

Climate Change Strategy Progress Report

April 2024 – March 2025



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Foreword

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we will ever face in West Sussex, so it's important we do all we can to protect our environment. During 2024-25, West Sussex experienced heatwaves and periods of intense rainfall across the county, with numerous, prolonged flooding events and storm damage. The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events affecting the county has increased over recent years and without action the impacts are predicted to worsen.

The significant changes to our climate that we are now seeing are not only presenting challenges for our communities, but also the work we do as a council to support them. It's vital that we take decisive steps now to address our carbon emissions and ensure we are ready to cope with the impacts of our changing climate.

Protecting the environment underpins everything we do and all the priorities in Our Council Plan. Through our [Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030](#), we committed to making the county council's own operations carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030.

We are proud of the significant progress we have made in tackling climate change over the first 5 years of our Climate Change Strategy. We've enabled the installation of 2,500 solar systems in people's homes through our Solar Together programme, and generated nearly 80,000 MWh of [renewable energy](#) from our solar farms and solar panels installed on the council's buildings. A long-term programme to decarbonise heat in our corporate buildings has begun in earnest, with detailed heat decarbonisation plans created for our 50 highest emitting sites and [decarbonisation works](#) completed at the first batch of 14 buildings.

Hundreds of electric vehicle chargepoints have been installed across the county through the [West Sussex Chargepoint Network](#). Our [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) schemes are making it easier and more attractive for residents and visitors to travel around the county by bus. [Active travel improvements](#) are enabling people to switch car journeys for walking, wheeling or cycling, cutting emissions and congestion while improving air quality and health. We are nearing the end of a 3-year project to [convert traffic signals to low-energy LED technology](#), cutting energy consumption and associated carbon emissions. Our "[nature-friendly road verges](#)" programme has established 58 Community Road Verges across the county, enabling local communities to improve their environment and boost biodiversity, and linked up diverse natural spaces into longer "pollinator highways" alongside local partners.

The progress we have made to date provides strong foundations from which we will address the significant challenges ahead. Our detailed Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, launched in 2024, sets out the actions we will prioritise during 2024 to 2027 to reduce our organisational emissions, understand climate risks and build greater resilience to the changing climate, and continue to protect our precious environment. With government support, through working in partnership with our communities, and by changing how we operate, we can achieve our ambitious Climate Change Strategy commitments, ensuring the county council can continue its vital work to support our residents and businesses both now and into the future.

Deborah Urquhart

Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change



Introduction

Our [Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030](#) sets out the far reaching and transformative benefits to the council and West Sussex communities of tackling and adapting to climate change. Embracing the climate challenge will increase people's health and wellbeing, improve local air quality, protect our natural environment, support biodiversity, grow a greener local economy, reduce energy bills and enhance energy security. To respond effectively and realise these benefits, the council has five key commitments which we apply across all areas of our business when planning, delivering our services and operations:

- We will mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing carbon emissions
- We will adapt and be resilient to a changing climate
- We will source and use resources sustainably
- We will support and grow our local green economy
- We will transform how we work

Having made strong progress since 2020 on embedding these Strategy commitments, we published our new [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#) (CAAP) in August 2024, setting out the climate action we will focus on during the three years from 2024 to 2027. The CAAP identifies 20 priority actions to be taken across the council and in partnership with key stakeholders in the county. These priority actions are organised into six pathways which are outlined in the table below:

CAAP pathways for action:

	Resources and influence Ensuring climate change mitigation and adaptation are at the forefront of decision making across the organisation		Buildings and energy Pursuing a sustainable estate with carbon-neutral operation, that supports the transition to low carbon energy
	Transport Supporting transportation that minimises environmental impacts and promotes sustainable travel methods		Procurement and commissioning Securing the best possible value including carbon, cost, quality, and social value when purchasing goods and services
	Nature and environment Pursuing 'nature-based' solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change, sequester carbon, and protect the environment		Communities Supporting, enabling, and inspiring West Sussex partners, communities, and businesses to work together to address climate change

This report will discuss each of the 20 priority actions in the CAAP and the progress made to develop and deliver them over the period from April 2024 to March 2025. Alongside these priority actions, other important projects have been progressed by different services during the reporting period, details of which are also incorporated into the report.

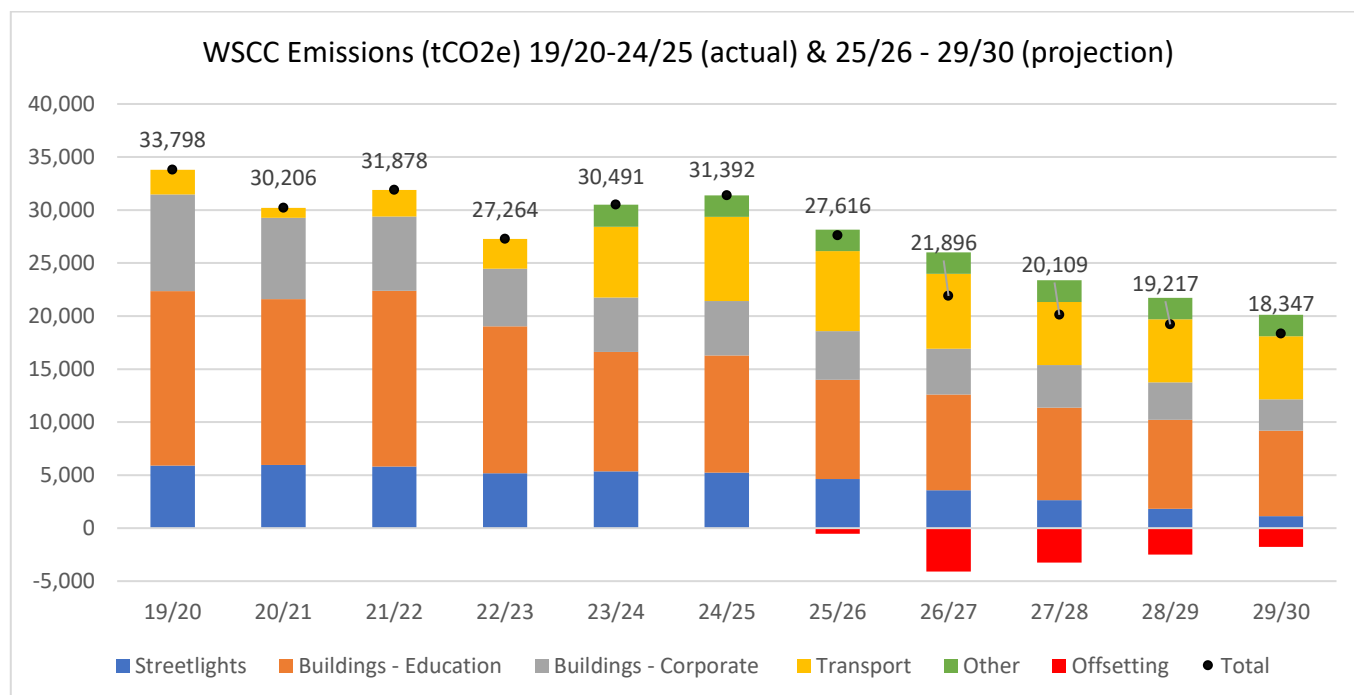
Progress in tackling climate change 2024-25

