Committee Name: **Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel**

Committee Date: **10/06/2025**

Report Title: **General Update**

Portfolio: Councillor Hampton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate and Environment

Report from: Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture

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 structure of this report has been changed to reflect the council's transition to a new way of structuring and reporting environmental activity. The transition reflects the replacement of its Environmental Strategy 2020-2025, during the 2025/26 financial year, with its new Climate Responsive Norwich Programme 2025-2035.

2. 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

3. This report is structured using the above 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

4. *Climate Responsive Norwich Programme 2025-2035* – consultation and drafting of this scoping document is now complete. A final draft is being prepared which incorporates consultation feedback. The final version will be circulated to consultees during June 2025 and will then be used to structure, coordinate, communicate and report on the climate and biodiversity action of the council.

5. *Net Zero Pathway Plan for Norwich* – the council is developing a net zero pathway plan for Norwich in collaboration with the consultancy firm Opergy Net Zero and UK Power Networks. This innovative plan will set out net zero pathways for each sector in the city e.g. housing, transport, commercial & industrial, etc,

creating annual decarbonisation targets based on the Paris Agreement aligned SCATTER methodology, ultimately aiming for the city to be net zero by 2045. The plan will also set out, in broad terms, the sequenced actions required to meet the targets. Ideas and opinions received during the public consultation exercise held during February 2024, are informing the development of the plan.

The approach taken by the council ensures that UK Power Networks, who manage the city's electricity infrastructure, can import the sector targets directly into their future investment model. In this way UK Power Networks are accurately informed of the city's decarbonisation plan so they can ensure the city's networks are adequately strengthened for electrification of heat, transport and greater use of renewable energy and batteries. The methodology can be easily adapted so future iterations can accommodate boundary changes resulting from Local Government Reorganisation. Initial outputs of the pathway data modelling exercise are expected in the last week of May 2025.

6. *Sustainable Food Norwich CIC* – following COP26, the council became a signatory to the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration and has since supported Sustainable Food Norwich CIC to make an application for Norwich to become part of the Sustainable Food Places network, which was successful. Sustainable Food Norwich CIC are assisting the council in the early stages of developing a sustainable food action plan for the city, with the principles of this strategy being included in the Net Zero Pathway Plan for Norwich document, in the sections relating to the city's indirect emissions.

7. *New Supplementary Planning Documents* – the council is developing new supplementary planning documents (SPDs) to support the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP), in collaboration with South Norfolk and Broadland Councils. These new documents will outline to developers how to implement policies of the GNLP.

   The SPDs currently in production will support the implementation of Policy 2 in relation to Sustainability Statements covering issues such as water efficiency, energy generation, pollution, access to services and sustainable design; and Policy 3 to formally adopt the recently produced Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy and set out expectations for providing green infrastructure for new development to reduce visitor pressure on protected sites.

8. *Norfolk & Suffolk Energy Plan* – Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils are collaborating to produce a Norfolk and Suffolk Energy Plan. A budget of £200,000 has been allocated and a procurement exercise underway to find a suitable provider; by the time this report is published a supplier is expected to be appointed. The scope of the plan includes ensuring growth and decarbonisation can be accommodated by the energy networks of the two counties and alternative solutions considered where networks are unable to deliver energy where needed.

   The Norfolk and Suffolk Energy Plan also aims to unlock the barriers to community energy by tackling the challenges to community understanding, skills, trust and uptake of low carbon technologies in their communities.

The *Net Zero Pathway for Norwich* work reported in paragraph 5 above will feed into the Norfolk and Suffolk Energy Plan.

9. *Norfolk & Suffolk Water Strategy* – Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils are collaborating to produce an Integrated Water Strategy. Engagement regarding the scope of the strategy started in April 2025. The need for the strategy is evidenced by the water scarcity of the region, climate change impacts, growth and the need to retain business and create inward investment.

