

These notes are an overview of some of the projects and initiatives in each district around the priority themes of the [Kent Environment Strategy](#). Although not a comprehensive reflection of all activity in the area, the note aims to provide an overall picture of the priorities and pressures for delivery of the strategy as well as current and future project development. For background information please also see [Climate Change: A Guide for Kent's Decision Makers](#).

Living within Our Environmental Limits

Energy Efficiency and Housing in Maidstone

Homes in Maidstone: 59,700

Tenure: 79% owner occupied, 6% private rented, 15% social rented.

The percentage of homes in Maidstone with inadequate loft and cavity wall insulation is around the Kent average. There are believed to be around 11,000 solid wall properties, which are much harder to treat due to the increased cost and invasiveness of the work required, as well as 32,500 homes with significantly inadequate loft insulation and 21,500 homes with empty cavities. There are also 9,000 flats and 3,500 privately rented homes that are traditionally more difficult to make energy efficient.

Fully insulating all the homes in Maidstone could cost in the region of £71m-£167m, but could save residents approximately £9m per year on their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by 37,000t per year.

For more information please visit www.kent.gov.uk/homeenergy.



Maidstone Borough Council have endorsed the work carried out by Heatseekers to identify homes which have poor thermal performance using their thermal imaging system. They currently offer cavity wall insulation for £99. The borough are also working with Climate Energy to identify opportunities for all residents of the borough irrespective of income to access free and low cost home insulation measures. Additionally the council will continue to offer financial assistance to those residents on low income, through the Coldbuster programme for new and replacement heating systems.

The Green Deal launches nationally from October 2012 and the government hopes it will enable many households and businesses to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. In addition, the new energy company obligation (ECO) will focus on those householders who cannot achieve significant energy savings without an additional or different measure of support. **The Kent and Medway Green Deal Partnership** has been formed to communicate the Green Deal and ECO to residents, to support SMEs to take advantage of any new business opportunities arising from the Green Deal and to build the evidence base across Kent. This will enable a successful partnership with a Green Deal provider that draws in as much ECO for Kent as possible.

Schools Activity

Eco-Schools is an international award programme that helps schools to embed environmental principles and save money on utility bills. Schools work towards gaining one of three internationally recognised awards – Bronze, Silver and the Green Flag award, which symbolises excellence in the field of environmental activity.

Achievement is through following a simple seven-step process incorporating a variety of environmental themes, ranging from litter and waste to healthy living and biodiversity.

In Maidstone 20 schools have received bronze awards, eight silver and four have obtained the highest Green Flag award. One school is a Green Flag Ambassador. Currently 12 other schools are registered in the District with 17 unregistered.

Loose Infant School has installed Solaveil solar film to reducing cooling costs, Oakwood Park Grammar School has implemented lighting controls and LED lighting, and Valley Park School has installed a biomass boiler.

For further information on projects in your area please visit

http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/environment_and_climate_change/environment_policy_and_targets/renewable_energy_projects.aspx.



Local Government Estate Activity

Maidstone Borough Council's Carbon Management Plan is on target to achieve a 20% reduction in emissions from their estate and operations by 2014/2015, from a 2008/2009 baseline. This is through a range of projects including the biomass boiler and solar film at Maidstone House, groundsource heat pump at the museum, an upgraded heating system at the Hazlitt theatre and a new waste contract.

A number of improvements to KCC buildings in the Maidstone borough have been carried out; Cantium House improved its draft proofing; Invicta House and Sessions House have both installed new lighting controls; Invicta House has had an air conditioning upgrade; Sessions House has also improved its boiler performance and replaced its ICT server; the EIS building at Oxford Road has implemented evaporative cooling in its data centre; and Oakwood House has new solar thermal heating and a ground source heat pump.

Meeting the Climate Change Challenge

Supporting Businesses

Kent County Council's South East Business Carbon Hub provides a comprehensive range of free environmental services for businesses. There are currently over 950 businesses registered on the Hub, 110 of which are based in Maidstone. The team has been supporting businesses in measuring their

carbon footprints, implementing environmental management systems, providing sustainable transport advice, eco-driving lessons and running frequent workshops and online webinars.








