

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council



Climate Change Strategy 2020 - 2030

Foreword



It is recognised by Government and scientists internationally, that climate change is the most important environmental challenge that we face. As a local authority, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has an important leadership role to play in responding to the challenges posed by climate change, particularly relating to the delivery of our key services, but also more widely through working with partners and other agencies to influence mitigation and positive change. We recognise our pivotal role to act as an advocate to all sectors of our communities, in promoting sustainable policies to deliver a reduction in carbon emissions across the Borough.

A motion adopted by full Council in July 2019 sets out the “aspiration for Tonbridge and Malling to be carbon neutral by 2030” and for a strategy to be developed to support this ambition.

This strategy sets out our commitment to local action on climate change, our commitment to biodiversity protection and enhancement and our approach to partnership working.

The strategy takes us to 2030, however meeting the challenges and delivering on the aspirations within the strategy will be driven forward through a climate change action plan. This will be updated annually and actions and progress will be reported and published on our website each year. The targets within the action plan will help us move towards a low carbon future, improve our resilience to the effects of a changing climate as well as capturing the opportunities and benefits of transitioning to a low carbon future.

Climate change will directly impact how we, as a Council plan our activities in order to meet the needs of all residents in the Borough today and in the future. We recognise that climate change is a collective issue and that we all need to make changes to our lifestyles to reduce our impact on the environment. We will work with statutory partners, local businesses, local community groups and individuals to raise awareness and help to influence change. The Council has a key role in supporting and promoting local actions, we recognise that we don't solely have all the required powers and resources to do this. Only by working in partnership can we help to influence the effects of climate change now and for generations to come.

Cllr Nicolas Heslop

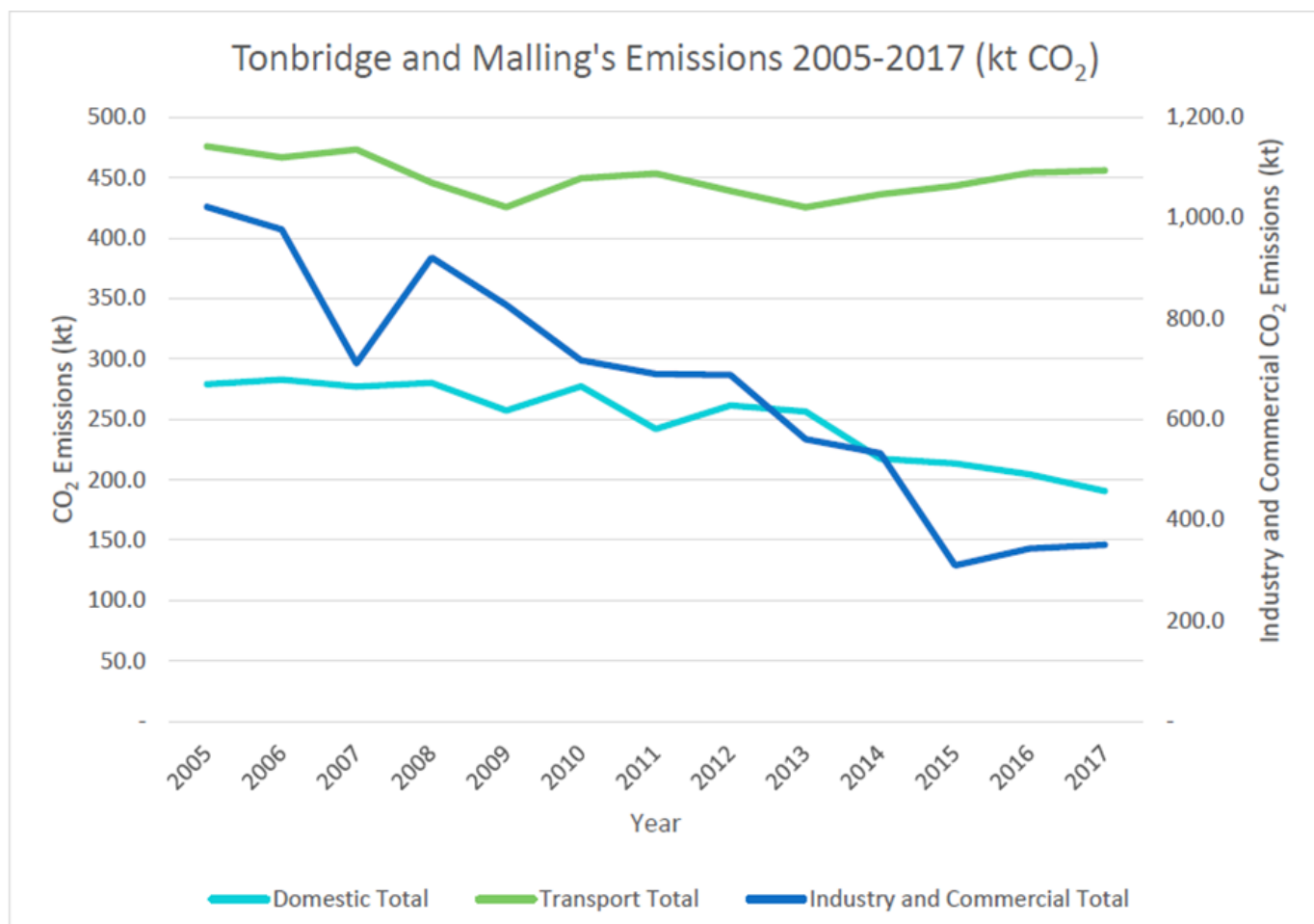
Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Setting Climate Commitments for Tonbridge and Malling

