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Foreword

The challenge of climate change is no longer a distant prospect—it is a reality that demands bold, local action. As the **Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture & Wellbeing** I am proud to introduce Mid Suffolk District Council's **Annual Climate Report** for the Council's Carbon Reduction Management Plan, a strategic roadmap that outlines how we will transform our operations and lead our communities toward a sustainable future.

Our district is defined by its beautiful rural landscapes and vibrant market towns. Protecting this heritage requires more than just good intentions; it requires a measurable, disciplined approach to reducing our carbon footprint. This plan isn't just a policy document—it is our "green blueprint" for ensuring that Mid Suffolk remains a resilient and healthy place to live, work, and visit for generations to come.

Empowering Our Local Economy: Solar for Business

We recognise that the transition to net-zero is a journey we must take alongside our local business community. High energy costs and carbon targets can be daunting for any enterprise; that is why we are championing initiatives like Solar for Business. Through our partnership with West Suffolk Council, we are making it possible for local firms to have solar panels installed on their premises with no upfront costs. By generating clean, renewable energy on-site, businesses can benefit from lower electricity tariffs, improving their bottom line while significantly reducing their environmental impact. Whether it's rooftop solar or the pioneering solar carports we've pioneered at our leisure centres, we are committed to making renewable energy a practical reality for Mid Suffolk's economy.

Our Strategic Priorities

- Decarbonising our Assets: Investing in energy efficiency and renewable technologies across our council-owned buildings.
- Cleaner Transport: Transitioning our vehicle fleet (including our HVO-powered waste vehicles) and supporting EV infrastructure.
- Sustainable Innovation: Embracing new technologies and supporting our partners through the Net Zero Business Advisor Service.

Achieving these goals will not be easy, and it will require the collective effort of our staff, our partners, and our residents. However, the cost of inaction is far greater than the investment required today.

By delivering on this Carbon Reduction Management Plan, we are not just meeting a target; we are honouring our responsibility to our environment and our community. Together, we can build a cleaner, greener, and more prosperous Mid Suffolk.



Cllr Tim Weller
Mid Suffolk District Council

Introduction:

This report sets out the key **climate, energy and sustainable transport activity delivered by Mid Suffolk District Council over the 12-month period in 2025**. It provides an overview of progress made across council-led programmes, partnership projects and community-focused initiatives that support delivery of the councils' Climate Emergency commitments.

Over the past year, activity has focused on **moving from planning and feasibility into delivery**, strengthening internal capacity, securing external funding, and supporting residents, businesses and communities to reduce emissions and energy costs. The work summarised in this report reflects a balanced approach, combining infrastructure investment, advice and support programmes, behavioural change initiatives and organisational change.

The report is intended to provide a **clear and accessible overview of what has been delivered**, the outcomes achieved to date, and how this work is laying the foundations for further delivery in 2026 and beyond. Each section outlines the context for key projects, the activity undertaken during 2025, and the anticipated next steps, enabling progress to be understood alongside future direction.



Energy & Estates

Overview

Energy and estates activity focuses on **reducing emissions, improving energy efficiency and managing energy costs across council-owned buildings and infrastructure**. This work is central to meeting Climate Emergency commitments while also addressing financial pressures, asset condition, and long-term operational resilience.

During 2025, activity within this theme has concentrated on:

- Improving the performance of existing low-carbon infrastructure
- Supporting local renewable energy generation and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Strengthening energy monitoring and data-led decision-making
- Ensuring council energy assets deliver maximum environmental and financial value

The projects outlined below demonstrate a **shift from feasibility and planning into optimisation and delivery**, supported by external funding, technical expertise and improved internal capacity.

Heat Network Development and Optimisation

Project context

Shared heat networks play an important role in decarbonising heat across mixed-use and residential estates, particularly where individual low-carbon heating solutions are not viable. Ensuring these systems operate efficiently, reliably and affordably is critical for both carbon reduction and resident outcomes.

Activity delivered in 2025

- Secured Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES) funding for optimisation studies at three Sheltered Heating Units (one in Mid Suffolk).
- Procured Chirpy Heat consultants to undertake detailed technical assessments, including on-site inspections and performance modelling.
- Completed preparatory data collection and planning, with site visits scheduled for January 2026.

Outcomes and benefits

- Improved understanding of system performance, heat losses and operational inefficiencies.
- Robust evidence-base to inform future capital investment and prioritisation.
- Potential to reduce carbon emissions, improve resident comfort and lower operating costs

Next steps (2026)

- Review consultant recommendations in early 2026.
- Prioritise optimisation measures and develop business cases for implementation.
- Seek funding to deliver improvements.

Low-Carbon Energy Infrastructure & Local Renewable Generation

Project context

While no new council-owned renewable installations were delivered during 2025, activity focused on supporting low-carbon energy infrastructure across the districts and ensuring existing council energy systems and EV charging infrastructure operate effectively. This enabling role supports wider decarbonisation while managing financial risk and maximising value from existing assets.

