

A stylized background featuring a yellow sun with radiating lines in the upper right, a green silhouette of hills or mountains across the middle, and a blue sky with horizontal lines. Below the hills is a brown horizontal band, and the bottom section is a teal area.

Action on Climate Change

Our County • Our Future

East Sussex County Council's Climate Emergency Plan

2023 to 2025

East Sussex
County Council



Why does climate change matter?

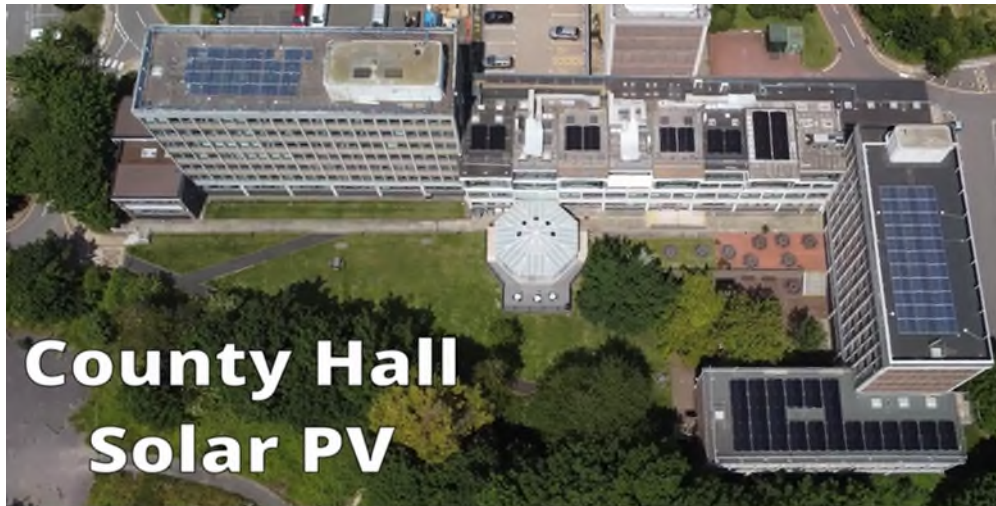
In 2018 the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that “rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” are required to limit the average global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Even half a degree above that will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, mass extinctions of animal species, and extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. In 2022 the IPCC concluded that global greenhouse gas emissions need to stop rising within the next 3 years to keep the average global temperature rise to below 1.5°C.

The predicted impacts of climate change in East Sussex include more frequent and intense flooding, drought and episodes of extreme heat, as well as impacts from the effects of climate change overseas, such as on food supply. This will lead to an increase in heat-related deaths, particularly amongst the vulnerable and elderly, damage to essential infrastructure, increased cost of food and disruption to supply chains and service provision, as well as greater coastal erosion.

The earlier and greater the reduction in carbon emissions the more likely we are to contribute to remaining within the global carbon budget and, conversely, the later and slower the reduction in emissions the more likely we are to contribute to exceeding the global carbon budget.

This Climate Emergency Action Plan covers the council's own activities. A more detailed report can be found here:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/priorities/what-we-are-doing



Between 2009-10 and 2021-22 the council cut the emissions within its direct control by over 66%. It invested in over 300 energy efficiency and renewable energy projects worth about £4m that have generated annual savings of over £850,000.

The council has also worked with partners to produce a separate Climate Emergency Plan that covers the whole county, which can be found here:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/priorities/environment-strategy

This provides more background information on climate change including the estimated costs, benefits and key challenges of getting to net zero in the UK.



