



Wealden's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

2025 to 2030

If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print or in another language please contact the Climate Change Team at sustainability@wealden.gov.uk or call Wealden District Council on 01323 443 322.

Foreword

We are proud to present our Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan—a renewed and ambitious framework that sets out how we will respond to the climate emergency with purpose, clarity, and collaboration.

This Strategy builds on the foundations laid by our 2019 Climate Emergency Action Plan and reflects the significant policy, scientific, and societal shifts that have taken place since then. It marks a step-change in our approach: no longer a draft or discussion document, but a clear commitment to action.

In June 2025, our council was ranked 4th nationally in the district council category by Climate Emergency UK. This recognition is a testament to the hard work of our teams, partners, and communities. But it is also a call to go further. We are determined to build on this success and ensure that our district continues to lead by example.

Our Strategy outlines how we will reduce emissions from our own operations and support the wider district to transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future. It is informed by robust evidence, including emissions modelling and scenario planning developed with support from Arup. These insights help us understand the scale of the challenge and the opportunities ahead.

We recognise that climate action must be fair and inclusive. That’s why this Strategy places a strong emphasis on a just transition—ensuring that the benefits of decarbonisation are shared by all, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We are committed to demonstrating the co-benefits of our actions, from improved health and wellbeing to energy savings and community resilience.

Delivering this Strategy will require sustained investment, innovation, and collaboration. We will work closely with residents, businesses, community groups, and regional partners to co-create solutions and build the infrastructure, skills, and behaviours needed for long-term change.

This is a living document. We will update it regularly to reflect new evidence, technologies, and funding opportunities. But our direction is clear: we are committed to a cleaner, greener, and fairer future for everyone in our district.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Councillor Paul Coleshill

Climate Change Portfolio Holder

The Climate Green Paper

The [Climate Green Paper](#), published in December 2024, laid the foundational vision for Wealden District Council's commitment to addressing climate change for both the council and the wider District by outlining key principles—such as promoting renewable energy, sustainable transport, biodiversity, and community engagement—and highlighting the co-benefits of these actions, including improved public health, economic resilience, social equity, environmental protection, and community empowerment.

This Climate Green Paper was informed by extensive research, including three detailed reports examining the existing and future impacts of climate change on Wealden, strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, options for renewable energy and a vulnerability assessment. These were complemented by two consultation surveys that gathered feedback from residents and local businesses on their perceptions of climate change impacts in the district, suggested actions, and more recently, responses to the draft themes presented in the Climate Green Paper.

In addition, several discussions and meetings were held with a range of groups and organisations based in or working in the district. These engagements sought input on ideas for the action plan and helped assess whether the proposed areas for action were appropriate and complete based on the Green Paper. In December 2024, we hosted an event called the BIG climate conversation, engaging over 90 local organisations and groups to gather their views on the Climate Green paper.

Building on this work, this new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan transforms these principles into actionable steps, providing a detailed action plan to guide Wealden District on its journey toward net zero emissions, enhanced climate resilience and a more sustainable future.

This transition from the Green Paper to the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan marks a shift from conceptual planning to practical implementation—grounded in the findings of public consultation—to ensure that Wealden District Council's climate initiatives are both comprehensive and community-informed in driving a sustainable future.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The UK government consulted early in 2025 on the English Devolution White Paper. Of relevance to this work, the Government is proposing to create a new Strategic Authority for Sussex (East, West and Brighton & Hove), led by a directly elected Mayor. In addition, the Government has invited local authorities in East Sussex including Wealden District Council to form a new unitary authority or authorities which would be responsible for the delivery of all local services currently delivered by the District and County councils. There is still much that is uncertain about the detailed proposals and the timelines involved, however our current (June 2025) understanding is that the Mayor will be elected in May 2026, and the new unitary council(s) will be in place by April 2028. It is expected that both the unitary council(s) and the Strategic Authority (and Mayor) will have responsibilities for action on climate change.

To reflect this change, and to support this transition, the Climate Change Strategy has focused on a five-year Action Plan. This plan is designed to deliver immediate impact, ensuring this vital work is not derailed by change in local government structures, and laying the groundwork for long-term legacy projects. These initiatives are aligned with the evolving structure of local government, ensuring continuity and adaptability through future organisational changes.

We are committed to:

- Directly funding impactful local projects.
- Bringing networks and communities together to collaborate, share skills and knowledge.
- Amplifying the voices and actions of our residents.

As we transition from a district council to a unitary structure, our aspiration is that the new governance model will embrace and carry forward Wealden's ambition – integrating into its own plans and actions, with the full backing and support of our residents and communities.

Executive Summary

Wealden District Council is proud to present its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for 2025–2030—a bold, community-led roadmap to tackle climate change, protect nature, and build a greener, healthier future for everyone.

Why This Matters

Climate change is already affecting Wealden—through flooding, heatwaves, and changing weather patterns. These challenges impact our homes, health, economy, and environment. But they also present an opportunity: to act now, together, and create a more resilient and sustainable district.

Our Vision

To create a climate-resilient, nature-rich, and inclusive Wealden where people and the nature thrive together—powered by clean energy, sustainable transport, and homes that are warm, affordable and efficient, while actively restoring nature and enhancing biodiversity.

Our Mission

Wealden District Council is committed to leading the transition to a net zero, climate-resilient future by empowering our communities, protecting our natural environment, and fostering a fair and thriving local economy. Through bold action on renewable energy, sustainable transport, biodiversity, waste reduction, and inclusive engagement, we aim to create a greener, healthier, and more equitable Wealden for current and future generations

Key Themes

The strategy focuses on eight key themes:

1. **Empowering and Supporting Communities for Climate Action** – supporting local climate action and ensuring a just transition.
2. **Buildings and Energy Use** – making homes and buildings more energy efficient and affordable to heat.
3. **Energy Generation** – investing in renewable energy and local energy resilience.
4. **Travel and Transport** – Encouraging walking and cycling and cleaner transport options.
5. **Maximising Resource Use and Reducing Waste** – reducing waste and promoting reuse and recycling.
6. **Nature, Biodiversity, Soil, Food and Health** – restoring nature, improving biodiversity and supporting community wellbeing.
7. **Green Low Carbon Economy** – supporting sustainable local businesses and green jobs.

8. **Governance, Finance and Leadership** – embedding climate action in everything the council does.

Built on Local Voices

This strategy was shaped by the people of Wealden. Over 90 local groups took part in the BIG Climate Conversation, and hundreds of residents shared their views through surveys and events. Their message was clear: now is the time for climate action and it must be fair, inclusive, and community led.

Grounded in Science and Local Evidence

This strategy is underpinned by robust scientific analysis, including three detailed reports by Arup in 2024. These assessed Wealden's greenhouse gas emissions, climate risks, and renewable energy potential. Combined with local data and extensive community consultation—including the BIG Climate Conversation and Climate Green Paper—this evidence base ensures our actions are targeted, effective, and locally relevant.

