

TITLE: Climate and Nature Monitoring Report and Action Plan 2026

Committee: Finance and Assets

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Author: Climate Change and Natural Environment Manager

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Contact officer:

Richard Kay, Climate Change and Natural Environment Manager

richard.kay@eastcambs.gov.uk, 01353 665555, Room 12, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. To provide an update on our climate and nature activities over the past 12 months and to agree a set of activities for the coming year.

Recommendations

2. Members are requested to
 - (i) Approve the Climate and Nature Action Plan and Monitoring Report 2026, which incorporates the Climate and Nature Top 20 Actions for 2026/27 (Appendix A)

Background/Options

3. On 27 June 2024 this Committee approved a *Climate and Nature Strategy 2024-28*. The Strategy focuses on three themes:
 - Bring Back Nature
 - Reducing our Carbon Emissions
 - Adapting to a Changing Climate
4. Each theme has a set of Priorities and Goals By 2028, with the entire strategy set out on a single 'A3 poster' rather than a lengthy document. The poster is available here:
<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-11/Climate%20and%20Nature%20Strategy%202024-2028%20-%20adopted%20June%202024.pdf>
5. This agenda item provides a review of performance towards the targets in the Strategy, with a particular focus on the past 12 months. The agenda item also considers our performance against the 'Top 20 Actions' we set in June 2025, as well as proposals for a new set of Top 20 Actions for the coming 12 months.

Performance Review for June 2025-June 2026

6. In summary, it has largely been a mixed/positive year in progressing the strategy and the planned actions.

7. Whilst undoubtedly positive in terms of on-the-ground impact, it is fair to say that implementing our statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) duties through the planning system continues to be a considerable resource effort for the team, to the degree that it dominates the work of the 2FTE ecologists. This past year, BNG has also drawn in a considerable proportion of the 0.6FTE manager role due to such senior assistance needed to deal with complex and contentious BNG applications; appeals relating to BNG; numerous s106 agreements requiring BNG clauses; and major development proposals (such as Kingsway solar farm) and their approach to BNG. All of this effort drives considerable gains for nature recovery via new development, because BNG is a very powerful tool to ensure all developers deliver meaningful gains for nature. That said, we have to be mindful that it limits the capacity of the service area to undertake non-statutory duties, which primarily are what the Top 20 actions are.
8. Nevertheless, and away from BNG, a summary of the highlights of the past year are as follows.
9. Many of our top 20 actions for the year were either completed or predominantly completed. This included:
 - Completed preparation of twenty habitat management plans for twenty public open spaces the council manages, thereby establishing a clear medium-term plan for how such spaces will remain high-quality public spaces for people, but also strengthen their biodiversity richness.
 - Successfully award 100 more orchard trees to local communities, further strengthening existing community orchards across the district. For details of this scheme, and previous orchard tree awards, see <https://eastcambs.gov.uk/services/climate-change-and-nature/bring-back-nature/community-orchards-and-coronation-oaks>
 - Making progress on delivering biodiversity enhancements as part of the Lake View Bereavement Centre (the site is a designated county wildlife site).
 - Successfully established a new staff volunteering programme, including litter picking at Lake View and bulb planting in Ely. Now established, we are hoping to build up the programme to provide more opportunities for nature-related staff volunteering.
 - Almost completed the Arbour Square development, incorporating solar panels, insulation measures, air source heat pumps and electric car charging points, with the properties completed so far achieving EPC A rating.
 - A further 10% reduction in water consumption at The Grange.
 - Prepared a medium-term strategy entitled 'Pathway to Net Zero' setting out in more detail how we will achieve net zero as a council.
10. In addition to the Top 20 Actions of the past 12 months, year one of the Warm Homes programme, done collaboratively across Cambridgeshire under the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP), has been successfully commenced, delivering major energy retrofit measures to private residential properties where residents meet eligibility requirements. In East Cambridgeshire, 14 homes received works over 2025/26, with a typical cost of £15,000 - 20,000. Works

usually involve solar panels, battery, air source heat pumps and insulation (or a combination of some of those). Further homes received similar grant support under the Eco4 arrangements, albeit that scheme closed nationally from April 2026.

