



NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

DRAFT

Adopted by Northam Town Council on ***dd mm yyyy***

	Name	Signature
Mayor		
Town Clerk		

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Version	Date	Note	Drafted by
V0.1	2021	Most recently approved policy	Town Clerk
V1.0	13.10. 2025	Reviewed, revised and updated following the final review by the former Climate Emergency Committee and in the light of the 2023 Biodiversity Duty.	Town Clerk

NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL – ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Northam Town Council is committed to the creation of a sustainable community, particularly in the following areas:

Water – The Council will aim to use water efficiently for Council activities and on Council premises, parks, greens and allotments. The Council's Planning Committee will consider issues of water use, water run-off and water pollution when making recommendations on planning applications. The Council will support the use of sustainable drainage systems in new developments and redevelopments to reduce flooding risks.

Development – The Council's Planning Committee will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when commenting on planning applications and development control policies from the Local Planning Authority, and also when developing or redeveloping any of its own buildings.

Climate Change and energy Conservation – The Council will monitor its energy use and aim to improve upon energy efficiency within its buildings. It will aim to increase awareness of energy efficiency amongst employees and encourage energy-conserving behaviour and support energy-saving projects in the community.

Waste – The Council will encourage waste reduction in the community and minimise its own waste production wherever possible, by reducing, repairing and reusing resources. (e.g. paper), and by recycling the waste its activities produce.

At a Full Council meeting on 28th February 2018 the Council resolved That Northam Town Council adopt the Surfers Against Sewage stance opposing the proliferation of single use plastics in this area in order to both cut down on coastal pollution and the waste of natural sources they represent.

Transport – The Council will encourage sustainable transport systems, promoting public transport and car sharing and non-polluting modes of transport within the town, such as cycling and walking. Members and employees will endeavour to use public transport, walk, cycle or car share when attending meetings and events on behalf of the Council.

Biodiversity and Green Spaces – The Council will promote local biodiversity in all its activities, but particularly with regard to the management of its land.

Sustainable Procurement – Council procurement will be assessed for sustainability implications, with the intention of purchasing renewable/recycled, environmentally low-impact and recyclable materials. The Council will aim to purchase from companies that have environmental management systems in place.

The policy and its success will be reviewed annually.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

On the 22nd July 2019 resolved to adopt a motion declaring a Climate Emergency.

The Council committed to an action plan aiming to secure net zero carbon emissions in parish activities by 2030, moving to a low carbon, sustainable and resilient future and supporting our community in this vital journey.

The Council is also committed to encourage any action to promote the natural environment as a resource to be protected for future generations.

The Council will comply with all relevant environmental legislation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council aims in its operations to mitigate the impacts of climate change and threats to biodiversity. In all cases, the Council will have due regard to the limits of its powers, rights and responsibilities.

This policy sets out how, across the Council's activities, it may address environmental issues and climate change.

2. ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

Through its Neighbourhood Plan, the Council will expect proposals for any new developments to meet the requirements of its Environmental Policy.

Through its Parks & Recreation and Environment & Maintenance committee, the Council will have due regard to the impact of the Committee's decisions on the environment, locally and further afield.

The Council will operate sustainably in the replacement, renovation and maintenance of buildings and other structures in its ownership. It will also ensure that land, facility and building maintenance and other related activities are undertaken with due regard to the minimisation of their environmental impacts.

Through its Finance and Human Resources Committee, the Council will apply a sustainability test to all its procurement activities.

Through its Review committee the Council will have due regard to the environmental impact of its decisions, including:

- Purchase of materials – office supplies, equipment and furniture
- Emissions from the use of energy in our buildings and fuel in transport
- Waste Management – plastic, paper, green, and other waste
- Management of chemicals used in Town Council premises, operations and services
- Suppliers' environmental performance.

The Council will, if required, review and revise its controlled documents, including but not limited to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in order to meet its environmental objectives.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve the above the following actions will be applied:

3.1 Local Sourcing

The Council we will seek to source materials locally in order to minimise environmental damage caused through transportation of goods. This also has the positive effect of supporting the local economy.

3.2 Environmental Impacts

The Council will aim to reduce its net carbon footprint to zero by 2030 by pursuing the following objectives

- Minimise greenhouse gas emissions produced by Town Council activities.
- Minimise energy use, making use of sustainable energy and energy conservation measures wherever possible.
- Aim to replace the Council's fleet and equipment with carbon zero alternatives e.g. electric vehicles. Electric/battery powered equipment will be sourced wherever possible, with due regard to cost effectiveness and suitability.
- Support initiatives across the parish that promote sustainable transport, where appropriate.
- Reduce waste and re-use material wherever possible, supporting initiatives with this aim across the parish where possible.
- Minimise material consumption and consider the full life cycle impact of purchases.
- Embrace repair and recycling opportunities.
- Explore ways to support and increase biodiversity in the Council's parks and open spaces.
- Minimise the use of mains water in its operations.
- Encourage employees and members to use public transport, cycling or car-sharing schemes.
- The Council supports the Devon County Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), adopted in January 2024. The LCWWIP builds on the government Active Travel strategy and contains numerous proposals for upgrading and improving identified walking and cycling routes in the area, the Northam Neighbourhood Plan policy TR2 has regard for, and is consistent with, the routes for the parish.

