

**STROUD
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

2023-2024

ANNUAL

2030 REPORT

Progress Towards the Council's Climate
Change and Sustainability Goals.

Third Annual Report

CONTENTS

Pg. 1	.....	Foreword
Pg. 2	.....	A Year In Numbers
Pg. 3-5	.....	Built Environment
Pg. 6-8	.....	Energy
Pg. 9-13	.....	Natural Environment
Pg. 14-15	.....	Mobility
Pg. 16-19	.....	Economy
Pg. 20-21	.....	Waste and Resources
Pg. 22-25	.....	Community
Pg. 26	.....	Forward Look

FOREWORD

Cllr Chloe Turner

“Climate action has never been more crucial. In 2023, for the first time, we saw global warming exceed 1.5% degrees. This first year-long breach of the limit agreed by world leaders in Paris in 2015 – along with the unprecedented floods, heatwaves and wildfires we’re seeing all over the world – should be a wake-up call to us all. The 2030 Strategy for Stroud district was drafted in 2021 as our blueprint for how we can limit, adapt, recover and respond in a changing climate. In it, we pledged that we’d do everything within the Council’s power to make Stroud district carbon neutral by 2030.

As this latest report shows, many of the actions to reduce carbon bring additional benefits. For example, our programme of work to make our council homes lower carbon, which has been shortlisted for a national award, will also make them warmer, cheaper and healthier to live in for residents.

Our active travel work across the district, like the funding we have put towards the Transition Stroud e-bike hire scheme and the resurfacing work on the Stonehouse path, will allow more residents to leave the car behind, should they choose to, and enjoy the health benefits that come with travelling by bike.

Our ambitious project, boosted by a £4.7m government grant, to replace ageing gas boilers with brand new renewable heating systems at Stratford Park Leisure Centre, The Museum in the Park and The Pulse, will make those sites more sustainable in the long term and help ensure that our leisure services continue to be available to all.

Our outreach work with local farmers and landowners aims to support them at a challenging time, recognise their importance to our local economy and communities, and also highlight the key role they have in climate and nature solutions for our area.

Three years on from the publication of our 2030 Strategy, we thank everyone working with us to address the climate and nature emergencies, to protect our District’s character and communities today and for many generations to come.”



A YEAR IN NUMBERS

2

2030 COMPATIBLE
NEIGHBOURHOOD
DEVELOPMENT PLANS
PROGRESSED TO
EXAMINATION

3.54

KILOMETERS OF
STREAM RESTORED

SCORE: B

THE COUNCIL
ACHIEVED A "B" IN
2023'S CDP CITIES
ASSESSMENT

24

PUBLIC EV
CHARGE POINTS
APPROVED

99,465

SOLAR PANELS
APPROVED THROUGH
PLANNING PERMISSION

21%

REDUCTION IN SCOPE
1 EMISSIONS
COMPARED TO 2022

187

NEW NATURAL
FLOOD
MANAGEMENT
INTERVENTIONS

2.8

HECTARES OF
NEW WETLAND
CREATED

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Enabling services that support homeowners to make homes warmer, greener and cheaper to run.

Buildings are the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions after transport and Local Authorities are seen as trusted sources to support homeowners in their self-funded retrofit journey. Working with other city and district councils in the county, we are developing 'The Retrofit Centre' website as a first port of call for homeowners, and, through contracting Severn Wye Energy Agency, have delivered bespoke retrofit assessments and support to 75 properties in the district.

We are also maintaining the provision of specialist support services to vulnerable residents in the district through Warm and Well. 311 households supported April to Sept 2023, 552 enquiries to advice line, 91 home visits made, 29 home improvements supported with ECO4 and Green Homes Funding. Delivery of Home Upgrade Grant 2 Scheme commenced to provide funding for energy efficiency and renewable heating home improvements

More SDC owned council homes are improved to cut fuel bills and carbon emissions.

In March 2023, SDC were awarded a Government grant of £1.7 million to improve the energy efficiency of 250 council homes. This will include external and cavity wall insulation, loft insulation top up and ventilation, resulting in EPC C minimum and reduced heating bills for each property.

