

Environment Strategy 2020 – 2030



Environment Strategy for Rother 2020 – 2030

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Foreword

Rother District Council has declared a Climate Emergency with the ambitious target of being carbon, and other noxious gas, neutral by 2030. This means we have just under 10 years to deliver a cleaner, greener and much more sustainable environment for our residents now and for future generations.

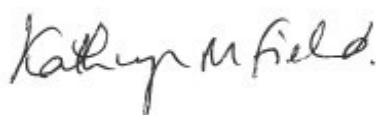
When we have achieved our target, we will have a District where the air is cleaner as we reduce the need to travel in unsustainable ways. The natural and built environments will be enhanced and protected for the future and our buildings will be heated, and cooled, by energy from low carbon renewable sources. Fewer people will live in fuel poverty and waste will be reduced. The District will be resilient to freak weather events.

This is an enormous task.

This strategy is a working document and is underpinned by detailed plans. Above all it will be flexible. During the next decade technology will develop, and unforeseen events will happen so we must be able to adapt and use good ideas from the experience of others. We are not alone and will not waste time reinventing the wheel.

When it comes to biodiversity, so important for our environment, we are starting with an advantage because 82% of the District is designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and we have two Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance). Being a semi-rural district, we have many miles of roadside verges and of course our domestic gardens. Let us not forget the sea with its unique eco system and potential for wind power.

We know it will not be easy and we know we will not be successful without the help and commitment of Rother residents. We have made a good start and we can move forward together in a spirit of optimism.



**Councillor Kathryn Field,
Portfolio Holder for Environmental Management,
Rother District Council**

Background

Climate Change is undoubtedly the greatest challenge facing our society. The scientific evidence of climate change is overwhelming; the impact will be severe. Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C. Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate¹. Potential impacts of global warming include increased temperatures, extreme weather conditions, flood risks and rising sea levels. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment² identifies six priority risk areas: flooding, high temperatures, water supply shortages, natural capital, food production, and pests and diseases. The UK Climate Change Act 2008 set a statutory target to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990 by 2050. In May 2019, the UK Committee on Climate Change recommended that the UK Government increase the statutory target to Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Government has now adopted this target.

Solutions are available to build resilience and transform our energy supplies, creating new opportunities for a low-carbon economy. Technology is improving and the cost is reducing. Many solutions provide additional benefits from enhancing biodiversity, improving health and wellbeing to providing a driver for economic renewal which has the potential to localise our economies.

Rother District Council's Environment Strategy sets out the Council's vision for reducing our impact on the environment and our commitment to make Rother District carbon neutral by 2030. We have set ambitious targets to be carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030; but it is clear we cannot reach more ambitious district wide targets without support from the Government, and without taking a co-ordinated approach working closely with district leaders and stakeholder partners.

We have the following priorities areas:

1. Becoming a smart digital district
2. Green economy
3. Air quality and sustainable transport
4. Sustainable waste management
5. Sustainable energy
6. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity
7. Construction and existing buildings
8. Environmentally friendly council

¹ Global Warming of 1.5c: An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming – Summary for Policy Makers. (https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf)

²Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584281/uk-climate-change-risk-assess-2017.pdf

A data review which covers the district and the organisation has been completed in order to inform this strategy and a delivery plan. The data review includes the following:

- Co2 emissions (for the district)
- Walking and cycling (for the district)
- Low emission vehicles (for the district)
- Recycling rates (for the district)
- Noise pollution (for the district)
- Superfast broadband coverage (for the district)
- Electricity, gas and water usage (for the organisation)
- Car use/mileage (for the organisation)
- Flexible working (for the organisation)
- Paper use (for the organisation)

We have three policy themes which provide a framework for the delivery plan:

1. **CLEAN GROWTH** – ensuring the impact of development is not detrimental to the environment, that we consider the environment through our planning policies and own development and economic regeneration initiatives.
2. **HEALTHY PLACES** – putting in place policies and encouraging initiatives which have a positive impact on the environment and the district.
3. **SUSTAINABLE SERVICES** – leading by example: ensuring that minimum impact on the environment is core to the Council's operations and provision of services.

Strategic Context

The Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is the first truly global effort to reduce emissions. To date, 160 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) parties have made voluntary pledges to reduce emissions up to 2030, including China, the US and the European Union (on behalf of the UK and other EU nations).

