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Tree planting in Surrey overshoots

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More than 800,000 new trees have been planted across Surrey over the past five years – overshooting the council's own target, according to a report.

Surrey County Council's climate change progress report analysed the authority's progress for the first five years of its climate change delivery programme between 2021 and 2026.

The findings note that 116,359 trees have been planted in the 2025/26 financial year alone, bringing the total planted over the past half decade 885,000.

It means the council has exceeded its initial target of 600,000 in the first phase of the programme. Surrey has committed to planting 1.2 million trees by 2030, representing one for every resident.

Tree planting was one of 74 action points reviewed in the report, which is due to be considered by councillors next week.

A total of 45 of these actions were delivered, according to the summary, with 18 partially completed and 11 either seeing limited progress or not delivered at all.

But the council claims it is "broadly on track" to meet its 2030 net zero targets, with the report saying that the authority's carbon emissions have been reduced by around 60 percent.

"Maintaining progress towards the net zero will require continued investment, clear prioritisation and a focus on the most carbon-intensive assets, alongside planning around offsetting remaining emissions in 2030," the report says.

It adds: "A major success of the programme has been supporting residents to reduce energy bills and improve their homes.

"More than 1,438 low-income households received energy efficiency improvements, including insulation, solar and low-carbon heating measures, supported by over 3,000 HEAT home visits providing advice and access to funding."

However, it also noted the challenges ahead in continuing to pursue decarbonisation policies, saying the programme was "significantly affected by external market conditions, supply chain constraints and wider economic pressures".

Elmbridge Borough Council recently passed a motion calling for the future East Surrey council to update its tree strategy to consider the survival rate of trees, not just how many are planted.

The text said that many trees planted in the borough are dying within the year as a result of not receiving the right aftercare.

In that meeting, Councillor Katerina Lusk (Conservative: Cobham and Downside) told councillors: "There is little point celebrating the number of trees we plant if a significant number of them are dead a year later."

James Moules Local Democracy Reporter

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Trees Surrey (Credit: Google Maps)

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