

Climate Change Strategy

2021 - 2030



Foreword

The climate crisis is one of the most significant issues to face our society, our environment and the planet. A global response is required to tackle it, at an international, national and local level - its down to every individual. What happens next is up to us and we all need to play our part to manage our impact on Earth.



Councillor Wendy Schmitt,
Cabinet Member for
Environment

We declared a climate emergency in 2019 to build on and step up the work the Council has already undertaken to reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to a changing climate.

Since the motion at full Council we have been working with representatives from the community to develop a new strategy and action plan building on our previous strategy.

We must all now take every action possible to prevent local and global changes to the climate before it is too late, we are at the tipping point and it is everyone's responsibility to do whatever they can to help protect our precious planet for generations to come.

As a Local Authority we need to change the way we deliver our services, as well as working in partnership with local organisations, partners and the wider community to minimise our District's environmental impact by reducing waste, carbon and pollution.

Feedback from public engagement

A public engagement exercise was carried out between May and July 2021, to hear the views of residents, businesses and stakeholders on our draft Climate Change Strategy.

Different engagement techniques were used to broaden the responses and feedback and to encourage people to participate in the engagement in a way that suited them.

An online survey asked direct questions about the themes and priorities, and a simulator asked people to apply scorings to approaches, which were weighted according to how much they would contribute to an overall reduction in carbon emissions.

Face to face engagement allowed more in depth conversations to better understand views, behaviours and barriers to tackling climate change and engagement with schools helped us to understand the thoughts and views of our younger generation.

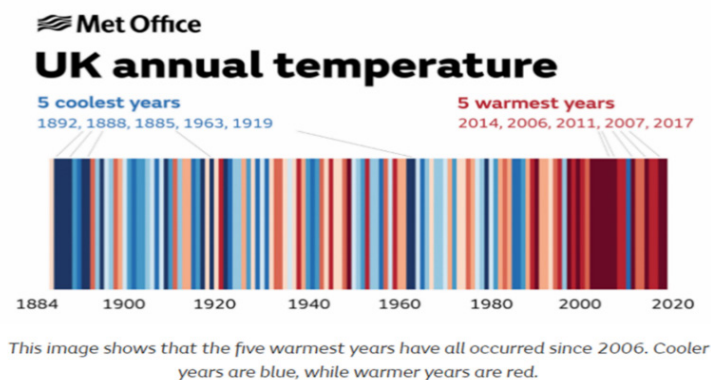
It was clear from all of the feedback received that people's awareness of climate change is high. It is also clear that the majority of our respondents did feel that we can all do more to tackle climate change and there were a number of differing views as to the best way to do this.

In developing the updated strategy, we have taken all of these views into account and tried to reflect the breadth of views that have been expressed through the engagement process. We have made changes to the themes and priorities and strengthened the commentary throughout the strategy. Our Action Plan has also been developed taking into account the feedback received.

Introduction

Our climate is changing, we have seen a rapid rise in greenhouse gas emissions and a trend towards increasing global average temperatures over the last century. As a result of the temperature increases, climatic events are increasing in severity, strength and regularity. The intensity and frequency of storms and rainfall, flooding and heatwaves is increasing.

Global temperatures are projected to continue rising, which is very likely to cause continued changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. These changes are reflected in the UK recorded temperatures, which are illustrated in the graph below.



As a result of this weather, seasons will become more variable with summers becoming hotter and drier, creating drought conditions with implications for growing crops and food and pressure on water supplies, milder and wetter autumn and winters, increasing flooding.

Changes to our climate will affect parts of our community and economy in different ways. For example, flooding may force residents and businesses out of their homes and premises or affect highways causing travel disruption.

The rural economy, including local agriculture may experience an impact on food yields and require different crop choices in our District.

There may also be less obvious indirect impacts on utilities. Power outages from increased storms could affect businesses, households and public services alike, causing disruption.

Throughout Earth's history the climate has always changed, with ecosystems and species coming and going. However, rapid climate change affects the ability of ecosystems and species to adapt and so biodiversity loss increases. Plant and animal species must either adapt or migrate to areas with more favourable habitats, and in some cases are lost altogether. Even small changes in average temperatures can have a significant effect upon ecosystems.

In 2015 the UK government joined 195 others from around the world and signed the Paris Agreement. The Agreement legally ratified a commitment to prevent average global temperature increasing by no more than 1.5 °C. In addition to the global agreement, the UK Government amended the Climate Change Act 2008 with a binding target of 'net zero' emissions by 2050.

The emerging Environment Bill 2020 sets out some of the policy changes that the government is seeking to make to support the UK's climate change objectives. This has been extensively consulted on but has been introduced to government during a period of significant change and uncertainty through the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been a delay in the progress of this Bill through parliament, and it is currently programmed for progression in Parliament in late 2021.

The pandemic has also had a significant impact on society and it is not yet clear what the long term implications of this will be on travel, working styles, consumer behaviour and choices, housing and wider public priorities. This is a developing picture at a national level and it is likely to affect where the most positive environmental impacts can be made.

