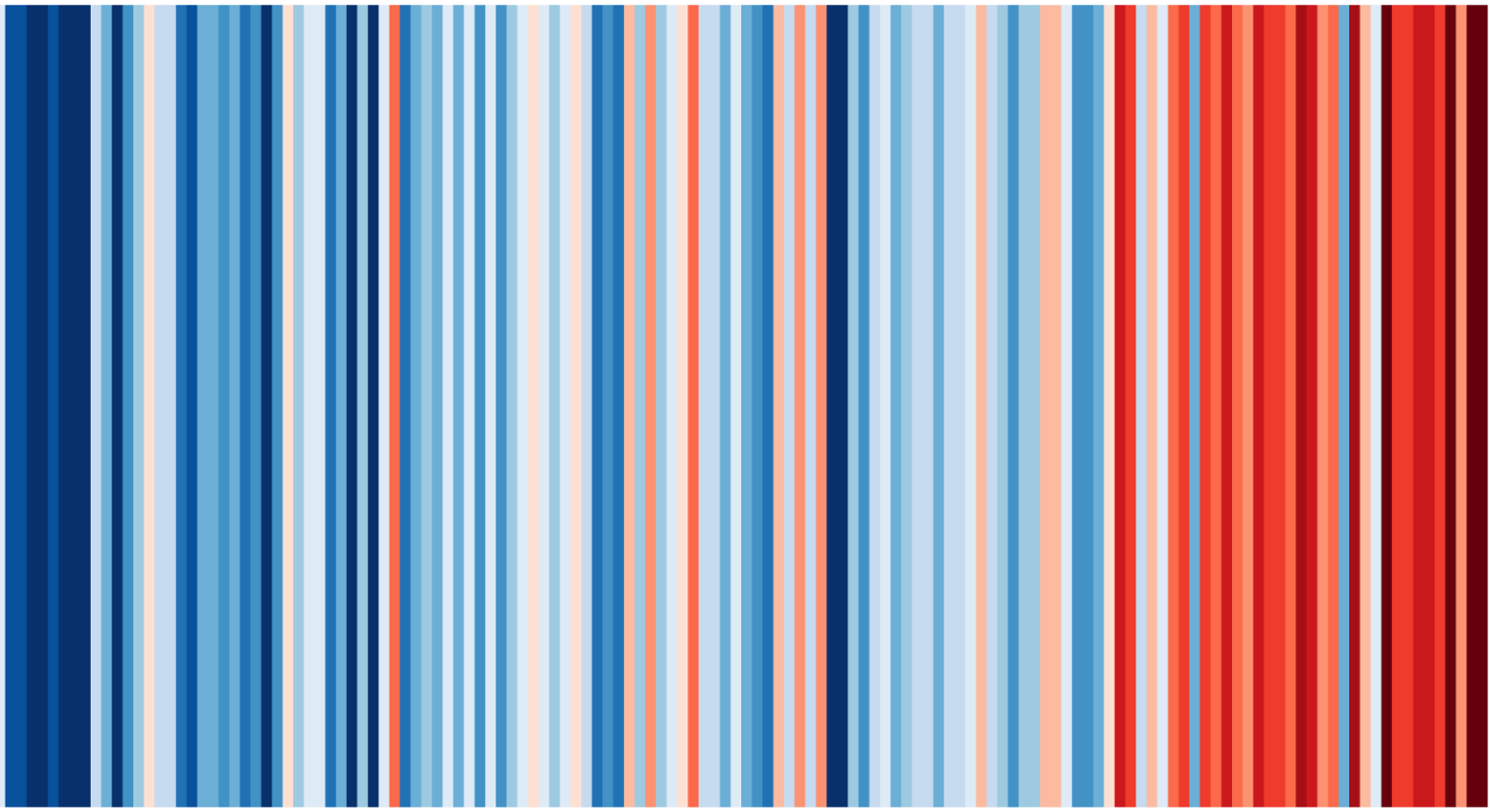

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Borough Climate Change Strategy: Accessible Version

16 July 2025

TWBC CLIMATE ACTION

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Foreword

In 2019 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency. This declaration, fuelled by a recognition of the climate crisis and a clear shift in local attitudes, was a critical first step by the council in addressing this problem.

While national governments are the key to creating large-scale change, smaller, localised strategies must be implemented to ensure localised decarbonisation can occur. It has been estimated that Local Authorities can directly influence up to one third of local emissions. Across the Tunbridge Wells Borough area, emissions have dropped by 47.3% since records began in 2005, with the council's own emissions dropping by 24% since our 2018/19 baseline. While this progress is encouraging, we still have a long way to go.

This strategy is about reducing all emissions across our geographical area, rather than the council's own emissions specifically, which are covered by a separate strategy. As explained in detail within this strategy, we have re-aligned our borough net zero target to 2050, in line with the Climate Change Act 2008. Climate action in communities can only be delivered with commensurate support and funding from national government, support which is currently lacking. With the information now available to us that was not at the time of our initial climate emergency declaration, it is clear that 2050 is the most sensible, realistic, and achievable net zero target.

Tackling the climate crisis is a key element of our Strategic Plan 2024-32. We are committed to continuing our work to create a cleaner, green and net zero future for our borough. Climate change is an urgent issue that must be addressed at all levels of society, through positive, collective action. The clock is ticking; we all have a role to play alongside national government and must act locally if we are to have an impact globally. To do this, we have developed the strategy you are now reading, aimed at encouraging everyone in the borough to work towards achieving a net zero borough by 2050.

We have developed this Borough Climate Change Strategy to identify the key actions and ambitions required to set the borough on the path to net zero by 2050. It has been designed with residents in mind, ensuring that community and collaboration is at the heart of all that we do.

We can tackle the climate crisis together. This strategy is our starting point.

Cllr Rob Wormington

Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Climate Emergency

“Unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach.”

- Ko Barrett, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021)

Tackling climate change is a global issue to be solved by national and international governments, but governments cannot do it alone. Over 50% of emissions reductions required in the UK depend on local residents, communities and businesses taking action. Every individual has a responsibility to minimise their impact on the climate and ensure that future generations prosper.

The IPCC’s sixth assessment report was a ‘reality check’ for global, national, and local climate policy. If urgent action is not taken, the consequences of exceeding the 1.5°C threshold will be huge.

Climate change poses the most substantial challenge and threat to our way of life. If left un-checked, Climate Change will result in extreme changes to our weather systems, biodiversity loss and habitat degradation. It will threaten our public health, economy, infrastructure, and resources. Action must be taken to mitigate against these threats and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Tackling climate change is intrinsically linked with public health improvements, economic growth, sustainability, and poverty alleviation. This is our opportunity to tackle the biggest issue facing our society and improve the quality of life of our residents for generations to come. By acting now, we are safeguarding a better future.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) has acknowledged the urgency of the climate and biodiversity emergency with its declaration in 2019. To deliver against this declaration, TWBC has developed this Borough Climate Change Strategy.

This strategy shows how we can create a sustainable, low carbon borough. We have used key information, data, and policy to create achievable ambitions and actions. We have combined an evidence-based approach with public consultation and engagement to give all residents a voice on this topic.

The council recognises the key role it plays as a community leader in shaping the borough through its policies, partnerships, and services. Achieving net-zero cannot be done alone: it requires collective action from the whole community. This is reflected in the Strategy, whose adoption will steer climate action across our borough.

1.2. Purpose of this Strategy

By declaring a climate and biodiversity emergency, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) acknowledges the work required to drive local climate action. This declaration sets out our commitment to tackling climate change.

The council will not deliver this strategy alone. This strategy provides a framework for delivering climate action by the council, residents, and wider stakeholders, but is not a fixed course to net zero. Further developments in policy, understanding and technology may impact the scope and delivery of this strategy in the future.

We have developed this strategy to achieve the ambition of net zero in the borough by 2050, in line with the Climate Change Act 2008.

Greenhouse gas emissions are not constrained by borough boundaries; achieving net zero in isolation is beyond the control of the Borough Council and its residents. There are sectors that cannot be influenced without changes to national policy and regulation.

Aligning with the Climate Change Act 2008 provides the most realistic timeframe to achieving net zero. As highlighted by the seventh carbon budget released by the Climate Change Committee in 2025, net zero is possible in 2050, but significant and sustained action is required.

To meet this ambition, our strategy proposes 21 ambitions across seven priorities:

1. Buildings
2. Transport
3. Biodiversity and Environment
4. Renewable Energy
5. Waste and Resources
6. Business and Community Engagement
7. Adaptation

These ambitions depend on action from all residents, local institutions, businesses, community organisations and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Each priority has a detailed action plan, highlighting actions Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will take to achieve our ambitions and support the borough in doing so too.

1.3. Climate Change in Brief

1.3.1. What is climate change?

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns[1]. These changes can be in the mean and/or variability of its properties that persist for an extended period, typically decades or longer[2]. Whilst there have been natural periods of climate change in the earth's history, the scientific consensus observes that since the industrial revolution, this process has accelerated exponentially because of human activities[3].

1.3.2. Climate change causes

As highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) observed increases in global temperature and atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations (GHG) are unequivocally caused by GHG emissions resulting from human activity since 1750[4]. Human-induced warming is often referred to as anthropogenic climate change. Water vapour (H_2O), carbon dioxide (CO_2), nitrous oxide (N_2O), methane (CH_4) and ozone (O_3) are the primary GHGs in the Earth's atmosphere.

Since the industrial revolution, humans have increased the amount of GHGs in the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels for energy. Increased GHG concentrations in the atmosphere traps infrared radiation, stopping it from being re-emitted back into space. As more energy is trapped in the earth's atmosphere, the earth's temperature increases (global warming). This is the enhanced greenhouse effect.

From 1850 to 2019 the best estimate for human-caused global warming has been 1.07°C, directly from the GHG emissions being released into the atmosphere[5]. In 2025, atmospheric CO_2 concentration reached 427.1 parts per million (ppm), which is higher than at any time in the last two million years. This rise in CO_2 concentrations is at the limit of compatibility with the 1.5°C global temperature limit, set by the 2015 Paris Agreement (see section 2.1)[6].

2024 was confirmed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to be the warmest year on record (since records began in 1850): the earth's 10 warmest years all occurred in the past decade[7]. Average global temperature increase is now 1.46°C above pre-industrial levels, with global average temperature approximating 1.55°C in 2024, making 2024 the first year to breach the 1.5°C global warming limit[8].

[1] Met Office, 2025.
[2] IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report Annexes, 2023
[3] IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report, 2023
[4] IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report, 2023
[5] IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report, 2023
[6] Met Office Forecast
[7] National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, 2025
[8] World Meteorological Organisation, 2025

The below graphs from the NOAA highlight increase in global CO_2 concentrations since 1958 and the associated change in global temperatures.

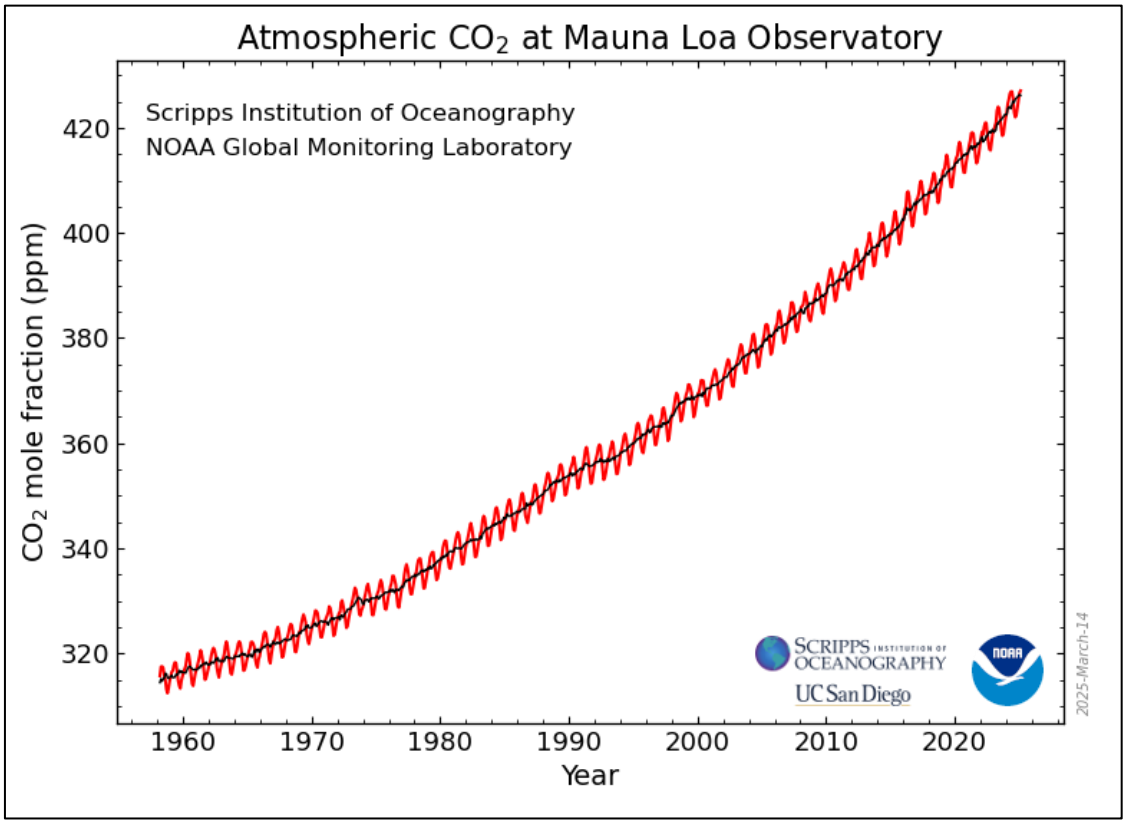

Figure 1: Atmospheric CO_2 concentration 1958-2024, NOAA, 2025

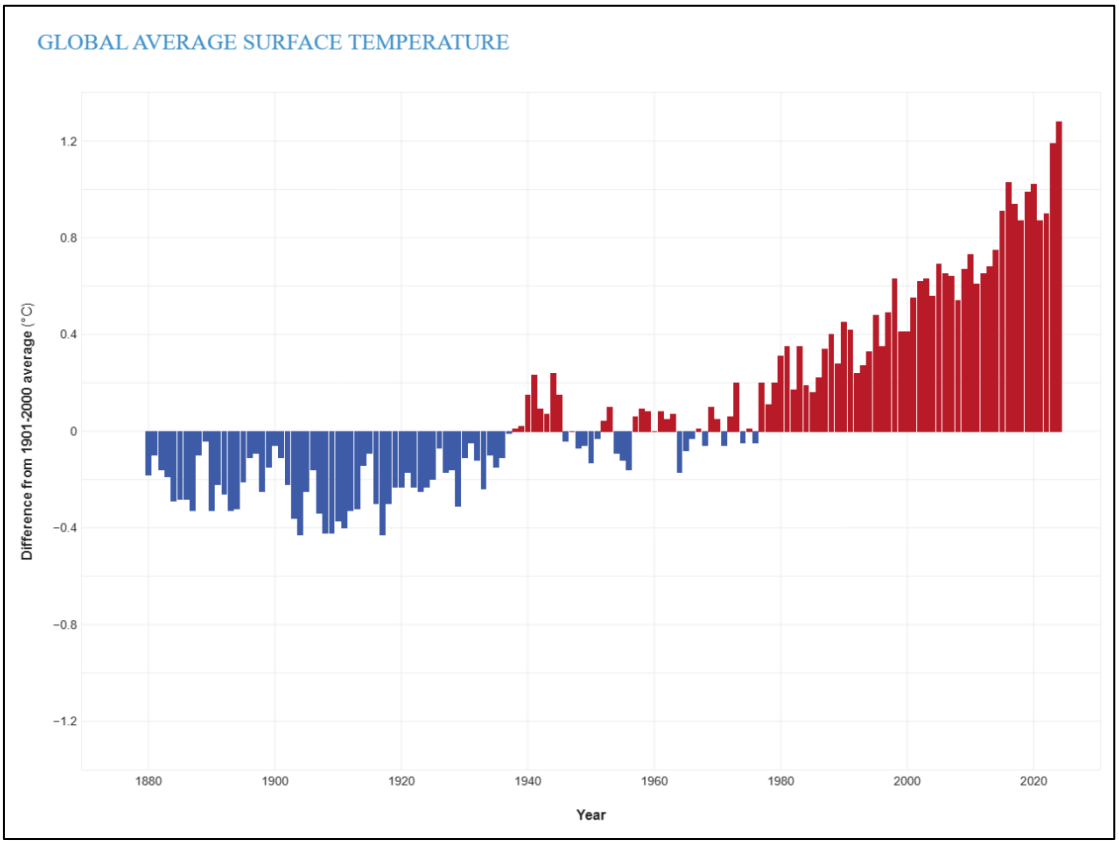

Figure 2: Global average surface temperature (°C) 1880-2024, NOAA, 2025

1.3.3. Climate change impacts

Global warming has had an unprecedented impact on the planet. Extreme weather events, such as heat waves, heavy rainfall, and droughts have already increased in frequency and intensity. Climate change is not a distant threat, but a reality.

Met Office projections following high emission scenario modelling for 2070, suggest that the UK will experience[9]:

- Warmer (+1°C to +4.5°C) and wetter winters (up to 30%).
- Hotter (+1°C to +6°C) and drier summers (up to 60%).
- More frequent and intense weather extremes.

Heatwaves:

Temperatures of 40.3°C were recorded in the UK in July 2022[10], making it our warmest year on record. The UK's ten warmest years have occurred since 2002; 2022 and 2023 were the hottest two years on record.

During the 2022 summer heatwaves, the UK observed 2,985 excess deaths associated with five separate heat periods between June and August[11]. By 2050, these heatwaves are expected to happen every other year[12].

Climate change is altering global rainfall patterns. Parts of the world are getting wetter; others are drying out and becoming more susceptible to drought. East Africa saw five failed rainy seasons between 2020 and 2022[13]. This impacts farming and livestock, putting a huge strain on food security. The World Weather Attribution (WWA) states that climate change has increased the likelihood of drought by 100 times[14].

On 7th January 2025 wildfires began in LA, devastating over 47,000 acres of California. Climate change has driven a 33% rise in burnt area across Western North America, between 2003 and 2019[15]. Rising temperatures dry out grass and shrubs, making them more flammable. This highlights the growing issue of rising temperatures and changing weather patterns enhancing the risk to fire-prone regions.

Storms:

Severe weather events, including heavy rainfall and storms, will become more common, leading to increased flooding and damage to homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure.

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[9] Met Office, 2025
[10] Met Office, 2022
[11] UK Health Security Agency, 2025
[12] Met Office UK Climate Projections: Headline Findings, 2022.
[13] World Meteorological Organization, 2023
[14] World Weather Attribution, 2023
[15] Nature Climate Change, 2024

The result: costly repairs, displaced residents, and disrupted electricity, water, transportation, and emergency services.

In the 2023/24 storm season, the UK and Ireland experienced 12 severe storms. WWA analysis tells us that 'average precipitation on stormy days increased by about 20% due to human-induced climate change'[16]. Storms and rainfall that breach our normal weather patterns are now expected to occur every three years.

Flooding:

6.1 million people in the UK live in flood prone areas. The Met Office predict that rainfall intensity could increase by up to 20% in the summer and 25% in the winter. It is expected that by 2070 the UK will meet the threshold for flash flood alerts twice as often than in 1990. Beyond infrastructure damage, flooding also contaminates water supplies, posing further public health risks and burdening local healthcare systems.

Communities across the UK have already been severely affected by storms and heavy rainfall: storm Eunice (February 2022) was one of the most powerful storms in the last decade. Storm Eunice resulted in four deaths from falling trees, over one million homes left without power and significant transport disruption[17]. In 2022/2023 Storm Babet resulted in the most severe flooding recorded to date; in winter 2023/2024 thirteen storms caused widespread damage and flooding to the UK[18].

