



Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030

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COUNCIL
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas
Making a Difference Every Day

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Foreword

We are proud to introduce South Ayrshire Council's second Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy (SD & CC). This strategy is at its heart about ensuring we have the correct foundations for the people and places of South Ayrshire to be able to thrive now and in the future. Following on from our first strategy 5 years ago, this document sets out a coherent framework showing how the work of the council will promote sustainable development and address climate change in the next 5 years. This includes taking forward mitigation, adaptation, nature emergency and Just Transition measures in the way we exercise all our functions, using both our control and our influence to make a difference locally.

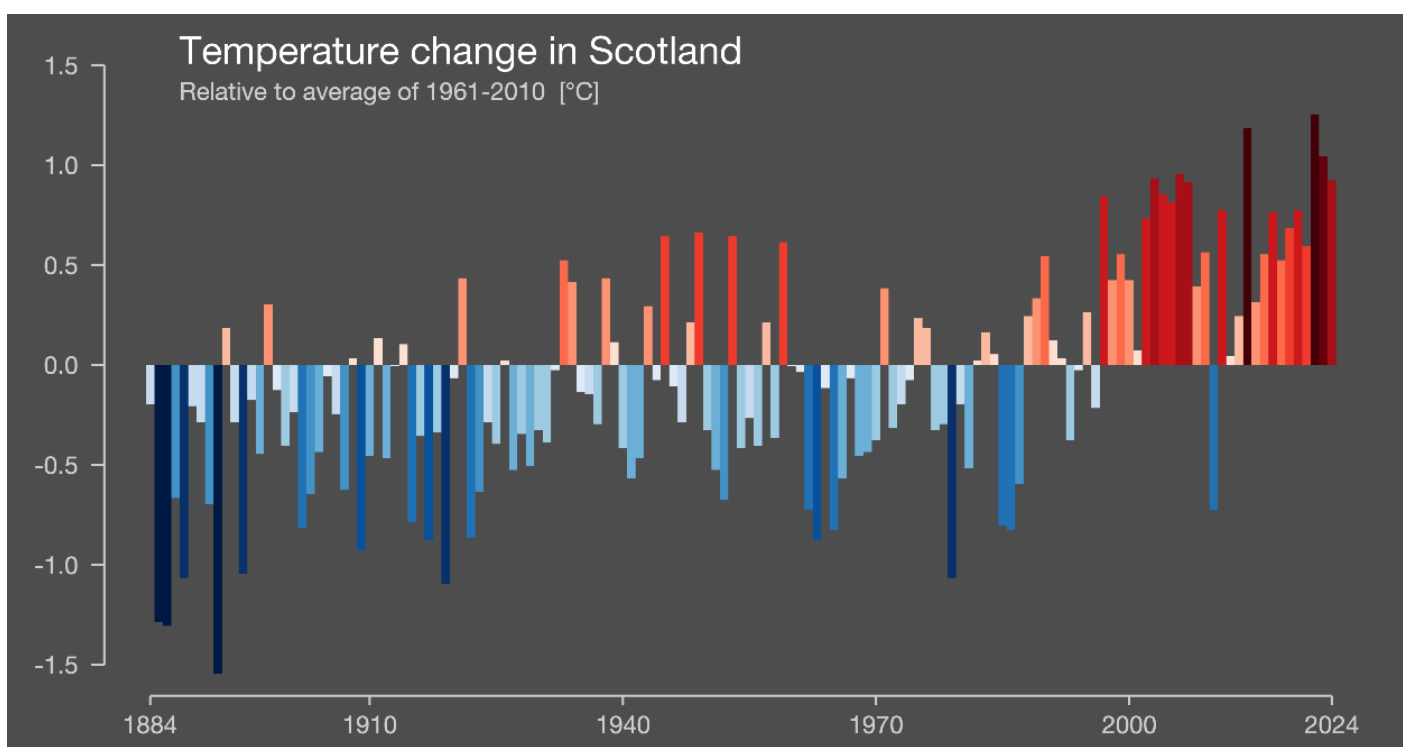
This strategy reflects on our successes to date, including consistently remaining on track to meet our 2030 and 2045 emissions reduction targets as set by the Council in 2020. It also acknowledges the scale of the challenge going forward. We live at a time of nationally declared climate emergency and recognise the depleted state of nature and the need for action. This strategy hears that need for and call to action,

responds to our legal duties in relation to that, and sets out how we can steer a proactive course over the next 5 years.

This strategy will support the people of South Ayrshire to live better lives by minimising the risks and maximising the opportunities a changing future presents, to be ready for the future, develop new skills, support and benefit from our natural capital and better health and wellbeing.



**Councillor Martin Kilbride,
Policy Lead (Housing and
Property Services)**



1. Introduction

This strategy sets out how the Council aims to further sustainable development and tackle climate change over the next five years. It provides a strategic framework with clear outcomes and action areas to drive progress. The strategy draws together relevant commitments from across the council and wider local partnership working, bringing that into one coherent framework, demonstrating that delivering the strategy will be a collective responsibility both within the council and when working with others.

The strategy seeks to ensure delivery of the Council's legal climate change duties, and in doing so in a holistic way explores how the Council can contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable development and holistic climate action is about ensuring that all people can enjoy a good quality of life now and in the future.

Our Council Plan states that: **'The council aims to both fulfil and show leadership in relation to our statutory climate change, sustainability, and biodiversity duties across all our services, decision making and work with partners. We have committed to be net zero by 2045 and to adapt to the already locked in impacts of a changing climate. In doing so we aim to ensure a just transition for people and nature, supporting ecological recovery and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and creating sustainable, liveable places where people are connected to nature, climate literate and understand the natural systems we rely on, are supported to develop green skills and can work in a fast-evolving local green jobs market, travel less overall and make active and sustainable travel choices first.'**

This strategy sets out in more detail how we aim to achieve this over the next 5 years and beyond.



2. Why does it matter?

In the Council's first SD&CC Strategy we outlined that climate change is the defining issue of our time and how it has and will shape how we live our lives in South Ayrshire. In the intervening five year period we have seen this play out in our local area. The global climate is rapidly warming due to human activity, and this is leading to significant impacts such as rising sea levels, more intense storms, hotter temperatures, and in turn changes in food availability and prices, impacts on infrastructure and more – all affecting our health and livelihoods now and in the future.

In South Ayrshire, as elsewhere, we are more vulnerable to flooding and coastal erosion than before, and we have also felt the effects of periods of extreme heat and prolonged dry weather as well as storms over the past five years as well. We expect more of this as we move forward and this impacts on how we deliver services and how the people of South Ayrshire go about their lives.

The context in which we deliver our services has also shifted because of the wider national and international social, economic and political response to climate change. Perhaps most notably, renewable energy, resilience and localisation is becoming increasingly important to key issues like heat and transportation in South Ayrshire, and innovation in these areas is accompanied by a shift in the skills required for our evolving resilient low carbon economy.

While we have a legal duty to play our part in delivering net zero and in turn this can deliver valuable energy cost reductions and associated savings, it is clear that this is only one of the many reasons why it is important that the Council takes a holistic and strategic approach to sustainability and climate change. In addition to legal duties to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and to act sustainably, provision of efficient and effective services for the people of South Ayrshire, now and in the future, depends on it.



3. South Ayrshire Context

South Ayrshire Council is a coastal local authority located in the southwest of Scotland with a population of 112,799 and covering 476 square miles. It is approximately an hour south of Glasgow by overland transport and is well connected by road, rail, sea and air. It is dominated by low lying coastal towns where the majority of the population live, and a wider rural hinterland dominated by agriculture and including some smaller towns and villages.

The major employers are public services, in particular local government and the National Health Service (NHS), with the aerospace industry based in the Prestwick area. Tourism is important and includes a range of public and private golf courses and the heritage of Robert Burns being particularly notable.

The local authority area is geographically characterised by areas of affluence and deprivation and also has one of the most significantly aging populations in the world, with an awareness that this, along with the challenges of the climate and nature crisis, will shape (by dictating need in relation to) the future of service provision in the local area.

Climate vulnerabilities include flooding, in particular flooding associated with coastal erosion and pluvial* flooding in key locations where infrastructure is struggling to cope with intense rainfall events. Road and other infrastructure can be compromised in the most vulnerable locations. The aging population is also particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events, including storms and also heat waves, impacting on care requirements.

