



# Environment Improvement Plan Working with Worcestershire

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2024



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## Foreword – Cllr Richard Morris

### As the Cabinet Member for Environment, it gives me great pleasure to present the Worcestershire Environment Improvement Plan.

We have a wonderful County, an outstanding environment with beautiful landscapes and high quality assets that are valued by residents, businesses and visitors. We recognise that we cannot improve our local environment and tackle climate change alone, collaboration and working together with partners in national and local government, alongside our communities and businesses is key.

By working together, we will foster a sense of collective responsibility drawing on our combined resources, expertise, and enthusiasm to drive positive impact.

This plan will also support the delivery of Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Plan priority of protecting the environment which will deliver:

- A greener future;
- Our commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2050,
- A resilient transport network and
- Reducing our waste.

“By working together, we will foster a sense of collective responsibility drawing on our combined resources, expertise, and enthusiasm to drive positive impact.”

The Environment Plan brings together the key strategies under eight priorities which support positive impact on our environment and will deliver our ambition of becoming Net Zero by 2050, by focusing on the improvement of our environment, promoting clean growth and the development of a low carbon economy, we can create a healthier environment that both accelerates the transition to Net Zero whilst improving Worcestershire's resilience for the future.

### Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment



Cllr Richard Morris





## Introduction

Worcestershire has an ideal blend of urban and rural environments. 85% of our County is classed as rural, with urban areas having good access to parks, open spaces and public rights of way. Worcestershire includes two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; The Cotswolds and Malvern Hills.

There is easy access to the countryside wherever you live in the County, promoting outdoor activities which support healthy lifestyles and attracting visitors from across the country.

Our urban areas, with their rich fabric and strong historic and cultural offers, provide a good quality of life and encourage people to live in, work and visit our County. From the splendour of Worcester Cathedral to the beauty of our varied countryside, our towns and city have something for everyone.

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) has been working to reduce its carbon emissions for over a decade now, with some significant results across many service areas within the Council.

“ Our urban areas, with their rich fabric and strong historic and cultural offers, provide a good quality of life and encourage people to live in, work and visit our County. ”

We deliver our community leadership role by improving our environmental protection and enhancement through partnership working with District Councils, our public sector partners, the private sector, the voluntary sector, local communities of interest and for the benefit of all residents.

Our Council's corporate plan sets out the Council's core priorities, with environment being one of the four key areas that people want to see the Council deliver on.



Photo image of  
Malvern Quarry Lake







The Environment Improvement Plan brings together our commitment to continue our strong progress across a number of key areas:



The Natural  
EnvironmentLow



Carbon energy  
generation



Resources  
and Waste



Net Zero  
Council



The Green  
economy



Communities  
and wellbeing



Transport



Reducing the impact  
of environmental  
hazards and  
climate change

We will continue to invest in environmental measures that protect our natural environment, enhance our biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint. We recognise there is more to be done to achieve our ambition as quick as possible, with an aim to be net zero in all our operations by 2050. We will learn from best practice from elsewhere and share our experiences and expertise with local, regional and national partners.



## This Plan sets a framework, which takes into account the Government's 25 year Environment Plan and the recent published review in 2023.

It recognises the Council's strategies across the eight key themes and provides an overview of our objectives by theme, what we will do, how we will measure our performance and how we will work with partners and the wider community to go further, quicker by exploiting opportunities to preserve and protect our environment for future generations.

The County Council has already halved our emissions over the last decade and has a strong track record of delivering environmental improvements. Striving to go further we have now agreed a Net Zero plan which will focus our efforts to reduce our environmental impact even further. We will continue to invest in environmental measures that protect our natural environment, enhance our biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint.

We continue to work with partners to protect our communities from the adverse impacts of extreme weather, including flooding, and ensure

future developments meet national and local standards and are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Our aim is to encourage residents and businesses to reduce, reuse, repair, recycle and compost more. By doing this we will use less raw materials and save energy whilst protecting natural resources and reducing carbon emissions. All of this will help us achieve our ambition of being a Net Zero Council by 2050. The Environment Act 2021 has introduced new measures which will help transition to a more circular economy and increase waste and resource efficiency.

Our aim is to encourage residents and businesses to **reduce, reuse, repair, recycle and compost more.**

By doing this we will use **less raw materials and save energy** whilst protecting natural resources and reducing carbon emissions.

All of this will help us achieve our ambition of being a **Net Zero Council by 2050.**

### How will we measure this:

- **Reduce kg of waste production per person.**
- **Improve the condition of our roads and pavements to be among the best nationally.**
- **Additional increase in the number of homes and businesses protected from flooding.**
- **Reduce Council's carbon emissions towards Net Zero by 2050.**
- **Cut Journey times and improve journey time reliability along key rail and road routes.**



**The Environment Act 2021 has introduced new measures which will help transition to a more circular economy and increase waste and resource efficiency.**

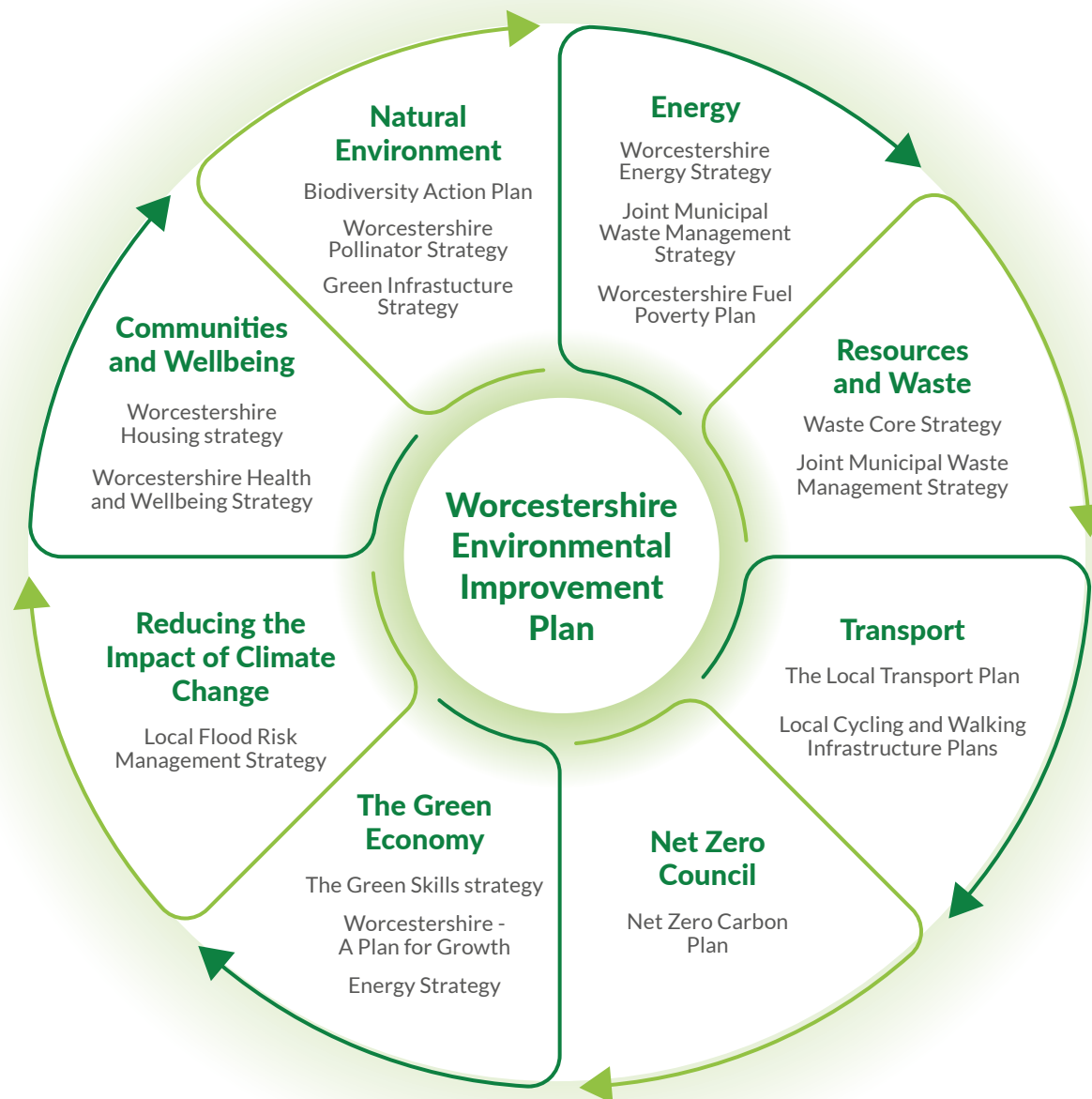




## Our strategies working together

The purpose of this plan is to illustrate how Worcestershire County Council is taking action to improve the county's environment, ensuring that policies across eight priority areas are working together to:

- Enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure.
- To reduce waste.
- Improve active travel infrastructure and reliability of travel times along key rail and road routes.
- To reduce the carbon emissions of the council and its supply chain.
- To support businesses with decarbonisation plans and expand the low carbon economy.
- To protect the county against the impact of climate change through flood mitigation and adaptation, managing and minimising the likelihood and impact of flooding.
- To improve health and wellbeing.





