

Annual Report Climate Emergency Action Plan

Report To: Cabinet

Date of decision: Wednesday, 11 December 2024

Portfolio: Climate Change

Access: Public document (not exempt from disclosure)

Executive Summary

This is the 5th annual update of the Climate Emergency Action plan, first published in December 2019. The report provides an update about the progress being made against priorities set out in the Climate Emergency Action Plan and presents the annual emissions data for both the Council's own operations and those arising in the district.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Economy is recommended to:

- a) To welcome the progress made in the past five years since the declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019.
- b) To acknowledge the significant emissions reductions and progress achieved to date, as detailed in this covering report and Appendices A and B:
 - i. The Council's Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions have decreased by 20.13% since the baseline financial year 2018/19 and by 4.62% compared to the previous financial year, 2022/23.
 - ii. District wide emissions have reduced by 43.33% between 2005 and 2022, and by 4.88% between the calendar years 2021 and 2022.
 - iii. Total renewable energy capacity has grown by 725% between 2014 and 2023.
 - iv. In the district, the uptake of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEVs) has increased by 807% between 2018 and 2024, and the total number of publicly accessible EV chargers have increased by 842% between 2019 and 2024.

- v. Transitioning the waste collection fleet and street cleansing vehicles to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel has resulted in a 75% reduction in emissions, measured over the eight months following the transition from diesel. This reduction is expected to increase.
- c) To note the revised draft timetable set out to complete the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the remainder of 2024/25 and
- d) To acknowledge the scope and scale of the challenge in order to reach net zero, and how this can only be met through collaborative action, partnership working, as well as individual actions we can all make in our daily lives.

Council Strategy

This report's purpose is to report progress against the existing Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The following actions will be delivered under all the key targets of the new Council Strategy:

- **Climate Change**
 - To continue monitoring Council and district-wide emissions to best inform decision making in reaching net zero.
 - To continue consulting and supporting projects that reduce heat and power demands in Council assets as well as best support community initiatives that reduce heat and power demands in the district.
 - To continue consulting and leading on the implementation of low and zero carbon technologies in Council assets as well as in the district.
 - To continue promoting, consulting and leading on projects that aim to decarbonise transport in the district.
 - To continue monitoring the ability of natural carbon sinks within the district, measured within the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector.
 - To consider offsetting options as well as promote the importance of insetting in Wealden to reduce the Council's operational emissions to net zero.
 - To continue developing the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- **Community Resilience & Wellbeing**
 - To encourage active community involvement through climate change initiatives, such as the promotion of local climate action community groups in the district.
 - To collaborate with local organisations to strengthen community resilience and adapt to the impacts of climate change, in crucial sectors including but not limited to health, food security, and climate impact mitigation.
 - To facilitate ongoing engagement and consultation with residents on climate related projects and initiatives.
- **Local Economy**
 - To support local green economy initiatives through partnerships with businesses, schools, and charities in sustainable practices.
 - To support green skill development through the promotion of Council and community led initiatives, such as renewable energy installations.
 - To prioritise local contractors and suppliers for Council-led climate action projects to boost local employment and social value.
 - To enable income generation from sustainability initiatives that can be reinvested to benefit local services and climate action projects.

Reasons for the recommendation

In December 2019, the Council approved the Council's Climate Emergency Plan. This report details the progress made toward the action plan's goals to achieve net-zero emissions across the district by 2050, with efforts to reach net zero even sooner. It highlights the Council's role in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from its own operations and services.

Introduction

1. This paper outlines the progress of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, approved by the Council in December 2019. The action plan envisions achieving net-zero emissions for both the Council and the district by 2050, with efforts to reach this goal even sooner.
2. The plan projected emissions through 2050 against a 'business as usual' scenario, incorporating anticipated national policy interventions and commitments. The findings underscored the significant challenges involved in achieving net zero by 2050.
3. The Plan outlined four key priority areas for the Council to focus on, targeting reductions in both the Council's own emissions and those across the wider district:
 - a. Reduce heat and power demands in buildings
 - b. Increase the uptake of low and zero carbon technologies
 - c. Decarbonise the transport sector; and,
 - d. Offset any remaining emissions.
4. Achieving the net zero target will require a profound and ongoing nationwide shift in policies and behaviours. This shift involves implementing new policies that support sustainable practices, clean energy, and environmental protection, while technological advancements further accelerate the transition to a fossil fuel-free society.
5. The Council has consistently played a vital leadership role in advancing the vision for net zero and intends to enhance its leadership efforts within the district and surrounding areas. We have been evaluating our own operations and identifying best practices that can be implemented in areas we control. Additionally, the Council aims to collaborate with partners to drive broader change across the district and to influence government policy.
6. Since the declaration, we have made strides not only in researching and outlining the necessary steps for Wealden to become a net-zero district but also in implementing tangible projects.
7. Collaboration remains essential to the success of our climate change and carbon reduction goals, and the Council views partnership working as crucial for achieving its net-zero vision for the district.

8. Consequently, the Council has advanced both regional and local projects in collaboration with partners, including:
 - e. [East Sussex Energy Partnership](#), focused on enhancing the energy efficiency of local homes and addressing fuel poverty.
 - f. [Joint Waste and Recycling Partnership](#), collaborating with Biffa, ESCC, RDC, and HBC to minimise the carbon impact of waste collection and street cleansing services.
 - g. [Solar Together Sussex](#), a community initiative in Sussex aimed at helping residents and businesses access affordable solar energy solutions. 282 homeowners in Wealden installed solar photovoltaic (PV) systems via the initiative, with 242 also adding battery storage systems.
 - h. [Net Zero 360 - Clean Growth UK](#), a plan was developed in partnership with Clean Growth UK, to deliver and provide taster workshops for SMEs across the district with the opportunity to take part in 3 workshops
 - a. What is Net Zero and how do you get there?
 - b. Energy efficiency and renewable energy installations for SMEs
 - c. Building a workforce fit for a net zero future
9. Building on the success of these initial workshops the Council using the UK Shared Prosperity Funding continued the collaboration and partnership with Clean Growth UK to deliver comprehensive net zero 360 workshops during 2024/25.

