

Norfolk County Council's Environmental Policy

This is Norfolk County Council's new Environmental Policy. It takes as its starting point the Government's own 25-year Plan published in 2018 and is structured to reflect the key environmental concerns embodied in that plan. In addition, it is framed to reflect the increasing importance that climate change has on all aspects of the environment, whether the landscape itself, the species within it, or the rich cultural heritage that occupies it.

This policy reflects the areas that the Council sees as key to protecting and maintaining the health of Norfolk's distinctive environment and its occupants. The Policy itself signposts to overarching activity that spans a range of environmental interactions that the Council is involved with, including those where it already has its own statutory environmental responsibilities.

As reflected in our current six-year business plan – 'Together for Norfolk', we will put at the centre of our efforts, an approach that ensures that the development of Norfolk's economy is socially inclusive, while championing innovative and sustainable development. It will support investment in green jobs and infrastructure, while ensuring that we both protect and enhance the environment.

We will champion resource efficiency in how we conduct our own operations, setting stringent environmental targets, and we will work within the County at large to deliver against the targets set in our Climate Policy. In this we will cooperate with our partners in the region.

We will continue to ensure that the distinctive Norfolk environment is cared for, both for current and future generations, and that we will continue to explore new ways to make our countryside and coast as accessible as possible, whilst respecting the sensitivities around certain natural landscapes and sites. By continuing to operate a proactive and evidence-based approach, we will ensure that a net improvement ('net gain') to biodiversity and habitat creation is the norm.

From now on this Environmental Policy will guide all the Council's future decision-making.

Goals

We fully support the Goals the Government has stated for its Environmental Plan and have used them as the basis for framing this policy. These are:

- Clean air for the population
- Ensuring a clean and plentiful water supply
- Encouraging a thriving plant and wildlife community

- Reducing the risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
- Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Minimising waste
- Managing exposure to chemicals
- Enhancing biosecurity

Policy

In enacting these goals, the supporting key policy aims are:

Using and managing land sustainably

- Creating and embedding in our strategic planning a more holistic approach to address climate change, particularly within the local planning frameworks
- Embedding an 'environmental net gain' principle for development, including housing and infrastructure
- Improving soil health
- Focusing on woodland to maximise its many benefits for the environment and our communities
- Working with key partners to ensure an adequate water supply, including exploring water harvesting initiatives
- Reducing risks from flooding and coastal erosion where possible
 - Expanding the use of natural flood management solutions
 - Putting in place more sustainable drainage systems
 - Working to make 'at-risk' properties more resilient to flooding

Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes

- Protecting and recovering nature
 - Publishing a Norfolk 25-year Environmental Strategy for nature
 - Recognising that Norfolk is losing biodiversity, particularly insect populations. Therefore, a Pollinator Action Plan will be produced as a key element of our Environmental Strategy
- Conserving and enhancing natural beauty
 - Providing support for designated sites, including the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads, and the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natura 2000 sites and species, and County Wildlife Sites
- Respecting nature in how we use water
 - Working to incentivise greater water efficiency, with users, and supporting water companies

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing

- Helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces
 - Promoting the opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing that are available through exposure to the natural environment
- Encouraging children to be close to nature, in and out of school
 - Working with schools to make the most of their green spaces
- Greening our towns and cities
 - Supporting the creation of green infrastructure in our key urban areas
- Planting more trees to improve biodiversity and as a potential mitigation measure for climate change in appropriate locations
- Working with County Farms tenants to move to higher level stewardship and greater biodiversity
- Supporting the community to make sustainable travel choices
 - Working to support alternatives to car travel including promoting sustainable public transport and initiatives that utilise the growing cycling and pedestrian improvements within the County
 - Encouraging sustainable travel on all new developments within the County, through the appropriate planning agreements
 - Helping to develop integrated transport hubs across the County and maximising the opportunities presented through schemes such as Transforming Cities

Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste

- Maximising resource efficiency and minimising environmental impacts at end of life
 - Achieving zero avoidable plastic waste in operations
 - Reducing the impact of waste generally in our operations through working with the supply chain regarding single use products
 - As part of our statutory function, continue to explore opportunities for improving the management of residual waste
 - Working with partners to maximise the opportunities for recycling waste
 - Addressing the impacts that our own use of energy has on the environment in accordance with the council's Climate Strategy.
 - Working with our supply chain wherever possible to reduce the environmental footprint created
- Reducing pollution

- Supporting initiatives that lead to clean air, such as developing new proposals within the forthcoming Local Transport Plan and its supporting strategies

Securing clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans

- Working with key agencies to ensure that our offshore areas and coastline contributes to the network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
 - Focusing on delivering on the statutory duties with respect to the Wash, and North Norfolk European Marine Site

Protecting and improving our global environment

- Reflecting the significance of climate change and the need to both mitigate and adapt, the council has adopted in addition to this Environmental Policy a separate Climate Policy.