Activity delivered in 2025

Supporting local renewable energy generation

- Solar for Business programme engagement:
 - Mid Suffolk: 45 enquiries, 14 proposals issued, 9 progressed to legal stage, 11 did not proceed.
- Battery Box (Amp Energy) programme:
 - three installations constructed and progressing to operation.

EV charging infrastructure management

- Ongoing operational support for **100+ electric vehicle charge points** across council-owned sites.
- Fault resolution, monitoring, and liaison with operators to maintain reliability and user confidence.

Outcomes and benefits

- Increased local renewable energy capacity through privately funded installations.
- Improved reliability and performance of EV charging infrastructure.
- Strengthened local energy resilience and support for low-carbon transport.
- Foundations laid for future decarbonisation without requiring immediate capital investment.

Next steps (2026)

- Continue supporting Solar for Business enquiries and progression where schemes move forward.
- Monitor Battery Box installations as they become operational.
- Continue performance monitoring of EV infrastructure to inform future expansion and investment decisions.



EV Charger

Ongoing Energy Management and Estate Support

Activity delivered in 2025

- Closer working with the councils' energy broker (Vertas) to identify utility supplies relying on estimated readings and resolve data inaccuracies.
- Weekly monitoring of council-owned renewable energy assets to track performance and identify issues early.
- Awarded a solar panel cleaning contract to improve generation efficiency across installations.
- Provided technical and operational energy support for major sites including leisure centres and corporate buildings.

Outcomes and benefits

- Improved accuracy of energy billing and forecasting, ensuring budgets are neither overstated nor underspent and releasing funds for use elsewhere.
- Optimised renewable generation performance through proactive monitoring and maintenance.
- Better cost control, reduced operational risk, and increased confidence in energy data.

Next steps (2026)

- Maintain enhanced energy monitoring and broker engagement as standard practice.
- Review performance data to identify further optimisation opportunities across the estate.
- Continue proactive maintenance and performance management of renewable assets.

Retrofit

Overview

Improving the energy efficiency of homes is central to tackling fuel poverty, reducing emissions, and supporting residents with rising energy costs. During 2025, Mid Suffolk District Council focused on **building the foundations for long-term, scalable retrofit delivery**, ensuring the right skills, partnerships, and systems are in place ahead of major national investment programmes.

This work is being delivered through the **REACH programme (Retrofit & Energy Advice for Communities and Households)**, which is **scheduled to launch in Spring 2026** and act as the councils' primary vehicle for resident-facing energy advice, retrofit engagement, and signposting to funding.

REACH Programme Development

Progress in 2025

- REACH approved by Cabinet in **December 2025**, establishing a formal mandate for district-wide retrofit and energy advice
- **Lead Retrofit & Engagement Officer appointed (September 2025)** to establish and lead the programme
- Procurement process initiated for a **REACH EV engagement van** to support mobile outreach and community-based advice
- Recruitment planned for **two additional Community Energy Advice Officers** to expand engagement capacity
- Development of a **REACH communications and branding strategy** in collaboration with the Communications Team
 - New REACH website planned ahead of Spring 2026 launch
 - Consistent branding for events and the engagement van to build public trust and visibility
- Strong collaboration with internal teams including **Customer Services, Housing, Communities and Heritage**
- Engagement with **Sustainable Suffolk**, updates through **key local authority partnerships**, and participation in the **Suffolk Retrofit Officers Working Group**
- Ongoing alignment discussions with **Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice** to ensure advice services dovetail effectively

Next Steps (2026)

- Formal public launch of REACH (Spring 2026)
- Mobilisation of the REACH engagement van for community events and outreach
- Recruitment of additional Community Energy Advice Officers
- Roll-out of Lunch-and-Learn sessions to support staff advocacy and resident signposting

Skills, Training & Organisational Capacity

Progress in 2025

- Lead Retrofit Officer achieved **NEA Level 3 Energy Awareness**, enabling provision of trusted advice on:

- Home energy use
- Heating systems
- Fuel poverty
- Practical energy-saving measures
- Officer undertaking **Level 5 Retrofit Coordinator training**, due for completion in **April 2026**, enabling PAS 2035-compliant oversight of retrofit projects
- Commitment to extending **NEA and Carbon Literacy training** to future recruits and relevant internal teams

Next Steps (2026)

- Completion of Retrofit Coordinator qualification
- Wider rollout of energy and carbon training to strengthen service-wide capability
- Embedding retrofit knowledge across Customer Services and Housing teams

Warm Homes Local Grant

Progress in 2025

- **£1.38m secured by Warm Homes Suffolk (December 2025)** through DSNEZ to support eligible households across Suffolk's districts
- Fund supports measures including:
 - Loft and external wall insulation
 - Air source heat pumps
 - Solar PV and battery storage
 - Storage heater upgrades
- Targeted communications campaign in development using **LIFT (Low-Income Family Tracker)** insights

Next Steps (2026)

- Launch targeted communications via BMSDC channels
- Support eligible households through application and delivery stages
- Align grant delivery with REACH advice and signposting routes

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) programme supports energy efficiency upgrades to council housing, improving comfort, reducing fuel costs and cutting carbon emissions. Delivery continued through SHDF Wave 2.2, implemented in partnership with Housing teams and delivery contractors.

