

ADEPT President's Awards 2026

Entry form

Award category

Shaping Places for People

Project Title

Surrey ADAPT - Creating Climate Resilient Communities

Local authority

Surrey County Council

Partner/s if applicable

Surrey Wildlife Trust, X schools,

Headline summary (150 characters max.)

Surrey ADAPT. Strategy to Action. Supporting over 30 schools and groups take practical action to tackle climate change and support nature recovery.

Please note we need at least one supporting image per award submission. Upload your image/s below.



Resilient Schools Generic (2).pdf

Shaping Places for People: How was this project an innovative response to a significant local challenge? (150 words max.)

Surrey faces significant climate change impacts and biodiversity loss. Old school buildings are not designed for the changing climate. SCC must implement its Adaptation Strategy. However, there is little or no money. Measures must be cheap, compact, easy to install/replicate and deliver multiple outcomes to attract additional funding, including supporting deprived communities. Creating opportunities for peer learning reduces future costs. Two schools in deprived urban areas had deep-dive interventions, providing learning for others. Measures included: trees in specialist pits that absorb 18,000l of water, slowing rainwater runoff, capturing up to six tonnes of CO2 and providing around 100m2 of shade. Plus living walls, solar sunshades, water butts, ponds, wildlife gardens. These newish technologies provided cross-curriculum educational opportunities. Volunteers reduced costs. Two grant schemes offering up to £7,000 provided for schools/community groups raising awareness of simple adaptation and biodiversity improvements. 30+ schools/groups supported. A peer learning network established with exemplar demonstrators.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the quality of outcomes obtained from the project (for example improved/more efficient services, increased inclusivity for residents, futureproofing the service). (150 words max.)

Installing climate adaptation and biodiversity measures in schools/communities across Surrey, benefits thousands of children/residents through creating richer environments, cleaner air, access to nature/better green spaces, cooler classrooms/playgrounds and reduced flooding. This improves concentration, provides opportunities for learning, improves behaviour, mental health and wellbeing especially in schools. Through utilising learning from pilots (schools and community groups) and exemplar demonstrators, a one to many approach to support schools and communities has been developed that can inspire others to take action, especially through Surreys annual schools Eco-Summit, which this year focused on resilience. Other measures include: case studies; practical guide to help identify solutions for sites; two grant schemes - school resilience and community biodiversity and tree give aways at libraries and CRCs. Through school assemblies, staff and students are educated about climate resilience and adaptation.

Grant schemes were oversubscribed and the multiple outcomes achieved have attracted another years of funding.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the level of collaboration between place and people services (both within the council and with external partners/providers). (150 words max.)

Working closely with Surrey schools/community groups through two deep-dive pilots and grant schemes supporting over 30 schools/community groups. In-house climate resilience and biodiversity specialists worked with education colleagues, conducting multiple site visits to understand each school's challenges/needs. Designs were developed collaboratively to ensure strong engagement, learning and support from staff and pupils. The pilot schools were chosen for their location in priority neighbourhoods and limited parent support networks. To help deliver, we brought in volunteers from community groups, charities and local businesses. The LNRS Lead set up the nature grant scheme and worked closely with the Surrey Wildlife Trust and Surrey Nature Partnership. Because many measures are not commonplace in schools, we also worked closely with contractors to build skills/experience so they can support other projects. Biochar used in the tree pits was locally produced at Surrey's pioneering pyrolysis facility, supporting a low-carbon, circular approach to climate resilience.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the level of buy-in to the project or its goals from members of the local community, health and social care, and external organisations. (150 words max.)

The work undertaken this year has proved to be very popular. The grant schemes were significantly oversubscribed. Successful recipients were extremely engaged, working closely with the team, often having plans already that they had been unable to fund. For one deep-dive school an open day was organised for parents/pupils/staff to learn and celebrate improvements/benefits. The deep-dive pilots attracted community volunteers, from businesses, charities and community groups who gained a greater understanding of the challenges the schools face and measures to overcome them. The supplier of the biochar visited one of the school sites, to understand usage in the context of a tarmac playground, and to consider scalability for more schools. Health practitioners are interested in the project due to a previous project at Sandfield Primary - playground air pollution was reduced 44% through resilience measures. Greater working with public health has been established.

Shaping Places for People: Please give evidence of the use or consideration of new sources of investment to fund projects. (150 words max.)

The project has been such a success that another tranche of internal funding has been secured for 2026-27, with around £500000 likely to go to Resilient Schools and supporting biodiversity projects. The team has secured funding for schools via BUPA Groundworks grants, Action Funder, Your Fund Surrey and will continue to support small-scale intervention funding applications. As well as being a pilot for schools to learn from one another and showcase both quantitative and qualitative evidence of impacts from air quality improvements to health benefits to flood mitigation, the initiative also provides information to potential investors and funders. Case studies demonstrate real time benefits, something corporate investors will be keen to explore, including social value. Thames Water is an example of an organisation we are currently in discussions with. Funded also from the DOE in collaboration with the River Thames Scheme.

All categories: please add anything else that supports your award entry

This project resulted from a significant cut to the Greener Futures team budget for 25/26. Opposition members lobbied the Cabinet Member and an equivalent amount of money was given back to the team on the proviso of delivering significant outcomes. The staff that were lost were not replaced. Therefore, a small team, working with others, established a programme and delivered it over and above expectations in less than a year. This is a significant achievement. More outcomes were achieved than have been mentioned in this submission and I would like to also enter this entry into the Presidents Award. I will send more documents by email and an outcome report is being produced now.

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