

Kent County Council Draft Environment Plan



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1. Executive Summary

Kent boasts a rich and diverse environment, full of internationally important habitats, nature reserves and protected landscapes that enhance Kent's natural beauty and ecological health. Our environment is crucial for sustainable economic and social growth,

supporting a range of industries, driving innovation in green technologies and fostering community identity and cohesion. And a healthy environment that provides access to green open spaces also improves the mental and physical wellbeing of our residents.

Kent County Council (KCC) has invested significantly in enhancing our environment, reducing our own environmental footprint and supporting our residents and businesses to do the same. However, the Kent environment faces unprecedented challenges from climate change, air and water pollution and biodiversity loss, with communities and industries across the county already dealing with the environmental, economic and health related consequences of these challenges.

The size and scale of this task means that we need to transform the way we think and the way we operate, harnessing the multiple benefits that come from considering environmental improvement alongside sustainable economic growth and population health.

This plan aims to do just that, through identifying six environmental goals that we will embed in our business, whilst enabling and inspiring all parts of our community to work together to deliver environmental step change. These goals are:

1. Deliver green energy and reduce carbon emissions
2. Adapt to our changing climate
3. Reduce flood risk and effectively manage water resources
4. Protect and improve the natural and built environment
5. Manage resources through a circular economy
6. Conserve and promote Kent's natural beauty and heritage.

Delivery will be focused on the six interconnected themes of delivery through partnership, leveraging private equity and investment, strategic planning, our buildings, our assets and delivering social value through our commissioning activities.

Each of these goals has a set of clear actions that are flexible and scalable, enabling activity to be responsive to opportunities and resources as they arise. The action plan will be reviewed by Members annually, with progress published on the kent.gov website.

2. Introduction



Kent, the Garden of England, boasts a unique, rich and diverse environment that has supported its reputation of lush landscapes, fertile farmland and stunning gardens for centuries. With habitats ranging from woodlands, wetlands and extensive coastal areas to the UK's only desert, Kent is home to numerous endangered species and a stunning variety of flora and fauna. The county's internationally important sites, national nature reserves, protected landscapes and local wildlife sites contribute significantly to conservation and environmental sustainability, enhancing Kent's natural beauty and ecological health.

The environment in Kent is crucial for sustainable economic and social growth. Natural resources support industry and agriculture, while the county's landscapes and biodiversity attract tourism and investment. Sustainable practices and green initiatives create jobs and drive innovation in low-carbon technologies. Sustainable economic development promotes prosperity and a prosperous local economy supports a good quality of life. Additionally, Kent's cultural and heritage significance fosters community identity and cohesion, highlighting the vital connection between the environment and economic and social stability.

Protecting and preserving Kent's environment ensures better health outcomes for communities. Healthy ecosystems provide essential resources for agriculture and fisheries, supporting food security. Clean air and water reduce exposure to pollutants, lowering the risk of disease. Access to green spaces improves mental well-being and provides opportunities for physical activity, enhancing quality of life and reducing healthcare costs through prevention.

Through consistent and focused effort, KCC has made significant progress towards its environmental priorities over recent years:

- Reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from its own estate and operations by over 50% and bringing together a county wide partnership with collective actions targeting Net Zero 2050 for the county.
- Implementing comprehensive waste reduction initiatives and recycling programs, significantly reducing landfill waste.
- Enhancing biodiversity through local habitat restoration projects and the creation of greenspace as well as directly managing 1,500 hectares of land in its country parks to protect and restore nature and support health and wellbeing through community access.
- Investing in renewable energy projects including solar panel installations on public buildings and schools and supporting residents to access schemes to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- Leveraging millions of pounds of UK government and EU funding to support the decarbonisation of businesses and buildings in the county and to stimulate the green skills market.
- Implementing natural flood management techniques such as wetland restoration and tree planting to enhance water retention and reduce flood risks, as well as schemes that directly protect Kent residents and businesses from flooding.
- Integrating climate resilience into its heritage conservation work to protect heritage assets from environmental threats.

