

These notes are an overview of some of the projects and initiatives in each district around the priority themes of the [Kent Environment Strategy](#). Although not a comprehensive reflection of all activity in the area, the note aims to provide an overall picture of the priorities and pressures for delivery of the strategy as well as current and future project development. For background information please also see [Climate Change: A Guide for Kent's Decision Makers](#).

## Living within Our Environmental Limits

### Energy Efficiency and Housing in Tunbridge Wells

Homes in Tunbridge Wells: 44,000

Tenure: 79% owner occupied, 7% private rented, 14% social rented.

Whilst the percentage of homes in Tunbridge Wells with adequate loft and cavity wall insulation is above the Kent average, Tunbridge Wells has a very high percentage of solid wall properties which are much harder to treat due to the increased cost and invasiveness of the work required. In total there are believed to be around 11,000 solid wall properties, as well as 22,500 homes with significantly inadequate loft insulation and 14,000 homes with empty cavities. There are also 9,000 flats and 3,000 privately rented homes that are traditionally more difficult to make energy efficient.



Fully insulating all the homes in Tunbridge Wells could cost in the region of £68m-£159m, but could save residents approximately £7.7m per year on their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by 31,000t per year.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is marketing a free insulation offer in partnership with Climate Energy. Home visits within the target areas of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst have included energy and water saving advice.

The Green Deal launches nationally from October 2012 and the government hopes it will enable many households and businesses to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. In addition, the new energy company obligation (ECO) will focus on those householders who cannot achieve significant energy savings without an additional or different measure of support.

**The Kent and Medway Green Deal Partnership** has been formed to communicate the Green Deal and ECO to residents, to support SMEs to take advantage of any new business opportunities arising from the Green Deal and to build the evidence base across Kent. This will enable a successful partnership with a Green Deal provider that draws in as much ECO for Kent as possible.

## Schools Activity

**Eco-Schools** is an international award programme that helps schools to embed environmental principles and save money on utility bills. Schools work towards gaining one of three internationally recognised awards – Bronze, Silver and the Green Flag award, which symbolises excellence in the field of environmental activity.

Achievement is through following a simple seven-step process incorporating a variety of environmental themes, ranging from litter and waste to healthy living and biodiversity.

In Tunbridge Wells seven schools have received bronze awards, 16 silver and eight have obtained the highest Green Flag award. A further school has achieved Green Flag Ambassador status. Four other schools are registered in the borough with seven unregistered.

Three schools, Claremont Primary, Mascalls and The Skinners' School, have installed solar PV panels. The Skinners School has also upgraded draught- proofing and Mascalls has further installed a wind turbine, new LED lighting and heating controls, as well as pipework insulation. Oakley School also has new lighting controls.

For further information on projects in your area please visit

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/environment\\_and\\_climate\\_change/environment\\_policy\\_and\\_targets/renewable\\_energy\\_projects.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/environment_and_climate_change/environment_policy_and_targets/renewable_energy_projects.aspx).



## Local Government Estate Activity

In the second year of its carbon management plan, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council achieved a 4.5% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. Among the projects completed were pipe work insulation within the boiler room at the civic site and three leisure centres and a multi-storey car park lighting upgrade. Carbon savings have also been found in the council's fleet, with a 6% reduction in fuel use for street cleansing operations. Work is ongoing to deliver the target of a 25% reduction in carbon emissions over five years and £250,000 has now been allocated for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in capital programme.

A lighting upgrade and lighting controls have also been installed at The Swattenden Centre, Cranbrook by KCC.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's parks team has developed an action plan for improving the sustainable management of parks, grounds and open spaces. The plans include implementing new practices for the management and composting of green waste and water conservation measures. Opportunities for collecting and storing water for use during the dry summer months are being explored. In conjunction with the annual Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom campaign, a number of water conservation measures have been used, including drought tolerant planting, mulching borders and the use of hanging baskets with water reservoirs.

