

**Breckland 2035: Our roadmap to becoming net zero by 2035**  
**Sustainability Policy Statement 2021 – 2035**

**Strategic vision, pillars and priorities**

**Breckland 2035 Vision:** “Breckland Council will work with its residents, businesses and partners to affect positive behavioural change that will lead to it becoming one of the most sustainable rural districts in the country”

**The Pillars of our Strategy**

Given the size and complexity of the challenge of addressing sustainability and climate change, the council cannot act in isolation, but rather must engage and work in partnership with the wider community while leading by example. Therefore, in defining this strategy, three strategic pillars have been developed to help define how we will approach this issue, they are:

- **We will reduce our own impact as an organisation on the environment**

In order to do this:

- We will set a positive example to our communities and demonstrate what is possible through innovation and behavioural change.
- We will reduce our organisational carbon footprint and have set a date by which we will be net zero as an organisation.
- We will improve and reduce our water usage.
- We will put sustainability at the centre of our decision making processes.
- We will ensure that our elect members and officers are aware of their personal impact on the environment and make sure it is at the forefront of all decisions they make.

- **We will use our regulatory powers and resources to influence behavioural change and drive positive changes around the environment**

In order to do this:

- We will use the powers granted to us as a planning authority to ensure that development in the district is sensitive to the environment, protects wildlife and local habitats, and ensures more sustainable building practices.
- We will use the powers granted to us as a waste collection authority to promote behavioural changes that reduce waste and consumption, where this is not possible we will improve knowledge and uptake of recycling and reuse schemes.
- We will continue to take a strong stance against environmental crime including fly tipping by having a robust approach to enforcement activities.
- We will continue to use our powers to enforce and protect our water and air quality.
- We will utilise our contracts and procurement activities to drive change in the local supply change with a focus on buying locally and supporting more sustainable suppliers.
- We will work with our partners who are responsible for roads, cycling and public transport in our district to lobby, improve and reduce impacts.
- We will work with partners to help improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing in the district.

- We will use our position to secure Government and external funding to support this agenda.
- We will promote the use of renewable energy in the district.
- **We will enable our communities to take action for themselves**  
In order to do this:
  - We recognise that we cannot do this ourselves and that there is a key role for our communities to play in delivering this agenda.
  - We will empower our communities to take actions for themselves that will improve their local environment, give them tools and knowledge to make more sustainable choices and to carry out grassroots action while preventing any unintended consequences.
  - We will create a grant scheme that will enable community groups to take action for themselves.
  - We will use our communications channels to promote initiatives that will help our residents make more sustainable choices and reduce their own impact on the environment (including energy efficiency grants, switch and save schemes).

### **Partnership working**

As part of our approach to delivering effective behavioural change around environmental and sustainability issues we will actively engage with key stakeholders to deliver behavioural changes that will reduce the impact on the district's environment.

Where possible we will work to support Norfolk County Council's environmental policy principles which are:

- Using and managing land sustainably
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
- Securing clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans
- Protecting and improving our global environment

Our list of partners will include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Other Local Government & Public Sector Organisations
- Housing Associations and Private Landlords
- Breckland Business Community
- Woodland Trust
- Forestry Commission
- Local community action groups
- Town & Parish Councils
- Developers
- Agricultural Leaders & the Farming Community
- Environmental Activist Groups
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- British Trust for Ornithology
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- The Brecks Landscape Partnership
- Norfolk Conservation Corps
- Breckland Farmers Wildlife Network

## **Net zero**

The council is declaring its committed to be net zero as an organisation by 2035.

The council wants to be explicit in its intent to affect positive behavioural change and lead by example. Therefore, unless there is no other practical option the council will not use carbon offsetting activities to reduce its carbon footprint. On the very limited occasion that it does this, it will be a temporary measure to enable the council to have time or to secure resources to address the fundamental issues affecting emissions.

