

**ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY
(Report by Head of Technical Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council will tomorrow sign the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. In doing this the Council is committing itself to work to achieve environmental change.
- 1.2 Pivotal to delivering against its commitment will be the adoption of an environment strategy which will demonstrate how the Council will build on the excellent work it is already doing through its services, improve its own environmental performance as a major employer and property owner and encourage local residents and businesses similarly to reduce their adverse impacts on the environment.
- 1.3 The final adoption of an agreed strategy is still some six months away but this report outlines how the strategy will be developed through a broad-based consultative process leading to a comprehensive environment strategy supported by a detailed and costed action plan.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

- 2.1 The document at Annex A provides a starting point for the development of the strategy. It is proposed that it is used as the basis for consultation with Members, our partners on the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership, and other local, county and regional public and private sector organisations, including, businesses, that have the greatest potential to impact on the environment.
- 2.2 In April 2007 the Cabinet will be asked to approve a version of the strategy for public consultation. This will have been informed by the feedback from the initial consultation outlined above. Concurrently with both these consultation processes service managers will be developing the action plans that will demonstrate how the strategy could be delivered. The draft action plans will provide the Council with an opportunity to balance its environmental aspirations with the cost of their achievement and to take an informed view on the pace with which progress can be made.
- 2.3 Through these processes the Council will be in a position to adopt a final strategy in Autumn 2007 for implementation from 2008/09, the financial implications of which will be available to inform the development of the 2008/09 to 2013/14 Medium Term Plan

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The environment strategy will provide a vehicle for celebrating the many areas of good work the Council is already doing. Its performance on recycling, home energy conservation, maintaining bio-diversity, increasing access to the countryside and sustainable land use and construction already make a significant environmental contribution. However, national and

regional guidance increasingly identifies the need for councils to lead their local communities in this essential area, both by example and by engagement and influencing individuals and groups.

- 3.2 Through the consultation processes the environment strategy will be circulated widely. To increase awareness it is proposed that an overview also be published as a small leaflet. The draft content of the leaflet is included at Annex B.
- 3.3 Formal Member consultation will be through the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework). However, the development and delivery of the strategy will be a major programme of work and Cabinet are invited to consider forming a small Member Working Group to support the process.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 Cabinet are recommended to –
- (a) approve the draft Environment Strategy at Annex A as a basis for consultation with Members, organisations and businesses;
 - (b) note the intention to seek approval for a public consultation draft in April 2007;
 - (c) authorise the Head of Technical Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment, to publish a leaflet to publicise the development of the environment strategy; and
 - (d) establish an Environment Strategy Members' Working Group to assist with the development and delivery of the environment strategy.

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ANNEX A

Huntingdonshire District Council Environment Strategy

Introduction

- Environment Strategy for Huntingdonshire
- Huntingdonshire District Council's commitment

ONE - Tackling Climate Change

- Increasing Energy Efficiency
- Increasing the use of Renewable Energy
- Encouraging more Sustainable Travel
- Adapting to climate change

TWO - Using Resources Efficiently

- Reducing Waste going to Landfill
- Increase Water Efficiency
- Encourage Sustainable Purchasing
- Making Best Use of Land and Enhancing Landscape Diversity

THREE - Protecting and Improving our Environment

- Improving air quality in Huntingdonshire
- Minimising harm from contaminated or polluted land
- Protecting and enhance biodiversity
- Increasing access to green space
- Improving the cleanliness of Huntingdonshire's streets
- Creating a safer environment by reducing anti-social behaviour

Implementation – Developing a Working Strategy

- Developing delivery mechanisms
- Consultation process
- Two-year Delivery Action Plan

Environment Strategy for Huntingdonshire

Huntingdonshire has accommodated significant growth over the last four decades and is faced with even more rapid growth in the next two. The challenge the district faces is to ensure that the prosperity and quality of life of Huntingdonshire's residents is maintained, the local environment is preserved and enhanced and that we minimise our use of, and damage to, irreplaceable natural resources. If all of these things can be achieved the development of Huntingdonshire will be sustainable. We will leave a legacy to future generations that will allow them to maintain the prosperity and quality of life we have enjoyed. If we fail we will have robbed them of that opportunity and, potentially, they will face risks and challenges to their existence that will make their lives much poorer.

Controlling our consumption of natural resources is pivotal to achieving sustainable development. Natural resources include the timber and minerals we use in construction, the land we build on, the fossil fuels used for energy production and travel, the water that we drink and the air that we breathe (but also pollute). These are not inexhaustible and our objective must be to ensure that Huntingdonshire consumes no more than its fair share of those resources. As an organisation the Council will review its own environmental footprint and that of the district of Huntingdonshire.

Where we cannot easily or immediately change what we are doing we must seek ways to mitigate the adverse impacts. A change to renewable energy can reduce our reliance on burning fossil fuels to generate energy but is unlikely ever to replace it entirely. We can reduce our demand for energy by making our homes and businesses as energy efficient as possible and we can help to mitigate the damage to the atmosphere caused by the carbon dioxide resulting from burning fossil fuels by planting trees that take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The link between carbon dioxide production and global climate change is irrefutable and local measures to reduce emissions are an imperative.

Tackling climate change is the first theme of this environmental strategy. It will complement the objectives in the Local Development Framework and the commitments already contained in the community strategy. Furthermore, it will support the achievement of the targets adopted by the Eastern Regional Assembly which already has acknowledged the risk that this low-lying region runs from climate change. The Council has already demonstrated its commitment by signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change.

The forecast growth in the district will generate massive demand for construction materials, increase local consumption and has the potential to detract from the council's achievements in reducing household waste. The Council will need to ensure that the efficient use of natural resources is a principal consideration in the delivery of growth and providing services to new residents of the district. The efficient use of resources will be the second key theme of this environmental strategy.

When considering our use of resources it will be important to consider the role that water has already played in shaping Huntingdonshire. The flood plains of the Rivers Great Ouse and Nene and the fens give the district a unique character and were responsible for the rich agriculture that brought prosperity to the district in years gone by. Climate change brings with it the risk of rising sea levels and more intense rainfall and, therefore, a greater likelihood of flooding. However, winter rainfall will become less reliable and the area will become drier and less able to sustain the demand for water from new development.

The final theme for this strategy is protecting and improving our environment and will look at the existing and future contribution that the broad spectrum of Council services can make to the district. Communities must be free to enjoy and value their local environment. This is the essence of the national 'clean, green and safe' agenda. It is about people's perceptions and these are shaped by how clean the streets are, how easy it is for them to visit open countryside and how safe they feel in their homes and on the local streets. Street cleaning, waste collection, environmental health and community safety are all services provided by the Council that contribute to people's perceptions of their locality.

Major countryside initiatives such as the Great Fen Project, and country parks such as Paxton Pits and Needingworth provide accessible countryside as well as creating and enhancing habitat and increasing bio-diversity. They bring the added benefit of proving vegetation that takes up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and help to mitigate the man-made discharges that contribute to climate change. This is just one example of how the themes within the strategy are inseparable and is a feature which will be increasingly apparent in the detail of the Council's environmental strategy.

On a global level the past 20 years have seen a growing realisation that the current model of development is unsustainable. In other words we are living beyond our means. From the loss of biodiversity with the felling of rainforests to the negative effect our consumption patterns are having on the environment and the climate. Our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet - this cannot be sustained. The most noticeable impact on our environment is climate change. The weather is changing. Temperatures and sea levels are rising. Summers are getting hotter, winters wetter.

