NORWICH City Council

Climate and environment emergency executive panel

Date: Tuesday, 07 October 2025
Time: 16:30
Venue: Mancroft room, City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH

Committee members:

Councillors:

Champion (Chair)
Hampton (Vice-Chair)
Bolton
Fox
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IN TRAN communication for all

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Agenda

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1 Apologies

To receive apologies for absence

2 Declarations of interest

(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting)

3 Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 - To follow.

4 General Update 3 - 70

Purpose - To provide an update on the progress of the current Environmental Strategy 2020-2025; Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032 and the development of the new Climate Responsive Norwich Programme 2025-2035.

NORWICH City Council

Item 4

Committee Name: Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel

Committee Date: 07/10/2025

Report Title: General Update

Portfolio: Councillor Hampton, Deputy Leader: Climate and Environment

Report from: Executive Director of Climate and Environment

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update CEEEP on:

(i) Progress on the delivery of the current Environmental Strategy 2020-2025;

(ii) Progress on the delivery of the current Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032; and

(iii) The development of the new *Climate Responsive Norwich Programme 2025-2035 (*hereafter *'CRN Programme 2025-2035'),* which is the proposed delivery plan for the 'A Climate Responsive Norwich' priority of the council's '*We Are Norwich 2024-2029*' community-led plan.

CEEEP is asked to note the progress undertaken and make comment on these updates.

Policy Framework

The Council's 2024-2029 community-led plan outlines five priorities. This report relates to the priority to create *A Climate Responsive Norwich* and fulfils the four related goals:

1. A Net Zero council by 2030;
2. A Net Zero Norwich by 2045;
3. Vibrant parks and green spaces; and
4. Adapting to climate change

The actions set out in this report also contribute to the other corporate plan policies of creating *A Future-Proof Norwich* and *A Prosperous Norwich*.

Report Details

1. The Climate Responsive Norwich Programme 2025-2035 programme document identifies four main areas of strategic action, which are:

    a) Citywide climate action;

    b) Council General Fund (i.e. operational) climate action;

    c) Council Housing Revenue Account (i.e. social housing) climate action;

    d) Biodiversity improvement

2. This report is structured using these main areas of strategic action providing detail according to the new *climate action areas*, also set out in the Climate Responsive Norwich Programme 2025-2035, which are:

    a) Leadership and Coordination (including strategy and plan development);

    b) Finance;

    c) Communities;

    d) Homes and/or Buildings;

    e) Infrastructure;

    f) Transport;

    g) Waste, and

    h) Land Use and Emissions Removal

Citywide Climate Action – Update on Activity

Leadership and Coordination

3. *New Directorate for Climate and Environment* – a new council directorate has been created to provide dedicated focus on activities relating to climate and environmental workstreams, reflecting the importance of these strategic priorities. Nick Austin has been appointed as Executive Director for Climate and Environment and will commence this role on 6th of October 2025. A restructure will see the Environmental Strategy Team move from the Housing and Communities Directorate to report directly to the Executive Director for Climate and Environment, alongside Planning and Regulatory and Environmental Services Teams.

4. *Net Zero Pathway Plan for Norwich* – finalisation of the council's '*Net Zero Pathway for Norwich*' is progressing following work with consultants *Opergy Net Zero* to model interventions needed to enable the city to meet its 2045 net-zero target. This has included development of annual targets for decarbonising interventions such as electrified heating in buildings and the uptake of electric vehicles. The specialist consultancy *Small World Consulting* has recalculated the

city's carbon budget to 2045, aligned to the Paris Agreement and using the same parameters as the SCATTER methodology. Final adjustments to the model and document are being made to ensure the number of low carbon interventions align with the city's remaining carbon budget.

Once a working draft of the document has been finalised, it will be considered by Cabinet ahead of a public consultation exercise through the council's Get Talking Norwich platform and public engagement events. Thereafter feedback will be considered and incorporated into the final adopted version.

5. *New Supplementary Planning Documents* – the council has drafted a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Policy 2 (Sustainable Communities) to support the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The SPD will support implementation of Policy 2 by setting out the scope for sustainability statements including water efficiency, sustainable energy generation and consumption (including embodied energy), pollution and sustainable design. At Cabinet on 10th September 2025, members agreed for the draft SPD to proceed to public consultation for a six-week period in November/December 2025 prior to adoption, in accordance with the Greater Norwich Local Plan Statements of Community Involvement. An SPD has also been developed to guide implementation of the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy (GNGIS) and this will be subject to a six-week public consultation period as well, to take place in October/November 2025.

6. *Norfolk & Suffolk Energy Plan* – Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils are continuing to collaborate on the production of a Norfolk & Suffolk Energy Plan, which aims to ensure growth and decarbonisation activity can be accommodated by energy infrastructure networks across both counties. Following a tender exercise, City Science were appointed as the contracted consultant to lead development of this plan, which has a budget of £200,000.

   In support of this work, Norwich City Council responded to a detailed Request For Information (RFI) to share relevant data such as planned housing growth figures in Norwich, as well as details of ongoing and planned energy and decarbonisation projects in the city. The council will continue to engage with Norfolk County Council to support development of this work, ensuring that the energy infrastructure needs of Norwich are fully included in the plan.

7. *Transitional Regional Energy Strategic Planning (tRESP)* – the council has recently responded to a detailed Request for Information (RFI) from the National Energy Systems Operator (NESO – previously National Grid) to support development of a transitional Regional Energy Strategic Plan (tRESP). This work complements and overlaps with the Norfolk & Suffolk Energy Plan, aiming to plan for future energy needs across the wider East of England region. The council shared data regarding planned housing growth figures as set out in the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) and decarbonisation targets as well as preliminary data for significant future energy projects such as a Norwich citywide heat network and the Norwich Solar System initiative.

The tRESP will be an input to Ofgem's arrangements to calculate the anticipated level of investment needed for the UK's energy networks to provide 'clean power' by 2030.

8. *Satellite Mapping Data* – the council is working with an organisation which provides satellite mapping data to support carbon mitigation and adaptation activities. Data includes tree canopy cover, total green space measurement, soil organic carbon content and heat hazard mapping. The data will enable more targeted interventions across the council's climate and nature recovery initiatives and will be correlated with spatial data relating to social need such as RITA areas and Index of Multiple Deprivation data,.

9. *Council website updates* – as part of ongoing work to update the council's website, new content has been developed for the energy, climate and biodiversity webpages. The updates will more clearly reflect council workstreams in these areas. Updates include, for example, the latest metrics for decarbonisation in Norwich, refreshed gardening for wildlife tips, inclusion of a river water quality page linking to relevant data sources, and links to the new Homewise and Fairer Warmth tools commissioned by Norfolk Climate Change Partnership to support domestic retrofit acceleration. The new content is expected to go-live from 22nd October 2025.

Finance

10. *Norwich Climate Action Fund* – the council is exploring the feasibility of setting up a climate action fund for Norwich, similar to a successful scheme established by East Suffolk. The fund will provide loans to accelerate retrofit activity in Norwich including for homeowners, businesses, institutions and the council itself. The fund will provide loans to a blend of technologies and initiatives including solar PV, heat pumps, fabric efficiency measures and improved energy system controls.

    Loans will be issued on the basis that they make savings for borrowers, so they can repay the loan. The scheme would operate as a revolving fund, creating a self-sustaining facility that can support a continuing program of decarbonisation activities. Details of how the scheme will be set up are being explored as part of the implementation of the council's forthcoming *'Net Zero Pathway for Norwich*'.

Communities

11. *Solar Together* – the council is participating in the 2025 round of the 'Solar Together' scheme, organised by iChoosr. This is a collective solar PV purchasing scheme which offers households a cost-effective way to get Photovoltaic systems installed in homes. Registration for the scheme opened on 4th August, with direct mailouts sent to particularly suitable households in Norwich, as well as promotion through the council's social media channels. The registration period is set to close on 17th October 2025, and thereafter households will be provided with a personalised offer. Households accepting their offers can expect PV installations to be completed no later than June 2026, with many commencing before

Christmas 2025. At time of writing, 246 households in Norwich have so far registered for this year's scheme.

12. *Big Community Switch* – the council continues to participate in the 'Big Community Switch' scheme, organised by iChoosr, to promote affordable warmth and reduce fuel poverty. This collective energy purchasing scheme offers households the opportunity to save money on their energy bills whilst also switching to a low carbon electricity tariff. The outcome of the June 2025 scheme saw 583 Norwich households save, on average, £196 per year on a dual-fuel bill and £115, per year, on an electricity-only switch. The council is also participating in the September 2025 scheme with registration currently open and closing on 31st October 2025. iChoosr have notified the council that the scheme will be renamed '*Switch Together'* from the next round onwards.

13. *Our Power* – the community energy advice and advocacy group Our Power have recruited their first full-time employee with a new General Manager overseeing delivery of the group's projects. Energy Champions continue to provide energy advice and home visits to Norwich residents, and the Our Power steering group has expanded to include five members. Additional grant funding has been won through Community Energy Pathways, which is expected to support growth of the energy champions model and cascading to a wider volunteer network.

14. *Domestic Retrofit Engagement Service* – the council has engaged Our Power to produce the specification for a domestic retrofit engagement service which will support delivery of the Warm Homes: Local Grant *and* Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 energy efficiency grant schemes. An upcoming procurement exercise will award a three year contract of c£600k to the most suitable provider of this service. The retrofit engagement service will directly engage council tenants and private sector residents to maximise uptake of the grant schemes, provide impartial advice and support throughout the retrofit installation lifecycle.

15. *Norwich Climate Commission Update* – the Climate Commission has been expanding, with a part-time Coordinator recruited to lead on developing public engagement initiaitves. Several new commissioners have been invited to join as of the September 2025 meeting with additional new commissioners expected to join by November. It is anticipated this will bring more diverse representation to the commission and enable it to extend its reach and influence in supporting the city's decarbonisation and adaptation workstreams.

16. *COPx* – council officers have attended the initial meetings of a new local group called COPxNorwich which is part of a wider international COPxGlobal network. Norwich-based individuals with a professional or personal interest in climate action have been convened to discuss and plan action to support decarbonisation and adaptation initiatives.

17. *Sustainability Retreat Day for Businesses and NGOs* – the council has recently provided sponsorship support to an event organised by Youth Climate Solutions. This event took place on 26th September 2025 at the UEA Enterprise Centre delivering guidance and support to local businesses and non-governmental organisations regarding sustainable business practices and the requirements of the new Sustainability Reporting Directive. Businesses have an important part to play in achieving the city's net-zero target, and the council will continue to support events such as these to promote integration of climate targets into business practices.

18. *Norfolk Net Zero Communities Project finalisation* – an event was held at the Kings Centre in Norwich on 13th June 2025 to mark the conclusion of the 'Net Zero Communities Project' delivered by Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP). The event was attended by council officers, key partner organisations and community representatives. Funded by Innovate UK's Fast Followers programme, this project carried out deep engagement with seven communities across Norfolk, including Eaton in Norwich, to identify the non-technical barriers preventing widespread uptake of home retrofit measures, energy efficiency and sustainable transport.

    The principal findings of the project have enabled the council to understand how to implement a retrofit engagement strategy. The strategy requires two key components including (1) online trusted information and (2) energy champions who can provide face to face advocacy and support throughout the retrofit journey.

    A final report summarising the project's key findings has been published and is provided as an appendix to this report. Two online tools, *Homewise* and *Fairer Warmth,* were commissioned by NCCP towards the end of the project and are now available for use by homeowners to understand retrofit options. These tools will be accessible through the council's website (as part of the website refresh) and will be promoted through its social media channels. These new online tools provide the initial building blocks for a 'digital retrofit hub'.

19. *Further Innovate UK bid by Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP)* – following conclusion of the Net Zero Communities Project, NCCP was invited by Innovate UK to bid for further funding under its Net Zero Living programme to extend the impact of the project. A bid has been submitted for £150k to fund development of a more extensive online energy advice resource tailored specifically to Norfolk residents and addressing barriers identified through the previous project. Additionally, the project will aim to expand successfully piloted community energy champion schemes. The project has been named 'Home Energy Help Hubs' and the outcome of the bid will be communicated to NCCP by 15th October 2025. If successful, the project will need to complete delivery by 31st March 2026 in line with Innovate UK's funding requirements.

20. *Warm Homes: Local Grant* – the council has awarded a contract to EON to deliver the Warm Homes: Local Grant scheme, which will run to March 2028. This follows the council's success in winning £4.7m from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) earlier in the year. This scheme is designed to deliver energy efficiency improvements and low carbon heating to 330 owner-occupied and privately rented homes in Norwich. The project is in the mobilisation phase with very good levels signup to the scheme so far, following promotion through the council's website and social media pages. More information about this scheme can be found on the council's website at the following page: https://www.norwich.gov.uk/info/20608/energy_efficiency_and_reducing_energy_bills/4192/warm_homes_-_local_grant

    The council is in discussions with DESNZ to increase the allocation of funding for this scheme, with the council requesting a doubling a funding allocation.

21. *ECO4/GBIS Funding* – the council has an ongoing arrangement with FlexConnect to enable wider access to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) grant funding schemes, benefitting residents in Norwich by funding energy saving improvements. The arrangement allows the council to expand eligibility criteria for these schemes under the 'LA Flex' provisions, enabling households to access home improvements based on medical grounds and other unique circumstances without limitation to the standard income criteria. Several Norwich households have now benefitted from works delivered under these schemes, helping to promote affordable warmth in the city. Further information can be found at: https://www.flexconnect.eco/norwich

Infrastructure

22. *Citywide Low Carbon Heat Networks* – following announcement of the Heat Network Delivery Unit (HNDU) Round 15 funding scheme, the council has recently submitted an expression of interest (EOI) to DESNZ to develop detailed project planning for a citywide heat network in Norwich. The submitted EOI is for £75k with £75k match funding from the council to build on the techno-economic feasibility study previously completed by consultants Fairheat, which demonstrated excellent technical and economic viability. The submission aligns to the government's current desired approach for early market engagement with potential heat network investor and developers. The council plans to undertake a soft market test with investors and developers in October and November, so that their feedback regarding the opportunities for the proposed citywide heat network, can be included in the R15 bid.

    The council expects to hear in October 2025 whether its EOI is successful and if so will be invited by DESNZ to submit a formal bid to Round 15 of the fund.

