Draft Climate Change Framework – Informing a Climate Strategy for North Northamptonshire 2024-2030

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Dated:
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Executive Summary

Globally we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, including increased flooding, water shortages, heatwaves, biodiversity loss, and deteriorating infrastructure. To address the critical challenges posed by climate change, we must all lead by example, embedding sustainability in all aspects of our daily lives and working practices.

Through a combination of policy frameworks, strategic investments, and community partnerships, our vision is for a North Northamptonshire that has fully transitioned to Net Zero by 2050, with a thriving green economy, resilient infrastructure, and a healthy, sustainable environment for all residents. While also ensuring a Just Transition to Net Zero, ensuring that the benefits of climate action are equitably distributed.

This draft framework will be used to inform a reimagined Climate Change Strategy for North Northamptonshire. It is designed to ensure the region remains resilient, sustainable, and is able to achieve this vision. There are six key areas of focus: Transport, Homes and the Built Environment, Nature, Food and Farming, Energy, Green Economy, and Waste. In each section, specific actions are outlined for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, building resilience to climate impacts, and promoting sustainable practices.

The framework emphasises the importance of community and business engagement, recognising that collective action is essential to achieving the vision and outlined goals. Each section of the framework outlines actionable steps, alongside recommendations for residents, businesses, and organisations including the Council, ensuring a collective approach to achieving the region's climate goals.

Public engagement is very important. We are keen that the reimagined Climate Change Strategy for North Northamptonshire is informed by a strong evidence-base and consultation.

Background

Climate Change Forecast for North Northamptonshire

Climate change effects different areas in different ways. The climate for North Northants is forecast to change in a similar way to the rest of the East Midlands, which is different to coastal regions. Our region will continue to get hotter and drier, more so than many other parts of the UK. The weather will also become increasingly unsettled, so although on average it might be hotter and drier, we will face an increase in storms or storm damage, extreme downpours, and flooding, which combined with dry spells and heat will result in less fertile soils, decreased biodiversity, and low crop yields.

For North Northamptonshire under the existing global policies, the yearly average temperature is forecast to increase by 2.93 °C by 2070 compared with local records for the 1980s.[1]

The hottest summer day in the last 30-year period was on 19th July 2022[2], with temperatures reaching 38.2°C in Northamptonshire[3]. Within the past 30 summers, on average there were 4 days above 25°C per month; if, as predicted, global warming temperatures rise by 2°C, this would double to 8 days a month on average. With a 4°C rise, there could be up to 17 days above 25°C per month during the summer – it would be significantly hotter.

The table below (figure 1) illustrates temperature and rainfall projections for the area based on the BBC's localised projection model, using Corby as a map reference point.

Figure 1: Table showing North Northamptonshire's past and future-forecasted temperature and rainfall records[4]

	Past 30 years	2ºC increase	4ºC increase
Average days above 25ºC per summer month	4	8	17
Average rainy days per month in summer	9	8	6
Wettest day/mm	41	46	49

[1] Data source: The climate data used is from CHESS-SCAPE/. Existing policies point to a 2.8C temperature rise by 2100, in line with RCP6.0.
[2] Met Office, A Milestone in UK Climate History, 22 July 2022.
[3] BBC News, Pitsford and Santon Downham Record Hottest UK Temperatures, 19 July 2022.
[4] BBC News, What Will Climate Change Look Like Near Me?, 12 August 2022.

What this is likely to mean for us

This means the risks we face from climate change will increase significantly. These will include:

Flooding – damaging our homes, communities, businesses, cars, transport links, electricity infrastructure, and telecoms with higher costs for insurance, repairs etc.

Well-being – more extremely hot days builds up heat and make us ill, particularly the old and those living in poorly insulated and ventilated buildings

Social care – services will be put under increasing pressure affecting our treatment and health

Water supply – even though there will be more floods, and extreme downpours, most will be turbid and wash away, leaving us short of water and leading to increased costs

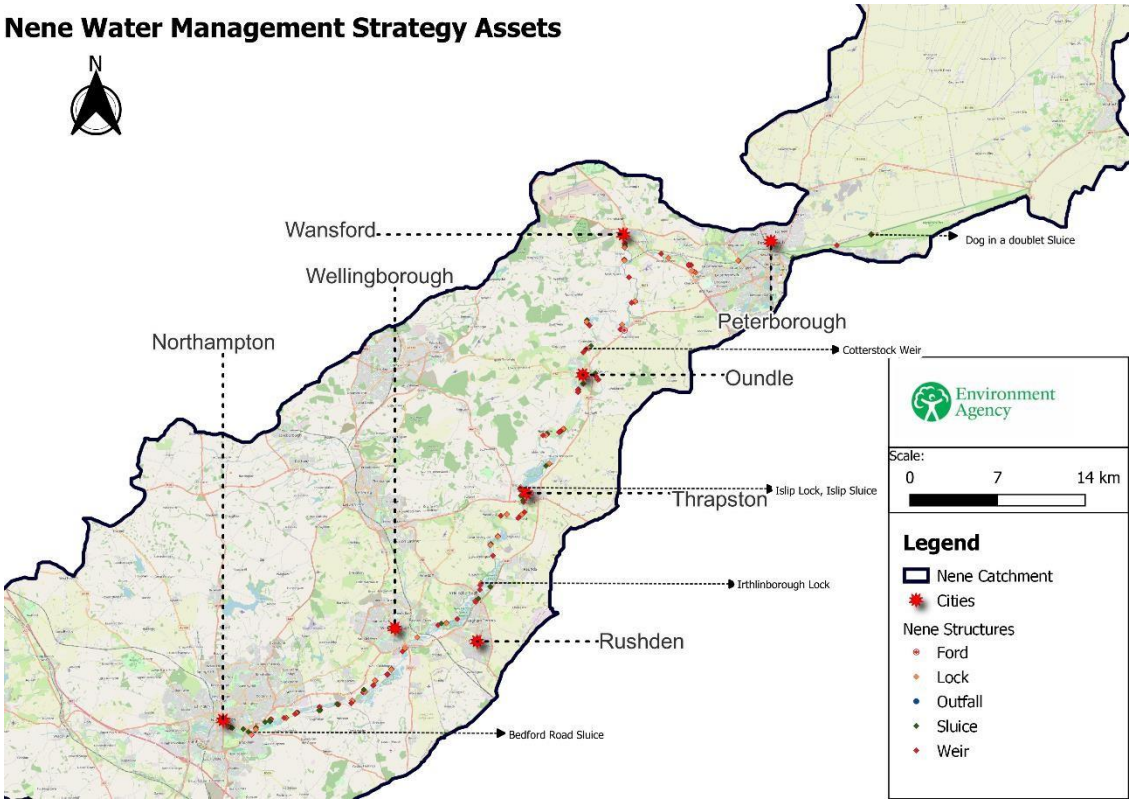
Nature – biodiversity will suffer, our gardens will wither, alongside plants and wildlife, and soil health will suffer from soil erosion, flood, and drought

Disease – a warmer, wetter climate will lead to outbreaks of invasive species, pests, and new diseases, endangering humans, livestock, food supplies, and biodiversity

Food – soil erosion from rain and reduced yields from drought will lead to supply shortages will grow, and prices will rise, as crop yields suffer or fail, and less imports are available as it is no better elsewhere

Cultural heritage – our landscape will change, and listed buildings will crumble materially and structurally, reducing our cultural heritage

Figure 2: illustrates key risk of flooding in North Northants, around the River Nene which could affect up to 62,000 people[5], and the Environment Agency's strategy[6] to improve the management of its water levels.



