

## Notice of Meeting

### Climate Change Advisory Panel

Councillors Dr Barnard, Mrs Hayes MBE, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Leake, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, Mossom, Parker, Virgo and Temperton

### Non-Voting Co-optees

Councillor John Harrison  
Councillor Chris Turrell

**Wednesday 8 June 2022, 6.30 - 8.30 pm**

**Online Meeting - via Zoom**



## Agenda

Item	Description	Page
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Reporting: ALL	
2.	<b>Election of Chairman</b> Reporting: ALL	
3.	<b>Appointment of Vice-Chairman</b> Reporting: ALL	
4.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	<p>Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p>Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.</p> <p>Any Member with an affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.</p> <b>Reporting: ALL</b>	
5.	<b>Minutes</b>	1 - 4
	<p>To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change Panel on 25 April 2022.</p> <b>Reporting: ALL</b>	
6.	<b>Urgent Items of Business</b>	

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS**

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	Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent. <b>Reporting:</b> Harry Rigg	
7.	<b>Countryside Partnerships presentation on Climate Change : Pathfinder - Marking out the route to net zero.</b>	Verbal Report
	To receive a presentation from Percy Mullany, Robert MacDiarmid, Daniel King and Mike Woolliscroft of Countryside Partnerships. <b>Reporting:</b> Sarah Holman	
8.	<b>Annual report on Climate Change Strategy</b>	5 - 46
	To present the Annual Report on the Climate Change Strategy for Full Council 13 July 2022 <b>Reporting:</b> Damian James	
9.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
	The date of the next Climate Change Advisory Panel is 29 September 2022. <b>Reporting:</b> Harry Rigg	

Sound recording, photographing, filming and use of social media is permitted. Please contact Hannah Harding, 01344 352308, hannah.harding@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, so that any special arrangements can be made.

Published: 26 May 2022

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION INSTRUCTIONS**

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**CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY PANEL  
25 APRIL 2022  
6.30 - 8.45 PM**

**Present:**

Councillors Virgo, Mrs Hayes MBE, Mrs Ingham, Leake and Temperton

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, Mossom and Turrell

**40. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**41. Minutes**

The minutes of the Climate Change Advisory Panel meeting held on 9 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

Arising from the minutes it was noted that:

- A note had been circulated to update members on cycleways from Highways and Transport.
- A change in maintenance to leave long grass under trees was now happening.
- An engagement event was being held with schools on climate change on 6 May 2022.

**42. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

**43. A presentation from Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) - Matthew Stanton**

Matthew Stanton from Berkshire, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) attended the meeting to present on the charity's work.

Matthew introduced the Trust's Wilder conversation strategy, which aimed to help wildlife and the climate crisis to work on connectivity between habitats and support people to access the natural works. COVID had highlighted the importance of nature to people in the UK, however this interest needed good management to allow for greater access.

BBOWT agreed with the Government's aspiration to see 30% of land well-managed for nature by 2030. This included thinking wider than BBOWT's own nature reserves and considering how other partners' landscapes could be developed for wildlife to thrive. Matthew explained the change in approach to habitat management from the traditional small oasis of nature reserves to nature recovery networks which identified areas most important to nature for protection.

Matthew explained that BBOWT would be well placed to assist local planning authorities in their development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies which would be developed at county level with one local authority acting as the lead. Buckinghamshire had recently completed a pilot project with DEFRA.

Matthew highlighted a few key projects for BBOWT, including a wild verges project to create a network of wildlife friendly corridors along road verges, and the meadows for climate initiative which focussed on the creation of floodplain meadows.

While BBOWT was a small organisation with few employees, Matthew highlighted that there were thousands of volunteers and the trust aimed to get everyone inspired.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- BBOWT were assessing their land management processes to adapt for the changing climate, including periods of heavy rain and drought. Some of this work would include opening up floodplain meadows to allow rivers to flood.
- BBOWT had an interactive map available to see areas of potential across the region.
- While BBOWT had a suite of projects available with proven success, it would require partnership and enthusiasm from the Council to take on these projects.
- Matthew highlighted the importance of local policy and how local policies could support biodiversity and nature corridors within new developments. Matthew encouraged the Council to investigate biodiversity net gain and to have a policy in place for how net gain should be spent.
- Members invited Matthew and BBOWT to attend the Green Minds Green Lives event with secondary schools.

**44. A presentation from Bracknell Forest Council's Natural Estate - Stephen Chown - Head of Natural Estates**

Stephen Chown, Head of Natural Estates at Bracknell Forest Council presented on the work the Council was doing to support biodiversity.

Stephen highlighted work to control invasive non-native species in the borough, active woodland management and designing urban environments to ensure connection between natural spaces.

The Council had published a Biodiversity Action Plan for 2018-2023, and a mid-term review had been held in 2020. The plan included 84 targets to be completed during the 6 year period, and a significant amount of progress had been made towards these targets.

Stephen highlighted some particular areas of work for the Parks and Countryside team, including tree planting during Winter 2021/22, grassland cutting regimes and meadow creation at Bluebell Hill, woodland management to manage invasive rhododendron at Longhill Park.

The Council was producing its own definitive map of biodiversity, to make connections and make best use of local knowledge to improve biodiversity in the borough.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was recognised that there would always be difference of opinion on matters such as rhododendron clearance, and not all residents would be pleased with work ongoing.
- Members requested regular communications from their local rangers, and Stephen agreed to facilitate greater connection between the two so that members would be aware of scheduled works in their area.
- Stephen noted a local issue with a third party provider and noted that rangers would need to be able to gain access to an enhancement project once the initial work was complete to restore any areas of damage by third parties.
- While it was noted that parks were available for all residents' use for a wide range of activity, incidents of genuine anti-social behaviour would be addressed in a collaborative way with partners.
- Parks and Countryside officers were working to communicate as much as possible with the public. Officers used connections made to pass S106 moneys onto parish councils to support biodiversity in their areas.

45. **A presentation from the Crown Estate - Des Sussex**

Des Sussex, Crown Estate presented on biodiversity work within the Crown Estate.

Des raised the issue of capacity for rangers in Bracknell Forest, coming from a small countryside team.

Des also commented on the pressure put on biodiversity from the housebuilding and expanding population, and how recreational outdoor space often came at the cost of biodiversity. Visitor numbers to outdoor spaces were also putting pressure on key habitats.

It was noted that in Windsor, the Crown Estate were looking at their carbon footprint and water use across the estate. Many areas of the Crown Estate were under pressure due to public access. The ancient trees in Windsor Great Park had been damaged in the past by damage to the rootzones, and recently some had been lost during storms. Des commented that it was important to leave dead trees or their stumps in situ wherever possible to support other organisms.

Des highlighted a few rare species which had been found in Bracknell Forest and Crown Estate ecosystems, including the Royal Splinter Crane fly, Violet Click Beetle, Dartford Warbler and Nightjar. There was also pressure from collectors on nationally important fungi found in the area.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- While ivy would be a nuisance plant and smother trees, it could also be an important wildlife plant to provide pollen and nectar for insects into the Autumn.
- There were some parts of Crown Estate land which were not publicly accessible, and some parts of Windsor forest had restricted public access via gated entrances for local residents only. Parts of Buttersteep Rise were fenced off around the Swinley brick pits, due to their SSSI nature but also the hazards at the site. Swinley Park and Buttersteep Rise both had members only car parks but were accessible to pedestrians via gates. Members recognised there was also a commercial element to the land and car park management.
- Members commented that it was important to maintain the forest elements in the borough.

**46. A presentation from Warfield Environment Group - Sheila Collings**

Sheila Collings, of Warfield Environment Group presented on the Group's work.

Warfield Environment Group had been formed in 2002 by local residents, working closely with Bracknell Forest Council and the biodiversity ranger. The group had taken part in lots of biodiversity activity including rhododendron clearance, organising an ancient tree hunt, litter picking, an annual newt survey and wildflower planting amongst other activity

The group had also supported the development of the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership was hosted by the Council's Biodiversity officer, and the group allowed residents to meet and share ideas for improving biodiversity. Sheila commented that the group had used to have ranger representation which would be useful going forward.

Warfield Environment Group were taking part in the Year of Green Corridors 2022, to support passage for wildlife between green spaces.

Sheila highlighted the group's work on verge management to oversee verges with wildflower mix and to promote an annual mow cutting regime. Orchard maintenance was also highlighted, as the large orchard at Larks Hill had been neglected for some time.

Sheila commented that the main threat to biodiversity was human interaction, including treading on bluebell woods and allowing dogs to disturb ground-nesting bird species.

The Warfield Environment Group was supporting the establishment of other local environment groups.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was agreed that the relevant rangers would be better connected into Warfield Environment Group going forward.
- It was suggested that an annual programme of warnings could be developed to warn residents at the right time of year, for example at skylark nesting season or bluebell season.
- Members were encouraged to follow Warfield Environmental Group on social media channels.

**47. Items for future meetings**

- Small companies' efforts to tackle climate change
- Hydrogen power
- Strategy for Climate Change and Environment

Any further suggestions for future agenda items should be sent to Councillors Virgo and Mrs Hayes MBE.

**CHAIRMAN**

To: **EXECUTIVE BRIEFING**  
**07 June 2022**

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## **Climate Change Action Plan annual progress report Executive Director of Delivery**

### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 Following the publication of the council's climate change strategy in January 2021 the Executive Director Delivery promised to provide annual update reports on progress to Full Council. This is the first such update.

### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 For Council to note and approve the report.

### **3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 Council are requested to endorse progress so far.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 N/A

### **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The full annual progress report for 2021/22 is attached as appendix 1 and a summary of climate change progress so far is attached as appendix 2.
- 5.2 In summary significant achievements have included increased robustness of the governance of climate change actions; improvements to the energy efficiency of both the council's estate and our residents' homes; the successful implementation of kerbside food waste collections coupled with reduced residual waste collections resulting in both increased recycling rates and reduced landfill; and successful Highways initiatives aimed at improving and increasing active travel.
- 5.3 Areas requiring a stronger focus over the coming year include continuing our efforts to make all climate change targets SMARTer, improving our customer facing website information, investigating ways to record the council's indirect (scope 3) CO2 emissions and improving our collaboration with businesses, community groups and schools alike.

### **6 Consultation and Other Considerations**

#### Legal Advice

- 6.1 The overarching legislative context of the Council's Climate change strategy is the Climate Change Act 2008. This Act places a legal duty on central government to set legally binding targets to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Specific EIA's are completed by Officers for their individual projects within the Action Plan.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 The Council is committed to becoming a net zero carbon authority by 2050. All actions that the council undertakes should be assessed for their environmental impacts prior to receiving executive approval.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to:

Reduce emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The reason the Council believes that this will reduce emissions is because the very goal of all actions contained within the annual progress report is to mitigate the man-made impacts of climate change and lower CO<sub>2</sub>.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 There are strong and developing links between Health in All Policies ambitions and climate change actions. Promoting active commuting, supporting green and active volunteering and improving the warmth of residents' homes are all such examples.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Climate Change Annual Report 2021/22

Appendix 2: Our action towards net zero 2050

Contact for further information

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director of Delivery, 01344 355621

Kevin.Gibbs@bracknell-forest.gov.uk



# Climate Change Strategy

Annual report on progress  
2021/22





## Foreward from The Executive Member of the Environment, Councillor Dorothy Hayes MBE



This report covers the period 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 representing the first annual summary of the council's progress against our climate change strategy. As Executive Member for the Environment

I take great pride

in taking the lead to help us reach our pledged commitment to become a net-zero carbon council by 2050. Mitigating the impacts of climate change is a subject area that has long been a focus for Bracknell Forest Council and it is specifically referenced within the Protecting and Enhancing our Environment section of the council plan.

Climate change mitigations were of course on the front foot at the very start of the year given our introduction of our new food waste strategy plus the completion of retrofitting 99 of our residents' least energy efficient homes through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme. Further initiatives have centred on decarbonising our own estate, continuing to support sustainable transport and improving the biodiversity of the borough.

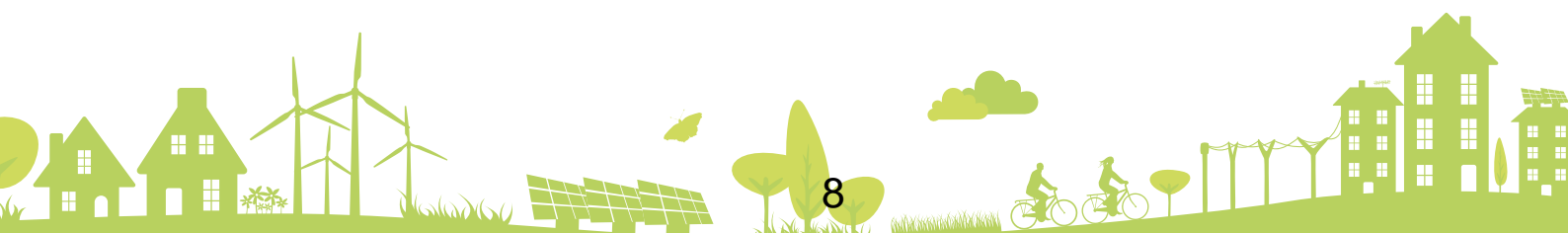
Internally our climate change governance took a big step forward during the year with the creation of both an Officer's Climate Change Board and a Councillor Climate Change Advisory Panel. Taken together I believe these will bring both a focus and a scrutiny into the council's efforts to mitigate the man-made impacts of a changing climate.

