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# Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

Our priorities for 2024-2027



View of the South Downs



# Delivering change today while preparing for tomorrow

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we will ever face in our country. We are experiencing a period of significant change in our climate which is not only presenting challenges for our communities, but also threatens our work as a council to support them.

The importance of this Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) cannot be overstated. It sets out how we will reduce emissions in order to mitigate the cause of climate change and commits us to developing our adaptation plans to ensure our communities are resilient both now and in the future.

Since adopting our [Climate Change Strategy](#) in 2020, we have focused on reducing our carbon footprint, increasing our climate resilience, and protecting the wonderful natural environment we are so lucky to have here in West Sussex. We are pleased to say we have made significant progress:

- Our operational carbon emissions have reduced by 11.4% against our original baseline set in 2019. We are also gathering extensive data on our indirect 'Scope 3' emissions to give us a more complete picture of the impact that the services we provide, and our staff, have on our carbon footprint – and are moving forward to be able to establish a supply chain emissions reduction target.
- We have produced plans to decarbonise our top 50 carbon-emitting buildings, ensuring they move away from fossil fuels and switch to clean, green energy sources wherever possible. Work on the first phase of this work has completed and further work is already planned.
- We have installed over 2,500 solar systems in residential homes through the *Solar Together Sussex* programme, and generated almost 17 million kWh in renewable energy in 2022/23 from our solar farms and panels installed on many corporate buildings.
- We have installed hundreds of electric vehicle chargepoints, 36km of new footpaths, and 22km of cycle paths. We are now working in partnership to introduce a fleet of hydrogen-powered buses, all helping to make sustainable travel a reality for our residents.
- We are working with our neighbouring councils to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for West Sussex to protect declining habitats and species, and we are providing support to local businesses through our 'Let's Go Net Zero' initiative.



- We are also trialling a new approach to grass cutting which we hope will help to reduce the costs and emissions associated with ongoing highways maintenance, while increasing biodiversity.

We are very proud of the ongoing work we are doing.

This CAAP sets out how we will continue to protect the environment and tackle climate change over the next three years. It represents the tangible ways we will deliver the commitments in our Climate Change Strategy.

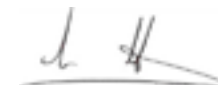
Over the past two years, every service across the organisation has been consulted to increase our understanding of climate change impacts, embed sustainability thinking into our practices and operations, and ensure climate change mitigation and environmental protection remain among our core council priorities.

This CAAP outlines the challenges ahead of us and sets out the work needed to ensure we become both carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030.

With government support, through working in partnership with our communities, and by changing how we operate, we can achieve this - not only protecting our precious environment, but also ensuring the county council can continue its vital work to support our residents and businesses both now and in the future.



**Deborah Urquhart**  
Cabinet Member for  
Environment and Climate Change



**Lee Harris**  
Director of Place Services



# Our plans

Through our Climate Change Strategy and Our Council Plan we have pledged to be a carbon neutral and climate resilient organisation by 2030. This Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) represents our initial roadmap to 2030, covering the first three-year period from 2024 to 2027.

By 2026/27 we aim to reduce our carbon emissions by 36% from our updated 2023/24 baseline and become a more climate resilient organisation.



Westhampnett solar farm

Not only is it essential that we reduce the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases that we emit, but we must prepare for the inevitable disruptions already resulting from the impacts of climate change.

Recent emergencies such as record-breaking temperatures threatening to close schools, and more frequent flooding that disrupts travel and compromises critical infrastructure, highlight the need to adapt our operations and services to better anticipate, respond to, and prevent climate-related emergencies.

The impacts of climate change are already being felt and will continue to be realised more acutely by all areas of society. However, climate change will impact those most vulnerable 'first

and worst' including older people, those in poor health, and people living in socio-economic deprivation. Lowering carbon emissions has been linked to improved health, social equity, strong economic growth, and community resilience, all benefits that directly affect residents and boost public support for, and engagement with, climate action. Because of this, we know that this is work worth doing.

For the county council, early investment in carbon reduction not only represents better returns on each pound spent, allowing us to realise cumulative savings over time on lower energy bills for example, but also minimises our long-term and ongoing costs associated with offsetting residual emissions beginning in 2030. Early investment in the transition to carbon neutrality will save us money in the longer term.