[5] UK Government, Policy Paper: Anglian river basin district flood risk management plan, 18 April 2023.
[6] 2024 Environment Agency Briefing Paper, Nene Water Management Strategy

These risks are from a local climate risk analysis we have commissioned to assess the climate risks for North Northamptonshire. This builds on the National Risk Register[7], which assesses risks that would have a substantial impact on the UK's safety, security, or critical systems at a national level.

The aim is to directly mitigate the highlighted risks, to minimise their impacts, and ideally, reach a position where we are fully resilient to them.

Vision & Approach

Our Vision

By 2050, the area will be a fairer, greener community, having fully transitioned to Net Zero emissions. Our energy will be sourced entirely from renewables, our buildings will be energy-efficient, and our transport system will be clean and sustainable. Every resident, business, and organisation will contribute to reducing the area's carbon footprint and enhancing climate resilience, securing a healthier environment for future generations.

This aligns with the emerging Big50 vision of securing the best life for all in North Northamptonshire, which has sustainability as golden thread running through it.

Our commitment to equity ensures that the benefits of this transition are universally accessible. We aim to provide opportunities for all, especially disadvantaged communities, to engage in the green economy. This include working to remove barriers to green jobs, clean energy, and healthier living conditions.

North Northamptonshire will be climate resilient and thriving. Our infrastructure will effectively manage extreme weather events like floods and heatwaves, supported by natural solutions such as restored wetlands and increased tree cover. This will not only mitigate climate risks but also offer beautiful, green spaces for everyone.

Economically, the area will flourish with a dynamic green economy that fosters innovation and sustainable development. Local businesses will spearhead advancements in green technologies, attracting investment, creating jobs, and driving growth. Socially, from school age onwards our communities will be cohesive and engaged, united by shared sustainability goals.

Goals for a Fairer, Greener Community:

- **Integration of Sustainability:** Sustainability will be embedded in everyday life, from energy-efficient homes and green public transport to local food production and waste reduction. Every decision, from urban planning to individual lifestyle choices, will reflect our commitment to protecting the environment.

[7] UK Government, National Risk Register 2023.

- **Equitable Distribution of Benefits:** Our aim is to ensure that all community members benefit from the green transition. Programmes will be designed to support low-income and disadvantaged groups with access to renewable energy, efficiency upgrades, and green jobs. Our strategy will address health disparities caused by environmental factors, promoting cleaner air, safer homes, and healthier lives for everyone.

Our Approach

We must all focus on reducing carbon emissions to stop global temperatures warming, whilst planning to manage the impacts of climate change associated with a 2°C rise in temperature. The Council will focus on becoming carbon neutral (meaning reducing emissions to a minimum, and then offsetting the remainder) by 2030, and will work to support businesses, communities, and individuals to do the same. Beyond 2030, we will focus on reaching Net Zero – ahead of the UK national target of 2050.

Our approach for North Northants will be to:

- Create the right environment to enable and support North Northants becoming carbon neutral, 2°C resilient, and then Net Zero
- Set the right policy framework locally to support successful climate action plans
- Lead by example – demonstrate that we can do it by showcasing what the Council is achieving
- Push for green growth – to make sure we make the most of related economic opportunities
- Embed climate considerations in all our decision-making
- Seek cooperative benefits – to make the most of any changes – such as added health benefits

In so doing, our delivery plans will be:

- Inclusive – ensuring the transition is accessible to all
- Evidence-led – using the best science and analysis, informed by a wide range of relevant stakeholders

Our vision cannot be delivered by us alone. We must rely on other individuals and organisations across the area, and beyond, to help deliver the vision for North Northants.

The UK Climate Change Committee estimates that local authorities influence one third of emissions in their area[8]. This makes public engagement and buy-in from organisations critical to tackling the other two thirds. The diagram (figure 3) explains the varying degrees that the Council can extend its influence, in terms of driving climate change action. The central sphere represents areas directly under the Council's control, such as local operations and infrastructure. Moving outward, the Council can enable change through contracts, funding, policy, and local influence. The degree of influence, and therefore certainty of success, decreases as we move from areas within our control to those where individuals have more freedom of choice. In these areas, we must rely on the wider interest to act, goodwill, logical argument, and the desire to leave the world a better place.

Figure 3: Spheres of Influence

We can also support and enforce positive behaviour and change through planning policies and conditions around planning applications, and we can penalise negative behaviour, such as issuing fines for blocking electric vehicle charge points or more severe penalties for fly-tipping and pollution.

We can drive change by setting conditions for organisations and individuals they contract for goods and services. By including Net Zero objectives in contract terms, the Council can ensure that suppliers align with environmental goals to secure local government contracts. Policies can and will be reviewed and developed to guide the public and businesses toward a Net Zero future.

The Council will engage with the public and encourage sustainable practices through several strategic approaches, including:

[8] Climate Change Committee, Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget, December 2020.

- **Direct Investment** - Invest in projects or infrastructure that the Council owns, such as renewable energy or public transport, to ensure they meet sustainability goals.
- **Seed Investment** - Partner with stakeholders in shared ownership projects to influence and promote green initiatives
- **Grants** - Provide financial incentives to individuals and organisations to encourage sustainable activities, such as energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy projects.
- **Promotional Policies** - Educate and motivate the public through awareness campaigns and workshops, encouraging eco-friendly practices.
- **Punitive Policies** - Enforce environmental standards by penalising harmful behaviours, such as littering and improper waste disposal.
- **Combination Policies** - Use a mix of incentives and penalties to balance rewards for positive actions with deterrents for negative ones, creating effective "carrot-shaped sticks."

By taking the lead and demonstrating commitment, we can inspire and influence the community and stakeholders to participate in achieving a sustainable future.

