

# Draft Climate and Nature Strategy July 2025

## Summary

Gases like carbon dioxide and methane, released by human activities, are increasing in our atmosphere and causing rapid warming of our planet leading to big changes to our climate, weather, and nature. Our climate and nature strategy will help us reduce the carbon pollution created by Stroud District Council, and all those who live and work in Stroud District, to as close to zero as possible. We also want to make sure that we reduce the impact of our activities on plants and animals and the places they live.

Many of the actions we need to put in place to slow down warming and reduce our impact on nature will also improve our standard of living and make our society fairer. Implementing our strategy to tackle the nature and climate emergencies will help us to create a better quality of life for everyone and a district where:

1. Our homes, workplaces and schools are comfortable, healthy and efficient.
2. We can afford the energy needed to live well and our energy system is fairer, resilient to shocks and not dependent on fossil fuels.
3. We can easily walk, cycle or use public transport if we choose to and goods are safely transported through our communities without polluting our streets.
4. Our businesses are thriving in a circular economy.
5. We produce less waste through sharing and repairing.
6. We can afford to eat well and sustainably, and our farmers have the capacity and resources to grow and produce sustainable food that helps restore nature.
7. Our towns and villages are protected from flooding, drought, heat and storms and feel resilient and connected to each other.
8. We can build new houses and create new communities that help nature without creating more pollution.
9. We can see and hear that nature is recovering and healthy in the places we live and visit.

Changing our energy systems and making sure our houses are well insulated and using renewable electricity will create jobs, increase skills, improve the comfort of our homes and make them cheaper to live in. Cleaner air and water will improve our physical health and being able to walk in areas rich in nature will improve our mental health. We will be better prepared to prevent and respond to some of the impacts from a warming climate such as storms and heatwaves.

This matters, because our existing houses, roads, bridges and factories are not designed or built to withstand the increased temperatures, rains, floods, droughts and storms that a warming climate will bring. The way we grow and produce our food is not compatible with long periods of much hotter and wetter or dryer weather. We have built towns and villages in places that will be flooded because sea levels are getting higher and it's raining harder.

Since our buildings, roads, and ways of growing food are not designed for the significant changes to our weather being caused by our pollution, we need to very quickly adapt or change them to cope with more heat, more rain, longer droughts and stronger storms. If we fail to reduce the levels of carbon pollution or protect our

buildings and food systems, the intensifying storms, fires, floods, heats, droughts and sea-level rise will get worse and then the physical and economic destruction and number of deaths caused by them will increase. If we don't stop destroying or polluting natural habitats, then the ability of our planet to produce our air, clean water and food will reduce and life will become much harder and much more uncomfortable for everyone. This is especially true for those who are already disadvantaged economically or physically, including the elderly and children.

If we would like to slow down the rapidly changing physical climate around us, we must reduce the amount of carbon pollution caused by our everyday activities that are powered by fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal. If we delay in doing this, then the new and significantly different weather from the additional carbon pollution will cause much more damage to our society, and that damage will continue to increase and cause more disruption and cost us more than the price of preventing climate change in the first place.

## Why our Strategy needs to be updated

Stroud District Council was one of the first local authorities to declare both a climate and ecological emergency. The original [2030 Strategy](#) was our response to the declaration of those emergencies and was written to create a 10-year programme of work to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Since 2020, the council has made good progress in reducing the emissions from our main buildings, retrofitting renewable energy installations and improving the energy efficiency of both our properties and to the council housing stock owned by the council. We have made significant reductions to our own scope 1 and 2 emissions (emissions we have direct control over), but we now know that most emissions produced by the council sit within scope 3 (indirect emissions associated with goods or services we purchase, capital works and pensions). We know that building new homes and infrastructure creates significant levels of carbon pollution. We want to ensure that our large capital projects reduce their carbon both during construction and whilst operational.

Our weather is changing significantly. Globally 2023 was the warmest year in a series stretching back to 1850, according to the Met Office and the University of East Anglia. 2023 was also the tenth year in succession that has equalled or exceeded 1.0 °C above the pre-industrial period (1850-1900). The [Met Office State of UK Climate Report 2024](#) confirms that October 2023 to March 2024 was the wettest winter half-year on record in the UK. Across the globe, we are seeing intense heatwaves and extreme flood events. Extreme flooding in [Valencia in Spain](#) killed over 200 people in November 2024 and flash flooding in Texas in July 2025 killed over 130 people.

The impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, increased storm intensity and rainfall and increased heat, are already impacting our communities in Stroud district. The original 2030 Strategy did not have a specific focus on the need for adaptation. Part of our update is to rectify this omission with new emphasis on adaptation.

[The State of Nature report 2023](#) confirms that nature is still seriously declining across England and other parts of the UK, a country that is already one of the most nature-depleted in the world. The data show that since 1970 UK species have declined by about 19% on average, and nearly 1 in 6 species (16.1%) are now threatened with extinction. Whilst the 2030 strategy had a section on nature it did not include a specific target for nature recovery or link nature recovery with key sectors. [The State of Natural Capital England report 2024](#) shows that the functioning of nature or how it provides our clean water, clean air and food, is also declining, meaning ecosystems are not working as well as they should be.

Our new [Council Plan](#), agreed in February 2025, describes the priorities for the Council, including a review and update for the 2030 Strategy. The Council Plan sets the framework for our continuing work on climate and nature and this review allows us to describe in more detail what we want to achieve for some of the objectives contained in the Council plan. In some cases, we have reiterated those objectives and in others we have proposed going further.

We are also updating our strategy to take account of new policy, legislation and funding on climate and nature issues, to take account of new understanding and methodologies for carbon accounting, to consider learning from what has and hasn't worked in our original 2030 strategy and finally, to increase our emphasis on reducing scope 3 emissions, adapting to climate impacts and nature's recovery.

## Key Changes to the Strategy

### Name of the Strategy

One of the most fundamental changes we have made is to the name of the strategy, in recognition of the fact that we need to respond to both the climate and nature crises. Many of the interventions needed to allow us to adapt to climate impacts include nature-based approaches and solutions. To reflect this, and the inclusion of a new ambition for nature recovery, we are changing the name of the strategy from the 2030 Strategy to the Climate and Nature Strategy.

### Carbon Neutrality vs Net Zero

Another key change is that the Council changes its ambition from achieving "Carbon Neutrality" to "Net Zero". Net zero is a more ambitious standard with higher levels of transparency and accountability, whereas carbon neutrality would allow us to simply pay to offset our emissions without any attempt to reduce them; this is not enough, and offsetting effectively is difficult to achieve. Stroud District Council's view is that we now need to focus on emissions reductions to dramatically reduce our impact rather than achieving a balance or neutrality.

**The Table below** summarises the key differences between net zero and carbon neutrality.

<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>Net Zero:</b>	<b>Carbon Neutral:</b>
Scope of Emissions	All greenhouse gas emissions	scope 1 & 2 Carbon dioxide.
Absolute emissions reduction	Emissions reduction first	No requirement for emissions reduction
Offset strategy	Offset residual emissions only.	Can offset all emissions if desired
Operational Changes	Significant changes needed	Can be achieved with minor changes.
Alignment with Paris Goals	Fully aligned with 1.5C goal	Partially aligned
Transparency and accountability	High level of transparency and accountability	Lower levels of transparency and accountability.

## **Additional Themes**

The original 2030 Strategy was formed around seven main themes. To that list we have now added four new themes, i. Food and Farming, ii. Governance, Planning and Decision Making, iii. Water, Rivers and Coast and a separate theme on iv. Adaptation. To the theme of Community, we have now added Just Transition.

### **Governance, Planning and Decision making**

All decisions made by the Council on spending and policy have the potential to increase or reduce carbon emissions and impacts to nature. How we make those decisions, and the information used to make them are key areas of Council activity. Alongside this, the local spatial development planning system (the Local Development Plan) is probably the most important way the council can influence emissions and plan future adaptation to climate impacts in the wider district.

### **Water, Rivers and Coast**

The primary way that most of us will experience and feel the impacts of climate change is through changes to water, rivers and the sea. A hotter climate increases the amount of water in the atmosphere, leading to increased flood risk. This will impact both our communities and the natural water environment. Sea level rise in the Severn Estuary will continue in the medium term irrespective of emissions reductions. We may also experience more drought and dry conditions.

### **Food and Farming**

Food security and the resilience of the food system will be under pressure from a changing climate and changes in food prices will also likely be a primary way we experience climate impacts. Flooding and drought will have significant impacts on farmers and their ability to produce many staple crops. Increasing the amount of food we produce locally and making sure we waste less food will help us to overcome some of those impacts and will form an important part of adaptation.

### **Adaptation**

The Council has an important role to play in adaptation planning to enable us to protect people, communities and infrastructure from climate impacts. Adaptation is woven into most of the other themes, but we have created a specific theme for adaptation planning and resilience to reflect the importance of this.