South Ayrshire Council employs approximately 4972 FTE (full-time equivalent) staff across main office locations, leisure, library and cultural facilities and schools and nurseries. Front line operational staff maintain our parks and open spaces, collect waste and recycling, maintain council houses and carry out home care duties. The estate includes a number of historic listed buildings including County Buildings and the Town Hall in Ayr and also includes a range of parks, golf courses and other land-based assets including two reservoirs. There are 1183km of road and 944km footway along with 21,590 street lighting columns to power and maintain. The council's roads function is delivered by Ayrshire Roads Alliance. Refuse and recycling services are provided directly by the Council to 57319 households as well as many commercial properties. Approximately 8176 (as of 31 Oct 2025) Council houses are also part of the local authorities estate.

*pluvial = relating to rainfall (directly, as opposed to overtopping from for example river or sea)



4. Policy Framework

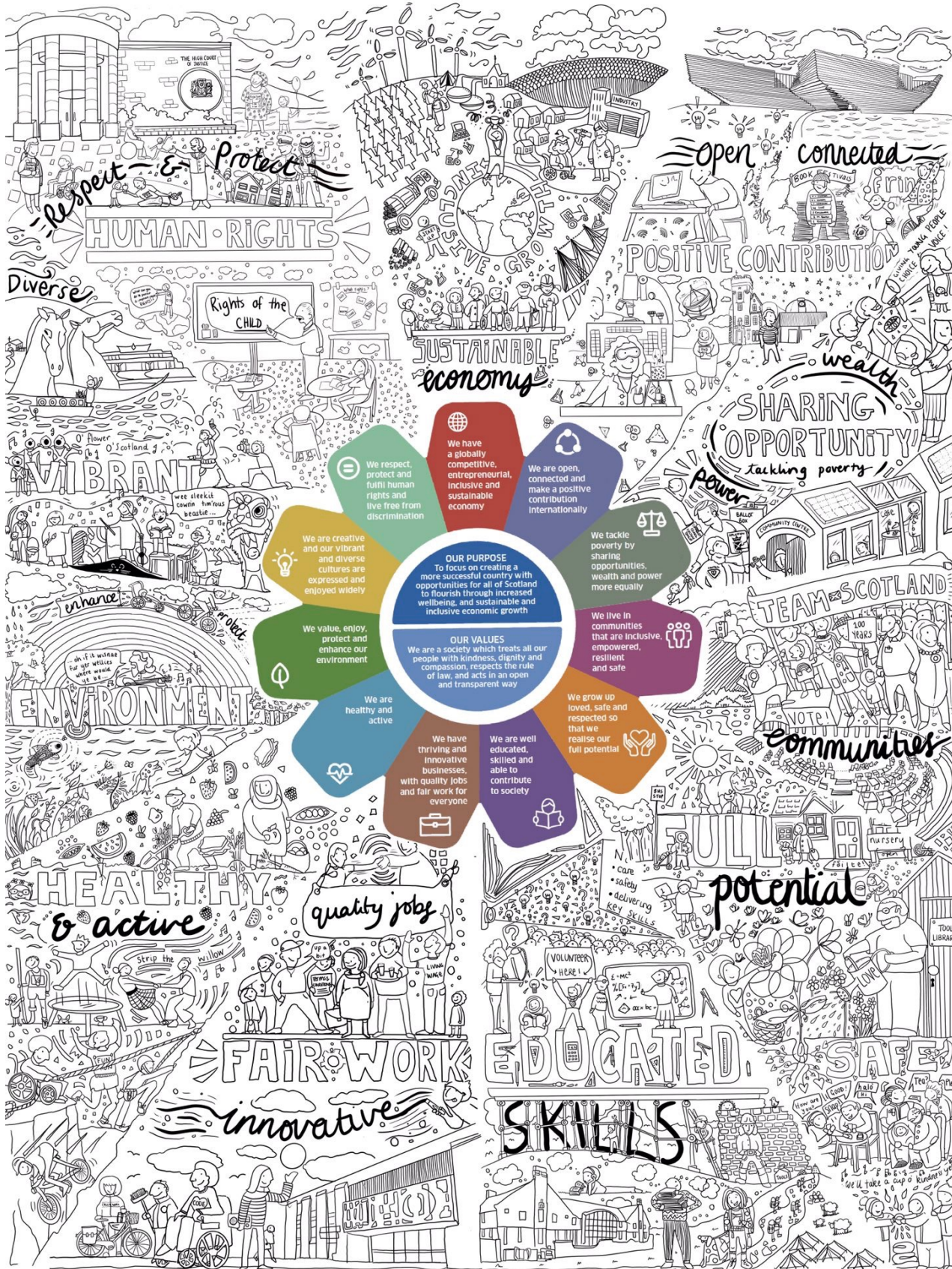
There are several international, national and local policy commitments which are relevant to this strategy:

International					
UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and framework for international action					
National					
National Performance Framework, Local Government Benchmarking Framework	The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 which sets out our Climate Change Duties	The Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015 which sets out our annual reporting requirements	Scotland's Climate Change Plan and Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029	Environmental Standards Scotland and their evolving role	
Regional and Local					
Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and Ayrshire Growth Deal	Local Plan and Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)	Council Plan	Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy	Council Single Use Plastics Policy	Council Ban on their land of Helium Balloons and Sky Lanterns

The United Nations has a series of global Sustainable Development Goals that are part of an internationally agreed performance framework. All countries are aiming to achieve these goals by 2030. They address the big global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice.



The Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework is aligned with the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals, putting into practice the commitment to embed the goals in all government activity. The Scottish Government believes national and international efforts on these critical issues must be interlinked. Local authorities work in partnership with the Scottish Government to realise these outcomes. The illustration shows how this can be envisaged:



5. Success factors – how will we do it?

Sustainable development informs how we deliver all our services. The themes and activity areas promoted through this strategy are integrated into council strategies and plans. Key outcomes, related activity areas and a thematic set of Performance Indicators are included within the action plan. This strategy is the over-arching framework within which the annual workplan and monitoring of progress will sit. The detailed workplan and actions will be developed and reviewed annually.

In the development of this strategy we have considered the [Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist](#) published by the [Sustainable Scotland Network](#) and we will regularly return to the checklist to evaluate our progress.

Successful delivery depends on the following success factors, which are central to this strategy:

Leadership

The council leadership – political and administrative – provides high profile support to delivery of the strategy across all portfolios. Council members and senior level officers drive delivery of the strategy and monitor performance.

Audit and Performance reporting

Delivery of the strategy is guided by an annual workplan. Progress against this workplan will be considered by Service and Partnership Performance Panel. Actions are embedded in the relevant service and topic specific plans and monitored accordingly. Where appropriate, responsibilities and competencies are included in performance development reviews.

Council strategies and process

Reports to council and panels include a check against sustainable development and climate change impacts through the Integrated Impact Assessment process, as well as a route to improve performance through tracked mitigations. Where possible, this can be preceded by officer support and sustainability checks in preparing business cases and capital bids. Climate change is recognised in strategic and directorate level risk registers in terms of meeting duties, and the social, economic and health risks of climate change impacts.

It is important to note that delivery will also be achieved through the full range of council and partnership functions which will have their own strategies and plans with associated monitoring and performance indicators detailed within them. During the life of this strategy it is anticipated that list of strategies and plans that can make a positive contribution to delivery will be identified and added to through the Integrated Impact Assessment process.

Communications and training

Delivery of the strategy is supported by ongoing communications including online and in-person training, induction and bespoke sessions. The links between economic and social objectives, such as inequalities, health, local jobs, rural and urban issues, are made as well as the potential costs and benefits of action (or risks of not taking action). How to take our duties forward in the delivery of daily work and council processes is highlighted.

6. What have we achieved already?

Our first Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy has over the past 5 years helped the Council to navigate a pathway to delivery of our climate change and sustainable development duties by mainstreaming our efforts through all our business.

