

From: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 31 January 2018

Decision No: N/A

Subject: Kent Environment Strategy Progress, Energy and Air Quality

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary

Kent Environment Strategy (KES) was adopted by Kent County Council (KCC) in 2016, and a subsequent Implementation Plan produced. It was agreed by Kent Leaders and Chief Executives, KCC Cabinet and the KCC Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee that there should be an annual progress report to the aforementioned bodies.

This report provides highlights with respect to the delivery of the KES. It covers challenges, progress against KES targets and an overview of impact, as well as identifying significant new activity.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and consider and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste on the challenges outlined, progress made against KES Targets and identification of significant new areas of work.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Kent Environment Strategy (KES) was adopted by Kent County Council (KCC) in 2016, and a subsequent Implementation Plan produced. It was agreed by Kent Leaders and Chief Executives, KCC Cabinet and the KCC Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee in 2016 that there should be an annual progress report to the afore mentioned bodies which covered:

- Current state of the environment, focusing on existing and new challenges and identifying any improvements or declines.
- A summary of the impact KES activities are having.
- Progress against KES targets and actions.
- Identification of new significant action needed to address challenges faced, including recommendations and next steps.

1.2 This report summarises these points and includes recommendations and next steps for discussion by the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee. A

presentation will be provided at the meeting with more detail and links have been provided to all full reports. (check that chair has agreed – we also have a presentation on the country parks strategy)

2 KENT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT – EXISTING AND FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

2.1 The 2017 State of the Environment Report updates the original evidence base used to develop the Kent Environment Strategy. The report considers a broad range of environmental, social, economic and health issues that impact and are impacted by our environment. It identifies the rationale behind the actions, as well as the achievements that have been made. It also summarises the current state of play and the risks and opportunities faced under each topic. Chart 1 shows statistics on the key challenges.

