

Greener Living in Three Rivers

Sustainability Booklet

September 2021





Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council Sustainability Booklet

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Introduction

Welcome to Three Rivers' first sustainability booklet, produced together with Watford Borough Council and Watford and Three Rivers Friends of the Earth, to help you understand more about the environmental challenges we are all facing, and the actions you can take to safeguard our planet - both now and for future generations.

In 2019, [Three Rivers District Council \(TRDC\)](#) declared a Climate Emergency; committing to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 for its own emissions and assisting the District to achieve net-zero carbon by 2045 at the latest. The scientific evidence that climate change is happening is irrefutable, and while the effects are already devastating in some areas, this is only the beginning if we don't make significant changes now.

Limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C could avoid the worst social, economic and environmental impacts of climate change and safeguard the planet for future generations.

You can read our strategy here:

[Three Rivers Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy.](#)

This booklet focuses on those areas where we can make a positive impact - both in our homes and in how we live our lives.

However, this will require radical changes not only from all levels of government, but all levels of society too. We can't achieve our 2045 target without the help of our residents, businesses, partners and volunteers both within and beyond the district.

There are many steps everyone can take, both big and small, to help keep global temperature rise to a minimum, reduce the impact each of us have on our planet, and help nature recover.

Phil Williams,
Lead Member for Environmental Services,
Climate Change and Sustainability.

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"The future of humanity and indeed, all life on Earth, now depends on us. Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster on a global scale, our greatest threat in thousands of years: climate change. If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilisation and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon."

David Attenborough



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Water

Water in the home

Hertfordshire has been designated by the UK government as an area that is 'under serious water stress', and is considered to be one of the driest in the country.



Water companies abstract water from a variety of sources, including groundwater, aquifers and rivers. In Hertfordshire, some of our water comes from chalk streams. These rare habitats support a wide range of species, such as brown trout and water voles, which are sadly at risk due to over abstraction.

Affinity Water, our local supplier, is working to protect these streams, and in 2020 stopped abstracting water from two sites on the River Chess.

Did you know Hertfordshire residents' water consumption is 8% above the national average, at 153 litres per person per day?

What can I do?

The government target is for people to use 105 litres/person/day. Take a look at your water bill, calculate your daily usage, and follow the tips opposite to help reduce your water consumption.

In the Garden

- **Collect rainwater** for plant watering and car washing.
- Using a watering can, **water plants early in the morning or in the evening** when it is cooler.
- **Let your grass grow longer** in dry periods to trap dew. **Leave lawn cuttings on the lawn**, to return moisture and nutrients to the soil.
- **Choose plants that thrive in dry conditions and use mulches to retain moisture.**
- **Avoid dripping hoses** - use a trigger hose, to control water release.
- **Move containers and baskets into shady areas.**
- **Use containers made from glazed terracotta or wood.**
- **Add swell gel crystals to plant pots**, to help retain moisture in the soil.
- **Reduce the likelihood of local flooding** by using water-permeable materials in landscaping projects/driveways. Gravel or permeable block paving on drives allow water to percolate into the ground (whereas concrete, tarmac and standard block paving does not).
- To **help prevent sewage floods**, check that your roof water discharges into a soakaway and not your foul drain, and if it does, explore with an expert how this can be changed.

Sign up to the **Affinity Water Save Our Streams Campaign** ([SaveOurStreams.co.uk](https://www.saveourstreams.co.uk)) for advice and free water-saving devices.
Watch: Protecting our precious chalk streams

In the Bathroom

- **Turn off the tap while brushing teeth.**
- **Take four-minute showers.**
Apply for free timers and water-saving shower heads at www.savewatersavemoney.co.uk and [SaveOurStreams.co.uk](https://www.saveourstreams.co.uk)
- **Minimise baths** - each bath uses around 80 litres of water.
- **If you have a dual-flush toilet, use the half-flush button.** For lever-handle toilets, **install a Save a Flush device in the cistern** (which can save up to 5,000 litres a year).

In the Kitchen

- **Fix dripping taps** - www.watersafe.org.uk/approved-plumbers is a free online search facility for approved plumbers.
- **Ensure washing machines and dishwashers are completely full** before use.
- **Don't overfill** the kettle - use **only what you need.**
- **Water your plants with 'grey' water** (water previously used for washing).
- **Use washing-up water to rinse recyclables.**
- Ensure new appliances have a **good energy rating** - [energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-labels-are-changing-heres-what-you-need-to-know](https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-labels-are-changing-heres-what-you-need-to-know)
- **Use Eco settings** on appliances.

