

Three Rivers District Council

Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2023-2027

*Three Rivers
'enabling
and inspiring
sustainable
communities'*



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Foreword



Climate change and biodiversity destruction are the defining challenges of our time

Climate change and biodiversity destruction are the defining challenges of our time, posing an undeniable threat to communities, ecosystems, and economies across the world. The council's declaration of a "climate emergency" in 2019 recognised the urgent need to address the problem of a rapidly changing climate and avoid the dire consequences of inaction.

Since the council's original Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy was published in 2021, the effects of climate change have continued to manifest across the globe. The world's oceans were the hottest ever recorded in 2022, and arctic sea ice shrunk to its fifth-lowest maximum on record. Meanwhile, June 2023 was confirmed as the hottest June in the UK since records began in 1884, and July saw the world's hottest day with heatwaves across many parts of Europe, Asia, and the USA.

This year (2023), record-breaking wildfires have devastated parts of Greece, Spain, Portugal, Tenerife, Canada, Hawaii, Chile, and Russia exposing millions of people to toxic air pollution, while torrential rainfall, landslides, and deadly flooding impacted Italy, India, South Sudan, Libya, and the United States. We must take bold and decisive action to limit the extent of global heating and safeguard the

health of our planet and the wellbeing of all its inhabitants.

This update to the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy renews the council's resolve to address the climate and ecological crises we face at a local level, and create a more sustainable, fair, and prosperous district for current and future generations.

Transitioning to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society is not without its challenges –volatile political landscapes, inconsistent national policy, economic austerity, technological uncertainties, infrastructure and supply chain constraints, resistance to behavioural change and misinformation, all hinder the attainment of net-zero. But it will also unlock a host of economic, technological, and societal opportunities which we must seize.

We cannot address a planetary scale, collective action problem alone. All of us – national and local government, business and industry, communities, voluntary organisations, households, and individuals – have a role to play in addressing a challenge of this magnitude and complexity.

The scale of the crisis can seem overwhelming, and we often hear that actions at the individual

Foreword



Climate change and biodiversity destruction are the defining challenges of our time

level are futile, or that the largest polluters should act first. However, the Office for National Statistics Environmental Accounts show that households are bigger emitters of greenhouse gases than any industry sector in the UK!

As my own blog has demonstrated on the smallest change to a weekly lifestyle such as the food we decide to put on our plate or the way we choose to travel, can have sizable impacts on our individual footprint yet do not diminish the quality of our lives at all.

Indeed, the things we consume account for more than 50% of household emissions, and what we choose to consume is frequently within our control as individuals and households. The updated Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy acknowledges that the council has a role to play in empowering and informing

residents to make more sustainable choices, but ultimately, the power to act rests with each of you.

By working together, we can realise a Three Rivers where clean energy powers our buildings and transport, homes are energy-efficient and comfortable, nature is respected, protected, and enhanced, resources are consumed consciously, and a circular economy is embraced, the air we breathe is clean and safe, and our food systems are regenerative and sustainable.

I hope you will join us at this critical juncture in rising to the challenge of net zero and creating a thriving low-carbon future.

Introduction



Net Zero

Can be achieved through a combination of emission reduction and emission removal

This document is the Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy. The original strategy was written in 2021 in response to the council's declaration of a "climate emergency", and this updated version has been produced to reflect changes at an international, national, and local level, to policy, technology, and experience.

Since declaring a "climate emergency" in 2019, the council has worked to reduce its own emissions, whilst encouraging and enabling others to reduce their emissions, improve sustainability and resilience to the effects of climate change, to enable the council to achieve net-zero carbon for its own emissions by 2030, and support the district in reaching net-zero carbon by 2045.

This strategy focuses on what the council and its partners are doing and plan to do within the parameters of the current legal, financial, regulatory, and technological frameworks, under which we must operate to deliver substantial carbon emission reductions.

The Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2023-2027 is the detailed work behind the council's Corporate Framework where one of the council's four overarching objectives is to strive towards net-zero and be climate resilient.

