

Document control Number	ALL-POL-001-02		
Document Name:	Sustainability and Climate Change Policy		
Date 1st Issued:	1 st April 2015	Latest Issue Date:	March 2026
Issued By:	N. McCormick	Approved by Council:	10 February 2026

Document Control

Policy Title	Sustainability and Climate Change Policy
Policy Reference	ALL-POL-002
Version	03
Policy Summary	The Sustainability and Climate Change Policy give a commitment that the Council will carry out its activities and operate in a manner which minimises any possible negative climate change impacts, and states that the principles of sustainable development will be incorporated throughout all Ards and North Down Borough Council activities.
Source/Author(s)	Climate Change and Sustainability Manager
Date of Equality and Sustainability Screening Panel	Previously screened (269) 15 April 2022
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Next Review Date	August 2030
Officer Responsible for Review	Climate Change and Sustainability Manager
Any Other Information	This policy can be provided in alternative formats if needed in relation to language or disability.

Revision History:

Date	Changes Made	Version
<i>9 November 2021</i>		2
<i>02 December 2025</i>	<i>Policy summary updated Legislation updated Language updated Structure revised</i>	3

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Sustainability and Climate Change Policy

Introduction

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to creating a sustainable, resilient, and low-carbon future for the borough. This policy sets out our approach to sustainability and climate change, and how we will meet our legal duties and support a fair and just transition for everyone.

Policy Summary

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to reducing its impact on the environment. We will lead by example, deliver high-quality services, and take action to prevent pollution, cut waste and greenhouse gas emissions, and use less energy and water.

We aim to follow all relevant environmental and climate change laws, guidance, and best practice. As part of our commitment, we will protect the environment and our outstanding natural landscapes, including internationally recognised sites such as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). To respond to climate change, we will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and take steps to prepare for current and future impacts. We will protect natural resources, enhance biodiversity, and help improve quality of life and wellbeing for everyone in the borough.

We will begin by changing how we work within the Council by reducing our environmental footprint and making our services more sustainable. We will also work with external partners to support sustainable development. This means making balanced decisions that take account of social, economic, and environmental needs, so we can protect the public interest over the long term.

Requirements for Policy

Ards and North Down Borough Council operates an ISO 14001 certified Environmental Management System, which requires us to have a formal Environmental Policy to continually improve our environmental performance.

We are also legally required to comply with the NI Climate Change Act, the Duty for Sustainable Development, the Biodiversity Duty, and any future environmental or sustainability legislation introduced in Northern Ireland.

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The Council has shown strong leadership on these issues. In February 2019, we formally declared a Climate Emergency. Since then, we have developed and since reviewed our Roadmap to Sustainability, which sets out how we will reduce our environmental impact, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and build a more sustainable future for everyone in the borough. This Roadmap is supported by other strategies and action plans that work collectively to reduce negative environmental impacts.

This Policy has been devised to address all climate change, sustainability, biodiversity, supply chain, communication, digitization and environmental requirements.

Who does this policy apply to

This policy applies to all Council employees, Elected Members, external contractors, visitors, service users and all people and organisations using council facilities.

Legal and Policy Framework

Our approach is guided by:

- **Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022** – including duties to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- **Section 25 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006**– including the duty to promote sustainable development.
- **The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014** – requiring community planning to improve social, economic, and environmental wellbeing.
- **Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011** – includes a duty to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity.
- **Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan (2024)** – setting regional goals and actions across six objectives.

We also support the *Just Transition Principle* — ensuring climate action is fair and leaves no one behind.

Compliance with the Duty for Sustainable Development	The principal legal requirement for this policy is the Duty for Sustainable Development contained within Section 25 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006. This places a statutory duty on district councils to promote the achievement of sustainable development.
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Our Commitment to Sustainable Development

We define sustainability as meeting the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It

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means protecting our natural resources, supporting our communities, and making sure our decisions are socially fair and economically responsible.

A healthy environment is essential for the wellbeing of our economy and society. Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to putting sustainability at the heart of everything we do.