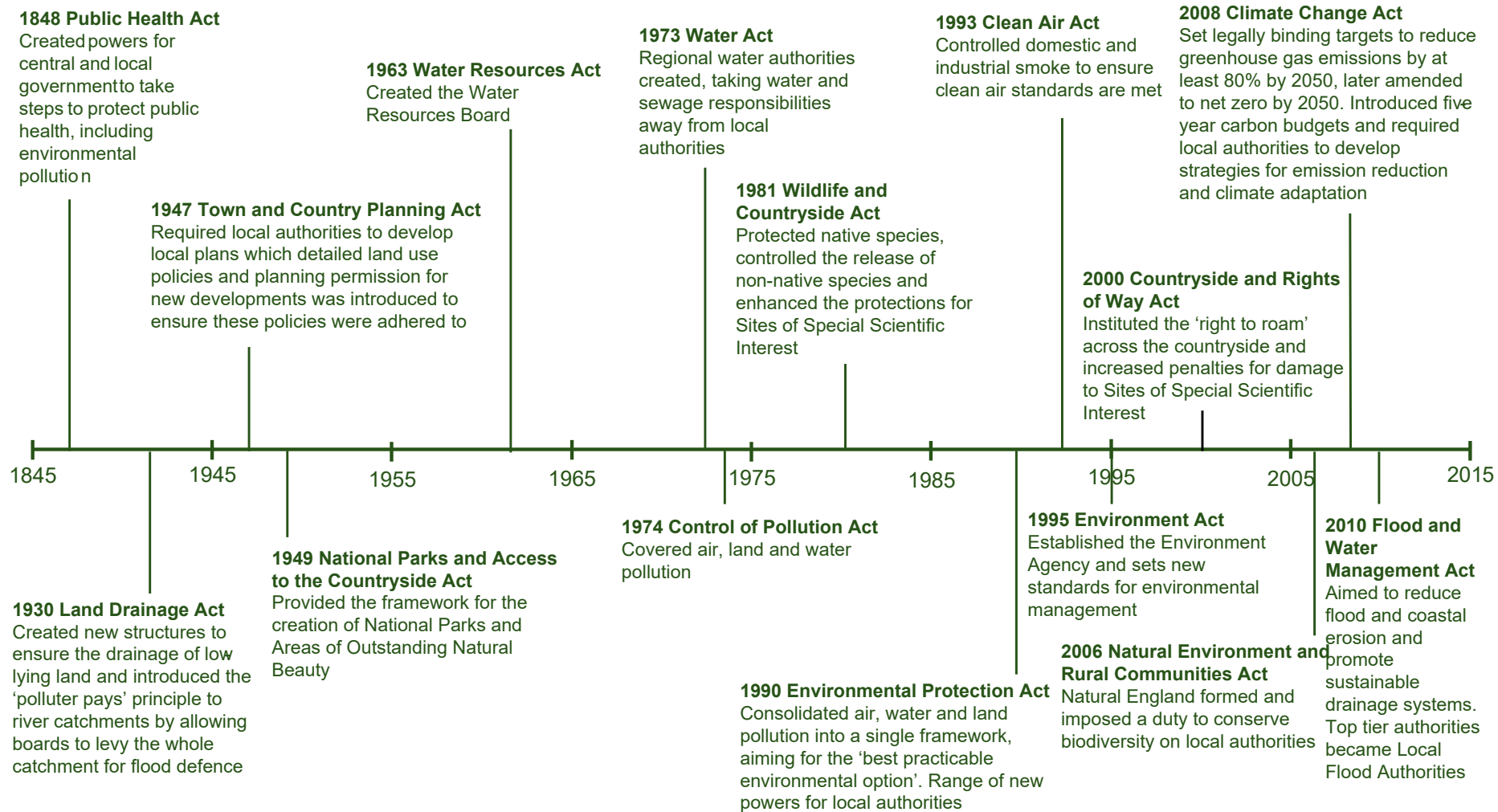
More detail on environmental achievements in 2023/24 can be found in Appendix 1.

However, despite these significant efforts, Kent's environment continues to face unprecedented challenges. Climate change is bringing warmer seasons, more extreme weather patterns leading to flooding and drought and coastal erosion from rising sea levels. Air and water pollution from traffic and industrial activities impact our terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. And biodiversity loss due to fragmented habitats and overdevelopment pressurises the county's infrastructure and natural resources. Communities and industries across the county are already having to deal with the consequences of these challenges.

The size and scale of this task means that we need to transform the way that we think and the way we operate, embedding environmental priorities into our operations whilst leveraging our role as community leaders to inspire all parts of the Kent community to work together to deliver environmental step change.

3. Policy Landscape

3.1. National context



The chart above provides a snapshot of some of the key pieces of legislation that have sought to (directly or indirectly) protect or enhance the natural environment, dating back to the industrial revolution and the first Public Health Act in 1848.

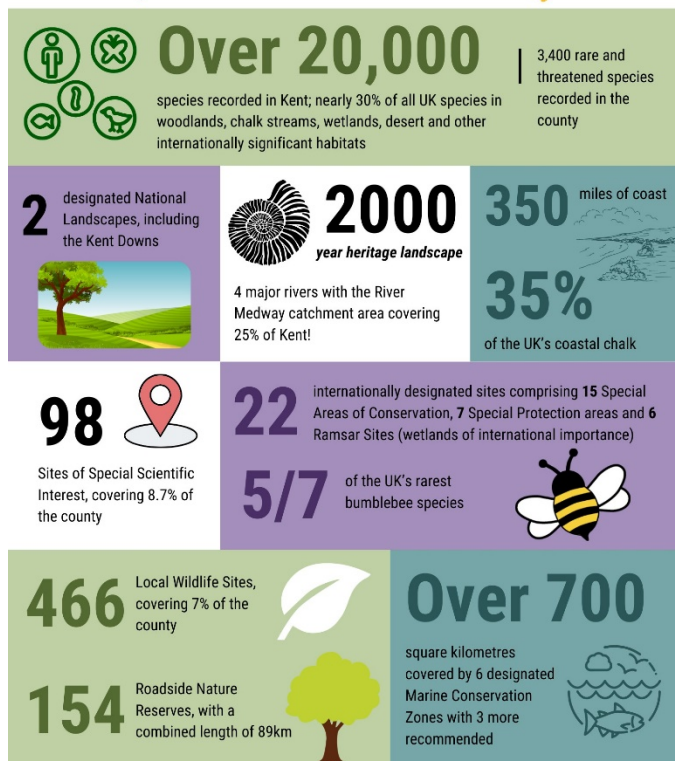
The pace of legislative change accelerated significantly between the Environmental Protection Act in 1990 and the Flood and Water Act in 2010, in response to international commissions and treaties, pan-national directives and national issues. With this acceleration has increasingly come additional powers, duties and responsibilities for local authorities.

3.2. Kent context

ENVIRONMENT PLAN

SUSTAINABLE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Kent's uniquely rich habitat and biodiversity
What's so special about Kent?



Kent's rich biodiversity, natural and heritage landscapes not only support ecological health but also attract tourism and inward investment, fostering economic growth. Sustainable practices and green initiatives create new markets and green jobs, driving innovation in low-carbon technologies. Additionally, access to green spaces, a stronger connection to nature, clean air and water, and better climate resilience enhance physical and mental health, reducing healthcare costs through prevention and improving residents' quality of life.

As legislative duties and responsibilities on local authorities increased, KCC invested in teams, increased its knowledge and expertise and worked with partners. We have delivered groundbreaking projects, improved performance and made a significant difference to the Kent environment. We also innovated, tested and pushed boundaries and came to realise that if we were truly going to respond to the challenges being faced by the environment, addressing the environmental determinants that enable healthy lives including housing, transport and the natural and built environment with a systems approach was needed.