The Tyndall Centre for Climate Research has carried out an analysis of the UK's carbon budget for delivering the Paris Agreement's commitment to staying "well below 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C global temperature rise". Based on their assessment, they recommend that the borough of Tonbridge and Malling stay within a maximum cumulative carbon dioxide emissions budget of 6.4 million tonnes (MtCO₂) between 2020 and 2100. Based on 2017 carbon dioxide emissions, Tonbridge and Malling would use the entire budget by 2027.

Staying within the carbon budget will only be possible if Tonbridge and Malling rapidly transition away from fossil fuel use. There will be significant challenges ahead, which we will need to confront in order to make a difference.

Figure 1 below shows the total carbon emissions by sector for Tonbridge and Malling (BEIS, 2019).



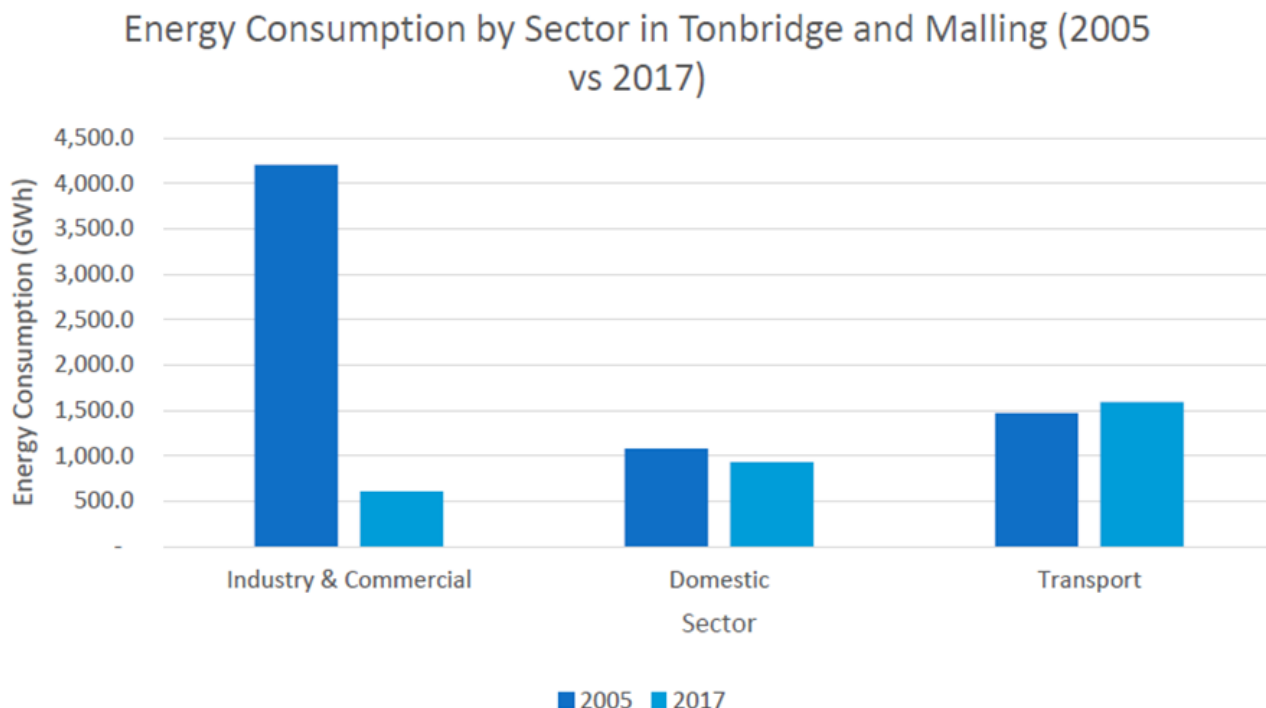


Figure 2 (above) shows energy consumption by GWh sector for Tonbridge and Malling (BEIS, 2019). Along with energy efficiency measures in the private sector, a contributing factor to the dramatic decline in energy consumption was the closure of Aylesford Newsprint in 2015.



Energy usage per household

The average domestic consumption per household in Tonbridge and Malling was 4,172kWh in 2018. From 2015 to 2018 the average domestic consumption per household fell from 4469kWh to 4172kWh. Whilst domestic consumption has been falling on a per household basis, the number of households has been increasing.

For gas, the mean consumption (domestic and non-domestic) in Tonbridge and Malling in 2018 was 18,339GWh, higher than the Kent average of 18,291GWh. This is lower than in 2015 where the mean for Tonbridge and Malling was 18,533GWh. Gas remains the main source of domestic emissions and heating. The government has proposed to ban the installation of gas fired boilers in new homes from 2025, in a bid to tackle emissions. The retrofitting of existing dwellings to remove boilers in favour of low emission alternatives, does however remain a challenge that requires government support.

Renewable electricity

In Tonbridge and Malling (end of 2018) there were 1353 installation sites producing 40,011MWh of renewable electricity. Of these installation sites, 99.3% were photovoltaic specific, however this accounted for just 29% of the total renewable electricity generated. The remaining electricity came from the conversion of land-fill gas (42%), anaerobic digestion (18%), sewage gas (9%), plant biomass (<2%) and onshore wind (<1%).

Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) accreditation – the RHI is a government scheme that aims to encourage the uptake of renewable heat technologies amongst householders, communities and businesses through financial incentives. Between April 2014 and October 2019, 100 domestic installations have been accredited in Tonbridge and Malling - 8% of Kent and Medway's total. Further work is required to accelerate the take up of low emission heating systems.