To deliver on this commitment, the Council will:

- **Support healthy, sustainable lives** by working with local communities through our Community Plan, community development activities, and engagement programmes.
- **Use the Local Development Plan (LDP)** to help protect and improve the environment for future generations. The LDP will promote sustainable development, encourage walking, cycling and public transport, support green spaces and infrastructure, and avoid building in flood-risk areas. It will also include planning policies that support renewable energy and reflect local needs.
- **Promote local prosperity, fairness, and social value**, including support for equal opportunities and fair trade.
- **Consider sustainability and climate impacts** when developing new policies or activities. This means thinking about how we can reduce emissions (mitigation) and how we can prepare for the effects of climate change (adaptation), for both the Council and our residents.
- **Encourage a more sustainable food system** by using our buying power and community links to promote healthy, seasonal, and local food. We will help reduce food waste and support community growing projects where possible.
- **Include sustainable design** in all major construction and refurbishment projects from the very beginning—at both the business case and design stages.
- **Monitor and manage our use of natural resources** and lead by example in promoting sustainability.
- **Expect contractors and partners** working on our behalf to meet the same sustainability standards we set for ourselves.
- **Keep Council staff and elected members informed** about key sustainability and climate change issues.
- **Regularly report on our progress** in delivering our sustainability and climate change actions.

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Assessing Sustainability

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to screening the social, economic, and environmental impact of the work we do. This helps us understand where there could be negative effects. If any issues are found during this check, we will review the activity and may make changes or add safeguards before it goes ahead.

We will assess the sustainability impact of all new policies, plans and activities, including:

- New strategies
- Events
- Building or construction projects
- Changes to public spaces
- Community consultations
- The Community Plan
- New projects or initiatives
- Choosing where to build new infrastructure
- Changes to how we deliver services
- How we manage Council buildings and land
- Supply Chain procurement

This list is not exhaustive, and any other identified activity should also be considered and assessed for its impact on sustainability. The Local Development Plan will be supported by a Sustainability Appraisal, which includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Integrating Sustainability

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to meeting all legal requirements and following best practice on sustainability, the environment, and climate change. **This includes complying with the Northern Ireland Climate Change Act**, the Biodiversity Duty, the Duty for Sustainable Development, and any other relevant legislation and guidance.

Our Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision of "A Sustainable Borough." We are committed to delivering this vision by making sure sustainability is a central part of all our strategies, policies, and service plans.

The Council's Roadmap to Sustainability is our main strategy for embedding sustainability and tackling climate change across everything we do. It ensures that sustainability and climate action are built into decision-making at every level of the organisation.

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Supporting the Global Sustainable Development Goals

In June 2018, the Council formally agreed to support and promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This commitment is now embedded in our Roadmap to Sustainability.

We understand that local progress cannot happen without also protecting the planet. Our economy and society depend on healthy natural resources and ecosystems. That is why we are committed to managing the balance between social, economic, and environmental factors in everything we do – from planning and decision-making to service delivery.

Responding to the Climate and Nature Emergency

The Council recognises that action is needed to respond to the climate and nature emergency. We are determined to play our part in the global effort to meet the goals of the UN Paris Agreement, by reducing carbon emissions and supporting the shift to a sustainable, low-carbon future.

The Council formally agreed to support and promote the UN Goals in June 2018.

Compliance with the NI Climate Change Act	<p>The Northern Ireland Climate Change Act 2022 sets legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the impacts of climate change.</p> <p>As required by the Act, the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has developed a Climate Action Plan that sets out how we will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to achieving net zero by 2050. • Has prepared a Climate Adaptation Plan to assess climate risks and outline how we will adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change. • Has developed a mechanism to monitor and report progress to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), demonstrating how we are delivering on our statutory climate obligations. <p>The Council recognises its role in helping to deliver a just transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future, and will ensure that climate action is integrated into decision-making and service delivery in line with the Act.</p>
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**Understanding
Climate Impacts**

Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature, rainfall, sea levels, and extreme weather caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

Our response focuses on two areas:

- **Mitigation** – reducing emissions and increasing carbon storage.
- **Adaptation** – preparing for and responding to the impacts of climate change.

Compliance with the Duty for Biodiversity	<p>The Duty to Conserve Biodiversity is contained within Section 1 of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. This places a statutory duty on public bodies, including district councils, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions.</p> <p>Ards and North Down Borough Council will integrate the protection and enhancement of biodiversity across all its activities, ensuring that biodiversity is considered in decision-making, land management, service delivery, and community engagement.</p>
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**Understanding
natural capital**

Natural capital refers to the natural resources and ecosystems—like forests, wetlands, and coastlines—that provide essential services such as clean air, carbon storage, and flood protection. By protecting and enhancing natural capital, Ards and North Down Borough Council can meet its climate change and sustainable development obligations, helping to cut emissions, build resilience, support biodiversity, and improve quality of life for local communities.

