

Environment Briefing Jan-March 2022

Dear colleagues,

This briefing covers a selection of the environmental work by Kent County Council (KCC) and with external partners. I trust you find it of interest and will share it with your communities.

Susan Carey

Cabinet Member for Environment, Kent County Council

Climate Change Committee visit to Kent

Lord Deben, the chair of the UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC) visited Kent on 8 March with a team of officers, as part of a 'National Conversation' about our environment. The tour started in Margate to see the steps that double as a flood defence and included the prizewinning George V Park that stores flood water as well as providing a better environment for both people and wildlife.



The team at the start of the day in Margate

Lord Deben was keen to listen to our young people and met several hundred at Herne Bay High School in a Q & A session before a working lunch with council leaders from across the South East. The next stop was to see how marginal farmland could provide cost effective flood defences and improve biodiversity.



Roger Gough, Lord Deben and Susan Carey at Chatham Historic Dockyard

The final part of the tour was at Chatham Historic Dockyard in Medway (underlining how Kent & Medway work together on environment issues) where Lord Deben held another Q & A with stakeholders from local industry, Kent Wildlife Trust, local councils, farmers and more.

As we travelled about Kent in a variety of electric buses our visitors were given presentations on KCC's work on adapting to the warmer winters, wetter summers and more severe rain that we already experiencing. It was a stimulating discussion with much learned on both sides.

Briefing the Adaptation Sub-Committee of the CCC

The visit by Lord Deben and team to Kent was preceded by the Adaptation Sub-Committee of the CCC hearing evidence from two of KCC's top experts on building resilience to Kent's climate change. Tom Henderson from the Adaptation Team and

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Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director for Growth and Communities were invited to present on 18 February to the Adaptation Sub-Committee which is chaired by Baroness Brown. Tom and Stephanie's presentation was very well received and they were told the committee was 'inspired' by what they'd heard.

We intend to continue to brief the CCC and its sub-committees on our work and gain their support for the resources and powers we need to 'weather-proof' our County and achieve our Net Zero goal.

Tree news

Do have your say on Plan Tree, KCC's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022-2032. The consultation launched on 8 March and is open until 2 May. Plan Tree sets out our ambition for more trees and extended tree canopy cover in Kent and the principles that should underpin any tree establishment in the county. Go to <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/plantree> or call 03000 42 15 53 if you need a printed copy.

KCC won through to round two of the Trees Call for Action Fund (TCAF) and we submitted a bid for a three year project which will provide extra resources for the strategic coordination and collaboration needed to deliver our tree establishment targets for Kent. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is distributing TCAF in partnership with the Forestry Commission, on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and they are expected to announce where the funding will be allocated at the end of March.

Advice on funding or subsidising tree planting is available here [Tree planting advice – Kent County Council](#).

Environmental Champion Network launched

186 staff at KCC have volunteered to become Environment Champions to spark even more green action across KCC and within their communities. 100 of the Champions attended introductory training in February.

The Champions will now work with our topic experts on themes including natural environment, waste and the circular economy, and resource efficiency, to decide on priority actions for this year.

The network will hold lunchtime events every month to help our volunteers learn more about all things green and the invitation is extended to all KCC staff to attend these bite-size lectures. The first took place on 15 March on Plan Bee and the April event will be on Waste in Kent. Please email KES@Kent.gov.uk for any more details.



Landscapes Review consultation by the Government

The Government response to the Landscapes Review was published on 15 January. The response is accompanied by a public consultation that will run for 12 weeks until 9 April.

The Landscapes Review's final report was published on 21 September 2019 after the government asked for an independent review into whether the protections for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are still fit for purpose. In particular; what might be done better, what changes will help and whether the definitions and systems in place are still valid.