### **Just Transition and Community**

Creating a fair or just transition through our climate and nature work is a core principle of what we want to do and how we want to work. It means making sure that we do not disadvantage anyone or leave anyone behind in the shift to a different net zero economy. To reflect the importance of this, the updated strategy also describes some specific strategic objectives that will help create a more inclusive approach to our work. These focus on building skills to work in a green economy, ensuring our economic strategy is aligned with a just transition and creating a way for our communities and partners to work with the Council.

## **Ambitions for Emissions reduction, Nature recovery and Adaptation:**

Perhaps the most significant change we are making to our strategy are the ambitions for carbon emissions. We have changed both the metric and the time scales for our emissions targets. Improvements in the methodology used to calculate emissions now allows us to more accurately report emissions generated from all our activities, including all procurement, capital projects and those generated from the Council's pensions holdings. This means that in our published [carbon accounts](#), the Council's emissions appear to have significantly increased; the trend previously has been a year-on-year reduction in emissions, so we are confident that this sudden spike can be attributed to our change in methodology allowing for more thorough reporting, rather than sudden increases in actual emissions reported on previously. It does however mean that the Council is emitting more carbon than previously reported.

As described above, we are moving away from aiming for carbon neutrality to aiming for net zero, a more stringent and transparent measure. Whilst the date of 2030 for achieving carbon neutrality was an important mechanism to galvanise action, achieving net zero emissions (reducing carbon pollution to as close to zero as possible) across all council activities and scopes will take much longer and will require deeper changes in the way the Council and wider society operates. Achieving net zero across all Council activities includes emitting almost zero carbon from building new homes, retrofitting and maintaining older ones, building regeneration projects and from our pension's investments.

Although the Council can act relatively quickly on its own scope 1 and scope 2 emissions, we have much less influence on some of the most significant sources of emissions across our district.

To reflect this, the Council will adopt a separate ambition to achieve net zero in our scope 1 and scope 2 emissions by 2030. Whilst this is still challenging, we believe that it is possible to achieve.

However, our analysis of Council scope 3 emissions, and emissions in the wider District, demonstrates that it is highly unlikely we or the district would achieve carbon neutrality or net zero for either of those by 2030. Most businesses and economic activities generating emissions across the district, including those providing goods and services to SDC, are likely to be aligned with the Government target to achieve net zero by 2050.

District Councils are very reliant on national policy, legislation and funding to bring down emissions across the wider district and to some extent our scope 3 emissions. SDC therefore proposes to align our own ambition to reduce our scope 3 emissions **and** the district wide ambition with the UK legally binding target to achieve net zero by 2050 or sooner if Government policy or action makes that possible. The Council has an important leadership role to play in this (we have some influence over about 30% of emissions across our district) and we will continue to encourage and enable our partners, residents, business and other public bodies to reduce their emissions in line with the 2050 deadline or sooner. We will also be working closely with

businesses through our procurement process to encourage and enable emissions reductions and improving our contractor requirements to drive innovation.

We expect that as other public authorities update their carbon accounts to utilise better methodologies, greater data availability and more transparency, many could come to similar conclusions as we have regarding existing 2030 targets and the challenges associated with achieving net zero by 2030 across all scopes. On our website, we have published a [carbon baseline summary](#), that provides more detail about the Councils and the district wide carbon emissions and the emissions reductions pathways needed to achieve net zero.

**Ambition 3** reflects the international agreement signed by the UK at the UN Biodiversity Summit (COP 15) in 2022 to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 (30by30). SDC does not have access to all the necessary powers or incentive mechanisms to make this happen, but we can demonstrate our participation in relevant work, provide advocacy and ensure the management of our own land is counting towards this target. Our ambition is for the Council to take an active role in both reversing nature's decline and in restoring it and to actively support landowners in the district to manage their land to contribute to this. As this is a national and international target, there is a powerful case for SDC to publicly align our own ambition and develop policy accordingly.

We estimate that the percentage of land currently managed primarily for nature in the district is 5%. This is based on the government guidance already available. The Council will keep the methodology used to estimate the % of land managed for nature consistent with Government published guidance and principles.

**Ambition 4** is designed to quantify the level of climate risk that the district should prepare for and create and begin implementing a plan for adaptation by 2030. Very few local authorities have currently developed an ambition on adaptation. This will assist the Council in attracting funding for new projects and demonstrates our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable residents, services and infrastructure from the increasing levels of damage and disruption we are seeing from climate driven hazards.

This new strategy recognises that our climate is already changing rapidly, creating challenges and impacts to our everyday lives, our businesses and our natural environment and that lack of rapid action has both immediate and far reaching, serious consequences.

We know that the consequences and impacts of climate change are starting to be felt across society and that we need to put in place accelerated adaptation and planning to reduce those impacts. This updated strategy therefore includes greater emphasis on adaptation and specific strategic objectives for planning, increasing resilience, and interventions that will help reduce and manage some of the main impacts that climate change is likely to bring.

## New Ambitions Summary

**Ambition 1:** *SDC will reduce its Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions to net zero by 2030 and will reduce its Scope 3 emissions to net zero by 2050 or sooner if possible.*

**Ambition 2:** *SDC will enable and encourage the district to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner if possible.*

**Ambition 3:** *SDC will work alongside landowners, partners and residents to support the ambition that at least 30% of all land and water in the district is managed for and supporting nature recovery by 2030.*

**Ambition 4:** *By 2030, SDC will be implementing an adaptation plan to protect nature, residents, business and infrastructure from the impacts of 2 degrees Celsius warming and have assessed the risks from 4 degrees.*

## How we will work

Stroud District Council will continue to be an exemplar, acting on our own emissions and impacts to nature and adapting our own estate and operations to reduce the impacts of climate hazards on our service provision. Through our services, policies and projects we will actively demonstrate leadership, working collaboratively to achieve ecosystem restoration, nature recovery, a just transition to net zero. We have three primary ways of working to achieve our climate and nature goals:

### ***We will act as an Exemplar***

Joining up all parts of the council under a common mission, investing in our own property and changing our policies and practices. To help others in the district tackle their challenges we will exploit the opportunities of our land and buildings to demonstrate how things can be achieved and how new technologies can be applied.

### ***We will be an Enabler and play our part as a partner***

We will act as a focal point for diverse groups to come together. In partnerships and through consultation we will identify shared benefits and the initiatives to achieve them. We will focus on making the most of our strategic relationships and signpost to funding and expertise.

### ***We will Encourage & actively promote good practice***

The council will be looking for chances to incentivise through awards, accreditation and experience sharing as these help us all understand what 'good' looks like. We will be active in our communications and use a variety of ways to engage, advise and inform the district to help everyone get involved.



## Principles underpinning our work

How we implement our climate and nature strategy is an important part of what we are seeking to achieve. There are two broad principles underpinning our work. The first is that we want to implement action in ways that support our community and achieve a fairer more equitable or just transition.

The second is that we will always favour and work towards nature-based solutions to achieve our objectives. Nature based solutions allow us to address both the causes and impacts of climate change through actions for nature recovery. We recognise that these two crises must be addressed together, and we also know that the impacts of climate change and nature depletion will at first disproportionately affect our most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents.

### Just Transition

Stroud District Council understands that the benefits of moving towards a more sustainable future must be shared widely and felt by those that have the most to lose from the effects of climate change.

There are many ways in which a just transition can help the district address the impacts of climate change while supporting the local economy.

1. **Equity and Inclusion:** A just transition aims to protect vulnerable communities and workers who might be disproportionately affected by the move away from fossil fuels or the impacts of climate change.
2. **Social Stability:** By addressing the social and economic impacts of the transition, we help to maintain social stability and prevent potential conflicts that could arise from abrupt changes in industries and employment
3. **Political and Societal Acceptability:** Ensuring that the transition is just and equitable should increase political support for climate policies, making it easier to implement necessary changes and achieve climate goals
4. **Holistic Approach:** It promotes a holistic approach to council policies with the aim to be less reliant on an exploitative relationship with nature.
5. **Long-term Success:** A just transition will help build resilience and adaptability in communities, making the overall shift to a sustainable future more successful and enduring

A just transition not only addresses the environmental challenges, but also supports social and economic well-being, making the fight against climate change and nature depletion more effective and inclusive.

Stroud District Council will use the tools it has at its disposal to support this, such as the Equality Impact Assessments, Climate and Nature decision-making tool, and social value in procurement. The Council will also continue to influence decisions taken that are outside of its direct control.

## **Nature based solutions**

Nature-based solutions (Nbs) are crucial tools for both adapting to climate impacts and helping to mitigate climate change in the first place. They utilise the power of natural ecosystems to mitigate and reduce a variety of climate induced challenges. They provide a cost-effective way to enhance resilience to climate risks, reduce vulnerability to impacts like flooding and coastal erosion, and improve overall community well-being whilst at the same time, being how we can help nature recover.

Nature based solutions are simply about providing space for nature's recovery in places and ways that can reduce a range of other environmental impacts. Many Nbs also provide additional benefits for health and wellbeing and local economies.

### **Examples of Nbs we want to encourage and enable in our District and the benefits they can provide**

Coastal wetlands such as saltmarsh can help store carbon and reduce erosion and flood risk.

