

Climate Change Strategy

Annual report on progress 2021/22



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



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

I take great pride

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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Introduction by Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery



Summary of key successes:

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

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

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

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

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



secured £260k, for active travel initiatives and EV charging points. We have also had support from our local MPs, who supported Cllr Mrs

Hayes in hosting the Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion to look at how the council can get green funding to address brownfield sites.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Climate Change Advisory Panel Chair: Councillor Tony Virgo



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

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

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

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

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



Vice Chair: Councillor Tina Mckenzie-Boyle



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

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

Ahead of the session I and several other councillors of the panel visited existing anaerobic digestion plants in Hampshire and Oxfordshire. Our own findings were mapped against a separate

feasibility study completed by Atkins on the council's behalf to consider the merits of installing a facility here within the borough. The overall conclusion was that whilst an AD plant would be of benefit any lead on such a project should be left in the hands of a commercial developer to take forwards.

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

I look forwards to supporting further initiatives over the coming year



Strategy summary

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

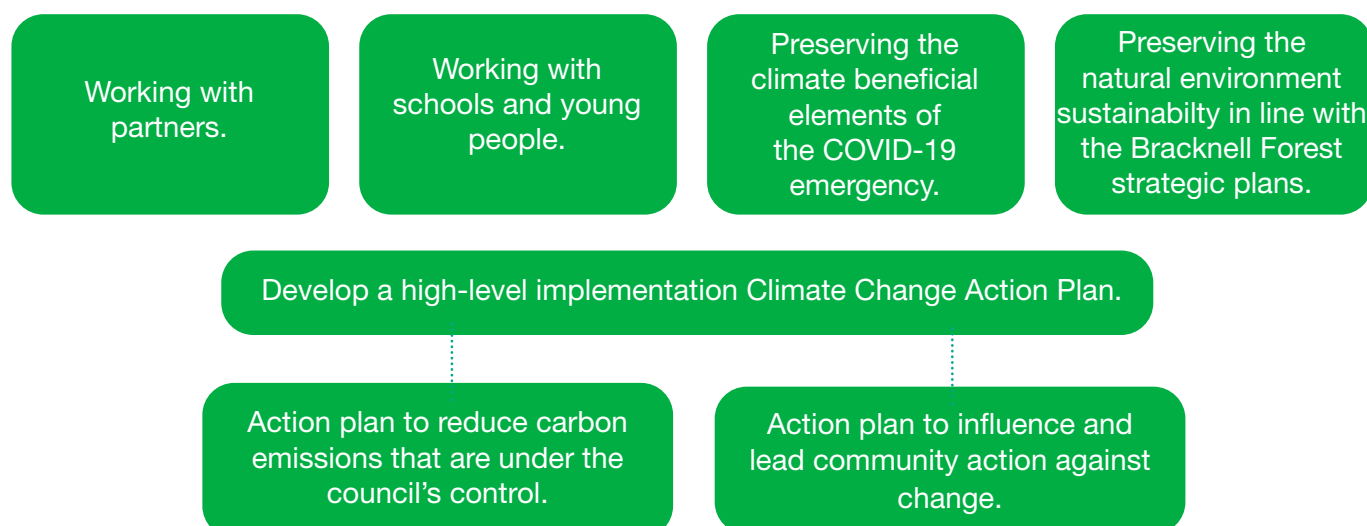
The strategy can be summarised as per the diagram below. It is worth noting that direct carbon dioxide equivalent emissions within the council's control represent around 2% of the entire emissions associated with the borough as a whole.

BFC Climate Strategy (on a Page)

Bracknell Forest Council: 2020-2024

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

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



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

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



Action plan to support strategy

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

The action plan is therefore a 'live' document which is updated and consolidated at the end of each quarter. Updates are provided by nominated officers within various sections and directorates of the council. These quarterly updates are reported to the officer's board and the action plan is updated and published on the council's climate change web pages. [Climate change strategy action plan | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](#). Action Plan progress reports are also presented to the Advisory Panel and once per annum to Full Council to complete full governance of all climate change mitigation activities.

