

Environmental Strategy



National strategy and policy:

The Government's 25-year Environment Plan, published in January 2018, brings together the Clean Growth, Clean Air and Industrial Strategies. It sets out a comprehensive and long-term approach to protecting and enhancing the environment for the next generation.

The goals focus around achieving clean air and water, protecting threatened species and providing richer wildlife habitats. It wants us to use resources more wisely and radically reduce the waste we generate. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing which puts the environment first.

The document outlines plans to encourage sustainable development and support innovation to achieve clean growth and increase resource efficiency.

The Environment Bill is also currently going through Parliamentary approval. If approved the Bill makes provisions about targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment. It outlines reporting requirements about environmental protection and sets the scene for the proposed new regulator – the Office for Environmental Protection. It gives waste and resource efficiency targets, redesigns air quality regulation, provides powers for the recall of products which fail to meet environmental standards and makes provisions to manage water resources sustainably.

Regional Strategy and Policy:

In November 2019, Norfolk County Council adopted a new Environmental Policy building on the 25-year Environment Plan and the authority's current business plan. The document sets out key policy aims on conserving and enhancing the local environment while exploring new ways to make the countryside and coast as accessible as possible to improve health and wellbeing. There is also a focus on increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste which we can support at a district level.

The Local Environment:

The Government produces a National Atmospheric Emissions inventory¹, which assess the emissions from Local Authority areas broken down by different sectors. According to this, in 2017, South Norfolk produced 838.6kt of CO₂ which equates to 6.2tonnes of CO₂ for each person. It takes 6 fully grown trees to offset each tonne of carbon so you would need to plant at least 36 per year per person to balance it out. Alternatively, 6.2 tonnes is approximately 4 round trip flights from London to New York.

Looking at the data by sector, South Norfolk has experienced an increase in emissions from transport over the previous five years while the greatest reductions have been seen in the industry and commercial sector.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics>

FIVE YEAR VISION

South Norfolk Council has published a new Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 with our commitment to support growth while protecting the local environment. The vision for the Council is to create the best place for everyone now and for future generations.

One of our key priorities is to protect our natural and built environment – such as open spaces, parks, homes and places of work and leisure, while maximising quality of life. Our approach to achieving this has been set out in the plan as follows.

*Promoting growth in our area by working with key partners to deliver a local plan which protects the best of what we have and shape the area's future, to make it the best possible place to live and work.

*Making sure our green spaces, streets and public places are clean, attractive and safe.

*Protecting our environment and playing our part in wider environmental issues.

*Acting as a catalyst for homes people can afford, creating sustainable communities for the future.

Key targets for the environment:

*A reduction in per capita emissions (i.e. each individual) against 2017 levels.

*Implementation of carbon offset measures including solar generation and tree planting.

*Engaging with local residents and businesses to support energy generation or where that isn't possible then using carbon sequestration i.e. reducing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Working with our communities:

We recognise we have an important part to play in reducing our emissions, but we cannot do this on our own. We will, therefore, work closely and inclusively with our residents and businesses to support behaviour and lifestyle changes such as green transport options and recycling facilities.

We will use social media, attendance at events and strategic communications to increase awareness, promote and share good practice and enable informed decisions.

Our Local Environment:

For most of us in South Norfolk we are fortunate to live in neighbourhoods where we feel happy, healthy and safe. Clean streets, which are well maintained and designed, bring people together and discourage crime. These are places we are proud to call home. But there are still areas where we could do better.

Litter, dog fouling and fly-tipping are more than just a nuisance. So too are issues such as excessive noise, dust and odour from commercial activities, pest complaints and anti-social behaviour. All of these spoil the environment in which we live. They lower the quality of our lives and can adversely affect our physical and mental health.

But it's not just about clean streets. The quality of the air we breathe, dealing with contaminated land and rivers, drainage and flood risk and ensuring our drinking water is of the highest quality are all part of protecting our environment.

The Wider Environment:

The Government's 25 year plan 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment', sets out what it will do to improve the environment within a generation. It highlights tackling fly tipping and waste crime where hazardous materials are dumped on private land and/or falsely labelled and exported abroad to unsuspecting countries.

It has laid out targets to improve air quality, achieve a clean and plentiful supply of water and ways of ensuring the environment is richer in plants and wildlife. It looks at natural hazards such as flooding, drought and coastal erosion and what can be done to mitigate climate change.

Clean up operations, whether on a larger scale such as waste crime or rubbish in the streets is paid for by the taxpayer and costs millions of pounds each year. It also has a negative impact on communities, our health and wellbeing.

What we are doing:

*Zero tolerance approach to Environmental Crime from fly tipping to dog fouling with a combination of fines for offenders and educating the public.

