



A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2025** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) meeting held on 10th July 2025.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 9 - 22)

- a) The Panel are to receive the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and the Notice of Key Decisions 1st September 2025 to 31st December 2025
- b) Members to discuss future planning of items for the Work Programme
- c) To appoint members to a Council Tax Premiums Working Group

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

4. BUILDING ENERGY STRATEGY (Pages 23 - 78)

The Panel is invited to comment on the Building Energy Strategy Report.

Executive Councillor: S Howell

Contact Officer: M Raby
01480 387921

5. PAXTON PITS NATURE RESERVE EXTENSION OF LEASES (Pages 79 - 106)

The Panel is invited to comment on the Paxton Pits Nature Reserve Extension of Leases report.

Executive Councillor: J Kerr

Contact Officer: G Holland 01480 388157

6. RIGHT TO GROW POLICY REVIEW (Pages 107 - 130)

The Panel is invited to discuss the Right to Grow Policy Review Report and to reflect on which strategic elements, if any, could be advanced for inclusion in the Council's Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Executive Councillor: J Kerr

Contact Officer: A Rogan
01480 388082

27 day of August 2025

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid
Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests](#) is available in the Council's Constitution

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Please contact Mrs Beccy Buddle, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Tel No: 01480 388008/e-mail Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 10 July 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor N J Hunt – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, S Bywater, S J Criswell, M Kadewere, C Lowe, D J Shaw and N Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M A Hassall, S Mokbul and B M Pitt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors L Davenport-Ray and S Howell.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held of 5th June 2025 were discussed. It was observed by Councillor Criswell that the carbon payback figures detailed in Minute 25/9 did not include the carbon from transportation amongst others and that it had been agreed that future reports would be more transparent with lifetime carbon figures. With that addition made to the minutes, they were approved as a correct record of the meeting held and signed by the Chair.

13. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None declared.

14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Notice of Key Decisions for the period 1st July 2025 to 30th September 2025 were presented to the Panel.

The Panel were advised that the Huntingdon RIBA item had been moved from the September to October meeting date.

Councillor Alban requested that a review on progress made by Civil Parking Enforcement be brought back to the Panel at an appropriate date.

15. ANNUAL CLIMATE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN UPDATE

By means of a report and presentation by the Climate Co-ordinator (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Annual Climate Report and Action Plan Update was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Criswell congratulated Officers on the report, which he felt

was comprehensive except for demonstration of value for money and how the team assessed which projects are to be progressed. The Panel heard that cost benefit is considered with each decision made but that it was difficult to measure value for money as this was subjective. It was further questioned whether any projects had been ruled out due to the associated costs, following which, the Panel heard that costs were considered and options were weighed up ensuring a balanced approach was taken on the Council's journey to Net Zero.

In response to a question relating to the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and how success was being measured the Panel heard that the detail on this would be sought and brought back to the Panel at a future date, potentially via the Climate Working Group. It was noted that there was a desire for the Panel to be a critical friend in this process.

Concern was expressed that the journey to Net Zero would become progressively harder as more and more big ticket items were achieved. It was noted that the process worked as a funnel with big gains in CO2 savings achieved initially filtering down to the smaller savings. It was also advised that with anticipated improvements in technologies the smaller savings would become more achievable.

It was observed that Climate Change is an abstract topic but that the report and presentation from the team demonstrated the wealth of good work undertaken and translated what that good work meant for residents.

It was advised to the Panel that the procurement training from Anglia Ruskin University had been specific for the Council's procurement team.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

16. ONE LEISURE INDEPENDENT REVIEW UPDATE

By means of a report and presentation by the Head of Leisure (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the One Leisure Independent Review Update was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Shaw complemented the team on the report and noted that he particularly enjoyed reading the conclusion of the report.

Councillor Bywater echoed this and also noted that the Sawtry swimming pool project was very much appreciated by himself and the Sawtry community. He further questioned the timelines and planning to move the leisure centres towards the Local Government Review (LGR). Following which, the Panel heard that an independent review would be undertaken to establish market position and what could be controlled within the Council's assets. The Panel were assured that

the Council were mindful of the progress and successes of One Leisure and would endeavour to protect this during and following the move into LGR.

The Panel heard that 60% of One Leisure's revenue was generated through Health and Fitness, 20% through swimming lessons and 10% through casual swimming. These activities make up the bulk of focus of One Leisure. The Panel also heard that conversations and opportunities were being developed with the Football Foundation on collaborative opportunities in line with the Council's playing pitch strategy. It was noted that the popularity of sports at centres was continually monitored and considered in line with centre development opportunities.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

17. ONE LEISURE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

By means of a report and presentation by the Head of Leisure (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the One Leisure Annual Performance Review was presented to the Panel.

It was noted that the journey since COVID had been incredible and that the level of improvement in the service was surprising and a credit to the team.

The Panel were advised that membership payments and signups had been moved onto a new payment system with a lot more online functionality. It was clarified that options and opportunities to link with health partners with the Customer Relationship Management system were being investigated. It was further noted that a refresh of the One Leisure website with an improved customer experience would be developed.

Following a question relating to the ebb and flow of specific sport popularity, the Panel were advised that around 60% of service revenue came via health and fitness, 20% from the swimming school programme and 10% from casual swimming bookings. It was noted that football was a prominent sport and that work was ongoing with the Football Foundation and it's Hockey equivalent to develop opportunities in those sports. It was also observed that there was a decline in demand to the service for cricket and squash.

Chair

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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26 - Performance and Growth

Forward Agendas

Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review
3 rd September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 1) Local Government Outcomes Framework Initial Consultation Response Commercial Investment Strategy (Private) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2025/26 Q1 Planning Enforcement
8 th October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Infrastructure Levy Funding Transformation Approach and Plan 	
5 th November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 2) Treasury Management 6 Month Performance Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2025/26 Q2
3 rd December 2025		

Unscheduled Agenda Items

Item	Notes	Progress
Local Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with Parishes and residents – ease of submitting responses 	
Market Towns Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons learnt following project completion 	

Market Towns Project – Ramsey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requested to see progress and development of the projects plans involving Ramsey 	
CIL Strategic Allocation		
Local Development Order for Brampton Cross		
Housing Strategy Refresh		
Decision to implement 2025/26 Parking Fees		
Parking Strategy Refresh		Under development, anticipated for inclusion in the democratic cycle in Spring 2026

O&S Topics Identified For Further Consideration

Subject	Brief	Status
Huntingdonshire Evening Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Huntingdonshire's Evening Economy - supporting the night-time economy across our District How HDC currently supports the evening economy across our market towns and rural areas (possibly across financial/business support, safety, growth, CCTV service, rural rates relief policies), as well as how we can influence our partners to provide further support for this strategic sector (including wider economic support, skills and employment). 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26 - Environment, Communities and Partnerships

Forward Agendas

Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review
4 th September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right to Grow Council Tax Premium Working Group – to appoint members
14 th October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub – RIBA Stage 2 (Private) 	
6 th November 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play Sufficiency Council Tax Support 2026/27 	
4 th December 2025		

Unscheduled Agenda Items

Item	Notes	Progress
Fleet Decarbonisation Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report under development and discussed with the Climate working group for initial feedback 	Report being finalised prior to scheduling onto the democratic cycle of meetings in the Autumn.
Community Safety Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider bringing forward a paper to review and understand what Huntingdonshire District Council has done or is currently doing in relation 	Report being developed ahead of scheduling onto the Agenda.

	<p>to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the importance of community safety, I believe it would be beneficial to examine the CSP's activities, outcomes, and any ongoing initiatives to ensure transparency and alignment with local needs, thus improve local understanding. Is it working, could this be improved? 	
Community Health and Wealth Update	Following the project launch an update on initial feedback and successes will be brought to the Panel.	Report being developed ahead of scheduling onto the Agenda.

O&S Topics Identified For Further Consideration

Subject	Brief	Status
Civil Parking Enforcement Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An update on implementation and feedback on progress was requested by Councillor Alban at the July meeting of the Panel 	Investigating with Officers an appropriate time to schedule onto the agenda
Hinchingbrooke Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on redevelopment works Big organisations making a difference locally, local recruitment Link to preventative and integrated care 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Open Spaces in Huntingdonshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC owned – HCP, Paxton Pits Great Fen Green spaces perspective and how links with the local plan Access for residents – health lifestyles, mental health, OLAL Purpose of open spaces, and strategic use of them 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health, Well-being • Wildlife corridors 	
Customer Service Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community support • Merits of speed of customer contact versus depth of discussion and customer outcome 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Huntingdonshire's Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and influence of Huntingdonshire • Creating a legacy for the district 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs

Working Groups

Climate Working Group
Members: Cllrs N Hunt, T D Alban, M Hassall, C Lowe, B Pitt and D Shaw Lead Officer: Adjusted to suit the topic, enquiries to B Buddle
Progress: November 2022: Initial Meetings held to establish Terms of Reference for the group. April 2023: Regular meetings established. Evidence and information gathering to be progressed. Group to be involved in the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development. January 2024: Meetings held to discuss proposed work plan for the group and to discuss HVO Fuels project November 2024: Meeting to discuss future proposed projects January 2025: Group met to review the HVO draft report prior to its consideration by the Panel August 2025: Group scheduled to meet twice to discuss both the Energy Strategy and the Fleet Decarbonisation Project for initial feedback prior to their inclusion in the democratic cycle of meetings over Autumn 2025 Next Steps: Meetings to be scheduled to allow involvement in proposed works.
Disabled Facilities Grants Group
Members: I P Taylor, B Banks, C Tevlin and C Lowe Lead Officer: Claudia Deeth
Progress: February 2024: Councillors invited to express their interest in being involved with the project. August 2024: initial meeting held and scope of project discussed February 2025: Further meeting held to update the group on the progress of the project Next Steps: DFG team to arrange ongoing schedule of meetings

NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Prepared by: Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader of the Council
Date of Publication: 18 August 2025
For Period: 1 August 2025 to 30 November 2025

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

Councillor Details		Councillor Contact Details
Page 15	Councillor S J Conboy	Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Place
		Cloudberry Cottage 9 Earning Street Godmanchester Huntingdon PE29 2JD Tel: 01480 414900 / 07831 807208 E-mail: Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
	Councillor L Davenport-Ray	Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce
		73 Hogsden Leys St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6AD E-mail: Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
	Councillor S Ferguson	Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance
		9 Anderson Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DN Tel: 07525 987460 E-mail: Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Councillor J Harvey	Executive Governance Services Councillor for and Democratic	c/o Huntingdonshire District Council Pathfinder House St Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN Tel: 07941 080531 E-mail: Jo.Harvey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Howell	Executive Communities, Health and Leisure Councillor for	c/o Huntingdonshire District Council Pathfinder House St Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN Tel: 01733 794510 E-mail: Sally.Howell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor J Kerr	Executive Countryside, Waste and Street Scene Councillor for Parks and	15 Crown Walk St Ives Cambridgeshire PE27 5QN Tel: 07906 899425 E-mail: Julie.Kerr@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor B Mickelburgh	Executive Countryside, Waste and Street Scene Councillor for Finance & Resources	2 Grainger Avenue Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 2JT Tel: 07441 392492 E-mail: Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Councillor T Sanderson	Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning	29 Burmoor Close Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 6GE Tel: 01480 436822 E-mail: Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Wakeford	Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing	4 Croft Close Brampton Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 4TJ Tel: 07762 109210 E-mail: Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Page 17 Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

A notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01480 388169 or E-mail Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.

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Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
 - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

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- Notes:-
- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated ***
 - (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Community Chest Grant Aid Awards 2025/26 To consider applications received via the Community Chest Awards Scheme for 2024/25.	Grants Panel	18 Mar 2026		Claudia Deeth, Public Protection Manager Tel: (01480) 388233 or email: Claudia.Deeth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Howell & L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Energy Strategy***	Cabinet	16 Sep 2025		Kerry Slater, Energy and Sustainability Officer Tel: (01480) 388242 or email Kerry.Slater@huntingdonshire.gov.uk Matthew Raby, Facilities Manager – Hard Services Tel: (01480) 387921 or email Matthew/Raby@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Howell	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Play Sufficiency To approve a new framework for play provision in the District and to ensure provision is sustainable and meets the needs of all communities.	Cabinet	16 Sep 2025		Helen Lack, Development and Delivery Manager - Parks Countryside and Climate Tel: (01480) 388658 or email: Helen.Lack@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Taylor	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Paxton Pits Nature Reserve##	Cabinet	16 Sep 2025		Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Service, Health and Environment	3	S Howell	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Community Infrastructure Levy Funding To consider application for funding from the Test Community Infrastructure Levy Funding round which opened on 2 June 2025.	Cabinet	14 Oct 2025		Claire Burton, Implementation Team Leader Tel No: (01480) 388274 / email: Claire.Burton@huntingdonshire.gov. uk		T Sanderson	Performance & Growth

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub - RIBA Stage 2## To gain approval to proceed with the preferred option and provide detail on the final designs, costs and capital requirements.	Cabinet	14 Oct 2025	Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub Feasibility Report - RIBA Stage 1 Built Facility Strategy Swim England Aquatics Review	Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Service, Health and Environment Tel No: (01480) 388157 / email: Gregg.Holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk	3	S Howell	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Building Energy Strategy

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny - Environment, Communities and Partnerships – 4th September 2025

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Sally Howell (SH)

Report by: Matthew Raby (MR) – Facilities Manager

Ward(s) affected: Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to comment on the recommendation for Cabinet to authorise the Building Energy Strategy as outlined in the attached Cabinet report.

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Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Building Energy Strategy

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny (E,C&P) – 4th September 2025
Cabinet – 16th September 2025

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Sally Howell (SH)

Report by: Matthew Raby (MR) – Facilities Manager

Ward(s) affected: Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots

Executive Summary:

Huntingdonshire District Council has commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040, as outlined in the Climate Strategy adopted in February 2023.

We have taken a proactive approach to reducing carbon emissions within the buildings by moving to a renewable green electricity tariff as well as completing several projects to reduce carbon and running costs utilising external funding including Salix Recycling Scheme, Public Sector Decarbonisation (PSDS), Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) and Sports England. We have also had the opportunity to use HDC's own resources, a few examples are noted below

- Partial Decarbonisation of Pathfinder House and Civic Suite – PSDS
- Decarbonisation of One Leisure Ramsey – PSDS
- Decarbonisation designs for Pathfinder House, Eastfield House and One Leisure Huntingdon Dryside – LCSF
- Solar Canopy at One Leisure St Ives Indoor – Sport England
- Roof mounted Solar at One Leisure Huntingdon Dry, Ramsey, St Ives Outdoor and St Neots – HDC Funded

The data reveals that between 2019/20 and 2024/25 we have achieved a market-based carbon reduction of 34.1% in building-related emissions. This leaves 1,678 tCO₂e still to be eliminated to reach net zero carbon.

To support this goal, we are implementing a Building Energy Strategy. This strategy aims to enhance the energy efficiency of council buildings, reduce emissions, and identify opportunities for renewable energy installations, thereby delivering both environmental and financial benefits.

Recommendation(s):

To note the required feasibility studies and works within the Building Energy Strategy for the Buildings to become Net Zero by 2040.

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

1. to approve the Building Energy Strategy with a view to complete feasibility studies on the building identified allowing HDC to make informed decisions on future energy and carbon savings; and
2. to delegate to the Corporate Director - Finance & Resources (S151) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finances & Resources to make any consequential amendments to budgets and release of necessary funds to deliver the projects.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report aims to gain formal approval to proceed with the implementation of the Building Energy Strategy and identify opportunities for renewable energy installations delivering both environmental and financial benefits primarily at the sites below.

- Pathfinder House
- Eastfield House
- One Leisure Huntingdon Dry
- One Leisure Huntingdon Wet
- One Leisure Ramsey
- One Leisure St Ives Indoor
- One Leisure St Ives Outdoor
- One Leisure St Neots

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 With the Net Zero target of 2040, decarbonisation and reducing carbon is a key priority. The Building Energy Strategy has been produced to sit alongside and work in conjunction with HDC's Climate Strategy.

To ensure that HDC's net zero carbon commitment is credible, science-aligned, transparent, and effective, the Buildings Energy Strategy has been developed in accordance with the UK Green Building Council's (UKGBC) *Guidance on **Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy Framework***.

The Strategy will focus on three critical operational energy areas that must be addressed to achieve net zero carbon across HDC's property portfolio as noted below. This would be completed by individual site surveys identifying bespoke options for each site.



Reducing operational energy consumption to achieve targets of low Energy Use Intensity (saving 60% compared to 2020) and a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) of 40B or lower.



Low carbon energy supply (i.e. removing fossil fuels from the process of heating the buildings, from catering and minimising fugitive refrigerant gas.)



On-site renewable energy generation.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

To be added following the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny on 4th September 2025

4. ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

The Buildings Energy Strategy highlights five priorities to achieve net zero emissions by 2040

1. Review HDC's corporate buildings strategy to focus on retained sites
2. Electrification of heat by 2033, in line with the HDC Climate Strategy.
3. Reduce energy consumptions by 60% by 2040
4. Procure electricity from renewable sources
5. Improve the EPC rating of Pathfinder House in advance of imminent MEES regulation evolution

Feasibility studies working with specialist contractors will need to be procured and costed to take place on each of HDC's retained buildings. This will enable us to confirm costings to complete the required works to become net zero, these can then be reviewed in line with carbon reduction benefits and potential paybacks.

Within the Strategy the order of electrification is set out although this could be subject to change dependant on the potential for redevelopment of sites and funding available at the time as during this process HDC can include this within developments or refurbishments.

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

[*\(See Corporate Plan\)*](#)

- 5.1 The decarbonisation of the building's links to Priority 2 of HDC's Corporate Plan.





Lowering carbon emissions

We will take positive action to reduce carbon emissions and become a net zero carbon Council by 2040. We will enable and encourage local people and businesses to reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity across Huntingdonshire.

- 5.2 The installation of more efficient equipment and management of this will also link with Priority 3 of HDC's Corporate Plan.



Delivering good quality, high value-for-money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations

Around 80% of our resources are aligned to business as usual (BAU) service delivery and our third priority focuses on delivering good quality, high value for money services with good control and compliance with statutory functions. While new activities will mostly focus on delivering outcomes under our two new outward-facing priorities, we will continue to provide a wide range of existing statutory and important services and seek to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Where applicable leases will need to be updated and permissions granted. This will involve both the Estates and Legal departments to make and review the required changes.
- 6.2 Planning permission may be required with decarbonisation works so these would be applied for at the time of implementation.

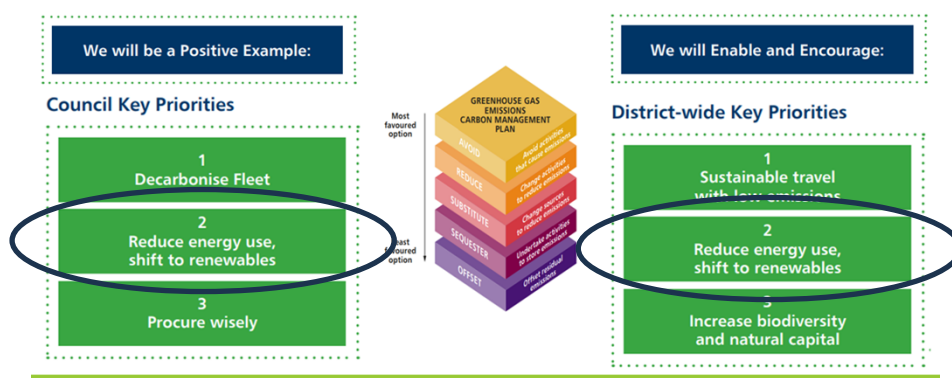
7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No additional resources will be required for the delivery of the Building Energy Strategy. Facilities Management will oversee with the assistance from each of the One Leisure Managers.
- 7.2 Feasibility Studies and Energy Saving Measures will be costed using HDC's procurement processes therefore delegation to the councils Corporate Director - Finance & Resources (S151) to make the necessary adjustments will be required.

8. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 In February 2023 HDC agreed its climate strategy with its aim to be Net Zero by 2040. By implementing the Building Energy Strategy this will assist with the pathway to delivering this objective.

Climate Strategy Priorities



Priority*	Action	Theme	Portfolio
High	Review Council assets to establish further opportunities to improve insulation, energy efficiency and adaptation to reduce their carbon impact	Energy and Renewables	Corporate and Shared Services
High	Develop plan for the Council to use 100% renewable energy	Energy and Renewables	Corporate and Shared Services

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 9.1 This provides a pathway enabling HDC to investigate suitable and deliverable schemes enabling HDC to reduce its utility costs and CO2 consumption while assisting the overall HDC goal of being Net Zero by 2040.

10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – HDC Buildings Energy Strategy.

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Buildings Energy Strategy for Huntingdonshire District Council

Second Draft of Strategy | 16th June 2025

Produced by Cambridge Management Consulting

Buildings Energy Strategy for Huntingdonshire District Council

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) has reaffirmed its commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040, as outlined in its Climate Strategy adopted in February 2023. This strategy not only addresses the climate crisis but also integrates environmental goals into the council's broader Place Strategy, ensuring that sustainability is a shared ambition across the district.

To support this goal, HDC has partnered with Cambridge Management Consulting (Cambridge MC) and its sustainability-focused consultancy, edenseven, to develop a comprehensive Buildings Energy Strategy. This strategy aims to enhance the energy efficiency of council buildings, reduce emissions, and identify opportunities for renewable energy installations, thereby delivering both environmental and financial benefits.

Cambridge MC brings extensive experience in strategy, procurement, and technology services, particularly in the energy and utilities sector. Their collaboration with edenseven, which specialises in data-driven sustainability solutions, ensures that the Buildings Energy Strategy is both effective and aligned with HDC's net zero objectives.

This initiative is part of HDC's broader efforts to lead by example in tackling climate change, demonstrating how local authorities can implement practical solutions to achieve ambitious environmental targets.

1.2 Approach & Methodology

To ensure that HDC's net zero carbon commitment is credible, science-aligned, transparent, and effective, the Buildings Energy Strategy has been developed in accordance with the UK Green Building Council's (UKGBC) *Guidance on Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy Framework*.

The Strategy focuses on three critical operational energy areas (shown in Figure 1) that must be addressed to achieve net zero carbon across HDC's property portfolio.

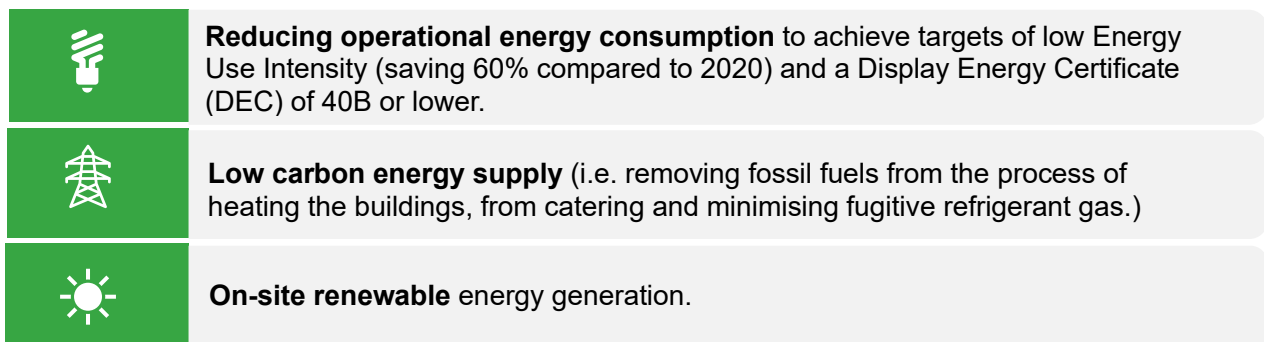


Figure 1: Three Key Operational Energy Areas to Be Addressed to Reach Net Zero Carbon

1.3 HDC's Journey So Far

Carbon emissions

HDC have taken a proactive approach to reducing carbon emissions within their buildings. The data reveals that between 2019/20 and 2024/25, HDC achieved a market-based carbon reduction of 34.1% in building-related emissions. This leaves 1,678 tCO₂e still to be eliminated in order to reach net zero carbon.

-34.1%
Carbon

As of 2025, HDC's buildings account for approximately half of the Council's total carbon emissions.

Notably, just five key sites (filled in blue in the below diagram) are responsible for 87% of total building emissions, making them critical to HDC's net zero strategy.

Analysis of the energy and carbon data indicates that the key challenge at these 5 sites stem from the use of fossil fuels. Transitioning to low-carbon energy sources (e.g. electrification) and maximising on-site renewable energy generation will be critical to HDC reaching their net zero targets.

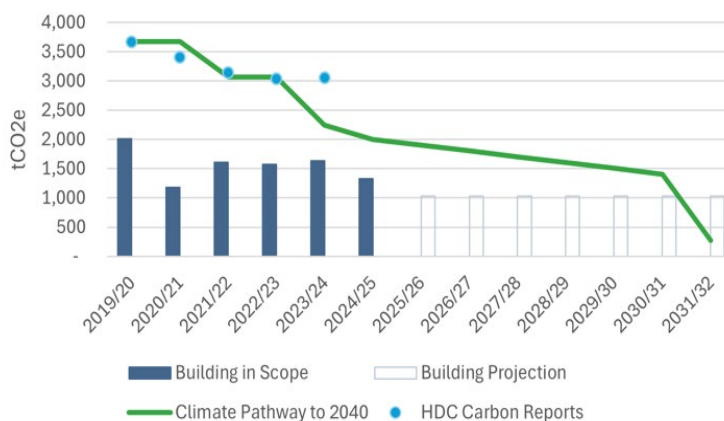


Figure 2: HDC Carbon Pathway and Historic Building Emissions (with Green line from the HDC Climate strategy document and blue dots reflecting total actual CO2 emissions).

