2024/25 revenue budget is £1,831,400 p/a based on 69,882 budgeted tonnes.

3.17 The annual cost of the commission is £1,566,300 based on current market prices processing 75,000 tonnes.

3.18 The total cost of the commission for the 24-month initial period is projected to be £3,132,600 based on 75,000 tonnes pa

3.19 The increase in tonnage is due to population growth and increased outputs due to increased performance over the term of the contract.

3.20 The markets for recyclables can fluctuate as they are market driven, and as such predicting the extension value accurately is challenging.

3.21 KCC will be seeking a contractual arrangement which offers the benefit of a rebate on the sale of the commodities. These rebates are influenced by factors such as material quality, volume, and market values.

3.22 It should be noted that there would be significant haulage costs should there be a requirement to travel out of the county, as well as an environmental impact with regard to higher emission outputs. It is also necessary for the fleet to be available to service other contracts therefore, it is desirable to have disposal outlets that are as local to Kent as possible.

3.23 Haulage costs are evaluated so that the full cost of the contract is considered.

7 Legal implications

3.24 Commissioning via a framework is fully compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015).

3.25 A key function of the Waste Disposal Authority operating under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, is to provide outlets for the processing of dry recyclables.

3.26 The Environment Act 2021 under 'simpler recycling' sets out a requirement for a core number of materials to be collected from kerbside and recycled; this contract covers the mixed dry elements of this requirement.

8 Equalities implications

3.27 The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken concluded that no Protected Characteristics will be impacted as a result of this contract. Furthermore, no personal data will be collected.

4 Other corporate implications

4.1 The following procurement implications have been considered:

- i. The commission will be presented in one lot and sourced via CSKL's framework for the 'Supply of Waste Management Services' (ref. Y21003) and will include the provision for managing circa 75,000 tonnes of DMR per annum.
- ii. The framework offers one provider who is able to meet KCC's requirements.
- iii. The framework is a selection of pre-qualified suppliers who have been vetted through the tender evaluation process and the terms and conditions governing the provision of the services are set out in the framework.

10. Governance

4.2 Through the decision outlined above, any further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through to delivery will be taken by the Director of Environment and Circular Economy under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment.

11 Conclusions

11.1 The current contract for receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclate waste expires in October 2024. A new contract needs to be in place to reduce the risk of unplanned costs and offer KCC best available market value and enable the Authority to discharge its statutory duty as Waste Disposal Authority.

12. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment regarding the proposed decision to award a contract to

APPROVE the procurement and contract award to N+P via the CSKL Framework for the receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclables for an initial period of 24 months, with up to a further 36 months extension period.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity;

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision; and

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to award extensions of the contract in accordance with the extension clauses within the contract (up to 36 months) as shown at Appendix A.

13. Background Documents

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix 1 – Materials sorted from a Materials Recycling Facility
- The Environment Act 2021:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents>
- Environmental Protection Act 1990:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents>
- Public Contract Regulations 2015
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/102/regulation/33>

14. Contact details

Report Author:

Lead Officer: Susan Reddick
Name and Job title: Head of Resource
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Relevant Director:

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Director for Environment and Circular
Economy
03000 416676
matthew.smyth@kent.gov.uk

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rob Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment

DECISION NO:

24/00065

For publication**Key decision: YES / NO****Subject Matter / Title of Decision:**

Approval to award a new contractual arrangement for the receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclable waste (with fibre and glass) for Mid Kent, West Kent, Thanet and Canterbury (SC240042)

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Environment, I agree to:

APPROVE the procurement and contract award of a N+P via the CSKL Framework for the receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclables for an initial period of 24 months, with up to a further 36 months extension period.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity;

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision; and

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to award extensions of the contract in accordance with the extension clauses within the contract (up to 36 months).

Reason(s) for decision:

A key function of the Waste Disposal Authority operating under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, is to provide outlets for the processing of dry recyclables. The current three year (plus one year extension) is due to expire on 21 October 2024, with no further extension permitted

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Members of Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee will consider the proposal at their meeting on 9 July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:**Option 1: Do nothing and discontinue accepting the DMR waste from the collection**

authorities; this is not an option as when the contract ceases on 21st October 2024, KCC will be in breach of its statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Option 2: Continue to accept the waste, but utilise alternative disposal methods by using

landfill or incineration; this is not an option as there is a priority to move this material up the waste hierarchy to meet landfill diversion targets, improve recycling rates, achieve better value via a contractual arrangement with a contractor who specialises in managing DMR waste, and avoid incineration as it is costly in comparison.

Option 3 - To award a contract via the CSKL Framework to the incumbent contractor N+P for

seven years via CSKL Framework. The new legislation poses unquantified outcomes which will impact the risk profile of the contract post 2026. These risks will be costed into the pricing mechanism to minimise risk for the contractor, making this a more expensive option.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

.....
signed

.....
date

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Receipt and processing of dry mixed recyclables with fibre contract

Responsible Officer

Kay Groves - GT - ECE

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Susan Reddick - ECE

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

Commissioning/Procurement

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Resource and Circular Economy/Service Delivery

Responsible Head of Service

Susan Reddick - ECE

Responsible Director

Matthew Smyth - GT - ECE

Aims and Objectives

KCC currently has in place contractual arrangements that are due to expire 21st October 2024, and therefore is seeking new contractual arrangements for processing of dry recyclables (with fibre) for the following Authorities: Canterbury City Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Ashford Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Swale Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Gravesham Borough Council and Dartford Borough Council. The contract is proposed to be up 24 months with up to a 36-month extension.

