

Annual Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report

January 2026





2025 Climate and Ecological Annual Report

Foreword

In June 2019 Swale Borough Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. Since then tackling this emergency has been at the heart of our operations both internally and externally.

We set some of the most ambitious net zero targets in the country and these targets drove the Council to begin working on projects which may have otherwise been delayed such as tree planting, LED roll out, establishment of car clubs, and building retrofits.

In March 2025 we adopted a new revised Action Plan to update the way in which we tackle the emergency taking into account the challenging economic and social landscapes.

This will be the seventh Annual Report, covering the activities undertaken in 2025 to address the emergency, and the first to report on progress against the revised Action Plan.

As shown in this report we have made positive progress in reducing emissions directly within our control and supporting the wider Borough in decarbonising.

In the next few of years all the authorities in Kent will be restructured and merged with neighbouring local authorities into unitary authorities, which will bring challenges, but equally opportunities.

Funds such as Pride in Place will provide £20 million to communities on East Sheppey over the next decade, while the Pride in Place Impact Fund will help residents across the wider Borough. Both present an opportunity for the Council to collaborate with communities to deliver sustainable regeneration that will benefit residents for generations to come.

I look forward to working with councillors, officers and residents to further our progress towards net zero.



Figure 1: Cllr Dolley Wooster, Chair Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee



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Background

In June 2019 Swale Borough Council, in common with many other local authorities, passed a motion to declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency.

The motion set some of the most ambitious targets in the United Kingdom, with the Council then seeking to achieve net- zero carbon across our operations by 2025 and Borough wide by 2030.

These targets drove the Council to begin working on projects which may have otherwise been delayed such as tree planting, LED roll out, establishment of car clubs, and building retrofits. Despite this, the time since the 2019 declaration has been challenging, and it became clear the Council could not achieve its targets.

Throughout 2024, officers completed a carbon audit to set a new emissions baseline and in March 2025 the Environment and Climate Change Committee (now the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee) adopted a revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan.

The 2019 motion also included the provision of an Annual Report in January of each year.

This will be the seventh Annual Report, covering the activities undertaken in 2025 to address the emergency, and the first to report on progress against the revised Action Plan.



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2025 Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan

The [2025 Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan](#) set revised targets for the Council to achieve net zero in our own operations, as well as across the wider Borough.

For the first time, targets have been disaggregated by scope.

The re-baselining exercise undertaken by the Council in 2024 showed varied levels of changes in the emissions of each scope, meaning there are different opportunities and challenges in achieving net-zero for each. Separating the targets also means it is clearer to see how the Council must act.



The revised targets include a 2035 net zero target for the Council's own scope 1 and scope 2 emissions, and a 2045 net zero target for both the Council's scope 3 emissions, and the Borough.

The revised action plan includes seven focus areas, under which actions are grouped.

This Annual Report covers the measures taken towards achieving the ambitions of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan, as well as any other interventions taken by the Council to deliver a net-zero Swale.



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Establishing a baseline

To monitor progress against our targets, we need to understand the emissions of the Borough. Regional greenhouse gas statistics are published each year by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), although for the purpose of robust reporting these feature a two-year lag. This means the most available data is from the 2023 calendar year.

In Swale in 2023, 42.18% of CO₂ emissions came from the Industry Sector, while only 5.62% came from the Commercial Sector. Transport accounted for the next largest source of emissions, at 32.25%, followed by the Domestic Sector emissions from houses at 16.05%, Agricultural Sector emissions (3.68%), Public Sector emissions (1.82%), and waste management (<0%).

Land Use, Land Change and Forestry meant that 15.5 kt CO₂e was sequestered from the atmosphere. This can be attributed to carbon sequestration from forest and grassland in Swale.

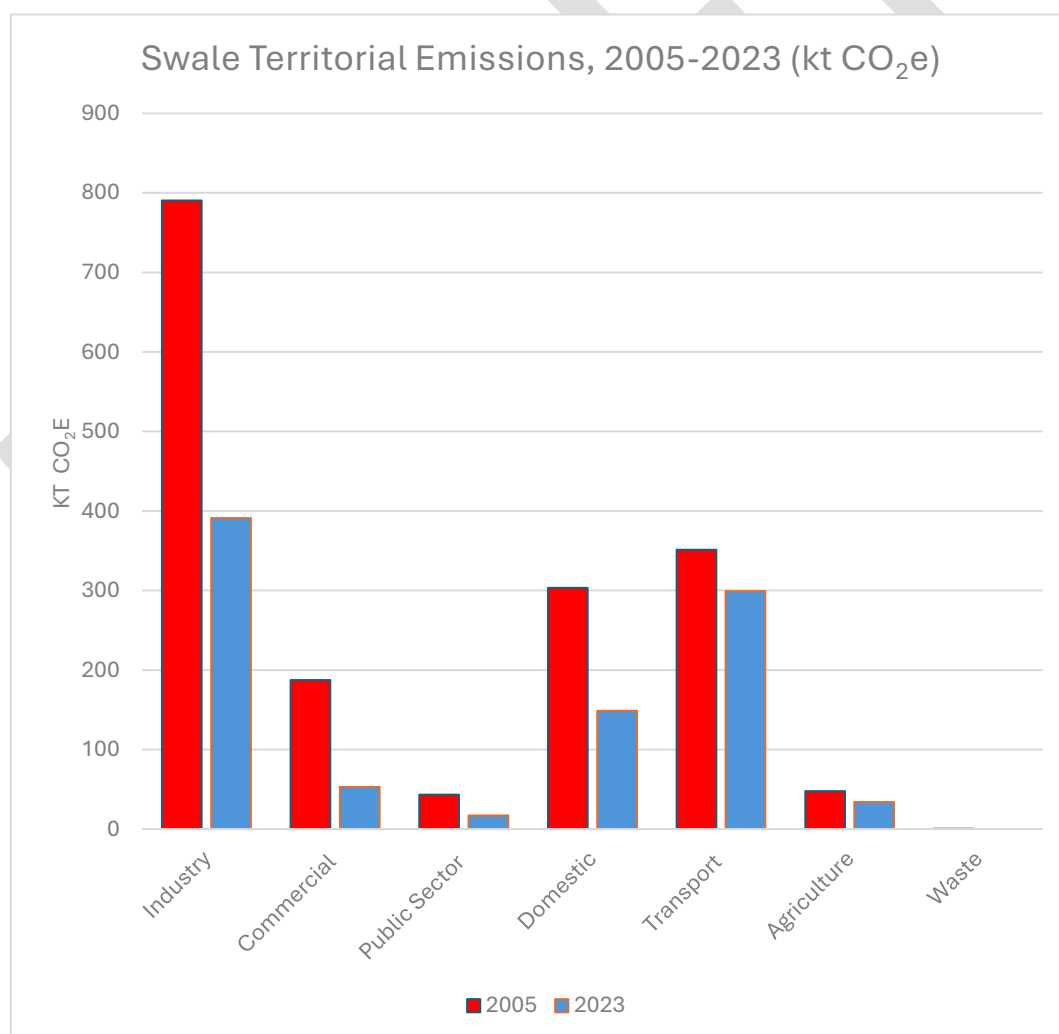


Figure 2: Source, DESNZ



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The total carbon emissions from the borough have decreased by 45.79% since 2005, from 1710.5 kt CO₂e to 927.3 kt CO₂e in 2023.