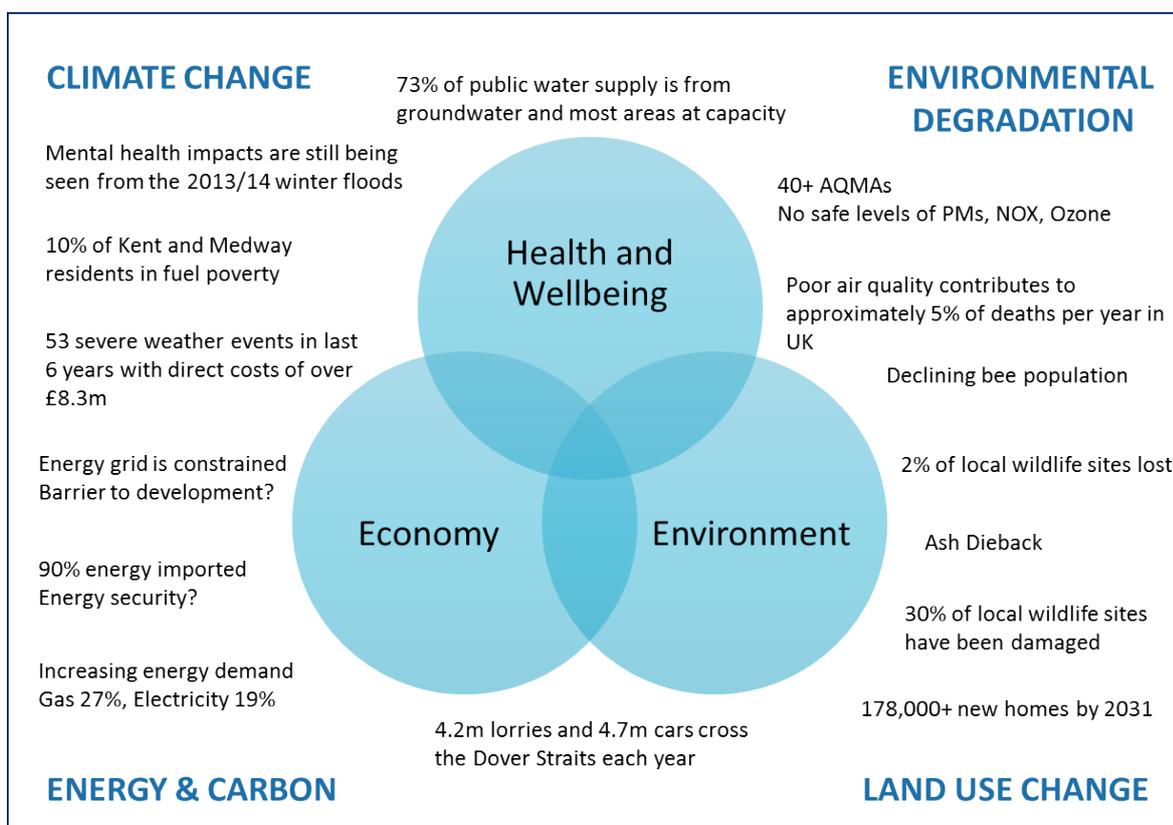


Chart 1: Some of the key challenges we face in relation to the Kent Environment Strategy

2.2 Current major challenges include:

- Energy, 90%+ of our energy is imported and demand and costs are increasing. There is a need for a new and more innovative approach to energy generation and use, if development is not to be hindered and energy security maintained.
- Air quality is increasingly an area of concern for the public and public authorities with over 1,000 early deaths across Kent and Medway attributed to poor air quality in 2013. A Kent-wide approach is needed if future growth is not to have unacceptable impacts on air quality and health.
- Carbon dioxide emissions in Kent continue to fall, largely driven by the closure of a small number of energy intensive industrial sites and a national reduction in the use of coal in electricity generation. We are on course to reach our target of a 34% reduction in emissions by 2020 (2005 baseline). However, transport emissions

remain stubbornly static and are currently the same as they were in 2009. Emerging digital technologies and the growth in the use of electric vehicles present Kent with an exciting opportunity to lead the shift to smart, flexible and low emission transport.

- Water, both too much and too little, continues to be an area of concern. Kent has many areas where there is little or no water available for abstraction during dry periods and this will be exacerbated by rising population and development. Conversely, fluvial and surface water flooding remains a significant issue.
- Biodiversity 2010 targets to manage and restore priority habitats were not met and the 2020 targets are also unlikely to be achieved without significant intervention. Growth, climate change and issues such as Ash Dieback are having a significant negative effect on biodiversity in the county.

2.3 The full State of the Environment Report will be made available at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-environment-strategy>, along with a Member Briefing on air quality. Further Member Briefings on energy and climate risk will be produced in 2018-19.

Kent Climate Change Risk Assessment

2.4 In 2016, the Committee on Climate Change undertook a National Climate Change Risk Assessment, which the UK Government has now adopted. The Assessment highlights 6 key significant national risks. A summary of these risks and a very succinct synthesis report can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017>.

