

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

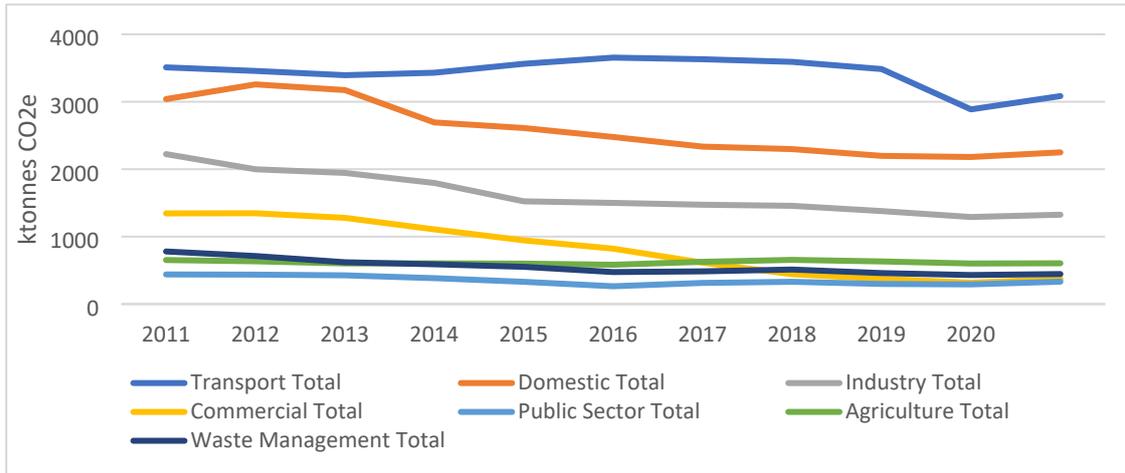
- All partners promoted “The Great Big Green Week” in September, with 39 events mapped and shared.
- Two new walking campaigns for primary and secondary schools in support of International Walk to School Month were delivered. Across both campaigns, participation doubled to 16 schools compared to the 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.

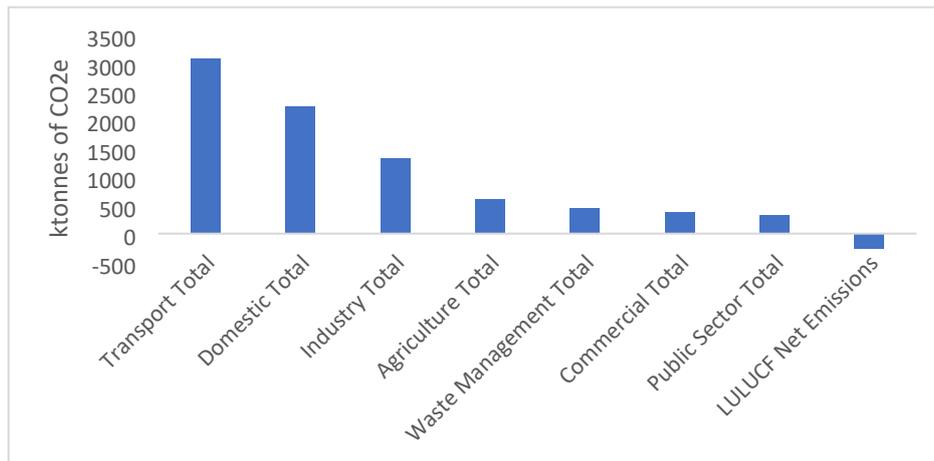
2.14 This covers emissions which are directly produced in Kent (terrestrial emissions) such as those from gas boilers and vehicles. It includes carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide and is reported as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e).

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)

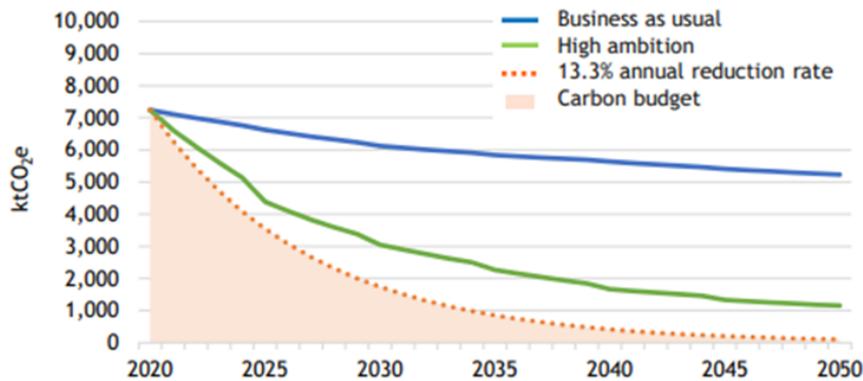
2.16 The following figure shows the most up to date data for Kent's terrestrial emissions from 2021. The majority of these direct emissions come from transport, resident's homes, other non-residential buildings and industry.



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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