KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STRATEGY REVIEW

Priorities for nature and the wider environment from plans and strategies

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To note: The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, Environmental goals, have been used to categorize the district's environmental targets in this review.

SECTION 1: THREATS AND PRESSURES ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Development and Population Pressures

The county of Kent is expected to accommodate significant housing and economic growth over the 20 year period to 2031. 158,300 additional dwellings are expected with an associated population increase of 293,500 people (an increase of 17%). Our increasing population, housing development, transport links, industry and agriculture all require space and resources, putting pressure on the county's landscapes and changing how we use the land. This also has an impact on the quality of our soils and their ability to sustain life, reduce carbon emissions and support resilience to climate change and its impacts such as flooding. The way land is used in communities and development also has a significant impact on population health and wellbeing, affecting mortality and morbidity risk and leading to direct implications for health and social care services. (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

Kent is a densely populated part of the country, which is a pressure on our sensitive wildlife sites that are vulnerable to disturbance; and not all areas of high biodiversity value and importance are suitable for public access for this very reason. But the close proximity of these sites to the population is also an opportunity for people to experience nature, learn to love it and protect it, and to improve their own wellbeing. The challenge is to mitigate the risks and unlock the opportunities in a way which allows people to access nature in a low impact manner but which still provides a wildlife enhanced experience. Although there have been real gains for wildlife in some areas, there is still a gradual loss of habitats and species in the county, for example of the Local Wildlife Sites monitored over the past five years, 30% have been damaged and 2% lost. This represents a significant threat to the intrinsic value of Kent's natural environment and to the economic and social benefit that it provides. (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

Changes in our land use, including insensitive urban development and intensive farming, have resulted in habitat loss and fragmentation, the most significant cause of pollinator decline. (Pollinator Strategy, 2022)

1.2 Infrastructure Pressures

The county of Kent is currently facing increased congestion on both road and rail, impacting Kent's economy, health and environment. Major routes such as the M20 and A2/M2 form important local and strategic links for residents, businesses that when congested result in delay on the wider local network, with significant impacts on our economy. (Environment Strategy, 2016)

In addition, these major routes are used for inbound/outbound continental freight. The county is not able to influence or reduce these freight volumes but suffers considerable environmental damage from them. (KKC)

With increasing congestion in the major town centres such as Ashford, Canterbury and Maidstone, growth across the county will be constrained without investment in increasing capacity. Air traffic noise pollution, and associated risks for air quality, is a key concern for large areas of West Kent, particularly in relation to Gatwick Airport, resulting in this being a major issue for many of our residents. A shift to active travel, such as walking and cycling, and an increase in use of public transport can help alleviate congestion pressures, improve air quality and extend the capacity of our transport infrastructure over a longer timeframe. An evidence-based approach to decision making and how we influence strategy and policy will support the right decisions being made for the county for major transport infrastructure. (Environment Strategy, 2016)

The proposals we have set out would increase the ease of using electric vehicles and also making it easier to choose to use alternatives like trains and buses that would lead to reductions in emissions. If those improvements can be delivered soon, then the impact could be greater and make transport's contribution to staying within the national carbon budget easier. (Local Transport Plan 5, 2024)

Whilst the proportion of electric vehicles is increasing, there are limitations when looking to replace larger specialized vehicles for electric vehicles in terms of costs and availability. For example, refuse trucks, highways maintenance vehicles, freight vehicles. Increasing electric vehicle numbers is dependent on increasing the amount of EV infrastructure which whilst there is some funding available is not a straightforward procedure. Replacing combustion engines with EV whilst reducing noise and emissions, does not improve congestion and costs of road maintenance or improve the safety of more vulnerable road users. (KCC)

1.2 Flood Risk (Flood Risk Management Strategy, 2017)

There are approximately 64,000 properties estimated to be at risk of flooding from coastal and fluvial flooding in Kent. The coastal areas of Kent are at significant risk of flooding, in particular the Romney Marshes, Dartford and Gravesend are at high risk of coastal and tidal flooding. Flood defences are in place in many of these areas to reduce the risk. The floodplains of the Rivers Medway, Beult, Stour and Darent present a significant risk of fluvial flooding in Kent, there are some flood defences for these areas. There are also approximately 24,000 properties estimated to be at risk of flooding from surface runoff. This is one of the highest risks of any Lead Local Flood Authority in England. All areas are at some risk of surface water flooding, but the risk is generally concentrated in urban areas. Ordinary watercourses are a significant source of flood risk in Kent, unfortunately there is no national estimate of the risk from this source. Ordinary watercourses can vary in size from small ditches or field drains to large streams or small rivers. There are many areas with a large number of ordinary watercourses in a concentrated area in Kent, for instance the Low Weald, North Kent Marshes or Romney Marshes, where they perform a vital role in land drainage and flood risk management in flat impermeable areas. There are also towns and villages in Kent with steeper topography, where ordinary watercourses present a significant flood risk. Groundwater presents a significant

source of flooding in parts of Kent as there are large areas of permeable aquifers, particularly the chalk aquifers of the North Downs. Groundwater flooding occurs in a number of areas across the North Downs, most notably along the Nailbourne Valley.

Flood risks for all districts

1.3 Water Stress

Kent is one of the driest regions in England and Wales and our water resources are under continued pressure requiring careful management and planning. In Kent 73% of our public water supply is taken from groundwater with the remainder from rivers or storage reservoirs. In Kent we are already using most of the capacity in the county and in some places already exceeding it. This water stress will be exacerbated by a growing population and climate change. In addition, the quality of our water affects our health, our economy and our natural environment but is under increasing pressure from pollution, reduced river flows and physical modifications to water bodies. Despite these pressures, Kent's household water use is above the national average (154 litres per person per day compared with 141 litres nationally). (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

1.4 Climate Change

Severe weather

Severe weather, heat and flooding: Severe weather events impact infrastructure, homes, communities and the delivery of services, to the detriment of Kent partners, residents and businesses across rural and urban areas. The winter flooding of 2013-14 resulted in direct costs to partners of over £4m with further investment, such as repairs to Highways, increasing this to over £11m. Kent has the highest risk of local flooding of all local authorities in England and surface water flooding is estimated to affect 76,000 properties in Kent, of which approximately 60,000 are residential. Kent is also currently estimated to have approximately 64,000 properties at risk of river and coastal flooding, of which approximately 46,000 are residential. (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

Our health is also impacted by severe weather. For example daily mortality in South East England increases at temperatures above 27°C and heat-related mortality is projected to increase steeply in the UK in the 21st century. This increase is estimated to be approximately 70% in the 2020s and 260% in the 2050s compared with a baseline of around 2,000 premature deaths in the 2000s. (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

Illustrating the possible effects of temperature changes across sectors; using the latest UK Climate Projections by 2050 Kent and Medway are likely to see winter temperatures to be warmer by 2.0 degrees, summers by 2.8 degrees; winter rainfall is likely to increase by 14% and summer rainfall likely to decrease by 24%. (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

(Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

Pollinator Strategy, 2022:

Disrupting pollinator patters: By disrupting seasonal patterns and flowering periods of plants, climate change is impacting pollinators. It affects the timing of flowering plants that they rely on for food and disrupts nesting behaviours and emergence after winter. It is also thought that a warming climate could restrict or alter the range of pollinators.

Evidence suggests that some honeybee diseases can spread to our wild bumblebees. A further threat is invasive species such as the Asian hornet, which if allowed to take hold could devastate our native bee populations. Pollinators have been in serious decline for many years and a loud and clear message is coming from scientists, wildlife organisations and the government that they need help and quickly otherwise all of us, plants, pollinators and people, face serious problems.

1.5 Pests and Diseases (Kent Plan Tree, 2022)

Kent's trees are not only at risk from land use change and development but also pests and diseases. Our landscape still features the scars of Dutch elm disease and is now impacted again by Ash dieback and other pests and diseases such as the Oriental chestnut gall wasp and sweet chestnut blight. The county is particularly vulnerable given its proximity to the continent, meaning Kent's tree population is often impacted by 'new' pests and diseases sooner than other parts of the country.

1.6 Land Management

The increased use of pesticides has adversely impacted pollinators and the plants on which they depend. Neonicotinoid pesticides are particularly harmful to bees, affecting their central nervous system, and consequently are now under a general ban across the European Union. Furthermore, some routinely used herbicides have also been shown to affect pollinators and their use, of course, reduces the availability of food plants throughout the year. (Pollinator Strategy, 2022)

Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022:

Over the last few decades, we have lost significant areas of many of our most precious habitats. We now need to restore those degraded habitats, replenish our depleted soils and arrest the decline of native species to deliver robust ecological networks that are sustainable, ecologically coherent and resilient to climate change. We will expand our use of natural processes and natural solutions to ensure more sustainable use and management of habitats, to provide biodiversity net gains, and to protect and grow our natural capital.

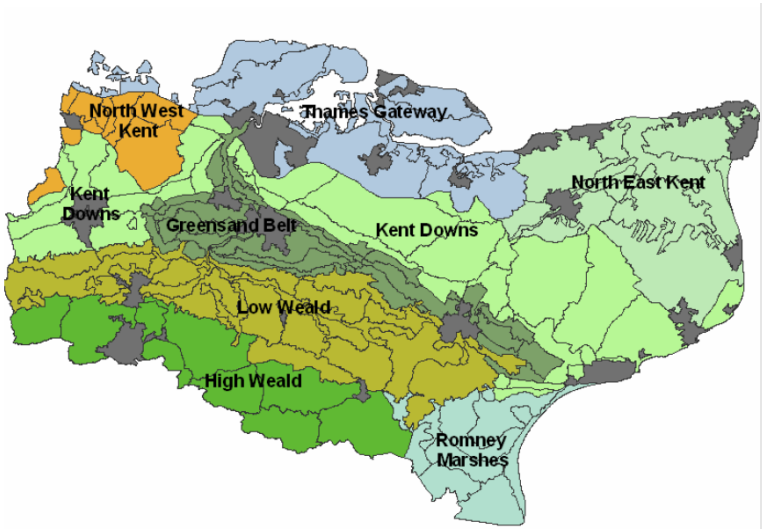
The freshwater and intertidal habitats of Kent and Medway represent a tiny proportion of their former extent, with many lost through factors such as agricultural intensification and drainage, and degraded through abstraction and pollution. They are also particularly sensitive to climate change impacts and recreational pressures and disturbance (this latter pressure is addressed under Connecting people with the natural environment). We need to secure the long-term sustainable management of these fragile ecosystems by rebuilding and developing ecological networks that are sustainable, ecologically coherent and resilient to climate change. To do this, we will need to ensure that we replace like for like habitat lost to coastal realignment and make innovative use of natural flood and drought management solutions. Only then can we also ensure that these habitats are able to support vital ecosystem services such as carbon storage, groundwater recharge and flood control

The seas around the coast of Kent and Medway contribute to the wider UK marine environment – home to ‘the widest range of marine habitats of any coastal waters in Europe’ 25– yet they have been badly neglected and depleted over the last few decades. Whilst plastics in the aquatic environment has recently received public attention, and subsequently government action, this is just one of many issues facing the marine waters off Kent’s coastline. These pressures include water quality, invasive non-native species, habitat destruction from fisheries and other offshore activities and land-based pressures such as pollution and disturbance. Our seas and coastal waters do not follow political or regional boundaries and so, to ensure that we have marine habitats which can support healthy, sustainable ecosystems, we need to complete our ecologically coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), as well as working more closely with local stakeholders to ease the impacts of human activity from source to sea.

SECTION 2: TARGETS AND PRIORITIES FOR NATURE RECOVERY (GOAL 1)

2.1 PROTECTING HABITATS

2.1.1 Character Areas



(Kent Landscape Assessment, 2004)

2.1.2 National Landscapes

Kent Downs National Landscape, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty stretching from the white cliffs of Dover to the Surrey and London border. With ancient bluebell woodlands, rugged chalk coastline, internationally rare chalk grassland, and ragstone villages there is beauty to explore all year round. (Kent Downs NL)

High Weald National Landscape is a medieval landscape of wooded, rolling hills studded with sandstone outcrops; small, irregular-shaped fields; scattered farmsteads; and ancient routeways. The 1461km2 area covers parts of Kent, Sussex and Surrey at the heart of South East England. (High Weald NL)

2.1.3 Sites of international, national and local designations (Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, 2024)

Minerals and waste developments can have adverse impacts on sites of international, national and local importance. Kent has a wide range of landscapes and habitats that play an important role in supporting a variety of flora and fauna.

Policy DM 2 -Environmental and Landscape Sites of International, National and Local Importance

Proposals for minerals and/or waste development will be required to ensure that there is no unacceptable adverse impact on the integrity, character, appearance and function, biodiversity and geodiversity interests, or geological interests of sites of international, national and local importance, such that these proposals accord with the avoid, mitigate, compensate hierarchy.

1. International Sites

Minerals and/or waste proposals located within or considered likely to have any unacceptable adverse impact on international designated sites, including Ramsar, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation ('National Site Network' as defined by the Changes to the Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and 'Habitat Sites' as defined by the NPPF114 E), will need to be evaluated in combination with other projects and plans and be in accordance with established management objectives for the national sites network ('network objectives'115). Before any such proposal will be granted planning permission or identified in the Minerals and Waste Sites Plan, it will need to be demonstrated that:
a. there are no alternatives;
b. there is a robust case established as to why there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and
c. there is sufficient provision for adequate timely compensation.
2. National Sites

Designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)116 have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Regard must be had to the purpose of the designation when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land, in an AONB. For the purposes of this policy, such functions include the determination of planning applications and the allocation of sites in a development plan.

Planning permission for major minerals and waste development in a designated AONB will be refused except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that it is in the public interest. In relation to other minerals or waste proposals in an AONB, great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing its landscape and scenic beauty. Proposals outside, but within the setting of an AONB should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas. Will be considered having regard to the effect on the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.

Consideration of such applications will assess;

a. the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations and the impact of granting, or refusing, the proposal upon the local economy;

b. the cost of, and scope for developing elsewhere outside the designated area,or meeting the need in some other way; and

c. any detrimental impact on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which the impact could be moderated taking account of the relevant AONB Management Plan.