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

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

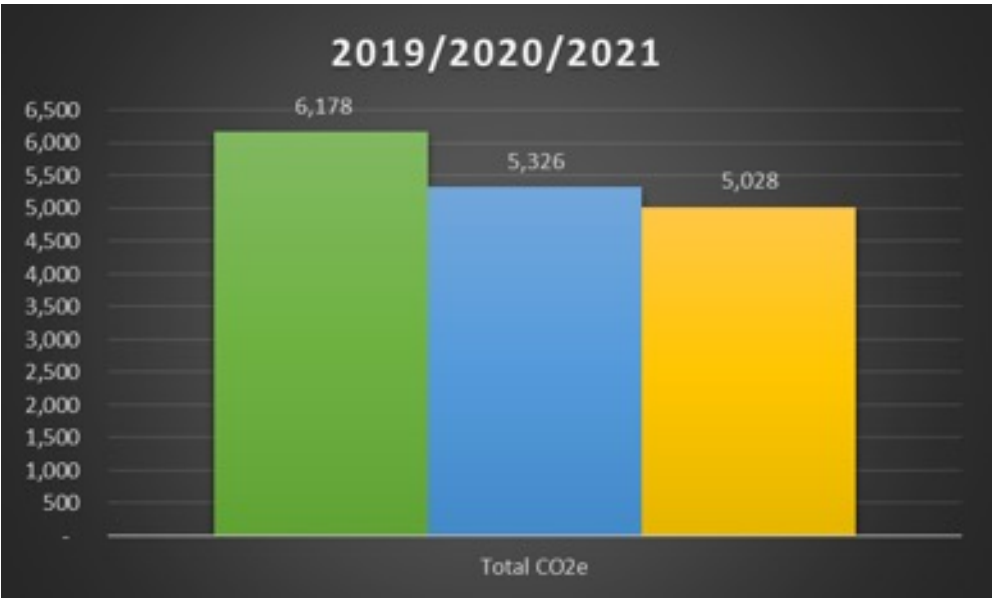
Completed or closed projects are also captured within the action plan and a summary of those key achievements in the 2021/22 year is covered elsewhere within this report.

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



Headline metrics 2021

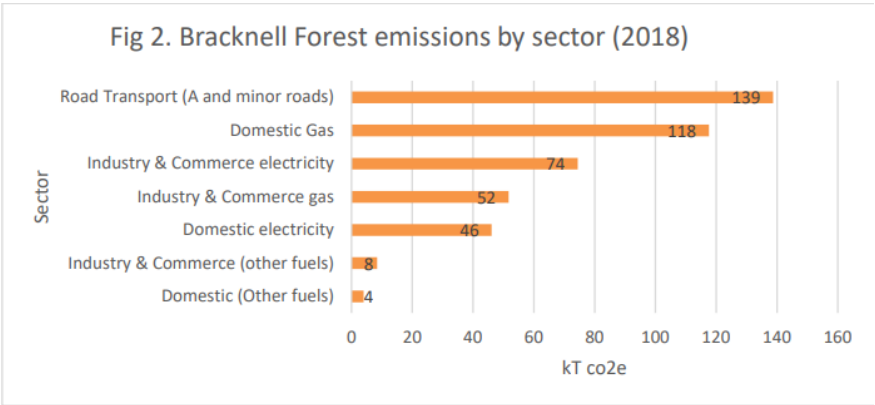
The Council commenced measurement of its own carbon footprint in 2019 based on a calendar year. The data for the 2021 calendar year showed that our total CO₂e emissions from the council’s transport fleet, plus gas, electric and water consumption was 5,028 tonnes. This compares to the initial figure of 6,178 in 2019 and 5,326 from 2020. This saving is the equivalent of taking 248 petrol run cars off the road.