3.3 Energy Management

The Council is committed to responsible energy management and will, where possible, promote energy efficiency throughout its operations by the following actions:

- Implement energy conservation measures, including insulation, low energy light bulbs, low water use toilets.
- Monitor heating in its buildings, installing more environmentally sustainable systems when possible.
- Ensure that employees switch off unnecessary lights and install time-controlled lights in its buildings.

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- Ensure that employees switch off computers and related equipment when not in use.
- Seek to install solar panels or other sustainable electricity generation at Council premises.
- In conjunction with relevant authorities, explore the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charge points at suitable locations in the parish.

3.4 Recycling and reuse

Recycled and reused paper should be used wherever possible in products such as – letterheads, folders, compliment slips, business cards, photocopy paper, printed paper, envelopes and toilet rolls.

A significant amount of paper is used for meeting agendas and related documents. To reduce the use of paper, the Council will consider adopting the following approach:

- Councillors will be encouraged to receive their meeting agendas and reports electronically and not to print them for meetings but instead bring electronic copies on their Council-provided tablets.
- Councillors and co-opted committee and group members will be sent all papers electronically as standard. Paper copies are to be available on request.
- Those members who do receive paper copies are only to do so for those committees that they sit on, papers for all other meetings are to be sent electronically.

Wastepaper should be minimised by, where appropriate, re-using paper already printed on one side, maintaining a ready supply of such material for use as rough note paper.

External shredding services will only be used for confidential documents (in line with the requirements of data protection and GDPR), and the service provider must guarantee that the paper is all 100% recycled.

Comply with the Government guidance: **Simpler recycling: workplace recycling in England.**¹

3.5 Chemicals

The use of chemicals harmful to the environment will be avoided where suitable less harmful products exist. The use of harmful chemicals such as insecticides and herbicides on Council sites should be avoided, or minimised where avoidance is not possible or practical.

The Council will constantly strive to identify and adopt alternative, safer methods of weed and insect control but always in the context of prioritising protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

3.6 Biodiversity and Ecology

Implement land management processes to encourage biodiversity at appropriate sites, including but are not limited to:

- Planting wildflower areas.
- Rewilding, including managing suitable areas of grass to leave uncut.
- Implementation of the Devon County Council 'Life on the Verge' initiative.
- Composting waste vegetation where possible.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/simpler-recycling-workplace-recycling-in-england#legal-requirement-for-workplaces>

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- Promoting environmentally friendly practices to allotment plot holders.

Statutory Biodiversity Duty

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

In order to meet its objectives, a subordinate Biodiversity Policy has been prepared, see the appendix.

3.7 Single Use Plastic

The Council welcomes the moves to ban the sale of cheap polystyrene body boards by retailers in Westward Ho! This recognises the effect cheap single use items have on our environment and the Council seeks to reduce, reuse, or recycle single use plastics. To date the following steps have been taken:

- A water bottle refill station has been installed in Churchfields car park, Appledore and at the pavilion, Westward Ho! Park.
- Recycle bins have been installed in the play parks across the community.
- Single use plastic cups and straws are no longer purchased.
- Wooden stirrers and washable spoons are used.
- The Council has also adopted a plastic-free initiative at its events and meetings. No plastic cutlery or cups may be used, with all events and meetings provided with regular reusable crockery. Water refill stations may be used instead of plastic bottles.

3.8 Water

The Council will use water efficiently, for Council activities and on Council premises, including parks, green spaces and allotments gardens. This will include the installation of water saving equipment such as water butts fed by downpipes to collect rainwater. Rainwater storage equipment has been installed at Northam Hall.

Measures will also be taken at Council premises to ensure water use is kept to a minimum, such as the installation of water-saving devices in toilet flushes. At Council property, due consideration will be given to the installation of water saving and grey-water recycling as renovations and refitting takes place.

Allotment holders will be encouraged to capture rainwater at the allotment sites under the Council's control and, by adopting suitable cultivation methods, mitigate the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

4. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually or following significant changes in legislation or council activities.

Appendix: Statutory Biodiversity Duty – subordinate policy

A1. BACKGROUND

A1.1 In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, Northam Town Council (the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must consider what action the authority can properly take, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

A1.2 This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

A2. DEFINITION

A2.1 According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

A2.2 Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

A3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A3.1 The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

A3.2 The Full Council and any committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the parish / town to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

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A4. ACTIONS

Planning applications

A4.1 The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, consider how site and building design benefit biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats and what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

Land and property management

A4.2 The Council will:

- seek to carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity when managing its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's regulations.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use.
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

A4.3 The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

A5. WORKING WITH OTHERS

A5.1 The Council will when working in partnership with other organisations seek to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area. It will take special care in the specification of any grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of the Northam Burrows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

A6. REVIEW

A6.1 This subordinate policy will be reviewed alongside the main policy.