

Watford Environmental Strategy: Addressing the Environmental and Ecological Emergency

Delivery Plan 2023-2025

Annual Report 2023-24



Foreword

“The climate and ecological emergency remains challenging and important. At Watford Borough Council we’re working hard to address it by bringing our residents and businesses together to take collective action.

“We’ve invested in green spaces, improved our recycling rates and encouraged active travel, but we need to better understand the scale of tackling 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

Councillor Ian Stotesbury

Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability

Introduction

The Environmental Strategy: Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency 2023-2030 was approved in March 2023, along with the first two year delivery plan. The strategy set out overarching targets as well as specific targets under two themes:

- Leading by Example
- People Power

And four topics:

- Achieving Net Zero
- Nature and Ecological Restoration
- Responsible Resource Use
- Adapting to Change

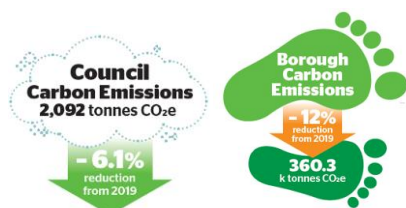
In the adopted strategy we committed to annual external reporting, covering the following:

- Carbon emissions – for both the Council and the borough, and showing how this is performing against target
- Water usage for the borough and the Council
- Biodiversity – initially this will relate to the amount of green space managed for nature and the canopy cover. Once the new green spaces strategy is developed with an appropriate metric, we will incorporate that into this strategy
- Waste
- Progress on delivery plan

The report is the first annual report under the strategy, covering 2023-24, unless stated otherwise.

Progress by Area

Carbon Emissions:



The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, and set a net zero target for both its own operations by 2030 and to work with other towards the Borough achieving net zero by the same target date.

The Council has calculated its carbon emissions using the Local Government Association (LGA) Greenhouse Accounting tool and DESNZ conversion factors to calculate its carbon emissions. These include scope 1 (direct fossil fuel used in operations e.g. gas heating, fuel for vehicles etc.), scope 2 (indirect fossil fuels used in operation e.g. electricity) and some scope 3 (this is energy use outside the direct control of the council and includes leased assets and contracted out services).

A baseline study was completed for 2019, which is used in the Environmental Strategy. Data for some of the baseline emissions have been reviewed and updated, and so an updated baseline of emissions of 2228 tonnes CO₂e is now being used. As we improve the emissions we can collect we are introducing them to the scope 3 emissions. Therefore, there is a comparison to the 2019 baseline, which is what our target is based on, and additional carbon calculations and ultimate reductions based on the additional activities we are able to include.

The council scope 1 and 2 emissions reduced by 15.5% in 2023/24 compared to the 2019 baseline, however they only reduced by 6.1% when baseline scope 3 emissions are included. The target is to reduce scope 1, 2 and baseline scope 3 emissions by 22% by 2025.

This will require significant resources and investment, however our current audits of leased assets are setting us back on the road towards achieving this. To implement the recommendations from the audits will require significant resourcing in the short term, but should lend itself to lower running costs, and be more resilient to climate change impacts. External funding will be required to deliver on this and has yet to be secured. We have produced a standalone Greenhouse gas emissions report for Watford, which is attached as Appendix C.

Borough emissions are calculated by DESNZ, 2 years in arrears, with the latest figures published in July 2024. The table below shows our performance, how it compares to the rest of Hertfordshire and to the UK.

Emissions by Area (tonnes)	2019	2020	2021	2022
Borough emissions (DESNZ)	412.6 k	396.7 k	417.3 k	360.3 k
Borough emissions in LA influence (DESNZ)*	326.0 k	289.1 k	303.0 k	281.1 k
Herts emissions ¹	6356.6 k	5740.5 k	5940.6 k	5634.9 k
UK emissions	417.1 m	377.3 m	395.9 m	375.9 m
Emissions per capita	2019	2020	2021	2022
Borough (DESNZ)	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.5
Herts ¹	5.3	4.8	4.9	4.7
England ¹	5.8	5.2	5.4	5.1

