

COUNCIL

9 NOVEMBER 2023

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

1. This is my first report to Council as Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Environment. This report covers work that has taken place across my portfolio of responsibility over the last year. The role of CMR for Environment is cross-cutting, covering a number of service areas.
2. The Environment remains one of the Council's Corporate Priorities, underpinning the character of the county and I continue to believe it is an essential resource for economic prosperity and social well-being of residents and visitors alike.
3. Since taking the role I have been really impressed by the vast amount of great work the Council does in this area but does not get seen, a fact supported by the Cross-Party Member Advisory Group (MAG) for Carbon Reduction, Biodiversity and Water quality.
4. I appreciate the work and support of the Member Advisory Group who have input and supported the Environment Improvement Plan, Nature Recovery Strategy, Water quality and helped benchmark our activities against other councils so we can seek improvements.

Environment Improvement Plan

5. Since taking the role on I have seen the large number of separate policies we have supporting our Environment work and believed this needed integrating into an overall plan. The Environment Improvement Plan will illustrate how the council is working towards the Corporate Plan Objective of Protecting the Environment, bringing together the key work areas and strategies impacting on the Environment. These have been identified as:

- Natural environment
- Energy
- Resources and waste
- Transport
- Net Zero Council
- The green economy
- Reducing the Impact of climate change
- Communities and wellbeing

6. The plan recognises that the Environment is not the responsibility of one organisation, as this report highlights the importance of collaborating and working alongside partners including national and local government, as well as the significant roles played by our communities and businesses to improve our local environment and tackle climate change.

7. The aim is for the Environmental Improvement Plan to go to a future cabinet meeting for approval to take to wider engagement. Once agreed we will look to how we can effectively communicate - including through our web site and how we can further motivate communities and engage.

Waste Management

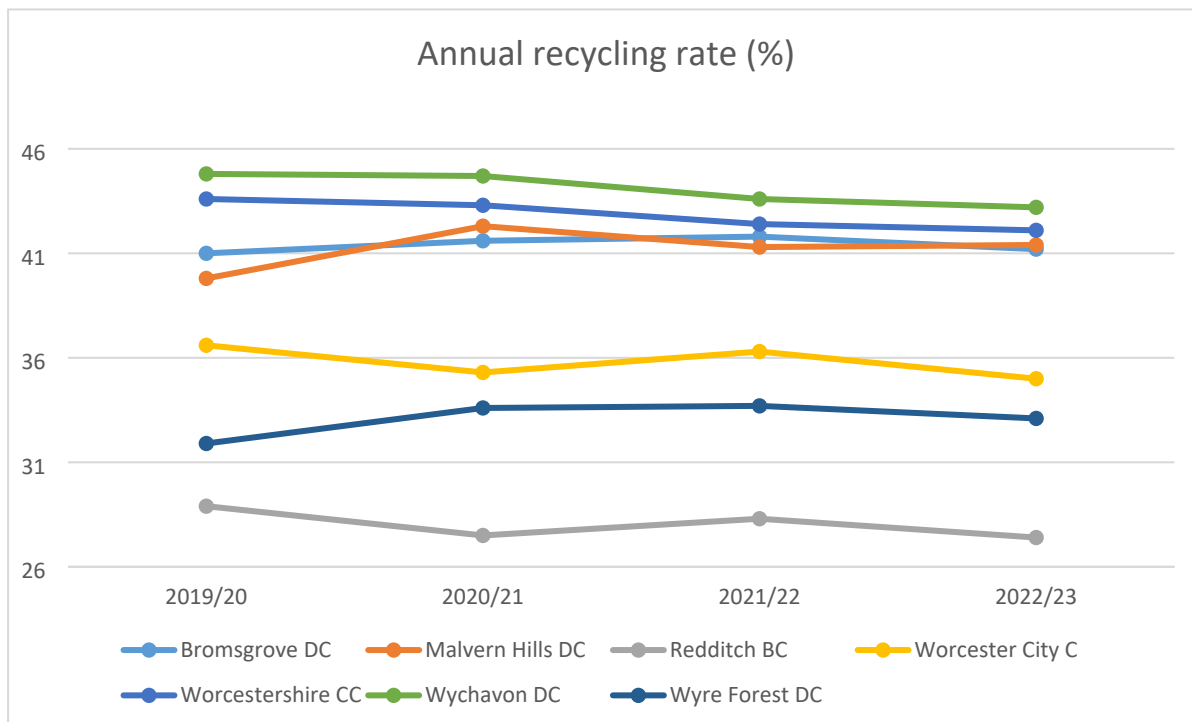
8. Worcestershire County Council is in a fortunate position to be working with the six District Councils (as waste collection authorities) who offer a similar residual waste kerbside collection to all residents in the County. It shows that as a group of Authorities we embrace the 'One Worcestershire' approach working collectively to benefit the residents of Worcestershire. We continue to work closely with our partners to reduce the amount of waste produced by our residents and minimise the cost and environmental impact of that waste.