Environmental Management System: Required ISO 14001	<p>Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to protecting the environment by continually improving how we operate and by preventing pollution from our services and activities.</p>
Environmental Performance	<p>We use an Environmental Management System (EMS), certified to ISO 14001, to help us manage and reduce our environmental impacts.</p> <p>Through this system, we will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set realistic and measurable goals to improve our environmental performance, supported by an action plan. 2. Regularly review this policy to make sure it reflects what we do and continues to be effective.

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We are committed to protecting the environment by:

1. Reduce **greenhouse gas emissions** and use nature-based solutions to help meet our climate change obligations and support a more sustainable, resilient borough.
2. Reduce the amount of **waste** we produce. Where this is not possible, we will reuse or recycle waste and make sure any remaining waste is disposed of safely.
3. Use **natural resources** such as water, fuel, and energy responsibly, and promote good environmental practices across the organisation.
4. Limit the release of **pollutants** into the air, land, and water wherever possible.
5. Reduce the environmental impact of the **goods and services** we buy, and work with suppliers and contractors to help them improve their environmental performance too.

Legal Requirements (Environmental)

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to fully complying with all relevant environmental laws, regulations, and requirements — and, where possible, going beyond them by applying best practice.

We maintain a dedicated Environmental Legal Register as part of our ISO 14001-accredited Environmental Management System; to help us stay up to date with legal obligations and ensure we continue to meet or exceed them.

Monitoring Environmental Compliance

The Council will monitor compliance with environmental laws and standards through its Environmental Management System (EMS). This will include regular audits, collect environmental data, and record any incidents where we do not meet the required standards.

The EMS will also be independently audited by a qualified external company to ensure it meets the requirements of ISO 14001 certification.

Related Environmental Information

The following documents are part of the Council’s Environmental Management System and help us put this policy into action:

- **Environmental Legislation Register** – keeps track of all relevant environmental laws and regulations
- **Environmental Aspects Register** – identifies the environmental impacts of the Council’s activities

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- **Environmental Audit Reports** – record the findings of internal and external environmental audits
- **Environmental Corrective Action Database** – tracks actions taken to address any issues or areas of non-compliance
- **Environmental Monitoring Information** – includes data we collect to measure our environmental performance

These tools help ensure the Council continually improves and stays compliant with environmental standards.

Management of Environmental Aspects

The Council recognises that its activities have an impact on the environment. The most significant environmental aspects include:

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse Gas Emissions contribute to climate change and are emitted via numerous council activities including the management of our estate and the running of our services. We aim to:

- Reduce our carbon emissions by 48% by 2030 and to net zero by 2050
- *Implement our Climate Adaptation Plan*
- *Implement our Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan*

Energy

Energy use affects both the environment and the Council's budget. We aim to:

- Use energy efficiently.
- Save money by improving energy performance and installing low-energy technologies.
- Prioritise the use of renewable energy across all Council buildings and operations.
- *Implement our Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan*

Fleet (Vehicles)

Transport is a major source of emissions. We are:

- Using Lightfoot technology to help drivers reduce fuel use.
- Exploring cleaner alternatives such as electric and hydrogen vehicles.
- Ensuring all new vehicles meet the latest emissions standards.
- *Implement our Roadmap to a Green Fleet*
- *Transition to electric small and medium sized vehicles*

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Waste

The Council will lead by example to reduce waste, promote reuse and recycling, and move towards resource management, not just waste disposal. We will:

- Encourage staff, residents, and contractors to follow the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle).
- Cut waste from Council sites and activities.
- Promote reuse and recycling wherever possible.
- Continue enforcing the ban on single-use plastic items in Council operations.

