



Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report 2025

150

bikes distributed
through Swale Cycle
Recycle

218 members

of the Green Grid
Community Forum

£102,367.87

in grants provided
through the community
infrastructure grants

617

car club bookings


Only Kent authority with
an active travel
coordinator

18

installations of solar PV
through solar together

7

households with low
carbon works through
Home Upgrades Grant
scheme

1,139

fuel vouchers issued,
worth £63,727

330

energy efficiency packs
given out

£16k

of water
debt cleared

6

schoolteachers
Carbon Literacy Trained

40.87%

recycling rate

53

members of the Green
Schools Forum

22

staff climate
champions

150

standard trees
planted

6,200

whips planted



Swale Borough Council

Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report January 2025 (looking back at the achievements over 2024)

Background

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

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

This is the sixth annual report and covers 2024's activities to address the emergency.

This will be the final report on the current Action Plan. We are reviewing both our targets and the Action Plan and will publish a new one in the Spring of 2025.

The original motion also included targets to achieve net-zero within our own operations by 2025, and 2030 for Boroughwide net-zero. The Council is in the process of reviewing these targets. The Carbon Trust was commissioned to undertake a review into the Council's emissions throughout 2024 and the findings will be used to inform any decisions around targeting.

A steering group consisting of councillors and officers representing all service areas of the Council meets regularly to progress the actions within the Action Plan.

The refurbishment of the second floor of Swale House is complete and funding has been agreed for solar PV which will be installed in 2025. Masters' House is fully refurbished. The latter has been successfully let to a charitable enterprise supporting young entrepreneurs.

Most of our fleet vehicles have been replaced with EVs, and with a total mileage of 55,000 miles have saved around 11.5tCO₂e throughout 2024. The grounds maintenance contract has seen electric vehicles and power tools used for the first time on this service. The new waste and street cleaning contract has been implemented. While there continues to be teething problems, the use of Euro VI diesel vehicles fitted with electric lifts, and the re-routing of rounds is estimated to reduce emissions by 12-15%.

In 2023, Council funding allowed the roll out of LED lighting replacement, tree planting, a range of air quality measures, and the installation of 18 EV charge points across the Council's car parks. The roll out continued in 2024. Monitoring of the EV chargepoints is underway, and data shows 27,800 electric vehicles were parking in Council owned car parks between January and September 2024. However, most of these were not charging. Less than 1% of parking is EV charging, which is estimated to have offset approximately 66.4 t CO₂e in the same period.

Community Infrastructure Grants (CIG) have provided £102,367.87 to projects which take measures such as insulation and the installation of renewable technologies in community facilities.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

The Rural Swale Small Business Grant Scheme has provided £21,000 to small businesses to make capital investments to support growth and carbon reduction measures.

Together, the schemes have seen 17 projects approved that will reduce emissions. These included the installation of solar PV, low energy lighting, bicycle racks, EV charge points, and active travel infrastructure. Provided alongside this is a bespoke low-carbon advisory service, which has given 17 organisations practical guidance on reducing their emissions.

Swale Borough Council partook in the Home Upgrades Grants scheme (HUG2) to support residents with high energy bills and reduce their properties domestic carbon emissions. Throughout 2024 works were completed for seven households, with six more receiving support.

A successful bid to the Local Authority Tree Fund, Highways England and Trees for Communities has allowed Swale to plant 6200 whips and 150 standard trees.

The Council continues to follow the Air Quality Action Plan (2023-2028) to achieve a cleaner, healthier borough. On Clean Air Day 2024 a new Air Pollution training platform for healthcare professionals was launched. We are working with KCC to explore 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. Further air quality monitoring has been implemented.

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. Facilities to recycle difficult-to-eliminate plastic waste in Swale House were introduced in 2023, including coffee cups, cardboard, newspaper, and plastic bottles. Further facilities have been rolled out in 2024 for the recycling of empty pens, blister packs and crisp packets. Swale has also joined a Digital Kent initiative to allow staff to recycle old devices, which are then recycled and given to members of the community to support digital integration. 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. Although the Special Project’s Fund funding was exhausted in 2024 Swale was able to support the service continuing using some of our Household Support Fund allocation and Children and Families secured additional external funding. This year the service has issued 1139 fuel vouchers worth £63,727, 150 Winter Warm packs, 330 Energy Efficiency packs. 250 information and advice emails have been sent monthly and 6000 people have been reached on social media month. 22 households have been referred to Southern Water and water debt of £16,000 has been cleared. 32 households were moved to a lower water tariff and 3 households received white goods.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

130 households were signed up to the Priority Services Register. Free period products have started to be supplied again. Further funding to keep the service going is being explored.

A car club was set up in Faversham in May 2022 and in Sittingbourne in March 2023. The town of Faversham has two hybrid cars and one electric car, while Sittingbourne has three hybrid vehicles. These have completed 617 bookings in the last 15 months, driving a combined total of 64,522 miles. This is estimated to have saved 4.7 tCO₂.

The Local Plan rewrite is underway, and the Council is utilising this opportunity to pursue the most ambitious options to ensure the next generation of housing is net-zero. The revised Action Plan will include these measures.

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. This project is now underway, having successfully secured funding, and will see nine hectares of restored saltmarsh along the Swale. We are supporting the Zoological Society of Londons Transforming the Thamescape, an intergrated coastal habitat restoration project for the Greater Thames Estuary, as well as working with Peel Ports on a beneficial use of dredging materials project.

Swale Borough Council is a member of the advisory board of the North Kent Local Decarbonisation Project (LIDP), an ambitious project to develop and deliver a joint carbon reduction strategy by the Kelmsley Industrial Cluster, supported by Innovate UK.

Swale remains the only second tier authority in Kent with a dedicated Active Travel Co-ordinator, and work is underway to produce a Swale Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.

One project unique to Swale is the Swale Cycle Recycle Project. The scheme 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 scheme ensures that 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. Over 150 bikes have been distributed into the community throughout 2024.

Events have been held to engage and inform residents about the Climate and Ecological Emergency. During Great Big Green Week, Swale received grants from the Royal Horticultural Society and Cycling UK to hold train station gardening events in Queenborough, Faversham and Sittingbourne, as well as two bike repair cafés in Sheerness. Swale has supported litter picking days at Kingsborough Manor Community Woodland, collecting thousands of tree guards to be recycling by CDDL

Recycling. A schools Eco-Fair in October in partnership with Friends of Milton Creek Country Park, Swale Friends of the Earth, and Take Pride integrated physical activity with climate awareness for five classes of students from six local primary schools. Carbon Literacy Training was delivered to STEM teachers from a local secondary school to roll out certification to over 1200 students. A case study is being prepared to enable the rollout of training to more secondary schools. National Tree Week 2024 saw five events take place around the borough, including whip planting, guided tree walks, litter picking and tree guard removal.

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 2022. Waste collection figures are similarly only updated to the end of the 2023/24 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.

The report from the Tyndall Centre recommended that Swale should aim for an annual emissions reduction of 13% in order to achieve our borough wide targets. At 2017 emissions rates, Swale's carbon budget would be spent within 7 years. Figure 1 demonstrates Swale's emissions across the borough from 2017 compared to the minimum reduction rate of 13% per year.