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Water

Waste water

Did you know that flushing wet wipes, nappies, sanitary items or even tissues (i.e. unflushables), can pollute our rivers? To protect our rivers, bin it – don't block it.

Heavy rain can cause sewer overflows, meaning unflushables are washed into waterways, and, as plastic, these take hundreds of years to break down.

That's why it's really important to only flush the 3 'P's
– **pee, poo and (toilet) paper.**

What can I do? Top tips:

There are loads of great reusable options that work brilliantly:

Wet-wipe alternatives:

- Reusable cotton face pads.
- Washable cloths.
- Cleansing foam – to moisten normal toilet paper.

There are also plenty of environmental options for sanitary products, **nappies**, tissues, cotton buds and other unflushables.

If using unflushables, dispose of them properly.



What are we doing about water?

TRDC is working with Thames Water, Affinity Water, the Environment Agency, Hertfordshire County Council (the Lead Flood Authority) and conservation groups to encourage protection and regeneration of chalk streams, address flooding from sewage and encourage reduction in consumption.

TRDC through the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust is restoring an area of the Gade for endangered water voles.

TRDC Draft Local Plan seeks to reduce water consumption, prevent water pollution and lower flood risks through robust planning policies for water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day.

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Energy

Most of the energy we use at home is generated from fossil fuels: coal, oil and gas. When burnt, they release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

We can all contribute to lowering the release of carbon dioxide by reducing our energy consumption, improving home energy efficiency, and switching to renewable energy. See **Ethical Consumer Magazine** for recommendations.

What are we doing about energy?


TRDC is managing a Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme for lower-income households in energy-inefficient homes. Under the scheme, residents can get energy efficiency upgrades, such as insulation, solar panels and low-carbon heating, worth up to £10,000, installed for FREE. www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/green-homes-grant

TRDC is also enabling more residents to access Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding by offering Flexible Eligibility Criteria, which broadens the scope of eligibility criteria to include low-income residents vulnerable to the cold or in fuel poverty.

Eligible residents can get ECO funding towards the cost of energy-efficient boilers and cavity-wall and loft insulation.

Find out more: www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/energy-company-obligation-eco/support-improving-your-home

What can I do? Energy-saving tips:

-  Turn off lights when you leave the room.
-  Use LED light bulbs.
-  Dial down the thermostat.
-  Wash clothes on low heat and dry washing outdoors.
-  Switch to energy-efficient appliances.
-  Reuse and repair.
-  Unplug devices when not in use.
-  Home developments:
 - Improve insulation.
 - Install double or triple glazing.
 - Look at alternatives to gas boilers, such as heat pumps.
 - If buying a new home, ensure it has a **Home Quality Mark**.

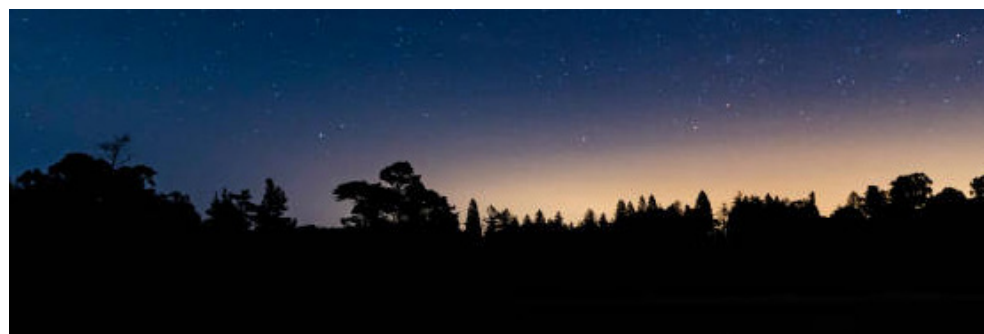
Energy

Light pollution



Light pollution means many of us will have never gazed up at a dark sky. Artificial light at night has negative, and sometimes lethal, effects on many nocturnal species, upsetting their natural foraging, breeding, navigation and sleep-wake behaviours. Just 22% of England has night skies completely free of light pollution.

Fortunately, light pollution is easy to reverse – by ensuring outdoor lighting is well-designed and used only where and when needed. Help our wildlife, see more stars, get better sleep, save energy and money, and cut your carbon footprint – turn the lights out!