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

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

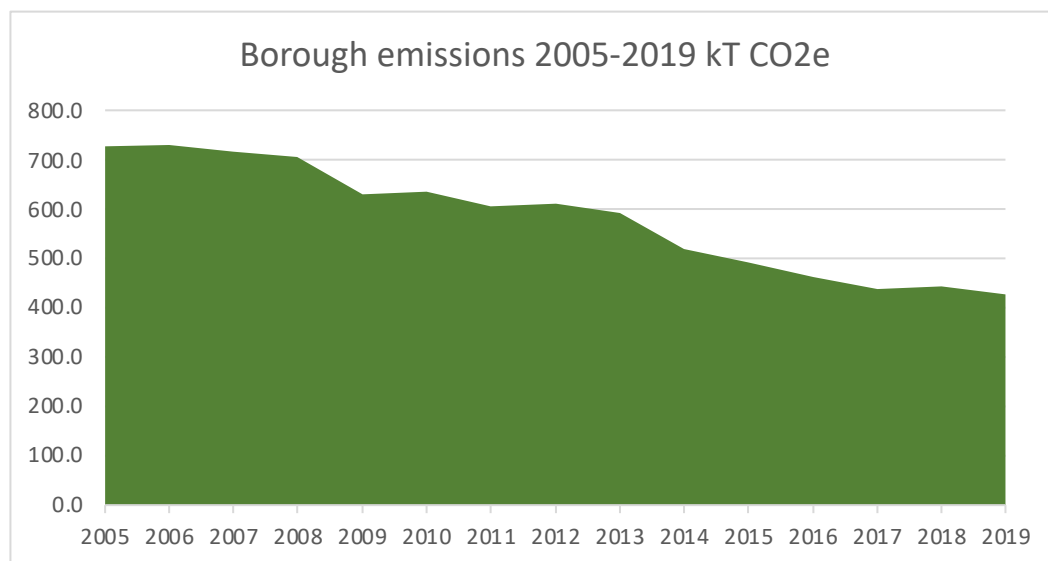
When compared to figures for the borough as a whole the council’s direct activities referred to above represent around 2% of all emissions. The figure remaining equates to 443kT Co₂e which represents emissions from across the borough, such as domestic energy use, and industry and commerce emissions.



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

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

For Bracknell Forest Borough the figure was 426.1kT CO₂e which is down by 18.2kT from 444.3 in 2018 and compares to our initial benchmark of 728.5kT in 2005, representing a 41.5% reduction overall. This saving is the equivalent to powering over 75% of the borough's households for a year (38,041 houses) (see chart below).

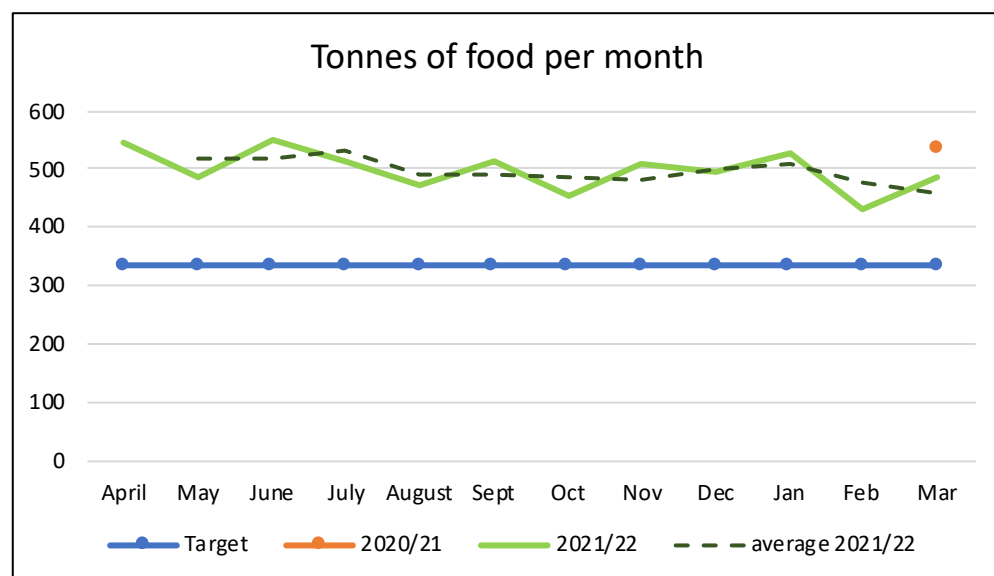


Bracknell Forest's emissions per capita were 3.5 tonnes: lower than the 4.4 tonnes south east England average and the 5.2 tonnes national average. When compared to the other local authorities in Berkshire, only Reading have reduced emissions by a higher percent than Bracknell Forest over the 14 years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