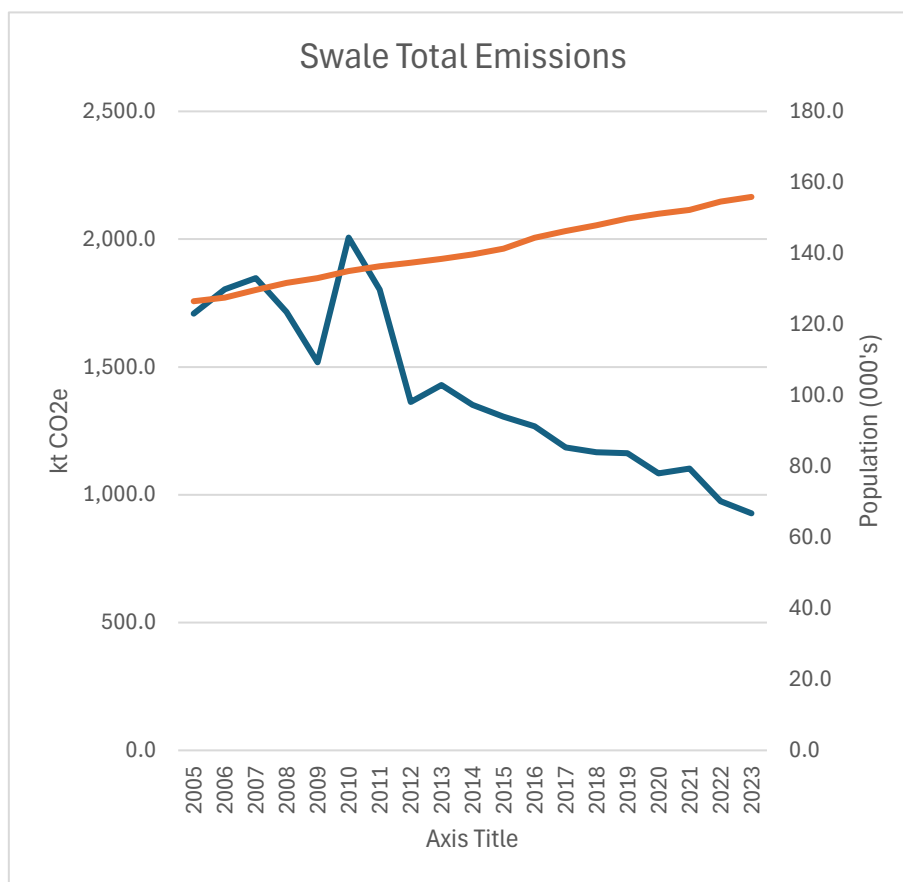


Figure 3: Source, DESNZ

Since Swale Borough Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019, the per capita emissions of Swale have fallen from 7.8 tCO₂e to 5.9 tCO₂e.

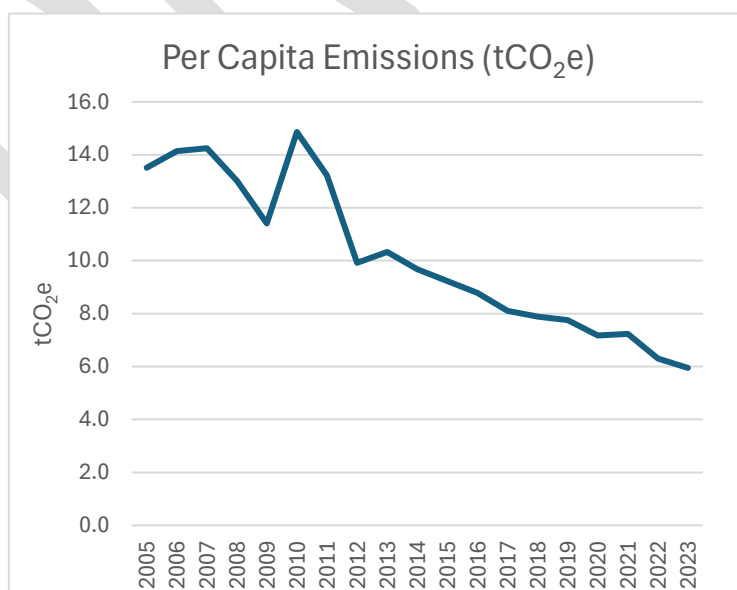


Figure 4: Source, DESNZ

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Swale has a long industrial heritage and so emits much more from this sector than any other Kent authority, although work is underway to address this. In 2023, the industrial sector produced 391.1 kt CO₂e, accounting for 42.18% of the borough's total emissions. This is a 50.2% reduction from the 2005 baseline used in DESNZ reporting.