Braintree District Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in July 2019 and announced a target to be carbon neutral as a Council by 2030, as well as supporting our communities to reduce the impacts of climate change across the Braintree District.

Building on our first strategy dated 2015, the Council has taken a different approach to developing this strategy, with more of an external District wide focus to enable all of us across the District to contribute towards its aims, objectives and actions. A Climate Change Working Group with people from our communities, businesses and the voluntary sector was established to influence and contribute to shaping the key elements of the strategy and the Action Plan.

The group recognised the need to embrace national and local plans e.g. Environment Bill 2020 and Essex Climate Action Commission and that with a flexible and partnership approach we can make the best use of our collective resources and data. The delay to the Environment Bill means that rather than the Bill informing the District strategy as was originally intended, we had to consult on the strategy based on our assumptions of the outcomes of the Bill, where possible, and we will review when the Bill has been agreed.

This strategy sets out the direction of travel to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. It will need to be reviewed and adapted over this time as the national and international agenda evolves. The strategy has also been developed to complement existing and emerging strategies that have significant overlap, including the Local Plan, District Growth Strategy, Corporate Strategy and Cycling Strategy.



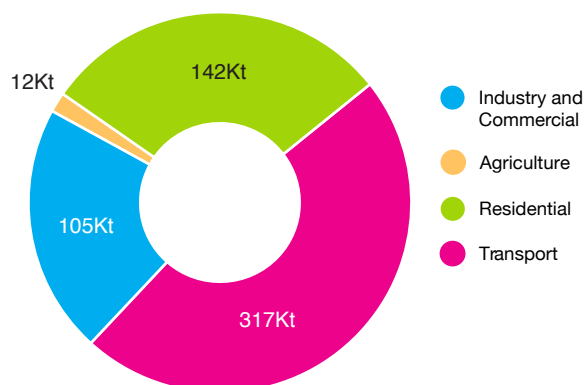
Progress on reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change

Since 2005, domestic and commercial carbon emissions have reduced in the District due to changes in vehicle fuel efficiency, domestic insulation, heating and lighting, energy efficiency improvements to industrial processes and the introduction of renewable energy.

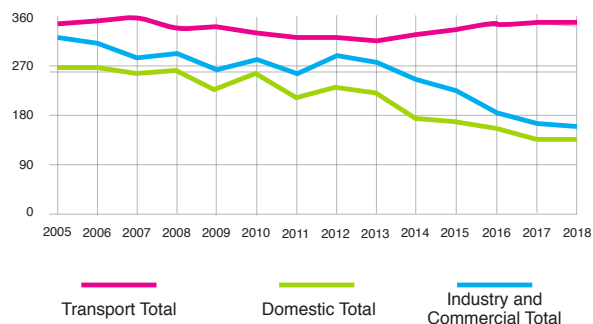
The make-up of our Carbon emissions gives us an understanding of where attention needs to be focussed to make the biggest impact.

District wide sources of Carbon Dioxide emissions (KT CO₂)

The Government produces area based CO₂ emissions measured in Kilo Tonnes (Kt). This pie chart and graph show that in the Braintree District, in order to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030, there would need to be a reduction of 576Kt of CO₂. Please see breakdown below.



Levels of carbon dioxide emissions in our District (KT CO₂) since 2005



As part of the previous Climate Change Strategy and emission reduction targets, the Council has also recorded its own direct emissions those created from the energy it consumes and indirect emissions. Since 2005, the Council has reduced its own emissions from 6455 tonnes down to 3281 tonnes CO₂ per annum, and we aim for our Council activities to be carbon neutral by 2030.

To date we have delivered, and worked with others to deliver a range of initiatives and projects to mitigate the impacts of climate change across the District and reduce carbon emissions. Some of these achievements of this are set out below.



Energy Conservation

- Installed 8,700 energy saving measures including boilers, domestic solar installations, cavity wall and loft installation resulting in 1,000 tonnes of carbon saved.
- 14,689 residents registered for energy switching to green tariffs resulting in 710 tonnes of carbon saved



Council Assets and Operations

- 0.5MW solar panels installed on local authority owned buildings generating £100k/pa combined income and saving.
- Installed 30 secondary double glazed units, replaced 150 light bulbs and replaced gas boiler with an A rated replacement at Grade 2* listed Town Hall saving 15 tonnes of CO₂ emissions since 2014.
- Total Household Waste collected 2010-2020 571,455 tonnes.
- Total Household Waste recycled 2010-2020 301,939 tonnes.
- Total Percentage recycled 2010-2020 52.84%.



Transport

- Installed electric car chargers in car parks across the District.
- Cycle scheme - 70 participants purchased bikes through the scheme.
- Provision of secure bike storage at Causeway House and Lakes Road.
- Provision of electric bike for staff use.
- Since 2015 we have saved 858 tonnes of CO₂ in business travel.