Adaptation and Resilience

Recognising the increasing impacts of climate change—such as flooding, heatwaves, and water stress—the strategy integrates climate adaptation alongside mitigation. It prioritises nature-based solutions, community resilience, and infrastructure preparedness.

Governance and Future-Proofing

With local government reorganisation on the horizon, the strategy is designed to deliver immediate impact while laying the foundation for long-term legacy projects. It ensures continuity through governance changes and positions Wealden as a leader in local climate action.

Co-Benefits and Community Impact

Climate action in Wealden will deliver wide-ranging co-benefits, including improved public health, reduced fuel poverty, enhanced biodiversity, economic resilience, and stronger community cohesion.

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Context

Introduction to Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, affecting ecosystems, economies, and communities across the globe. Here in Wealden, we are already witnessing the effects first hand - from rising sea levels threatening our coastline, to shifting weather patterns disrupting agriculture, and more frequent and intense storms leading to increased flooding in our towns and villages.

These are not just environmental issues - they are deeply social and economic, influencing local biodiversity, tourism, and the overall well-being of our residents. In response, it is essential that we develop and implement comprehensive strategies to mitigate and adapt to these changes.

This strategy outlines our commitment to addressing climate change through sustainable practices, innovative solutions, and collaborative efforts within our community, ensuring a resilient and thriving future for Wealden and its residents.

The science behind climate change is robust and well-documented. Reports from the [Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change](#) (IPCC) confirm that human activities - particularly the burning of fossil fuels - have significantly increased the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, driving global warming and triggering widespread changes in our climate system. In Wealden, this is evident in more unpredictable weather, increased flooding, and shifts in local biodiversity.

International and national frameworks guide our response:

- [The Paris Agreement](#) (2015) commits nations to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C, with efforts to stay within 1.5°C.
- The UN Sustainable Development Goal 13 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- In the UK, [national legislation](#) sets a target of Net Zero emissions by 2050, with an interim goal of a 78% reduction by 2035 (compared to 1990 levels).

These targets shape our local strategy and align Wealden with global and national efforts to address the climate emergency.

In 2019, the council declared a Climate Emergency and developed the Climate Emergency Action Plan, and in May 2025, the council formally declared a biodiversity crisis, recognising the urgent and unprecedented threats facing our natural environment, ecosystems, and unique wildlife - both locally and globally.

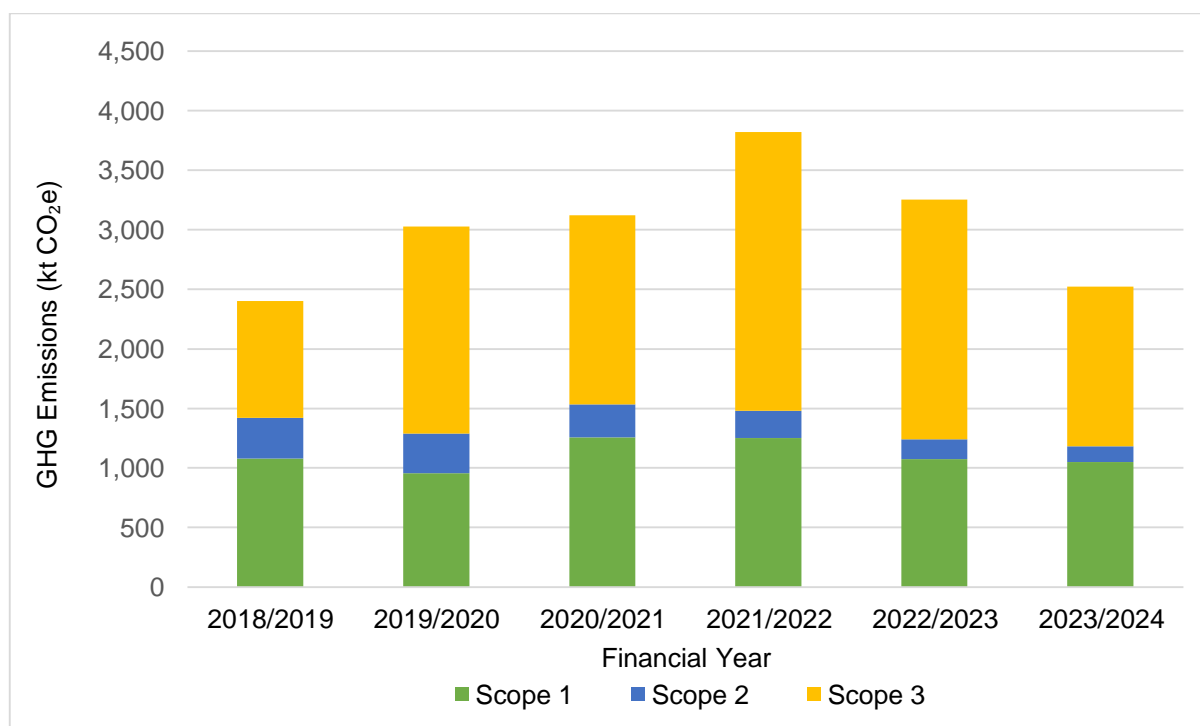
This Strategy builds upon the Climate Emergency Action Plan (2019), the Climate Green Paper (published in December 2024) and responds to the Biodiversity Crisis declaration. It has been shaped through extensive research and engagement focused specifically on Wealden. It reflects the valuable input of councillors, council officers, local residents, businesses, community groups, and organisations, ensuring that the strategy reflects local priorities and aspirations.

It focuses on reducing emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change, so that Wealden becomes more resilient, adaptive and ready to respond to future challenges.

Wealden District Council

Wealden District Council (WDC) is responsible for emissions from a range of sources. The graph below shows how emissions from energy use in its buildings and fuel use in its vehicles (called Scope 1 and 2 emissions) break down and have changed over time since the Climate Emergency was first declared in 2019.

Figure 1: Wealden District Council Emissions.



Source: [Appendix B – Council Emissions, Wealden District Council Annual Report Climate Emergency Action Plan, 2024.](#)