9. The 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy for England and the Environment Act 2021 bring forward significant changes for the management of waste, they include a separate weekly collection of food waste and a consistent approach to the collection of recyclables. Collectively these are known as 'Simpler Recycling' (as detailed in recent government guidance). These proposed changes in national policy and legislation led to the formation of a Worcestershire Waste Task and Finish group, established Autumn 2022, to try to build on the consistent collection system across the whole of Worcestershire that will meet the requirements of the Environment Act. The group consists of the portfolio holder for the Environment and senior officers from each of the County, Borough, City and District Councils with myself as chair.

10. During 2022/23 we treated and disposed of over 260,000 tonnes of household waste collected from Worcestershire residents. Which is a drop of more than 20,000 tonnes on 2021/22. Whilst it is difficult to say what has driven this reduction, we know that there are a number of factors that can affect the amount of waste produced. During COVID the amount of waste produced increased nationally however since the lifting of restrictions we have seen a national decline in waste arising. It has also been shown that during periods of recession and financial hardship the amount of waste produced does drop. People are also becoming increasingly aware of the positive impacts that can be gained by reducing the amount of waste they produce. This demonstrates that human behaviour is a major factor with waste and our communication and education is key.

11. EnviroSort, our Materials Reclamation Facility, sorted nearly 60,000 tonnes of household waste last year and our contractor, who runs the facility on behalf of the council, hosted numerous visits for schools, residents, Councillors and MPs.

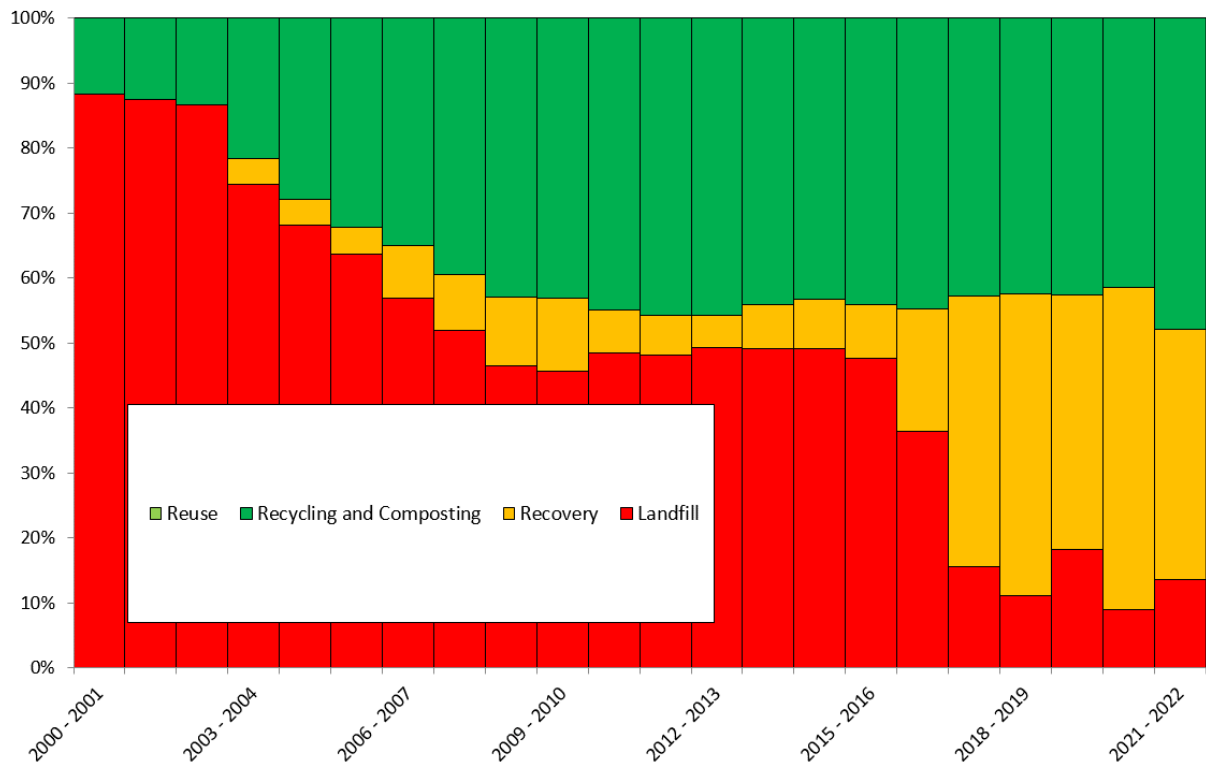
12. Below is a graph of recycling rates achieved by the all the waste collection authorities in Worcestershire since 2019/20. Rates have plateaued over that time and this is in line with the National trend.



