



Executive Summary: Annual Report 2024 - 2025

Environmental Strategy:

Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Foreword

The climate and ecological emergency remains challenging and important, especially in the current global political environment. At Watford Borough Council we're working hard to address it by bringing our residents and businesses together to take collective action. We continue to invest in green spaces and encourage active travel. We have also reduced our total waste, however, we need to do more to tackle the scale of borough wide emissions.

This report sets out our progress to date, actions going forward and helps to highlight the scale of the challenge ahead. We need bolder national action and resourcing. To succeed we need everyone within the borough to take action to help address this generation defining issue.



Peter Taylor
Elected Mayor
of Watford



Cllr Ian Stotesbury
Portfolio Holder for
Transport and
Sustainability

Introduction

In March 2023 the Council approved the Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030 and its associated delivery plan. The strategy set out targets and approaches under the two themes of *Leading by Example* and *People Power*; and four sustainability topics: *Achieving Net Zero*, *Nature and Ecological Restoration*, *Responsible Resource Use* and *Adapting to Change*.

The strategy also sets out an approach to report and inform people on our progress in delivering our objectives.

This report forms part of our second annual report. It discusses how we are performing, our proposals for going forward and how you can help.

Overarching targets and performance

In the Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency 2023-2030 we set out 5 overarching targets to give an overview of how the Council and the Borough are progressing on the road to addressing the climate and ecological emergency.

Overarching target - 2030	Actual 2024 - 2025	2025 target	2027 target	2030 target
Council's own carbon emissions to be net zero	8.3% reduction from 2019 baseline	22% reduction from 2019 baseline	40% reduction	75% reduction
	0% offset	6% offset	11%	25%
Council's own waste reduced to near zero	163 tonnes office waste 45% being recycled	60% of waste recycled	70% recycled	Waste reduced to near zero
30% by area of our green spaces to be managed to support nature	42.4%	20% by 2025* (target exceeded)		30%* (Target exceeded)
Do everything in our power to achieve net zero borough carbon emissions	372.9k tonnes CO ₂ e (2022) - 12.7% decrease on baseline	50% reduction**	65% reduction**	Net zero
Do everything in our power to reduce waste by 50%, and recycle at least 60% of said waste	49.6% (2023/24)		54% of waste recycled by 2027	60% recycled
	6% reduction in total waste	TBC***	TBC***	50% reduction

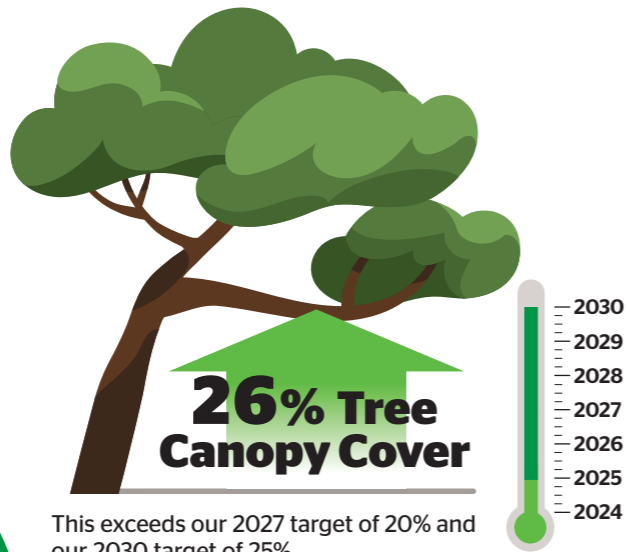
* Target reviewed and updated in Delivery Plan 2025 - 2027

** Target based on the Tyndall Centre's proposed reductions to achieve a just transition.

*** Target to be developed as the National Resources and Waste Strategy is rolled out.



This exceeds our 2030 target and we have updated the target in our next Delivery Plan.



This exceeds our 2027 target of 20% and our 2030 target of 25%.

Council Carbon Emissions
2,043 tonnes CO₂e

- 8.3% reduction from 2019

This includes all emissions in our control (scope 1 and 2) and some emissions from services provided by others but which are part of the Council's remit e.g. contracted out services like the leisure centres.