## Working in Partnership

We recognise that we cannot improve our local environment and tackle climate change alone, collaboration and working together with partners in national and local government, alongside our communities and businesses is key. By working together, we will foster a sense of collective responsibility drawing on our combined resources, expertise, and enthusiasm to drive positive impact.

Photo image of Wild Flowers in bloom  
at Worcestershire County Hall





## Working in Partnership



### Our partners include:

- Act on Energy
- Active Travel England
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Canal & Rivers Trust
- Department for Transport
- Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)
- District Councils (should we list indiv)
- Environment Agency
- Education Sector
- Forestry Commission
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce
- Local Bus Operating Companies
- Local Nature Partnership
- Midlands Connect
- Midlands Net Zero Hub
- National Farmer Union
- National Highways
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- Our Communities
- Parish Councils
- Severn Trent Water
- Sustainability West Midlands
- Train Operating Companies
- Volunteer Groups
- Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services
- Woodland Trust
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.





# Natural Environment

## Introduction

The natural environment is valued by residents and visitors alike. The majority of the council area is classed as rural and also includes:

- Two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Four National Nature Reserves (NNR).
- Two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's).
- 114 Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI's).
- 553 Local Sites (LS's).
- 44 Roadside Verge Nature Reserves (RVNR's)

## Strategies supporting delivery

The protection and enhancement of the natural environment is delivered through a number of plans, policies and strategies with further strategies to follow because of the Environment Act. Many of these have been developed and delivered in partnership with the district councils, government agencies and other partners.

The council is also a leading member of the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership which provides strategic leadership and guidance on natural environment matters.

### Current adopted strategies include:

- Landscape Character Assessment and Supplementary Guidance.
- Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Pollinator Strategy.
- Worcestershire Woodland Guidelines.
- Green infrastructure strategy (produced by the Green Infrastructure Partnership of which WCC is a leading member).

In addition, development has commenced on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and local biodiversity net gain plans and policies, requirements for both of which arise from the Environment Act.

These strategies are supplemented further by planning policies which are included in district local plans and Worcestershire's Minerals Local Plan and Waste Core strategy.



Photo image of Natural field in Worcestershire







# Objectives

Overarching objectives for the Environment are:

- Planting 150 000 trees across the county.
- To become a pollinator friendly council.
- To develop a framework of principles and priorities for green infrastructure in Worcestershire which meets the integrated needs of business, the natural & historic environment, and our communities.
- To support the development of natural environment policies in local plans.
- To protect and enhance priority habitats and species in the county.
- Embed the benefits and services provided by the natural environment in the successful growth of Worcestershire's economy and the health and well-being of its communities.



*Photo image of  
New Bush Orchard*



## What we have delivered

- 2018 delivery of traditional orchards regeneration.
- 2019 Worcestershire's second Biodiversity Action Plan adopted.
- 2020 Pollinator Strategy adopted.
- 2021 Worcestershire Habitat Inventory refresh complete.
- 2020 revised biodiversity and green infrastructure policies developed for the South Worcestershire Local Plan review.
- 2022 adoption of the Minerals Local Plan (green infrastructure led).
- 2022 secured Treescapes funding and Woodland Creation Accelerator.
- 2023 Development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy commenced.
- 2023 consultation on Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 2023 Natural Networks programme delivered 98 ha of biodiversity enhancements.



## What we will do:

- Implement the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.
- Commence monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain and Biodiversity reporting.
- Continue to develop, monitor and deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy alongside our partners.
- Commence delivery of Treescapes and Woodland Creation Accelerator programmes to improve landscape connectivity outside and between woodlands, and provide benefits to ecosystems and society, such as carbon absorption, flood protection and support for biodiversity.
- Endorse the Green Infrastructure Strategy which will inform planning and planning decisions, providing policy for local plans, with the aim to enhance, create and maintain green infrastructure in the county.
- Support the revised Green Infrastructure policy at Examination of the South Worcestershire Development plan review.
- Commence delivery of Natural Networks 2.0, Natural Networks is a partnership between Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Worcestershire County Council and District Councils. It aims to help create and enhance wildlife corridors across the county. The programme offers advice and grants, to projects that aim to restore wildlife-rich habitats.





Photo image  
of Volunteers

## How we will measure performance

- Number of trees planted.
- Hectares of biodiversity net gain delivered.
- Hectares of biodiversity enhancements delivered.
- Development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in line with agreed timetable.



## How we will work with partners / wider community

We work with partners and the wider community through a number of different ways:

- Local Nature Partnership which WCC currently chair provides strategic direction and guidance on environmental matters. WCC is a founder member and provides the secretariat. Other members include the district councils, Defra family, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, voluntary groups, Earth Heritage Trust and landowner representation. The natural environment is one of the three areas of focus for the Local Nature Partnership.
- A series of partnerships have been developed on specific topic areas such as Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity Action Planning. We continue to work with these groups to deliver the natural environment objectives.
- A Local Nature Recovery Strategy Steering Group has been established for the development of this new strategy. This includes both environmental interests and landowners.
- We will continue to develop our approach to Biodiversity Net Gain, working in partnership with developers, landowners and districts.
- We will work in partnership with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Malvern, Worcester, Wychavon & Wyre Forest councils to deliver the Natural Networks biodiversity improvement project.



## What can you do?



### Volunteer

Countryside site work party  
volunteering | Worcestershire  
County Council.

Volunteer | Worcestershire  
Wildlife Trust.



### Gardening for wildlife

Wildlife gardening |  
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.

Photo image  
of Volunteers





## Energy

### Introduction

WCC has for many years been helping residents and enterprises across the county to heat and power their homes and businesses efficiently through a range of advice and grant funding programmes.

WCC coordinates Warmer Worcestershire: a network of Worcestershire's Councils, local energy efficiency charity and other agencies working together to improve home energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty. The council has been recognised for its work by the **National Energy Efficiency Awards**.

As the UK moves towards a zero-carbon energy system, the council is supporting delivery of Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Energy Strategy, with its focus on access to affordable clean energy and overcoming infrastructure and development barriers.

### Relevant strategies/plans

- Worcestershire LEP Energy Strategy.
- Worcestershire Fuel Poverty Plan.



### Targets

WCC's work contributes to achieving the following Worcestershire Energy Strategy targets:

- Reduction in county carbon emissions of 50% on 2005 levels by 2030.
- Tripling the county's energy production from renewable generation by 2030 from 5% to 15%.
- 2000 energy efficiency interventions per year for fuel poor households.



*Photo Image of Strategic Infrastructure development, from Waste Facility in Hartlebury*







## Objectives

WCC is seeking to:

- Help develop the ability of Worcestershire residents, businesses and public sector to access affordable, zero carbon energy.
- Help reduce instances of fuel poverty and reduce the overhead cost on small business that energy provision entails.
- Help remove barriers to development by encouraging alternative means to achieve secure energy supply e.g. through smart systems.

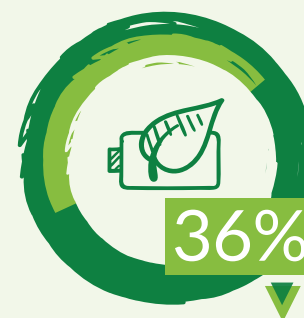
*Photo Image of Strategic Infrastructure development, from Waste Facility in Hartlebury*



## What we have delivered

WCC has:

- Led a number of countywide home energy efficiency programmes including:
  - Solid wall insulation installed in 750 privately owned homes through the Green Deal communities grant programme.
  - 1,526 vulnerable residents with warmer and more energy efficient homes through a range of support programmes, such as 'Boilers on Prescription'.
- Overseen the provision of energy and debt advice, and fuel vouchers for households struggling to afford to heat their homes.
- Provided warm spaces for local residents across Worcestershire's libraries.
- Offered Worcestershire residents the opportunity to bulk bid for solar panel and battery technology to help drive down the price. The council worked with iChoosr and Worcestershire District Councils to offer the Solar Together Worcestershire scheme. More than 5000 residents registered an interest.
- Commissioned research into heat networks and deep geothermal heat across the county.
- Generated over 135,000 MWh electricity a year from WCC's Energy from Waste plant and landfill site, the equivalent to 29 windmills. This power is supplied to the National Grid.



