

# Environment and Sustainability Update, April 2024

Update from Environment and Sustainability Reference Group.  
(ESRG)



# Synopsis

The progress against the delivery of commitments in the Net Zero Carbon 2030 strategy will be reported on a quarterly basis through the council's Scrutiny function. The aim is to provide reporting of progress that is transparent, easily accessible to the community and ensures accountability to residents.

This report provides an up-to-date summary of overall progress and performance on the delivery of commitments set out in the Environment and Sustainability Action Plan.

The progress updates on commitments are organised according to the five different programme workstreams that are responsible for the delivery of actions. These workstreams are:



**Biodiversity**



**Housing (retrofit)**



**Community and  
Communications**



**Planning and Regulation**



## Corporate Action

# Notable tasks and projects

The following report is not a replacement for the adopted Environment and Climate Change Action Plan. Any new or revised actions agreed as a result of this update will be reflected in the action plan going forward. Once any potential next steps are agreed by the Group and/or Cabinet as applicable, timescales, resource implications, etc will be identified.

Workstream	Notable task or project	January 2024 update
Biodiversity	Increase tree cover	120-130 semi-mature trees have been received and are now planted in their locations onsite.
	Green Flag status	Green Flag management plans are currently being updated. Applications submitted for Abbey Gardens, Nowton Park, East Town Park, Brandon Country Park, West Stow & Aspal Close.  We have received further details of the October Field Wormwood plant ( <i>Artemisia campestris</i> ) survey undertaken by the Breckland Flora Group at College Heath Road. There are now 416 plants at the site, which is an increase from 41 in 2019.
	Green equipment	Abbey Gardens are investigating and completed the purchase of two electric powered Hayter lawnmowers.

<b>Communities and Communications</b>	Air quality community initiatives	<p>DEFRA updated advice on Bonfires on their webpage (clean air day in December references log burners).</p> <p>Great Barton Air Quality action plan (AQAP) update consultation launched 20 December 2023 and ended 22 January 2024. AQAP subsequently renewed.</p>
	Solar for business	2023/24 has been the most successful year for new solar installations with 2MW (5000 solar panels) installed to date. West Suffolk College was the main beneficiary.
	Reverse Vending Machines Pilot	<p>Trial launched on 9 February 2024 in Newmarket, where two of the machines are located (The Guineas shopping centre and Newmarket Leisure Centre). Two more machines are installed in Bury St Edmunds (one at West Suffolk College).</p> <p><a href="#">West Suffolk: trailblazer initiative to boost recycling</a></p>
	Reduce waste and improve recycling	<p>Glass – rebranded Christmas campaign started 8 December.</p> <p>Work ongoing with collection crews and housing associations to reduce contamination issues at communal properties.</p> <p>In January 2024, council got involved with 'Buy nothing new' month. Social media campaign by Keep Britain Tidy.</p>
	SCC Walking and Cycling funding	Suffolk County Council is leading on this initiative, and we are awaiting the completion of consultation analysis. A priority area for West Suffolk is "East to West", Bury St Edmunds.
	Community events	<p>In collaboration with Suffolk Community Partnership a community Networking Event was held in Bury St Edmunds in November. The events were for volunteer and environmental groups across to encourage networking and information sharing.</p> <p>The Environment Management Officer has been attending events held across west Suffolk inc. Go Green Events Hosted by West Suffolk College, Green Careers Event at Sybil Andrews Academy.</p>

<b>Corporate Action</b>	Green Travel Plan	Survey complete. New actions have been formulated based on the analysis.
	EV charging at depots	We continue to work with suppliers to reach an agreement on next steps. New supplier selected.
	Renewable Energy at Council sites	Results from the Sport England bid announced by February 2024 - Bury St Edmunds Leisure Council was awarded the £35,000
	Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund	As of 11 January, 12 applications received for LED conversion of parish council owned lights. Contractors engaged for commissioning assessments. The WSC grants are likely to cover over 1600 lights in total, and carbon dioxide savings from converting those lights is estimated at over 200 tonnes per year.
<b>Housing (retrofit)</b>	Retrofit programmes	420 properties have been upgraded with a grant investment total of £2.48 million in 2020.
	Housing Improvement Loans Scheme	Following up the request for a West Suffolk scheme and/or to build on the current schemes, a scoping document has been developed and includes a rationale and options appraisal.
<b>Planning and Regulatory</b>	Planning Application Checklist	<p>The Planning Application Checklist cannot be brought into force until there has been a review of the local validation requirements.</p> <p>Since the new year, the Planning team has been reviewing the local validation requirements with a view to consulting on a new list this year.</p> <p>As part of that review, we are looking at the design checklists, considering changes to building regulations, national policies, and the emerging local plan.</p>
	Local Plan	The Local Plan was agreed to move forward to pre-submission (Regulation 19) consultation at Full Council in December. The consultation was held between 30 January 2024 and 12 March 2024.

# Overall summary of progress

Overview of the progress on delivery of commitments set out in the Action Plan since the last report to Cabinet.

## Key progress highlights

- Preparations are now being made for Anglia in Bloom in 2024.
- Signage content and layout are currently being produced to update the current signage at Aspal Close Nature Reserve, Beck Row.
- A grass cutting review has been undertaken on the request of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The review has been finalised and is being distributed to Town and Parish Councils.
- The Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has been updated for a further five years, and a consultation completed on 22 January 2024. The responses are being analysed and the decision to renew will be brought to Cabinet on 6 February 2024.
- The Green Travel survey is complete, and responses have been analysed.
- Following the development of new signage at West Suffolk House, the Mildenhall Hub and Haverhill House, an intranet post was published to inform staff on correct recycling practices. The waste and recycling intranet page was also updated.
- The funding bid has been made to Sport England to cover various decarbonisation measures in our leisure centres. The results were announced in February 2024.
- Working with our partners, we are now promoting the Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Funder - [Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Funder – Green Suffolk](#)
- All eligible councils are now signed-up to take part in the Council's Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund to town and parish councils to convert their streetlights to LED. Next steps are the completion of grant agreements followed by retrospective grant payments and the commissioning of contractors.
- Guidance notes for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) have been published. Currently reviewing options.
- A total £18.5m has been awarded to deliver energy efficiency improvements to low-income households across all tenures in Suffolk. Summary of domestic retrofit progress for properties in West Suffolk:

Scheme	Grant spend	Number of properties upgraded	Number of measures
LAD1a	£485,700	50	50
LAD1b	£1,493,028	141	141
LAD2	£328,924	47	47
LAD3	£945,315.87	108	108
HUG1	£705,317.12	46	46
SHDF	£355,700.75	37	46
<b>Total</b>	£4,313,986	429	438

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