The strategy is supported by an Action Plan which details quantifiable, short-, medium- and long-term actions needed to meet our aims and is updated continuously and reviewed bi-annually by the Climate Change, Leisure, and Community Committee. The Council's progress addressing the climate emergency can be followed on the website [here](#).

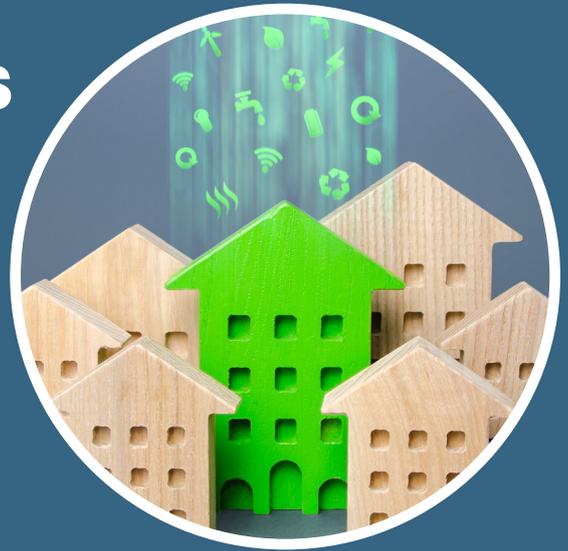
The need to reduce emissions, while adapting and building resilience to the effects of climate change, remain the most urgent tasks of our time. Mitigation is necessary to limit the extent of global temperature rise and the severity of its impacts, however it is also critical to adapt to the impacts of climate change that we are already experiencing.

Our ability to reach net zero is greatly dependent on national and international action and policy on climate change. Addressing the planetary scale problem of climate change requires urgent and strong top-down leadership, and global collective action.

Net zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas that is produced and the amount that is removed from the atmosphere. Net Zero can be achieved through a combination of emission reductions and emission removal.

1 Weather-related disasters increase over past 50 years, causing more damage but fewer deaths | World Meteorological Organization (wmo).

Measuring Emissions



Measuring emissions

Emissions can be divided into three “Scopes”, described below.

Scope 1

Direct emissions

Resulting from vehicles, fuel use, and/or chemical leakage (Which for council operations includes gas and emissions from council owned vehicles).



Scope 2

Indirect emissions

Are associated with purchased electricity.



Scope 3

Other indirect emissions

Other indirect emissions which occur in the value chain of a company and are not already included with Scope 2, such as those from purchased goods and services, transport, or business travel. (Which for council operations includes water, business miles, and leased leisure facilities).



Scope 3 emissions are complicated, extensive, far-reaching and are very difficult to measure accurately with no consistent methodology currently in use. Therefore, only limited Scope 3 emissions will be included in the council’s emissions measurements, such as the leased-out leisure services, but not the wider supply chain, enabling the council to compare the emissions like-for-like each year. However, work continues to be done to reduce Scope 3 emissions and improve sustainability of the council and district despite only a limited range being included in council carbon targets.