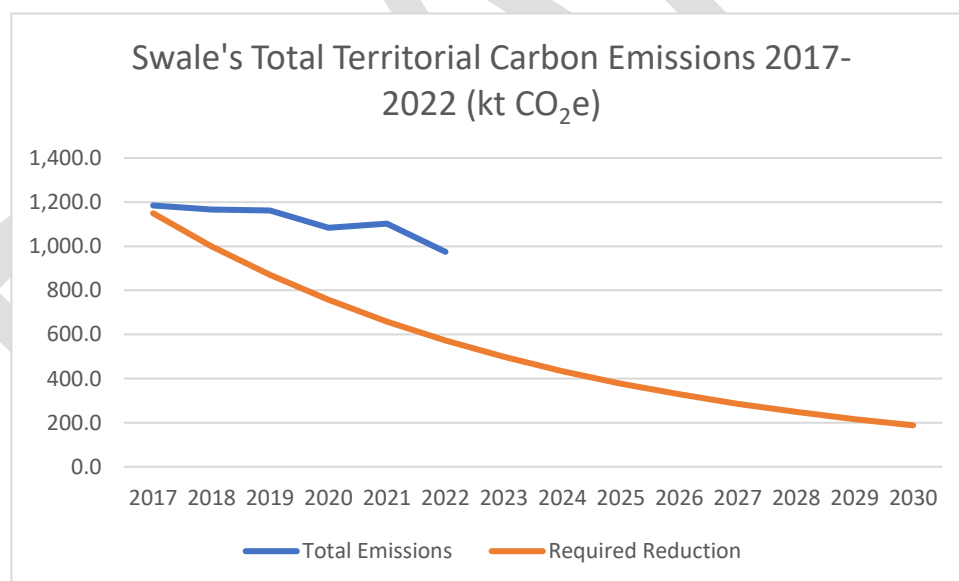


Figure 1: Source, DESNZ

Energy Consumption and Emissions

Traditionally Swale has been a hub of industry, and as such has always had higher energy consumptions arising from the commercial and industrial sectors when compared to other Kent Districts. These two sectors alone are now responsible for 48% of the boroughs total emissions. Emissions from these sectors peaked in 2010 and have consistently declined ever since. This has contributed significantly to the overall downward trend in carbon emissions in the borough (see figure 2).

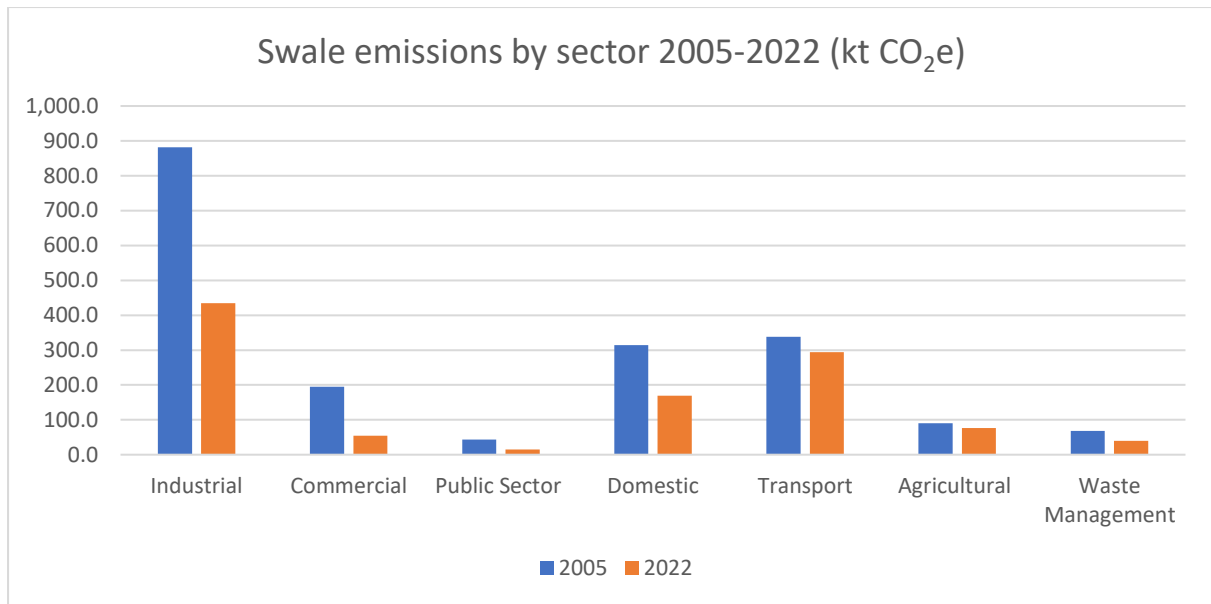


Figure 2: Source, DESNZ

In Swale in 2022, 43% of CO₂ emissions came from the Industry Sector, while only 5% came from the Commercial Sector. Transport accounted for the next largest source of emissions, at 29%, followed by domestic emissions from houses at 17%, agricultural sector emissions (5%), public sector emissions (1%), and waste management (0.1%). Meanwhile, Land Use, Land Change and Forestry meant that 15.4 tCO₂ was sequestered from the atmosphere. This can be attributed to carbon sequestration from forest land and grassland in Swale. The total carbon emissions from the borough have decreased since the declaration was made in 2019, with per capita emissions dropping from 7.8 tCO₂ to 6.3 tCO₂ between 2021 and 2022.

Industrial and Commercial Sectors

Despite a slight rise in 2021, there has been an overall decrease in emissions from industry since 2005, with this trend continuing strongly in 2022. Within the sectors there has been a 52.2% decrease in CO₂ emissions between 2005-2022 (see figure 3).

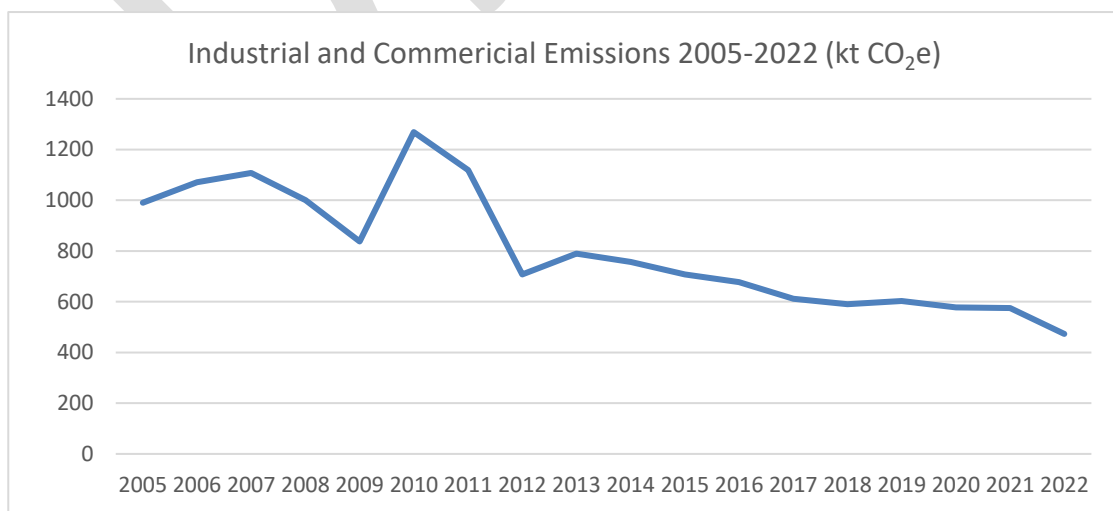


Figure 3: Source, DESNZ

Transport

In Swale, transport emissions have remained stable. The exception to this was during 2020, when reduced movement was seen as the result of Covid-19. The loosening of restrictions in 2021, transport emissions rose by 11.8%, although they remain 12.2% below pre-pandemic levels (figure 4)