Analysis

10. Since the last annual update in December 2023 there have been a number of national policy announcements which will be considered as part of the refresh of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.
11. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) published its [annual progress report](#) to parliament in reducing UK emissions, pursuant to Section 36 (1) of the Climate Change Act 2008. At this time the CCC concluded that there has been a lack of urgency in the last year, that the Government reversed or delayed key policies, such as the date for the ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles, which was pushed back from 2030 to 2035. Additionally, the Government loosened plans to phase out gas boilers by 2035, scrapped proposals to introduce new taxes on aviation and meat and removed the requirement for landlords to improve energy efficiency in rental properties.
12. UK100 published their report, '[Powers in Place](#)' in May 2023 which examines the powers available to local authorities ahead of the 2023 local elections and concludes that the vast majority are still waiting for the Government to provide the necessary resources and powers to fully commit their Net Zero ambitions.
13. Such interventions are essential not only for reducing emissions across the district and nationwide but also, alongside national grid decarbonisation efforts, to enhance energy security for all residents in Wealden.

14. The Committee on Fuel Poverty's [Annual Report](#), has stated that without a change in Government policy, including more effective and fully resourced energy efficiency programmes to where they are most urgently needed, we cannot expect next year's statistics to show a significant drop in levels of fuel poverty.
15. Additionally, the Government has estimated that 8.9 million households in England could be classed as fuel poor in 2023, around double the level in 2021. This estimate includes the impact of the different support schemes introduced by the Government during the 'energy crisis' to help make bills more affordable and targeted cost of living payments in 2022/23 and 2023/24.
16. COP28 which was held between 30 November 2023 and 13 December 2023 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was envisaged by the UAE as a milestone moment when the world will take stock of its progress on the 2015 Paris Agreement, which committed countries to holding global temperature increases well below 2 degrees Celsius and to pursuing efforts to limit increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. COP29 is taking place as this report is being written.
17. The key outcomes of COP28 include
 - a) The global stocktake on progress since the 2015 Paris Agreement, and on international agreement to 'transition away' from fossil fuels.
 - b) Operationalisation of the loss and damage fund, providing financial support for countries experiencing serious climate change impacts, totalling USD 600 million to date.
 - c) Adoption of a framework for measuring progress on adaptation.
 - d) Declarations and pledges on renewables, food, land-use, and health.
18. The following sections of this report provide a summary of district-wide emissions, the Council's own emissions, and an overview of progress on prioritised actions in the Action Plan.

Annual Emissions

19. The district's emissions data is reviewed first. It's important to note that there is an approximate 18-month delay in data reporting, meaning the most recent data available is for the calendar year 2022.
20. Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) is a standard way to measure and compare the impact of different GHGs based on how much they contribute to global warming, using carbon dioxide as the baseline. Since some gases are more potent than others, CO₂e allows us to express all emissions in a single, comparable figure. This makes it easier to report and understand the total impact on climate, no matter the type of gas.

District Wide Emissions

21. The report presents the latest data in our district-wide emissions and [local authority greenhouse gas emissions](#), as issued by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) for the calendar year 2022.
22. In 2022, Wealden's territorial GHGs were 651.25 kilotonne carbon dioxide equivalent (ktCO₂e), reflecting a 4.88% decrease from 2021 and a 16.45% reduction compared to the 2018 baseline year. Since 2005, the district has achieved an overall reduction of 43.33% in GHG emissions.
23. Transport continues to be the largest emitting sector, responsible for 47% of net emissions in 2022. The domestic sector was responsible for 36% of net emissions, and the agriculture sector was responsible for 21% net emissions.
24. Appendix A provides a detailed assessment of the district wide emissions in 2022.

Council Emissions

25. To support local authorities, the Local Government Association (LGA), in collaboration with Local Partnerships and the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), launched a GHG Accounting Tool for Scope 1 and 2 emissions, Scope 3 and Outside of Scope emissions. Descriptions for these can be found in Appendix C. We have aligned the Council's emission reporting with this LGA accounting tool.
26. Appendix B provides a detailed assessment of the Council's emission reductions for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
27. Scope 1 and 2 emissions are reported together, representing where the Council can have the most control and impact.
28. The Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions for 2023/24 are 1,180.87 tCO₂e, this represents a 4.62% decrease from 2022/23 (1,238.04 tCO₂e in 2022/23).
29. Additionally, this represents a 20.13% decrease in Scope 1 and 2 emissions since the baseline year 2018/19.

Climate Emergency Action Plan 2019 – Progress Against Prioritised Actions

30. [The Climate Emergency Plan](#) sets out a range of action areas to support the ambition to achieve net zero by 2050 (or sooner).

Grid Decarbonisation

31. The carbon intensity of UK electricity generation dropped from an average of 186gCO₂/kWh in 2022 to 162gCO₂/kWh in 2023. The carbon intensity of electricity is a measure of how much CO₂ emissions are produced per kilowatt hour of electricity consumed.

32. By the third quarter of 2023, the carbon intensity hit an even lower average of 143gCO₂/kWh, marking the lowest-carbon quarter on record. This improvement is due to the UK's increased adoption of renewable energy sources like wind and solar, along with a drop in electricity demand.
33. Decarbonising the grid is essential for meeting climate goals, as it reduces emissions from electricity generation. This shift enables cleaner energy use across sectors like transport and heating, driving progress toward a low-carbon future. Grid upgrades and increased renewable energy integration are key to maintaining this momentum. Figure 1 illustrates how the national grid has decarbonised since 1990.

