

Essex Climate Action Plan (2023-25)

[COVER PAGE]

1. Introduction

This is the second iteration of the Essex Climate Action Plan. We are really proud of the significant progress since the [first plan was published in November 2021](#). This updated Climate Action Plan takes stock of what has been achieved and what is still to come, whilst also recognising that since original publication, there have been significant changes at regional, national, and international levels which have impacted our communities, residents and businesses across Essex. Dramatic increases in energy costs; rising inflation; war in Ukraine; the ongoing impact of COVID on how we live and work, mean that we have been able to reassess how initiatives in the Climate Action Plan can best support the people of Essex, whilst also ensuring that resources are managed effectively. We also publish an annual report ([Essex Climate Action Report 2021-22](#)) setting out progress in climate action across Essex.

This Climate Action Plan (like the previous one) is in response to recommendations made by the [Essex Climate Action Commission](#) (the Commission) in the report [Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#). The recommendations were endorsed by Essex County Council in full in November 2021. The Commission was established as an independent advisory body to support Essex on its journey to tackle climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to build a climate resilient county.

Essex County Council (ECC) recognises that it cannot tackle the environmental and climate challenges we face alone. This document details projects which ECC is managing both directly and in concert with partners to drive effective progress against the Commission's recommendations. With sections relating to each of our key themes, this Climate Action Plan details projects which have been delivered since November 2021; initiatives which began in the previous Climate Action Plan and are still ongoing; and new undertakings which will commence in the financial year from April 2023 (or later). Please note that all funding commitments outlined below will be profiled through to 2025/26 (unless stated otherwise)

2. Commitments

Essex County Council's organisation strategy, [Everyone's Essex](#), (ref: FP/172/10/21) sets out four key strategic aims for the council, which are central to our undertakings:

Key for Contributions to Strategic Commitments



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One of Essex County Council's four strategic aims is a core commitment to a High Quality Environment. This includes objectives to:

1. Deliver on net zero targets

2. To deliver a step change in sustainable travel, helping to support our transition to net zero and climate resilient housing developments
3. To reduce waste and deliver a more circular economy.
4. To work with communities and businesses providing advice and support to enable them to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build their own climate resilience
5. To help our communities enjoy a high-quality environment, by making them more resilient against flooding, heat stress and water shortages, by enhancing our county's green infrastructure and reducing air pollution

In addition, the separate strategic aim in *Everyone's Essex* of a Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy includes a commitment to green growth in Essex. This encompasses developing Essex as a centre for innovation, supporting new technologies and business models to prepare and enable our economy to transition to net zero and securing green jobs for the future by ensuring we have the right local skills and drawing in investment opportunities

ECC is therefore committed to ambitious climate action and is embedding this across every aspect of the council's service delivery. We also recognise that the delivery of climate action also meets other ECC strategic aims. This is set out in the following sections of the Climate Action Plan.

3. Action Within ECC

ECC is committed to tackling our own greenhouse gas emissions and building our resilience as an organisation. We measure our progress via an international benchmark – [CDP](#) (originally the 'Carbon Disclosure Project'). Essex County Council has been awarded

an A-rating for action on climate change in 2022 – the only UK county council to achieve this top rating – and we will continue to benchmark our performance each year.

3.1 Levelling Up

Climate Action and Levelling Up Essex are key organisational priorities. Whilst they are distinct in definition, they are fundamentally interconnected due to the risks posed by – and potential impacts of – climate change. For instance, we know that certain socio-economic groups are disproportionately affected by climate change and therefore any increased climate-related risk factor could worsen inequality in Essex. Whilst in the broadest sense all of us are affected by climate change, it is people living in places with the highest levels of deprivation who experience the impacts of climate change most acutely; have fewer resources to respond to, and recover from, extreme weather events such as flooding; and are therefore less resilient. It is imperative that our plans and undertakings to tackle climate change and improve the environment also address inequalities and support the Levelling Up agenda.

The alignment between Climate Action and Levelling Up is clear: for example, as we upgrade our homes to improve energy efficiency and reduce our carbon emissions, we also reduce energy costs for households. As we green our county to reduce flood risk, protect our soils and screen our roads and buildings from overheating, we give more people access to green space, delivering key improvements in physical and mental health. As we bring forward our economic support programme, our focus is on unlocking the opportunities that come with the transition to net zero, ensuring Essex businesses and residents benefit from new skills, jobs and investment.

3.2 Devolution

Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend-on-Sea City Council together with district, city and borough authorities across the county have been working collaboratively to explore the benefits a potential devolution deal could offer residents of Greater Essex.

The devolution framework published by government in the 2022 [Levelling Up White Paper](#) describes an 'opportunity to adopt innovative local proposals to deliver action on climate change and the UK's Net Zero targets'. Earlier this year, Greater Essex submitted an [Expression of Interest](#) to government, requesting devolved powers and funding to support local ambitions in responding to climate change and achieving net zero.

3.3 Partnership

ECC works closely with partners within Essex, across the wider region and the UK as a whole, to deliver climate action through collaboration. This includes:

The **Climate Action Working Group of the Essex Anchors Network**: the network brings together 'Anchor Institutions' – large, typically not-for-profit organisations like hospitals, local councils, and universities – whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the populations they serve. ECC coordinates, supports and participates in the Climate Working Group, whose members work together to deliver net zero and green growth in Greater Essex. This sits under the umbrella of the [Essex Partnership](#).

East of England Local Government Association's **Regional Climate Change Forum**: this recently formed group brings together local authorities from across the East of England to share information and approaches to climate action and to amplify action taken by individual authorities. ECC has helped to shape the group's overall direction and is active in workstreams on sustainable planning and development, climate-related procurement and retrofit.

ECC is a member of **UK100**: a network of local leaders who have pledged to lead a rapid transition to net zero with clean air in their communities, ahead of the government's legal target. ECC joined UK100 in 2022. Cllr Peter Schwier has attended the Climate Leadership Academy run by UK100. ECC is also part of their Countryside Climate Network.

ECC sits on the Environment Board of **ADEPT**, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport. The Board aims to share knowledge and understanding of strategic issues and policies relating to climate change and the environment and to develop collaborative responses where needed. The Board advocates that environmental matters – and tackling and adapting to climate change – must be at the heart of decision making.

Internationally, ECC is a member of [Local Governments for Sustainability](#), a global network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments, committed to sustainable urban development. Essex is one of only seven UK locations to be a member.

3.3 Essex County Council Estate and School Estate

Essex County Council has committed to be a net zero organisation by 2030¹.

Essex County Council and School Buildings

ECC is developing a new estate plan which will include delivery of the net zero ambition, due to be completed by early 2024. Across ECC's core estate and school estate, action is already being taken to upgrade our own and our school buildings. We are rolling out smart meters across our estate and are committed to continue to improve our estate. We have secured £11.4m in grant funding from

¹ Net zero for scope 1 & 2 emissions

- Scope 1 emissions (direct emissions) are those from activities owned or controlled by your organisation. Examples of Scope 1 emissions include emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, furnaces, and vehicles: and emissions from chemical production in owned or controlled process equipment.
- Scope 2 emissions (energy indirect) are those released into the atmosphere that are associated with your consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam, and cooling. These indirect emissions are a consequence of your organisation's energy use but occur at sources you do not own or control.

the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (2021/22 to 2024/25) and will continue to maximise Government grant support for these costs. We have completed a review of charging infrastructure requirements across ECC's property portfolio to 2030.

Since 2021, all new school buildings being commissioned by ECC are designed to be net zero in operation, including three new primary schools to be opened in 2024. We will continue to commission only net zero schools, demonstrating our commitment to building for the future. We have a team which works with schools to develop carbon reduction plans and position schools to benefit from the maximum in Government grant support to fund retrofit and heating improvements.

Essex County Council has been supporting Ashden's Let's Go Zero campaign. Around 30 Essex schools are signed up, with ECC providing [case studies](#) of schools which have taken effective climate action. We are also developing Sustainability Kits for young people and schools in Essex. The kits will be rolled out as part of the Carbon Cutting Essex App, which was launched in spring 2023. Individuals will have the option to donate their 'carbon credits' to enable a local school to purchase one of the Sustainability Kits.

Essex County Council Energy

ECC has a new certified renewable energy contract for the three years to September 2025. This is in line with ECC's renewable electricity policy, whereby the council will source certified renewable energy and maximise renewable generation. We are investing in solar on our estate and have installed approximately 4,300 solar panels across 50 sites, equating to a capacity of 1,990 MWh/Annum. We will continue to review opportunities to increase renewable energy.

Essex County Council Land

ECC recognises the importance of its own green estate as a carbon sink and in building climate resilience, while providing space for nature. Essex County Council aims to prepare an asset management plan for our green and open spaces. This will draw together existing work and initiatives, including opportunities for enabling investment in nature rich landscapes (via payments from developers

under the new [Biodiversity Net Gain](#) requirements – see below, page 9) on our operational and non-operational estate; the Essex Forest Initiative; watercourse and flood management; and the management of – and enhancements to – areas of open space and woodland. The Green Asset Plan will supplement and link to existing service asset management plans and be developed over the next twelve months as part of the wider service area asset review programme.

Two pilot sites for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) schemes on the ECC estate have been identified. This will involve an initial investment from ECC of £276,000 to put in place the framework for coordinated management over 30 years to revert land from active arable use to grass scrubland mosaic. ECC aims to offset the costs by selling biodiversity units under the new BNG requirements for development. This seeks to offset negative biodiversity and habitat loss through development in Essex, realising a 10% net gain – an increase in wildlife – on these sites through positive action.

