

# Watford's Environmental Strategy:

## Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

2023 - 2030

### Summary



**WATFORD**  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL

# Contents



<b>Foreword</b>	3
<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Overview of the strategy</b>	4
<b>Leading by example</b>	5
<b>People power</b>	5
<b>Achieving net zero</b>	6
<b>Nature and ecological restoration</b>	7
<b>Responsible resource use</b>	8
<b>Adapting to change</b>	9
<b>Governance</b>	9

# Foreword

There are few challenges more important than the climate and ecological emergency. It is already affecting communities across the world and in the future will have high impacts on our local economy, local families and local wildlife. We've seen in Watford the profound effects of extended droughts followed by extensive rainfall, and the challenges of invasive species on our local biodiversity.

Councils can play a critical role in creating low-carbon and climate resilient communities and also play a leadership role in creating lasting and effective partnership with residents, community organisations and businesses. Together we can tackle the big issues facing Watford.

The Environmental Strategy builds on the work being done across the Council following the declaration of a climate and ecological emergency. We want to see Watford Borough Council achieve net zero carbon emissions in all its direct emissions by 2030, and see a net zero town, with the benefits of lower congestion, radically improved biodiversity and tree cover.

Our mission will require all sectors of our community to play their part as we address the climate and ecological emergency and move towards net zero. Together we can create a more sustainable future.



**Peter Taylor**  
Elected Mayor of Watford



**Councillor Ian Stotesbury**  
Portfolio Holder for  
Sustainability and Transport

**UK temperature change**

# Introduction

We are facing a climate and ecological emergency. We can see this for ourselves in the changing weather patterns, with more torrential rainfall, floods, and heat waves. Globally, governments have committed to limit global temperature change to below 2°C, and ideally below 1.5°C. Locally, Watford Borough Council has signed climate and ecological emergency declarations.



**There is still hope.** With effort, leadership and co-operation, we can limit our environmental impacts. The earth is our home and we must work with nature respectfully and with reciprocity.

**The longer we leave it, the tougher and more expensive it gets - so the time to act is now.**



# Overview of the strategy

The strategy has two overarching themes:

-  Leading by example
-  People power

And four sustainability topics:

-  Achieving net zero
-  Nature and ecological restoration
-  Responsible resource use
-  Adapting to change

We also have five overarching targets split between the two themes:

## Leading by example



Council's own carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) to be net zero carbon by the end of 2030



Council's own waste reduced to near zero by 2030



30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030

## People power



Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) for the borough by the end of 2030



Do everything in our power to reduce waste by 50% by 2030, with recycling making up at least 60% of the waste

# Leading by example

We know that to make behaviour change happen in our town, it must start with us. And to enable the council to lead the way towards a more sustainable future, collaborating with partners and stakeholders is essential.

## Targets

- To meet the Council Plan's Greener, Brighter Future commitments by 2026
- Ensure that the council is a leader in coordinating with stakeholders across the borough to address the climate and ecological emergencies
- Environmental strategy targets and associated actions embedded in all council strategies and plans as they are developed or reviewed, or by 2030 at the latest
- Councillors and all staff trained on the strategy and its impacts, climate change and the ecological emergency by 2024, and ongoing annual or biennial thereafter
- Ensure the council lobbies regionally and nationally to improve the ability of Watford, and the UK, to meet their environmental targets
- Annual reporting of key targets from 2024
- Regular review of the procurement strategy 2022 - 2026
- Ensure ESG remains a key consideration in where we invest
- Property investments (excluding FRI leases extending beyond 2030) to have EPC rating of B or higher by 2030
- ESG/Environmental impacts to be a key consideration in all new JV and own projects by 2025

# People power

We all have a role to play in creating a happy, healthy and thriving town. Some targets require borough-wide action, needing widespread engagement to achieve success.

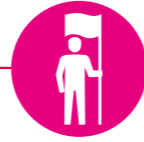
## Targets

- 10% of Watford Households signed up to Count Us In or equivalent by 2025; 25% by 2027; 50% by 2030
- Engage with 50% of fuel poor households on how they can reduce their energy costs by 2025; 75% by 2027 and 90% by 2030
- 50% SME and large businesses signed up to sustainable business charter by March 2025; 75% by March 2027
- 25% micro businesses signed up to sustainable business pledge by March 2025; 50% by March 2027
- Increase uptake of local climate initiatives by 10% year-on-year from 2024 to 2030
- Increase by at least 10% year-on-year opportunities for people to be engaged with educational or voluntary activities in this area
- Develop a skills and employment plan, with green skills and jobs as a key strand, by 2024, implementing the targets and actions thereafter



# Achieving net zero

Watford Borough Council has committed to achieving net zero carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>equivalent) in its operations by 2030 and supporting the borough to reach net zero by the same year. Put simply, net zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. We reach net zero when the amount we add is no more than the amount taken away.



