OXFORDSHIRE CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK

For a greener, fairer, healthier Oxfordshire

2026 - 2030

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Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, I am proud to introduce Oxfordshire County Council's Climate Action Framework 2026 - 2030. This framework sets out our renewed commitment to a greener, fairer, and healthier Oxfordshire – one where climate action is at the heart of our ambitions for people and nature.

Oxfordshire faces the realities of the climate and ecological emergencies: more frequent flooding, heatwaves, and other risks that threaten our communities and environment. These risks are experienced unequally across the county, as a result of economic and social inequality. Yet, our county is also a place of innovation, collaboration, and resilience. Over recent years, we have led the way nationally – recognised as the top-performing county council in the Climate Emergency UK Council Climate Action Scorecard for two years running – and have shown what is possible when local government, communities, and partners work together.

This framework is more than a plan to reduce emissions: it is a plan for wider change. It aims to improve health and wellbeing, create new economic opportunities, and restore our natural spaces. By integrating climate, nature, and people – and putting our values of fairness, resilience and empowerment at the heart of climate action – we can deliver benefits that reach every resident. This means lower energy bills, cleaner air, thriving wildlife, and stronger local economies. We are committed to ensuring that the transition to net zero is inclusive, so that no one is left behind.

The transition is already underway. The challenge is to shape it in favour of greater speed and fairness, which requires bold leadership and systemic change. Oxfordshire County Council will continue to champion evidence-based decisions, invest in green skills and jobs, and foster partnerships that drive innovation. We invite everyone – residents, businesses and visitors – to join us in shaping a sustainable future.

Together, we can build an Oxfordshire that is reducing its impact on the climate, is prepared for the impacts of climate change and leads the way in environmental stewardship. Let's seize this opportunity to create a legacy of hope, action, and shared prosperity for generations to come.

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

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Glossary

Advanced manufacturing	Production using cutting-edge technologies like automation and data analytics to improve efficiency and sustainability
Biodiversity net gain	Ensuring development projects result in a measurable improvement in biodiversity compared to the original state
Carbon budget	The total amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted while staying within a specific climate target, such as limiting warming to 1.5°C
Carbon neutral	State where the greenhouse gas emissions emitted by an entity's direct activities (and possibly Scope 3 indirect emissions) are balanced by an equivalent amount being removed or offset
Circular economy	An economic model that designs out waste by keeping materials in use through reuse, repair, and recycling
Cleantech	Environmentally friendly technologies that reduce pollution and improve energy efficiency
Consumption emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions that are associated with the production and consumption of goods and service within an area, regardless of where in the world they are produced
Doughnut Economics	A framework that balances meeting human needs with respecting ecological boundaries
Energy Performance Certificate	A rating that shows how energy-efficient a building is, with advice on improvements
Global majority	Inclusive term for people from regions that make up most of the world's population, such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America
Greenhouse Gases	Gases like carbon dioxide and methane that trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to climate change
Gross Domestic Product	The total value of goods and services produced in a country, used to measure economic activity
Gross Value Added	A measure of economic output showing the contribution of industries or regions to the economy
Household Waste Recycling Centre	A site where residents can recycle or dispose of household items not collected at the kerbside
Nature-based solutions	Actions that use natural systems to tackle environmental challenges like flooding, climate change, and biodiversity loss
Nature finance	Using money to help protect and take care of nature in ways that also support people and the planet
Net zero	State where greenhouse gas emissions emitted by an entity including supply chain (scope 1-3) have been reduced as much as possible and any residual emissions neutralised by an equivalent amount being removed from the atmosphere

Offsetting	Compensating for emissions created during one activity, by investing in activities that reduce or remove an equivalent amount of emissions. This is often achieved through a credit system, such as carbon credits
PAS 2080	PAS 2080 is a built environment industry standard which specifies the requirements for the management of whole-life carbon in buildings and infrastructure
Retrofit	Upgrading existing buildings or infrastructure to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
Science-based target	A climate goal aligned with scientific evidence to help limit global warming, often verified by the Science Based Target Initiative
Scope 3 emissions	Emissions that are not produced by an organisation directly, but those that are indirectly generated through its supply chain, for example by the manufacture, transport and disposal of products
Solar PV	Technology that converts sunlight into electricity using solar panels
Territorial emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions that occur from activities carried out within the boundary of an area (such as Oxfordshire)

Acronyms

ACES	Action on Carbon and Energy in Schools
CAG Oxfordshire	Community Action Groups Oxfordshire
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HWRC	Household Waste Recycling Centre
LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
LED	Light Emitting Diode
LGR	Local Government Reorganisation
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LTCP	Local Transport Connectivity Plan
OCC	Oxfordshire County Council
OLNP	Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership
OxLAEP	Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plan
PaZCO	Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire
PV	Photovoltaic
ZCOP	Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership

Executive Summary

Overview

Climate change remains a critical international, national and local priority. Oxfordshire has progressed substantially in reducing emissions and mobilising climate action, yet evidence shows that the scale and pace of activity must accelerate to meet net zero commitments. This framework sets out an evidence-led, countywide approach to advance mitigation, adaptation, nature recovery and a circular economy. It builds on and replaces the 2020 Climate Action Framework, and aligns with county and district targets, and national policy direction.

Evidence and Need for Action

Supported by local programmes and national grid decarbonisation, territorial emissions in Oxfordshire continue to fall. Oxfordshire County Council has reduced operational emissions by 72% since 2010/11. Transport accounts for 40% of remaining territorial emissions, and domestic buildings around 22%. Intensifying climate impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. To address such challenges, the framework synthesises updated evidence on emissions, risks, infrastructure gaps and the enabling conditions for a fair transition. It adopts a systemwide approach that links climate objectives to public health, economic prosperity, resilience and social equity.

Key Findings

- Socioeconomic inequalities shape exposure to climate risk and access to climate action benefits. A fair transition requires a targeted, inclusive approach.
- A growing green economy is a key opportunity for Oxfordshire's residents, unlocking employment by capitalising on sector growth and green skills.
- The built environment requires change in scale and coordination of energy efficiency, retrofit and low carbon heat, aligning new development with net zero.
- Transport emissions will only reduce at the necessary pace through demand reduction, modal shift, and rapid electrification.
- Large increases in renewable generation, storage and flexibility are essential. Local Area Energy Planning will be a critical guide to infrastructure investment.
- Delivering a circular economy - reducing waste and improving resource efficiency - is critical, through improved infrastructure, education and behaviour change.
- Oxfordshire's ecosystems provide carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and water management. Nature recovery requires coordinated restoration and protection.
- Council operations remain a significant lever for change, particularly through procurement, policy-making, fleet decarbonisation and carbon literacy.

Next Steps

Immediate priorities include establishing governance, developing an action plan, ensuring fairness in early decisions, and preparing for Local Area Energy Planning, spatial updates, and next stage investment. Delivery of the Framework depends on strong collaboration across local authorities, communities, institutions, businesses and national government to support delivery. To support this, the Framework recommends a coordinated approach, including shared evidence bases, pooled resources, consistent messaging, and cross authority governance. Monitoring, evaluation, and review will ensure actions remain responsive.

1. Introduction

In 2020, we (Oxfordshire County Council) launched our first Climate Action Framework, pledging to become carbon neutral by 2030 and achieve a net zero Oxfordshire as soon as possible in the 2040s.

Climate action is not just about reducing our greenhouse gas emissions; by transitioning to a more sustainable way of doing things we can also deliver better health and wellbeing, new economic opportunities, lower cost of living and access to nature among many other benefits. Putting fairness firmly at the heart of this transition ensures that these benefits will be felt across our society and help reduce inequality. According to research by PriceWaterhouseCoopers taking a bespoke, place-based approach to climate action in Oxfordshire means we could deliver these outcomes at a third of the cost, with three times the wider social benefits compared to a nationally uniform, top-down approach.

Over the last five years we have made significant progress. We have prioritised collaborative working on climate action to deliver positive change within our own organisation and across Oxfordshire. We have demonstrated strong leadership, being rated the top performing county council for climate action nationally by Climate Emergency UK in 2023 and 2025. This revised framework celebrates and reflects our work to date, and sets our vision for future work in this area.

Despite this success, there is still significant work to do. We need to act decisively to reduce Oxfordshire's contribution to the climate crisis and mitigate the local impacts. Climate change is already happening right now in Oxfordshire with flooding, droughts, heatwaves and other climate-related threats being more frequent and intense. These hazards are adversely impacting people's health and livelihoods. We need to prepare for these climate impacts and ensure the long-term safeguarding of our communities – especially those who find it hardest to adapt.

We are also approaching a period of change for local government in England. Currently, Oxfordshire is part of a two-tier system, with the county council as the tier one authority, and the five district and city councils as tier two authorities. Tier one and two authorities have different responsibilities and spheres of influence. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution will reshape this system, and change the delivery of climate action at a local level. From May 2028, LGR will result in one or more unitary councils with responsibilities across housing, transport and energy systems. Devolution will enable further devolved powers to a mayoral authority. This framework straddles this period of transition, aiming to provide a clear thread on climate action from the current system to the new structure.

This document replaces the 2020 Climate Action Framework, and pulls together our work on the climate crisis, nature, adapting to the impacts of climate change, and waste management. These themes are intrinsically linked, and an integrated approach which puts fairness at its heart is crucial to achieve the very best outcomes for our environment and people.

2. Vision for the Future

Greener: In 2030, Oxfordshire will be a leader in climate action, resilience and nature recovery. We will have reached our 2030 council target, supported by a high-integrity offsetting strategy, and be on track for a net zero county as soon as possible in the 2040s. By using resources more sustainably and prioritising reuse, repair, and recycling, Oxfordshire will significantly reduce waste and support a circular economy. Communities will be better able to manage the impacts of severe weather, and biodiversity will flourish through coordinated nature recovery and community-led green space stewardship.

Fairer: In 2030, Oxfordshire will be a place where climate action builds shared prosperity and empowers residents, supporting them to use their voice and accounting for their differing needs and experiences. There will be growth in training and support for people to participate in the green economy. Investment in climate action will be better aligned with community wealth building to ensure that the benefits stay local. Work will be taking place to support availability of affordable, low carbon transport and energy-efficient homes, particularly for low income households, and the most vulnerable people in society will be resilient against the impacts of climate change. Climate action will be shaped by active public participation, strong local partnerships and a focus on future generations.

Healthier: In 2030, Oxfordshire will be a county where people and nature thrive. Walking, wheeling and cycling will be a widely adopted choice for everyday journeys. Clean air, comfortable, energy efficient homes, green spaces, and community volunteering will boost mental and physical wellbeing. Our built and natural environments will promote healthier lifestyles, reduce health inequalities, and create opportunities for everyone to live well in a changing climate.

3. Oxfordshire's Climate Story

Our Natural Spaces

Oxfordshire is rich in green landscapes, including the Cotswolds, Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes. Our green spaces play a crucial role in storing carbon, supporting biodiversity and reducing the risks from extreme weather. They make Oxfordshire a place that is attractive to live, visit and invest in. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) aims to make our natural environment more resilient by identifying key habitats and improving their connectivity.

Our Green Economy

The shift to a green economy brings opportunity to Oxfordshire. We are seeking to build community ownership and finance models, attract private investment, and create skilled opportunities such as retrofit of our building stock. Our cleantech clusters in are developing technologies for the future, and networks like Oxfordshire Greentech and new market-making arrivals including the Ellison Institute for Technology put Oxfordshire at the heart of the UK's response to the climate crisis.

Our Universities

Boasting two outstanding universities, Oxfordshire leads the way in research and innovation across climate science, policy and governance, healthcare, technology and more.

Our Networks

Oxfordshire is a county of collaboration, driven by a network of organisations. Through the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership, the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership, Low Carbon Hub, Good Food Oxfordshire, our business communities, healthcare and waste partnerships, we progress climate action in all sectors and deliver the benefits across the county.

Our Communities

Community climate action is central to our response to the climate crisis in Oxfordshire. The Community Action Groups (CAG) Oxfordshire network brings together over one hundred grassroots organisations, covering environmental topics from waste reduction to nature recovery. Working together locally helps ensure that climate action in Oxfordshire is inclusive and community focused.

Our Leadership

Oxfordshire is a leader in climate action. Our councils work together to push boundaries for our people and our planet. We came top on the Climate Scorecard for county councils in England, and we continue to lead with new policies and programmes to support fast and fair climate action.

3.1: Progress in Oxfordshire Since 2020

General

- 9% reduction in greenhouse gases per capita between 2020 and 2023 (latest data)

Our own estate

- Replaced over 60,000 streetlights with LEDs, cutting costs and emissions by over 70% compared to 2010
- Secured more than £5m in central government grants to remove fossil fuelled heating systems in over 50 council buildings
- We generated 231,840 kWh of electricity from solar panels on our estate in 2024/25 – equivalent to powering around 85 homes for a year

Transport

- £32.8m ZEBRA funding from the government providing 159 new electric buses in Oxford
- Installed 118 EV charge points per 100,000 population in Oxfordshire, compared to 109 per 100,000 across the rest of the South East

Waste

- Best County Council Household Waste Disposal Authority in England for 11 years

Nature

- Our Local Nature Recovery Strategy has identified 85 Biodiversity Priority actions and 63 bespoke species actions to support Oxfordshire's local ecosystems.

Home Retrofit

- We have been awarded £11.4m funding for domestic retrofit since 2021
- We have completed retrofit projects on 627 low income homes since 2021
- 18% reduction in emissions from domestic buildings in the county
- Supported innovative projects such as Clean Heat Streets and our multi-award winning Energy Saver App

Green Economy

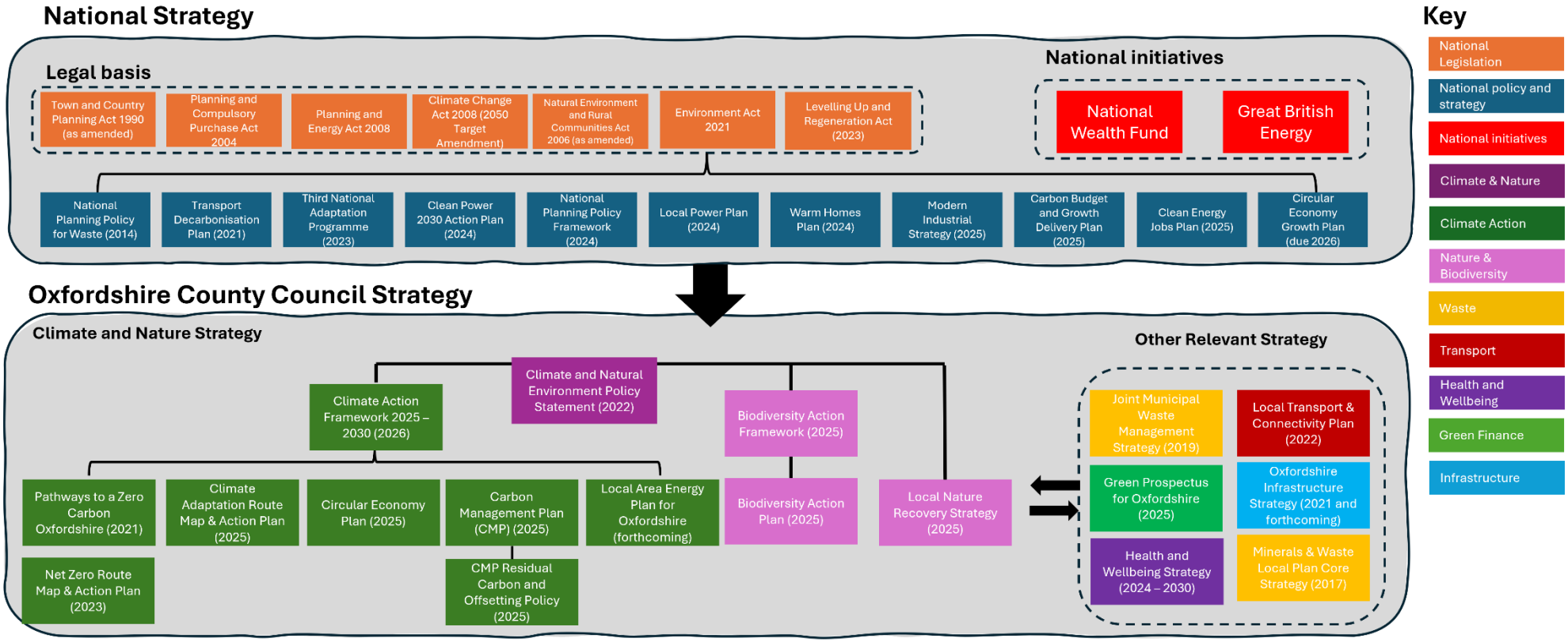
- We launched a green prospectus to deliver over £46m investment in green construction and nature recovery projects

Communities

- The Community Action Group Oxfordshire network ran more than 8,000 events in 2024, reaching over 120,000 participants and generating over £6m of funding and income
- We offer support to town and parish councils, with 40% of councils having delivered a Community Emergency Plan

4. Policy Context

Through our local approach, we are playing our role in delivering against national strategies to reduce emissions, restore nature, support inclusive economic growth and increase resilience against the impact of climate change. This diagram summarises our key policies and strategies that are relevant to climate action.



Our Partners

- District & City Councils
- Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership
- Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership
- Oxfordshire Resources & Waste Partnership
- Enterprise Oxfordshire
- Community Action Groups Oxfordshire Network
- Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership

5. Our Role in Climate Action

Achieving the UK's 2050 net zero target requires collaboration between national, regional and local authorities to tackle the emissions within their control, influence the emissions outside of their control, and ensure that the transition to a green economy is fair. National government is critical in setting strong policy signals and providing the financing context to enable net zero.

Local authorities are uniquely placed to understand communities, drive delivery and bring people together at a local level.

In Oxfordshire the public sector was responsible for approximately 4% of emissions in 2023. While this is a small proportion, the council can deliver wider emissions savings and other valuable benefits by using our buying power, convening power and influence to deliver local and national action. The Climate Change Committee estimates that local authorities can influence around a third of local area emissions through planning, transport policy, waste and other services. Our work brings together the needs of the climate, nature, and people, which are all strongly interlinked, to implement solutions which restore natural systems, build resilience, and accelerate the transition to a fairer, low carbon future.

Local authorities also play a vital role in adapting to the impacts of climate breakdown. From supporting resilient and inclusive local economic growth, to supporting the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents, local action to mitigate the impacts of climate change across Oxfordshire is essential. We take a holistic climate-people-nature approach to tackling the climate crisis and improving our natural environment, as set out in Figure 1.

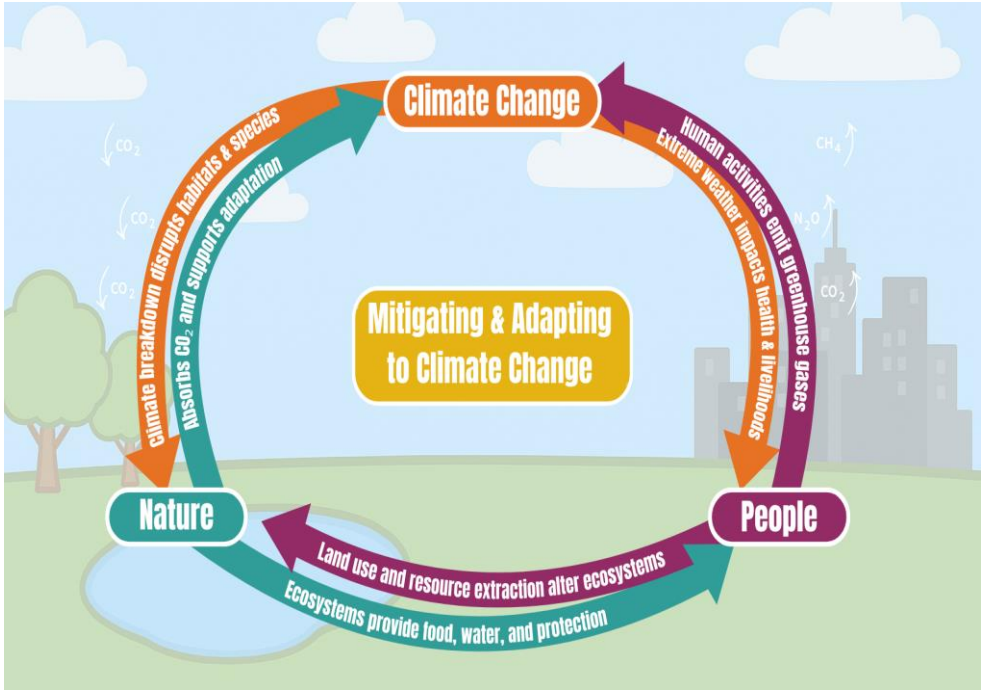


Figure 1: The relationship between climate, people and nature

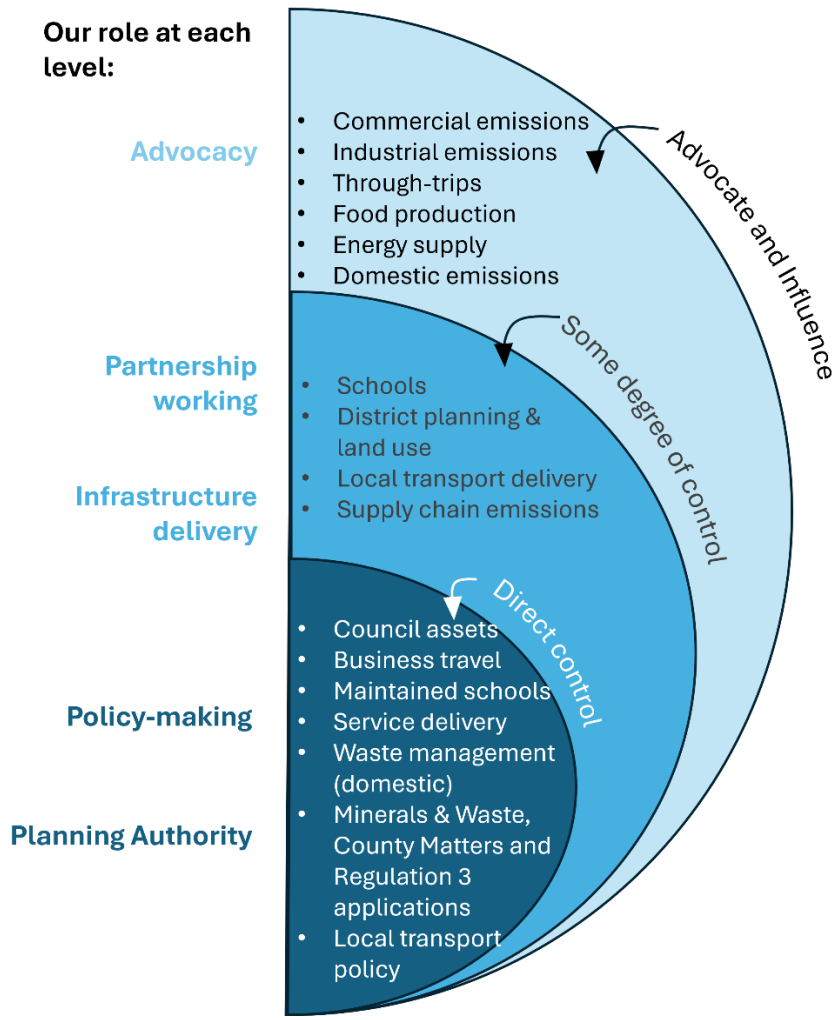


Figure 2: Areas within our control and sphere of influence

The county council sits at the centre of many systems and networks, and we will use our position to drive action at a county and regional scale, leveraging investment to maximise the impact of our climate action programme. We will prioritise equity, efficiency and value for money through our work, including our home retrofit programme, our Local Area Energy Plan, the transition to zero emission transport, strategic planning at scale and our nature recovery and biodiversity programmes.

There are several ways that we can directly and indirectly have an impact on the emissions which are causing climate change, as shown in Figure 2. This includes our advocacy work – we are active members of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy Planning and Transport (ADEPT), UK100 network, and the Local Government Association Sustainability Action Network, and use our influence through these organisations to push for change in national policy and practice in climate action.

We recognise the importance of partnership working for ensuring a holistic approach to climate action. We will continue to work with key organisations to reduce emissions from different sectors and ensure they are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Spotlight on: Partnership Working

The Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership (ZCOP), hosted by Oxford City Council, exemplifies the power of collaborative working to accelerate climate action at scale. Originally established as a city-wide partnership to unite stakeholders across Oxford, it has expanded to countywide membership and brings together key organisations including local authorities, universities, NHS trusts, and businesses, to coordinate efforts toward net zero.

Through its Sprint Groups, ZCOP allows organisations to pool their knowledge and experience on specific issues such as retrofit (both residential and non-residential), adaptation, green skills, industrial decarbonisation and sustainable commuting.

6. Where Are We Now?

We have been making progress in the delivery of our climate action programme since the previous framework was introduced in 2020, reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the likelihood of more extreme weather events across the county. The county's territorial emissions have continued to fall, in part driven by the decarbonisation of electricity from the grid. Transport emissions however have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic and stayed relatively steady in recent years.

Oxfordshire has higher territorial emissions per person (per capita) than the south east region and the England average (Figure 3). This is partly because Oxfordshire is a rural county, which means that people often rely on private vehicles to move around and our relative wealth drives higher-carbon lifestyles. Oxfordshire also hosts many A-roads and motorways which carry both local and through-traffic, the emissions from vehicles on these roads included in the per capita calculation. However, emissions are falling at a slightly faster rate than the rest of England which could be attributed to the higher-than-average uptake of low carbon technologies in the county, such as electric vehicles. The reduction in total emissions over this same period (Figure 4) demonstrates that an increase in population alone has not driven the reduction in per capita emissions.

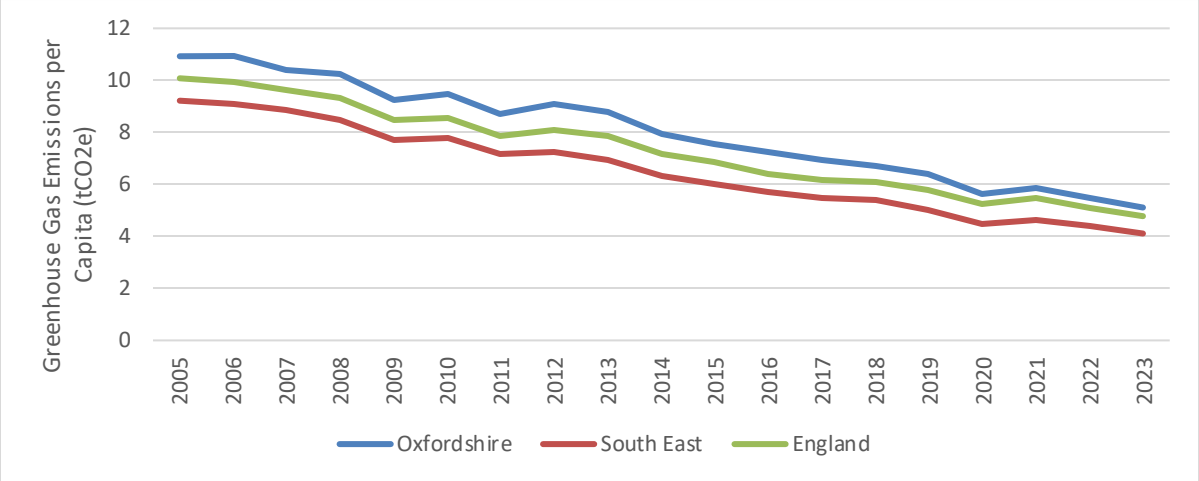


Figure 3: Greenhouse gas emissions per capita in Oxfordshire, the South East and England from 2005 to 2023

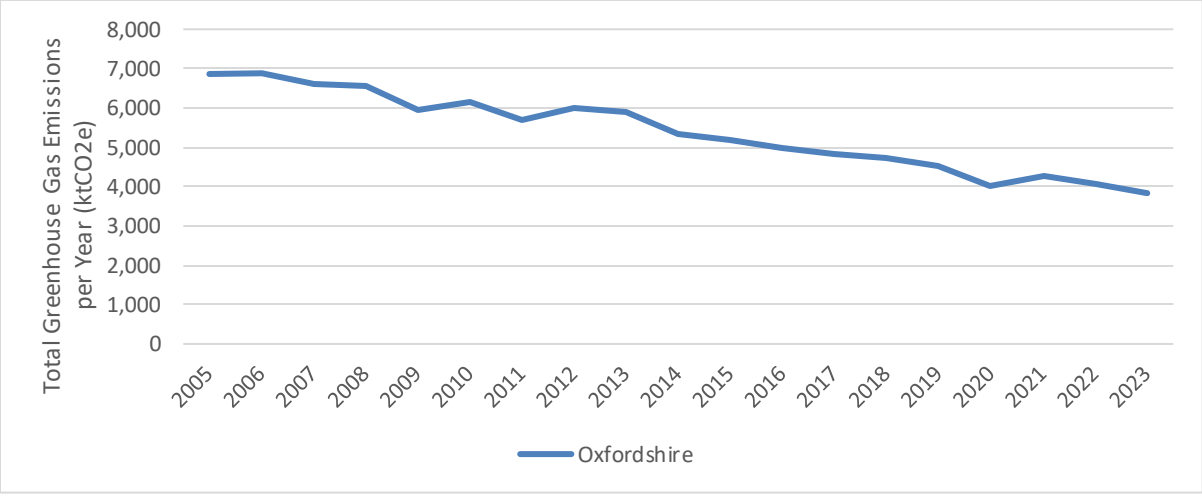


Figure 4: Total greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire from 2005 to 2023

The most recent data from the Government's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero shows that transport is responsible for the majority of territorial emissions in Oxfordshire (40%), followed by domestic sources such as home heating and energy use

(22%) (Figure 5). This demonstrates the importance of continuing to focus on providing sustainable transport options, such as public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling and home retrofit programmes.

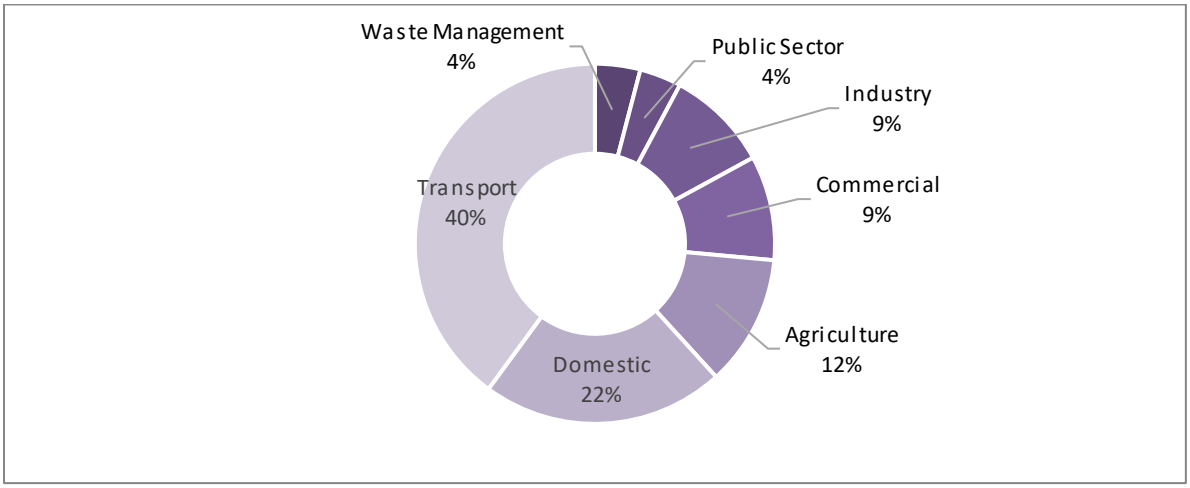


Figure 5: Proportion of greenhouse gas emissions by sector (2023)

It is important to note that these emissions data only reflect emissions inside Oxfordshire's boundary; consumption emissions (emissions from goods and services consumed in Oxfordshire but produced outside the county's boundaries) are equally important but harder to track. This is where reducing supply chain emissions, managing infrastructure carbon and moving to a circular economy are crucial. Consumption emissions are available at a county level through the Local Authority Consumption Accounts.

Since 2020, the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) has been published with the associated Route Map and Action Plan. These documents form the evidence base for our work and inform our approach to becoming a net zero county as soon as possible in the 2040s. The Route Map and Action Plan set out milestones across different sectors along the path to 2050. They also tell us the maximum amount of carbon dioxide we can emit within each five-year period between now and 2050 to stay within our 'carbon budget'. By 2023 we had emitted 61% of our 2021 – 2025 carbon budget, but the rate of emissions reduction indicates we will be able to stay within budget by the end of this period. Meeting future carbon budgets will be more challenging as we tackle areas such as transport and industry which are harder to decarbonise. How we deliver this decarbonisation trajectory is also important, as we aim to support a fair transition, rather than one which further entrenches inequality in the county.

Economic growth in the county has continued despite reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (Figure 6). This shows that we can continue to take action to reduce our impact on the climate while maintaining and improving economic opportunities for people living and working in Oxfordshire, driving inclusive economic growth. However, much of this decoupling of growth and emissions has been driven by decarbonisation of the national grid; as the government delivers on the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, further emissions reductions must come from changes to national and local policy. We must work proactively to prevent a slowdown in progress, while acknowledging that Oxfordshire will be the focus of much economic growth in the coming years. We will look to grow our green economy and provide opportunities for people to learn new skills and join new green industries as they appear.

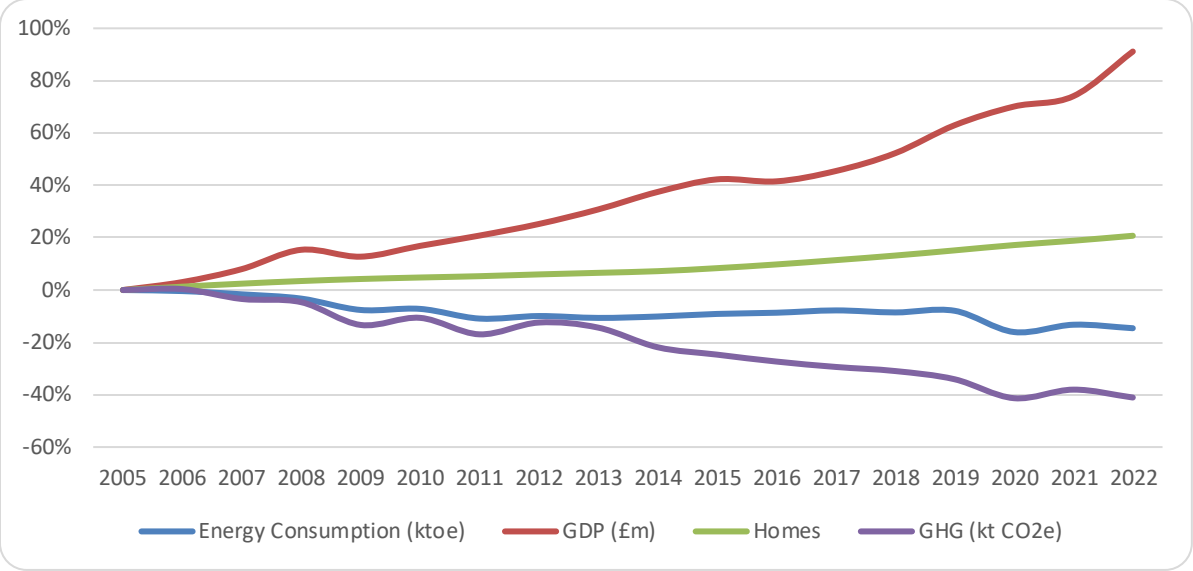


Figure 6: Relative changes in energy consumption, GDP, number of dwelling and GHG emissions in Oxfordshire, 2005 – 2022

There is also a strong link between economic resilience and preparing for extreme weather events. We commissioned research into climate vulnerability in the county, the impact of a changing climate on health, and the likelihood of extreme weather events impacting Oxfordshire in the future. The impacts of climate change could reduce Oxfordshire's economic output by up to 6.5% in the 2070s if no steps are taken to become more resilient. In order to manage these risks, and the risks to health and wellbeing from a changing climate such as flooding, heatwaves, water shortages and food insecurity, we led the development of a Climate Change Adaptation Route Map for Oxfordshire. This outlines the activities needed to ensure that Oxfordshire can better manage, prepare for and respond to severe weather events.

7. Climate Action Principles

The principles guiding our work on climate action:

Evidence-based decisions

- We hold ourselves to account and take an open, smart approach to data gathering and sharing.
- We use this data to support our decision making and investment.
- We share and learn from best practice to demonstrate national and global leadership.

Maximising the benefits for Oxfordshire

- We consider climate in every health policy and health in every climate policy, creating healthy sustainable places and communities
- We increase access to nature and green spaces where people live.
- We work with Enterprise Oxfordshire to develop the green and circular economies and support the growth of low carbon jobs.
- We support communities to own and benefit from energy projects and retain the benefits locally.

An inclusive and fair transition

- We support all communities and businesses to have a say in decision-making and participate in climate action.
- We ensure that responsibilities, costs and benefits are fairly shared.
- We seek to reduce inequality through climate action.

Communities & partnerships

- We encourage everyone to participate; our staff, communities, suppliers, businesses, partners and national government.
- We convene partnerships to drive action in industry, transport, planning, healthcare and more.
- We support and learn from our community groups.

Research & innovation

- We advocate for evidence-led climate action across local government.
- We look for opportunities to adopt new technologies on our estate.
- We partner with research institutions to constantly improve our understanding of effective climate action and solutions.

8. A Fair Transition to a Greener, Healthier Future in Oxfordshire

The climate crisis affects everyone, but not equally. Some communities face greater risks and are often overlooked in climate solutions. Women, children, older people, those with disabilities, low-income households, and people of colour experience the impacts of climate change more severely.

Oxfordshire has significant social and economic inequalities:

- Two locations in Blackbird Leys (Oxford City) are in the 10% most deprived areas in England.
- One in five children live in poverty.
- Nearly 100,000 residents have a disability.
- Average house prices are ten times local earnings.
- Thousands lack reliable broadband.

As a Marmot Place, Oxfordshire is committed to tackling inequalities and improving health fairness in the county. We will ensure climate action is also fair: how we deliver projects, communicate, involve communities, and share benefits and resources matters.

By designing climate programmes that improve access to jobs and education, health and wellbeing, safe and comfortable homes, and sustainable transport, we can make the transition to a green future fair for all.

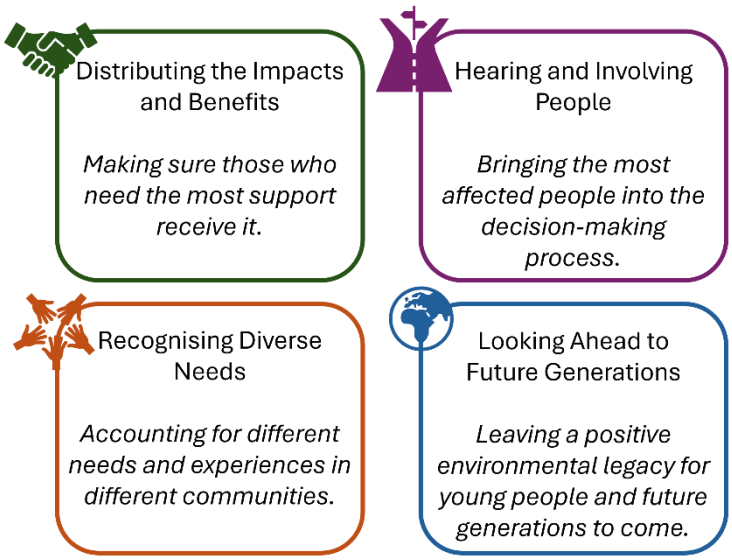


Figure 7: Four pillars of a fair transition

To guide this work, we have identified four pillars for embedding climate equity in decision-making through our Climate Action Framework (Figure 7).

Spotlight on: Oxfordshire's Transport Citizens' Assembly

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

In 2025, Oxfordshire County Council ran its first Citizens' Assembly on travel and transport, which brought together a representative sample of 34 residents to discuss the question: *'What steps do we need to take so Oxfordshire's transport system enables our county's health, economy, and environment to thrive in 2050?'*

Participants heard from 40 experts covering a wide range of perspectives and information, and their final recommendations were discussed by Cabinet. The recommendations included reducing emission and congestion in central Oxford, standardised ticketing across bus companies, better information about travel choices, and the vision for sustainable travel in Oxfordshire.

The Citizens' Assembly results have informed subsequent schemes, such as the MyBus Oxfordshire ticket, which offers daily or weekly travel around the county, covering most routes and operators at a fixed price.

9. Enabling a Green Economy

Transitioning to an inclusive green economy means moving to a model where economic activity enhances the natural environment, and improves public health and wellbeing, while generating and sharing economic benefits. Climate change impacts – rising temperatures, extreme weather, and infrastructure damage – pose risks to residents, the workforce and our economy. Building climate resilience and providing access to new skills, jobs and community ownership of assets like renewable energy generation, is essential for inclusive, sustainable growth.

Oxfordshire can capitalise on its strengths in six of the eight knowledge intensive sectors highlighted in the Modern Industrial Strategy, including advanced manufacturing and cleantech, by supporting green skills training and access to new opportunities. Enterprise Oxfordshire has responded to the emerging skills gaps through a £1.7 million Green Skills Bootcamp. Courses in e-bike maintenance and heat pump installation have enabled residents to access new opportunities in the growing green economy, and the Oxfordshire Skills Hub has complemented this with the creation of employer films for Green Careers Week 2024, an event for teachers focused on the space sector's impact on sustainability and environmental issues, and workplace visits and employer encounters with businesses that are focused on green skills.

We are addressing inequality through a community wealth building project, working with the local community enterprise sector to place economic control in the hands of local people. This helps ensure that environmental transformation is equitable and locally beneficial. We also wish to support our community energy sector to bring about greater shared ownership of renewable generation. In December 2024 we issued £500,000 in green bonds to decarbonise public buildings and support tree planting projects across the county, demonstrating how innovation and community investment can drive environmental and social progress.

Together, these actions reflect Oxfordshire's commitment to a green economy that is inclusive, resilient, and future-ready; where environmental ambition is matched by economic opportunity and community empowerment.

9.1: Key Statistics

- Failing to adapt to the impacts of climate change could reduce Oxfordshire's Gross Value Added to the UK by up to £1.8bn per year in the 2050s.
- The Local Government Association estimates that over 15,000 green jobs will be required in Oxfordshire by 2050, mostly in low emissions vehicles, infrastructure, and low carbon electricity.
- According to PaZCO, £3.4bn investment is required to deliver the net zero transition in Oxfordshire between 2021 and 2030.
- There are currently 727 clean energy businesses in the county, 150 of which have high-growth potential.

Spotlight on: Oxfordshire Green Futures

oxon Green Futures
Powering net zero, restoring nature, leading the transition

We have developed a digital prospectus to showcase investment-ready nature and net zero projects in Oxfordshire. It aims to encourage investors to engage with opportunities in the county which provide a financial return while also enabling us to achieve our climate mitigation and adaptation targets. The prospectus is currently promoting over £46m of investment opportunities across nature recovery, green construction and renewable generation.

9.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Accelerate green skills development through dedicated education and training programmes to support the just transition	
Empowering residents and businesses to lead and benefit from the low carbon transition by creating accessible pathways into green careers.	• Lead a £2m programme for residents focused on developing solar and electric vehicle skills. • Enterprise Oxfordshire Careers Hub will be running one day work experience opportunities focused on green skills.
Priority 2: Target inward investment into green projects to deliver local benefits	
Place-based investment in low carbon, nature-positive initiatives can attract capital by engaging stakeholders to accelerate net zero and benefit communities and nature.	• Continue to bring stakeholders together through the 100 Together programme. • Seek development funding for a pipeline of net zero and nature recovery projects in Oxfordshire. • In partnership with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (OLNP), aim to leverage private finance to support nature recovery and LNRS delivery (see Chpt 13). • Explore inclusive models of ownership and benefits from renewable energy schemes (see Chpt 12, Priority 3).
Priority 3: Support and engage our networks to drive innovation in the green economy	
Supporting the low carbon economy by fostering innovation and collaboration will position Oxfordshire as a hub for climate-positive technologies and business models.	• Continue to support Oxfordshire Greentech through membership and sponsorship of their annual conference, and their work with Cambridge Cleantech. • Work with Innovate Oxfordshire to encourage growth of the low carbon sector in Oxfordshire.
Priority 4: Embed holistic, systems-level thinking into decision-making to ensure climate action supports a thriving, inclusive local economy	
Embedding systems-level thinking into our processes will ensure that our climate action contributes to a thriving and inclusive local economy.	• Develop a tool which provides a practical way of assessing the impact of our activities and plans on economic, environmental and social boundaries.

9.3: Benefits of our actions

10. Built Environment

Our homes and buildings are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Significant growth is expected across Oxfordshire over the coming years, and new development must be delivered sustainably. This includes using low carbon materials, heating, shading and insulation to be resilient to climate change and reduce lifetime emissions and energy costs. Oxfordshire councils have pushed the boundaries of planning policy for climate change such as Salt Cross Garden Village in West Oxfordshire and progressive Energy Use Intensity targets in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

The Planning and Infrastructure Act (2025) places a duty on relevant authorities to prepare Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) alongside local plans. This will provide a new lever to bring together planning for housing, transport and infrastructure in a holistic manner, allowing for the delivery of climate change, health and sustainability outcomes at scale. In areas without a combined authority in place, the relevant authority will be either the unitary authority, or in the case of two tier areas, the county council.

New net zero buildings alone are not enough. Additional financing will be needed to support energy efficiency in homes. We have delivered government-funded programmes like the Home Upgrade Grant 2 and Heat Pump Ready, targeting low-income households with poor EPC ratings. We have also partnered with Cosy Homes Oxfordshire and the Low Carbon Hub to create resources that help residents upgrade their homes and switch to low carbon heating.

The design of the built environment will shape community and economic resilience and wellbeing. Buildings will need to be warmer in the winter and cooler in the hotter summer months. As partners on the National Hub on Net Zero, Health and extreme Heat (HEARTH) project, we aim to realise the health benefits of the net zero transition and the reduction in health risks associated with extreme heat for vulnerable communities. For example, communities in Blackbird Leys are at highest risk of overheating in Oxfordshire due to the volume of concrete and lack of shade in their local area, but are also in the 10% most deprived areas of England. In response, we are proposing to install cooling equipment in Blackbird Leys library to provide a cool space for residents in the summer.

To support sustainable development, an updated Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy has been commissioned, identifying challenges such as energy capacity, gaps in sustainable transport, lack of green space and rising flood risk. We will continue to work with partners, including schools and care homes, to improve the wider built environment across Oxfordshire.

10.1: Key Statistics

- We have installed solar panel units with battery storage on 306 owner-occupied domestic buildings through the Energy Saver App project.
- In 2023, housing alone accounted for 22% of total emissions in Oxfordshire.
- In order meet our net zero targets, 80% of new developments will need to have heat pumps and 100% of existing properties will need to be EPC B minimum.

Spotlight on: Energy Saver App

ENERGY SAVER APP

In July 2024 we launched our Energy Saver App, funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, which encourages energy efficient behaviour and gives access to energy data for residents across Oxfordshire with a smart meter. The app reached almost 10,000 downloads, and 306 homes in Oxfordshire received solar and battery technology, trialling a new subscription model. Extensive positive feedback was received from residents, most of whom could not have otherwise afforded the technology.

Key successes:

- Those receiving the offer of low carbon technology saved on average £361 a year on their energy bills after the subscription costs.
- 97% would recommend a similar model to friends and family if it was available.
- The project has won two industry awards.
- Showcased at a Parliamentary Reception at the Houses of Parliament as an example of smart technologies that are driving the clean energy transition.

10.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Scale up delivery of retrofit across the county	
Scaling household retrofit countywide reduces emissions, improves energy efficiency, lowers bills, reduces fuel poverty and creates green jobs.	• Develop a retrofit plan for the county, identifying optimal delivery methods and analysing policy gaps for low income and able-to-pay households. • Deploy £3.75m funding under the Warm Homes Local Grant. Seek increased funding from central government to tackle fuel poverty through energy performance and low carbon heating upgrades.
Priority 2: Mitigate climate impacts on the built environment while minimising the built environment's impact on the climate	
Mitigation and adaptation in the built environment creates resilient places that protect people, reduces emissions, and prepares communities for a changing climate	• Explore potential opportunities for strategic environmental policies to be embedded in future planning at a regional level through the SDS. • Work with 10 of our maintained schools to implement a range of measures addressing climate risks (e.g. heat, flooding and water scarcity). • Support delivery of the LNRS, including providing planning guidance for nature-based solutions to climate mitigation and resilience (see Chpt 13). • Continue to address flood risk (see Chpt 13).
Priority 3: Engage with stakeholders to demonstrate the benefits of building retrofit and climate resilience	
Effective engagement builds public trust, unlocks investment, and drives behaviour change, making retrofit a shared priority across the community.	• Produce and share materials to demonstrate the importance and benefits of retrofitting homes for energy efficiency and climate resilience. • Work with district and county planning teams to ensure that all applications for development are compatible with net zero and improve resilience to a changing climate.

10.3: Benefits of our actions

11. Movement and Connectivity

Transport is Oxfordshire's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and, as a rural county hosting a significant A road and motorway network, one of the hardest to decarbonise. As the Local Transport Authority, we are working to reduce car dependency and build a net zero transport system by 2040, as outlined in our Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP). This includes replacing or removing one in four car trips by 2030 and prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport.

We are delivering this through initiatives like Oxford's electric bus fleet and an electric vehicle (EV) car club pilot, which has seen over 1,200 new members and 5,200 hiring sessions since April 2023. EV car clubs funded through CAG Oxfordshire also support low income households in rural areas. Active travel is supported through Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans and our Sustainable School Travel Strategy, while freight decarbonisation is being explored through mobile delivery hubs and e-cargo bike trials. We are accelerating public EV charge point roll out through the Oxfordshire Local EV Infrastructure fund (OxLEVI) in line with our Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy.

To improve air quality and reduce traffic, we have introduced a Zero Emission Zone in Oxford city centre and implemented Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Cowley and East Oxford. The Oxford temporary congestion charge was rolled out to manage increasing congestion and poor air quality within the city centre and improve bus journey times. It aims to benefit all users, particularly low-income groups relying on buses for transport. To address equity concerns, the Park and Ride service was free for all users for the first three months of the charge, and a comprehensive list of exemptions and permits is available, including for blue badge holders, care workers and unpaid carers, and those who use their vehicle for work. We are also strengthening the resilience of our transport network to flooding and severe weather, with nature-based solutions and climate-resilient infrastructure promoted through our emerging OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail.

11.1: Key Statistics

- Transport produces 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire.
- We aim to increase weekly cycle trips in the county to 1,000,000 by 2031.
- Over 4,000 people in Oxfordshire are using the BetterPoints app to earn rewards for walking, wheeling, cycling and using public transport.

Spotlight on: Zero Emission Buses

Oxford has one of the UK's largest electric bus fleets outside London. Led by Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach, and supported by Oxfordshire County Council, the £82.5 million initiative – supported by the government's ZEBRA scheme – has introduced 159 battery-electric buses, including 104 from Oxford Bus Company and 55 from Stagecoach. These vehicles cover city routes, BROOKESbus services, and sightseeing tours. Buses travel 200 miles per charge, supported by 104 rapid chargers at the Cowley depot.

The fleet saves over 4,000 tonnes of CO_2 annually, and prevents 35,000 litres of diesel from being burned and delivers 70,000 zero tailpipe-emission miles weekly.

11.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Decarbonise our transport system, reduce congestion and enable sustainable travel choices	

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Reducing emissions by managing travel demand and encouraging sustainable travel choices protects public health, mitigates climate risks, and ensures reliable, equitable mobility across Oxfordshire's communities and infrastructure.	• Align transport infrastructure carbon management processes with PAS 2080 (carbon management in infrastructure) and adopt circular economy practices (see Chpt 15, Priority 2). • Transition to a trial of camera-operated traffic filters in Oxford. • Investigate a Workplace Parking Levy in Oxford to encourage sustainable commuting. • Investigate expansion of the Oxford Zero Emission Zone. • Deliver an Electric Freight Spine and an integrated, decarbonised railway through the OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail.
Priority 2: Support place-based plans for sustainable transport improvements	
Examining local requirements and challenges aligns transport with place-based needs. This supports decarbonisation of the transport system while also addressing the distribution of positive and negative impacts to ensure that the outcomes are fair and inclusive for all.	• Develop local area plans in line with the LTCP to guide future scheme development, funding bids, enabling sustainable growth. • Continue to support the development of not-for-profit community transport groups and services through toolkits and grants. • Consider appropriate mitigations to challenges caused by transport decarbonisation, such as increased costs and unequal access to infrastructure.
Priority 3: Ensure resilience against extreme weather	
A resilient transport network is crucial to maintain safe, reliable connectivity, protect economic activity, and reduce disruption from extreme weather events.	• Prioritise sections of highway network for enhanced maintenance in extreme weather. • Ensure regular maintenance of all drainage gullies in the county.
Priority 4: Accelerate the transition to EVs	
Speeding up EV adoption cuts air pollution, supports emissions targets, and stimulates innovation and investment in Oxfordshire's green economy.	• Procure Charge Point Operators to install 1,200+ public EV charging points by the end of 2027. • Roll out charging cable gullies for residents without off-street parking.

11.3: Benefits of our actions

12. Energy

Decarbonising the energy system is critical to achieving Oxfordshire's climate targets. The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan and Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire report highlight the need to significantly increase local renewable energy generation by 2050 and improve energy efficiency across homes, businesses and public buildings. We are managing this transition through the local area energy planning process and working with local authority and commercial partners to unlock investment in flexible, resilient energy systems.

The energy system in Oxfordshire is heavily constrained requiring significant upgrades over the coming years. We are working with the new National Energy System Operator alongside our local authority partners to help shape the first Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP) which will cover Oxfordshire. Our energy planning work is a critical part of being able to ensure the RESP reflects our local needs. Decentralised renewable energy generates important benefits for the county and local communities including savings on energy bills, new income streams, jobs, stronger communities and better economic resilience. We are working to highlight the importance of public, community-owned and co-owned renewable energy generation, building upon the work of the Low Carbon Hub, such as CAPZero, as a way of sharing the benefits of the energy transition.

Projects like Local Energy Oxfordshire have trialled smart technologies and behaviours to create a more flexible and fair energy system. It aimed to create a viable commercial marketplace for flexible energy trading to allow everyone to benefit from the generation and storage of energy, and worked within communities to explore the benefits of energy flexibility for communities, businesses and individual households. We have also submitted detailed forecasts of Oxfordshire's future energy needs to energy system operators to ensure local priorities shape network planning.

Global electricity demand is projected to more than double by 2050 in response to the electrification of heating and transport. Meeting this increase in demand in an efficient and sustainable way will be critical to enabling Oxfordshire to achieve its growth ambitions. The resilience of the electricity networks is of vital importance, particularly with the increased risk of extreme weather. Adapting the infrastructure to a changing climate is crucial for all new energy infrastructure projects.

12.1: Key Statistics

- Capacity of installed solar energy in Oxfordshire would have to increase 13-fold between 2020 and 2050 to meet low carbon energy demand.
-
- Two out of the three national energy system demonstrators have been held in Oxfordshire.

Spotlight on: Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plan

Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plan (OxLAEP) was commissioned to provide a clear, community-focused action plan for transforming how energy is generated, used and managed in Oxfordshire.

It involves all Oxfordshire councils working with Ove Arup & Partners Ltd to produce a plan for each district, as well as local authority capacity and capability building to deliver and continue future local area energy planning.

OxLAEP will complete by the end of 2026. The Oxfordshire Growth Commission has highlighted the importance of OxLAEP in shaping our energy future to enable growth in the county.

12.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Plan for, and invest in, Oxfordshire's energy future	
Strategic energy planning ensures long-term security, affordability and sustainability, and supports resilient communities across Oxfordshire.	• Convene the Local Area Energy Plan process to identify low carbon investment needs and grid upgrades. • Develop investment pipelines and delivery mechanisms to support the energy transition (see Chpt 9, Priority 2).
Priority 2: Develop innovative clean power infrastructure to support sustainable growth	
Embedding energy into growth strategies unlocks innovation, supports green jobs, and ensures new developments contribute to climate goals while enhancing Oxfordshire's economic resilience.	• Work with partners on a smart local energy system that is built into the design of new housing developments. This will keep bills low and supply secure in grid-constrained areas (see Chpt 10, Priority 2).
Priority 3: Accelerate the community-led energy transition	
Communities must benefit from the transition to clean power through local generation, ownership and fair distribution.	• Advocate for community benefits from, and community ownership of, renewable schemes. • Take opportunities in the Local Power Plan to expand community owned energy in Oxfordshire.
Priority 4: Work with NESO in shaping the Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP)	
The RESP should acknowledge OxLAEP to ensure our energy priorities are reflected	• Ensure Oxfordshire is represented on the first RESP Strategic Board. • Involve NESO in critical discussions on energy infrastructure and the development of OxLAEP. • Work with NESO and the University of Oxford on research to understand how the RESP can most effectively be developed.

12.3: Benefits of our actions

13. Natural Environment and Land Use

Oxfordshire, the most rural county in the south east, supports habitats from chalk grassland to ancient woodlands. We have statutory responsibilities for nature under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021, including the 'biodiversity duty', delivered through our Biodiversity Action Framework and Action Plan. Recovering nature enables 'nature-based solutions' to climate impacts, such as carbon storage in vegetation and soils, natural flood management through wetlands, and resilience to extreme temperatures by increasing natural areas within urban environments. Our tree policy promotes increased canopy cover and climate-resilient species, and our Highway Verge Policy considers biodiversity outcomes.

Climate change is harming Oxfordshire's biodiversity, but reconnecting habitats can increase resilience. Through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), we have identified areas to focus efforts for a bigger, better, more connected and resilient network of nature. Our Biodiversity Action Plans set out actions the council will take to conserve and enhance biodiversity. We also work with and through the OLNP to lead and convene partners, from farmers and land owners (including the North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster) to local communities, environmental organisations, businesses and public bodies, enabling delivery of LNRS priorities.

Increasing frequency and severity of flooding is one of the most noticeable climate impacts in Oxfordshire. As the Lead Local Flood Authority, we have updated our Local Flood Risk Management Plan to manage flood risk and the impacts on people and property. This includes taking a collaborative, holistic approach to flood risk management, involving communities and delivering wider environmental and social benefits. We have also allocated £500,000 to fund 39 flood projects to make our communities more resilient, and have recruited new Flood Engagement Officers to support communities with flood preparedness and engagement.

13.1: Key Statistics

- There are 197 neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire with poor provision of accessible green space, seven of which are in the 30% most deprived areas in England.
- 800 to 900 species of plants, animals and fungi are at risk of local extinction.
- According to the UK Urban Canopy Cover Map Oxfordshire's average canopy cover per ward is 17.3% (above the UK average of 15.8%), of which 1.8 – 2.2% is at risk from Ash Dieback over the next 4-6 years. This would bring us below the national average overall.

Spotlight on: Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The LNRS is a county-wide plan to reverse biodiversity loss and enhance nature. The strategy was shaped by around 3,500 consultation responses during its creation. Key features include:

- A Local Habitat Map which highlighted existing and potential areas of biodiversity importance – covering about 40% of the county.
- A Species Priority List containing 63 bespoke species actions.
- A list of 40 Biodiversity Priorities with associated actions.

The LNRS will guide planning, funding, and land management decisions, supporting nature recovery across urban and rural areas.

13.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Reduce our impacts on nature and deliver enhancements	

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Leading by example is key to achieving 'nature positive'; halting and reversing nature loss for the benefit of people and planet.	• Conserve and enhance biodiversity through procurement, decision-making, land management and delivery of biodiversity net gain, including developing a Habitat Banking Vehicle.
Priority 2: Understand the ecosystem services provided by nature and take this into account in decision making	
Ensuring decisions consider potential impacts on natural capital will give best public value, given the scarcity of some natural resources and the trade-offs between objectives.	• Undertake natural capital assessments to inform our decisions, we will prioritise the use of nature-based solutions where appropriate, including natural flood management to reduce flood risk.
Priority 3: Collaborate with private, public and voluntary sectors to enable nature recovery across Oxfordshire	
Nature recovery requires action by a wide range of people, it requires targeted investment and co-ordinated action to deliver a well-connected, biodiversity-rich, network of nature that is resilient into the future, restored for the health and wellbeing of future generations, and for natures' own sake.	• Work with and through the OLNP to embed the LNRS in decision-making, identify and develop strategic projects and monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities. • Work with communities in the Lower Windrush Valley to strengthen the evolving landscape, protect and enhance biodiversity and access to green space. • Work in partnership to conserve and enhance Oxfordshire's Local Wildlife Sites, aiming to increase the proportion of sites in positive conservation management. • Support the CAG Oxfordshire network to deliver community-level nature recovery.
Priority 4: Improve awareness in our communities of the need to conserve and enhance biodiversity and what action they can take	
Providing communities with knowledge, tools, and support fosters environmental stewardship and resilience against climate change.	• Work in partnership with local groups, empowering communities to take local actions that contribute to the priorities in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (see Chpt 16, Priorities 1 and 2).

13.3: Benefits of our actions

14. Waste and Resources

To reach net zero, Oxfordshire must shift from a 'take, make, use, dispose' model to a circular economy; keeping materials in use for longer and designing out waste. As both the Waste Disposal and Waste Planning Authority, we manage household waste collected by the district and city councils and oversee planning for all waste developments through the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which sits alongside district and city Local Plans to form the county's Development Plan.

Most waste comes from construction, demolition and excavation operations, but household waste is also significant. The Local Plan sets waste management targets to 2031 for these waste streams to provide the maximum diversion from landfill. Through the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership's (ORWP) current Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy we aim to keep household waste growth to zero, increase household waste recycling to 70% by 2030 and send less than 3% of our household waste to landfill. We also plan for the management of future arisings of household waste through the Waste Local Plan. Our seven Household Waste Recycling Centres handle 50,000 tonnes annually, with over 65% recycled, reused or composted. A further 120,000 tonnes is sent to our energy recovery facility, generating enough electricity to power over 19,000 homes each year.

We're embedding circular principles across our operations. Our Circular Economy Plan outlines actions to reduce waste and extend the life of materials, such as donating refurbished laptops to residents facing digital exclusion through Getting Oxfordshire Online. Tools like the Waste Wizard help residents repair, reuse or recycle items, while projects like EU CircleUp in Wantage encourage circular behaviours through community engagement.

Reducing waste and improving resource efficiency are essential to cutting emissions and building a low carbon economy. Every step – from planning and infrastructure to public engagement – helps Oxfordshire move towards a more sustainable future.

14.1: Key Statistics

- In 2020 Oxfordshire produced 1.8 million tonnes of household (16%), commercial and industrial (27%), and construction demolition and excavation waste (57%).
- In 2023/24 for the 11th consecutive year Oxfordshire was the best county council in England for recycling, reusing and composting of household waste.
- In 2024-25 380 tonnes of food was diverted from the waste stream by activities delivered by the Oxfordshire Community Action Group network.
- Moving towards a circular economy could generate 6,000 - 7,000 jobs in Oxfordshire.

Spotlight on: Waste Wizard

To tackle recycling confusion and reduce waste, we launched the Waste Wizard, an intuitive online tool that helps residents determine how to reuse, repair, recycle, or dispose of household items responsibly.

By simply entering an address and item name, users receive tailored guidance on the most sustainable disposal options, prioritising reuse and repair over disposal. The tool also provides information on kerbside collection, recycling centre locations, and local reuse or repair services.

The Waste Wizard supports Oxfordshire's ambition to reduce waste to landfill. With over 58% of waste already reused, composted, or recycled – well above the national average of 45% – the tool aims to push this even higher by reducing kerbside contamination and encouraging circular economy practices.

14.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Encourage a shift to circular principles within our own organisation	
Embedding circular principles across our teams will reduce waste and cost over time, impacting our climate and waste management.	• Educate colleagues on the circular economy, and the need to consider circular economy principles in our processes and proposals. • Implement PAS 2080 (carbon management in infrastructure) standards across our organisation (see Chpt 15, Priority 2). • Explore opportunities for local procurement of goods and services to the council (see Chpt 15, Priority 2).
Priority 2: Improve waste infrastructure, services, and opportunities for circularity	
Upgrading infrastructure and services enhances recycling rates, reduces environmental impact, and ensures efficient, accessible waste management for all Oxfordshire communities.	• Explore opportunities such as the sale of second-hand and used items at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). • Agree new HWRC management contract, seeking to increase on-site reuse and recycling levels from 2027. • Implement capital works on HWRCs aiming to secure, maintain and enhance our network. • Extend behaviour change communications and explore projects to reduce waste and increase recycling. • Work with ORWP to update the county's waste analysis, enabling better understanding of the impacts of forthcoming legislation changes and business cases development for service changes and behaviour change work.
Priority 3: Plan for long-term, sustainable resource management in Oxfordshire	
Strategic resource planning is essential for future resilience and managing waste planning and arisings.	• Begin preparing a new Local Plan for minerals and waste once the new plan-making system, proposed by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, is enacted. • Embed climate action within the new Local Plan and use a climate action framework assessment tool to assess policies and planning applications (see Chpt 10, Priority 2).

