

CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

1st July 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 2026/27

- 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: 1st July 2026

- 1.3 This Panel meeting will include presentations on the subject of Biodiversity and Volunteering. Chris Hinchliff MP will give a policy update on chalk streams, Abbie Robinson will present her biodiversity improvement project, and Heidi Hutton will showcase recent volunteer successes in the Countryside Management Service.

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 Officers have been attending and supporting conversations with the Hertfordshire Sustainability Officers Group (HSOG) on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). These conversations are helping shape best practice to be carried forward in Hertfordshire on various aspects of Sustainability.

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 Your Tree Our Future scheme

3.4 The 'Your Tree Our Future' initiative has been extremely popular in North Herts, with 14,739 free trees claimed and planted across the district last year. Thousands of residents took part by collecting free saplings to plant in gardens, community spaces, schools, and green areas. These trees will help create a greener, more sustainable Hertfordshire for future generations by boosting habitats, improving air quality, and strengthening climate resilience. The scheme has reopened as of the 22nd June. More information can be found on the Hertfordshire County Council website: [Your Tree Our Future | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

3.5 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)

3.6 Decarbonisation of Royston Leisure Centre is complete (completed 23 March)! Estimated completion for Hitchin Swimming and Fitness centre and North Herts Leisure Centre (Letchworth) is October. Design work for decarbonisation of Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum is progressing as part of the council's decarbonisation phase 2 project, with the aim to submit a planning application in the early part of the 26/27 financial year. The planning application for the decarbonisation of the learner pool at NHLC has been submitted.

3.7 Council Emissions

3.8 A report on North Herts Councils' greenhouse gas emissions has now been published on our website which covers progress in reducing the council's own emissions and summarises progress on district wide emissions. The report uses 2021-22 as the baseline year for the council's operational emissions and reports progress annually to 2024-25. Available at: [Reducing emissions | North Herts Council](#)

3.9 Climate Engagement

3.10 The North Herts engagement hub for climate change and sustainability, the Climate Hive, now has over 1200 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.

3.11 Volunteer Meadow Monitoring Programme

3.12 As part of our ongoing work to enhance biodiversity across the district, we are launching a volunteer meadow monitoring programme, beginning with Rapid Grassland Assessment training for community volunteers (Friday 12th July). The training teaches how to monitor and assess the condition of the wildflower meadows being established across our green spaces in Letchworth, Hitchin, Royston and Baldock. Volunteers will monitor record plant diversity and identifying how these habitats are supporting wildlife. The project will not only provide valuable data to help guide future management of our meadows but also encourage community involvement, learning, and stewardship of local green spaces.

3.13 Community Energy Event – Film Screening

The Council partnered with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation to host a community energy event at the Broadway Cinema in Letchworth on the 10th July. The event included a showing of the film 'Power Station' followed by a Q&A session with the Co-Director of the film. <https://www.broadway-leitchworth.com/cinema/whats-on/power-station-qa-co-director-dan-edelstyn/> A recording of the Q&A portion will be made available soon on the North Herts Council YouTube channel.

3.14 Sustainability Briefings

- 3.15 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. Royston Leisure Centre is complete and Hitchin and Letchworth will be complete in the Autumn time.
- Electric Vehicles are now in operation for the waste collection service. This will result in carbon emissions reductions further to the nearly 400 tonnes saved (between May and November 2025) through the use of HVO.
- Our aim to train staff on climate change issues has progressed well, with 93% of staff having completed the tailored Sustainability eLearning module. Internal comms are being shared to staff to raise awareness of environmental issues. <https://carbonliteracy.com/>
- We continue to deliver the government funded Warm Homes Local Grant scheme aimed at supporting homes in fuel poverty in North Herts with insulation, solar panels and clean heating. For year 1, we delivered installations at 12 homes. In year 2, we are planning installations in up to 30 homes.
- The North Herts Council app is continuing to grow, with additional guidance on recycling which is part of the effort to improve recycling rates. The app currently has over 20,000 downloads.
- An EV salary sacrifice scheme has been launched for staff at the council to help them invest in lower emission vehicles, supporting a reduction in staff commuting emissions.
- We have launched a mandatory Green Procurement Checklist internally for officers to utilise in higher value procurements (over £100,000 for goods & services and over £500,000 for works). The checklist is intended to help officers consider how they can best embed sustainability into their procurement.
- Work continues on supporting Community Energy in the District. Last month we organised an event in collaboration with Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation to show the film Power Station. The event brought together multiple Community Energy groups and environmentally minded individuals to promote the growth of Community Energy in the area. A webpage to promote Community Energy groups and initiatives in North Herts is in progress.
- The Green space team reported increased use of electric equipment and progress on wildlife monitoring with volunteers and partners.

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 5.2 will only be placed on the work programme if agreed by the Chair 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 2026/27

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