Finance

10. *City Science Retrofit Finance Workshop* – as part of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership's (NCCP) activities around community energy, council officers recently participated in a workshop led by specialist consultancy City Science to explore retrofit finance options that local authorities across Norfolk could promote. The productive session focused on five potential options for further exploration. City Science are preparing more detailed plans and costings in relation to these finance options to facilitate further action by NCCP partners.

11. *Lendology Proposal* – the council met with representatives from Lendology CIC and has subsequently received a proposal for the delivery of services. Lendology, provide loan administration services on behalf of local authorities, to accelerate retrofitting in private sector housing. Lendology's service is one element of a retrofit accelerator loan scheme for residents in the city. The other element is the availability of a capital 'lump sum' (from which to disburse loans) regarding which the council is exploring a number of options.

Communities

12. *Big Community Switch* – the council is participating in the latest round of the 'Big Community Switch', organised by iChoosr. This is a collective energy purchasing scheme which offers households the opportunity to save money on their bills. Registration for Norwich residents opened on 12th May 2025 and will close on 28th July 2025. An auction with energy suppliers will be held on 24th June 2025 to identify the supplier able to offer the best deal to residents. Registered participants will then have until 1st August to accept their offer, if they choose to proceed. During the previous round in December 2024, 670 households registered across Norwich. The tariff offered through this scheme is always a 'green tariff' with energy supplied from 100% renewable energy sources. The council continues to participate in this scheme to promote affordable energy and alleviate fuel poverty as part of its Sustainable Warmth (fuel poverty) Strategy.

13. *Our Power* – Our Power community energy advice group are continuing to grow in capability and capacity. Following an event at St Stephen's Church on 27th of February 2025, Our Power have recruited additional volunteers to their steering group. Additionally, they are currently undertaking a recruitment process for a paid general manager, which is expected to help Our Power expand their activity considerably. Additional lottery funding of c£17,000 has been won and there are

currently six Energy Champions undertaking regular energy advice surgeries and home visits across the city. The council continues to work closely with Our Power to identify further opportunities for growth.

14. *Norwich Climate Commission Update* – Norwich Climate Commission is currently recruiting new volunteer Commissioners. Norwich Climate Commission acts as an independent critical friend and trusted expert adviser to the council, providing support in numerous ways. The Commission is made up of volunteers with either personal or professional subject matter knowledge and/or experience relating to the fields of climate, sustainability and biodiversity. The application process for new commissioners opened on 15th May and will close on 15th June 2025. Thereafter a transparent selection process will be undertaken to identify suitable candidates to join the Commission.

    Additionally, the Commission is recruiting to a part-time post via University of East Anglia (UEA) which will provide invaluable support in planning public engagement events and expanding the outreach of the Commission. It is expected this will lead to public engagement events on various topics such as water, community energy and sustainable transport, further engaging the communities of Norwich.

15. *Green Doctor Service* – Norwich's 'Green Doctor' service, provided by Groundwork East in partnership with the council, continues to provide free specialist advice to households experiencing fuel poverty. Since July 2024, the Green Doctor has completed 215 home visits in Norwich to provide energy consultations and to install free energy saving measures such as radiator reflector panels and draught-proofing. This is estimated to have saved 33.65 tonnes of CO2e to date. The service has recently received extra funding via National Energy Action (NEA) to deliver additional work including training sessions for health providers in the city to form new partnerships. Discussions are underway to increase resource, especially during the busy winter months, when waiting times for a Green Doctor consultation can be up to four weeks.

16. *Climate Ambassadors* – officers of the council helped to staff the Climate Ambassadors stand in 'The Explorium' at The Forum as part of Norwich Science Festival between 15-17 February 2025. Climate Ambassadors is a two-year project funded by the Department for Education as part of its Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. It aims to connect educators to volunteers working in sustainability to help schools and colleges develop and deliver climate action plans. The event involved engaging with young people around issues of climate and biodiversity, as well as giving away packs of wildflower seeds to promote biodiversity. Over the course of the weekend over 200 engagements were made, including directly with decision makers at schools and colleges.

    The regional lead for Climate Ambassadors in the east of England is UEA, and council staff will continue to liaise with partners there to identify suitable opportunities to volunteer with local schools.