On a national level Bracknell Forest continues to engage with the Local Government Association and other overarching bodies striving to share best practice and learnings from one another's experiences. The council also actively embraced the inaugural The Big Green Week (Sep 2021) to showcase what we are doing for the climate change agenda.

On the international front the UK of course played host to the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) which took place in Glasgow in November 2021. COP26's main focus was to encourage greater cooperation among nations. However, that is not to say that the outcomes do not affect Bracknell Forest. There are three areas of funding specifically laid out within current government's strategy that could help us achieve our net zero ambitions:

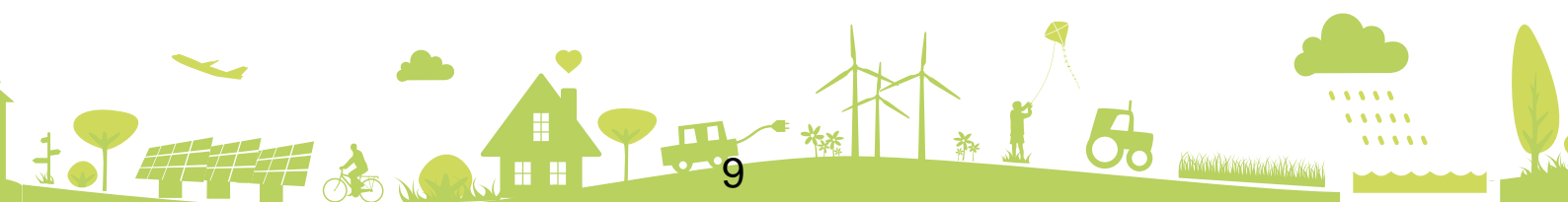
- £3.9 billion of new funding for decarbonising heat and buildings, including the new £450 million 3-year Boiler Upgrade Scheme, ensuring homes and buildings are warmer, cheaper to heat and cleaner to run.
- A £1.35 billion commitment to support the electrification of UK vehicles and their supply chains, coupled with a further £620 million for targeted electric vehicle grants and infrastructure.
- A £124 million boost to the Nature for Climate Fund helping to meet commitments to restore approximately 280,000 hectares of peat in England by 2050 and treble woodland creation in England to meet commitments to create at least 30,000 hectares of woodland per year across the UK by the end of this parliament.

Aligning our approach to focus in on securing access to these funds and others to come will be at the heart of our continued efforts moving forwards.



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## Introduction by Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery



### Summary of key successes:

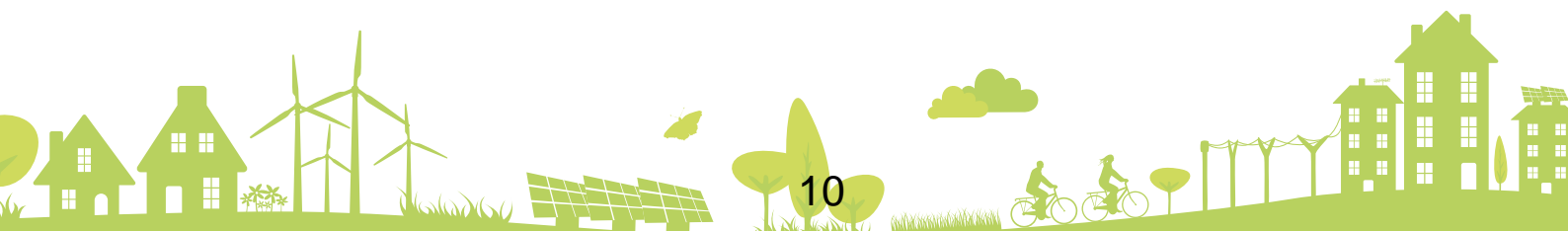
- Changing the culture here at BFC (climate change at core of procurement choices ; climate change a critical factor in all decision reports; educating, encouraging, spreading the word)
- Co-benefits – any action taken on climate change is relevant to associated priorities such as health; the economy / employment; poverty, housing and inequality; and energy security;
- Encouraging behavioural adaptations both within but more importantly from our businesses and our residents
- Bracknell Forest Giants in partnership with The Lexicon helping deliver the borough’s messages around protecting and enhancing our natural environment (Bracknell Forest Springs to follow).

Bracknell Forest is an ambitious council and seeks to be a class leader in everything we do. The communities within the borough have set and expect high standards for the council and therefore expect our delivery around the climate change agenda to be as exemplary as everything else we do.

We are in this for the long term, and therefore our ambition must be tempered by the resources we have available and how willing everyone is to

join us on this change in how we live, work and enjoy our lives. Meeting people where they are, as opposed to where we want them to be is key to keeping as many people engaged in our work as possible. Tom Heap, the Countryfile presenter, made the case around getting to net zero, that this will require a change in what we define as a “good life”. Jumping into a car to do a short journey that could be done on foot, will need to be as socially unacceptable as smoking is now. Things that are the most convenient may need to be given up and habits changed forever to become sustainable. That said, we recognise that simply demanding that people change is not an effective strategy. Bracknell Forest Council is focused on doing stuff, as opposed to talking about doing stuff. To this end, the last 12 months has seen the anniversary of our Greening our waste strategy. This strategy has delivered a whole borough food waste recycling scheme that has over 90% participation of those eligible to use the scheme. This is now into its next phase, with the scheme being rolled out to flats and houses in multiple occupation. Everyone can be involved.

The council has sought to maximise the monies available for works that we can do but bidding for financial resources, made available via central government schemes, is not straight forward or as easy as it could be. Although we have done well in securing resources via public sector decarbonisation schemes, we have also been less successful in some of our larger bids (For example, a £500k joint bid with Silva Homes for social housing decarbonisation and a £500k air source heating system for Time Square). Each bid takes the same amount of staff resources and therefore for the next period, we will be working hard to get our ideas to the stage of being “shovel ready”, a theme which we have picked up in the feedback on the projects not funded. That all said, Property Services have secured £929k of grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation fund, Salix. This being in addition to the funding that the council has put in itself, into schemes on our corporate building estate, such as for new LED lighting, boiler replacements and additional PV



solar cells. Highways and Transport have secured £260k, for active travel initiatives and Electric Vehicle charging points. We have also had support from our local MPs, who supported Cllr Mrs Hayes in hosting the Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion to look at how the council can get green funding to address brownfield sites.

The council’s approach to changing its own operations, to ensure that we reach our target, has been based on embedding climate change mitigation into the heart of the council’s decision making, resourcing planning and service delivery. Our report templates have been amended so that report authors can show that they have considered climate change mitigation and reduction as part of their change proposals. Service Plans (published in April 2022) have had climate change mitigation added to the “golden thread” and therefore can be monitored via the normal performance management processes which have ensured that the council has been successful in delivering on its programme of work for many years.

There is a strong link in our climate change mitigation work with our duties under the “Public Sector Equalities Duty” and “Health in all policies”, part of our drive to improve public health. To this end, the Public Health team has supported programmes for behaviour change schemes, to increase walking and cycling (Eco Rewards scheme) and general fitness (Get Green and Active). They have also worked on Air Quality schemes (with the Public Protection Partnership), adding to the £259k funding secured from DEFRA, to improve the air within the borough, especially around our schools. Finally, supporting our Energy Sustainability Officer to address thermal inefficient poor-quality housing.

Covid has impacted on our ability to capture the good work that our schools and businesses have been doing to contribute to the whole borough target. Our strategy is a whole borough area programme and seeks the whole borough to work with us to achieve net zero. Although it is true that

only 12% of Bracknell Forest businesses have specific targets for net zero, over 51% now have an intention to be more environmentally friendly. Therefore, it is key that we turn these intentions into action and work with those businesses who neither have a plan or target to get these for the next performance year.

Reaching out into the community has been the core of getting the net zero change message beyond the work that the council is doing. The Forest Giants at Bracknell Town Centre weren’t just about bringing people back to the high street, but also an important way of reaching out to the community about the importance of the natural environment and to communicate important environmental information to residents and visitors, covering a range of ages and background. The campaign to introduce food waste recycling, with its strap line of “easy as 1,2,3” not only brought the issue of food waste to the fore, but also encouraged greater participation in recycling and reducing residual waste that goes to landfill.

On the whole, this has been a successful year, despite the pandemic. The key for this next year is to hold on to the gains in behaviour change that were forced by COVID. Hybrid working, reducing the number of car movements, increasing social connection and enjoyment of our natural environment, are all positives that must continue. As must staycations and reducing pollution from air travel. With energy costs set to rocket this year, finding ways to move to more sustainable, locally produced, energy will be something that the council will be focused upon for the next year.



## Climate Change Advisory Panel Chair: Councillor Tony Virgo



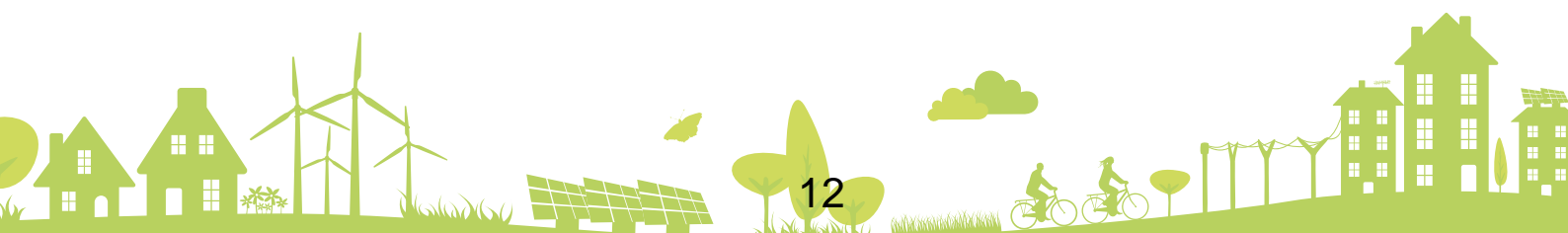
The Cross-party climate change advisory panel was set up by the Executive following a recommendation by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission for the establishment of a councillor group as part of its scrutiny of the Council's climate change strategy and action plan and I am delighted to have been appointed as Chair. We are a panel of 12 elected councillors with representation from all political parties with a common interest in facing up to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The role of Climate Change Advisory Panel is to advise Executive Councillors on issues around climate change. The CCAP also provides a useful public forum for sharing the council's journey to net zero and to demonstrate that there is credible performance management of our projects. We meet bi-monthly with the first meeting having been held in June 2021.

Since that first meeting the group have considered specific themes in turn. The first such topic being centred around the challenges around electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. The panel were updated on the council's current policy towards EV's, along with presentations from Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (energy provider) and Bloor Homes, representing

the new home builders. The informative presentations highlighted the need for government strategy to crystallise further so that the council could progress with its own plans.

The next topic concerned the subject of domestic home energy efficiency. The panel received a summary of the past, present and future work plans of the Energy Sustainability Officer, an introduction to how the council is working in partnership with a private landlord (Silva Homes), a view of the issues facing housing developers (Wimpey Homes) plus a presentation on the current benefits and drawbacks of (ground or air source) heat pumps. Two themes emerged from these discussions: capacity and cost. There are projected capacity issues around both the scale of retrofitting existing homes but also the ability and skill set to provide homes of the future. In addition, further stimuli to encourage private funding and investment will be required to make customer choices more affordable.





## Climate Change Advisory Panel Vice Chair: Councillor Tina Mckenzie-Boyle



I am delighted to have been selected as Vice-Chair of the CCAP as I have a keen interest in all matters relating to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

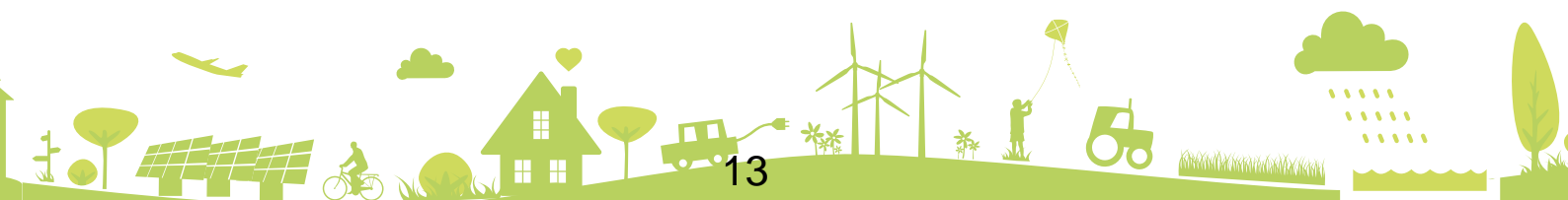
One specific area of interest of mine concerns the need to move towards a circular waste economy and so the January 2022 session of the CCAP which considered the benefits of anaerobic digestion (AD) plants was of particular interest. AD plants function by breaking down organic waste materials and producing either gas or fertilisers or both.

Ahead of the session I and several other councillors of the panel visited existing anaerobic

digestion plants in Hampshire and Oxfordshire. Our own findings were mapped against a separate feasibility study completed by Atkins on the council's behalf to consider the merits of installing a facility here within the borough. The overall conclusion was that whilst an AD plant would be of benefit any lead on such a project should be left in the hands of a commercial developer to take forwards.

