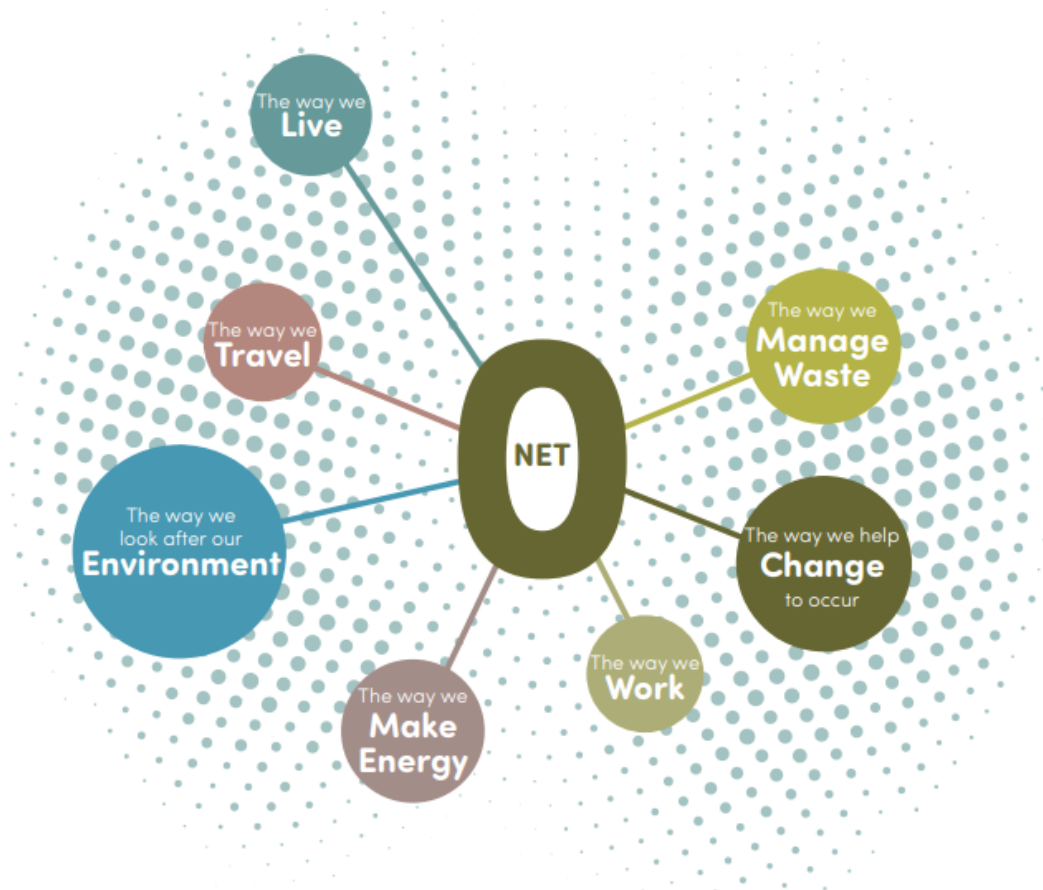


AIMING LOW: THE WAY TO NET ZERO

Interim Update February 2023



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Introduction

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council introduced a plan to support the reduction of carbon emissions across the district in 2021. The plan, which was acknowledged by Climate Emergency UK to be one of the best in the country, is based upon our 7 Ways to Net Zero approach.

The plan follows 7 themes of how we:

- Live
- Travel
- Work
- Make energy
- Look after our environment
- Manage waste
- Help change occur.

A short video that explains the Council's approach can be found on our website or at <https://youtu.be/D9B64fGchq8>.

In addition, the Council is an active member of the Staffordshire County Sustainability Board and has pledged to deliver objectives in tandem with the other districts, boroughs and the county.

The council are members of the [UK 100 Climate](#) organisation which is a network for ambitious councils demonstrating leadership in the climate mitigation aims.

Climate Emergency UK have established a scorecard to rank local authority activities in climate mitigation and adaptation. The [new scoring methodology](#) for 2023 has been drafted and published. We will respond to this when requested.

General

The actions for 2023 all have overarching principles which will ensure we are well placed to access opportunities.