17. *Norfolk Net Zero Communities Project* – the ‘Net Zero Communities Project’, managed by Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP) and funded by Innovate UK, is reaching its conclusion in June 2025. The project has centred around close engagement with one community in each Norfolk district, Eaton being the Norwich community, to explore barriers to uptake of home retrofit measures, energy efficiency and sustainable transport. This project has yielded useful learning regarding barriers to sustainable behaviours, and the development of ‘persona’ archetypes which can guide approaches to engaging with residents based on their varying life circumstances.

    A full day co-production event will be held on 13th June 2025 at the Kings Centre in Norwich to present the project findings and enable discussion on its legacy and next steps. This event will be attended by council officers, portfolio holders, community representatives and other stakeholders.

    As part of the project’s final stages, a ‘Community Energy Roundtable’ event was undertaken at the Ipswich Road United Reformed Church in Eaton on 28th April 2025. This session was run in partnership with public participation specialists ‘Involve’. The session engaged with a focus group comprising members of the community, regarding aspects of energy to determine levels of existing community knowledge and the approaches local authorities should take to fill knowledge gaps.

    Building on the work of the project, NCCP has used a proportion of remaining project budget to commission energy advice tools which can be tested with the project’s communities, to determine how beneficial and effective they might be. This includes Homewise, Fairer Warmth, Solar Wizard and Mapping for Change. These on-line tools provide tailored recommendations about home energy and retrofit options based on information provided by homeowners about their dwellings. This action is aligned to one of the council’s objectives of providing a ‘digital retrofit hub’.

Buildings

18. *Warm Homes: Local Grant* – following an expression of interest (EOI) submitted to DESNZ in November, the funding allocation for the council was confirmed in February 2025. DESNZ have confirmed a grant of £4,745,409 to be delivered over three years with a possibility to extend the project by a further two years if sufficient funding is allocated in the government’s funding review. 100% of the funding is granted on the basis that no council co-funding is required.

    The project aims to improve 330 private sector homes over three years, with up to £15,000 available for each home to improve energy efficiency and a further £15,000 for low carbon heating solutions such as heat pumps.

    The scheme is in the mobilisation phase, with strong early signup to the scheme. The funding criteria have been summarised on a dedicated council webpage here:

(https://www.norwich.gov.uk/info/20608/energy_efficiency_and_reducing_energy_bills/4192/warm_homes_-_local_grant)

19. *Sustainable Warmth Competition Evaluation Study* – following completion in 2023 of this previous grant scheme for improving private sector homes, which saw 288 measures installed, the council commissioned a study to gain insight into scheme outcomes. The study looked at a number of technical and process related outcomes to understand how grant delivery performance can be improved. For example, people who signed up to the scheme but who didn't proceed to have works undertaken were interviewed to find out why they didn't proceed. Scheme participants who did proceed to the works phase were also interviewed to find out the opinions and attitudes towards the scheme. The study provides valuable insight to inform and improve the design of the latest Warm Homes: Local Grant scheme and future schemes.

20. *ECO4/GBIS Funding* – the council has an ongoing arrangement with FlexConnect which allows simpler 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. This scheme allows for individual local authorities to have an 'LA Flex' arrangement, potentially making the funding available more widely than OFGEM's standard eligibility criteria. The council has created a new and updated 'LA Flex' statement to benefit as many residents in Norwich as possible.

    FlexConnect manage the administrative process of verifying householder eligibility and liaising with pre-vetted installers to deliver works under the schemes. FlexConnect also undertake quality control checking and report outcomes to the council. There are presently six installers registered with FlexConnect to undertake works in Norwich, with more expected to be onboarded soon.

    The council has briefed relevant partners such as the Green Doctor and Our Power community energy champions, who can refer households to FlexConnect. Residents can apply for this funding here https://www.flexconnect.eco/norwich

Infrastructure

Citywide Heat Networks – following the success of an initial £80,000 feasibility study, the council is pursuing funding for the next detailed stage of study which will determine the technical and commercial approach to developing heat networks in the city. A bid for £310,000 has been produced which will be submitted as soon as DESNZ's Heat Network Development Unit (HNDU) Round 15 funding window opens, expected in June. Council officers met with senior HNDU officers in May to discuss the bid and express its importance to Norwich.