13. We continue to recover value from more than 71% of the waste deposited at our Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). A review of existing HRCs is to be carried out to explore and identify what our customer service and future requirements will be.

14. Our recycling goes to a number of third-party processors. For example, textiles currently go to an organisation called Wilcox based in the West Midlands, cardboard to Smurfit Kapa in Birmingham and glass to Viridor in Sheffield. As well as processing the recycled materials collected from the kerbside and at the HRCs we also sent approximately 5,000 tonnes of street sweepings from mechanical street sweeping in the six districts to Sita for recycling in 2022/23.

15. The graph below shows how waste disposal routes have changed since 2000-2001. There has been a huge reduction in the overall amount of waste being sent to landfill with most of the waste now being recycled or going to the Energy Waste plant for energy recovery. We appreciate that there is still more work to do to increase our recycling and composting figures and believe that by working collaboratively with the districts across Worcestershire to provide effective communications we can achieve this together. We also need to continue our focus on waste prevention and re-use to help us move towards a circular economy.



16. We also extract value from waste that is not reused or recycled. EnviRecover, our Energy from Waste (EfW) plant, continues to perform well exporting electricity to the grid and has treated over 40% of household waste collected. The amount of electricity generated is roughly the same amount of energy generated by 29 windmills.

17. The Pollution Control Team monitors closed landfill sites and nearby ground and surface waters across Worcestershire ensuring no harm is caused to the local environment. They also recently won the contract to undertake the monitoring of a closed landfill site for Gloucestershire County Council.

18. Communications and engagement play a major part in reducing waste in the County and the Council is committed to supporting national and local campaigns where possible such as Recycle week, compost awareness week, reusable nappy week and food waste awareness week amongst others.

19. Food waste currently makes up around 35% of our black bins (reference the diagram below). #Foodsavvy is a countywide campaign launched in April this year after a successful trial in Wychavon. It is targeted at reducing the amount of food wasted by the residents of Worcestershire and has the potential to save households up to £730 a year. Promotion of the campaign is through social media, digital boards at bus stops throughout the County and attendance at various events and roadshows. We also have #foodsavvy panels on the side of refuse vehicles in several our partnership authorities.



20. Since April 2023 our Let's Waste Less volunteers have attended 28 events, spoken to over 1,600 people and given over 250 hours of their time.

21. The One Waste Worcestershire group, made up of representatives from the Borough, City, County and District Councils in Worcestershire, is aiming to bring consistency in waste messaging across the whole county. The Let's Waste Less branding is used on all communication to help residents identify all waste and recycling messages. At key times in the year all the councils share the same social media messages and campaigns.

22. The sale of subsidised compost bins has slowed down significantly over the years as most keen gardeners have already purchased them. With each compost bin reducing the householder's food and garden waste by on average 140kg per year, these bins continue to contribute to significant reductions in household waste.

Flood Risk Management

23. The Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, continues to reduce flood risk to residents, businesses, and infrastructure through its work with vulnerable communities and a wide range of partners including the district councils, the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water.

24. A significant number of statutory duties and powers are discharged through a large and diverse programme of activity including flood risk management scheme development and delivery, flood defence and drainage infrastructure maintenance, flood event response and recovery support, community engagement and resilience development, planning process scrutiny and deployment of natural land management solutions.