The council wishes to address its emissions levels as soon as practically possible, however a carbon audit undertaken in late 2020 has identified a number of issues were it would not be achievable to deliver carbon neutrality by 2030. These issues are:

- Emissions generated by our contracted refuse vehicle fleet – As part of the recent procurement of our waste contract the option of electric refuse vehicles was explored. Due to the rurality of our district the current range and technology of electric refuse vehicles would not support this. Our consultants have advised that at the end of new fleet's life cycle it would be practical to revisit electric vehicles or explore other alternative technology such as hydrogen.
- Emissions relating to elected member and officer travel – While the Worksmart 2020 programme will reduce the amount of times members and officers need to travel to the office there will still be some residual emissions left over when they do need to travel. With the government bringing forward the ban on the sale new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, it feels that 2035 would be a prudent date by which the majority of members and staff could have switched to other more sustainable forms of transport, but it will continue to work towards reducing this sooner.
- Emissions relating to heating of the councils contracted leisure facilities – While the council intends to switch its electric provision to fully renewable sources by 2024 at the end of its current contract, it will be left with a number of assets that use gas to heat them particularly the existing leisure centres with swimming pools. In order to give the council time to fully explore alternative heating sources and identify potential funding streams for this, it is felt that 2035 would be a more prudent timescale.
- Emissions relating to tenants of the council's commercial assets – The council has limited influence over its current tenants in terms of the emissions they generate. The council will take an educational role to support them make better choices, however it cannot force them to change. Therefore, it is felt that 2035 is an achievable timeframe to mitigate their impacts.

## **Existing commitments made by the council**

The council already makes a significant contribution to supporting the environment in Breckland, this includes:

- Replacement of Street Lighting with LED - £825,000
- New two-year fixed term Environment & Climate Change post - £90,000
- Initial Carbon Audit -£10,000
- Members ICT Kit to enable paperless meeting -£10,000
- Delivery of a Local Plan – approximately £310,000 per annum
- Recycling elements of Waste Contract – approximately £1,350,000 per annum
- Environmental Protection Service – approximately £300,000 per annum

- Enforcement Activity – approximately £46,000

### **Climate Change & Sustainability Work Programme**

The council intends to undertake a number of activities to support the delivery of this strategy. It will deliver the following within existing resources:

- Strengthening of its planning position to protect the natural environment while ensuring that growth is still delivered in a sustainable way.
- Carbon literacy training for elected members and officers to enable them to make more informed choices both professionally and personally.
- Reviewing our procurement strategy to ensure that we buy more locally and drive more sustainable behaviours within our supply chain.
- Delivering new web pages to help sign post residents to helpful information that will help them reduce their own impacts.
- Renewal of our current energy contract to purchase our energy directly from a renewable only supplier and explore the option of establishing a power purchasing agreement with other partners.
- Deliver new ways of working through our Worksmart 2020 programme which will change how we use our offices and reduce the amount of times elected members and officers are required to travel to them.
- Through our new waste contract, we will continue to promote reuse and recycling with residents.
- We will continue to take a robust approach to enforcing environmental crimes such as fly tipping.
- Using our taxi licensing policy to look at how we reduce emissions associated with taxis in the district.

It will also look to release £525,000 from reserves to create the following new activities:

- £100,000 to create new tree planting and environmental schemes;
- £60,000 to deliver additional electric vehicle charging points in the district;
- £200,000 to reduce the impact of Council owned builds on the environment;
- £100,000 to create a grant scheme to support community environmental projects;
- £10,000 to look at further initiatives to reduce the impact of member/staff travel;
- £5,000 to promote switch and save schemes for residents;
- £50,000 to commission feasibility studies on renewable energy options in Breckland.

### **Monitoring Progress**

As part of its performance framework the council will adopt a number of high level key performance indicators that will measure the success of this programme of work. These indicators will be reported through the council's existing performance reporting mechanisms through Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet.

In addition, the council will make commitment to publish its carbon footprint and emissions levels annually on its website.