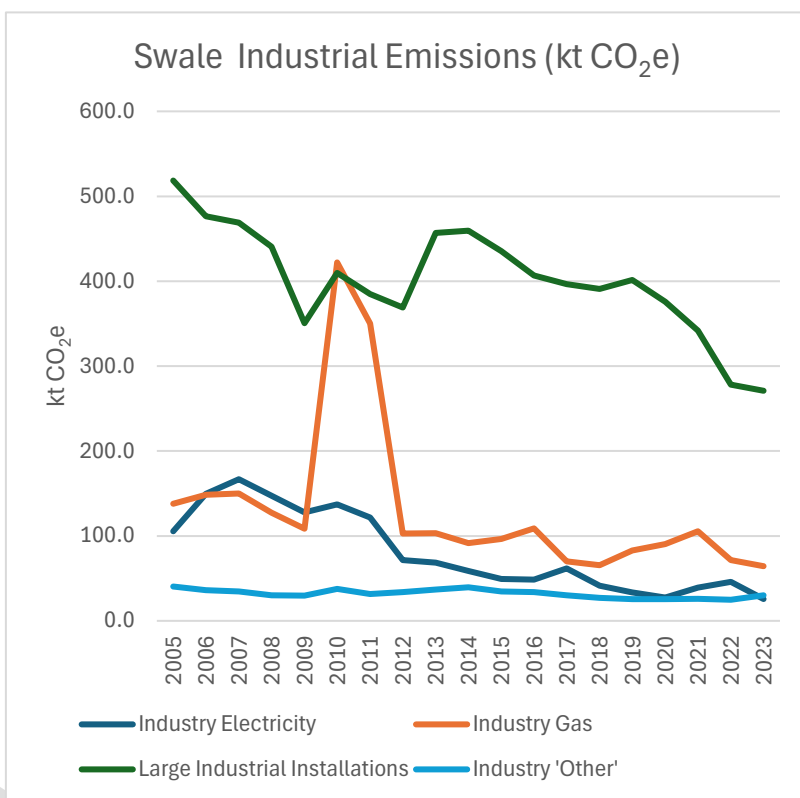


Figure 5: Source, DESNZ

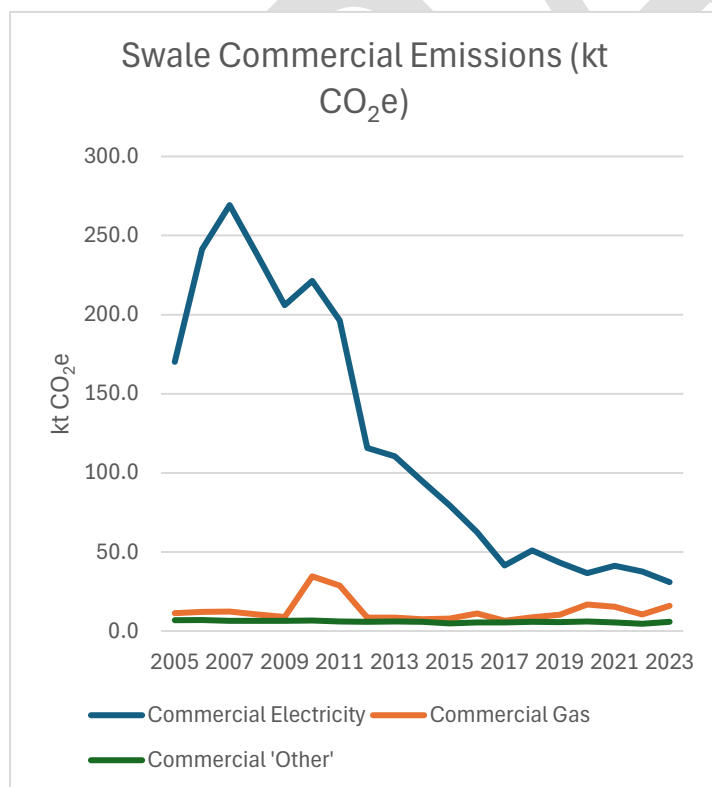


Figure 6: Source, DESNZ

In 2005, the commercial sector of Swale was responsible for emitting 187.5 kt CO₂e, a figure which has decreased by 71.89% to just 52.7 kt CO₂e in 2023. Much of this can be attributed to a significant drop in emissions arising from the use of electricity. The sector now accounts for 5.62% of the borough's total emissions.



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The public sector has seen a 43% reduction in emissions since 2005, when the sector emitted 43 kt CO₂e. The latest data shows that this has dropped to just 16.9 kt CO₂e, representing 1.82% of the borough's total emissions.

In 2005, the sector emitted 303.4 kt CO₂e, a figure for which the use of electricity was predominantly responsible for. Despite a peak between 2010-2011 emissions in the sector have become stable and in 2023 emitted 148 kt CO₂e, a reduction of 50.96% from the 2005 baseline. This represents 16.05% of Swale's total emissions.

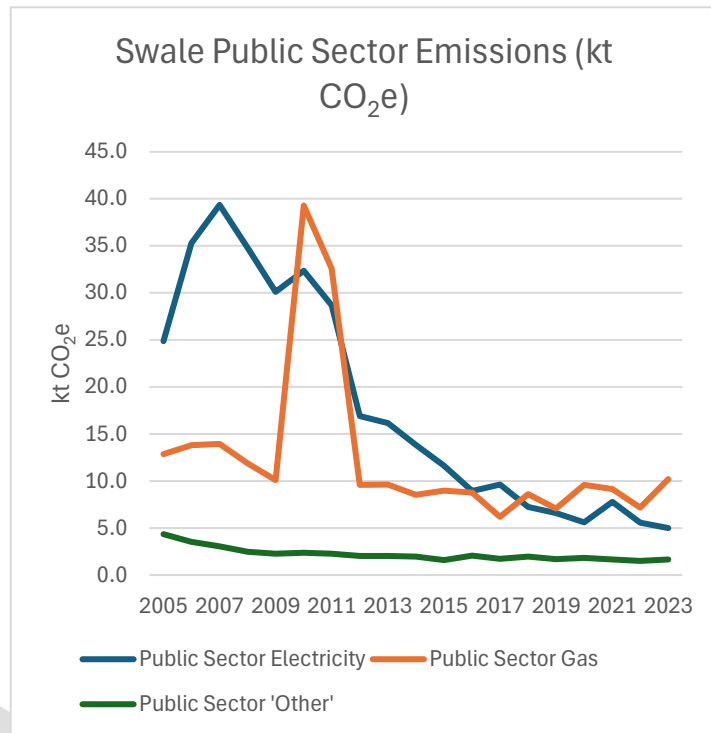


Figure 7: Source, DESNZ

The transport sector is Swale's second largest emitting sector before industry, representing 32.25% of the borough's total.

Unlike other sectors included within this report emissions derived from the transport sector cannot be entirely attributed to Swale. In 2023, 33.97% of transport emissions could be attributed to vehicles using the motorways that cross through the borough.

The sector saw a swift decrease in emissions because of the measures put into place during the COVID-19 emergency, and although emissions have since increased, they remain 11.4% below pre-covid levels. Since 2005, emissions from the sector have decreased by 14.85%, from 351.4 kt CO₂e to 299.1 kt CO₂e.

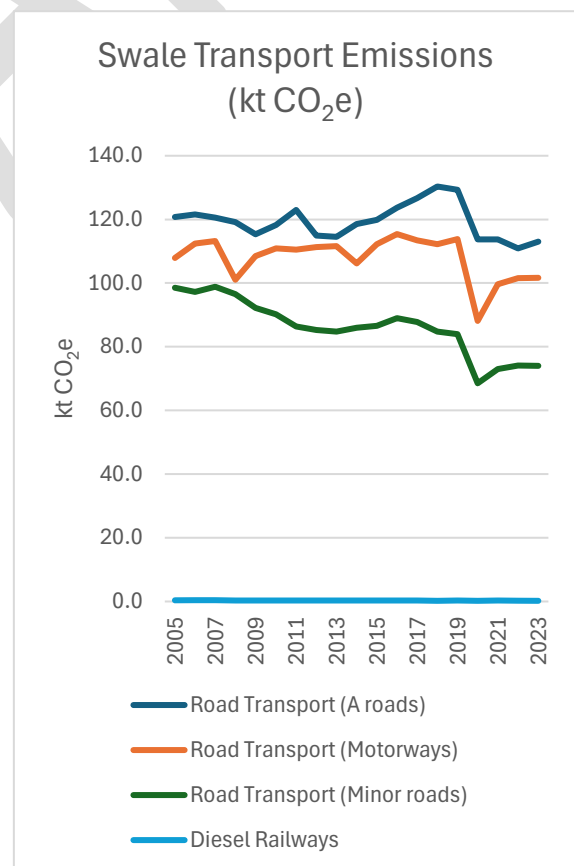


Figure 8: Source, DESNZ



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The domestic sector emitted 148.8 kt CO₂e in 2023, accounting for 16.05% of the borough's total emissions. Since 2005, emissions from the sector have decreased by 35.32%.

Much of this decrease can be attributed by reductions in emissions arising from electricity, owing to the gradual decarbonisation of the national grid, as well as increased uptake of domestic photovoltaics.

