

Name: Marisa Heath

Portfolio: Environment

Supporting Nature Recovery and improving our natural environment

Work to develop Surrey's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which is a new statutory responsibility under the Environment Act, is continuing. Resident and community engagement is a crucial part of this process and 8 workshops have been held to-date with over 140 Surrey residents, including farmers and landowners. Three more workshops are planned, including a Surrey Nature Day on 28th September where there will be the opportunity for residents to meet representatives from some of the important organisations involved in nature recovery in Surrey, and talk to them about what they are doing to help 'bring wildlife home.' Events include Wild Walks, an original piece of theatre directed by the Guildford Shakespeare Company, designed to bring to life the concept of habitat restoration in an engaging, easy-to-understand way.

**2024-25 tree planting programme and success in achieving a fourth round of funding**

Following the success of last years tree planting programme where we planted 43,603 new trees, which included 1952 metres of hedgerows, a planting collaboration with Bronzefield women's prison's horticultural qualification and 7300 new trees at Bocketts Farm. We have just been successful in receiving **£273,323.08** in our 4th round of grant funding. Consequently, the programme has now successfully achieved **£1,234,694.77** of grant funding contributions since 2021. This coming season has a target of 48k trees, with projects planned at Ashford Hospital, over 60 surrey schools and planting more than 350 fruit orchard trees.



Ash dieback - turning a negative into a positive, improving our woodland areas

As nesting bird season concludes, we will be working to address Ash dieback as part of our proactive approach to managing woodland across Surrey's Countryside Estate. In the interest of public safety, felling of diseased and dying ash trees is planned in higher-risk areas around the county throughout the autumn and early winter.

7 Whilst the loss of ash trees from disease will have a noticeable effect on our landscape, removal of the dead and dying trees is likely to result in indirect benefits to our woodlands. Many of Surrey's woodlands have been unmanaged for some time, resulting in species such as bramble and ivy flourishing, and sensitive woodland specialist species declining. Ash dieback works will create a more open canopy in our targeted areas that allow more daylight to reach the forest floor. This is a critical component for many of our woodland specialist wildflowers and will help their populations to recover. The planned restoration for each site will help us to protect these new glades, whilst also working to ensure recovery of scrub and woodland edge habitats. Our most sensitive sites are being completed under protected species licences to avoid, reduce, and manage potential impacts caused by the tree felling. As part of these licences we are committed to providing enhancements for species such as bats, hazel dormouse and roman snail, and have incorporated all of these features into our long-term management plans.

On the Countryside Estate, works are planned around targeted areas of Norbury Park (Leatherhead/Dorking), Chittys and Stringers Commons (Worplesdon), Shere Woodlands (near Guildford), and Newlands Corner (Guildford). Necessary works will also take place at Markedge Shaw (Merstham), Beech Avenue (Effingham), near Witley and Rodborough Commons (Milford), Dorking Road (Leatherhead) and Jacks Copse (Burpham). Start dates will be staggered throughout the autumn.

In addition to sharing information via newsletters and on-site signage, an engagement programme including "Walk and Talk" sessions with the Council's arboricultural team and "Drop-in" sessions providing opportunities for informal discussion has been taking place at key locations throughout September. More information on Ash dieback can be found on the Council's [dedicated webpages](#).

Basingstoke Canal Centre

Residents and users are being asked for their thoughts on the Basingstoke Canal Centre in Mytchett, and ideas they might have for improvement in the future. A short public survey has been created to improve our knowledge of how people currently use the centre, when they visit, which facilities they use, but also what opportunities may encourage them to use the centre more often.

Survey results will be used to guide thinking around potential improvements that could not only enhance the Centre's value to the community but help it become more financially sustainable and fit for the future. The [survey](#) is being hosted on the Council's Commonplace platform, but hard copies are also available, while posters are also being distributed in the local area with QR codes that direct people to the survey.

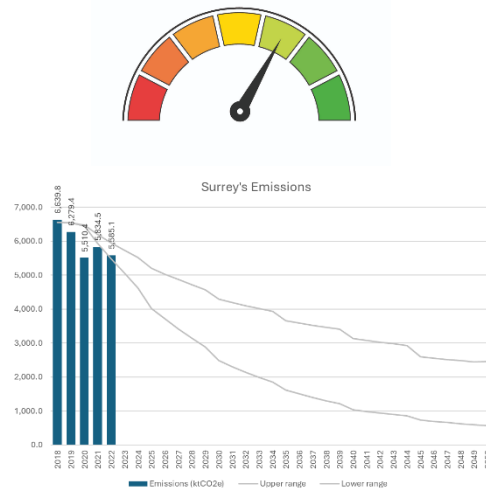
Meeting our net zero targets

Early indications show that Surrey County Council continues to be on track to meet its 2030 net zero target. Since 2021 until present, officers have brought in £14M in Government grant funding to decarbonise the estate, focusing on switching buildings with end-of-life boilers to low emission heat pumps. Officers are also focusing on solar installation, which will save the Council money on energy bills as well as contributing to the 2030 target. A further programme of rooftop solar installation will commence in 2025, seeing installations on approximately 30 buildings. In addition, the installation of the solar canopy at Woodhatch is now completed (image below).







7

The Surrey's 2050 net zero target also remains on track but there are significant challenges ahead to scale up action to reduce emissions in a financial environment that has never been more challenging for residents, businesses and the public sector.



Since the start of the plan, our actions, working with key partners, have resulted in huge benefits under all four strategic priorities - making it possible for residents to reduce energy, get skilled in jobs, enabling businesses to decarbonise, allowing pupils to walk and cycle safely to school and encouraging residents to be empowered to take action on the environment, plant trees and much,

much more.

<p>Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit</p>  <p>259</p> <p>Businesses have benefitted from grants to reduce costs and be more sustainable</p> <p>507</p> <p>Subsidised retrofit skills courses to fill the green skills gap</p> <p>New service</p> <p>To support businesses to develop, including on sustainability</p>	<p>Tackling health inequality</p>  <p>1264</p> <p>fuel poor households treated with insulation and PV, reducing bills.</p> <p>68,286</p> <p>Visitors to 84 warm welcome services and energy efficiency advice</p> <p>580</p> <p>Households received free home energy surveys and advice</p>	<p>Empowered and thriving communities</p>  <p>2177</p> <p>Households participated to purchase solar panels, reducing bills.</p> <p>31,969</p> <p>Pupils received cycling and walking training, building confidence for active travel.</p> <p>2802</p> <p>Active travel users being rewarded through the Betterpoints app</p>	<p>Enabling a greener future</p>  <p>558,267</p> <p>Trees planted, absorbing carbon and providing climate resilience</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>Woodland under improved sustainable management, improving biodiversity</p> <p>New service</p> <p>Being developed to support biodiversity and nature recovery</p>
---	--	---	--

Supporting residents to save energy and stay warm

We continue to support residents struggling to heat their homes, mindful that Government's restrictions on the winter fuel allowance will put more pressure on some over 60s. 46,000 residents were assisted by the Fuel Poverty programme's work last winter, and with additional targeted projects planned for this year, we are ensuring the most vulnerable residents in Surrey have a support network and a lifeline. Funding from the programme enables prevention projects in SFRS, Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships, Citizen's Advice, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People as well as many others which are funded through the £1m grant we receive. We will also be running our Warm Welcome scheme once again this winter, with approximately 80 venues across the county.



A Warm Welcome cooking class at the Hope Hub, Camberley

Since 2022 we have installed almost £9M of Government funded energy efficiency measures in 346 fuel poor homes, creating annual energy savings of approximately £310,000 for these residents. Our HUG2 scheme will continue to run to March 25 after which further funding will be available. Surrey is one of the most successful local authorities in delivering Government funded fuel poverty schemes in the country.



Surrey resident Bob had solar installed on his home

The third phase of Surrey Solar Together has just launched. Solar Together offers residents subsidised costs for solar installations through a bulk purchase scheme which is supported and promoted by the Council. To date, the Solar Together programme in Surrey has enabled 10 MW of renewable energy capacity installed, saving 50,452 tonnes of CO2 across the next 25 years. 2274 installations have been completed, equating to £17.1m of private investment and offering an average 34% saving to residents on their energy bills. This programme is cost neutral to the Council.



Surrey resident Ruth accessed solar through Solar Together "I've wanted solar panels forever because for one environmentally it's the right thing to do... I felt I would have confidence in their due diligence... Obviously satisfied with the actual installation itself!"

Also launching in September is the Council's Home Energy Improvement One-Stop Shop. Working with expert delivery partner FurbNow, this pilot offers Surrey households a centralised, streamlined and simplified platform through which to upgrade their homes by installing energy saving 'retrofit' measures to save money and carbon.

Supporting our residents to be more resilient to climate changes especially flooding

We recently published our first annual [Impact Report](#) into the steps SCC and our partners have been taking to manage the risk of flooding across the County. The report sets out the approach taken by risk management authorities to deliver against the objectives of Surrey's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and includes some of the **Page 79** achievements and challenges faced.