Reduction in  
Worcestershire's  
carbon emissions  
since 2005

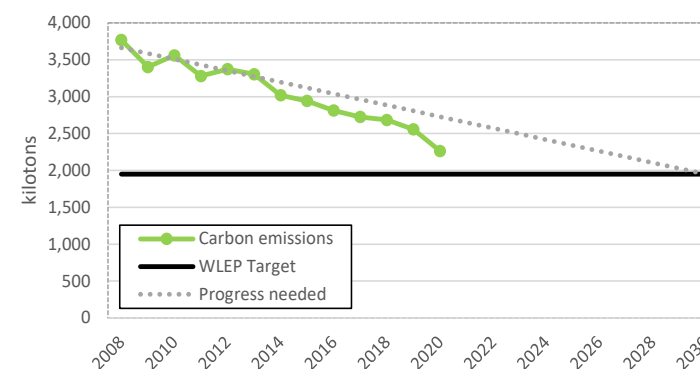
(latest data: 2021)



of Worcestershire's  
electricity demand  
generated from  
renewable energy sources

(latest data: 2021)

42% reduction in carbon emissions - Target 50%







## What we will do:

- Continue to coordinate the Warmer Worcestershire home energy efficiency & fuel poverty network.
- Coordinate the provision of the Home Upgrade Grant scheme (HUG2) funding energy efficiency and zero carbon heat measures for more than 300 vulnerable households in Bromsgrove, Redditch, Malvern & Wychavon by 2025, in collaboration with district councils.
- Provide advice and grant funding for energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures for 130 Worcestershire businesses by March 2025 (see green economy section).
- Continue to explore the opportunities to generate renewable energy on our own estate and explore the utilisation of heat generated from WCC's Energy from Waste Plant.
- Continue to invest in and seek external funding for further initiatives.

## How we will measure performance

- County carbon emissions.
- Number of Worcestershire homes benefiting from energy advice and grant programmes.
- Number of Worcestershire businesses benefiting from energy advice and grant programmes.
- % of Worcestershire's energy demand met from renewable energy generation.
- Amount of renewable energy generated by WCC.



## How we will work with partners / wider community

- Work with LEP partners and energy network providers to review the county Energy Strategy including assisting in the development of Worcestershire's Local Area Energy Plan (a plan to identify the most effective route for Worcestershire to meet its net carbon reduction targets).
- Lobby government for increased funding and powers through groups such as the County Councils' Network and Midlands Net Zero Hub, to support wider net zero carbon objectives.



## What can you do?



### At Home

Reduce your energy bills -  
Worcestershire County Council



### At Work

Sustainability grants & support -  
Worcestershire County Council





## Resources and Waste

### Introduction

Resources and waste services are undergoing major reforms bringing huge changes. It is not an option to stay still as our services need to respond and evolve to meet the new requirements.

For example, food waste has to be collected separately, we need to improve the quality and quantity of our recycling.

We have to consider how a future Deposit Return Scheme, where some drinks containers can be returned to the retailer to redeem a deposit, will change what we do. Extended Producer Responsibility means that packaging producers will be paying us in the future to deal with the packaging that we collect, and we have to ensure that our services are as efficient and effective as possible.

As a growing economy, with more businesses and homes forecast, we know the importance of reducing our carbon footprint and ensuring new developments support a sustainable future.

We will encourage and grow our communities' capacity to reduce and recycle waste through the right services, support and provision.

### Our Relevant strategies/plans

- National Resources and Waste Strategy (2018).
- Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste, the waste prevention programme for England (July 2023).
- Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire 2004 – 2034.
- Worcestershire County Council's Net Zero Carbon Plan.



We know the importance of reducing our carbon footprint and ensuring new developments support a sustainable future.



Photo Image: 1 million tonnes of recycling processed at the plant since opening

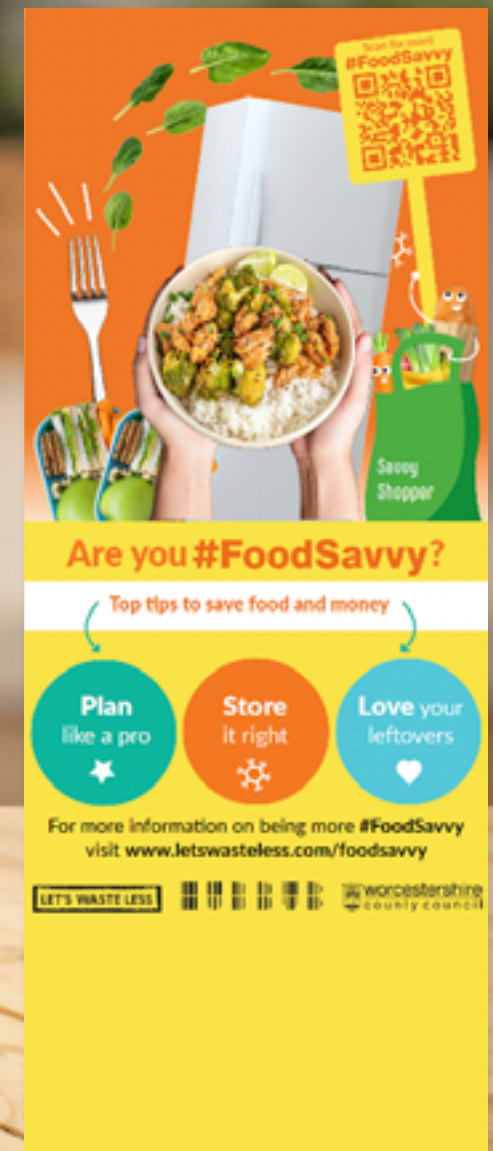




# Objectives

Our aim is to encourage residents to reduce, reuse, repair, recycle and compost more. By doing this we will use less raw materials and save energy whilst protecting natural resources and reducing carbon emissions. All of this will help us achieve our ambition of being a Net Zero Council by 2050.

New measures introduced through the national Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act 2021 will help transition to a more Circular Economy and increase waste and resource efficiency. This means major changes to the way in which waste is created in the first place, with new measures to reduce packaging and the way waste is collected, disposed of and treated.







## Targets

Our Strategy includes targets to reduce residual waste per household, increase recycling and the amount of waste sent for energy recovery. A new target to reduce residual waste by 50% by 2042 has been agreed as part of a new suite of national targets. We are reviewing our targets alongside the Strategy to ensure these reflect the new reforms and national policies.



## What we have delivered

WCC has:

- Over the last six years we have made significant progress by diverting waste which can't be recycled to our local Energy Recovery Facility rather than to landfill. The facility produces enough electricity to power approximately 32,000 homes each year.
- Last year (2022/23) 90% of the waste we handled was reused, recycled, composted or used to generate energy.
- Last year we carried out analysis looking at what is going into the general waste stream to inform our future campaigns. This showed that an average black wheelie bin in Worcestershire contains 35% food waste with over 40% of that waste still in its original packaging. Almost 70% of the food waste (or 25% of the average black wheelie bin) was avoidable – i.e. it could have been eaten. This highlights that food waste is an issue that we can all do something about.
- We have continued to promote waste prevention through campaigns and initiatives including FoodSavvy, subsidised compost bins and reusable nappies.





## What we will do:

- We are working with our Local Authority partners to deliver the requirements of Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act 2021 in the most efficient and effective way. We are reviewing our Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy to ensure that it reflects the changes and helps us move closer towards a Circular Economy.
- We will continue to make it easier for people to do the right thing to maximise the use of these resources and minimise their waste.
- We will continue to communicate with our residents and customers to ensure that they are aware of the services provided to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost.

## How we will measure performance

- Joint Municipal Waste Strategy strategy targets.
- How much residual waste is produced by each household.
- How much is recycled.



## How we will work with partners / wider community

- Working with our local authority partners through delivery of the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy is a cornerstone of our resources and waste services. We have achieved consistency in the core services that are provided, and we are working closely to ensure that we maintain that consistency in delivering the efficient and effective services of the future.
- Working with our local community is essential to meeting our plan to make it the norm to reduce, reuse, and recycle so we can reduce waste and make our economy truly circular and sustainable. We will do this by, providing good quality information in a range of formats and listening views about how we can make things easier.



## What can you do?

### Let's waste less

Resources are finite and precious. Their extraction and manufacture can cause environmental harm. We want to make it easier for people to do the right thing to maximise the use of these resources and minimise their waste.

Our plan aims to make it the norm to reduce, reuse and recycle so we can reduce waste and make our economy truly circular and sustainable.

Our dedicated website [Let's Waste Less | Worcestershire County Council](#) provides a wealth of information about how to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost in Worcestershire.







# Transport

## Introduction

Worcestershire's transport network which includes road, rail and active travel is essential to our location in the heart of the country and provides economic connectivity to the important neighbouring regional economies plus those of London and the South East and Wales.

The key objectives for transport are set out in our Local Transport Plan 4, which targeted investment in 3 broad areas:

- Travel choice
- Transport Technology
- Capacity Enhancement

In addition to the County Council who are the local highways authority, motorways (M5, M50 and M42) and trunk roads (A46) are the responsibility of National Highways.

The train operating companies and Network Rail are responsible for train services and rail infrastructure.

How we choose to move in the County has a significant impact on carbon emissions and the wider environment. Around 34% (2021) of carbon emission in the County are from transport, although this does include strategic traffic on the motorway network which is passing through the county.