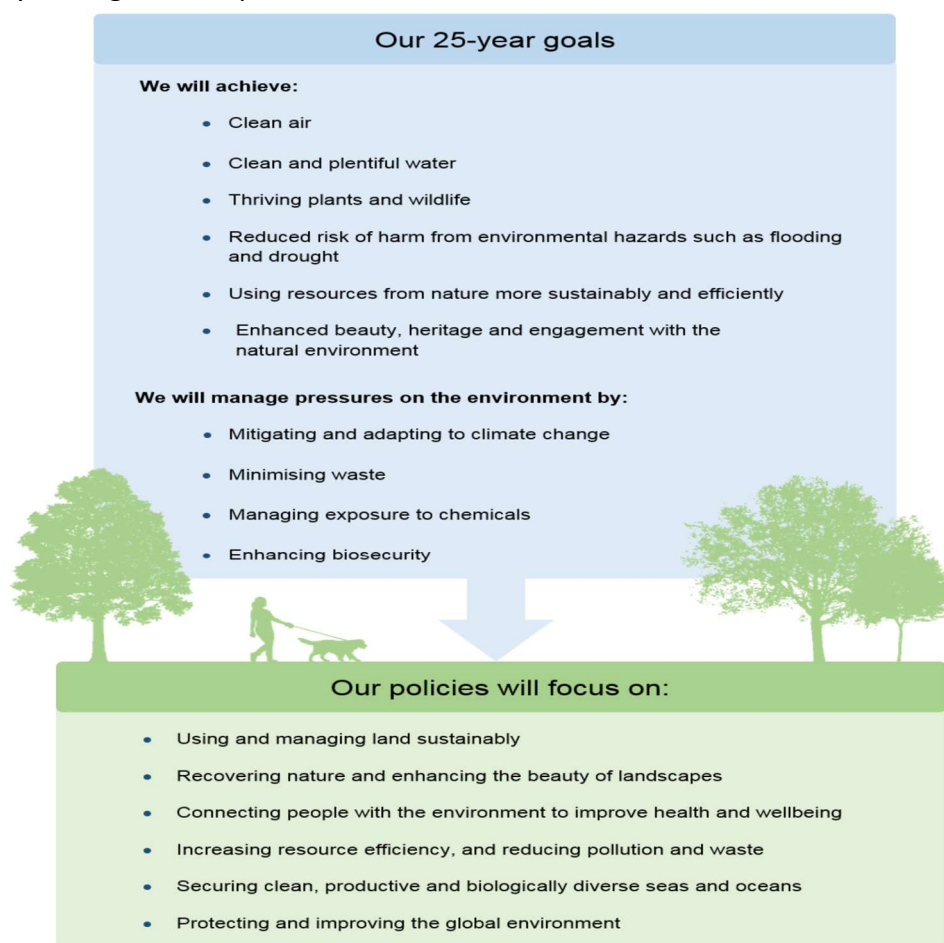
The main aim of the Paris Agreement is to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.

Overall, the current pledges would lead to lower global emissions compared to previous expectations. But further action will be required to keep warming to below 2°C or 1.5°C.

National Context

The UK Climate Change Act commits the UK Government by law to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050.

The Government's 25-year Environment Plan sets out the action they will take to deliver cleaner air and water, and to protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. A summary of its goals and policies is set out below.



The Environment Bill puts into legislation a series of environmental principles and establishes an Office for Environmental Protection, which will have scrutiny, advice and enforcement functions. It also makes provision for the setting of long-term, legally binding environmental targets in four “priority areas” of air quality, water, biodiversity, and resource efficiency and waste reduction, along with the production of statutory Environmental Improvement Plans (the first being the January 2018 25 Year Environment Plan).

Future Homes Standard

Homes are a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions responsible for 15% of the UK's total emissions in 2018. What is more – unlike other sectors such as business, transport and energy supply – residential homes saw emission levels rise between 2017 and 2018.

The Government is planning to introduce a new Future Homes Standard, helping us towards that net zero goal. Homes being built now will still be there in 2050 so getting them built right and to high environmental standards is a crucial part of meeting the targets. The Government aims to introduce the Future Homes Standard by 2025.

Initially, the Future Homes Standard will change Parts L (conservation of fuel and power), F (ventilation) and Part 6 (energy efficiency) of the Building Regulations.

Regional Context

A local Energy Strategy has been completed by three Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) – Coast To Capital, Enterprise M3 (EM3) and South East LEP (SELEP) – referred to as the ‘tri-LEP’. These cover a large geographical area including Hampshire, Surrey, West and East Sussex, Kent, and Essex. Rother District Council is represented on the SELEP.

The shared vision for energy in the tri-LEP region is:

“To become a leader for sustainable energy production within the UK, powering innovative, decarbonised and clean economic growth”.

