

WNC Sustainability Report 2023/24

Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Executive Summary	3
Energy	4
Housing	6
Transport and Highways.....	9
Biodiversity.....	11
Emissions Reporting	15
External Accreditation.....	19
Adaptation.....	19
Waste	20
Economic Growth.....	24
Regeneration	25
Environmental Health	26
Public Health and Wellbeing.....	27
Communications and Engagement.....	30
Procurement.....	31
Performance.....	32
Looking Forward	32
Glossary	33

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this year's Sustainability Report, which outlines the progress we have made towards fulfilling our commitment to a more sustainable future for West Northamptonshire (West Northants). Sustainability is not just the responsibility of a single team – it involves the entire Council and extends beyond it.

Sustainability is becoming a vital thread woven throughout the whole organisation – guiding our policies, shaping our initiatives, and informing the way we work across all areas of the Council.

In the face of ongoing environmental, social and economic challenges, we recognise the urgency of acting decisively and responsibly. This report details the progress we have made over the past year to reduce our carbon footprint, promote greener practices, and support the wellbeing of our community.

Following the publication of the Sustainability Strategy and launch of Sustainable West Northants in 2022, the Council made three Sustainability Pledges as a foundation for steering resources and actions. These primary commitments are:

- Net Zero own emissions by 2030 and those of residents and businesses by 2045
- Take a community leadership role for Sustainability in West Northants
- Ensure all our Council strategies and policies are aligned to and contribute to the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

This report has been produced to demonstrate our ongoing progress towards these commitments, to show transparency and to show that we are determined to lead by example. The UN SDGs form the basis of our sustainability approach and have been highlighted throughout the report sections to show progress towards specific areas of sustainability.

We are committed to delivering real, measurable change. The projects and initiatives highlighted in this report are a testament to the collective efforts of our teams and partners, and I would like to thank the Sustainability Team and wider cross-party Sustainability Working Group for their continued dedication.

I am proud of the progress we have made, but I am also mindful that there is much more to be done, and we will continue to update you as our journey continues. I hope that you find this report both informative and encouraging.

Cllr Rebecca Breese

Portfolio Holder for Environment, Recycling and Waste, West Northamptonshire Council

Introduction

This report is the second annual Sustainability Report and has been created to summarise the sustainability progress at the Council during 2023/24, with information drawn from key service areas such as Public Health, Housing and Waste, as well as the work completed by the Sustainability Team.

The report follows on from West Northamptonshire Council’s (WNC’s) Sustainability Pledges made in 2022 and aims to demonstrate our position as a regional leader in sustainability. The Sustainability Project continues to be supported by the cross-party Sustainability Working Group, who are currently supporting the development of a Climate Change Strategy, scheduled for publication by March 2025.

The UN SDGs, presented in Fig. 1, consist of 17 goals, created in 2015 as a blueprint to achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. The goals address a range of challenges including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change and peace. All the goals are interconnected and need to be approached in unison. It was agreed that the Council would use the SDGs as a framework for reporting on our sustainability progress and relevant SDGs are referenced throughout sections of this report. For more information on the targets and indicators for each of the SDGs, visit the UN webpage – [UN SDGs](#).



Fig. 1 – United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Executive Summary

Since the Sustainability Pledges were made in 2022, the Council has demonstrated its commitment to these pledges by forming a dedicated Sustainability Team. At the time, the Council decided to shift the focus to sustainability and not solely climate change and the extent of the projects covered within this report demonstrates the broad remit of the team. The report shows good progress since the team was introduced and the annual production of a Sustainability Report demonstrates our transparency and commitment in this area.

Particular highlights during 2023/24 include measures to support residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, participation in the No Mow May campaign and maintenance of our bronze level Investors in the Environment accreditation.

Energy



The Council's Assets and Environment Team manages energy for the Council, working with the Sustainability Team and other departments.

Reducing Energy Demand

Since the formation of WNC in 2021, a proportion of our energy has been purchased from renewable sources through certificates known as Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (or REGOs) for electricity; and Renewable Gas Guarantees of Origin (or RGGOs) for gas, at a premium price. After consideration of the cost benefits of this form of energy purchasing, also considered a form of offsetting, WNC decided to cease purchase of renewable gas certificates in September 2023 and will cease purchasing of renewable electricity by October 2024. The focus will instead be on delivery of projects resulting in emissions reductions.

The Council continues to generate its own renewable energy through various solar arrays (also known as photovoltaic or PV arrays). During 2023/24 the Council generated >407,000 kWh of renewable energy which reduced our demand for national grid energy and was an increase of 12% generation compared to the previous year. The PV system at One Angel Square was extended this year to add an additional ~90 kWp capacity. The number of buildings with small renewable energy generation systems will continue to increase further reducing electricity sourced from the national grid.

In the corporate buildings, energy is predominantly controlled centrally to manage lighting and heating effectively. With the introduction of the Investors in the Environment (iiE) accreditation, this has fostered an improved process for quarterly reviews of energy usage from the corporate buildings between the Energy Manager and the Sustainability Team.

Large Scale Solar Projects

In 2022/23, the Council embarked on a programme to assess the feasibility of installing large scale PV systems on its assets around West Northamptonshire. This is an ambitious programme with the goal of securing the energy demand of the Council from renewables by 2030. During 2023/24, the Council assessed most of the sites earmarked for this project. A report is intended to be reviewed by Cabinet in September 2024 to provide an update on the project so far and to seek funding to progress to Phase 3 and consider next steps. This next

phase would develop proposals in more detail, including assessing the benefits of battery energy storage.

Estate Climate Strategy

This strategy was approved by Cabinet in November 2023 and can be found on WNC's [Estates Management](#) webpage. The Estate Climate Strategy draws much of the above work together and set out an approach by which WNC can achieve a net zero estate by 2030. Where practical, the aim is to achieve this directly, through energy efficient buildings, low carbon heating and lighting, and good management. Emissions which remain would be offset either through generation of green electricity or measures such as tree planting to positively remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Construction and Maintenance Climate Strategy

This strategy was approved by Cabinet in November 2023 and can also be found on WNC's [Estates Management](#) webpage. The strategy has taken into consideration guidance from professional bodies and agencies. It sets out a series of steps the Council could take to work towards low-carbon construction. These include:

- Only building that which is genuinely required
- Re-using and adapting existing buildings where practical
- Using low-carbon materials where practical, especially timber, which can support net removal of carbon from the atmosphere, the strategy will be presented to the Cabinet for approval later in 2023

Sustainable Heat Network

In partnership with Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH), the Council has been awarded £112k as part of the Heat Network Delivery Unit Phase 12 funding, to carry out a feasibility study for a sustainable heat network for Northampton and Rothersthorpe village. The Public Health grant and NPH are match funding the study in a bid to help alleviate fuel poverty by designing a solution to deliver lower-cost large-scale carbon heat to homes and to commercial large-scale buildings. Sources of heat being explored include large-scale water and air source heat pumps (ASHPs) and waste industrial heat.

During last year, the Council completed the feasibility study which showed that there is a great potential to generate heat from low carbon sources. It has also been identified that the first phase should be developing a heat network for the town centre which will gradually expand to reach the whole of Northampton. The choice of the town centre was based on the concentration of high heat consumers and the availability of low carbon heat sources such as waste heat from industrial processes, river Nene and Council-owned land where large air source heat pumps can be installed. The Council has also been awarded £227.5k as part of the Heat Network Delivery Unit Phase 12 funding, to prepare an Outline Business Case (OBC) for the sustainable heat network for the town centre. The Council and NPH are match funding the project with £86k. The OBC will update the feasibility study, identify the commercial model and procurement route to develop this heat network.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

The Council was successful in securing £7m from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3b to decarbonise and improve energy efficiency of four leisure centres across West Northamptonshire, this was match funded by a contribution from WNC bringing the total project value to £8m. The fund, initiated by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), is delivered by Salix Finance, which supports decarbonisation and energy efficiency across Great Britain. The objective is to bring facilities up to date and contribute towards decarbonisation.