Reducing our operational carbon emissions

The total operational carbon emissions generated by the county council (excluding our supply chain) from April 2024 to March 2025 was 31,392 tCO₂e. This total is 3% higher than the emissions reported for the previous year. The trends over this period indicate a decrease in emissions from streetlighting and the education estate, a flattening of corporate estate and "other" emissions, and an increase in emissions from transportation. This transportation category emissions increase was driven by refinements to our fleet data¹, alongside a small increase in business travel mileage, increased emissions from overnight accommodation and an increase in employee commuting emissions.

Since setting our original carbon emissions baseline in 2019/20, our operational carbon emissions have shown an overall downward trend, with 2024/25 emissions 7% lower than in 2019/20. It should be noted that in 2023/24 we expanded our baseline to include more emissions categories (e.g., working from home, employee commuting) to better reflect our operational carbon impact, meaning that emissions in 2019/20 are not directly comparable.

The chart below sets out our carbon emissions reductions to date and the projected emissions reductions to 2029/30. Having made good progress in cutting emissions so far, the council is continuing to develop ambitious projects and seek the necessary finance and resources to tackle more challenging emissions sources, such as those from employee commuting and the education estate.



¹ Corporate and fire fleet vehicle classifications were reviewed and updated within our new fleet data management system



Resources & Influence

Priority Action 1:

Prioritise climate change awareness across the organisation by ensuring Carbon Literacy Training and other related Learning & Development options are embedded within the corporate training offer.

Roll out of our established Carbon Literacy Training programme has continued, with an additional 273 staff achieving their Carbon Literate certification from the Carbon Literacy Project. This brings the total number of Carbon Literate certified staff to 638 which is just under 10% of the total workforce². Each Carbon Literate certified staff member commits to taking two new work-based carbon reduction actions following their training, helping the county council move closer to achieving its 2030 carbon neutrality target.

New actions being implemented by staff range from making more sustainable travel choices, such as cycling or taking the bus to work rather than driving, holding more virtual meetings and improving vehicle route planning, to embedding sustainability and carbon reduction requirements into procurements and utilising sustainable construction materials for projects.

The county council was re-accredited as a Bronze-level Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO) in June 2024, following on from our original CLO accreditation in 2021. We are now working towards Silver CLO accreditation.



A climate change e-learning module was incorporated into the annual mandatory training undertaken by all county council staff in autumn 2024, and included in the induction

² Based on headcount of 6,607; excludes school staff.

programme for new staff, facilitating organisation-wide knowledge of the causes and impacts of climate change. Staff can also access training and guidance on digital skills and behaviours.

The county council actively supports staff to develop academically, professionally and personally through its Apprenticeships programme across a wide range of subject areas, including climate and sustainability. In 2024, our first Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Practitioner successfully completed their apprenticeship (see “Embedding sustainability skills” box below), with 32 staff members now progressing through “green” apprenticeship programmes.

Embedding sustainability skills

The Climate Change Officer in our Highways, Transport and Planning service (HTP) completed a Level 4 Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Practitioner apprenticeship in October 2024. They developed their project management, budgeting, and communication skills, as well as improving their climate and sustainability knowledge, including environmental, social and governance reporting, carbon reduction, and sustainable practices. The apprenticeship has enabled them to plan and begin delivering the HTP Climate Action Plan, and made them empowered and equipped to support both the team and directorate with climate change related queries and advice. For more information read our [Apprenticeship Case Studies](#).

Priority Action 2:

Seek and bid for government funding and other green investment opportunities to support decarbonisation and energy transition projects

The county council has a history of successfully bidding for government grant funding, including the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). In conjunction with the county council’s own capital funding, previous grant awards have enabled development of over 100 heat decarbonisation plans for council sites and schools, and supported works to implement heat decarbonisation plans at 14 high-emitting corporate sites.

The county council successfully bid for further PSDS funding this year to support implementation of heat decarbonisation works at selected high-emitting sites during 2026-2027 subject to approval of detailed designs. An additional £10m of funding was allocated in the council’s capital programme for protecting the environment, which will support projects that deliver decarbonisation and improved climate resilience.

The Sustainability team recruited an officer to provide dedicated resource for identifying and securing new forms of external funding for climate action projects and to facilitate development of a new green funding strategy.