Wetlands and woodlands act as natural sponges, absorbing and storing water during heavy rainfall, reducing the risk of flooding and reducing pollution.

Increasing urban tree cover and green spaces can play a vital role in regulating temperature and reducing surface water flooding.

Promoting sustainable land management practices and restoring habitats can improve soils, which support increased biodiversity and will also act as a sponge.

Recreating and restoring wetlands to improve water quality, reduce flood risks, and support biodiversity, potentially by reintroducing Beavers.

River and floodplain restoration, by implementing natural flood management techniques will increase biodiversity and protect against flooding and droughts.

The skills needed to implement nature-based solutions can also create job opportunities and support local economies if they are implemented in partnership with local communities, landowners and utilise the local contracting workforce. The Council will seek to utilise Nature based approaches and solutions wherever possible in our work to implement the climate and nature strategy.

## Strategic Objectives

For each theme in the Climate and Nature Strategy, we have developed several strategic objectives. These strategic objectives describe what we are aiming to achieve for each of the themes and have been co-produced with input from across all services and district councillors. Achieving many of the strategic objectives will require working in partnership with residents, Town and Parish Councils, charities, community groups and businesses.

Our new [Council Plan](#), agreed in February 2025, describes the priorities for the Council, including an action to review and update the 2030 Strategy. The Council Plan sets the framework for our continuing work on climate and nature and the strategic objectives in the following sections describe in more detail what we want to achieve for some of the objectives contained in the Council plan. In some cases, we have reiterated those objectives and in others we have proposed going further.

The strategic objectives reflect work that the Council can undertake, whether this is through our role as an enabler or an encourager of others or setting an example in the work we undertake ourselves. It is important to understand however that the strategic objectives may not describe everything that needs to happen across the district to achieve net zero, nature recovery and adaptation across the whole of the economy and wider society.

**Nature** “We can see and hear that nature is recovering and healthy in the places we live and visit”.

**Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Lead the transition to net zero carbon emissions and nature’s recovery in the district;*

*Build the district’s nature recovery network;*

*Ensure Council-managed open spaces are increasing in biodiversity and contributing effectively to nature’s recover;*

*Promote sustainable development by balancing new housing, transport and employment requirements with the necessary infrastructure and environmental protection for the district;*

The Council fully supports the ambition to achieve 30% of all land and water in the district being managed for nature’s recovery by 2030. We will use Government guidance to identify what types of land management and land can count towards meeting this target and work alongside our partners, such as Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and the WWT, all of which are landowners in the district, to determine where the Council can add most value to their important work. Many farmers and landowners in the district are part of farming schemes designed specifically to allow nature recovery alongside the production of food and the Council will also work with others to further support those farmers that transition to more nature friendly farming and land management.

The Stroud District hosts an incredible range of habitats and species, including wildflower rich grasslands, ancient Beech woodlands, rare limestone springs, streams and rivers and of course one of the largest and most significant estuaries in the country.

The natural habitats are a mosaic of diverse and ecologically significant landscapes, many of which have legal protection for their nature importance for wildflower grasslands, woodlands and wetlands, with numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and many locally important wildlife sites.

The Council already has a range of statutory duties and responsibilities for nature through a variety of legislation, most of which are clustered around our interactions with protected areas or protected habitats and species through the development management and planning system. For example, the council is actively involved in helping to manage impacts on the SACs by implementing Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs) and mitigation strategies through our strategic planning and development management work. The Council manages Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) schemes to reduce recreational pressure on sensitive sites like Rodborough Common and the Cotswold Beechwoods.

For the Severn Estuary, the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) coordinates cross-boundary management. This includes input from Stroud District Council, Natural England, the Environment Agency, and others to ensure consistent protection of estuarine habitats.

However, we are seeking to go much further in the protection and restoration of nature within the district. This means our ambitions for nature in this strategy seek to go beyond those direct legal responsibilities and are about how we manage our own land and our role influencing others in the management of theirs.

Contributing to the creation and implementation of the [Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(GLNRS\)](#) is essential to ensure local priorities, ecological knowledge, and community values are embedded in the county-wide vision for nature recovery. By actively participating in the GLNRS, Stroud district can align its environmental goals with broader regional objectives, ensuring coherence and collaboration across administrative boundaries.

This involvement also provides a strong foundation for developing a Stroud District Local Nature Recovery Plan, that is tailored to the district's landscapes, biodiversity, and community aspirations.

The district is also implementing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policies, requiring new developments to leave nature in a measurably better state than before. While the natural environment around Stroud faces pressures from development and climate change, there is a strong local commitment to ecological restoration and sustainable land management.

Although significant areas of the district are designated under a range of national and international legislation to protect these important habitats, it's not only the designated areas that are important. Many parts of the district contain habitats that are just as important and of high quality that would potentially qualify for special protection in other parts of the country.

The Council has responsibility for the management of some important areas of land that include important habitats, such as Selsley common, but it also owns and manages many areas of park and multiuse green space. We are already implementing [No Mow May](#) and are changing the management of grasslands around our housing stock as well as implementing better tree management.

Managing Council-owned land to maximise biodiversity and create high-quality habitats is a vital step in tackling the nature and climate emergencies at a local level. These public spaces offer a unique opportunity to restore ecosystems, support pollinators, and provide safe havens for wildlife, all while enhancing the beauty and resilience of our communities. By prioritising nature on land, we already own, we lead by example—showing how thoughtful stewardship can benefit both people and the planet. It also creates opportunities for residents to connect with nature, enjoy green spaces, and take pride in a shared commitment to protecting our natural heritage.

Eliminating routine pesticide use by public bodies and those managing parks, green spaces, and other public areas is crucial for protecting both biodiversity and public health. Pesticides can harm pollinators like bees and butterflies, contaminate soil and water, and disrupt the delicate balance of local ecosystems. By limiting their use, we create safer, healthier environments for wildlife to thrive and for people to enjoy.

This approach also supports more sustainable land management practices and encourages the return of natural pest control through healthy, balanced ecosystems. It's a practical and impactful step toward making our shared spaces greener, more resilient, and better for future generations.

Developing a new Local Development Plan that supports nature recovery is essential for shaping a future where people and nature can thrive together. As our towns and communities grow, we have a unique opportunity to design spaces that protect and restore wildlife habitats, connect green corridors, and build resilience to climate change. A nature-friendly spatial strategy ensures that new developments contribute positively to the environment—by integrating green infrastructure, reducing habitat loss, and supporting biodiversity.

Developing a method to measure and reduce the hidden, or 'embedded', impacts on nature in the procurement of goods and services is a crucial step toward more sustainable and responsible decision-making. Every product or service we buy—from office supplies to construction materials—has a footprint that can affect ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources, often far beyond our local area. By understanding and reducing these impacts, we can make choices that support nature recovery not just in Stroud district, but globally. This approach helps ensure that public spending reflects our environmental values, encourages greener supply chains, and sets a positive example for businesses and communities alike.

Supporting Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust in [reintroducing wild beaver populations to the River Frome](#) is a powerful way to enhance nature recovery in Stroud District. Beavers are known as 'ecosystem engineers'—they create wetlands, slow down water flow, and improve water quality, which helps reduce flooding and supports a wide range of wildlife. Their presence can boost biodiversity, create natural carbon sinks, and make our landscapes more resilient to climate change. This project also offers exciting opportunities for community involvement, education, and eco-tourism, helping people reconnect with nature while contributing to a healthier, more vibrant local environment.

The work to recover nature needs our communities and residents to be engaged and active. Gardens are a fantastic opportunity to increase biodiversity, and many other nature recovery projects need volunteers to make them happen. The Council will prioritise engagement with local groups and residents to enable them to take their own action.

<b>Draft Nature Strategic Objectives</b>
N01. Contribute to the creation and implementation of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and use that to create a Stroud District Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
N02. Manage Council owned land to maximise biodiversity and nature creating high quality habitats.
N03. Support and influence other public bodies and managers of amenity, green and public space to eliminate routine pesticide use.
N04. Ensure the Local Development Plan / spatial strategy fully supports nature recovery and prioritises the use of nature based solutions.
N05. Develop a method to measure and reduce embedded impacts to nature in procurement of goods and services
N06. Support and work with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust in its work to reintroduce wild Beaver populations to the River Frome.
N07 Lead on community engagement and education programmes to enable residents to facilitate the delivery of our ambition for nature recovery and wilder habitat creation

**Adaptation** “Our towns and villages are protected from flooding, heat and storms and feel resilient and connected to each other”

**Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Ensure the district is prepared for the changes expected from the climate crisis*  
*Lead the transition to net zero carbon emissions and nature’s recovery in the district;*  
*Build the district’s nature recovery network;*

The impacts of climate change include greater intensity and frequency of rainfall, leading to increased flooding, prolonged heatwaves that lead to an increase in deaths, increased risk of drought and increased storminess. The Government’s Climate Change Committee published [a Climate Change Risk Assessment](#) in 2023. That report provides the Committee’s statutory advice to Government on priorities for the forthcoming national adaptation plans and wider action. More than 60 risks and opportunities have been identified by the Climate Change Committee, fundamental to every aspect of life in the district, covering our natural environment, our health, our homes, the infrastructure on which we rely, and the economy.