At the beginning of 2011 the Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) scheme was launched. STEM is a free step-by-step approach for businesses seeking to put into practice a robust system to reduce their environmental impacts and receive certification. So far, over 360 businesses have achieved the first level of STEM including RAP Interiors and Turfsoil Ltd in Maidstone.

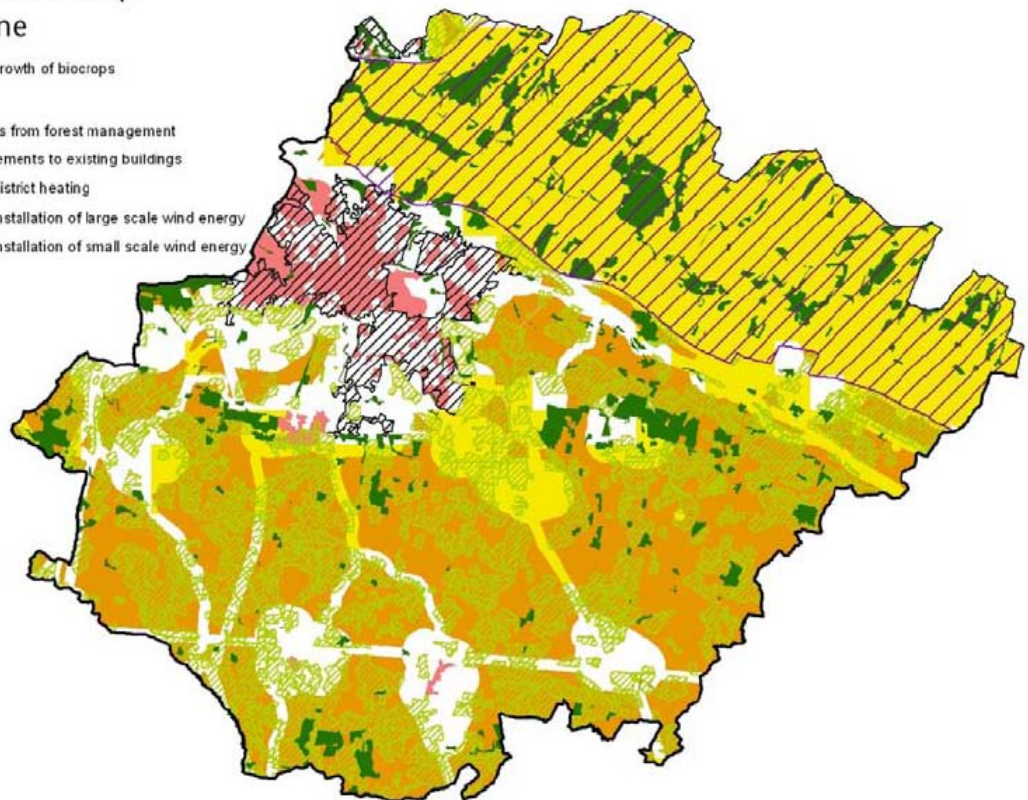
The South East Business Carbon Hub and STEM are part funded by the South East ERDF Competitiveness Programme 2007-13 and Kent County Council

Renewable Energy Opportunities

Consultants AECOM were commissioned by the County Council to undertake a renewable energy resource and opportunities study for Kent. This study builds on work done at a regional level and seeks to test and confirm the availability of renewable resources in the county. It further considers the likelihood of these resources being developed, the role of different partners in their delivery and the wider benefits which can accrue from their deployment. The study is accompanied by a proposed action plan which can assist the development of a low carbon and renewable energy strategy for Kent. This will be further developed over the coming months.

Energy Opportunities Map
Maidstone

-  High Potential areas for growth of biocrops
-  AONB
-  High Potential for biomass from forest management
-  High Potential for improvements to existing buildings
-  High Potential areas for district heating
-  High Potential areas for installation of large scale wind energy
-  High Potential areas for installation of small scale wind energy



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The map above shows energy opportunities for Maidstone and can help to identify where there may be potential for the development of renewable energy projects. It is important to note that this is purely based on the potential resource identified by AECOM and does not in any way reflect the council's position on the deployment of technologies.