Resources

- Since 2005 1,252 tonnes of CO₂ have been saved through the reduction of our gas consumption.
- Since 2005 600 tonnes of CO₂ have been saved through the reduction of our electricity use.



Natural Environment

- Flood alleviation schemes – Foxearth, Steeple Bumpstead, Williams Drive - Braintree, Forest Road - Witham.
- Habitat creation and improvements to increase biodiversity in BDC woodlands and local nature reserves and open spaces– Hoppit Mead, Bocking Blackwater, Cuckoo Wood, Coggeshall Pieces and Halstead River Walk
- Continuous tree, bulb and hedge planting across the District, including the Millennium and Jubilee Oaks projects, Bee Friendly Plant Giveaway, community tree planting projects, urban tree planting projects and support for the Essex Forest project and Essex Forest schools



Education, engagement and encouraging behavioural change

- Within our offices, stopped use of 22,000 single use plastic cups per year and reduced paper consumption.
- Provided educational talks to schools on waste and recycling
- Delivered
 - ‘Shop local’ and ‘click it local’ campaigns to encourage people to shop more locally, support local businesses and reduce carbon footprint
 - ‘Say no to plastic’ campaign to encourage people to reuse plastic and opt for items without plastic packaging when shopping
 - Love Essex Plastic Pledge – 2,067 households signed up to take the pledge to reduce their reliance on single use plastic
 - Various littering campaigns to reduce the amount of car litter, fly tips, dog fouling, littering in parks and open spaces by highlighting fines given out for litter offences
 - Love food, hate waste campaigns providing food tips to keep food fresher, lasting longer and saving it from going in the bin
 - Winter Warmth campaigns to ensure vulnerable people stay safe, well and warm during the colder months
- Provided an electrical items recycling service, historically through library collections and more recently through kerbside bulky waste collections
- Promoted Freegle to encourage reuse of items instead of throwing them away



Business and the Green Economy

- The LoCase programme has supported 39 businesses in the District receiving a total of £238,021 to implement energy efficiency measures.
- The Council collected 457 tonnes of recycling from 363 local businesses last year
- Supporting businesses to develop Green Travel Plans
- Investment in I-Construct to provide a regional centre for excellence in innovation and construction



Adapting to Climate Change

- Community risk – more than 50% of parish Councils have developed parish emergency plans.
- Emergency Planning – Multi-agency flood plan. Emergency plans for severe weather in place.



Purpose of Strategy



The Climate Change Working Group recognises the role of the Council, the wider community and multiple partner organisations in delivering the objectives. Everyone has responsibilities and by working together our individual and collective contributions will help to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Some members of the Climate Change Working Group have participated in the Essex Climate Action Commission and are monitoring progress of the Environment Bill 2020, as our strategy will need to align to these to ensure maximum impact. We have been mindful of this when considering our action plans for delivery.

An initial investment of £500k has been made by the District Council to support the delivery of this strategy. Individual business cases will be required to approve funding for the various projects, with some being delivered in conjunction with partners which will attract external/new funding opportunities. This District wide strategy recognises the important contribution that everyone can make including our partners, communities and businesses.



Themes and Priorities

A number of themes have emerged through the development of this strategy and engagement with our communities. Each of these themes has key priorities that will support the delivery of our overall objectives which follows through to our initial action plan.

The key themes of the strategy are:



Resources

Priorities



We must reduce our impact on the world's natural resources, with a focus on fair and sustainable production and consumption by reusing or repurposing where possible. We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by the production of goods and services and carefully manage the waste we produce.

Our current consumption patterns should be reduced and adapted, particularly our consumption of carbon-intensive products and activities and to re-use and repair items we already have rather than replace them.

Where carbon emissions cannot be completely eliminated, viable offsetting alternatives need to be available for organisations and businesses to support them to reduce their emissions to zero. The Council can play an active role in facilitating both access to carbon offsetting and supporting the development of local offsetting businesses.

In the transition to the low carbon economy the Council must play an active role in supporting local food producers and local material/product manufacturers. Residents and businesses should have more opportunities and be encouraged to source local products and to reduce their need to purchase products with single use packaging where possible.

As a waste collection authority, our role in the reduce, reuse and recycling of materials gives us the opportunity to support consumers and businesses to make better choices about their purchasing and disposal options and this needs to form a core part of our engagement plan.

Whilst the Council has control of the collection of waste, responsibility for disposal is Essex County Council's (Waste Disposal Authority). As members of the Essex Waste Management Partnership Board we will continue to work with them and other Councils across Essex to encourage the most environmentally sustainable options for the future processing and treatment of residual waste.

There will be changes to the way that that resources and waste are managed through the Environment Bill and this needs to be monitored over the months ahead to ensure speedy and effective implementation of the relevant parts of the Bill when it is passed.