Programme Impact (Wave 2.2 Delivery)

Post-delivery evaluation has identified significant performance improvements across upgraded homes:

- **Average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) improvement: +15 points**

Highest uplift: 54 points (F25 → B84)

- **Average space heating demand reduction: 19%**

Best case: 57% reduction

- **Average airtightness improvement: 21%**

Best case: 64% improvement

- **Average carbon emissions reduction: 45%**

Best case: 83% reduction (7 tCO₂e/year → 1.1 tCO₂e/year)

These improvements demonstrate the programme's effectiveness in reducing energy demand, improving thermal performance and lowering household emissions.

Note: Delivery under Wave 2.2 runs until 31 March 2026. The performance data reflects programme outcomes and may include a small proportion of works completed in early 2026 where separation by calendar year is not possible.

Outcomes & Benefits

- Warmer, healthier homes with improved thermal comfort.
- Reduced energy demand and lower heating costs for tenants.
- Significant carbon emissions reductions contributing to district climate targets.
- Enhanced building fabric performance supporting long-term housing quality.

2025 Activity

- Continued delivery of SHDF Wave 2.2 improvements across council housing stock.
- Ongoing collaboration with Housing teams and Equans to monitor performance and resident outcomes.
- Initial discussions with Procurement to strengthen social value requirements in future retrofit contracts.
- Early coordination discussions to align SHDF resident engagement with REACH community outreach.

Next Steps (2026)

- Complete Wave 2.2 delivery and capture full programme outcomes.
- Obtain district-level breakdowns of delivery and carbon savings for future reporting.
- Strengthen social value requirements within retrofit procurement.
- Align REACH engagement with SHDF resident engagement activity.
- Prepare for Wave 3 delivery coordination and tenant engagement.

Mid Suffolk Cosy Homes Plus

Mid Suffolk Cosy Homes Plus supports eligible households to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel costs and lower carbon emissions through funded home upgrades.

Progress in 2025

- Scheme delivery commenced in September 2025 and is now fully operational.
- £1.5 million funding allocation is expected to support approximately **150 homes** over an 18-24 month delivery period.
- Early delivery has provided valuable insight into:
 - customer journey and resident experience
 - installation timelines and contractor coordination
 - delivery risks and mitigation measures
- Ongoing collaboration between Housing, Climate and delivery partners is ensuring a coordinated approach to resident support.

Next Steps (2026)

- Continue programme delivery and monitor installation progress.
- Incorporate lessons learned to improve resident experience and delivery efficiency.
- Align communications and engagement with REACH to maximise uptake.
- Promote case studies demonstrating energy savings and comfort improvements.

Heritage & Traditional Buildings Retrofit - Knowledge Sharing

Improving the energy performance of listed and traditional buildings presents unique challenges. During 2025, the councils continued to contribute to regional and national knowledge-sharing to support appropriate retrofit approaches for heritage properties.

2025 Activity

- Continued engagement with partner authorities and retrofit networks to share learning on traditional building energy improvements.
- Participation in Suffolk retrofit officer discussions to ensure approaches consider heritage constraints and conservation requirements.
- Reviewed emerging guidance and case studies to inform local advice and future resident support.
- The Council approved and implemented a Local Listed Building Consent Order (LLBCO) on 18 August 2025, giving automatic consent for certain window-related energy-efficiency works such as secondary glazing for Grade II listed buildings, later publicly launched in October 2025.

Outcomes & Benefits

- Improved understanding of suitable retrofit approaches for heritage and traditionally constructed buildings.
- Helps ensure advice provided to residents balances energy efficiency, building performance and conservation requirements.
- Supports consistent best practice across Suffolk.
- The Local Listed Building Consent Order (LLBCO) removes the need for individual applications, making upgrades faster and cheaper while improving thermal performance and supporting carbon-reduction goals, encouraging more owners to act.

Next Steps (2026)

- Incorporate heritage retrofit considerations into REACH advice and resident guidance.
- Continue collaboration with partners and heritage specialists to share best practice.
- Identify future opportunities to support retrofit of traditional buildings where funding or guidance becomes available.
- Monitor uptake and raise awareness of the LLBCO across the district, gather feedback, and review whether there is any potential to extend or adjust the LLBCO in line with the heritage and sustainability objectives of the Council.

Household Energy Efficiency & Retrofit Support

During 2025, Mid Suffolk residents were supported to improve home energy efficiency through a range of funded schemes and affordable finance options.

Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2)

- 26 homes supported
- £445,271 secured for energy efficiency improvements

Warm Homes: Local Grant

- 15 referrals made
- 5 installations completed
- £71,935 delivered in measures

Lendology Interest-Free Home Energy Loans

- 40 loans approved
- £412,870 invested in home energy improvements

These programmes help residents reduce energy bills, improve comfort and lower carbon emissions while supporting fuel poverty objectives.