The Council will undertake a climate change risk assessment for the district to identify and quantify the key risks to our communities, natural environment and infrastructure, based on both 2 and 4 degrees of warming.

We will create an adaptation plan, that can be developed alongside and influence a new local development document, to prioritise policies and actions for the Council, residents and partners to prepare for and reduce the impacts of 2 degrees centigrade of warming.

Climate adaptation means implementing actions that protect us against the impacts of climate change. This includes reacting to the changes we have seen already, as well as preparing for what will happen in the future. The adaptation plan will identify opportunities to deploy and use nature-based solutions to reduce risk wherever possible. We will also prioritise actions in the plan that lead to or promote more equitable outcomes for those most impacted by climate change and also prioritise nature based solutions when considering which interventions to implement.

Many adaptation measures need to happen at the local level, so the County and District Councils, Parish and Town Councils, and a wide range of public bodies each have a role to play. Examples of measures include planting crop varieties that are more resistant to drought and practicing regenerative agriculture, improving water storage and use, managing land to reduce wildfire risks, making structural changes to buildings to withstand greater intensity of storms, adding tree canopy cover to urban areas and building greater resilience against extreme weather like floods and heat waves by creating green space and depaving urban areas. The Council’s Stroud valleys natural flood management work is an example of a nature-based adaptation measure with multiple benefits to nature and people.

The Council will seek to use the public estate to reduce risk wherever possible, working alongside public body partners to take any opportunity to retrofit measures



across the estate, such as sustainable drainage systems, that we know are needed to reduce risk. Many adaptation measures will require sufficient space to implement, and the public estate provides the best opportunity to act at the pace and scale needed.

The good news is that many adaptation actions can help to improve our standard of living too, by upgrading our buildings and infrastructure, improving the sustainability and productivity of important sectors such as agriculture and forestry, and restoring our natural environment.

Some impacts of climate change will continue to be felt even when emissions of greenhouse gases are reduced. The key one affecting Stroud district is the sea level rise within the Severn Estuary. Projections indicate a rise of 20-30 cm by 2050 and 30-40 cm by 2080, significantly impacting coastal flood risk. The estuary's unique geography, including high tidal ranges and low-lying topography, makes it particularly vulnerable to storm surges and coastal erosion, with significant potential impacts to communities living and working alongside the estuary. The Council aims to start work with partners and affected communities to plan for and adapt to that sea level rise.

Whilst this section is primarily focussed on adaptation planning and resilience, some of the themes in the draft strategy also include specific adaptation type objectives, to reflect the importance of that sector in building adaptation and resilience.

<b>Draft Adaptation Strategic Objectives</b>
AD01. Quantify risk to areas, communities and infrastructure across the district from impacts caused by 2 degrees increase in global temperatures and estimate the effects of 4 degrees increase.
AD02. Establish and implement an adaptation plan that builds resilience and reduce risks to the most vulnerable people, areas and infrastructure in an equitable way.
AD03. Ensure the Local Development Plan/Spatial Strategy maximises the potential to help existing and new communities adapt to all climate risks.
AD04. Maximise the use of the public estate to reduce risks by reducing areas of hard impermeable surface, retrofitting SuDs and using trees to create shade in urban areas.
AD05 Support partners and affected communities to plan for and adapt to sea level rise along the Severn Estuary.

**Buildings** “Our homes, workplaces and schools are comfortable, healthy and efficient”

**Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Deliver affordable homes through our own new homes programme*

*Support residents living in privately owned and rented accommodation to live in safe, sustainable and good quality homes*

*Develop partnerships, provide advice and support local action to make homes in the district more sustainable*

*Ensure the district is prepared for the changes expected from the climate crisis*

*Provide good quality, safe and fit for purpose council homes, ensuring tenants can live well*

According to the [Climate Change Committee](#), direct greenhouse gas emissions from buildings constitute around 17% of the UK total. This is mostly from burning fossil fuels to provide heating. When indirect emissions are added, this brings the total to about 23%. Changing the way we use and generate energy in our homes, commercial buildings and public buildings is a key way that the Council can influence emissions in the district and support the ambition to achieve net zero, for our own estate, but also in the wider district. The Council can do this in several ways; by working to improve the energy efficiency of our own social housing, both existing and future houses; by helping those residents who are disadvantaged, vulnerable or in fuel poverty to improve their energy efficiency and reduce their heating bills; by making it easier for private house holders to improve the energy efficiency and reduce the carbon emissions generated from their own homes.

### **Council Houses**

Throughout the ownership of our Council housing stock, alongside planned improvements work such as roof replacements, kitchen and bathroom upgrades, we have also prioritised “retrofit” measures, or improvements aimed at improving energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, and making our homes warmer and more comfortable.

The key outcomes of our retrofit programmes include:

- Achieving a minimum of EPC Band C for all homes
- Targeting a space heating demand of less than 90kWh/m<sup>2</sup>
- Reducing fuel poverty
- Lowering the carbon footprint of our housing stock

The Council has been successful in all four funding bids we have made to the Government’s Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF -now called the [Warm Homes : Social Housing Fund](#)). This £3.8 billion fund, launched by Central Government over a 10-year period starting in 2020, aims to improve the energy performance of social rented homes. Through this initiative, we have secured £9 million in grant funding. Most recently, in March 2025, we were awarded over £5 million in Wave 3 of the scheme.

The Council owns approximately 5,000 homes, with 450 properties receiving works through the SHDF projects so far, and a further minimum of 500 properties planned to receive retrofit works through the Wave 3 scheme.

Since the beginning of 2023, we have increased the proportion of our housing stock rated EPC C or above from 28.56% to 47.3%. Over the same period, our average SAP rating has improved from D63 to C69—already meeting our 2030 target five years ahead of schedule.

We are now aiming to bring all our housing stock up to a minimum of EPC C, where feasible, by 2030. This means just over half of our homes still require upgrades. While many of these will involve relatively minor works, such as loft insulation top-ups, others will require more extensive interventions.

Retrofitting our social housing stock, of which 21% is of pre-1949 construction, presents complex interventions, including:

- External and cavity wall insulation
- Loft insulation
- Ventilation upgrades
- Window and door replacements
- Heating system replacements

These upgrades must be tailored to each property's age, structure, and condition to ensure they meet both the technical requirements and the needs of our tenants. Retrofit work can also be disruptive, sometimes requiring temporary relocation or inconvenience to daily life for our tenants. Managing tenant expectations and minimising disruption is a logistical challenge that we continue to address within our programmes.

Additionally, there is a national shortage of skilled retrofit professionals, both in project coordination and among qualified installers, which can delay delivery and increase project costs. (See our "Business and Circular Economy" section for steps we are taking to address those shortages in skills).

Finally, these programmes require substantial capital investment. While we are proud of our success in securing SHDF funding, continued support from Central Government and alignment with national policy will be crucial in maintaining the momentum we have so far achieved and wish to continue with in future retrofit projects to achieve our future targets.

We are also still planning to build new Council owned houses for our residents. We want to design and build good quality, sustainable, dynamic, energy efficient homes that are consistent with our climate and nature recovery commitments.

The new homes will be built to provide energy efficiency, good space standards, flexibility, adaptability and safety with the aim of enabling people to live in their homes as independently as possible for as long as possible as their needs change.

Each new home where possible will be built to Building Regulations Part M4(2) or Part M4(3) and will meet Nationally Described Space Standards.

The specification for new builds will aim to help the Council achieve our climate and nature commitments and will be based on a fabric first approach with further specification items added to achieve a minimum SAP rating of 86, which equates to an EPC rating of A and which has been estimated would deliver a reduction on carbon emissions on Part L in the Building Regulations of 31%.

As the Council house building programme progresses and each time a new scheme is tendered, a review of the specification will be undertaken. Because technology, the market, government subsidies, and building regulations are all developing quickly a review of each scheme spec will allow to move to greater energy efficiency and address any requirements set out in future changes to the Building Regulations, the Future Homes Standards and the policies that are finally adopted in the Local Plan.

As set out elsewhere, our new Local Development plan will also include policies that support the development of operationally net zero emissions new buildings and will reduce the embedded carbon and nature impacts created through the construction process itself.

### **Council estate (non-housing)**

The Council has been an early adopter of air and water source heat pumps to replace gas boilers in several of our large buildings. Water Source Heat Pumps now provide the heating for our main office at [Ebley Mill and also at Brimscombe Mill](#), a property largely leased to businesses. Both buildings are Grade II listed, and we installed these heat pumps to decarbonise two major buildings within the council's stock, remove the reliance on heating the buildings from burning fossil fuels, reduce fuel costs and to sustain the economic life of these two historic buildings.

### **Key facts about the Water Source Heat Pump at Ebley Mill**

**Carbon Savings:** The Ebley Mill Water Source Heat Pump is projected to save 70-110 tonnes of CO2 per year.

**Financial Considerations:** The scheme's cost is approximately £1.05 million, with approximately 80% of the initial capital costs expected to be recovered through the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) payments over 20 years.