21. *New Heat Network Regulation* – the council is preparing for new heat network regulations expected to start in April 2026. For the first time, the supply of heat will

become a regulated utility by Ofgem, in the same way that gas and electricity are regulated. As well as creating new consumer protection frameworks and technical standards, the regulations also aim to accelerate new heat network development by creating heat network development zones in cities. Norwich has been one of 27 cities which has taken part in 'zoning studies' run by DESNZ, which have created the knowledge base required to develop the new regulations.

22. *Citywide Electrical Infrastructure* – as well as the collaboration with UK Power Networks regarding decarbonisation (see paragraph 5 above), the council is collaborating with UK Power Networks to ensure the city's electricity infrastructure is sufficient to enable new development, as set out in the Greater Norwich Local Plan. According to Policy 2 of the Greater Norwich Local Plan, all new development is likely to be *electrified* i.e. use electricity as the primary heating fuel, rather than gas. This activity ensures development areas such as East Norwich are included in UKPN's future investment and strengthening models.

Transport

23. *Electric Vehicle Charge Point (EVCPs)* – the council is continuing to liaise with Norfolk County Council's EV infrastructure team and internal officers regarding an opportunity for a rapid EV Charge Point (EVCP) to be installed at Chantry car park on Theatre Street, utilising LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) pilot funding.

    Other council car parks are also being considered for potential EVCP installations, including Sloughbottom Park as part of a regeneration project. In addition to funding available through Norfolk County Council, the council is exploring alternative funding models such as turnkey providers who provide fully funded end-to-end charge point service.

    The council continues to support Norfolk County Council's rollout of on-street charge points. All 46 on-street EVCPs have now been installed as planned under Phases 1-4, with the majority of these now operational. Further installations under Phase 5 are expected to commence later this year. A question was previously asked at CEEEP regarding the on-street charge point at Wingfield Road – it has been confirmed that this is now operational.

24. *Electric Buses Air Quality improvements* – air quality data has shown promising reductions in levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2) over the last year, believed to be due to the rollout of electric buses in the city. 70 zero-emission, battery electric buses were introduced by First Bus from March 2024, following funding received in partnership with Norfolk County Council from the Department for Transport. This enabled First Bus to electrify their highest use cross-city routes, accounting for almost two-thirds of bus journeys they operate through Castle Meadow. Further improvements in bus transport are expected, with the aim for 90% of buses in Norfolk to be low emission Euro 5, 6 or zero-emission models by 2027.

The council's continuous Air Quality Monitoring Station at Castle Meadow, together with all Diffusion Tubes across the city, have seen a reduction in NO_2 levels. The council's Environmental Protection Team produce an Air Quality Annual Status Report each year, a recent draft of which has been completed and is undergoing consultation with the Public Health and Highways departments at Norfolk County Council prior to submission to DEFRA by the end of June 2025. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was previously declared in 2012 due to exceedances of NO_2 criteria, and as such the reduction since observed is positive news. There were no exceedances of the NO_2 annual mean AQS objective within the AQMA during 2024.

Waste

25. *Waste Service Review* – the council is preparing its waste and recycling services to respond to changes required by the Environment Act 2021. The changes are set out below.

    Simpler Recycling - the purpose of the Simpler Recycling proposals are to standardise recycling services across the country. For example, all councils are now required to provide food waste collections to all households. In Norwich, this means that by April 2026, we will extend the existing service to the 8,500 non-council owned flats in the city which are not currently receiving this service. The council has set aside £0.3m in its capital programme for new vehicles (if required) and containers to support this expansion. Additionally, approximately £32,000 revenue and £18,000 capital funding from DEFRA will be received to support this. The council has worked closely with neighbouring authorities through the Norfolk Waste Partnership, to move towards a countywide approach to standardising the range of waste services that each council provides.

