

# Biodiversity and Climate Change *Successes*

Placed Joint  
**35th**  
186 Councils

on the implementation of our Action Plan  
by Climate Emergency UK and  
placed second in Kent



Carbon reduction in scope  
1 and 2 emissions from  
2021/22-2022/23



Largely due to a reduction  
in emissions from the  
Leisure centre.



of our fleet upgraded to EV's

**54**

Officers and elected members  
carbon literacy trained  
with 3 more training days  
booked for early 2024



**50%**

Climate change newsletter  
subscribers doubled in 2023



**31**

Plug in charging points  
installed at the depot



**65%**

Maidstone residents installing solar panels  
on their property through the 2023 Solar Together  
Scheme compared with the 2022 scheme.



**4**

Community organisations provided funding  
for carbon reduction projects through the  
Rural England Prosperity Fund,  
with an expected eight more organisations  
to be awarded funding in 2024



**1,926**

Visitors to Maidstone's  
Eco Hub



**500**

Eco Bags given to  
Maidstone residents

Our main offices,  
Maidstone House,  
the Depot,  
and the Crematorium  
upgraded to fully LED



**6,000**

Trees to be planted  
in winter 2023/24

**£3,126,536**

of funding bid for to retrofit Maidstone House



Action	Portfolio Holder and PAC	Responsible Officer(s)	February 2024 Update	Key Performance Indicator	Likely Start Date	Likely Completion Date	Progress
<b>Active Travel and Green Transportation</b>							
<b>Action 1.6</b> Facilitate a move to electric taxis by providing nine rapid charge points in total by 2025, and twelve rapid charge points by 2030.	Councillor Paul Cooper  Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee  And  Councillor Claudine Russell  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	John Littlemore  Lorraine Neale	Officers are working with KCC to look at the feasibility of installing a further 2 rapid charging points at Sittingbourne Road car park. Investigation with Swarco is ongoing to look at cost electrical connection work to see if the location is within budget. If the project goes ahead the legal agreement will be the same terms as with the Pudding Lane chargers. It is also suggested that one of the 2 bays served by the charger is open for general public access, and one is reserved for taxis. If Sittingbourne Road car park chargers are installed this would bring total to 4 of required 9 by 2024.	Number of Electric Vehicle Charging Points Installed	2023	9 by 2025 12 by 2030	On track
<b>Action 1.7</b> Work with the taxi trade to find solutions to licencing that will encourage gradual business led shift to EVs' and promote greener accreditation and campaigns to support taxi trade to move to EVs.	Councillor Paul Cooper  Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee  And  Councillor Claudine Russell	John Littlemore  Lorraine Neale	This is a joint Kent project and Kent Taxi Licencing meetings continue to be held every quarter. Officers are supporting KCC with developing district net zero plans in terms of target/deadlines/progress for taxis in relation to EVs. Solutions under investigation, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A switch that all new taxis licenced should be Euro 6 compliant, need to follow government guidance so that drivers are subject to changes in requirement at the same time by all licencing offices, so drivers don't switch where they licence.</li> <li>• Requirement for new and reregistered taxi must be euro 6 compliant.</li> <li>• Green taxi scheme for modest incentive,</li> </ul>	Number of EV taxi	2023	Across timeline to 2030	On track

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	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee						
<b>Decarbonising and Insulating Homes and Buildings</b>							
<b>Action 2.1</b> Explore grants schemes for residents, landlords and housing associations, for retrofitting insulation, and low carbon heating systems.	Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid  Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee  And  Councillor Claudine Russell  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	John Littlemore  Philip Jennings	The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 grant funding agreement has been signed by all relevant parties. The grant is being advertised (targeted advertising first before being opened to wider advertising to relevant wards in the early 2024.  Meetings have progressed with Eon to partner to promote and administer ECO Flex (Energy Companies Obligation) to increase ECO's eligibility criteria. The grant provides low carbon heating and insulation measures.  There was a delay in the HUG2 grant funding agreement being signed by partners, therefore the roll-out of the scheme has been delayed. This will result in a delay of getting works completed at eligible properties in Spring 2024.  Further work is required to partner with Eon and make the Council's ECO Flex statement of intent ready for implementation. This should be ready for advertising to households in early 2024.	Number of residents with EPC rating improvements of A-C from D-G	2023	Across timeline to 2030	On track
<b>Adapting to Climate Change</b>							
<b>Action 5.3</b> Conduct Borough Climate Impact Assessment and (i) Identify natural flood management (nature-based solutions and sustainable	Councillor John Perry  Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee	James Wilderspin  Gemma Bailey	Officers continue to seek partnerships on tree planting and nature-based solutions with private landowners of flood elevation efforts.  Communications and projects such as the Maidstone Eco Hub comprise climate adaptation information and awareness raising of climate impacts to raise awareness throughout the community and local businesses.	NA	2023	Across timeline to 2030	On track