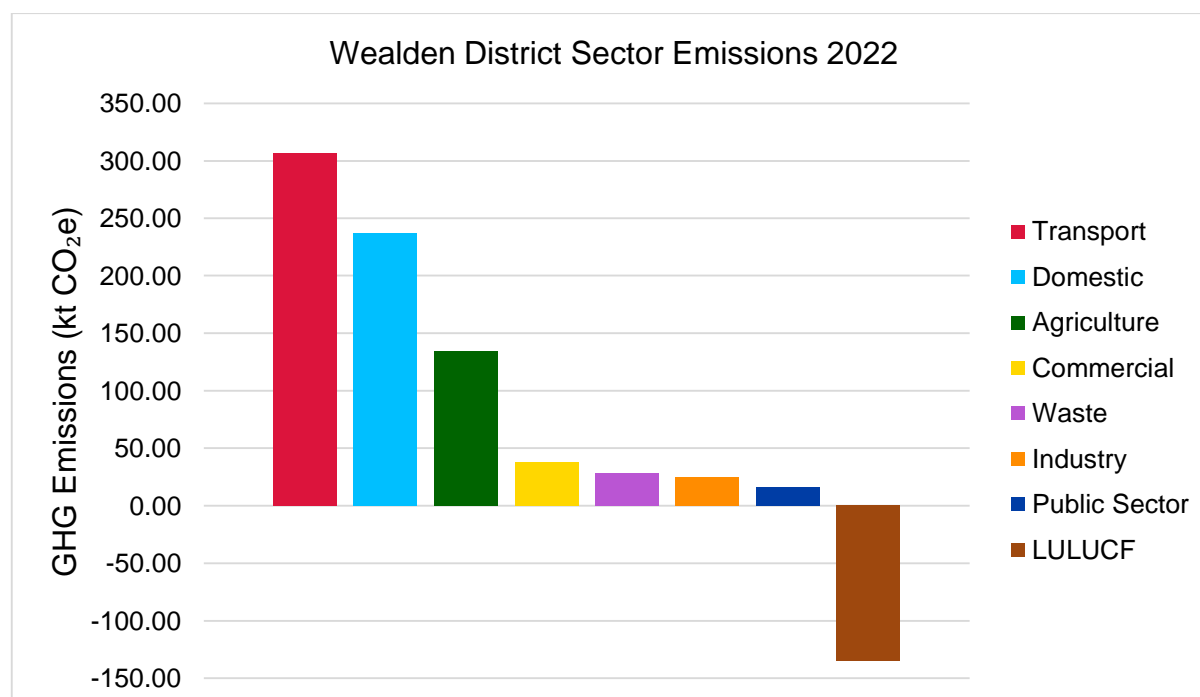
The majority of the council's emissions as seen in the graph above arise from the use of gas for heating our homes and our operational buildings.

In addition to this the council is indirectly responsible for emissions elsewhere arising sources it does not control directly, called Scope 3 emissions. These are more difficult to measure and include staff travel, commuting and working from home, emissions from our leased assets like the leisure centres, disposal of our waste, investments, and outsourced services such as cleaning and grounds maintenance.

Wealden District Green House Gas Emissions

Wealden district's territorial greenhouse gas emissions arise from a diverse range of sources as shown in figure 2 below and in 2022 were 651 ktCO₂e (or 5.1 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per person).

Figure 2: Wealden District Council Green House Gas Emissions, 2022.



Source: [Appendix A – District Emissions, Wealden District Council Annual Report Climate Emergency Action Plan, 2024.](#)

Excluding emissions from the goods and services we consume, the majority of emissions generated within the district arise from road transport (47%), domestic energy use (36%), and agriculture (21%). Together, transport and domestic emissions account for 83% of Wealden's net territorial emissions. Understanding where the district Green House Gas (GHG) emissions are coming from at a local level, provides an evidence base for our Climate Change Action Plan enabling us to identify local actions.

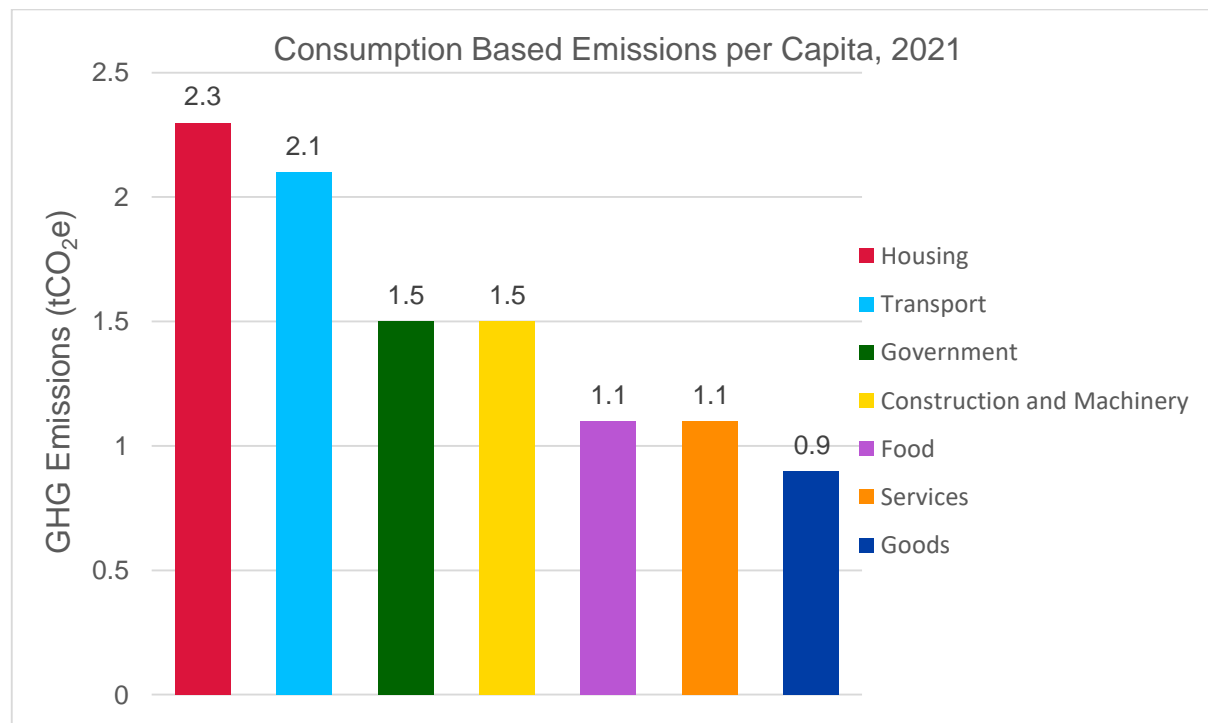
Land use and forestry activities, provide natural carbon sinks in the district, helping to balance out some of the district emissions. In 2022, 'Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry' (LULUCF) i.e. carbon sequestration, captured approximately 135 ktCO₂e, which is 21% of the district's gross total emissions (see Figure 2).

The district's land, land use, greenspace, forestry and woodlands significantly contribute to reducing and absorbing GHG emissions. It is crucial to maintain and enhance this role into the future. By caring for our natural environment we can support healthier ecosystems, promote biodiversity, restore nature and provide spaces for community wellbeing, thereby promoting health.

Consumption-based emissions have also been calculated for the district. These reflect the emissions arising from our everyday lives, including those associated with the goods and services we purchase. Unlike territorial emissions, these figures do not

include emissions from local businesses but do account for emissions that occur outside the district—elsewhere in the UK or even globally—due to our consumption choices. Focusing solely on emissions generated within the district would overlook a significant portion of Wealden’s overall environmental impact. The graph below illustrates how these consumption-based emissions are distributed.

Figure 3: Consumption Based Emissions per Capita, 2021



Source: [Local Authority Consumption Accounts](#).