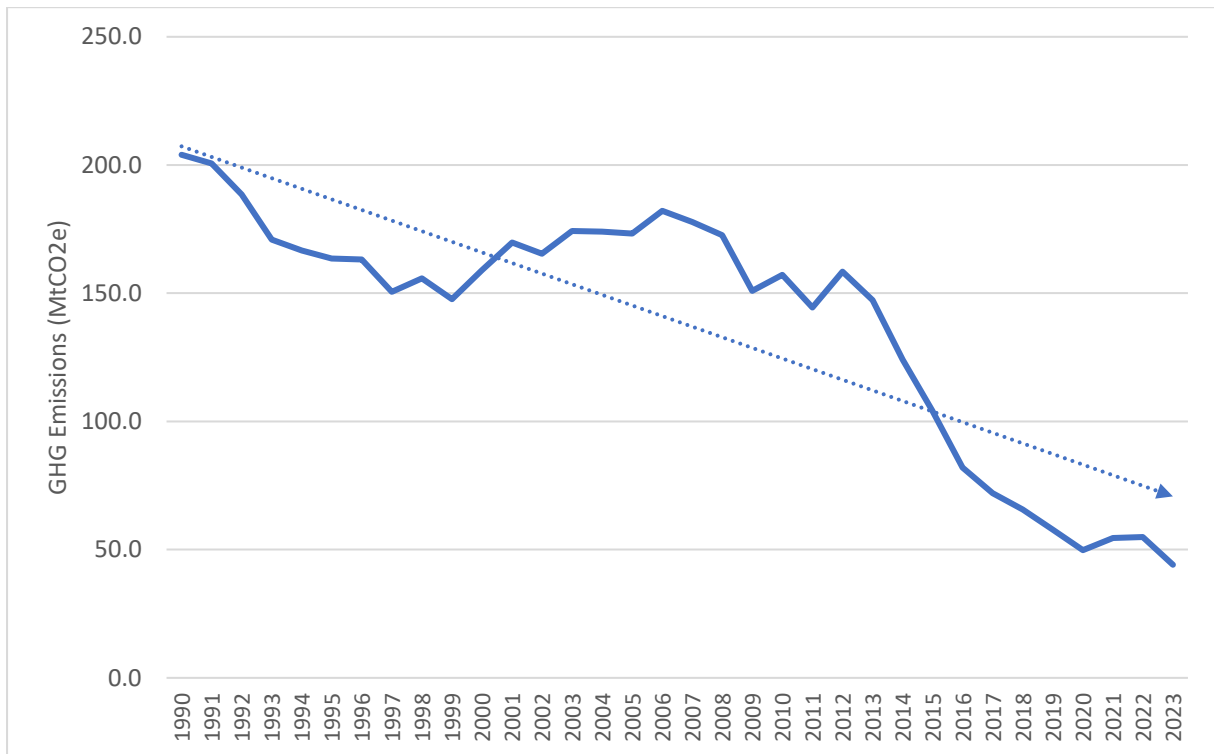


Figure 1: Grid Decarbonisation (Megatonnes, Carbon Dioxide Equivalent) 1990 – 2023.

34. The district has continued to see a growth in renewable energy capacity in Solar PV installations with 5.82MW being installed during 2023.

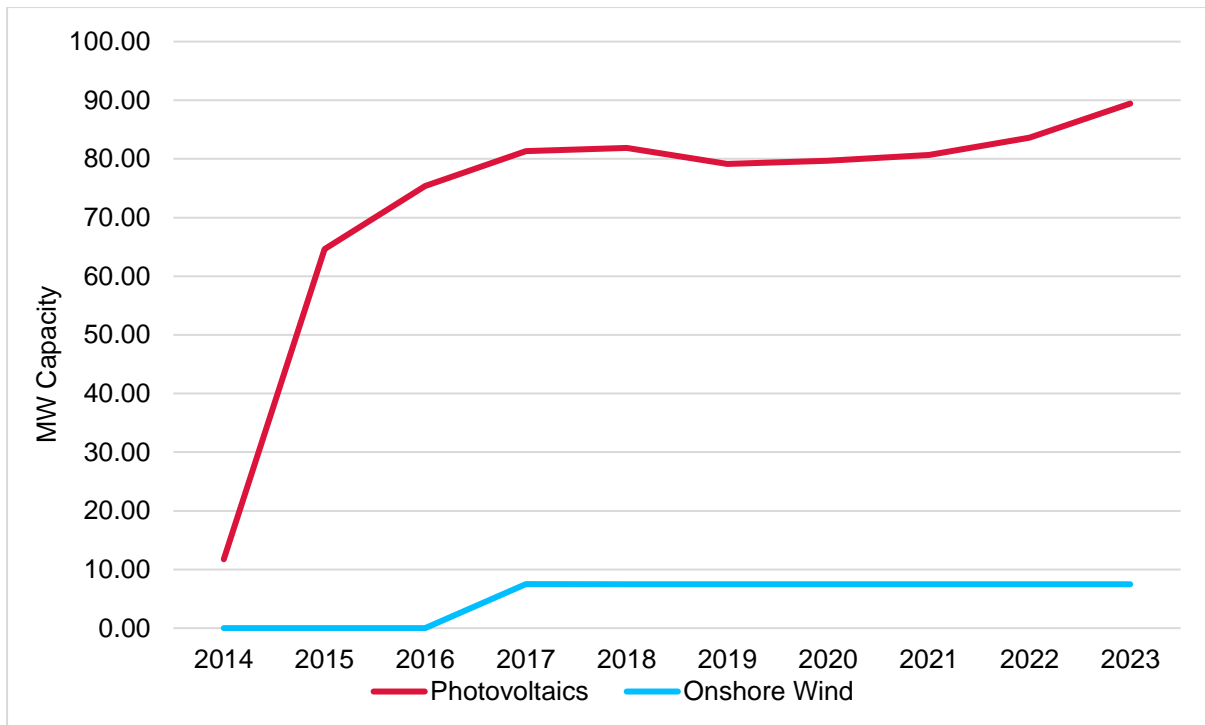


Figure 2: The Growth in Renewable Energy Capacity in the District 2014 – 2023.

