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Foreword from Councillor Harwood, Chairman of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group

People around the world are increasingly aware, concerned and demanding urgent action from their decision-makers to tackle human-caused global heating, degradation of natural habitats and catastrophic collapse of wildlife populations. Maidstone Borough Council has long understood the urgency of this crisis and published its ground-breaking '**Climate Change' overview and scrutiny report**' in 2003, containing 50 wide-ranging recommendations. This was followed with the cross-party declaration of a **Biodiversity and Climate Emergency** in April 2019 and an aim of making the Borough carbon neutral by 2030.

Latterly, national and international policy caught up with our local aspirations when in June 2019, the UK Government enshrined in law a reduction in the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases of 100% by 2050. Further, in May 2019 the United Nation's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) declared that 'nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world'. The evidence underpinning this declaration identified the UK as one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth. Subsequent detailed research, led by the Natural History Museum, documented the UK comes out bottom amongst the G7 leading economies in terms of how much biodiversity still survives, and that in the European context only Ireland and Malta come out worse, with the UK in the bottom 10% of all countries globally.

Following the Council's 2019 declaration of a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency a cross-party councillor working group was established to identify priorities for action. We sought expert advice to determine how to make unprecedented reductions to our own carbon emissions, and to learn about the actions we must take to cut harmful emissions and stem then reverse the decline in biodiversity across the Borough. To help us we sought the views of residents, businesses and land-managers on how they, and the Council, will phase-out polluting emissions and make us all more resilient to climate change while rescuing biodiversity in the Borough.

We used this work to identify nine clear themes for action. We framed challenging targets for each and identified actions we will take to achieve these aims. New, understanding, opportunities and technologies will emerge as we work to address the challenges we face. Therefore, our strategy must be flexible and adaptable, to make the most of new innovations. We must and will create an exemplar low carbon Borough while enabling a recovery of lost and damaged habitats and wildlife.

Climate change is hitting us harder and faster than modelling scenarios had predicted and, despite all the agreements and policy initiatives, deliberate destruction of natural habitats and wildlife is accelerating too. Climate change and ecological collapse cannot be dismissed as 'environmental issues', as too many people still believe. It is a universal threat, to our health and wellbeing, to agriculture, to peace and security, to quality of life and crucially also to the local, UK and global economy.

1 Introduction

Human activities, including burning fossil fuels and changing land use from wetland or forest to farming, has increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, particularly since the industrial revolution. An increase in the level of greenhouse gases increases the global temperature. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [Report](#) 2018 states that the temperature has already risen by 1°C. It advises that the greater the temperature rise, the greater the impacts of climate change will be to human health, water supply and biodiversity. It recommends rapid reductions in carbon emissions now with the aim to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in their 2019 [Report](#) found that human activities are having unprecedented adverse impacts on the world's species including one million species threatened with extinction. The State of Nature [Report](#) produced by the State of Nature partnership shows a significant decline in terrestrial and freshwater species in the UK since 1970.

Climate change, coupled with the biodiversity and habitat loss, is creating a mass extinction event that has severe impacts on all life on Earth. These challenges are being recognised across the globe with countries and organisations coming together to plan how to address them. Maidstone Borough Council will play its part locally in finding and implementing solutions to address the challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change.

In April 2019 this Council approved a motion recognising global climate and biodiversity emergencies. It created the cross party Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group cross to:

- Consider a target date of 2030 for the whole of the Borough of Maidstone to be carbon neutral
- Consider how the Council can strengthen local protection and enhancement of species, habitats and ecosystems services under available powers.

The Working Group recognises the importance and opportunity in addressing both emergencies together as set out in this strategy.

This strategy and action plan set out how the Council address climate change and biodiversity. The plan is a living document and the Council's ambition is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, if technology and national policy changes allow.

2 Climate Change

International Context

The IPCC provides scientific assessments of climate change, its implications and risks, and recommends ways to adapt to new climate patterns and reduce emissions. In 2018 it [reported](#) that the impacts of global warming would increase significantly when the temperature increase was more than 1.5°C. The report explained how limiting global warming to 1.5°C required emissions of carbon dioxide to be reduced by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by 2050. This led to the United Nations Paris [Agreement](#) where countries agreed to work towards holding the increase in global temperatures to well below 2°C and to aim to limit warming to 1.5°C.

National Context

In the UK the Climate Change [Act](#) 2008 set a target to reduce its carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. The UK [Committee on Climate Change](#) provides the five yearly carbon budgets which aim to reduce carbon emissions by 3% year on year. It describes how carbon is emitted in the UK from vehicles run on fossil fuels including petrol and diesel, from buildings heated by gas, oil or coal and from power stations burning gas or oil to create electricity. It guides the Government on the measures needed to reduce carbon emissions including the move from producing electricity from fossil fuels to low carbon methods, changing transport from fossil fuels to low carbon and reducing carbon from homes, farming and industry.

In 2019 the Act was amended to respond to the Paris Agreement to commit the Government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050. The Committee on Climate Change will provide future carbon budgets, and guidance, to meet this new target.

In May 2020 the Committee on Climate Change set out key measures which will give economic, social and environmental benefits when rebuilding the nation after the COVID-19 pandemic crisis in a [letter](#) to the Prime Minister. These are:

- Investment in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure
- Supporting reskilling, retraining and research for a net-zero well-adapted economy
- Upgrades to our homes to ensure they are fit for the future
- Making it easy for people to walk, cycle and work remotely
- Tree planting, peatland restoration, green spaces and other green infrastructure