Achieving net zero emissions requires action across a wide range of sectors and sources. There is no single solution—a diverse mix of actions must be implemented to address the many contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

Key actions include:

- Decarbonising buildings: Improving energy efficiency by reducing heat loss, retrofitting insulation, and adopting low-carbon heating systems.
- Reducing transport emissions: Encouraging walking, cycling, and the use of public transport, while supporting the transition to electric vehicles.
- Reducing emissions from consumption and waste: Increasing reuse and recycling, and the purchase of low-emission products to reduce the carbon footprint of consumption.

In addition to reducing emissions, nature restoration plays a vital role in combating climate change. Restoring forests and woodlands, wetland and other ecosystems enhances carbon sequestration, helping to absorb and store significant amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Healthy ecosystems also:

- Support biodiversity, increasing resilience and adaptability to climate change
- Mitigate extreme weather impacts, such as flooding and heatwaves
- Improve soil health and water regulation
- Provide cleaner air and water
- Enhance community well-being, offering recreational spaces and promoting mental and physical health

By prioritising nature restoration alongside emissions reduction, we can address both climate change and biodiversity loss, creating a more sustainable and resilient future for Wealden.

What Climate Change means for Wealden

Climate Change Impacts

A climate change impact can be described as any significant alteration to the environment, economy, and human health caused by changes in the Earth's climate. At a local level climate change impacts can mean more frequent and severe weather events like heatwaves, drought, heavy rainfall, and flooding. These changes can affect daily life in several ways by damaging property, disrupting transport such as train routes and increasing health risks such as heat-related illnesses, respiratory problems and excess deaths.

Communities may also experience changes in local ecosystems, which can affect affecting local wildlife, agriculture and food production.

The [State of the UK Climate Report 2023](#) published by the Met Office, confirms that the UK is experiencing a warming trend, with the last three years among the warmest on record. The report highlights an increase in extreme weather events, including record-breaking temperatures, intense rainfall, and severe storms.

Understanding these impacts is essential for building resilience and planning effective adaptation strategies.

Community Views on Climate Change

The results from the climate change surveys conducted in Spring 2024—available on [Let's Talk Wealden](#) highlight strong concern among residents and organisations about the local impacts of climate change.

- 72% of residents believe that climate change is either somewhat or greatly affecting the district right now
- 63% believe it will greatly affect the district in the future
- Over 80% of responding organisations expressed concern about the impact of climate change on their operations

These findings underscore the importance of taking meaningful, community-backed action to address climate change at the local level.

[Local Authority Climate Explorer](#) Climate projections from the Met Office for Wealden District indicate a clear trend of rising temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns. These changes are expected to have significant implications for the local environment, infrastructure, and communities.

Key projections include:

- Hotter, drier summers and milder, wetter winters
- Increased average annual temperatures
- More intense and concentrated rainfall events, raising the risk of flooding
- Longer dry periods, potentially leading to water shortages
- A higher frequency of extreme weather events, such as storms and heatwaves

These projections highlight the urgent need for adaptation – particularly in strengthening infrastructure and enhancing community resilience. Taking proactive steps now will help ensure that Wealden is better prepared to address the impacts of a changing climate.

The Climate Green Paper details the **Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment for Wealden** which was completed by the Arup consultancy during 2024. The Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment for Wealden identifies key climate-related risks and vulnerabilities within the district.

The report highlights that extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall, and flooding, are becoming more frequent and severe. These events pose significant risks to infrastructure, property, and public health, particularly affecting vulnerable populations like the elderly, low-income households, and those with pre-existing health conditions.

Geographic vulnerabilities are also noted, with certain areas being more prone to flooding and heatwaves. The assessment emphasises the need for targeted support and resources to help these vulnerable groups adapt and build resilience against climate change impacts. Additionally, the report underscores the importance of community engagement and proactive local initiatives to mitigate and adapt to these changes.

Four key climatic impact themes have been identified as being the most severe climate risks for Wealden:

- River and surface water flooding
- Extended dry periods leading to pressure on water supplies
- Extreme temperature changes – heat waves
- Sea level rise (coastal erosion and flooding)

Further details can be found in the Climate Green Paper. You can also learn more about how climate change may affect specific areas by visiting the [BBC's interactive resource](#).

Climate Adaptation

While reducing GHG emissions is essential to tackling climate change, the impacts are already being felt in the UK and here in Wealden. As such, emissions reductions alone will not be enough.

We must also prepare for the effects of climate change—a process known as climate adaptation. This involves making adjustments to our infrastructure, services, and communities to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience to climate-related risks.

Although this Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan primarily focuses on achieving net zero emissions, climate adaptation is an integral part of the council's broader approach to climate change and will continue to be embedded in future planning and decision-making.

Nature and Biodiversity

At Wealden District Council, addressing the nature emergency is central to our mission. In May 2025, we formally declared a biodiversity crisis, recognising the urgent and unprecedented threats facing our natural environment, ecosystems, and unique wildlife - both locally and globally.

Green spaces, trees and other natural features play a vital role in this response. These natural assets:

- act as carbon 'sinks' helping to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere
- support biodiversity and improve air quality
- deliver climate adaptation benefits, such as providing shade, reducing urban heat, absorbing rainfall and mitigating flood risk.

Protecting and enhancing these natural assets and systems is essential to building a more resilient and sustainable future for Wealden.

We are committed to working with partners and seizing opportunities to drive nature recovery at a landscape scale in Wealden. This includes the creation of community spaces such as community orchards that bring people closer to nature.

Through our strategy and action plan, we will implement initiatives that protect, enhance and restore nature and biodiversity for future generations. Our commitment also includes:

- securing funding for projects that support nature recovery and habitat restoration
- creating accessible green spaces that benefit both the environment and community well-being
- supporting carbon sequestration, pollination, and ecosystem resilience

The council recognises the critical role our natural environment and the significant opportunities that come from investing in our natural capital. By doing so, we can:

- Mitigate flood risk
- Regulate extreme weather
- Improve air and water quality
- Expand biodiversity
- Enhance access to nature and the associated health and wellbeing benefits

Health and Climate Change

Taking action on climate change brings a wide range of benefits for health and wellbeing. For example:

- Improving energy efficiency in homes not only reduces carbon emissions but also enhances physical and mental health. In addition to keeping homes warm in winter, energy-efficient design and materials help keep indoor spaces cooler during heatwaves. Warmer, more efficient homes can reduce the risk of respiratory conditions such as asthma and bronchitis, while also helping to lower energy bills and reduce stress associated with fuel poverty.
- Encouraging walking, cycling, and the use of public transport use not only cuts emissions but also promotes physical activity, helping to reduce rates of obesity, heart disease, and other chronic conditions.

Nature also plays a vital role in both climate action and health. Protecting and restoring natural environments—such as wetlands, woodlands, and urban green spaces—helps absorb carbon dioxide and supports resilient, healthier communities.

Green spaces in towns and villages can:

- Lower temperatures during heatwaves
- Reduce air pollution
- Provide cool, shaded areas for people to enjoy
- Support mental wellbeing and social connection

Nature-based solutions—like green roofs, rain gardens, and tree planting—can also help manage stormwater, reducing the risk of flooding and easing pressure on drainage systems.

