



Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report January 2024

Cover to be updated

Illustrations to be added

DRAFT

Swale Borough Council

Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report January 2024 (looking back at the achievements over 2023)

Background

In June 2019 Swale Borough Council, in common with many other local authorities, passed a motion to declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency.

Swale has some of the most ambitious targets in Kent and the UK, seeking to achieve net zero carbon for our own estate by 2025 and across the borough by 2030. Other Kent local authorities' target dates range from 2030 to 2050.

The motion included the provision of an annual report in January of each year.

This is the fifth annual report covering 2023's activities to address the emergency.

A steering group of councillors and officers meets regularly to progress actions and includes coverage of all service areas across the Council.

The refurbishment of Swale House is almost complete and the Master's House is fully refurbished and most units let out.

Most of our fleet vehicles have been replaced with EVs, this has reduced the carbon footprint of our services. The grounds maintenance contract has seen electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service. The proposed new waste and street cleaning contract will reduce carbon emissions by; re-routing rounds to reduce fuel use by 10-15%, using cleaner more fuel-efficient Euro VI diesel vehicles with an electric lift for the bins and use of EVs for some supervisors and street sweeping vehicles.

The Improvement and Resilience Fund has funding projects which help to tackle the emergency including LED lighting, tree planting, the car club, EV charging points and air quality measures.

We are working with KCC to explore in more detail measures to increase active travel, promote wider adoption of electric vehicles (e.g., on street charging), and improve the air quality especially in the Air Quality Management Areas. We are working with schools close to AQMAs to promote sustainable travel and a schools education programme has been rolled out this year. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented. We have developed an air quality planning technical guide and trained planning officers. An Anti-idling campaign has been rolled out with signage, staff training and the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for non-adherence.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration stated that we would "eliminate single-use plastic from council operations wherever possible" by 2021. A cross department audit of the council's plastic use was undertaken, and elimination or replacement of single use products is underway both in Swale House and across our estate/services. The drinks and vending machine contracts were not renewed. Facilities to recycle difficult-to-eliminate plastic waste in Swale House have been introduced. For example, coffees cups, yogurt pots, newspapers, tinfoil containers,

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cardboard, blister packs, nylon packing straps, metal book spines, suspension files empty aerosol cans and plastic bottles. Biodegradable tree guards are being used when trees are planted.

A fuel and water advice service was developed as a way of reaching our more vulnerable residents to help them reduce bills and carbon emissions. The adviser was appointed in late 2020 for two years. Funding for a third year was agreed in 2022 and an assistant has been funded from an external source. Over the three years the service has advised over 1500 households across the Borough on energy and water use and issued over 2500 fuel vouchers.

Via the Off-Road Charging Scheme (ORCS) funding was secured for additional EV charging points across the borough. 10 twin chargers have been installed in three car parks adding to the existing SBC EV charging bays (4 in Faversham, 8 in Sittingbourne and 4 in Sheerness). A further bid will be considered in 2024 should relevant funding become available.

A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022 and in Sittingbourne in March 2023. Two hybrid cars and one electric car are available in car parks across the town. To date the club has reached a utilisation rate of up to 50%. We are working with developers to include car clubs in new developments.

The Planning Committee has successfully requested more renewable energy and energy-efficiency measures to be included in new developments. All new developments are encouraged to achieve a 50% saving in carbon emissions over 2013 Building Regulations. The Local Plan will bring this down to net zero emissions by 2030. A guide for developers including examples of how the 50% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved is available on the council's website.

This year we have planted 295 standard trees and 14053 whips.

COVID19 has accelerated the move to virtual and hybrid meetings and new ways of working, resulting in business and commuting miles falling dramatically. However other challenges have arisen, such as the increase in household waste being put out by residents. We are therefore working on education campaigns to get this reduced

Kent Wildlife Trust approached Swale to be a local authority partner in their 3Cs project which will restore saltmarshes along the Swale. We are also working with Peel Ports on a beneficial use of dredging materials project.

Kemsley Cluster – info expected soon.

Swale is the only second tier authority in Kent with an Active Travel Co-ordinator. One project unique to Swale is the Swale Cycle Recycle Project. A scheme that takes unwanted or damaged bikes and repairs them in the workshops of HMP Swaleside before they are distributed via charity partners to people who cannot afford bikes. The benefits are bikes are diverted from the waste stream, prisoners learn new skills increasing their employability on release and economically vulnerable people get access to bikes which may make travel to work more viable and improve health.

Establishing a Baseline

To achieve our targets, we need to monitor the existing situation in both the Council and the borough as a whole. Latest figures on CO₂ emissions are released annually by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). The latest figures give us the data until the end of 2021. Waste collection figures are similarly only updated to the end of the 2022/23 financial year. Until the most update statistics are provided, we will not be able to fully comprehend the impact of the Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration in 2019.

As set out by the Tyndall Centre, Swale should aim for an annual emissions reduction of at least 13% per year and up to 25% in order to achieve our targets.

Energy Consumption and Emissions

Due to the nature of the types of businesses, Swale has always had higher energy consumption and carbon emissions from the commercial and industrial sector in comparison to other Kent districts (as seen in figure 1). The commercial and industrial sector are responsible for most of the carbon emissions in Swale (52.49%). Emissions from this sector have reduced since a peak in 2010, which has contributed substantially to a reduction in the overall carbon emissions in the borough.

Figure 1 - Source DESNZ

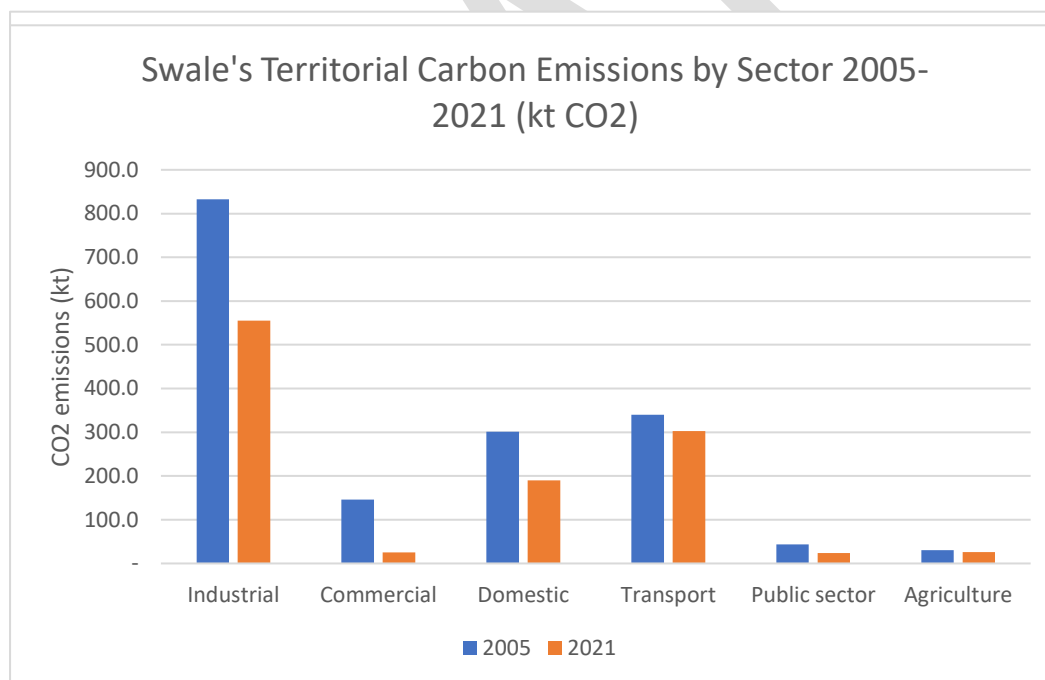


Figure 2 - Source DESNZ

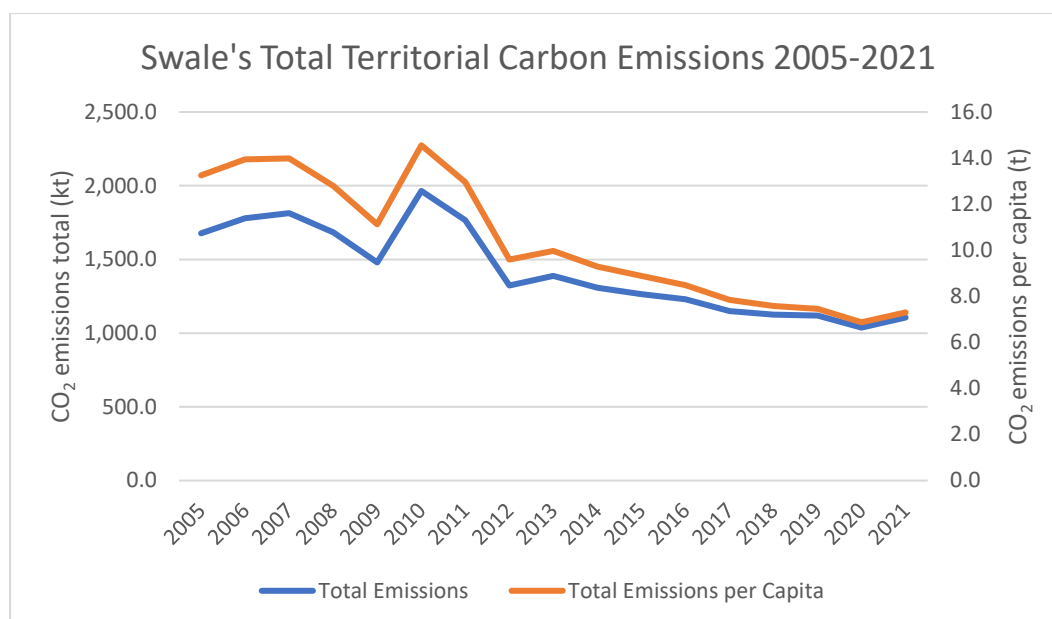


Figure 3 - Source DESNZ

The Department of Energy Security and Net Zero was established in February 2023 and provides Local Authority territorial carbon emissions which are broken down into subsections. In Swale in 2021, 17.15% of emissions came from domestic properties, 27.33% from transport, and 52.49% are industrial and commercial emissions (see figure 2). In addition to this, 2.12% from the public sector and 2.32% from agriculture, with -15.7 kt CO₂ net emissions from Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry changes, attributed to carbon sequestration from forest land and grass land in Swale. The total carbon emissions from the borough have generally decreased over time with per capita emissions dropping from 7.5 tCO₂ to 7.3 tCO₂ between 2019 and 2021, although 2021 has seen a slight increase in total borough wide emissions from 2020.

In figures 4, 5 and 6 below the legend of the y-axis on the left refers to emissions from Swale, the legend on the right refers to Kent.