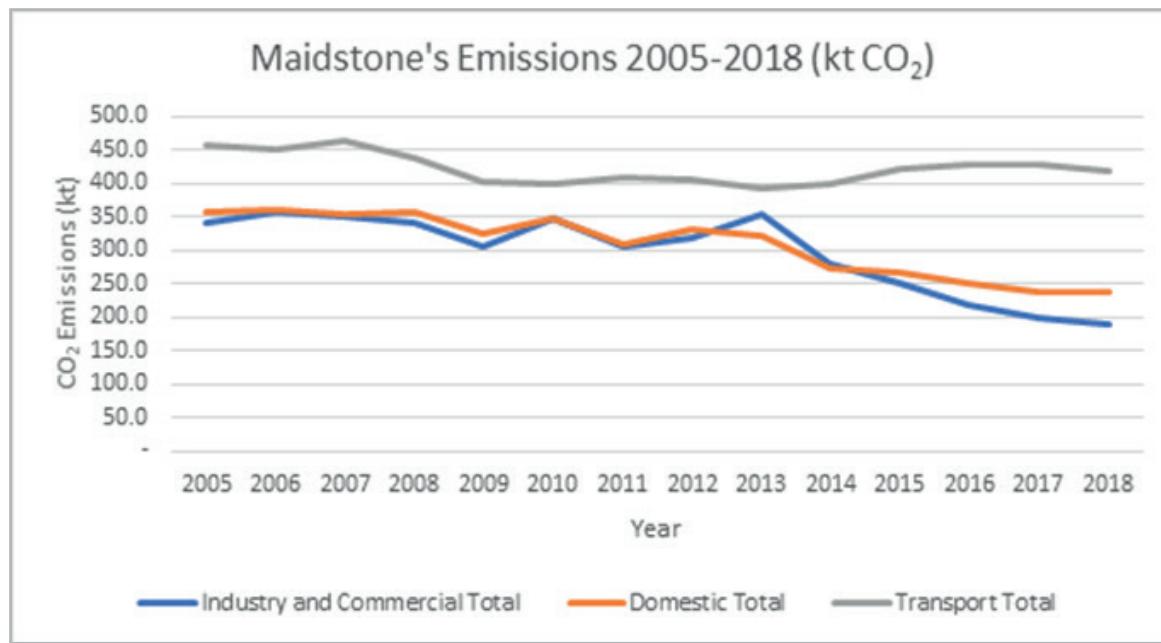
As well as substantially reducing carbon emissions this Council must also adapt to climate change. The Climate Change Act 2008 requires a Climate Change Risk Assessment every five years, and this sets out the risks and opportunities arising from climate change in the UK.

The 2018 National Infrastructure [Assessment](#) sets out a pathway for the UK's infrastructure for the next 30 years. It recognises the challenges of climate change and its recommendations include that the Government provide half the UK's power from renewables by 2030, the infrastructure for electric vehicles, and plan for resilience to flooding and drought.

Local Context

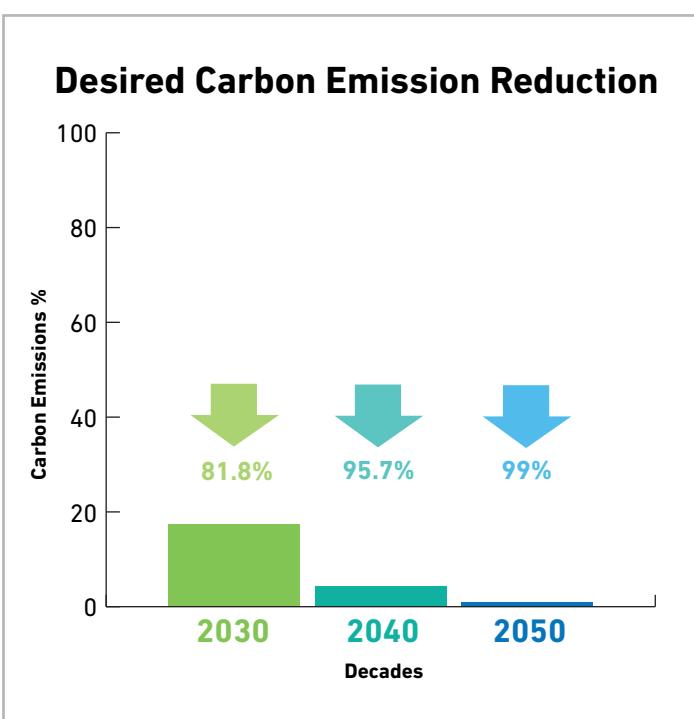
The Kent Environment Strategy, and Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, show how Kent County Council will work with partners, including Maidstone Borough Council, towards a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) data shows, that in the borough, carbon emissions from the homes, industry and commercial sectors have dropped since 2005, particularly since 2013, but emissions from transport have risen since 2014.



Total Carbon Dioxide Emissions by sector, (BEIS 2020)

The [Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research](#) brings science and engineering researchers together to develop sustainable responses to climate change. They developed a tool to show how much carbon emissions must reduce to meet the commitments agreed in the Paris [Agreement](#). This carbon budget provides a 'likely' chance of staying below 2°C and offers an outside chance of holding temperatures to 1.5°C.



