

# AREAS OF THEMATIC ACTION



# Taking Climate Action and Air Quality Action Together

Climate change is one of the most serious problems facing humanity, with its effects worsening every week, month, and year. It is essential to tackle our greenhouse gas emissions in the borough to mitigate climate impacts today and ensure a liveable world for future generations. Most actions on climate change also help reduce air pollution. The Council has developed an extensive action plan to deliver such improvements, as well as developing a new Climate Emergency Strategy. This is due for completion in 2025 and will cover 2025-2030.

## Carbon Neutral Council by 2030

The Council intends to be Carbon Neutral by 2030. By 2024, Richmond had reduced its emissions by 3/5ths since 2017 and was one of 119 towns and cities in the world on the Carbon Disclosure Project 'A' list. This was delivered through initiatives like Warm Home Packs, revisions to the Local Plan, BlueScapes projects and the Air Quality Action Plan. To build on this success and achieve our 2030 goals, we are developing a Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025-2030. This will also address the ecological challenges we are facing as a borough, accelerate our pathway towards becoming a Net Zero borough by 2043, and build our adaptation and resilience towards the effects of climate change.

Reducing local combustion by improving building energy efficiency, installing solar hot water panels and replacing gas boilers with heat pumps and increasing proportions of active travel or electric vehicles all directly benefit local air quality. Reducing grid electricity consumption lowers the demand for coal, gas, and biomass power stations, which contribute to air pollution that can be blown into our area on the wind.



## Reducing emissions from our buildings

Reducing emissions from Council buildings will help make the Council Carbon Neutral by 2030. This will be delivered by retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency and replacing heating systems with low emission alternatives, including in our leisure facilities and buildings we lease. And we will seek additional funding to support the decarbonisation of buildings and our swimming pools.

## Replacing our fleet with EVs

To eliminate emissions from our vehicle fleet, our decarbonisation plan will replace end-of-life vehicles with EVs, enabled by charging infrastructure and defined replacement schedules.

## Training and more sustainable transport options for Council staff

We will strengthen our support for sustainable travel for staff, including with the cycle-to-work scheme, season ticket loans, and EV leasing schemes. We will also provide carbon literacy training for all staff and councillors.

## Energy efficiency for low income households

We are implementing a series of energy efficiency schemes to support low-income households and those in homes with poor energy efficiency. This includes securing more funding from the Government and Green Finance sources and providing advice to residents on improving energy efficiency and reducing bills. The new Local Plan, set for adoption in winter 2024/25, will include improved planning requirements on climate change.

## Retrofit Skills Training for Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction

We are increasing the provision of retrofit skills and training to ensure we have skilled personnel for installing energy efficiency and carbon reduction systems.

## Sustainability Network to Support Local Businesses

A new sustainability network comprising the Council and local businesses will run events and training on the zero emissions transition. Events like the Richmond Sustainability Forum facilitates knowledge sharing, networking, and increased local action among public sector partners, businesses, and community groups. Along with our Making Businesses Greener service, which identifies tangible cost savings from energy efficiency, these will support local businesses in improving their energy efficiency and emissions.



# Active Travel and Transport

**In years to come, we expect other sources of air pollution to increase in importance, but for now vehicles remain a major source of pollution in Richmond, with areas along roads experiencing some of the highest air pollution levels. To address this we will both promote active travel and the transition of local vehicle fleets to EVs, as well as a long term plan to reduce vehicle-kilometres travelled. In 2019 we set out our road user hierarchy that prioritises active travel which continues to guide our policy, plans and implementation. This helps put into practice the Healthy Streets principles developed for London but increasingly used Worldwide, and which underpin our thinking on all new street design. And we are developing a new transport strategy that will include air quality as a key consideration. This recognises that current levels of vehicle-kilometres driven are unsustainable so we have targeted a 5-10% reduction in vehicle-km by 2041.**

## Bus route electrification

An important measure will be our work to promote bus route electrification by Transport for London (TfL). They have already electrified the buses on the 33, 65, 111, 265, 281, 290, 371 and R70 routes. But we think TfL can do better than this in terms of health and air pollution outcomes through more careful planning. Our goal is to maximise the benefits to our air pollution hotspots by prioritising the upgrade of bus routes that service multiple town centres and that can be upgraded quickly, rather than TfL's current approach.

