Response to the Climate Change Action Plan Survey 2022

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# Introduction

From May 2022 to July 2022, we released our Climate Change Action Plan survey, to find out from the public what their priorities for climate action in Medway were. Thank you to everyone who took part in this survey. Climate Change is one of the most important challenges of our time, and to combat it we need all who live, work and study in Medway to come together to make a lasting improvement to our planet. Therefore, we also used this survey as a chance to gather the ideas of the Medway community, to further strengthen our plan.

In this document, we have responded to suggestions that were raised, ensuring that those who took part in our survey understand that we have listened and learned from their ideas, and how we will implement the ones that we feel will benefit Medway and our Climate Change Action Plan. We also respond on the ideas that we will not be taking forward, explaining why we do not feel they are possible or will benefit Medway. Finally, we highlight what we are already doing, to make sure everyone is aware of what is happening in Medway to address climate change.

# Headline Results

* In total 71 responses were received.
* Almost half of respondents feel informed about what Medway Council is doing to respond to climate change (43%)
* Over half of respondents are aware that Medway Council has a Climate Change Action Plan and what it includes (59%)
* Just 29% of respondents agree that they know climate change related campaigns and events are taking place in Medway
* 24% agree that they know they can get involved in climate change action in Medway
* 84% agree that their actions can help tackle climate change
* 90% agree that reducing the impact on the environment is a personal priority
* In response to the question “The following are Medway Council’s 11 priority areas as set out in the Climate Change Action Plan. Which three priority areas are of most importance to you?” overall, the priority areas were ranked in the following order of importance:
	+ Transport, travel and digital connectivity (43) – 62%
	+ Green and blue infrastructure (42) – 61%
	+ Planning and development (26) – 38%
	+ Renewable energy generation (22) – 32%
	+ Communications (20) – 29%
	+ Public sector decision making (15) – 22%
	+ Climate adaptation and resilience (13) – 19%
	+ Building retrofit programme (10) – 15%
	+ Emissions reduction pathways (9) – 13%
	+ Supporting low carbon business (2) – 3%
	+ Climate emergency funding (2) – 3%

# Responding To Ideas

Throughout the remainder of this document, we have set out whether the ideas suggested in the survey response are ones we are already actioning, will not be actioning or will action. These have been sorted by theme.

## Transport

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging for most residents

* We released a public EV survey to assess the demand for EV street charging point locations. The survey is available on the [electric vehicle charging points](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200161/travel/1130/electric_vehicle_charging_points) page on the council website. In October 2021, 34 Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) were installed within council-owned car parks and further EVCPs are intended as part of the [Kent & Medway Chargepoint Network](https://www.connectedkerb.com/kent). On-street options are being explored as part of a potential pilot scheme involving 10 EVCPs.

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Vehicles should turn off engines when in traffic jams or traffic lights

* We promote that it is best to switch your engine off when stationary for longer than a minute, in all situations, not just in traffic jams or at traffic lights. For many newer cars, it is more fuel efficient to switch off your engine if you will be stationary for longer than 10 seconds. We are currently carrying out the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs funded Rainham idling project and the intention is to use the findings of the project in a wider idling campaign across Medway.

We have considered but do not plan to progress:

### Support e-scooters

* E-scooter schemes on the public highway are not something that we are actively pursuing in Medway, as they are not currently legal to ride on the public highway, unless as part of a recognised government trial area; the only designated site across the entire county was in Canterbury. [See guidance for e-scooter trials on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-users).
* Kent County Council announced their decision to gradually reduce the number of vehicles in the trial, as well as the areas in which they operate, ahead of the trial finishing in Kent at the end of November 2022. E-scooters conflict with Medway Council's casualty reduction and safer routes to school objectives, where we actively discourage this mode of transport.
* Micro mobility options are being explored, including e-bikes, however only in the early discussion stages. Active travel initiatives are also being promoted to schools and workplaces in line with our Department for Transport (DfT) Capability Fund allocation.

