

**North Herts Council
Climate Change Strategy
Proposed Actions 2021 - 2026
Progress - Updated August 2022**

TAKING ACTION

ACTION	PROGRESS TO DATE
Council Buildings and Property	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider thoroughly, and ensure that new system installations are renewable electricity rather than gas-fired, where this is deemed the best option 	<p><i>This will arise as and when new system installations occur.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider replacing gas with electricity from renewable sources where appropriate 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure no new buildings use gas-fired systems 	<p>This will arise as and when new buildings are built</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore use of heat pumps (ground source or air source) to provide heating as the technology develops 	<p>The policy team has been researching the viability of different types of heat pumps at leisure centres and discussions are ongoing regarding obtaining necessary funding to implement this.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to identify ways to improve building energy management systems to reduce waste 	<p>LED lights have been installed in multi storey car parks and in some open space areas.</p> <p>A number of schedule settings have been set up on the heating and air conditioning system within district council offices</p> <p>Building Energy Management system settings have been reviewed.</p> <p>The Display Energy Certificates, which can be viewed on our website, indicate the Council building's improved energy efficiency since 2019.</p> <p>Energy efficiency measures have been implemented at Leisure Centres in the districts including installing pool covers at North Herts Leisure Centre and replacing pool covers at Hitchin Swimming Centre, and updating and installing LED lighting throughout the facilities run by Stevenage Leisure Ltd.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve building insulation and conduct lighting surveys to reduce energy outputs 	<p>Pool covers installed at North Herts Leisure Centre and pool covers replaced at Hitchin Swimming Centre in 2021</p> <p>Update and install LED lighting throughout SLL facilities in 2021</p> <p>Leisure facilities have had a mechanical and electrical (M&E) survey completed. This will give more detail on energy renewal possibilities</p> <p>An M&E survey of Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum has been completed</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase incorporation of green clauses in leases and licenses for NHC's property estate (e.g. encouraging tenants to consider whole life carbon assessments when selecting construction methods or materials in their leased property) 	<p>Estates & Asset Management has placed increased emphasis on introducing green clauses in leases and other property agreements. The aim has been to promote consideration by tenants of the operational energy efficiency of their leased properties and the implications of embodied carbon when selecting materials or methods planned for use in building alterations.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the environmental, economic, and social sustainability principles presented in NHC's Property Acquisition & Development Strategy when appraising prospective property acquisitions, to ensure pre-acquisition due diligence is comprehensive and not solely focused on financial drivers 	<p>Due diligence enquiries made to property vendor on energy efficiency credentials of prospective property purchase. To promote robust decision-making on buying commercial property by extending the appraisal beyond pure financial criteria.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and progress on-site generation of electricity from solar or wind 	<p>Solar PV panels have been installed on the roof of the District Council Offices (Nov 2021).</p> <p>We have commissioned a net zero roadmap to be produced and are investigating relevant options for other council sites, including leisure centres.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for the sustainable heating of swimming pools 	<p>The policy team has been researching the viability of different types of heat pumps at leisure centres and discussions are ongoing regarding obtaining necessary funding to implement this.</p> <p>Report from OnGen (Provided through Energy Hub) completed looking at renewable energy proposals including solar PV options on 5 sites.</p> <p>A project to install solar thermal panels to heat Royston Leisure Centre's pools has been approved. This is due to take place in 2022/23.</p>
<p>Offsetting</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantify how much land we would need to plant trees on to offset 5% of the Council's 2019/20 carbon emissions, and work towards this goal as is feasible, both as area planting and single specimen planting 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to retain and preserve scrub and woodland edges to protect trees and maintain natural boundaries to woodlands 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, change grass verge cutting regimes to allow more plant species to grow 	<p>The contract with John O'Connor (grounds maintenance service) was renegotiated in 2021 to include more environmentally friendly practices such as cutting highway verges less frequently.</p> <p>Budget confirmed and £25k allocated for implementation of additional wilding schemes from those set out in the Wilding Audit prepared for the council by Countryside Management (Feb 2022)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more wildflower areas across the district 	<p>Areas of grass that were previously mown have been allowed to grow wild during the Summer months in 2021 and 2022. Sites that have areas designated for wild meadows include areas designated as Local Nature Reserves as well as the sites below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avenue Park, Baldock • Clothall Common, Baldock • Baldock Road Recreation Ground, Letchworth Garden City • Letchworth Gate, Letchworth Garden City • Jackmans Central Playing Field, Letchworth Garden City • Cadwell Lane Playing Field, Hitchin • Butts Close, Hitchin • Walsworth Common, Hitchin • Wilbury Road Recreation Ground, Letchworth Garden City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to strengthen hedgerows and have them connect fragmented habitats 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with the Council's 2019 resolution, continue replacing all future operational vehicles leased or purchased by the Council with Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) or zero emission vehicles until the last non-ULEV vehicle leases expire (2022); and encourage contractors to adopt similar measures 	<p>Vehicles are being reviewed as they come up for renewal. The Council's fleet is made up of 15 vehicles, with one new electric vehicle received in 2022, and three others currently on order.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin transitioning to zero emission vehicles as leases come up for expiry from 2025 	<p>Four electric vehicle charging points have been installed at the District Council Offices to charge council fleet electric vehicles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce staff and Councillor business travel through use of Zoom and similar technologies as much as possible 	<p>Throughout 2021 and 2022, meetings have continued to be held virtually and as hybrid meetings.</p> <p>Laptop rollout completed in 2021, for staff and Councillors, to enable video conferencing and hybrid working between home and office</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce staff commuting through home working as much as practical 	<p>Policies have been put in place to encourage staff to work from home more, post-pandemic, and reduce travel to meetings to lower emissions. This includes the changes in the flexible working policy which allows staff to request flexible working arrangements from day one of employment, and the laptop rollout to enable hybrid working between home and office.</p> <p>Every month in 2021, articles have been published in the staff newsletter, encouraging staff to take action to reduce their environmental impact and personal emissions including reducing gas, electricity water use as well as</p>

