



**RICHMOND CLIMATE  
EMERGENCY STRATEGY**  
ANNUAL REPORT 2024



# Introduction from Cllr Neden Watts

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, in response to the global climate crisis, declared a climate emergency in June 2019. Recognising the threat climate change poses to our people and Richmond as a place, we developed the Richmond Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan, which outlines the challenges we face, the actions we need to take, and the preparations we need to make in the face of a changing climate.

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is committed to tackling the climate emergency. We aim to become a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030 and reach net zero as a borough by 2043. Our approach puts the environment at the heart of local decision-making and aims to protect vulnerable communities.

This annual report highlights the action we have taken over the last year across six key areas: Our council, Our legacy, Our waste, Our air, Our nature, and Our resilience. It provides an overview of our efforts and outlines our plans for the future. The annual report shows the breadth of action we have taken and the breadth of action needed to tackle climate change. Collaboration with partners, businesses and the community is key, as we all need to work together to take action on climate change and the environment.

In 2023, we made significant progress in implementing the Richmond Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. Richmond earned an A rating from the Carbon Disclosure Project, showcasing leadership in climate action. Our initiatives include installing new EV charge points, improving the energy efficiency of homes to help people manage their energy bills, delivering rewilding projects in schools, and implementing flood resilience programs.

Looking ahead to 2024, we will develop a new Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025-2030. This strategy will emphasise the need for urgent action and community involvement. It will focus on how the Council will become carbon neutral by 2030, how we can support more retrofitting of housing, and how we can protect Richmond from the impacts of a changing climate by building resilience against climate change risks. Engagement with the community will be central to the strategy's development and I hope that you will have your voice heard as part of this work.



**Cllr Neden Watts**  
Cabinet Member for the Environment

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# CONTEXT ON CLIMATE CHALLENGES FOR THE BOROUGH AND NEW STRATEGY FOR NEXT YEAR

In June 2019, Richmond upon Thames declared a climate emergency, recognising climate crisis that is faced globally and the threat climate change poses to the people and place of Richmond. Following this declaration, Richmond developed a Climate Emergency Strategy (RCES) and Action Plan, outlining the challenges we face, the actions we need to take and preparations for climate change.

Richmond Council aims to lead London in tackling the climate emergency by putting the environment at the heart of local decision making, with a target of becoming a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 and reaching net zero as a borough by 2043. Through sustainable growth, sustainable travel and improving air quality, the Council will protect vulnerable communities. The Council is committed to enhancing Richmond's beauty through planting trees, combating fly-tipping, and working with community groups to improve open spaces. Collaboration with the community is key, as we all need to work together to take action on climate change and the environment.

**The RCES and Action Plan focus on six key areas, which reflect the breadth of action that needs to happen:**

- **OUR COUNCIL: Becoming Carbon Neutral as an Organisation by 2030**
- **OUR LEGACY: Climate Change Mitigation and Energy Efficiency**
- **OUR WASTE: Waste and Plastics and the Circular Economy**
- **OUR AIR: Improving Air Quality**
- **OUR NATURE: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**
- **OUR RESILIENCE: Climate Resilience and Flooding**



In 2023, significant progress was made in implementing the RCES and Action Plan. Richmond earned an A rating from the Carbon Disclosure Project, showcasing leadership in climate action. Initiatives include installing new EV charge points, delivering rewilding projects in schools, and implementing flood resilience programs, which are explored in more detail in this document.

Looking ahead to 2024, Richmond will develop a new Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025-2030, emphasising the need for urgent action and community involvement. The new strategy will include a focus on how the Council will become carbon neutral by 2030, how we can support more retrofitting of housing, as well as embedding how we protect Richmond from the impacts of a changing climate by building resilience against climate change risks. Engagement with the community will be central to the strategy's development.

# OUR COUNCIL: Becoming carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030

Richmond Council has set a target to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, which is a crucial step in showing leadership in combatting climate change.