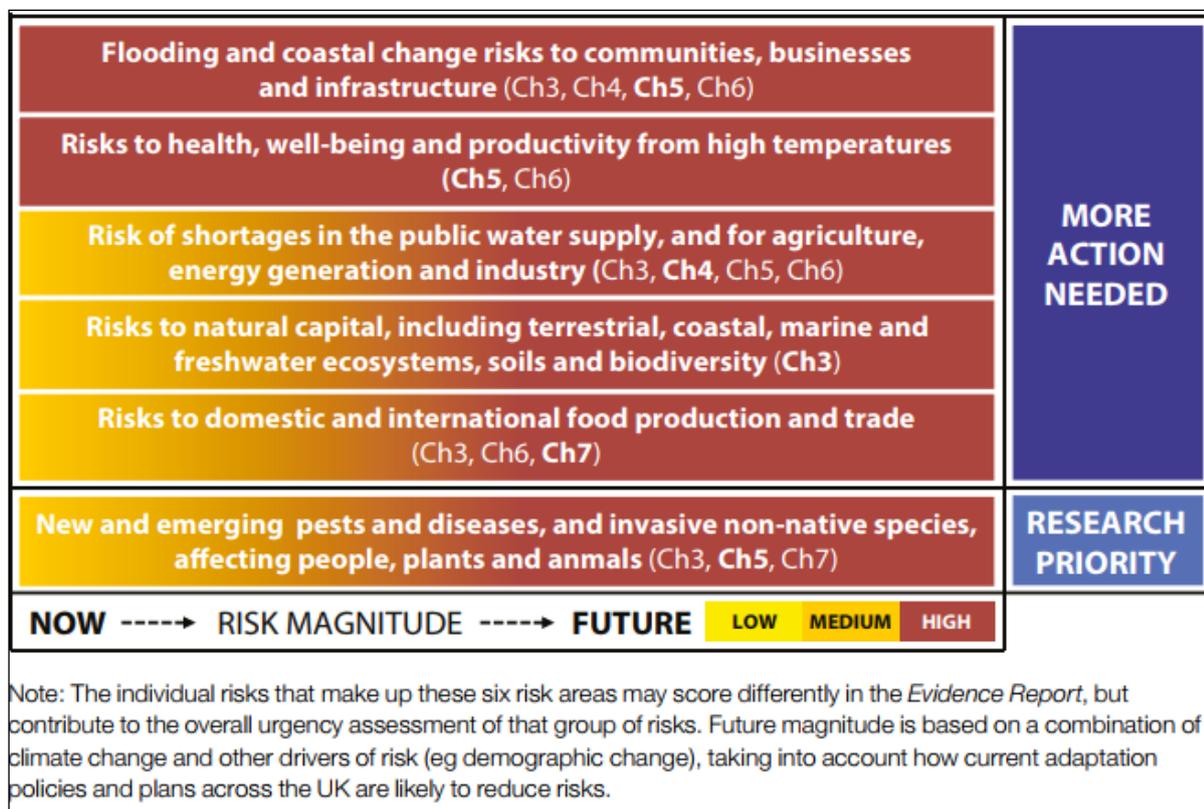


Chart 2: Priority UK climate change risks (Committee on Climate Change, 2016)

2.5 Chart 2 above summarises these risks. This year KCC's Sustainable Business and Communities Service will utilise the National Climate Change Risk Assessment to provide a specific Climate Change Risk Assessment for Kent, identifying Kent's significant risks and any appropriate actions needed.

3. IMPACT REPORT 2017

3.1. The annual Kent Environment Strategy Impact Report (http://www.kent.gov.uk/_media/kcc/documents/impact-report-2017.pdf) is designed to be a snapshot in time, providing a brief update on the key challenges we face in relation to the Kent Environment Strategy. It provides a summary of the range of actions that have been undertaken since the KES was launched in 2016, and identifies the impact these actions are having. Chart 3 shows some of the highlights.