    Simpler Recycling also specifies which materials councils must collect, and the city council is well placed to meet these requirements. From April 2027, the council will be required to collect soft plastics and films, including plastic bags, wrappers and flexible packaging, from all households.

    Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging - the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (EPRP) shifts the cost of collecting and recycling packaging materials to producers, and ultimately consumers. It aims to encourage investment in recycling infrastructure by making packaging easier to collect and recycle. From 1 April 2025, producers have been paying into a scheme that covers the costs of local authority collection and processing services. In terms of the scheme, these services must be "efficient and effective", with further guidance expected on the meaning of "efficient and effective".

    Deposit Return Scheme - a Deposit Return Scheme will be introduced by all UK nations in October 2027. This will involve a deposit (likely 25p) being paid on all non-glass drinks containers between 150ml and three litres sold at retail outlets. The deposit will then be repaid to consumers on return of the container to any accredited return point (normally a reverse vending machine at a supermarket or

convenience store). This is expected to reduce the amount of waste collected by the council and reduce litter. It is expected that removal of higher value drinks containers from the council's waste stream may increase net processing costs, and the council is working with partners at NEWS Joint Venture to identify preferred medium and long-term options for materials processing.

Land Use and Emissions Removal

Nothing to Report (NTR)

Council General Fund Climate Action

Leadership and Coordination

26. *New Recruitment* – new posts are being recruited into the Environmental Strategy Team. These posts include 4 new full-time officers including a Retrofit Officer, Low-Carbon Infrastructure Officer, Environmental Projects Officer and an Energy and Water Manager. These positions will accelerate activity in all workstreams (citywide, general fund, and social housing).

27. *Procurement Emissions Plan* – as well as producing a net zero plan for the city (as reported in paragraph 5 above), the council is working towards a climate action plan for its General Fund (Operational) activities. As part of the GF climate action plan, the council is moving forward with a procurement emissions action plan, as part of an exercise to better understand its Scope 3 emissions. Specialist consultants have been appointed who will calculate the emissions resulting from the goods, services and works procured by the council, including its wholly owned businesses NCSL and Lion Homes. The insights gained from understanding procurement emissions will enable an action plan to be developed, to create a net zero pathway plan.

Finance

28. *Community Centre Finance* – council officers have met with a provider of green municipal loan schemes to discuss this approach for financing retrofit works to the council's 15 community centres. This exercise included reviewing case studies where similar schemes have been applied at other local authorities. Under such schemes, council's borrow money from the public to meet the cost of specific retrofit projects. This approach can provide mutual benefits for both the council and the public, who can each access interest rates preferable to alternative options.

    The council has additionally been exploring other retrofit finance options, for example as summarised in paragraphs 10 and 11, and through recent engagement with the National Wealth Fund (previously the UK Infrastructure Bank). During this financial year, the council expects to make a decision regarding

the preferred approach to creating an environmental investment scheme, and further updates will be brought to CEEEP accordingly.

Communities

29. *Green Events Code of Practice* – the council has previously participated in a pilot project to develop a Green Events Code of Practice (GECoP), for which a National Pilot Key Findings report was produced in February 2025. This project was co-run by Vision for Sustainable Events in partnership with the organisation Julie's Bicycle, and assessed 60 events across 10 local authorities according to consistent minimum environmental standards, to explore how effectively local authorities could integrate environmental assessment into event processes. The council is now exploring participation in Phase 2 of the GECoP project, which aims to work with a focus group of 3-5 cities to fully integrate GECoP into practice and processes, to inform a national adoption pathway and produce a toolkit of resources and case studies to support wider rollout.

Buildings and/or Homes

30. *Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF)* – the council has prepared a £75,000 bid for Phase 6 of this funding stream. The funding provides access to consultancy services for making technical and commercial plans to decarbonise heat in public sector buildings. All of the council's operational buildings were included in the bid but unfortunately it was announced in May that the government had decided not to fund Phase 6. The council is now exploring other options for funding this work.