Community Energy & Local Action

Overview

Community Energy enables residents, volunteers, and councils to work together on local climate and energy projects. Initiatives range from behaviour-change campaigns ('Power Down') to renewable energy generation ('Power Up'), supporting energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, and keeping benefits within local communities.

In Mid Suffolk, Community Energy activity continues to grow:

- **In 2025 there was 1 active group in Mid Suffolk:** Central Suffolk Community Energy
- Support provided via the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership (SCCP) and Community Energy Pathways (CEP) programme.
- Councils currently provide **light-touch coordination**, focusing on enabling delivery, sharing expertise, and connecting groups to funding and resources.

This section highlights **key projects delivered in 2025**, outcomes achieved, and plans for future community energy support.

BMSDC Community Energy Network – Biannual Meetings

Meetings held: March and September 2025

Participants: One active Community Energy group in Mid Suffolk: Central Suffolk CE

Focus: Sharing best practice, overcoming operational challenges, and aligning activities with district Climate Emergency objectives.

Outcomes:

- Identified short- and medium-term actions to support local projects.
- Coordinated workshops, pilot projects, and community events.
- Strengthened collaboration between Community Energy groups, councils, and external partners.

Next Steps: Continue biannual meetings to maintain momentum, track action delivery, and provide councillor updates.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk Community Energy Development

Purpose: Work to provide a framework for Community Energy development across the districts.

Highlights:

- Defines current position of active and emerging groups.
- Identifies achievable actions within current officer capacity, including coordination, mapping, communications, and engagement support.
- Outlines optional enhanced ambition options, including additional staff and funding to accelerate renewable generation and retrofit initiatives.

Focus: Sustain current activity, build local capacity, enable volunteer engagement, and embed Community Energy into Net Zero delivery.

Next Steps: Formalise actions to go into the refreshed Carbon Reduction Management Plan

Thermal Imaging Camera Loan Scheme

Overview

During winter 2025, staff and residents were able to borrow infrared thermal imaging cameras to identify heat loss in homes and inform energy efficiency improvements. The scheme provided a hands-on, practical tool to engage households with retrofit and low-carbon solutions, enabling users to visually see where energy was escaping.

Engagement

- **15 loans** fully booked during the season, with participants surveying a range of property types, including detached, semi-detached, and terraced homes, as well as bungalows.
- Properties spanned a mix of ages, from pre-1900 builds to post-2012 homes, reflecting the diversity of the local housing stock.
- Users also surveyed homes of friends and family, amplifying the reach of the programme.

Impact & Outcomes

- The cameras **identified insulation gaps, drafts, and cold spots**, supporting prioritisation of interventions such as loft insulation, wall and floor insulation, window replacements, radiator reflector foil, and roof upgrades.
- Several participants reported acting on the findings, including installing or topping up loft insulation, repairing windows, or addressing chimney flue insulation.
- The visual nature of thermal imaging helped households **understand energy loss issues and focus resources effectively**, avoiding unnecessary or ineffective interventions.
- Participants rated the scheme highly: ease of booking, collection, return, and use of the device scored consistently 4-5/5.

Participant Feedback

- “The camera showed us that we were definitely losing heat through the older parts of our house, especially floors and walls. It gave us visual proof and highlighted that our skylight needed replacing.” - Helen Cufley
- “It helped me identify a blown double-glazed window pane and a cold roof over an extension, which we have now upgraded. The house is much warmer.” - Melanie Lee
- “The infrared camera quantified the poor chimney flue insulation. I now know where to focus for maximum benefit.” - John Dolby

Next Steps (2026)

- Continue the thermal imaging camera loan scheme in 2026 to maintain practical engagement with energy efficiency.
- Explore the inclusion of **before-and-after photos** to visually demonstrate improvements from interventions.
- Encourage follow-up actions and signposting to local retrofit and insulation schemes, including the Suffolk Loft Insulation Offer.
- Collect additional feedback to improve booking and device handling processes, ensuring high accessibility and usability for participants.

Partnerships and Support

- **Greater South-East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH):** Technical expertise, governance guidance, and access to Community Energy Fund.
- **Community Energy Pathways (CEP) & SCCP:** Support for local groups until March 2026, maintaining momentum and access to national funding streams.
- **Council Role:** Light-touch coordination and practical guidance, enabling groups to progress projects, access funding, and connect with stakeholders.

Sustainable Travel

Overview

Sustainable Transport and Mobility activity in Mid Suffolk focuses on reducing transport-related emissions, improving accessibility across a predominantly rural district, and supporting residents to shift towards low-carbon and active travel options. This work contributes directly to the council's Climate Emergency commitments while also supporting public health, social inclusion and economic resilience.

