

South Gloucestershire Council

REPORT TO: CABINET

CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2024 (ALL WARD(S))

Purpose of Report

- To respond to the requirement to produce an annual progress report every year for ten years in response to the Council's Climate and Nature Emergency Declaration July 2019,
- To present progress on the delivery of the combined Year 5 (2024/25) Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan and the Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030,
- To present the latest available data relating to both area wide and the Council's own operational CO₂e emissions and work on climate adaptation and resilience,
- To review initial proposals and indicative budget estimates for the Year 6 (2025/26) Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan,
- To highlight recommendations made in the 'Year 5 Progress Review' conducted by the South Gloucestershire Climate Emergency University Advisory Group,
- To present progress delivered over the first five years towards 2030 including the essential delivery work that has become Business as Usual (BAU).

Recommendations

That Cabinet be recommended to:

- i) Note the progress made in Year 5 (2024/25),
- ii) Approve the outline proposals for the Year 6 (2025/26) Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan and indicative budget spend, as set out in this report and appendices, and informed by the work of the South Gloucestershire Climate Emergency University Advisory Group,
- iii) Combine the Green Transport and Green Communities budget allocations (£500k each) to allow for better prioritisation between funding streams and match against grant funding opportunities,
- iv) Note and approve the Local Authority Adaptation Reporting Report.

Policy

1. South Gloucestershire Council declared a Climate Emergency on 17th July 2019. As part of this declaration, the Council pledged to provide the leadership to enable South Gloucestershire to become carbon neutral by 2030, urgently prepare for the local impacts of a changing climate and protect and restore nature. The full declaration can be found at [our declaration](#). All previous action plans and reports can be found at: <https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/climate-emergency-in-south-gloucestershire>

2. The South Gloucestershire Climate Emergency Strategy contains commitments made by the Council as part of the Climate and Nature Emergency declaration and subsequent annual Climate and Nature Emergency action plan(s). The overarching vision is:

For a climate resilient South Gloucestershire with a thriving low carbon economy and lifestyle reflected in our travel, homes, businesses, and communities, where nature can flourish.

3. To deliver the commitments made in the Climate and Nature Emergency declaration, the aims set out in the strategy document are:

- I. *For South Gloucestershire to become carbon neutral by 2030,*
- II. *To maximise the generation of renewable energy from installations located within South Gloucestershire,*
- III. *For South Gloucestershire to be prepared for the local impacts of a changing climate,*
- IV. *For nature in our local area to be more protected, connected, and healthy and biodiversity increased,*
- V. *To plant trees across South Gloucestershire by 2030 to double tree cover.*

4. As part of the declaration, the council is required to provide a yearly Climate and Nature Emergency action plan and report on progress towards the delivery of the plan in December of each year, for a 10-year period. The Year 5 Action Plan (2024/25) was approved by Cabinet, in December 2023. This current report forms the progress report on the delivery of that action plan (**Appendix 1**) and a presentation of the proposed projects in the Year 6 plan (**Appendix 3**).

5. The Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy and accompanying Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 was adopted by Cabinet in December 2021. The vision of the Green Infrastructure Strategy is for:

'Greener places where people and nature thrive.'

6. The Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 sets out the action the Council and our partners are taking to optimize the planning, design, and management of Green Infrastructure to deliver priorities for nature recovery, adaptation, resilience, health, and well-being to 2030. Year 5 progress on this Action Plan is set out in **Appendix 5**.
7. This report provides an update on progress towards the delivery of the projects in the Year 5 Action Plan as set out in **Appendix 1**.

Highlights from the delivery of the Year 5 Action Plan include:

- We have supported 25 Town and Parish Councils across our area to develop and start delivering Local Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plans,

- We are working with local community renewable energy organisations to identify sites for big wind on council owned land,
- We have secured funding for an officer to lead on our Investing in Climate and Nature (ICAN) scheme to bring in funding for on the ground nature restoration and emissions reduction projects,
- We have completed a study looking at the heating and cooling off take potential of former mine workings across South Gloucestershire to provide heating and cooling for local homes,
- We have progressed our local plan policies for new development to Regulation 18 stage of the Local Plan,
- We have expanded the LiveLabs Greenprint project to analyse the carbon emissions impact of mixing grass cuttings and waste to generate energy (biogas) collected from highway verges,
- We are continuing to plant trees delivering the Tree Canopy Project, planting trees on council owned land across the wider area,
- We are supporting calls for national policy change recently signing up in support of the National Climate and Nature Bill,
- We have launched several Community Nature Reserves, supporting residents to manage gardens positively for nature. Over 300 residents have signed up in Willsbridge, Emersons Green and Warmley supported by the Common Connections Project,
- We have produced a video to help residents learn how to keep cool at home in the summer - [Preparing for local climate change | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council](#)
- We have pioneered work on tackling transport severance for nature – to prevent wildlife road deaths on our highways network which is now included in regional priority programmes for nature,
- We have developed groundbreaking new funding models for financing work on climate and nature emergency including our goods and services (Scope 3),
- We are taking positive action to prepare our area for local climate changes by putting in place a framework for adaptation and resilience - participating in the Local Authority Adaptation Reporting Power 4th round (ARP4) pilot programme including undertaking some council climate risk assessments; and in a pilot project on Rapid Adaptation Pathways Assessment (RAPA),
- We have promoted Round 3 of the regional Solar Together scheme a renewable energy scheme for residents and the regional Retrofit West campaign that provides resident support for home energy retrofit,
- We delivered a summer programme of information and practical support sessions at community events including at the Thornbury Carnival, Bristol and South Gloucestershire Refugee Festival, PRIDE, and events during Great Big Green Week,
- We have developed leading work to analyse the impact of highways run off on local rivers,
- We have secured funding for the Linking the Levels partnership project to restore nature across the Lower Severn Vale, Levels and Shore of South Gloucestershire,
- We have worked with partners on the Resilient Frome natural flood management programme for the Frome River to restore nature and improve resilience,
- We have made a successful application to Sustainable Food Places – to start developing a cross-sector food partnership for South Gloucestershire,
- We are taking forward the recommendations of task and finish groups for ‘Stormwater Outfalls’ and ‘Farming,’

- This autumn working with 13 Town and Parish Councils and community groups 10,000 bulbs have been planted across our communities to provide early flowering and nectar rich sources of food for pollinators.