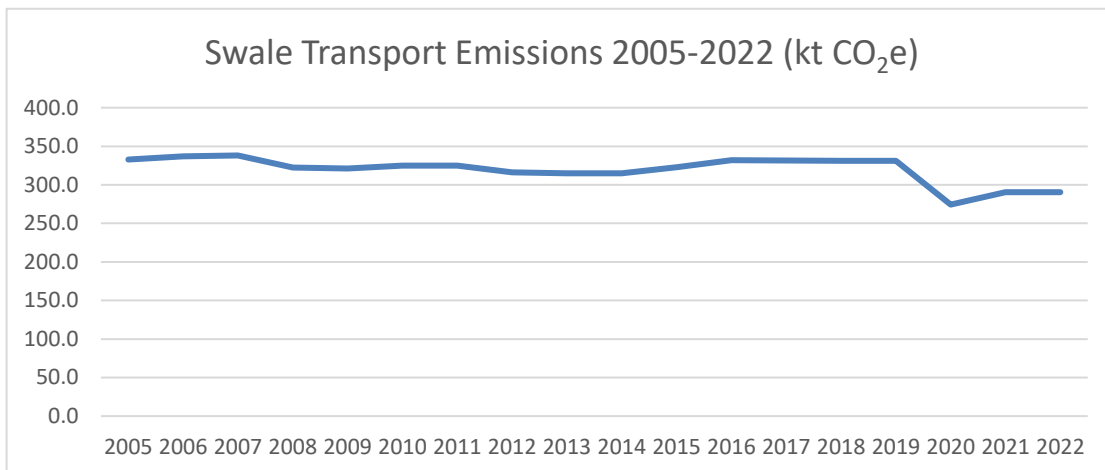


Figure 4: Source, DESNZ

Domestic

Swale's domestic emissions (figure 5) are the 4th highest in Kent, with 72% resulting from domestic gas use. The overall trend in domestic emissions is positive, with a decrease of 46% between 2005-2022. This can largely be attributed to a decrease in emissions relating to domestic electricity use (see figure 6).

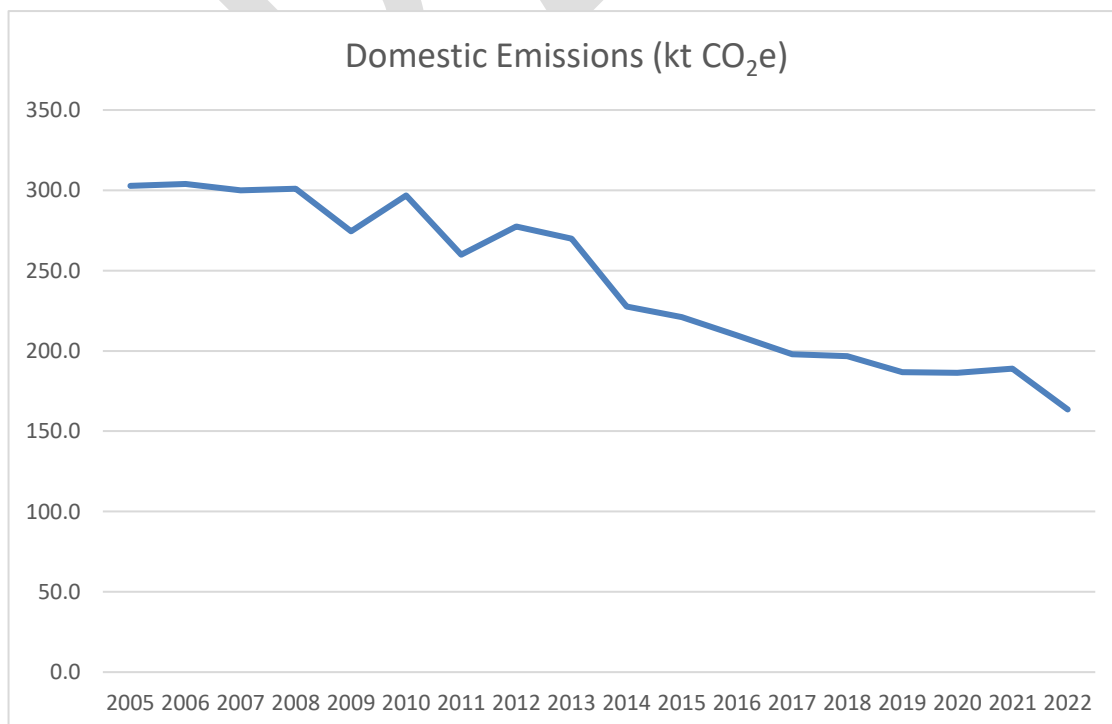


Figure 5: Source, DESNZ

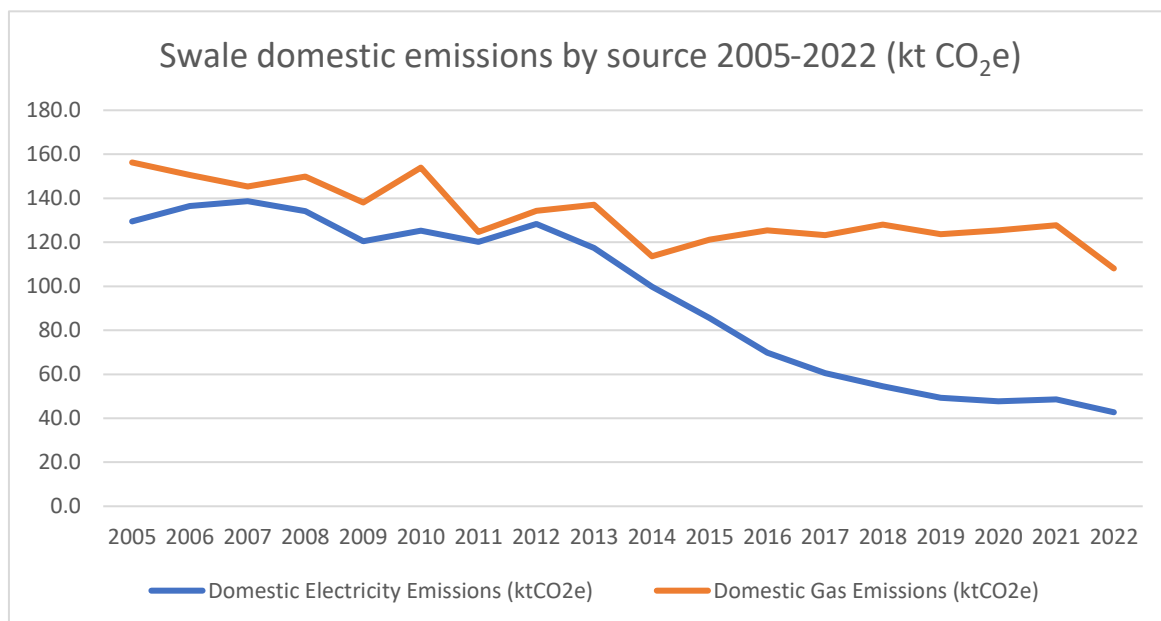


Figure 6: Source, DESNZ

Public Sector

Since 2021, public sector emissions have been included in the DESNZ reporting. These figures show that historically, Swale has had some of the highest public sector emissions in Kent (figure 7).

