

Our Environment priority

Environment Policy

2021/22 – 2025/26



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Date of Approval:

13/07/21

Approved by:

Executive Board

Version (review date):

1 (13/07/22)



Introduction

North Kesteven District Council has long been committed to reducing the impact on the natural environment of the services it delivers (directly and indirectly), and activities undertaken within the district. This policy has been produced to reflect the recent significant increase in the council's ambitions, notably the introduction of an 'Our Environment' corporate priority and the declaration of a climate emergency.

Aim

This document sets out the council's approach to protecting and enhancing the natural environment. It aims to provide clear guidance to ensure that the significant action required to reduce negative environmental impacts are taken and that the council's commitment to environmental protection is demonstrated to service users, visitors, suppliers, and contractors.

Scope

This policy is to be followed by those delivering council services, including North Kesteven District Council colleagues, contractors and suppliers. It covers policy commitments which cover all commonly recognised environmental damage, and includes specific focus on climate change due to the urgent and ambitious action that needs to be taken to reach the council's net zero CO² emissions by 2030 target, and commitment to tackling all greenhouse gas emissions.

Our definition of environmental damage

This section explains the most common origins of environmental damage, to which we need to apply measures that will reduce/eliminate these sources through the way we purchase goods and services, delivery policies and strategies, make choices as individuals, and the way we influence our communities.

Climate change

Releasing greenhouse gases through: burning coal, oil, and gas; fertiliser and cement production; deforestation; livestock management; agriculture; and producing soot and black carbon.

Ocean acidification

Producing CO₂ (which becomes dissolved in sea water) primarily through burning fossil fuels and through land use change.

Chemical pollution

Releasing and spreading radioactive compounds, organic compounds (such as DDT), and heavy metals (such as mercury and lead), through industrial production and waste disposal.

Freshwater withdrawals

Altering river flow and extracting water for irrigation; capturing rainfall for use on crops; extracting water from water tables, for agriculture, industry and household use.

Nitrogen & phosphorus loading

Producing fertilisers for crops and animal feed; manure and human sewage management; burning fossil fuels and biomass; and growing leguminous crops. Putting excessive phosphorus into the environment by producing fertilisers, manures, detergents, and pesticides.

Land conversion

Converting natural forests and other ecosystems into agricultural land, plantations, and urban settlements.

Biodiversity loss

Destroying habitats; expanding urban land use; agriculture and aquaculture; introducing invasive species; mining, building dams and transport routes.

Air pollution

Releasing fine particles into the air: burning fossil fuels and biomass; industrial processes which create dry soils and dust.

Ozone layer depletion

Producing chlorofluorocarbons for use in refrigerators, air conditioners and aerosol cans.

Our environmental protection principles

This section contains our environmental protection principles which are to be used as guidance when decisions are made during, and about, the delivery of our services.

Integrate

We integrate environmental protection into activities, priorities, policies, decisions, service delivery proposals, and future ambitions

Prevent

We take preventative measures to anticipate and avoid environmental damage

Rectify at source

When taking preventative measures, we begin by stopping environmental damage where it is being created

Polluter pays

Using the authority's powers to ensure those who deliberately or recklessly damage the natural environment are prosecuted and the cost of repairing the damage caused is recovered.

Precaution

The risk of environmental harm is often uncertain, where this is the case we put in place protective measures before waiting for damage to occur

Our environment policy

This section provides an overview of our environmental policy commitments.