Air quality:

Poor air quality, heat-related health issues, and rising levels of fuel poverty are impacts of climate change already affecting our borough. Climate change intensifies pollutant build-up caused by elevated temperatures and stagnant air, exacerbating respiratory and cardiovascular health problems.

By reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions we can address both climate and public health challenges. Benefits include cleaner air, reduced pressure on the NHS, enhanced energy security, growth in the low-carbon economy, and reductions in poverty.

Major roads in the borough, including the A26, A264, A267, and A21 are significant sources of emissions due to congestion, with additional contributions from industrial, commercial, and domestic activities. As of 2025, only one Air Quality Management Area (AQMAs) remains in place within the borough due to breaches of the nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) annual mean limit[19].

Agriculture:

Extreme weather disrupts the UK's food supply because agricultural systems are vulnerable to climate change. Intense drought, heavy rainfall, and unseasonal frosts affect crop yields and farming operations. The UK experienced a record-breaking heatwave in 2022: temperatures

[16] World Weather Attribution, 2024
[17] Met Office, 2022.
[18] Environment Agency, National assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England, 2024
[19] Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Air Quality Annual Status Report, 2024

exceeded 40°C for the first time. This led to reduced yields from wheat, potato, and carrot crops (all strategically important crops in the UK), due to drought stress and poor soil moisture retention[20]. In 2018, the "Beast from the East" cold snap followed by a summer drought further disrupted planting and harvesting, causing vegetable shortages, and forcing supermarkets to ration iceberg lettuces and broccoli[21].

Globally, climate change has also impacted agriculture, influencing food availability in the UK. Coffee production in regions like Brazil has declined due to changing weather patterns, while olive yields in southern Europe have also fallen because of extreme weather[22]. Cocoa-growing areas in West Africa are projected to shrink as higher temperatures make conditions less suitable for cacao trees[23]. Global disruptions directly affect UK imports, leading to shortages and higher food prices.

[20] State of the UK Climate 2022, International Journal of Climatology, 2023
[21] Food shortages in supermarkets, BBC News, 2017
[22] Agriculture and food security, Open Knowledge, 2021
[23] Climate Change 2022: Impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability, IPCC, 2022

1.4. Climate Change in the Borough

1.4.1. Borough territorial emissions

Tunbridge Wells Borough emitted 422.8 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent ($ktCO_2e$) in 2023[24]. Of this carbon footprint, 32% came from domestic properties, 31% from transport and 11% from agriculture. These three sectors contribute 74% of emissions in the Borough. Tunbridge Wells Borough also naturally sequesters emissions, absorbing 60.4 $ktCO_2e$ in 2023 from its forest and grassland.

The below pie chart breaks down the borough's emissions profile into the seven net emitting sectors:

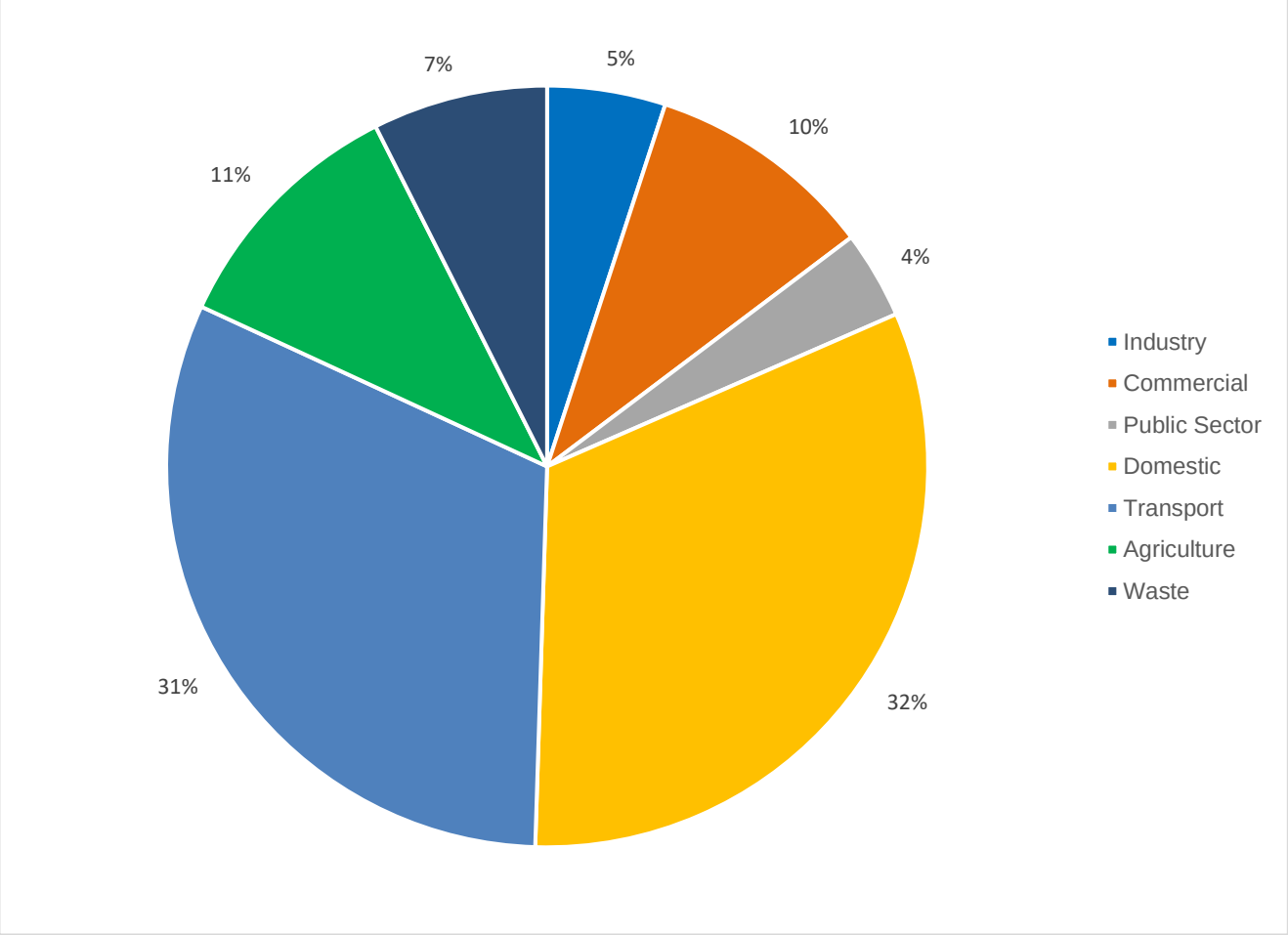

Figure 3: Tunbridge Wells Borough emissions sector breakdown 2023. DESNZ, 2025

Tunbridge Wells Borough emissions have fallen significantly since 2005, by 47.3%. Much of this reduction can be attributed to the decarbonisation of the national grid as the UK has

[24] UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, DESNZ, 2025

reduced its reliance on coal and oil. Building and car efficiencies have also contributed to this reduction to a smaller extent.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an annual reduction of 8.8%, the largest annual reduction since 2014 (10.2%). Emissions subsequently rebounded by 5.8% before falling in 2022 and 2023 by 6.7% and 5.8%, respectively. Emissions in 2023 are the lowest levels on record in the borough.

The below graph highlights the decrease since 2005, whilst also showing how emissions from each sector have changed over time:

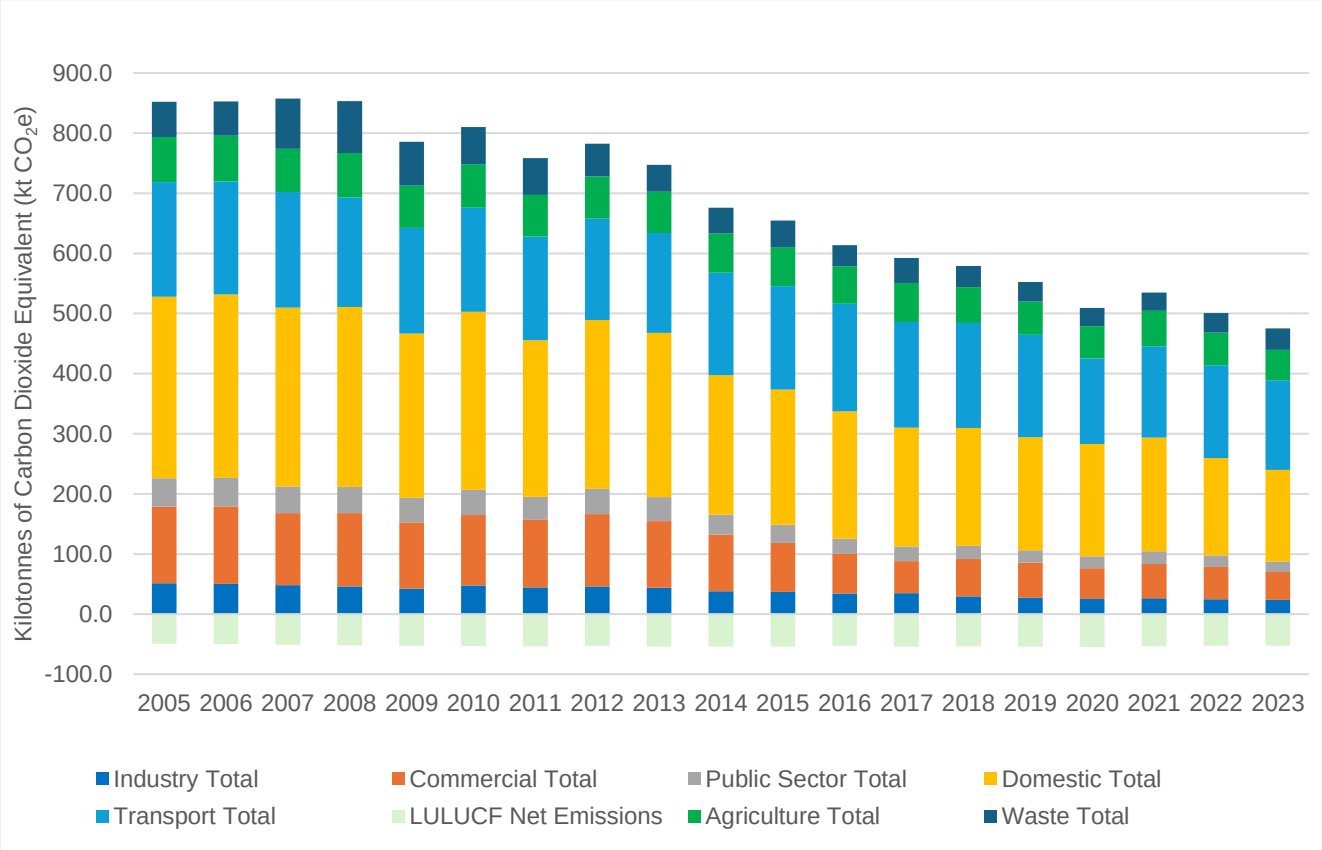

Figure 4: Tunbridge Wells Borough sector emissions 2005-2023. DESNZ, 2025.

Land use, land use change, and forestry only absorbs 52.3 $ktCO_2e$ (net), a fraction of what is needed to offset our borough's total emissions. While land-based sequestration (absorption) should not be neglected, this highlights the imbalance between our greenhouse gas emissions and removals.

Our emissions are decreasing but this data does not provide the full picture. These emissions are calculated with a focus on energy and fuel consumption, discounting consumption emissions which we are responsible for, but not accounting for. These sources include aviation, the food we eat and the goods we purchase. This means total emissions associated with our Borough are higher than officially reported by government. We must be conscious of this limitation when taking steps to reduce our emissions.

1.4.2. Borough consumption emissions:

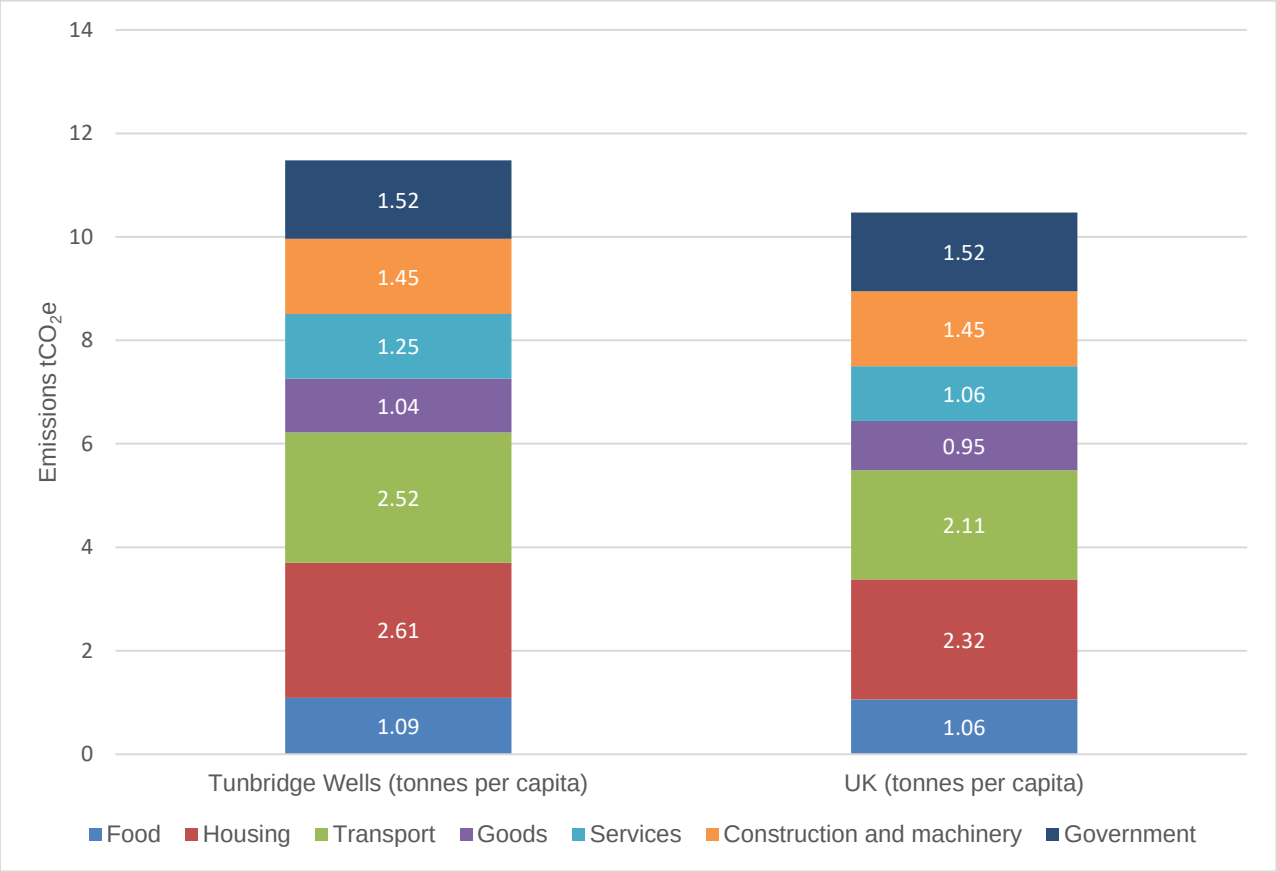

Figure 5: Per capita consumption emissions 2021 for Tunbridge Wells vs UK, Local Footprint, 2025

Consumption emissions are the greenhouse gases produced throughout the lifecycle of goods and services consumed within a specific area. This includes emissions from production, transportation, use, and disposal, regardless of where those emissions physically occur. TWBC monitor these emissions to understand our community's carbon footprint beyond direct emissions. Tracking consumption emissions helps identify high-impact areas like imported food, construction materials, or energy use, so that we can make targeted policies and public engagement to drive meaningful emissions reductions.

The per capita consumption emissions in our borough (11.5 tonnes) exceed the UK average (10.5 tonnes). This is true for most sectors, except for construction and machinery and government, which are consistent with the UK average.

This pattern of consumption-based emissions is caused by several factors. The average disposable income in our borough is £8,662 higher than the UK average[25]. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) household income data, areas with higher disposable incomes generate greater consumption-based emissions because they spend more on goods and services, which have carbon-intensive supply chains[26].

[25] Regional gross household income, UK: 1997 to 2022, ONS, 2025
[26] Regional gross household income, UK: 1997 to 2022, ONS, 2025

Additionally, car ownership per household in Tunbridge Wells borough is higher than the national average in England. 43.2% of households in the borough own one car or van, compared to 41.3% in England. In Tunbridge Wells is 29.7% of households own two vehicles, while England's average is 26.2%. 11.1% of households in the borough own three or more vehicles, compared to 9.1% across England[27]. More privately owned vehicles mean more emissions from road transport and higher transport consumption emissions.

Housing in Tunbridge Wells is generally larger and older. In homes that have not been retrofitted for energy efficiency, this means higher energy demands for heating. The borough has more households with four or more bedrooms (27.8%) compared to the national average (21.1%). More homes in Tunbridge Wells have lower Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of E, F, and G, compared to the England average[28].

The most recent data on local production and consumption, last available in 2014 on the Southeast Local Enterprise Partnership website, indicated that 29% of industry demand was met through local sources.

These combined factors mean our borough has higher consumption-based emissions than the UK average.[29]

The below graph shows regional per capita consumption emissions (measured in tonnes of CO_2 equivalent) from 2001 to 2021 for Tunbridge Wells and the UK average.

Both Tunbridge Wells and the UK saw rising emissions in the early 2000s. Between 2008 and 2010, emissions dropped sharply, likely linked to the 2008 financial crisis, which lowered consumption across the UK. Improved energy efficiency measures and cleaner energy sources also factor into this reduction.

The UK's per capita emissions remained stable, with a gradual downward trend. Tunbridge Wells fluctuated, potentially because of variations in local economic activity, housing emissions, and vehicle use.

[27] Local indicators for Tunbridge Wells, ONS, 2025
[28] Local indicators for Tunbridge Wells, ONS, 2025
[29] Local Authority Consumption Accounts, Local Footprint, 2025

Emissions in both the UK and Tunbridge Wells hit their lowest levels around 2020, largely linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced travel and consumption. A slight rebound is observed in 2021, indicating a return to normal economic activity.