Council operational emissions



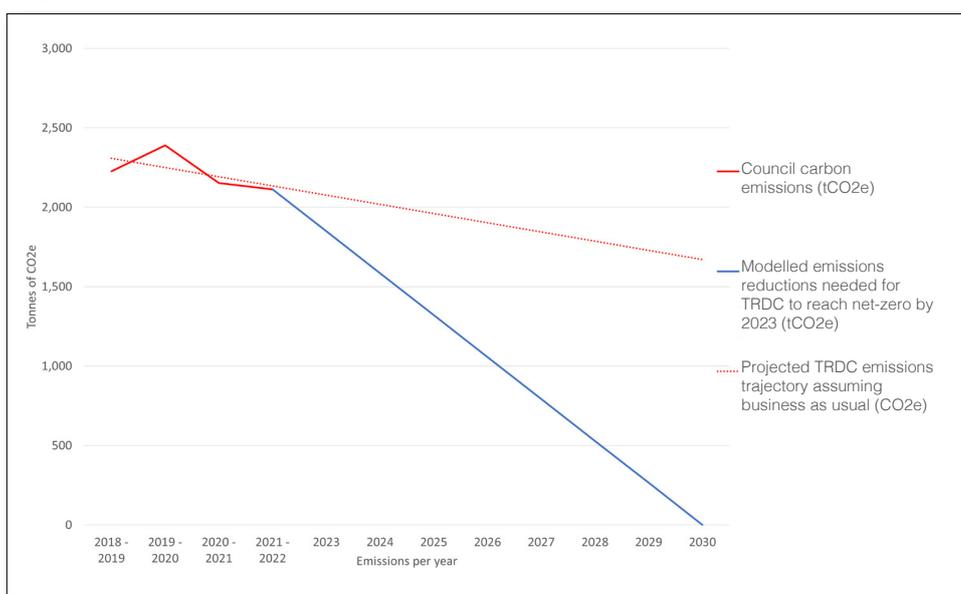
Net-zero carbon by 2030

A reduction of 264t CO₂e/year on average is needed.

Achieving net-zero CO₂e is a huge challenge and will require a reduction of 264t CO₂e/year on average. [The Association for Public Service Excellence](#) (APSE)'s Carbon Trajectory Report 2022 estimated the cost to decarbonise the Council would be £19million at 2022 prices, with an annual saving of £160,000 per year. This presents a significant financial barrier to achieving our 2030 net-zero ambition. To explore possible solutions the council has

secured funding from Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme to research the use of innovative sources of finance, including community and private finance, to fund decarbonisation activities. This is a two year project and will be explored fully during the course of the Action Plan which will run alongside this strategy.

Figure 1 Modelled trajectory of our ambition to achieve net zero by 2030



This Figure shows the measured emissions generated by the council between April 2018 – March 2020 with a trajectory showing emissions to 2030. The dotted line shows a business-as-usual trajectory, and the blue line demonstrates that active interventions are required to meet net zero by 2030.

The council measures and publishes its own emissions annually in accordance with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and uses conversion factors for the carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

