

Environment

At a local level we have to support the sustainable use of land across East Riding meeting our objectives to support nature, people and the climate. This has to take into account nature recovery, tree planting, recreation, food production, renewable energy and creating high-quality places to live. Whilst many of these types of land use are picked up through the Climate Change Strategy, this priority area focuses on three: nature, farming and food systems.

There are fundamental links between the natural environment and climate change.

- Soils, forests, wetlands, peatlands and oceans absorb and store carbon. There is potential for cutting future emissions through the maintenance of healthy ecosystems and restoring degraded environments. On the other hand, damage to ecosystems can reduce their capacity to capture and store carbon.
- Working with and enhancing nature can provide cost-effective and accessible solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation.
- The climate is changing much faster than nature and wildlife can adapt to it. The pressure our natural resources are under has led to an **ecological crisis** with species and habitats declining at an alarming rate, with the UK experiencing some of the highest rates of biodiversity loss in the world.
- The impact of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystems can lead to other pressures such as pollution, over-exploitation, invasive species, flooding and habitat loss and fragmentation.

Agriculture and the food sector will also play a large role in the UK's climate change response, accounting for around one-third of territorial emissions (including emissions overseas from imported food & drink). In the agricultural sector emissions are largely the result of livestock, fertilisers and operational activity, whilst emissions linked to food and drink production and consumption more broadly, can be related to supply chains, transportation and waste. In East Riding, agricultural land makes up 90% of the land area and supports over 2,000 farming and food manufacturing businesses, illustrating its importance to our economy and cultural identity.

What we have done

- The Council's Environmental Policy set out objectives for managing and improving the Council's environmental performance. A key theme in the Policy is the 'Natural Environment' which sets out how we act on our statutory duty to conserve and enhance the natural environment and promote the wider social and economic benefits of doing this. The Council is currently in the process of reviewing the Policy and this will reflect the new requirements made on biodiversity and nature in the Environment Act, including the enhanced biodiversity duty, to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and to implement biodiversity net gain for developments.
- We continue to work with the farming sector on sustainability and climate change across our departments and at different levels, including through:

- engagement with the National Farmers Union and Country Land Business Association.
 - providing business advice
 - owning a number of farms and small holdings which are let to tenants.
 - interacting with farming and food business across our service areas, from planning to food services.
- Facilitate the East Yorkshire Local Food Network, which works to develop and expand the local food and drink sector, whilst emitting fewer carbon emissions.
 - The Council hosts and facilitates several key environmental partnerships, including the:
 - **East Riding Rural Partnership** – promotes the economic and social wellbeing of residents living and working in rural communities across East Riding, equipping them with the tools to enable them to contribute to environmental improvements and tackling climate change.
 - **Humber Forest** – works together with communities, businesses and landowners to increase tree cover and maintain existing woodland.
 - **Hull and East Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership** – works strategically to promote the value of the natural environment and the services it provides to the economy and health of our communities.
 - **Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership** – provides a vehicle for collaboration amongst a variety of external and internal partners in order to better support, understand and holistically manage Yorkshire’s marine ecosystems, including its role in climate change.
 - As an authority we proactively support young people to engage with climate and nature. This includes a project we have helped fund through East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS) to support the employment of a ‘Green Mentor’ who will enable young people to lead the way as ‘Green Influencers’ on social action projects in their communities.

Key Challenges & Opportunities

Challenges to Delivery

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) - Increasing summer temperatures could lead to an increase in non-native species colonising the area or being able to reproduce more successfully and thus potentially become invasive.

Marine environment – Whilst some impacts of climate change in the marine environment are well-documented, the complexity of marine and coastal ecosystems means that data gathering and implementing management measures can be particularly challenging.

Nature-based solutions – Many nature-based solutions to manage flood and coastal change risk in East Riding are not suitable, such as our coastline’s geology and nature preventing nature solutions to coastal erosion.

Food price – Some of the sustainable and ethical food products can be more expensive, which can disproportionately affect those on low incomes.

Supply chains – Supporting the implementation of a sustainable and resilient food supply chain that extends across all aspects of the East Riding's food network is a huge challenge, requiring change from outside the region.

Opportunities

Regenerative agriculture – Technologies that regenerate and revitalise the soil and environment can help rebuild soil organic matter and restore degraded soil biodiversity, storing more atmospheric carbon and creating more resilient soils that can better withstand climate change impacts like flooding and drought.

The Agriculture Act – This includes the Environmental Land Management Scheme, rewarding farmers for public goods, such as improving soil health, measures to reduce flooding and storing carbon.

The Environment Act - In line with the requirements in the Environment Act, we will lead on the creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy that identifies opportunities for nature's recovery and deliver wider benefits, including climate change mitigation and adaptation. We will also implement into our planning system a way to deliver measurable net gain improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development.

Government Food Strategy – The national food strategy, published in 2022, contains an objective to deliver a sustainable, nature positive and affordable food system setting out this will only be achieved through a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the food system.

Covid-19 – A survey undertaken by Natural England found that more than 40% of people noticed that nature, wildlife and visiting local green and natural spaces has been more important to their wellbeing since the start of the pandemic in 2020. There is an opportunity to capitalise on this newfound appreciation for the natural environment.

Natural Capital Approach – Working closely with partners in both the terrestrial and marine environments, the natural capital approach allows the value of our natural resources to be included in decision-making. This includes both monetised goods (such as food and fuel) and the non-monetised services we receive (such as health & wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature).

Areas of Action

Please note that until the final Climate Change Strategy has been approved, we have chosen to use the wording 'East Riding of Yorkshire Council can.' Once the Strategy has been fully consulted on internally and with the public we will commit to 'East Riding of Yorkshire Council will.'

East Riding of Yorkshire Council can...

- Explore the value of declaring an ecological emergency, recognising the links between the nature and climate change.
- Ensure through the review of the Environmental Policy that the Council implements measures to enhance the natural environment and reduce food waste through its own policies and procedures.
- Create habitats and plant trees on Council land, where appropriate, maximising opportunities for carbon sequestration
- Work with partners, such as the Humber Forest, to calculate carbon sequestration rates of tree planting and to explore the creation of a carbon-based tree planting Strategy for East Riding.
- Explore further opportunities for carbon sequestration in East Riding, including in marine and intertidal habitats.
- Lead on the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Integrate biodiversity net gain into our local planning policy.
- Promote nature-based solutions and development of blue-green infrastructure wherever possible.
- Work with Council farm tenants to encourage more climate and wildlife friendly practices.
- Engage with local farmers and national farming bodies promoting sustainable agriculture practices.
- Work with partners, such as the Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership, to advocate for the marine and coastal environment and further explore opportunities for environmental progress.
- Help measure local natural capital with key partners to help inform climate decision-making.

How might you reduce your carbon footprint?

- If you are interested in planting trees on your land or volunteering to help plant trees, check out this link to get involved with the Humber Forest <https://www.humberforest.org/get-involved/>
- As weather patterns shift due to climate change, some insects that depend on particular flowers might suffer, so consider planting a diverse variety of pollinator friendly plants with ranging flowering times.
- Planting trees and plants can help tackle climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and reduce risks of flooding by slowing rainwater runoff.
- Consider shopping locally for your food and drink.