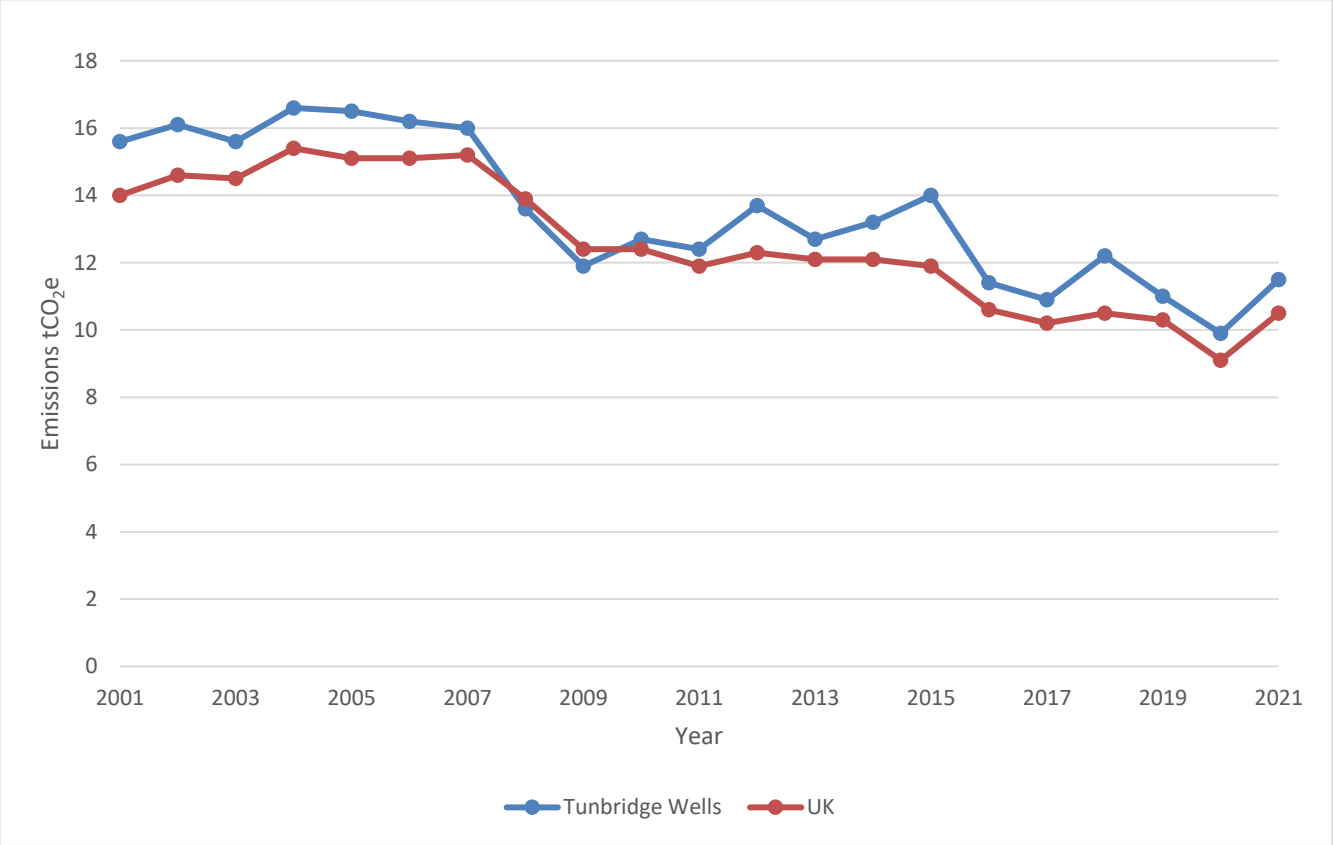

Figure 6: Regional per capita consumption emissions 2001-2021, Local Footprint, 2025

1.4.3. Local climate risks

Geographies often determine how a local area will experience climate change. Knowing the risks relevant to the local area is vital to building resilience.

The Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway (CCRIA) informs on climate risks to society, economy, and environment. Opportunities and adaptations are measured and given urgency scores. This assessment highlights areas of weakness and provides recommendations for each action in the short-term.

Risks to the borough and county are:

- **River and surface water flooding:** Both Tunbridge Wells and Kent are susceptible to river and surface water flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. The river Medway and its tributaries pose flood risks in Kent, while Tunbridge Wells has localized surface water flooding issues due to its topography.
    - Tunbridge Wells Borough has experienced many pluvial flooding events. A thunderstorm in 2018 caused railway disruptions and traffic gridlocks. It left the

Pantiles, where 18 residential properties and 17 businesses experienced flooding[30] covered in mud, sewage, and rubbish[31]. In the last 5 years, manholes near the River Grom have burst more than 30 times[32]. These floods are caused by rainfall exceeding the capacity of current drainage systems.

Figure 7: The Pantiles Floods in Royal Tunbridge Wells, 2015. Photo from Halls Bookshop.

- **Heatwaves:** More frequent, more intense heatwaves pose risks to public health, particularly elderly and younger demographics. Urban areas like Tunbridge Wells may experience higher temperatures due to the urban heat island effect.
    - If temperatures rise by 2°C, our hottest summer day will reach 37.2°C. If earth's temperature increases by 4°C, summer temperatures in the Borough will reach 41.8°C[33].
    - The intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), predict that under the existing global policies the average temperature increase attributed to climate change in 2070 is expected to be 3.03°C [34].
- **Storms and high winds**: The whole of Kent is affected by strong storms and high winds which cause property damage, disrupted services, and pressure on emergency services.
    - The latest Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System (SWIMS) report released by KCC in 2020 showed a total of 11 severe weather events logged[35].
    - At the time of writing, the most recent storm to hit the UK was Storm Eowyn which had yellow warnings of wind across Kent, Sussex, and Surrey with speeds reaching

[30] Flood Investigation Report, KCC, 2019
[31] Royal Tunbridge Wells Flash Flooding, BCC, 2018
[32] Call for urgent improvements following flooding, BBC, 2024
[33] What will climate change look like near me, BBC, 2022
[34] The representative concentration pathways: an overview, NOAA, 2011
[35] Monitoring Impacts of Severe Weather, KCC, 2020

56mph[36]. This caused disruptions to power, internet, and phone networks, fallen trees, and flooded infrastructure.

- **Droughts:** Low rainfall leads to droughts which affect water supply, agriculture, and ecosystems. Kent, known as the "Garden of England," will see impact on its horticulture and agriculture sectors.
    - In August 2022 official drought status was announced across Kent. Residents in the Borough (as well as most of Kent) were subject hosepipe bans.
    - A 2024 KCC report stated that the projected wetter winters and warmer summers, could bring vector-borne diseases to Kents shores[37].
- **Sea level rise**: Coastal areas in Kent are at risk from rising sea levels, which lead to increased coastal erosion, loss of habitats, and coastal flooding. Kent faces risks from coastal flooding in low-lying areas like Romney Marsh and areas around the Thames Estuary.

You can read the full Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway here.

[36] Southeast travel disruption as wind and rain hits, BBC, 2025
[37] Implications of Climate Change for Public Health, KCC, 2024

2. Achieving Net Zero

For Tunbridge Wells Borough, reaching net zero is critical to addressing the impacts of climate change. Reducing emissions from transport, buildings, waste, and other sectors, and enhancing natural carbon sinks, contributes to national climate goals and improves air quality, energy efficiency, and resilience to extreme weather. Reaching net zero is an environmental and social responsibility, which supports healthier communities, green job creation, and long-term economic stability.

2.1. What is Net Zero?

Net zero means balancing the greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere with those removed. Such removals could come from activities such as tree planting, peatland restoration, and carbon capture and storage.

2.2. Policy Frameworks

Policy has been instrumental in driving the climate action we have seen to date. International treaties, agreements and carbon budgets are designed to tackle climate change and minimise its impacts, while policy ensures climate action is taken locally.

The following section highlights international, national, and local policies driving climate action:

2.2.1. International agreements:

The Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement (PA) are agreements from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Kyoto Protocol (1997) was the first to impose legally binding obligations on signatory countries to reduce and limit greenhouse gas emissions, though it only applied to developed nations[38].

Building on the Kyoto Protocol, the 2015 Paris Agreement committed all parties to keeping the rise in global surface temperature to well below 2°C above preindustrial levels. The agreement also stated it preferable to limit warming to 1.5°C[39]. As of 2024, 195 members of the UNFCCC have consented and are parties to the agreement, although President Trump has since announced the United States' withdrawal. At the time of writing, signatories account for over 98% of all global greenhouse gas emissions.

As part of the UNFCCC, the annual conference of the parties (COP) brings together all UNFCCC parties to assess progress in tackling climate change. The Kyoto Protocol (COP3) and the Paris Agreement (COP21) were agreed at these summits. The COP28 summit in 2023

[38] Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCC, 1998
[39] The Paris Agreement, UNFCC, 2016

was the first international agreement committed to the transition away from fossil fuels, marking "the beginning of the end" of fossil fuel use for energy[40]. Outcomes of COP29, the most recent conference, included a $300 billion annual climate finance goal for developing nations by 2035, and operational rules for global carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement[41]. Pledges supported renewable energy, energy storage, and green hydrogen, while the Baku Adaptation Roadmap advanced global goals on adaptation.

2.2.2. National policy:

Climate Change Act 2008:

In 2008, the UK became the first country to establish a legally binding national climate commitment with the Climate Change Act. This act set an emissions reduction target of 80%, which was later revised to achieve net zero emissions by 2050[42]. The Climate Change Act requires the UK government to set emissions targets or "carbon budgets," every five years. Carbon budgets set legally binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions over five-year periods, creating a cost-effective pathway to meet long-term climate targets. To date, five carbon budgets have been enacted, extending to 2032.

Seventh Carbon Budget:

The seventh carbon budget sets the UK's carbon limits for 2038-2042, ensuring the country stays on track to meet its Net Zero by 2050 target[43]. It is developed by the Climate Change Committee (CCC), an independent advisory body that makes recommendations to the government on carbon reduction strategies. This budget outlines a comprehensive pathway to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The CCC conduct analysis on emissions trends, economic impacts, and sector-specific decarbonisation pathways, then publishes a report outlining recommended carbon limits. The government considers the report before setting the final budget. National policies and funding mechanisms are adjusted to align with the budget's targets, guiding industries, businesses, and local authorities in reducing emissions. Local councils can use the budget's framework to shape climate action plans. The budget acts as a roadmap so that national climate goals are translated into practical local emissions reductions.

The below timeline highlights some recommendations for decarbonisation in the UK:

2025 to 2030

- **Electric Vehicles (EVs) Adoption**: Reduce emissions from the transport sector by adopting electric vehicles, aiming for most new car sales to be electric by 2030.
- **Heat Pump Installations**: Reduce emissions from home heating by aiming for more than half of homes to use heat pumps by 2040.

[40] COP28 Agreement Signals "Beginning of the End" of the Fossil Fuel Era, UNFCC, 2023
[41] COP29 Key outcomes and next steps for the UK, CCC, 2024
[42] Climate Change Act 2008, UK Government, 2025
[43] The Seventh Carbon Budget, CCC, 2025

- **Renewable Energy Expansion**: Meet growing demand for electrification by expanding renewable energy capacity, to include: a sixfold increase in offshore wind, a doubling of onshore wind, and more than quadrupling solar capacity compared to current levels.

2030 to 2035

- **EPC Ratings**: All fuel poor homes to be upgraded to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C by 2030 and as many homes as possible to be EPC Band C by 2035.
- **Industrial Electrification**: Electrify industrial heat processes, which are projected to contribute to 57% of emissions reduction in the industry sector by 2040, by adopting electric boilers, ovens, and heat pumps.
- **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Deployment**: Use CCS technologies in industries like chemicals and cement, with high process emissions to capture and store carbon dioxide effectively.
- **Waste and Recycling**: Increase the UK household recycling rate from 45% (2021) to 57% by 2035. The recycling rate for non-household waste needs to increase from an estimated 49% in 2021 to 74% by 2035.

2035 to 2040

- **Hydrogen Fuel Adoption**: Integrate hydrogen as a fuel source in industrial processes which cannot be electrified, contributing to 7% of emissions reduction in the industry sector by 2040.
- **Peatland Restoration**: Aim for peatland restoration to account for 17% of emissions reductions in the agriculture and land use sectors by 2040.

2040 to 2045

- **Businesses**: Install heat pumps in non-residential buildings with 83% and 95% of heat in commercial and public sector buildings delivered by low-carbon technology by 2040.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[44], sets out the Government's planning policies for achieving sustainable development (section 2) and combatting climate change, flooding, and coastal change (section 14). There is also Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) relating to Climate Change.

The NPPF provides a clear set of guidelines that local planning authorities, must consider when developing local plans. The NPPF ensures local and national policies align. By setting expectations, the NPFF helps local authorities create robust planning policies that meet legal requirements.

[44] National Planning Policy Framework, UK Government, 2025

2.2.3. Regional policies:

In 2020, Kent County Council (KCC) agreed The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, which sets out how KCC, Medway Council and the 12 district and borough councils of Kent will respond to the climate emergency and drive clean, resilient economic recovery across the county. This strategy commits Kent to achieving net zero 2050, and a 50% to 60% reduction in emissions by 2030[45].

2.2.4. Local policies:

TWBC declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in 2019, and a 2030 net zero ambition was established for the borough and the Council.

Since the declaration, TWBC has developed a Corporate Carbon Descent Plan (CCDP), to achieve net zero across the Council's operations[46].

The emerging local plan includes sustainability and climate change objectives working towards net zero, including conserving environmental assets, improving energy efficiency of new developments through sustainable design, prioritising active travel, and maintaining the green belt's purpose.

A detailed overview of national and international legislation, national and local policy and strategy can be found in our supporting evidence document.

[45] Kent and Medway Low Emissions Strategy, KCC, 2020
[46] Corporate Carbon Descent Plan, TWBC, 2021

2.3. Developing Our Borough Climate Change Strategy

2.3.1. Climate and biodiversity emergency declaration

Following TWBC's declaration of a climate and biodiversity emergency (FC29/19), the Council agreed to establish how the council and the wider community, businesses, organisations, and individuals make the borough carbon neutral[47] by 2030:

"Tunbridge Wells Borough Council recognises the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence pointing to man-made climate change and the harmful impacts this is having on natural habitats and ecosystems, biodiversity, and our lives in general. It notes the early work undertaken to date by the Council including efforts to promote active travel, increase recycling and the reduction of plastic usage in the Town Hall but understands it needs to do more. It recognises that it has a responsibility to take a firm lead on reducing the council's and the wider borough's carbon emissions and in furtherance of this responsibility agrees to.

- *Declare its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies.*
- *Set up a climate cross party task force to start a dedicated report within the fiscal year with actions that it needs to take to address this emergency including how the wider community including businesses, organisations and individuals can be encouraged to make their own contributions to meeting a goal to make the Borough carbon neutral by 2030. This report will include a plan to conduct a green audit of all council services to ensure that weight is given to the environmental and sustainability impact as well as cost and which will inform the next iteration of the Council's five-year plan.*
- *Ensure that forthcoming plans and strategies (including the Local Plan and the next iteration of the Five-Year Plan) set out ways in which the Council can make its contribution to reduce carbon emissions, the degradation of the environment and combating climate change by agreeing an ambition to make the Council's operations carbon neutral by 2030;*
- *Lobby central government to provide additional resources and to grant the necessary freedoms to deliver the above*
- *Take steps with partners to proactively include young people in the process, ensuring that they have a voice in shaping the future by setting up a Citizen's Assembly as a way of also involving residents and businesses in the process as climate change will have implications for generations to come."*

[47] Whilst the word carbon neutral was used, it was agreed that this term was to be used synonymously with net zero.

The council's work initially focused on developing a Corporate Carbon Descent Plan (CCDP), to implement decarbonisation interventions for council operations. Our borough strategy is the next stage in delivering against the 2019 declaration.

2.3.2. Resident consultation

The 2019 declaration agreed to "take steps with partners to proactively include young people in the process, ensuring that they have a voice in shaping the future by setting up a Citizen's Assembly as a way of also involving residents and businesses in the process as climate change will have implications for generations to come."

The resources required to deliver a Citizen's Assembly were prohibitive, and research suggested that this would not be the most effective format for engagement. Engagement options were discussed at cabinet (CAB116/20) and at full council (FC78/20). Full council noted different options on public engagement and agreed that the debate held at full council should provide guidance on the preferred engagement option.

We adopted the following phased approach to the public consultation of our draft borough climate change strategy.

Phase One: Informal drop-in sessions and online engagement

The sustainability and communications teams held borough-wide drop-in sessions throughout summer and autumn 2024. During phase one, we engaged in informal discussions about climate change, addressing residents' questions and clarifying topics where further education was needed. We wanted to know whether climate action was a priority for residents and whether they supported the delivery of a borough climate change strategy.

We spoke to over 400 residents in person throughout phase one, attending 17 drop-in events. Almost every resident we spoke to communicated their support for climate action and the council taking an active approach.

Phase Two: Focus groups

We delivered 12 90-minute focus groups from August to October 2024, engaging with 71 residents. Most sessions covered all priorities, allowing residents to guide the discussion to gain deeper insights or ask further questions. We took notes on each session so that residents' views could be included in the strategy.

Phase Three: Statutory online consultation

Our online consultation ran until 18 October. We received 72 responses to the formal consultation and 215 responses to our short survey. More than 1,000 residents visited our consultation page, and almost 700 downloaded the strategy.

While the formal consultation focused on the draft strategy, the short survey also asked residents about actions they take or plan to take to become more sustainable. This shows how willing residents are to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.

Response

Response to the strategy was positive, most in-person respondents were pleased to see TWBC taking clear action and leadership on the issue of climate change. In focus groups, only one resident out of the 71 engaged with did not support the council developing this strategy (1%).

From the formal consultation 60% of respondents supported our ambitions, 35% did not support the ambitions and 5% we unsure. Of the 35% who did not support the ambitions 65% did not believe in climate change or net zero and 35% supported net zero but wanted a change to some of the ambitions and priorities.

72% of respondents supported the council in tacking climate action, 23% were not in support and 5% were unsure.

Following analysis of the consultation and engagement data, four feedback headlines were incorporated into the strategy:

- Ambitions with SMART, measurable targets are required.
- The strategy's ambitions should be more ambitious.
- Commitment to a specific Net Zero target was preferred.
- Improved resources, funding and delivery was essential to the successful delivery of the strategy.

2.3.3. SCATTER pathways

In development of this strategy, we utilised the SCATTER[48] (Setting City Area Targets and Trajectories for Emissions Reduction) tool, developed by Anthesis and funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). This tool allowed TWBC to create emissions reduction pathways, which helped us to forecast emissions across varying scenarios. This tool uses a range of national and local public data to help local authorities understand what net zero pathways will work for them.

SCATTER's high ambition pathway is the primary data source used to map our road to net zero. Figures 8 and 9 below display the 'Business as Usual' (BAU) and 'High Ambition' pathways for the borough.

[48] SCATTER, 2025

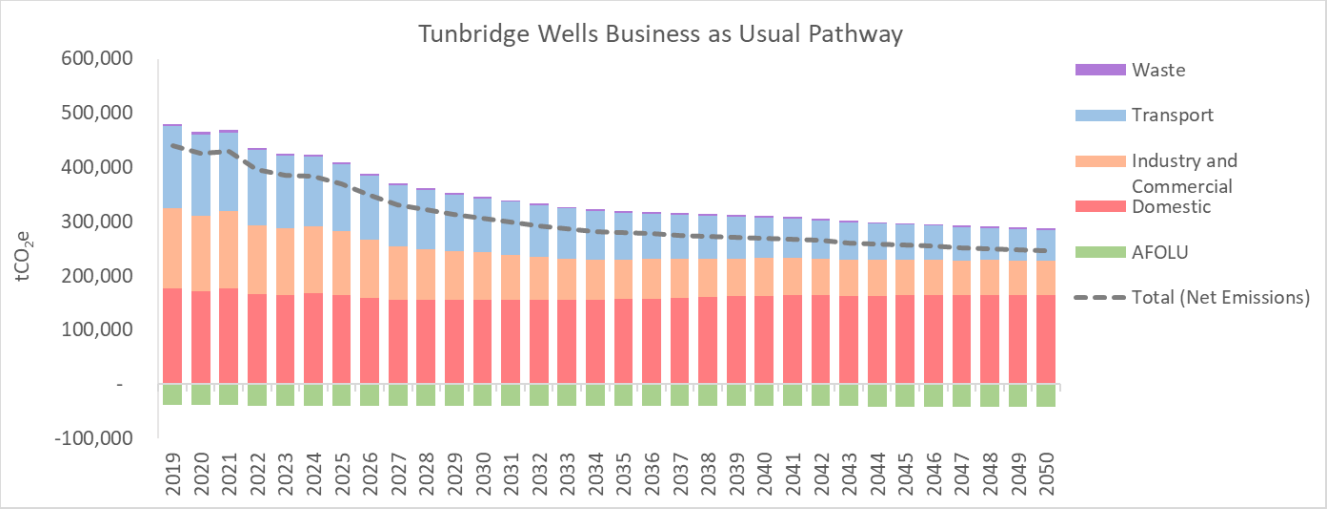

Figure 9: Tunbridge Wells Borough business as usual pathway. SCATTER, 2025

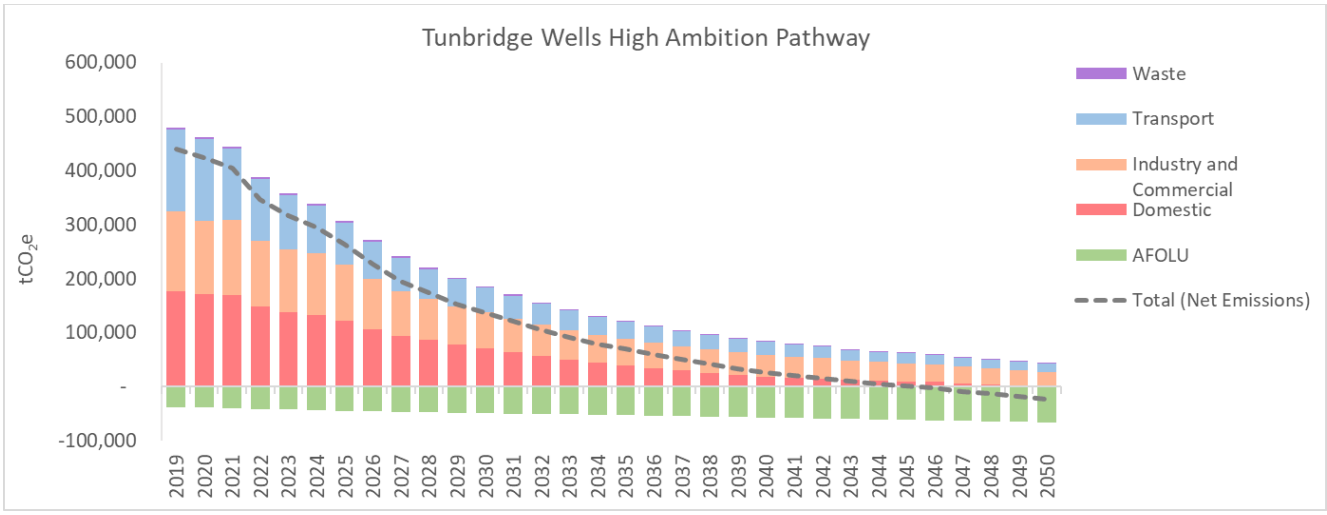

Figure 8: Tunbridge Wells Borough high ambition pathway. SCATTER, 2025.

