Draft Decarbonisation Strategy 2025-28

June 2025

1. Introduction

The impacts of climate change are already directly affecting our homes, health, water supply, and wildlife. The window of opportunity to limit warming to 1.5°C is closing and we risk severe and irreversible damage to our planet and our people.

The UK's Climate Change Act commits the nation to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, with intermediate targets requiring rapid progress this decade. The government has stated that the UK should be a world leader in the fight against climate change and the UK public sector is a small but significant emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

Direct emissions, such as heating public sector buildings like offices, leisure centres etc. only account for around 2% of total UK GHG emissions. However, the indirect emissions created by the public sector's wider activities, including local authorities, remain considerably more significant. Purchased electricity, travel, and procurement of goods and services make up significant additional sources of carbon output. Public procurement accounts for around 15% of total GHG emissions globally once supply chains are included, these practices present enormous challenges to emissions reduction and sustainability goals.

In 2019, North Norfolk was the first district council in Norfolk to declare a climate emergency. Following community engagement an Environmental Charter was developed, and a number of carbon reduction projects were initiated. An ambitious target was adopted to eliminate the emissions from the Council's properties and activities (its estate and operations) by 2030. A Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan (NZSAP) was developed to help map out a pathway by which the Council could reach its decarbonisation goals.

Since the publication of the NZSAP, the Council has updated its targets to include a responsibility to aid the wider district to decarbonise by 2045. This builds on the community commitments laid out in the Council's Environmental Charter. The Council is involved in schemes to assist in reducing emissions from households and from businesses, although it has little influence over the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions, such as transport and agriculture.

Each year since 2019 the Council has measured its own emissions and reported these as its 'carbon footprint'. Although generally on a downwards trajectory, progress has not been linear and a renewed focus needs to be given to this to stand a chance of reaching the goal. The context has changed since the first strategy was adopted, with better data available to identify the scale of the challenge and also new opportunities by which to respond to them.

This decarbonisation strategy, and its associated action plan, identifies the challenges in reaching the identified goal and the options available to maintain the necessary momentum to achieve it.

Importantly, this strategy aligns with new government priorities, the new Council Corporate Plan and in readiness for local government organisation across Norfolk and Suffolk.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) has already noted that bold targets mean nothing if action is too slow and has warned that current UK policies cover only a third of the emissions reductions required to meet national targets. Each organisation will need to play its part and it is clear that the pace needs to increase significantly in order to reach the target as we get closer to 2030.

This revised strategy recognizes that the Council is unlikely to exist in its current form in 2030, due to proposals to restructure local authorities in the area, however the functions the Council performs, and the assets on which local communities rely, will remain.. This presents a challenge to short-term thinking but change also brings opportunities and benefits of reducing energy use go beyond mitigating the causes of climate change.

We do not have time to wait and see what happens. We must continue our decarbonisation journey to ensure north Norfolk is playing its part in helping to reduce emissions to mitigate climate change.

2. Strategy aims

This strategy

outlines the behaviours, commitments and high-level actions that are needed to reduce the Council's emissions from its operations and estate by

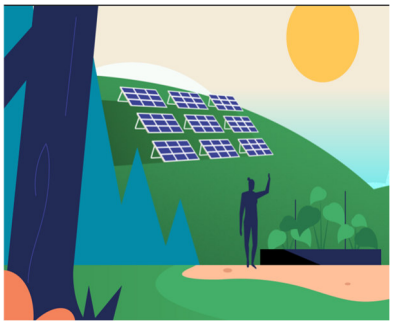
2030

outlines the steps the Council will take to assist the north Norfolk district in reducing wider community emissions by

2045

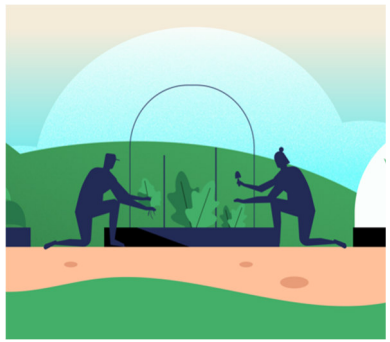
This strategy will:

provide the framework for the actions the Council will take



set out the opportunities for communities to access funding and work with partners