35. Renewable energy generation in Wealden peaked in 2017, following the installation of several large solar and wind farms. After a slight decline, total generation rose again in 2021/22, surpassing the 2017 peak modestly, with further increases in 2023.
36. Solar PV Renewable energy installations in the district have increased from 2,877 installations in 2018 to 5,692 installations in 2023, a 97.8% increase in installations in the district.
37. The Council continued to engage with UK Power Networks (UKPN), the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for Wealden - and engaged in the discussions regarding future energy scenarios for the region and the launch of their [net zero data hub](#) to support energy transitions in the region.
38. The Council has been receiving a growing number of planning approvals for large scale battery energy storage systems (BESSs). An example of this includes a BESS at a site in the Herstmonceux and Pevensy Levels ward and can be seen at the [May 16 Planning Committee South](#).

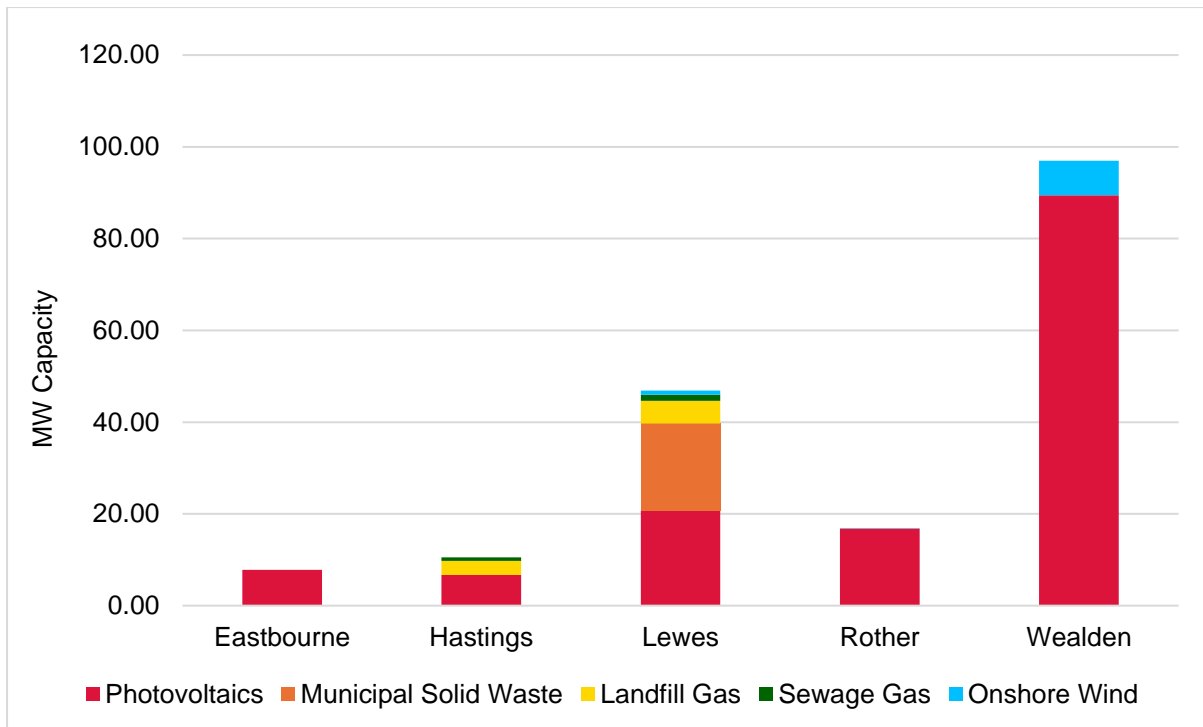


Figure 3: Total Renewable Energy Capacity per Local Authority Area 2023.

Demand Reduction and Low Carbon Heating

39. Demand reduction lowers energy consumption and emissions while providing co-benefits like reduced costs, improved air quality, and enhanced energy security. These benefits are amplified when combined with energy efficiency and renewable technologies, easing grid pressure and resulting in a more resilient, low-carbon energy system.
40. The [Housing Decarbonisation Plan](#) since its adoption in 2021 has continued to be implemented by the Housing Service and the annual update about the progress to date was presented to cabinet on [9 October 2024](#). In the financial year 23/24 the following energy efficiency improvement works were undertaken:
 - a. Installed new air source heat pumps – 95.
 - b. Increased/renewed loft Insulation – 191 properties.
 - c. replaced failed cavity wall insulation – 148 properties.
 - d. New solar photovoltaic systems – 177 properties.
 - e. Replacement triple glazed windows to whole house – 121 properties.
41. The Council has continued to reduce energy demand across the private rented and owner-occupied housing stock and successfully secured £1.83million from the Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 to improve the energy efficiency of local homes with an Energy Performance certificate rating of between D & G.
42. In January 2024, the Council submitted an application for the [Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund \(SHDF\)](#) and successfully secured £1.47million in partial

funding for a £3.03million project aimed at retrofitting 100 properties off the gas network have a SAP rating below C.

43. Since the launch of the [Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery \(LAD1a\)](#) in September 2020, Wealden has invested £1.6 million in improving the energy efficiency of low-income (privately owned) homes. This funding has been part of broader initiatives, including the additional phases of LAD ([LAD1b](#)) and the [Sustainable Warmth](#) program, aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty in the region. Through these efforts, the Council continues to support vulnerable households in achieving warmer, more energy efficient homes.
44. In the first year of the [Home Upgrade Grant Phase 1 \(HUG1\)](#), the Council successfully completed retrofits for 14 homes. As the Council continues into the second year of the scheme, the Council anticipates retrofitting an additional 55 homes.
45. The Council has utilised the [Rural England Prosperity Fund](#) (REPF) to enhance local communities by supporting a variety of initiatives, particularly through the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF). This funding focuses on supporting community buildings to improve energy efficiency, promoting active travel options and enhancing open spaces.

