

COUNCIL
13 JULY 2023

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 4.8.12

The following motion has been submitted, due notice of which has been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

The Great Home Upgrade

This council believes that a green recovery from the pandemic is not only possible but imperative if we are to meet our carbon reduction targets as a local authority. However, up to now much of the proposed actions from National Government are little more than rhetoric. We need to turn rhetoric into action.

As a local authority, we have worked on several environmental actions that have assisted residents and the wider environment. These include the 'Solar Together' scheme, utilising the Home Upgrade Grant to improve homes that are earning under £30k annually (and with an EPC rating of E,F, or G (plus some D-rated properties)), and have worked with environmental groups throughout the district to spread eco-friendly messaging.

We note that melting ice caps and forest fires can often seem like someone else's crisis when many are taking effect so far from our homes. But we also note that crises closer to home affecting thousands of local families can not be separated from those further afield. Here in North Herts there are 6193 households living in fuel poverty, and many homes affected by damp. Across the UK there are more than 24 Million Homes leaking heat.

Housing in the UK is leaky and draughty. We have [older housing](#) than every EU country, and our homes leak heat [three times faster](#) than those in Northern Europe. 56% of homes in North Herts fall below a good level of energy efficiency (EPC rating C). This means we spend more money and energy keeping our homes warm. For those who can afford to, this leads to higher carbon emissions from burning fuel for heating — [14% of the UK's total emissions come from our homes](#). For the [3.18 million UK households](#) (13.4%) that can't, living in a cold home could be [putting their health at risk](#).

Upgrading our homes would mean that everyone can live in a warm, comfortable home that doesn't pollute the planet. But for more than a decade, we've had stop-start policy when it comes to making our homes warmer and less polluting. The main problem is the Treasury's reluctance to put proper money towards retrofitting. Right now, home upgrades are still just in the hundreds of thousands a year — [just 118,000 insulation measures](#) were installed in 2020.

There is no route to decarbonising the economy without retrofitting these more than 24 million homes across the UK. Doing so would not only help to protect our planet, but can improve housing, lead to cheaper energy bills and create hundreds of thousands of good quality jobs. Here in North Herts there are 38,873 properties that require retrofitting.

The highest standard of whole-house retrofits can mean that households only have their heating on for a few days a year. However, the Energy Efficiency Infrastructure Group (EEIG) estimates that if all homes were upgraded to the EPC C efficiency band, households could save £400 each on average — that's £7.5bn total savings across the whole country by 2030.

Plus, if our homes are less reliant on fossil fuels, then households will be insulated against sudden rises in energy prices.

With proper investment from the government and companies, the Great Homes Upgrade could directly create [at least 190,000 jobs](#) across the UK. Other estimates vary quite widely, but all suggest that we could create hundreds of thousands of jobs. [The Construction Leadership Council](#) estimates that upgrading 12m homes by 2030 could create nearly 500,000 jobs. A key part of the Great Homes Upgrade should be training up tens of thousands of people to fill these jobs. And because there are homes in need of upgrading all over the country, these jobs wouldn't be limited to one region. This means new, secure, well-paid, long-term jobs making our homes and local areas healthier and happier places to live in.

- **North Herts calls upon the Prime Minister to call for a Great Homes Upgrade and a commitment to retrofit 19 million homes by 2030.**
- **We also call on the Chancellor to commit to investing over the next three years to begin a Great Homes Upgrade, and that the government will commit to working with housing associations, private rental properties and owner occupiers to upgrade properties for net zero and commits to setting up a retrofitting taskforce to target resources now to achieving net zero through upgrading properties.**
- **We also commit to writing to our neighbouring local authorities to ask them to join us to join the campaign.**

Proposed: Cllr Chris Hinchliff

Seconded: Cllr Sean Prendergast

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Ecological Emergency

Council notes that loss of nature, alongside climate change, represents a major threat to future generations of North Herts residents and that the UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 that took place in December 2022 agreed to progress global actions to deal with this.

The Council therefore resolves to:

- 1. Declare an ecological emergency.**
- 2. Ensure that addressing the ecological emergency and nature recovery are considered as strategic priorities for planning policies and design guides for new development, including master-planning of sites, by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain and ensuring that development limits impact on existing habitats in its process.**
- 3. Set measurable targets and standards for biodiversity increase, in both species and quantities, seeking also to increase community engagement.**
- 4. Work with our partners to establish a Local Nature Partnership for Hertfordshire as soon as possible, in keeping with the urgency of this declaration.**
- 5. Work with our partners to develop Nature Recovery Networks and Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire, again in keeping with the urgency of this declaration.**
- 6. Look for opportunities to work in partnership with local charities and environmental organisations to deliver nature recovery in North Hertfordshire.**
- 7. Investigate new approaches to nature recovery such as habitat banking that deliver biodiversity objectives and provide new investment opportunities.**

Proposed: Cllr Steve Jarvis

Seconded: Cllr Ruth Brown

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Waste Contract Renewal – Changes to Residual Waste Collection Cycle

This Council notes the intention to introduce to 3 weekly collections for residual waste when the new waste contract is introduced.