The development of strategy formed a key part of this response:

2016 Kent Environment Strategy

The 2016 Kent Environment Strategy aims to balance environmental protection with economic and community well-being. It focuses on building delivery foundations, optimising resource use while minimising impacts and fostering a sustainable future through cross-sector collaboration to enhance natural assets, support growth and create vibrant communities.

2020 Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

The 2020 Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy builds on the 2016 Kent Environment Strategy, outlining pathways to net-zero emissions by 2050, improving air quality and promoting clean energy. It integrates sustainable practices across sectors, enhances public sector decision-making and fosters low carbon business growth to address the climate emergency and support resilient economic growth.

Framing Kents Future 2022-26

Framing Kent's Future (2022-2026) prioritises economic recovery, infrastructure development, environmental protection and improved health and social care services. It aims to level up Kent by reducing disparities, ensuring necessary infrastructure, achieving Net Zero by 2050 and integrating new technologies for better care and support.

The strategies prioritise fostering economic growth, enhancing public health through prevention and improving quality of life and ensuring environmental sustainability. They emphasise collaboration, innovation and the use of cutting-edge technologies to boost efficiency and productivity, all while addressing significant financial and environmental challenges.

3.3. A long-term vision for the UK environment

In 2018, the UK government set out a long-term approach to environmental protection and improvement in its [25-year Environment Plan](#). This plan highlighted the natural environment as our most precious inheritance that we must protect and enhance for future generations. Its long-term goals (as shown in figure 1) include cleaner air and water, thriving plants and animals and a cleaner, greener country for everyone. By fostering better connections to nature, the plan aims to make our generation the first to leave the environment in a better state than we found it, ensuring a protected and enhanced natural environment for the future.

This ambitious plan was followed by the groundbreaking [Environment Act 2021](#), described as a turning point for nature recovery. This world-leading legislation aims to improve environmental protection in the UK by setting legally binding targets to enhance air and water quality, tackle waste, increase recycling, halt species decline and improve the natural environment. The Act imposes greater duties and responsibilities on local authorities, including developing and implementing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, conserving and enhancing biodiversity, reforming waste and recycling services, reducing pollution from vehicles and industry and ensuring community involvement in decisions affecting local green spaces. The Act also requires the government to consider the environmental impact of all decision-making processes. Importantly, the Act does not replace existing policies but works alongside them to enhance their reach and impact.

The [2023 Green Finance Strategy](#), titled “Mobilising Green Investment,” aims to position the UK as a global leader in green finance by focusing on five key objectives: enhancing the growth and competitiveness of UK financial services, mobilising private sector investment in the green economy, integrating climate and environmental risks into financial decision-making to ensure financial stability, incorporating nature and biodiversity into financial strategies and aligning financial flows with the UK’s climate and nature goals. These objectives collectively support the transition to a sustainable economy and reinforce the UK’s commitment to addressing climate change and environmental sustainability, with the aim of accelerating global growth in green finance. The strategy provides several avenues to support and enable KCC to develop a model for financing its new and existing responsibilities. However, it also places the responsibility for funding these initiatives back on local authorities. To meet its environmental

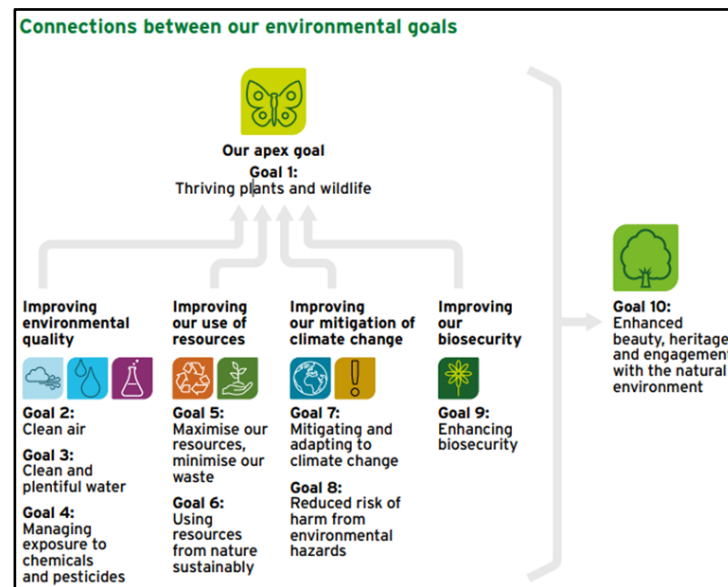


Figure 1 – the 10 environmental goals contained in the 25-year Environment Plan

aspirations, KCC will need to attract and facilitate investment in projects and infrastructure through partnerships with stakeholders, including the private sector and financial institutions.

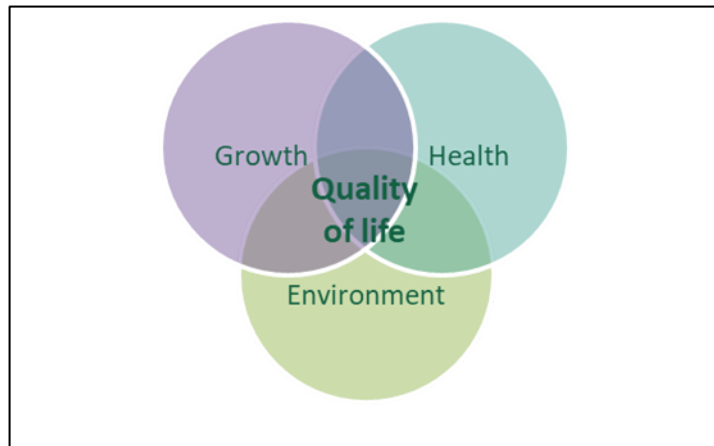
Following the Green Finance Strategy, the government released the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#), the first revision of the UK's 25-Year Environment Plan. This delivery plan outlines how the government will collaborate with landowners, communities and businesses to achieve environmental goals. The plan focuses on ten key areas: thriving plants and wildlife, clean air, clean and plentiful water, managing exposure to chemicals, maximising resources while minimising waste, sustainable use of natural resources, climate change mitigation and adaptation, reducing environmental hazards, enhancing biosecurity and improving the beauty and engagement with the natural environment.