Our Climate Change Framework

Key principles

These key principles will underpin all of the council's climate activities. They will make sure that the council delivers effective climate action which supports all residents and communities.

1. Ensuring a Just Transition, Ensuring the Journey to Net Zero is Fair for Everyone:

The council is committed to building a net zero district that is fair for all. As we move away from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy, we must ensure that it is fair, equitable and inclusive and that no one is left behind. This strategy will aim to provide a safe planet for future generations, address poverty and inequality, and enhance health and public spaces for residents prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable and those least able to adapt due to their socio-economic status or geographic location.

2. Partnership and Collaboration: Tackling climate change requires collective effort.

The council will work with partners, local organisations, communities and residents and facilitate partnerships. Collaborative efforts enable pooling of resources, knowledge and expertise from a wide range of organisations and individuals. Working together can help secure funding, create new opportunities for action, and achieve economies of scale. We need to tackle this challenge together, as a community, co-producing, co-designing and co-delivering projects and initiatives.

3. Working with Residents and Local Communities: This strategy has been shaped by input and feedback from our residents, community, local organisations, and businesses. Ongoing co-production and co-delivery will be crucial for developing and delivering the associated Action Plan, amplifying community action, sharing knowledge and experiences, and securing funding. The council will provide community leadership, and advocate for investment in the district.

4. Focus on the Needs of the District: Whilst understanding the international and national context of climate change is important, our climate action will focus on the unique challenges and opportunities within the district. We will address the specific needs, strengths and vulnerabilities of our local communities, empowering individuals and organisations to take action. Our efforts will focus on both reducing emissions and building the district's resilience, considering the diverse needs and characteristics of different areas within the district.

5. Harnessing Innovation and Technological Advancements: As technology evolves, new opportunities to support our net zero ambitions will arise. The council will stay informed about these developments and ensure the district can benefit from them,

adopting innovative approaches to tackle climate change. We will seek to lead in pioneering adaptation and mitigation measures to address future climate challenges.

6. Making Financial Decisions Based on the Evidence: Given the council and its partners have limited financial resources; we will prioritise actions that deliver our climate goals most effectively. We will develop innovative financial solutions to share resources, create income opportunities, secure external funding, and offer grants. This approach ensures our spending achieves the greatest possible impact.

7. Protecting and Enhancing the Environment, Wildlife, and Countryside: The council is committed to safeguarding the natural environment recognising its value as a cornerstone of health. We will ensure that tackling biodiversity loss and restoring nature is at the heart of our response to climate change. We will implement actions to conserve and enhance local wildlife habitats, protect biodiversity, and maintain the ecological health of our countryside. Our approach promotes sustainable and regenerative land management practices that ensure natural spaces are preserved and enriched for future generations. We will also invest in improving these areas to support thriving ecosystems and foster greater community involvement in conservation. By enhancing access to clean, green, and beautiful spaces, we aim to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents while strengthening the environmental foundations of our district.

8. Highlighting Co-benefits of Climate Action: Addressing climate change can bring many co-benefits including enhanced health, job creation, resilient communities and greater social equity. We will highlight these co-benefits throughout this strategy and action plan, illustrating the multiple benefits of our climate actions.

Links to current council strategies

A comprehensive policy review was undertaken to inform the Climate Green Paper. Climate change is identified as a key priority in the Council Plan for the period 2025 – 2028, with the following ambition for the district.

Council Plan Vision - Wealden is a place where people and nature thrive together.

Our Mission - Wealden District Council is to be an enabling and enterprising council working alongside our communities to create a greener, fairer, and kinder district for present and future generations.

Our Priorities -

Protecting our environment and leading the district towards climate neutrality.

- Tackle the Climate emergency.
- Countryside and biodiversity.
- Active travel and sustainable transport.
- Circular no waste economy.
- Renewable energy.

The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will support the delivery of the council's ambition as well as supporting many of the other ambitions of the plan.

This strategy will also support key priorities in other council strategies and services and vice-versa including the following:

- The emerging new [Draft Local Plan](#) includes ambitious policies to support the journey to net zero, setting clear requirements for applicants to help tackle the climate emergency. These policies aim to reduce emissions through energy efficiency, limit fossil fuel use, and promote sustainable design, construction, and operation of developments. They also support climate adaptation, ensuring communities can live and work safely and comfortably as climate impacts intensify.
- The [Wealden Economic Development Strategy](#) which has the following vision “Wealden has a thriving and vibrant economy, where our businesses, town centres and people are well placed to benefit from future growth opportunities and we are delivering against our net zero ambitions” Climate action will be central to delivering these aims.
- The [Health And Wellbeing Strategy](#)– has priorities e.g. ‘active communities, environment and facilities’ that can be supported by climate action or will be put at risk by climate change
- **Financial hardship support** – addressing significant incomes disparities in the district across the district by promoting financial independence among disadvantaged residents. This includes targeted assistance through the Household Support Fund and funding for local services that provide essentials, advice, and community-based support.
- **Fuel poverty support** - helping residents reduce [energy costs](#) and improve home energy efficiency, particularly for those most at risk. This includes advice on greener, cheaper heating options, support for energy-saving improvements, and targeted assistance for households facing fuel poverty through community grants and partnerships
- **Sustainable transport and active travel** – enhancing walking, cycling and low-emission travel options across the district. This includes improvements to the [Cuckoo Trail](#), investment in green infrastructure, and support for community-led projects that support cleaner air and healthier, more connected communities.
- Meeting legal duties to manage flood risk, conduct emergency planning, prevent homelessness and enhance and conserve biodiversity
- Developing strategic projects that meet high environmental standards and generate their own power e.g. Wealden Community Sports Hub and Mayfield Community Hall and Medical Centre
- Deliver the [Housing Decarbonisation Plan](#) to improve the energy efficiency of the council’s housing, reduce emissions from housing, tackle fuel poverty, deliver warmer homes with lower energy bills and support the districts journey to net zero.



- Improving the energy efficiency of our operational assets including our offices and the Crematorium and leisure facilities to reduce emissions from our operations, lower running costs.








Co-benefits of Climate Action



There are many other positive outcomes that arise from taking action to address climate change. By maximising the co-benefits of acting on climate change we can significantly improve lives and support the creation of more resilient communities. These can include health and wellbeing opportunities of low carbon homes and communities, the jobs and skills created through the green economy and helping communities be more resilient to environmental shocks such as flooding or rising fuel costs.

The key co-benefits the council will consider as part of its climate actions are listed below in Table 1. These will be embedded throughout the Climate Action Plan.

Table 1: The Co-benefits of Climate Action and their Descriptions.

Icon	Co-benefit	Description
	Health	Actions aimed at decarbonising transport and buildings can significantly enhance public health by improving air quality through reduced reliance on petrol and diesel vehicles, increasing physical activity from more walking and cycling, and alleviating fuel poverty through more energy efficient homes.
	Citizen and Community Engagement	Climate change can feel overwhelming, which is why it's crucial to support a shared understanding to engage communities and individuals in action and transformative change. By building a collective awareness among residents, businesses, and communities about the challenges, opportunities, and benefits of climate action, we can show how everyone can contribute to this shared journey, amplifying positive action and share collective knowledge.

