

2025 Environmental POLICY



MARLOW
TOWN COUNCIL



Environmental Policy

Adopted: 2025

Review date: 2026

1. Introduction

This policy outlines Marlow Town Council's commitment to our environment. The threat posed to our community by climate change, manifested, for example, in the form of extreme weather events (flooding and drought), soil erosion and biodiversity loss requires us to take action to allow our community to continue to thrive, ensuring the wellbeing of future generations.

2. Guiding principles

Marlow Town Council will actively seek to protect and enhance the local environment and biodiversity within our area of operation, while trying to make sure our actions don't harm the environment in other places.

The Council considers that nature is vital to our residents and will comply with all relevant environmental regulations, laws and codes of practice – and try to do even better when we can.

The Council will make a positive contribution to sustainability by protecting and enhancing the local and global environment. We will promote the actions outlined in this policy and seek to influence the local community and other organisations to also follow the policy.

3. Purpose & aims

The purpose of this policy is to guide Marlow Town Council Officers, Councillors, suppliers and contractors with regard to the environmental impact of their operations.

The aims include:

- To operate within environmental legislation and prevent incidents that could result in a liability.
- To safeguard Marlow and its community and mitigate negative consequences from extreme weather events.

- To increase sustainable practices across Town Council responsibilities and Town Council assets for the benefit of the local community.
- To help people understand why a clean and healthy natural environment is important and valuable, for all species to thrive, and to support all residents and visitors in their enjoyment of it.
- To carry out our work in an efficient way that minimises or eliminates its adverse impact on our environment.
- To promote the development of a Circular Economy,¹ starting at local level.

4. Nature & wildlife

Marlow Town Council is committed to increasing opportunities for nature to thrive on the assets we own, manage or have influence over. We will support local organisations to protect and enhance nature and wildlife.

Marlow Town Council will:

- Support the conservation and enhancement of woodland, trees, hedgerows, grasslands, ponds, streams and riverside habitats, subject to hedge cutting policy, planning committee consultations or sustainable travel considerations
- Actively promote and support appropriate tree planting and maintenance.
- Support activities that promote a clean river, free of sewage, waste and other pollution, encouraging increased biodiversity and recreational use.
- Introduce natural climate mitigation solutions², such as rewilding, on Council assets where possible, and advocate, promote and support these solutions within the Town.
- Provide allotments for local residents, manage the resource effectively and promote them
- By 2026, stop the use of pesticides and herbicides on assets Marlow Town Council owns or manages (with the exception of use for the control of Schedule 9 plants under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, such as Japanese

¹ A circular economy is a system designed to minimize waste and maximize the use of resources by keeping materials in circulation through processes like reuse, repair, refurbishment, and recycling.

² Natural climate mitigation solutions are conservation, restoration, and improved land management practices that increase carbon storage or avoid greenhouse gas emissions in ecosystems. These solutions include reforestation, wetland restoration, and sustainable agriculture. They leverage nature's power to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide and enhance ecosystem resilience.

Knotweed, or where it is used to reduce material risks to asset integrity). Advocate for the phasing out of these products across the Town, including with Buckinghamshire Council and National Highways.

- Support the conservation and enhancement of designated sites such as Green Belt, Local Wildlife Sites, Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest etc.

5. Sustainable travel

Marlow Town Council will:

- Actively promote sustainable travel (e.g. walking, cycling, bus, train) options wherever reasonably possible for our Officers and Councillors. There should be no need to fly to fulfil Council duties, unless under exceptional circumstances.
- Encourage Councillors and Officers to car-share, when a car journey must be made on Council business.
- Promote and support the use of public footpaths, cycling and public transport.
- Increase and use its influence to increase opportunities for and safety of active travel across the town.
- Investigate and work with partners and other Authorities to set up low-cost, on-street electric vehicle charging points for residents.
- Work with local transport providers to ensure residents and visitors receive optimal service.