What does this mean for Huntingdonshire? What will it be like to live here? What can we – HDC and you do about it?

The environmental footprints of an individual, organisation, district or country are the result of many individual choices, activities and policies. This means that actions that lead to changes in policy and the ways products are produced are just as important as changing personal lifestyles.

As part of the development of The Community Strategy for Huntingdonshire, consultation with local people and other organisations in Huntingdonshire established a vision and priorities for the District.

OUR VISION

"Huntingdonshire, where...

we make the most of opportunities that come from growth;
our local people can realise their potential;
we balance our social, economic and environmental needs; and
we have a good quality of life."

This strategy will encourage HDC to look at the environmental footprint of the district council and of the district of Huntingdonshire to identify where we can take action to create more sustainable communities that will not only benefit today's residents, through a better quality of life, but crucially help to secure our vision today and for future generations.

This strategy will include clear actions to promote sustainability by involving people, leading by example and by demonstrating our commitment to deliver the Council's six key priorities, all of which work towards ensuring a good quality of life in Huntingdonshire:

- Safe & active communities
- A clean, green & attractive environment
- Housing which meets local needs
- A healthy population
- A strong & diverse local economy
- Accessible services & transport choices

In addition, the Environment Strategy will take into account national priorities and initiatives, issues that the Huntingdonshire Community Partnership has identified as its priorities, the Council's current ongoing programmes and the aims, objectives and targets of various council strategies already working towards sustainable development. All of which work together to achieve an overall vision of Huntingdonshire.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

Although Huntingdonshire faces many challenges in the journey to achieving these six priorities/overall vision, this strategy identifies the main environmental challenges we need to overcome to achieve this vision.

These are:

1. Tackling Climate Change
2. Using Resources Efficiently

3. Protecting & Improving the Environment

Huntingdonshire District Council's Commitment

The Council will make continual, measurable progress in its environmental performance, reduce its own environmental impact and strive to improve the environment.

It will fulfil its statutory environmental responsibilities and ensure that all operations and activities carried out on its behalf, comply with, or exceed, relevant statutory environmental requirements.

The Council will foster a sense of responsibility for the environment amongst its employees, elected Members and the local community and ensure that both employees and contractors act in accordance with this policy and in compliance with its adopted Environmental Management System.

The Council will provide regular and concise information regarding its environmental performance.

Through this strategy and an effective Environmental Management System, the Council aims to:

- Review and understand the environmental impact of service delivery and office-based activities.
- Communicate the achievement of environmental and sustainable development objectives and targets.
- Promote sustainable development both within its own offices and in all of its activities by embedding sustainable development in the decision-making process and service delivery.
- Set strategic objectives and targets for this policy with regular monitoring, reporting and review of progress.
- Achieve continual improvement in environmental performance through the implementation of an Environmental Management System, for example ISO 14001 or EMAS
- Influence the culture of employees by communicating the policy and providing adequate training to achieve this policy.

Through the Council's various strategies, plans and policies, an integrated system will be created to drive forward environmentally aware initiatives in all service areas to achieve a significant impact on the environment.

Priority 1: Tackling climate change

Strategic Objective: Reduce Greenhouse gas emissions

This Strategy will develop through consultation with the Carbon Trust and other stakeholders, specific targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the council's own operations, in homes in the district and in the transport sector. These targets will be consistent with the Government's strategy, "Climate Change: The UK Programme 2006", of a CO₂ reduction target of 20% below 1990 levels by 2010 and to reduce emissions by 60% below 1990 levels by 2050. Our corporate strategy "Growing Success" now recognises the need to reduce greenhouse gases as one of its priority community objectives.

Strategic Aim (1a): Increase Energy Efficiency

"Huntingdonshire District Council will increase the energy efficiency of council owned buildings and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District."

Energy use and production through the burning of fossil fuels is the major contributor to emissions of greenhouse gases. Using energy more efficiently is a factor in reducing our impact on climate change. Energy efficiency is not just good in terms of the environment; it also reduces fuel bills for residents and businesses.

Energy is used in Council buildings for space heating and cooling, hot water, lighting, and powering electrical equipment such as computers and the operation of other appliances such as lifts and automatic doors. Reducing energy used in Council buildings will save money and significantly reduce carbon emissions.

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995 places a duty on the Council to identify and promote ways in which it will be possible to achieve a 30% reduction in the District's domestic energy consumption over the 15 years to 2010/2011. Based on energy efficiency measures installed to date, a reduction in energy consumption of 23.4% has been achieved against 1996 baseline figures.

Since April 2000, the Council has also reported to the Government its strategy and achievements to reduce fuel poverty amongst District residents. Fuel poverty arises when a household can't afford to pay for the energy they need to keep their homes heated to an acceptable temperature. This may arise from the poor energy efficiency of houses due to age, inefficient heating systems, the use of expensive fuels, lack of insulation, or the income of the householders. Those particularly vulnerable include the elderly and single occupancy homes. The recently published Stern Review suggests that, as a result of predicted climate change, there is likely to be a reduced demand for heating in winter but increased energy consumption for cooling homes in summer. A growing demand for relatively low cost, high energy, portable air conditioning units is already being satisfied by DIY outlets. It will be important to design homes to take account of this through encouraging the use of active ventilation systems.

Strategic Aim (1a): Actions

- Introduce improved standards to reduce carbon emissions
- Reduction in Council's energy consumption in all its buildings
- Raise awareness of and encourage the installation of energy efficiency measures by local businesses, institutions and householders
- Target the promotion of the most cost effective energy efficiency measures and those likely to achieve the greatest reductions in carbon emissions
- Achieve the Decent Homes Standard for housing stock managed by Registered Social Landlords and properties in the Private sector
- Develop and implement a Fuel Poverty Strategy to reduce fuel bills for vulnerable residents
- Improve energy efficiency through the Home Energy Conservation Act

Strategic Aim (1b): Increase the proportion of energy produced and used which comes from renewable resources

“Huntingdonshire District Council will increase the proportion of energy produced and used which comes from renewable resources in council owned buildings and promote and encourage renewable technology and energy tariffs to households and businesses in the District.”

Developing renewable technologies that can provide clean energy and reduce our ‘carbon footprint’ will significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. The UK currently generates around 4% of its electricity needs from renewable sources, but significant growth is required if carbon emissions are to be reduced and if any future energy gap is to be bridged.

The UK Government’s target is for 10% of electricity to come from renewables by 2010, with an aspiration for this to rise to 20% by 2020. The East of England has a specific target within the Regional Spatial Strategy, for the installation of 821MW of onshore renewable electricity by 2010. The Red Tile farm wind farm recently installed within the district contributes 24MW towards this regional target and the council will support other such developments where appropriate within the District.

On a smaller scale the council will actively facilitate the introduction of renewable energy in individual homes in the district, seeking opportunities to grant fund where possible the installation of technologies likely to achieve the greatest reduction in carbon emissions.

Technologies encompassed by micro-generation include:

- solar (thermal) for hot water systems
- solar (photovoltaic) to provide electricity
- heat pumps
- micro-wind (including rooftop mounted turbines)
- biomass
- micro combined heat and power (CHP) schemes

Such ‘micro-generation’ technologies can be highly effective in communal dwellings and community facilities e.g. combined heat and power servicing leisure centres, can achieve relatively large potential carbon savings, which offset the high up front installation cost.

As part of the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Area, Huntingdonshire will see significant levels of new development by 2020. It is anticipated that this will amount to around 20,000 new homes.