Council has committed to engage with the community and put people first through its Council Plan 2022-2027 and has committed on waste and recycling to deliver change by development of the recycling and waste service to deliver any local outcomes of the national waste strategy, consider sustainability initiatives and options for renewal of the contract in 2025.

Given that this is a significant change to the service we provide to the public and to ensure through community engagement with its residents that the proposed changes are supported by the majority we want to know what residents think of the planned change to the collection cycle for residual waste.

Therefore Council proposes to call a referendum of all North Herts residents prior to committing to any change from the current bi-weekly collection asking:

Should North Herts Council

- A Retain the current bi-weekly collection of residual waste.
- or
- B Move to a 3 weekly collection of residual waste.

Proposed: Cllr Adam Compton

Seconded: Cllr Mandi Tandi

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Community Infrastructure Levy

Following the adoption of the Local Plan Council believes that in order to maximise contributions and funding for infrastructure that the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy could be the best way to achieve this and ensure new developments contribute to the sustainability of the District and take into account the amount of cumulative development proposed. The government is also undertaking a consultation on the introduction of a mandatory CIL and is asking for local authorities to begin pilot testing in 2025.

Council request that:

- 1. North Hertfordshire District Council asks to be one of the pilot authorities for the introduction of a mandatory CIL.**
- 2. The relevant officers prepare a report on the requirements for the introduction of CIL and the timescales for introduction if not accepted as a pilot authority.**
- 3. The report sets out the advantages or otherwise of the introduction of a CIL.**
- 4. The report details the potential financial implications and additional funding from the adoption of a CIL.**
- 5. The report is presented to Council at the meeting scheduled for 23/11/23.**

Proposed: Cllr Ian Moody

Seconded: Cllr David Levett

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Solar Energy Policy

This Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2007 and published its original Climate Change Strategy in 2009.

In 2019 it declared a Climate Change Emergency and pledged their commitment “to do everything within its power to make North Hertfordshire Carbon Zero by 2030”.

The Climate Change Strategy was reviewed in 2021 and the council has now published its revised Strategy for 2022-2027.

The Climate change Strategy covers the overall approach to global warming, the present approach is now to achieve net zero on the councils own operations by 2030 with a revised date for the district to achieve net zero by 2040 but has no specific references relating to solar energy generation.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the council has installed solar panels on the roof of the DCO and other schemes are under consideration and has said it will explore opportunities for community solar schemes we are now seeing a number of planning applications for large scale solar energy projects.

These large commercial solar energy projects are normally sited on open land mostly used for agricultural operations.

Policy NE12 of the recently adopted Local Plan references Renewable and low carbon energy including solar farms. However the impact assessment criteria in paragraphs (i) to (vii) do not specifically address the impact on land currently used for agriculture and in particular land used for food production.

The loss of valuable agricultural land, will inevitably increase the need to import food. This will negatively impact on the Councils aim to achieve a zero carbon footprint. The current situation in Ukraine and the reduction in availability of grain imports is a prime example of the need to retain productive land.

It also puts a threat on the livelihoods of tenant farmers on the application sites, and can lead to agricultural employees becoming redundant, and lose their tied homes.

The balance between land being used for food production and production of energy to reduce greenhouse gas and other harmful emissions is a delicate one and we need to ensure that solar energy production does not result in an increase in the import of food products thereby impacting on the carbon footprint and sustainability of the agricultural industry and those it employs within the district.

The Council current policy on the development of large scale solar energy projects within the district needs to be strengthened and therefore calls for

- 1. That policy NE12 of the Local Plan is reviewed to include specific reference to the balance between food production solar energy production.**
- 2. The policy takes into account the loss of valuable agricultural land and the consequences of loss of that land for food production and the impacts on sustainability when assessing the development of large scale solar energy projects.**
- 3. A bond or enforceable requirement for the developer to remove the equipment and restore the land to its former use for any approved Solar Energy Project.**
- 4. The Climate Change Strategy is reviewed to include reference to the Councils policy on large scale solar energy projects.**

Proposed: Cllr David Levett

Seconded: Cllr Ralph Muncer