Our bus upgrade prioritisation plan targets reductions in Richmond and Twickenham town centres and Upper Richmond Road West. It includes upgrading the 190, H22, 337, 419, 493, 533 and R68 buses by 2029. We recognise the limitations placed on TfL by their existing contractual obligations with bus companies but will press to replace fleets early where needed. We also recognise TfL's financial pressures and the challenges they face in delivering electrification without more Government financial support. So we will support them in their efforts to obtain additional funding for electric buses.

Buses must also provide a good quality and frequent service. We will work with TfL and operators to ensure this remains the case.



## Better and more facilities for active travel

Walking and cycling are crucial for improving health and reducing air pollution from motor vehicles. We will roll out additional safety and comfort improvements to footpaths and cycle paths throughout the borough, particularly in Richmond Town and Twickenham. This year alone we will install at least 33 new bike hangars across the borough and create a cycle parking hub with 700 spaces in Richmond Town (see box), as well as 500 new short term cycle stands across the borough over coming years. We will continue our Good Move scheme offering bike trials, car club membership and Oyster cards to residents who are scrapping a non ULEZ compliant vehicle. And we will continue our popular cycle training scheme, which help cyclists develop confidence in cycle use and road safety.

### Bicycle Superhub at Richmond Station

A new multi-storey bicycle superhub will be built at Richmond Station, offering secure parking for up to 700 bicycles. This will provide a safe place for cyclists to securely store their bikes at the station, as well as offering facilities for bike maintenance. By encouraging more residents to choose active travel and public transport, it will reduce car dependency, alleviate congestion, and improve local air quality.



## E-bike, e-cargo bike and delivery management schemes

To increase bicycle accessibility we'll offer affordable rentals of standard, electric, and cargo bikes. E-bikes will assist those who need help pedalling, while cargo bikes will enable quick, cheap transport of large items. And we will test the feasibility of an e-cargo bike waste collection scheme for businesses.

## Delivery lockers and consolidation

To mitigate pollution from the growing number of home deliveries, we will work on setting up new delivery lockers or consolidation hubs and consult residents on expanding the use of collection points and parcel lockers, especially at transport hubs and residential areas.

## EV charging points and power supply for traders

In addition to the 525 new EV chargers recently installed, we will install at least 200 more this year and more in years to come. This includes trialling EV-only parking bays and on-street cable gullies. And we will bid for more funding to expand the availability of chargers, especially fast chargers. We will collaborate with UK Power Networks to install power supplies for traders, such as those completed at Hampton Court Bridge, and major events and support more charging off-street, delivering it ourselves where possible. We will ensure our new car club operator uses only the cleanest vehicles and makes plenty of EVs available, and keep under review schemes like Co-Charger that encourage residents to share their chargers.

## Action on engine idling

Our regular idling action events, which are supported by residents and councillors, will continue to run, especially at our target hotspot locations. Our Parking Officers continue to do excellent work intervening and offering advice to motorists, but this is not enough, we will therefore aim to reinforce idling action at these locations by new powers through Public Service Protection Orders.

# Planning and Development

Emissions from gas heating in buildings, as well as other sources like wood fires, make up a significant proportion of local air pollution. To reduce these we will work with developers through our new Local Plan and other measures to eliminate sources of air pollution.

## New Local Plan and Development Control

Our new Local Plan is central to delivering long term reductions in air pollution and climate emissions, by requiring the elimination of emissions from new developments, or as buildings are replaced, refurbished or upgraded. Over time insulation and replacement of gas heating with heat pumps will eliminate heating emissions. In listed or conserved buildings this can be a challenge so we will work on tailored approaches to financing and retrofitting them.

## Development Control

How and where we prioritise construction and access to developments helps us to reduce dependence on cars and helps people get around on foot or by bike. It allows us to seek mitigation when new homes are built near sources of air pollution like busy roads. Enabling the installation of delivery lockers at transport hub locations and near housing estates will help to reduce the emissions impacts of online shopping and make them safer and more convenient to receive. And developers will be required to meet the local standards we have set for NO<sub>2</sub> of 20µg/m<sup>3</sup> as well as Mayor of London's 10µg/m<sup>3</sup> PM<sub>2.5</sub> limit. We will update the AQ Supplementary Planning Document to this effect at the next opportunity.

## Study whether emissions based schemes are needed

We will carefully consider the environmental impact, public acceptance, and economic considerations associated with Controlled Parking Zone variants based on emissions schemes, as these have been shown to encourage the adoption of cleaner vehicles. To date we do not believe our goals in the borough require them but it is sensible to at least examine their possible benefits and downsides.