As a Waste Disposal Authority, the provision of such Waste processing services is a statutory obligation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

From 22nd October 2024 Kent County Council will:

Secure a Provider to process dry recyclables (with fibre) that have been separated by the resident and collected at the kerbside by the following Waste Collection Authorities: Canterbury City Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Ashford Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Swale Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Gravesham Borough Council and Dartford Borough Council

The intended beneficiaries are the residents in Canterbury City Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Ashford Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Swale Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Gravesham Borough Council and Dartford Borough Council whose dry recyclables (with fibre) are collected from households by the Waste Collection Authorities.

As the Waste Disposal Authority, Kent County Council is responsible for ensuring that all waste collected in Kent is disposed of correctly in the most financially efficient way. The disposal of this waste is a 'back office' procedure, with all 'customer facing' elements of this process the responsibility of the Waste Collection Authority (WCA).

There are no Protected Characteristics that will be impacted upon either positively or negatively - No Change

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

No

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Incumbent Provider

Market and Waste Industry

Members

Senior management and team

Commissioning and Procurement Oversight Board

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

No

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

No

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

No. Note: If Question 17 is "No", Question 18 should state "none identified" when submission goes for approval

Details of Positive Impacts

none identified

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

No. Note: If Question 19a is "No", Questions 19b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for

approval
Details of negative impacts for Age
Not Completed
Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Completed
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No. Note: If Question 20a is "No", Questions 20b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Completed
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No. Note: If Question 21a is "No", Questions 21b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Completed
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No. Note: If Question 22a is "No", Questions 22b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No. Note: If Question 23a is "No", Questions 23b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Race
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No. Note: If Question 24a is "No", Questions 24b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval

approval
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Completed
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No. Note: If Question 25a is "No", Questions 25b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No. Note: If Question 26a is "No", Questions 26b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No. Note: If Question 27a is "No", Questions 27b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No. Note: If Question 28a is "No", Questions 28b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed

Appendix 1 – Materials sorted from a Materials Recycling Facility

Recyclable material	Recycled Material Outcome
Glass	Approximately 70% is used for cullet (new glass), 30% is used as aggregate (sand substitute)
Aluminium	Recycled into aluminium products
Steel Cans	Recycles into steel products (mainly cans)
Mixed paper	Recycled into paper/ board
Cardboard	Recycled into cardboard
HDPE	Recycled into milk bottles
PET	Recycled into food grade plastic
Pots, tubs and trays	Further segregation then on for various uses, food grade PP, mixed polymer use (drain pipes, cladding, non-food grade bottles, plastic packaging etc)
Mixed bottles	Recycled into plastic packaging
LDPE	SRF/RDF uses for energy recovery

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From: **Robert Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment**
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee**

Subject: **24/00068 - Heritage Conservation Strategy – Update on proposed change to Windmills Policy**

Key decision: **Yes**

- *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: **None**

Future Pathway of report: **None**

Electoral Division: **Cranbrook, Elham Valley, Gravesham Rural, Herne Village and Sturry, Gravesham Rural, Margate, Sandwich, Sevenoaks Rural, Tenterden.**

Summary: This report summarises the results of a public consultation on the proposed change to the approach to the maintenance and management of KCC's eight historic windmills. It outlines options considered, next steps and identifies the key objectives within the Heritage Conservation Strategy that would be affected by any subsequent changes.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment regarding the proposed decision that:

1. KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets, and that
2. The Heritage Conservation Strategy is updated to this effect.

As shown at appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC currently owns the freehold of eight historic windmills, located in eight different districts and boroughs across the county. The windmill properties, all of which are designated (listed) buildings of high grade, were acquired by KCC as 'owner of last resort' between the late 1950s and the mid-1980s. Some of the properties include small parcels of land and accompanying buildings; others include only the footprint on which the windmill structures stand.