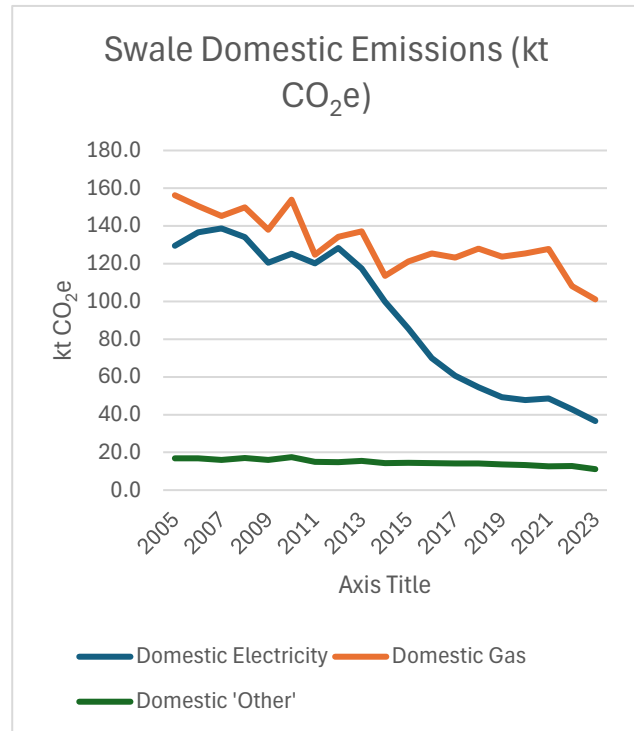


Figure 9: Source, DESNZ

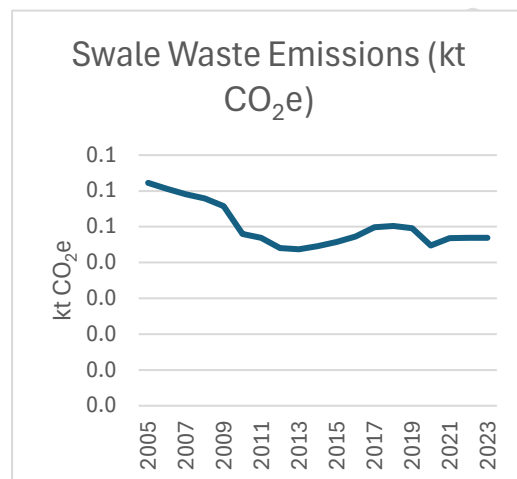


Figure 10: Source, DESNZ

Emissions from waste management have always accounted for a negligible proportion of the borough's total.

The Agricultural Sector emitted 34.1 kt CO₂e in 2023, a decrease of 28.36% from 2005 levels. The agricultural sector now accounts for 3.68% of the boroughs total emissions.

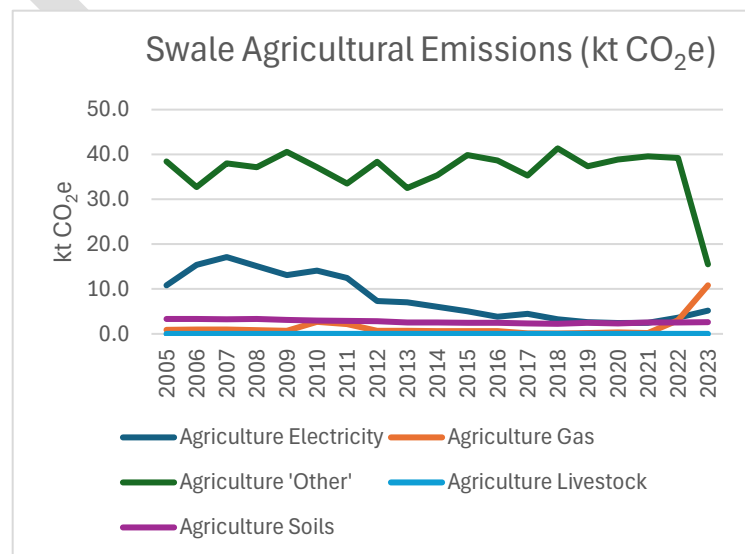


Figure 11: Source, DESNZ



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Renewable Generation

At the end of 2023, there were 3136 installation sites producing renewable energy in Swale, an increase of 25.38% from the previous year. Of these, 99.39% were domestic photovoltaics.

The remaining sites include 13 onshore wind installations, three sites generating renewable energy from sewerage gas, landfill gas, or municipal solid waste, and one site generation energy from biomass.

The total generation of these is estimated to be 807.4 MW.

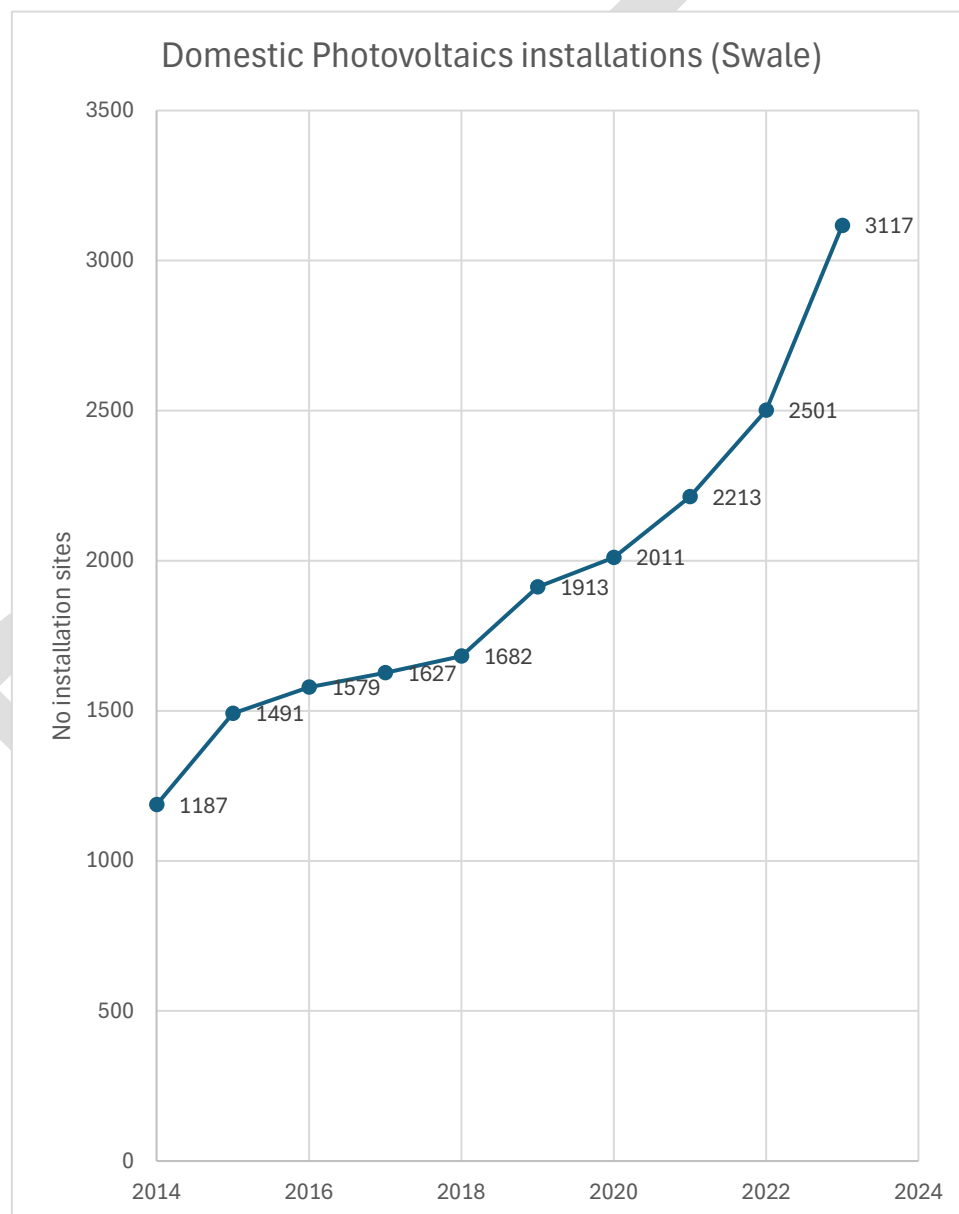


Figure 12: Source, DESNZ



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Waste

As the waste collection authority Swale has targets to reduce the amount of residual waste collected and increase the proportion sent to recycling and composting.

From April 2024 to March 2025 the residual waste per household was 35,369.87 tonnes, equating to 42.5 tonnes per household. The overall recycling rate for Swale was 35.34%.

