

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT
14th January 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: Council Activity Update and Action Tracker

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR: ENVIRONMENT

PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. SUMMARY

Panel Overview 2025/26

- 1.1 This note highlights the topic for this Panel meeting as well as a Council Activity Update, and Action Tracker Review (at Appendix A) for the Cabinet Panel on the Environment.
- 1.2 The Cabinet Panel aims to select topics which will enable open discussion that may lead to recommendations to Cabinet from the relevant Executive Members or Director, regarding actions that they believe the Council should be taking to address climate and environmental issues.

Panel Meeting: 14th January 2026

- 1.3 This Panel meeting will include an update on council activity pertaining to sustainability, including key progress made on our Sustainability Strategy Actions; review of the action tracker; an opportunity to suggest future topics and speakers for the work programme; an environmental update from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation; and a presentation from Green Heat Co-op on community energy.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of the Cabinet Panel for the Environment at the 27th June 2019 meeting. The amended terms of reference were tabled for the Full Council meeting on the 4th June¹. The Constitutional Amendment Report of the 18th April 2023² recommended that this Panel be the only remaining panel going forward.

- 2.2 By way of update to the Panel, we have been involved in the following work:

3. COUNCIL ACTIVITY

- 3.1 **Contributions to the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)**
- 3.2 The third round of Solar Together has closed. Over 650 North Herts residents registered interest and 113 have accepted offers for Solar PV. North Herts also has one business accepted for battery storage. 72 solar installations have so far been completed in North Herts, totalling 762 panels. 68 batteries have also been installed. From the installations completed so far, it is estimated that 63,295kg of CO2 will be saved per year.

¹ [Appendix B - Revised Terms of Reference for Cabinet Panel on the Environment.pdf \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Constitutional amendment report 18.4.23.docx \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

3.3 Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.4 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are statutory spatial strategies which agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions to achieve these priorities. These strategies are legislated for in The Environment Act 2021. Development of the LNRS for Hertfordshire has been led by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), working in conjunction with the district councils and other stakeholders. The Strategy contains a local habitat map and a written statement of biodiversity priorities. Public consultation was open throughout summer 2025. The Strategy has now been published and will be officially launched in January with a nature summit event. [Local Nature Recovery Strategy | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

3.5 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)

3.6 The project to decarbonise our leisure facilities is progressing. For the second phase of decarbonisation related to Hitchin Town Hall, North Herts Museum, District Council Offices, and the learner pool at North Herts Leisure Centre, we are in the process of appointing a team to move forward on designs, with the aim of submitting planning applications this financial year.

3.7 Climate Engagement

3.8 The North Herts engagement hub for climate change and sustainability, the Climate Hive, now has 850 subscribers. We continue to keep residents up to date on the latest surveys and consultations, eco events, national environment days, the Cabinet Panel for the Environment, and council activity.

3.9 Sustainable Communities Grant

3.10 The Sustainable Communities Grant, funded by UKSPF, launched and was open to applications until 14th September. The team assessed and scored applications during the second half of September. £62,778 has been awarded to six local organisations to support sustainability projects across the district. The recipients are Royston Museum for installation of an air source heat pump system; Benslow Music Trust for the installation of EV charging points; Kimpton Parish Council for the installation of solar pv and battery storage on the pavilion; St Mary's Church, Ashwell for biodiversity improvements; Create Community for delivery of sustainability educational sessions; and Green Heat Co-op for development of retrofit training and a Home Energy Upgrade Guide for Royston. [North Herts Council awards over £60,000 to local sustainability projects | North Herts Council](#)

3.11 Sustainability Briefings

3.12 The latest Sustainability briefings are available to view on the website at: [Latest updates on Sustainability | North Herts Council](#). They include information on available funding, upcoming events, and council activity.

4 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2025-2030 UPDATES

4.1 The Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 is available here: [Sustainability strategy | North Herts Council](#). Actions are being monitored by our Climate and Sustainability Officer Group and Political Liaison Board which is comprised of Cabinet Members and our Leadership Team. Key progress made so far includes:

- Ongoing progress on-site at our leisure centres as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Project.
- Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is now in use in all refuse vehicles, as well as in hire vehicles which are being used prior to the arrival of EVs.
- A mandatory Sustainability e-learning module has been launched for all staff to aid understanding of the council's Sustainability aims and what staff can do to work towards these.
- New EV charge points have gone live in car parks across the district, with more due to gain grid connections in the New Year.
- The Warm Homes Local Grant work continues to be progressed and was advertised in our Winter Outlook magazine to reach more of those who are eligible.
- Money from the Sustainable Communities Grant Fund has been distributed to recipients and projects are underway.
- The North Herts Council app has gone live, with additional guidance on recycling which is part of the effort to improve recycling rates. The app currently has over 10,500 downloads.
- Key teams are being liaised with on a project to record and monitor the impacts of extreme weather events on our services.
- Further areas in our open spaces are being considered for reduced mowing regimes in 2026.

5 INFORMATION TO NOTE

5.1 Our Environment inbox is a means for members of the public or organisations to provide suggestions/presentations for the panel's consideration. The address is - EnvironmentPanel@north-herts.gov.uk

5.2 The Panel could choose to accept suggestions from outside the meeting including:

- Suggestions by Members of the public or organisations either at the meeting or by email.
- Recommendations from Council, Cabinet or any other Committee.
- Suggestions by any Member of the Council.
- Suggestions by any Officer of the Council.

5.3 The Panel will seek to ensure that consideration of agenda items minimises additional burdens on staff resources. Wherever possible, requests are made for the presentation of documents already in existence rather than the production of new documents specifically for the Panel. Suggestions from outside sources, as detailed in paragraph 3.2 will only be placed on the work programme if agreed by one of the alternating Chairs or at a meeting of the Panel.

5.4 Attendance from external bodies and members of the public is actively encouraged.

5.5 This is a non-decision-making advisory body and therefore this or any notes/reports to the Panel do not include a recommendation on a key Executive decision and have not been referred to in the Forward Plan. However, recommendations for action from the

Panel for consideration by Cabinet may do so. This will therefore need to be borne in mind for any recommendations of the Panel.

6 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Other topics for consideration and inclusion in the Panel's work programme can be suggested at each meeting, and also by emailing EnvironmentPanel@north-herts.gov.uk

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix A – Work Programme and Action Tracker 2025/26

8 CONTACT OFFICERS

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