Local authorities will continue to play a key role in the UK's net zero and climate adaptation goals, so it is important to have a clear path for cutting greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change. We also know that government support will be essential to achieving carbon neutrality, such as providing funding to help our maintained schools to decarbonise and working with suppliers to minimise supply chain emissions. Through partnership with government and collaboration with other local authorities, West Sussex will continue to lead the way on climate action.



Greenprint cut and collect mowers - designed to reduce costs and emissions associated with highways maintenance, while increasing biodiversity

# Our approach

The most effective way for us to address climate change and protect the environment is to minimise the amount of greenhouse gases that are emitted by our activities.

Most of the county council's direct emissions are produced by our buildings, streetlights, and maintained schools. This is the result of using fossil fuels for power and heat and can be reduced by switching to electricity powered by renewable energy sources, as well as implementing energy efficiency measures and renewable energy generation.

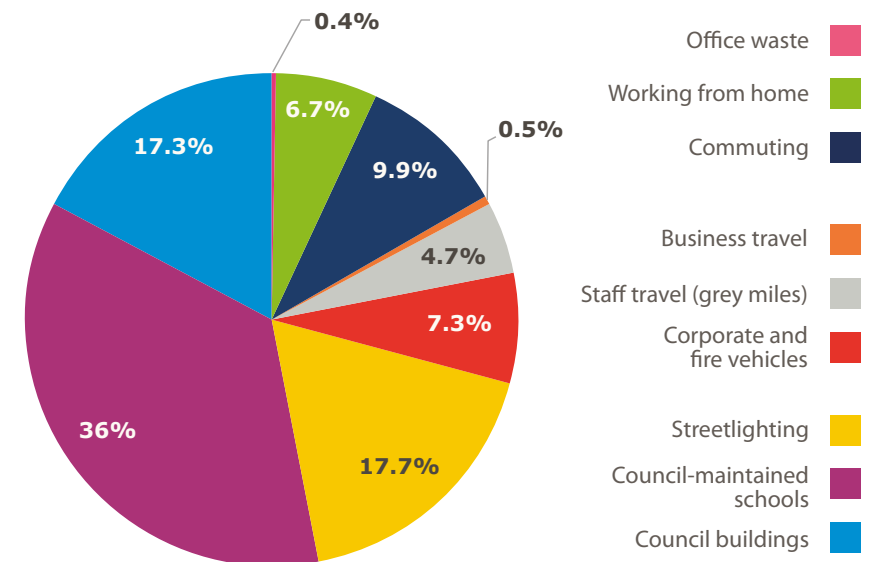
Transport also contributes significantly to our emissions. Moving to ultra-low emission and electric vehicles will reduce those emissions, alongside options such as active travel, car sharing, public transport, and hybrid working arrangements.

Typically, around 96% of carbon emissions from local councils come from their supply chains (Scope 3), with only 2% coming from their own operations (Scope 1) and another 2% from indirect emissions from purchased energy (Scope 2)<sup>1</sup>.

At present, our indirect emissions from our supply chains are excluded from our carbon reporting, though we know that by far the largest proportion of our emissions are from Scope 3 sources. This is an issue for many local authorities given the level of spend on goods and services and the reliance on information being provided by external parties. An accounting tool is currently being secured

which will help us to measure and address these emissions and make decisions on next steps, including setting long-term reduction targets for our supply chain emissions.