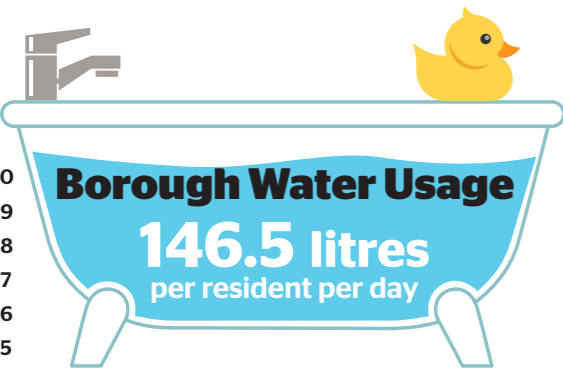
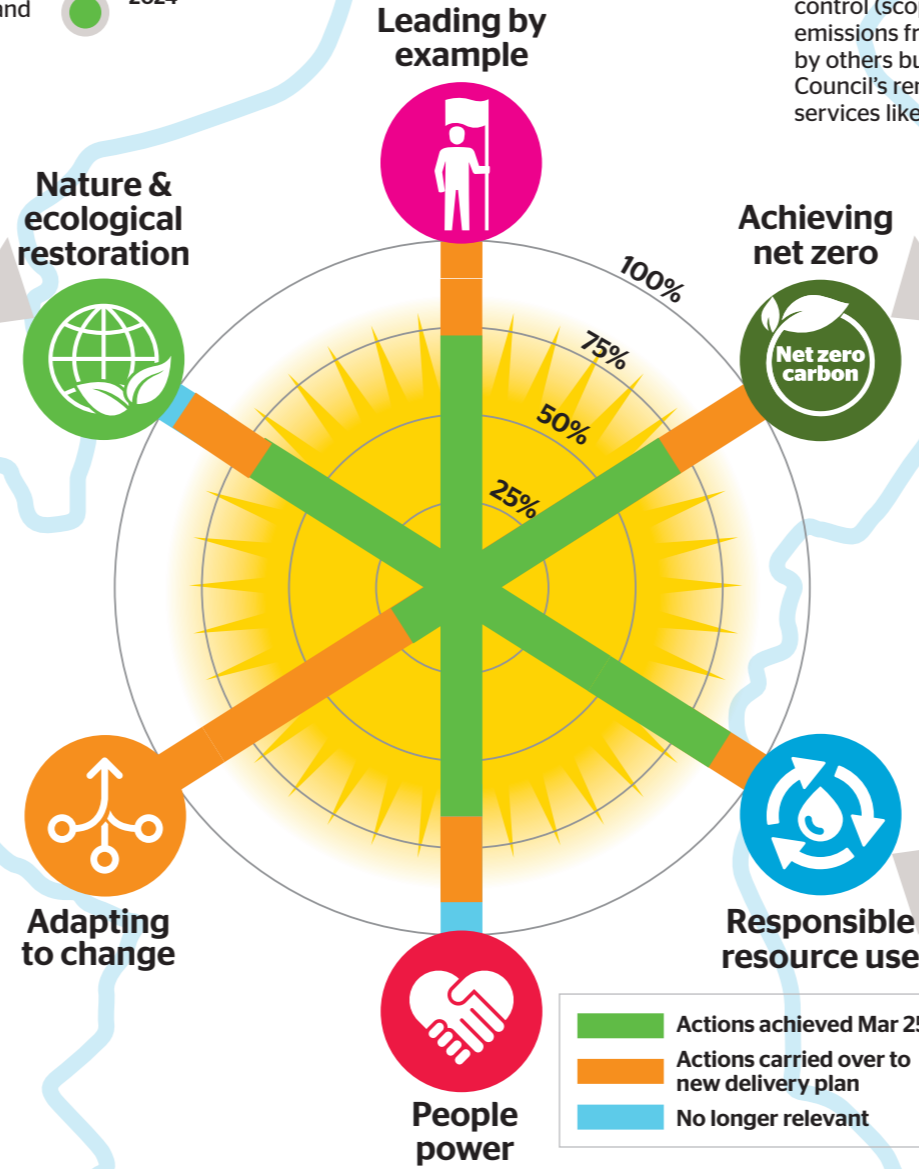
Borough Carbon Emissions

- 11% reduction from 2019

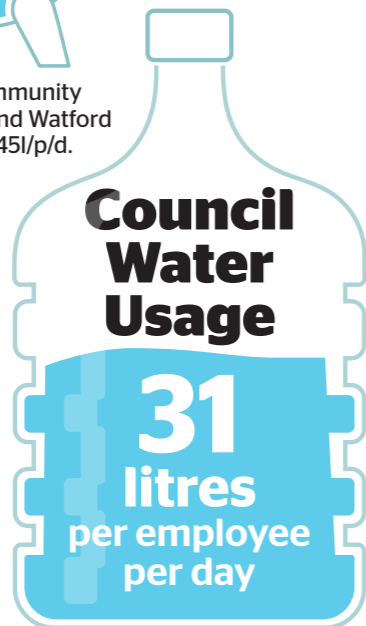
372.9 k tonnes CO₂e

This is based on 2023 Government data (latest available). To achieve the net zero target by 2030 will require joint effort and collaboration by all stakeholders.

ACTIONS DELIVERED 2023 - 2025 (%)



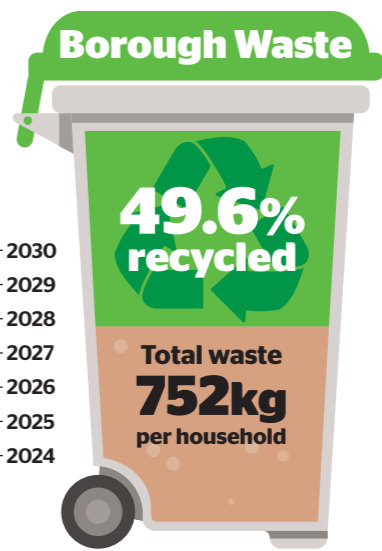
Based on Affinity Water's Colne Community catchment usage, which goes beyond Watford boundaries. Our target for 2025 is 145l/p/d.