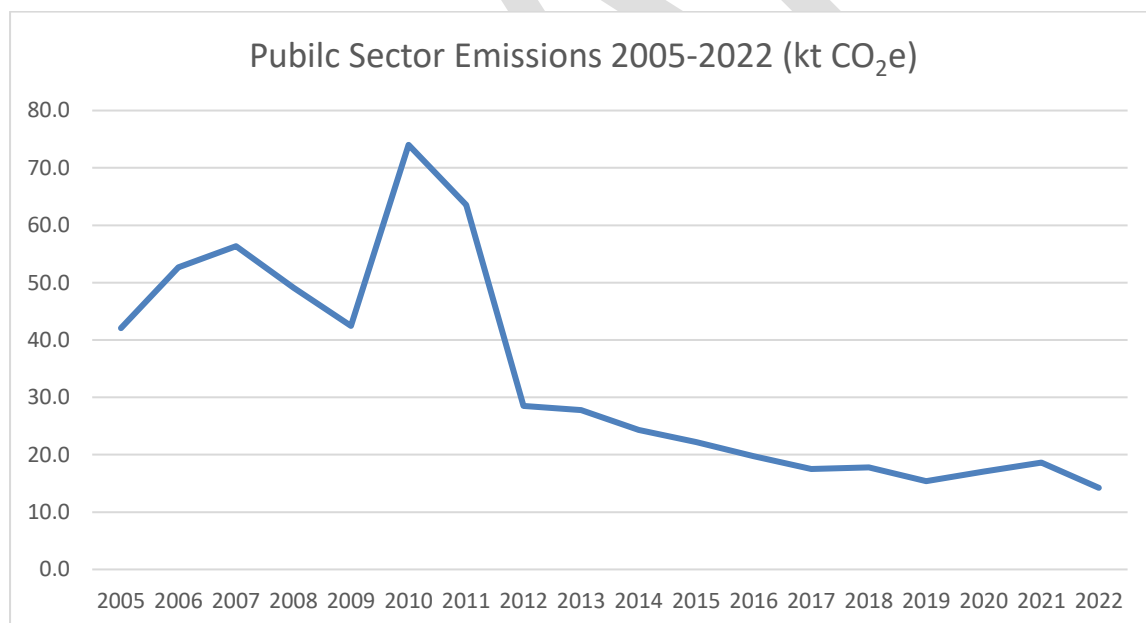


Figure 7: Source, DESNZ

Other Greenhouse Gases

In 2022, DESNZ included a breakdown of other greenhouse gas emissions within territorial emissions data, namely Methane and Nitrous Oxide. Figure 8 shows how these have fallen significantly since 2005.

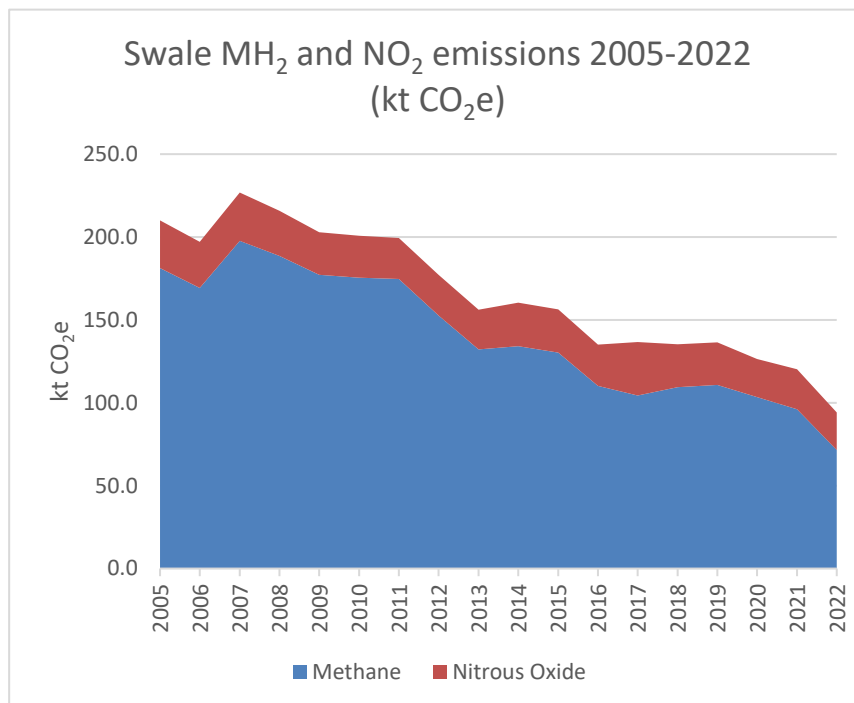


Figure 8: Source, DESNZ

Household Waste

As the waste collection authority, we have targets to reduce the amount of residual waste collected, and increase the proportion sent to recycling and composting. Household waste collection has seen a number of changes this year, with the rollout of the new service from March. Despite the disruption of changing vehicles, disposal locations and having to work from a temporary depot, the new cleaner vehicles and electric lifts will have shown carbon reduction benefits. We have seen an increase in contamination of bins this year which has led to lost recycling loads and we will be focussed on reducing contamination in 2025.

Percentage of household waste recycled and composted (2024)	
Month	% Recycled
January	34.3
February	34.5
March	37.2
April	41
May	42.5
June	45.1
July	39.7
August	34.1
September	35.8
October	32.8

Figure 9 – Source, Waste Contracts Manager

Renewable Generation

At the end of 2022, there were 2,520 installation sites producing renewable electricity in Swale, an increase of 14.2% from 2021. Of these sites, 99.3% were domestic photovoltaics. The remaining sites include 13 onshore wind installations, three sites generating renewable energy from sewerage gas, landfill gas, or municipal solid waste, and one site generating energy from biomass.

The total generation is an estimated 141,589 MWh.

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.

The Action Plan is currently being revised and will be published later in 2025.