In March 2022 we focussed on efforts to decarbonise the council's estate including a number of heat decarbonisation plans which will propose suitable tangible options for decarbonising and saving energy within future schemes, a summary of recent green energy efficiency initiatives including solarPV roof panels, plus heating and energy efficient lighting projects and an explanation of the planned energy efficiencies and future proofing being built in to the redevelopment of the commercial centre.

I look forwards to supporting further initiatives over the coming year.



## Strategy summary

The Council's climate change strategy was published in January 2021 and sets out the council's initial 4-year framework towards reaching our ambition to be carbon net-zero by 2050. <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/bracknell-forest-climate-change-strategy.pdf>

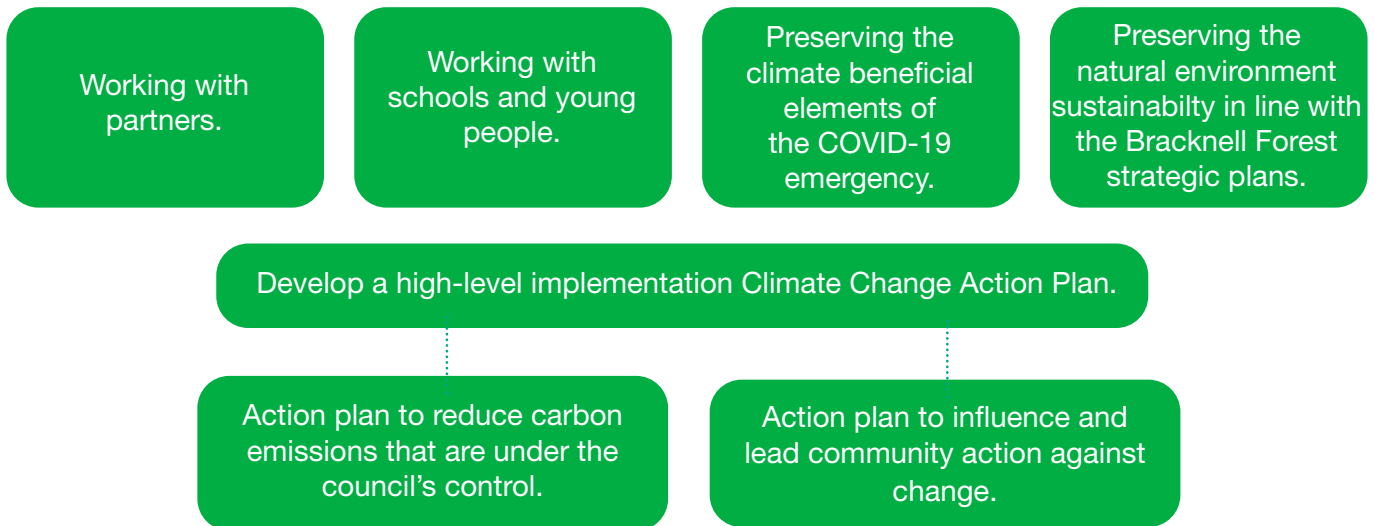
The strategy can be summarised as per the diagram below. It is worth noting that direct carbon dioxide equivalent emissions within the council's control represent around 2% of the entire emissions associated with the borough as a whole.

## BFC Climate Strategy (on a Page)

### Bracknell Forest Council: 2020-2024

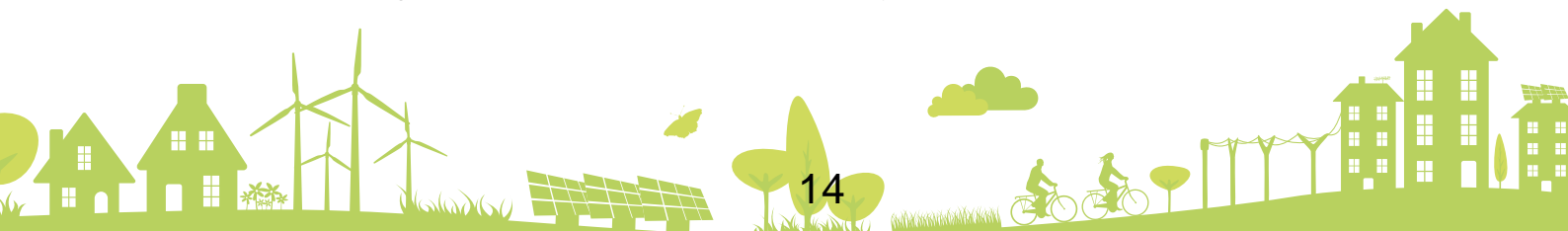
Adopt 4 Strategic Principles for the council's approach to tackling climate change

**We will achieve our 2050 objective of being carbon neutral through:**



During 2021/22 there was a strong emphasis placed on cementing the governance around supporting our climate change work. The strategy and accompanying action plan were therefore each audited in August 2021. The objectives of the audit were to evaluate the controls in place to manage and deliver the council's Climate Change Strategy, with a view to delivering reasonable assurance as to the adequacy of the design of the internal control systems and their application in practice. The overall findings indicated an adequate level of assurance with some minor recommendations for further improvement.

One of the headline outcomes from that audit process included recognition of the importance of the creation of both Councillor and Officer groups along with recommendations to strengthen and support the work of each group. In addition, there was an acknowledgement that certain aspects of the council's work towards reducing our carbon emissions were lacking in terms of defining and quantifying progress made and having interim targets to reach. Each recommendation has been included within an audit outcomes management plan for further work and analysis.





## Action Plan to support strategy

The Council's climate change strategy is supported by an action plan which charts progress made against current climate change mitigation projects or streams of work.

The action plan is therefore a 'live' document which is updated and consolidated at the end of each quarter. Updates are provided by nominated officers within various sections and directorates of the council. These quarterly updates are reported to the officer's board and the action plan is updated and published on the council's climate change web pages. <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/climate-change/climate-change-strategy-action-plan>

Action Plan progress reports are also presented to the Members' Advisory Panel and once per annum to Full Council to complete full governance of all climate change mitigation activities.

At any point in time the action plan represents a snapshot of all known 'live' pieces of work being completed that can be demonstrated as having tangible benefits to minimise the man-made impacts of climate change. Projects or work streams are only added to the action plan once they have been approved at Department Management Team level.

At the end of Q4 in 2021/22 there were 46 different projects referred to within the action plan and a further 5 at the proposal stage. The activities represented reflect a mix of those which solely benefit the council estate, those which solely benefit the borough and those which benefit both.

Completed or closed projects are also captured within the action plan and a summary of those key achievements in the 2021/22 year is covered elsewhere within this report.

The 2021 audit of the climate change strategy highlighted the differences in the degree to which individual projects within the action plan could clearly identify the measurement of progress. There was a recognition that whilst clearly defined progress could be shown in some areas, there was still work to do with regards the re-definition of others to enable the council to set both interim and final targets, plus demonstrate progress made towards those. Officers have already been undertaking efforts to provide a tighter focus and definition for their work streams and this will continue to be a clear focus for improvement as we move forwards.



## Headline metrics 2021

The Council commenced measurement of its own carbon footprint in 2019 based on a calendar year. The data for the 2021 calendar year showed that our total CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from the Council's transport fleet, plus gas, electric and water consumption was 5,028 tonnes. This compares to the initial figure of 6,178 in 2019 and 5,326 from 2020.



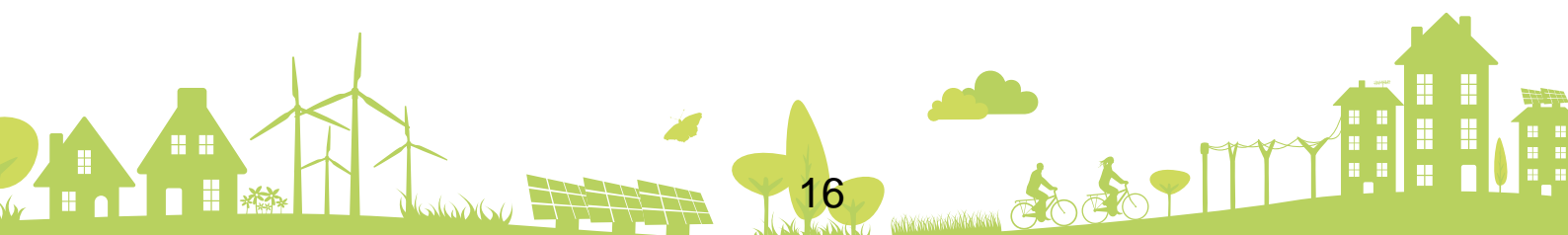
For 2021 it has also been possible to start capturing data showing emissions from the council's consumption of water. These amounted to 78 tonnes which are incorporated into the total above.

Both 2020 and 2021 were of course heavily impacted by COVID enforced lockdowns.

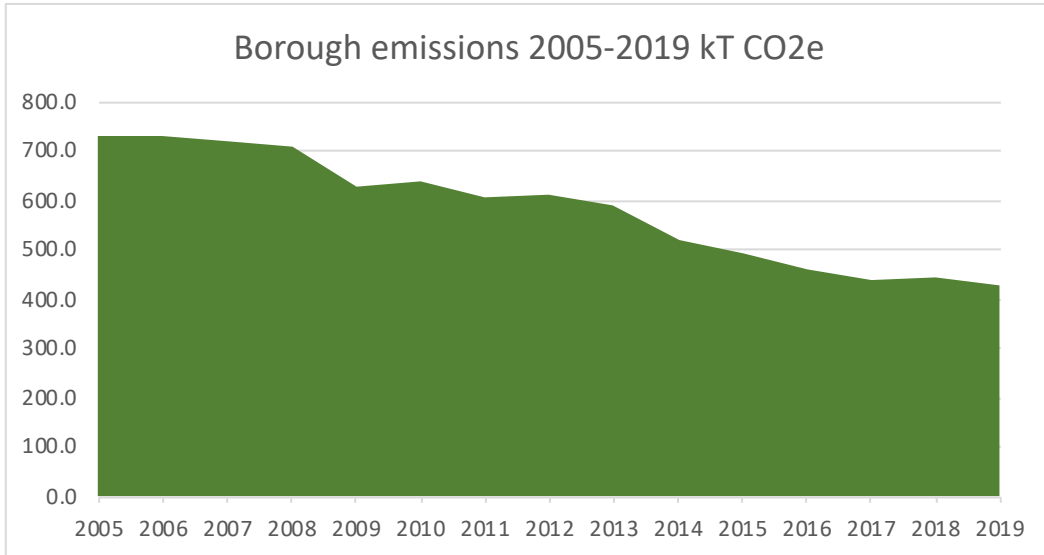
When compared to figures for the borough as a whole the council's direct activities referred to above represent around 2% of all emissions.

Indirect emissions (those from our supply chain and our contracted services) are a much harder parameter to define, but exploratory work is underway, and this area will continue to be explored further.

Estimates for total emissions for all local authority areas are provided by the governments' Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy department (BEIS). The first such set of figures were provided for 2005. BEIS releases annual statistics each June approximately 18 months in arrears, so the most recent release is that from June 2021 which reports on emissions in the 2019 calendar year.



For Bracknell Forest Borough the figure was 426.1kT CO<sub>2</sub>e which is down by 18.2kT from 444.3 in 2018 and compares to our initial benchmark of 728.5kT in 2005, representing a 41.5% reduction overall. (see chart below)

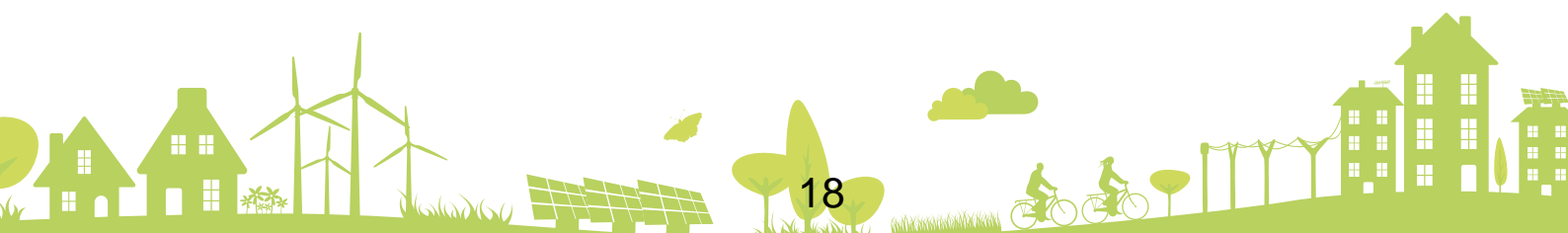
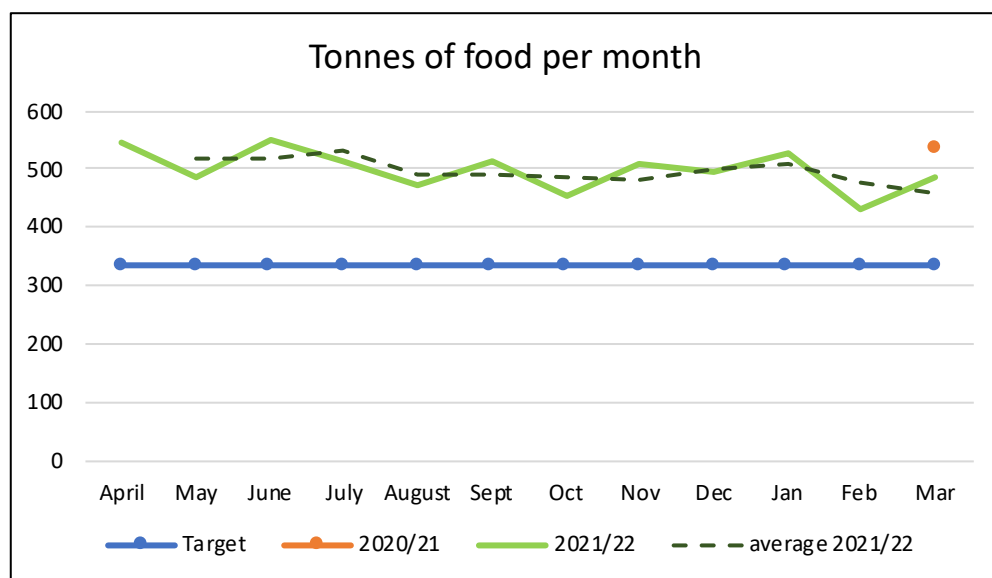


Bracknell Forest’s emissions per capita were 3.5 tonnes: lower than the 4.4 tonnes south east England average and the 5.2 tonnes national average. When compared to the other local authorities in Berkshire, only Reading have reduced emissions by a higher percent than Bracknell Forest over the 14 years of measurement.