Our 2030 target is 12 l/p/d for council offices.

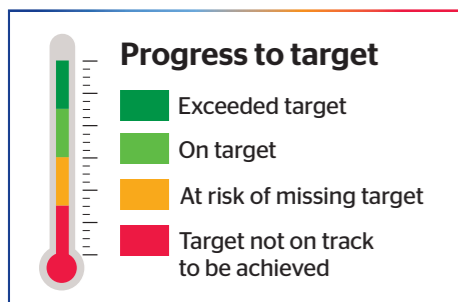


This is a proxy measure based on a waste audit and scaled for the year. It will be used to compare future council waste generation and set interim targets.



This is based on 2023/24 data (latest available). Our 2027 target is 54% of waste recycled, while also reducing overall waste.

Targets and Progress



Going forward



Carbon emissions

The Council is moving towards its Net Zero emissions for the Council, and continues to review how it can improve its buildings. The Town Hall and Colosseum decarbonisation work is now complete and the Colosseum opened in August 2025. Carbon emissions will be included in our updated emissions and we will continue to seek to improve the operation and management of our buildings. Three more buildings are being decarbonised with PSDS funding and additionally rooftop solar photovoltaics will be investigated for installation on a number of buildings. Further work in this financial year will be on staff and business travel and on water use. The Borough emissions have reduced but there is more work to be done. The Council is working on transport initiatives, however it needs action from residents, businesses and communities.

Achieving net zero for both the Council and the Borough is likely to require significant investment and progress will also be influenced by national policy and funding.



Water usage

In Hertfordshire we are one of the highest water users in the UK, in one of the drier regions. The Council is working to

understand and improve its water usage, and will continue to engage with water companies to help residents reduce their water use.



Biodiversity

The Council is developing its Green Spaces Strategy to help ensure the quality of our green spaces both for residents and nature. We are also working with Hertfordshire County Council on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which along with biodiversity net gain requirements will help to improve biodiversity in the borough and surrounding area. We will also continue our work on the Rediscovering the River Colne Project, implementing the Cassiobury Wetlands management plan and managing all our green spaces effectively.



Waste

The Council is working both to reduce its waste and also to help residents and businesses to do their bit. The Government is bringing in new requirements for recycling which will be implemented by 2027, and by 2025 for some businesses. This will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to recycle more, whether at home or at work.

What can you do to help?



Individuals

- Leave the car at home if you can – walk, cycle or get public transport (see www.watford.gov.uk/green-transport). This also makes it easier for those who have to drive, such as those with disabilities.
- Reduce your emissions at home – can you improve the efficiency of your home? Turn things off when they're not in use? Reduce how much you heat your home (while staying comfortable) or the appliances you use? Install renewables? For energy advice go to www.bhbh.org.uk
- Don't leave the tap running, use water efficient cycles, run the washing machine / dishwasher when full, when changing appliances, choose water efficient ones, along with low flow taps and aerated showers.
- Create a resilient garden, which doesn't need lots of watering, use a water butt if you can, use a watering can instead of a hose.
- Create a wildlife friendly garden – allow holes in fences for hedgehogs, add bug hotels, leave spaces untended to encourage bugs and wildlife, plant native species, be careful not to disturb creatures, such as over wintering insects, hedgehogs, etc.
- Take litter home – litter can cause serious harm to wildlife as well as looking unsightly.
- Think about how you can reduce the amount of waste you create – do you need to buy a new item now? Can it be reused by someone else? Can you repair rather than replace? Can you (or someone else) upcycle it? Can you decline or reuse packaging?
- Reduce food waste where you can and use the food waste collection or home composting where you can't.



Businesses

- Sign up to the Sustainability Commitments of the Watford Business Pledge.
- Monitor your energy and water use.
- Look for the quick wins and get everyone on board. When doing maintenance move to more sustainable options.
- Manage any green spaces for nature, allowing access for small mammals, thinking about the planting, leaving parts 'untidy' for the bugs and thinking about what chemicals (if any) you use on the area.
- Encourage staff to travel in a more sustainable way, i.e. walking, cycling, public transport, car sharing.
- Implement the new 'simple recycling' requirements and encourage staff to reduce, reuse and recycle.



Community groups

- Look at the business actions you can do.
- Work with your members and local community to see what actions you can all take.



Around the Borough

- Can you volunteer? There are volunteer opportunities with the Rediscovering the River Colne Project: www.rivercolnewatford.co.uk and at Cassiobury Wetlands: www.friendsforcassioburypark.org.uk
- You can find a list of environmental groups in Watford with everything from waste and recycling to nature and volunteering to travel and transport to energy and campaigning: www.greenwatford.uk/connections



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

For more information

 www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford  sustainability@watford.gov.uk