Category	Tonnes recycled
Household Recycling	8,802.73 tonnes
Food Waste	2,658.88 tonnes
Garden Waste	8,526.48 tonnes

Percentage of household waste recycled and composted (2024)	
Month	Recycled
January	25.23%
February	28.51%
March	31.15%
April	35.12%
May	37.40%
June	38.51%
July	36.59%
August	36.76%
September	38.41%



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Action Progress

1. Council Operations

- 1.1. Action 1:** To bring forward business cases to retrofit Council assets where funding is available, and to identify grant and advocacy opportunities to support the retrofitting of tenanted premises.

Planning permission has been granted for a 294-panel solar array on the roof of Swale House. A contract is being drawn up, following which an application to the distribution network operator can be made. Installation expected around November. Once installed this is estimated to generate 117,128 kWh, offsetting ~50% of the total electricity currently consumed by Swale House annually. Installation of the array is planned to begin in January 2026.

The Council has engaged with the Greater Southeast Net-Zero Hub (GSENZH) to undertake desktop assessments on the suitability of rooftop solar PV and solar canopies over the car parks of both the Swallows Leisure Centre, Sheppey Leisure Complex, and Sheerness Pools.

- 1.2. Action 2:** to ensure that the Council's commitments are balanced in all plans, strategies, and decisions as far as practical.

In January 2023, the Council was awarded £20 million from the UK Government to undertake a regeneration project on the Isle of Sheppey. The resulting project – 'Sheerness Revival' will improve the health, leisure, education, and employment outcomes for the town of Sheerness.

Three sites; Master's House, East Kent College Sheppey, and Beachfields are in the process of retrofit and extension.

Consideration has been given to the Climate and Ecological Emergency in all instances.

The reconfiguration of the Healthy Living Centre at Beachfields is being completed to BREEAM 'Very Good,' with improvements made to the insulation of the building, an improved window and glass spec, and the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump.

All materials from the demolition works at the site are being recycled (except from asbestos), with much of it crushed and reused in the extension or as substrates for new pathways.



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The extension of East Kent College has considered building orientation to maximise daylight, shading, natural ventilation, and low air permeability, while the roof will incorporate an extensive bio-solar roof system, providing not just renewable generation, but benefits to ecology. Air Source Heat Pumps have been installed, contributing to further carbon reductions. BREEAM “excellent” has been achieved.



Figure 13: Installation of the Biosolar roof at East Kent College

At Master’s House the garages are being converted into office space for young entrepreneurs. The conversion works are being completed to a BREEAM ‘Good,’ and Air Source Heat Pumps have been installed. The next phase of works will see the garages connected to the solar PV system.

1.3. Action 3: to produce a Sustainable Events Policy.

A Sustainable Events Policy is being drafted. This focuses on reducing the environmental impact caused as the result of outdoor events on Council land. The policy will mandate recycling at such events, restricts the use of single use plastics, lanterns and helium balloons, reduces damage to amenities such as grass lawns, flower beds, and vegetation, and will mean events promote wider awareness of energy efficiency and encourage active travel.

1.4. Action 4: To provide training for purchasing Officers on procurement and commissioning which includes considerations on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration.

Officers are exploring whether changes could be made to the Carbon Literacy Course to include tailored information on sustainable procurement.

Officers attend the Procurement sub-group of the Climate Change Network and are feeding into the development of a Sustainable Procurement Toolkit.

1.5. Action 5: To identify opportunities to reduce emissions from the Council’s largest contracts through formal and informal agreements.

Two new electric vehicles have been added into the service of the waste fleet. The Fiat eDucato Technicos are expected to make savings of 16 tCO₂ per annum in comparison to their diesel counterparts.



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1.6. Other Related Items/Achievements

Carbon Literacy Training

In 2024 the Climate and Ecological Emergency Projects Officer undertook Carbon Literacy Training, with the view of providing training to members at Swale Borough Council.

Carbon Literacy Project



An initial taster session was held on Thursday 14 August 2025, which was attended by seven members. On October 7 and November 13 (Carbon Literacy Day), members attended full training, and six members earned accreditation.

Training has been offered to parish and town councils.

Carbon Literacy Training provides learners with an in-depth understanding of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities, and builds their capacity to act in a personal, community, or organisation context.

The project officer has recently undergone Water Literacy training and this will be offered alongside Carbon Literacy.

LED Lighting

171 lights have now been replaced with LEDs, representing just under 80% of the Council's stock. Many of the remaining lights are non-streetlights and include uplighters and strip lights.

The installation of LEDs has led to a significant reduction in energy consumption and a 76% reduction in costs, from £5606.92 in March – September 2024 to £1340.65 in March – September 2025.

Paper Use

The Staying Put team has digitalised their working with most paper forms being replaced by use of an iPad. This is estimated to reduce printing and paper use by over 4,500 pages a year. A single sheet of A4 paper has a carbon cost of approximately 5g CO₂, meaning the Council has reduced downstream emissions by approximately 22.5kg CO₂.



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2. Air Quality and Sustainable Transport

2.1. **Action:** Review the Electric Vehicle Strategy

A review of the [2022 Electric Vehicle Strategy](#) is currently underway.

2.2. **Action:** Create and implement a Swale wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

A Local Walking and Cycling Plan (LCWIP) is a strategic document which analyses local travel patterns to identify physical measures to increase local levels of Active Travel. While LCWIP's are not statutory, they are crucial in unlocking funding to improve active travel infrastructure.

The Swale LCWIP public consultation ran from 1st September 2025 to the 26th of October 2025. This was both on-line and in paper format at strategic hubs within the Borough. 25 walking routes and 22 cycling routes were detailed within the consultation and there was a total of 82 responses.

Each of the comments will be looked at to determine what actions are required on the LCWIP document following this feedback. The routes will then be prioritised based on Active Travel England criteria. The LCWIP will then be presented back to Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee for final sign off before it can be adopted into Swale Borough Council's Local Plan.

2.3. **Action:** Prioritise LCWIP routes that require infrastructure enhancements first.

All routes have undergone the first stage of design (feasibility stage) as this was part of the LCWIP documentation. These initial designs were completed by AECOM for the Sittingbourne routes and WSP for the Sheppey Town routes. Funding through the Consolidated Active Travel Fund was awarded in July for a feasibility study on the highway section of the Sheppey Light Railway Greenway route. Additional funding from Active Travel England also allowed SBC to be able to choose Fi routes to complete the next stage of design which is more detailed design work (all completed by WSP). These routes were:

- Kemsley to South Sittingbourne
- Iwade to Kemsley
- Grove Park to South Sittingbourne
- Brielle Way to Rushenden Road
- Minster Broadway



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Going forward, all routes will be scored against Active Travel England criteria to prioritise further routes for detailed design works. The scoring methodology used to prioritise routes will include forecast increases in trips through active travel, improvements in road safety, use groups (for instance students, or employees), and construction and maintenance costs.

2.4. Action: To work with KCC to deliver 20mph zones in urban centres across the Borough.

Funding was applied for in March to the Consolidated Active Travel Fund to introduce 20mph zones in Sittingbourne and Sheerness, but this was not successful. Further opportunities will be pursued as they arise.

2.5. Action: Support the delivery of measures outlined in the Air Quality Action Plan 2023 -2028.

The Council continues to follow the [Air Quality Action Plan \(2023-2028\)](#) to achieve a cleaner, healthier borough. An Air Quality Steering Group was formed in early 2022 to develop and deliver the strategic Air Quality Action Plan. The group meets quarterly, although there are task and finish sub-groups responsible for implementing and delivering specific measures. These groups meet more regularly, and report back to the steering group.

