

NET ZERO STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Extraordinary Cabinet	02 March 2023
Report Author	Dr Hannah Scott, Climate Change Officer
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Bob Bayford, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services & Special Projects
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	All wards

Executive Summary:

Thanet District Council called a Climate Emergency on 11th July 2019. On September 22nd 2022, the first draft of the Thanet District Council Net Zero Strategy was presented to cabinet and the updated TDC pledge was agreed:

To do what is within our powers and resources to:

- make Thanet District Council net zero by 2030 in our core carbon footprint (this includes emissions we have direct control over e.g. the estates and activities that we own and manage)
- address emissions that TDC has partial control over (those outside of the core carbon footprint e.g. projects, procurement and social housing) as soon as possible, and by 2050 at the latest.
- support KCC, the Government, business, industry and the community to make Thanet as a whole net zero by 2050.

In order to make these targets possible we will:

- call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the targets possible;
- continue to work with partners across the county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies;
- investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment

The cabinet also approved the draft Net Zero Strategy for public engagement, which ran until Friday 11th November 2022. Members of the public and stakeholders were asked to

complete either a short questionnaire comprising three questions or a long survey comprising 8 questions.

32 responses to the short survey and 40 responses to the long survey were received. This feedback is summarised in the report below and the full document is attached - [annex 1](#). As part of the engagement we received a large number of comments and suggestions which are summarised in Table 1 of the full report. The table also includes TDC's response to the comments, showing how we will take the comments into consideration.

The engagement process has led to a number of recommended additions to the strategy. These were discussed at the Climate Change Cabinet Advisory Group and were considered useful. Members are asked to read the report and consider the recommendations below.

Further information has also been added to the Net Zero Strategy which helps to clarify our route forwards. This includes a paragraph around the use of seaweed to sequester carbon: "Scientists will assess the carbon storage and sequestration potential of all UK seas, as well as within Marine Protected Areas and it is hoped that the report will be available in summer 2023. We will use this information to inform our carbon sequestration plans".

The updated strategy is attached as Annex 2. Any additional information is highlighted in yellow within the document for ease of viewing.

Recommendations:

- 1) That the Cabinet approves the proposed recommended additions to the Net Zero Strategy:
 - To add interim targets (to 2030 and 2040) for the emissions the council has partial control over in the next action plan. This action plan will be written in 2024;
 - To add the emissions from home working to future carbon footprinting calculations;
 - To consider calculating emissions from staff commuting when resources become available to collate the more complicated data set;
 - To work with KCC on Local area energy planning to devise a plan for renewable energy across the district, where resources allow;
 - To set out a clear plan to ensure that all staff are educated on climate change.
- 2) That the Cabinet approves the Final Net Zero Strategy 2023;
- 3) That Cabinet continues to note that the strategy cannot be fully implemented without external funding being available, and agreed, in accordance with the pledge, to lobby external agencies and government.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

The addition of further targets and completion of further emission calculation can be met from existing resources and budgets. It is already acknowledged within the strategy that significant resources will be required to meet our objectives, and Council recognises the strategy cannot be fully implemented without external funding being made available.

Legal

The Climate Change Act 2008 places national targets on the reduction of emissions by 2050. The Council has powers to do anything an individual could, under the power of general competence in the Localism Act 2011. This includes taking steps to reduce Council emissions, which contribute to the local and national targets.

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy in the world to legislate binding targets to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Following this, TDC called a climate emergency and has committed to the pledge as set out above. The TDC Net Zero Strategy and action plan is the first step in TDC's journey to meeting these pledges.

Risk Management

It is important to address greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the serious risks of climate change that these emissions cause e.g. heatwaves, sea level rise, flash floods and societal disruption. This climate disruption will mean that some areas of the world will become uninhabitable and there could be considerable food insecurity worldwide.

The world has already experienced devastating fires in Australia and Greece, heat waves in North America and India, floods in Germany, melting ice caps and dying coral reefs. The past decade has contained the hottest years on record and this year the UK hit 40oC, showing that we need to act fast to avoid further severe impacts of climate change.