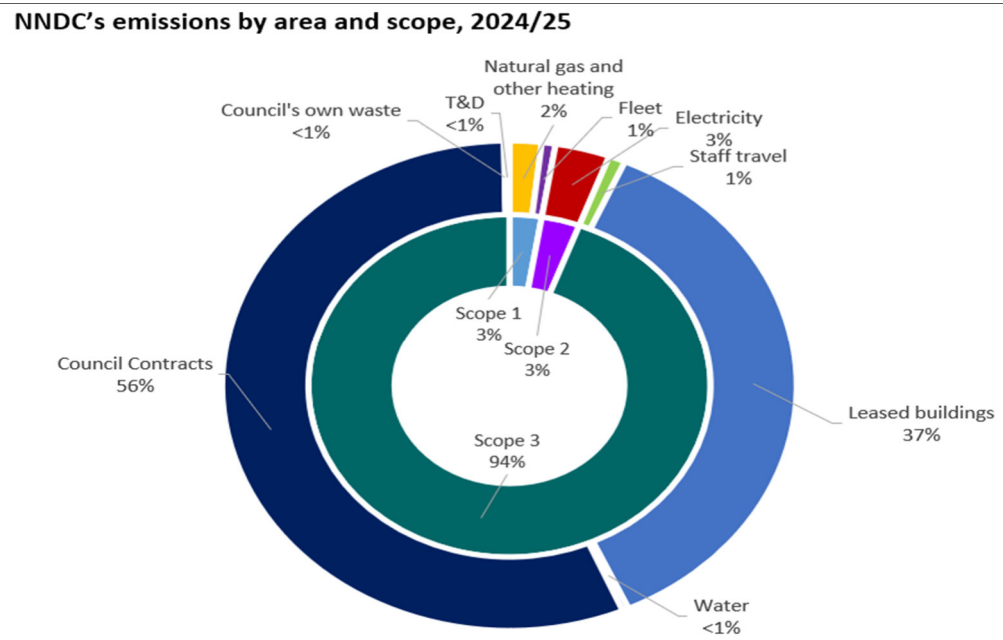
highlight the changes the Council needs to make to decarbonise its own estate and operations



show how the Council can lead by example through decarbonising our own estate and operations