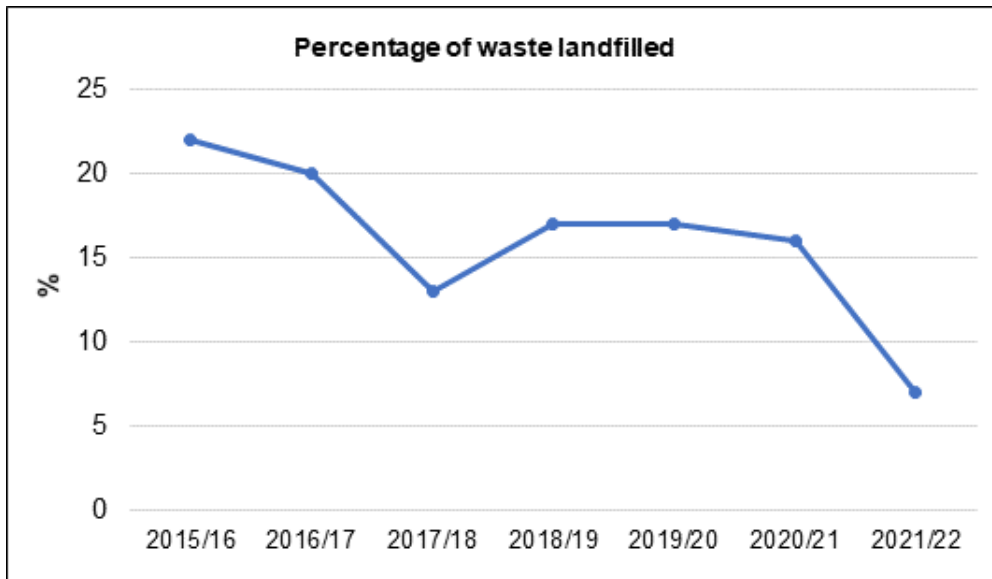


## Key projects delivered 21/22

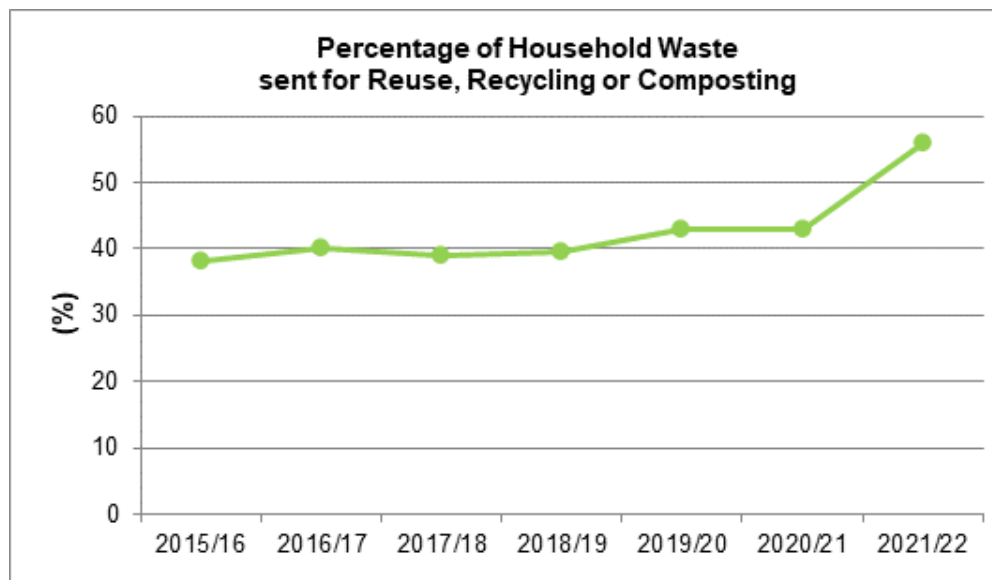
- Green Homes Grant funding (£900k spent / further £1M planned); In terms of the home decarbonisation projects via the government’s Green Homes Grants Local Authority Delivery schemes (GHG LAD), the council completed the works from GHG LAD 1 (£900k grant received) back in the Summer of 2021. We have further funding from both GHG LAD 2 (£87k for spend by 30th June 2022) and GHG LAD 3 – also referred to as Sustainable Warmth and Home Upgrade Grants (£1M for spend by 31st March 2023).
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Salix) funding of £350k at Sandhurst school to enable their transition from oil to gas central heated boilers. A further £425k of funding was secured for 38 schools within the borough who benefitted from works that increased their heat conservation and reduced their energy use. Once all schemes were completed it is estimated that their combined carbon footprints were lowered by 1,536,170 kWh, or a 25% tCO<sub>2</sub>e per year reduction (283 Tonnes).
- A second tranche of Salix funding worth £154k has enabled our partner, Atkins, to prepare heat decarbonisation plans for all of the Council’s property stock including schools not already funded. This will propose suitable tangible options for decarbonising and saving energy within future schemes.
- From April 2021 all electricity consumed within BFC buildings has been sourced from 100% sustainable supplies.
- The Parks and Countryside service planted 2,795 trees over 20 sites as part of highways improvements and improvements to public green spaces.
- In addition both the total areas of Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) have increased by 50.97 and by 17.7 hectares respectively. In a climate change context our ponds help store water, reduce flooding and act as carbon sinks, whilst our woodlands and meadows provide urban cooling, carbon storage and support the survival of biodiversity.
- The introduction of our kerbside recycling of food waste in Mar 2021 has seen 6,031 tonnes of food waste collected and recycled in the first year. The graph below shows that the trend for tonnes collected far outweighed our initial target estimates.



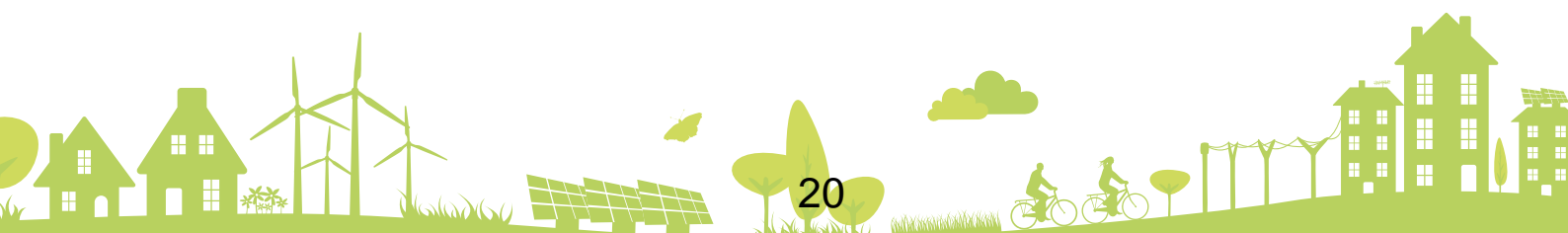
The service, when combined with the reduction in the frequency of residual waste collections, from two weekly to three weekly, has also helped reduce waste going to landfill. The graph below shows the landfill rate for the last 7 financial years:



- This diversion of food waste has produced a carbon saving of over 3.72 million kg of Co2e (carbon dioxide equivalent emissions) being prevented from entering the atmosphere. Participation in the food waste scheme remains exceptionally high at around 90% of households. This compares to an average of around 60%-70% in other schemes nationally.
- Our recycling rate (as a % of all waste collected) has risen from 43% to 56% during the 2021/22 year. This 13% improvement on last year is an exceptional achievement and proof of the success of our greening waste strategy.

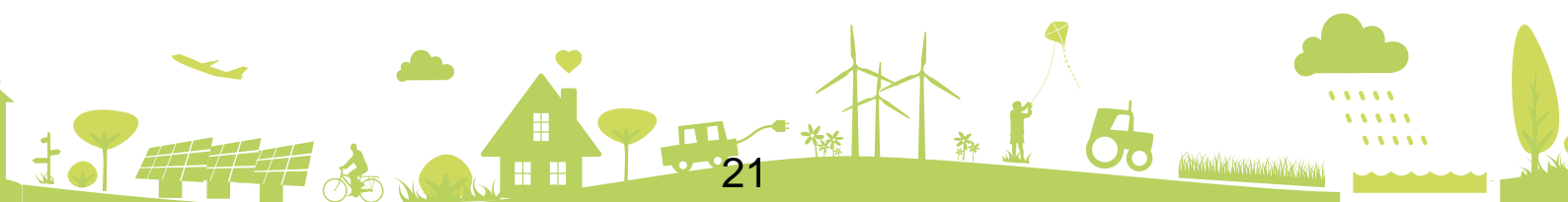


- The Highways and Transport service has received a revenue grant, from the Department of Transport, aimed at active travel initiatives. A £160k grant has been utilised to help the service to expand cycling routes to Crowthorne and Sandhurst and to commission some promotional videos as well. These videos will be supported by interactive maps, cycle led rides, family events, and working with businesses and schools to increase active travel participation.
- We have also promoted involvement in the EcoRewards active travel scheme that provides an incentive for residents to use active transport for their commutes. A specific competition during the Big Green Week led to a 25% increase (in-week) in miles travelled using active transport. During 2021/22 the scheme has seen 187,132 of green miles logged, saving 40.8 tonnes of CO2 when compared to driving.
- Highways also revised our bus service improvement plan and will work with planners to produce a new travel plan policy, giving us more control over sustainable mode initiatives.
- All reports now have to have considered Climate Change impacts as part of the decision-making process. This helps support a cultural change in the Council in relation to Climate Change.
- It is worth noting that the council applied for, but was ultimately unsuccessful with the following funding bids:
  - Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: A £500k bid submitted on behalf of / in partnership with Silva Homes to retrofit private landlord housing;
  - Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund: a £500k bid to install a hybrid system of air source heat and a new gas boiler at Time Square;
  - Department for Transport: a £30k bid to develop a detailed plan to improve cycling and walking between Crowthorne and Owlsmoor;



## Key projects moving forwards

- The plans for the redesigned Commercial Centre will incorporate some significant energy saving / greening elements. These will include a green roof providing thermal insulations and allowing the installation of solar PV panels; the heating of the building via an air source heat pump; plus, the addition of electric vehicle charge points.
- The council has secured £100k funding to roll out 32 residential charging points across the borough. These will be low wattage / fast chargers, aimed at overnight charging. Having reviewed the best locations for these, and in line with the funding criteria, it has been agreed local community hubs, e.g., at shopping centres, would be the best locations. Looking ahead BFC will continue to help facilitate with the introduction of more EV charging points, working with the businesses to increase employee charge points and reacting to any future funding opportunities that could increase EV charging infrastructure on highway land.
- Public Health funding will count towards several projects that contribute towards mitigating climate change too. Additional funds will support an Eco Rewards behaviour change incentive scheme; a scheme to promote 'Get Green and Active' volunteering, and efforts to improve the health of some of our poorest residents through home improvement works.
- There is ongoing work to phase out conventional vehicles from the council's fleet and replace with electric vehicles. This ties in with longer term ambitions for both the Home to School transport fleet and our 3rd party contractor vehicles (waste/recycling; highway maintenance; street cleansing) too.
- Additional funding to support anti-idling project work will enable the purchase of further equipment to monitor levels of air quality. Licensing liaison Officers will also be attending taxi ranks and starting education around idling and idling enforcement. This programme will then expand further to known hot spot areas around the borough.
- Our Natural Estate officers are committed to protecting and improving habitats that mitigate the effects of climate change. Their aim is to target the provision of 20 hectares of publicly accessible greenspaces within 2km of every residence. Alongside this there is their ambition to improve green infrastructure through land management. They aim to link up 5 areas of urban ecological importance and to move to 60% of all farmland being managed with nature conservation aims.
- Our food waste collection scheme will start to expand to a further 20% of flats (up to 1,800 residences) in the Borough.
- Plans to alter the council's approach to grass verge maintenance will see grass areas surrounding trees left uncut through the growing season. These planned actions would help preserve the trees themselves, improve biodiversity, reduce rain run-off and protect wildlife species.
- Investigations have begun into options for an electric vehicle charging hub situated on land owned by the Council on the London Road. This is in addition to a solar farm on the same site.