Industrial and Commercial Sector

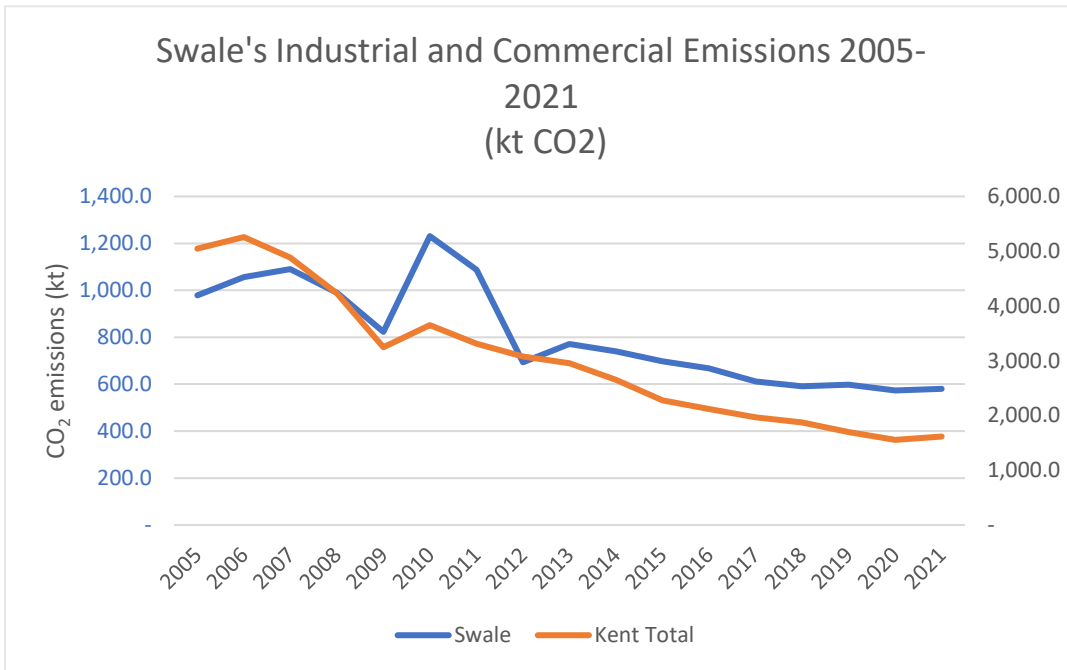


Figure 4 - Source DESNZ

Despite a slight rise in 2021, at both borough and county level there has been an overall decrease in emissions from industry since 2005. Within Swale’s industrial and commercial sector (figure 4) there has been a 40.67% decrease in CO₂ emissions between 2005-2021.

Transport

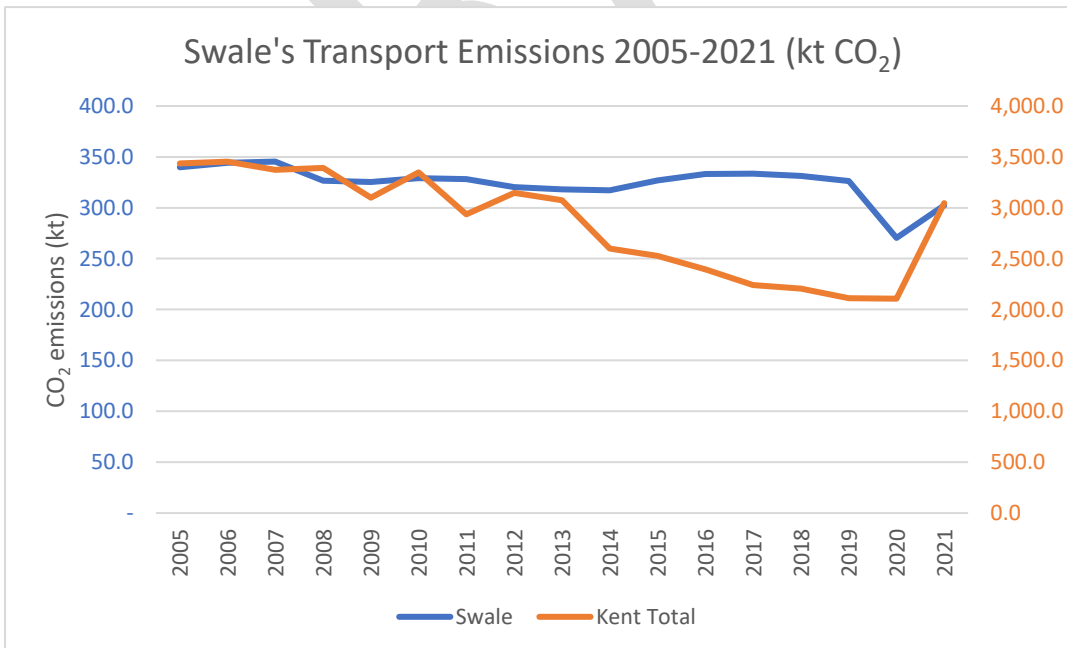


Figure 5 - Source DESNZ

In Swale, transport emissions (figure 5) had fallen by 7% between 2005-2014 but rose again by 6% between 2014 and 2017. Transport emissions dropped to the lowest level

since 2005 in 2020 due to reduced movement as the result of Covid-19. With the loosening of restrictions in 2021, Transport emissions rose by 11.8%, although overall they remain 7.3% below pre-pandemic levels.

Domestic

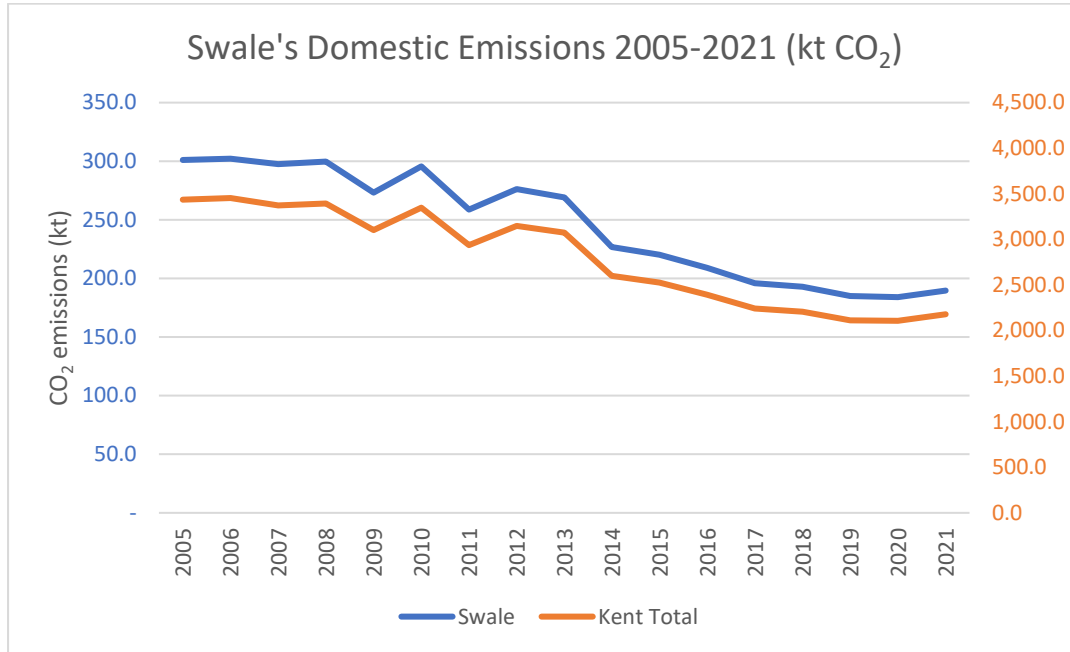


Figure 6 - Source DESNZ

Swale’s domestic emissions (2021 figures) are the 4th highest in the County, with 68.27% resulting from domestic gas emissions, for which Swale also ranks 4th. Overall domestic emissions have decreased at a faster rate since 2013.

Overall, emissions across all sectors have been decreasing per capita – in 2005 per capita emissions were at 13.8 tonnes and have decreased to 7.3 tonnes in 2021.

Public Sector Emissions

Since 2021, BEIS has included public sector emissions in its emissions data publications. Figure 7 shows Swale to have had some of the highest public sector emissions in Kent when compared to other districts. However, this has decreased significantly in recent years.

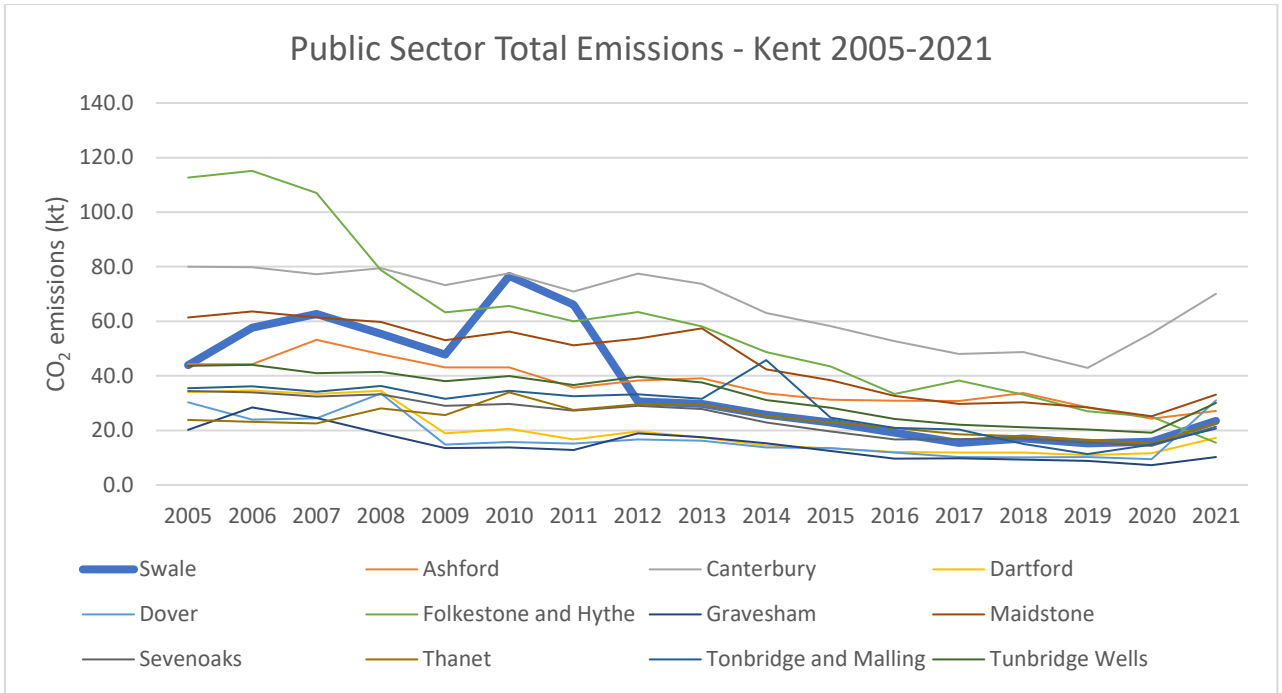


Figure 7 – Source DESNZ

Other Green House Gas Emissions

In 2022, BEIS included a breakdown of other greenhouse gas emissions to the territorial emissions data for local authority areas. Below shows the methane, nitrous oxide and CO2 as a proportion of all greenhouse gas emissions since 2018.