# Meeting the Climate Change Challenge

## Supporting Businesses

Kent County Council's South East Business Carbon Hub provides a comprehensive range of free environmental services for businesses. There are currently over 950 businesses registered on the Hub, twenty four of which are based in Tunbridge Wells. The team has been supporting businesses in measuring their carbon footprints, implementing environmental management systems, providing sustainable transport advice, eco-driving lessons and running frequent workshops and online webinars.

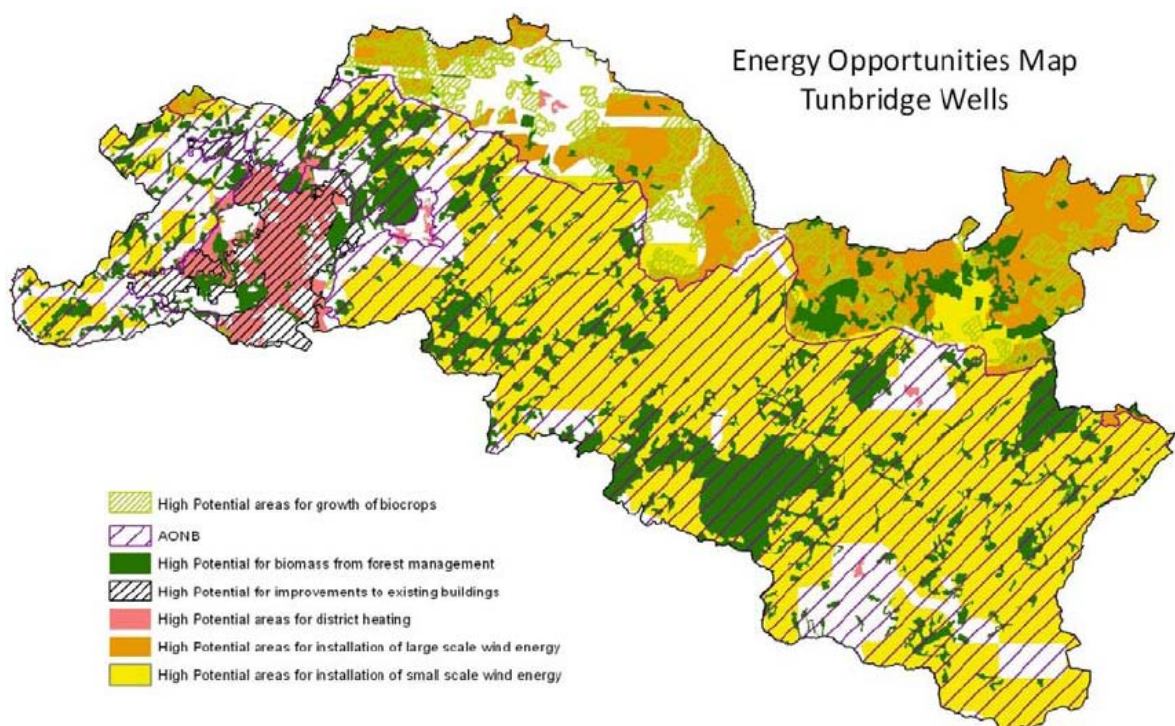
At the beginning of 2011 the Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) scheme was launched. STEM is a free step-by-step approach for businesses seeking to put into practice a robust system to reduce their environmental impacts and receive certification. So far, over 360 businesses have achieved the first level of STEM.

The South East Business Carbon Hub and STEM are part funded by the South East ERDF Competitiveness Programme 2007-13 and Kent County Council.

## Renewable Energy Opportunities

Consultants AECOM were commissioned by the County Council to undertake a renewable energy resource and opportunities study for Kent. This study builds on work done at a regional level and seeks to test and confirm the availability of renewable resources in the county. It further considers the likelihood of these resources being developed, the role of different partners in their delivery and the wider benefits which can accrue from their deployment. The study is accompanied by a proposed action plan which can assist the development of a low carbon and renewable energy strategy for Kent. This will be further developed over the coming months.

The map below shows energy opportunities for Tunbridge Wells and can help to identify where there may be potential for the development of renewable energy projects. It is important to note that this is purely based on the potential resource identified by AECOM and does not in any way reflect the council's position on the deployment of technologies.