23. *Citywide Electrical Infrastructure* – the council and its consultants have recently shared key data with UK Power Networks (UKPN) in response to a request for information. The data, sourced from the developing '*Net Zero Pathway for*

Norwich' citywide decarbonisation plan, includes projected rates of electrification of buildings and transport in the city and the impacts of energy efficiency initiatives. This data is being used to inform UKPN's network investment models.

This activity demonstrates a successful collaboration between the council and UKPN which is vital to ensure that Norwich's electricity distribution networks are future fit and able to support decarbonisation aligned with the council's 2045 target.

Transport

24. *Electric Vehicle Charge Point (EVCPs)* – the council is pursuing installation of a rapid EV charger at its Chantry Car Park on Theatre Street, following signoff by the council's Design Authority and the relevant Executive Director. This installation will be funded using Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding in partnership with Norfolk County Council, who will project manage the installation which is expected to be completed this financial year.

    The council is continuing to liaise with Norfolk County Council and a local EVCP operator to assess feasibility of installations in other council car parks and to explore different ownership models to accelerate wider rollout.

    As of July 2025, the city has 186 public EVCPs in total, with a significant increase in usage observed during August 2025 suggesting growing popularity of electric vehicles. The ratio of publicly available EVCPs to EV's registered in the city is currently 1:9 i.e. there is 1 EV charger for every 9 electric vehicles registered in the city.

25. *First Bus additional EV buses coming to Norwich* – in partnership with the county council, First Bus have announced that a further 24 electric double-decker buses will be introduced to Norfolk, including 14 new electric buses in Norwich. These buses will serve routes 28, 36, 37 and 38, linking communities in Thorpe Marriott, Horsford, Mulbarton and Ives Road with Norwich city centre. This builds on the previous successful introduction of 70 electric buses in Norwich by First Bus during 2024. The electrification of public transport is linked to evidenced improvements in city centre air quality. The new buses are expected to be in service by Autumn 2026.

26. *Air Quality Action Plan* – following publication of the latest Air Quality Annual Status Report, an updated Air Quality Action Plan is being developed to replace the previous one published in 2021. This work is being led by the council in partnership with Norfolk County Council highways department with an updated action plan expected to be published by June 2026.

Waste

Nothing to Report (NTR)

Land Use and Emissions Removal

NTR

Council General Fund Climate Action

Leadership and Coordination

27. *New starters in the Environmental Strategy Team* – the council's Environmental Strategy Team has welcomed four new starters recruited to the following positions: Low Carbon Infrastructure Officer, Building Retrofit Officer, Environmental Projects Officer, and Energy & Water Utilities Manager. These new posts will provide valuable additional resource and expand the council's capacity to deliver decarbonisation, affordable warmth and nature recovery workstreams in Norwich.

28. *Procurement Emissions Analysis* – an exercise is ongoing to analyse greenhouse gas emissions associated with the council's procured goods, services and works across the organisation. The council is working with a specialist consultancy to analyse emissions associated with all its purchase orders and invoices for the last two financial years. Once completed, this will provide an enhanced understanding of the council's Scope 3 emissions, improving carbon accounting and allowing an action plan to be developed to reduce procurement emissions and pursue less carbon intensive alternatives where possible.

Finance

29. *Community Centre Finance* – initiatives to provide additional funding to community centres (in addition to the £200k already allocated) are being explored as summarised in paragraph 10 above.

Communities

30. *Green Events Code of Practice (GECoP) Phase 2* – the council is a core participant in Phase 2 of this project, following a previous successful pilot. The GECoP aims to guide sustainable practices for public events, embedding improved environmental performance into planning around waste, energy generation, water, transport and food provision. The latest phase will aim to update the code of practice, create a toolkit of resources, introduce the GECoP to 15 new local authorities (guided by the experience of the pilot authorities, including Norwich City Council), and publish a pathway to national adoption. Public events organised by the council in 2026 will be assessed in line with the GECoP. The council's participation in this programme is helping to drive positive environmental change in the events industry.

Buildings and/or Homes

31. *Heat decarbonisation planning and funding* – the government announced in May that the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant schemes have been discontinued until 2028. These schemes previously provided funding for consultancy services and 50% capital funding to decarbonising heat in public sector buildings. The council has been exploring alternative solutions and is liaising with a specialist consultancy to understand the costs of decarbonisation of heat across its General Fund estate. Proposals for alternative capital funding is described in Paragraph 10.

32. *Solar PV Feasibility Study* – as part of an ongoing feasibility work for Solar PV systems for 7 council operational buildings, G99 applications were submitted to and approved by UK Power Networks (UKPN) which confirms that grid capacity exists to support the planned installations and potential exported energy. The council is awaiting final figures from its consultant and will then develop a detailed business case ahead of pursuing agreement, funding and installations.

    Sites studied include the Norman Centre, St Andrews Car Park, St Giles Car Park, Rose Lane Car Park, The Halls, Carrow House and NCSL Hurricane Way depot.

33. *Community Centre Retrofit Programme* – work is ongoing with a specialist architect firm to determine quantities and specification for insulation works to the council's 15 community centres. Following agreement of scope and specification a procurement exercise will be undertaken to award a c£200k contract. It is expected the insulation improvement works will be completed before the end of 2025/26 financial year.

34. *Norman Centre retrofit study* – the council has engaged a specialist architect firm to undertake a retrofit and decarbonisation options assessment for the Norman Centre. It is anticipated that improved fabric (insulation and ventilation) measures will be required in the main hall prior to decarbonisation of heating with air source heat pumps (ASHPs). The study will determine the number and size of ASHP required. The council will seek appropriate funding to support the capital cost of the retrofit works. The Norman Centre is also being considered for installation of solar PV, as mentioned in paragraph 32.

Infrastructure

NTR

Transport

35. *Dr Bike bicycle maintenance event for staff* – following the success of past events, the council is organising for a Dr Bike event to be held for staff in mid-

October 2025 outside City Hall. This will provide free bike safety checks and basic servicing for staff who commute by bicycle, as well as offering more significant works for a small fee. This event forms part of ongoing efforts to promote active travel amongst staff.

36. *Beryl minutes bundle for council staff* – to promote active sustainable travel to council staff, the council purchased 100 x 100-minute bundles for free usage of the Beryl app for bicycle, e-bike and scooter journeys around the city. Several codes are still available to be redeemed and this can be done using promotional code NCC100 when signed in on a Beryl account using an @norwich.gov.uk or @cllr.norwich.gov.uk email address.

37. Staff Commuting Survey – the council has undertaken a survey to estimate its (Scope 3) staff commuting emissions and to identify opportunities to reduce emissions.

Waste

NTR

Land Use and Emissions Removal

NTR

HRA Climate Action – Update on Activity

Leadership and Coordination

38. *New Major Works Contract Structure* – new partnership contracts will commence in January 2026 which have been procured to consolidate the delivery of HRA capital stock investment programmes over the next ten years. These contracts will deliver over £200m in improvements to tenants homes including energy efficiency works as part of the council's commitment to decarbonise it's housing portfolio. The budget allocation for energy efficiency and decarbonisation, over the next 5 years, is c£60m.

Finance

39. *HRA Business Plan* – in reviewing the 5 year ahead capital plan and 30 year ahead HRA business plan, expected to be published in December 25, the council has brought greater clarity to allocations relating to energy efficiency and decarbonisation. New cost estimates for getting the stock to an EPC banding of C have been estimated using data from the government’s social housing decarbonisation schemes. This more accurate approach to estimating has resulted in a slight reduction in allocations compared to previous versions of the business plan. Estimates for decarbonisation of heat have also been reviewed to

ensure they align with council's target of reaching net zero for its housing stock by 2045, and likely costs.

Communities

40. *Community Wellbeing Day at Knowland Grove* – the council and colleagues from EON attended the Future Projects Community Wellbeing Day on 27th August 2025 at The Baseline Centre on Knowland Grove. This event provided an opportunity to speak with tenants and homeowners from the area, raising awareness of the grant schemes being delivered by the council. Several applications to the Warm Homes: Local Grant were received from this, and various other local support services and organisations were also in attendance.

Buildings

41. *Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.2* – the council is continuing delivery of this £5.1m retrofit project in partnership with EON, with the delivery window running to 31st March 2026. The scheme has focused on solar PV installations, loft insulation and external wall insulation. As of 15th September 2025, 204 installations have been completed with 18 in progress and 28 awaiting surveys. These metrics suggest c250 participants of the target of 260 are in progress, and with 6 months of the scheme remaining, the council is confident the grant will be fully spent.

42. *Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (Wave 3)* – the council has awarded a delivery contract to EON for works under the scheme which will run to March 2028. This followed the council's successful bid for £12.7m to DESNZ with £10m match funding committed from HRA budgets. The scheme is expected to deliver energy efficiency retrofit upgrades to 1,482 council dwellings over the next three years, including 1,333 solar PV systems, 147 air source heat pumps, and a ground source heat pump system for 24 dwellings. The project is in mobilisation phase with eligible council tenants being contacted to offer the home upgrade works. The council is currently piloting a domestic retrofit engagement service with Our Power as part of the programme to maximise uptake of the grant scheme and support tenants through the process, as described in paragraph 14.

43. *Low Rise Block Architypes Retrofit Options Studies* – following completion of a detailed retrofit options study of the council's 'MM' low rise architypes, comprising 348 dwellings across 27 blocks, the council has commissioned a specialist architect practice to undertake further studies of its other low-rise housing blocks. This includes a further 9 architypes comprising a further 4,681 dwellings. These studies, expected to complete in October 2025, will support the council's development of its Retrofit Roadmap for its social housing estate.

Infrastructure

44. *Heat Networks Update* – the council has won c£50k from the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES) to carry out optimisation studies for three existing

district heating networks in the council's HRA estate, a bid for a further £62k has been submitted in September. The council is also liaising with consultants to undertake a wider portfolio review of all 29 district and communal heating network sites to determine options and costs decarbonisation and efficiency improvements.

Transport

NTR

Waste

NTR

Land Use and Emission Removal

NTR

Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032 – Update on Activity

Leadership and Coordination

45. *NatureCityNorwich launch* – It was confirmed in July that the council has won £775,311 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Nature Towns & Cities Programme. The project, titled 'NatureCityNorwich', has been funded for three years to 2028 creating a partnership with Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Norfolk County Council, and South Norfolk & Broadland District Council. Council officers attended a Parliamentary Launch in Westminster on 8th September 2025, and a local launch event has since been held at City Hall on 24th September 2025. This project will co-create a community-led urban nature recovery network and action plan, placing nature and people at the heart of Norwich's future. It will map and address the city's 'nature gaps', improve access to green and blue nature spaces, and empower communities to shape a more resilient, biodiverse and inclusive city.

    This project comes at an ideal time to respond to and implement the strategic objectives set by the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (see below).

46. *Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)* – following extensive consultation between Norfolk County Council and neighbouring local authorities regarding the developing Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), a final pre-publication consultation process is taking place. Norwich City Council will provide a formal response by 13th October 2025, to provide final comments on the mapping and document text. The response has been drafted and will be considered at Cabinet on 8th October.

Development of the LNRS has been led by Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership (a collaborative effort between the Norfolk & Suffolk County Councils) and aims to set out, at landscape scale, priority areas for nature recovery activity. The LNRS is one of 50 being developed throughout the country by each responsible local authority. Together they will create a UK-wide nature recovery network of sites to enhance and conserve nature. Individual authorities have consulted widely and mapped their locally prioritised species and habitats.

47. *Trees for Norwich Management Plan* – actions to complete this plan have been completed with the final version appended to this document.

Finance

48. *New Nature Blended Finance Models* – the council's recent bid to the Nature Towns & Cities Fund (described in paragraph 45) includes a proposal to explore innovative financing models for nature recovery. This includes blended finance options facilitated by the project partnership, in addition to newly developed approaches such as Natural England's 'Green Tokens', Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), new approaches to carbon sequestration and Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) funding from corporations.

Communities

49. *Biodiversity Monitoring and Surveying Course* – in partnership with Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the council co-hosted a successful two-day ecology training course on 19th and 24th June 2025. The course was free to members of the public and helped participants to develop new skills in plant identification, site assessment and recording for flora across all biodiverse sites to identify good or poor habitat conditions. The course was developed in response to requests from local volunteer groups to understand more about their local community green spaces. As part of the *NatureCityNorwich* project described in paragraph 45, the council and its partners will provide further training and volunteering opportunities, and the council is developing a mailing list via its biodiversity@norwich.gov.uk inbox to inform about any such future opportunities.

50. *'Mousehold to the Marsh'* – between 2nd to 13th July 2025, the council helped fund and supported delivery of a nature-focused community theatre production performed by The Common Lot. The show, titled '*Mousehold to the Marsh'* and performed in various Norwich green spaces, helped to raise awareness about the value and importance of Norwich's nature. It is estimated that around 5,000 people watched the production over the course of ten shows, engaging the Norwich public on issues relating to biodiversity and nature recovery.

    Officers of the council participated in the production and engaged in post-show conversations with the public about the council's nature recovery work taking place in the city. A sustainability and legacy group has been convened to extend the positive impact of the production through legacy projects and events, and the

council is continuing to support these and ensure they are integrated as part of the NatureCityNorwich project.

51. '*Blue & Green Corridors' event* – the council supported an event on 30th September as part of the legacy of the '*Mousehold to the Marsh*' production, titled '*Blue & Green Corridors – Connecting Nature in Norwich*'. This was a drop-in knowledge-sharing session at 185 Drayton Road, organised by Norfolk Wildlife Trust and The Common Lot, to discuss what members of the public could do on their patch to support nature connection in the city. The council has also supported other legacy events including a talk about Norwich's geology and ecology, titled 'Our North Norwich Landscape', which took place at the Phoenix Centre on 10th September 2025.

Homes and/or Buildings

52. *Back Garden Nature pilot project* – the back garden nature project aims to improve biodiversity in selected back gardens in the council's social housing estate and work is progressing on the first HRA 'Back Garden Nature' site as a shrub transition habitat.

    The council is funding a pilot project for a small number of sites, with varied management approaches to be trialled according to garden type, including small woodland and grassland habitats. Appropriate sites were visited in May to assess suitability for inclusion in the pilot project. The project is co-managed by officers from housing and environmental strategy teams and the Fringe Project.

    The scheme seeks to find cost saving solutions which also improve biodiversity in gardens which are underused and/or untended. Tenants are being offered the opportunity to pass management responsibilities for their gardens back to the council. The properties primarily targeted are maisonette style dwellings with large back gardens.

    The spaces will be managed for the benefit of nature, as 'micro nature reserves' providing year-round refuge, creating a mosaic of biodiverse habitats and overwintering sites for birds, mammals and invertebrates. Compostable waste material is retained on site to construct additional habitats. In the longer-term, the intention is for these sites to be managed by community groups with a 'light-touch' ongoing involvement of the council and Norwich Fringe Project.

Infrastructure

53. *UEA Yare Valley Boardwalk* – working with Norwich Fringe Project, the UEA have submitted an application for funding from Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) Green Infrastructure fund to support improvement works to the boardwalk. The council provided support to the project with advice and recommendations. The riverside route forms part of the Yare Valley Walk between Strawberry Fields and UEA Broad, and is currently closed due to disrepair. The UEA is leading the

project which aims to reconstruct the boardwalk. Two consultation events were previously held in May 2025.

Transport

NTR

Waste

NTR

Land Use and Emissions Removal

54. *Heartsease Recreation Ground improvements* – a 10m x 10m extension to the existing Miyawaki project comprising 300 new trees has been planted. with two new wildflower areas linking the Miyawaki creating a total area of approximately 78 m^2. An annual and perennial wildflower mix was sown into prepared ground in early spring of 2025.

    The council has undertaken public consultation and is in the final planning stages before implementing further improvements to Heartsease Recreation Ground, during the 2025/26 planting season. These new improvements, which result from a collaboration between the council, NCSL, and Norwich Fringe Project, include the creation of 300 metres of mixed native hedgerow and a further 3000 square metres of wildflower meadows. Native hedges are now listed as a ‘priority habitat’ under the NERC Act (2006) as it is widely recognised that they have high ecological value. Hedge numbers have declined rapidly in the last century.

    The site presents the opportunity to create a model to deliver a coherent approach to multi-functional green space where land can be maintained for sport *and* recreation whilst improving ‘doorstep’ biodiversity and enhancing appearance.

55. *Netherwood Green woodland* – this woodland has been planted with 300 young trees to increase the scale of the wood and promote age-diversity across the Norwich tree stock. This was managed with Norwich Fringe with support from the TCV volunteer group.

56. *Charter Wood* – maintenance of the young trees recently planted has been undertaken to ensure they establish well, as well as coppicing of older stock to ensure longevity and strong growth. This was managed with Norwich Fringe with support from TCV.

57. *Marlpit Wood* – the wood has been planted with 300 young trees (as bare-rooted whips and donated container-grown trees) to increase the scale of the wood and promote age-diversity across the Norwich tree stock. This was managed with Norwich Fringe with support from TCV.

Financial and Resources

58. There are no direct financial/resource implications of this report.

Legal

59. There are no direct legal implications of this report.

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	**Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:**
Equality and Diversity	The activities, measures, and recommendations outlined in this report will contribute to improving equality in Norwich.
Health, Social and Economic Impact	The activities, measures, and recommendations outlined in this report will have positive health, social and economic impacts.
Crime and Disorder	NA
Children and Adults Safeguarding	NA
Environmental Impact	The activities, measures, and recommendations outlined in this report will all contribute to reducing Norwich's emissions, supporting biodiversity, and/or supporting Norwich's vulnerable residents.

Risk Management

Risk	**Consequence**	**Controls Required**
NA	NA	NA

Other Options Considered: NA

Reasons for the decision/recommendation: NA

Background papers: NA

Appendices:

Trees for Norwich – a 10 Year Plan

Net Zero Communities Final Report

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TREES FOR NORWICH

A 10-Year Management Plan

TREES FOR NORWICH

A 10-Year
Management Plan

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Version control			
Date	Version number	Reason	Author
26/02/2025	V.09		P. Rabbitts / E. Bolton
07/03/2025	V.10	Feedback from Biodiversity team	P. Rabbitts
19/03/2025	V.11	Feedback from Executive Director	P. Rabbitts
08/05/2025	V.12	Feedback from Biodiversity Team	J. Wilkinson
09/05/2025	V.13	Issued to CEEP	P. Rabbitts
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FOREWORD BY COUNCILLOR EMMA HAMPTON

Norwich City Council directly manages many thousands of trees across the city, in its parks and gardens, nature reserves, housing estates, woodlands and nature reserves. Trees are an essential part of our city's environment and vital to healthy urban living. At a time of growing awareness of global climate change and loss of biodiversity, trees and their care is even more important than ever. The council has been and remains committed to the responsible management of the city's trees and has been planting trees in the town since the early part of the 20th century. This tree management plan reaffirms the City Council's ongoing commitment to responsible tree management and to maintaining and enhancing the city's urban forest.

Cllr Emma Hampton

Deputy Leader
Cabinet member for climate and environment
Labour councillor for University Ward

THE NEED AND CONTEXT FOR THIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Norwich City Council manages thousands of trees growing in the city. These are found within many of its parks and open spaces and large areas of woodlands that we manage directly.

Trees are an essential part of the environment and vital to healthy urban living. At a time of growing awareness of global climate change and biodiversity crisis, trees and the care of trees is more important than ever. The City Council has been committed to the responsible management of the city's trees and has been planting trees in the city since the start of the 20th century, building on the excellent work carried out by well-known city forefathers including Captain Sandys-Winsch, parks superintendent from 1919 to 1953 who planted 20,000 trees, making Norwich the green and 'fine' city it is today.

Trees for Norwich - A 10-year Management Plan reaffirms the council's ongoing commitment to responsible tree management and to maintaining and enhancing the city's canopy cover. This is defined as the area of leaves, branches and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above and is usually expressed as a percentage.

Trees play an important role within an urban environment. There has been extensive research in recent years demonstrating the significant benefits trees bring to our physical and mental health, our social and economic wellbeing, to biodiversity, to the air we breathe, and the soil beneath our feet. They can in many cases also act as an acoustic barrier to noise. This is particularly beneficial in an urban area such as ours where traffic noise and noise within high density housing is a potential issue. They also help offset the effects of heavy rainfall, helping to mitigate flood risk, and offset the 'urban heat island effect'. They capture and store carbon and particulates which pose an increasing risk to human health. Together, these benefits that trees provide us with are called 'eco-system services'.

This Management Plan sets out the City Council's approach to the management of its trees on its own land for the overall benefit of the city, its residents, employers and visitors.

Trees bring beauty to our city, but it is central to the management approach that they are not simply considered individually as aesthetic objects but recognised as a key element of the city's green infrastructure essential to the quality of life in Norwich.

This Management Plan sets out the council's commitment to protect, enhance and maintain trees in the city. It describes how this commitment will be delivered and measured.

SUMMARISING THE AIMS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Trees bring many benefits to the city and its residents. This document describes the current tree population in Norwich and how these trees will be managed, inspected and maintained. For instance, it sets out how and why trees are pruned, the circumstances when they will not be pruned and the reasons why trees sometimes must be removed.

The Management Plan affirms a presumption against the removal of healthy trees, subject to complaints, unless the basis of a complaint has an over-riding justification, and no alternative management practice is practicable.

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The City Council will take steps to protect its trees from threats such as the activities of statutory undertakers (including gas, water, electricity and tele-communications) and other excavation activities or building works.

There will be a continuation of tree planting, in suitable sites, to help maintain and extend the tree canopy cover across the city.

The Management Plan will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes in national legislation and developments in arboricultural best practice.

VISION STATEMENT

Norwich City Council's vision for its trees is:

"To preserve and expand the urban forest in a way that is sustainable for present and future generations, and to achieve this we will protect and maintain a safe and resilient urban forest and increase and diversify the urban forest in Norwich"

Defining the urban forest – Forest Research defines the urban forest as comprising all the trees in the urban realm – in public and private spaces, along linear routes and waterways and in amenity areas. It contributes to green infrastructure and the wider urban ecosystem. It provides numerous benefits to human society, and it does so in vast quantities.

Maintaining a healthy and diverse urban forest is critical to sustaining resilient delivery of these benefits, and requires understanding of the urban forest resource, including species and age composition, distribution, and health.

Trees for Norwich is a plan of how the council aims to manage the treescape in Norwich. This will include working together with all the stakeholders to protect, grow and maintain the urban forest. To deliver this overarching plan, it is important we look at the wider national, regional and local policy priorities. These are summarised in Appendix A.

Chapelfield Gardens

The purpose of this management plan

A Tree Management Plan is a comprehensive statement of intent for how we plan to manage, maintain and develop the urban forest in Norwich. It will:

1. Allow for greater understanding of the current tree stock and highlight the contribution it makes to local ecosystem services.

2. Provide a framework for the cost-effective management of all trees in the city and articulating the direction Norwich City Council is traveling.

3. Support councillors as they advocate for their constituents by enabling them with clear policy statements along with detailed guidance.

4. Improve tree health with greater emphasis on the benefits of our proactive tree management and how improved tree health increases the benefits that trees provide us.

5. List the key strengths and weakness of the tree stock and allow us to develop short-medium-long-term goals, objectives, and priorities. It sets out how these can be achieved and measured through clear aims and objectives.

6. Create greater transparency and accountability.

7. Link to other plans and strategies, the Tree Management Plan will align with other council priorities in the Norwich 2040 City Vision, as well as 'We are Norwich: A community-led plan 2024-2029', the Biodiversity Strategy, the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

To ensure a sustainable urban forest, the Tree Management Plan can be used to support the council's case for more trees and enable us to take advantage of funding opportunities from central government and other grant awarding bodies.

THE KEY BENEFITS OF HAVING A TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The urban forest provides a broad range of benefits to people that add to the wider ecosystem services that all the green infrastructure supports. The ecosystem services that trees deliver is broadly linked to their size and the canopy cover that they provide. We will use this Management Plan to highlight the value that trees provide to communities and to ensure that they are viewed as a positive asset that contribute towards to a diverse and vibrant culture in Norwich.

The key benefits of having a defined Management Plan, and through its planned delivery and implementation, are considerable, and will ultimately provide:

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1. **A sustainable urban forest -** that has everything it needs to maintain its extent and enable it to provide the desired ecosystem services.

- **Improved tree health** – increases the ecosystem services that trees provide; healthy trees make a much greater contribution. Proactively managing trees identifies potential issues and enables us to mitigate these in a timely manner. Having a safe, healthy urban forest is integral to promoting increasing the urban forest in Norwich.

- **Tree protection and retention** – is an integral part of maintaining the urban forest, trees should be removed only when it is necessary and replaced with trees that give us the same or increased benefits. To help us protect trees we currently hold 615 Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and have seventeen conservation areas. Having robust tree protection identifies 'at risk' trees and highlights the obligations that potential developers and landowners must maintain and improve the urban forest. Retaining existing trees is more valuable for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) than planting replacement trees, therefore a robust tree retention policy will be enforced during the development process.

- **Increased tree canopy cover** - in line with advice from central government and national governing bodies, we should be working towards increasing the tree canopy cover in Norwich, to a baseline target of 30%. An i-tree eco survey in 2020 put the canopy cover data for Norwich at 17.4% (±2% tolerance of i-Tree Canopy). This Management Plan will assist our aims in increasing tree canopy cover.

- **Resilience to climate change** – a healthier, larger, and more diverse urban forest that increases the positive ecosystem services that trees provide. Creating continuity and enabling measurable contingency plans to be put in place to counter the negative effects of climate change.

- **Tree diversity** – greater diversity of age and species increases resilience within the tree population.

- **Planting the right tree in the right place** – planting trees in a sustainable way to increase the tree canopy cover in Norwich, this will put an emphasis on planting the 'right tree in the right place' and will enable us to efficiently accomplish our aims. It will make sure that we consider factors that influence species suitability such as local environmental conditions, ecosystem services, climate change resilience and whether there is space for the tree to grow to maturity without coming into conflict with infrastructure. Good tree selection will mean that future management costs are minimised.

- **Biodiversity** – trees contribute to biodiversity, a larger, healthier urban forest will aid the council's broader aim to increase biodiversity across the city. They provide connectivity between areas of separated habitat and are themselves habitat providing shelter and food for many species.

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2. **Community engagement -** an aim to share and discuss the benefits that trees provide by:

- **Enabling communities** – by building on the proactive work the council is doing with existing friends groups involved in parks, open spaces and natural areas. We can engage with communities to develop community relationships and promote a culture of shared ownership.

- **Greater benefits to society** – by expanding the urban forest and increasing tree numbers we will also be increasing the health and wellbeing of communities.

3. **A thriving urban forest** that can contribute ecosystem services into the future through:

- **Cost efficiencies** - tree management highlighting the benefits of investing in effective proactive tree management. By having an adopted Management Plan, this increases our chances of attracting funding to support the trees in Norwich through improved monitoring and analysis. It will also help us to forecast upcoming budgetary requirements and apply for funding opportunities as they arise.

- **Reduced incidences of emergency tree work** - through having healthier trees and more effective management. This will have a knock-on effect for reduced instances of culpability following damage to property.

- **Minimised environmental impact of the climate emergency** - by highlighting the positive ecosystem services the Management Plan can support how we improve resilience.

- **Sequestration of carbon** – by trees occurs as they grow, this is increasingly important to offset the negative impacts of pollution from the urban environment. Trees directly reduce the amount of atmospheric CO2.

- **Pollution control** – from trees planted in the right place by filtering the air and trapping particulates within their foliage improves air quality. Planting trees in the right place also forms a barrier that can lessen the effects of noise and light pollution.

- **Shade effect** – of trees is progressively more significant in our warming climate, higher temperatures and prolonged periods of drought put increased pressure on urban communities. Trees planted next to buildings and in public open space reduce summertime temperatures.

- **Reducing the 'urban heat island effect'** – that is created in towns and cities by these urban environments producing and trapping more heat than the surrounding countryside. Trees do this by releasing water vapor through a process called evapotranspiration, that in combination with shading surfaces significantly reduces urban temperatures.