Sites put forward for allocation for minerals or waste development in updates to the Minerals Sites Plan or any the Waste Sites Plan will be considered having regard to the above tests. Those that the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority considers to be unlikely to meet the relevant test(s) will not be allocated.

Proposals for minerals and/or waste developments within or outside of designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserves, that are considered likely to have any unacceptable adverse impact on a Site of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserve, will not be granted planning permission or identified in updates to the Minerals Sites Plan and any Waste Sites Plans except in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for the development and any impacts can be mitigated or compensated for, and:

a. the benefits of the development outweigh any impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest; and

b. the benefits of the development outweigh any impacts that it is likely to have on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Minerals and/or waste proposals located within or considered likely to have any unacceptable adverse impact on irreplaceable habitat such as Ancient Woodland and ancient or veteran trees will not be granted planning permission or identified in updates to the Minerals Sites Plan and any Waste Sites Plans unless the need for, and the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh any loss, justified by wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy is in place.

<u>3. Local Sites</u>

Minerals and/or waste proposals within, or likely to have an unacceptable adverse impact on, the Local Sites listed below will not be granted planning permission, or identified in updates to the Minerals Sites Plan and any Waste Sites Plans, unless it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for the development and any impacts can be mitigated or compensated for, such that there is a net planning benefit:

a. Local Wildlife Sites;
b. Local Nature Reserves;
c. Priority Habitats and Species;
d. land that is of regional or local importance as a wildlife corridor or for theconservation and enhancement of geodiversity and biodiversity;
e. Local Geological Sites;
f. irreplaceable habitat including aged and veteran trees;

g. Country Parks, common land and village greens and other important areas of open space or green areas within built-up areas.
h. Marine Conservation Zones

Green Belt:

The western area of Kent is situated within the Green Belt around London fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Policy DM 4- Green Belt

Proposals for minerals and waste development within the Green Belt will be considered in light of their potential impacts, and shall comply with national policy and the NPPF.

2.1.4 Woodland and Tree Cover

A tree canopy assessment (July 2020) calculated the county had 64,751ha of tree cover, with an average tree canopy cover of 17% and an urban tree cover average also at 17% (above the England average of 16%). In terms of distribution across the county, west Kent districts have a far greater canopy cover (28-30%) than those in east Kent (4-9%). (Plan Tree Strategy, 2022)

Kent has 11% of England's ancient semi-natural woodland, with more ancient woodland than any other county in the UK; and in the south east, the county has 22.5% of the region's ancient woodland resource. Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland is the county's largest semi-natural habitat, covering 44,490ha and just over 11% of Kent. Our two National Landscapes are heavily wooded – the High Weald has the most wooded landscape in the country with 28% woodland cover; and the Kent Downs has 23% and the majority of this is irreplaceable ancient woodland (70%). (Plan Tree Strategy, 2022)

Our history of fruit production has also left us with traditional orchards found in two main areas, the North Kent Fruit Belt (between Rochester and Faversham) and the Mid Kent Fruit Belt (in the central areas of the High and Low Weald and the Greensand). Many of these have been lost in the past half century and traditional orchards now only account for 0.4% of Kent's habitats; but this seemingly small resource is nationally important, comprising around 10% of the traditional orchard area in England. (Plan Tree Strategy, 2022)

The average canopy cover of Kent and Medway is estimated at 17% (excluding hedgerows) and the canopy cover of the districts are as follows (Canopy Cover Report):

District	% Canopy Coverage
Ashford	16.0%
Canterbury	19.5%
Dartford	18.5%
Dover	9.0%
Folkestone and Hythe	8.0%
Gravesham	22.0%
Maidstone	16.0%
Medway	12.0%
Sevenoaks	30.0%
Swale	9.5%
Thanet	4.0%
Tonbridge and Malling	28.0%
Tunbridge Wells	29.0%
Average	**17.0%**

2.1.5 Countryside Partnerships and Country Parks

Countryside Partnerships (Countryside Partnerships):

North West Kent, Kent High Weald, Medway Valley, Kent Mid Downs, Medway Swale Estuary, Kentish Swale, Romney Marsh, White Cliffs, Thanet Coast

Our objectives are:

- Work in partnership to conserver and enhance Kent's landscape, countryside and coast through advice provision and direct countryside management
- Improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike through improved accessibility and the promotion and development of sustainable countryside recreation
- Provide opportunities for greater enjoyment, engagement and understanding of Kent's countryside, towns and coasts through volunteering, event and education programmes
- Deliver local, county and national objectives in the maintenance and enhancement of the countryside working

Country Parks (Country Parks):

Brockhill Country Park, Grove Ferry Picnic Site, Lullingstone Country Park, Manor Park Country Park, Pegwell Bay Country Park, Shorne Woods Country Park, Teston Bridge Country Park, Trosley Country Park, White Horse Wood Country Park

2.1.6 Natural Environment

PRIORITY 5: Conserve and enhance the quality and supply of the county of Kent's natural and historical resources and assets (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016):

5.1 Establish a coherent, landscape-led approach to decision making through identification of the natural and historic features that underpin landscape character and a strategic approach to assessment of character and trends in landscape condition

5.2 Improve and increase functional habitat networks on land and in the sea, identifying opportunities and protecting and enhancing our natural and historic environment and landscape character through planning and decision making

5.3 Identify and take forward opportunities for sustainable water management to improve quality and quantity of our water environment and resources

5.4 Establish land-use management approaches that create, preserve and enhance healthy, viable soils and respect landscape character

5.5 Develop heritage strategies to improve understanding and management of the historic environment

2.1.7 Blue Infrastructure

Policy DM 10- Water Environment (Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, 2024)

> *Planning permission will be granted for minerals or waste development where it does not:*
>
> - *result in the deterioration of physical state, water quality or ecological status of any water resource and waterbody, including aquifers, rivers, streams, lakes and ponds;*
> - *have an unacceptable impact on groundwater Source Protection Zones (as shown in Figure 15) or threaten the development of future groundwater abstraction and associated source protection zones in overlying principal principles or secondary aquifers; and*
> - *exacerbate flood risk in areas prone to flooding and elsewhere, both now and in the future. Measures to reduce flood risk where possible are encouraged.*
>
> *All minerals and waste proposals must include measures to ensure the achievement of both no deterioration and improved ecological status of all waterbodies within the site and/or hydrologically or hydrogeologically connected to the site. Hydrogeological and/or hydrological assessment(s) may be required to demonstrate the effects of the proposed development on the water environment and how these may be mitigated to an acceptable level.*

Coast:

The Kent and Medway Shoreline Pollution Emergency Plan (2023), outlines a policy framework for coastal shoreline pollution planning and response in Kent and Medway.

2.1.8 Protection from the negative impacts of development and infrastructure

(Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, 2024)

Spatial Vision for Minerals and Waste in Kent

Throughout the Plan period 2024-39, minerals and waste development will:

1. Make a positive and sustainable contribution to the Kent area and beyond and ensure minerals and waste development contributes to the progression towards a low carbon economy.

2. Supports the needs arising from growth in Kent.

3. Deliver sustainable solutions to the minerals and waste needs of Kent and beyond through collaborative working with communities, landowners, the minerals and waste industries, the environmental and voluntary sector and local planning authorities.

4. Embrace the naturally and historically rich and sensitive environment of the plan area, and ensure that it is conserved and enhanced for future generations to enjoy.

Planning for Minerals in Kent will:

5. Seek to deliver a sustainable, steady and adequate supply of landwon minerals including aggregates, silica sand, crushed rock, brickearth, chalk and clay, building stone and minerals for cement manufacture.

6. Facilitate the processing and use of secondary and recycled aggregates to become less reliant on land-won construction aggregates.

7. Safeguard economic mineral resources for future generations and all existing, planned and potential mineral transportation and processing infrastructure (including wharves and rail depots and production facilities).

8. Restore minerals sites to a high standard that will deliver sustainable benefits to Kent communities.

Planning for Waste in Kent will:

9. Facilitate the achievement of a more circular economy in all forms of development, ensuring the maximum reuse of materials and goods, minimising waste and ensuring its management is sustainable and takes place as high up the Waste Hierarchy as possible.

10. Extract the maximum amount of renewable energy incorporating both heat and power, from waste that cannot be re-used or recycled (i.e. unavoidable residual waste) and minimise the amount of non-hazardous waste sent to landfill.

11. Ensure waste is managed close to its source of production.

12. Allow for the development of a variety of waste management facilities to ensure that Kent remains at the forefront of waste management with solutions for all major waste streams, while retaining flexibility to adapt to changes in technology and legislation.

13. Ensure sufficient capacity exists to meet the future needs for waste management.

14. Restore waste management sites to a high standard that will deliver sustainable benefits to Kent's environment and its communities.

Strategic Objectives for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan

General:

1. Encourage the use of sustainable, low carbon modes of transport for moving minerals and waste long distances and minimise road miles.

2. Ensure minerals and waste developments contribute towards the minimisation of, and adaptation to, the effects of climate change. This includes helping to shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

3. Ensure minerals and waste sites are sensitive to both their surrounding environment38 and communities, and minimise their impact on them.

4. Enable minerals and waste developments to contribute to the social and economic fabric of their communities through employment, educational and recreational opportunities where possible.

4a. Ensure that waste is managed and minerals are supplied in a manner which is consistent with the achievement of a more circular economy.

Minerals:

5. Seek to ensure the delivery of adequate and steady supplies of sand and gravel, chalk, brickearth, clay, building sand, silica sand, crushed rock, building stone and minerals for cement during the plan period, through identifying sufficient sites and safeguarding mineral bearing land for future generations.

6. Promote and encourage the use of recycled and secondary aggregates in place of primary land and marine won minerals.

7. Safeguard existing, planned and potential sites for mineral infrastructure including wharves and rail depots across Kent to enable the on-going transportation of marine dredged aggregates, crushed rock and other minerals as well as other production facilities.

8. Enable the extraction of building stone minerals for heritage building products.

9. Restore minerals sites at the earliest opportunity to the highest possible standard to sustainable after-uses that benefit the Kent community economically, socially or

environmentally. Where possible, after-uses should conserve and improve local landscape character, and provide opportunities for improvements in biodiversity which meet and, where relevant, exceed targets outlined in the Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045, the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies to help maximise overall net-gain in biodiversity on restoration

Waste

11. Minimise the production of waste and increase its reuse. Promote the movement of waste up the Waste Hierarchy by enabling the waste management industry to provide facilities that increase recycling, treatment and reprocessing to improve the management of resources and deliver further reductions in the amount of Kent's waste being disposed of in landfill and through waste to energy.

12. Promote the management of waste close to the source of production in a sustainable manner using appropriate technology and, where applicable, innovative technology, such that net self sufficiency is maintained throughout the plan period.

13. If it cannot be reduced, reused, recycled or composted, use waste as a fuel for the generation of renewable energy, in the form of both heat and electricity through energy from waste including technologies such as gasification and anaerobic digestion.

14. Ensure sufficient capacity exists to maintain a county-wide network for the sustainable management of Kent's waste.

15. Restore waste management sites at the earliest opportunity to the highest possible standard to sustainable after-uses that benefit the Kent community economically, socially or environmentally. Where possible, after-uses should conserve and improve local landscape character and provide opportunities for biodiversity to meet and where relevant, exceed targets outlined in the Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045, the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, Greater Thames Nature Improvement Area, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans and Local Nature Recovery Strategies to maximise overall net-gain in biodiversity on restoration.

Policy DM 3- Ecological Impact Assessment

> *Proposals for minerals and waste developments will be required to ensure that they result in no unacceptable adverse impacts on Kent's important biodiversity assets. These include internationally, nationally and locally designated sites, European internationally and nationally protected species, and habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation, protection and enhancement of biodiversity, geodiversity and habitats and species identified in the Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045. Proposals that are likely to have unacceptable adverse impacts upon important geodiversity and biodiversity assets will need to demonstrate that an adequate level of ecological assessment has been undertaken and should*

provide a positive contribution to the protection, enhancement, creation and management of biodiversity. Such proposals will only be granted planning permission following:

1. an ecological assessment of the site, including preliminary ecological appraisal and, where likely presence is identified, specific protected species surveys;

2. consideration of the need for, and benefits of, the development and the reasons for locating the development in its proposed location;

3. the identification and securing of measures to mitigate any adverse impacts (direct, indirect and cumulative); and,

4. the identification and securing of compensatory measures where adverse impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated for.

All development shall achieve a net gain in biodiversity value in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. All major development shall deliver at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity value with an expectation that the maximum practicable net gain is achieved. All planning applications must be supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan and relevant supporting reports that demonstrate net gain will be achieved, implemented, managed and maintained. Restoration of mineral extraction sites for end uses that limit options to maximise biodiversity gain, may still be acceptable, provided the restoration achieves the minimum requirements and it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the restoration proposed would help achieve other objectives within the Development Plan that can be balanced against the need to maximise biodiversity net gain.

Policy DM 19 - Restoration, Aftercare and After-use

Planning permission for minerals extraction and temporary waste management development will be granted where satisfactory provision has been made for the highest possible standards of restoration and aftercare such that the intended after-use of the site is achieved in a timely manner, including where necessary for its long-term management.

Restoration plans should be submitted with the planning application which reflect the proposed after-use, be carried out to a standard that reflects best practice and provides for restoration and aftercare at the earliest opportunity, Restoration proposals must deliver sustainable after uses that benefit the Kent community, economically, socially or environmentally. All development should achieve at least 10% biodiversity net gain and demonstrate how maximum practicable on-site biodiversity net gain shall result from the development.

Restoration of mineral extraction sites for end uses that do not maximise biodiversity gain, but still achieve the mandatory minimum, may be acceptable

if it is demonstrated that the benefits of the restoration would help achieve other objectives of the Development Plan that in the view of the planning authority outweigh the achievement of maximum biodiversity net gain.