- 1.2 Whilst in the Council's ownership, KCC has a statutory responsibility to maintain the windmills in good condition in order to protect the historic fabric of the buildings and their machinery. As the windmills are all publicly accessible and, in most cases, surrounded by residential properties, the Council has an additional responsibility to ensure that the buildings remain safe, and 'utilities compliant', for visitors and site users to enter.
- 1.3 Financial responsibility for the maintenance and management of these eight windmill properties rests solely with KCC, apart from small-scale investment by the mill groups. The annual cost to the Council of maintaining the windmills portfolio in a safe structural and mechanical condition is considerable. Management of the windmills is only possible, however, through the work of the Friends volunteer groups who carry out small scale maintenance tasks, operate the windmills and open them to the public.
- 1.4 KCC's approach to the management and maintenance of the windmills is set out in the adopted KCC Heritage Conservation Strategy (Appendix 1). Any changes to this approach would be considered a change of policy. In addition, as each windmill is located in a different district or borough, any proposed change of policy would constitute a key decision.
- 1.5 A strategic review of KCC's windmill assets was undertaken in 2023 by a task and finish group comprising officers from Infrastructure, Environment and Circular Economy and Finance. Five key considerations were evaluated:
 - A) The heritage value of the windmills,
 - B) Current arrangements for managing the windmills,
 - C) The potential for divestment of the windmills,
 - D) The potential for alternative uses for the windmills,
 - E) KCC's current financial situation.
- 1.6 Divestment of each of the eight sites was identified as the most financially advantageous option for KCC. By identifying alternative ownership arrangements for each of the sites, KCC would save the annual costs associated with maintaining the buildings in a safe and accessible condition.
- 1.7 Divestment of the windmills would be a change to the policy set out in the adopted Heritage Conservation Strategy. As the Heritage Conservation Strategy was adopted following a public consultation, a public consultation is required in advance of a final decision on the change in policy. This was discussed at a meeting of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 15th November 2023.
- 1.8 This report provides an update on the public consultation that was subsequently undertaken. The consultation ran for nine weeks ([Windmills owned by KCC | Let's talk Kent](#)) from 28 November 2023 until 29 January 2024. The consultation invited residents, windmill and heritage volunteer groups and any other interested parties to provide views on the proposal to seek alternative arrangements for the ownership of these windmills.
- 1.9 To raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation, the following actions were undertaken:

- Meeting held with windmill managers ahead of the consultation launch to provide information on the proposal and ask for their support in promoting the consultation.
- Email sent to stakeholder database and those registered with Let's talk Kent who had expressed an interest in being kept informed of consultations regarding 'Arts and culture' and 'Environment and countryside' (8,559 people) and to those who participated in the 2021 Heritage Conservation Strategy consultation and asked to be kept informed (258 people).
- Voluntary groups managing the windmills asked to promote the consultation locally.
- Media release issued – <https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/views-wanted-on-proposals-for-kents-windmills>.
- Promotion through the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC).
- Banners added to relevant pages on Kent.gov.
- Promotion via social media including, KCC's corporate channels (X, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor and LinkedIn), the Heritage Conservation Facebook page and information shared on dedicated windmills forum on Facebook.
- Articles in KCC's residents e-newsletter.
- Briefing email to all KCC Members and promotion on staff communication channels.

2. Public consultation results

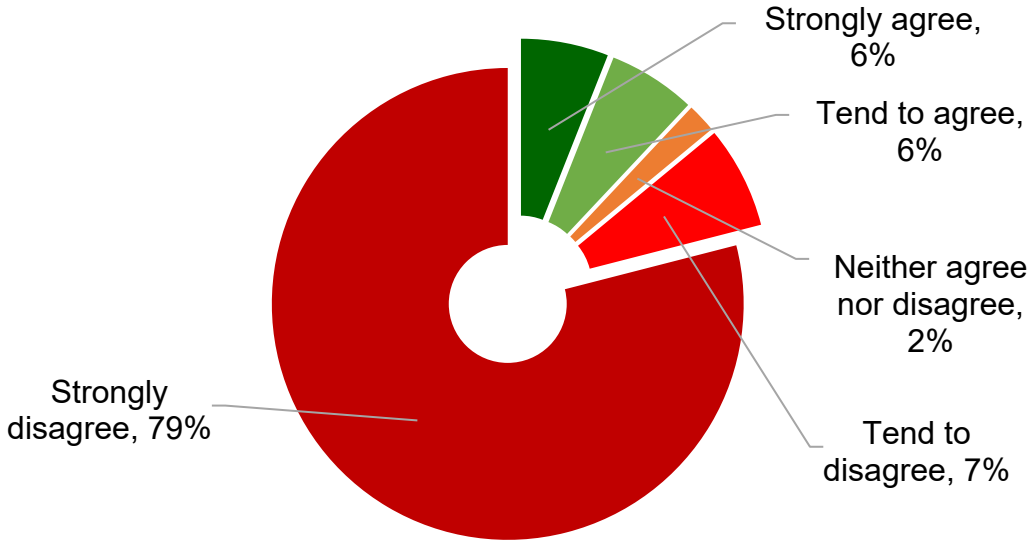
2.1 The consultation results were analysed, and a written report prepared by Lake Market Research (see Appendix 2). A summary of the results is provided below.