**Project Duration:** The heat pump systems are designed to last for 25 years.

**Impact on Buildings:** The project has a significant impact on extending the economic life of the buildings, enhancing comfort levels for occupants, and reducing peaks and troughs in internal temperatures.

**Public Awareness and Innovation:** The project has generated interest in the technology from various groups and organizations, raising awareness of water-source heat pumps as an option for heating buildings.

**Other Benefits:** The project demonstrates the council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and has encouraged others to consider similar projects.

**Net Zero Commitment:** The council is actively implementing heat pumps as part of its net carbon zero emissions strategy, replacing gas boilers with these renewable energy systems.

**Fuel Security:** The project also provides fuel certainty, particularly important given unforeseen escalating fuel costs

Air source heat pumps have also replaced gas boilers at Stratford Park Active Lifestyles Stroud Leisure Centre, The Museum in the Park and at The Pulse Leisure Centre in Dursley. The funding for this installation came from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (SALIX), with the council also adding additional funding. The new heating systems will reduce carbon emissions significantly and provide more efficient heating and hot water.

The Council is looking at the feasibility of adding further solar car parking canopies to the car park in Stratford Park, to add to those already on the roof, to supply the additional electricity needed for the heat pumps. We will continue to make use of Government grants and schemes to continue the decarbonisation of our estate and to maximise the generation of roof top solar wherever possible.

As part of our adaptation planning work, we will be ensuring that we start the work to make our estate as resilient and adapted to climate impacts as it can be, to ensure our operations and tenants are protected from climate impacts such as flooding, heat and storm damage. For example, we will specifically review our car parks to reduce excess run-off.

<b>Draft Buildings Strategic Objectives</b>
B01 - Enable all new build residential, public and commercial developments in the district to be built to operationally net zero emissions standards using a combination of renewable energy and construction innovations that also reduce embedded carbon and nature impacts.
B02 - All existing SDC social housing to be adapted and retrofitted to achieve a minimum EPC C by 2030
B03 - Council (non-housing) property and estate to be adapted or retrofitted to become operationally net zero emissions by 2030
B04 - Council property, estate and car parks are adapted and resilient to the impacts of 2c warming by 2035 and we will understand the impacts of 4c warming.

**Energy** “We can afford the energy needed to live well and our energy system is fairer, resilient to shocks and not dependent on fossil fuels”

**Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Support community wealth building and community ownership*

*Support community and locally led renewable energy initiatives to accelerate the transition to a net zero district*

*Support the delivery of key regeneration sites across the district by enabling and influencing significant infrastructure projects and investments*

The Council strongly supports the shift to renewable forms of energy generation. The Council's own estate generates renewable energy through use of roof top solar panels and uses low carbon air- and water-source heat pumps to provide heating in some of our buildings. Any surplus energy we require is procured through renewable tariffs.

The Council is investigating the feasibility of adding further renewable energy generation on its estate. and supporting community energy initiatives.

The Council is a founder member and key participant of the [Warm and Well](#) consortium in Gloucestershire. Running since 2001 and delivered by the [Severn Wye Energy Agency](#) (SWEA), the [Warm and Well scheme](#) aims to improve energy efficiency in the home and reduce the risk of fuel poverty and associated health problems by:

- Raising public awareness of energy efficiency and fuel poverty
- Providing specific and appropriate advice by telephone, referrals from partner organisations and engagement at events
- Delivering home visits to vulnerable customers that include an energy survey and bespoke advice report
- Making referrals to grant and discount schemes

According to SWEA, [Stroud has experienced one of the highest percentage increases in average bill costs](#), with a 129% rise from October 2022 to May 2024. On average, homes spend more than 6% of household income on bills, and this is likely to rise in the near future (based on an average household income of £32,300).

In 2024/25, the Warm and Well Scheme supported 525 homes to become more energy efficient, with estimated lifetime money savings of £339,000 for those households and lifetime carbon emissions savings of approx' £1700t.

To support other households in the district to reduce their carbon emissions, the Council has entered into a countywide partnership with a company called [Furnbow](#) to create a One Stop Shop for home energy efficiency upgrades.

Furnbow can manage the entire retrofit project from start to finish - beginning with an initial assessment of a property which includes a paid for home survey to help create a personalised energy plan, through to designing energy efficiency improvements, selecting and managing trusted contractors, and ensuring high-quality installation.

<b>Draft Energy Strategic Objectives</b>
E01- - Encourage greater energy generation that is fair and equitable and maximises community involvement.
E02 – All public buildings, estate and car parks to be generating renewable energy to the maximum level feasible.
E03 – Ensure all Council tenants, private homeowners and tenants, business and commercial property owners have the knowledge and support to reduce their energy use and costs by as much as possible.

## **Business and Circular Economy** “Our businesses are thriving in a circular economy”

### **Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Lead the transition to net zero carbon emissions and nature’s recovery in the district*

*Continue to build a more sustainable and inclusive local economy*

*Support community wealth building and community ownership*

*Support community and locally led renewable energy initiatives to accelerate the transition to a net zero district*

*Be an ambassador for climate conscious start-ups and existing businesses*

*Promote Stroud district as a sustainable tourism and visitor destination*

*Promote sustainable development by balancing new housing, transport and employment requirements with the necessary infrastructure and environmental protection for the district*

Stroud District Council seeks to influence the creation of a well-being economy that can provide for everyone in our district within planetary boundaries. A well-being economy is designed to service the interests of people and planet, not the other way round. A wellbeing economy provides dignity, purpose, fairness, allows participation and allows nature to thrive.

The Councils current [Economic Development Strategy](#) strongly supports our green sector and advocates for the decarbonisation of industry and business. It focuses on ways to encourage new green businesses into the district. Alongside the other Local Authorities in the County, we provide funding for the Stroud and Gloucestershire Growth Hubs to ensure net zero specialists are available for 121 meetings and workshops for existing businesses to find out how to transition to net zero working practices.

Like other parts of the Country, Stroud district has seen an increase over the last decade in the green sector, with a particular focus on green technologies, in particular innovative ways to save, generate and utilise energy. The UK Government currently defines green sector businesses as those involved in: low-carbon heat and energy; alternative fuels; energy efficient products; low carbon services and low emission vehicles and infrastructure. According to the [Office for National Statistics](#), the low carbon economy and renewable energy sectors of the economy are growing faster than any other part of the national economy.

As a local authority with the commitment to protect and enhance our natural assets, we are proactively looking to green businesses to set up locally, supporting our ambition to be the district of choice for the emerging environmental technology sector.

One of the barriers to this is the shortage of skills. The Council is currently working closely with stakeholders to ensure the sector has access to the required skillset, considering the needs of specialist areas within low carbon energy and energy efficient products. With our support, the South Gloucestershire and Stroud College recently opened a Green Skills Centre at their Berkeley Vale centre, to train young



people in retrofit and low carbon heating installation. We are also part-funding a Green Skills coordinator, working with Climate Leadership Gloucestershire to work with industry and training providers to identify and plug key green skills gaps in the County.

We will shortly be updating and reviewing our Economic Development Strategy to ensure it is consistent with our ambitions in this Climate and Nature Strategy to further promote the industry, skills and knowledge needed to allow businesses in the district to transition to a net zero economy.

This will be vital if the district is to achieve net zero by 2050 but will also be essential if we are to reduce the Council's scope 3 emissions too. We want to work with significant suppliers of goods and services to the Council to ensure they are supported in a continuous journey to reduce their emissions and the impact they have on nature.

Part of this support is provided through Stroud Districts UK Shared Prosperity Funding and the Rural England Prosperity Grants we've issued. These funds have supported businesses and community organisations to take up working practices and update infrastructure that improve their carbon footprint and transition to practices that enable decarbonisation across the whole district. With limited grants and interest free loans available for businesses, we want to ensure that future funding and grants are aligned with our net zero ambitions.

The Stroud district has a significant untapped potential to generate and grow our nature based economy. Organisations such as [Rewilding Britain](#) have carried out research on the potential for nature recovery and rewilding to generate employment opportunities and grow skills and capacity in nature based jobs. Our Stroud valleys natural flood management project has worked with over 60 landowners and 20 contractors, many of whom have developed skills in installing and building nature-based solutions approaches that are transferable to other types of work. Our district already has extensive protected woodlands, wildflower rich grasslands and commons, and one of the country's largest estuaries that need ongoing skilled management. Our district is also home to the national office for one of the UK's most significant nature charities, the [WWT](#), employing over 70 people at the centre which welcomes over 200,000 visitors per year. Restoring and managing nature requires a skilled and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics educated workforce and can generate significant revenue and investment. We want to encourage growth in the nature based economy throughout the district.