The funding will be used to decommission the end-of-life gas boilers and replace them with air source heat pumps or similar low carbon heating solutions which will be partially fed by electricity produced from new PV systems at Daventry Leisure Centre, Moulton Leisure Centre, Brackley Leisure Centre, and Towcester Centre for Leisure. The estimated annual carbon reduction on completion of the project is 861 tCO₂e per year.

The project has progressed this year and the new PV systems and air source heat pumps will be operational in the four rural leisure centres by September 2024. The gas boilers will be decommissioned in the four leisure centres except Moulton LC where they will be retained and operated in parallel with the installed ASHPs until National Grid upgrades their electrical infrastructure and provide the centre with the requested electrical capacity. This is due to be completed by around September 2025. The Council will then be able to decommission the gas boilers.

Housing



The [Housing Strategy](#) for WNC was published in 2022, and delivery is ongoing to 2025.

Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard

As part of its regulatory functions across private rental properties, the Private Sector Housing Team monitor and ensure compliance with the 2018 'Minimum Level of Energy Efficiency' standard (energy performance certificate; EPC, band E) across all private rented accommodation in West Northamptonshire. During 2023/24 two financial penalties were issued to landlords who had failed to ensure compliance with the requirement.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) are grants offered by DESNZ to improve the energy performance of social rented homes. The Council own around 12,000 homes and had successfully applied for three SHDF programmes: SHDF Demonstrator; SHDF Wave 1; and SHDF Wave 2.1, to improve some of the poorer energy performing properties. These SHDF programmes were consortium projects led by WNC with works being delivered by NPH.

Having successfully completed the SHDF Demonstrator programme in 2022/23 for the improvement of 149 homes, WNC and NPH completed SHDF Wave 1 in 2023/24 for 429 homes. SHDF Wave 2 had been outcome driven, aiming to exceed the space demand targets and for all homes to reach EPC band C or better. The primary measure installed was external wall insulation. Other measures included new windows and doors, loft insulation, mechanical ventilation, and internal sensors (Aico Home). Roof adaptations and other enabling works, including future proofing for air source heat pump installations, had been made where necessary. The project was delivered on a geographic scope, focusing on solid wall homes, in particular estates in Northampton. Abington, Kingsthorpe and Kingsthorpe Hollow were the main estates, with smaller areas of Kingsley and St James also being included in the project. The project's successful delivery has reduced space heating demand by 70% to an average 58 kWh/m². These homes are now amongst the most thermally efficient in the WNC housing stock, despite being 90 years old. All homes were made EPC band C or better, removing the risk of fuel poverty according to the Low-Income Low Energy Efficiency metric, and achieving WNC and NPH targets to improve all council housing to at least EPC band C by 2030. The average Standard Assessment Procedure score, which ranges from 1 to 100, uplift is 15 points across the project.

The SHDF Wave 2.1 programme is currently in progress with proposed works to over 100 council homes. The programme is anticipated to be completed in 2025.

Northamptonshire Partnership Homes

NPH manages a portfolio of >12,400 homes on behalf of WNC and aim to transform these to a net zero portfolio by reducing energy consumption and increasing renewable energy generation. 1,600 homes already have PV systems installed and in 2023/24 these generated 1.9 million kWh of renewable energy, saving carbon emissions as well as saving residents hundreds of pounds in energy bills and providing some protection from energy price fluctuations.

NPH manage and report on their own carbon emissions through their annual Energy and Carbon Report. NPH carbon emissions have continually reduced from the initial baseline of 2,474 tCO₂e in 2018/19. Year on year reductions have exceeded the 7% target for three years in a row, but 2023/24 data shows an increase of both total emissions and emissions per home compared to the previous reporting period, totalling 1,769 tCO₂e.

Funding

The Sustainability and Housing Teams at WNC have worked together to secure access to the following funding schemes for home energy improvements for residents on low incomes living in energy inefficient properties:

ECO4 Flex: The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a Government Scheme which confers an obligation on energy suppliers to install energy efficiency and heating measures to homes. It is currently in its fourth iteration, known as ECO4 which will run until 31st March 2026. ECO is aimed at householders on means evaluated benefits; however, suppliers are allowed to fulfil part of the obligation through ECO4 Flex. ECO4 Flex means that householders who are on low income/are particularly vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home can still be eligible. Working with an installer, households complete a self-declaration and provide evidence to show that they meet the requirements of one of the Government-defined eligibility routes. Participating local authorities then check and sign off these declarations so that householders can access funding.

There is a significant administrative burden for local authorities who choose to participate in ECO4 Flex and at WNC this has stretched internal resources. For ECO4 Flex, WNC agreed a partnership agreement with National Energy Foundation (NEF), at no cost to the authority, to ease some of this burden. NEF check and onboard installer qualifications and add them to their network of approved suppliers, they also pre-check self-declarations and evidence. WNC then complete a final check, sign the declarations, and audit a random sample.

In 2023/24 WNC signed off over 130 declarations through this arrangement. Additionally, although installers can contact NEF directly to join their network, we also received contact from 14 installers looking to undertake ECO4 Flex work in our area, who were then directed to the NEF network.

HUG2: Government scheme designed to be a continuation of the HUG scheme in Sustainable Warmth to upgrade homes that are not connected to the mains gas grid for heating. WNC were part of the successful Cambridge and Peterborough consortium bid, managed by the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. The application was submitted in November 2022 and successful applicants were notified in March 2023. As we are part of a consortium bid, funding allocation has some flexibility, but we expect to have funding to upgrade around 60 homes in West Northamptonshire. Delivery of this project began in December 2023 and should conclude by 31st March 2025. As part of the scheme, WNC have run a marketing and communications campaign to promote it to residents in a variety of formats such as attending local events and social media posts to ensure optimal uptake of the scheme. WNC have also targeted properties via mailouts to promote the campaign, between December 2023 and March 2024 we have mailed out to over 3200 homes.

Transport and Highways



Local Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (LEVI)

The Council is working on a large-scale concession contract to support the roll-out of electric vehicle (EV) charging facilities on its street and car parks, and the car parks of any willing partners.

The UK Government introduced the LEVI fund to support local authorities with the deployment of charging infrastructure for EVs. The capability fund provides upfront resource funding to recruit dedicated staff to undertake the planning required for EV infrastructure. WNC was awarded £73,620 for the capability fund in 2022/23 with a further tranche of £335,380 awarded. The second aspect of LEVI is the capital fund, this will enable the Council to bid for funds to deliver EV charge point infrastructure. WNC has provisionally been allocated £2.8 million for this purpose.

The Council has set up an EVI Team using the awarded LEVI capability funding. The team has drafted the West Northamptonshire Electric Vehicles Infrastructure Strategy which will be shared for consultation with the residents during summer 2024 before seeking Cabinet approval. The team has also started preparing the LEVI Capital Application to secure capital funding of £2.8m, the application will be submitted in summer 2024. The application highlights the number and type of EV chargers to be installed, their locations and commercial arrangement to be adopted to deliver this work. Most installed chargers will be on-street in locations where residents do not have off-street parking. This will encourage these households to switch to electric mobility.

