



East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum Meeting

Water Sustainability

Wednesday 17th March 2021: 10:30am – 12:00pm via Zoom

Introduction

Cllr Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

Cllr McAndrew introduced the meeting, explained its format and summarised the content and actions resulting from the Biodiversity Forum meeting in January. Notes of this meeting can be found on the East Herts website alongside a copy of the [East Herts Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan](#).

The Action Plan has doubled in size since January to over 120 lines, extending the terms of reference to include many other, interrelated deliverables contributing to climate and the environment.

The Environmental Sustainability web pages now also includes a 'getting involved' calendar of events providing suggested ways for local community to participate with East Herts, other local or national sustainability, environmental and climate events each month. March will see us promote the East Herts Food Waste campaign and Growth & Transport Plans and publish the Sustainable Planning Document (SPD) which has now passed full Council.

Cllr McAndrew then introduced the topic of this Forum - Water Sustainability, and the event speakers:

- David Thorogood - Environmental Sustainability Co-Ordinator at East Herts Council, presenting an update on the East Herts Action Plan
- Victoria Nevin – Demand Management programme Manager from Affinity Water, presenting the principles of Demand Management, how Demand Reduction supports sustainability and some of the key initiatives that Affinity Water are launching this year with water consumption reduction in mind.
- David Thorogood, presenting the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, Strategic Action Plan for Water Sustainability

East Herts Environmental Sustainability Action Plan

David Thorogood, Environmental Sustainability Co-Ordinator, East Herts Council

Action plan review

The Action Plan has come about in order to deliver the aspirations of the East Herts Climate Change Motion. It is divided into 3 sections – changes to Council’s own people, premises and service; using regulatory powers to promote action by others, and influencing and encouraging others to do things.

The terms of reference have now been expanded to include waste & recycling, land use, agriculture and biodiversity, energy and water consumption, housing and planning, business and economic development and transport. This now represents the interconnectedness of all sustainability actions towards the carbon reduction and environmental improvement effort.

The plan has been completely reordered and numbered, making for more sensible positioning of actions and sub-actions. Progress and carbon reduction will be measured against each action. This new version will be published in the next few weeks.

Actions and progress to note:

- Training officers and Members in climate change and carbon reduction is now underway in 2-hour, bite-size sessions. The officer training phase will complete at the end of May with Members commencing shortly after. This delivers one of the nine main East Herts Climate Declaration commitments.
- Wallfields – The one-line objective to ‘improve energy efficiency’ is now split into sub actions so progress and carbon contributions can be measured and reported.
- Buntingford – Our waste and recycling depot is nearing completion of its LED lighting refresh
- Procurement of energy - From April the Council is switching to “low carbon” electricity. The original objective to switch 4 contracts has been extended to 19 contracts now changed. A few sites are on older contracts, but these are single metered contracts, such as market stall electricity provision so the new contracts take in 95% of the East Herts facilities estate. The Council will continue to monitor options for switching to other low carbon/renewable energy sources as they arise.
- Grange Paddocks and Hartham – sub actions are now created to track progress and measure each sustainability related enhancement as works on these leisure facilities progress. For example, the tender process is now complete and Environmental Sustainability has been a large part of that.
- Biodiversity – this topic is now included and will expand as elements of the HCCSP Biodiversity Action Plan relating to East Herts is also included. Actions taken from the last Forum are also captured across the relevant sections. This is a wide-ranging action topic so more opportunities will be captured and added over time.
- Section 2, use of regulatory powers – the Sustainability Planning Document (SPD) was formally approved on 2nd March and is available on the East Herts website. Planning colleagues have now started work on other related documents including the Vehicle Parking SPD which will update considerations around electric car charging, for example.
- Results from a survey of property developers on opportunities and threats to sustainable development are now being taken forward into engagement and training-based actions.
- Opportunities to optimise S106 payments from developers into sustainable deliverables are underway.

- Anti-idling signs will be installed in various East Herts carparks
- Recognising that East Herts has significant agricultural land coverage, a Rural Round Table has been established, bringing together key landholders and farmers. East Herts will be working with them to understand their issues and needs in order to help them build on their already considerable environmental and carbon saving efforts.

Demand Management

Victoria Nevin, Demand Management Programme Manager

Affinity Water

Victoria works in the Demand Management team at Affinity Water – the team responsible for encouraging Affinity customers to support water efficiency initiatives. Reducing customer wastage ensures Affinity Water can provide high quality drinking water whilst taking care of the community environment. Victoria oversees the development and delivery of multiple projects influencing customer behaviour and providing water efficiency devices to reduce overall usage. These are delivered alongside Affinity Water’s metering programme to balance and manage demand across the network.

Affinity covers the East Herts area with drinking water, while waste water supply is provided by either Thames or Anglian.