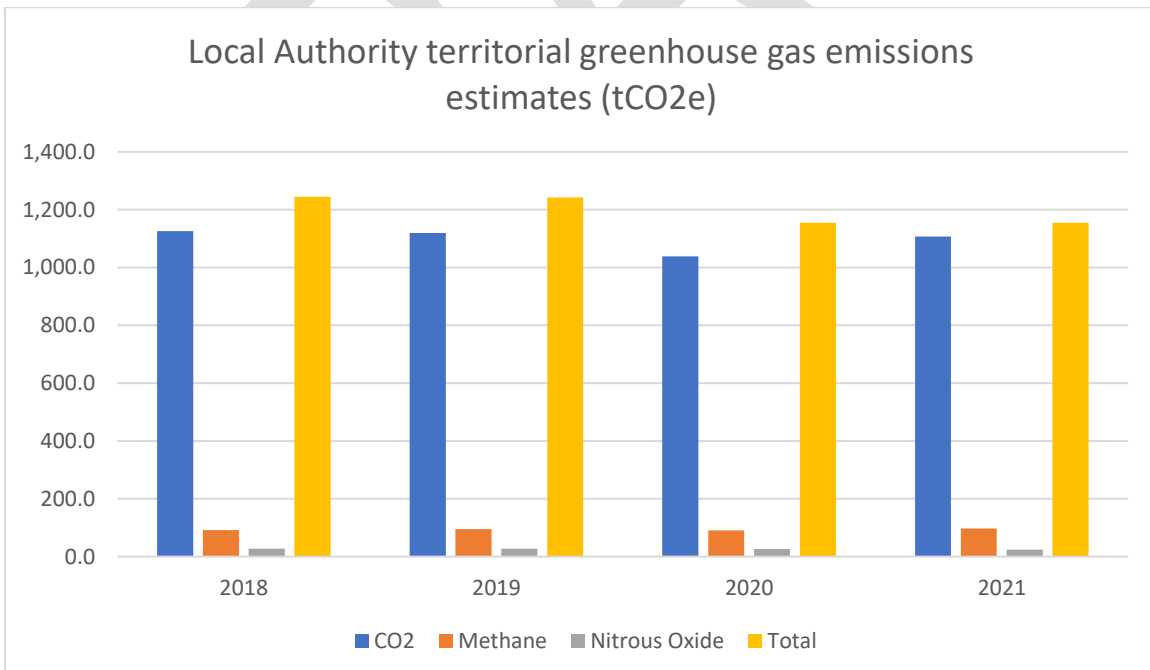


Figure 8 – Source DESNZ

Household Waste

As the waste collection authority, we have targets to reduce the amount of residue waste collected, and increase the proportion sent to recycling and composting. Household waste collection has increased (figure 9) and recycling rates have continued to plateau (figure 8), remaining lower than our partners in the waste partnership. We know that waste levels increased during 2020-2021 due to the Covid19 pandemic, including food and garden waste; paper, cardboard, and glass; and other recyclables. In the year 2022/23 these levels have however fallen back to pre-pandemic levels (see figure 10).

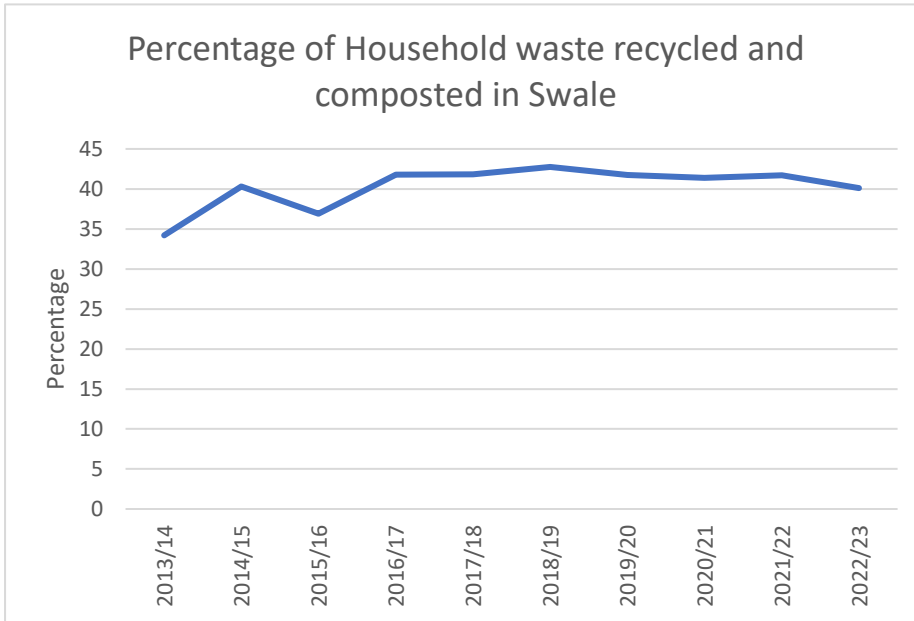


Figure 9 - Source Environmental Contracts Manager

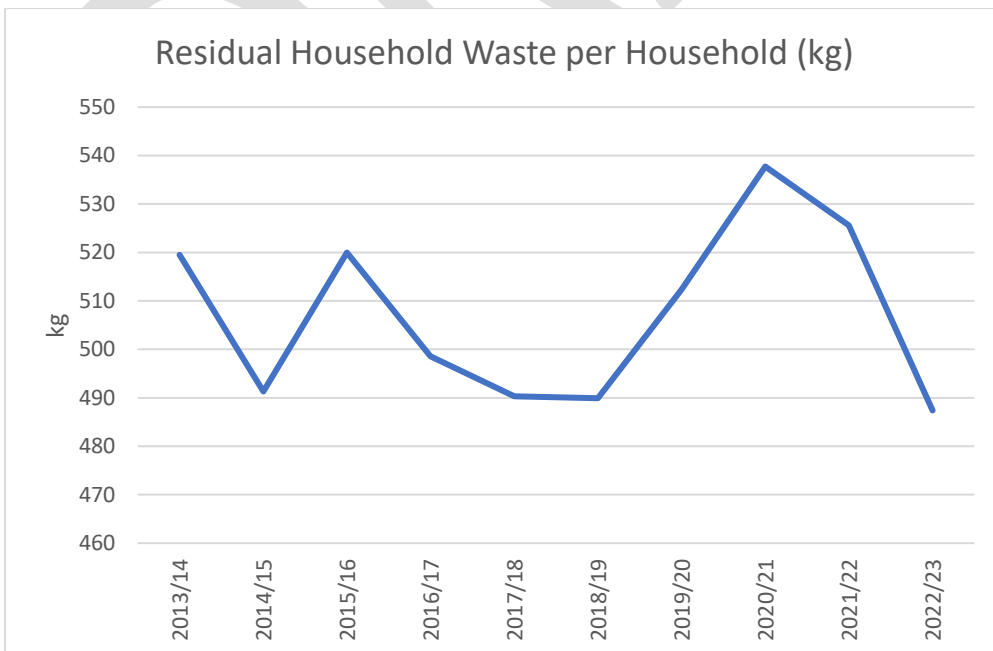


Figure 10 - Source Environmental Contracts Manager

Swale Borough Council's response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

The Climate and Ecological Emergency was declared on 26 June 2019, shortly after the new coalition administration took office following the May 2019 local elections.

Our Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan was adopted by Cabinet on Earth Day - 22 April 2020. It was approved by Council in October 2020.

The full action plan can be found [here](#)¹. The Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan sets out the Council's strategy and identifies some enabling tools that are essential to progress across a wide range of areas. The plan then identifies a set of specific actions in the following areas: Council operations; Buildings and energy efficiency; Transport and air quality; Resource consumption and waste; Ecology and biodiversity; Resilience, adaptation and offsetting. This report reviews progress under each of these headings.

Enabling Tools – Cross Cutting Themes and Actions

Swale Borough Council recognises that there are cross-cutting actions needed to underpin the specific actions targeted at the particular causes of carbon emissions. The strategy set out in the Action Plan is based on an approach to Lead, Show, Support.

LEAD: We will lead by taking actions to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's own operations and to enhance biodiversity in the management of the Council's own estate.

SHOW: Use the council's improved operations and estate as beacon of good practice on the road to net zero.

SUPPORT: Assist businesses, organisations and residents to take their own actions and to build the capacity to move towards a low carbon economy in Swale.

This plan requires that actions which address the carbon footprint of the Council's own operations will be an early focus.

Table 1, below, sets out progress on the enabling actions identified in the Action Plan.

¹ <https://services.swale.gov.uk/assets/Climate-Change-and-Ecological-Emergency/SBC%20CEE%20Action%20Plan%20Final%20with%20illustrations.pdf>

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Department	Action	Time scale	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Progress Dec 2022	Progress Dec 2023	Status
CEE	Rolling out a climate change learning and development programme for staff to improve understanding of carbon and the wider environmental context. The skills programme will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base level training for all employees 	Short	-	60 members of staff trained and certified. Member training being developed.	New project officer undergoing train the trainer training and working on this. Member training being developed	On Track
CEE	•Encouraging personal responsibility and roll out of a Green Champions Network.	Short	-	30 'CEE Champions' recruited, and activities started	Meetings and activities ongoing	On Track
CEE	•More targeted/ intensive training for organisational decision-makers to enable them to adequately assess carbon impacts in their decisions	Short	-	CL training for environment committee members agreed at Member Training Working Group. The Head of Environment and Leisure attended LGA CLT for senior managers with this we can apply to be a 'Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation'	CL training delivered to Environment Committee in January	On Track
CEE	Sharing our knowledge – we will provide capacity to share our learning and approaches with others, such as town and parish councils and community groups.	Short	-	Increased numbers of parish councils signed up to the Green Grid mailing list - sharing regular updates about projects, funding and events.	Green Grid mailing list continues to grow, and a monthly newsletter is published. Two in person meetings held.	On Track

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CEE	Promotion of low carbon food through council facilities and communication. Promotion of vegan and vegetarian diets using seasonal, local sources to support local food networks.	Short	-	Limited work during 2022. Promoted internally to staff.	Limited work during 2023	Started
CEE	Identify and align to national days of action to reinforce the message of collective action.	Short	-	Highlighted where possible across SBC external comms e.g., social media, Inside Swale. 25 events run through Great Big Green Week Appendix 1 details these communications	Highlighted where possible across SBC external comms e.g., social media, Inside Swale. Promoted Great Big Green Week but no external funding this year limited our involvement	On Track

Table 1 Progress on Enabling Actions

Ten High Priority Actions

In addition to the enabling tools, we selected ten actions to be classed as 'high priority' for 2023. They are shown in table 2 below and discussed under the theme headings which follow.