The strategy sets out five priority themes with project models:

Priority theme	Project models
Low carbon heating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District Heat Networks – support the construction of DHN projects across the south east of England• Off gas grid homes – connect off-grid homes to the gas grid• Hydrogen injection into the natural gas grid – create the pathway for hydrogen to be injected into the natural gas grid

Renewable generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offshore wind development – encourage further inward investment and economic development of the south east of England in offshore wind • Solar and microgrid on landfill sites – build solar arrays on council owned landfill sites to generate an income and reduce emissions • Biomass fuel supply chain development – support the development of a biomass supply chain to utilise natural resources of the south east of England • Solar energy for Network Rail – support the development of renewables to power a significant regional energy consumer • Car parks – solar potential – invest in solar car ports to increase utilisations of car park land
Energy saving and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy efficiency insulation improvements in homes – increase energy efficiency of domestic properties to EPC C or above • SME support programme – expand LOCASE programme to whole of south east to develop the supply chain ready for clean growth and low carbon opportunities, by targeting grant funding into small businesses
Smart energy system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and community microgrids – locally built and owned microgrids on new housing and community developments to increase retention of energy value locally
Transport revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EV charging and hydrogen fuelling infrastructure scale up – support ultra-low emissions vehicle charging infrastructure scale up across the region • Compressed natural gas (CNG) fleet fuelling – support roll out of CNG for HGV and refuse vehicles, supporting a shift away from diesel • Ports – move to on-site renewable power – generate more renewable power at ports

In 2020 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) updated its Environment Strategy, initially adopted in 2011. It has brought together the high-level aims, objectives and actions of a wide range of organisations in East Sussex, including Rother District Council into one shared, long-term strategic environmental plan for the county. The new 2020 East Sussex Environment Strategy has five priorities: Climate change, natural capital, air quality, water, and resource efficiency.

The High Weald Management Plan is the statutory AONB Management Plan for the High Weald AONB which covers over 82% of Rother District. The High Weald AONB Management Plan is the single most important document for the High Weald. It provides a useful unifying framework for addressing the major issues that face us today from food and energy security to housing provision, biodiversity, climate change resilience and the transition to a low carbon economy.

Local Context: Planning Policy

Existing National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), published in February 2019, explains the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Framework sets out three overarching objectives for achieving sustainable development, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Paragraph 8 of the Framework lists those three objectives as follows:

- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Existing Local Planning Policy

The Development Plan for Rother includes saved policies from the Rother District Council Local Plan (2006), the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy, five separate neighbourhood plans including Crowhurst, Rye, Salehurst and Robertsbridge, Sedlescombe and Ticehurst, together with the Waste and Minerals Plan (2013) and Waste and Minerals Site Plan (2017). In addition, the Development and Site Allocations Plan was formally adopted at full Council on 16 December 2019.

The Core Strategy sets out the Council's vision and objectives and provides broad guidance on the scale and distribution of development, guiding development to the most sustainable locations, and the provision of supporting infrastructure both for the district as a whole and for its towns and rural areas. It also contains 'core policies' addressing key issues facing the district in relation to sustainable resource management, community development, housing, the economy, the environment and transport.

In terms of protecting the environment, there are specific policies (see Appendix 2 for details) that protect the landscape (including the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), design quality, biodiversity and green space, flood risk management and flood risk and development. There are also two policies relating to sustainable resource management: SRM1 (towards a low carbon future) and SRM2 (water supply and wastewater management).

Local Evidence/Background Papers

The Council has produced a range of relevant environmental background papers which support the Local Plan. These are available to view on the Planning Policy part of the Rother website in the 'Environment' section of background evidence. The background papers include:

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – Levels 1 & 2 (2008). This will be updated as part of the Core Strategy review.
- Low Carbon and Renewable Potential Study (January 2010).
- An Ancient Woodland Inventory (October 2010).
- A Green Infrastructure Study (August 2011), together with an Addendum (November 2016) – identifies spaces that contribute to green infrastructure in the district and to identify potential opportunities for future green infrastructure provision.
- Water, People, Places (September 2013) – this guidance outlines the process for integrating sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) into the master planning of large and small developments.
- Water Efficiency Background Paper (June 2016).
- Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Background Paper (November 2016).

Limitations of the Planning System

The national and local policies and guidance referred to above relate primarily to new development, including new build dwellings and commercial properties. There is obviously a large amount of existing housing stock and commercial buildings within the district, some of which is dated and inefficient, which the planning regime has little influence over improving.

