

KENT ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

A STRATEGY FOR ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND ECONOMY
IMPACT REPORT 2018



kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy

VISION

The county of Kent is benefitting from a competitive, innovative and resilient economy, with our natural and historic assets enhanced and protected for their unique value and positive impact on our society, economy, health and wellbeing.

IMPACT REPORT 2018

The annual impact report is designed to be a snapshot in time, providing an update on the key challenges we face in relation to the Kent Environment Strategy. The report summarises the range of actions that have been taken over the past year and the impact these actions are having. A more detailed monitoring report and state of the environment report is available online at www.kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy

WORKING TOGETHER, ACHIEVING MORE

The Kent Environment Strategy provides a strategic framework for closer cross-sector partnership working between environment, health and economic agendas. The strategy identifies high level, evidence-based priorities and focusses on the activities that would most benefit from partnership working. It also identifies opportunities where Kent's natural environment can provide positive outcomes for health, wellbeing and ultimately the economy. The strategy enables expertise and resources to be shared and creates greater opportunities to access external funding.

“

The environment is central to a strong economy and resilient communities as well as keeping our residents healthy and happy. By utilising our natural and heritage assets in an innovative way we can create economic opportunities, support wellbeing and provide cost effective solutions. This includes climate change challenges such as flooding, drought and heat, making it the only sensible way forward.”

Mike Whiting

(Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste)

Michael Payne

(Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste)

Andrew Bowles

(Leader of Swale Borough Council and Chair of Kent Environment Champions Group)



THE KENT ENVIRONMENT CHAMPIONS GROUP

The Kent Environment Champions Group provides the environmental conscience for the county of Kent. The group is composed of elected councillors, representatives from statutory organisations and other individuals who are active in environmental matters in Kent and Medway. The Group champions and challenges the progress of the Kent Environment Strategy and provides strategic guidance on the best ways to address important environmental issues and opportunities.

This year the group are recognising the achievements of 21 individuals, organisations and projects, for their environmental contribution:

BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

- Bloomsburys at Biddenden
- Electric hybrid pool vehicle project, Kent County Council
- Hedge Barton retrofit project, Sevenoaks District Council
- Kent Renewable Energy Centre
- Newton Waterproofing
- Orchard Community Energy
- Solar PV project, Northfleet School for Girls

CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

- Chris Drake, Kent County Council
- Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership
- Sheerness Seafront Team
- Swale Green Grid Partnership

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- Belinda Lamb, Guardians of the Deep
- Fred McCormack, Eco Cops
- Linda Marshall, Milton Creek Trust
- Plastic Free Faversham
- Pippa Palmar, Kent Orchards for Everyone
- Vikki Sedwick, Swale Borough Council

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Abbey Physic Garden
- Dandelion Time
- Ecology Island, NW Kent Countryside Partnership and North Kent Mind
- Kent Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Rachael Fagg, Godinton House

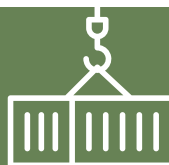
KENT'S RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES



8,900
HOMES TO BE BUILT
EVERY YEAR UNTIL
2031



56,400
PEOPLE EMPLOYED
IN THE LOW CARBON
ENVIRONMENT GOODS
AND SERVICES SECTOR



**£120
BILLION**
OF TRADED GOODS
PASS THROUGH PORT
OF DOVER ANNUALLY



**£18.6
MILLION**
RECORDED COST OF
53 SEVERE WEATHER
EVENTS IN KENT 2012-17



41%
OF RESIDENTS LIVING
IN RENTED PROPERTY
STRUGGLE TO PAY THEIR
ENERGY BILLS



708,000
TONNES OF
HOUSEHOLD WASTE
PRODUCED
ANNUALLY



1,900MW
OF RENEWABLE
ENERGY CAPACITY



**£3.6
BILLION**
VALUE OF KENT
TOURISM

THE BIGGEST ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS OF KENT'S RESIDENTS



HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
AND LOSS OF GREEN SPACE
(**46%**)



TRAFFIC, CONGESTION
AND AIR POLLUTION
(**27%**)

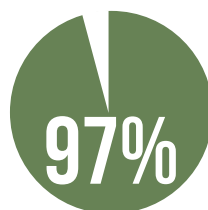


LITTER AND FLY-TIPPING
(**21%**)