These risks are made clear in the IPCC's most recent report "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability" which assesses the impacts of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. It also reviews vulnerabilities, the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate change.

The Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway (CCRIA) was produced in 2019 by KCC; it describes the changes Kent might face, and the potential risks to Kent's society, economy and environment.

It explains:

"Understanding the potential future impacts of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers is crucial for future prosperity, environmental quality, and health and wellbeing of communities.

Based on the Met Office's UK Climate Projections (UKCP) for the south east, by 2080

- summers are likely to be hotter by around 5°C to 6°C
- winters are likely to be warmer by around 3°C to 4°C
- summer rainfall is likely to decrease by 30% to 50%
- winter rainfall is likely to increase by 20% to 30%
- sea level rise is likely to increase by 0.8m.

The impacts of climate change are likely to be felt acutely in Kent with its long, strategically important coastline, large number of properties at risk of flooding and warm summers compared with the rest of the United Kingdom. It is imperative that the impacts of climate change are considered alongside other drivers of change including economic fluctuations, population growth and demographic shifts.”

The risks of not acting, or delaying acting, on climate change will affect us all, but the poorest in society will suffer the greatest risk, for example, through the rising cost of food and the lack of financial resilience to disasters. If we do not act quickly, the risks of ecological breakdown and extreme heating will get worse. It is important that we address climate change now as a matter of fairness and equality.

The Stern Report demonstrated that the cost of doing nothing to combat climate change far exceeded the cost of tackling climate change. The cost of living crisis will not get better, but worse if we ignore this emergency. The benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting and so we will act now.

Corporate

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- To foster good relations between *people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*

An EIA was completed for the Net Zero Strategy and is attached. It is summarised below.

Climate change will disproportionately affect the poorest in society. These are over represented in certain protected characteristics e.g. young and old, female residents and the disabled.

Those more well off will be able to avoid some impacts of climate change whereas poorer members of the public will not have the financial resilience e.g. to move or to buy items to assist them during heat waves or floods.

The cost of living will increase due to climate change and so will cause further inequalities.

Food prices will increase in an unstable world, as will general day to day products.

Health inequalities already exist in Thanet and this will be tested as climate change causes various public health crises in the future.

Some new low carbon technologies e.g. electric cars and heat pumps are unaffordable for many residents currently. We will promote alternative ways to reduce emissions which do not cost any extra or that can be achieved through grants to ensure a fair transition.

How does the strategy, policy, service, project, activity or decision actively meet the public sector equality duties to:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination (including harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct)

The strategy does not negatively impact the groups identified in the Act.

As climate change affects resources, it is likely that people will compete for limited resources. This could increase discrimination between different groups in society. The strategy aims to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Likely increased migration to the UK and Thanet from countries with disrupted climates - impact on housing and resources.

Advance equality of opportunity (between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it)

The mitigation of climate change is essential for the advancement of equal opportunities.

Climate change will disproportionately affect the poorest in society, as well as those with disabilities and current ill health

Foster good relations (between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it). Could it have an adverse impact on relations between different diverse groups?

A world that avoids the worst of climate change will reduce the chance of social unrest and resource wars that would destabilise society and reduce current standard of living.

The net zero strategy aims to not only avoid the serious impacts of climate change but stimulate the economy and create a healthier society. For example, TDC will work with KCC

to increase employment within the housing retrofit sector. This will not only increase job opportunities but also produce warmer, more energy efficient homes. Net zero actions also reduces air pollution and encourages us to be healthier, by eating more fruit and vegetables and walking and cycling more.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Growth
- Environment
- Communities

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 There were 40 respondents to the full engagement survey, consisting of eight questions, and 32 respondents to the short survey, consisting of three questions. In general, respondents thought the strategy was easy to read and understand. Many respondents were positive toward the strategy, agreed with the pledge (below) and thought that the strategy and actions would be effective.