25. I represent the County on the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) which is a committee established by the Environment Agency under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 that brings together members appointed by LLFAs and independent members with relevant experience for 3 purposes:

- To ensure there are coherent plans for identifying, communicating, and managing flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines;
- To encourage efficient, targeted and risk-based investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management that represents value for money and benefits local communities; and
- To provide a link between the Environment Agency, LLFAs, other risk management authorities, and other relevant bodies to build understanding of flood and coastal erosion risks in its area.

26. Please see table **Appendix A** for the schemes funded and scheduled for delivery this year as part of the RFCC's '6-year programme' of schemes.

27. River flooding in December 2020, January 2021, June 2021, February 2022, January 2023, June 2023 and October 2023 were responded to by a very significant and constantly evolving and improving multi-agency effort. Agencies including Worcestershire County Council, the Environment Agency, the District Councils, the Met Office, and the Police, Ambulance and Fire & Rescue Services work in a fundamentally coordinated manner at a strategic, tactical and operation level. The essential and lengthy multi-agency recovery effort is similarly coordinated at all levels and it has been strengthened by WCC-led and funded individual and community recovery grant schemes.

28. Impacts from the recent flood event in October 2023, following record rainfall in some places and widespread surface water flooding and then flooding of smaller

'ordinary' watercourses and finally flooding of the big 'main rivers', are still being confirmed but they include:

- At least 50 homes flooded internally within habitable areas
- A Further 100+ homes flooded in non-habitable areas (cellars, garages etc) and in external areas including being completely cut off in some cases
- More than 40 businesses severely impacted by being flooded or completely cut-off
- Widespread disruption to transport network including many road closures

29. The number of flooded properties would have been well over 1,000 but for the county's flood defences, drainage maintenance and schemes, natural flood management schemes and the highway flood adaption schemes helped to keep key parts of the county open for business.

30. The recovery effort is now underway and there will be Local Resilience Forum de-brief and an informal investigation leading to an action plan of further response and mitigation measures.

31. The schematic representation of the area's major watercourses in **Appendix B** shows that most of Worcestershire's is part of the River Severn catchment. Other than a small number in the north-east of the county which drain the River Trent catchment, all other watercourses and the surface water which impacts them ultimately drains to the River Severn.

32. Significant progress has been made strongly supporting delivery of the EA's new, large flood risk management schemes including:

- Beale's Corner, Bewdley – under construction
- Toronto Close, Worcester – construction due to commence Autumn 2023
- Severn Stoke – construction due to commence Spring 2024
- Tenbury Wells. – construction due to commence late 2024

29. In addition, many dozens of smaller scale flood risk management and drainage schemes have been completed or further developed around the County such as:

- Bewdley Bridge House flood defence scheme
- Bromsgrove brooks natural flood management scheme
- Bromsgrove A38 sewer and highway drainage scheme
- Diglis property flood resilience
- Duck Brook surface water management measures
- Droitwich surface water management measures
- Droitwich property flood resilience
- Evesham property flood resilience
- Feckenham flood risk management
- Hagley flood risk management
- Himbleton property flood resilience
- Hollywood flood risk management
- North Worcestershire-wide property flood resilience
- Perdiswell penstock improvement
- Redditch flood risk management
- Severn Stoke surface water management
- Summerfield flood risk management
- Tenbury property flood resilience
- Tenbury surface water drainage
- Wickhamford property flood resilience

30. The pilot project to work with natural land management-based approaches to slow and hold back upstream flow on critical watercourses was successfully completed and led to a significant further inward investment for the five-year Worcestershire Working with Water project. Working closely with farmers, other landowners and communities hundreds of interventions have already been installed.

31. Natural flood management approaches are also extremely positive for biodiversity, landscape and water pollution reduction and they are also being adopted on the upper River Severn, River Avon, River Teme and River Stour. In July this year, the Environment Members Advisory Panel (MAG) and the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel saw first-hand the implementation of a range of natural land management-based approaches during a visit to Uncllys Farm in Tanners Hill, Bewdley. 'Slow the Flow' is an initiative the Council fully supports.

32. It appears to be highly likely that natural flood management helped to minimise and prevent flood impacts during the October 2023 flood event in locations including Charlton, Sedgeberrow, Tenbury and Wolverly.