The first principle is engagement and communications internally as an organisation, external to service providers and partners, with community groups, businesses and residents.

Keeping up to date with emerging legislation implications and opportunities. Consulting where appropriate on the development of policy and implementation of mechanisms.

Responding to opportunities with funding/partners and to respond to legislation changes which will support the delivery of the plan and co-benefits. Establish appropriate working groups to develop opportunities and scoping.

Making use of existing programmes which mutually benefit partners and our objectives. Examples would be energy saving programmes, Moors for the Future, RSPB or Wildlife Trust campaigns.

We need to better understand gaps in what we can and can't do and where we can influence or enable. Consideration needs to be given as to how to address the gaps and what associated skills, costs, capacity, lobbying etc might be needed.

The strands of the plan are overseen by the Climate Change and Biodiversity Delivery Group with Heads of Service working together.

1 The Way We	2 The Way We	3 The Way We	4 The Way We	5 The Way We	6 The Way We	7 The Way We Can
Live	Travel	Work	Make Energy	Look After Our Environment	Manage Waste	Help Change to Occur
Actions						
Support new buildings to be energy efficient and minimise emissions	Reduce emissions from Council vehicles	Reduce emissions from Council buildings	Look at generating green energy for Council buildings	Increase tree cover and improve nature	Reduce carbon emissions from our waste and recycling service	Consider Climate Change in all Council decisions and policies
Tackle fuel poverty and reduce emissions from homes	Support sustainable travel and development	Switch to green energy	Promote the use of renewable energy	Protect and extend the existing green infrastructure	Encourage recycling and the green initiatives	Provide Councillors and staff members with appropriate skills and training
	Support the increased use of EV vehicles	Buy low carbon products and services		Reduce the risk from flooding	Support community initiatives designed to reduce, recycle and repurpose waste	Promote climate change projects
	Encourage people to make journeys by walking or cycling	Support the green economy		Work in partnership with our communities, including the most vulnerable		Encourage community climate change and nature projects
		Support the development of a circular economy				Work with Parish Councils
		Help businesses to get advice and support				Involve and engage our communities and create a more inclusive society
		Encourage Council staff to adopt energy saving/low carbon				Lobby for change

How we live

The council recognises the contribution from heating and power of homes to district-wide carbon emissions. Retrofitting existing homes to improve energy efficiency has potential co-benefits of reduced costs, emissions and improving the health of the householders.

In addition, energy costs have increased exponentially in the last year contributing to a cost-of-living crisis for householders and pressurising businesses with excessive overheads leading to compounding material costs. This has plummeted more people into fuel poverty.

The complexity and scale of retrofitting the district's housing has several pathways with varying dependencies and barriers.

Various previous and existing schemes have been implemented through national funding programmes. The district benefits from our collaboration with Staffordshire Warmer Homes to access and programme manage several of those schemes.

Current programmes offer energy efficiency and some renewable installations to low-income households. The council is working with Beat the Cold to actively target households which may benefit. In quarters 1 to 3 2022, Beat the Cold helped over 240 households in Staffordshire Moorlands. The cumulative uplift of energy and water related benefits was over £62,750. This does not include any energy and water savings resulting through building fabric grant signpost or behaviour change support.

The council await national guidance on implementation on a scheme announced in the budget to offer partly funded installations to council tax bands A-D regardless of household income. This fund aims to target several groups and the council will use our data to actively target those who may benefit.

The budget also announced a national advice programme which we hope to be able to engage with.

Officers have been working with Local Government Association's Retrofit Programme, Retrofit Academy and Keele University to support delivery of a more holistic approach to domestic energy considerations. Some housing officers are embarking on PAS 2035 awareness training which is the standard for energy retrofit assessment.

It is intended to map the tenure, archetypes, access to gas grid, Energy Performance Certificates, and finance mechanism to identify the pathways to retrofit.

This will include assessing self-funding options and whether we can support the stimulate of a market. The Prosperity Fund could be an opportunity to address the skills gap in information and technical installation of measures to support households.

Financial mechanisms need to be explored and assessed as part of the pathway mapping exercise.