Energy Conservation

Priorities

REDUCE ENERGY
USE & IMPROVE
ENERGY EFFICIENT
INFRASTRUCTURE

INCREASE
PROPORTION OF
ENERGY FROM
RENEWABLE
SOURCES

IMPROVE
ENERGY
PERFORMANCE
OF EXISTING
HOUSING

The energy we use has a significant impact on our environment. Fossil fuels are non-renewable and the burning of fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide and other gases into the air. This causes visible issues such as pollution as well as contributing towards global warming. Energy conservation is something that everyone can contribute to by limiting the amount of energy that they use as well as ensuring that as much of that energy as possible is derived from renewable sources.

Heating buildings and hot water currently accounts for nearly 25% of District wide carbon emissions. At least 65% of this heat is supplied by gas, 25% from oil and about 10% from electricity (including storage heating).

Since 2005 Braintree District Council has halved its own carbon emissions from 6455 tonnes down to 3281 tonnes CO₂ by upgrading the energy efficiency of its estate, policy change and investment in the delivery of services and introducing significant renewable solar technology on buildings and installing EV charging infrastructure across its sites. The Council continues to work to reduce emissions to zero and share best practice when trialling new green technology.

To support our District to conserve energy, the Council must build on existing engagement programmes to actively support households, landlords and businesses in identifying and implementing practical ways to reduce energy used and find carbon neutral or reduced carbon alternatives for energy that is consumed. As alternative energy and energy efficient products move into the mainstream they are becoming more accessible and affordable making it easier to transition.

Some initiatives will require engagement at a national level to ensure that regulations, powers and subsidy regimes are provided which support the phase out of fossil fuel energy. There will be a need to increase awareness and to encourage uptake of emerging technologies, supporting residents to access opportunities for funding.

An increased reliance on the electricity network in the future will require local and national electricity structure to be upgraded and operated more smartly to serve higher demand. Local micro-generation and storage systems need to be better integrated to the grid, or permitted to operate independently to the grid to reduce cost and deployment friction and encourage uptake.



Built Environment

Priorities

REDUCE THE CARBON IMPACT AND IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS

REDUCE ENERGY USE IN EXISTING HOUSING BY RETROFITTING ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES

REDUCE HOUSEHOLD WATER CONSUMPTION AND MAXIMISE INSTALLATION OF SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS, WATER REUSE AND GREY WATER HARVESTING TECHNOLOGIES

Reducing the carbon impact of our homes and ensuring that future communities are sustainable will be a major contributor to the reduction of our impact on the climate. Communities need to be designed to fit in with and enhance the environment, whilst creating a good place to live and improving the health and wellbeing of residents.

Between 2013 and 2033 the District must build over 14,000 new homes, and the locations for these can be found in the new Local Plan. When the Environment Bill is enacted, it is likely that there will be a requirement for all new developments to deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain of 110%.

One of the biggest priorities in the emerging Local Plan is the position of development. Locating this within walking and cycling distance of new infrastructure networks will enable residents to meet their everyday needs without long journeys.

Retrofitting our existing homes will ensure our current buildings will have better energy and water performance, cutting water and heating demand and therefore carbon, and will support the target to eliminate fuel poverty and end the risk of anyone having to live in a cold home.

Engagement will be required with housing developers, households and businesses across the District to develop an awareness and understanding of modern construction, planning considerations and the implications of the new planning reforms. A particular focus will be required on those experiencing fuel poverty, with tailored support services and funding opportunities identified for home upgrades.

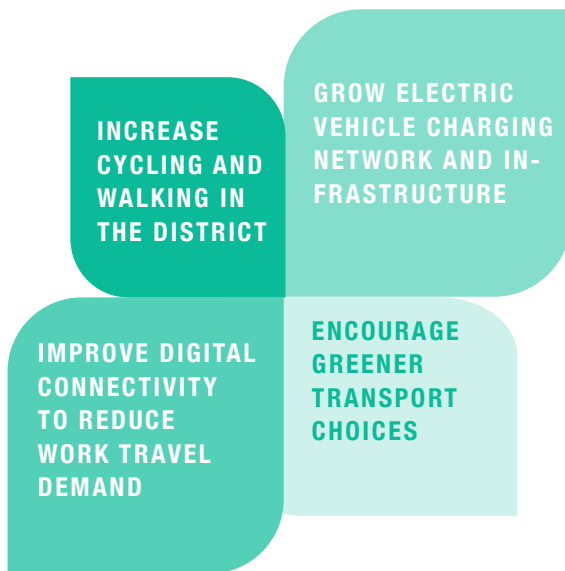
Planning functions are a key lever in reducing emissions and adapting localities to a changing climate. We will make use of our planning and building powers to require higher energy efficient standards and design standards in new builds and extensions, where we are allowed to do so through national policy.

It will be important to engage and influence Government on the introduction of powers and regulations to drive high energy efficiency, water efficiency and climate resilience standards for existing buildings, supporting improvements in the domestic and non-domestic private rented sectors.