Where appropriate, restoration plans should address the following issues in relation to the restoration, aftercare and after-use of minerals extraction and temporary waste management development:

1. a site-based landscape strategy for the restoration scheme;

2. the key landscape and biodiversity opportunities and constraints ensuring connectivity with surrounding landscape and habitats;

3. the geological, archaeological and historic heritage and landscape featuresand their settings;

4. the site boundaries and areas identified for soil and overburden storage;

5. an assessment of soil resources and their removal, handling and storage;

6. an assessment of the overburden to be removed and stored;

7. the type and depth of workings and information relating to the water table;

8. storage locations and quantities of waste/fill materials and quantities and types of waste/fill involved;

9. proposed infilling operations, sources and types of fill material;

10. the arrangements for monitoring and the control and management of landfill gas;

11. consideration of land stability after restoration;

12. directions and phasing of working and restoration and how they are integrated into the working scheme;

13. the need for and provision of additional screening taking account of degrees of visual exposure;

14. details of the proposed final landform including pre and post settlement levels

15. types, quantities and source of soils or soil making materials to be used;

16. a methodology for management of soils to ensure that the predevelopment soil quality is maintained;

17. proposals for meeting and where relevant exceeding, the biodiversity net gain targets, including those outlined in the Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020-45, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

18. removal of all buildings, plant, structures, accesses and hardstanding not required for long term management of the site;

19. planting of new native woodlands;

20. installation of drainage to enable high quality restoration and after-use;

21. measures to incorporate flood risk mitigation opportunities and avoid unacceptable impacts on groundwater;

22. details of the seeding of grass or other crops and planting of trees, shrubs and hedges;

23. a programme for the long-term management and aftercare of the restored sites to include details of vegetation establishment, vegetation management, biodiversity habitat management, field drainage, irrigation and watering facilities;

24. the restoration of the majority of the site back to agriculture, if the site consists of the best and most versatile agricultural land;

25. the potential for financial guarantees such as bonds in exceptional circumstances where their use can be justified to secure restoration objectives.

Aftercare schemes should incorporate an aftercare period of at least five years. Where appropriate, voluntary longer periods for certain uses will be sought through agreement between the applicant and minerals planning authority.

2.2 RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITATS

2.2.1 Terrestrial ecosystems, habitats and species (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2020)

By 2045 Kent has a rich and growing terrestrial biodiversity, underpinned by more resilient and coherent ecological networks and healthy, well-functioning ecosystems.

Over the last few decades, we have lost significant areas of many of our most precious habitats. We now need to restore those degraded habitats, replenish our depleted soils and arrest the decline of native species to deliver robust ecological networks that are sustainable, ecologically coherent and resilient to climate change. We will expand our use of natural processes and natural solutions to ensure more sustainable use and management of habitats, to provide biodiversity net gains, and to protect and grow our natural capital.

Our objectives for terrestrial ecosystems, habitats and species are, by 2045:

• 20.84% high value semi-natural habitat (74,750 ha) well managed15 for nature16 (from the 2015 baseline of 14.6% and 54,640 ha).

• An ecological network of semi-natural habitat (high and low value) covering 30% of Kent (112,000 ha) 17 (from the 2015 baseline of 27% and 100,872 ha).

• 75% Sites of Special Scientific Interest restored to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term (from the 2019 baseline of 68%).

• Over half of Local Wildlife Sites in good management10, securing their local wildlife value for the long term (from the 2019 baseline of 43%).

• More, bigger and less fragmented areas of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected sites network for wildlife, with an increase in the overall extent of all priority habitats to ensure greater connectivity and resilience to climate change.

• New development to better provide for a greener urban environment, through increased urban tree planting, the inclusion of integral wildlife niches, and green building and landscape design.

• Protect and restore existing trees, hedgerow and woodland, whilst increasing the county's tree cover with the right trees in the right places, which supports the recovery of wildlife, delivers natural climate solutions and enriches people's lives.

• Kent-specific threatened and iconic species of terrestrial animals and plants are recovering, including those that support ecosystem services (for details, see Species table below)

The following have been selected as terrestrial priority habitats and priority and indicator species:

Priority habitats	Priority species	Indicator species
Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland	Shrill Carder Bee	Hedgehog
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	Turtle Dove	Serotine bat
Chalk grassland	Nightingale	Common Blue
Lowland meadow	Swift	Lady Orchid
Lowland dry acid grassland / Lowland heathland	Adder	
Hedgerows	Adonis Blue	
Brownfield	Heath Fritillary	
Traditional orchard	Dwarf or Kentish Milkwort	

2.2.2 Freshwater and intertidal ecosystems, habitats and species (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2020)

By 2045 Kent has secured clean, plentiful and biologically diverse freshwater and intertidal ecosystems underpinned by implementation of a catchment-based approach.

The freshwater and intertidal habitats of Kent and Medway represent a tiny proportion of their former extent with many lost through factors such as agricultural intensification and drainage, and degraded through abstraction and pollution. They are also particularly sensitive to climate change impacts and recreational pressures and disturbance (this latter pressure is addressed under Connecting people with the natural environment). We need to secure the long-term sustainable management of these fragile ecosystems by rebuilding and developing ecological networks that are sustainable, ecologically coherent and resilient to climate change. To do this, we will need to ensure that we replace like for like habitat lost to coastal realignment and make innovative use of natural flood and drought management solutions. Only then can we also ensure that these habitats are able to support vital ecosystem services such as carbon storage, groundwater recharge and flood control

Our objectives for Freshwater and intertidal ecosystems, habitats and species are, by 2045:

• 75% freshwater SSSIs restored to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.

• Over half of Local Wildlife Sites in good management21, securing their local wildlife value for the long term.

• Reaching or exceeding objectives for rivers, lakes, coastal and ground waters that are specially protected, whether for biodiversity or drinking water as per our River Basin Management Plans.

• No deterioration in the status of any water body in Kent. If deterioration of any element's classified status occurs, actions will be implemented to reverse the decline.

• Improve 375 km (15 km per year) of waters in Kent (rivers, lakes, canals, groundwater, transitional and coastal waters). The enhancements include work to improve ecological, chemical and/or physical quality, e.g. reducing pollution, restoring flows and improving habitat

The following have been selected as freshwater and intertidal priority habitats and species.

Priority habitats	Priority species
Rivers	European eel
Chalk streams	Lapwing
Ponds	Sandwich tern
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Water vole
Intertidal mudflats and coastal saltmarsh	True Fox-sedge
Wet woodland	
Vegetated shingle	

2.2.3 Marine ecosystems, habitats and species (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2020)

By 2045 Kent is making its contribution to reversing the loss of marine biodiversity and delivering clean, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas through good management.

The seas around the coast of Kent and Medway contribute to the wider UK marine environment – home to 'the widest range of marine habitats of any coastal waters in Europe' 25– yet they have been badly neglected and depleted over the last few decades. Whilst plastics in the aquatic environment has recently received public attention, and subsequently government action, this is just one of many issues facing the marine waters off Kent's coastline. These pressures include water quality, invasive non-native species, habitat destruction from fisheries and other offshore activities and land-based pressures such as pollution and disturbance. Our seas and coastal waters do not follow political or regional boundaries and so, to ensure that we have marine habitats which can support healthy, sustainable ecosystems, we need to complete our ecologically coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), as well as working more closely with local stakeholders to ease the impacts of human activity from source to sea

Our objectives for marine ecosystems, habitats and species are, by 2045:

• A series of Marine Protected Areas off the coast of Kent, forming an ecologically coherent network that is effective in conserving marine habitats.

• There will be no further decline of Kent's Marine Protected Areas, which will be showing signs of recovery as a result of regular monitoring and well-informed management that limits damaging activities.

• Kent's Marine Protected Areas will be improved and extended so that representative habitats missing from the network are featured and offered protection as required.

• Pressures will be assessed and appropriate management identified and implemented for the entirety of Kent's Marine Protected Areas to adequately protect the features for which those areas were designated (it is the intention that this objective will be achieved within the shorter timeframe of 2025).

• The South East and South Marine Plans are being applied and have been integrated within relevant local plans.

• We will be managing shellfish stocks sustainably and harvesting shellfish in a non-environmentally damaging way. • There is better understanding of the subtidal and tidal environment and ephemeral marine features, with the development of spatial management plans and strategic action for those areas at most pressure.

• The natural capital value of the marine environment as a carbon sink is better understood and being managed to realise this contribution

The following have been selected as marine priority habitats (nominated). Due to the innate difficulty of undertaking meaningful monitoring of marine species at a county level, no targets have been set for marine species; however harbour and grey seals have been included as an indicator species for the health of the estuarine environment.

Priority habitats	Indicator species
Intertidal chalk and subtidal chalk (nominated)	Harbour and Grey Seals
Subtidal mud (nominated)	

2.2.4 **Tree Strategy** (Plan Tree Strategy, 2022)

Kent Plan Tree sets an ambition for Kent to extend tree cover by 1.5 million new trees and increase the county's average canopy cover to 19%. Furthermore, our existing woodland and trees health will be restored and afforded greater protection from loss.

Tree establishment in the county will be underpinned by four principles:

•The first step is to protect and restore the county's existing trees and native woodland, therefore, the founding principle is one of better management and protection of existing stock, which not only aims to avoid loss but ensure our existing stock is secure from pests and disease.

•Natural regeneration will need to be complemented by considered and well-planned establishment of new tree stock. Where we look to establish new trees, this must adhere to the principle of the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with

the right management and right monitoring to ensure appropriate, successful and sustainable tree establishment across the county that is secured for the long-term.

•Investment of public money needs to demonstrate value; therefore, the design of any tree establishment will look to deliver multiple benefits, including nature based solutions, amenity benefits, nature recovery and economic benefits.

•And finally, we must ensure the biosecurity of new tree stock through application of strict standards on the trees we plant and the places we source stock from.

Objectives:

Establishing the right trees in the right places will help deliver benefits for Kent's wildlife, people, and economy. Through extending tree cover in Kent and delivering this Strategy, we aim to deliver the following objectives:

- Contribute to Kent County Council's, and the county's, net zero targets
- Reduce and reverse the trend of decline in nature and loss of trees
- Tackle the multiple threats to our trees
- Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges
- Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity
- Address the decline in trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees
- Realise the economic benefits
- Increase our knowledge and provide better protection

Actions:

Since stating the ambition in 2019 for 1.5 million new trees to be established in the county, Kent County Council has delivered over 226,104 new trees (until March 2024); and more planting is scheduled over the coming years. This Strategy looks to build on this action and provide a more robust framework for tree establishment in Kent and the collaborative action needed to deliver on the ambitious tree targets for the county. The Strategy sets out some specific actions that Kent County Council will take to progress delivery of the ambitions and objectives of Plan Tree.

These actions focus on:

1. Delivering against the tree establishment target.
2. Exemplar provision for trees on our own estate.
3. Improving protection to trees in Kent.
4. Improving our understanding of Kent's trees.
5. Developing the Kent carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions.

The actual delivery of these actions will be laid out in a more detailed implementation plan that will sit alongside the Strategy. In addition to detailing

a delivery schedule for this action plan, the implementation plan will also more clearly define:

- Specific targets for extending canopy in rural, agroforestry and urban settings.
- Targets for delivery through assisted natural regeneration.
- Targets for improving the ecological condition of native and ancient woodland and associated priority species.
- A tree establishment plan, associated resources and a comprehensive monitoring and reporting process.

Working in Partnership:

Plan Tree will be delivered by working in partnership with (but not limited to) district and borough and town and parish councils, the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes, the county's Countryside Management Partnerships, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, and environmental charities. We will look to bring together local communities, schools, businesses, and landowners to collaborate on tree establishment projects.

Ecological Condition of Trees:

In addition to increasing the extent of trees in the county, the ecological condition of the county's native woodland and ancient and veteran trees will be restored. And our existing trees will be afforded better recognition for the vital role they play and, consequently, better protection from loss, so that there is a genuine and significant gain of tree stock within Kent. The delivery of new trees, via a mixture of planting and assisted natural regeneration, coupled with the protection and restoration of existing trees, hedgerow, and woodland, will support the recovery of wildlife, provide natural climate solutions, and enrich people's lives.

KCC Ambition:

In addition to this collaborative action, Kent County Council aims to contribute directly to the county target by establishing new trees across its own estate. Although our ambitions will be greater, at a very minimum we will establish 28,600 trees on land we own, manage or influence, representing a tree for every person in our own workforce.

Our objectives for tree establishment:

Establishing the right trees in the right places will help deliver benefits for Kent's wildlife, people and economy. Through extending tree cover in Kent and delivering this Strategy, we aim to deliver the following objectives:

- Contribute to Kent County Council's, and the county's, net zero targets
- Reduce and reverse the trend of decline in nature and loss of trees
- Tackle the multiple threats to our trees
- Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges
- Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity
- Address the decline in trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees
- Realise the economic benefits
- Increase our knowledge and provide better protection

Principles for tree establishment in Kent

1. Better management and protection of existing stock
2. The right tree in the right place
3. Deliver multiple benefits
4. Ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through application of strict standards

Kent Tree Establishment Strategy – Kent County Council Action Plan

In order to deliver on the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, Kent County Council will take forward a number of actions over the Strategy period. The actual delivery of these actions will be laid out in a more detailed implementation plan that will sit alongside the Strategy.

In addition to detailing a delivery schedule for this action plan, the implementation plan will also more clearly define:

• Specific targets for extending canopy in rural, agroforestry and urban settings.
• Targets for delivery through assisted natural regeneration.
• Targets for improving the ecological condition of native and ancient woodland and associated priority species.
• A tree establishment plan, associated resources and a comprehensive monitoring and reporting process.