It will be vitally important to encourage the installation of renewable technology in as many of these new homes as possible. The council will require developers to incorporate renewable energy sources on all major sites in line with recommendations within the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy. Where renewable technologies are not installed, ‘future proofing’ to facilitate the easy installation of renewable energy technologies during their design life of a property, will be encouraged through the planning process.

Strategic Aim (1b): Actions

- Increase the amount of the Council’s electricity procured from renewable sources.
- Carry out feasibility studies into the installation of renewable sources of energy at new council buildings and when replacing heating systems in existing buildings
- Raise awareness of and encourage the installation of renewable energy by local businesses, institutions and householders
- Require a minimum of 10% renewable energy generation from all major developments (50+ units)
- Work to support community scale renewable energy projects

Strategic Aim (1c): Encourage more sustainable travel

“Huntingdonshire District Council will encourage more sustainable travel for work practices amongst its own employees as well as promoting and encouraging the use and development of more sustainable modes of travel across the District.”

The transport sector is the third largest source of greenhouse gas emissions (Climate Change UK Programme). But more importantly it is the fastest growing source. Left unchecked, car traffic could grow by about 20% over the next two decades and van and lorry traffic is forecast to grow by about 22%. Fuel use in the transport sector is the fastest growing contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the UK and demand is increasing year on year.

Action to tackle the impacts of this growth on congestion and pollution and to reduce the impact of transport on the environment is being taken forward as one of the government's main priorities.

The council is committed to reducing transport related carbon emissions (particularly from road traffic) and will work with the transport authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) to achieve an integrated transport network and to develop and promote alternatives to the single occupancy use of the private car.

The council is working to reduce the impact of its own transport activities and will introduce site specific employee travel plans, designed to encourage employees to use cars only when absolutely necessary and to promote the use of alternative forms of transport, such as fuel efficient pool cars, car sharing, cycling, walking and using public transport.

The Council will investigate methods for reducing emissions from its fleet and will ensure that emissions are a key consideration when specifying new vehicles. This strategy will include options for advising employees how they can reduce transport emissions, by employing economical driving techniques for example.

Strategic Aim (1c): Actions

- Support more opportunities for residents to walk, cycle and use public transport
- Develop and implement site specific employee Travel Plans for each of the Council's main sites.
- Purchase a fleet of low emission pool vehicles for use by Council employees.
- Effective management of Council's own vehicle fleet to reduce vehicle emissions
- Encourage schools and businesses to develop travel plans by working in partnership with County Council, the Local Strategic Partnership and the planning process
- Ensure safe access for pedestrians and cyclists
- Promote the implementation of the Huntingdonshire Car Parking Strategy, to manage demand for car parking in town centre locations
- Take part in annual events to promote alternative modes of travel

Strategic Aim (1d): Ensure buildings, services and the community are able to adapt to climate change

“Huntingdonshire District Council will work towards ensuring buildings, services and the community are able to adapt to climate change”

Whatever action is taken now to mitigate climate change, it will take decades to bring emissions of greenhouse gases under sufficient control that the concentrations of the gases in the air stop rising. Significant climate change is now unavoidable and we have no choice but to begin adapting to changes in average weather and also preparing for extremes of weather.

These extremes of weather will have a number of implications for the built environment and spatial development, for example, warmer temperatures will effect the thermal comfort in buildings, while wetter winters may lead to increased risk of flooding. Therefore it is essential that new development is planned in such a way that it responds and adapts to these pressures.

Huntingdonshire District Council provides guidance to developers in relation to avoiding flood plains and areas at greater risk of flooding. Our Emergency planning Section has strategies for dealing with extreme weather events, flooding and drought. Huntingdonshire District Council, as a service provider at the core of the community needs to be prepared to deal with all possible outcomes.

Huntingdonshire District Council recognises households, businesses and communities in Huntingdonshire all have an impact on climate change and by addressing this issue and working on the aims of this strategy we can help reduce the impact Huntingdonshire is having on our climate.

Although we are working hard to reduce the human activity that contributes to climate change we also acknowledge that some amount of climate change is inevitable and we need to adapt to the consequences of climate change. This centres on protecting ourselves from the effects of hotter drier summers and wetter winters with more frequent storm and flood events.

This is best achieved by working in partnership with the range of agencies that are active throughout the District. These partners include the Environment Agency, Cambridgeshire County Council and the emergency services.

Strategic Aim (1d): Actions

- Improve awareness on flood warnings in conjunction with the Environment Agency
- Fully integrate climate change issues into the Emergency Plan
- Develop improvement plans for relief of particular flood areas
- Implement where possible Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to manage run-off rates.
- Encourage grey water recycling schemes in all major developments
- Work with Local Authorities to plan together for climate change impacts
- Develop accurate baseline data for greenhouse gas emissions

Priority 2: Using Resources Efficiently

Strategic Objective: Reduce the environmental impact of resource use

Everybody consumes resources. When people consume resources either by buying manufactured products, driving a car or turning on the tap at home, there are associated impacts on the environment.

As we have become more affluent we have bought more goods, travelled further and demanded greater convenience. If these demands on the Earth's resources continue to increase we will be causing irreparable harm to the environment. The use of resources can often be associated with the production of waste, air polluting gases, degradation of natural habitats and depletion in natural resources such as fossil fuels and water.

The UK Government have committed themselves to "encourage and promote the development of a ten year framework of programmes ... to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production".

Resource efficiency is an important area for the UK. It is one of the four priority areas for UK action set out in the new Sustainable Development Strategy, Securing the Future.

There are inefficiencies in the whole of the 'cycle of production'. From the impacts of mining the raw materials, the production and transporting of materials and products which result in emissions, to the waste products that end up in landfill from the production process as well as the disposal requirements of the product at the end of its life cycle. By addressing how we can use resources more efficiently, and promoting this to businesses and consumers in Huntingdonshire, everyone can save money as well as benefit the environment. By far the largest amount of waste that goes to landfill is produced by the industrial and commercial sectors, over which the council has little influence, which is where recycling should be encouraged to reach domestic levels, where the council has significant influence.

Strategic Aim (2a): Reduce the amount of waste disposed of to landfill

"Huntingdonshire District Council will reduce the amount of waste produced and sent to landfill and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District."

Waste is a major environmental challenge, landfill space is scarce and many improvements and innovations in recycling need to be made to conserve the space available and meet European requirements to reduce dependency on landfill.

The Council has a crucial role in providing an effective waste collection and recycling service but it is also crucial that we emphasise the importance of reducing waste as a key component in becoming more resource efficient.

A successful waste management programme leads to major reductions in the problems associated with landfill disposal, reducing pollution, health hazards, impacts upon biodiversity and loss of amenity. Methane, a common landfill gas is also a potent greenhouse gas.

The amount we waste and the breakdown of waste products has a big impact on climate change. The products we throw away may have taken a significant amount of energy to produce and more often than not what we throw away can be re-used either for its original purpose or for something different.

When biodegradable waste breaks down in landfill sites it gives off a gas which is mainly a mixture of up to 65% methane and 35% carbon dioxide. As these are both potent greenhouse gases it is important to examine the impact of waste disposal to landfill.

Therefore we need to reduce the amount that we put in the bin in the first place and once we have decided we have finished with a product, we need to dispose of it in an environmentally responsible way.