As a Council, we need to continue to respond to changes which could impact our environment, but which are outside of our control. The Council shares some of the concerns of residents about the new incinerator being built in the District and it's potential carbon contribution. Whilst it has no direct control over the plans to build the incinerator, Braintree District Council will continue to engage on behalf of residents with the site owner, with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority and the Environment Agency to ensure that the site is built and operated within its permitted limits.

Transport

Priorities



Currently 47% of the District's carbon emissions are transport related. The number of vehicles on the roads needs to reduce, with more people using public transport, walking and cycling instead of using private cars. This would positively impact peoples' health and provides an opportunity to minimise emissions, reduce congestion and improve local air quality.

Public transport needs to be accessible, reliable, safe and affordable to encourage greater use. Modal change hubs where the public switch from one form of transport to another need to be accessible. Although Braintree District Council is not responsible for highways or transport, we will work with Essex County Council to transform our infrastructure in favour of active transport. We also need to support Government plans to phase out petrol and diesel powered vehicles,

converting to electric for most vehicles and biogas or hydrogen for some larger vehicles like buses, lorries, tractors and other plant. A significant electric vehicle charging infrastructure will be required across the District and being the District with the first all-electric forecourt in the country, we have a good example of what can be achieved. We will also need an extensive cycle/walking network that is easy to use and our cycling strategy will set out how we plan to create cycling networks in both rural and urban areas, secure funding and promote cycling.

Locating sustainable transport facilities near to work and homes will increase the opportunity for people to choose alternative means of travel to a private car. Increasing the ability for people to work from home on a long term basis will reduce the need for journeys.

This climate change strategy is aligned with our cycling strategy, which seeks to make Braintree a leader in cycling provision, to make it safer and more attractive for a greater number of people to cycle more frequently.

We know that our transport system is vulnerable to future climate change flood events, as well as impacts of high temperatures, through melting tarmac or contorted railway tracks. By its nature, transport is a cross-boundary issue and we will need to work with other statutory undertakers and providers to reduce carbon emissions from transport, as well as mitigate the impacts of climate change on our transport infrastructure.



Business & the Green Economy

Priorities



The UK's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050 will increase demand for low carbon environmental goods and services, both within the District and beyond and will also require businesses to reduce their carbon footprint. This area of growth in the green sector has the potential to enhance the local economy. The Council has an essential role in creating the conditions for growth and attracting sustainable, environmentally responsible low carbon businesses and skilled workers to the District.

The continued growth of a cross cutting green technology sector is one which the Council will seek to facilitate. We will support green projects for inward investment, attract grant funding and capitalize on green growth opportunities across all industry sectors, from house-building and infrastructure to low carbon technology, as well as setting an example through the commercial buildings we own and operate, sharing our expertise and knowledge with local businesses.

I-Construct is a regional centre for excellence in innovation in construction and is the first part of that programme. It will support the District's important construction and infrastructure sector to share innovations and showcase new construction processes and products, provide training opportunities to upgrade knowledge and skills and share best practice across the sector. We will work with partners to ensure the impact of this project and other similar schemes is maximised for our businesses.

With almost a third of carbon emissions coming from heating there will need to be engagement with low carbon generation and heating businesses to promote the District as an attractive operating environment with favourable opportunities for product development and trade.

We will work with key local partners and businesses to support innovation and entrepreneurship and the sharing of technical knowledge, foster partnerships, offer incentives and support for local businesses to operate on a sustainable model and commit to becoming carbon neutral.

The Council has worked with businesses in the past to access grant schemes that help them become more efficient and carbon neutral and will continue to work with businesses to access these national or regional schemes.

Training will be needed to support new technology implementation. There is an opportunity to work with training providers, businesses and further education establishments to increase skills and attract businesses associated with this sector into the District.

Whilst it may not currently be possible for all organisations to eliminate 100% of carbon emissions, this can be supplemented by high quality and verifiable carbon offsetting. This is an area that the Council could provide a role in facilitating between those organisations who want to invest in offsetting measures and those who have schemes and projects that provide an offsetting opportunity.

This could also help develop new low-carbon income streams for carbon positive rural businesses that can offer surplus carbon credits generated from carbon sequestration* (e.g. following tree planting or land use activities) whilst also assisting local firms with unavoidable emissions to achieve net zero. Offsets trading should be considered as an interim measure, as by 2050 it is anticipated that the necessity for carbon trading falls to a low level due to technological advances allowing significant reductions in 'unavoidable' emissions.

*Carbon sequestration - is the long-term removal, capture or sequestration of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to slow or reverse atmospheric CO₂ pollution and to mitigate global warming.



Natural Environment

Priorities



Protecting the natural environment is a priority that will not only deliver benefits for climate change but will also impact positively on the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of residents. Access to green open spaces has been continually identified by our residents as one of their key priorities in making the District a good place to live.

Developing, protecting and enhancing green infrastructure and the natural environment will also help protect urban and rural environments against the impacts of climate change. Amongst other things, it will help improve surface drainage, reducing flood risk, storing and cleaning water and reducing the urban heat island effect. By planting more trees and increasing canopy cover, not only will we create an improvement in our green spaces, we will also create an opportunity to capture and store carbon.

