

Environment Strategy – 2019 Revision

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Foreword

Welcome to our 2019 revised Environment Strategy.

In February 2007 we adopted a 20-year Environment Strategy. The Strategy is now over 12 years old and recognising that we are now in a very different place internationally, nationally and locally. In the intervening period, despite numerous initiatives by Stroud District Council and our many active and innovative residents the environmental threats have increased dramatically. The climate is changing at a greater rate than in recorded history and it is predicted that there will be further significant changes in the next 20 years.

We need to develop a more flexible approach to allow a rapid response to how we adapt and mitigate opportunities and threats. It was agreed to split the Strategy between the longer term principles, along similar lines as set out in the original Strategy, but under those principles we will now set out an annual action plan.

The 2019 Environment Strategy sets out the scope of our roles and responsibilities and states our vision, aims, objectives and the subsequent action plan with specific annual targets. These will drive purposeful action to ensure we are meeting our environmental obligations, embedding environmental sustainability into the effective running of council services. Fulfilling our leadership and enabling role in a way that recognises and minimises our environmental impact, improves the wellbeing of people and contributes to a rapid shift to a sustainable low carbon economy.

We have been at the forefront of creativity and commitment in using our powers and influence to conserve, protect and where appropriate enhance the environment. We are known for spearheading new ideas and initiatives from helping retro fit community buildings, hard to treat households and business premises to be as energy efficient as possible, protecting internationally important wildlife sites, to developing natural flood prevention methods which have been recognised through a number of awards and accreditations and we are rapidly gaining recognition for our efforts to be a Carbon Neutral District by 2030.

Most recently we have been awarded the National Recycling Award for cutting the most amount of waste sent to landfill - an award that the whole district won. Working together is key, a statement reaffirmed as part our Declaration of a Climate Emergency.

Insert picture of Cllr Simon Pickering

Introduction

Environmental awareness and action is not new to the Stroud District Council and the communities which we serve. Indeed, a number local, national and international environmental movements have been initiated by citizens from within the District.

Stroud District Council has not only had a long standing commitment to the environment but also a long history of leading initiatives that have helped and encouraged others to do the same.

We understand the inter-dependency between environmental, social and economic well-being and the essential role we play in balancing this through service delivery and in our wider leadership role.

This is evident as one of the Council's key priorities is Environment: Help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to the changing climate and continue to improve recycling rates - as set out in our Corporate Plan.

Though Environment is a priority in its own right, environmental issues are cross cutting and hence this Strategy will also support outcomes in the 4 other areas: –

- Economy: Help create a sustainable and vibrant economy that works for all.
- Affordable Housing: Provide affordable, energy efficient homes for our diverse and changing population.
- Health & Well-Being: Promote the health and well-being of our communities and work with others to deliver the public health agenda.
- Delivery: Provide value for money to our taxpayers and high quality services to our customers.

This is also demonstrated through our annual surveys with residents and businesses which show consistently high satisfaction ratings in support of the environment priority.

The Vision and New Priority Areas

The Council's Environment Committee decided to keep the original 2007 vision but review the priorities and to separate the work programme from the Strategy. The vision is:-

“To lead a community that is willing and able to make the district a better place by:

- **Tackling the consequences of already unavoidable climate change; and,**
- **Reducing the stress on resources and environmental systems – water, land and air – from the way we produce, consume and waste resources.”**

The 2007 Strategy's 5 priorities were consistent with the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, but since its publication there have been a number of reports released by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and Government including their 'A Green Future' – the Government's 25-year environmental plan released in 2018.

The Environment Committee recognised the importance of reviewing the priorities to reflect these changes and subsequently agreed on the following:

- **Priority 1: A Circular Economy** - Thriving now, thriving in the future; Financial prosperity today is no good if we use the resources our children will require tomorrow. We must consider the whole life costs of our purchases and not waste them. When we have finished with them we must repair, reuse and recycle and use them again. A sustainable economy should leave no trace.
- **Priority 2: Climate Change** - The biggest threat we face; Man made climate change is the biggest threat humanity faces. We must adapt and increase our resilience to changes in weather patterns. We therefore must take steps to prevent levels of CO₂ rising, by using less energy and what we do use must be greener, cleaner and smarter.
- **Priority 3: Protecting the Environment** - Caring for our natural world; we are all the custodians of Stroud District; we are looking after it for future generations. It is our mission to hand it on to them in a better state than it was handed to us.
- **Priority 4: Sustainable Communities** - Planning today for a better tomorrow: We must continue to ensure that the communities we plan and build today will still be vibrant places where people can and want to live longer, now and in the future.