Social Housing in Staffordshire Moorlands is mostly through Your Housing. The average EPC rating for the portfolio is D and they have a target for all properties to reach a minimum C rating by 2030. , focussing on the worse performing properties as a priority. They are actively assessing property data

Staffordshire Moorlands Housing (2021)

Total dwellings 45,068

Social Housing 3,834

Valid Energy Performance Certificates 19,904 (44% housing stock)

Rated D-G 14,249

Potential C or above 13,637

<https://sustenic.co.uk/lgs/my-data/>

with potential funding streams to support meeting those targets.

Private rented properties must have a minimum EPC rating of E. This applies to new and existing lets. The council's licencing team is responsible for monitoring this. Some of the national funding programmes can be accessed by landlords, however, this cannot be used to meet the statutory minimum.

Monitoring overall improvements on energy performance of domestic properties has a data lag time of around 2 years. We are able to monitor the success of some of the programmes when a new EPC is created after the installation. However, in most cases this is would not be required making overall timely monitoring prohibitive.

Supplementary Planning Guidance or similar is due to be developed in 2023. As part of the Alliance, the council have been working with Derbyshire authorities to deliver a toolkit for climate change considerations in planning. The learning and outputs from this work will be used to inform developing a proposal for Staffordshire Moorlands.

This will be used for new planning applications to support informed choices.

How we travel

The Energy Saving Trust has assessed the fleet used to deliver council services. Whilst some of the recommendations are embedded into planned phasing out of fleet, some of the advice was not wholly suitable as not agnostic in technology recommendations. Being a rural district, electric vehicles are not holistically the "go to" solution yet. The commissioning team and partners will continue to explore options as technology develops.

Some of the larger vehicles such as bin lorries, can use a lower emissions fuel derived from waste Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) which has been implemented. The trial indicated that operations could result in 88% less carbon emissions. Reducing emissions from 553 tonnes CO₂e to 67.

Tailpipe emissions were also monitored as part of the trial. The results clearly indicate that all emissions have been lowered substantially in those vehicles using HVO compared to those using diesel. CO₂ emissions reduced by 9.5% and NO_x by 31% and PN by 44%.

The trial also confirmed there were no detrimental effects to the engines nor effect on mpg, demonstrating that HVO is safe to use.

Grey Fleet is when staff use personal vehicles for Council business. Being a rural district and many officers working across the Alliance, public transport and active travel methods are not always suitable.

Staff Mileage is apportioned across the Alliance. The figures are for the "grey fleet" where staff use their own vehicles for work purposes and record mileage. Carbon intensity coefficients have been taken from the Local Government Association carbon accounting tool.

The COVID lockdown and working from home for many staff reduced the mileage initially. Some of the working from home practices have remained with continued use of virtual meetings and through the 'Agile' ways of working adoption. The table below shows the annual mileage since 2019/2020 which we are using as our baseline year.

Staff Mileage Grey Fleet	Total Mileage	Variance on Baseline	tCO2e	Variance on Baseline
2019/2020	12,296		3.49	
2020/2021	3,964	68%	1.10	68%
2021/2022	4,716	62%	1.29	63%

Teams do informally encourage carsharing. Schemes to explore mechanisms to improve and adopt as a common behaviour are being considered.

The council are exploring a salary sacrifice scheme for interested staff to move to an electric vehicle. In addition, charge points are planned for sites.

Remote meetings are now commonplace without presenteeism culture as before COVID. This has pros and cons to cross team engagement and is not appropriate for all roles.

We actively work with Staffordshire County Council on travel programmes including the county wide Electric Vehicle charging strategy. We also have our own charging strategy which will be completed and ready to implement soon.

We are active partners of Air Aware who work with schools and other bodies to support active travel and reduce idling of vehicles.

We have a dedicated officer working in the community to support active travel to engage in nature. A co-benefit of this is that people would adopt active travel for short commutes and journeys and not just for leisure and wellbeing.