Building-integrated Renewable Energy Generation and Storage

46. Adopting low and zero-carbon technologies and battery storage is crucial for meeting climate goals and reducing emissions. These innovations facilitate the shift to renewable energy, enhance efficiency, and ensure reliable power supply.
47. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the roof-mounted solar PV system at the Vicarage Lane Office generated 11,241 kWh, avoiding a total of 2.33 tCO₂e. This generation accounts for 2.69% of the combined electricity consumption of the Vicarage Lane Office and the adjacent community hall during the same period.
48. The roof-mounted solar PV system at the Crematorium has been successfully installed and operational since August/September 2023. Between September 2023 and March 2024, the system generated 12,872 kWh of electricity, accounting for 13.62% of the Crematorium's total electricity consumption during the financial year 2023/24. This avoided a total of 2.67 tCO₂e..
49. In addition to the roof-mounted solar PV system at the Crematorium, a battery storage system was also fully installed. The success of this project underscores the Council's commitment to investing in renewable technologies.
50. The completion of the Solar PV systems on Grants Hill Court and Helen Court in April 2023 means that all Retirement Living Courts now have Solar PV systems installed. Between April 2023 and March 2024, a total of 250,619.15 kWh was generated across all Retirement Living sites, accounting for 65.23% of their total electricity consumption. This generation avoided 51.9 tCO₂e of emissions.

51. Between April 2023 and March 2024, significant progress was made in generating renewable energy across various Council sites, reducing carbon emissions. The Council's assets, including operational buildings, the crematorium and the retirement living sites generated a total of approximately 275,000 kWh, avoiding a total of 56.9 tonnes of CO₂e.
52. Working in partnership with the Greater South East Energy Hub and Innovate UK a soft market test was undertaken to invite innovate solutions for the provision of low carbon heating to our retirement living courts as the gas boilers in the courts are reaching the end of their life. The retirement living courts contribute to the Council's Scope 1 emissions. Nineteen suppliers submitted proposals of which six were invited to present their proposals. Two of these proposals have since been taken forward to undertake site visits and develop more detailed solutions and costings.
53. [Solar Together Sussex](#) is a collaborative project across Sussex designed to encourage homeowners to adopt renewable energy technology through a bulk-purchase scheme. In 2024, 282 homeowners in Wealden installed solar PV systems via the initiative, with 242 also adding battery storage systems. Across Sussex, over 2,500 homes participated, installing solar PV systems, and over 1,900 added battery storage. The partnership, currently led by West Sussex County Council (WSCC) on behalf of all borough and district councils in Sussex, is tendering for a new three-year contract set to launch in 2025.
54. The Council is working in partnership with Freedom Leisure to deliver the [Swimming Pool Support Fund](#) to implement energy efficiency measures at Hailsham Leisure Centre, including rooftop solar PV systems, a pool cover, and upgraded, more efficient boilers. Additionally, we are working with Freedom Leisure to deliver other decarbonisation plans within all of the Council's leisure centres. For example, at Uckfield Leisure Centre energy efficiency measures such as a new pool cover, stratification fans and energy efficient lighting is being installed.

Low Carbon Transport

55. Low carbon transport is crucial for climate mitigation and adaptation, as it can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector, which is the largest contributor to GHG emissions in both Wealden and the UK. Increasing the uptake of low carbon transport not only aids in achieving climate targets but also delivers co-benefits such as significant health, economic, and social benefits to communities across the UK.
56. In financial year 2023/2024, the Council continued its development of publicly accessible EV charge points within 11 of our public car parks. We have been working with our contractor Connected Kerb to complete the delivery of 27 7kW chargers as part of phase one and have begun the process of delivering four 50kW chargers, each capable of charging two vehicles simultaneously, as part of phase two of the project. This was made possible by securing £156,800 grant funding from the [On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme](#) (ORCS), as well as securing £150,000 funding from REPF, which was matched by an estimated £100,000 investment from Connected Kerb.

57. Since June 2023, the Council's fleet has transitioned to leased fully electric vehicles, which are primarily charged at the Vicarage Lane office in Hailsham. This location has consistently benefited from renewable energy through the Council's green tariff with its electricity supplier, meaning the vehicles are charged using renewable energy sources.
58. For the past four years, the Council has endorsed the [Cycle to Work](#) scheme, resulting in an estimated 20 sign-ups during this period. Initiatives like this contribute to promoting sustainable active travel; however, the rural characteristics of the district continue to pose challenges.
59. The Council is looking to explore a salary sacrifice scheme for staff focused on electric and hybrid vehicles. While projections on commuting and business travel related emissions have not yet been measured, this scheme would be expected to positively contribute to reducing the Council's Scope 3 emissions.
60. Wealden is experiencing a significant rise in zero and ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) such as battery electric and plug-in hybrid electric car ownership. The EV chargers installed by the Council will not only benefit current ULEV drivers, as shown in Figure 4, but also encourage those considering the switch to ULEV vehicles. Additionally, Wealden continues to have the highest number of ULEV owners in the county, as detailed in Table 2 below.

