

Our Environment Priority

# Environment Policy

2022/23 – 2025/26



**North Kesteven**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# Introduction

## Purpose:

This document sets out our corporate environment policy for NKDC and provides guidance through 8 key principles to ensure we can all take the necessary steps to help protect and enhance the natural environment, address the climate emergency, and work towards net zero. This policy applies to all NKDC employees and to those who deliver services for NKDC. The 8 key principles established by this policy are to be used to inform the decisions we make, how we manage our services and our assets, and to help shape our individual actions to ensure environmental and climate considerations are truly embedded in everything we do at NKDC.

This environment policy builds on the strong foundation of NKDC's existing environmental and climate commitments and seeks to encourage the next phase of ambitious action to support the creation of a flourishing, biodiverse, and ecologically safe future. Whilst this policy is an internally focused document, it is strongly aligned with the Our Environment Priority and our broader climate emergency response and environmental work, including our Climate Emergency Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plan, as well as our efforts to support sustainable development.

## Aim:

This policy aims to support colleagues and those who deliver NKDC services to integrate environmental considerations into everything we do. The 8 key principles and further guidance set out in this policy should be applied by all to inform how we work and the decisions we make. The policy is intended to support our efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment, tackle the climate emergency, and work towards NKDC's net zero 2030 target.

Taking an integrated and holistic approach towards our environmental and climate activities helps to maximise the positive outcomes and co-benefits we can deliver. This also supports the development of a climate resilient future for NKDC. We have established this integrated co-benefit approach to help broaden the positive impacts of our climate and environmental activities, seeking to support NKDC's wider ambitions for sustainable development within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## Scope:

This environment policy is internally focused and applies to all NKDC employees and those who deliver our services. Colleagues are asked to share this policy with relevant service providers as needed, who should seek to adhere to these principles when delivering services for NKDC.

All legislation and statutory requirements in relation to environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and enhancement, pollution management, and other related environmental subjects must be followed, and in no way are the principles of this policy intended to infringe upon this.

## Our Environment Policy Principles:

- 1. We will support and work towards a sustainable net zero future for North Kesteven District Council.**
- 2. We will work to make NKDC a climate resilient council, in which our teams and services are prepared for and adapted to climate change.**
- 3. We will empower everyone within NKDC to act to protect and enhance the natural environment, take action to address the climate emergency, and work towards our net zero 2030 targets.**
- 4. We will ensure the decisions we make at all levels consider the climate emergency, reaching net zero, and protecting and enhancing the natural environment.**
- 5. We will ensure that our service delivery and asset management approaches seek to protect and enhance the natural environment, incorporate our climate emergency response, and align with our net zero 2030 targets.**
- 6. We will learn from best practice and use the best available science and information to shape our approach to environmental protection and enhancement, our climate emergency response, and achieving net zero.**
- 7. We will protect and enhance the natural environment, supporting ecosystems, habitats, and biodiversity.**
- 8. We will manage our resource demands effectively, minimise our waste production, and continually seek to minimise the environmental impacts of the resources we use and the waste we generate.**

## Our Environment Policy Principles in More Detail:

The information provided in the following section aims to clarify how to follow each of the principles, including expected behaviours and examples to support this. The examples help explain key aspects of our environmental approach, but these are not exhaustive. For more assistance with this policy, please contact the Sustainability Team.

### **1. We will support and work towards a sustainable net zero future for North Kesteven District Council.**

Principle 1 focuses on activities and behaviours at all levels that support our work towards a sustainable net zero future and aligns strongly with the broader ambitions of our Climate Emergency Strategy and our Climate Emergency Action Plan.

To support this principle:

- Colleagues are encouraged to incorporate efforts to support a just and fair transition to net zero and broader sustainable development into our work, both in terms of our corporate work and the work we undertake across North Kesteven. It is vital to recognise that the impacts of climate change are not felt equally, with the worst impacts disproportionately effecting vulnerable groups.
- We will actively seek to maximise co-benefits in our environmental and climate response activities. This can include social, economic, or health/wellbeing related co-benefits, and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals approach.
- Both adaptation and mitigation approaches are to be used to support our efforts to achieve NKDC's

net zero 2030 target. This is supported by the Our Environment Priority. Mitigation covers actions which control and reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Adaptation covers measures which help us prepare for and become resilient to the effects of climate change (both present and future).