*Encouraging and supporting social and community action to keep our streets clean working with parish and town councils and businesses to improve high streets and market towns.

*Undertaking a spring clean of the district.

*Adopting the best new technology and methods to get people to change their behaviour to design safe and attractive streets, stop littering and fly tipping before it happens and take rapid action when it does.

*Working more closely and sharing intelligence with the Police, National Farmers Union and the Environment Agency to tackle Environmental Crime

What we are asking you to do:

*Report environmental crime to us so we can investigate all cases where someone has witnessed an incident or may know where the waste has come from.

*Ensure, whether you are a business or an individual, you dispose of your waste legally and correctly.

*Take part in community litter picks to keep your community clean and safe.

*Tell us if we get it wrong so we know how to make it right.

*Take your rubbish home or put it in a bin.



Our Local Environment:

South Norfolk is a great place to live and work. To keep it that way we must ensure our community is sustainable. This means taking into account the needs of those who live here, ensuring the economy can grow, while at the same time protecting the local environment.

To ensure our communities are sustainable we will meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents from recreation to work, healthcare and access to shops and schools. We will ensure that the design and quality of new development is high and contributes to the establishment and maintenance of resilient and inclusive places to live. We will work to ensure our communities are sensitive to their environment, contribute to a high quality of life and are well planned with space for people to enjoy their leisure time, places for children to play, good transport networks and equal opportunities and good services for everyone.

But there are factors outside of our community which need to be taken into consideration to ensure the places where we live and work are resilient to a changing climate and the impact that will have on maintaining our sustainable communities and building new ones.

The Wider Environment:

Extreme weather events such as rain, storms, drought and heat waves are becoming more frequent and more intense. They have the potential to damage our homes, buildings and infrastructure such as power lines and transport networks.

Work needs to be done locally and nationally to help businesses, individuals and communities become more resilient in the face of potential extreme weather events. Furthermore, South Norfolk Council is working with its partners in Greater Norwich on the Greater Norwich Local Plan – GNLP – to ensure new homes and jobs can be delivered to meet the needs of the area while at the same time protecting and enhancing the environment.

Ecosystems like wetlands and woodlands contribute to this aim by helping minimise flood risks, regulating the local climate and maintaining the supply of clean water and other resources. Biodiversity – the whole range of living things from plants to animals - supports sustainable communities by providing us with clean air, water, food, energy, medicine and building materials. It's about giving us places for recreation and employment while also protecting the best and most precious environmental assets of our area.

What we are doing:

*Ensuring local plans take a proactive approach to mitigate and adapt to climate change and the impact on our community.

*Allowing for the delivery of new and changing technologies from electric and hydrogen powered cars to fibre optic networks, broadband and telecommunications.

*Creating inclusive and safe communities where people of all ages can interact, have good access to services and job opportunities and have the chance of a healthy, active lifestyle.

*Enhancing existing and establishing new local green spaces.

*Using the best environmental management practices for land use to protect and enhance biodiversity.

What we are asking you to do:

*Encourage wildlife into your garden to support biodiversity. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/encourage-wildlife-to-your-garden>

*Where possible give some time to volunteer in our parks and open spaces.

*Get involved with local environmental groups who work to protect and enhance biodiversity such as the Norwich Fringe Project <https://norwichfringeproject.wordpress.com/>

*Install water saving devices to cut your water consumption and reduce energy bills.

*Sign up to receive flood warnings by phone, email or text.

*Let us know your views when it comes to planning issues so we can ensure our plans meet with your needs.



Our Local Environment:

In South Norfolk there are a large proportion of homes – particularly in rural areas – which rely on liquid fuel such as oil or LPG – liquid petroleum gas. For many the cost of connecting to the local gas grid is prohibitive. This means residents have no option but to use liquid fuel even though other fuel types have a lower carbon footprint.

A substantial number of properties in the district are of solid wall construction which means they struggle to retain heat and are harder to insulate. All of these factors affect the district's existing energy consumption and the potential for renewable energy.

Despite this the overall emissions from homes in the district have reduced significantly over the past five years. Data from the EPC – Energy Performance Certificate – considers a property with a rating of C and above to be well insulated. Of those who have an EPC, 42% of South Norfolk's homes have the C rating or higher.

Local councils can play a major part in reducing carbon emissions by improving the energy efficiency of homes across both districts with schemes such as the Norfolk Warm Homes Fund which provides grants for first time central heating, and also advice and support about saving energy and reducing fuel bills. More efficient use of energy will lower bills which will have an impact environmentally, socially and economically.

The Wider Environment:

We need fuel to heat our homes, power appliances and run industry. The cost of electricity, gas and oil are rising faster than the rate of inflation and increasingly taking up a larger part of household income. This affects the health, welfare and prosperity of our residents – particularly those on a low income.

