

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	11 July 2024
Title:	Climate and Nature Strategy and Action Plan 2024
Report of:	Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Planning and Regeneration
Cabinet member:	Councillor Emily O'Brien, Cabinet member for Climate, Nature and Food Systems
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of report:	To provide the new Climate and Nature Strategy and Action Plan for publication
Decision type:	Key
Officer recommendation(s):	<p>Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <p>(1) approve the Climate and Nature Strategy 2024 and Action Plan for final design and publication on the council's website.</p> <p>(2) Note the achievements to date.</p>
Reasons for recommendations:	To progress the aims of the council's Climate Emergency Declaration (2019) to make the council net zero carbon by 2030 and to assist the same aim to be achieved within the wider district.
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Almost 5 years on from our Declarations of the Climate and Ecological Emergencies, Lewes District Council is leading on Local Government climate action. Action on climate change and nature issues is of central importance to the council as demonstrated by the adoption of the new corporate plan 2024-2028 with a central theme of climate, nature and food systems. The cross-

cutting nature of this work provides a challenge for the council; ensuring that sustainability remains central across all services.

Our core vision from our first Climate Change & Sustainability strategy 2021, for supporting and enabling climate action work across the district remains unchanged. Much has changed around us however, and many of our previous actions and aspirations have been achieved, so we have chosen to refresh and update our climate change strategy and action plan as we rapidly approach the midpoint of our pledge to become net zero carbon by 2030.

In November 2023, as part of the annual update to the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy, it was proposed that a review and refresh of the strategy should be completed with the following objectives:

- Ensure the strategy is live and dynamic.
- Incorporate updates to national, regional and local policy framework.
- Update organisation and government department names.
- Update and reflect the ongoing input and partnership working with the community in helping to deliver the council's net zeros goals.

1.2 Appendix 1, The Climate and Nature Strategy 2024 and Appendix 2, the Action Plan has been brought forward for approval by Cabinet and is the result of the proposed review.

1.3 The strategy has undergone a thorough refresh involving Portfolio Holders, external stakeholders and partners, officers and the Climate Emergency Scrutiny Panel. A summary of the process and outcomes is included in section 3.

2 Achievements to date

2.1 As reported to Cabinet in November 2023, total emissions from the council's scope 1 & 2 emission sources have reduced by 16.8% on our 2018/19 baseline. The district's emissions have reduced by 15% between 2018 and 2020.

This is positive progress, though we acknowledge we have much more to do, and a summary of the projects and milestones achieved are summarised below:

2.2 Energy & the built environment:

- Completed innovative research into how to decarbonise our social homes
- Using our Roadmap approach, awarded £4.1m to retrofit insulation to 267 council homes which could reduce residents' energy use by up to 20%.
- Supported installation of 249 solar installations during 2023 through the 'Solar Together' scheme saving nearly 237 tonnes CO₂ per year. This built on the earlier scheme in 21/22 when 161 installations were completed.
- Housing tenants have had increased access to information on carbon reducing behaviours.

2.3 Sustainable travel and air quality:

- Installation of 86 publicly accessible electric vehicle charge points.

- Enabled two car club cars to convert from petrol to electric saving 5.5 tonnes CO₂e per year
- Enabled cycle training and bike loans for children through Ouse Valley Climate Action
- The Council obtained the grants for e-cargo bikes and worked closely with OVESCO to set up the Get Bikery initiative – that enables zero carbon last mile deliveries .<https://getbikery.org/>

2.4 **Reducing emissions from waste:**

- Introduction of 6 electric food waste vehicles.
- Delivered 53 community waste and recycling workshops.
- 1000 Cheeky wipes vouchers issued for reusable nappies, wipes and sanitary products.
- Replaced diesel fuel with HVO- Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil- saving up to 90% CO₂
- Provided regular communications on reduce, reuse, recycle behaviour change.

2.5 **Biodiversity:**

- Increase in biodiversity through 6.8-hectare Cockshut chalk stream restoration project.
- Enabled nature recovery of chalk downland through the Changing Chalk project.
- Implemented beneficial pollinator and biodiversity practices on council land.
- Supported community climate action through Ouse Valley Climate Action and Climate Hubs.

2.6 **Food and Agriculture:**

- Developed a community growing guide and policy for community growing on Housing managed land. Enabled three community growing spaces on council land.
- Supported the strategic development of Lewes District Food Partnership,
- Contributed to Sustainable Food Places Bronze award for the district.

2.7 **Circular economy & community wealth:**

- The Council has increased its share of spend on local suppliers which can help to shorten supply chains and reduce CO₂ emissions. The council has almost doubled its local spend from £5.3 million to nearly £10 million over the last financial year.
- Developed a Sustainable Procurement Policy to improve the environmental sustainability of the council's spending on goods and services.
- Developed our working relationship with local businesses focussed on sustainability such as Boutique Modern, delivering local housing using modular construction with lower CO₂ emissions than traditional building methods.
- Encouraged social entrepreneurialism through our Lewes District Start-up Program with 155 one to one mentoring sessions and 14 group workshops to support local people setting up small businesses.