## Our Relevant strategies/plans

- Local Transport Plan 4.
- Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy 2.
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan 3
- Transport Asset Management Plan 3.
- Network Management Plan.
- Passenger Transport Strategy.
- Bus Service Improvement Plan.
- Road Verges Habitat Action Plan.



Photo image: Arrow Valley Country Park in Worcestershire





## What we have delivered

### Rail

- Worcestershire Parkway Rail Station.
- Kidderminster Rail Station rebuild.
- Enhanced regional train services to Bristol.
- Secured options for future accessibility enhancements at Alvechurch and Blakedown rail stations.

### Verge management

- Designation and management of Roadside Verge Nature Reserves.
- Programme of less intensive management of verges to enhance biodiversity.

### Active Travel

- National productivity investment funded seven active travel routes in Bromsgrove.
- Active travel England funded routes in Redditch, Worcester and Kidderminster.

- Active Travel routes in Worcester (in partnership with Worcester city and funded through the Towns Fund).
- Active travel routes in Kidderminster (in partnership with Wyre Forest DC and funded through Levelling Up Fund).
- Additional County investment in public rights of way and footways.
- A programme of cycle parking provision across the County.
- Active Travel stakeholder group.
- A annual programme of dropped kerbs and crossing points to support walking and cycling.
- Commenced development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for key towns and City.

### Highways

- Completed the dualling of the A4440, including the new Carrington Bridge and causeway.
- Secured funding for capacity enhancement of the A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme.
- Hoo Brook Link Road delivered.
- A38 Upton improvements delivered.
- Pershore infrastructure improvement scheme delivered.

### Bus

- Subsidy for core routes across the county.
- Worcestershire on Demand - Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in Bromsgrove and Malvern.
- A programme of Real Time Infrastructure Improvements.





## Objectives

- Invest on corridors to enhance journey time reliability and support economic growth.
- Improving all modes of transport to the detriment of none.
- Strategic investment at Redditch and Worcester Shrub Hill rail stations.
- Further service enhancements at Worcestershire Parkway.





## What we will do:

- Develop Local Transport Plan 5.
- Publish a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for each of the main urban areas in Worcestershire 2023-2024.
- Produce an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2023/24 and a delivery project (subject to funding).
- Continue to secure funding for and invest in the delivery of active travel routes.
- Work with Worcester City on the delivery of a bike share scheme.
- Deliver Hampton Active Travel Bridge, Evesham.
- Complete the delivery of Kepax Bridge, Worcester.
- Deliver the Worcester Shrub Hill masterplan.
- Deliver Redditch rail station redevelopment.
- Deliver Worcestershire Enhanced Bus Partnership.
- Continue to develop the North West Worcestershire Corridor business case.
- Work with partners to develop and deliver the Worcestershire Air Quality Action Plan.

## How we will measure performance

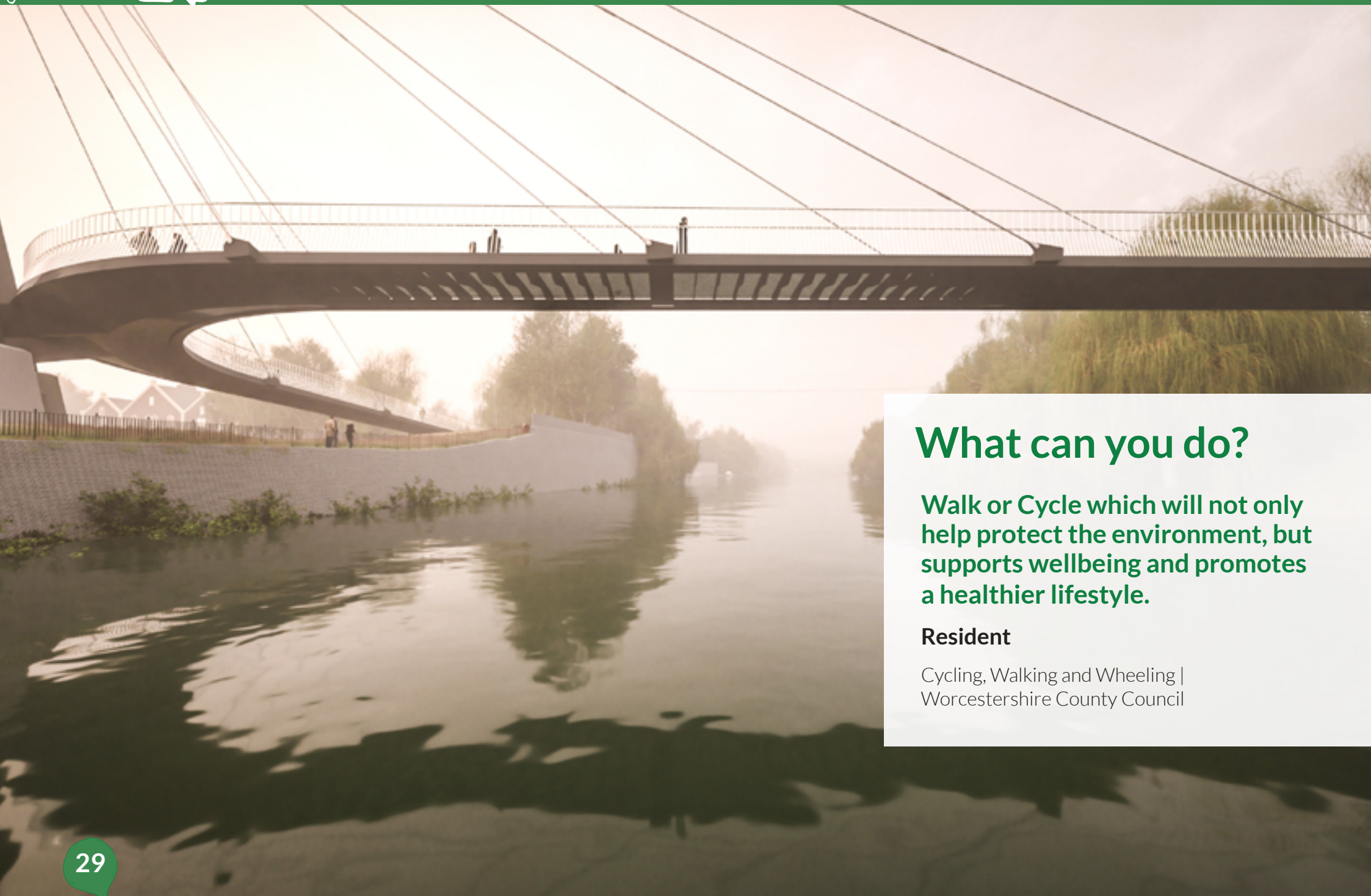
- Cut journey times and increase journey time reliability along key road and rail routes (from corporate plan).
- Delivery of active travel routes.



## How we will work with partners / wider community

It is essential that we continue to work with our partners, both nationally and locally to achieve transport outputs and outcomes outlined above. Without joint working many of the priorities, schemes and aspirations set out cannot be delivered.

This will include the District and City councils in Worcestershire, National Highways, Midlands Connect, Active Travel England, Train Operating Companies, Network Rail, Local Bus Operators and the Department for Transport. We will also work locally with stakeholders including Worcestershire Regulatory Services and specialist interest groups.



## What can you do?

**Walk or Cycle** which will not only help protect the environment, but supports wellbeing and promotes a healthier lifestyle.

### Resident

Cycling, Walking and Wheeling |  
Worcestershire County Council





## Net Zero Council

### Introduction

The Council declared a climate emergency in July 2021 and reaffirmed the target of reaching net zero emissions by 2050 from council operations and activities.

Our Relevant strategies/plans

- Net Zero Carbon Plan.

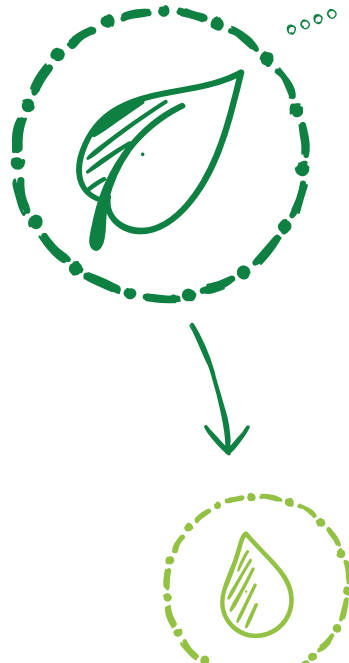


Photo image : Solar Panels,  
Kidderminster Library





## Objectives

Net Zero emissions by 2050 from council operations and activities.

Interim targets:

- Reduce our direct net emissions by 92% by 2024/25.
- Reduce all net emissions by 49% by 2030.