	encouraging other environmentally positive behaviour changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities around low-emission refuse freighters 	Vehicle demonstration day held on 15th October 2021. Further work is ongoing to assess the viability of specific vehicle types and associated infrastructure in advance of vehicle replacement in 2025.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the creation of a 5-Year Plan to reduce emissions from the waste fleet 	RCVs have all been fitted with additional technology to monitor driver telematics. We are in the data collection phase and it is hoped that providing information and training to drivers will help reduce carbon emissions as part of the service Carbon Management Plan.
<p>Explore Options for the preparation of an evaluation, updated each year showing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon savings that have been achieved since the 2019/20 baseline •The savings identified to make progress towards the carbon neutral by 2030 target •The savings still to be identified 	<p>The Corporate Policy Team is producing a carbon emission estimate for the Council's emissions from 2021. This will be comparable to the baseline estimate (2019/20).</p> <p>A consultant has been commissioned to produce a road map to net zero to identify a timeline and actions that can be taken to achieve our net zero targets. This work is ongoing.</p>
Continue to consult with the public and with interest groups on strategies for achieving zero carbon emissions by 2030	The Cabinet Panel on the Environment continues to engage with individuals and the community, act as a sounding board on community ideas and projects and seek evidence and views as appropriate.
<p>Additional Action</p> <p><i>This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.</i></p>	<p>Last planting season (2020-2021) 159 trees were planted, from standards to extra heavy standards.</p> <p>This year's planting season (2021-2022) includes 103 standards to extra heavy standards and 250 mixed whips</p>
<p>Additional Action</p> <p><i>This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.</i></p>	A carbon emissions assessment was completed of our most high-energy using sites, vehicle fleet, mileage reimbursement system, staff commuting, council waste and council water usage. This includes data from 2019/20 to be used as a baseline.
<p>Additional Action</p> <p><i>This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.</i></p>	Work has continued within the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) to lead on the development of a Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan for the county. Actions plans have now been published for water, biodiversity, carbon and transport and can be found on the HCCSP web page .
<p>Additional Action</p> <p><i>This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.</i></p>	<p>At Hitchin Town Hall, investment is being made in glassware and related commercial cleaning equipment, whilst at events for which glassware is inappropriate (such as busy, lively concerts etc) plastic vessels have already been replaced with compostable alternatives.</p> <p>The North Herts Museum café meanwhile continues to maximise the use of recycled and recyclable materials and minimising any use of plastics.</p>

Additional Action <i>This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.</i>	The hydraulic lifts, which were at the end of their life were replaced with a modern electric traction lift in 2021. An estimated 40% energy saving is expected in the operating costs of the lifts.
Additional Action <i>This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.</i>	The Council is working to produce a wilding audit on Council owned land using the DEFRA metric, and is seeking advice on what further habitat creation could be provided on Council owned sites