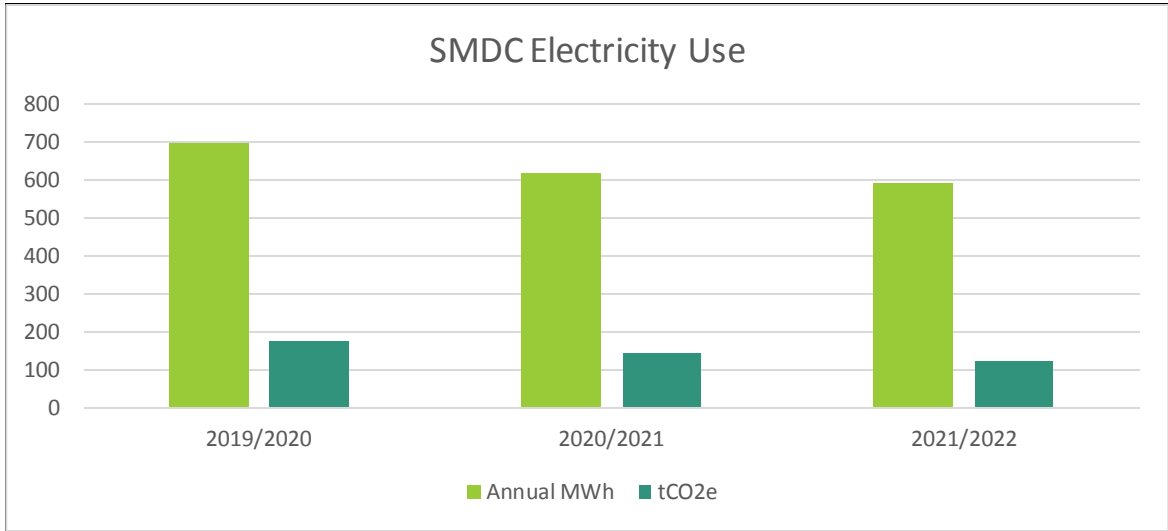
How we work

Energy and water in buildings is monitored through the fiscal meters. The figures below are absolute, annual, total estate figures. They have not been rationalised to account for fluctuations in weather, building use, acquisitions, disposals or retrofit measures. As the data is for the buildings, it does not account for areas which are used by other organisations such as parts of Moorlands House.

The figures demonstrate a significant overall decrease in kilowatt-hours, even post pandemic. The carbon intensity of electricity is decreasing annually due to decarbonisation of the grid nationally.

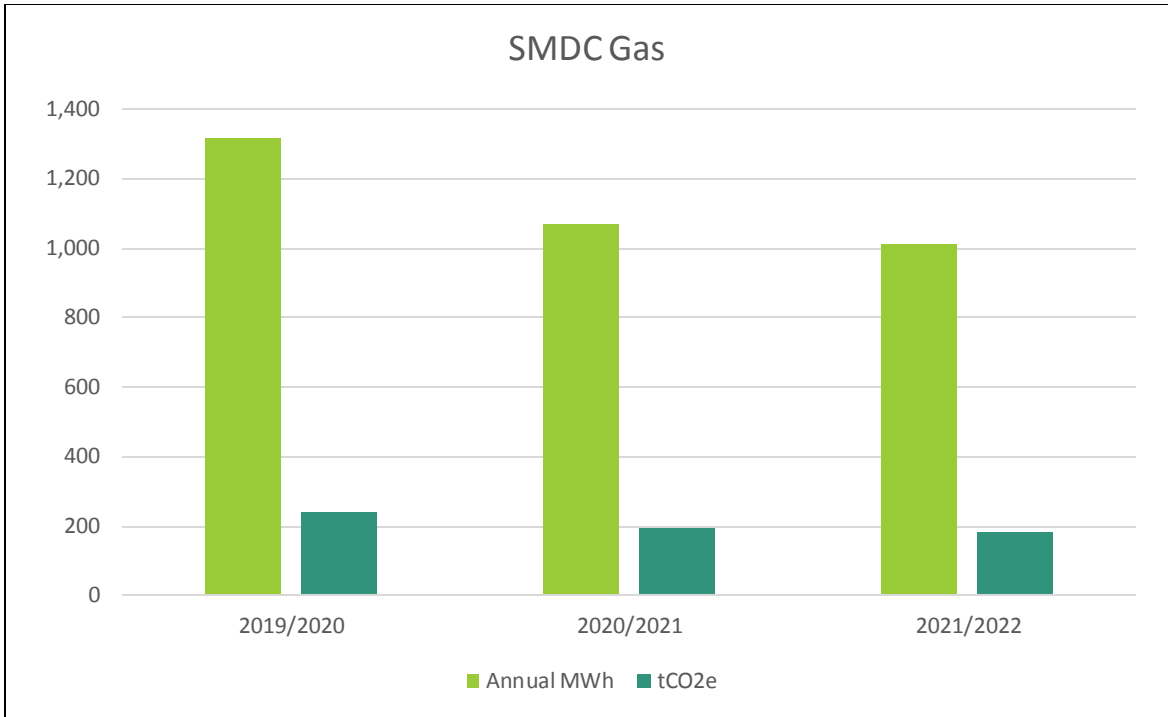
The carbon intensity coefficients are taken from the latest version of the Local Government Association tool (Jan 2023). This is the same methodology used across Staffordshire councils and standard practice nationally.

