



Climate Change Annual Report 2020/21



Foreword

“The scale of the challenges we face in tackling and adapting to climate change is really substantial, new territory and cannot be under-estimated. It will require radical transformation in how we all work, live and play. Its importance is reflected in the cross cutting theme that underpins everything in Our Council Plan and in our detailed Climate Change Strategy.”

We are delighted to introduce our 2021 annual report on climate change. We know that the scale of the challenges we face in tackling and adapting to climate change is substantial new territory and cannot be under-estimated. It will require radical transformation in how we all work, live and play. Its importance is reflected in the cross-cutting theme that underpins everything in Our Council Plan and in our detailed Climate Change Strategy.

Against the backdrop of a global pandemic and challenging circumstances, the range and breadth of progress on our strategy clearly demonstrates our continued commitment. The report is laid out to present progress across each of the 5 commitments, divided into Leading and Enabling/Inspiring.

We’re particularly encouraged by our reduction in operational carbon emissions and the allocation of £10 million of capital investment for climate change projects, in addition to the £42 million already allocated for energy projects. We’re sharing our learning and experience locally and nationally.

We know our residents want to see us managing our own estate effectively, but more than that we know people want us to make it easy to make the right choices.

The promotion of our Solar Together Scheme, to support people to install solar panels, has been popular and the second round has recently launched.

Our continued focus on waste reduction has seen us introduce campaigns to inspire residents to reduce their waste and improve the quantity and quality of their recycling.

And we continue to champion the importance of our high-quality natural environment, whether that’s adopting our Tree Plan, supporting the kelp restoration in the Sussex Bay, or taking a lead role in the Sussex Nature Partnership, as well as managing our own countryside estates and enabling communities to adopt roadside verges for pollinator benefit. We are pleased to have recently appointed an Adviser for Biodiversity to champion and challenge us in this critical area.

Climate Change remains core to our business, and the communities we serve, now and in the future.



Becky Shaw
Chief Executive



Paul Marshall
Leader of the
County Council



Deborah Urquhart
Cabinet Member
for the Environment

Our vision

“We will mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing carbon emissions”.



We will be a net carbon zero organisation by 2030

Leading

We've reduced our corporate carbon emissions by 12% vs 2019/20 and have agreed a new capital investment of £10 million being allocated towards climate change projects such as: uplifting planned works for greater decarbonisation, enabling works to facilitate future carbon reductions and individual projects focused solely on decarbonisation. To date, £442,000 is allocated to projects supporting reduction of our biggest carbon source - heat demand from schools.

This is in addition to £42m which is already allocated for future energy generation and storage projects to explore green energy technology, reduce the council's reliance on fossil fuels, reduce carbon emissions, and generate a sustainable financial return for the council.

Enabling / inspiring

We featured in the Local Government Association (LGA) 'First' magazine, demonstrating how we contributed to the development of the LGA's greenhouse accounting tool thereby improving national data and participate in shared learning.

Our long-standing commitment to renewable energy is featured in the LGA's 'Pass the Planet' campaign for COP26, which showcases best practice from councils.

We will reduce the carbon associated with road-based transport

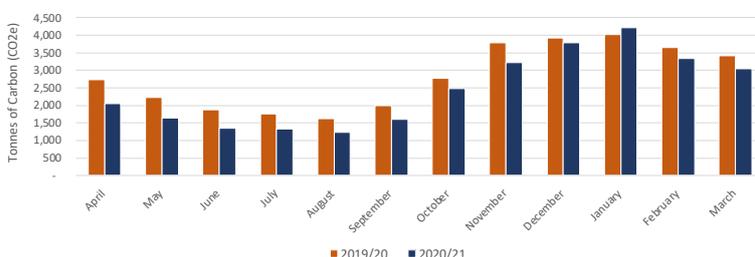
Leading

Our business travel mileage has decreased significantly between 19/20 Q1 and 21/22 Q1, down 66%. This reduction was driven by Covid-19 measures and was relatively consistent across travel types. Grey mileage (use of private cars) remains the largest source of miles travelled. There are early indications of a return to public transport, with 21/22 (year to date) levels reaching roughly 60% of pre-covid demand. Travel currently accounts for 3% of overall operational carbon emissions, down from 10% in 2019/20.

To decarbonise our business travel, we're moving our fleet to low emission models, and 2020 saw 42 hybrid cars joining the fully electric cars already on our fleet, replacing diesel and petrol models.