We have considered but do not plan to progress:

### Look into tram systems

* Unfortunately, it is exceedingly difficult to expand existing road space in Medway, which is something we have looked to do in the past to introduce dedicated bus lanes. If this space was found without encroaching on green space, it would then require significant investment and would cause significant disruption to the roads. Therefore, this is not something we are currently considering.

## Education and Engagement

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Make sure to keep the public engaged in what the council is doing

* Communications is one of our Climate Change Action Plan Priority Areas and is an important aspect to our climate work. You can read our Climate Response and Communications and Engagement Strategy here
* We had a presence at a variety of events during 2022, such as Wild about Capstone, the English Festival and Armed Forces Day. We use these events as an opportunity for the public to ask questions about climate change, find out what the council is doing and [sign up to our newsletter](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMEDWAY/signup/32489) to get monthly updates on climate action in Medway.
* We also have a two-page spread in Medway Matters; the magazine sent quarterly to every house in Medway. We make use of social media to share updates and opportunities to the public.
* We are we are always happy to hear from the public on their thoughts around climate action in Medway and you can email us at climatechange@medway.gov.uk

This is an action that we are already committed to:

###  Educate families

* Over the past six months Medway Adult Education (MAE) have been running Family Learning Gardening Clubs at three Medway primary schools. They are run as after-school clubs in which the parents/ grandparents are actively learning about planting, re-use and recycle together with their children. MAE are supporting schools with their work towards being Eco-Schools and running workshops over school holidays. During 2022/23, MAE will be running garment and bag making sessions for families to attend together to learn new skills and create new life from older clothes and fabrics.

We will incorporate this suggestion into our actions:

### Frequently report progress on the climate change action plan

* Progress reports are shared with our Members Advisory Group, and these are publicly available documents. We will ensure that these progress reports are made more accessible to residents, and are promoted when they are published, to ensure that everyone is kept up to date with what is happening to address climate change in Medway. As a direct response to this request, we will include a new section on our climate change webpages which will summarise our progress so far. [Read the Climate Change Action Plan Progress](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200517/climate_change_action_plan_summary/1651/climate_change_action_plan_progress).

We will incorporate this suggestion into our actions:

### Use the main Medway Council social media channels to promote to more people

* While we use our Medway Climate Change social media channels to keep people up to date on climate action in Medway, we have taken on board this suggestion and have increased our climate change coverage on the Medway Council Updates accounts and will continue to do so.

We will incorporate this suggestion into our actions:

### Use local television to promote

* We welcome the opportunity to promote our work in a way that engages the most people, and since receiving this suggestion have taken advantage of the opportunity to promote our Great Big Green Week on KMTV. We will continue to use all opportunities available to promote our Action Plan on local television.

## Waste and Recycling

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Recycle in greenspaces and at events

* We conducted a small waste recycling trial at the English Festival in 2022. Unfortunately, the bin became contaminated with food, disposable cups and food packaging, all non-recyclable and therefore disposed of as general waste.
* Having spoken to other Kent councils and London borough councils, the success rates of recycling in public are low (usually around 37%). We are working with some of our Parks to establish a programme to encourage the public to take their waste home and fully utilise their kerbside recycling service.
* However, we are seeking to run a recycling trial in our country parks, to measure the levels of contamination and investigate different methods of improving behaviour to decrease contamination. The results of this trial will inform future decisions.

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Education of the public and consequences for households being wasteful.

* We attend public events, roadshows, school groups and festivals to actively engage with the public and to educate on reducing consumption and to reuse and recycle as much as possible. We also manage our own social media platforms, have a dedicated newsletter to raise awareness around sustainability. We publish an annual report which transparently shows how and where all waste is processed within Medway. [Read the Waste and Recycling End Destination report](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/download/515/waste_and_recycling_end_destinations).