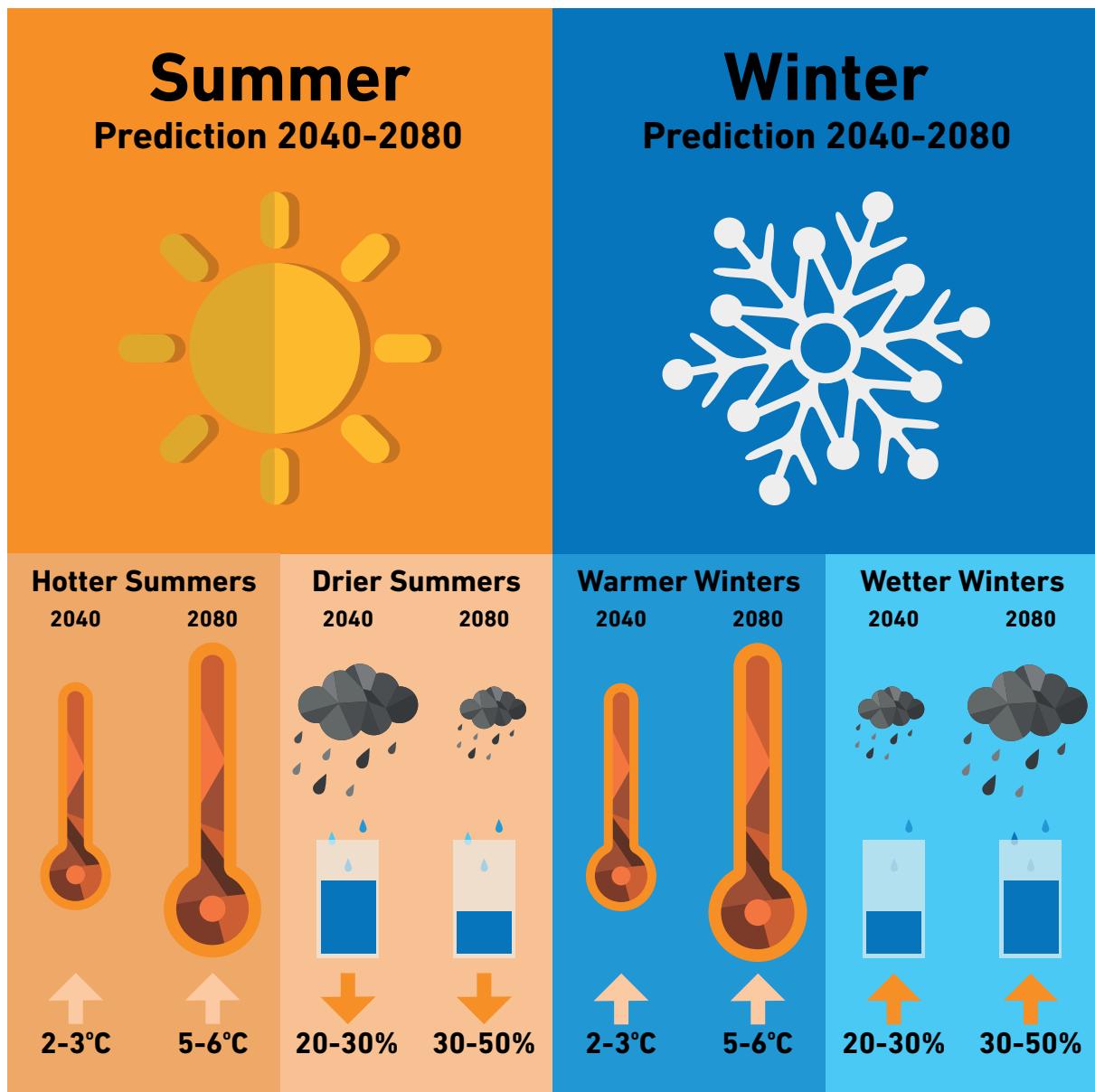
It shows Maidstone Borough should stay within a maximum cumulative carbon dioxide emission budget of 5.4 million tonnes (MtCO₂) from now to 2100. At our current levels of emissions Maidstone Borough would use the entire budget by 2027 so, though emissions are reducing, we must take substantial action to ensure they reduce much faster.

The Tyndall Centre's research shows we need to reduce CO₂ emissions by 13.4% each year and reach near to carbon zero by 2041. This indicates we should reduce our carbon emissions by at least 81.8% by 2030.

Maidstone Borough Council recognised the climate emergency as a way of acknowledging the need for urgent and effective actions throughout the next decade to reduce emissions. The cumulative level of emissions is so important that a cut in emissions now is more valuable than the same cut later. It is vital to cut emissions now and not to delay just because the route for eliminating emissions is not clear at the start.

The [Kent and Medway Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment](#) (CCRIA) is provided to inform policy and decision-makers of the climate risks that will have the greatest impact on Kent's society, economy and environment, and provides the evidence for future planning.

The expected changes in Kent are:



We will continuously review the need to offset carbon. We will ensure offsetting is assessed in a robust manner and measure proposal against the following principles:

- Contribution to biodiversity in the borough
- Contribution to social good in the borough, which would include a reduction in fuel poverty or in flash flooding

We will have due regard to any guidance the Government produces on offsetting.

3 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth including all ecosystems, wild, managed and urban. Healthy ecosystems help mitigate climate change by capturing and storing carbon from the atmosphere. They also help us adapt to climate change impacts by reducing flooding, providing shading to reduce excess heat and reducing soil erosion.

International Context

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) assesses the state of biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides to society. In 2019 it warned that:

- Nature, and its vital contributions to people, is deteriorating worldwide
- the drivers of this change are accelerating
- that goals for conserving and sustainably using nature cannot be met by current practices and that goals for 2030 can only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors

It states that the UK is one of the most nature depleted nations on Earth.

National Context

The UK State of Nature 2019 [Report](#) explains how the abundance and distribution of species has declined since 1970 and continues to decline. It uses a 1970 baseline and recognises there was habitat loss and degradation before that date.

The State of Nature 2019 Report describes how human activity creates pressure on landscapes which has resulted mainly in losses, but also some gains, for biodiversity. Pressures come from agricultural management, urbanisation, pollution, hydrological change, woodland management and invasive non-native species. Climate change can change the timing of important natural events like migration, egg laying and flowering, sometimes resulting in mistiming between species.

The Environment Act, anticipated later this year, will set out how the Government plans to protect and improve the natural environment. It includes commitments to secure improvement on waste management, air and water quality, and biodiversity, and will create the Office for Environmental Protection to ensure improvements are made.

The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan, A Green Future; Our 25 Year [Plan](#) to Improve the Environment, was released in 2018. It uses a natural capital approach, where the socio-economic value of the natural environment is considered through the ecosystem services it provides.

The Environment Act will lay the ground for the Nature Recovery Networks and Nature Recovery Strategies across the country. These will help better spatial planning for nature recovery by setting out priorities and opportunities for protecting and investing in nature within a local area. This will help organisations, including Maidstone Borough Council, to identify priorities and opportunities for conserving and enhancing nature. The Act will establish spatial mapping and planning tools to help inform nature recovery and introduces the Environmental Land Management Scheme form of payments for land managers. This will encourage land managers to use nature based solution to challenges including flooding

and water quality. The Act introduces biodiversity net gain into the planning system which requires all new developments to enhance biodiversity. This is expected to lead to the creation, or improvement, of habitat for wildlife providing improvements in air quality, water flow control and provide space for outdoor recreation.