The Council already has an ethical investment policy that will shortly be reviewed and updated. We already avoid direct investment or borrowing activities with organisations whose core activities include Fossil Fuel extraction and combustion, Armaments – weapon systems, Gambling, Pornography, Tobacco and Pay-day loans

The Council seeks to directly invest in organisations or financial products whose core focus includes Renewable energy, green investment products and social housing. We employ an independent auditor to scrutinise our investments and give them an ESG rating (Environmental, Social and Governance). We aim for them to be ESG

rated (A or above) and certainly no lower than yellow (BBB) for any individual holding, and have established a Strategic Objective to reflect this aim.

<b>Draft Business &amp; Circular Economy Strategic Objectives</b>
BCE01 The Councils new economic development strategy will encourage and facilitate our local economy to achieve net zero by 2050
BCE02 We will support work to increase green skills and capacity in the district's workforce, including skills needed to help nature recover and to help the district adapt to climate impacts.
BCE03 We will encourage and support growth in our <a href="#">Low carbon and renewable energy economy</a> (As defined by Office for National Statistics) and encourage business that are skilled in the implementation of adaptation measures.
BCE04 We will encourage and support growth in Stroud's nature based economy
BCE05 Stroud District Council financial investments and holdings will achieve an ESG rating of A or above (average) and no individual holding shall fall below a rating of BBB and we will work with partners to reduce the climate and nature impacts of our pensions investments.

## Resources and Consumption “We produce less waste through sharing and repairing”

### Linked Council Plan Objectives:

*Reduce the quantity of resources discarded as waste and minimise its environmental impact*

*Promote Stroud district as a sustainable tourism and visitor destination*

Stroud District Council, as a Waste Collection Authority (WCA) plays a vital role in delivering kerbside collection services to residents. However, these operations also contribute to carbon emissions—both through fleet activity and the treatment of collected materials.

In line with the waste hierarchy, reducing consumption remains our primary goal, thereby minimising the volume of kerbside waste. National legislation, including [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) and the upcoming deposit return scheme (scheduled for October 2027), is expected to further reduce the weight of recyclable materials collected.

Stroud District Council (SDC) has been a leader in waste reduction, having adopted restricted-capacity residual waste bins ahead of national trends. This approach not only limits residual waste tonnage but also encourages residents to make full use of recycling services. As a result, SDC consistently ranks among the top performers in recycling rates and sending the least amount of residual waste for treatment.

[National 2023/24 statistics](#) rank SDC and its residents as the fourth best performing Waste Collection Authority for minimising residual waste per household (previously National Indicator NI191).

The strategy objective of further reducing this measure by five percent will see performance easily within the top three nationally. This target is assumed without kerbside scheme change and will necessitate reliance on enhanced resident engagement. This target excludes the waste taken in person by residents to the County recycling centres.

Further step change improvement in recycling and waste minimisation could be possible, though this would require more intrusive regime change.

The vehicles used to collect waste and recycling in the district emit significant quantities of carbon pollution. This is the key reason why our scope 1 emissions appear to have risen. We previously counted these vehicle emissions as scope 3, but after discussions with other district Councils in Gloucestershire, we have decided to move these into scope 1 to be consistent. SDC has already made substantial progress in reducing the carbon footprint of its fleet. Route optimisation software has been in use for several years, helping to reduce mileage. In 2024, this was enhanced with in-cab software that enables real-time task allocation, further minimising unnecessary journeys.

To support the transition to electric vehicles (EVs), six EV charge points have been installed at our vehicle depot in Gossington, with six more planned for 2025/26. Currently, three EVs are in operation—including an 18-tonne industrial street sweeper—with three more expected by summer 2025. Additional orders are scheduled for 2025/26 to fully utilise the charging infrastructure.

Looking ahead, further investment will be needed to expand this transition. One option under consideration is installing photovoltaic (solar) panels on the depot's transfer station roof, potentially paired with battery storage for overnight charging.

### **Challenges and Transitional Strategy**

While smaller fleet vehicles are well-suited to electrification, larger vehicles—such as fully laden refuse collection trucks—face challenges due to the district's hilly topography. As technology evolves, SDC will continue to assess options to maintain service standards. A transitional fleet strategy, approved by the [Environment Committee in March 2023](#), is guiding this process.

As part of this strategy, SDC began using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) in April 2025. HVO can reduce carbon emissions by up to 80% without requiring engine modifications. The council is working with Ubico to ensure the fuel is responsibly sourced.

To complement this, driver behaviour software is being introduced to identify inefficient driving practices. This initiative supports both environmental goals and cost savings.

Stroud District Council already encourages event organisers to look at ways to reduce plastic waste. There is a national ban preventing mobile food units serving prepared food to customers in single-use polystyrene food and drinks containers and providing customers with single-use plastic cutlery or drink stirrers. The Council will look at ways we can end the use of all single use materials in events that are held on public land.

The Council works with and supports [Transition Stroud](#), providing core funding for them to continue their work, which includes setting up and organising repair cafes in different parts of the district. We want to work with them to expand this provision, but we also want to encourage and enable wider use of refill and reuse, including drinking water refill stations.

<b>Draft Resources and Consumption Strategic Objectives</b>
RC01 The total residual waste collected per household will decrease by 5% by 2030
RC02 Per household carbon emissions from waste collection vehicles will reduce annually
RC03 Single use materials will be eradicated from Council use and in events on council owned land by 2030.
RC04 We will support a circular economy by promoting and encouraging reuse, refill and repair across the district and investigate the use of other regulatory and financial measures to achieve this.

**Mobility and Transport** “We can easily walk, cycle or use public transport if we choose to and goods are safely transported through our communities without polluting our streets”

**Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Reduce the impact of transport on the environment, by working in partnership and leading by example*

*Increase connectivity and mobility innovation across the district*

According to data from the [Department for Energy and Net Zero](#), transport accounts nationally for approximately 26% of all domestic emissions, so reducing emissions from transport is an extremely important part of any plan to achieve net zero. Stroud District Council is not a Transport or Highways Authority, and our ability to influence those emissions sits primarily within our powers to promote, fund and support active travel and public transport and to create policies within a local plan that reduce reliance on private cars and promote designs that encourage easier active travel choices for new communities.

Stroud District Council began a [Walking and Cycling promotion programme](#) in 2017 with the aim to invest in walking and cycling projects throughout the district and encourage a modal shift to active travel. The first project was the resurfacing and widening of the Stroud to Nailsworth multi-user path which is now a well-used and popular route for both walkers and cyclists. Since its inception, the project has invested close to £1.5 million in walking and cycling projects.

The project was consolidated in 2021 through a task and finish group which recommended the continued investment in walking and cycling projects, and that investment should be split equally between smaller local projects and large strategic projects. Since 2021, a diverse array of projects have benefited from funding, from the resurfacing of local footpaths and installation of bike repair stations, to large scale feasibility and design studies on strategic active travel routes. A scheme providing free bike stands to local businesses and organisations has proved particularly successful and has been expanded due to high demand.

The project requires close alignment with Gloucestershire County Council as the local highway authority, and in particular the Local Transport Plan and the relevant Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). Local groups and Parish and Town Councils play an important role by identifying local walking and cycling projects for potential investment.

We want to continue this work and taking the project forward requires continued support and capital funding. The Council will continue to provide funding for this work and support GCC and local groups however, while the Council can continue to contribute towards feasibility and design of strategic routes, funding for their implementation remains the biggest barrier to creating a strategic walking and cycling network in the district.

As the local planning authority, SDC can influence active travel through planning policy. Current adopted policy recognises the importance of active travel and

identifies some key routes which potential new development must incorporate. We will ensure that future adopted planning policy documents continue and strengthen this work, to reduce car dependency, promoting active travel and public transport. To achieve net zero in our scope 1 and scope 2 emissions by 2030, the Council will need to replace all existing petrol and diesel powered fleet vehicles with EVs wherever practical as and when those vehicles need replacing.

In March 2023 our Environment Committee approved the introduction of electric vehicle charge points in several SDC owned car parks. Charge points in seven car parks, spread geographically throughout the district, have been commissioned. The charge points are predominantly in place to serve local communities, allowing residents to transition to EV, even without access to a private driveway.

The offer reflects and complements the 'on street' rollout being managed by Gloucestershire County Council. Usage data will be monitored in the coming months and years to determine the suitability of any further rollout. We will be working with the County Council and suppliers, with the aim of increasing the available of EV charge points in our car parks on other sites around the district.

In 2025 the council established an [air quality strategy](#) that describes our current [air quality monitoring programme](#) and develops actions the Council will take and promote to reduce air pollution. Stroud district benefits from generally good air quality but the council is committed to continue to develop its monitoring programme, and to employ data led interventions and work with local and county partners on improving air quality for residents.

<b>Draft Mobility and Transport Strategic Objectives</b>
MT01 - Support a shift towards active modes of travel using all available policy and support means at our disposal to make it easier to choose.
MT02 – Ensure the local development plan /spatial plan contains policies to reduce car use and promote active travel and increased public transport use.
MT03 - All Council and partner fleet vehicles powered by zero or low carbon technologies by 2030
MT04 – All district car parks to have electric vehicle charge points to meet ongoing increase in demand and encourage highways authority and businesses to install on street and workplace charging where feasible.