Measure one is to develop an Air Quality standard within the Local Plan. An updated Air Quality Policy is included in the Regulation 18 of the Local Plan Review, which is due for consultation in January 2026.

Measure five is to reduce emissions from activities with Environmental Permits. Monitoring of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) are continuing, with decreased levels of particulates at the St Pauls Street AQMA despite the site still exceeding. The Environmental Permits Team is consulting with the cleansing team to consider rezoning the street from a zone three to zone two, meaning additional cleaning and monitoring would take place to continue reducing particulates.

Measure seven is to improve and develop Electric Vehicle infrastructure across Swale. Officers from Swale have been working with Kent County Council to identify potential sites for the installation of on-street electric vehicle charge points through the Local Electric Vehicle Fund. A LEVI operator has now been appointed, and it is hoped that installations will begin in Spring 2026.

Measure nine is to continue anti-idling enforcement, signage, and educational campaigns. In September 2025 33 anti-idling signs were installed across Sheerness, Queenborough, and Faversham.



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2.6. **Action:** Investigate the potential to install cycle parking facilities in Council owned car parks.

The Council applied to ATEs Consolidated Active Travel Fund in March to install cycle storage facilities, but this was not successful. Further opportunities will be pursued as they arise.

2.7. **Other Related Items/Achievements**

Swale Cycle Recycle

The Swale Cycle Recycle project takes unwanted or damaged bikes and repairs them in the workshops of HMP Swaleside before they are distributed via charity partners to people who cannot afford bikes. This ensures that bikes are diverted from the waste stream, prisoners can learn new skills to improve their employability upon their release and economically vulnerable people can get access to bikes which may make travel to work or school more viable while also improving their health.



In June 2025, a new donation point opened at Faversham Household Waste and Recycling Centre.

Throughout 2025 the scheme has held six sale events alongside partners such as Faversham Town Council, Sheppey Matters, and the Community Railway Partnership, through which 198 bikes have been distributed back into the community.

Feedback from those who have received bikes has been overwhelmingly positive, with the bikes given a high-quality rating of 8.53/10.

55% of those who received a bike reported using it predominantly for leisure, 23% said they had used it to commute to work or school, and 23% said they were using it for exercise.

19% of recipients reported using their bike to replace a car journey within one week of purchase.

Comments about Swale Cycle Recycle have included:

“Great prices. I can now teach my son to ride a bike as I could not afford a bike before.”

“Helping me to buy a very affordable bike- I would not be able to afford a new one. Helping the wider community by supporting giving prisoners’ good skills for when they are released.”



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“This is an amazing scheme. It helps lower income families like myself to purchase a bike for their kids or for themselves. I know when my son out grows the bike I will be able to recycle it and replace it with another bike. Your scheme is a good send and I thank you and all the members within the prison who took the time to work on the bikes.”

“Fantastic to know that I have an affordable bike for my grandson which has been checked over and serviced.”

Promoting Low Carbon Travel Among Council employees

Swale Borough Council promotes various schemes to encourage its staff to use low-carbon transport. This includes the Cycle to Work Scheme, Tusker Car Benefits Scheme, and Octopus Electric Vehicles.

Throughout 2025 6 members of staff have participated in the Cycle to Work Scheme, while 2 members of staff have begun leasing electric cars through the Tusker or Octopus Schemes.



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3. Low Carbon Business and Industry

3.1. **Action:** to include a 'green thread' throughout the next Economic Development Plan

The Swale Economic Development Plan (2020-2023) is now obsolete, and consideration is being given to the development of a new plan.

3.2. **Action:** facilitate the sharing of best practice with publication of local case studies

A series of case studies on the positive measures achieved by local businesses are being prepared. These will be included in future publications of the Economic Development e-bulletin.

3.3. **Action:** to engage with businesses on a regular basis to understand how the Council can further support industry in the transition to net-zero

A series of surveys is being prepared to begin assessing the barriers that face businesses in transitioning to net-zero.

3.4. **Action:** encourage and support the largest emitters to develop carbon reduction strategies

Swale Borough Council continues to be a member of the advisory board of the North Kent Local Decarbonisation Project (LIDP).

In 2022 the Kemsley Industrial Cluster was successful in securing a portion of Innovate UK funding to support emissions reductions in pursuit of the UK's 2050 net zero target. In 2023, the cluster emitted 506,817 tCO₂, representing nearly the entire industrial sector emissions of the borough. The project aims to further the sharing of resources, materials, waste, and by-products for mutual benefit.

In November, officers attended a meeting of the Medway Carbon Capture Cluster at the Isle of Grain LNG. The project will see the separation of CO₂ from exhaust streams of large industrial installations in Swale and Medway, after which it will be liquified, condensed, and transported to the North Sea to be injected into depleted gas reservoirs.



Figure 14: The visit to Isle of Grain LNG



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3.5. Other Related Items/Achievements

Community Infrastructure Grants

For the 2025/2026 financial year Swale Borough Council was allocated funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). This has been distributed across the borough in the form of Community Infrastructure Grants and Rural Small Business Grants.

A total of 10 applications that aim to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions have been supported, with a total expenditure of £68,676.65. Projects supported include the installation of a 13.5kwh solar battery storage system at a sports club, the purchase and installation of LED lighting at a village hall, the purchase of an off grid educational yurt at a local nature reserve, and the purchase of solar panels for a charity.



Figure 15: PV Battery storage installed thanks to the CIG.



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4. Low Carbon Buildings and Energy Efficiency

4.1. **Action:** That the Council supports sustainable building practices and development.

The Planning Policy team is currently drafting a suite of sustainable design & construction policies based on the evidence base study (Bioregional) that has been undertaken for the Council. These policies will be included in the forthcoming Regulation 18 document, due for consultation in early 2026.

This will include new policies on:

- Sustainable design and adaptation principles
- Net-zero operational carbon in new build non-domestic development
- Embodies carbon and waste.
- Renewable energy development and infrastructure

4.2. **Action:** To understand how to deliver a borough wide net-zero energy system

A Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) is an evidenced, data-driven, and whole systems approach to planning an authority's decarbonisation. A LAEP provides a baseline of an existing energy system and built environment and produces a sequenced plan of interventions such as renewable installations, domestic and non-domestic retrofit, and identifies opportunities to use climate action to alleviate connected social and economic issues.

The Council have been working with Kent County Council and the other districts on a two phased approach to Local Energy Planning. This will involve initial data collection before the appointment of a consultant to develop a LAEP based on the boundaries of the new unitary authorities established through Local Government Reform.

4.3. **Action:** To investigate the feasibility of heat networks in Swale

A heat network removes waste heat from a central source and distributes it underground via insulated pipes to customers. This reduces reliance on individual fossil fuel heating systems and is envisioned as among the most cost-effective means of cutting emissions from heating.

In August 2025, the Council submitted an Expression of Interest to the Heat Networks Delivery Unit (Round 15), seeking funding of the cost of a feasibility study into a Sittingbourne district heat network. This was unsuccessful due to prioritisation of larger



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urban projects, however, the bid will be reviewed and updated for future rounds of funding.

4.4. Action: That the Council facilitates the creation of an approved list of renewable technology suppliers

Solar Together is a UK wide group buying scheme designed to make installing solar panels and battery storage more affordable to homeowners, landlords, and small businesses. Swale Borough Council has participated in the scheme since 2021, with a steady stream of installations throughout the years. Throughout 2025, 56 households have accepted participation in Solar Together, with 33 having been installed.