“ I have children - the countryside is something I want them to benefit from in the future, so it has to be maintained and looked after ”

Public Opinion Survey 2018

WHAT THE ENVIRONMENT MEANS TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS



RESIDENTS
THINK KENT
COUNTRYSIDE
IS IMPORTANT
(**76% VERY
IMPORTANT**)



20% HAVE
PARTICIPATED IN
ENVIRONMENTAL
VOLUNTEERING
IN THE PAST YEAR

80% 

USE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
AT LEAST ONCE A FORTNIGHT

THE MAIN REASONS FOR USING
THE ENVIRONMENT:
**FRESH AIR, RELAXATION,
SPENDING TIME WITH
OTHERS, KEEPING WELL**



**WOODLANDS ARE THE
MOST APPEALING
FEATURE OF THE KENT
COUNTRYSIDE**

OUR CHALLENGE: MAXIMISING THE VALUE OF OUR NATURAL AND HISTORICAL ASSETS

Population increase, housing development, new transport links and intensive farming are all increasing demand for resources, fragmenting habitats and placing pressure on our landscape and natural heritage. In Kent, 20% of the county is classified as semi-natural, but only two thirds of this is managed in a way that benefits biodiversity.

Climate change, threats from non-native invasive species and diseases such as Ash Dieback, will continue to negatively affect the natural diversity of Kent, and will increasingly impact our historical sites. In addition, sea level rise could significantly

impact our maritime heritage and coastal habitats.

Kent's natural environment provides us with resources such as drinking water and timber, and benefits such as flood protection, clean air and areas for leisure and tourism. Contact with nature also promotes better physical and mental health.

Increasing access to green space and ensuring our natural heritage and historical assets are protected and enhanced, is key to ensuring Kent remains attractive to residents and visitors alike; supporting our economy and bringing benefits to health and wellbeing.

THE IMPACT WE ARE HAVING

- ↑ **43%** of Kent local wildlife sites are in positive management, a 2% increase on the previous year.
- ↓ **90.55%** of Kent's SSSIs are in a favourable or recovering condition, a 0.34% decrease on the previous year.
- ↔ **80%** of Kent residents use the countryside at least once a fortnight (no significant change since 2014)
- ↑ **32,139** hours spent volunteering with Kent's country parks and countryside management projects in 2017/18
- ↑ **70%** of the public rights of way network is now stile free



HIGHLIGHTS

REINVIGORATING USE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACE

Sevenoaks District Council is working with **Kent Wildlife Trust** and other partners to implement the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons project, which was awarded a £483,600 Heritage Lottery Fund grant. The scheme is restoring the landscape, social and natural heritage of the Commons, which contain important acid grassland and heath habitat of high biodiversity value. The scheme will improve public access and create new opportunities for people to use and share their knowledge of the Commons. It will also develop the capacity of local people to take a lead role in the on-going management of the 300 hectares of Commons.

LINKING NATURE TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING

North West Kent Countryside Management Partnership is working in partnership with **North Kent Mind** to offer weekly outdoor activity sessions at Ecology Island in Dartford's Central Park. Activities are chosen by the group and have included conservation work such as scrub clearance; natural crafts such as whittling and willow weaving; and

other activities such as wildlife watching, painting and walking. The scheme is helping participants to feel more involved in the community; reducing isolation and improving mental health and wellbeing.

ENHANCING GREENSPACE THROUGH PLANNING

Canterbury City Council has been successful in securing multiple green corridors and new areas of open space through strategic planning applications. In one development near Whitstable, 40 acres of semi-natural habitat will be joined to the neighbouring Duncan Down Village Greens, which are managed as a nature reserve and recognised as a Local Wildlife Site. This will double the area currently managed for wildlife; creating an important green corridor, as well as new recreational space for local residents.

CONSERVING KENT'S ICONIC ORCHARDS

The **Kent Downs AONB** Unit is supporting communities to conserve and enhance 15 traditional community orchards in the Mid Kent Downs and west of Maidstone. The five-year 'Kent Orchards for Everyone' project has

been funded by Heritage Lottery Fund. So far the project has had over 9,000 people participate in events, trained 277 volunteers and orchard wardens to manage the orchards sustainably and given 22 landowners advice. Bee and pyramidal orchids are now present in one of the orchards and another site is being used as a venue for outdoor yoga classes.