	Action	Action Owner	Target date	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)
1	Carry out roof top solar PV viability studies on our properties	Property	2023	Large
2	Implement the EV strategy. Lobby KCC re on-street charging	Environment and Leisure	2025	Medium
3	Tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions.	Environment and Leisure	2025	1,481t offset of woodland
4	Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.	ECS, Planning, Air Quality	2030	Large
5	Increase engagement with staff and members to roll out learning about the climate & ecological emergency. Review of staff business travel	HR, Environment and Leisure	Short	Small

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6	Support businesses to reduce carbon emissions and improve ecology and biodiversity.	ECS	Medium	Medium
7	Behaviour change around domestic waste and food recycling	Environment and Leisure	short	Small
8	Establish and promote a car club in Sittingbourne.	Environment and Leisure	2023	Small
9	Implement stage 1 of LED roll out across council parks and open spaces	Environment and Leisure	2023	Medium
10	Improve air quality across the whole borough, focussing on the six air quality management areas (AQMAs)	Air Quality, Environmental Health	short	Small

Table 2 Top Ten Priority Actions 2022

Progress against all actions can be found here: https://swale.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/408594/All-Action-Progress-for-Annual-Report-22-public-A.pdf

The chart below gives an indication of overall progress. With the targets for Council operations by 2025 and Borough by 2030 this shows a good level of progress. The following pages summarise the key achievements over the year in each of the areas of the action plan.

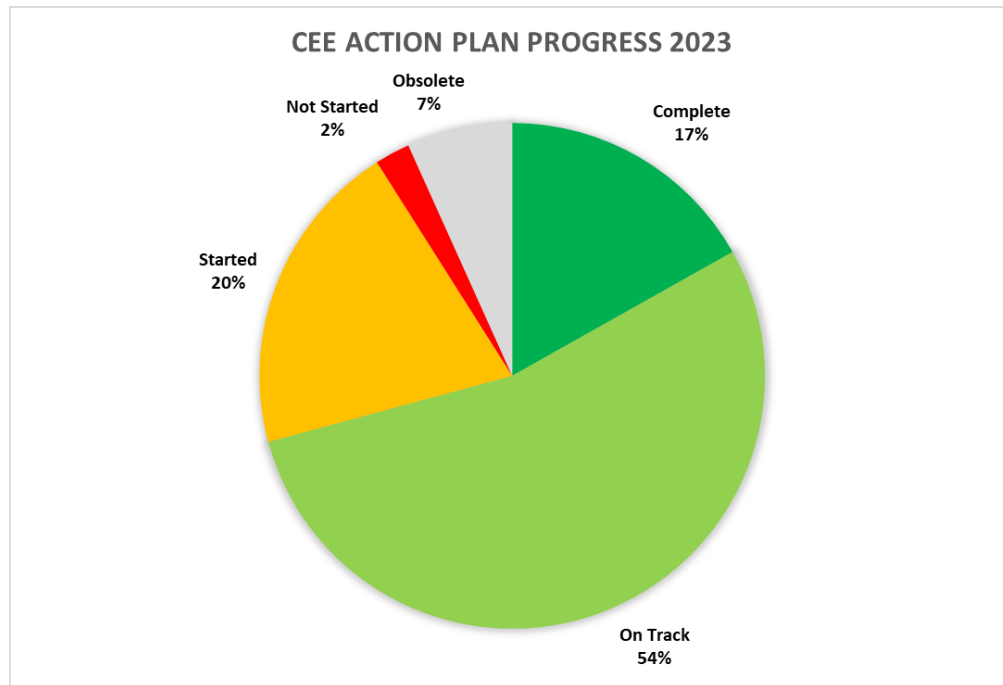


Figure 1 Overall progress against Action Plan

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Council Operations

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2022	Progress Dec 2023	Status
Property	Retro-fit Swale House to cut carbon emissions (eg. extra insulation, triple glazing, heat pump, solar PV).	2025	186	.Swale House – phase 1 roof works complete. Windows and undercroft insulating underway. Master's House phase one complete	Roof, windows and insulation complete. Internal work almost complete. Solar feasibility study complete. Master's House units let out	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Replace SBC fleet vehicles with electric vehicles.	2025	26	Electrification of fleet complete - 9 electric vehicles are now in use, saving almost 20 tonnes of CO2 each year. The Mayor's car is now an EV, as is the Staying Put Handyman's van and an EV pool car is available to staff. The parking wardens' two vehicles are electric vehicles	As Dec 22	Complete
Commissioning	Revise procurement strategy to embed the climate and ecological emergency into all procurement decisions.	2023	780	The new policy was adopted by Cabinet on 27th October. This new policy provides more emphasis on this topic and crucially require contractors to report back throughout contract terms on their achievement of targets. The Procurement officer has joined the procurement sub-group of the Kent Climate Change Network	As Dec 22	Complete
Property / CEE	Eliminate single-use plastic from council operations wherever possible	2021		Tea & coffee facilities amended to remove single-use sachets and included milk in glass bottles. Central recycling centre working well and more to be trialled. A team to volunteer to	As Dec 22	On Track

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				<p>trial not having black bins in their office – evidence shows it improves recycling rates at central recycling points. Climate Champions working to remove plastics in their teams with good progress so far eg. black sacks and challenging suppliers. More messaging to be shared with staff to encourage best practice.</p>		
CEE / Economy & Regeneration	Carry out regular staff commuting survey and encourage commuting by walking, cycling or public transport.	2025	20	First survey complete. COVID delayed subsequent surveys	Completed July.	Complete
HR	Encourage use of IT to reduce business travel to meetings.	2025	15	Use of IT for virtual meetings established and maintained through flexible working arrangements. All councillors provided with dedicated laptop	As Dec 22	Complete
HR	Review HR strategy to remove incentives to use a car for business travel.	2025	15	There should also be a wider action on staff travel that looks at car parking, council vehicles, electric cars and other ways of travel to be taken forward by a project team that should involve other HOS and managers currently responsible for these areas	.As Dec 22	Started
HR	Introduce a cycle to work scheme that includes e-bikes.	2021	2	Cycle scheme includes e-bikes	Cycle scheme includes e-bikes	Complete
Property	New waste contract for Swale House to reduce waste & increase recycling.	2020	6	New waste contract now in place (Reduced the number of collections per year, recycling services are more straight forward. Option to introduce food waste collection.) Contract included company working with us to help reduce waste and promote recycling. Grace working with Deb & NWOW group with new ideas as we	As Dec 22	Complete

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				begin to come back to office and redesign Swale House. Central recycling point installed and food waste bins in kitchens.		
Property	Provide facilities to encourage cycling to work (eg. secure cycle storage, shower)	2020	1	Shower refurbishment complete. 6 extra secure spaces for bike storage	As Dec 22	Complete
IT	Develop working practices to use IT to reduce use of paper.	2025	5	Paper used considerably reduced.	Paper used considerably reduced.	Complete
Property / Environment & Leisure Services	Ensure LED lighting is fitted across the council estate, including parks and open spaces.	2023	19	Have met with contractor to go through number of queries regarding current lighting specification and locations. The previous estimated cost of this work was around £286k, well over our available budget. The contractors are now working through the latest information following our meeting to come up with a revised estimate, and the works have been split into “phases” to allow us to undertake the work in different sections. First replacements expected in the new year.	We have been working closely with KCC’s term lighting contractor, which has resulted in an agreed schedule of works and specifications. The previous estimated cost of this work was around £286k, which is well over our available budget. As such, we have split the works into prioritised “phases” which will be completed until funds are exhausted. To date, we have completed an initial phase to replace lighting along Sheerness seafront and have also completed phases 1.1 to 1.7.	On track

Table 4 Progress against council operations actions

The Carbon Trust was appointed to undertake carbon foot-printing and baselining of our own estate and to propose steps to achieve carbon net zero across council operations by 2025.

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The report was completed in early 2020 - the full version of which can be found [here²](#)

To reach the target of carbon neutrality by 2025, it was identified that the Council must reduce scope 1 and 2 emissions by approximately 68 tCO₂e per year, and scope 3 emissions by 994 tCO₂e per year.

Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from owned or controlled sources. Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy. Scope 3 emissions are all indirect emissions (not included in scope 2) that occur in the value chain of the Council, including both upstream and downstream emissions. This equates to a 14% reduction in emissions year on year to achieve the target.

The Carbon Trust made several recommendations for our buildings and contracts which we have already fulfilled, such as the electrification of our fleet - 9 electric vehicles are now in use, saving almost 20 tonnes of CO₂ each year. The Mayor's car is now an EV, and an EV pool car is available to staff. The parking wardens' two vehicles are electric vehicles.

The Carbon Trust report showed that about half of the council's carbon footprint arises from the waste contract. The specification for the new waste contract highlighted the desire for reducing carbon emissions and submissions during the tender came forward with lots of ideas. The new contract will start in March 2024 incorporating the following initiatives.

The contractor is a net producer of renewable energy and will self-supply electricity to the Swale depot. Any electric vehicles charged at these sites will therefore be powered with renewable energy.

Electric vehicles will be provided for the delivery of some frontline services. Where staff receive a company car, they will be encouraged to choose an electric vehicle, from an extensive range.

A sustainable travel policy has been implemented that encourages all staff to consider the impact of meetings and how to plan business travel sustainably.

A Sustainability Champion will be recruited at the depot. They will deliver local environmental initiatives including a biodiversity action plan.

² <https://services.swale.gov.uk/assets/Climate-Change-and-Ecological-Emergency/Carbon-Trust-Report-on-Swales-Carbon-Footprint.pdf>

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All Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles will be Euro VI, which reduces levels of harmful exhaust emissions including nitrogen oxide (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), hydrocarbons (THC and NMHC) and particulate matter (PM). Environmental improvements are delivered from less pollutants and lower CO2 emissions.