Appendix 9 to this report provides a snapshot of photos of some of the Climate and Nature Emergency actions achieved over the last 5 years since the declaration in 2019.

Year 5 Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan Delivery Progress 2024/2025

8. For the actions identified in the Year 5 Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan (**Appendix 1**), an evaluation has been given to indicate progress made. This includes a Blue-Red-Amber-Green (BRAG) rating plus a brief explanatory comment. The table below summarises progress towards the delivery of the year 5 projects (2024/25):

There is 1 project highlighted as Blue. Become business as usual.	1
There are 63 projects highlighted as Green. Green means the project is on track, no concerns.	63
There are 16 projects highlighted as Amber. Amber means minor slippage	16
There is 1 project highlighted as Red. Red means no progress, major concerns.	1

9. All projects BRAG rated RED in the Year 5 plan continue into the Year 6 plan. In terms of projects rated RED in the previous years, these were:

- Adaptation and Resilience Surveys for SMEs – No offer for business developed yet.

10. For the actions identified in the Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 Report on Progress (**Appendix 5**), an evaluation has been given to indicate progress made. This also includes a Blue-Red-Amber-Green (BRAG) rating plus a brief explanatory comment. The table below summarises progress towards the delivery of the Action Plan projects to 2030:

There are 25 projects highlighted as Blue in 24/25. Blue means the project is complete or has become business as usual. (5 projects in 2023/24)	25
There are 47 projects highlighted as Green. Green means the project is on track, no concerns. (62 projects in 2023/24)	47
There are 3 projects highlighted as Amber. Amber means minor slippage. (8 projects in 2023/24)	3
There are 2 projects highlighted as Red. Red means no progress, major concerns. (2 projects in 2023/24)	2

11. Projects showing red in the GI and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 Report on Progress (**Appendix 5**) are:

- **N11 - to double tree canopy cover** - to highlight that this is an area wide and regional goal, and whilst significant work has been delivered and is underway by the Council and 2024/25 funded work is on track, this goal remains a significant challenge due to the need for the development of commercial mechanisms and willing 3rd party landowners' involvement to achieve the scale and pace of work needed.
- **W1 - Restore and improve our river catchments** - whilst significant work has been delivered and is underway by the council and our partners, and work planned and funded for 2024/25 is on track, achieving this goal remains a significant challenge due to national legislative context, lack of effective regulation and enforcement, and underinvestment.

12. Progress towards key performance indicators

Each year the Council reports on 2 key performance indicators and these are currently summarised in the [Council's annual Quality of Life](#) report (latest report pending):

- Carbon emissions (area-wide)
- Renewable energy generation (area-wide)

13. The Council also annually monitors the carbon emissions from our estate and activities, and this year's figures are reported in the table below.

Commitments/ Aims	Indicator	Annual target	Change from previous year	On target?
For South Glos (Area) to become carbon neutral by 2030.	1041.5 kilo t/ CO ₂ e occurred in 2022 (the latest available data).	Target value was set at 976.89 kilo t/ CO ₂ e (to be on target the indicator figure needs to be lower than the annual target value). This target will change each year as we recalculate to include any residual from the year before.	There was a decrease of 70.4 kilo t/ CO ₂ e between 2021 and 2022. The overall decrease is largely as a result of warmer temperatures in 2022 resulting in less energy being used to heat buildings and potentially higher energy prices also had an impact. Compared to our 2018 baseline figure (from BEIS 2024 data) of 1186.1 kt CO ₂ , emissions have decreased by 12%.	Target not met

<p>For South Glos Council to become carbon neutral by 2030.</p>	<p>7,672 t/ CO₂e occurred in 2023/2024 (Scope 1 & 2 only)</p>	<p>1226 t/CO₂e is the target reduction amount per year – (based on the previous 2022/23 emissions data, divided by the remaining years to 2030). This target will change each year as we recalculate to include any residual from the year before.</p>	<p>There was 909.12 t/ CO₂e reduction (11%) from the previous year</p> <p>Our streetlighting programme continues to reduce streetlight emissions.</p> <p>13 primary schools became academies, and this will impact our overall emissions as they move out of scope of this indicator. Two vehicles are undertaking a trial using hydrogenated vegetable oil.</p>	<p>Target not met</p>
<p>To maximise renewable energy generated from installations located in South Gloucestershire .</p>	<p>Locally installed renewable energy provides 5% the equivalent of local energy demand, (Heat, power, and transport) (2022/2023)</p> <p>2562 Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accredited installations were achieved from 2022 to 2023</p>	<p>We currently have an aspirational target for 100% of local energy demand to be met from renewable energy generated from installations located in South Gloucestershire.</p> <p>This was originally set in line with the UK100 target which has been subsequently changed.</p> <p>This indicator will be changed from next year as per the explanatory text below. It will be altered to the number of Microgeneration Certification Scheme accredited installations</p>	<p>Annual total renewable energy generation: 297 gigawatt hours (2022/23) providing the equivalent of 5% of local energy demand. Energy demand will vary year on year and over time.</p> <p>As set out in our data dashboard generation from Solar PV increased from 88.9 GWh in 2022 to 94.4 GWh in 2023.</p> <p>4.5 MW of new renewable energy capacity was installed in 2022/2023. An additional 506 MW of solar PV and 1471MW battery storage, either has permission and is unimplemented or awaits a decision.</p>	<p>Target not met</p>