During 2025, activity has focused on:

- Expanding and supporting low-carbon transport options
- Developing a strong pipeline of walking and cycling infrastructure schemes
- Enabling electric vehicle charging through partnership working
- Maintaining and strengthening rural transport provision

The projects outlined below demonstrate a combination of **delivery, scheme development and enabling activity**, ensuring Mid Suffolk is well positioned for future funding and investment.

E-Bike Hire: Eezybike Pods

Project context

E-bike hire provides a practical, low-carbon alternative for short journeys and leisure trips, helping to reduce car dependency while encouraging healthier travel choices.

Activity delivered in 2025

- One Eezybike pod operational at **Needham Lake**, enabling residents and visitors to hire e-bikes for emission-free travel.
- Regular, though seasonal, uptake observed throughout the year.
- Council contribution used to subsidise rental costs has reduced year-on-year as the scheme matures.
- Funding secured for **two additional Eezybike pods in Stowmarket**, supporting future expansion.

Outcomes and benefits

- Increased access to low-carbon transport options in key locations.
- Supports modal shift away from private car use.
- Demonstrates improving financial sustainability of the scheme.

Next steps (2026)

- Install and launch the two additional Stowmarket pods.
- Monitor usage and demand to inform future expansion opportunities.

Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Project context

The LCWIP provides a strategic framework for developing safe, connected walking and cycling routes that link communities, schools, services and employment. It is particularly important in Mid Suffolk, where rural connectivity and access to services can be limited.

Activity delivered in 2025

- **8 LCWIP schemes completed** across the district.
- **5 additional schemes** underway or under construction.
- **11 further schemes** have secured funding for future delivery.
- Concept design work completed for a number of priority routes, providing clarity on feasibility, design options and capital cost requirements. These include:
 - **Needham Market to Stowmarket** – new shared-use footway/cycleway along the B1113 (cost options ranging from £2.0m to £5.3m).
 - **Eye to Diss** – shared-use footway/cycleway following the B1077 (£6.25m).
 - **Barking Tye to Needham Market** – shared-use route along the B1078 (£5.36m).
 - **Ringshall (Offton Road / Lower Farm Road junction)** – pedestrian safety improvements for school access (£71k–£78k).
 - **Onehouse to Stowmarket Recreation Ground** – shared-use route and junction improvements (£402k–£439k).
 - **Thurston (Station Hill)** – pedestrian and cycling improvements with scalable delivery options (£102k–£111k).
 - **Stonham Aspal (The Street / A1120)** – pedestrian connectivity improvements (£4k–£19k).
 - **Stowmarket (Combs Lane)** – new footway linking residential areas (£128k–£145k).
 - **Combs Ford to Combs** – off-road walking and cycling route (£481k–£589k).
 - **Bildeston Road, Combs** – footway extension to Oaks Meadow (£44k).
 - **Palgrave to Diss** – shared-use footway/cycleway along Priory Road / Denmark Hill (£1.22m).
- Established the **Suffolk LCWIP Liaison Group** to share progress, resolve barriers and coordinate delivery across Suffolk authorities.

Outcomes and benefits

- A robust, costed pipeline of walking and cycling schemes ready for future funding bids.
- Improved readiness to deliver schemes quickly when funding becomes available.
- Safer, more accessible routes supporting everyday journeys and school travel.
- Stronger collaboration across Suffolk.

Next steps (2026)

- Progress funded schemes through construction and completion.
- Use completed concept designs to secure further capital funding.
- Continue collaborative working through the Suffolk LCWIP Liaison Group.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure: Plug in Suffolk

Project context

Expanding EV charging infrastructure is essential to support the transition to electric vehicles, particularly for residents without off-street parking.

Activity delivered in 2025

- Ongoing partnership working with **Suffolk County Council** to expand EV infrastructure across Mid Suffolk.
- District council facilitating and enabling installations on **MSDC-owned land and council housing neighbourhoods** through lease agreements.
- Programme currently exploring approximately **65 EV charge point installations** across the district.
- Up to **20 installations** may be located on district council land or housing neighbourhoods.
- Installations provide a modest ongoing income stream while supporting the transition to low-carbon transport.

Outcomes and benefits

- Improved access to public EV charging across rural and urban areas.
- Reduced barriers to EV uptake for residents and visitors.
- Generates a modest revenue stream to support long-term infrastructure management.

Next steps (2026)

- Finalise site selection and progress installations.
- Monitor demand and utilisation to inform future rollout phases.

Rural Transport

Project context

Rural transport provision is vital in Mid Suffolk to ensure residents can access education, employment, healthcare and community services.

Activity delivered in 2025

- Over **4,000 passenger journeys** delivered through MSDC Rural Transport Grant-funded pilot schemes, including:
 - **Rural Connect**
 - **Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus**
- Journeys include school transport, community group travel, demand-responsive services and scheduled routes.
- Continued practical and operational support provided to community transport operators.
- Ongoing work with parishes and partners to access **Suffolk County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)** funding.

Outcomes and benefits

- Improved connectivity and reduced isolation for rural residents.
- Supports access to essential services and employment.
- Builds a strong evidence base for future transport investment.