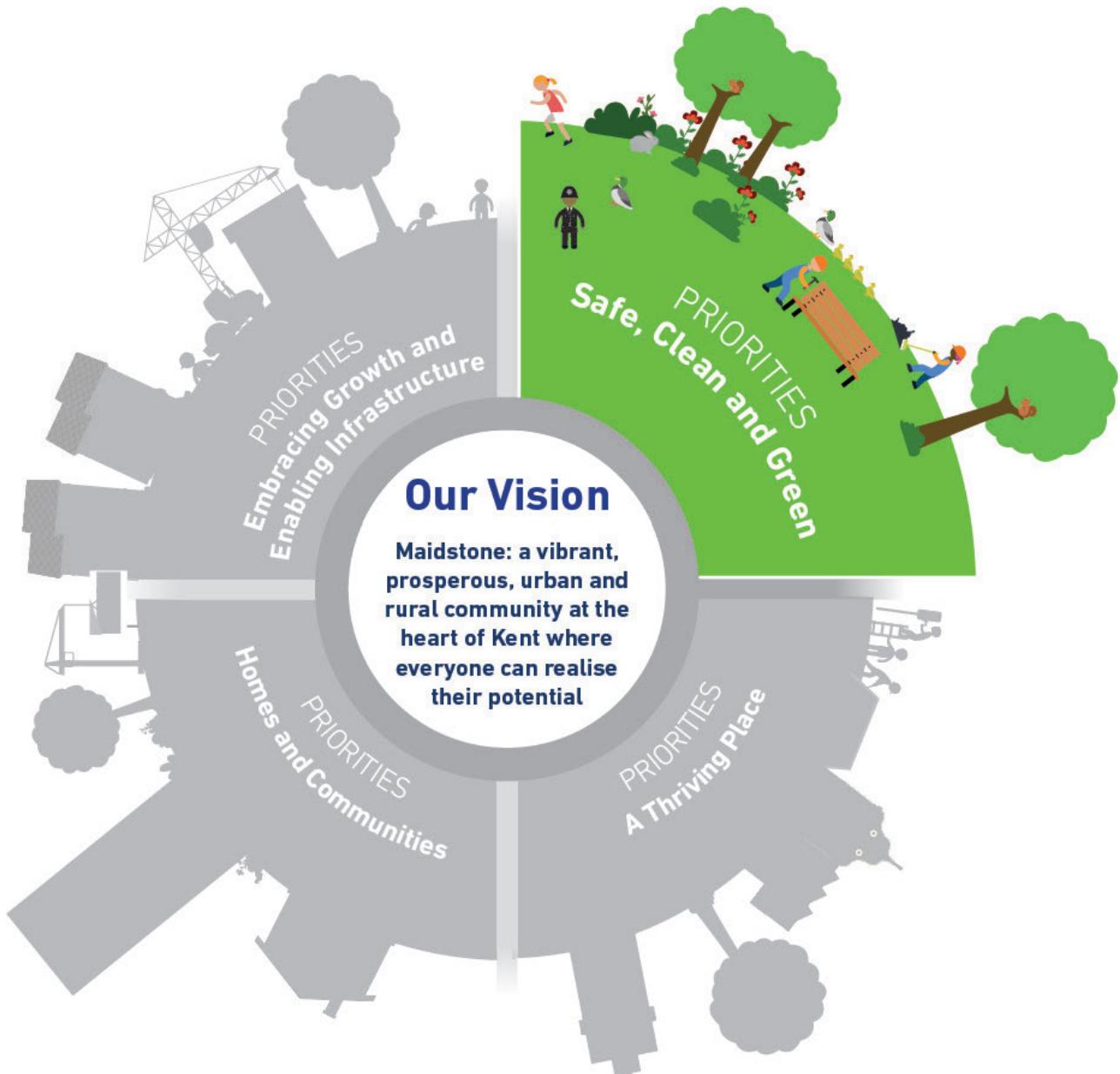
Local Context

The Kent Nature Partnership provided the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045 which shows how the county can maintain, restore and create thriving habitats. It sets out how the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan can be delivered in Kent through a partnership including organisations, businesses and individuals and Maidstone Borough Council will have due regard to it.

The [Kent Biodiversity Strategy](#) can be used to inform local planning policy and decisions. It provides a framework for delivering biodiversity net gain, offering a focus for habitats and species of local importance and helping to identify areas for habitat management, restoration and creation. It will influence the development of a Local Nature Recovery Network in Kent.

4 Themes and Aims

Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Plan 2019-2046 sets the direction for Maidstone's long-term future. One of the four priorities in our strategic plan is Safe, Clean and Green and we have a cross-cutting objective to respect biodiversity and environmental sustainability.



We will focus on the areas that we can control and influence that will have the most impact on biodiversity and addressing climate change. We understand that some measures, including decarbonising the electricity supply and controlling the sale of vehicles powered by petrol or diesel, will come from Government policy, and we will take consultation opportunities to influence Government policy as well as being directed by it.

We will use expertise from organisations including the [Carbon Trust](#) and the [Energy Saving Trust](#) to ensure our interventions are effective and we use up to date best practice. We will bid for external funding for works to address climate change and biodiversity to ensure the best possible outcomes for the Borough.

The Committee on Climate Change recommend that local authority plans focus on decarbonising heating and retrofitting homes, providing for infrastructure for walking and cycling and charging electric vehicles and helping the area adapt to climate change. Their Sixth Carbon Budget will provide further advice for local authorities and this will be used to update the action plan as needed and inform future action plans. It also recommended that the Government should incentivise, support and enable local authorities to deliver emissions reductions and climate adaptation measures at a local level.

We will work with our partners to address climate change and biodiversity together and residents and businesses will be encouraged and supported to play their part. We also understand that some actions may be unpopular with some people and hope that we have explained why it is essential and urgent for us to take these steps to address climate change and biodiversity loss.

This strategy is organised into nine themes. These are areas that were raised in our 2020 Residents' Survey on Biodiversity and Climate Change, in the consultative event with land managers in March 2020, and areas where we believe the Council could have an impact. Each begins with our aim, briefly describes relevant national policy, outlines any local data and highlights any points from the consultative actions. It identifies some of the actions to be taken with more detail given in the action plan. The action plan is a living document and we expect changes in policy, technology and national climate change funding to present further opportunities for addressing climate change and enhancing biodiversity.