Icon	Co-benefit	Description
	Equity and Inclusion	Collaborating on climate action enables a just transition by promoting the inclusion of diverse groups and communities. Since climate change disproportionately impacts disadvantaged and vulnerable people, it is crucial to integrate equity into climate efforts to show a genuine commitment to fairness and justice.
	Community/Social Cohesion	Bringing a diverse range of residents together to tackle climate change will encourage stronger community relationships, reduce isolation and empower people to drive local change.
	Local Economy and Jobs	Taking action can have significant beneficial effects on the local economy, such as creating opportunity for green skills and jobs, alongside investment in green technologies and renewable energy. Prioritising local suppliers in procurement decisions also promotes a more sustainable and resilient local economy.
	Long Term Financial Resilience	Many interventions which reduce energy or resource use (and thus emissions) will also save residents, businesses and organisations money, protecting those facing deprivation.
	Education	Climate initiatives can create opportunities for local schools, colleges, and businesses to develop programs and training that empower people to take action and give them key green skills for the future.
	Nature and Biodiversity	Nature – such as trees, plants, and soil – absorb carbon. Actions that create more space for nature will not only enhance climate resilience but also support and benefit biodiversity.
	Resilience and Adaptation	Actions that increase our ability to withstand the impacts of climate change, to cope with future instability in energy prices, and our ability to transition to e-mobility.

Icon	Co-benefit	Description
	Energy Security	This can be achieved by diversifying energy sources and increasing energy efficiency. Generating renewable and low carbon energy locally, along with improving the energy efficiency of buildings, will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and enhance energy security, especially given the volatility of oil and gas prices.
	Resource Use	Reducing consumption can reduce emissions and help to conserve scarce natural resources, such as water and foster a more sustainable economy. By cutting demand for energy and raw materials, we lessen the environmental impact of their production and preserve vital resources for future use.

Delivering on climate change objectives will also have co-benefits for the council, such as supporting council finances, service resilience, partnership working and recruitment and retention.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing global challenges, recognising that ending poverty and deprivation must be integrated with efforts to improve health, education, and economic opportunity, while reducing inequality. Crucially, the SDGs emphasise the need to tackle climate change and protect our natural environment—including oceans and forests—as a foundation for sustainable development.

The UK's National Implementation Plans highlight the vital role of local government. Councils are uniquely positioned to translate national climate policies into practical, place-based actions that reduce emissions, build resilience, and promote sustainability across all sectors. This includes advancing Goal 13: Climate Action by embedding low-carbon practices, supporting adaptation, and enabling communities to respond effectively to climate impacts. We will ensure the actions within the Climate Action Plan are aligned with the SDGs.

Figure 4: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



Source: United Nations, 2025.

How the council can influence emissions

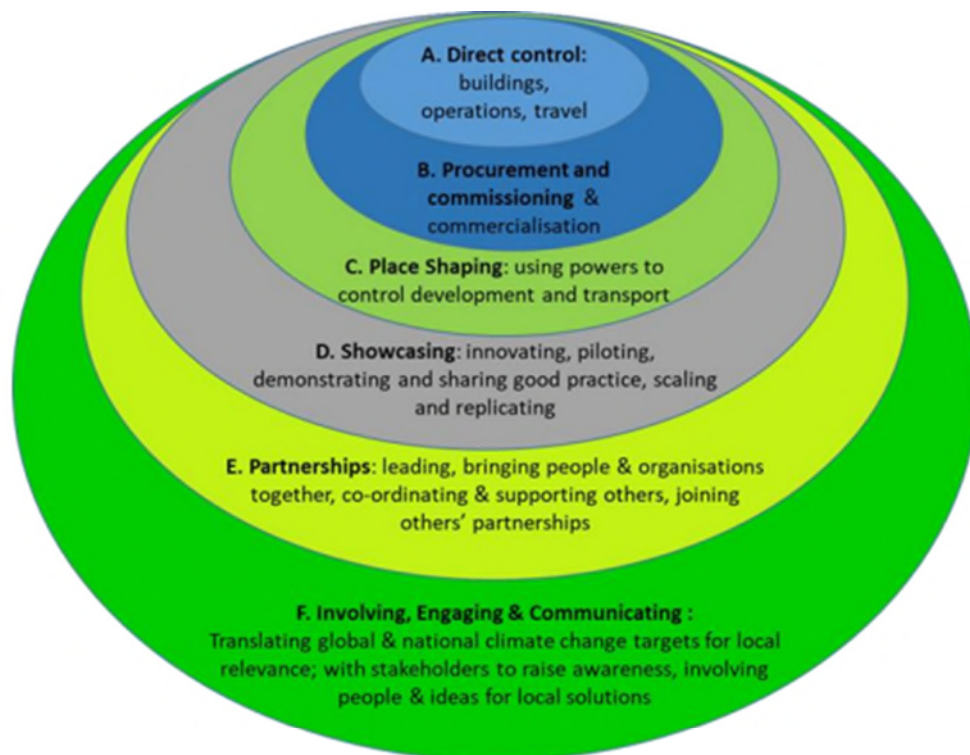
The council plays a vital role as both a community leader and service provider in tackling climate change. While we cannot deliver the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan alone, we are committed to leading by example and working collaboratively to reduce emissions across the district.

According to the [Climate Change Committee](#), local authorities have varying levels of control and influence over emissions:

- 2–5% of emissions are within our direct control.
 - These include emissions from council-owned buildings, vehicles, and services we directly manage.
- Up to 33% are within our direct influence.
 - This includes emissions affected by our policies (e.g. planning, housing, and infrastructure), and through our regulatory and enforcement powers (e.g. licensing and environmental health).
- 62–65% fall within our wider sphere of influence.
 - These emissions can be influenced through leadership, community engagement, partnerships, and collaboration with residents, businesses, and other organisations.

The diagram below (Figure 5) illustrates the levels of control and influence local authorities—including Wealden District Council—have in reducing emissions.

Figure 5: How Local authorities control and influence emissions.



Source: The Climate Change Committee, (n.d.).

According to the Climate Change Committee, “Many of the urgent changes and decisions which are needed next to reduce emissions and reach Net Zero have a strong local dimension. Decarbonising buildings, transport, waste and industry, cutting emissions from agriculture and storing more carbon through land use and forestry are dependent on delivery at a local scale”.

Table 2: The council's influence and potential actions.

Level of Influence	Potential Actions
Council emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in council assets. • Considering climate in procurement.
Stronger influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering climate in all our policies and regulatory work e.g. planning and licensing. • Delivering place shaping actions e.g. regeneration/strategic projects and economic development.
Helping others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcasing and enabling good practice. • Providing targeted support. • Facilitating and bringing others together to collaborate.
Primary influence elsewhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying county, regional and national government and key organisations.
Consumption emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing, campaigning and engaging with residents and stakeholders.