- We will use our local influence to support national and international efforts to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions to limit global temperature rise, an example of such international efforts includes the Paris Agreement.
- We will take urgent action to address the climate emergency and incorporate an avoided impacts approach through which action should be taken now to avoid greater impacts later, this can also help to avoid greater future costs from arising as a result of earlier inaction.
- We will embody the Green Thread, seeking to ensure our individual actions contribute towards achieving NKDC's climate and environmental ambitions.
- We will communicate the progress made in our environmental efforts and climate emergency actions both internally and externally, to help track our journey towards net zero.

## **2. We will work to make NKDC a climate resilient council, in which our teams and services are prepared for and adapted to climate change.**

Principle 2 focuses on team, division, and service level behaviours and actions that help to improve the climate resilience of our operations.

To support this principle:

- Climate emergency risks, referring to risks identified as a result of climate change and the effects of climate change, must be considered in all Service Delivery Plans with measures put in place to minimise and mitigate any identified risks.
- Climate emergency risks to NKDC's activities should be incorporated into the broader risk management approach, for example in the Strategic Risk Register.
- The risks and potential impacts of extreme weather events (for example storms, flooding, heatwaves, and droughts) must be factored into service planning, with attention given to colleague safety and wellbeing whilst ensuring effective service delivery is maintained.
- Adaptations to reduce risks and improve the resilience of NKDC's operations and service delivery should be explored, especially when it will impact positively upon colleague wellbeing.
- Climate emergency risk considerations should be factored into and monitored in all major projects to minimise risk for the present and future.

## **3. We will empower everyone within NKDC to act to protect and enhance the natural environment, take action to address the climate emergency, and work towards our net zero 2030 targets.**

Principle 3 focuses on the importance of our individual actions and behaviours, and the role we each have in supporting our broader environmental efforts, climate emergency response, and net zero ambitions.

To support this principle:

- When travelling on NKDC business, colleagues, contractors, and those who deliver our services must use efficient route planning to minimise excess emissions from transport.

- Colleagues are encouraged, when it is viable and efficient, to use public transport or active travel options to reduce transport emissions.
- All colleagues, contractors, and those delivering NKDC services must not idle vehicles unnecessarily, in accordance with the advice of the Highway Code. This helps to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and to improve local air quality.
- When appropriate, colleagues are encouraged to utilise virtual meetings to help minimise travel emissions.
- Recycling bins are available in our buildings and must be used to sort and separate recycling.
- Colleagues are encouraged to minimise printing for work purposes to reduce paper usage and waste.
- Colleagues are encouraged to lead by example to support other colleagues, partners, and the wider District to take action to address the climate emergency, and to understand the importance of protecting our natural environment.
- Colleagues should support and engage in collaborative and partnership opportunities which complement our efforts to respond to the climate emergency and work towards net zero.

**4. We will ensure the decisions we make at all levels consider the climate emergency, reaching net zero, and protecting and enhancing the natural environment.**

Principle 4 focuses on the importance of considering environmental and climate implications in the decisions we make at all levels, including in our individual decisions.

To support this principle:

- At all levels, colleagues must consider the potential impacts that the decisions we make will have on our climate emergency response and progress towards our 2030 net zero targets.
- Consideration of climate and environmental impacts are to be included in all decisions, including when presenting options and recommendations, and when developing new policies and strategies.
- Decisions made by our teams are expected to actively contribute towards reducing NKDC's CO<sub>2</sub> and Greenhouse Gas emissions in line with our net zero 2030 targets and the Our Environment Priority ambitions.
- When proposing options as part of the decision-making process, colleagues are encouraged to explore low carbon and net zero options and opportunities.
- If barriers are faced which prevent the uptake of low carbon or net zero options as part of our decision-making processes, colleagues are encouraged to raise awareness of these challenges.
- When making environmental decisions, additional consideration must be given to existing or potential social, economic, or wellbeing challenges that may arise. Our actions must seek to prevent negative outcomes which could exacerbate or entrench further challenges, for example fuel poverty.
- Financial decisions should avoid investment in fossil fuels, and look for options which support positive environmental outcomes, including supporting the green economy.

## **5. We will ensure that our service delivery and asset management approaches seek to protect and enhance the natural environment, incorporate our climate emergency response, and align with our net zero 2030 targets.**

Principle 5 focuses on team, division, and service level asset management and service delivery to support our environmental ambitions. We each have a role to play in this, and the Asset Management Group are expected to support and champion the implementation of these activities.