Active Travel

Delapre Park Active Travel Project

The project to provide high quality walking and cycling infrastructure in Delapre Park is ongoing. This infrastructure replaces a mud trodden path and allows high quality access for families with buggies, people with disabilities, commuters and equestrians to get across the parkland and access other destinations by active travel. It also addresses some seasonal flooding issues in places by providing an elevated path. Alongside this there has been two years of behaviour change funding to provide a suite of interventions that include an active travel map for the area, cycle training for children and adults, cycle maintenance and provision of electric bikes for loan. There was strong local community engagement which made sure local people's views and requirements heavily influenced the scope of the project. The resulting pathway should encourage more cycling and walking in the area and will be monitored and evaluated with the University of Northampton (UON).

Other work continued in terms of the Northampton Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which is anticipated to be sent out for consultation in Autumn 2024.

Strategy Development and Behavioural Change

The developing West Northamptonshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) will have a key role in ensuring that future transport infrastructure provides opportunities for increased active travel and supports the increased use of public transport. The LTP will go out for consultation for in July 2024, with final draft approval expected before the end of 2024.

WNC is developing LCWIPs to make active travel a natural choice for residents and visitors of Brackley, Daventry and Towcester, with consultation on the Northampton plan due later this year, 2024.

Abington Area Active Travel Scheme

The scheme funded by Active Travel 2 funding continued to progress towards construction anticipated to be Autumn 2024. The Rushmere Road junction will be the first phase of the scheme and will provide high quality intelligent traffic management and improved facilities for pedestrians to cross the junction as well as provision for cycling off highway. The second phase extends Park Avenue south to the King Edward Road junction and then continues along Park Avenue Crescent. It will provide segregated cycleways and improved provision at the King Edward Road junction and is due for completion in Spring 2025.

Public e-Scooters

A consultation was undertaken to seek views on the current trial scheme of Voi e-scooters. This was initiated as part of the works of a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group which was tasked with considering the effectiveness of the trial within West Northamptonshire. The group concluded that the economic and environmental benefits of the e-scooters provided a compelling case for retention of the trial scheme to May 2026, with a number of recommendations for any future contract extension.

Car Sharing Scheme

In 2023, WNC introduced a Car sharing scheme on the intranet for use by staff. the car sharing scheme was implemented following feedback from the annual Staff Travel Survey, which indicated interest from colleagues. The scheme intends to provide staff with benefits, including cost savings on fuel and parking, as well as reducing the environmental impact of their commute and putting them in touch with new colleagues. Uptake so far has been modest, but this is an ongoing project that will require behavioural change and it is recognised that this may not be a viable option for many members of staff, for various reasons.

Kier

The contract 'Climate Change and Environmental Management Plan' was developed at the start of the WNC's contract with Kier in September 2022. This is a management plan with a

suite of appendices to manage environment and sustainability on the WNC Highways contract. The plans and appendices are due for review in early 2024/25.

During this last year, the main achievement has been the increased use of hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) in highways vehicles, reducing the use of ultra-low sulphur diesel (ULSD). During the first year of the contract, just under 10,000 litres of HVO was used in operations. During 2023/24 this figure had increased to 164,000 litres, representing 62% of the fuel used on this contract. This has helped to reduce emissions from this contract by over 400 tCO₂e compared to using just ULSD.

Biodiversity

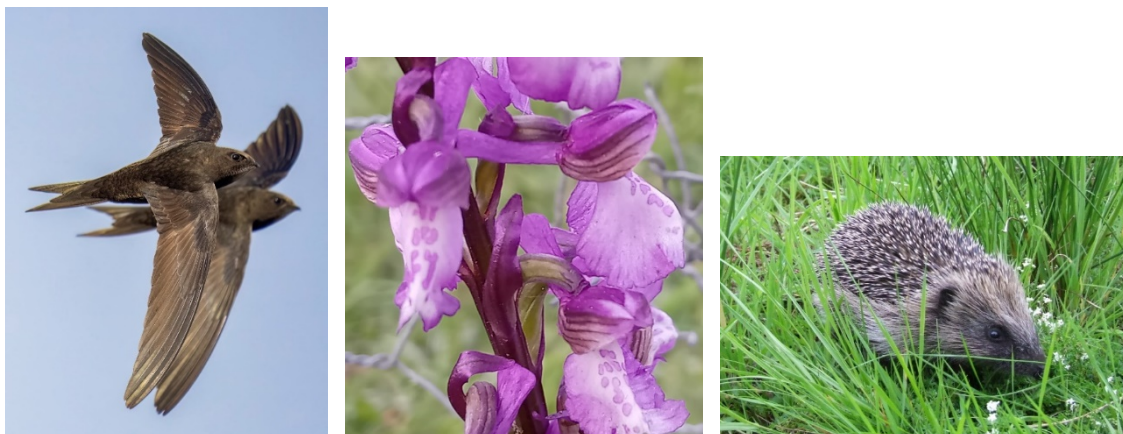


Fig. 2-4. Nature in West Northamptonshire: (2) swifts – Robert Booth; (3) green-winged orchid – Ruth Rolls; and (4) hedgehog – Nikki Charlton.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

A dedicated Nature Recovery Strategy Officer was appointed in January 2024 to lead the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) alongside partners, stakeholders and communities across West Northamptonshire. There is a governance structure which includes WNC councillor portfolio holders, the National Farmers Union, Woodland Trust, Country Landowners Association, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Local Nature Partnership and University of Northampton, amongst others. WNC is one of 48 responsible authorities delivering LNRSs throughout the country as per the 2021 Environment Bill and guided/supported by Natural England.

The LNRS comes from an urgency to address the nature crisis and the recognition that healthy habitats and ecosystems support/provide, for example, clean water and air, shelter, pollination and healthy soils, and contribute to reducing flood risk, improving food production and cooling our environments. Nationally, almost 1 in 6 species are at risk of extinction, and in West Northamptonshire, these species include swifts, water voles, hazel dormice, green-winged orchids, curlews, golden plovers, adders, hedgehogs, and wood white and black hairstreak butterflies (see Fig. 2-4 for photos of example species).

WNC engaged with three delivery partners: The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire to complete the Statement of Biodiversity element; the Northamptonshire Biological Records Centre to produce the initial “long list” of over 1000 species identified as at risk of extinction in Northamptonshire; and the Nene Rivers Trust to create an Engagement Plan.

WNC was one of three councils contracting Natural Capital Solutions to study and report on biodiversity opportunity mapping and ecosystems services, including funding mechanisms and case studies. The Natural Capital Implementation Plan shared its final draft in March, which consisted of a full report, web browser [storyboard](#) and GIS layers. The report is not only useful for providing an evidence base for the LNRS, but also for informing the Local Plan, flood risk and other departments.

The LNRS will identify the most impactful places and activities to deliver nature recovery. It is an opportunity guide, bringing the latest national evidence, local information and knowledge together. The strategy will consist of an interactive map and document hosted on the Council’s website which will be for all to use and inspire informed action. Mapped potential measures (actions) will become the focus for funding opportunities such as Biodiversity Net Gain, Environmental Land Management Schemes, and other national funding bids. The planned timescale for adoption of the strategy is by March 2025.

Parks and Open Spaces

Daventry Parks

During the last year, Daventry Country Park rangers teamed up with DHL to plant over 300 tree whips in the park to provide more habitats and foraging opportunities for a range of native species. The trees were provided by Friends of Daventry Country Park. This volunteering session inspired the group to come back and help coppice a large section of overgrown and encroaching willow to create a willow hedge to protect the wetland and allow light to reach the woodland floor, giving other plant species the opportunity to thrive.

We are continuing to work in partnership with Green Health at Daventry at the Community Allotment Garden. All involved have been working hard to plant and cultivate a variety of vegetables and plants for re-sale to raise funds to reinvest into the project. The project offers opportunities for people living with mental illness to develop their knowledge and awareness of horticulture as well as improving their health and wellbeing. This year they won many rosettes in the Daventry Flower and Vegetable Show organised by the Daventry Allotment and Gardening Association.