31. *Riverside Leisure Centre Solar PV* – This capital project has progressed according to plan with a completion event booked for the 5th of June. The funder's grant was successfully spent within the required timescales and the project is running under budget.

32. *Community Centre Retrofit Programme* – retrofit options assessments have now been completed for all 15 community centres. Analysis of the findings show that the most effective use for the currently agreed funding is to improve insulation for walls and roofs. Further work has been undertaken to develop technical specifications for works, including insultation and renewable energy systems.

    An exercise is planned during 2025-2026 to establish further funding options taking the form of either council or municipal loans. This further funding will enable the installation, where viable, of further measures identified by the options assessments, such as PV systems and/or heat pumps.

Infrastructure

NTR

Transport

33. *Beryl minutes bundle for council staff* – to promote active sustainable travel to council staff, the council has purchased 100 x 100-minute bundles for free usage of the Beryl app for bicycle, e-bike and scooter journeys around the city. This has been promoted via the staff intranet and posters around City Hall. The minutes are available to download by both officers and councillors, using promotional code NCC100, when signed in on a Beryl account using an @norwich.gov.uk email address. There is a limit of 100 promotional downloads available at this time, based on observed uptake of the previous offer, this may be extended if needed.

34. *Cycle to Work Scheme* – further to a question raised during the previous CEEEP meeting, it is confirmed that the council participates in a 'Cycle to Work Scheme' through a provider called 'Cyclescheme'. Under this scheme, staff on the council payroll can purchase a bicycle or e-bike and associated equipment through a tax beneficial salary sacrifice arrangement, with instalments deducted from gross salary over a 12-month period. This can offer significant savings compared with purchasing the same equipment outside of the scheme. There is a £10,000 limit on equipment value. 2,600 retailers across the UK participate in the scheme, including 9 cycle shops located in Norwich.

Waste

NTR

Land Use and Emissions Removal

NTR

HRA Climate Action – Update on Activity

Leadership and Coordination

NTR

Finance

NTR

Communities

NTR

Buildings

35. *Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.2* – the council is delivering this £5.1m retrofit project in partnership with Eon Energy Solutions Ltd, over 2024-2025 and 2025-2026. This scheme is focused on Solar PV, as well as

loft insulation and external wall insulation. Of the target of 260 installations, 99 installations have already been completed with 34 in progress and 113 awaiting surveys. Tenant interest and sign-up continues to be strong, benefitting from positive outcomes from the previous scheme.

36. *Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (Wave 3) Funding Won* – previously known as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 3, DESNZ confirmed an award to council in February of £12,042,657 to which council co-funding of £10,634,555 is being allocated, to create a project fund totalling £22,677,212.

    This three-year project aims to deliver 1333 solar PV systems, 147 air source heat pumps, and a ground source heat pump system for 24 dwellings.

37. *Low Rise Block Architypes Retrofit Options Studies* – a detailed pilot study of the council's 'MM' low rise architypes, comprising 348 dwellings across 27 blocks, has now been completed. The aim of the study was to (1) develop a methodology for understanding how to retrofit the council's low-rise blocks, and (2) test the council's evolving retrofit strategy.

    The brief for the study was to develop retrofit concept designs which (a) create net zero emission dwellings, (b) reduce energy cost for tenants compared to current gas fuelled heating, (c) have equitable positive outcomes for all dwellings in a block, and (d) minimise capital and operating cost to the council.

    The method developed includes modelling dwellings in an advanced thermal modelling application called PHPP which was developed for the Passivhaus approach to dwelling design. Although not aiming for Passivhaus standards, the modelling application is useful for understanding the benefits and costs of numerous retrofit measures, such as improvements to building fabric and renewable energy interventions. The method can also test the overheating risk of dwellings in their current form as well as following the addition of retrofit measures.

    Having developed retrofit options for the MM architypes, the council is now furthering this work by letting a contract to undertake retrofit options analysis for the remaining low rise block architypes, comprising a further 4681 dwellings. The results of this second tranche of work is expected in October 2025.