Essex County Council Tree Plan

The Tree Plan Vision is that “Essex County Council will lead the way on creating 30% Natural Green Infrastructure by protecting and increasing the tree stock on the Essex County Council estate”. In addition to the Tree Plan, 31 Tree Management Statements are being prepared to guide ECC officers in delivering the Tree Management Plan. Following Cabinet approval in May 2023, the Tree Plan will be published and the statements adopted later this year.

Essex Outdoors and Country Parks

Across Essex Outdoors and Country Parks outdoor education centres, we are working to enhance biodiversity and environmental outcomes. Working with Natural England, Historic England, National Highways, the Forestry Commission and the Rural Payments Agency, we are putting in place Countryside Stewardship agreements, to improve and manage these protected habitats. To date, we have secured a grant of £116,000 from the Rural Payments Agency. A second application is in train. We continue to improve water

management on these sites with '[leaky dams](#)', Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) rain gardens, visitor engagement, and the creation of additional ponds for water management and storage, all of which also have other ecological benefits.

3.4 Essex County Council Staff

The [Ways of Working \(WoW\) Programme](#) has now been fully rolled out and ECC has embraced a new approach to work with a [hybrid work model](#) that has significantly reduced our staff travel and building footprint, so reducing our energy use. Staff are further encouraged to reduce their travel impacts with provision of cycle parking at County Hall and a car share scheme. We are planning to introduce a salary sacrifice scheme for leasing electric vehicles later this year, subject to a formal decision.

In February 2023, ECC was awarded Bronze status as a Carbon Literate Organisation, with over 500 staff and councillors signing up for carbon literacy training and nearly 300 staff having received accreditation. The Leader of the Council; Executive Director, Climate, Environment and Customer; and Climate Czar, Cllr Peter Schwier, have all completed the training and are fully accredited. We will continue to support further carbon literacy training.

A staff Climate Network has been established to encourage action to mitigate climate change within staff roles and teams, and outside of the organisation through informed discussion and support.

3.5 The Essex Pension Fund

The [Essex Pension Fund](#) – for which ECC is the administering authority – recognises both its responsibility to be a trusted investor and the range of potential long-term risks associated with climate change that the Fund, as a long-term investor, faces. The Investment Steering Committee has appointed specialist external managers to a range of investment mandates. The financial impact of issues, including climate change, forms one part of the process that determines the investments made on the Fund's behalf. The Committee continues to review its Responsible Investment (RI) Policy and RI Beliefs – which includes climate change – to ensure

that the Fund's mandates are aligned and have an aspiration to be net zero by 2050. As a result, the Fund recently, in collaboration with its Index Tracking Manager, launched a new Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) global Equity Sustainable Transition Fund and has made a £100 million commitment to the Stafford Carbon Offset Opportunity Fund. In addition, the Committee has agreed a set of Climate Change Metrics in line with the Taskforce on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) regulations.

3.6 Treasury Management Investments

When the council has surplus cash balances, these are invested until they are next required. The council will not knowingly invest directly in businesses whose activities and practices pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the council's values. This would include, inter alia, avoiding direct investment in institutions with material links to:

- Human rights abuse (e.g. child labour, political oppression)
- Environmentally harmful activities (e.g. pollutants, destruction of habitat, fossil fuels)
- Socially harmful activities (e.g. tobacco, gambling)

For further information, please see the [Everyone's Essex Annual Plan and Budget \(2023/2024\)](#)

3.7 ECC Procurement









Essex County Council spends over £1.2bn per annum on goods, services and capital projects in order to run its operations. Working with the Carbon Trust, ECC has baselined these (Scope 3²) emissions produced under our Purchased Goods & Services and Capital Goods. ECC has set out a procurement action plan, to gain more detailed measurements, incentivise reduction of emissions and to support our suppliers to understand, set and reach their own climate targets. To date ECC has achieved:

² See Section 11 Monitoring & Evaluation below

- Inclusion of a requirement for climate to be considered in all tenders over £100,000, This may result in the supplier providing a Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) which meets the requirements of central government's [Procurement Policy Note 06/21](#). To lead by example, ECC will be producing an organisational CRP in line with these requirements.
- We take account of Social Value when awarding most contracts. Social Value includes climate measures used to ensure that environmental benefits are taken into account when deciding which bid is successful. These measures have been updated for 2023. These benefit suppliers who support Circular Economy solutions through their supply chains, as well as reducing waste and monitoring fleet emissions. Developing climate transition plans for our key emitting categories (Passenger Transport, Highways, Waste, Nursing & Residential Care, Homecare Services and Facilities Management & Property), as identified in our supplier emissions report.
- Continuing to baseline contract specific emissions and develop measures to ensure that emissions are reduced throughout the contractual terms, where appropriate. Working with our suppliers, we are creating measurement tools specific to their market sector, running webinars and publishing information to support suppliers' understanding and transition to net zero.
- Our supplier sustainability charter is being updated with clear targets in the environmental section and our procurement policy is being amended in line with ECC's wider ambitions.
- A new environmental policy is being produced. This will cover buying standards as well as expectations for how the organisation meets the climate challenge.
- Measurement of further Scope 3 emissions (Upstream and Downstream Transportation and Distribution, Waste Generated in Operations, Business Travel and Employee Commuting) will enable us to publish our own Carbon Reduction Plan for these key areas.

Essex County Council Estate and School Estate Initiatives

Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start	End	Finance £000			Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				To Mar 2023	Apr 2023 – Mar 2026	Total Spend for Initiative	Econ	Env	Health	Place
Retrofit ECC Core Estate	Energy efficiency, heating and renewables technologies for ECC core estate buildings from mix of Public Sector Decarbonisation Grants (£11.4m), ECC capital funding (£6.8m) and EU funding (EMPOWER £258k).	Ongoing	-	13,333	4,659	17,992				
Highways Street Lighting	Replacement of streetlights with low energy LEDs. ECC capital funding.			13,777	10,102	23,878				
Schools Team	ECC team which works with schools to undertake energy audits, develop low carbon plans and secure grant funding. ECC reserve funding.	22/23	24/25	57	188	245	 			

School Energy Campaign	Campaign for children across ten schools to support energy saving Grant funded by the EU (2IMPREZS: Energy Challenges Essex)	Jan 2022	Jun 2023	15	-	15		 		
Countryside Stewardship	Government Grant funding to support maintenance of country parks (RPA grant funding of £116k)	Dec 23	Apr 24	6.5	241.1	247.6		 		
EVs and charge points for ECC	Support transition to EV fleet for ECC *	Apr 23	Mar 26	-	400	400		 		

4. Land Use and Green Infrastructure

ECC recognises the challenges of a changing climate. Our Climate Action Plan addresses both reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our land use and increasing our resilience to our already changing climate, which is facing increasing risks of coastal erosion, flooding, overheating, water scarcity and soil degradation.

We have adopted a target of 30% green infrastructure by 2040. This green infrastructure, trees, scrub, meadows and salt marsh, reduces climate risks across both urban and rural landscapes. For example, green infrastructure helps the landscape absorb water and stores it in the landscape. Increasing our greenspace provides more space for nature – including pollinators critical to agricultural productivity – and gives more green space for residents.

4.1 Higher Sea Levels and Coastal Flooding

The Environment Agency (EA) is the lead on coastal flooding nationally and produces the [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#). We have been a core member of the independent panel reviewing the plan for the resilience of the Thames Estuary to a 1 in 100-year flooding event. The [report](#) was launched in May 2023. In addition, ECC works with the EA, other local authorities and government agencies to refresh and consider any amendments the [Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan \(SMP\)](#).

4.2 Flooding and Water Scarcity

A changing climate is already affecting our landscape, businesses and residents with key risks increasing, including from flooding. ECC is the statutory flood authority and works with the EA to produce the **Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs)** and **The Surface Water Management Plans (SWMPs)** for Essex, working with partners in the Flood Board. We have delivered an investment of over

£20 million over seven years through our flood capital programme, which delivers largely nature-based solutions (green infrastructure). Of this, circa £10million was externally funded, mainly from the Environment Agency (EA), as we seek to raise 50% from the Environment Agency and other partners. The Property Resilience Scheme offers protections for homes that have suffered flooding.

We deliver extensive advice to planners on Sustainable Drainage to reduce risks, improving flood reduction for 67,500 homes in new developments in Essex County Council on average per year. We continue to work with our communities to help them reduce their flood risk. We are implementing Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) schemes ourselves, including:

- On our highways, including the ground-breaking “[Make Rain Happy](#)” on Canvey Island, jointly funded with Anglian Water
- On our own estate with projects at Essex Outdoors Danbury and Thorndon and Weald County Parks
- In eight Basildon Schools, in a project funded by Department for Education and Anglian Water

Essex is a highly water stressed area, with water scarcity increasing. We are producing a Water Strategy – due out 2024 – which will set out the actions which organisations and individuals need to take to manage our scarce water supplies and improve our water quality.














4.3 Green Infrastructure

Last year, we published the Essex Green Infrastructure standards in the [Essex Design Guide](#). Produced with national and local partners, this provides ground-breaking advice for planners and developers in building green infrastructure into Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents. We are also taking direct action – ECC’s Essex Forest Initiative is planting 375,000 trees and is working with the broader Essex Forest Partnership which is planting a million trees by 2030. The Essex Local Nature Partnership,






set up last year, is supporting us in developing a new statutory Nature Recovery Strategy for Essex, which will map where Green Infrastructure is best placed in Essex to deliver resilience, as well as creating space for nature.

