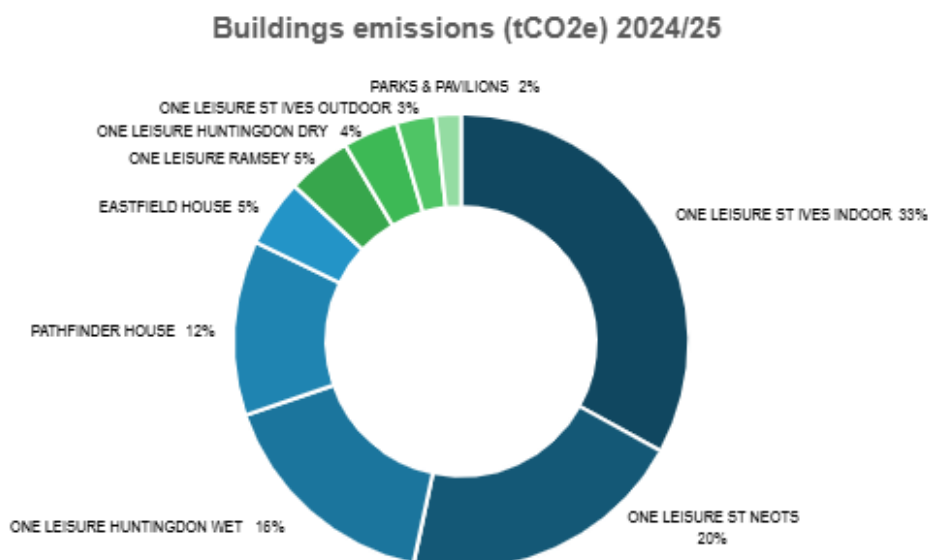


Figure 3 : HDC's Buildings emissions split in 2024/25 (Market Based)

Energy consumption

The Net Zero Pathway also requires meeting increasingly stringent targets in term of energy performance (in kWh/sqm GIA) and the related Display Energy Certificate (DEC) ratings. To credibly achieve net zero carbon, organisations will need to reduce their energy consumption by approximately 60% on average, compared to typical 2020 levels. HDC's data shows that between 2019/20 and 2024/25, a 9.9% reduction was achieved. While this represents a positive step forward, it highlights the need for accelerated action if future net zero targets are to be met.

-9.9%
Energy

Leisure Centres

A detailed analysis of the sites is provided within the report. Unsurprisingly, wet leisure centres, a vital part of the health and wellbeing infrastructure, have been identified as some of the highest energy consumers, presenting the greatest challenge to HDC's decarbonisation efforts. Developing effective, tailored solutions for these facilities will require specialist input from swimming pool and leisure energy experts. In the short term, the Council may wish to review its future plans for these sites and explore opportunities for strategic redevelopment, including the potential replacement of existing centres with newer, significantly more energy-efficient facilities.

This report recommends that due consideration should also be given to **One Leisure St Ives**, which is not only the largest carbon emitter but also a victim of its success, with more visitors, resulting in year-on-year consumptions increases (+12.5% since 2019/20).

Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)

An unexpected finding of the analysis conducted is **Pathfinder House's** EPC rating D, despite being built in 2007. It is far below the anticipated EPC B requirement by 2030 UK's MEES. To uphold its commitment to lead by example, the Council will need to invest in the short term to bring the site in line with future standards.

Evidence of good practice already delivered

- Since the baseline year of 2019/20, there is clear evidence of proactive energy management, including a strong post-pandemic "reset" and improved control over time schedules. By 2024/25, most buildings had reduced their energy consumption, achieving an average reduction of 9.9% in kWh compared to the baseline.
- Notable success stories include retrofit projects funded through schemes such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), which have delivered significant improvements (see the One Leisure Ramsey case study, right).
- Equally, it is commendable that HDC kept
- momentum by recently using the Low Carbon Skills scheme to fund feasibility studies and RIBA Level 4 design of heat electrification for 3 critical sites.
- The Council's adoption of a green tariff with Total Energy, effective from October 2024, has also begun to show measurable impact. While location-based emissions have fallen by 16.7%, HDC can now report a 34.1% market-based reduction compared to the 2019/20 baseline.



Image 1: One Leisure St Ives forms 33% of emissions and continues to see energy consumptions' year on

One Leisure Ramsey Success Story

With a £2.3m investment in air source heat pumps, new glazing, and roof insulation in 2022, the leisure centre has seen a reduction of carbon emissions of 47.6% (from 48.1% energy savings in kWh).

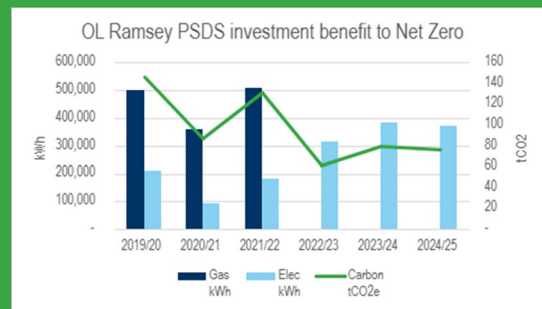


Figure 4: OL Ramsey PSDS Investment Benefit to Net Zero

1.4 HDC Buildings Net Zero Carbon Roadmap

The Energy Buildings Strategy sets out for HDC a multi-step approach which will create the momentum and change needed to successfully decarbonise the estate. A roadmap has been developed, outlining the key steps for HDC to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040.

The Buildings Energy Strategy document highlights five priorities:

1. Review HDC's corporate buildings strategy to focus on retained sites
2. Electrification of heat by 2033, in line with the HDC Climate Strategy.
3. Reduce energy consumptions by 60% by 2040
4. Procure electricity from renewable sources
5. Improve the EPC rating of Pathfinder House in advance of imminent MEES regulation evolution

The below diagram (Figure 5) presents the buildings pathway, when focussing on the second priority, which is to remove fossil fuel from site, through heat electrification (note: “market-based emissions” method accounts for the benefit of procuring energy from specific sources such as renewable). Ultimately the UK grid will be 100% decarbonised and all electricity will have zero carbon emission factor. In the meantime, HDC needs to procure green energy when possible.

Energy Management System (EnMS)

Truthfully, the achievement of HDC’s targets will rely on more robust governance in an EnMS underpinned by clear definitions of roles and responsibilities within HDC’s leadership.

With the benefit of a Buildings Net Zero Carbon Steering Group setting directions, the team managing the EnMS will develop realistic plans supporting an investment decision making process within HDC’s affordability.

Also, the EnMS will support a culture of energy performance improvement that depends upon commitment from all levels of the organisation, especially top management

The below diagram summarises our call for a structured EnMS with governance enabling communication, collaboration and action.

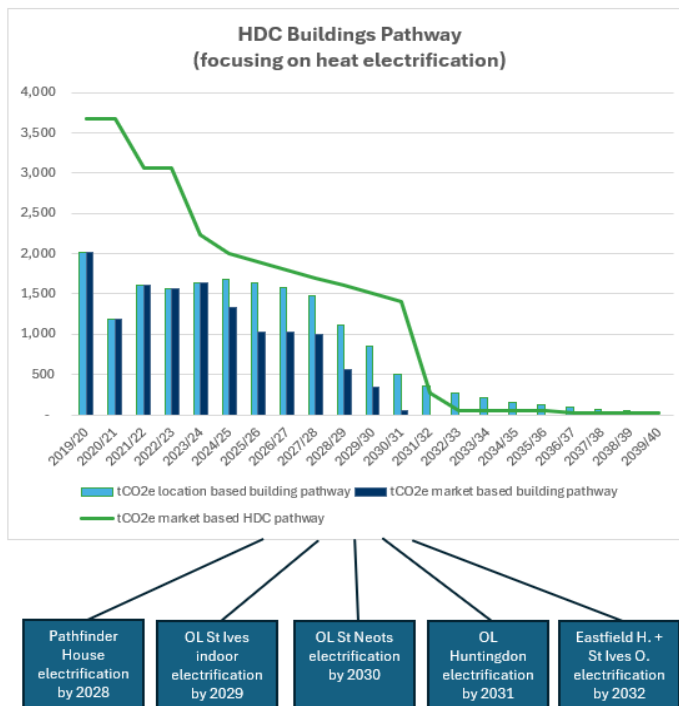
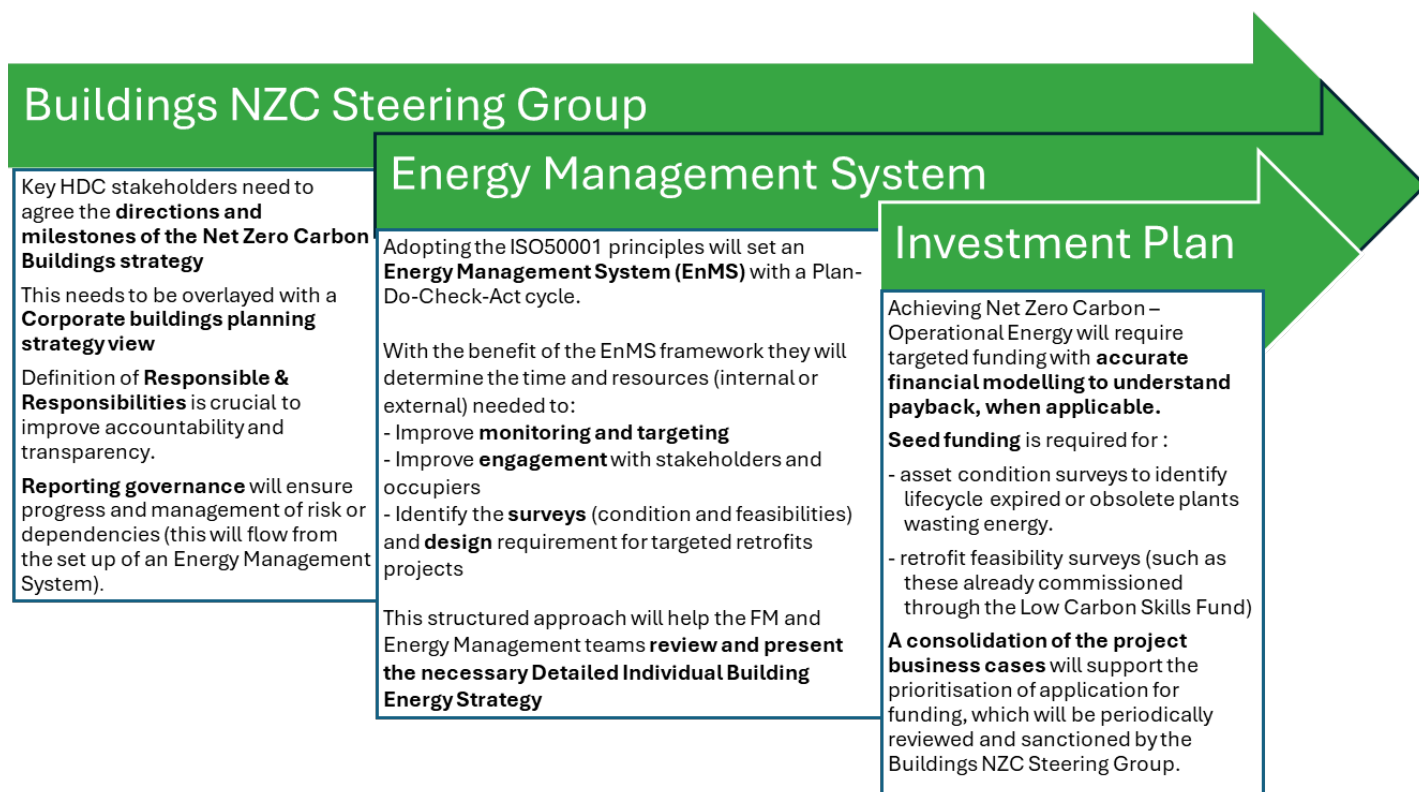


Figure 5: HDC Buildings Emission Pathway when focusing on heat electrification.



2 Climate Strategy

On Wednesday 22nd February 2023, Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC, “the Council”), at a Full Council meeting, formally recognised a Climate Crisis and Ecological emergency in Huntingdonshire and adopted a Climate Strategy setting out the priorities to achieve the commitment of net zero carbon council by 2040. HDC wishes to be a positive example to others by reducing their own emissions and adapting their service to the changed climate.

HDC’s Climate Strategy highlights the need to embed a Carbon Net Zero vision in all policies, actions delivered through spending wisely, and systemic change.

The following six themes underpin HDC’s Climate Strategy:

- Buildings
- Community
- Energy and Renewables
- Nature
- Travel and Transport
- Waste, Recycling, and Resource Management

It is recognised that buildings and utilities are amongst the biggest contributors to the Council’s emissions. It is therefore critical to ensure that HDC’s building and energy plans become as environmentally sustainable as possible. It is also considered critical that any adaptation of buildings should make the services more resilient to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

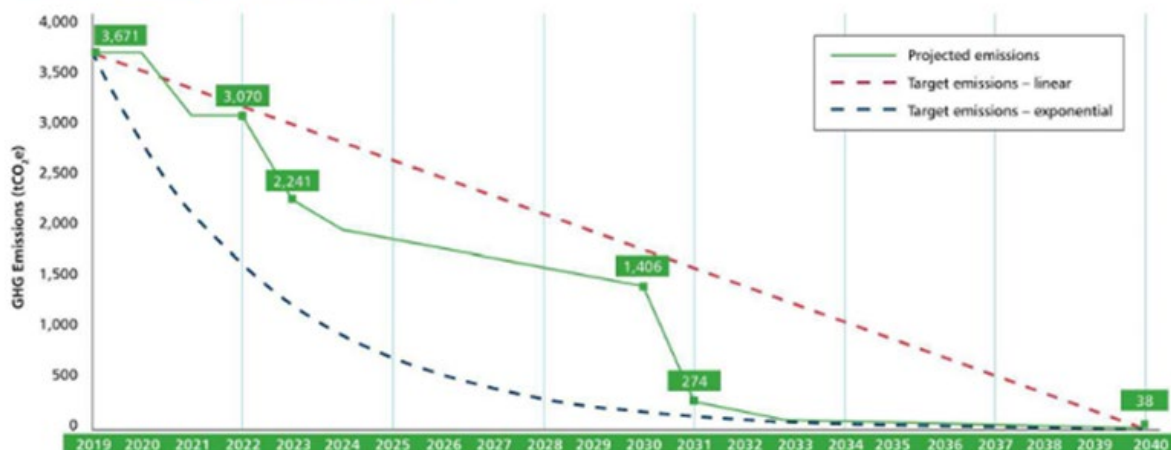
The below Carbon Pathway Scenario to 2040, forming part of the Climate Strategy document highlights the criticality of initially identified installation of heat pumps, the implementation of an energy strategy and the completion of heat electrification by 2033.

Why is this important?

The 2021 IPCC report stated unequivocally that human activities are responsible for global temperature increases and that, unless immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are made, limiting warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond our reach, resulting in catastrophic climate change impacts.

In response to this Climate Emergency, organisations and developments across the UK are defining their decarbonisation pathways and implementing mitigation measures to achieve net zero carbon.

Carbon Pathway Scenarios to 2040



3 Buildings Energy Strategy Document Scope

This document is designed to review the HDC roadmap in relation to Buildings, Energy, and Renewables. It will reflect on the progress made since 2018/19 (the baseline of the Council's Net Zero Pathway) and propose steps to bridge the gap to Net Zero by 2040.

This Net Roadmap is a bespoke plan for HDC and intended to meet operational net zero, as defined by the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC). It has been developed based on the methodology shown in the figure below.

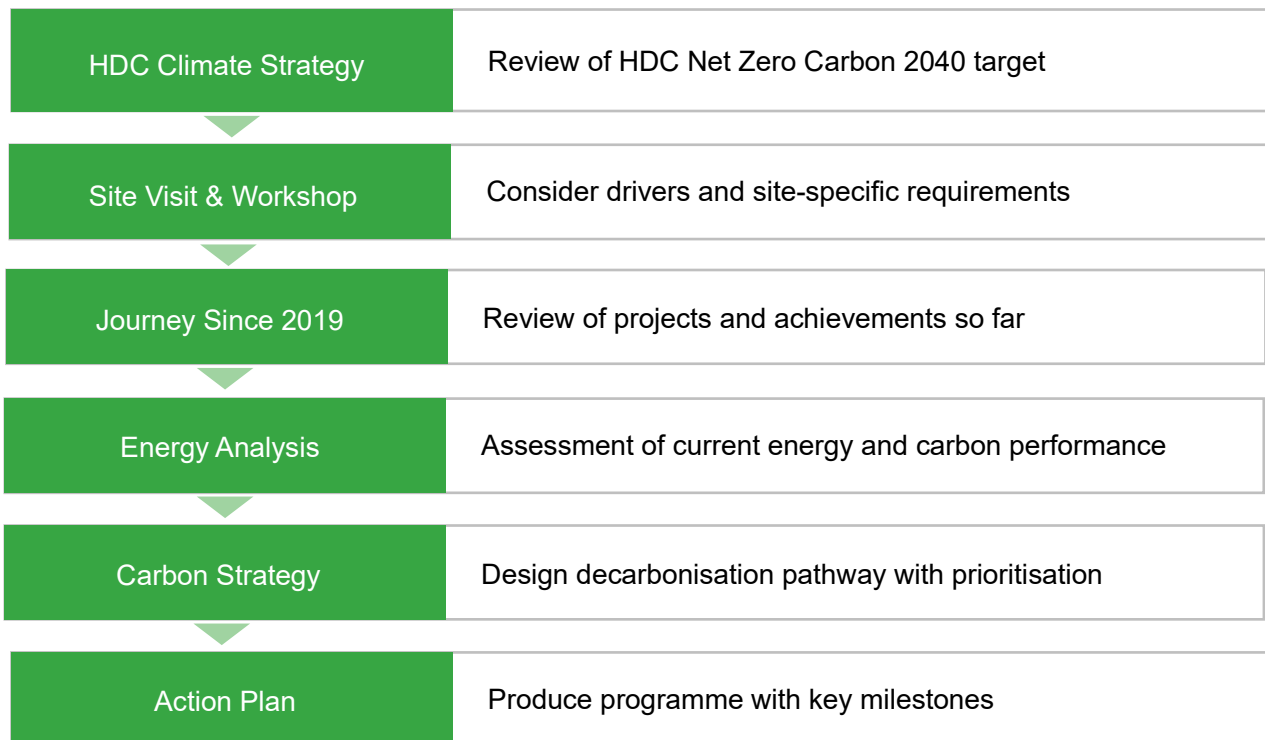


Figure 6: Methodology Used to Develop a Bespoke Plan for HDC

This document meets the key requirements of HDC's brief:

- Makes reference to HDC's climate strategy objectives.
- Builds a high-level assessment of the status of the main real estate assets within HDC's property portfolio (from a sustainability perspective).
- Highlights progress made to date across HDC's main real estate assets within the property portfolio (relating to the journey to net zero).

3.1 Buildings in Scope

Corporate Sites	Leisure Centres	Parks and Pavilions
Pathfinder House Eastfield House	One Leisure St Ives One Leisure St Ives Outdoor One Leisure St Neots One Leisure Ramsey One Leisure Huntingdon	Hinchingbrooke Country Park Paxton Pits Sapley Pavilion Priory Park

Table 1: HDC Buildings in Scope

3.2 Definition of Net Zero

In their initial Climate Strategy document, HDC identified the general direction of their Net Zero Carbon target by 2040, with key enablers including:

- Improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings
- Stop using gas for heating
- Look for opportunities to install renewable energy generation on our land and buildings.

A comprehensive definition of Net Zero Carbon is required to clearly define the Council's commitment. It is widely accepted that UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) offers a framework reflecting current industry best practices.

This definition is aligned with a 'Paris Proof' 1.5°C carbon reduction trajectory and encompasses whole life carbon — comprising both operational emissions (e.g. energy use) and embodied emissions (e.g. those associated with materials used in refurbishment).

At this stage, it is recommended that HDC focuses on operational emissions including renewable energy. HDC should therefore refer to their target as "**Net Zero Carbon – operational energy**".

Nonetheless, reporting on embodied carbon in construction and retrofit activities will increasingly become part of good governance. Addressing these emissions is critical to developing a complete picture of HDC's whole life carbon footprint and is a prerequisite for achieving a genuine Net Zero Carbon status. This, in turn, will require the integration of circular economy principles and strategic, forward-looking real estate planning.

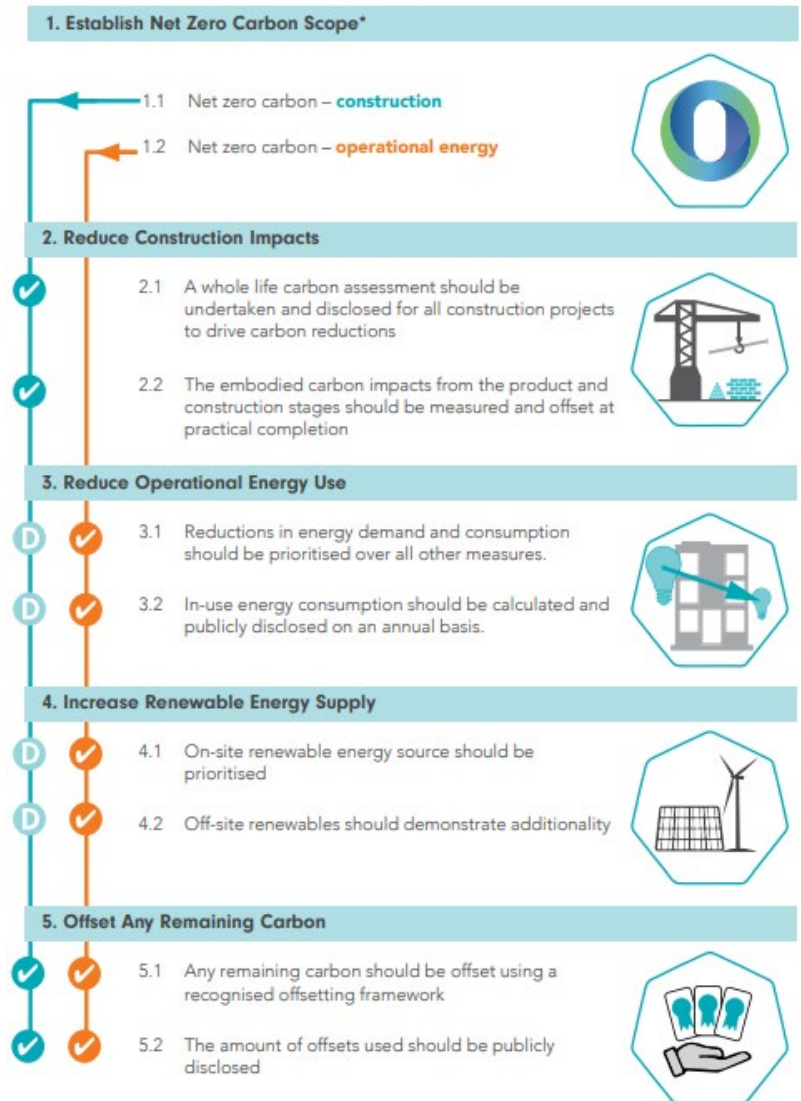


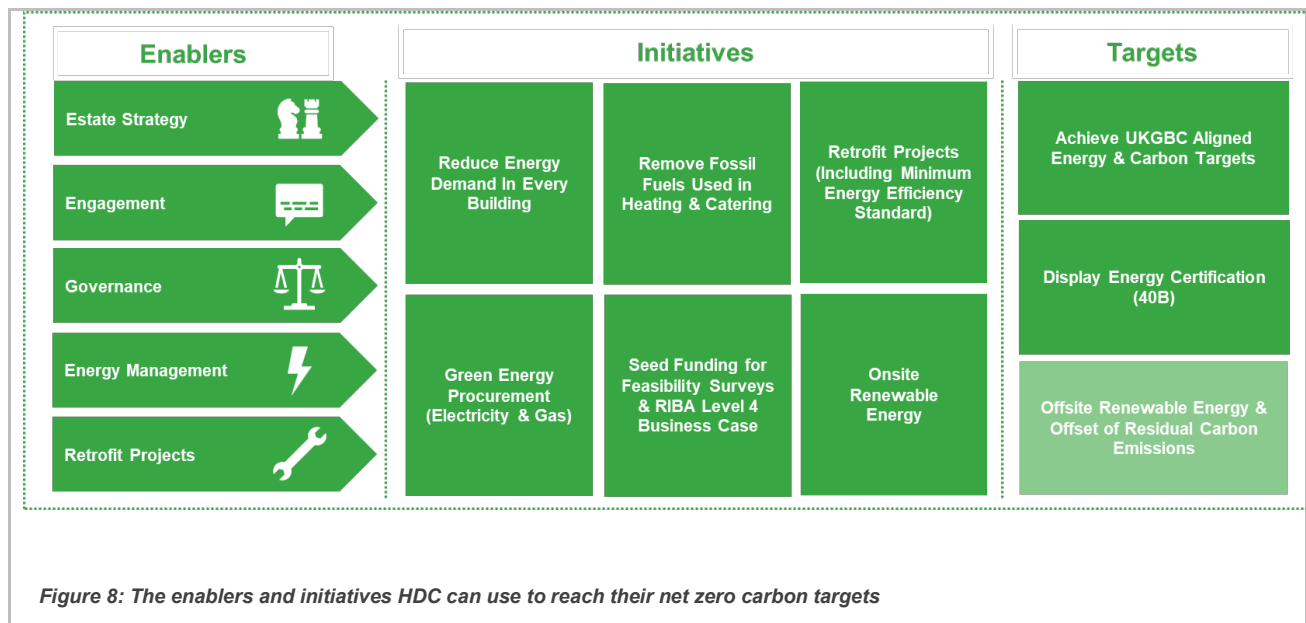
Figure 7: Steps to Achieving a Net Zero Carbon Building published by the UK Green Building Council

3.3 Achieving a Net Zero Carbon building – Operational Energy

The main areas to address to achieve Net Zero Carbon are:

- Reducing operational energy consumptions;
- Low carbon energy supply;
- Onsite renewable energy generation.

