



Mid Suffolk District Council

Climate Change and Biodiversity

- our journey so far



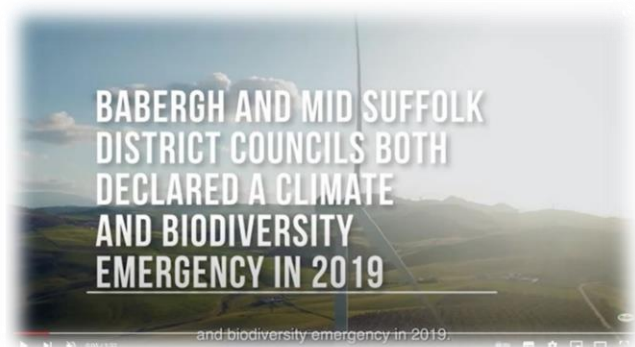
Introduction

In July 2019, Mid Suffolk District Council declared a climate emergency and committed to investigating ways to reduce its emissions and contribute toward the Suffolk-wide ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030. Shortly afterwards we declared a biodiversity emergency and made similar commitments to species and habitat conservation.

This report is the first of its kind for Mid Suffolk and presents the progress and achievements we have made with regards to climate change and biodiversity.

Recently published research by [Council Climate Scorecards](#) gave Mid Suffolk District Council a rating of 58% based on a number of factors.

The score is based on an "expert-approved checklist" and included rating the council's commitment, community engagement, mitigation and adaption measures as well as the education, skills and training it provides.



To find a short video which summarises our work to tackle climate change to date, [visit the councils YouTube channel](#)

The following pages reflect actions identified in support of biodiversity and topic headings as outlined in the carbon reduction management plan.



Biodiversity



Low carbon



Housing



Planning



Waste and fleet



Travel and transport



Council and commercial estate



Customer transformation and ICT



Business and communities



Culture change and governance

Our Commitments

Since declaring climate and biodiversity emergencies in 2019, Mid Suffolk District Council has taken the additional following steps to further strengthen our actions and plans:

- In July 2020, councillors approved proposals to create a joint [Sustainable Travel Action Plan](#) with Babergh District Council.

The aim being, to encourage a permanent shift towards sustainable transport such as cycling, walking and public transport throughout the district.

- [Street lighting](#) – a motion was passed in September 2021 to reduce the intensity and extent of outdoor lighting within our own public realm and housing assets and elsewhere where possible. The council will also include guidance in its Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document to protect and enhance dark skies for the benefit of wildlife and human health and wellbeing.
- [Publicly accessible green spaces](#) - a motion was passed in March 2021 to undertake a review of 'green space' within the Council's control to ensure that the public has as much access to natural and amenity open space as possible.
- [Biodiversity](#) - in September 2019, councillors approved commitments to enhance and protect biodiversity across our district. The actions included preparing a Wildlife Network Map, a Tree Canopy Survey and initiatives to enhance wildflower verges and meadows to encourage bees and insects.

Our Commitments

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** – in 2015, [The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), was adopted by all United Nations Member States to provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and for the future.

At its heart are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. For the purpose of this report, the Council has linked its own actions and commitments to the most relevant of the 17 SDGs.



Biodiversity

Streetlighting

- We have committed to reducing artificial lighting across our public realm and housing assets by including additional lighting control guidance within a planned Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- We will work with our partners to help reduce wider light pollution across the district.
- This provides us with the opportunity to:
 - Reduce energy consumption,
 - Reduce any negative impacts on human health and wellbeing, and wildlife, caused by intense blue-white light.



Strategic Property

- The council's strategic property team actively look for opportunities to acquire sites to support district-wide biodiversity.



Mapping Exercise

- We have commissioned Suffolk Wildlife Trust to undertake a mapping exercise which covers wildlife corridors, council-owned public realm sites, as well as county wildlife sites and local nature reserves. This is now complete.
- The survey will not only enable us to hold a more accurate record of our own tree stock and wildlife corridors but will help us target where additional planting is required and which planting areas need to be protected.
- The survey's findings will be made available publicly via an interactive database in due course

Parish wildflower planting

- Increased interest from residents to leave more of our green spaces unmown has enabled us to change our mowing regimes to allow for longer grass and wildflowers.
- Working alongside a local supplier, we have developed a Suffolk grasses and wildflower mix.
- Our public realm team have been mapping locations and assessing suitability as well as planning areas to sow from Spring 2022.