Our agricultural productivity is also at risk from degrading soils. Increasing green infrastructure and moving to sustainable farming protects our soils, holds more water in the landscape and supports pollinators. We are working intensively in North Essex in our Climate Focus Area to accelerate action on green infrastructure and provide a road map for others. We are working with the National Farmers' Union, The Country Land and Business Association and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs agencies to engage with our farming communities. We have worked with partners to establish a farm cluster in North Essex, with match funding from Anglian Water, Essex and Suffolk Water and the Environment Agency up to March 2024. We are developing business cases with four landowners, in a Defra supported project, to enable commercial investment into green infrastructure, using new funding flowing from Government farming grants under the new Environmental Land Management Scheme, carbon credit for woodland and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG is a new investment required from building developers to ensure that no biodiversity is lost. We are also working with parish councils and national engagement charity, Involve, to develop resident-led nature recovery plans.
























Delivered (November 2021 – March 2023)



Initiative	Description	Date Initiative Delivered	Finance £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Economy	Env	Health	Place
Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) in Schools	Sustainable drainage systems delivered to eight selected Essex schools in Basildon, identified as at high flood risk. Grant funded from Dept for Education (£230k) and Anglia Water (£25k) & ECC (£27k), plus ECC staff time (£49k).	Mar 2023	282		 	 	 
Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC)	A community engagement project ECC is undertaking with Thames21 in Canvey Island. BRIC is a two year pilot project funded by the EU, which is trying to empower residents to shape solutions to flood risk. Deliverables include raingardens on Springfield Rd, Canvey.	Mar 23	12.7		 	 	 

Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – March 2026 and beyond)










Initiative	Description	Start	End	Finance £000			Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				To Mar 23	Apr 23 – Mar 26	Total for Initiative	Growth	Env	Health	Place
Capital Flood Programme	The Flood Prevention Capital Programme aims to reduce the level of surface water flood risk to properties. ECC funding is matched by external grants, largely the Environment Agency.	Ongoing – ECC funding to 25/26	-	5,288	13,416	18,704	 		 	

								 		
Property Flood Resilience (PFR)	The PFR scheme gives residents that have been flooded internally access to a one-off £8,000 grant to protect their homes through the installation of property flood resilience measures. 100% grant funded from the Environment Agency.	Ongoing	-	121	1,980	2,101				
Water Strategy	The Essex Water Strategy project will provide a more integrated view of the water challenge and collective action needed in the county to improve our water quality and protect water resources. *	2024		122.5			 	 		
Essex Net Zero Innovation Futures (NEIRF)	Essex Net Zero Innovation Futures 100% funded by EA: Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund. ECC is working with Downforce Technologies, Finance Earth and four Essex landowners to unlock investment in natural capital assets at four pilot sites (total 1,560 ha).	Oct 2022	Oct 2023	56.4	42.1	98.5	 	  	 	

Climate Focus Area	The Climate Focus Area (CFA) acts as a demonstration site for best practice in sustainable land use management. This includes ECC contribution to the North Essex Farm Cluster, which has match funding from Anglian Water (£20k), Essex & Suffolk Water (£20k), Environment Agency (£20k), RSPB (£2k) *	April 2022	March 2024	207	32.5	240	 	  	 	 
Essex Forest Initiative	Part of a five year project to plant 375,000 trees across Essex. 240,000 trees planted to date. 2023/24 planting target of 100,000 trees 2024/25 planting target of 125,000 trees Grant funding of £925k from Forestry Commission and private sector support.	2021	2025	658	1,018	1,676	 	 	 	
Green Streets	Maintenance programme for ECC street trees. The total funding commitment is out to March 2028.	April 2022	Mar 2028	407	929	1,925		 	 	
Local Nature Partnership & Local Nature Recovery Strategy	The independent partnership chaired by Dr Simon Lyster has representatives from a wide range of sectors. ECC provides secretariat support to 2024. LNP is supporting development of the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy which has	March 2022	Ongoing	33	16	48				

	received £48k in funding support from Defra to date.									
										

New Initiatives (April 2023 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Duration	Finance £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Economy	Env	Health	Place
Biodiversity Net Gain Pilots	Two pilot Biodiversity Net Gain sites on the ECC estate. Upgrading land for the benefit of nature and unlocking BNG credits to maintain this nature rich landscape out to 2053.	Apr 23 – Mar 24	276		 	 	 
Biodiversity Net Gain Grant	To support planning authorities with planning oversight to manage mandatory BNG requirements.	Jun 23	10		 		

5. Energy

ECC is committed to increasing investment in renewable energy, to support local communities to generate their own renewable energy and to benefit directly from the transition to clean energy.

In 2022, ECC helped over 600 residents to source solar panels and battery storage through a bulk buying scheme [Solar Together](#). The 2023 Solar Together scheme is now underway and we expect it to deliver a further 600 solar rooftop installations.

ECC is supporting the establishment of a network of new community energy groups through the Pathways programme, helping parishes and communities across Essex – including in our Levelling Up areas – to develop new local renewable energy projects. Pathways has been nationally recognised for its achievements in scaling up community energy and collaboration across local government, local communities and the third sector. ECC has also supported communities in researching and developing their own renewables projects through the grant funded South East New Energy (SENE) programme. This includes:

- Communities developing local renewable energy generation, storage project plans and feasibility studies
- Renewable Energy Resource Assessment maps that set out the potential for solar and wind energy generation











ECC works with Citizens Advice Essex to deliver the [Warm Homes Essex](#) website, to help people who are struggling to afford heating to keep their homes warm, as well as to help all residents reduce their energy costs and impact on the environment. The website provides signposting to a range of government approved schemes within the county, as well as advice on energy efficiency in the home.









In new initiatives for 2023-24, ECC, along with partners in the private and community sectors, has been successful in winning Phase 1 funding from Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme for two projects to look at how we scale up investment in local energy projects. Both projects explore how barriers such as accessing finance and local capacity to deliver net zero projects can be overcome. One project is focusing on community led local energy projects, such as solar and storage across whole communities. The second project is looking at net zero investment in schools, SMEs and the public estate. ECC expects to bid for the subsequent round of Phase 2 funding in 2023.

ECC has also partnered with the private sector to secure funding from the Ofgem Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) to develop low carbon heat and power solutions for low income households using technology innovations, "Project SHIELD". ECC will work with partners to bid for subsequent rounds of the Ofgem SIF fund in 2023.








ECC has secured funding from the Horizon 2020 Shared Green Deal fund to explore local area energy planning to support a just transition to net zero for low income communities and will be developing this work in Jaywick in 2023.









Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021– March 2026 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Finance £000					Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
		Start	End	to Mar 23	April 23 – Mar 26	Total £ Initiative	Econ	Env	Health	Place
Warm Homes Essex Advice Service	<p>Warm Homes Essex is an advice service delivered by Citizens Advice Essex that provides bespoke support for residents whose health is impacted by living in a cold home. Funded by a grant from Affordable Warm Solutions CIC for £1.2m</p> <p>ECC further supports Citizens Advice Essex to provide the website and online energy efficiency advice and signposting to government grant schemes.</p>	Jun 21	Mar 24	797	367	1,164		 		 
Annual Solar Together Essex Scheme	<p>Collective purchasing scheme for solar panels and battery storage on homes.</p> <p>Initial £43,000 spend by ECC is recovered from referral fees; hence long term costs are net zero.</p>	Ongoing	-	-	-	-	  	 		

Local Energy Programme (South East New Energy)	South East New Energy (SENE) is a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant to fund and enable local renewable energy projects across the South East. Overall project budget £3.8m was distributed across partners in SE England. Total award was £134k with some spend prior to Nov 2021.	Oct 21	June 23	88	41	129	 	 		
Community Energy – Pathways Programme	Initially supported by Local Energy Communities across the 2 Seas Region (LECSEA) – a grant funded programme to support and grow a network of community energy groups in Essex and develop local energy projects. Grant funding of £227k was matched by ECC staff time (£168k) plus £24k cash contribution to extend into Mar 24. ECC continued to support. Continuation of local community energy Pathways programme	Mar 21	Mar 24	227	24	251		 		

New Initiatives (April 2023 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Duration	Finance £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Economy	Env	Health	Place
Innovate UK Pathfinder Places 1: Essex Net Zero Taskforce	Innovate UK grant funding to explore non-technical barriers to area based, community led, renewable energy projects. ECC is the lead in this scheme. The total budget is £77,215 of which £60,353 is grant funded, ECC share is £23,783.	Apr 23 – Mar 24	23.783				
Local Energy – Innovate UK Pathfinder Places 2: SHIFT To Net Zero Communities	Innovate UK grant funding to accelerate investment in net zero projects in schools, support for SMEs, and decarbonising heat. ECC is a partner in this scheme, which is led by EnergyPro. The total budget is £86,041, of which £69,222 is grant funded, of which ECC share is £7,500. The balance is funded by private sector investment.	Apr 23 – Mar 24	7.5				

Project SHIELD – sustainable heat and intelligent energy for low income neighbourhoods	Ofgem Strategic Innovation Fund project to develop low carbon heat and power solutions for low income households using technology innovations. ECC is a partner in this UKPN scheme. The total budget is £90,742, of which £81,668 is grant funded.	Apr 23 – Jun 23	3.5				
Horizon 2020 – Shared Green Deal – enabling a just transition for low income communities	Grant funded Community led local area energy planning project – exploratory phase in Jaywick.	Apr 23 – Dec 23	19				

6. Built Environment

The challenge facing Essex is significant given the scale of development coming forward, much of which is outlined in Local Plans. This is coupled with the retrofit challenge as the vast majority of our existing buildings need to be upgraded to improve energy efficiency, move to low carbon heat and embrace renewables. ECC is supporting both low carbon new development and upgrading our existing buildings across the county. ECC continues to work with planning authorities to develop new garden communities that are low carbon, climate resilient and high-quality developments.