In addition, there are many forms of development that can be carried out without having to apply for planning permission, known as permitted development rights. Over recent years, the Government has significantly increased the range of permitted development rights meaning that even more development can be carried out without any control from local planning authorities. For example, there are permitted development rights available that, subject to a prior notification procedure, allow certain existing office blocks to be converted to residential units. In doing so planning policies relating to energy efficiency cannot be applied.

Our Vision

The vision for this strategy is set out below:

The air will be cleaner as the need to travel will be reduced and those of us that do travel will travel by bike, public transport, electric vehicle, or on foot. The natural and built environment will be enhanced and protected for current and future communities. The Council will be a carbon neutral organisation; the district will be tackling and adapting to climate change. More energy will come from renewable or low-carbon sources, such as solar. Fewer people will live in fuel poverty. Waste will be reduced. The district will be resilient to the impacts of climate change including heatwaves, droughts and flooding. We will each use less water. Everyone will play their role in reducing their impact on the environment.

Partnerships

As an organisation, Rother District Council will ensure our services and operations are delivered in an environmentally friendly way; much has been done already. But we also recognise a commitment to our contribution to have a carbon neutral district, and that this cannot be done in isolation. We will commit to working with partners, businesses and residents to do everything we can to meet carbon neutral goals before the Government's 2050 target and by 2030 if we can. Some of these partnerships are in place already and others will emerge.

An Environmentally Friendly Council – Our Commitment

The Council employs over 260 people and has assets throughout the district. We are responsible for numerous services which are used by residents, businesses and visitors. As an organisation we are aware that we contribute to carbon generation in the district and it is our aim to inspire others through our own commitment to reduce our carbon footprint. Examples of pro-environmental initiatives already carried by organisation are outlined in Appendix 3.

We will commit to standards in the following areas:

- **Our decisions** – environmental implications are considered in the decision-making process, particularly regarding planning policy and where development occurs.
- **Our estate** – an audit of all Council owned assets to understand where retrofitting will produce reduced carbon benefits and to undertake actions to ensure all assets meet the carbon neutral standard.

- **Our contractors** – work with our contractors to have in place sound environmental policies which align with our commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- **Our travel and transport** – a move from diesel and petrol vehicles to electric and other zero emission fuels for officers and Members using fleet cars or cars for business. A reduction in overall vehicle use, with increases in shared and active transport, by encouraging the use of sustainable travel solutions for staff and Members, such as car sharing, cycling, walking, public transport, and teleconferencing to minimise the requirement for travelling to meetings.
- **Our procurement** – a responsible procurement policy.
- **Our construction** – all Council led developments are assessed for environmental impact and these assessments form part of the business case and decision-making process.
- **Our workforce** – environmental awareness is raised, and good environmental behaviour encouraged.
- **Our leadership role in the community** – there are action plans and guidance for delivery of these commitments.

Strategy Priorities

Rother District Council is committed to doing everything within its power to support environmental change. Many of the changes required are outside of our control. Where this is the case, we will work with partners to develop a district wide action plan, or lobby where necessary. This section sets out some of the changes that may contribute to meeting the Carbon Neutral target – and what we can do to bring forward the required changes.

1. Becoming a smart digital district

The use of smart technologies can help address environmental challenges. For example, smart energy meters can help people reduce their energy use; smart heat networks can increase the efficiency of heat production and use. Smart lampposts can charge electric vehicles and supply Wi-Fi and local information. Digital connectivity, including the rollout of 5G can support changing working patterns that enable environmental improvements.

PLEDGE:

- We will work with partners to take forward initiatives enabling Rother to become a ‘smart digital district’ contributing to carbon neutrality with the added health and wellbeing benefits that this will bring.

2. Green economy

A green economy is defined as low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in employment and income are driven by public and private investment into such economic activities, infrastructure and assets that allow reduced carbon emissions and pollution, enhanced energy and resource efficiency, and prevention of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

There are some challenges to developing a green economy around development, particularly in terms of local knowledge and skills which are based on traditional building methods. There is little the Council can do in isolation to remedy this and therefore developing partnerships is vital.

PLEDGE:

- We will work with partners to encourage the retraining and reskilling of people in retrofit, insulation and environmentally friendly industries to encourage a local 'green economy'.
- We will boost the local economy by working with partners to create demand for low-carbon goods and services.
- We will support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to access funds and expertise for reducing carbon pollution.
- We will take forward plans for ethical banking that does not invest in fossil fuels, where in our power to do so.

