

District Councillor Report – Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye, November 2024

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Every responsible authority (in our case the County Council) is required by law to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

SODC is a member of the Local Nature Partnership, to which this responsibility has been delegated, and there have been a number of workshops involving large numbers of stakeholders over the past 18 months or so.

The final draft LNRS has been available for public consultation **for six weeks from 15th October**. The link is here:

[**Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) survey - phase 1 | Let's Talk Oxfordshire**](#)

Council tax on empty homes – possible changes

We are consulting about decreasing the time a home qualifies as empty for the purpose of the council tax premium. This is part of a policy approach to ensure homes are not left empty for long periods to help address the housing crisis.

Please see the link below if you would like to respond, and the consultation ends on 26th November:

[**Proposed changes to the additional Council Tax charge for long-term empty properties - South Oxfordshire District Council - Join the conversation - South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse - Citizen Space**](#)

SODC has reviewed its Net Zero Targets

- **Review of the 2025 Operational Net Zero Target.**

The Cabinet has adopted a revised operational net zero target of 2030.

While we recognise the significant progress made in reducing the council's operational carbon emissions, these have reduced by 19 per cent since the council's Climate Action Plan baseline year of 2019/20 and by 52 per cent since Greenhouse Gas reporting commenced in 2009/10, there are still issues that mean we will not reach the (very ambitious) initial target of 2025.

- **Review of the 2030 District Net-Zero Carbon Target**

Cabinet has formally recognised that the aspirational target of being a net zero carbon district by 2030 cannot be met.

Cabinet commits to a new but still ambitious target of 2045 for reaching net zero carbon for the district, and to work within our sphere of influence to accelerate this decarbonisation as much as possible, in particular by working in partnership to deliver the [Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan](#).

We have joined **UK100** as part of our efforts to accelerate our work and address where we can, some of the barriers and challenges. Members of UK100 share best practice and details of successful projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards net zero.

The council has already made good progress – for example:

- buys electricity for its buildings (such as council offices and its arts centre) that is from 100 per cent renewable energy sources
- has a programme of installing solar panels and air source heat pumps at its leisure centres in Didcot, Thame and Wheatley and its arts centre, Cornerstone, enabled by various funding sources including the council's budget, the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and Swimming Pool Support Fund
- has had 62 EV chargers installed at its car parks
- has ordered an electric food truck for the waste collections fleet
- has given grants for many community climate and nature recovery projects through its grants programme
- has regularly lobbied government on climate change and nature recovery actions
- has supported cultural organisations with their climate change ambitions by supporting Green Arts Oxfordshire and its carbon literacy training programme
- Has adopted a new waste strategy which includes objectives to reduce all waste and therefore impact on the environment.

Councillor Community Grant

There are only a few weeks left until the deadline for applications for the latest round of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme. All applications must be completed by midday **Friday 29th November**.

Please get any applications in quickly, but do let me know first what you are planning! If you have any questions, email the [Community Enablement Team](#).

Christmas highlights at Cornerstone

This December, Cornerstone Arts Centre is offering festive shows for everyone:

Hundred Watt Club (5th December): A cheeky, vintage-inspired burlesque and cabaret show with plenty of laughs, sparkle, and circus acts. Perfect for a memorable night out with friends — adults only!

Oxford Gospel Choir (7th December): Kick off Christmas with soul-stirring gospel and holiday tunes, supporting Camerados. Get ready to clap, sing, and celebrate.

An Elf Advent-ure (8th December): A sensory theatre experience for ages 0–3, as little ones join ‘Elf’ in a magical countdown to Christmas, full of festive sights and sounds.

Cinderella Pantomime (18th–31st December): KD Theatre Productions presents Cinderella, a magical pantomime filled with comedy, enchanting characters, and lavish costumes. Don’t miss the discounted Preview Night on 18th December!

As ever, if you have any questions or issues you would like to contact me about:

sam.casey-rerhaye@southoxon.gov.uk

Or leave a message for me on 01235 635566.