

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 Gravesham

Homes in Gravesham: 37,000

Tenure: 69% owner occupied, 6% private rented, 25% social rented.

The percentage of homes in Gravesham with inadequate loft insulation is the highest in the county and the second highest for homes with unfilled cavities. It also has a large number 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 7,000 solid wall properties, as well as 22,000 homes with significantly inadequate loft insulation and 15,000 homes with empty cavities. There are also 5,000 flats and 2,000 privately rented homes that are traditionally more difficult to make energy efficient.



Fully insulating all the homes in Gravesham could cost in the region of £46m-£108m, but could save residents approximately £6m per year on their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by 24,000t per year.

The Gravesham Coldbusters Scheme had been running since 2002 and has installed a great number of heating and insulation measures. The last two years have seen a significant drop in measures being installed due to the withdrawal of Regional Housing Board funding. However Gravesham are looking to work with Green Deal providers to tackle areas of hard to heat/treat homes through remaining CERT funding and Eco pilot schemes. This will predominately look at external wall insulation, but will also look at sustainability measures.

Gravesham is also working with other organisations (Climate Energy and Energy Saving Partnership) to deliver free/low cost insulation in the borough, through remaining CERT funding.

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 Gravesham 11 schools have received bronze awards, six silver and five have obtained the highest Green Flag award. Six other schools are registered in the borough with ten unregistered. Gravesend Grammar School has carried out pipework insulation and Istead Rise Primary School has installed Solarveil solar film.

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.



Local Government Estate Activity

Gravesham Borough Council has undertaken redevelopment of Christianfields as part of their on-going improvement of their housing stock. Kent County Council has undertaken a number of initiatives, for example Northfleet Youth Centre has upgraded its lighting and controls; Shorne Wood Country Park has installed a biomass boiler, solar panels, a wind turbine and rainwater capture system; and Trosley Country Park has built a green roof also with rainwater capture.

Meeting the Climate Change Challenge

Developing Skills For The Future

The CAP'EM (Cycle Assessment Procedure for Eco-Materials) Project is a North-West European programme drawing together the expertise of 11 partner organisations to improve the production, distribution and use of eco-materials. The project has supported Gravesham Skills Centre to integrate sustainable construction skills into standard learning and provided the opportunity to test new materials. For more information on the project please visit www.capem.eu.



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, approximately ten of which are based in Gravesham. 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.

