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# Tackling climate change

## Progress Report

### April 2023 to March 2024



# Foreword

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we face in our county, resulting in more extreme weather events, wetter, stormier winters and hotter, drier summers.

The impacts of the changing climate are already causing disruption for our communities, damaging vital infrastructure and presenting challenges for the local economy. Over the winter of 2023/24, we experienced intense rainfall across the county with numerous, prolonged flooding events and storm damage.

The County Council has made a strong commitment to tackling and adapting to climate change. Our Council Plan priorities are underpinned by a commitment to protecting the environment, including addressing the climate challenge, and our detailed Climate Change Strategy sets out our ambitious target to be a carbon neutral and climate resilient organisation by 2030.

This report describes the actions taken, and progress made across all parts of our operations between April 2023 and March 2024 towards delivering our Climate Change Strategy target. These actions build on the strong steps we have already taken, as laid out in our previous Climate Change Strategy progress reports, and they lay the foundations for us to go further and faster to address the climate challenge in the years to come.

We are proud of the progress we have made this year, including the extensive decarbonisation works at 14 of our buildings, the development of our detailed Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, and a range of exciting projects to enable sustainable transport choices, widen access to renewable energy, improve waste prevention and recycling, protect and enhance nature, and build community awareness and resilience to climate impacts.

We will reflect upon and learn from the progress made in 2023/24 so that we can do more to protect the environment, while ensuring we provide high-quality services and support for residents and businesses across the county.

Deborah Urquhart

Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change



# Reducing our operational carbon emissions

The total operational carbon emissions generated by the county council (excluding our supply chain) from April 2023 to March 2024 was 30,492 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. This total is higher than the emissions reported for the previous year. However, the higher emissions figure does not reflect a 'real world' increase in emissions. The reported increase is due to improved data quality which has enabled us to add several new emissions categories to our baseline from 2023/24 onwards. This expanded baseline better reflects the carbon emissions generated by the council's operations and gives us a more accurate picture of our footprint. Our new baseline includes data for the following emissions categories:

- corporate estate
- education estate<sup>1</sup>
- streetlighting
- corporate and fire fleet
- grey mileage
- business travel
- employee commuting and working from home<sup>2</sup>
- office waste<sup>3</sup>

Since setting our original carbon emissions baseline in 2019/20, our operational carbon emissions have shown an overall downward trend. Compared with emissions in 2019/20, we achieved an 9.7% reduction in emissions in 2023/24, despite adding these new emissions categories to our measurement and reporting.

## Climate Action & Adaptation Plan

To achieve the goals set out in the council's Climate Change Strategy, a comprehensive delivery plan was produced to address the complexities, interdependencies, and challenges of reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change in a co-ordinated way. The 'Climate Action & Adaptation Plan' (CAAP) was developed through collaboration with all directorates during the year, reflecting how every service plays a part in tackling climate change.

The CAAP describes our pathways for action and our priorities for 2024-2027, our approach to performance monitoring and the resources required for delivery. It is underpinned by a review of current and projected carbon emissions, and insight into expected climate-related impacts on residents, staff, and council services, to determine the scale and scope of work required. The CAAP will be formally adopted in summer 2024, and will drive our Climate Change Strategy implementation from 2024 to 2027. CAAP outputs and learnings will support subsequent climate action planning for 2027 to 2030.

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<sup>1</sup> maintained schools only, from 2023/24

<sup>2</sup> from 2023/24

<sup>3</sup> from 2023/24



# Resources and influence

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

## Carbon Literacy Training

Our established Carbon Literacy Training programme aims to increase awareness of climate change, explaining what is causing it, and the actions needed to address it. The programme supports staff and councillors to tackle climate change and protect the environment through their work. This year a further 119 staff and councillors have gained "Carbon Literate" certification bringing the total number of certifications since the programme began in 2020 to 375.

Each Carbon Literate person commits to implementing two new carbon reduction actions within their work. This means that over this year, 238 new action pledges have been made by our staff, including assessing carbon emissions impact within projects, switching off electrical equipment when not in use, changing job allocations to reduce road vehicle mileage, and embracing active travel. Three staff members also gained Carbon Literacy Facilitator certification, in recognition of their expertise in training delivery and learner support.