The UK Green Building Council framework provides a pathway and key metrics to plan your decarbonisation, with recognisable building blocks enabled by Strategy, Engagement, Governance, Energy Management, and Retrofit projects.



Below, we explore the key performance indicators and their relevance to HDC.

3.3.1 Energy Usage Intensity (-60%):

While low carbon energy fuel sourcing strategy and on-site renewable energy generation are intuitively linked to a Net Zero strategy, the significance of reducing operational energy consumption must be understood too.

In a Net Zero Carbon economy, with a switch to electricity as the main fuel source, minimising the demand on the grid is critical. It will be achieved by initially focusing on energy efficiency and demand reduction.

In the UKGBC “Net Zero Carbon Building: A framework definition”, a **target of 60% energy reduction is set for commercial offices between 2020 and 2050**. Figure xx provides milestones underpinning the target and likely to inform government strategy in term of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard.

Scope	Metric	Interim Targets			Paris Proof Target
		2020-2025	2025-2030	2030-2035	2035-2050
Whole building energy	kWh _e /m ² (NLA) / year	160	115	90	70
	kWh _e /m ² (GIA) / year	130	90	70	55
	DEC rating	D90	C65	B50	B40

Figure 8 : UKGBC “Net Zero Carbon Building” metrics

This should serve as guidance for most buildings including leisure centres.

Offices - For offices, the requirement is an Energy Use Intensity of 55 kWh/sqm (GIA). To illustrate the challenge of this target, Pathfinder House present a relatively good performance by today's standard, for a commercial office with a sizeable comms room. However, its current EUI is 170.81 kWh/sqm/year, three times more than required to achieve Net Zero.

Leisure centres - The UKGBC has not yet published specific Energy Use Intensity (EUI) targets for leisure centres and warehouses. However, the forthcoming UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard aims to provide EUI benchmarks for approximately 30 building types, potentially including leisure facilities. In the interim, the Greater Cambridge proposed policy CC/NZ: Net zero carbon new buildings suggest an EUI target of 100 kWh/m²/year (GIA) for leisure buildings. The current average of HDC's leisure centres is 383 kWh/m²/year (GIA). It is recognised that wet leisure centres have significantly higher energy demands for water heating and ventilation. As a result, achieving net zero carbon will require a combination of on-site renewable energy generation and off-site renewable energy sources to meet their energy needs.

Warehouses - For light industrial use buildings, the Greater Cambridge proposed policy CC/NZ: Net zero carbon new buildings suggest 110 kWh/m²/year. However, UK warehouse associations currently consider it efficient to target an EUI below 80 kWh/m²/year (GIA). Eastfield House's EUI in 2024/25 is 118 kWh/m²/year (GIA). Using the general guidance of a 60% reduction compared to 2020, Eastfield House should achieve 55 kWh/m²/year (GIA).

Staying informed about upcoming UKGBC guidelines will further aid in aligning with national net zero objectives.

Property	EUI 2019/20	2024/25	Targets EUI 60% of 2020	EUI Recommended	DEC
Pathfinder House	217	171	87	55	40B
Eastfield House	138	118	55	55	40B
One Leisure St Ives Indoor	417	469	167	167	40B
One Leisure St Ives Outdoor	278	219	111	111	40B
One Leisure St Neots	562	459	225	225	40B
One Leisure Ramsey	429	223	172	172	40B
One Leisure Huntingdon Dry	599	543	239	239	40B
One Leisure Huntingdon Wet	incl. in Dry	incl. in Dry			40B
Hinchingbrooke Country Park Café	128	169	51	51	40B
Hinchingbrooke Country Park Visitor Centre	82	156	33	33	40B
Little Paxton Visitor Centre	24	109	10	10	40B

Pavilion Sapley Park			-	-	40B
Pavilion Priory Park (Old)			-	-	40B
Pavilion Priory Park (New)			-	-	40B
Pavilion Hartford Road Huntingdon	14	2	5	5	40B

Table 2: HDC properties target EUI and DEC Scores

3.3.2 Building Efficiency Target (Display Energy Certificated <40B):

UKGBC have determined that all buildings need to improve their efficiency to a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) rating of 40B or below. The current typical level is 100D. The below heatmap presents how the HDC estate in scope is positioned in relation to the 40B rating target.

It should be noted that DEC takes in consideration actual energy consumption. This sometimes results in poor rating for buildings otherwise considered efficient. This is the case of Eastfield House, with a 76D DEC but a B EPC rating.

The UKGBC interim targets are:

- 2025-2030 - 65C
- 2030-2035 – 50B
- 2035-2050 – 40B

Low Challenge (DEC <40B)	Medium Challenge (DEC C)	High Challenge (DEC D+)
One L Huntingdon (40B)	Pathfinder house B, C & D (70C) One L St Ives outdoor (53C) One L St Ives (54C) One L St Neots (63C)	Eastfield House (76D) Pathfinder house E (116E)

Table 3: Current DEC Ratings for HDC Properties (Buildings with surface area <250 sqm are currently exempt of DEC rating, and therefore not included).

3.3.3 Electrification of Heat

To meet the UK's legally binding Net Zero emissions target by 2050, businesses must transition away from the use of fossil fuels and adopt electricity generated from renewable sources.

Switching to clean heating and cooking technologies offers a wide range of co-benefits for businesses. Electrically powered heating systems, such as heat pumps, can achieve efficiencies of over 300%, compared to less than 100% for even the most modern gas boilers. This means that every 1 kWh of electricity used by a heat pump can generate approximately 3 kWh of heat, significantly reducing overall energy consumption and operational emissions.

Cooking and catering with gas also contribute significantly to the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, making continued reliance on gas incompatible with a Net Zero future. Phasing out gas appliances in favour of electric alternatives, such as induction hobs and electric ovens, not only reduces emissions but

also delivers additional advantages, including improved indoor air quality, greater energy efficiency, and enhanced safety in commercial kitchens and catering operations.

As the UK's electricity grid continues to decarbonise with the rapid integration of renewable energy technologies, the emissions associated with electric heating and cooking will continue to decline sharply. In contrast, emissions from gas will remain persistently high, reinforcing the urgent need for businesses to accelerate electrification. A widespread shift to electric heating and catering technologies is therefore essential, not just to meet regulatory climate targets, but to future-proof operations, improve working environments, and demonstrate leadership in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The following table summarises the current state and will inform the investment plan:

Site	Heating with Natural Gas	Cooking with Natural Gas
Pathfinder House Block B, C & D	✓	✗
Pathfinder House Block E	✗	✗
Eastfield House	✓	✗
One Leisure St Ives	✓	✓
One Leisure St Ives Outdoor	✓	✓
One Leisure St Neots	✓	✗
One Leisure Ramsey	✗	✗
One Leisure Huntingdon	✓	✓
Hinchingbrooke Country Park	✗	✗
Paxton Pits	✗	✗
Sapley Pavilion	✗	✗
Priory Park	✗	✗
Huntingdon (Riverside) Pavilion	✗	✗

Table 4: Use of natural gas in HDC properties (Sites using gas for heating or cooking are indicated with a red tick, sites without gas are indicated with a green cross)

3.4 Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) consideration (EPC <B)

To contribute toward a Net Zero economy, the UK government has defined legal standards, MEES, underpinned by the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 applies to non-domestic buildings.

At present it is not a legal requirement for local authorities. However, MEES can apply when HDC is leasing out space to a third party, and HDC's Climate Strategy adheres to the principle that local authorities are expected to lead by example.

From the 1st April 2023, all non-domestic buildings must have an EPC rating of at least E. The government has proposed tightening MEES in the future, with a target of C by April 2028 and B by April 2030 (subject to consultation and confirmation, likely to delay the timeline by 12-18 months).

Table 5 represents a heatmap where HDC's estate is positioned in relation to the MEES trajectory. This categorisation may be used to prioritise investments in the next years leading to 2030.

	Low Challenge (EPC B)	Medium Challenge (EPC C)	High Challenge (EPC D+)
Low Impact	Hinchingbrooke Country Park		Paxton Pits Sapley Pavilion Priory Park Riverside Pavillion
Medium Impact			One L Ramsey
High Impact	Eastfield House One L St Ives One L St Ives Outdoor One L St Neots	Pathfinder House E One L Huntingdon	Pathfinder House B,C&D

Table 5: HDC Property Heatmap Against Mees Trajectory

3.5 Carbon Emissions Portfolio View

HDC's Climate Strategy includes a Carbon Pathway Scenario to 2040 from 3,671 tCO₂e in 2019/20 (the Baseline). The annual reporting indicates that the Council was on track with the Climate Carbon pathway until 2022/23 but fell short of expectations in 2023/24.

From the Baseline to 2023/24, buildings have remained at 51-55% of the Council's actual total carbon emissions (with the exception of the year of pandemic when the ratio dropped to 35%).

Had the Council met its "Climate Pathway Scenario to 2040" target for 2023/24, buildings would have represented 73% of total emissions.

Entering in an agreement with Total Energy to buy green electricity from October 2024 will greatly contribute to reducing the impact of buildings in HDC's Carbon Pathway, in both absolute and relative terms. However, to stay on track, there is a clear requirement to accelerate building decarbonisation through enhanced energy management, retrofits, and renewable energy.

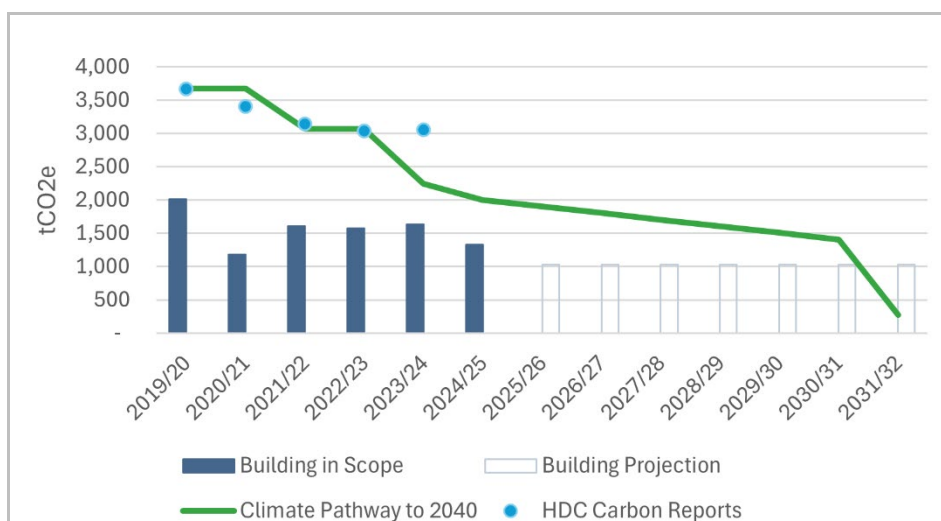


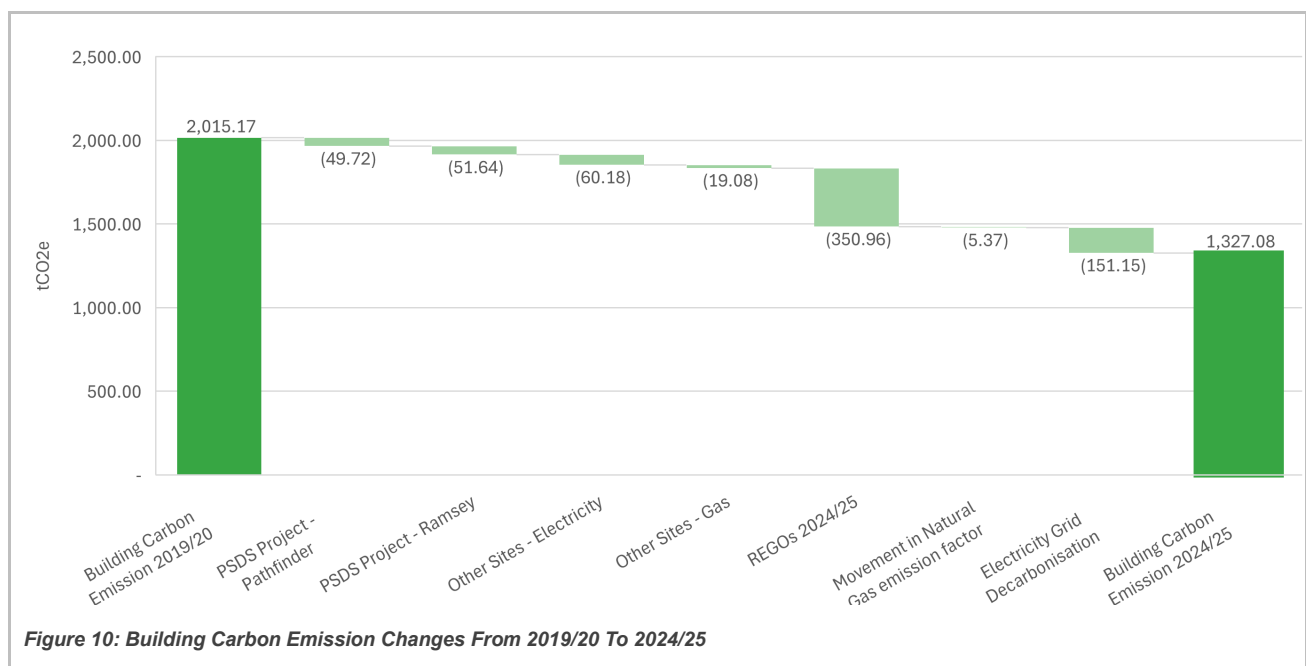
Figure 9: Carbon pathway scenarios and historic building emissions for HDC properties

A review of total energy consumptions (kWh gas and electricity) between the 2019/20 Baseline and 2024/25 shows a saving of 9.9%.

In terms of carbon emissions, this translated to a reduction of 16.7% (Location-based emissions). When taking into account the Green Electricity tariff taking effect in October 2024, the emission reduction improves to 34.1% (Market-based emissions).

The 34.1% carbon emission reductions are comprised of:

- 5.1% from PSDS projects (£3,783k investment at Pathfinder House and OL Ramsey);
- 3.9% from other changes in demand (electricity and gas);
- 17.4% from Total Energy deal, which came into effect in October 2024, and only impacts for 6 months;
- 7.8% from electricity grid decarbonisation and change in gas emissions factors.



Some buildings have performed much better than others. A focus on **the 5 buildings, that generate 87% of HDC's building emissions**, shows a particularly challenging situation at One Leisure St Ives Indoor. This should inform the strategy to focus on the sites having the most impact and underperforming.

	2024/25 vs 2019/20 kWh	2024/25 vs 2019/20 tCO2e
All buildings	-9.9%	-16.7%
Pathfinder House	-21.3%	-29.9%
One Leisure St Neots	-18.2%	-23.9%
Eastfield house	-14.8%	-25.3%
One Leisure Huntingdon (Wet)	-3.4%	-4.8%
One Leisure St Ives indoor	+12.5%	+4.4%

Table 6: kWh and tCO₂e (market based) at the 'Big 5' HDC buildings

It should be noted that the 2024 numbers do not benefit yet from a series of RE-Fit, PSDS, and Swim England Funding projects undertaken since 2023 (see project pathway section 4.3).

3.6 Evidence of Energy Management

The reporting period from the Baseline of 2019/20 to 2024/25 shows a 9.9% reduction in energy consumption. This comes from a 13.8% reduction of gas consumptions and 1.7% of electricity consumptions.

Most of the savings can be attributed to a proactive reset post-pandemic. It could also be argued that changes in demand (e.g. new ways of working and using buildings) have contributed. However, it should be noted that, as the estate ages, there is a decline in building performance. To avoid an adverse trend, HDC are actively applying and securing funding for projects (e.g. new AHU, variable speed drives, and solar PV) through schemes such as Salix or Re-fit (see "Project Pipeline").

Year	Combined kWh
2019/20	9,723,967
2020/21	5,842,591
2021/22	8,329,197
2022/23	8,429,498
2023/24	8,506,056
2024/25	8,763,051

Table 7: Combined kWh by Year

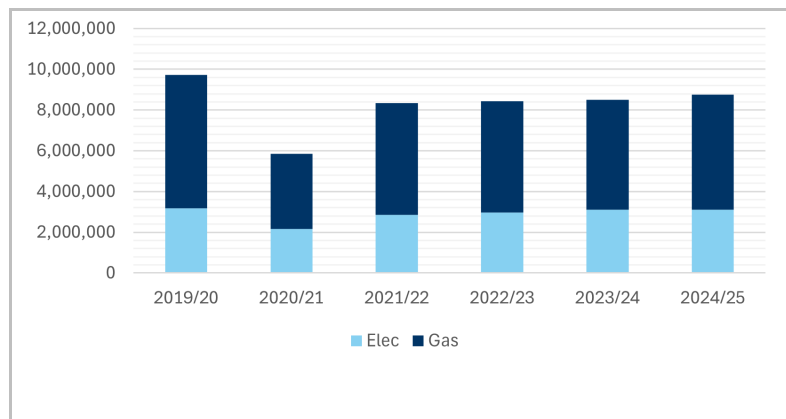


Figure 11: HDC Buildings Combined Electricity and Natural Gas kWh

There is also evidence of proactive energy management, as illustrated in the below daily energy consumption profiles of the "Big 4" buildings forming 80% of HDC's emissions.

Patterns of consumptions across the sites demonstrate some alignment with occupancy levels over the 48 half-hourly periods of the day. However, one of our recommendations will be to increase governance and building control strategies to reduce the baseload consumption.

The initial focus will have to be outside normal working hours and on bank holidays, when significant savings can be achieved. Also, better submetering would help understand the profile of consumptions from large energy consuming assets such as swimming pools.

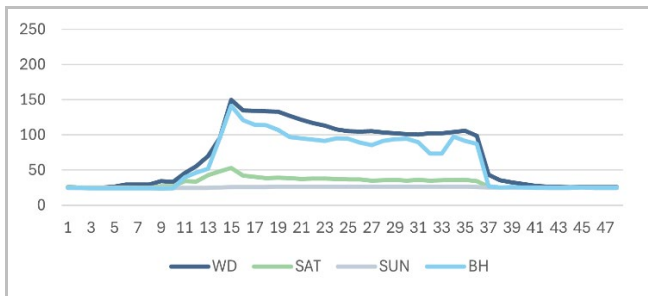


Figure 12: Pathfinder House 2024/25 Combined kWh Daily Profile

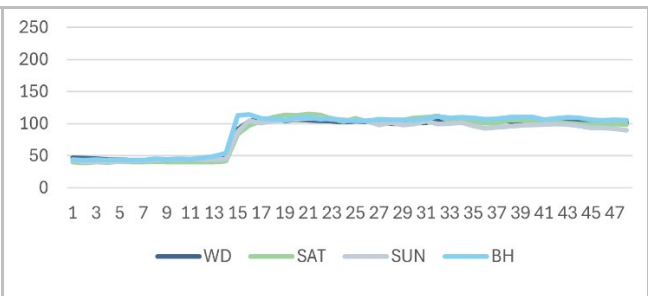


Figure 13: OL Huntingdon(wet)2024/25 Combined kWh Daily Profile

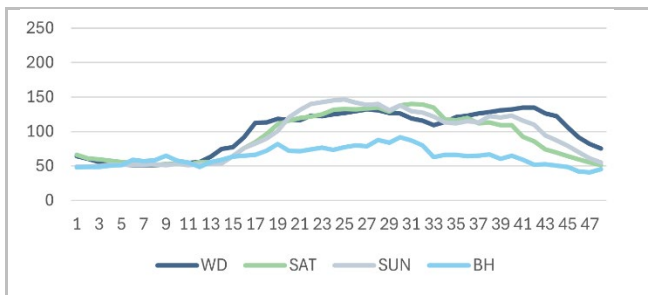


Figure 14: St Neots 2024/25 Combined kWh Daily Profile

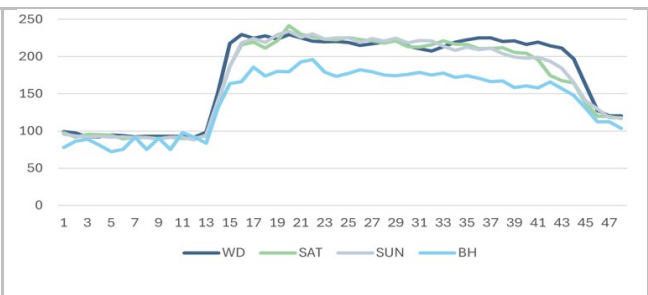


Figure 15: One Leisure St Ives (Indoor) 2024/25 Combined kWh Daily Profile

3.7 Projects Undertaken to Date

Over the years, HDC has proven particularly proactive and successful in securing funding from schemes available to local authorities. The below table provides a summary of such projects ranging from adopting current technology such as variable speed drives to major retrofit (e.g. partial electrification of heat at Pathfinder house) and renewable energy solutions.

Value	Details	Sites	Completion (date or period)
Salix	The Salix scheme is a government support scheme that provides capital investment which is matched by the public Sector organisation. This scheme was a 15-year scheme which closes on 31st March 2025		
£ 676,556	Variable Speed Drives	Leisure centres	April 2010
	PIR	Leisure centres	April 2010
	Pool covers	Leisure centres	April 2011 & April 2012
	AHU upgrades	Leisure centres	2012 & 2014
	AHU Motor replacement	Eastfield House	September 2021
	LED upgrade	All	Various dates
	Booster pump upgrades	Pathfinder House	May 2024
	Booster pump upgrades	Eastfield House	December 2020

Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme	This scheme provides Public Sector bodies funding for heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures		
£ 2,269,193	Air source heat pump x 2, new BMS, Fan coil units replacement, new glazing, cavity wall insulation, roof insulation	One Leisure Ramsey	2021
£ 1,513,770	Electrification of heat, New energy management system, 4x AHUs, 2 x ASHP, New ICT Chillers, BMS	Pathfinder House	2021
RE-Fit Project	Phase 2, to support sites with energy saving measures across the country. This scheme was £60 million		
£ 650,000	Roof mounted solar PV	Leisure centres	2016
	LED Lighting	Leisure centres	2016
	CHP	One Leisure St Neots	2016
	Building Energy Management System	Leisure centres	2016
	HVAC insulation	Leisure centres	2016
	Pool Pump controls	Leisure centres	2016
	Mechanical works on boilers	Leisure centres	2016
£ 650,000	Carport solar canopies	One Leisure St Ives	31/03/2025
£ 50,000	Triple glazing windows	One Leisure St Ives	31/03/2025

Table 8: HDC Projects Completed between 2010 and 2025

Examples of proactive initiatives:

- Enhancement funded through savings made in annual funding cycles such as compartmentation of space between offices and atrium, with the effect of improving control of heating and air conditioning distribution in the Civic Centre.
- Negotiation of a 100% electricity tariff with Total Energy in September 2024 for two years, resulting in zero scope two market emissions

It is also very commendable to note the proactive funding of feasibility surveys and detailed design toward future retrofit. The business cases from the below RIBA stage 4 design for heat electrification will be inserted in the project pipeline, reducing time to procurement when the decision to progress is made.

Value	Scheme/Study	Site
Low Carbon Skills Fund	A government grant that enables public sector organisations the ability to access skills and expertise to unlock heat decarbonisation plans. Through this scheme we have been able to gain RIBA stage 4 designs for heat electrification	
	Decarbonisation Feasibility Studies s.	Conducted for Pathfinder House, Eastfield House and our Leisure Centre
	RIBA stage 4 level designs for heat electrification	Pathfinder House
	RIBA stage 4 level designs for heat electrification	Eastfield House
	RIBA stage 4 level designs for heat electrification	One Leisure Huntingdon Dry side

Table 9: Low Carbon Skills Fund projects

4 Proposed Way Forward

A review of net zero best practice has informed the overall HDC net zero definition and the required EUI reduction targets and DEC score for each building. A site visit and desktop energy analysis were carried out to identify suitable potential energy and carbon reduction strategies. These were then collated into fact sheets and suggested priorities for the development of bespoke decarbonisation plans.

4.1 High Level Summary

To better assess the key risks and emissions profile of each site, including GHG emissions, energy consumption, reduction project effectiveness, and overall impact, each location was assigned a score out of 11 across three criteria: **GHG Emissions Reduction (2019-2024)**, **Energy Usage Reduction (2019-2024)**, and **Relative Carbon Impact (tCO₂)**. Each site's scores across these three categories were summed to generate a final ranking, providing a data-driven view of performance and risk.

The weighted criteria was calculated as detailed in the table below.