2.2 There were 2,330 responses to the consultation:

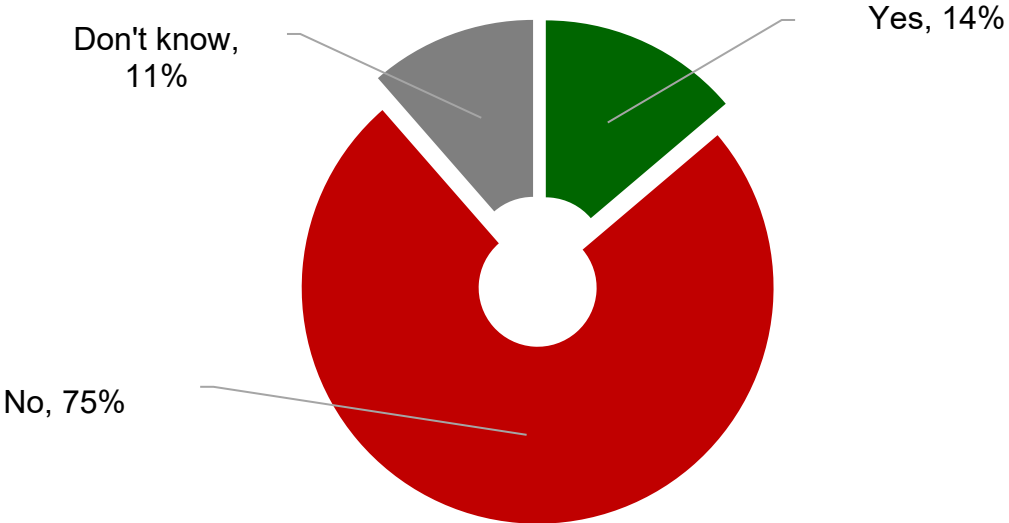
- 2,245 consultation questionnaire responses were received - 1,759 were submitted online and 486 questionnaires were submitted in hard copy or by email.
- An edited version of the consultation questionnaire was used by consultees to collect feedback regarding Herne Mill. 63 responses were received via this questionnaire. The responses have been combined with the data collected from the official consultation questionnaire and have been included in the analysis.
- A second edited version of the consultation questionnaire was used and submitted by 2 consultees, entitled Save our Windmills. Open feedback from these questionnaires has been considered in the analysis.
- An additional 20 emails were received by the KCC project team. Their open feedback has been combined with that collected from the official consultation questionnaire and they have been included in the analysis.
- The majority of consultees who responded are residents of Kent (89%); 4% of consultees are residents that live outside of Kent, including Medway. 44 questionnaire submissions were received on behalf of windmill and heritage volunteer groups (2%). Responses were also received from community / resident associations, professional organisations working in the heritage sector, local councils and councillors and VCS organisations.

2.3 Feedback from all the sources has been combined in a summary in the consultation report (Appendix 2).

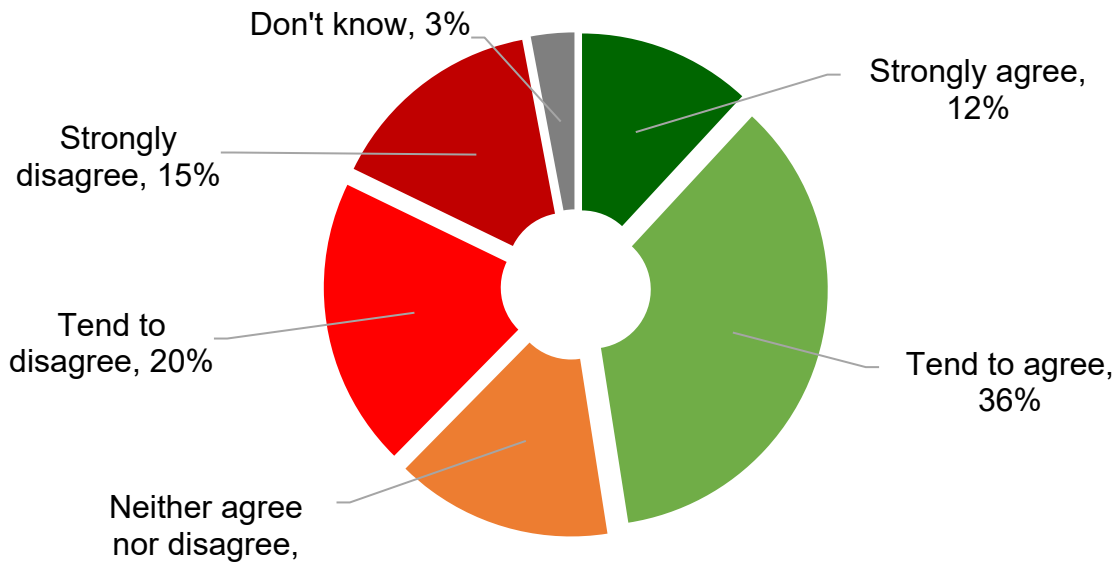
- 83% of consultees have visited at least one of the eight KCC Windmills
- 11% of respondents agree in principle with KCC's proposal to find alternative arrangements for the ownership and/or financial responsibility for KCC owned windmills and 87% of respondents disagree (79% strongly disagree).



- 14% of respondents indicated that they would change their mind if a local interest, voluntary or community group(s) were to take on ownership of the windmills; 75% indicated they would not change their mind and 11% indicated they are not sure. The main reasons cited by those who would change their mind are that windmills will be locally owned / funded / managed, windmills will be preserved / not developed / demolished and local groups might have more interest / have a vested interest in operating them.



- The consultees who indicated they would change their agreement rating were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with the proposal to seek alternative arrangements for KCC owned windmills for the second time. 48% indicated they agree in principle with KCC's proposal to find alternative arrangements for the ownership and/or financial responsibility for KCC owned windmills 35% indicated they disagree in principle with KCC's proposal to find alternative arrangements.