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 sets ambitious targets to improve air quality, ensure clean and plentiful water, halt biodiversity decline, and enhance resource efficiency and waste reduction. It also aims to increase woodland cover and protect marine environments. By integrating environmental goals with economic strategies and health outcomes, the plan seeks to foster a more sustainable and prosperous future that enhances public well-being.

4. Delivering in Kent

4.1. Our environment plan

Given this legislative and policy framework, our environment plan outlines KCC's role in delivering the national agenda locally, focusing on holistically protecting and enhancing the Kent environment. Our plan does not seek to replace previous strategies and policies but acts as an umbrella plan to enhance and, where possible, improve them. It also links to wider strategies that are not specifically environmentally focused such as those delivering health, growth, transport and asset management but where environmental outcomes can be achieved as a co-benefit. This approach allows us to build on past work and progress, enabling us to move further and faster, driven by a consistent framework that addresses both current and future challenges.



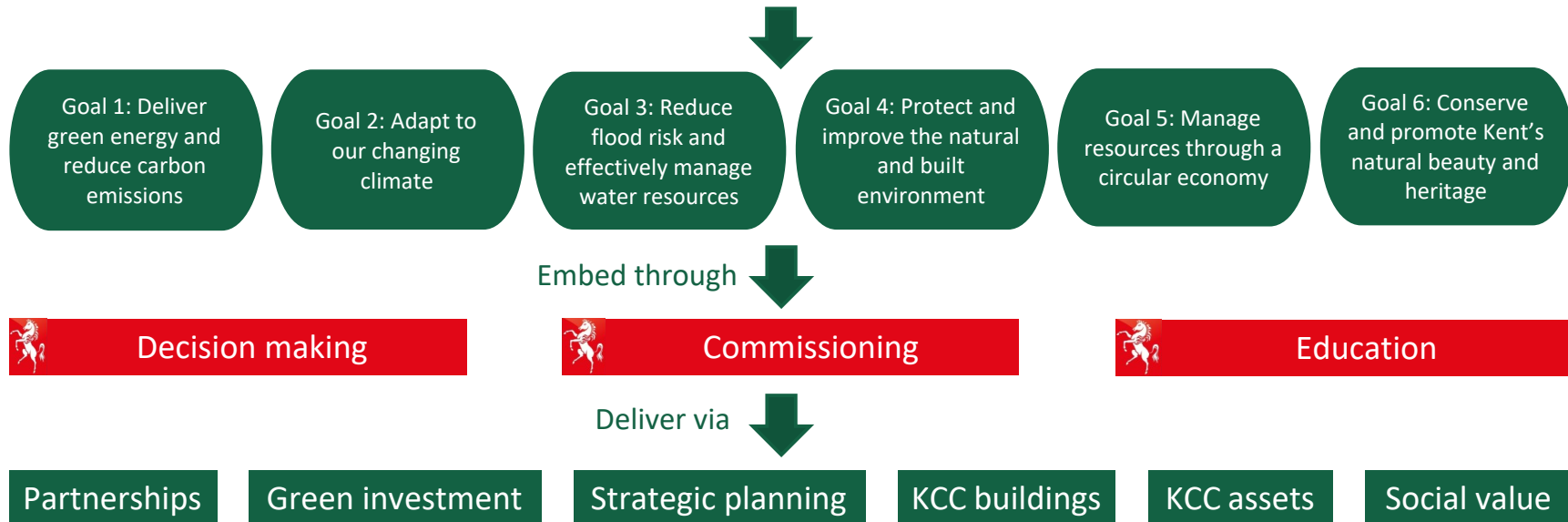
Much like the government's approach, our environment plan recognises the interconnected principles of environment, growth and health. By integrating these principles, the plan aims to align with existing and new strategies, leading to outcomes that are more sustainable, affordable and equitable. By working closely with policymakers and delivery teams, the environment plan will support mutual progress and activities, providing significant co-benefits without requiring fundamental changes to existing or future work.

Our aim is to safeguard and improve our environment, supporting healthy communities and sustainable growth. To achieve this, our plan identifies six goals that we will embed across the organisation, ensuring that environmental considerations are integrated into how we operate. We will deliver these goals through six interconnected approaches. This is discussed in more detail in the

following sections.



Our aim: A protected and enhanced environment that enables our communities to be healthy and supports the delivery of sustainable growth



4.2. Our goals

Our goals encompass both statutory duties and areas where KCC can influence environmental outcomes through internal and external collaboration and partnerships. These ambitious goals outline KCC's role in delivering the national agenda amidst unprecedented change, challenge and opportunity. The plan focuses on protecting and enhancing the quality of life for Kent's residents through environmental conservation, mitigation, adaptation, protection and careful management of our emissions, natural environment, air, water, heritage and waste.

Kent's future prosperity hinges on a healthy and thriving natural environment that minimises conflicts between growth, health and the environment, allowing us to live within our ecological and financial means. These goals highlight the significant task ahead and

the unique opportunity we have to make a difference for the county and its residents through collaboration, shared knowledge and evidence-based decision-making.

Goal 1



Deliver green energy and reduce carbon emissions

What will we do: enable the delivery of green energy infrastructure in the county, deliver net zero greenhouse gas emissions across KCC's estate and operations and collaborate with partners to achieve countywide net zero emissions.