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Prevent fly tipping and make it easy to report fly tipping

* Medway Council work in partnership with Kent Police's Rural Task Force carrying out regular operations. The purpose of these operations is to target potential illegal waste carriers and vehicles/people suspected of being involved in fly tipping through intelligence led enforcement
* Recently Medway Council have seized two 32 tonne hook loader lorries believed to have been involved in significant deposits of waste, these actions act as a deterrent to those who want to tip illegally. We have also seen an increase in the number of licensed collectors out and about. Again, this is off the back of these operations. The partnership work carried out with Kent Police is integral to prevent and deter fly tipping
* We also work proactively in ‘hotspot’ areas, visiting as often as resource allows, to expedite removal of the fly tip and to give a greater chance of evidence recovery. We do this by using caged tipper vehicles to clear once investigated, reducing the likelihood of more being added or for it to be spread around the locality.
* We have designed new signs incorporating a Quick Response (QR) code which will take the customer directly to the fly tipping reporting page. The QR code has also been added to our notices and advice letters.

We have considered but do not plan to progress:

### Support the reduction of unnecessary packaging

* As a local authority, we can only influence the contracts that are held for residential waste and have little-to-no say in commercial enterprise. However, we will continue to engage with businesses to support their journey to becoming more sustainable.

## Supporting Low Carbon Business

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Work with local businesses, such as supermarkets, to ensure they are contributing to looking after the local area

* Morrisons (Strood) were recently due to assist our Environmental Engagement Team and the Medway and Swale Estuary Partnership in a trolley clear up of Jane’s Creek in Strood. Unfortunately, this event was cancelled due to bad weather, but we will continue to seek to work with large businesses and local supermarkets on initiatives to keep Medway clean.

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Pool financial and technical resources with adjacent councils to ensure maximum impact

* We continue to work with UK councils, both local and nation-wide. Our officers sit on a variety of networks that connect councils together to work on group projects. The Kent Climate Change Network is one example of this, and we always strive to collaborate where possible. For example, collectively we have supported Solar Together Kent, a group buying scheme that supports residents to install solar panels on their homes for a reduced price. [Read about Solar Together Kent](https://www.medway.gov.uk/solartogether).
* We are currently working with Kent County Council and Kent District Councils on a Behavioural Insights Programme that is looking at how best to support households to make changes to improve energy efficiency in their homes.
* We will continue to work with other councils and seek funding to support collaborative work.

## Green Spaces and Biodiversity

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Don't develop on green space, develop on brownfield land

* There is a distinction between green spaces, e.g., parks and play areas, and greenfield land (usually farmland or fields). There are policies to protect designated open spaces. [See Medway Local Plan 2003, policy L3.](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/75/medway_local_plan_2003) The council seeks to promote the regeneration of brownfield sites, but it will not be possible to meet our housing needs only by building on brownfield sites. The council will be consulting in 2023 on options for development in the new local plan, and people can comment then on their preferences on how best to meet housing needs on sites across Medway.

We have considered but do not plan to progress:

### Declare a biodiversity crisis like the Declaration of a Climate Emergency

* Medway Council supports the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, and the Leader of Medway Council and Kent Nature Partnership Board member Cllr Alan Jarrett has said: “The Kent Biodiversity Strategy clearly sets out our intentions to champion the natural world and deliver a healthy environment for Kent and Medway’s wildlife."
* At this time, we feel that our commitment to the Kent Biodiversity Strategy and our Climate Change Action Plan recognise our concern over the state of the natural world, so will not be officially declaring a biodiversity crisis.

## Public Sector Decision Making

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Ensure that the council's pension is divested from fossil fuels

* The council’s pension fund is managed independently from the council itself with the Superannuation Fund Committee consisting of county councillors, representatives of other Kent and Medway councils, trade unions, employees and pensioners. [See how the Kent Pension Fund is addressing climate change concerns.](https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/finance-and-budget/the-kent-pension-fund)
* In our Climate Change Action Plan, action 4.4 is to 'explore joint working with Kent HR network to influence investment of funds in pension scheme'. We will continue to use our influence to request divestment from fossil fuels.