2.4 Consultees were asked to detail their reasons for their level of agreement with the proposal to find alternative arrangements for ownership and/or financial responsibility for KCC owned windmills in their own words. 86% of consultees provided a comment at this question. The comments have been reviewed and grouped into themes in the consultation report and are summarised below. A selection of verbatim quotes is included in the consultation report.

2.5 The majority of comments referred to reasons why consultees disagree with the proposal.

- The most common theme noted is that the windmills are part of the County's heritage / culture / history / community assets and should remain so moving forward (50%).
- There is concern for the protection / longevity of windmills with 32% commenting that windmills must be preserved / safeguarded for the future / concerned they could be at risk of demolition / development, 24% commented that proposals won't guarantee funding / there is a lack of funding and 17% commented they are concerned the windmills won't be maintained / fall into disrepair.
- 27% commented that the windmills must remain in public ownership / be the responsibility of KCC and 15% commented they should not be privately owned / they are at risk if sold to private owners.
- 9% commented that the suggested savings made from the proposal are small in comparison to the funding required by KCC.

2.6 Respondents were asked if they had suggestions for alternative arrangements. The most common alternative suggestions put forward included income generation through donations / fundraising / charging entrance fees (10%),

raising awareness of the windmills (9%), offer tours / open museums / shops selling merchandise / cafes (8%). The majority of remaining suggestions involve collaboration / working with others such as lottery funding (5%), English Heritage / National Trust (5%), communities / volunteer groups (4%), local businesses (4%). Suggestions also include applying to Historic England for more funding and setting up a Trust.

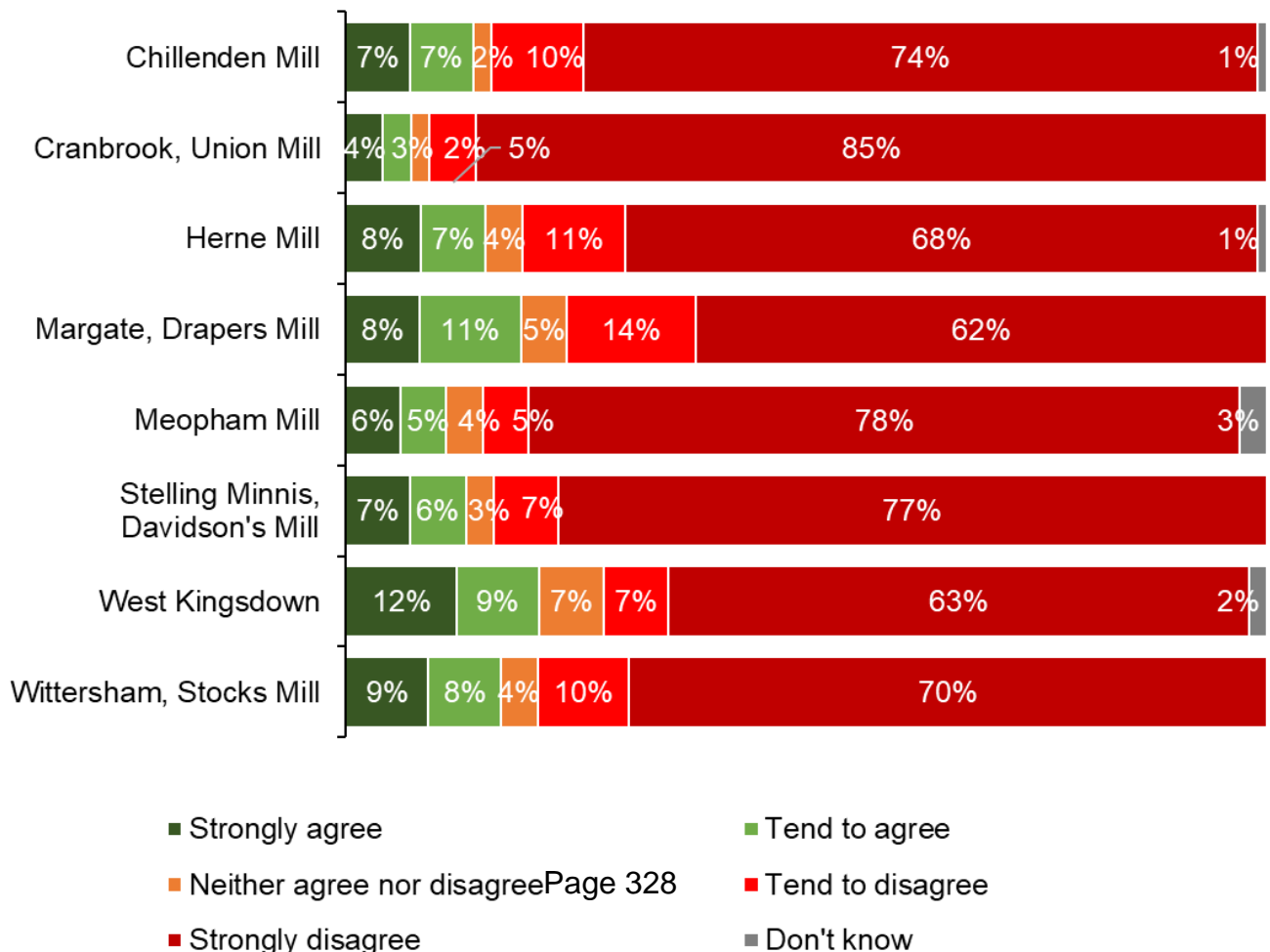
2.7 Detailed responses were also provided as letters from professional bodies such as Historic England, Kent Conservation Officer’s Group, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Comments from professional bodies included:

- Managing the windmills requires an appropriate level of specialist knowledge (such as that held by KCC Heritage Conservation),
- Transfer of ownership into private hands would be against public interest as privately owned windmills are less likely to be open to the public, and
- A decision to transfer ownership of the windmills was premature and required further consideration of the circumstances of each windmill and an analysis of options.