## Climate Vulnerability Index

We worked with the University of Brighton to develop the [Climate Vulnerability Index](#) (CVI), a unique geospatial mapping tool that collates and analyses social, economic and environmental data to identify areas of the county that may be more vulnerable to climate change. The CVI tool considers what population characteristics may influence a community's overall social susceptibility and ability to adapt and react in emergency situations. It further identifies key environmental data on future climate conditions, air quality, flood risk, land cover and more.


Having access to this wealth of data from multiple sources in an easily accessible and visual format improves our ability to support our communities and build resilience to the impacts of our changing climate.

## Council business

County councillors contributed to sustainable ways of working by holding most informal meetings virtually, reducing the need for travel. In addition, councillors were provided with an app enabling them to read and annotate meeting papers virtually, which should reduce the need for printed meeting papers. All formal decision and committee reports must explain how a policy or proposal may affect the key county council priority to protect the environment, enabling councillors to assess how well the commitments set out in the Climate Change Strategy are being met.

## Supporting our staff

Our staff benefits include a range of commuting and business travel discounts and initiatives that support sustainable travel choices and a healthy work-life balance. By March 2024, our car benefit scheme had enabled 61 staff to switch to a hybrid or electric vehicle and 85 staff were participating in the Cycle to Work scheme.



# Buildings and energy

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

## Building decarbonisation programme

We began the first phase of an ambitious programme to reduce the carbon footprint of our buildings this year. This programme phase introduced a range of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures at seven libraries, six fire stations, and a day centre. It is estimated that once the works have been completed in July 2024, they will prevent almost 200 tonnes of carbon from being released into the atmosphere each year, the equivalent of travelling over 600,000 miles in a petrol car.

The decarbonisation works included replacing gas boilers over 10 years old with air source heat pumps and installing solar panels, as well as upgrading heating controls, windows and insulation. The measures installed in this first phase have eliminated gas use at 13 of the 14 sites. The £8.2m capital investment included a grant of just over £1.4m from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, administered by Salix Finance.

Officers from the buildings and services included in the programme were part of a cross functional approach from conception and design through to implementation. This included advance planning and communications by our library teams to minimise any disruption to customers and communities during the works, delivering pop-up libraries to maintain service provision during closures, and re-opening our libraries with staff briefed and able to outline the improvements to library visitors.

## Children's Residential Improvement Programme

Energy efficiency has been an integral part of major remodelling and refurbishment work at one of our children's residential homes. To minimise heat demand at Orchard House in Cuckfield, we installed a ground-source heat pump and improved the building fabric by installing roof and cavity wall insulation, along with new double-glazed doors and windows. The ground source heat pump is expected to reduce carbon emissions from the building by 65%, saving 361 tonnes of carbon over the system's predicted 20-year life. The works will finish in July 2024.

## Platinum House

Our new state-of-the-art training centre and fire station opened in July 2023. The multi-million-pound site commissioned by West Sussex County Council, is the first of its type in the county. Named Platinum House, it replaces the previous fire station on Hurst Road, Horsham which was built in 1968. The site has been designed to support the county council's aims to become carbon neutral, with features including: a live fire training facility that emits smoke back into the environment as clean air; air source heat pumps; solar panels; and electric vehicle charging points.





## Traffic Signals Halogen Replacement Programme

We began a £6.5m programme to upgrade current halogen traffic signals in West Sussex with new LED technology which has a far smaller carbon footprint and lifetime operating cost. In 2023/24, 32 traffic signal sites were refurbished, with 205 halogen traffic signal heads converted to LED. The work completed this year is estimated to save over 73 MWh energy, 14.5 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e and over £13,000 of energy costs annually.

## Renewable generation

The county council's solar farms and solar PV systems on schools and corporate buildings exceeded expectations for energy generation and income according to the latest Annual Solar Report (2022/23). The systems, which include our solar farms at Tangmere and Westhampnett as well as roof mounted panels on schools and corporate buildings, generated almost 17,000 MWh of clean electricity which would be enough to power 6,290 average UK homes for a year<sup>4</sup>. This prevented 3,584 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from being released into the atmosphere compared to using electricity from the grid. During that year we were also able to adjust our strategy to take advantage of the high sale of power prices on the energy market, which meant that financial returns were well above expectations.

## Solar PV & Battery Storage Programme

Our ambitious programme to install new solar PV and battery storage systems in schools and county council buildings went out to procurement this year to identify a delivery partner. We currently have 24 corporate buildings and 55 schools signed up for the three-year programme which will help to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. This work will build on the success of the earlier Solar Power for Schools Programme which installed 74 PV systems.