SDC has been shortlisted as a finalist for The Retrofit Academy “Best Social Housing Retrofit Programme Award”. The Academy has acknowledged the exemplary work and commitment SDC is undertaking in driving excellence in retrofitting our council homes. The winner will be announced in March 2024.



Collaborating with Town and Parish Councils

Collaborating to develop 2030 compatible neighbourhood development plans (NDPs). NDPs include a review of actions to date that address the Climate Emergency, and an exploration of practical projects that benefit the climate and environment.

E.g. Slimbridge Parish Council have described how they are seeking land to be used as allotments and an appropriate site for a community orchard. They are also looking at how to care for their hedgerows and verges to improve biodiversity.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The CIL bid process has included a specific focus on meeting the objectives set in SDC's Climate Change 2030 Strategy since the 2021 funding round. Projects that help to reduce the community carbon footprint are recognised within the formal assessment process; those schemes that can be seen to be delivering the greatest sustainability goals have a higher chance of gaining CIL funding support.

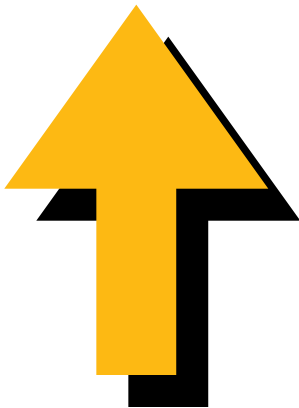
Projects approved for CIL funding in 2024/25 include:

- Standish multi-user path to improve active travel accessibility
- Stroud Merrywalks Interchange Hub to encourage greater use of public transport
- Sustainable drainage for water quality and habitat at Stratford Park

ENERGY

SCOPE 1

Emissions down by 21% compared to 2022



SCOPE 2

Emissions up by 1% compared to 2022

SCOPE 3

Emissions down by 25% compared to 2022



SCOPES EXPLAINED

SCOPE 1: DIRECT EMISSIONS FROM OUR OWN FACILITIES AND VEHICLES (IN-SITU COMBUSTION)

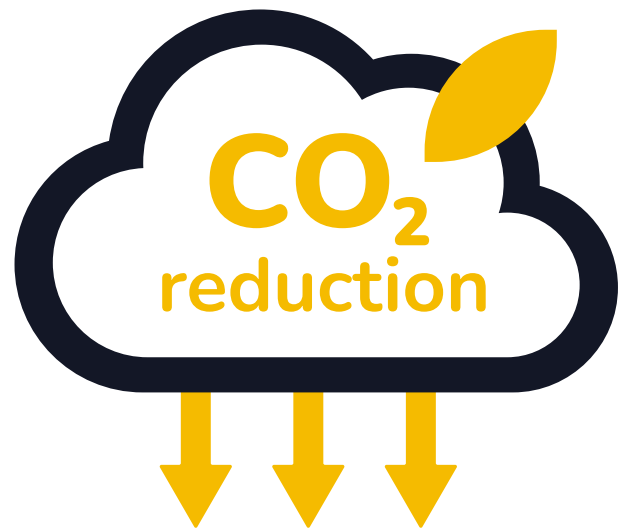
SCOPE 2: INDIRECT EMISSIONS FROM ELECTRICITY WE PURCHASE

