

Gateshead Council's Environmental Policy February 2021

Gateshead Council recognises the importance of our natural environment. We are committed to reducing the environmental impact of our operations and will support residents and businesses to do the same.

A thriving natural environment can deliver considerable benefits to our communities. In the same way, action on climate change can provide many local benefits to health and well-being, economic growth, social equity and cohesion, and the resilience of our communities. In taking action to improve our environment and reduce carbon emissions, we will seek to optimise these wider benefits.

Key Principles:

Climate Emergency

- Reduce the emissions associated with the council's activities to net zero by 2030
- Ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to decision making give consideration to a shift to zero carbon by 2030
- Support local organisations and our communities on the journey to reducing their carbon emissions by generating and sharing ideas, facilitating connections between groups and individuals, and providing an exemplar for other organisations to follow

Transport

- Work to further reduce the environmental impacts of staff travel, including reducing the need to travel, and promoting sustainable modes of transport
- Through specific initiatives, and through our strategic decisions we will support active travel, public transport improvements, and other approaches to decarbonise transport that will reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, and contribute to sustainable access for all

Waste

- Minimise waste generated by the Council's activities
- Encourage households and businesses to minimise the amount of waste generated across the borough
- Apply the waste hierarchy of prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery and (only then) safe disposal

Procurement and Investments

- Support a shift to a green and just economy by seeking to procure products and services in an economically, environmentally and socially responsible manner

- Consider carbon and environmental impact in spending decisions to support the transition to a green and just economy
- Procurement and investments will support local organisations and service providers wherever feasible, retaining value within the local economy

Energy

- Continue to expand the use of clean energy across all the council's operations
- Proactively support the development of new low-carbon energy technologies, taking advantage of energy infrastructure and opportunities specific to Gateshead

Property, Land and Grounds Maintenance

- Minimise carbon emissions associated with the council's property portfolio – striving to achieve carbon neutrality across commercial and residential properties
- Optimise the potential for the council's land holdings to support biodiversity and our natural environment
- Work with partner organisations to increase tree planting in Gateshead, and maintain tree cover - increasing total tree cover to 17% by 2050
- Prepare a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with partner organisations to address the biodiversity emergency

We will monitor progress against the key principles of this policy. Annual reviews and updates will take account of relevant changes in legislation and other factors.

The policy will be made available on the council's website, and will be communicated to all employees, including as part of the induction process for new staff.