The Racecourse

The Garden in the Park – a space that was previously an antisocial behaviour hotspot has been turned into a community garden and orchard. It consists of 12 raised beds which are sponsored or cared for by various organisations (Fig. 5). The area is mostly maintained by the Probation Service (Community Payback) who tend it weekly and carry out various tasks around the site. The main community group who tends to the area (twice a week) is Grow Wild who provide hands-on outreach services for individuals of all ages, including those with disabilities, learning disabilities, and mental health challenges.

The project supports organisations to grow fruit and vegetables for use in their own organisation or to supply to the local community. The site consists of planters, a wildflower bed, a small orchard with trees and bushes, and composting bays where contractors recycle green waste for use within the garden and park. There is also a seating area, bug hotel, bird baths and feeders as well as several water butts to collect rainwater for use in the garden.

The Park Rangers work closely in partnership with the Council's Highways contractor idverde – they provide woodchip from tree works that they have carried out around the park, as well as fallen leaves and grass cuttings which are then made into compost for use within the garden and around the park (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5 & 6 – Raised beds and compost piles at the Racecourse.

Bradlaugh Fields

The community orchard that was established last year with 12 fruit trees is progressing well. Similarly to the Racecourse, this area is also supported by the Probation Service. Particular highlights this year include making additional compost bays, habitat piles and more wildflower areas, as well as a rockery from bricks found around the area. Willow growing on site has also been harvested to make a living willow dome (Fig. 7), which is particularly popular with young children and forest school.

The park rangers also make use of resources from idverde such as woodchip and logs which have been used for edging paths making it a safer space for the community (Fig. 8).



Fig. 7 & 8 – Willow dome and log edged paths at Bradlaugh Fields.

No Mow May

During 2023, WNC participated for the first time in the national Plantlife campaign, No Mow May. The campaign was supported by the Council's Highways contractors Kier and idverde, and areas within the Council's green spaces were designated to be left unmown for the duration of May. The parks which participated included Abington Park and The Racecourse. The Council also encouraged parish councils, which have responsibility for their grass maintenance schedule, to participate. A total of 16 parish councils (~10% of total parish councils) in West Northamptonshire informed us that they had participated in No Mow May; however, we expect that actual participation was much higher. This number does not include individual households but whole parishes. Public response to the campaign was largely positive, with our subcontractors, idverde, expressing that park goers were pleased to see nature blooming. During the period of the campaign, residents also shared animal sightings with us (Fig. 9)

Following the campaign, more green spaces within the management remit of WNC, have been incorporated into the scope of the campaign and it is hoped that ecological surveys can be undertaken at selected sites to establish whether a quantitative impact on biodiversity can be observed.

For the 2024 No Mow May campaign, a public survey was launched in April 2024 to gauge public perception and involvement in the campaign, and to understand how to improve engagement for future years.

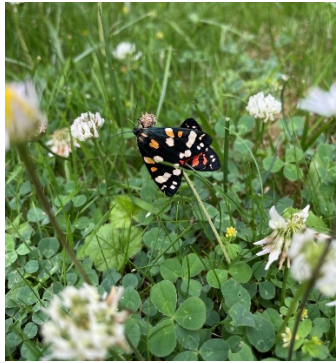


Fig. 9 – Scarlet tiger moth in a West Northants resident’s garden during No Mow May.

Tree Strategy and Policy

During the year, the Council collaborated with consultants Woodland Dwelling to begin work on developing a Tree Strategy for West Northamptonshire. This initially involved extensive consultation with local communities, residents, partners and town and parish councils between Autumn 2023 and Spring 2024. The results of the consultation have informed the strategy’s content.

The draft strategy sets out how WNC will manage, protect and expand tree and woodland cover across West Northamptonshire for the next twenty years and will complement existing and emerging strategies that align with it, such as our Health and Wellbeing Strategy and emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Mapping, undertaken as part of the consultation work, has identified that only 9% of land in West Northamptonshire is covered by trees, below the national average of 14.5%.

The Council will be consulting on a final draft of the Strategy in early Autumn 2024, with a view to launching it in early 2025, before working to deliver its ambitions.

Emissions Reporting



Carbon emissions represent one of the clearest and challenging measurements of our progress. West Northamptonshire Council committed to achieving Net Zero on its own emissions by 2030, and Net Zero on West Northants emissions by 2045. Adopting these ambitious Net Zero targets requires the Council to monitor, reduce and, where possible, eliminate sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across the organisation and the wider area. In addition to the benefits Net Zero will bring to West Northants, it will also contribute towards the UK’s 2050 Net Zero target.

WNC Operational Emissions

In order to track progress against the Net Zero 2030 target, a review of emissions is undertaken and reported on annually. The reporting year 2021/22 has been established as the baseline year and data were recorded in a standalone baseline emissions report. The second year of emissions reporting, 2022/23, is included within the first Sustainability Report. Both reports are available to view on this webpage: [Sustainability at West Northants Council](#).

WNC strive to continuously improve its emissions reporting and will seek to provide the fullest picture on our progress that the data allow. This means where additional data becomes available and calculation methodologies improve, we will include this in our reporting. In addition to new datasets included in the 2022/23 reporting year, this year we have included new data on waste generated from our libraries as well as improving the data reporting for waste from our One Angel Square office base.

WNC are currently exploring emissions from our pensions portfolio. However, this information is not currently in a format that is easily transferrable to our own emissions reporting process. We will continue to explore this for inclusion in the 2024/25 emissions reporting. An initial review of Scope 3 emissions using the categories outlined in the GHG Protocol Value Chain Standard has also been undertaken this year. This will enable the Council to determine the major activities and most significant emissions, not already being accounted for in our reporting, to be included. This exercise will be completed this year.

For reporting year 2023/24 total emissions were 22,861.9 tCO₂e. This is a 3% increase against the baseline and a 0.4% decrease compared to the previous year. Full details of the data are provided in Fig. 10 and Table 1, with analysis below.

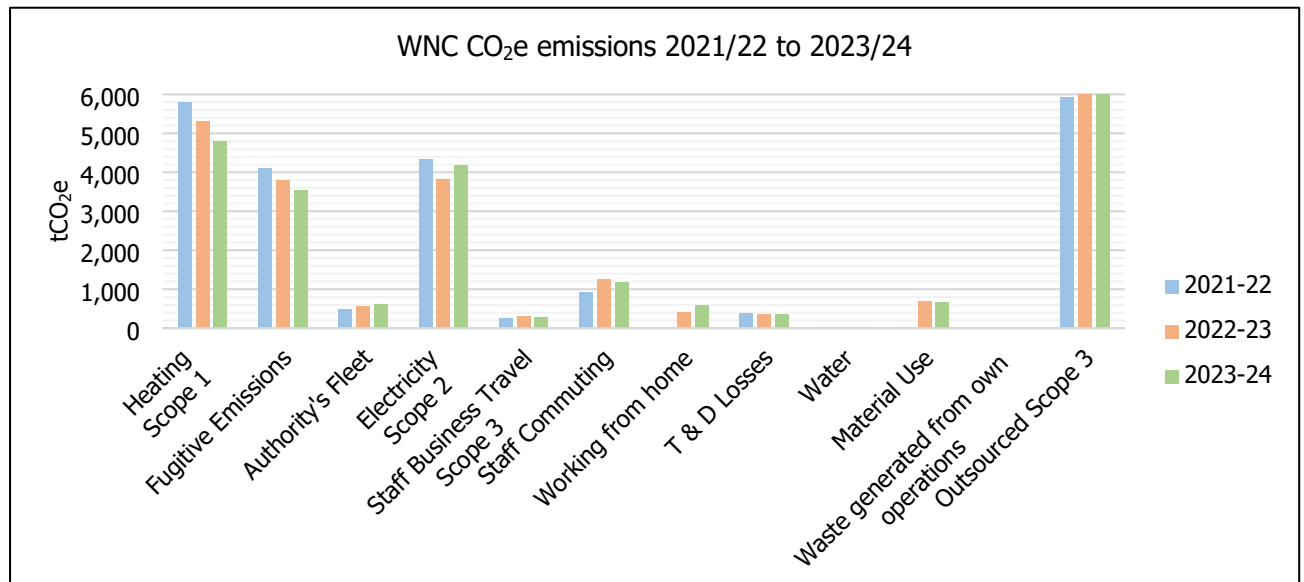


Fig. 10 – WNC’s annual emissions since baseline.