11. Anecdotally, we've also started to see excellent results from the 'Net Zero Villages' programme. Whilst much of the effort on this programme took place in 2024/25 (the bidding, awarding and contracting process), the actual installation and preliminary review of results have taken place in 2025/26. As a reminder, the Net Zero Villages programme culminated in ten village halls (or similar) across the district being awarded a collective £150,000 for solar panels, batteries and insulation, helping our vital community facilities reduce their running costs and their carbon emissions. Initial results are showing fantastic savings, some with payback for the investment in as little as five years or so. We think there is an opportunity to review this information more thoroughly, establish case studies and use the information to demonstrate to others what can be done. This forms a proposed action for 2026/27 and potentially might result in some form of grant scheme being set up (subject to the findings of the investigation and committee consideration of any such grant scheme terms, with funding coming from savings and income made by the service area, rather than any new budget).
12. However, it is disappointing to report that over the past year, several of our Top 20 actions for the year were not as successful as hoped (full details of these projects are in the attached Monitoring Report at appendix A). Whilst some of these were for reasons beyond our control (such as upcoming Government legislative changes meaning the production of developer guides would sensibly await such changes before publication), other factors included:
 - Unexpected delays on land transfers (preventing Bottisham Woods progressing).
 - Unable to implement measures in our public toilets to reduce water consumption.
 - Delays to implement measures to reduce water consumption of the Jubilee Fountain.
 - Challenges getting data or other promotional activity from Anglian Water to assist any public water reduction campaigns.

Progress towards our 'Goals by 2028'

13. Of the three themes in our 2024-28 strategy (see earlier link for details), we have made the greatest progress towards the 'Bring Back Nature' theme, with all four goals on track. For example, our Pride of Place grant programme (2023-25) has delivered significant gains across our district; and we have finalised preparation of new wildlife-friendly management plans for twenty of our own parks and open spaces.
14. The second theme of 'Reducing our Carbon emissions' is partially on track, with the elements relating to our own emissions on track to meet targets, but elements relating to reducing emissions across East Cambridgeshire as a whole are not on track. This latter element is, of course, extremely challenging for a council to influence, not helped by the steady decline in public opinion towards tackling climate

change. Nationally, since 2021, less people are concerned and more people are not concerned about climate change, and the perception that a transition to net zero will be negative (rather than positive) is an increasing majority public opinion.

15. Turning to our third theme of ‘adapting to climate change’, we have made some progress towards our Goals by 2028, but there is significant work to do to keep our targets on track. One of the four goals we set in 2024 for this theme is no longer achievable because we are not presently proposing to update our Local Plan (for reasons as agreed at Full Council meeting of 25 February 2025).

Top 20 Actions for June 2026-June 2027

16. Presented at section 5 of Appendix A is a new set of Top 20 Actions proposed for the coming year. Such actions have been established based on aiming to meet the Goals by 2028 in our main Strategy, as well as taking account of the latest opportunities and resources available.

17. Once again, the actions are a mix of nature, climate change and water-related.

Net Zero Audit

18. The council's Audit Committee agreed it would be beneficial that, as part of its work programme for the year, an audit be undertaken seeking assurance over the plans for reaching the council's net zero targets and the outcomes delivered from climate change-related expenditure. Whilst the outcome of that audit has not yet been reported to the Audit Committee, the audit work has been completed, and it is pleasing to note that, by way of headline, no significant issues in need of attention have been raised.

Arguments/Conclusions

19. The proposals are considered ambitious, achievable and affordable. They engage across all communities and all age groups. Collectively, they should help achieve the Council's priority of a *Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire*.

Additional Implications Assessment

20. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications No	Legal Implications Yes	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) Yes	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

Legal implications

21. The Council has no direct statutory responsibility to mitigate climate change. However, it does have a statutory responsibility via the Natural Environment and

Rural Communities Act 2006 to “[further] the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in England through the exercise of [its] functions” (s40(A1)) and “determine such policies and specific objectives as it considers appropriate for taking action” (s40(1A)(a)) to meet that duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

22. The Act (s40/s40A) also requires a number of reports to be published setting out how it will achieve the above duty.

23. The projects as reported in this agenda item will assist in meeting the above requirements and are considered entirely compatible with what the statutory duty seeks.