Climate change can spread pests, diseases and non-native invasive species so biological and environmental diversity provides a degree of resilience for natural systems.

We all need to limit the damage caused to natural habitats and wildlife by climate change, whilst also supporting opportunities for recovery and protection of species. Developing our blue and green infrastructure and increasing the network of natural and semi-natural areas across the District, will increase the range of ecosystems in both rural and urban settings. The Local Plan sets out the allocation and protection of a range of open spaces and important natural features to support this priority, as well as how we can adapt our blue and green infrastructure to support the natural environment.

Gardens form a significant part of our natural environment and residents can make changes in their gardens, which collectively can make a large impact on biodiversity.

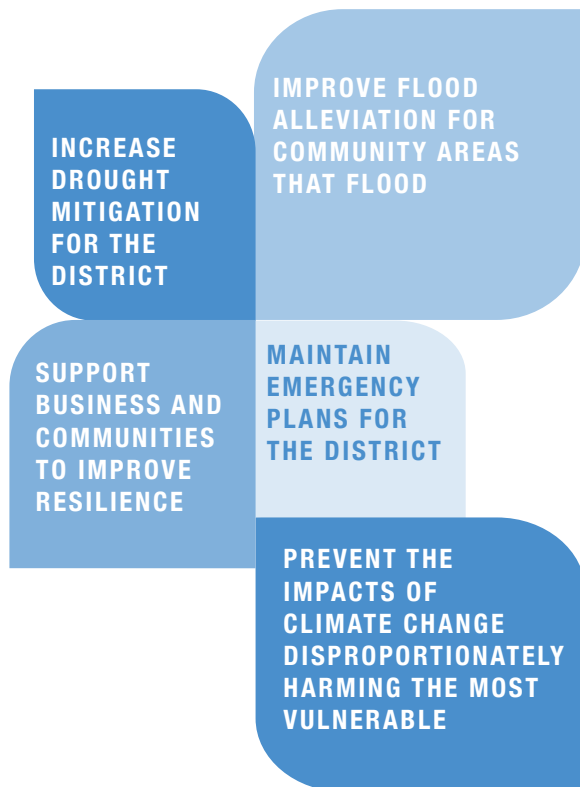
We will build on the already strong network of volunteers including our Green Heart Champions, Friends of groups, volunteer tree wardens and community groups, identifying Climate Change Ambassadors and working with these individuals and groups to support them to make a difference to the place they live, enabling and empowering everyone to play their part.

Existing and new partnerships can support the implementation of changes to enhance our natural environment and help to implement the outcomes of the Environment Bill 2020, including any around Biodiversity Net Gain.



Adapting to Climate Change

Priorities



Whilst the majority of our Climate Change Strategy focusses on mitigating our impact on the climate, we know that the climate is already changing and residents and businesses need support to adapt to this change.

In our Emergency and Resilience Planning role, we have a direct responsibility to consider how we can support and work with all of our communities. We will build community resilience through supporting behaviour change and partnership working. Communities should feel

empowered to take action, understanding the part they play and inspiring people to develop the skills they need to lead on initiatives. A number of Parish and Town Councils have their own emergency plans to plan for and respond to events, and homeowners have put their own mitigation measures in place. We will need to continue to provide emergency planning advice and support to Town/Parish Councils with their own emergency plans.

Flooding has become an increased risk that our communities face and it is important to continue working with the lead flooding agencies, to ensure that communities are protected from flooding as much as possible. As a Council, we will work with partners to ensure that the District becomes resilient to flooding through a variety of measures from large catchment flow schemes to sustainable drainage systems.

We recognise the role that the changing climate plays on health issues, from the impact of heatwaves to increases in diseases and the stress caused by flood damage to homes and businesses. There is also a risk that climate change will impact disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our society, increasing inequalities. This can include long term health impacts and fuel poverty. We will continue to develop our understanding of the health impacts of climate change and work with partners through our Health and Wellbeing panel to respond to these.

Essex Resilience Forum and other community based partnerships will enable more efficient use of resources and will increase resilience enabling us to protect services for the most vulnerable.