Three Rivers District Emissions

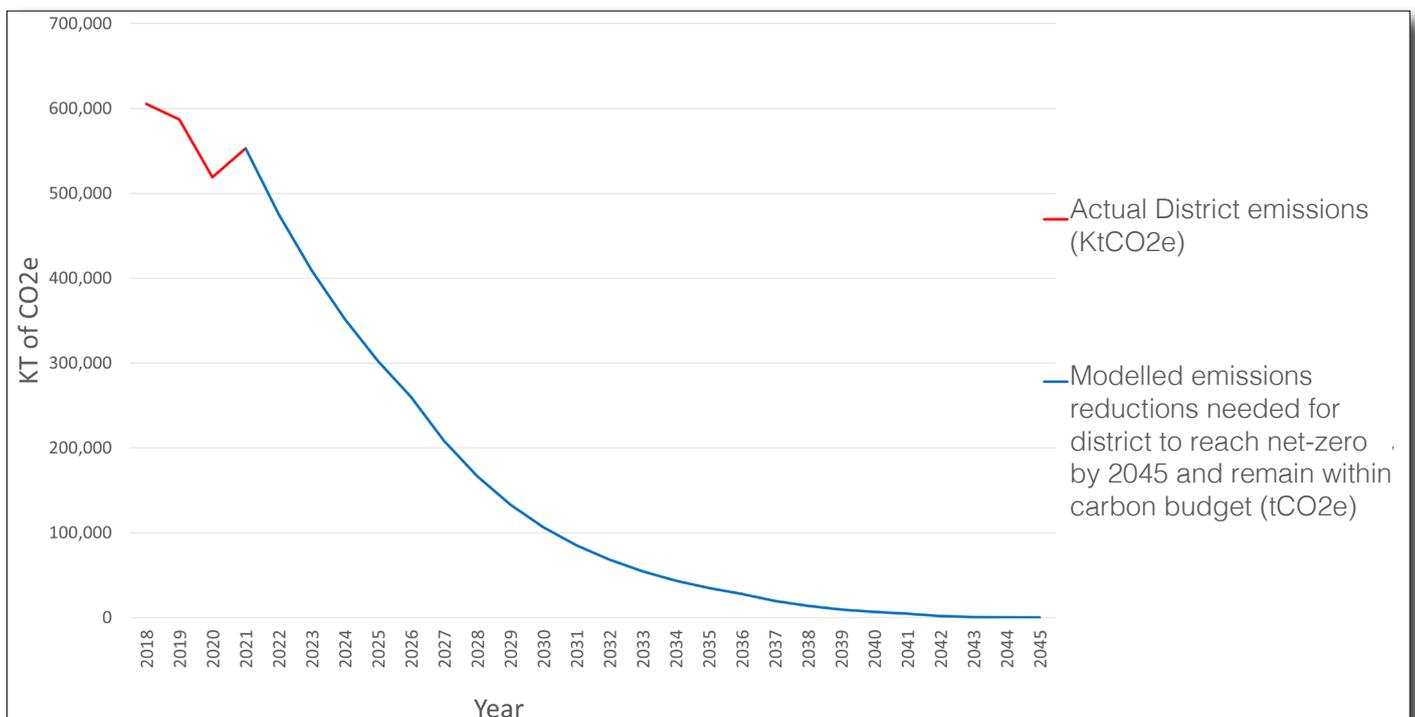


Net-zero carbon by 2045 for the district will require a reduction of 14% annually.

The district will need to reduce emissions by a minimum of 14% annually¹ for the next 5 years to make its fair contribution to the Paris Climate Change agreement.

The figure below shows measured carbon emissions for the District taken from ONS data from 2005 – 2021², and the estimated rate of emissions reductions needed to meet net-zero by 2045 and remain within our carbon budget.

Figure 2 Trajectory Ambition to achieve net zero for the district 2045



The council measures and publishes its own emissions annually in accordance with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and uses conversion factors for the carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO2e).

Reaching net-zero together



Working together

Key stakeholders to lead, enable and inspire.

•GOV

Local Authorities and Government

Stakeholders

Central Government, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, Three Rivers District Council.

Key roles

Lead by example by reducing emissions and changing internal practices to be more sustainable .

Enable all to reduce emissions through the policy framework and lobbying, accessing sources of funding, educational and networking support.

Inspire all to reduce emissions and change behaviours through knowledge sharing.

Key areas of influence

Own operations – Reduce emissions associated with the council's estate, fleet, and service provisions.

Policy and strategy – Planning, land management, waste and recycling, transport management, and community services.



Community and voluntary organisations

Stakeholders

Community and voluntary organisations such as conservation groups, community energy groups, environmental advocacy groups, faith groups, residents associations, and charities.

Key roles

Engagement – Trusted source to inspire behaviour change and deliver action and projects in the community.

Key influence areas

Community projects – Community projects with local social benefits that make use of economies of scale e.g. community energy and community gardens.

Reaching net-zero together



Working together

Businesses, organisations and residents.



Businesses and organisations

Stakeholders

NHS/healthcare providers, schools, independent businesses, national chains, suppliers, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Local Strategic Partnership, Parish and Community Councils, Greater South-East Net-Zero Hub, District Council Network, UK100, Local Enterprise Partnership, Innovate UK, Healthy Hubs

Key roles

Networks – share best practice and knowledge.

Sponsorship – Sponsoring, funding, and supporting community projects.

Engagement – Engage with staff, customers, and suppliers to inspire sustainable choices.

Key influence areas

Buildings – Improve energy efficiency and incorporate renewable energy technologies.

Travel – Use sustainable modes of transport for movement of goods and people.

Production/consumption – Reduce emissions associated with production of products.

Supply chain – Addressing and reducing supply chain emissions and waste.



Residents

Key roles

Behaviour change – Changes to consumption and lifestyle to reduce carbon footprint.

Lobbying – Vote, ask local representatives for change and engage with local decision making.

Engagement – Communicate and share knowledge and skills within your community/network and engage businesses, organisations and community groups to support and drive change.

Key influence areas

Home – Reduce energy, water and resource use at home and enhance nature.

Travel – Increase use of active travel or public transport.