Covid-19 has triggered alternative ways of working, and our new Smarter Working approach will enable staff to continue working flexibly, while reducing the impact of our IT infrastructure. We're committed to using technology to help us reduce the need to travel. IT Services have supported the organisation by expanding remote technology capabilities to increase staff effectiveness when working from home, collaborating with colleagues, and engaging with stakeholders. We've invested to extend and refine our ability to host interactive, hybrid meetings (mixing remote and face to face attendance).

Combined Operational Carbon Consumption



Enabling/inspiring

In partnership with six district and borough councils, we tendered a contract to create a publicly accessible and affordable electric vehicle chargepoint network across the county. The network will be powered by renewable energy, in line with our carbon reduction objectives. This work supports delivery of our Electric Vehicle Strategy and its ambitious vision for electric vehicle adoption.

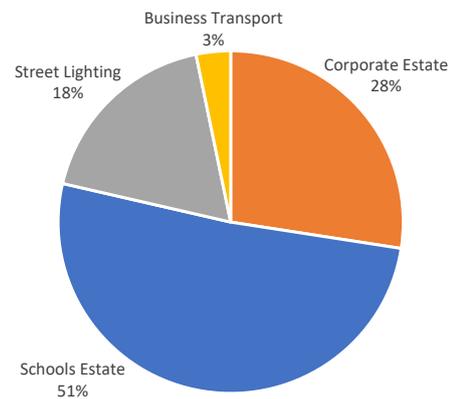
We presented at an Energy Saving Trust webinar entitled: 'The County Council perspective: A discussion on delivering EV chargepoints in a two-tier authority'. We are members of an Office for Zero Emission Vehicles working group shaping future EV funding and ensuring it incorporates a more rural and countywide perspective.

The County Council was successful in securing over £2.3m of funding to develop and implement a range of permanent infrastructure measures to support Active Travel.

The Local Transport Improvement Programme (LTIP) continues to focus on the development and implementation of capital improvements to encourage and enable active travel such as improved walking routes around schools, formalised and controlled crossing and school safety zones. This includes a range of behavioural change activities to win hearts and minds. The County Council has submitted a bid to the Department for Transport for 'Capability Funding' that will seek to enable additional behavioural change projects to influence active travel choices.

The West Sussex Transport Plan is being reviewed to update our approach to managing and investing in the transport network from 2022 to 2036. Stakeholders have expressed concerns such as environmental impacts, congestion, road safety, lack of cycling infrastructure, rural accessibility, and the effects of planned development. This feedback has shaped the draft West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-2036, which sets out how the County Council intends to address these challenges.

2020/21 - Carbon Source Overview



We will increase the amount of renewable energy used and generated in West Sussex.

Leading

Energy Strategy – The County Council is preparing a major update of the Energy Strategy which will go out to public consultation in the last quarter of 2021. The strategy is aligned with the County Council's Climate Change strategy and will support the authority to achieve its aim of becoming net zero by 2030.

Largescale battery storage – The County Council approved the business case for a new 12MW battery storage site at Halewick Lane, Sompting. Demolition work was completed in December 2020 and construction is scheduled to begin during autumn 2021. Once operational, the batteries will be used to balance supply and demand on the grid by storing surplus electricity and releasing it when it is needed.

Corporate estate solar and battery – Feasibility work identified 56 schools and 20 corporate buildings with the potential to increase the installed solar PV and battery storage capacity. Some of the sites identified already have solar PV, while others will be switching to renewable electricity for the first time. The County Council is currently considering the feasibility work and next steps.

Enabling / inspiring

Solar Together – In September 2020, the County Council launched the first round of its popular Solar Together Sussex scheme in partnership with councils across Sussex and iChoosr. More than 1,000 people registered to install a high quality and competitively priced solar PV and battery storage system at home. A second round of the scheme will launch in autumn 2021.

Our vision

“We will adapt and be resilient to a changing climate”.



Leading

Our Highways, Transport and Planning Directorate (HTP) is keen to significantly reduce carbon emissions and build climate resilience. Colleagues are beginning by identifying meaningful baseline data on HTP carbon emissions, before developing short and long-term plans for reducing these emissions in line with our Climate Change Strategy.

In December 2020, our Angmering bridleway bridge overhaul included an innovative paint system to triple the refurbishment's lifespan and significantly reduce the carbon footprint and cost of future maintenance.

Climate Adaptation Profile

Adaptation refers to actions taken to adjust for the unavoidable impacts of climate change. Studies show that adaptation action is generally much cheaper, and more effective over time, than responding to impacts as they occur. To support climate change adaptation and resilience planning in West Sussex, we have created a Climate Adaptation Profile which will be reviewed and updated annually.