Scope 1 - Direct	Scope 2 – Indirect (but WCC has direct control over how much electricity we use and what type we purchase)	Scope 3 - Indirect
<p><b>Direct emissions from Council activities and operations under the Council's control including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Natural gas use in WCC buildings (excluding schools).</li><li>• Fuel use in WCC vehicle fleet.</li><li>• Residual fuel use (e.g., burning oil, LPG etc.) consumed at WCC sites (excluding schools).</li></ul>	<p><b>Indirect emissions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electricity use in WCC buildings (excluding schools) and street lighting (grid generation).</li></ul>	<p><b>Other indirect emissions for which WCC can access data for, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electricity (grid transmission and distribution).</li><li>• WCC staff business mileage and air travel.</li><li>• Electricity/gas use in buildings operated by Council's main outsourced contractors for Waste Management and Highways.</li><li>• Fleet/staff mileage undertaken by main outsourced contractors for Waste Management and Highways.</li><li>• Contracted fleet vehicle fuel use</li><li>• Emissions from county-wide municipal waste disposal.</li></ul>



## What we have delivered

The Council has been working to reduce its own carbon emissions over many years. Since 2009/10 the Council's own net carbon emissions have reduced by 45%. Much of this progress has been realised through improvements to Council buildings, street lighting, and a shift from landfill to energy from waste for household waste disposal.

WCC has taken significant action on our emissions reduction journey; from starting to invest in electric fleet vehicles, upgrading street lighting and traffic signals to LED and investing in renewable energy generation on our sites. Other initiatives include:

- Continued investment in the energy efficiency of Council buildings through the Council's £3m Energy Efficiency Spend to Save scheme (which has been running since 2010 making c.£400k savings a year) and the Capital Maintenance Programme.
- Solar power on several corporate properties (currently over 450kWp installed on corporate estate), and the Council has also installed Solar PV on many Worcestershire schools.
- Energy efficient new build and refurbishment programme - including refresh of the Council's Sustainable Design & Estate Principles – Working towards a Zero Carbon Estate document.
- Purchase of 100% renewable electricity for all street lighting since April 2020.
- Successful bid to Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 1 (PSDS) and investment of £817,288 grant which funded 34 discreet energy projects across 25 council sites.
- Staff training on sustainability and climate change has been provided over a number of years and has included face to face training and e-learning modules. Since 2021, the Council has been delivering Carbon Literacy training to staff.
- Use of the Joint Impact Assessment (JIA) tool that requires review of environmental impacts (including carbon emissions), and is required for all new Council projects.
- 'Zero Heroes' staff sustainability champion scheme.



## What we will do:

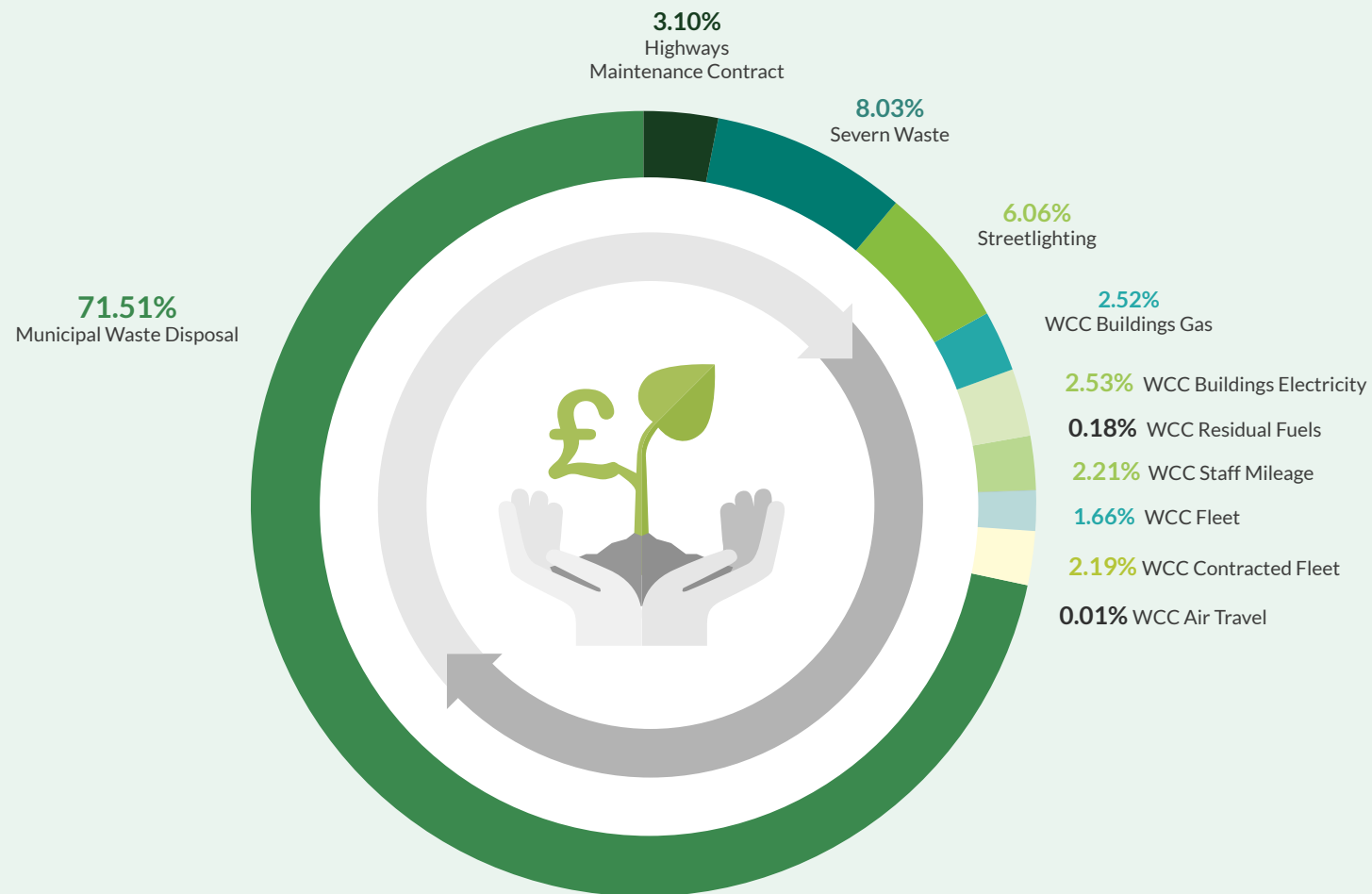
- Purchase 100% renewable, accredited green electricity for all street lighting.
- Complete the rollout of LED street lighting.
- Continue to review opportunities to decarbonise the Council's buildings through energy efficiency retrofit and investment in renewable energy generation.
- Ensure that all property projects and building works follow the Council's Sustainable Design and Estate Principles Guide to reduce emissions and adapt to future climate change.
- Ensure Council decisions consider the potential environmental impact of all WCC projects through completion of a Joint Impact Assessment (JIA), and any consequent full environmental sustainability assessment which includes assessment of carbon emissions.
- Identify replacement ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) options for WCC fleet (taking technological advances in account).
- Review existing and future contracting requirements and develop a procurement policy for how WCC's supply chain will support the council's net zero ambitions.
- Keep under review the viability of carbon reducing technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, for energy from waste facilities.







## WCC's Emissions: (absolute GHG emissions before application of green electricity tariff)

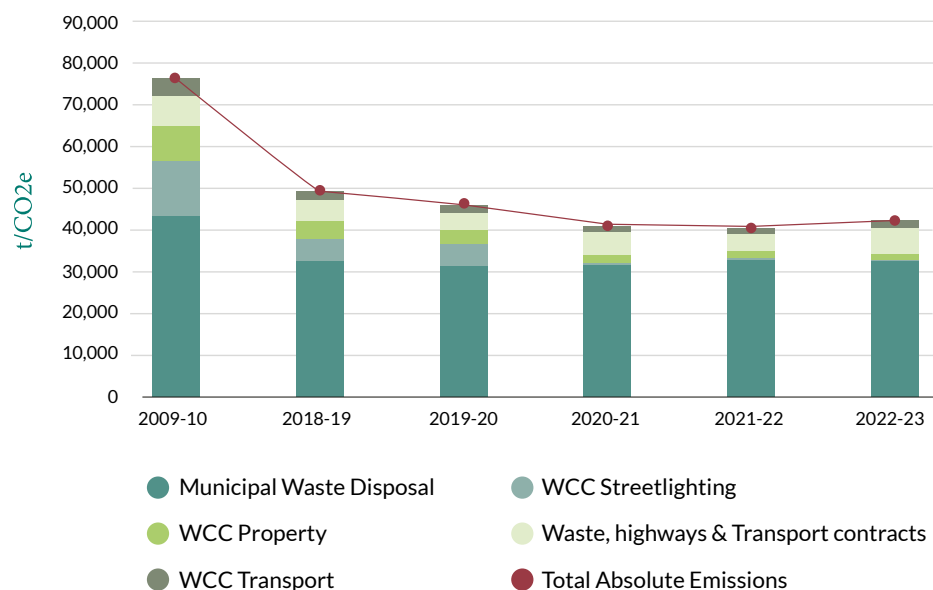




## How we will measure performance

- The Council measures progress of its net zero commitments in an **annual Green House Gas (GHG) report**.