Table 1 – WNC’s annual emissions showing % changes since baseline and previous year.

Scope	Emissions Type	2021-22	% of Total Emissions	2022-23	% of Total Emissions	% change against baseline	2023-24	% of Total Emissions	% change against baseline	% change previous year (22-23)
Scope 1	Heating	5,784.07	26.05%	5,296.11	23.1%	-8.4	4,803.46	21.0%	-17.0	-9.3
	Fugitive Emissions	4,091.68	18.43%	3,795.00	16.5%	-7.3	3,546.00	15.5%	-13.3	-6.6
	Authority's Fleet	474.23	2.14%	560.04	2.4%	18.1	615.19	2.7%	29.7	9.8
Scope 2	Electricity	4,325.12	19.48%	3,828.47	16.7%	-11.5	4,172.62	18.3%	-3.5	9.0
Scope 3	Staff Business Travel	252.63	1.14%	294.25	1.3%	16.5	270.15	1.2%	6.9	-8.2
	Staff Commuting	926.73	4.17%	1,255.66	5.5%	35.5	1,175.34	5.1%	26.8	-6.4
	Working from home	-	-	404.74	1.8%	100.0	574.72	2.5%	N/A	42.0
	T & D Losses	382.75	1.72%	350.22	1.5%	-8.5	361.00	1.6%	-5.7	3.1
	Water	28.60	0.13%	29.56	0.1%	3.4	25.85	0.1%	-9.6	-12.6
	Material Use	18.21	0.08%	684.13	3.0%	100.0	672.44	2.9%	N/A	-1.7
	Waste generated from own operations	2.46	0.01%	3.49	0.02%	41.7	3.76	0.0%	52.5	7.6
	Outsourced Scope 3	5,917.16	26.65%	6,463.04	28.1%	9.2	6,641.37	29.1%	12.2	2.8
Total Emissions (tCO₂e)		22,203.64	100%	22,964.70	100%	3.4	22,861.90	100%	3.0	-0.4

Key observations:

Scope 1

- There has been a reduction in gas usage from assets and schools which has decreased emissions from energy usage
- The proportion of emissions from the authority's fleet (which represents the south area waste contract and leased vehicles) saw a marginal increase from 2.4% of total emissions in 2022/23 to 2.7%. The increase in mileage is mainly attributed to the leased vehicles
- Fugitive emissions, which represent those from closed landfill sites, have been mapped up to 2030, with annual decreases indicated
- A decrease in energy use and fugitive emissions has resulted in an overall decline in total emissions for Scope 1 of 13.3% compared to baseline

Scope 2

- Overall increase in total proportion of emissions for Scope 2 from 16.7% in 2022/23 to 18.3%
- The streetlighting category has an additional dataset provided on traffic signals, not reported on in previous years. This increased the emissions from this category from 874 tCO₂e in 2022/23 to 1,117 tCO₂e this year
- Despite the electricity consumption of buildings decreasing, the conversion factor for electricity (set by DESNZ) increased associated emissions from this category by approximately 1,000 tCO₂e
- As a result of an increase in the two categories for Scope 2 data, overall emissions have increased from the previous year but still decreased by 3.5% compared to baseline

Scope 3

- Emissions from staff business travel, determined from employee mileage claims, have decreased from 294 tCO₂e in 2022/23 to 270 tCO₂e
- Staff commuting, measured through an annual Staff Travel Survey, has an estimated decrease in car mileage. This is also supported by an increase in employees choosing to travel by bus

- Emissions from staff working from home is estimated using the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. The FTE figure increased from 2,323 in 2022/23 to 2,446, resulting in an increase in emissions for this category
- Decreases have been observed in water use and material use emissions
- The datasets for the waste from own operations category have improved with the use of dashboard data for One Angel Square showing waste volumes, as opposed to the tool used in previous years which estimates tonnage based on number of bin lifts. This category also now includes waste information for WNC libraries. This is one of the smallest categories of WNC emissions but demonstrates ongoing improvements in data availability
- Emissions from the water and waste generated by own operations categories are not insignificant, but as the smallest emissions categories, are not visible in Fig. 10 and can instead be viewed in Table 1 above
- Due to the additional datasets included in this category since the baseline year, the most relevant comparison is against the previous year which shows an increase of Scope 3 emissions of 2% compared to 2022/23

Outsourced Scope 3

- This year, the Local Government Association GHG Accounting tool has been updated to enable emissions from outsourced activities to be shown per contract. This simplifies the methodology for calculating total emissions for the outsourced Scope 3 category and provides a more detailed analysis of the emissions associated with each contract
- The most significant change in data for this category is vehicle fuel for the Kier Highways contract. During the first year of the contract, just under 10,000 litres of HVO was used in operations. During 2023/24 this figure had increased to 164,000 litres representing 62% of the fuel used on this contract. This has helped to reduce emissions from this contract by over 400 tCO₂e compared to using only diesel instead
- This category represents the largest proportion of WNC emissions due to the number of outsourced contracts for services such as highways, waste and leisure centres. The emissions have increased by 2% compared to 2022/23 and 12% compared to baseline

Area Wide Emissions

The Area Wide Emissions Report informs and supports our communities, residents, and businesses in reducing their own emissions and will help us meet our commitment to achieve Net Zero West Northamptonshire emissions by 2045.

NEW REPORT, BASED ON 2022 DATA, TO BE LINKED.

External Accreditation



Investors in the Environment

In 2023, WNC received bronze level accreditation to the iiE scheme, recognising its commitment towards sustainability. The iiE scheme is designed to help organisations improve their environmental performance and reduce their impact on the environment, save time and money as well as get recognition for their progress. The 2024 audit has taken place, and the Council retained the bronze level accreditation, improving on the 2023 score. Particular recognition was awarded for the amount and variety of environmental and social projects, both within the workplace through projects such as the sustainable periods project, and within the community through, for example, the No Mow May campaign. The Council will now work towards strengthening this accreditation and progressing to the next level of silver.

Adaptation



Local Plan

The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan for West Northamptonshire. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, sustainable development is a golden thread running through the plan.

The proposed spatial strategy within the emerging plan includes making use of existing brownfield sites and regenerating areas within Northampton and Daventry town centres. Growth is also proposed on larger sites that are on the periphery of Northampton to make use of and enhance existing walking, cycling and public transport routes.

Policies are specifically included within the Plan that relate to the following:

- Sustainable design and construction
- Air quality
- Low carbon and renewable energy, both standalone schemes and for new development
- Flooding

- Placemaking including design and amenity to make the most of opportunities for sustainable journeys
- Open space including local green space, green and blue infrastructure and landscapes
- Sustainable transport

Planning policy continues to work with the sustainability, public health, transport and other internal teams and external stakeholders to ensure the emerging policies are robust and contribute to improving sustainability within West Northamptonshire.