## Decarbonising our buildings

Throughout 2023, progress has been made in decarbonising Council buildings, including notable examples such as installation of a building management system and LED lighting at the Civic Centre has seen gas use reduce by a quarter and electricity use reduce by a third, as well as installation of LED lighting at our central depot which has seen electricity use reduce by 30%. This effort has led to a reduction in organisational carbon emissions, with a 15% decrease in emissions on last year and a total 76.8% reduction in emissions since 2017/18. Plans for a new Decarbonisation Strategy are underway, which will set out a pathway for our carbon emission reduction actions in the coming years. This work is supported by bidding for external funding so we can deliver on this quicker, with bids to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and the Swimming Pool Support Fund.

## Decarbonising our fleet

We have developed an analysis of our vehicle fleet, which looks at types of vehicles, age of vehicles, distances travelled and what low carbon vehicles are currently available, so we can plan out in detail where and when we

can transition to low carbon vehicles like electric vehicles. This will reduce our carbon emissions and also improve air quality.

## More sustainable procurement

Efforts have also been made to improve our sustainable procurement, with recruitment for roles supporting low carbon and sustainable practices, analysis of the carbon emissions associated with our procurement and further use of the low carbon procurement toolkit.

### What we'll do in 2024

- Publish a new Decarbonisation Strategy, detailing how the Council will decarbonise its operational buildings.
- Implement a new vehicle decarbonisation strategy, detailing how and when the Council will replace its vehicles with zero emissions vehicles.
- Set up a Sustainability Network for Council staff to meet regularly to discuss, learn, and act on climate change.



Civic Suite

# OUR LEGACY: Reducing direct carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency

Half of the borough's carbon emissions come from domestic energy use, meaning that supporting residents to take action to reduce energy use and move away from fossil fuels to heat and power their home is a key area to tackle. Around a quarter of carbon emissions in the borough come from transport, so this too is an important area to tackle.

## Supporting residents to improve their energy efficiency

Initiatives to reduce domestic energy using funding from Green Homes Grant have been delivered, with improvements made in over 212 low income and low energy efficiency homes since work began in 2021. Efforts to support residents through the Cost of Living crisis include energy efficiency advice and home visits provided by partners Thinking Works and SW Leap, as well as Warm Homes Packs which have benefited over 900 residents.

## A Local Plan with climate change at its core

A new Local Plan, which sets the planning framework for Richmond as a whole, is nearing completion. The new Local Plan goes further than before in tackling the climate emergency, with requirements that new developments minimise carbon emissions and enhance biodiversity in the borough.

## Skills to deliver retrofit

Skills to deliver energy efficiency and retrofit across the borough have also been supported, with work by South London Partnership to develop a retrofit skills plan using funding from central government, which builds on the work already carried out by the Green Skills Academy led by South London Partnerships. This will allow people already in construction or training to enter that workforce to have the skills needed to be able to deliver the improvements to buildings that need to be made.



## Helping schools to decarbonise

To support schools to take climate action, a framework has been launched for schools providing information and guidelines on reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions from school buildings. Energy audits for three community schools have been completed, which This work builds on the existing online Schools Climate Change Resource Hub which has been updated and promoted.

## Sustainable transport

Sustainable transport initiatives have been installed, with 525 EV charge point installations in 2023/24, an increase in the number of e-cargo bikes available alongside increased parking spaces for e-cargo bikes and e-scooters, promoting alternative way of getting around Richmond. and e-cargo bike programs, aim to promote eco-friendly alternatives. More bikehangars have also been installed, bringing the total number to 56 in the borough.

### What we'll do in 2024

- Deliver additional EV chargepoints in the borough alongside EV only parking bays
- Increase support for residents to take action on retrofit, including better information on what to do and support for skills so we have the workforce to deliver
- Continue our support for those struggling to pay their energy bills by helping them improve their energy efficiency



Air Source Heat Pump, Vineyard School

# OUR WASTE: Waste, plastics and the circular economy

Waste is a source of carbon emissions, both through the processes involved in the disposing of waste and through the carbon emissions associated with the growth and production of stuff that is ultimately then thrown away. Reducing waste and promoting a circular economy approach that designs out waste from the start is therefore key.

## Improving our waste collection

Throughout the year, Richmond has made significant strides in improving food waste recycling services, now serving 223 blocks of flats comprising 5,170 households, with plans to expand to include more blocks, potentially reaching around a third of suitable blocks in the area. The Reduction and Recycling action plan, approved in September 2023, emphasizes moving waste up the hierarchy to prioritise reduction, reuse, and recycling efforts.