SCOPE 3: INDIRECT EMISSIONS FROM ASSETS WE OWN BUT DO NOT CONTROL

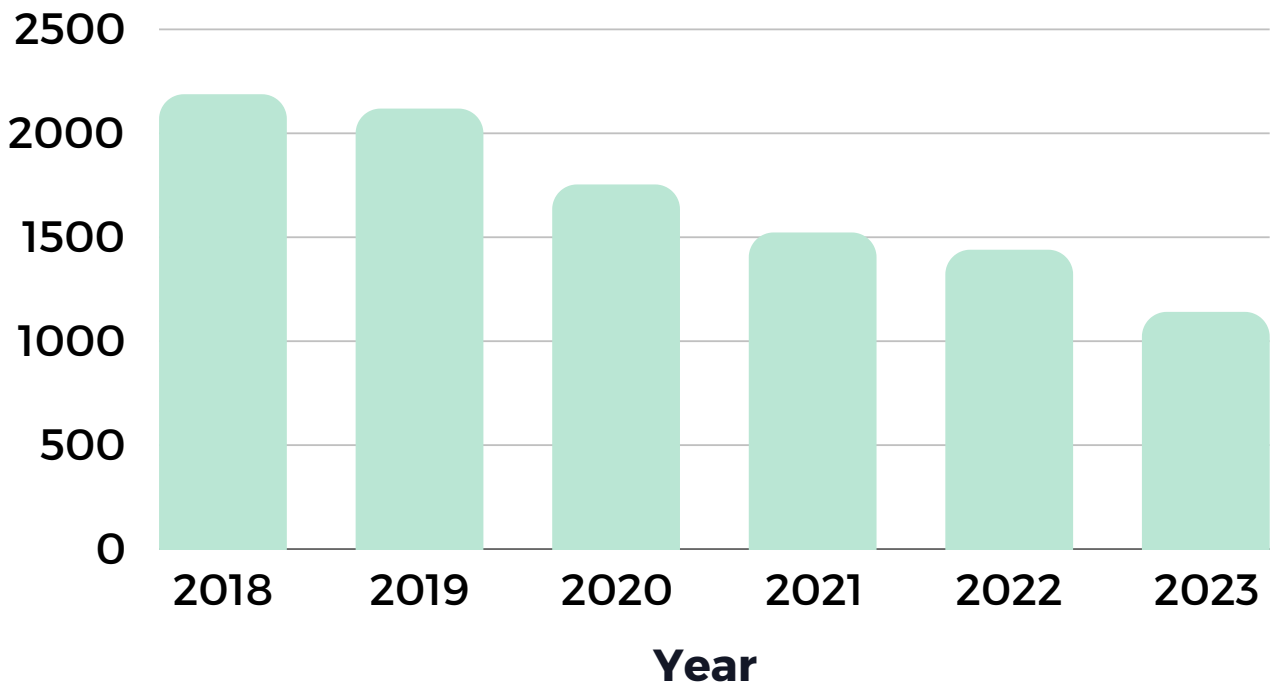
OVERALL CO₂ REDUCTION

2022 VS. 2023

299
Tonnes



■ Emissions CO₂e



We've Gone Green

Contractor appointed and work has started on The Pulse, Stratford Park Leisure Centre and the Museum in the Park to replace ageing boilers. Over the winter, Stratford Park Leisure Centre was partially closed to allow for the installation of a new renewable heating system

Explore renewable energy innovation

South West Net Zero Hub's funding opportunity has been shared with community networks including the new community energy group 'Stroud Area Community Energy Group' (SACEN)

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

An officer action group for the Natural Environment meets every 4 weeks chaired by Strategic Lead for Nature Recovery and Biodiversity, sharing information and supporting each other.

Changing some grass cutting to a 'Meadow Mow'; one cut per year which encourages more diversity and healthier soils.

Where safe to do so, we have stopped mowing within a meter of Council-owned trees to allow for less soil compaction and healthier tree roots

Funding has been received from the Community Infrastructure Levy to clean up the Council-owned lake in Stratford Park, restoring it to better biodiversity



Leading on the production of guidance for developers and planners throughout Gloucestershire, providing groups with clear guidance and support with regard to any planning application requiring Biodiversity Net Gain as part of their application. In addition to this, SDC are working with Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund to ascertain the available and preferable locations upon which to develop BNG.

A severe, climate driven, flood event on 12th June measured at 220mm/hr in 30 minutes impacting 100+ properties including internal flooding at Stroud Hospital, 21 dwellings and numerous businesses. The district only saw the edge of storms Babet to Henk; SDC emergency response was active throughout and has been refined as a result

Epney and Longney Property Flood Resilience Scheme is progressing in partnership with the Environment Agency. SDC are working in partnership with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council to establish and maintain a network of flood wardens across the district.