Carbon Impact Assessment

24. The assessment of the impact of the recommendations from a carbon impact perspective has been limited to those actions within the recommendations which are not agreed through a separate Council consideration.

25. Further, any proposals in the recommendations which are ‘target setting’ or encouraging others to take action to reduce carbon emissions do not score positively or negatively in the CIA for this agenda item because, directly, they will not reduce or increase carbon emissions.

26. The scope of the CIA for this agenda item is therefore limited to those actions to be taken directly by the Council, and which are not to be subject to a separate Council decision-making process.

27. Consequently, the positive or negative implications are, directly, somewhat negligible.

28. However, indirectly, it is anticipated that approving the actions for the coming year will consequently lead to (or help lead to) such actions being implemented, which in turn should lead to considerable net positive carbon emission savings, either directly for this council or directly for residents or organisations

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Climate and Nature Action Plan and Monitoring Report, June 2026

Background documents

Climate and Nature Strategy 2024 to 2028, East Cambridgeshire District Council, June 2024

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Climate and Nature Action Plan and Monitoring
Report

June 2026

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1. Highlights Report (June 2026)

Achievements

- 1.1. East Cambridgeshire District Council remains committed to tackling climate change and bringing back nature to East Cambridgeshire. It is pleased to publish this annual report of our activities in the past year. In summary, the highlights from 2025-26 for this 2026 annual report are as follows.
- 1.2. Helping to **Bring Back Nature** to East Cambridgeshire, the Council has:
 - Prepared habitat management plans for 20 public open spaces that it looks after, helping to make such areas not only great for people but also for wildlife.
 - Given away another 100 orchard trees to communities across the district. That means since winter 21/22, we have given away 400 orchard trees and helped create 30 new community orchards.
 - Implemented wildlife improvements as part of the new Lake View Bereavement Centre, including native tree planting (some of which are orchard trees), wildflower-rich meadow seeding and creation of log piles for insects. Further improvements underway this summer.
- 1.3. Helping to **tackle climate change**, this year the Council has:
 - Installed solar panels on the new development built by Palace Green Homes at Arbour Square, Ely.
 - Published a detailed plan of action for how the council will reduce its own emissions ('Pathway to Net Zero').
- 1.4. Helping the Council, our local residents and our communities **adapt to a changing climate**, the Council has:
 - Reduced its own water consumption by a further 10% in its main office The Grange (following a 10% reduction the previous year).
 - Helped progress the concept of a network of agricultural reservoirs across the district.
- 1.5. Our latest 'carbon footprint' (carbon emissions) data for the Council, as an organisation, is 3,182 tonnes CO₂e (period 2024-25). Full details on our emissions were reported in November 2025, and are available below:
<https://eastcambbs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-02/Carbon%20Audit%20Digital%20Report%20%28published%29.pdf>
- 1.6. The main challenge we faced in 2025/26 was resourcing all of the actions we wanted to achieve, especially with the high resources needed to implement statutory Biodiversity Net Gain in the planning system.
- 1.7. This Monitoring Report provides further details on the matters summarised above.

Top 20 Actions for 2026-27

- 1.8. For the coming 12 months (June 2026-May 2027), we have set ourselves a **new set of 'Top 20' actions**, the seventh year in a row to do so.
- 1.9. Further details are set out in section 5 of this Monitoring Report.

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- 2.11. **Over winter 2025/26** we had another successful round of the giveaways with a further 100 orchard trees given out to parish councils and community groups within the district, mainly to increase the size of the successful orchards created in 2021 or 2022 (the majority of which have flourished in the three or four years since planting), but also created three new orchards.
- 2.12. The free orchard trees we give away are sourced from the [East of England Apples and Orchard Project](#) [external link], a local charity that promotes the planting of local orchard fruit varieties and the preservation of orchards in the East of England.
- 2.13. Helping create and expand local orchards has been a great success. Orchards are classed as 'priority habitats' due to their high importance for biodiversity and their cultural value. The trees, as well as the grass that surround them, also help lock away carbon dioxide.