## Travel and Transport

There are a wide range of initiatives currently underway in the borough, funded through a variety of schemes.

### Local Sustainable Transport Fund

Kent has secured £2.3 million over four years from 2011/12 to fund projects that cut carbon emissions from transport and create economic growth.

Tunbridge Wells will benefit directly from:

- £40K of funding to Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust for improved cycle storage at Tunbridge Wells Hospital.
- Station Travel Plan initiatives.
- Ongoing development of Smartcard ticketing technology.

### Schools engagement

- Support for a range of walk to school initiatives including Walking Buses, Walk on Wednesday (WoW) and Active Bug.
- Roll out of Kent Rider and National Standard Cycle training with grant funding from Department for Transport.
- Support for school travel plans.
- Targeted road safety and sustainability awareness packages e.g. Small Steps and Zig Zag parking.

### Workplace engagement

- Development of New Ways 2 Work, a collaborative partnership with Kent Business, to support work place travel plans and sustainable travel choices.
- A Smarter Choices road show was held in the town centre in June as part of the Partnership.
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's own staff travel plan and car share scheme were launched in April 2012.

### A26

In December 2011, an extension to A26 Air Quality Management Area was adopted.

## Monitoring the impacts of severe weather in Kent

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council are partners in the Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System (SWIMS), an innovative online tool developed by Kent partners to measure how we are impacted by, and responding to, severe weather events. It provides a decision-support tool, informing risk management and business continuity as well as long term planning. Further details are available at [www.kent.gov.uk/SWIMS](http://www.kent.gov.uk/SWIMS).

The system is a key activity within the Kent Adaptation Action Plan, developed and adopted across Kent partners. The plan won the Improvement and Efficiency South East award for Progress through Innovation for the Kent Climate Change Network. On-going monitoring of progress across Kent is available on our [web pages](#).



Photograph c/o Duncan Dwinell



# Valuing our Natural Environment

## Understanding the Natural Economy

The Natural Environment White Paper, published by Defra at the end of June 2011, outlines the Government's vision for the natural environment over the next 50 years. Much like Theme 3 of the Kent Environment Strategy, the White Paper recognises that a healthy, properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. One initiative announced by the White Paper was the establishment of Local Nature Partnerships, which represent a more holistic view of the natural environment and recognise the wider social and economic benefits biodiversity brings.

The Kent Biodiversity Partnership has recently secured £27,000 of capacity building funding from Defra to develop a Local Nature Partnership, which will focus on engaging additional partners (for example from the business and health sectors) and establishing a vision and set of targets for the natural environment that also recognise the potential for social and economic benefits.

This partnership will act as a framework for KES theme 3 and the continuation of its aims and objectives past the timeframe of the strategy.

## Countryside Access

### Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Management

The Countryside Access Service (CAS) will continue to manage and maintain the 585km of public rights of way in the Tunbridge Wells borough, responding to the significant correspondence and prioritising according to public need. The popular PRoW network provides access to Kent's iconic countryside, boosting the rural economy through tourism and improving the health of residents.



### Explore Kent

In 2012 Explore Kent will support and promote 400 guided walks/health walks in Tunbridge Wells borough. People can find and book a walk on the [Explore Kent](#) website making it easier for people to get out and walk more.

