

From: David Wimble, Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 17 July 2025

Subject: Kent County Council – Introduction to Environment and Circular Economy

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: n/a

Future Pathway of report: n/a

Electoral Division: All Divisions

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview and introduction to the Environment and Circular Economy division.

Recommendation(s): The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment.

1. Introduction and policy context

- 1.1. 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 attracting tourism and inward investment, sustainability initiatives drive innovation and create future-ready jobs whilst access to green spaces, clean air and safe water enhance physical and mental health, reducing healthcare costs and improving residents' quality of life.
- 1.2. Kent County Council (KCC) has a key role to play in managing, protecting, and enhancing the Kent environment, not only through a range of legislative duties and responsibilities, but also through work with partners, businesses and residents, inspiring collective action that delivers measurable outcomes for our communities.
- 1.3. The council's Environment Plan (attached at Annex 1) brings all of this together by setting out clear environmental priorities, aligning wider strategies with environmental outcomes and responding to national and local policy drivers. At its core, the plan recognises, at a strategic level, how the principles of environmental stewardship, economic growth and population health are interconnected and by fostering collaboration across team's mutual progress and significant co-benefits can be achieved.

1.4. The Environment Plan sets out an overarching aim, which is a protected and enhanced environment that enables our communities to be healthy and supports the delivery of sustainable growth.

1.5. To achieve this aim, the plan sets out six goals:

- Provide sustainable energy solutions and reduce carbon emissions
- Adapt to our changing climate
- Reduce flood risk and manage water resources effectively
- Protect and improve the natural and built environment
- Manage resources through a circular economy
- Conserve and promote Kent's natural beauty and heritage.

1.6. The approach of the plan is to embed these goals into how the council makes decisions, how it commissions services and through educating and upskilling its staff. Action can then be delivered via work with internal and external partners, through accessing external green investment, through strategic planning, social value and via KCC's buildings and assets.

2. Who we are and what we do

2.1. The Environment and Circular Economy division is responsible for managing the delivery of the Environment Plan, meeting our environmental legislative duties and responsibilities, and bringing together partners to protect and enhance the Kent environment.

2.2. It is one of three divisions in Kent County Council's Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate. The division is organised into two services; Environment and Resource Management and Circular Economy and two shared support teams, Communication and Engagement and Programme and Business Services. The division also acts as the employing authority for the Kent Downs National Landscape team, hosts four of the Countryside Management Partnerships that work across Kent and Medway delivering community projects to maintain and enhance the countryside and also hosts the Kent Resource Partnership that leads work on the resources and recycling agenda.



2.3. Environment

2.3.1. The Environment Service is made up of five specialised teams:

- Natural environment and coast
- Flood and water management

- Country parks and countryside management partnerships
- Energy security and future impacts
- Heritage conservation.

2.3.2. The natural environment and coast team co-ordinates the Kent Nature partnership, led the development of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and delivers KCC's commitments to tree planting, support for pollinators and the coastal and marine environment. The team also provides ecological advice to all Kent planning authorities, including support for biodiversity net gain.

2.3.3. As the Lead Local Flood Authority, the flood and water management team investigate the causes of surface water flooding of homes, works with local communities to increase their resilience to flooding and delivers innovative and impactful flood reduction schemes. The team is a statutory consultee for new developments going through the planning system and works with water companies and other stakeholders to manage Kent's precious water resources, supporting the development of a sustainable water environment in Kent.

2.3.4. The country parks and countryside management partnerships team manages nine country parks and three countryside sites, offering high-quality accessible countryside experiences for over 1.2m visitors a year. Programmes of education, events and activities provide opportunities for connecting with nature alongside vital conservation work and biodiversity enhancement. The team also supports a network of partnerships to enhance greenspaces through education, management, and community engagement.