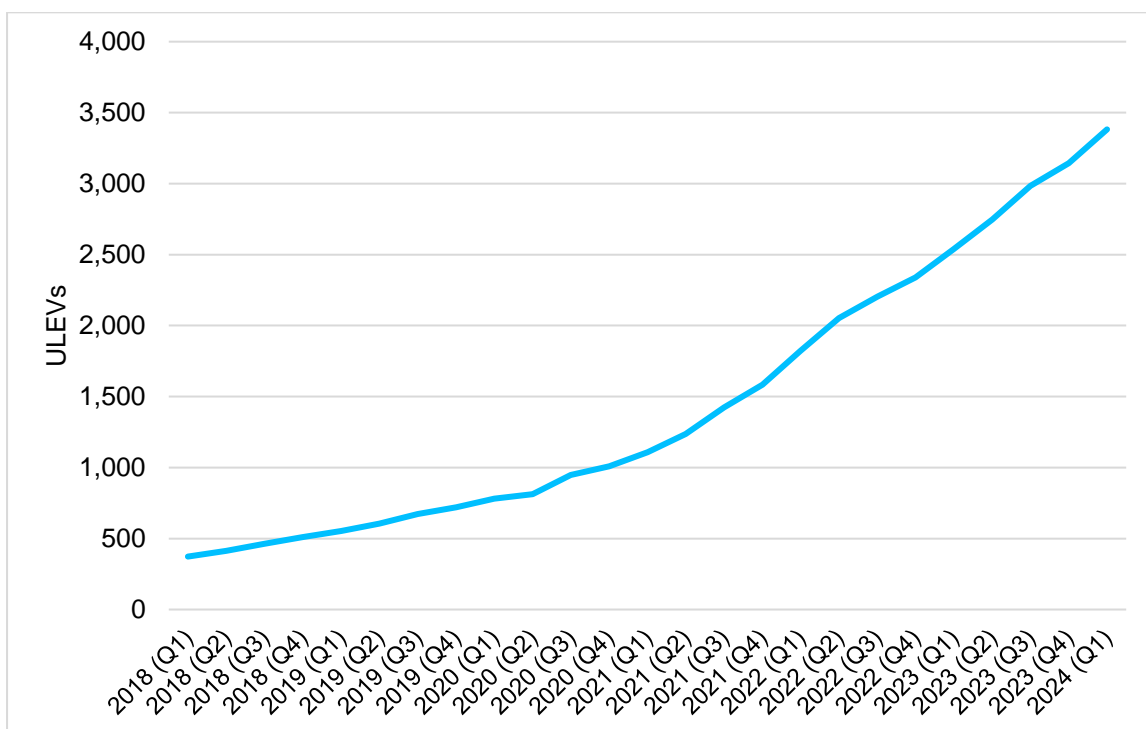


Figure 4: Wealden ULEV Total (2018 Q1 – 2024 Q1)

Registered ULEVs			
Local Authority	Privately-owned	Company-owned	Total
Eastbourne	576	235	811
Hastings	411	126	537
Lewes	1,116	211	1,327
Rother	990	188	1,178
Wealden	2,218	459	2,677

Table 2: Registered ULEVs in East Sussex (March 2024).

61. In addition, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has secured £4.4 million in Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding to install electric vehicle chargers on streets where homeowners lack driveways. Installation is expected to begin in 2025.
62. In addition to the Council's efforts, other investments in EV infrastructure have been made by the private sector, for example, at local petrol stations and supermarkets where EV charging points are increasingly being installed. This expansion supports the growing number of electric vehicle users in the area and complements the Council's initiatives by providing convenient charging options for residents and visitors.
63. Connected Kerb is exploring a smart tariff that offers different rates for day and night charging, aiming to make ULEV charging more affordable and efficient for users. Smart tariffs like these benefit ULEV owners by allowing them to charge their vehicles at lower rates during off-peak hours, helping to reduce their energy costs. This approach also supports a more balanced energy grid by encouraging ULEV charging at times of lower demand.
64. Figure 5 below illustrates the increase in EV charge points within the district from 2019 to 2024. To keep up with the rising number of new ULEV registrations, both now and in the coming years, the Council will monitor the utilisation of its charges and make recommendations for further investment as demand increases.