The Benefits of Tackling Climate Change

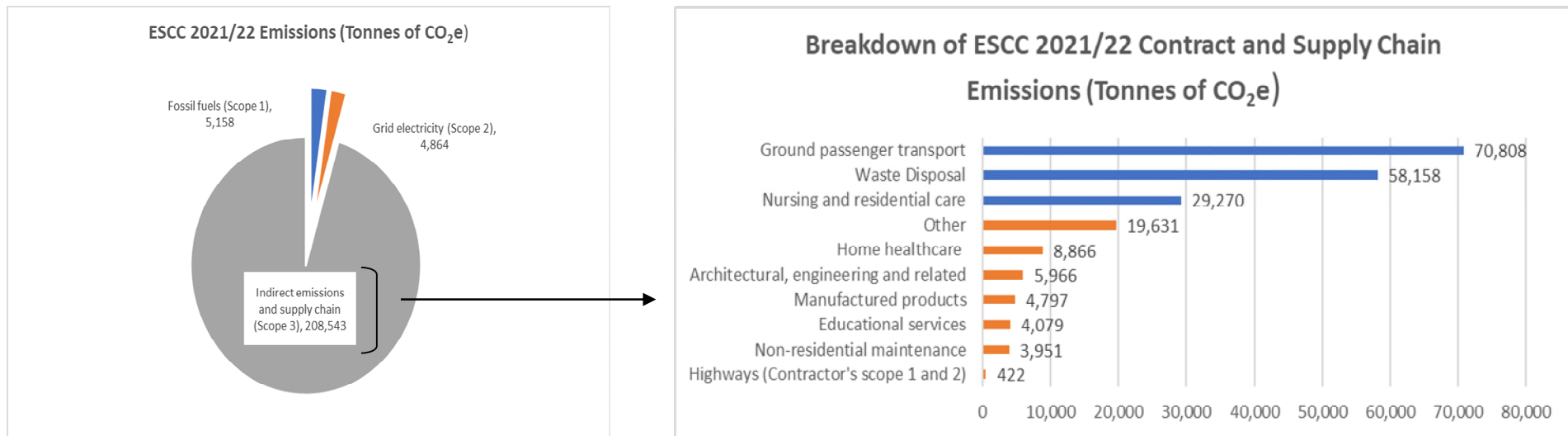
Investing in measures that cut carbon emissions will bring a number of benefits, including:

- **Greater prosperity:** as it will drive growth in those local businesses that provide environmental goods and services, such as insulation and solar PV.
 - **Lower costs:** the government estimates that getting to net zero will cost less than 1% of GDP, but failing to stop run-away climate change will cost about 5% of GDP from having to invest in measures to adapt to the effects of climate change, such as more flood defences.
 - **Better health:** there will be fewer excess winter deaths as a result of living in more energy efficient and warmer homes, whilst more exercise as a result of walking and cycling rather than driving, and replacing diesel and petrol vehicles with electric vehicles, will reduce the 40,000 premature deaths caused by poor air quality and reduce the cost burden on the NHS caused by ill-health.
 - **Greater energy security and lower energy bills:** becoming more energy efficient and generating more power locally will reduce our reliance on imported oil and gas from other countries, many of which are in politically volatile regions.
 - **An improved natural environment:** making changes to how land is managed and used can reduce carbon emissions from agriculture and offset carbon emissions.
 - **Reducing the risks of conflict and need for migration:** the UN predicts that climate change will increase conflicts over resources and make a number of areas uninhabitable, which will force some populations to migrate.
 - **Helping to address the parallel ecological emergency:** many measures that reduce carbon emissions also bring ecological benefits, such as tree planting.
- We also need to continue to invest in measures to adapt to the effects of climate change that are now unavoidable.

The County Council's Carbon Footprint

The council provides services used by all residents in East Sussex, including providing care and support to children, families and the elderly; maintaining the roads and providing library services; and working to boost the local economy. To deliver these services the council owns a wide range of assets including schools, offices, day centres, care facilities and depots.

