



ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Policy Summary

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that its operations impact the environment and is committed to minimising this impact both locally and globally. The Council aims to demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship while delivering high-quality services. The policy's overall intent is to act sustainably, safeguard the environment, and comply with all relevant environmental and climate change legislation, guidance, and best practice.

Policy Status	Approved
Responsible Officer	Claudia Cowie, Team Leader, Sustainability and Climate Change
Policy Sponsor	Ewan Wallace, Head of Service, Environment and Sustainability
Authorised By	Full Council Policy Committee
Policy Review Date	26/02/2031

1. Policy Statement

The Aberdeenshire Council Environment and Climate Change Policy was developed to directly support the council's strategic priorities of fostering a sustainable economy, building connected communities, and enabling residents to live well locally. These priorities are reflected in the policy's aims to reduce environmental impact, enhance resilience through adaptation, and promote sustainable practices across all council operations.

The policy is also grounded in compliance with all relevant environment and climate change legislation, guidance, and best practice principles. This includes statutory duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, among others. These legal frameworks require the council to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate risks, conserve biodiversity, and promote sustainable development.

By aligning with both strategic priorities and statutory requirements, the policy ensures that Aberdeenshire Council's environmental and climate actions are integrated with broader organisational goals and legal obligations, supporting a greener, fairer, and more resilient future for all.

Key Aims:

- **Reduce Environmental Impact:** Lower greenhouse gas emissions, conserve natural resources, enhance biodiversity, and protect cultural and historical assets.
- **Adaptation and Resilience:** Identify climate change risks and vulnerabilities, and embed adaptation measures to improve resilience.

- **Sustainable Resource Use:** Reduce energy, water, and natural resource consumption, supporting circular economy principles and zero waste.
- **Leadership and Influence:** Lead by example, raise awareness, and use influence to address environmental and climate change challenges.
- **Sustainable Planning and Procurement:** Deliver sustainable places through planning, promote sustainable procurement, and encourage innovative solutions.
- **Integrated Transport:** Develop sustainable transport solutions and travel plans for all stakeholders.
- **Education and Awareness:** Support educational establishments to embed sustainability and the natural world in the curriculum.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Set objectives, provide training and resources, and ensure ongoing improvement in environmental performance and climate action.
- **Promotion and Engagement:** Make the policy known to all staff, members, suppliers, contractors, partners, and the public.

The policy is designed to ensure Aberdeenshire Council acts as a responsible steward of the environment, taking evidence-informed action to reduce its environmental footprint, adapt to climate change, and improve quality of life for all residents, now and in the future. It commits the Council to continuous improvement, partnership working, and leadership in environmental and climate change matters, embedding sustainability across all its functions and services.

2. Scope of Policy

The policy is designed to have a broad and inclusive scope. This means the policy applies to everyone involved in the Council's operations, decision-making, and service delivery, as well as those working with or on behalf of the Council. It covers internal employees, leadership, external suppliers and contractors, collaborative partners, and is also communicated to the wider public to ensure transparency and shared responsibility.

The policy does not specify any exclusions or exceptions. The language used is inclusive and comprehensive, indicating that the policy's provisions are intended to apply universally across all relevant groups and individuals associated with Aberdeenshire Council.

3. Policy Principles & Equalities

Strategic Direction

This policy sets a clear strategic direction to act as a responsible and proactive public authority in addressing environmental challenges and climate change. The policy is designed to integrate sustainability into all council functions and services, ensuring that environmental, social, and economic considerations are embedded in decision-making processes across the short and long term.

Intended Outcomes

The implementation of this policy is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions across council buildings, transport, and operations.
- Enhanced climate resilience through adaptation planning and risk mitigation.
- Conservation and restoration of biodiversity, natural resources, and landscapes.
- Integration of circular economy principles and zero waste targets.
- Increased awareness and understanding of environmental and climate issues among staff, partners, and the public.
- Delivery of sustainable planning and procurement practices that support a wellbeing economy.
- Support for educational institutions to embed sustainability and nature-based learning.
- Continuous improvement in environmental performance through training, monitoring, and cross-service collaboration.
- Compliance with relevant environment and climate change legislation, guidance, and best practice principles.

Equality Duties Integration

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Fairer Scotland Duty, the development of this policy has actively considered and embedded equality throughout its process. This goes beyond the completion of an Integrated Impact Assessment and includes:

- Ensuring that climate actions do not disproportionately impact vulnerable groups and instead promote inclusive benefits.
- Applying an equity lens to adaptation planning, recognising that climate risks affect communities differently.
- Engaging stakeholders in policy development to reflect a broad range of experience and needs.
- Promoting access to sustainable transport, energy, and education in ways that reduce inequality and improve wellbeing for all residents.

This approach ensures that the policy not only meets statutory obligations but also contributes to a fairer, more resilient Aberdeenshire.

4. Supporting Policies and Documents

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

- [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)
- [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)
- [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)
- [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045](#)
- [The Waste \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#)

Council Strategies and Plans

- [Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2024 – 2029](#)
- [Route Map to 2030 and Beyond](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Council Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2025-2030](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2023](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2022 - 2027](#)
- [Joint Procurement Strategy](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023](#)
- [Transport and Travel Plans](#)
- [Place Policy](#)
- [Place Strategy](#)

Best Practice and National Guidance

- [Scottish Government Guidance on Public Sector Climate Duties](#)
- [Adaptation Scotland](#)
- [SEPA \(Scottish Environment Protection Agency\) Guidance](#)
- [Zero Waste Scotland Resources](#)
- [Public Health Scotland](#)

Internal Council Resources

Information and training resources are available on the Intranet to support officers and Members.

Council Strategic Priorities

The current [Council's Strategic Priorities](#):

Pillar	Priority	How does the policy reflect the Council's strategic Priorities?
<i>A sustainable economy</i>	<i>We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The policy commits the Council to minimising its environmental impact while delivering high-quality services, supporting a strong and diverse economy.• By reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving natural resources, and supporting circular economy principles and zero waste, the Council creates the conditions for sustainable economic growth and helps attract people of working age to the region.• The policy's focus on sustainable procurement and encouraging innovative solutions throughout the supply chain further supports economic resilience and diversity.
<i>Connected communities</i>	<i>We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The policy emphasises working constructively with partners and communities, ensuring that decision-making considers environmental, social, and economic aspects over both the short and long term.• It supports the development and implementation of integrated, sustainable transport solutions and travel plans that meet the needs of employers, employees, residents, and visitors, enhancing connectivity and resilience.• By raising awareness and understanding of environmental and climate change challenges, the policy empowers

communities to develop innovative, locally relevant solutions.

Living well locally

We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.

- The policy aims to improve the quality of life and well-being for all residents by protecting natural surroundings, enhancing biodiversity, and conserving cultural and historical assets.
- It supports educational establishments to embed the natural world and sustainable development across the curriculum, encouraging healthy, active, and informed lifestyles.
- The Council's commitment to continuous improvement in environmental performance and climate change action ensures that proactive choices are made to cater to the needs of all residents, including an ageing population.

5. Policy Revision

Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes
V1	26/02/2031	26/02/2026	None

6. Policy Distribution

Name	Designation	Organisation
Rob Simpson	Director of Business Services	Aberdeenshire Council
Alan Wood	Director of Infrastructure Services	Aberdeenshire Council
Laurence Findlay	Director of Education and Children's Services	Aberdeenshire Council
Leigh Jolly	Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership	Aberdeenshire Council
Vicky Morris	Risk & Resilience Team	Aberdeenshire Council