provide assistance and advice on routes to help fund decarbonisation projects

3. Where are we now?

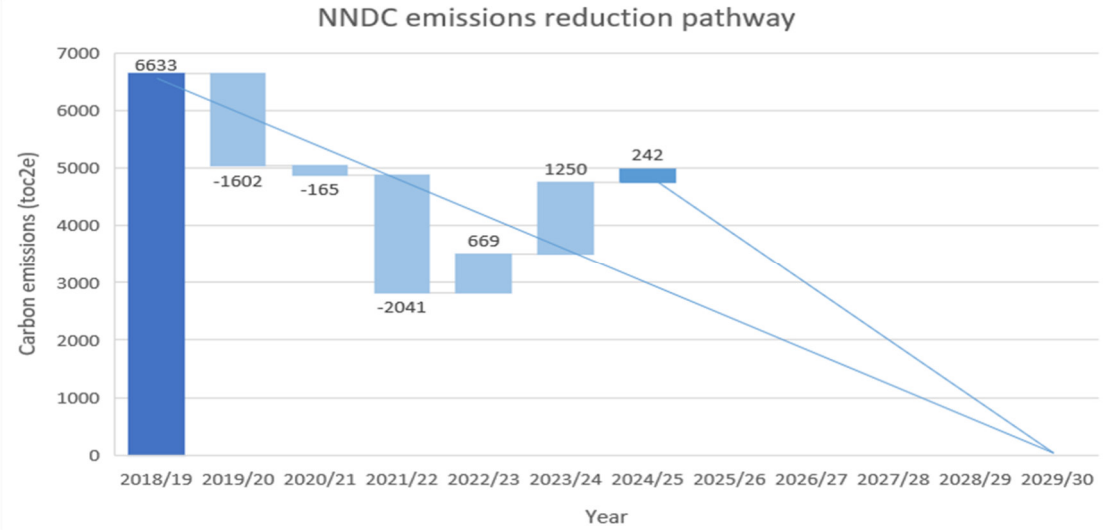


North Norfolk District Council Carbon Footprint

The Council's total carbon footprint for 24/25 is **5,002 tCO_2e**

There are no national or international standards for calculating carbon footprint, however the Council's annual footprint assessment follows a methodology based on the Greenhouse Gas accounting tool developed by the Local Government Association, which is considered best practice by Local Authorities. It covers scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, including energy used by our buildings, vehicle fuel used for Council business, waste produced by our operations and emissions associated with Council contracts and other consumption.

The Council has most influence over its scope 1 and 2 emissions where it directly consumes energy.

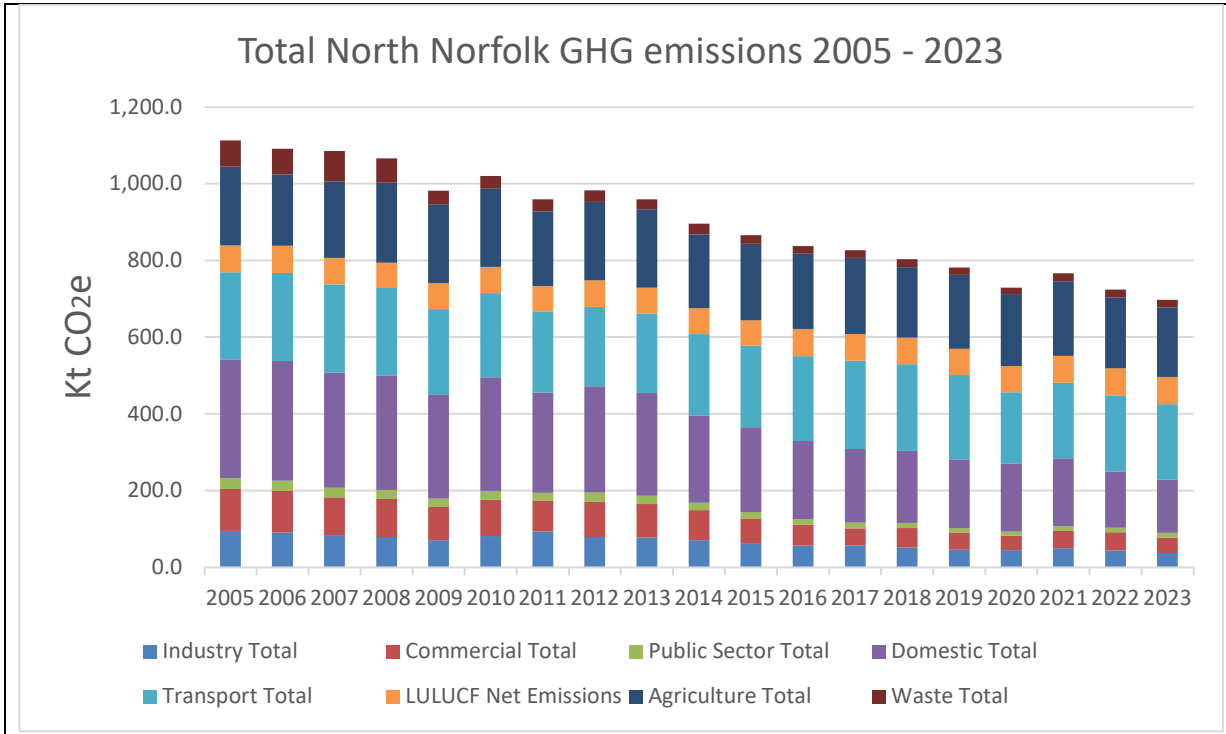


Emissions reduction pathway

The passage to eliminating emissions is a turbulent one. Council emissions fluctuate from year to year due to changes in our asset base, and the nature of activities undertaken. Significantly, refinements in the methodology for calculating the carbon emissions has led to an apparent increase in the emissions reported.