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>

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Department	Action	Time scale	Annual carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	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: Base level training for all employees	Short	-	New project officer undergoing train the trainer training and working on this. Member training being developed	Project officer fully trained.	On Track
CEE	Encouraging personal responsibility and roll out of a Green Champions Network.	Short	-	Meetings and activities ongoing	Meeting 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 delivered to Environment Committee in January	In conjunction with KMEG	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	-	Green Grid mailing list continues to grow, and a monthly newsletter is published. Two in person meetings held.	Green Grid mailing list continues to grow, and a monthly newsletter is published. Two in person forum meetings held, one at Milton Creek Country Park and one at Lynsted Community Kitchen Garden. Six school science teachers received Carbon Literacy Training, with view of rolling out training to all year 9 students.	On Track

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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 2023	The Council purchases very little externally produced catering overall. Ad-hoc Climate events do provide suitable catering. Regular messaging through staff forums encourages positive choices.	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. Promoted Great Big Green Week but no external funding this year limited our involvement	Highlighted across SBC external comms e.g., social media, Swale Means Business, CEE website, and Green Grid forum newsletters. Promoted Great Big Green Week and ran six of our events	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 2024. 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, Environmental Health	2030	Large
5	Increase engagement with staff and members to roll out learning about the climate & ecological emergency.	HR, Environment and Leisure	Short	Small

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

	Review of staff business travel			
6	Support businesses to reduce carbon emissions and improve ecology and biodiversity.	ED	Medium	Medium
7	Behaviour changes around domestic waste and food recycling	Environment and Leisure	Short	Small
8	Refresh the Action Plan	Environment and Leisure	2024	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)	Environmental Health	Short	Small

Table 2 Top Ten Priority Actions 2024

Progress against all actions can be found in the relevant sections of this report.

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.

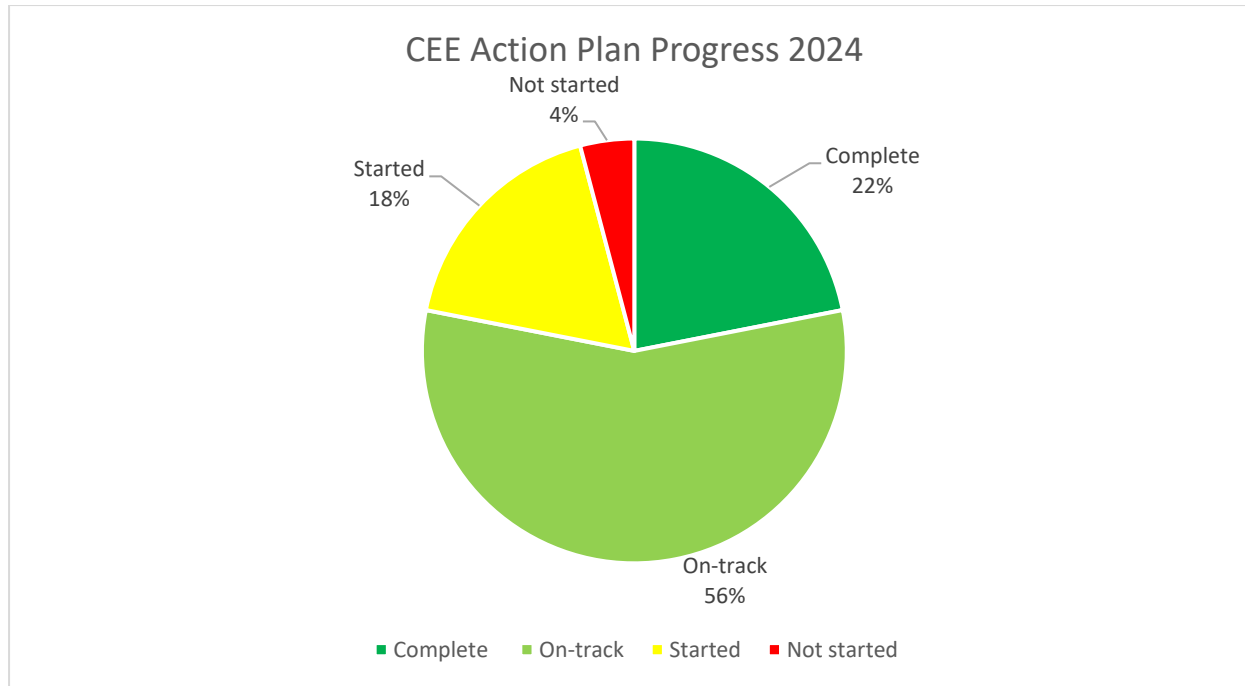


Figure 1 Overall progress against Action Plan as of Dec 2024

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Council Operations

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Property	Retro-fit Swale House to cut carbon emissions (eg. extra insulation, triple glazing, heat pump, solar PV).	2025	186	Roof, windows, and insulation complete. Internal work almost complete. Solar feasibility study complete. Master's House units let out	Work complete. Funding for Solar on the roof of Swale House agreed. Currently out for tender, with installation planned for 2025.	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	Complete	
Commissioning	Revise procurement strategy to embed the climate and ecological emergency into all procurement decisions.	2023	780	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	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 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	A Sustainable Events Policy is being written which will apply to all outdoor events taking place on Council land. This will be supported by a Sustainable Events Guide.	On Track

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

				challenging suppliers. More messaging to be shared with staff to encourage best practice.		
CEE / Economy & Regeneration	Carry out regular staff commuting survey and encourage commuting by walking, cycling or public transport.	2025	20	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	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	We have promoted a new staff scheme to encourage take up of public transport season tickets.	Started
HR	Introduce a cycle to work scheme that includes e-bikes.	2021	2	Cycle scheme includes e-bikes	The Cycle to Work scheme includes e-bikes and the total cost of bikes allowed to be bought by the scheme has been increased.	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. Swale House. Central recycling point installed and food waste bins in kitchens.	Complete	
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	Complete	

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

IT	Develop working practices to use IT to reduce use of paper.	2025	5	Paper used considerably reduced.	Paper used considerably reduced. Committee chairs encouraging paperless meetings	Complete
Property / Environment & Leisure Services	Ensure LED lighting is fitted across the council estate, including parks and open spaces.	2023	19	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.	We continue to work closely with KCC's term lighting contractor to progress the LED Lighting Upgrade Project. To date we have completed phases 1.1 to 2.6 of the lighting schedule, as well as some lighting replacements along Sheerness Seafront. A quotation has now been received for phases 2.8 to 3.1 of the works and an order has been issued to the contractor. To date, we have replaced 110 units with LED lights. Whilst it is acknowledged that funding will not be sufficient to complete all of our lighting assets, a substantial number of our lights will be upgraded to LED specification under this project. As part of this work, a complete update of Swale's lighting asset records held by UK Power Networks is also being undertaken to ensure accurate information on our assets is held by the electricity provider.	On track

Table 4 Progress against council operations actions

The Carbon Trust was appointed in 2019 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.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

The report was completed in early 2020 - the full version of which can be found [here](#)²

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 direct 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 started 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 are provided for the delivery of some frontline services. Where staff receive a company car, they are 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 has been 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>

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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

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

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

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

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is an alternative available solution. 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.

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

Our new contractors, Suez, have given considerable thought to how we tackle weeds yet reduce the use of herbicides. They are using 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 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 6 times 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 in 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

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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 24 – Sept 24 saw recycling figures 5.6t of Dry Mixed, 3.5t of Mixed Glass and 164.5t of Green Waste.

The refurbishment of Swale House was completed in late summer of 2023. The window replacements are bringing a saving of approximately 39 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. Funding has been agreed for the installation of solar PV panels, which should produce 50% of our electricity demand and saving £32,750 pa at current prices. The payback period should be three years.

The bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Fund was successful and this was used in the Master's House refurbishment. It is estimated that the switch from an oil boiler to an air source heat pump is saving 32 tonnes of CO₂ per annum from operational energy. We have been able to use this investment as match funding for our Levelling Up Fund big *Sheerness Revival*, which includes solar panels for Masters House.

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.