As shown in figure 8, the high ambition pathway scenario does not show the borough achieving net zero until 2046. This pathway relies on national levers to drive a large amount of the emissions reductions forecast. Of the 30 interventions identified, 21 rely on national levers or societal change (consumption, diet, travel, and energy use). The suggested interventions include:

- Onshore wind generation is 2.4 times bigger by 2030, tripling by 2050.
- By 2030, offshore wind electricity generation is six times bigger than current levels.
- By 2030, hydroelectric power generation increases by 90%; by 2050 generation is 230% of current levels.
- Solid biomass generation quadruples in 2025, dropping off after that; Coal phase-out follows trajectories from the National Grid's Two Degrees scenario.

- Industrial electricity consumption is 50% of total energy consumption by 2035; 65% by 2050. Output falls by 2% every year for non-heavy industry.
- By 2050, 50% of heating is from air-source heat pumps; 30% from ground-source heat pumps and the rest comes from community-scale CHP for commercial heating and cooling.
- By 2050, 22% decrease in distance travelled by road freight: 75% increase in efficiency. In waterborne transportation, 28% increase in use of waterborne transport.
- 25% reduction in total distance travelled per individual per year by 2030, staying constant at this level until 2050.
- Domestic lighting and appliance total energy demand decreases to 27% by 2050.
- Hot water demand per household reduces by 8% every 5 years.

2.4. Setting The Net Zero Target

Before the 2019 declaration, no work had been undertaken to identify whether 2030 was a realistic net zero target for the borough, whether it was possible to achieve net zero for a borough in isolation and what scope of influence the council had to deliver.

Considering SCATTER's high ambition pathway has shown how much work is required to achieve net zero. It also tells us that achieving net zero earlier than 2046 is unlikely. Most of the interventions required will be led by national government. It is, therefore, clear that TWBC and the residents of the borough do not have all the levers necessary to achieve net zero by 2030.

This does not mean that we cannot achieve change outside of national intervention, but it shows that the initial 2030 target was unrealistic.

We are taking a pragmatic approach to net zero that focusses on changing those areas within our control, so that once national interventions are delivered, the borough will achieve net zero.

In the draft strategy, taken to public consultation, it was proposed that we adopt a net zero compatibility target for 2030. Net zero compatibility requires immediate action to be delivered but recognises the limited scope of influence over a number of key emitting sources and the requirement for national interventions to accelerate further action. National intervention is, therefore, the last step to reaching net zero. This target approach was proposed to align with the initial 2030 target, despite the data highlighted by SCATTER.

Residents told us in consultation that net zero compatibility was difficult to understand and requested a specific net zero target. We have aligned this strategy and the borough's net zero target to the Climate Change Act 2008 (see section 2.1). We are committed to achieving net zero by 2050 and hitting the interim targets set out by the UK's carbon budgets.

This does not negate the climate and biodiversity emergency declaration, declared by TWBC in 2019. Adopting a different target to that initially agreed, simply presents a more pragmatic, realistic, and achievable option, one that can only have been identified following the development of this strategy, as directed by the declaration. A 2050 target aligns with the

available data (highlighted in section 2.2), the UKs legal requirement (highlighted in section 2.1) and the UKs independent climate advisory committees, (the Climate Change Committee), consensus on what is achievable for the UK (as highlighted in section 2.1, the seventh carbon budget).

Consequently, a 2050 net zero target presents itself as the most sensible option for Tunbridge Wells Borough.

2.5. Tunbridge Wells Borough Net Zero Target

- 68% net reduction by 2030.
- 81% net reduction by 2035.
- 87% net reduction by 2040.
- 100% net reduction by 2050 (net zero).

2.6. The Council's Role

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:

The Council set an ambition to achieve net zero across its operations in 2030. The Corporate Carbon Descent plan (CCDP), created by the cross-party Climate Emergency Advisory Panel (CEAP) in 2021, outlines actions and measures the Council needs to take to achieve this ambition.

The Council's operations make up a small percentage of the total emissions produced by the borough (figure 10), but the Council must advocate for local climate action by collaborating with residents and partner organisations.

As stated by the Climate Change Committee (CCC), local authorities have powers or influence over approximately a third of local area emissions[49]. The following four pillars are required to achieve collaborative climate action and delivery:

- *"Framework: An agreed framework for delivery for Net Zero incorporating local and national climate action."*
- *"Financing: Appropriate long-term financing to support local authorities in delivering Net Zero."*
- *"Flexibility: Local operational flexibility around how local areas address climate change."*
- *"Facilitation: coherent policy and powers for the facilitation of delivery."*[50]

[49] Sixth Carbon Budget, Climate Change Committee, 2020
[50] Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget, Climate Change Committee, 2020

There is no agreed framework for delivering against net zero objectives in local government, with targets varying between authorities and there are no national reporting requirements. This makes joined up working difficult because of competing priorities and timescales. KCC are helping drive joint climate action across Kent, with the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy forming a framework for the County.

Local authorities face financial difficulties: often having to deliver more services, with less funding. Without national government funding for climate action, local authorities are dependent on grant schemes, which are not an adequate or sustainable source of funding to reach net zero targets.

Figure 11 shows the spheres of influence available to the Council to respond to the climate emergency. A local authority can exert direct and indirect influence over emissions reductions in the borough. Activities directly controlled by the Council contribute less to emissions than activities over which the Council has limited or no control. Making changes to the latter can have a huge impact. It is, therefore, essential that we work collaboratively as a borough to achieve 2050 net zero.

Local Government Reorganisation

In December 2024, the Government published the English Devolution White Paper inviting councils to apply for priority status. Alongside devolution the Government plans to replace the current system of county councils and borough/district councils with unitary councils – this is called local government reorganisation. In most areas, this means creating councils that serve at least 500,000 people.

Although Kent was not selected for the Devolution Priority Programme, the process of local government reorganisation is continuing. Council leaders across Kent received a letter from the Minister inviting them to submit a proposal for local government reorganisation in Kent and setting out the criteria against which any such proposal will be assessed. The proposal would see Kent County Council, the borough and district councils in Kent, and Medway Council, being replaced with unitary councils.

With organisational changes on the horizon, any changes to TWBC as a result of reorganisation will trigger a review of this strategy, ahead of our targets. It will be for any new unitary authority to determine its position on climate change.

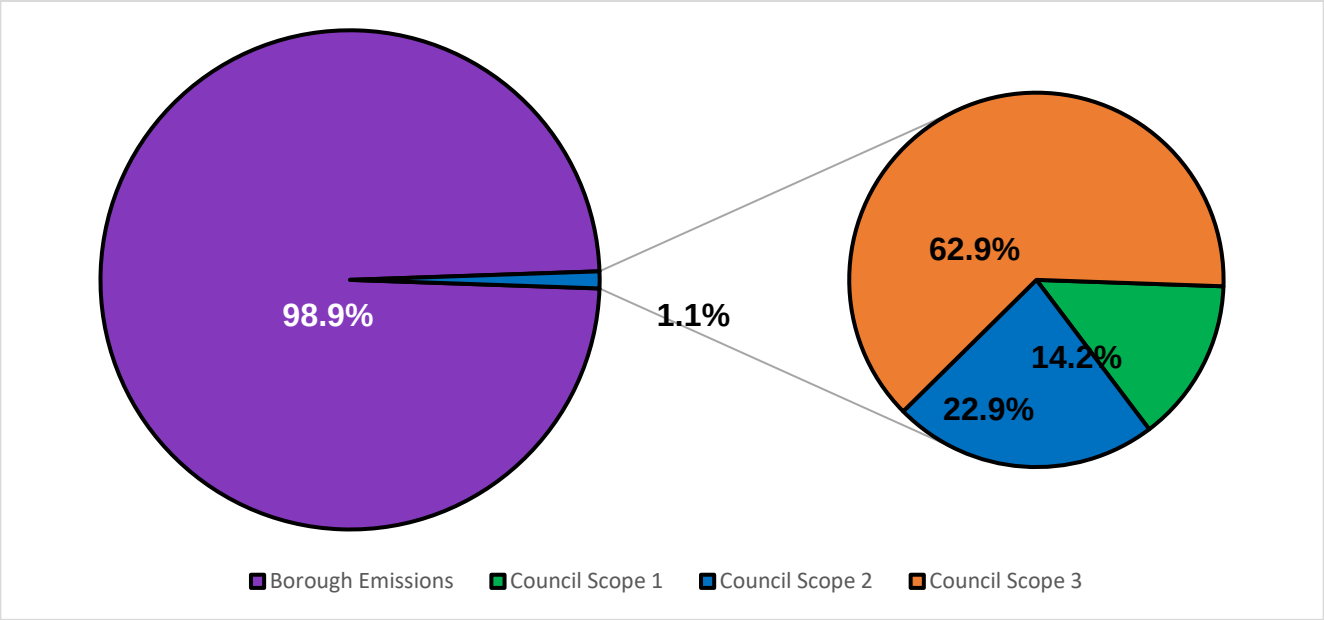

Figure 10: TWBC emissions as a percentage of total borough emissions. DESNZ, 2025, TWBC, 2025.

For more information regarding the councils' own operations and its corporate carbon descent plan, please refer to the [TWBC Climate Action Website](#).

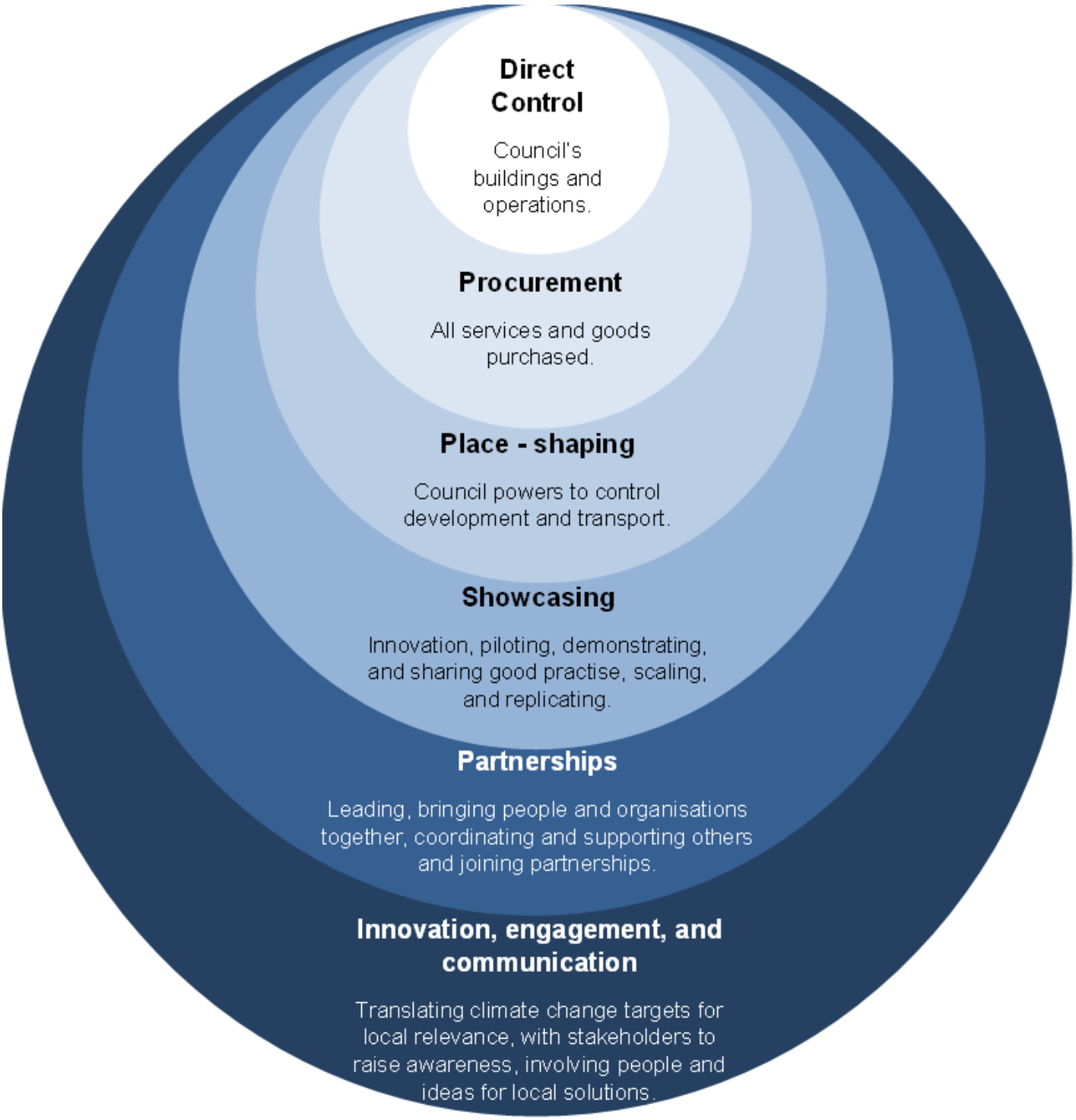

Figure 11: TWBC spheres of influence. Adapted from the CCC, 2024.

3. Our Borough Ambitions

We have developed 21 ambitions as a vision for what the borough must achieve by 2050. Our ambitions are split into seven priorities, each with three ambitions and an action plan.

A net zero borough will not be achieved and delivered by the council alone. Achieving net zero will be reliant on all of us taking action to deliver real change. These ambitions are only achievable with the whole borough working together.

In the below ambitions, where 'we' is referenced, the ambition is referring to the borough as a whole. Where Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) is explicitly referenced, the ambition is referring to the Council only.

Ambitions for our net zero borough:

Buildings:

1. We have increased the percentage of existing homes using air source heat pumps to 52% by 2040.
2. All suitable domestic properties in the borough have achieved an EPC level C (or equivalent) by 2035, where practical and cost effective.
3. All suitable commercial properties in the borough have achieved an EPC level C (or equivalent) by 2027 and EPC level B (or equivalent) by 2030.

Transport:

4. We have increased the percentage of journeys travelled through active travel methods to 55% by 2035.
5. We have grown EV chargepoint provision to at least 685 public sockets by 2030, 1,448 by 2040 and 1,631 by 2050.
6. We have electric buses in operation in the borough by 2035.

Biodiversity and Environment:

7. We have continued to increase annual tree planting and biodiversity improvements throughout the borough by the end of the 2034/35 planting season.
8. We have exceeded 10% annual biodiversity net gain by 2027.
9. We have exceeded 25% total woodland cover in the borough by 2050.

Renewable Energy:

10. We have trialled community energy projects in the borough by 2030.

11. We have increased total local solar generation by at least 1,000% by 2050, from a 2019 baseline.
12. TWBC has allocated local sites to new renewable projects in the borough by 2030 (subject to the Local Plan Review).

Waste and Resources:

13. We have increased kerbside recycling rates in the borough to 65% by 2035 and 85% by 2050, from a 2019 baseline.
14. We have reduced per capita food waste 50% by 2030, from a 2021 baseline.
15. TWBC waste collection vehicles will be fossil fuel free by 2031.

Business and Community Engagement:

16. All Schools, Parish and Town Councils will have set a net zero target and developed plans by 2030.
17. The industry and commercial sectors average at least a 4% annual reduction in CO_2e emissions, from a 2022 baseline.
18. Over 90% of residents and businesses are aware of climate change and how they can take meaningful action by 2030.

Adaptation:

19. All vulnerable residents in the borough have signed up for local flood alerts by 2030.
20. Over 90% of residents and businesses are aware of local climate risk and how they can meaningfully adapt by 2030.
21. TWBC has delivered a local climate adaptation strategy by 2030.

4. Action Plans

To deliver against our ambitions, we have made dedicated action plans detailing the work that TWBC will deliver over the coming years. These action plans are a starting point but not an exhaustive list.

These action plans cover a five-year period and will be reviewed and updated in 2030. Whilst these action plans are for the 2025 – 2030 period, our commitment to the climate emergency extends beyond this period.

This plan will be updated annually to reflect national and local policy and technological changes, funding, and capacity availability. The plans are ambitious: not all actions have immediate dedicated funding or capacity to deliver, but they identify key priorities, future direction, funding, and capacity requirements.

The following legend highlights how we will indicate cost and capacity for each action:

Cost:

£	= £0 - £9,999.
££	= £10,000 - £99,999.
£££	= £100,000 - £499,999.
££££	= £500,000 - £999,999.
£££££	= £1,000,000 +.

Capacity:

0	= Existing capacity can deliver.
0.5	= Requires 0.5 FTE to deliver.
1	= Requires 1.0 FTE to deliver.
1+	= Required 1.0+ FTE to deliver.

4.1. Priority 1: Buildings

Ambitions

1. We have increased the percentage of existing homes using air source heat pumps to 52% by 2040.
2. All suitable domestic properties in the borough have achieved an EPC level C (or equivalent) by 2035, where practical and cost effective.
3. All suitable commercial properties in the borough have achieved an EPC level C (or equivalent) by 2027 and EPC level B (or equivalent) by 2030.

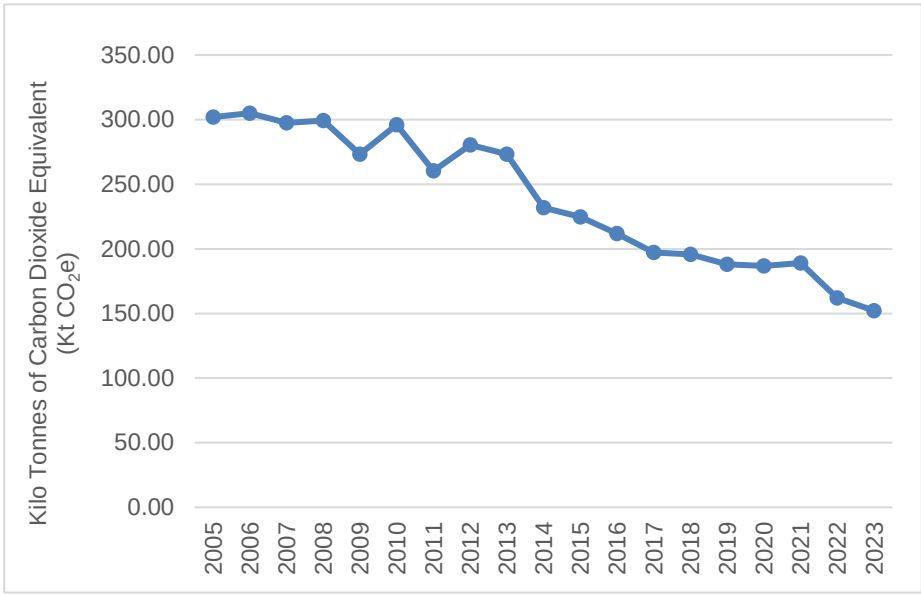

Figure 12: Borough domestic emissions 2005-2023, DESNZ, 2025

The above ambitions have been developed to align with national government targets and Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommendations. Ambition one aligns with the CCC Seventh Carbon Budget, which sets targets for air source heat pump uptake in the UK. Ambition two aligns with the government's Clean Growth Strategy (2017) and Heat and Buildings Strategy (2021) for domestic property energy efficiency improvements. Finally, ambition three aligns with proposed minimum EPC requirements for non-domestic private rented properties in the UK.

