



**KNUTSFORD TOWN COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT 2021**

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Knutsford Town Council adopted a revised Environmental Policy in 2020 in which it set out its key environmental objectives. The policy also committed the council to undertaking an annual assessment of its operations against its environmental objectives. This is its first such audit.

In September 2021, the council also declared a Climate Emergency. The resolution committed the council to working towards carbon neutrality and considering the climate impact in all its decision making.

As the first audit, this document sets out a baseline from which the council will seek to improve. It is noted that whilst the council has never previously documented its work in this way, it has been conscious of its environmental footprint for a number of years and has regularly undertaken projects which seek to enhance the environment or reduce the council's carbon footprint.

ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

The council's environmental objectives are set out in its Environmental Policy and are as follows.

Energy and Water Management

- 4.1 Minimise electricity consumption
- 4.2 Maximise the efficiency of heating systems
- 4.3 Minimise freshwater usage and maximise the use of water butts
- 4.4 Minimise all forms of pollution

Recycling and Resources

- 4.5 Minimise the use of single use plastics
- 4.6 Ensure recyclable materials are recycled
- 4.7 Use recycled paper products where feasible
- 4.8 Minimise printing and the generation of wastepaper
- 4.9 Compost organic waste

Biodiversity and Green Spaces

- 4.10 Protect and enhance the quality of Knutsford's natural environment and open spaces
- 4.11 Support the conservation of trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams
- 4.12 Manage green spaces to promote and protect biodiversity
- 4.13 Minimise the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides
- 4.14 Ensure its planning schemes are predominantly pollinator friendly perennial flowers

Fossil Fuels

- 4.15 Minimise use of fossil fuels at events
- 4.16 Minimise unnecessary car journeys on council business

- 4.17 Promote and support the use of public transport, cycling and walking
- 4.18 Procure electric tools/vehicles for grounds maintenance where it is viable to do so

Sustainable Procurement

- 4.19 Procure goods and services locally where requirements for value and quality are met
- 4.20 Procure FSC certified timber

Awareness, Lobbying and Partnerships

- 4.1 Encourage partner organisations to meet these environmental objectives
- 4.2 Promote the awareness of environmental issues within the community
- 4.3 Support and initiate projects which contribute towards meeting these environmental objectives across the wider community

ACTION

After this audit is first reviewed by the Environment Committee, each standing committee of the council will receive a report on the areas falling under its remit at their next meeting. The Environment Committee will review implementation of action plans addressing the areas for improvement throughout the year.

ENERGY AND WATER MANAGEMENT

MINIMISE ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION

Baseline

The current estimated annual electricity usage across the council's assets (including Christmas lights and the Council Offices) is 93,976 kWh¹. All electricity contracts are on renewable/green energy deals which cite a carbon footprint of 0g/kWh however the Council Offices utilities are operated by Cheshire East Council and it is unknown what contract they are on; the data for usage at the Council Offices corresponds to the 2020/21 year which will be lower due to COVID restrictions.

The main lighting within the Market Hall is LED but there is some florescent tube lighting within stalls. The lighting within the chapel is LED. It is unknown whether the lighting within the public toilets is LED. The majority of lighting within the Council Offices is florescent tubes.

Procurement of new electrical products is undertaken with energy performance as a consideration, notable example in the year was the purchase of fridge/freezer for the chapel.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate capital and operational cost of upgrading fluorescent lighting to LED

MAXIMISE THE EFFICIENCY OF HEATING SYSTEMS

Baseline

The Council Offices is heated by a gas boiler, using 84,735 kWh per year generating 15.7 tonnes of CO₂; it is an inefficient system and this data is for usage in the 2020/21 year which will be lower due to COVID restrictions. The chapel has electric heating - in the anterooms this is thermostatic and in the main hall is on demand IR heating.

There is no mains heating within the Market Hall which results in a number of electric heaters being used by traders to heat their spaces.

The gas boiler at 60 King Street was condemned and the current winter heating will be using a number of electrical radiators which is inefficient.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate options for reducing gas consumption at the council offices

¹ Council Offices (34,770), Cemetery Chapel (2,471), Market Hall (45,078), Public Toilets (9,535) and Christmas Lighting (2,120).

MINIMISE FRESHWATER USAGE AND MAXIMISE THE USE OF WATER BUTTS

Baseline

The council uses over 478m³ of freshwater per year for its assets; data is not available for the water meter at the cemetery which provides for the chapel and cemetery. This usage equates to around 142kg of CO₂. The data for usage at the Council Offices corresponds to the 2020/21 year which will be lower due to COVID restrictions.

Water butts are used at the allotments and one was installed at the chapel in 2021. The majority of toilets (except the new chapel toilet) are large cisterns although some have a duo-flush for a reduced flush option. There is no greywater recycling at any asset.