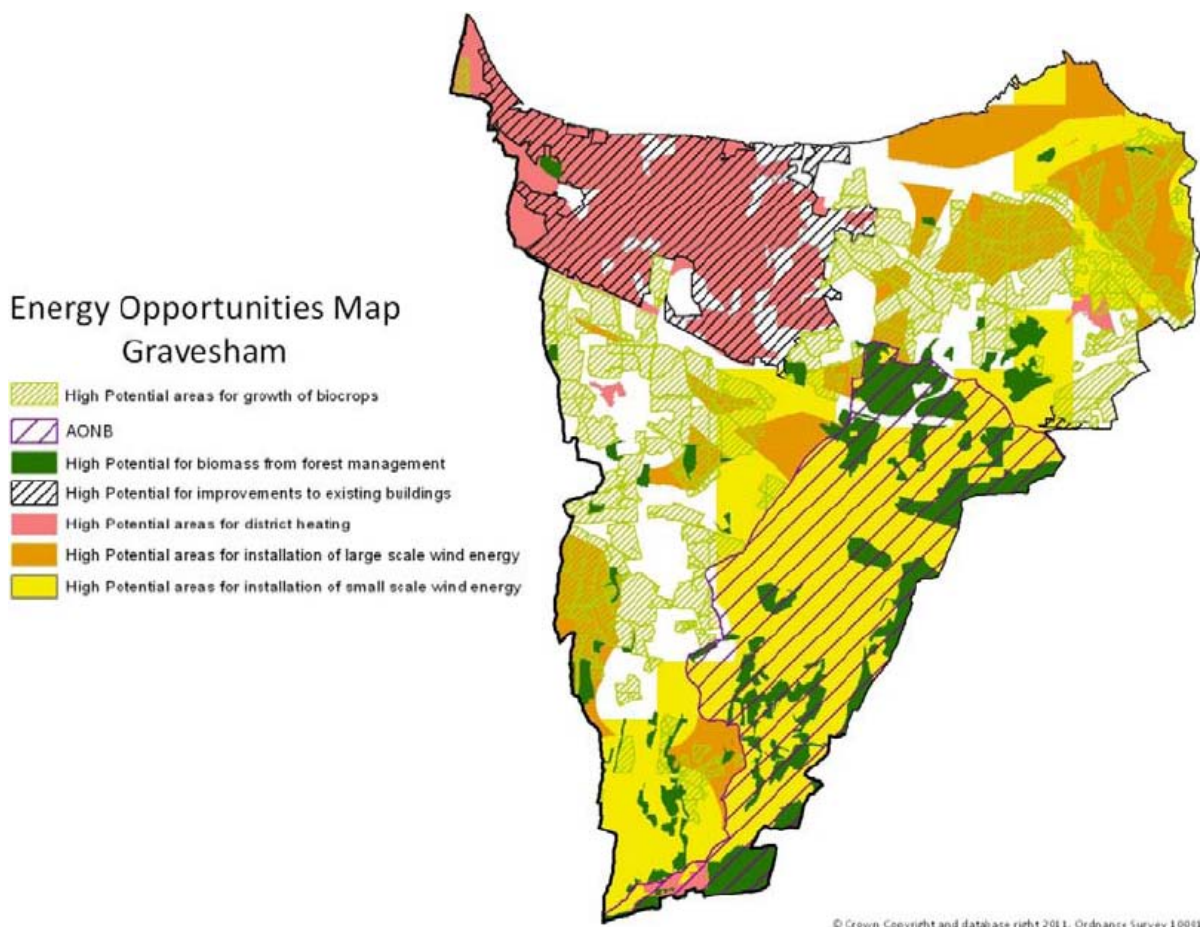
At the beginning of 2011 the Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) scheme was launched. STEM is a free step-by-step approach for businesses seeking to put into practice a robust system to reduce their environmental impacts and receive certification. So far, over 360 businesses have achieved the first 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 on page 3 shows energy opportunities for Gravesham 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 including:

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.

Gravesham will benefit indirectly from:

- Station Travel Plan initiatives.
- Ongoing development of Smartcard ticketing technology.

Public transport investment

Fastrack and other public transport requirements are to be reviewed through the updated Gravesham Borough Council transport strategy.

- Subsidy towards the 474/475 bus services.
- Improvements to bus stops on the A227 between Vigo and Gravesend.
- Network Rail has undertaken improvements to Gravesend station.

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.

Monitoring the impacts of severe weather in Kent

Gravesham 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



Photograph c/o Duncan Dwinell

details are available at 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](#).

Planning for Change in Gravesham

In Gravesham the UK Climate Projections 2009 (UKCP09) have been used as part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. Previous iterations used to inform flood tide levels for the Kent Thameside Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. In addition the plan will require sustainable drainage as a default position and encourage the use of green roofs in appropriate locations to reduce surface water run-off and improve biodiversity.

Gravesham Borough Council also provides cool community centres as refuge for vulnerable tenants during severe heat through using air to air heat pumps.

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.

There is also a Local Nature Partnership for Thames Gateway and further information can be found on the Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway [website](#).

Countryside Access

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Management

The Countryside Access Service (CAS) will continue to manage and maintain the 193km of public rights of way in Gravesham, 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 Gravesham. People can find and book a walk on the Explore Kent website making it easier for people to get out and walk more. Explore Kent also helped mark and celebrate the Queen's Jubilee in Gravesham by promoting a weekend of walks during the planned Diamond Jubilee Walking Festival.

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.