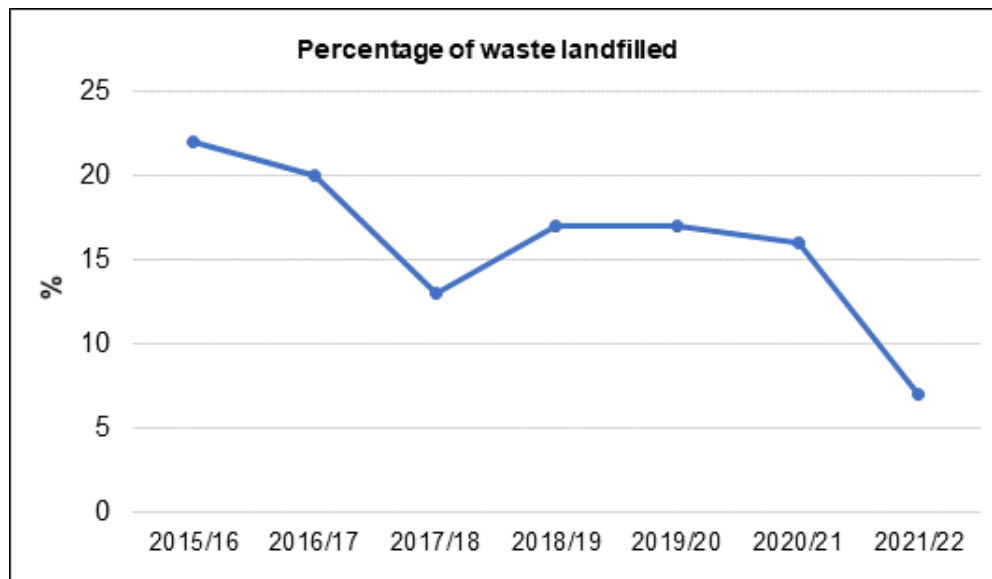


Key projects delivered 21/22

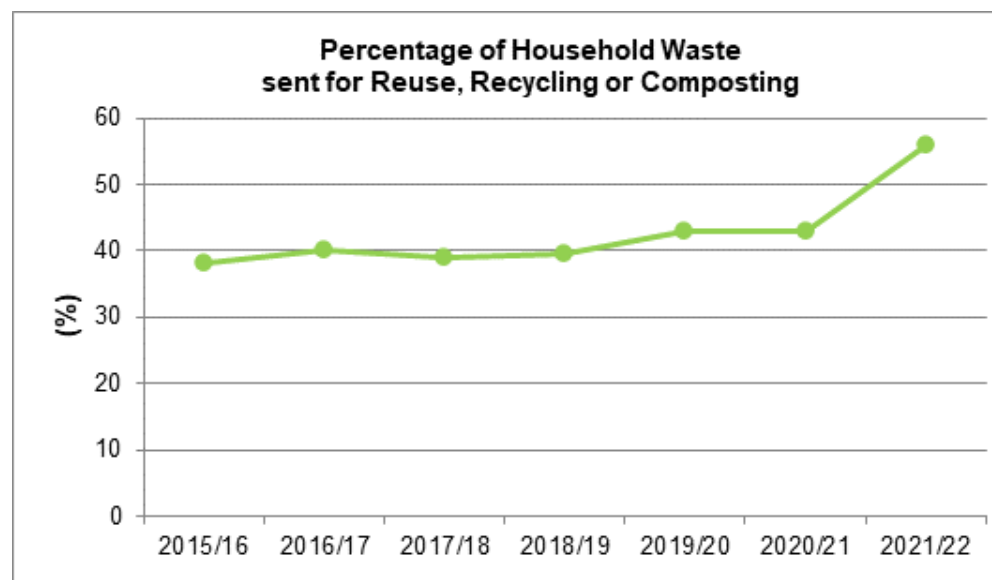
- Green Homes Grant funding (£900k spent / further £1M planned); In terms of the home decarbonisation projects via the government's Green Homes Grants Local Authority Delivery schemes (GHG LAD), the council completed the works from GHG LAD 1 (£900k grant received) back in the Summer of 2021. We have further funding from both GHG LAD 2 (£87k for spend by 30th June 2022) and GHG LAD 3 – also referred to as Sustainable Warmth and Home Upgrade Grants (£1M for spend by 31st March 2023).
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Salix) funding of £350k at Sandhurst school to enable their transition from oil to gas central heated boilers. A further £425k of funding was secured for 38 schools within the borough who benefitted from works that increased their heat conservation and reduced their energy use. Once all schemes were completed it is estimated that their combined carbon footprints were lowered by 1,536,170 kWh, or a 25% tCO₂e per year reduction (283 Tonnes).
- A second tranche of Salix funding worth £154k has enabled our partners Atkins to prepare heat decarbonisation plans for all of the Council's property stock including schools not already funded. This will propose suitable tangible options for decarbonising and saving energy within future schemes.
- From April 2021 all electricity consumed within BFC buildings has been sourced from 100% sustainable supplies.
- The Parks and Countryside service planted 2,795 trees over 20 sites as part of highways improvements and improvements to public green spaces.
- In addition both the total areas of Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) have increased by 50.97 and by 17.7 hectares respectively. In a climate change context our ponds help store water, reduce flooding and act as carbon sinks, whilst our woodlands and meadows provide urban cooling, carbon storage and support the survival of biodiversity.
- The introduction of our kerbside recycling of food waste in Mar 2021 has seen 6,031 tonnes of food waste collected and recycled in the first year. The graph below shows that the trend for tonnes collected far outweighed our initial target estimates.