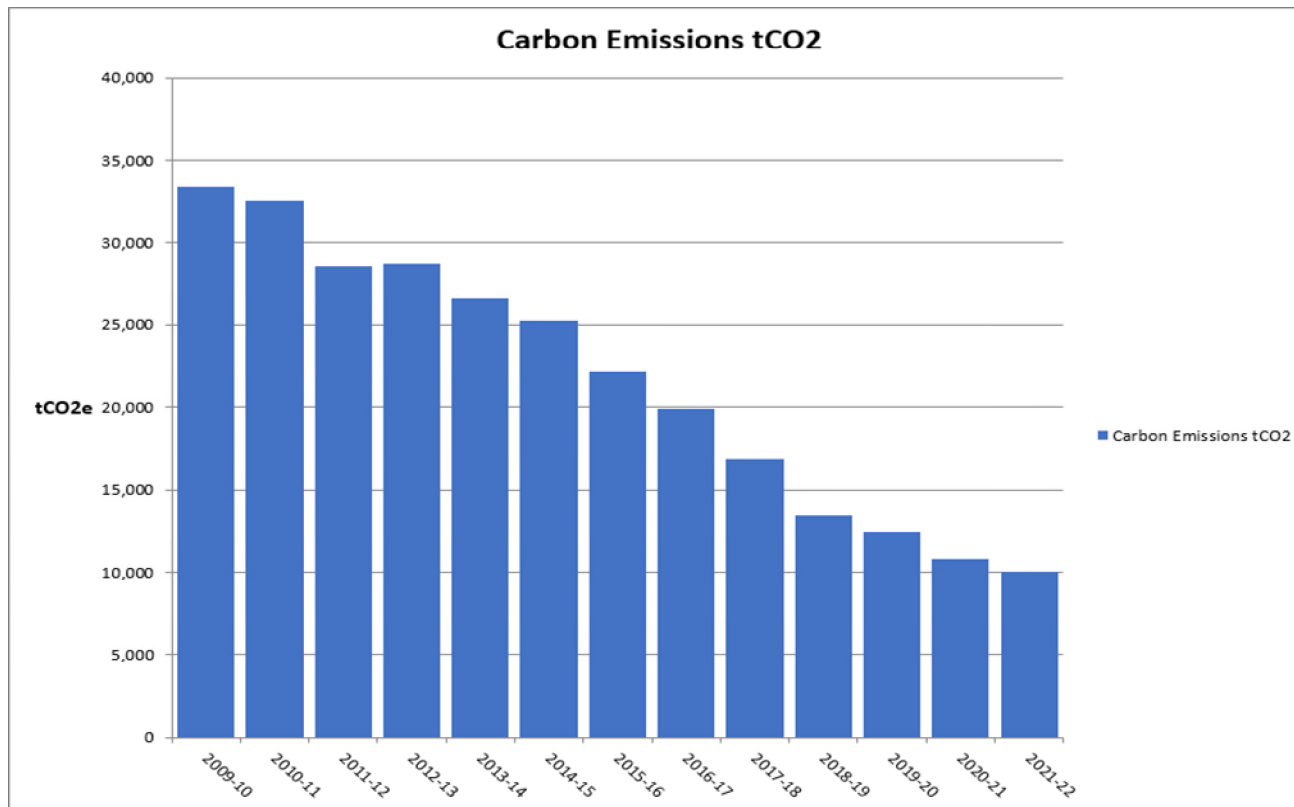
The figures below show the estimated carbon emissions from delivering these services and managing these assets. The council's emissions are about 12% of total emissions from East Sussex.



Most of the emissions within our control are from heating our buildings and most of this is from schools. Emissions that we can influence but don't control directly are from our suppliers, with the four main areas being contracts covering transport, waste, care services and property.

The Past

The council has had a carbon reduction programme in place since 2008. The graph below illustrates that between 2009-10 and 2021-22 the council cut the emissions within its direct control by over 66%. Steps taken by the council include investing in over 300 projects worth about £4m that have generated annual savings of over £850,000. Examples of projects include installing energy efficient street lighting and deploying about 1.5MW of renewable energy generation on buildings.