Kent has two highly effective AONBs – the Kent Downs AONB and the High Weald AONB and the consultation offers the chance to reinvigorate the status of AONBs with new purposes, powers and resources for the partnerships charged with conserving and enhancing these special places. There is a great disparity between the funding of the AONBs compared with the National Parks, with the AONBs delivering considerably more for far less funding. Funding based on outcomes would do much to help the AONBs, so do please take the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Coastal path extended

A 47mile (75km) section of the England Coast Path officially opened on the 12 January between the Woolwich Foot Tunnel and the Isle of Grain. This section completes the Thames Path National Trail from source to sea. There are now three national trails in Kent– The North Downs Way, the England Coast Path and the Thames Path, further extending recreational opportunities to Kent's residents and increasing the offer to tourists.



Further detail is available on National Trail webpages

Shorter wait for small Electric Vans

The Kent REVS electric van free trial scheme has proved really popular: over 170 businesses in Kent have already taken advantage of the opportunity to try an EV for up to two months. The waiting times to trial a Renault Crew or Zoe are currently very short so it's a great time to sign up to try one of these vans. Businesses can enquire by emailing REVS@csltd.org.uk and start creating a greener tomorrow!



Kent Green Action

We're pleased to report an increase in Facebook followers (36%) and Twitter followers (22%) over the last year. Kent Green Action offers advice and provides links to information on how individuals and communities can take actions that protect and enhance our environment.



New Appointments

We are delighted to announce two appointments. Our new Director of Environment and Waste; Matt Smyth. Matt is currently the Partnership Director at South London Waste Partnership and will join KCC on 3 May. Matt grew up in Kent and he's really excited to be coming home.

Matthew Balfour has been appointed chairman of the Kent Nature Partnership. Matthew is a former KCC Member with a wealth of experience in land management and the natural environment.



Matt Smyth



Matthew Balfour

Solar Together Phase 2 in Kent

There's been a strong surge of interest in our collective buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. The social media campaign was supported by all the districts and Medway and a direct mail was sent to over 110,000 Kent residents in the last week of February. The scheme was open to community buildings and small businesses as well as householders.



Registrations closed on 15 March and over 10,000 people have registered their interest. This is 2.5 times the number that signed up for the first phase in 2020.

More support for businesses

This Spring is an even busier time for the Low Carbon Kent team with two new projects added to the existing portfolio supporting and developing sustainability in the region. Growing Green is one of the first of the UK Community Renewal Fund pilots to be launched and KCC are at the heart of its planning and delivery. This training programme shares knowledge, tools and provides funding for micro and small- to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the food and drink sector looking for ways to reduce environmental impacts. Registration is now open for the first cohort!



The C-Care programme led by KCC is now ready to accept expressions of interest for the **Green Recovery Voucher Scheme**. This £150,000 fund offers up to £1,500 towards an SME's energy efficiency measures, waste reduction, sustainable transport, biodiversity and 'Net Zero' planning & feasibility studies.

Those interested should contact lowcarbon@kent.gov.uk

Kent County Council's Windmills



Throughout 2021, vital restoration works have continued to take place at the eight historic windmills owned by KCC. An equally packed programme of conservation and repair is planned for 2022. This will include the completion of KCC's flagship windmill at Cranbrook. Built in 1814, this is the tallest smock mill in the UK and a Grade I listed building to boot.

Weatherproofing works to the fabric of the mill were completed in the Autumn. Off site, four new sails are being manufactured in specialist workshops in East Suffolk. The sails, known as sweeps in areas south of the Thames, have a total span of 69 ft (21 metres) and contain 266 pivoting shutters which can be opened and closed according to the speed of the wind.

Mercifully, our windmills suffered no recent damage at the hands of storm Eunice and storm Franklin. This is a tribute to the skills and knowledge of the people who designed and built the windmills over 150 years ago.

Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee

The meeting of KCC's Environment & Transport Committee on 17 March includes a report on our proposed Heritage Strategy, a paper on the opportunities for Kent in the Green Economy, a proposal for a solar farm which will reduce KCC's carbon emissions by a whopping 30% a year and reduce annual energy costs by around £760,000 a year. Last but not least, the Performance Dashboard shows KCC is continuing to beat its carbon emissions' target and is on track to reach carbon neutrality by 2030.

You'll find the papers for this meeting and a webcast recording on www.kent.gov.uk under 'council meetings'.