Priority Action 3:

Develop and action a long-term climate change communications strategy and plan, covering internal and external communications

Our long-term communications strategy and plan has been developed to support Climate Change Strategy delivery. It considers how the county council can most effectively employ different engagement channels and techniques to enable people across the county to understand the council’s work to protect the environment, including tackling climate

change. In addition, the communications strategy and plan aim to enable and inspire people across West Sussex to consider the actions they can take to reduce carbon emissions and protect nature.

The [West Sussex Climate Action](#) section of the county council's website continued to form the basis for our communications activity, giving users an overview of our work and providing access to key documents and news updates. Our monthly Environment & Climate Change (E&CC) digital newsletter remained a significant communications channel. With more than 10,000 subscribers, and an open rate consistently over 55%, this newsletter performs significantly above average local government rates and is in the top 20% (median: 42%, top 20%: 47%). This popular newsletter saw high levels of engagement over the year, providing readers with a wide range of articles detailing the council's work to tackle climate change, alongside the work of partners and other local organisations. The E&CC newsletter was complemented by dedicated newsletters on bus service improvement and recycling³.



We continued to work with partners and neighbouring authorities on joint projects which required a collaborative approach to communications, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for West Sussex. This is a new initiative and part of a nationwide effort to map, plan and prioritise action for nature locally that everyone in Sussex can be part of.

³ To subscribe to the council's regular newsletters and email alerts, please visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWSCC/subscriber/new>



Buildings & Energy

Priority Action 4:

Deliver estate decarbonisation projects

Emissions from the corporate estate make up 17% of the council's total emissions. To achieve our carbon neutrality target by 2030, we need to decarbonise these buildings, primarily by decreasing reliance on gas for heating and by installing energy efficiency upgrades.

In July 2024, we completed the first phase of an ambitious programme to reduce carbon emissions from council buildings. The buildings included in phase 1 of the programme were:

- Broadfield Library
- Crawley Library
- Durrington Library
- Southwick Library
- Horsham Library
- Haywards Heath Library
- Storrington Library
- Petworth Fire Station
- Midhurst Fire Station
- Steyning Fire Station
- East Grinstead Fire Station
- East Wittering Fire Station
- Haywards Heath Fire Station
- Glebelands Day Centre



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. This programme phase introduced a range of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures at seven libraries, six fire stations, and a day centre. 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 works eliminated gas use at 13 of the 14 sites, and are expected to prevent over 200 tonnes of carbon from being released into the atmosphere each year, the equivalent of travelling over 600,000 miles in a petrol car. Over the 9 months from July 2024 to March 2025, gas consumption across the sites has reduced by 84.6%, while electricity consumption across the sites has increased by 41.3%. Overall, the decarbonisation works have resulted in a carbon emissions reduction of 105.3 tCO₂e for the 9-month period.

Major refurbishment at Orchard House & Lodge children's residential home was completed in July 2024. The refurbishment included installation of a ground source heat pump, solar photovoltaic panels and battery storage at Orchard House, and an air source heat pump at the Lodge, along with roof and cavity wall insulation and new double-glazed doors and windows. The ground source heat pump was installed in January 2024, and over the 12 months from April 2024 to March 2025 enabled an 81.5% reduction in gas use, saving 28.5 tonnes of carbon⁴. Carbon emissions for the whole site reduced by 28 tonnes over the 9 months from July 2024 to March 2025⁵.

The Sustainability team supported Facilities Management to deliver nearly 50 carbon reduction installations across the WSCC corporate estate over the last year. £664,000 of investment enabled the replacement of single glazed windows with double glazing, installation of LED lighting, improved insulation and heat pumps. The programme is providing more energy efficient buildings and warm spaces for our residents by installing fabric, lighting and heating improvements with lower carbon emissions compared to like-for-like replacements. The collaboration between the Sustainability team and Facilities Management team will continue over the next financial year with a further £500,000 investment in WSCC corporate estate estimated to deliver between 40 and 160 tonnes of carbon savings.

Priority Action 5:

Initiate and deliver the LED streetlighting programme.

A programme to convert existing streetlights to LED is under development. Approximately 64,000 luminaires across West Sussex are expected to be converted to LED over a 4-year period. The programme aims to reduce energy use and costs, deliver significant carbon savings, and improve efficiency of maintenance regimes including the ability to remotely monitor assets.

Works have continued on delivering our [£6.5m programme](#) to upgrade current halogen traffic signals in West Sussex with to LED technology. Over the year, 29 traffic signal sites were upgraded, consisting of 2 junctions and 27 crossings, with 190 traffic signal heads replaced. This has removed 570 halogen bulbs from the annual maintenance contract. This year's improvements are estimated to save over 68 MWh electricity, 18.7 tonnes of CO₂e and nearly £13,000 of energy costs annually. Since the project's inception, 61 traffic signal sites have been upgraded across 5 junctions and 56 crossings, saving 141 MWh electricity, 33.2 tonnes of CO₂e and reducing costs by £26,000.

⁴ Compared with the 12 months from April 2021 to March 2022 which represents the most recent comparable time period prior to the start of the refurbishment works; figures account for additional electricity consumption for heat pump operation.

⁵ Compared with the 9 months from July 2021 to March 2022 which represents the most recent comparable time period prior to the start of the refurbishment works; figures account for additional electricity consumption for heat pump operation.



Priority Action 6:

Launch and deliver a reinvestment scheme to support decarbonisation across corporate and education estates and develop school partnerships.

In 2009, the county council invested £314k of capital in a loan scheme which was matched by £314k of government funding and administered through Salix Finance. Since then, the county council has used this £628k 'Invest to Save' fund to deliver energy efficiency measures, focusing primarily on the installation of LED lighting in schools and council buildings that pay back the original investments through the energy savings made.