Our Aims

Our aims define what we want to achieve from this Strategy.

Circular economy

- Support action for the development of a low carbon circular economy
- Reduce resource requirements and make more sustainable use of the resources consumed
- Reduce the amount of waste produced and minimise its environmental impact by applying the waste hierarchy in the priority order of: prevention, preparation for reuse, recycling, other recovery and disposal; and
- Demonstrate and promote environmental good practice to show community leadership.

Carbon and impacts of a changing climate

- Increase and support wider use and generation of low/zero carbon energy;
- working with partners to support the district to become Carbon Neutral by 2030;
- supporting initiatives that help communities to adapt to the changing climate and more frequent adverse weather; and
- Work with local and national governments to ensure the best opportunities for enabling communities make the move to low emissions vehicles and technologies.

Protecting the Environment

- Working with communities to create, protect, enhance and manage local green infrastructure and biodiversity;
- Encouraging environmentally sensitive development through good planning policies and approaches to listed buildings and the effective application of building regulations, to protect, conserve and enhance our district's high quality built environment and distinctive heritage; and
- Working with partners and communities to protect, conserve and enhance our district's high quality natural environment and its biodiversity whilst improving our parks and open spaces, public rights of ways and green corridors.

Sustainable Communities

- Encouraging the construction of more sustainable and lifelong housing;
- Supporting residents to be more resource efficient in terms of energy and water use therefore reducing the cost of running a home. Encouraging the provision of housing that enables more sustainable access to local services, green spaces, transport and employment and minimises and/or mitigates the impact of developments on the natural environment; and
- Working with communities and partners to create, protect and manage local green infrastructure and biodiversity providing accessible environments that people can enjoy and which positively contributes to their good health and well-being.

Scope

The Environment Strategy recognises that the Council has different levels of control and influence in managing and protecting the environment, minimising its environmental impacts and meeting the challenges and opportunities of a changing climate. The scope of the Strategy covers both the Council's own operations and also where it has control and influence within Stroud District.

The scope includes:

- The legal and statutory duties that we must fulfil regarding the environment and the national response to climate change;
- What we need to do to embed environmental sustainability into the effective and efficient running of council services; and
- What we need to do to fulfil our leadership role in a way that recognises and minimises environmental impacts, improves the health and wellbeing of people and contributes to the sustainable economic development of the district.

The Strategy also recognises the environmental issues that affect the Council and its ability to provide services and meet its obligations. The most significant issue is that of the changing climate and the related impacts such as an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms, flooding and heat-waves, prolonged cold periods and changes in the number of pests and diseases.

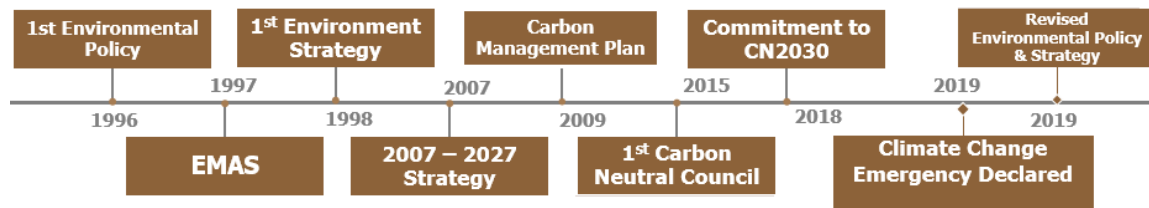
This Strategy coordinates the Council's overall approach to environmental management, recognising that there are a number of separate strategies and plans that deliver aspects of our environmental duties, responsibilities and commitments.

This Strategy is not a static document and provides a revised framework on which to take forward actions to 2027. This time frame will allow the Strategy and subsequent action plans to respond to changes in environmental policies, legislation and the wider context and circumstances in which it operates.

