

Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan Bi-annual Update

11/03/2026

CLIMATE CHANGE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2026

PART I

CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

(DfE)

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the council's performance against the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2024-2027 (Appendix 3) and its associated Action Plan detailed at Appendix
- 1.2 Council emissions have reduced by 8% compared to 2018/19, with key reductions driven by upgrades to council buildings. Emissions from council-owned buildings have dropped 13% since 2018/19.
- 1.3 Of 24 council actions, 15 are complete, 6 are on track, and 3 are retired and just 1 is at risk. Emissions in Three Rivers have decreased by 15.47% from 2018/19 to 2022/23, with the largest reductions in industry (-24.6%) and domestic buildings (-23.1%).
- 1.4 Climate and sustainability terminology used throughout the report are hyperlinked to the glossary, which can be found at the end of this document, in Appendix 1.

2. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- 2.1. Notes the progress made in delivering the strategy.
- 2.2. Agrees to the addition of new actions as outlined at paragraph 3.13 to 3.17.

3. Details

- 3.1. Following a declaration of a Climate Emergency in May 2019, the council adopted its first Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy in 2021. Since 2021, the council has worked to deliver the aims and objectives of that strategy to meet its ambition to be net-zero carbon by 2030 and to support the district in being net-zero carbon by 2045.

Council Operation Emissions

Council emissions are reported annually at the October bi-annual review

Figure 1: Decarbonisation projects

Project	Cost	Carbon Saving per annum	Planned installation date
Cavity Wall Insulation at WT	£36,050	10.6 tCO ₂ e	January 2026
Cavity Wall Insulation at TRH	£28,825	6 tCO ₂ e	March 2026
48 kWp Solar PV installation at TRH	£48,038.03	6 tCO ₂ e	March 2026
146 kWp Solar PV installation at SOLC	£102,902.00	24.43 tCO ₂ e	January 2026
Batchworth Depot 22kWp solar installation and 10.36 kWh battery	£20,708	5 tCO ₂ e	Date TBC

- 3.2. Several council building decarbonisation projects are underway in the first half of 2026 which are forecast to reduce emissions by 52 tCO₂e annually
- 3.3. Cavity Wall Insulation (CWI) was installed in Watersmeet Theatre (WT), in January '26, and is scheduled to take place in Three Rivers House (TRH) in March '26.
- 3.4. The Solar array is being extended on TRH in March '26.
- 3.5. A solar array was installed on SOLC in January 2026.

A third solar array will be installed on Batchworth depot further to approval at Policy and Resources Committee in January '26. Date to be confirmed. *See Figure 1 for details.*

Progress against the 2024-2027 Council Emissions Action Plan

- 3.1 Appendix 2 gives a detailed view of current actions and their progress, with Figure 5 below providing an overview of Action Progress regarding Council Emissions.

Figure 2

Council Emissions Action Progress	Building, Emissions and Energy	Travel and Air Quality	Waste and Resources	Nature and Water	Adaptation and resilience	Other	Total
Delayed and vulnerable to not happening	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delayed but still progressing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
In Progress - On Track	3	1	0	0	1	1	6
Completed	5	3	2	1	1	3	15
Not Started	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Retired	0	2	0	1	0	0	3
Total	8	6	2	2	2	4	24

Progress shows the majority of actions are now completed, with the remaining in progress, or retired. Those retired are; Explore procuring Ultra-low Emission vehicle (ULEV) and Electric Vehicle (EV) salary sacrifice scheme, Establish a route to zero for the council fleet as part of a 5-year fleet procurement plan, and Reducing food miles and encouraging local food production and a sense of community for staff by developing a staff community garden for their own consumption and suppliers for the local food bank. These have been retired as they have been done so because they have been determined as not feasible or absorbed into other actions.

Council Emission Highlights from October 25 – February 26:

3.2 Installation of Cavity Wall Insulation at Watersmeet Theatre, and installation of Solar PV at South Oxhey Leisure Centre.

3.3 The Solar PV performance of William Penn Leisure Centre is laid out in *Figure 3 below*.

Figure 3: William Penn Solar PV Performance January '25 – December '25.

	Utility Bill Savings	T CO2e Saved
Forecast	£29,173	83
Actual	£31,500	86
+/- Forecast	£2,327	3

3.4 Electric Vehicle public charge points are now available at Three Rivers House underground car park and available for staff use.

Next Steps to progress Council Emissions actions: March 26 – October 26

3.5 Reviewing the options to switch to a green energy tariff under our existing utility contract with N Power.

3.6 Officers will draft a document to formalise the council's approach to carbon offsetting in 2026, following approval at CMT.

District Emissions

3.7 District emissions will be updated in October following their annual publication in June.

3.8 Appendix 1 shows the detail on progress on district actions, with a summary below in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3: Overview of Action Progress – District Emissions Action Plan.

