

# Durham County Council's Environmental Statement



**cl!mate**  
County Durham



# Durham County Council's Environmental Statement

The Council recognises the imperative of achieving and maintaining a high-quality natural and built environment and that our responsibility towards it is an integral part of our organisational duties and core values.

## We will:

- Actively identify and take opportunities to improve environmental quality and outcomes throughout our activities;
- Reduce the environmental impact of our activities, operating methods and production and consumption of resources;
- Regularly monitor and report on environmental indicators and continually improve our environmental performance;
- Ensure environmental impacts and sustainability are understood and embedded within our decision-making processes, policies, strategies, projects and working practices;
- Comply with and endeavour to exceed all relevant certification standards, accreditations and regulatory requirements;
- Take a lead role on critical issues such as climate change, nature recovery and single-use plastic reduction;
- Contribute to tackling other global challenges we face as defined by the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- Raise awareness of and encourage environmentally positive behaviours and best practice among employees, members, partners, those we commission work to, residents and our communities; and
- Work with and support others to protect, improve and connect County Durham's natural environment and natural capital.

## Responsibility

Durham County Council's Cabinet and Corporate Management Team have overall, collective responsibility for the Council's Environmental Statement.

A cross service, executive officer team - the Net Zero Carbon Board has been established to drive and oversee the Council's delivery against carbon targets and environmental performance. It oversees and reviews implementation of the Environmental Statement. Performance will be monitored through our Environmental Management System and respective Service Plans.

All employees, including those that work within maintained schools and arm's length organisations are to abide by its principles, including when determining any locally specific environmental guidelines and when working with partners.



# Key Principles

## Climate Emergency

**All service areas and staff are responsible for responding to the climate emergency in their area of work to help the Council and county meet its net zero goals, raise awareness of the climate emergency and ensure that we are best able to respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change.**

**We have agreed to:**

- Achieve net zero by 2030 by retaining the 80% actual carbon reduction target for Council emissions by 2030 whilst offsetting or further reducing remaining emissions; and
- Work with our partners, communities, and businesses to become a net zero county by 2045 for countywide emissions.

## Ecological Emergency

We will protect and enhance natural capital across our estate, within both the built and natural environments and through our decision making, ensuring that the most environmentally beneficial management regimes are adopted, and nature recovery is supported in line with our Ecological Emergency Response Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

## Sustainable Procurement

The Council's commissioning and procurement activity will be undertaken in an economically, environmentally and socially responsible manner, taking into account whole life impacts and benefits of the contract along with the environmental and ethical credentials of suppliers.

## Resources

We will proactively seek to avoid and minimise unnecessary resource consumption as a key part of our decision making and operational practices. Where resources, such as energy, water, minerals etc are required, these will be managed sustainably and will be kept in use for as long as possible, abiding by 'circular economy' principles.

## Waste

We will avoid and minimise waste by encouraging employees, members suppliers, businesses and our residents to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost.



## Sustainable Design and Construction

We will adhere to sustainability principles to ensure that the location, orientation, construction methods and materials, ongoing maintenance, refurbishment, operation and demolition of our buildings and infrastructure minimises impact on the natural and built environment and maximises resource efficiency. All new buildings, built by the Council will need to meet the requirements of the County Durham Plan and comply with the standards set out in all other relevant internal policy and guidance, including the need for new development to set a pathway to net zero and not connect to the gas network. The Council will seek to achieve the same standards for major refurbishments projects where viable.

## Transport and Air Quality

We will work to reduce the environmental impacts of staff travel and seek innovative, sustainable solutions to travel and travel avoidance around the county, including the adoption of appropriate hybrid and smarter working practices. Where travel is necessary, we will work to reduce the impacts from our own vehicle fleet and the use of officers' cars for business travel, including supporting the uptake of zero emission vehicles, bikes and roll out of vehicle charging infrastructure. The Council will also seek to embed walking, cycling and public transport use into County Durham's everyday travel culture and will pay particular attention to the implementation of measures within Air Quality Management Areas.

## Festivals and Events

We will be leaders in festival and event environmental responsibility, ensuring that we, organisers, traders and attendees comply with standards relating to marketing and promotion, waste reduction, reuse and recycling, sources of power, travel, food, pollution prevention and protection of public amenity and biodiversity.

## Culture

We will involve staff and members in the implementation of this statement for greater environmental accountability and improved performance. Staff and members will be provided with relevant environmental training and will be engaged through regular communication, sharing of performance information and activity. We will also work with suppliers, contractors, sub-contractors and our partners to encourage their environmental performance and will actively engage with our residents and communities to encourage and facilitate environmentally positive behaviour.

**This statement will be reviewed at least once annually in consultation with staff and other stakeholders where necessary.**

**Next Review: September 2025**

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## Signatures



**Councillor Mark Wilkes**  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for  
Neighbourhoods and Climate Change



**John Hewitt**  
Chief Executive Officer