The progress of our emissions reduction journey to date is detailed in the graph below:



## How we will work with partners / wider community

- Convene and contribute to the Worcestershire Sustainability Joint Working Group (WSJWG) which brings together all of those working in Sustainability in the public sector/public service roles in Worcestershire, with a focus on Net Zero.
- Lobby government for increased funding and powers through groups such as the County Councils Network, Midlands Net Zero Hub Board, to support wider net zero carbon objectives.



## Green Economy

### Introduction

Since 2012 the council has been helping enterprises across the county to become greener and to develop new, more environmentally friendly products and services, through a wide range of advice and grant funding programmes.

Worcestershire's environmental and low carbon goods and services sector is an area of strength, with many innovative businesses. With the Government putting clean growth at the forefront of its plans to achieve net zero carbon emissions, there is clear opportunity to maximise the local benefits of this and keep growing Worcestershire's green economy to the benefit of all in the county and beyond.

The council is supporting delivery of Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Energy Strategy, which includes clean economic growth as one of its priorities.

The work of the council referred to in other sections of the strategy e.g. energy, is helping to develop and grow the local market for green products and services.

### Our Relevant strategies/plans

- Worcestershire Energy Strategy
- Plan for Growth - Worcestershire LEP ([wlep.co.uk](http://wlep.co.uk))



*Photo image: Green space in Diglis, Worcestershire*







## Objectives

“By 2030, Worcestershire will have a thriving low carbon economy which supports the creation of high value jobs and stimulates investment and clean growth across the county...”

(Worcestershire LEP Energy Strategy)

WCC is seeking to help double the size of Worcestershire’s environmental and low carbon sector by 2030 from £1.1bn to £2.3bn by:

- supporting the ability of Worcestershire businesses to achieve growth without causing a subsequent rise in carbon emissions.
- promoting and encouraging the County’s flourishing low and zero carbon supply chain to expand further.
- Promoting and encouraging the development of skills needed to grow Worcestershire’s green economy e.g. science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).





## Latest data 2020.

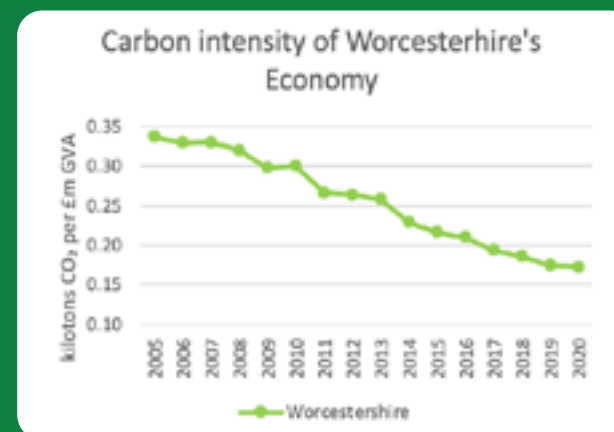
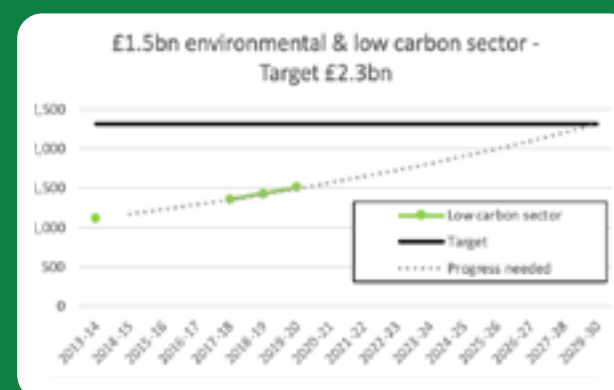
- The County is currently on track to achieve its growth target for the environmental and low carbon sector.
- Worcestershire's environmental and Low Carbon sector has outperformed the growth of the wider economy, with growth in turnover averaging 5% a year from 2014 to 2020.
- 700 Worcestershire businesses are active in the sector supporting 11,300 jobs
- While Worcestershire's overall economy has grown, carbon emissions have fallen, as shown to the right.



The County is currently on track to achieve its growth target.

## What we have delivered

- Worcestershire County Council's business support programmes have provided free advice and grant funding for c 1000 local small and medium enterprises to improve their energy efficiency, support wildlife and develop greener products. C 7000 tonnes carbon have been saved and an average 25% energy savings enabled.
- WCC is offering a free web based decarbonisation portal to local businesses to help make cutting carbon easy and engaging.
- WCC is supporting development of skills for our green economy through promoting STEM skills in schools and colleges, events such as Worcestershire Green Skills Week and provision of grant funding for accreditation for roles such as energy efficient retrofit assessors.







## What we will do:

- Provide advice and grant funding for energy efficiency, decarbonisation and wildlife measures for 210 Worcestershire businesses by March 2025.
- Fund the **decarbonisation portal** for local businesses for at least a further 2 years.
- Track the size and performance of Worcestershire's green economy.
- Continue to support development of skills for our green economy.
- Develop the work detailed in other sections of this plan, thus continuing to develop the local market for green products and services.
- Continue to invest in and seek external funding for further initiatives.

## How we will measure performance

- Numbers of local businesses supported, amount of carbon reduced and % energy reduction through WCC green business support programmes.
- Performance of Worcestershire's low carbon and environmental goods and services sector:
  - GVA of the sector
  - Numbers of businesses in the sector
  - Numbers of employees in the sector.
- Carbon intensity of Worcestershire's economy.



## How we will work with partners / wider community

- Continue to deliver business support programmes in partnership with district councils, Worcestershire Growth Hub and partners such as H&W Chamber of Commerce etc.
- Lobby government for increased funding and powers through groups such as the County Councils' Network, Midlands Net Zero Hub, to support wider net zero carbon objectives.



## What can you do?



### At Home

By sourcing a reputable local trader for your renewable energy or heat pump installations you'll help build local supply chains. It is important to thoroughly insulate your home first.



### At Work

Net Zero Worcestershire support  
Worcestershire County Council





## Climate Change

### Introduction

The very significant flood event in 2007 led to a national review and then the Flood & Water Management Act 2010. This act clarified existing responsibilities across a range of organisations and added some new ones.

This included the designation of upper tier local authorities, Worcestershire County Council (WCC), as 'Lead Local Authorities' and gave them a wide range of new statutory duties and powers.

This led to a review of the existing flood risk management partnerships and activities in Worcestershire and established the WCC Flood Risk Management Team and the formalised partnerships with the district councils via the new shared services of the North Worcestershire Water Management team and the South Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership.

Along with the EU-led 'Flood Risk Regulations', the Flood & Water Management Act also led to increased partnership working across the Risk Management Authorities (WCC, district councils, Environment Agency, water companies, Highway Authorities) and an increased focus on accelerated flood risk management activity.

Flood risk management remains a high priority for Worcestershire County Council and we will continue to work closely with the Environment Agency on the delivery of the large flood defence schemes and generally reducing flood risk for more residents and businesses are specifically referenced in the Corporate Plan. Climate change projections for wetter winters and increased likelihood of extremely heavy summer rainfall storms increase the importance of this adaptation and mitigation work.