## Comms work

A detailed communication plan has been developed and good progress has been made in profiling key programme successes. Climate change news stories have been published every two weeks since the start of May 2021. Over the course of the year a grand total of 110 climate change related articles were issued by the council. Links to some example stories are included here:

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news/2022/03/reducing-idling-cars-bracknell-forest](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news/2022/03/reducing-idling-cars-bracknell-forest)

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news/2022/01/energy-efficiency-support-residents](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news/2022/01/energy-efficiency-support-residents)

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news/2021/06/eco-rewards-scheme-clocks-100000-green-miles?fbclid=IwAR0LsUJJXOYvG3zw4v9\\_rziOxbnacXpjYkFWLsFeUzhfNnlhVsmKqdd7BYA](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news/2021/06/eco-rewards-scheme-clocks-100000-green-miles?fbclid=IwAR0LsUJJXOYvG3zw4v9_rziOxbnacXpjYkFWLsFeUzhfNnlhVsmKqdd7BYA)

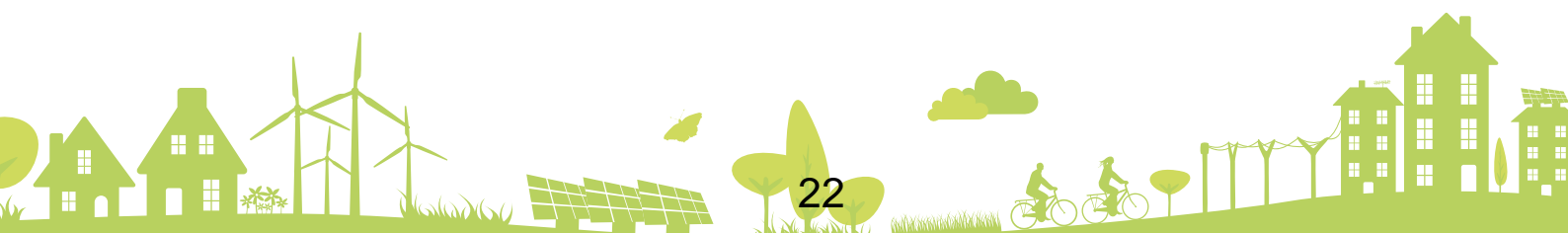
Social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, have been key communication channels. The council has over 13,000 followers on Facebook, so it is one of the most important platforms to put communication messages out through. This also has the benefit of being two-way communication, with posts generating much debate between the users and messages back to the council. The council also uses e-news letters, e.g., Parks & Countryside, Waste & Recycling, etc., in addition to Town and Country, as its other routes for messaging.

The climate change team's press releases have been used by the Bracknell News, and on local radio including BBC radio Berkshire. One particular highlight being a piece around one of our food recycling trucks being named "Dame Foodie Dench", prompting a video response from Dame Judi herself.

Local events like the Forest Giants have generated a real focus on the area and the council's work around climate change. We are therefore now exploring if additional budget for communications can be secured to extend the work to billboards, radio ads, leaflets, letter drops, etc.

Looking forward, the team will be exploring the most effective ways to communicate with schools more regularly, e.g., headteachers updates plus supporting a planned schools' climate change conference in May 2022. Also, more targeted messaging for groups like older residents, faith groups, etc. Our Climate Change Officer started producing weekly tips for residents for these different resident channels. The focus is on everyday things that residents can build into their routines, e.g., shorter showers, sustainable cooking, etc.

Internal communications are equally as important. Messages and articles have been put in the staff newspapers, Forest Views and Forest Views Extra, helping to make the strategy more visible to all staff and Councillors. There is also a Climate Change Yammer group through which all staff and Members can post ideas or signpost others to articles of interest around climate change. Using the internal staff channels more has opened up new internal debates around efficiencies that the council can make in its operations, such as staff talking about working from home in a more sustainable way, etc. Having now secured a regular slot in Forest Views for climate change content should mean that the council's priority in this area stays front and centre in staff's thinking and planning.





## Wider Engagement

This report has already touched on the publicly open stance adopted by the Climate Change Advisory Panel with all sessions being recorded and available to watch via YouTube. The council aims to build on the success of these public engagement forums as it seeks to widen the opportunities for us to work in tandem with our local communities. The incoming Climate Change Officer will focus on developing these opportunities over the next year.

In addition, there are plans during 2022/23 to engage more directly with our schools and young people. Recently, Bracknell Forest Council hosted a schools climate conference, featuring talks from Greenpeace and Chris Packham. The day consisted of inspiring presentations and workshop activities, in the hopes of empowering the local young people to become agents of change in combating climate change. There will be opportunities arising from the conference for the borough's climate change officer to engage with the schools' community to help inform a joined-up approach to communicating key messages around climate change mitigation.

A 2021 Bracknell Forest Council Business Survey was undertaken with over 500 local businesses primarily to understand the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit but it also asked for the views of local businesses around the green agenda. Among many outcomes the results (available on the Bracknell Forest for Business [webpage](#)) showed that just 51 per cent of businesses have the intention of being more environmentally friendly, just 12 per cent have set a specific target or aim to achieve net-zero and just five per cent have set a deadline to this commitment. This clearly demonstrates an opportunity for greater engagement and collaboration and is an area that the council is keen to develop in partnership with both large and small businesses over the next year. We are therefore planning to engage directly with the Bracknell Businesses Improvement District (BID) to identify ways in which we can better share knowledge, experiences, and successes.

## Climate Change FAQ's

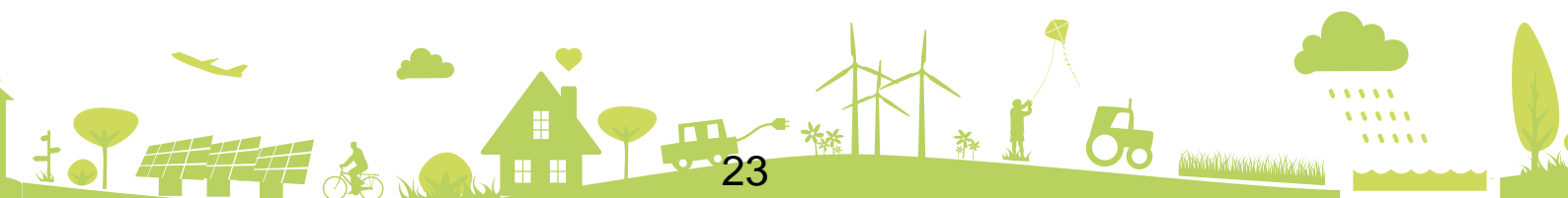
- **What is the council doing with regards to home energy efficiency improvements?**

Our proposed Local Plan (currently awaiting approval) proposes that all major new residential developments should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this is unviable. In which case, the development must achieve a minimum of a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.

New residential developments shall also meet a water efficiency standard of 110 Litres / person / day.

Non-residential developments shall meet at least BREEAM 'excellent' or equivalent standard.

Energy efficiency improvements to existing homes are targeted on a 'most in need' basis so that residents living in energy inefficient homes or those particularly vulnerable to the effects of the cold are most likely to benefit from funding support. We regularly bid for government funding to help address



these needs.

- **What types of local home and non-domestic energy efficiency can the council help and advise on?**

Our proposed Local Plan makes it clear that developments for renewable and low carbon energy may include solar farms, wind turbines, biomass, district heating and combined heat and power (CHP) from renewable resources.

Residents can find materials to help and support them understand energy efficiency on our dedicated webpages: [www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency-home/renewable-energy](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency-home/renewable-energy)

- **Do you have a policy on electric vehicle charging stations, locations and charging types?**

The council's Transport team have produced an updated guide on its work around EV infrastructure <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-08/electric-vehicle-charging-facilities-summary-and-guide-2021.pdf>.

- **Please explain what you are doing to improve cycling and walking take-up?**

The council already has a strategy to target active travel: BFC Sustainable Modes Strategy which contains both a - Walking and Cycling Strategy; and a - Public Transport Strategy; <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/travel-and-public-transport-strategies-and-policies>.

- **What are you doing to monitor your carbon footprint?**

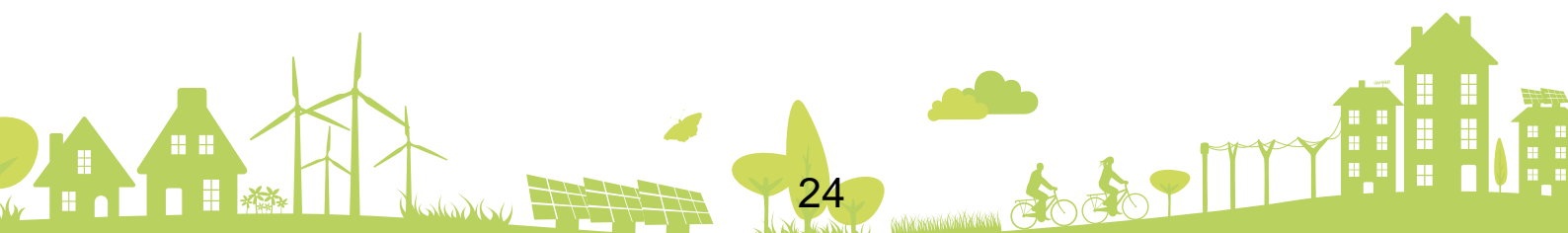
We use the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions survey to measure our whole borough performance. The data for 2019 is the most recent such release and confirms that the Bracknell Forest area saw emissions reduce by 4% since 2018, and by a total of 41% since 2005. Between 2005 and 2019, the per capita rates of CO<sub>2</sub>e have reduced from 6.6 tonnes to 3.5 tonnes. Overall, the data shows the borough's CO<sub>2</sub>e reduced from 728.5 Kilotonnes to 426.1 Kilotonnes. Compared to other local authorities in the South East of England, only Reading and Kent have reduced emissions by a higher percentage than Bracknell Forest over the 14 years.

- **Can you make your climate change action plan SMARTer with objectives linked to ambitious but credible targets?**

The council's Climate Change Strategy is underpinned by an action plan covering about 46 projects. Each project has a climate change mitigation target and evaluation process. The strategy's effectiveness is measured in CO<sub>2</sub>e reductions, as measured in the BEIS annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions survey for the BFC borough area.

Quarterly performance reports are presented to the Climate Change Advisory Panel, and updates are also published on our web pages for the public to review.

The individual targets within our climate change action plan have and continue to be reviewed and modified to better reflect SMART measures.

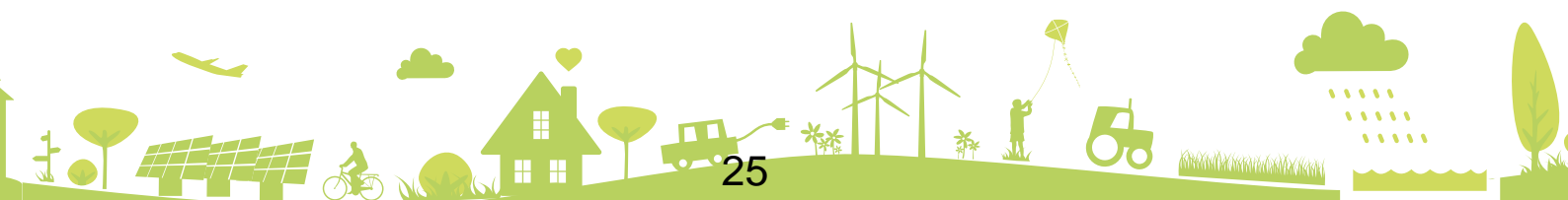


- **What is the Council doing to reduce waste and what can we recycle?**

We made changes to our waste and recycling services in March 2021 when we reduced the residual waste kerbside collections to once every three weeks whilst simultaneously introducing a weekly food waste collection. We have seen an increase in our recycling rates from 43% to 56% as a direct consequence of this action. In addition only 7% of all household waste now ends up as landfill. For information on what can be recycled please check this link: <https://re3.fccenvironment.co.uk/recylo/>

- **How are your policies helping to protect biodiversity?**

The Council's new Local Plan includes Policy LP 46 Biodiversity which requires a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain from all new developments and a 20% net gain for specific developments. The same developments are also required to provide suitable ecological survey information (including for protected and priority species) prior to the determination of a planning application. In accordance with this policy, developments are expected to retain, protect, enhance and buffer ecological features and create new features where possible. They are also expected to avoid fragmentation of habitats and create coherent ecological networks.



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# Climate Change Strategy Annual report on progress 2021/22



## **Forward from The Executive Member of the Environment, Councillor Dorothy Hayes MBE**

(Pic of Dot)

This report covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 representing the first annual summary of the council's progress against our climate change strategy. As Executive Member for the Environment I take great pride in taking the lead to help us reach our pledged commitment to become a net-zero carbon council by 2050. Mitigating the impacts of climate change is a subject area that has long been a focus for Bracknell Forest Council and it is specifically referenced within the Protecting and Enhancing our Environment section of the council plan.

Climate Change mitigations were of course on the front foot at the very start of the year given our introduction of our new food waste strategy plus the completion of retrofitting 99 of our residents' least energy efficient homes through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme. Further initiatives have centred on decarbonising our own estate, continuing to support sustainable transport and improving the biodiversity of the borough.