Next steps (2026)

- Continue monitoring and data collection to support a full evaluation of the pilot Rural Transport Grant scheme in **September 2026**.
- Identify opportunities to expand services and secure additional funding.
- Support new routes, timetable enhancements and capital improvements to stops and stations.

Schools, Skills & Engagement

Overview

The councils are committed to engaging young people in climate action, sustainable careers, and energy awareness. Schools-based initiatives provide practical learning opportunities, promote green skills, and build leadership capabilities while supporting local Net Zero ambitions.

In 2025, the focus was on the **Schools Green Skills Summit**, alongside wider youth engagement events, ensuring students gain practical experience, explore climate solutions, and connect with local businesses delivering green innovation.

Schools Green Skills Summit 2025

Date & Venue: 10 October 2025 - Royal Hospital School

Attendance: ~85 students from 10 schools across Babergh and Mid Suffolk

Year Groups: Year 8 & 9

Aims:

- Strengthen climate learning, leadership, and awareness of green careers
- Empower students to tackle real-world climate challenges
- Build partnerships between schools, councils, and local businesses

Activities:

- **COP-style Climate Negotiations:** Students debated climate justice, emissions reduction, and climate finance, then voted on actions.
- **Climate Question Time:** Panel of councillors and industry experts answered student questions on local climate action and green careers.
- **Green Skills Careers Fair:** 13 local organisations showcased careers in engineering, construction, energy, food sustainability, waste management, and digital technology.
- **Student Action Planning:** Schools identified priorities for follow-up projects within their communities.

Key Outcomes:

- Students improved teamwork, negotiation, and communication skills
- Increased awareness of local green career opportunities
- Stronger partnerships between councils, schools, and local businesses
- Reinforced councils' commitment to climate education and youth engagement



Schools Summit 2025 – COP debate

Wider Schools & Youth Engagement

- **Youth Climate Conference (Sustainable Suffolk):** Councillors and staff attended alongside six Babergh & Mid Suffolk schools, supporting youth-led climate discussions and practical project workshops.
- **Sustainability in Education Conference Suffolk:** Officers participated with local teachers to share best practice and promote climate education across school networks.

Next Steps & Future Plans:

- **Schools Green Skills Summit 2026:** Planning underway to expand participation, activities, and business engagement.
- **Follow-up support:** Encourage schools to implement action plans and track progress on climate initiatives.
- **Business & careers links:** Strengthen relationships with sponsors and exhibitors to increase student exposure to green skills pathways.
- Maintain the summit as a flagship youth climate engagement programme for Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Supporting Businesses to Decarbonise

Overview

Supporting local businesses to reduce emissions, manage energy costs, and invest in low-carbon technologies is a key part of delivering the councils' Climate Emergency commitments. During 2025, activity focused on **practical, funded support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)**, helping businesses move from awareness to action through audits, grant funding, and targeted advice. This work supports economic resilience, reduces operational costs for businesses, and contributes to measurable carbon savings across Mid Suffolk.

Net Zero Innovation Fund

Project Overview:

The Net Zero Innovation Fund provides capital support to help local businesses invest in low-carbon technologies, energy efficiency, and innovative decarbonisation measures.

2025 Activity:

- **4 businesses funded** across the districts
- **4 additional projects in the pipeline**, with the fund now fully allocated
- Projects supported a range of energy and carbon reduction measures, aligned with business needs

Outcomes:

- Enabled early-stage investment in decarbonisation projects that may not otherwise have proceeded
- Supported innovation and demonstration of low-carbon solutions within the local economy

Next Steps (2026):

- Monitor delivery and performance of funded projects
- Capture case studies and lessons learned to inform future funding rounds
- Explore options to secure additional funding to reopen or expand the programme

Business Funding Advice & Support

Project Overview:

To complement grant funding, councils provided tailored advice to help businesses identify and access external finance for decarbonisation projects.

2025 Activity:

- Funding surgeries delivered to support businesses exploring low-carbon investment
- Bespoke support provided through **Grantfinder**, **Funding4Suffolk**, and the **Suffolk Funders Network**

Outcomes:

- Improved awareness of available funding routes
- Increased confidence among businesses to progress decarbonisation projects
- Reduced barriers to accessing complex funding landscapes

Next Steps (2026):

- Continue signposting businesses to relevant funding opportunities
- Strengthen links between audits, grant funding, and external finance
- Align business support more closely with emerging national programmes

Business Energy & Carbon Audits (Groundwork East, 2025)

Project Overview:

In partnership with Groundwork East, the councils delivered a programme of **remote business energy and carbon audits**, targeting SMEs and community organisations.

