

## Foreword/Introduction

We will seek to provide a clean and safe environment, in consultation and partnership with local people. We will engage local people and organisations as we progress towards our target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030, whilst taking action to enable and encourage residents to minimise their own carbon impact. We will protect the natural and built environment through our planning policies and an effective green spaces strategy. We will take action against environmental crime and ensure that our approach to waste and recycling promotes the hierarchy of reduce, re-use, recycle. We will complete the elimination of single use plastics from the council and support reductions in their use across the district. We will work to improve the monitoring and management of air quality across the district, prioritising those areas where air quality is most in need of improvement.

## What is Climate Change

**Climate change refers to a large-scale identifiable change in the planet's weather patterns that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer.**

The current period of warming is occurring more rapidly than in the past. Scientific evidence indicates that the natural fluctuation of temperature has been overtaken by a human-induced warming. This warming has come as a result of the changes that have occurred since the onset of the industrial revolution. These changes have serious implications for the future stability of the planet.

## Mandate for Climate Action

At the twenty first meeting of the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, member states, including the British government reached a historic agreement to strengthen the global response to Climate Change. This agreement included a landmark commitment to *“holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”*.

Following the Paris Climate Agreement, in 2018 the United Kingdom became the first major developed economy to assess how it will meet the terms of the agreement. As part of this process the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) assessed the nation's progress on the targets outlined in the Climate Change Act 2008. The findings from their analysis highlighted that the UK is not on course to meet its target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% on 1990 levels by 2050, nor transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050.

Already, the increase in temperature is having widespread impacts across the UK. Over the last ten years the UK has experienced a variety of climate-related extremes, including record wet winters, major floods and heatwaves. In 2018 the UK Met office scientists published their climate projections for the next century based on different rates of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. The high emission scenario demonstrated that:

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- Summer temperatures could be up to 5.4C hotter by 2070; Winters could be up to 4.2C warmer
- The chance of a summer as hot as 2018 is around 50% by 2050
- Sea levels in London could rise by up to 1.15 metres by 2100
- Average summer rainfall could decrease by up to 47 per cent by 2070, while there could be up to 35 per cent more precipitation in winter.
- The Committee for Climate Change stated in its 2018 report – *Managing the coast in a changing climate*, that coastal communities, infrastructure and landscapes in England were already under significant pressure from flooding and erosion.

Subsequently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 special report on Global Warming highlighted that any effort to limit global warming to 1.5°C as agreed in the Paris accord would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society and the declaration of a Climate Emergency. In line with this, in their 2019 report the CCC similarly asserted that Climate Change requires more ambitious reductions and radical actions by national government, local authorities, businesses, communities and individuals. The CCC concluded that if radical steps are taken the UK can end its contribution to global warming within 30 years.

### Current National Policy Environment

The Climate Change Act 2008 is the UK's long-term framework for tackling Climate Change. The Act aims to facilitate the UK's transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050. Since the Climate Change Act 2008, a number of national initiatives have been introduced to help meet targets.

- **The Carbon Plan 2011** identifies the emission reductions needed in five key areas of the economy; buildings; transport; industry; electricity; and agriculture to meet targets.
- **The Clean Growth Strategy 2017** outlines the plan to grow the national income while cutting greenhouse emissions.
- **The 25 Year Environment Plan** published in 2018, sets comprehensive goals and targets to improve the UK's air and water quality and protect threatened plants, trees and wildlife species.
- **The Resource and Waste Strategy 2018** outlines the actions the UK will take to minimise waste, promote resource efficiency and move towards a circular economy.
- **The Clean Air Strategy 2019** demonstrates how the national government will tackle all sources of air pollution, and boost the economy.
- **Climate Emergency Motion** affirmed Parliament's commitment to addressing Climate Change. While there is no single definition of a Climate Emergency, the general consensus is to work toward becoming carbon-neutral by 2030.

At the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) Agreement placed emphasis on the notion that the real solution to climate change would require wide scale collaboration and sharing of best practices. Whilst Britain leaving the EU will not necessarily mean that Britain will stop collaborating with international partners, there may be a change in the manner this collaboration takes place

## NHDC Approach

Climate action has been a long term corporate priority area for NHDC, and it is currently pursued through our objective to *Respond to Challenges to the Environment*. The warming of the earth brings milder and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, more intense downpours and more frequent and intense flooding for North Hertfordshire. These changes pose great risk to the Council's service delivery. In accordance with this, the Council will continue to provide a clean and safe environment, in consultation and partnership with local people. We will continue to protect the natural and built-up environments and address the impacts of the climate emergency; in our approach to waste and recycling, food hygiene, environmental crime and the management of air quality areas.