Consumption – Reduce consumption and switch to more sustainable, low-carbon alternatives. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Sustainable living



Consumption of goods and services

is responsible for the majority of household emissions in Three Rivers.

The average household in Three Rivers produces 18.9t of CO₂e per year compared to the GB average of 16t of CO₂e per year, with consumption of goods and services having the highest impact (Figure 3).

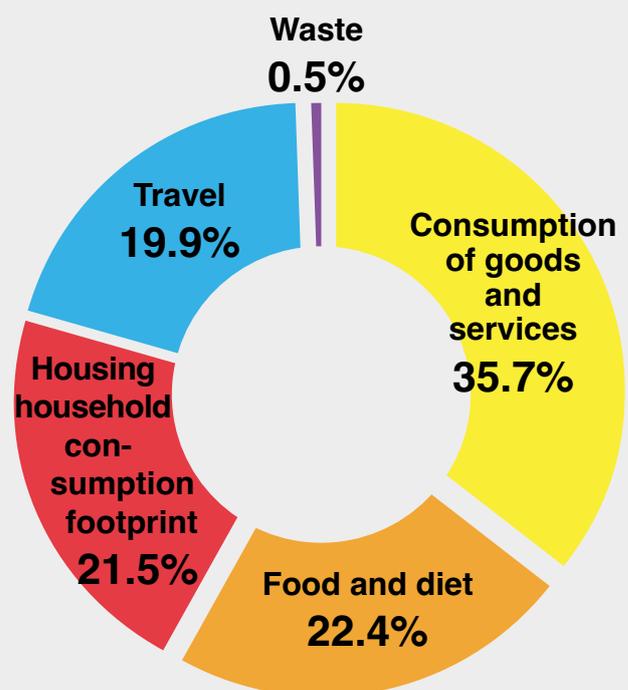
The emissions generated across Three Rivers vary considerably between local areas. The Community Carbon Calculator indicators³ the carbon footprint of different areas and is a useful tool for measuring your areas impact.

To avoid the worst impacts of the climate emergency, the carbon emissions associated with our lifestyles need to fall dramatically. Some positive movements have started through digital second-hand marketplaces, clothes swaps, high levels of recycling in the district, making more sustainable choices when shopping and reducing single-use plastic. However, more needs to be done – such as adopting low-carbon travel, sharing tools and equipment, repairing broken goods, insulating our buildings, and switching to electric heating systems. Active community groups can assist in these behavioural changes through a collective approach which enables shared learning, economies of scale, developing

libraries of things, community fridges and gardens, repair shops, and buying local goods and services.

Three Rivers Emissions 18.9 tonnes of CO₂e

per household consumption
footprint per year



³ <https://impact-tool.org.uk/report?regionId=E07000102&geography=local-authority>

Challenges



Challenges to net-zero

Outside influences and obstacles.

This strategy's ambition to achieve net-zero by 2030 for the council's own operations is an enormous challenge. Where possible, we will look for external funding and work with our partners to address this.

The strategy sets out our direction of travel and overarching ambitions. Some of the challenges we face for delivery include:

Lack of readily available funding to support emissions reductions for council operations and the wider district.



The high cost of: finance, retrofitting buildings, and transitioning to low-carbon transport.



Skills shortages such as accredited retrofit professionals and suitably qualified professionals for installing retrofit technologies.



Lack of long-term direction on net zero policies and finance from central government



Uncertainty over “low carbon” technologies such as hydrogen, electric vehicles and heat pump installation and operation.



Lack of awareness among residents and stakeholders of the benefits of adopting: new methods of heating, sustainable travel, incorporating sustainability into decision making, and changing consumption habits.



Offsetting



Ways to reach net-zero

Prioritising emissions avoidance and reduction.

There are a variety of ways to reach net-zero, and not all of them are equal. The council will follow the carbon management hierarchy; this means the council will prioritise emissions avoidance and reduction, and only replace or compensate our hard-to-treat emissions as a last resort.