Since adopting our first SD&CC Strategy progress highlights include:

- ✓ Developed with partners a Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) action plan with priority areas including energy, travel, food, nature, green health and active living supported by a strengthened Strategic Delivery Partnership (SDP) structure including the SDP with clear reporting routes to the Community Planning Board.
- ✓ Adopted with partners a Regional Economic Strategy and led on the priority set within it of Enhancing Natural Capital
- ✓ Worked with partners on the Ayrshire Growth Deal including the Clean Growth Workstream and the development and adoption of the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan
- ✓ Development and adoption of other topic and sector specific plans and strategies including our Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), our Active Travel Strategy, our Fleet Management Strategy, our Waste Management Strategy, our Open Space Strategy, our Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Programme
- ✓ Providing the geographical framework shaping the future of our area, South Ayrshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2 was adopted in August 2022 and evidence is now being prepared for the Local Development Plan (LDP) 3 taking account of National Planning Framework (NPF) 4
- ✓ Developed our own Integrated Impact Assessment process for all council decisions
- ✓ Developed our own Sustainable Design Guidance
- ✓ Begun work to measure and target area wide emissions reductions via Climate View
- ✓ Considered our progress against the national Adaptation Capability Framework and undertaken specific focused projects related to flooding and coastal change
- ✓ Submitted annual reporting nationally every year covering leadership, emissions, adaptation and procurement.
- ✓ Consistently reduced measured operational emissions in line with our targets, with notable recent progress through the implementation of Building Energy Management Systems across our estate



7. Activity Themes

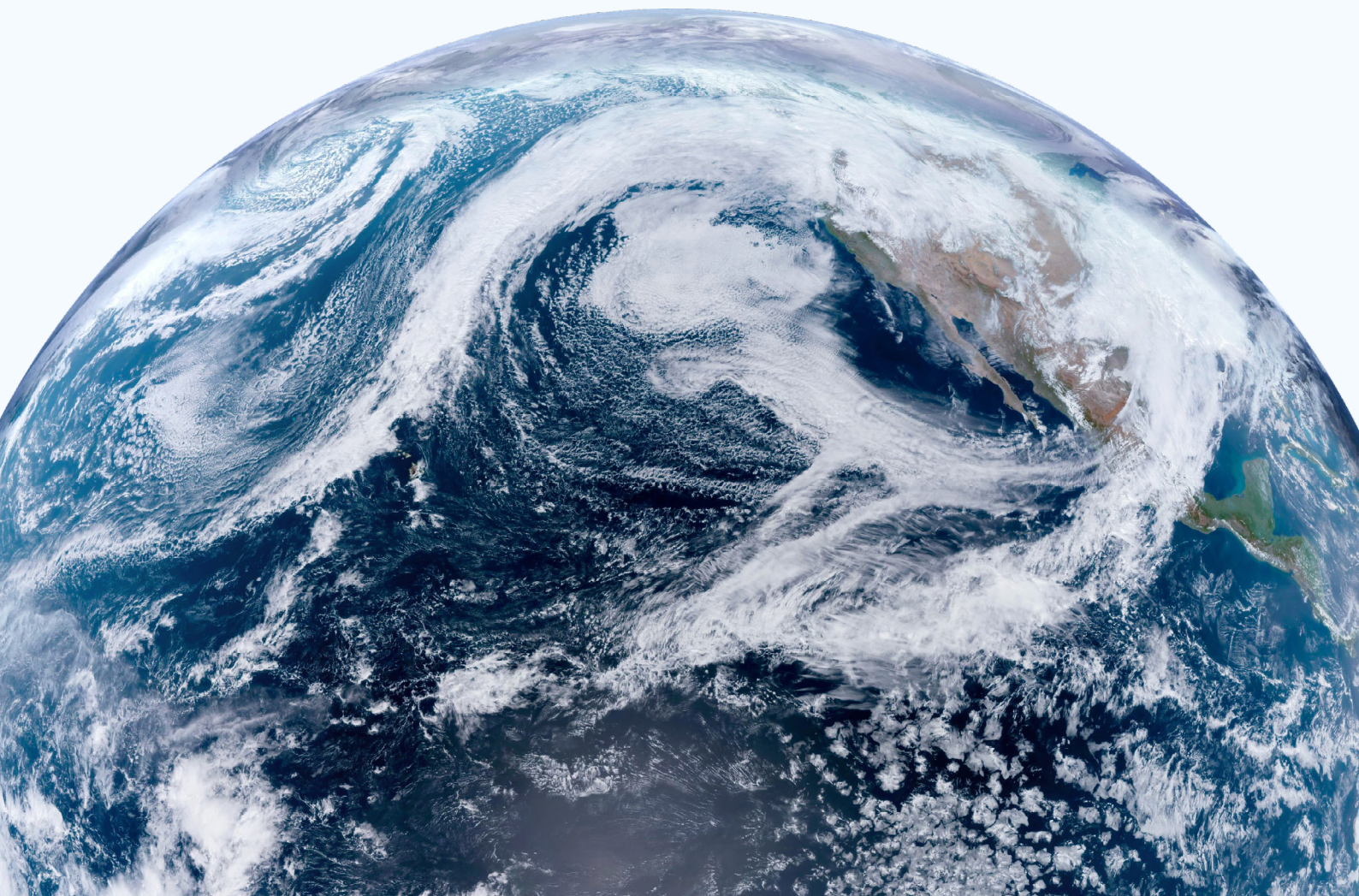
In this strategy we have set out below our headline activities according to the themes highlighted in the [Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist](#):

- Emissions reductions
- Adapting to a changing climate
- Delivering a Just Transition
- Tackling the nature emergency

We have set out what each of these themes means to us, what our recent achievements have been during our first strategy and what our headline activities will be in the next five years. Detailed annual action plans setting out additional detail will be developed and used to guide delivery.

It is important to highlight that while we have grouped activities under these themes, each of our activities must deliver interconnectedly across all themes in order to be successful in delivering the best short and long term outcomes for the people of Ayrshire.

As a local council we must respond to the climate and nature emergency as a major organisation in our local area considering all the day to day operations we have in the same way as any other business. However, we must also respond in terms of our role as a leader in our local area, with required duties to implement national policy including through our ability as a council to influence the lives, and in turn the climate and nature impacts, of everyone in South Ayrshire.



8. Reducing our emissions

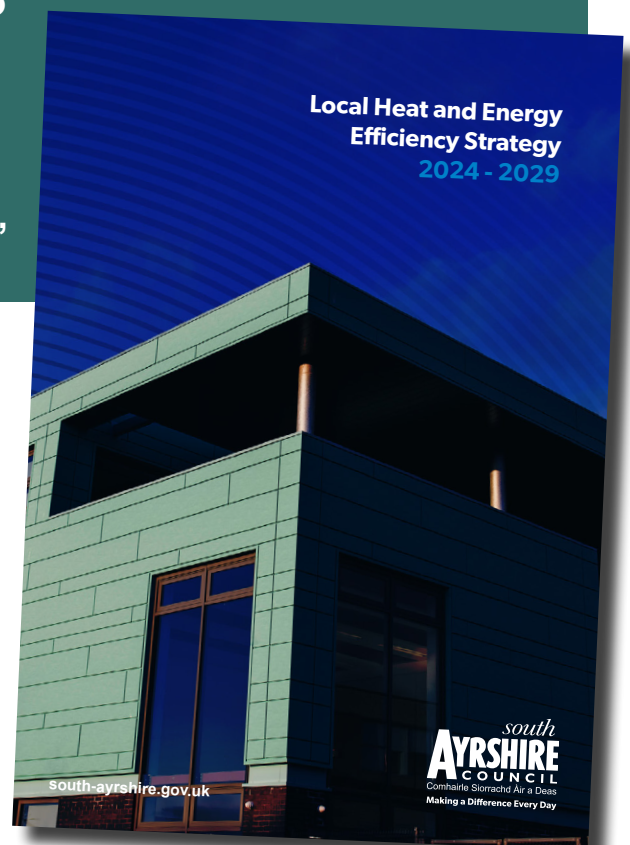
We are over halfway to achieving our targets! Scotland has passed halfway to meet its target of net zero by 2045 based on a 1990 baseline. Here at South Ayrshire Council we are also over halfway to reaching our target of 75% emissions reduction of our own measured organisational emissions by 2030. But we know we must increase the pace and depth of our efforts to continue to make progress against in the lifetime of this strategy.

Much of the progress has initially been related to the introduction of more renewable energy to our electricity grid, but most recently we here in South Ayrshire have been successful in driving down council emissions and energy costs through the introduction of Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS) in our own buildings. We have developed our own Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and Ayrshire Energy Masterplan (AEMP) which will now be implemented. Our new Sustainable Design Guidance has been developed and will now be applied to all new builds and refurbishments that we take forward. Energy and Travel are now Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) priorities in South Ayrshire to work in partnership on these areas in a holistic way.

The Council measures and aims to reduce emissions in relation to fleet, mileage, waste and water as well energy use in buildings, street lighting and traffic signs. More information about our organisational baseline can be found in appendix 1. We use Climate View to consider our influence on wider emissions in our area, with heat and transport being the key areas where we know we must make progress. More information about our area wide emissions provided by the Scottish Climate Intelligence Service (SCIS) can be found in appendix 1.

