

# Durham County Council's Environmental Statement

Durham County Council recognises the importance of striving for and maintaining a high-quality environment and our responsibility towards it as being an integral part of our organisational duties and core values. We will therefore:

- Actively identify and take opportunities to improve environmental quality and outcomes throughout our activities;
- Reduce the environmental impact of our activities, operating methods and production and consumption of resources;
- Regularly monitor and report on environmental indicators and continually improve our environmental performance;
- Ensure environmental impacts and sustainability are understood and embedded within our decision-making processes, policies, strategies, projects and working practices;
- Comply with and endeavour to exceed all relevant certification standards, accreditations and regulatory requirements;
- Take a lead role on critical issues such as climate change, single-use plastic reduction, declines in biodiversity and ensuring a green, inclusive and resilient Covid 19 recovery;
- Contribute to tackling other global challenges we face as defined by the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- Raise awareness of and encourage environmentally positive behaviours and best practice among employees, members, partners, those we commission work to, residents and our communities; and
- Work with and support others to protect, improve and connect County Durham's natural environment and natural capital.

## **Responsibility:**

Durham County Council's Cabinet and Corporate Management Team have overall, collective responsibility for the Council's Environmental Policy. The Net Zero Carbon Board will oversee and review its implementation. All employees, including those that work within schools and arm's length organisations are to abide by its principles, including when determining any locally specific environmental guidelines and when working with partners.

## **Key Principles:**

- **Climate Emergency** - All service areas and staff are responsible for responding to the climate emergency in their area of work in order to meet or exceed emission reduction targets, raise awareness of the climate emergency and ensure that we are best able to respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- **Sustainable Procurement** – The Council's commissioning and procurement activity will be undertaken in an economically, environmentally and socially responsible manner, taking into account whole life impacts and benefits of the contract along with the environmental and ethical credentials of suppliers.
- **Resources** - The Council will proactively seek to avoid and minimise unnecessary resource consumption as a key part of its decision making and operational practices. Where resources, such as energy, water, minerals etc are required, these will be managed sustainably and will be kept in use for as long as possible, abiding by 'circular economy' principles.

- **Waste** – The Council will avoid and minimise waste by encouraging employees, members suppliers, businesses and our residents to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost.
- **Sustainable Design and Construction** – The Council will adhere to sustainability principles to ensure that the location, orientation, construction methods and materials, ongoing maintenance, refurbishment, operation and demolition of its buildings and infrastructure minimises impact on the natural and built environment and maximises resource efficiency. All new buildings will need to meet the requirements of the County Durham Plan and comply with the standards set out in all other relevant internal policy and guidance. The Council will seek to achieve the same standards for major refurbishments projects where viable.
- **Natural Capital** - The council will seek to protect and enhance natural capital, across its estate, highways, woodlands, green and blue spaces and within decision making, ensuring that net gains in biodiversity are achieved, the most environmentally beneficial management regimes are adopted and pollution is prevented.
- **Transport and Air Quality** - The council will work to reduce the environmental impacts of staff travel and seek innovative, sustainable solutions to travel and travel avoidance around the county, including the adoption of smarter working practices. Where travel is necessary, we will work to reduce the impacts from our own vehicle fleet and the use of officers' cars for business travel, including supporting the uptake of electric vehicles, bikes and roll out of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle charging infrastructure. The Council will also seek to embed walking, cycling and public transport use into County Durham's everyday travel culture and will pay particular attention to the implementation of measures within Air Quality Management Areas.
- **Festivals and Events** – The council will be leaders in festival and event environmental responsibility, ensuring that we, organisers, traders and attendees comply with standards relating to marketing and promotion, waste reduction, reuse and recycling, sources of power, travel, food, pollution prevention and protection of public amenity and biodiversity.
- **Culture** - The council will involve staff and members in the implementation of this policy for greater environmental accountability and improved performance. Staff and members will be provided with relevant environmental training and will be engaged through regular communication, sharing of performance information and activity. We will also work with suppliers, contractors, sub-contractors and our partners to encourage their environmental performance and will actively engage with our residents and communities to encourage and facilitate environmentally positive behaviour. This policy will be reviewed at least once annually in consultation with staff and other stakeholders where necessary.

**Signed:**

**Durham County Council - Cabinet**

**Durham County Council – Corporate Management Team**