## Sustainable events guide

To support event organizers in reducing environmental impacts, the Council has developed and published new sustainable events guidance. This resource offers practical measures to minimise the environmental and carbon footprint of events, including a checklist to prioritise sustainability actions.

## Megaskips

Megaskip collections have been extended across the borough, including collaboration across council teams and with external partners to increase impact. Recent megaskip days have seen participation from the Richmond Furniture Scheme, collecting furniture for repurposing, alongside the Waste and Climate Change and Sustainability teams providing recycling and waste reduction information.



A megaskip event  
Left: Sustainability guide for events:

## Library of Things

Richmond Library of Things is a place where you can borrow useful household items you don't need to use often, instead of buying them. This means there are less carbon emissions from the making of and disposing of items that we buy and then don't need. The Council has supported the opening of a Library of Things at co-working space Patch in Twickenham. The new service, which opened in February 2024, offers 40 household items available for hire, promoting a culture of sharing and reuse.

### What we'll do in 2024

- Start work on reducing the carbon emissions from our waste fleet, including an analysis of what we can do
- Develop our plans for a new circular economy hub in the borough, promoting and supporting the circular economy
- Supporting and promoting the recently opened Library of Things



Library of Things



# OUR AIR: Improving local air quality

Air quality and climate change are linked, with many of the sources of air pollution (such as petrol and diesel cars and gas boilers) also contributing to climate change by emitting greenhouse gases. Air pollution has severe impacts on health, particularly for the most vulnerable such as children and the elderly and air pollution is one of the biggest environmental threats to human health.

## Air Quality monitoring

Extensive monitoring of air quality takes place in Richmond, with over 80 monitoring stations, including 20 Breathe London Monitors that also measure harmful small particulates known as PM2.5. This data allows us to target interventions at the worst impacted sites, and also shows us that we are meeting national air quality objectives at nearly all locations.

## Anti idling

Efforts to combat idling vehicles have been a key focus, particularly in supporting schools to raise awareness and reduce idling. Ten anti-idling events, three workshops, and air quality assessments for schools have been conducted throughout the year.

## Smoke control campaign

This year, Richmond has taken part in action on smoke control measures, with campaigns targeting residents and businesses selling fuel and appliances. Richmond took part in the GLA Wood Burning Working Committee and through that work a London wide awareness raising campaign was

launched in November 2023 to address smoke control challenges and raise awareness about its health impacts.

## Reducing air pollution from vans and traders

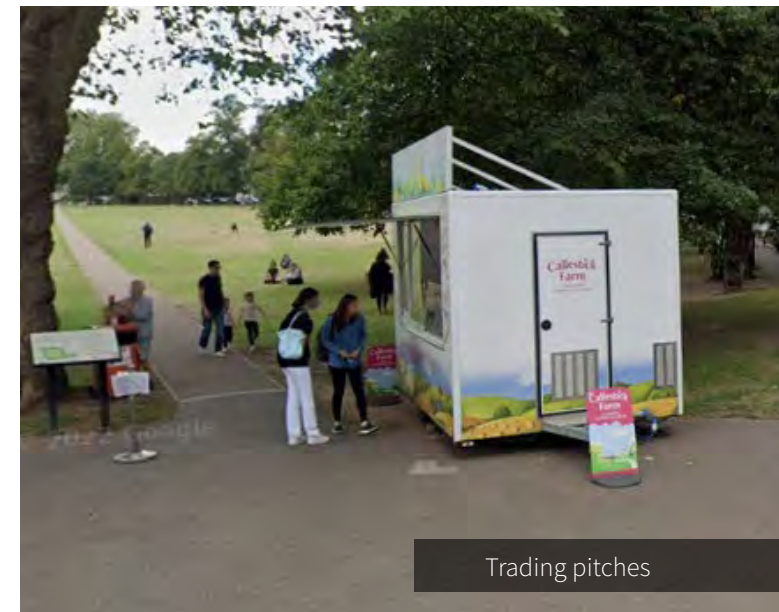
Significant progress has been made in the electrification of trading pitches, which avoids localised air pollution and carbon emissions from ice cream vans and other traders running engines while serving customers. Feeder pillars and electrical points have been installed at all viable sites, and there have been updates to our licensing rules that requires static pitch traders to plug into electrical supplies.