The initial £628k investment has been spent over 6 times since the fund began and has generated over £5.8m of cost savings and 22,866 tonnes of carbon emissions savings. Over this year the fund has supported LED lighting upgrades at Thomas A Beckett Infants School (Worthing), Maidenbower Junior School (Crawley), and East Grinstead Library. Over their lifetime, these projects alone will produce a 591 tonne CO₂ saving.

Following the 2023 government announcement that that Salix Finance would close its fund in 2025, the county council has been developing a new 'Energy Reinvestment Fund' to allow ongoing investment in energy efficiency and decarbonisation upgrades with a positive rate of return in schools and council buildings. That new fund will be available in financial year 2025/26 when the Salix fund closes.

Priority Action 7:

Explore renewable energy purchasing and viability of Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin certificates (REGOs).

Purchased electricity accounted for approximately 37% of the county council's carbon emissions in 2024/25. The authority is considering ways to reduce the carbon impact from electricity used across its corporate estate. This includes assessing the viability of

purchasing electricity generated from renewable sources and using Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO)⁶ from its own electricity generation to offset emissions.



Priority Action 8:

Explore a Forward Funded Investment model for maximising on-site renewable energy generation potential.

The Energy Services team is developing a new initiative to commission and install renewable energy systems on new council and school buildings, or when refurbishment work is being undertaken. The approach, which utilises the council's wealth of solar and battery retrofit knowledge and experience, aims to avoid the need for more costly retrofit at a later point.

Potential benefits of this proactive approach include a lower cost to install, opportunities to maximise the scale of the solar PV installation, and a greater amount of renewable electricity produced by the council sooner than would have been possible through a retrofit approach.

Solar PV & Battery Storage Programme

The council awarded the installation contract for the Solar PV & Battery Storage programme to Corin Dudley Electrical Services. The design and survey phase has progressed for the first 60 sites, with final surveys and the first installations taking place in summer 2025. A further 13 sites are expected to progress to installation later in 2025.

⁶ <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/renewable-energy-guarantees-origin-rego>



Transport

Priority Action 9:

Deliver the installation of charge points across the estate to support the transition of corporate and fire fleet to electric vehicles.

The county council needs to support its transition to electric vehicles with sufficient infrastructure to ensure reliable charging. This project aims to instal electric vehicle charge points at 4 key council locations through procurement of long-term ChargePoint delivery, operations and maintenance contract. This will enable the first phase of the transition of the council's fleet to electric vehicles. The project will also assess the councils' future requirements for charging infrastructure to support planning for this provision. Following a successful procurement, West Sussex County Council awarded the corporate EV charging contract to Blink Charging in March 2025.

Priority Action 10:

Purchase/lease electric vehicles to replace existing assets and explore other alternative fuel options.

The Fleet and Sustainability teams have worked together to review the council's existing vehicle fleet, vehicle replacement cycles, charging requirements and capacity constraints, service travel needs, and market provision of suitable electric vehicle models. In conjunction with priority action 9, this work is now enabling the development of a long-term programme for transitioning the fleet to electric/low carbon vehicles to maximise efficiencies in delivering EVs to council fleet. At the same time, the council has been exploring other alternative fuel options, including Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil which can significantly reduce carbon emissions when burned in vehicle engines as a direct substitute for fossil fuel derived diesel.

Priority Action 11:

Develop and implement a transport hierarchy and related supporting policies to encourage and enable staff to adopt more sustainable travel choices.

The county council has been working to gather robust data on how our staff travel for business and commuting purposes and encouraging sustainable travel improvements. The annual commuting survey has provided interesting data contributing to our commuting and business travel emission calculations. Following this, there has been direct engagement with key services identified as the highest emitters but equally with the greatest opportunity to use more sustainable commuting modes, such as Communities, Highways and Waste teams.

A range of sustainable travel incentives and schemes are already provided for staff, including bus and rail discounts, a cycle to work scheme, and a 'Liftshare' scheme. Uptake of these schemes has been reviewed to help improve accessibility and awareness and address barriers to adoption. The travel webpages are being refreshed to consolidate the information and initiatives available whilst also creating a place to launch new schemes.

Further commuting and business travel guidance along with a package of communications is being developed to encourage behaviour change and a switch to more sustainable travel modes.

Staff travel benefits

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 2025, our car benefit scheme had enabled 87 staff to switch to a hybrid or electric vehicle and 98 staff were participating in the Cycle to Work scheme.

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 363 EV chargers (727 sockets) on-street and 137 chargers (275 sockets) in District & Borough Council car parks, helping to make EV charging more accessible and affordable for both residents and visitors⁷.



Active Travel

The council achieved Level 1 Capability status from [Active Travel England \(ATE\)](#) in recognition of progress we made to [improve active travel in the county](#). ATE is the government agency that works with local authorities to make it easier and more attractive for people to walk, wheel and cycle on local journeys such as to school, work, the shops

⁷ Figures as of July 2025.

and leisure facilities. Council officers worked with ATE on an action plan to improve our planning and implementation of active travel schemes. Securing ATE Level 1 Capability status enables the council to bid for future funding to deliver active travel improvements.

Alongside this, the council developed its new Active Travel Strategy and the West Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which will support development of a pipeline of active travel improvements, help shape future capital programmes and support bids for external funding. In 2024/5 we delivered three ATE funded schemes:

- A new puffin crossing on the A286 Midhurst Road at Lavant, supporting walking and wheeling to Lavant CE Primary School.
- Upgrading the existing puffin crossing on B2259 Felpham Way, Bognor Regis to a toucan crossing to support walking, wheeling and cycling to Felpham Community College and Downview Primary School.⁸
- A contraflow cycling facility in Cross Street, Worthing, supporting cycling to and from Worthing Station. This scheme was implemented at the same time as public realm improvements in Railway Approach, which were delivered as part of the Worthing Growth Deal and included new pedestrian and cycle facilities.