- 1. Priority** - Protecting and improving the natural environment is a corporate priority and the responsibility of all those who deliver our services.
- 2. Resilience** - We are working to make our services and the district more resilient to the impacts of the climate and ecological emergency and are reducing emissions from energy to net-zero by 2030. We require our suppliers and contractors to support our efforts.
- 3. Honesty** - We are honest with our colleagues, residents, communities and businesses about the size of the challenge and support them to take the action needed to protect and restore the natural environment.
- 4. Resources** - We dedicate the necessary resources to meet our ambitions and ensure colleagues have the knowledge to implement environmental protection principles in their role.
- 5. Engagement** - We engage with residents, community groups, businesses, and experts to determine the action to take, and enable them to take action.
- 6. Best practice** - We present the best available options in service delivery proposals, and are clear how they contribute to, or how they are counter to, our environmental ambitions.
- 7. Procurement** - We use the procurement process to reduce the negative environmental impacts of council service delivery, its supply chain and contracts, and favour suppliers and contractors whose values, policies and actions align with our own.
- 8. Raising standards** - We work to raise existing and new build housing standards to improve their thermal and energy efficiency, and resilience to a changing climate.
- 9. Reducing emissions** - We constantly improve the management of our estate, increasing our expertise, taking a consistent approach to efficiency and resilience, monitoring and reducing energy and water use, and fuel/mileage. We expect our contractors to do the same.
- 10. Healthy ecosystems** - We improve the management of council land with the aim to provide the ecosystem services that make all life possible.
- 11. Waste hierarchy** - We reduce, reuse, repair, recycle, and recover before disposal to reduce the use of raw materials, and work with the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership to improve waste education and services to residents.
- 12. Green economy** - We work to reduce our investment in fossil fuels, increase investment in positive environmental outcomes, and are committed to supporting the growth of the local green economy.

Our policy commitments to the climate emergency

This section relates specifically to our policy commitments on climate change, and the approach that we are taking to tackling this complex and challenging environmental emergency.

1. On 15 July 2019 Full Council unanimously declared a climate emergency and committed to working with residents, businesses and other partners to tackle climate change, and lobby for support to address the emergency by 2030.
2. As a result, we are acting with urgency to reduce our corporate and district greenhouse gas emissions, aiming for net zero CO₂ emissions by 2030.
3. We understand that climate change poses a risk to the consistent delivery of our services, particularly through more extreme and unpredictable weather events, and have therefore added climate change as a corporate strategic risk.
4. To ensure that we take our fair share of action to meeting the commitments of the Paris agreement (to keep global temperature rise below 1.5oC) we are taking a science based approach approved by a reputable academic organisation.
5. The speed of decarbonisation of the national power grid and fuel will not current meet our net zero target. Therefore we will not rely on these to reduce CO₂ emissions to our net zero target.
6. Non-CO₂ are harder to reduce and lack of data makes them hard to measure and monitor for reductions. However, we will take action to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions emitted in the district.
7. It will not be possible to eliminate all emissions from human activity in the district, and we will implement measures to capture ('net') the remaining emissions by 2030.
8. There are few certified emissions offsetting methods available, and we understand that emissions must be reduced not emitted and offset elsewhere. Therefore offsetting will not be used as the primary method to counter greenhouse gas emissions, and if we do use offset methods they will be through approved nature and non-nature based solutions.
9. To ensure that council decisions take our commitment to tackling the climate emergency into account, every report put forward for approval must answer the question 'How does this report contribute to the Climate Emergency and net zero emissions target?'

Expected behaviours and activities to deliver our policy

This section aims to highlight and provides examples of some of the behaviours and activities that are required to deliver our policy commitments and demonstrate that North Kesteven District Council is committed to providing services which operate within the earth's natural boundaries.

Embedding environmental protection and enhancement

1. To ensure that decision makers have the information they need to make environmentally conscious decisions, and take the commitments in this policy into account, every report put forward for approval must answer the question 'Has this report been written according to the corporate environment policy?'

Empowering our staff and communities

2. We understand the authority is in a position to empower people to take action. Residents, communities, and businesses are to be supported to understand how a healthy natural environment supports prosperity, and to access support and funding to take action.

Research and best practice

3. To ensure ambitious action can be taken, all efforts are to be made to ensure decisions are based on evidence and expertise.
4. The best available information and range of options should always be provided to inform decision making.

The Built Environment

5. Where council homes are 'off-grid' low carbon heating options are to be installed, and options pursued to ensure gas boilers in all new council homes and buildings within our direct control will not be installed from 2025.
6. Opportunities to improve council home standards and the development of a low emissions specifications for our non-housing capital projects should be pursued.
7. Work with our partners to improve local planning so it facilitates our ambitions is to be supported and continue.
8. When government funding is available for energy and thermal efficiency measures and low carbon technologies access to it should be facilitated to maximise existing building upgrades.