Figure 1: St Andrew's Churchyard, Witchford, received 6 fruit trees in winter 2021/22. Those trees produced edible fruit in summer 2025. In January 2026, the Church received a further four trees (three plum and one apple) as part of our winter 2025/26 campaign.



Figure 2: A newly planted (Jan 2026) orchard tree, forming part of a new orchard in Brinkley. Photo taken April 2026 with tree in blossom.

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Nature related self-help guides for developers

Action 5 (25/26): deliver high quality nature friendly development by helping planners and developers cut through the complicated nature legislation with a series of self-help guides

- 2.14. This action was put on hold because government announced several significant changes to the planning and natural environment system mid-year, including wide ranging technical changes to Biodiversity Net Gain. Government is yet to fully publish and implement these changes but is expected to do so by 31 July 2026. Once these changes are published, we will proceed with this action.

Staff Volunteering

Action 6 (25/26): establish a portfolio of environment staff volunteering day options (1 day per year per staff member):

- 2.15. The council launched its new volunteering policy in May 2025. Since then, many staff have taken the opportunity to take up to 1 day a year to undertake a wide variety of local volunteering opportunities.
- 2.16. To assist staff to find an opportunity and at the same time help Bring Back Nature to East Cambridgeshire, three volunteering opportunities have taken place over the past year. Two litter picking events took place at the emerging Lake View Bereavement Centre. The site is a county wildlife site, and litter can cause considerable harm to wildlife. A further volunteering opportunity took place on Nutholt Lane, adjacent to the Atrium Gym, where litter picking, bulb planting and bird boxes were erected. A beautiful daffodil display took place as a result this spring.
- 2.17. We are hoping to build on these successes by identifying further opportunities for nature-related volunteering, including via the management plans published under Action 1 (above).



Figure 3: Litter pick volunteers at Lake View, March 2026

Social Media Campaign

Action 7 (25/26): establish a Bring Back Nature social media campaign.

- 2.18. This action has been somewhat more limited in extent than hoped, with a few social media posts on issues such as looking after hedgehogs. Other issues have taken social media priority, such as Local Government reorganisation and the new recycling arrangements. We think there remains

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scope to increase social media messaging on nature related matters, subject to resources and competing corporate demands.

Bottisham Woods

Action 8 (25/26): deliver a publicly accessible new woodland in Bottisham.

- 2.19. Unfortunately, this project has been delayed because the transfer of the land to the Council is, at the time of writing, still not completed. The transfer is linked to the transfer of the wider open space land associated with the new housing development south of Bottisham. It is anticipated imminently, and we will then progress delivery of a management plan for the site. The site will include interactive natural play, whilst leaving areas for biodiversity enhancements.

Duck and Swan Poster

Action 9 (25/26): family friendly information at Riverside in Ely on what to feed local ducks and swans

- 2.20. In September 2025, we installed a new poster at the Riverside in Ely, helping visitors choose the right foods to feed ducks.
- 2.21. Separately, sadly Ely was hit by a bird flu outbreak in November 2025. Bird flu can have a devastating effect on local wild duck, geese and swan populations. To quickly raise awareness, we prepared and circulated a warning poster, including advising our own parks and open spaces team. The outbreak was successfully contained and measures lifted in February 2026.
- 2.22. Both posters are below, and the duck feeding poster is also available to download via <https://eastcambs.gov.uk/services/climate-change-and-nature/bring-back-nature/help-us-bring-back-nature>



Figure 4: various posters to support the health of ducks, swans and other birds

Lake View Bereavement Centre

Action 10 (25/26): commence biodiversity enhancements as part of the bereavement centre development, including the creation of a wildflower meadow.

- 2.23. The Lake View Bereavement Centre continues to progress through its construction programme, with opening anticipated in early Autumn.
- 2.24. As part of the approved development, a suite of biodiversity enhancements has been integrated into the landscape design to strengthen ecological value, support native species, and contribute to long-term habitat resilience.