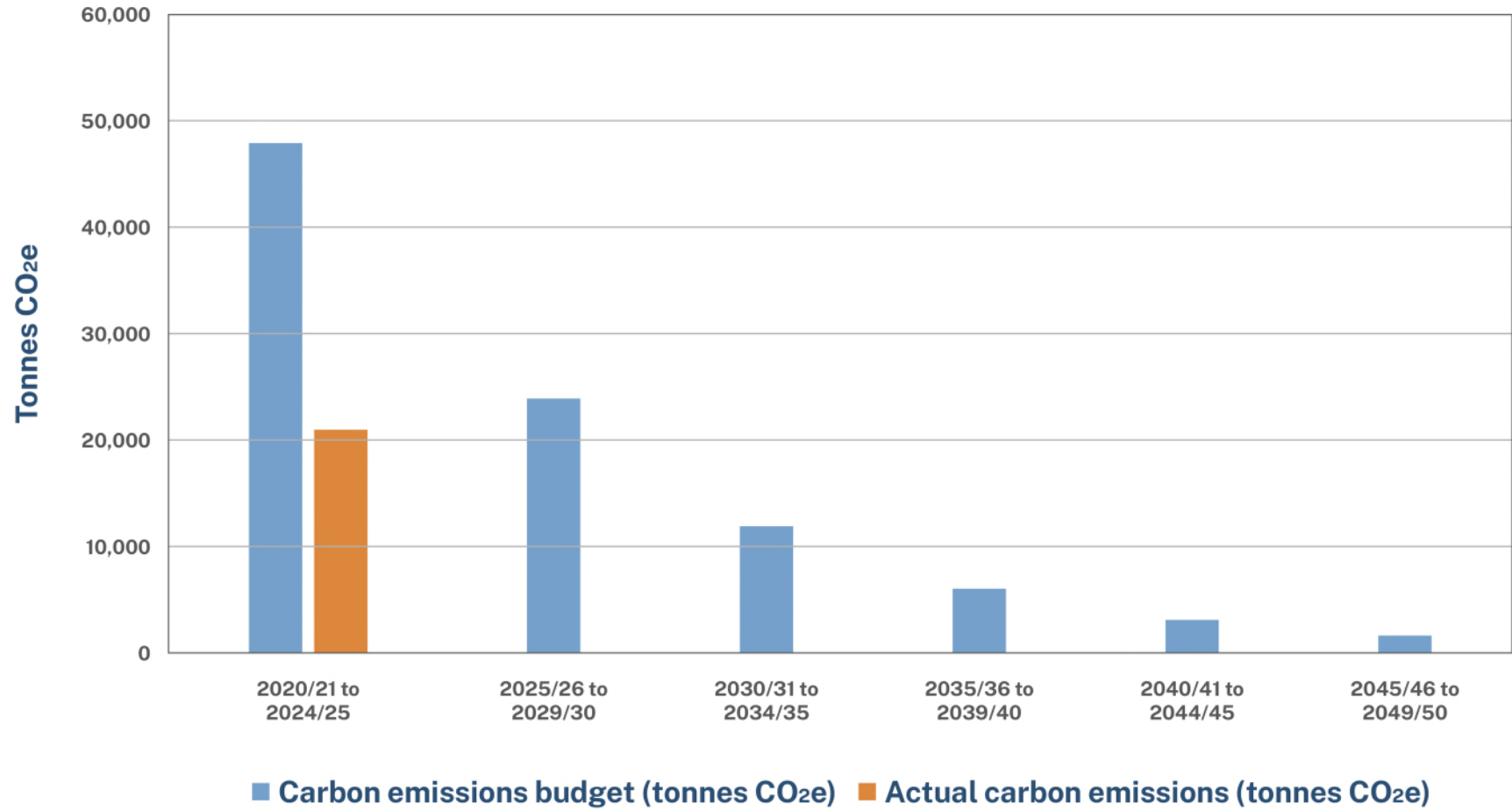
The Present

The council recognizes the important local leadership role that it has in contributing to net zero. In 2019 the council declared a climate emergency, developed a climate emergency plan for 2020-22 and committed a further £9.9m up to March 2025 to cut council carbon emissions further and faster.