Essex Housing is rolling out a pilot project that seeks to be net zero both in operation and construction, to drive further innovation in housing development.

District, borough and city council local plans set the local planning policies for new development. ECC continues to work with local authorities across Essex to support the move to net zero new development. Some key activities that have been undertaken to address the challenges facing new build development include:

- A Climate and Planning Unit (CaPU) to help support local planning authorities – with development of climate change local plan policy – and to provide advice on new development schemes in relation to climate change.
- Development of the including a study on the additional cost of net zero development, which has been shown to be marginal ([Net Zero Carbon Viability and Toolkit Study | Essex Design Guide](#))
- Legal advice on the potential of local plans to set higher standards than national regulations [Essex Open Legal Advice – Energy Policy and Building Regulations | Essex Design Guide](#)

- Essex Design Guide updates – this has included having a dedicated section on climate change and including updates such as solar gain guidance. Work is ongoing to update transport planning policies.
- [Essex Developers Climate Action Charter](#) – The Essex Developers Group has signed up to the Charter which has number of aims relating to climate change and an action plan of how to deliver on these aims.
- Training for Members and Planning Officers – Training by BRE on climate change and the built environment was provided. Further training sessions through CaPU are scheduled to be provided for Planning Officers.

Retrofit

If we are to reach net zero as a county by 2050, reducing carbon emissions from homes represents one of the biggest challenges. However, it also provides an opportunity for economic growth through new jobs; opportunities for our many construction SMEs; and a chance to tackle the cost-of-living crises and inequality, by improving the quality of housing whilst reducing fuel bills.







ECC has completed a detailed analysis of the current energy efficiency of every domestic property in Essex and the potential costs of retrofitting those homes to net zero. This data, developed in partnership with Parity Projects, informs targeted retrofit projects. Work will also be undertaken in 2023-24 to explore how ECC can enable and support the uptake of retrofit measures with the wider, self-funded sector of the community.















ECC worked with our district, borough and city authorities, and with the Government funded Greater South East Net Zero Hub, to maximise grant funding from central Government to support the upgrading of our most fuel poor households. This included grant money of up to £10,000 for energy efficiency, heating and renewables installations. We have successfully secured grant funding across each tranche of Government support. An initial £800,000 awarded in September 2020 was delivered directly by ECC (Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery), with subsequent grants of £5.2m in December 2020 and £9.3m in December 2021. The latest

award is of £25m (2023). All delivered by the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. ECC has also led a partnership with Social Housing providers Sanctuary Housing and Eastlight Community Homes to secure £1.6m funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund to retrofit social housing stock, improving them to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C.

We will continue to explore how we can maximise support for households across Essex to improve their properties, reduce their carbon emissions and bills and live in warm, comfortable and healthy homes.

Delivered (November 2021 – April 2023)







Initiative	Description	Date Delivered	Financial Spend (Delivered) £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Econ	Env	Health	Place
Essex Design Guide Development & Support *	<p>Working with the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) to support development of best practise guidance to inform local plan development across Essex.</p> <p>Net Zero Carbon Viability and Toolkit Study Essex Design Guide</p> <p>Essex Open Legal Advice – Energy Policy and Building Regulations Essex Design Guide</p> <p>Walkable Neighbourhoods Guidance</p> <p>Essex Design Guide climate change net zero update</p>	Apr 23	175		  	 	

	Training for Planning Members & Officers						
Developers Charter	ECC supported the Essex Developers to develop their Developers Charter and signatories commit to being carbon neutral in respect of building by 2030. (Staff time)	Mar 22	-		  	 	
Retrofit Grants for Fuel Poor Homes	Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (GHGLADS) Phase 1a. ECC delivery of grants up to £10k to fund retrofit projects in low income households. Grant award was £813.2k of which £37k was spent prior to Nov 2021.	Mar 22	776		  	 	
Housing Stock Analysis	Detailed modelling analysis of the energy efficiency of every domestic property in Essex and the potential costs of retrofitting to net zero. This was supported with a £50k grant from the Community Renewal Fund. The financial impact of this project is reported through the Retrofit grant in the Just Transition to Green Economy section (please see page 52).	Mar 22					




















Delivered by South East Net Zero Hub















Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – 2025 and beyond)

Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) delivered projects in partnership with ECC and district, borough and city authorities in Essex.

Initiative	Description	Dates	Finance £000			Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
			To Mar 23	Mar 23-Apr 26	Total Committed	Econ	Env	Health	Place
Retrofit Grants for Fuel Poor Houses	Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Phase 2	Oct 22	5,200		5,200				
	Sustainable Warmth	Mar 23	3,910		9,300				





Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – March 2026 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start	End	Finance £000			Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				To Mar 23	Apr 23 – Mar 26	Total £	Econ	Env	Health	Place
Essex Housing	Net zero housing pilot of ten homes, net zero in construction and in use. The figures reflect the full development cost.	Sept 21	Dec 25	ECC 160	Grant 145 ECC 3248	4,058	   	    	  	
Climate and Planning Unit (CAPU)	A Climate Planning Policy Support Group to provide Essex districts with advice and support on embedding climate change related policies into local plans.	Apr 22	Mar 26	50	770	820	 	  	 	

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1	Grant funded programme to retrofit social housing stock, working with registered housing providers Sanctuary Housing and Eastlight Community Homes.	April 2022	June 2023	735	886	1,620	  	 		
Revising Transport Planning Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Parking Strategy for New Garden Communities and Walkable Neighbourhood – TRACC Accessibility Mapping Tool – Walkable Neighbourhood Public Realm Design – Net Zero Carbon Travel Planning Guidance & Behaviour Change Toolkit – Pan -Essex Net Zero Carbon Transport Planner – Guide Net Zero Transport Assessment & Modelling 	Apr 23	Mar 24		675	675	  	 		

Delivered by South East Net Zero Hub: New Initiatives (April 2023 – 2025 and beyond)

Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) delivered projects in partnership with ECC and district, borough and city authorities in Essex.

Initiative	Description	Start Date	End Date	Finance £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
					Econ	Env	Health	Place
Retrofit grants from	Home Upgrade	April 2023	March 2025	24,800				

fuel poor homes	Grant (HUG) 2							
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7. Transport

We are committed to delivering a step change in carbon emissions related to transport to support the move towards net zero. Essex County Council has worked with [Transport East](#), the non-statutory sub-national Transport Body for Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend and Thurrock, to develop a new regional [Transport Strategy](#) for the East of England. The Transport Strategy identifies “Decarbonising Transport” as one of its four priorities and has set an ambitious target of reaching net zero transport by 2040. As the relevant Transport Authority and Highways Authority for Essex, ECC formally endorsed the Transport East Transport Strategy at a [Cabinet meeting on 19 July 2022](#). The Transport East Transport Strategy, its priorities for transport, and delivery goals will be reflected in future transport strategy and policy developed by ECC, including the new Local Transport Plan covering Essex, which is currently in development.

All of our work is delivered in partnership, either with districts, central government and its agencies, Transport East, or suppliers, and is aligned with the transport priorities within *Everyone’s Essex*.

Our approach is ‘Avoid – Shift – Improve’: avoid unnecessary motor vehicle trips; encourage residents to shift to sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport; and improve the efficiency and sustainability of those journeys which are essential, through initiatives such as improving bus provision and developing a strategy for electric charge points.

ECC has continued development and delivery of active travel schemes investing over £15m across six districts. The schemes reallocate road space to make it easier to walk and cycle and have been designed with our districts. In January 2023, we received £1m in Capability Funding to encourage families, commuters and school children in Essex to take up active travel habits. The funding will be used to plan our walking and cycling networks, develop a series of consultations and local engagement events to enable residents and businesses to have their say and help to shape networks, school streets and Liveable Neighbourhoods across the

county. We also received a Level 2 rating from Active Travel England for our active travel provision by demonstrating strong local leadership, with clear plans that form the basis of an emerging network with a few elements already in place.

Going forward, our priorities will be to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for all of our districts, as well as a Strategic Cycling Network for Essex (County-Wide LCWIP). This includes developing a long-term framework which will guide future investment in walking and cycling infrastructure. We have five LCWIPs in place or that are being refreshed (Basildon, Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, and Harlow) and five in development (Witham, Brentwood, Uttlesford, Rochford and Castle Point). All the remaining Essex districts are expected to start development later in 2023/24. Our refreshed Cycling Strategy is expected to go out to consultation in the Summer.

We have also developed a proposal for the Army and Navy junction, which is congestion hotspot. Following public consultation, rather than simply build another road junction for cars, we have focused on a solution for people, following best practice guidance for walking and cycling. A business case supporting this project has been developed in conjunction with local MPs, parish and city councils, Essex Highways, Jacobs and Highways England. This has been submitted to the Department for Transport for review in Spring 2023.

Following a successful trial, Essex Highways is now using warm asphalt for inlay surfacing works, where it is locationally appropriate. This form of asphalt uses less energy when it is being manufactured. This is better for the environment, although the reduction in carbon emissions overall is only moderate.

Our ongoing DfT supported electric scooter trial, run in partnership with a private operator in three key locations, has delivered more than more than 1.769 million trips, actively delivering modal shift from cars to net zero alternatives. At the end of their useful life, the scooter batteries are recycled and the scooter body repurposed.