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<p>(ii) urban drainage), Build local communities' resilience,</p> <p>(iii) Support business continuity management, and</p> <p>(iv) Priorities and strengthen power and water supply and other critical infrastructure ensuring more resilient communities.</p>	<p>And</p> <p>Councillor Claudine Russell</p> <p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee</p>		<p>Officers are investigating Local Energy Action Plans (LEAPs) which are strategic documents developed by local authorities and other relevant stakeholders to outline their approach to sustainable energy management and the transition to low-carbon, renewable energy sources at the local level. Costing approximate £120k for a full LAEP. Due to the size of Kent, it would need to be sub-divided into 2-3 LAEP areas and Districts are being encouraged to work together to develop LEAPs. Folkestone are currently undergoing a pilot and planning to share their experience developing a LEAP. Swale are likely to be interested partnership with Maidstone.</p>				
<b>Enhancing and Increasing Biodiversity</b>							
<p><b>Action 6.6</b> Work with local farms and landowners to deliver landscape scale biodiversity initiatives Nature Recovery Strategy – including reconnection of habitats, floodplain restoration, reduced chemical inputs and reintroduction of lost native species.</p>	<p>Councillor Paul Cooper</p> <p>Planning, Infrastructure, And Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee</p> <p>And</p> <p>Councillor Claudine Russell</p>	<p>Rob Jarman</p> <p>James Wilderspin</p> <p>Gemma Bailey</p>		NA	2025	Across the timeline to 2030	Not yet due

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	Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee						
<b>Action 6.7</b> Increase borough canopy cover expanding ancient forests and reconnecting of existing woodland including urban woods, and greening town centres.	Councillor David Burton  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	James Wilderspin  Rob Jarman	Officers continue to work closely with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) and investigated 5 large scale tree planning projects in autumn 2023. Two projects are going forward in spring 2024, one is in continuation at Nettlestead Yalding on the Angling Societies land planting a further 1000 trees in addition to the thousand planted last winter along the river side. As well as a second project in partnership with a local vineyard to plant 5000 trees.	Number of Trees planted / area of land rewilded	2022	Across timeline to 2030	On track
<b>Making our Estate Carbon Neutral</b>							
<b>Action 7.1</b> Deliver Maidstone Borough Council 2030 Net Zero Commitment, by: (i) Decarbonising the councils' buildings through low carbon heating, LEDs, insulation and smart controls, (ii) decarbonising the council's fleet to fully EV, (iii) investing in renewable energy generation, (iv) incorporating energy saving principles into	Councillor John Perry  Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee  And  Councillor Claudine Russell  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	James Wilderspin  Mark Green  Katie Exon  Darren Guess	16% of the MBC fleet have now been upgrade to EV's (11 of 65 vehicles total), with a further x2 EVs on order for 2024. There are now a total of 31 plug in charging points installed at the depot.  4 buildings have been fully upgraded to LEDs.  Preplanning advise is currently being sought for a solar canopy car port project in Mote Park Car Park, to be private wired to the leisure centre to reduce its operational costs and carbon emissions.  On November 7 <sup>th</sup> 2023, officers submitted a largescale bid for Phase 3c of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for £3,126,536 to retrofit Maidstone House. Included in the bid were provisions for developing detailed designs, upgrading the heating system, replacing the glazing, fully insulating the building, upgrading all the lights to LED, and installing Solar PV on the Link business terrace roof. The preparation of this bid included a complex and technical set of documents and schematics, energy saving calculations, costing and quotes evidence, project management programme, and risks register. The submission of the bid is a first come first serve organised by	Percentage Change of Carbon Emissions from MBC Buildings, Fleet, Contracts (ie Scope 1, 2)	2022	2030	On track