Next steps

The Planning Policy Team is currently analysing responses made to the Regulation 18 (Draft) Local Plan which closed in June 2024.

The Council then expects to consult on the Submission Draft of the Plan in early 2025 ready for a submission to the Secretary of State soon after.

Existing plans

In the meantime, and while the new Local Plan is being prepared, the current development plan for West Northamptonshire comprises of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Part 1) and Part 2 Plans for the Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire Areas.

These plans all contain policies relating to sustainable development that are used to guide proposals and make decisions. The Plans will guide development in West Northamptonshire to 2029.

Waste



Food Waste Reduction and Recycling

Throughout 2023/24 we were promoting food waste reduction and recycling across the Northampton area, using a grant from Public Health. We produced a comprehensive guide to food waste reduction and recycling which highlighted the social, economic, and environmental benefits of doing so as well as practical tips and advice. As part of the same project, we have made plastic food waste caddy liners available to purchase in all WNC run libraries, which in turn has funded the provision of a roll of liners for all new properties, with the aim of starting them off with food waste recycling as soon as they move into a new

property. Plastic caddy liners are cheaper than biodegradable ones and are preferred by the waste processors. Both plastic and biodegradable liners must be removed from the waste food before processing and are baled and sent for energy recovery.

One food waste round comprising 4,000 properties in the Kingsthorpe area of Northampton, have been provided with a new food waste recycling leaflet and a set of plastic caddy liners to encourage them to take part in the services. Participation and tonnage monitoring took place before the trial and will be undertaken again in a few months to monitor if this intervention has had the desired effect.

We have produced a series of social media videos about food waste – how to reduce it and how to recycle what you do have left over. They have been well received and viewed thousands of times.

We have also been supporting the network of Community Larders across West Northamptonshire, and are currently producing seasonal recipe cards, which larder users can use to make nutritious and cost-effective family meals with foods that are readily available at the larders. Once produced we will be running a series of cooking workshops, where we will be cooking some of the recipes on the cards with representatives of each of the Community Larders. They will take their knowledge back to their respective larders and organise their own taster sessions to encourage use of the cards.

Food waste is carbon intensive and can make up 30% of the carbon emissions from the residual waste stream. By reducing and recycling food waste WNC will also be reducing area wide carbon emissions. The food waste collected is anaerobically digested and turned into a fertiliser for use on local farm fields and biogas which is used to make renewable electricity.

During the year we have encouraged a further 18 schools across West Northamptonshire to recycle their food waste. Not only does this save the school money in terms of waste collection and disposal costs, but ensures that the food waste is reprocessed into green energy and compost and the children become accustomed to recycling their food waste at school and at home. Many of these school also received a food waste assembly from a waste education officer.

We will continue to focus on promoting the use of food waste recycling. Currently in West Northamptonshire only around one third of properties are using their food waste bins helping to recycle 10,000 tonnes of food waste.

Tri Sticker Roll Out and Waste Comms

A “tri” sticker (Fig. 11), incorporating 3 different campaigns was stuck onto the residual waste bin of every house in West Northamptonshire. The messages were:

- No Food Waste – use your food waste caddy
- No Batteries – use the separate collection
- No Recycling – use your recycling bin



Fig. 11 – Tri-sticker on residual waste bin.

The aim of this sticker was to encourage the recycling of food waste and recyclable materials as well as promote the safe disposal of batteries in order to reduce vehicle and facility fires.

To complement the sticker, the waste “Welcome Pack” has been updated and reprinted. This is delivered to all new properties at the same time as their new wheeled bins. It aims to ensure that residents are fully aware of how to take part in the recycling services as soon as they move in, so they start as they mean to go on. Website pages have also been updated, providing specific information about batteries and where all the various recyclable materials go for reprocessing.

The Waste Team had a large stand at the 2023 Northampton Balloon Festival where we discussed all aspects of the waste service with visitors.

West Northamptonshire Bin App

Further developments were made to the WNC App during 2023/24, with the inclusion of a “Report It” facility in October 2023. Residents can now report issues such as abandoned shopping trolleys, fly-tipping, lost dogs, street cleaning issues and graffiti via the app, adding a photo of the issue if they so wish. This report goes straight into the Council’s Customer Relationship Management system for action. There are further plans to add in further issues for reporting.

Resources and Waste Strategy

During the autumn of 2023, WNC finalised and approved a Resources and Waste Strategy. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a sustainable 15-year vision for waste and street cleansing services, which will inform decision making related to these services. The Strategy contains a set of 10 principles, which will be used to guide the development of waste services in West Northamptonshire as they evolve and harmonise, and to ensure waste services are delivered in accordance with the wider ambitions and objectives of the Council.

The 10 principles are:

1. To provide appropriate, harmonised waste services
2. To move waste up the waste hierarchy

3. To support local waste prevention initiative and increase waste education
4. To deliver high performing services, recycle more and achieve our targets
5. To ensure waste services are value for money
6. To invest in West Northamptonshire's waste infrastructure to support performance and value for money
7. To consider future changes when designing services
8. To collaborate with partners to improve street cleansing
9. To consider carbon emissions and sustainability in our decisions regarding waste services
10. To align waste services with West Northamptonshire Council's wider values and strategies

The Resources and Waste Strategy can be read in full here ([AWAITING REPORT LINK](#)).

Sustainable Periods Products

Towards the end of 2022/2023, WNC and NPH started having meetings to discuss the issue of excessive menstrual waste in office bathrooms. The idea to introduce the conversation around reusable products was discussed and research was conducted to understand the benefits of swapping to reusable menstrual products rather than disposable. Following this, we liaised with several companies to procure some free samples of the various forms of reusable products as well as to negotiate discount codes for colleagues to use. We procured around ten different products that we showcased to staff in a workshop setting in January 2024 (see Fig. 12 for promotional material). The response to this was extremely positive and colleagues of all genders were eager to remove the stigmas and barriers around the topic and create a safe environment for open conversation. Further workshops have been planned for 2024/2025.



Fig. 12 – Poster promoting sustainable periods workshop.

Economic Growth



UK Shared Prosperity Fund

In 2023/24 the Council was successful in securing £5.4m from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to boost our local economy over the next three years.

A number of these projects link directly to climate action through support for businesses, and others link to different aspects of sustainability. Below is a summary of each of the relevant projects.

Net Zero West Northants

Objective: Support businesses in West Northants on their path to sustainability.

The project is managed by Ngage Solutions on behalf of WNC. The programme offers expert guidance to help businesses understand and reduce their carbon footprint and hosts workshops and events to foster community engagement and shared learning among businesses. It also provides financial assistance for energy-saving projects through a total grant fund of £325,000. The project aims to assist 100 businesses in calculating their emissions and developing a strategic approach to the Net Zero transition and enable businesses to achieve savings of up to 1,000 tCO₂e per year by the end of the programme.

Planning and procurement works for the Net Zero West Northants project were completed within 2023/24 with the project due to launch in early 2024/25.

Towards A Net Zero West Northants

Objective: To support small and medium-sized enterprises with decarbonisation through a programme of support delivered by UON. The project aims to assist 100 businesses in calculating their emissions through use of a carbon calculator and support webinars.

The project was launched in September 2023 and during the course of the rest of the year, surpassed the target of 100 businesses registered to the programme. Key activities included two webinars and ongoing development of the Carbon Calculator by UON.

Northamptonshire Energy Saving Scheme

Objective: The aim of the project is to combat fuel poverty by supporting households to improve energy efficiency. The project has completed 41 assessments and 28 installations at year end and is working alongside Asset Management to target those with low EPC ratings.

Active Travel Programme

Objective: Develop cycleways to increase active travel take-up in West Northants, reduce congestion, improve air quality, and promote a healthier, more active lifestyle.

