WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Sustainable Watford

Executive Summary: Annual Report 2025 - 2026

Environmental Strategy: Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Foreword

The unprecedented heatwaves this summer clearly show how climate change impacts our everyday lives, and knowing human activity has intensified them is a sobering thought.
At Watford Borough Council, we are working hard to address the climate and ecological emergency internally and across our local community. While we are investing in green spaces, reducing our energy usage, and encouraging active travel, we all need to do more.
This report outlines our current progress and highlights the scale of the challenge ahead. As we continue to advocate for bolder national action and resourcing, driving real success will require everyone across the borough to act on 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. In March 2025 the new delivery plan for 2025-2027 was appropved.

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*.

This report forms part of our third 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 2025 - 2026	2025 target	2027 target	2030 target
Council's own carbon emissions to be net zero	21.4% 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	151 tonnes office waste 54% 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	315.3k tonnes CO_2e (2024) – 23.5% 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	48.4% (2024/25)		54% of waste recycled by 2027	60% recycled
	10% 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.

Key Exceeded target | On target | At risk of missing target | Target not on track to be achieved

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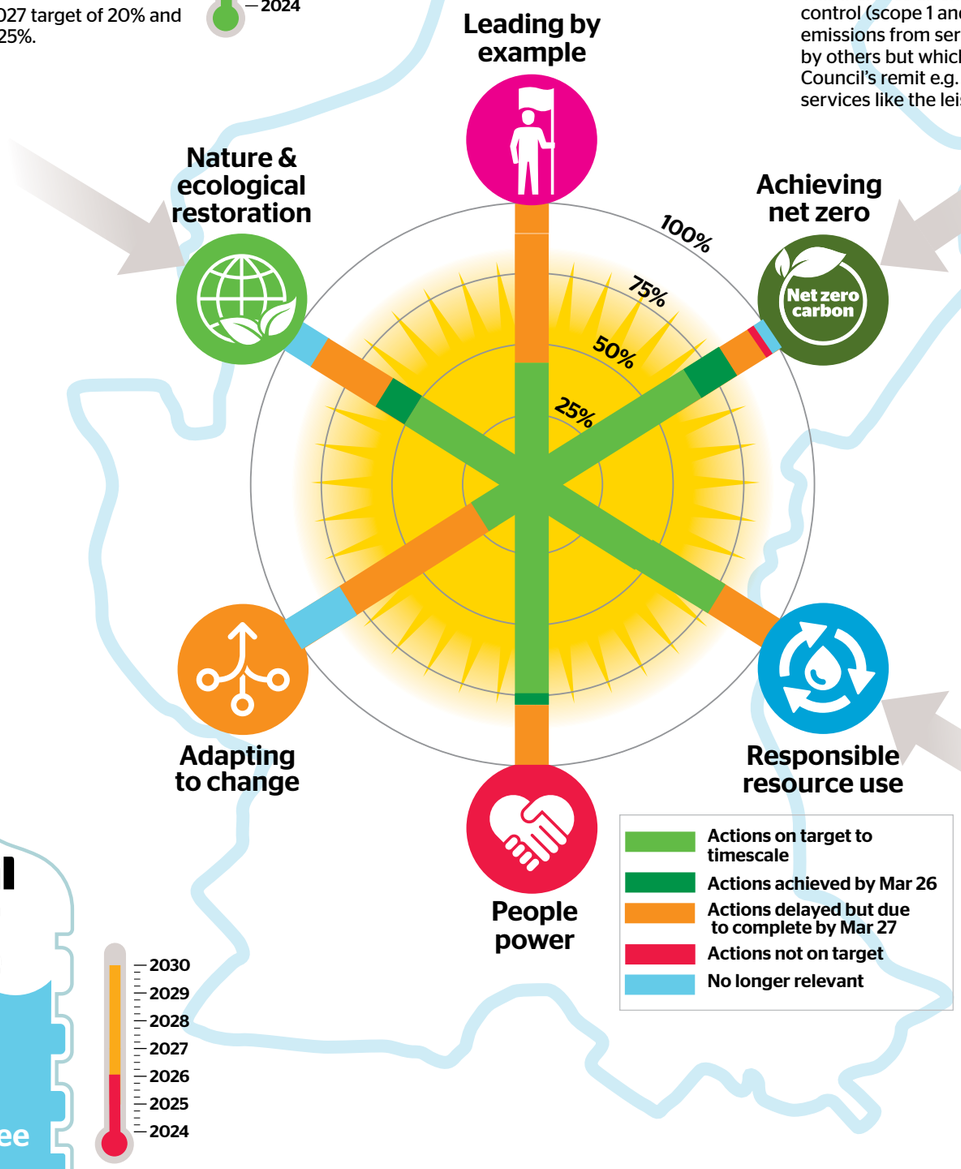
Targets and Progress

Sustainable Watford

ACTIONS DELIVERED 2025 - 2027 (%)



- Actions on target to timescale
- Actions achieved by Mar 26
- Actions delayed but due to complete by Mar 27
- Actions not on target
- No longer relevant

26% Tree Canopy Cover

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

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

42% Council Green Spaces managed to support nature

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

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

Council Carbon Emissions 1,751 tonnes CO_2e

- 21.4% reduction from 2019

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

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

-23.5% reduction from 2019

315.3k tonnes CO_2e

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

This is based on 2024 Government data (latest available). To achieve the net zero target by 2030 will require joint effort and collaboration by all stakeholders.

Council Waste

54% recycled

Total waste **151 tonnes** approx

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

This is a proxy measure based on a waste audit and scaled for the year.

Borough Waste

48.4% recycled

Total waste **718 kg** per household

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

This is based on 2024/25 data (latest available). Our 2027 target is 54% of waste recycled, while also reducing overall waste.

Borough Water Usage

167 litres per resident per day

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

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

Council Water Usage

30 litres per employee per day

2030 2029 2028 2027 2026 2025 2024

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

Progress to target

- Exceeded target
- On target
- At risk of missing target
- Target not on track to be achieved

Going forward

Carbon emissions

The Council is moving towards achieving 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 for the Colosseum will be included in our updated emissions under scope 3 leased assets. We will continue to seek to improve the operation and management of our buildings. We are moving forward with a community energy aproach to install rooftop solar photovoltaics on a number of our buildings. The Borough emissions have reduced but there is more work to be done. The Council is working on transport initiatives, however it also 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

Hertfordshire is one of the highest water users in the UK, in one of the drier regions and we will continue to support borough wide initiatives to reduce water consumption. The Council is improving its own monitoring and management of water usage, and will continue to engage with staff to reduce water usage.

Biodiversity

The Council has published its Green Spaces Strategy to help ensure the quality of our green spaces both for residents and nature. We will also continue our work on the Rediscovering the River Colne Project, will implement our green spaces strategy and continue to manage all our green spaces effectively.

Waste

The Council is working to reduce its waste, improve its recycling and also to help residents and businesses to do likewise. 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 only when full, when changing appliances, choose water and energy 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 handheld hose instead of 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., include safe water features for wildlife.
- 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.
- Create your own 'green team' so it doesn't all fall on one person. 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.friendsofcassioburypark.org.uk**
- Here is a list of environmental groups in Watford, from waste / recycling to nature to travel and transport to energy and campaigning: **www.greenwatford.uk/connections**

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For more information

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