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(v) office strategies, and supporting staff to shift to electric/ultra-low emission vehicles, public transportation and more flexible working.			Salix, where applicants need to submit a bid as soon as the portal opens to be in for a chance to be considered. On the 7th of November, officers were able to submit the application in under 4 minutes and are currently waiting to be notified if the bid is successful.				
<b>Action 7.5</b> Improve data management on all property including leased buildings and prioritise decarbonisation actions and improve EPC ratings.	Councillor John Perry  Corporate Services Policy Advisory Committee  And  Councillor Claudine Russell  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Katie Exon  James Wilderspin	Officers continue to improve Data Management for MBC key buildings, and work with Laser Energy and Fidums to monitor consumption.  Officers are still working to improve leased data management, particularly for the temporary housing stock.	Percentage change/reduction in Utility costs/KWh for Gas, Electricity, Water usage at leased assets.	2023	Across the timeline to 2030	On track
<b>Communications and Engagement Strategy</b>							
<b>Action 8.1</b> Support residents (including adults, women, youths and children, faith groups,	Councillor Claudine Russell	Gemma Bailey	A second Eco Hub was run in Summer 2023, a pop-up, walk-in community information centre for residents to access information and see real world solutions to help them become more sustainable. The hub opened for six weeks,	NA	2022	Across the timeline to 2030	On track

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<p>minority groups, and marginalised groups), partners, and wider stakeholders (Parish councils, farmers, and landowners) to understand the changes they can make to reduce and prepare for climate change. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting residents to reduce their individual carbon footprints, upskilling and green job creation, buying local, conserve water, and with sustainable lifestyles and Eatwell guidance.</li> <li>Promote schemes which help residents, landlords and housing associations reduce energy bills and decarbonise their buildings e.g. retrofitting grants and the government domestic and non-domestic renewable heat incentive programme.</li> </ul>	<p>Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Julie Maddocks</p>	<p>throughout the summer holidays, in a unit in The Mall Maidstone. There were 1,926 visitors to the Eco Hub, a 121% increase in users when compared to the 2022 project. 24 local sustainable businesses, charities, and community groups partnered with MBC and shared information, resources, leaflets, and demonstration models of their products, as well as holding events and workshops in the Eco Hub. Visitors commented on how good it was to see MBC acting on the climate crisis and are hopeful that this initiative raised the profile of MBC's action on climate change and biodiversity loss. Overall, the project was a huge success, and the Eco Hub was one of just three projects shortlisted in The Revo's for the best local authority/ private sector partnership Revo award. This award recognises a Local Authority initiative that has had a major impact on the town centre experience for its residents and users.</p> <p>Solar Together scheme phase 3 started in 2023 and will finish in early 2024. The scheme was split into two auctions, spring, and autumn. The spring scheme has so far delivered 768 installations across Kent (68 in Maidstone), however this number will rise once all customers who have accepted their quote receive their install. The autumn scheme closed for registration at the beginning of November, therefore installs are still being completed, but phase 3 of Solar Together Kent looks to be the most successful to date. Final figures for Solar Together phase 3 and expected carbon savings will be available for the next update. There is likely to be a phase 4 of Solar together in 2024. Solar Together has the potential to bring in profit for the Council, with other local authorities seeing profits of as much as £12,000 after three years of the project. Phase one of Solar Together in Maidstone was not very successful with low take up. The officer managing the programme for this phase no longer works for MBC and there was no handover, therefore it is difficult to understand the issues in this phase. Phases two and three have been profitable for MBC with phase 3 likely to be the most successful as there has</p>				