We celebrated the first anniversary of [Essex Pedal Power](#), a community-led initiative that aims to make cycling accessible for everyone, providing access to employment, training and educational opportunities or key local services. There are now 600 residents in Jaywick Sands and Clacton who have been given a new bike free of charge, with another 600 bikes to follow next year. The project will be extended across Tendring District (500 bikes) and to other districts including Colchester (700 bikes) and Basildon (600 bikes), providing improved access to the opportunities available to other Essex residents.

We continue to promote our vision for a [Safer, Greener, Healthier Essex](#) using targeted online advertising, social media, PR, and events, as well as collaborating with key partners to encourage modal shift.

We have published our Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy this year for consultation and are focussed on the provision of the “Right Charger in the Right Place”. We received £236,200 from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) to install 60+ on-street chargers in Essex, across 30 locations – rural and urban. This will allow us to better understand what type of charger works in various locations – as well as helping to reduce the risk of creating of a ‘low-carbon elite’. We have provided the opportunity for residents to suggest locations for on-street residential charging points via the [Essex Highways website](#).







[HomeRun](#) is a free app which Essex County Council is currently trialling to help school pupils and their families make the best sustainable travel choices to suit them. It provides the financial and environmental costs of each travel option from home to school: walking, scooting or cycling, public transport and school buses, or car sharing between households. It creates an online school

community, where students and families can share their experiences, and match up for journey-sharing. Two small primary schools, both in rural parts of the county, are taking part. In the Spring term of 2023, almost 150 people used the app, travelling an average distance of just over four miles each way. We are offering it to all secondary schools, so these numbers are likely to increase.







We have published our [Bus Services Improvement Plan](#) (BSIP) to rebuild the Essex bus network, reverse the long-term decline in passengers, deliver modal shift from cars and improve public health. As part of delivering our BSIP, we have:




















- Made Essex's first Enhanced Partnership between the county council and bus operators. We have published network reviews for each district; agreed distinct numbering for bus services within districts and common dates for network changes; undertaken 49 infrastructure schemes to improve the bus network at an ultra-local level and supported growth in bus patronage
- Agreed to the Essex Saver and Sunday Saver multi operator, with all Essex tickets being available on digital ticketing platforms
- Launched the TravelEssex brand and started development of a single Essex portal
- Launched the [DigiGo](#) electric minibus service following a successful bid into the Rural Mobility Fund, which saw 15,735 total passengers and 12,163 total rides made (between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023). This is a £2.575m grant funded pilot for a demand response minibus service in rural Essex using electric vehicles





















Delivered (November 2021 – April 2023)








Initiative	Description	Date Delivered	Financial Spend (Delivered) £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Econ	Env	Health	Place
Pedal Power	Upgrade of cycle route from Jaywick to Clacton. Grant funded from DLUC's Getting Building Fund and the Essex Physical Activity Local Delivery Pilot	Mar 23	1,490		 	  	

Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start	End	Finance £000			Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				To Mar 23	Apr 23 – Mar 26	Total Spend for Initiative	Econ	Env	Health	Place
Bus Back Better	Essex County Council published its Bus Service Improvement Plan. This will set out how buses can help deliver safer, greener and healthier travel in Essex. The plan sets out specific measures where Essex County Council (ECC) will work with the bus industry and other partners to deliver safer, greener and healthier travel. Investment of £433k grant funding from DfT (Clean Bus Tech Fund) and £500k ECC capital.	Apr 23	Mar 24	443	500	943		 	 	

Active Travel	Active Travel includes dedicated cycleways; walkable neighbourhoods and school streets; improving cycling infrastructure to all stations and develop a coherent network across the county; increase walking through the development of walkable neighbourhoods; and encourage active travel in young people through the creation of school streets. Revenue grant funding from DfT (£1,495k). Active Travel Capital Grants from DfT totalling £11,500k & £3,912k ECC capital.	Apr 21	Mar 25	5,121	11,786	16,907		  	  	
Cycling assets renewal	Maintenance of cycle lanes	Apr 23	Mar 26	-	1,750	1,750	 	  		
LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans s106 funding	Apr 23	Mar 26	250	2,679	2,929	 	  		

Pedal Power	Providing free bikes to residents in the county's most disadvantaged communities, in order to significantly increase cycling, active travel and physical activity levels. Grant funded from DLUC's Getting Building Fund and the Essex Physical Activity Local Delivery Pilot (£1.85m revenue)		Mar 24	1,550	300	1,850		 	  	
Cycling Infrastructure	Ongoing Investment in new cycling infrastructure	Apr 21	Mar 25	522	3,400	3,922		 	  	
Bikeability	Free bikeability training for adults in Essex	Mar 23	Apr 24	368	299	667		 	  	
Electric Vehicle Strategy *	Developing an EV charging strategy for Essex, to support the transition to electric vehicles. (Staff cost)	Apr 22	Sept 23	78.9	85.7	164.8				

Electric Vehicle Charging network	Grant funding from Office of Zero Emission Vehicles for the On-street Residential Charging Point (ORCS) Fund grant to install 66 residential on-street charging points across Essex	Jan 23	May 24		236	236				
Behaviour Change	Mobilisation of a wider behaviour change programme to support the Safer, Healthier, Greener ambition.	Apr 23	Mar 25	-	450	450	 	 		

8. Waste

Essex County Council (ECC) is committed to minimising waste and reducing environmental impacts by reusing and recycling more. By supporting residents and businesses to make the right choices and delivering enhanced waste services, we can move toward a more circular economy, where we better protect our natural resources.

ECC is working with all borough, city and district councils to develop a shared approach for how we manage waste in Essex. The new Waste Strategy for Essex will align with the recommendations of the Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC) by delivering a low waste, low carbon vision, which embraces the circular economy. Essex residents and partners will be consulted on the waste strategy vision and approach during 2023.





Over the last year, ECC has secured future access to the bio-waste facilities needed to ensure we can recycle green garden waste collected in Essex and turn it into compost and generate energy from separately collected food waste. We have also committed to reducing our reliance on landfill, with an aim of sending zero waste to landfill by 2030, by maximising recycling and encouraging the waste industry to provide us with alternatives to landfill for non-recyclable waste. We are using our green waste (mulch) as a source of nutritious feed for trees planted as part of the Essex Forest Initiative. In 2022, ECC took direct control of the operation of its recycling centre and waste transfer station network and reconfigured the way these sites operate in order to maximise reuse and recycling. This in-sourcing approach has also enabled us to invest in a newer, more efficient fleet, with lower emissions and to redesign our operations to reduce waste miles travelled. Our recycling centre booking trial is exploring the use of innovative service delivery models to reduce the carbon impact of one of our key waste services. By reducing congestion and vehicle idling time across the recycling centre network, as well as providing enhanced opportunities to reuse and recycle, we are looking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon impact of our waste system.

Our 'Love Essex' initiatives – delivered by the Essex Waste Partnership comprising ECC and district, borough and city councils – have focussed on behaviour change and encouraging residents and businesses to reduce waste, improve recycling and tackle littering. In 2022, our team and campaigns were recognised as national exemplars, winning multiple awards.





In 2022-23 our campaigns delivered a wide range of activities, including:




- Providing 38 Essex community-based projects with micro-grant funding to reduce waste
- Supporting the online platform [Freegle](#) with promotional opportunities, resulting in over 14,000 items being swapped in Essex. This is estimated to save almost 400 tonnes worth of items from being thrown away
- Working in partnership with the [Lighthouse Furniture Project](#) early to collect nearly 500 appliances from ECC recycling centres, with over 90% serviced, repaired, and made available for resale at low cost in the local community
- Diverting over 150 tonnes of waste through home composting promotion and subsidised compost bins
- Engaging with 170 Love Essex Champions to share inspirational waste reduction and recycling messages across their networks, reaching over 5,700 people
- Empowering 35 local authorities to move to a more circular economy by developing guidance and self-assessment tools, as well as providing training and learning to 1,300 people through our [Blueprint to a Circular Economy project](#)

Delivered (November 2021 – April 2023)



Initiative	Description	Date Delivered	Financial Spend (Delivered) £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Econ	Env	Health	Family
BLUEPRINT to a Circular Economy	Supporting councils and other institutions to deliver a more circular economy through the development and delivery of training, education, solution testing and a self-assessment toolkit. The total project cost over three years c.£4.9m of which c£3.4m was provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).	Apr 2023	3,414	 	 		

Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start	End	Finance £000			Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				To Mar 23	Apr 23 – Mar 26	Total Finance	Econ	Env	Health	Family
Waste Strategy for Essex	Development of a 30-year framework strategy to deliver the Essex Waste partnership vision for a low waste, low carbon future for waste management in Essex.	November 2021	Mid 2024 (Strategy Adoption)	141	783	924		 		
Love Essex	Delivery of educational and behaviour change projects by the Essex Waste			651	1,173	1,823				

	Partnership that aim to reduce household waste, improve recycling and tackle waste crime.									
Biowaste Treatment	Secured Biowaste treatment to ensure future treatment capacity of garden waste and food waste collected by Essex councils for recycling	Apr 23	Apr 28	6,663	9,474	16,107		 		
Booking Trial	Trialling a booking systems at the recycling centres across Essex to improve customer experience, reduce congestion, and vehicle idling, and to increase recycling	Nov 21	Dec 23	65	20	85				

New Initiatives (April 2023 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start Date	Delivery Date	Finance £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
					Econ	Env	Health	Family
Biowaste Project	Targeted countywide campaign to drive up participation in household food recycling	June 23	Dec 23	763		 		

9. Community Engagement

Total financial commitment (revenue) for Engagement and Communications is £2.0m 2021/22 – 2025/26. Spend will be incurred on charges for research, communication materials, events, social media (including ‘Essex is Green’), website development (including ECAC website) and maintenance, newsletters and campaigns. Spend to June 2023 totals £758k. A further £1m was committed to support community initiatives, including £500k for the Climate Action Challenge Fund.