Often these changes have tended to mask the carbon savings made through genuine carbon reduction methods, for example, photo voltaic installations on our properties, behaviour change, reduction in waste, and investment in water saving measures.

Accurate data collection helps ensure consistency and will help better target emissions reduction activities.



North Norfolk District Wide Carbon footprint

North Norfolk's (territorial) emissions were reported as 697,000 tonnes CO_2e in 2023.

North Norfolk's regional greenhouse gas emissions have been calculated by the UK Government Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). These statistics provide the most reliable and consistent breakdown of greenhouse gas emissions across the country, using nationally available data sets going back to 2005. They cover territorial emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_2O).

These emissions are separated into eight main categories, with Transport (28%) Agriculture (26%) and Domestic (20%) being the largest contributors to district-wide emissions.

Industry, commercial, domestic and public sector emissions have decreased significantly, due to the increased electrification and the transition of the electricity grid away from fossil fuels to renewables; however, there is still significant work needed in these sectors to decarbonise them further. Emissions from transport, agriculture, and LULUCF (Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry) emissions have proved slower to reduce and these pose significant challenges for a rural area like North Norfolk. Local data tends to mirror the national trend.

4. How we will get there

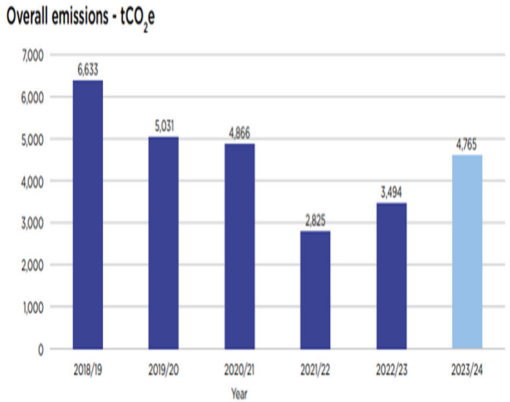
This decarbonisation strategy focuses on delivery between 2025 – 2028. It is based upon the best available data and evidence, using our latest carbon footprint analysis and current government policy.

The following behaviours and practices will form the foundation of a more targeted set of actions in the accompanying action plan.

Governance, Decision making and Engagement

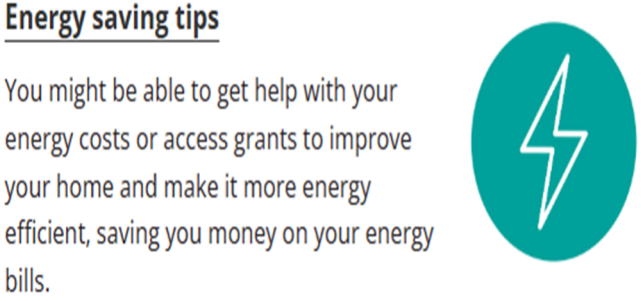
Renew our commitment to eliminating emissions by 2030 through the actions and objectives of the Council's corporate plan and annual action plan

Provide Carbon Literacy and Carbon awareness training for all Staff and members, giving opportunities for staff to share best practice and make every role at the Council a "green" role



Monitor and report our carbon footprint and regularly report progress on our strategy and action plan, overseen by the Council's Decarbonisation Board. Use this data to inform decisions

Develop and evolve tools to keep carbon reduction at the heart of Council decision making and every Council strategy



Provide our residents, businesses and visitors with the tools they need to complete their own decarbonisation journeys, collaborating with neighbouring Councils and like-minded organisations to promote low carbon choices

Work with central government and energy providers to ensure the district gains maximum benefit from the installation of appropriate renewable energy infrastructure projects

Domestic and Commercial Buildings

Improve data monitoring from our estate, in order to be very clear about the emissions that arise and the renewable energy generated.