Theme 1 - Transport

Our aim for transport:

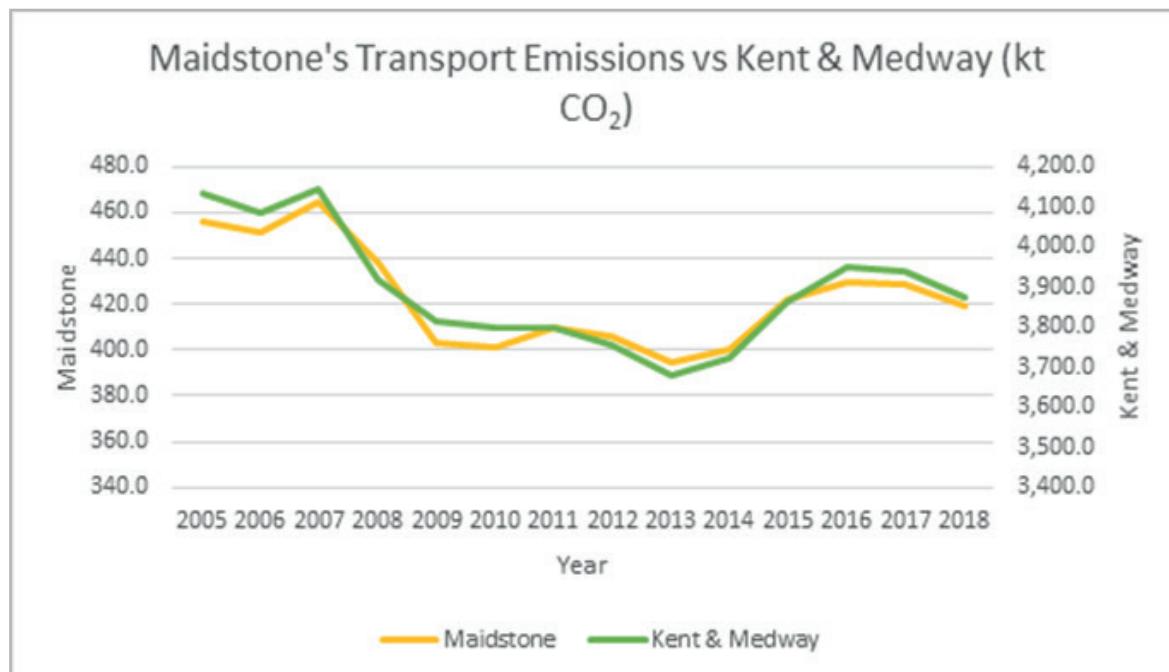
To support the shift from cars to active and mass transport and enable the transformation from fossil fuels to no tailpipe emissions.

The Government's [consultation](#) Decarbonising Transport; Setting the Challenge, published in March 2020, shows the need for public transport and active travel to become our natural first choice, for vehicles to have no tailpipe emissions and for placed based solutions that meet the needs of local people. The Council will take part in consultations to help shape the Governments Transport Decarbonisation Plan and ensure that Maidstone residents benefit from it.

The Government launched [Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking](#) in July 2020. This aims to put cycling and walking at the heart of decision-making processes. Maidstone Borough Council is working with Kent County Council to bid for funding for works from the Department of Transport to help residents feel safe when walking or cycling in the borough.

A Local Government Association [report](#) recommends that councils can help their communities reduce emissions from transport by using the Avoid Shift Improve framework. This promotes travelling less by doing more online and planning our area to reduce the need for travel; shifting to active transport and decarbonising travel; and increasing the uptake of electric vehicles.

Transport created the largest amount of emissions in the Borough. These dropped 13% between 2005 and 2013, rose from 2013 and then dropped.



Carbon dioxide emissions from transport (BEIS, 2020)

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, which forced people to remain at home and socially distance, showed how adaptable people are. Many managed to work from home with very little notice. With a more planned approach, and with the right technology, it is likely that many will be able to work from home far more than in the past and so make fewer journeys.

During the COVID-19 lockdown period many people noticed the air quality improved and there was less noise from traffic. Air quality [monitoring](#) showed that the monthly average nitrogen dioxide levels were lower in Maidstone during lockdown than in the same months in the previous year.

Our 2020 Residents' Survey on Biodiversity and Climate Change, carried out in February and March, showed that most respondents would like to see investment in active travel infrastructure, including cycle routes and pedestrian crossings with many saying they were willing to walk, or cycle, journeys of less than one mile. Kent's Active Travel [Strategy](#) explained that people walk more in well designed, accessible, streets and cycle more where cycling is separated from traffic. It found that people make journeys that combine walking or cycling with public transport.

Emissions from electric vehicles are significantly lower than from fossil fuel vehicles and will fall further as electricity generation is decarbonised. Electric vehicles are currently more expensive to buy than fossil fuel vehicles, but they are cheaper to run, particularly if you charge them at home. The Government currently provides grant [schemes](#) for installing home charging points and towards the cost of buying a new electric vehicle. Maidstone Borough Council is committed to be an electric vehicle friendly borough and has already provided charging points in some car parks. The Residents' Survey showed widespread support for providing more electric vehicle charging points and support for a requirement for taxis to be electric.

We will:

Use the Local Plan to ensure its supports walking, cycling and public transport and the use of electric vehicles where the opportunity arises

Work with partners to develop Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy

Develop a travel plan for the council staff to reduce emissions from travel ensuring learning from adaptations to the COVID-19 crisis is used

Work with partners to ensure electric vehicle charging points are provided across the borough

Update our Taxi Licensing Policy to ensure new vehicles are electric and that enough rapid charging points are provided for taxis that aren't charged at home

Promote schemes to help businesses move to electric vehicles.

Theme 2 - Buildings

Our aim for buildings:

To support the change from heating and cooling buildings using fossil fuels to low carbon technology and reducing energy needs by increasing energy efficiency.