3. Air quality and sustainable transport

Acting to reduce air pollution can also help to limit climate change, through reducing the number of dirty vehicles and encouraging more people to cycle and walk. This is because sources of air pollution are also sources of greenhouse gas emissions. For example, transport is now the largest-emitting sector of the UK economy, accounting for 28% of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2017³. Vehicle noise is another issue that impacts negatively on people and the environment.

The issue of intrusive lighting, particularly in rural areas of the Rother district and its negative impact on both people and the environment, is to be considered.

Reducing car use in a rural district such as Rother, with poor public transport and connectivity, is a challenge. Yet as well as offering useful transport links to residents, it can aid a recovery of the tourist economy of Rother and East Sussex.

PLEDGE:

- We will explore options to make urban areas, such as Bexhill town centre, car free or restricted vehicular access.
- We will explore the use of future planning policy to require electric vehicle (EV) charging points and cycle parking to all new homes and businesses.
- We will work with East Sussex County Council and our District and Borough partners to deliver an Electric Vehicle Plan for the County which will bring forward EV charging points across the district.
- We will work with partners to improve the standard, environmental impact and frequency of public transport as well as promoting its use.

³ Committee on Climate Change: reducing UK Emissions 2018 update <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CCC-2018-Progress-Report-to-Parliament.pdf>

- We will reduce the need to own or use a car through managing developments in the Local Plan.
- We will bring forward initiatives which encourage walking and cycling; this includes ensuring walking and cycling friendly development is encouraged through Planning Policy.
- We will explore ways to incentivise taxi drivers to take up electric vehicle use.
- We will explore options with partners and contractors to move away from diesel vehicles to electric fleet (e.g. waste contract).
- We will explore the introduction of a dark skies policy to reduce light pollution within the Rother District.

4. Sustainable waste management

It should be acknowledged that most of the waste can be avoided and can become a valuable resource. We want our strategy to be aspirational, but there are certainly challenges to be faced, not least in terms of the ongoing financial pressures faced by many individuals and businesses as well as the public sector. Despite this, we must re-think our whole approach to waste and resource management and explore new approaches and opportunities, including moving towards a more 'circular economy' through a 'Waste Hierarchy', where goods and materials are constantly re-used and recycled rather than discarded as waste – this can help contribute to protecting both the economy and the environment.

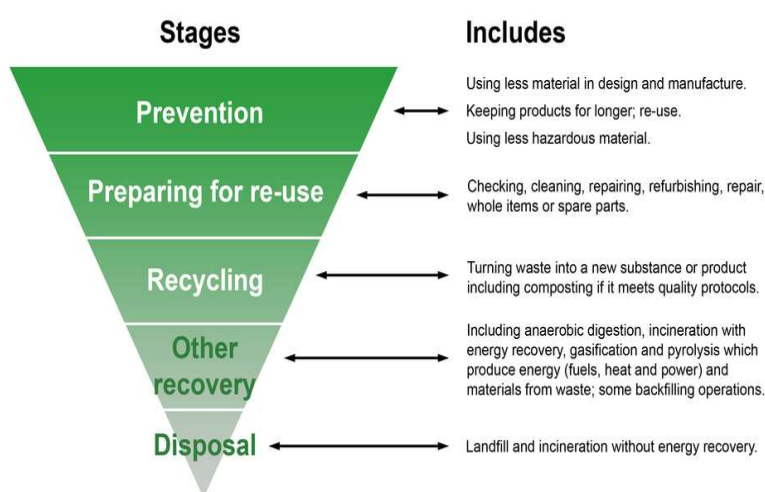


Table 1: The Waste Hierarchy (Source: www.DEFRA.gov.uk)

The 'waste hierarchy' ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal (e.g. landfill).

PLEDGE:

- We will encourage a focus on 'prevent' and 're-use' through delivery of 'top tips' for residents through MyAlerts (a weekly email service).
- We will promote waste reduction in Council offices, including implementing a plan to reduce/eliminate single-use plastics.
- We will share expertise with other councils, public bodies and local businesses.

5. Sustainable energy

It is important to consider sustainable energy production and usage as part of a strategy to take forward carbon improvements. Spatial planning has a fundamental role in the implementation of successful and long-term sustainable energy solutions – creating and supporting spatially appropriate energy solutions. However, this cannot be delivered by Rother in isolation; it will require working with other agencies and stakeholders. There are many options including district heating networks, biomass fuel supply, onshore and offshore wind farms, and solar PV and microgrids. The Local Energy Strategy completed by the tri-LEP (see page 7) sets out their vision:

‘To become a leader for sustainable energy production within the UK, powering innovative, decarbonised and clean economic growth’

PLEDGE:

- We will support the tri-LEP in delivery of sustainable energy solutions for the district of Rother.
- We will consider sustainable energy solutions as part of the Local Plan Review.
- We will support communities to develop localised energy solutions.

6. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity

Over 82% of Rother District falls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - a landscape of national importance which was designated as an AONB in 1983. The figure for total woodland in the district is 9,751ha⁴ (only including woodland parcels greater than 2ha) and Rother has the highest Ancient Woodland cover (as a percentage of its area) of all districts in the South East region⁵. If we were to add ancient woodland less than 2ha in size, total woodland in the district is around 10,211ha.

Rother is a rural district: its farmed fields, grasslands, woodlands, and soils as well as the agriculture industry have an important role to play in mitigating climate change, reversing ecological collapse, and contributing to a low/zero carbon economy. The district’s farmed landscape and sustainable countryside management requires engagement with the farming and woodland management communities and the High Weald AONB partnership to achieve positive outcome.

The value of trees in the landscape of Rother District cannot be overstated. They provide shelter, shade, screening and make an important contribution to the visual quality of both rural and urban areas. In villages and towns, they can soften the built environment. They also play an important role in the ecological cycle, providing habitats for many species of birds, mammals and insects. Trees can only help reduce the negative impacts of a changing climate - trees remove carbon dioxide from the air. Trees can also help to manage the risk of flooding

⁴ Source: National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (Forestry Commission 2000)

⁵ Source: Revision of Ancient Woodland for Rother District, October 2010

and provide shade and cooling benefits. They are a renewable source of energy today, and a sustainable raw material for the future bioeconomy.

PLEDGE:

- We will encourage residents and community groups to take part in the 'Big Climate Fightback' by planting a tree.
- We will set up a 'meet the target' page on the Rother District Council website which includes all reported tree planting and shows progress to 'doubling tree cover' in Rother.
- Where possible, we will increase tree coverage throughout the district on Council owned land.
- We will reduce verge cutting and mowing; encourage wildflowers.
- We will support existing homes facing medium/high risk of flooding and encouraging flood resilience/ defence measures.
- We will develop a pollinator and pesticide policy which will detail how the Council will maintain, protect and enhance key habitats over the long-term for the many species of insects that pollinate crops and wildflowers. The policy will commit the Council to avoiding pesticides whenever possible on its sites including parks, recreation grounds, children's play areas, sports fields, down land, cemeteries and nature reserves.
- We will review the ecological and biodiversity data for Rother District, with the outlook of using this data in evidence-based decision making.

7. Construction and existing buildings

The Rother District is expected to accommodate significant housing growth over the coming years; if the district is to become carbon neutral, the way development takes place must change. Rother's Local Plan is undergoing a review – this provides an opportunity to consider implementing policies which encourage greener development, but the Council must also lead through its own developments and procurement.

PLEDGE:

- We will require homes built on Council owned land to be Passivhaus or similar, wherever possible.
- We will encourage suitable low carbon and renewable energy development schemes, through the Local Plan Review.
- We will seek to mitigate the environmental impact of new development in the District through the introduction of specific planning policy.
- We will review all Council office accommodation and act where it does not meet environmental standards.
- We will consider the introduction of a levy to support offsetting carbon impact of new developments.

- We will consider the use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for schemes that fit within the focus of this Environment Strategy such as cycling and walking infrastructure, traffic calming.
- We will ensure a focus on green spaces and tree planting for all new build schemes.
- We will ensure all Council led developments are assessed for environmental impact and these assessments form part of the business case and decision-making process.
- We will actively seek funding opportunities to support retrofitting existing housing throughout the district.
- Procurement: We will request environmental policies from tenderers for all contracts worth over £5,000.
- Procurement: We will ensure environmental issues are considered within the social value requirement within contracts worth over £50,000.
- We will use local businesses where possible to reduce travelling requirements.

8. Environmentally friendly council

The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030; meeting this target requires a step change in the way the Council delivers its services, from ensuring environmental considerations are core to decision making to considering how officers and Councillors travel to and from work and throughout the district.