The council will consider the opportunities for tree planting and other nature based solutions in the district (and county where applicable). Developers will be encouraged to consider carbon absorption opportunities alongside nature enhancements in delivering their Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations.

Given the geographical limitation for extensive tree planting in Three Rivers, we will be working across the County to identify opportunities for large scale woodland planting in Hertfordshire for carbon offsetting.

Additionally, a review of renewable energy generation opportunities on council owned sites such as car parks will be undertaken.

Achievements since 2021



Reaching net-zero carbon emissions

for our own operations by 2030

- ✓ **Replaced** depot building and now includes an air source heat pump, radiant heating, solar panels electric vehicle charging points, bat bird boxes, an otter holt, insect pile in and fruit trees.
- ✓ **Retrofit** of Three Rivers House including the installation of air source heat pump and energy efficient cooling systems in the server room saving 335,170 kilowatt hours per annum.
- ✓ **Started** electrifying the council's fleet with three electric vans
- ✓ **Adopted** an Environmental Impact Assessment tool which embeds consideration of climate change and sustainability in to the council's decision-making processes.
- ✓ **Upgraded** all Three Rivers District Council owned streetlights to energy efficient LED or solar.
- ✓ **Introduced** climate change training for all council staff, with senior leadership benefiting from advanced training on climate change and adaptation.

Achievements since 2021 in the district



Supporting Three Rivers District

to reach net-zero carbon by 2045:

- ✓ **Joined Solar Together** scheme with at least 76 homes in the district installing solar panels and a new round launched in August 2023.
- ✓ **Retrofitted** 117 private homes saving 161.2 tonnes of CO₂e annually and 82 social homes.
- ✓ **Supported** energy efficiency improvements for the least efficient homes in the district through the delivery of Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and Social Housing Decarbonisation fund.
- ✓ **New independent Home Energy Support Service** helpline provided free advice to over 250 residents.
- ✓ **Resurfaced** a significant section of the Ebury Way trail for walkers and cyclists.
- ✓ **Improved** the northbound link in the Grand Union Canal towpath (Three Rivers) route.
- ✓ **Inspired** sustainable behaviour change at events discussing issues with over by over 2000 residents.
- ✓ **Published** "Guide to Greening Your Home" and 'Greener Living Guide'.
- ✓ **Provided** 2,920 free trees to residents in 2022, with a further 7,086 trees reserved by residents in 2023.
- ✓ **Adopted the Biodiversity Opportunities Audit** (BOA), Nature Recovery Strategy, and Alternative Grassland Management (AGM) Initiative throughout the District.
- ✓ **Creation of two new woodlands**, made up of 750 trees in Leavesden County Park and Denham Way Playing Fields.
- ✓ **Planted** 59 street (standard) trees throughout the district.
- ✓ **Conservation grazing introduced** to the Horses' Field at Leavesden Country Park.
- ✓ **Developed** and approved the management plan for the Rickmansworth Aquadrome.
- ✓ **Hosted** 50 wildlife themed events attended by over 850 local people.

Achievements since 2021 in the district



Supporting Three Rivers District

to reach net-zero carbon by 2045:

- ✓ **Commissioned reports** to improve active travel in our key centres.
- ✓ **Installed** wayfinding signage in Croxley Green to encourage active travel.
- ✓ **Developed** and consulted on the district's Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.
- ✓ **Installed** Real Time Information signs at 15 district bus stops.
- ✓ **Established** the Three Rivers Water Partnership to help protect and improve water quality.
- ✓ **Awarded community grants** for 14 low-carbon and sustainable projects totalling £19,438 since April 2022.
- ✓ **Delivered a Sustainable Business Programme**, helped 12 SMEs develop climate action plans.
- ✓ **Secured** £300k funding unding from Innovate UK to deliver projects with our partners Grand Union Community Energy and the National Energy Foundation, to overcome barriers to net-zero. The projects include:
 - The development of a retrofit fit one-stop shop (ROSS)*
 - Assessment of green finance options for Three Rivers District Council premises*
 - A community energy project*
 - A pilot Transition Streets programme*

Reaching net-zero by 2030



What must the council do to reach net-zero by 2030 and improve sustainability?