CASE STUDY

Wetland and stream restoration works in Kingscote Woods, Horsley

Stroud District Council and Forestry England implemented one of the most ambitious stream restoration projects within the Stroud Valleys this October in Kingscote Woods. Kingscote Wood has been owned and managed by Forestry England since 2019 and the Forest Plan showing future management of the woods can be viewed at: www.forestryengland.uk/forest-planning/kingscote-forest-plan

Historic management of the stream within the lower part of the woods on the two large floodplains had resulted in the natural stream channel being straightened and en-ditched (made deeper) to reduce the amount of water that can leave the channel at high flows. This work was carried out to stop water from spreading across the floodplain and potentially impacting young Ash and Beech trees. In addition, the straight channel has also been moved over to one side of the floodplain to a point where it is unnaturally higher than the valley floor. This meant that lower flows were lost through the permeable bed of the artificial channel, resulting in significant impacts to the stream in both low and high flows.

Whilst this original work was done with the best of intentions, the ecological impacts were significant, resulting in the loss of wetland and stream habitats, an increase in flood risk downstream and longer periods of time when there is little or zero flow in the stream.



New areas of wetland created

In October 2023, we undertook work to restore the stream back to its original position on the floodplain and allow the water to spread across the area creating wetland or wet woodland. The benefits of the work include:

a. The creation of a large and locally significant area of wet woodland resulting from the spreading of both low and high flows across the floodplain. This habitat type is nationally rare and will boost the biodiversity of the woods and help store more carbon.

b. Significant benefits for downstream communities as the existing straight ditches convey high flows at significant speed and volume through the woodland, increasing flood risk for the town of Nailsworth. Allowing High flows to spread across the floodplain will slow flows and reduce peak flows through the woodland and into the valley. This will also improve water quality as the flows percolate through the vegetation.

c. Increased aquifer recharge - This would occur in periods of high flows as we expect significant infiltration through the floodplain into the aquifer under high flow conditions.

CANAL RESTORATION



The Heritage Lottery funded project, Cotswold Canals Connected, has delivered multiple environmental, social, economic and health benefits through this reporting period, including:

- Upskilling volunteers in using brush cutters and scythes, assessing the biodiversity of a river through Riverfly and bird nesting check training.
- 91 out of a target of 100 Waterway Network volunteers recruited
- 1km of new hedgerow planted
- Planning permission for work on 'the missing mile' was approved February 2024

MOBILITY

Electric Vehicles

In September 2023, a financial commitment was made to roll out electric vehicle (EV) charge points at 7 public car parks in the district. Work was carried out to investigate grid capacity, civil engineering requirements and individual car park limitations. In all locations 7kw charge points are to be installed. 7kw chargers provide up to 30 miles of range per charge hour, allowing 'top up' charge for visitors, whilst primarily serving local residents for overnight use.

At the London Road Car Park we have the advantage of being able to both access a grid connection and use the existing power supply. This has allowed for the provision of six charging bays, two benefitting from faster 22kw charging. Wherever possible future expansion is being pre-installed as a 'passive supply'. This reserves the grid capacity, without the need to re-connect supply. It saves further trenching and the associated carbon expenditure.

Taxis

As licence renewals become due, vehicles that are over 10 years old are not permitted to be renewed. Licence holders have been reminded that by April 2025 all vehicles must be Euro 6 compliant with an exception for wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Walking and Cycling

£75K has been allocated to resurface the full length of the Stonehouse to Stroud bike path, which is match funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy and Gloucestershire County Council.

Funding has been allocated to Transition Stroud to deliver an E-Bike hire scheme in the district, so that people can trial E-Bikes with the aim of increasing a swap over to decarbonised transport.

Walking has been encouraged through the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) over Easter 2023 in Stroud and Dursley. The Discover Stroud trail app has been upgraded, to encourage people to explore their locality by foot, as well as the regular volunteer-led walks by SDC's Strolling in Stroud Districts initiative.

Bike parking facilities are being improved at Stratford Park with a covered bike store and some more bike hoops within Museum in the Park grounds.