Domestic emissions are the largest contributor to the borough's carbon footprint. In 2023, this sector contributed 32% of all carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) emissions emitted in the borough. Emissions from this sector have been falling since 2005 (figure 12), but improving the energy efficiency of buildings is essential if we are to reach net zero. By improving and modernising our buildings we can also reduce energy bills, tackle energy poverty, improve quality of life and reduce local pollution from the burning of fossil fuels (mainly gas and oil in the borough).

Most emissions from buildings in the borough are associated with gas consumption, as the main heating fuel in the borough. Therefore, removing gas consumption and improving energy efficiency will bring us closer to net zero. Every resident can do this: even renters can access government energy efficiency grants with their landlord's permission. It is our responsibility to take ownership over decarbonising

our buildings as much as we can. Retrofitting can be a costly barrier to sustainable development; TWBC will lobby central government to provide affordable retrofitting options to all residents.

There are many interventions residents can take to improve their properties: an energy performance certificate (EPC) helps residents to understand their options. EPCs explain a property's energy efficiency on a scale from A-G (band A properties should have the lowest fuel bill). Of the total dwellings in the borough with EPCs in 2025 (54,807), 12.4% of properties received an A or B energy efficiency rating. Most dwellings are rated D (19,473, 35.6%) and are energy inefficient.

Of the 3,959 registered non-domestic EPCs, 16% are EPC B and above, 56% are EPC C and D, with the remaining 28% EPC E and below. Poorly insulated buildings result in high energy bills and cause fuel poverty.

Retrofitting buildings reduces embodied emissions. By improving existing buildings, we are limiting the emissions associated with new construction. Building standards and our Local Plan set standards for reducing emissions from new developments but this is an area where we can go further.

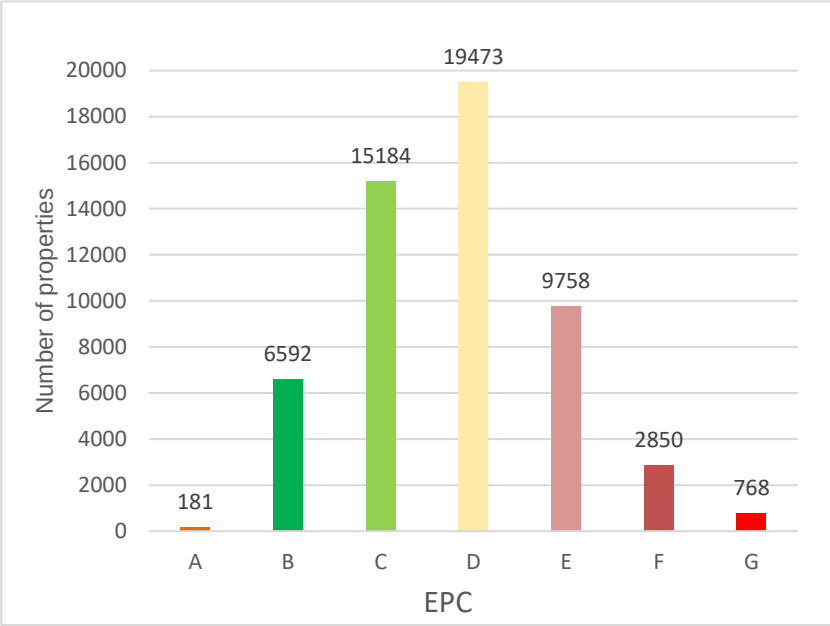

Figure 13: Distribution of domestic property EPCs in Tunbridge Wells. DLUHC, 2025

Air source heat pump (ASHP) uptake

As highlighted by the CCC, the largest source of emissions in the residential sector is the use of fossil fuels for space heating and hot water. By 2040, low carbon heating, such as ASHPs can drive up to a 66% reduction in residential emissions, with electrification being the main form of heating in the UK. As such, installing an ASHP is one of the most impactful decisions a household can make from a climate and emissions perspective (alongside an electric car)[51].

ASHPs are a low carbon heating that extracts air from outside and uses it to heat a property and produce hot water. Heap pumps are similar in principle to air conditioners, although in reverse, where they instead absorb heat from the air and transfers it indoors. ASHPs do not rely

[51] The Seventh Carbon Budget, Climate Change Committee, 2025

on fossil fuels such as gas or oil to operate, instead only electricity. As such, there are very few direct GHG emissions from their operation. They are even more low carbon when powered using renewable energy, from roof mounted solar, or a renewable energy supplier. ASHPs are three to four times more efficient than traditional gas boilers[52], achieving efficiencies of up to 300%, compared to a gas boiler which operates at roughly 90%. This means that for every unit of electricity consumed by an ASHP, up to three units of heat are produced.

The largest barriers to households installing ASHPs is the upfront cost, which is expected to be higher than fossil fuel equivalents for a considerable time. As such, assistance for households with these capital costs will be required to support the required uptake in ASHPs. Currently, the government are offering a £7,500 grant towards the cost of an ASHP, through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme[53]. Whilst this is a good first step, wider avenues need to be established to further mobilise ASHP adoption, such as, green mortgages or zero-interest loans.

Case Study: Crescent Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells

In 2024 TWBC collaborated with contractor Baxall to refurbish four long-term empty properties on Crescent Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells. We implemented several decarbonisation measures to align with the Council's sustainability objectives. Air source heat pumps, improved glazing, insulation and solar pv cabling were installed into each property. All properties achieved an EPC C, an improvement from an F rating at one property. They are now being used as temporary accommodation.

Figure 14: ASHP at Crescent Road Property, TWBC, 2024

[52] The Seventh Carbon Budget, Climate Change Committee, 2025
[53] Boiler Upgrade Scheme, 2025

Buildings Action Plan

Theme: Domestic Properties.

Objective 1: Support increased sustainability requirements for new developments through the local plan.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
1.1. Implement Local Plan policies: - STR2: Place Shaping and Design - STR7: Climate Change - EN1: Sustainable Design - EN2: Sustainable Design Standards - EN3: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	Development Management	£	0	2025
1.2. As part of the Local Plan review process consider the need to review and update sustainability policies.	Planning Policy / Sustainability	£	0	2025-28
1.3. As part of the Local Plan review process consider the need to build on our reference to historic buildings in terms of embodied energy and capabilities for retrofit.	Planning Policy / Sustainability	£	0	2025-28
1.4. Review building conservation planning guidance that supports the local plan to identify if TWBC can go further to facilitate retrofitting on relevant historic properties.	Development Management / Planning Policy	£	0	2025-28
1.5. Work to embed retrofitting principles into the borough's design codes.	Development Management / Planning Policy	£	0	2025-28

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
1.6. As part of Local Pan review process, consider opportunities for district heating.	Planning Policy / Sustainability	£	0	2025-28
1.7. Planning Services to consider opportunities to investigate carbon offset funding, through the planning process e.g. S106.	Development Management / Planning Policy / Sustainability	£	0	2025-28
1.8. Lead by example, displaying sustainable development through the Town Centre Plan & Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre refurbishment works.	Development Management / Property / Sustainability	£££££	0	2025-28

Objective 2: Improve the energy efficiency of private rented housing in line with national regulations.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
2.1. Enforce current MEES regulations to existing and new rented properties.	Private Sector Housing	£	0	Ongoing
2.2. Enforce updated EPC requirements under any future MEES regulation changes.	Private Sector Housing	££	1+	Ongoing
2.3. Develop a local MEES communications campaign to encourage anonymous local reporting / disclosing from tenants living in properties in breach of the regulations.	Communications / Private Sector Housing / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30

Objective 3: Support homeowners and domestic landlords to retrofit their properties to a minimum of EPC C by 2030.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
3.1. Continue to deliver Solar Together in partnership with KCC.	Private Sector Housing	£	0	2025-30
3.2. Share any relevant energy efficiency grant schemes available to residents such as: - Boiler Upgrade Scheme - Energy Company Obligation Phase 4 (ECO4) - Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) - Solar Together - Energy Efficiency Assistance Loan	Private Sector Housing / Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
3.3. Deliver the Warm Homes Local Grant.	Private Sector Housing	£££	1	2025-30
3.4. Deliver a free Energy Efficiency Pack scheme to residents during winter months.	Sustainability / The Amelia Scott	££	0.5	2025-27
3.5. Deliver a pilot EPC certificate grant project to incentivise residents with no existing EPCs to obtain one.	Private Sector Housing / Sustainability	££	0.5	2027
3.6. Produce a comprehensive local retrofit guide for residents, covering: - Example measures from local housing archetypes. - Example measures suitable for historic properties. - What is permitted under permitted development rights. - When to engage the planning authority and building regulations. - Signpost residents to relevant grant schemes.	Building Control / Development Management / Planning Policy / Sustainability	££	0.5	2026

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
3.7. Consider the feasibility of expanding the current TWBC 'Energy Efficiency Assistance' scheme, in terms of internal delivery resources and additional loan funds.	Private Sector Housing / Sustainability	££	1	2026-30
3.8. Deliver a Climate Change Expo aimed at highlighting opportunities to retrofit properties and connect with local installers.	Sustainability / The Amelia Scott	££	1	2026-27
3.9. Using fuel poverty data, develop targeted engagement and education to support those who are likely to be living in low energy efficient properties.	Communications / Private Sector Housing / Sustainability	£	0	2026-27
3.10. Develop and deliver a communications plan to promote the benefits of obtaining a domestic EPC rating for residents.	Communications / Sustainability	£	0	2026-27
3.11. Deliver local retrofit talks, aimed at educating residents on steps they can take to improve the energy efficiency of their property.	Sustainability / The Amelia Scott	£	1	2026-28
3.12. Develop, expand and share retrofit and energy saving resources on the TWBC Climate Action Website and TWBC social media.	Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30
3.13. For historic buildings (early 20th century and older), signpost residents to advice on best practice from Historic England on retrofitting.	Development Management / Sustainability	£	0	2025

Objective 4: Improve the energy efficiency of the social housing and temporary accommodation stock in line with national regulations.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
4.1. Continue to improve the energy performance of TWBC's temporary accommodation by: - Achieving a minimum EPC level C (or equivalent). - Replacing gas consumption in each property for renewable electric alternatives. - Meeting requirements under the Renters Rights Bill.	Housing / Property / Sustainability	£££££	1+	2025-30
4.2. Continue engagement with social housing providers in the borough to understand net zero commitments and support where possible to achieve alignment with 2050 net zero.	Housing / Sustainability	£	0	2025-26
4.3. Continue to collaborate closely with landlords providing temporary accommodation services to promote grant opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of their properties in exceedance with the standards highlighted in 2.1.	Housing / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30

Theme: Business Properties.

Objective 5: Improve the energy efficiency of commercial units in line with minimum energy efficiency standard regulations.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
5.1. Promote and encourage adherence to the MEES regulations to existing and newly rented commercial properties, working with KCC where required.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	Ongoing

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
5.2. Develop a local MEES communications campaign to encourage anonymous local reporting / disclosing from tenants working in commercial premises in breach of the regulations.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	Ongoing

Objective 6: Support local businesses, to deliver retrofit and energy efficiency projects to their commercial properties.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
6.1. Deliver further rounds of the Business Decarbonisation Grant Scheme.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	0	2025-27
6.2. Collaborate with partners to identify opportunities to establish large scale commercial rooftop solar schemes.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	1	2025-30
6.3. Develop, expand, and share decarbonisation resources on the TWBC Climate Action website and the TWBC Business portal.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
6.4. Share relevant funding opportunities available to support businesses to make energy efficiency improvements.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
6.5. Engage with local business advice groups & networks to promote and facilitate ways to improve sustainability and deliver emissions reductions.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	Ongoing
6.6. Consider short term discretionary business rates levers to incentivise carbon reduction in business building operation.	Finance / MKIP Revs and Bens / Sustainability	££	0	2026-30

4.2. Priority 2: Transport

Ambitions

4. We have increased the percentage of journeys travelled through active travel methods to 55% by 2035.
5. We have grown EV chargepoint provision to at least 685 public sockets by 2030, 1,448 by 2040 and 1,631 by 2050.
6. We have electric buses in operation in the borough by 2035.

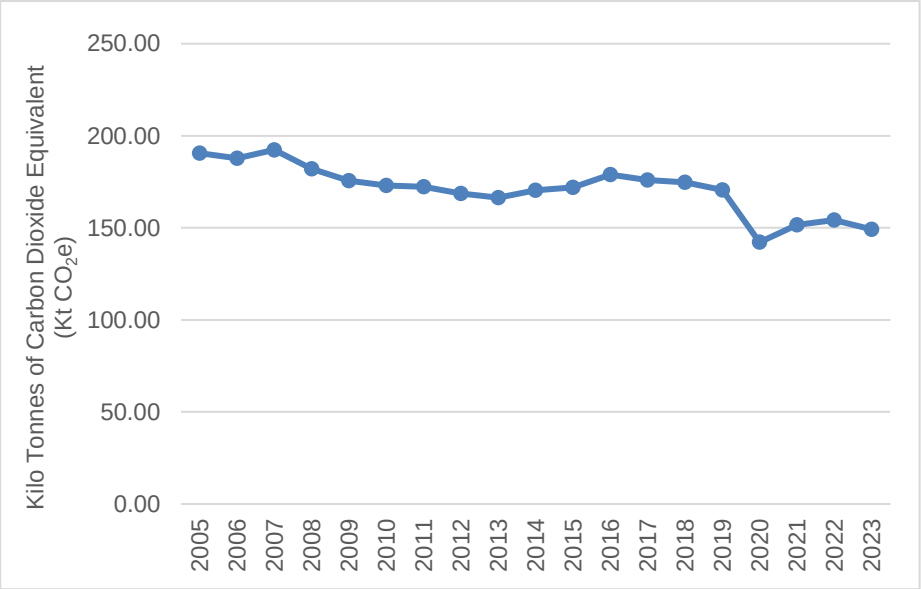

Figure 15: Borough transport emissions 2005-2023. DESNZ, 2025.

The above ambitions have been developed to align with national government targets, data, and best practise recommendations of borough wide net zero delivery. Ambition four builds on targets for short journeys set out by government in the second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2). Ambition five was developed using electric vehicle charging infrastructure (EVCI) requirement projections for the borough, as developed by NEVIS (National EV Insights and Support). We have aligned our ambition to their high EV uptake scenario, which includes the 2030 ban on new ICE vehicles. Ambition six has been developed following borough intervention suggestions from the SCATTER emissions pathway tool, highlighting the need for electric buses in operation in the next 10 years to be on track to achieve net zero.

Our boroughs significant rural geography means that 30% of residents live in rural areas of our borough and rely on private transport for community and business connection throughout the borough and county. This is highlighted in the data, with transport contributing 31% of all emissions in the borough. This is narrowly second behind the domestic sector.

As highlighted in figure 15, transport emissions reached an all-time low in 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, before rebounding in 2021. However, following two consecutive years observing increases, emissions from transport started to fall again in 2023. Since 2005, transport emissions in total have fallen by 21.7%.

Reducing transport emissions means a shift towards electric alternatives and public and active travel methods. This relies on major infrastructure support and funding from national government and KCC, so that we can reduce the number of cars on the road and increase active and public travel in the borough. Technology will help reduce transport emissions as zero emissions vehicles become the norm. The CCC estimate electric car adoption will contribute 53% of transport emissions reductions in 2040: the wider transport sector can decarbonise almost completely through electrification[54].

There are several local transport plans and strategies in place:

- TWBC's submission local plan[55] sets out a vision for transport and parking across the borough. In the plan, active travel, public transport, and updated technology (electric vehicle charging) are identified as areas of development (Policy TP1: transport assessments/statements and policy TP2: transport design and accessibility).
- The Tunbridge Wells Transport Strategy (2015-2026)[56], prepared by TWBC and KCC seeks to address existing transport problems and support future development.
- The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)[57] was agreed in 2019, and updated in 2021, to identify cycling and walking improvements. It is a plan for infrastructure improvements to make active travel and public transport more desirable and accessible for the public in the future.

Electric vehicle transition

The CCC explain in the seventh carbon budget how electric vehicles will be the main source of transport decarbonisation in the UK. It is estimated that by 2040, over three quarters of all cars and vans on the road will be electric.[58] Charging infrastructure must be prioritised to aid the transition. A transition to electric vehicles (EVs) is a significant intervention to achieve net zero. There are many barriers to adoption, some ideological and some systemic.

The cost of EVs is considered prohibitive by many people. In the past, EVs have been more expensive but the CCC predict price parity for EVs over the next couple of years. Range anxiety has been an issue, but EV ranges now often exceed 300 miles. Extended range upgrades

[54] Climate Change Committee, Seventh Carbon Budget, 2025
[55] TWBC Submission Local Plan, TWBC, 2025
[56] Tunbridge Wells Transport Strategy (2015-2026), TWBC, 2015
[57] Tunbridge Wells Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Phase 1, TWBC, 2021
[58] The Seventh Carbon Budget, CCC, 2025

are also available for many EVs, but sufficient charging networks and speeds will provide confidence to residents that EVs are a viable option.

EV charging infrastructure (EVCI) in the borough needs to improve. There has been growth over the past decade with Zap Map now showing 86 public chargepoints in the borough (some of which are dual sockets), but more are required to give residents confidence to transition to an EV. In partnership with KCC, TWBC has already installed 11 charging points both on-street and in public car parks. TWBC is also working to install further dual chargepoints in Royal Tunbridge Wells throughout 2025 and 2026. Recently many large supermarkets, petrol stations and private car parks are installing chargepoints, providing more opportunities for residents to charge.

Case Study: KCC LEVI Fund

In 2024, KCC was awarded a grant from the Department for Transport (DfT) of just over £12million to increase EVCI in Kent. This funding comes from the DfTs local electric vehicles infrastructure (LEVI) fund and will be used to roll out on-street EV charging bays over the next ten years. More on-street bays help residents without off-street parking make the switch to EVs. KCC will be working closely with all Borough Councils to deliver this scheme and ensure chargepoints are delivered in the right place.

Figure 16: EV charging vans at TWBC north farm deport, TWBC, 2025

Case Study: Tunbridge Wells Car Club

Car clubs reduce wider transport emissions and promote the 'shared economy.' Community sharing of assets reduces the reliance on private car ownership and makes private travel more accessible to residents. It has been estimated that one car club reduces up to eight private vehicles on the road[59].

TWBC runs a car club through Co-Wheels. There are currently nine vehicles across various locations in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Expansion to wider areas of the borough is being considered.

Figure 17: Co-Wheels Car in Hawkenbury, Royal Tunbridge Wells, 2024

Transport Action Plan

Theme: Active Travel (Walking, Cycling and Wheeling).