* Carbon dioxide emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities, e.g. excluding transport emissions from motorways. For more information see <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a67cc37a4c230013bba230/2005-21-local-authority-ghg-emissions-statistical-release-update-060723.pdf> page 29-30

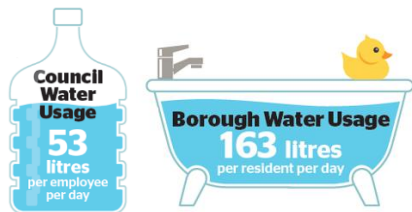
¹ Information from Herts Insight: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/herts-insight/topics/environment-and-sustainability.aspx>

Borough emissions have reduced by 12.7% since 2019, with the most significant reduction being in transport (40%), with our current transport emissions being similar to those during the pandemic in 2020. The most significant reductions in the last year are waste management and domestic, with the latter likely being due to cut backs due to the cost of living and people returning to the office more.

Even with our current performance there is more we can do:

- Leave the car at home if you can – walk, cycle or get public transport. This also makes it easier for those who have to drive, such as those with disabilities.
- Reduce your emissions – can you improve the efficiency of your home / building? Turn things off when not using? Reduce how much you heat you use (while keeping comfortable) or the appliances you use? Install renewables?
- At work – large or small, can you create a ‘green approach’? Sign up to the sustainability aspects of the Watford Business Pledge?

Water



The Council has committed to reducing its own water use to 12 l/p/day (excluding water usage for parks etc.) and to support residents reduce water usage to 110 l/p/d, with an interim target of 145 l/p/d. Water usage has both an ecological impact and a carbon impact. The latter is due to the processing of water and sewage. We are in a low rainfall region and also much of our water is from ground sources, which can directly affect our chalk and chalk fed streams.

We are significantly away from target for both the Council and Borough water use.

The Council is working towards improving how it monitors water use for its buildings. This will help us understand where major water usage is, and so take action to reduce this. It will also be able to determine if there are any undetected leaks. While South Staffs Water suggests 50 l/p/d is average, CIRIA data puts this as much lower classing above 27 l/p/d as excessive. The key action for 24/25 is to get a better understanding of our water usage and to create a specific action plan to address it. This will allow us to set interim targets going forward.

Borough water usage is currently only available as part of Affinity Water’s Colne Community area (see map) and therefore does not represent accurately water use in the borough or reflect if we are making improvements. The Council is looking at how it can get more accurate data.



However, there are still many things which residents in Watford can do to reduce their water usage, such as:

- In the home: don't leave the tap running, use water efficient appliances/ cycles, run the washing machine / dishwasher when full, when changing appliances, choose water efficient ones, along with low flow taps and aerated showers etc.
- In the garden: plant resilient plants, which don't need lots of watering, use a water butt if you can, use a watering can rather than a hose, a hose rather than a sprinkler.
- At work: Are you monitoring your water use? If not this is a good place to start. Also look for easy wins, such as old, large toilet cisterns, taps left running, drips and leaks etc.

Biodiversity



The UK is one of the most biodiversity depleted countries in the world, consistently ranking in the bottom 10% in terms of biodiversity intactness, and the southeast particularly so.

Watford, especially as an urban borough, is fortunate in the amount and quality of green space residents have access to – 17 green flag parks this year. The Council is working on making sure the spaces it manages includes spaces for nature. It is also increasing its tree planting, which improves biodiversity, provides shading, and absorbs carbon. It has significantly exceeded its space managed for nature target and has also exceeded its tree planting target. In addition, the Council is now developing a Green Spaces Strategy, which will ensure that biodiversity, and connectivity for species, is maintained and, where practicable, enhanced.

How can you help?