As we move towards a greener future, we are committed to ensuring a Just Transition. This commitment involves creating pathways for communities to benefit from new green jobs, access affordable renewable energy, and participate in sustainable practices. Achieving a Just Transition means recognising the technological, social, and economic challenges of decarbonisation, while working to identify ways in which we can remedy existing inequalities across communities and prevent new ones from forming. An effective and fair transition needs to be planned and coordinated in a coherent way. Our goal is to ensure that no one is left behind in our efforts to combat climate change and build a more equitable society.

We will achieve a Just Transition through active community engagement, which is essential for the success of our climate initiatives. We are committed to involving residents at every stage of our climate action plans, from planning and decision-making to implementation and monitoring. Our approach will include a range of engagement activities, such as:

- The use of online surveys, webinars, and public consultations to gather feedback and insights from residents.
- Leverage digital channels to maximise reach and minimise costs, ensuring broad community participation.
- Collaborate with community groups, including minorities and disadvantaged groups, to disseminate information and engage broader audiences effectively.

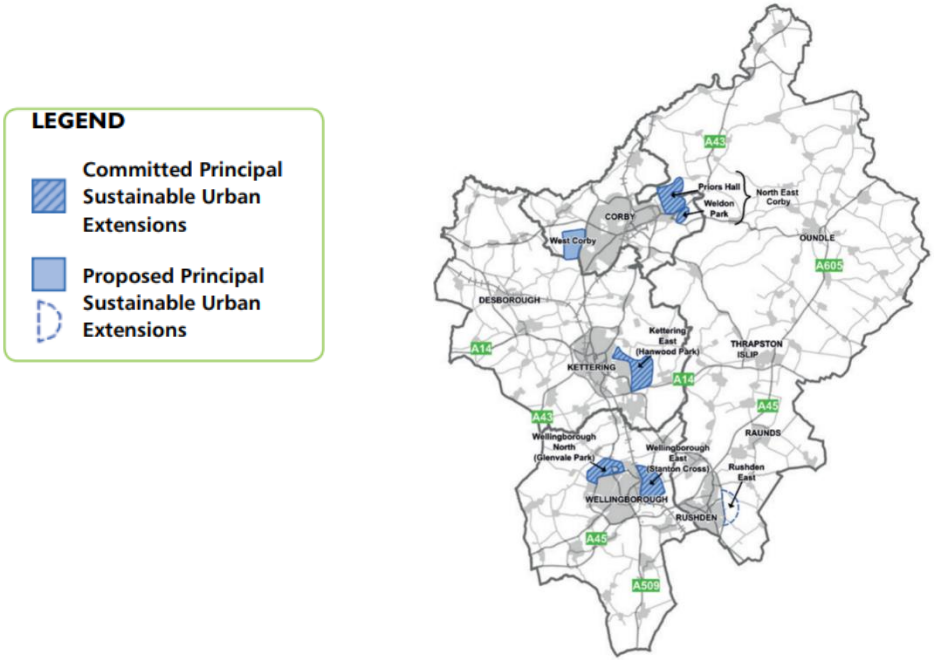
Key Areas of Focus

In this section, we highlight six key sectors of strategic importance. Plans for each sector focus on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, building resilience to climate change, and ensuring an equitable transition to a low-carbon future. Highlighting the things we should be doing to build a fairer, greener community.

Homes & the Built Environment

Significant growth is planned across North Northamptonshire through 2030 and beyond, with around 30,000 new houses and associated infrastructure expected by 2031, including seven new Garden Communities (six Garden Communities and one Garden Village)[9]. This necessitates focusing on adaptation and mitigation to address these pressures and reduce climate impacts.

Figure 4: Principal Sustainable Urban Extensions[10]



[9] North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031, July 2016.
[10] North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031, Pg. 74, July 2016.

Action in the built environment (buildings, infrastructure, and the spaces between them) is a key part of ensuring a Just Transition. Our transition to an ecologically conscious development mindset, while also ensuring that the benefits of the shift to Net Zero are equally spread and enjoyed throughout the population, and that the costs of these activities are not borne by traditionally excluded or marginalised groups and individuals, is our primary goal.

The Local Plan for North Northants is currently being revised and includes climate risk analyses as part of its evidence base. Policies related to climate adaptation should be specific and measurable, particularly for flooding, reducing energy consumption, and changing weather patterns such as extreme temperatures. The Local Plan is one of our primary means to influence the new built environment in North Northants, by promoting design measures that make developments less vulnerable to climate risks.

We can also help reduce emissions from transport and promote carbon sequestration and biodiversity by working together with partners and the government. Supporting renewable energy provision, storage, and transmission is another key area where local planning can significantly reduce emissions, with benefits extending locally, regionally, and nationally.

What the Council plans to do

The Council will continue to lead by example, delivering activities outlined within our Carbon Management Plan, such as retrofitting our buildings to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) B standard, decarbonising our fleet, and implementing behavioural changes to our operations and working practices. We will aim for all Council homes to have a minimum EPC B standard, not just new build. Homes will need to be retrofitted to introduce energy savings measures such as insulation and air source heat pumps. The Council is also working with partners to build a publicly accessible network of on-street EV charging points. More information can be found in our EV Infrastructure Strategy 2024-2030. Our biodiversity and nature recovery work will continue to safeguard existing carbon sinks on Council-owned land (e.g., woodlands, grasslands). We will use the Local Plan review as an opportunity to establish low carbon building requirements for new builds and provide stronger policy on adaptation and mitigation.

By using our influence and relationships with local partners, we will provide targeted support to help residents understand the importance of improving their home's efficiency, engage in retrofitting, and actively promote third party projects and initiatives that aim to achieve this. We will work with local partners to develop an action plan to achieve retrofit across all housing in North Northants, that needs it. We will continue to work with regional and national partners to disseminate learnings, enhance building standards of housing, schools, and the wider built environment. The Council will promote inclusive educational campaigns to raise awareness for climate change impacts in the area, as well as the benefits and options for home adaptation. We will empower local leaders and organisations to act as intermediaries and advocates for climate adaptation and resilience within the community.