Gravesham borough has three BOAs; the North Kent Marshes, Thames-side Green Corridors and Medway Gap & North Kent Downs. The map on the next page 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 features of national and international importance, including:

- Substantial blocks of nationally and internationally important woodland.
- Important areas of heathland, acid grassland and bog.
- Small areas of neutral grassland.
- Coastal habitats, freshwater wetlands and flower-rich grassland.
- Internationally important grazing marsh, saltmarsh and mudflats.



Within these sites we find several key species including:

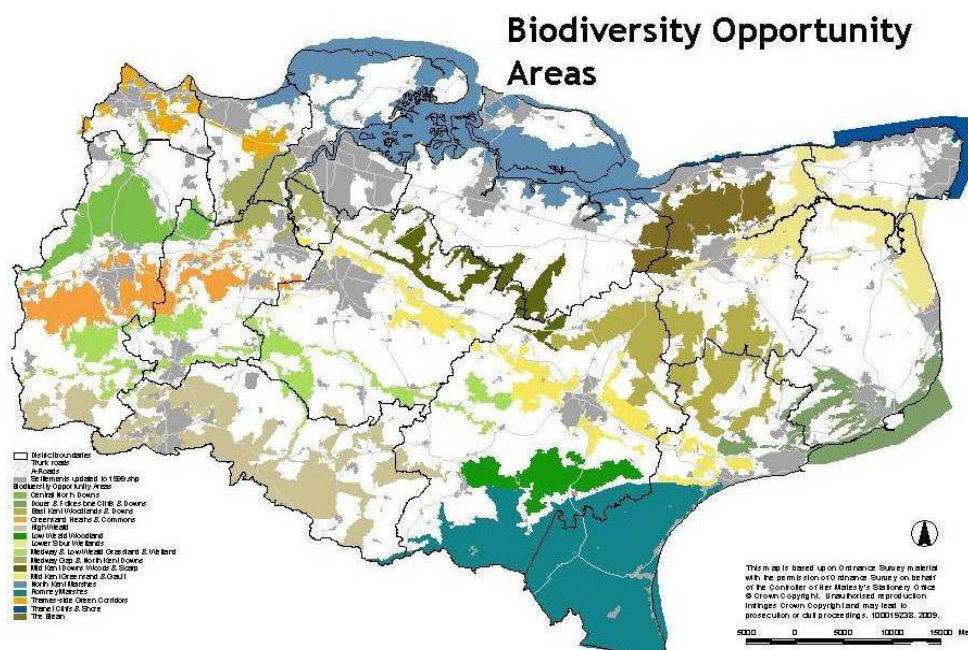
Marsh harrier, redshank, reed bunting, grey plover, dunlin, avocet and brent goose. Least lettuce, heath fritillary butterfly, brown hare, water vole, great crested newt, shrill carder bumblebee, rare invertebrates and woodland bird and bat populations.

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

- Protect and enhance existing habitats.
- Recreate grazing marsh on arable land and improved grassland in order to extend and connect existing habitats.
- Create new intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh to help offset historical losses across the UK.
- Enhance and reconnect woodland to create a very extensive block of habitat, particularly through the maintenance and restoration of coppice management.
- Restore conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites to suitable, wooded habitat.
- Create acid grassland, heathland and species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 250ha of new lowland meadow.

There is also a Greater Thames Marshes Nature Improvement Area, further details of which are

available on the Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway [website](#).



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.

Our heritage is a valuable but fragile asset, so easily destroyed but so important in how we define or make sense of the world within which we live. Also, because our heritage is comprised of remnants of the past, such assets that have been passed down to us must be treated as a non-renewable resource. Our heritage as an historic riverside town, surrounded by a hinterland of distinct village settlements set within a highly valued countryside, provides an anchor with the past, and a firm basis upon which to found our vision for the future of Gravesham.

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 representative for Gravesham Borough Council is **Sarah Kilkie** Sarah.kilkie@gravesham.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 Gravesham, 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 around ten of these are in Gravesham. 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.