The UK's plans to reduce carbon emissions relies on producing our energy from low or zero carbon sources such as solar panels and wind farms.

Fuel poverty, where people cannot afford their heating or lighting bills is a growing issue and is closely linked to a number of health problems. Older people and children are most at risk of health problems associated with living in a cold home such as respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

What we are doing:

- *Minimising energy use in all Council owned buildings including offices and leisure centres.
- *Moving to buy our energy from green suppliers
- *Assessing the potential for renewable energy production
- *Proactively enforcing minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rental sector and encouraging new developments to be designed to minimise energy demand and maximise sustainable energy.
- * Encouraging and supporting residents to install more efficient central heating and making energy efficient improvements using national funding where available such as the Warm Homes Fund.
- * Supporting residents with advice about saving energy and reducing energy bills.

What we are asking you to do:

- *Look at saving energy at home. For how this can be achieved see <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-energy-efficiency>
- *Seek financial support for energy efficiency measures. If anyone in your household is receiving benefits ask your energy company e.g. Npower, SSE, Scottish Power etc to tell you what help is available through the ECO - Energy Company Obligation.
- *Contact us as we may be able to let you know about local initiatives which can provide help to reduce energy bills and make your home warmer. See Norfolkwarmhomes.org.uk
- *Check if you are eligible for the winter fuel payment and/or warm home discount.



WASTE MINIMISATION

Our Local Environment:

More than 40% of waste in South Norfolk is recycled. Every household in the district is provided with a 240-litre recycling bin and the option of a bin for garden waste. Recycling provides the opportunity to reduce the amount of rubbish being sent for disposal and positively impacts our economy and environment.

We collect and sell waste which has a value – for example paper and glass. That money then goes back into Council's funds. Where practical all waste is sent to facilities in the UK for treatment for recycling or disposal.

The value of recycling increases with its quality. Reducing recycling contamination saves money otherwise spent on sorting and removal, and ensures more items are being recycled. We are directly engaging with our communities to increase the quality and quantity of our recycling to reach some of the best levels in the Country. We monitor contamination levels and work with households to encourage positive recycling behaviours.

The recycling of plastics is a priority. We are investigating ways in which we can tackle this locally. This includes becoming a single use plastic-free Council by 2024. We are raising awareness of the Refill scheme where businesses displaying a Refill sign will fill up your reusable water bottle free of charge.

Plastic containers, bottles and lids can be placed in the recycling bins in both districts. A full list is available on the recycling section of the Council's websites. We'd also suggest carrying canvas

or cotton bags for shopping as plastic bags cannot be put in the recycling bins.

The Wider Environment:

The Government has recently introduced a new strategy on minimising waste.

The Government's Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England wants us to look at how the Council manage recycling and ways of reducing the amount of rubbish produced in the first place. This means looking at the journey from manufacturing to packaging to recycling and disposal. It also takes into account the impact on the environment of transportation to landfill and recycling sites.

The issue of single use plastics is a nationwide problem. The average household uses around 500 plastic bottles each year but only recycles around half of them. Plastic containers including soft drinks, cleaning products and cosmetics make up nearly two thirds of household plastic collections. We are raising awareness on plastics recycling through community and educational events.

Recycling extends the life of the items we use and reduces the amount of waste we dispose of. This decreases the need for raw materials which helps save energy and reduce carbon emissions.

What we are doing:

- *Reducing the amount of waste generated through council activities.
- *Engaging with communities/residents to reduce the amount of waste generated and to minimise recycling contamination.
- *Encouraging businesses to recycle through better value and more effective commercial waste services.
- *Providing a service which complies with the Government's latest waste minimisation regulations and generates income for the Council.
- *Hosting local community events where residents can reuse and recycle unwanted items.

What we are asking you to do:

- *Recycle more and double check which is the correct bin – which avoids rubbish, which could be recycled, having to go into landfill. <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Waste%20and%20Recycling%20Guide%202017.pdf>
- *Put your bin out by 0630 on the day of collection.
- *Help a neighbour, friend or family member put their bin out if you can. Otherwise let them know about the assisted collection scheme for people who have difficulty with mobility.



Our Local Environment:

Having a good transport network is vital to get us to our jobs, schools and colleges, doctors' surgeries, the hospitals, shopping and to visit friends and family. It's also important for our leisure time and to encourage visitors to the area.

For many of us that means travelling by car – particularly if you live in a rural area. We are always looking at ways to improve our transport network – whether that is buses, cycle routes or safe places to walk. It includes linking the network so wherever you live you can be sure of getting to where you need to go.

We're pulling together a local plan to reduce car use which will be cost-effective and convenient to encourage change. It will take into account the needs of people living in our villages and outlying areas as well as our towns and the city.