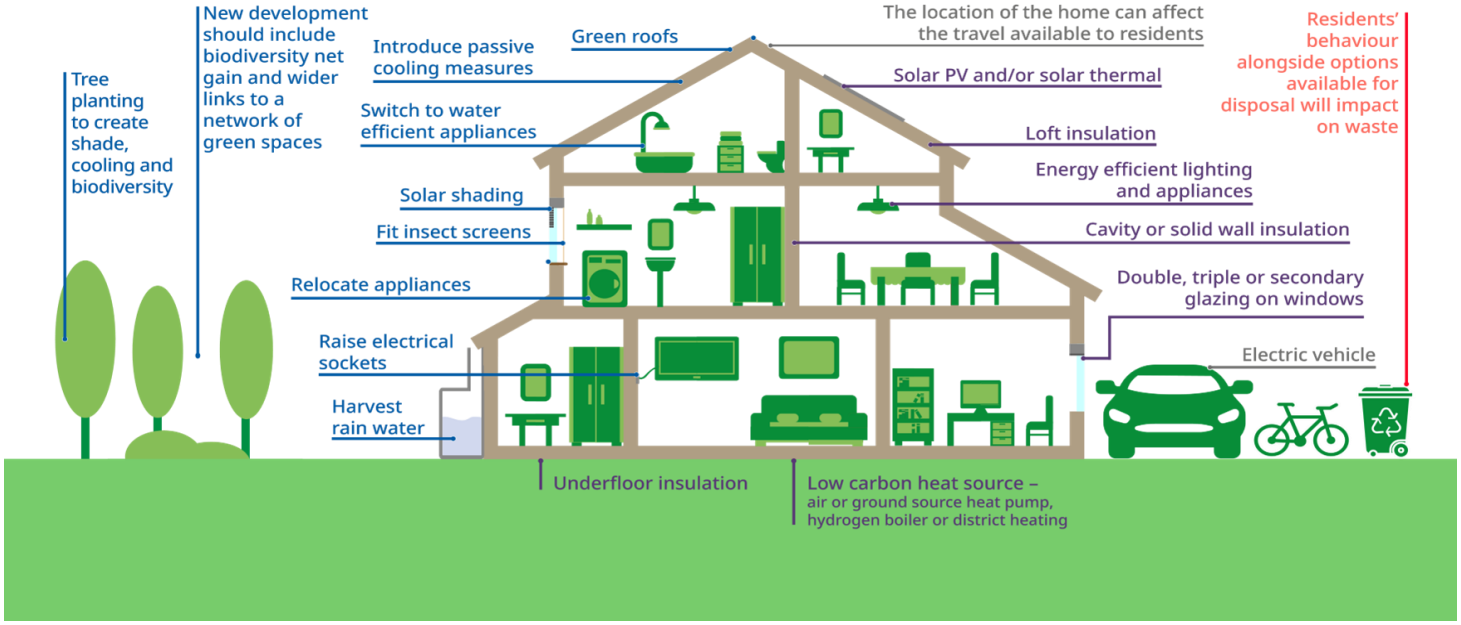
Our continued work with developers will ensure that development sites are resilient to future climate change impacts (e.g., flooding, temperature fluctuations etc), and that they reduce the reliance on private vehicles for occupants and nearby residents/businesses. We will work to mandate for green and blue infrastructure to be included on all major developments such as green roofs, EV charge points, and renewable energy technologies, and heating/cooling networks. We will also seek to obtain increased government funding to offset the cost of home and business upgrades (e.g., through grants, loans, tax breaks, financial incentives etc.). Funds, such as the NNDecarb business grant scheme and NN2NZ green transition grants,

are two examples of mechanisms the Council has employed to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in investing in low-carbon technologies.

One thing you can do

Review your home for cold spots and leaks, then seal and insulate these areas as this help protect you from storm, wind, rain, flooding, or excess heat damage, help your home stay cool in summer as well as warm in winter, and save you money on your heating bills.

Figure 5: Sustainable living



One thing organisations and businesses can do

Evaluate the vulnerability of business operations and supply chains to climate-related risks such as flooding, extreme temperatures, and storms, and put in place practical plans to make your business climate resilient. We can help you with further advice.

Energy

Transitioning to renewable energy is imperative for the North Northants area to meet its carbon reduction targets. The region is already home to two renewable energy parks in Kettering and Chelveston. There is also potential for solar to be added to buildings, car parks, and low-grade farmland. As

well as opportunities for wind and biomass energy generation, all of which would significantly decrease reliance on fossil fuels. The challenge over the next 10 years is to accelerate away from the use of fossil fuels, which could be achieved by investing in renewable energy infrastructure.

However, North Northamptonshire faces several significant barriers to integrating renewable energy and achieving Net Zero targets. The region's electricity network is constrained, particularly at the Grendon Grid Supply Point (GSP), which serves as the primary hub for local energy distribution[11]. This, along with its associated four bulk supply points and 19 primary substations, means the network is currently at capacity, limiting the ability to connect new renewable sources, especially large scale solar or wind generation.

Additionally, the Active Network Management (ANM) system, crucial for managing grid constraints, requires an upgrade. Although National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) is developing an upgraded ANM system, there is currently no timeline for when it will be ready for customer connections. The connection of larger scale renewables will typically not be possible until the ANM system has been fully developed, installed, and commissioned.

This electricity network's congestion, combined with potential curtailment due to the Corby Power Station's operational patterns, complicates the business case for renewable projects by creating unpredictable risk of grid disconnection. High grid connection costs and the need for network reinforcements further exacerbate the issue, with substantial contributions from developers making projects economically challenging.

What the Council plans to do

Despite these challenges, the Council remains committed to driving renewable energy generation across the area. To tackle long-term energy issues, we will collaborate closely with the NGED, aiming to resolve these challenges. This includes advocating for the creation of local micro-grids that can generate and consume green energy off-grid.

We will continue to support grants and programmes that assist individuals and businesses in electrifying fossil fuel-intensive processes, transitioning to renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency. We also plan to continue working with partners to promote and support smart grid technologies and community energy projects, ensuring a balanced distribution of renewable energy benefits. An example of this is the Funded Energy Redress Scheme project CLEAR, which aims to match local solar generation with domestic consumption, providing financial benefits to both generators and consumers[12].

[11] National Grid, Grendon – Corby.
[12] Although not a formal partner of Project CLEAR, the Council supported the grant funding bid by writing a letter of support to assist Electric Corby Community Interest Company and its partners in securing the grant. Additionally, the Council has helped promote the project to North Northamptonshire residents.

Additionally, the Council will engage with NGED to accelerate the construction of a new GSP and encourage the upgrade the existing ANM system. These upgrades are essential to alleviate congestion and support large-scale renewable energy projects. To advance these goals, the Council is supporting the establishment of a community group that will collaborate with NGED on progressing new GSPs and ANM systems.

Promoting awareness of energy efficiency and renewable energy remains a priority. We will focus on informing residents and supporting renewable energy projects on Council-owned land. We also see the upcoming Local Plan review as an opportunity to identify priority areas for renewable energy infrastructure projects, encouraging developers to invest, and bring these projects to fruition.