## Targets: Leading by example

- To achieve net zero carbon by 2030 in the stepped reduction as shown below:

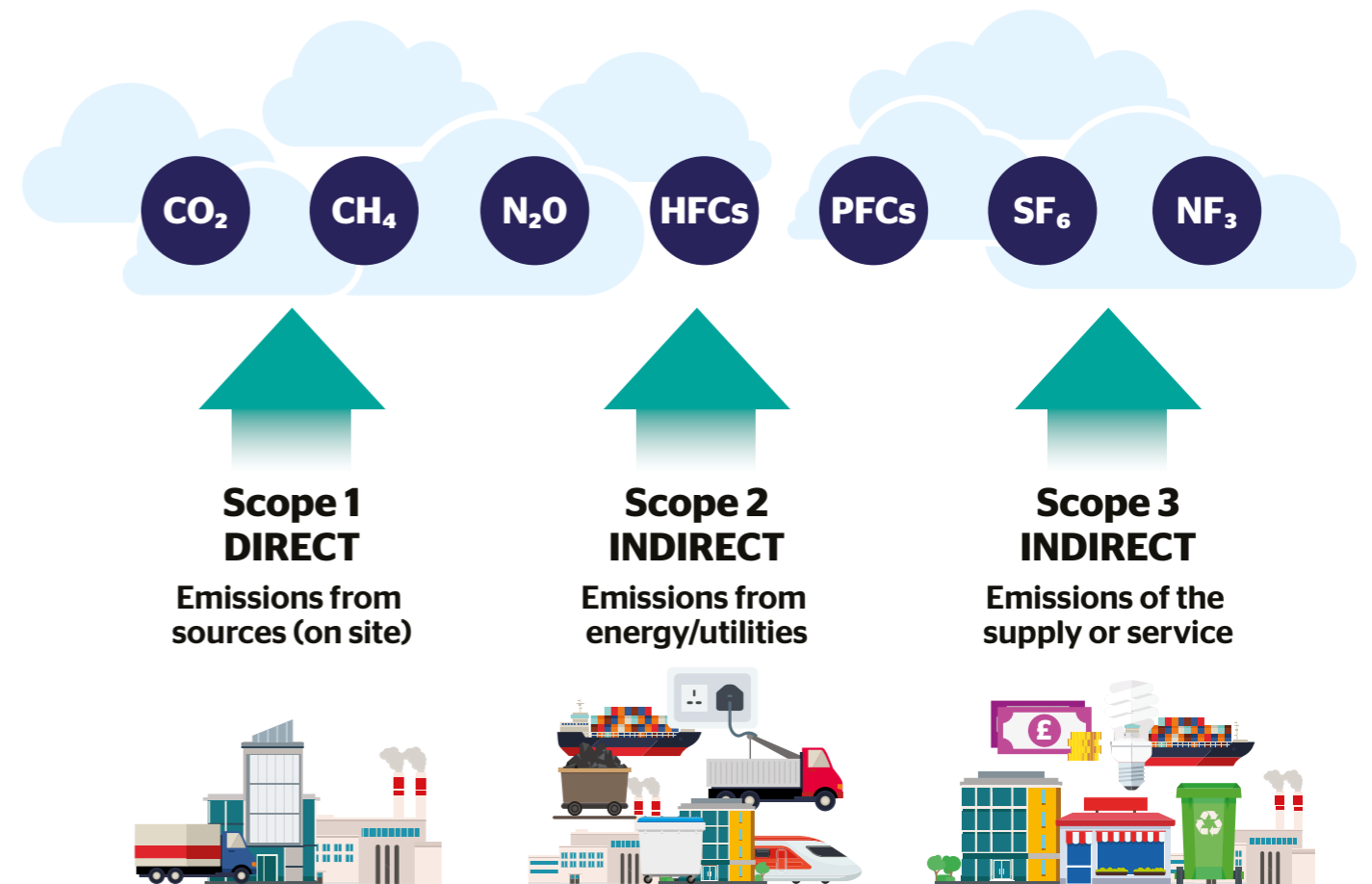
Year	Percentage reduction %	Percentage offsetting %	Total %
2025	22	6	28
2027	40	11	51
2029	60	19	79
2030	75	25	100