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



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



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



Key projects moving forwards

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

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



Communications and Marketing work

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

[Reducing idling cars in Bracknell Forest | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news-releases/2021/08/24/reducing-idling-cars-in-bracknell-forest/)

[Energy efficiency support for residents | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news-releases/2021/08/24/energy-efficiency-support-for-residents/)

[Help for heating your home | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/news-releases/2021/08/24/help-for-heating-your-home/)

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

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

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

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

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



Wider engagement

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

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

A 2021 Bracknell Forest Council Business Survey was undertaken with over 500 local businesses primarily to understand the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit but it also asked for the views of local businesses around the green agenda. Among many outcomes the results (available on the Bracknell Forest for Business webpage) showed that just 51 per cent of businesses have the intention of being more environmentally friendly, just 12 per cent have set a specific target or aim to achieve net-zero and just five per cent have set a deadline to this commitment. This clearly demonstrates an opportunity for greater engagement and collaboration and is an area that the council is keen to develop in partnership with both large and small businesses over the next year. We are therefore planning to engage directly with the Bracknell Businesses Improvement District (BID), and the Economic and Skills Development Partnership who already have climate change embedded in its work programme, to identify ways in which we can better share knowledge, experiences, and successes. Clearly both the impact of the pandemic and Brexit have caused significant issues for businesses and naturally other considerations have reduced in priority, such as climate change. Engagement on the green agenda at this time with local businesses would demonstrate Council leadership and support commerce in starting and continuing their journey in relation to minimising their climate impact as well as offering advice and guidance at this difficult time.

Climate change FAQ's

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We use the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), annual CO₂e emissions survey to measure our whole borough performance. The data for 2019 is the most recent such release and confirms that the Bracknell Forest area saw emissions reduce by 4 per cent since 2018, and by a total of 41 per cent since 2005. Between 2005 and 2019, the per capita rates of CO₂e have reduced from 6.6 tonnes to 3.5 tonnes. Overall, the data shows the borough's CO₂e reduced from 728.5 Kilotonnes to 426.1 Kilotonnes. Compared to other local authorities in the South East of England, only Reading and Kent have reduced emissions by a higher percentage than Bracknell Forest over the 14 years.

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

The council's climate change strategy is underpinned by an action plan covering about 46 projects. Each project has a climate change mitigation target and evaluation process. The strategy's effectiveness is measure in CO₂e reductions, as measured in the BEIS annual CO₂e emissions survey for the BFC borough area.

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

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



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

We made changes to our waste and recycling services in March 2021 when we reduced the residual waste kerbside collections to once every three weeks whilst simultaneously introducing a weekly food waste collection. We have seen an increase in our recycling rates from 43% to 56% as a direct consequence of this action. In addition only 7% of all household waste now ends up as landfill. For information on what can be recycled please check this link: [re3 re3cyclopedia \(fccenvironment.co.uk\)](https://re3.re3cyclopedia.fccenvironment.co.uk)

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

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