Criteria	GHG Emissions Reduction (2019/20-2024/25)	Energy Usage Reduction (2019/20-2024/25)	Relative Carbon Impact (tCO ₂)
Overview	Scored out of 3. This metric measured the percentage reduction in emissions relative to baseline levels.	Scored out of 3. This assessed the percentage decrease in energy usage from baseline levels.	Scored out of 5. This evaluated each site's contribution to HDC's total carbon footprint, helping to prioritise high-impact sites.
Scoring	Less than 29% reduction: 1 (Low) 30% - 45% reduction: 2 (Medium) More than 46% reduction: 3 (High)	Less than 19% reduction: 1 (Poor) 20% - 30% reduction: 2 (Moderate) More than 31% reduction: 3 (Good)	Over 200 tCO ₂ : 1 (Very High) 91 - 200 tCO ₂ : 2 (High) 41 - 90 tCO ₂ : 3 (Medium) 11 - 40 tCO ₂ : 4 (Low) 10 tCO ₂ or less: 5 (Minimal)

Table 10: Weighted Score Criteria Used to Assess Key Risks and Emissions Profile at Each HDC Site

The table below shows the scoring attributed to each site.

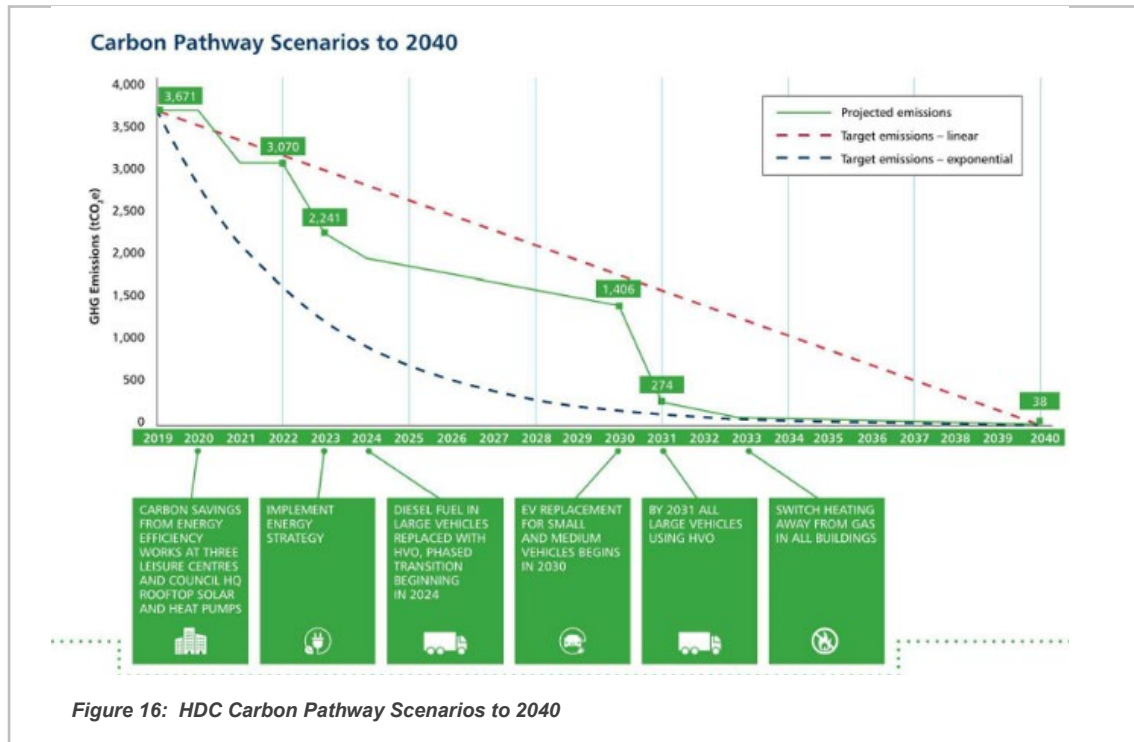
Site	Share of Total GHG Carbon Emissions	GHG Change (2019/20-2024/25) <i>Market Based</i>	Score GHG Reduction (2019/20-2024/25) <i>Market Based</i>	Energy Change (2019/20-2024/25)	Energy Use Reduction (2019/20-2024/25)	Gas C Cooking H Heating	Relative Carbon Impact (tCO ₂ e)	Score (Out of 11)	Carbon Emissions (2024/25) (tCO ₂ e) <i>Location Based</i>
Pavilion Hartford Road Huntingdon	0.0%	-94%	Good	-82%	Good	N	Minimal	11	0.1
Pavilion Sapley Park	0.0%	-86%	Good	-43%	Moderate	N	Minimal	10	0.5
Hinchingbrooke Country Park Café	0.2%	-69%	Good	32%	Poor	N	Minimal	9	4.0
Pavilion Priors Park (New)	0.3%	-56%	Good	3%	Poor	N	Minimal	9	5.9
One Leisure Ramsey	4.6%	-76%	Good	-48%	Good	N	Med	9	76.8
One Leisure St Ives Outdoor	2.8%	-56%	Good	-21%	Moderate	Yes - H & C	Med	8	46.6
One Leisure Huntingdon Dry	3.9%	-52%	Good	-28%	Moderate	Yes - H & C	Med	8	65.6
Pavilion Priors Park (Old)	0.2%	71%	Poor	246%	Poor	N	Minimal	7	2.8
Little Paxton Visitor Centre	0.3%	59%	Poor	355%	Poor	N	Minimal	7	4.3
Eastfield House	4.8%	-57%	Good	-15%	Poor	Yes - H	Med	7	80.4
Hinchingbrooke Country Park Visitor Centre	0.7%	-25%	Poor	91%	Poor	N	Low	6	12.5
Pathfinder House	12.4%	-62%	Good	-21%	Moderate	Yes - H	Very High	6	208.1
One Leisure St Neots	20.4%	-37%	Moderate	-18%	Poor	Yes - H	Very High	4	341.5
One Leisure Huntingdon Wet	16.4%	-8%	Poor	-3%	Poor	Yes - H & C	Very High	3	275.1
One Leisure St Ives Indoor	33.0%	-7%	Poor	12%	Poor	Yes - H & C	Very High	3	553.8

Table 11: Scoring For Each HDC Site Showing Sites Posing Lowest to Greatest Risk

Based on these findings, One Leisure St Ives Indoor is the poorest performer, with a score of 3 out of 11 and the highest carbon emissions among all HDC sites. This highlights the need to prioritise intervention at this location, particularly as it is also showing an upward trend in energy consumption.

4.2 Proposed Roadmap

We presented, in section 4.1, how HDC's carbon pathway appears to be on track until 2022/23 but fell behind last year. The HDC published "Carbon Pathway Scenario to 2040", presenting some significant milestones such as the move to Electrical Vehicle or HVO fuel.



In relation to buildings, the action “**implementation of an energy strategy**” fails to reflect the series of interventions and investments required every year to stay on track with the pathway, including a total electrification of heat by 2033.

Our review of the estate performance shows the positive effect of the existing energy management governance and the impact of projects funded through schemes. For instance, the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) greatly contributed to Pathfinder House and One Leisure Ramsey.

It is critical to appreciate that Net Zero Carbon means reducing energy use intensity in addition to removing fossil fuels. The new agreement with Total Energy will significantly reduce emissions from scope 2 electricity. However, whichever standard HDC ultimately adopts (e.g. UKGBC, SBTi), achieving Net Zero Carbon requires a reduction of Energy Use Intensity by up to 60% compared to 2020.

We have identified 5 sites representing 87% of HDC's building emissions. Unsurprisingly, the highest impact will come from improving the performance of swimming pools, with a specific focus on One Leisure St Ives indoor, which is experiencing an adverse trend.

All buildings need a strategy to leverage existing surveys available and to better understand the asset lifecycle opportunities. An investment programme will focus on retrofits affecting building services (i.e. mechanical, electrical, and public health plants) as well as the fabric (e.g. windows, roof).

There is an element of urgency to start planning and deep diving. The capital planning will rely on an investment-grade report with detailed RIBA Level 4 design when applicable. A timely instruction of

surveys and the creation of steering committees for key buildings will determine synergies and interlock between opportunities to deliver programmes in the most cost-effective way.

As part of HDC's mission "to become a positive example", an immediate priority should be to improve Pathfinder House block B, C & D Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) from a D to a B. Indeed, the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES), currently requiring an E, is likely to require a B by 2030.

HDC will continue to explore renewable energy solutions. Solar PV is the most obvious consideration, but thermal solar water heating or wind solutions can be explored.

All of the above needs to be underpinned by enhanced energy management governance including better remote monitoring with more submetering and useful dashboards. Comfort policies and other policies limiting consumptions from small power equipment need to be written. This will improve the engagement with building users and standardised best practices which will become embedded.

The below diagram presents a high-level roadmap, which should form the basis of strategic workshop to develop a programme in full awareness of HDC's estate plans for individual buildings.

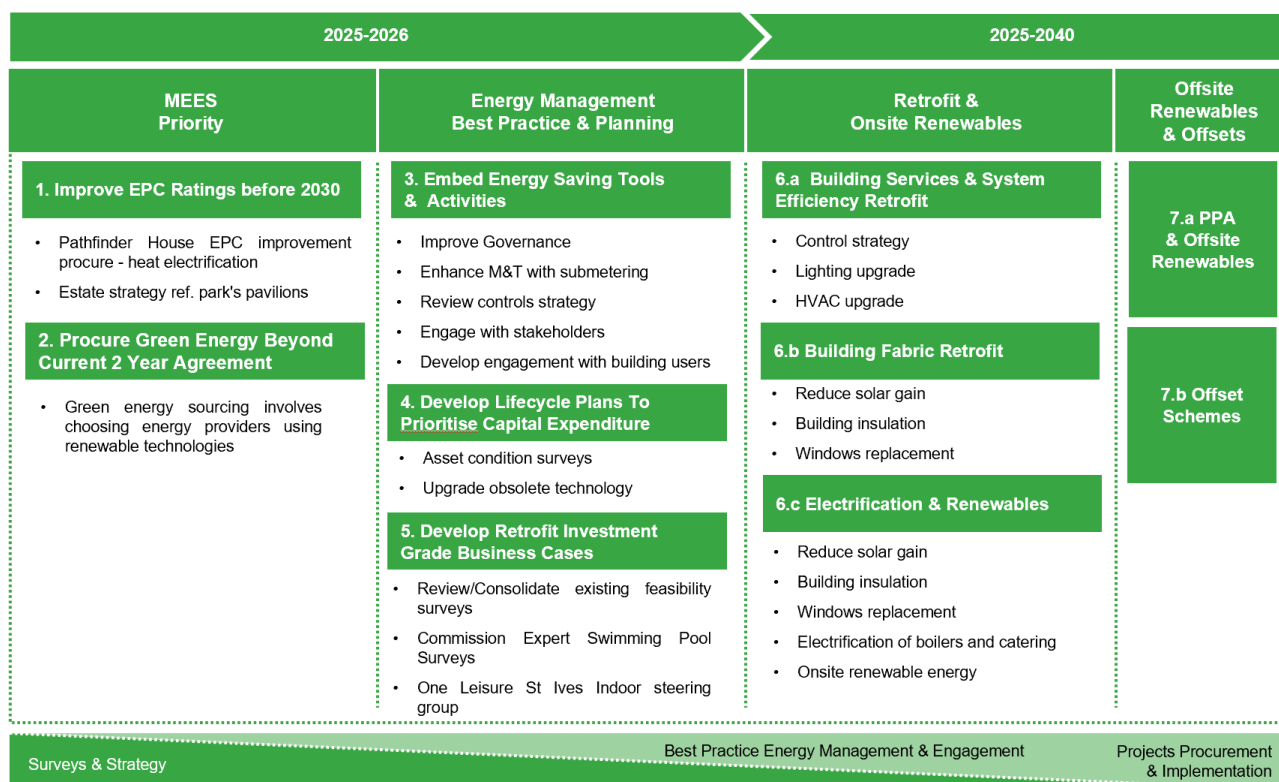


Figure 17: Draft Roadmap to Inform Strategic Workshop

1. Improve EPC Ratings Before 2030

Due to the MEES legislation, improving Pathfinder House EPC from D to B by 2030 should be a priority. All Park Pavilions have EPC D or above. They may not be considered a priority because they form a very small element of the Council's carbon footprint. However, they are very visible to the public and should have a strategy to minimise waste or perhaps include renewable energy solutions.

2. Procure Green Energy Beyond the Current 2 Year Agreement

Green energy sourcing involves choosing energy providers using renewable technologies. In October 2024, HDC entered a 2 year agreement with Total Energy. To maintain the benefit offered to Scope 2 emissions, HDC will need to seek a similar deal in 2026.

3. Embed Energy Saving Tools & Activities

Enhancing Energy Management practice will reduce operational energy consumptions at low or no cost (examples provided opposite).

4. Develop Lifecycle Plans To Prioritise Capital Expenditure

An asset verification with a condition survey will establish building performance, including assets already beyond their useful life and 30-year-old technology that has become obsolete (e.g, belt driven fans and pumps)

5. Develop Retrofit Investment Grade Business Cases

HDC proactively instructed Feasibility surveys and RIBA stage 4 design (with Low Carbon Skills Funding). These surveys need to be consolidated in a Strategy document and enhanced with the addition of expert swimming pool surveys to tackle these largest emitters. Considering the predominance of One Leisure St Ives indoor building and the adverse trend since 2019/20, a steering group will design a strategy based on risk, opportunities, assumptions, and dependencies.

6. Retrofit & Onsite Renewables

Execution of an investment plan based on feasibility studies and investment-grade business place forming part of a site-by-site strategy. This can take the form of pure System Efficiency measures or Building Fabric and Passive Design (examples provided opposite).

7. Offsite Renewables & Offsets

To reach Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy, after all feasible emissions reductions have been achieved within HDC's building portfolio, the next steps are to fund offsite renewable energy projects or to offset (see more detail in the conclusion of this report).

Example Energy Management Activities:

- Improve Governance structure combining progress reviews of programmes, together with impact assessment in terms of energy and carbon (using a carbon monitoring platform). Develop RACI.
- Improve Monitoring and Targeting (Spark Energy Management Platform using Automatic Meter Reading may be used more proactively with enhanced submetering).
- Review time schedules (align operating hours and HVAC running hours, with specific focus on weekend and bank holidays).
- Engagement (develop policies and behaviour change campaigns with occupiers to reduce use of small power equipment, adopt agreed indoor comfort policy).

Example System Efficiency Activities:

- Review building controls strategy (including flow rates, delta of temperature, frost coil set point to 5 degree C).
- Review set points and deadband (adopt a policy to a minimum of 3 degree C deadband).
- Lighting upgrade (LED).
- Lighting levels (Reduce use of artificial lighting, when possible, reduce lux level to 300lux, from 500lux typically, in office areas).
- Upgrade HVAC equipment (leveraging lifecycle replacement).

Example Building Fabric & Passive Design Activities:

- Reduce solar gain (consider windows reflective coating and façade shading measures).
- Comprehensive pipework insulation (e.g. lagging and valve jackets).
- Windows upgrade.
- Lifecycle replacement.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings and recommendations

We are recommending the UKGBC for reference because they offer a clear pathway and are in the process of editing 30 categories which will help refine the targets for each type of building. We highlight that the terminology to be used should be **Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy**. At this stage, we will focus on **Reducing Operational Use, moving away from fossil fuels and increasing On-site Renewable**.

A Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy requires upfront investment of time and capital but can lead to significantly lower operating costs while reducing exposure to future energy price inflation or climate related taxation. Moreover, enhancing environmental performance will strengthen HDC's pledge to be a "positive example", an "enabler", and an "encourager"

While current Energy Management efforts have shown some benefits, they are not sufficient to accelerate building emissions reductions at the pace needed to align with HDC's Carbon Pathway to 2040. The table below outlines the **key short-term considerations** for action.

Continue	Do More	Change
Energy Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence of building performance from a good maintenance management and a proactive reset of controls strategies post pandemic (leading to lower energy consumptions). An Energy Management Software platform has been implemented and can be <u>utilised</u> for monitoring (with more submetering where possible) Government Scheme funding applications have been successful for retrofit and also to commission feasibility surveys or solution design. 	Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The roles and responsibilities need to be defined more clearly for better collaboration and accountability between the central team and the occupiers. The current informal engagement of the FM and Energy Management team requires enhanced governance including monthly dashboard and exception reports Bimonthly meetings with occupiers would support review of performance, setting targets and review progress of initiatives 	Strategic planning and funding for Buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Energy Management Strategy should align with HDC's Property Strategy. This will enable focus on retained buildings and minimize the risk of regretted spent. The Council Net Zero Carbon Pathway 2040 needs to be translated in a clear scenario for Buildings, with milestones and year on year carbon targets. The Net Zero Pathway can no longer rely mostly on government funded schemes or on surplus left in the annual budget. Specific funding is required to improve building performance, for electrification and renewable energy
Procure Green Energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The agreement with Total Energy is a large contributor toward market-based carbon reporting. Extending or replacing this arrangement in October 2026 will help. 	Asset Management and Solution Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An asset verification should inform a fully developed lifecycle plan. EPC and TM44 reports' recommendations need to be qualified or costed Expert Swimming Pool Surveys are required to tackle these significant energy users, with transfer of best practice between sites. 	Establish policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearer policies need to be defined and communicated. This includes comfort policies for each building and general principles in the use of small power equipment.

Robust Energy Management best practice and detailed investment plans to decarbonise each building are required. Priority should be given to **reducing energy consumptions through building services retrofits, fabric improvement, and onsite renewable**. The resulting lower energy demand will be beneficial to right size new heating systems and therefore reduce the cost of heat electrification projects.

Continuing to procure green electricity will be beneficial to accelerate HDC's Carbon pathway. HDC can rely on the UK grid decarbonisation to reduce the emissions from the electricity consumed. By 2040, the UK electricity grid emissions factor is projected to be almost zero — around 0.01 kgCO₂e/kWh or lower.

Net Zero Carbon is differentiated from Carbon Neutral in the way that renewable generation should be maximised before considering offsetting. To reach Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy, after all feasible emissions reductions have been achieved within HDC's building portfolio, the final steps are:

- **Procurement of Offsite Renewable Energy:** Remaining energy demand should be met through credible procurement of renewable energy generated offsite, such as via Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) that are certified and additional.
- **Offsetting Residual Emissions:** For any unavoidable residual emissions — after deep reductions and renewable procurement — credible, high-quality carbon offsetting should be employed. Offsets must be verified, permanent, and aligned with best practice standards.

We can only emphasise that offsetting is a final step, not a substitute for real emissions reductions. The Appendix 1 to this document presents a site-by-site review of key findings and recommendations.

Strategically, the recommendation is to set up a Steering Group reflecting the importance of achieving the Buildings Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy by 2040. The Steering Group will oversee the **development of a comprehensive Energy Management System (EnMS)** responsible for developing plans and embedding an Energy Management culture required to drive improvement.

This Buildings Energy Strategy document and the development of an Energy Management System will inform the roadmap and will lead the production of investment grade retrofit business cases.

The below table provides directions on the priorities to be considered by the Steering Group. Appendix 3 offers the detail of the proposed methodology of an Energy Management System to underpin a new continuous improvement approach following the principles of ISO50001.

- **Improve EPC ratings** in line with anticipated Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)
- **Extend the period of green electricity procurement** which is set to expire in September 2026. As the agreement with Total Energy is delivering a significant contribution to the Net Zero Carbon pathway it is a necessary and low-cost action to renew the agreement while the UK grid continues its journey toward Net Zero.
- **Invest in HDC's Energy Management Software** to expand submetering capabilities and **enhance monitoring & targeting**. The low-cost activity will inform further building performance improvement measures and support the necessary engagement with occupiers.
- **Inform the Corporate sites strategy with the findings from the Buildings Energy Strategy** including a prioritisation of site redevelopment where a decarbonisation of the existing facilities is the most challenging.
- **Prioritise capital investment to meet the Council's deadline of heat electrification by 2033 while improving building performance and adding onsite renewable energy.** Re-ordering capital spend will reduce the energy baseload and thus lower the overall investment needed for electrification.
- **Consider offsetting as a final step**, not a substitute for real emissions reductions. Offsetting should be transparently reported and should support projects that deliver wider environmental and social co-benefits wherever possible.

In our experience, achieving a Net Zero pathway can be perceived as inherently complex, involving numerous variables and long-term planning. However, with this Buildings Energy Strategy, HDC has the crucial advantage of understanding their current emissions baseline, providing a solid foundation from which to move forward.

With this starting point, they can confidently engage internal teams and external consultants to help shape and refine their Net Zero Carbon strategy. While some of the investments required may not deliver a direct financial return, the shift toward Net Zero will consistently lead to reduced operational costs through lower energy consumption.

Appendix 1 presents key metrics and comments for each site

Appendix 2 highlights typical interventions to consider in an energy management plan

Appendix 3 provides an overview of the Energy Management System recommended

Appendix 4 offers links to two reference documents

Appendix 5 is an illustration of a roles and responsibilities matrix to be developed

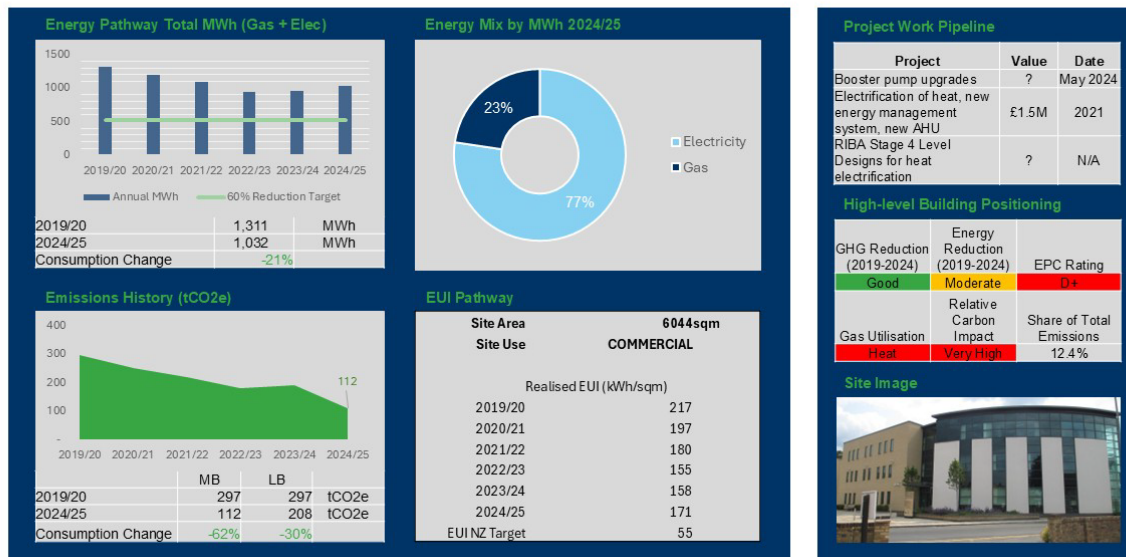
Appendix 1:

Building Fact Sheets & Recommendations

Pathfinder House	29
Eastfield House	Error! Bookmark not defined.
One Leisure St Neots	31
One Leisure Huntingdon (Wet)	32
One Leisure Huntingdon (Dry)	33
One Leisure St Ives (Indoor)	34
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Hinchingbrooke Country Park Cafe	40
Hinchingbrooke Country Park Visitor Centre	41
Little Paxton Visitor Centre	42
Pavilion Sapley Park	43

Pathfinder House

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET PATHFINDER HOUSE



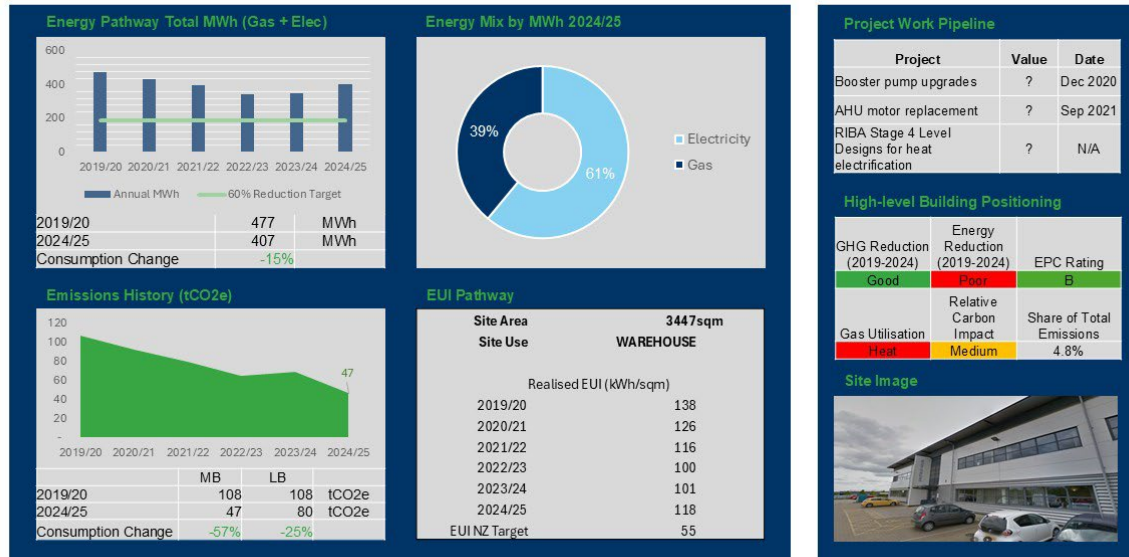
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based. LB = Location Based.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- Successful partial electrification of heat with a PSDS funded project in 2021.
- Priority needs to be given to EPC improving measures (including further heat electrification) to improve current EPC rating and meet the anticipated Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards of a B by 2030 (currently a D).
- Pathfinder House represents 12.4% of total emissions. Reducing consumptions will have a large impact on the Net Zero Plan. To improve Energy Utilisation Intensity (EUI), Pathfinder house is particularly dependent on improving controls and enabling a strategy to reflect occupancy levels.
- Heat electrification will remove 43 tCO2e, which is 3% of HDC's current buildings related emissions

Eastfield House

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET EASTFIELD HOUSE



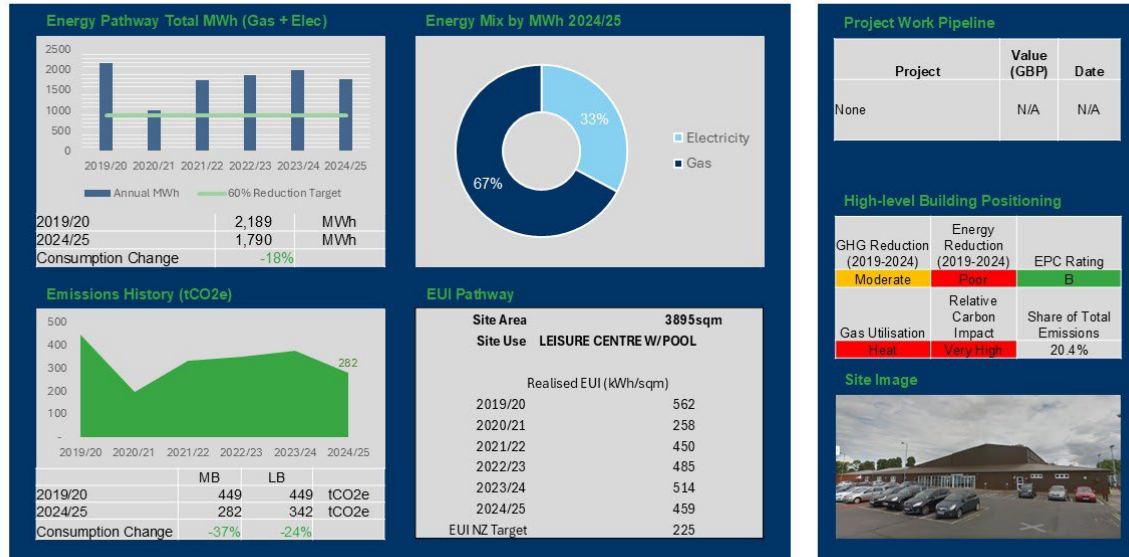
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based, LB = Location Based.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- Eastfield House has benefitted from some investment including air handling unit upgrades.
- Historic data shows an improvement of the site with a reduction of consumption by 15%. However, last year's increase, compared to the previous year, demonstrates a dependency on controls and users demand level, which need to be investigated.
- The other specific challenge of the site is its reliance on radiant heating tubes, controlled locally and using natural gas for fuel. HDC has a RIBA stage 4 design of heat electrification.
- Heat electrification will remove 29 tCO2e, which is 2% of HDC's current buildings related emissions
- Beyond an investment plan, this site would specifically benefit from an engagement with the occupiers, with the potential to limit adverse consumption trends.

