

East Cambridgeshire District Council Environment Policy 2024

The Policy

At East Cambridgeshire District Council, we recognise that we can affect the environment through:

- the services we provide and how we deliver them
- our policies
- our enforcement of laws and regulations
- the choices we make when buying goods or commissioning services and
- our role as a community leader

The Council is committed to act on urgent environmental issues facing the district and the wider world, especially the climate change emergency and biodiversity crisis we face, locally and globally, as well as the increasing risk of severe water-related impacts that could affect East Cambridgeshire in future years (namely, a lack of supply in summer and flooding in winter).

We recognise our role as a community leader, and we are committed to supporting you as we all come together to do our bit to tackle climate change, help bring back nature and adapt to an uncertain world.

In addition to fulfilling our statutory environmental responsibilities and complying with all legal and other requirements, including any voluntary commitments, we will use our powers and influence to further protect and improve the environment, challenging ourselves to make continual improvements in our performance.

We will:

- update every four years our Climate and Nature Strategy, within which we will set out, amongst other matters, our ambitions towards achieving 'net zero' carbon emissions.
- publish annually our Climate and Nature Monitoring Report and Action Plan, setting out clearly what we have achieved in the previous year, any challenges we faced, and our latest set of Top 20 Actions for the coming year. It will also report on the latest carbon footprint data, for the Council, the district as a whole and for Cambridgeshire as a whole.
- seek to reach consensus with Cambridgeshire local authorities on a shared evidence base and the most effective actions for the county to reduce its emissions deeply and quickly, together with collectively agreeing a target year for net zero emissions in the county, and what resources, skills and experience can we share with each other.

As an organisation, we want to reduce our actual emissions, not buy 'credits' to offset our emissions. On that basis we will primarily use 'location based' reporting of our emissions, not 'market based' reporting. We will progressively improve our reporting of emissions, by bringing in as many 'scope 3' (indirect) emission as is practical to do so, such as the emissions arising from the goods and services we buy.

Working with partners, we will develop our understanding of the risks presented by climate change and ensure our services and infrastructure (such as our water management and flood prevention capacity) are adapted to protect the district and its residents. In doing so, we will ensure that it is delivered in a just and fair way, meaning no community or group is left behind as we adapt to a changing climate.

We will prevent or minimise pollution to air, water and land (including noise pollution, litter, fly tipping and the impacts of car travel) and work to ensure that air quality in East Cambridgeshire meets all legal limits on air pollution levels.

We are committed to protecting and enhancing the quality, extent and accessibility of East Cambridgeshire's 'green infrastructure' (open spaces, trees, waterways and natural environment) for people and for nature, and we will use the improvement of green infrastructure to help the district adapt to climate change and reduce carbon emissions.

We will

- contribute to the creation of a sustainable built environment through the planning process and achieve a high level of sustainability in our own development projects.
- act as a role model, minimising energy and water demand across our estate and use all resources efficiently to reduce the environmental impacts of their consumption by our services and activities. This will include increasing use of renewable and low carbon energy, including through the installation of projects within our own estate.
- take even more steps to minimise waste and the impact of its disposal by applying the 'waste hierarchy': maximising waste reduction, reuse, recycling or composting and energy recovery to minimise the amount sent to landfill.
- promote a circular economy, and actively participate where we can.

Throughout the Council we will strengthen the culture of environmental awareness, including through the provision of training (including carbon literacy training available to all staff) and ensuring that staff are aware of their role in implementing this policy. As part of that culture, the senior management team and political leadership will take advantage of their leadership roles and capabilities, supporting and encouraging change and awareness throughout the organisation. At the same time, 'bottom up' support and ideas will be provided by the Council's cross-department staff Green Team.

A Council Member will continue to be designated as the 'Natural Environment and Climate Change Member Champion', overseeing the corporate implementation of this policy and help promote it within, and beyond, the organisation.

Implementing the policy

All staff are expected to implement this policy within the Council wherever it relates to their work. Managers are expected to ensure it is implemented as relevant and appropriate.

We recognise the importance of effective communication in delivering this policy, as well as the potential of participation and dialogue to enhance progress.

We will

- communicate this policy within the Council and to our external stakeholders, enabling our staff and others to fulfil their role in delivering it by providing information and other support.
- encourage dialogue within the Council and with our stakeholders to foster debate, learning and greater environmental improvement. This will include the public, businesses, education and community organisations, and regulators.
- encourage the public, schools and partners to act too, through environmental information, advice and services.

Accountability

This Policy has been approved by the Finance and Assets Committee (September 2024). The Council will publicise its performance and progress each year, in its annual Climate and Nature Monitoring Report and Action Plan, to enable the people of East Cambridgeshire to hold us to account.