

From: Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment  
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To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 3 November 2021

Subject: Development of the Climate Change Adaptation Programme for Kent and Medway

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

**Summary:** This paper updates the Cabinet Committee on the development of the Climate Change Adaptation Programme for Kent and Medway. It outlines the need for cross sector climate adaptation to reduce the vulnerability of Kent's communities, natural environment, and economy to climate change, the 2050 vision of a climate resilient future for the county, and the strategic priorities of the Adaptation Programme across seven key sectors.

**Recommendation(s):**

**The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee** is asked to make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for the Environment on the ongoing development of the Climate Change Adaptation Programme for Kent and Medway.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Climate change is already affecting Kent and Medway. It is crucial that the impacts of climate change are planned for and considered alongside other drivers of social, environmental, and economic change. Planning for climate change and implementing adaptation measures now will reduce the vulnerability of our communities, our natural environment, and our economy to climate change risks. A resilient future for Kent and Medway depends on acting now in response to the main climate risks that Kent and Medway face, in particular higher temperatures, increased flooding and coastal change, more frequent storms and heavy rainfall, drought, and soil erosion (Kent and Medway Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment 2019).
- 1.2 Building on the findings of the Kent and Medway Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment published in 2019, the National Adaptation Programme, and engagement and interviews with our partners during winter 2020/21, Kent County Council (KCC) is currently developing a localised Adaptation Programme for Kent and Medway that identifies actions to be taken across key sectors to adapt to our changing climate.

- 1.3 The Adaptation Programme is being developed to work within existing governance and delivery arrangements for other local strategic priorities such as the Kent Environment Strategy and the Growth and Infrastructure Framework.
- 1.4 The Adaptation Programme will build on existing climate adaptation initiatives being carried out across the county and nationally and identify priority actions to address climate risks and build resilience for the future across Kent's key sectors. It will form a key pillar of Kent County Council's and its partners' response to the climate emergency.

## **2. 2050 Vision - A Resilient Future for Kent and Medway**

- 2.1 By 2050, Kent and Medway will have enhanced its resilience to climate change and will be regarded as a model of excellence for climate adaptation, evidenced by its thriving society, economy and environment.
- 2.2 Collaborative working within and across different sectors and organisations will have resulted in communities, businesses, ecosystems, transport links and utilities becoming more adaptive and resilient to climate shocks and stresses. Public and private sector organisations operating across the county will have implemented measures to ensure that their assets, services, and infrastructure are resilient to climate risks. The effectiveness of these measures will be systematically monitored and evaluated as our climate continues to change, and new risks and opportunities for action will be periodically assessed.
- 2.3 Climate change adaptation will be embedded into all key policy areas, in particular the Kent Environment Strategy and its subsequent revisions. Climate adaptation will be strategically implemented and embedded within investment decision making, procurement processes, and governance.

## **3. The Adaptation Programme - Strategic Priorities**

- 3.1 To ensure a resilient future for Kent and Medway, the Adaptation Programme will integrate adaptation into seven key sectors across Kent and Medway (agriculture, natural environment, people and the built environment, local government, transport, industry, and utilities) and build resilience to climate change over time by developing each sector's capacity to adapt to current and future climate impacts. Collaboration between a range of organisations that operate or have influence in Kent and Medway is critical for building climate resilience, and the implementation of the Adaptation Programme will require integrated, multi-sector actions across the seven key sectors.
- 3.2 Each of the seven key sectors will have a dedicated chapter in the Adaptation Programme outlining strategic priorities and what needs to be done to achieve them. Currently, the strategic priorities for each of the sectors are as follows:
  - 3.2.1 **Agriculture:** Ensure that Kent's emblematic agricultural sector continues to thrive and take advantage of new opportunities as our climate changes. This

will require measures to maintain and improve productivity as our summers become hotter and drier and our winters warmer and wetter, restoration and improvement of soil health, and preparedness for the arrival of new pests and diseases.