Energy and water

9. To meet our net zero CO₂ emissions target energy, cooling, heating and hot water are to be managed efficiently, and products with low energy and water consumption should be favoured.
10. To take immediate action to reduce emissions and support renewable energy generation, certified 100% renewable electricity should be purchased for all council buildings.

11. To enable us to measure the council's emissions and monitor the effectiveness of activities to reduce them, our contractors are expected to provide accurate energy and fuel consumption, at least annually, and work with us and independently to reduce the emissions from service delivery.
12. Renewable and low carbon energy generation projects form an essential part of our net zero emissions target and opportunities, both stand alone and opportunistic projects, are to be actively sought.
13. Fresh and waste water require energy intensive processes, therefore water efficiency is to be considered during routine maintenance and replacement, and when designing new buildings.
14. Opportunities to raise awareness of the environmental impacts of water use and importance of water efficiency should be acted upon, with the campaigns and messages of partners, e.g. water suppliers, supported.

Transport

15. Road mileage by colleagues and contractors to deliver our services is to be monitored and minimisation measures should be put in place during service and project design and delivery.
16. Flexible working arrangements for colleagues alongside support to use sustainable travel options for business and commuting are to be facilitated.
17. Service delivery is to be designed and regularly reviewed so as to use the most sustainable and efficient modes of transport to deliver council business.
18. Colleagues are to be encouraged to use, and supported to transition, to low emissions travel options.
19. Low emissions options appraisals are to be undertaken for every new council vehicle purchase.
20. Vehicles on council business should never idle unnecessarily when stationary, in accordance with the Highway Code.
21. Active travel should be promoted with our partners, and opportunities taken to improve the transport options available in the district.

The natural environment

22. Council land should be managed to improve interconnected multifunctional urban and rural green infrastructure, reverse biodiversity loss and store carbon emissions.
23. Expert advice and external partnership working should be sought to improve the management of land in the district.

Waste, recycling and raw natural materials

24. Separate recycling bins and waste bins should be made available in all council buildings.
25. Unwanted reusable items are to be offered to others before being disposed of or recycled.
26. The necessity of all purchases and acquisitions should be considered to reduce the amount of raw natural materials used and items that will need to be disposed of at the end of their life.
27. Renting/sharing should be considered where possible before purchasing.
28. Recycled and recyclable products should be favoured.
29. The procurement of single use plastics and plastic is to be avoided.
30. Licensed and appropriate organisations are to be used to dispose of, and recycle, unwanted items.
31. As a member of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership, work to reduce waste production, and increase reuse and recycling by residents is to be supported.

Economy and Finance

- 32. Investment in fossil fuels is to be avoided and our financial portfolio, policies and strategies are to be regularly reviewed.
- 33. Investment options which support positive environmental outcomes should be favoured.
- 34. Opportunities that support the growth of the green economy should be pursued.

Adaptation and Resilience to the effects of climate change

- 35. Assessments of how extreme weather events affect existing service delivery are to be undertaken.
- 36. All new council developments should be designed to minimise hard surfaces and maximise permeable surfaces.
- 37. Our land is to be managed to support residents, and the ecosystems services they provide, to be more resilient to climate change.
- 38. When reviews of our new build standard are undertaken measures to make homes more resilient to extreme weather are to be included.
- 39. Opportunities to encourage all land owners, from gardeners to farmers to improve land use and land use change so it provides the services that support humans and nature to be more resilient to the effects of climate change should be taken.

Maintenance and Cleaning

- 40. High levels of maintenance, regular servicing, and the quick rectification of issues/faults should be standard practice for all buildings, fleet vehicles, and equipment.
- 41. The options to use the most environmentally friendly materials should be considered during maintenance and refurbishments.
- 42. Environmentally friendly cleaning products should be favoured.

Application of this policy

To ensure that this policy is applied we will promote it internally through colleague communication channels and events, member briefings etc. Each year we will assess application and progress made under each of its provisions and adherence to the expected behaviours and activities. This will be reported annually alongside progress towards our net-zero emissions targets and delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan.



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