2025 Activity:

- **17 audits completed**
 - Mid Suffolk: **12**
- Each organisation received a tailored **Carbon Reduction Plan** outlining practical next steps

Key Findings & Potential Impact:

- Potential **annual greenhouse** gas savings:
 - **133.7 tCO₂e**
- Potential **annual financial** savings:
 - **£51,970**

Measures Identified:

- LED lighting upgrades
- Improved heating controls and zoning
- Insulation and fabric improvements
- Operational and behavioural changes
- Adoption of low-carbon technologies

Next Steps (2026):

- Support audited businesses to move from recommendations to implementation
- Link audit outcomes to available grant funding and finance options
- Track delivery where possible to evidence real carbon and cost savings

Embedding Climate Considerations into Business Engagement

Procurement & Supply Chain:

- Environmental criteria embedded into council procurement processes
- **10% social value weighting** applied to tenders over £25k, with environmental responses actively evaluated
- Encourages suppliers and contractors to demonstrate low-carbon practices and innovation

Next Steps (2026):

- Continue strengthening environmental expectations in procurement
- Improve guidance for suppliers on how to meet climate-related criteria
- Use procurement as a lever to influence wider supply-chain decarbonisation

Carbon Charter Engagement

Overview:

The councils support the **Carbon Charter**, a countywide scheme encouraging businesses to measure, reduce, and report carbon emissions.

2025 Position:

- Mid Suffolk: **25** businesses signed up

Next Steps (2026):

- Promote the scheme alongside audits and funding support
- Use Carbon Charter engagement as a pathway into deeper decarbonisation support

Key Outcomes - 2025

- Direct financial and carbon savings identified for local businesses
- Practical decarbonisation measures progressed through grants and audits
- Climate considerations embedded into business engagement and procurement
- Strong foundations established for scaling business support in future years

Organisational capacity, governance & leadership

Overview

Strong internal governance, skills, and leadership are essential to delivering the councils' Climate Emergency commitments. During 2025, Babergh and Mid Suffolk focused on **embedding climate awareness across services**, strengthening data-driven decision-making, and building the **internal capacity needed to move from strategy into delivery**. This work ensures climate considerations are no longer isolated within specialist teams, but are increasingly **mainstreamed into everyday decision-making, service delivery, and corporate governance**.

Climate Change Champions Network

Overview:

The Climate Change Champions Network provides a cross-council mechanism for embedding climate awareness, sharing knowledge, and supporting service-level delivery of climate action.

2025 Activity:

- Network expanded to **18 Champions**, representing the majority of council service areas
- **Bi-monthly meetings** held to share progress, challenges, and emerging opportunities
- Champions supported to develop climate literacy and act as advocates within their teams

Key Focus Areas:

- Translating corporate climate objectives into service-level actions
- Sharing best practice and lessons learned across departments
- Supporting behaviour change and awareness among colleagues

Outcomes:

- Improved consistency of climate messaging across services
- Increased confidence among officers to consider climate impacts in their work
- Stronger cross-service collaboration on climate-related projects

Next Steps (2026):

- Support Champions to become **accredited Carbon Literacy Trainers**, enabling in-house delivery of training
- Expand Champion representation to remaining service areas
- Strengthen the link between Champions and service planning cycles to support measurable delivery

Case Study

Tereza Fairbairn - Risk Management Lead

"I am a Climate Champion and recently completed the Carbon Literacy course, where I was tasked with developing both an individual pledge and a team pledge. Following this, I proposed that the Strategic Policy team adopt a collective climate commitment, which was fully supported. Together, we developed a written team pledge that has now been embedded within our service plan, ensuring that every team member includes a climate-related objective within their personal development plan. As Risk Manager, my individual pledge focuses on reviewing and strengthening the climate-related risks incorporated into our strategic and operational risk registers, a piece of work scheduled to take place following the update of the service plans in 2026."

Embedding Climate into Governance & Decision-Making

Overview:

The councils continued to strengthen governance arrangements to ensure climate considerations are systematically embedded into decision-making, procurement, and asset management.

2025 Activity:

- Deployment of a **Power BI energy monitoring platform**, enabling active management of energy consumption and generation across the estate
- Increased scrutiny of **energy billing, asset performance, and consumption trends**
- Climate and environmental criteria increasingly integrated into procurement processes and service delivery

Outcomes:

- Improved visibility of energy performance across council assets
- Earlier identification of inefficiencies and optimisation opportunities
- Climate considerations increasingly factored into procurement decisions and business cases
- **Both councils improved their scores in the Climate Emergency UK Scorecards**, reflecting progress in governance, transparency, and delivery

Next Steps (2026):

- Further develop Power BI reporting to support monitoring and decision-making
- Embed climate impact considerations more consistently into reports and business cases
- Use performance data to inform investment prioritisation and capital planning
- Establish an Environmental Programme Board for coordination and oversight

Building Capacity & Leadership for Delivery

Overview:

To support delivery at scale, internal capacity and leadership were strengthened in 2025 through targeted recruitment, ensuring both strategic oversight and operational delivery capability.