To support this principle:

- All relevant teams, colleagues, contractors, and those who deliver our services are expected to provide accurate and timely energy and fuel usage information to support NKDC's annual Greenhouse Gas emissions calculations. This is essential for monitoring of our emissions reduction efforts and our progress towards net zero.
- All colleagues, teams and services must actively work to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions generated from NKDC's buildings and operations, for example through the uptake of energy efficiency measures.
- All NKDC capital projects are to be built to the relevant net zero emissions standards or approved alternative specifications, for example adhering to the CO<sub>2</sub>-sy Homes Standard.
- When considering options for materials, whether for new projects or refurbishment, options with better environmental credentials should be favoured, for example, options with lower embodied carbon or lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- All NKDC buildings are to use 100% certified renewable electricity tariffs.
- Energy efficiency and emission reduction measures should be incorporated into the design of projects to help future-proof our assets. For example, by minimising the energy and heating demands of a building or by future-proofing electrical connections to enable Electric Vehicle chargepoints to be installed more easily in the future.
- Opportunities to install renewable energy generation measures, for example solar photovoltaic panels, are actively encouraged to support the reduction of NKDC's Greenhouse Gas emissions.
- During the feasibility stages, all new renewable energy generation projects should consider and incorporate battery storage options to maximise efficiency of renewable generation.
- Options appraisals should highlight methods for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> and Greenhouse Gas emissions and should explore net-zero aligned options.
- Equipment replacement plans should seek to utilise net zero/low carbon options as much as is viable.
- Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles options appraisals must be conducted for all vehicle purchases.
- Measures to improve water efficiency, reduce water wastage, and reduce associated energy usage must be considered within routine maintenance and replacement cycles for our assets and when designing new buildings.
- Appliances provided or replaced by NKDC should be the highest efficiency that is viable to minimise energy demands.
- New and replacement lighting installations must use LEDs to minimise power consumption; motion activated lighting options should also be considered where appropriate.

- When appropriate funding opportunities arise, we should seek to access, support others to access, or signpost schemes which assist with energy efficiency and emission reduction measures.
- NKDC business travel is to be monitored and efforts to reduce our transport related emissions should be supported. For example, this could include supporting colleagues to efficiently plan routes to minimise excess emissions, reducing the need for business travel, or where appropriate and viable by supporting the use of public transport or active travel options.

## **6. We will learn from best practice and use the best available science and information to shape our approach to environmental protection and enhancement, our climate emergency response, and achieving net zero.**

Principle 6 focuses on the importance of using scientific evidence and best practice to help inform our activities at all levels as we work towards our environmental ambitions.

To support this principle:

- Our environmental and climate response activities will take a science-based approach and be informed by the best available science, including seeking expert advice when necessary.
- Projects and activities should seek to incorporate elements of good and best practice and should also seek to act as best practice examples both within NKDC and to others.
- Colleagues are expected to support and engage in internal knowledge sharing, including lessons learned and best practice, to assist and support our continued climate and environmental activities and help inform our evolving approach.
- Within NKDC, we will share and sign-post relevant information and opportunities to help support our environmental and climate activities. For example, this could include sharing information on encouraging the growth of the green economy and associated jobs, or the growth of the circular economy to reduce waste.
- Partnership and collaborative working should be supported to supplement and enhance NKDC's climate emergency and environmental activities, helping to support a sustainable and flourishing future for North Kesteven as a whole.
- Colleagues are encouraged to contribute suggestions to inform the annual updates of our Climate Emergency Action Plan by the Sustainability Team. These suggestions will be considered as part of our Climate Emergency Action Plan review process.

## **7. We will protect and enhance the natural environment, supporting ecosystems, habitats, and biodiversity.**

Principle 7 focuses on our environmental approach to activities and behaviours that span all levels of NKDC.

All legislation and statutory requirements in relation to environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and enhancement, pollution management, and other related environmental subjects must be followed, and in no way are the principles of this policy intended to infringe upon this.

To support this principle:

- We will support the improvement of ecological and habitat networks and prevent habitat fracture, for example by supporting the interconnection of green infrastructure in areas within NKDC's control, and by supporting biodiversity net gain in accordance with all legislation.