- **Rainwater interception** - trees reduce the runoff caused by storms by slowing the water flow in various ways; through direct capture in root systems, bark and canopy; by stabilising

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soil allowing it to hold and slow water and through water uptake process of transpiration and evaporation via foliage.

4. **Minimise the impact of pests and diseases** affecting trees that are becoming increasingly more prevalent and challenging. The UK Plant Health Information Portal holds information on pests and diseases affecting trees. Trees for Norwich highlights these and contains information about how we will manage them in the Priorities section.

- **Current threats** - issues such as ash die-back, acute oak decline and oak processionary moth.

- **Future threats** - issues that we may face in the future such as *Xylella fastidiosa* or the Emerald ash borer beetle.

- **Biosecurity and tree planting** – stock needs to be procured from companies accredited under the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme and in line with the Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain 2014.

Earlham Park

UNDERSTANDING THE COUNCIL TREE STOCK

A resource called Tree Equity Score UK has been created by the Woodland Trust in collaboration with partners and aims to provide a simplified assessment of overall tree distribution in urban areas. It gives neighbourhoods a score ranging from 0-100. A score of 100 means that the area has met the minimum standard for tree cover. Norwich currently has a composite score of 90 (Appendix B).

To help us understand the urban forest in Norwich we have identified concerns through analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), (Appendix C) to help develop our objectives. This form of analysis works by creating a simple matrix, for example, if concerns that we have identified in the weaknesses, are also present in some form as threats, then this can be easily identified in the objectives.

OUR MAIN AIMS, PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

Our main aims, priorities, operational actions are highlighted below.

Progress will be measured annually, every five years and every ten years respectively.

Aim 1: Protect and maintain and enhance a safe and resilient urban forest

The value of well managed trees and the wider ecosystem services that they provide is increased by proactive tree management. The outcome of the financial outlay on proactive tree management are the added benefits that trees provide. These increased ecosystem services help Norwich to combat the adverse effects of climate change.

Proactive tree management is when trees are actively managed to anticipate what work might be needed by identifying upcoming concerns, for example ordering work to prune branches away from a footpath before they become an issue for pedestrians.

Priority 1: Proactive tree management – Norwich City Council (NCC) already takes a proactive approach to managing its trees with the details of our cyclical inspection program described in our Tree Risk Management Framework (TRMF).

The TRMF aims to minimise the risks posed to people and property by trees and enables NCC to manage our trees to the benefit of local communities. This framework ensures that we continue to proactively manage our trees.

Maintaining our trees proactively with periodic inspections helps early identification of pests and diseases allowing for timely intervention, planning and reporting.

- **Action 1.1:** Complete all tree safety inspections in line with the TRMF.
- **Action 1.2:** Order work to trees in line with the TRMF.
- **Action 1.3:** Investigate all customer tree enquiries within the allocated time frames in line with the TRMF.
- **Action 1.4:** Report any suspected findings of tree pests and diseases which are of concern in Britain.

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Priority 2: Norwich's tree inventory – is a record of all the council managed trees and includes information such as a trees location, size, age, and health. Since 2010 we have been recording tree inventory data digitally and currently hold information on 39,400 trees. The data is then uploaded to the council's GIS systems and can be viewed by both council employees and members of the public.

This data is essential when establishing future planning for the maintenance of the council's trees.

We use the Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) methodology to value the council trees, this assesses the economic, social, and environmental benefits that they provide Norwich and have been valued at just over £300,000,000.

Our tree inventory has documented most of the council managed trees, and we will prioritise surveying the remaining areas.

- **Action 2.1:** Earlham Cemetery – trees within falling distance of the main roads, pathways and boundaries have been recorded; we will complete the final areas within the next five years.
- **Action 2.2:** Rosary Cemetery – trees within falling distance of the main roads, pathways and boundaries have been recorded; we will complete the final areas within the next five years.

Priority 3: Parks and play areas – Norwich has 23 formal parks and 81 play spaces that contain 11,141 trees.

Amongst these there are several Grade II and II* historic parks and gardens designed by Captain Sandys-Winsch, park's superintendent at Norwich City Council from 1919 to 1956. Many are also within the city's conservation areas.

It is in these heritage parks where the trees present the greatest management challenges. Many of the original tree lined avenues are now coming to the end of their lives at similar times and are starting to develop biomechanical features and diseases that could become a safety concern. We must have a plan in place to start the process of renewal of the trees in Norwich's heritage parks so that it is done in a way not to adversely affect their overall aesthetic.

- **Action 3.1:** Include tree renewal programmes for declining avenues in park management plans.
- **Action 3.2:** Identify new areas suitable for tree planting and to include these in management plans.
- **Action 3.3:** Seek longer term funding for the replacement and management of trees within these important heritage parks.
- **Action 3.4:** Review and adopt best practice with regards to the use of parks for events and ensure actions are undertaken to protect root zones from the impact of such events.

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Priority 4: Woodland and natural area management – we maintain 28 woodland sites around Norwich of various types and ages.

Woodlands are a significant part of Norwich's landscape, where they provide an important green lung, diverse habitats, accessible natural green space as well as recreation space for people to enjoy.

Much of the council's woodland is mature and well established having been planted by previous landowners prior to the industrial revolution. Many of the trees are mature and moving into veteran status. Sensitive and ongoing management is needed to maintain the woodland stock and introduce new trees ready to replace the older ones into the future.

Norwich City Council is already actively managing its woodlands, with recent woodland management work carried out at Marlpit Paddock, Danby Wood, Bunkers Hill Woodland, Netherwood Green Wooded Ridge and Charter Wood. The work has involved woodland thinning, haloing around specimen trees, coppicing, pollarding creating woodland glades and replanting with mixed native species.

Proactive woodland management involves making difficult decisions regarding the removal of trees that is needed to create healthier more resilient urban woodlands. Any tree removal in the urban area is often viewed negativity by local communities although it is an essential part good management. We will engage with, and communicate, the benefits of maintaining woodland to local communities.

- **Action 4.1:** Increase capital and revenue resources for more proactive management of woodlands, natural areas and tree belts (applying the concepts of continuous cover forestry to the urban environment to create and maintain healthy age structure without losing canopy cover). The council will make best use of grant applications where appropriate.
- **Action 4.2:** Carry out National Vegetation Classification (NVC) level 1 / 2 survey of the woodlands – baseline data survey on appropriate sites.

Priority 5: Mousehold Heath

Mousehold Heath consists of woodland, grassland, heathland, and recreational open space covering 184 acres. It was given to NCC by the Church of England in 1880 for the citizens of Norwich. Historically, Mousehold Heath was much larger and predominantly open heathland, whereas today there are large areas of maturing woodland.

Mousehold Heath is maintained and preserved by the Mousehold Heath Conservators and managed on a day-to-day basis by two wardens. Where possible, work to maintain the trees on the heath is carried out by the wardens in cooperation with local volunteer organisations.

Professional tree work is carried out as necessary around the heath and adjacent highways by our main contractor NCSL. When ordering this work, we will consider the priorities highlighted in the Heath's management plan.

- **Action 5.1:** Mousehold Heath wardens will carry out tree inspections in accordance with our Tree Risk Management Framework and report findings to the arboricultural officers.

- **Action 5.2:** To work with Mousehold Heath wardens to allow natural regeneration of the woodland.
- **Action 5.3:** To work with Mousehold Heath wardens to manage invasive species such as sycamore and rhododendron.
- **Action 5.4:** To leave standing dead and decaying wood where it is safe to do so and create dead and decaying habitat wood piles on Mousehold Heath and elsewhere, where appropriate to do so.

Priority 6: Trees within housing areas

The benefits that trees provide play an important role in improving the quality of council tenants' and wider citywide residents' lives and increases biodiversity throughout the city.

We maintain 8,438 trees within communal housing areas and 1,253 trees recorded in tenanted council houses throughout the city.

In 2019, we marked the centenary of council housing with several celebrations, showcasing the proud history of homes within our city. To mark the event, we planted 100 trees in communal housing areas around the city.

Historically there have been tree management issues in housing areas caused by inappropriate tree planting that continue to cause issues for tenants. We will use the principles of planting the 'right tree in the right place' to reduce future management issues.

- **Action 6.1:** identify new areas suitable for tree planting as part of the estate aesthetic programme and especially in areas of low tree canopy cover and encourage tenants to either adopt a tree or plant a tree in their own gardens.

Priority 7: Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Areas

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sets out the legislation to enable the council to legally protect trees. This is via a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or if they are growing within a conservation area.

Protecting trees from unnecessary pruning or removal is an import function of the council. We currently hold over 600 Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and have seventeen conservation areas in which trees are offered protection.

Trees are assessed on their suitability for a TPO using the TEMPO system (Tree evaluation method for preservation orders) developed by Forbes Laird Arboricultural Consultancy. We only consider serving a TPO if a tree is under threat.

- **Action 7.1:** Carry out a TPO review - we currently hold 615 Tree Preservation Orders that are helping to protect trees in Norwich. Many of these have been in place for a long time and need reviewing. We will need to review internal and departmental resources to update the TPO register.
- **Action 7.2:** Increase public awareness of the importance of TPOs and the importance of the legal requirements and their implications where appropriate.

Priority 8: Planning Development and Enforcement

The National Planning Policy Framework is the national set of planning policies that must be applied when considering applications for new development. The policies include statements regarding how development should protect and maintain trees, stating that new streets should be tree lined and that trees should be incorporated into new developments with measures in place to secure long term maintenance. It also states that wherever possible existing trees should be retained.

As part of the recently introduced Environment Act new development projects have a greater responsibility to provide green infrastructure and biodiversity protections and enhancements. The new mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement will help maintain and build in resilience to projects that could otherwise be harmful to the environment. Within the legislation there is also more protection for trees with an exemption status for irreplaceable habitat.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities "to ensure whenever it is appropriate that in granting planning permission for any development, adequate provision is made by the imposition of conditions for the preservation or planting of trees."

The City Council has several development management policies and supplementary planning documents in place which promote the protection and retention of trees and aiming to secure new tree planting as an integral part of new development, including.

The Council will only register applications for development when supplied with full tree related information in line with B.S.5837:2012.

- **Action 8.1:** Monitor construction sites where trees are affected by development to ensure that all tree protective measures are in place.
- **Action 8.2:** Liaise with the planning enforcement team in relation to tree protection/damage/removal issues related to new development.
- **Action 8.3:** Monitor and enforce new tree planting agreed through new development.

Priority 9: Enable community involvement

Around Norwich there are many 'Friends' groups and residents associations from local communities that work together with council officers to advocate for the parks and open spaces on behalf of citizens. We collaborate with them on management plans for trees in parks and they help us to liaise with local people.

We work in partnership with the Norwich Fringe Project and Mousehold Heath Wardens to maintain our natural areas and woodlands. When it is safe to do so, much of this work such as coppicing, pollarding, and woodland thinning is carried out by volunteers. We also run a tree sponsorship scheme called Trees for Norwich that allows local people to sponsor a new tree to be planted in the city.

As well as active engagement, we will investigate establishing a network of tree wardens to better connect with local communities to inform about the benefits trees provide and how people can get involved with helping to maintain our trees.

The Management Plan can create a platform to engage with local communities to give them a sense of ownership of the environment.

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- **Action 9.1:** Investigate the potential to operate a pilot tree warden scheme in Norwich.
- **Action 9.2:** Expand the Trees for Norwich sponsorship scheme.
- **Action 9.3:** Work in contact with community enabling officers prior to tree planting and investigate how we can involve local communities.
- **Action 9.4:** Encourage local residents to plant trees in their own gardens and promote the benefits of trees widely through marketing and social media.
- **Action 9.5:** Promote the planting of fruit and nut trees to help alleviate food insecurity and contribute to healthier diets, but adopting the principle of right tree, right place.

Priority 10: Highway trees (Norfolk County Council Highways Department)

Norwich has 10,000 trees within the adopted highway. They are some of the most prominent and highly valued in the city and are maintained by Norfolk County Council's Highways department.

Highway trees contribute greatly to the urban forest improving amenity and should be preserved and enhanced

We work closely with highways officers to maintain the street trees in Norwich, and they welcome the chance to support our priorities within this Management Plan. They share our vision for a safe and resilient urban forest ready to combat future challenges.

Many of our street trees are in hard landscape areas, and this can complicate replacement tree planting. Priority should be given ensuring that there is provision for replacement planting as well as investigating the opportunities for new plantings.

- **Action 10.1:** Work with Norfolk County Council to identify areas for new and replacement tree planting along the highways, aligning with their 'Tree Planting and Resilience Strategy'.
- **Action 10.2:** To expand the Trees for Norwich sponsorship scheme.

Aim 2: Increase and diversify the urban forest in Norwich

By creating a larger and more diverse tree resource we can maximise the benefits that trees provide communities and ensure that the council's trees continue to make a positive contribution to climate adaptation.

Planting more of the right trees in the right places is key to succeeding to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and the rise of invasive pests and diseases.

To enhance tree health and biosecurity, NCC currently procures all tree planting stock from companies accredited under the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme.

Priority 11: Increase tree canopy cover

Tree canopy cover (TCC) is a good indicator of the benefits that the urban forest can provide and an important management tool, it can be estimated using several different methods. These methods use different criteria that often creates varying results.

We will work towards increasing TCC in Norwich to 30% in line with advice from central government.

Our aspirations are that we should embrace the 3-30-300 rule proposed by Cecil Konijnendijk that states everyone should be able to see at least three trees from their home. We should aim to have 30% TCC in every neighbourhood and we should all be within 300 metres of the nearest high-quality green space. Of course, to achieve this, we need to know what we have in greater detail and therefore we need an accurate baseline figure for the tree canopy cover in Norwich before we can set a realistic and achievable target for improvement. There are several different methods for measuring TCC and they all have their own strengths and weaknesses. The method that we use needs to be easily repeatable so that we can measure future changes.

We already have some data regarding the TCC in Norwich. A biodiversity baseline study carried out in 2024 that was commissioned by the council has analysed lidar data and estimated that the tree canopy cover is currently 25.1%. As this is the most recent survey, we will be using this as the baseline figure for Norwich.

A study by Google of data from 2022 has been published putting the TCC in Norwich at 24%.

We also have data from a free online tool called i-tree eco, run by Forest Research in conjunction with i-Tree.