- **We pledge to do what is within our powers and resources to:**
- **make Thanet District Council net zero by 2030 in our core carbon footprint (this includes emissions we have direct control over e.g. the estates and activities that we own and manage)**
- **address emissions that Thanet District Council has partial control over (those outside of the core carbon footprint e.g. projects, procurement and social housing) reaching net zero as soon as possible, and by 2050 at the latest.**
- **support Kent County Council, the Government, business, industry and the community to make Thanet as a whole net zero by 2050**

1.2 As part of the engagement we received a large number of comments and suggestions which are summarised in Table 1 of the full report. The table also includes TDC's response to the comments. The main points are summarised as follows:

1.3 Some comments asked for further details on the route to net zero in our core carbon footprint. The full detail can be found in the [Carbon Reduction Plan](#) and clear links to this document will be created in relevant parts of the strategy for those who would like more information. There needs to be a balance between readability and detail in a public strategy and so this technical document was written separately.

1.4 With regards to the emissions TDC has partial control over e.g. projects, procurement and social housing, some respondents wanted to understand how they will be monitored to the year 2050 and requested interim targets. This has been added to the recommendations below. There were other comments around calculating emissions from home working and this has also been added to recommendations.

1.5 Some people suggested using seagrass and kelp to sequester carbon in our seas. Scientists will assess the carbon storage and sequestration potential of all UK seas,

as well as within Marine Protected Areas and the report will be available next summer. We will use this information to inform our carbon sequestration plans.

- 1.6 Respondents also asked for clarification around how the district wide emissions will be addressed by Kent County Council and Thanet District Council through the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emission Strategy. This information will be added to the final strategy.
- 1.7 With regards to Kent wide emissions, many people were concerned about those from transport and felt that the cuts in bus routes were not in line with this strategy. However, as they also understood, TDC does not control the bus services and so our influence here is limited. The strategy however points out that, within our resources, we will work with KCC on projects to encourage active travel and develop a cycling network in the district.
- 1.8 Many respondents were also concerned about new housing being built without solar pv and heat pumps as standard, as well concerns over building on agricultural land. As stated in the strategy, these emissions will be addressed in the local plan review where various approaches to net zero are being considered and these comments can be taken into consideration. The Government is gradually introducing measures from the Future Building Standard with a target of full implementation by 2024 in its progression to Net Zero.
- 1.9 With regards to building on agricultural land, unfortunately the only government stipulation currently is this: *Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.*
- 1.10 Some respondents stressed the need for government funding, as was pointed out within the strategy. Our pledge explains that we will 1) call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the targets possible, 2) continue to work with partners across the county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and 3) investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment.

Some also reiterated the point which was expressed in the strategy regarding affordability of electric cars and heat pumps and this needs to be addressed for a fair transition.

- 1.11 A number of respondents commented that a system change was necessary to reduce emissions from consumption, accounting for at least half of Thanet's carbon footprint. This includes emissions from the food that is eaten and the general purchases made in Thanet.
- 1.12 A clear plan to firstly educate TDC staff on climate change is necessary and will be added to the action plan. Many called for more public and community engagement in climate change education and action. This has been heard and will be acted upon within the resources available at TDC. For example, as set out in the strategy, we will

create an overarching Net Zero Communication Plan which will inform residents on climate change and help to enact the system change that is necessary. We will also aim to start a net zero community group forum in addition to the current sustainability forum group (which focuses on plastic and litter).

- 1.13 Respondents commented on the need for more renewable energy production in Thanet and Kent. Following this observation, it is recommended that a further action is added to priority 11: to work with KCC on local area energy plans to create a map of opportunity areas for renewable energy production throughout the district.