Performance Management

Performance monitoring of this Strategy and subsequent Action Plan will be managed through the Council's Environmental Management System (EMS) which follows the ISO 14001:2015 framework and the Council's online reporting performance management system Excelsis. Quarterly updates of the Action Plan progress will be reported to the Environment Committee and an annual environmental summary statement will be published on the Council's website.

Stroud District Council Environmental Timeline



1996 First Environmental Policy which has been regularly reviewed

1997 Accredited with Eco Management & Audit Scheme (EMAS) – A European environmental performance management accreditation. A continuous achievement until March 2018 when it was decided to apply our Environmental Management System to ISO 14001:2015

1998 SDC's 1st Environment Strategy

2007 A new 20-year Environment Strategy and action plan

2009 SDC signed up to the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme to *“reduce the CO₂ emissions from its' direct operations by at least 35% by the end of the 2010/11 financial year based on a 2007/08 baseline”*

2015 Declared as the first Council to be Carbon Neutral

2018 Commitment to be a Carbon Neutral District by 2030

2019 New Environmental Policy and a revised Environment Strategy

2019 Declared a 'Climate Change Emergency'

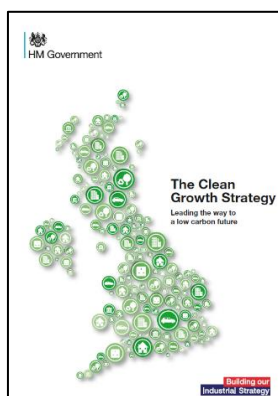
Key Supporting Evidence

There is local, national and international evidence that supports the need to act to improve, enhance and protect the environment. Stroud District Council (SDC) is striving with its long term commitment to 'Help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to the changing climate and continue to improve recycling rates' and with its declaration of a 'Climate Change Emergency' have also committed to become a Carbon Neutral District by 2030 – CN2030. The evidence base includes

Climate Change Act 2008 – this sets out legally binding greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets of at least 80% by 2050 against the 1990 baseline.

Paris Agreement 2015 – requires countries to work together in limiting global temperature rise to below 2 degrees as recognised by the IPCC to limit the risks and impacts of climate change.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) – sets out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it recognises the interconnection between economic development, social equity and inclusion. Governments are expected to translate the SDGs into national policy, plans and initiatives.

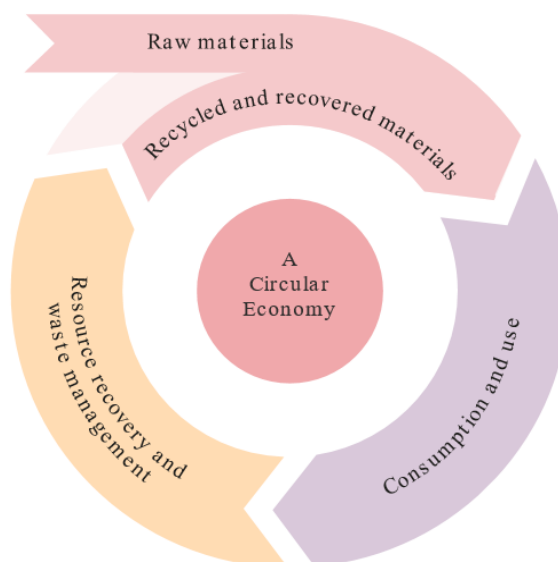


Clean Growth Strategy 2017 – this Strategy underlines the role that local government has in delivering and supporting a low carbon society.

UK Government 25 year Environment Plan 2018 - promotes the use and management of land in a sustainable manner, the enhancement and recovery of landscapes and the connection of people with the environment to promote health and wellbeing. It also promotes an increase in resource efficiency and a reduction in pollution and waste, securing a clean, productive and biologically diverse sea and ocean and protection and improvement of the global environment. It identifies that one of the key ways this will be implemented and achieved is through better local planning and more effective partnerships.



Our Waste, Our Resources Strategy for England 2018 – sets out how the Government intends to preserve the stock of material resources by minimising water, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy and tackling waste crime. It is also their blueprint for eliminating avoidable plastic waste



Clean Air Strategy 2019 – outlines how the Government intends to tackle all forms of air pollution to ensure cleaner air to breathe and protecting nature whilst boosting the economy.