## Solar Together Sussex

We enabled West Sussex residents to instal 493 new solar PV and battery systems through the third round of our popular Solar Together Sussex scheme. This equates to

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<sup>4</sup> Using Ofgem's latest typical domestic consumption values.

2.14 MW of new generation capacity and 3.28 MW of additional battery capacity in the county. We co-ordinate Solar Together Sussex on behalf of all local authorities in Sussex. The scheme helps residents to install high quality solar panels, battery systems and electric vehicle chargers to reduce their energy costs and carbon emissions. Since 2020, we have delivered 1,432 installations across West Sussex - a combined generation capacity that's greater than our Tangmere solar farm. The combined annual CO<sub>2</sub> saving is estimated to be 1,495 tonnes.

## Re-Energise Manor Royal

We received a national award this year for our work in helping to establish the Manor Royal Local Energy Community (LEC). We came first in the 'Enabler' category at the June 2023 Association of Decentralised Energy Awards. The Manor Royal LEC has been set up to help businesses to invest together in renewable energy.

## Community Energy Fund

We supported a parish council-led community energy project to submit a successful bid for feasibility funding. The REACH (Renewable Energy Access for Communities and Households) project, which covers Rustington, East Preston and Angmering, secured £40,000 from the Community Energy Fund. The project plans to invest in solar panels and batteries for homes and community buildings and establish a local energy community (LEC). Once established, the LEC will help residents to reduce their energy costs and act on climate change together.

## Transport

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

### Bus Service Improvement Plan

Travelling around rural parts of the county is now easier following the launch of "Book-a-Bus", a new flexible and on-demand bus service. The service is part of our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), supported by £17.9m of funding from the Department for Transport, which aims to make it easier and more attractive for residents and visitors to travel by bus.

"Book-a-Bus" operates within set zones, picking passengers up from convenient locations when they need it, for the same price as a standard bus fare. With no conventional timetable or routes, the service operates on bookings received via the "Ride Pingo" app or by phone. Drop-off points with onward connections to travel by bus or train are also included within the service zone to ensure ease of onward travel.

Other BSIP initiatives that began implementation this year include:

- a new '16 to 20 Bus Saver' scheme developed alongside bus operators, which enables young people to access discounted bus fares if their journey starts or finishes anywhere within West Sussex



- installation of over 400 Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) digital displays, including at bus stops near vital community facilities, such as hospitals and doctors' surgeries, and in rural areas, making it easier to plan bus journeys
- traffic light junction upgrades to improve signalling at 20 junctions, giving buses priority and improving journey times for the Coastliner Route 700
- the new 500 bus service, from Chichester to Littlehampton via Fontwell, Eastergate and Barnham, operated by Stagecoach South, which gives residents living in more rural areas improved access to local facilities and towns, easing traffic congestion.

## Manor Royal Crawley New Eastbound Bus Lane

A new eastbound bus lane in Manor Royal, Crawley was completed in September 2023, as part of a comprehensive £3.5m Highways Improvements Scheme, enabling a faster, more reliable bus service and encouraging people to travel by sustainable transport. A third phase of the scheme, funded by the BSIP, is planned to start in October 2024.



## ZEBRA funding

The Department for Transport awarded a partnership between Metrobus, West Sussex County Council, Surrey County Council, Kent County Council and London Gatwick over [£10 million funding](#) to launch a new fleet of 43 hydrogen powered buses. The funding, combined with £11.6 million from Metrobus (Go Ahead) and almost £3 million from the other partners brings the total for the project to over £24 million.

The buses will operate across a wide area of Sussex, Surrey and Kent to connect rural areas with local towns and London Gatwick. The funding will be received, and vehicles put in place when planning permission for the increased liquid hydrogen storage is approved. When fully operational, it will be one of the biggest fleets of hydrogen powered buses in the country and the only one operating in rural areas.

## Active travel

We completed 16 cycling infrastructure schemes this year, adding 10.5km of cycling infrastructure to the network, surpassing our 7.5km annual target. This included two schemes funded by Active Travel England: a contraflow cycle route in Littlehampton, and a shared cycleway linking to Downland School in Hassocks.





We worked closely with Active Travel England towards achieving Level 1 capability status, and in March we were awarded just over £1m of capital funding to deliver active travel schemes in 2024/25. We were also awarded £475,000 of revenue funding to further our capability and help develop our pipeline of schemes.