Light to protect the night Five principles for responsible outdoor lighting:



Useful

All light should have a clear purpose.

Before installing or replacing a light, determine if light is needed. Consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and the environment. Consider using reflective paints or self-luminous markers for signs, curbs, and steps to reduce the need for permanently installed outdoor lighting.



Targeted

Light should be directed only to where needed.

Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of the light beam so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.



Colour

Use warmer colour lights where possible.

Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light to the least amount needed.



Low Light Levels

Light should be no brighter than necessary.

Use the lowest light level required. Be mindful of surface conditions as some surfaces may reflect more light into the night sky than intended.



Controlled

Light should be used only when it is useful.

Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.

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Food



Meat and dairy production creates more carbon dioxide emissions than crop production, so switching to a more plant-based diet is a great way to help tackle climate change.

In addition, when food is wasted, it's also a waste of other resources, such as water, labour, energy, manufacturing, packaging, and transportation.

Did you know?

In the UK, the average family throws away 22% of their weekly shop, worth £730 per year.



What are we doing about food?

TRDC collect food waste weekly and convert it into electricity and fertiliser at a local Anaerobic Digestion plant.









Hertfordshire WasteAware is working on a new campaign to tackle food waste.

TRDC collect food waste is collected weekly and transported to an Anaerobic Digestion plant in Hertfordshire where the food is broken down and converted into electricity and fertiliser. Each year, the facility produces enough energy to power around 6,000 average sized homes, creating the net greenhouse benefit of taking 2,000 cars off the road. You can find out more about the process on our [website](#).

Unfortunately, a recent composition analysis revealed that over 23% of the waste we put in our refuse bin is edible food waste - that's food that could have been eaten and is often still in its packaging.

What can I do? **Top tips:**

Find out your diet's carbon footprint using the [BBC's own Carbon Calculator](#).

-  **Increase plant-based meals:** aim for one or two meat and fish-free days a week to start.
-  **Reduce dairy consumption, switch to organic and try oat milk as an alternative.** See the following sites for more ideas and information:
 - www.soilassociation.org
 - www.pastureforlife.org
 - sustainablefoodtrust.org/key-issues/sustainable-healthy-diets/how-to-eat-sustainably
-  **Grow your own fruit and vegetables or join a community-based project.**
-  **Help protect the marine environment by eating less seafood, and purchasing from a responsible source.**
-  **Use your local council provided food bin or a compost bin for inedible waste.**
-  **Minimise waste:**
 - Use leftovers and share food you can't use with friends, charities, and food banks.
 - Use a food-waste app, as reviewed in this Marie Claire [article](#).
 - [Random Cafe](#) in Watford helps residents reduce waste and make our food system more sustainable.
-  **Use odd bits of vegetables to make stock or soups.**
-  **Shop local, shop ethical, eat in season:**
 - Most ethical retailers minimise plastic use and transport emissions. Check out [Ethical Consumer magazine](#) for more.
 - Buy in season to reduce long-distance transportation.

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Clothing and Textiles



'Fast fashion' is designed, manufactured and marketed quickly and cheaply, causing 15.1 million tonnes of textile waste each year, and much of which is plastic.

Microfibres are also released when washing fabrics made from plastic (i.e. polyester) which is leading to polluted soil, waterways and oceans.

What can I do?

Top tips:

- Buy second-hand or swap with friends or at a swishing event.
- Find brands you love that are aligned with your values:
 - www.fashionrevolution.org
 - www.stylewithheart.com
- Think: "Will I wear it at least 30 times?"
- Only buy items that you can use all year round.
- Donating or selling unwanted clothes helps others to be more sustainable. Try a one-in-one-out policy.
- Look after your clothes so they stay their best for longer, and try to repair them.
- Buying better quality is likely to cost you less over time.
- Spend your money on items you will wear every day. Think about hiring 'special occasion' wear.

What are we doing about clothing?

Hertfordshire WasteAware is working with local councils to tackle fast fashion and is running future 'Swishing' events where you can swap unwanted clothes. If you would like to hold a swishing event, find out more [here](#).



Learn more / book a free textiles collection in Three Rivers [here](#).

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Waste



Our throw-away culture cannot continue. If everyone consumed at the same rate as us in the UK, we would need 2.8 earths to sustain ourselves.

Three Rivers residents had the highest recycling rate in England – recycling, composting, and reusing 64.1% of their household waste in 2019/20.

Herts recycled an average of 52.3%, with over 85% processed in the UK in 2019/20.