Hosepipes are used for watering the cemetery flowerbeds/ newly sown grass as required over dry periods. The Town Ranger uses water for pressure washing and watering. The council contracts a watering service for its town centre watering and a number of the external planters have reservoirs which minimise water wastage.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Confirm usage data for the cemetery
- Confirm usage data on water usage for floriculture watering
- Install water butt at Council Offices

MINIMISE ALL FORMS OF POLLUTION

Baseline

The council uses 408L of petrol and 766L of diesel per year to operate the council van and power tools and the council also uses generators at events. These are the primary sources of local pollution generation from the council's operations.

The council does not burn any waste. Fires are permitted at allotments and the Allotment Society has discussed banning them but its motion has not been confirmed by the membership.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate electric replacements if any tools require replacement during 2022

RECYCLING AND RESOURCES

MINIMISE THE USE OF SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Baseline

The council avoids single use plastics at events and has hired glasses where necessary instead. Policy requires Market Hall traders to avoid single use plastic bags (except where required for food hygiene). Some traders at the Christmas Market use single use plastics as part of sales though many use plastic free packaging. Single use plastics are not used for room hires. Some venues on Taste Knutsford use single use plastics.

Some plastic over packaging routinely provided with ordered goods (e.g. bulk orders of toilet paper wrapped in pairs).

Plants for planting schemes routinely supplied in plastic pots and practice has not been to reuse/recycle.

Poppy wreaths at Remembrance Sunday are single use.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate making Taste Knutsford plastic free
- Work to reduce single use plastics in Christmas Market
- Investigate options for reducing single use plastic in procurement of goods
- Plastic plant pots to be reused, donated or returned to suppliers
- Investigate with the RBL plastic free options for Remembrance Sunday

ENSURE RECYCLABLE MATERIALS ARE RECYCLED

Baseline

The council provides a mixed recycling collection for the traders of the Market Hall and at the Council Offices. Waste is generally well separated but there is room for improvement. Waste is separated at the chapel but there is no recycling within the cemetery. There is no separation of waste at the Christmas Market nor at Makers Markets.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Gather data to measure percentage of waste recycled from waste collections
- Explore waste separation at Makers Market and Christmas Market
- Internal campaign to increase recycling rates
- Investigate improving recycling at the cemetery

USE RECYCLED PAPER PRODUCTS WHERE FEASIBLE

Baseline

Office printer paper and event flyers etc are from FSC certified sources. Provenance of other paper supplies (including toilet paper) to be investigated.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate provenance of any paper products at point of order and with Danfo and where possible move to FSC certified or recycled products.

MINIMISE PRINTING AND THE GENERATION OF WASTEPAPER

Baseline

The council used 78,668 sheets of paper (equivalent to 102,400 sheets of 80gsm A4) across its general stationery and event promotion literature.

Printing of agendas uses approximately 7,150 sheets of A4 paper, 25% of which is printing the committee minutes for Full Council meetings. Two members have stopped receiving paper agendas saving approx. 1,000 sheets per year.

Mayoral Fundraising events and most music festival ticket sales are not paper ticketed, reducing waste paper generation.

The council publishes some paper publications including the Town Guide and Town Maps.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Review effectiveness of leaflets/flyers current event marketing methods and take steps to reduce wastage.
- Explore stopping the printing of committee minutes for Full Council meetings

COMPOST ORGANIC WASTE

Baseline

An organic waste bin is provided at the Market Hall for traders to dispose of food waste where separated from general waste. Organic waste is separated at the cemetery and composted onsite e.g. flowers are collected and composted. Allotment holders compost majority of waste on site. The Town Ranger composts or mulches generated green waste.

There is no organic waste/composting at the Council Offices or Chapel.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Install compost bin at Council Offices to compost green waste and food waste generated in the Council Offices².

BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN SPACES

² A 'Green Joanna' compost bin is designed to enable home composting of cooked food.

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF KNUTSFORD'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACES

Baseline

The council's nature action plan is actively enhancing open spaces and the council has supported the creation of new Friends groups for two woodlands. The council regularly supports groups working to improve open spaces.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Consider any projects which would contribute towards this aim
- Obtain the Green Flag award for the cemetery

SUPPORT THE CONSERVATION OF TREES, HEDGEROWS, PONDS AND STREAMS

Baseline

The council undertakes regular tree surveys of its trees and undertakes works as required. Through the Planning Committee the council comments on all tree work applications and seeks to influence CEC.

During the year the council has kickstarted the formation of new Friends groups for College Woods and St John's Wood.

Through the Nature Action Plan mature trees are being surveyed and potential candidates for TPOs identified.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- None.