Key Appointments in 2025:

- **Head of Service – Climate Change and Nature Recovery**
 - Provides strategic leadership across climate mitigation, adaptation, and nature recovery
 - Coordinates climate action across services and external partners
 - Strengthens alignment between policy, delivery, and governance
- **Energy & Carbon Officer**
 - Supports day-to-day energy management and performance monitoring
 - Leads on data analysis, reporting, and carbon reduction initiatives across council operations
 - Plays a key role in identifying and delivering operational decarbonisation opportunities
- **Retrofit Engagement Officer**
 - Leads delivery of the REACH programme
 - Provides trusted, resident-facing energy advice and engagement
 - Acts as a bridge between strategic objectives and community-level delivery

Outcomes:

- Improved capacity to move from planning and feasibility into delivery
- Clearer ownership of climate workstreams across the organisation
- Stronger coordination between corporate, operational, and community-facing activity

Next Steps (2026):

- Ensure clear performance reporting and accountability for delivery
- Assess future capacity requirements in light of programme growth, funding opportunities, and local government reorganisation

Electric Vehicle Salary Sacrifice Scheme

The Electric Vehicle (EV) Salary Sacrifice Scheme supports staff to transition to ultra-low-emission vehicles, reducing transport emissions while also improving affordability and access to cleaner transport options. The scheme forms part of the councils' wider approach to leading by example on decarbonisation and supporting sustainable behaviours across the organisation. The scheme includes both new and pre-owned electric vehicles and is delivered in partnership with Octopus Electric Vehicles, who also provide ongoing carbon impact reporting.

Mid Suffolk District Council

Uptake to date

- 4 pre-owned electric vehicles in use, with 1 additional vehicle on order
- 11 new electric vehicles in use, with 7 additional vehicles on order

Carbon impact

- Carbon savings achieved to date: **5.65 tonnes of CO**
- Projected carbon savings if all vehicles are retained for the full lease period: **77.05 tonnes of CO₂**

Outcomes and benefits

- Reduction in emissions associated with staff travel
- Practical support for behaviour change and sustainable commuting
- Reinforces the council's commitment to climate leadership and innovation
- Demonstrates how employment benefits can align with climate objectives

Next Steps (2026)

- Continue to promote the EV Salary Sacrifice Scheme to increase staff uptake
- Monitor participation and carbon savings annually through Octopus reporting
- Explore alignment with wider sustainable travel initiatives, including EV charging infrastructure and pool vehicle strategies
- Use the scheme as a case study for embedding climate action into organisational policies and staff benefits

Embedding Climate and Nature Recovery into the workplace

Opportunities have been identified for how the Council can further support existing and future employees throughout recruitment, induction and their work journey to consider climate change and take action at work and home.

Potential job applicants can learn more about how climate and nature recovery is embedded across the councils via our **Jobs & Careers page**:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/climate-change-and-nature-recovery>

This page highlights:

- Our climate and nature recovery commitments
- How every role contributes to sustainability, whether office-based, community-focused, or frontline
- Resources and inspiration for embedding climate action into daily work

Next Steps (2026)

- Promote the Jobs & Careers page internally to raise awareness among current staff
- Encourage managers to use guidance for recruitment and staff development
- Update content annually to reflect new programmes, training, and climate achievements

Our Priorities for 2026

Mid Suffolk District Council remains committed to tackling climate change and working towards Net Zero by 2030. Delivery in 2026 will focus on practical action, partnership working and embedding climate considerations across council operations and community activity.

Council Housing & Sheltered Accommodation

- Work with Housing services and partners to improve energy efficiency across sheltered and council housing.
- Support retrofit and low-carbon heating improvements where funding opportunities arise.
- Ensure residents are supported to reduce energy costs and improve comfort.

Leisure Centres & Contracted Facilities

- Work collaboratively with leisure operators to optimise energy efficiency and reduce emissions.
- Monitor performance of existing energy systems and identify opportunities to reduce fossil fuel dependency.
- Encourage operational improvements and behavioural energy savings.

Retrofit & Energy Efficiency

- Launch and deliver the REACH programme to provide trusted advice and engagement across the district.
- Maximise uptake of Warm Homes funding and other retrofit schemes.
- Strengthen partnership working to support large-scale retrofit delivery.

Community Energy & Local Action

- Support community energy groups and implement a Community Energy Action Plan.
- Promote local energy projects and community-led climate action.
- Continue partnership work to explore future community energy opportunities.

Supporting Businesses to Decarbonise

- Provide advice, funding signposting and technical support to help businesses reduce energy use and emissions.
- Support implementation of recommendations from energy audits.
- Encourage participation in initiatives such as the Carbon Charter.

Sustainable Transport

- Support delivery of Electric Vehicle infrastructure and active travel improvements.
- Promote low-carbon travel options and behaviour change.
- Work with partners to improve rural transport accessibility and sustainability.

Council Operations & Procurement

- Continue improving energy monitoring and performance management across council assets.
- Embed climate and environmental considerations into procurement and decision-making.
- Use data and governance processes to prioritise emissions reduction.

Staff Engagement & Organisational Culture

- Support staff to adopt sustainable working practices.
- Embed climate and nature recovery responsibilities within roles and service delivery.
- Promote initiatives that help staff reduce emissions at work and at home.