Future developments

MBC is developing a Core Strategy which proposes new standards for new residential and commercial developments. Following further rounds of public consultation and examination, the Core Strategy is programmed for adoption in December 2013.

Travel and Transport

There are a wide range of initiatives currently underway in the borough, funded through a variety of schemes.

Integrated Transport

MBC's developing Integrated Transport Strategy will be followed by Parking Standards that will apply to all new developments.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund

Kent has secured £2.3 million over four years from 2011/12 to fund projects that cut carbon emissions from transport and create economic growth.

Maidstone will benefit directly from:

- £40K of grant funding to Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust for improved cycle storage.
- £45K of funding to provide a shared path or 1900m connecting the town with housing estates and Maidstone Hospital.
- Station Travel Plan initiatives.
- Support for the Medway Valley Line Community Rail Partnership.
- Ongoing development of Smartcard ticketing technology.

Public transport investment

- Doubling of frequency to two buses per hour on Arriva Route 72 linking Maidstone to Kings Hill.
- Addition of two buses per hour on new X72 route via the M20.

Green Bus Fund

A successful bid will see the delivery of 11 Low Carbon Electric Vehicles on the A20 Kings Hill-Maidstone corridor in March 2013. KCC will also publish a statutory Quality Partnership Scheme, which will set minimum standards for buses operating along the corridor. The scheme, which will be branded and marketed, aims to improve air quality and increase the use of public transport on the corridor.

Schools engagement

- Support for a range of walk to school initiatives including Walking Buses, Walk on Wednesday (WoW) and Active Bug.
- Roll out of Kent Rider and National Standard Cycle training with grant funding from Department for Transport.
- Support for school travel plans.
- Targeted road safety and sustainability awareness packages e.g. Small Steps and Zig Zag parking.

Workplace engagement

- Development of New Ways 2 Work, a collaborative partnership with Kent Business, to support work place travel plans and sustainable travel choices.

Monitoring the impacts of severe weather in Kent

Maidstone Borough Council are partners in the Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System (SWIMS), an innovative online tool developed by Kent partners to measure how we are impacted by, and responding to, severe weather events. It provides a decision-support tool, informing risk management and business continuity as well as long term planning. Further details are available at www.kent.gov.uk/SWIMS.



Photograph c/o Duncan Dwinell

The system is a key activity within the Kent Adaptation Action Plan, developed and adopted across Kent partners. The plan won the Improvement and Efficiency South East award for Progress through Innovation for the Kent Climate Change Network. On-going monitoring of progress across Kent is available on our [webpages](#).

Valuing our Natural Environment

Understanding the Natural Economy

The Natural Environment White Paper, published by Defra at the end of June 2011, outlines the Government's vision for the natural environment over the next 50 years. Much like Theme 3 of the Kent Environment Strategy, the White Paper recognises that a healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. One initiative announced by the White Paper was the establishment of Local Nature Partnerships, which represent a more holistic view of the natural environment and recognise the wider social and economic benefits biodiversity brings.

The Kent Biodiversity Partnership has recently secured £27,000 of capacity building funding from Defra to develop a Local Nature Partnership, which will focus on engaging additional partners (for example from the business and health sectors) and establishing a vision and set of targets for the natural environment that also recognise the potential for social and economic benefits.

This partnership will act as a framework for KES theme 3 and the continuation of its aims and objectives past the timeframe of the strategy.

Countryside Access

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Management

The Countryside Access Service (CAS) will continue to manage and maintain the 787km of public rights of way in Maidstone, responding to the significant correspondence and prioritising according to public need. The popular PRoW network provides access to Kent's iconic countryside, boosting the rural economy through tourism and improving the health of residents.