ECONOMY

Ethical Investments

The SDC Ethical Investment Policy has again been approved by Councillors and applied consistently across the Council Portfolio. Investment has been withdrawn from areas scoring the lowest in the ethical investment assessment. In addition, the District Council has engaged with the County Council as part of its consultation on the Responsible Investment Policy for the Pension Fund.

The Council's Corporate Procurement Strategy has been updated to reflect the objectives of the Council Plan and current national best practice, it was approved in November 2023. The strategy has 4 procurement aims, one of which is to 'Drive Social Value from our procurements, including minimising the adverse environmental impact of services delivered by our suppliers, and supporting the local economy, and covers:

- Supporting the Local Economy
- Social Value
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs)
- Sustainability And Equalities In Procurement
- Partnership Working

There is also an annual procurement plan including performance indicators so progress against the procurement aims can be monitored and reported

Green Skills Coordinator

As part of the the work we and other partner councils undertake as part of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, funding has been secured to employ a Green Skills Coordinator. The objectives of this role are:

- Developing forums, events and workshops on retrofit and green skills to further explore the challenges and identify solutions with employers, training providers and relevant LA reps.
- Developing information campaigns targeted towards regional businesses to facilitate upskilling the workforce.
- Working with employers and training providers to provide targeted skills initiatives in rural, remote and deprived areas, where these can be made cost-effective
- Work with the Gloucestershire Careers Hub and with LEA colleagues to instil awareness of green/sustainable careers at earliest opportunities.
- Consider an appropriate approach for trainers, employers and LAs to satisfy PAS 2035 requirements.

Expected benefits include:

- Increased engagement between training provides, employers and industry, and local authorities on retrofit skills development and supply chains.
- Increased numbers of people training and re-training in retrofit skills.
- High rate of trainees moving to in-county employment.
- Reduction in identified retrofit skills gaps.
- Increased certainty for all stakeholders on the future of retrofit skills within county.
- Increased proliferation of retrofit advisors, assessors, and most importantly coordinators across the county's retrofit/construction industry
- Industry satisfaction with skills provision from employers

CASE STUDY

Stroud District: The Natural Place

Leaders from across the business sector have joined up with Stroud District Council in a new venture to help encourage more investment in Stroud district. Stroud District: The Natural Place is an online prospectus aimed at stimulating investment in the district by helping people find out what makes our place, our people and our businesses so special. It helps enterprises which want to establish themselves in the district, as well as existing businesses which want to expand or diversify.

The online prospectus www.strouddistrict.co.uk showcases the district's Green economy, innovation workforce, work-life balance, infrastructure, investment opportunities, tourism, climate and ecology commitments, culture and heritage, and case studies feature some of the great businesses and projects already based here. It also explains more about green and agricultural technologies, advanced manufacturing, distribution and logistics, microbusinesses and ;SME and creative industries.



Council Leader Catherine Braun:

“Our ambition for economic development is to support a sustainable, thriving and resilient economy for business, communities and visitors. We set ourselves the task of promoting the Stroud district to attract more investment, focusing on environmental technologies, engineering and manufacturing and creative industries. The Natural Place prospectus does just this and we are excited to see who will choose our district as the place for innovation.”

WASTE AND RESOURCES

Greener waste collections

We've introduced an 'In cab' system to our waste collection vehicles in 2023, digitalising workflows and reducing mileage by sending jobs direct to the cab, rather than waiting for return to the depot. This system also allows work to be made zonal, which reduces miles driven.

A fleet replacement strategy has been implemented, which will replace ageing vehicles with those that have the latest "Euro 6" technology. "Euro 6" is the name given to a set of limits for harmful emissions produced by a vehicle's internal combustion engines

As part of this strategy, we have committed funding for the provision of an alternative fuel (hydrogenated vegetable oil) where electric vehicles as a replacement could currently compromise service. Switching to HVO requires no vehicle alternations but will reduce "well to wheel" carbon emissions by 80-90%

Messaging

There has been over 2,500 engagements with SDC led social media posts promoting behaviour change through the celebration of the district's great recycling rates.