PLEDGE:

- We will ensure environmental implications are considered in Rother District Council reports, policies and strategies and decision-making processes, by ensuring all managers are aware of the policy and able to demonstrate how they comply with it through the inclusion of an environment impact assessment summary on all committee reports.
- We will increase options for flexible working options for our staff.
- We will develop an officer working group or 'green team' of 'climate champions' within the organisation to take forward a 'culture shift' within the organisation; and encourage other organisations and local businesses to do the same.
- We will share expertise through the 'Green Teams' with other councils, public bodies and local businesses.
- We will scrutinise our supply chains, carrying out assessments to understand their environmental impact and incorporating environmental criteria into the procurement process.
- We will undertake a review of existing office accommodation to ensure the Council is meeting its carbon neutral commitment.

Resources

Delivery of this strategy will not be possible without specific resources. Initially this will be specialist officer time, and existing officer support and a small revenue budget. The benefits

to having in place this additional resource will include the ability to co-ordinate and access partner resources and apply for funding necessary to take forward our more ambitious plans such as the provision of a 'smart digital district' or to investigate the option of energy generation. As with all public sector organisations, we need to be considerate of resource availability. The Rother District Council recognise the impact of climate change and have prioritised meeting a carbon neutral target by 2030, including providing the resource required to begin this

Conclusion

This strategy and its vision are ambitious; with a commitment to be a carbon neutral organisation and a district by 2030, 20 years ahead of the national government's target. Tackling the issues outlined in this strategy will be an ongoing effort and may require adjusting over the next 10 years. Therefore, the strategy must be kept under a review. The Rother District Council will consider new initiatives and opportunities as they arise rather than be wedded to the ideas set out in this document.

The next step is to develop a detailed plan for the delivery of the new Rother Environment Strategy and a monitoring and an evaluation framework to monitor the progress.

Appendix 1: Source documents

The following source documents have been used to help inform this strategy.

The Environment Bill 2019

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1951/195104.htm>

A Green Future: Our 25 year Plan to Improve the Environment

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

Global Warming of 1.5c: An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming – Summary for Policy Makers https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf

The National Pollinator Strategy

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794706/national-pollinator-strategy.pdf

Rother Green Party: 68 Proposals for Climate Action in Rother

https://rother.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/localparties/Rother_Green_Party/ROTHER%20GREEN%20PARTY%20-%2068%20PROPOSALS%20FOR%20CLIMATE%20ACTION%20IN%20ROTHER%20-%202018%20SEPTEMBER%202019.pdf

Rising to the Climate Crisis: A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/planning-for-climate-change>

South2East Local Energy Strategy <https://www.coast2capital.org.uk/south2east-energy-strategy>

33 Actions local authorities can take on climate change (Friends of the Earth)

<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/insight/33-actions-local-authorities-can-take-climate-change>

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

Moving Beyond the Air Quality Crisis <http://www.ukhealthalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Moving-beyond-the-air-quality-crisis-WEB.pdf>

Reducing UK emissions: 2018 Progress Report to Parliament <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CCC-2018-Progress-Report-to-Parliament.pdf>

IPBES Global Assessment Report <https://ip.panda.org/ipbes>

Energy South2East Local Energy Strategy

https://www.coast2capital.org.uk/storage/downloads/energy_south2east_-_energy_strategy-1554122644.pdf

Enabling Local Green Growth – OECD 2012 <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/49387595.pdf>

A revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Rother district, East Sussex 2010

<http://www.rother.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=12578&p=0>

Appendix 2: Existing local planning policies relating to environment

Policy SRM1: Towards a low carbon future states the following:

The strategy to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change is to:

- i. Require proposed developments of more than 10 dwellings or 1,000m² of non-residential floorspace to provide a comprehensive energy strategy and, for proposed developments of more than 100 dwellings or 50 apartments to require such a strategy to include an assessment of the potential for combined heat and power and district heating, subject to further assessment of the thresholds via a subsequent Development Plan Documents and/or Supplementary Planning Document.
- ii. Ensure that all developments meet prevailing energy efficiency standards and encourage them to meet higher standards and pursue low carbon or renewable energy generation, where practicable, by fully recognising related costs in assessing viability and developer contributions.
- iii. Support stand-alone renewable and low carbon energy generation schemes, particularly those utilising solar, biomass and wind energy technologies, that: (a) do not have a significant adverse impact on local amenities, ecological and heritage assets or landscape character, and (b) in respect of locations in or adjacent to the High Weald AONB and other sensitive landscapes, are generally small in scale.
- iv. Achieve high levels of energy performance on the strategic mixed-use developments to the north east of Bexhill, including by Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and/or wind energy generation.
- v. Reduce the carbon emissions from existing buildings by encouraging application of prevailing standards to whole buildings when extending them, supporting adaptations to be energy efficient, promoting take-up of Government energy efficiency schemes and supporting community-based energy infrastructure initiatives.
- vi. Adaptation through building in resilience to anticipated climatic changes, including through green infrastructure.
- vii. Promoting more sustainable travel patterns in accordance with transport policy TR2, and through widespread fast broadband coverage.
- viii. Expect new developments to provide and support recycling facilities.