- Take litter home – litter can cause serious harm to wildlife as well as looking unsightly and requiring extra work from the council which could be spent better elsewhere.
- If you have a garden- at home or at work – allow holes in fences so hedgehogs can move between them, 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.
- Volunteer - on one of the local projects, such as the Rediscovering the River Colne project or the Cassiobury Wetlands project; or with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.
- Consider how you can make your neighbourhood a wilderhood (<https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-communities/watford>)

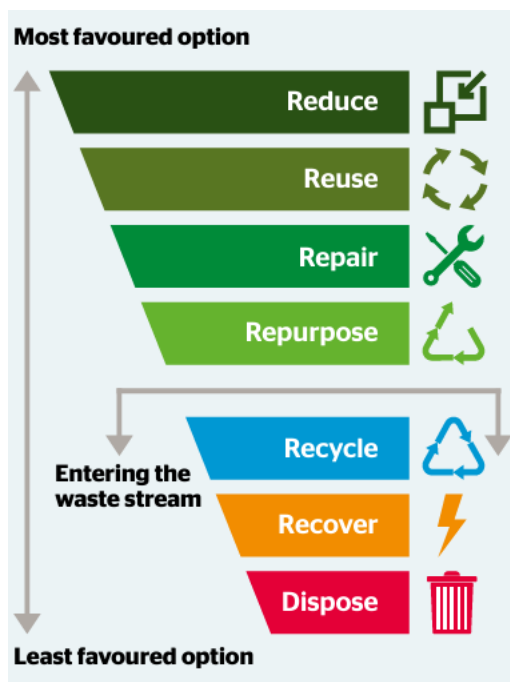
Waste



Waste has a major environmental impact, in terms of processing the waste, but also in terms of creating the product which is now waste in the first place. It is good practice to reduce the materials going into the waste stream, as shown in the diagram. If the item is no longer usable in any form then ideally it would be recycled.

The Council has started monitoring its waste, and has improved the recycling labelling in its offices to encourage more recycling, along with working with partners to achieve the same thing. We now have a baseline for performance over future years. This includes the market waste. For our main office space in the Annex, this equates to 79kg/employee annually or approximately 0.3 kg/ employee/ day.

As a Borough, our total residual waste was 765kg per household for 2022/23, which is 2nd lowest in Hertfordshire (Welwyn and Hatfield was 763kg/household). This also represents a 5% decrease since 2019. Our recycling rate is also above 50% at 50.2% but is slightly lower than 2022/23's rate of 51.7%. Rates for 2023/24 will be available in the Autumn 2024.



The Government has now brought in actions to reduce the use of single use plastic and improve recycling. By end of March 2026 all councils will need to be collecting paper and card, plastic, glass, metal, food waste and garden waste as curb side collection. In addition, businesses, schools and hospitals will need to be doing the same with the exception of garden waste, on a staggered timeframe, giving smaller organisations time to put this in place.

What can you do to help?

- Think about how you can reduce the amount of waste you create – do you need it, or are you ok for now? If replacing something, 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?
- Where you can't reduce or reuse, recycle wherever possible – make the most of the kerb side recycling, check what you can recycle when you buy things (particularly with packaging)
- Can you help set up or run a repair café? Can you share tools and

equipment with neighbours so you don't all need to own them, or work with others to set up a local 'library of things'?

Progress to Target

The Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency sets out the Council's approach to addressing the climate and ecological emergency from 2023-2030. This section sets out how we are performing in each of the two themes and 4 topics, against the targets and actions in the Delivery Plan 2023-25. Progress has been assessed on whether the action:

- has been achieved,
- will be achieved by the end of the delivery plan period or
- if it is an area we need to review. Some actions have been delayed until the next delivery plan period to tie in with other planned activities, while others have been superseded, e.g. by new government legislation. Ones we intend to complete this delivery plan period we will review to ensure appropriate action is taken.