## Reducing emissions during construction

Construction site machinery, or Non-Road Mobile Machinery, are a substantial source of air pollution. Our air quality team are acknowledged leaders in London and the UK on reducing emissions from this machinery. Working with the Greater London Authority, we will implement new requirements that machinery are compliant with Stage IV emissions regulations by 2025 and Stage V by 2030. And with £200,000 of new funding, work has begun to extend this to similar polluting equipment in services like roadworks, waste sites and public events. As emissions standards become tighter we will help construction switch to clean site power such as electricity and hydrogen. With the right energy and fuel sources, this can complement decarbonisation efforts as well as reducing air pollution.

# Community Engagement and Education: Empowering Residents to Improve Air Quality

Engaging and informing our community is crucial to the success of our air quality initiatives. By raising awareness, promoting sustainable practices, and encouraging behaviour change, we can work together to create a healthier environment for all. To achieve this, we plan a comprehensive programme of communications about air quality in the borough, including the following key projects to involve and empower our residents.

## Working with the NHS and schools

As described earlier, we will work with schools and the NHS to provide training and events that cascade understanding of air quality sources and how to minimise exposure. This aims to support the people in our communities most vulnerable to air pollution.

## Rating and Award Scheme for Commercial Kitchens

We will establish a rating and award scheme for restaurants and commercial kitchens to highlight their progress in reducing emissions of NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> from their operations.



## Clean Air and Sustainability Events

We will hold air quality, active travel and information events on Clean Air Day, Car Free Day and the Richmond Ideas and Arts Festival. These provide opportunities to reach out to the community, share information about air quality, and inspire people to act. Practical support like free bike maintenance is also included. We will use these to highlight the importance of clean air, showcase our work to address pollution, and encourage residents to adopt environmentally friendly practices in their daily lives. These events are an excellent opportunity to organize a Summer Play Street, allowing children to play safely in the street.

## Tackling Vehicle Emissions from Engine Idling

Idling is unnecessary and the traditional behaviour change approaches do not seem to be working. The legislation is weak and desperately needs to be reviewed so we will lobby government for a better system. We will continue our regular monthly events across the borough at idling hotspots where people can be exposed. This includes railway level crossings, outside schools, at railway and bus stations, and supermarkets, and wherever possible involving community volunteers. We will take this further as part of the Pan-London Idling project focused on:

- lobbying for improved legislation and LA powers to enforce;
- best practice sharing;
- campaigns to engage drivers; and
- engagement with logistics companies and driving instructors as part of pan-London work with other Councils.

We will introduce a new last-resort fine for engine-idling using newly introduced powers through Public Spaces Protection Orders. This will be used to reinforce the positive fuel and emissions saving messages from our work to change behaviours.

## Wood Burning stoves

Wood-burning stoves and fire pits are very high PM<sub>2.5</sub> air pollution emitters. Collaborating with other Councils we will educate residents on the impact of wood burning on air quality and provide guidance on their correct use and maintenance. By raising awareness and promoting best practices, we aim to reduce the negative effects of wood-burning stoves on individuals and our local air quality.

## Commercial Cooking

Emissions of PM<sub>2.5</sub> from commercial kitchens and wood-fired pizza ovens are a growing concern in London. They contribute substantially to PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels. Solutions to this issue are not well understood yet. We will coordinate with other boroughs to identify effective measures to tackle this. Meanwhile, we will ensure restaurants understand their duties and best practices. This will protect their customers and staff from high indoor air pollution and minimize emissions from their air extraction units.