- 2.8 **Water:**
- Enabled natural flood prevention measures through Sussex Flow Initiative, and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
 - 4 council motions on water quality and holding Southern Water to account, who have now agreed to spend nearly £10 million on areas we highlighted
 - Declared (via council motion) an urgent need for Ocean Recovery through The Motion for the Ocean.

3 **Summary of engagement process**

- 3.1 Firstly, engagement began in December 2023 with a portfolio holders' consultation to review their action areas to ensure sustainability is embedded within each portfolio. Following this 14-page document summarising key aspects of the 2021 strategy with refreshed goals and vision statement, was prepared and used as an engagement tool for the council's project partners and organisations. A questionnaire was linked to the document which was shared with 52 groups and organisations and 24 town and parish councils. The survey was available online and via paper copy. Organisations coordinating or linking groups e.g., OVCA, climate hubs, food partnerships were contacted separately to discuss the refresh and engagement process. Wildflower and tree planting groups were invited to engage with the consultation at a council event held at Marine Workshops. The partner engagement consultation was live for two and a half weeks in February.
- Responses were received from 28 partner organisations and 8 individuals. The report of the consultation is available as Appendix 3. Comments, suggestions and recommendations from partner groups have informed the strategy refresh.
- 3.2 The summary document was then taken to a meeting of the Climate Emergency Scrutiny Panel in March and members of this group contributed across the main sections of the vision, the youth voice, policy framework and the 7 action areas. The comments received were then reviewed and a thorough re-draft of the strategy was completed during April
- 3.3 During May the re-draft was again consulted upon by Cabinet and the Scrutiny Panel and comments taken back to officers for further consideration.
- Officers have been consulted and provided input, content and data to ensure a robust action plan is produced that reflects the scope and breadth of zero carbon activities both direct and enabling, across the organisation and the district.
- 3.4 The strategy and action plan were then finalised during June.
- 3.5 Due to time constraints, it has not been possible to update the carbon reduction pathway or carbon emissions data for 2023/24. This will be completed over the summer and reported in November.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Once agreed the strategy and action plan will undergo final design and prepared for publication on the council's website.
- 4.2 Carbon emissions data will be compiled, and case studies collected for reporting on the 2023/24 period in November.
An event for partners and young people will also be arranged to feed into the report.

5 Legal implications

- 5.1 The overarching legislation for the Council's climate work is the Climate Change Act 2008 which commits the UK government to reduce emissions to Net Zero by 2050. This legislation was informed by the Paris Agreement which seeks to keep global temperature rises to well below 1.5° C. National work and progress on the Act is regularly reviewed and challenged by the Climate Change Committee.

Some actions the Council takes to tackle the climate and nature emergencies are mandatory and required by law, for example changes to waste collections enacted through The Environment Act 2021, and enforcing energy standards through Building Regulations, whilst other documents such as the Clean Growth Strategy, The Energy White Paper and Gear Change, set a national strategic direction or provide guidance and recommendations.

Approving the Council's climate and nature strategy and associated action plan is an executive function. Cabinet is therefore the appropriate body to grant approval.

Date of legal advice: 12.06.24
13012-LDC-OD

Legal ref:

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications concerning this report.

7 Equality analysis

- 7.1 An Equality analysis has been undertaken on these proposals. This has concluded that;

Improved responses to the impacts of climate change and reducing carbon emissions will generate co-benefits such as improved air quality, and this would generally be positive for all residents in the borough. It was noted also that children will be the owners of our legacy of carbon emissions, and that we have a duty to do what we can to reduce these as soon as possible.

Potentially, vulnerable residents may be more susceptible to the impacts of climate change. For groups such as the elderly, low-income households and those with certain underlying health conditions, tackling climate change is particularly positive. The strategy itself includes actions which will assist different

need, including those least able to pay for home improvements to reduce their energy bills, enabling them to cope better with unpredictability of energy prices.

Further analysis is done on a project by project basis.

8 Environmental sustainability implications

- 8.1 The strategy is key to delivering the net zero carbon goal of the council by 2030. It will seek to ensure that carbon implications are taken into account throughout the council and in all decisions. The Council's contribution to district emissions is approximately 0.3%.

Implementation of actions to achieve carbon neutrality is key to mitigate the predicted negative impacts of climate change on the environment, economy and communities.

9 Contribution to Community Wealth Building

- 9.1 Community Wealth Building Strategy and Action Plan is a fundamental enabling strand of the Climate and Nature Strategy 2024. Buying more locally, employing local staff, and encouraging local investment in our projects helps increase, and keep, wealth and jobs within our community whilst reducing carbon emissions.

10 Appendices

- Appendix 1 –Climate and Nature Strategy 2024 and
- Appendix 2- Climate & Nature Strategy Action Plan
- Appendix 3 – Partner Engagement Survey Report

11 Background papers

The background papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

- Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021 [Lewes District Council Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2021 \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)
- Climate Change and Sustainability Update November 2023 [Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk)