

Oxfordshire County Council

Circular Economy Plan 2025 - 2030

July 2025

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Foreword

I am proud to introduce Oxfordshire County Council's first Circular Economy Plan. This plan sets out a bold and necessary shift in how we think about resources: how we use them, how we value them, and how we ensure they serve both people and planet for generations to come. It builds on our county's strong record of climate leadership and innovation, and it reflects our shared ambition to be greener, fairer, and more resilient.

The climate emergency demands more than incremental change. While we have made significant progress in reducing emissions from energy and transport, we must now turn our attention to the 45 per cent of emissions that come from the way we make, use, and dispose of products and food. The circular economy offers a powerful response. It designs out waste, keeps materials in use, and regenerates natural cycles and systems.

This plan is not just aspiration; it builds on a track record of excellence. Oxfordshire has been the top-performing county council for household waste recycling for 11 consecutive years, with residents recycling, reusing, or composting 57.6 per cent of their household waste in 2023–24.

From embedding reuse and repair targets in major contracts, to trialling innovative materials like graphene-enhanced asphalt, to donating over 200 refurbished laptops to tackle digital exclusion, we are already putting circular principles into practice. We are empowering our residents to lead as well. The Community Action Groups we support saved over 1,600 tonnes of non-food waste from disposal in just one year.

This plan aligns with Oxfordshire County Council's ambition of becoming a partner and place shaper of choice. It recognises that the transition to a circular economy is not only essential for the environment, but also an opportunity to build a healthier, more inclusive and prosperous future for our residents and businesses alike.

You'll find buckets of ambition, innovation, and practical action throughout this plan. Together, we can lead the way in building a circular Oxfordshire that thrives within the limits of our planet and leaves a legacy we can be proud of.

Cllr Judy Roberts
Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action
Oxfordshire County Council

A Circular Council Overview

Circular economy key principles:



Design out waste and pollution



Keep materials and products in use for longer



Regenerate natural systems

Our Goals

- Facilitate a culture shift within the organisation
- Use our purchasing power to enable circularity
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Build on our strong waste prevention & recycling record
- Use our assets to drive efficiencies, reuse and repair
- Become a more resilient council and save money
- Regenerate nature and reduce pollution
- Support innovation

Core Themes



1 Introduction

As a society we are using more resources than our planet can sustain. Everything we buy has an impact on the environment. Our economy is built on a 'take-make-dispose' approach involving extraction of raw materials, production, consumption and discarding of products and materials soon after use. However, this linear model does not take into account the costs to both people and the planet. It has led to a huge waste burden, the loss of critical resources and significant environmental harm, including biodiversity loss and pollution. Operating within the constraints of the planet's boundaries is a key challenge right now and for the coming decades.

As the global impacts of climate change escalate, reducing emissions from fossil fuels by transitioning to renewable energy and implementing energy efficiency measures is crucial. However, it is estimated that these energy related actions can only tackle 55% of emissions. We also need to urgently address the remaining 45% of emissions that are attributed to the way materials, products, and food are designed, produced and used¹.

The Circular economy represents our biggest untapped opportunity to reduce our impact on climate and nature, improve biodiversity and cut carbon emissions further and faster. Adopting a circular approach will reduce costs, grow the economy and kick start the transition to an economy that is fairer and healthier for people, as well as more sustainable.

Oxfordshire County Council wants to be at the forefront of this opportunity. This Circular Economy Plan outlines how we intend to do this.

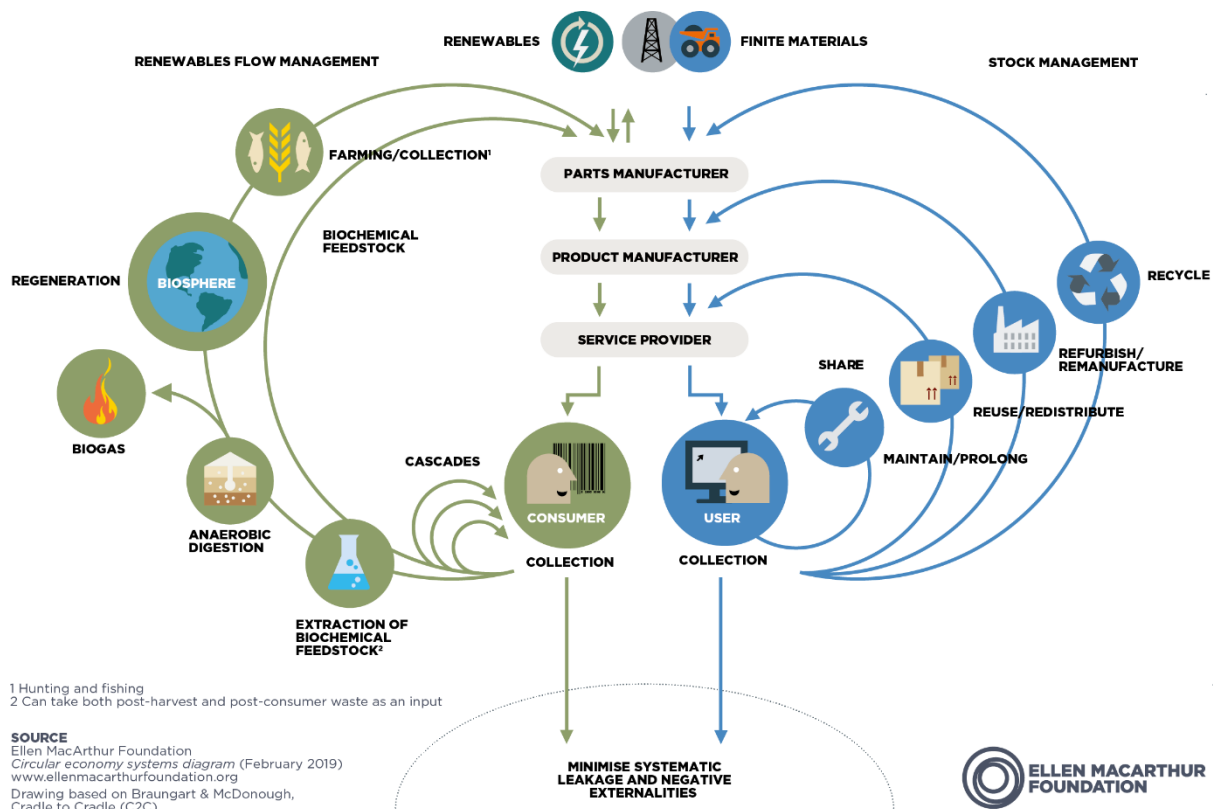
1.1 What is a circular economy?

The circular economy is an approach to tackling global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution.

At its core the concept is based on three principles:

- Design out waste and pollution
- Keep materials and products in use for longer
- Regenerate natural cycles and systems

¹ <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/completing-the-picture>



1.2 A Circular Economy in Practice

The principles of the circular economy in practice, mean using less resources and energy by creating and/or buying locally, extending the life of materials, maintaining and repairing items and reusing as much as possible.

In a circular economy, products and infrastructure are designed to consider their whole life so they can be easily repaired, re-purposed, and refurbished. These circular actions build resilience. For example, if less virgin material is required, we are less reliant on the often-volatile markets for these materials. They prevent the loss of precious resources and reduce wasteful practices. They serve to protect our natural environment and reduce pollution, for example, by reducing extraction of raw materials which in turn reduces habitat destruction and associated pollution, and supports people's health and wellbeing. A systemic change to a more local economy also has the potential to empower citizens and provide new opportunities for community wealth building².

For example, at the household level circular actions include sharing and borrowing items rather than purchasing new; repairing items; selling or donating things we no

² Community Wealth Building seeks to change the way that our economies have come to function by aiming to retain more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people. This is in contrast to the predominant economic model, whereby wealth is created by property ownership, regeneration is based on speculative property development and large companies extract wealth for the benefit of distant shareholders.

longer need to others; and where possible purchasing what we need second hand, extending its useful life.

In a council context examples include the use of reused or recycled materials in infrastructure construction, refurbishing buildings and equipment where possible, reviewing policy around ICT equipment to ensure more items are collected and redistributed rather than purchasing new, setting targets for reuse/repair in all major contracts (for example mobility and healthcare aids) and phasing out the use of peat and herbicides/pesticides on the council's estate.

1.3 Scope of the work

This plan sets out:

- The work the council is already doing that supports a circular economy.
- The further actions we will take to ensure circular principles are adopted and practised in-house.
- How we can work within our sphere of influence to support the adoption of circularity across Oxfordshire.

It should be noted that transitioning to a circular economy is by no means a quick task. This plan represents a long-term commitment by the council.

The circular economy landscape is still evolving with exciting developments regularly coming on board. It's complex and impacts a wide range of services at the council. To address this challenge, we have developed an overarching plan which will take us up to 2030. Progress will be reported annually to cabinet. This will allow flexibility to ensure that the right approach is being taken, and ambitious change can be delivered.

2 Policy Landscape

This plan supports our goal to be greener, healthier, and fairer. It will contribute towards the following corporate priorities: addressing the climate emergency, tackling inequalities, supporting residents' health and wellbeing, preserving and restoring green spaces, and working with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit.

Oxfordshire County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. We are committed to reaching net zero as a council by 2030 and enabling Oxfordshire to be carbon neutral as early as possible in the 2040s. The council's [Climate Action Framework](#) notes the importance of resource consumption and the role circular economy must play in this transition.

Designing out waste and keeping products and materials in circulation through processes such as maintenance, refurbishment, reuse, recycling and composting sits at the heart of the circular economy. This plan closely aligns with the aims of the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership's (ORWP's) Joint Municipal [Waste Management Strategy](#) and Action Plan 2018-2027 which sets the following objectives:

- Keep household waste growth to zero (per person per year)
- Increase the amount of household waste we recycle to 70% by 2030

It also supports the [soon to be published](#) 'Oxfordshire Resources & Waste Partnership's Waste Prevention Strategy - towards zero waste growth in Oxfordshire' - which sets out more detail about how ORWP will work to meet the first target.

Procurement will play a central role in the transition to a circular council. As a council, we aim to use the flexibility of the Procurement Act to consider local suppliers. The Social Value Policy encourages us to work with suppliers to ensure what we buy brings positive benefits to the local economy, environment and people. Our Ethical Procurement Policy supports good, clean, and inclusive growth that keeps wealth local. Becoming a more circular council also supports our ambitions around community wealth building, outlined in [Embedding Community Wealth Building into Oxfordshire County Council](#).

Circular economy principles align closely with the aim to protect and restore nature and biodiversity in Oxfordshire. Supporting natural cycles (carbon, water, nutrients) by restoring healthy ecosystems will provide a wide range of associated benefits from improved food production, greater biodiversity, better climate regulation, cleaner air and water, and improved health and wellbeing. In November 2022, cabinet approved the [Climate and Natural Environment Policy Statement](#) and adopted the [Oxfordshire Environmental Principles](#), to enable the development of a countywide strategic framework to support the development of Local Plans and ensure development is underpinned by these key environmental principles. Our Biodiversity Framework and Action Plan is currently under development and has cross-cutting themes which reference this Circular Economy Plan. We have cross-referenced actions to ensure both of these pieces of work are fully aligned.

The circular economy principle of designing out pollution supports the objectives of the council's [Air Quality Strategy](#) and ambitions outlined in the council's [Carbon](#)

Management Plan to transition to an electric fleet, reduce the impacts of colleagues commuting and business travel for example.

We have also committed to consider future generations in our decision making as a council. The principle of Future Generations is about acting in a manner that is intergenerationally fair, ensuring we consider the people who will live in the years to come, and their needs and well-being. A transition to a circular economy can help meet the needs of the present while giving future generations the same opportunity.

2.1 The Benefits of a Circular Approach

Table 2-1 below outlines some of the key benefits resulting from the transition to a circular economy approach.

Category	Benefits of a circular approach
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ It is central to delivering our net zero commitments. It is estimated globally 45% of carbon emissions come from the way we design, produce and use products and food³.➤ It will significantly contribute to the protection and restoration of nature in Oxfordshire by reducing natural resource use and pollution.
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ A transition to a circular economy supports living within the planet's boundaries. It will afford future generations the opportunity to have the resources they need to live a good life.➤ Circular economy in practice can help foster well-being, reduce inequalities, and create more cohesive communities through reuse and repair, the sharing of equipment and skills.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ It is estimated that transitioning to a circular economy could bring direct economic benefit to Oxfordshire businesses of between £400m and £500m each year. It would also bring £1bn of wider societal benefit per year as well as about 6,000-7,000 jobs⁴.➤ Circular economy principles support the council's ambitions around community wealth building, and procurement that supports good, clean, and inclusive growth that keeps wealth local.

³ <https://www.wrap.ngo/taking-action/climate-change>

⁴ https://assets.website-files.com/5f9978a71f4d1719b3f50dfb/6103e3c499290417675e89aa_Circular%20Economy%20in%20Oxfordshire%20-FINAL%20Report.pdf

Building
Resilience

- Circulating resources locally and using renewable energy develops resilience to global price fluctuations and the rapidly growing risk of resource scarcity (e.g. recent energy cost inflations).
- Preventing and reducing household waste across Oxfordshire will help reduce core business costs (Oxfordshire County Council is forecasting over £33m spend on household waste management in 2024/25).

Table 2-1: Benefits to a circular economy approach

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3 Themes and Actions

Theme 1: Facilitate a culture shift within the organisation

The circular economy represents a fundamental shift in perspective; it is not an add on. These principles need to sit at the heart of the organisation – in both policy and delivery. A culture shift can be achieved by providing a mandate for change within our policies; considering circular economy principles when decisions are made; and by raising awareness with colleagues around the circular economy and how it can be applied to their role.

How the council is supporting a circular approach

As outlined in the policy landscape section many of our policies are strongly aligned with the principles of the circular economy. Circular economy considerations are included within our decision support tools and processes which are mandatory for all new proposals. We will continue to ensure these circular principles are integral as decision support tools and processes evolve over time.

Further actions the council will take:

- ✓ Add circular economy to existing training around climate i.e. mandatory climate action.
- ✓ Add circular economy content to the Carbon Literacy Training modules.
- ✓ Continue to incorporate circular economy principles into council policies.
- ✓ Continue to consider circular economy in decision making via Climate Impact Assessment tool.
- ✓ Ensure circular principles are integral when implementing PAS 2080 (a global standard for assessing building and infrastructure whole life cycle carbon) across the organisation.
- ✓ Ensure capital project processes and documentation incorporate circular economy considerations.

Spotlight On: E-Learning



Tailored information will be incorporated into both the council's climate action e-learning module that's mandatory for all colleagues and its carbon literacy training. We are aiming to attain carbon literacy silver status by December 2026 which will require an additional 504 colleagues to be trained and accredited over this period.

Theme 2: Use our purchasing power to enable circularity

How we procure goods and services will play a central role in transitioning to a circular council. We spend over £500m a year with suppliers delivering critical services for residents. Over 80% of the council's spend is with its 25 biggest suppliers. Working with those suppliers affords the greatest opportunity to use our influence as a customer to reduce our impact on climate and nature and get a fairer, greener outcome for residents. By working with suppliers to raise awareness, measure and monitor success we can facilitate the transition to a circular council.

How the council is supporting a circular approach

Our ethical procurement policy has been refreshed to ensure circular economy principles sit at the heart of the policy. We have begun work to embed circular economy into all procurement processes and build circular economy-based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) into select contracts. We are using the flexibility of the Procurement Act to consider local companies. For example, a new minor works procurement framework is under development, allowing us to spend between £10-15 million per annum with local companies benefiting Oxfordshire's economy.

We continue to invest in renewable energy for our estate and support the installation of renewable energy for state-maintained schools, via the [Action on Carbon and Energy in Schools](#) initiative.

Further actions the council will take:

- ✓ Implement revised guidance for colleagues around purchasing that follows circular principles.
- ✓ Explore leasing versus capital options for major contracts.
- ✓ Put in place a local procurement framework for property works.
- ✓ Set Circular Economy KPIs in major contracts and begin to measure outcomes.

Spotlight On: Highways Maintenance



From 1 April 2025, the council entered into a new long-term highways maintenance contract with its supplier M Group. In addition to setting science-based targets for the reduction of carbon emissions during the contract, it includes significant KPIs that will enable a circular approach, alongside committing to the following:

- Recycled materials specified as default, where feasible.
- Investment in a permanent aggregate recycling centre.
- Reuse of materials, for example, use of recycled asphalt⁵ material on the road network over the first five years of the contract. This is particularly significant in terms of reducing pollution, as asphalt contains coal tar which is deemed hazardous waste.
- Looking for opportunities to work with local community groups, charities and not-for-profit enterprises to reuse or recycle materials.
- A commitment to fund a Net Zero Depot feasibility study which will investigate the potential to create OCC's first net zero depots at Drayton and Deddington.
- A Carbon Reduction Group which consists of members from M Group, OCC, and our supply chain partners, and will take an alliance approach to carbon reduction, sharing ideas and exploring joint opportunities.

Theme 3: Build on our record of Oxfordshire-wide waste prevention and high recycling rates

We have been the top performing county council household waste disposal authority for 11 consecutive years now. In 2023/24, residents recycled, reused, or composted

⁵ A mixture of dark bituminous pitch with sand or gravel, used for surfacing roads, flooring, roofing

57.6 per cent of their household waste. Despite this good record a significant proportion of valuable resources are currently not going back into the system.

Reducing the amount of household waste managed by councils within Oxfordshire makes economic sense; around £60million (2023/24) is spent by the county and district councils on dealing with household waste through collection, disposal and transport.

Preventing waste can also help residents to save money. Wasting food costs the average family with children £1,000 a year⁶. Repairing clothes and electrical items can help products last longer, meaning new items do not need to be bought as often.

How the council is supporting a circular approach

The council is working as part of ORWP to deliver the following ambitious targets outlined in the Joint Municipal [Waste Management Strategy](#):

- To keep household waste growth to zero (per person per year)
- Increase the amount of household waste we recycle to 70% by 2030

The council regularly runs communication campaigns aimed at residents around preventing food waste, composting, reuse and recycling. We also provide tools such as the [waste wizard](#) which allows residents to understand where they can repair, reuse, recycle, or dispose of unwanted household items.

We have been supporting the [Community Action Group](#) network since 2001. The network is involved with many grass root level initiatives on waste reduction and recycling outlined in the spotlight below.

Further actions the council will take:

- ✓ Deliver on ORWP targets.
- ✓ Participate in the [EU Circle Up project](#)⁷ and complete 25 case studies.
- ✓ Continue to support the Community Action Group network to run repair cafes and create Libraries of things.

Spotlight On: Community Action Groups



The council has been supporting Oxfordshire's [Community Action Groups](#) since 2001 and there are now 117 groups across the county. It is the biggest climate network of its kind reaching over 120,000 participants in 2023-24.

As a collective between 2023-24 the CAG network:

- Saved 1,654 tonnes of non-food waste from disposal.
- Redistributed, cooked or processed 678 tonnes of food that would otherwise have been wasted.
- Repaired 1,194 bikes.
- Prevented 1,695 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

⁶ <https://www.wrap.ngo/media-centre/press-releases/urgent-action-needed-scale-tackle-food-waste-our-homes>

⁷ A Horizon Europe research project which develops, tests and implements strategies to encourage circular practices at a micro level, within local communities and individual households.

Theme 4: Use the council's assets to drive efficiency, reuse and repair

Using less, reusing materials and repairing products are central to the circular model. Councils can play a role in meeting these objectives by driving energy efficiency across their estates and exploring using council owned assets to support reuse and repair activities.

How the council is supporting a circular approach

The ten-year plan to manage and rationalise the buildings within our portfolio began in 2022. The programme will save money, see us use less energy and resources, gain efficiencies and build resilience.

Starting in 2020, we have replaced street lighting in Oxfordshire with energy-efficient LEDs. This has cut costs and emissions by more than 70 % in comparison with 2010 figures. We have implemented rigorous energy management practices in our buildings, as well as, carrying out retrofitting to increase energy efficiency in some council offices, schools and a fire station.

The council has also changed its approach to issuing mobile phones. Instead of issuing mobile phones by default to new colleagues a range of options are now offered, appropriate to the role. Along with a phone amnesty, this new approach has reduced the number of phones needed overall. We have also established a process to allow older laptops to be donated to charity (see spotlight).

Further actions the council will take:

- ✓ Embed circular economy principles into the re-development of Speedwell House offices in Oxford and decommissioning of County Hall.
- ✓ Explore the potential for green leases to be used in certain circumstances.
- ✓ Explore the reusing of materials and/or the use of materials with recycled content in minor property repairs.
- ✓ Use the new HWRC contract to drive reuse and repair and keep benefits local.
- ✓ Continue to drive energy efficiency measures in line with our Carbon Management Plan.
- ✓ Increase our in-house recycling rate by 5% yearly from a baseline of 60%.

Spotlight On: Technology



The council has established a process to allow older laptops to be donated to charity. In 2024, over 200 refurbished laptops were donated to the charity 'Getting Oxfordshire Online' to support residents who face digital exclusion gain access to a computer.

Theme 5: Agree circular economy metrics and establish a baseline

Our Circular Economy Plan is pioneering work - at the time of writing very few councils across the UK have a plan in place to transition to a more circular approach. Circular economy metrics for local government to measure and monitor progress are not yet well established. As a priority we need to gather data to establish a baseline and agree suitable metrics to allow us to set targets and measure success.

Actions the council will take:

- ✓ Set up a working group to research and agree appropriate circular economy metrics.
- ✓ Undertake a gap analysis to establish any additional data required and set up processes to record this data.

Theme 6: Pilot innovative materials or processes that support circularity

One of the most powerful outcomes of transitioning to a circular economy is that, because it requires innovation, it drives innovation.

How the council is supporting a circular approach

We will continue to use our estate as a 'Living Lab' to trial new products or processes that support innovation and circularity. By demonstrating how these materials and/or processes work in real life settings we will pave the way for future uptake.

Our infrastructure teams i.e. transport infrastructure, highways maintenance and property and assets are particularly well placed to drive circular principles and practices within the organisation (see Spotlight on: Highways Maintenance). We will continue to support these teams to take action.

Further actions the council will take:

- ✓ Develop business cases for the reuse of materials, use of secondary materials and the use of innovative materials across our infrastructure teams.
- ✓ Investigate building design for lifespan flexibility and disassembly.
- ✓ Develop a circular economy assessment checklist which can be used to ensure that all opportunities for integrating circular economy principles are taken.
- ✓ Continue to pilot the re-use of materials and use of innovative materials.

Spotlight On: Innovative Materials



The Highways team have been trialling the use of an innovative product; an enhanced type of asphalt called Gipave⁸ for road repairs. It is thought that the product will increase the lifespan of road surfaces, reduce the need for resurfacing work (approx. 165 % compared to conventional resurfacing methods), ease the burden on highways budgets, and cut carbon emissions by approx. 40% for the life cycle of a stretch of road.

Gipave also uses waste plastics which would not normally be recycled. The asphalt containing Gipave can itself be entirely recycled – promoting the circular economy which reduces waste and the need for new materials.

Theme 7: Regenerate nature, increase biodiversity and reduce pollution

Globally, over-consumption, production relying on the extraction of virgin materials and the use of chemicals in agriculture, for example, are significant threats to nature, causing pollution and reducing habitats available for wildlife. The principles of the circular economy, including regenerating and restoring natural systems and keeping materials in use for as long as possible, support nature recovery.

⁸ A graphene-enhanced asphalt supermodifier. Gipave combines graphene with polymers extracted from carefully selected waste hard plastics, that would not normally be recycled.

How the council is supporting a circular approach

As a council we are bringing together people and organisations that care about Oxfordshire's habitats and species to develop a [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#). This will allow us to develop a shared ambition to recover nature across Oxfordshire.

We have also developed a Biodiversity Framework and Action Plan for our own estate that aligns with our circular economy ambitions. We will continue to support circular economy principles when carrying out our statutory duty to plan for mineral extraction and waste management as outlined in the [Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#) (see spotlight below). We will also continue to influence via our role within the planning process to recommend that circular approaches are adopted.

We are a [Good Food Oxfordshire Network](#) member, and contributor to the [Oxfordshire Food Strategy](#) which aims to improve Oxfordshire's food system and make it more sustainable, affordable and resilient. We are working towards achieving the Soil Association's 'Food for Life Accreditation' which champions local, fresh, healthy and sustainably sourced food for its primary school catering.

Our approach to fleet decarbonisation prioritises avoidance of emissions by rationalising the fleet, encouraging sharing of resources, and replacing fossil fuels with zero tailpipe emissions alternatives. Electric vehicles now make up 10% of our fleet and we have 44 charge points across 19 council sites.

Further actions the council will take:

- ✓ Implement the council's Biodiversity Framework and Action Plan.
- ✓ Support the delivery of the priorities and actions identified in the Oxfordshire LNRS.
- ✓ All applications for Oxfordshire County Council development submitted under Regulation 3⁹ from 1st January 2026 will contain measures to increase biodiversity by a minimum of 20%.
- ✓ Deliver on the objectives set out in the council's Air Quality Strategy (up to 2030).
- ✓ Continue to rationalise our fleet.
- ✓ Achieve the Soil Association's 'Food for Life Accreditation' for state-maintained primary school catering.

Spotlight On: Minerals and Waste



Our adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan enables circularity through:

- Encouraging the maximum practical recovery of aggregate from secondary and recycled materials for use in place of primary aggregate
- Ensuring provision is made for facilities to enable the production and/or supply of recycled and secondary aggregate
- Making provision for waste management capacity that allows Oxfordshire to aim to be net self-sufficient in meeting its own waste needs

⁹ Where a local authority is both the applicant and determining authority for a planning application relating to land they own or manage.

- Supporting initiatives that reduce the amount of waste produced and encourage the delivery of waste management facilities that drive waste up the waste hierarchy
- Promoting a biodiversity-led approach to restoration of minerals sites.

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4 Governance, Evaluation and Monitoring

This plan runs to 2030 in line with the Carbon Management Plan and Air Quality Strategy (see Action Plan overleaf) and will be monitored regularly to ensure progress is measured and the work is driven forward. Progress against relevant actions will be monitored by the Carbon Management board and reported in the Climate Action Programme report annually.

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A Circular Council Action Plan				
Theme	Objective	Action	Target Date	Delivery Stakeholders
Theme 1: Facilitate a culture shift within the organisation	Raise awareness of the circular economy with colleagues and supplier base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Add circular economy to existing training around climate i.e. mandatory climate action ✓ Add circular economy content to the Carbon Literacy Training modules 	End of 2025	Climate Action Team Learning and Development Team
	Provide a mandate for change by embedding circular principles into policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continue to incorporate circular economy principles into council policies 	Ongoing	Policy Team
	Embed circular economy into decision making processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continue to consider circular economy in decision making via Climate Impact Assessment tool ✓ Ensure circular principles are integral when implementing PAS 2080 (a global standard for assessing building and infrastructure whole life cycle carbon) across the organisation ✓ Ensure capital project processes and documentation incorporate circular economy e.g. options appraisal, prioritisation matrix, budget setting and governance process. 	Ongoing Ongoing End of 2025	Climate Action Team Capital Programmes Team

Theme 2: Use our purchasing power to enable circularity	Embed circular economy into procurement practices & processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implement revised guidance for colleagues around purchasing following circular principles. ✓ Explore leasing versus capital options. ✓ Put in place a local procurement framework for property works. 	TBC Mar 2027	Procurement Team Climate Action Team
	Set Circular Economy KPIs in major contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Set Circular Economy KPIs in major contracts and begin to measure outcomes. 	Ongoing until 2027 (based on contract refresh timescales)	Procurement Team Service Areas
Theme 3: Build on our record of Oxfordshire-wide waste prevention and high recycling rates	Meet waste prevention & recycling targets committed to with the ORWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Deliver on ORWP targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keep household waste growth to zero (per person per year). ○ Increase the amount of household waste we recycle to 70% by 2030. ✓ Participate in the EU Circle Up project & develop 25 case studies. ✓ Continue to support the Community Action Group network. 	April 2028 Dec 2027 Ongoing	Waste Strategy Team
Theme 4: Use the council's assets to drive efficiency,	Use the councils' assets to enable circularity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Embed circular economy principles into the re-development of Speedwell House and decommissioning of County Hall 	Spring 2027	Waste Strategy Team Property and Assets Team

reuse and repair		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explore the potential for green leases to be used in certain circumstances ✓ Explore reusing of materials and/or the use of materials with recycled content in minor property repairs 	TBC	
	Drive efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use new HWRC contract to drive reuse and repair and keep benefits local ✓ Continue to drive energy efficiency measures in line with our carbon management plan ✓ Increase our in-house recycling rate by 5% yearly from a baseline of 60%. 	Mar 2027 2030 Jan 2028	Waste Management Team Property and Assets Team
Theme 5: Agree circular economy metrics and established	To enable progress to be measured against targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Set up a working group to research and agree appropriate circular economy metrics ✓ Undertake a gap analysis to establish any additional data required and set up processes to record this data 	July 2026 July 2026	Climate Action Team
Theme 6: Pilot innovative materials or processes that	Demonstrate viability of circular products/practices to promote further uptake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop business cases for the reuse of materials, use of secondary materials and the use of innovative materials across our infrastructure teams ✓ Investigate building design for lifespan flexibility and disassembly 	TBC TBC	Highways Maintenance Team Transport Infrastructure Team

support circularity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop a circular economy assessment checklist which can be used to ensure that all opportunities for integrating circular economy principles are taken ✓ Continue to pilot the re-use of materials and use of innovative materials 	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>	Property and Assets teams
Theme 7: Regenerate nature, improve biodiversity and reduce pollution		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implement the council's Biodiversity Action Plan ✓ Support the delivery of the priorities and actions identified in the Oxfordshire LNRS ✓ All applications for Oxfordshire County Council development submitted under Regulation 3 from 1st January 2026 will contain measures to increase biodiversity by a minimum of 20% ✓ Deliver on the objectives set out in the council's Air Quality Strategy (up to 2030) ✓ Continue to rationalise and decarbonise our fleet ✓ Achieve the Soil Association's 'Food for Life Accreditation' for state maintained primary school catering. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Jan 2026</p> <p>2030</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Mar 2025</p>	<p>Biodiversity Team</p> <p>Minerals and Waste Policy Team</p> <p>Property and Assets Team</p> <p>Transport Policy and Strategy Team</p>



Oxfordshire County Council Equalities Impact Assessment

Oxfordshire County Council Circular Economy Plan

21 May 2025

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6 Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Economy and Place, Climate Action
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Circular Economy Plan
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	A new plan for OCC
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The principles of the circular economy in practice, mean using less resources and energy by creating and/or buying locally, extending the life of materials, maintaining and repairing items and reusing as much as possible.</p> <p>The plan sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work the council is already doing that supports a circular economy. • The further actions we will take to ensure circular principles are adopted and practised in-house. • How we can work within our sphere of influence to support the adoption of circularity across Oxfordshire. <p>It does not include actions for the wider county that are not within the council's remit.</p> <p>All of the possible impacts of implementing the Circular Economy Plan are positive. They are largely focused around a reduction in emissions and therefore associated risk regarding the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>There are also benefits from the use of the council's assets to bring circularity to communities at local hubs and libraries.</p>
Completed By	Aoife Dudley, Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Policy & Project Lead

Authorised By	Jamie Kavanagh, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities)
Date of Assessment	21 May 2025

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7 Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>Climate Action represents the number one priority for the council, which includes both climate mitigation (reducing carbon emissions) and climate adaptation (minimising the impacts of climate change). Circular economy is part of the mitigation strategy, supporting the council's goals to be greener, healthier and fairer.</p> <p>Designing out waste and keeping products and materials in circulation through processes such as maintenance, refurbishment, reuse, remanufacture, recycling and composting sits at the heart of the circular economy. This in turn reduces emissions, which will feed into the council's 2030 and 2050 emissions targets.</p> <p>The Circular Economy Plan has been co-developed with representatives from across the council, in order to ensure that circular economy practices can be embedded into business as usual across the organisation.</p> <p>The Circular Economy Plan is on the forward plan for Cabinet in July 2025.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The Circular Economy Plan outlines a range of actions which fit into a number of themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a culture shift within the organisation • Use our purchasing power to enable circularity • Build on our record of Oxfordshire-wide waste prevention and high recycling rates • Use the council's assets to drive efficiency, reuse and repair • Agree circular economy metrics and establish a baseline • Pilot innovative materials or processes that support circularity • Regenerate natural systems and reduce pollution <p>The proposal is for this Circular Economy Plan to be adopted, and circular economy principles to be embedded within all areas of OCC, from procurement to investment, delivery and maintenance, and across all of our assets.</p>

<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>A brief research paper was developed to imagine the future of a circular economy in Oxfordshire and understand the opportunities for different areas of the county. This was followed up with a paper for internal stakeholders outlining the process of developing a circular economy strategy in line with the council's priorities, presenting a range of policy options and giving further detail on three key pieces of work which would underpin the strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCC Circular Economy Action Plan • Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership Waste Prevention Strategy • Oxfordshire Circular Economy Route Map <p>As the global impacts of climate change escalate, reducing emissions from fossil fuels by transitioning to renewable energy and implementing energy efficiency measures is crucial. However, it is estimated that these energy related actions can only tackle 55% of emissions. We also need to urgently address the remaining 45% of emissions that are attributed to the way materials, products, and food are designed, produced and used.</p>
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>Due to the wide-ranging nature of the circular economy, and the need for action to reduce emissions, doing nothing is not considered a viable option.</p> <p>A circular economy approach could be implemented on a project-by-project basis, however this would likely result in key opportunities for maximising circularity being overlooked. The nature of circular economy principles mean that a whole systems approach is required, and the best way to ensure that all parts of the council are on board is to develop a plan that can be embedded into day-to-day service delivery.</p> <p>An Oxfordshire-wide plan has also been considered, however at the present time this piece of work cannot be progressed. This will be revisited in the future.</p>

8 Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

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Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	By implementing circular economy principles within the council, this will reduce the demand for additional resources and extraction of new or raw materials. This in turn will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions and environmental degradation. Over the long term, this will reduce the impacts of climate change compared to a do-nothing scenario, which will have a positive impact on older and younger residents in particular, as they are at higher risk from the impacts of extreme weather events associated with climate change.			

Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	By implementing circular economy principles within the council, this will reduce the demand for additional resources and extraction of new or raw materials. This in turn will lead to a reduction in carbon emission and environmental degradation. Over the long term, this will reduce the impacts of climate change compared to a do-nothing scenario, which will have a positive impact on disabled residents in particular, as they are at higher risk from the impacts of extreme weather events associated with climate change.			
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on people who are undergoing, or who have undergone, gender reassignment has been identified			

Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on people who are married or in a civil partnership has been identified			
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	By implementing circular economy principles within the council, this will reduce the demand for additional resources and extraction of new or raw materials. This in turn will lead to a reduction in carbon emission and environmental degradation. Over the long term, this will reduce the impacts of climate change compared to a do-nothing scenario, which will have a positive impact on pregnant residents in particular, as they are at higher risk from the impacts of extreme weather events associated with climate change.			

Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on people on people of different races has been identified			
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on people on people of different sexes has been identified			
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on people on people of different sexual orientation has been identified			
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on people on people of different religion or belief has been identified			

9 Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A key part of the Circular Economy Plan is the use of the council's assets e.g. community hubs and libraries to drive circular economy in practice, and to support the Community Action Group network. This will benefit rural communities as it will provide access to resources and services within the local area. Rural communities are also more at risk from the impacts of climate change due to their relative isolation, limited transport connections and the higher concentration of elderly residents. Over the long term, implementing circular economy principles will reduce emissions and			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				therefore the impacts of climate change compared to a do-nothing scenario. This will have a positive impact on rural communities by reducing the impacts of extreme weather events associated with climate change.			
Armed Forces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on the armed forces has been identified			
Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on people with caring responsibilities has been identified			
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A key part of the Circular Economy Plan is the use of the council's assets e.g. community hubs and libraries to drive circular economy in practice, and to support the Community Action Group network. This			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>will benefit deprived communities as it will provide access to resources and services within the local area. Deprived communities are also more at risk from the impacts of climate change due having fewer resources to allow for adaptation and the mitigation of the impacts of extreme weather. Over the long term, implementing circular economy principles will reduce emissions and therefore the impacts of climate change compared to a do-nothing scenario. This will have a positive impact on areas of deprivation by reducing the impacts of extreme weather events associated with climate change.</p>			

10 Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Embedding circular economy principles will improve efficiency and reduce waste of all kinds, improving productivity. The plan is also likely to reduce costs in the long term by looking for opportunities for sharing and collaboration of assets and processes between teams. The improvements to the environment, including the re-development of Speedwell House, will also benefit staff.			
Other Council Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Embedding circular economy principles will improve efficiency and reduce waste of all kinds, making services easier to navigate and improving			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				productivity. The plan is also likely to reduce costs in the long term by looking for opportunities for sharing and collaboration of assets and processes between services.			
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The implementation of circular economy principles will encourage our suppliers to reduce waste, adopt innovative materials and processes and reduce their emissions accordingly.</p> <p>Short term need to invest in new or reusable equipment, accreditation, and expertise which will temporarily increase costs.</p>	<p>The increase in costs are time limited.</p> <p>Lead time so suppliers have time to prepare Tendering</p>		

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Social Value ¹⁰	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are clear positive social value implications of encouraging circular economy principles within the local community through the use of the council's assets to drive reuse and repair. The Circular Economy Plan also has an objective to regenerate natural systems and reduce pollution which will improve the local environment for use by people across Oxfordshire and encourage better public health outcomes.			

¹⁰ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

11 Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	21 May 2026
Person Responsible for Review	Aoife Dudley
Authorised By	Sarah Gilbert