Delivering the strategy

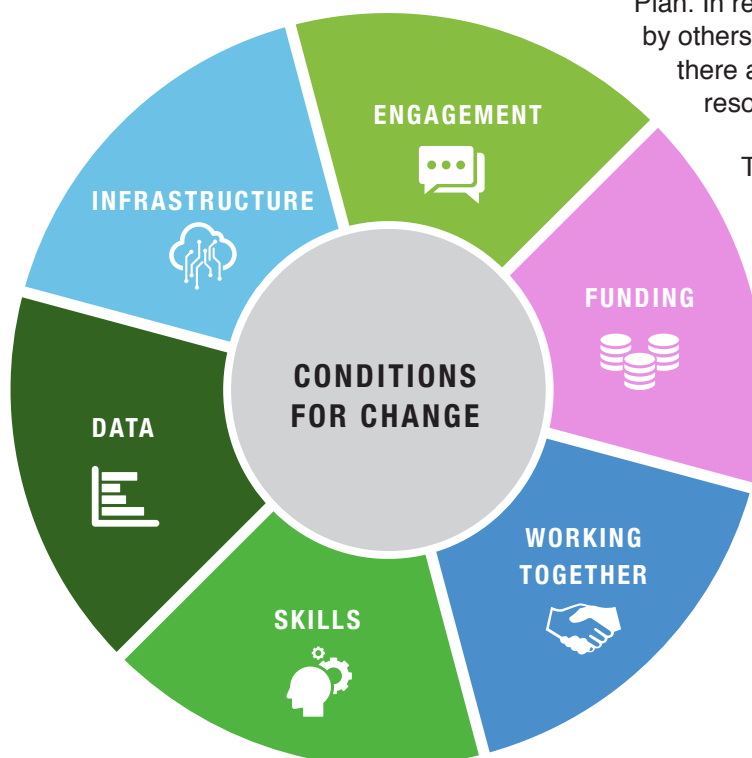
This strategy sets out the community wide shared priorities for almost a decade of transformative climate action.

Braintree District Council, along with our Climate Change Working Group and the Essex Climate Action Commission are bringing partners together to provide collective leadership on climate change.

Many people and businesses are already taking action individually, in communities or through various networks. This will need to continue and scale up. People's individual actions are extremely important, both in direct emissions reduction and in bringing about the changes we need to achieve our goals.



In order to maintain governance, accountability, support and coordination within wider networks, Braintree District Council, and the Climate Change Working Group will continue to provide direction and maintain an overview of the delivery of the strategy. They will also contribute to and support the ongoing development of the Action Plan. In respect of those actions to be delivered by others, including our partners, it is essential there are sufficient staff and financial resources available to deliver actions.



The pace and scale of change for us to deliver the aims and objectives of this strategy by 2030 requires a step change to the previous work undertaken by the Council and its partners, as well as our communities.

The following conditions for change have been highlighted throughout our strategy and will need to be developed to ensure successful delivery of our objectives

Engagement

Many people are already taking action as individuals and communities, and they support changes which would help them to reduce carbon emissions. We need to continue to support our communities to engage, feel empowered and to have the tools, capacity and the opportunity to contribute to the overall climate change objectives.

To ensure that the changes are fair and socially encompassing, unintended negative consequences must be minimised so that change is accessible and possible for all.

In order to support and enable further individual and community action, development of a communication and engagement plan with buy-in from all delivery partners will be essential. This must include plans to ensure that we reflect the views of a wide range of groups. We will also develop approaches to engage with harder to reach groups and our urban and rural communities.



Much work has already taken place at individual and community level. We will work with all partners who have declared, or want to declare, a climate emergency or made public climate change commitments, supporting them to develop plans.

Funding



To achieve the objectives of this strategy, substantial investment will be needed at an international, national and local level, particularly in relation to infrastructure projects and long term programmes, such as the move away from fossil fuel heating systems and investment in sustainable transport solutions.

Expenditure in carbon reduction can often deliver savings, which will help to demonstrate effective business cases for change. As a District Council, we can seek out and identify innovative and collaborative ways to finance climate change programmes and support partners who require investment to realise projects that will contribute towards objectives. More widely, people and businesses across the District can influence funding through personal spending choices and collectively there will be a need to engage nationally with government and business to support wide scale investment into the green economy.

Working Together

To ensure that we can make the maximum impact, we all need to work together. We will need to deliver our own actions, whilst engaging at a local level with residents, businesses, community groups and others to ensure that they feel empowered and able to play their part. At the same time, we will all need to influence others at a local and national level to create the right laws, policies and programmes that support this.

The climate change response is happening alongside other key priorities in the District that need to be delivered, including sustainable economic growth, community resilience and connectivity. This strategy needs to address the interconnectivity of these priorities and seek to find ways to achieve the combined objectives. To achieve a fair transition and make change affordable for all we will need systemic market changes. This will require barriers to change to be addressed and initiate a shift in favour of climate mitigation and adaptation interventions.



Skills



The Green economy creates a great opportunity to increase employment. We need to support everyone to be able to make choices which reduce carbon emissions or increase climate resilience. We also need to transform the way in which our decisions are made, empowering everyone with the skills, knowledge and capacity to support the implementation of climate friendly initiatives.

In particular, we recognise that the skills and capacity in the construction industry to deliver the scale and pace required. We need to make sure we support the uptake of solutions that support our local economy and businesses.

We need the right skills and resources. We also need to enable effective ways of connecting our skilled workforce with those with a demand for skills. To do this we will seek out and support innovation and share best practice with wider networks, emphasising the importance of investment in schemes like I-Construct. It will also be important to link with Further Education providers, including Colchester Institute who are likely to deliver much of the training required in the construction and technology sector.

We need to integrate training and the requirements for carbon neutral and climate resilient related knowledge into Further Education, apprenticeships and job roles across all of our priority areas. There will also be a need for ongoing carbon literacy training for local authority officers and staff in other organisations to ensure that those delivering services and taking decisions have the most up to date knowledge and information to support them to understand the climate impact of their services.

Data



Evidence and validation will be required to develop our action plans, ensuring that we invest in the most effective actions to achieve carbon neutrality and climate resilience. Without good data we cannot be sure we are focusing on the key issues and it is difficult to measure our progress. Therefore we need to establish baselines and set targets to allow monitoring and evaluation to take place.

Some of the national data has a significant time lag until we receive it, which will require us to identify other data sources to support our monitoring and decision making.

We want to be able to share knowledge and data with other local authorities and partner organisations to share our understanding and learning from both successes and opportunities for improvement. Given the urgency of the challenge, we need to work with our current data and evidence, then adapt our approach as we learn more. For some priorities we have good data and knowledge about the challenge and the actions which are needed, others we need to explore more.

We need to make sure we have the right data and information to support the decisions that will support action. We also need to know more about regional climate scenarios so that we can plan using the most up to date climate projections. A key priority to support the delivery of this strategy will be development of an impact assessment tool to identify, capture, monitor and report the impacts of climate change in our District.

Infrastructure

Successful delivery of the strategy will be reliant on infrastructure. The way that infrastructure is managed and maintained will be important in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Aligned to this, will be investment in new or updated infrastructure, in terms of heat, electricity and transport, to meet our strategic goals. Walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure, as well as charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, or other zero carbon fuels will support a number of priorities set out in the strategy.

Infrastructure can protect homes and businesses from flooding. This includes grey infrastructure, such as flood walls and rain water storage, but also where natural solutions such as leaky dams and reinstated flood plains could be implemented to support flood protection while providing urban cooling, environmental and health and wellbeing benefits. We will need to develop our ICT and communications infrastructure to enable the use of technologies.

We will need to support UKPN to understand future local demand for electricity and to develop a clear plan for investing in upgrades required to the electricity distribution grid. Continued engagement with ECC and Environment Agency on flood defence projects, development with ECC of countywide plan for electric vehicle charging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure will be important. We will also need to continue to work with developers to implement flood mitigation technology and green infrastructure in developments.



Action Plan

The action plan has been informed by the engagement process for the strategy. It will build on the reductions in District emissions that have already been achieved in partnership with Government, regional agencies, local businesses, organisations and communities and residents.

The action plan sets out work stream actions by Braintree District Council and partners, including work by community groups and will be regularly reviewed to stay abreast of changes in emissions, external influences such as national policy and legislation, and the measures available.

The initial plan will have projects and initiatives to deliver wider sustainable development, provide sustainable transport infrastructure, improve air quality, protect biodiversity and habitats and promote and improve environmental stewardship, reduce fuel poverty and improve the standard of housing.

The action plan will be a living document. We will revise our plans as the climate and environmental emergency develops, targets are met, funding becomes available and new technologies emerge.

At this stage, the carbon impact of delivering the actions has not been fully quantified. Further, detailed work is required in order to produce a more definite assessment of the carbon reduction of each action in the plan. In an attempt to provide a high-level estimation, a carbon impact scale has been incorporated into the plan. This method will help identifying those actions that are likely to have the highest carbon reduction contribution and also those actions that will be more complex to quantify for various reasons. The carbon impact will be updated with specific figures as and when further work is undertaken and they can be calculated more accurately. Actions have been separated out into short, medium and longer term as well as ongoing actions throughout the life of the strategy.

Actions will link into other strategies including the District Growth Strategy and further develop the green economy in the District through the development of new green sector skills and jobs, and will link to our Livewell programme to improve health and adapt to the impacts of climate change with stronger, more resilient, communities.

Projects will be reviewed through a business case process to ensure value for money, significant carbon saving and ability to deliver sustainable change.

Measuring and Monitoring

For the Council and the wider District to become zero carbon and climate resilient, progress must be measured.

Carbon emissions across the District are currently calculated each year by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy who release local authority wide carbon emissions data (there is always a two-year lag in the publication of each year's data e.g. 2020 data will not be published until 2022).

Therefore this strategy will require other outcome and output measures to monitor the success of interventions to determine which actions offer best value for money and provide the widest co-benefits in a timely manner.

We already have an organisation baseline provided by the annual carbon reduction monitoring reports. The Council also maintains its Emergency and Business Continuity Plans. We will continue to monitor progress against this evidence base.

We will develop performance measures for mitigation and resilience action covering both outputs (what is delivered through actions) and outcomes (the difference made by the outputs).

Some actions such as biodiversity improvement, adaptation measures or education engagement campaigns are essential to change behaviours and mind sets, but it is difficult to measure the direct contribution these make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions or improving the natural environment. For these interventions, qualitative outputs and outcomes will be a primary means of measurement.







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