While there can be costs to taking action, we know that ‘delays to tackling climate change will only harm more people and places, while being more costly in the long term. A recent OBR report estimates that unchecked climate change could cost up to 8% of UK GDP by 2070 if the world warms by 3 degrees Celsius this century. The cost to all nations of doing nothing will unquestionably be higher than the price of action.’ Draft Scottish Climate Change Plan, November 2025.

The Sustainable Procurement Duty in the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires public bodies to consider and act on opportunities to improve economic, social and environmental wellbeing within their area. This is underpinned by statutory guidance. Not including wages, South Ayrshire Council spends approximately £118m annually and we have the potential to have significant influence through our procurement practices. We work to understand and influence our emissions footprint and wider impact in this area in a variety of ways.



9. Reducing emissions – achievement case study

In 2022 the Council established a Net Zero Board group to drive forward activity to reduce our building emissions. Pilot projects were identified and feasibility reports completed for projects including energy centres and *EnerPHit building retrofit.

A new Building Energy Management System, IQ Vision, has also been installed which has improved the remote access to building heating controls and generated energy reductions. We now have 116 remote access building connections encompassing the majority of our medium/large consuming sites and all Education buildings.

Scotland's Public Sector Heat Decarbonisation Fund to supported the refurbishment of Prestwick Swimming Pool during 2024-25 including building fabric upgrades, installation of new air handling plant, installation of solar PV and a Building Management System upgrade.

Reductions in electricity used annually by the council equated to 11% in 2024-25 and use of gas was also reduced by 7% for the same period as a result of proactive action.

The Council has developed a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and in partnership through the Clean Growth Workstream of the Regional Economic Strategy the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan. These key documents will help guide the development our low carbon energy future in South Ayrshire.

The Council has finalised new Sustainable Design Guidance which as it is implemented will see an improvement in the sustainability of new build and refurbishment projects taken forward by the council, reducing their footprint as well as creating better environments for their end users.

The Council introduced an Integrated Impact Assessment for all decisions. It requires consideration and transparency of the impacts of all decisions. This includes decisions to progress with plans and projects, and will have an impact on carbon emissions as well as a range of other variables including climate, nature and other considerations in a holistic way. This informs better decision making and supports the delivery of the organisations carbon reduction targets.

Our approach to [waste management](#) contributes to emissions reductions and supports the circular economy.

[Girvan Library Lend and Mend Hub](#) won the 'Project Excellence 2025' category at the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) Awards. The aim of the initiative is to help local communities engage in more sustainable practices, supporting community resilience, carbon reduction, the circular economy.



*EnerPHit is the passivehaus standard for retrofits

10. Reducing emissions – key activity areas to 2030

- This strategy not only seeks to deliver on our existing targets but will respond to the need to set further sectoral targets in relation to forthcoming national guidance, developing and taking these forward during the lifetime of this strategy.
- Through our work on Transforming the Estate and our Asset Management Plan we will quantify and reduce the emissions of our built estate, applying our own Sustainable Design Guidance to all council new builds and retrofits of buildings.
- Through our Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan (AEMP) we will ensure our wider energy infrastructure is fit for the future, allowing communities and businesses to thrive.
- We will use Climate View to quantify our wider impact on South Ayrshire’s emissions and identify the changes needed to meet our duties on delivery of the national net zero target.
- We will seek to reduce transport emissions in a sustainable way, reducing emissions while providing opportunities for people to access services, training and employment and improve health outcomes.
- Through our Waste Management Strategy and Sustainable Procurement Strategy we will quantify and reduce emissions, reduce resource use and support the circular economy.
- We will support our secondary school communities to take action through the [South Ayrshire School Footprint Challenge](#). This work, along with our approach to junior conservation volunteering, outdoor education through Dolphin House and many other programmes, will deepen connection to nature and amplify young voices in our community.



11. Adapting to a changing climate

‘Damage and disruption from flooding, failing crops and the impact of storms all pose increasing risks to the Scottish economy as the impacts of climate change grow. A 2025 report by the Office of Budget Responsibility estimates that climate damages could reach 8% of UK GDP by 2070 if the world warms by 3 degrees by the end of the century.’ states the Draft Scottish Climate Change Plan 2025, and goes on to state ‘Scotland’s changing climate also poses growing risks to households and businesses through physical damage to homes or assets, health and safety risks to employees and customers, disruption to supply chains, reduced access to finance or insurance coverage and increased risks to employee health and safety.’

As a coastal local authority, the council has to consider not only fluvial* and pluvial* flooding, but also coastal flooding and change, and the impact climate change will have on these phenomena in the future. Other impacts of a changing climate are already being felt in South Ayrshire too, including changes in the growing season and impacts on nature. We must consider the impact on all our infrastructure and services as we move forward into a world with a less stable climate.

This work will be progressed during the lifetime of the strategy for the rest of the Ayrshire Coastline, superseding the Ayrshire Shoreline Management Plan with a more realistic and proactive plan which will improve resilience for all our coastal communities. The Council is also working in partnership with Scottish Water to solve flooding challenges together where the drainage networks are already compromised by rainfall events, in particular in Prestwick, but also in other locations across our area as the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt.

The [Adaptation Capability Framework from Adaptation Scotland](#) allows organisations to consider progress in adapting to a changing climate. It identifies four capabilities that are needed to adapt to climate change, providing tasks to guide change. Organisations have different levels of maturity, and the Framework allows the council to identify where we are on your adaptation journey, and how to develop each capability. As a council we have considered our progress against the [Adaptation Capability Framework from Adaptation Scotland](#) to assess where we are and what needs to be done next to prepare and be resilient in the face of these evolving challenges.



*fluvial = from rivers, pluvial = directly from rainfall

12. Adapting – achievement case study

We have worked with natural solutions to adaptation, benefiting biodiversity as well as people and solving operational challenges simultaneously. The local community reused old Christmas trees to encourage sand dune restoration in front of Blackburn Road Car Park. The dunes are now maturing and, with minimal maintenance and litter picking from volunteers, provide an amazing new home for wildlife and prevent wind blown sand from leaving the beach and blocking access on the walking and cycling routes beyond. Not only is it valuable to prevent sand loss from the beach, the dunes now provide a natural flood barrier to high tide storm events which will be increasingly needed as we move forward.

In a mapping of social vulnerability and coastal erosion disadvantage, Ballantrae was identified as one of the most at risk locations in Scotland. The Council was successful in gaining dedicated Scottish Government funding to undertake geomorphological research and work with the community to prepare a Coastal Adaptation Plan as can be found in the [Ballantrae Case Study](#). Further to this work the Council along with North Ayrshire Council were successful in gaining further funding to complete a [Coastal Change Adaptation Plan for Ayrshire](#)

Troon flood study assessed coastal flooding and management options. Residents and existing defences were surveyed. Wave, tide and inundation modelling took place, covering 2D wave transformation, wave-tide overtopping and subsequent inundation. Economic flood damage assessment was also undertaken. Development and consideration of options included consideration of processes and enhancement of the natural ability of the landscape to offer natural solutions. This work will be incorporated in the Ayrshire Coastal Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP).

The Council along with multi-agency partners who are category 1 and 2 responders form the Local Resilience Partnership and have a Disruptive Weather Plan to guide coordinated and effective responses when severe weather events occur. Senior officer training is regularly carried out in relation to extreme weather scenarios and other emergencies, for example training was undertaken in relation to a severe wind scenario. This ensures services can anticipate potential impacts and are ready to respond.



Sand dune restoration in Ayr January 2020, natural solutions to adaptation
Photos show work in progress and community volunteers

13. Adapting – key activity to 2030

- We will complete our work to prepare the Ayrshire Coastal Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP) and move to the delivery phase. This will include the development and sharing of the education pack and decision makers toolkit.
- We will continue to improve South Ayrshire’s water infrastructure, including through the Prestwick Strategic Drainage Project in partnership with Scottish Water which has been developed in response to reported flooding in this area. A strategic solution across the hydraulically linked clusters in Prestwick has been developed and costed and will be taken forward in phases. This will include the St Ninians Park SUDS retrofit project being progressed in an early phase. The work will reduce flooding, protecting home owners and businesses and supporting travel corridors.
- By implementing our Sustainable Design Guidance for all our new and refurbished buildings, we will make sure they are as sustainable as possible, not only low carbon but also well adapted to function in future climate scenarios.
- We will continue our work through the Regional Economic Strategy and the Community Planning Partnership to work towards low carbon and resilient energy and transport networks that work for everyone in South Ayrshire. This work will include among other things delivery of the Ayrshire Energy Masterplan, our Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, our Active Travel Strategy and our wider approach to local and regional transport.
- Over the next 5 years we will be developing and embedding our approach to sustainable development, climate change and nature into our next Local Development Plan (LDP). We are already preparing for our next Local Development Plan, LDP3, which will respond to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). NPF4 states that **‘We must embrace and deliver radical change so we can tackle and adapt to climate change, restore biodiversity loss, improve health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities, build a wellbeing economy and create great places. It outlines a vision for Scotland’s development up to 2045, focusing on sustainable, liveable, and productive places.’** It aims to address the challenges posed by climate change and promote a wellbeing economy.