*Photo image of Flood in Worcester City Centre*



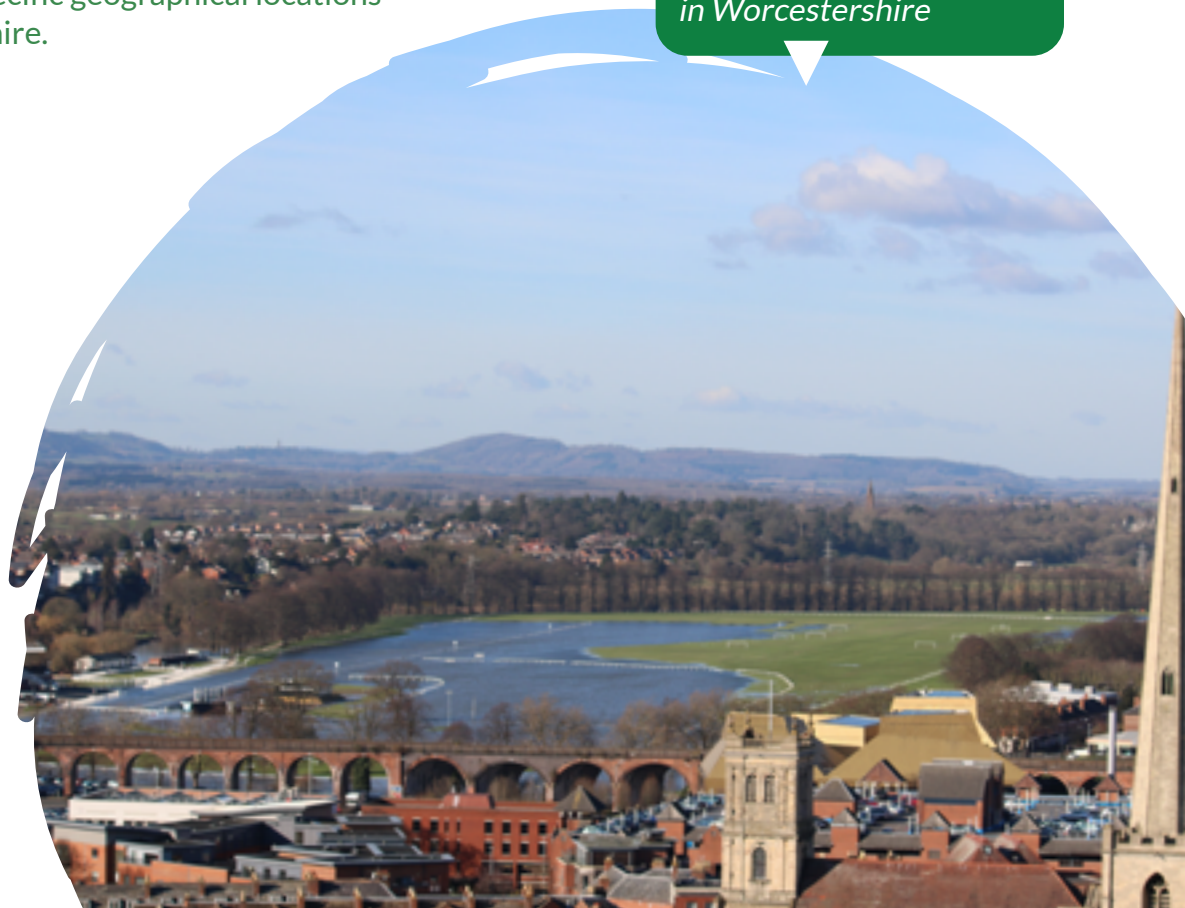


## Our Relevant strategies/plans

Strategies supporting delivery flood risk management is guided by the following key strategies:

- Worcestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy: a statutory document under the Act produced and maintained to be consistent with the National Strategy by WCC.
- National Flood Risk Management Strategy: a statutory document under the Act produced and maintained by the Environment Agency.
- County-wide Surface Water Management Plan: a detailed evidence base produced and maintained by WCC to support the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment: a strategic assessment under the Flood Risk Regulations of flooding produced and maintained for Worcestershire by WCC.
- River Severn Flood Risk Management Plan: produced and maintained under the Flood Risk Regulations by the Environment Agency with support from WCC and its partners.
- Local Flood Risk Management Plans: produced and maintained by WCC and partners to articulate the understanding and guide flood risk in specific geographical locations in Worcestershire.

*Photo image of flood plain in Worcestershire*







## Objectives

The Worcestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy' articulates the following strategic aims:

- Understand and appropriately prioritise flood risk.
- Manage and minimise the likelihood and impact of flooding.
- Develop and manage effective partnerships.
- Inform, develop and implement relevant, plans, policies and strategies.
- Secure, maximise and prioritise the appropriate allocation of funding and other resources.
- Deliver sustainable environmental and economic benefits and contribute to the wellbeing of Worcestershire's communities and residents.
- Develop, maintain and implement the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy's action plan.



*Photo image of River Sever Worcester*



## What we have delivered since 2010

WCC has:

- Strong support for the completion and development of EA-led flood alleviation schemes at Bewdley, Severn Stoke, Tenbury, Worcester, Bromsgrove, Upton, Powick, Kempsey, Pershore, Kidderminster, Broadway.
- Highway flood adaptation schemes including the raising of New Road in Worcester and the A4106 in Upton upon Severn, keeping residents connected and moving and ensuring Worcestershire remains open for business.
- A significant programme of 100s of smaller drainage, surface water and ordinary watercourse flood alleviation schemes.
- Installation of a significant number of natural interventions on upstream catchments to slow and hold back the flow.
- Support for increased community resilience including the establishment of local community flood action groups
- Scrutiny of planning applications to ensure adequate surface water and flood risk management.
- Significant contribution to the response to emergency flood events and planning and preparation for future flood events, implementing continuous improvement.
- A lead role in flood event recovery and investigation.
- Flood recovery grant support for residents, businesses and communities during significant flood incidents.
- Co-ordination of multi-agency Flood Risk Management Plan groups at locations including Bromsgrove, Hagley, Redditch, Worcester, Wythall, Droitwich.
- Discharge of Land Drainage Act responsibilities to encourage and ensure the proper maintenance and management of the significant network of ordinary watercourses.
- Gathering, management and mapping of significant flooding data including over 2000 flood spots.



## What we will do:

We will continue to deliver and strongly support all the above activities including:

- Completion of the large EA-led flood alleviation schemes at Bewdley, Severn Stoke, Tenbury and Toronto Close.
- Implementation of the ongoing programme of small to medium scale flooding and drainage schemes.
- Implementation of the expanded natural flood management programme on a range of catchments across Worcestershire.
- Continued scrutiny of new planning applications and potential discharge of new statutory Sustainable Drainage System responsibilities.
- Establishment of more local community flood action groups and support for existing groups and the increase in community resilience.
- Continued and improved flood event preparation, response, recovery and investigation.
- Further development of partnerships.

## How we will measure performance

- Schemes completed and number of properties and businesses with reduced flood risk.
- Number of catchments worked on within the Natural Flood Management programme and the number of individual interventions installed.
- Number of planning applications scrutinised and percentage responded to within statutory timescale.
- Number of community flood groups supported and the number of multi-agency meetings attended.

In addition, an annual report is produced each year and examined by the WCC Economy & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

District council Overview & Scrutiny Panels also examine flood risk management on an ad hoc basis.

The response to every emergency flood event is closely scrutinised by a Local Resilience Forum de-brief process and some flood events are

formally investigated by WCC under its FWMA duties. All flood events are at least informally investigated. All of these processes culminate in the production and implementation of improvement plans.





## How we will work with partners / wider community

Partnerships within and across Risk Management Authorities and communities are completely fundamental to the successful delivery of flood risk management. This happens via constantly building relationships and daily communication and the following more formal structures:

**Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC)** A quarterly meeting of WCC elected member representatives, independent specialist invitees and Environment Agency officers to oversee flood risk management and administer Local Levy and Government capital funding on its six-year programme of schemes.

**Worcestershire Strategic Coordinating Group:** A multi-agency group to give strategic direction to flood risk management in Worcestershire.

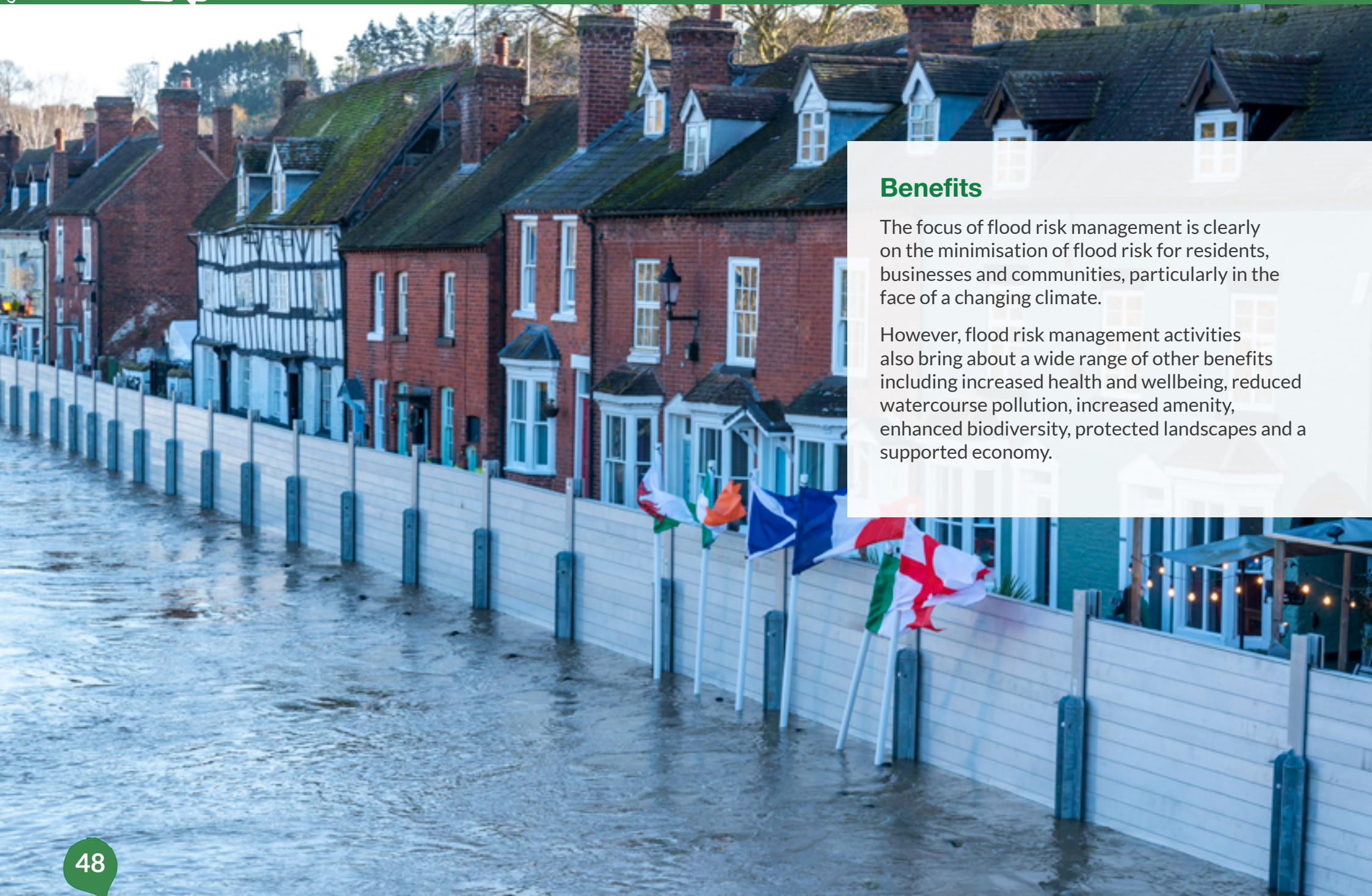
**Worcestershire Land Drainage Group:** A multi-agency group to give tactical and operational direction to flood risk management in Worcestershire.