It is recognised that the biggest impact to the environment comes from operating vehicles. This is both from carbon emissions, but also from the production of particulate pollution from break disc and tyre wear. To minimise these impacts, it is important that we operate efficient routes. By completing a full review of routes and designing more efficient rounds, it is estimated that waste collection will achieve a 5-15% reduction in miles, fuel and emissions. The specialist software used to do this 'rebalance' will also enable RCV's to avoid already congested routes, or schools at the busiest times of the day. The exercise will result in more future proof rounds that are achievable by the crews collecting the bins.

Driver monitoring software will be used to support drivers in driving more sustainably e.g., through reduced speed and idling, as well as over revving engines.

Electric bin lifts will be fitted to all 26t collection vehicles delivering a 5% saving in fuel, reducing emissions and noise pollution.

Mechanical sweepers will be fitted with dust suppression and water recirculation equipment reducing air pollution and water usage. Electric equipment will be provided to street cleansing operatives wherever available.

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is an alternative available solution and has been trialled in Somerset. It is claimed that it delivers a 90% reduction in carbon dioxide equivalents when compared to diesel. Currently it is not economically viable but the use of HVO will continue to be reviewed and assessed throughout the contract. Where supply can be guaranteed from a sustainable source (i.e., not virgin oil grown from energy crops) we will assess whether it can be introduced.

For street cleansing, there will be electric hand tools such as leaf blowers. There will also be a e-glutton available. This uses a powerful vacuum to ensure swift cleansing of 'hard to reach' areas.

Our new contractors have given considerable thought to how we tackle weeds yet reduce the use of herbicides. Suez will use a 'Foamstream' system. It kills weeds, moss and algae using a combination of near boiling water covered by a biodegradable foam made from natural plant oils and sugars, making it 100% biodegradable. Foamstream is uniquely effective because the foam acts as

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a thermal blanket, ensuring the heat is retained in the water while it's applied to the plant, keeping the plant in the kill zone for 6x longer than any other herbicide-free alternative.

Foamstream is approved for organic use by the British Soil Association, and the Organic Farmers and Growers Association, meaning it can be used around people, animals and waterways safely.

Our contractors are in negotiations with a well-known local charity to encourage the re-use of various items collected through the bulky waste, WEEE and textiles service. Re-useable products will be stored for the charity to view and remove any items that they find useful.

The current ground's maintenance contract started on 15 January 2022. Since the commencement of the contract we have been working very closely with the grounds maintenance contractor to support their implementation of a number of improvements. The contract now benefits from a number of electric vehicles, battery operated handheld power tools, and an ongoing commitment to the gradual reduction and complete elimination of the use of pesticides over the five-year contract. Continual identification and implementation of increased biodiversity and varied maintenance regimes including a number of enhanced wildlife areas. Ongoing monitoring and recording of recycling values has been introduced as part of the new contract. Feb 22 – Jan 23 saw recycling figures 5,476kg of Dry Mixed, 4,800kg of Mixed Glass and 254,640kg of Green Waste. Feb 23 – Jun 23 saw recycling figures 2,135kg of Dry Mixed, 1,400kg of Mixed Glass and 89,960kg of Green Waste.

The contract for the refurbishment of Swale House was awarded and work commenced in the late summer of 2022. The window replacements should bring about a saving of 39 tonnes of CO₂ per annum according to the Carbon Trust report.

The bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund was successful and this was used in the Master's House refurbishment. Phase One was completed in 2022. It is estimated that the switch from an oil boiler to an air source heat pump will save 32 tonnes of CO₂ per annum from operational energy.

Swale House now has LED lighting throughout. A full survey of all of our lighting assets in Swale, both within our open spaces and within our off-street car parks has been undertaken. Plans are being drawn up to upgrade to LED any lighting units that have not already been converted. LEDs consume up to 70% less energy.

Swale House and other buildings under our control now have both 100% renewable electricity supplies and bio-methane gas supplies.

Buildings and Energy Efficiency

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2022	Progress Dec 2023	Status
Plannin g Policy	Prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan, use a planning condition based on a 50% improvement over current building regulations, ratcheting to 75% and 100% improvement by 2025 and 2028 respectively, as the basis for negotiation with developers through pre-application and planning application negotiations.	2020-2030	400 - 1,000+	This is being encouraged currently, with varied success – generally larger house builders are pushing back more than smaller developers. This, however, demonstrates that this condition is viable in Swale and the importance of adopting Local Plan policy to require it.	As DEC 22	On Track
CEE	Bulk buying scheme for solar PV installations paid-for by residents (in partnership with KCC).	2020-21	100	Current round is proving popular.103 households initially requested a survey. Comms Team have been promoting. Battery storage and EV charging being offered as an add on	Two more rounds in 2023 with 72 installations including 3 with battery storage.	On Track
CEE	Fuel and water poverty outreach service to reduce fuel and water bills for vulnerable residents.	2020-23	to be monitored	Household Support Fund remaining inhouse but moved to ECS team. referral route for Fuel Bank Foundation vouchers Worked with over 1000 households Jan - Dec Swale Sisters – 360 packs Fuel vouchers – over 1400 issued Funding (not SBC) for part-time assistant – Funding from SBC confirmed for third year of project	Project funded by SBC Special Projects ended in October 2023. Over three years over 1500 people reached advised and over 2500 fuel vouchers issued. Part of SBC’s HSF will be used to continue this project managed by Children and Families.	Complete

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Plannin g Policy	Use the local plan review to investigate the potential to introduce minimum requirements for on-site renewables on new developments.	Short	Large	Included in Local Plan Review	As Dec 22	On Track
Plannin g Policy	Review Local Plan and incorporate recommended actions on spatial land use strategy and integrated transport strategy, including focusing development in Swale's conurbations to utilise existing vacant sites and under-utilised sites within the settlement confines.	2025	Large	The success of this objective is related to the timescale for adoption of the Local Plan Review, which is currently delayed from its published programme (LDS). A new programme/LDS will be confirmed in late spring/summer, with an anticipated revised Regulation 19 Plan going to consultation in the autumn of 2022 and anticipated submission in Spring 2023.	Local Plan consultation paused.	On Track
Plannin g Policy	Encourage high-quality, medium-high density dwellings near to transport nodes. Development could be supplemented by restricted parking, and EV pool-cars.	Short	Large	As above. The next iteration of Local Plan will be looking at reinforcing a land use strategy that focuses development in existing conurbations near transport nodes. The Transport Strategy will be updated to accompany to next iteration of the Local Plan.	Local Plan consultation paused	On Track
CEE	Signpost householders and businesses to grant schemes for insulation and energy improvements, such as the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), Warm Homes and advice services such as the Energy Saving Trust.	Short	Medium	Achieved via FWHA, as well as press release and corresponding social media posts encouraging Warm Homes Grant. Regular advice provided via Inside Swale, often referencing Energy Saving Trust.	As Dec 22	On Track
CEE	Encourage Town and Parish Councils to fit LED lighting and other low energy technology by providing information on cost savings and carbon reduction.	Short	Small	Have written to town/parish councils with further engagement required.	As Dec 22	Started

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Plannin g Policy	Consider development of a financial viability toolkit to ensure that the cost of low and zero-carbon methods is accurately assessed (eg building materials, design and orientation, natural ventilation, landscaping, renewable generation and off-setting). Toolkit to be used by development management for pre-application advice.	Short	Large	Not progressed to date due to lack of officer time and financial cost		Obsole te
Plannin g Policy	Develop, initially through a Supplementary Planning Document and subsequently the Local Plan Review Policy, the potential to move rapidly towards zero-carbon development in Swale including using tools such as the Home Quality Mark and BREEAM.	Short	Large	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review, DM 3. An SPD however, is not a priority at this stage, due to resource commitment and detail provided within DM3 itself. Other tools, eg Net Zero Carbon Toolkit could be adopted as a resource for developers to refer to.		Obsole te
Plannin g Develo pment	Provide pre-application advice on energy efficiency and carbon standards and statements for future developments	Short	Large	Being implemented by DM team and Climate Change Officer	As Dec 22	On Track
Plannin g Policy / CEE	Investigate the potential to set up an offset fund (106 Agreements) or allowable mechanism for developers to pay into if a certain energy efficiency of buildings is not able to be met in the development and use this money for carbon saving projects	Short	Large	Outputs from KWT/SELEP project delayed and possibility that the amount of offsetting from this scheme will be limited. Other options (eg retrofitting existing stock) to be investigated, but this is complex	. As Dec 22	Started

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Planning Policy	Investigate options for monitoring and testing conditions compliance on significant major planning applications (250 dwellings +), including those related to climate change (eg the performance gap between buildings designed energy use and actual energy use), with a view to securing S.106 obligations from developers to contribute towards the cost of such compliance monitoring	Short	Large	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review – policy DM3	Local Plan consultation paused	On Track
Housing	Enforce private rented and non-domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards regulations	Medium	Medium	We are utilising existing legislation under the Housing act to enforce standards in the private rented sector not met at present. We do not have any capacity to deal with additional legislation due to high workloads. We continue to contact landlords who we believe may have properties with Low EPC. We are signed up to Sustainable warmth project which will run to 2023	As Dec 22	Started

Table 5 Progress against buildings and energy efficiency actions

The next Local Plan is being prepared and incorporates actions for buildings and energy efficiency set out in the Action Plan. Already, new housing developments are encouraged to reduce carbon emissions by 50% more than required in the current Building Regulations. Guidance has been published to illustrate how developers can achieve the reduction. Applicants are signposted towards this information when seeking pre-application advice.

We participated in a pilot project led by the University of Greenwich and Medway Council to offer householders retrofitting advice. Initially aimed at the able to pay owner occupiers this project will be extended in 2024 to other sectors of the housing market.

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We are working with the Kent Wildlife Trust to explore offsetting options for both our own estate and new developments. Where the carbon emissions of a development cannot be reduced, the developer would make a payment into the fund to enable the carbon emissions to be offset elsewhere in the Borough. The carbon price will be set to allow onsite carbon reduction to provide the lower cost option, to encourage carbon emissions to be avoided rather than offset. We are also working with KWT on biodiversity net gain through a saltmarsh restoration project.

We pledged through the Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration to take steps to avoid any adverse impacts on our most vulnerable residents. The service is available to vulnerable residents across the borough. Funding was secured for a third year of delivery and Children and Families also secured external funding for a second member of staff to assist. This over the three years over 2500 Fuel vouchers have been issued. 2100 energy efficiency packs have been provided containing LED bulbs (saving 10450kg of CO₂), water hippos (saving 40,000 litres of water) and various other energy saving products specifically for each households needs. Over £21,000 of water debt has been written off. 635 households have been signed up to the Priority Services Register. The fully funded service ended in October 2023 but is continuing with partial funding from Swales HSF allocation and other organisations including utility companies.