Since 2003 the Council has improved the district's recycling performance substantially. A three bin alternate weekly collection receives high levels of customer satisfaction, high participation, and a 49% recycling rate in 2005/2006 (the sixth highest local authority recycling rate in the UK)

This success is yet to be replicated throughout all the Council's many sites. Day to day functioning of the council results in a great deal of waste, a large proportion of which is paper that is recycled, but there are still many waste streams that could be recycled that are currently heading straight for landfill. Much more can be done and this strategy will highlight necessary improvements to achieve even greater recycling performance within the Council as well as households and businesses in Huntingdonshire.

Strategic Aim (2a): Actions

- Enhanced domestic recyclable waste collection service to increase domestic recycling to 50%
- Development of Waste Minimisation Strategy in conjunction with the RECAP Partnership
- Waste minimisation and recycling education and promotion campaign
- Reduce amount of Council's own waste going to landfill by 20% over next 5 years
- Develop targeted promotions for key waste streams
- Facilitate the introduction of a trade waste recycling collection service for small to medium sized businesses in the District

Strategic Aim (2b): Increase the efficiency of the use of water resources

“Huntingdonshire District Council will reduce the amount of water used by Council buildings and services and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District.”

Water resources are of international and national concern and becoming ever more a significant environmental issue in the East of England, which is now officially classed as ‘semi-arid’ and has the lowest rainfall in the UK.

The council uses water for a wide range of functions such as in swimming pools, cleaning streets, grounds maintenance and general use within its own building. It is important that the council seeks to introduce measures to improve the council’s own water utilisation and ‘design-in’ water efficiency measures.

Many uses of water do not require that water be of drinking quality. Harvested rainwater and ‘grey water’ collected after it has been used for washing and showering, is adequate for uses such as watering gardens and flushing toilets. This not only makes wise use of a natural resource but can also have significant cost savings.

Domestic water use has risen year on year for the last 30 years. The extensive housing growth planned for Huntingdonshire to 2020 will place significant further pressure on water supplies. To combat this, the promotion of water efficiency will be critically important.

The Environment Agency has suggested that a 25% reduction in water consumption at all new properties and an 8% reduction at all existing properties, achieved against a 2004 baseline figures, will be required to avoid the need to the development of major new water storage resources.

Adopting a systematic approach to water reduction, through the installation of some or all of the measures listed below can typically result in a 20 – 50% fall in water consumption.

- Dual flush toilets
- Aerated or flow regulated taps
- Showers with low flow rates
- Best practice washing machines/dishwashers
- Rainwater collection facilities (e.g. water butts)

At larger developments (above 50 units) the council will require the specification of water saving appliances to a 25% reduction in water consumption.

Strategic Aim (2b): Actions

- Promote water saving measures such as Water Butts for domestic rainwater harvesting
- Introduce rainwater harvesting systems at all new Council sites.
- Require a 25% reduction in water usage at all major developments (over 50 units), against the 2004 baseline figure of 153 litres per household per day.

Strategic Aim (2c): Encourage Sustainable Purchasing

“Huntingdonshire District Council will implement and follow a code of sustainable purchasing and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District.”

Everything we buy and use has an impact on the environment and can add to the effects of climate change. Products such as computers, stationery, vehicles and furniture have impacts throughout their life, and it's the same for the services we buy such as waste management, water and energy.

In some cases, we aren't aware of these impacts. They may happen in the early stages of a product's life (e.g. through mining the raw materials needed to make our computers, or cutting down the trees to make our paper), or after we have finished using it (e.g. when it is sitting in a landfill).

It is possible to purchase goods and services in a more sustainable way by for example specifying environmentally preferred products, looking at the whole life costing of a product, and, through our contracts with suppliers, to encourage them to operate green and sustainable procurement policies. Food miles, the distance our food travels from where it has been grown to where we buy it, has become an important issue.

The food system accounts for up to 40% of all UK road freight and a typical Sunday meal could have travelled 49000 miles, equivalent to 2 trips around the world. Supporting local food production and consumption through farmers' markets and farm shops can drastically reduce food miles and benefit the local economy at the same time.

Strategic Aim (2c): Actions

- Implement Green Purchasing Policy
- Purchase Council office furniture from sustainable forestry sources and implement a program of repair to damaged furniture where possible and feasible
- All Council's own computers, photocopiers and printers with high energy efficiency rating
- Promote the use sustainable construction practices through the planning process at all developments within the district
- Renewable energy use and energy efficiency measures are to be specified in all contract specifications where applicable
- Continue to develop and support the local farmers' markets
- Develop further opportunities for the sale of locally produced food in Huntingdonshire

Strategic Aim (2d): Making Best Use of Land and Enhancing Landscape Diversity

“The Council will work to make more use of previously developed land and existing buildings, and use land more efficiently, to achieve sustainable growth – whilst maintaining the landscape value of the District”

The eastern region is one of the UK’s fastest growing regions, making a significant contribution to the national economy. This also means that it faces the pressures of growth, putting land availability for development at a premium.

It is important to retain landscapes of value in the district that may be threatened by proposals to build houses, for example. We need to know where these places are so that we can use the planning system to make sure they aren’t damaged.

Bringing land back into productive use eases pressure on valuable Greenfield or environmentally sensitive landscapes and is in accordance with the aims of sustainable development.

Regional Planning Guidance 6 sets an initial target for Cambridgeshire of developing at least 50% of housing on previously developed sites by 2008.

The council will encourage developments with greater intensity of at locations accessible to good public transport services e.g. town centres and nodes along good public transport corridors,

Strategic Aim (2d): Actions

- Increase the proportion of housing development on previously developed land, to at least 50% by 2008.
- Identify and ensure the protection of landscapes of value and heritage sites in the district.
- Encourage developments with a density of 30 – 50 dwellings per hectare

Priority 3: Protecting & Improving our Environment

Strategic Objective:

To protect and enhance the environmental capital of Huntingdonshire.

Huntingdonshire benefits from a number of parks and green spaces which contribute significantly to the quality of life and wellbeing of those living and working in the District. The council is committed to protecting these green spaces and seeking to improve their value for wildlife and community leisure.

The rivers Nene and Great Ouse flow through the heart of the district and their species rich valleys are considerable environmental assets. Imaginative management and promotion of such sites will maximise their contribution to regional and national biodiversity, whilst encouraging the potential for tourism and for engaging the wider community.

The Great Fen Project is a habitat restoration scheme of international significance, which will restore over 3,000 hectares of farmland in the district to fenland wildlife habitat by connecting and enlarging the two vitally important National Nature Reserves of Woodwalton and Holme Fen.

Realising the full value of the environmental capital within the District is central to the Council's role as a 'community leader' and through working with schools, volunteers and community groups much valuable work has already been done to encourage involvement and foster environmental consideration.

Such work is complimented by the regulatory role of the Council in improving air quality and remedying land contamination.

Strategic Aim (3a): Improve air quality in Huntingdonshire

"Huntingdonshire District Council will minimise its own contributions to pollution arising from its activities and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the district."

Poor air quality can cause harm to people, plant and animal life, materials and structures. The main sources of air pollution are air and road transport, energy generation, industrial processes and domestic sources. Some pollutants can combine to form even more damaging secondary pollutants, for example to create low-level ozone, one of the major components of urban smog.

The UK's air has long been polluted. As recently as the 1950s, major cities in the UK were frequently engulfed in smog. Since then, government clean air regulations, the closure coal-fired power stations and increasing use of central heating rather than coal to warm our homes, has ensured that smog is no longer such a problem. Pollution is now less visible, but is still damaging our health. It is estimated that air pollution is responsible for around 20,000 premature deaths each year and the most vulnerable people are children, older people and those with heart and lung problems. There is also considerable impact in terms of corrosion and damage to buildings.