14. In 2024 we reviewed our three carbon/energy related targets. Our overall area wide target currently remains the same, but the trajectory and the amount to be reduced each year has changed. The national data we use is two years in arrears so we will not know our area wide emission in 2030 until 2032. Dividing the latest emissions figure (at present this is 2021) by the remaining years to 2030, gives us an equally distributed reduction target each year, which will make it simpler to monitor progress. By recalculating the residual each year, it will allow us to measure whether the amount is getting greater and therefore suggesting we are getting further away from meeting our target. It should be noted that the government data is altered each year after publication, for all previous years (this is done as more data is released so the updated figures increase in accuracy) and therefore the figures change retrospectively each year. The revised approach of recalculating each year also removes this vulnerability to the figures updating each year.
15. The review undertaken by UWE in 2023 shows that even a 'highly ambitious' carbon reduction scenario leaves significant residual emissions at 2030 ([Plan to 2030 Report, UWE](#)). As such, without significant national policy and fiscal interventions, the target is likely to continue to be missed each year. Reporting on what is essentially an 'emissions gap,' helps to gauge the scale of the task still ahead.
16. While the target for the Council to be carbon neutral by 2030, remains the same, we will be altering the target each year to ensure that we include any underachievement in residual emissions from the previous year. We will also express the target as an actual amount rather than a percentage. We will also need to consider the costs associated with offsetting any residual emissions as we get closer to the 2030 target year so that we can inform business cases to reduce emissions further or purchase carbon credits.
17. Our renewable energy target will be altered going forward. It was based on the UK100 target which has since been changed. We will still report on the total proportion of renewable energy, but our target now relates to the annual increase in renewable energy capacity in communities. The new target will be based on Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MSC) installations, where the data is already reported and collected on our behalf.

18. Nature Recovery Goals

In 2023 officers identified a baseline and a monitoring process for our goals for Nature Recovery which align with local, regional, and national ambitions for nature, consistent with our Climate and Nature Emergency declaration to 'protect and restore nature across our area'. See **Appendix 5** Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 Progress Report (24/25), for information about the goals, baseline, progress, work delivered and underway.

19.

Goal	Baseline	Tracking	Progress since last year	On target?
Double tree canopy 'Plant and establish trees across South	2020 baseline: 12% (6,437 hectares) tree canopy cover for South Gloucestershire.	Bluesky data every 5 years to track progress alongside reporting progress on projects and work	See Appendix 1 – year 5 Progress	Projects in the year 5 action plan are

Gloucestershire by 2030, to double tree canopy cover at maturity.'	Bluesky satellite data and Tree Canopy tool	SMART targets where appropriate.	report for detail.	on track, however the scale of challenge remains for this goal
30% of land managed positively for nature 'Increase the area of land managed positively for nature – 30% by 2030'	2020 baseline: 11.58% (6,612 hectares) of South Gloucestershire is designated for nature. This includes LNRs, SSSIs and SNCIs with all overlaps accounted for. The unitary local authority area of South Gloucestershire covers 53,644.7 hectares	Annual review of increase or decrease in land managed positively for nature. To highlight that the definition of land in scope for 30 by 30 is being reviewed nationally and may be broadened to bring in other categories of land managed positively for nature which are managed under a management plan for nature e.g. land under a Local Climate and Nature Plan	See Appendix 1 – year 5 Progress report for detail.	Projects in the year 5 action plan are on track, and other land may contribute to 30 by 30 subject to any changes in national definition of land and water 'managed positively for nature'
Connect sites for nature 'Close at least 24 of the 60 Nature Recovery Network connectivity gaps through the creation of new habitat by 2030'	2020 baseline: 30 wetland, 15 grassland, and 15 woodland gaps	Annual review of progress and number of Nature Recovery Network gaps closed in South Gloucestershire.	See Appendix 1 – year 5 Progress report for detail.	Projects in the year 5 action plan are on track and work is underway to close 40 of the gaps
Improving our river catchments work with partners to increase the number of catchments in our area which have moderate or good ecological status by 2030'	2019 baseline: Catchment ecological status using Water Framework Directive: SGC has 33 catchments. Good-5 (15.15%) Moderate-19 (57.57%), Poor-6 (18.18%), Bad-0 (0%), No Data -3 catchments (9.09%)	Environment Agency Water framework directive data will be used to track progress, however this is not issued annually and has not been updated since 2019, so progress will be reported when new data is published.	See Appendix 1 – year 5 Progress report for detail. Awaiting publication of statutory Water framework data	Projects in the year 5 action plan are on track however scale of the challenge remains for this goal

Background

20. In 2024, the visible global, national, and local impacts of a changing climate are accelerating this has manifested in extreme weather with severe flooding and wildfires receiving the most global news coverage. Impacts continue to cause loss of life, infrastructure destruction and huge economic costs, with notable impacts across Europe, Latin America, Asia, and North America. In the last month our near neighbour Spain, a well-developed and resourced country has suffered catastrophic flooding.
21. Global warming surpassed 1.5 degrees Celsius over the past 12 months for the first time on record breaching a critical threshold that, if it continues, will push the limits of the ability for life on earth to adapt. Actions to reduce emissions globally and nationally are far behind achieving the required levels of reduction needed to stabilise the climate over the longer term. While significant impacts are now inevitable, there are still opportunities to avoid major tipping points, but only with the rapid scaling up of emissions reduction. The UK has committed to reduce emissions in 2030 by 68% compared to 1990 levels, according to the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement. The UK is not on track to hit this target despite a significant reduction in emissions in 2023. Much of the progress to date has come from phasing out coal-generated electricity, with the closure of the last coal-fired power station this year. We now need to rapidly decarbonise heat and transport fuels by reducing the use of both gas and oil.