Biodiversity

Tree Canopy Survey

- By using field surveying and satellite data, the council can create an accurate inventory of its tree stock. It can also provide the following:
 - identify the % canopy cover in each ward.
 - quantify ecosystem services in each ward – carbon storage, carbon sequestration etc.
 - assess the resilience and composition of the current tree population in each ward,
 - make planting projections necessary to compensate for the loss of trees due to disease e.g ash dieback and chronic oak decline.
 - produce a tree planting strategy which categorises the areas where tree planting will benefit the existing tree stock or improve habitat networks.
- The completed project will include publicly accessible web maps which show tree canopy and ecosystem services data.

Tree and Hedgerow planting

- In March 2019, the Committee on Climate Change announced, the need to plant 30,000 hectares of trees each year and increase our hedgerows by 40% as part of measures to



dramatically reduce UK carbon emissions.

- This year, Mid Suffolk and Babergh have planted 281 trees and 4,690 hedgerow plants have been distributed to town and parish councils for planting and care. At 10 years old, the carbon sequestered from the 281 trees planted will equate to 7,025 kg a year
- increasing annually as the trees grow larger. The average family car emits 4,500kg per year.
- To promote the benefits which planting trees brings to our communities, we offer all families a tree to mark the arrival of every new child through the [Tree for Life scheme](#) Since its launch, we have given away over 1,000 trees in Mid Suffolk and Babergh.

Biodiversity

Investing in wildlife

- The council's strategic property team has acquired almost three acres of land at Wash Lane, Great Finborough to support district-wide biodiversity and actively continues to look to acquire more sites for the future.
- Whilst the Wash Lane site is not suitable for development it is an ideal space for local nature to quietly thrive alongside a busy town.
- There are currently no plans to make the site publicly accessible, but instead allow it to be a green oasis for wildlife and local flora and fauna



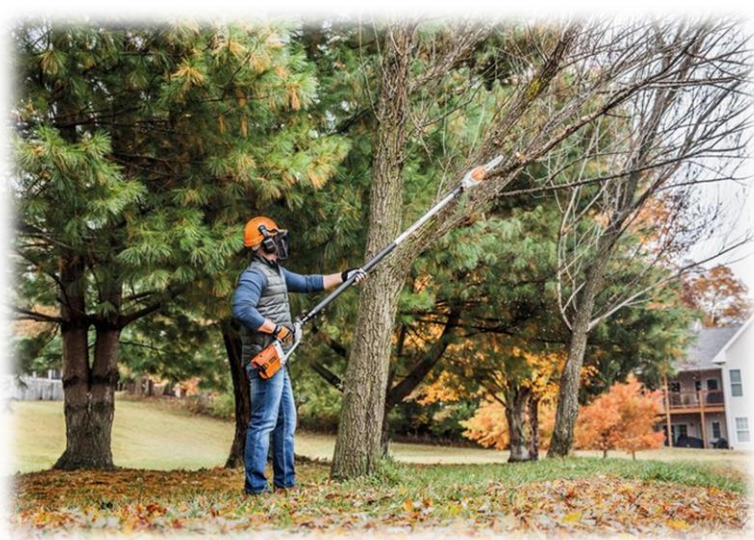
Low Carbon



In developing the carbon reduction management plan, the climate change taskforce took expert advice on which areas to target first for the greatest impact.

The council contracted Groundwork Suffolk to prepare a baseline of emissions and to develop recommendations. Initial results show, that the council's two largest emitters were our leisure centres and our waste vehicles.

- Alongside Babergh, we are the first rural UK council to switch its fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). A 90% reduction in emissions is expected from the switch.
- The councils' two leisure centres have successfully transferred to certified low carbon tariffs for electricity use.
- The councils' grounds maintenance team are using electric trimmers and bushcutters as opposed to diesel powered equipment.
- The development and refurbishment of 6 Cross Street, Eye will include several low carbon improvements including:
 - Insulation including loft, cavity wall, floor and external wall
 - Air source heat pump
 - Solar PV
 - LED lighting throughout the building



Low Carbon

Solar carports

- Following a successful bid, the council secured funding for the installation of a solar multi-function carport at Stowmarket leisure centre.
- Mid Suffolk alongside Babergh is one of the first councils to install these in public surface carparks.
- The scheme is a learning pilot for the council and has the potential to be rolled out elsewhere and links to the wider regional strategy regarding cumulative localised energy microgeneration
- The benefits of 'multi-function' include:
 - generating power on site to offset leisure centre costs - public swimming pools are under pressure from rising energy costs, with a recent [Sport England report](#) finding that 40 per cent of public pools could be lost by the end of the decade.
 - power electric vehicle charging points and battery storage to help manage demand during peaks and troughs
 - Carbon savings expected from the installation are:
 - lifetime (25 years) CO₂ savings – 8.6 times the volume of the Royal Albert Hall
 - Generate enough power to supply 52 average homes in Stowmarket each year