2.3.5. The energy security and future impacts team co-ordinates work with other KCC teams to develop business cases and secure external funding for environmental improvements to the KCC estate and embed environmental improvement into KCC's commissioning process. The team also supports businesses, community groups and residents to become more energy efficient and enable local energy generation projects and collaborates with partners across the county to embed resilience and adapt to the growing challenges of water scarcity, flooding, and the changing climate.

2.3.6. The heritage conservation team provides advice on the historic environment to KCC, planning authorities and partners, maintains the Kent historic environmental record and the statutory treasure process. The team also carries out archaeological excavations and manages KCC's eight historic windmills contributing to the visitor and tourism industry and the cultural significance of Kent.

2.4. Resource management and circular economy

2.4.1. The Resource Management and Circular Economy Service manages Kent's 650,000 tonnes of municipal waste per year with a strong emphasis on sustainability, circular economy principles and financial efficiency. The service aims to minimise expensive landfill use and

prioritises waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and energy recovery. Where possible, the service aims to process and manage waste within the county, supporting local jobs and reducing environmental impact.

- 2.4.2. As the waste disposal authority, KCC has a statutory duty to arrange for the recycling and disposal of waste collected by Kent's district, borough, and city councils (called waste collection authorities). This involves managing a network of waste transfer facilities where material is bulked and hauled to a range of material reprocessing facilities and managing contracts with those facilities.
- 2.4.3. The service also manages and maintains a network of 19 Household Waste Recycling Centres, which receive over 2.2m visits per year. Here, the emphasis is on providing facilities that enable residents to reuse and recycling as much of their waste as possible.
- 2.4.4. The service collaborates with district, borough, and city councils through the Kent Resource Partnership (KRP). This strategic partnership is responsible for developing the county's long term Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy, a statutory requirement in two tier authority areas.
- 2.4.5. In addition, the service monitors closed landfill sites to ensure environmental compliance and explores sustainable methods for site transformation.
- 2.4.6. Robust data management enables the service to report accurately to DEFRA and monitor emerging waste trends. This insight supports the planning and development of infrastructure to meet evolving service demands.
- 2.4.7. The service also leads projects across Kent aimed at maximising resource reuse, securing funding, and fostering partnerships with third parties to support a more sustainable, circular economy.

3. Achievements in 2024/25

- 3.1. The range of achievements in 2024/25 for each of the goals in the Environment Plan are shown in Annex 2.
- 3.2. This achievements report demonstrates the breadth of work that is delivered through the division and the significant positive benefit that this work delivers for KCC and for communities across the county.

4. Budget

- 4.1. The net budget for the division in 2025/26 is £92.2m. This includes projected income of £26.9m.
- 4.2. 95.7% of this spend (£88.4m) is managed by the Resource Management and Circular Economy service through the delivery of KCC's statutory function as Kent's waste disposal authority. 3.5% (£3.2m) is spent by the Environment

Service, with the remaining 0.7% allocated to staff who support the delivery of work across both services.

4.3. Annex 3 sets out the budget in more detail.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The services within the Environment and Circular Economy division are vital for maintaining and improving Kent's environment, improving community well-being, and supporting economic growth and inward investment.

5.2. KCC's framework of legislative and statutory duties, combined with clear environmental priorities aligned to broader strategic goals, supports our response to national and local policy drivers. This approach helps future-proof our operations and reinforces our commitment to protecting and enhancing the county's natural assets while advancing a circular economy.

6. Recommendation

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment.

7. Annexes

- 7.1. Annex 1 – KCC Environment Plan 2025: <https://kcc-app610/documents/s131139/Annex1EnvironmentPlan2025.pdf>
- 7.2. Annex 2 – Achievements report 2024/25: <https://kcc-app610/documents/s131140/Annex2EnvironmentallInfographics2025.pdf>
- 7.3. Annex 3 – Environment and Circular Economy Divisional Budget 2025/26: <https://kcc-app610/documents/s131141/Annex3ECEbudget202526.pdf>

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