During the year, the project has developed Breeze Rides with an Active Breeze leader, running monthly rides at Upton Country Park and weekly gentle family rides at Six Hills Reservoir; attended community engagement events and secured funding for a coaching course at NSport Bike Park; and identified two new schools for cycling training for teachers.

Regeneration



There are a number of regeneration projects taking place in Northampton town centre which are ongoing projects over a number of years. The summaries below provide an update on the works undertaken during 2023/24.

Market Square Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the Northampton town centre market square is due for completion in Autumn 2024. Some of the key sustainability features within the development include the planting of 11 semi-mature new trees in GreenBlue Urban root cells which help the healthy growth of trees in urban areas and the installation of two drinking water filling stations, helping to reduce single use plastic within the town centre, and providing safe and clean drinking water, supporting public health.

24 Guildhall Road

The following sustainability improvements have been made to this project

- Installed a new 'Garland' tapered insulated roofing system to allow for improved thermal qualities and water drain off, enhancing heat retention in the building
- Two air source heat pumps to allow heating for the building
- Shared waste bin storage to allow for reduced waste collections and co-operation between tenants
- LED lighting and light sensors have been installed
- The property was given an EPC rating of B

Marefair Heritage Park

The following enhancements will be made through the Marefair Heritage Park.

- An existing tarmac car park is to be replaced with much needed 'Green Space' within one of the county's most deprived areas. This will promote Health and Wellbeing for the local community and schools
- Increasing biodiversity with the planting of a mini orchard along with several other new trees, hedges, lawns and wildflower soft landscaping
- A new 'Castle' themed inclusive playground will be installed together with some sensory play
- Heritage timeline poles with story panels will be erected as a historic symbol of where the Northampton Castle once stood. The heritage and history within the area and surrounding historic buildings will be celebrated and interpreted through the story panels
- Elevated community garden will create a social growing space for the local residents and imitate medieval vegetable and herb gardens to support the heritage park atmosphere
- New lighting, pathways, seating and CCTV will form part of the heritage park

Environmental Health



Air Quality

WNC has a legal duty to review air quality and take action where air pollution exceeds the national air quality objectives. West Northamptonshire has 8 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) where levels of nitrogen dioxide exceed the objective, due to road traffic. Levels are reducing in line with the national trend partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic changing the way in which we work and travel, and partly due to improvements in vehicle technology, and it is likely that several of the AQMAs will be revoked in the coming year. WNC's Draft Air Quality Action Plan outlines the steps that will be taken to improve air quality further, and links to other areas such as sustainable travel, road infrastructure improvements, public health and planning policy. WNC also improves air quality and improves health by regulating industrial emissions, dust on construction sites and the burning of waste.

There are 3 key grant funded projects:

ZEBRA 2 funding grant – grant and match funding by our partner Stagecoach will contribute to the delivery of 51 Zero Emission Buses which will operate on 11 routes in Northampton to improve vehicle emissions and air quality. The capital grant will also support the installation of vehicle charging infrastructure at the Stagecoach depot in the town. The project will support a reduction in transport carbon emissions and improve air quality. The new modern bus fleet will also improve journey experience and encourage an increase in bus use.

Active traffic management – a network of 20 real time air pollution sensors has been installed across Northampton. These sensors link to traffic management and public information systems and help inform steps that can be taken to improve congestion and improve air quality.

Domestic solid fuel burning – this will collect information on why, what and how residents across the district burn solid fuels, and what pollution and impact on health this is causing. There will be a behaviour change campaign to assess if this can improve pollution and health, as well as looking at the effectiveness and socio-economic implications of other controls such as the use of legislative smoke control areas.

Environmental Crime

The Cleaner Communities Campaign has the aim of bringing together a range of services to help make West Northamptonshire a cleaner and greener place to live and thrive. Through a dedicated webpage and social media posts, actions taken to address fly tipping and other environmental crime are publicised. Enforcement action forms part of the programme and during 2023/24 a total of 1,738 fixed penalty notices were issued for environmental crime along with 16,671 fly tips cleared.

Public Health and Wellbeing



Strategy Delivery

The Anti-Poverty Strategy entered its second year and the focus on supporting people has been underpinned with sustainability. The funding has been used to continue support for the warm spaces, Community Training Partnership, and improving the sustainability of food larders and food banks. The distribution of the household support fund has also been

focussed on sustainable solutions for supporting people, with the provision of household essentials that will support people on a longer-term basis.

The work against the commitments in the West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy has continued with action plans developed under the 10 ambitions around 'Live Your Best Life':

- The best start in life
- Access to the best available learning
- Opportunity to be fit, well and independent
- Employment that keeps them and their families out of poverty
- Good housing in places that are clean and green
- To feel safe in their homes and when out and about
- Connected to their friends and families
- The chance for a fresh start when things go wrong
- Access to health and social care when they need it
- To be accepted and valued simply for who they are

Last year the Northamptonshire Health Inequalities Strategy and Plan was produced which is based around the 'Core 20 plus 5', an NHS approach to reducing healthcare inequalities. The approach defines a target population – the 'Core20PLUS' – and identifies '5' focus clinical areas requiring accelerated improvement. The 'Core20' is the most deprived 20% of the population as identified by the national Index of Multiple Deprivation. 'PLUS' is groups that experience inequalities that are identified at a local level, and include people identified from minoritised ethnic communities, people with learning disabilities and long-term health conditions and 'inclusion health' groups etc. '5' is the clinical areas of focus that require accelerated improvements, this includes maternity, severe mental illness, early cancer diagnosis, chronic respiratory disease and hypertension case finding and optimal management for adults. This is currently being refreshed. Alongside this, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been refreshed, which is the baseline of health and wellbeing for residents in West Northamptonshire, identifying areas for focus for interventions to improve health and wellbeing and address inequalities.

Public Health continue to fund a scheme on providing energy support and advice which is a multiagency service providing free, independent, and confidential advice and support to those who are struggling with fuel poverty. Over 640 residents in West Northants have been directly supported by this service since August 2022. This has resulted in an estimated £14,418 energy savings for residents and the total debt managed is £117,928.

The Northamptonshire Anchor Institutions Network launched publicly its commitment to four priorities in 2023:

- Empowering the younger generation
- Inclusive employment opportunities
- Maximising social value
- Enhancing sustainability

The Well Northants Programme is funded by Public Health and delivered by the Communities Team, taking an asset-based community development approach, working in partnership with local communities to improve their health and wellbeing. Priorities identified by the community include the local environment and communities are coming together to improve their local spaces.

Public Health have run a competition with schools in the Northampton Central area for pupils to create posters with messages on how the school community can improve air quality. These posters have been used to create a communications campaign. Alongside this, schools have been supported to sign up to the Asthma + Lung UK Air Quality Champions programme.

West Northants Sustainable Food Network

The Sustainable Food Network is strengthening its goals and position. Funding has been secured to employ a project manager who is beginning to deliver on network development and action planning. A key aspect of network aims is to plan for food sustainability with regards to production, accessibility and waste management. A recent workshop brought together key partners from across the food environment to explore Farm to Fork – identifying what we have along the journey as well as issues, challenges and opportunities. This work, along with a bigger partnership discussion, will form the foundations of the Network Food Plan that will be developed by Spring 2025.

Workplace Wellbeing

At WNC we are in the process of implementing our Workforce Wellbeing Strategy. Associated activities to date include reviewing and relaunching our Mental Health First Aider network and providing Wellbeing Rooms in our main office hubs. We have also developed guidance to Improve the Way You Work and support sustainable and healthier habits in the normal, virtual and hybrid workspace. Our learning and development open programme weaves wellbeing into all our delivery with focused courses on the impact of change and personal resilience.