Low Carbon

Public sector decarbonisation fund

- Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils are installing a number of green energy measures at their leisure centres – providing the centres with renewable energy and reducing CO2 emissions.
- Work to install a mixture of both solar PV panels and an air source heat pump, at the leisure centres is now complete.
- The council-owned sites and measures include:
 - Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket (500 solar panels generating 195 kW as well as an air source heat pump and air handling unit)
 - Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre (104 solar panels generating 40.6 kW)
- The changes, carried out by [CorEnergy](#), enable the centres to reduce their demand on the energy grid and begin to transition away from fossil-fuelled heating systems, by powering them with renewables.
- They are expected to save 234 tonnes of CO2e per year - a 4.8% reduction in the councils' annual carbon emissions – as well as reduce the total amount of energy needed to run the leisure centres.
- These works have been made possible thanks to £1.4m in funding from the Government's [Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme](#), which supports capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within public sector non-domestic buildings.



Low Carbon

Linking Environment and Community

- Needham Lake is one of the region's most visited free tourist attractions and is home to a variety of wildlife.
- In March 2019, funding was approved to develop a new visitors centre and café at Needham Lake.




- The new building has been designed to complement the surrounding natural environment and meets the Councils' climate change ambitions with several green features including bird boxes, solar panels, sustainable drainage, an air source heat pump and the use of sustainable building materials.
- Social value is key and so the café will be managed by local business Cabbages and Kings and will offer locally sourced food and use sustainable products.

Housing



A significant amount of work has already been undertaken to improve energy efficiency in our own housing stock. This includes:

- 900 Mid Suffolk owned council homes have had solar panels installed to generate electricity.
 - Authorities through the [Suffolk Solar Together scheme](#) offer residents discounted rates for the installation of solar panels for their homes.
 - Between April 2019 and November 2021, Mid Suffolk installed 114 Air Source Heat Pumps in council owned homes. A number of these have been funded through the Warm Homes Fund. The fund was set up to support the council in addressing some of the issues affecting fuel poor households.
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- Oil fired / storage communal heating has been replaced with individual heat pumps at Mason Court, Mendlesham with surveys to be undertaken at Hartismere House Laxfield and Farnish House Botesdale.
 - We have and continue to install external insulation on solid wall properties whilst replacing cladding systems with materials which offer better insulation whenever viable.
 - Work has commenced in Harleston Corner (Harleston) to improve both the appearance and efficiency of our residents homes over the next three years.
 - We have received funding through the Green Homes Grant to help improve the energy efficiency of low-income households across the district.
 - Working alongside the Energy Savings Trust, we have evaluated every property within our housing stock (via a desktop exercise). This has provided the council with a current efficiency level compared to what it could be and the level of investment required to achieve improved energy efficiency.
 - We are targeting the 'hardest to heat' homes first i.e. properties where the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is rated D – G.
 - All properties to be rated C on the EPC scale by 2030.

Housing

- We have trained our surveyors in Retrofit training which has been extended to a Retrofit Co-ordinators Diploma by the Retrofit Academy.
- Our stock condition surveyors are qualified to undertake EPCs.
- All new homes delivered for council housing in 2021 were built to an EPC rating of B.
- Our new homes 'design guide and technical specification' that incorporates carbon saving solutions will be launched alongside the 30-year Housing Business Plan in April 2022 and seeks to improve energy efficient standards further for all new homes built by the Councils and their Growth Companies.
- The councils have appointed 2 Energy Performance Surveyors that are currently working with Private Landlords to target the worst performing homes within the Private Rented Sector. This is a Countywide initiative and follows a successful bid to Government.

Planning



- Our [Joint Local Plan](#) was formally submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination on 31 March 2021 and includes policies that require new developments to achieve high levels of energy efficiency and minimise carbon emissions.
- The council continues to play an active role working alongside other local authorities on the [Suffolk Design Charter](#). The project aims to embed high quality, sustainable and functional design for new homes across Suffolk.
- Preliminary work has begun on a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) including:
 - biodiversity
 - open space

Other SPDs are planned for Climate Change and Heritage. Before the SPDs can be formally adopted, they will be subject to public consultation following adoption of the Joint Local Plan.