33. Other key flood risk management focus continues to be maintained on:

- Review and renewal of the statutory Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Scrutiny of hundreds of planning applications to reduce the risk of future flooding
- Further development of community resilience with support for more than a dozen local flood action groups and liaison with a wide range of parish and town councils
- Implementation of the Land Drainage Act to ensure appropriate management of the huge network of smaller watercourses
- Further development and implementation of local Flood Risk Management Plans, each supported by a multi-agency group
- Engagement with the River Severn Partnership.

Natural Environment

34. The Environment Act 2021 resulted in significant new responsibilities to protect and enhance the natural environment.

35. Included within the Act is a requirement to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These are spatial strategies for nature to help protect and improve the local environment, meet national environmental objectives, and support the delivery of the National Nature Recover Network. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy will consist of three elements:

- Statement of biodiversity priorities (local priorities for nature's recovery)
- Local habitat map (valuable existing habitat for nature)
- Map specific proposals for creating or improving habitats for nature or wider environmental goals.

36. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) must be prepared in partnership with supporting authorities and include wider community input. For Worcestershire the supporting authorities are the districts, borough, and city council, plus Natural England.

37. Worcestershire County Council has been appointed to develop the LNRS for Worcestershire and is in receipt of funding from Defra to support this role. A report on the LNRS is timetabled for Cabinet late 2023 to be followed by public consultation. The Member Advisory Group & Environment O&S will be involved in this process.

38. The Government has set a timetable that the final strategies are to be adopted in 2025.

39. To support the development of the local habitat map, WCC have completed a review and update of the Worcestershire Habitat inventory using remote sensing. The inventory provides details of land use and habitat for the county on a field-by-field basis. The update was completed in 2022, and includes additional features from the original version including habitat connectivity and fragmentation.

40. A further requirement of the Environment Act is a requirement for a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) from the majority of planning applications. This requirement is expected to commence in January 2024. In collaboration with the South Worcestershire Councils, WCC secured funding from the Natural Environment Readiness Fund to undertake preparatory work on the requirement. We are developing new processes to implement BNG, we are identifying the BNG requirements for WCC's own development for highways and education and exploring how net gains for biodiversity will interface with other environmental workstreams including the LNRS and carbon offsetting. LNRS is currently being prepared with the collaboration of Worcestershire's Local Nature Partnership. LNP partners are key stakeholders in LNRS delivery. Prior to implementation in January 2024, secondary BNG legislation is due to be published by Government.

41. The Environment Act also brings a new requirement for local authorities to report on their actions for biodiversity, which will include progress on implementing LNR and biodiversity gains through the planning system.

42. A review of the Worcestershire Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy is nearing completion. The new draft strategy was consulted in early in 2023, and the final revisions are being made prior to publication of the new strategy. This document has been updated to reflect some of the new policy and guidance since it was originally written in 2013, the track record of delivery in the county and updating of Local Plans and their green infrastructure policies. Some key highlights in the forthcoming Guidance document will include new case studies showcasing successful GI delivery across Worcestershire, descriptions of a number of new funding streams available to help deliver GI, and closer cross-referencing to Natural England's recently published GI Standards and GI Principles.

43. Work has continued across the Council inputting into a range of schemes to bring benefits to the natural environment. Most notably during this period this has included roll out of wildlife-friendly lighting in specific locations to support bat foraging and commuting as part of the transition to LED streetlights, and where data shows bat movements, plus undertaking ecological surveying for maintenance and development projects. There is continued engagement with district colleagues concerning the natural environment (ecology and landscape) as they revise and update their local plans, and share supporting data sets. We have met regularly with District portfolio holders and Supporting Authority representatives to collaborate on the production of our LNRS. Landscape and ecology were integral to the development and adoption of the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan which was adopted in 2022. This plan takes a green infrastructure led approach to minerals development and site restoration.

Tree Planting

44. The Council has made a commitment to plant 150,000 trees across Worcestershire. To date, 50,000 trees have been planted, at New and Ashmores Farms, Norton, Evesham at Netherton Lane, Bewdley and at other country parks, nature reserves and picnic places across Worcestershire.

45. Other new woodlands at Upton Snodsbury and Dodderhill, near Droitwich, are currently being designed and Forestry Commission grant schemes have now been accessed to fund the planting. A further site in the north of the county will be announced very soon. Planting at Upton Snodsbury and Dodderhill will start in winter 2023/24. The requirement to meet an 85% survival rate is being written into the tree planting contracts to ensure that any failures are replaced, and the trees given the appropriate aftercare.