Transport and Air Quality

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2022	Progress Dec 2023	Status
Environment & Leisure	Install EV charging points across the borough.	2025	to be monitored	ORCS funding application successful for 10 twin EVCP (20 charging bays) across 3 car parks. Work commenced in November 22 with all fully operational by end of Jan 2023	.Fully operation	Complete
ECS	Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.	2030	Large	Faversham LCWIP consultation closed P2T Solar Way: meeting with Developer 16/9. Kent PROW commissioning Sustrans to undertake a Feasibility Study FTC Bike Hangar installed, and parking rates agreed. WAC Routes Consultation Event postponed	Faversham LCWIP adopted. Faversham Parishes to Town Project Complete (EAC funded) Sustrans Solar Cycle Way Options Report Completed (developer funded – c.£7k)	On track

			<p>Sheppey Community Cycling Group initial mechanics training complete. Swale LCWIP: Community/PC meetings complete Online survey closed 12/9 £1,300 of S106 funds obtained for cycle parking for Halfway & Minster FTC successfully bid for Cycling UK funds for community rides £2,100 bid to Cycling UK being assessed Active Travel Fund 4, bid prepared Bid to ATE Capability & Ambition Fund prepared. Discussions started with Southeastern & Network Rail on accessible northern access and improvement to cycle parking at Sittingbourne and new, larger lifts at Faversham Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Project Launched</p>	<p>Three Active Travel Fund 4 (ATF4) KCC Submissions developed and presented to residents and Councillors. One ATF4 bid – Faversham Cross Town Path – successful and awarded £995k by Active Travel England (ATE) NCN Route 1 Quietways Bid successful (£30,000) – Faversham – Teynham & Conyer - Feasibility Study Complete NCN Route 1 Barrier Redesign bid successful (£48,000) – initial research & assessment complete. Sheppey Light Greenway Project obtained seed funding and has partnered with Greenways and Cycleroles Limited to assess potential routes. Work commenced on clearing the route at Power Station Road. ATE Capability Fund bid successful (£40,000) projects underway are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheppey Towns Connectivity Active Travel Feasibility Study (£15,000) • Swale LCWIP data analysis (£10,000) • Faversham Cross Town Path 2 – Construction Bid Study (£15,000) <p>Swale Cycle-re-Cycle established in partnership with HMP Swaleside, Canterbury Bike Project, KCC and FCC</p>	
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					<p>Cycling UK Big Bike Revival bid successful (£2,100), community bike rides and events held across the borough.</p> <p>Second Cycling UK Community Cycle Club established with Age UK in Faversham</p> <p>Explore Sittingbourne & Faversham Cycling & Walking Maps completed - available online and at VICs.</p> <p>Linking Coast to Downs Project completed with one new cycle route and two new walking routes. Available online and at VICs</p> <p>WAC funded Swale Trails – two rides and four walks – launched. Available online and at VICs</p> <p>County submissions included to the Kent Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan and with Planning Policy, to the Local Transport Policy 5 “Rainbow of Rural Solutions” presented at Cycle County Active County, the national active travel conference in Oxford.</p>	
Planning Policy	Review Local Plan and incorporate recommended actions on spatial land use strategy and integrated transport strategy, including favouring public transport and active transport. Use Local Plan Review to reduce the need to travel (e.g., for work).	2025	Large	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	On Track

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ECS	Promote work-place car chargers (Government funding available).	Medium	Medium	To be included in business support on new CEE webpages and supported by actions in new EV strategy. Climate advice for businesses, such as workplace charge points, provided for businesses e.g. The Council's business support advisor has also commenced a new programme of 2-hour seminars to help businesses manage change. The seminars encourage businesses to plan for issues including the climate and ecological emergency.	As Dec 22	On track
Planning Policy	Through the Parking Standards SPD, require that 10% of parking spaces in new developments are provided with Electric Vehicle charge points (best technology available at the time of planning approval) which may be phased with 5% initial provision and the remainder at an agreed trigger level	Short	Medium	Parking Standards SPD Adopted 2020 - action complete	. As Dec 22	Complete
Planning Policy	Use the Local Plan Review to require that where a development is for more than 50 residential units measures such as the following be provided- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel plan including mechanisms for discouraging high emission vehicle use and encouraging the uptake of low emission fuels and technologies • A welcome pack available to all new residents online and as a booklet, containing 	Short	Medium	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review Car club established in Faversham enabling developers to include additional vehicles in their developments – initial conversations underway	Ad Dec 22 with an additional car club in Sittingbourne	On Track

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	<p>information and incentives to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes from new occupiers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EV car club provision within development or support given to local car club/EV car clubs. • Designation of parking spaces for low emission vehicles • Improved cycle paths to link cycle network. • Adequate provision of secure cycle storage. • Using green infrastructure to absorb pollutants. 					
Planning / Air Quality	Incorporate a policy on air quality in the local plan review	Short	Small	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Local Plan consultation paused	On Track
Planning / Air Quality	Work with KCC to develop the Swale Local Transport Strategy (to run in parallel to the Local Plan Review) and the promotion and facilitation of a major shift in priorities to public transport and active travel.	Short	Medium	A draft Local Transport Strategy went to consultation in Spring 2021 with the Regulation 19 Local Plan Review. This will be updated to accompany the next Regulation 19 Local Plan Review Consultation (currently due Autumn 2022) and together with the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan will set out schemes to encourage walking and cycling and sustainable travel.	Local Plan consultation paused	On Track
Air Quality	Establish an anti-idling campaign, initially around school sites from which it can be expanded.	Short	Small	ERT and Environmental Protection have issued 3 press releases and has fed into Facebook and Twitter (4 Nov 21, 27 Jan 22, 30 Mar 22). Media sources picked up several stories, including Kent online (7-14 April 2022). Other engagement is through the new Green Schools Forum (joint working with Climate Actions). Green School Forum was successful, 14 schools	Campaign ongoing	On Track

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				attended, as well as various stakeholders		
Environment & Leisure	Develop EV charging strategy including publicly accessible fast and rapid chargers, in council and private car parks (e.g., hotels, shopping centres), and working with KCC for on-street charging.	Short	Medium	.EV Strategy adopted at Environment Committee on 30th June. Agreed to award ORCS project works to Pod Point Ltd. Procurement underway for delivery by end 2022.	As Dec 22	Complete
ECS	Promote business fleet decarbonisation, including the potential cost and reputational benefits.	Medium	Small	Investigated continuation of Kent REVS scheme within Swale borough. Working on survey for local businesses ahead of Swale REVS scheme in progress with KCC. 'Go Electric' webinar provided during Great Big Green Week	REVs scheme not possible. Fleet decarbonisation promoted to businesses via ebulletins	On Track
Air Quality	Engage with public transport providers to improve the quality, quantity and affordability of public transport, so that more people commute by public transport, and reduce carbon emissions from buses.	Medium	Medium	Uncertain to what funding will be available for Swale through the Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan. KCC a currently undergoing a review of the funding available.	Funding largely for subsidised fares. A pilot is operating in Swale	Started
Planning Policy / Air Quality	Work with KCC to implement 20mph limit across built up areas of borough as a cost effective and swift way to improve air quality, reduce health inequalities, lower carbon footprint and encourage active travel (following the implementation of a comprehensive 20mph zone in Faversham).	Medium	Small	20mph is now active in Newington and Faversham. AQ data will be monitored at Newington air quality station over 2023 to assess if the change in speed limit impacts (+/-) air quality	Data collection on going and will be analysed in 2024.	On Track

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Air Quality	Undertake a feasibility study on implementing a Clean Air Zone along the length of the A2 from Brenley Corner to the western boundary with Medway.	Short	Small	SBC have had two high-level officer meetings to discuss support of KCC to advance the non-charging CAZ priority measures. The second meeting (28/04/22) identified significant reservations from KCC highways and at this point in time there is little support that can be offered for implementing the non-charging CAZ. However, KCC are keen to support active travel measures and review highway related schemes through other potential traffic orders. Relevant KCC officers will be attending the steering groups to review the AQAP update measures.	As Dec 2022	Complete
Air Quality / ECS	ECO Stars fleet recognition scheme - business case is for engaging and inviting new operators with key information on benefits to business, fuel savings and environment. At present Swale has 22 operators signed up.	Short	Small	ECO Stars no longer running - engagement with businesses through summer 21 survey	Not active – to be removed or replaced in action plan.	Obsolete
Air Quality	Apply to Defra's Air Quality Grant Scheme for an electric bus (joint bid with Arriva our main local bus company).	Short	Small	We have launched 'Pollution Patrol' which is a free interactive website for primary schools, children and their families developed to help raise awareness of air pollution, the damage it can cause and ways that individuals can help to reduce their impact by changing behaviours. All primary schools in Swale will have access to this important resource from Monday the 25th of April. The website includes games, an immersive 360O story mode, curriculum-linked teaching resources and a school assembly plan amongst other elements. Canterbury	Schools encouraged to use the resource	Complete

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				City Council and the MidKent Environmental Health Partnership have created the interactive website through Defra funding.		
Air Quality / ECS	Encourage local school and business travel plans to reduce car journeys.	Short	Small	The Business Travel Plan Survey has been completed and circulated to relevant KCC and SBC departments. A review of how this has been useful for departments to provide additional support in the form of incentives and improve sustainable travel will need to be completed. Engagement with schools via the Pollution Patrol project.	Review underway	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Establish a tree planting strategy for schools (links with biodiversity)	Short	Small	Swale Green Schools' Forum established to meet regularly with primary and secondary schools to discuss issues and projects such as tree planting and other ecological initiatives.	Ongoing	On Track

Table 6 Progress against transport and air quality actions

The new Air Quality Action Plan is now active. It outlines what the council will deliver between 2023 and 2028 to reduce concentrations of air pollutants and people's exposure to air pollution. It includes a package of measures that have been prioritised relative to their viability, cost effectiveness of air quality and non- air quality benefits.

The AQAP Steering Group was formed in early 2022 to develop and deliver the Strategic AQAP update for Swale and assessed the AQAP options proposed, including a review of the 2018 – 2022 AQAP measures, including the recommended measures from the CAZ Feasibility and Source Apportionment studies. The group also collaborated to identify what traffic management interventions were required; what may influence the local pollution in the future (i.e., five to ten years); and other existing projects in Swale that could contribute to emission reductions (or increases).

The steering group review of measures also considered the viability of measures and used cost benefit analysis to prioritise measures relative to the cost effectiveness, air quality and non- air quality benefits.

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The steering group will meet quarterly every three to four months throughout the lifetime of this action plan. Task and finish sub-group will be set up and responsible for implementing and delivering specific measures will meet more regularly and report back to the steering group. The task groups will also be responsible for providing further sub-actions and associated measurable milestones.