Emission Projections to 2050

The Climate Green Paper outlined a pathway to net zero shaped by resident feedback and three in-depth research reports. The preferred pathway to net zero was directly informed by emissions projections presented in the research which modelled how emissions could evolve under different levels and timings of climate action. Full details of the analysis and assessment can be found in the Climate Green paper.

Delivering the Preferred Pathway to Net Zero

The preferred pathway identified in the Climate Green Paper is the medium ambition scenario, which proposes resetting the district's net zero target to 2044. Achieving this goal will require significant investment—not only from the council, but also from a wide range of partners, stakeholders, and residents.

The council has a critical leadership role in enabling this transition. This includes:

- **Influencing new development** through planning policy that supports low-carbon design and infrastructure.
- **Investing in infrastructure**, such as installing electric vehicle charging points in council-owned car parks.
- **Retrofitting social housing** to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions.
- **Securing external funding** to support community-led climate action and enable others to invest in low-carbon solutions.
- **Promoting and providing funding** to support local communities in delivering grassroots climate initiatives and sustainability projects.
- **Installing renewable energy** technologies on council-owned buildings.
- **Engaging with residents and communities** to build awareness, trust, and participation in climate action.

The pathway places a strong emphasis on a community and place-based approach, recognising that local renewable energy, sustainable transport, energy-efficient homes, and community engagement are all essential levers for achieving net zero. These priorities are directly supported by the emissions modelling, which shows that meaningful progress depends on coordinated local action.

We recognise that sustained behaviour change is only possible when supported by the right infrastructure, facilities, education, and community involvement. That's why co-creation and shared delivery will be essential to success. The council is committed to leading by example in areas within its direct control, while empowering others to act.

Vision

To create a climate-resilient, nature-rich, and inclusive Wealden where people and the nature thrive together—powered by clean energy, sustainable transport, and homes that are warm, affordable and efficient, while actively restoring nature and enhancing biodiversity.

Mission

Wealden District Council is committed to leading the transition to a net zero, climate-resilient future by empowering our communities, protecting our natural environment, and fostering a fair and thriving local economy. Through bold action on renewable energy, sustainable transport, biodiversity, waste reduction, and inclusive engagement, we aim to create a greener, healthier, and more equitable Wealden for current and future generations.

Target

Based on our understanding of current government plans for Local Government Reorganising (LGR), the council will cease to exist in April 2028. Whilst acknowledging this context, we consider it helpful to set a framework and target for our place, our organisation and our successor(s) to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions are reducing at a rapid enough trajectory to meet our climate aspirations.

In this context and based on our evidence, our target is for the

Wealden District to achieve district-wide net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2044

The policies and actions in this Strategy and Plan set our place on a path to deliver against this target, providing the detail for short term action and a framework to achieve the major milestone of net zero in the years to come.

Climate Action Plan - Themes and Objectives

The following themes provide the strategic framework through which the Climate Action Plan will bring the strategy's vision to life. The theme names have been updated to reflect feedback received during the public consultation, ensuring they are clear, relevant, and aligned with community priorities.

Wealden's Climate Green Paper provides detailed analysis and background information on each of the key themes below. To avoid repetition, that information is not included here.

Theme 1: Empowering and Supporting Communities for Climate Action

Goal:

To empower and support climate action across the district through collaboration and participation, ensuring a just transition to a low carbon, climate-resilient future.

Objectives:

- Increase community awareness and knowledge about climate change, its impacts and the actions individuals and groups can take.
- Establish and support community-led projects and partnerships that promote sustainable practices, reduce carbon footprints and enhance local resilience to climate change. Ensure inclusive participation and building capacity, especially for vulnerable communities to support a fair transition.

Theme 2: Buildings and Energy Use

Goal:

We aim to ensure our homes, workplaces, public buildings and public spaces are energy-efficient, comfortable, healthy and resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Objectives:

- Promote and enhance energy efficiency in buildings. implement programmes and incentives to encourage energy-efficient practices and technologies in residential, commercial and public buildings, reducing overall energy consumption and lowering carbon emissions.
- Promote the integration of renewable and low-carbon energy sources into both existing and new buildings, helping to decarbonise the district's energy systems.
- Develop and support initiatives to retrofit existing buildings and promote and encourage the uptake of low-carbon heating solutions.

Theme 3: Energy Generation

Goal:

Developing a clean, fair, resilient local energy system powered by renewable and low carbon energy sources.

Objectives:

- **Invest in renewable energy and storage infrastructure:** Invest in and support the development of renewable energy infrastructure and energy storage solutions to increase local clean energy generation and improve energy resilience.
- **Encourage community-owned renewable energy projects:** Facilitate and promote community-led renewable energy initiatives that empower local residents and organisations to generate and benefit from clean energy
- **Collaborate to improve local grid capacity:** Work with energy providers and regional partners to strengthen local grid infrastructure, enabling greater integration of renewables and ensuring the system can meet future demand.

Theme 4: Travel and Transport

Goal:

To increase opportunities for active travel—such as walking and cycling—while reducing reliance on private cars by supporting and advocating for improvements to public transport, and enabling a modal shift towards more sustainable, accessible, and health-promoting forms of transport.

Objectives:

- **Promote active travel:** Support the development and enhancement of active travel infrastructure for walking and cycling and other forms of active travel encouraging healthier, low carbon travel choices.
- **Encourage shared and low-impact transport options:** Encourage reduced car usage through the development of and promotion of shared transport opportunities such as car clubs, bike hire and car sharing opportunities.
- **Support sustainable and low-emission transport:** Support the transition to low-emission and electric vehicles through the development of infrastructure, promoting awareness campaigns and supporting community transport solutions such as electric and low-emission community buses.
- **Advocate for improved public transport:** Work with partners to enhance public transport services, particularly in rural and underserved areas, making sustainable travel and viable option for all.

Theme 5: Maximising Resource Use and Reducing Waste

Goal:

Lead and support sustainable and circular initiatives and infrastructure across the district, with a focus on waste reduction and the elimination of single use plastics

Objectives:

- Encourage waste reduction, reuse and recycling: Work collaboratively with local communities and businesses to raise awareness and promote behaviour change through campaigns and educational programmes. and support the delivery of efficient waste management and recycling facilities.
- Support the circular economy: Promote and collaborate on circular economy projects that focus on repurposing, refurbishing and recycling materials, collaborating with local businesses and communities.

Theme 6: Nature, Biodiversity, Soil, Food and Health

Goal:

To protect and enhance the district's natural environment—supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, sustainable food systems, water resources, and community wellbeing.