Image 1: the refurbished Masters House.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Buildings and Energy Efficiency

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	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.	Net-zero evidence base being undertaken; this will feed into the emerging Local Plan.	On Track
CEE	Bulk buying scheme for solar PV installations paid-for by residents (in partnership with KCC).	2020-21	100	Two more rounds in 2023 with 72 installations including 3 with battery storage. 184 installations since the project started.	18 installations throughout 2024.	On Track
CEE	Fuel and water poverty outreach service to reduce fuel and water bills for vulnerable residents.	2020-23	to be monitored	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.	1139 fuel vouchers worth £63,727, 150 Winter Warm packs, and 330 Energy Efficiency packs have been issued. 250 information and advice emails have been sent monthly. 6000 people reached on social media monthly. 22 households have been referred to Southern Water. Water debt of £16,000 has been cleared. 32 households were moved to a lower water tariff and 3 households received white goods. 130 households were signed up to the Priority Services Register. Free period products being supplied again. Further funding to keep the service going is being explored.	Complete

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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	This will be updated as the Local Plan progresses	On Track
Plannin g Policy	Review Local Plan and incorporate recommended actions on spatial land use strategy and integrated transport strategy, including focusing development on 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.	An updated Local Plan timetable was agreed at Full Council in December 2024	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.	An updated Local Plan timetable was agreed at Full Council in December 2024. The preferred growth option will be discussed during the course of 2025/26.	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.	Regular signposting taking place through Green Grid newsletters, social media, the CEE webpage, and the One Swale Roadshow.	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 23	Started

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Planning Development	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	Pre-app advice being provided by the DM team and the Climate Change Officer.	On Track
Planning 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.	Emphasis has switched to Biodiversity Net Gain. However, offsetting as a last resort will be considered in the next Local Plan.	Started
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	On hold as implications of new NPPF (Dec 2024) are being investigated.	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 MEES 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.	No capacity for MEES investigations.	Started

Table 5 Progress against buildings and energy efficiency actions

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

The next Local Plan is being prepared and will incorporate and build on 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 are working with the Kent Wildlife Trust and local farmers to explore offsetting options for 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 Fuel and Water Advice Service is available to vulnerable residents across the borough. Funding was secured for a fourth year of delivery using the Household Support Fund and external funding. This year the service has issued 1139 fuel vouchers worth £63,727, 150 Winter Warm packs, 330 Energy Efficiency packs. 250 information and advice emails have been sent monthly and 6000 people have been reached on social media monthly. 22 households have been referred to Southern Water and water debt of £16,000 has been cleared. 32 households were moved to a lower water tariff and 3 households received white goods. 130 households were signed up to the Priority Services Register. Free period products have started to be supplied again. Further funding to keep the service going is being explored.

Transport and Air Quality

Dept.	Action	Time scale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Environment & Leisure	Install EV charging points across the borough.	2025	to be monitored	10 double charge points fully operational	No further installations as public demand is not sufficient. The Council is working with Kent County Council to deliver on-street electric vehicle charge points in residential areas across Swale through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. Tender is currently out for a charge point operator. It is expected that around 600 charge points will be installed around the borough.	Complete
CEE	Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.	2030	Large	Faversham LCWIP adopted. Faversham Parishes to Town Project Complete (EAC funded) Sustrans Solar Cycle Way Options Report Completed (developer funded – c.£7k) 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	New permanent Active Travel Officer appointed to role in August 2024. Faversham LCWIP in place and some schemes/initiatives being delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East to west walking route • North to south design project • Reviewing LCWIP including better linkage to the Highways Infrastructure Plan (HIP) Faversham Hopper Bus commenced in April '24 to restore public bus service to the residents of Oare, Newnham, Lynsted,	On track

			<p>obtained seed funding and has partnered with Greenways and Cyclerroutes 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> <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</p>	<p>Faversham and parts of Teynham.</p> <p>Sheppey Light Railway Greenway (SLGR) have now cleared a section of the old railway from Scrapsgate Road to Sheerness Golf. Permissions are being sought from other landowners to progress other parts of the proposed route.</p> <p>Capability Fund has been awarded of £50,750.</p> <p>Sheppey Towns LCWIP stages 1-4 completed.</p> <p>Swale LCWIP stages 1-4 completed.</p> <p>The forward plan for the LCWIP is to now merge the Sheppey Town and Swale LCWIP together as one Swale-wide LCWIP (whilst ensuring the agreed and adopted Faversham LCWIP in also incorporated) and take this through the committee stage and public consultation in 2025.</p> <p>Sittingbourne Connectivity Study has commenced this year to better understand the area of Sittingbourne and agree proposed 'active travel corridors'.</p>	
--	--	--	--	---	--

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

				“Rainbow of Rural Solutions” presented at Cycle County Active County, the national active travel conference in Oxford.		
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
ECS	Promote work-place car chargers (Government funding available).	Medium	Medium	Included in business support on CEE webpages and supported by actions in the EV strategy. Businesses sign posted to grants etc	The Workplace Charging Scheme has been promoted across a range of external communications, including Swale Means Business, the CEE webpage, and newsletters for the Green Grid Forum and Green Schools Forum.	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	Complete	

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Planning Policy	<p>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-</p> <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 information and incentives to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes from new occupiers. • 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. 	Short	Medium	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review</p> <p>Car club established in Faversham and Sittingbourne enabling developers to include additional vehicles in their developments – initial conversations underway.</p>	As Dec 23	On Track
Planning / Air Quality	<p>Incorporate a policy on air quality in the local plan review</p>	Short	Small	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review</p>	<p>Being progressed through the Local Plan Review.</p>	On Track

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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 stage of the Local Plan Review Consultation and together with the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan will set out schemes to encourage walking and cycling and sustainable travel	The Council has contributed towards the KCC Local Transport Plan and the current draft Local Transport Strategy will be integrated into the emerging Local Plan.	On Track
Air Quality	Establish an anti-idling campaign, initially around school sites from which it can be expanded.	Short	Small	Campaign ongoing	Anti-idling patrols have started and will run throughout school terms for 42 weeks.	On Track
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	ORCS funded EV chargers installed	The Council is working with Kent County Council to deliver on-street electric vehicle charge points in residential areas across Swale through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. Tender is currently out for a charge point operator. It is expected that around 600 charge points will be installed around the borough over a 10-year contract period.	Complete
ECS	Promote business fleet decarbonisation, including the potential cost and reputational benefits.	Medium	Small	Fleet decarbonisation promoted to businesses via ebulletins	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	Funding largely for subsidised fares. A pilot is operating in Swale.	In 2023 the Environmental Protection Team updated the SBC Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) (2023 - 2028). The AQAP includes measure 13 Public transport improvements to bus infrastructure/service - Support public transport providers in a lobbying role for improvements to infrastructure	Started

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

					and service improvement. This measure is still to be actioned.	
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	Data collection on going and will be analysed in 2024.	The 2023 updated AQAP includes the following measure: "20 is plenty" zones - to be monitored and reviewed for AQMAs. Newington's air quality and 20 mph limit will be assessed through continuous monitoring to assess long-term air quality changes within the AQMA and potential impact of speed change. Currently, air quality is improving within the district, in addition to Faversham and Newington, therefore it is hard to assess the impacts.	On Track
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.	Complete	
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	Schools encourages to use 'Pollution Patrol' which is a free interactive website for primary schools, children and their families developed to help raise awareness of air pollution, the	From successful Defra bid Environmental Health launched a 'Clean Air Academy' (November 18, 2024) which is an online tool for health professionals to use to assist	Complete

