



Council Briefing Note 17th April 2024

CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY PORTFOLIO - COUNCILLOR ADRIAN ENGLAND

Dacorum CAN - we are saving waste, saving CO₂, and saving money.

Each month the numbers coming in give more cause for concern. In the first quarter of 2024 global average temperatures in each month broke previous monthly records. Each degree higher (we are now around 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial norm) means 7% more water can be held – and dropped – by the air.

The world is changing, but we can make that change significantly easier for people by doing the “no-regrets” decisions – though Government investment is long overdue essential. Money for solar panels on the sports centres – really welcome - could have been saving the economy consumption, therefore money and carbon, for years before now; proper support for a decent bus network and a faster switch to EVs would save UK motorists on vehicle purchase and running costs – especially for the unnecessary second and third cars.

- [Climate and Nature Bill](#) – Dacorum are officially supporting Zero Hour’s Climate and Ecology Bill – a plan for a new UK law that addresses the full extent of the climate and nature crisis in line with the most up-to-date science.
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 2 - we are on site at 30 properties. Blackwell road, Kings Langley, completed earlier in April, and Curtis Way, Berkhamsted, scheduled to complete in May. The second phase of 45 homes will roll on from this, starting in Summer in Berkhamsted, Wigginton, and Tring.
- £22.4M has been allocated in the approved HRA business plan to achieve EPC C by 2035 in all social homes. A high-level plan has been put together for 24/25 and £1m allocated for this first year. During the first 5 years of the programme a balanced and targeted approach is being taken, prioritising those in fuel poverty, off gas grid properties, solid wall properties and system build/non-traditional properties.
- The Communities and Leisure Team were successful in a bid for £630,000 for the installation of solar panels at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre. The solar panels are estimated to generate 360kWh watts of renewable energy, which will play a significant part in reducing the leisure centre’s carbon footprint as well as lowering energy bills.
- Public engagement complete on LCWIP closed on 26th Feb. We had 269 responses on cycling map and 359 on walking map, majority from over 40s. The team are working on targeting youth groups and schools to obtain more diverse responses as well as analysing current responses. HCC and consultants WSP will be undertaking route audits in April before a prioritisation exercise takes place to inform the draft plan.
- The Council are currently exploring the feasibility of the provision of E-bikes with careful consideration of scheme size opportunities and risks. Work is taking place to develop the requirements for the scheme and this will be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet in June.

- A green screen will be installed in Nash Mills School this month. The new plant barrier is designed to reduce particulate pollution, and improve air quality, provide more privacy and improve wellbeing for those attending the school.
- Following creation of new wildflower meadow spaces over the winter, they are now being prepared ahead of spring growth.
- New wild honey bee hives installed, one in the Water Gardens, and two in Gadebridge Park. Bat boxes have also been installed in Water Gardens
- Tree and hedge planting – 1,000 whips have been planted at Bunkers Park in Pond Field this March, I joined a volunteer work party on 16th March to assist this project. This is year 4 of the councils current 5-year tree planting strategy which has seen 3500 whips being planted, with 1000 planned for the final year, next year. Two tree planting days were held recently, one with local volunteers and one with Henkel, a local business.

The Council now uses plastic free materials in tree planting, apart from the impermeable hydration bag needed for larger trees. There is currently no plastic-free alternative on the market for the hydration bag, but new products emerge every year.

- River restoration - The restoration of the river Gade, in Gadebridge Park, is funded, and the Environment Agency is going through internal governance procedures before getting shovels in the ground later in 2024. The river Bulbourne project, led by Affinity Water, is at an earlier stage. Affinity is producing more detailed plans for the stretch of the river in question.
- Rapid EV charging points are live at 5 sites, with Leverstock Green shops proving popular. Langley Hill fast charger and the charging hub are under construction and St John's Well Lane planned for install this month.

Fast chargers have been installed in 15 of 16 sites and the 16th, Water Gardens North is in progress, all sites to be installed by end of this month. The 'go-live' dates for the fast chargers are forecast for June due to lead in times with UK Power Networks.

- LEVI EV charging points - HCC are analysing mapping tools to determine suitable locations. They are prioritising residential areas, looking at footway access, the many resident requests are being mapped and taken into account, as well as the aim for residents to be within a 5 minute walk from a charge point. The team are conducting site visits in addition to this. HCC plan to send all districts and boroughs the partnership agreement to sign this month.
- Electric vehicles – DBC are trialling different electric vehicles to understand which are most suited for different routes and the drivers. So far we have trialled a refuse collection vehicle and a cage tipper. The trials are promising and show potential for the transition to an electric fleet.