The last i-tree eco survey undertaken for the Norwich area in 2020 put the canopy cover at 17.4% (±2% tolerance of i-Tree Canopy). Analysis by wards highlights the lowest four that we can prioritise for improvement. These are Mancroft, Sewell, Catton Grove, and Nelson (Appendix D).

We will place an emphasis on planting ‘the right tree in the right place’ to enable the urban forest to grow without the need for large increases in maintenance budgets.

Although we have some limited data on the extent of the urban forest in Norwich greater understanding would enable us to better target areas for increasing tree canopy cover.

- **Action 11.1:** Utilise the agreed baseline figure for tree canopy cover in Norwich.
- **Action 11.2:** Set short-medium- and long-term targets to increase tree canopy cover in Norwich.
- **Action 11.3:** Improve newly planted tree establishment rates by monitoring annually the numbers of newly planted trees that survive for an initial three-year period.
- **Action 11.4:** Engage with stakeholders to identify new tree planting opportunities, prioritising wards with lowest TCC.
- **Action 11.5:** Work in partnership with Norfolk County Council Highways to develop opportunities for planting replacement and new street trees, prioritising wards with the lowest TCC.
- **Action 11.6:** Seek out and consider relevant funding opportunities and set short-medium- and long-term tree planting goals within a year.

Priority 12: Tree species diversity

As with other plant taxonomy, trees are categorised by their family, genera, species and variety with a healthy tree population having diverse mix.

To avoid monocultures urban tree populations should contain no more than 10% of a particular species, 20% of a particular Genus and 30% of a particular Family. Maintaining healthy species

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diversity will increase resilience enabling us to better combat the adverse effects of climate change and pests and diseases.

Norwich City Council owned trees are currently within these parameters (Appendix E). Although this is desirable, we are quite close to these tolerances for some of our trees, with the most common family and species being 25.6% Rosaceae and 9.26% Sycamore.

By increasing species diversity, we can build in greater resilience to future threats.

- **Action 12.1:** Analyse the tree species by ward to enable us to target concerns at a local level.
- **Action 12.2:** Monitor the species of new trees that we plant to ensure we maintain a diverse tree population.
- **Action 12.3:** Proactively manage woodlands that are becoming monocultures of sycamore to create healthier more diverse habitats.

Priority 13: Tree age diversity

To create greater resilience in the council tree stock, it should have a structure containing a healthy variation of different age classes. Tree age is usually linked to tree size, so tree populations are often measured by their size, using the stem diameter at breast height (DBH).

This method illustrates (Appendix F) that we have an aging tree population, ideally the council's trees should have 40% 0-20cm, 30% 20-40cm, 20% 40-60cm and 10% over 60cm.

The data clearly shows that we have too many old trees and not enough younger trees ready to take their place and that to have greater resilience we must work towards having a more diverse age structure of council trees.

- **Action 13:1:** Ensure that replacement tree planting is undertaken in the following planting season.
- **Action 13:2:** Work with stakeholders to identify areas for new tree planting.
- **Action 13.3:** Put management plans in place to facilitate the replacement of Norwich's aging tree avenues, tree groups and urban woodlands.
- **Action 13.4:** Introduce more coppiced areas in woodland and tree belt, plant suitable trees to be coppiced on rotation to create age diversity in woodlands.

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Review

We will monitor the Management Plan annually, to ensure that the performance indicators are progressing and are measured against the objectives. The medium- and long-term goals will then be reviewed at five- and ten-year intervals.

We will also investigate the possibility of working together with other local authorities by benchmarking.

We will also investigate opportunities for consultation with national bodies such as the Arboricultural Association, London Tree Officers Association and the Institute of Chartered Foresters.

Lion Wood

APPENDIX A: POLICY CONTEXT

Norwich 2040 City Vision

A Liveable City that adapts and undergoes renewal... works together to combat climate change... values green and open spaces... has excellent air quality. This means protecting and maintaining our green and open spaces to improve biodiversity and air quality.

The Environment Act 2021

In 2021, The Environment Bill received royal assent to become The Environment Act. This operates as the UK's new framework of environmental protection following the UK's exit from the European Union and allows the government to enshrine environmental protection into law. It offers new powers to set binding targets, including for air quality, biodiversity, and waste reduction. Of note is the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which requires development sites to achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity compared to the pre-development condition of the site, and the strengthened duty on local authorities to act for biodiversity and monitor/report on those actions under the NERC Act 2006.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local nature recovery strategies (LNRS) are a system of spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement introduced under The Environment Act 2021. These strategies must agree priorities for nature recovery, map the most valuable existing areas for nature and map specific proposal for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals. The intention is for LNRSs to support the planning application process, including for mandatory biodiversity net gain, as well as the strengthened biodiversity duty introduced by the Environment Act. Norfolk County Council has been appointed as the responsible body in charge of producing the LNRS for Norfolk.

We are Norwich 2024-2029

This is the council's community-led plan which outlines five priorities. This Management Plan relates to the priority to create *A Climate Responsive Norwich*, fulfilling, to a greater or lesser degree, each of the four related aims, and particularly the third aim, as set out below:

1. A Net Zero council by 2030.
2. A Net Zero Norwich by 2045.
3. Vibrant parks and green spaces; and
4. Adapting to climate change.

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Green Spaces Better Places - A Parks and Green Spaces Strategy for Norwich - 2025-2035

The Parks and Green Spaces strategy sets out how Norwich will invest in and improve the parks and green spaces in the city. It applies to all parks and green spaces in Norwich excluding spaces within housing estates, highway verges and smaller ancillary amenity spaces. The strategy applies primarily to parks and green spaces, recreation grounds, cemeteries, play spaces, allotments, and our natural and semi-natural green space assets including the urban fringe, especially valuable in an urban community such as ours. It sets the direction of travel and will assist in securing funds for continued investment in our parks and green spaces.

Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032

As set out in the council's Biodiversity Strategy, the council's biodiversity policy is to 'create a city where biodiversity can sustainably recover and thrive, halt species decline and increase species diversity and abundance by 2030 or sooner' affirming the council's commitment to lead and coordinate nature recovery in the city.

One of the actions of this strategy is to develop and implement a strategy for trees. A further action is to develop a nature recovery network for the city, a vital component of which are the city's trees.

Current Local Plan Policy

The currently adopted Local Plan for Norwich City Council consists of the following documents:

- Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk
- Norwich City Council Site Allocations Local Plan
- Norwich City Council Development Management Policies Local Plan

These documents contain multiple policies that support protection and enhancement of the natural environment including trees through the planning application process such as through JCS Policy 1, DM6 and DM7.

In addition, the council has also adopted several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to assist in the application and implementation of the Development Management Policies. Of relevance is the Landscape and Trees SPD which sets out landscaping requirements for new developments in Norwich.

Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP)

The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is a strategic framework for development in the Greater Norwich area, and was adopted in March 2024, guiding growth and infrastructure from 2018 to 2038. The GNLP serves as a comprehensive planning document that outlines the vision for growth in Greater Norwich over a 20-year period. It aims to balance the need for new housing, jobs, and infrastructure while protecting the area's unique environment and community character.

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Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy

Norwich City Council, along with Broadland and South Norfolk Councils, has adopted a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Greater Norwich area. The main aim of the strategy is to support the protection, enhancement, and provision of GI, promoting health and wellbeing, provide places for outdoor recreation and play, create, maintain, and improve habitats, help mitigate the effects of climate change and provide a linked network of multi-functional spaces. The strategy has established a baseline of existing GI in Greater Norwich and provided an assessment of whether this meets current and future needs, identified future opportunities for GI, as well as supports planning applications and other decision making, and has created delivery plans to implement the strategy.

River Wensum Strategy

Norwich City Council led on and produced the River Wensum Strategy along with partners including the Environment Agency, the Broads Authority, the Norwich Society, and Norfolk County Council. The strategy aims to bring life back to the river corridor in the city focussing on the unique social, economic, and environmental aspects and opportunities of this asset. The strategy contains a chapter on improving the environment and a delivery plan has been produced setting out the projects looking the deliver the aims of the strategy.

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APPENDIX B – TREE EQUITY SCORE

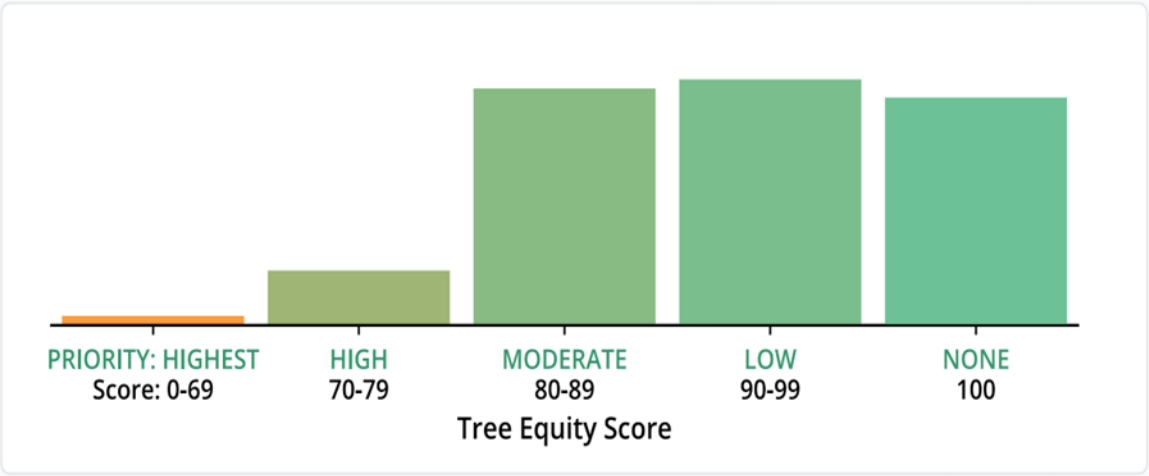
Norwich, England

Composite Score: 90

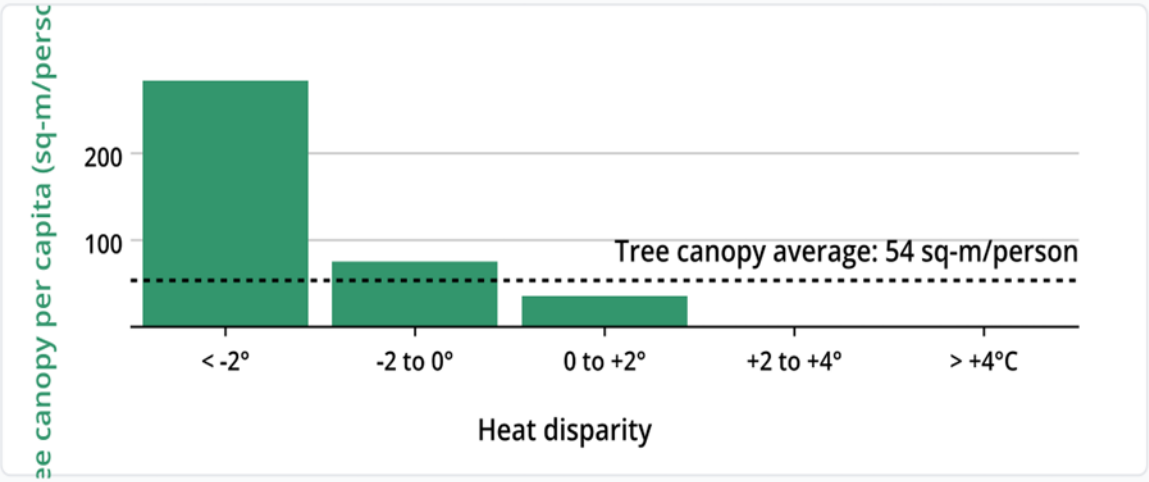
Summary of Norwich urban areas

Population	143,967
Income ranking (IMD)	mean: 12,274 | range: 1,004-32,040
Employment ranking (IMD)	mean: 13,052 | range: 1,080-32,635
Health ranking (IMD)	mean: 8,245 | range: 292-26,502
People from minoritised ethnic groups	13.1%
Children and older people	32.8%
Average NO2 air pollution	10.7 µg/m3
Average PM2.5 air pollution	7.3 µg/m3

Distribution of Tree Equity Scores



Tree canopy vs. Heat disparity



NORWICH City Council

Get all LSOAs to a Tree Equity Score of 75

1 of 85 have a Tree Equity Score below 75

172,601 sq-m of canopy expansion will be needed to get all LSOAs to a score of **75** (this is equivalent to 3,097 medium trees). See the significant benefits to the community this will create.