1.DELIVER AGAINST THE TREE ESTABLISHMENT TARGET

• Develop a ten-year strategic Kent County Council tree planting plan, including a tree planting project pipeline. In association develop a three-year delivery plan, published to give visibility of schemes, with a funding/investment plan to underpin this work.
• Establish a detailed definition of the "right tree in the right place", identifying the specific constraints of tree, location, purpose, and management.
• Establish priorities for ecological condition recovery, responses to tree disease and woodland connectivity; and develop targeted action for important and/ or threatened woodland species. Ensure development of the Kent Local

Nature Recovery Strategy enables the delivery of these, alongside specific tree establishment to be delivered by Plan Tree.
• Establish maintenance, management and monitoring plans for newly established trees and develop mechanisms that ensure the long-term security of this new tree cover, such as conservation covenants.
• Work with partners across the county to establish a resourced Kent Plan Tree Partnership, with the capacity and capability to support joined-up action in the delivery of tree establishment in the county.
• Working with district councils and other partners, respond to central government calls for bids for tree planting, and other government support that will help implement the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, maximising funding investment for the county.
• Set annual expansion targets, with targets focussing on both quality and quantity. By measuring quality, we will ensure the expansion of trees in Kent also delivers recovery of nature, enriches people's lives, sequesters, and stores carbon and delivers other nature-based solution benefits.
• With partners, identify creation, extension, connection, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on a broader county-wide scale and develop a county-wide opportunity map and tree establishment plan.
• Develop a transparent and accessible tree establishment monitoring and reporting approach against the county target.
• Work with individual farmers, landowners and managers to reinstate and expand the county's hedgerow network and extend tree cover, to benefit landscape and wildlife.
• Work with parish and town councils and other urban community groups to increase trees in urban areas. The Strategy's establishment targets, and timeframe may need to be revised once the tree planting plan and opportunity mapping work is completed; only then will we understand if the 1.5 million is feasible/deliverable within the timeframe and in respect of available land.

2. EXEMPLAR PROVISION FOR TREES ON OUR OWN

• Identify creation, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on the KCC estate.
• Review whether further tree establishment on our Highways is a feasible route to help increase the volume of trees outside woodlands and in our urban areas.
• Ensure our wooded estate provides exemplary public value by integrating climate action with other nature-based solutions, high quality access and wildlife recovery.
• Review, and revise if necessary and/or feasible, our tree establishment and replacement policies across the KCC estate and for land we manage/influence. Ensure the best standards are delivered through a renewed tree establishment (incl. protection and maintenance) and replacement policy.

3. IMPROVE PROTECTION TO TREES IN KENT

• Use our planning functions to ensure protection and regulated management of irreplaceable veteran trees and ancient woodland on or adjacent to development sites, with prevention of further loss or damage controlled through conditions and legal agreements as appropriate. There shall be a general presumption in favour of retention and enhancement of existing tree, woodland and hedgerow cover on planning application sites determined by the planning authority.
• Work with district and borough colleagues to ensure that trees are well provided for, and offered appropriate protection by, Local Plans, so that loss as a result of development is minimised and that the inclusion of new trees is properly considered, with quality designed landscaping in new development. Consider the provision of additional planning guidance for development to support this.
• Develop sustainable and bio-secure supply-chains for local-provenance trees, seed, tree-guards, fencing and other materials, ensuring that Kent's nurseries and suppliers realise the opportunities presented by the development of this market.

4. IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF KENT'S TREES ESTATE

• Ensure we have a clear picture of KCC's, and in turn Kent's, tree stock, both woodlands and trees outside woodland, with areas lacking in tree cover identified.
• Ensure our ancient woodland inventory is up to date and undertake a veteran tree inventory.
• Assess the impact of natural threats (for example deer, squirrels, climate change) on tree establishment across Kent to understand how such risks may impact the county's target and to ensure appropriate management/protection is put in place.
• Promote the importance of trees to landowners, businesses and the local community so that everyone understands the value of trees and woodlands, the important services they provide and the role they can play in helping to increase tree cover in Kent.
• Establish a hub of information that provides support to partners, landowners, businesses and the local community to identify, develop and deliver creation, restoration and protection opportunities.

5. DEVELOP KENT CARBON OFFSET MARKET FOR UNAVOIDABLE EMISSIONS

• Support work in the county to grow the nature-based carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions and identify opportunities on our estate to offset carbon and in turn deliver investment into our trees and the benefits they provide.

2.2.5 **Pollinator Action Plan** (Kent Plan Bee, 2022)

OBJECTIVE 1: For Kent County Council to manage the land it owns, controls and influences in a way which benefits pollinators' habitat and forage.

The Council will:

• Continue to review its land management practices and put in place, where it can, revised grass-cutting and maintenance regimes and apply pollinator-friendly planting. This applies to the highways network, country parks, schools and waste sites and our broader built estate.

• Introduce a dedicated policy to ensure that neonicotinoids are never used on County Council owned or managed land.

• Continue to lobby against any reintroduction or emergency use of neonicotinoids.

• Reduce the use of glyphosate across land owned or managed by the County Council, except where no viable alternative exists, and continue to review new methodologies as they become available.

• Identify ways to create corridors for wildlife throughout the landscape within and adjacent to the County Council's estate.

• Look for opportunities to 'green' its buildings and assets with pollinator friendly planting and such things as bee hotels.

• Ensure the needs of pollinators are recognised across the range of Council services and functions and are considered within all strategies and polices which may impact on, or present opportunities for, pollinators.

• Develop approaches within KCC's planning services that will help to protect pollinator habitats.

• Provide training, as required and appropriate, for staff involved in land management to increase their understanding of the needs of pollinators and how they can help them in the course of their work.

OBJECTIVE 2: For Kent County Council to work with partners across the county to better protect pollinators and improve the habitats on which they rely.

The Council will:

• Promote and support landscape scale projects that deliver habitat connectivity for pollinators.

• Work with Kent's planning authorities to deliver improvements for pollinator habitats at the local level through, for example, their management of greenspace, local plans and development management.

• Develop a countywide Kent Pollinator Pledge, where, through a programme of work, parish and town councils, communities, landowners, businesses and schools will be supported to take action for pollinators.

OBJECTIVE 3: For Kent County Council to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators and the need to safeguard these vital insects, mobilising the people of Kent to take their own action within communities, workplaces, schools and homes.

The Council will:

• Host an annual Plan Bee summit, to bring together partners and interested parties to review, discuss and progress action for Kent's pollinators.

• Deliver a rolling communication campaign to inform and infuence the people of Kent and engage them in action for pollinators.

• Encourage and support pollinator friendly gardening.

• Support schools in activities relating to pollinators through access to resources and activities.

• Build an expert network of advisors and mentors to help to guide and steer Plan Bee action across the county.

OBJECTIVE 4: For Kent County Council to monitor and evaluate its action for pollinators, so that we understand the impact of our efforts and direct continued action and resources to where they are most needed.

The Council will:

• Establish annual pollinator surveying (using the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme's flower insect timed count survey method or something similar) at selected sites across County Council owned and managed land, to monitor the effect of land management practices on pollinator numbers and provide an indicator of the impact of Plan Bee.

• Contribute to the annual Bugs Matters survey through our own service feet vehicles and encouragement of staff participation.

• Publish a set of Plan Bee performance measures and report progress against these every two years.

• Keep up to date on the latest scientific evidence on pollinator health and respond as appropriate in respect of decision-making, asset management and service delivery.

The Long-term Plan:

Kent's Plan Bee is a continuing plan which is intended to be long term. The many actions set out and the raising of understanding and determination to act among the county's one and a half million people will necessarily take time. It will come in phases; some of the work, like changing grass cutting regimes, is dependent on contract renewals which are not yet due. The need for action for pollinators, Kent's Plan Bee, was agreed unanimously by Kent County Council in May 2018, underlining the importance the elected members attach to the programme on behalf of the people they represent. It is being overseen by a cross-party member group which reports to the Cabinet Member for Environment… and ultimately by millions, even billions, of tiny Kent residents on whom we depend, as they depend on us.

2.2.6 Flood Risk Management (Flood Risk Management Strategy, 2017)

TABLE 2 **FOCUS AREAS FOR LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT**

Priority area	Flood risk management issues	Actions	Partners
Medway Catchment (under the Medway Flood Partnership)	The Medway Valley contains many local flood risks, especially from ordinary watercourses and poor drainage	The Environment Agency has formed a Strategic Flood Partnership for the Medway Valley, which KCC is an active partner in. KCC is also a partner in the Natural Flood Management Project for the Medway Valley. As part of these projects and this Local Strategy, KCC will investigate the opportunities through NFM and other means to reduce the risk of flooding in the Medway Valley to the towns and villages there.	Environment Agency, Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board, Southern Water, Southeast Rivers Trust, Natural England
Northeast Kent (Deal, Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs)	Southern Water has undertaken a drainage strategy for Northeast Kent (Deal, Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs) that identifies sewer capacity as a potential obstacle to growth.	KCC will work with Southern Water to identify opportunities where it can reduce the discharge of surface water to the sewers	Southern Water, Thanet Council, Dover District Council
Nailbourne Valley	Groundwater and main river flooding cause long-standing disruption	KCC will work with multi-agency partners and local representatives to identify and deliver options to manage the flood risks in this Valley	Environment Agency, Southern Water, Canterbury City Council, Nailbourne and Little Stour River Group
Folkestone and Hythe	Steep hills in Folkestone and Hythe lead to rapid runoff which causes flooding issues from surface water, ordinary watercourses and main rivers	KCC will work with partners to investigate opportunities to reduce the risk of flooding	Southern Water, Environment Agency, Shepway District Council
Tunbridge Wells	Two flood events in 2015 and 2017 have caused flooding to the town centre and other areas of Tunbridge Wells	KCC will work with partners to understand the causes of these floods and identify opportunities to reduce the risk	Southern Water, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Sittingbourne	Poor drainage leads to hotspots of flooding	KCC will investigate the causes of flooding and identify opportunities to reduce the risks	Southern Water, Swale Borough Council

Kent local flood risk management strategy 2024-2034

Flood risk to communities

Surface water management plans

Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment, 2011

Land Drainage Policy, 2019

2.2.7 Within Development and Infrastructure

Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2024) and Implementation Plan (2024):

Priority 3 Planning & Development

Ensure climate change, energy, air quality and environmental considerations are integrated into Local Plans, policies and developments, by developing a clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework for Kent and Medway, to drive down emissions and incorporate climate resilience:

3.1 Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net-zero targets, and climate change adaptation.

3.2 Adopt and/or reference the refreshed Kent Design Guide as Supplementary Planning Documents, in line with Local Plan updates.

3.3 Secure agreement and identify scope and resource requirements to develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth evidence-base and strategic planning policy and guidance framework.

3.4 Using the outputs from action 3.3, develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework that identifies latest evidence, good practice, position statements and policies for Local Plans and Development Management.

3.5 Raise clean growth / climate change awareness and skills of planners, planning committees, developers, and supply chain.

3.6 Develop tailored Kent and Medway public sector buildings design guidance for new build and refurbishment

THEME 3- Toward a sustainable future (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

AIM: Kent's communities, businesses, environment and services are resilient to environmental change whilst making the most of the economic and health opportunities this brings. Our communities are well designed and sustainable, improving prosperity, health outcomes and social wellbeing. Innovation in low carbon, resource and environmental business sectors is delivering economic growth in the county.

OUTCOME: Kent is actively addressing the risks, impacts and opportunities from environmental and climate change, whilst delivering wider economic and health opportunities.

Kent Nature Partnership (2022):

The KNP promotes the adoption of 20% biodiversity net gain (BNG) target for the county's planning authorities.

In response to the KNP's promotion of a 20% BNG target for the county, Kent County Council (with funding support from Natural England) commissioned this strategic viability assessment of BNG in Kent. The purpose is to assist the county's planning authorities to understand whether targeting a higher BNG than the statutory minimum of 10% is potentially viable in the county.

Viability Assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain in Kent 2022

2.3 HABITAT CREATION

2.3.1 Green Infrastructure

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018)

Actions to Improve Green Infrastructure:

2.6 Work with planners and developers to create a planned strategic green infrastructure which incorporates the PROW network to promote and encourage sustainable, active travel and provide opportunities for leisure and recreation.

2.7 Work with stakeholders to create places where people are not impeded in undertaking physical activity, accessing nature and having low air pollution levels.

2.8 Support improved communication with planning officers to ensure access is integrated into developments and best practice is applied.

2.9 Maintenance and improvements will be designed to be in keeping with surrounding environment. For example a tarmac path would not be suitable choice through a woodland habitat.

Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2024) and Implementation Plan (2024)

Priority 8 Green Infrastructure:

Develop a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme – focusing on environmental projects that store carbon, increase climate change resilience, improve air quality and soil health and increase biodiversity:

8.1 Undertake an assessment of Kent and Medway's opportunities for natural solutions to climate change.

8.2 Develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway that agrees priorities for nature recovery, maps the most valuable existing areas for nature, and

maps opportunities for creating or improving habitat for nature and delivering wider environmental goals (nature-based solutions).

8.3 Develop and implement a strategy to establish 1.5 million new trees (or their carbon sequestration equivalent) in Kent and Medway.

8.4 Develop cost effective and innovative approaches to establishing trees outside woodlands whilst strengthening biosecurity, through the Promoting Trees Outside Woodlands Project.

2.3.2 Tree Strategy (Plan Tree Strategy, 2022)

Kent Tree Establishment Strategy – Kent County Council Action Plan

In order to deliver on the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, Kent County Council will take forward a number of actions over the Strategy period.

1.DELIVER AGAINST THE TREE ESTABLISHMENT TARGET

• Develop a ten-year strategic Kent County Council tree planting plan, including a tree planting project pipeline. In association develop a three-year delivery plan, published to give visibility of schemes, with a funding/investment plan to underpin this work.

• Establish a detailed defnition of the “right tree in the right place”, identifying the specific constraints of tree, location, purpose, and management.

• Establish priorities for ecological condition recovery, responses to tree disease and woodland connectivity; and develop targeted action for important and/ or threatened woodland species. Ensure development of the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy enables the delivery of these, alongside specific tree establishment to be delivered by Plan Tree.

• Establish maintenance, management and monitoring plans for newly established trees and develop mechanisms that ensure the long-term security of this new tree cover, such as conservation covenants.

• Work with partners across the county to establish a resourced Kent Plan Tree Partnership, with the capacity and capability to support joined-up action in the delivery of tree establishment in the county.

• Working with district councils and other partners, respond to central government calls for bids for tree planting, and other government support that will help implement the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, maximising funding investment for the county.