Enabling / inspiring

We continue to play an active role within the DEFRA-led Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP); supporting government policy planning, contributing to collective consultation responses, and sharing examples of our work with other Local Authorities. We helped establish a LAAP sub-group to support the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government in understanding how pollination strategies and green infrastructure can boost climate resilience.

Through 2020, we backed the Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority in their ambition to realise the carbon storage opportunity from kelp forest restoration, and we were delighted when the Sussex Nearshore Trawling Byelaw was confirmed. We are now part of the Sussex Kelp Restoration Network. Restored kelp forests provide additional benefits including biodiversity improvement, boosting commercial and non-commercial marine species abundance, cultural heritage and as a harvestable resource.

Sussex Nature Partnership (SxNP) was formally established in 2014 and brings together more than 25 organisations in Sussex, across seven sectors. SxNP works “across sectors and organisations to secure the healthiest ecological system possible thereby protecting and enhancing the natural environment and all that it gives us”. We sit on the Executive Team and the SxNP Board and provide annual funding. A new Local Authority Network has now launched to engage all the District and Borough councils with the SxNP's work.

Trees are a vital element of our urban and rural landscapes, contributing significantly to the character and quality of life in West Sussex, as well as providing essential economic, social, and environmental benefits. West Sussex has 42,500 hectares of woodland, covering 23 per cent of our land, compared to 10 per cent for England as a whole. We've adopted a Tree Plan, with three strategic aims:

- maintain the trees and woodlands in our ownership.
- protect trees and woodlands from new development and other threats.
- improve tree cover in West Sussex through natural regeneration, the planting of new trees and the creation of new woodlands.



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As part of the implementation, a Tree Forum has been established, including representatives from the Forestry Commission, the Knepp Estate, major landowners and the Woodland Trust. We support the 'Lost Trees of the Low Weald' project, aiming to transform the landscape to boost biodiversity and revitalise traditional woodland management.

Through our Pollinator Action Plan, we are committed to reducing the threats to bees and other pollinators that are vital to our crops, gardens and countryside, and to increasing pollinator habitat in West Sussex. In February, we hosted a successful webinar on Pollination, in partnership with our Youth Cabinet, featuring live music, films, and presentations from expert speakers. Feedback from attendees was

overwhelmingly positive, with one saying, 'Well done WSCC- this was one of the most uplifting zooms I've watched during the whole lockdown-brilliant music, information, and great vision'.

We are working with 19 parishes and community groups across the county to pilot a Community Road Verge project including providing wildflower seed to 13 community groups. The pilot will inform development of a support package and engagement format for broader roll-out to improve pollinator habitats and species abundance.

We are working with the South Downs National Park to evaluate the impact of "cut and collect" verge management on biodiversity. In addition, we are developing our first 'Pollinator Highway' to link up existing and new insect habitats from Lancing to the South Downs National Park, enabling pollinators to expand their foraging range.

West Sussex County Council holds a responsibility for delivering positive health and wellbeing outcomes for its residents. Working with District and Borough colleagues, developers and key county partners, we've created a 'Creating Healthy and Sustainable Places Framework'. This Framework provides public health guidance to decision makers on creating healthy and sustainable places in West Sussex. At its January 2021 meeting, the county Health and Well-being Board endorsed and supported the Framework and observed it is 'a forerunner in the Country and is ambitious, collaborative and partnership driven'.



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Our vision

“We will source and use resources sustainably”.



Leading

We want to minimise our natural resource use. As a water-stressed county, our water resources are precious. Water monitoring and leak detection is incorporated into the 2021/22 Energy Services business plan. We will continue to investigate technical solutions with our appointed retailer, and work to prevent and respond to leaks in a timely manner.

Our focus in reducing the impact of our IT Infrastructure has continued with the with the targeted refresh of existing printers with a reduced number of new units across our smaller sites. This has allowed the introduction of secure print release technologies to reduce print volume, as well as further enhancing our information security. Our print volume has reduced significantly as a result of changes in working practices, securing a 69% reduction in our print between 2019/20 and 2020/21 - over 9.5 million fewer printed pages. This quantity is the equivalent of saving between 500 – 1000 trees.

Enabling / inspiring

The Recycling and Waste Team continued to work in partnership with Arun District Council to launch the 123 collection service in May 2021. The aim of the trial is to test the extent to which

introducing separate weekly food and Absorbent Hygiene products ie nappies waste collections, maintaining fortnightly comingled recycling collections and reducing the frequency of residual waste collections to three-weekly, will reduce the overall amount of waste collected in the trial area of approximately 1,100 properties, improve recycling performance and enable local authorities to meet the requirements of the Government’s 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy.