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- 2.25. Over the past 12 months, the project team has worked closely with an appointed ecological consultancy to ensure that all planting, habitat creation and land management decisions align with best practice and local biodiversity priorities.
- 2.26. Completed Biodiversity Enhancements (2025/26) include:
- Collaboration with ecological specialists - Ongoing ecological oversight has ensured that all planting proposals are fully compliant with native-species requirements and reflect local habitat character
 - Commitment to native planting - All soft-landscaping elements delivered to date use exclusively native species, supporting pollinators, birds and invertebrates
 - Protection and reinstatement of native fruit trees - Particular attention has been given to reintroducing locally significant fruit tree varieties, including those at risk of being lost such as Morley's. These have been incorporated into the planting schedule to preserve local genetic heritage
 - Initial meadow establishment - Seeding has commenced across the designated meadow area to ensure early establishment of a wildflower-rich meadow, forming a key biodiversity asset within the site
 - Log piles and other micro-habitat structures are located around the site – habitat recreation in line with County Wildlife status priorities of sand dune including the seed bank recapping the newly positioned dune, tree stumps replanted – some even regrowing. All trees that have been felled remain on site.
- 2.27. Upcoming Biodiversity Enhancement Works (Pre-Opening) includes:
- Continuation of meadow development - Follow-up seeding, aftercare and seasonal management will continue to support successful germination and long-term meadow health
 - Installation of habitat features - Bird boxes, bat boxes, log piles and other micro-habitat structures will be installed to enhance nesting and foraging opportunities
 - Completion of native hedgerow and shrub planting - Additional hedgerow sections and understorey planting will be completed to strengthen ecological connectivity across the site
 - Swale planting – the plantation of rushes from the lake edge into the swale to self-populate
 - Continuation of log piles as micro-habitat structures

3. Reducing our Carbon Emissions

New waste and recycling service set up

Action 11 (25/26): implement new waste and recycling collection service for residents from June 2026, which will have a positive impact on our district's carbon emissions.

- 3.1. The council is on track to commence the new waste and recycling service from June 2026. Whilst it is too early at this stage, we will monitor closely the impact of the changes, including on the district council's carbon emissions.
- 3.2. For the latest information on the updated service from 1 June, please visit our webpages at <https://eastcamb.gov.uk/services/services/waste-and-recycling> .



Figure 5: Illustration of the new black bin and food waste bins that have been delivered to residents, ready for the 1 June 2026 new service

Reduce our energy bills in our public conveniences

Action 12 (25/26): seek to reduce our energy bills by a third for our public conveniences, targeting a saving of £5,000 per annum and at least 3 tonnes CO2e which is equivalent to about 10 return flights to Barcelona from London.

- 3.3. This action has proved challenging, albeit we almost met our targets.
- 3.4. The original expectation was that through a series of measures (adjusting heating controls, new efficient taps and/or installation of solar panels where possible) a reduction by a third was deliverable. However, we have made limited progress on implementing such measures, other than trialling of new hands-free taps with 'on demand' heating of hot water at the Palace Green public conveniences in winter 2025/26. We have commenced monitoring of that site to see if any reduction in electricity use arises.
- 3.5. The council has also agreed to dispose of the Littleport public conveniences, meaning no measures to reduce their efficiency have been taken forward prior to disposal.
- 3.6. However, due to the decarbonisation of the national grid and the benefit of a substantially reduced unit price electricity contract, we did make significant savings on our energy bills and emissions. Opportunities to reduce the running costs (and emissions arising) from our remaining public toilets clearly still exist. We will seek to explore such opportunities over 2026/27.
- 3.7. Overall, our electricity usage in our public toilets in 2025/26 (compared with 2024/25) reduced by 4.7%, our energy bills reduced by 42% or £8,166 and our carbon emissions reduced by 18.6% or 2.1 tonnes CO2e.



Figure 6: new hands-free taps, with on demand heating, installed at Palace Green toilets, Ely

Rooftop solar

Action 13 (25/26): actively promote the benefits of rooftop solar panels, costs and savings likely to be achieved, issues to look out for and to help residents with grants that may be available.

