

## Our Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan

In April 2019, Maidstone Borough Council declared a [Biodiversity and Climate Change Emergency](#). In October 2020 we then agreed our [Biodiversity Climate Change Strategy](#) and action plan for addressing these emergencies.

The implementation of our Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan is led by the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager. The individual actions in the plan are assigned to a specific manager(s) and/or officer(s) from each department and service area to ensure they are monitored and completed. Each action is overseen by a Lead Member on the Executive Committee and reported to the respective Policy Advisory Committees. An indicators framework has been established for monitoring progress against each action and we have committed to reviewing and updating the action plan on an annual basis.

The Biodiversity and Climate Change Action plan was reviewed and updated in April 2023 as part of the scheduled annual review. A succinct version of the revised action plan can be found below.

### Our Net-Zero commitment

We have committed to becoming as close to carbon neutral as possible by 2030. Carbon Neutrality also referred to as [Net-Zero](#) can be achieved through reducing existing emissions and actively removing greenhouse gases. We have committed to achieving Net-Zero for our own operations by 2030 and our long-term aspiration is to become carbon negative or a footprint less than neutral, so that we have a net effect of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

At a borough wide-scale, in accordance with national government targets, and based on Tyndall Centre data, we have set out carbon reduction milestones to reduce CO2 emissions by -13.4% each year across the borough to reach near to Net-Zero by 2041. However, it must be noted that the fairness of this target is contingent on many aspects and not the sole responsibility of the council due to economic factors, private sector, transport sector, and wide-scale public behaviour change.

We are committed to embedding the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan into our Strategic Plan and all of our decisions and actions, as climate resilience and biodiversity enhancement bring a multitude of co-benefits that incorporate many positive aspects of our mandate, including environmental, social, job creation, equity and social cohesion, health and wellbeing, citizen engagement, and the economy.

### Engagement

Climate change increases inequality, as it has a disproportional impact on low income and vulnerable groups. The foundation of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action is inclusiveness, and we will work to ensure gender equality, Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities, youth, senior residents, faith groups, those with disabilities, and marginalised groups are included in the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan and engagement process.

# Actions

## Active travel and green transportation

**Action 1.1** Update the Integrated Transport Strategy, and work towards a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to prioritise walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicles.

**Action 1.2** Deliver policies that enable infrastructure for:

- Low carbon transportation,
- Active travel, and that
- Facilitates high quality public transport connectivity in new developments and existing communities.

**Action 1.3** Identify low carbon transportation, active travel, and public transport indicators that align with strategic planning and monitor implementation of sustainable transport policies.

**Action 1.4** Deliver Policy that ensures sustainable travel, such as bike racks, pool cars, electric vehicle charging, active travel, is integrated into all Maidstone Borough Council construction of new buildings (offices, housing, leisure facilities) and building acquisitions.

**Action 1.5** Deliver an Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy for the borough that provides sufficient EV charging infrastructure to support the transition to EVs and reduces range anxiety, with consideration of changing and new emerging technologies.

**Action 1.6** Facilitate a move to electric taxis by providing nine rapid charge points in total by 2025, and twelve rapid charge points by 2030.

**Action 1.7** 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.

**Action 1.8** Actively participate in Quality Bus Partnership and ensure that the borough's infrastructure is bus friendly.

## Decarbonising and insulating homes and buildings

**Action 2.1** Explore grants schemes for residents, landlords and housing associations, for retrofitting insulation, and low carbon heating systems.

**Action 2.2** Enforce Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015.

## Generating renewable energy

**Action 3.1** Ensure Sustainability DPD as part of larger Development Plan requires on-site renewables on all types of new developments and identify indicators that align with strategic planning and monitor implementation.

## Reducing waste

**Action 4.1** Investigate recycling strategies in the Town centre.

**Action 4.2** Ensure MBC offices and buildings have recycling facilities.

## Adapting to climate change

**Action 5.1** Deliver policy as part of design and sustainability DPD and future Development Plan evolution for long term climate change adaptation in new developments to flooding, heatwaves, and drought and ensure longer term climate impacts are being considered as part of planning and policy decisions. Identify indicators that align with strategic planning and monitor implementation.