2.8 The consultation questionnaire provided the opportunity to provide feedback on each of the windmills individually; the following chart can be found in the Consultation written report (page 32).

Figure 1 – Summary of individual windmill feedback.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to find alternative arrangements for the ownership and/or financial responsibility for...? Base: all answering (varies for each windmill)



3. Options

3.1 Following consideration of the feedback from the consultation, a number of options have been identified as to how KCC proceeds:

3.2 **Option 1: Do nothing** and retain ownership of the windmills. This option does not reduce the cost to KCC of maintaining the windmills and was therefore rejected.

3.3 **Option 2: Retain the windmills but look to reduce the financial input from KCC.** Whilst income generation ideas were suggested through the consultation, the scalability and deliverability of these are unclear. Community based owners would also be eligible for a wider range of grants than currently available to KCC. It is therefore not just in KCC’s interests that the mills find new owners but potentially in the best interest of the mills themselves. This option was therefore rejected.

3.4 **Option 3: Recommended Option - KCC divests itself of the windmills.** Officers are proposing to explore the most effective way to divest, based on the local circumstances of each windmill. Considering the unique character of each windmill, as detailed in Table 1 below, one option is to explore the establishment of charitable trust models. These models could be tailored to accommodate the distinct features and requirements of each windmill, developed in collaboration with interested parties. This approach could provide a bespoke solution that aligns with the specific needs and potential of each site. The consideration of charitable trust models would be subject to feasibility and alignment with KCC’s objectives, KCC’s Property Assets Disposal Policy where applicable and KCC’s Heritage Conservation Strategy. However, the explorative work to enable recommendations on the most appropriate divestment option for each windmill has not been concluded and therefore a range of options are still open for consideration. Any individual divestment option would be subject to consideration before final agreement to proceed was undertaken.

Table 1 – Characteristics of the windmills

Windmill	999-year lease/ restrictive covenant	Within another property or surrounded by another property	Mill building only in freehold	Vehicle access [*restricted]	Mill volunteer group
Chillenden	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Davison’s, Stelling Minnis	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Drapers, Margate	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Herne	No	No	No	Yes*	Yes
Meopham	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes

Stocks, Wittersham	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Union Mill, Cranbrook	No	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes
West Kingsdown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes*	No

4. Relevance to the KCC Heritage Conservation Strategy

4.1 KCC's Heritage Conservation Strategy was adopted in 2022. It includes specific objectives relating to the eight windmill sites:

Objective 6: Follow a management approach to KCC-owned windmills, so that:

- i) Mills capable of milling flour (Drapers Mill, Margate, and Cranbrook Mill) remain able to do so.
- ii) The weatherproofing programme will be undertaken as needed on a rolling cycle.
- iii) Static mills will be returned to visual completeness subject to funding.
- iv) Static mills will be made active wherever possible [also Strategic Aim 3].

Objective 7: KCC's relationship with the windmill volunteer groups will be strengthened [Also Strategic Aim 3]. and

Objective 8: Explore alternative funding mechanisms for the windmills, including setting up a charitable Trust to oversee management, and develop a funding strategy [also Strategic Aim 3].

4.2 If KCC is to divest itself of any or all of the windmills Objectives 6, 7 and 8 would need to be amended to reflect this change. If it is not possible to transfer ownership of any of the windmills, Objectives 6 and 7 would need to remain in place.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The most significant budgetary impact which could be delivered from the divestment of these heritage assets, is the reduction of future capital expenditure which is currently funded through a revenue contribution to capital outlay.

5.2 Revenue costs – The total annual revenue budget within the service and Corporate Landlord amounted to £236,800 in 2022/23 which was inclusive of a £200,000 annual revenue contribution to capital outlay (RCCO) (see Tables 2 and 3); this RCCO reduces to £150,000 in 2024/25. There is a small revenue budget in Heritage Conservation for essential items such as fire alarms, fire extinguishers and millwright inspections, and a slightly larger budget in Infrastructure to cover other compliance matters such as fixed wiring and water inspections. Additionally, the current salary costs associated with the Windmill service is approximately £35,000 based on apportionment of officers' time. This is unlikely to be a cashable saving as the officer's time would be reallocated to other critical tasks.