[Progress in reducing emissions 2024 Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee](#)

This year global action on climate change will be discussed at the Conference of the Parties (COP29) in Azerbaijan in November and global action on nature at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Colombia in October 24. Agreements made at the COP conferences remain voluntary. Although there is an ongoing case at the International Court of Justice to determine whether the nationally determined contributions should be legally binding, the outcome of this case will be issued in late November 2024.

22. The Government have introduced new policies committing to ramp up renewable energy generation in the UK creating Great British Energy and re-establishing the ban on sales of Internal Combustion Engine vehicles from 2030.
[King's Speech 2024: Energy security, net zero, environment and agriculture](#)
However, even with these new policy commitments, energy costs will be an ongoing challenge for both residents and businesses while the transition to a greener grid continues.
23. The governments' UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 3 (CCRA3) and National Adaptation Plan 3 (NAP3) highlight the urgent need for action to adapt to a changing climate and to build resilience within communities, highlighting the need for preparations for up to 4°C of warming. Data has started to be gathered for the next climate change risk assessment, which will be published in 2026, and information is beginning to be published on the outputs and format of this report [Independent assessment - UK Climate Risk](#). As well as the technical report a separate 'well-adapted' UK report will be produced. This will set out how climate and weather changes interact with critical aspects of society and how these growing risks can be

effectively managed. Central to the analysis will be the exploration of the future costs associated with the most urgent climate risks and the potential impact and cost of adaptation measures to reduce the risk.

24. [The UK State of Nature Report 2023](#) was published on 28 September 2023 by the [State of Nature Partnership](#). The report brings together data from over 60 conservation non-governmental organisations, research institutes, and statutory nature conservation bodies, and highlights the devastating degradation and state of nature in the UK and the urgent need for policy, investment, and action. The Natural England [State of Natural Capital report 2024](#) brings together evidence of the fundamental importance and value of natural ecosystems to all aspects of our lives, society, and economy, and that due to the state of England's natural capital, that society and the economy face substantial risks.
25. Nationally the new UK government is undertaking a [rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\)](#) to be completed by the end of 2024. Following this review, the Government will develop a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment with delivery plans to meet each of the legally binding Environment Act targets to protect and restore nature.
26. In July 2024, the new government also launched a consultation on [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#), and in October 2024 government launched an Independent Commission into the water sector and its regulation [Governments launch largest review of sector since privatisation - GOV.UK](#)

The Issues

27. Working over the last 5 years to tackle the Climate and Nature Emergency we have achieved a milestone by embedding various one-off pieces of project work into business-as-usual activity the following work will not transfer into the Year 6 plan because it has become standard practice. Key elements of this integrated work are:
 - **Strategy and Policy** - We continue to comment on, input into and influence all Council and regional strategies and plans to ensure the implementation of Climate and Nature Emergency objectives including the new Council Plan.
 - **Carbon emissions reduction and adaptation and resilience monitoring** - We continue to update our area wide carbon baseline data collect annual data on our Scope 1 and 2 emissions and are developing our analysis of our Scope 3 emissions. We also submit an annual return to the Carbon Disclosure Project as well as other data requests.
 - **Applying to external funders** – Where they align with our objectives, we are proactive and successful in the submission of funding bids to deliver Climate, Nature, Adaptation and Resilience Projects.
 - **Area wide partnerships - Play our part in regional initiatives and deliver joint projects** - We are consolidating our relationship with Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership and effective in working with regional partners including the Mayoral Combined Authority and Partnerships such as West of England Nature Partnership, Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership, Severn

Estuary partnership, West of England Local Sites Partnership, Town and Parish Councils, Community and Voluntary Sector, SMES and major businesses.

- **Biodiversity Net Gain** – We have embedded the need for non-statutory BNG assessments in new council development.
- **New Waste Contracts** - We successfully influence decisions regarding waste collection and disposal options to ensure the implementation of Climate and Nature Emergency objectives.
- **Council Fleet Emissions Reductions** - We support this programme of delivery that is part of how the council does business although the remaining fleet conversion will be more challenging due to the remaining vehicle types and application.
- **Working closely with the West of England Combined Authority** - Across numerous policy areas including the Regional Adaptation and Resilience Action Plan and coordinating our own South Gloucestershire work on adaptation and resilience.
- **Supporting Procurement decisions** - providing expertise to support staff with procurement to ensure that climate and nature considerations are part of the process.
- **Energy finance mechanisms** - Working with partners to further the development of aggregation of dispersed renewables and innovative approaches to energy demand, retail, and supply.