Internally our climate change governance took a big step forward during the year with the creation of both an officer's climate change board and a Councillor Climate Change Advisory Panel. Taken together I believe these will bring both a focus and a scrutiny into the council's efforts to mitigate the man-made impacts of a changing climate.

On a national level Bracknell Forest continues to engage with the Local Government Association and other overarching bodies striving to share best practice and learnings from one another's experiences. The council also actively embraced the inaugural The Big Green Week (Sep 2021) to showcase what we are doing for the climate change agenda.

On the international front the UK of course played host to the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP26) which took place in Glasgow in November 2021. COP26's main focus was to encourage greater cooperation among nations. However, that is not to say that the outcomes do not affect Bracknell Forest. There are three areas of funding specifically laid out within current government's strategy that could help us achieve our net zero ambitions:

- £3.9 billion of new funding for decarbonising heat and buildings, including the new £450 million 3-year Boiler Upgrade Scheme, ensuring homes and buildings are warmer, cheaper to heat and cleaner to run.
- A £1.35 billion commitment to support the electrification of UK vehicles and their supply chains, coupled with a further £620 million for targeted electric vehicle grants and infrastructure.
- A £124 million boost to the Nature for Climate Fund helping to meet commitments to restore approximately 280,000 hectares of peat in England by 2050 and treble woodland creation in England to meet commitments to create at least 30,000 hectares of woodland per year across the UK by the end of this parliament.

Aligning our approach to focus in on securing access to these funds and others to come will be at the heart of our continued efforts moving forwards.

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## Introduction by Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery

(Pic of Kevin)

Summary of key successes:

- Changing the culture here at BFC (climate change at core of procurement choices ; climate change a critical factor in all decision reports; educating, encouraging, spreading the word)
- Co-benefits – any action taken on climate change is relevant to associated priorities such as health; the economy / employment; poverty, housing and inequality; and energy security;
- Encouraging behavioural adaptations both within but more importantly from our businesses and our residents
- Bracknell Forest Giants in partnership with The Lexicon helping deliver the borough's messages around protecting and enhancing our natural environment. (BF Springs to follow).

Bracknell Forest is an ambitious council and seeks to be a class leader in everything we do. The communities within the borough have set and expect high standards for the council and therefore expects our delivery around the climate change agenda to be as exemplary as everything else we do.

We are in this for the long term, and therefore our ambition must be tempered by the resources we have available and how willing everyone is to join us on this change in how we live, work and enjoy our lives. Meeting people where they are, as opposed to where we want them to be is key to keeping as many people engaged in our work as possible. Tom Heap, the Countryfile presenter, made the case around getting to net zero, that this will require a change in what we define as a “good life”. Jumping into a car to do a short journey that could be done on foot, will need to be as socially unacceptable as smoking is now. Things that are the most convenient may need to be given up and habits changed forever to become sustainable. That said, we recognise that simply demanding that people change is not an effective strategy. Bracknell Forest Council is focused on doing stuff, as opposed to talking about doing stuff. To this end, the last 12 months has seen the anniversary of our Greening our waste strategy. This strategy has delivered a whole borough food waste recycling scheme that has over 90% participation of those eligible to use the scheme. This is now into its next phase, with the scheme being rolled out to flats and houses in multiple occupation. Everyone can be involved.

The council has sought to maximise the monies available for works that we can do but bidding for financial resources, made available via central government schemes, is not straight forward or as easy as it could be. Although we have done well in securing resources via public sector decarbonisation schemes, we have also been less successful in some of our larger bids (For example, a£500k joint bid with Silva Homes for social housing decarbonisation and a £500k air source heating system for Time Square). Each bid takes the same amount of staff resources and therefore for the next period, we will be working hard to get our ideas to the stage of being “shovel ready”, a theme which we have picked up in the feedback on the projects not funded. That all said, Property Services have secured £929k of grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation fund, Salix. This being in addition to the funding that the council has put in itself, into schemes on our corporate building estate, such as for new LED lighting, boiler replacements and additional PV solar cells. Highways and Transport have secured £260k, for active travel initiatives and EV



charging points. We have also had support from our local MPs, who supported Cllr Mrs Hayes in hosting the Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion to look at how the council can get green funding to address brownfield sites.

The council's approach to changing its own operations, to ensure that we reach our target, has been based on embedding climate change mitigation into the heart of the council's decision making, resourcing planning and service delivery. Our report templates have been amended so that report authors can show that they have considered climate change mitigation and reduction as part of their change proposals. Service Plans (published in April 2022) have had climate change mitigation added to the "golden thread" and therefore can be monitored via the normal performance management processes which have ensured that the council has been successful in delivering on its programme of work for many years.

There is a strong link in our climate change mitigation work with our duties under the "Public Sector Equalities Duty" and "Health in all policies", part of our drive to improve public health. To this end, the Public Health team has supported programmes for behaviour change schemes, to increase walking and cycling (Eco Rewards scheme) and general fitness (Get Green and Active). They have also worked on Air Quality schemes (with the Public Protection Partnership), adding to the £259k funding secured from DEFRA, to improve the air within the borough, especially around our schools. Finally, supporting our Energy Sustainability Officer to address thermal inefficient poor-quality housing.

Covid has impacted on our ability to capture the good work that our schools and businesses have been doing to contribute to the whole borough target. Our strategy is a whole borough area programme and seeks the whole borough to work with us to achieve net zero. Although it is true that only 12% of Bracknell Forest businesses have specific targets for net zero, over 51% now have an intention to be more environmentally friendly. Therefore, it is key that we turn these intentions into action and work with those businesses who neither have a plan or target to get these for the next performance year.

Reaching out into the community has been the core of getting the net zero change message beyond the work that the council is doing. The Forest Giants at Bracknell Town Centre, weren't just about bringing people back to the high street but also an important way of reaching out to the community about the importance of the natural environment and to communicate important environmental information to residents and visitors, covering a range of ages and background. The campaign to introduce food waste recycling, with its strap line of "easy as 1,2,3" not only brought the issue of food waste to the fore, but also encouraged greater participation in recycling and reducing residual waste that goes to landfill.

On the whole, this has been a successful year, despite the pandemic. The key for this next year is to hold on to the gains in behaviour change that were forced by COVID. Hybrid working, reducing the number of car movements, increasing social connection and enjoyment of our natural environment, are all positives that must continue. As must staycations and reducing pollution from air travel. With energy costs set to rocket this year, finding ways to move to more sustainable, locally produced, energy will be something that the council will be focused upon for the next year.

## Climate Change Advisory Panel Chair: Councillor Tony Virgo

(pic of Tony)

The Cross-party climate change advisory panel was set up by the Executive following a recommendation by the O&S Commission for the establishment of a councillor group as part of its scrutiny of the Council's climate change strategy and action plan and I am delighted to have been appointed as Chair. We are a panel of 12 elected councillors with representation from all political parties with a common interest in facing up to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The role of CCAP is to advise Executive Councillors on issues around climate change. The CCAP also provides a useful public forum for sharing the council's journey to net zero and to demonstrate that there is credible performance management of our projects. We meet bi-monthly with the first meeting having been held in June 2021.

Since that first meeting the group have considered specific themes in turn. The first such topic being centred around the challenges around electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. The panel were updated on the council's current policy towards EV's, along with presentations from Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (energy provider) and Bloor Homes, representing the new home builders. The informative presentations highlighted the need for government strategy to crystallise further so that the council could progress with its own plans.

The next topic concerned the subject of domestic home energy efficiency. The panel received a summary of the past, present and future work plans of the Energy Sustainability Officer, an introduction to how the council is working in partnership with a private landlord (Silva Homes), a view of the issues facing housing developers (Wimpey Homes) plus a presentation on the current benefits and drawbacks of (ground or air source) heat pumps. Two themes emerged from these discussions: capacity and cost. There are projected capacity issues around both the scale of retrofitting existing homes but also the ability and skill set to provide homes of the future. In addition, further stimuli to encourage private funding and investment will be required to make customer choices more affordable.

## Vice Chair: Councillor Tina Mckenzie-Boyle

(pic of Tina)

I am delighted to have been selected as vice-chair of the CCAP as I have a keen interest in all matters relating to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

One specific area of interest of mine concerns the need to move towards a circular waste economy and so the January 2022 session of the CCAP which considered the benefits of anaerobic digestion (AD) plants was of particular interest. AD plants function by breaking down organic waste materials and producing either gas or fertilizers or both.

Ahead of the session I and several other councillors of the panel visited existing anaerobic digestion plants in Hampshire and Oxfordshire. Our own findings were mapped against a separate feasibility study completed by Atkins on the council's behalf to consider the merits of installing a facility here within the borough. The overall conclusion was that whilst an AD plant would be of benefit any lead on such a project should be left in the hands of a commercial developer to take forwards.



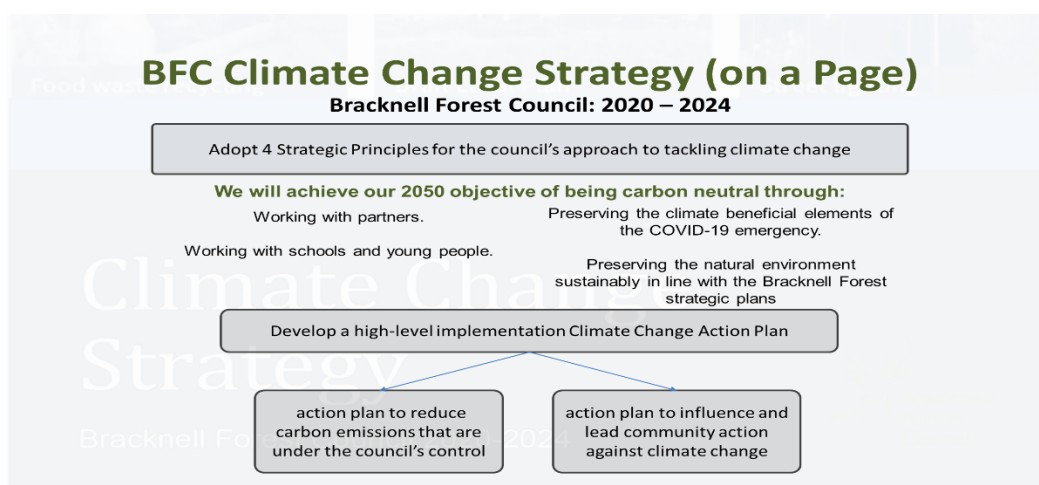
In March 2022 we focussed on efforts to decarbonise the council's estate including a number of heat decarbonisation plans which will propose suitable tangible options for decarbonising and saving energy within future schemes, a summary of recent green energy efficiency initiatives including solarPV roof panels, plus heating and energy efficient lighting projects and an explanation of the planned energy efficiencies and future proofing being built in to the redevelopment of the commercial centre.

I look forwards to supporting further initiatives over the coming year.

## • Strategy summary

The Council's climate change strategy was published in January 2021 and sets out the council's initial 4-year framework towards reaching our ambition to be carbon net-zero by 2050. <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/bracknell-forest-climate-change-strategy.pdf>

The strategy can be summarised as per the diagram below. It is worth noting that direct carbon dioxide equivalent emissions within the council's control represent around 2% of the entire emissions associated with the borough as a whole.



During 2021/22 there was a strong emphasis placed on cementing the governance around supporting our climate change work. The strategy and accompanying action plan were therefore each audited in August 2021. The objectives of the audit were to evaluate the controls in place to manage and deliver the council's Climate Change Strategy, with a view to delivering reasonable assurance as to the adequacy of the design of the internal control systems and their application in practice. The overall findings indicated an adequate level of assurance with some minor recommendations for further improvement.

One of the headline outcomes from that audit process included recognition of the importance of the creation of both councillor and Officer groups along with recommendations to strengthen and support the work of each group. In addition, there was an acknowledgement that certain aspects of the council's work towards reducing our carbon emissions were lacking in terms of defining and quantifying progress made and having interim targets to reach. Each recommendation has been included within an audit outcomes management plan for further work and analysis.

- **Action Plan to support strategy**

The Council's climate change strategy is supported by an action plan which charts progress made against current climate change mitigation projects or streams of work. The action plan is therefore a 'live' document which is updated and consolidated at the end of each quarter. Updates are provided by nominated officers within various sections and directorates of the council. These quarterly updates are reported to the officer's board and the action plan is updated and published on the council's climate change web pages. [CC Action Plan for CCOB Q4 Jan-Mar 22 - 04-05-22.pdf](#) Action Plan progress reports are also presented to the Advisory Panel and once per annum to Full Council to complete full governance of all climate change mitigation activities.

At any point in time the action plan represents a snapshot of all known 'live' pieces of work being completed that can be demonstrated as having tangible benefits to minimise the man-made impacts of climate change. Projects or work streams are only added to the action plan once they have been approved at Department Management Team level.