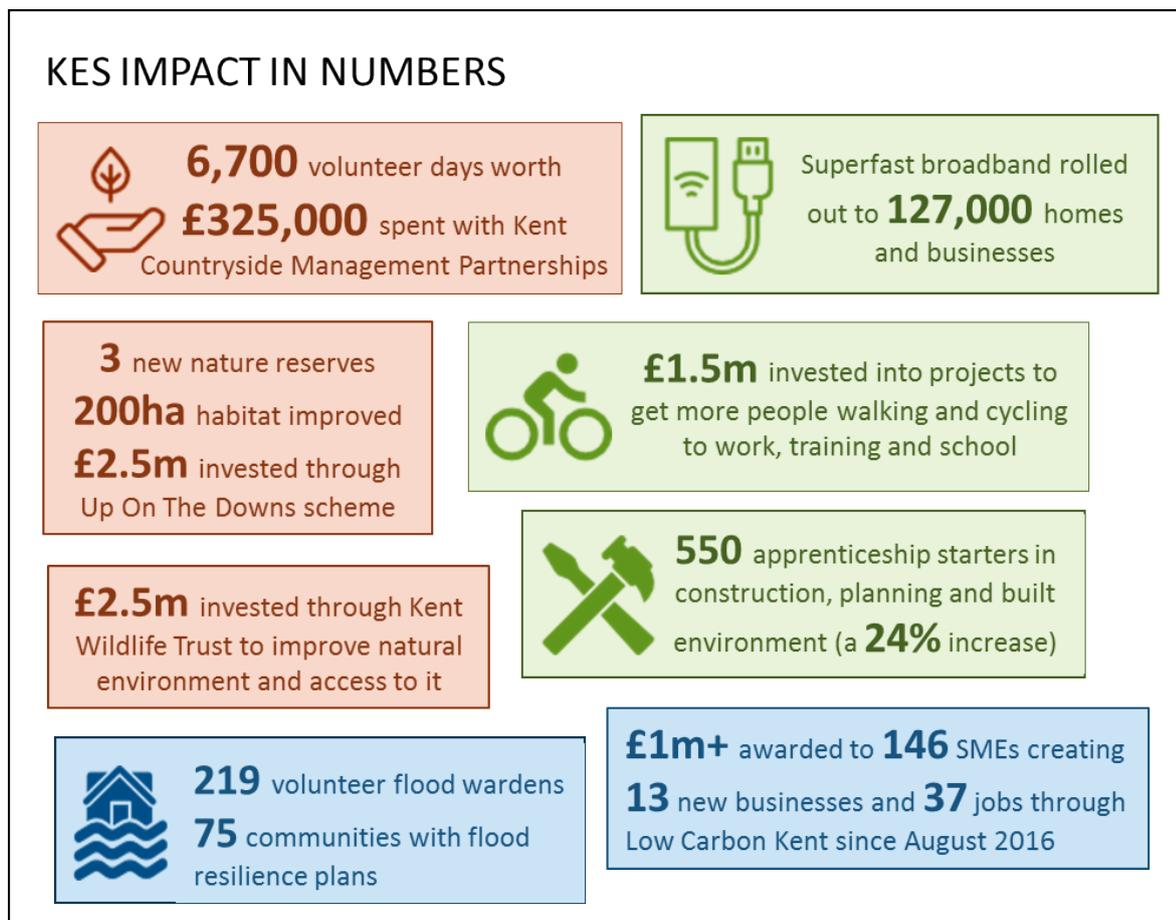


Chart 3: Key statistics highlighting the impact KES activity is having on Kent.

4. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AGAINST KES TARGETS

4.1 Provided below is a summary of progress across each of the three themes of the KES. The full monitoring report can be found at http://www.kent.gov.uk/_media/kcc/documents/Implementation-plan-progress-report-2017.pdf. RAG rating is in relation to delivery of the activity described in the 2017 Implementation Plan (http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/63810/The-Kent-Environment-Strategy-Implementation-Plan-2017.pdf).

Theme 1: Building the foundations for delivery

- 4.2 Theme 1 activities are focused on providing an evidence-based understanding of our environmental risks and opportunities, and developing the mechanisms that will enable delivery of actions on the ground. The activities seek to address gaps in our understanding; influence local, national and EU policies; and plan to manage and build resources, capabilities and change behaviours across all sectors.
- 4.3 Our understanding of the value the natural and historic environment has to our residents and economy continues to grow. Partnership working between health and environmental professionals is strengthening our understanding of how to prescribe greenspace to meet health and wellbeing outcomes. Recommendations are being developed to integrate green infrastructure into planning and investment decisions, and opportunities to ensure that sustainable water management is embedded in local plans have been identified and are beginning to be implemented.
- 4.4 European Union funding has been secured to support the growth of the offshore wind supply chain sector, wood fuels and wider low carbon environmental goods and services sectors, which have been identified as sustainable growth opportunity areas for the county.
- 4.5 There have, however, been some commonly reported risks and issues which are having an impact on the delivery of activities in this theme. Firstly, there is uncertainty on future funding for this agenda, particularly in light of Brexit, as many projects and achievements are currently reliant on EU funding. Insufficient or uncertain funding is also impacting levels of staff resource, particularly those with the necessary specialist skills. Another key risk relates to the need for stronger coordination of activities to tackle Kent-wide issues, particularly in relation to air quality. Activities that are RED RAG rated are:
- Improved understanding of Kent's natural environment through a Natural Capital Assessment.
 - Identifying options and/or establish opportunities for volunteering placements and apprenticeships

2 RED Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	9 AMBER Activity changed and/or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of KES	14 GREEN Activity on track or completed
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Table 1: Action RAG rating for Theme 1 activities in the KES Implementation Plan

Theme 2: Making best use of existing resources, avoiding or minimising negative impacts

- 4.6 Theme 2 activities are focused on ensuring that all sectors are aware of their impact on the environment and know how to take action to avoid or reduce this impact if negative. The emphasis is on existing infrastructure, assets and resources across the public, private and domestic sectors.
- 4.7 The risks and issues reported by partners for Theme 2 relate to national policy uncertainties and resourcing issues which has resulted in some activities being delayed or postponed. Activities that are RED RAG rated are:
- Commissioning a new Landscape Assessment
 - Engaging and discussing CAP reforms
- 4.8 However, there have also been some important achievements. For instance, £3.16m Heritage Lottery Funding has been secured to deliver two habitat

improvement and connectivity projects within the North Downs and Romney Marsh areas over the next four years. There has also been progress in integrating Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) into spatial planning, including Defra funding to undertake three planning demonstration projects in Kent.