### What we'll do in 2024

- Develop a new Air Quality Action Plan to tackle air pollution and improve air quality in the borough
- Continue our anti-idling campaigns
- Continue to oppose the expansion of Heathrow



Anti-idling event



Trading pitches

# OUR NATURE: Green infrastructure and biodiversity

The UK's nature is under threat. Across Great Britain, 16% of species are threatened with extinction and across the UK species have declined by 19% on average since 1970. Urban areas can provide vital refuges for nature, help boost biodiversity, and halt the declining trends the UK's nature is experiencing. Richmond is blessed with wonderful green spaces, protecting and enhancing these are a key part of tackling the climate and nature emergency.

## Trees

Richmond recognizes the vital role trees play in combating climate change, offering cooling shade, supporting biodiversity, and reducing flooding. With 356 new trees planted in the previous season and plans for 800 more, including 300 new trees during the ongoing 2023/24 season, Richmond is committed to expanding its green canopy. The adoption of a tree policy in early 2023 has helped our strategic tree planting efforts, with parks surveyed to optimize tree placement, especially around play areas. Community engagement has been pivotal, planting events at Twickenham Green and Old Deer Park have fostered local participation, while the Friends of Street Trees scheme continues to promote community stewardship, with events in Kew encouraging care for young street trees.

## Enhancing Biodiversity in Richmond

Efforts to advance the Biodiversity Action Plan have progressed in collaboration with key community groups and partners. Initiatives in 2023 include promoting tree care best practices, establishing new stag beetle loggeries and work to create habitats ahead of the reintroduction of water voles. Communications campaigns highlighting the importance of biodiversity and caring for green spaces have raised awareness, alongside a rewilding project for launched in secondary schools, engaging students in developing their own biodiversity action plans for their schools.



Trees in Richmond



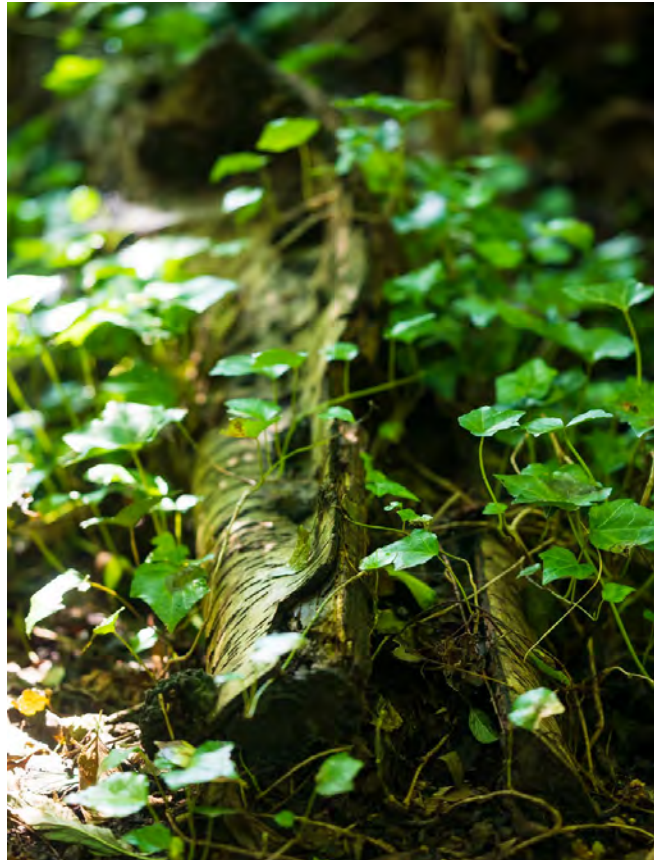
Newly planted trees

## Cultural Reforesting

Cultural Reforesting, an ambitious arts programme based in Orleans House Gallery, is responding to the question ‘how can we renew our relationship with nature?’. This year, highlights include the Darkness in Urban Spaces project working with communities in Ham and Kneller Gardens to explore how they experience their spaces in darkness. The Kinship Project delivered a nature-centred development programme to council staff, while SupermarketForest took place at Orleans House Gallery, showcasing the work of young people in care and in schools exploring food sustainability and the connection to our ecosystems through food.

