

Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) – Annual Progress Report 2025 – Executive summary

The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) continues to provide a collaborative framework for climate action across Kent County Council, Medway Council, and the county's district and borough councils. During 2025, partners made significant progress in reducing operational emissions, supporting residents and businesses, developing plans for large-scale retrofit and energy system transformation, and strengthening climate governance and engagement.

Key achievements in 2025

Continued reduction in public sector emissions

Local authorities across Kent and Medway have continued to reduce emissions from their estates and operations through investment in renewable energy generation, building retrofits, fleet decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures. Several councils reported substantial reductions against the 2019/20 ELES baseline, including:

- Kent County Council: 64% reduction in Scope 1 and 2 emissions.
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council: 46% reduction.
- Dover District Council: 38% reduction.
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council: 27% reduction.
- Swale Borough Council: 23% reduction.

Notable projects included low-carbon leisure centre refurbishments, large-scale solar PV installations, air source heat pump deployment, LED lighting upgrades and expanded use of low-carbon fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO).

Fleet efficiency and decarbonisation

Local authorities are at varying stages of progressing fleet efficiency, with several councils undertaking feasibility work, trialling EVs, or adopting lower-carbon fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), which has already delivered measurable savings in places like Gravesham, where 100% of the fleet is already running on HVO (totalling a 25.7 tCO₂e reduction). Thanet also transitioned their entire fleet (113 vehicles) to HVO (including 41 heavy goods vehicles). Swale has transitioned 71% of its fleet to electric.

Authorities continue to explore fleet efficiencies, install EV-charging infrastructure and promote car clubs and EV salary sacrifice schemes.

Building stronger climate governance

A Sustainable Procurement and Commissioning Toolkit was co-developed by KCC and the Climate Change Network. The toolkit provides practical guidance for embedding environmental considerations throughout procurement processes and is expected to launch during 2026/27.

KCC also piloted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EnvIA) framework to strengthen consideration of environmental impacts within decision-making processes, helping authorities better assess environmental risks and opportunities.

Advancing retrofit and tackling fuel poverty

The Kent and Medway Homes Retrofit Action Plan (HRAP) was developed with extensive stakeholder involvement from local government, housing, health and education sectors. Publication is expected following final endorsement in 2026.

Across the county, authorities continued delivering retrofit programmes and fuel poverty support through a range of national funding streams and local initiatives. Examples include support for vulnerable households, energy advice services, insulation measures, solar PV installations and low-carbon heating systems. Millions of pounds have also been secured through the Warm Homes Local Grant and Warm Homes Social Housing Fund programmes to support retrofit delivery between 2025 and 2028.

Community energy and renewables

The Solar Together programme delivered particularly strong outcomes across Kent and Medway. By March 2026:

- 517 solar PV systems had been installed.
- 36 retrofit battery storage systems had been deployed.
- The installations are expected to avoid approximately 417 tonnes of CO₂e in their first year alone.

Several authorities also supported the growth of community energy initiatives, helping local groups explore community-owned renewable energy projects and access funding opportunities.

KCC launched and co-chaired the Kent Sustainable Communities Network, creating a forum for community groups working on sustainability and carbon reduction.

Nature Recovery and climate adaptation

Important progress was made on natural environment objectives. The Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy was formally launched in November 2025 and is already helping guide local biodiversity and nature recovery activity.

Authorities delivered a wide range of habitat restoration, tree planting, biodiversity net gain and flood resilience projects. Collectively, local authorities planted over 25,000 trees and 11,000 whips during the year, contributing towards the Kent Plan Tree ambition of 1.5 million additional trees across Kent and Medway.

Supporting businesses and skills development

Councils continued supporting businesses to reduce emissions and improve resilience through grants, training programmes and sustainability advice. Programmes delivered by KCC and district councils helped organisations access funding, undertake carbon reduction projects and build green skills.

Climate awareness and education activity also expanded significantly. More than 20,000 pupils participated in the e-Waste Warriors programme, while local authorities delivered Carbon Literacy training, retrofit skills programmes and climate-focused learning opportunities for residents, businesses and staff.

Looking ahead

Priorities for 2026/27 include publishing the Homes Retrofit Action Plan, launching the Sustainable Procurement Toolkit, developing a shared approach to Scope 3 emissions reporting, progressing the Kent and Medway Local Area Energy Plan, and commencing work on a Kent and Medway Adaptation Plan. While challenges remain, particularly around supply-chain emissions, transport decarbonisation and large-scale energy infrastructure, collaborative working across the ELES partnership has established a strong foundation for accelerating progress towards net zero and climate resilience across Kent and Medway.