Essex County Council has established an ambitious and robust programme, working with multiple partners, to engage local communities, residents, businesses and schools to help tackle climate change and transform Essex to become a carbon neutral county.

9.1 Empowering Action

The £500,000 Climate Action Challenge Fund was launched in July 2021 to support communities to deliver their own projects. In February 2023, it was announced that all £500,000 had been awarded to over 40 local community groups, schools and local councils. Projects that benefited from the Fund included the Gaia installation at Chelmsford Cathedral, the installation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and eco clubs for schoolchildren. Whilst some projects funded have already been completed, there are a number still being delivered.

We are working to support other organisations in their own planning and to engage their members. A series of bi-monthly webinars were held for the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) between September 2021 and September 2022 to upskill parish councillors. In January 2023, Essex County Council facilitated and helped organise a bespoke webinar for the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE): “Moving towards Carbon Zero”. ECC is working with Involve on a grant funded project within the Essex

Climate Focus Area which will see three parish councils (Stisted, Tiptree and Wivenhoe) create their own community led Local Nature Plan to improve biodiversity, climate resilience and adaptation in the area.

We are also making use of our own capacity across the council. A climate and environment-themed Love Your Library Day was held on 8 October 2022 in 73 Essex libraries. The day provided opportunities for visitors to learn about the environment in their local area from speakers and partner organisations. The response from the public was positive. Families particularly enjoyed building bird feeders and seed bombs. Some libraries reported these were their busiest-ever sessions. Active Essex ran a Grow Your Own project in 2022 to support Essex residents at risk of food insecurity or social isolation to grow their own fruit and vegetables across the Spring and Summer months.

We are working with the arts and culture community to mobilise positive climate action. In their 'Beach of Dreams' project, arts organisation Kinetika walked the entire east coast of England (over 500 miles across 31 days) in 2021, joined by residents, environmentalists and artists around the Essex coast. Amanda Kelleher was awarded the 2021/22 Explore Essex Art Commission. An award-winning Essex based theatre producer, artist and performer, her projects often explore serious subjects in playful and fun ways. For six months, Amanda worked with primary aged school children in Wickford (Basildon) and Tiptree (Colchester), looking at issues around the environment and climate change anxiety through storytelling and the recording of these stories, using Cudmore Grove Country Park as inspiration.

Launched in 2021, the ECC Arts and Cultural fund has been supporting arts organisations and practitioners by providing grants which have enabled arts, creative and cultural projects to be delivered across the county. As part of the judging criteria, entrants are asked to show how their project will contribute to ECC's climate action goals. Just a few of the projects which have been all, or part funded by ECC, and which have a link to climate action are: [INSTAR: Arcade](#); [Unfamiliar The Deepenings](#); and the [Colchester 2022 EcoFestival](#).

9.2 Advice and Information

In May 2022, we produced three [Climate Action Advice Packs](#) for residents, businesses and schools. A new pack for early years providers will be published later in 2023.

In May 2023, we published the new [Cutting Carbon Essex app](#) (available on Apple Store and Google Play).

These resources provide authoritative advice on actions we can all take to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience.

9.3 Digital Support and Social Media

We continue to support a dedicated website essexclimate.org.uk, which hosts the advice packs alongside news items, events and a standalone feature page for the [Local Nature Partnership](#). In the nine months since Google Analytics was added (mid-September 2022), the website received over 17,000 page views.

Social media accounts have been developed for the Essex Climate Action Commission on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#). The accounts are used to post and share information on climate action, ECC and partner activity, as well as to direct people to various web pages and events. In terms of analytics, we have a current reach of 109,745 people, with paid ad campaigns included (72,209 excluding the paid ads) and 3,474 profile visits. These are combined figures for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube over the previous three months.

Essex is Green social media channels actively engage and inspire thousands of residents online to get involved and help tackle climate change. Between July 2021 and June 2023, the total number of Essex is Green content impressions was 10.75 million. The






total number of followers is over 10,500 and the average number of engagements per post is 21. The Essex is Green Twitter account now has 2,500 followers and since August 2020 has had 422,000 impressions. The Changemakers group is where over 250 Essex admins or local community group leaders meet to work and learn together to achieve their shared goals of tackling climate change and improving the environment. The group has more than doubled in size since our first climate action plan was published.




We continue to run a programme of events each year across the county with the current 2023/4 events programme now underway.




9.4 Community Benefit Funding

There will be a number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) coming to the county over the next few years. We are hoping that these projects will secure community benefit funding which can be used for future climate initiatives.









Delivered (November 2021 – April 2023)









Initiative	Description	Date Delivered	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
			Econ	Env	Health	Family
Climate Advice Packs	<p>We have produced advice packs for residents, schools and businesses, explaining the impact of climate change to these different audiences, what they can do about it and how to get involved. Packs were launched in May 2022 and will be refreshed in summer 2023.</p> <p>An additional advice pack for early years settings will be published later in 2023.</p> <p>An easy read version of the residents' advice pack has also been developed for those with learning difficulties.</p>	May 2022		   		

<p>Essex Climate Action Challenge Fund</p>	<p>The £500,000 Climate Action Challenge Fund was launched in July 2021 and was established in response to the Essex Climate Action Commission's Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral report.</p>	<p>July 2021 – March 2023</p>				
<p>Love Your Library Day</p>	<p>A climate and environment-themed Love Your Library Day was held on 8 October 2022 in 73 Essex libraries.</p> <p>The day provided opportunities for visitors to learn about the environment in their local area from speakers and partner organisations</p>	<p>October 2022</p>				
<p>RCCE Webinar</p>	<p>Essex County Council facilitated and helped organise a bespoke webinar for the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), titled "Moving towards Carbon Zero".</p> <p>This initiative offered RCCE members an opportunity to learn more about what actions to take in order to tackle climate change and also how they can help the county achieve net zero by 2050.</p>	<p>January 2023</p>				












Grow Your Own Campaign	The Active Essex Grow Your Own project engaged Essex residents who were at risk of food insecurity or social isolation to grow their own fruit and vegetables across the Spring and Summer months in 2022.	March 2023				 
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Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Initiative Start Date	Projected Delivery Date	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Econ	Env	Health	Family
Bi-annual Climate Conferences	Bi-annual spring and autumn climate conferences, hosted by ECC, attended by local authority Members and officers from across Essex.	April 2022	Ongoing		   		
Online Activity	<u>Website and Digital Channels</u> Development of the essexclimate.org website; the Essex Climate Commission social media channels; and the Essex is Green social channels continue to amplify climate messaging.	Apr 22	Ongoing		 		

					  		
Events	Programme of events for 2023/24, to continue face-to-face engagement with residents, businesses, and schools.	2021	Ongoing		  		
Water Butt Giveaway	Hosted via Facebook. Competition held whereby people could enter a prize draw for approximately ten water butts. This typically runs once a year.	2020	Ongoing				
Reduced cost water butts	50% off 100L and 200L water butts from GetComposting	2020	Ongoing				

New Initiatives (April 2023 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start Date	Delivery Date	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Econ	Env	Health	Family
Involve Project	<p>ECC has been chosen to work with Involve on its Leading Climate Engagement programme to deliver three community workshops.</p> <p>Residents from Wivenhoe, Stisted and Tiptree had the chance to attend these workshops and provide recommendations to their local town/parish council, which will be used in the development of a Local Nature Plan.</p>	Feb 23	Sept 23		 		
Carbon Cutting Essex App	<p>In May 2023, Essex County Council launched a new Carbon Cutting Essex App to support residents, schools and businesses in taking action on climate.</p> <p>You can download the free app through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GooglePlay • the App Store • the Greenredeem website 	Apr 22	May 23		   		
Sustainable Front Gardens	<p>Programme to highlight the important role of gardens in flood risk reduction, nature conservation and improved health.</p>	2023			  		

10. A Just Transition to a Green Economy

Green growth is a direct commitment of ECC's *Everyone's Essex* and intrinsic to delivering against the recommendations of the Essex Climate Action Commission. The [Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero](#) report, delivered to Government by Chris Skidmore MP this year, was clear that the transition to net zero is the biggest economic opportunity this century. The report identified that local authorities have a key role in unlocking this economic growth opportunity in their areas. Green growth is intrinsic to our work across Essex.

The Essex Renewal Fund supports land and property projects in Essex and the investment principles include a commitment to net zero and climate resilience. The fund is part of our commitment to good jobs, future growth and investment, green growth and levelling up the economy. Over the next 20 years, the fund aims to invest over £100m, (subject to affordability) supporting 1,500 jobs and bringing to market enough land to deliver 1,000 new homes.

10.1 Essex Sector Development Strategy

The [Essex Sector Development Strategy](#) sets out our approach to creating high quality jobs within the priority economic sectors, futureproofing the Essex economy and embracing the opportunities that the transition to net zero carbon bring. Our strategy brings together public sector partners, businesses and residents to plan for the economy of Greater Essex around five key growth sectors:

- Green Construction and Retrofit (including Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects)
- Clean Green Energy (including low emission vehicle technology)
- Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (supporting the green transition)
- Digitech (including fin, insure, marine and agri tech)
- Lifescience (focusing on med and care tech)

10.2 Innovation

Essex County Council is clear in its ambition to “develop Essex as a centre for innovation, supporting new technologies and business models to enable our economy to transition to net zero and secure green jobs for the future by ensuring we have the right local skills and drawing in investment opportunities” (Essex Sector Development Strategy). This ambition is being supported by the Net Zero Innovation Network, a group of 50-plus businesses, academic institutions and public sector organisations working collaboratively to develop a pipeline and secure funding opportunities to deliver transformational green projects.