### What we'll do in 2024

- Plant more trees to enhance the biodiversity of the borough
- Continue to develop Cultural Reforesting, including planning for the 2025 Richmond Arts & Ideas Festival
- Continue to deliver the actions in the Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan in partnership with community groups and residents



The Orleans House Gallery woodland, photographed by Eden Spence

# OUR RESILIENCE: Climate resilience and flooding

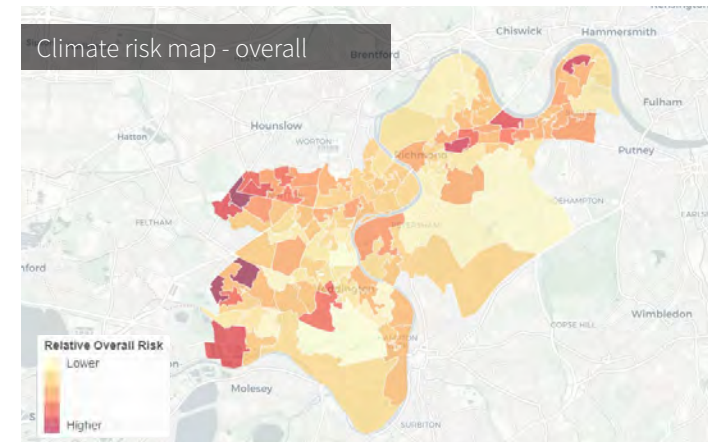
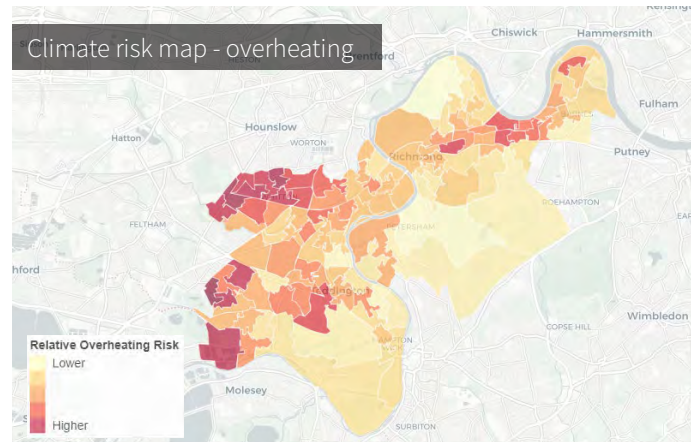
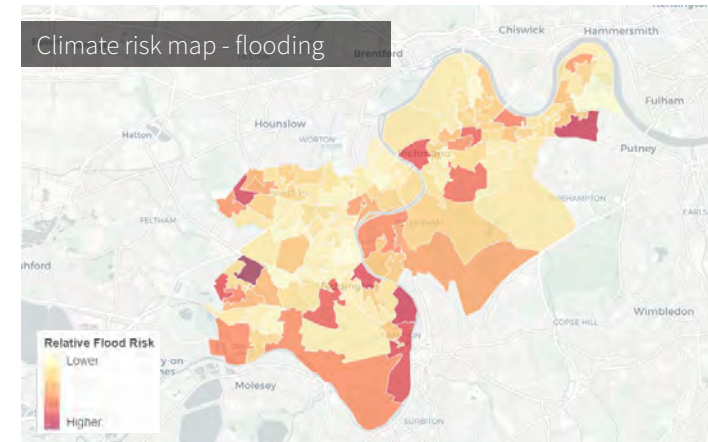
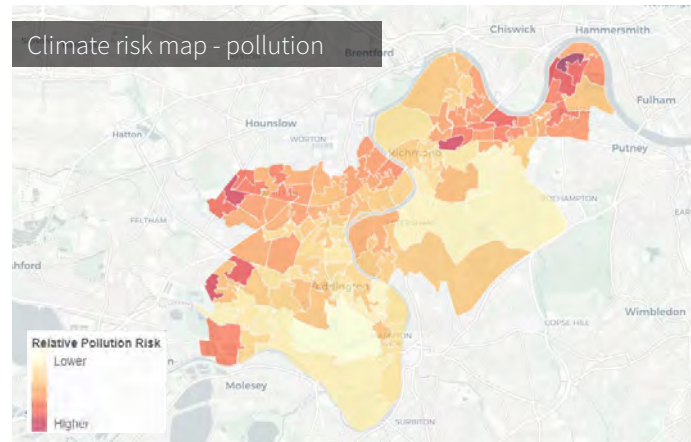
Richmond faces various climate risks, from flooding to heatwaves, impacting residents and communities. Recent years have witnessed firsthand the effects of extreme weather events, emphasizing the need for climate resilience measures. Alongside reducing carbon emissions, we need to accept and recognise that the impacts of climate change are already happening. Therefore the Council needs to support Richmond to adapt to a changing climate and ensure our communities are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