Our work on coastal change adaptation planning began at Ballantrae and will now be developed to cover all of Ayrshire

14. A Just Transition for everyone

Between 1990 and 2023 Scotland's emissions halved while the economy grew by 67.4%; a thriving economy and falling emissions are not only compatible but go hand-in-hand (Scotland's Draft Climate Change Plan, November 2025).

Maximising the economic opportunities of the climate transition is important for everyone in South Ayrshire, and we require to work collaboratively, both in local communities and in the wider region, to ensure that this is fair and equitable for all our people and places.

We have an unprecedented opportunity to build a more resilient and prosperous economy that is fit for the future, bringing with it innovation and systems change that can provide jobs, improve human and environmental health, reduce cost of living, create energy and food security and position Ayrshire at the forefront of this as a leader. We cannot successfully sustainably develop our economy unless we work with the challenges and opportunities the climate and nature emergencies present – we do this not only as an answer to these problems, but as it is the pathway to the best possible future socially, economically and environmentally for local people.

To achieve this addressing the climate and nature crisis must be done in a way that leaves no one behind. Those with the lowest footprint are often those who are most disadvantaged by climate change and least able to afford the costs of the transition, such as those living in our areas of multiple deprivation. Actions such as tackling fuel poverty and protecting those on low incomes from unavoidable costs and impacts of the transition, providing skills training opportunities, ensuring affordable sustainable transport is in place and access to healthy food, enables all groups to be part of the solution without being further disadvantaged. This theme speaks to wellbeing and community wealth building. Progress made here already such as our Child Poverty Strategy and our Aging Well Strategy have important parts to play. Our role in delivering global climate justice, for example through the things we buy and our support of fair trade, is also relevant.



'Health benefits from cleaner air, warmer homes, healthier food, health-promoting natural and built environments, high quality public services and fair work in a thriving economy can be immediate. The Climate Change Plan will support delivery of Scotland's prevention-focused Population Health Framework, wider public service reform agenda and the ambitions of the Scottish Government to build a fairer, greener and healthier Scotland.' **Scotland's Draft Climate Change Plan 2025**

15. Just Transition – achievement case study

The Council has provided support in relation to fuel poverty both through [Energy Vouchers](#) and energy efficiency improvements. The Local Housing Strategy improves energy efficiency across all tenures by utilising local and national funding. External wall insulation has been installed, reducing fuel poverty, carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency in homes. Delivery has been focused in areas of high levels of deprivation. Since 2019 572 council properties and 871 private were treated, saving 39,753 tonnes of CO₂, £22,758,732 on individuals fuel bills and 175,010 MWh of energy as well as health and wellbeing improvements for the those who live in them.

The 20-minute neighbourhood concept is incorporated flexibly within the design of all new housing developments. The large development at Mainholm, Ayr is an excellent example of a place where people can meet their daily needs within a 20-minute walk, cycle or wheel. The size of the site and its surroundings provided a real opportunity to create a place with affordable housing options, housing diversity and a place where people can age well.

Over the past 5 years the council has collaborated with partners to promote [blue and green health](#), with positive interventions that are open to all while focused on supporting those who are in greatest need of these opportunities and benefits.

Also working in partnership, the council is supporting [ageing well](#), ensuring better provision for older people in their own local communities.

South Ayrshire Council signed the [Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration](#) and has been developing our work in this area in line with Good Food Nation recommendations.

The Ayr Show has been used as a way to deliver exciting Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) opportunities. There has been a focus on how the aviation industry innovating and evolving to be fit for a low carbon future. The emissions of the planes flying in the displays have also been calculated for the past two years and these reduced significantly between the first and second year of monitoring.



The front cover of our summer edition of the Blue Health Calendar, one of our four seasonal calendar brochures released and distributed in 2025.

16. Just Transition – key activity areas to 2030

- Our approach to transport, regionally and locally, will facilitate liveable local places, where everyone can sustainably access the services and opportunities they need, including for education, training and employment.
- We will deliver high quality energy efficient housing that is fit for the future. Sustainability labelling was introduced for new housing development through the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. The silver standard is an upper level offering substantial benefits in 8 sustainability aspects and is achieved across the Council's social housing developments.
- The Council will pursue the Ayr Town Centre Framework 2025-2035 to support regeneration and to encourage conversation and engagement from the local community in the development of a Delivery Action Plan. The Ayr Town Centre Framework has been developed and shaped through engagement with local people and engagement opportunities will continue in the development of a Delivery Action Plan.
- Our businesses will continue to benefit from training to support their transitions through targeted Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund grants. This Ayrshire Growth Deal fund will continue to invest an allocated £3.5m across Ayrshire by March 2028. Many local businesses in South Ayrshire have already benefitted from the fund, with, for example, one local business now having 13 staff receive electric and hybrid vehicle training to allow them to work with these new lower carbon vehicles in addition to their previous involvement with only fossil fuel powered vehicles. This supports businesses, supports jobs, supports individuals and supports the transition to a low carbon, resilient future.
- We will prepare, approve and implement our first Good Food Nation Plan as required by the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022. It will address challenges like rising obesity rates and climate change impacts, delivering the vision for Scotland “where people from every walk of life take a pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day.”



Kerr & Smith Ayr Ltd – Car Service & Repair Centre received electric vehicle training for their staff team through the Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund

17. Nature – Natural capital for health and prosperity

We are living at a time of mass species extinction at unprecedented rates. Our natural environment has been shaped by man to meet our historic and present-day needs, but recognition of the value of our natural capital in that provision has been missing - it is now in a depleted state.

We have seen a 65% decrease in abundance of UK priority species between 1965 and 2019 according to the Defra biodiversity indicators 2021

In Ayrshire, Enhancing Natural Capital has been one of six priorities in the first year of our current Regional Economic Strategy. The importance of our natural capital is clear due to the wide range of ecosystem services it provides, from clean air to fresh drinking water. The natural beauty of our scenic coastal region and rolling countryside attracts many to come to our region every year, for tourists to visit, but also motivates many to make South Ayrshire their home.

We are signatories of the [Edinburgh Declaration](#) which calls on local authorities to deliver transformative actions, recognising the overall value of nature and integrating it into local planning, management and governance instruments. We have been working towards our commitment, investing our allocated Nature Restoration Funds into identifying and improving our key local nature networks.

Working with nature is also one of our greatest communication tools in the climate and nature crisis. By connecting people with nature we can communicate most clearly the value at stake, supporting people in identifying themselves in the twin emergencies we face and how they relate to them as individuals. This can help each of us to see our lives in terms of the roles we can play individually and in our communities to both protect and enhance nature, tackle the climate crisis and live more sustainably, leading to lasting behaviour change which is mutually beneficial for our individual health and wellbeing and addressing the emergencies we face in a sustainable way.



18. Nature – achievement case study

The South Ayrshire Rangers Service has run Conservation Volunteers and Junior Conservation Volunteers groups to undertake practical conservation tasks making a difference on the ground for nature. Examples of activities undertaken by the group include eradicating non-native invasive species, developing and maintaining wild flower meadow, wetland habitat management activities, tree planting, sand dune restoration, nature identification and survey work. Volunteers benefit from learning new skills which can offer valuable experience for future opportunities in the wider community or in terms of future employment.

New wildlife habitats have been introduced at Belleisle Golf Course enhancing the course for both people and nature. Ponds have been designed to collect and hold excess water during periods of heavy rainfall, helping adapt to our changing climate. Wetland habitat has been provided for amphibians, birds and aquatic invertebrates. Otters have also been recorded in the area with the project linking small wetland areas to both the east and west. The provision has reduced the speed of Slaphouse Burn flood events, reducing bank erosion and sediment being washed downstream. Meadow areas which support our pollinator network have been introduced as part of the project. Services and partners have worked together to create habitat management plans and carry out surveys to monitor the new habitat. Existing butterfly orchid areas were also identified and recorded during the project will now be managed and monitored.

