

Councillor Neil Reeve, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

Report to Full Council – Tuesday, 22 July 2025

Climate Change

Climate Action Updates:

Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) – published

- In July the [Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) has been published.
- The LNRS is a statutory requirement and is a tool to drive nature recovery action and bring about benefits for nature and the wider environment.
- Delivering local action on nature recovery in Uttlesford will bring multiple benefits such as:
 - carbon capture
 - absorption of water to reduce flooding
 - protection soil of quality and agricultural production
 - provision of spaces for nature and wildlife
- The Essex Local Nature Recovery Partnership will be launching a small grants fund available to local groups to assist with nature recovery at a community level.

Climate Change Scorecards – UDC most improved Council

- UDC has been recognised as a ‘most improved’ council in the latest Climate Emergency UK Action Scorecards.
- The scorecards rank all UK local authorities on how they are tackling climate change and is an independent assessment across seven key areas: buildings, planning, transport, governance, biodiversity, waste and community engagement.
- We showed strong improvements in several sections including a huge 45% increase in biodiversity – this was the joint second highest improvement of any council in the UK.
- Overall, Uttlesford scored 47%, which is a 19% improvement on our scores from 2023 and the best score of any council in Essex.

London Road Retrofit Project – Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)

- Confirmation of the successful UDC bid was received in March and the project is now in the first stage of delivery which includes a full design review and preparation of documents for listed building and planning approvals.
- The decarbonisation project at London Road includes installation of building fabric and energy efficiency measures including: insulation-draught proofing; roof insulation; secondary glazing; installation of Air Source Heat Pumps, and a small number of solar PV panels.
- We expect to be at the procurement stage for this project in the autumn.

Sustainable Uttlesford Events

- More than 70 people attended the launch of the new community collaboration Sustainable Uttlesford, which was held on 9th April at Canfield.
- Following the launch, on 11th June Sustainable Uttlesford held a joint event with the Roding and West Essex Farm Cluster, who hosted both farmers and Sustainable Uttlesford members at Bury Farm, Canfield. The evening included inspiring nature walks led by RSPB and EWT with the aim of sharing how to identify and record species.
- Work has commenced on design and development of the Sustainable Uttlesford web site including an Uttlesford community project directory which will launch shortly.
- The latest Sustainable Uttlesford newsletter is available to view [here](#).

DEFRA Clean Air Project Saffron Walden – Summer Community Cycling Events

- In June the Climate Change team held two community cycling events in Saffron Walden, to promote active travel, enable bike ‘try outs’ from our hire schemes, and encourage and boost confidence to cycle on the road
- On Sunday, 15th June, more than 60 cyclists participated in a family-friendly bike ride around the town – this was our second annual community cycling event, and it was wonderful to see so many families out enjoying the day together.
- June saw our best month to date for the [App Bike Hire scheme](#) in Saffron Walden with a 13% growth in monthly rentals compared to May. This made it the strongest month since the launch in April 2024, with rentals for the month at 501.
- Total trips since the bike hire scheme launch are now at 4,577. 34 e-bikes are available for hire across 10+ locations in the town and the scheme has recently been expanded to include Littlebury village. The most popular journey is between Saffron Walden and Audley End rail station.

Uttlesford Clean Air Schools Project – Anti Idling Events

- Officers are working with MP Smarter travel to deliver a school engagement & education project with 10 schools from across the district. To raise awareness about levels of air pollution and support mode shift - delivered via assemblies, surveys, anti-idling events and completing a school travel plan.
- During June several of the schools have been hosting anti-idling events including Dunmow St Mary’s Primary, where year 6 pupils at the school approached drivers idling near the school gates, encouraging them to turn off their engines, raising awareness about the dangers of air pollution.

Air Quality update

Air Quality Strategy

Members may recall the Essex Air Quality Consortium, made up from 12 District, Borough and City Councils as well as Essex County Council have championed the development of an Essex Wide Air Quality Strategy. A public consultation on the draft strategy ran from January to March this year.

The final and amended strategy will be presented to the next Essex Chief Executives Forum and following this, a report will be prepared in the coming months to determine whether the strategy is something that UDC would like to endorse, support or adopt.

Annual Status Report

Members are reminded that each year the Council is required to prepare an Annual Status report on air quality within the district. The report fulfils the Councils statutory duty to review and assess AQ and serves to provide the public with information on measures taken to raise awareness. Currently the report is in draft form and will be sent to DEFRA and published on the Councils website in the coming weeks. Key findings of the report include:

UDC measured no exceedances of Air Quality Objectives

UDC measured PM_{2.5} concentrations demonstrate were aligned with DEFRA background PM_{2.5} mapping. Both report a decline in levels for 2024 and are below the Environment Act (2021) annual mean concentration of 10µg/m³.

Measured concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide continue to fall, and there is a downwards trend of measured PM₁₀ pollution.

Environmental Services Update:

Small waste electrical items

Finally, we have launched a new kerbside collection service for small electrical items across the district . This will enable us to collect items and take them to be recycled, reducing useful materials going to landfill.

Waste services transformation programme workshop

Members received an update on upcoming regulatory changes and how these are likely to affect future design and performance of recycling and waste services, on Tuesday.

This interactive session gave members an opportunity to test their recycling and waste knowledge, and to affirm their ambitions to be a UK leader in environmental performance and innovation providing easy to access services.

A copy of the slides has been saved in the Member Sharepoint Training folder. The next session will be in September, where members will help to shape how we engage with residents and communities to inspire and enable waste reduction and increased recycling.