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

				damage it can cause and ways that individuals can help to reduce their impact by changing behaviours.	patients with CHD/COPD in navigating air quality information.	
Air Quality / ECS	Encourage local school and business travel plans to reduce car journeys.	Short	Small	Review under way.	This measure is currently being led by KCC. The updated AQAP includes a measure 3: Air pollution alerts, information to raise awareness on impacts and solutions. Our Kentair website has free air pollution alerts and information. There are currently 336 registered users for the email service. During 2024 SBC have promoted the digital education package 'Pollution Patrol' to schools, with prize draw to encourage schools to use it. Uptake has slowed.	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.	SBC has limited land so tree planting efforts will gradually turn towards supporting other landowners in the coming years. Officers continue to engage with schools regarding tree planting and biodiversity through the Green Schools Forum. Greenspaces team are to begin drafting a strategy for schools in early 2025.	On Track

Table 6 Progress against transport and air quality actions

The 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

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

the CAZ Feasibility and Source Apportionment studies. The group also collaborated to identify what traffic management interventions were required; what may influence 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.

The steering group meets quarterly every three to four months. Task and finish sub-groups are responsible for implementing and delivering specific measures and meet more regularly, reporting back to the steering group. The task groups are also responsible for providing further sub-actions and associated measurable milestones.

Updates on milestones are reported to the AQAP Steering Group and are 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.



Image 2: Bikes donated through the Swale Cycle Recycle scheme.

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. We are working with developers to include car clubs in larger developments.

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. This year over 100 bikes have been distributed and over 150 bikes donated to the project.

Swale remains the only second tier authority in Kent with an Active Travel Co-ordinator. The role was made permanent in the Spring reflecting the Council's commitment to Active Travel. And the new officer took up their role in August.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

The Faversham LCWIP is in place and some schemes/initiatives being delivered - the east to west walking route, the north to south design project, a review to include better linkage to the Highways Infrastructure Plan and additional cycle storage engagement activities are being planned to start in early 2025.

The Faversham Hopper Bus run by Faversham Town Council, commenced in April to restore public bus services to the residents of Oare, Newnham, Lynsted, Faversham and parts of Teynham.

The Sheppey Light Railway Greenway (SLGR) has now cleared a section of the old railway from Scrapsgate Road to Sheerness Golf club plus another smaller section along the route. Permissions are being sought from other landowners to progress other parts of the proposed route. SLRG has applied to the Woodland Trust for some trees to help with this project.

Capability Fund funding has been awarded of £50,750 for LCWIP consultation and implementation studies, and the continuation of the Swale Cycle Recycle project.

Stages 1-4 of both the Swale and Sheppey Town LCWIPs have been completed and it has been decided to merge these into one Swale wide LCWIP (whilst ensuring the agreed and adopted Faversham LCWIP is also incorporated) and take this through the committee stage and public consultation in 2025.

A Sittingbourne Connectivity Study has commenced this year to better understand the area of Sittingbourne and agree proposed 'active travel corridors'. This study will enable us to calculate the costs for each corridor, calculate the calories burned by using each corridor and calculate the typical CO₂ emissions saved based on mode shift to walking and cycling.

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.



Image 2: Solar PV was installed on the roof of Graveney and Goodnestone village hall through the Community Infrastructure Grants.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Successful projects have encouraged walking and cycling or the use of electric vehicles through the installation of active travel infrastructure, bicycle racks, and EV charge points. Three village halls have been awarded grants to install solar PV, while other organisations have installed low energy lighting and water irrigation systems. 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. The total grants awarded are currently projected to be £102,367.

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. Total grants awarded throughout the scheme amount to £21,000.

DRAFT

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Resource Consumption and Waste

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	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, the Local Plan will address waste.	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, along with social media campaigns driven by Swale	Some delays due to the new contract roll out KRP promotion on hold	On track
Environment & Leisure	Increase amount of garden and food waste collected for compost.	Short	Medium	Garden waste subscriptions are still fluctuating. The cost-of-living crisis and increase in subscription costs is having an impact on residents signing up	This year garden waste subscriptions have increased to 21,317 as of the end of December.	Started
Environment & Leisure	Encourage residents to recycle small electricals, textiles and batteries.	Short	Medium	Ongoing	This was removed from the new waste collection contract as a fortnightly kerbside service as there are more reliable options for residents this was promoted in our letters to residents during the service change and is included on our website. However, residents can include these items with bulky waste bookings and the contractor will run new drop-in events across each town in 2025.	On track
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 above update.	On Track

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Environment & Leisure	Reduce contamination of recycling that leads to rejected loads.	Short	Medium	Targeting of areas of high contamination and behaviour change communication	Unfortunately, contamination has increased this year. Suez have a project officer who will be working with our Education Officer to target this in 2025.	On track
Environment & Leisure	Encourage litter picks and measures to reduce the amount of plastic litter in the sea	Short	-	Ongoing	Swale has supported 20 volunteer litter pick groups throughout 2024.	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 23	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	Officers have attended community events to promote the reduced used of single-use plastics e.g the Graveney Flower Festival during Great Big Green Week 2024, with a theme of recycling and flower displayed made from plastic waste.	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	KRP has reestablished in the later part of the year and is considering impacts from the new waste legislation focussed on Simpler Recycling.	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.	Produced in Kent no longer running Food Loop	Started

Table 7 Progress against resource consumption and waste actions

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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. A sustainable events policy is being written for outdoor events which take place on Council land, alongside supplementary guidance.

Phase 2 of the Marine Town project was rolled out in October 2023 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 was also rolled out to the few remaining areas of the Borough that did not have this type of collection ahead of the to the start of the new waste contract.

Community litter picks have been supported.

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.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Ecology and Biodiversity

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	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	Ongoing and additional LATF funding applied for	LATF funded planting completed. LATF round 4 application unsuccessful for planting in winter 2024/2025.	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	As a result of the Environment Act 2021 a requirement for mandatory minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain will come into effect in January/April 2024 for major/small sites schemes	10% Biodiversity Net Gain conditioned in planning permissions. Local Plan will require 20%	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.	Throughout 2024 100 litres of pesticides in the form of Roundup Pro Active 360 was used. This is down from the 160 litres used throughout 2021.	On Track
environment & Leisure	Promote use of locally produced compost derived from garden and food waste collections	Short	Small	Unfortunately, the compost supplier unable to deliver.	Completed	
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. 1.5 Ha coppiced	0.38 hectares coppiced in 2024	On Track

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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.	A wide range of organisations have consistently been involved in tree planting efforts. These have included local primary schools, Friends of Milton Creek Country Park, and Friends of Faversham Rec.	On Track
Environment & Leisure	Promote forest and beach schools	Short	Small	Regular interaction with 20+ primary and secondary schools via the Swale Green Schools Forum	Benefits of forest and beach schools promoted through the Green Schools Forum. Continuing to work with and support local organisations which provide forest schools to local primary schools.	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	Ongoing but no officer resource to support In Bloom. No funding for plant giveaways in Great Big Green Week	In-Bloom role now obsolete. Swale working with Kent Wildlife Trust Group and local farming cluster on the 3C's project to restore grazing saltmarsh along the Swale.	On Track

Table 8: Progress against ecology and biodiversity actions.