- Council business travel to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 50% reduction; 2027 - 75% reduction
- Staff travel and home working to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction
- Council services transport fleet to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction
- Council buildings net zero by 2030 - i.e. scope 1 and 2 for our buildings



## Targets: People power

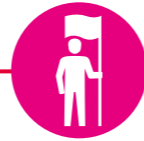
- Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO<sub>2e</sub>) for the borough by the end of 2030
- Modal shift away from private cars - public transport shift from 11.5% to 15%; cycle modal shift from 2.5% to 7% and walking modal shift from 28% to 34% by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate developers to build all new buildings to net zero standards by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate existing building owners to review their buildings for energy efficiency improvements, implementing where practical by 2030
- Facilitate the means for all fuel poor dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical
- Facilitate rented properties to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical
- Encourage all dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030



# Nature and ecological restoration

The UK is one of the least biodiverse nations and ranks low globally for biodiversity intactness. This is especially true in southeast England, where we also have rare chalk streams. Watford, a water-stressed area with high water usage, faces issues with nature, water, pollution, and food security.

## Targets: Leading by example



- 30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 20% by 2025
- 30% by area of our corporate estate green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 10% by 2025
- Council to ensure separate water monitoring for council activities by 2025
- Council to achieve water usage of 12 l/employee/day by 2030 for office based activities. An interim target for 2027 will be set in 2025
- Ensure sports facilities, trees and amenity planting are primarily irrigated by rainwater where practicable by 2030
- For the council to meet the International Dark-Sky Association's 'Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting' across all council-operated properties by 2025 (darksky.org)
- WBC café/ concession operators to have in place an approach to increase plant-based options and provide information on the carbon implications of food choices on the menu by 2030; this to be a requirement for all new operators by 2025

## Targets: People power



- Biodiversity net gain of 10% or greater for all new developments, with any offsetting occurring within the borough or adjoining boroughs/districts by 2030
- Minimum canopy target 25% by 2030; interim target of 20% by 2027
- Work with partners to facilitate Rivers Colne and Gade in the borough meeting the Water Framework Directive (WFD) good standard for biodiversity and at least moderate for chemical water quality by 2030
- Maintain or improve access to private outdoor amenity space (e.g. gardens, balconies you can go out on, private communal spaces)
- Maintain or improve the green space per capita and distance from green space and improve where practical
- Support residents to achieve an annual average residential use of 110 l/p/d by 2030; interim targets of 145 l/p/d by 2025 and 130 l/p/d by 2027
- All Watford to meet national Air Quality Objectives and Air Quality Standards Regulations
- 60% of waste food collected to be recycled by 2030; with interim targets of 50% by 2027
- Improve the ability of those in the borough to grow food, year-on-year



# Responsible resource use

A key part of our environmental impact comes from what we consume, such as fashion, technology, food, and leisure activities. This section focuses on non-food consumption, using the waste hierarchy, and promoting a circular economy.

## Targets: Leading by example



- Council-generated waste reduced to as near zero as practicable by 2030
- Ensure the council itself is recycling 60% of waste generated by 2025 and 70% by 2028