- 3.2.2 **Natural environment:** Kent's natural environment – including its unique protected ecosystems – will be able to adapt to our changing climate through strengthening ecological resilience and by supporting adaptation in other sectors. A more integrated, whole sector approach to adaptation will be developed to prepare Kent's natural environment better for the impacts of ongoing climate change.
- 3.2.3 **People and the built environment:** Ensure that Kent's homes and built environment remain healthy, safe, and attractive places to live, work, and visit as summer temperatures rise and flood risk increases. This will involve mitigating the impacts of extreme summer temperatures in urban areas through targeted measures to reduce the urban heat island effect, nature-based and property level flood management techniques, and increasing water use efficiency across the county.
- 3.2.4 **Local government:** Local authorities will work together to systematically incorporate climate adaptation into planning, commissioning, procurement processes and long-term decision-making in order to safeguard residents and ensure the quality and continuity of the key services that they provide.
- 3.2.5 **Transport:** Ensure that Kent's transport networks are resilient to today's extreme weather events and prepared to meet the needs of a growing population while supporting economic growth as our climate changes. Over land, Kent's road and rail network must be prepared for more severe weather, in particular longer and more intense extreme heat events and flooding. At sea, disruption to the county's vital port activities resulting from storm events must be minimised.
- 3.2.6 **Industry:** Kent's businesses will be resilient to extreme weather and the challenges of climate change, but also prepared to take advantage of new business opportunities that these may bring. A growing number of Kent businesses are on the route to Net Zero, and the Adaptation Programme will take advantage of this to systematically build adaptation understanding and action into mitigation activities already underway across Kent's business community.
- 3.2.7 **Utilities:** A utilities sector resilient to extreme weather and future changing climate as Kent's population increases and demand grows. Key to resilience in the sector will be the maintenance of a safe and reliable water supply for a growing population and drier climate, and a secure and reliable energy supply as we experience more intense and prolonged extreme heat events and more frequent and severe storms and floods.
- 3.3 The Adaptation Programme will plan for, adapt, and build resilience to projected future climate risks in a way that encourages cross-sector

collaboration and provides cross-sector co-benefits. In this way, no matter what the future brings, our county will be a better place for our communities, our economy, and our natural environment.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The Adaptation Programme is being developed within the budget of the Sustainable Business and Communities team. Earlier stakeholder surveying, follow up interviews and initial drafting was funded from the Interreg VA 2 Seas Programme's STAR2CS Project, which was led by Kent County Council (project finished in August 2021).
- 4.2 Specific adaptation measures that may be recommended in the final plan will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis in terms of how they could be funded. The plan will focus on mainstreaming adaptation and resilience into business as usual, while external funding sources are sought to optimise outcomes where required.

#### **5. Policy Framework**

- 5.1 The Adaptation Programme is directly linked to the Kent Environment Strategy and its Implementation Plan and informs the Economic COVID-19 Recovery Plan - Renewal and Resilience. It is also relevant to the Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework, Local Transport Plan 4 (and will inform Local Transport Plan 5), the extended Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Kent's Public Health Outcomes.
- 5.2 The Adaptation Programme supports the following priority actions of Setting the Course – Kent County Council's Interim Strategic Plan: Work with our partners to deliver essential support for local businesses; Champion the rural and green economy; and deliver Net Zero for Kent by 2050 and promote climate resilience.

#### **6. Next Steps and Timescales**

- 6.1 We will continue to engage with partners to progress the Adaptation Programme, in particular establishing the actions that need to be taken in the short, medium, and long-term to achieve the strategic priorities for each sector outlined in section 3. Subject to comments from Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, the Adaptation Programme will continue to be developed over the next three months and will return to the Environmental and Transport Cabinet Committee for endorsement prior to wider consultation.

#### **7. Recommendation(s)**

**The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee** is asked to make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for the Environment on the ongoing development of the Climate Change Adaptation Programme for Kent and Medway.

## **8. Background Documents**

Kent Environment Strategy – [www.kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy](http://www.kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy)

Climate Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway –  
<https://www.kent.gov.uk/environment-waste-and-planning/climatechange/kents-changing-climate/climate-change-risk-and-impact-assessment>

## **9. Contact details**

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