In 2023, the first staff walking challenge 'Walk West' took place. This was a workplace physical activity initiative for WNC staff using End to End's third-party software. A virtual route was mapped around West Northamptonshire landmarks and as people completed their daily steps/walks, distance could be measured and uploaded it to the platform. This then moved the participant's marker around the virtual map, highlighting landmarks and areas of interest as they passed them via postcards. The whole route was 85.31 miles. As each participant passed 20%, 40%, 60% and 80% completion marks, a tree was planted on their behalf. For each participant that passed the 50% completion mark, a meal was also donated to goodwill.

A total of 267 individuals signed up to the challenge with:

- 213 individuals registering distance walked
- 724 trees planted

- 180 meals donated
- 151 individuals completing 85.31-mile course

Communications and Engagement



Staff Network

Colleagues are actively encouraged to get involved in a Sustainability Staff Network (SSN) to share and implement ideas around sustainability, acknowledging how small everyday steps can mount up to larger change and impact. The SSN host monthly online meetings with over 40 people on the mailing list. Each month's meeting has different agenda items providing updates to colleagues on the priorities of the Sustainability Team as well as time for colleagues to share new sustainable practices, ideas and awareness. Notably, in May 2023, the SSN had a guest speaker from the Vegetarian Society as part of National Vegetarian Week, which was well attended and informative for colleagues. Other highlights for the network during the year included the Festive swap and planting of a wellbeing garden, making use of existing planters at the One Angel Square office base and utilising compost produced at the Racecourse.

Social Media

Since the launch of Sustainable West Northants, we have been engaging with local residents and businesses via our Twitter (X) channel ([@SustainableWN](#)) by regularly posting about sustainability top tips, awareness days, events. Our channel now has over 200 followers and interactions on some of our posts have received over 4,400 impressions.

Carbon Footprint Game

During the last year, the Sustainability Team have been engaging in an increasing number of public events. A total of 17 events were attended, with approximately 140 members of the public engaged with. Events ranged from school talks and community days to parish council and environmental group meetings. The topic of these events has varied depending on the audience and although all positively received, an engagement tool was identified as required to support this work. As such, the *How Bad are Bananas? Game* by Future We Want was purchased for use by the Sustainability Team (Fig. 13). The game is designed to be a solution to easily starting conversations around climate change with all audiences by comparing the carbon footprint of various consumption, travel and daily activities using a simple higher or lower principle. The game has been used at four events to date and has proven to be an effective conversation starter, leaving people to consider their lifestyle

choices and make informed meaningful changes where possible. As a result of these events, contacts are often made for future community outreach too.



Fig. 13 – *How Bad are Bananas? Game* being played at Towcester Women’s Institute event.

Northampton Sustainability Accord

The Sustainability Team attend the first UON Sustainability Summit in May 2023. The event brought together people from academia, local government and businesses to discuss shared sustainability challenges and goals. A key outcome of the summit was the Northampton Sustainability Accord, of which WNC was a founding signatory. Further details available at [Northampton Sustainability Accord – SLIPAH](#).

Procurement



The 2022/23 Sustainability Report highlighted that the Council had introduced a Social Value Policy to be applied in procurements and contract delivery of its goods, services and works.

The now well-established policy ensured that six new contracts, beginning in the 2023/24 financial year, would deliver social value in some way. Within these contracts suppliers have committed to delivering £292,655 worth of social value and have already delivered £70,128 of this to date.

In total, since the policy was introduced, 13 new contracts have been awarded in line with the policy, with suppliers committing to deliver £1,573,697 worth of social value, with £551,221 being delivered so far.

Some examples of the social value being delivered include:

- £866,056 committed by suppliers (£308,455 delivered so far) to ensuring a local supply chain is used in delivery of the contract.
- 17,735 car miles committed to being saved (12,149 car miles delivered so far) as a result of a green transport programme or equivalent (e.g., cycle to work programmes, public transport or car sharing programmes)

Performance

The Council has 6 key priorities which all form part of the vision towards a Sustainable West Northants. These priorities are:

- 1) Green and Clear
- 2) Improved Life Chances
- 3) Connected Communities
- 4) Thriving Villages & Towns
- 5) Economic Development
- 6) Robust Resource Management

For more information regarding the 2023/24 performance against the corporate plan measures, please see the [Annual Report](#).

Looking Forward

This report provides a comprehensive overview of progress towards delivery of the Council's sustainability objectives and an overview of the work completed by the Sustainability Team during 2023/24. The report will continue to be published on an annual basis providing updates for residents on progress towards WNC's sustainability objectives. The next report will be a reflection on the current 2024/25 year and will be published in the autumn of 2025. There are a number of key Council strategies due for publication this year which all contribute towards sustainability, most notably the Climate Change Strategy, Tree Strategy, Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Electric Vehicles Infrastructure Strategy and Local Transport Plan.

To keep up to date with our progress, view the [Council's Forward Plan](#), visit our dedicated [Sustainable West Northants](#) page and follow the Sustainability Team on Twitter @SustainableWN. You can contact the team by email at sustainable@westnorthants.gov.uk.

Glossary

Authority's Fleet – vehicles owned and operated by the authority. (1)

Biodiversity – the variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat. [What is biodiversity? – WWF](#) (2)

Decarbonisation – the process of removing or reducing carbon emissions, especially carbon dioxide from the atmosphere because of a process.

Financial Control Boundary – the authority reports on all sources of carbon emissions over which it has financial control. The authority has financial control over a service if it has the ability to direct the financial and operating policies of the service with a view to financially managing its activities, e.g. setting budgets, managing expenditure, and/or obtaining an 'income', such it might be the case in leisure centres, community centres, etc. (3)

Fuel Poverty – when households are spending 10% of their income to provide a sufficient heating regime ([What is fuel poverty? – NEA.](#)). (4)

Fugitive emissions – these emissions result from intentional or unintentional release. (3) The only fugitive emissions included in this report are those emitted from closed landfill sites.

Net Zero – achieving a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it ([What is net zero and how can we get there? – Energy Saving Trust](#)). (5)

Outsourced Scope 3 emissions – These emissions are from high value, large, outsourced contracts which are likely to present the biggest opportunity for making emissions reductions. For example, waste management services (collection, disposal, treatment), facilities management, leisure centres, highway maintenance, social care and children's services (including home to school transport). (1)

Scope 1 emissions – direct GHG emissions occur from sources that are owned or controlled by the company, for example, emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers and vehicles. (3)

Scope 2 emissions – indirect GHG emissions from the generation of purchased electricity consumed by the company. (3)

Scope 3 emissions – Scope 3 is an optional reporting category that allows for the treatment of all other indirect emissions. These emissions are a consequence of the activities of the company, but occur from sources not owned or controlled by the company. For example, staff business travel, water usage, waste. (3)

Staff Business Travel – vehicles owned by employees but used to conduct the business of the authority. (1)

Staff Commuting – this represents emissions from vehicles used for staff commuting to and from work. (1) This data was obtained by a survey undertaken by WNC.

T & D Losses – electric utility companies often purchase electricity from independent power generators or the grid and resell it to end-consumers through a transmission and distribution (T&D) system. A portion of the electricity purchased by a utility company is lost during its transmission and distribution to end-consumers. (3)

References

1. LGA – Climate Change: <https://www.local.gov.uk/climate-change-reporting-guidance-local-authorities>
2. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/what-is-biodiversity>
3. GHG Protocol – <https://ghgprotocol.org/sites/default/files/standards/ghg-protocol-revised.pdf>
4. NEA Action for Warm Homes – <https://www.nea.org.uk/what-is-fuel-poverty/>
5. Energy Saving Trust – <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/what-is-net-zero-and-how-can-we-get-there/>