2.0 Proposed additions to the Draft Net Zero Strategy

- 2.1 **We will add interim targets (to 2030 and 2040) for the emissions we have partial control over in the next action plan. This action plan will be written in 2024.**

- **We will add the emissions from home working to future carbon footprinting calculations.**
- **We will consider calculating emissions from staff commuting when resources become available to collate the more complicated data set.**
- **We will add the following action to priority 11:
Work with KCC on Local area energy planning to devise a plan for renewable energy across the district, where resources allow.**
- **We will add the following action:
A clear plan will be set out to ensure that all staff are educated on climate change.**

- 2.2 Information/updates to be added to the strategy

2.3 Reaching net zero by 2030

The [TDC Carbon Reduction Plan](#) details the route to net zero by 2030 in our core carbon footprint. It can be found at the bottom of the Net Zero TDC webpage: www.thanet.gov.uk/netzero/

The emissions from our core carbon footprint will be calculated each year and compared to the carbon reduction plan as set out in the emissions reduction model in appendix D. This way we can gauge if we are on track and address any issues.

The UK report on seagrass and kelp carbon sequestration which will be released summer 2023 will be used to help devise a plan to offset our residual emissions.

2.4. Emissions within our partial control - updates since the draft strategy was written

TDC released their strategy for addressing emissions in the social housing we own in November 2022: [Journey to Net Zero](#). This includes the aim to make all social housing EPC C by 2030 and addresses a large percentage of the emissions within the TDC "partial control" footprint.

Work has also been carried out to calculate the emissions from our top 15 spends in our baseline year (2019-2020). This totalled approximately 3,500 tonnes of emissions

from a spend of approximately £21.5 million - a similar volume of emissions that is created directly from our core carbon footprint (~4,000 tonnes).

2.5 The study found that a large volume of emissions is emitted from construction projects. They have a higher carbon intensity per pound spend due to the nature of their supply chain activities. The specifications within the procurement of these types of projects should be targeted to reduce the emissions associated with our spend.

2.6 **Kent wide emissions**

Kent County Council is leading on much of the district wide emissions reduction work. The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and implementation plan can be found on their [website](#).

Climate change officers from each district in Kent (along with Medway) formally meet quarterly at the Climate Change Network (CCN) to share learning, exchange ideas, where possible identify shared approaches/joint projects, and receive and feed in to updates from KCC on the Kent and Medway wide implementation plan. In addition to these four formal meetings each year, the CCN meet more frequently for specific briefings and topic discussions, and as part of additional sub-groups, discuss areas like procurement, communications, taxi licensing and energy.

2.7 CCN feed upwards into the Kent and Medway Environment Group (KMEG), which also meets formally each quarter. This is a director level group that has strategic oversight of the implementation plan. It is chaired by Larissa Reed, Chief Executive at Swale, and has representation from all districts, KCC and Medway. It provides scrutiny, ensures the plan is staying on track and champions it corporately within each organisation.

2.8 An annual review of progress against the KCC implementation plan goes to KCC's Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, usually in June/July and is published on KCC's website. KMEG ultimately reports upwards to Joint Kent Chief Executives and Kent Leaders. SMART targets are being drawn up including emissions from housing, transport, business and communities. District wide emissions will have interim targets to 2025, 2030 and 2040.

2.6 **Monitoring**

The council's work on climate change will also be overseen by Climate Emergency UK who use the [council climate scorecard](#).

3.0 **Options:**

3.1 Approve the recommendations 1-3. This is the recommended option to move forwards with the strategy.

3.2 Do not approve the recommendations and offer an alternative approach. This is not recommended because we need to act swiftly in the climate emergency.

Contact Officer: Dr Hannah Scott. Climate Change Officer
Reporting to: Chris Blundell, Acting Deputy Chief Executive & S151 Officer

Annex List

Annex 1: [Net Zero Strategy public engagement feedback](#).

Annex 2: Draft Final Net Zero Strategy. Attached as a PDF.

Annex 3: [Draft Final Net Zero Action Plan](#)

Background Papers

Title: [Kent's changing climate - KCC Climate Change risk and impact assessment](#)

Title: [Climate Change Committee: the sixth carbon budget](#)

Title: [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell, Acting Deputy Chief Executive & S151 Officer

Legal: [Sameera Khan \(Interim Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer\)](#)