Infrastructure

38. *Heat Networks Update* – the HRA manages 29 district and communal heating schemes which serve around 2000 social housing dwellings. In light of the need to decarbonise heat networks, and proposed new consumer protection and technical regulations coming into effect April 2026 as described in paragraph 21, the council has now commissioned 4 studies to better understand how to move forward. Further studies will be commissioned during this financial year.

Transport

NTR

Waste

NTR

Land Use and Emission Removal

NTR

Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032 – Update on Activity

Leadership and Coordination

39. *Trees for Norwich - A 10-Year Management Plan* – appended to this report as a draft for consultation with CEEEP, this plan reaffirms the council's ongoing commitment to responsible tree management and to protect, maintain and enhance the city's canopy cover. The plan sets out the council's approach to the management of trees on its own land for the overall benefit of the city, its residents, employers and visitors. It also describes how this commitment will be delivered and measured. Any feedback from CEEEP members is requested by the 4 July 2025, to be considered for inclusion in the final draft of the plan. Feedback is to be directed to the Environmental Services Manager for Parks and Open Spaces.

    Norwich City Council manages thousands of trees growing in the city, which are an essential part of the environment and vital to healthy urban living. These trees are found within many of the council's parks and open spaces and large areas of woodland that we manage directly.

    Trees provide a number of 'ecosystem services', including clean air, biodiversity, shading, flood mitigation, noise reduction, aesthetic benefits and contributing to health and wellbeing. They also sequester carbon dioxide and contribute to mitigating climate change. It is therefore 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.

40. *Nature Towns and Cities bid* – The council has convened a new nature recovery partnership with Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk and Broadland (SN&B) Councils to bid for £0.764m for a 3-year nature recovery planning project called *NatureCityNorwich*. The project focuses on the whole of the urban area of Norwich. If the funding bid is successful, NatureCityNorwich will co-create an ambitious community-led urban nature recovery action plan to connect and benefit nature, people and place. A comprehensive spatial map will be produced identifying nature heritage under threat, the city's 'nature gaps',

opportunities to develop safe and accessible routes to nature and new ‘doorstep’ nature-rich spaces. The plan gives a voice to and prioritises communities most in need.

All residents, community groups, asset owners, land-managers, contractors and influencers will be listened to and included through extensive, inclusive engagement. The project will establish new ways of doing things including developing innovative blended nature finance models, nature-friendly grounds maintenance schemes and new nature recovery measurement and reporting methods.

A plan of interconnected ‘pipeline projects’ will be developed as will be the conditions for a truly sustainable and inclusive urban nature recovery network. The plan protects heritage at risk, creates the potential for new nature spaces and improves community resilience, health and wellbeing across the city.

The project creates an integrated implementation plan which includes the objectives of council’s Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032, the evolving Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Norfolk and Suffolk and the recently launched Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy.

The funding does not pay for capital projects, but instead aims to establish new ways of funding nature recovery including through Natural England’s green token scheme, Biodiversity Net Gain, carbon sequestration, corporate Environment Social and Governance funding, etc.

The project aims to reduce grounds maintenance costs for the council’s involved, and at the same time improve biodiversity and outcomes for communities.

41. *Nature Towns and Cities (NTC) Scheme Accreditation* – the Accreditation Scheme runs in parallel with the Nature Towns & Cities funding bid but is a separate initiative open to all towns and cities. NTC accreditation will be piloted in England from Spring 2025, aiming to reassure funders and investors that accredited towns and cities are fully prepared to implement green infrastructure improvements.

    To achieve accreditation, a city needs to meet the criteria including actions under such headings as *Setting your vision* and *Building Strong Partnerships*. *The Level One: Foundation* accreditation process has commenced for the *NatureCityNorwich* partnership, with the relevant documents being submitted this year.

    To achieve accreditation, local authorities and community organisations must demonstrate:

    - Community empowerment and participation
    - Effective leadership
    - Cross-sector partnerships
    - Comprehensive improvement and investment plans

42. *Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) mapping* – the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, led by the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership, is in the 'public consultation' phase which is open until Wednesday 11 June 2025. For the Norfolk consultation and survey visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/naturerecovery

    This LNRS is one of 50 being developed throughout the country by each local responsible 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.