- 3.8. We have continued to actively engage with residents, especially targeting those most in need and assisting them with access to available grants and support. Support has been given by our dedicated Retrofit Officer in the Climate and Nature service, as well as wider support from our housing service for those in particular need (such as debt). We have continued to work with our partners across Cambridgeshire to keep our Action on Energy Cambridgeshire website updated (see <https://www.actiononenergycambs.org/>) as well as our own website.
- 3.9. We think we can do more to progress encouragement of solar panel deployment, especially for the 'able to pay' market, by giving confidence to residents that it is a worthwhile and cost-effective action to take for many, especially those with c£5-10,000 in available savings. We propose to take more action on this in the coming 12 months, as well as consider promotion of the new small-scale 'plug-in' solar panels due to hit the market in summer 2026 and which are intended to have a much lower price point (c£400-500).

Pathway to Net Zero

Action 14 (25/26): prepare, by November 2025, a detailed step by step plan of how we will become a net zero council.

- 3.10. A [Pathway to Net Zero report](#) was approved by the Council in November 2025, providing a detailed action plan of how we will aim to meet all our emission targets.

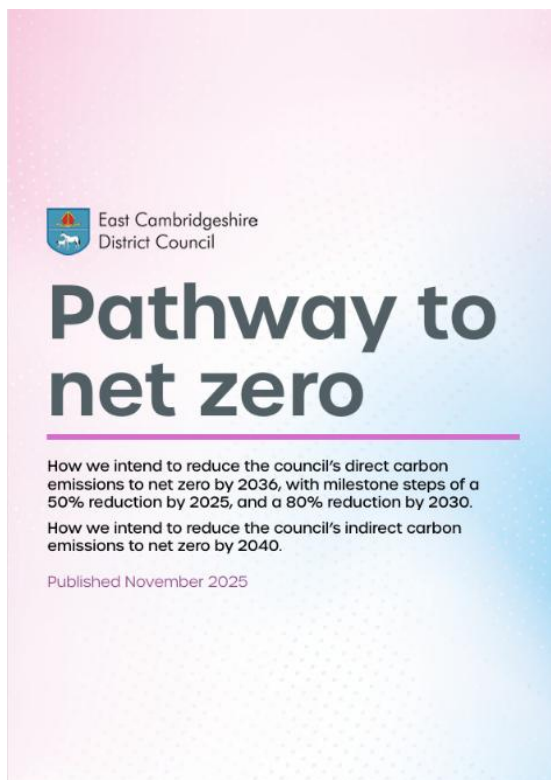


Figure 7 Approved Pathway to Net Zero Report, November 2025 available at [Pathway to Net Zero report](#)

Smart Meters

Action 15 (25/26): Let's get smart: promoting the benefits of smart meters, and how to get the most out of them.

- 3.11. This action was linked with Action 13, and again less progress than hoped has been achieved during the year. Nevertheless, we have updated our webpage to provide advice on the benefits of smart meters and intend to progress greater promotion during 2026/27.

Water reduction at The Grange

Action 16 (25/26): further reduce our water use in the council's main office (The Grange) by 10% this would save an estimated 100,000 litres or 500 large baths.

- 3.12. Across The Grange, we achieved a further reduction in water use by 10.3% compared with 2024/25, thus meeting our target.
- 3.13. We still believe there are opportunities for further reductions, because some parts of The Grange appear to have increased water use over 2025/26, whilst others reduced (with a net reduction overall). A further 10% reduction appears feasible, meaning a 30% reduction overall compared with 2023/24.

Solar Panels at Arbour Square Development

Action 17 (25/26): Palace Green Homes to install PV panels on all 27 new homes at Arbour Square, Ely development.

- 3.14. Arbour Square is due to complete all 27 new homes by the end of July 2026. At the time of writing, 23 of the 27 homes have their PV solar panels installed on the newly built property (remaining properties to follow shortly). The development also benefits from air source heat pumps (ASHP) and electric vehicle charging points. To date, all properties have achieved an EPC A rating.



Figure 8: new development at Arbour Square, with integrated solar panels



Figure 9: new development at Arbour Sq, with charge point, ASHP (middle of photograph) and solar panels

4. Adapting to a Changing Climate

Sustainable water management

Action 18 (25/26): promote sustainable water management, both small scale (for example water butts) and larger scale (for example farmer reservoirs).