Reduce energy and water consumption in our buildings through behavioural change and fabric retrofit measures

Reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and future-proof our assets (making us Net Zero ready) by replacing systems at end of life or sooner with lower carbon alternatives and ensuring all new builds take full advantage of low carbon technology (including low energy and waste construction methods)

Invest in renewable generation on our estate, purchase renewable energy for our assets and contribute to the region's energy plan

Norfolk Warm Homes

Promote energy saving advice, green energy tariffs, community energy schemes and grants and funding to residents and businesses to improve their building fabric and heating systems and invest in renewables

Provide clear guidance on planning requirements for energy efficiency works and renewable energy potential in new development

Transport

Reduce emissions from our business travel by instigating a sequential approach: promoting no travel solutions, low carbon forms of transport and car sharing

Move to electric fleet and pool cars as the default transport method when a car is need for Council business

Provide incentives for staff to use low carbon forms of transport such as EV and cycle to work salary sacrifice schemes

Work with local public transport providers and the public transport unit to develop and promote public transport options

active norfolk

Work with third parties such as Active Norfolk and Visit North Norfolk to increase resident and visitor uptake of active travel

Encourage the uptake of EVs and facilitate development of the infrastructure required

Purchasing and Investments

Improve data collection methods and quality of data on our Council contracts and spending to allow more accurate calculation of our carbon footprint

Review our banking and investment strategies and investigate sustainable funding sources for our projects

Incorporate sustainable practices as a priority in procuring contracts and services from third parties, working with carbon-literate, sustainable contractors who are actively reducing their own carbon footprint

Prioritise local produce and promote “buy local’ campaigns and other ways to purchase products with a lower carbon footprint

Implement waste reduction practices and promote zero-waste and the circular economy initiatives

Provide information to allow people to make sustainable decisions on their investments

Offsetting, Carbon capture and land-use

Investigate options for investing now to offset in the future and develop a strategy for any residual emissions remaining in 2030

Prioritise offsetting in north Norfolk to take full advantage of the co-benefits of offsetting such as biodiversity, employment and community health and well-being

Manage the Council's green assets to maximise carbon sequestration

Support initiatives that optimise potential for carbon capture and storage, in the district so that the area can capitalise on the co-benefits

North Norfolk Local Plan 2016 - 2036

Collaborate with developers and landowners, using the Council's Local Plan and legislation such as Biodiversity Net Gain to maximise opportunities for decarbonisation in north Norfolk

Work with local and national environmental and wildlife groups to protect and enhance the special landscape of North Norfolk and its potential to sequester carbon in its peatland, saltmarsh and other habitats

5. Monitoring our progress

This strategy, the related action plan, and monitoring progress are the responsibility of the Council's decarbonisation oversight board. The board maintains the strategic oversight, with defined terms of reference to oversee the Council's decarbonisation programme and projects related to climate change. It's membership is drawn from across the relevant services of the Council. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive an annual update on the relevant metrics and performance information on the achievement of the aims of this strategy . The strategy will be routinely monitored and the action plan revised annually in order to maintain the focus on the achievement of the stated goals and adjust the direction accordingly.

Evaluation of the action plan against the performance measures will be presented via a bi-monthly dashboard, showing progress against individual objectives and targets. The Council's carbon footprint of its estate and operations will be calculated in accordance with best practice and overall progress on decarbonisation will be reported annually in the carbon footprint report.

The greenhouse gas emissions of the area covered by North Norfolk District Council (territorial emissions) are difficult to calculate locally but figures produced by DESNZ will be relied upon. These data are generally published 2-3 years in arrears, making them a useful tool to measure the district's progress, but unsuitable for monitoring the success of the strategy and action plan in reducing district emissions in the shorter and more immediate term. Territorial emissions will be included in the Council's annual carbon footprint report alongside information about the outcomes of specific projects to influence them.

The Council will review this strategy and the resulting action plan routinely to take account contextual changes such as legislation, local priorities, data availability and changes in collection methods, and other influences such as local government reorganisation.