One Leisure St Neots

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET ONE LEISURE ST NEOTS



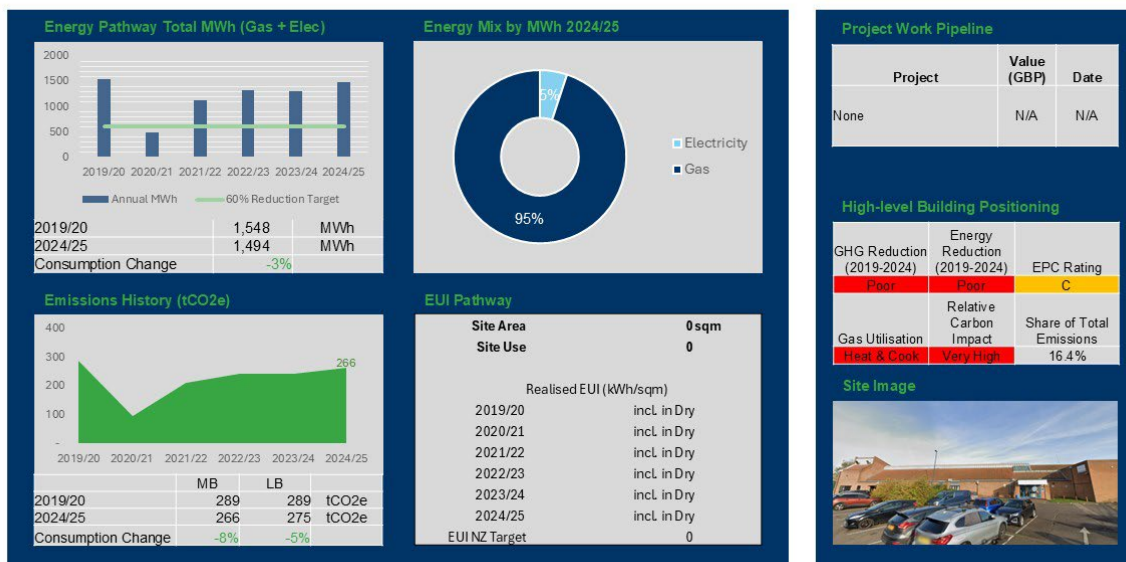
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based. LB = Location Based.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- Despite limited investments, St Neots appears to make some progress over time. However, it represents 20.4% of HDC's building emissions, with 67% of energy fuelled with Natural Gas.
- It is therefore critical to invest in heat electrification design (HDC's stated goal is to "switch heating away from all buildings by 2033") and to involve swimming pool experts to review the feasibility of plants upgrades.
- Heat electrification will remove 220 tCO2e, which is 17% of HDC's current buildings related emissions

One Leisure Huntingdon (Wet)

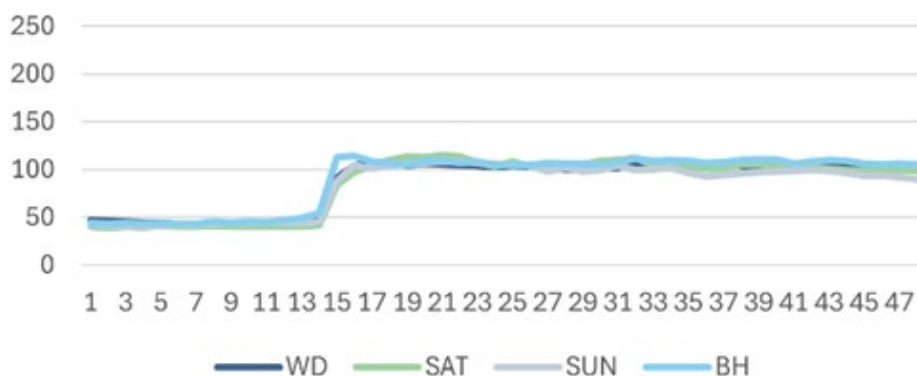
BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET ONE LEISURE HUNTINGDON WET



Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based, LB = Location Based.

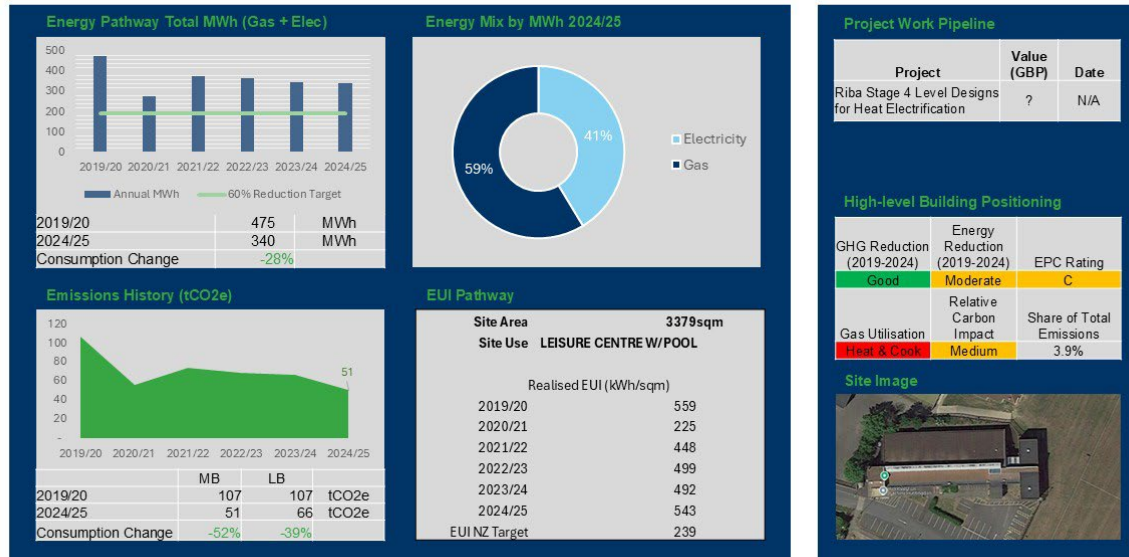
Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- This site is one of the most critical for HDC's NZ pathway. Representing 16.4% of the buildings' emissions, it has only seen a small reduction of energy and emission in the past five years.
- Considering a 95% dependency on natural gas. Heat electrification will remove 259 tCO₂e, which is 20% of HDC's current buildings related emissions
- A potential plan to build a new pool next to One Leisure Huntingdon dry facility would address a large challenge.
- Nonetheless, the below diagram of half-hourly consumptions indicate that the site energy use should be managed and better understood, possibly with the addition of submeters for the significant energy use.



One Leisure Huntingdon (Dry)

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET ONE LEISURE HUNTINGDON DRY



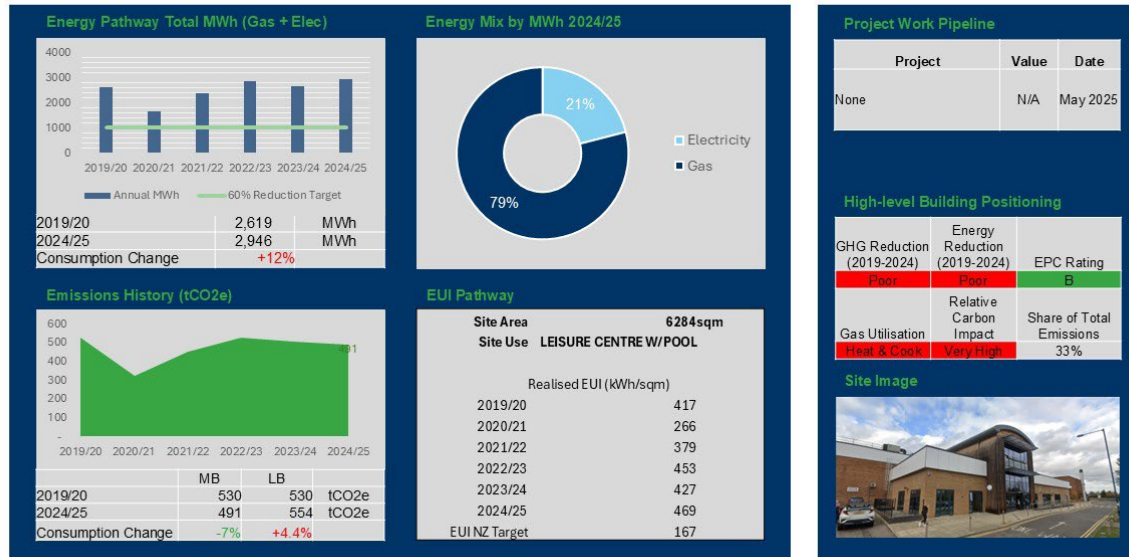
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based. LB = Location Based.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- This site is showing signs of good management with post-pandemic levels of consumptions and emissions maintained at 28% below the baseline of 2019/20. However, there are limited signs of energy reduction year on year.
- With 59% energy coming from natural gas, the site will rely heavily on heat electrification. Heat electrification will remove 36 tCO₂e, which is 3% of HDC's current buildings related emissions.
- HDC is in possession of a RIBA stage 4 design which needs to be included in an investment plan for the site (HDC's stated goal is to "switch heating away from all buildings by 2033").

One Leisure St Ives (Indoor)

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET ONE LEISURE ST IVES INDOOR



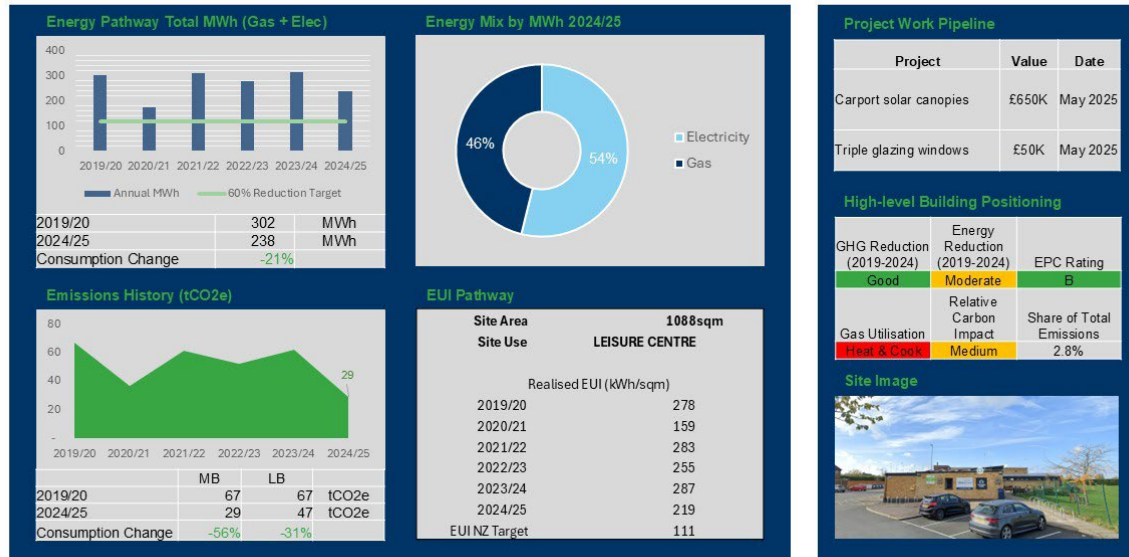
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based, LB = Location Based.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- With an EPC rating B, the site appears to be efficient by design. A DEC 54C, that takes into account energy consumptions (contrary to EPC), also indicates a relatively acceptable performance.
- However, representing 33% of HDC's emissions and having increased its consumptions by 12% between 2019 and 2024, this site is the most critical to tackle.
- It is recommended to understand the estate strategy for this site and have a full review with a dedicated working group including the FM team, occupiers, and appointed swimming pool experts.
- With 79% of its energy fuelled with Natural Gas, alternative solutions are required (HDC's stated goal is to "switch heating away from all buildings by 2033").
- Heat electrification will remove 426 tCO2e, which is 32% of HDC's current buildings related emissions.

One Leisure St Ives (Outdoor)

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET ONE LEISURE ST IVES OUTDOOR



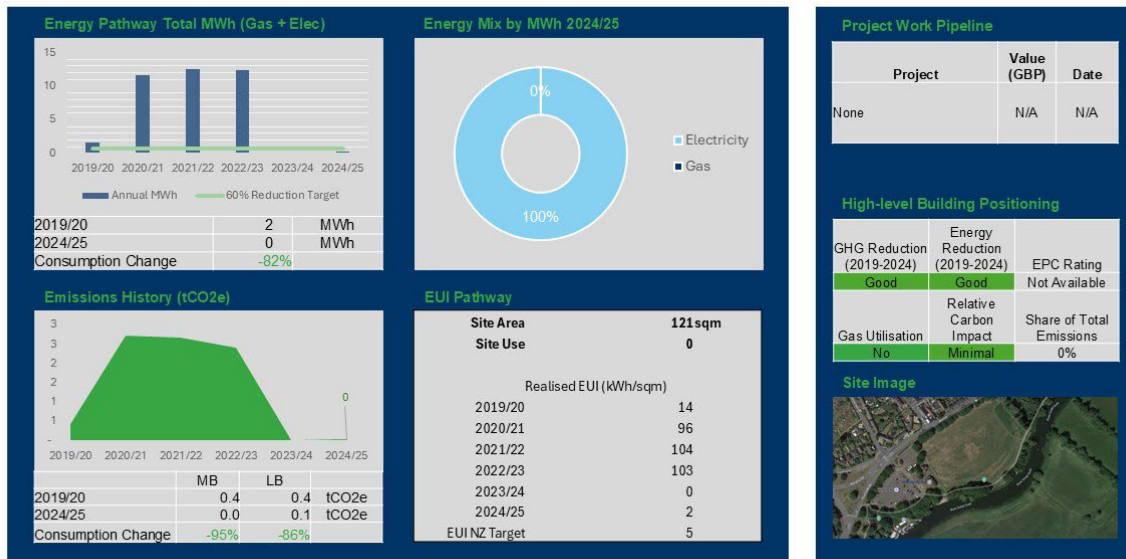
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based. LB = Location Based.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- Representing 2.8% of HDC's emissions and having 46% of its energy in the form of natural gas, this site presents opportunities to help the Net Zero Carbon pathway.
- The current investments funded through the ReFIT scheme will help reduce the consumptions baseload.
- In turn, this will support an electrification of heat with a better payback (contributing to the HDC objective to move away from natural gas by 2033).
- Heat electrification will remove 47 tCO2e, which is 2% of HDC's current buildings related emissions.
-

Pavilion Hartford Road Huntingdon

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET PAVILION HARTFORD ROAD HUNTINGDON



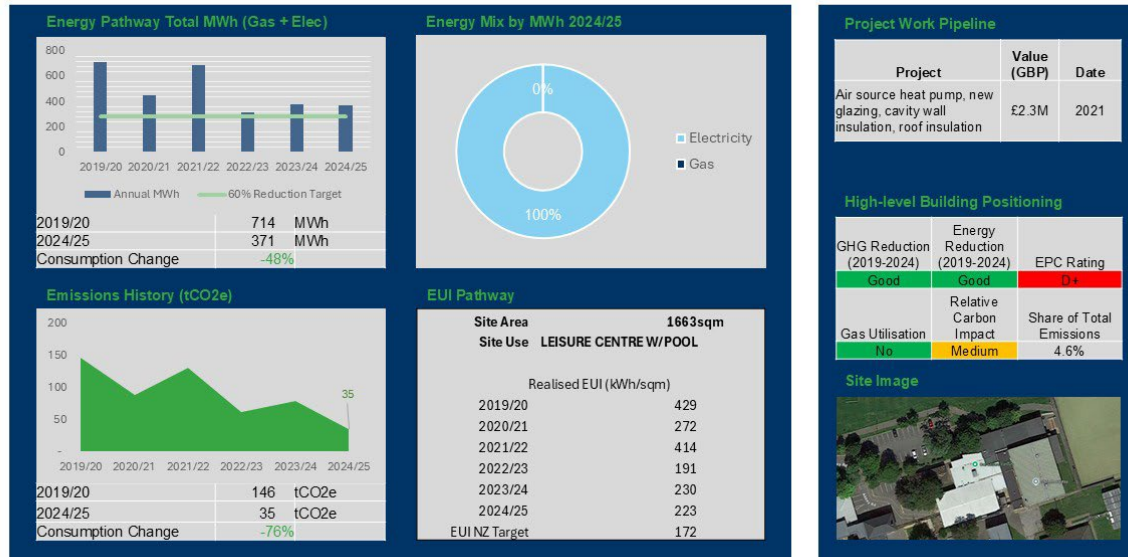
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions. MB = Market Based, LB = Location Based.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- The site energy consumptions are relatively low (in the 3 years when the record could be found).
- It is an all-electric site.

One Leisure Ramsey

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET ONE LEISURE RAMSEY



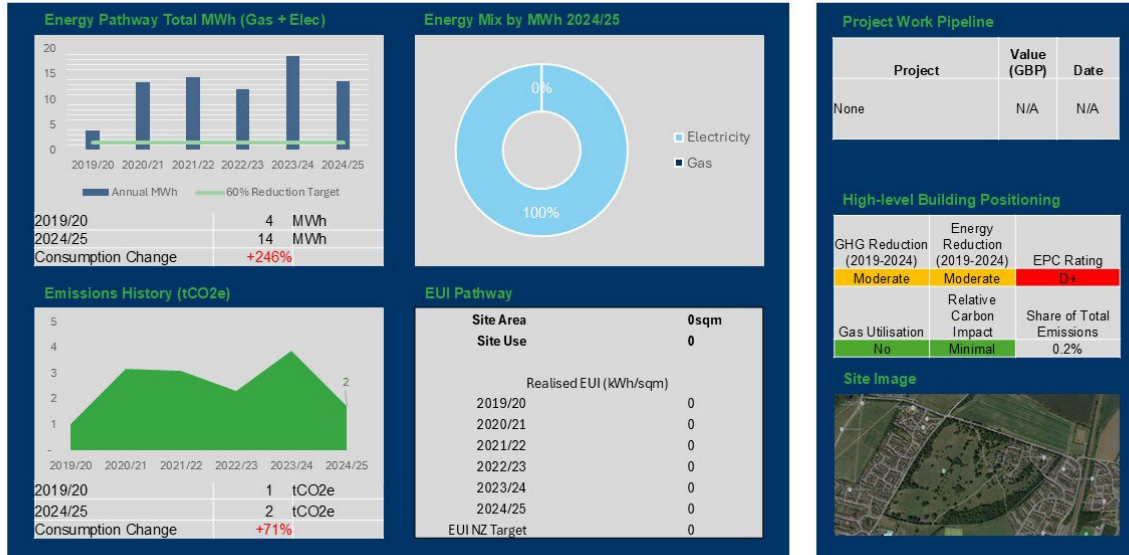
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- This site is a case study for HDC's Net Zero pathway activities. A £2.3m investment in air source heat pump and fabric insulation have reduced kWh consumptions by 48% and emissions by 76%.
- The EPC D is a concern, but it may be because the rating predates the retrofit. A new rating is to be considered.
- Further plant upgrades will be required to reduce energy consumptions, with the possible transfer of best practice learned from swimming pool experts initially commissioned for the other leisure centres.

Pavilion Priory Park (Old)

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET PAVILION PRIORY PARK (OLD)



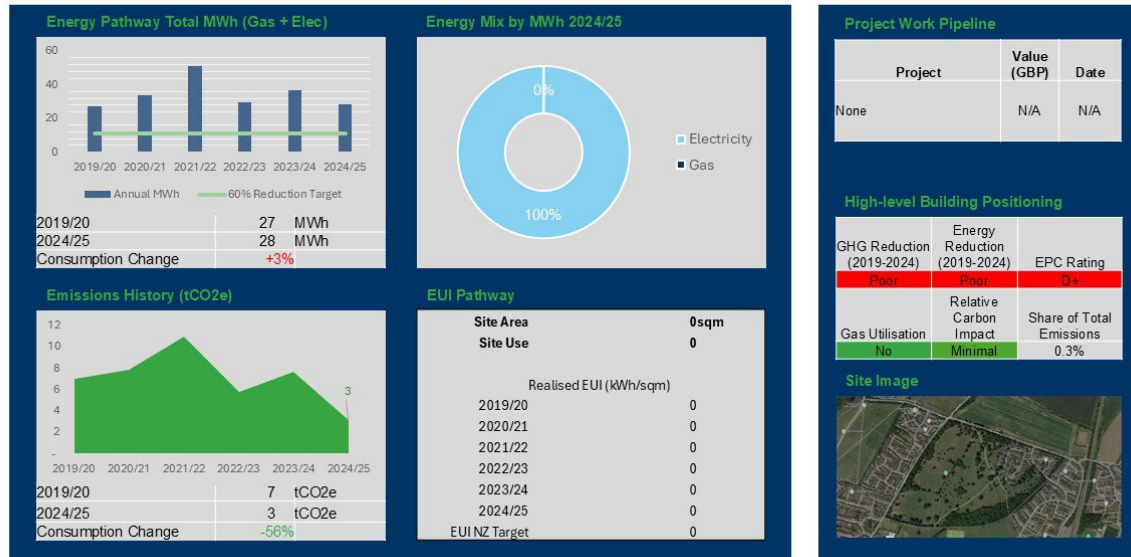
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- The site is all electric and makes a relatively low impact on the Net Zero Carbon pathway.
- However, it appears to experience fluctuations worth exploring to limit waste.
- The EPC D is a concern, but this would have to be reviewed in the context of HDC's Property strategy and long-term plan for the site.