43. *Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy (GNGIS) launch* – the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy, developed by the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) was launched in May 2025. Green Infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green and blue (water/waterways) routes and spaces for people and nature.

    Developed with input from a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, this strategy is a culmination of extensive collaboration and provides a flexible framework for guiding and prioritising the most suitable types, locations and scale of green infrastructure needed to support future growth, alongside health and wellbeing, biodiversity and climate resilience. The GNGIS can be found here: https://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/article/67059/Green-Infrastructure-Strategy

44. *Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study (BBS)* – produced in 2023 by Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS), this study provides a detailed resource, collating existing data on biodiversity in Norwich with an assessment of the opportunities and threats to species and habitats. Until recently, this was only available as a report with the city-wide mapping of the data at a low resolution. The biodiversity mapping in the report is now available as a digital resource mapped on to Local View for officers to use. This availability of this data assists the development of nature recovery planning and action.

Finance

45. *Nature Finance Models* – the council's recent bid to the Nature Towns & Cities Fund (described in paragraph 40) includes a proposal to explore innovative financing models for nature recovery. This could include 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

46. *New Biodiversity Monitoring and Surveying Course* – a two-day ecology course has been co-developed between the council and Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), to

be held initially on 19 and 24 June 2025, with NWT ecologists leading the training. The course is free to members of the public and local groups have been contacted through the council's volunteer networks. The course aims for participants to develop new skills in plant identification, site assessment and recording for flora across all biodiverse sites to identify either good or poor habitat conditions.

The course has been developed in response to requests from local volunteer groups to understand more about their local community green spaces. Additionally, it fulfils the council's duty to conserve and enhance protected sites, through measuring and monitoring the biodiversity.

47. *'Mousehold to the Marsh'* (MttM) – the council has helped fund and supported with officer time The Common Lot's development of this community theatre project focused on nature and climate. The concept underpinning MttM is closely aligned to the council's Biodiversity Strategy, the principle of an urban Nature Recovery Networks, and the council's recent funding bid '*NatureCityNorwich'* (see paragraph 40).

    MttM was co-developed during a six-month period of citizen-group research towards and will be performance in a series of live shows across 8 green spaces and parks. The council engaged with the research, collaboration and networking phase of the project on walks and group/public meetings.

    Performances will take place between 2-13 July 2025 at green spaces across north Norwich, including Mousehold Heath, Kett's Heights, Sloughbottom Park, Waterloo Park, Wensum Park, St Clements Park, Peterson Park, and Marlpit Community Gardens. A legacy programme is being developed in partnership with the council, community and climate emergency groups.

Homes and/or Buildings

48. *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 has commenced on the first HRA 'Back Garden Nature' site.

    The council is funding a pilot project for a small number of sites, with varied management approaches to be trialled according to garden type. Appropriate sites were visited in May to assess suitability for inclusion in the pilot project. The project is co-managed by Housing Tenancy, Fringe Projects Manager and Biodiversity Strategy Officer.

    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. 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 from the council and Norwich Fringe Project.

Infrastructure

49. *UEA Yare Valley Boardwalk* – this active travel and nature access route is currently closed due to disrepair. The riverside route forms part of the Yare Valley Walk between Strawberry Fields and UEA Broad. The UEA is leading a project to reconstruct the boardwalk with support from Norwich Fringe and council. Two consultation events have taken place, on 9 May 2025 at Bob Champion Research Park and on 13 May 2025 at the Willow Centre, Cringleford.

Transport

NTR

Waste

NTR

Land Use and Emissions Removal

50. *Replacement and New Tree Planting* – a number of updates on relevant tree planting sites are provided below:

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

   This recreation ground site has potential to be a pilot for additional biodiversity measures, including a native mixed hedge. This is being investigated in collaboration with NCSL and the Fringe Project and Parks Team. 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.

b) 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.

c) Netherwood Green woodland – the wood 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 TCV.

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

e) 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

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

Legal

52. 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 Management Plan, draft for consultation

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