What can I do? **Top tips:**

- Before you buy, stop and think: Do you really need it? Can you borrow it? Buy second-hand? Buy a more sustainable option?
- Choose lower-waste options when shopping, and **remember your reusables.**
- Think about 'hidden' waste – **nappies** and **period products** are full of plastics too!
- Recycle everything you can. Use the **Recycle Now recycling locator.**
- Visit or follow **Herts WasteAware** for tips and updates.



Remember the 6 Rs - rethink, reduce, refuse, reuse, repair and recycle.
Reduce, refuse, and reuse are always first, recycling should be a last resort!



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Transport

Did you know that air pollution, linked to vehicle use, is the largest environmental health risk we face today? Every year, air pollution causes up to 36,000 deaths in the UK. In Hertfordshire, 70% of our personal journeys are made by car.

What can I do? **Top tips:**



Replace local car journeys – the government has stated 50% of all journeys in towns and cities should be cycled or walked by 2030.

- Living Streets is the UK charity for everyday walking. They offer guidance on how to get walking and campaign for safer streets.
- Spokes, the local cycle club for SW Herts, encourage cycling, organise rides and campaigns for safer routes.
- Use public transport, cycle or walk - here are some useful links to help plan your low-carbon journey:

• [Transport for London \(TfL\)](#)
• [City Mapper](#)

• [Google Maps](#)
• [Cycling UK](#)



Change the way you use your car.

- When replacing a car consider if hybrid or electric alternative could work for you.
- The government's [Electric Vehicle Home Charge Scheme](#) provides grants towards the cost of installing a home charger.
- Look for the shortest routes.
- Don't leave the engine on when parked.



Reduce use of delivery vans.

- Shop local.
- Group online purchases and deliveries.
- Look out for suppliers who are piloting low-carbon delivery, e.g. delivery robots.



Leavesden Cycle Hub offering cycle repair services, maintenance courses and cycle training.

What are we doing **about transport?**

Our sustainable travel programmes include: Better Buses, Walking and Cycling, Sustainable Travel Planning, Parking Management and Streetscape Improvement. **TRDC** is:

- Promoting and supporting Travel Plans that encourage homeworking, shared mobility and new forms of travel (e.g. hydrogen and electric).
- Encouraging the delivery of low-carbon transport infrastructure, including requiring the provision of electric vehicle charging points in new developments.
- Expanding and encouraging EV charging infrastructure. [Find further information here.](#)

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Biodiversity

Around 20% of Hertfordshire species are at risk of extinction, according to the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust State of Nature Report 2020. And globally there has been a 68% decline in our planet's wildlife populations since 1970, according to the World Wildlife Fund's 2020 Living Planet report.

What can I do?

Top tips:

At Home

- **Use environmentally friendly cleaning products.**
- **Buy local and seasonal, visit farmers' markets.**
- **Put a bell on your cat** – cats kill around 55 million UK songbirds annually.

In the Garden

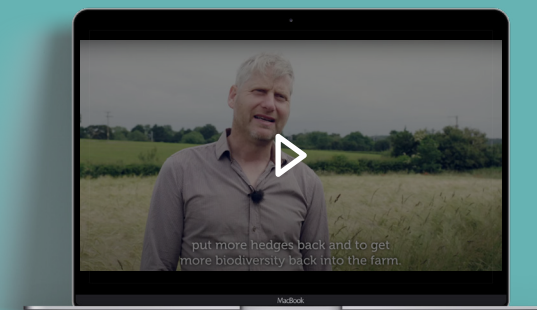
- **Avoid pesticides.** Use organic, nature-friendly products.
- **The 'No Dig' method** of gardening keeps carbon in the soil.
- **Make your own compost or always buy peat-free.**
- **Reduce lawn-mowing frequency.**
- **Support bees** – sow wildflowers and native plants. Make a bee hotel. (www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-make-bee-hotel)
- **Grow your own flowers, fruit and vegetables.**
- **Plant a tree** in your garden and join local tree-planting projects.
- **Create a wildlife corridor** by cutting small holes in your fences to allow small mammals like hedgehogs to travel.
- **Put out nuts, seeds and fat balls for birds.**

What are we doing
about Biodiversity?