• Set annual expansion targets, with targets focussing on both quality and quantity. By measuring quality, we will ensure the expansion of trees in Kent also delivers recovery of nature, enriches people’s lives, sequesters, and stores carbon and delivers other nature-based solution benefts.

• With partners, identify creation, extension, connection, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on a broader county-wide scale and develop a county-wide opportunity map and tree establishment plan.

• Develop a transparent and accessible tree establishment monitoring and reporting approach against the county target.

• Work with individual farmers, landowners and managers to reinstate and expand the county's hedgerow network and extend tree cover, to beneft landscape and wildlife.

• Work with parish and town councils and other urban community groups to increase trees in urban areas. The Strategy's establishment targets and timeframe may need to be revised once the tree planting plan and opportunity mapping work is completed; only then will we understand if the 1.5 million is feasible/deliverable within the timeframe and in respect of available land.

2. EXEMPLAR PROVISION FOR TREES ON OUR OWN

• Identify creation, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on the KCC estate.

• Review whether further tree establishment on our Highways is a feasible route to help increase the volume of trees outside woodlands and in our urban areas.

• Ensure our wooded estate provides exemplary public value by integrating climate action with other nature-based solutions, high quality access and wildlife recovery.

• Review, and revise if necessary and/or feasible, our tree establishment and replacement policies across the KCC estate and for land we manage/influence. Ensure the best standards are delivered through a renewed tree establishment (incl. protection and maintenance) and replacement policy.

2.4 SPECIES SPECIFIC

2.4.1 Plan Tree Strategy, 2022

Our woodlands are important to our natural heritage and home to a vast array of wildlife, including some nationally threatened woodland species.

Kent is one of the last strongholds of Nightingale in the UK and is also important for the declining and scarce Hawfnch.

The county is also one of a small handful of locations where the woodland butterfy, Heath Fritillary, is found and the increasingly rare and now threatened Duke of Burgundy.

Our woodlands are also important for some rare moths, including the Common Fan Foot moth and the Heart moth, with Kent being one of only four sites where this species is found.

And the Blean Woods hosts Britain's only known population of the money spider, *Walckenaeria mitrata.*

The county's woodlands are also important for mammals – along with the other southern counties, Kent is a stronghold for the Hazel Dormouse.

And our ancient broadleaved woodlands are hugely important for bats, with Kent's woodlands being home to one of the UK's rarest mammals, the Bechstein's bat.

2.4.2 Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022

Terrestrial:

Priority habitats	Priority species	Indicator species
Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland	Shrill Carder Bee	Hedgehog
Lowland Mixed Broadleaved Woodland	Turtle Dove	Serotine bat
Chalk grassland	Nightingale	Common Blue
Lowland meadow	Swift	Lady Orchid
Lowland dry acid grassland / Lowland heathland	Adder	
Hedgerows	Adonis Blue	
Brownfield	Heath Fritillary	
Traditional orchard	Dwarf or Kentish Milkwort	

Freshwater and Intertidal:

Priority habitats	Priority species
Rivers	European eel
Chalk streams	Lapwing
Ponds	Sandwich tern
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Water vole
Intertidal mudflats and coastal saltmarsh	True Fox-sedge
Wet woodland	
Vegetated shingle	

Marine:

Priority habitats	Indicator species
Intertidal chalk and subtidal chalk (nominated)	Harbour and Grey Seals
Subtidal mud (nominated)	

SECTION 3: WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

3.1 GOAL 2: AIR QUALITY

Kent Environment Strategy (2016):

It has been estimated that poor air quality contributes to approximately five percent of deaths per year and possibly contributes to more mortality and morbidity than passive smoking. Kent's unique position between London and the continent brings significant challenges in relation to air pollution through cross-channel freight and traffic. In addition, easterly winds can bring pollution from the continent and westerly winds bring it from London. There are currently 40 air quality management areas in the county where air pollutants have been known to exceed objectives set by Government.

Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2024):

Poor air quality is a major health challenge for the UK causing both short and long-term effects on health. Long-term exposure to air pollution can impact on all stages of life; from asthma in children, to emerging evidence linking fine particulate matter (PM2.5) to the progression of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Public Health England estimates that the cumulative health and social care costs of air pollution (PM2.5 and NO2) in England could reach £18.6 billion by 2035. Poor air quality also has adverse impacts on the natural environment through damage to vegetation, soils, rivers and lakes.

Although air quality in the county is generally improving in line with national trends, there are still 43 Air Quality Management Areas and significant pockets of poor air quality along the major road networks. Kent and Medway's position between London and the continent brings air quality challenges associated with cross-channel traffic, including a disproportionately large number of HGVs, with their associated diesel emissions. Around the coast and ports, shipping brings additional impacts from the use of marine diesel. Even air pollution sources from outside Kent and Medway impact the population; with easterly winds bringing pollution from continental sources and westerly winds bringing urban pollution from London.

Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan (2024):

Priority 6 Transport, Travel & Digital Connectivity

6.24 Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Action Plans.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018):

Modal Shift to Cycling and Walking to Reduce Road Air Pollution

2.1 PROW network to provide realistic traffic free alternative to the car especially for short journeys to keep towns moving at peak flow times. Provide routes to encourage walking & cycling as a realistic mode of transport for utilitarian purposes as well as for leisure use.

2.2 Improve and upgrade the PROW network where it links with amenities, public transport nodes, work and education to increase the attractiveness of walking, cycling and riding as an alternative to driving.

2.3 Work with planners to secure PROW within green space and green corridors which actively ameliorate air pollution.

2.4 Further develop policies and projects in line with changes in working and travel patterns over the duration of the plan.

2.5 Work to secure higher status routes (bridleway, restricted byway) to provide access for the greatest range of users.

Active Travel Strategy (2018):

Nationally, the most affluent 10% of the population receive almost four times as much public spending on their transport needs as the poorest 10%, whilst the most deprived areas tend to have a higher density of main roads, poorer air quality, higher noise levels and higher collision rates. Residents of deprived communities travel less than residents in more affluent areas, but feel the impact of other people's travel.

Making short journeys using active travel helps to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and improves air quality. It can also be quicker, as in urban areas journey times are often shorter when walking or cycling as users can take advantage of routes not accessible to motor vehicles.

3.2 GOAL 3: CLEAN AND PLENTIFUL WATER

The Kent and Medway Shoreline Pollution Emergency Plan outlines a policy framework for coastal shoreline pollution planning and response in Kent and Medway.

Kent Environment Strategy (2016):

PRIORITY 5- Conserve and enhance the quality and supply of the county of Kent's natural and historical resources and assets

5.3 Identify and take forward opportunities for sustainable water management to improve quality and quantity of our water environment and resources

THEME 3- Toward a sustainable future

AIM: Kent's communities, businesses, environment and services are resilient to environmental change whilst making the most of the economic and health opportunities this brings. Our communities are well designed and sustainable, improving prosperity, health outcomes and social wellbeing. Innovation in low carbon, resource and environmental business sectors is delivering economic growth in the county.

Sustainable growth:

The risks to the future water environment have been identified through the Kent Water Spatial Risk assessment (2021), as being excess surface water during increased downpours and drought during hotter temperatures. Ensuring that future decisions on services, development and planning are integrating understanding of environmental change and wider health and economic benefits forms the focus of priority 8: Influence future sustainable growth for the county of Kent and priority 9: Improve the county of Kent's environmental, social and economic resilience to environmental change. (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

3.3 GOAL 4: MANAGING EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

3.4 GOAL 5: MAXIMISE OUR RESOURCES, MINIMISE OUR WASTE (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

PRIORITY 6 - Improve our resource efficiency such as energy, water and land

6.1 Reduce negative impacts and maximise the resource efficiency of public sector services, setting out our public commitments for energy, waste and water use reduction

6.2 Improve the resource efficiency of our homes, reducing costs, tackling fuel poverty and improving health outcomes

6.3 Work with businesses to reduce costs and negative impacts through improving compliance, efficiency, resilience and innovation in the use of resources

THEME 3- Toward a sustainable future

AIM: Kent's communities, businesses, environment and services are resilient to environmental change whilst making the most of the economic and health opportunities this brings. Our communities are well designed and sustainable, improving prosperity, health outcomes and social wellbeing. Innovation in low carbon, resource and environmental business sectors is delivering economic growth in the county.

Economic growth and circular economy:

The Low Carbon and Environmental Goods and Services (LCEGS) sector forms an important element of Kent's economy. It is estimated to employ more than 55,000 people and is an important resource for skills and expertise that can support the county's sustainable growth requirements. The sector incorporates a range of businesses that either directly or indirectly support the decarbonising of the energy sector; improving resource efficiency; or preserving and enhancing the natural environment. Sectors in retrofitting, low carbon new builds, offshore wind, waste management and recycling are highlighted as particular growth areas, but support will need to continue through funding, business advice and guidance. Similarly, there is a need and opportunity to support the development of a low carbon and sustainable rural economy through building resilience to environmental change, sustainable intensification of food production, and supporting the diversification of our sources of energy. It is an important sector for the county not only in terms of employment, with an estimated 14,000 people directly employed in agriculture and horticulture, but in the positive benefits it affords to the health of Kent's residents, communities and environment through production and supply of food and natural resources and recreational access

3.5 GOAL 6: USING RESOURCES FROM NATURE SUSTAINABLY (Kent Environment Strategy, 2016)

THEME 3- Toward a sustainable future

AIM: Kent's communities, businesses, environment and services are resilient to environmental change whilst making the most of the economic and health opportunities this brings. Our communities are well designed and sustainable, improving prosperity, health outcomes and social wellbeing. Innovation in low carbon, resource and environmental business sectors is delivering economic growth in the county.

Sustainable growth:

In the context of planned growth across the county, as set out in the 'Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework', there is a need and an opportunity to integrate measures that will ensure that infrastructure and asset development will be more sustainable without significant detrimental economic, social and environmental impacts. We have commitments to carbon reduction and renewable energy generation, and incentives and legislation to manage air quality; this will require additional low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure, smarter business and travel choices along with the increased uptake of energy demand reduction initiatives. Noise pollution is a key concern for many residents and businesses in relation to major transport infrastructure, along with the impacts of growth on our natural and cultural assets.

3.6 GOAL 7: MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2024) and Implementation Plan (2024):

Priority 1 Emission Reduction Pathways to 2050

Set five-year carbon budgets and emission reduction pathways to 2050 for Kent and Medway, with significant reduction by 2030:

1.1 Agree evidence/baseline and set 5-yearly carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole. Monitor delivery against the five-year carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole.

1.2 Develop Kent and Medway emission reduction pathway to Net Zero by 2050. Monitor delivery against the high ambition pathway and the 1.5° compliant pathway set by the Tyndall Centre.

1.3 Develop local strategies that set out how Net Zero will be achieved in their area, using carbon budgets and emission reduction pathway report to inform the evidence base where appropriate.

1.4 Continue to develop and refine detailed emission reduction pathways for key sectors based on emerging policy and good practice, incorporating estimated costs where possible.

1.5 Monitor and publicly report progress against net-zero targets.

1.6 Consider how emissions from consumption could be calculated and incorporated into future area pathways / targets. Incorporate consumption-based emissions into ELES targets and implementation plan.

Priority 2 Public Sector Decision Making

Develop a consistent approach across Kent and Medway, to assess, manage and mitigate environmental impacts (both positive and negative), resulting from public sector policies, strategies, service delivery, commissioning and procurement:

2.6 Conduct policy and service reviews to align policy, spending, and functions with net-zero commitments at both national and local level. Identify challenges/misalignment, then put in place mitigation plans to align them at a future date and reduce emissions in the meantime. Develop project and financial appraisal systems that include emissions and climate impacts.

3.5 Raise clean growth / climate change awareness and skills of planners, planning committees, developers, and supply chain.

3.6 Develop tailored Kent and Medway public sector buildings design guidance for new build and refurbishment.

Priority 4 Climate Emergency Investment Fund

Establish a trusted Kent and Medway 'climate emergency' carbon offset scheme and renewable energy investment fund:

4.2 Accelerate the 'supply and demand' of nature-based climate solutions (understand demand, assess skills/capacity gaps, develop resources to support delivery).

4.3 Create the framework for a SE-wide 'brokerage hub' that can bring together 'buyers' and 'sellers' to co-develop nature-based carbon sequestration projects.

4.4 Review and act on the outcomes of the SELEP Sector Support Fund project, and Accelerating Nature Based Climate Solutions conclusions.

4.5 Grow and maintain a portfolio of 'shovel-ready' renewable energy projects suitable for external funding.

4.6 Develop a portfolio of quick wins and 'shovel-ready' natural capital / carbon sequestration projects suitable for delivery through Net Gain or other external funding.

Priority 7 Renewable Energy Generation

Set up an opportunities and investment programme for renewable electricity and heat energy generation:

7.1 Undertake a Local Area Energy Plan for Kent (or multiple smaller LAEP's) that focus on all existing and emerging technologies.

7.2 Work in partnership to identify, support and promote new renewable energy projects across Kent and Medway, maximising funding from the Growth Fund, future Prosperity Fund and SE Energy Hub.

Priority 9 Supporting Low Carbon Business:

Develop and implement a Kent and Medway business recovery and support programme to cut costs and win new business:

9.4 Support the continued development of the onshore & offshore wind sector, green hydrogen, and related local supply chain.

9.6 Investigate workforce upskill/ training requirements for retrofit and green business.

9.7 To consider the environmental impact of tourism in Kent and work with partners to measure the impact and benefit of tourism. Also, support tourist business to be more sustainable.

Priority 10 Communications

Develop a comprehensive communications, engagement and behaviour change programme targeted at residents, employees, businesses and visitors:

10.1 Develop a joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy and action plan.

10.2a Develop a communication working group/network to ensure consistency of messages and facilitate joint working.

10.2b Consider the impact of reviewing and potentially rebranding the annual environment conference.

10.3 Maximise the impact of Great Big Green Week in Kent by promoting a shared calendar of events and supporting local activities.