Objective 7: Deliver and improve active travel infrastructure throughout Tunbridge Wells town and the wider borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
7.1. Prioritise the delivery of cycling and walking routes in the LCWIP & Strategic Plan.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£££	1	2025-32
7.2. Continue to bid for funding from Active Travel England (via KCC as the Highways Authority) to deliver active travel projects.	Economic Development	£	1	Ongoing

[59] Annual Car Club Report, CoMoUK, 2023

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
7.3. Engage with KCC to install double yellow lines along bike lanes.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	1	2026-30
7.4. Ensure that effective community engagement is undertaken for all active travel projects.	Communications / Economic Development / Sustainability	£	1	Ongoing
7.5. Feed into plan-making process and planning applications to ensure section 106 is agreed for active travel infrastructure where appropriate.	Development Management	£	0	Ongoing
7.6. Ensure that active travel route priorities are included in all key TWBC plans and strategies and continue to seek for inclusion in KCC plans.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
7.7. Continue to embed and improve active travel policies in the Local Plan Review and RTW Town Centre Plan.	Planning Policy	£	0	2025-27

Objective 8: Encourage the uptake of walking and cycling in the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
8.1. Review opportunities to implement additional secure cycle parking facilities in Tunbridge Wells.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	1	2026
8.2. Investigate the possibility of bringing a bike share / rental scheme to the borough.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	1	2027-28

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
8.3. Expand the promotion of adult bicycle training schemes (bike ability).	Health Team / Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
8.4. Promote the benefits of active travel via various media outlets; social media channels, TWBC Climate Action website.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing

Theme: Public Transport and Vehicle Share.

Objective 9: Improve local bus service and infrastructure provision.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
9.1. Work with KCC to develop opportunities for the deployment of electric buses in the borough.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30
9.2. Implement sustainable infrastructure requirements to improve and replace existing bus shelters through the bus shelter contract.	Economic Development / Sustainability	~~££££~~	0	2026-30
9.3. Work with bus operators and through the bus shelter contract to provide real time transport information throughout the borough.	Economic Development / Sustainability	~~££££~~	1	2026-30
9.4. Work with KCC on the implementation of their Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) including more frequent and reliable bus services.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
9.5. Through the Town Centre Plan Process, work to propose and implement improved public transport services and infrastructure.	Economic Development / Parking / Planning Policy / Sustainability	£££	1	Ongoing
9.6. Develop, expand, and share communications materials to encourage the use of public transport, focussing on those living in rural communities.	Communications / Sustainability	£	0.5	Ongoing

Objective 10: Maintain and expand the Tunbridge Wells Car Club to offer alternatives to private car ownership.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
10.1. Re-tender the Tunbridge Wells Car Club, following the conclusion of the existing contract.	Sustainability	£-£££	0	2025-30
10.2. Expand the car club fleet within Tunbridge Wells, considering wider trial areas in the borough.	Sustainability	£-£££	1	2025-30
10.3. Introduce trial electric car club vehicles into established Tunbridge Wells sites.	Sustainability	£-£££	1	2026-28
10.4. Develop, expand, and share Car Club resources on the TWBC Climate Action website and through TWBC communications channels.	Communications / Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
10.5. Review existing and potential new levers to incentivise local car club use.	Sustainability	££	0	2025-26

Theme: Electric Vehicles and Chargepoint Infrastructure.

Objective 11: Improve local electric vehicle chargepoint infrastructure (EVCI).

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
11.1. Utilise the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) to deliver EVCI on council car parks.	Parking	££££	0	2025
11.2. Conduct a review of current electric vehicle chargepoint infrastructure (EVCI) on TWBC owned car parks against existing public demand, to determine how TWBC infrastructure needs to expand.	Parking / Sustainability	£	0	2025-26
11.3. Work closely with Kent County Council to deliver local kerbside EVCI, through the LEVI fund.	Parking / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30
11.4. Work closely with Kent County Council to deliver dedicated Car Club kerbside EVCI, through the LEVI fund.	Parking / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30
11.5. Work closely with Kent County Council to deliver dedicated taxi EVCI, through the LEVI fund.	Licencing / Parking / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30
11.6. Engage with businesses and residents to promote grants for the installation of private EVCI.	Sustainability	£	1	Ongoing
11.7. Review requirements to update the TWBC EVCI guidance note for new developments beyond the existing 2020 EVCI guidance.	Planning Policy / Sustainability	£	0	2026

Objective 12: Promote and support the electric vehicle transition.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
12.1. Establish local incentives to transition to EVs without penalising those who are not able to make the switch.	Parking	££	0	2025-30
12.2. Engage with businesses and residents to promote existing EV charging infrastructure.	Sustainability	£	0.5	Ongoing
12.3. Review taxi and private hire vehicle licensing to align with Kent wide timescales for transitioning to EVs.	Licencing	£	0	Ongoing

Theme: Business Transport.

Objective 13: Support businesses in their efforts to reduce transport emissions.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
13.1. Investigate opportunities to deliver a pilot last mile delivery scheme with interested local businesses.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	1	2025-30
13.2. Investigate opportunities to provide dedicated kerbside cycle storage to businesses with limited or no access to secure cycle storage.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£££	1	2026-27
13.3. Explore appetite with local businesses to partake in a pilot e-cargo bike scheme for short (sub five mile) deliveries.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	1	2026-27
13.4. Review and where appropriate promote car share opportunities for businesses.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-30

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
13.5. Review workplace parking levy feasibility in the borough's towns and large industrial centres.	Economic Development / Parking / Sustainability	££	0	2025-30
13.6. Share resources/templates for businesses via our TWBC Climate Action website.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing

Theme: Wider Low Carbon Transport.

Objective 14: Implement traffic and speed reduction schemes to improve safety and reduce emissions.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
14.1. In line with the Local Plan and any relevant made NDP policies, encourage the development of safer neighbourhoods where appropriate and with community engagement.	Development Management	£	0	Ongoing
14.2. Review opportunities to implement lower speed limits across residential roads in the borough.	Planning Policy	£	0	Ongoing
14.3. Develop, expand, and share communications materials to promote the benefits of car sharing.	Communications / Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
14.4. Encourage ‘low carbon commutes’ for students and parents. Promote schemes such as ‘cycle to school week’ as well as developing own resources.	Communications / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-26

Objective 15: Promote and expand the TWBC anti-idling scheme.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
15.1. Review the TWBC anti-idling reporting scheme to assess public awareness, signage, and enforcement effectiveness.	EP Team Leader & Lead Officer / Parking / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-26
15.2. Promote engine idling hotspot reporting to aid enforcement clampdowns.	Sustainability / Communications	£	0.5	Ongoing
15.3. Work with local business and Amplifi to display signs and promote anti-idling to customers.	EP Team Leader & Lead Officer / Sustainability	£	0.5	2025-26

4.3. Priority 3: Biodiversity and Environment

Ambitions:

7. We have continued to increase annual tree planting and biodiversity improvements throughout the borough by the end of the 2034/35 planting season.
8. We have exceeded 10% annual biodiversity net gain by 2027.
9. We have exceeded 25% total woodland cover in the borough by 2050.

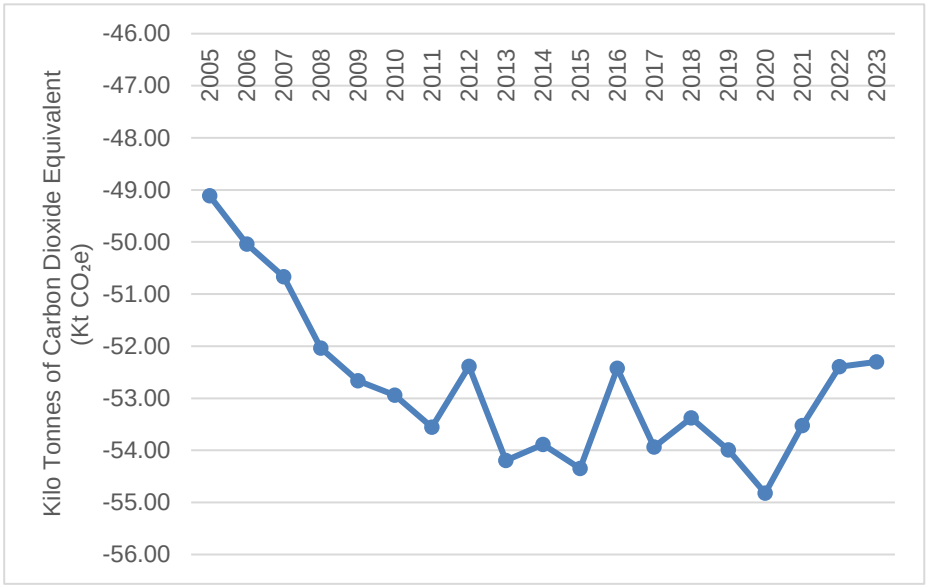

Figure 18: Borough land use, land use change and forestry net emissions 2005-2023. DESNZ, 2025.

These ambitions have been developed to align with existing local commitments, national guidance, and best practise. Ambition seven aligns with the TWBC Strategic Plan 2024-32 and its commitment to delivering more or better-quality natural habitat and increased biodiversity in the borough. Ambition eight builds on new national planning requirements to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain for new developments. Ambition nine exceeds the Natural England and Forestry Commission target of increasing tree cover to 16.5% by 2050[60], with the 25% figure based on woodland opportunity mapping commissioned by Friends of the Earth.

The borough has a diverse landscape, which spans the High and Low Weald of which 70% falls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Formed by a patchwork of agriculture, woodland, heathland, rural and urban settlement, the borough is rich in sites designated for biodiversity: it is a stronghold for several protected species including dormice, great crested newts, and several species of bats.

[60] Our position on woodland creation, Forestry Commissions, Natural England, 2023

Woodland is a habitat of importance to nature conservation and acts as a natural emission 'sink,' sequestering carbon dioxide (stored as carbon). In 2023, the borough's net sequestration of emissions was 52.3 $ktCO_2e$. Woodland infrastructure is a key part of our natural capital, regulating our climate and water systems, providing traditional construction materials and is a resource for wellbeing. Around 22% of the land cover of the borough is woodland, of which 85% is ancient woodland; an irreplaceable habitat of national importance.

Tunbridge Wells Borough biodiversity action plan:

The Council will protect, restore, and enhance our natural environment and wildlife through improvements to its own land holdings, advising other land holders on good land management practice and community engagement. This will involve supporting volunteer action for conservation and community-based conservation projects (including work with Parish and Town Councils). We will work with and support stakeholders in a range of partnerships including Kent County Council, the Kent Nature Partnership (tasked to oversee and progress action on the County Biodiversity Action Plan) the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, Kent Wildlife Trust Local Wildlife Site System and importantly the Kent High Weald Partnership countryside management team who manage Local Nature Reserves in the Borough.

Biodiversity net gain:

New developments put pressure on the natural environment, but they provide opportunities to deliver environmental improvements. The emerging Local Plan includes policies that protect and enhance the natural environment. Under the Environment Act 2021 and supporting statutory instruments, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is now mandatory for most development. BNG requires a minimum 10% gain in biodiversity from applicable development either onsite, offsite or a combination of both. The Council has been applying BNG principles to development since 2019, relying on existing polices and an interim project for offsite net gain provision.

Case Study: Tunbridge Wells Winter 2024 Tree Planting

TWBC in partnership with KCC and the Kent High Weald Partnership planted nearly 3,000 trees in council owned parks over the 2024/25 winter planting season. The idea for the project arose from the offer of disease resistant elm trees to support the survival of the White Letter Hairstreak Butterfly. The elms were planted in alongside other native trees in locations likely to support the butterfly.

Benefits of this project include:

- Restoring landscape character and lost tree species.
- Supporting species that rely on or benefit from Elm trees.

- Improving species and genetic diversity in tree cover to help with climate change and disease resilience.
- Community engagement with emphasis on butterfly conservation through the national Annual Big Butterfly Count organised by Butterfly Conservation.

Case Study: Kent and High Weald Partnership

The Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP) plays a pivotal role in advancing environmental action and fostering community engagement across Tunbridge Wells and the broader Kent region. In collaboration with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, KHWP has spearheaded significant environmental initiatives, including the planting of 3,000 trees in parks and conservation areas, such as Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, as part of the Kent Plant Tree project.

KHWP's commitment to biodiversity is exemplified by the Cross Pollination Project, which established six public demonstration gardens filled with pollinator-friendly plants. These gardens serve as educational hubs, raising awareness about bee-friendly gardening practices and offering citizen science opportunities for local volunteers and students.

Volunteer engagement is central to KHWP's operations. The organisation hosts regular conservation tasks throughout the year, involving activities such as coppicing, hedge laying, and tree planting. These sessions not only contribute to environmental conservation but also foster community spirit and provide volunteers with valuable skills and experiences.

In addition to hands-on conservation work, KHWP manages several local nature reserves, including Barnett's Wood and Hilbert Woods. These sites are maintained in partnership with local community groups, ensuring the preservation of ancient woodlands and diverse habitats for future generations.

Through these initiatives, KHWP not only enhances the natural environment but also strengthens community ties and promotes sustainable practices throughout Tunbridge Wells Borough.

Biodiversity and Environment Action Plan

Theme: Biodiversity.

Objective 16: Improve biodiversity throughout the Borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
16.1. Under the Environment Act 2021, produce and publish the Biodiversity Report, detailing progress and plans to improve biodiversity across the borough.	Planning Policy	££	0.5	2025-30
16.2. Align and expand on biodiversity resources on the TWBC Climate Action Website.	Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
16.3. Ensure all management plans for council owned sites include biodiversity objectives.	Street Scene	£	0	2025-30
16.4. Support and align with the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy through policy, development, and action.	Planning Policy	£	0	Ongoing
16.5. Engage with the community to conduct biodiversity work and continue reviewing future opportunities for community engagement.	Planning Policy / Street Scene	£	0	Ongoing
16.6. Investigate opportunities for urban greening through the Local Plan review.	Planning Policy / Sustainability	£	0	2025-28
16.7. Review the TWBC Biodiversity Action Plan.	Planning Policy	££	0	2025-2027

Objective 17: Improve environmental outcomes for new developments.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
17.1. Ensure new development complies with environmental policies in the Local Plan including: - STR8 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural, Built, and Historic Environment. - EN1 Sustainable Design - EN 8 Outdoor Lighting and Dark Skies - EN 9 Biodiversity Net Gain - EN 10 Protection of Designated Sites and Habitats - EN 11 Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation - EN 12 Trees, Woodland, Hedges, and Development - EN 13 Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees - EN 14 Green, Grey, and Blue Infrastructure - EN 15 Local Green Space - EN 16 Landscape within the Built Environment - EN 17 Arcadian Areas - EN 18 Rural Landscape - EN 19 The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Development Management	£	0	2025

Objective 18: Maintain an updated list of Local Wildlife Sites.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
18.1. Monitor and review Local Wildlife Sites including mapping and citations. Agree all changes through Kent Nature Partnership Board (or equivalent body).	Planning Policy	£	0	Ongoing

Theme: Trees and Green Spaces.

Objective 19: Continue to increase tree planting and maintenance.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
19.1. Consider and review requirement for a dedicated street tree planting strategy, subject to LGR and street tree responsibility.	Development Management / Street Scene	£	0	2028-30
19.2. Review opportunities and requirements to increase tree planting and woodland regeneration projects.	Development Management / Street Scene	£££	1	2025-32
19.3. Review opportunities to collaborate with schools to increase perimeter tree and hedgerow planting as a means to provide a barrier to particulate pollution.	Environmental Health / Sustainability	££	0.5	2026-28
19.4. Where appropriate, support and deliver against the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives.	Planning Policy / Street Scene	££	0	Ongoing

Objective 20: TWBC to continue protecting and enhancing council-owned green spaces and public realm.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
20.1. Revise the Grounds Maintenance contract specification to further embed a more nature friendly approach.	Street Scene	£££	0	2025
20.2. TWBC to work in partnership with Kent High Weald Partnership, 'Friends of' groups and local business to promote and enhance the natural environment in council parks, green spaces, schools, and community sites.	Planning Policy / Street Scene	££	0	Ongoing
20.3. TWBC to work to empower stakeholders and residents to take more ownership over the improvement and protection our local green spaces.	Planning Policy / Street Scene	££	0	Ongoing
20.4. Promote Tunbridge Wells in Bloom to improve public realm and green spaces and to reinforce positive environmental messages about biodiversity and pollinators.	Street Scene	£	0	Ongoing
20.5. TWBC to provide support to Parish Councils developing nature friendly projects.	Street Scene / Sustainability	££	0.5	2025-30
20.6. Embark on a phased approach to converting existing bins in parks and open spaces to recycling bins.	Street Scene	£££	0.5	2028

Theme: Communication and Engagement.

Objective 21: Maintain and improve Community Engagement and volunteering for the natural environment.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
21.1. Continue to offer open access volunteer events through the Kent High Weald Partnership on Council owned sites.	Planning Policy	£	0	Ongoing
21.2. Continue to offer advice, leadership and training resources to community based environmental groups through the Kent High Weald Partnership.	Planning Policy	£	1	Ongoing
21.3. Provide advice to residents on how to use their gardens and allotments to promote better biodiversity, habitat creation and climate resilience.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
21.4. Support Social prescribing, Forest Schools and Health and Wellbeing events in green spaces, working with the Kent High Weald Partnership.	Planning Policy / Street Scene	£	1	Ongoing
21.5. Use the TWBC Climate Action Website to share stories of conservation work happening across the borough	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing

Objective 22: Increase opportunities to further embed community engagement into habitat management and horticultural projects.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
22.1. Embed a community engagement officer into the Grounds Maintenance contract specification.	Street Scene	££	0	2025
22.2. Share resources for community allotments/growing schemes on the TWBC Climate Action website	Communications / Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing

4.4. Priority 4: Renewable Energy

Ambitions:

10. We have seen community renewable energy trialled by 2030.
11. We have increased total local renewable energy generation by at least 1,000% by 2050, from a 2019 baseline.
12. TWBC has allocated local sites to new renewable projects in the borough by 2030 (subject to the Local Plan Review).

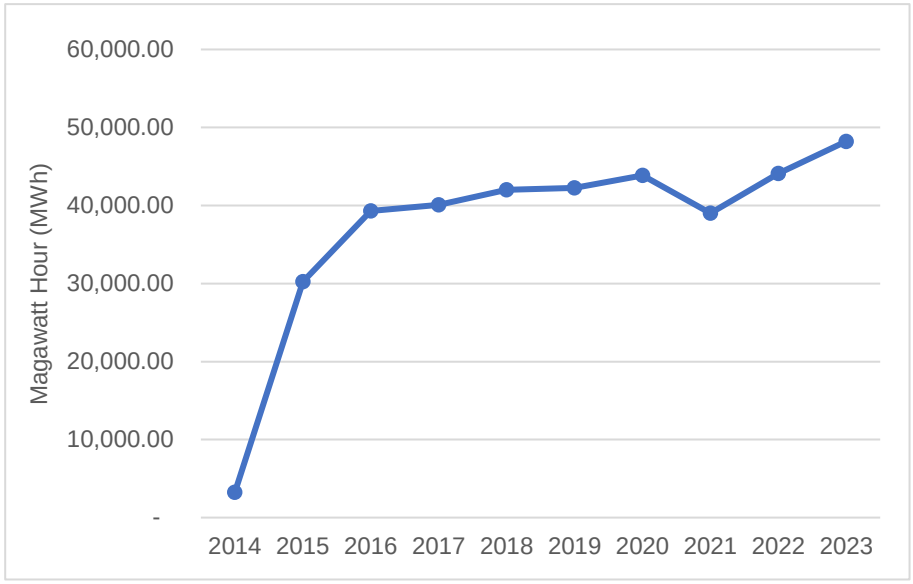

Figure 19: Borough solar pv generation 2014-2023. DESNZ, 2025.

These ambitions were developed to align with local authority guidance and national targets and priorities. Ambition 10 has been developed to align with the government's clean power commitment: funding and focus will be provided to local community energy projects. Ambition 11 has been developed using SCATTER pathway data, providing clear forecasts for local renewable energy requirements. Ambition 12 have been developed as TWBC can facilitate renewable energy projects in the borough.