In 1995 The Environment Act was passed. This provided a new statutory framework for air quality management. In response to this, in 1997 the Government established a National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS). This demonstrated that good air quality was seen to be important to sustainable development and the creation of an environment where individuals and communities can thrive.

The NAQS set standards for eight air pollutants. These are:

Benzene	1,3-butadiene
Carbon Monoxide	Lead
Nitrogen Dioxide	Ozone
Fine Particles (PM ₁₀)	Sulphur Dioxide

The NAQS sets objectives and requires local authorities to take steps to review and assess air quality in a process known as Local Air Quality Management. This process helps ensure air quality is taken into consideration during local authority decision and policy-making processes and provides the basis for action where improvements are found to be necessary.

The Environment Agency regulates emissions from the most potentially polluting processes. The prevention of pollution from other sources is the responsibility of local authorities and we have a duty to review and assess local air quality so as to see if national air quality objectives are being met. We are also responsible for monitoring air quality. The UK Government has developed an Air Pollution Banding system to help interpret information about air quality and the likely health effects. A value of 1 to 3 is low while 10 (the maximum) is very high and this is the system we use to monitor air quality in the district.

A partnership of the five District Councils and the County Council was set up in 1997 to tackle air quality issues. Since 1997, two Air Quality Review and Assessment (AQRA) reports have been published.

Major sources of air pollution in the district are motor vehicle emissions, especially in more urban centres and along major trunk roads, together with a number of industrial processes. Pollution significantly affects the quality of people's lives, their health and the environment. The Council has a legal duty to identify, monitor and manage air pollution levels and manage statutory nuisances, e.g. fumes or gases emitted from premises.

The government's National Air Quality Strategy places responsibility for reducing pollution with local authorities, which are required to meet targets under the Environment Act 1995 but, we all contribute to pollution, and everyone has a role to play if our air is to get cleaner.

Strategic Aim (3a): Actions

- Testing new zero pollution buses.
- Ensuring taxis will become cleaner; and that the most polluting vehicles will not have their licences renewed.
- Reducing traffic growth by improving public transport and encouraging developers to make easy access to public transport part of new developments.
- Buy or lease cleaner vehicles.
- Use CleanUp and PowerShift grants to reduce pollution from vehicles
- Produce travel plans, to help staff to walk, cycle or use public transport to get to work: for example by putting in cycle racks and showers.
- Check that the goods and services purchased come from businesses that use less polluting vehicles and minimise their energy use.
- Design more energy-efficient, less polluting buildings that can be reached easily by public transport, by bicycle or on foot.
- Build homes, shops and leisure facilities close together so reducing the need to travel.

Strategic Aim (3b): Minimise harm from contaminated land and remediate where necessary.

“Huntingdonshire District Council will minimise the threat to health, controlled waters and/or the wider environment from land which is contaminated or polluted and ensure that where identified, appropriate remediation will be undertaken”

Contaminated land usually results from industrial pollution that adds substances to the ground that can cause harm to humans or ecosystems, or may be the cause of pollution to local water systems. Contamination, in most cases, arises from a previous use of the site, or an adjacent site, that had an industrial activity on it at one time or another.

The existence of contamination presents its own threats to sustainable development:

- it impedes social progress, depriving local people of a clean and healthy environment;
- it threatens wider damage to the environment and to wildlife;
- it inhibits the prudent use of land and soil resources, particularly by obstructing the redevelopment of previously developed land and increasing development pressures on green -field areas;
- the cost of remediation represents a high burden on individual companies, home and other land owners, and the economy as a whole; and
- the fear of contamination alone can have an adverse effect on property values and lead to blight.

Under Part IIA of the Environment Protection Act 1990, for land to be classed as officially ‘contaminated’, the local authority (which acts as the enforcing authority) must have identified whether substances present in, on, or under the land, may cause:

- significant harm;
- a significant possibility of such harm;
- pollution of controlled waters;
- or the likelihood of pollution of controlled waters.

A risk-based approach is used to identify contaminated land. A site is assessed on the current use of the land and the prevailing circumstances. To be considered a risk, there must be a source of contamination.

The Council’s process for identifying potentially contaminated sites can be found in the Council’s Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy. Identifying contaminated land however is only the first part. Once it has been correctly identified, the risk needs to be dealt with and a programme of remediation must be undertaken. It is important to understand that the purpose of remediation is to reduce any significant risks posed by contaminated land; it is not necessarily to decontaminate the land. In other words a programme of remediation may not eliminate all possible future risks or remove all the pollutants.

The Council has produced a Remediation Strategy to make it easier for residents and businesses to understand what the remediation process involves.

Strategic Aim (3b): Actions

- to identify and remove unacceptable risks to human health and the environment;
- to seek to bring damaged land back into beneficial use; and
- to seek to ensure that the cost burdens faced by individuals, companies and society as a whole are proportionate, manageable and economically sustainable.

Strategic Aim (3c): Protect and enhance biodiversity

“Huntingdonshire District Council will encourage the management, enhancement and further creation of green space within the district to stimulate biodiversity. It will also promote the appreciation of nature in partnership with community groups, households and businesses in the district.”

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth – the myriad plants and animals and the places where they live. We should protect and conserve wildlife – our natural heritage – for its own sake, and for future generations of people. They too should be able to enjoy wild places, just as we can today. Contact with the natural world is inspiring, and promotes good physical and mental health. They are great places for learning about nature too.

Huntingdonshire is predominantly a rural district with a variety of green spaces including rivers, gardens, parks, farmland, and woods which make up a large proportion of the district. The green spaces support a tremendous variety of plants and animals and some of the most important wildlife habitats in the area include woodlands, meadows, wetlands, rivers, parks, and the ‘urban’ habitats found, for example, on disused railway land or areas where buildings have been demolished and nature has taken over.

Important places for biodiversity may be threatened by proposals to build houses, for example. We need to know where these places are, so that we can use the planning system to make sure they aren’t damaged. They must also be looked after in the right way. For example, a meadow will gradually fill up with bushes if the grass is never cut nor grazed, and many wild flowers will die out.

We also need to keep an eye on changes in wildlife, so we notice when there are problems.

The UK Government published Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan in 1994. This sets out the broad strategy for conserving and enhancing wild species and wildlife habitats in the UK. It also initiated the production of detailed action plans (between 1995 and 1999) to guide the work needed to conserve the individual habitats and species most in need of conservation in the UK. These action plans contained targets for the maintenance, restoration and, in many cases, expansion of the priority habitat. Expansion of existing habitat extent is important in order to start to redress historical habitat loss, create more habitats for priority species and help wildlife withstand pressures and challenges.

The revised habitat targets for England were published in November 2006 as part of the update of the England Biodiversity Strategy

Strategic Aim (3c): Actions

- Develop Community Involvement in green spaces and Biodiversity Projects
- Enhance neglected green spaces with the local communities
- Enhance the condition of SSSI's and CWS
- Establish principles for the use and management of river water and the land beside it.
- Promote the conservation and enhancement of farmland biodiversity.
- Encourage greening of the built environment and the use of open spaces in ecologically sensitive ways.
- Encourage experience of the natural world and promote environmental education.
- Supports partnerships at District wide and local levels to produce and implement Biodiversity Action Plans.
- Encourage the business community to play a major role in implementing the programme for conserving biodiversity.
- Ensure that major new development projects include provision for biodiversity.