The council has worked in partnership with the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere to deliver the [Small Tree Planting Project](#). This has not only provided new habitat, but has sequestered carbon and provided local small businesses with opportunities to [enhance green health](#) for staff and visitors.

We report on our progress in our 3 yearly Biodiversity Duty Reporting, the next of which will be due in December 2026.



Golf course habitat improvements at Belleisle

19. Nature – key activity to 2030

Work has begun on the Stepping Stones project, supporting 12 communities in the South Ayrshire area to improve their habitat and share their learning, together and with the wider community. A range of resources and communications are being prepared to spread the word and help everyone in South Ayrshire understand what is happening locally and how they can play their part. The project will help people to connect with and support nature locally in ways that work for them and in turn will grow environmental awareness and support both climate literacy and green health.

South Ayrshire Council working with partners will prepare and deliver a new Biodiversity Strategy. The strategy will create a connected landscape for nature; secure and mainstream positive effects for biodiversity; protect, enhance and restore habitat for nature and connect people with nature. The strategy will be delivered by both council services and wider partners working together. Our work on nature networks will help us to target investment in the places where it can have the most impact for nature, and to be able to support public understanding of the challenges faced by nature. The delivery of the strategy will be supported by a detailed action plan of key interventions which will support nature over the next five year period. Progress will be monitored and reviewed and reported through the nature sub group within the Community Planning Partnership.

A key part of the strategy will be integration of our new nature networks into next Local Development Plan, LDP3, and these will be consulted on as part of the development of the Plan. Work has begun to identify and set out [our habitat networks](#) here in South Ayrshire, so that we can contribute to efforts to ensure that in Scotland 30% of all land and sea is protected and effectively managed to support nature in good health by 2030 as required by the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, and that these are spatially connected. We have been using recorded data and mapping techniques to scientifically identify nature rich sites and relevant sites to set out our proposed network with partners.



Wetland habitats creation in Ayr

20. Enabling and capacity building activity

Climate literacy, communications and training will be used to support a shift in ethos, renewed motivation for action and support implementation of both Integrated Impact Assessment and Sustainable Design Guidance, delivering better decisions for the council. We will use of mechanisms such as The Outstanding People Awards (TOPA) and School Footprint Awards to champion and reinforce this.

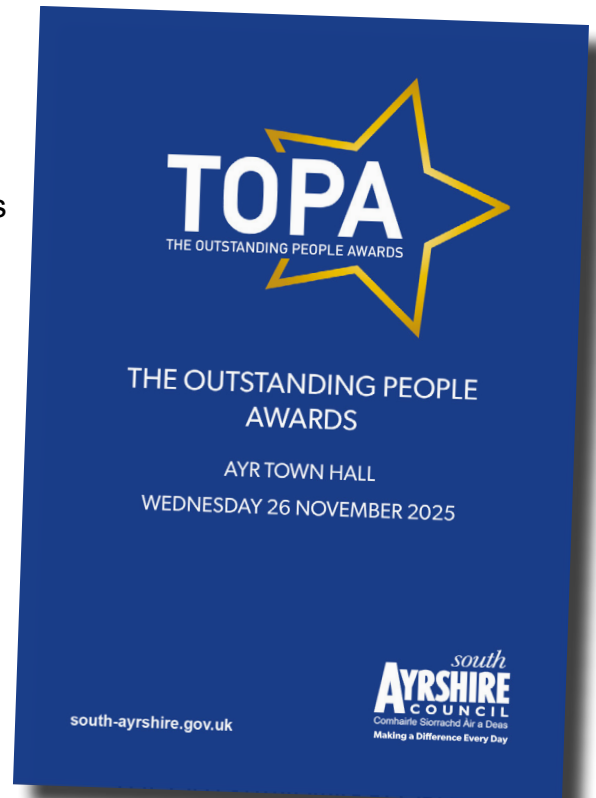
We will improve our data and monitoring to communicate better and inform decisions:

- ✓ More areas of our organisational footprint will be captured
- ✓ More sectoral targets will be established for areas we can monitor
- ✓ Improved data will allow a renewed approach to carbon budgeting and sustainable procurement / circular economy across services, supporting more embedded action and development of sectoral target
- ✓ Inform service planning with integration of activities into the performance reporting system for services and team planning
- ✓ Inform Integrated Impact Assessments which will in turn provide new data
- ✓ We will track our adaption progress against the adaptation capability framework and develop how we track both climate impacts and service responses to impacts
- ✓ We will improve wildlife recording, reporting and spatial mapping to support our nature networks and planning processes
- ✓ We will use Climate View for area wide emissions reporting and intelligence
- ✓ We will consider the Local Government Benchmarking Framework in terms of how it can inform us about our council response to sustainability and climate change

We will develop an enabling approach through the senior officer group, supporting a broad understanding of how council business can deliver holistic sustainability, linking action areas and avoiding duplication or contradictory efforts.

21. Governance

Progress of this strategy will be monitored by a senior officer working group with an annual performance report being submitted for scrutiny by the Service and Partnership Performance Panel.



Appendix 1

SCIS Annual Emissions Inventory Report: South Ayrshire 2021

SCIS Annual Emissions Inventory Report South Ayrshire 2021



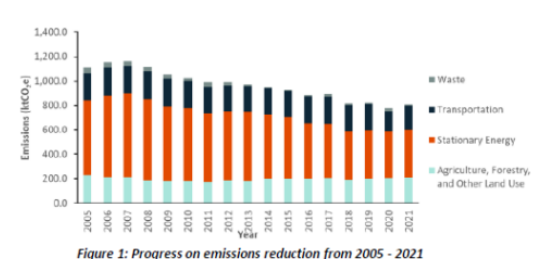
This report provides an overview of your area-wide greenhouse gas emissions in 2021 as well as highlighting some key insights and trends.

Key Takeaways

<p>Total 2021 emissions for South Ayrshire 809.7 ktCO₂e</p>	<p>Rise in emissions since 2020* 3%</p>	<p>Largest sector in 2021: Stationary Energy 395.1 ktCO₂e</p>
<p>Total 2021 emissions for Scotland 38,504.6 ktCO₂e</p>	<p>Decrease in emissions since 2005* 27%</p>	<p>Total sequestered emissions in 2021 -212.6 ktCO₂e</p>

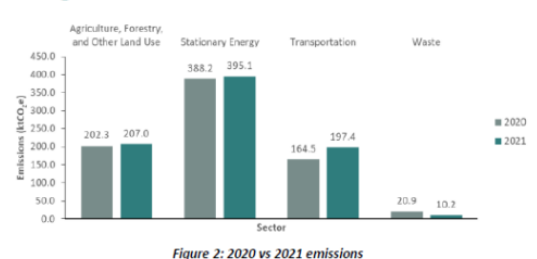
* This does not include negative emissions

Progress on emissions reduction



- The downward trend in total emissions since 2005 is largely driven by a 36% decrease in Stationary Energy emissions (Figure 1).
- Waste emissions have reduced, however the impact on the overall total is small, which is why it is not further discussed in the report in more detail.
- Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) emissions have remained relatively stable as have Transportation emissions, excluding a fall due to the COVID pandemic in 2020 [1].

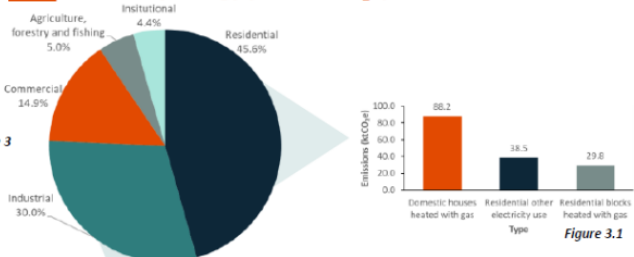
Change in emissions 2020-2021



- Annual emissions rose across Stationary Energy, Transportation and AFOLU sectors from 2020 to 2021 (Figure 2).
- The greatest increase in emissions, a 20% rise, was seen in the Transportation sector, linked to a return to work and travel post-COVID restrictions [1].
- Waste emissions fell by 51% or 10 ktCO₂e.
- Further detail of these changes are discussed in the *sectoral analysis* section.

Sectoral Analysis

Stationary Energy (395.1 ktCO₂e)



Residential emissions contributed 46% of all Stationary Energy emissions in South Ayrshire in 2021 (Figure 3). Natural gas for heating was the largest category of Residential emissions, whilst 21% was due to electricity for other use, including lighting, cooking and appliances (Figure 3.1). Industry was the second highest emitting category in Stationary Energy (Figure 3.2), with most of these emissions related to natural gas use for purposes other than heating.