Updates on milestones will be reported to the AQAP Steering Group and will be published through the Councils Air Quality Annual Status Reports. Some new measures include; more car clubs and bike hire schemes; installation of more electric vehicle charging points; anti-idling campaigns; campaigns to educate the public about air pollution and improving walking and cycling infrastructure.

We have established car clubs in Faversham and Sittingbourne contracting Hiya Car to run them for us. Two self-charging hybrids and one electric car are available and are located in three car parks in both town centres. Use of the cars has been greater than anticipated with utility rates up to 50%. It is generally considered that one car club vehicle takes up to 18 cars off the road. In addition car club users are more likely to consider walking and cycling as alternative methods of travel.

Swale is the only second tier authority in Kent with an Active Travel Co-ordinator. A lot of work has been undertaken to promote active travel such as the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Projects, Active Travel bids to KCC with funding awarded for the Faversham Cross Town Path, The Quietways bid and Sheppey Light Greenway Project. Considerable funding of £1,115,100 has been won during the year.

One project unique to Swale is the Swale Cycle Recycle Project. A scheme that takes unwanted or damaged bikes and repairs them in the workshops of HMP Swaleside before they are distributed via charity partners to people who cannot afford bikes. The benefits are bikes are diverted from the waste stream, prisoners learn new skills increasing their employability on release and economically vulnerable people get access to bikes which may make travel to work more viable and improve health.

The Community Infrastructure Grants have been established to support community infrastructure in Swale, using money allocated from two Government funds - the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Grants are available for capital investment and will prioritise investments for community benefit and include support for: Investment which improves the environmental and financial sustainability of community facilities/amenities through carbon reduction measures. Projects encouraging walking and cycling or the use of electric vehicles. Applicants have also been able to access advice from a low carbon advisor about their project. For example, they can receive advice about ensuring that the project is value for money and suggestions for improvements to the design of their project. Seven applications have been received which will contribute towards reducing carbon emissions and have been approved in principle (subject to meeting the eligibility criteria). The total grants awarded are currently projected as £38,155.51.

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Rural Swale Small Business Grant Using money allocated from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) this funding is available to support small rural businesses to make small capital investments to support growth and carbon reduction measures or support capital projects which help develop the local visitor economy. Businesses can also access support and advice from a Low Carbon Advisor to develop their project. The grant scheme closed to applicants on Friday 13 October 2023.

Resource Consumption and Waste

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2022	Progress Dec 2023	Status
Planning Policy	Provide guidance on waste minimisation and resource consumption via a Sustainable Design & Construction SPD.	Short	Medium	Not yet started Local Plan Review taking precedence. However, Draft Policy DM 3 does address waste.	As Dec 22	Not Started
Environment & Leisure	Decrease the amount of household waste collected by promoting each separate method of recycling	Short	Medium	Use of KRP videos to promote behaviour change	Use of KRP videos to promote behaviour change, along with social media campaigns driven by Swale	On track
Environment & Leisure	Increase amount of garden and food waste collected for compost.	Short	Medium	The cost-of-living crisis has seen a fall in subscriptions to garden waste collections	Garden waste subscriptions are still fluctuating. The cost-of-living crisis and increase in subscription costs is having an impact on residents signing up	Started
Environment & Leisure	Encourage residents to recycle small electricals, textiles and batteries.	Short	Medium	Ongoing	Ongoing	On track

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Environment & Leisure	Signpost residents to recycling facilities for products that cannot be recycled in the kerbside collections.	Short	Small	Waste Wizard tool now on website	As Dec 22	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Reduce contamination of recycling that leads to rejected loads.	Short	Medium	Targeting of areas of high contamination and behaviour change communication	As Dec 22	On track
Environment & Leisure	Encourage litter picks and measures to reduce the amount of plastic litter in the sea	Short	-	Ongoing	As Dec 22	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Work with KCC to stop export abroad of recyclables	Medium	-	Ongoing, although lack of UK infrastructure to recycle for some specific materials	As Dec 22	On track
Environment & Leisure	Influence KCC to maintain or improve the low levels of waste that go to landfill.	Medium	Small	Ongoing	Less than 1% of Swale waste goes to landfill.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote reduced use of single-use plastic (e.g., in partnership with Plastic-Free Faversham and Plastic-Free Sheerness).	Short	Small	Ongoing	Ongoing	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Work with Kent Resource Partnership on county-wide education/communication schemes	Short	Medium	Ongoing, Swale remain part of the KRP providing funding for county wide campaigns	Ongoing	On Track
Environment & Leisure / ECS	Promote improved recycling of commercial waste with businesses across the Borough	Long	Large	Applying to WRAP business waste pilot project. Providing information about Produced in Kent's 'Food Loop' programme. Sharing Blueprint to a Circular Economy information.	Ongoing	Started

Table 7 Progress against resource consumption and waste actions

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Wherever possible, use of single-use plastics has been eliminated in Swale House and across our estate. Cleaning product packing has been changed. Drinks machines using plastic sachets have been removed. Vending machine – both food and drink – contracts were not renewed. Biodegradable tree guards are being used for tree and hedge planting in the council's country parks.

Work is ongoing to tackle heavy contamination across the Borough which is impacting our recycling tonnages as increasing amounts of recyclate is being diverted to the waste to energy facility due to containing high levels of non-recyclable items. The team are working closely with KCC, Biffa and residents to raise awareness and resolve this.

Phase 2 of the Marine Town project was rolled out in October providing all Marine Town residents the ability to recycle their food waste and reducing refuse collections from weekly to fortnightly encouraging residents to recycle more. Officers have been working hard with the residents of the area providing recycling information and helping to ease any concerns residents had about the change. The project will be rolled out to the few remaining areas of the borough that do not have this type of collection over the next few months leading up to the start of the new waste contract.

Community litter picks have been supported and our weekly deep cleans have continued throughout the year, working with residents to keep heavily trafficked roads clear to allow us to give the road a thorough cleanse.

We have been working with LitterLotto to introduce a scheme to encourage residents to use the litter bins across the borough and prevent littering, this has been trialled by one Kent Authority in conjunction with the Kent Resource Partnership and will be rolled out to Swale and the rest of Kent over the coming months. We have also recently carried out an audit of all litter bins and dog bins across the borough to ensure they are all in prime locations for residents to use.

We have continued to work with Defra and LARAC to help steer government policy around the changes to packaging waste legislation.

We support and promote the Repair Cafes in Faversham enabling a large range of household items to be repaired and reused rather than going to waste.

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Ecology and Biodiversity

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2022	Progress Dec 2023	Status
Environment & Leisure	Establish a baseline of trees and woodland on council land and develop a funded action plan to increase tree cover in Swale and promote the benefits of sequestration.	Short	Medium	Currently working on plans for standard tree planting and whipped tree planting at various sites identified across Swale using the LATF funding. Funding has also been provided via the Improvement & Resilience fund. We are discussing options on how best to use the funding.	Ongoing and additional LATF funding applied for	On Track
Planning Development	Ensure the installation and maintenance of landscaping in new developments to contribute to biodiversity net gain via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements.	Short	Medium	Biodiversity Net Gain is required through the NPPF. Once the Environment Bill is enacted the requirement will be 10%. The emerging Swale Local Plan Policy is for 20% BNG.	Ongoing	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Minimise use of fertilizers, pesticides and weed killers.	Short	Small	Use of pesticides is only undertaken as spot treatment on hard surfaces with contractors having converted to a chemical with a lower rate of active ingredient to further reduce pesticide use. Street cleansing contract to use alternative methods from 2024.	Ongoing	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote use of locally produced compost derived from garden and food waste collections	Short	Small	SBC resources would not allow this campaign to be repeated in spring 2022 and the compost supplier could not provide the compost. Now a campaigns officer is in post, we will try and repeat this successful campaign in spring 2023. Material is	Unfortunately the compost supplier unable to deliver.	On Track

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				derived from garden waste only now as food waste goes to an AD plant.		
Environment & Leisure	Encourage coppicing of council woodland to promote biodiversity and use of local woodland products in Swale's country parks.	Short	Small	Discussion with local coppice contractors to identify appropriate timber from the felling plan for this season's contracts are ongoing. 1.37 ha coppiced	1.25 ha coppiced	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Engage business and community groups to support tree planting and conservation work in Swale's efforts to achieve action 1	Short	Large	Continuing work supporting community groups. Also encouraging tree planting via Swale Green Schools Forum. Successful tree week.	Ongoing	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote forest and beach schools	Short	Small	Positive outcomes from MSEP project. Regular interaction with 20+ primary and secondary schools via the Swale Green Schools Forum.	Regular interaction with 20+ primary and secondary schools via the Swale Green Schools Forum	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Support Swale in Bloom working with schools, community groups, voluntary groups and Town and Parish Councils to enhance local habitats and wildlife corridors improving biodiversity conditions across Swale	Short	Small	Continuing work supporting community groups. Also encouraging tree planting via Swale Green Schools Forum. Grants and information provided via the monthly Green Grid newsletter. Excellent In Bloom judging results. Strong focus on biodiversity, bee roads and reuse/recycling. 'Get Swale Growing' plant giveaway during GBGW.	Ongoing but no officer resource to support In Bloom. No funding for plant giveaways in Great Big Green Week	On Track

Table 8 Progress against ecology and biodiversity actions

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This year we have planted 295 standard trees and 14053 whips. A second bid has been made to LATF to facilitate further tree planting.

Update after Tree Week in November

We are reducing our use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer and encouraging the use of compost from food waste recycling.

The renewed grounds maintenance contract also included increased provisions to reduce fertilisers, pesticides and weed killers, as well as a commitment to replace vehicles and tools with electric models from year one. The waste contract will not use any pesticides.

The Environment Grant scheme reopened in October using ring fenced funds from littering fines.

Developers are being encouraged to leave gaps in garden walls and fences for hedgehogs. Warning stickers from the Hedgehog Preservation Society have been added to trimmers and other heavy machinery used by SBC contractors, Blenwood. Operatives have also been made more aware of the need to protect wildlife through training talks.

This year 1.25 ha of coppicing occurred in Perry Wood. This brings work in line with the management plan. All the timber has been used for fencing locally. Coppicing enhances biodiversity, allowing wildflowers and insects to thrive as light reaches the woodland floor.

Our Green Grid network continues to grow and keeps like-minded organisations and individuals in touch. We publish a monthly e-newsletter with a mailing list of over 170 local businesses, parish councils, community groups and individuals. The combination of twice yearly networking meeting and visit to a local green business has proved popular. In 2023 we visited Plumford Farm who were recipients of one of our clean growth grants – using it to install solar panels to run cold storage in the winter and pumps for irrigation in the summer, and Murston Old Church a restored church which is now an arts display venue and new build artists' units and cafe.