Pollution

Pollution harms land, air, and water. To reduce pollution, the Council will:

- Make sure infrastructure is in place to prevent pollution or its spread.
- Provide clear procedures for safe disposal of potentially harmful substances and how to respond to spills.
- Minimise the use of polluting substances.
- Require contractors to follow high environmental standards, such as the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

Resources

Overusing resources like water, energy and materials impacts the environment and the economy. The Council will:

- Monitor and reduce energy and water use.
- Remove single-use plastics from operations and the supply chain.
- Only order necessary supplies and monitor usage carefully.
- Choose reusable items where possible and consider the full life-cycle cost of purchases.
- Reduce printing and use digital communications where possible.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity means the variety of life and the connections between species. The Council is committed to protecting and enhancing local biodiversity. We will:

- Use Nature-Based Solutions to address environmental challenges.
- Include biodiversity considerations in the Local Development Plan and complete a biodiversity checklist for all new plans.
- Increase tree planting while responsibly managing existing woodlands (as outlined in the Tree & Woodland Strategy).
- Use pollinator-friendly plants in public planting schemes.
- Restore natural habitats through rewilding.

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- Reduce use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides.
- *Implement our Local Biodiversity Action Plan*

Environmental Standards for Occupiers of Council Property	<p>This policy applies not only to the Council's own operations, but also to third parties acting on its behalf or operating from Council-owned or leased premises. Ards and North Down Borough Council expects all contractors, suppliers, tenants, and partners to uphold the same exacting standards of environmental responsibility. This includes complying with relevant environmental legislation, adopting good sustainability practices, and supporting the Council's goals to reduce carbon emissions, protect biodiversity, and use resources efficiently.</p> <p>Lease agreements, service contracts, and partnership arrangements will include appropriate environmental clauses to ensure that third parties contribute positively to the Council's sustainability goals.</p>
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Green Leases Buildings are responsible for around 40% of the UK's carbon emissions. This means that the way buildings are designed, used, and maintained plays a big part in tackling climate change. Government targets and new laws are pushing landlords and tenants to work together to improve the environmental performance of buildings. The Council recognises that buildings use a lot of energy and water and generate a large amount of waste. As a result, we will encourage and support all those who lease or use Council-owned buildings to make sustainable choices—especially when planning refurbishments, choosing materials, or making other changes to their premises. We will promote the use of energy-efficient technologies and encourage tenants and partners to reduce their carbon footprint. Where new buildings or major renovations are taking place, we aim for high environmental standards such as low EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) ratings and certification under recognised schemes like BREEAM or LEED.

What is a 'Green' Lease? It is a standard lease that:

- Includes additional clauses relating to the management and improvement of the environmental performance of a building.
- Is enforceable for the entire term of the lease.
- Helps to provide realistic and measurable building efficiency targets.

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Five Broad Categories

The ‘green’ element of the lease will fall into 5 broad categories as follows:

- **Energy** – Building Management Systems (BMS); separate utilities metering systems; motion and daylight sensors lighting systems; appropriate service and maintenance strategy; renewable energy schemes
- **Water** – building strategy and individual metering; advanced metering technology; efficient plumbing; recycling of grey water and rainwater/ storm water harvesting
- **Waste** – waste audits and monitoring; reduction strategy; adequate space for recyclables storage; fit-out and refurbishment contractors to make provision for waste recycling and segregation
- **Building works** – avoid work compromising environmental performance; BREEAM; LED; EPC; sustainable replacement of plant and equipment; sustainability-based planned preventative maintenance; EV charging; green travel plans; on-site cycle storage and cyclist’s facilities; SUDs
- **Biophilic and Biodiversity Planning** – use of plants and natural materials; biodiversity in and around the building; green roofs; living walls; building performance monitoring

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Sometimes building owners and occupiers may not fully agree on the details of a “green” lease, even though both are committed to environmental improvements. In these cases, they can create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to set out how they will work together to improve and manage the building’s environmental performance. An MOU is not legally binding and can be updated by either party without changing the main lease terms. This makes it a quicker and more flexible way to agree on green commitments.

Benefits to owners/ occupiers of ‘Green’ leases

Owners – good quality space is easier to rent; better leasing terms able to be negotiated; occupiers will be keen to renew leases
 Occupiers – allays environmental and social impact concerns; reduces reputational risk; reduces operational costs; creates a ‘green’ culture

Ards and North Down Borough Council will consider the use of Green Leases where practical.

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Communication and Awareness of Sustainability and Climate Change Policy

This policy will be shared clearly and in a way that everyone working for the Council can understand and follow. We will raise awareness about sustainability, climate change, and environmental management through training and sharing useful information with all employees and those working on our behalf.

The policy is actively promoted and easily available to our staff, the public, and other stakeholders.