MANAGING ACCESS TO PROTECTED AREAS

Folkestone and Hythe District Council has been working with neighbouring Rother District Council to develop the Dungeness Sustainable Access and Recreational Management Strategy. The strategy takes a cross-boundary approach to managing access to the 3 internationally important protected areas on Dungeness and Romney Marsh. This approach ensures that any increases in access and recreation resulting from new developments in the two districts, does not adversely impact the rare habitat and species living there.

OUR CHALLENGE: ENSURING GROWTH IS SUSTAINABLE

Over the coming decades Kent faces unprecedented levels of growth, with an estimated 178,600 new homes and a population increase of 396,300 people by 2031. This will put increasing pressure on infrastructure and demand for services.

The county is facing increased congestion on both road and rail networks and could be severely gridlocked in the medium to longer term. Current evidence already reveals pockets of poor air quality along Kent's major road networks and linked to travel to and from the port of Dover.

Emerging smart infrastructure and the growth of electric vehicles, present Kent with an exciting opportunity to lead the shift to smart, flexible and low emission transport. Encouraging active travel, such as walking and cycling and increasing the use of public transport will also help alleviate congestion pressures, improve air quality and contribute to improved personal health.

The energy system in Kent is also changing. There will be an increased need for smaller, dispersed, low carbon power generation sources, and for greater utilisation of technologies such as battery storage, to manage the daily and seasonal variations of renewable energy production.

THE IMPACT WE ARE HAVING

- ↑ **719%** increase in renewable energy capacity since 2012
- ↔ **5** sites exceed annual air pollution levels for nitrogen oxides in 2016
- ↑ **3.9%** increase in average A-Road journey delays last year
- ↑ **22,798** electric vehicles registered in Kent since 2011
- ↑ **89%** of new builds had an EPC rating of A or B in 2017, up from 62% in 2011



HIGHLIGHTS

GENERATING LOCALLY SOURCED, LOW CARBON ENERGY

The **Kent Renewable Energy** Centre in Sandwich burns locally sourced wood fuel to generate heat and power for Discovery Park and export electricity to the national grid. It generates 27MW of low carbon electricity, enough to supply 50,000 homes and saves over 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. The power plant also provides a local, reliable market for low grade wood and it is becoming the catalyst for more local woodland to be brought back into active management. The centre supports 27 jobs and is also helping to support local woodland workers and the local supply chain.

REDUCING PEAK TIME CONGESTION

Medway Council has implemented active travel initiatives that have significantly reduced the number of school journeys made by car. Initiatives such as walking buses, road safety education, Bikeability training and promotion of 'Sustrans The Big Pedal' and 'Walk to School Month' saved 66,286 car journeys in the 16/17 academic year. The council has also been encouraging inactive residents to get more active through public health initiatives including health walks, Nordic Walking sessions and adult cycling groups.

These schemes are not only improving resident's health, but also tackling congestion and improving air quality.

INCREASING SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL OPTIONS

Kent County Council has been working with **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council** and rail partners to improve access to Tonbridge Station, the busiest station in Kent. The work, which is nearing completion, provides a large pedestrian and cyclist forecourt outside the station, prioritising pedestrian, cyclist and bus transport over private car use. The scheme will also provide a cycle hub at the rear of the station that will provide an additional 200 bike spaces to cater for the growing demand of train users who cycle to the station. The scheme received £500,000 from the Local Growth Fund.

COMMUNITY INNOVATION

Orchard Community Energy was established in 2015, by a group of local professionals who wanted to develop community-owned renewable energy in Swale and Medway. The Orchard Farm Solar Array went live in 2016 and generates around 5MW of electricity, enough to meet the annual electricity demand for around 1,250 homes. The site is 100% community owned, with bond holders receiving an annual payment of 5.5% on their investment. The project

is also expected to create a community fund of up to £3 million over 25 years, for distribution to community projects in the local area.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO SUPERFAST BROADBAND

Kent County Council continues to work with the government's broadband agency to improve access to superfast broadband services. To date, superfast broadband has been rolled out to over 138,000 homes and businesses who would otherwise have been left with no, or slow broadband. This means that by September 2018, 95.7% of properties across Kent and Medway will be able to access a broadband service of at least 24mbps.