The draft West Sussex Active Travel Strategy and West Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) were the subject of a public consultation during 2023/24 and are due to be adopted in 2024/25. We have also continued to develop LCWIP priority schemes in Chichester, Crawley and Horsham.

## West Sussex Chargepoint Network

Working in partnership with West Sussex district and borough councils and the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure specialist Connected Kerb, we have continued to expand the [West Sussex Chargepoint Network](#). Since the installation programme began in 2022, we have installed 113 chargers (226 sockets) on-street and 90 chargers (179 sockets) in District & Borough Council car parks, helping to make EV charging more accessible and affordable for both residents and visitors.



## Carriageways and footways

When maintaining carriageways and footways, we now use warm-mix asphalts wherever possible to achieve an estimated 10% carbon saving over standard-mix materials. In addition, all planings arising from surfacing operations are returned to our contractor for reuse / recycling. We also introduced retexturing works on areas of the network that had been affected by heat, which reduced the need for higher cost and higher carbon resurfacing. Material removed from the road surface is reused where possible.

## Road safety

Through our Road Safety team, we delivered Bikeability cycle training to approximately 6,500 primary school children in year 6, improving their cycling skills and confidence and encouraging continued cycle use for short journeys. We also provided tips on social media for safe and sustainable transport use, including tips on seasonal driving and vehicle maintenance, to help cut carbon emissions.

## Road Safety Engineering

Road traffic collisions (RTCs), as well as causing human harm, cause congestion and increased carbon emissions / air pollution within the local area, as well as affecting the environment through fluid spillages and damage to roadside vegetation. In 23/24 road safety engineering schemes were delivered at 11 sites to encourage safer driving and reduce the likelihood and severity of RTCs. Our Road Safety Engineering teams' site selection methods included extensive desktop studies using data from connected vehicles, reducing the need for staff to travel to sites.

## Driver Training

Driver Training courses were delivered to 54,000 motor vehicle drivers and riders who had been identified by the Police for a driving misdemeanour, such as speeding or driving whilst distracted. 74% attendees completed the course online, reducing the need for people to travel to training venues.

## Changing how we work

Staff Q&A sessions with the Director of Adult's Services were held online rather than in person, removing the need for over 100 attendees to travel, reducing the council's grey fleet mileage and associated carbon emissions. Further less carbon intensive ways of working are being explored for large cohorts of staff across the organisation.

## School run improvements

More than £420,000 worth of improvements were completed by the county council to increase children's and parents' confidence in choosing an active travel mode of transport, such as walking or cycling, for the school run. The 14 schemes included: improved pedestrian links between Barns Green Primary School and the village hall for greater road safety; a new designated layby for buses outside the Forest School in Horsham, along with parking restrictions, to help reduce peak time congestion; and installation of a new signalised pedestrian crossing on the A29 in Westergate at the request of the local community, to improve safety for school children from Ormiston Six Villages Academy and local residents.

## School Streets Trial Schemes

From September 2023 to March 2024, the county council worked in partnership with Sustrans and three West Sussex schools to trial 'School Streets' schemes in Arundel, Shoreham and Worthing. A School Street is a road outside a school with a timed restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. They aim to tackle air pollution and poor health, reduce road danger, encourage a healthier lifestyle and

active travel to school for families, and protect the environment for everyone. A full report on the trial findings will be published in Autumn 2024.

## Procurement and commissioning

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

### Supply chain emissions

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 e.g., from purchased energy (Scope 2)<sup>5</sup>. At present, our supply chain emissions are excluded from our carbon reporting, although we know that by far the largest proportion of our emissions are from these 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. We began reviewing options to improve our supply chain emissions measurement, to enable us to and address these emissions and make decisions on next steps, including setting long-term reduction targets for our supply chain emissions.

### Reducing the carbon impact of IT equipment

While specification and price remain the key considerations in our IT equipment procurement decisions, we also factor in a greener supply chain and 'in service' operational improvements. We have begun introducing more modern, lightweight Microsoft Surface Go 2 and Go 3 laptops, and replacing ageing monitors in our offices with more power-efficient Dell Hub monitors.

### Social Value & Sustainability measures in procurement

We piloted a new approach on social value and sustainability within the procurement process for the provision of a Highways Capital Delivery Services Framework contract for 2024 to 2028. The new approach incorporated 14 measures from the nationally recognised Social Value TOM System™ of Themes, Outcomes and Measures including 4 having a primary focus on environmental impact. The chosen measures focused on decarbonisation, air pollution and resource efficiencies that link clearly to the service's climate action plan.