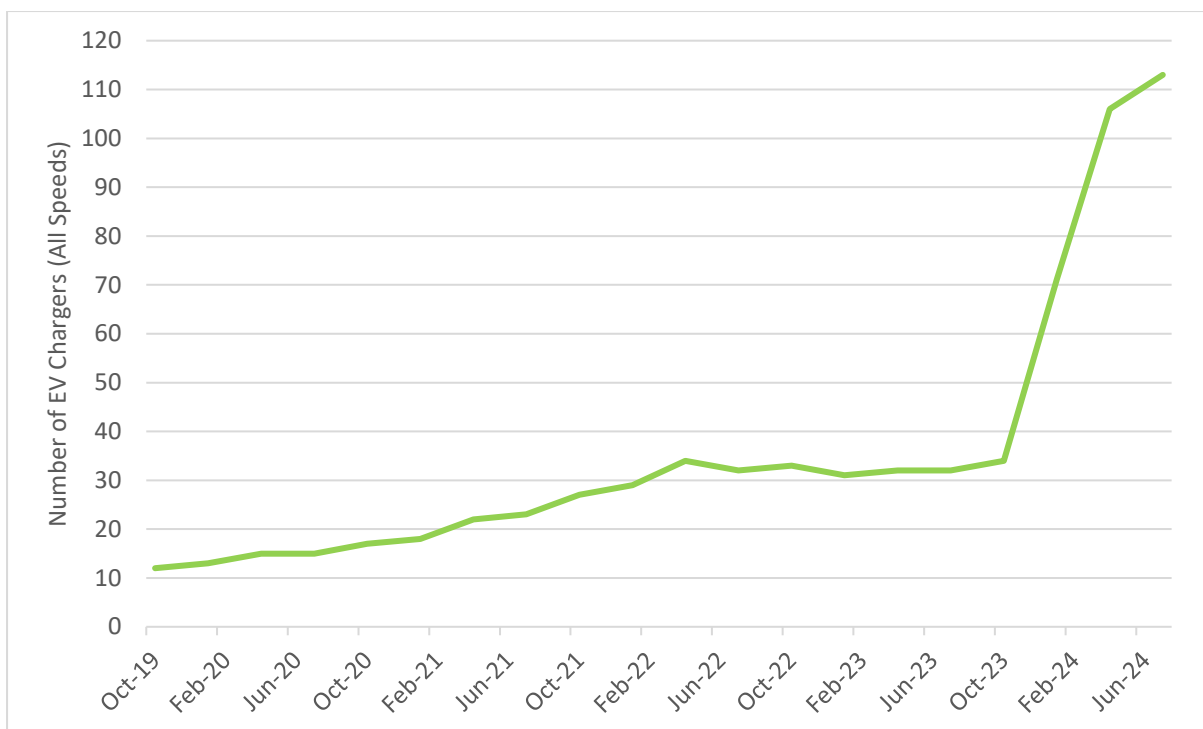


Figure 5: Publicly Available EV Chargers (All Speeds) in Wealden (2019 – 2024).

65. To support local walking and cycling infrastructure and activities in the district the Council submitted and secured a funding bid from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to create a masterplan for the [Cuckoo Trail](#) and a programme of capital investment. In addition, the Council began to explore the potential to develop a new cycleway link between Uckfield and Lewes and identified key partnerships that would be required to deliver such a proposal.
66. Waste Officers have ensured the continued use of HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) in waste collection and street cleansing vehicles for 2024/25, achieving up to 90% carbon emission reductions compared to diesel while also cutting harmful air pollutants. In 2023, the Council allocated up to £500k from its Climate Change Fund to support HVO use until the current waste contract ends in 2026. However, improved availability and favourable market conditions this year reduced supply costs by nearly 50%. A contract extension, approved by all partner authorities and due to be signed soon, will make HVO the default fuel until 2033. The results of the transition to HVO can be found in Appendix B. For more information, refer to the [Reducing Carbon Emissions from Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Services](#) report.

Offsetting

67. Offsetting will play a crucial role in the journey to net zero. We will need to develop robust, high integrity nature-based solutions while maintaining a strong focus on reducing direct emissions.
68. The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector offset a considerable amount of CO₂e within Wealden District. In 2022, this net totalled approximately 21% of the district's emissions. See Appendix A for further details.

69. To effectively manage and reduce emissions, it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of both offsetting and insetting. While offsetting provides a valuable mechanism for compensating for emissions through external projects, insetting offers a more direct and sustainable approach by addressing emissions within the Council's own operations and supply chain. This approach is more localised and focuses on creating sustainable practices in Wealden district where the Council already operates.
70. Through the Local Plan process, the Council will seek a minimum of 20% measurable improvement in biodiversity for development sites. Evidence from Natural England¹ reports that 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in simple terms, it is the lowest level of net gain that the department could confidently expect to deliver genuine net gain, or at least no net loss, of biodiversity, meaning seeking a higher target will genuinely obtain gains for nature. Although this target is ambitious, given the district's already high biodiversity value, it remains essential. The role of BNG is seen as a critical nature-based solution to address climate change impacts. Despite the challenges, the Council is committed to pursuing this target as part of broader efforts in offsetting, nature recovery, and biodiversity restoration.

New Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

71. Policy updates from trusted scientific bodies on climate change – such as the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC), the [Climate Change Committee](#) (CCC), and [research](#) from the [Met Office Hadley Centre Climate Programme](#) (MOHCCP) – increasingly highlight that the impacts of human-driven climate change are already visible worldwide, as well as locally in Wealden District, affecting both our staff and residents.
72. As a result, in 2023, it was decided that a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan would be developed to reflect the ambitions of the new administration in addressing climate change. This new strategy aims to ensure the continued wellbeing of Wealden residents by focusing on proactive climate action, resilience building, and sustainability initiatives tailored to the district's needs.
73. This new strategy and action plan strengthens the commitment to tackling climate change with a new key objective of '*protecting our environment and leading the district towards carbon neutrality*', outlined in the new [Council Strategy For Wealden](#), adopted by the Council on [22 November 2023](#).
74. Since then, we have been working closely with our consultants, Arup, to conduct a high-level risk analysis assessing the effects of climate change on the district. Additionally, we are carrying out a spatial analysis to identify potential sites for future renewable energy development. This work is ongoing, and we remain committed to collaborating with Arup to deliver impactful results that will help shape our new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
75. Additionally, we developed and implemented surveys for both residents and local organisations to gather key insights and feedback. These surveys were specifically designed to assess concerns, priorities, and levels of climate

¹ [181121 Biodiversity Net Gain Consultation IA FINAL for publication.pdf](#)

change awareness within the community and among businesses. The responses received have provided a solid, data-driven basis for shaping the strategy, ensuring that the climate change plan reflects the needs and aspirations of both residents and organisations. The results are currently under analysis to fully realise their potential at this stage. A brief analysis of the survey highlights can be seen in Appendix D.

76. Furthermore, we have initiated and are conducting 'climate conversations' with various service areas across the Council. This process provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the current actions being taken within each service, identify potential changes and improvements that could better support the Council's climate goals, explore existing challenges and barriers, and assess how each service may have already been impacted directly by climate change.

Updated Timeframe for the New Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

77. The following is an updated 'high-level' draft timetable to develop a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan:
 - a. Community engagement and public consultation to begin in late November and continue until mid-January
 - b. Host the draft strategy on Let's talk Wealden' with a brief questionnaire
 - c. Attend Community Network meetings e.g. The Wealden Food Partnership and Wealden Disability Involvement Group
78. Host a 'Big Climate Conversation' on 3rd December
79. Edit the draft strategy during Spring 2025
80. Draft Strategy to be submitted to Cabinet and Full Council in Spring 2025

Consultation

81. The Council conducted two dedicated climate change surveys to inform the new climate change strategy.
82. The resident survey received 448 responses from individuals, while the organisation survey engaged 34 local organisations, including parish councils, businesses, charities and schools.
83. Both surveys were published on Let's Talk Wealden on 14 March 2024 at 2pm and were open for 11 weeks, until 31 May 2024 at 12pm.
84. An analysis of both survey's highlight results can be found in Appendix D.
85. In addition, the Council conducted internal service climate change conversations to support the drafting of the new strategy.
86. These were undertaken to ensure the new strategy reflects the Council's current progress and reflects future plans. The conversations began on 8 April 2024 and are ongoing.