10.4 Implement joint communication campaigns to raise awareness of the health impacts of air pollution and ways to protect health and improve air quality. Include progress on Kent air quality funding projects/programmes.

10.5 Implement joint communication campaigns to increase modal shift to active travel / public transport.

10.6 Support joint communication campaigns on behaviour change projects focused on tackling residents carbon emissions.

10.7 Implement joint communication campaigns to help residents reduce their water bills / save water.

10.8 Implement joint communication campaigns to reduce resident's environmental impact (Kent Green Action and District-level campaigns).

10.9 Implement joint communication campaigns to encourage and support SMEs to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

10.12 Investigate the training, skills and education needs for climate awareness for Kent & Medway (including schools, residents)

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018):

EN06 - Environmental Impact and Mitigation

Actions:

2.21 Identify climate change impact and mitigation measures.

2.22 Use data available on air quality to prioritise projects and schemes to help towards improving the local environment.

2.23 Identify flood risk areas and likely impact on PROW network and put in place mitigation measures.

Kent Environment Plan (2016):

PRIORITY 9- Improve the county of Kent's environmental, social and economic resilience to environmental change

9.1 Increase awareness of the impacts of severe weather and environmental change and empower businesses and communities to build resilience

9.2 Ensure that public sector services have assessed key environment and severe weather risks and opportunities and are taking action accordingly

9.3 Improve water management and build flood resilience, maximising opportunities to deliver multiple benefits for our environment and residents into the future

9.4 Build resilience to the impacts of environmental change, disease and invasive species on plant and animal health

3.7 GOAL 8: REDUCE RISK OF HARM FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

3.8 GOAL 9: ENHANCE BIOSECURITY

3.9 GOAL 10: ENHANCE BEAUTY, HERITAGE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

3.9.1 Heritage

Heritage Conservation Strategy (2022):

Strategic Aim 1: Continue to improve the high quality and timely historic environment advice provided to KCC, local authorities and other bodies involved in growth and change based on accessible and up to date information and understanding.

Strategic Aim 2:Ensure, working with new and existing partners, that KCC's historic assets are conserved, enhanced, enjoyed and valued by Kent's residents and visitors.

Strategic Aim 3: Increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Kent's rich heritage and increase involvement in heritage activities amongst its local communities.

Strategic Aim 4: Work towards the service becoming more financially self-sustaining

Strategic Aim 5: Contribute to KCC's action to address the Climate Emergency.

Kent Environment Plan (2016):

PRIORITY 5: Conserve and enhance the quality and supply of the county of Kent's natural and historical resources and assets

5.5 Develop heritage strategies to improve understanding and management of the historic environment

Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2024):

Policy DM 5 - Heritage Assets

Proposals for minerals and waste developments will be required to ensure that Kent's heritage assets and their settings, including non-designated heritage assets, registered historic parks and gardens, Listed Buildings, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, archaeological sites and features and defined heritage coastline, are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Proposals should result in no unacceptable adverse impact on Kent's historic environment and, wherever possible, opportunities should be sought to enhance historic assets affected by the proposals. Minerals and/or waste proposals that would harm the significance of a heritage asset will not be granted planning permission unless it can be demonstrated that there is an overriding need for development and any impacts can be mitigated or compensated for, such that there is a net planning benefit, as set out in national policy for the historic environment.

Policy DM 6 - Historic Environment Assessment

Proposals for minerals and waste development that are likely to affect important heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets will only be granted planning permission following:
1. preliminary historic environment assessment, including field archaeological investigation and assessment of contribution towards setting where appropriate, to determine the nature and significance ofthe heritage assets

2. appropriate provision has been secured for preservation in situ, and/or archaeological excavation and recording and/or other historic environment recording as appropriate, including post-excavation analysis and reporting,archive deposition and access, and interpretation of the results for the localcommunity, in accordance with the significance of the finds

3. agreement of mitigation of the impacts on the significance of the heritage assets, including their fabric, their setting, their amenity value and arrangements for reinstatement

3.9.2 Health and wellbeing

Key Health Statistics (Kent by Numbers):

The health-related measures presented below are indicative of the issues raised in the Kent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

- 350 miles of coastline- Coastal communities face complex challenges in terms of service provision, economic insecurity and remoteness
- 2x childhood obesity- The prevalence of obesity among children starting and finishing primary school is double in the most deprived tenth of the population compared to the last deprived.
- 25% disability or LTC- A quarter of Kent residents at the last census reports some form of disability or long-term health condition
- 6 years- The difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived tenths of our population. The difference in males is 8 years.
- 30% suicides impacted by domestic abuse- this is an association both for males and females. Impacted by domestic abuse can mean victim or perpetrator.
- 9% provide unpaid care- this refers to the Kent population aged over 5, providing some level of unpaid care
- 18% have no qualifications- this refers to the population aged 16 and over, having no qualifications
- 30,000 Kent residents aged 85+ - By 2036, there are projected to be more than 30,000 people aged 85 and over living in Kent. In 2018, there were 15,500.

District Health Profiles

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018):

Actions:

Increase Health and Wellbeing Benefits

1.1 Target priority areas and deliver improvements to the network addressing health inequalities through increasing active travel and recreational activity.

1.2 Prioritise maintenance on those PROW providing access to natural greenspace and public open space or where providing an accessible resource for community-based activities (walking groups, health walks).

1.3 Improve connectivity and consider equestrian and other parking where reasonable to encourage recreational and leisure activity; including access to country parks, honey pot sites and other facilities of high leisure use, such as National Trails, promoted routes and routes within and leading to AONBs.

1.4 Support volunteering in greenspace and on PROW network.

1.5 Work with partners to support implementation of health improvement initiatives, such as Walking for Health, cycling and equestrian initiatives and GP referrals.

1.6 Support schemes that will contribute to a reduction of air pollution, particularly in those areas where levels are high, and measures of deprivation and health are poor.

Tackling Deprivation & Disadvantage

1.11 Remove barriers for economically disadvantaged communities by encouraging the use of the network as a free-at-the-point-of-use resource for active travel, recreation and leisure use.

1.12 Tackle health disadvantage by promoting access to the natural environment and green space, beyond urban areas, providing connectivity to nature and cultural landscapes.

1.13 Utilise information available on health inequalities, areas of deprivation poor health, high air pollution, and current access to green space to support measures to focus efforts on the areas that will have greatest impact. 1.14 Encourage active travel to schools through promotion and enhancing PROW and cycle networks, targeting areas of childhood obesity and deprivation affecting children.

Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2024):

Policy DM 11 - Health and Amenity

> *Minerals and waste developments will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the development is unlikely to generate unacceptable adverse impacts from noise, dust, litter, vermin, vibration (including vibration from blasting), odour, emissions (including emissions from vehicles movements associated with the development), bioaerosols, external lighting, visual intrusion, traffic or associated risks to quality of life, the health and wellbeing of local communities and the environment.*
>
> *Proposals for minerals and waste development will also be required to ensure that there is no unacceptable adverse impact on other permitted land uses on surrounding land (including waterbodies).*

3.9.3 Access to nature

Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2024) and Implementation Plan (2024):

Priority 6 Transport, Travel & Digital Connectivity

Set up a smart connectivity and mobility modal shift programme – linking sustainable transport, transport innovations, active travel, virtual working, broadband, digital services, artificial intelligence and behaviour change:

6.3 Implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Kent and for Medway; to develop motor-vehicle free routes for walking and cycling.

6.4 Update and implement the Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP) and related strategies and the Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy to promote and incentivise walking, wheeling, and cycling through the provision of infrastructure, facilities, training, and engagement.

6.5 Work in partnership to prepare and implement local walking and cycling strategies. Measure the amount of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure delivered in Kent.

6.12 Support local SMEs to switch to ULEV vans through the Kent REVS Up for Cleaner Air scheme. : Support further measures to encourage Kent business to switch to electric vehicles.

6.13 Support progress in Kent regarding “low carbon multimodal transport hubs” to include measures such as multimodal integrated transport next to Fastrack electric BRT network, train stations, key bus corridors, public EV infrastructure, bike/e-bike share schemes, secure bike storage, electric car clubs with associated EV infrastructure, ecargo bike trials.

6.14 Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Action Plans.

Kent Environment Plan (2016):

PRIORITY 7- Support sustainable access and connectivity for businesses and communities

7.1 Develop an integrated approach to sustainable access to our countryside, heritage and coast, supporting Kent’s economy and improving health outcomes through outdoor sport and leisure opportunities

7.2 Support our residents, businesses and communities in being well connected to services, with sustainable and active travel options

7.3 Promote smarter working practices to improve efficiency and deliver health and economic benefits through reduced travel

Active Travel Strategy (2018):

Action 1: Integrate active travel into planning

1.2 Create one Kent-wide mapping layer showing existing and desired cycle network- to be made accessible to all HTW departments and borough councils for linked up planning.

1.3 Update the Kent Design Guide and planning toolkits on walking and cycling standards.

1.4 Raise awareness within KCC as well as with developers etc of equalities standards for disabled access cycle facilities, using the Wheels to Wellbeing guide.

Action 3: Support active travel in the community

3.3 Cycle safety initiative / campaign to promote safer and more considerate driver behaviour around cyclists on the road.

3.4 Work with a borough council to encourage the establishment of a Bike hire scheme in a major Kent town.

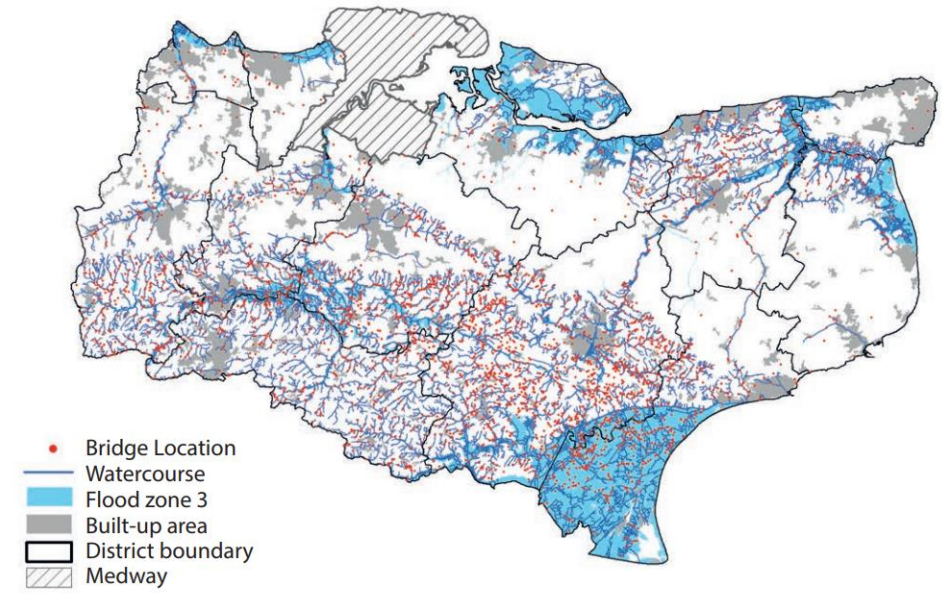
District cycling strategies

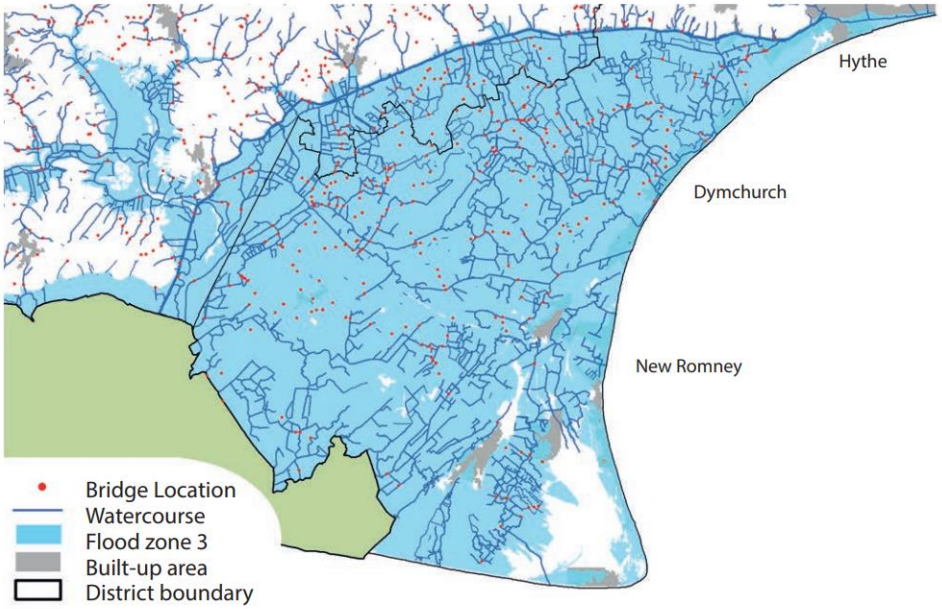
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018):

Our vision: To provide a high quality, well-maintained Public Rights of Way network, that is well used and enjoyed. The use of the network will support the Kent economy, encourage active lifestyles and sustainable travel choices that support health and wellbeing, and contribute to making Kent a great place to live, work and visit.

Example 1: Safeguarding the PROW Asset

Using flood zone, watercourse mapping and spatial data showing the PROW bridge asset, we can identify those structures at greatest risk and direct activity to safeguard the asset through bridge anchoring, anti-scour works and other protective measures.