Enabling Carbon Savings

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the ‘Sustainable North Hertfordshire’ programme, work to develop and support policies that encourage electric vehicle use and other ‘cleaner air’ initiatives across the district, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Providing more electric car charging facilities in our car parks o Exploring the possibility of making it cheaper for zero emission vehicles to use Council car parks o Working with the County Council to improve the provision of on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging o Exploring the opportunities for a holistic approach to a town-wide Electric Vehicle strategy which will include all users and operators, both public and private o Working with other public and private entities/partners to improve provision of EV charging 	<p>Capital bid for EV chargers for 22/23 - bid was prepared for government funding to cover 75% of costs of installing additional charging points in our car parks (plus, proposed to seek remaining 25% from private sector)</p> <p>The Council is working towards having EV charging points in each of the Council car parks. This is intended for resident’s off-streetcar parking.</p> <p><i>Pending</i></p> <p>County-wide EV Charging Strategy – Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has provided North Herts Council with access to the EV Ready Toolkit. This mapping application is helping officers identify where EV charge points will be needed to serve households that do not have off-street parking, and hence will be unable to charge an EV at home. HCC is consulting with Local Authorities on guidance and conditions on providing on-street charge points. This aligns with HCC’s central policy of preferring destination (workplaces, supermarkets, leisure centres, etc) and hub (car parks, fuel stations and dedicated charging stations) locations to on-street.</p> <p><i>Pending</i></p> <p>The Council has applied for central government funding to install Electric Vehicle charging points.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Progressing the implementation of a better cycle network in North Herts, linking the district and beyond 	<p>The Council is working with Hertfordshire County Council to produce a cycling infrastructure plan.</p> <p>The draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is being finalised to for public consultation, following detailed review by Herts County Council and North Herts Council officers. It is expected that the consultation will start in early July and run for six weeks. In combination with the Growth and Transport Plan, North Herts will have a large array of schemes to develop and deliver as and when funding becomes available – from central government and Section 106 agreements with developers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Working with the relevant portfolio holders to prepare an annual Electric Vehicle Action Plan 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further to the requirement for all new and replaced taxi vehicles to be ultra-low emissions from 2028, explore how we can support transitions to low emission vehicles before this date and to zero emission vehicles when the necessary infrastructure is in place 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that masterplans and planning applications for new development are designed around streets and routes for active travel (rather than cars) and create walkable neighbourhoods 	<p>To be determined following the adoption of the Local Plan</p> <p>Work is underway to produce SPDs including for biodiversity and sustainability</p> <p>Sustainability principles have been taken to Cabinet in advance of SPDS (June 2022)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how a Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) could encourage and provide guidance on how new development can use resources more efficiently, reduce carbon emissions, incorporate carbon sequestration measures, and adapt to climate change 	<p>To be determined following the adoption of the Local Plan</p> <p>Work is underway to produce SPDs including for biodiversity and sustainability</p> <p>Sustainability principles have been taken to Cabinet in advance of SPDS (June 2022)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a standard within a Sustainability SPD to support more energy efficiency buildings to the equivalent of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes 	<p>To be determined following the adoption of the Local Plan</p> <p>Work is underway to produce SPDs including for biodiversity and sustainability</p> <p>Sustainability principles have been taken to Cabinet in advance of SPDS (June 2022)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out comprehensive planning guidance within a Sustainability SPD on reducing carbon emissions, adapting, and mitigating climate change 	<p>To be determined following the adoption of the Local Plan</p> <p>Work is underway to produce SPDs including for biodiversity and sustainability</p> <p>Sustainability principles have been taken to Cabinet in advance of SPDS (June 2022)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require Passivhaus, BREEAM, or similar standards for all developments on land sold by the Council 	<p>During 2021, negotiations were underway regarding the sale of North Hertfordshire’s freehold interest in land south of Clare Crescent, Baldock. This has acted as a test case of requiring higher environmental standards and has resulted</p>