District Emissions Action Progress	Building, Emissions and Energy	Travel and Air Quality	Waste and Resources	Nature and Water	Sustainable Living	<u>Adaptation</u> and resilience	Total
Delayed and vulnerable to not happening	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delayed but still progressing	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
In Progress - On Track	5	6	1	6	3	3	24
Completed	7	4	3	10	9	6	39

Not Started	1	0	1	4	0	0	6
Retired	2	1	1	1	1	0	6
Proposed Actions	2	0	0	1	2	0	4
Total	18	11	6	23	15	9	80

The majority of actions are in progress or complete. Those not yet started are due to lack of officer capacity, and prioritisation of other actions and workloads. 6 of the actions now retired, are due to establishing the projects are not feasible, or their absorption into other actions. There is an action delayed but still progressing. Securing funding for a feasibility study for the potential heat network powered by the Abbots Langley data centre. The application to the Heat Network Delivery Unit was unsuccessful, but other routes to establish viability are being explored.

Five new actions are proposed to be added to the Action Plan:

3.9 Provide grant funding to local SMEs for solar and battery storage installation to commercial premises in the district. A maximum £3,000 grant requiring a minimum 75% match funding by the business, with £50,000 total spread over 2 years, and could generate local investment of £200,000 and support local jobs. This project has been approved by JLT and P&R.

3.10 A new marketing campaign is under development with the aim of encouraging installation of solar panels and heat pumps in domestic and commercial properties. Artwork will be displayed on waste collection vehicles in place of the winter Pantomime banners and thereafter used for social media and engagement events undertaken by GUCE.

3.11 Develop a Green Space Strategy. This would be a new strategy for the council building on the work of the Biodiversity Opportunities Audit, acknowledging many council owned greenspaces do not require full individual management plans. This project is in very early stages.

3.12 Work with Grand Union Community Energy to inform and inspire residents to retrofit their homes and adopt low-carbon technologies through a series of retrofit-related events.

3.13 Work with Grand Union Community Energy to offer Sustainable Streets to residents as a means of supporting sustainable behavioural change.

District Emission Highlights from October 25 – February 26:

3.14 The Environmental Forum has now been renamed as the Environmental Network and new Terms Of Reference was recommended by CCLC 14 January 2026 to

progress to Full Council 24 February 2026. The March meeting took place in South Oxhey with a focus on energy. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 28 March 2026, the time and location is to be decided, with transport the planned topic of discussion.

- 3.15 Draft net-zero policies for new build energy efficiency standards above current Building Regulations were incorporated into the Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation in Summer 2025. These draft policies aim to secure highly energy efficient new housing which is more closely aligned with net zero targets than current Building Regulations under the Future Homes Standard.
- 3.16 Three Rivers District Council have worked closely with local community energy group, Grand Union Community Energy (GUCE), to explore the feasibility of major decarbonisation initiatives such as heat networks fed by aquifers and data centres, and solar canopies in council-owned car parks, as well as delivering projects such as Transition Streets under Fast Followers. The council's collaborative approach to joint projects with GUCE was recognised and Highly Commended by Community Energy England at the Community Energy Awards in November 2025.
- 3.17 The next annual careers fair in partnership with Watford Burrough Council and Hertfordshire Futures following the success of the 2025 careers fair is taking place on Thursday 5th March at Woodside Leisure Centre. This is a general careers fair, aimed at students in the day and open to the public in the evening, with a focus on highlighting 'Green' skills and careers.
- 3.18 A Community Energy Fund Stage 1 feasibility study, overseen by Grand Union Community Energy is underway to assess the technical and economic feasibility of a heat network to utilise the waste heat from the planned data centre in Abbots Langley. The study concludes by April 2026, after which, the next steps will be decided.
- 3.19 5 local community and charitable organisations have been awarded sustainability funding in 25/26 to date totalling £7,550. This has included solar on Chorleywood

Community Arts Centre, Rickmansworth Toy Library, Mill End Baptist Church for a new electric cooker, Ebony Ambassadors, Community Learning Partnerships, and Good Vibrations. The achievements of these projects will be communicated through digital channels, and further information on the projects funded is available on our website [here](#).