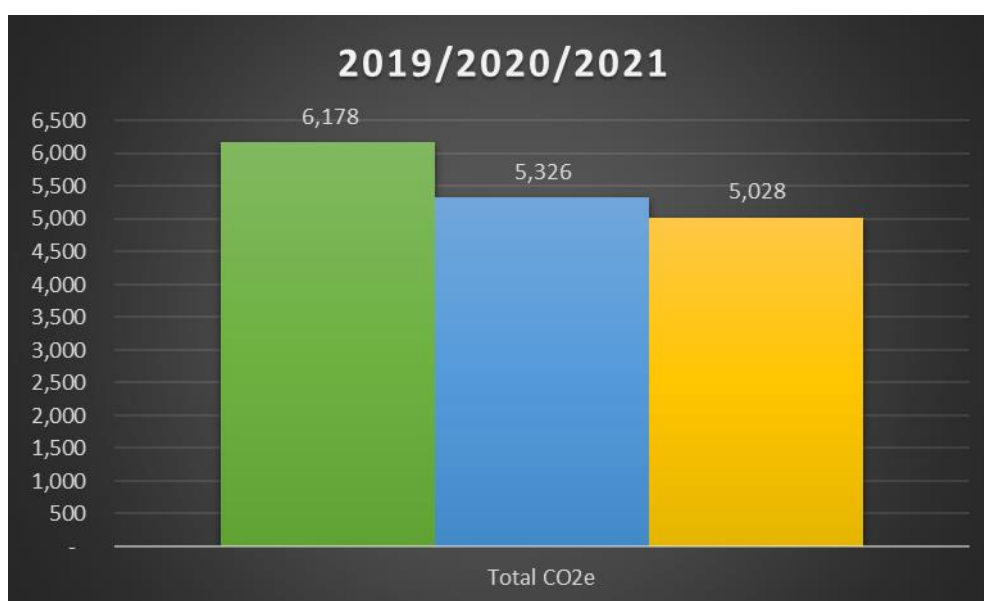
At the end of Q4 in 2021/22 there were 46 different projects referred to within the action plan and a further 5 at the proposal stage. The activities represented reflect a mix of those which solely benefit the council estate, those which solely benefit the borough and those which benefit both.

Completed or closed projects are also captured within the action plan and a summary of those key achievements in the 2021/22 year is covered elsewhere within this report.

The 2021 audit of the climate change strategy highlighted the differences in the degree to which individual projects within the action plan could clearly identify the measurement of progress. There was a recognition that whilst clearly defined progress could be shown in some areas, there was still work to do with regards the re-definition of others to enable the council to set both interim and final targets, plus demonstrate progress made towards those. Officers have already been undertaking efforts to provide a tighter focus and definition for their work streams and this will continue to be a clear focus for improvement as we move forwards.

## • **Headline metrics 2021**

The Council commenced measurement of its own carbon footprint in 2019 based on a calendar year. The data for the 2021 calendar year showed that our total CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from the council's transport fleet, plus gas, electric and water consumption was **5,028 tonnes**. This compares to the initial figure of **6,178** in 2019 and **5,326** from 2020.



For 2021 it has also been possible to start capturing data showing emissions from the council's consumption of water. These amounted to 78 tonnes which are incorporated into the total above.

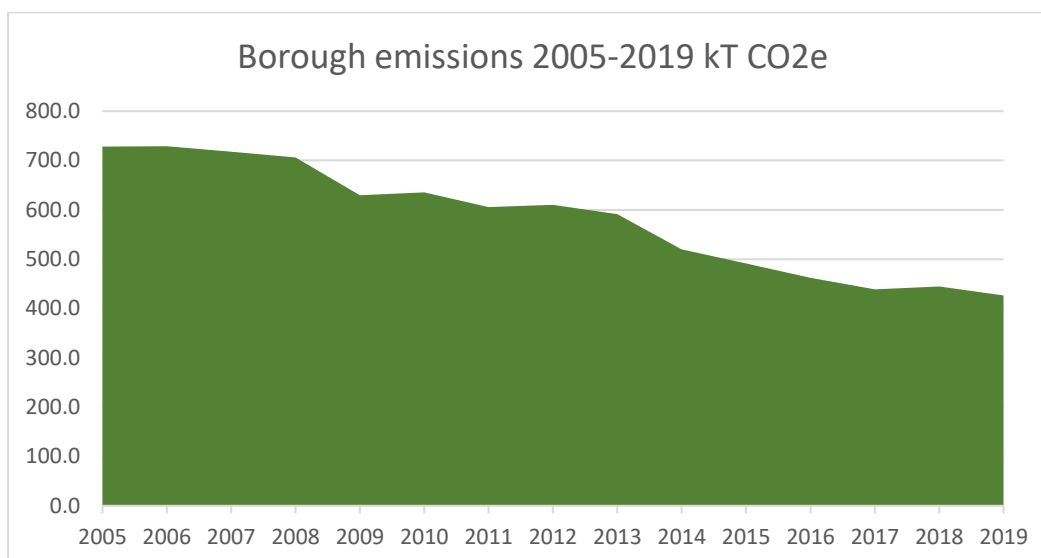
Both 2020 and 2021 were of course heavily impacted by COVID enforced lockdowns.

When compared to figures for the borough as a whole the council's direct activities referred to above represent around 2% of all emissions.

Indirect emissions (those from our supply chain and our contracted services) are a much harder parameter to define, but exploratory work is underway, and this area will continue to be explored further.

Estimates for total emissions for all local authority areas are provided by the governments' Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy department (BEIS). The first such set of figures were provided for 2005. BEIS releases annual statistics each June approximately 18 months in arrears, so the most recent release is that from June 2021 which reports on emissions in the 2019 calendar year.

For Bracknell Forest Borough the figure was **426.1kT CO<sub>2</sub>e** which is down by **18.2kT from 444.3 in 2018** and compares to our initial benchmark of **728.5kT in 2005**, representing a **41.5%** reduction overall. (see chart below)



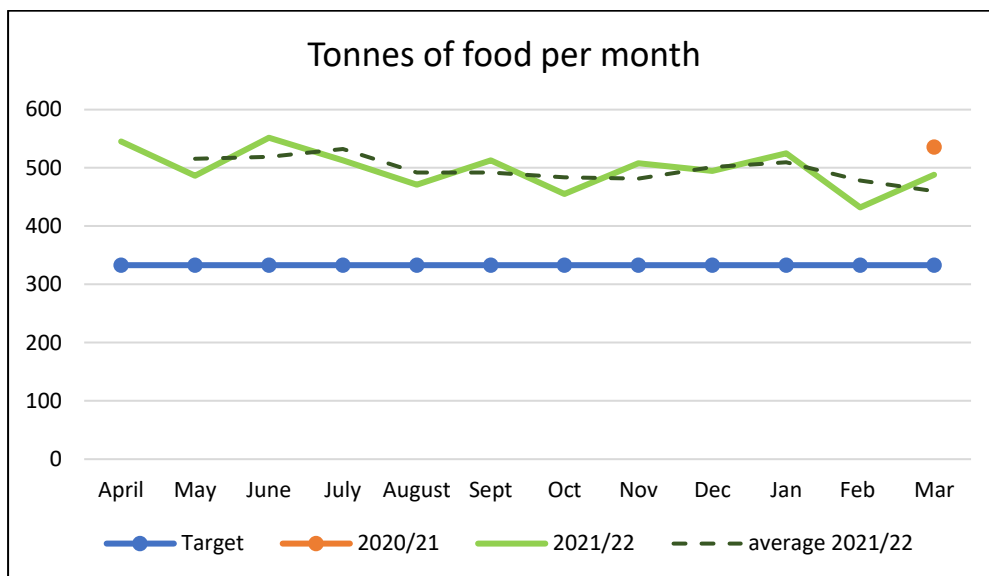
Bracknell Forest's emissions per capita were 3.5 tonnes: lower than the 4.4 tonnes south east England average and the 5.2 tonnes national average. When compared to the other local authorities in Berkshire, only Reading have reduced emissions by a higher percent than Bracknell Forest over the 14 years of measurement.

### • **Key projects delivered 21/22**

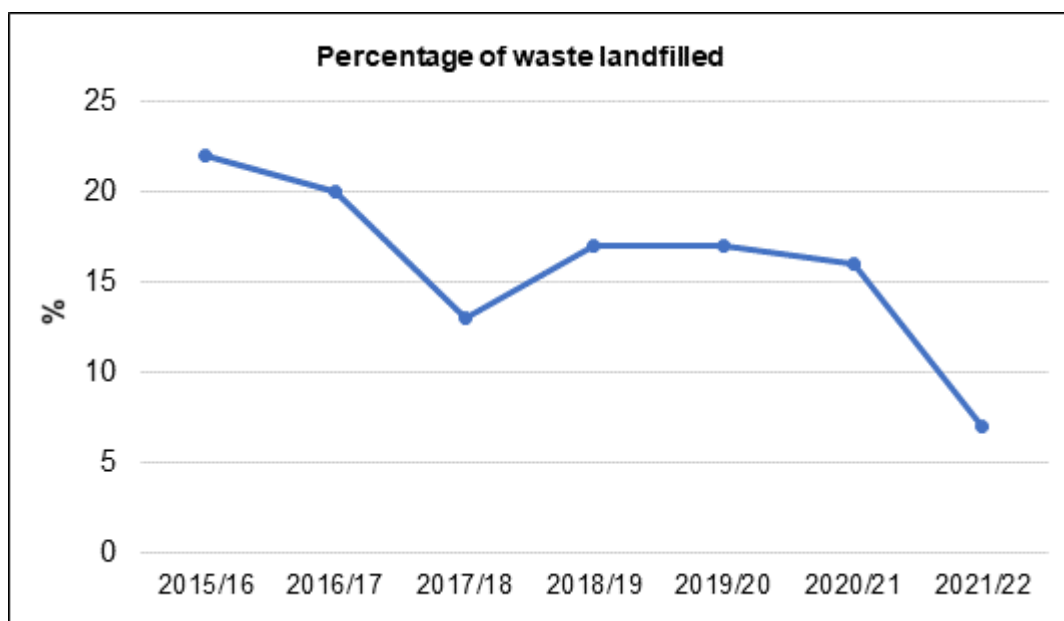
- Green Homes Grant funding (£900k spent / further £1M planned); In terms of the home decarbonisation projects via the government's Green Homes Grants Local Authority Delivery schemes (GHG LAD), the council completed the works from GHG LAD 1 (£900k grant received) back in the Summer of 2021. We have further funding from both GHG LAD 2 (£87k for spend by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022) and GHG LAD 3 – also referred to as Sustainable Warmth and Home Upgrade Grants (£1M for spend by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023).
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Salix) funding of £350k at Sandhurst school to enable their transition from oil to gas central heated boilers. A further £425k of funding was secured for 38 schools within the borough who benefitted from works that increased their heat conservation and reduced their energy use. Once all schemes were completed it is estimated that their combined carbon footprints were lowered by 1,536,170 kWh, or a 25% tCO<sub>2</sub>e per year reduction (283 Tonnes).
- A second tranche of Salix funding worth £154k has enabled our partners Atkins to prepare heat decarbonisation plans for all of the Council's property stock including schools not already funded. This will propose suitable tangible options for decarbonising and saving energy within future schemes.
- From April 2021 all electricity consumed within BFC buildings has been sourced from 100% sustainable supplies.
- The Parks and Countryside service planted 2,795 trees over 20 sites as part of highways improvements and improvements to public green spaces.



- In addition both the total areas of Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) have increased by 50.97 and by 17.7 hectares respectively. In a climate change context our ponds help store water, reduce flooding and act as carbon sinks, whilst our woodlands and meadows provide urban cooling, carbon storage and support the survival of biodiversity.
- The introduction of our kerbside recycling of food waste in Mar 2021 has seen 6,031 tonnes of food waste collected and recycled in the first year. The graph below shows that the trend for tonnes collected far outweighed our initial target estimates.

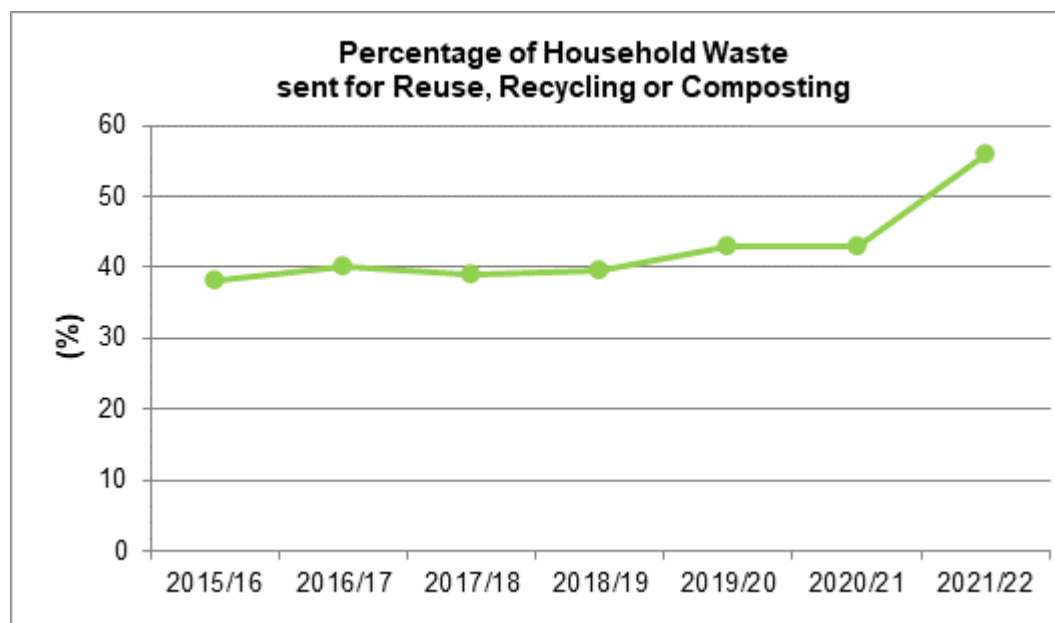


- The service, when combined with the reduction in the frequency of residual waste collections, from two weekly to three weekly, has also helped reduce waste going to landfill. The graph below shows the landfill rate for the last 7 financial years:





- This diversion of food waste has produced a carbon saving of over 3.72 million kg of Co2e (carbon dioxide equivalent emissions) being prevented from entering the atmosphere. Participation in the food waste scheme remains exceptionally high at around 90% of households. This compares to an average of around 60%-70% in other schemes nationally.
- Our recycling rate (as a % of all waste collected) has risen from 43% to 56% during the 2021/22 year. This 13% improvement on last year is an exceptional achievement and proof of the success of our greening waste strategy.