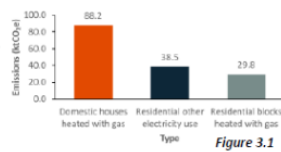
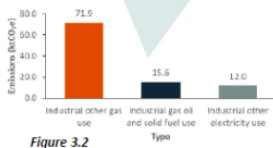


Figure 3: Stationary Energy emissions
Figure 3.1: Three largest Residential emissions by type
Figure 3.2: Three largest Industrial emissions by type



An investigation into fuel usage

In South Ayrshire, 59% of all Stationary Energy emissions in 2021 were the result of natural gas use, and 25% from electricity use. Fuel use for Heating specifically resulted in 50% of Stationary Energy emissions. Approximately 78% of Heating related emissions were a result of natural gas use with only 10% from electricity use.

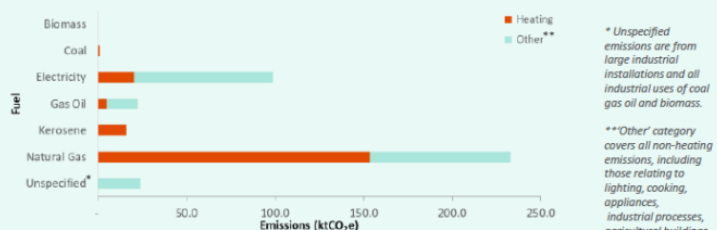


Figure 4: Emissions by fuel type and end use

* Unspecified emissions are from large industrial installations and all industrial uses of coal gas oil and biomass.
** Other** category covers all non-heating emissions, including those relating to lighting, cooking, appliances, industrial processes, agricultural buildings and machinery.

A note on energy consumption

The fall in emissions since 2005 masks a more complex picture (Figure 5). As can be seen, emissions per capita have been falling but rate of reduction has been decreasing – as demonstrated by the flattening line in the chart. The increased level of renewables feeding into the electricity grid has resulted in a reduction in electricity emissions per unit consumed [2,3]. This is reflected in the emissions factor for electricity which fell from 0.467 kgCO₂e/kWh in 2005 to 0.207 kgCO₂e/kWh in 2021, contributing to the fall in per capita emissions. Energy consumption has fluctuated, in part affected by the variation in natural gas and electricity rail price [3]. As the rate of grid decarbonisation slows, achieving further emission reductions will require a decrease in consumption.

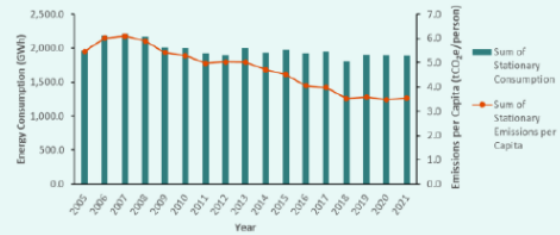


Figure 5: Stationary Energy consumption and emissions per capita

Transportation (197.4 ktCO₂e)

Figure 6 illustrates the breakdown of emissions by mode of transport. Of Transportation emissions included in South Ayrshire’s inventory, 97% were generated by on-road travel with 55% from cars and 22% from light goods vehicles. It should be noted that ferry data and aviation travel has not been included yet and so a change in proportion is possible in future reports. Unlike Stationary Energy, Transportation emissions have remained high, notwithstanding a fall during 2020 when COVID reduced travel [1]. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that in 2021 these emissions rose again to approach the levels seen in 2019, pre-pandemic.

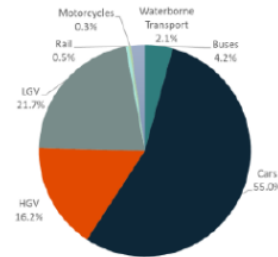


Figure 6: Transportation emissions

Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (207.0 ktCO₂e)

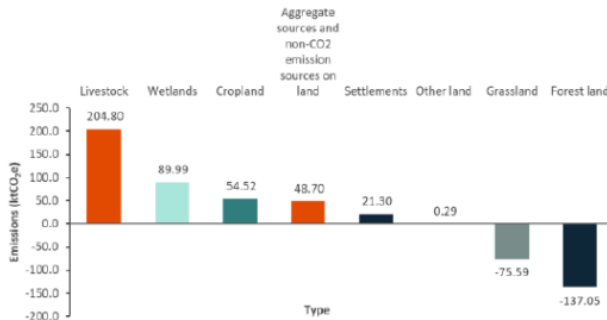


Figure 7: AFOLU emissions

Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) contains both the largest single source of emissions and a large carbon sink for South Ayrshire (Figure 7). Livestock agriculture resulted in more emissions in 2021 than the Residential category. However, these Livestock emissions have fallen 10% since 2005, in line with falling cattle numbers across Scotland [4]. Wetland (peatland) emissions have reduced by 30% in the same period. The emissions sequestered by Forestry and Grassland have also decreased by 25% since 2005. It should also be noted that AFOLU is the sector with the most uncertainty around calculation of emissions which are taken from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero data [5].

Key Considerations

These consideration are not mandates or requirements but are suggestions for tackling the emissions identified in this report

Stationary Energy:

- Decarbonising homes could have a significant effect on total area-wide emissions given that 46% of all Stationary Energy emissions are residential. With 78% of heating emissions from natural gas use, low carbon fuel sources for these homes could deliver a reduction in emissions. South Ayrshire LHEES [6] identifies heat pump installations and high efficiency electric heating as possible solutions alongside ongoing feasibility studies into heat networks. The LHEES [6] has also highlighted the need for retrofit measures to improve home energy efficiency.
- As 23% of Residential emissions arise from electricity for ‘other’ uses, programmes to increase uptake of energy efficient lighting and appliances could also be explored.
- Whilst Industrial emissions make a significant contribution to Stationary Energy Emissions, we understand that the local authority has limited influence over these.

Transportation:

- Over 76% of Transportation emissions were generated by cars (petrol and diesel) and vans on-road. Measures which decrease emissions by minimising distance travelled by these vehicles could be considered, however it is understood this is complicated by the need to improve connectivity to rural settlements.
- The STPR [7] has identified lower than average levels of active travel and of electric vehicle charging points in the region. Measures which could address these points include increasing charging infrastructure and as had been proposed in the Active Travel Strategy[8], improving cycle and walking routes. Enhancing local bus and rail services could also bring a reduction in on-road emissions while enhancing connectivity in the region.

AFOLU:

- The value of protecting and where possible increasing areas of forestry to increase sequestration is identified in the Local Development Plan [9] and could include projects such as the Small Scale Tree Planting Programme [10].
- While Agricultural and Wetland emissions have both fallen since 2005, the levers to bring about further reductions in these positive emissions from agriculture and peatlands do not all lie at local authority level but could involve development of relevant policy alongside Scottish Government [1].