To play its part in keeping the average global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels the council has committed to cutting its own emissions in half every 5 years. The graph on page 8 shows the rate of carbon reduction required for the emissions over which the Council has direct control up to 2050 (in blue) and progress over the last 2 years against the 5-year carbon budget for 2020/21 to 2024/25 (in orange).

Modelling commissioned by the council in 2022 highlighted that the most cost-effective measures to cut carbon are to improve energy efficient lighting, install solar PV, replace oil and gas boilers with heat pumps and replace petrol and diesel vehicles with electric vehicles. The modelling also concluded that it would cost the council about £200m up to 2050 to get to net zero for those emissions within its direct control.

East Sussex County Council's Climate Emergency Plan 2023 to 2025



Emissions We Can Influence

The council's total carbon emissions in 2021-22 were estimated to be 240,650 tonnes. This is equivalent to the average annual emissions of about 34,380 people in the UK and represents roughly 12% of the total carbon emissions from East Sussex. The vast majority of these emissions are from areas that the council can influence but does not have direct control over.

This is mostly from the goods, works and services that the council pays for to help deliver its functions, including major services such as highways maintenance, waste disposal, education and social care provision (the 'procurement' box below). This is typical for most local authorities.

The Council's Carbon Emissions		
Emissions controlled by the council		Emissions influenced by the council
Scope 1	Scope 2	Scope 3
Natural Gas Fleet	Electricity	Procurement Business Travel Commuting Corporate Waste Water Usage

The council has developed an Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy with its partners at Surrey County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council. We are focusing on those contracts which generate the most carbon first, including transport,

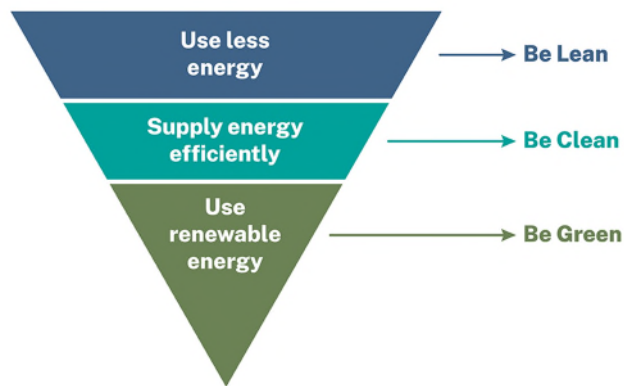
waste, care services and property. We are asking key suppliers to provide data on their carbon emissions and beginning to work with them to understand what they can do cut emissions.

For smaller, local suppliers we are offering them support to cut their carbon emissions and energy bills with grants of up to £10,000.

Guiding Principles

The council has set out the following principles to guide the development and delivery of its corporate carbon reduction programme:

1. **Organisational change:** the council will seek to embed climate change throughout the organisation.
2. **Carbon budget:** the council recognises the importance of early action and will aim to cut carbon emissions as quickly as possible, within the constraints of existing resources.
3. **Carbon hierarchy:** the council will follow the carbon hierarchy (see the figure) in a pragmatic way, seeking to cut emissions as quickly as possible and at least cost.
4. **Prioritisation:** the council will invest in decarbonising buildings that are expected to be retained in the long term and will only invest in assets, such as new boilers, where existing assets are due for replacement and/or are particularly energy inefficient.
5. **Making best use of resources:** the council will prioritise investing in carbon reduction measures in buildings where this will reduce energy bills.
6. **Mobility:** the council will support transport options for staff and Members that reduce carbon, support equality and do not adversely impact on service delivery.
7. **Off-setting:** the council will invest in high quality and verifiable offsets.
8. **New build:** the council will look to ensure that major construction works are net zero, where practicable, to minimise the risk of increasing the council's carbon footprint.