Bus Service Improvement Plan

The council's [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) (BSIP), funded by the Department for Transport, has enabled 265 [Real Time Passenger Information](#) (RTPI) digital displays to be installed countywide, near community facilities such as hospitals and doctors' surgeries and in rural areas. RTPI displays show the bus service number, its destination and departure time. All feature a special audio push-button facility to make bus travel easier for passengers with visual impairments, learning or reading difficulties. A map of the [completed and future RTPI installations can be found on our website](#).

Traffic lights have been upgraded at 14 junctions to give buses priority, further supporting sustainable travel choices. The junctions now have more dynamic control systems which respond to traffic movements in real time, giving priority to buses while minimising delays for other road users. The upgrades are concentrated on the Coastliner 700 bus route, one of the busiest in the country, as well as Southwick, Shoreham, Lancing, Worthing and Bognor Regis. Upgrades are also planned in Crawley as part of the programme.

Improvement schemes have included Western Boulevard in Crawley which has provided a dedicated bus lane near The Broadway. Work also commenced on the extension of the eastbound bus lane in Manor Royal between London Road and Compton Way. In addition, over 80 bus stops have been improved across the county together with works along the Hydrogen Fastway Routes 10 and 20 in Crawley to improve transit speeds, accessibility and passenger satisfaction. We also continued to work through the details of bringing Zero Emissions Buses to West Sussex through the ZEBRA 2 scheme.

⁸ The footpath to the east of Felpham Community College will be widened during 2025/6 to further support cycling.



"Book-a-Bus" is an on-demand service being trialled in areas of West Sussex with limited or no traditional bus services. We extended Book-a-Bus in June 2024, with the launch of a new "Book-a-Bus 97 Flex" service covering a wide area between Barnham, Aldingbourne, Eartham, Shripney, Slindon, and Walberton, and enabling further connections to local towns and other transport networks. You can find more information on our ["Book-a-Bus" services](#) on the council's website.

The 16-20 Bus Saver, giving child fares to all until they reach 21, started in 2024/25. We also provided post-Covid support where commercial bus operations had not yet recovered to sustainability. Council contracts had significant inflationary pressure which was supported by BSIP in order to sustain the tendered bus network.



Procurement & Commissioning

Priority Action 12:

Develop a corporate Sustainable Procurement Policy and support its implementation across commissioning teams, focusing initially on high-value, long-term contracts.

We know that the goods and services the county council buys generate carbon emissions and wider environmental impacts. To support our Climate Change Strategy commitment to source and use resources sustainably, our Procurement Team has worked to develop a new Sustainable Procurement Policy, setting out how we will address climate change mitigation and adaptation through our commissioning and procurement activities.

Alongside the Policy, we are developing a Sustainable Procurement Toolkit and training to ensure that staff involved in commissioning and procurement are able to embed Policy requirements into their work. The Policy and Toolkit are expected to be finalised and launched in Autumn 2025. In the meantime, the Sustainability and Procurement teams collaborated with different services to integrate sustainability requirements into strategic contracts, including highways maintenance and drainage, and school meals services.

Sustainability and carbon reduction criteria were included in the new primary schools catering contract specifications. Requirements include reducing carbon emissions annually as well as setting a net zero reduction target by 2050 (or earlier), in line with the UK national target. This could be achieved through measures such as expanding local food sourcing and moving to closed loop packaging within the supply chain. Alongside this, the service provider is contractually required to engage with the Pro Veg Plates Award certification scheme designed to help children to eat healthier and more sustainable meals.

Priority Action 13:

Improve data collection for procurement-related (Scope 3) emissions and establish reduction targets.

The county council is committed to improving its supply chain emissions data to enable us to properly measure and monitor those emissions, and take effective action to reduce supply chain them. We began working with [Climate Essentials](#), using their carbon management platform to support this supply chain focussed challenge. Climate Essentials helps organisations measure, track and reduce carbon emissions and set a net-zero target.

Initially, our top spend suppliers are being invited to use the Climate Essentials carbon calculator. Since launch in December 2024, 77 suppliers have registered and begun sharing their data, representing approximately 29% of the council's supply chain spend.

For suppliers that already report their emissions elsewhere, there is an easy mechanism to upload that data to the Climate Essentials platform. The platform also provides a great opportunity for organisations that do not currently report on their carbon emissions. Suppliers can benefit from support from Climate Essentials experts and gain access to a Net Zero Community with free resources and webinars. The platform also allows users to generate reports for internal reporting purposes.



Nature & Environment

Priority Action 14:

Develop corporate Land Use Policy that includes climate change considerations and support its implementation for decision-making regarding WSCC-owned property.

To enable a holistic approach to determining the best use of undeveloped surplus land owned by the council, the Property & Assets team has led development of a corporate Land Use Statement. The Statement relates to undeveloped land or land which will be cleared following demolition of buildings. It seeks to combine effective provision for current and for future service requirements with opportunities for carbon sequestration and other nature-based solutions.

A land use forum has been established to support co-ordination of information on land use options. Alongside this, an options appraisal matrix has been created to enable decision makers to easily review key information and compare different land use opportunities. A small number of existing land assets have already been appraised through the matrix. Decisions on land use will proceed through the council's existing governance processes.

Priority Action 15:

Develop WSCC carbon offsetting plan and establish partnerships with other local and regional offsetting and nature recovery projects.

To enable the county council to achieve its target of carbon neutral operations by 2030, we will need to offset emissions that cannot be avoided. Offsetting will be achieved through initiatives that permanently remove carbon from the atmosphere or that enable additional emissions reductions to be made beyond our own operations.

Over this year, the Sustainability team began analysing the council's land holdings to identify opportunities for nature-based carbon offsetting and nature recovery projects. Field studies have been completed on 5 sites, and while these have deemed the sites not to be suitable for nature-based carbon offsetting, habitat assessment and monitoring plans were developed for further investigations into Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) opportunities. Review of further land for offsetting or nature recovery is underway in line with the Land Use Statement and options appraisal process (see PA14).