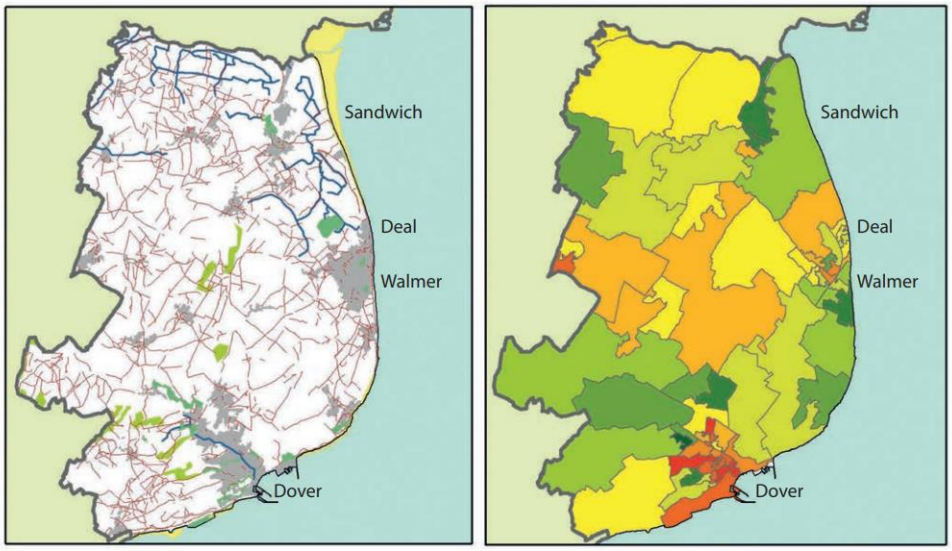




Example 2: Tackling Health Inequalities through Access to Greenspace

Research has identified a correlation between areas where there is a low prevalence of the population being physically active and low levels of natural green space provision.[18] Good quality open and green space is important in tackling health inequality and it has been recognised that the availability and quality of access to green space is not evenly distributed.

Dover District

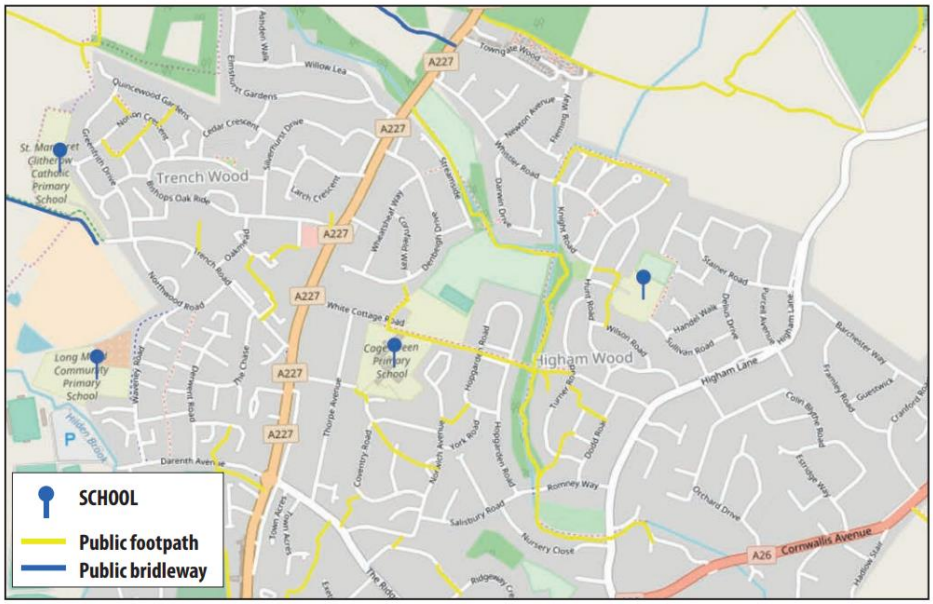


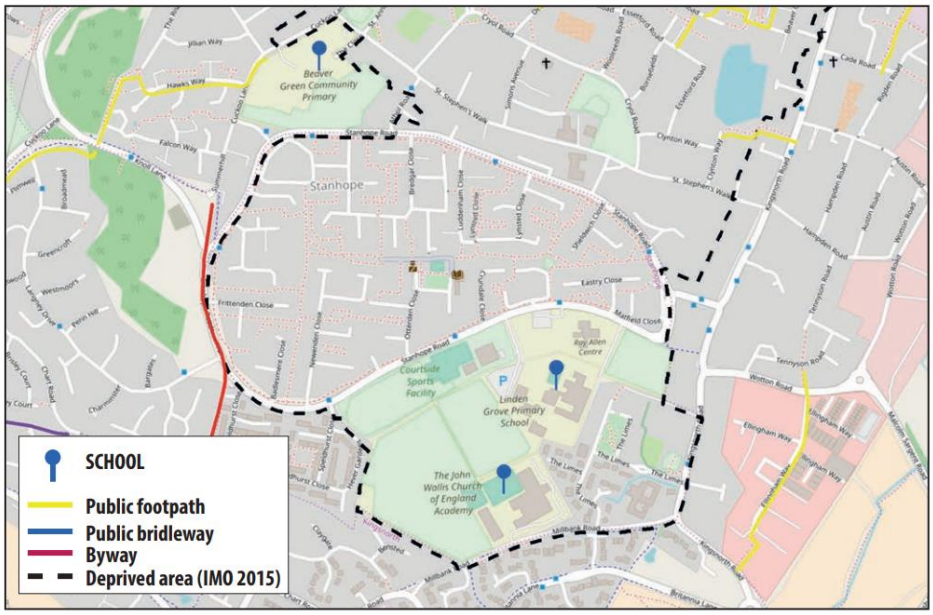
PROW Network
River Network
Coastal foreshore
Woodland
Other greenspace

Indices of Mulitple Deprivation (2015)
Higher deprivation — Least deprivation

Example 3: Encouraging Active Lifestyles

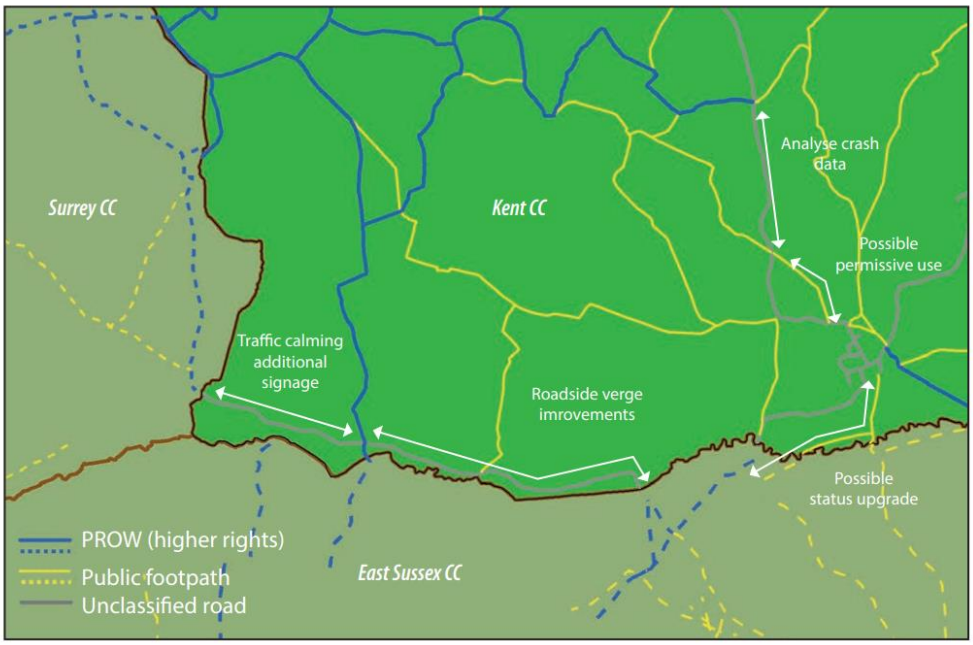
Using spatial data we can identify improvements, linking schools to the wider PROW and cycle network. Information can be further scrutinised to target specific schools and potential links to the network, encouraging active travel and healthy lifestyle choices. The provision and improvement of such links has the potential to unlock great benefits in areas of poor health outcomes.





Example 4: Reducing Fragmentation of the Network and Improving Safety

The example map below demonstrates the power of spatial data in building up a picture of the 'missing links' that could deliver maximum benefit to connectivity. Using multiple datasets e.g. road data, crash statistics, cross-border assets etc. to build up an accurate picture of the local situation, allows the most appropriate options for delivering improvements to be identified. This may be improving the roadside verge; working to improve signage and traffic calming features; trying to establish behind the hedge routes; or, working for permanent or permissive upgrades to existing lower status paths.



ACTIONS:

Increase Health and Wellbeing Benefits

1.1 Target priority areas and deliver improvements to the network addressing health inequalities through increasing active travel and recreational activity.

1.2 Prioritise maintenance on those PROW providing access to natural greenspace and public open space or where providing an accessible resource for community-based activities (walking groups, health walks).

1.3 Improve connectivity and consider equestrian and other parking where reasonable to encourage recreational and leisure activity; including access to country parks, honey pot sites and other facilities of high leisure use, such as National Trails, promoted routes and routes within and leading to AONBs.

1.4 Support volunteering in greenspace and on PROW network.

1.5 Work with partners to support implementation of health improvement initiatives, such as Walking for Health, cycling and equestrian initiatives and GP referrals.

1.6 Support schemes that will contribute to a reduction of air pollution, particularly in those areas where levels are high, and measures of deprivation and health are poor.

Active Travel:

1.7 Support and influence local authority strategies and policies to ensure that active travel is firmly integrated into development planning.

1.8 Work with developers to ensure active travel routes are incorporated and link to PROW / cycle networks, transport hubs and greenspaces.

1.9 Provide motorised traffic free, safe walking, cycling and equestrian and routes linking to towns, urban and rural areas. Seek to provide longer distance links between urban centres.

1.10 Remove barriers to active travel and recreation and promote routes and opportunities. For example promote recreational routes to introduce people to active travel and work with KCC's Active Travel Strategy Group to support work with children to develop bike skills, build confidence and encourage use.

Policy DM 14 - Public Rights of Way (Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan,2024)

> *Planning permission will only be granted for minerals and waste development that adversely affect a Public Right of Way, if:*
>
> - *satisfactory prior provisions for its diversion or stopping up are made which are both convenient and safe for users of the Public Rights of Way*
> - *provision is created for an acceptable alternative route both during operations and following restoration of the site.*
> - *opportunities are taken wherever possible to secure appropriate, improved access into and within the countryside.*

3.9.4 Connection with Nature

Our objectives for engagement are, by 2045 (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022):

• An increase in the number of health initiatives, bringing more people into contact with the natural environment.

• An increase in the number of people taking action that benefits biodiversity, including citizen science projects, with 23% of Kent's residents participating in environmental volunteering.

• An increase in the number of opportunities for children and young adults to engage with environmental issues, in and out of school.

• There is more and better quality, accessible natural space and green infrastructure close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, where both people

and wildlife can thrive; and all new developments will include accessible green space.

• More people are spending more time in natural spaces and benefiting their mental health and wellbeing.

• Create a network of visitor “hubs” in key locations in Kent, including North Kent Marshes, Blean Woods and North Downs, that enable an enhanced visitor experience without negatively impacting wildlife and provide a gateway for people to get involved and take action for nature.

• People are using the increased coastal access rights to gain a better connection with, and understanding of, the coastal margins and marine environment.

• Whilst there is an increase in the number and quality of opportunities for Kent’s residents to connect with the natural environment, this access is appropriately managed, and impacts from disturbance monitored, so that the health and wellbeing benefits realised are not to the detriment of the natural environment through increased use and associated recreational disturbance.

• Kent’s population is supported in making the right environmental choices and are empowered to take direct action for the recovery of nature with their own informed actions

<u>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018):</u>

KT03 Sustainable Tourism

3.7 Help to keep spend by visitors (e.g. walkers and cyclists) in the local and rural areas through linkages with local businesses, thereby supporting Kent’s small business sector.3.8 Develop access which does not conflict with nature conservation interest and support mitigation measures which may require recreational pressure to be diverted from sensitive sites.

3.9 Provide information to help support community led tourism.

3.10 Increase length of stay through packaging, linking and developing new products (e.g. new routes or new promoted routes). Promote the resource widely to target short break audiences.

SECTION 4: PROJECTS TO NOTE

4.1 Climate Change Projects (Kent's Change Climate)

Kent's climate is changing and it is important that we adapt as a county to minimise the impact of the effects. We continue to lead projects to help protect us against climate change, and prepare our county for the future.

- Climate change risk and impact assessment (CCRIA)
- Severe Weather Monitoring System (SWIMS)
- Kent spatial risk assessment for water
- Rainwater Harvesting Calculator

Climate adaptation projects:

With local, national and international partners we support a range of projects to help the county adapt to the global climate emergency.

Our previous projects include:

- Making Margate a cooler, greener place - a programme of work in Margate to reduce the risk of flooding and the impact of increasing summer temperatures
- Adaptation Catalyst - a tool to help decision makers plan and justify local action to adapt to our changing climate
- H20: Source2Sea European Union funding - to promote the use of natural flood and drought management strategies in Kent.
- STAR2Cs - supporting local authorities in managing climate adaptation projects.
- Cool Towns EU funding - helping urban areas minimise the heat-related effects of climate change.
- Triple A funding - promoting the development and use of low-carbon technologies by homeowners.
- C5a EU funding - aims to deliver a whole system approach to water and flood risk management in response to climate change.

4.2 Environmental champions (Zet Zero)

We have a network of over 200 staff volunteers who champion the environment and sustainability in their teams and departments, as well as in their communities. Our environmental champions will promote Kent Green Action, our campaign to connect people with nature, and inspire everyone to take action to improve our environment.

4.3 Kent Connected (Kent Connected)

Smarter ways to travel map and other sustainable travel projects

4.4 Solar Together Kent (Solar Together Kent)

Solar Together Kent is a solar panel and battery storage group-purchase scheme. It enables householders and small businesses to install solar panels on their homes and businesses at a competitive price.

4.5 Greener Kent (Greener Kent)

Greener Kent is our campaign to inspire everyone to do what they can to protect and enhance our woodlands, chalk streams, wildflower meadows, coastline and all the other natural gems that we treasure, so that our communities can thrive in balance with nature

4.6 Pollinator Projects (Pollinator Projects)

As well as work on Kent's Plan Bee, there are a number of other projects across the county to restore and create habitats for pollinators as well as increase public awareness about pollinators.