6. Water management

Marlow Town Council is committed to responsible water management and conservation throughout our operations.

Marlow Town Council will:

- Encourage officers and allotment holders to use water efficiently on Council premises
- Where possible, utilise water butts as a non-drinking water source. Promote the use of water butts across the Town.
- Promote and support nature-based solutions³ to reduce/reuse surface water run-off in the Town.

³ Nature-based solutions for managing surface water run-off use natural systems to absorb, filter, and store excess water. Examples include green roofs, which retain rainwater; permeable pavements, which allow water to seep into the ground; and rain gardens, which are depressions planted with water-loving vegetation to collect and filter run-off.

7. Waste & recycling

Marlow Town Council will:

- Keep Council waste to a minimum by preventing, reusing, repairing, recycling or recovering waste. Ensure waste is sorted, stored and disposed of appropriately on Council premises.
- Cease use of single-use plastic items by end of 2025, and minimise use of any single-use items on Council premises and events.
- Recycle all recyclable waste generated at Council premises and events.
- Promote and encourage recycling across the Town.
- Use recyclable, compostable and/or recycled products on Council premises whenever possible.
- Minimise the production of non-recyclable resources such as laminated or plastic-based publicity material
- Minimise the amount of printing and waste paper.
- Ensure we handle our waste responsibly and follow the rules in our waste agreements.
- Utilise electronic communications and run paperless meetings. Use an opt-in by exception scheme for printing paper documents. Reasonable provision of alternatives for officers and councillors can be made when requested.
- Minimise pollution from its activities and prevent where possible (including air, light, noise, solids, liquids and chemicals).
- Use composting facilities at relevant operated amenities, including allotments and the recreation ground.

8. Development

The Town Council will:

- Encourage planning applications where the applicant can demonstrate appropriate on-site biodiversity net gain.

- Encourage planning applications where the applicant can demonstrate climate and sustainability adaptations are included, e.g. rainwater management, increased energy efficiency, biodiversity-enhancing landscaping.

9. Responsible & sustainable procurement

This aspect is covered separately by the Marlow Town Council Sustainable Procurement Policy.

10. Awareness, lobbying & partnerships

Marlow Town Council will:

- Promote awareness of, and information about, environmental issues within the community.
- Support, and act as a voice for, local environmental concerns within the community.
- Ensure that all individuals involved in the organisation (including contractors) are aware of their responsibilities in complying with this environmental policy
- Work with partners, where appropriate, to follow sustainable practices within the Town.

11. Energy use

Marlow Town Council will:

- Consider and act on the findings of audits of our existing energy use. Produce a plan on how the Council's energy use can be reduced. This may require influencing the building owner(s).
- Encourage our officers to switch off electrical equipment and unnecessary lights when not in use.
- Encourage our officers to close windows and external doors when heating is on. Investigate using smart devices to achieve optimum ventilation (e.g. CO2 monitors).
- Where possible, procure energy from 100% green/renewable sources, including investigating options to generate our own energy on assets we own, manage or control.

- Encourage officers to switch off engines when vehicles are stationary or parked (no idling).
- Promote the use of green/renewable energy in the Town.

12. Circular economy

Marlow Town Council will:

- Work with partners and organisations to encourage the development of a circular economy in the Town.
- Promote and support events and activities that highlight circular economy opportunities.

13. Roles and responsibilities

- **Town Clerk:** Ensure officers' awareness and compliance with this policy.
- **All Officers and Councillors:** Abide by this Policy.

14. Monitoring & review

Marlow Town Council Officers and Councillors, will:

- Monitor to check that the Council's activities match what this policy says we should do.
- Keep track of how the Council is doing on our environmental performance and take action to fix it if something is not working well — then check to make sure the fix actually worked.
- Collaborate with partners and contractors to reduce the environmental impact of the services we and they offer.
- Review and update this policy regularly to ensure that it continues to reflect the aims and objectives of Marlow Town Council for the benefit of the Marlow community.