### Common Land and Village Greens

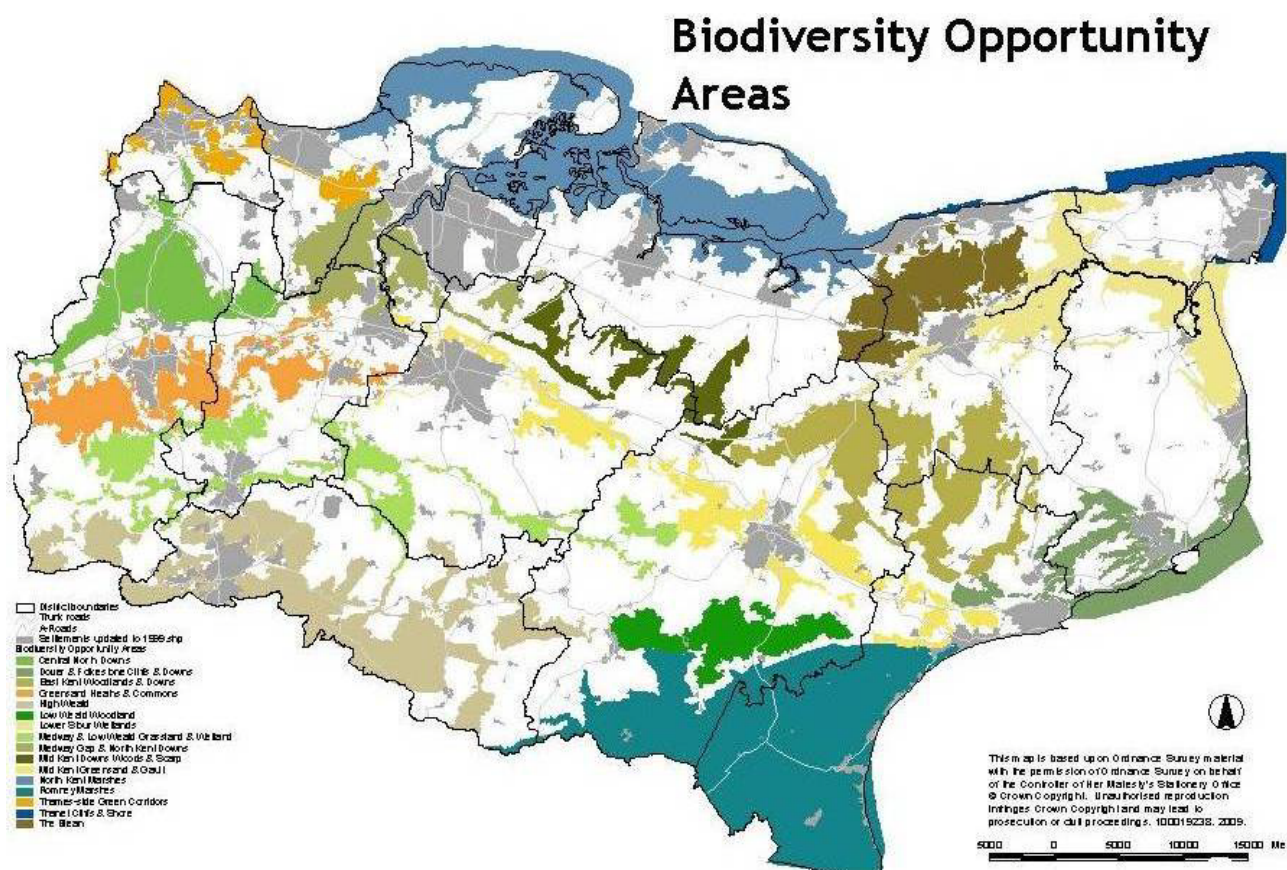
The Countryside Access Service continues to work on the much needed task of updating the Registers of Common Land and Village Greens, as part of the pilot implementation of new provisions contained in the Commons Act 2006. Kent is one of seven pilot areas currently using the new legislation ahead of the proposed national implementation. The Countryside Access Service also continues to deal with a high level of activity in relation to complex and often emotive applications to register land as a new village green.

## BOAs (Biodiversity Opportunity Areas)

BOAs reflect targets in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). They indicate where we want to focus our work to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits offering the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks or wildlife habitats. It is not intended or proposed that nature

conservation becomes the primary land-use within the target areas, so long as the targets and objectives for each area can be met, and development of any kind is not precluded.

Tunbridge Wells borough has two BOAs; High Weald and very small areas of Medway and Low Weald Grassland and Wetland. The map below illustrates the cross-district locations and proximity of BOAs and consequently the need for joint working. For more information please visit <http://www.kentbap.org.uk/kent-boas/>.