The council has also been engaging with external suppliers of nature-based carbon offsetting initiatives to assess the viability of offsetting council emissions via purchase of verified carbon credits, and to understand the potential of emerging technologies, offsetting approaches and verification methods.

Priority Action 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.

The county council is the responsible authority preparing the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in line with the requirements of the Environment Act 2021. The LNRS is a tool to encourage more coordinated practical and focused action and investment in nature. In partnership with East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, and Natural England, the county council has been completing the necessary technical aspects of LNRS development, and engaged with key stakeholders, including the district and borough councils and South Downs National Park Authority. A public consultation on the draft LNRS will be held in October 2025, prior to approval of the final strategy.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory in the planning system in February 2024, requiring developers to ensure that development results in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development. The requirement for BNG has been embedded in the planning processes and [BNG guidance](#) is available on the council's website.

The County Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, is required to prepare and maintain a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS), which is a statutory document to address flood and coastal erosion risk management. Following completion of necessary technical work and engagement with key stakeholders, a public consultation on the draft LFRMS took place in February and March 2025 (the LFRMS was approved in July 2025 and is now published on our website).

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 14th 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.



Priority Action 17:

Develop detailed climate adaptation actions based on assessed risks to service delivery and further embed climate resilience (e.g., business continuity planning, asset management plans).

Our climate resilience work has developed across three key aspects this year: (1) how our built assets such as offices, libraries, schools, fire stations, and roads will need to be adapted to withstand the impacts of climate change such as flooding and heatwaves; (2) how we will ensure our staff can safely continue to do their jobs as the climate changes and weather becomes more extreme; and (3) how the county council can help to support wider community resilience.

The [Climate Vulnerability Index](#) was published on the county council's website and the Sustainability team has been engaging with key stakeholders across the organisation, as well as with district and borough councils and third sector organisations, to identify which areas of the county are more vulnerable to climate change and why. Having access to this wealth of data from multiple sources in an easily accessible and visual format improves our ability to support our communities. A [case study on the CVI](#) was published by the Local Government Association in May 2024 to enable other local authorities to learn from our experience.

Building WSCC resilience

We have begun integrating climate resilience thinking into our decision-making processes to minimise the risk of service disruption and costs, especially considering that the impacts of climate change are projected to increase in severity in the future. This work includes quantifying the cost of inaction, developing appropriate resources for staff to consider climate impacts, and beginning to collaborate with West Sussex communities.

Following the loss of Durban House due to flooding, emergency flood barriers are now available for deployment and mechanisms are in place to provide triggers to activate their deployment. This should ensure that WSCC services can continue to deliver essential services to our communities across West Sussex.

Rapid Adaptation Pathways Assessment (RAPA)

The county council was one of three locations across the UK selected to pilot a new Rapid Adaptation Pathways Assessment (RAPA) methodology for climate resilience planning. The RAPA methodology was developed by the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT) and the Environment Agency (EA). Working with ADEPT, the EA, Climate Sense and Adur & Worthing Councils, we ran a RAPA workshop assessing key climate threats facing Worthing, identifying what types of interventions should be considered at different thresholds of risk, and brainstorming adaptation options.

Stakeholders from across the county attended and provided input into the process, including representatives from the county council's highways, fire and rescue, property and assets, and public health teams, National Rail, Shoreham Port, and several local community groups. The outputs will support further work to identify local demonstrator adaptation projects and community engagement activities, as well as replicate the RAPA approach for other areas of West Sussex.



Community climate resilience

West Sussex has continued to see impactful events from the changing climate. In April 2024 a combination of extremely high spring tides and strong winds resulted in two significant flooding events on the same night. The first, in Rope Walk Littlehampton, saw properties flooded and a number of residents evacuated. Shortly afterwards, Medmerry Caravan Park was inundated by the sea following a breach of the sea defences. Over two hundred residents in the caravan park required rescue and evacuation.

A few weeks later severe thunderstorms crossed the county with an exceptional amount of lightning. A care home near Bognor was struck causing major damage to the building, resulting in the emergency evacuation of residents. The same storm also saw a further lightning strike on an accommodation block at Chichester University with several hundred students being evacuated.

Learning from these incidents has resulted in improvements to multiagency flood plans and evacuation support processes. Communities across the county have seen localised surface water flooding from extreme rainfall events. The frequency of these events is increasing, and we continue to support communities in developing local community emergency plans, including the creation of "First Places of Safety" community hubs, whilst raising awareness and levels of readiness for severe weather events.

The Resilience & Emergencies team continued delivering the "What If – You can Make a Difference" community resilience training programme across West Sussex. This is an all-hazards approach to resilience, which provides education, seeks to warn and inform, and promotes mitigation methods to minimise the impacts of climate change and other stressors on our communities.

Water Summit

County council representatives met with other public sector leaders, and chief executives from water companies, at the West Sussex Water Summit in October. Progress on issues including flooding, water quality, water scarcity and sewage outflows were discussed. The Summit considered the Government's three stage approach to the reform of the water sector and received a high-level update on the regional water supply.

To tackle issues faced by planning authorities and water suppliers when trying to reduce water consumption in new build housing, the group agreed to approach the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Secretary of State and Defra to support a review of the Building Control Regulations.

Other areas discussed at the Summit included the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, River Catchment Partnerships, and investment plans for the next three years from Southern Water, Portsmouth Water, West Sussex County Council and the Environment Agency.

Promoting nature recovery and biodiversity

The council, in collaboration with the National Trust and Arun & Rother Rivers Trust installed a specially designed 'mammal shelf' in a culvert under a road close to one of the county's only breeding otter populations. Road casualties are thought to be one of the main issues hampering the growth of sustainable otter populations to West Sussex. Rather than swimming under bridges or through culverts, otters will often choose to travel on foot, resulting in them crossing roads to reach breeding grounds. The mammal shelf will allow otters to travel safely on foot under the road on a ledge above the water.