In their tender submission responses, the 16 contractors that were successfully appointed to the Framework provided a proportionate understanding and active approach within their organisation relating to the selected measures, which included:

- NT31 Savings in CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions on contract achieved through decarbonisation
- NT65 Percentage of fleet or construction vehicles on contract that are at least Euro 6 or Low Emission vehicles
- NT66 Fleet emissions monitoring programme

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<sup>5</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>

- NT88 Reduce waste through reuse of products & materials. Measure the practice of reusing /recycling products & materials as part of the Circular Economy

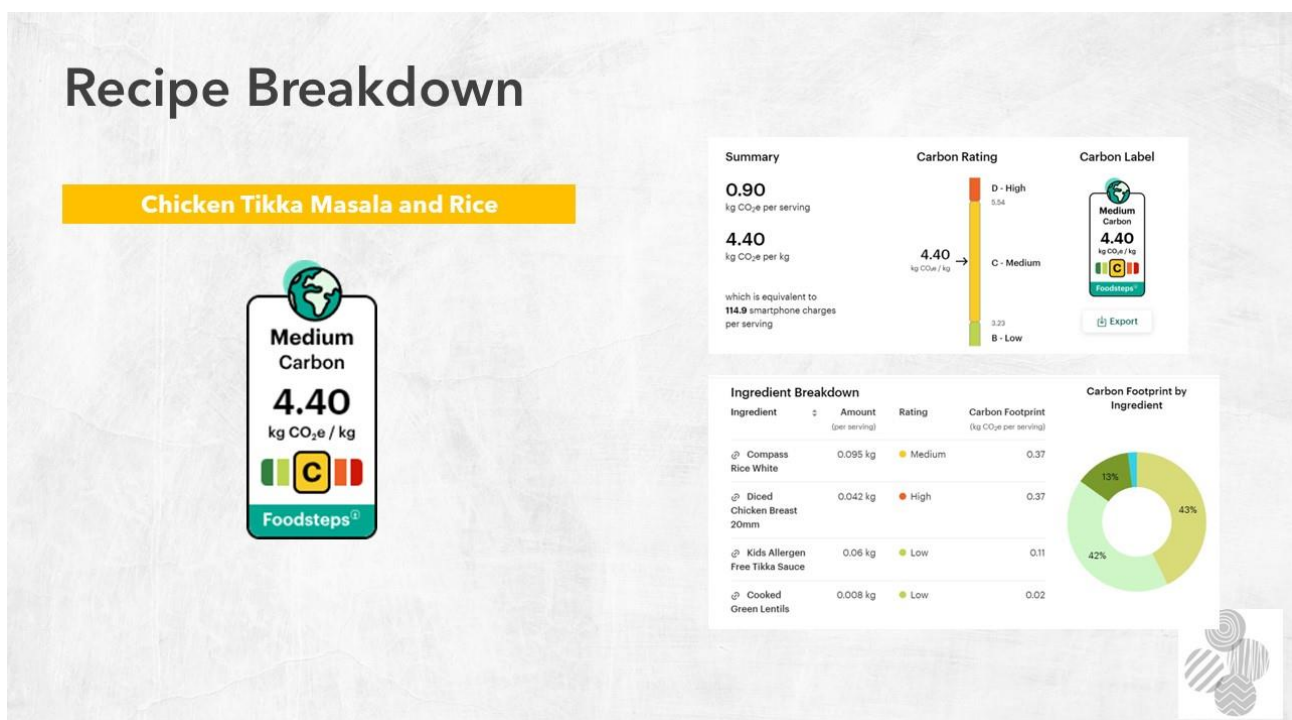
Following on from the positive outcomes of the pilot, the 14 measures have been embedded into future framework procurement rounds from 2024 to 2028 inclusive.

## Catering Services

The Catering Service worked with our school meal provider Chartwells, supported by specialist industry organisation Foodsteps, to calculate the carbon impact of each dish on our menu. Analysing data across the whole supply chain of a food product including farming, packaging, processing, transport, food preparation and cooking, we developed carbon labels for our menus. The new labels will be introduced from April 2024, enabling children and parents to improve their awareness of low carbon school meal options.

In our Special Schools, we worked with the ProVeg UK School Plates Programme to achieve their bronze award. This scheme aims to encourage plant-based meal choices and reduce meat consumption.