In addition, we set out 5 overarching targets, the progress to date can be seen in the table below:

Overarching target - 2030	Actual 2023 - 2024	2025 target	2027 target	2030 target
Council's own carbon emissions to be net zero	6.1% 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	143 tonnes office waste 50% 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	360.3 k 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	50.2% (2022/23)		54% of waste recycled by 2027	60% recycled
	5% reduction in total waste	TBC***	TBC***	50% reduction

* Target to be reviewed and updated in Delivery Plan 2025 - 2027

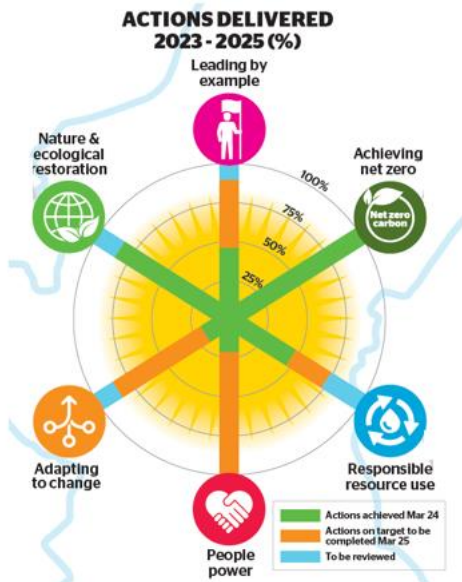
** Target based on the Tyndall Centre's proposed reductions to achieve a just transition.

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

Key	■ Exceeded target	■ On target	■ At risk of missing target	■ Target not on track to be achieved
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Appendix B shows all targets, actions and progress. Below sets out the summary and highlights of this.

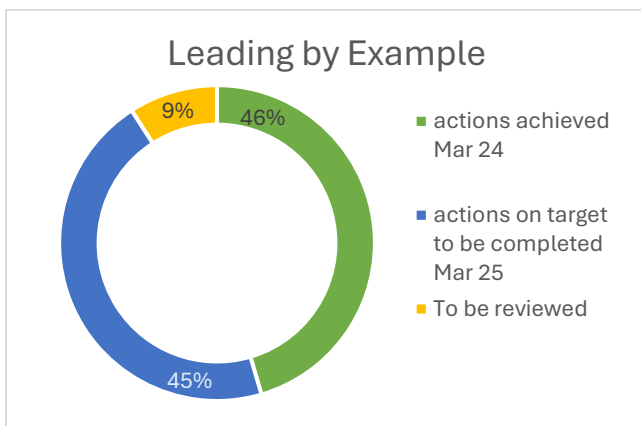
A summary of progress is shown in the graphic below:



Leading by Example

To achieve the Council’s aims requires working across the council and beyond. The Council seeks to lead by example, both in its approach to addressing the climate and ecological emergency, and also in its approach to working with others: to enable, facilitate and inspire others in these areas. The Council Plan 2022-2026 includes as its second theme: A greener, brighter future; setting out its commitment to addressing these issues.

This section contains 10 targets, with 11 actions set out in the delivery plan, of these 5 have been achieved (including ongoing activities which were achieved for 2023-24) and 5 are expected to be achieved by the end of 24/25. The remaining one will be reviewed to determine the actions required to deliver.



Highlights on progress include:

- Development of the Watford Wheel to consider environmental and other sustainability issues as projects and strategies are developed. It has been introduced into the project management process and agreed to be used in the options appraisal process. It has also been approved to be used in CMB reports initially, with its impact to be reviewed and adapted if necessary to be included in the full reporting structure ultimately.
- ESG policy adopted as part of the Council’s Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24.
- Watford was shortlisted in 2024 for the Visa ‘Let’s Celebrate Towns’ Award in the Sustainability Category.

- Watford Borough Council is the leading district in Herts in the UK Climate Scorecards published in 2023 and 19th among all district councils across the UK.

Areas to be reviewed:

- Development of policy on environmental requirements for joint venture or Council property development projects has not yet been taken forward. This will be reviewed with the property team, and an approach agreed.