Across the two sites we see important features, including:

- Intricate matrix of ancient semi-natural woodland and grassland.
- Patches of heathland and important areas of acid grassland and lowland meadow.
- Furnace/hammer ponds and other acidic water courses which are unique.
- Courses, tributaries and floodplains supporting species rich meadows or floodplain grassland.

Within these sites we find several key species including:

Willow tit, lesser spotted woodpecker, woodlark, breeding and wintering wetland birds and tree sparrow. Bats - particularly woodland species, brown hare, water vole, great crested newt, common toad and medicinal leech. Golden-ringed and brilliant emerald damselflies and greater water parsnip.

To maintain and improve the areas, Tunbridge Wells's current targets include:

- Restore, recreate and enhance woodland through active conservation management.
- Restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland.
- Restoring and recreating heathland, acid grassland, and neutral grassland, and reconnect fragmented woodlands.
- Maintain and restore water courses and maintain, restore and create ponds.

- Pursue opportunities for creation of wider river floodplains with riparian corridors around natural drainage channels.
- Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing lowland meadows.
- Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland.
- Maintain, restore and recreate buffer ponds, particularly to establish networks of sites to support great crested newts.

## Heritage and Protection of Assets at Risk

Funding is being sought to carry out Heritage Crime Risk Assessments in each district which will be incorporated into Strategic Crime Assessments.

Funding is being sought to develop a Heritage Warden programme to help monitor the condition of heritage assets and record damage or loss.

Work is being undertaken in conjunction with Natural England, English Heritage and landowners to increase the number of designated assets in Higher Level Stewardship. The Kent farmsteads survey identifies historic buildings across the county. SHINE funding allows the creation of polygons to identify designated assets and this information will be used by Natural England in their Higher Level Stewardship application assessment, and for identifying potential sites.

## Volunteering

Kent High Weald Partnership, supported by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells in Bloom, has delivered 46 community gardening projects across 11 sites in the town in 2011/12. The projects engage a wide range of partners from local charities, employers and schools, to social housing providers. Through these partnerships over 1000 volunteers have contributed close to 6000 hours of service on environmental projects ranging from hedge laying to habitat creation.

## A Renewed Recycling Campaign

In June, a recycling campaign was launched by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council with a roadshow during Recycle Now Week. Activities will be running throughout the year to provide residents with advice on how to get the most from their recycling service. Already underway are primary school visits, with educational talks on recycling and littering, and a schools competition to design artwork for recycling vehicles. The campaign will progress to look at where activities can be targeted to improve participation at communal recycling facilities.

## Kent Climate Change Network

The Kent Climate Change Network meet quarterly to share best practice and learning, develop initiatives and provide input into county-wide programmes. Successful joint initiatives include collaboration on the Kent Housing Retrofit programme, the Severe Weather Impacts Monitoring System and development of the Kent Environment Strategy. The Network also won an award for *Progress through Innovation* in 2011 from Improvement and Efficiency South East for their work on the Kent Adaptation Action Plan.

The Climate Change Network representatives for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council are Louise Woollen ([Louise.Woollen@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:Louise.Woollen@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)) and Karin Grey ([Karin.Grey@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:Karin.Grey@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)).

## Elected Member Support

All of the projects and activities highlighted in this note require leadership, support and promotion within districts and communities across Kent.

### Influencing and Communicating

Some of the issues raised here, such as the housing stock in Tunbridge Wells borough, energy efficiency and the deployment of renewable energy require our residents to be aware of the projects, grants and initiatives available to them. Although there are wide ranging communications in place, it is the local knowledge, support and influence of Members which can significantly improve uptake.

As highlighted in this note, businesses in Kent are signing up to the South East Business Carbon Hub to reduce their energy bills but only 24 of these are in Tunbridge Wells. Local knowledge and promotion can support uptake for this free resource, benefitting business in the area.

Where there are planning decisions to be made, Member influence is needed to improve resource efficiency, transport networks, the development of BOAs and the deployment of renewable energy as appropriate.

Further information on specific projects can be found in [Climate Change: A Guide for Kent's Decision Makers](#) along with a checklist of key factors to consider in the decision-making process.