	<p>in some passivhaus compliant elements being included. More information can be found on our website: 9. Record of decision made under delegated authority - NHDC Estates 31st January 2022 - PART 1.pdf (north-herts.gov.uk)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how a Biodiversity SPD could help to provide a clear ecological network plan, further enhance, and create new habitat (e.g. woodlands, grasslands, and hedgerows) within new development and on Council owned land as part of an offsetting strategy to deliver biodiversity net gain 	<p>To be determined following the adoption of the Local Plan</p> <p>Work is underway to produce SPDs including for biodiversity and sustainability</p> <p>Sustainability principles have been taken to Cabinet in advance of SPDS (June 2022)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy to identify where new green spaces and corridors should be provided as part of new development to support further carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and flood and surface water management 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signpost residents to funding for retrofitting of insulation, heating, and energy reduction features to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes 	<p>Warmworks (government funded scheme for retrofitting and increasing energy efficiency) and Energy Efficient Home Scheme (includes funding retrofitting cavity wall and loft insulation) have been promoted to residents on Outlook spring edition 2022 as well as other publications.</p> <p>Schemes for various businesses are being promoted. There are currently (June 2022) two main schemes for environmental improvements, one providing grants up to £5k and a larger one providing grants up to £25k</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby government to introduce more funding for retrofitting of insulation, heating, and energy reduction features, for both privately-owned and social housing 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Herts Waste Partnership (HWP) to investigate how we could secure the use of anaerobic digestion to deal with food waste from 2024 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure recycling and waste collection arrangements promote reduction and reuse 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support community tree planting initiatives 	<p>Completed a 10,000 free tree giveaway to North Herts residents (Autumn 2021 - Spring 2022)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for Solar schemes for residents, businesses, and community groups – such as those run by West Suffolk Council and South Cambridgeshire Council 	<p>A Solar Together Project (group buying scheme for residents) has been arranged to go live in Autumn 2022.</p>
<p>Additional Action</p> <p><i>This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.</i></p>	<p>Sustainable Travel Towns (STT) – The Officer Working Groups (OWGs) for the Letchworth and Royston STTs are preparing a draft governance framework for each STT. Once adopted, the OWGs will develop an implementation plan based on the Outline Plans.</p>
<p>Additional Action</p>	<p>Working with Hertfordshire County Council on bus service improvement plan to encourage and enable sustainable travel</p>

This action has been achieved in addition to our commitments outlined in the climate change strategy.

Inspiring the Community

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable residents to assess their carbon emissions, comparing them with the district and best practice 	<p>Carbon calculators have been considered by the policy team and this has been raised within the cabinet panel on the environment (November 2021). The Council has shared and publicised the WWF carbon calculator to residents and staff in 2022 and has promoted this at local green festivals and events, encouraging individuals to assess their own carbon emissions and receive personalised suggestions to reduce their carbon footprint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage residents to make behaviour changes by highlighting positive actions that can be taken, and informing them of more environmentally friendly options 	<p>Throughout 2021, a monthly article was produced on eco-friendly actions published to staff and residents with individual suggestions also being shared as social media posts.</p> <p>The council prepares a quarterly communications plan highlighting relevant environmental dates to inform residents of what environmental action the Council is taking as well as highlighting what individuals can do to contribute (2022)</p> <p>The council is working with HCC on Sustainable Travel Towns to encourage behavioural change for sustainable travel uptake</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote zero carbon construction (timber buildings, offsetting of carbon, etc.) 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run food waste awareness programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of waste awareness officer who was in post during 2021. • Ongoing waste minimisation communications, including food waste pledge • Creation of waste warriors Facebook page to encourage residents to reduce waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run waste reduction awareness programmes and continue to support community plastic free initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of waste awareness officer who was in post during 2021. • Ongoing waste minimisation communications • Creation of waste warriors Facebook page to encourage residents to reduce waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for certification/awards for Green/Sustainable businesses 	<p>The Council has been liaising with local BIDs to understand what support would be helpful for local businesses to address the climate crisis, including the possibility of certification / awards for green/ sustainable businesses.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the possibility of tree planting awards 	<p><i>Pending</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with the public to identify further means by which the Council can assist the residents and businesses of North Herts to achieve the target of zero emissions across the district by 2050 	<p>The Cabinet Panel on the Environment continues to engage with individuals and the community, act as a sounding board on community ideas and projects and seek evidence and views as appropriate. Cabinet Panel on the Environment North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk)</p>

• Develop communications to raise awareness of the benefits of retrofitting of insulation, heating and energy reduction features, and the long-term cost-saving potential

The council is working in partnership with Warmworks and has promoted the Green Homes Grant scheme to residents. This is a government grant scheme that funds a range of energy efficiency measures including. This information has most recently been included on the council's [Easing the squeeze: help with the cost of living](#) web page (Published April 2022).