The information displayed on our menus will enable people to make informed choices when ordering their meals. We serve over 4 million school meals each year so these changes can have a big impact on reducing the carbon footprint of the menus we provide.





# Nature and environment

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

## Nature-based solutions

We incorporated nature-based solutions and other environmental improvements into projects, such as the Worthing Cross Street Active Travel scheme, and the [Worthing Railway Approach Public Realm Scheme](#) which commenced construction in February 2024. Features include:

- Rain gardens and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to ease rainwater runoff and improve water quality
- Landscape planting and new trees to help adapt the area for public use and provide shading
- Refurbishment of the existing stone and reuse of paviour surface materials to reduce waste
- Improving the access layout for walking and cycling in the station area.



## Livelabs Greenprint project

WSCC's Greenprint project, funded by DfT's Livelabs innovation funding, is continuing to trial a new approach to verge maintenance. In 23/24, we trialled a new 'cut and collect' verge maintenance routine in Horsham, Aldwick, Bersted and Pagham. Normally, we would cut these urban verges five times a year and leave the cuttings on the ground. This puts nutrients back into the soil, encouraging grass growth. Cutting and collecting grass cuttings aims to slow grass growth, encouraging a wider variety of plant life and pollinators, boosting local biodiversity, and increasing the capture and storage of carbon in the soil.

We are measuring the yield of cuttings and working with partners to explore how the cuttings can be used in biochar production. Biochar is a carbon-rich, charcoal-like material, which could be used in road surface materials production to provide long-term carbon storage.

## Buchan Country Park Green Flag

Buchan Country Park was again recognised as one of the country's best parks, being awarded a prestigious Green Flag Award for the 13<sup>th</sup> year in a row. The Green Flag Award scheme is the internationally recognised mark of quality for parks and green spaces which have demonstrated exceptional levels of care, offering a sanctuary for people and wildlife. Buchan Country Park is a vital green space for the community in West Sussex, bringing people together and supporting healthy lifestyles.

## Water

County council leaders met with other local authority leaders, Southern Water, the Environment Agency, and Water Resources South-East to consider strategic plans for addressing local water issues such as flooding, water quality, sewage outflows, and scarcity. They agreed to develop a joint Water Management Plan for West Sussex, and identified key areas for early action and collaboration including implementing sustainable drainage solutions that will also enhance the environment, schemes to help householders to reduce water run-off from roofs, and working with existing Catchment Partnerships to deliver solutions that alleviate catchment water pressures and improve biodiversity.

## Nature friendly verges

We maintained relationships with Community Road Verge groups across the county, helping them to learn and communicate via the Nature Verge Network. We also actively promoted our 'Pollinator Highways' initiative – nature corridors created through local partnerships. The Sompting Pollinator Highway was established this year, adding to existing pollinator highways in Selsey and Lancing. We attended and presented at Horsham Green Spaces quarterly forums and continued to support Arundel's Green Team.



## Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory in the planning system in February 2024 to ensure that development results in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development. The requirement for developers to deliver 10% BNG has been embedded in the planning applications process. The county council must secure the delivery of BNG requirements (including long-term monitoring and management) as part of the decision-making process for planning applications determined by the County Council (minerals and waste, and its own development). We have also been assessing the implications for capital schemes (e.g. education, highways) which will be required to deliver BNG.

## Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a flagship measure in the Environment Act 2021 to encourage more coordinated, practical, and focussed action and investment in nature. The LNRSs will be published in 2025. West Sussex and East Sussex County Councils are the responsible bodies for LNRSs in Sussex and have been working in partnership on their development. Over this year, we have begun evidence gathering and undertaking technical work, engaging with key stakeholders including local communities, farmers and landowners, and biodiversity and natural environment experts, to identify actions and priorities for addressing the biodiversity crisis in Sussex, as well as related matters, including the impacts of climate change. We created the [Sussex Nature Recovery](#) website to support the project.

## Communities

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

## Operation Watershed

Operation Watershed was established 10 years ago to enable West Sussex communities to respond to local flooding issues. Since then, the County Council's Active Communities Fund has successfully supported local communities with £5m of funding across more than 500 projects to help reduce flood risk.

The programme awarded £435,587 across nine projects this year, including surface water storage ponds, riparian ditch network improvements, addressing localised highways drainage issues and improving resilience to protect homes and businesses.