In 2024 the Labour Government committed to decarbonising the national grid by 2030[61], accelerating the previous target of 2035. This will reduce energy bills, generate jobs and investment, enhance energy security, and reduce emissions from electricity consumption to near zero. To reach this target, rapid transformation in renewable energy generation and delivery, necessitating widespread expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, such as offshore and onshore wind and solar power.

Renewable energy generation means clean energy systems. As the UK grid decarbonises, these systems must meet the increased demand of a rapidly electrifying UK while ensuring reliability and affordability for consumers. Across Kent, a 726% increase in renewable energy generation was observed between 2020 and 2021[62].

[61] Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, DESNZ, 2025
[62] Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emission Strategy (ELES), Kent County Council, 2020

Tunbridge Wells has significant potential for renewable energy generation, especially solar. As shown in figure 19, solar panel generation in the borough has increased since 2014 by over 1,300%.

Case Study: Solar Together Kent

Working in partnership with TWBC and councils across Kent, Solar Together Kent uses the collective buying power of residents and businesses to secure competitive pricing from vetted installers. This unlocks significant savings compared to individual installations. This means reduced reliance on the national grid, increasing household energy security and lowering carbon footprints.

Since phase one was launched in 2021 over 3,000 solar panels have been installed in the borough alongside, 255 battery storage and 23 EV chargepoint installations.

This work has saved almost 300,000 kgCO_2, with a total investment of £2.5million.

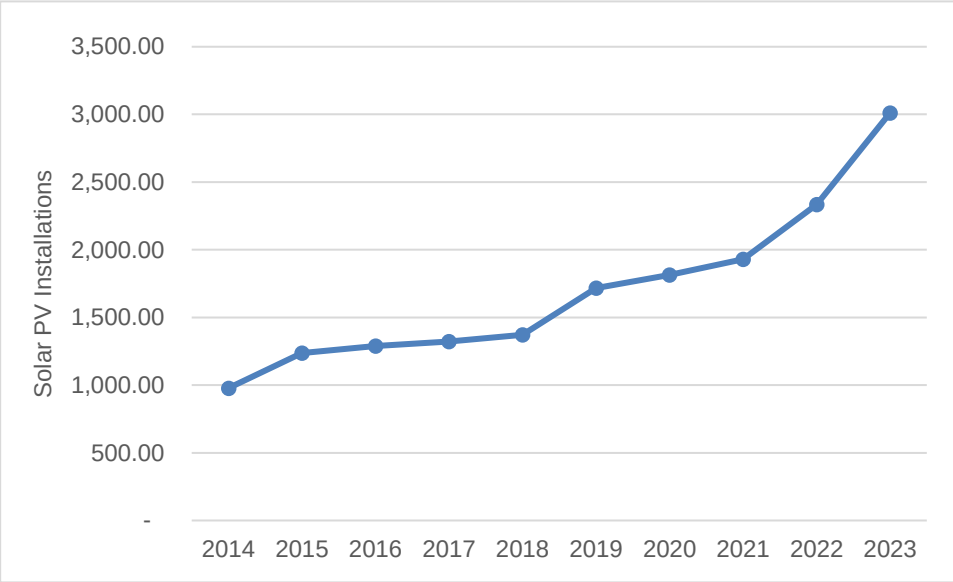

Figure 20: Borough solar PV site installations 2014-2023, DESNZ, 2025

Renewable Energy Action Plan

Theme: Renewable Energy.

Objective 23: Increase the number of renewable energy generation sites/installations across the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
23.1. As part of the Local Plan review process, consider opportunities for a renewable energy site allocation if evidence shows a need for this.	Planning Policy	£	0	2025-28
23.2. Set an example by ensuring that TWBC incorporates solar onto its sites where practically and financially viable.	Property	£££££	0	2025-30
23.3. Investigate options for Solar PV on council owned car parks and leisure centres, including solar canopies.	Parking / Property	£££££	0	2025-30

Objective 24: Understand the existing Tunbridge Wells borough energy context.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
24.1. Investigate a requirement to commission a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), to understand the change required to the Tunbridge Wells Borough energy system with future pathways and opportunities.	Sustainability	£££	0.5	2027-28
24.2. Explore local opportunities for district heat networks.	Sustainability	££	0.5	2026-27

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
24.3. Develop solar opportunities map to highlight to residents and businesses how appropriate buildings in their area may be for rooftop solar.	Sustainability	££	0.5	2027-28
24.4. Explore local opportunities and appetite for community energy schemes and help facilitate any potential projects.	Sustainability	££	0.5	2026-28

Objective 25: Work in partnership with KCC to identify, support and promote new renewable energy projects across the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
25.1. Signpost available funding to appropriate stakeholders	Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
25.2. Work with the Climate Change Network energy sub-group to network with officers across the county and help with county-wide renewable energy initiatives	Sustainability	£	0	2025-30

Objective 26: Support residents and businesses to retrofit and install renewable technologies.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
26.1. Explore options for implementing sustainable design and renewable technologies for buildings in the borough, including listed buildings and sites/buildings located in conservation areas.	Development Management	£	0	2025-30

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
26.2. Share relevant grants available to businesses for renewable energy generation through the TWBC Climate Action website and the TWBC Business portal.	Sustainability	£	0	2025-30

Objective 27: Increase public engagement with renewable energy.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
27.1. Share information about renewable energy, funding, community energy projects etc. to residents via the TWBC Climate Action website	Communications / Private Sector Housing / Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
27.2. Run surveys to gather insight into the perception of community energy in the local area.	Communications / Sustainability	£	0	2026-27

4.5. Priority 5: Waste and Resources

Ambitions:

13. We have increased kerbside recycling rates in the borough to 65% by 2035 and 85% by 2050, from a 2019 baseline.

14. We have reduced per capita food waste 50% by 2030, from a 2021 baseline.

15. TWBC waste collection vehicles are fossil fuel free by 2031.

These ambitions were developed to align with local government guidance and national targets. Ambition 13 aligns with recycling targets suggested by SCATTER for Tunbridge Wells Borough to achieve net zero in alignment with a high ambition pathway. Ambition 14 has been developed to align with the UK Food and Drink Pact and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The 2021 baseline is used as this is the earliest year TWBC has kerbside food waste data. Ambition 15 sits with TWBC as the local waste collection authority. It is the responsibility of TWBC to ensure that this service decarbonises.

Headline figures:

- In 2023 waste emissions increased to a five year high of 35.3 ktCO2e. Emissions have reduced by 39.3% since 2005.
- From the base year (2018/19) to 2023/24, total annual household waste has decreased by 6.8% in the borough.
- Between 2023-24, 39,888 tonnes of total household waste was produced in the borough. This total sits below the mean average for local authority districts in the Southeast for 2023/24 (42,781 tonnes).
- Between 2023-24, 52.2% of household waste (20,809 tonnes) was sent for reuse, recycling, or composting in Tunbridge Wells[63]. Official England 'waste from households' recycling rate was 44.1% in 2022[64].

[63] Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, and composting, LG Inform, 2025
[64] UK statistics on waste, DEFRA, 2024

Data provided by DEFRA shows that residents are reducing the amount of waste they produce; and more of that waste is recycled, composted, or reused. This is positive, and means declining emissions from waste, but the percentage of household waste sent for recycling has only increased by 1.5% over the last 10 years. We must improve recycling rates in the borough.

Barriers to improving recycling rates include waste policy, service constraints, physical barriers and a lack of effective communication and public engagement[65]. We must understand and address these barriers. Service constraints are localised to each authority context, but effective communication and public engagement can be easily addressed to educate residents and empower them to recycle.

UK Deposit Return Scheme

In 2025, the government announced a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers in October 2027. A DRS incentivises the public to return used containers in return for a small financial payment. Similar schemes operating in Europe have been successful: Germany's DRS caused container return rates to increase to 98%. An estimated 17 million single-use drinks containers are disposed of without being recycled every day in the UK. Introducing a DRS will improve the recycling rates of these containers, and benefit consumers.

This scheme could reduce the total number of items recycled in high street bins and on the kerbside and help achieve ambition 13. This priority will be reviewed after the DRS is introduced in 2027.

Figure 21: Charlie's Angels Kitchens, Royal Tunbridge Wells, 2025

Case Study: Charlie's Angels

Charlie's Angels Kitchens is a not-for-profit community café and social enterprise founded by Charlie Moore in late 2021 with an initial £750 raised through a GoFundMe campaign in Tunbridge Wells. Charlie's Angels reduces food waste and addresses food insecurity. In the last four years, the initiative has grown significantly. In January 2024, Charlie opened a permanent café at 86 Camden Road, thanks to the efforts of over 50 dedicated volunteers, affectionately known as "angels".

Operating on a "pay-as-you-feel" model, the café transforms surplus food from partners like Fare Share and local farms into nutritious meals. This approach diverts food from landfill and ensures that

[65] A critical review of household recycling barriers in the United Kingdom ISWA, 2021

everyone, regardless of financial means, has access to healthy food. In 2023 alone, Charlie's Angels Kitchens served approximately 33,000 meals through its café and pop-up events in areas like Southborough and Rusthall.

The café is also a community hub, offering training opportunities for students from Oaks Specialist College and hosting events focused on mental health and social inclusion. Charlie's Angels Kitchens received the Community Contribution Award from the Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society in 2024.

Through its innovative approach to sustainability and community engagement, Charlie's Angels Kitchens exemplifies how local initiatives can make a meaningful difference in addressing environmental and social challenges.

Waste and Resources Action Plan

Theme: Resident Waste.

Objective 28: Promote good recycling practices to residents.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
28.1. Commission a WRAP analysis of waste disposal trends throughout the Borough.	Street Scene	££	0	2025-26
28.2. Investigate opportunities to permit garden waste collections.	Street Scene	££	0	2025-26
28.3. Develop and implement a targeted recycling campaign, with a focus on areas with lower recycling in the Borough.	Communications / Street Scene / Sustainability	££	0.5	2025-26
28.4. Develop and implement a general recycling campaign to improve rates to 65% by 2035 and review these targets against any changes to national waste schemes or legislation.	Communications / Street Scene / Sustainability	££	0.5	2025-26
28.5. Engage with the public, schools, and communities through Borough wide behaviour change initiatives, working with the Kent Resource Partnership.	Street Scene	££	0.5	2025-30
28.6. Continue to promote waste reduction initiatives across the Borough.	Communications / Street Scene / Sustainability	£	0	2025-30

Objective 29: Investigate and implement Net Zero waste collection.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
29.1. Re-tender TWBC's waste collection contract to be fossil fuel free for the 2031 contract renewal.	Street Scene / Sustainability	££££	0	2025-27
29.2. Trial HVO fuel in the waste fleet to assess as a medium-term decarbonisation option.	Property / Street Scene	£££	0	2025-27
29.3. Investigate the possibility of bringing electric vehicles into the waste fleet in the long term.	Property / Street Scene / Sustainability	£££££	0	2026-30
29.4. Consider depot electrification requirements and build into TWBC budgets to deliver in the medium - long term.	Property / Street Scene / Sustainability	££££	0	2026-30
29.5. Work with the waste collection service provider to deliver a communal food waste project.	Street Scene	££	0	2025

Objective 30: Improve the recycling rates of outdoor bin stations across the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
30.1. Review opportunities and scope to implement recycling into kerbside bins through relevant council contracts.	Street Scene / Sustainability	£££	0	2025-27
30.2. Consider a 'leave no trace' campaign to promote reduced public littering.	Communications / Street Scene / Sustainability	£	0	2025-30

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
30.3. Encourage/organise community litter picks and promote this work via the TWBC Climate Action website.	Communications / Street Scene / Sustainability	£	0.5	2026-30

Theme: Business Waste.

Objective 31: Promote good recycling practices with businesses.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
31.1. Create a campaign to promote and encourage better business waste recycling and management.	Economic Development / Street Scene / Sustainability	£	0.5	2026-27
31.2. Work with and support partners (e.g. Amplifi, Town Square) to implement and highlight best practise waste management.	Economic Development / Street Scene / Sustainability	£	0	2025-27
31.3. Develop resources to promote to and educate businesses on the circular economy.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	2026-27

Theme: Resources.

Objective 32: Encourage and support residents to adopts sustainable consumption, circular economy principles, and promote shopping local to facilitate the local economy.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
32.1. Continue to promote local repair cafés.	Communications / Sustainability	£	0	2025
32.2. Create a water saving campaign to encourage residents to reduce their water usage.	Communications / Sustainability	£	1	2026
32.3. Develop educational and outreach materials / programmes to discuss and highlight climate conscious diet options and their benefits.	Communications / Sustainability	£	1	2026
32.4. Communicate and promote resident opportunities to donate, swap and share unwanted clothes.	Communications / Sustainability	£	1	2026
32.5. Collaborate with schools to pilot a food waste reduction programme	Communications / Street Scene / Sustainability	££	1	2026-30
32.6. Work to promote sustainable consumption and circular economy principals.	Communications / Sustainability	£	1	2026-27

Objective 33: Reduce the use of single use plastics in the council and across the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
33.1. Review route to becoming a ‘Plastic Free Council.’	Sustainability	££	1	2026-27

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
33.2. Investigate the 'Surfers Against Sewerage' methodology as an option to engage residents, parish councils, businesses, and schools in reducing plastic waste. Ultimately, working towards a Plastic Free accreditation.	Sustainability	££	1	2026-27
33.3. Introduce deposit schemes at council events and events on council land.	Assembly Hall Theatre / Sustainability	££	0	2026-30
33.4. Encourage businesses to join the water ‘refill’ scheme to encourage the uptake of reusable water bottles.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0	2026-27
33.5. Investigate options for public water refill taps / schemes.	Street Scene / Sustainability	£££	0	2026-30

4.6. Priority 6: Business and Community Engagement

Ambitions:

16. All Schools, Parish and Town Council's will have set a net zero target and developed plans by 2030.
17. The industry and commercial sectors average at least a 4% annual reduction in CO_2e emissions, from a 2022 baseline.
18. Over 90% of residents and businesses are aware of climate change and how they can take meaningful action by 2030.

These ambitions are a call to action for our communities, businesses, and institutions, showing what we must do to reduce emissions. Ambition 16 builds on recent requirements for schools to nominate sustainability leads and develop their own net zero plans. This ambition extends this approach to parish and town councils. Ambition 17 sets the minimum requirement on our industry and commercial sectors to achieve net zero in the borough. Ambition 18 lays the groundwork for residents and businesses to understand the importance of taking climate action and how they can start, no matter their situation.

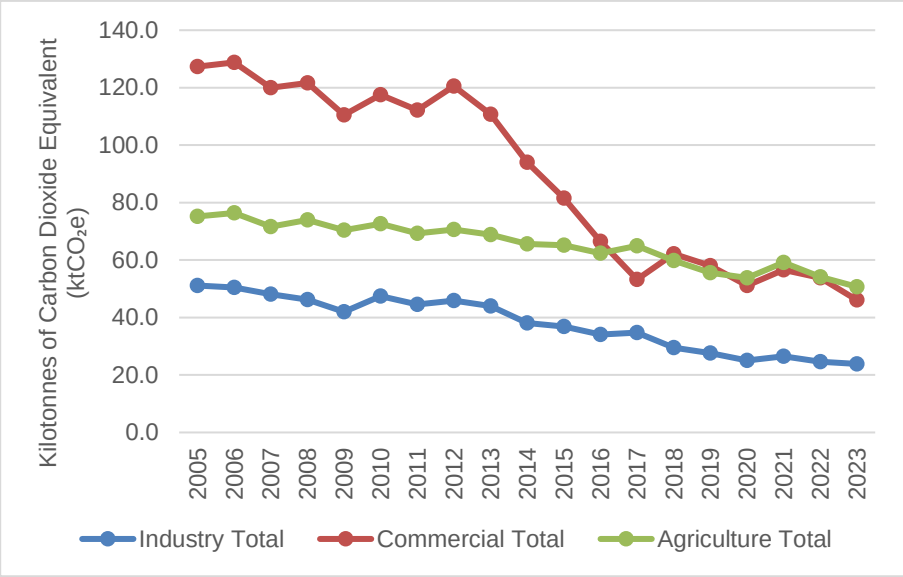

Figure 22: Borough industry, commercial and agriculture emissions 2005-2023, DESNZ, 2025

Input from stakeholders across the community is essential to reach net zero. Engaging with groups, schools, businesses, and individuals to expand reach will create shared ownership over climate action. 116,000 residents working together will have a significant impact. Climate action requires collaboration between government, local organisations, and the community. Not all residents have the resources to make climate conscious choices, but we must help our communities take action.

For residents, adopting sustainable practices, like energy efficiency improvements, active travel, and sustainable consumption, will improve quality of life. We must help residents understand the wider benefits of climate action and make it attractive for residents.

Understanding why and how residents will take action will underpin effective change. Behaviour change must be sustained. Public consultations and engagement events will develop and maintain effective local ownership of the climate crisis.

For businesses, decarbonising mitigates the impacts of climate change and maintains competition in the market. Businesses can reduce their carbon footprint, lower operating costs, and attract environmentally conscious consumers by investing in renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, adopting circular economy principles, reviewing procurement requirements, and considering the impact of deliveries and wider travel. We must champion low carbon industries to foster economic resilience, create green jobs, and improve the borough. We must consistently engage with local businesses to show the benefits of embracing net zero.

Case Study: Amplifi

Locally, Amplifi is a fantastic showcase of how passion and a desire to do better leads to change. Amplifi is a Tunbridge Wells based not-for-profit, whose goal is to connect local businesses and tackle climate change together. Launched in 2024, Amplifi has engaged with over 100 businesses. In collaboration with Net Zero Now, Amplifi is providing emissions reporting and decarbonisation plan services to businesses across many sectors.

Figure 23: Amplifi logo, Amplifi, 2023

They have run Sector Groups for seven business sectors. Their aim – “to accelerate the sustainability journeys of our members.”

Amplifi have facilitated carbon audit programmes, carbon literacy training, and an educational programme.

Recently, they have taken a deep dive into practices of members to embed the principles of a circular economy into their core. Amplifi hope that this will be scalable and accessible to all businesses.

Green skills:

Green skills are technical skills, competencies, and knowledge that drive sustainable practices.

As green jobs rapidly increase, industries need to support economic and sector growth. To meet demand for environmental technicians, wind turbine and solar panel technicians, and green construction managers, we must upskill our workforce.

Developed through dedicated training programs, green skills include technology installation, waste reduction and recycling practices, agriculture, building design and construction, ecological restoration techniques and corporate sustainability and decarbonisation management. We can promote and encourage these roles to build capacity for net zero delivery.

Diversity, equality, and social inclusion

Everybody experiences climate change, but those experiences are as diverse as our community.

Marginalised groups are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. These groups (such as low-socioeconomic and racial minority groups) are more likely to experience pollution, an unequal distribution of resources, poor adaptation measures and impacts to health and wellbeing.

The most vulnerable groups have less influence in climate change policymaking. Policies which do not consider these groups will further marginalise them. We must empower these demographics and engage with all residents. Climate policies must be equitable, with costs and benefits distributed to everyone.

Case Study: The Amelia Scott

The Amelia Scott is a cornerstone for climate awareness and community engagement. It opened in 2022, following a £21 million transformation, the centre has integrated sustainability into its operations through the installation of 90 solar panels, which are projected to reduce the building's carbon footprint by 12 tonnes annually over their 30-year lifespan.

The Amelia Scott is a vibrant community hub that offers cultural and educational programs. Services offered include supporting educational activities and family events, facilitating dementia-friendly sessions and leading book clubs.

The Amelia Scott aids local sustainability efforts: it hosted the launch of Amplifi, an event which attracted over 120 attendees and featured discussions on sector-specific strategies for climate action.

The Amelia Scott has received the prestigious Sandford Award: which affirms its status as an inclusive, dynamic learning environment. The Amelia Scott enriches the cultural fabric of Tunbridge Wells while championing sustainability and community engagement.

Figure 24: The Amelia Scott, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TWBC, 2025

Business and Community Engagement Action Plan

Theme: Business Engagement.