MANAGE GREEN SPACES TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT BIODIVERSITY

Baseline

Bug hotels were created at Wallwood and Higher Town Green and bird/bat boxes installed at the council's open spaces. Wood from felled trees/limbs has been left to decompose at Higher Town Green. The council has introduced wildflower meadows and strips at a number of sites. Big Bulb Plant initiative will increase number of spring flowers in 2022.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Consider the enhancement of biodiversity at the council's open spaces as part of developing site management plans
- Identify additional sites for wildflower planting

MINIMISE THE USE OF CHEMICAL PESTICIDES AND HERBICIDES

Baseline

The Town Ranger uses herbicides to control weed growth in the town centre. Some herbicides occasionally used at cemetery e.g. to prevent stumps regrowing.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate alternatives to herbicides

ENSURE ITS PLANNING SCHEMES ARE PREDOMINANTLY POLLINATOR FRIENDLY PERENNIAL FLOWERS

Baseline

The planting schemes at the Council Offices (currently ANSA) are predominantly annual. The initial planting schemes at the cemetery were all annuals. The hanging basket/barrier planters are annuals.

The planned planting scheme for the new cremation garden will predominantly be perennial.

Knutsford In Bloom planting schemes are predominantly perennial.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Introduce perennial plants into cemetery flower beds in 2022
- Introduce perennial plants into Council Offices flower beds once Town Council is responsible

FOSSIL FUELS

MINIMISE USE OF FOSSIL FUELS AT EVENTS

Baseline

Some gas use at events (e.g. BBQs) and at the Christmas Market for food traders although there are limited alternatives. Diesel generators used at Christmas Market, Music Festival and Pumpkin Path. Park and Ride system in place at Christmas Market although uses diesel bus.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Work with contractors to use alternatives to diesel generators where possible

MINIMISE UNNECESSARY CAR JOURNEYS ON COUNCIL BUSINESS

Baseline

Increased number of working meetings held using Zoom/Teams in place of physical; use of hybrid/remote meetings for working groups reduces member car journeys.

Public transport promoting for officer journeys (e.g. training) where this is practical.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- None.

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, CYCLING AND WALKING

Baseline

There is no cycle parking at the Council Offices, cemetery or Market Hall. Event publicity promotes public transport.

Mayor's Ball can occasionally be held at out-of-town venues requiring car travel and Remembrance Sunday involves multiple car journeys to different venues.

The council lobbies for improvements to railway services and has supported organisations such as Cycle Knutsford in the promotion of cycling. The council published and promotes a cycle map and is working with Cycle Knutsford to promote the Revolution route.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate provision of cycle parking at the cemetery
- Progress project to increase number of cycle shelters in the town centre
- Identify additional opportunities for improving/promoting walking/cycling within the town

PROCURE ELECTRIC TOOLS/VEHICLES FOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE WHERE IT IS VIABLE TO DO SO

Baseline

The council's van is diesel and the council's grounds maintenance tools and lawnmowers are petrol. The council uses 300L of petrol at the cemetery and 108L petrol and 766L diesel for the Town Ranger service. As new / replacement items are required the council would look to procure electric where feasible.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Investigate electric replacements if any tools require replacement during 2022

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

PROCURE GOODS AND SERVICES LOCALLY WHERE REQUIREMENTS FOR VALUE AND QUALITY ARE MET

Baseline

The council prioritises procurement from local businesses where they are economically competitive; this is always carefully balanced with the need to prudently manage public finances.

Flowers are purchased from Knutsford nurseries and the council always approaches local contractors first. Tendering processes are designed to provide advantage to local suppliers in a cascade of Knutsford > Cheshire > North West.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- None

PROCURE FSC CERTIFIED TIMBER

Baseline

The council has reused wood from felled trees/limbs. Wood purchased for incidental Town Ranger jobs is primarily from Travis Perkins where 98% of timber is FSC certified.

Status of wood uses for Flowers in Wallwood initiative unknown.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Confirm sustainability of wood used in Flowers of Wallwood

AWARENESS, LOBBYING AND PARTNERSHIPS

ENCOURAGE PARTNER ORGANISATIONS TO MEET THESE ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

Baseline

Supply chain for businesses used by the council is uncertain, for example it is unknown to what extent individual businesses in Taste Knutsford buy local.

The council works with a range of partners which work towards the overall improvement of the local environment.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Ascertain the extent to which supply chain businesses also utilise local businesses.

- Increase awareness of the Knutsford Schools Award for Sustainability

PROMOTE THE AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Baseline

Through the Nature Action Plan the council has been promoting awareness of biodiversity and ecology. In principle agreement to establish a Climate Emergency working group which will further engage the wider community in local environmental initiatives.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Establish the Climate Emergency working group
- Identify a project that could be delivered with the Knutsford and District Schools Council to further this aim

SUPPORT AND INITIATE PROJECTS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS MEETING THESE ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES ACROSS THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Baseline

The council has previously instigated a ReFill scheme (shops refilling water bottles) to reduce single use plastic use.

Areas for Improvement in 2022

- Reinvigorate ReFill scheme
- Lobby Cheshire East Council to include recycling bins within in the town centre