46. The development of these new tree planting sites has enabled other important habitats to be created such as wetlands, hedgerows, community orchards, species rich grassland and other pollinator habitats. In addition, the new sites may well be used by local schools for activities such as Forest School.

47. The County Council has recently submitted a grant bid to Defra's Coronation Heritage Fund in order to plant 10 mini (Miyawaki) forests and 20 community orchards across Worcestershire. The Miyawaki Method is one of the most effective tree planting methods because it is based on natural reforestation principles, i.e. using trees native to the area and replicating natural forest regeneration processes. The trees planted by this method grow much faster, jump starting the forest creation process and capturing more carbon. Higher biodiversity has been recorded in Miyawaki forests than in neighbouring woodland, so it is an ideal method for creating diverse forest ecosystems quickly.

48. In meeting regularly with Borough, District & City Portfolio holders we can also start to aggregate the picture on Tree Planting and show as greater County position.

Sustainability

49. In July 2021 the Council declared a Climate Emergency, reconfirming its commitment to work with partners across Worcestershire to tackle the challenge of climate change and to reduce the County Council's operational carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. The Sustainability Team are coordinating work aimed at achieving this goal.

50. As part of the above commitment Council resolved to set up a Member Advisory Group MAG to help advise me on the council's Net Zero and Biodiversity related work. The MAG have looked at a wide number of aspects of this brief, including benchmarking the council's work against other local authorities, and will input into the review of the council's Net Zero Carbon Plan (as well as other areas mentioned earlier).

51. The Sustainability Team are working with Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver the Worcestershire Energy Strategy. This work includes contributing to the development of a Local Area Energy Plan involving energy network providers and supporting feasibility studies for local heat networks. The Strategy's aims are by 2030 to:

- halve the county's carbon emissions (from 2005 levels)
- double the size of Worcestershire's £1.1bn low carbon and environmental sector
- treble the amount of renewable energy generated in the county to 15% of electricity used.

52. County carbon emissions have been cut by 36% since 2005 (latest figures are for 2021), the county's low carbon and environmental sector grew to 1.56bn in 2020 (latest figures) and c16% of county electricity demand is generated from renewables.

53. In the last 4 years over £18m European, central Government and private sector funding has been secured by the council's Sustainability Team, supporting businesses and communities across the county to save energy, save money, cut carbon emissions, enhance the natural environment, and grow our low carbon economy.

54. The County Council achieved Council of the Year at the West Midlands Energy Efficiency Awards for our wide-ranging work on business and household energy efficiency and our Net Zero business support programmes have been shortlisted by the international Edie Net Zero awards for Energy Efficiency Project of the Year.

55. **Warmer Worcestershire:** The council co-ordinates this network of local partner organisations overseeing the County's Fuel Poverty Plan. The network helps Worcestershire households in fuel poverty, giving practical help through access to home energy efficiency grants and free advice. The network is making preparations for the new Energy Company Obligation funding regime including the Great British Insulation scheme, which starts this year. The Council is working with district councils on the HUG2 programme, programmed to start later this year. HUG2 will offer energy retrofit for low-income homes with a low EPC rating and not connected to mains gas central heating. With current high energy prices raising many questions and concerns for householders, we are also supporting the delivery of the energy funding from the Household Support Fund. Following a successful pilot last winter, we will be extending the Warmth on Prescription project across the whole County working with Primary Care Networks to identify households with long term health conditions that could be made worse by living in a cold home and offering a payment towards their heating costs this winter. The project is expected to support around 280 residents this winter.

56. **Solar Together scheme:** The Council has promoted this bulk purchase scheme (administered by iChoosr) for solar PV panels and/or battery storage. 5674 householders registered for the scheme, which is more than twice the normal rate. 980 households accepted their offer, which is a high rate of take up. To date 739 households have had surveys and 441 installations have taken place. Installations are expected to finish by the end of November 2023.

57. **European funding for WCC's four sustainability advice and grant programmes** ended June 2023. Programme achievements and plans for continuation from July 2023 are detailed below.