A commitment to reduce CO2 emissions needs to be made across all sectors. At Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council we will reduce emissions from energy consumption in all Council buildings, in house fleet transport and staff travel. We are committed to fully embed carbon management within all Council policies and procedures and ensure that climate change is a recognised commitment within the Corporate Strategy. We will raise carbon management awareness to staff to reduce energy consumption. We will also incorporate the highest appropriate energy efficiency specifications into new buildings, equipment and contracts.

We are stakeholders in the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emission Strategy and Climate Change strategy and our action plan will sit alongside these.

Adapting to climate change

It is important that Tonbridge and Malling is resilient to the effects of climate change. We are already experiencing hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. With this we have seen an increase in incidents of severe weather such as storms and flooding. The Council will work with partners through the Kent Resilience Forum to plan and prepare for these impacts and minimise the risk to communities.

We will work with Kent County Council on the Kent and Medway Climate Change Adaptation Programme and Implementation Plan, which aims to assess and prioritise risks and impacts climate change will have on key sectors. Working in collaboration with partners we will focus activity to fully understand and prepare for current and future risks such as flooding, which is recognised as a key risk for the borough. We are members of the Medway Flood Partnership at both a strategic and operational level.

We will work with communities and businesses to increase resilience to future changes in climate, such as promoting the Flood Warden Scheme, assisting businesses and residents to prepare and adapt to climate change and ensuring that spaces and habitats are well adapted to a changing climate. We will also protect and enhance native species and habitats, promoting opportunities for environmental management and enhancement.

Sustainable Development

The Council has a key role in ensuring that new housing and development in the borough is as sustainable as possible. Planning policies and controls are in place to ensure that any new growth takes into account sustainability issues, such as reducing the need to travel, minimising energy and water consumption and the ability to harness energy from renewable sources.

Planning policies and development allocations are being updated in the new Local Plan, to ensure that developments respond to sustainability considerations, these include;

- Developments which maximise opportunities to reduce energy demands through the orientation of habitable rooms to harness natural light and through landscaping to prevent over heating (draft policy LP14).
- Developments which maximise opportunities where practicable for sustainable travel, including contributions towards off site infrastructure as well as walking and cycling routes and infrastructure, reflecting the amount of movement generated and the nature and location of each site (draft policy LP23).