28. This year we have developed our work on adaptation and resilience. We are part of a group of local authorities who are piloting reporting to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) under the fourth round of adaptation reporting power¹ (ARP4) with a deadline of 31st December 2024. There are two objectives of the reporting, these are:

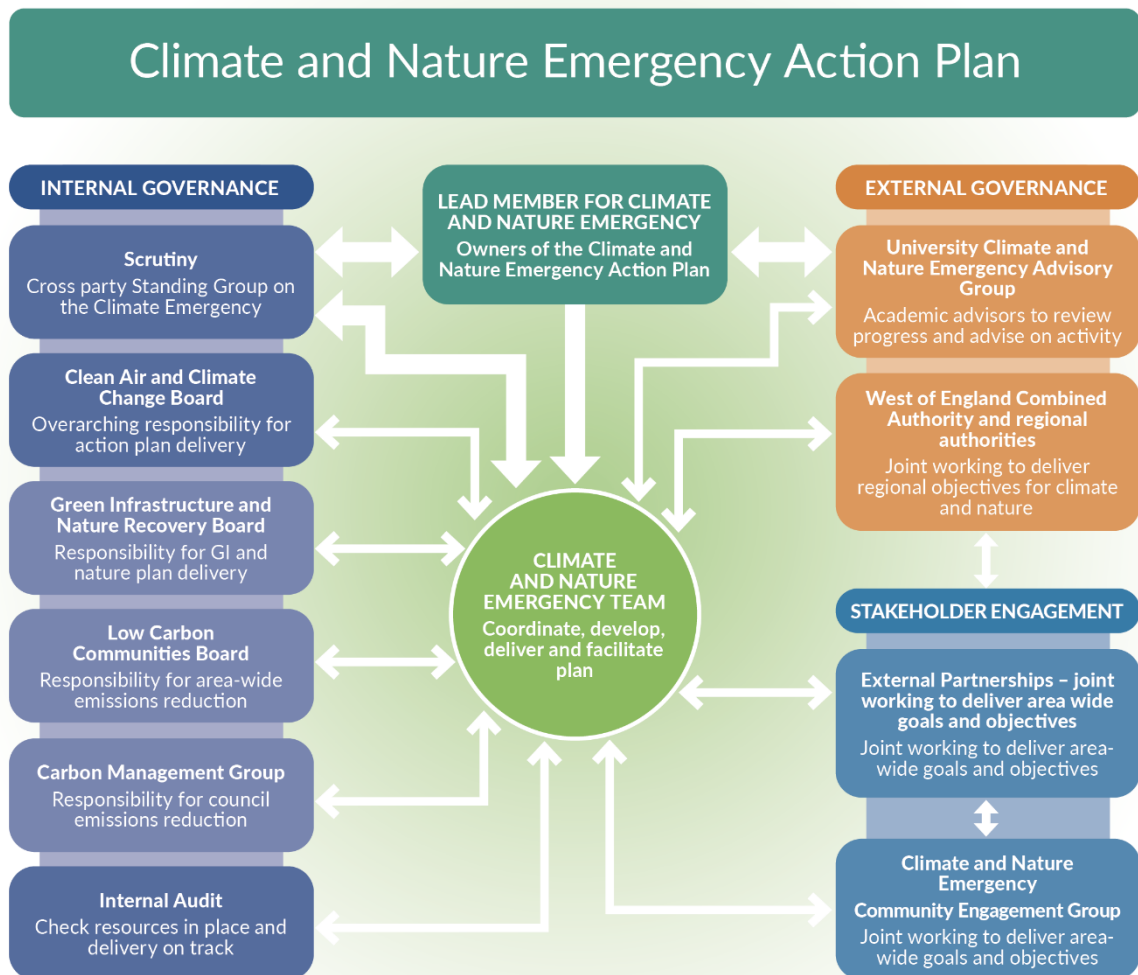
- To support the integration of climate change risk management into the work of reporting organisations,
- To build understanding of the level of preparedness of key sectors to climate change, at a sectoral and national level, and inform other parts of the government's statutory cycle for climate adaptation, (including national Climate Change Risk Assessments and National Adaptation Plans).

29. The report, which is largely focused on the operation of Council services and functions is attached at Appendix 8.

¹ The Climate Change Act 2008 gives the Secretary of State the power to require reports from 'reporting authorities' and local authorities have been asked to pilot reporting this year to feed into the next cycle of national adaptation risk assessment and planning.

Governance

30. The Climate and Nature Emergency work is governed as set out in the structure below. Further to this structure the Climate and Nature Emergency Team have monthly update meetings with the Cabinet and Lead Member for Climate and Nature Emergency, and quarterly meetings with the cross-party Climate and Nature Emergency Standing Group.



1

Communication and stakeholder engagement

31. The communications and stakeholder engagement strategy and delivery in 2024 has included:

- Quarterly meetings and engagement with the South Gloucestershire Climate and Nature Emergency Community Engagement Forum which has a steering group comprising of representatives of local climate and nature action groups, these sessions held in Emersons Green, Bradley Stoke, Winterbourne and online.
- LiveLabs engagement day workshop with Equalities Voice partners to identify priorities for action and a programme of Equalities, Diversity and inclusion training delivered for council staff and managers.

- Great Big Green Week 2024 – events across South Gloucestershire on saving energy and nature including at the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Refugee Festival, PRIDE, Thornbury Carnival,
- Tree week 2024 providing vouchers to residents for tree planting,
- Energy advice and advocacy through Year 3 of Severn Wye Energy Agency Step Up South Gloucestershire project,
- Love Your Patch project deep dives completed for 2 neighbourhoods Severn Beach and Pilning and Filton,
- Commons Connection Project has worked with schools, community groups and delivered events across the East Bristol Fringe. This includes the launch of Community Nature Reserves working with residents to manage gardens positively for nature,
- Engagement Day workshop with Equalities Voice partners.