## Just Transition and Community

“Our homes, workplaces and schools are comfortable, healthy and efficient.

“We can afford the energy needed to live well and our energy system is fairer, resilient to shocks and not dependent on fossil fuels”

“We can afford to eat well and sustainably, and our farmers have the capacity and resources to grow and produce sustainable food that helps restore nature”

### Linked Council Plan Objectives:

*Work to always champion equality, diversity, inclusion and equity in everything that we do*

*Continue to build a more sustainable and inclusive local economy*

*Support community wealth building and community ownership*

This draft strategy sets out the importance of a just transition to the Council. The changes needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change must be positively felt by all those who live and work in the district; especially those who are most vulnerable such as: those living with health conditions, lower-income households, and older people, and younger people who have a greater stake in the future. Additionally, climate change impacts can exacerbate existing societal inequalities.

It is important to note that just transition principles run throughout all themes of this Strategy,

The Council supports community partners to maximise climate and nature action. We were a founding member of the [2030 Community Engagement Board](#) where partners share best practise and knowledge. The Council provides core and project funding to Transition Stroud in recognition of the strength of its grassroots climate action. The Council works with many partners such as those involved in the Stroud valleys natural flood management work, and through the grant funding it provides or administers. Stroud District Council is active within the Food Strategy for Gloucestershire and has a long history of providing support to community hubs and partners who are better placed to deliver essential services.

The Council supports the building and retention of skills through apprenticeships and partnering with local education providers on green skills, such as South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, that was able to access £450k of [Strategic Economic Development Funding](#) for their green skills centre at Berkeley Green.

The Council is a trusted voice in the community and regularly promotes Waste and Recycling Initiatives. The 2030 Community Engagement Board volunteer their time to attend events to deliver climate action outreach. A comprehensive communications strategy will support local climate action, inspire more sustainable choices, and promote the community benefits of the Council's own Climate and Nature Action.

Modelling demonstrates which characteristics are most at risk from increased climate change effects in the district. Equality Impact Assessments are part of project proposals so that benefits and challenges are anticipated and mitigated.



<b>Draft Just Transition and Community Strategic Objectives</b>
JTC01 Establish a climate partnership to maximise the district's potential in climate action.
JTC02 Our climate and nature projects will prioritise the building and retention of skills and capacity within the community to make the transition to a net zero world
JTC03 Our new <b>economic development strategy</b> will support the principles of a Just Transition as defined by the UN and International Labour Organisation.
JTC04 Develop a climate and nature communications, engagement and culture plan that is consistent, inspirational and rooted through local groups.
JTC05 Our adaptation plan will prioritise the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable residents in our District.

## **Governance, Planning and Decision making** “We can build new houses and create new communities that help nature without creating more pollution”

### **Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Lead the transition to net zero carbon emissions and nature’s recovery in the district*

*Work to always champion equality, diversity, inclusion and equity in everything that we do*

*Promote sustainable development by balancing new housing, transport and employment requirements with the necessary infrastructure and environmental protection for the district*

*Proactively use data and insight to inform decision making and ensure equality and social value is embedded in the way we work*

The Council has made significant progress reducing its direct emissions arising from burning of fuels such as petrol and gas ((scope 1 emissions) and continues to implement reductions through replacement of gas boilers with greener alternatives, such as air source heat pumps. We now calculate our scope 2 emissions as net zero because we have verified that the electricity we pay for is directly supplied by renewable technologies with appropriate and traceable certificates of origin.

However, the most significant sources of carbon emissions generated by the Council arise from the goods and services procured by the Council as part of our service delivery, from the capital projects implemented by the Council and from the pension holdings managed on behalf of the Council by the Local Government Pension Scheme. (scope 3 emissions)

The Council uses industry-standard spend-based methodologies to account for our scope 3 emissions. With time, and as methodologies and tools improve, we hope to refine this process to give us more accurate data that will also include better calculation of the embodied carbon in house building and other major capital projects.

To accelerate the reduction in our scope 3 emissions, we are also refining a social, equalities and climate impact assessment tool for our procurement system that will help us to work with suppliers that can demonstrate they are implementing a plan to reduce their carbon emissions and other environmental impacts. This is a key mechanism that will allow us to reduce our scope 3 emissions.

The Council takes many other decisions in addition to procurement on both projects and policies that have potential impacts on both the climate and nature emergencies and whilst we currently assess direct environmental implications of those decisions, the Council does not carry out any consistent or quantitative assessment that provides elected Councillors with the information and data needed to take those wider climate and nature implications into account when considering their decisions on both spending and policies.

We feel this is a potential weak point in terms of understanding and reducing the environmental impacts of our decisions and policies, so we are also developing a climate and nature assessment tool, that would be used in advance of key decisions being taken. Several Councils across the country are already using similar tools to help them quantify likely impacts and take climate and nature impacts into account. An example of a similar approach can be seen in use by [Cheltenham Borough Council](#) and [Cornwall County Council](#).

The Strategic planning system is one of the most important tools and ways that the Council can influence the way new development can reduce emissions in the district but also help to create the type of development that is resilient to protects our communities from the impacts of climate change. [The Town and Country Planning Association](#) have produced a key report outlining how Councils can utilise the strategic planning system to reduce emissions and create resilient and adapted communities. We intend to use their recommendations as a basis for how we will build climate and nature into a new development plan for the district.

The Government is currently developing new legislation that will fundamentally change the way Council's develop and deliver local and strategic development plans for their area. Whatever the outcome of that change process, Stroud District Council will put tackling the climate and nature emergencies at the centre of any new development plans that cover our district.

It is vitally important that the Councils and any other strategic development plan that cover our district are focussed on reducing emissions and adapting to climate impacts. This is simply because the impacts of flooding, overheating and other consequences of climate change stand in the way of everything else we want to achieve in terms of the creation of vibrant communities and a sustainable and just society. If new strategic development plans do not have achieving net zero and adapting to impacts at their core, the impacts of climate change will continue to be significantly felt by the most vulnerable and those least able to respond. We aim to ensure that any new strategic plan will put tackling the climate crisis is at the heart of the vision for the future of our communities. We understand how vital strategic planning is to secure our objectives – both directly, through facilitating the extension of renewable energy generation, and strategically, through practical nature-based solutions and design actions that can promote sustainable travel, urban cooling, or natural flood defence. We recognise how many of the actions necessary to tackle the climate crisis are also key in creating healthy, ecologically rich, prosperous and beautiful places for us and for future generations.

You will see reference to the Local Development plan throughout other sections of this consultation, where we want to particularly emphasise future policy and aims for a new local plan.

To enable us to communicate our progress on implementing this strategy, the Council will develop a robust monitoring plan that will allow us to keep track of our progress and share that with the community.

<b>Draft Governance, Planning and Decision-making Strategic Objectives</b>
GPD01 Create and implement a climate and nature decision making tool for use in all strategy, major projects and decisions taken by the Council.
GPD02 Key suppliers of goods, services and works to the council will have carbon reduction plans that include trajectory of reductions to reach net zero by 2050.
GPD03 Establish a methodology to report on and reduce the scope 3 emissions and embedded ecological footprint from the works, goods and services the council buys from outside suppliers.
GPD04 Ensure that a new local development plan / spatial strategy for the district is consistent with achieving net zero by 2050; and provides the framework for adapting to 2 degrees warming.
GPD05 Develop robust monitoring methods to measure and report on the implementation of the Climate and nature strategy.

**Food and Farming** “We can afford to eat well and sustainably, and our farmers have the capacity and resources to grow and produce sustainable food that helps restore nature”

**Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

*Enable the development of regenerative farming and land management*

*Reduce the quantity of resources discarded as waste and minimise its environmental impact*

*Reduce health inequalities in the district through a strategic and evidence-led approach*

Food and farming is a significant contributor to the local economy, ‘The Gloucestershire Agri-food supply chain employs over 50,000 people, 14.9% of the workforce and generated a GVA of £1.39billion in 2017, or 8.8% of the local economy, [both higher shares of the economy than seen nationally](#).

The NFU have established the target for the farming sector to become carbon neutral by 2040, recognising the need to increase efficiency in farming practices, improve land management practices and the role of farms in renewable energy production and the bioeconomy. According to Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) emissions data agriculture is responsible for approximately 16% of Gloucestershire’s greenhouse gas emissions,

The [national food strategy](#) published summer 2021 is clear that ‘without addressing the emissions of the food system, it will not be possible to meet those climate change obligations [laid out by law] and to contribute to mitigating climate change.’ Food security is another key and related issue increasingly being felt and which can complement efforts for low carbon growth and climate change adaption and mitigation in Gloucestershire. In 2021, the [Government published](#) a UK Food Security Report. The report states that climate change, climate variability and biodiversity loss all threaten the long-term security of global food production. It concluded that climate change and biodiversity loss were among the biggest medium to long term risks to UK domestic food production, alongside other factors, including soil degradation and water quality. For example, the report noted [UK wheat yields dropped by 40% in 2020 as a result of heavy rainfall and droughts](#) Regenerative production will can contribute to reducing climate risks, by for example, increase soil organic matter that can hold more water within the soil and reduce compaction that leads to run off.