- Major developments will, where practicable and proportionate, provide opportunities for habitat creation (draft policy LP19), and where possible maximise opportunities for net biodiversity gains on site (draft policies LP27-31)
- New dwellings will be required to make provision for an electric vehicle charging point with each property. This is also required where practicable and proportionate for non-residential developments.
- New dwellings will be required to meet the Building regulations optional requirement for tighter water efficiency of 110 litres/person/day (draft policy LP44).



The Council is mindful that Housing Standards Review in 2014 resulted in the Coalition Government winding down the voluntary Code for Sustainable Homes, and made it clear that local plans should not be setting any additional local technical standards or requirements relating to the energy performance of new dwellings. The view taken by the Government was that the energy performance of new build homes is a matter for the national Building Regulations regime.

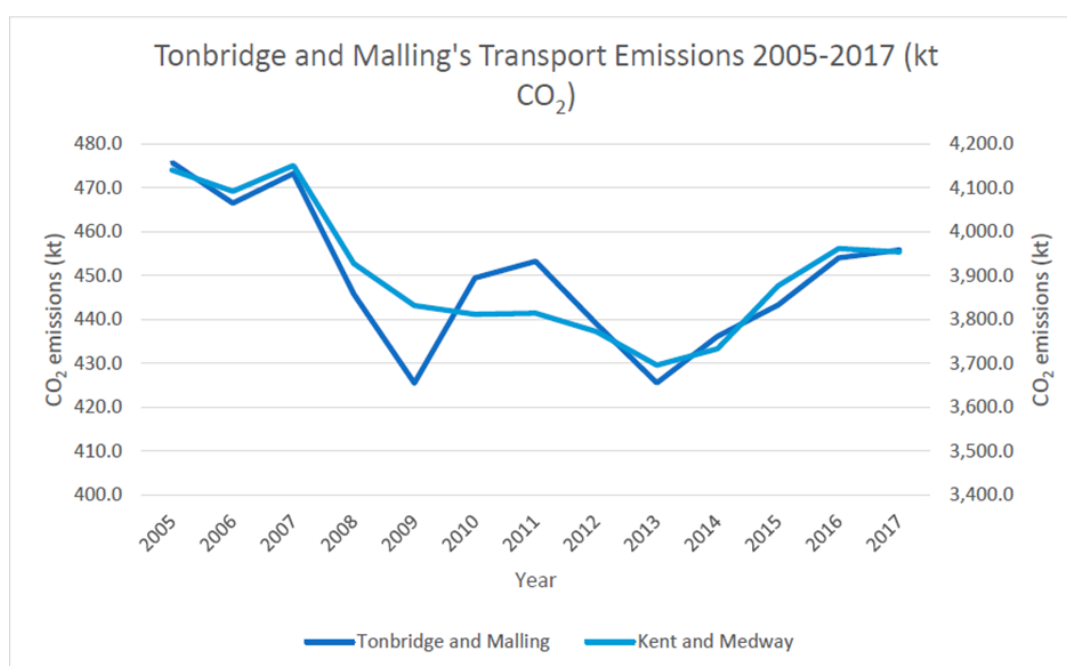
The submitted Local Plan responds well to the sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) addressing 'Planning for climate change'. Where the Local Plan is silent on a specific issue, the NPPF and this Climate Change strategy will remain material planning considerations to be taken into account in determining future planning applications. The Plan will be subject to review once adopted and any new national policy initiatives, including for climate change, will form part of that exercise.

It is anticipated that the government will introduce the Future Homes Standard by 2025, which will set new requirements for new homes built in England via Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations. It is anticipated that this will require new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating, and world-leading levels of energy efficiency, as a consequence the installation of gas boilers will cease.

Transport

In Tonbridge and Malling CO₂ emissions from the transport sector have risen by 7% since 2013.

Figure 3 below shows the carbon emissions from the Transport Sector in Tonbridge and Malling (BEIS, 2019).



Reducing the need to travel using technology and smarter ways of working will help to reduce transport emissions. The Council's adopted digital strategy contains ambitions and actions that support carbon reduction. There are also opportunities to raise public awareness of sustainable travel choices. In addition to reducing vehicle mileage, we will also promote smarter driving and undertake an anti-idling campaign to eliminate emissions from idling engines.

