

Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee	
Meeting Date	27 January 2026
Report Title	Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Progress Report
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Neighbourhoods and Regeneration
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Janet Hill, Climate Change Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. For Committee to approve and to take to Council for noting.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 On June 26, 2019, the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency, as well as setting ambitious net-zero targets.
- 1.2 The 2025 Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan set revised targets for a net-zero Swale by 2045.
- 1.3 The 2019 Declaration committed the Council to producing an Annual Report on the progress made towards becoming a net-zero Council and Borough.
- 1.4 This is the seventh Annual Report, and the first to be made on the revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan which was adopted in March 2025.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 In the revised Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan the Council set new net-zero targets.
- 2.2 This includes a 2045 Borough wide target, five years ahead of the legally binding 2050 national net-zero target.
- 2.3 Targets for Swale Council's own operations are disaggregated by scope, which can help to understand, target, and report on emissions. For Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, the Council will be net-zero by 2035, while a 2045 net-zero target is in place for scope 3.
- 2.4 The full report can be found in Appendix I

Progress Highlights

- 2.5 A Steering Group consisting of councillors and officers convenes quarterly to update on the top 10 priority actions.
- 2.6 A 294-panel solar array is to be installed on the roof of Swale House in Spring 2026, which will generate approximately 117,128 kWh, and offsetting 50% of the total electricity currently consumed by Swale House annually.
- 2.7 Works have begun on Sheerness Revival, with the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency commitments reflected in the redevelopment of Master's House, East Kent College, and the Healthy Living Centre. Master's House is being completed to BREEAM 'Good', and Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV are being installed. At East Kent College, building orientation has been considered to maximise daylight, shading, and natural ventilation, while the roof is being built to incorporate a bio-solar roof to provide renewable energy generation and benefits to biodiversity. Air Source Heat Pumps have been installed. The Reconfiguration of the Healthy Living Centre is being completed to BREEAM 'very good', with improvements made to the building's insulation, and the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps. All materials from demolition works are being recycled, with much crushed and used as substrates for new pathways.
- 2.8 The Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan went out for consultation at the start of October and received 87 responses. Work is now underway to collate and analyse these before adoption of the LCWIP.
- 2.9 Swale Cycle Recycle continued to expand, with 298 refurbished bikes being re-distributed back into community over the course of the year. Funding from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund is being used to begin recycling scooters and upskill workshop staff so the scheme can begin running Dr Bike sessions.
- 2.10 The Council's continued participation in Solar Together has resulted in 33 installations in Swale throughout 2025, with a further 26 households having paid deposits.
- 2.11 The Fuel and Water Advisory Service is continuing, with 685 fuel vouchers and 377 energy packs provided to residents across Swale. £43,065 of water debt has been cleared.
- 2.12 On Carbon Literacy Action Day 2025 six Swale Councillors completed their Carbon Literacy Training and achieved full accreditation. The first cohort of 120 students completed their Carbon Literacy in June 2025. A second cohort at the school has started training as of September, and work is now underway to rollout training at EKC Secondary in the next academic year.
- 2.13 The Council is working with Kent Wildlife Trust to create a pilot habitat bank at Queendown Warren Nature Reserve, helping to restore the landscape, provide long term protection, and satisfy Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements where

on-site offsetting is not feasible. A Biodiversity Net Gain grant from DEFRA is being used to identify further sites within Swale that may be suitable for habitat banks. A 20% BNG uplift is being sought through the Local Plan Review. The 3Cs project is now complete.

- 2.14 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) have been used to establish the Community Infrastructure Grant and Rural Swale Small Business Grant which has supported capital investment for community benefit in Swale. Projects have been prioritised based on investment which improves the environmental and financial sustainability of community facilities and amenities through carbon reduction measures. Successful projects have included the installation of solar battery storage at a sports club, the purchase and installation of LED lighting at a village hall, and a solar array for a charity.
- 2.15 During National Tree Week and Swale Tree Week, 210 free native whips were given out at markets across the Borough, and five planting events were held which saw 1600 whips planted across Swale. A further 20 standard trees were planted to support the rejuvenation of the Easthall Community Orchard. These have been attended by students from five local schools as well as volunteers.

Going Forward

- 2.16 In the next few years Kent will undergo Local Government Reform. This brings change, uncertainty, but also opportunity.
- 2.17 The years since the 2019 Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration has been marked by fiscal strain, the cost-of-living crisis, and Covid-19. Despite this, the Council has made positive progress, which has and will continue to bring tangible benefits for residents and the Council. If this resilience is anything to go on, then despite the challenges Swale Council will be able to continue to work effectively to reduce its operational emissions and see year-on-year cuts on borough wide emissions.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 1. For Committee to approve and to take to Council for noting.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 While there are no decisions required as the result of this report, an option could be to rescind the Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration. This is not recommended as it would result in a slower decrease in emission reductions both for in the Council's operations and the wider Borough. Doing so would also result in reputational damage.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Members of the Climate and Ecological Steering Group have been involved in the writing of this report by providing information and updates from their service areas.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Delivering on the declarations and revised targets will enhance quality of life of residents, demonstrate good governance, and ensure well managed assets.
Financial, Resource and Property	The Annual Progress Report identifies where funding has been used. Where funding has been used, capital and revenue funding has been assessed on an individual project basis.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The projects within the report support deliver a more a sustainable borough and council.
Health and Wellbeing	There are tangible benefits on the health and wellbeing of residents as the result of climate action.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage
Local Government Reorganisation	In the next few years Kent will undergo Local Government Reform. This brings change, uncertainty, but also opportunity.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: 2026 Climate and Ecological Emergency Progress Report

8 Background Papers

[2025 Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan](#)