Cross Pollination project: This Kent High Weald Partnership project ran from 2016 to 2020 in the Tunbridge Wells area. It aimed to raise public awareness about bees and other pollinating insects. Pollinator friendly flowers were introduced to a number of parks in the area as demonstration sites and studies were carried out to identify the best plants for pollinators. Read more on the Cross Pollination project website.

Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme: Part of this Kent Wildlife Trust led scheme includes a Green Lanes for Bumblebees project, which the Bumblebee Conservation Trust manage. This is working to better connect habitats for bumblebees across the Romney Marsh and restore areas, such as through wildflower seeding.

Kent's Magnificent Moths project: This Butterfly Conservation led project starts in spring 2021 in East Kent to help to safeguard some of the UK's rarest moths. Read more on the Butterfly Conservation website.

Making a Buzz for the Coast project: This project aims to restore and create habitats for Kent's wild bees and other pollinators along the north and east Kent coasts. It is managed by Bumblebee Conservation Trust and works with a range of partners, including Kent County Council, to increase public awareness around Kent's wild bees and monitor their populations. Read more on the Bumblebee Conservation Trust website.

Old Chalk New Downs project: This project aims to restore and connect areas of chalk downland on the North Downs. Specific training on pollinators has been provided as part of this and the habitat restoration works provide valuable habitat for these insects. Read more on the Old Chalk New Downs website.

Short-haired Bumblebee Reintroduction project: The aim was to reintroduce the extinct short-haired bumblebee and also to work with land managers to create and enhance the habitat for bumblebees. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust leads this project, which has been running since 2009 around Dungeness and the wider Romney Marsh. Read more on the Bumblebee Conservation Trust website

4.7 Kent's Plan Bee Actions (Kent's Plan Bee, 2022)

Actions since 2020:

Changes to Kent County Council's rural swathe cut: In 2022, Kent Highways changed their rural swathe cut regime of one per annum to two, to provide greater gains for pollinators. At the additional cost of £300k per annum, two cuts each year (running March to May and September to October) will keep forage for pollinators free of cutting at an optimum fowering and feeding period. Over time, this new approach will create an extensive network of habitat mosaics, which are interconnected and managed to optimise the range of habitats provided for pollinators across Kent's rural verge network.

Urban verge management for pollinators: Along Fastrack's dedicated and shared bus route in the Dartford area, 10 pollinator road verges have been established and more are planned in Ebbsfeet and Gravesend, in addition to the installation of green roof bus shelters. Further to this pollinator planting is the creation of the bee bus, a double decker on the route featuring the Shrill Carder Bee and promoting the Kent's Plan Bee.

Supporting pollinators at our waste sites: Species-rich grassland and trees for the benefit of pollinators were included in landscaping for the newly opened Allington Household Waste Recycling Centre (2022). And management for the closed landfill site, Shaw Grange (near Charing), will provide for pollinators by including sheltering and overwintering habitat and increasing the number of flowering, pollen rich plants.

Pollinator parks: Kent County Council's country parks are managed for the benefit of biodiversity, and pollinators are an integral part of this activity with grassland areas managed to maintain flowering plants and grasses diversity and optimum soil conditions. At Brockhill Country Park (Hythe) habitat is specifically managed for the benefit of solitary bees, providing foraging and nesting opportunities.

Insecticide action: A review in 2021 confirmed no use of the damaging neonicotinoid. The Chair of the Plan Bee member group and Cabinet Member for Environment also lobbied the UK, and other European Governments, to take a stand against permissions for emergency use of neonicotinoids and urged Kent MPs to take part in a debate about this pesticide.

Trialling alternatives to herbicide use: Kent Highways has trialled alternatives for weed control however, no viable, effective, affordable and environmentally friendly alternatives have yet been found. Work continues on this and various contract

renewals over the next two years present opportunities to further explore pesticide use reduction and trial alternatives.

Working with district and borough councils: A Plan Bee blueprint has been developed, focussing on the range of actions that could be taken at the local level by these authorities.

Raising awareness and mobilising the people of Kent: 1,500 people follow our Plan Bee Facebook page and 2,300 receive our monthly newsletter. Both provide advice on action to take and information of pollinator activities. Over 5,000 people took part in our public perception survey in 2021 and we had 336 individuals and 16 organisation pledge to not cut their grass for the month of May, during the No Mow May campaign in 2022. We have launched the Kent Children's University Pollinator Challenge, a 12-month programme of pollinator-themed activities and learning for children aged 5 to 14. And we engaged with stakeholder and businesses across the county via two Plan Bee summits, in 2020 and 2021. Both attracted large numbers of attendees – the 2020 event was one of the County Council's best attended online events that year, with 240 people taking part – demonstrating the level of interest in this important agenda.

Roadside Nature Reserves: Kent and Medway Roadside Nature Reserves project has been going since 1994, protecting threatened wildlife and habitats in roadside verges with a network of sites now totalling 123. It's run by a team of voluntary road verge wardens and is a partnership between Kent Highways and Kent Wildlife Trust. MAKING A BUZZ FOR THE COAST A partnership project to safeguard rare bees by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, which created and restored habitats and linked isolated populations by creating flower-rich 'stepping stones' along 135 miles of the coast from Dartford to Deal.

Short-haired Bumblebee Reintroduction: A partnership of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Natural England, Hymettus and the RSPB was set up in 2009 to bring back the short-haired bumblebee to Dungeness and Romney Marsh in Kent, the place where they were last seen before going extinct in 2000. The project brought in short-haired bumblebees from Sweden and worked with farmers, landowners and conservation groups to create fower-rich habitats to support the new bees. This work now continues and is expanding its area as the Bee Connected project.

A Conservation Strategy for the Shrill Carder Bee: Bumblebee Conservation Trust is also leading a national group of partners to delivery this strategy, which aims to increase habitat, connectivity, evidence data and have an increased understanding of the needs of this nationally rare bumblebee. The north Kent coast is part of the larger Thames Estuary focus area, one of only four areas in England and Wales where the species is still recorded.

Kent's Magnificent Moths: A partnership project led by Butterfly Conservation is helping to save and celebrate some of the UK's rarest and most beautiful moths in East Kent. The project also offers opportunities for people to engage with these moths, help carry out recording work and become involved in vital habitat management work.

4.8 Ecology Island (Ecology Island)

Ecology Island is a weekly mental health retreat in a peaceful, wooded area of Dartford's Central Park, along the River Darent. It is a collaboration between North Kent Mind and the North West Countryside Partnership, a conservation group which we support and fund. Volunteers who attend the retreat work together to learn conservation and wildlife preservation techniques.

4.9 Rights of Way Projects (Improving our Rights of Way)

The Kent Rights of Way Improvement Plan is designed to increase the use and enjoyment of Kent's public rights of way and open greenspace.

A number of schemes that help to deliver the positive outcomes identified in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan are completed as part of the Single Local Growth Fund project. The Single Local Growth Fund is specifically supporting the delivery of a range of small scale local improvements to routes that provide sustainable transport connections to areas of employment and education across the county. The schemes often make use of existing public rights of way, diverting and upgrading them to encourage and support higher levels of use.

Schemes in progress:

Finberry to Ashford scheme: Work has begun on two sections of the new route to link the Finberry residential housing development at Cheesemans Green to Ashford town centre and International train station.We completed Phase 1 in 2019. Phase 2 of the bridleway upgrade work is planned to begin summer 2020 and be completed by the end of the year.

Powder Mills scheme: This project links the Powder Mills development in Leigh to Tonbridge. The necessary agreements have been secured and we have completed the path construction. Legal orders are currently in progress to convert the footpath into a cycle track.

Peters Village: Work is nearly complete on this project which links the completed Medway Towpath at Aylesford with the new housing development at Peters Village, Burham.This project will also improve the Medway Towpath between Aylesford and Mill Hall Station.

Leybourne Chase Equestrian Link: This project aims to improve equestrian links through and around the Leybourne Chase development, by upgrading the status of existing footpaths and creating new bridleways.These developments will improve connectivity for residents of the new development, providing greater walking and cycling access to the countryside.Work on this scheme is due to begin February 2020

Ashford Links: Our intention is to improve connectivity across the Ashford area, linking new developments with existing amenities and the town centre for walking,

cycling and equestrian use. The creation of a new bridleway route approximately 2 kilometres long, will link the parish of Kingsnorth with Park Farm, Chilmington Green and Ashford town centre.

Schemes completed:

River Medway Towpath Improvements and The Loose Valley Greenway.

4.10 Explore Kent (Explore Kent)

Explore Kent is a Kent County Council led partnership initiative with public, private and voluntary sector partners that promote and actively encourage Kent's residents to access, enjoy and benefit from the great natural resources that Kent has to offer. We also work alongside our friends at Visit Kent to promote Kent to the wider UK and European community as an outdoor leisure destination.

4.11 Restore species-rich lowland meadow - Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022)

Yalding Lees is a 6 ha grassland site. It was classified as rank neutral grassland (GN31) in the 2012 Habitat Survey, and the historical management was a summer cut with the cuttings left on the grassland. The Lees lie at the confluence of three main rivers - the Medway, the Teise and the Beult – and are part of the flood prevention for the local village as a water storage area in times of high river flow. Advice in 2014 from the SOMM Project led to a change of management to hay making (cuttings removed).

4.12 Kent Turtle Dove Friendly Zones (TDFZS) Project – RSPB (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022)

Turtle doves are the UK's fastest declining bird species and they are threatened with global extinction (IUCN Red List of Endangered Species). Kent is the stronghold for turtle dove in the UK. Within Kent, 12 important core turtle dove areas have been identified as the highest priority for the species. These areas are known as Turtle Dove Friendly Zones (TDFZs) and are the areas where the RSPB is prioritising its work. Working with landowners to develop on the ground habitat for the species and engaging with the local community to highlight the plight of the species and promote community habitat delivery for this species.

4.13 Great Bells Farm - Environment Agency and the RSPB (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022)

Great Bells Farm was purchased by the Environment Agency to provide new grazing marsh habitat to replace predicted future losses. Environment Agency commissioned the RSPB to design and build the new wetland habitats due to their experience of designing and managing wetlands, such as at Medmerry and Wallasea. The project was awarded the CIEEM 'NGO Impact Award' in 2014

4.14 Shingle on the cusp- KWT (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022)

This project is enabling us to test methods of restoring degraded shingle habitats. Brash has been piled at different heights in plots on RSPB and MoD land and is being monitored for vegetation recolonisation and changes in invertebrate assemblage. In addition invasive species are being controlled and leaflets and web content produced to inform local residents on how to protect these habitats

4.15 Improving the River Beult SSSI for people and wildlife- Environment Agency (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022)

The project has been working in partnership with local stakeholders, as part of the Medway Flood Action Plan, to understand what services the River Beult SSSI currently provides or supports and how these benefits for people and wildlife can be improved. This has helped us to form a plan to improve the River Beult and we want to work with the community to put this plan into action to develop a more natural river and floodplain which are resilient to pressures including climate change

4.16 Guardians of the deep – KWT (Kent Biodiversity Strategy, 2022)

Giving everyone the chance to learn more about the astonishing wildlife that lives around Kent's shores, providing lots of ideas and activities in which people can help to look after it. Establishing a network of 360 volunteer Coastal Guardians (eyes and ears of the coast); training for volunteers in shore survey techniques and species identification; establishment of a team of trained Coastbusters (volunteers to help tackle the invasion of the non-native Pacific oyster); promotion of Marine Conservation Zones to the wider public. For schools and young people: six-week WildBeach programmes at the coast and Undersea Explorer snorkelling workshops (in swimming pools)

4.17 The King Charles III England Coast Path (England Coast Path)

The King Charles III England Coast Path is a new walking route that will follow the entire coast of England. For the first time people will have the right of access around all our open coast. This includes – where appropriate – any land, other than the trail itself, which forms part of the Coastal Margin. The path is being opened in sections but will, when completed, be the longest coastal path in the world. It will be a National Trail.

SECTION 5: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND REFERENCED

Document reference	Link
Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, 2024	Reg 19 Draft KMWLP - showing changes tracked (kent.gov.uk)
Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, 2024	ELES FINAL v.3
Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan, 2024	ELES-Implementation-Plan-2024-to-2027.pdf (kent.gov.uk)
Kent Connected	Kent Connected - Getting there together
Solar Together Kent	Solar Together Kent - Kent County Council
Greener Kent	Greener Kent - Kent County Council
Kent Environmental Strategy, 2016	KES_Final.pdf (kent.gov.uk)
Kent's Plan Bee, 2022	BEE (kent.gov.uk)
Pollinator Projects	Pollinator projects in Kent - Kent County Council
Kent and Medway Shoreline Pollution Emergency Plan, 2023	Kent and Medway Shoreline Pollution Emergency Plan - Kent County Council
Ecology Island	Ecology Island case study - Kent County Council
Plan Tree Strategy, 2022	Plan Tree (kent.gov.uk)
Canopy Cover Report	Canopy cover report (kent.gov.uk)
Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2022.	Kent Biodiversity Strategy | Kent Nature
Kent Landscape Assessment, 2004	Landscape Assessment of Kent 2004
Kent by numbers	Kent by numbers - Kent Public Health Observatory (kpho.org.uk)
Country Parks	Kent Country Parks - Kent County Council
Countryside Partnerships	Home - Kent Countryside Partnerships
Kent Downs NL	Kent Downs National Landscape - Kent Downs
High Weald NL	Welcome to the High Weald National Landscape
Flood Risk Management Strategy, 2017	Local-Flood-Risk-Management-Strategy-2017-2023.pdf
Rights of Way Improvement Plan, 2018	Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2018-2028.pdf (kent.gov.uk)
Improving our Rights of Way	Improving our rights of way - Kent County Council
Explore Kent	Welcome to Explore Kent - Explore Kent
Cycling Strategies	Cycling strategies - Kent County Council
Active Travel Strategy, 2018	Active Travel Strategy
Heritage Conservation Strategy, 2022	Kent Heritage Conservation Strategy

England Coast Path	King Charles III England Coast Path - South East - National Trails
Local Transport Plan 5, 2024	KCC Local Transport Plan 5
Kent Nature Partnership, 2022	Biodiversity Net Gain | Kent Nature
KCC	KCC Officer