OUR CHALLENGE: CREATING A LOW CARBON AND CLIMATE RESILIENT KENT

Severe weather, such as flooding and heatwaves, impact our infrastructure, homes, communities, businesses and the delivery of public services. Kent's Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System (SWIMS) has recorded 53 events over the last 6 years, with total costs of over £18.6m.

Kent and Medway have one of the highest risks of flooding in England, with risks from coastal, river, surface water and groundwater flooding. Approximately 60,000 homes are at risk of river and tidal flooding and 22,000 homes are at risk of surface water flooding.

At the other end of the scale, Kent is one of the driest regions in England and our water resources are under continued pressure. 73% of

our public water supply is taken from groundwater with the remainder from rivers. Despite this, average household water use in parts of Kent is 154 litres per day, which is above the national average of 141 litres.

We know that greenhouse gases are the dominant cause of observed climate change since the mid-20th century, which is why the Kent Environment Strategy commits to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2030. Kent has already achieved a 36% reduction since 2005, but we will need to continue to promote and integrate low carbon technology into our homes and businesses if we are to meet our target and benefit from the economic opportunities in this sector.

THE IMPACT WE ARE HAVING

- ↓ **36%** reduction in Kent's total carbon dioxide emissions since 2005
- ↓ **2%** fall in average household energy consumption since 2015
- ↓ **18%** reduction in water abstracted from groundwater and rivers since 2005
- ↓ **9.6%** reduction in household waste tonnage per household since 2012/13
- ↓ **8%** reduction in energy consumption by Kent's district and borough councils since 2012/13

HIGHLIGHTS

SUPPORTING LOW CARBON BUSINESS

Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) is an £18.8 million EU funded partnership programme that provides support and grants to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in South East England for low carbon initiatives. Since its launch in 2015, it has awarded 804 grants to businesses, with a total value of £6.1 million. This has saved 7,715 tonnes of carbon and increased average turnover by £2,000 per SME.

SOAKING UP SOLAR POWER

Northfleet School for Girls have installed one of the country's largest solar panel arrays to be installed at a school. The panels provide enough power for 30% of the school's energy use; saving around £17,000 a year on the school's energy bill and reducing carbon emissions by 100 tonnes a year. The panels are also being used as an education tool for pupils studying science, technology, business and maths.



“We’ve been through 3 recessions and this time round we are finding it much more of a struggle to find the heating money. The insulation will make a big difference to our spending”

PREPARE, ACT, SURVIVE

The **Environment Agency** and partners continue to raise awareness of flood risk to communities in Kent, through face to face events, school visits, social media campaigns and flood warden training. This year there has been an increase of over 8,000 Flood Warning registrations in Kent and there are 150 volunteer flood wardens. Through the Environment Agency's capital investment programme, flood protection has been improved to 6,070 homes and 699 homes have benefited from improved coastal erosion protection.

MAKING KENT HOMES WARMER

Kent and Medway partners are working together to help residents save energy and feel warmer in their homes. Since the Warm Homes Scheme began in 2014, over 2,400 energy efficiency measures have been installed in over 2,300 homes. In total, the measures are expected to save an estimated 39,000 tonnes of carbon and save residents £8.8 million over the course of the measure's life.

UTILISING KENT'S WASTE RESOURCE

The **Kent Resource Partnership** continue to ensure that our household waste is managed as an important resource. In 2017/18 the 13 Kent councils handled over 708,00 tonnes of household waste; 46.7% was recycled or composted, and 52.2% was used to generate energy; only 1.1% was sent to landfill. The Kent Resource Partnership has also been working hard to drive down litter, with over 2,500 bags of litter collected through initiatives with community groups, parish and town councils and Highways England.

DRIVING DOWN EMISSIONS

Councils across Kent have been supporting the use of ultra-low emission vehicles. After a successful trial, **Kent County Council** now has 30 electric-hybrid pool and fleet vehicles; saving up to 12p per mile and a 35% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to an average car. **Thanet District Council** added three electric vehicles to its fleet and **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council** is supporting a car club which includes electric vehicles.