Table 2 - Revenue position in 2022/23 by Windmill

Site	Budget			Outturn			Variance		
	Gross	Income	Net	Gross	Income	Net	Gross	Income	Net
Chillenden	£4,100	£0	£4,100	£9,911		£9,911	£5,811	£0	£5,811
Cranbrook	£3,800	£0	£3,800	£7,126		£7,126	£3,326	£0	£3,326
Herne	£7,000	£0	£7,000	£7,585		£7,585	£585	£0	£585
Drapers	£6,100	£0	£6,100	£11,858		£11,858	£5,758	£0	£5,758
Meopham	£4,200	£0	£4,200	£7,400		£7,400	£3,200	£0	£3,200
Stelling Minnis	£5,000	£0	£5,000	£9,462		£9,462	£4,462	£0	£4,462
West Kingsdown	£1,300	£0	£1,300	£4,612		£4,612	£3,312	£0	£3,312
Stocks (Wittersham)	£1,800	£0	£1,800	£4,768		£4,768	£2,968	£0	£2,968
Windmills General	£203,500	£0	£203,500	£202,870		£202,870	£-630	£0	£-630
Totals	£236,800	£0	£236,800	£265,591	£0	£265,591	£28,791	£0	£28,791

5.3 Capital costs – as noted, expenditure is currently funded by an annual revenue contribution to capital outlay (RCCO) which for 2024/25 is £150,000. Each windmill requires cyclical capital investment to maintain weatherproofing and undertake essential repairs. The amount varies considerably per windmill depending on size of mill and complexity of the repair. Table 3 shows the capital spend per windmill since 2019/20.

Table 3 - Actual Capital Spend by Windmill since 2019/20

Site	19/20 Spend	20/21 Spend	21/22 Spend	22/23 Spend	23/24 Spend	Total
Chillenden Windmill	18,515.00	18,230.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	37,645.00
Cranbrook Windmill	0.00	38,820.00	211,405.76	37,716.66	3,520.00	291,462.42
Meopham Windmill	0.00	9,590.00	56,793.50	123,164.50	80,825.00	270,373.00
Stelling Minnis Windmill	0.00	0.00	18,881.90	47,992.86	133,477.23	200,351.99
West Kingsdown Windmill	18,627.00	120,112.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	138,739.00
Wittersham Windmill	0.00	0.00	0.00	60,203.00	3,700.00	63,903.00
Drapers Mill Windmill	48,183.00	8,850.00	0.00	9,200.00	11,102.11	77,335.11
Herne Windmill	0.00	18,900.00	0.00	23,393.93	13,025.00	55,318.93
Totals	85,325.00	214,502.00	287,081.16	302,570.95	245,649.34	1,135,128.45

5.4 Major capital works and weatherproofing have been carried out at several of the windmills in the last five years (see Table 3). The need for such works is expected to reduce from this year onwards and from 2025 major investment is expected to be focussed primarily on Herne and Drapers Windmills, subject to funding. Regular minor repairs and checks by expert millwrights are essential to reducing the need for major works. Proposed capital expenditure over the next five years is set out in Table 4.

Table 4 – Service Proposed Future Capital Expenditure

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Total	£150,400	£100,000	£185,700	£100,000	£121,600	£657,700

5.5 The capital and revenue requirements and obligations sit within the overall financial context and the need to limit spending to balance the Council’s overall budget position. The current MTFP for the capital programme is severely limited in respect of the Modernisation of Assets budget relating to all of the Council’s other asset estate. In light of this, keeping capital spending to a minimum is vital.

6. Equalities implications

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and negative implications have been identified for age along with mitigating actions.

The Equality Impact Assessment will be updated for each divestment option identified to ensure that the mitigating actions continue to respond to any negative implications for age.

7. Other Corporate Implications

7.1 Any divestment activity would need to take account of KCC’s Property Assets Disposal Policy and be co-ordinated with the KCC Infrastructure Team.

8. Conclusions

8.1 After consideration of all factors including the recommendations of the 2022-23 Strategic Review, the public consultation and the Council’s budget position, it is concluded that KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns whilst seeking to ensure that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets, subject to feasibility and alignment with KCC’s objectives and KCC’s Property Assets Disposal Policy where appropriate and KCC’s Heritage Conservation Strategy.

8.2 The next step to progress divestment would be to investigate the feasibility and legal implications of transfer of ownership to include, but not limited to, the establishment of a trust or series of trusts for this purpose. There will be small scale costs associated with obtaining the relevant legal and professional advice to progress this.

9. Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment regarding the proposed decision that:

1. KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets, and that
2. The Heritage Conservation Strategy is updated to this effect

As shown at Appendix A.

10. Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- 10.2 Appendix B: EqlA
- 10.3 Appendix 1: [Kent Heritage Conservation Strategy](#)
- 10.4 Appendix 2: Consultation Written Report

11. Contact details

Report Author:

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With contributions from:

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Relevant Director:

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rob Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment

DECISION NO:

To be allocated by
Democratic Services

For publication

Key decision: YES / NO

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: KCC Heritage Conservation Strategy Revision – Change to Windmills Policy

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Environment, I agree to the decision that:

(i) KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets, and that

(ii) The Heritage Conservation Strategy is updated to this effect.

Reason(s) for decision:

Divestment of the windmills is a change to the policy set out in the adopted Heritage Conservation Strategy.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

A public consultation was undertaken from 28 November 2023 until 29 January 2024.

In advance of the public consultation the issue was discussed at a meeting of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 15th November 2023.