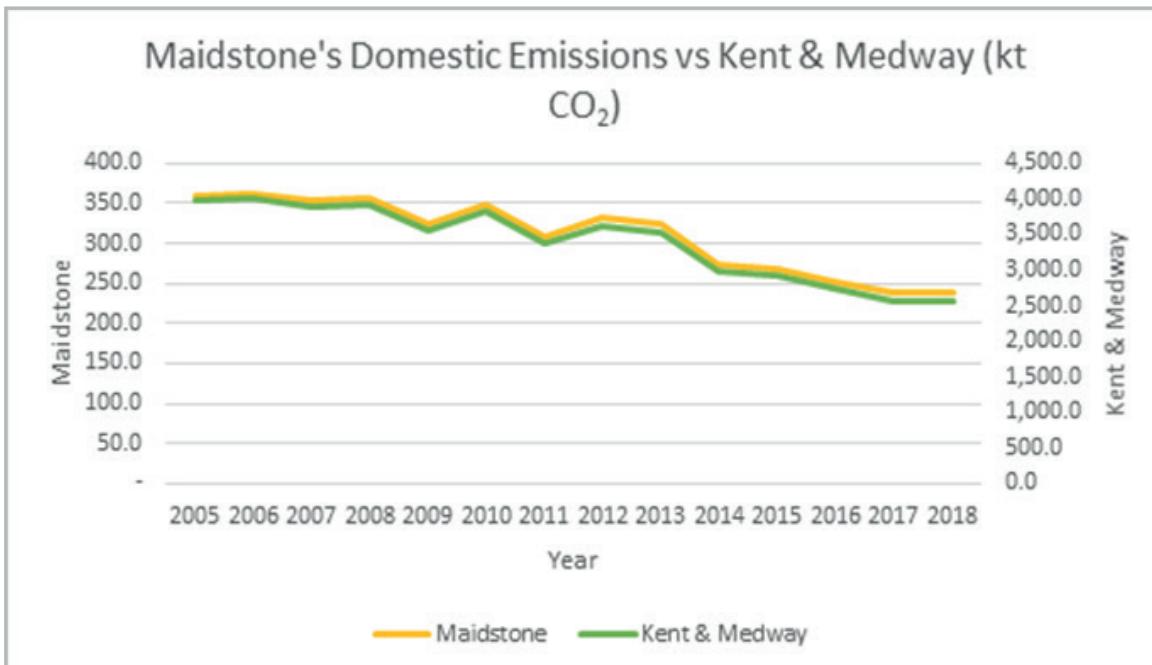
Changes in building regulations over the past four decades have resulted in newer homes being more energy efficient than older homes. People living in more efficient homes generally have lower fuel bills and so are less likely to live in fuel poverty. The Future Homes [Standard](#) describes the new standards anticipated to be introduced by 2025 which would continue this trend and require low-carbon heating and excellent energy efficiency.

The energy efficiency of many older homes has been improved by installing loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, double glazing and more efficient heating systems. Some older buildings have solid walls and these can be insulated externally or internally but this is much more expensive than installing cavity wall insulation and few buildings have been insulated in this way.



The majority homes in England are heated using fossil fuels, mainly gas, but a small number use oil or coal. We must transform buildings by improving the insulation, changing to low carbon heating and cooling systems and using smart controls for heating and appliances to reduce the carbon emissions from them. Lower carbon heating systems include ground, air and water source heat pumps and low carbon district heating systems. These works could generate employment for suitably trained local people.

A significant amount of energy is used to power and heat domestic and non-domestic buildings. 29% of carbon dioxide emissions in the borough come from homes. There has been a 34% decrease in CO₂ emissions between 2005-2017 with a decline since 2012.



Carbon dioxide emissions from homes (BEIS 2020)

The 2020 Residents' Survey on Biodiversity and Climate Change indicated that many respondents have carried out some improvements to the insulation of their homes, but it is likely that the homes that have been improved could benefit from further insulation works and improved heating systems. There are still a significant number of poorly insulated homes where improvements in efficiency would lower heating costs and so reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty.

The Government's [Green Homes Grant Scheme](#), due to open for applications at the end of September 2020, should help to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes. It will provide homeowners vouchers to cover $\frac{2}{3}$ of the cost of works including insulation of walls, floors and roofs, installation of low carbon heating including heat pumps and solar hot water measures up to £5,000. Homeowners in receipt of certain benefits can receive a voucher for all of the costs of the works up to £10K.

Energy is used by water companies to clean and supply drinking water and we use energy when we heat water. Changes to rainfall patterns suggest we will have less summer rainfall and should use water wisely. We will work with partners to promote water efficiency so reducing water use and reducing water poverty.

We will:

Support partners to explore the potential for Combined Heat and Power systems and District Heating scheme developments across the community

Promote insulation retrofitting schemes

Promote low carbon heating schemes to residents and businesses

Promote water efficiency measures

Theme 3 - Generating Renewable Energy

Our aim for generating renewable energy:

To take every opportunity to generate renewable energy across the borough.

As a nation, we need to decarbonise energy generation and change from fossil fuels to renewable electricity for transport and in buildings. There are many opportunities to generate solar energy on new and existing buildings and wind or solar energy on land. Generating renewable energy at home reduces the amount of energy bought, and so fuel bills and fuel poverty. Renewable energy installations would generate employment for suitably trained local people.



The Feed In Tariff is closed to new applicants and has been replaced by the [Smart Export Guarantee](#), which pays for electricity exported back to the grid. Energy generation on buildings, or land, generates useful income and it is anticipated that the energy market will change with many smaller producers joining the market. Some householders and businesses may prefer to use a battery system to store excess power to use later.

At the end of 2018 there were over 2000 sites in the borough generating renewable energy. The majority were photovoltaic systems and there were 3 wind powered systems, 3 anaerobic digestion installations and 2 micro combined heat and power installations. Maidstone Borough Council are working with Kent County Council to promote the [Solar Together](#) Scheme to help residents and small businesses benefit from a collective buying programme and will bring forward other opportunities as they arise.

We will:

Use the Local Plan to support renewable energy generation in new developments

Support residents, businesses and third sector to install renewable energy generation by providing information and promoting grants and savings schemes

Encourage and support community energy projects.

Theme 4 - Reducing Waste and Energy Used in Processing.

Our aim for waste reduction and processing:

To reduce the amount of domestic waste created, increase the proportion re-used, recycled and composted to at least 60% by 2030 and reduce the carbon emitted from processing waste.

The Government's strategy Our Waste, Our Resources; a [Strategy](#) for England sets out how we must reduce our waste and manage it carefully. Its aims to reduce the amount of waste we create as a society and move to a circular economy where we re-use, remanufacture, repair and recycle. We use least energy when we re-use or repair items and recycling is not the first choice.

Most Favoured Option

Reduce

Lowering the amount
of waste produced



Reuse

Using materials
repeatedly



Recycle

Using materials
to make new products



Recovery

Recovering
energy from waste



Landfill

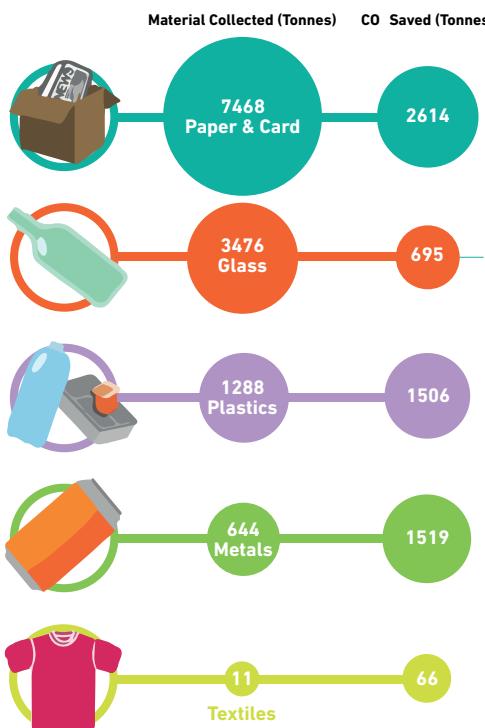
Safe disposal
of waste to landfill

Least Favoured Option

The proportion of waste re-used, recycled or composted has increased in the borough since 2010-11. Some useful materials are still put into the waste bins including metals, textiles, food waste. We aim to re-use, recycle or compost at least 60% of household waste by 2030, in line with Government policy.