The installations throughout 2025 are estimated to of reduced emissions by 32,329 kg CO₂e.

The Council is exploring the potential for a similar scheme promoting the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps.

4.5. Action: To run a series of events targeting both landlords and owner occupiers promoting energy efficiency measures.

The Healthy Homes Project was launched in September 2024 in response to rising concerns about damp and mould within the private rented sector. Supported by funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (since renamed the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), the project aims to strengthen local authority capacity, improve early identification of hazards, upskill partners and residents, and promote sustained behaviour change across the housing sector.

Officers are regularly attending community events such as the One Swale Road Shows and Keeping Warm days, enabling 1:1 conversation with residents to allow for the early identification of damp and mould risks. Community groups have become active partners in the project, extending the reach beyond traditional enforcement activity.

Much effort has been given to building rapport with agents and landlords, providing clear explanations of modern ventilation, insulation, and heating requirements, with agents given training to influence landlords into taking a more swift and informed approach to any issues identified.

To support these efforts, a single centrally managed landlord/agent data base now allows for targeted communications, newsletter, and event invitations.



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Winter Warmth Grants are also being issued. From April 2024 – March 2025 nine grants, all for boiler and heating upgrades, were completed. Since April 2025, 4 Winter Warmth Grants have been issued for the same purposes.

A Fuel and Water Advice Service continues to be made available to residents across the Borough. This year, the service has issued 685 fuel vouchers, provided 377 energy packs, and cleared a debt total of £43,065.

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5. Waste and Resource Consumption

5.1. **Action:** to promote overall reductions in waste through the promotion of reduced consumption and circular economy

The Council is working with Suez, through their social value goals, to organise a series of area-based road shows. On 26 November Suez partnered with Swale Cycle Recycle to hold a road show event at Milton Creek Country Park where 44kg of Waste, Electric, and Electrical (WEE) was collected for recycling. A further roadshow is being held on the 12 December at Bartons Point.

The Swale Cycle Recycle project continues to promote a circular economy and ensure bikes do not enter waste streams.

5.2. **Action:** reduce contamination of recycling that leads to rejected loads

Throughout 2025 composition studies have looked at the waste coming from residual bins and food bins. The main summary findings identified that 27% of waste in green bins are food waste, and that 86% of this food waste was avoidable, with almost half still packaged.

The studies found that 43.1% of residual waste could have been recycled at the kerbside. Food waste bins tended to have very little contamination, although 72% of the waste contained within them could have been avoided.

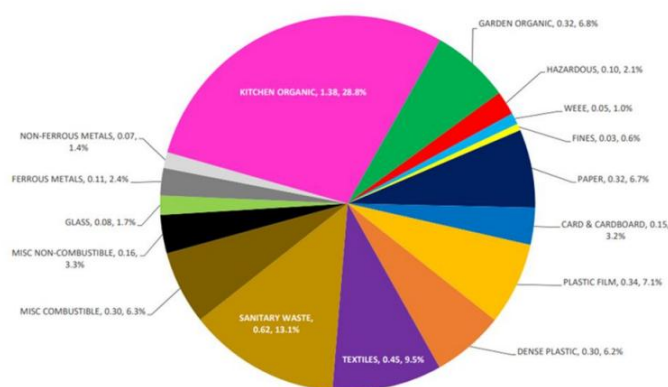


Figure 16: Pie chart showing the average Swale residual bin waste composition (Kg/HH and %)

Contamination remains a concern, and it is not uncommon for entire lorry loads to be re-categorised as 'residual waste'. This means that the materials are lost from the circular economy as it these loads are then sent for incineration (this also carries a higher cost



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than recycling). The most frequent contamination items include black bin bags, textiles, and used dirty nappies.

Officers are working with SUEZ to ensure recycling bins are checked at the point of emptying. If there is a significant level of contamination the bins are then left with a tag to advise residents of the reason it was not collected. The scale of these operations is to increase over the coming months to target specific, frequent contaminants.

5.3. **Action:** to promote the recycling of domestic and commercial waste.

In 2025 the Council successfully delivered a Borough wide food waste sticker campaign, with stickers placed on the green bin of residents who currently receive food waste collections. The stickers were to remind people to recycle food waste instead of placing food into the green bin. The project was delivered jointly between Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council and resulted in a 30% increase in food waste collections, an uplift that has been sustained. There are still some roads which do not receive food waste collections, and preparations are being made to ensure all households have access to the service by the end of March 2026.



Figure 17: stickers placed on green bins across Swale.

A key focus for food waste rollout has been at communal properties and holiday camps, which require more complex services to provide. Officers have been visiting every bin store to capture data on space and existing services. A project plan has been developed which will aim to see the roll out of recycling services to these premises to bring them in line with the rest of the borough in receiving alternate weekly collections (refuse and recycling) with weekly food.



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6. Resilient Communities and Engagement

6.1. **Action:** to develop a Climate Change Communications Plan

A business case for a stand-alone Facebook page has been made. We have used social media to promote Cycle Re Cycle sales and other events. A Communications Plan is in development.

6.2. **Action:** To include a dedicated page to the Climate and Ecological Emergency in future versions of Inside Swale

The Climate Emergency Team is planning a page spread in the upcoming Inside Swale focusing on energy efficiency. This will help to address both domestic emissions and cost of living crisis. It will be published in the February 2026 edition of Inside Swale.

6.3. **Action:** to support the development of local green skills

Officers have met with East Kent College to understand how the Council could promote Green Skills in Swale.

6.4. **Action:** expand the outreach of the Green Schools Forum

The Green Schools Forum provides an opportunity for resource and knowledge sharing between school staff and the Council. At current the Forum has 51 members, representing 38 schools in Swale out of 67.

[The Sustainability and Climate Change: a Strategy for the Education and Children's Service Systems \(2023\)](#) requires that by 2025 all education settings will have a nominated sustainability lead. Work is now underway to identify a sustainability lead from each Swale school and include them in the forum membership.

6.5. **Action:** to expand the outreach of the Green Grid Community Forum

The Green Grid helps coordinate work in our local environment, focusing on the relationship between our greenspaces and the communities they serve. In 2025 the mailing list continued to expand, and the forum now contains (insert final number).

In May the forum toured an award-winning regenerative farm in Kingsdown-upon-Lynsted, and in October met at the Sheerness Dockyard Church to share updates from the year.

The forum now has 218 members, comprising of residents, businesses, charities, and community groups. Posters have been placed in notice boards in Milton Creek Country Park and the Oare Gunpowder works promoting the Green Grid.



Figure 18: Forum members on a tour of a farm.



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6.6. Action: to support parish councils in measuring their emissions and developing carbon reduction strategies

The Climate Emergency Team presented at the Kent Association of Local Councils in June 2025 to outline how the Borough Council can support town and parish councils. Since this, Officers have begun working with both Minster Parish Council and Faversham Town Council to undertake carbon audits and develop carbon reduction strategies.

6.7. Action: to work with schools, community groups, and businesses to encourage low carbon travel

The Active Travel Officer is engaging with schools, alongside KCC, to increase the percentage of primary schools with Active Travel Plans.

Opportunities for funding for businesses have been promoted through the Economic Development e-bulletin, including the KCC Active Travel Business Grants.

Community groups and businesses can apply to the Community Infrastructure Grants to fund projects which will encourage low carbon travel through new or improved cycle storage facilities and electric vehicle charge points.