Highlight from the presentation include:

- Demand Management is the holistic management of customer behaviour, water abstraction, water leakage and all points of supply. This is often referred to as Water Efficiency and Household Consumption by others water suppliers.
- East Herts has a drinking water Per Capita Consumption (PCC) of 151.95 litres per day – PCC being a standard performance measure by which water consumption is monitored. A ‘Good’ level of consumption is 130-135 litres/day, 170 is poor. 110 can be easily achieved with rainwater harvesting or grey-water recycling.
- Affinity is one of the worst performing companies against this metric (19th/20). The company is keen to improve this ranking and sees it as an important opportunity.
- A 12.5% PCC KPI reduction target has been set between now and 2025. This will be the largest jump of any company in the industry. Addressing the challenge will require improvements to the whole water cycle. As an example, an above average, 20% reduction in water leakage is also a target.
- By 2025, Affinity aims to have an 80% water-meter penetration. This will provide more data for analysis as well as encourage behaviour change since consumption noticeably reduces after installation.
- Environmental challenges are a key factor with dryer winters and hotter summers resulting in the SE England being declared a water scarce area. This all adds to the pressures on the network.
- COVID has had a big impact. East Herts is prime commuter-belt and staying at home is resulting in greater water usage. Demand patterns have shifted across the network – Thames’ consumption has reduced, for example.
- Population increases also need to be accounted for with 220,000 additional properties in the area anticipated in the next 5 years.

- Affinity's Demand Management business objectives ensure customers will continue to have enough water while leaving enough in the environment.

Looking then at broader environmental concerns, Victoria spoke about:

- how Affinity's objectives fit with Government regulations with water also on the agenda for the National Infrastructure Commission, Department for Energy Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26).
- low carbon challenges - Affinity is targeting savings of ~30 tCO₂e savings from their activities by 2025.
- the amount of water taken from the environment, addressed by:
 - reducing the amount of water taken from underground sources (aquifers) by 36 million litres of water per day by 2025 and reducing abstraction from environmentally sensitive sites when flows or levels are low.
 - protecting chalk streams – England is home to 85% of the world's chalk streams. 10% are in the Affinity supply area.

Measures to be taken include:

- Home water efficiency checks via technicians visiting homes, checking leaks and advising on water efficiency devices such as shower heads and tap fittings.
- A 'Save Our Streams' campaign to be launched in 2021 targeting areas of high consumption.
- Establishing efficient communities bringing schools, stadiums and commercial users into the mix
- Establishing partnerships with East Herts and the Wildlife Trust, for example, and collaboration with other water companies.

Victoria concluded with some simple 'take away' water efficiency measure such as turning off the tap whilst brushing teeth (2 minutes on full tap saves 10 litres), dual flush button toilets and filling up the kettle to what you need. The key is to avoid wastage not 'reduce required consumption'.

Strategic Action Plan for Water Sustainability

David Thorogood, Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)

David provided an overview of HCCSP, this being a high level councillor led partnership of all the Hertfordshire district authorities along with the County Council and the Herts Local Economic Partnership. It has been working together for over 10 months with the objective 'to deliver more than the sum of its parts'. Its specific focus is to achieve cross Hertfordshire carbon emissions reduction along with developing climate change mitigation and adaption measures in order to help meet our climate change targets.

Climate change and sustainability actions are currently being addressed through 4 theme groups: water; biodiversity; carbon assessment & reduction, and transport. The first of the theme groups, water, has now prepared an initial action plan. This aims to help address the high levels of water consumption and abstraction in Hertfordshire, and the impacts of draught and flooding.

There are 25 actions in the current draft plan, covering cross-cutting issues across the whole of Hertfordshire.

Picking out example actions, David explained how the plan:

- seeks to optimise engagement and delivery with partners
- addresses sustainable urban drainage issues such as that caused by run off
- will address the relationship between water and building regulations by working more closely with water companies on local plan development
- will include water consumption considerations in local SPDs (which East Herts has already completed)
- encourages more co-ordination between local and county planning offices on day-to-day business
- develops actions to influence and facilitate change by others such as water education in schools, public information water performance dashboards and pursuing grant applications.
- considers the high energy usage and carbon impact of water consumption

Some of the HCCSP actions will be delivered as part of the various district Climate Action Plans. David confirmed that relevant actions will be incorporated into the East Herts Environmental Sustainability Action Plan and will be published, along with the final HCCSP Water Strategy on the East Herts and HCCSP websites respectively, in the early summer.

Q&A

Cllr McAndrew chaired a Q&A session where the panel responded to attendee questions.

Themes covered community engagement; public water consumption dashboards; water quality, pollution and monitoring; bathing water quality initiatives; run off; disproportionate water consumption and 'offending' business types; supply sources from different places in the UK (and monitoring consequences); water pricing; population growth; chalk streams; government lobbying; new technologies and own-collected water in agricultural irrigation.

Close

Cllr McAndrew thanked everyone for attending and for their active participation. He reiterated that all comments from the meeting are taken on board and are considered for inclusion on the East Herts Action Plan: He urged all to keep in contact and confirmed that a summary of the meeting will be shared on the East Herts website Environmental Sustainability page.

The next Forum meeting date was noted as follows:

Tuesday 25th May, 14:30 – 16:00pm via Zoom