Objective 34: Support partners and stakeholders to promote and embed low carbon business practises.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
34.1. Continue to provide sponsorship and support to Amplifi to accelerate local business climate action.	Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
34.2. Run a business focused climate change expo to display decarbonisation measures applicable to local businesses and provide advice on progressing with such works.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£-££	1	2025-30
34.3. Support and encourage local businesses to connect to 100% renewable energy sources (either through PPA, direct wire or REGO tariffs).	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
34.4. Continue to provide a free emissions calculation tool on the TWBC Climate Action website, as a starting point for businesses looking to calculate their carbon footprint.	Sustainability	£	0	2025-30
34.5. Collaborating with key partners (The BID, Amplifi etc), identify barriers to business decarbonisation and opportunities for support.	Sustainability	£	0	2025-26
34.6. Identify opportunities to acknowledge and reward businesses reducing emissions and tackling climate change e.g. Love Where We Live Awards.	Communications / Sustainability	££	0	2026

Theme: Community Engagement.

Objective 35: Engage with the community to raise awareness of climate change impacts and solutions across the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
35.1. Develop a local schools 'Path to Net Zero' climate action pledge.	Sustainability	£	1	2026
35.2. Develop a climate action guide for schools.	Sustainability	£	1	2025
35.3. Support local school sustainability networks.	Sustainability	£	1	2026
35.4. Consider develop a local 'Path to Net Zero' resident pledge.	Sustainability	£	1	2026
35.5. Develop a climate action information hub for residents, through the TWBC Climate Action website.	Sustainability	£	1	2026
35.6. Continue expanding the TWBC Climate Action platform to display best practise from the Path to Net Zero Pledges.	Sustainability	£	0	2026
35.7. Explore the potential to set up local youth climate conferences / networks to engage with young people throughout the borough.	Sustainability / The Amelia Scott	£	1	2026-27
35.8. Explore the potential to embed climate awareness in youth programmes through the Amelia Scott.	The Amelia Scott	£	1	2025-26
35.9. For Great Big Green Week, deliver thematic events to promote ways residents can tackle climate change.	Sustainability / The Amelia Scott	£	2	2025-26

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
35.10. Bring together community interest groups to help support and facilitate local initiatives.	Sustainability	£	1	2026
35.11. Share any relevant KCC/central government resources and grant schemes via TWBC's media channels.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
35.12. Develop a climate change communications plan to encourage action and share knowledge on different sustainability and climate change issues.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
35.13. Align with national awareness day and campaign events e.g. Earth Day, Great Big Green Week.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
35.14. Create frequent climate change consultations/surveys for residents.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing

Objective 36: Support the community to deliver climate action throughout the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
36.1. Deliver the Climate Community Micro Grants Scheme.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	0	2025
36.2. Deliver local Parish and Town Council workshops to cover issues like: - Carbon Footprint Development - Net Zero Strategy Development	Sustainability	£	1	2025-27

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
- Carbon Literacy Training				
36.3. Deliver local workshops to schools, covering issues like: - Carbon Footprint Development - Net Zero Strategy Development - Carbon Literacy Training	Sustainability	£	1	2026-27
36.4. Work with Amplifi to engage with and support the business sector in measuring impact, identifying actions, and delivering change.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
36.5. Develop a 'Green Events Guide' to provide advice and expected standards for events being held in the Borough.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing
36.6. Develop a 'Green Tourism Guide' to advise residents and tourists how best to see our borough in an environmentally friendly way. This could involve building upon existing plans such as the Visit Kent Business Sustainable Tourism Action Plan.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	2026

Objective 37: Celebrate successful climate action across the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
37.1. Review opportunities to create a new category within ‘Love Where We Live’ awards which celebrates individual and community climate action.	Communications	£	0	Ongoing

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
37.2. Consider incentives / recognition opportunities for those taking and facilitating climate action locally.	Sustainability	£	0	2027

Objective 38: Lobby national government.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
39.1. Continue to lobby national government for better local government funding, improved grant schemes and opportunities for residents.	Sustainability	£	0	Ongoing

Theme: Green Skills.

Objective 39: Develop and promote green skills and job opportunities within the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
39.1. Engage and work with schools to promote climate change, what we are doing in the borough and what future opportunities green skills provide.	Sustainability	££	1	2025-30
39.2. Work with higher education providers to identify opportunities for expanding and / or creating courses to provide green skills.	Sustainability	££	1	2026-28
39.3. Host a sustainable careers event.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	2026

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
39.4. Work with the repair café to host a repair academy to support circular economy practises and teach younger residents repair skills.	Sustainability / The Amelia Scott	£	0	2025
39.5. Where possible, use TWBC procurement to facilitate internships and apprenticeships.	Procurement / Sustainability	££	0	2026-28

4.7. Priority 7: Adaptation

Ambitions:

19. All vulnerable residents in the borough have signed up for local flood alerts by 2030.
20. Over 90% of residents and businesses are aware of local climate risk and how they can meaningfully adapt by 2030.
21. TWBC has delivered a local climate adaptation strategy by 2030.

Figure 25: Sherwood Lakes, Royal Tunbridge Wells

These ambitions were developed to strengthen climate adaptation and ensure we have a resilient borough. Ambition 19 was developed because, according to the Environment Agency, only 18% of the over 1,900 properties at risk of flooding are signed up for flood warnings. Ambition 20 ensures that our residents and businesses understand local climate risks and how to adapt to them. Ambition 21 is TWBC's commitment to create an adaptation strategy to further our work in ensuring our borough becomes more resilient to climate change.

Climate adaptation is defined by the IPCC as "the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects… adaptation aims to moderate or avoid hard or exploit beneficial opportunities [to humans]"[66].

This strategy has focused on why and how we can reduce emissions, but we must also consider the change that our impact has already caused and future changes to the climate. Even if we are successful in limiting global temperature warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C we will still experience changes to our climate for decades to come.

As highlighted in section 1.4.4, Tunbridge Wells Borough will see more extreme weather events (storms and heatwaves), hotter, drier summers and wetter, warmer winters. Ignoring these changes will exacerbate their impact. For Tunbridge Wells, an in-land borough, it is

[66] AR5 Annex II Glossary, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018.

predicted that flooding (caused by extreme weather events) will be one of the greatest risks to the borough, along with limited water resources, extreme drought, increased resource depletion, increased summer temperatures and extreme weather events.

Creating climate resilient communities is as important as reducing emissions. We need to make our buildings and communities more resilient to flooding through flood risk alleviation schemes (sustainable drainage systems), improved local water management, flood defence installation, education, and water efficiency. Overheating must be tackled through natural shading and cooling infrastructure and designing buildings which expel and retain heat more efficiently. Building environment design will help ensure our borough can adapt to future climate impacts.

Developing a Climate Risk Register will help TWBC identify the risks imposed by climate change. It will strengthen our awareness of climate change and help residents act within the community. It will promote long-term planning with appropriate actions to build resilience and protect communities and infrastructure.

Adaptation actions must be taken across all sectors. We must all adapt to climate change; a strong adaptation plan will prepare us. As scientific predictions of future climate impacts improve, the adaptation section of the strategy will be updated.

Adaptation Action Plan

Theme: Adaptation.

Objective 40: Ensure that future local development considers climate change adaptation.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
40.1. As part of the Local Plan review process, consider the need to review and update climate change and adaptation policies.	Planning Policy / Sustainability	£	0	2025-28

Objective 41: Ensure that the borough is aware of the potential climate impacts.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
41.1. Develop a Climate Adaptation strategy (corporate and borough-wide) to sit alongside the Borough Climate Change Strategy and Local Plan (STR7: Climate Change and EN3: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation).	Sustainability	££	0.5	2027-30
41.2. Develop a local climate risk register to shape the development of the climate adaptation strategy.	Sustainability	£	0	2027-30
41.3. Develop a borough wide climate risk map, highlighting the following: - Flood Risk Exposure - Heat Risk Exposure - Air Pollution Exposure	Sustainability	£-££	0	2027-30

Objective 42: Increase awareness of climate change adaptation measures to stakeholders of the borough.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
42.1. Produce a dedicated page on the TWBC Climate Action website on climate change adaptation and signpost to relevant resources.	Sustainability	£	0	2025-26
42.2. Work with the local business community (Amplifi, the Bid etc) to host workshops and talks on adapting businesses to future climate change.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0.5	2026-30
42.3. Hold community awareness and action events to promote adaptation measures.	Sustainability / The Amelia	£	0.5	2026-30

Objective 43: Identify short term opportunities to support residents and businesses susceptible to climate change impacts (flooding, heatwaves etc).

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
43.1. Develop a communications campaign to encourage all vulnerable residents are signed up to severe weather event alerts.	Communications / Environmental Health	£	0	2027
43.2. Trial a scheme to install smart water butts to domestic and commercial properties susceptible to flooding.	Private Sector Housing / Sustainability	££	0.5	2027-28
43.3. Work with Amplifi to help encourage at risk businesses to develop climate contingency and business continuity plans that consider climate impacts.	Economic Development / Sustainability	£	0	2026-30
43.4. Working with Amplifi, look to help promote and provide climate-risk insurance (e.g. flood insurance), investigating way to harness group buying to achieve preferential rates.	Economic Development / Sustainability	££	0	2026-30

Objective 44: Ensure core TWBC services are adapted to future climate scenarios.

Action	Lead	Cost	Capacity	Timeline
44.1. Develop TWBC service plans that consider climate adaptation.	Emergency Planning	£	0	2026-27
44.2. Develop a Climate Change Risk Register with input from officers across TWBC.	Emergency Planning / Sustainability	£	0	2026-27

5. Taking Local Climate Action

Reducing individual emissions is an important part of tackling climate change. Collective action results in large scale change. The case studies included above show how climate action is being taken locally.

This section provides practical tips for minimising your carbon footprint through the everyday choices you make. From energy efficient practices at home to sustainable transport options, these interventions will make a positive impact on the climate.

5.1. Climate Action Tips

Transport

- Walk, Cycle, or Use Public Transport: Reduce car journeys, especially for trips under five miles.
- Use Car-Sharing & Car Clubs: Join schemes like co-wheels to cut individual car usage and reduce your personal car running costs.
- Switch to an Electric Vehicle (EV): Invest in hybrid or electric vehicles. The climate change committee predict EV price parity with fossil fuel cars within the next couple of years. Many second hand EVs are now cheaper than their fossil fuel equivalents.
- Adopt Eco-Driving Habits: Drive efficiently (smooth acceleration, correct tire pressure) to lower fuel consumption, break wear and tyre wear. This helps reduce particulate matter pollution, and fuel spend.

Goods

- Buy Less, Choose Quality: Invest in durable, repairable products instead of fast fashion. Have you ever tried going six months without buying new clothes?
- Support Second-Hand & Circular Economy: Use charity shops, vintage stores, and online resale platforms to give pre-loved clothes a new lease of life.
- Repair Instead of Replace: Join repair cafés or DIY workshops to fix broken items. Many items that we throw out can easily be fixed at a fraction of the cost of replacement.
- Borrow & Share: Use local libraries for books or platforms for renting tools and appliances.

Food

- Buy Local & Seasonal Produce: Support Kent-based farms and local markets to cut produce transport emissions.
- Reduce Food Waste: Plan meals around use by dates, store food properly, and use food-sharing apps like Olio to redistribute food that you do not think you will eat.
- Compost Food Scraps: If you have the space, try composting food scraps and garden waste.
- Choose Sustainable Packaging: Buy products with minimal or recyclable packaging. Did you know that you can also take soft plastics back to large supermarkets for recycling?

Housing

- Improve Home Energy Efficiency: Install insulation, double glazing, and draught-proofing. There are many methods we can use to improve the energy efficiency of our homes, some of which you can get government grants to pay for.
- Switch to Renewable Energy: Install solar panels or sign up for a 100% green energy supplier.
- Upgrade to Energy-Efficient Appliances: Choose A rated devices where possible. This will reduce energy emissions and save you money on your energy bills.
- Reduce Water Heating Needs: Take shorter showers and install low-flow fixtures to save on your water use. Often your water supplier will be able to provide you with free water saving devices.

5.2. Climate Pledges

Throughout our consultation we asked residents to submit their own climate pledges, detailing one thing they will do over the next year to be more sustainable and have a positive climate impact.

Here are their pledges:

Transport

- “Do more active travel”
- “Walk to school”
- “Start walking to school.”
- “Walk to school more.”
- “Walk to school instead of driving.”

- “Cycle or walk more instead of driving.”
- “Use buses more.”
- “Use the school bus more.”
- “Use an electric car.”

Litter and Wate Reduction

- “Pick up people’s trash.”
- “Go on litter picks.”
- “Join a litter pick group.”
- “Start picking up rubbish in my local area.”
- “Attend litter picks.”
- “Upcycle as much as possible.”
- “Recycle batteries”
- “Use less plastic.”
- “Use paper bags when shopping.”
- “Reduce food packaging.”
- “Avoid plastic packaging.”
- “Buy food without packaging.”
- “Use re-usable cotton wool & makeup remover.”

Energy and Water Conservation

- “Turn off my lights when I’m out.”
- “Switch off my lights.”
- “Turn off my bedroom light when I’m not in it.”
- “Turn off the lights in my house when I leave.”
- “Stop unnecessarily using lights in my house.”
- “Use less electricity.”
- “Save water”
- “Install a water butt.”
- “Install motion detection lights.”
- “Use heating less and wear a jumper.”
- “Get a heat pump installed.”
- “Install solar panels.”
- “Think about using renewable energy more.”
- “Switch to a renewable energy supplier”

Sustainable Living and Awareness

- “Eat less meat.”
- “Cut down on unsustainable products at the theatre (at work)”
- “Use less new technology.”
- “Help out with school climate goals.”

6. Climate Change Co-benefits

Climate action co-benefits are favourable outcomes which arise from adopting climate mitigation measures. Examples of co-benefits are detailed below (but not limited to):

Public health co-benefits:

Public health is improved by climate action.

- Introducing measures to improve air quality reduces risks to health, particularly respiratory health.
- Physical health and mental wellbeing are improved by active travel (walking and cycling) if we install safe accessible infrastructure.
- Domestic energy efficiency improvement reduces fuel poverty and improves living conditions and mental and physical health.
- Changes in diet can improve health and reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Adaptation co-benefits:

Adopting climate mitigation measures improves local adaptation to climate change.

- Sustainable resource consumption (water-saving/recycling technologies and behaviour change) will improve water security in areas susceptible to droughts.
- Food security can be improved through sustainable agricultural practices and reducing food waste.
- Ensuring properties are well insulated and prepared for extreme weather reduces public health issues, emergency services demand and disruption to public life.
- Implementing green infrastructure to mitigate against heat stress and flood stress also allows for increased biodiversity.

Economic co-benefits

- The ‘Green Job’ sector will increase as the demand for those with ‘Green Skills’ increases.
- Promotion of circular economy practices could boost economic growth through increased competition, and innovation.
- Improving domestic energy efficiency will reduce energy bills for residents and businesses.

7. Lobbying

TWBC will continue to lobby central government to provide additional resources to grant the necessary freedoms, frameworks, and funding to ensure we can deliver against this strategy and action plans.

UK100

TWBC is an ally member of the UK100, a cross-party membership organisation that 'supports the most ambitious councils to go further and faster on their Net Zero and Clean Air targets'.

As an ally we will:

- **Continue to lead the UK's response to climate change**. We will use our experience and achievements to advocate to the UK government to accelerate the delivery of ambitious local climate action. **With greater powers and funding, we would go further.**

- **Commit to do everything within our power and influence** to rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and work with our residents and businesses to bring our wider communities' emissions in line with Net Zero as soon as possible.

- **Understand our impact on climate change, prioritise where action needs to be taken and monitor progress towards our goals.** We will reduce our emissions at source and limit the use of carbon offsets as part of the global effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

- **Work to be closer to the people who live and work in our communities, so we have a better understanding of their needs.** This means we can collaborate with them to build consensus for the solutions we need to transition to a Net Zero society that delivers multiple benefits and is fair, just and works for everyone.

Being an ally of the UK100 will grant TWBC more opportunities to lobby national government collectively, to provide resources and funding to achieve net zero.

Figure 26: UK100 Logo, 2025

8. Finance, Governance and Monitoring

In the seventh carbon budget, the Climate Change Committee estimated that the cost of achieving net zero in the UK by 2050 will be on average 0.2% of GDP per year. The net cost of achieving net zero is projected to be £110 billion between 2025 and 2050. This estimated cost has decreased from the sixth carbon budget, which estimated annual costs to be 0.5%-0.6% of GDP.

TWBC will maximise every opportunity to obtain government funding for climate action. To date we have received over £1.5 million in grant funding towards our corporate decarbonisation works, over £100,000 towards EV chargers in the borough, supported over £2.5 million of investment in solar panel installation for residents and distributed over £20,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding to businesses through our business decarbonisation grant scheme. This is just the beginning.

Our action plans show the expected cost and capacity required to deliver against the strategy ambitions over the next 5 years. These costs and capacity are not all yet allocated and will need to be taken forwards through the budget setting process. Projects will also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

To ensure this strategy is delivered successfully, every part of the Council must be held accountable. The below management plan highlights how TWBC will do this:

1. The Sustainability team will oversee the delivery of this strategy.

2. Workstreams (for the strategy priorities) will be established to deliver actions within their departments' remit.

    a. The Sustainability team will work alongside the workstreams and their leads to monitor progress and deliver actions. The workstreams will meet quarterly with the Sustainability team to provide updates for the annual progress report.

3. Management Board will be informed of the strategy's progress through the annual progress report and yearly action plan review.

4. Progress will be tracked through a KPI monitoring page on the TWBC climate action website, with KPIs updated as soon as new data is released.

5. This will be reported to the council's cross-party Climate Emergency Advisory Panel (CEAP).

6. Once an annual progress report and yearly action plan review has been created, it will be taken to cabinet.

This strategy is a live document, with objectives, actions, and timescales subject to alteration. An annual review and progress report will form an integral part of the monitoring process.

The purpose of the annual action plan review will be to review progress and amend actions, ambitions, and governance where appropriate to account for changes in legislation, funding, capacity, and strategy delivery.

9. Glossary of Terms

Adaptation: Adaptation refers to adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects.

Anthropogenic: Refers to something that is caused or influenced by human activities. This term is often used in the context of climate change to describe the impact on the climate resulting from human activities, such as carbon emissions from industrial processes or transport.

Carbon Budget: The maximum amount of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions allowed to be released without global temperature rise exceeding a specified limit. This budget is calculated based on the remaining capacity of the atmosphere to absorb CO_2 without triggering dangerous levels of global warming.

Climate Change Co-benefits: Climate co-benefits are wider societal beneficial outcomes that arise from climate change mitigation.

Climate Change Committee: The Climate Change Committee is an independent body established under the Climate Change Act (2008) that advises the UK Government on setting and meeting carbon budgets and on preparing for the impacts of climate change.

Decarbonisation: Decarbonisation is the term used for removal or reduction of carbon dioxide (CO_2) output into the atmosphere.

DESNZ: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Green Jobs: Roles in various sectors that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment.

Green Skills: Abilities, knowledge, and competencies needed to support the transition to a sustainable and environmentally friendly economy.

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

KCC: Kent County Council.

Lobbying: any attempt by individuals or private interest groups to influence the decisions of government.

Net Zero: Refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gases produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. Outcome is no overall increase in greenhouse gases.

Net Zero Compatibility: Reducing direct emissions to the point where national intervention must take over to achieve full net zero.

SCATTER: Setting City Area Targets and Trajectories for Emissions Reduction.

TWBC: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

10. Version Control

Document Name	Borough Climate Change Strategy
Responsible Officer	Henry Saunders, Sustainability Manager

Version Number	Reason for Review	Author	Date
1.0	Consultation Draft	H. Saunders, Sustainability Manager J. Berry, Graduate Climate Change Officer	25.07.2024
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All figures in this document are correct as of 16/07/2025.