We are also encouraging other methods of transport such electric cars and the use of greener private hire vehicles, such as taxis, through licensing.

We want to see an expansion of the electric vehicle infrastructure network and are supporting local groups in installing and managing public charging points. In South Norfolk we now have 20 electric vehicle charging points across five sites.

The Wider Environment:

Emissions from petrol and diesel engines – nitrogen oxides known as NOx pollutants - reduce the quality of the air we breathe and have an impact on the environment in which we live. These nitrogen oxides can cause breathing problems, reduced lung functions and corroded teeth. They are also harmful to animals and plants.

Switching to a zero emission capable vehicle – such as an electric or hydrogen vehicles – can reduce harmful emissions and improve air quality.

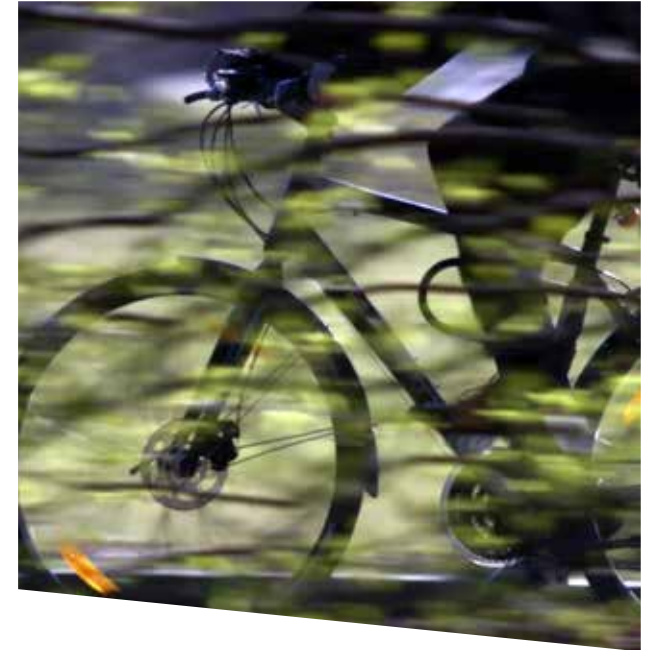
The number of electric cars registered in the UK in 2013 was around 3,500. In 2018 it was almost 60,000. This means there are nearly a quarter of a million electric vehicles on the UK's roads. The number of charging points has risen too. There are now around 30,000 charging points across the country in more than 11,000 locations. (Source: EDF Energy <https://bit.ly/2YM3qfx>)

What we are doing:

- *Encouraging and incentivising staff to use public transport, bicycles, motorcycles or car share where possible to get to work.
- *Allowing staff to work from home where possible and hold video/phone conferences rather than travelling to meetings.
- * Introducing a new car leasing scheme with options for electric and hybrid vehicles and installing electric vehicle charging points at all council owned buildings.
- *Working with Norfolk County Council to promote and encourage new alternative technologies for personal and commercial vehicles including taxis such as hybrids and electric cars.

What we are asking you to do:

- *Turn off your engine when stationary – especially outside schools.
- *Use public transport where available.
- *Cycle to work or to the shops if possible.
- *Walk more for health and to avoid the short car journeys if you can.



Our Local Environment:

When South Norfolk Council buy goods or services, our priority is to ensure we are getting value for money for you, the taxpayer. We also want to use our buying power to support local businesses and the local economy. We want to encourage local enterprises in South Norfolk and the county to bid for work with us.

However, it is also important we take into account the significant environmental impact of those decisions not just for now but in the future too. This is known as sustainable procurement.

As a Council we want to ensure all the services and products we buy improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area from reducing carbon emissions to maximising the use of recycled materials. We want all businesses and individuals we work with to consider their role in our efforts to increase sustainable procurement.

The Wider Environment:

Government departments and their related organisations have to ensure they meet the minimum mandatory Government Buying Standards (GBS) standards when buying goods and services and encourage the wider public sector to specify these in tenders.

However, it encourages everyone to meet best practice standards, which go further and include sustainable procurement.

In effect when organisations choose their goods or services, the decision should not be based solely on value for money but for the impact on society and the economy as a whole including the need to minimise any damage to the environment.

We will select products and services which have a minimal effect on the depletion of natural resources and biodiversity. We will also look at the environmental performance of suppliers.

What we are doing:

- *Carrying out a review of the products we buy and their impact on the environment.
- *Considering the environmental performance of all suppliers and contractors and encourage them to conduct their operations in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- *Ensuring local enterprises are encouraged to bid for goods and services from the Council.
- *Looking at moving to green energy supplies for property belonging to the Council.
- *Considering ways of minimising the environmental impact of our canteen through new contracts.

What we are asking you to do:

- *Buy local and sustainable goods and produce to help support the local economy and local producers.



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