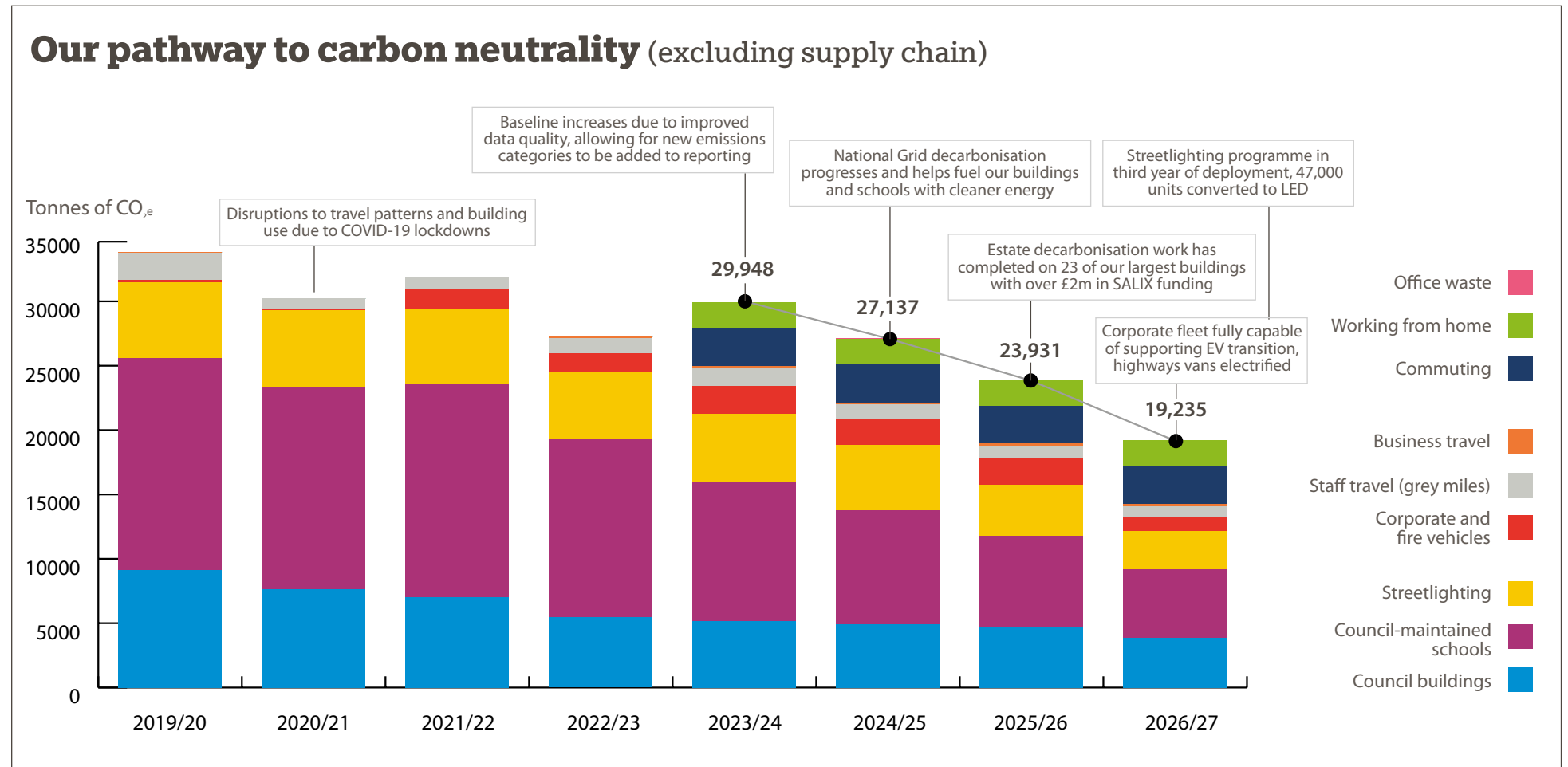
## Our carbon emissions 2023–2024 (excluding supply chain)



<sup>1</sup>Eichler, W. 'Council supply chains responsible for 10% of UK emissions.' LocalGov, 22 April 2022. <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Council-supply-chains-responsible-for-10-of-UK-emissions/54076>

To achieve our interim 2027 targets, large emissions reductions will be driven by the transition to electric vehicles in the corporate fleet, investment in an LED streetlighting conversion scheme, and a dedicated programme to transition our buildings away from gas. National grid decarbonisation and rationalisation of the

council’s managed estate will also play critical roles in reducing the emissions associated with our operations. In this ambitious ‘best case’ scenario, a large portion of our remaining emissions reductions will come from changing staff behaviours, such as commuting to work, which are under the direct influence of the council.



# Our three guiding aims

Having a better understanding of how our operations and activities contribute to climate change will allow us to transform our organisation by embedding climate action into our decision making and business planning.

## 1. Climate mitigation

We will reduce the amount of greenhouse gases that we produce and offset emissions that are unavoidable.