Quality Assurance

32. This year once again South Gloucestershire Council's work has been assessed by the UK Climate Scorecards process. The UK Climate Scorecards assessment questions have been updated this year with an additional 4 questions the results will be available early in 2025. The work of South Gloucestershire Council on the Climate and Nature Emergency was assessed last year as part of the UK Climate Scorecard work, with South Gloucestershire rated as 36th out of 166 single tier councils in 2023 we await the outcome of this year's assessment. This year 2024 the work of the council has also been re-assessed using the internationally recognised Global Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) reporting tool. Last year we achieved a B rating (A B/B- Companies that score a B have addressed the environmental impacts of their business and ensure good environmental management and we await the outcome of this year's assessment.

33. The South Gloucestershire Climate Emergency University Advisory Group (based at UWE (University of West of England) provides independent advice to the council and to the Local Strategic Partnership on how to respond to the Climate Emergency. This group have been commissioned to provide a review of progress in the delivery of the Year 5 Action Plan. The report can be found at **Appendix 6**. The report reflects in the conclusion on page 13 that:

South Gloucestershire Council are to be applauded for the progress that have made in the first 5-years of their Climate Action Plan activities especially in challenging financial circumstances, through a global pandemic and in constantly shifting political and policy environments. The Council should be proud of their ongoing commitment to the mitigation of emissions, adaption to climate impacts, building resilience within local systems and working towards positive nature targets. The last five years has had some tangible success stories as illustrated by the news announcement [South Gloucestershire Council celebrates 5 years of climate and nature action | Newsroom \(southglos.gov.uk\)](https://www.southglos.gov.uk/newsroom/south-gloucestershire-council-celebrates-5-years-of-climate-and-nature-action).

However, while progress towards the 2030 goals within the Climate Emergency Declaration and Strategy is good, South Gloucestershire Council needs continue to build on its Climate and Nature Emergency work and plans by increasing capacity to embed the actions within routine Council activities and to extend this to all stakeholder engagements and other forms of communication. If it is willing to fully exercise these capabilities and to effectively integrate climate mitigation, adaptation, and nature recovery into all aspects of its core business then South Gloucestershire

*Council could become a UK leader in its integrated, systematic, and strategic response to the Climate and Nature Emergency. **Good progress to date but there is much more work to do, and we need to act quickly.***

34. The Council also continues to implement the strategic recommendations of the 'Plan to 2030' report published in 2022. The report was focused on carbon emissions reduction only, the high-level recommendations are set out below:

Area wide strategic recommendations to deliver carbon neutrality by 2030:

- Maximise support for domestic retrofit (most likely largest remaining contributor to area emissions),
- Plug gaps in action on decarbonising heat,
- Maximise business engagement in carbon emissions reduction,
- Maximise advice and support for active travel and electric vehicle charging infrastructure roll-out,
- Work with the Mayoral Combined Authority, and the local and national highways authorities to consider adaptation in transport planning,
- Maximise growth of renewable energy across the area,
- Maximise green economic development. Target certain high impact sectors in industry and commerce, and encourage new green tech, services, and businesses to locate in our area,
- Increase opportunities for green skills and training to grow workforce skills and capacity to deliver the work and jobs needed,
- Maximise climate and nature policies in the Local Plan,
- Align forces with the Mayoral Combined Authority, and regional partners to ramp up action across the region.

Council recommendations to deliver carbon neutrality:

- Become a carbon neutral council (direct emissions), reduce Scope 3 emissions,
- Embed climate and nature decision making as standard in council processes and ramp up internal and external training,
- Work with organisations across South Gloucestershire on emissions reduction and adaptation,
- Prepare the area and council for the local impacts of a changing climate with focus on health, vulnerable residents, and infrastructure,
- Carry out the 31 actions for climate councils as identified by Friends of the Earth (all relevant actions completed in 2023).

Proposals for the Year 6 Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan

35. The proposed Year 6 Action Plan is set out in **Appendix 3** with indicative budget cost estimates for implementation. These include various actions that are continued or refined from Year 5 alongside new actions that have been identified.

36. The Year 6 action plan contains 12 NEW outline projects that will need to have the Climate and Nature Decision Wheel applied to them at Project Initiation Document stage, April 2025.

37. The wide portfolio of projects set out for the Year 6 action plan include:

- Projects that continue or build on Year 5 Actions,
- Projects that deliver carbon emissions reductions as outlined in the carbon emissions baseline report,
- Projects that delivery nature recovery, resilience, mitigation, and adaptation,
- Projects proposed by officers and partner organisations that meet the aims of the declaration,
- Recommendations made by the South Gloucestershire Climate Emergency University Advisory Group in the Plan to 2030.

38. The allocated Revenue base budget for the fifth year of Climate and Nature Emergency funding is £200k and is largely focused on staff and consultant costs, evidence gathering and research to inform capital spend and bids for further funding. £1.5 Million of Community Infrastructure Levy funding is split equally between Green Transport, Green Communities and Open Spaces and Green Schools. This year we are proposing to use a proportion of the Green Transport Funding (£300K) to supplement Green Communities funding given the need to temporarily increase capacity to resolve some long-standing data and evidence issues, which underpin future scheme design and funding bids. In previous years, a substantial part of the Green Transport Funding has gone towards EV charge points, however, both Green Recovery and LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) funding, has resulted in a some of last year's spend being rolled forward in to 2025. Other community-based projects green transport projects are retained in the action plan. Part of the Green Schools element of the funding is fully committed a year in advance in order to maximise draw down of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding, which was £499,460 in 2024/25 and funded work at Barrs Court Primary, St Stephens Junior and Wick Primary, totalling £1,963,480 by bringing together Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant, Climate Emergency and School/s Capital Revenue and Maintenance (R&M) Budget.