Other SDC social media posts have encouraged participation with national and local climate action and sustainability events e.g. World Refill Day and supported DIY bike repair opportunities.



People enjoying a Canal community event

COMMUNITY

Events and displays

A set of community led 'Love where you live' events have been held with SDC tenants and officers, cleaning up SDC estates for the benefit of people and wildlife. Additional co-benefits to these events include increasing residents' mental health and reducing stress. There are plans afoot for developing wildflower gardens on site.

The 'Road Less Travelled' display at the Museum in the Park explored how local people used to commute to work in the first half of the 20th century, with the aim to encourage reflection on visitors' own commute. They were then invited to record how they travelled to the Museum and to calculate the carbon footprint of their commute.

SDC grant funding has continued to support the development of the Climate Action Network (CAN). This grant has been used to continue CAN communications and 1-2-1 support as well as resource project time to further support CANs with District-wide infrastructure and local practical action projects.

Stroud District Councils work to liaise with farmers continued by hosting the first meeting of a Stroud Farmer group. This aimed to help farmers support each other and provide some guidance on the various agri-environment schemes available and the funding options associated with such schemes. The longer term plan is to enable farmers to increase their understanding of alternative land management techniques relating to nature recovery and addressing the loss of biodiversity.

Last year SDC partnered with Stroud Valleys Project to plant more than 5,000 trees in a field owned by SDC at Salmon Springs in Stroud, then we dug in ponds to encourage more wildlife. This year, volunteers put in some suitable plant ponds and we had immediate proof that what we are doing is working as a beautiful dragonfly landing and laid its eggs in front of their eyes.

The role of social media

Messaging, averaging more than one-per-week of news stories, press releases, radio interviews or social media posts, celebrating climate and sustainability actions across the district and highlighting national events for people to get involved with encouraged, supported and inspired people about climate action.

CASE STUDY

Broader representation in climate action

'Stroud District youth Council (SDYC) are pleased to report that there has been more community work occurring in the district this year regarding the theme of climate change, especially that relevant to and involving young people. The 2030 Community Engagement Board itself has been working with SDYC on intergenerational discussions on the objectives in the 2030 plan.

The facilitation of discussions between young people and adults, especially educators and activists, explored varying perspectives and opinions on the work of the board and that of SDYC's Manifesto commitment (www.stroudyouthvoice.co.uk/manifesto). One intergenerational event, set within the time frame of COP28, led to a very informative and in-depth discussion that taught everyone something new about people's thoughts and concerns about environmental matters. The work that some SDYC members have been part of, has been very informative of the way people view climate change and climate action, as well as what already exists locally.

Being involved with the 2030 Community Engagement Board, representatives from SDYC have also helped explore climate change denial and how to help people feel more empowered rather than paralysed. We look forward to continuing our work during the year ahead.'