## 2. Climate adaptation

We will prepare our assets, operations, and communities for the impacts of climate change and increase resilience to extreme heat, severe weather, flooding, and rise in sea levels.

## 3. Responsiveness and climate equity

We will change the way we work to reduce our impact on the environment without sacrificing high-quality service, responsiveness, and the ability to support all West Sussex communities equally.

Achieving the goals set out in our Climate Change Strategy will require bold planning and resourcing given the scale of our reach and service provision across the county:

- We manage around 360 buildings, 64,000 streetlights, illuminated signs, and traffic signals, and over 600 vehicles.
- In 2023 our staff drove roughly 4,000,000 miles conducting essential site visits and other duties.

To reduce our emissions and continue to safeguard our operations and service delivery against the impacts of climate change, ongoing corporate action and leadership will be needed.



# Our 20 priority actions

We have identified 20 priority climate actions we will focus on between 2024 and 2027. Each of these climate actions aligns with at least one of the key commitments made in our Climate Change Strategy, and they are broken down into the following six pathways.



## Resources and influence

Making sure climate change mitigation and adaptation are at the forefront of decision making across the organisation.

### Our priority climate actions for 2024-2027

1. Prioritise climate change awareness across the organisation by ensuring Carbon Literacy Training and other related Learning and Development options are embedded within the corporate training offer
2. Seek and bid for government funding and other green investment opportunities to support decarbonisation and energy transition projects
3. Develop and action a long-term climate change communications strategy and plan, covering internal and external communications



## Buildings and energy

Pursuing a sustainable estate with carbon-neutral operation, that supports the transition to low-carbon energy.

### Our priority climate actions for 2024-2027

4. Deliver estate decarbonisation projects
5. Initiate and deliver the LED streetlighting programme
6. Launch and deliver a Reinvestment Scheme to support decarbonisation across corporate and education estates and develop school partnerships
7. Explore renewable energy purchasing and viability of Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin certificates (REGOs)
8. Explore a Forward Funded Investment model for maximising on-site renewable energy generation potential



## Transport

Supporting transportation that minimises environmental impacts and promotes sustainable travel methods.

### Our priority climate actions for 2024-2027

9. Deliver the installation of charge points across the estate to support transition of corporate and fire fleet to electric vehicles
10. Purchase/Lease electric vehicles to replace existing assets, and explore other alternative fuel options
11. Develop and implement a transport hierarchy and related supporting policies to encourage and enable staff to adopt more sustainable travel choices



## Procurement and commissioning

Securing the best possible value including carbon, cost, quality, and social value when purchasing goods and services.

### Our priority climate actions for 2024-2027

12. Develop a corporate Sustainable Procurement Policy and support its implementation across commissioning teams, focusing initially on high-value, long-term contracts
13. Improve data collection for procurement-related (Scope 3) emissions and establish reduction targets



## Nature and environment

Pursuing ‘nature-based’ solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change, sequester carbon, and protect the environment.

### Our priority climate actions for 2024-2027

14. Develop corporate Land Use Policy that includes climate change considerations and support its implementation for decision-making regarding WSCC-owned property
15. Develop WSCC carbon offsetting plan and establish partnerships with other local and regional offsetting and nature recovery projects
16. Continue to lead and support the development and roll-out of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, biodiversity net gain, and the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
17. Develop detailed climate adaptation actions based on assessed risks to service delivery and further embed climate resilience (for example: business continuity planning, asset management plans)



## Communities

Supporting, enabling, and inspiring West Sussex partners, communities, and businesses to work together to address climate change

### Our priority climate actions for 2024-2027

18. Continue to engage residents, businesses, and community groups in climate action, and identify the role of WSCC in supporting area-wide mitigation and resilience planning
19. Support WSCC schools in delivering climate action through a partnership approach to achieving energy efficiency, sustainable transport, climate change curricula, food security, and other key mitigation and resilience actions
20. Continue to support the community net zero transition through a solar PV group purchasing scheme and Local Area Energy Planning

🔗 Website: [westsussex.gov.uk/ClimateAction](https://westsussex.gov.uk/ClimateAction)

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📘 Facebook: @WestSussexCC

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