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and encourage residents, businesses and the third sector to install renewable energy generation or develop community energy projects, by providing information and promoting grants, shared investment, and savings schemes.</li> <li>Encourage residents to separate food and recyclables, use appropriate bins, compost at home, avoid contamination and reduce waste production through promoting the circular economy strategy.</li> <li>Support residents, schools and community groups with biodiversity improvement and protection, promoting relevant schemes, such as tree</li> </ul>			<p>been a primary officer within MBC monitoring progress throughout. With a better understanding of data and tracking of progress, phase 4 could be the most successful phase for MBC to date.</p> <p>In 2023 we were allocated £539,728 to spend between 2023 and 2025 on capital interventions in our rural communities as part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The REPF in Maidstone aims to support rural communities to modernise and improve their assets to provide multiuse spaces that improve health, wellbeing, reduce rural loneliness, while having a positive impact on the local environment, contribute towards net zero, support the local rural economy, and promote community cohesion. In phase one of the REPF £134,932 was awarded to four organisations for improvements to their facilities including the installation of solar panels, heat pumps and double glazing. Phase two of the scheme opened for applications in December 2023 and will support more projects than phase one with £404,796 of funding available.</p> <p>At the end of 2023 officers purchased the carbon literacy for local authority's toolkit. This not only enables climate change officers to train MBC staff and elected members, but also enables us to deliver training to parish councils. In 2024 carbon literacy training will be offered to parish councils in the borough of Maidstone. This programme will help to improve the knowledge of climate change in parish councils and enable more action in the community.</p> <p>The climate change newsletter now has 4,650 subscribers. The newsletter continues to share information on upcoming funding, grants, sustainable initiatives, relevant events and MBC's climate change initiatives.</p>				

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planting and after care, and encouraging them to enhance biodiversity in their gardens and grounds.							
<b>Action 8.2</b> Provide staff awareness information of biodiversity and climate change at induction and provide job specific sustainability training to each service area.	Councillor David Burton  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Gemma Bailey	The carbon Literacy for local authority's toolkit has been purchased by MBC, allowing officers to continue training MBC staff for the next three years. The aim is for all staff who attend training to complete action pledges and become certified as carbon literate. To ensure all staff can attend training, the course will continue to be run both online and in person. In person training will also be introduced at the depot in 2024.  46 officers have been trained to date and 41 have completed their pledges to become certified as carbon literate. We now have a good understanding of the programme and the different ways we can roll it out to officers, therefore in 2024 we will aim to train 100 officers through the carbon literacy programme and aim for at least 85% of attendees to complete their pledges and become certified as carbon literate.	Number of Staff carbon literate accredited	2022	Across the timeline to 2030	On track
<b>Action 8.3</b> Enable local businesses to reduce their carbon footprint by providing information on funding opportunities, carbon calculators, localised supply chains and travel plans that promote active travel and public transport, and support businesses to use the Kent Prepare website to raise awareness of how to prepare for flooding.	Councillor David Burton  And  Councillor Claudine Russell  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Julie Maddocks  Chris Inwood  Gemma Bailey	Economic Development continue to feature a 'green tip' in every monthly Business E-newsletter and promote relevant business support schemes and grants when made available.  Achieved a 71% increase in business newsletter sign ups since 2021 to 7,000 with an average 41.5% average monthly open rate.  Promoted The Eco Hub pop-up information centre August/September 2023 to local businesses.  The climate change website now includes a page for businesses, providing resources, links, and information to assist businesses in improving their sustainability.	NA	2022	Across the timeline to 2030	On track

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<b>Sustainable Decision-Making Processes and Governance</b>							
<b>Action 9.1</b> Provide briefings and training for councillors and our managers on carbon, climate change, and biodiversity to create a culture change and ensure climate change and biodiversity are integrated into decision making.	Councillor David Burton  Communities, Leisure and Arts Policy Advisory Committee	Gemma Bailey	<p>Carbon Literacy Training was delivered to a group of eight elected members in October and four have gone on to complete their action pledges to become certified as carbon literate. This training was delivered by an APSE trainer who specialises in Carbon Literacy for elected members.</p> <p>The next carbon literacy training day for elected members will be held in February on a Saturday, to allow elected members who work during the week to attend.</p> <p>The carbon literacy for local authority's toolkit purchased at the end of 2023 licences officers to deliver training to elected members, therefore moving forward carbon literacy training for elected members will be delivered by MBC officers. In 2024 we will aim to train a further 15 elected members.</p>	Number of Councillor carbon literate accredited	2023	Across the timeline to 2030	On track