58. **Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP):** This is a business support programme that offers advice and provides an assessment of the current energy position of the business. It then offers grant support on a 50% intervention rate to deliver an action plan based on this assessment. This partnership initiative with local councils and the Chamber of Commerce supported 422 Worcestershire businesses through energy assessments identifying £2.6m annual savings and c 7700 tonnes of greenhouse gas reduction since 2016. 208 grants, totalling £1,315,287, were awarded to install lighting, efficient heating, insulation, faster warehouse doors, solar panels and energy storage, leveraging c£2.1m of private sector investment. In addition to this BEEP also supported businesses across the Marches region, Telford and Wrekin, Shropshire and Herefordshire.

59. **Low Carbon Opportunities Programme (LOCOP):** This programme provided advice and grant support for SMEs to install renewable energy and develop innovative low carbon goods and services. Starting in 2016, it provided support to 202 local businesses and approved grants of c.£1.9m, enabled the installation of c.3.9 MWp renewable energy generation capacity, saving over 2200 tonnes of GHG and leveraging c.£2.7m + private sector investment.

60. Both BEEP & LoCOP saw a significant increase in demand from businesses associated with rising energy bills and targeted marketing campaigns. To meet this demand funding has been obtained to enable the council to continue to offer local SMEs advice and grant funding for energy efficiency, renewable energy and low carbon innovation until March 2025. Funding is from Worcestershire District Council managed UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocations and County Council's Open for Business fund.

61. **Natural Networks:** This £1.2m ERDF funded programme, in partnership with the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, offered free advice and grants to local organisations (including SMEs) to improve the biodiversity of publicly accessible land across the County. 170 projects were supported, with biodiversity improvements funded for 130ha land and improvement plans for 2600 ha. Funded works included:

- 71,500 bulbs & plug plants planted
- 25,700 trees & shrubs planted
- 4½ km hedges planted
- 1½ km watercourses enhanced
- 50 ponds created or enhanced
- 620 bird & bat boxes
- 30 bee posts
- 40 hibernacula

62. Projects supported included water course naturalisation at Churchill Brook - Redditch, Beaudesert Park - Hollywood and Bowbrook Lodges nr Pershore, pond creation/enhancement at Battenhall Park - Worcester and Priory Park - Malvern and flower rich grassland enhancement at Burlish Meadows Stourport on Severn and St James the Great Church - Norton. The County Council itself benefited from this programme, obtaining funding for wildflower meadow and biodiversity improvements at County Hall campus, and other WCC sites.

63. The team has secured UK Shared Prosperity Funding from four district councils to continue the Natural Networks programme in Wychavon, Malvern, Wyre Forest and Worcester until March 25.

64. Funding has also been obtained from DEFRA's Treescapes and Woodland Creation accelerator fund to enable free advice and grant funding for tree planting on county council and other sites across the county until at least March 25. For the first phase of this programme, trees have been planted on Highways land in Wyre Forest and a number of Countryside Services sites.

65. **Public-Sector Energy Efficiency Programme (PEEP):** This programme launched in April 2020 and aimed to reduce the energy consumption of public buildings within Worcestershire. PEEP providing free energy assessments and grant funding to support energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Energy advisors visited over 40 local buildings, including: educational institutions, council offices, social housing, museums, hospitals and community halls. Over £740k grant funding was awarded for measures such as solar panels and low energy lighting schemes.

66. UK Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is now available for grant funding to support public sector heat decarbonisation projects.

67. **Community Renewal Fund:** The Sustainability Team secured £0.5m funding via the UK Government Community Renewal Fund to run a pilot project, (Zero Carbon Ready Worcestershire), building on the successes of the above programmes. This programme (which ran from March 22 to Dec 22), offered free decarbonisation advice to Worcestershire businesses and organisations not eligible for ERDF funded support. Support covered a wide range of sectors and differing levels of complexity. There was a focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy advice. The project delivered more decarbonisation reviews than originally planned due to high demand. Over 250 Worcestershire businesses and organisations were supported through the scheme and a decarbonisation platform established to provide on line support to Worcestershire SMEs and organisations working to achieve net zero emissions. The types of support tested in this project are being taken through to the Council's new Net Zero business support programme.