## Climate risk mapping

We have developed a climate risk map to show social vulnerabilities and environmental risks related to a changing climate across the borough. This tool allows us to identify areas most at risk and most vulnerable to climate change, with information on the types of risks and vulnerabilities allowing us to plan more targeted and impactful actions. The map is available for the public to use, so they can understand the risks in their own areas.

## The Climate Emergency as a Health Emergency

The climate emergency is also a health emergency, due to the risks that climate change poses to the health of the general population. Recognising this, our Public Health teams have delivered climate change and health workshops and training for health partners, alongside a comprehensive Public Health Engagement and Communications plan. A heatwave and vulnerable population working group has also been formed to ensure that we are preparing for how we can protect the public during extreme weather events.



## Tackling flooding

Flooding remains a significant threat to Richmond, with the development of a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy which identifies targeted interventions to mitigate flood risks and enhance community resilience. Community Bluescapes is a natural flood management project working to reduce flood risk in the Beverley Brook catchment area and employs nature-based solutions to manage flood risks, including sustainable drainage solutions and community engagement around Castlenau and Barnes.

### What we'll do in 2024

- Ensure that climate risk, adaptation and building resilience form a much bigger part of the new Richmond Climate Strategy 2025-2030
- Continue to engage with communities and deliver new projects as part of the Community Bluescapes work
- Develop a new project for Vine Road Recreation Ground which will create an innovative climate refuge providing community resilience against climate change



Community Bluescapes

# Engagement and communication

Communications and engagement on climate change is a vital part of Richmond's efforts to tackle the climate crisis. It's important that we as a council communicate our own climate action work and more importantly that we support and encourage our communities to take action. The council cannot achieve Richmond's 2043 net zero borough on its own, so it's essential that we all come together to find solutions to this collective crisis together.

## Climate Emergency Resident Action Pack

The Council launched the Climate Emergency Resident Action Pack in December 2023, an easy-to-navigate guide for local people looking for guidance on actions they can take to reduce their impact on climate change as well as lower the impact that climate change can have on our borough's people, homes and spaces. The pack contains simple, everyday actions and links to local groups, services and resources available.

## Great Big Green Week

Great Big Green Week was held in June 2023, with 90 events and activities delivered as part of the programme, almost triple the number of events held as part of Clean and Green Week in 2022 and engaging approximately 3000 residents. Great Big Green Week was supported with microgrants for local schools, charities, organisations and businesses, with 36 microgrants distributed.



Top: Residents Action Pack  
Bottom: Great Big Green Week

## Richmond Sustainability Forum

The Richmond Sustainability Forum was launched at the end of November with over 100 attendees signed up to join the first meeting held at Patch in Twickenham. Richmond Sustainability Forum provides a space for businesses, community groups, public sector partners and passionate residents who are leading climate initiatives in their communities to discuss collective action to accelerate Richmond upon Thames's journey to becoming a Net Zero Borough by 2043.

### What we'll do in 2024

- Engage and consult with residents, communities and partners in developing the new Richmond Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030
- Launch microgrants to support small organisation and groups in the borough who want to develop and deliver smaller-scale projects on climate action
- Build the Richmond Sustainability Forum throughout the year with further meetings and events.



Richmond Sustainability Forum