Finally, the Council is committed to supporting the maximum production of renewable energy across the area, along with initiatives aimed at reducing renewable energy costs below those of fossil fuels, to include supporting clean energy communities, heat networks, and micro-grids. Our continued engagement with key stakeholders in the energy sector, community groups, and residents will help enable the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, further solidifying our commitment to a sustainable future.

One thing you can do

Turn down the thermostat, particularly when you are not at home or at night, only boil the water you need, and switch to a green renewable energy supplier.

One thing organisations and businesses can do

Regularly conduct energy audits to identify areas for improvement and implement changes to optimise energy use.

Transport

North Northamptonshire is well connected to the surrounding East Midlands region and beyond. We have excellent road connections with the rest of the UK, including London, Birmingham, and Manchester, via the M1, M6 and A14.

The Council has over 1,100 miles of roads, over 1,200 miles of foot and cycleways, and 700 miles of public rights of way to manage and maintain. In addition to the roads, there are approximately 724 highway structures and 557 public right of way structures to maintain.

The Midland Main Line railway, which is now electrified through North Northamptonshire, runs in a broadly north-south direction connecting with London and Eurostar services at London St Pancras. The area has three main train stations in Corby, Kettering, and Wellingborough, which are owned by Network Rail and operated by East Midlands Railway.

The commercial core of the North Northamptonshire's bus network is represented by the inter-urban routes, including services that cross local authority boundaries to Bedford, Northampton, Milton Keynes, Market Harborough, and Peterborough. This reflects both the multi-centre nature of the area, and the heritage of urbanised small towns and villages along the A6 corridor, which were the historic home of the boot and shoe industry.

While the area has fast transport links much of its rural areas lack suitable public transport, which prevents residents from accessing jobs, education, and services without the use of a private car.

Current infrastructure priorities, to deliver planned growth to 2031, identified pressures and pinch points as factors affecting delivery, most notably, congestion and capacity issues along key strategic highways networks such as the A14, A43, and A45 corridor.

Why people travel

The most common trip purpose in England in 2022 was for shopping, followed by commuting. Cars are the most popular mode of personal travel, comprising 58% of trips in 2022 and 78% of distances travelled in England. In 2023, the average car journey in England was 6.5 miles in urban areas, and about 10 miles in rural areas[13].

The 2021 census found that the majority of people drove or were passengers in a car or van to work (63%) followed by working from home (23.6%), on foot (7.6%), by bike (1.6%), by bus (1.4%) and by train (0.9%).

How people travel

Active travel, particularly walking, plays a key role in how people travel for all journey purposes. Whether it be walking to a bus stop, train station, or walking to a destination from a car parking spot. In England, walking made up 26% of all trips whilst cycling made up just to 3% of all trips and 11% of adults cycled at least once per week.

About 16% of households in North Northamptonshire have no access to a car or van, 40% have one car or van, and 44% have two or more.

Census data on distance travelled to work shows that while there is a higher proportion of shorter commutes in larger towns, such as Corby and Kettering, there is still a good proportion of commutes in the 0-5km range in the more rural parts of North Northamptonshire that could be walked or cycled (approximately 30.6% in rural areas compared to 45.9% in urban areas).

In 2020, the Council launched the use of e-scooters, which, as of September 2024, have saved 925,000 car journeys and 337 tonnes of CO_2 in the area

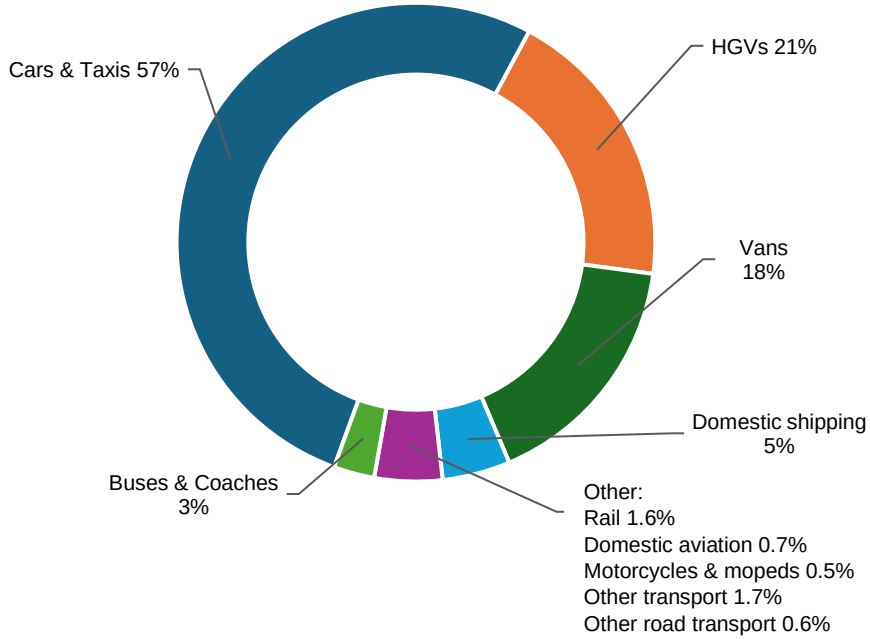
[13] UK Government, Official Statistics, National Travel Survey: 2022, 30 August 2023.

Transport, Climate Change, and Air Quality

Transport is the largest emitting sector of UK greenhouse gas emissions, producing 26% of the UK's total emission in 2021[14]. Within this passenger cars account for 55% of road transport emissions[15].

In 2021, transport accounted for 819.3 kilotonnes of CO_2 equivalent ($ktCO_2e$) in North Northamptonshire[16]. Between 2005 and 2017, CO_2 emissions in North Northamptonshire reduced by 27%; however, emissions from transport only saw a 3% reduction. Locally transport accounts for 19% of CO_2 emissions in the Corby area, 48% in Kettering, 43% in Wellingborough, and 53% East Northamptonshire[17]. Given how and why people travel, there is clear potential to reduce emissions from transport.