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Net zero - needs to be a Medway wide ambition with baseline and targets for whole of Medway not just Medway Council

* Our net zero ambition is for the whole of the Medway area, as well as being a Council target. The Climate Change Action Plan supports the [Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy](https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-and-medway-energy-and-low-emissions-strategy) to achieve net zero across Kent and Medway by 2050. We are currently working with Kent County Council and other Kent districts to develop ways of measuring performance across Kent. Our Climate Change Action Plan is our blueprint for action across the whole of Medway, as can be seen in Priority Area 9 - Supporting Low Carbon Business, which demonstrates our intent to work with Medway businesses to support and drive adaption to sustainable practices. Priority Area 10 – Communications, demonstrates how we want to be working with the public to educate about climate change and the importance for action.
* Our 2022 refresh of the Action Plan took into consideration a Sustainable Development Goals mapping project undertaken by one of our Climate Change Interns during summer 2021. This ensured that our Action Plan was in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and that the goals were reflected in our actions.
* We touch on the cross-benefits of climate change, the health, and social benefits of actions although we want to do more to show the benefits of all actions.
* Climate Change is a core value for Medway Council. We have an action in the plan to embed climate change considerations within our Key Documents such as the Cultural Strategy, the Local Plan and Medway 2037, the River Strategy, Child Friendly City Strategy and the Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework.

We have considered but do not plan to progress:

### Rewarding households with low emissions on a reduction in council tax

* Council tax is an important revenue stream for the council and is what predominantly supports us to deliver on work. It would also require significant investment to set up and run a scheme such as this, so the cost to the council would be high. Given that improving the energy efficiency of a home already has financial benefits by reducing energy bills, we would not consider reducing council tax as an additional financial incentive.

We will incorporate this suggestion into our actions:

### Allow people to be able to make suggestions

* We appreciate that people might have thoughts on climate change and ideas they'd like to share outside of survey periods. We have always been keen to receive people's thoughts but have taken this suggestion on board and have included an invitation to share feedback on our Climate Change Homepage on the council website to make it clearer how you can get in contact with us. We also invite recipients of our Climate Change newsletter to get in contact with suggestions and questions by email, in each edition.

## Green Energy and Housing

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Have solar canopies over car parks and large buildings

* We already have two priority actions within our Action Plan that address these ideas:
	+ Action 7.8: Undertake a review to establish the potential for solar PV within council owned car parks (solar canopies) and EV charging points.
	+ Action 7.7: Explore opportunities to support businesses with the install of solar panels on commercial buildings

This is an action that we are already committed to:

### Support residents with funding and advice to improve their homes energy efficiency and to increase biodiversity

* Our [Climate Change webpage](http://www.medway.gov.uk/climatechange) provides advice for residents on their energy efficiency and links to grants that may be available to support them.
* The council has supported [Solar Together Kent](https://www.medway.gov.uk/solartogether) for two years, which is a group buying scheme that supports residents to install solar panels on their homes for a reduced price.
* This year, we have promoted the Green Homes Grant and Sustainable Warmth Scheme, which were grants available to Medway residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. We have also recruited a new dedicated Sustainable Warmth Officer to ensure that we are promoting and delivering on these schemes.
* Medway Adult Education (MAE) have run a couple of workshops on how to make a compost bin out of pallets. MAE plan, during 2023, to run workshops for people to learn new woodworking skills to create homes for wildlife. On their community gardening courses at Fort Amherst and St. Augustine’s, MAE teach participants methods to help increase biodiversity through considered planning and nurturing of wild spaces and gardens.

We have considered but do not plan to progress:

### Enforcing new developments to be fitted with solar panels and air source heat pumps so that there is less drain on resources. It should be mandatory

* If we seek to apply local policy that requires a higher standard than that set out by central government, we could find that development is unviable due to higher costs, and we would need a strong evidence base in place to justify a new policy. We must also prepare new policy through the new local plan, which is a lengthy process to adoption. If a developer challenges our requirement as unreasonable or unjustified, it could be overturned by a planning inspector.
* We seek to negotiate with developers and encourage measures to address climate change and have recently set up a Climate Change Developers Forum as an opening for these discussions.