**District land drainage partnership boards:** A meeting of district and county council officers to give direction to the land drainage partnerships.

**Flood Risk Management Plan Groups:** Multi-agency groups to develop and oversee implementation of Flood Risk Management Plans for particularly vulnerable locations within Worcestershire.

**Tactical Co-ordination Group and Operational Cells** The formal governance structure for efficient and coordinated tactical and operational response to significant flood events and subsequent recovery from them.

**Local community group multi-agency meetings:** meetings between communities and the range of flood risk management authorities to ensure to ensure a shared understanding and two-way sharing of priorities and actions.



## Benefits

The focus of flood risk management is clearly on the minimisation of flood risk for residents, businesses and communities, particularly in the face of a changing climate.

However, flood risk management activities also bring about a wide range of other benefits including increased health and wellbeing, reduced watercourse pollution, increased amenity, enhanced biodiversity, protected landscapes and a supported economy.





## Communities and Wellbeing

### Introduction

The Council is helping communities to take positive action to protect and enhance the natural environment; helping residents to save money as well as improve physical and mental health in the process.

WCC is supporting residents to:

- take action to improve their local green spaces and mental wellbeing by coordinating regular volunteer activities such as woodland management.
- volunteer to encourage others, including school children, to reduce, reuse and recycle household waste through our Let's Waste Less volunteer scheme.
- cut carbon emissions and create healthier and cheaper to run homes through home energy efficiency advice and grant programmes (see energy section).

- cut air pollution, improve physical health and save travel costs through the development of a network of active travel routes and improving green infrastructure.

### Relevant strategies/plans

- Worcestershire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Herefordshire & Worcestershire Waste Strategy
- Worcestershire Energy Strategy
- Worcestershire Fuel Poverty Plan
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.



Photo image of People holding energy saving icons





## Objectives

WCC is seeking to:

- Involve communities in the management of their greenspaces.
- Engage volunteers to learn new skills, socialise, gain physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits and deliver meaningful environmental benefit.
- Increase the provision and quality of biodiverse green spaces for Worcestershire residents.
- Help reduce instances of poor health made worse by cold homes and cut carbon emissions from housing.
- Improve air quality and promote active lifestyles.





## Targets

WCC's work contributes to achieving the following targets:

- 3,200 greenspace volunteer hours per year.
- 250 active Health Walks leaders.
- 150,000 trees planted on County Council land.
- Development of 5 new public greenspaces.
- 2000 energy efficiency interventions per year for fuel poor households (Worcestershire Energy Strategy).





## What we have delivered

### Countywide:

- Over 4200 volunteer work party hours at WCC Countryside sites.
- 50,000 trees planted.
- Green Flag awards at Waseley Hills Country Park, Worcester Woods Country Park and St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve, recognising their welcoming environment, biodiversity and community involvement.
- 1526 energy efficiency interventions per year for fuel poor households since 2019 (2022).
- Local cycling and walking improvements.

### WCC has:

- Led regular Countryside sites volunteer work parties, where members of the public can work alongside Countryside Service staff on projects such as hedge laying, woodland management, and orchard restoration. In the last year, many volunteers have had the opportunity to meet new people, get fresh air, exercise and learn new skills. Taking part provides moderate physical activity, improves muscle strength, relieves stress and can help combat depression.

- Coordinated the Worcestershire Health Walks programme providing opportunities for regular exercise with others in the county's beautiful natural environment.
- Operated the Lets Waste Less volunteer programme encouraging local communities to reduce the amount of waste they throw away.
- Through the Natural Networks programme we have provided biodiversity advice covering 2600ha, created and enhancement habitats on over 130ha, supported 170 projects providing grants of over £700,000 for biodiversity enhancements, accessible to residents and visitors.
- Led countywide home energy efficiency programmes (see energy section).
- Local cycling and walking Infrastructure Plans:  
One plan in consultation and seven plans in development.





## What we will do:

We will continue to deliver and strongly support all the above activities including:

- Continue to protect our natural environment and promote the positive benefits it has for mental health & wellbeing.
- Continue to offer volunteering opportunities in countryside management and waste prevention.
- Continue to deliver the Worcestershire Health Walks programme.
- Continue to coordinate the Warmer Worcestershire home energy efficiency & fuel poverty network offering energy efficiency advice and grant programmes.
- Continue to invest in and seek external funding for further initiatives.

## How we will measure performance

- Number of countryside and Let's Waste Less volunteer hours.
- Number taking part in Health Walks.
- Area of WCC maintained public green space.
- Number of Worcestershire homes benefiting from energy advice and grant programmes.
- Miles of active travel routes.



## How we will work with partners / wider community

- Work with Worcestershire's health services to offer environmental volunteering, health walks and warmth on prescription services to those in need.
- Work with Warmer Worcestershire partners to review the county fuel poverty plan.
- Lobby government for increased funding and powers through groups such as West Midlands Sustainable Housing Action Partnership and Midlands Net Zero Hub, to support wider community environmental action objectives.



## Benefits

- Volunteering in the countryside | Worcestershire County Council.
- Let's Waste Less volunteers | Worcestershire County Council.
- Gardening for Wildlife.
- Reduce your energy bills | Worcestershire County Council.
- Worcestershire Health walks | Worcestershire County Council.
- Worcestershire cycling and walking guides | Worcestershire County Council.



## Monitoring Performance

We will monitor our performance by reporting annually on the following indicators, a full performance report will be submitted through the County Council's corporate governance process which includes the senior leadership team, corporate business board and Cabinet. The monitoring and performance against the Environment Improvement Plan will also be subject to discussion and scrutiny at the Members Advisory Board (Climate Change and Biodiversity) and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Indicator	Target	Current Performance	Progress
Trees Planted	150000	50000	<div></div>
Hectares of Biodiversity Gain	N/A	Reporting commences Jan 2024	<div></div>
Reduction of County Carbon emissions	50% Reduction on 2005 by 2030	2,264 kilotons CO2 emissions (2020) 3.8 tonnes co2 per head	<div></div>
Waste produced per head of resident	To decrease the Kg er head of resident each year	474.9 KG	<div></div>
Active travel Improvements	N/A	36 Improvements in 22/23	<div></div>
New or Improved Cycleway (KM)	N/A	3.6km (2022/23)	<div></div>
Worcestershire County Council carbon emissions	To achieve Net Zero by 2050 Interim targets: Reduce our direct (scope 1 & 2) net emissions by 92% by 2024/25. Reduce all (scope 1, 2 and 3) net emissions by 50% by 2030	Scope 1: 2,008 tonnes CO2 (22/23) Scope 2: 0 (22/23) Scope 3: 40,357 Tonnes CO2 (22/23)	<div></div>
To grow the green Economy of Worcestershire	To achieve annual growth of the low carbon sector of 5%, doubling the sector by 2030	11,300 jobs (2019/20) 700 businesses (2019/20)	<div></div>
To protect homes and busniesses from flooding	To increase the number of homes and busniesses protrected from flooding	5727 additional homes and busniesses protected from flooding	<div></div>
Homes benefitting from Energy advice and grant programmes	2000 homes supported per year		<div></div>
Homes supported through the Home energy upgrade scheme	400 homes supported by march 2025	Scheme Launches Novemebr 2023	<div></div>
Healthy Walks across Worcestershire	N/A	1796 registered walkers	<div></div>