14.3: Benefits of our actions

15. Our Own Estate: Zero Carbon Council and Beyond

To reach carbon neutrality by 2030, the council is transforming the way it manages its estate and operations; improving electrical and heating efficiencies, electrifying transport and heating, removing and minimising fossil fuel usage, increasing renewable electricity, and embedding low carbon practices. This includes corporate buildings, streetlights and traffic signals, fleet vehicles, and staff business travel.

Our Carbon Management Plan has driven significant progress, with a target for 90% reduction in emissions from our estate and operations by 2030. Key initiatives include LED street lighting, property retrofits, new net zero buildings, fleet electrification and digital-first working. We have also been working with our supply chain to track and reduce our Scope 3 emissions, and implement our Ethical Procurement Policy. Our Carbon Literacy programme has delivered training to 600 colleagues to improve their awareness of climate change and their impact on the environment through their work.

Some emissions are likely to remain in 2030, particularly from specialist fleet vehicles, business travel and grid electricity usage. We are looking for innovative projects to address these through our offsetting strategy that prioritises high-quality, locally beneficial carbon reduction and removal projects .

We also recognise the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change. We are embedding climate resilience into our estate planning, infrastructure upgrades, service delivery and critical supply chains to ensures that we are better prepared for climate related risks.

15.1: Key Statistics

- By the end of 2024/25, the council achieved a 72% reduction in carbon emissions from its estate and operations compared to the 2010/11 baseline.
- Our LED street lighting programme, combined with decarbonisation of the national grid, has delivered an 83% reduction in emissions from street lights compared with 2010/11.
- By the end of 2026, we will have removed end of life fossil-fuelled heating from 51% of our estate in scope for our 2030 target.

Spotlight on: Our Maintained Schools

Action on Carbon & Energy in Schools

We have been supporting our 116 maintained schools to decarbonise as part of the countywide 2050 net zero target.

Through the Action on Carbon and Energy in Schools (ACES) programme, we provide our maintained schools with free energy audits and action plans to save money and carbon. ACES also supports schools to apply for our interest-free Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme to install LED lighting, rooftop solar PV, and battery storage.

We have loaned £448,000 to ten schools to install energy saving LEDs, solar panels, and batteries, with an additional £508,000 allocated to 12 more.

15.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Decarbonise our estate and operations to reduce costs and energy consumption	
Decarbonising our estate and operations cuts emissions, improves energy performance,	• Continue to deliver our 'electric by default' policy to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles, targeting full transition of cars and vans by 2028.

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
and demonstrates leadership in climate action.	• Engage with emerging technologies to address hard-to-decarbonise fleet, including hydrogen power for fire and waste vehicles. • Continue to deliver our funded buildings retrofit programme and seek further financing to deliver our 2030 target
Priority 2: Improve our sustainable procurement process to localise our supply chain and avoid outsourcing emissions	
Enhancing sustainability processes ensures consistent delivery, embeds climate goals into decision-making, and drives long-term value across estate upgrades and operational practices.	• Update our procurement processes to ensure sustainability by design and encourage service areas to request accredited science-based carbon targets from suppliers. • Ensure our contracts are in line with PAS 2080 standards and emphasising circular economy practices.
Priority 3: Support our colleagues to deliver climate action across our services	
Empowering colleagues with tools, training, and support enables climate-conscious service delivery, builds internal capacity, and embeds sustainability into our everyday operations.	• Target Carbon Literacy silver status by November 2027 (15% of our organisation completing training and submitting an action plan). • Support colleagues to engage with climate action in their service through the colleague-led climate action group.
Priority 4: Explore the role of offsetting on our estate	
Offsetting helps address residual emissions, supports nature-based solutions, and complements action in achieving carbon neutral targets.	• Investigate a Power Purchase Agreement to supply green power to meet councils' needs post LGR. • Develop a high integrity, locally focused carbon offsetting approach using verifiable nature-based projects that deliver carbon removal alongside a range of other environmental and social benefits and strengthened climate resilience.

15.3: Benefits of our actions

16. Engagement and Capacity Building

Oxfordshire's communities are one of its greatest strengths in our response to climate change. From grassroots groups to town and parish councils, there is significant capacity for action on all aspects of climate change and sustainability. We work with umbrella organisations including the CAG Oxfordshire network, Low Carbon Hub, Good Food Oxfordshire, Wild Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils and Community First Oxfordshire to support and coordinate activity.

Our role is to inform and empower residents, support emissions reduction and resilience, and secure resources to help communities deliver climate action. We've developed a Climate Engagement Plan to guide this work and created the Climate Action Oxfordshire website with city and district councils to provide practical resources for residents.

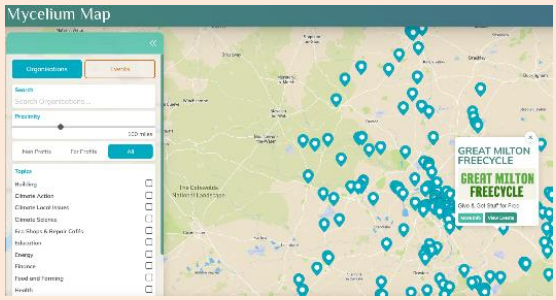
We have increased our funding for CAG Oxfordshire, which provides capacity building opportunities, micro-grants, advice, resources and coordination to a wide range of climate focussed grassroots and community organisations.

Research from our Local Policy Lab fellows into community engagement approaches and principles has encouraged us to reframe our approach to better include marginalised and global majority communities in climate action. For example, the Inclusive Nature Recovery Working Group provides stipends and travel costs for non-traditional groups to take part and access funding in the climate and nature space, including refugee and disability groups, Caribbean groups and for supporting community gardens in deprived areas. We are also committed to supporting activities rooted in community to strengthen our approach to climate action; we have provided annual grants for Great Big Green Week, the Garden Tree Giveaway and supported expansion of Oxfordshire's Libraries of Things. We also support community groups and parish councils with management of road verges.

16.1: Key Statistics

- 85% of Oxfordshire Climate Survey (2024) respondents feel it is important to reduce their (and their family's) carbon footprint.
- Around 130 groups are members of CAG Oxfordshire and growing.
- In 2024/25 over 100,000 volunteering hours were recorded by the CAG network for environmental projects.

Spotlight on: The Mycelium Map



We partnered with Hedgerley Wood Trust to expand the coverage of their interactive map across Oxfordshire, listing local climate action groups, initiatives, and sustainable businesses.

The map is integrated with the Climate Action Oxfordshire website to help residents bridge the gap between learning about actions and finding a place to take them. It aims to foster confidence in the local climate and sustainability movement and widen engagement.

16.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Work with our residents to spread the word about climate action	
Working with residents builds awareness, shared responsibility, and	• Promote the Climate Action Oxfordshire website. • Work with local schools to engage young people, develop relationships with arts and cultural

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
encourages climate-positive behaviours to ensure actions are inclusive and locally supported.	institutions in the county and work with local programmes such as EU CircleUp (see Chpt 14, Priority 2). • Provide updates on activity to be shared in residents', partner and community newsletters.
Priority 2: Provide training for, and share knowledge with, our communities to support local action	
Helping communities develop skills, networks, and resources empowers local action, strengthens resilience, and ensures long-term delivery of climate initiatives across Oxfordshire.	• Offer training and support to community groups and town and parish councils on a range of topics including carbon reduction, emergency planning and climate resilience and community engagement. • Support grassroots initiatives and identify key communities to work alongside, particularly those not often seen in the climate action space. • Launch a community grant scheme to encourage community investment in local climate resilience.
Priority 3: Provide coordination across the county to maximise impact	
Coordination aligns efforts, avoids duplication, and amplifies impact which enable joined-up climate action across the county.	• Work with existing networks to amplify their voices, enhance their impact and support the development of resources which encourage coordination efforts. • Develop and maintain our network of strategic partners, engaged groups, schools and funders to facilitate coordination, for example by peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing workshops.
Priority 4: Secure resources to support local climate action	
Securing resources ensures communities have the tools to lead meaningful climate action locally.	• Work with partners to secure further funding for our objectives and put communities in touch with funders. • Work to secure community benefit from local renewable energy schemes to support climate action (see Chpt 12, Priority 3).

16.3: Benefits of our actions

17. Summary and Conclusion

This framework sets out a bold and necessary path for climate action in Oxfordshire. Local government has a vital role to play in influencing national policy, convening partnerships and amplifying the voices of our communities to drive systemic change, and ensure that climate action is not only ambitious, but fair and inclusive.

Throughout this framework we have emphasised the importance of the wider benefits that this transition will deliver: improved health and wellbeing, economic opportunity and restoration of the natural environment. Yet we also acknowledge the scale and urgency of the challenge. The impacts of climate change such as flooding, heatwaves and loss of biodiversity are all being felt across Oxfordshire and disproportionately affect our most vulnerable communities. We must act quickly and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from climate action.

Delivering this vision requires robust governance and accountability. An Equalities Impact Assessment and a Climate Impact Assessment have been carried out as integral parts of developing this framework, ensuring that our actions address both climate and social justice. These assessments will be reviewed annually, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement and transparency. Progress on the delivery of the framework will be reported annually to Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet, providing regular opportunities for accountability.