Considerations

The following considerations were taken into account in making the recommendations in this report.

Financial Considerations

87. Production of this report was completed with the current budgeted resources.
Alasdair Ridley, Principal Accountant.

Legal Considerations

88. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
Chris Crichton, Senior Solicitor.

Climate Change Considerations

89. The actions and recommendations outlined in this report are aimed at tracking the progress made towards the Council's carbon reduction goals, including the continued alignment with national and local climate strategies. There are no immediate or direct climate change implications arising from this progress report, as it primarily serves to document achievements and assess emission trends.
90. The actions and recommendations detailed in the report are in line with the existing strategy to reduce emissions and move towards achieving net zero by 2050 (or before). Failure to continue this work would result in slower progress towards these goals, potentially exacerbating the impacts of climate change in the district.
91. The data presented reflects trends in emissions across sectors highlighting areas where further action may be necessary. The Council's efforts to engage local stakeholders and monitor sectoral emissions are critical in creating a collective approach to addressing climate change at the local level.
Alex Byott, Climate Change Project Officer.

Resource Considerations

92. No resource implications arising from this report.
Laura Morgan, HR Business Partner.

Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

93. This report focusses on tracking progress towards achieving the Council's sustainability goals, with a specific emphasis on emissions reduction within the Council's operations as well as across key sectors in the district.
94. Failure to continue advancing emission reductions could hinder the Council's ability to meet its sustainability targets, particularly in reducing carbon emissions, which would delay progress towards a more sustainable and climate-resilient future for Wealden.
95. Key environmental and sustainability considerations include:
 - a. Continued reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from local authority operations.
 - b. Co-benefits of implementing further emissions reduction strategies in high-impact sectors.
 - c. Opportunities for community engagement and collaborative sustainability initiatives.
 - d. Ensuring the Council's actions align with wider regional and national environmental goals.

Alex Byott, Climate Change Project Officer.

Equalities Considerations

96. None arising from this report.
Alex Byott, Climate Change Project Officer.

Community Wellbeing and Safety Considerations

97. None arising from this report.
Alex Byott, Climate Change Project Officer.

Conclusions

98. The progress made over the past year towards achieving the goals outlined in the Climate Emergency Action Plan has been significant. While emissions data can be complex due to shifting baselines and reporting delays, we can be assured that emissions across the district are on a downward trend.
99. Through careful monitoring, we continue to identify key areas for action and improvement, ensuring that our local efforts contribute to the broader goal of reaching net zero emissions.
100. As we look to the future, the development of a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be crucial in ensuring that the next phase of actions is driven by solid evidence and informed decision-making.

101. Decarbonising key sectors such as transport and domestic buildings, alongside enhancing carbon sequestration through land-use and forestry, will require a coordinated effort at both the national and local levels. The delivery of these actions will, however, depend largely on the availability of funding from central Government as well as local context and the ability to adapt to regional needs.
102. Planning for climate change impacts will also be a fundamental component of the updated strategy. By preparing for the likely effects of a changing climate, we can build community resilience to better protect our communities, residents, and businesses in the years to come.
103. The Council will continue to play a pivotal leadership role in guiding the district's energy transition and in facilitating responses to the evolving climate crisis. With a clear, evidence-based strategy and ongoing commitment to action, we are well-positioned to lead Wealden towards a sustainable, resilient, and low-carbon future.

Corporate Management Team Recommendation

104. Corporate Management Team agree:
 - a) To welcome the progress made in the past five years since the declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019 and the progress made to date.
 - b) To acknowledge the significant emissions reductions and progress achieved to date, as detailed in this covering report and Appendices A and B:
 - i. The Council's Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions have decreased by 20.13% since the baseline financial year 2018/19 and by 4.62% compared to the previous reporting year, 2022/23.
 - ii. District wide emissions have reduced by 43.33% between 2005 and 2022, and by 4.88% compared to the most recently reported year, 2021.
 - iii. Total renewable energy capacity has grown by 725% between 2014 and 2023.
 - iv. In the district, the uptake of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEVs) has increased by 807% between 2018 and 2024, and the total number of publicly accessible EV chargers have increased by 842% between 2019 and 2024.
 - v. Transitioning the waste collection fleet and street cleansing vehicles to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel has resulted in a 75% reduction in emissions, measured over the eight months following the transition from diesel. This reduction is expected to increase. This reduction is expected to increase.
105. To note the revised draft timetable set out to complete the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the remainder of 2024/25 and
106. To acknowledge the scope and scale of the challenge in order to reach net zero, and how this can only be met through collaborative action, partnership working, as well as individual actions we can all make in our daily lives.

Contacts and References

Director: Chris Bending, Director of Place

Head of Service: Nichola Watters, Head of Planning Policy, Economy and Climate Change

Report Authors: Chantal Lass, Climate Change Manager and Alex Byott, Climate Change Project Officer.

Enquiries to: Tel no. 01892 602554 and email address Chantal.lass@wealden.gov.uk

Classification: Non-key - Not an executive decision

Reason if Exempt: N/A (Not Exempt)

Appendices:

- A. Appendix A: Wealden District Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions 2022
- B. Appendix B: Wealden District Council Annual Operations Emissions Report 2023/24
- C. Appendix C: Emissions Classifications and Definitions
- D. Appendix D: Wealden District Council Climate Change Resident and Organisation Survey Highlight Results

Background Papers:

- None