



Environmental Sustainability Strategy

2024-2029

**This strategy sets
our sights on becoming a
sustainability leader in the social
housing sector.**

It establishes our key environmental principles and priorities, and sets NCHA-wide targets for our Environmental Sustainability programme covering the years 2024-2029.

Our Environmental Sustainability Strategy sits alongside Our Customers, Our Places, Social Impact and Value for Money strategies at the heart of NCHA's Group Corporate Plan.

Our big sustainability challenges

This strategy sets out our environmental sustainability priorities and objectives for the next five years.

During this strategy we will **build more than 1600 new homes, retrofit more than 700 of our existing homes** and complete our **new low-carbon headquarters**. We'll make sure that all of this work reflects our values, because we know that the next five years are vital to establish a culture of sustainability for decades to come.

To support our customers

In a time of environmental, economic and social change, we'll make our homes more energy efficient and our neighbourhoods greener. We'll make the most of external partnerships and public funding to complete this extensive work.



To continually improve our business operations

As resources deplete, costs increase and environmental legislation evolves, we'll establish a comprehensive environmental management system and embed a culture of sustainability across our business.



To fulfil our social responsibilities as a Community Benefit Society.

We'll continue to build new affordable housing with continually improving energy efficiency and biodiversity standards. We'll work hard to cut our carbon footprint and resource consumption, reducing reliance on fossil fuels in our homes, offices and vehicles.

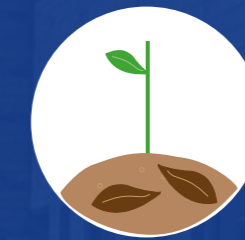


Our guiding principles



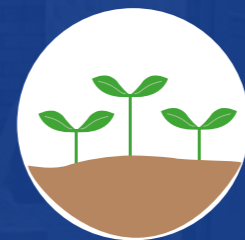
Responsibility

We'll become an environmentally sustainable organisation. We'll carefully manage our environmental impacts, making sure that sustainability is considered as part of every decision we make. We'll find opportunities to make positive environmental impacts and never support decisions that are destructive to the environment.



Resilience

We'll provide sustainable environments that help our customers to thrive. Environmental sustainability is closely linked to our social value aims. We'll continue to pursue better lives for our customers, even as the climate emergency brings new challenges.



Regeneration

We'll improve places and communities through our work. We'll provide new homes on unused and dilapidated sites, upgrade existing homes, and restore natural ecosystems everywhere we work.

NCHA environmental sustainability 2024-2029



Our three top priorities



Fuel poverty

Insulating our homes and working with customers to limit the impact of the energy crisis

-50%

we'll halve the number of Our customers defined as fuel poor by 2030, with our homes reaching A-C efficiency ratings and energy efficiency support provided.



Decarbonisation

Cutting carbon emissions across NCHA

-50%

reduction in our operational carbon footprint by 2030 and a full net-zero plan for all emissions sources agreed in 2024.



Healthy environments

Maximising the environmental services offered by our homes and neighbourhoods

+10%







biodiversity improvement across our places by 2027 as part of a wider focus on liveable communities.

Our four working areas for delivery

Our sustainable customers

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- Energy smart customers  
- Fuel poverty support  
- Customer-guided sustainability agenda 
- Food growing opportunities 

Our sustainable places

More on pages 8 - 9











- New places**
- Building low-energy homes  
- Biodiversity net-gain 
- Sustainable Places Standard   
- Improved places**
- Fabric-first retrofit programme  
- Environmental sensors  
- Biodiversity action plan 
- Environmental risk mapping 

Our sustainable people

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- Green Leaders programme   
- Carbon literacy training 
- Environmental volunteering opportunities 
- Ethical pensions 
- Sustainable travel incentives 
- Education for sustainable consumer choices 

Our sustainable business

More on page 11



- Carbon-neutral Clifton campus   
- Environmental management system  
- Fleet efficiency and electrification 
- Sustainable procurement 
- Waste management  
- Energy and carbon management 
- Green technology services 

Our customers

The long-term vision

All of our customers will be enabled to achieve high levels of wellbeing in their home and community and empowered to choose lifestyles that tread lightly on the planet. We'll work side by side with our customers and colleagues to create more sustainable and resilient communities.

Our current position

Our customers are at the centre of everything we do. Many customers already model sustainable behaviours: buying renewable energy, recycling at home, cycling for transport and working with us to create wildlife areas near their homes. For those at risk of facing fuel poverty, we've created an affordable warmth fund and advice service, providing more than 500 households with direct support through the energy crisis. Our customer panels show a strong commitment to sustainability, and regularly have a direct involvement with sustainability projects.