State of Nature Report 2019 – this Report pools the best available data on the UK's biodiversity, with a focus on the trends in species as the key evidence of how nature is faring. In addition to assessing the state of nature it also reviewed the pressures acting upon nature, and the conservation response being made to counter these pressures, in order to give a rounded view of the UK's nature in 2019.

There is also various legislation that places particular duties on local authorities regarding conservation, management and access to the natural environment, namely, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), Natural Environment & Rural Communities

Act (NERC) 2006.

At a local level: -

Stroud District Council Local Plan sets out the strategic priorities for development of Stroud district and covers housing, commercial, public and private development, including transport infrastructure, along with protection for the local environment. It comprises of a series of documents that sets out clear guidance on what development will and won't be permitted.

Stroud District Council Procurement Strategy 2019 – 2023: This strategy sets out our vision for procurement until 2023 incorporating the latest government procurement legislation and initiatives; and recent motions agreed by the Council. It is a statement of the procurement commitments of the Council. The vision for procurement over the term of this strategy is to demonstrate value for money through the effective procurement of goods, services and works on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits to the community and the organisation, whilst minimising impacts to the environment.

Climate Change Emergency Declaration: In January 2019 Stroud District Council declared a Climate Change Emergency and followed this up with a plan of action to make the District of Carbon Neutral by 2030 (CN2030), by working with partners, residents and businesses, voluntary and community groups.

Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy Jan 2019 – outlines the energy strategy for Gloucestershire which become key factors in the development of other projects within the county as well as playing a vital role in the development of the county's Local Industrial Strategy.

Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership are in the process of developing a Nature Recovery Network in response to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. This initiative provides us with the opportunity to draw together all past works in a revised spatial format, looking to identify not merely where our special wildlife and natural habitats currently are, but also the opportunities that exist for enhancing and creating additional habitat networks and connectivity - whilst also helping to strategically inform development and growth opportunities locally, rather than simply hinder them.

Gloucestershire's Local Industrial Strategy will build on recent success to drive inclusive growth and secure an economy fit for the future, which benefits everyone who lives and works in the county. The strategy identifies Gloucestershire's strengths, opportunities and challenges and aligns with the Government's national Industrial Strategy.

Stroud District Council Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan sets out the Council's ambition of increasing cycling and walking activity across the district including increasing the number of children that usually walk to school.

Stroud District Council Green Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation Study - a district wide Green Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation Study. This covers a wide range of recreational open spaces, parks, natural green spaces, playing pitches, outdoor sport facilities and children's play spaces.

Stroud Rural Sustainable Drainage (RSuDS) project is an award winning innovative six-year Natural Flood Management project working to reduce flood risk and restore biodiversity throughout the catchment of the River Frome and all its tributaries. SDC are working with landowners to implement natural flood management techniques and restore natural drainage where it is safe and feasible to do so. This includes working with local community flood groups,

land owners, farmers and partner organisations to implement a range of measures that will reduce flood risk but also improve water quality and enhance the biodiversity of the streams, brooks and the wider River Frome catchment.