The council has embedded consideration of the climate emergency into its culture and decision-making processes. Our ambition is to achieve an average annual reduction of 264t CO₂e to reach net-zero by 2030.

Buildings

Integrate net-zero design and renewable energy into new council and joint venture developments.

Assess opportunities to reduce emissions from council-owned buildings and identify cost-effective finance solutions to fund the decarbonisation of council-owned buildings.

Develop the business case for solar PV on council buildings, sites, and car parks.

Reduce carbon emissions from existing council buildings through retrofit and energy demand reduction.



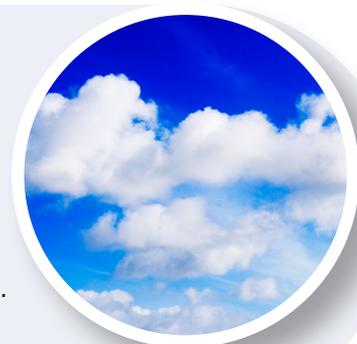
Travel and Air Quality

Where suitable, progress switching the fleet to low-emission or electric vehicles.

Continue to encourage remote working and virtual meetings to reduce staff travel.

Install electric charging points at council buildings for staff and fleet.

When staff travel is necessary encourage sharing, and low carbon forms of transport.



Reaching net-zero by 2030



What must the council do to reach net-zero by 2030 and improve sustainability?

Circular economy/ waste and resources

Reduce waste and increase the proportion of composting, reuse, and recycling within council operations.

Consider all suitable technology when replacing waste collection vehicles to reduce their carbon footprint.

Continue to use fleet vehicles to promote reduction, reuse, and recycling.



Nature and water

Ensure that all TRDC-owned land is managed sustainably and for the benefit of biodiversity, soil health, public education, responsible recreation and climate resilience.

Reduce the council's water consumption across its estate.



Adaptation and resilience

Ensure our emergency and public health plans account for more severe weather and its impacts on infrastructure and communities.

Ensure the council's infrastructure, landscapes, and services are built, maintained, and managed to be resilient to the impacts of climate change.



Supporting the district to reach net-zero



How is the council supporting the district to reach net-zero by 2045 and improve sustainability?

The council will inspire, enable and support everyone in the district to reduce emissions, and adopt sustainable, climate resilient behaviours to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.

Progression and adoption of a new Local Plan is critical to secure the highest standards of environmental performance and sustainability in development.

Housing and buildings

Encourage developers to adopt net zero design standards including the integration of renewable energy and low-carbon heat technologies.

Require all major developments to submit an adaptation strategy and sustainability statement to demonstrate how the development will mitigate and adapt to climate change over its lifetime.

For major non-residential developments, proposals should achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' as a minimum with the ambition to achieve "Outstanding."

Require new development to install flood mitigation measures and facilitate optimum water and wastewater efficiency aiming for water neutrality.

Refuse development if it is subject to unacceptable flood risk or if it would exacerbate flood risk on site or elsewhere.

Develop and implement a decarbonisation action plan to reduce emissions from residential properties.

Encourage community led approach approach to retrofit and sustainability.

Support residents and businesses to reduce their energy use and improve the efficiency of their homes and buildings.

Work in partnership to support the development of the local retrofit supply chain to increase skills and capacity for retrofit in the district and wider county.



Supporting the district to reach net-zero



How is the council supporting the district to reach net-zero by 2045 and improve sustainability?

Circular economy/ waste and resources

Continue to play an active role in the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership to produce and promote campaigns, resources, and support.

Consult on and comply with the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy.



Travel and Air Quality

Promote and encourage the use of public transport and active travel.

Adopt and implement a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Increase the availability of community services in neighbourhoods to reduce the need for travel.

Support our partners and stakeholders in the development and promotion of strategic sustainable passenger transport and infrastructure.

Develop a county-wide programme that supports a transition to low-carbon private hire vehicles and taxis.

Maximise opportunities in new developments to increase sustainable low- and zero-carbon transport infrastructure.

Ensure Air Quality Management Plans are successfully delivered.