10.3 Green Skills

Essex Green Skills Action Plan

A review of green skills and related infrastructure in the county ([The Green Skills Infrastructure Review](#)), with recommendations for ECAC, ECC and partners. Beneficiaries of this study are the residents, businesses and training/education providers located within the geographical county of Essex. The work has refined a definition of ‘green skills’ and produced a report which has influenced our Essex Green Skills Action Plan.

Based on this research, ECC has now worked with partners to develop the [Essex Skills Plan](#) taking forward some of the key recommendations from the final report. This includes a dedicated Essex Green Skills Opportunities Portal, with a Green Skills Prospectus and Directory, and bite-size courses for businesses, training providers and residents of the county. An Essex Green Skills Summit was delivered in June 2023 in order to bring partners together to discuss the Essex Green Skills Action Plan and the Essex Green Skills Pledge. Other actions planned include resourcing a specific teacher bursary to reduce green skills tutor shortages, promoting the Essex Levy Transfer Service as a specific vehicle to develop new work-based learning pathways to capitalise on and increase green apprenticeships, and coordinating with professional bodies and Training Providers to champion **CPD for professionals**, in order to support the county’s green skills infrastructure plans.

Retrofit Training

In 2021/22, ECC entered into a collaboration with the Retrofit Academy Community Interest Company (TRA) to deliver a collaborative project, with support from the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF), in Harlow and Tendring, in support of our Levelling Up priorities. The training programme delivered:

- Retrofit Research, including a stock condition report, social housing demand research, and employment and skills research.
- Social Housing and Business Support, including the Fit for Retrofit programme, and business support for 30 Essex-based SMEs to gain PAS³ 2030 certification, which is required when delivering energy efficiency measures for Government initiatives.
- PAS 2035 Training Delivery: PAS 2035 offers an end-to-end framework for the application of energy retrofit measures to existing buildings in the UK and provides best practices for their implementation.
- The Essex Retrofit Academy: an Essex-specific Retrofit Academy based on a train the trainer model. Physical retrofit training hubs have been developed and a 'Provider Support Pack' has been produced. The project exceeded its target of 240 individual participants. It has supported 20 SME businesses, and 11 organisations.

A further pot of funding was secured through the Homes Decarbonisation Skills Training Competition from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to deliver a further 50 retrofit training courses. This training was delivered between 1 January and 31 May 2023. This focused on three further levelling up priority areas: Basildon, Colchester estates and Castle Point (Canvey Island).

This approach has been awarded the ADEPT – Delivering Clean Growth award. The judges praised the programme for being 'a bit out of the ordinary and a very specific and tailored approach to real world problem'.

³ PAS is a Publicly Available Specification – PAS provides a fast-track standardisation document, resulting from expert consulting from the British Standards Institution (BSI), the national standards body of the United Kingdom. A PAS outlines industry best practice for either a product, service or process

10.4 Support for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Low Carbon Across the South and East (LoCASE) was a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant funded programme helping businesses with 'green' projects, such as energy efficiency, or supporting SMEs in the low carbon sector. Since the programme started in 2016, £2.6m has been awarded to 397 businesses with an estimated 2,902 tonnes CO₂ equivalent emissions reduction and £992,534 cost savings per annum within Greater Essex (including Southend and Thurrock). Further funding was secured for the partnership to extend the delivery of support to SMEs until June 2023, with an expected £2.7m of grants available to Greater Essex businesses. In Essex alone it has delivered support to over 460 businesses, annual savings of close to £1,400,000, and saved over 3,000 tonnes CO₂e. Over 50 jobs have also been created as a result of this programme.

Great Start is a Green Business Accreditation Scheme aimed at supporting Climate and Green Growth ambitions of businesses. The scheme champions collective change for big impact. The Essex specific scheme will use the same principle as Working Well accreditation for Wellbeing and Health run by Provide. We have agreed on a three Tier System and will pilot this scheme in Braintree and Uttlesford, working on a test and learn approach to best support our SMEs. We are currently surveying businesses to ensure the scheme is codesigned with businesses for businesses. The application process will be as automated as possible, so that SMEs are not deterred by extensive paperwork. The applications will be reviewed by a panel quarterly and there will be extensive non-financial incentives for the scheme, free to those who are accredited.


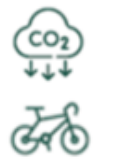
10.5 Young Entrepreneurs









Green Entrepreneurs is supporting individuals aged 18-30 with green start-ups in Essex and to hone the knowledge, skills, attributes and values for the future workforce. The scheme will see delivery of an enterprise programme to 30 individuals with green entrepreneurial aspirations and ideas. There is an opportunity for participants to pitch for £5,000 of seed funding (£25,000 in the winners' pot – five winners). The goal at the end of the six-week programme is that all will pitch their idea to a panel in a 'Dragons'

Den' type format, with a chance to win the £5,000 of seed funding. We will champion the winners and all participants on the programme, track their business progress and support their ideas. There will also be the opportunity for all to maintain relationships with their mentors and tutors from the course, following its completion. We are working with a team at Real Ideas CIC to write a digital badge for this programme. The Badges come from Badge Nation and are all about showing what individuals achieve outside of formal qualifications to champion skills experience and learning.





Essex Youth Movement (Shujaaz) is a youth movement to promote economic growth, including career and skills opportunities from peer to peer. We are piloting this scheme in Canvey Island, one of our levelling up priority areas. We are currently building a group and driving momentum to take this forward. The youth movement will be created by young people, for young people and they will be a catalyst to drive this forward. We have met a core group to date and are hosting a World Café event. Any young person engaged will receive training, mentorship and digital badges as part of the programme to support articulation of knowledge, skills, attributes and values they have demonstrated. This group is passionate about climate action and will have a green focus.






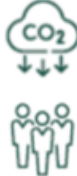
Delivered (November 2021 – April 2023)

Initiative	Description	Date Completed	Financial Spend (Delivered) £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				Econ	Env	Health	Family
Skills and Development	<u>Retrofit Academy</u> The Retrofit Academy Community Interest Company (CIC) – in partnership with Essex County Council – ran a project to support residents and businesses to create jobs and growth from making private properties more energy efficient. The project targeted Harlow	Dec 2022	798				














	and Tendring, Basildon, Colchester and Castlepoint as priority areas. Funded by Government grants from Community Renewal Fund (£703k) and Home Decarbonisation Training Skills Competition (£95k).				 		
Research	Essex Green Skill Infrastructure Review	Mar 2022	50	  	 		










Ongoing Initiatives (November 2021 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start	End	Finance £000			Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
				to Mar 23	Apr 23 – Mar 26	Total	Econ	Env	Health	Family
Net Zero Innovation Network NZIN	Net Zero Innovation Network (NZIN) brings together individuals from a wide range of education and business sectors across Essex. The aim is to support partnerships and drive innovation around net zero.	Mar 2021	ongoing		160		 	 		

										
LoCASE – Low Carbon Across the South and East	Low Carbon Across the South and East (LoCASE) is an ERDF grant funded programme helping businesses with ‘green’ projects, such as energy efficiency, or supporting SMEs in the low carbon sector. Total funding is £52.6 million (across four Local Enterprise areas: SELEP; Coast to Capital; Enterprise M3; and Solent), of which £6.4m was allocated in Essex.	Spring 2016	June 2023	86.9	-	86.9				
Skills Plan	Green Skills Summit	Jan 2023	Mar 2023	31	-	31				

New Initiatives (April 2023 – 2025 and beyond)

Initiative	Description	Start	End	Finance £000	Alignment to Everyone's Essex			
					Econo my	Enviro nment	Health	Famil y
Green Entrepren eurs	A short enterprise programme for 30 individuals with green entrepreneurial aspirations and ideas (aged 18 to 30) – leading to supporting 30 green start-ups in Essex and to hone the knowledge, skills, attributes and values for the future workforce	April 2023	Sep 202 4	150	 	  		
Great Start	Programme to encourage businesses to make small changes to aid transition to net zero. Supporting business awareness and engagement.	May 2023	Ong oing	50	 	    		

Future Essex Heroes (Shujaaz)	“A youth movement to promote economic growth including career and skills opportunities from peer to peer”	April 2023	Ong oing	50	   			 
Green Growth	Ongoing development of evidence base and match funding to support the business cases/test cases needed. ECC will also need to lead the market showing the opportunity to business, via leveraging its purchasing power, and that of fellow anchor institutions to facilitate Green Business Growth within Essex	Dec 2021	Mar 25	940				

11. Evaluation and Monitoring

Essex County Council (ECC) has an organisational ambition to reach net zero on its core estate by 2030 and is committed to publishing its own greenhouse gas emissions annually. We are also working to reduce the impact of the goods and services we purchase (scope 3) and have baselined our greenhouse gas emissions for our supply chain (see page 62).