- 3.20 TRDC Officer will attend Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy Steering Group meetings to contribute to the delivery of the Strategy. HCCSP is seeking funding to deliver Strategy from various sources currently. Priority action is to establish a Retrofit Advice Service for residents across Hertfordshire.
- 3.21 Continuing to deliver Warm Homes Local Grant funding in partnership with Watford Council. Results of first year of delivery to be shared from April 2026. ECO4 and GBIS schemes end in March 2026 and will not be renewed, following government announcement in Autumn budget.
- 3.22 TRDC have commissioned GUCE to offer Sustainable Streets to residents until October 2026 to encourage community-led sustainable behavioural change. GUCE are also offering free, in-person energy advice to residents at regular Healthy Hub locations and are currently planning their first retrofit event which will inform and inspire residents on the topic of home retrofit, with specific focus on heat pumps and solar panels, aiming for Spring 2026.
- 3.23 A screening of Power to the People was attended by over 60 people with a panel discussion at Watersmeet Theatre, panellists included representatives from Octopus Energy and GUCE, with productive discussions around barriers and solutions to installations such as funding and trust.
- 3.24 Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCP) installations are now complete, with 28 installations taking place across Three Rivers District Council car parks. Funding was secured from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles' On-street Residential Charge point Scheme and from the Community Infrastructure Levy. There is also a contribution from Blink Charging, the chosen Charging Point Operator. The full list of sites can be viewed in Appendix 2.

Next steps to progress District Emission actions: March 26 – October 26

- 3.25 Establishment of the Environmental Champions Award approved at CMT in December 2025. Award to launch in March 2026, with winners announced at Great Big Green Week event combined with a free film showing at Watersmeet in June 2026.
- 3.26 Roll out of the solar and heat pump campaign materials in conjunction with engagement by GUCE.

3.27 Progress the feasibility for a Heat Network powered by the Abbots Langley Data Centre to attract private investment.

3.28 Work on the Three Rivers Energy Plan is continuing and will be completed ahead of the next action plan update.

4. Options and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and agreed a Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy in 2021, and the update in 2023. It was agreed on adoption of the strategy a bi-annual report would be brought to the Climate Change and Leisure committee bi-annually to update on progress against the strategy and the associated action plan.

5. Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

5.1. The recommendations in this report are within the council's agreed policy and budgets. The budgets associated with the actions are identified within the report and its appendices. Most identified actions are achievable within existing budgets; except where additional external funding is required or business cases are required to be submitted to Policy and Resources against the capital programme budget. The sustainability revenue budget is being used to secure external funds and deliver against agreed [net zero](#) projects as outlined in this report.

5.2. The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators:

- CP50 District carbon emissions reported as [tCO₂e](#) equivalent.
- CP52 Council Operations Carbon emissions reported as tCO₂e equivalent.

5.3. The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:

- The Actions and progress against these KPIs are the council's road map to reducing both the council's own operational emissions and supporting the district in reaching net-zero and therefore achieving the PIs.

6. Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

Legal Implications

6.1. Contract work will be required on certain projects, and these will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

6.2. Policy and Resources Committee approval is required for all projects which intend to use the Council's Capital Sustainability Fund

Equal Opportunities Implications

- 6.3. A Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix 4. There are no negative impacts identified as arising from the proposals within the Action Plan and its delivery to date. Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted for specific actions and proposals on a project-by-project basis.

Staffing Implications

- 6.4. All service areas are, and will continue to be involved with the delivery of the Action Plan, supported by the Climate Change team.

Environmental Implications

- 6.5. The Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan reported in this report supports the Council and District to reduce emissions to net-zero carbon and increase sustainability across a wide range of areas. Furthermore, the Action Plan will support the [mitigation](#) of the impacts of the Climate Emergency.
- 6.6. A sustainability impact assessment can be found at Appendices 5 resulting in a score of 3.8/4.

Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	3.75
Travel	3.33
Goods and Consumption	4.00
Ecology	4.00
Adaptation	3.50

- 6.7. Achieving the actions in this Action Plan will improve community safety across the district through reducing the risks associated with the Climate Emergency, including wildfires, floods, and heatwaves.

Public Health implications

- 6.8. The Action Plan will contribute to the prevention of deterioration of health and well-being issues arising from the consequences of climate change such as overheating, skin cancers, decline in productivity, and respiratory illnesses.

- 6.9. Improvements in Home Energy Efficiency through [retrofit](#) work will improve environmental quality within homes and reduce energy bills, thereby assisting in reduction of financial anxiety related to household bills and benefitting physical health by improving the warmth and air quality within homes and preventing damp and mould.

Customer Services Centre Implications

- 6.10. Customer Services are briefed on a project-by-project basis.

Communications and Website Implications

- 6.11. The website is crucial to this strategy as the repository for the information regarding all relevant projects and initiatives.
- 6.12. The district emissions ambition in the strategy demonstrates the need for sustained engagement with the residents, businesses, and communities in the district to encourage a shift to more sustainable behaviours. The climate change team works closely with the communications team and will continue to do so.
- 6.13. Briefings are held with members as required to optimise the chances of success of the various initiatives.
- 6.14. Active engagement will continue to be essential with the Local Strategic Partnership, parish councils, schools, resident associations, housing associations, activist, and conservation groups.

Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 6.15. The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 6.16. The subject of this report is covered by the Climate and Sustainability service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response	Risk Rating
The Council fails to act to reduce its' CO2	The Council Net Zero target of 2030, Corporate Framework net zero carbon theme and requirements of the Climate and Emergency	For the Committee to note and continue to provide a	Treat	6

emissions	Sustainability Strategy are unlikely to be met unless a coordinated programme of activity is implemented. And importantly the Council will not be addressing the Climate Emergency and thus will contribute further to the increase in global warming and its' consequences.	mandate for officers to progress the actions identified.		
The Council fails to consider adaptation requirements to climate change	Services provided by the council are disrupted by extreme weather conditions, some of which could have been avoided with pre-planning. Customers are impacted by extreme weather conditions, some of which may have been avoidable with pre-planning	Continue to measure the risks and implement the actions associated with the risk register.	Treat	6

6.17. In the officer's opinion the risk that the Council fails to act to reduce its emissions would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and therefore presents a strategic risk.

6.18. The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

7 Data Quality

NA

8 Appendix 1: Glossary of Environmental Terms and References

Adaptation (Climate Adaptation)

Actions that reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts by adjusting infrastructure, ecosystems, or human behaviour.

Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP)

A low-carbon heating technology that extracts heat from outside air to heat buildings and water, even in cold temperatures.

Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO₂e)

A unit used to measure the global warming potential of different greenhouse gases, expressed as the amount of CO₂ that would have the same impact.

Community Energy Fund

A government grant to support the development of community-led renewable energy projects.

Decarbonisation

The process of reducing or eliminating carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions from activities such as transport, heating, and power generation.

Emissions Scope (1, 2, 3)

- **Scope 1:** Direct emissions from sources controlled by the council (e.g. gas boilers, fleet vehicles).
- **Scope 2:** Indirect emissions from purchased energy.
- **Scope 3:** Indirect emissions from activities not owned or controlled by the council, like procurement or business travel.

Fast Followers Programme

An Innovate UK-funded programme supporting local authorities in accelerating climate action and delivering replicable, scalable climate solutions.

Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)

Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to climate change, including CO₂, methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O).

Ground Source Heat Pump

A renewable heating technology that extracts heat from the ground for use in heating buildings.

Heat Network

A system for distributing heat generated in a centralised location to residential and commercial buildings through a network of insulated pipes.

Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)

A data-driven framework to plan for the energy transition at the local level, considering future electricity and heating needs.

Low Carbon Technologies (LCTs)

Technologies that produce less greenhouse gas emissions compared to traditional fossil fuels, e.g. solar PV, heat pumps, and EVs.

Mitigation (Climate Mitigation)

Actions that reduce the amount or speed of future climate change, usually by cutting emissions or enhancing carbon sinks.

Net Zero Carbon

Achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere and those removed or offset.

Carbon Offsetting

Compensating for carbon dioxide emissions resulting from council operational activity by investing in projects that reduce or remove emissions elsewhere, such as tree planting or renewable energy production.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)

A UK government funding programme supporting energy efficiency and low-carbon heat in public sector buildings.

Retrofit (Home Energy Retrofit)

Improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings through insulation, heating system upgrades, glazing improvements, etc.

Retrofit One Stop Shop (ROSS)

A comprehensive technical advice service for homeowners in the district that offers free, independent guidance and support on planning retrofit, identifying funding and finance options for retrofit and finding accredited installers.

Solar Canopies

Structures installed over car parks or other open spaces with solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to generate renewable electricity.

Solar Photovoltaic (PV)

A renewable energy technology that converts sunlight directly into electricity using solar panels.

Solar Together

Solar Together is a **group-buying scheme**, delivered by iChoosr and in partnership with all 10 Local Authorities in Hertfordshire, that enables homeowners to register for free and, through a reverse auction, secure **high-quality solar PV panels** (and optional battery storage or EV charge points) at **competitive prices**—all while being supported throughout the process by vetted installers and dedicated helpdesks. It has been run three times across Hertfordshire to date.

Standing Charges

Fixed daily charges applied to energy bills, regardless of how much energy is used.

Sustainable Travel

Transport options that are environmentally friendly, such as walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicles.

Territorial Emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions from sources located within a specific geographical area, excluding imports and exports.

Transition Streets

A community-led behavioural change programme encouraging sustainable living by engaging small groups of neighbours in actions to reduce carbon footprints.

Tonne of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (tCO₂e)

A standard unit for measuring carbon footprints, representing one metric tonne of CO₂ or its equivalent in other GHGs.

Utility Costs

The costs associated with electricity, gas, water, and other essential building services.

Background Papers**APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix 1: Glossary of Environmental Terms and References

Appendix 2: Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy Action Plan 2024 - 2027

Appendix 3: TRDC Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2023 - 2027

Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Outcome Assessment

Appendix 5: Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment