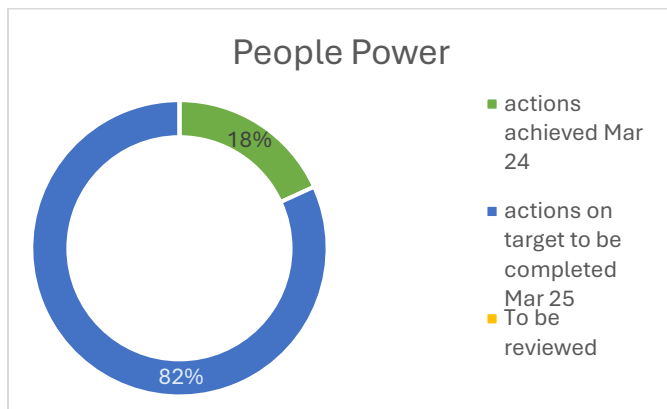
Spotlight: Climate Change Training

The Council now has a mandatory e-learning module on climate change, and one will follow on the Environmental Strategy. In addition, since September 2023 the Council has been running internal carbon literacy training, based on the Carbon Literacy Project requirements. So far 4 courses have been run and 20 people have been certified as carbon literate, including senior management. Some officers attending the course decided not to complete their evidence forms, so while they are trained they are not included in these figures. Others have subsequently left the Council.

People Power

While Leading by Example sets out what the Council will do, People Power is about how we encourage the whole community to get involved. In the subsequent sustainability topics targets are divided into Leading By Example and People Power, but here are the more general targets we have set to get the whole borough engaged.

This section contains 7 targets, with 11 actions set out in the delivery plan, of these 2 have been achieved (including ongoing activities which were achieved for 2023-24) and 9 are expected to be achieved by the end of 24/25.



Highlights on progress include:

- Successful participation in Great Big Green Week in June 2023, with a fully booked family film event, encouraging people to send us 'Postcards to the Future, a litter pick, our Environmental Managers Network meeting held during the week to promote the initiatives and participating in the Green Market. For 2024 we ran a family film, film and panel, clothes swap and stall at the Green festival.
- Our ongoing work with residents in Watford to support them in improving the energy efficiency of their homes.
- The development of the Watford Pledge, with sustainability as part of it.
- The Council has funding to support local businesses on achieving Net Zero Carbon, and our partner, Wenta, has worked with 327 to date, with ongoing work planned for 2024/25.

Areas to be reviewed:

- Developing of the people power portal to support households in reducing their environmental impacts. The Council was not successful in its funding bid, so is currently seeking alternative approaches.

Spotlight on Business Pledge

The Environmental Strategy set targets for getting businesses to act on the climate and ecological emergency. The Economic Development Team have developed a Business Pledge addressing five key themes: local employment, local supply chains, good business practices, community support and environmental sustainability.

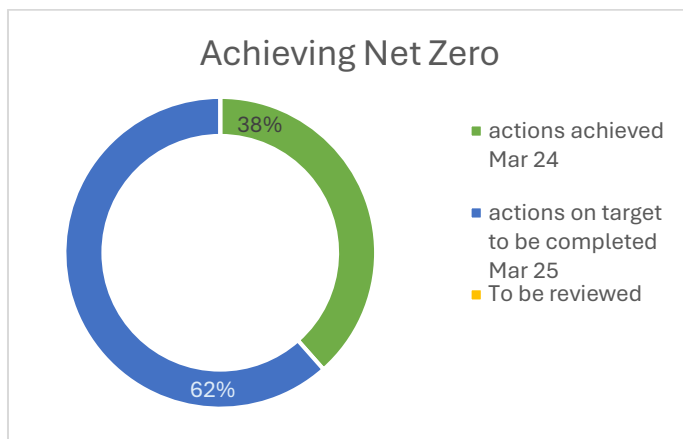
The Environmental Sustainability theme asks businesses to commit to net zero and provides extensive guidance on how to measure greenhouse gas emissions and set a net zero target and action plan.

The Pledge was launched at a sold-out Business Connect event in July 2024, held at Regal's The Clarendon Works.

Achieving Net Zero

This section has targets for both the Council and Borough, the latter we seek to influence where we can as we have minimal control. For the Council targets, issues include looking at our transport, both commuting and business travel, as well as our building energy.

This section contains 12 targets, with 13 actions set out in the delivery plan, of these 5 have been achieved (including ongoing activities which were achieved for 2023-24) and 8 are expected to be achieved by the end of 24/25. There are no actions to be reviewed.



Highlights on progress include:

- We have reduced our emissions by 6.1% compared to 2019/20 and we continue to improve our managing and monitoring of emissions.
- Formulating a sustainable asset strategy for the entire community asset portfolio, which will enable us to determine how to prioritise investment in building stock to improve carbon performance. This will also prepare us for future decarbonisation funding bidding rounds.
- Secured Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding to improve the energy efficiency of three buildings within the community asset portfolio, to be delivered with match funding from the Council.
- Expansion of Beryl Bike scheme into surrounding boroughs, and contract extended in Watford for a further 2 years.
- Launch of e-car club (see spotlight below).

- The Council continues to support residents in decarbonising their homes in the borough. Council grants and loans support Energy Company monies for insulating and heating improvements. The Council was recognised for its work in 2023’s London Energy Efficiency Awards. (<https://www.watford.gov.uk/news/article/414/council-recognised-in-this-year-s-london-energy-efficiency-awards-2023>)
- Social housing schemes continue to decarbonise homes at pace in the borough following Watford’s successful part in a £40m scheme (split across 3 Housing Associations). Works are set to upgrade insulation to 463 homes in Watford.
- Successful funding bid to the Swimming Pool Support fund for solar panels to help decarbonise Woodside Leisure Centre.
- Integration of Environmental Sustainability in agreements with commissioned voluntary sector partners.

Areas to review:

- Increase in emissions of the leisure centres. This now constitutes 48% of our emissions up from 37% in 2019/20 and 44% in 2022/23, and has increased in real terms by approximately 90 tonnes CO₂ in the last year. Energy audits have been carried out to understand the change, especially as they have low carbon systems already in place. However, as mentioned above, funding has been secured for photovoltaics at one of the leisure centres, which will help to mitigate this.
- Emissions from our fleet. This is another major emitter, and we are developing a fleet strategy, as well as reviewing the implications of the simpler recycling changes which will impact waste collection routes and rounds. As part of this we will commission a study on decarbonising our waste fleet.
- Business travel, although this is a small amount in comparison to the other issues. As part of the travel plan, and working with HR, we will look at how we might improve this. Currently business travel only includes car use, and this is likely to have increased post covid as people are more hesitant to use public transport.

Spotlight: Alternatives to the private car:

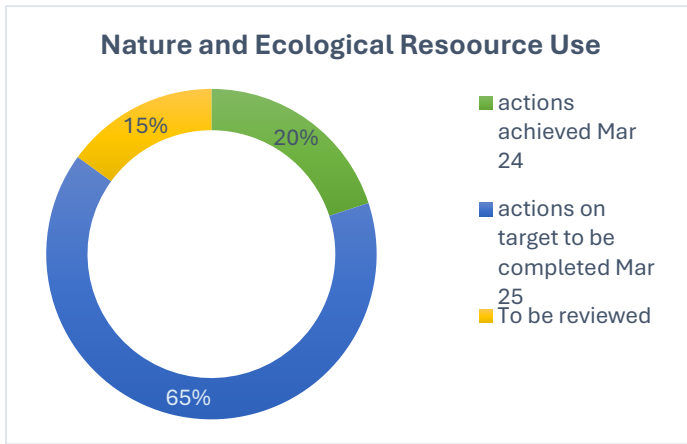
Watford Council launched Beryl Bikes in 2020, a pay by the minute cycle hire, and now has over 70 bays within the Borough, with approximately 200 bikes and a further 100 e-bikes. The Council is working with neighbouring councils to expand the bike network, and it has recently been expanded into Hertsmere Borough Council in the Bushey area, and a planned extension into Croxley Green, working with Three Rivers District Council.

To complement Beryl Bikes, the Council has recently launched its e-car club, an hourly or daily hire scheme, with initially 4 cars in bays around Watford town centre, bays planned in a number of new developments and with the intention to expand as usage grows.

Nature and Ecological Restoration

As mentioned previously, the UK is depleted of biodiversity. The UK is home to 85% of the world’s chalk rivers, unique habitats of which two run through Watford: the Rivers Colne and Gade, both of which are in ‘moderate’ condition as assessed under the water framework directive. To halt biodiversity loss requires effective policy and strategy to deliver spatial planning, protection, land management and education.

This section contains 16 targets, with 20 actions set out in the delivery plan, of these 4 have been achieved (including ongoing activities which were achieved for 2023-24) and 13 are expected to be achieved by the end of 24/25. The remaining three will be reviewed to determine the actions required to deliver.



Highlights on progress include:

- The completion of the Cassiobury Wetlands project, and the development of a management plan, working with Friends of Cassiobury Park and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.
- Exceeding our target of tree planting by having 23,000 trees given away and planted by end March 2024. Our tree canopy across Watford has also increased to 22%, meeting our interim target of 20% by 2027.
- Commissioning of the Green Spaces Strategy.
- Collaborating with Hertfordshire County Council to produce the statutory county wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Delivery of works to the River Colne at Knutsford and Timberlake.

Areas to be reviewed:

- Progress on in-river works within Rediscovering the River Colne project has been hampered by delays caused by the Environment Agency permit system.
- The production of Design Codes has been delayed, but are being looked at as part of the Local Plan review which completes in the next Delivery Plan period. Initial work has started.

Spotlight: Volunteering in Nature

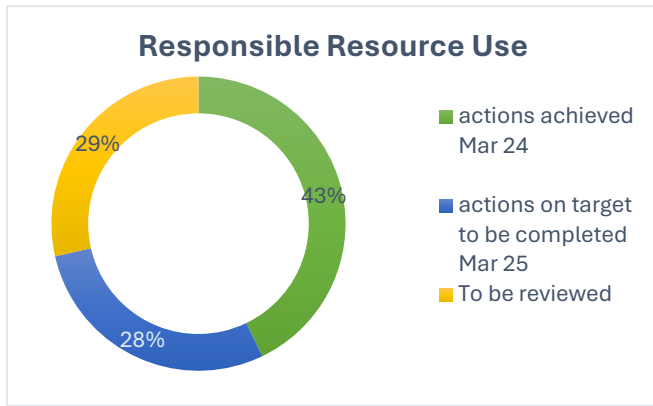
There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer to help support nature in Watford and to learn about the environment, there are various friends of parks groups to join, the Rediscovering the River Colne programme, Watford Green Gym and with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust at Cassiobury Park for more details click on this link [Volunteering in Watford – www.watford.gov.uk](http://www.watford.gov.uk) . This year we launched our first podcasts funded by the national heritage lottery fund for you to learn about the river Colne and how you can help.

Responsible Resource Use

A key part of our environmental impact comes from the things and amount we consume. The targets set out here are about how we can reduce the amount of waste we produce, and then improve how we recycle it. Indirectly we are considering the circular economy, and directly the waste hierarchy.

The Government has introduced the Simpler Recycling requirements, which sets out what recycling is required to be collected by local authorities, alongside business recycling requirements. The Government has also tightened up on use of single use plastic.

This section contains 5 targets, with 7 actions set out in the delivery plan, of these 3 have been achieved (including ongoing activities which were achieved for 2023-24) and 2 are expected to be achieved by the end of 24/25. The remaining two will be reviewed to determine the actions required to deliver.



Highlights on progress include:

- Preparation for the Simpler Recycling roll out. Changes in government regulation / requirements have had an effect on how the actions in this section are implemented.
- Audit of Watford Market to monitor single use plastic ban.
- Roll out of separate food waste collections to over 2,000 flats. The scheme will continue to be rolled out during 24-25.
- Helping residents to save money by reducing the amount of edible food wasted through the #Worth Saving campaign.
- Successful clothes swap during Recycling week, raising awareness with staff.
- Improved monitoring and managing of council waste and raising awareness with officers on how to recycle in the office.

Areas to be reviewed:

- Lack of data for waste generated by businesses will make reporting in this area difficult. The focus will be on supporting businesses with implementing recycling and separate food waste collections by 31 March 2025 as required 'Simpler Recycling' reforms.

Spotlight: Initiatives to help you reduce your waste

WasteAware is a cross Hertfordshire initiative to encourage people to take action to reduce their waste. This can be anything from Clothes Swaps to reusable continence pads and reusable nappies, to repair cafes. You can find more information here: [WasteAware campaigns | Hertfordshire County Council](#).

Watford residents are the second best dry mixed recyclers (blue bin) in the county. However, nearly 25% of black bin/residual waste is still food waste, check out our worth saving campaign [#WorthSaving – Save Food, Save Money | Hertfordshire County Council](#) and please remember to use your food waste bin to help us improve our recycling rate and reduce our emissions

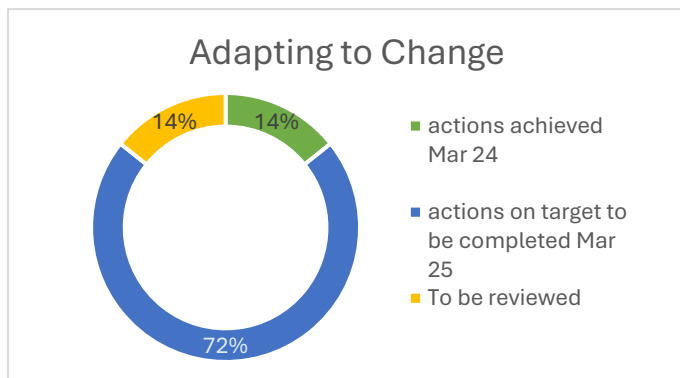
Adapting to Change

Even if the Council meets its environmental commitments, the UK meets its 2050 net zero target, and the world remains within a 1.5 °C temperature change, we will still need to adapt to those changes, as we are already adapting as the global average temperature rises, with 2023 being the hottest year on record with a global

average temperature of 1.46°C above the preindustrial period, and the background trend of approximately 1.25°C above pre-industrial temperatures in 2023.¹

Therefore, we need to consider how we adapt to those changes alongside mitigation measures we take. This includes understanding the risks and knowing how we are going to mitigate and manage them, as well as supporting those in the borough, particularly more vulnerable in society, to adjust to the climate changes, extreme weather, and the impacts of those, such as food production issues.

This section contains 6 targets, with 7 actions set out in the delivery plan, of these 1 have been achieved and 5 are expected to be achieved by the end of 24/25. The remaining one will be reviewed to determine the actions required to deliver.



Highlights on progress include:

- Associate director and service level lead workshop on climate risk and how to address this both within their areas and across the council. This has enabled the work to be take forward.

Areas to be reviewed:

- Development of guidance for external stakeholders has been on hold while it was addressed internally and while work was progressing with the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership on the county wide approach. We will review the deadlines for these actions, but anticipate they will be completed by the end of the Delivery Plan period.
- Additional work is required to determine actions to facilitate the borough to be future ready.

¹ <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2024/2023-the-warmest-year-on-record-globally>

Going Forward:

Carbon emissions: The Council is moving towards its Net Zero emissions for the Council, and a detailed audit has been completed to determine how and where emissions can be reduced most effectively. Following a PSDS Grant of £3.2m, the decarbonisation works at the Town Hall and Colosseum are now complete, and when reopened, will provide significant benefits. 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 within the Transforming Travel In Watford strategy, however it needs action from residents, businesses and communities.

To achieve 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 and implement the Cassiobury Wetlands management plan.

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 [Watford's 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 not using them? 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, a hand held hose rather than a sprinkler.
- 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 a new one 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 those 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 (<https://www.rivercolnewatford.co.uk/>) and at Cassiobury Wetlands (<https://friendsofcassioburypark.org.uk/>)
- You can find a list of environmental groups in Watford with everything from waste and recycling to nature and volunteering to travel & transport to energy and campaigning (<https://greenwatford.uk/connections/>)

For more information

www.Watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford

sustainability@watford.gov.uk

Appendices

- A: Headline figures explained
- B: Progress to date
- C: Full Greenhouse Gas report
- D: Summary of References