Explore Kent

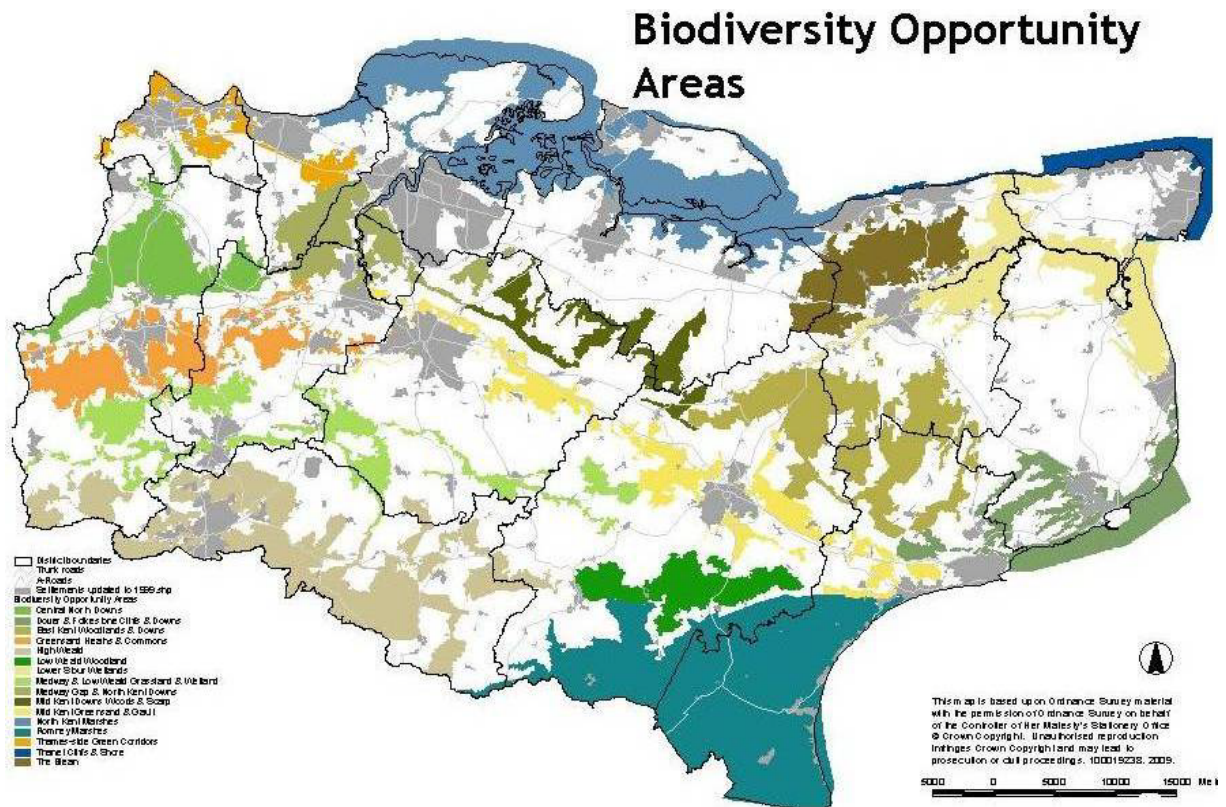
In 2012 Explore Kent will support and promote 400 guided walks/health walks in Maidstone. People can find and book a walk on the [Explore Kent](#) website making it easier for people to get out and walk more.

BOAs (Biodiversity Opportunity Areas)

BOAs reflect targets in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). They indicate where we want to focus our work to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits offering the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks or wildlife habitats. It is not intended or proposed that nature conservation becomes the primary land-use within the target areas, so long as the targets and objectives for each area can be met, and development of any kind is not precluded. In some cases though, some consideration will need to be given to ensuring development within a BOA does not significantly increase fragmentation of wildlife habitats within the target areas or work against any significant opportunities for habitat recreation or restoration.

Maidstone borough has four BOAs; Medway & Low Weald Grasslands & Wetlands, Greensand Heaths & Commons and Medway Gap & North Kent Downs, Mid Kent Greensand & Gault, and Mid Kent Downs Woods & Scarp.

The map below illustrates the cross-district locations and proximity of BOAs and consequently the need for joint working. For more information please visit <http://www.kentbap.org.uk/kent-boas/>



Across the four sites we see features of local importance, including:

- Rivers, tributaries and a series of small springs
- Floodplains, fen, lakes, ponds and wetlands, rich meadows and floodplain grassland
- Chalk and clay woodlands. Blocks of wood pasture and wet woodland
- Nationally important acid grassland and heathland sites
- Chalk grassland
- Small areas of mature ancient woodland

Within these sites we find several key species including:

Depressed river mussel, river lamprey, white-clawed crayfish, Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* and great crested newt. Wintering bittern, hawfinch and Bechstein's bat. Shrill carder bee *Bombus sylvarum*, keeled skimmer dragonfly, brown hares, otter and water vole.