Strategic Aim (3d): Increase access to green space

“Huntingdonshire District Council acknowledges the importance of green space in contributing to the quality of life of those living and working in the district and supports the protection and enhancement of green spaces to encourage a diverse range of leisure and amenity uses”.

Enhancing the environmental value of major sites within the district will be considered with regard to the following:

- **Parks and gardens** - provide high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events
- **Green Corridors** - popular for walking, cycling and horse-riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, also provide opportunities for wildlife migration
- **Amenity Green Space** - provides opportunities for informal activities close to home or work and can enhance the appearance of residential or other areas
- **Outdoor Sports Facilities** - Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports`
- **Allotments and Community Gardens**- provide opportunities for those people who wish to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion
- **Provision for Children and Young People** - in the form of equipped play areas, skateboard parks and teenage shelters enable safe play and social interaction

Strategic Aim (3d): Actions

- Increase quantity and quality of green space through Section 106 agreements
- Work with partners to increase the area of local public open space
- Work with partners to develop the Great Fen, Needingworth Wetland and Paxton Pits Nature Reserve into regional green space projects.
- Promote sites through national shows, website and promotional leaflets
- Develop footpath links to areas of population
- Enhance interpretation by provision of leaflets and information boards
- Support the Parish Paths Partnership
- Maintain key sites to Green Flag Award status

Strategic Aim (3e): Improve the cleanliness of streets

“Huntingdonshire District Council will continue to maintain the cleanliness of our street to the highest possible standards and educate residents, households, communities and businesses in the district about how they can maintain clean streets.”

The Council prides itself on keeping the streets of the towns and villages within the district clean and litter free. To do this we provide litter bins in public open spaces and on streets and pavements, mechanical street sweeping services and litter picking in towns and along major verges. These environmental measures coupled with effective street cleaning services help to make Huntingdonshire such a pleasant place to live and work.

Litter is not the only challenge we face when keeping Huntingdonshire clean. Problems ranging from fly-tipping, graffiti, abandoned vehicles through to dog fouling and chewing gum on our streets all have a detrimental impact on Huntingdonshire's street scene.

Evidence suggests that a poor quality street scene can have far reaching social and economic impacts. Consultations undertaken as part of the Community Strategy with the people of Huntingdonshire have shown that resident's sense of pride in their community can be greatly reduced as a result of unclean streets and the fear of crime can be increased as a result of graffiti and abandoned vehicles in their neighbourhood. This can impact on Huntingdonshire's attractiveness as a place to live and work, affecting the economic prosperity of the District.

In order to maintain the cleanliness of our streets the Council reports several indicators of performance in relation to the following areas:

- **Litter, Graffiti & Flyposting**

Litter accumulation is monitored in accordance with the ENCAMS Litter monitoring regime which requires the council to survey the streets in the district every four months. The survey grades streets from A to D on the level of litter and sediment built up on streets and grass areas.

- **Fly tipping**

The Council's Operations Division collect all waste that has been reported by the public as fly-tipping. We aim to remove all waste reported as fly tipping within three days of receiving the report. This is unless the waste reported appears to be hazardous in nature in which case we aim to collect it sooner.

- **Abandoned vehicles**

All abandoned vehicles reported by the public are then investigated by the Council's Operations Division. Abandoned vehicles reported must be investigated within 24 hours and if judged by the Council to have been abandoned can (if on public land) be authorised for removal within 24 hours.

Removal is undertaken by a private company which then takes the vehicle to an Authorised Treatment Facility (ATF) for de-polluting it is then crushed and recycled.

Strategic Aim (3e): Actions

- To achieve an 'A' rating for at least 92% of streets in the District by 2007/08
- To achieve 'Grade One' performance for fly-tipping removal across the District
- To investigate 98% of all vehicles reported as abandoned within 24 hours
- To remove 80% of all vehicles identified as abandoned within 24hours

Strategic Aim (3f): Create a safer environment by reducing anti-social behaviour

“Huntingdonshire District Council will work to address anti-social behaviour in Huntingdonshire in partnership with the Police, the local people and other public agencies.”

Anti-social behaviour can be seen in a number of different forms, and may range from the dropping of litter to actual violence against people and property. Whatever the level of anti-social behaviour, its effects are the same, and in many cases areas will have experience of both crime and fear of crime, which in turn has a detrimental impact on the surrounding environment.

In 1998 the Government brought into force the Crime & Disorder Act. The law was introduced in response to growing public concern about anti-social behaviour (ASB) from individuals or groups who cause alarm, distress or harassment within the community. In 2003 the Government launched the TOGETHER campaign and published an action plan called ‘Together: Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour.’

Following this, the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 was introduced to help the police and local authorities work together with local people to tackle ASB.

The Crime & Disorder Act 1998 also required the establishment of Community Safety Partnerships which bring together the Police, local authorities and other public agencies to reduce crime and help tackle its causes.

The Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership (HCSP) put together their first Community Safety Strategy in 1999 and has recently produced a new strategy for the period 2005-08. There is also a free standing Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy which supports action towards delivering the targets and objectives set out in the Community Safety Strategy.

Drug misuse and dealing; criminal damage and vandalism; teenagers hanging around and vehicle related nuisance are the issues that are highlighted as the most concern in consultation with the people of Huntingdonshire. Therefore the aim of the Huntingdonshire Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy is to identify and address anti-social behaviour by taking effective action to tackle anti-social behaviour in Huntingdonshire.

Strategic Aim (3f): Actions

- Target problem individuals, focusing on prevention and enforcement
- To use, where appropriate, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) to disrupt the behaviour of perpetrators of anti-social behaviour
- To carry out targeted work to reduce alcohol related anti-social behaviour in town centres in Huntingdonshire
- To reduce the number of malicious fires
- To reduce the amount of criminal damage occurring in the district
- To support and participate in, partnership working and information sharing through ASB problem solving groups to address anti-social behaviour

Implementation – Developing a Working Strategy

Developing Delivery Mechanisms

The council will establish both Member and officer groups tasked with ensuring the delivery of this strategy. Delivering the strategy will be a major work programme comprising many individual projects. Appropriate project management and governance arrangements will be established to ensure the planning, implementation, review and reporting of the strategy's delivery.

Consultation Process

The strategy will be developed through a comprehensive consultative process. During the Spring of 2007 the council will consult with key public and private sector partners, including governmental, non-governmental and commercial organisations and local councils. A broad-based public consultation will be undertaken during Summer 2007.

Two-Year Delivery Action Plan

The tables that follow summarise the existing and possible future actions of the council. During the period of consultation on the broad objectives of the strategy the council will develop detailed short-term action plans and less specific medium and long term action plans which will be incorporated in the final version of the strategy to be adopted in Autumn 2007.

When complete, this strategy will give comprehensive overview of environmental activity in Huntingdonshire over the next five years and also bring together and demonstrate the good environmental practice currently happening across the district. The final strategy will relate this activity to the strategic aims and, based on consultation and identified priorities, an action plan will be developed for the following year.

Once an annual action plan has been established, we will further its implementation by educating the community and staff about environmental sustainability and working with businesses and the community to promote environmental sustainability

The strategy will be reviewed annually and our progress will be reported and published each year. This annual report will inform the development of the following year's action plan to ensure the strategy remains current and up to date.

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PRIORITY ONE - TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Strategic Objective: Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, (carbon dioxide and methane).