Goal 2



Adapting to a changing climate

What will we do: assess the risks and impacts of climate change and reduce the impact on our residents by adapting to Kent's future climate and more frequent severe weather.

Goal 3



Reduce flood risk and manage water resources effectively

What will we do: mitigate flood risk and contribute to improving community flood resilience, sustainable drainage and water efficiency across the county

Goal 4



Protect and improve the natural and built environment

What we will do: drive nature protection and recovery across the county, reduce air pollution, ensure that our habitats are abundant with wildlife and plants and drive environmentally sustainable development

Goal 5



Manage resources through a circular economy

What we will do: manage materials more efficiently by minimising waste and reusing and recycling materials, enabling the development of a circular economy in Kent

Goal 6

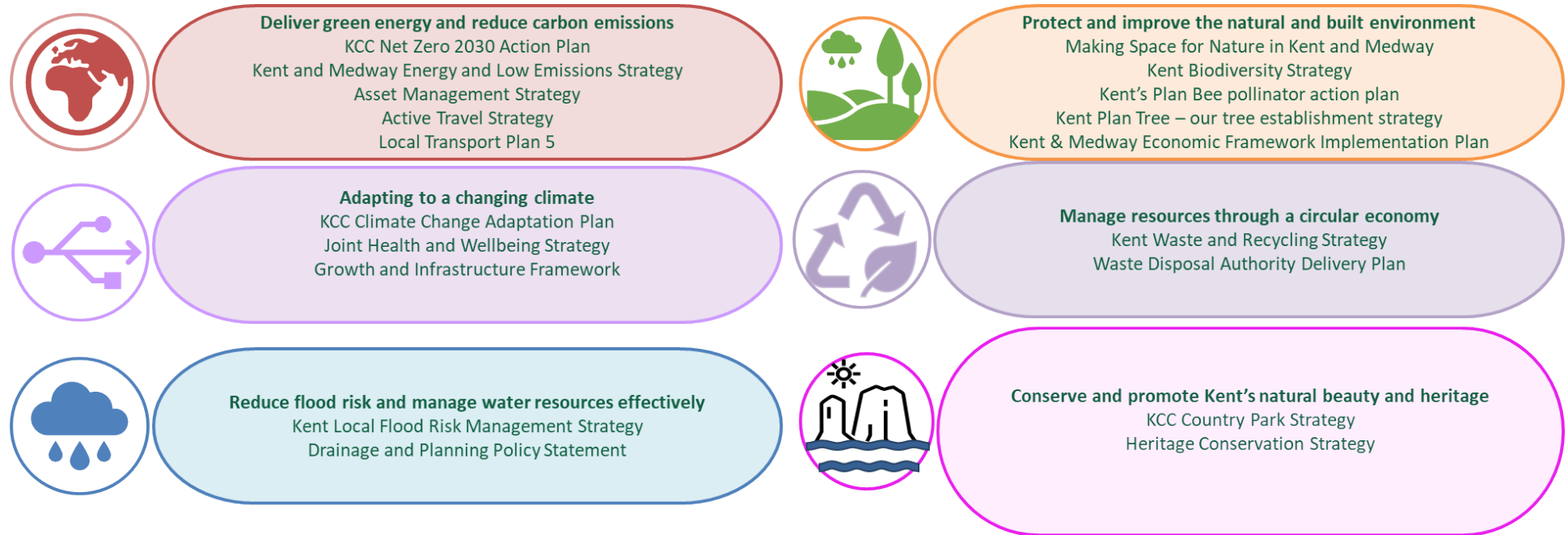


Conserve and promote Kent's natural beauty and heritage

What we will do: Ensure that Kent's historical environment is sustained for future generations and promote public engagement with our unique countryside and natural beauty

4.3. Linked strategies

There are a number of subject specific strategies and plans that directly deliver these goals and these are shown in the graphic below. Other organisational strategies also contribute to the delivery of these goals, which will be enhanced even further as these goals are embedded into the organisation.



4.4. Embedding these goals in the organisation

Consistently making informed decisions that consider climate, environmental and health impacts through an assessment and guidance tool will significantly enhance our environmental outcomes. Data and evidence will drive decision-making, enabling us to make informed choices about policies, projects and programs by placing the best available environmental information at the heart of policy development and implementation. This rigorous approach will support existing processes by diversifying data sources, moving the organisation from intuitive or perceived environmental impacts to evidence-based choices that lead to genuinely

informed recommendations or decisions. Shared decision-making across partnerships using the same data and intelligence will also enable collaborative solutions and more efficient delivery models, balancing risk and innovation while leveraging the expertise of environmental specialists to support the entire process.

Enhancing commissioning and procurement processes to include climate, environment and sustainability considerations through an improvement toolkit will enable KCC to meet the needs for goods and services in a way that achieves value for money on a whole-life basis while minimising environmental damage and focusing on inequalities by encouraging suppliers to target vulnerable groups or areas that are disproportionately affected by environmental issues. Embedding sustainability into procurement will advance KCC's environmental objectives while driving innovation in the supply chain and generating social and economic benefits for local communities. By targeting high-value contracts, those with the greatest reach or those supporting vulnerable groups for climate adaptation first, we can refine new sustainability requirements with large suppliers before extending them to the SME business community, minimising disadvantages for small businesses in the county.

Increasing awareness of environmental issues and opportunities and the corresponding health impacts through generalised and targeted training, webinars, networking opportunities, hands-on experience and improving our knowledge bank will enable all employees, leaders and elected members to better understand their roles and responsibilities in achieving the organisation's environmental objectives. By providing a deeper understanding of the environment, we will enhance problem-solving, considering risks and mitigation measures and providing the context needed to innovate practical and impactful solutions to environmental problems while continuing to deliver value for money. Outside of specialist input, designated sustainability champions within the organisation will drive initiatives and keep sustainability at the forefront of daily operations by supporting those around them. Regular updates and communications about progress, successes, and challenges related to the environment plan will ensure stakeholders are well-informed and enable the dissemination of information and requests for data internally and externally.