Electricity	Annual MWh	Variance on Baseline kWh	tCO ₂ e	Variance on Baseline tCO ₂ e
2019/2020	697		178	
2020/2021	621	11%	145	19%
2021/2022	592	15%	126	29%



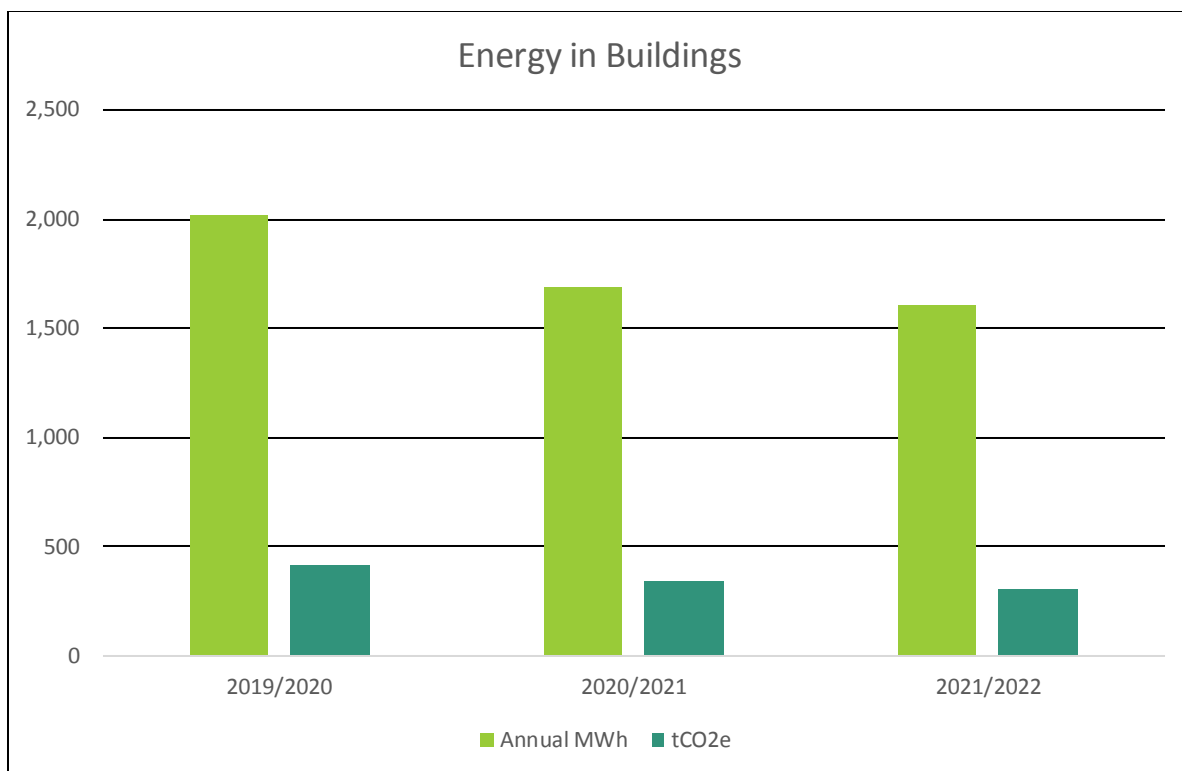
Electricity consumption (Megawatt-hours) has reduced by 15% since the baseline year. The carbon emissions have reduced by 29% (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent).