Because Carbon Dioxide is the most important of the greenhouse gases (in terms of volume) the UK Government has set national targets for reducing CO₂ emissions. By moving away from our dependence on fossil fuels, it will be possible to limit the effects of climate change. This can be achieved by encouraging energy saving, 'designing-in' sustainability to our homes and workplaces and developing renewable technologies that can provide clean energy and reduce our 'carbon footprint'

AIM	HDC (Estate Management) Actions	Huntingdonshire (Policy) Actions
Increase energy efficiency	Reduction in Council's energy consumption in all its public buildings	Raise awareness of energy efficiency to local businesses institutions and householders Develop an award scheme for energy efficient initiatives in local businesses Achieve the Decent Homes Standard for the Council owned housing stock Develop and implement a Fuel Poverty Strategy to reduce fuel bills for the Council owned properties Improve energy efficiency through the Home Energy Conservation Act Work towards the Decent Homes Standard for Private Housing
Increase the proportion of energy produced and used which comes from renewable resources	Increase the amount of the Council's electricity procured from renewable sources. Carry out feasibility studies of renewable sources of energy at new and existing Council buildings and when replacing heating systems in existing buildings	Raise awareness of and encourage the installation of renewable energy by local businesses, institutions and householders Minimum 10% renewable energy generation from all 'Major Developments' Work to support community led approaches to renewable energy projects
Encourage more sustainable travel	Develop and implement site-specific employee Travel Plans for each of the Council's main sites. Purchase a fleet of low emission pool vehicles for use by Council employees. Effective management of Council's own vehicle fleet to reduce vehicle emissions	Encourage schools and businesses to develop travel plans by working in partnership with County Council, the Local Strategic Partnership and the planning process Ensure safe access for pedestrians and cyclists Promote the implementation of the Huntingdonshire Car Parking Strategy, to manage demand for car parking in town centre locations Take part in annual events to promote alternative modes of travel
Ensure buildings, services and the community are able to adapt to climate change		Improve awareness on flood warnings in conjunction with the Environment Agency Fully integrate climate change issues into the Emergency Plan Develop improvement plans for relief of particular flood areas Encourage grey water recycling schemes in all major developments Seek funding for activities within the Climate Change Strategy Work with Local Authorities to plan together for climate change impacts Develop accurate baseline data for greenhouse gas emissions

PRIORITY TWO – USING RESOURCES MORE EFFICIENTLY

The largest and fastest growing pressures on the global environment come from areas such as household energy and water consumption, food consumption, travel and tourism. We now need to look at the life cycle of goods, services and materials we use and seek ways to minimise the environmental impacts of that life cycle.

AIM	HDC (Estate Management) Actions	Huntingdonshire (Policy)
Reduce the amount of waste disposed of to landfill	Reduce amount of Council's own waste going to landfill by 20% over next 5 years	Enhanced domestic recyclable waste collection service to increase domestic recycling to 50% Development of Waste Minimisation Strategy in conjunction with the RECAP Partnership Waste minimisation and recycling education and promotion campaign Develop targeted promotions for key waste streams Facilitate the introduction of a trade waste recycling collection service for small to medium sized businesses in the District
Increase efficiency of use of water resources	Introduce rainwater harvesting systems at all new council sites.	Promote water saving measures such as Home Water Butts for domestic rainwater harvesting Require a 25% reduction in water usage at all major developments (over 50 units), against the 2004 baseline figure of 153 litres per household per day.
Increase the efficiency with which the council uses other resources	Implement Green Purchasing Policy Purchase Council office furniture from sustainable forestry sources and implement a program of repair to damaged furniture where possible and feasible All Council's own computers, photocopiers and printers with high energy efficiency rating Renewable energy use and energy efficiency measures are to be specified in all contract specifications where applicable	Continue to develop and support the local farmers' markets Develop further opportunities for the sale of locally produced food in Huntingdonshire Promote the use sustainable construction practices through the planning process at all developments within the district
Making Best Use of Land and Enhance Landscape Diversity		Increase the proportion of housing development on previously developed land, to at least 50% by 2008. Identify and ensure the protection of landscapes of value and heritage sites in the district. Encourage developments with a density of 30 – 50 dwellings per hectare

PRIORITY THREE – PROTECTING & IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT

The third priority in this strategy relates very much to the services we provide as a local authority and how we ensure through protecting and improving our environment, residents maintain a good quality of life.

AIM	HDC (Operations)	Huntingdonshire (Policy)
Improve air quality in Huntingdonshire		Testing new zero pollution buses. Ensuring taxis will become cleaner; and that the most polluting vehicles will not have their licences renewed. Reducing traffic growth by improving public transport and encouraging developers to make easy access to public transport part of new developments. Buy or lease cleaner vehicles. Use CleanUp and PowerShift grants to reduce pollution from vehicles Produce travel plans, to help staff to walk, cycle or use public transport to get to work: for example by putting in cycle racks and showers. Check that the goods and services purchased come from businesses that use less polluting vehicles and minimise their energy use. Design more energy-efficient, less polluting buildings that can be reached easily by public transport, by bicycle or on foot. Build homes, shops and leisure facilities close together so reducing the need to travel.
Minimise harm from land which is contaminated and polluted		Develop Community Involvement in green spaces and Biodiversity Projects Enhance neglected green spaces with the local communities Enhance the condition of SSSI's and CWS Establish principles for the use and management of river water and land beside it. Promote the conservation and enhancement of farmland biodiversity. Encourage greening of the built environment and the use of open spaces in ecologically sensitive ways. Encourage experience of the natural world and promote environmental education. Supports partnerships at District wide and local levels to produce and implement Biodiversity Action Plans. Encourage the business community to play a major role in implementing the programme for conserving biodiversity. Ensure that major new development projects include provision for biodiversity.
Protect and enhance the landscape diversity and biodiversity		
Increase access to green space		Develop footpath links to areas of population Enhance interpretation by provision of leaflets and information boards Support the Parish Paths Partnership Maintain key sites to Green Flag Award status Increase quantity and quality of green space through Section 106 agreements Work with partners to increase the area of local public open space Work with partners to develop the Great Fen, Needingworth Wetland and Paxton Pits Nature Reserve into regional green space projects. Promote sites through national shows, website and promotional leaflets
Improve the cleanliness of streets		
Create a safer environment by reducing anti-social behaviour		Target problem individuals, focusing on prevention and enforcement To use, where appropriate, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) to disrupt the behaviour of perpetrators of anti-social behaviour To carry out targeted work to reduce alcohol related anti-social behaviour in town centres in Huntingdonshire To reduce the number of malicious fires To reduce the amount of criminal damage occurring in the district To support and participate in, partnership working and information sharing through ASB problem solving groups to address anti-social behaviour

Implementation - Educating & Enabling

Educate the community and staff about environmental sustainability

Work with businesses and the community to promote environmental sustainability

Take account of environmental considerations on funding, contract, policy and purchasing decisions

Monitor achievement of actions and objectives in this strategy in an annual published report to cabinet.

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ANNEX B

Our Environmental Commitment - Huntingdonshire's Declaration An Environment Strategy for Huntingdonshire

Huntingdonshire has accommodated significant growth over the last four decades and is faced with even more rapid growth in the next two. The challenge the district faces is to ensure that the prosperity and quality of life of Huntingdonshire's residents is maintained, the local environment is preserved and enhanced and that we minimise our use of, and damage to, irreplaceable natural resources. If all of these things can be achieved we will leave a legacy to future generations that will allow them to maintain the prosperity and quality of life we have enjoyed. If we fail we will have robbed them of that opportunity and, potentially, they will face risks and challenges to their existence that will make their lives much poorer.