Waste and Fleet



- Our waste fleet is one of the largest carbon emitters in the council and in September 2021 switched its fleet from diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). The switch from diesel, will result in up to a 90% reduction in CO2 and elimination of diesel fumes.
- All kerbside waste, when it cannot be recycled goes to the Suffolk Energy from Waste plant which powers more than 30,000 homes.
- Our recycling rate (reduction in waste sent to the energy from waste plant) for 2020/21 was 41.02%. Our aim is to increase this to 65%.
- Our garden waste scheme continues to grow with a total 17,906 customers at the end of December 2021 compared with 16,475 at the end of December 2020
- This year, we have given away 480 bags of compost generated by Material Change in Creeting St. Mary through our community 'giveaway' event in Needham Market.
- Through our membership of the Suffolk Waste Partnership, we continue to support the countywide [Food Savvy](#) project. In Suffolk, over 52,000 tonnes of food waste is thrown away by residents each year costing the local taxpayer approximately £4.75 million.
- Work has begun on developing a litter and fly tipping strategy with our colleagues at the Suffolk Waste Partnership. The strategy will be key to managing the problem of fly tipping for the next 5 years and we are aiming to publish this in the winter of 2022/23.
- Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils have appointed a Waste Management Officer to support the service and to work collaboratively with Suffolk Waste Partnership, residents and businesses to promote waste reduction initiatives and support the implementation of the Resource and Waste Strategy (RAWs).



Waste and Fleet

- Back in December 2018, the government published their [Resource and Waste Strategy \(RAWS\)](#). Mid Suffolk welcomed this publication and supports its overarching aims to reduce waste, improve recycling and support the development of a circular economy.
 - The government launched a public consultation with stakeholders in Spring 2021, the purpose of which was to establish how any new waste system can effectively work in practice for householders, local authorities, waste management companies, businesses and product producers
 - Both councils responded to the consultation in conjunction with our partners at the Suffolk Waste Partnership.
 - Consultation responses are now being analysed by the government and guidance expected in March 2022.
 - Once the process has concluded, the councils and the Suffolk Waste Partnership will be in a position to consider the implications for the districts and agree how to implement any required changes to our current services.



Travel and Transport



Electric vehicle charging

- As part of the drive towards our low carbon future, people need to feel confident to make the switch to electrifying their transport. Where appropriate Mid Suffolk is working with [Plug in Suffolk](#) - a project run by Suffolk County Council to simplify the procedure of charging an electric car and make Suffolk Zero Emission Vehicle ready.
- We have installed a small number of electric vehicle charge points at 2 car parks in the district, all of which are fast chargers. Work is currently underway to seek funding for an additional 21 charge points (all fast chargers) with installation expected over a rolling programme of 1-2 years.
- The solar carport at Stowmarket leisure centre incorporates 2 rapid chargers.



Parking Strategy

- Development of our first parking strategy is underway, with the initial round of public consultation complete.
- The strategy will incorporate both on-street and off-street parking.
- Through both development of the parking strategy and the carbon reduction management plan we are reviewing our existing parking policies to encourage a modal shift in transport from cars to other sustainable transport options including cycling.



Travel and Transport

Active Travel

- In developing the councils Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils received over 1,880 contributions to the active travel consultation.
- Alongside the LCWIP, which includes network zone mapping for active travel infrastructure investment and a prioritised list of 195 schemes across both districts, the councils will publish a 'sustainable travel vision' which outlines key values and ambitions and how we plan to achieve them, within the coming months.
- In partnership with Suffolk County Council, we have facilitated a cycle parking installation in Stowmarket.

Buses and Community Transport

- We are a key stakeholder and active partner in the Enhanced Bus Partnership for Suffolk, and advocate for our communities needs with regards to improving bus connectivity and services across the district.
- We are proactively advocating for Demand Responsive Transport pilot schemes in our districts to provide better rural connectivity via more sustainable means.

Other

- We have fed into and are now reviewing Transport East's 'Transport Strategy' (currently at consultation stage), which has decarbonisation at its heart.



Travel and Transport

Behaviour Change Initiatives

- We actively spread messages to encourage behaviour change including:
 - [Love to Ride initiative](#) - an online platform that gets more people cycling
 - Funding for Bike Doctor Sessions enables an experienced cycle mechanic to carry out a thorough check on your bike
 - [Clean Air Day](#) - is the UK's largest air pollution campaign, engaging thousands of people at hundreds of events, and reaching millions more through the media. This year it took place on 17 June 2021.
- We are looking to deliver courses and events to make people feel more confident in travelling more regularly by bike or on foot, such as Bikeability courses, more leader-led Health Walks, and activities around Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival.
- We are exploring new initiatives, such as incentive schemes for active travel participation, cargo e-bikes for businesses, and 'zero carbon commuting' initiatives.