- 4.1. For larger scale water management, the council has been a lead player promoting the concept of a set of farmer-led local reservoirs across East Cambridgeshire, which could feed into the local water network at times of need. This would provide much needed relief to the public water supplies and a diversification income to farm landowners. The concept continues to be investigated, with interest from a wide range of stakeholders. We'll progress the concept further over 2026/27.
- 4.2. For smaller scale domestic measures, we have updated our webpages to provide more information on ways to save water, as well being more transparent on how the council itself uses water (<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/services/climate-change-and-nature/adapting-changing-climate/water-and-flooding>).
- 4.3. We've engaged with Anglian Water on numerous occasions, particularly (the intention was) to take advantage of their data collected through the use of water meters. Via such data, we then intended to target meaningful actions and monitor progress. Unfortunately, Anglian Water were unable to provide any such data and concentrated their efforts on simply getting as many households on water meters as possible (much of East Cambridgeshire now is on a meter). Anglian Water were unable to support any direct campaigning, data analysis or additional water reduction measures bespoke to East Cambridgeshire. We have not, therefore, progressed this action as far as we would have liked.

Improve the water efficiency of the Jubilee Gardens Fountain

Action 19 (25/26): manage the water efficiency of the Jubilee Garden fountain, whilst retaining it as a water feature, and seeking to save up to £1,000 in water usage costs.

- 4.4. The Jubilee Gardens fountain is a surprisingly large consumer of water. Its consumption comes through water it loses, primarily we believe through spray loss via breeze/wind. As such, water is not being recycled through its underground tank and instead is blowing on to the nearby grass. As set out on the webpage below, the fountain is the fourth highest consumer of water across the Council's estate, similar to the amount of water used at The Grange, and consumes more than some of our public conveniences.
<https://eastcambs.gov.uk/services/climate-change-and-nature/adapting-changing-climate/water-and-flooding/reducing-our-own>
- 4.5. Turning the fountain off, or redesigning it to reduce spray loss, was deemed not appropriate for the time being, therefore a compromise solution of fitting a timer in March 2026 means the fountain should now be off overnight and operate only during the daytime. This measure means the fountain is still likely to remain a high consumer of water, but hopefully less than in recent years. We will continue to monitor.

Improve water efficiency in the public conveniences

Action 20 (25/26): commence a programme to reduce water use in our public conveniences, a 10% reduction would save over 400,000 litres which is the equivalent to 2,500 large baths, saving £2,000 annually.

- 4.6. Unfortunately, we have not been successful with this action. Our water consumption across our six public conveniences went up slightly (0.3% increase), thus not meeting our target of a 10% reduction.
- 4.7. The primary consumption of water at the public conveniences is through toilet flushing, and it is presently determined that measures are not to be taken forward to reduce the volume of water via flushing. There is a concern that if less water is used in a flush, that the drainage system may block more frequently.

5. New Top 20 Actions for 2026/27

Introduction

- 5.1. Each June, the Council publishes a new set of Top 20 Actions for the coming year in respect of climate change and the natural environment.
- 5.2. For 2026/27, we follow the same theme as previous years with actions across climate change, adaptation, the natural environment and water.

Natural Environment

Note: Actions 1 to 7 are taken from a selection of the new open space management plans prepared by the council and the Wildlife Trust over 2025/2026. Such management plans have lots of actions, albeit for implementation over several years. Below is a selection we intend to deliver in the next 12 months, though we will aim to complete several more actions from the management plans.

Action 1: Beechcroft Open Space, Brinkley - adjust where and when the grass is cut in order to increase the size of the meadow area and the richness and abundance of native wild species within it

Action 2: Carter's Pit, Burwell – commence removal of non-native Snowberry and Honesty to provide more space for native plants and to limit their future spread. Organise staff volunteer day to assist in this action.

Action 3: Celandine View Open Space, Soham – enhance the flower-rich meadow in the eastern half of the site through adjusting cutting timing and collecting of cuttings.

Action 4: Ely Milking Common – maintain, and enhance where possible, the bat hibernaculum and the bug hotels, and assist with monitoring of species recorded.

Action 5: Fisherman's Bank, Littleport - Plant a selection of small flowering and fruiting trees and shrubs to the north and south of the playground.

Action 6: Kings Avenue, Ely - implement specific conservation measures to benefit hedgehogs.