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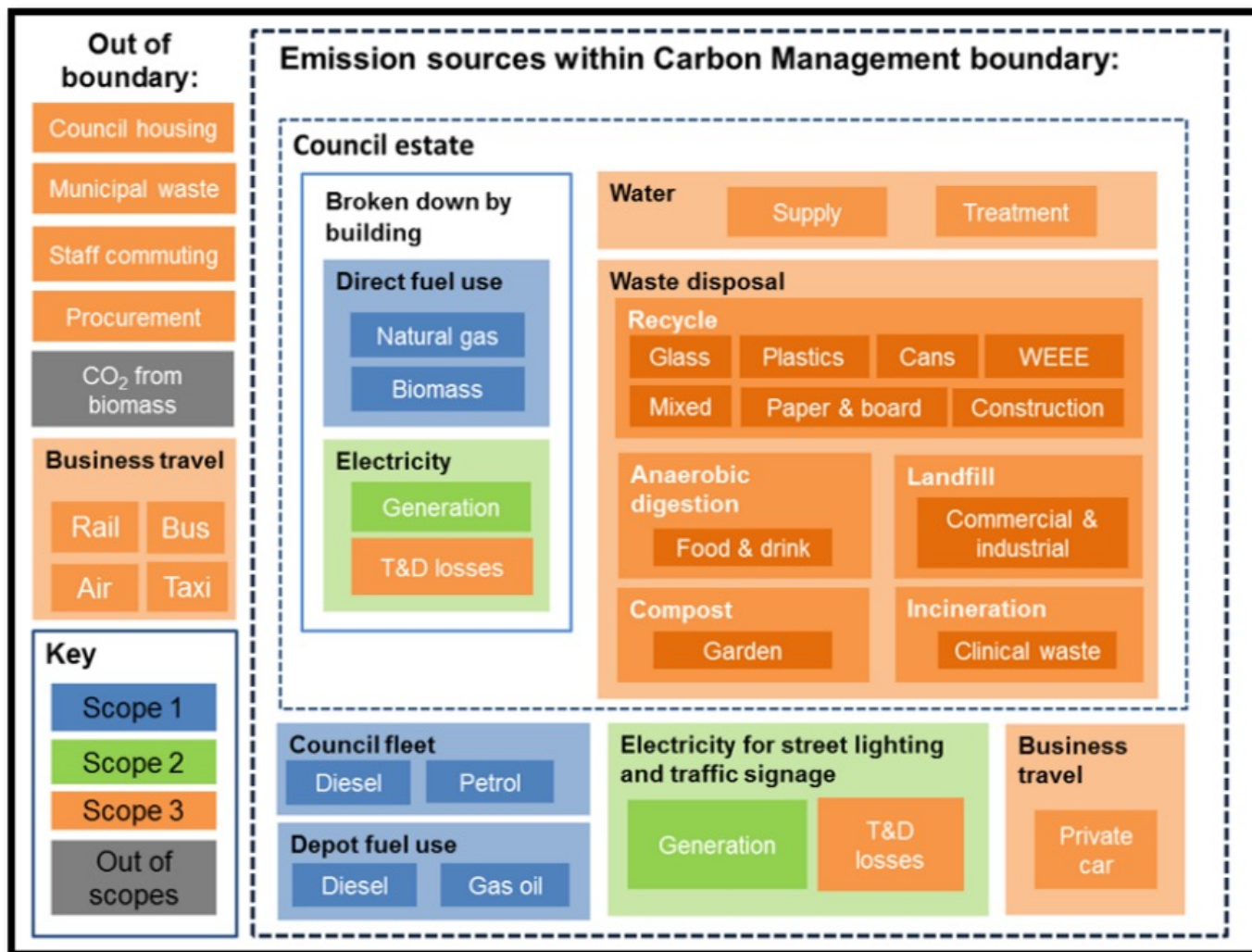
This report intends to provide an overview of your area-wide greenhouse gas emissions in 2021.

(Note: The results are based on the SCIS teams’ interpretation and methodology, which is continually being updated and is subject to future change and improvement. Data and analysis are correct as of January 2025. A reference sheet has been shared alongside this document defining each sector and with further clarity on some sub-sector categories).

Should you have any questions, please contact your Local Lead or email the SCIS team at info@climateintelligenceservice.scot. We are more than happy to discuss details of this report in greater depth.



Appendix 2 Organisational emissions reporting boundary



South Ayrshire Council’s emissions have consistently been reported from 2014/15 to 2024/25 using our boundary as shown here. Our 2030 emissions reduction target was also set based on this boundary reporting in relation to the 2014/15 year. Going forward there will be a requirement to include additional out of boundary areas in our monitoring and reporting and to set more detailed sectoral targets to reduce emissions in line with our duties. We will take forward the development of the systems and processes to allow this to take place within the strategy action plan.

In the diagram above T&D stands for Transmission and Distribution and WEEE stands for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

Scopes are classifications of greenhouse gas emissions and are the basis for mandatory greenhouse gas reporting in the UK:

Scope 1: direct emissions that are owned or controlled by an organisation, such as emissions from the fleet vehicles of buildings

Scope 2: Indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating, and cooling consumed by the organization

Scope 3: All other indirect emissions that occur in an organisations value chain, including both upstream and downstream emissions, such as those from suppliers and service users.

Appendix 3

Adaptation Scotland - the Adaptation Scotland Programme provides help and advice to organisations, businesses and communities to prepare for and build resilience to climate change impacts.

Best Value – a framework to help local authorities ensure the delivery of better, more responsive public services through continuous improvement and ensuring that they are of the highest quality at a cost which is acceptable to their local communities.

Biodiversity – the variety of life which inhabits the planet including all plants, animals, fungi and also the surroundings they live in.

Biodiversity Duty – a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity was placed on all public sector bodies in Scotland through the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland)

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) – a colourless, odourless gas which is produced both naturally as people and animals exhale CO₂, and through human activities, such as burning fossil fuels and wood. In the earth's atmosphere CO₂ acts as a greenhouse gas and plays a major role in global warming and climate change.

Carbon emissions – the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere over a specified area and period of time. Carbon footprint – a measurement of the amount of carbon dioxide produced by the activities of a person, company, organisation, country or the planet.

Circular economy – an alternative to the traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life.

Climate change – a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Climate change adaptation – actions or changes required in anticipation of, or in response to, the impacts of a changing climate.

Climate change duties – The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places duties on public bodies relating to climate change which requires them to: contribute to carbon emissions reduction targets; contribute to climate change adaptation in a way that supports sustainable development.

Climate change mitigation – limiting the extent of future climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions now and in the future. It can also mean removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, for example by planting more trees or restoring peat bogs.

Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 – an act passed by the Scottish Parliament to set national targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions and to support the transition to a low carbon economy.

Community planning – the statutory process through which public sector organisations work together and with local communities and the voluntary sector, to identify and solve local problems, improve services and share resources.

Decarbonisation – the reduction or removal of carbon dioxide from energy sources.

Economic development – a process by which a community or nation creates, retains and reinvests wealth and improves quality of life.

Ecosystem – short for ‘ecological system’, it includes all the living organisms such as plants, animals, and fungi existing together in a particular area and how they interact with each other and with the non-living elements of the area, such as climate, water, soil, etc.

Ecosystem services – the benefits that are supplied to society by an ecosystem; these include clean air, water, food, energy, medicine, jobs and places to live.

Energy efficiency – a goal to reduce the amount of energy required to provide products and services.

Fleet – a number of vehicles under the control of an organisation.

EnerPHit – is the passivehaus standard for retrofits

Framework – a broad outline of the principles and supports required to achieve a particular goal.

Fuel poverty – when a household needs to spend more than 10 percent of its income on energy to keep their home at a satisfactory temperature. Fuel poverty is driven by a number of factors including the cost of energy, the energy performance of the home, household income, and how energy use is managed.

Greenhouse gases – gases that stop heat escaping from the earth’s atmosphere ensuring that the planet is warm enough to sustain life. Human activity has increased the emission of greenhouse gases contributing to global warming.

Greenspace – an area of grass, trees, shrubs or other vegetation used for recreational or aesthetic purposes (eg a park or community garden). **Habitats** – the natural home or environment of an animal, plant or other organism.

Just Transition - phrase commonly used in climate change dialogues which means making sure that action on climate change supports an inclusive economy, with a particular focus on workers and communities.

Local development planning – planning for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community.

Low carbon economy – an economy that produces goods and services of increasing value while reducing the associated carbon dioxide in their production, use and disposal.

Low carbon energy/heating – energy or heating that comes from processes or technologies that produce power with substantially lower amounts of carbon dioxide emissions than is emitted from conventional fossil fuel power generation.

Low carbon future – a future society that has economic development while ensuring minimal carbon emissions. This may involve deployment of low carbon technologies and changes to behaviours and lifestyles.

Low emission zones – a defined area where access by some polluting vehicles is restricted or deterred with the aim of improving air quality.

Natural capital – the world’s stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. It is from this natural capital that humans derive a wide range of services, often called ecosystem services, which make human life possible.

Outcome – desired end result following action.

Placemaking – a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces.

Public Sector Climate Change Duties – a legal obligation for the public sector under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act to produce annual reports on efforts to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change impacts.

Renewable energy generation – energy which comes from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, and geothermal (thermal energy generated and stored in the Earth).

Resource efficiency – maximising the use of money, materials, staff and other assets to function effectively with minimum waste. It means using the Earth’s limited resources in a sustainable way while minimising environmental impact.

Scottish Climate Intelligence Service – Organisation who support Scottish Local Authorities to deliver on their emissions reduction duties by implementing Climate View, a data platform which assesses pathways to emissions targets.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard – the Scottish Government’s principal measure of housing quality in Scotland.

Social development – improving the wellbeing of citizens and communities and creating the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential.

Staff competencies – knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes that contribute to enhance employee performance and ultimately result in organisational success.

Sustainable procurement duty – The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on public procurement to maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits through effective and efficient procurement activity.

Sustainable Scotland Network – Scotland’s network for public sector professionals engaged in sustainability and climate action.

Sustainable Urban Drainage – a natural approach to managing drainage in and around properties and other developments.