Encourage behavioural change on vehicle idling through education and partnership working.

Expand public electric vehicle charging infrastructure within Three Rivers .



Supporting the district to reach net-zero



How is the council supporting the district to reach net-zero by 2045 and improve sustainability?

Nature and water

Enforce Biodiversity Net Gain requirements under the Environment Act (2021) and encourage the net-gain to be achieved in-situ on development sites or within the district.

Work in partnership on a catchment-scale with key stakeholders to protect and enhance local rivers and the habitats and wildlife supported by them.

Promote reductions in water consumption in the district.

Actively encourage Thames Water to invest in their wastewater catchments and the Maple Lodge Sewage Treatment Works to ensure sufficient capacity and eradication of untreated sewage discharges into the chalk streams.



Sustainable living

Adopt a community-led approach to encouraging sustainable behaviours and energy reduction.

Encourage and enable renewable energy generation in the district.

Encourage and inspire local landowners to increase biodiversity and climate resilience and explore options for renewable energy production.

Encourage and inspire local, sustainable food producers to connect food retailers, the hospitality sector, and residents.

Encourage local food production through the development and stewardship of community gardens, allotments, and orchards.

Engage with local businesses, community groups, and residents to adopt sustainable food consumption and reduce food waste.



Supporting the district to reach net-zero



How is the council supporting the district to reach net-zero by 2045 and improve sustainability?

Adaptation and Resilience

Adopt a community-led approach to encouraging sustainable behaviours and energy reduction.

Understand the value of trees in the district and the role they will play in tackling the climate emergency locally.

Encourage ecologically resilient and varied landscapes to ensure that habitats remain diverse and adaptable to the impacts of climate change, thereby safeguarding local flora and fauna.

Prioritise climate adaptation efforts that explicitly help our most vulnerable populations.

Inspire and support stakeholders, partners, community groups, businesses, and residents to be resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Encourage landowners in the district to enhance biodiversity through proactive land management to incorporate climate resilience, adapt to a changing climate, and contribute to carbon storage.



How can residents and businesses help



How can residents and businesses help contribute to a sustainable, net-zero district by 2045?

We have a range of information on our website including a 'Greener Living' guide and 'Guide to Greening Your Home' with lots of helpful hints and tips on living sustainably.

Housing and Buildings

Optimise insulation, install renewable energy, give nature a home, install water saving appliances, and explore smart home technology - home renovations are an ideal opportunity to incorporate these changes.

Reduce your energy use, and switch to a renewable energy provider where installing renewable energy is not possible.



Travel and Air Quality

Increase use of public transport and active travel.

Turn vehicle engines off when not in use to reduce pollution from idling.

Businesses to review active travel plans to encourage use of public and active transport, increase cycling facilities and electric vehicle infrastructure.

Install electric charging points on private property.



How can residents and businesses help



How can residents and businesses help

contribute to a sustainable, net-zero district by 2045?

Circular economy/waste and resources

Prioritise reduction and reuse of waste over recycling.

When buying goods, consider if it is really needed, whether it can be purchased second hand, borrowed or shared, and if new is required consider optimal sustainable choices.

Businesses to have clear reduction, reuse, recycling policies to minimise excess consumption and reduce waste to landfill.

Reduce food waste and increase composting.



Nature, water and food

Reduce water consumption in homes and workplaces.

Maximise space for nature in homes, businesses and on farmland and open spaces.

Consider volunteering on projects that support nature conservation.

Choose in-season, local foods, and look for food items which have a lower carbon impact, such as plant proteins.

Consider options for growing food either in your garden, allotment, or a community space.



Adaptation and resilience

If you have a garden or community space, improve soils, utilise diverse native plant species in landscaping, and plant new trees/hedges.

Help prevent flooding and pollution of our rivers by disposing of waste responsibly and using the sewerage system correctly.

Ensure driveways and outdoor spaces have permeable surfaces and incorporate planting to reduce flood risk.

Retrofit houses and buildings to keep cool in the summer and warm in winter.



*Three Rivers
'a great place
to live, work
and visit'*