## Targets: People power

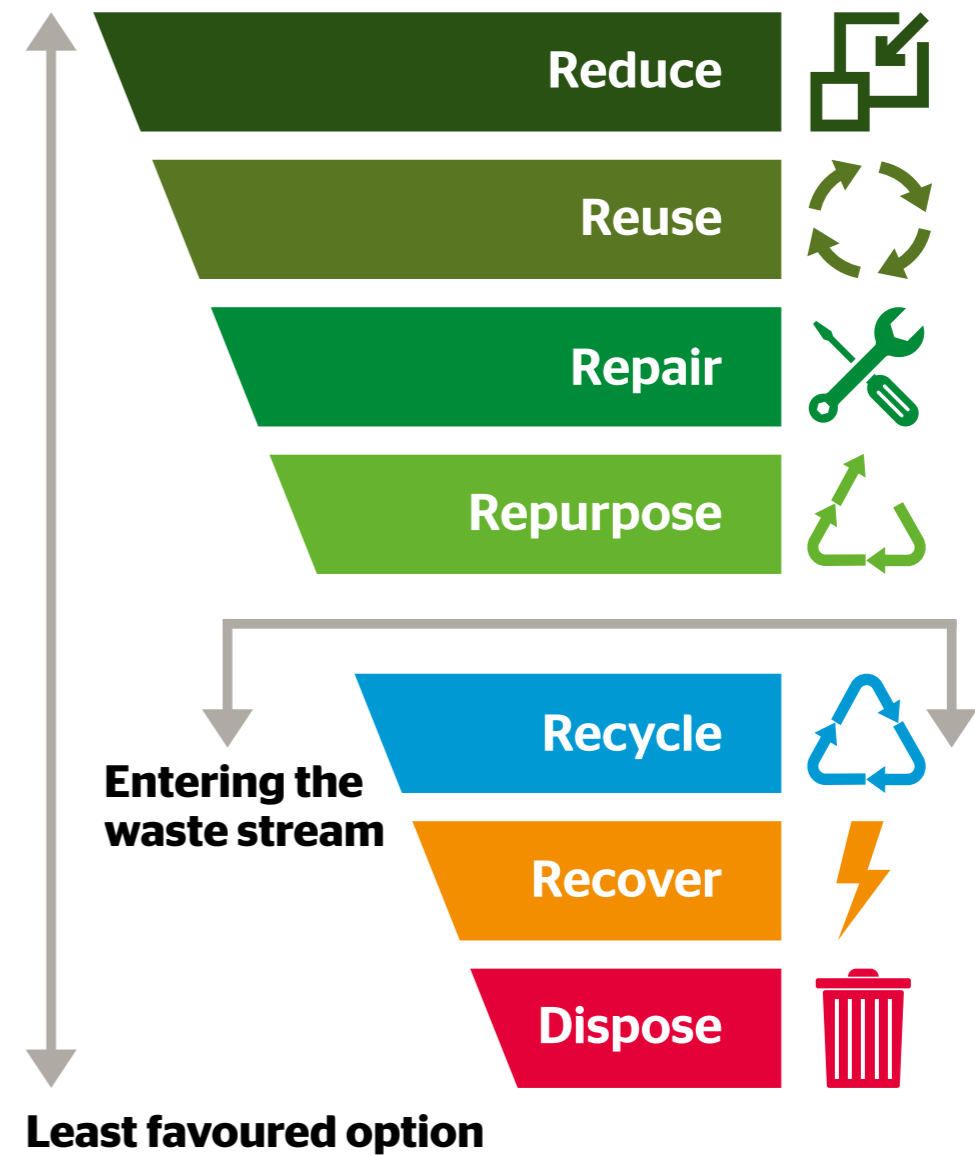


- Borough is recycling 60% of its residential waste by 2030; with an interim target of 54% by 2027
- Residential borough waste reduced by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20
- Businesses to reduce their waste by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20



## Waste hierarchy

Most favoured option





# Adapting to change

Meeting our carbon reduction targets and keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C will still bring changes, like more intense rainfall and increased heat, affecting food production, ecosystems, and daily life. We must be aware of these risks and adapt to mitigate and manage them.



## Targets: Leading by example

- Corporate and service risk registers explicitly address climate change, and report on climate incidents by 2024
- All our operations and services ready for future climates (based on most up to date climate projections for the UK) by 2030
- Ensure that the council has addressed the government's 8 priority risk areas by 2025
- Ensure that information and education is available about climate change, risk and adaptations for local people and groups by 2024, and regular (at least annual) updates are sent thereafter



## Targets: People power

- Facilitate the borough to be ready for future climates by 2030
- Encourage and facilitate all housing providers and developers to provide a climate change risk register, guidance by 2025, with actions to mitigate and actions for adaptation by 2030



# Governance

The Environmental Strategy will have a delivery plan reviewed annually and updated every two years. The Environmental Strategy will be reviewed midway. It is owned by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and the Sustainability Board, with internal quarterly reports and annual external reports starting from 2024.





# **Watford's Environmental Strategy:**

Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

2023 - 2030

**Summary**

**[www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford](http://www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford)**