On a global level the past 20 years have seen a growing realisation that the current model of development is unsustainable. In other words we are living beyond our means. Our way of life is placing an increasing burden on the planet - this cannot be sustained. The most noticeable impact on our environment is climate change. The weather is changing. Temperatures and sea levels are rising. Summers are getting hotter, winters wetter.

What does this mean for Huntingdonshire? What will it be like to live here?

What can we – Huntingdonshire District Council and you do about it?

It is our careless use of the planet's natural resources that has led to changes in our climate and the need to protect our environment from the detrimental impact of such carelessness.

The first step towards addressing the environmental challenges is to acknowledge them and analyse their potential impact at a local level. Huntingdonshire District Council is fully aware of the ever-increasing threat to our local environment and has now committed itself to addressing environmental issues through the production and implementation of a five-year Environment Strategy.

The Environment Strategy is currently in the developmental stages but our vision and commitment is well established and clear. Although Huntingdonshire faces many challenges in the journey to achieving this long term vision, this strategy identifies the main environmental challenges we need to overcome.

These are:

1. Tackling Climate Change
2. Using Resources Efficiently
3. Protecting & Improving the Environment

Each environmental challenge has a series of related actions that will work towards addressing that challenge. The diagram "Turning Words into Actions", shown on the centre pages demonstrates these challenges and actions and shows how the Environment Strategy will work towards an overall vision of the quality of life in Huntingdonshire.

When completed in autumn 2007 the strategy will provide a detailed action plan by which the Council itself, with residents, businesses and community groups in the

District, can act towards protecting and improving our Environment, and subsequently our quality of life not only for ourselves, but for future generations.

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TURNING WORDS INTO ACTIONS

The Council is responsible for promoting the economic, social and environmental well being of our communities, so that we can all enjoy a good quality of life. The overall long term visions for Huntingdonshire is based on what local people have told us is important for them now and in the future. The Environment Strategy will work towards promoting the environmental wellbeing of Huntingdonshire and therefore contribute to achieving the long term vision for the community.

OUR VISION FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

“Huntingdonshire should be a place where current and future generations have a good quality of life and enjoy continued economic success, opportunities for all and an environment that is protected and improved.” By promotion of:

· Safe, active & inclusive communities
A strong, diverse economy

Healthy living
Housing that meets local needs

A clean ‘green’ & attractive place
Access to services & transport

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL’S COMMITMENT TO BE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE

To work towards this overall vision, Huntingdonshire District Council will make continual, measurable progress in its environmental performance, reduce its own environmental impact and strive to improve the environment.

- We will fulfil its statutory environmental responsibilities
- We will foster a sense of responsibility for the environment amongst its employees, elected Members and the local community and ensure that both employees and contractors
- We will provide regular and concise information regarding its environmental performance.
- Through the Council’s various strategies, plans and policies, an integrated system will be created to drive forward environmentally aware initiatives in all service areas to achieve a significant impact on the environment.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

Although Huntingdonshire faces many challenges in the journey to achieving this overall vision, we have identified three main environmental challenges we need to overcome.

1. Tackling Climate Change

Increasing Energy Efficiency

“Huntingdonshire District Council will increase the energy efficiency of council owned buildings and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District.”

Increasing the use of Renewable Energy

“Huntingdonshire District Council will Increase the proportion of energy produced and used which comes from renewable resources in council owned buildings and promote and encourage renewable technology and energy tariffs to households and businesses in the District.”

Encouraging more Sustainable Travel

“Huntingdonshire District Council will encourage more sustainable travel for work practices amongst its own employees as well as promoting and encouraging the use and development of more sustainable modes of travel across the District.”

Adapting to climate change

“Huntingdonshire District Council will work towards ensuring buildings, services and the community are able to adapt to climate change”

2. Using Resources Efficiently

Reducing Waste going to Landfill

“Huntingdonshire District Council will reduce the amount of waste produced and sent to landfill and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District.”

Increase Water Efficiency

“Huntingdonshire District Council will reduce the amount of water used by Council buildings and services and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District.”

Encourage Sustainable Purchasing

“Huntingdonshire District Council will implement and follow a code of sustainable purchasing and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the District.”

Making Best Use of Land and Enhancing Landscape Diversity

“Huntingdonshire District Council will work to make more use of previously developed land and existing buildings, and use land more efficiently, to achieve sustainable growth – whilst maintaining the landscape value of the District”

3. Protecting & Improving the Environment

Improving air quality in Huntingdonshire

“Huntingdonshire District Council will minimise its own contributions to pollution arising from its activities and encourage similar good practice in households and businesses in the district.”

Minimising harm from contaminated or polluted land

“Huntingdonshire District Council will minimise the threat to health, controlled waters and/or the wider environment from land which is contaminated or polluted and ensure that where identified, appropriate remediation will be undertaken”

Protecting and enhance biodiversity

“Huntingdonshire District Council will encourage the management, enhancement and creation of green space for biodiversity, and promote appreciation of nature in partnership with community groups, households and businesses in the district.”

Increasing access to green space

“Huntingdonshire District Council acknowledges the importance of green space in contributing to the quality of life of those living & working in the District and supports the protection and enhancement of green spaces to encourage a diverse range of leisure and amenity uses.”

Improving the cleanliness of Huntingdonshire’s streets

“Huntingdonshire District Council will continue to maintain the cleanliness of our street to the highest possible standards and educate residents, households, communities and businesses in the district about how they can maintain clean streets.”

Creating a safer environment by reducing anti-social behaviour

“Huntingdonshire District Council will work to address anti-social behaviour in Huntingdonshire in partnership with the Police, the local people and other public agencies.”

From Nottingham to Huntingdonshire – A Declaration of our environmental commitment

The Nottingham Declaration is a voluntary pledge to address the issues of climate change. It represents a high level, broad statement of commitment that any council can make to its own community. The Declaration was originally launched in October 2003 at a conference in Nottingham and has now been signed by over 100 councils in the UK.

The Leader and Chief Executive of Huntingdonshire District Council signed the declaration on 2 February 2007 and confirmed our commitment to ensuring that tackling climate change is a cornerstone of the council's strategies.

Signing the declaration is an important starting point for developing the Environment Strategy and associated action plan.



If Huntingdonshire is to be at the forefront of environmental issues then we need to demonstrate community leadership on climate change and other environmental matters. Although we recognise the need to lead by example, tackling these environmental challenges is not something we can do alone.

The strategy will give strategic aims to be considered over a five-year period. It will be reviewed annually and our progress will be reported and published each year. This annual report will inform the development of the following year's action plan to ensure the strategy remains current and up to date.

To ensure the action plan and targets it sets out are both workable and achievable, all stakeholders in Huntingdonshire, the Council, businesses, community groups and householders, will need to be involved in its production.

By late spring 2007 a draft version of the strategy will have been produced for consultation with a variety of stakeholders including Anglian Water, The Wildlife Trust, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, and the East of England Development Agency amongst many other institutions working towards a better Huntingdonshire, that form the Environment Forum of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership.

Once we have integrated the relevant work of these agencies with the work of the Council and the aims and the strategy, we will then make it available for public consultation during summer 2007. The strategy at this stage should be a comprehensive action plan covering the work happening in Huntingdonshire over the next five years and also bring together and demonstrate current good environmental practice across Huntingdonshire. Through public consultation we hope to apply timescales and targets to the action plan based on what the public of Huntingdonshire see as their environmental priorities.

The end result, to be published in autumn 2007, should be a detailed but clear strategy and action plan involving organisations and residents across the district, which will have an impact on tackling the main environmental challenges faced by Huntingdonshire.