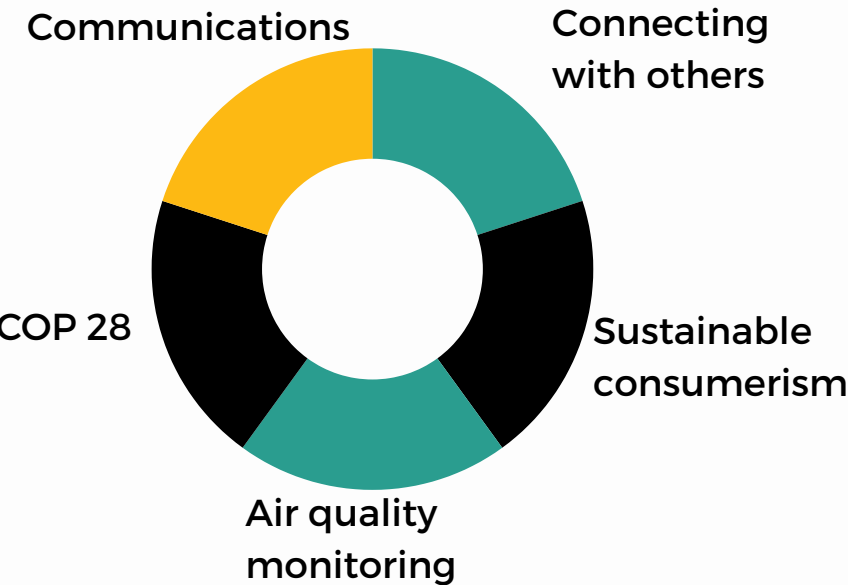
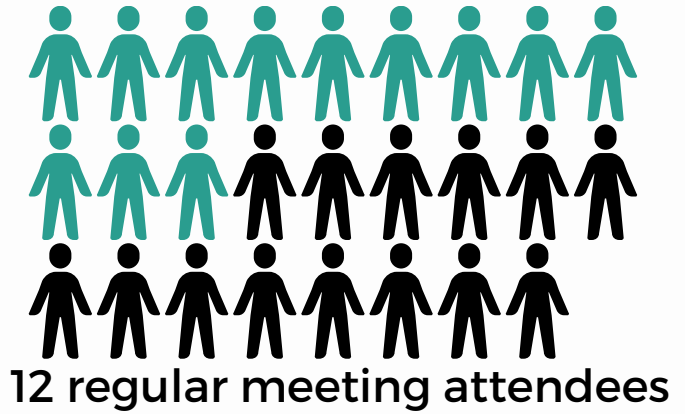
Cate James-Hodges – SDYC Leader

Megan Land – SDYC Principal Member for Environment

2030 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BOARD

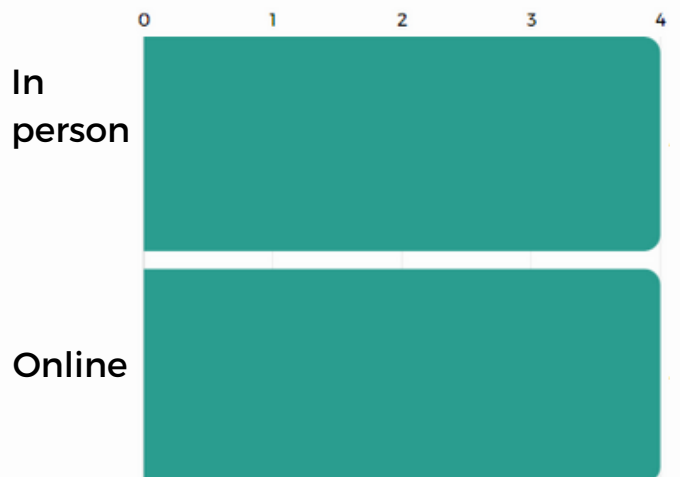
The 2030 Community Engagement Board (2030CEB) has completed its second year of facilitation with Ann Finlayson from Sustainability and Environmental Education (SEEd) with the aim to generate ownership of community based climate action. 2030CEB has grown in strength with expert input from others around e.g. air quality and communications. There is a committed, cohesive group of approximately 12 volunteer changemakers who connect with a range of networks in the district. We're in a great place to progress into year 3 (mentioned in the forward look!).

26
Official members



5
Topics deep-dived

8
Facilitated meetings



FORWARD LOOK

EXEMPLAR

We want our own efforts to reflect continual improvement, and so will be assessing of all aspects and impacts across the council that do, or could have, an impact on the environment. From this we will develop and implement vital management systems to ensure we are doing our best at all times, and can monitor our progress.

ENABLER

As our membership with the countywide forum Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG) enters its third year, we are making greater resource commitments so that our impact as a council, alongside other members, can be even bigger. As theme lead for retrofit, we will be doing all in our power to enable homeowners to reduce their footprint and increase the efficiency of their homes.

ENCOURAGER

Stroud District Council will encourage the strengthening of networks in support of positive climate and sustainability actions through e.g. further Farmer Cluster support groups, SDYC events, continued financial support to Transition Stroud projects and costs and by 2030CEB members mentoring established community groups through climate action projects. These actions will have more representation in SDC's communications.



**STROUD
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**