Gas	Annual MWh	Variance on Baseline kWh	tCO ₂ e	Variance on Baseline tCO ₂ e
2019/2020	1,319		242	
2020/2021	1,068	19%	196	19%
2021/2022	1,012	23%	185	24%



Gas consumption has reduced by 23% since the baseline year. The resulting emissions reduction is 24%.

Total Energy in Buildings	Annual MWh	Variance on Baseline kWh	tCO2e	Variance on Baseline tCO2e
2019/2020	2,016		420	
2020/2021	1,689	16%	341	19%
2021/2022	1,604	20%	311	26%



Overall energy used has reduced by 20% and the resultant carbon dioxide emissions have reduced by 26%.

These figures do not include the emissions from outsourced services of Parkwood, AES, NEC payroll services and other procured services.

Systems are being put in place to request this data from primary delivery partners and collate the findings on a regular basis.

Water figures are difficult to analyse due to the inherent issues with metering and billing water. Some resource may be required to analyse the data we have and rectify any issues.

Following energy assessment of the majority of our building portfolio, the council's new Asset Management plan will include energy and water efficiency technologies, revised operation schedules and potentially renewable energy in our own buildings. The use of some corporate buildings is being assessed to optimise functionality. Our strategic partners are all on board with monitoring and reducing their building emissions.

Moorlands House will have new LED external and internal lighting in the next few months.

An application to the Public Sector Carbonisation Fund has been made for funding to improve energy efficiency and add renewable generation to one of our leisure centres.

The council applied to the Low Carbon Skills Fund for support in developing bespoke, holistic site specific decarbonisation reports. Unfortunately, owing to the mechanisms of the fund, the application was received too late to meet the first round. However, the exercise was useful and will help us apply for any future opportunities.

The council's revised procurement strategy has been designed to embed sustainability and low carbon considerations into decision making for the procurement of goods, services and works. Environmental Sustainability is one of the key focus areas of the strategy and has specific actions to

deliver against. The strategy will be rolled out during 2023/24 across all service areas and elected members. We will also work closely with the Council's Joint Venture companies to support delivery of key environmental actions included in the strategy.

A network of climate champions will engage with services to support energy and water saving and waste minimisation.

UK [Shared Prosperity Fund](#) of up to £3.4m has been allocated to Staffordshire Moorlands.

The UKSPF is part of the national Levelling Up agenda and is based on three investment priorities:

- Communities and place
- Supporting local business
- People and skills

The fund will be governed by a newly formed board to lead on the prioritisation of initiatives. Green jobs and supporting the skills shortages to deliver climate initiatives shall be considered as deliverables within the programme.

We will continue to promote training and funding opportunities to business community including membership of the Staffordshire Business Environmental Network

Procurement will work closely with the Council's local supply chain to encourage and support actions to reduce their carbon footprint in our local areas.

How we make energy

As part of the Asset Management Plan, the council buildings have had light touch assessments of potential energy generation.

These provide an indication of what is possible but did not consider in-depth technical requirements (e.g. structural integrity, network capacity, asbestos, wiring or metering upgrades).

Further work to consider off site potential for generation should be explored.

Some of the domestic energy funding will provide some home solar panels (photovoltaics). However, exploring opportunities to upscale the uptake is required.

Our website includes signposting to renewable energy schemes such as approved installers and organisations to support community energy development projects.

How we look after our environment

The management of our country park sites has now transferred to Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Having experts on biodiversity and community engagement with greatly improve the ecosystems on these sites, whilst supporting communities to engage with them.

We have also commissioned the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to develop a "Plan for Nature". This will assess opportunities to improve biodiversity on sites owned by SMDC and others. This will provide a biodiversity strategy with a bank of potential sites to prioritise, enhance the green infrastructure, increase tree cover and use to respond to funding opportunities. It will also prepare us for the incoming Biodiversity Net Gain legislation and provide some ready scoped opportunities for

potential S106 funding.