Maidstone Recycling Materials

Collected between 1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020



New bin hanger for residents

The 2020 Residents' Survey on Biodiversity and Climate Change showed many respondents were willing to recycle more, and many already choose re-usable items. Maidstone Borough Council will work with residents to reduce the amount of waste generated and increase the proportion of it that is re-used, recycled or composted, supporting those with communal bins to recycle.

This council has used route optimisation to reduce the distance waste is transported for processing so reducing waste related carbon emissions. We will continue to look to minimise mileage without reducing the service and at ways to decarbonise the vehicles that will be used to provide the services.

We will:

Encourage and support residents to re-use, recycle and compost

Provide guidance for developers to ensure new developments have suitable recycling facilities

Maximise carbon reduction from recycling materials by making sure waste is processed as close to the borough as possible

Introduce recycling into the street cleansing service

Aim to reduce fly tipping and penalise offenders.

Theme 5 - Adapting to Climate Change

Our aim for adapting to climate change:

To build resilient landscapes, communities and services.

The IPCC are very clear that some level climate change is inevitable even if emissions are cut immediately. It is sensible to prepare for the warmer, drier summers, milder, wetter winters and more intense and frequent storms that are predicted by the [Kent and Medway Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment](#) (CCRIA).

Changes to our landscapes and urban areas can help us fare better during drought, heatwave and flood. Natural flood management helps to hold water in the landscape and release it more slowly, reducing both downstream flooding and the impact of drought. Heat islands are when built up areas are hotter than nearby rural areas, particularly at night. Trees and plants provide shade and cooling and reduce air temperatures during hot weather and reduce the heat island effect. Green roofs also reduce the temperature of the roof surface, reduce run off in heavy rain and may help reduce the temperature inside the building.



Greening our buildings and urban spaces



In our Local Plan Review we will consider:

- where developments should be sited to increase resilience to extreme weather
- how schemes are laid out to increase cooling from shade and reduce surface water flooding
- the design of buildings to help reduce overheating in summer, reduce damage from storms, and to use less water

Maidstone Borough Council understands the importance of local data and will use the Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System (SWIMS) to ensure we understand and can respond to the local picture. We will ensure our services are resilient in times of severe weather.

Partnership working is vital in adaptation work and the council will work with partners to ensure that infrastructure, such as drinking water, wastewater, electricity, and telephone and internet systems are resilient to changes in climate.

We will:

- Ensure our Local Plan supports adaptation to climate change
- Use the CCRIA data to plan how to protect the borough from climate impacts
- Use SWIMS to understand impacts of severe weather in borough
- Ensure our services and operations are resilient to climate change
- Support local businesses to be resilient to climate change
- Work with partners to strengthen critical infrastructure to climate change

Theme 6 - Enhancing and Increasing Biodiversity

Our aim for biodiversity:

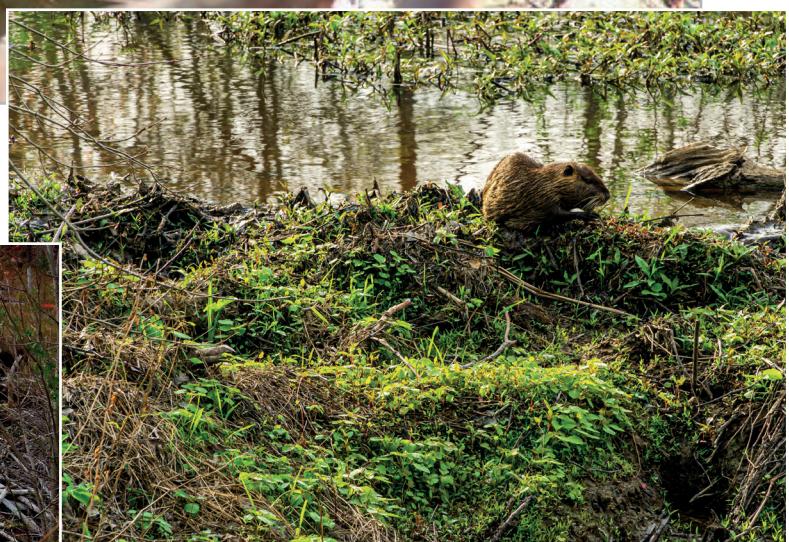
To use every opportunity to protect, enhance and increase biodiversity in the Borough.

The IPBES [report](#) showed that human activities are having very harmful impacts on the world's species, including one million species threatened with extinction. The national strategy is forming with the Environment Act anticipated later in 2020 with the Environmental Land Management Scheme to be introduced in the following years.

The [Kent Biodiversity Strategy](#) 2020 to 2045 focuses on how the county can maintain, restore and create thriving habitats. Maidstone Borough Council recognises the intrinsic value of biodiversity, and the contributions it can make to mitigating carbon emissions and helping us adapt to climate change. It will work in partnership to develop the Nature Recovery Strategy for the area and use this to inform the way it delivers services.



Beavers and their dams



There is broad support for protecting nature locally. The 2020 Residents' Survey on Biodiversity and Climate Change indicated many respondents had a good knowledge of the causes and effects of biodiversity loss with a significant majority expressing concern over loss of the natural environment. Planting trees and creating other habitats for wildlife was the most popular action for the council to take in the Residents' Survey. There was also support for leaving some verges to grow wild to provide useful habitat. At the land managers event many pledged to take action to enhance biodiversity on their land or by providing their expertise. The success of the "Go Green, Go Wild" campaign shows residents and local groups willingness to act to support biodiversity. Maidstone Borough Council will ensure we have the expertise and staff to coordinate work on biodiversity in the borough.