Greenprint 2nd year report

The council's '[Greenprint](#)' project continued during this year's growing season, trialling a new 'cut and collect' verge maintenance routine in parts of the county. Collecting cuttings reduces soil fertility, slowing grass growth and enabling a wider variety of plant life and pollinators to thrive. Slowing grass growth also reduces the need for future cuts, enabling carbon savings from our maintenance programme.

Increasing the variety of plants growing in grass verges between cuts is expected to increase capture and storage of carbon in the soil. The project has also begun exploring

how the cuttings may be used for producing biochar, a carbon-rich, charcoal-like material, for incorporating into road surfacing materials, and biogas for vehicle fuel.

Public Realm Improvements

As part of the Arun Growth Deal, the [Bognor Regis Esplanade Public Realm Improvements](#) have enhanced pedestrian, cyclist and disabled access between the Esplanade and the seafront, including traffic calming features, upgraded signal crossings, increased planting, additional seating and litter bins. 350 square metres of rain gardens have created more attractive and biodiverse green spaces as well as providing much needed drainage to improve resilience to increasingly adverse weather conditions.



The [Worthing Railway Approach Public Realm Improvements Project](#), incorporating Worthing Cross Street Active Travel scheme, was completed in December 2024. Nature-based improvements incorporated into the design include rain gardens and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) which ease rainwater runoff and improve water quality.

Urban biodiversity was enhanced through new planting, with 16 new trees providing wildlife habitats and natural shade in public areas for sitting, walking and wheeling. Partners agreed a landscape management plan with an extended period of additional watering to ensure the new trees thrive.

The project supports sustainable transport choices with its enhanced layout for walking and wheeling, new bike stands for cyclists and easy-access bus interchange directly in front of the station. New way-finding monoliths were installed with maps to signpost visitors to key public buildings, sustainable transport options, and efficient and effective routes to local areas of interest in the town and seafront heritage sites.

The carbon and waste footprint of the works were reduced by refurbishing and reusing existing stone within the site and other local schemes, and recycling of paviour surface materials





Communities

Priority Action 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

Through the West Sussex Joint Climate Change Board (WSJCCB), which comprises representatives from county, district and borough councils in West Sussex, the South Downs National Park Authority, Sussex Wildlife Trust and National Landscapes, we have laid the groundwork for developing a countywide approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The new countywide approach is intended to build upon the ambitious climate action commitments already made by WSJCCB members, enabling greater collaboration amongst members while ensuring local organisations and communities are able to play their part.

In conjunction with district and borough councils, we created the necessary governance structures for countywide collaboration and began research into levels of public engagement with climate change in the county. By reviewing the work done by other UK local authorities on area-wide climate action planning, we have been able to incorporate the learnings into our own approach. During 2025-26 we will progress the creation of two countywide strategies (mitigation and adaptation). This will be a highly collaborative process with key stakeholders and public consultation, supported by consultants, culminating in jointly owned costed and prioritised action plans.

New Economic Strategy 2025 – 2035

A new [Economic Strategy](#) for West Sussex was launched in March 2025, produced by West Sussex County Council in conjunction with partners, business representatives and the newly formed [West Sussex Economic Growth Board \(WSEGB\)](#). The strategy targets key sectors with opportunities for growth, ensuring a skilled and inclusive workforce, supporting the transition to net zero, delivering sustainable development and supporting resilience.

Healthy & Sustainable Places

The Public Health Team have been working with partners and stakeholders to progress the vision of the '[Creating healthy and sustainable places](#)' framework for West Sussex. The framework considers the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing in West Sussex and makes a number of recommendations to mitigate these impacts, such as increasing physical activity and encouraging active travel. As an example, Public Health contribute to funding of Bikeability training at West Sussex schools.

Priority Action 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.

The county council provided West Sussex schools with guidance and resources to enable them to create climate action plans in line with the Department for Education's (DfE) Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy expectations. Schools have been encouraged to utilise DfE funded resources, such as the [Climate Ambassadors](#) scheme, [Sustainability Support for Education](#), and the [National Education Nature Park](#). Easy access to these free resources was provided via the council's [West Sussex Services for Education website](#) and a [special edition of our Education Matters newsletter](#).

In addition, schools have had free support for climate action plan development through the enhanced [Schools Waste & Climate Education Programme](#) delivered by Wastebuster on behalf of the West Sussex Waste Partnership, which includes a new Climate Action Planner tool. The tool enables schools to build a programme of climate actions that are relevant for their setting, and measure and report the progress they make.

Inspiring entries to the [Climate Enterprise Award](#) were received from secondary schools, with the winning school planning to encourage pupils to take part in 'tech swap' events to keep small electrical items out of the waste stream, ensure reuse, repair and recycle are considered, and raise awareness of the valuable resources within small electrical items that can be recycled. Nearly 200 primary schools engaged with the Schools Waste & Climate Education Programme, by utilising free classroom resources, and through campaigns designed to boost waste prevention and recycling behaviours, including the [Planet Protector Challenge](#), Recycle to Read, and textile collections.

The council continued working with our school meal provider Chartwells to enhance the sustainability of school meals, launching new carbon labels on menus in April 2024. The labels help children and parents easily compare the carbon impact of different meals using a 'traffic light' system as well as providing a more detailed breakdown of the carbon footprint by ingredient.

To encourage an increase in vegetable consumption among primary-aged children, the West Sussex Public Health team commissioned Veg Power to implement their "[Eat Them to Defeat Them](#)" campaign. In March 2025, 37 schools across West Sussex participated in this initiative, which combines a national advertising campaign with a school-based program.