Pavilion Priory Park (New)

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET PAVILION PRIORY PARK (NEW)



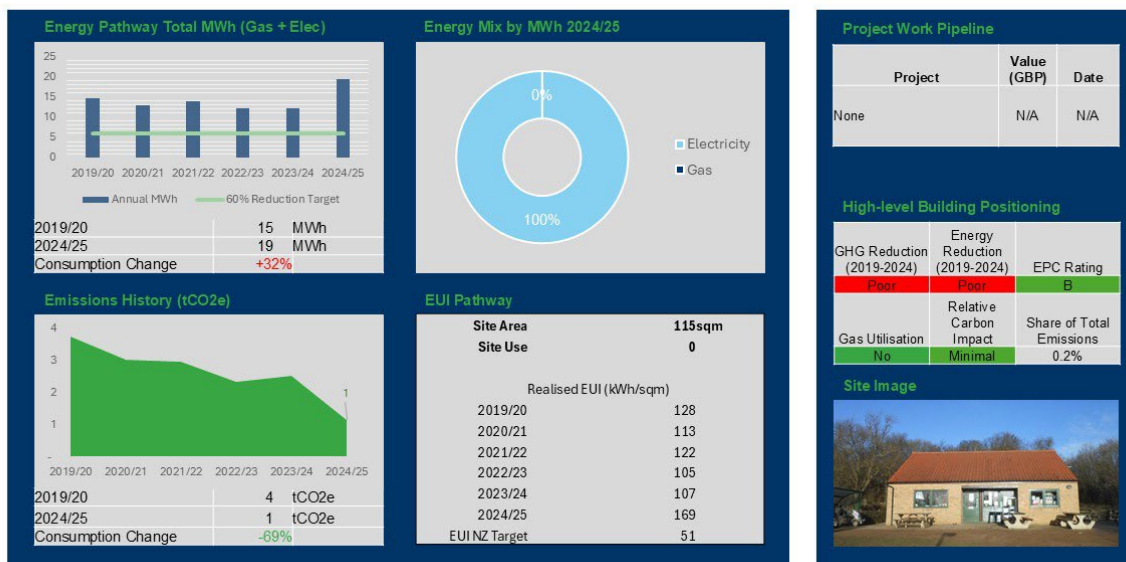
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site.. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- Priory Park is all electric with a relatively low emission.
- The EPC D is a concern, but this would have to be reviewed in the context of HDC's Property strategy and long-term plan for the site.

Hinchingbrooke Country Park Cafe

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK CAFE



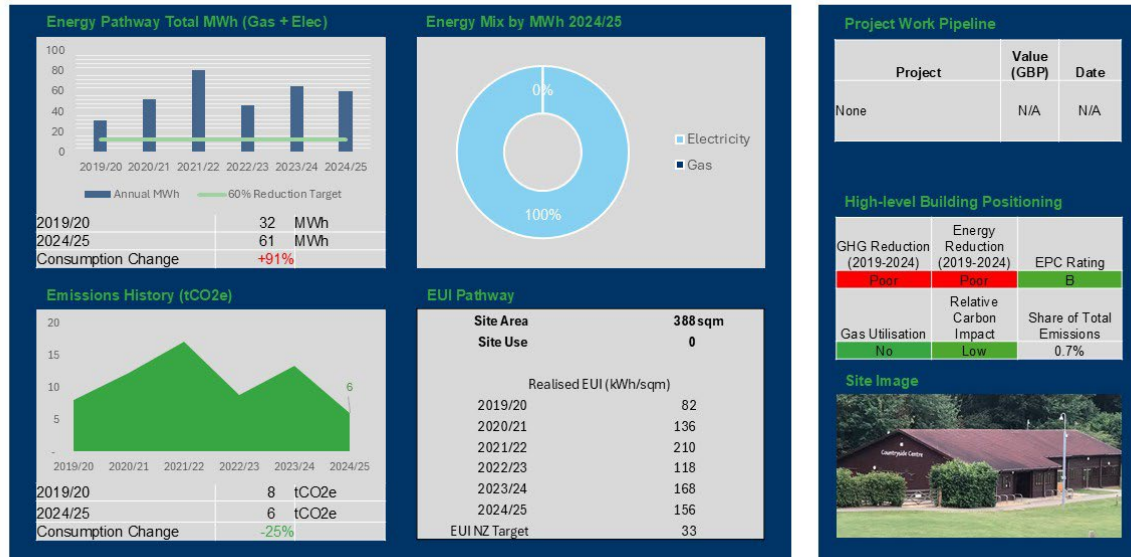
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- The café has very low consumptions and is due to be relocated in the visitor centre (subject to planning permission). Therefore, it is not a priority to invest time and effort on this site.

Hinchingbrooke Country Park Visitor Centre

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE



Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- While relatively small in the scale of HDC's emissions (0.7%), the site shows great variability of consumptions year-on-year.
- A review of governance and policies may minimise waste.
- Economies are expected if the café was moved in the Visitor centre.

Little Paxton Visitor Centre

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET LITTLE PAXTON VISITOR CENTRE



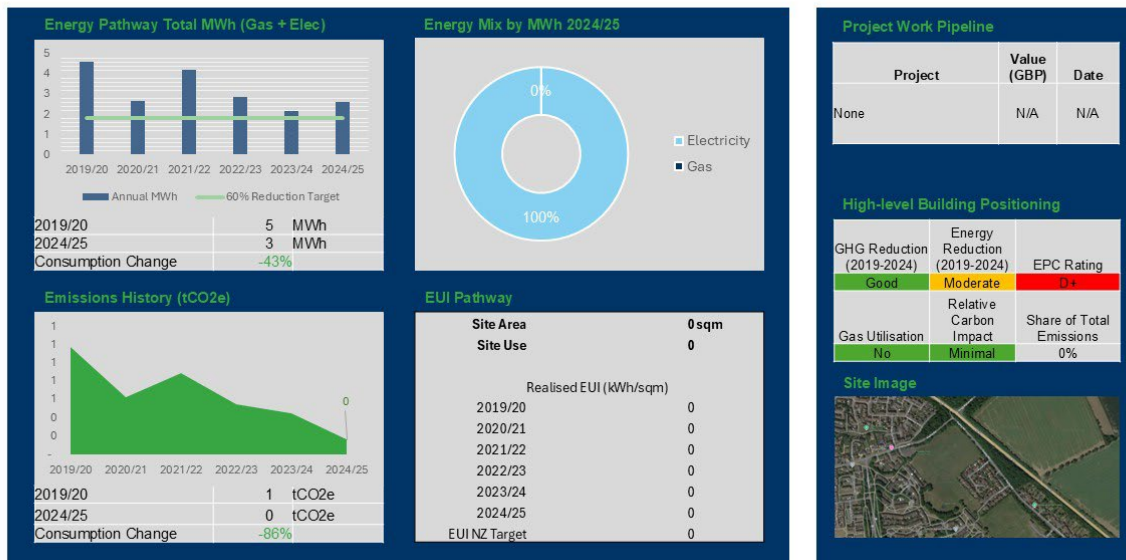
Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- The EPC D is a concern, but this would have to be reviewed in the context of HDC's Property strategy and long-term plan for the site

Pavilion Sapley Park

BUILDING KEY METRICS FACTSHEET PAVILION SAPLEY PARK











Key: Relative Carbon Impact reflects the total carbon emissions attributed to the site. GHG Reduction and Energy Usage Reduction values (2019-2024) are calculated using weighted percentage reductions.

Key Comments & Items for Consideration

- The EPC D is a concern, but this would have to be reviewed in the context of HDC's Property strategy and long-term plan for the site

Appendix 2: Link to external references

Appendix 2: Energy Management Interventions for consideration

Enhance Energy Management  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an Energy Management System for remote meter reading and monitoring • Develop a submetering strategy to monitor significant energy users • Define Energy Performance Indicators and targets 	Review Comfort Policies  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider acceptable indoor air temperature including a seasonal approach. • Increase HVAC set points to 3 degrees C deadband between heating and cooling • Review light level requirement for potential dimming 	Improve Controls Strategy  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure alignment between operational hours and BMS schedules • Adapt air flow to actual occupancy levels • Review set points (e.g. frost temperature) and flow temperature 	Electrification  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace fossil fuel powered heat production with heat pump • Consider point of use domestic hot water electrical immersion heaters • Electrify catering when applicable
Building Services Upgrade  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt direct driven fan when possible • Fit motors with invertors • Upgrade Air Handling Units to include energy recovery systems • Consider Power Factor Correction equipment 	Building Insulation  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider roof insulation as well as pipework • Consider windows surface coating or brise soleil on south facing windows • Review opportunity of replacing windows 	Renewable Energy  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas for solar PV or thermal solar solution • Review car park space for solar PV Carport opportunity • Consider wind power including roof mounted solutions 	Occupiers Engagement  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit occupier small power equipment to 9W/sqm (procurement of IT and limit temporary heaters) • Implement behaviour change campaigns

Appendix 3: Proposed EnMS delivery methodology

We recommend to progress from this Energy Strategy report with the adoption of the principles of an overarching **Energy Management System (EnMS)** following the best practice approach offered by the ISO50001 standard in a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle.



Below are the key steps for implementation:

1. Commitment and Policy (Plan)

Obtain top management commitment and develop a Steering group with a definition of Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed stakeholders.

Establish an energy policy outlining energy performance goals, compliance, continuous improvement. **Engage** to ensure the policy is communicated, understood, and reviewed regularly.

2. Planning (Plan)

Overall property strategy. This strategy is crucial and HDC need to identify their long-term plan for each of their property assets.

Conduct an energy review:

- Involve swimming pool experts to tackle significant energy uses (SEUs).
- Analyse energy consumption and usage patterns.
- Establish a baseline and performance indicators (EnPIs)

Identify legal and other requirements, such as MEES and DEC improvement expectations.

Set energy objectives, targets, and action plans:

- Define measurable goals.
- Assign responsibilities, resources, and timelines.
- Align total building carbon pathway to 2040 with the HDC's overarching pathway.

3. Implementation and Operation (Do)

Define roles, responsibilities, and authorities in the implementation of the plan.

Ensure competence, training, and awareness of staff.

Establish communication procedures (internal and external).

Document and control EnMS documentation (policies, plans, records).

Operational control:

- Implement procedures for significant energy users
- Ensure effective operation and maintenance.

Design considerations for energy efficiency in new projects or upgrades.

Procurement:

- Consider energy performance in purchasing decisions.

4. Checking (Check)

Monitor, measure, and analyse EnPIs and energy performance.

Evaluate legal and other compliance.

Conduct internal audits of the EnMS.

Handle nonconformities and take corrective/preventive actions.

5. Management Review (Act)

Conduct periodic management reviews to ensure continuing suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness.

Update the policy, objectives, and processes based on review outcomes.

6. Continual Improvement

Use audit findings, performance data, and management reviews to drive ongoing improvements in energy performance and the EnMS.

Appendix 4: Links to reference material

[Greater Cambridge proposed policy CC/NZ](#)

[UKGBC Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework](#)

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Paxton Pits Nature Reserve Extension of Leases

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny Committee - (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) – 4th September 2025

Cabinet – 16th September 2025

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Julie Kerr – Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene

Report by: Gregg Holland – Head of Leisure, Health & Environment

Ward(s) affected: All Ward(s)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Customers & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the Paxton Pits Extension of Leases report and make any comments to the Cabinet.

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Paxton Pits Nature Reserve Extension of Leases

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny Committee - (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) – 4th September 2025
Cabinet – 16th September 2025

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Julie Kerr – Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene

Report by: Gregg Holland – Head of Leisure, Health & Environment

Ward(s) affected: All Ward/s

Executive Summary:

Paxton Pits Nature Reserve currently consists of 78 hectares. Gravel extraction has taken place there since the 1940's. In September 2006 Cabinet approved the extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve by way of the acceptance of leases of land adjacent to the existing reserve. A Section 106 agreement created in September 2006 obliged the Council to enter into the leases of the conservation land.

From 2008 to 2016 Little Paxton Quarry was mothballed during the economic recession which delayed the restoration works. In 2017 planning permission expired so Aggregate Industries submitted a revised proposal to Cambridgeshire County Council for the period up to 2029. In 2017 it was felt that the 2007 lease which was annexed to the S106 needed modernising. Since then, the legal representatives for the different parties have been negotiating the terms of the leases. Now, the terms of the lease have been agreed.

Typically, the agreement of leases such as this would be delegated to Officers, based on previous decisions, however, owing to the passage of time in this case, and the potential for linked opportunities, further approval by Cabinet is recommended in this instance.

Following further gravel extraction, the reserve is set to increase substantially (more than 3.5 times) to 280 hectares which would make it one of the largest nature reserves in Cambridgeshire. This can be seen in **Appendix 1**. The additional land is owned by Oxford University Chest and Thornhill Estate. Holcim UK (formerly Aggregate Industries) has planning consent for the extraction of gravel and the associated restoration.

The land will be released to the Council in phases as gravel extraction and restoration is completed. Leases will be granted to the Council for a minimum period of 80 years with options to extend and the rent will be a peppercorn.

Once completed, the Nature Reserve and the adjoining land in private ownership will provide a complex of lakes and public open spaces covering over 600 hectares in total situated between the River Great Ouse and the A1 stretching from Little Paxton to Diddington. It will have a network of footpaths, bridle paths and cycle ways covering the whole area. Management of the site will be governed by a reserve management plan which is agreed by the Council, TOF and Thornhill in accordance with the S106 agreement. This management plan will set out in detail how the conservation land will be managed, monitored and maintained.

Taking on these sites has benefits to the Council, and has alignment with our established Place Strategy, Corporate Plan, and wider environmental, social and community aspirations. There are also potential opportunities from an economic perspective in relation to the visitor economy.

This report seeks approval to give delegated authority for the signature of the leases of land adjacent to the current reserve creating the extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve following the completion of gravel extraction operations and agreed restoration works.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet/Committee is

RECOMMENDED

- To fully approve and give delegated authority to fully execute the leases for the land adjacent to the current nature reserve allowing for an extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve following the completion of gravel extraction operations and agreed restoration works.
- To agree and approve the feedback from 3C Legal Shared Services outlined in Section 10 which provides confidence and clarity to the Council in moving forward with the extension of leases.
- To support the principle of Officers engaging in efforts to acquire land and buildings in connection with the principle of exploring wider opportunities to not only develop existing sites across the Council's parks and open spaces but also new sites and spaces to support wildlife and conservation, health and wellbeing, physical activity and commercial sustainability opportunities.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to gain full approval from Council and to allow delegated authority to Senior Officer's to fully execute the leases for the land adjacent to the current nature reserve allowing for an extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve following the completion of gravel extraction operations and agreed restoration works.
- 1.2 This report also seeks to set out the current legal position as supplied by 3C Legal Shared Services and to provide Council the full confidence in which full approval for this scheme and delegated authority can be given to Senior Officers to proceed with this matter.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is also aimed at gaining approval for the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment and associated teams in principle to explore wider opportunities to develop existing and new sites across the Council's parks and open spaces to support wildlife and conservation, health and wellbeing, physical activity and commercial sustainability opportunities.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 [On 7th September 2006, Cabinet approved the extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve](#) by way of the acceptance by HDC of leases of land adjacent to existing reserve following the completion of gravel extraction.
- 2.2 [In the meeting minutes it stated](#); *"Having considered the terms of the leases the Cabinet agreed that the Director of Central Services after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, be authorised to approve the terms of the leases."*
- 2.3 A Section 106 agreement was produced in September 2006 which obliged HDC to enter into the leases of the conservation land. The form of lease was annexed to the S106. The parties are HDC, Oxford University (TOF), Thornhill Estates and Aggregate Industries (now HOLCIM UK).
- 2.4 In 2008, the economic recession led to the quarry being moth balled until 2016 which meant that gravel extraction and the associated restoration works ceased for 8 years. Consequently, this extended the timeframe of the reserve extension.
- 2.5 In 2017 it was decided that the 2007 lease, which was annexed to the S106, needed modernising.
- 2.6 Since then, the legal representatives for the different parties have been negotiating the terms of the leases. The terms of the lease are now agreed. HDC will enter into;
 - an overreaching agreement with TOF and HOLCIM UK Ltd (formerly Aggregate Industries)
 - an overarching agreement with Thornhill and HOLCIM UK Ltd

- these will be for the surrender of HDC's current 2007 lease and the grant of the new leases for the various phases detailed in the plan.
- 2.7 Typically, given the previous approvals, and the existing content of the Scheme of Delegation, the agreement of leases would be delegated to Officers to resolve. However, in this instance, owing to the passage of time that has occurred it is considered prudent for Members to re-authorise the proposed approach.
- 2.8 Following the approval of the extension of leases it will allow the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment and other Senior Officer's to explore wider opportunities to develop existing sites across the Council's parks and open spaces to support wildlife and conservation, health and wellbeing, physical activity and commercial sustainability opportunities.
- 2.9 Another key reason and purpose for progressing with the extension of leases at Paxton Pits is that it is strategically aligned to the Council's' Place Strategy, Corporate Plan and will as be outlined in 2.8 above support wider economic growth as future opportunities can be sought, reviewed and presented to Council for the benefit of residents and to underpin the financial sustainability of Council services.

3. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The extension of the Nature Reserve will be managed and maintained by HDC's Parks and Countryside Team working in partnership with The Friends of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve (FPPNR).
- 3.2 FPPNR generate around £80,000 income per year from membership fees, visitor centre sales, donations and bequests. Of the £240,000 of assets in the bank, £127,000 is currently set aside for work in the reserve extension when land has been transferred.
- 3.3 An additional £113,000 is allocated to conservation projects on the existing reserve.
- 3.4 The salary costs of a Countryside Ranger Apprentice is being funded by the Friends for 30 months.
- 3.5 In addition to this it is not believed that the on-going maintenance of the extension of leases and associated land will incur the Council any additional expenditure and will be managed within existing financial budgets and by the wider team outlined in section 3.1 above.
- 3.6 In respect of other potential opportunities, it is considered that if such opportunities are identified, it is possible for due consideration of the financial implications to be given as part of due diligence work and the development of any business cases that may be necessary. Due regard can also be given to the budget framework at the time. Thus there would be ample opportunity to ensure that any additional land taken on, would not be to the financial detriment of the council. Moreover, there may be financial benefits arising from such activities.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

5. BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

- 5.1 The extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve will bring tremendous community benefits. These will be:

- 27 km of footpaths
- 8.4km Cycleway
- New bird hides and viewpoints

- 5.2 A full summary presentation on Paxton Pits Nature Reserve and the extension of leases and its wider benefits can be viewed in **Appendix 2**.

- 5.3 Currently about 120,000 people visit Paxton Pits each year from all over the Country and World. This figure is expected to increase as the reputation of the Reserve and the facilities and opportunities it offers become more widely known.

- 5.4 The reserve extension will deliver fantastic wildlife benefit. The reserve's wildlife will be enhanced by the addition of a mosaic of important habitats:

- A reedbed – nationally scarce habitat
- Five extra lakes
- Three new islands designed for wading birds
- Scrub – a mix of bushes, grassland, sandy banks and small ponds to support a whole host of plants, insects and birds
- Rare wildflower rich grassland
- Rare wet woodland habitat

- 5.5 The remaining 60% of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is currently in the quarry area, will be brought into the Reserve as the gravel extraction is completed by 2029.

- 5.6 As outlined within this section the benefits of this scheme are vast and allow the Council to provide increased opportunities for residents and people from far and wide to visit the Nature Reserve to see its exceptional habitats.

- 5.7 It also provides the ability for the Council to design, develop and implement a wider strategic approach not only at Paxton Pits but further across the Council's parks and open spaces to create spaces that residents want to visit, spend time with their families, spend money and support the wider financial sustainability of these services.

6. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 6.1 The table below identifies the potential risk associated with this scheme and importantly the likelihood and impact. The table also demonstrates the mitigation measures that will be in place to limit any risk to the Council.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Financial risks of maintenance and management	Medium	High	Work is carried out as per management plan; secure Friends Group, volunteer and partner support; explore income streams such as guided tours, education programmes, and grants
Environmental risk of land restoration quality	Low	High	Legal agreements require restoration to be carried out to required standard; carry out staged inspections before each land transfer. HDC attends Technical Steering Group with Holicim and stakeholders.
Liability for accidents	Medium	High	Maintain public liability insurance; carry out site checks; ensure clear signage and visitor information
Operational risk of coordination challenges with multiple landowners and stakeholders	Medium	Medium	Site is managed as agreed in management plan. HDC representatives to continue to attend Liaison Group meetings and Technical Steering group meetings to discuss restoration works, management work, access and environmental issues
Reputational risks and public dissatisfaction	Medium	Medium	Communicate progress through signage, through local media and online; involve Friends of Paxton Pits group in planning and events
Environmental risks of long-term ecological changes	Medium	Medium	Build flexibility into the management plan; conduct regular

e.g. climate change, invasive species			ecological monitoring; adapt management to changing conditions
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7. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 Land in Phase 1 and 2 is ready to be transferred to the Council once leases are signed. HOLCIM UK have planning permission to extract gravel until 2029 so further land will be transferred in additional phases once extraction and restoration is completed.
- 7.2 The table below illustrates some indicative dates that the Council and Senior Officer's will work towards to complete the execution of leases and commence direct management of land which will be transferred:

Time Period	Comment
October – December 2025	Final signatures and execution of leases
January – March 2026	Mobilise team and commence proprietary works within management plans
April & Onwards	Full utilisation of the site by residents and Council teams

8. LINK TO CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 The extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve strongly supports the council's corporate plan and its key priorities which are:
- a) Improving the quality of life for local people.
 - b) Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.
 - c) Delivering good quality, high value for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.
- 8.2 Executing the leases for the land adjacent to the current nature reserve allowing for an extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve following the completion of gravel extraction operations and agreed restoration works can contribute and support the delivery of the Councils strategic priorities and Corporate Plan in the following ways:
- 8.3 The proposed leases will expand accessible green space from 78 to 280 hectares, creating one of the largest nature reserves in Cambridgeshire. The network of footpaths, bridleways, and cycle routes will provide extensive opportunities for walking, cycling, and outdoor leisure, supporting both physical health and mental wellbeing. The expansion will also enhance biodiversity and the scenic quality of the local environment, offering residents and visitors a richer and more enjoyable place to explore.
- 8.4 Additional footpath networks and a cycleway will provide residents from neighbouring villages better access to services and amenities, thereby improving the quality of life for local people.

- 8.5 The long-term leases will secure public access and protection for high-quality habitats for a minimum of 80 years. Restored land following gravel extraction will be managed to safeguard wildlife, promote ecological recovery, and strengthen climate resilience. This ensures that the area's natural capital is preserved and enhanced, providing a valuable environmental legacy for future generations.
- 8.6 Executing the leases will support and enhance priority three within the Corporate Plan as it will deliver good quality, high value for money services. The arrangements achieve significant public benefit at minimal cost, with the land leased on a peppercorn rent basis.
- 8.7 The project meets statutory duties for biodiversity, public access, and sustainable land management while ensuring effective oversight through robust legal agreements. Strong partnership working between the Council, landowners, and other stakeholders will deliver these outcomes efficiently and in full compliance with obligations.
- 8.8 This project is strategically aligned to the Council's' Place Strategy and Corporate Plan and will support wider economic growth as future opportunities can be sought, reviewed and presented to Council for the benefit of residents and to underpin the financial sustainability of Council services.
- 8.9 These opportunities will be captured in a new and innovative "Commercial Strategy" that the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment is developing and will provide a new strategic approach to how we can increase activity across our parks and open spaces, ensure they are financially sustainable and explore new opportunities to help drive engagement from residents, improve health and wellbeing and generate revenue.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The section 106 Agreement dated 18 September 2007 as varied obliged TOF Corporate Trustee Limited ("TOF") and Edmund George William Thornhill ("Thornhill") to grant separate leases of phased areas to Huntingdonshire District Council ("HDC") and for HDC to take them for a term to expire on 20 September 2087 for use as a nature reserve within the definition contained in section 15 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and for the purposes of education and ancillary amenity use.
- 9.2 Prior to the grant of the leases to HDC referred to in 1 above, HDC will enter into the following.
 - a. An overarching agreement with TOF and Holcim UK Limited ("Holcim") (formerly known as Aggregate Industries UK Limited) to deal with amongst other things a commitment for HDC to enter into the lease with TOF referred to in 1 above and to enter into the lease surrender in c below.

- b. An overarching agreement with Thornhill and Holcim to deal with amongst other things a commitment for HDC to enter into the lease with Thornhill referred to in 1 above.
 - c. A surrender of the lease dated 21 September 2007 and made between
 - (1) The Chancellor Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford
 - (2) HDC (3) Aggregate Industries UK Limited.
- 9.3 Following a thorough review of this transaction by 3C Legal Shared Services they are comfortable that the Council are administering its obligations under the original 2007 Section 106 Agreement similar to all other parties involved. They are content that the extension of leases can be fully executed.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There will be no additional financial budgetary impact on the Council, as Rangers are already managing the nature reserve under the existing management plan. The ongoing operational responsibilities for the expanded reserve will be absorbed within current staffing arrangements.
- 10.2 The Friends group is providing strong community support, including funding a full-time Countryside Ranger Apprentice and setting aside funds for projects within the reserve extension. This additional resource enhances capacity for habitat management, education, and visitor engagement.

11. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The expansion of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve will provide substantial public health benefits. The enlarged network of footpaths, bridleways, and cycle routes will encourage greater participation in outdoor physical activity such as walking, running and cycling, supporting improved cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, and general physical wellbeing.
- 11.2 Access to high-quality green space is also strongly linked to mental health benefits, including reduced stress, improved mood, and enhanced social connection. The reserve will offer opportunities for social interaction through community events, volunteering, and guided activities, helping to reduce loneliness and isolation. This also complements our Community Health and Wealth Building strategy and approach.

12. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The expansion of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve will have a significant positive impact on the local environment. By securing the long-term protection and management of 280 hectares of restored land, the project will enhance biodiversity, create a variety of habitats for wildlife, and improve ecological connectivity between existing green spaces as part of the Great Ouse Valley in Huntingdonshire. The restored gravel pits and surrounding habitats will support priority species, contribute to nature recovery targets, and strengthen the district's natural capital.