This planting season we have planted 6200 whips and 150 standard trees.

Five events were hosted across the borough during National Tree Week 2024. This saw hundreds of whips planted at Milton Creek Country Park and Faversham Recreation Grounds, tree guard removal and litter picking at Kingsborough Manor Community Woodland, and a guided tree walk through the King George V park.

We are reducing our use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer and encouraging the use of compost from food waste recycling. Work is underway to incorporate a term into allotment agreements that prevents the use of pesticides.



Image 3: Hedgerows planted during National Tree Week

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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 does 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 strimmers 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 0.38 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 200 local businesses, parish councils, community groups and individuals. The combination of twice-yearly networking meetings. In April 2024 we visited the Lynsted Community Kitchen Garden – a new garden which started during Covid and now 201 members growing a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and flowers organically. In October we visited Milton Creek Country Park to see the work of the Friends group and the new cabin which was partly funded by a Community Infrastructure Grant from Swale, using funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Image 5: Work begins at Conyer, where the restoration of coastal grazing saltmarsh is underway.



Image 4: Guests at the Green Grid autumn meeting, hosted by Milton Creek Country Park.

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%.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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 on a project exploring saltmarsh restoration in the Swale. Work has recently commenced at Conyer. A similar saltmarsh restoration/creation project is being undertaken by Peel Ports to make use of beneficial dredging materials. We are supporting the Zoological Society Of London in their Transforming the Thames project.

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.

DRAFT

Energy Generation and Storage

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Property	Perform a viability survey at all existing council owned sites to potentially accommodate solar PV.	Medium	Small	Feasibility study commissioned and completed	Funding agreed for Solar on Swale House. Tender ongoing, and installation planned for 2025.	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.	Not Started	
Environment & Leisure	Encourage and support community energy projects. Consider community energy as a financial investment.	Medium	Small	Encourage and support local community projects	Not Started	

Table 9 Progress against Energy Generation and Storage actions

Permission was been granted, by the Secretary of State, for the Cleve Hill Solar Park which is now under construction. This will consist of 800,000 solar panels over an area of approximately 360 hectares on the Graveney Marshes. It will have the capacity to generate 350MW of electricity and will have 700MW of battery storage.

The draft Local Plan includes policy on renewable technology at micro and macro levels.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Resilience, Adaptation and Offsetting

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Carbon Red. PA	Progress Dec 2023	Progress Dec 2024	Status
Planning Policy	Incorporate a policy on climate change adaptation in the local plan review	Short	-	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	Timetable for Local Plan approved (LDS).	Started
Emergency Planning	Regularly update the Emergency Plan for the borough in partnership with the County Council	Short	-	Ongoing	Council website signposts people to the Kent and Medway Prepared website, which highlights resilience plans and actions to be taken in emergencies.	On Track
Planning Policy	Ensure the Local Plan reflects the level of current and future flood risk, and development in flood risk areas is avoided.	Short	-	Being progressed through the Local Plan Review	A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is being undertaken as part of the emerging Local Plan. This will support better understanding of current and future flood risk.	Started
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	Emerging local plan to investigate habitat restoration and linkages through a suite of environmental policies, as well as the Councils Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.	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 and Planning Application decisions	The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is to be a golden thread throughout the emerging Local Plan.	Started

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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	Planning Policy working on a range of environmental projects with the EA, KCC, and the LMIDB.	On Track
Planning Policy	Work to restore natural processes within river systems to enhance water storage capacity and improve water quality.	Medium	-	Contact with LMIDB	<p>The Council is supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 3C's project to restore grazing saltmarsh around Conyer Creek. • The ZSL Transforming the Thames/Restoring the Thamescape projects to restore seagrass beds, saltmarsh and native oyster beds in the Thames Estuary. 	On Track
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 Policy are working with KCC on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Local Nature Recovery Network will be an important element of the forthcoming Local Plan	Policy and Resources Committee agreed to confirm that the Council is content with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to go out for public consultation.	On track

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Planning Policy	Work with Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board to minimize the long-term risk of flooding	Short	-	Ongoing	Planning Policy works closely with LMIDB on a number of projects.	On track
Emergency Planning	Make sure everyone can 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	Advice for resilience against major emergencies including flooding promoted on the Swale Borough Council website.	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	Promotion of third-party events ongoing through CEE webpage and Green Grid Community Forum.	Started

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.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

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.

DRAFT

Looking forward

In 2019 the Council 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, while paper use and business mileage has reduced dramatically.

Although we are moving in the right direction, it has become apparent that we will not achieve the aspirational target of being a net-zero council by 2025. There are numerous reasons for this, including a lack of financial support from national government, industry not being able to deliver the required infrastructure, and constantly changing offsetting situations. Despite this, we remain committed to reducing both our own emissions and in leading the residents and businesses of Swale on their own net-zero journey.

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 our work. Staff recruitment and retention is an issue countywide with staff leaving for London and other unitary authorities.

This is a common feature across Kent, where all local authorities are in the process of revisiting their targets and producing freshened action plans. In doing this, the need to explore more joint working Kentwide has been recognised, and efforts are underway to develop these relationships.

Swale Council consulted with the Carbon Trust throughout 2024 to recalculate our carbon footprint, as well as model various carbon reduction scenarios going forward. We are also revisiting targets that were set for Borough wide net-zero, and in the process of developing a renewed Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. This will set fresh actions to ensure that Swale Borough Council maintains our momentum.

The financial situation facing local authorities, as well as the cost-of-living crisis has limited our options and going forward, we will need to assess what is feasible.

The revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan will be put to the Environment and Climate Change Committee in the early part of 2025.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Report 2025

Conclusion

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan was adopted in 2020 and was scheduled for review in 2025. The new Action Plan is due to be published in early 2025. As such, this is the final report based on the original action plan.

The past five and a half years have been extremely unusual and challenging and have certainly contributed to the hampering of the transition to net-zero. Yet in the time since Swale declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency the Council has remained strong in our ambition and achievements, both in the measures we have taken to decarbonise within our operations and influence wider net-zero throughout the Borough.

Among the highlights of our works are the electrification of the SBC fleet, the improvement of electric vehicle infrastructure across the borough, the establishment of car clubs in two of the district's towns, the use of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund to complete low-carbon refurbishments of Swale House and Masters House. The new refuse collection contract facilitates progressive savings and will oversee the use of more efficient and cleaner vehicles. Work on Biodiversity Net Gain is underway, while a progressive Local Plan is being developed.

The Council has forged strong partnerships with a wide range of businesses, community groups, and environmental organisations to engage and inspire residents around the topics of climate change and biodiversity loss, encouraging positive community action.

It is always the case that initial reductions in carbon emissions will be the easiest to make, and that without ambitious support from central government, substantial year-on-year cuts will become increasingly difficult.

While our new Action Plan will reflect these barriers, it will also build on the efforts and relationships that have been developed as the result of the 2020 Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan, ensuring that Swale Borough Council continues to lead by example and support the wider Borough in achieving net-zero.