BOA Statement documents provide guidance on conservation policies appropriate for each individual BOA as well as biodiversity targets. These biodiversity targets incorporate, where appropriate, targets in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The Maidstone Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) contributes toward the Kent BAP in a local context.

To maintain and improve areas in Maidstone, relevant BOA targets include:

- Recreate and restore acid grassland, chalk grassland, neutral grassland and heath.
- Enhance or reinstate woodland management – including wood pasture management where appropriate – and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland.
- Pursue opportunities to restore or recreate wetland habitats, especially where this will provide opportunities for flood risk management, recreation and extension of buffer zones for Local Wildlife Sites.
- Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites.
- Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats to avoid further fragmentation.
- Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing lowland meadows.
- Continue to encourage the positive management, restoration and re-creation of hedgerows
- Improve the management of invasive species in and alongside water courses.
- Maintain, restore, recreate and buffer ponds, particularly to establish networks of sites to support great crested newt.

It is important that BOA maps and statements are read alongside relevant Habitat Action Plans in the Kent BAP and Maidstone LBAP.

MBC Turning Waste into New Resources

In January 2011 weekly food waste collections were introduced to over 55,000 households within Maidstone borough. Residents were provided with a kitchen caddy and food waste bin to help them separate their cooked and uncooked food waste from their general rubbish. In the past 18 months the initiative has proved to be an overwhelming success, with over 80% of residents using the service and over 100 tonnes of food waste sent for local composting every week. The implementation of the service received national recognition, as the initiative won a LARAC Celebration Award 2011. The service continues to increase recycling within the borough with over 45% of Maidstone's rubbish now recycled.



Heritage and Protection of Assets at Risk

A pilot Heritage Crime Risk Assessment has been carried out for the Medway Gap Valley of Visions project area. This will be incorporated into the Strategic Crime Assessment for the area. Funding will be sought to develop a Heritage Warden programme to monitor the condition of heritage assets and record damage or loss. Funding will be sought to carry out further Heritage Crime Risk Assessments for other districts in Kent.

Work is being undertaken in conjunction with Natural England, English Heritage and landowners to increase the number of designated assets in Higher Level Stewardship. The Kent farmsteads survey identifies historic buildings across the county. SHINE funding allows the creation of polygons to identify

designated assets and this information will be used by Natural England in their Higher Level Stewardship application assessment, and for identifying potential sites.

Kent Climate Change Network

The Kent Climate Change Network meet quarterly to share best practice and learning, develop initiatives and provide input into county-wide programmes. Successful joint initiatives include collaboration on the Kent Housing Retrofit programme, the Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System and development of the Kent Environment Strategy. The Network also won an award for *Progress through Innovation* in 2011 from Improvement and Efficiency South East for their work on the Kent Adaptation Action Plan.

The Climate Change Network representative for Maidstone Borough Council is **John Newington** (JohnNewington@maidstone.gov.uk)

Elected Member Support

All of the projects and activities highlighted in this note require leadership, support and promotion within districts and communities across Kent.

Influencing and Communicating

Some of the issues raised here, such as the housing stock in Maidstone, energy efficiency and the deployment of renewable energy require our residents to be aware of the projects, grants and initiatives available to them. Although there are wide ranging communications in place, it is the local knowledge, support and influence of Members which can significantly improve uptake.

As highlighted in this note, businesses in Kent are signing up to the South East Business Carbon Hub to reduce their energy bills and 110 of these are in Maidstone. Local knowledge and promotion can support uptake for this free resource, benefitting business in the area.

Where there are planning decisions to be made, Member influence is needed to improve resource efficiency, transport networks, the development of BOAs and the deployment of renewable energy as appropriate.

Further information on specific projects can be found in [Climate Change: A Guide for Kent's Decision Makers](#) along with a checklist of key factors to consider in the decision-making process.