While maintaining our core service during the COVID-19 pandemic, focus shifted to growing our online presence with campaigns run to inspire residents to reduce their waste and improve the quantity and quality of their recycling, through initiatives such as Plastic Free July, food waste prevention and Waste Free Father’s Day. Audiences have been growing on social media and e-newsletters to enhance our engagement with residents. Our Waste Prevention Advisor volunteers have been writing articles for our Town and Parish Councils eNewsletters.

Partnership projects with the District and Borough Councils have been developed to reduce waste and improve the quality and quantity of recycling and are being rolled out in 2021/2022.



Our vision

“We will support and grow our local green economy”.



Leading

The Economic Growth Team are working on a range sustainability projects, supporting businesses with green innovation and moving towards net zero carbon. The LoCASE (Low Carbon for the South East) project offers grant funding, information and support to SME businesses across West Sussex. The RISE (Research, Innovation Sussex Excellence) project in partnership with University of Brighton and University of Sussex supports SMEs with enhanced access to innovation support, and works with a range of business including those in the sustainability sector. We are a funding and strategic partner for both projects.

We've worked with the horticulture and farming sectors, supporting in the delivery of the West Sussex Grower's Association 'Understanding the Horticulture Sector in West Sussex' 2020 report which contains useful insights on sustainability in the horticulture sector. Papers on Green Skills and Green Business Support have been delivered to inform future areas of work, as well as briefings on green businesses in West Sussex for Arundel and Souths Downs MP and UK Net Zero Business Champion Andrew Griffith. As we approach COP26, we're developing projects to further support businesses on their green journey and to help build the green skills West Sussex will need for the future.



The Experience West Sussex partnership promotes sustainable tourism across the county, supporting tourism businesses on their own green journeys, as well as running campaigns. These include 'Shop Sussex' - encouraging visitors and residents to shop locally, 'How be an environmentally aware paddler' and a 'Guide to Marine Conservation in West Sussex'. The partnership promotes local food and drink producers and encourages active travel to enjoy our beautiful county.



Our vision

“We will transform how we work”.



Leading

Our Council Plan is underpinned by a corporate commitment to action on climate change. All Directorate business plans were reviewed through summer 2020 to assess how the shared corporate priority of climate change has been reflected. Conversations took place to identify specific opportunities to incorporate climate change action within each of the Plans. The business planning cycle has now started again for 2022/23 and this will build on the climate change actions identified for this year.

Our recent Carbon Literate Organisation Bronze Award demonstrates our commitment to creating a low-carbon organisational culture and supports our drive towards becoming net zero by 2030. The Carbon Literacy Project is a unique training scheme to help organisations and individual employees understand the carbon impacts of their everyday actions and help them make informed choices to address climate change and reduce carbon emissions. We will be rolling the training to our staff to increase climate change awareness and enable concerted action.

Our staff induction and annual refresher programme now includes links to training on climate change and sustainability.

Elected councillors are provided with regular information through their Member Information Newsletter, such as quarterly carbon reports.

All our decision reports are now required to show how they contribute to our climate change commitments. To help with this, a new tool has been developed to enable staff and decision makers to understand and capture the contribution that a proposed decision could make towards us meeting our climate change commitments. The easy-to-use tool is designed to:

- help us think about and capture the impact of projects and proposals against our Climate Change Strategy priorities
- provide the author and report readers with an ‘at a glance’ summary of the impact on these priorities

Enabling / inspiring

We continue to work with many different partners across the county and beyond. We’ve established the countywide Joint Climate Change Board, bringing together all District and Borough colleagues as well as those representing our Protected Landscapes. Two key aims of the Joint Board are to have an overview of councils’ response to climate change and Nature Recovery across West Sussex, with initial focus on our own assets and activities, and to develop a strategic vision for tackling Climate Change across West Sussex as a whole.

In autumn 2020 we launched our Climate Conversation. This countywide project, collaborating with all our District and Borough colleagues, as well as the Youth Cabinet, looked how people’s behaviour changed during the pandemic – for example working from home or exploring locally - and how these choices affected our local environment. The information gathered will be used by Councils across West Sussex to help support residents and businesses to continue with, or start more, positive actions. The initial project secured funding from Local Partnerships, a body set up to support councils in tackling challenges and to share their findings. We’re building on that collaboration with local partners into 2021/22.