## Application of Nudge Methods

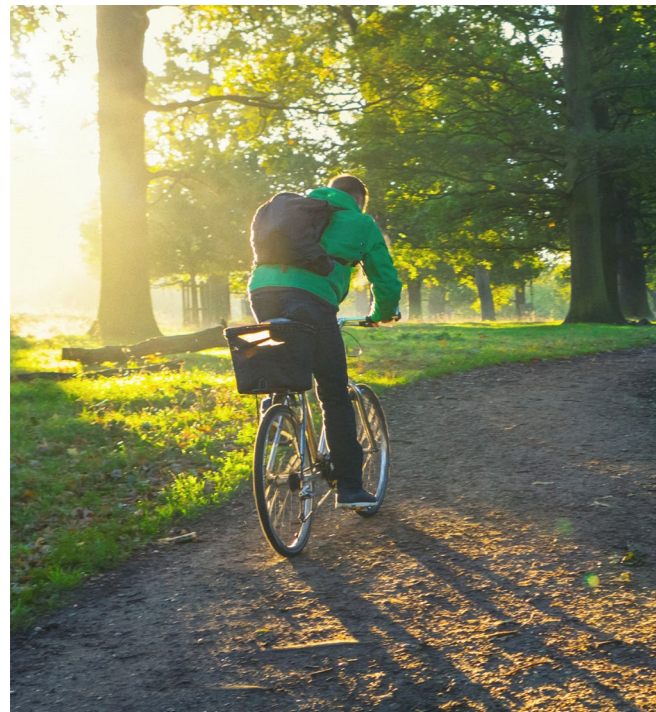
To encourage positive behaviour change, we will investigate the use of nudge methods – subtle and indirect approaches that influence people’s choices and actions. These methods may include providing information, changing the physical environment, or offering incentives to promote environmentally friendly behaviours. By carefully designing and implementing these nudges, we can guide our community towards more sustainable practices without resorting to coercive measures.

## Our Commitment to Transparency

Throughout all these initiatives, we will maintain open communication channels with our residents. We will regularly update the community on our progress, seek their input and ideas, and provide opportunities for them to get involved. By fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, we can create a strong foundation for long-term success in improving air quality.

# Our Green Spaces and Amenities

**Our green spaces and amenities are central to our enjoyment of life, activities, sports and overall health. They are also some of the lowest air pollution areas in the borough. We have plans to help you enjoy them more and to maintain the best air quality in these areas, including our strategy to get more people more active Richmond Moves for a Healthier Borough.**



## Richmond Moves for a Healthier Borough

Richmond Moves for a Healthier Borough is the Council's strategy to help people be more active. It will encourage people to make positive choices for more activity, informed by air pollution information where appropriate, always promoting the benefits of an active lifestyle. It will increase opportunities for people to be active above and beyond the provision of improved active travel infrastructure. And it makes sure local services that support active communities are accessible. This work strongly complements air quality improvement measures, as physical activity helps improve overall health, reducing vulnerability to air pollution.



## Improving Access to our Parks, Events and Amenities

The borough is gifted with 135 beautiful parks, greens, and open spaces. The lowest air pollution levels are consistently measured in our green spaces, making them perfect for activity and important clean air environments to protect. As we depend on transport to reach them, we will continue to prioritise access to these locations on foot, by bike or by public transport. Event day restrictions will also stay in place to minimise both local traffic and air pollution effects in the local areas.

## Sustainable Park Amenities and Events

Amenities like ice-cream vans and cooking stalls at regular or one-off events also emit air pollution. We will reduce this by providing electrical power supply or loan battery packs at locations and stands that are actively in use. This will eliminate the need for generators and help events become fully sustainable.

## Healthy Waterways

Our Healthy Waterways outreach and education programme works with canal and river dwellers to help them minimise air pollution. We will work on ways to establish baseline data for the number and extent of the problem among our river dwellers. We will then seek funding to help them reduce emissions and eliminate the need for combustion sources, such as providing shore supply from electric power pillars.

## Sustainable Management of Open Spaces

The Council will maintain our open spaces as centres of excellence for sustainable management, reducing the environmental impact of our operations. For air quality, this means increasing use of alternatives to fossil fuel powered equipment and vehicles. We will maximise composting of green waste to minimise transport emissions from removing waste.

## Trees

The Borough will develop a new Tree Planting Strategy, taking account of the benefits for air quality and climate. Trees and hedges are well understood to provide effective screening from air pollution sources in the right conditions, as well as absorbing the climate gases carbon dioxide and ozone, providing shelter in hot weather and absorbing some NO<sub>x</sub> and PM.

Working with our air quality team, the strategy will take account of opportunities to use trees and hedges to improve dispersal and screening of air pollutants. Key target locations, including major TfL routes, and locations with limited vegetation will be a special focus, pressuring partners like TfL where needed. We will continue to examine emerging evidence on the effectiveness of particular species at pollutant absorption. A new Tree Warden Scheme will help the community support and nurture trees in their local area, not least in helping to protect local trees during hot weather.