Working with Kent County Council and transport operators to provide an integrated transport system that promotes lower carbon and healthy transport choices within Tonbridge and Malling will also be instrumental in lowering carbon emissions from this sector. The Council is seeking options to have a greater influence here through its work with the West Kent Partnership, including the establishment of a new Quality Bus Partnership.



The Borough Council also has a specific role to play as a licencing authority. By improving the environmental standards of licensed taxis operating in the borough, we intend to reduce emissions from older, more polluting vehicles. We will be running consultations detailing our plans over the next ten years, requiring all taxis to adhere to a vehicle replacement schedule, to meet higher Euro emissions standards and ultimately work towards all taxis becoming Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).

Although the Council does not own a large fleet of vehicles, there are a small number of parking and enforcement vehicles that we will replace to become electric vehicles or ULEV. Similarly, contractors, such as our waste and recycling providers, will be encouraged to use ULEVs in order to undertake work for the Council.

A move towards ULEVs will help to reduce transport emissions. Providing the infrastructure to support electric vehicles will be instrumental in facilitating the change to greener vehicles. In order to achieve this change, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has made a commitment to provide electric charging points across the borough, so that it is one of the most welcoming places in the country for driving electric and hybrid vehicles.

Air Quality

The Borough Council has a statutory duty under Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Legislation to review air quality within its area, and where concentrations exceed national objectives, put in place measures within an Air Quality Action Plan to reduce emissions.

These statutory duties are very much directed at preventing risks to health and amenity from a variety of pollutants, but those pollutants are not necessarily the same as those associated with Climate Change. However, there is a synergy between our statutory duties for the betterment of public health and the aims of this Climate Change Strategy; improvements to one will lead to improvements in the other. Our statutory work can therefore lead to a reduction in pollutants that contribute to climate change.

Ongoing assessments of air quality within the borough of Tonbridge and Malling have identified six areas where levels of Nitrogen Dioxide have at some point exceeded the annual objective limit of 40µg/m-3 and have been declared Air Quality Management Areas. These are;

- M20, between New Hythe Lane and Hall Road,
- Tonbridge High Street between Vale Road and The Botany,
- A26, Watringbury Crossroads
- A20 Aylesford
- A20 Larkfield
- A25 SevenoaksRd/Western Rd Borough Green

The Borough Council will continually monitor and update its Air Quality Action Plan for these areas, and as part of this work will review the change in levels over the years.

All monitoring sites within Tonbridge and Malling have shown a slow trend in the improvement in Nitrogen Dioxide levels. In 2018, (the last full year results available at the time of writing), Tonbridge High Street, Borough Green and M20 monitoring sites within those AQMA's all achieved levels below the 40µg/m-3 annual objective for Nitrogen Dioxide. However, our AQMA in Watlington still recorded the second highest level of Nitrogen Dioxide in Kent.

Recognising the links between local air quality, planning, transportation, and climate change pollutants, we will continue our work with the Kent & Medway Air Quality Partnership to secure a co-ordinated approach to the monitoring and improvement of air quality in Kent. We will update as necessary our Air Quality Action Plan to continue to seek improvements in air quality within our Air Quality Management Areas and across the Borough in general, we will work with KCC and other partners to promote and encourage the use of sustainable travel options and be early adopters of strategy documents aimed at improving air quality, including the KCC Energy and Low Emission Strategy.

Habitats and Biodiversity

In addition to key outdoor leisure sites, the Council has two country parks (Haysden and Leybourne Lakes Country Park) both of which have been awarded Green Flag awards. We produce management plans for all key outdoor sites and will review them regularly, taking into account nature, biodiversity and conservation.

Where possible we will create and maintain buffer zones of mixed vegetation on edges of open spaces and against water areas to create habitats and habitat corridors. We will commit to reducing chemical use as much as reasonably practicable and ensure that our main contractor working at the sites, hold ISO140001 environmental accreditation or have other appropriate environmental safeguarding strategies in place.

Raising awareness locally will be a key objective and we will provide educational events for the public on sites across the borough that relate to nature, wildlife, biodiversity and its importance. In addition we will continue to core fund Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to assist in delivering various works and education across the borough regarding all environmental issues.

Working with partners, we will produce a Tree Charter for the Borough, with the aim of retaining a planting budget to re-plant trees where appropriate and ensure that trees in the borough are well cared for. We will work with local landowners and developers to encourage tree planting and explore suitable opportunities for planting within boundaries and hedgerows. We will also seek to maximise tree planting through the development process where possible and appropriate.