County Council Carbon Reduction

68. The Council's **Net Zero Carbon Plan** is currently being reviewed. The Council's carbon emissions reduced by 40% from 2009/10 to 2022/23. The offsetting we can include from the purchase of green electricity for all the council's buildings and street lighting brings this reduction to 45%. The Council reports on emissions covering the Council's estate and operations and on carbon emissions from household waste disposal, (which comprise nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of all accounted emissions). WCC worked alongside Cambridgeshire County Council and UCL on the development of a tool for more accurate reporting of emissions from waste disposal, as part of the LGA Net Zero Innovation Programme.

69. Opportunities for investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy within the Council's estate have been and continue to be developed. The Council has overseen many energy efficiency projects, including major street lighting upgrades, installation of solar panels, improvement in the energy efficiency of buildings, and the introduction of electric vehicles into the Council's fleet. Projects supported via the council's energy efficiency Spend to Save fund to date are saving the Council approximately £400,000 every year.

70. Further capital funding has been committed by the Council to complete the transition to LED street lighting, cutting both carbon emissions and electricity use. This work has included the installation of bat friendly lighting at a few sites including Warndon and Upton upon Severn roundabout on the A38.

71. The Sustainability Team successfully bid for grant funding from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to fully fund 34 energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across 25 WCC sites (£820k). These projects including: LED lighting improvements, glazing, insulation, building energy management system upgrades and a number of solar panel systems, have now been installed through the WCC property team and will result in financial savings of c£60000+ per year, and carbon savings of 170 tonnes/CO₂^e per year.

72. Surveys of most of the council's buildings have been completed to identify further action required to cut WCC's building-related carbon emissions to zero.

73. The Council operates an online JIA screening tool for all projects which combines screenings for environmental sustainability, data protection, equality and health into one place.

74. To date, 238 members of staff have undertaken accredited Carbon Literacy training and we are considering, with MAG, a suitable course for interested members.

75. **UK Government** published its **revised UK Net Zero strategy (Powering Up Britain)** in March 23. The strategy recognises the importance of local authorities in delivery of the UK Net Zero by 2050 target and WCC will be directly engaged in local delivery of a significant number of the strategy's objectives, including the following:

76. The government has committed to a business energy efficiency support pilot across the West Midlands for higher energy users. WCC will be participating in this pilot.

77. The government has also committed to further support for energy efficiency and low/zero carbon heating measures in households across UK. The Sustainability Team are working through the Warmer Worcestershire Network to ensure delivery of this funding in the county and as detailed above are leading on delivery of the HUG2 programme for decarbonisation measures in off gas fuel poor homes in Wychavon, Malvern, Redditch & Bromsgrove districts.

78. Support for carbon capture and storage as well as decarbonisation of industrial processes is included in the strategy. WCC has recently been awarded BEIS funding for a feasibility study into carbon capture and battery energy storage for Hartlebury Energy from Waste plant.

Water Quality

79. The Members Advisory Group has been tasked with producing a report on the quality of Worcestershire's waterways. Accordingly, a range of data is being gathered about water quality and the performance of the water companies and their regulator, the Environment Agency. Relevant data is also being gathered from Rivers Trust and Angling Trust.

80. It appears that this could be the first such broad, county-wide compilation of this kind of data and other local authorities are already showing an interest in adopting the same approach, which will aid comparison and benchmarking.

81. Water quality statistics compiled to date indicate that watercourses in Worcestershire are in a disappointing condition and this is reflected in the current Water Framework Directive status of the network being 'moderate', 'poor' or 'bad'

Acknowledgements

82. I would like to place on record my thanks to John Hobbs, Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure, and the Assistant Directors, heads of service, managers, and many unsung great members of our staff across the Council for their continued commitment.

Councillor Richard Morris
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment

Appendix A

Projects delivering in 2023/24 Year 3 of the 6-year programme 2021-2027		
Project Name	RMA	Properties Delivering (OM2s)
Broadway FAS Penstock	Environment Agency	116
Kempsey Pumping Station Refurbishment	Environment Agency	50
West Mids PLR - Droitwich (Hunters Way)	Environment Agency	30
Toronto Close FAS	Environment Agency	26
North and Middle Littleton Surface Water Drainage Scheme	Worcestershire County Council	20
West Mids PLR - Evesham, River Avon	Environment Agency	19
Worcestershire Surface Water Drainage Schemes Package	Worcestershire County Council	9
Severn Stoke Surface Water Drainage Scheme	Worcestershire County Council	6
Highlighted in green have delivered		Total in 23/24 - 276
		Delivered - 69

Appendix B