Total canopy added

0.53%

Annual ecosystem service value

£56,944

NAL

CARBON

Carbon sequestered

52.8

tonnes

Carbon sequestered equal to:

98

petrol-powered cars offset

WATER

Stormwater runoff prevented

3.1

million litres

Stormwater runoff equal to:

47

standard swimming pools

AIR

Pm2.5 pollution removed

69.6

tonnes

Pm2.5 pollution equal to:

292

petrol-powered cars offset

Nitrogen dioxide removed

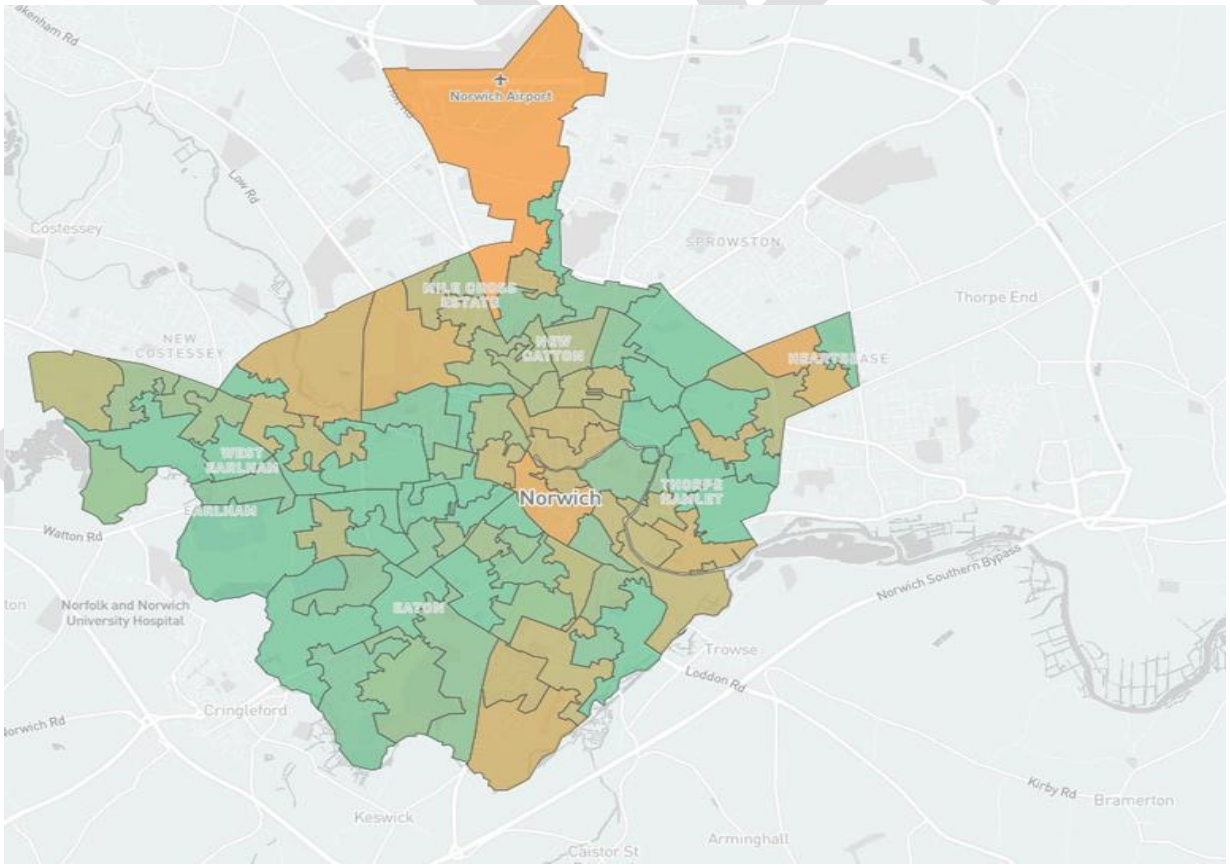
209.5

kg

Sulfur dioxide removed

27.1

kg



Norwich Tree equity score map

APPENDIX C SWOT ANALYSIS

This analysis guided the development of our objectives. Our main aims and priorities should include objectives that allow continuation of our strengths while also addressing the identified weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

- Tree age diversity
- Tree planting funding
- Young tree establishment
- Community engagement
- Woodland management
- Future Planning
- Pests and diseases
- Climate change

Strengths

- Tree risk management procedure – proactive management enables us to maintain our tree resource sustainably and fulfil the council's duty of care to protect members of the public from being harmed by trees.
- Digital GIS mapping and tree inventory data – since 2010 we have held all our tree management data within a specific digital application called Ezytreev. This is an essential tool when that enables the council to successfully manage its trees.
- Tree species diversity – we are currently maintaining a resilient tree resource in the city based on current tree species, genus and family so are ready to face future challenges.

Weaknesses

- Tree age diversity - Norwich has an aging tree population that needs greater diversity.
- Tree planting funding - to help us to maintain and increase the urban forest in Norwich requires additional funding. This adds pressure to the council's finances. We can apply for government funding as and when it becomes available, but this is intermittent.
- Young tree establishment rates - planting trees are a costly process requiring funding and large amounts of staff time to facilitate. We should work to prioritise improving our newly planted trees survival rates.
- Community engagement - at this time is limited, we should investigate ways to engage with communities to enable us to help improve residents understanding of the benefits that trees provide.
- Woodland management - in recent years we have concentrated resources on tree risk management. In the future, we need to engage a program of more proactive woodland management. However, this requires further investment and the award of successful external grant funding.

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- Future planning - too often we only look forward to the next scheduled tree inspection. To succeed we need to change the way we think about trees and use this Management Plan to be the catalyst for change and to look ahead to what the city will look like in the next 50-100 years. The mechanism for change is partly by thinking more strategically and by adopting Green Infrastructure principles.
- The impact of events in some open spaces such as Earlham Park and Chapelfield Gardens – events are popular in many of our open spaces and concerns remain on damage to tree route systems due to compaction.

Opportunities

- Tree planting funding – the Urban Tree Challenge Fund - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and the Local Authority Treescapes Fund - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) are both available for Local Authorities to supplement their budgets. The council has taken advantage of these funding streams.
- Social and privately owned housing – we should encourage tree planting in the gardens of tenanted council and privately owned properties.
- Local business inclusion – we should engage with local businesses to promote the benefits that trees provide and encourage tree planting.
- Community engagement – we should look to engage with more with people about the benefits of trees and management decisions.
- Biodiversity baseline study – recommendations to inform further opportunities for growing the urban forest and increasing the ecosystem services it provides.
- Planning new developments – to include increased provision for tree planting as part of achieving mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Threats

- Tree age diversity – an aging tree population threatens the sustainability of the urban forest, leaving it vulnerable to decline.
- Pests and diseases – are becoming an increasing threat, not only caused by the prevalence of imported plants, risking accidental introduction but also by the warming climate, that when combined with extreme weather events such as periods of drought and flooding, puts trees under stress increasing their vulnerability to pest and diseases.
- Climate change – has increased the number of extreme weather events that threaten urban trees. Heatwaves, drought, high winds, and flooding are occurring much more frequently. This is also affecting when trees come into leaf, flower and when leaves fall, impacting the length of the growing season that has consequences for ecosystems.
- Loss of trees through new developments – should not be seen as acceptable, the importance of trees and green infrastructure in providing high quality living space means that they should be given priority form the beginning of development planning.
- Veteran trees - require specialised management. Identifying the veteran trees of the future is vital to ensure continuity of habitat and to ensure the spectrum of age diversity is maintained.

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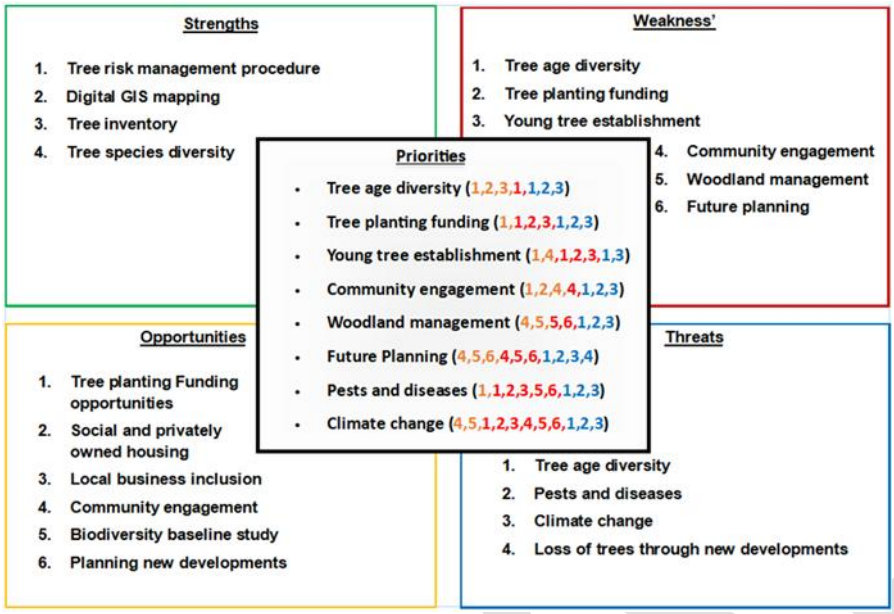

APPENDIX D: PERCENTAGE OF TREE COVER BY WARD

Ward	% TCC	Ward	% TCC
Eaton	27.9%	Mile Cross	18%
Lakenham	20.6%	Crome	16.5%
University	20.5%	Nelson	13.5%
Bowthorpe	20.2%	Catton Grove	12%
Thorpe Hamlet	19.3%	Sewell	11%
Town close	18.4%	Mancroft	10.7%
Wensum	18%		

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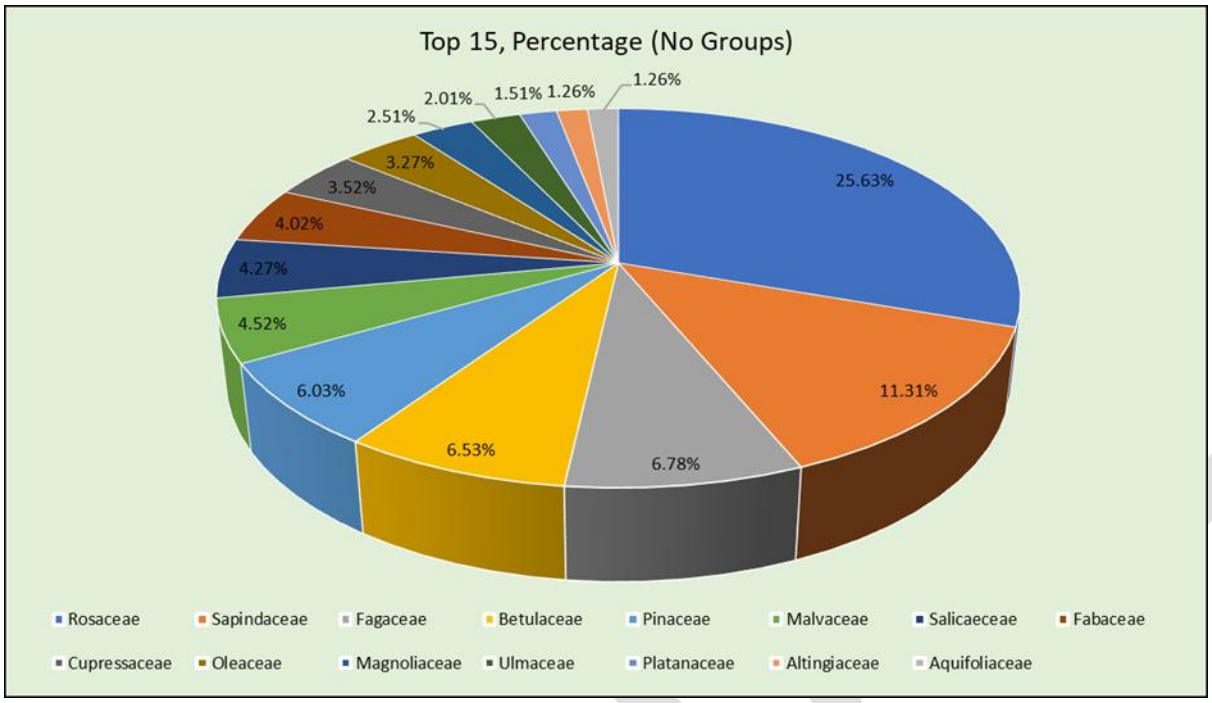
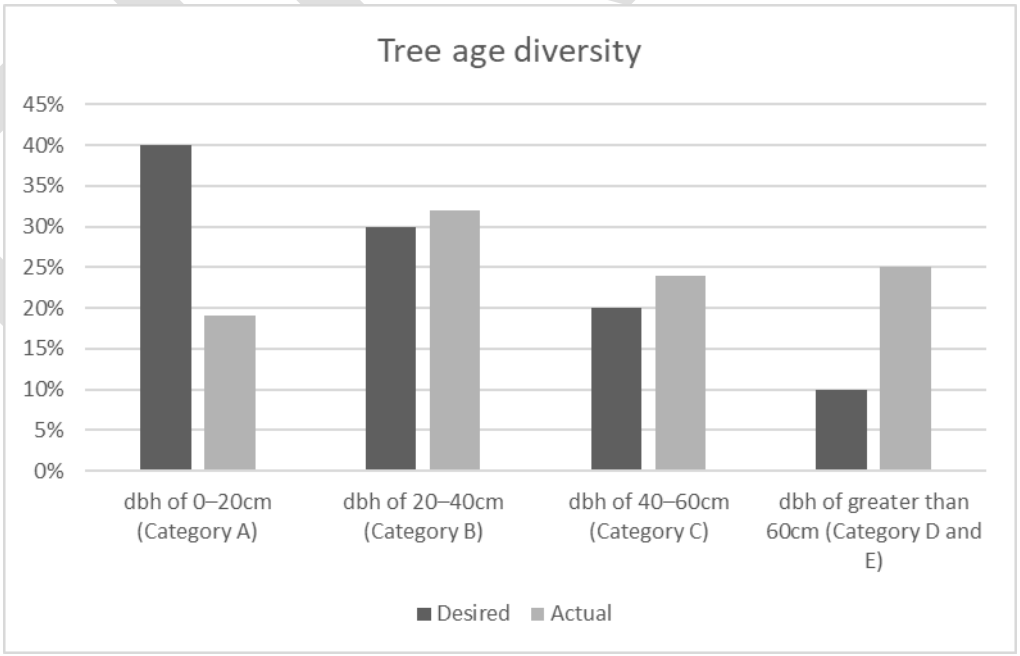
APPENDIX E: TOP 15 BY PERCENTAGE IN NORWICH



APPENDIX F: TREE AGE DIVERSITY



Tree size	Desired	Actual
0–20cm dbh (Category A)	40%	19%
20–40cm dbh (Category B)	30%	32%
40–60cm dbh (Category C)	20%	24%
60cm+ (Category D and E)	10%	25%

GLOSSARY

Arboriculture - The selection, production, planting, maintenance, and removal of all woody plants for amenity purposes.

Biodiversity - the variety of life in all its forms, levels and combinations; includes ecosystem diversity, species diversity, and genetic diversity.

Biosecurity - A set of precautions to reduce the risk of accidentally introducing or spreading alien invasive species, including potential pests and pathogens.

Carbon sequestration – the processes of capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Diameter at breast height (DBH) - The diameter of a tree at around 1.5 metres above ground level.

Ecosystem Services - are the benefits and services provided by ecosystems that support human existence. These include continued provision of oxygen, clean air, drinking water, an equitable climate, the productivity of agriculture, forestry and oceans, control of flooding, soil erosion, coastal erosion and carbon sequestration.

Ecosystem – An area consisting of a community of species, interacting with each other and the physical environment where they live.

Environment - Includes the air, water and land, and the relationship that exists between them and all living things, including plants, man, and other animals.

GIS (Geographic information system) - A collection of computer hardware, software, and geographic data for capturing, storing, updating, manipulating, analysing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information.

Green infrastructure (GI) - An interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, greenways, parks, forests, and other open spaces that support native species.

Green space - Any vegetated land or water within an urban area that serves as recreation or open space. This includes neighbourhood and regional parks, gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, bike and walking paths, and urban landscaping.

Habitat - Food, water, shelter and space that supports plant or animal life.

Tree Inventory - gathering of accurate information on the location and characteristics of trees within a defined geographical area.

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Native Species - Species present in a defined region for a certain amount of time without having been brought by humans (cf. exotic), for instance in Britain since the English Channel was flooded around 6,000 years ago.

Non-native species - A species that due to direct or indirect human activity occurs in locations beyond its known historical or potential natural range. Refers to species from another continent, region, ecosystem, or habitat.

Pollution - Substances introduced into the environment by human actions that contaminate the environment.

Tree canopy cover - a metric that measures the area of ground covered by the tree canopy which includes the branches, foliage, and stems.

Tree Protection Order (TPO) - A legally enforceable document made by the local planning authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity.

Urban Forest - Trees, woody shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants, waterways, wildlife, grasses, and other green infrastructure.

Urban heat island effect - A phenomenon where air temperatures in urban areas are 2-10°F hotter than surrounding rural areas due to the high concentrations of buildings and pavement in urban areas.

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NORWICH
City Council

Norfolk NetZero Communities – Final Report - Draft

Executive Summary

Project Overview

The Norfolk NetZero Communities project was designed to accelerate Norfolk's transition to Net Zero by addressing the non-technical barriers that prevent citizens and businesses from taking climate-positive actions. With Norfolk's unique geographical vulnerabilities and socio-economic challenges, the project aimed to empower communities and support clean growth through a place-based, citizen-led approach.

Objectives

1. **Empower Citizens**: Provide accessible, relevant information to help individuals make informed, climate-conscious decisions.
2. **Support Businesses**: Enable local businesses to adapt to and benefit from the green economy, including workforce development and supply chain evolution.
3. **Drive Behaviour Change**: Increase demand for low-carbon solutions such as home retrofits, sustainable transport, and community energy schemes.

Approach

The project was delivered in four stages:

- **Establishing Seven Net Zero Communities** representing Norfolk's diversity.
- **Deep Community Engagement** to identify local barriers to Net Zero.
- **Co-Production of Solutions** with residents to test interventions.
- **Scaling Successful Interventions** based on socio-demographic data and emissions profiles.

Key Findings

- **Barriers Identified**: Lack of knowledge, trust, and financial resources were the most significant obstacles. Misinformation, fear of scams, and perceived high costs discouraged action.
- **Place and Life Stage Matter**: Barriers and motivators varied by geography and demographic. Older residents were concerned about return on investment, while younger adults prioritized affordability and family needs.
- **Trust is Crucial**: Local leaders and peer-led initiatives were more effective than national campaigns in building credibility and engagement.

- **Language and Framing Matter**: 'Net Zero' can be seen as too technical or divisive. When ideas were communicated in plain terms and connected to real-life benefits, they resonated more with people and built confidence.
- **Shared Benefits Build Engagement**: Actions gained momentum when tied to practical outcomes—lower bills, healthier homes, stronger communities. Framing initiatives around mutual gain helped overcome hesitation and build interest.

Tested Interventions

- **Energy Champions**: Trained locals provided trusted advice, increasing confidence in retrofit decisions.
- **Local Case Studies**: Real-life stories helped normalize and demystify green technologies.
- **Open Homes & Drop-in Events**: Peer-led experiences and face-to-face advice proved impactful.
- **Digital Tools**: Platforms like *Fairer Warmth* and *Homewise* offered accessible, tailored guidance.

Impact

- Engaged over **800 residents** through events, surveys, and workshops.
- Enabled **21 households** to access retrofit funding.
- Supported **7 community buildings** with energy audits and decarbonisation plans.
- Helped secure **£20,000** for sustainable transport infrastructure.
- Informed regional and national climate forums with project findings.

Legacy and Next Steps

- Develop a **communication toolkit** tailored to place and life stage.
- Expand **trusted advice platforms** and **local case studies**.
- Continue collaboration through the **Norfolk Climate Change Partnership**.
- Integrate findings into future **local government structures** and **devolution planning**.

Conclusion

This project has laid a strong foundation for Norfolk's NetZero journey by demonstrating that meaningful action must be rooted in local context, trust, and community empowerment. The project has identified the way in which Norfolk can enable a shift from fragmented efforts to a coordinated, inclusive model that can be scaled and replicated across the region and beyond.

Project Overview

What we set out to achieve

Norfolk aspires to an integrated growth and regeneration framework that decouples growth from environmental harm. Its coastline is absolutely core to its sense of place; wind turbines forming part of its skyline and the low carbon and environmental goods and services sector has a key role in our evolving economy, the livelihoods of our residents and the UK's ambition to achieve 'Net Zero' carbon. The County's topography and geography make it particularly vulnerable to the cumulative effects of climate change and the need to recognise and respond to our challenges - including the decarbonisation of communities/economies and the requirement for physical adaptations are fully acknowledged by all partners.

This project had two ambitions:

1. To provide Norfolk citizens, communities, and visitors with relevant information to enable people to take transformational steps (big or small) to modify behaviour in favour of Net Zero, empowering people to make positive choices along a pathway to Net Zero with climate change in mind.

2. To support Norfolk's business sectors to benefit from clean growth, supporting business model evolution, including workforce and supply chains, to best serve local citizens choosing a pathway to Net Zero. This includes creating workforce growth, giving access to people with the clean growth skills thereby grasping the opportunities borne out of a green economy.

Our project set out to create a quantified change in citizen's behaviour and propensity to invest/move to low carbon net zero adaptations (e.g., increased retrofit homes & buildings, increased community energy schemes, making different choices on greener transport options, increased demand for local circular economy green solutions). It aimed to generate a greater demand for net zero changes in local communities, the local economy and supply chains (e.g. construction, heating, technology & logistics, land management, tourism) resulting in changes in local business operating models, the creation of more green jobs and workforce opportunities, and a firm shift along the pathway to Net Zero in Norfolk.

Non-technical barriers we sought to address.

Net Zero interventions are fragmented in Norfolk with co-ordination required to facilitate the scaling up of supply-side capability and capacity. Norfolk's rurality presents several sustainability challenges in common with other geo-spatially large counties. Sustainable transport, warm homes & retrofitting, and the need for an overarching energy strategy which

decarbonises supply and builds resilience for community are key drivers for the NCCP as well as the:

- Appliance of a place-based model to co-ordinate and integrate policy and provision at a local level, leveraging the work of existing structures such as the Norfolk Skills Board, Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce and Local Authority economic development functions to identify business sector enterprise-level opportunities for diversification, upskilling, reskilling and address under-employment.

- Acceleration of citizen demand-side through centralised signposting, sector-led advocacy, and positioning as a trusted 'go-to' for media comment. Backed by coordinated, syndicated communications and concise messaging to establish, mainstream and reinforce behaviours, while localising and personalising climate examples. Monitoring of receptiveness of different approaches shapes and refine the overall strategy.

- **Norfolk's Non-technical Barriers**:

Economic - Norfolk has an economy which is skewed towards occupations requiring lower-level qualifications. With jobs projected to increase in the retrofit sector (in particular heat pump engineers, electricians, and solid wall insulation installers) but this is dependent on generating consumer demand for services.
Legal - supportive planning/development consent regimes. Across Norfolk's housing stock, only 68% of domestic properties have an EPC record with 36.9% (15.1% GB average) of domestic dwellings in Norfolk living off the gas grid. The local skills improvement plan will start to address the skills gap, the need to accelerate consumer demand is also required.
Social - trust in technical solutions, access to trusted sources of information and advice, consumer preferences, and the failure to connect behaviours with local and global risks form some of our key social barriers.
Contextual Factors - elevated susceptibility to the impacts of climate change, local skills/qualifications challenges, we have an opportunity to engage re-entrants to the labour market, displaced older workers.

How we delivered the project
The project was delivered in a stage approached: -

- Stage 1 - **Establish seven Norfolk Net Zero Communities**, engaging citizens and visitors in behaviour change to develop the right positive interventions. These were identified by a detailed analysis of demographics to ensure that each community represented one of the many diverse communities found in Norfolk. This approach

was important to ensure that the legacy of the project was scalable when future funding became available.

- Stage 2 – **Deep engagement with each community** was undertaken to understand the impact of non-technical barriers (across housing, transport, and energy) in each place. This allowed us to identify common issues and barriers, along with any place specific challenges citizens experienced.
- Stage 3 - **Co-production in real time with communities** to understand barriers and generate innovative solutions to address those barriers. This included the testing of the interventions including qualitive information and digital resources. All interventions were aimed at moving citizens closers to taking action and potentially engaging with local suppliers to make retrofit changes to their homes or community buildings.
- Stage 4 - **Launch successful interventions which have the biggest benefit more widely**, targeted at the right citizen segmentation based on socio-demographic cohorts and guided by territorial emission data.

As with many local authorities, the Norfolk system has limited resources dedicated to working on NetZero solutions. At the point of project inception, the countywide climate change partnership had only just made the decision to appoint a dedicated resource to co-ordinate its activities. To address this challenge, the project used project funding to: -

- Appoint a NetZero Innovation & Delivery Manager to project manage.
- Procurer an organisation skilled in delivering community engagement, the national environmental charity Hubbub was appointed to do this.
- Appoint an unpaid panel of industry experts to act as an advisory panel to the project.

Local engagement was key to understanding the impacts of non-technical barriers on citizens ability to make changes or even be ready to consider a move towards NetZero living. The project quickly identified that in Norfolk many citizens are intensely feeling the impacts of increases in the cost of living making NetZero living seem like an unaffordable or unattainable goal, meaning that events specifically tailored toward this where unlikely to be engaged with. To address this throughout the project where possible existing events and groups where utilised as a route to engagement. This was done by using a community engagement role employed through Hubbub to attend different events and engage citizens.

As outlined above the project was delivered in a staged approach this enabled deep listening with each of the seven communities to identify: -

- Common barriers experienced by all seven communities.
- Unique barriers influenced by the 'place' i.e. the geographical, physical environment, demographic, or social make-up of the community.

Phase One: Identifying Barriers

Phase one identified significant non-technical barriers including knowledge, trust, and financial aspects.

- **Knowledge Barriers:** Residents lacked clear, impartial, and tailored advice on where to start with home energy improvements. Awareness of retrofit options was low, and confusion existed, particularly for older or heritage properties, highlighting the need for house and life stage specific guidance.
- **Trust and Misinformation Barriers:** Widespread mistrust existed towards tradespeople, installers, and energy companies, often due to awareness of rogue firms and scams. Negative perceptions of retrofit as disruptive or risky also contributed. Friends, neighbours, and charitable organisations were consistently identified as the most trusted sources of information, significantly more so than energy companies or national media.
- **Financial Barriers:** Cost barriers were widespread across all communities and demographics. High upfront costs, uncertainty about return on investment, and concerns about the impact on property value were significant obstacles. Awareness of available grants, subsidies and loans was low, and residents often incorrectly assumed they were ineligible. Financial support was seen as a key motivator.
- **The Importance of Place:** Some barriers such as financial concerns and a lack of trusted advice, were consistent across communities, while others varied Barriers and engagement preferences varied significantly across communities due to differences in housing stock, demographics, infrastructure, and social connections. Engagement preferences also varied by place, while trusted local networks facilitated outreach and helped counter fear of scams.
- **Barriers Specific to Businesses:** Local businesses and tradespeople faced challenges including being too busy to upskill, administrative complexity of grants and a perceived lack of customer demand

Phase Two: Testing interventions and outcomes.

Based on the barriers identified, Phase two tested several interventions aimed at increasing residents' willingness and ability to retrofit their homes:

- **Developing Local Case Studies:** This involved supporting community groups to share stories of local retrofit projects. **Outcome: Locally led case studies proved to be a low-cost, effective way to build trust, raise awareness, and counter negativity by showcasing real experiences in familiar settings especially in areas with low confidence or uptake.** They made retrofit relatable and credible.
- **Energy Champion Initiative:** This piloted placing a trained, trusted individual within a community to provide energy advice. **Outcome: Knowledgeable trained, locals within communities appears to boost resident confidence and understanding** of home energy improvements and should be explored further. The model makes retrofit advice more accessible and relatable through peer-led support. **Challenges include recruitment and sustaining funding.**
- **NESTA 'Visit a Heat Pump' Open Homes Initiative:** This allowed residents to visit homes with heat pumps installed. **Outcome: In-person visits helped build trust and shift perceptions of heat pumps by offering real-life, peer-led experiences.** Visitors found them quieter and more compact than expected. **However, low host availability, privacy concerns and practical barriers limited reach.** These visits are more impactful when run by trusted individuals like Energy Champions and could be complemented with case studies.
- **Energy Drop-in Events:** Local events offering face-to-face advice were organised. **Outcome: Local drop-in events were an impactful way to engage residents**, particularly effective when offering face-to-face advice, partnering with experts and known local groups, utilising localised promotion (e.g., leaflets, posters) and holding events in familiar local venues at flexible times. Partnering with trusted organisations and local leaders added credibility. However, they can be resource intensive and require lots of promotion.
- **Message Testing Focus Group (Working Age Households):** An online focus group explored messaging preferences with residents aged 30-45. **Outcome: This group preferred positive, practical messaging focused on co-benefits** like warmth, cost savings, and increased home value, with environmental aspects as secondary support. Directive, negative, or anxiety-inducing messaging was disliked. While digital engagement was preferred due to time constraints, in-person engagement was welcomed if integrated into existing activities.
- **Other Interventions:** A Heritage Property Retrofit Event with experts and case studies received positive feedback. A Thermal Imaging Camera Loan Scheme helped visualise energy loss but faced technical challenges.

The table below sets out the interventions tested and location.