Objectives:

- Protect and restore local nature: Implement conservation projects to protect existing natural areas and restore degraded ecosystems, enhancing the health, connectivity and resilience of local environments, supporting long-term biodiversity and climate adaptation.
- Preserve and enhance the natural environment: Preserve and enhance our natural environment by promoting sustainable land and marine management practices that protect biodiversity, improve soil health, and help tackle climate change while supporting initiatives such as planting native species, creating wildlife corridors and protecting vulnerable species to increase biodiversity.
- Empower communities to take action for nature: Engage residents and communities in projects such as tree planting, local food growing, habitat restoration and citizen science projects. Promote and support local initiatives that connect people with nature and encourage looking after the environment together.

Theme 7: Green Low Carbon Economy

Goal:

Support the transition to a green, low carbon economy.

Objectives:

1. Support local businesses and partners to reach net zero: Collaborate with local enterprises and stakeholders to reduce emissions, share best practice and promote low carbon innovation to grow the Green Economy.
- Promote sustainable and local procurement: Increase the proportion of council procurement spend directed toward local businesses that demonstrate sustainable practices, helping to build a greener, more resilient local economy.

Theme 8: Governance, Finance and Leadership

Goal:

Foster collaboration between the council, local communities, businesses, and residents by promoting shared leadership and inclusive decision-making. Leverage the council's governance role to build a long-term legacy of sustainability and resilience – empowering communities to continue taking climate action beyond the current local government structure.

Objectives:

- Strengthen community-led climate action support and fund local groups, initiatives, and partnerships that lead on climate and nature projects. Encourage knowledge-sharing and amplify the work of community champions to build long-term capacity and momentum.
- Promote inclusive engagement and collaboration: Host and participate in local events, forums, and outreach activities that bring together residents, businesses, and stakeholders. Create accessible platforms for sharing ideas, celebrating success, and co-designing climate solutions.
- Embed climate leadership across council staff and services: Equip council staff with the knowledge, tools, and training needed to lead by example. Ensure that climate and nature considerations are embedded in all council decisions, policies, projects and service delivery. Establish clear processes for monitoring progress and prepare an annual public report to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan, which sets out the detailed measures and delivery timelines for achieving the goals outlined in this Strategy, is published as a standalone document.

You can view or download the Climate Action Plan from our website or request a printed copy by contacting the Climate Change Team at sustainability@wealden.gov.uk or by calling Wealden District Council on 01323 443 322.

Key Terms and Definitions

Active travel means promoting walking, cycling, and shared transport as healthier and more sustainable ways to travel.

Climate Change is a change in the state of the climate that can be scientifically identified and lasts for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may result from natural internal processes or external forces such as variations in solar activity, volcanic eruptions, and long-lasting human-caused changes to the atmosphere's composition or land use.

Climate Change Adaptation refers to actions that help reduce vulnerability to the current or expected impacts of climate change like weather extremes and hazards, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, or food and water insecurity.

Climate Change Mitigation involves altering our lifestyles, transportation, consumption, and manufacturing processes to reduce or eliminate the production of harmful greenhouse gases. It also encompasses optimising land use to achieve these goals (picture of solar PV).

Climate Neutral refers to achieving a balance between the amount of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere and the amount removed from it. This can be done by reducing emissions through energy efficiency and renewable energy and offsetting any remaining emissions by investing in projects that absorb carbon, like reforestation.

Circular economy means reusing, recycling, and reducing waste to create a more sustainable system for producing and consuming goods.

Decarbonise means to reduce or eliminate carbon emissions from buildings by improving energy efficiency and using cleaner energy sources in both new and existing structures.

Just Transition refers to making sure the move to a low-carbon economy is fair and inclusive of everyone affected. It means giving workers and communities a real say in decisions about the changes and making sure that the costs and benefits are shared fairly, so no group is unfairly burdened and everyone has the chance to benefit.

Local inseting is a strategy that focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing carbon capture within a company's own supply chain or industry. Unlike carbon offsetting, which often involves investing in external projects to compensate for emissions, local inseting emphasises direct investments in sustainability initiatives that benefit both the environment and local communities.

Local offsetting refers to the practice of compensating for carbon emissions by investing in projects or initiatives within the local community. This approach aims to create a direct positive impact on the environment and society, rather than relying on external offset projects.

Local renewable energy projects are initiatives that are often community-based which produce energy from sustainable sources like solar or wind within a specific area.

Low carbon economy is an economy that reduces carbon emissions by using clean energy and efficient technologies to minimise environmental impact.

Low carbon future is a vision of a world where we significantly reduce carbon emissions by using cleaner energy, improving efficiency, and adopting sustainable practices to combat climate change and protect the planet.

Net Zero refers to the state where the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted is equal to the amount removed from the atmosphere, effectively resulting in no net increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases. This can be achieved through a combination of reducing emissions and enhancing carbon sinks, such as forests or carbon capture technologies. Net zero encompasses all greenhouse gases, whereas carbon neutrality often focuses specifically on carbon dioxide emissions.

Offsetting refers to the practice of compensating for carbon emissions by investing in projects that reduce or remove an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This is often done through purchasing carbon credits, which represent a specific amount of carbon dioxide that has been prevented from entering the atmosphere or has been removed.

Resilience The capacity of social, economic and ecosystems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance. Building climate resilience requires mitigation and adaptation actions that must be combined to tackle the current and future impacts of climate change.

Retrofit means upgrading existing buildings with new technologies or materials to enhance energy efficiency, lower emissions, and improve their resilience to climate impacts.

Sustainable consumption means using products and resources in a way that meets current needs without harming the environment or depleting resources for future generations.

Transition Towns are grassroots community initiatives that aim to help people work together on practical ways to deal with climate change and other interlinked challenges. These projects aim to make towns and villages more sustainable and able to cope with future pressures. This often includes things like growing more local food, protecting nature, using renewable energy, and building a stronger sense of community.

List of Acronyms

2. BAU – Business As Usual.
- BNG – Biodiversity Net Gain.
- CCC – Committee on Climate Change.
- CCRA – Climate Change Risk Assessment.
- CH₄ – Methane.
- CLO – Carbon Literate Organisation.
- CO₂ – Carbon Dioxide.
- CO₂e – Carbon Dioxide Equivalent.
- DESNZ – Department of Energy Security and Net Zero.
- ESCC – East Sussex County Council.
- EV – Electric Vehicle.
- GBF – Global Biodiversity Framework.
- GHGs – Greenhouse Gases.
- GWP – Global Warming Potential.
- HECC – Health Effects of Climate Change.
- HVO – Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil.
- IPBES – Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.
- IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- LEVI – Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund.
- LCWIP – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- LNRS – Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- LPG – Liquefied Petroleum Gas.
- LTP – Local Transport Plan.
- LULUCF – Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry.
- MCZ – Marine Conservation Zone.
- NAP – National Adaptation Programme.
- N₂O – Nitrous Oxide.
- ONS – Office for National Statistics.
- RCPs – Representative Concentration Pathways.
- SANGs – Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces.

- SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals.
- SDNP – South Downs National Park Authority.
- SMPs – Shoreline Management Plans.
- TCV – The Conservation Volunteers.
- UKCP – UK Climate Projections.
- UKHSA – UK Health Security Agency.
- UN – United Nations.
- WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature.