

15 OCTOBER 2024

CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS ASSESSMENT 2023/4

Purpose of report: To summarise the main findings from the latest Climate Change Assessment and Greener Futures Engagement Strategy, with recommended key areas of focus for the following year.

Introduction:

1. This is the third progress assessment [1] to be done since publication of the Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-2025 [2] (the Delivery Plan) to support Surrey to become a net-zero County by 2050, and Surrey County Council's Corporate plan to be a net-zero Council by 2030 [2].
2. The interim findings of the climate change assessment for the financial year 2023-4 are set out in a slide pack **Annex A**. Once complete, these will be developed into two full reports for Cabinet: (1) Surrey County Council's 2030 net-zero progress report and; (2) Surrey's 2050 Progress Report.
3. As requested by the CEH committee and in recognition of the vital role engagement plays to the success of the Delivery Plan, there is an additional section which summarises progress against the implementation of the Greener Futures Engagement Strategy [3], and areas of focus for the coming year. This is not intended to go to Cabinet unless recommended by the CEH Committee.
4. This report is set against a backdrop of where, despite growing evidence and very high levels of public concern [4] about climate change, there is a small but growing wave of scepticism, and some slow-down of ambition from the outgoing National Government [5]. But although the economic climate has been more challenging for residents, and Local Authority's resources to provide non-statutory services is lower, Local Authorities have, where feasible, remained committed to supporting residents and businesses to live more sustainable and healthier lifestyles with strong green job opportunities.
5. This commitment is due to the additional benefits that the climate change agenda bring to residents and businesses and the strong ties to the No One Left Behind agenda in Surrey through focused investment and engagement in

supporting fuel poor households and SME businesses and those who are most impacted by the cost of living crisis.

2030 Surrey County Council progress report

6. When the plan was put in place, Surrey County Council emitted around 17,700t of carbon from buildings, fleet and streetlighting, plus indirect emissions from procured services, business travel and buildings that we own but do not operate. The plan was seeking to achieve a 40-69% by 2025/6 emission reduction. With a reduction of 38%, we are still on track to achieving this ambition, as long as key decarbonisation projects scale up as anticipated and Capital funding is available.
7. In addition to delivering annual carbon savings of 6.7kt per year, the plan delivered estimated bills savings of £4M and 0.5MW additional renewable energy, funded in part through £4.7M of external funding.
8. Key successes include:
 - 1.1 The now completed streetlighting LED replacement programme which has achieved a carbon saving of £75% and saves the Council around £3.5M per year.
 - 1.2 Retrofit measures, part funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, have been started in 9 buildings, expecting to save the Council around £0.7M in energy bills. A further £6m has been won from PSDS, expected to treat a further 8 buildings.
 - 1.3 Further embedding of climate change targets into our service areas has resulted carbon considerations in procurement policies, in the development of new buildings, and engagement.
9. Areas that have proved more challenging include:
 - 1.1 The delivering of Solar PV on rooftops and large-scale ground-mounted projects. These are essential to reduce our dependency on high energy prices, pay back borrowing and offset carbon emissions that are technically unfeasible or prohibitively expensive to decarbonise. To mitigate this, officers are developing a programme of solar rooftop schemes for SCC which will be brought to Cabinet in November and are continuing to explore opportunities for ground mounted solar.
 - 1.2 Delays in installing EV charging infrastructure at office and depot sites has slowed our ambitions to decarbonise the Council's 487 vehicles, and a staff travel plan has not been developed. To mitigate this, responsibility

for delivering EV infrastructure will now sit with Greener Futures, in collaboration with Land & Property and will be delivered alongside the estate decarbonisation programmes.

- 1.3 There is a key risk around further decarbonisation of buildings, many of which will not be eligible for PSDS and will be affected by decisions on future building rationalisation and dependent on arrangements with the new facilities management contractor. Consultants Arup has been commissioned to produce costed options for the delivery of the estate decarbonisation programme to 2030 and beyond. This work is expected to be included in the Climate Change Delivery Plan 2026-2031.

2050 progress report

10. The Delivery Plan seeks to accelerate climate action to achieve a 20-40% reduction across Surrey. Since the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, Surrey's 6.6M tonnes of carbon emissions have reduced by 16% so Surrey continues to be on track. However, indicators on the pace and scale of change show that key shifts in Surrey (such as an increase in renewable energy, and a move away from electric vehicles) are not happening at the pace needed and therefore there is a risk that Surrey will go off track over the coming years.
11. It has always been recognised that Local Authority led action and investment in decarbonisation should prioritise schemes that have benefits for the No One Left Behind agenda. Some examples of projects which generated benefits for residents and small businesses include:
 - 1.1 With £0.9M of funding, the Fuel Poverty programme has expanded to provide grants to decarbonise homes, visits to 3393 residents, £28k of food vouchers, meals, cooking and insulation measures and free energy advice to lower bills and reduce carbon.
 - 1.2 Increased activity to support household retrofit, includes Solar Together, generating an additional 4MW of renewable energy, saving residents £1.3M in energy bills per year.
 - 1.3 507 subsidised places on green skills courses have been funded to encourage more people to meet the green skills gap, although a reduction in resource means that it may not be possible to sustain and scale up action as planned.

- 1.4 Schools' engagement has resulted in 98 schools with Green Flag status – with Surrey having the highest in the country. In addition, 31,969 pupils completed cycle and walking training.
 - 1.5 Over 0.5M trees have been planted, with plans in place to improve land management on Local Authority land improving prospects for biodiversity as we plan for expanded action through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
 - 1.6 The launch of Surrey Adapt [6] and continuation of the flood management programme, paves the way for Surrey to be more prepared to adapt and be resilient to the future impact of climate change, avoiding costs of emergency management caused by extreme weather.
12. Projects where progress was not as expected included:
- 1.1 National Government funding to retrofit fuel poor homes was reduced to only off gas households, reducing overall funding, scope of households that could apply, and increasing the complexity of scheme administration. Action Surrey and the Council have been working to address the scheme difficulties and new funding for all fuel poor households is expected next year.
 - 1.2 Transport remains challenging. Funding and resident opposition has paused progress on new cycle infrastructure, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and emission-based charging. The installation of EV charge points has been slower than expected with an increase in pace expected next year. Bus decarbonisation is expected to continue next year following supply chain issues.
 - 1.3 Local Authorities in Surrey have been working towards more ambitious net-zero targets including the retrofit of 41 buildings, 171 EV vehicles and carbon literacy training, but for many Local Authorities, funding has never been more challenging.

Implementation of the Greener Futures Engagement Strategy

13. The Greener Futures Engagement Strategy was developed in 2023 to support the delivery of the Greener Futures outcomes. It recognises that the widespread adoption of sustainable habits from residents and businesses, is essential to successful delivery and that our engagement approach. It also recognises that there is significant scope to increase reach and improve support provided to residents and businesses through engagement projects. The strategy has been developed using sound engagement theory [7] and Surrey-

specific social research using the Britain Talks Climate methodology [8] to create a high quality plan.

14. The overarching aim of the plan is to turn the widespread concern on climate and the environment into practical action through low carbon and pro-environmental behaviour. Aiming to reach as many of the 1.2 residents in Surrey as possible, as well as businesses and public sector organisations, it identified key modes of engagement which needed to be improved to increase reach, build trust and trigger behaviour change (comms, web and digital, community-Council joint working, building networks, participation in Council service delivery and lobbying). It targeted topic areas and groups of stakeholders to maximise impact (2050 net-zero target, Schools, public sector businesses, internal, natural environment and rural).
15. Since the Engagement Strategy has started to be implemented a number of successes have been achieved, including:
 - 1.1 Comms/ web and digital: Improved social media campaign planning resulting in 6 campaigns reaching over 50 thousand residents and improved web pages resulting in greater uptake of Council services, and reputation.
 - 1.2 Community council joint working: Increased volunteer capacity through new Council-community projects, building trust and empowerment. This includes the new Home Energy Advice taskforce with 100 volunteers who have already delivered 580 free home energy surveys, the setup of a new community energy company with 9 Directors, and My Green Future, an environmental volunteering programme for 12 young people not in training or employment, designed to provide them with green skills to enable future environmental careers.
 - 1.3 Building networks: Increasing the capability and collaboration of organisations through small grants, training leading 25 events and improved communication routes. This includes a new email network of 670 individuals and organisations and an increased readership of Greener Matters of 733 individuals.
 - 1.4 Participation with Council service delivery: has begun through the development of good quality engagement plans including significant in-person engagement on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, a new statutory duty for the Council, and green skills.
16. Next year implementation will be on projects that require further progress and scale up:

- 1.1 Together for Surrey: a major behaviour change project that uses a peer-to-peer inspired digital platform to inspire and enable residents to take a wide range of environmental and climate actions within their sphere of influence. It is being developed jointly between the Council and the University of Surrey to use as a test bed and is a core focus of the Civic Agreement.
- 1.2 Parish engagement: further support for Parishes to develop, implement and monitor Biodiversity and Climate action plans.
- 1.3 Lobbying: expand lobbying to include joint Council-community voices.

Conclusions:

17. Continuing to be on track with the 2030 and 2050 net zero carbon targets is a substantial achievement but carries significant risk of slowing down in future years.
18. The cumulative benefits to Surrey's residents, businesses and Local Authorities are substantial across all four strategic priorities as well as significant benefits to the No One Left Behind agenda, resulting in better lives for residents. It has also resulted in additional funding and cost savings to Local Authorities.
19. The plan has an appropriate suite of projects consistent with our carbon targets. Whilst many are progressing well, the key future issue will be to prevent the plan plateauing, and ensure that successful projects grow to the scale of action required.

Recommendations:

20. Cabinet recommendations are expected to be:
 - a) Continue to deliver against the net zero targets as set out in the Climate Change Delivery Plan - noting key focus areas (Annex A slides 3-4) that are intended to make the plan as impactful as possible within available resources.
 - b) Develop the 5 year Climate Change Plans for the years 2026-31, for Cabinet Consideration next year.

Next steps:

Next steps as identified in the recommendation section

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Annex A – Interim findings of the Climate Change Progress Assessment 2023-4

Sources/background papers

[1] Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan Progress report, 2022; https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/342471/Climate-Change-Whole-Programme-Assessment.pdf and Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-2025, 2021:

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s82192/Annex%20-%20Climate%20Change%20Delivery%20Plan%20Main%20Report-Cabinet%20Draft.pdf>

[2] Cabinet report with the approved Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-2025, 2021, the 2030 Corporate plan:

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s82192/Annex%20-%20Climate%20Change%20Delivery%20Plan%20Main%20Report-Cabinet%20Draft.pdf>

[3] Greener Futures Engagement Strategy, 2023: Not published, but available on request.

[4] Temple Group obo SCC stated that 68% of Surrey residents rate action on climate change and environment as '*extremely*' or '*very*' important, Dec 2022

[5] In Depth Q&A: What do Rishi Sunak's U-turns mean for UK climate policy?, Carbon Brief, September 2023;

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/in-depth-qa-what-do-rishi-sunaks-u-turns-mean-for-uk-climate-policy>

[6] Surrey Adapt, 2023; <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/climate-change/what-are-we-doing/adaptation-and-resilience/adaptation-strategy>

[7] The COM-B model, September 2024: <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/organizational-behavior/the-com-b-model-for-behavior-change>

[8] Britain Talks Climate – report summary and findings, September 2024;

https://climateoutreach.org/britain-talks-climate/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMlwZH5w5msiAMV6JFQBh1BeAJ3EAAYASAAEgLn1_D_BwE