6.8. Action: Work in partnership with schools, businesses, and parish councils to identify land for tree planting.

A Schools Tree Planting Guidance has been issued, which sets out how the Council can support nurseries, secondary schools, and colleges in making their grounds more biodiverse. Support includes free site visits, bespoke advice on species suitability, funding support, and post-planting advice.

During National Tree Week the Council funded a supply of native trees from the Woodland Trust to be given out to residents for free at markets in Faversham,

Sittingbourne, and Sheerness. A total of 210 trees were passed out, including Rowan, Hazel, Silver Birch, Sessile Oak, Blackthorn, and Wild Cherry.



Figure 19: a free tree stall at Sittingbourne market



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6.9. Other Related Items/Achievements

Student Carbon Literacy Training

Carbon Literacy Training ensures that participants are aware of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and can reduce emissions on an individual, community, and organisational basis. It is well known to influence positive behaviour around climate change.

The course includes a range of modules covering the science behind climate change, what the co-benefits of climate action are, and how we can act ourselves. The course is accredited, and those who complete it receive certification.

In the 2024/2025 academic year the Council undertook a pilot of Carbon Literacy Training alongside a local secondary school. Training was delivered to six science teachers, who have since worked to integrate Carbon Literacy into the existing curriculums. This has enabled the delivery of training to 155 year 9 students by the end of the 2024/2025 academic year, and a further 185 students have commenced training by the time of this report.

Officers are now working with East Kent College Secondary School to integrate Carbon Literacy Training into student's curriculum.

Some examples of student's pledges include:

"I pledge that I will increase in eating locally sourced (and in-season) foods, prioritizing in eating seasonal and locally grown produce, nothing that requires energy-intensive transportation (from distant countries) since it contribute to higher carbon emissions and increase of climate change from the release of CO₂ from the boat/other transport."

"Cutting down on usage of cars for trips and resorting to usage of things like bikes, buses, trains and walking if possible."

"One new action I pledge to doing is to replace two red meat meals a week with vegan alternatives. This will help to reduce the pollution of methane from cattle farming."



Volunteers and Engagement

Throughout 2025 the Council has supported 25 volunteer litter picks, including at Thistle Hill Community Woodland, Kingsborough Manor Community Woodland, Faversham Recreation Grounds, and the Teynham Community Hall.

Volunteers at the Country Parks have dedicated approximately 5844 hours of their time. This includes 1569 hours of volunteer hours at Oare Gunpowder Works, 3450 at Milton Creek Country Park, and 825 hours of working time at the Faversham Recreation Ground.



Figure 20: bagged tree guards outside Thistle Hill Community Woodland



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7. Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecology

7.1. **Action:** to support and align the Council to the Kent Biodiversity Strategy and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is an initiative established by the Environment Act 2021. It aims to identify where the creation or improvement of habitat is most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the environment, encourage landowners to take action to support nature recovery, and channel investment into local nature priorities.

Local authorities had until the 29 September to comment on the LNRS.

The LNRS was published on the 28 November 2025. A link to the strategy can be accessed [here](#).

7.2. **Action:** to make the most of BNG requirements to improve the state of nature in Swale.

Biodiversity Net Gain is now a statutory requirement, meaning development must result in a biodiversity uplift of 10%.

In 2025 the Council purchased the Mycelia software tool, allowing the Council to better track, plan, and collaborate on nature recovery projects throughout the pre-application, validation, determination, monitoring, and reporting stages.

The Council is seeking a 20% BNG uplift through the Local Plan Review.

7.3. **Action:** to investigate a pilot study for a Swale Habitat Bank.

A habitat bank is a site where land is set aside for long term habitat creation, restoration, and enhancement to generate biodiversity units. These units can then be purchased by developers who are seeking to satisfy Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements where on-site offsetting is not possible.

Swale Borough Council is undertaking the creation of a pilot habitat bank in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust at Queendown Warren, a 76.5-hectare reserve managed by Kent Wildlife Trust. It consists of chalk grassland, open pasture, and woodland.

The habitat bank is to be made a replicable process for other sites, meaning the Council can in future ensure off-site BNG at sites which are strategically aligned to the Local Nature Recover Strategy (LNRS).



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The Council have now commissioned Adonis Blue (ABEC) to undertake further work to identify potential sites for more habitat banks using the Biodiversity Net Gain grant from DEFRA.

7.4. Action: to review opportunities to increase tree and hedgerow planting both on SBC and private land.

Throughout the 2024/2025 planting season the Council was able to plant 5700 whips and 150 standard trees. Funding was provided by the Local Authority Tree Fund, National Highways, and the Conservation Volunteers.

The Local Authority Tree Fund was discontinued in 2025, and this has meant tree planting to previous scale is increasingly difficult. Despite this the Council has been awarded smaller amounts of funding, allowing the Council to host it's first ever Swale Tree Week.

Five tree planting events were held, including at Bartons Point Coastal Park, Peregrine Drive (Sittingbourne), KGV The Mount, and Milton Recreation Ground. Three primary schools joined officers in planting up the sites. These events saw 1600 native whips planted.



Figure 21: newly planted whips at the Mount, Faversham.

On the 11 December Council staff participated in the rejuvenation of Easthall Community Orchard, where 20 heritage fruit trees were planted.

7.5. Other Related Items/Achievements

3C's Project

In 2021 Swale Council remains the local authority partner for Kent Wildlife Trusts' Wilder Carbon Project, which aimed to see a 22-acre site in Conyer restored as coastal grazing saltmarsh.



Figure 22: Scrapes on the restored saltmarsh.

Scrapes have now been completed, cattle are on site, and signage and fencing has been installed.

Monitoring is now underway to understand how the restoration of the site has impacted biodiversity.

It is also hoped the work will reduce the risk of flooding for the village of Conyer, which sits next the tidal Conyer Creek.



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Woodland Coppicing

Coppicing enhances biodiversity, allowing wildflowers and insects to thrive by allowing more light to reach the woodland floor. Throughout 2025 0.4 hectares of woodland have been coppiced across our woodlands.

Pesticide Use

A requirement for a reduction in the use of pesticides and weedkillers is written into the ground's maintenance contract. Use of both is only undertaken as spot treatment on hard services, and contractors have switched to the use of Roundup Pro Active, which contains a lower rate of the active ingredient. In 2021, 160 litres of weedkiller was used, and in 2025 this had fallen to 120 litres.

Green Flag Awards

The Green Flag award is an international quality mark for parks and greenspaces, and to be awarded one the space must meet the highest standards in cleanliness, community engagement, conservation, safety, and inclusivity.

In 2025 three of Swale Greenspaces received Green Flag awards; Faversham Recreational Ground, Milton Creek Country Park, and Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park.



Figure 23: The Green Flag at Milton Creek Country Park



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8. Going Forward

The years since 2019 have been challenging, and like most local authorities Swale Borough Council has experienced fiscal strain, endured the Covid-19 Emergency, and increased demand on services as the result of the cost-of-living crisis. Despite this, the Council has made positive progress in reducing emissions directly within its controls and supporting the wider Borough in decarbonising.

In the next few years Kent will undergo Local Government Reform, something that will bring both challenges and opportunities.

Funds such as Pride in Place will provide £20 million to communities on East Sheppey over the next decade, while the Pride in Place Impact Fund will help residents across the wider Borough. Both present an opportunity for the Council to collaborate with communities to deliver sustainable regeneration that will benefit residents for generations to come.

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