## Protecting our Biodiversity from Air Pollution

We have many special and important sites in the borough, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve. This includes National Priority Habitats and Species as well as those found with the Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan. These habitats and species can be harmed by air pollution, so will receive attention in the Tree Planting Strategy for how new plantings can help protect them by absorbing contaminants and providing important wildlife corridors. Maps of these habitats will be included in our future work on detailed climate and air quality risk mapping, to develop a more accurate and detailed risk estimate for future work.

# The Future of Air Pollution in Richmond upon Thames

The goal of reducing the adverse health effects of air pollution has repeatedly been driven by new and emerging evidence and events. This ranges from new scientific understanding of the effects of PM<sub>2.5</sub> on cardiovascular health, low birth weight and dementia, to measurements showing how much cooking can affect air pollution in London, to events such as in the VW “Dieselgate” emissions scandal. As a leader in UK air quality, the Council understands the importance of looking ahead to eliminate air pollution long-term. Our monitoring of emerging issues has identified the following issues and actions we will take, in particular pushing for a national approach to adopting the WHO guidelines.

## Pressing for tighter national targets based on WHO guidelines

By adopting the WHO interim targets on air quality, the country can reduce the amount of disease caused by air pollution, saving lives and costs to the NHS. Getting air pollution even lower towards the WHO final targets will not be trivial, even if we approach or achieve these levels at times in places like our borough. We will press the Government and the Greater London Authority to adopt our progressive approach. This will reduce disease across the country and help share the effort needed to achieve this important health goal.



## Crematoria

Losing our loved ones is often one of the most difficult moments in our lives. While we carefully manage air pollution from our crematoria, residents increasingly seek more environmentally friendly options, like water-based disposal and other nature friendly options. We are studying how best to implement methods in the borough.

## Monitoring for new pollutants and science, such as EV particulates

Ongoing scientific research continues to reveal new air pollution issues, which we will monitor and take action to mitigate if required. One such issue is whether the weight of EVs could lead to increases in PM concentrations, due to the increased frictional wear on brakes and wear and damage to road surfaces from heavier vehicles. Experimental and modelling studies currently suggest that overall PM levels will go down in cities despite the switch to EVs, while others suggest battery weights in EVs are expected to decline as the technology improves. This remains an important area of research and we will continue to monitor it, not least by installing new monitoring equipment for outdoor PM<sub>2.5</sub> in Richmond Town.

Other important topics are nanoparticles such as plastic nano-fibres, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons. These are increasingly suspected to be a cause of cancer in our urban environments. We will monitor this emerging evidence in case there's a need for action. And we will continue our work, ongoing since the early 1990s, to ensure the borough has an effective and comprehensive air quality monitoring network. This will comprise both the existing high quality, regulatory standard measurement stations, including the new regulatory standard measurement station for PM<sub>2.5</sub> at Richmond Town, our extensive diffusion tube network, including special projects such as at schools, and experimental real time sensors such as the Breathe London network, and portable indoor air pollutant measurement equipment. We are committed to sharing all our findings and research with residents.

## Protecting people from ozone and its links with climate change

Ozone is a naturally occurring gas formed by sunlight and chemical reactions with other air gases and pollutants. Its presence high in the atmosphere protects us from the Sun's ultraviolet radiation, skin cancer and safeguards nature. But when ground-level ozone forms it can cause asthma attacks and respiratory issues, especially in vulnerable individuals. It also harms plants and harms animals.

To help reduce hazards from ozone, we will work with clinicians and people who have asthma so they understand the risks associated with ozone in hot weather. They will be informed about services like airTEXT and Met Office forecasts of high ozone. They will learn how to use these to ensure they have medication ready and what are the safest times for outdoor activities.

## Heathrow Third Runway

Richmond Council opposes the expansion of Heathrow Airport with a third runway. Not only would this increase air pollution and carbon emissions, it would disrupt local life with more aircraft traffic at low altitudes over the borough. This is not only a nuisance but harms people's quality of sleep and affects their health. We will continue to work with other boroughs to resist these plans and to take account of the wider issues in play, such as airspace modernisation, so we prevent adverse impacts on our residents.

## Hammersmith Bridge

Hammersmith Bridge Road is a GLA Air Quality Focus area, but while the bridge remains closed air quality emissions remain lower. The full reopening of Hammersmith Bridge would improve cross-river car and bus transport but would also significantly increase air pollution in some localities. Plans are still in development by London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham to implement their programmes to stabilise, strengthen and restore the bridge. We will monitor air pollution levels in the area to establish the new local baselines to prepare for any new risks, especially considering our new local air pollution targets.