Figure 6: Greenhouse gas emissions by transport mode, 2021[18]



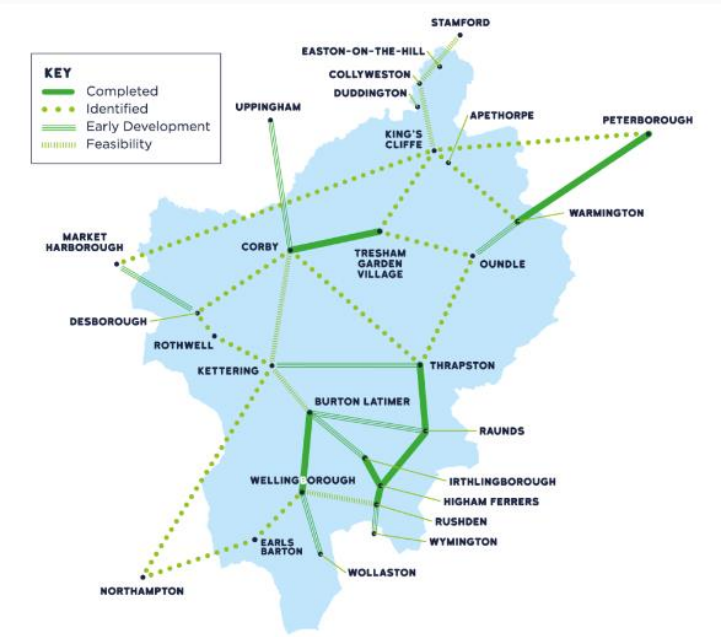
[14] Department for Transport, Official Statistics, Transport and Environment Statistics: 2023, 19 October 2023.
[15] Department for Transport, Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain, Pg. 87, 2021.
[16] Department for Transport, Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Transport by Local Authority, 19 October 2023.
[17] North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, Pg. 32, March 2022.
[18] Department for Transport, Official Statistics, Transport and Environment Statistics: 2023, 19 October 2023.

What the Council plans to do

Transport is a significant contributor to GHG emissions in North Northamptonshire, and the reliance on fossil-fuelled vehicles continues to pose environmental challenges. To address this, the Council is taking several steps to promote sustainable transport options and reduce the carbon footprint associated with mobility. Key initiatives include the development of car-free options like cycling, walking, and public transportation. Additionally, the Council is investing in electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, guided by the national strategy 'Taking Charge'. This includes expanding the public network of charge points and planning for future demand growth.

To encourage a shift towards more sustainable transport modes, the Council recently adopted the Greenway Strategy Masterplan, which aims to connect the 350km network of 'greenways' and ensure they are safe, off-road routes that connect key locations, and are designed for cycling, walking, and riding. Where feasible and practical to do so, greenways will be constructed using environmentally sustainable materials such as recycled Flexipave® instead of tarmac and gabion stones rather than concrete. This investment not only supports greener travel but also enhances local biodiversity and flood resilience.

Figure 7: Greenway routes, April 2024



The Council is also leading by example by electrifying its fleet, where practical to do so, and considering the case for introducing of zero-emission zones in town centres. To support rural communities, innovative solutions like ‘hail-a-minibus’ demand-driven services are being explored as efficient alternatives to underused large buses. Alongside these efforts, we will publicise national grants for purchasing bikes, electric cars, and chargers, as well as apps that help residents calculate the true costs and benefits of switching to electric vehicles.

Further efforts include working with local partners to ensure that sustainable transport infrastructure is in place at schools, leisure centres, and public spaces. We will also continue to promote the creation of car-sharing clubs, mobility hubs, and the construction of segregated cycleways with green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and wildflower borders, to provide safe and sustainable routes for non-motorised transport. Pothole repairs and road maintenance will be accelerated to ensure safe and reliable networks, using materials and processes that are more resilient to climate change.

In line with the Council’s commitment to climate resilience, there will be a focus on encouraging the prioritisation of infrastructure for green transport. When repairing and restoring old infrastructure, we will encourage our highways partners to use climate-resilient materials. The Council will explore opportunities to repurpose wide roads to accommodate a shift towards cycling and micro-mobility, to include incorporating tree canopy shading, greener segregation, and flood-resilient drainage systems, all of which contribute to a sustainable and resilient transport network.

Figure 8: Example of what a local community mobility hub

What you can do

When you go on short trips, consider walking or cycling to your destination. For longer trips, try to carshare or use public transport. Ideally, give up your car as much as possible.

What organisations and businesses can do

Support people working from home where transport is disrupted and whenever commercially acceptable. Encourage car sharing incentive schemes, promoting alternative attractive means of commuting instead of single occupant cars.

Nature, Food & Farming

Nature

North Northamptonshire has diverse wildlife with a range of habitats and species of local, regional, national, and international importance. The area is also host to several designated sites, including the Upper Nene Gravel Pits, which is which designated as a Special Protection Area of wider than national importance, due to its importance as a breeding, feeding, wintering, or migration ground for rare and vulnerable bird species.

Natural assets are situated alongside urban settings, including parks, woodlands, private gardens, and green corridors which are all important elements for ecological systems to thrive.

The area is rich in green infrastructure, featuring a variety of parks and open spaces, to include our five country parks - Barnwell, East Carlton, Fermyn Woods, Irchester, and Sywell. There are also several ancient woodlands, including one in Corby that is designated as a nature reserve, and numerous nature reserves like Summer Leys near Wollaston.

The region also benefits from the Nene Valley Way and the North Northants Greenway, a largely traffic-free route connecting Rushden, Higham Ferrers, and other places in the local area. There are plans to extend further along the Nene Valley, linking Wellingborough to Peterborough. Public rights of way enhance accessibility across rural areas. The proposed greenway network spans 350 km within North Northamptonshire, and includes routes identified in feasibility studies, local cycling, and walking infrastructure plans.

Much of the area’s countryside is dominated by arable fields with low biodiversity value, and the rapid growth expected in housing and employment land poses further threats. Increased agricultural intensification and climate change exacerbate habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. This has resulted in significant pressures on local biodiversity.

As a council we are committed to local nature recovery and conservation. We have a dedicated team of rangers looking after our parks and woodlands, who are engaged in several activities to improve and enhance biodiversity and resilience. This includes fighting pests and diseases, that

have increased as a result of climate change, such as ash dieback and the oak processionary moth. We are also under planting and introducing a wider variety of species. We help to provide the right flora for butterflies – great work is happening in partnership with the Butterfly Conservation already in Fermyn Woods Country Park.

We work closely on carbon sequestration projects for enhancement, meadow creation, wildflower planting, and improving carbon storage in waterways. We support the Rockingham Vision Group on producing 10 Parish Nature Recovery Plans through our active friends of groups and wider community links. We work with landowners on larger projects – including land acquisition for sequestration, and we administer Countryside Stewardship Grants to landowners, to improve conservation and accessibility, working closely with Forestry Commission.

As well as conservation, we see health and wellbeing fundamental for country parks and run the Active Parks project funded by Public Health. We also promote the use of our open spaces and parks for active lifestyles, providing gym equipment and running and cycling trails. We work with landowners on larger projects – including land acquisition for sequestration, and we administer Countryside Stewardship Grants to landowners, to improve conservation and accessibility, working closely with Forestry Commission.