We also have an internal Climate Action and Sustainability Champions Working Group that meets every three months. This group will regularly communicate the policy and its progress.

Environmental Statement

A shortened version of this policy (see Appendix 1) will be displayed in all Council buildings for the public to see. This helps us meet our environmental and legal responsibilities, show our commitment to improving the environment, and keep open communication with our stakeholders.

Reporting Compliance

We will report on our legal compliance biennially through the action plan for the Roadmap to Sustainability.

We will also submit reports on how we meet the Statutory Duty for Sustainable Development, the Biodiversity Duty, **the Climate Change Act (NI)**. Specific reporting on aspects of implementation of this policy will be reported to the relevant council committee.

Consequences of Not Following this Policy

Failure to follow this policy may be considered misconduct and formal disciplinary steps, in line with the Council's Disciplinary Policy, may be taken against person or persons deemed to be in breach.

Monitoring Sustainability Compliance

Compliance with this policy will be tracked using the Roadmap to Sustainability. This living document will be regularly updated, and progress will be reported to the Council and senior management.

Related Information

The Council will assess compliance with this policy and our legal obligations to climate change and sustainability using:

- The Sustainable Screening Form
- The Roadmap to Sustainability
- **The Climate Adaptation Plan**
- **The Climate Action Plan**

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Other Council Policies and Procedures relevant to Environmental Aspects

Carbon Reporting Dashboard

- Environmental Management System Procedures
- The Energy Management Strategy
- The Roadmap to a Green Fleet
- Roadmap to Sustainability
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Tree & Woodland Strategy
- Procurement Policy & Guidelines
- Emergency Plan
- Learning & Development Strategy
- Land & Property Policy
- Local Development Plan
- The Big Plan for Ards and North Down (The Community Plan)
- ANDBC's Corporate Plan: A Sustainable Borough**
- ANDBC's Performance Improvement Plan
- ANDBC's Annual Service Plan
- ANDBC Climate Adaptation Plan
- ANDBC Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan

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Appendix 1 Public Environmental Statement

Public Environmental Statement

Below is a copy of the proposed Environmental Statement to be shown on display in all Council owned and maintained buildings.



Environmental Policy Statement

Ards and North Down Borough Council is committed to leading by example in sustainability. We aim to protect our environment through strong leadership and responsible actions.

<p>Our vision of A Sustainable Borough is one where:</p> <p>Economic, environmental and social wellbeing are interdependent and decisions that are taken are well-balanced and equitable. We want a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable local economy with jobs and opportunities for all • Fair and inclusive society with reduced inequalities • Clean, well-managed and low-carbon environment 	<p>We are committed to protecting the environment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing greenhouse gas emissions • Reducing waste • Conserving natural resources and biodiversity • Preventing pollution • Sustainable resource use 	<p>Our Environmental Management System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets clear and achievable environmental goals • Monitors and helps us to improve our performance by focusing on resource conservation and ecosystem protection. • Helps us meet and exceed our legal obligation • Reviews our environmental policies regularly to keep them up to date and relevant • Communicates our impact and commitment to environmental protection more clearly • Helps us address climate change, biodiversity and lifecycle perspectives • Focus on supply chain oversight
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We will:

- Reduce our energy use and greenhouse gas emissions by transitioning to net zero
- Minimise waste produced and reuse or recycle waste wherever possible
- Ensure all waste is disposed of safely
- Use natural resources like water, energy and fuel responsibly
- Protect, improve and enhance biodiversity
- Take steps to reduce pollution of land, air and water
- Reduce the environmental impact of the goods we buy
- Work with our suppliers and contractors to also follow good environmental practices

Meeting legal and regulatory requirements

We will fully comply with all environmental laws and aim to go beyond them by using best practices and technology wherever possible.

Raising awareness and sharing information

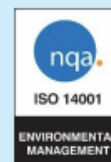
We will make this statement easy to understand and share it with all staff. We will also:

- Raise awareness of sustainability, climate change and environmental issues
- Provide relevant training and information to staff and others working on our behalf

This Environmental Statement reflects our wider **Sustainability and Climate Change Policy (ALL-POL-002)** and our **Roadmap to Sustainability**. It has been approved by Council and is available to employees, the public, and other stakeholders.

Signed: _____
Chief Executive

Date: _____



The full policy is available on the Council's internet or by requesting a printed copy from the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability Service Unit.