The project with the Wildlife Trust has already identified some potential projects to improve rural green corridors working with some of our community groups on a joint funding application. If our application is successful, this will form part of our work for 2023/24.

Our collaboration with Staffordshire County Council and the other districts and boroughs in the county, could result in a parallel commitment through the sustainability board to pledge to particular activities in the next year. This is to be decided at the next sustainability board meeting.

The county has overall responsibility for the Nature Recovery Strategy. Our work on the Plan for Nature will dovetail into this overall objective.

A strategy for our parks and open spaces is planned for 2023/24. Park management plans will be developed for those sites which are substantial enough to require them with our smaller sites having maintenance plans produced, where appropriate. [Staffordshire Wildlife Trust](#) has taken on the management of 11 of our nature reserves which will improve the management of the sites, enhance the biodiversity and draw in community volunteers.

Our Green Network of community groups and the community fund have both been established, amongst other things, to support communities enhance nature in their area. This includes the development of new or expanding orchards and native tree planting.

We have a dedicated member of staff who is able to support groups with nature walks, which can improve health & wellbeing of participants and increase appreciation for nature and the outdoors. Walking is also a key action to help reduce short car journeys – active travel can help reduce emissions and car use by encouraging people to walk to school, work and local amenities.

We are actively engaging with the new Arts Council funded programme ‘Outside’ which combines engagement with nature and wellbeing with arts, culture and heritage in Staffordshire Moorlands. Working together, we can benefit from their vast experience and creativity to sustain and embed engagement and appreciation of nature. This will support the long term objectives of our Plan for Nature.

How we manage waste

Staffordshire Moorlands has historically good rates of recycling. New Resource and Waste Strategy (RAWS) may lead to changing service delivery. Changes will be communicated through the AES dedicated communications and engagement team. The RAWS implementation will also inform the Staffordshire joint waste strategy review.

The county-wide Joint Waste Board has joined with the Staffordshire Sustainability Board which we are active members of.

We continue to support community groups to enhance recycling and waste avoidance through make do and mend, repair cafes and re-use initiatives. Our community fund and the green network is accessible to groups needing some help to set up an initiative.

Our new procurement strategy will, set clear standards in our specifications to reduce or eliminate the impact on the environment, including removing single use plastics and stipulate sustainably sourced materials as an alternative.

Replacement Fleet strategy procurements include provision for alternative ‘options’ as part of the

tender process e.g. alternative fuels, electric vehicles. The Council's waste vehicles used by our strategic partners Alliance Environmental Services Ltd now operate on hydrogenated vegetable oil which reduces the greenhouse gas emissions and has other benefits for air quality.

How we help change occur

All council reports have climate change listed as a consideration.

The council has achieved the Carbon Literacy Bronze award. More training is planned in the spring to raise the award to silver.

A shorter awareness raising training programme for new starts and councillors is to be developed.

A cross council network of climate champions has been set up to support embedding service specific climate considerations across the operations. This network is embryonic and is to be developed over the coming months.

From this network, we will establish improved engagement to join up the good practice across the council activities and communicate outwardly.

We will continue to support community groups to build capacity and resilience through peer-to-peer sharing and some project/operational funding. We will use examples to demonstrate to other groups how to. We will also try to re-engage parish and town councils to take action with climate activities.

As a council we are active members, partners or subscribers of several relevant peer groups, including Local Government Association, UK100 and APSE. We can use these networks to share and learn good practice and to influence others.

The **Climate Change and Nature Community Fund** is a small fund set up by the Council with match funding from AES. The grants are awarded to community groups for projects with enhance nature or support our climate change plans. The grants are assessed by a panel of external partners with one council officer. The grant runs on a rolling programme allowing groups to apply for more than one initiative or to allow time for groups to formulate ideas.

Since inception, the fund has awarded 12 grants to groups, totalling over £6000. A round has just closed and the panel will assess these applications shortly.

Projects range from supporting community buildings with energy efficiency and generation, nature walks linked to wellbeing and awareness, supporting allotments and a nature based sculpture working with a mental health creative group and recycled materials. The applicant groups range from small nascent, place-based groups to well established district wide groups.