Council and Commercial Estate

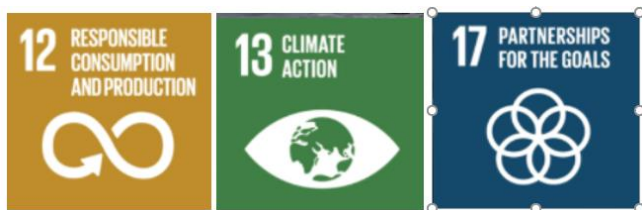
- The councils [Strategic Asset Management Plan 2020-2025](#) was approved in January 2021 and supports the move to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Energy audits that focus on our depots and touch-down points have been carried out. Further audits are planned for the council's income-producing assets, with a view that Energy Performance Certificates will be obtained for all council assets.
- As existing lease arrangements expire both for council assets and CIFCO assets, new leases reflecting modern practices such as sustainability will be adopted. New lease arrangements for CIFCO include specific green clauses as outlined in CIFCO's sustainability action plan which was adopted in 2021.
- CIFCO has incorporated within its key performance indicators a target to reduce the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of its portfolio by 10% by 31 March 2022.
- Planning consent has been granted for Gateway 14 in Stowmarket which



will deliver 13% Net Biodiversity Gain across the structural landscaping element of the site, alongside further net gains as the plots are developed, with 20% of plots comprising landscaping. Buildings at Gateway 14 will benefit from solar panels, grey water recycling, EV chargers and sustainable travel arrangements.

- The council has received funding from the Greater South East Energy hub (GSEEH) for a low carbon study of Gateway 14
- Gateway 14 is a tax site within one of only 8 Freeport designations across the UK and one of the priority actions from [Freeport East](#) is to become carbon neutral.

Customer, Transformation and ICT



- We are, in conjunction with our IT partners in Suffolk County Council, moving to new technologies that enable us to utilise less hardware to run the same workloads.
 - We are working with colleagues from our Communities team and external partners including foodbanks and befriending schemes on community device recycling schemes where members of the public can donate unused devices which are then recycled to those in need.
- To maximise the opportunity for digital engagement with our residents, enable greater efficiency and reduce our carbon footprint the councils have:
 - launched a one-year pilot scheme working alongside Suffolk Libraries, to lend iPads to those residents who need help to get online.
 - through the online tenant portal [‘My Home’](#) supported the reduction of paper wherever possible.
 - implemented a remote access solution for our Housing service called Open Access which is a self-service portal available to all our tenants providing a range of services - available on smartphone, tablet, or computer.
 - through the Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP) offered residents and businesses the ability to go [paperless](#) with their council tax and business rates bills.



Business and Communities



- We are working collaboratively with local authorities in Suffolk to develop the Suffolk Energy Prospectus - setting out the challenges and opportunities for Suffolk to contribute to becoming carbon neutral in the UK by 2050.
- We hosted the councils first ever energy focused event - the Local Energy Showcase in October 2021. The aim of which was to inspire and inform local businesses, community organisations and interested individuals - 238 tickets sold over 2 days.
- We are also working actively to:
 - on building better relationships with large energy infrastructure providers,
 - carry out an assessment of community energy projects in the district
 - develop a Local Energy Asset Representation Model (LEAR) for Suffolk, to help inform future asset decisions.

Culture Change and Governance

- Agile working allows staff to work from home or from a location that is convenient to them, in order to minimise unnecessary travel.
- Any supplier submitting a tender is requested to provide information in respect of their plans to reduce carbon emissions and single use plastic during the life of the contract, this will be strengthened as part of the procurement policy review.
- Through the 2022/23 budget setting process we are aiming to secure funding for a Climate Change Officer role.

Next steps

To ensure we keep everyone informed, the council will continue to produce the climate change and biodiversity report each year. Alongside this report you can also access the councils Greenhouses Gases (GHG) report [here](#). The GHG report provides a comprehensive carbon footprint for the council.

How can I help?

Making simple changes to the food you eat, how you reduce your waste, and the way you travel can reduce your carbon footprint.

- [Get involved with FoodSavvy Suffolk](#)
- [Use Suffolk's Carbon Footprint calculator](#)
- [Plan your journeys](#)
- [Help Suffolk's Wildlife](#)
- [Find your nearest reusable water bottle refill station](#)
- [Discover volunteering opportunities in your area](#)
- [Find out more about green communities already in Suffolk](#)

How can I share my ideas or get support for my community to tackle the climate change challenge?

We are keen to hear your ideas, suggestions and offers of help.

Please [email our climate change team](#)