**Action 5.2** Identify actions to mitigate climate change in existing developments.

**Action 5.3** Conduct Borough Climate Impact Assessment and

1. identify natural flood management (nature-based solutions and sustainable urban drainage),
2. build local communities' resilience,
3. support business continuity management, and
4. priorities and strengthen power and water supply and other critical infrastructure ensuring more resilient communities.

## Enhancing and increasing biodiversity

**Action 6.1** Monitor Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to adopted 20% standard.

**Action 6.2** Ensure sustainable urban drainage schemes (SuDS) maximise biodiversity potential.

**Action 6.3** Develop Supplementary Planning Documents for Garden community and other strategic development sites that ensure are exemplar for biodiversity and deliver semi natural open space.

**Action 6.4** Enhance and expand wetland coverage across the Borough to support nutrient neutrality, flood prevention, and enhance biodiversity.

**Action 6.5** Implement a Nature Recovery Strategy, linking habitat restoration and creation to improve flood protection and water quality.

**Action 6.6** 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.

**Action 6.7** Increase borough canopy cover expanding ancient forests and reconnecting of existing woodland including urban woods, and greening town centres.

**Action 6.8** Review Maidstone Borough Council non-operational land to assess potential for enhancing biodiversity including allowing community groups to take responsibility for management.



## Making our estate carbon neutral

**Action 7.1** Deliver Maidstone Borough Council 2030 Net Zero Commitment, by:

1. Decarbonising the councils' buildings through low carbon heating, LEDs, insulation and smart controls,
2. decarbonising the council's fleet to fully EV,
3. investing in renewable energy generation,
4. incorporating energy saving principles into office strategies, and
5. supporting staff to shift to electric/ultra-low emission vehicles, public transportation and more flexible working.

**Action 7.2** Measure the Council's carbon footprint each year and report findings to relevant committees and the public.

**Action 7.3** Purchase 100% renewable energy for our buildings and operations where we control the supply (market dependant with maximum 10% offset) and investigate Public Energy Partnership Power Purchase Agreement (PEPPPA).

**Action 7.4** Identify temporary accommodation assets eligible for insulation and low carbon heating upgrades under funding schemes and arrange installation. Provide top up funding for any measures not fully funded to ensure all homes let by MBC as temporary accommodation are energy efficient and EPC rating improved to requirement.

**Action 7.5** Improve data management on all property including leased buildings and prioritise decarbonisation actions and improve EPC ratings.

**Action 7.6** Deliver 100% LED lighting in MBC car parks.

## Communications and engagement strategy

**Action 8.1** Support residents (including adults, women, youths and children, faith groups, 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:

- Supporting residents to reduce their individual carbon footprints, upskilling and green job creation, buying local, conserve water, and with sustainable lifestyles and Eatwell guidance.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Support residents, schools and community groups with biodiversity improvement and protection, promoting relevant schemes, such as tree planting and after care, and encouraging them to enhance biodiversity in their gardens and grounds.

**Action 8.2** Provide staff awareness information of biodiversity and climate change at induction and provide job specific sustainability training to each service area.

**Action 8.3** 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.

## Sustainable decision-making processes and governance

**Action 9.1** 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.

**Action 9.2** Ensure service plans consider biodiversity and climate change and monitor with performance indicators, so that managers plan their services to ensure opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change are taken.

**Action 9.3** Deliver Policy that ensures sustainability criteria is used for all Maidstone Borough Council construction of new buildings (offices, housing, leisure facilities) and sustainability criteria is part of decision-making process for all Maidstone Borough Council building acquisitions, to ensure buildings owned by the council are sustainable, future proofed, and align with our net zero commitment.

**Action 9.4** Establish criteria for investment in climate change and biodiversity and invest to save schemes (eg. renewables, heat networks). These will consider relative impact in terms of carbon reduction and ease of delivery, such that expenditure is focused on deliverable, affordable initiatives that maximise impact on the carbon reduction targets.

**Action 9.5** Deliver corporate policy and sustainable procurement approach to reduce (Scope 3) MBC carbon footprint from contracts and services and ensure a 'carbon cost' is part of procurement and decision making.

If you have any questions or feedback on Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan please [contact us here](#).

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