We will continue to fund and work in partnership with the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit and High Weald AONB Unit in the review of the AONB Management Plans. Once adopted, these form Council policy for the management of the AONBs and for the carrying out of functions relating to it. We will continue to explore external funding opportunities through these partnerships to deliver projects within the AONBs that support the aims of the Management Plans.

We will also continue to support the Old Chalk New Downs project which aims to restore and connect remaining fragments of chalk grassland in the North Downs to facilitate the spread and survival of rare species and raise awareness of the habitat through engagement schemes.

Housing and Energy Conservation

The reduction of carbon emissions from residential homes, both new build and existing properties, is a key focus in addressing the challenge of climate change. Residential homes represent 14% of emissions (Committee on Climate Change 2019) of which the majority is from space heating.

To help reduce domestic carbon emissions we will promote retrofitting of insulation measures and efficient heating. We will also support the decarbonisation of energy supply through low carbon electricity for example photovoltaic panels and retrofitting of low carbon heating systems. For new build housing energy conservation requirements are dealt with under Building Regulations.

The Council's focus is to improve existing housing condition ensuring homes are safe and warm by encouraging and supporting the installation of both energy conservation and efficiency measures. Our private sector housing work directly links with sustainability objectives. We will adopt a whole house approach considering energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy options. There are also additional benefits to residents improving their homes, including reduced energy consumption and therefore lower bills, improved thermal comfort and improved well-being.

Home energy efficiency work is delivered through a combination of advice, marketing and promotion, energy efficiency schemes, financial assistance and signposting to funded or discounted measures where available in partnership with other agencies.

Waste Minimisation and Recycling

Managing the way we deal with waste, helps to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions. We will encourage more people to reduce their waste and make it easier for residents to compost or recycle.

We have drastically reduced our waste to landfill over recent years with the opening of Kent Enviropower (Energy from Waste) facility in Allington, which is geographically beneficial in reducing waste miles too. Waste sent to Allington is incinerated to produce electricity for the National Grid.



Across Kent over the last 13 years we are annually recycling and composting 43% (TMBC 41.9% 2018/19). TMBC aims to increase this to over 50% in 2020/21 as well as decreasing over all tonnage collected through minimisation of packaging etc.

We are committed to increasing kerbside recycling, re-routing rounds to maximise efficiency and time spent on the road and will set tangible annual targets to reduce waste sent to landfill or incineration.

Community and Business Engagement

Individuals, households, communities and business all have a role to play in lowering carbon emissions and tackling climate change. The Council has a leadership role which can be used to inform and influence decision making, enabling changes in behaviour which will address climate change issues. We will secure debate at a range of forums including, the West Kent Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership, our business engagement events, the Parish Partnership Panel and Tonbridge Forum.

We will work in partnership to raise awareness of climate change, providing updates and information. Assistance and advice will be available via our website and social media, to ensure that messaging about climate change is reaching everyone to enable them to reduce their carbon footprint.

We will progress the digitisation of services which will include the way we interact with our clients, such as actively encouraging residents to switch to paperless billing. We will reduce the amount of paper both internally as well as paper that is being sent out to clients.

We will work with our contractors, such as Urbaser (waste and recycling providers), the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust (who manage the Leisure Centres) and our grounds maintenance contractors to bring forward their action plans to address climate change issues.

We will also encourage and promote excellence and best practice within the Borough. There are many examples within the Borough including at East Malling Research Station where NIAB EMR is leading innovation in sustainable use of water for agricultural use. Promoting such initiatives will stimulate debate and share learning across sectors.

Lower Carbon across South East – LoCASE

The Borough Council plays a key role in supporting local businesses and contributing towards sustainable growth in the economy. A number of initiatives are already underway that contribute towards carbon reduction, resource efficiency and climate change resilience.

In Tonbridge and Malling 24 SMEs have received and used grants for low carbon and energy efficiency measures. The types of businesses gaining grant money include construction and manufacturing firms, consultancy and business services, as well as property and distribution businesses. Grant money has helped these SMEs to improve their heating and lighting, research and development (IT and software, and machinery) and for the purchase of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (KCC LoCase, 2019).

The Council will commit to delivery of the Economic Development Strategy to encourage sustainable growth in the borough and promote the take up of LoCASE and other grants to address carbon emissions and the impact of climate change.