The West Sussex Public Health team commissioned Veg Power to carry out the "[Growing to Love](#)" project in 67 West Sussex primary schools, involving a total of 341 classes. The programme, which will continue through spring and summer 2025, gives each child their own tomato plant, aims not only educate children on the growing cycle, food chain, climate and environment but develops practical growing skills and gives children the confidence to try new vegetables.

School Travel Plans

Schools engaged in travel planning through the nationally accredited [ModeshiftSTARS](#) programme, supported by Active Travel England. As of March 2025, 64 West Sussex schools had signed up to the platform, with 5 achieving accreditation. Several other West Sussex schools are developing their travel plans using alternative formats. Updated travel plans have enabled the county council to identify where there is a need for behaviour change education, further support or resources, and can give us valuable baseline data.

Bikeability

The council's Road Safety team, a fully [accredited Bikeability provider](#), trains over 7,000 pupils annually in the skills needed to navigate today's roads safely. In January, we

announced that free Bikeability training will be available to Year 6 pupils who are eligible for free school meals to help ensure that every child in the county has the opportunity to develop the confidence and skills to cycle safely.

School run improvements

More than £500,000 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. These included a 4-way pedestrian crossing on Chesswood Road in Worthing supporting active journeys to 5 local schools and 2 nurseries, as well as key local facilities. Installation of a pedestrian crossing on the A286 Lavant Road (funded by ATE) addressed the barrier between the residential area and school facilities within the village, as well as access to bus stops for residents and pupils travelling to secondary schools in Chichester.

We also delivered active travel to school improvements at Yapton Primary School using a combination of capital funding and s106⁹ developer contributions. Further schemes were delivered bringing walking and cycling improvements at and around local schools as well as identified to bring to design for future years.



School Streets

The county council formalised the three trial 'School Streets' schemes in Arundel, Shoreham and Worthing. These areas will now benefit from further active travel to school improvements building on the changes at the school gate following the successful trial scheme. A School Street is a road outside a school with a timed restriction on motorised

⁹ Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as S106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable, [S106 | Local Government Association](#).

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.

Three further school streets were planned for the 24/25 school year of which two, The Mill Primary Academy, Crawley and St Joseph's Infant and Junior Schools, Chichester, launched following behavioural change education delivered through Sustrans and Living Streets. The final scheme, River Beach Primary, Littlehampton, received behavioural change education however the scheme delivery has been deferred to 2025/26 following discussions with the school and the local community. More information on the schemes and the full trial report can be found on the [School Streets webpage](#).

Priority Action 20:

Continue to support the community net zero transition through a solar PV group purchasing scheme and Local Area Energy Planning.

The county council has been the lead local authority for Solar Together Sussex, a group purchasing scheme enabling residents and small businesses to install high quality solar PV, battery storage systems and associated technologies at a reduced price compared to average market costs. The scheme has been supported and promoted by all local authorities in Sussex.

The authority has worked with iChoosr to deliver more than 2,500 domestic installations across Sussex during three scheme rounds in 2020, 21 and 23. Throughout their 4-year contract with WSCC, iChoosr selected and managed accredited installers to carry out the work and oversee all aspects of customer care. Local installers were used where possible. The iChoosr contract came to an end in August 24 and, during the first quarter of 2025, started the procurement process to identify a delivery partner for a further domestic PV & battery scheme.

The County Council has begun developing an approach to Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP). LAEPs are area-based plans that capture the changes needed to the local energy system to reach net zero. They can play a major role in planning future investment in energy infrastructure and enabling projects from councils, communities, and commercial investors to be developed and delivered. The county council is working with district and borough councils and other stakeholders, including the Distribution Network Operators, in delivering this work.

Meals on Wheels

Between April 2024 and March 2025, our [meals on wheels service](#), provided by Health & Independent Living Support (HILS), took significant strides towards sustainability. We've moved away from ageing diesel "Chefmobil" vans to more efficient small city cars, cutting fuel use, emissions, and improving sustainability across the county. At the same time, meals are no longer heated in diesel-powered ovens in vans, but in electric ovens back at HILS kitchens within West Sussex, further slashing emissions, lowering running costs, and helping keep meal prices stable for elderly customers.

Community Food Hubs

The council's Community Food Hubs, run in partnership with Sussex-based food rescue charity UKHarvest, are designed to tackle food waste and provide education on food waste prevention. The hubs take place once a month in each district and borough across West

Sussex, and for a small voluntary donation residents are able to pick up a wide selection of surplus foods which would have otherwise ended up as waste. Over 4,600 residents attended a Food Hub during the year, feeding just under 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 2026.

Waste Prevention

The West Sussex Waste Partnership launched a set of [innovative video animations](#) to address residents' frequently asked questions about recycling and disposal of various materials, from coloured plastics to vapes. As part of our [fight against food waste](#) initiative, we supported WRAP's Food Waste Action Week¹⁰, hosting waste prevention stands and giving away free waste prevention tools at community events. By raising awareness of the financial and environmental impacts of food waste we aim to reduce the amount of edible food ending up in general waste and encourage sustainable shopping habits.

We partnered with our recycling and waste contractor Biffa on several waste prevention initiatives. A new £50,000 [Waste Prevention Community Grant Fund](#) was launched to support community groups, residents' associations, charities, community interest companies (CICs) and social enterprises to deliver innovative initiatives to reduce household waste at a local level. At the Worthing Recycling Centre, we opened our second [Reuse Shop](#), enabling local residents to donate and buy all kinds of quality preloved items. Reusing is better for the environment than recycling because items remain in use without more energy being used to recycle materials to turn them into something new. In collaboration with Biffa and [Community RePaint](#) (sponsored by Dulux), we also launched an initiative to reduce paint waste and redistribute surplus paint to other residents at designated recycling centres across West Sussex.



¹⁰ Food Waste Action Week is a national initiative from Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), as part of their [Love Food Hate Waste](#) campaign