For example, Rogate Parish Council, in partnership with local landowners, received funding to upgrade the existing drainage system to improve capacity and cope better with the natural sandy silt runoff from local land; while Findon Parish Council received funding to instal new gullies along key locations on the east side of the A24 to help to redirect surface water away from local properties.

## Developing more resilient communities.

As well as delivering emergency response and supporting community recovery from climate impacts, we worked with parish councils and communities on long-term community resilience programmes to enable and empower residents and businesses to



prepare for the severe weather events. For example, we supported the Felpham Emergency Resilience Group (FERG) which helps local residents during emergencies. FERG has been recognised nationally as an example of best practice and the model has been adopted to support other areas in West Sussex.

The county council and the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service launched an online toolkit to assist local businesses to consider how they can prepare and continue to operate as the climate changes. Businesses can complete a self-assessment survey and seek the support of specialist business continuity advisors from the Resilience and Emergencies Team. Several roadshows were held across the county, with continued support and promotion at business engagement events.

## Recycling and Waste Education Programme

Our long-running recycling and waste education programme, delivered by Wastebuster, saw over 23,000 visits by schools to access online materials or download resources, such as activity sheets or lesson plans. We received inspiring entries from secondary schools to the [Climate Enterprise Award](#), with the winning school planning to host a workshop for students to create tote bags from recycled materials. The school aims to test the concept before establishing an afterschool club to promote sustainability, reuse and learning new skills.

37 primary schools took part in the [Planet Protector Challenge](#), with pupils completing several exciting 'missions'. The Challenge helped over 1,000 pupils learn to 'recycle right'. Schools which participated in the Recycle to Read campaigns raised over £3,000 for their schools and generated impressive savings, including:

- 254 kg Food
- 2132kg Textiles
- 425 kg Batteries
- 3292 Toys
- 21835 litres of water
- 311 kWh of energy

## Community Food Hubs

Following a successful pilot, we continued working in partnership with UKHarvest, Biffa and local charities to provide monthly Community Food Hubs and education sessions for residents in each district and borough area. The Food Hubs supported food waste reduction, encouraged uptake of surplus food rescue schemes, and provided essential guidance to residents in the face of cost-of-living pressures.

Over 4,600 residents attended a Food Hub during the year, feeding just over 14,000 people. Nearly 50 tonnes of food was saved from going to waste, with a retail value of £115,500. Surveys showed that visiting a Food Hub improved people's sense of wellbeing and had a positive impact on the amount of fruit and vegetables people ate. In recognition of the scheme's success, it has been extended until April 2025.



## Waste prevention and recycling

Our [Think Before You Throw](#) campaign utilised a series of animated films and stills to encourage behaviour change. A survey after the campaign showed an increase in residents' understanding of what they can recycle in kerbside bins, and highlighted that they want to understand what happens to their waste and recycling and how to reduce waste further.

The council's team of Events and Initiatives assistants and volunteer Waste Prevention Advisors attended a wide range of events, ran workshops, and delivered talks and school assemblies, engaging with over 9,500 residents to encourage waste prevention, reuse and recycling right.

## Let's Go! Net Zero

The Let's Go! Net Zero (LG!NZ) initiative continued to help local businesses embrace sustainability and take advantage of the business benefits of going green. Research had shown that while many businesses understood that adopting sustainable business practices has the potential to support growth, many were confused about where to find advice and support, and how to implement targeted steps to realise change. LG!NZ has offered inspiration for all West Sussex businesses, including those with lower environmental awareness, helping to ensure that no business is left behind as the low carbon economy sees accelerated growth.

Engagement was achieved through a dedicated website and social media, providing case studies, and curated links to further support. A team of 12 motivated Green Business Champions from industry gave inspirational talks at business events around the county. A series of Sector Demonstrator Events provided sector specific information and opportunities to hear from industry experts. The programme included:

- 'Accelerating the Transition: Sustainable Transport & Logistics' at Shoreham Port
- 'Growing Green: Sustainability Showcase for Growers' at Tinwood Vineyard
- 'Manufacturing: Sustainability in Production' at Adelphi.

The initiative sparked rich conversation on multiple topics including waste reduction, product lifecycles, innovation, carbon calculation, accreditation and energy efficiency, helping each business imagine the possibilities and envisage a plan for decarbonisation best suited to their operations. LG!NZ has exceeded targets for businesses engaged, with over 1000 individual businesses attending events. Many businesses have been encouraged to take meaningful steps to lower their carbon footprint, and it has enabled new business opportunities and partnerships across the county.