The final proposal is being considered by Members of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 9 July.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Option 1: Do nothing and retain ownership of the windmills. This option does not reduce the cost to KCC of maintaining the windmills and was therefore rejected.

Option 2: Retain the windmills but look to reduce the financial input from KCC. Whilst income generation ideas were suggested through the consultation, the scalability and deliverability of these are unclear. Community based owners would also be eligible for a wider range of grants than currently available to KCC. It is therefore not just in KCC's interests that the mills find new owners but potentially in the best interest of the mills themselves. This option was therefore rejected.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

.....
signed

.....
date

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Heritage Conservation Strategy - Divestment of KCC Windmills Policy Change

Responsible Officer

Dyson, Lis - GT - ECE

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Helen Shulver - GT - ECE

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Heritage Conservation / Environment and Circular Economy

Responsible Head of Service

Helen Shulver - GT - ECE

Responsible Director

Matthew Smyth - GT - ECE

Aims and Objectives

We are proposing to make changes to the Kent Heritage Conservation Strategy which would allow KCC to consider options for alternative ownership arrangements and/or financial responsibility for our eight windmills.

We are proposing to find alternative arrangements for each windmill separately because the current arrangements vary from site to site.

The windmills are all prominent rural or urban landmarks and highly graded designated (listed) buildings. As such, they are currently maintained in a condition that allows them to remain accessible to the general public to visit for educational and recreational purposes. However, KCC is facing a large increase in the cost of services, fuelled by high inflation, market conditions and increasing demands on its services from growth in the number of households and complexity of needs, which means that it needs to find ways to save money and has resulted in KCC proposing a change to ownership of these windmills.

There are no laws that say we must continue to own historic sites like windmills. However, as the current owner of the windmills, we do have a statutory duty to keep them safe, weatherproof, and

preserve their unique character and appearance. If KCC does not do this, Historic England could put the windmills on its "At Risk" list, and/or enforcement action could be taken by the Local Planning Authority.

No regular staff are employed to open the windmills to the public. Instead, through management agreements, locally based volunteer teams give up their spare time on scheduled open days to admit and guide visitors around the sites and buildings.

The proposed change to the ownership arrangements would mean that the ownership of each windmill may change to a local interest group, a private company or individual.

There could be a loss of amenity, volunteering and educational opportunities as future public access and enjoyment of these windmills is dependent on whoever takes on the responsibility for them. It may therefore indirectly affect other members of the community. This includes people who live near the mills, as well as others who live in other parts of Kent, or further afield, who plan to travel and visit the mills on scheduled open days when they are fully accessible

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Full public consultation undertaken between 28th November 2023 and 29th January 2024.
Users registered with Let's talk Kent who had expressed an interest in being kept informed of consultation regarding 'Arts and culture' and 'Environment and countryside' (8,559 people)
Users registered with Let's talk Kent who participated in the 2021 Heritage Conservation Strategy consultation and asked to be kept informed (258 people).
The seven local volunteer groups currently connected with the windmills.
Members of the communities in which these windmills stand.
Other Kent residents in or around these communities as well as further afield.
Key stakeholders at a national level including members of societies and groups with a stated interest in the subject.
Key stakeholders at an international level including members of societies and groups with a stated interest in the subject

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you

are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
The data currently available nationally indicates that windmill sites such as these can be equally well cared for by groups based in the communities in which they are located, as they can by local authorities.
These groups tend to be charitable trusts or charitable incorporated companies set up with the twin aims of protecting the historic fabric of these buildings and ensuring they remain publicly accessible for educational and recreational purposes.
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Age
All of the volunteer teams potentially affected by the proposal are composed of people of retirement age, for whom the process of volunteering at the windmill sites might be a key focus of their weekly routine.
This may provide them with a sense of purpose and social connection. The potential loss of these opportunities could have a negative impact on their mental and physical health.
Mitigating Actions for Age
It would be important to manage the change in relationship between KCC and the volunteer teams, to minimise any negative impacts on the volunteers' wellbeing
This would include keeping them informed of the changes, providing them with opportunities to ask questions, and addressing any concerns they may have
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Lis Dyson
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Applicable
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

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Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – Draft Agenda and Work Programme (Updated 13 May 2024)

Item	Cabinet Committee to receive item
Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director	At each meeting
Performance Dashboard	At each meeting
Work Programme	At each meeting
Draft Budget	Annual
Biosecurity and Tree Health Report	Annual (January)
Corporate Risk Register	Annual (March)
Winter Service Policy	Annual (September)
Environment Agency - Presentation	Bi-Annual
Southern Water - Presentation	Bi-Annual

9 July 2024		
19 September 2024		
No.	Item	Additional Comments
Page 343	Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director	At each meeting
	Performance Dashboard	At each meeting
	Work Programme	At each meeting
	Countryside Management Partnerships SLA Renewal	

Items for Consideration that have not yet been allocated to a meeting	
Highways and Transportation fault reporting and enquiry form - Update	Requested at ETCC on 19 January 2023
A review of highway aspects of planning applications - Report	Requested at ETCC on 7 March 2023 For information
Climate Change Adaptation Plan	
Water management plan	To be added to the November meeting
Annual Report on water supply	

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