The Action Plan up to March 2025

The main actions that the council will implement over the next couple of years on its journey to net zero are set out below:

Area	Description	Carbon reduction
Corporate decisions	Develop and deliver a system to align council decisions with net zero objectives.	N/a
Buildings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Replace oil and gas boilers with heat pumps in 9 buildings (out of 259 buildings). 2. Install low energy lighting in 30 buildings. 3. Install solar PV on 30 buildings (taking the total to 34% of all buildings). 4. Update the Sustainable Buildings Policy. 	190 tonnes of CO2e 100 tonnes of CO2e 17 tonnes of CO2e Medium
Travel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement an updated staff travel plan. 2. Install electric vehicle charge points at key sites & replace smaller fleet vehicles with EVs. 	Medium Low
Procurement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather more carbon data from suppliers to help set targets 2. Require carbon reduction and reporting from new contracts with high carbon emissions. 3. Support small local suppliers to cut carbon. 	N/a High Medium
Offsetting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and implement a carbon offset policy and plan. 2. Explore a power purchasing agreement. 	High High
Adaptation	Develop and implement an adaptation plan.	N/a
Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer carbon literacy training to all staff, Members and schools. 2. Hold staff engagement sessions, co-develop communications for schools with Youth Cabinet. 	Low Medium

For a list of all the actions please see:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/priorities/what-we-are-doing

Key Challenges

Despite the significant investment being made by the council to address climate change it is clear from the modelling work that the scale of funding to get to net zero is significantly greater than the council can afford, given other financial uncertainties and pressures. This is the same for most councils. Some investments, such as in low energy lighting and solar PV, deliver an acceptable return on investment. Other measures, such as replacing oil and gas boilers with heat pumps, provide a

payback over a very long period, whilst interventions such as buying off-sets increase costs and deliver no financial savings.

The council has a good track record of bidding for external funds to help pay for carbon reduction. It will continue to do so, as well as explore other sources of funding and finance, such as the Public Works Loan Board. However, today it is unclear where all the money will come from to get to net zero.

The Future

The reason why the plan does not go beyond 2025 is because this is as far into the future as the council can reliably predict its finances. For funding beyond 2024-25 the council has a well-established annual process (called 'reconciling policy, performance and resources') through which budget allocation is made for core needs, including for climate change.

We are also in the early stages of having a comprehensive approach to some areas, for example carbon offsetting. The pipeline of activities is continually being developed and so the Action Plan will be reviewed each year. A new climate emergency plan will be developed in 2024 to carry on from where this plan ends in March 2025. The new plan will take into account changes in legislation, resources and technology.

We will continue to report on our progress every year.

The Bigger Picture

This Climate Emergency Action Plan covers the council's own activities. The council also delivers a number of programmes and projects that have reduced carbon emissions across the county, often in partnership with others. These include:

- **The fuel poverty programme**, overseen by the East Sussex Energy Partnership, which has coordinated a programme worth over £10m since 2016 to provide energy advice and improvements to insulation and heating for thousands of fuel poor residents.
- **Investing over £20m since 2014** to deliver improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure.
- **Securing over £40m** to improve bus services in the county.
- **Delivering approximately £500,000 of grants** to local businesses since 2018 to implement energy efficiency measures, which cut their energy costs and carbon emissions.
- **Working with public sector partners** to develop a co-ordinated plan for the roll-out of electric vehicle infrastructure in the county.
- **Supported over 250 households** to install solar PV panels on their properties through the Sussex Solar Together programme.

The County Council recognises that no single organisation, acting alone, has the powers or resources to secure the scale of change we need at a local level. It requires shared responsibility for making change and collective effort across the county from all of us. About 2/5^{ths} of the change required to get to net zero in the UK requires individuals and organisations to make changes to what we buy and about 1/5th needs to come directly from behavioural change, such as changes to how we travel and what we choose to eat.

We are all part of the solution to climate change.