- Within our areas of influence, we will seek to enhance the natural environment and support the sustained delivery of ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are direct and indirect positive benefits which the natural environment provides for people. These services are categorised as provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting. They are often referred to in natural capital approaches.
- Our actions and decisions should seek to support and protect pollinators (including bees, moths, butterflies, and other insects and animals) and their associated habitats as they are vital to the resilience of a healthy and biodiverse ecosystem.
- We will support the resilience of the natural environment, for example by supporting native species and reporting invasive species, by ensuring the right tree is planted in the right place, and by supporting diversity in our own planting to help support habitat resilience.
- We will include measures to prevent environmental damage in our operations. Environmental damage refers to any activities which disrupt natural processes or negatively impact upon habitats, plants, animals, other living organisms, land, air, and water. Sources of environmental damage include Greenhouse Gas emissions, chemical pollution, air pollution, land degradation, nitrogen and phosphorous loading, and exploitation of natural resources including water. Greenhouse Gas emissions contribute to climate change, cause ocean acidification, and cause ozone layer damage.
- We will use the internationally recognised environmental protection principles to help inform our internal approach to environmental protection and enhancement, these are outlined below.
  - i. The integration principle – environmental protection and enhancement considerations should be integrated into all we do.
  - ii. The prevention principle – we must take preventative measures to anticipate environmental damage risks and take action to stop damage from occurring.
  - iii. The rectification at source principle – environmental damage should be addressed at the source to resolve the problem and reduce the need to act on the effects later or further away.
  - iv. The polluter pays principle – those responsible for causing environmental damage are to be held accountable for the costs of repairing the damage in a proportional manner. This is to prevent the cost of repairs being unfairly left to those suffering from the effects of the damage. A local example of this includes prosecution and fines for fly tipping.
  - v. The precautionary principle – where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, the lack of full scientific certainty of the risks is not a valid reason to postpone cost-effective measures to prevent environmental damage from occurring.

**8. We will manage our resource demands effectively, minimise our waste production, and continually seek to minimise the environmental impacts of the resources we use and the waste we generate.**

Principle 8 focuses on how colleagues can support effective resource usage and management, and how we can all work to help reduce the amount of waste NKDC produce.

To support this principle:

- Waste produced by NKDC operations should be minimised and handled in accordance with the waste hierarchy, i.e. reduce waste as much as possible, reuse materials as much as possible, and recycle items which cannot be reduced or reused.
- All colleagues and those who deliver our services must actively work to reduce and minimise the quantity of waste produced, must try to improve the quality of recycling generated, and must prevent contamination of our waste and recycling bins.

- The usage of plastic is to be minimised and single use plastic items are to be avoided as much as possible, except where required on medical, accessibility, or safety grounds.
- If single use/disposable items are used, options which are recyclable or biodegradable, and preferably made of recycled materials, should be favoured.
- Printing designated for inside use should not be laminated to minimise unnecessary plastic usage.
- Appropriately licensed organisations must be used to dispose of, recycle, or repurpose unwanted items. Special care should be given to the disposal of appliances which contain hazardous waste, for example fridges contain CFCs which are highly damaging Greenhouse Gases.
- Unwanted reusable items which remain in working order should be offered to others before being recycled or disposed of to minimise waste. For example, laptops which are no longer needed but remain in working order could be auctioned off to colleagues, items could also be donated to charitable groups.

## Policy Implementation, Monitoring, and Review:

This policy is to be implemented by all colleagues and across all services to inform our activities and the decisions we make. The policy will be shared with colleagues through various internal communication channels, with support provided by the Sustainability Team. This policy will be reviewed every two years, or more frequently in the instance of significant legislative or organisational change. All legislation and statutory requirements in relation to environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and enhancement, pollution management, and other related environmental subjects must be followed, and in no way should the principles of this policy infringe upon this.

The primary monitoring mechanism for this policy is our annual corporate Greenhouse Gas emissions calculations. This sits with the Sustainability Team and is integrated within existing reporting channels to monitor progress towards our net zero 2030 target. Monitoring of policy implementation will also be supported through colleague engagement and feedback, with Sustainability Impact Assessments supplementing this, as much of this policy focuses on encouraging environmentally conscious behaviours rather than monitoring specific project outcomes. The Sustainability Team welcome any feedback or suggestions for improving this policy.

## Additional Information:

- For more information on the Green Thread, please see the [NK Plan](#).
- For more information on sustainable development and the 2030 vision for a District of flourishing communities, please see the [Our Community Strategy](#).
- Please see the Climate Emergency Strategy for more information on our approach to addressing the climate emergency, working towards a just transition to net zero, and our net zero 2030 targets.
- Please see our Climate Emergency Action Plan for more information on the specific actions we are taking to address the climate emergency.
- For more information on our open spaces and trees, please see the Open Space Strategy and Tree Strategy, available [here](#).
- For more information on invasive plant species please see national guidance [here](#) and [here](#).
- Please see guidance [here](#) for more information on local authorities' duties in regard to conserving biodiversity.
- More information on the Environment Act 2021, is available [here](#).



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