- The Highways and Transport service has received a revenue grant, from the Department of Transport, aimed at active travel initiatives. A £160k grant has been utilised to help the service to expand cycling routes to Crowthorne and Sandhurst and to commission some promotional videos as well. These videos will be supported by interactive maps, cycle led rides, family events, and working with businesses and schools to increase active travel participation.
- We have also promoted involvement in the EcoRewards active travel scheme that provides an incentive for residents to use active transport for their commutes. A specific competition during the Big Green Week led to a 25% increase (in-week) in miles travelled using active transport. During 2021/22 the scheme has seen 187,132 of green miles logged, saving 40.8 tonnes of CO2 when compared to driving.
- Highways also revised our bus service improvement plan and will work with planners to produce a new travel plan policy, giving us more control over sustainable mode initiatives.
- All reports now have to have considered Climate Change impacts as part of the decision-making process. This helps support a cultural change in the Council in relation to Climate Change.

It is worth noting that the council applied for, but was ultimately unsuccessful with the following funding bids:

- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: A £500k bid submitted on behalf of / in partnership with Silva Homes to retrofit private landlord housing;
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund: a £500k bid to install a hybrid system of air source heat and a new gas boiler at Time Square;
- Department for Transport: a £30k bid to develop a detailed plan to improve cycling and walking between Crowthorne and Owlsmoor;

## • Key projects moving forwards

- The plans for the redesigned Commercial Centre will incorporate some significant energy saving / greening elements. These will include a green roof providing thermal insulations and allowing the installation of solar PV panels; the heating of the building via an air source heat pump; plus, the addition of electric vehicle charge points.
- The council has secured £100k funding to roll out 32 residential charging points across the borough. These will be low wattage / fast chargers, aimed at overnight charging. Having reviewed the best locations for these, and in line with the funding criteria, it has been agreed local community hubs, e.g., at shopping centres, would be the best locations. Looking ahead BFC will continue to help facilitate with the introduction of more EV charging points, working with the businesses to increase employee charge points and reacting to any future funding opportunities that could increase EV charging infrastructure on highway land.
- Public Health funding will count towards several projects that contribute towards mitigating climate change too. Additional funds will support an Eco Rewards behaviour change incentive scheme; a scheme to promote 'Get Green and Active' volunteering, and efforts to improve the health of some of our poorest residents through home improvement works.
- There is ongoing work to phase out conventional vehicles from the council's fleet and replace with electric vehicles. This ties in with longer term ambitions for both the Home to School transport fleet and our 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractor vehicles (waste/recycling; highway maintenance; street cleansing) too.
- Additional funding to support anti-idling project work will enable the purchase of further equipment to monitor levels of air quality. Licensing liaison Officers will also be attending taxi ranks and starting education around idling and idling enforcement. This programme will then expand further to known hot spot areas around the borough.
- Our Natural Estate officers are committed to protecting and improving habitats that mitigate the effects of climate change. Their aim is to target the provision of 20 hectares of publicly accessible greenspaces within 2km of every residence. Alongside this there is their ambition to improve green infrastructure through land management. They aim to link up 5 areas of urban ecological importance and to move to 60% of all farmland being managed with nature conservation aims.

- Our food waste collection scheme will start to expand to a further 20% of flats (up to 1,800 residences) in the Borough.
- Plans to alter the council's approach to grass verge maintenance will see grass areas surrounding trees left uncut through the growing season. These planned actions would help preserve the trees themselves, improve biodiversity, reduce rain run-off and protect wildlife species.

Investigations have begun into options for an electric vehicle charging hub sited on land owned by the Council on the London Road. This is in addition to a solar farm on the same site.

## Comms work

A detailed communication plan has been developed and good progress has been made in profiling key programme successes. Climate change news stories have been published every two weeks since the start of May 2021. Over the course of the year a grand total of 110 climate change related articles were issued by the council. Links to some example stories are included here:

[Reducing idling cars in Bracknell Forest | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news-releases/2021/08/23/reducing-idling-cars-in-bracknell-forest)

[Energy efficiency support for residents | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news-releases/2021/08/23/energy-efficiency-support-for-residents)

[Eco Rewards scheme clocks up 100,000 green miles | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news-releases/2021/08/23/eco-rewards-scheme-clocks-up-100000-green-miles)

Social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, have been key communication channels. The council has over 13,000 followers on Facebook, so it is one of the most important platforms to put communication messages out through. This also has the benefit of being two-way communication, with posts generating much debate between the users and messages back to the council. The council also uses e-news letters, e.g., Parks & Countryside, Waste & Recycling, etc., in addition to Town and Country, as its other routes for messaging.

The climate change team's press releases have been used by the Bracknell News, and on local radio including BBC radio Berkshire. One particular highlight being a piece around one of our food recycling trucks being named "Dame Foodie Dench", prompting a video response from Dame Judi herself.

Local events like the Forest Giants have generated a real focus on the area and the council's work around climate change. We are therefore now exploring if additional budget for communications can be secured to extend the work to billboards, radio ads, leaflets, letter drops, etc.

Looking forward, the team will be exploring the most effective ways to communicate with schools more regularly, e.g., headteachers updates plus supporting a planned schools' climate change conference in May 2022. Also, more targeted messaging for groups like older residents, faith groups, etc. Our climate change Officer started producing weekly tips for residents for these different resident channels. The focus is on everyday things that residents can build into their routines, e.g., shorter showers, sustainable cooking, etc.

Internal communications are equally as important. Messages and articles have been put in the staff newspapers, Forest Views and Forest Views Extra helping to make the strategy more visible to all staff and councillors. There is also a Climate Change Yammer group through which all staff and councillors can post ideas or signpost others to articles of interest around climate change. Using the internal staff channels more, has opened up new internal debates around efficiencies that the council can make in its operations, such as staff talking about working from home in a more sustainable way, etc. Having now secured a regular slot in forest views for climate change content should mean that the council's priority in this area stays front and centre in staff's thinking and planning.

## Wider Engagement

This report has already touched on the publicly open stance adopted by the Climate Change Advisory Panel with all sessions being recorded and available to watch via YouTube. The council aims to build on the success of these public engagement forums as it seeks to widen the opportunities for us to work in tandem with our local communities. The incoming climate change officer will focus on developing these opportunities over the next year.

In addition, there are plans during 2022/23 to engage more directly with our schools and young people. Recently, Bracknell Forest Council hosted a schools climate conference, featuring talks from Greenpeace and Chris Packham. The day consisted of inspiring presentations and workshop activities, in the hopes of empowering the local young people to become agents of change in combating climate change. There will be opportunities arising from the conference for the borough's climate change officer to engage with the schools' community to help inform a joined-up approach to communicating key messages around climate change mitigation.

A 2021 Bracknell Forest Council Business Survey was undertaken with over 500 local businesses primarily to understand the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit but it also asked for the views of local businesses around the green agenda. Among many outcomes the results (available on the [Bracknell Forest for Business](#) webpage) showed that just 51 per cent of businesses have the intention of being more environmentally friendly, just 12 per cent have set a specific target or aim to achieve net-zero and just five per cent have set a deadline to this commitment. This clearly demonstrates an opportunity for greater engagement and collaboration and is an area that the council is keen to develop in partnership with both large and small businesses over the next year. We are therefore planning to engage directly with the Bracknell Businesses Improvement District (BID) to identify ways in which we can better share knowledge, experiences, and successes.

## Climate Change FAQ's

- What is the council doing with regards to home energy efficiency improvements?

*Our proposed Local Plan (currently awaiting approval) proposes that all major new residential developments should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this is unviable. In which case, the development must achieve a minimum of a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.*

*New residential developments shall also meet a water efficiency standard of 110 Litres / person / day.*

*Non-residential developments shall meet at least BREEAM 'excellent' or equivalent standard.*

*Energy efficiency improvements to existing homes are targeted on a 'most in need' basis so that residents living in energy inefficient homes or those particularly vulnerable to the effects of the cold are most likely to benefit from funding support. We regularly bid for government funding to help address these needs.*

- What types of local home and non-domestic energy efficiency can the council help and advise on?

*Our proposed Local Plan makes it clear that developments for renewable and low carbon energy may include solar farms, wind turbines, biomass, district heating and combined heat and power (CHP) from renewable resources.*

*Residents can find materials to help and support them understand energy efficiency on our dedicated webpages [Renewable energy | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/renewable-energy) (click link to see document).*

- Do you have a policy on electric vehicle charging stations, locations and charging types?

*The council's Transport team have produced an updated guide on its work around [EV infrastructure](#) (click link to see document).*

- Please explain what you are doing to improve cycling and walking take-up?

*The council already has a strategy to target active travel: [BFC Sustainable Modes Strategy](#) which contains both a: - [Walking and Cycling Strategy](#); and a - [Public Transport Strategy](#); (click links to see documents).*

- What are you doing to monitor your carbon footprint?

*We use the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions survey to measure our whole borough performance. The data for 2019 is the most recent such release and confirms that the Bracknell Forest area saw emissions reduce by 4% since 2018, and by a total of 41% since 2005. Between 2005 and 2019, the per capita rates of CO<sub>2</sub>e have reduced from 6.6 tonnes to 3.5 tonnes. Overall, the data shows the borough's CO<sub>2</sub>e reduced from 728.5 Kilotonnes to 426.1 Kilotonnes. Compared to other local authorities in the South East of England, only Reading and Kent have reduced emissions by a higher percentage than Bracknell Forest over the 14 years.*

- Can you make your climate change action plan SMARTer with objectives linked to ambitious but credible targets?

*The council's Climate Change strategy is underpinned by an action plan covering about 46 projects. Each project has a climate change mitigation target and evaluation process. The strategy's effectiveness is measure in CO<sub>2</sub>e reductions, as measured in the BEIS annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions survey for the BFC borough area.*

*Quarterly Performance reports are presented to the Climate Change Advisory Panel, and updates are also published on our web pages for the public to review. The individual targets within our climate change action plan have and continue to be reviewed and modified to better reflect SMART measures.*

- What is the Council doing to reduce waste and what can we recycle?

*We made changes to our waste and recycling services in March 2021 when we reduced the residual waste kerbside collections to once every three weeks whilst simultaneously introducing a weekly food waste collection. We have seen an increase in our recycling rates from 43% to 56% as a direct consequence of this action. In addition only 7% of all household waste now ends up as landfill.*

*For information on what can be recycled please check this link: [re3 re3cyclopedia](https://www.fccenvironment.co.uk/re3-re3cyclopedia) ([fccenvironment.co.uk](https://www.fccenvironment.co.uk))*

- How are your policies helping to protect biodiversity?

*The Council's new Local Plan includes Policy LP 46 Biodiversity which requires a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain from all new developments and a 20% net gain for specific developments. The same developments are also required to provide suitable ecological survey information (including for protected and priority species) prior to the determination of a planning application. In accordance with this policy, developments are expected to retain, protect, enhance and buffer ecological features and create new features where possible. They are also expected to avoid fragmentation of habitats and create coherent ecological networks.*



# Our action towards net zero 2050

Converted all of our street lighting to LEDs



Improved our waste recycling rates from 43% to 56%

New interactive cycling route maps launched



Purchased 100% renewable electricity for supplying the council estate since April 2021



Secured Public Sector Decarbonisation funding to help us create heat decarbonisation plans for our property estate



35 EV charging points across borough currently with further 32 planned to be delivered shortly



New cycle crossings created in Binfield and Crowthorne.

Have improved the average energy rating across all borough homes to a

'C'



187,132 green miles logged on the EcoRewards active travel scheme in 21/22 with a calculated CO2 saving of 40.8 tonnes



Embedded climate change impacts within all council project decision reports

Have seen improvements in air quality measurements in both of our targeted areas – Crowthorne High Street and the A322/A329 link



Initiated a weekly household kerbside food waste collection diverting more than 6,000 tonnes away from landfill in the first year.



Supported more than 500 residents to help make their homes more energy efficient



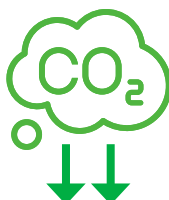
Planted almost 3,000 trees in the last year alone



Worked to align climate change ambitions within all Public Health policies

Reduced total waste going to landfill to just 7%

14% reduction in the Council's direct CO2e emissions in last 2 years



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