Barrier	Intervention to address barrier	Community tested in
Lack of positive local examples of retrofit to inspire residents. A negative bias towards retrofit (e.g. expensive, disruptive to install, not worth it).	Developing and sharing of local case studies*	Marshland St James, Postwick (Brundall Ward), Eaton
Confusion about the suitability of retrofit technologies; need for clear, unbiased advice.	Energy Champion initiative providing trusted, local information Open Homes - Visit a Heat Pump initiative	Eaton (with the Our Power Energy Champion project)
Negative perceptions of heat pumps (e.g. noise, space requirements). Need for peer-led support.	Open Homes – Visit a Heat Pump initiative	Eaton
Confusion around funding schemes; scepticism toward energy companies; fear of scams	Funding event explaining financing options in a trusted, local setting. Energy Champion initiative	Ormesby, Stalham, Marshland
Concerns about retrofitting heritage properties and need for tailored advice	Heritage Property Retrofit Event	Swaffham
Difficulty accessing understandable, motivating information about retrofit*	Homes Fit for The Future Focus Group to shape messaging*	All communities
Difficulty visualising energy loss and savings in the home	Thermal Imaging Camera Loan Scheme	Marshland St James, Stalham, Swaffham

*To focus efforts in phase two, testing was focused on the energy events and focus groups interventions, to dive more deeply into what information would help residents understand and engage on energy updates

Please see appendix A of this report for full details of the listening and testing phases of the project.

Following the testing phase of the project, a series of engagement and co-production events were held with a variety of stakeholders including community representatives, voluntary sector representatives, local government officers, and elected members. These events were used to distil the findings of the project including barriers and what solution worked in moving citizens closer to NetZero Living. These events particularly our Norfolk NetZero Communities conference acted as a call to action to create a legacy for the project and

quantified future commitment from the partners of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership to take the following actions: -

- Develop a common approach to communicating around NetZero living and climate change actions that considers both how 'place' and life-stage influences citizen outcomes.
- Commitment to further utilise the Homewise and Fairer warmth platforms to give citizens trusted advice and information as well as developing the Norfolk Retrofit Guide
- Identify, share, and promote both written and video case studies of people that have successfully transitioned to low carbon solutions.

Appendix B of this report sets out an illustrated guide to our Norfolk NetZero Communities conference and give more detail on what was discussed and next steps agreed.

Why was this innovation.

To many outside Norfolk this might seem like a standard research project but in the local context this was an entirely new approach to tackling the issues surrounding NetZero living and the barriers preventing our citizens from moving forward. Historically actions around climate change and NetZero living have tended to be a one size fits all approach due to resource and service delivery options. This project and the funding attached has allowed Norfolk as a system to spend the last two years deeply listening and understanding seven very different communities. It has enabled the time and space to test and iterate solutions that are firmly shaped around the places that our citizens live, the stage of life they are in and how we can create an adaptive approach to this going forward.

Impact

Our project reached and engaged with over eight hundred people, seeking their views and input into unlocking the barriers they experience in moving closer to NetZero living. This included: -

- 576 people through community engagements
- 150 people through a survey
- 70 people attending a heritage building event
- 33 people attending roundtable discussions on energy
- 59 people attending a drop in event on home energy efficiency

Through the work of the project, we delivered the following quantifiable benefits to the communities we worked with: -

- Enabled 21 people in Ormesby who were unaware that they were eligible for HUG2 funding to retrofit their homes, to access funding.

- In Brundall ward, we helped the local council and county transport team to submit a successful funding application for £20,000 to improve walking and cycling infrastructure to the local train station.
- In Postwick, we supported the local community centre to access free technical advice and support to fix their broken heating system and replace it with a new air source heat pump.
- We provided seven community buildings one in each NetZero community with a detailed energy audit and decarbonisation plan which will enable them to be ready to bid for funding.
- 30 other community buildings have benefitted from advice on how to access their own energy efficiency and funding applications.
- We tested the Fairer Warmth platform which gives impartial advice and information on energy efficiency to residents, this was well received and as such we are now funding it for a further year which will provide support to all residents in Norfolk.
- We have enabled the 'Our Power' energy champions network in Norwich to have free access to Fairer Warmth to help expand their energy advice support offer to residents.
- We tested the Homewise platform which provides an online retrofit plan for resident's homes. Again, this was successful, and we are now funding it for a further year which will provide support to all residents in Norfolk.

Through the technical advisors' programme supporting the project we secured the following benefits for Norfolk: -

- Working with City Science we have developed a clear understanding of the various retrofit finance options that could be developed in Norfolk to support our residents. This includes potential models for delivery with initial costings. (See Appendix C for further details)

- Working with the Carbon Trust we have a detailed understanding of the barriers to community energy uptake in Norfolk and an emerging action plan to take this forward through the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and the Norfolk and Suffolk Energy Plan. (See Appendix D for further details)

- Working with Involve we have carried out an initial series of engagements with communities about community energy and the Norfolk and Suffolk energy plan. These community representatives have provided feedback on how they would like to be engaged on future decisions about energy in Norfolk and this is being fed back into the consultation elements of the energy plan. (See Appendix E for further details)

- Working with Regen we have a detailed set of case studies from other regions in England where they have already undertaken local government reorganisation and/or devolution. This set of learning is enabling us to better decide how climate change and retrofit actions can be built into the new system of local government currently being designed.

There has been a significant interest both regionally in the East of England, and nationally in the findings of our project. We have shared our learnings in the following ways to ensure that other local authorities can benefit from it: -

- Findings have been disseminated via the East of England Regional Climate Change Forum which represents the fifty councils in the region. This has been positively received by climate leads with many stating we have articulated the barriers that they are experiencing in their areas so they will be applying the learnings we have identified about how to better communicate and engage citizens with NetZero living.

- Nationally the initial findings of the project were presented at Government Events' National Climate Change Conference 2025 in February. Again, these were very well received with many attendees stating that they would be waiting with interest to see the final outcomes of the project.

In terms of the qualitative impacts of the project these are: -

- We now have a clear picture of the issues faced by our communities around NetZero living and a set of approaches to begin unlocking these barriers. We acknowledge that this is the beginning of this journey and many of these barriers will take a long time to address.

- We understand that a one size fits all approach will not work in addressing the non-technical barriers that our citizens face. We know that while we need a consistent approach to language and messaging, engagements must be shaped around local places and the life stages that citizens are in. Our next steps for the project will look at creating a set of communications tools that will enable us to do this across Norfolk.

Challenges Faced by your project.

As with many projects of this type we experienced a number of challenges throughout its delivery, some which could be anticipated and others that were entirely unforeseen. Below are the challenges that this project experienced and some of the solutions that we found to address them.

- **Initial scepticism from the chosen communities:** Many of the communities were initially sceptical about being part of the project, some questioned the value or what benefit they would get from being part of it.
  Solution: slow and conscious engagement early on at project inception. We explained the intended outcomes of the project and what action they would see, allayed fears and concerns. We gave them time and space to consider whether they wanted to be part of the project. We ensured a strong sense that the project would be done with and shaped by them, it would not be done to them. In some communities this took longer than initially anticipated, with some taking several months to decide to take part.

- **Changing national landscape perspective on NetZero:** Public perceptions towards NetZero have changed significantly with many viewing NetZero as something that is unaffordable and/or being done to them. This rhetoric created a significant challenge in engaging communities with many initial engagements with community members starting from a perception that the project would be forcing them to take NetZero solutions.
  Solution: open and honest communication about what the project was intending to do and explore. We were clear that this project was not forcing them to do anything and that we wanted to hear from them and work with them to identify a way forward. Rather than starting conversations about NetZero we found talking to citizens about how they could make their home more affordable, energy efficient and more cosy were the most effective ways of engaging them.

- **Climate/environment is not a big enough motivator compared to cost living concerns:** key feedback from all the communities we engaged with was that they are all feeling the impacts of the increasing cost of living. This was influencing their views around environment and climate change. Similar to above they viewed it as a nice to have but it was not a burning issue for them to engage with activities solely focused on this.
  Solution: We utilised existing groups and social infrastructure to engage with them and started conversations rather than creating new groups/events for them to attend. We found this was the best way to maximise engagement. Similar to other challenges we found that basing conversations around solutions that would make their homes more affordable, cheaper to run and cosier were key.

- **Local Government re-organisation and devolution:** mid-way through the project the county of Norfolk was accepted by the Government on to the Devolution Priority programme with a proposed mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk likely to be elected by May 2026. Alongside this, plans to reorganise local government in the area from eight

councils to a smaller number of unitary councils were announced. This has had a significant impact on the ability to plan long-term actions coming out of the project. **Solution:** The technical advisors programme was utilised to create a piece of work looking at the lessons learnt from other parts of the country that had either been through a devolution or local government reorganisation process. This collection of case studies and learning has created a strong foundation to prepare for changes in service infrastructure and start early conversations on what climate action should look like in the new model of government locally. In addition, to prevent inaction project next steps/legacy plans have been shaped into the short, medium, and long-term actions, with short and medium-term actions planed for delivery by the existing structures and long-term actions being fed into conversations around the shaping of new structures.

Next Steps

The outcomes and learning from our project are helping us shape a collective approach in Norfolk through the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and its constituent members about how we better get our citizens to engage with NetZero living activities and generate greater demand for local retrofit installers to deliver solutions. Through our series of co-production and end of project activities we have identified the next steps that will be taken forward collectively: -

- **We will create a common communication toolkit that is tailorable to local place specific issues and the life-stages of our citizens.** This will enable us to create a consistent set of messages across Norfolk that will help more of our citizens understand what action they can take and how it will positively benefit their lives. It will empower them to make the right choices for themselves and reduce the levels of mistrust and misinformation identified throughout the project.
- **We will expand on local written and video case studies.** This will show our citizens what other people like them, living in the same types of home and community have achieved. It will effectively myth bust and dispel common misinformation and negativity biases towards green technologies.
- **We will create a greater focus on trusted advice and information on domestic retrofit.** Through the project we tested the Fairer Warmth platform delivered by the Centre for Energy Equality to deliver widespread advice and information on NetZero living and greater energy equity; and the Homewise tool from the Energy Saving Trust to deliver online retrofit assessments. Both tools are being commissioned for a year to continue to enable citizens to have greater access to information and to help move them forward on their home retrofit journeys at a pace that is comfortable and affordable for them.

- **We will continue to build on the work drawn down from the technical advisors' programme**, particularly around the learnings on devolution and local government reorganisation, work to expand community energy in Norfolk and retrofit finance options.

Key Learnings

Key barriers

The project identified that the key barriers to NetZero living were: -

- Lack of knowledge or information on what were the best actions to take or how to get started.
- Lack of trust in both suppliers and finance schemes available
- Cost or perceived cost of interventions prohibited them from taking actions.
- Negativity bias towards green technologies particularly heat pumps meant people did not act. The language surrounding Net Zero often acts as a barrier to public action. Terminology can be technical, abstract, or unrelatable, making it difficult for individuals to connect with or understand.

Life stages matter

Life stages influenced people's decisions around NetZero living: -

- Many older people were concerned about their return on investment paying back before they died.
- Younger adults were motivated by whether they were planning to stay in their home for a long time, or whether they prioritised spending money on their families to create memories.

Communication is key.

How we communicate is key to successfully engaging with our citizens. Many reported they were feeling the impacts of increased cost of living significantly and viewed NetZero living as an unaffordable nice to have, that while they would like to act on, they simply could not afford to. However, if we changed the narrative away from using language such as NetZero, climate change, and environment, and spoke to them about actions they could take to make their home more affordable, energy efficient and cosy they actively engaged.

Place matters

The socio-economic structure of a community significantly influenced the issues that they perceived as being important. For example, in communities that had a high concentration of heritage buildings or a conservation area many people were concerned about their ability to take retrofit actions, with many believe that planning regulations were a barrier to acting. In other communities, which are not connected to the gas grid, significant concerns were expressed about fuel poverty and how to keep their homes affordably warm. These all

highlighted the need to move away from a one size fits all approach to engaging people on NetZero living and instead adopting a tailored approach that recognised local drivers and concerns.

Visible local leaders are key to building trust.
Trust was a significant barrier to action throughout the project, and we found that local place leadership was fundamental to providing trust. Many citizens were sceptical of the validity of interventions and funding opportunities; they told us that they wanted to see people like themselves having successful interventions to prove that they were not going to be scammed or subjected to poor quality work. By engaging local trusted 'leaders' in the communities it provides a level assurance that enables other citizens to trust and act.

Existing social infrastructure is key.
Where possible do not seek to create new social infrastructure, seek to engage people through existing groups, clubs and events and you are more likely to get a better response.

What Could Others Use or Replicate?
If we were to offer advice to any organisation looking to replicate our work, it would be do not underestimate the length of time it takes to engage communities at the beginning of the process. Many communities often feel that they have been done to rather than meaningfully engaged and it takes time to build trust with them but also a willingness to participate in a significant research project. Time and space need to be given to each community to deeply listen and identify the barriers. Otherwise, it is very easy to jump straight to putting solutions in place without fully understanding what is influencing their behaviours.

Other actions we would suggest are: -

- Stakeholder mapping is key to understand the best routes to engagement or how to find those hard-to-reach groups. Recognised local leaders will be key to getting quality engagement and adding creditability to your interventions.

- Understand the "place'" geographical, social, and economic data is key to understanding behavioural drivers. This will come through a variety of sources including local knowledge from key local stakeholders and publicly available data.

- Do not create new groups or activities, it is important to engage people where they feel comfortable to build trust.

- Explore the role of delivery partners if you lack resources internally. We found real benefit from having people to engage at a local level with each community to gain trust and understand the barriers. This trust then transferred to testing solutions.

Conclusion

The project has marked a transformative step in Norfolk's journey toward enabling its citizens to have more cosy, affordable and efficient homes. Using the funding we created a deeply community-rooted approach, the project has begun the journey of shifting Norfolk from a fragmented, one-size-fits-all approach to a place-based, citizen-led model of action.

By engaging over 800 residents, the project has not only uncovered the nuanced, non-technical barriers to Net Zero living—such as trust, affordability, and awareness—but has also piloted practical, scalable interventions that directly address these challenges. The funding enabled the creation of trusted local networks, the trialling of innovative tools like Fairer Warmth and Homewise, and the beginnings of tailored communication strategies that resonate with people's real-life concerns.

In effect, the project has laid the groundwork for long-term systemic change. It has catalysed a shift in how Norfolk's institutions, communities, and businesses can collaborate on supporting citizens to engage with retrofitting their homes.