Green infrastructure, including parks, are important to the towns and the Council will be investing over £1m in projects to enhance these spaces in Corby, Desborough, Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden, and Higham Ferrers.

Food & Farming

Food is a contentious area, where many people can be resistant to changes like cutting down on red meat, or embracing local organic produce or becoming vegetarian, even though this is an area, where such changes can save people money and improve their health, as well as helping the environment.

Farmers are facing longer periods of drought followed by intense rainfall, which can lead to soil erosion, reduced crop yields, and water scarcity. Additionally, warmer winters are disrupting the lifecycles of pests and diseases, leaving crops and livestock more vulnerable.

In response to these challenges, many farmers in North Northamptonshire are adapting by introducing soil conservation techniques, such as cover cropping and reduced tillage, such measures are intended to improve soil health and water retention. Others are diversifying their crops, to include more climate-resilient varieties and investing in water management systems to better cope with droughts and floods.

Government schemes like the Rural England Prosperity Fund, the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), play crucial roles in helping farmers make climate change adaptations. The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) under ELMS, for example, rewards farmers for adopting practices that enhance soil health and reduce emissions, while the Local Nature Recovery component supports biodiversity and ecosystem restoration on farmland. Through CSS, farmers in the area can access grants to create wildlife habitats, improve water quality, and manage woodlands, all of which contribute to making farms more sustainable and climate resilient.

These initiatives not only help farmers adapt to the realities of climate change but also position agriculture in North Northamptonshire as a key contributor to the area’s broader environmental goals, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing biodiversity.

What the Council plans to do

We are committed to embedding a range of strategies and policies that promote sustainability and environmental resilience. One of the key areas of focus is championing sustainable farming practices. The Council will continue to work closely with local farmers to encourage methods that are both environmentally friendly and economically viable. Alongside this as part of a broader initiative to expand education on healthy and sustainable food choices, there will be efforts to promote interventions aimed at reducing food waste, promoting sustainable food consumption, and encouraging dietary changes that support both personal health and environmental sustainability.

We will continue strategic tree planting to capture carbon, provide shade, and enhance the resilience of green spaces. The development and effective management of hedgerows and arable field margins will also be a focus, alongside efforts to encourage outdoor recreational activities that connect people with nature. Enhancing local biodiversity and supporting nature recovery are key goals, we will continue to work to increase the efficiency of land use and management, including expanding tree and woodland cover in viable locations. Additionally, the management and surveillance of invasive non-native species will be prioritised, and nature-based carbon storage within plants, soils, and waterways will be promoted.

We will explore creating a "Focus on Food" initiative, which aims to change consumer behaviour by encouraging a shift away from meat and promoting local, organic, and healthy food options that are both environmentally friendly and cost-effective. Similarly, a "Focus on Farming" initiative will involve working with local farmers, landowners, and retailers to refocus the supply chain on producing food locally for local consumption. This includes collaborating with food and farming agencies to shift from growing crops for animal feed to those intended for human consumption, and replacing fossil fuel-based fertilizers with green, efficient alternatives.

Lastly, a "Focus on Nature" programme will lead efforts with all landowners to plant trees and enhance biodiversity on various types of land, including verges, roadsides, schools, hospitals, housing estates, allotments, and unproductive land. We will collaborate with builders, planners, architects, and the construction industry to establish future supply chains for locally grown wood, which can be used in local construction projects as a sustainable alternative to carbon-heavy materials like concrete and bricks.

What you can do

Change your eating habits by trying to eat less meat and processed foods. Where possible, shop locally by visiting farm shops. Buy less and waste less. Try your hand at growing your own food, using food waste rather than peat for compost.

Look at your outdoor spaces and consider how best to use the space for planting trees and shade, growing food, and encouraging biodiversity.

What farmers and other businesses can do

Farmers and businesses will be asked to support council initiatives and programmes, and we intend to make this as easy as possible for them.

Other organisations should consider tree planting and biodiversity programmes in and around workplaces.