- 12.2 The expanded reserve will also contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Increased tree cover, wetland areas, and vegetation will help sequester carbon, improve air quality, and regulate local temperatures. The network of green spaces will provide natural flood management benefits by slowing surface water run-off and increasing water storage capacity. The site's design encourages low-carbon leisure and travel, with extensive walking and cycling links reducing reliance on car-based recreation.
- 12.3 Potential climate-related risks include the impact of extreme weather events, drought, or invasive species on habitats and wildlife. These will be mitigated through adaptive management practices, regular ecological monitoring, and collaboration with conservation partners to respond to changing environmental conditions.
- 12.4 This opportunity will also allow Senior Officer's to explore opportunities for further funding to be developed and implemented through BNG services and credits for habitat banking. We can and will use this scheme as we do with the rest of our parks and open spaces to protect nature, conservation and ecology, but also use this to allow our services to attract more people to support our visitor economy offer.

13. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 13.1 The legal advice confirms this process can proceed and the extension of leases can be executed.
- 13.2 Obtaining full approval from the Council to allow for this extension of leases will provide local residents enhanced opportunities to enjoy this area, be physically active, allow wider work to be undertaken on site to attract a greater number of visitors and it creates a safeguard on the conservation and ecology of this space under a dedicated management plan.
- 13.3 Allows Senior Officer's the opportunity to develop a wider strategic approach to all parks and open spaces concentrating on improved accessibility and offering, health and wellbeing, commercial opportunities and financial sustainability.
- 13.4 The extension of leases not only allows an expansion of the site but with it the creation of a wider infrastructure of ecology and conservation which can be safeguarded for the duration of the leases by the Council team and the Friend's Group.
- 13.5 The extension of leases allows greater accessibility for local residents in the surrounding villages and neighbourhoods.
- 13.6 Upon the execution of leases further negotiation will be sought with Thornhill and HOLCIM UK Ltd and the Council around other areas of land under their control which may be deemed beneficial for the Council to operate in line with ecology, conservation, the wider benefit of residents and further commercial opportunities.

14. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Paxton Pits Nature Reserve Map (Existing & New)
Appendix 2 – Paxton Pits Nature Reserve Extension Presentation

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Report – Decision Sheet – 7th September 2006
- Cabinet Meeting Minutes – 7th September 2006
- Section 106 Agreement – 18th September 2007

CONTACT OFFICER

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Appendix 1 - Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

Current Reserve



Extended Reserve



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Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

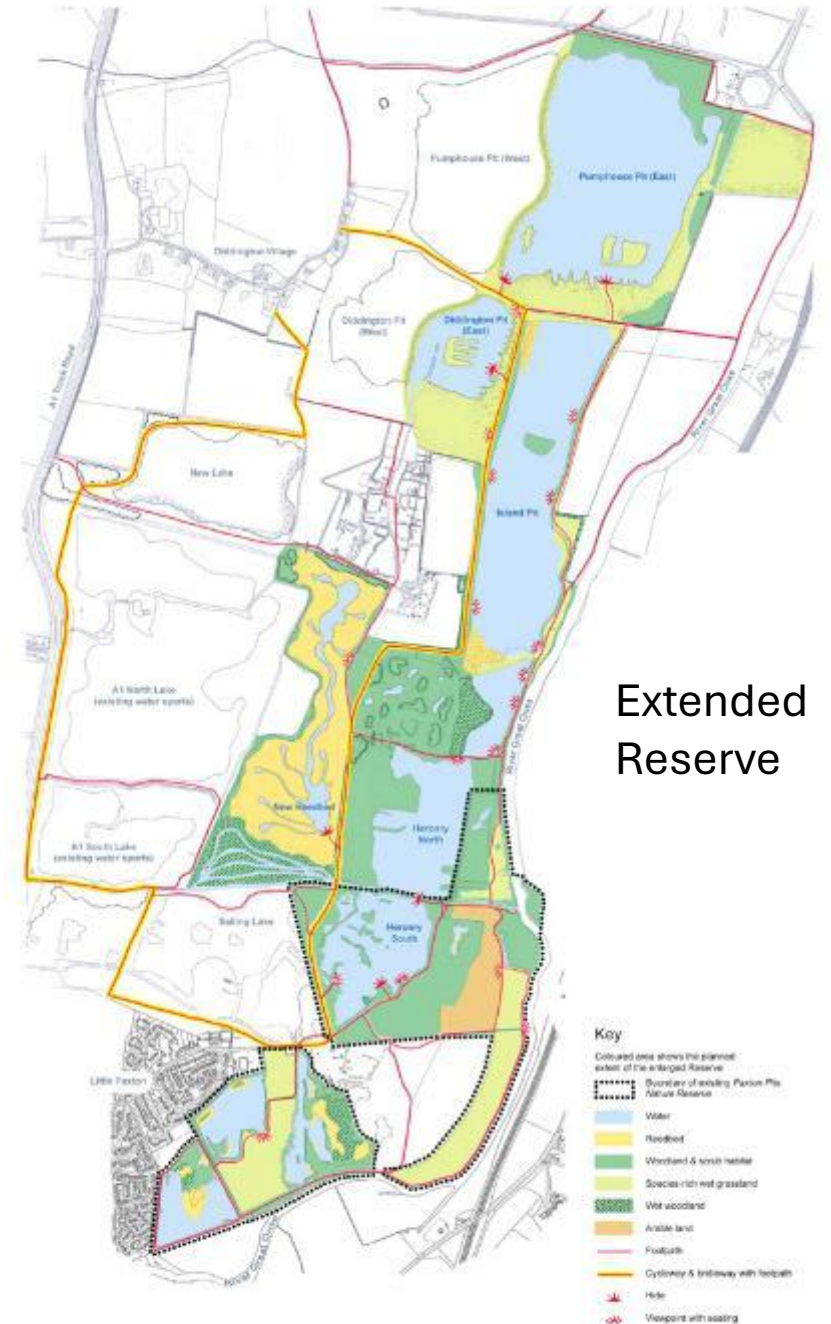


Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

- Part of the Great Ouse Valley in Huntingdonshire
- Current reserve is 78 hectares of lakes, meadow, grassland, scrub and woodland
- Former quarry site used for gravel extraction since the 1940's
- Set to increase substantially (more than 3.5 times) to 280 hectares as aggregate extraction sites are transferred in phases.
- Extraction is due to finish in 2029



Current Reserve



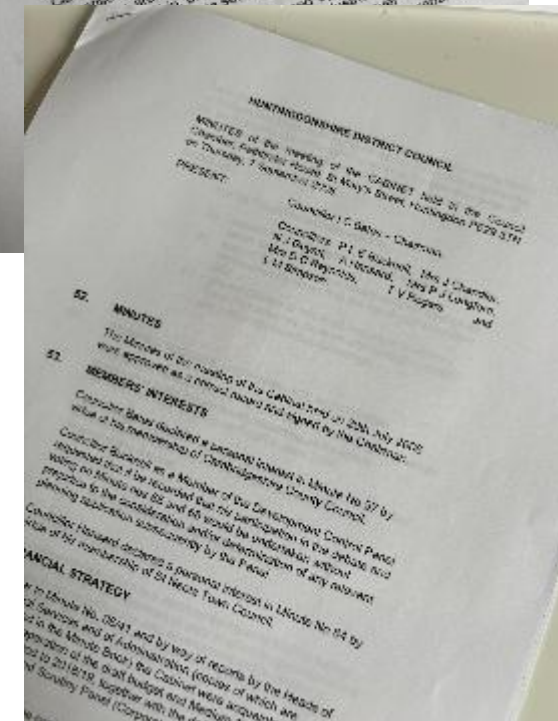
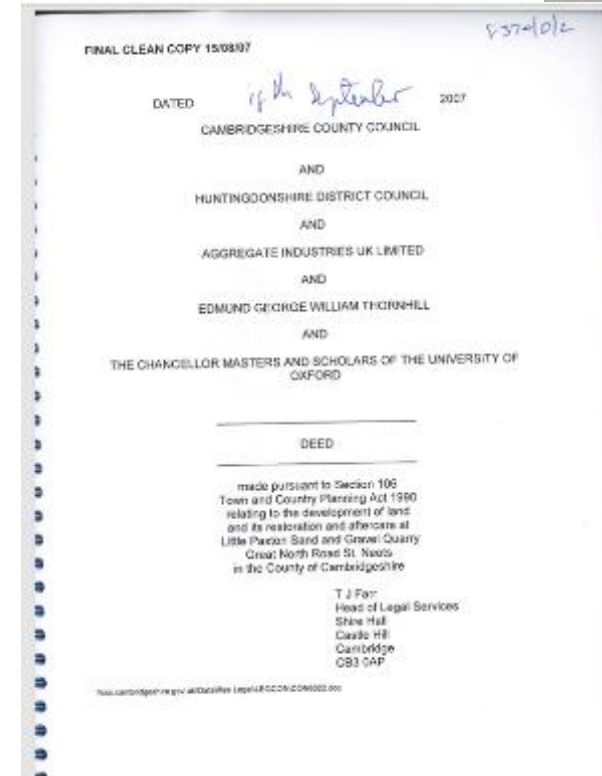
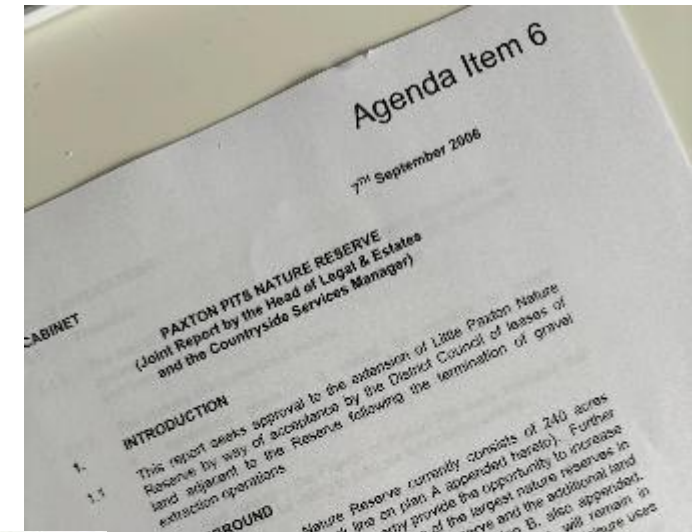
Extended Reserve

The Background

- On 7th September 2006 Council approved the extension of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve by way of the acceptance of leases of land adjacent to existing reserve following the completion of gravel extraction

A Section 106 agreement was produced in September 2006 which obliged HDC to enter the leases of the conservation land

- Therefore, the principle of the extension has been approved in the past, they are just subject to separate leases
- The parties are HDC, Oxford University (TOF), Thornhill Estates and Aggregate Industries (now HOLCIM UK)



The Process

- In 2008 Little Paxton Quarry was mothballed during the economic recession until 2016
- Restoration works were delayed.
- In 2017 planning permission expired so Aggregate Industries submitted a revised proposal to Cambridgeshire County Council to take them up to 2029.

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Note: In 2017 it was felt that the 2007 lease which was annexed to the S106 needed modernising. Since then, the legal representatives for the different parties have been negotiating the terms of the leases.

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- ## _HDC will enter into;

-
- Legend:**
- HCC Phase 1 (Yellow)
 - HCC Phase 2 (Green)
 - HCC Phase 3 (Purple)
 - HCC Phase 4 (Orange)
 - HCC Phase 5 (Blue)
 - HCC Phase 6 (Light Blue)
 - HCC Phase 7 (Dark Blue)
 - HCC Phase 8 (Light Green)
- Map File Name:** Overarching Ag - Phasing (with ownerships).npd
- Scale:** 1:12000
- Date:** 20/02/2023
- Map File Name:** Overarching Ag - Phasing (with ownerships).npd
- Map Data:** Map data shown may contain Ordnance Survey products supplied by Peer Technology Services Ltd. Email: info@peertechsurvey.co.uk
- Copyright:** Copyright and database rights from data shown above
- Ordnance Survey:** Ordnance Survey license number 100023148
- Scale:** 1:12000
- Date:** 20/02/2023
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- Map Data:** Map data shown may contain Ordnance Survey products supplied by Peer Technology Services Ltd. Email: info@peertechsurvey.co.uk
- Copyright:** Copyright and database rights from data shown above
- Ordnance Survey:** Ordnance Survey license number 100023148

The New Leases

- Term to expire – 20 September 2087
- Use of land - nature reserve within the definition contained in section 15 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (ie. *land managed for conservation purposes*) and for the purposes of education and amenity ancillary
- Management of the site is governed by a reserve management plan which is agreed by HDC, TOF and Thornhill in accordance with the S106 agreement. This management plan sets out in detail how the conservation land will be managed, monitored and maintained.



The Wildlife Benefit

The reserve's wildlife will be enhanced by the addition of a mosaic of important habitats

- A reedbed – nationally scarce habitat
- Five extra lakes
- Three new islands designed for wading birds
- Scrub – a mix of bushes, grassland, sandy banks and small ponds to support a whole host of plants, insects and birds
- Rare wildflower rich grassland
- Rare wet woodland habitat

The remaining 60% of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will be brought into the Reserve.



The Community Benefit

- 27 km of footpaths
- 8.4km Cycleway
- New bird hides and viewpoints



Partner Collaboration

The agreements that have secured this Reserve expansion result from the working partnership of Holcim UK, CCC, HDC, the Friends of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve and the landowners, supported by the local community.

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In March '25 this partnership was recognised at the National Mineral Planning Association Quarries and Nature Awards in London where Holcim UK received the award for 'highly commended' in the biodiversity landscape scale category for the extension of Paxton Pits.

Friends of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve



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- Started in 1995 and registered as a charity in 2008
- Now has a membership of around 2000
- Celebrating their 30th year this month with family events and volunteer thank you's.
- Around £80,000 income generated per year from membership fees, visitor centre sales, donations and bequests.
- Of the £250,000 of assets in the bank, £127,000 is currently set aside for work in the new reserve extension when land has been transferred
- An additional £113,000 is allocated to conservation projects on the existing reserve
- The salary costs of a Countryside Ranger Apprentice is being funded by the Friends for 30 months

Next Steps

- Political approval via Cabinet (September 2025)
- Leases can be signed
- Land in phase 1 and 2 transferred to HDC as restoration works in these areas are complete, infrastructure is in place and is ready to be handed over.
- Countryside Ranger Apprentice will be recruited to provide additional help
- Recommended for approval to allow for wider commercial, health and wildlife benefits to be realized across the site



**Any
Questions?**

Key Decision – No

* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Right to Grow Policy Review

Meeting/Date: O&S (Environment, Communities & Partnerships)
4th September 2025

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Julie Kerr Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene

Report by: Head of Operational Services

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

In December 2024, Councillor M A Hassall, seconded by Councillor S W Ferguson, forwarded a proposal with the aim of addressing the growing challenges of food insecurity in Huntingdonshire, driven by the cost-of-living crisis, climate change, global instability, and public health recovery. The proposal aligns with Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan Priority 1: Improving quality of life for local people, and the Joint Administration's commitment to Do, Enable and Influence.

The Council resolved to refer the proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Community and Partnerships) and subsequently to Cabinet for consideration. Although the motion was lost, it was encouraged to resubmit the proposal through the newly established submission process, so it could be considered as part of the Panel's future work programme.

These proposals are intended to explore how the Council might support residents in accessing fresh, affordable food through community-led food growing initiatives and a possible district wide 'Right to Grow' policy. The Council acknowledges the strong link between access to fresh, locally grown food and improved health and wellbeing, as well as the potential for community cultivation to reduce social isolation and demand on health and care services.

This report explores how community growing initiatives might contribute to improved health and well-being across our communities. It draws inspiration from approaches such as 'Right to Grow' to consider how similar principles could inform local thinking. The report presents a range of exploratory options that align with the Council's strategic priorities, including public health, sustainability, and community engagement. These options are not formal proposals, but indicative

workstreams intended to prompt discussion, support creative thinking, and guide further investigation.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to consider the contents of the report and reflect on which strategic elements, if any, could be advanced for inclusion in the Council's Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The Panel's feedback will be vital in shaping the direction of future work, ensuring that any actions taken are well-resourced, effectively targeted, and aligned with the Council's overarching objectives.

Recommendation(s):

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to consider the contents of the report and reflect on which strategic elements, if any, could be advanced for inclusion in the Council's Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report explores how community growing initiatives might contribute to improved health and well-being across our communities. It draws inspiration from approaches such as 'Right to Grow' to consider how similar principles could inform local thinking. These options are not formal proposals, but indicative workstreams intended to prompt discussion, support creative thinking, and guide further investigation.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 2024, Councillor M A Hassall, seconded by Councillor S W Ferguson, forwarded a proposal with the aim of addressing the growing challenges of food insecurity in Huntingdonshire, driven by the cost-of-living crisis, climate change, global instability, and public health recovery. The proposal aligns with Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan Priority 1: Improving quality of life for local people, and the Joint Administration's commitment to Do, Enable and Influence.

2.2 Key Acknowledgements:

- The urgent need to prioritise residents' health and well-being.
- Strong evidence linking health outcomes to access to fresh, locally grown, non-ultra-processed food.
- The impact of hunger and affordability on vulnerable households.
- The potential of community-led food growing to reduce loneliness and healthcare costs.
- The availability of underutilised public land suitable for cultivation and biodiversity enhancement.

2.3 Proposals:

2.4 Land Mapping and Access

- Identify and publicly map council-owned land suitable for cultivation.
- Promote access across all wards, excluding hazardous or soon-to-be-developed sites.

2.5 Licensing and Support

- Offer simple, free licenses to community groups for food growing.
- Minimise financial and practical barriers.
- Extend public liability insurance to cover growing projects.

2.6 Community Group Opportunities

- Allow groups cultivating public land to bid for it if it becomes available for sale.
- Provide infrastructure such as water access or harvesting systems.

2.7 Allotment Provision

- Adhere to the Thorpe Report standard of 15 plots per 1,000 households.
- Collect and publish data on allotment availability and uptake.
- Volunteering and Foraging

- 2.8 **Promote volunteering to support growing initiatives.**
- Align with existing foraging maps and similar community-led schemes.
- 2.9 **National Advocacy**
- Write to local MPs to support a statutory “Right to Grow” as proposed in Amendment 483 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.
- 2.10 At the Council meeting held on December 11, 2024, Councillor M A Hassall put forward a motion urging the Council to promote food security by mapping council-owned land for community cultivation, enabling low-cost licenses for growing, enhancing allotment provision, and advocating for a “right to grow” nationally.
- 2.11 The discussion highlighted the wider benefits of such an approach, including supporting residents during the cost-of-living crisis, improving health and well-being, making better use of public land, and aligning with the Council’s corporate priorities.
- 2.12 Although the motion was not carried, it was acknowledged that the issues raised warranted further exploration. Accordingly, it was encouraged to resubmit through the newly established submission process, enabling the matter to be considered as part of the Panel’s future work programme and ultimately leading to the preparation of this report

3. EVIDENCE FOR CHANGE

- 3.1 There is strong evidence from UK-based academic research that community gardens and “right to grow” policies deliver a multifaceted benefit to health, wellbeing, and community life, particularly for urban and disadvantaged populations.

3.2 The Positive Impacts

Studies such as Rogers' 2023 Masters thesis (Appendix 1) and the Centre for Mental Health's evaluation of the Markfield Park garden (Appendix 2) highlight how engagement with community gardens uplifts participants' mental wellbeing and fosters a deeper sense of social connection, especially among those who are otherwise isolated or living with mental ill-health. For many, the principal reason for joining a community garden is the improvement in mental wellbeing and the experience of being immersed in nature; participants report feeling more positive, less stressed, and socially connected as a direct consequence of their regular involvement.

- 3.3 ‘The Impact of Community Gardens on the Wellbeing of Individuals’ report (Appendix 3) provides robust data specifically on individuals with mental health difficulties: a multi-year study tracked people referred to a therapeutic community gardening programme and found that their wellbeing improved and was sustained over several years, even during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.4 Academic work also illustrates that the value of community gardens extends far beyond just horticulture. Being involved in these shared green spaces increases knowledge of wildlife, practical conservation, sustainability, and the importance of local biodiversity—often learned through informal, intergenerational and social

activities. Participants frequently cite gaining practical environmental skills and empathy towards the natural world as meaningful aspects of their involvement.

- 3.5 The spaces themselves foster a sense of ownership and pride, not just among adult volunteers, but also among young people and school groups who are introduced to new experiences and develop confidence outside traditional classroom or home environments.
- 3.6 Economically, these initiatives are argued to be cost-effective, with evidence (as cited in the Centre for Mental Health's report) suggesting substantial long-term savings to public health budgets by reducing loneliness and demand for NHS and social care services. Markfield Park's example also illustrates broader community benefits—rejuvenation of neglected spaces, improved perceptions of safety, and pride in the local environment—all of which contribute to community cohesion.

Challenges and Concerns

- 3.7 Although the benefits of community gardens and “right to grow” policies are well supported by research—including improved wellbeing, reduced loneliness, and strengthened community cohesion—several challenges and risks also emerge from both academic studies and local feedback.
- 3.8 One ongoing concern is sustainability, as these initiatives rely on ongoing volunteer engagement and active community participation; if enthusiasm fades, areas can quickly become neglected, attracting litter and antisocial behaviour, which may reduce their value or make areas feel less safe.
- 3.9 There are also worries about social inclusivity and gentrification, with some residents expressing fear that new initiatives could feel exclusive, serve outsiders rather than locals, or change the character of neighbourhood spaces.
- 3.10 Economic and resource limitations present practical hurdles, as start-up and maintenance require steady investment in management, infrastructure, and ongoing support, without which growing areas may struggle to survive or benefit the most vulnerable.
- 3.11 Any areas assigned for growing initiatives must be managed with careful attention to inclusivity, sustained support, and regular maintenance.
- 3.12 There is a need for proactive planning to avoid volunteer burnout, clarify who the areas are for, and ensure safety for all users, particularly in areas where vulnerabilities or inequalities already exist.
- 3.13 If these issues are not addressed, there is a risk that the positive impacts highlighted in the research could be undermined by decline, neglect, or unintentional exclusion. **Therefore, while the overall evidence is positive, the long-term success of these policies and initiatives hinges on continued resource and management, equitable access, and continuous community engagement.**

4. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The options outlined are not presented as fully developed solutions, but rather as potential workstreams for further enquiry. They are intended to

support initial discussion and investigation by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which will determine whether, and how, any, some, or all of these options should be progressed.

4.2 Land Mapping and Access - Identify and publicly map council-owned land suitable for cultivation.

- I. Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) maintains digital mapping layers that clearly identify land managed under the Alternative Land Management (ALM) regime, as well as land owned by the Council that is not currently subject to any formal management or maintenance arrangements (Unused).
- II. Both ALM-managed and unmanaged land present opportunities for community-led food growing initiatives. Although the mapping portal is not currently accessible to the public, it could be made available to help community groups identify suitable locations for cultivation. This would enable alternative uses of the land beyond biodiversity enhancement. However, making the mapping publicly accessible would require additional resources and budget, which are not included in the MTFS
- III. To maximise community engagement and uptake, HDC could consider actively promoting the availability of suitable land for food growing initiatives. This could include targeted communications through local networks, community newsletters, social media channels, and partnerships with voluntary organisations and town/parish councils.
- IV. Clear guidance on how to access the mapping portal (once made public), along with information on the application process for leasing or licensing land, could enable residents and community groups to take part.

4.3 Licensing and Support - Offer simple, free licenses to community groups for food growing. Minimise financial and practical barriers. Extend public liability insurance to cover growing projects.

- I. The current HDC Land Transfer Policy (Appendix 4), approved by Cabinet in November 2023, provides a clear and consistent process for handling requests to lease or take ownership of Council-owned public open spaces. It ensures that all applications are considered fairly and transparently.
- II. When land no longer supports the Council's corporate or investment priorities, decisions regarding the disposal of small land parcels or surplus property are made in line with the Disposal of Small Land Parcels and Disposal Policy (Appendix 5).
- III. Requests to lease or license small areas of public open space—defined as less than 0.25 acres—are delegated to the relevant Senior Leadership Team Member responsible for Open Spaces, in

consultation with their Executive Member. All decisions must follow the reporting and delegation rules set out in the Disposal Policy, with a formal record of each decision maintained and reported to Cabinet for information.

- IV. HDC's approach reflects the model adopted by Hull City Council through its Right to Grow policy (Appendix 6). Hull's scheme includes a formal application process where community groups must submit detailed project proposals for review. Applications are assessed against strict criteria to ensure suitability, safety, and community benefit. If approved, applicants enter into a legally binding licence agreement with the Council, which includes a fee and is issued on a rolling annual basis. This agreement outlines the responsibilities of the group and allows the Council to reclaim the land if needed for future development or if the project ends.
- V. If decided upon, adopting a similar model, HDC could help to ensure that access to land for community growing is fair, well-regulated, and legally robust. This approach could support the promotion of suitable sites across all wards, excluding those that are hazardous or earmarked for development.

4.4 Insurance

- I. Following a conversation with our insurance provider, no significant concerns were raised from a property perspective. Aside from the usual considerations there appear to be no outstanding implications at this stage. While no issues are currently anticipated, they would need to revisit this assessment once further details about the initiatives become available, to ensure all property-related aspects remain appropriately managed.
- II. Community groups and individuals could be encouraged to register with the Neighbourhood Network, which offers a blanket insurance scheme for its members at no cost. This approach was considered appropriate by Hull City Council for its '*Right to Grow*' scheme and may offer a practical interim solution for HDC.
- III. In terms of financial barriers, the full cost of administering such a scheme—including application processing, legal agreements, and ongoing management—has not yet been fully mapped out. If any proposal is taken forward for further exploration, there will be a resource impact that must be carefully assessed as part of the development work.