Action 7: Lime Kilns, Isleham – protect and preserve the integrity of the Lime Kilns by removing sycamore saplings and walnut seedlings, cut back the Ivy and clear the scrub on the kiln vent. Engage with the local community, and provide a new information board.

Action 8: Heaton Drive nature rich area - following a recent joint project by Palace Green Homes and the Council to create a new nature rich area off Heaton Drive (Ely), the two partners will work together to further enhance and expand the area by June 2027, for the benefit of wildlife and the local community.

Climate Change and Adaptation

Action 9: Non-Domestic Energy Assessor - to train up a staff member to become a qualified Non-Domestic Energy Assessor (NDEA) and thereafter seek to establish a free or significantly discounted energy assessment service to small scale businesses and community groups.

Action 10: Energy price cap advice - Undertake energy efficiency campaigns around each quarterly energy price cap announcement, offering simple advice and tips to reduce energy bills or links to advice for those most vulnerable to energy price shocks. For the 'able to pay' market, our advice will include estimated cost benefits of installing more substantial measures, such as rooftop solar panels.

Action 11: Net Zero Villages appraisal and extension - we will publish a report on the successes of our 2024/25 Net Zero Villages project, highlighting case studies that other local community groups and businesses could learn from to help bring down their own energy bills.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - APPENDIX 1

Subject to that investigation, we may commence a further round of Net Zero Villages grants, possibly offering around 50% of the cost of installing solar panels and batteries.

Action 12: Plug-in solar panels - once available on the market (due summer 2026), we will launch a promotional and advice campaign on the newly available 'plug-in' solar panels. Such panels may offer residents a low budget opportunity to take advantage of renewable energy technology and help them save money on the energy bills, even for those in the rented sector or with those not wanting or able to commit to a more substantial investment.

Action 13: Lake View Bereavement Centre - We will continue to support the environmentally responsible operation of the soon to be opened Lake View Bereavement Centre, an all-electric crematorium and natural burial ground designed to work in harmony with its surrounding landscape and wildlife setting. During 2026/27 the council will monitor operational energy demands and explore opportunities for future sustainability initiatives, including the potential installation of photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, with the aim of supporting the council's wider commitment towards reducing carbon emissions, supporting biodiversity through sensitive landscape management and native planting, and promoting long-term environmental stewardship.

Action 14: Maximising recycling rate – to closely monitor the new waste collection service (operating from June 2026), seeking to maximise recycling rates as we attempt to achieve a 65% recycling target by 2030 (one of the highest rates in the country).

Action 15: Public convenience solar panels - install solar panels on at least one public convenience, including a battery if appropriate, to complement the on-going revamp of these important public conveniences.

Action 16: Residents energy retrofit engagement - engage with residents that we have previously supported with energy efficiency grant funding schemes to: a) help understand the impact of such measures on individual resident's energy costs and thermal comfort, and how easy residents find using the new technology (such as solar panels and air source heat pumps); and b) use learnings from that engagement to inform future grant funded home energy upgrades, thereby ensuring value for money and resident satisfaction.

Action 17: Risk and Adaptation Plan - commence preparation of Climate and Nature – Risk and Adaptation Plan (a commitment in our 2024-28 Nature and Climate Strategy).

Action 18: Supporting local community groups - work with local community group *SSECAM - Sustainable South East Cambs* to help it deliver its emerging work programme such as: the establishment of a network of volunteer 'nature detectorists' across the Isle of Ely villages; community based hands-on nature recovery work; exploration of community energy projects; and 'local loop' small business support (i.e. local businesses that make products from reclaimed, recycled or surplus materials, or who offer refill stations, rental schemes, and take back programmes).

Water

Action 19: Water quality - work with local volunteer groups and statutory bodies to investigate the water quality and flows in some of our rivers and streams (several of which are internationally important, such as our chalk streams), and specifically to: (a) establish a baseline of data on water quality and flow; and (b) provide recommendations on a how to maintain, and where possible, enhance the water quality and ecology of such streams or rivers. This will be a long term project going beyond 2026/27.

Action 20: Local network of reservoirs - further support the concept of a network of local agricultural reservoirs.