6. Equality and Diversity

Climate change is an issue that affects everyone, but inequalities in society mean that not everyone is affected in the same way and certain groups may be disproportionately impacted. Adapting to a changing climate will impact people and groups in complex ways. Evidence points to certain groups in society, particularly those from lower socioeconomic groups and older people, being most at risk from climate-related effects, including from exposure to extreme weather, pollution, and food insecurity, affecting those least able to adapt their environment or their lifestyles to a greater extent.

This strategy concentrates on mitigation – limiting man-made climate change by targeting actions that reduce or absorb GHG emissions rather than adapting to the risks and changes caused by the changing climate such as increased prevalence of extreme weather events or accelerated coastal erosion.

The mitigation approaches outlined in this strategy will have differential effects; there are benefits and opportunities presented by low-emissions technologies but also the benefits and costs may have disproportionate effects. Residents and businesses may experience lower

energy prices from energy reduction measures or renewable technologies, however the ability to capitalise on those may depend upon factors such as income levels or location. Equality and diversity have been taken into consideration in devising this strategy, and the Council will consider the effects of individual actions and projects as they emerge.

7. Glossary

Carbon Capture	Refers to technologies that capture carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from industrial sources before they are released into the atmosphere or directly from the air. Captured CO2 is transported (often via pipelines) and stored underground, typically in geological formations like saline aquifers or depleted oil and gas reservoirs, preventing it from contributing to climate change.
Carbon dioxide CO_2	Carbon dioxide is a gas in the Earth's atmosphere. It occurs naturally and is also a by-product of human activities such as burning fossil fuels. It is the principal greenhouse gas produced by human activity.
Carbon dioxide equivalent CO_2e often measured in tonnes (tCO_2e)	CO_2 equivalent (CO_2e) is a way to measure the impact of different greenhouse gases (GHGs) on climate change using a single unit. It expresses the warming effect of various GHGs in terms of the amount of CO_2 that would produce the same warming effect. This allows for easier comparison and aggregation of emissions from different gases, even though they have varying global warming potentials.
Carbon footprint	The amount of carbon emitted by an individual or organisation in a given period of time, or the amount of carbon emitted during the manufacture of a product.
Carbon offsetting	Carbon offsetting is any reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in one place used to make up for emissions that cannot be avoided elsewhere.
Climate Change	A pattern of change affecting global or regional climate, measured by changes in average temperature and rainfall, or an alteration in frequency of extreme weather conditions. This variation may be caused by both natural processes and human activity.

Climate Mitigation	Action that will reduce man-made climate change. This includes action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or absorb greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
DESNZ	The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) is a UK ministerial department focussing on energy security and the UK's commitment to reaching net-zero carbon emissions.
Fossil fuels	Non-renewable energy sources such as coal, coal products, natural gas, derived gas, crude oil and petroleum products containing hydrocarbons. These fuels originate from plants and animals that existed in the geological past and emit GHGs when burnt
Greenhouse gases (GHGs)	Greenhouse gases are gases in the atmosphere that absorb and emit infrared radiation, trapping heat and warming the planet. Key Greenhouse Gases are Carbon Dioxide (CO_2), Methane (CH_4), Nitrous Oxide (N_2O), Water Vapor (H_2O), Ozone (O_3) and Fluorinated Gases such as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).
Net Zero	Cutting carbon emissions by as much as possible to a small amount of residual emissions that can be offset by nature or other carbon dioxide removal measures, leaving zero in the atmosphere
Renewable energy	Renewable energy is energy derived from natural sources that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed. Sunlight and wind, for example, are such sources that are constantly being replenished.
Scope 1,2 and 3 emissions	Carbon emissions are categorized into three scopes to understand their origins and impact. Scope 1 covers direct emissions from a company's operations, like fuel combustion in owned equipment. Scope 2 encompasses indirect emissions from purchased energy (electricity, steam, heating, and cooling). Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions from a company's value chain, such as emissions from purchased goods and services, employee commuting, and waste.