4.5 Community Group Opportunities - Allow groups cultivating public land to bid for it if it becomes available for sale. Provide infrastructure such as water access or harvesting systems

- I. HDC's policy framework does allow for the possibility of transferring public open space to third parties, including community groups, under specific conditions. Groups currently cultivating public land may apply

to lease or acquire the land if it is declared surplus and no longer contributes to corporate or service priorities. However, this is subject to a rigorous application process:

- II. To acquire the land, applicants must submit an outline business case, accompanied by a non-refundable application fee of £500, which covers initial administrative costs.
- III. If the outline case is endorsed, a detailed business case is required, with further fees including £3,000 for business case preparation, £1,000 for land valuation, and £1,000 for legal fees, excluding any additional ancillary costs.
- IV. All costs must be fully met by the applicant, and there is no guarantee of approval at any stage. If approved, the transfer is formalised through a legally binding agreement, ensuring the land's purpose is preserved and any future development benefits (e.g. biodiversity gain) are recoverable by the Council.
- V. This process mirrors the legal structure used by Hull City Council under its Right to Grow policy, which also includes strict criteria, a formal licence agreement, and a fee-based application system to ensure accountability and legal protection.

4.6 Providing Infrastructure Such as Water Access or Harvesting Systems

- I. Cambridgeshire is currently facing significant water scarcity challenges, particularly in the Greater Cambridge area. The Environment Agency has flagged risks of deterioration in local water bodies, and over-abstraction from the chalk aquifer has led to declining water levels and damage to rare chalk stream habitats.
- II. Given this context, any proposal to provide water infrastructure—such as mains access or rainwater harvesting systems—must be carefully evaluated. While such infrastructure would greatly benefit community growing projects, it would also involve notable costs and planning considerations:
- III. Rainwater harvesting systems typically cost between £2,000 and £5,000 per site, depending on scale and installation complexity.
- IV. Mains water access may require trenching, connection fees, and ongoing usage charges, potentially exceeding £10,000 per site.
- V. These costs would need to be fully funded by the applicant, as per HDC's policy, which states that no additional cost should fall to the Council.
- VI. Additionally, any water infrastructure must align with regional water efficiency goals and avoid increasing abstraction from already stressed sources.

- VII. Given the environmental pressures and financial implications, HDC would need to assess infrastructure proposals on a site-by-site basis, ensuring they are sustainable, cost-neutral to the Council, and compliant with broader climate and water management strategies.
- 4.7 **Allotment Provision - Adhere to the Thorpe Report standard of 15 plots per 1,000 households. Collect and publish data on allotment availability and uptake.**
- I. In the district, the responsibility for allotment provision lies with parish and town councils, who are best placed to assess and respond to local needs.
 - II. Adopting the Thorpe standard, seen as best practise but not legally binding, would place unrealistic expectations on land supply and could divert attention from more flexible, locally responsive solutions.
 - III. Many areas in Huntingdonshire face competing pressures for housing, biodiversity, and recreation space, and a rigid allotment quota could conflict with broader strategic priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy, and Healthy Open Spaces Strategy.
 - IV. Instead, HDC could support a collaborative and needs-based approach, working with parish and town councils to identify opportunities for community growing where there is clear interest and capacity.
 - V. This would allow for a more sustainable use of land, that ensures allotment provision is integrated into wider goals around health, wellbeing, and environmental stewardship—without imposing a one-size-fits-all standard.
 - VI. There is currently no national dataset in England that comprehensively tracks allotment availability and uptake across local authorities. Allotment provision is highly decentralised, with individual parish and town councils responsible for managing their own sites, waiting lists, and tenancy records. As a result, data is held locally and varies widely in terms of format, accuracy, and accessibility.
 - VII. This lack of a centralised system means that any attempt by HDC to collect and publish district-wide allotment data would be resource-intensive and time-consuming. It would require contacting each parish and town council, requesting data in potentially inconsistent formats, verifying its accuracy, and maintaining it over time. Without a national framework or reporting requirement, the burden of coordination, data cleaning, and publication would fall entirely on the district council, making it a significant undertaking

with ongoing resource implications. Allotment Information that we have acquired so far is seen in the table below.

Parish / Town	Locations	Waiting List?	Notes / Access
Huntingdon (4)	Hartford Rd, North St, Primrose Ln, Sallowbush Rd	Yes - 114	The 2024/25 annual fee for a 5 pole allotment plot is £41. https://www.huntingdowntown.gov.uk/council-services/allotments/
Huntingdon comments Capacity about 249			
Hemingford Grey (1)	Daintree Green	Waiting list: None now but usually has one. Vacancy: 1 plot currently vacant	Contact Parish Council, deposit required There is an annual charge to cover the Parish Council's water bill. This usually £3-£5 depending on usage. https://www.hemingfordgreyparishcouncil.gov.uk/allotments
HG comments Total plots: ~60 Vacancy: 1 plot currently vacant Waiting list: None now, but usually has one Cost: £27/year for residents			
Ramsey (1)	Stocking Fen Road	Yes:12	Open to Ramsey & surrounding villages https://www.ramseytowncouncil.gov.uk/allotments
<u>Ramsey Comments</u> R comments Total plots: ~50 Vacancy: None Waiting list: 12 Cost: £10/year for residents			
Sawtry (2)	St Judith's Field (St Judith's Lane),	Yes (5)	https://www.sawtry-pc.gov.uk/allotments

Parish / Town	Locations	Waiting List?	Notes / Access
	Rowell Way (off Gidding Rd)		
<p><u>Sawtry Comments</u></p> <p>Total Plots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S1: 51 plots (15 are half-plots) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Full plots: 20m x 6m ○ Half plots: 10m x 6m • S2: 10 plots (all full-size ~20m x 6m) <p>Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full plot: £28/year • Half plot: £16/year • £65 deposit (refunded if plot is returned in good condition). <p>High turnover: around half of returned plots are in poor condition</p> <p>Many underestimate the work involved; health or time pressures often lead to plot abandonment</p> <p>Issues noted: misuse (e.g. abandoned tractor tires), even smaller plots can get overgrown</p> <p><u>Raised beds recommended for better maintenance and weed control</u></p> <p>St Judith's site has poor accessibility due to sloped terrain</p>			

4.8 Volunteering and Foraging

- I. As with allotment data, there is no centralised dataset for foraging activity, and mapping such use across the district would be resource-intensive, requiring coordination with multiple local councils and community groups.
- II. Records of land use and suitability vary widely, and ensuring accuracy and safety would demand significant officer time. While some community-driven platforms such as 'Falling Fruit' offer open-source foraging maps, these rely on voluntary contributions and are not verified or maintained by local authorities.
- III. The Woodland Trust also provides seasonal guides and responsible foraging advice, helping people identify edible plants and understand sustainable harvesting practices, however, these resources are more educational than location-specific and do not act as a comprehensive mapping tools.

- IV. There is currently no national framework for tracking or regulating foraging activity, which adds complexity to any attempt to formalise or map it at the district level. Nonetheless, supporting volunteering and foraging through partnerships and light-touch promotion could offer a low-cost, high-impact way to enhance public engagement with open spaces—without the administrative burden of formal land transfers or infrastructure investment.

4.9 **National Advocacy - Write to local MPs to support a statutory “Right to Grow” as proposed in Amendment 483 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.**

- I. Writing to local MPs to support a statutory “Right to Grow,” as proposed in Amendment 483 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, could help raise the profile of community cultivation and strengthen national support for local food growing initiatives.
- II. The amendment, introduced by members of the House of Lords including Baroness Boycott, seeks to establish a legal framework that would make it easier for communities to access public land for growing food.
- III. While this proposal aligns with broader national goals around sustainability, health, and food security, it is not yet part of formal government strategy and faces barriers including legislative complexity, land ownership constraints, and the need for cross-party support.
- IV. Several councils, including Hull City Council, have already written to their MPs urging support for the amendment, reflecting growing grassroots interest in embedding the right to grow into law.
- V. For HDC, supporting this could signal a commitment to community empowerment and environmental resilience, but it would also require careful consideration of local governance structures, resource implications, and alignment with existing land use policies.
- VI. If adopted nationally, it could help standardise access and reduce administrative burdens, but until then, implementation remains dependent on local discretion and capacity.

4.10 **Community Fridges and Food Banks**

- I. As the Council considers options on how best to support residents in accessing fresh, affordable food, community fridges could offer a compelling alternative to land-based cultivation. These initiatives provide a practical, scalable, and immediate solution to food insecurity—particularly in areas where space, time, or resources for cultivation are limited.
- II. In 2024–2025, the two community fridges in Yaxley and Oxmoor—supported by Food for Nought (Appendix 7) —redistributed

37,795kg of surplus food, preventing an estimated 30,236 kg of CO₂ emissions and delivering food with a monetary value of £94,487.85. Entirely volunteer-run, these fridges offer safe, welcoming spaces where residents can access nutritious food, receive referrals to support services, and participate in training on cooking and budgeting.

- III. Compared to cultivation projects, community fridges require less land, lower upfront investment, and can be deployed more rapidly in areas of high need. They deliver immediate impact by diverting food from landfill, reducing household grocery costs, and improving dietary habits. The Council could take direct action—such as providing core funding for refrigeration, transport, and volunteer coordination—to ensure these initiatives remain viable and impactful.
- IV. The Council could also enable their success by helping identify suitable locations, facilitating partnerships with local food suppliers, and supporting volunteer recruitment and training. This practical support helps embed community fridges within the fabric of local neighbourhoods and strengthens their long-term sustainability.
- V. Finally, through its ability to influence, HDC could champion sustainable food systems by raising awareness of the benefits of community fridges, encouraging local businesses to donate surplus food, and shaping regional and national conversations around food waste and food insecurity.
- VI. By recognising community fridges as a strategic alternative to cultivation and aligning their development with the Council's Corporate Plan themes, HDC can enhance food access, promote environmental sustainability, and foster stronger, healthier communities across Huntingdonshire.

5. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 5.1 The implementation of a district wide 'Right to Grow' policy presents a number of operational, legal, and community-level risks that Huntingdonshire District Council must consider carefully. Delivering such a scheme would require significant officer time and financial resources to manage land mapping, application processing, licensing, and community engagement. Without dedicated funding or staffing, there is a risk of delays, inconsistent delivery, and reduced public confidence.
- 5.2 Legal liability is another key risk. Allowing public access to council-owned land for cultivation introduces potential risks related to personal injury, land disputes, and property damage. If insurance arrangements are not clearly defined and communicated, the Council could be exposed to legal claims.
- 5.3 Infrastructure requirements, such as water access or rainwater harvesting systems, also present financial risks. These installations can be costly, and

if not fully funded by applicants, may result in unplanned expenditure for the Council.

- 5.4 There is also the potential for land use conflicts. Allocating land for cultivation may compete with other strategic priorities, including housing development, biodiversity enhancement, and recreational use.
- 5.5 Access to suitable land and the capacity to manage growing projects will vary across communities, raising concerns about equity and fairness. Some areas may lack the organisational infrastructure or volunteer base to participate effectively, leading to uneven uptake and benefit.
- 5.6 The absence of reliable, centralised data on allotments and land use further complicates planning and evaluation. Without robust monitoring, it will be difficult to assess the impact of the policy or respond to emerging needs.
- 5.7 Reputational risk is also a factor; if the scheme fails to deliver tangible outcomes or is poorly managed, it may undermine public trust in the Council's ability to support community-led initiatives.
- 5.8 Community opposition is another possibility. Residents may object to cultivation projects near their homes due to concerns about aesthetics, noise, or land misuse. Even successful projects may be abandoned over time due to volunteer fatigue or unforeseen challenges, leaving sites overgrown or misused, this can result in additional maintenance burdens and complaints.
- 5.9 Vandalism and anti-social behaviour are also risks, particularly on unsupervised or poorly maintained land. Additionally, failed crops—due to poor soil, weather conditions, or inexperience—can discourage participation and diminish the perceived value of the initiative.
- 5.10 Environmental concerns, particularly water scarcity in Cambridgeshire, must also be considered to ensure that any new cultivation projects are sustainable and aligned with regional water management strategies.
- 5.11 In contrast, community fridges offer a lower-risk, scalable, and cost-effective alternative or complement to land-based cultivation. These initiatives provide immediate benefits by redistributing surplus food, reducing waste, and improving access to fresh produce.
- 5.12 They require minimal land and infrastructure, making them easier to implement, particularly in urban or space-constrained areas. The success of existing community fridges in Yaxley and Oxmoor—redistributing nearly 38 tonnes of food and preventing over 30 tonnes of CO₂ emissions—demonstrates their effectiveness.
- 5.13 Community fridges also support the Council's strategic objectives by promoting health and wellbeing, reducing food insecurity, and fostering community resilience.

- 5.14 They are volunteer led, encourage civic participation, and offer opportunities for training and social connection. Given their proven impact and lower operational burden, community fridges may represent a more practical and inclusive approach to addressing food access challenges across the district.

6. LINK TO HUNTINGDONSHIRE FUTURES, THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 [Corporate Plan](#)
- 6.2 [Climate Strategy Action Plan](#)
- 6.3 [HDC Healthy Open Space Strategy](#)
- 6.4 An important policy consideration is that Full Council approved the [Health and Wealth Strategy](#) in December 2024 and the pilot phase for the delivery of the support funding is now underway.
- 6.5 A key principle of the approach is that communities find solutions for problems themselves – rather than following prescribed approaches. As the fund is focused on Improved Mental & Physical Health, Economic Resilience, and Social and Community empowerment there may be significant opportunities, driven by communities themselves, to tackle and deliver against similar policy outcomes presented within this paper.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The implementation of any Right to Grow proposals will require careful legal oversight to ensure compliance with existing land use policies, property law, and health and safety regulations. Establishing a licensing framework for community cultivation will necessitate the drafting of legally binding agreements that clearly define responsibilities, liabilities, and termination clauses.
- 7.2 Legal Services will also need to support the assessment of land ownership, suitability, and any restrictions on use, particularly where land is subject to future development plans or environmental protections.
- 7.3 In cases where community groups seek to lease or acquire land, the Council must ensure that all transactions comply with its Land Transfer and Disposal Policies, including the requirement for formal business cases and cost recovery. Additionally, the Council must consider its duty of care in relation to public liability, insurance coverage, and safeguarding, particularly where volunteers or vulnerable individuals are involved. Legal input will be essential to ensure that any schemes are robust, transparent, and enforceable.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Progressing any of the proposals will require coordinated resource from multiple internal services, including Operational Services, Legal, Estates, Finance, and Communications. Activities such as land mapping, licensing, infrastructure assessment, and community engagement will demand significant officer time and cross-departmental collaboration.
- 8.2 These resource needs must also be considered in the context of ongoing local government restructuring, which may affect service capacity, staffing levels, and the availability of specialist expertise. A full assessment of staffing and financial implications will be necessary to ensure that any proposals taken forward are deliverable, sustainable, and aligned with the Council's evolving structure and priorities.

9. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Both cultivation-based initiatives and community fridges have the potential to deliver meaningful health benefits to residents across Huntingdonshire, though they do so in different ways.
- 9.2 Community-led food growing projects can support physical and mental wellbeing by encouraging outdoor activity, social interaction, and a sense of purpose. They promote access to fresh, locally grown produce, which is associated with improved nutrition and reduced reliance on ultra-processed foods. These initiatives may also help reduce social isolation and contribute to preventative health outcomes, particularly among older adults and those experiencing financial hardship.
- 9.3 Community fridges, while not involving physical cultivation, offer more immediate and scalable health benefits. By redistributing surplus food, they improve access to fresh produce and reduce food insecurity, especially in areas where cultivation is not feasible. They also support healthier diets and lower household grocery costs. In addition, community fridges often serve as hubs for wider support services, including cooking education and budgeting advice, which can further enhance health outcomes.
- 9.4 Cultivation projects offer long-term, holistic health benefits through engagement and activity, community fridges provide rapid, inclusive support that directly addresses nutritional needs and food access. Both approaches align with the Council's public health objectives.
- 9.5 The health benefits will depend on the successful implementation, accessibility, and sustainability of any initiatives taken forward and consideration should be given to ensuring inclusive participation and appropriate support for communities with the greatest need.

10. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Community-led food growing can support biodiversity, promote sustainable land use, and reduce the carbon footprint associated with food transport. However, these benefits must be balanced against environmental risks, particularly in relation to water use.
- 10.2 Cambridgeshire faces significant water scarcity challenges, and any new cultivation projects would need to be carefully managed to avoid over-abstraction and ensure alignment with regional water efficiency goals.
- 10.3 Community fridges, by contrast, offer a more immediate and measurable environmental impact through the reduction of food waste. In 2024–2025, the two fridges in Yaxley and Oxmoor prevented over 30 tonnes of CO₂ emissions by redistributing surplus food that would otherwise have gone to landfill. While they do not directly enhance green infrastructure, they contribute to climate resilience by reducing waste, lowering emissions, and promoting more sustainable consumption patterns.
- 10.4 Both approaches align with the Council's Climate Strategy and offer complementary pathways to achieving environmental sustainability.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - ['Earth community': The significance community gardens have for participants and environmental knowledge](#)

Appendix 2 – [Space to Grow](#)

Appendix 3 - [The Impact of Therapeutic Community Gardening on the Wellbeing, Loneliness, and Life Satisfaction of Individuals with Mental Illness](#)

Appendix 4 – [Transfer of Public Open Space](#)

Appendix 5 – [Disposal of Small Land Parcels Policy](#)

Appendix 6 – [Hull City Council Right to Grow Cabinet Report](#)

Appendix 7 - Yearly Report: Food for Nought

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Appendix 7 - Yearly Report: Food for Nought

Period: April 24, 2024 – March 25, 2025

Introduction

This report details the activities and impact of Food for Nought (F4N) in Huntingdonshire during the period of April 1st, 2024, to March 30th, 2025. The findings presented highlight the organisation's contribution to Huntingdonshire District Council's (HDC) strategic goals. Specifically, this work supports the Corporate Plans' priority of 'Improving Quality of Life for Local People', in line with the objectives of HDC's Health and Wealth Building Strategy, which include promoting economic resilience, improving health and wellbeing, strengthening social connections, promoting volunteerism, reducing inequalities, and helping towards environmental sustainability within Huntingdonshire.

Food for Nought (F4N) aims to reduce the effects of food poverty and food waste, whilst lessening the environmental and economic burdens associated with surplus food within the district. The project operates by collecting surplus and unwanted food from local shops, farms, and supermarkets, and redistributing it to communities in need through a network of community fridges which provide accessible and safe spaces for residents to obtain food items and other essentials. Key objectives are:

Improving Food Access: Providing vulnerable individuals and families in Huntingdonshire with reliable access to nutritious food.

Reducing Food Waste: Diverting surplus food from landfill, minimising environmental impact within Huntingdonshire.

Alleviating Financial Strain: Helping Huntingdonshire residents reduce their grocery expenses, freeing up income for other essential needs.

The offer operates through two community fridge locations in Huntingdonshire:

- **Oxmoor Community Fridge:** Based at Thongsley Primary School, Oxmoor. Open every Thursday at 2pm
- **Yaxley Community Fridge:** Based in Yaxley. Now open every Monday at 3pm, and Wednesday and Friday at 10.30am

These fridges, supported by Food for Nought, are a key part of a community-led solution to food access in Huntingdonshire. Food for Nought and each community fridge is run entirely by volunteers who manage all aspects of the network, including sorting, packing, driving, loading, and supporting residents, with the initiative requiring funding for running costs only. F4N's redistribution network serves community hubs across Huntingdonshire and Peterborough, requiring both districts to collaborate to effectively support their residents. Peterborough City Council has agreed to continue their support with the continuation of funding (reflecting its larger resident base) for 2025/2026.

It is expected that community fridges will help offset F4N's mileage costs.

Data: Food Weight Distributed (kg)

The following data represents the weight of food distributed by the community fridges during the reporting period:

Yaxley Community Fridge 2024/2025:

- April: 969 kg
- May: 939 kg
- June: 852 kg
- July: 1074 kg
- August: 2189 kg
- September: 3695 kg
- October: 683.42 kg
- November: 722.8 kg
- December: 11124.22 kg
- January: 3542 kg
- February: 3541 kg
- March: 2629 kg

Oxmoor Community Fridge 2024/2025:

- April: 312.5 kg
- May: 244.2 kg
- June: 235.7 kg
- July: 390.4 kg
- August: 446.4 kg
- September: 358.7 kg
- October: 325.6 kg
- November: 328.7 kg
- December: 2642.2 kg
- January: 339.9 kg
- February: 175.9 kg
- March: 134.5 kg

Note: A small portion of the weight of food recorded, specifically at the Yaxley Community Fridge, consistently shows a higher weight due to ongoing additional contributions from local partnerships. Furthermore, the Yaxley Community Fridge began operating 3 days a week in January 2025, which has also contributed to these slightly larger monthly figures in recent times.

Analysis of Data

The data can be analysed in several ways to demonstrate the impact of F4N's activities in Huntingdonshire during the last year.

1. **Total Food Distributed:** **37,795.14 kg**
2. **Average Monthly Distribution:** **3,149.595 kg**
3. **CO2 Emissions Avoided:** **30,236.112kg CO2e**
4. **Monetary Value of Food Saved:** **£94,487.85**

Calculations:

1. Total Food Distributed: 37,795.14 kg

Yaxley Total: $969 + 939 + 852 + 1074 + 2189 + 3695 + 683.42 + 722.8 + 11124.22 + 3542 + 3541 + 2629 = 32,160.44 \text{ kg}$

Oxmoor Total: $312.5 + 244.2 + 235.7 + 390.4 + 446.4 + 358.7 + 325.6 + 328.7 + 2642.2 + 339.9 + 175.9 + 134.5 = 5,634.7 \text{ kg}$

Total Distributed: $32,160.44 \text{ kg} + 5,634.7 \text{ kg} = 37,795.14 \text{ kg}$

2. Average Monthly Distribution: 3,149.595 kg

Dividing the total by 12 gives an average monthly distribution.

$37,795.14 \text{ kg} / 12 \text{ months} = 3,149.595 \text{ kg}$

3. CO2 Emissions Avoided: 30,236.112kg CO2e

Using an average emission factor for food waste using guidance from DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) and considering factors relevant to the UK's waste management infrastructure and data, an estimate for the CO2e from 37,795.14 kg of food is calculated using 0.8 kg CO2e per 1 kg of food waste.

$37,795.14 \text{ kg food waste} \times 0.8 \text{ kg CO2e/kg food waste} = 30,236.112 \text{ kg CO2e}$

4. Monetary Value of Food Saved: £94,487.85

Using the national average food price of £2.50 per kg to estimate the monetary value of the food saved.

$37,795.14 \text{ kg} \times £2.50/\text{kg} = £94,487.85$

Successes and Impact

The food distribution network, driven by the work of Food for Nought, has achieved significant success in several areas, directly supporting Huntingdonshire District Council's strategic objectives:

- **Food Waste Reduction and CO2 Emissions Avoided:** F4N's redistribution network has delivered environmental and economic benefits in the past year.

By redistributing 37,795.14 kg of food, we have prevented an estimated 30,236 kg of CO2 emissions according to DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) guidelines. This volume is comparable to the weight of three small cars each month, highlighting the significant amount of food being rescued and redistributed.

- **Financial Savings for Community:** By providing an estimated £94,487.85 worth of food to the community, the project has generated a substantial economic benefit for Huntingdonshire, aligning with HDC's priority of improving quality of life. By reducing food costs for residents, the project contributes to economic resilience within Huntingdonshire. The project helps to free up income that can be used for other essential expenses, thus reducing financial vulnerability within the district.
- **Improved Dietary Habits:** F4Ns work enhances the quality of life for local people by providing access to fresher, healthier food options. This not only improves immediate dietary habits by encouraging the consumption of more fruits and vegetables but also fosters increased knowledge about diverse foods and new recipes. These factors contribute to the long-term health and wellbeing of Huntingdonshire residents, supporting a thriving and healthy community.
- **Community Engagement:** The project has promoted strong community engagement through volunteer involvement. Volunteers are crucial to the daily operation of the fridges, collecting, sorting, and distributing food. Volunteers also play a vital role in direct engagement with residents, providing support and connecting them with resources. Key to F4N's operation are the partnerships established with local businesses and shops, which consistently contribute essential food supplies. The active involvement of parish and district councils further strengthens this community-wide effort to address food insecurity and build resilience across Huntingdonshire.
- **Developing Skills and Resilience:** A range of training programs are available through the Community Fridge's to equip residents with essential life skills, including practical cooking, effective budgeting, and much more. The goal of these initiatives is to foster long-term food security and overall well-being within the community, building resilience that addresses more than just immediate needs.
- **Referral Support in a Safe Space:** Community Fridge's offer a welcoming, safe, supportive environment to connect with others and trained volunteers can provide signposting, crucial advice, referral pathways to other support services.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that Food for Nought has had a positive impact on Huntingdonshire in terms of addressing food insecurity, minimising food waste/reducing CO2e, promoting community involvement and healthier food choices. This project's outcomes are consistent with Huntingdonshire District Council's strategic priorities of enhancing the quality of life for residents and promoting environmental sustainability, as articulated in the Corporate Plan 2023-2028. Moreover, Food for Nought's activities directly support the objectives of the Health and Wealth Building Strategy, contributing to economic resilience, improved health, stronger social connections, and environmental stewardship within the district.

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