One area set out in the report is how we support Flood Action Groups. These groups are led by the community and supported by the risk management authorities to help improve our collective understanding of the causes and impacts of flooding on residents but also to build community resilience to future floods. A recent example of where this approach has been successful is in Worplesdon. The Worplesdon Flood Forum was created in 2005 by the Parish Council and has held regular meetings with authorities. The group have fed back that this has recently helped to facilitate a collaborative approach with SCC teams resulting in the resolution of a long-standing flooding problem in the area.

7

We are continuing to carry out statutory investigations into the flooding that resulted from Storm Henk earlier in the year. We are also managing the Flood Recovery Framework grants for householders who flooded internally. Affected residents can claim a grant of up to £5000 to pay for "Property Flood Resilience" improvements to reduce the impact of future flooding to their property. So far, we have received 52 applications and are proceeding with surveys for 31 properties.

Following heavy rain on the 1st August, we received 51 reports of flooding, including 36 reports of properties flooded internally and 15 external. The Friary Centre in Guildford and The Square Shopping Centre in Camberley both experienced flooding from surface water. 53.7mm of rain was recorded as having fallen between 17:30 and 20:00 in Oxted. SCC teams continue to investigate reports and pass on details to the relevant authority as appropriate.

Supporting businesses to cut costs, carbon and grow their business

Following the success of the EU funded LoCASE programme, which offered grants to SME businesses for energy efficiency and low carbon measures, the Council will be launching Surrey's first SME decarbonisation loan scheme in September in partnership with 6 Boroughs and Districts, who are supporting with Government Shared Prosperity funding. This pilot will run to March 25, with the potential to extend for a further year. The pilot will offer loans of up to £15k to small and medium sized businesses in Guildford, Waverley, Woking, Reigate and Banstead, Spelthorne and Surrey Heath. Officers will also provide support and free training for businesses wishing to reduce energy bills and carbon emissions.

Officers are continuing to deliver grant funding to support rural SME businesses, charities and community groups in Tandridge, Guildford and Waverley. Organisations can apply for a grant of up to £50,000, and up to 50% of capital projects costs. The objectives are to support rural development, help job creation, environmental benefits and community enterprise. The Wheatsheaf pub in Grayswood (below) had been operating for over 120 years but sadly closed during covid. With more than 80 pubs a month closing in the UK, Mark Mizerotti and his family recognised the need for a pub in the village. There were no village amenities once the pub had closed so they set about refurbishing it. REPF funding has helped considerably with the refurbishment by awarding £50,000 towards the installation of a professional, energy efficient kitchen. This pub is now open and serving high quality, locally sourced food to all of its customers.



Supporting communities to improve their local environments

Parish and town councils: Over the coming months officers will be providing dedicated resource to support Surrey's parish and town councils to develop their own local carbon and nature recovery strategies and action plans. There is much that can be achieved by these councils, particularly to encourage local activities that have an environmental benefit. Parish and town councils are already well networked in Surrey through SALC and our intention is to support a handful of these councils to develop a strategy and action plan, providing them with the tools they need to start delivering local action and then for these councils to support others to develop similar tools and approaches.

Eco Schools: Surrey County Council continues to lead in England in environmental education, boasting the largest number of Eco-Schools Green Flag awards for the second consecutive year. 98 schools across the county have earned this internationally recognised award.

The Eco-Schools programme is the largest education programme globally, providing a structured framework for embedding sustainability into schools. It empowers students to take the lead in environmental action, encouraging them to become champions of positive change both now and in the future.

This year over 50,000 pupils were part of a school that achieved the Green Flag with support from SCC. Approximately 2,200 of these students have played an instrumental role in their schools' journey to achieving the Green Flag, dedicating time and effort to initiatives that range from reducing waste, conserving energy to promoting biodiversity, conserving water, picking up litter, keeping local water ways clean, growing food, promoting sustainable transportation and more.



St Peter's CofE Primary in Farnham were recently awarded Green Flag status with support from SCC.

Supporting our Farmers: In September we are hosting our second networking event for Surrey farmers at Woodhatch Place. The last event was well received and focused on supporting our farmers to access funds through environmental land management schemes. This month, we have speakers on sustainable farming incentives, a case study on regenerative farming and discussions on nitrate and water management. These events are aimed at offering a warm welcome to Woodhatch Place, building relationships with our farmers and offering a networking opportunity.