39. Projects in Year 6 include projects where external funding has already been secured these include:

Ongoing funding	
Frampton End Farm River Reserve – Green Recovery Fund – MCA*	£1.1 Million
Common Connections – Green Recovery Fund – MCA*	£998K
Hawkesbury and Ingleston Commons Higher Level Stewardship 10 years - DEFRA*	£300K
Tree Canopy Cover - Green Recovery Fund – MCA*	£1.1 Million
Live Labs 2 – Dept for Transport	£2.1 Million (SGC element)
Resilient Frome Programme – DEFRA*	£1 Million
Kingswood Park Restoration Development Funding – National Lottery Heritage Fund	£2.67 million lottery bid
New Funding	
Linking the Levels – Green Recovery Fund – MCA*	£370,000

Investing in Climate and Nature Scheme (ICaN Scheme – MCA Green Infrastructure Implementation funding)	£111,333
Highway Run Off Project – MCA* and Department for Levelling Up	£70,000

MCA* - Mayoral Combined Authority

DEFRA* - Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Next Steps

40. The Year 6 action plan includes new projects and the delivery of projects which continue from Year 5. We will continue to embed the Climate and Nature Emergency into the wider work of the council. Projects proposed in the Year 6 plan (**Appendix 3**) will be matched against the available budget. Where the budget does not cover all projects, the intention is for them to be developed to a stage where they are ready pending funding opportunities.

Consultation

41. The report is due to be reviewed by the Scrutiny Commission. The development of the Year 6 Action Plan (**Appendix 3**) has involved the cross-party standing group and external consultation, including the incorporation of recommendations from the technical advisory group the South Gloucestershire Climate and Nature Emergency University Advisory Group. The annual progress report and Year 6 action plan will be made available on the Council's website and a community engagement meeting held for questions on the progress made and the Year 6 action plan.

Equalities Considerations

42. The Equality Impact Assessment and Analysis (EqIAA) of the progress towards the Year 5 Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan has been reviewed and an update on progress inserted against each identified action. This is shown in **Appendix 2**.

43. **Appendix 4** to this report provides an overarching EqIAA in respect of the Year 6 Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan 2025-26. This EqIAA has identified a range of equalities issues and specific actions have been identified to support the development of SMART targets for work on equalities.

44. **Appendix 5** Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 progress report includes updates on the delivery of equalities actions identified.

45. **Some of the individual schemes brought forward as part of the Climate Emergency** will be subject to their own detailed EqIAAs as and when they are brought forward for delivery. Each scheme will take account of all protected characteristic groups and beyond (as per EqIAA Policy), ensuring that accessibility and all other issues pertaining to the elimination of discrimination and the advancement of equality of opportunity for all are fully considered and addressed to ensure maximum positive impact for all.

Alternative Options Considered

46. The alternative options are to not approve, or partially approve, the Year 6 Action Plan set out in this report. However, this would leave the Council without a clear Action Plan for Year 6 to address the Climate and Nature Emergency and with only a 5-year timeframe left for delivery this would be a further significant risk to achieving the 2030 area-wide carbon neutral target for South Gloucestershire set out in the Climate and Nature Emergency declaration.

Financial Implications (includes tax implications such as VAT)

47. The Year 6 Climate and Nature Emergency budget has been allocated by the Climate and Nature Emergency Team as set out in this report to deliver priority projects emerging from the portfolio of projects set out in the Year 6 Climate Emergency Action Plan that make the most impact within the cost envelope available. The £1.5 million from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be used each year to support the Climate and Nature Emergency response and to leverage external funding. This funding has been split across the following areas: Green Schools; Green Transport; Green Communities and Open Spaces and this year it is proposed to merge the budget for Green Communities and Open Spaces and Green Transport to enable increased delivery. The current CIL funding is agreed until financial year 2027/28.

48. Funding from national, regional, and local sources and from government and the private sector will continue to be sought and build on previous successes. In addition, the Council will seek philanthropic investment opportunities through the Investing in Climate and Nature Scheme (ICaN) to fund project development and delivery. The Year 6 Climate and Nature Emergency budget will be used to supplement this portfolio of projects as set out in the Year 6 Climate and Nature Emergency action plan and it will be imperative to match the budget to projects that make the most impact within the cost envelope available.

49. It is important to note that the full cost implications of actions to reduce emissions and to prepare our business and communities for the inevitable impacts of a changing climate cannot be fully quantified. To meet the Climate Emergency pledge will require ongoing and substantial investment to reduce the Council's own direct emissions (Scope 1 and 2), and to influence indirect emissions (Scope 3) and to demonstrate the leadership required to enable South Gloucestershire to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

50. Many steps are required to build resilience to the local impacts of a changing climate and to support nature recovery. It is recognised that the cost burden of failing to mitigate emissions and to adapt to current and future impacts will likely far exceed the costs of effective actions such as those associated with health and social care.

Steve Strange – Finance Business Partner - 01454 863122

Legal Implications

51. There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

Human Resources Implications

52. There are no direct HR implications arising from this report. The service will need to plan for any staffing and seek the funding required to deliver the work needed to achieve the 2030 objectives.