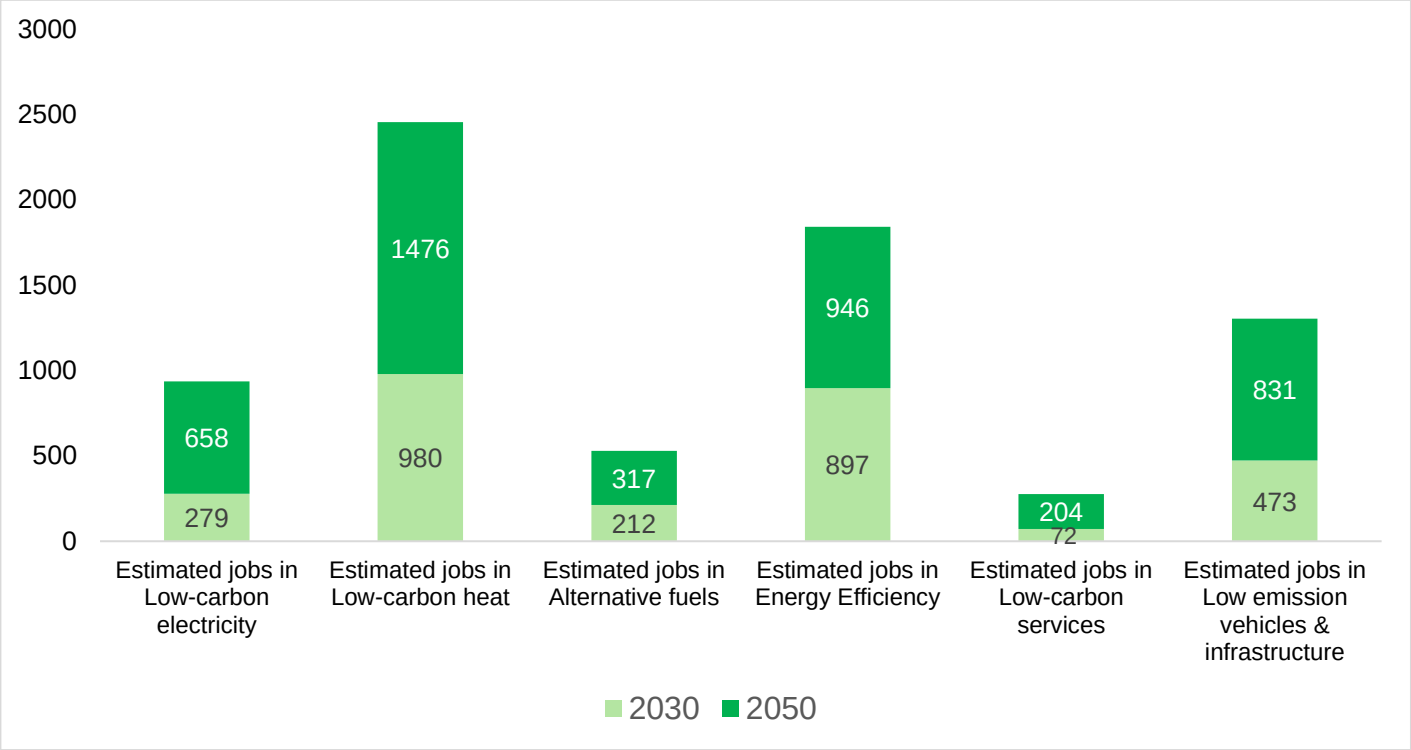
Green Economy

A sustainable economy focuses on creating jobs and fostering business practices that protect and enhance the environment. This approach helps reduce pollution, conserve resources, and promote long-term economic health. In North Northamptonshire, developing a sustainable economy means supporting local businesses that adopt planet-friendly practices, encouraging innovation in green technologies, and creating jobs and attracting new businesses in sectors like renewable energy and energy efficiency.

With the UK's green economy growing by 9% in 2023, compared to 0.1% for the overall economy[19], the area is well placed to seize the opportunity for green growth. Indeed, nationally significant investment in renewable energy at both Chelveston Renewable Energy Park and Kettering Energy Park, and leading circular economy innovators like In2Tec based in Kettering, highlights that North Northamptonshire has already started building the skills and spaces for the growth of the green job sector.

Figure 9: Estimated number of green jobs in North Northamptonshire by 2030 and 2050

[19] CBI Economic, The Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit, The UK's Net Zero Economy, February 2024.



The creation of more local jobs would help reduce the number of people commuting to jobs outside the area. Data from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) indicates a net increase of 22,000 jobs from 2011 to 2020 across North Northamptonshire. The green economy can help create more jobs in the area.

What the Council plans to do

The Council is committed to enabling a thriving and successful economy. Further development of the green economy presents a significant opportunity for local growth and innovation. With a robust employment sector, the region is well-positioned to capitalise on green job creation. The Council aims to build on the success of local initiatives such as the Chelveston Renewable Energy Park and In2Tec's green electronics innovations and help improve skills to ensure that the local workforce is not left behind by industrial changes. To support this vision, we will collaborate with educational institutions and training providers to increase access to green job training and upskilling initiatives. These programmes will help equip the local workforce with the skills needed to thrive in a green economy.

We will continue working with local business networks, supporting small organisations, such as SMEs and charities, to adopt sustainable business practices. The Council is also preparing a new Inward Investment Prospectus with a strong focus on Green Growth, supported by a network of local ambassadors, to attract new businesses and investment by and for our existing businesses.

What you can do

Support local green businesses by seeking local traders for installation of renewable energy or heat pumps at your home, choosing them helps create more demand for green jobs locally.

What organisations and businesses can do

Seize the new opportunities in the green economy by investing in new skills, products, and services to support local people adapting to climate change.

Waste

The waste management sector is responsible for 5% of GHG emissions in the UK in 2022, with methane being by far the most prominent gas (90% of emissions) [20]. In 2023, the Council collected over 148,000 tonnes of kerbside waste, with over 70,000 tonnes (47.5%) being sent for recycling, composting or reuse. The majority (93%) of general refuse waste collected is sent for treatment, meaning only 7% is goes to landfill.

Reducing waste by increased reuse, repair, and recycling helps to reduce emissions generated by waste collection and disposal. The circular economy, a system where goods are constantly in circulation, offers many benefits. It reduces the consumption of finite resources, increases the use of renewable materials through reuse, repair, and recycling, and provides a cost-effective means for consumers to purchase like new goods.

Figure 10: Diagram explaining circular economy[21]

[20] Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2022 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures, Pg. 19, 6 February 2024.
[21] Image provided by Freepik

What the Council plans to do

We are committed to promoting sustainable waste management practices to reduce the environmental impact. The Council will continue to support a waste management system centred on circular economy principles, which seek to prioritise the reduction of waste and encourage innovative approaches to waste reutilisation. We will continue to actively use education and best practice to promote sustainable waste management practices to drive behavioural change within the area.

Enforcement will also play a critical role. The Council will be robust in dealing with fly-tippers, issuing fixed penalty notices, and prosecuting repeat offenders where appropriate, ensuring that the consequences of illegal waste disposal are clear and a deterrent. Additionally, the Council will commit to ensuring that household waste collection centres are readily open and are free to use, encouraging residents to recycle as much as possible.

We also plan to explore opportunities to capture carbon and generate renewable energy from waste collected across the authority area, contributing to both waste reduction and energy sustainability. We will continue to monitor and regulate the disposal of industrial and agricultural chemicals and biocides to ensure that irresponsible waste management practices do not harm the environment.

In addition, the Council will provide ongoing advice and information to help people and businesses reduce waste and increase recycling. By focusing on improving supply chains for repairing, recycling, and reuse, we aim to reduce waste and enhance recycling rates with greater precision and effectiveness.

What you can do

Waste less and recycle as much as possible. Think about using less by sharing more for what you need and what others need, ideally locally. Commit to eliminating single-use plastics in everyday life. This could mean using reusable bags, bottles, and containers, or avoiding products with excessive plastic packaging.

What organisations and businesses can do

Take responsibility for reducing your waste and emissions. Implement a Zero-Waste Policy for Packaging: eliminate or drastically reduce packaging waste by switching to reusable, recyclable, or compostable materials. This could include offering products in bulk, using returnable containers, or minimizing packaging altogether. By doing this, businesses can significantly reduce their environmental footprint, set an example for others, and potentially cut costs associated with waste disposal

Next Steps

We have covered a wide range of approaches. There are a number of ways we could tackle climate change locally by implementing the recommended actions:

- We could pursue all of them as fast as possible, noting this is probably very expensive,
- We could pick the most transformational and initiate a transformation change programme on the biggest ones,
- We could take a risk-based approach where we initiate all of them, not knowing which will work best, and see which work first and best, then focus resources on these, whilst we add new ideas and technologies into the mix for failed areas
- We take the lowest cost highest risk route and do only what everyone agrees is affordable and easy to do, but risk failing, or
- We could do nothing and pass on the risks.

As it is difficult to predict which initiatives will be most successful, a risk-based approach is recommended, where the full range of initiatives are supported in the early years, allowing the winners and losers to emerge over time, after which we can leverage the learning gained and accelerate growth of the most successful initiatives, whilst also incorporating any new ideas and technologies as they emerge.