- 4.9 A number of key strategies and action plans which support the objectives of this Theme have been finalised and are now in implementation phases, including strategies for fuel poverty, active travel and waste management. These are key partnership documents that are improving resource efficiency and health outcomes for Kent residents.
- 4.10 Businesses are also being supported in delivering efficiencies and maximising opportunities from a growing low carbon sector through the LoCASE Programme. This is a European Funded programme being delivered by partners across the southeast, supporting our transition to a low carbon economy.

2 RED Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	8 AMBER Activity changed or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of KES	15 GREEN Activity on track or completed
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Table 2: Action RAG rating for Theme 2 activities in the KES Implementation Plan

Theme 3: Toward a sustainable future

- 4.11 The focus of Theme 3 is to ensure that Kent’s communities, businesses, environment and services are resilient to future environmental change, whilst delivering wider economic and health opportunities. The evidence on risks and opportunities from Theme 1 is used to influence and develop the plans, strategies and policies in this theme.
- 4.12 Through a number of partnership activities, there is now a better understanding of the fresh and waste water requirements needed to support growth. As part of this learning, the Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (GIF) is being updated and requirements are starting to inform planning decisions such as those relating to Ebbsfleet Garden City and Otterpool Park developments.
- 4.13 There has also been progress with capital projects to reduce the risk of flooding to properties, the promotion of sustainable drainage schemes through local planning, and our energy security requirements are being integrated into the GIF.
- 4.14 Several European Union funded projects have started in 2017, which will increase the capacity of our communities, businesses and decision makers to adapt to the impacts of climate change, particularly from flooding. There has also been national recognition of the Kent Tree Strategy, which is being supported by the Tree Council and Woodland Trust to become national best practice.
- 4.15 Like Themes 1 and 2, the key risks to delivery relate to an uncertain national policy environment resourcing issues. Similarly, these have resulted in some activities being delayed or postponed until adequate resources have been identified and/or the policy situation is clearer. Activities that are RED RAG rated are:
- Provide support and guidance e.g. Kent Design to achieve sustainable growth
 - Share risks and learning in relation to animal and plant disease
 - Attract increased levels of investment into Kent agri-food sector to increase food production
 - Skills development across the land, rural and community energy sector

4 RED Activity on hold or significantly behind schedule with a risk of non-delivery	2 AMBER Activity changed or timeline revised, but on track for delivery within life of KES	18 GREEN Activity on track or completed
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Table 3: Action RAG rating for Theme 3 activities in the KES Implementation Plan

5. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Significant progress has been made in delivering the Kent Environment Strategy and Implementation Plan and the impact is already being felt across Kent. However, existing and emerging environmental, financial and uncertain policy environment challenges will continue to put pressure on delivery.
- 5.2 The National Climate Change Risk Assessment highlights a number of risks which could have a significant impact on human health and wellbeing, food security, trade, economic growth and community cohesion. To understand how these risks could impact Kent it is recommended that we develop a Kent Climate Change Risk Assessment. The report will identify the key risks for the county, the potential impacts and the activity required to mitigate these risks.
- 5.3 Unprecedented levels of housing growth with knock-on impacts on congestion, increasing energy prices and changes in the way energy is generated, together with growing concern about the impact of air quality on health, makes energy and air pollution key priorities for 2018/19. To address these priorities and to ensure a consistent and uniform approach to air quality and energy issues in Kent, it is recommended that a Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and Action Plan for Kent and Medway is developed.
- 5.4 The proposed strategy will identify priorities for targeted partnership action across the county, building upon existing and planned energy, transport, travel and air quality activities. The aim is to contribute to improved health outcomes by reducing air pollutants, particularly in air quality management areas and localised hotspots as well as delivering co-benefits across public sector partners, businesses and communities. A Kent and Medway Low Emissions Strategy Working Group has been set up to develop the strategy, which aims to have a draft available for consultation in summer 2018. KCC Members will be involved through a Member Task Group and a Kent wide Steering Group.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No significant financial implications as this is a progress report.

8. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 8.1 Activities relating to the KES deliver across all three Strategic Outcomes

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no legal implications of this specific report, although there are specific regulations linked to the environment and air quality which will be taken into consideration as part of the ongoing delivery of the KES Implementation Plan and through the development of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy.

10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 A full EQIA was carried out for the KES. Individual screenings or full EQIA's are being undertaken for actions and projects within the Implementation Plan.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and consider and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste on the challenges outlined, progress made against KES Targets and identification of significant new areas of work.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS – All background documents are indicated in the main body of the text.

15. CONTACT DETAILS

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