The drafted Local Plan includes policies to improve development outcomes with support for access and recreation, green spaces, biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation. There are policies to ensure the installation and maintenance of landscaping in new developments to contribute to biodiversity net gain via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements. We have gone beyond the Government requirement of a 10% biodiversity net gain and are seeking a net gain of 20%.

We were approached in 2021 by the Kent Wildlife Trust to be their only Kent local authority partner in their Wilder Carbon Project which is investigating both offsetting and biodiversity net gain. We are working with them and a local landowner to explore offsetting

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opportunities for our own estate initially and then to broaden the offer to developers. We are also working with them on the 3Cs project exploring saltmarsh restoration in the Swale. A similar saltmarsh restoration/creation project is being under taken by Peel Ports to make use of beneficial dredging materials.

A cluster of thirty local farmers is working on the opportunities for biodiversity net gain in the borough and has identified some sites and exploring the feasibility of others.

Energy Generation and Storage

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2022	Progress Dec 2023	Status
Property	Perform a viability survey at all existing council owned sites to potentially accommodate solar PV.	Medium	Small	Swale House and Master's House retro-fit took priority. Property does not currently have the resource to review in detail.	Feasibility study commissioned and completed	Complete
Environmental & Leisure / ECS	Signpost residents and businesses through communicating benefits, understanding financial and business cases for installing energy storage with grid balancing capability.	Long	Medium	General business engagement on energy and low carbon solutions continued, however no specific focus on energy storage due to lack of time, skills and resources.	As Dec 2022	Not Started
Planning Policy	Investigate the possibility of increasing thermal storage (e.g., hot water and ground inter-seasonal storage) for greater maximisation of local energy generation.'	Medium	Medium	Suggest this is removed from the Action Plan at this stage as Local Plan Review unlikely to have resources to progress this level of detail. Could be mentioned in update to pre-amble to DM 4		Obsolete

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				Sustainable energy production, distribution and storage (Reg 19, 2021)		
	Investigate a pilot programme to use new technology such as virtual private wire technology to balance between energy generation, storage and use within the borough as part of achieving net zero carbon.	Medium	Medium	Early work with Wheelebrator, BEIS and KCC. Rejected by central gov		Obsolete
Property / ECS	Develop Swale as an innovation area promoting new low-carbon technology, linked to incubator units for low-carbon start-ups in a retrofitted Swale House.	Medium	Medium	Swale House commercial use deemed to be a priority but not in the context of low carbon innovation – we would be constraining ourselves. We will presumably create space that allows them to operate in a more Carbon efficient way, focused on the need to reduce carbon from the commercial sector in the Borough generally, rather than an innovation/low carbon sector specific workstream. Property does not currently have the resource to review in detail.		Obsolete
Environment & Leisure	Encourage and support community energy projects.	Medium	Small	No Change in year but plans to pursue in 2023	Encourage and support local community projects.	Started

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Planning Policy	Ensure the Local Plan provides for linking habitat restoration and creation to improve access, flood protection and water quality.	Short	-	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	As Dec 22	Started
Planning Policy	Ensure the installation and maintenance of green infrastructure via the Local Plan and suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements in subsequent developments.	Short	Medium	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	As Dec 22	Started
Planning Policy	Work with the Environment Agency, KCC and the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to manage flood risk and coastal erosion across Swale.	Medium	-	Ongoing	Ongoing	On Track
Planning Policy	Work to restore natural processes within river systems to enhance water storage capacity and improve water quality.	Medium	-	Green Grid responsibilities have been transferred from ECS to EL/CEE.	Contact with LMIDB	Started
Planning Policy	Develop and start to implement a Nature Recovery Network, linking habitat restoration and creation to improved access, flood protection and water quality	Medium	Small	Planning: Being progressed through the Local Plan Review (Early stages, working with KNP/KWT) ECS: Green Grid responsibilities (including this action) have been transferred from ECS to EL/CEE	As Dec 22	On track
Planning Policy	Work with Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to minimize the long-term risk of flooding	Short	-	Ongoing	Ongoing	On track
Emergency Planning	Make sure everyone is able to access the information they need to assess any risk to their lives, livelihoods, health and prosperity posed by flooding and coastal erosion;	Medium	-	Flood Awareness Week promoted via social media	As Dec 22	Started
Emergency Planning	Bring the public, private and third sectors together to work with communities and individuals to reduce the risk of harm – particularly those in vulnerable areas.	Medium	-	Promote third party events	As Dec 22	Started

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Table 10 Progress against Resilience, Adaptation and Offsetting actions

The draft Local Plan includes policy on climate change adaptation.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessments have been undertaken and the Local Plan will reflect the level of current and future flood risk, and development in flood risk areas will be avoided.

The Local Plan will provide for linking habitat restoration and creation to improve access, flood protection and water quality, and the installation and maintenance of green infrastructure via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements in subsequent developments.

We regularly update the Emergency Plan for the borough in partnership with the County Council and make sure everyone is able to access the information they need to assess any risk to their lives, livelihoods, health and prosperity posed by flooding and coastal erosion.

We bring the public, private and third sectors together to work with communities and individuals to reduce the risk of harm – particularly those in vulnerable areas. We have supported communities in the development of their localised emergency and flood plans. We advertise the Environment Agency run awareness weeks.

We are working with the Environment Agency, KCC and the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to manage flood risk and coastal erosion as appropriate across the Borough.

Looking forward

In 2019 we set very ambitious targets to reach net zero. This drove us to start on projects which might have been delayed otherwise – tree planting, LED roll out, car clubs, EV charging, the renovation of Swale House and the Master's House to name a few. Our efforts have been recognised by the Carbon Disclosure Project and Climate Emergency UK. Covid brought its challenges but also accelerated the use of virtual meetings and hybrid working, paper use and business mileage has reduced dramatically.

However it has become apparent that we will not reach the aspirational 2025 council target although we are moving in the right direction. We remain committed to reducing both our own emissions and in leading our borough's residents and businesses on their net zero journey. There are a number of reasons for this including industry the not being able to deliver the correct infrastructure needed to reduce our waste collection emissions and constantly changing offsetting situation.

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The Borough targets will also remain a challenge due to the recent central government announcements re delaying the switch to EVs, the delayed change and reduced numbers changing from gas boilers, the removal of the improved EPC requirement on landlords and the delay to biodiversity net gain rules for developers which have all weaken the drivers for our work when we need strong national leadership and guidance.

At Swale we have a small dedicated team which has worked with the Steering Group to embed the cause across the entire organisation. The emergency impacts all out work. Staff recruitment and retention is an issue with staff leaving for London and other unitary authorities – at least ten officers left Kent wide in 2023. We were without a full-time project officer for several months in this reporting cycle. We need to explore more joint working Kentwide and this is in development.

In order to respond to the challenges to the targets we need to revisit our footprint to establish where we are and how we proceed, setting new actions to make sure we maintain momentum. This will need include whether we offset or retarget.

The financial situation facing local authorities and the cost-of-living crisis has limited our options and we need to understand what is feasible.

During the early part of 2024 we will revisit our Action Plan and take a revised version to the Environment Committee for adoption.

2024 Top 10 Priority Actions

Action	Action Owner	Target date	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Measures of Success
1	Property	2023	Large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies completed. PV roll out started
2	Environment and Leisure	2025	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy shared with stakeholders. Installation of additional charge points in car parks in areas with high on-street demand Work with KCC to deliver on street parking via the LEVI scheme
3	Environment and Leisure	2025	1,481t offset of woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress made against tree planting targets. Other planting opportunities investigated (e.g., hedgerows, saltmarsh etc) Work completed with stakeholders and other landowners to identify further sites to plant. Engagement work conducted with residents, schools and groups to increase understanding of the importance of trees. Biodiversity Net Gain in tree planting sites
4	ECS, Planning, Air Quality	2030	Large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop LCWIPs in Sittingbourne & Sheerness – use LCWIPs across borough to apply for infrastructure funding. Linking Coasts to Downs routes finalised and advertised. Installation of cycle racks Bike Hire scheme investigated.
5	HR, Environment and Leisure	Short	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green Champions activities progressed, measured through behaviour change across teams. Carbon Literacy training delivered, and Carbon Literacy Organisation certification investigated.

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	about the climate & ecological emergency. Review of staff business travel				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member training developed and delivered. • Staff business travel review complete
6	Support businesses to reduce carbon emissions and improve ecology and biodiversity.	ECS	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased installation of work-place chargers measured across the borough. • Increased number of businesses engaging with the council to receive support on decarbonisation measures. • Measure success of Clean Growth Grant and share best practice/case study examples
7	Behaviour change around domestic waste and food recycling	Environment and Leisure	short	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategy and materials developed. • Increased recycling rates • Less contamination of blue bins
8	Refresh the Action Plan	Environment and Leisure	2023	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan aligned with Corporate Plan priorities
9	Implement stage 1 of LED roll out across council parks and open spaces	Environment and Leisure	2023	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED lighting installed across the estate, prioritising most in demand areas. • Carbon and cost savings captured and promoted to parish councils and other stakeholders to encourage installation of LED lighting
10	Improve air quality across the whole borough, focussing on the six air quality management areas (AQMAS)	Air Quality, Environmental Health	short	Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality Action Plan 2023-2028 • Air Quality Defra bids • Pollution Patrol - increased engagement with schools • Success of bid to Defra and development of resource • Continuing reductions in NOx and particulate matter evidenced in Swale's Annual Status Reports.

Table 11 – New top 10 priority actions for 2023

Conclusion

In the four and a half years since the Climate and Ecological Emergency was declared, Swale has made good progress in what have been, extremely unusual and challenging circumstances. We remain a leader in Kent in both our ambition and achievement. Highlights include electrification of the SBC vehicle fleet, improved infrastructure of electric vehicle charging across the Borough, the establishment of the car clubs, and the energy efficiency improvements in both Swale House and the Master's House. Strong partnerships have been formed with environmental groups and work on biodiversity net gain has begun. The new refuse collection contract will facilitate progressive savings and see the use of more efficient and cleaner vehicles.

Covid led to some emissions reductions particularly around transport. The challenge will be to retain and build on the best adaptations that have contributed to a reduction in carbon emissions while facilitating and improving our everyday lives by, for example, video conferencing technology, good broadband, more journeys made by walking and cycling, supporting local businesses etc.

It is always the case that the first reductions made to carbon emissions are the easiest to make. Substantial year-on-year cuts will become increasingly difficult. Our challenge now is to revisit our targets and revise our Action Plan in order to deliver the best for our residents at a realistic cost.

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