Over the last thirteen years the Council has worked continuously to reduce our waste, reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improve energy efficiency across the district. In 2007 we signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. In 2009 we published our original Climate Change Strategy, which we updated in 2013. Since then, the Council has passed several motions with the aim of encouraging residents, businesses and Council staff to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle plastics. Most notably, in 2019, the Council passed a motion to declare a Climate Emergency, in this motion the Council pledged their commitment to do everything within its power to make North Hertfordshire Carbon Zero by 2030. As one of the first council's in the United Kingdom to pass this motion NHDC is leading the way for climate action. This declaration asserted the Council's commitment toward Climate Action beyond current government targets and international agreements.

Following this declaration, the Council established a Cabinet Panel on the Environment. The Panel is an advisory panel chaired by the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure, and Recycling and Waste alternatively. The Panel meets approximately six times per year, and the community and any person or body are welcomed and enabled to participate at meetings.

As part of the declaration, that when Council policies are reviewed, specific consideration is given to how the policies and related decisions and actions affect our contribution to climate change, and where necessary, update these policies to reduce our impact where possible. The inclusion of an Environmental implications section within the report and delegated decision template will ensure that impacts and mitigation measures and risks are identified at an early stage.

The Council will form a Climate Change Implementation Group. This group will support and receive input from the Cabinet Panel, co-ordinate and formulate climate change actions and make recommendations in relation to policy development.

The Council has based its footprint on buildings and will conduct a gap analysis of current activity to identify further actions which could be undertaken in respect of this and wider considerations.

Both the Climate Change Strategy and the Environment Panel and Implementation Group will seek to assist the Council address the range of issues relating to climate change (both mitigation of and adaption to the effects of climate change) and environmental matters in North Hertfordshire and minimise the causes of climate change within North Herts, where possible.

The Council remains committed to playing a leadership role in local efforts to address climate emergency. We will continue to approach climate action in an inclusive, fair and effective manner. However with limited policy tools and resources available, successfully achieving carbon zero aspirations will require cross sector partnerships between the North Hertfordshire District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, local businesses, and voluntary and community groups.

## Strategic Priorities

1. Reducing our carbon footprint and influencing our polices.
2. Leadership across the district. This will identify how North Hertfordshire District Council can support local people and organisations across the district
3. Partnership working. By working together the Council will highlight and signpost other organisations and individuals to take action to reduce their own carbon impact.

### 1. Reducing our carbon footprint

#### Overview

The UK Committee on Climate Change has identified reducing emissions from local authority owned buildings, estates and operations as a key responsibility for local authorities. NHDC has made significant efforts to reduce emissions from its estate and operations over the past eighteen years and will continue to plan our work with a view to reducing our energy usage from our own estate.

The **three** key areas of focus, below contribute most to council's carbon footprint and are areas where the council has the most scope to influence emissions:

1. Reducing emissions from the District Council's estate and operations.
2. Improving use of sustainable transport in our operations.
3. Reducing our consumption of resources, increasing recycling and reducing waste.

### 2. Leadership across the district

#### Overview

The UK Committee on Climate Change emphasises the leadership role local authorities have in supporting residents and businesses to reduce their emissions. The Council will continue to provide leadership and support for residents and businesses to adapt to the impacts of planning projects and switch to renewable energy sources to change behaviour change in the community. In addition to this we will encourage the use of alternative models of sustainable transport to reduce car travel and congestion. We will continue to promote the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle waste through our policies and campaigns..

### 3. Partnership Working

#### Overview

The Climate Emergency is a wide-spread cross-cutting issue, and requires a concerted and coordinated effort. It is therefore vital that we partner with local statutory, voluntary, community and private sector organisations in North Hertfordshire to ensure that we mitigate for and adapt to the Climate Emergency. Partnership working increases avoids duplication

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and wasted resources. We will continue to work with local groups and organisations working to address the Climate Emergency to develop strategies for achieving zero carbon emissions by 2030..

### **Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating Impact**

This Strategy is accompanied by an Action Plan (appendix A), and a List of Achievements (appendix B). Impact will be measured and monitored annually, and a full evaluation will be undertaken in 2025.