4.5. Outcomes

Outcomes are crucial to our environment plan as they represent the tangible impacts of our actions and policies. These outcomes will help us determine the effectiveness of our environmental activities and strategies. They will hold us accountable, ensuring that our organisational commitments to sustainability are met, provide opportunities to learn from past actions and make better decisions for the future.

Key outcomes for the environment, along with linked outcomes for the shared growth and health agendas, are shown in the table below:

Environmental outcomes:

- Achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions, significantly reducing the county's carbon footprint and improving air quality.
- Facilitating green energy infrastructure, promoting the use of renewable energy sources and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
- Assessing risks and impacts to inform strategy and action to support preparation, response and recovery from climate-related events and minimise damage to ecosystems, infrastructure and the historic environment.
- Implementing effective flood risk management and sustainable drainage systems, reducing the occurrence and severity of flooding.
- Improving water efficiency, conserving water resources, maintaining natural water cycles and reducing pollution.
- Protecting and improving natural habitats, ensuring that wildlife and plant species thrive and resilience and functionality is enhanced.
- Minimising waste through efficient resource management, reducing landfill use, conserving natural resources and reducing the need for raw material extraction.
- Utilising advanced technology such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), geographic information system (GIS), drones and remote sensing to monitor and manage climate risks and opportunities, increasing flood protection and management and providing early warning systems for extreme weather events reducing the impact on communities.
- Enhancing data collection and analytic capabilities, leading to better decision making and more effective environmental management approaches

Growth outcomes:

- Investing in green energy and climate-resilient infrastructure, creating jobs in the county, stimulating economic growth
- Successfully implementing green energy strategies, positioning KCC as a sustainability leader and attracting recognition and investment in future projects
- Creating jobs in conservation, environmental management, eco-tourism, recycling, reuse and remanufacturing in new and existing businesses across the county, driving innovation and new business opportunities
- Increased availability of training programmes and skills development in green technologies and sustainable practices leading to higher employment rates in this sector and enhanced collaboration between educational institutions, businesses and local authorities to develop relevant skills
- Implementing circular economy principles, leading to the development of more comprehensive and integrated policy frameworks
- Monitoring and reporting on carbon emissions and energy, enhancing transparency and accountability and fostering trust among stakeholders

- Enhancing institutional capacity to manage climate risks and implement adaptation strategies

Health outcomes:

- Focusing on prevention to create a healthier, more resilient community that can thrive in a sustainable environment
- Reducing health inequalities by identifying and providing targeted climate adaptation for vulnerable groups most susceptible to climate impacts, such as care homes, schools, hospitals, pregnant women, and coastal communities
- Reducing air pollution leading to fewer respiratory and cardiovascular diseases
- Improving greenspaces and natural and heritage environments, leading to better mental health, reduced stress and promotion of relaxation
- Increasing the use of local renewable energy sources, reducing dependence on imported fuels, enhancing energy security and lowering costs for residents
- Increasing adaptive measures, reducing health risks from heat stress and vector borne diseases and mitigating anxiety by ensuring protective measures are in place
- Encouraging active lifestyles by providing access to quality green spaces and natural environments, facilitating public engagement through volunteerism
- Promoting a circular economy, reducing waste and increasing recycling leading to lower levels of pollution and increasing public awareness about sustainable practises
- Providing educational opportunities through engaging with Kent's natural and historical environments, enhancing public knowledge and appreciation of the local heritage and fostering social cohesion
- Focusing on improving data collection and analytic capabilities for climate impacts on health, leading to better decision making

4.6. Delivery approach

The priorities within our environment plan cannot be delivered in isolation, they are all interrelated and co-dependent. Sustainable and long-term progress in any area can only be achieved with support from other areas, with each underpinning the success of the others. Different areas of Kent also have different environmental needs, challenges and opportunities that relate not only to the geology and natural environment of the area but also to the range of environmental, social and economic factors that influence people's mental and physical health. We will therefore focus our delivery on six interconnected delivery approaches.



Partnerships

Our environmental objectives are complex and far-reaching, and no one organisation can achieve them alone. We will leverage our statutory and soft powers and our position as community leaders to collaborate with our communities and both private and public sector partners. By joining up services and activities, we aim to achieve the best possible outcomes for the county.



Private finance

The urgency to protect our environment and respond to the climate emergency is now. Given the current national financial landscape for local authorities, funding these necessary measures is challenging. We will explore alternative delivery models that reduce reliance on public funds and find new, affordable ways to finance our green ambitions.



Strategic planning

The national planning policy framework recognises that environmental issues transcend council boundaries. Effective environmental solutions require collaboration across administrative lines. By aligning local plans or strategic statements, we can set broader environmental objectives and develop sustainable local plans that deliver greener infrastructure and attract inward investment. Every climate action, policy, and strategy should aim to improve health and wellbeing, and every health action, policy, and strategy should mitigate and prevent negative health impacts from climate change



Our buildings

Our buildings provide essential services to Kent residents, such as education, care facilities and cultural connectivity. By deploying a coordinated approach to decarbonisation and adaptation, we can ensure that any appraisal of a building's worth includes its environmental impact and potential to support future environmental outcomes. Targeting buildings with the most impact or potential will help drive down maintenance costs and contribute to our environmental goals.



Our assets

KCC owns an extensive portfolio of assets, including vehicles, equipment, land, historic assets, highways and investment assets. By embedding our environmental priorities in decisions related to the use, management and disposal of these assets, we can improve our environmental impact across the organisation and beyond, supporting evidence-based approaches and maximising co-benefits.