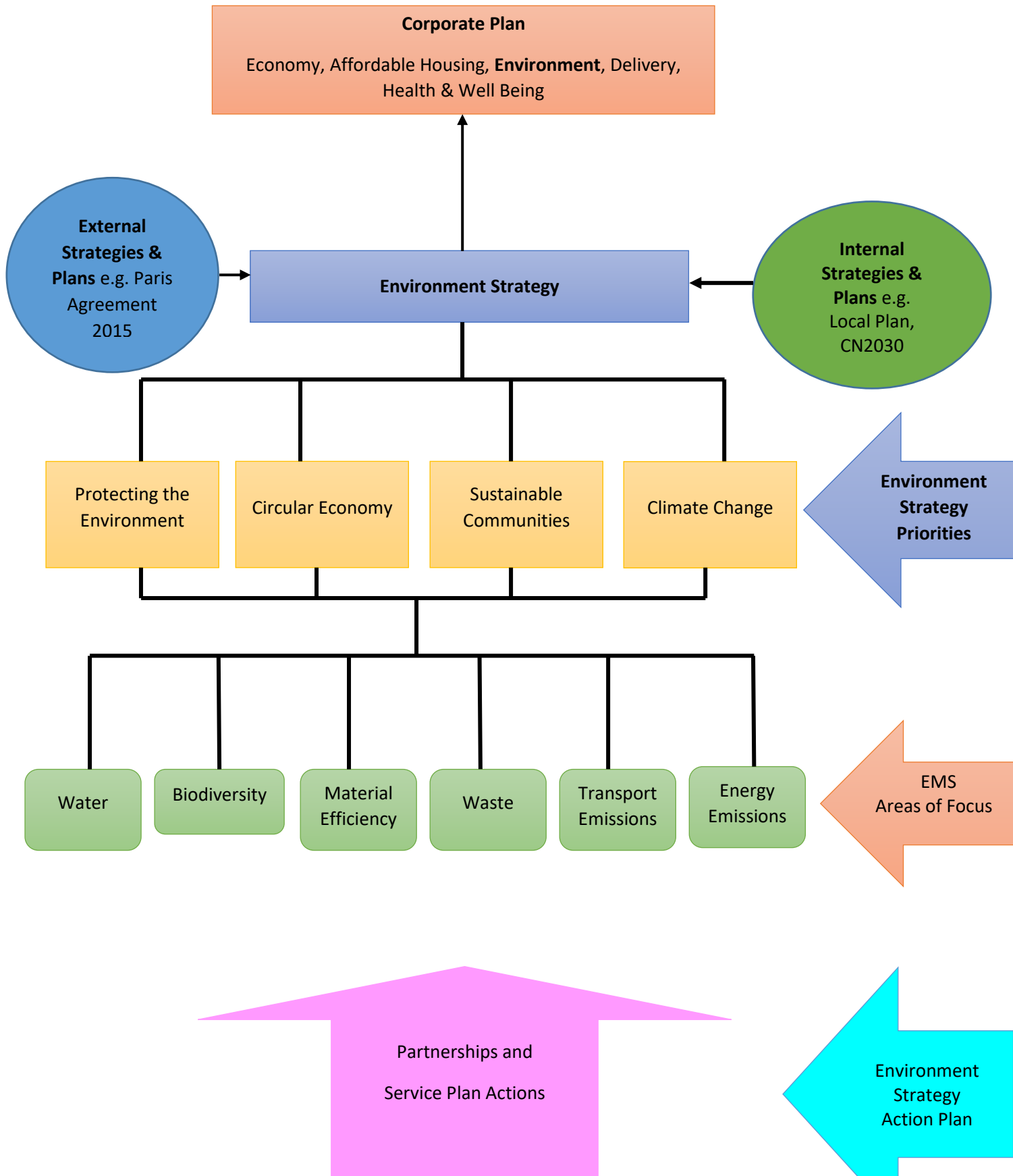
Stroud District Council Health and Wellbeing Plan – this document illustrates how the wellbeing needs of the District are ascertained and how the links between the general socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions affect mental and physical health.

Stroud District Council HRA Energy Strategy – the overall objective of the Energy Strategy is to relieve fuel poverty and maximise carbon reduction in line with the Council's existing and future agreed targets. It provides direction to overall investment decisions for the Council's housing stock, but also recognises that behavioural change is key to the long term sustainability and viability of the housing stock.

Restoration of the Cotswold Canal in the Stroud District - alongside the restoration of the canal the project will create around 25ha of new wildlife rich priority habitat that will mitigate the impacts of the development and result in an overall net gain for biodiversity. The project will increase the connectivity of wildlife habitats both across the Severn Vale and by forming a blue-green corridor from the Severn Estuary in the west to the Cotswold escarpments in the east, making populations more resilient to future change. The canal will fulfil a wide range of functions and offer diverse benefits to both human populations and the environment through providing multi-functional natural spaces and green infrastructure for health and wellbeing where nature and people can thrive both now and in the future. All aspects of the project will be used to promote socially sustainable communities and increase community cohesion.

The restoration will be managed to reduce negative environmental impacts. The approach aligns with SDC's Environment Strategy to reduce negative environmental impacts, minimise carbon emissions and integrate sustainability features. It considers embodied carbon in construction materials, wildlife habitats and biodiversity, water, land and air quality, environmental nuisance (odour and noise) and waste management.

Appendix 1: How the Environment Strategy contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan



Last updated: *insert date*

Next document review by: *insert date*

Reviewed by: *Name, Service, Team*

Approved by: *Name or Committee*