Nicola Plant – HR Service Director – 01454 863093

Climate Emergency and Environmental Implications

53. The implementation of this Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan for Year 6 includes a range of significant environmental work that will deliver benefits in terms of reducing carbon emissions, increasing green infrastructure, boosting biodiversity and nature recovery, and increasing resilience to the local impacts of a changing climate. To underpin this program, the Year 6 Action Plan includes continuing work to embed decision making processes, policy and communications which place climate and nature action at the heart of Council work, services and decision making. The new projects identified in the Year 6 Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan will need to have the Climate and Nature Decision wheel applied in the Project Initiation Document process in April 2024, new projects will need to be appropriately approved.

54. The Year 6 Action Plan provides a strong basis on which to increase action in subsequent years, towards delivering on the commitments made in the Climate and Nature Emergency declaration within the remaining 5-year time frame. With accelerating impacts and increasing profile there is urgent need to scale up action with partners, residents, and businesses to reduce emissions, restore nature and deliver adaptation and resilience work across our communities.

Lucy Rees, Senior Environmental Policy Officer –T: 01454 862224

Social Implications

55. The proposed action plan and ongoing Climate and Nature Emergency response work has significant implications for the built environment, transport, economy and for the natural environment and therefore will have significant impacts on our communities and how our residents live.

56. The guiding principles by which the Action Plan for Year 6 has been prepared include recognising issues such as climate justice and equalities and focus on the co-benefits of action for our residents and communities. For example, improved public health, physical and mental well-being, and increased job opportunities.

57. This approach will help support the Council's objective to reduce inequalities in our communities. This includes the reduction of crime and disorder through the recognition and tackling of inequalities.

58. The proposed action plan recognises the importance of the Climate and Nature Emergency response on our communities and their perception of their community

and environment which is known to have a direct correlation to the levels of crime and disorder within a local area.

Amie Copley Service Lead – Stronger Communities – 01454 868515

59. For projects in the Year 6 action plan where commissioning, grant or procurement is required then they must describe how social value is being built into service delivery at project initiation stage by April 2025.

Mark Pullin, Service Director – Community Development – 01454 868480

Economic Implications

60. There are no direct economic implications identified through the recommendations outlined within this report. There may be potential economic opportunities associated with the projects outlined within the Year 6 action plan. For example, the Investing in Climate and Nature (ICaN) scheme. Any subsequent actions identified through such projects should be subject to their own reports where required and incorporate economic assessments, or appraisals as deemed appropriate. As climate change awareness grows, local businesses are increasingly recognising the economic value of resilience. Enhancing resilience to climate risks, such as extreme heat and flooding may help businesses to reduce operational disruptions, lower insurance costs and improve business continuity, further positioning South Gloucestershire as a robust and adaptive economy.

Ian Steele, Business Investment & Digital Connectivity Manager - 01454 868202

Risks, Mitigations & Opportunities

61. It is considered that not approving the proposed Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan for Year 6 would increase the scale of risk that the council will face in delivering services to our communities as the climate continues to change, and in our ability to protect residents from the now inevitable consequences of a changing climate. The likelihood of extreme weather events is substantially increasing, and costs of impacts will accelerate if action to prepare our communities is not taken at the earliest opportunity.

62. Beyond the direct risks from extreme weather events, the council, local services, and area wide infrastructure, are at risk from the national and international consequences of a changing climate. This includes increasing pressure on international migration and availability of imported resources. Both local and broader impacts can trigger cascade events which amplify the risks further.

63. Often overlooked, the rapid decline in nature and associated 'ecosystem services' has significant implications for accelerating global and local disasters.

64. Preparing for and dealing with these anticipated impacts will inevitably become increasingly central to the operation of the Council with a focus on those in our communities who are unable to take adaptive actions themselves.

65. To deliver the best outcomes locally that move as quickly as possible towards our climate and nature emergency goals, the council recognises that it does not hold all

the levers for delivery. The council will need to continue to work positively and effectively with all partners, national, regional, and local including the Mayoral Combined Authority, our businesses, town, and parish councils, local organisations, and residents.

Other Implications

66. None

Reasons for Decision

67. To respond to the Climate and Nature Emergency declaration 17 July 2019, which specifically required an annual progress report on Climate and Nature Emergency work to be provided to full Council in December each year, and to also approve a Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan for Year 6 (2025/26). The Climate and Nature Emergency pledge is of such significance that sustained and scaled up action over the next 5 years will be required to ensure that the commitments set out in the declaration are met.

Author

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Background Papers

Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan - Year 5 Progress Update (2024/25)
2. Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Assessment Year 5 Action Plan Progress
3. Appendix 3: Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan - Year 6 (2025/26)
4. Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment Year 6 Action Plan
5. Appendix 5: Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030 – Progress Report (2024/25)
6. Appendix 6: UWE Review of Year 5 Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan Progress
7. Appendix 7: Target progress summary 2024
8. Appendix 8: ARP4 final 2024
9. Appendix 9: Year 5 Milestones in Photos

Background Papers

South Gloucestershire Climate Emergency Strategy
[Climate Emergency Strategy \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

The full Climate Emergency declaration can be found at [our declaration](#).

All previous action plans and reports can be found at:
<https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/climate-emergency-in-south-gloucestershire>

Quality of Life Report (Latest version pending)
[Quality of life | South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

South Gloucestershire Data Dashboard 2024
[Regen dashboard - South Gloucestershire](#)

Plan to 2030
[Plan 2030 Report for SGC](#)

UK State of Nature Report 2023
[The UK State of Nature Report 2023](#), published on 28 September 2023 by the [State of Nature Partnership](#).

State of Nature Capital Report 2024
[State of Natural Capital Report for England is now published – Natural England](#)

Rapid Review of Environmental Improvement Plan
[Government launches rapid review to meet Environment Act targets - GOV.UK](#)