We will:

Require biodiversity net gain on new developments with an emphasis on semi open natural spaces

Agree and implement a Biodiversity Strategy

Implement a plan to increase tree cover by at least 46 hectares

Deliver at least one new wetland project each year

Work with partners to implement a Nature Recovery Strategy

Work with local landowners to deliver landscape scale biodiversity initiatives

Assess potential of our land for enhancing biodiversity including allowing community groups to manage it to enhance biodiversity

Theme 7 - Making Our Estate Carbon Neutral

Our aim for our estate:

We will reduce emissions from our estate to as close to carbon neutral as possible by 2030

Maidstone Borough Council owns and leases buildings and land and runs a fleet of vehicles to carry out its functions. We have already taken some measures to reduce carbon emissions including

- Generating renewable energy using solar panels on Lockmeadow Hall, our depot, the newer part of the museum and the crematorium.
- Reducing energy use by installing heat pumps in the newer part of museum and LED lighting in many of our buildings and some car parks.
- Reducing the mileage of our street cleansing vehicles by route optimisation.
- Providing charging points for electric vehicles in six of our short stay car [parks](#).

We selected the Carbon [Trust](#) to measure our carbon footprint and provide a carbon reduction plan showing a pathway to make our estate carbon neutral by 2030. Their plan highlighted our direct emissions were mainly from fuel consumption in council owned vehicles, and gas and electricity consumed in council operated buildings. It indicated that we should reduce emissions from vehicles and electrify where possible, improve energy efficiency in our buildings and move to electric heat sources and generate more renewable electricity on our buildings. We will investigate how to follow their recommendations and will create a detailed action plan to address them.

The Carbon Trust advise that it is likely that we will still be responsible for 564 tCO₂e emissions even when we take all reasonable measures available with current technology to reduce our carbon footprint. We will seek ways to offset those emissions on new projects within the borough. These would focus on;

- Reducing emissions by producing renewable power generation
- Absorbing carbon by natural regeneration, tree planting and other ways that increase biodiversity

We lease buildings across the borough and will work with lease holders to improve the energy efficiency of our portfolio.

We will:

Implement the Carbon Trust's Carbon Reduction Plan.

Measure our carbon footprint each year to make sure we're on track

Offset the carbon emissions we cannot prevent emitting

Switch to a 100% renewable energy electricity provider

Use the Warm Homes [Scheme](#) and/or the Green Homes Grant [Scheme](#) to retrofit insulation to our temporary accommodation and top up any funding shortfall.

Use technology to support home working, reducing commuting to work

Ensure the buildings we let move towards a high standard for carbon reduction

Theme 8 - Communications

Our communications aim:

To enable residents, businesses and partner organisations to make informed decisions on climate change and biodiversity and access any funding available.

People alter their behaviour when social expectations change, they understand the reasons to act, these reasons resonate with their concerns, and they feel able to make the change. This was illustrated by the way the country responded to the Government guidance to lockdown and protect lives at the beginning of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights that people need more than information before making changes. They also need to feel that the matter being addressed is important to them and that their actions can make a difference.

The 2020 Residents' Survey on Biodiversity and Climate Change showed that a significant majority of respondents felt they had a good understanding of the causes and effects of biodiversity loss and of climate change. They were very concerned about the effects of climate change on future generations, and loss of biodiversity and the natural environment. Survey responses suggested a large majority of residents already do, or are willing to consider, personal behaviours that would support biodiversity or reduce climate change.

We asked land managers, parish councils, developers, farmers and organisations with relevant expertise about ways to enhance biodiversity in the borough at an event in March 2020. Many were already taking action and others were willing to consider actions on their land. This led to pledges that included sustainable management, commitments to work in partnership, commitments to set aside an area for wilding/wildflowers, to work to reconnect habitats and to provide training or expertise.

This engagement suggested that many people are already aware of climate change and biodiversity loss and many are taking, or are willing to take, action. Some respondents to the Residents' Survey said that they would like more suggestions on actions they could take, including knowing how to measure their carbon footprint, actions around recycling and waste and what they can do to look after wildlife and plants to grow to encourage biodiversity. We will carry out further resident surveys to ensure we are aware of current opinions. Maidstone Borough Council will help residents by showing the actions they can take and describing the difference those actions will have. It will work with partners and land managers to support biodiversity.

We will ensure our staff, managers and Councillors are trained so they understand the importance of addressing climate change and protecting biodiversity and know how to do that in their role.

We will work with our partner organisations to share information and ensure our actions are effective and working in harmony with each other.

Government strategies, and technology, is evolving and the information and guidance will change over the next ten years. We will adapt our communications as needed.

We will:

Implement a communications strategy and provide relevant messages that encourages individuals, and organisations to act

We will ensure our staff are suitably trained on biodiversity and climate change, related to their role, so they play their part

Build support from key stakeholders and the wider public on enhancing biodiversity and addressing climate change

Provide information and signpost residents and businesses to relevant grants

Work with partners to address climate change and biodiversity effectively and sustainably

Theme 9 - Decision Making Processes and Governance

Our aim for embedding climate change and biodiversity in decision making and governance:

To ensure that climate change and biodiversity are part of all decisions made

We will make addressing climate change and enhancing biodiversity part of our normal business practices. We'll make sure they are considered when managers are writing service plans, and that staff can make suggestions, so no opportunity is lost.

Councillors will be trained so they understand what to look for when considering reports to determine whether all opportunities to act are taken. We will change our report templates to ensure biodiversity and climate change will be considered in every report to every committee. We will establish a councillors' body to develop policy and scrutinise decisions relating to biodiversity and climate change.

Funds will be made available for projects to address climate change and biodiversity and assessed to ensure they will deliver a carbon reduction or measurable biodiversity benefit. Biodiversity and climate change will be considered when buying goods and services.

We will:

Provide relevant training for Councillors

Ensure Biodiversity and climate change are considered in service plans and Key Performance Indicators are set as needed

Add biodiversity and climate change to committee report template

Embed biodiversity and climate change into our governance structure

Establish criteria for investment in climate change and biodiversity and invest to save schemes

Consider biodiversity and climate change in the way we design, carry out and procure our services

5 Delivering and Monitoring

The action plan sets out the actions the council will take over the decade towards achieving our nine aims. Progress will be monitored every three months to celebrate successes and highlight any actions that need additional work to ensure progress is made. A written report will be made to the relevant committee who will make directions as needed. Emissions from our estate will be measured and reported annually.