Definitions

Under the Green House Gas protocol to measure the greenhouse gas emissions for an organisation, the scopes can be defined as:

- Scope 1 emissions (direct emissions) are those from activities owned or controlled by your organisation. Examples of Scope 1 emissions include emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, furnaces and vehicles, as well as emissions from chemical production in owned or controlled process equipment.
- Scope 2 emissions (energy indirect) are those released into the atmosphere that are associated with your consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam, and cooling. These indirect emissions are a consequence of your organisation's energy use but occur at sources you do not own or control.
- Scope 3 emissions (other indirect) are a consequence of your actions that occur at sources you do not own or control and are not classed as Scope 2 emissions. Scope 3 emissions can be from activities that are upstream or downstream of your organisation.

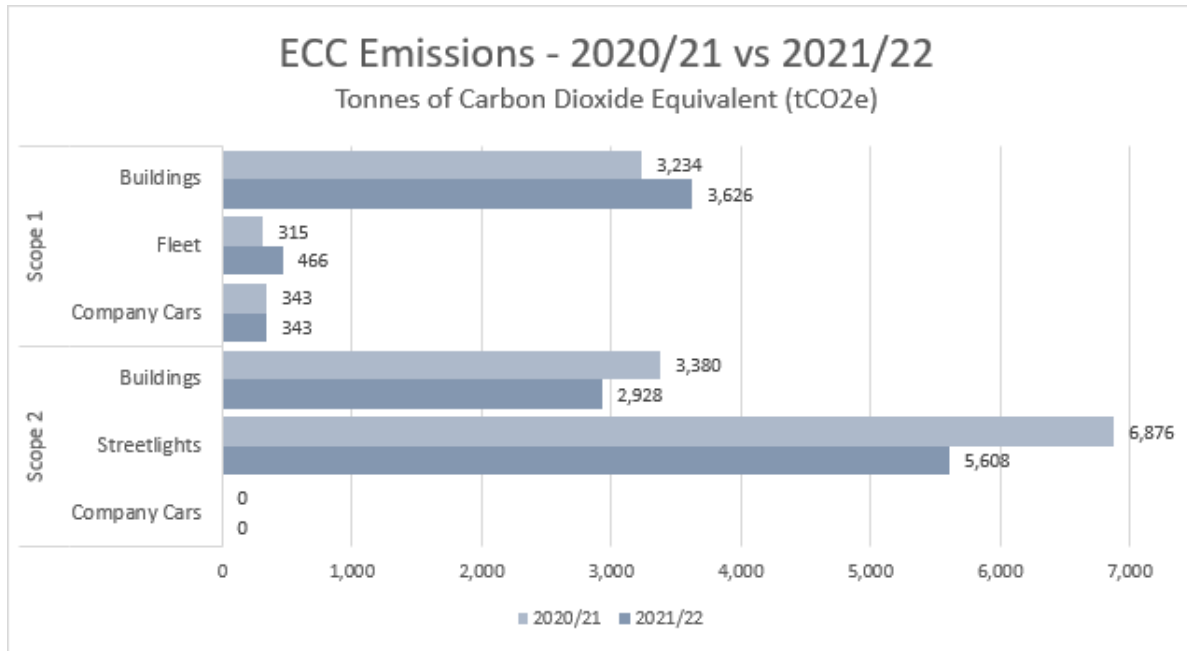
This greenhouse gas analysis is conducted on an annual basis and utilises the latest emissions intensity factors published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy/the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and follows the standard methodology to classify and quantify the appropriate emissions for each sector i.e., multiplying activity data by the emissions intensity factor.

ECC Green House Gas Emissions (Scope 1 & 2)

The following table and graph show the breakdown of scope 1 and 2 emissions for the financial years of 20/21 and 21/22 across ECC owned buildings, ECC fleet vehicles and company car mileage.

Financial Year	Scope 1 (tCO ₂ e)	Scope 2 (tCO ₂ e)	Total (tCO ₂ e)
2020/21	3,891	10,256	14,147
2021/22	4,435	8,536	12,971

Whilst overall the emissions of carbon dioxide have fallen across the two years, there has been an increase in scope 1 emissions – this is due to an increased amount of fleet travel and gas consumed onsite in 2021/22, as buildings resumed a more normal operation as pandemic restrictions lifted from 2020/21. These results are publicly available [here](#).



Scope 3 Baseline

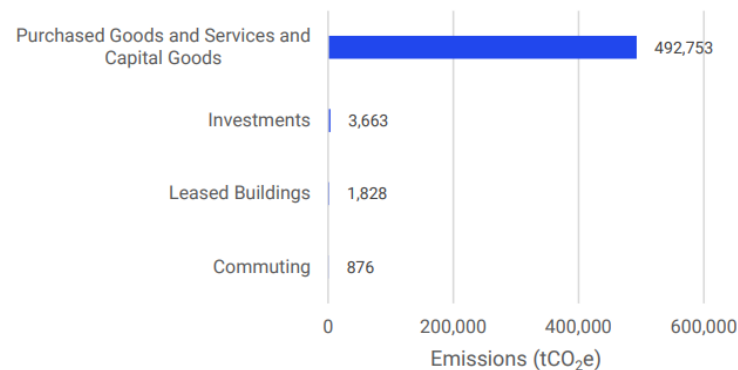
Whilst ECC is directly addressing the above scope 1 and 2 emissions via a rollout of energy efficiency and renewable energy generation measures across the estate, scope 3 emissions are typically outside ECC's direct influence. As a result, The Carbon Trust was commissioned to produce a scope 3 baseline for the 2020/21 financial year (FY), which provides a foundation so that the council can track these emissions year on year, as they are typically the largest share of an organisation's carbon footprint.

The sectors considered for the scope 3 baseline are as follows in FY20/21:

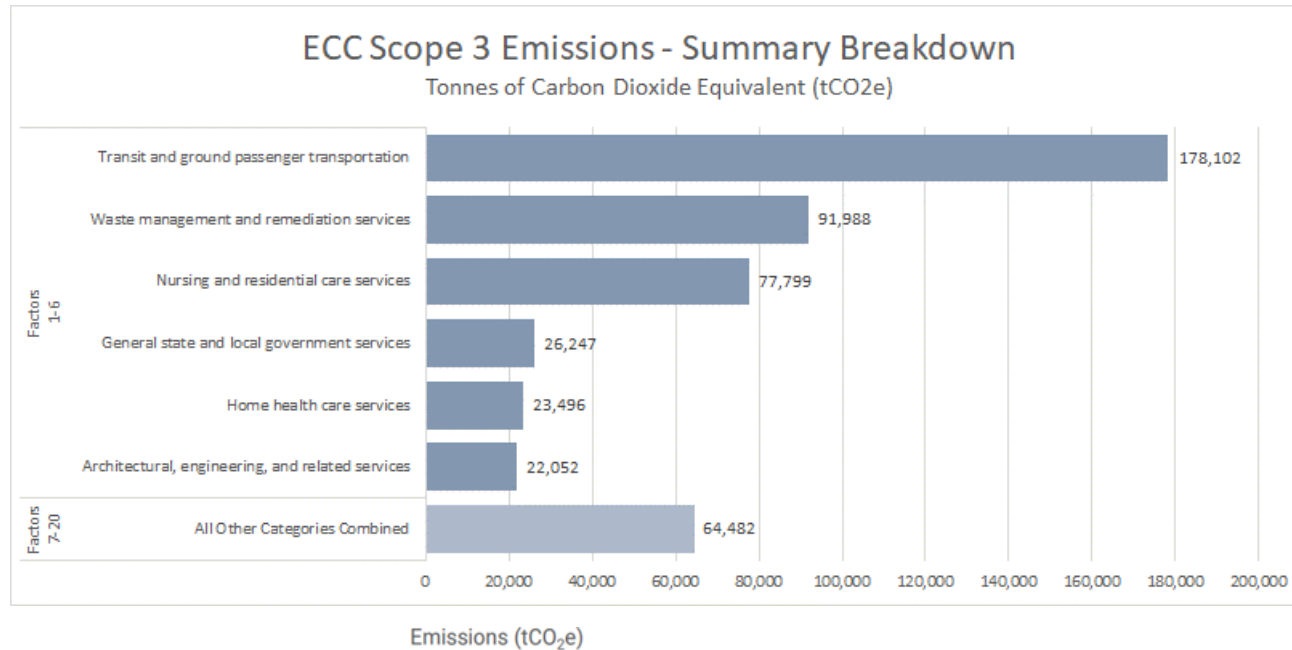
- Purchased goods and services
- Capital Goods
- Investments
- Leased Buildings
- Commuting

Due to the complexity of ascertaining activity data outside organisational boundaries, the accepted methodology is to use Carbon Trust's Environmentally Friendly Input Output Factors or otherwise known as "EEIO" to derive the cradle to grave emissions, utilising spend data from ECC's procurement system. Whilst this provides a reasonable estimate across the categories, more specific work is being undertaken to address high emitting suppliers i.e., using the supplier's primary activity data.

It was found that the total across these sectors was estimated to be 499,120 tCO₂e, with the following breakdown:



As can be seen, purchased goods and services/capital goods are responsible for approximately 99% of the scope 3 carbon footprint. These emissions arise from activities to create products and deliver services that ECC requires to run its operations and the top highest emitting categories are shown in the below chart:



This type of analysis is incredibly useful as these categories represent 98% of the purchased goods and services/capital goods emissions and therefore forms the basis as to which ECC can prioritise tackling and reducing these supply chain emissions. Furthermore, this can be done by initially leveraging the ECC procurement system and engaging with the top ten highest emitting suppliers, getting access to activity data and information to track and evaluate yearly performance.

Essex Green House Gas Emissions

ECC is also committed to publishing an annual report on climate action and greenhouse gas emissions for the county as a whole.

The first annual [Essex Climate Action Report](#) was published in Nov 2022 and the next one is due in Nov 2023.