Social value

KCC is committed to social value by applying social value criteria to contracts, aiming to leverage social value from contracts up to £1bn annually to support local community organisations and outcomes. By developing community projects that enhance conservation efforts, renewable energy development, sustainable infrastructure or community resilience, we can channel resources from public spending into environmentally focused projects. This approach could also serve as a funding stream for future environmental projects and activities.

4.7. Funding

KCC's Environment Plan has been developed by base funded staff from the Environment and Circular Economy Division, and at no additional cost to the council. Staff time will be the main resource required to deliver the objectives and actions that are set out in this plan and will be undertaken by base funded staff from all services involved. The objectives and actions are predominantly focused on capacity building through upskilling and knowledge transfer, as well as practical support and collaboration to embed the goals across the organisation and take into account relevant spending controls including Securing Kent's Future.

Actions that self-impose a duty to consider environmental impacts will be undertaken on a no regret basis where it is possible to do so at no net cost to the council.

Changing approaches to how activities are undertaken could present the opportunity to invest further in environmental outcomes. This will be dependent on the development of robust business cases. Where match funding or in-kind funding may be required, it will be assessed on a project-by-project basis.

Financing options underpinned by KCC's emerging green finance strategy will provide an alternative route to funding for environmental outcomes. This will be crucial in funding environmental interventions moving forward, as current budgets are highly unlikely to be able to fund the measures that are needed to meet the scale of the environmental challenge faced in Kent.

4.8. Governance

Ownership of the Environment Plan and all associated strategies and activity will be governed by the KCC Environment Board. Progress and risk and issues will be managed by the board and reported annually to KCC's Corporate Management Team and the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee. The full governance structure for the Environment Plan and roles and responsibilities within it is included in Appendix 2.

5. Measures of Success

Each goal has a set of clear actions that are linked to measures that will enable us to monitor progress. The actions are flexible and scalable, enabling activity to be agile and responsive to opportunities and resources as they arise. To keep this plan live, up to date and relevant, it will be reviewed on an annual basis. This review will consider the progress, successes of the previous year and lessons learned. Additionally, an annual action plan will be developed that will set out the priority actions for the year ahead for each of the six goals each with their own actions and measures. Detailed workstreams, actions and performance measures to achieve the priority actions for the year will be built into the divisional work programmes to ensure consistency of approach and rigour in performance monitoring. Decision making, commissioning and knowledge remain vital to embedding the priorities across the organisation and are therefore inherent across all six goals.

Progress will be reported quarterly to the KCC Environment Board who will also provide an escalation point for issues and ownership of any risks identified in the delivery of the plan. Annual progress in the form of the annual review will be reported to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee and made publicly available to Kent residents via the kent.gov webpages and targeted mailing lists and social media sites.

6. Annual Action Plan 2025-2026

Action	Description	Responsible Division	Key outcomes
Embedding the environment plan across the organisation			
Embed environment plan goals into decision-making activity through the development, testing and implementation of an Environment and Climate Change Impact Assessment	KCC has numerous environmental duties and responsibilities. To ensure these are met, we will integrate environment plan goals into future decisions using a climate and environment impact assessment tool (that also addresses health to prevent inequalities being over looked) and associated guidance.	Environment and Circular Economy	Environment plan goals considered in future decisions
Review and update the Kent State of the Environment report	We will maintain an up-to-date and accurate evidence baseline that reflects current environmental issues and opportunities, informing both current and future activities.	Environment and Circular Economy	An up to date and accurate baseline has been established fully reflecting current environmental issues and opportunities through a Kent State of the Environment report
Conduct a public perception survey to measure how residents perceive, use and prioritise different aspects of the Kent environment	Feedback from Kent residents will be collected through a public perception survey to compare previous and current responses, with results analysed and used to align future initiatives with community needs and priorities	Environment and Circular Economy	Public perception survey and analysis has been completed

<p>Embed justified and proportionate contractual requirements for environmental outcomes and Net Zero targets into commissioning and procurement frameworks</p>	<p>KCC contracts with a range of organisations from different sectors to deliver services on behalf of the council. We will embed contractual requirements for environmental outcomes within our commissioning and procurement processes, ensuring that suppliers incorporate these outcomes into the services they deliver.</p>	<p>Environment and Circular Economy, Commercial and Procurement</p>	<p>Justified and proportionate contractual requirements and supporting guidance for procurement and commissioning staff.</p>
<p>Embed baseline and, where appropriate, specialist environmental knowledge across all services</p>	<p>To better understand the risks and opportunities that the environment poses to KCC, our climate change, energy, natural environment, flood and water, heritage and public health teams will provide generalised and specialist training, webinars, networking opportunities, and knowledge bank updates. This will help all services, leaders, and Members develop a comprehensive understanding of environmental risks and opportunities and how these impact their work.</p>	<p>Environment and Circular Economy, Public Health</p>	<p>Training, webinar and networking opportunities provided to all services, leaders and members and supporting communications updated on KNET pages</p>

Delivery approaches			
Map existing strategies, actions and activity with environmental commitments	To better understand the existing scope and breadth of environmental commitments relevant to the environment plan and goals, enabling the production of a master list of actions and opportunities to inform future focus areas	Environment and Circular Economy	Prioritised master list of strategies, actions and activity linked to the environmental goals
Review and update strategies, actions and activity to improve links to environmental goals and outputs	Based on the priorities identified in the mapping work of all relevant current strategies, actions and activity will be updated to include specific references to environmental goals	Environment and Circular Economy	Evidence of input into KCC strategy renewal
Develop a green finance investment strategy	Research and develop a green finance strategy that includes models of delivery that attracts private finance into nature recovery, climate adaptation and net zero through a cyclical investment portfolio.	Environment and Circular Economy	Green finance strategy created
Align monitoring and evaluation metrics with funding requirements	Develop and align our monitoring and evaluation metrics with funders and create metrics with partners so that bids align with framework objectives, create buy-in and partnership approaches and create opportunities rather than barriers.	Environment and Circular Economy	Evidence of successful funding bids