- **Croxley Parish Council** is planting a wildflower meadow in Croxley Green as a pilot project during 2021.
- **TRDC** trialled reduced mowing in Spring 2021. Watch a [video](#) with the Council's Principal Tree and Landscape Officer, Alex Laurie.
- **TRDC** has commissioned studies to determine exactly what biodiversity exists across the areas which will establish opportunities for nature and where to create new corridors for wildlife.
- **Fund4Trees**, founded by local biologist, Russell Ball, educates the public about the protection and improvement of trees. Contact Russell to arrange a talk in your local school or to join a sponsored cycle ride.
- **Woodoaks Farm**, which is being farmed for nature, is trying to reverse a decline in wildlife needs your support to increase hedgerows across the farm.



The Environment Bill which is going through Parliament at present, will require all new developments across South West Hertfordshire to deliver a **10% net gain for biodiversity** whether on the actual site or in other local wildlife projects.



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Business

Larger businesses often have sustainability strategies. If you are part of a smaller business help is on hand with grants and advice on how you can green your business.

Low-carbon workspaces Grants

Go green and reap the benefits of a grant.
Often one of the biggest barriers to moving further forward with major energy efficiencies is the cost of technology.

With a match-funded grant of between £1,000 - £5,000 you can recover up to a third of the cost of many different energy-saving measures reducing the upfront cost and the time to recover your investment.

Visit www.lowcarbonworkspaces.co.uk



Save Money



Improve Working Environment



Drive Innovation



Cut Energy Usage



Increase Productivity



Boost Eco-Credentials



Reduce Carbon Footprint



Engage Staff

Eastern New Energy (ENE) Growing a low-carbon economy in the East of England



ENE provides support services and workshops which are **free of charge** to a range of business types and organisations to achieve their goal of creating jobs and growing the local, low-carbon economy across the East of England.

This includes advice, energy and carbon reviews, grant funding and setting pathways to net zero.

- They work with:
- Small and Medium Enterprises
 - Building and Construction Industry
 - Vehicle Fleet Operators
 - Local Authorities and Other Public Services
 - Parish and Town Councils
 - Community Group and Organisations

www.uel.ac.uk/sri/eastern-new-energy/who-we-can-help

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Environmental Community Groups

In Three Rivers and Watford

Friends of Chorleywood Common

The principal objectives of the Friends of Chorleywood Common are to conserve and safeguard the Common for the future.

Friends of the Earth Watford & Three Rivers

Creating a safer climate, flourishing nature, and healthy air, water and food, now and for future generations. We campaign for change in our community to make a difference to the environment locally, nationally and globally.

H.E.A.R.T. Community Group

We are a Herts residents' group who believe that we are facing existential threats brought about by climate change and other associated predicaments. We are committed to contributing to local community resilience, both practically and emotionally.

Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

The leading voice for wildlife conservations across the area, taking practical action every day to help wildlife flourish.

Horticultural Society

Not sure how to grow vegetables, plants... most areas have a local horticultural society whose members have years of experience and are happy to share their knowledge. Look for local details on the Internet.

Green Watford

Green Watford is a collaboration space for individuals and groups based in Watford, Three Rivers and Herts to come together to make our area more sustainable. The Green Watford website is formed to support the many individuals, groups and organisations that are working towards a greener and more climate-friendly area.
www.greenwatford.uk

Oxhey Village Environment Group

A residents' group run by volunteers since 1974 to maintain, protect and enhance the character and environment of Oxhey Village and its surroundings.

River Chess Association

Formed to protect and enhance the River Chess for future generations.

RSPB Chorleywood & District

RSPB local groups are a great way to meet friendly, like-minded people in your area while learning more about birds and wildlife.

Sustainable Three Rivers

Founded by a group of local residents to help people in Three Rivers to make lifestyle changes to protect the planet; encourage local residents to influence government on climate action; and kickstart new community events. Follow [@sustainable3r](#) on Instagram and [@Sustainable3R](#) on Twitter.

SW Herts Cycling Group

Encouraging cycling by organising rides and campaigning for better and safer cycling routes.

The Soil Association is managing a local farm and has plans to turn it into a model of biodiversity good practice with community involvement. Find out more [here](#).

Sustainable South West Herts

Join this Facebook community to find out about local events, issues and actions across SW Herts.
www.facebook.com/groups/sustainablesouthwestherts



Eco Office Audits available for Three Rivers Community Groups
Email: research@ig-cic.org.uk to obtain a free and personalised guide to help your organisation become more sustainable.

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In Partnership with

AffinityWater



SUSTAINABLE THREE RIVERS



Friends of
the Earth
Watford and
Three Rivers