As a local council, we can play a role in supporting farmers to transition to regenerative agriculture across the district by providing targeted information, financial incentives (where available), and policy support that encourages sustainable land stewardship. This transition is vital for improving soil health, enhancing biodiversity, increasing resilience to climate change, and securing long-term food production. By facilitating access to training, grants for regenerative practices, and local markets for sustainably produced food, we can empower farmers to adopt methods that restore ecosystems while strengthening the local economy. Supporting this shift not only aligns with our environmental and climate goals but also fosters a healthier, more resilient rural community.

We will also support local producers and growers to continue to or start to increase the amount of food sold locally. A survey and report by [Landwise](#) carried out in 2021, identified a lack of allotment sites across the district, and estimated the demand for sites to be approximately double the current number available. The Council does not directly own or manage allotment sites itself, as those are mostly owned by Town and Parish Council's, but we administer various funds and grants that could potentially be used to support and secure growers. For example, [Common Soil](#) on the edge of Stroud, successfully obtained funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund administered by the Council. We will aim to ensure that any future funding opportunities are communicated and able to be used for the purposes of buying land for local food production and /or securing existing business or community groups to enable them to supply more food locally.

Supporting access to land and other essential resources to increase the amount of food grown and sold locally brings a wide range of benefits to the community, economy, and environment. By empowering farmers, community groups, business start-ups, and residents to cultivate local produce, councils can strengthen food security, reduce carbon emissions from transportation, and promote healthier diets through fresher, seasonal food. This approach also fosters local enterprise, creates green jobs, and revitalizes underused or derelict land. Moreover, it builds community resilience and cohesion by encouraging collaboration, skill-sharing, and a stronger connection between people and the land. Investing in local food systems is a strategic step toward a more sustainable, inclusive, and self-reliant district.

Most of us do not realise how much food waste we produce. The most common food wasted is bread, salad, fresh fruit /vegetables and drinks. The UK grocery sector has agreed to reduce waste produced in line with [Waste and Resources Action Programme \(WRAP\)](#). Manufacturers and brand owners have also signed up to the targets set by WRAP.

On average family's waste £60 per month by throwing away unwanted food items. For example, 24 million whole slices of bread are thrown away every day. The WRAP campaign helped to reduce food waste by 21% between 2007 and 2012. Stroud District Council introduced food waste collections for residents in 2016. You can read more about [what happens to your food waste on our website](#). You can also find suggestions for what steps individual households can take to [reduce the amount of food wasted](#).

The Council has several workstreams that relate to the distribution of food that might otherwise be wasted or thrown away. As part of our Cost-of-Living response we have been working with the network of Community Hubs since 2021 to increase access to food through community cafes and pantries. This includes Hubs who are distributing surplus food and donations to communities. This work will continue to be supported by Household Support Funding.

The Gloucestershire Gleaning pilot began in Stroud through the [NoSH Hubs](#) Food Coordinator to link farmers and food producers with excess produce to community groups who can harvest, store and re-distribute to communities. Phase two of the

gleaning project will develop in 2025 with support from UK Shared Prosperity Funding and Household Support Funding.

In 2026, the new Council Health Inequalities Strategy will develop an action plan to improve access to affordable and nutritious food across Stroud District. This will involve the partners already working on our Cost-of-Living response and Gleaning.

The Council works with and provides support to Community Hubs that are working hard to provide food to those who need it, and part of this work is to provide high quality food that has been gleaned from farms and suppliers that would otherwise be throwing it away.

<b>Draft Food &amp; Farming Strategic Objectives</b>
FF01. Support farmers to transition to regenerative and nature friendly agriculture across the district.
FF02. Support access to land, allotments, orchards and other resources to increase the amount of affordable food grown and sold locally by farmers, community groups, business start-ups and residents.
FF03. Increase the amount of food available to people that would otherwise be thrown away or wasted.
FF04. Encourage and enable private and community composting schemes.



**Water, Rivers and the Sea** “Our towns and villages are protected from flooding, drought, heat and storms and feel resilient and connected to each other”  
“We can see and hear that nature is recovering and healthy in the places we live and visit”

**Linked Council Plan Objectives:**

Ensure the district is prepared for the changes expected from the climate crisis

Build the district’s Nature Recovery Network

*Promote sustainable development by balancing new housing, transport and employment requirements with the necessary infrastructure and environmental protection for the district*

Ensure Council-managed open spaces are increasing in biodiversity and contributing effectively to nature’s recovery

The way we manage water and protect and restore our districts springs, flushes, streams and rivers, is fundamental to the recovery of nature and reducing the impacts of climate change on nature and on people. The Councils 2030 Strategy recognised the importance of our work in the River Frome, implementing a nature-based approach to reducing flood and drought risk whilst at the same time, creating wetlands, increasing the diversity of aquatic habitats and species and increasing the catchments resilience to drought. Since its inception, the [Stroud Valleys natural flood management programme](#) has implemented over 1100 measures to slow flows and restore nature across the catchment of the River Frome, worked with over 60 landowners and farmers and worked with film maker Antony Lyons, local artist Joe Magee and local poet Adam Horovitz to produce engagement material to explain the reasons and the benefits of the work. The Council intends to continue the Stroud valleys natural flood management scheme and, in the future, extend it to all catchments of the district where it would be beneficial. [Gloucestershire County Council](#) have now established a countywide natural flood management programme to implement the approach across the other districts in Gloucestershire, and the Council will be working alongside the County Council to maximise the benefits from our joint work.

Since the start of that work, Stroud District Council has joined together with a partnership of organisations working to manage and protect the River Frome, the Wilder Frome Forum. That forum has produced a [Wilder Frome Vision](#) and the Council will play a full part in making that vision come to life.

The Vision aims to protect important species, such as White Clawed Crayfish, and supports the return of species that would originally have lived in the catchment, including Beavers and Salmon. The Council is supporting [Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust](#) in its plan to reintroduce wild Beavers to areas of the Stroud Valleys and is working with the [Severn Rivers Trust](#) to restore migration routes through the River. To assist with this, the Council has funded a feasibility study to produce an outline design to build a fish pass on the weir at Ebley Mill. Other weirs and obstacles to fish migration are being worked on by the forum’s partners. The Council intends to contribute fully to achieving the aims and the vision of the Wilder Frome Forum.



As climate change impacts continue to materialise in coming years, a range of ecological, hydrological, and habitat impacts can be anticipated. Climate change resilience will therefore be woven into all planned interventions and work will take account of the latest data and evidence. As described earlier, wherever possible, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) will be at the heart of our work. This includes building sustainable water management into any new local development plan to ensure the protection and stewardship of water and its sustainable management within the built environment. This will be vital as we experience more intense and frequent rainfall but also to increase resilience to droughts. We want to extend the approach we have taken in rural areas of the district to our built environment, which includes the retrofit and use sustainable drainage and nature based approaches to reducing surface water flood risk in the districts towns and villages. Replacing hard surfaces with more permeable ones will allow water to soak into the ground and slow down the rate at which it is drained back into the stream and rivers. This in turn will reduce the volume of pollutants being washed from our roads and buildings into the districts waterways.

Despite our continued work to reduce flood risk in the district by changing land use and implementing nature based approaches, flood risk from rivers and the Severn Estuary are likely to increase. The Council works closely with Gloucestershire County Council, the Environment Agency and the Severn Vale Internal Drainage Board to plan for, manage and reduce that risk. GCC are currently reviewing and updating the [Gloucestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#), which aims to reduce flood risk from surface waters, smaller rivers and Groundwater Springs and the Council will work closely with them to identify priority actions across the district. Flood risk in the district's main rivers and from the Severn Estuary, is managed by the Environment Agency, and the Council will work closely with them to identify priority actions to reduce flood risk from both of those sources.

Flood risk from the sea and coastal erosion are managed through the [Shoreline Management Planning](#) (SMP) process. SMPs are non-statutory plans that rely on the statutory planning process to help their implementation. Stroud's Local development plan will consider the relevant SMP for our district and the recommended policies for relevant parts of the estuary. As coastal defences reach the end of their serviceable life they will need to be replaced and, in some cases, set back or realigned.

WRC01. Achieve the objectives of the Wilder Frome Vision adopted by the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership, and extend the principles of the vision to all rivers and streams in the district

WRC02. Continue and extend our natural flood management work throughout all areas of the district where reducing flood risk from rivers and streams is a priority.

WRC03. Increase resilience to surface water flood risk caused by climate change in our towns and villages by implementing a programme of retrofitted sustainable drainage in the district's urban centres and communities.

WRC04. Ensure the Local Development Plan / spatial strategy encourages development that protects and restore springs, streams and rivers and sustainable collection, use and disposal of water to improve water quality and reduce risk and impacts of drought.

WRC05 Mitigate the increase in flood risk from rivers and the sea caused by climate change throughout the district, prioritising nature based solutions to reduce risk from rapid response catchments and rising sea levels.