Create a strategic partnership register	KCC works with a range of partners to deliver its environmental objectives. KCC will create a strategic partnership register to identify environmental opportunities, track progress and evaluate performance. Where appropriate partnership strategies will be updated to directly reference and contribute to our goals.	Environment and Circular Economy, Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance	Strategic partnership register created
Embed sustainability into all aspects of urban planning, including transportation, housing, and economic development to influence Local Planning Authority decision making	The planning system plays a significant role in shaping what Kent looks like moving forward. By making recommendations on what will be included in future planning, KCC can steer activity towards including more considerations for the environment.	Environment and Circular Economy, Growth and Communities	Environment featuring on corporate responses to local plans, housing applications, other developments and countywide guidance through the development of local strategic statements or aligned local plans
Support the delivery of Local Transport Plan 5	Local Transport Plan 5 includes a range of proposals that will improve the environment including delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, Cycling and Walking Improvement Plans and electric vehicle infrastructure	Highways and Transportation	Road-side air quality improves as decarbonisation of travel accelerates

<p>Utilising existing asset databases develop a sustainable land use register for all KCC assets</p>	<p>KCC owns land across the county that could be utilised for development to support green energy, biodiversity or carbon capture. In order to ensure that the best use is made of land for any environmental outcomes, it is important to understand what the portfolio looks like and where it will deliver best value</p>	<p>Energy and Climate Change, Infrastructure</p>	<p>Sustainable land use register created</p>
<p>Update the Kent Design Guide to include the latest evidence-based approaches for climate mitigation and adaptation</p>	<p>The Kent Design Guide is a comprehensive resource aimed at promoting high standards of design in the built environment across Kent. It provides guidance for house builders, architects, engineers, town planners, and other professionals involved in designing and developing buildings and spaces.</p>	<p>Growth and Communities</p>	<p>Kent Design guide in use as a supplementary planning document</p>
<p>Create a detailed decarbonisation plan for the entire KCC estate that identifies the actions needed at a building-by-building level</p>	<p>KCC's property portfolio is extensive. In order to understand and inform decisions on the rationalisation of the estate and the retrofitting requirements for existing buildings, a comprehensive review plan at a building-by-building level is required</p>	<p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>Estate wide decarbonisation plan created</p>

Contribute to the review of the asset management plans that underpin the Asset Management Strategy to include environmental outcomes as a key driver	KCC has existing asset management plans that provide the framework for operation and maintenance of the assets within the Asset Management Strategy. Inclusions of all relevant environmental outcomes in the plans will increase opportunities for coordinated delivery.	Infrastructure	Evidence of environmental considerations being included in asset management plans. Investigate implementing the new Net Zero building standard in the KCC estate for new builds.
Implement sustainable water management practices	To better understand opportunities to improve water management across the KCC estate, climate change officers will undertake building-level water efficiency reviews	Environment and Circular Economy	Evidence of water efficiency reviews being carried out and recommendations for improvements being adopted
Implement indoor air quality management practises in KCC buildings	To better understand issues with indoor air quality across the KCC estate and opportunities to implement management actions to improve the quality of indoor air	Environment and Circular Economy, Infrastructure	Evidence of monitoring of particulates and temperature in KCC buildings and subsequent improvements following corrective action
Review the current system for management and reporting of severe weather events	KCC currently uses SWIMS as its severe weather reporting tool, however engagement is low and therefore the data gathered is of low quality and impact. Conducting a review to determine the ongoing viability of existing systems alongside a market appraisal will identify whether there is a better system available for use.	Environment and Circular Economy	SWIMS review completed

Evaluate the prevalence of volunteerism in environmental projects	Understanding the prevalence and contribution that volunteerism makes to environments projects will define the key drivers and promote increased opportunities for future volunteering	Environment and Circular Economy	Evaluation of volunteerism in environmental projects completed
Provide opportunities through the social value exchange for external investment in environmental outcomes	Align environment social and governance responsibilities with the funding and investment need and provide opportunities for increased external investment into projects and activities that support environmental outcomes.	Environment and Circular Economy	Evidence of external investment in environmental projects through the social value exchange
Improve Active Travel facilities at appropriate KCC locations (minimum standard to be agreed)	Appropriate active travel facilities are explored at KCC locations to support the ability of staff and visitors to choose an active mode of transport when accessing KCC locations.	Environment and Circular Economy Highways and Transportation	Active travel standard agreed and implemented at appropriate KCC locations
Install EV charge points at appropriate KCC locations (for staff / visitors)	Strategic assessment of the need and technical specification of electric vehicle charge points identifies the most appropriate location and infrastructure required to support the installation of charge points at key KCC locations.	Environment and Circular Economy Infrastructure	EV charge points available for use at all appropriate KCC locations
Provide alternative travel options at appropriate KCC locations e.g. car clubs, bike hire etc			

Review opportunities to expand KCC Staff Rewards programme to incentivise net zero actions / behaviours			
Implement Kent's Plan Bee action plan across KCC managed land including highways, public rights of way, corporate estate and country parks			
Work with districts to secure a policy commitment to 20% biodiversity net gain in Kent			
Ensure relevant aspects of the KNP Kent Biodiversity Strategy are embedded within all relevant KCC services			
Development of Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy			
Develop a delivery plan that will implement and monitor the Kent target of establishing 1.5 million trees (one per Kent resident)			
Develop and communicate case studies to promote net zero actions and behaviours			
Develop a net zero awareness raising programme for KCC members and staff			

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Environmental Achievements 2023/24

Appendix 2 – Governance structure for the Environment Plan