Policy SRM2: Water Supply and Wastewater Management states:

Effective management of water resources will be supported by:

- i. Ensuring that the relevant water companies are aware of and have capacity to meet demands for water, wastewater and sewerage arising from new development.
- ii. Ensuring that new development does not have an adverse effect on the water quality and potential yield of water resources, in line with the objectives of the South East River Basin Management Plan, including reference to groundwater 'source protection zones'.
- iii. The promotion of sustainable drainage systems to control the quantity and rate of run-off as well as to improve water quality wherever practicable, and specifically for all development that creates impermeable surfaces within the hydrological catchment of the Pevensey Levels.
- iv. Safeguarding land for the possible raising of Bewl Water reservoir and contributing to the development of plans that also secure Bewl Water as a recreational, economic and social amenity for the local community. (NB the safeguarded area will be defined through the Site Allocations process in conjunction with Wealden and Tunbridge Wells Councils).

- v. Ensuring that all development incorporates water efficiency measures appropriate to the scale and nature of the use proposed.

The Development and Site Allocations (DaSA) is effectively “part two” of the Council’s Local Plan and will, apart from those areas where Neighbourhood Plans are in preparation, replace the Local Plan (2006). It contains development policies and site allocation policies. The DaSA contains further environmental policies relating to landscape character and the AONB, strategic gaps, biodiversity and green space, sustainable drainage, land stability and environmental pollution. There are also three policies relating to resource management that are of relevance: DRM1 (water efficiency); DRM2 (renewable energy developments); and DRM3 (energy requirements).

Policy DRM1: Water Efficiency states:

New development should plan positively to minimise its impact on water resources. All new dwellings are required to be designed to achieve water consumption of no more than 110 litres per person per day.

Policy DRM2: Renewable Energy Developments states:

Proposals for low carbon and renewable energy schemes, including community-led initiatives, will be supported where they accord with Core Strategy policy SRM1, where applicable, and with other policies in this Plan, including DEN1, DEN2, DEN3, DEN4 and DEN7. Proposals for large-scale stand-alone wind turbine schemes would be incompatible with the objectives of environmental designations across the district, although smaller schemes will be considered in accordance with the paragraph above.

Policy DRM3: Energy Requirements states:

The extent to which a proposal incorporates renewable and low carbon energy technologies will be a factor weighing in the favour of a proposed development. Proposed developments of more than 100 dwellings or 10,000sqm of non-residential floorspace should demonstrate that due regard has been had to energy efficiency, including using renewable and low carbon energy technologies, as part of their Design and Access Statement.

Please note that Policy DRM3 of the DaSA WILL replace SRM1(i) once adopted.

Appendix 3: What Rother District Council have already done

Solar panels were installed on the rooftops of the Amherst Road building and the Bexhill Museum in March 2019. Since installation, this has saved over 69 tonnes of CO2 emissions across both sites. For Amherst Road, based on the first seven months of solar, it is estimated emissions will be reduced from 77 tonnes in 2018 to around 40 tonnes for the current year. This could achieve an EPC rating of B.

Rother District Council has introduced flexible or 'agile' working. This allows officers to work away from the Town Hall, reducing traveling especially for those people who live outside of Bexhill. At October 2019, 56 officers (or 24.6% of the workforce) are formally registered for agile working. If each of those officers worked one day per week at home and saved an average 10 miles round trip for commuting, approximately 26,800 miles should be saved annually, reducing CO2 emissions by over 10 tonnes per year.

The Cycle to Work scheme was introduced at the Council in 2009. This scheme allows employees to purchase a quality bike at a reduced cost, and for the repayments to come out of salaries. This encourages people to leave the car and cycle to work instead. Since inception, around 80 employees have benefitted from the scheme. Not only does this help the environment, but there are added health benefits.

Rother has introduced a programme of sites for whip planting, tree planting and environmental grass.

As part of the Rother 2020 income and efficiency programme we have been reviewing the business processes carried out in service areas. Whilst the focus is to reduce overheads, the added benefit is the identified reduction in paper, printing and postage. If all the recommended solutions are implemented in areas that have been reviewed, over 83,000 sheets of paper would be saved, which could save 348 kg of CO2. This would require investment in technological solutions to avoid the paper and printing.