Targets for this strategy

Our sustainable customers 2024-2029

Area	Current	2026 Targets	2029 Targets
Energy smart customers	Published energy efficiency advice communications for customers Provided bespoke energy efficiency advice for all customers in homes below SAP 69, and those with higher- cost heating systems	Explore incentive schemes with renewable providers (dependent on energy crisis) Offer direct support for all customers on the fuel poverty register each winter	Sustainable living advice built into letting processes, including energy efficiency, recycling, biodiversity and water conservation advice
Fuel poverty support	Completed a fuel poverty register and supported over 500 households at risk of fuel poverty with advice and financial support	Integrate vulnerability information into retrofit programming where appropriate. Review and adopt updated government fuel poverty definitions, and create new fuel poverty strategy	
Customer-guided sustainability agenda	Customer Panels issued with regular sustainability updates and directly involved with a number of sustainability projects and with redrafting this strategy Sustainability specialist appointed to our customer committee	Customers to be engaged with the creation of our Sustainable Places Standard	Create a customer Green Champions network to steer neighbourhood environmental improvements
Green Space opportunities	Revamped 10 gardens in care and support homes, created 20 new wildflower meadows and planted more than 500 trees with colleague and customer volunteers	We'll assess our grounds and gardens for opportunities for food growing Provide opportunities for customers to get involved with improving their green spaces	



Many declarations of a 'climate emergency' have been made to great fanfare, but so few of our leaders are acting like our home is on fire. It's important to get out there and take the matter into our own hands and do our bit.



Helen Dunne
NCHA Customer and Committee member

Our existing places

The long-term vision

We'll upgrade our existing homes so they're carbon-neutral, thermally comfortable and highly liveable for all customers. We'll improve our communities to provide more access to nature and build resilience to environmental risks like flooding and overheating.

Our current position

We're proud that 87% of our homes have now reached a good level of energy efficiency (EPC band C or above). We now have an established retrofit team and more than £6m of government backing to move us towards all of our homes reaching this efficiency rating - keeping all of our customers safe from fuel poverty. In the great outdoors, we've planted more than 500 trees, revamped 10 of our gardens in our care and support services, trialled low-pesticides grounds maintenance, and created 20 new wildflower meadows across our land.



Targets for this strategy

Our sustainable improved places 2024-2029			
Area	Current	2026 Targets	2029 Targets
Fabric-first retrofit programme	87% of homes at EPC C (band C) or above £6m+ funding secured through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Full EPC C programme modelled with more than half of sub-C homes now surveyed in detail to PAS2035 standards Retrofit team established with PAS2035 accredited technical and customer specialists in post	92% of homes to EPC C (band C) or above Complete SHDF Wave 1 and 2.1 works programmes Bid for Wave 3 funding as part of the Midlands Net Zero Hub Develop in-house capability for PAS2035 and 2030 compliant retrofit	100% of homes to EPC C by 31 March 2030 Finalise our Heat Electrification Plan Establish a net-zero plan for hard-to-treat properties, including those with heritage protections
Indoor Air Quality	Damp, Mould and Condensation policy created Environmental sensor trial underway	Complete Environmental sensor trial and use data to develop Indoor Air Quality plan	Complete Indoor Air Quality toolkit for all stages of a home lifecycle
Biodiversity action plan	Our new grounds maintenance tender has prioritised peat-free, low chemical practices Work across NCHA has created improved green spaces for wildlife at over 20 sites	Map and quality-audit for all green spaces owned by NCHA Improve 20 green spaces with new habitat features appropriate to that space	Create a 10% biodiversity improvement across our places Create a sustainable grounds maintenance standard and integrate into grounds contracts Establish new policies and procedures for the management of trees
Environmental risk mapping	Geographical Information System (GIS) under development, with a transformation project under way Flood risk maps developed to understand long-term exposure to flooding	Establish GIS as an NCHA wide tool to support place-based decision making in all departments Adopt a flood resilience plan covering all NCHA places	Establish climate resilience advice for other environmental risks like extreme heat
Sustainable Places Standard for existing places	Drafting Sustainable Places Standard for new homes	Adapt the Sustainable Places Standard for use in existing homes, enabling audits to support improvement plans	

Our new places

The long-term vision

All of our new homes will meet an in-house Sustainable Places Standard, achieving carbon neutrality, thermal comfort and high levels of wellbeing and affordability for customers. Communities will be resilient to environmental change, with superb green spaces helping to protect from flooding and overheating.

Our current position

We've completed our first EPC A homes, and we have a total of 290 EPC A homes under development. Our Sustainable Places Standard is due for publication during 2024, establishing our first design guide for building great quality, future-proofed and sustainable homes.



Targets for this strategy

Our sustainable new places 2024-2029			
Area	Current	2026 Targets	2029 Targets
Building low-energy homes	All new places built to at least EPC B Completed our first EPC A homes, including our first 7 EPC A+ homes built by our Property Services Teams We always build to EPC A whenever viable for a project	Actively partner with Homes England and other bodies to advocate for increased funding for the highest energy standards Target EPC A on any schemes where financial feasibility allows, with a minimum target of 10% new schemes built better than building regulations Create optimal NCHA specifications for meeting the Future Homes Standard 2025, and communicate to developers	Finalise our Heat Electrification Plan to enable our zero-carbon roadmap Identify at least one pilot project to trial an NCHA zero-carbon design standard Develop new energy metrics using primary energy demand to enable clear comparison of home energy performance
Biodiversity net-gain	All development projects in compliance with Environment Bill 2022, including 10% Biodiversity net-gain on development sites	Adopt a biodiversity design standard, as part of our Sustainable Places Standard	Integrate Building with Nature principles into design and development, using natural features to support building performance
Sustainable Places Standard	Sustainable Places Standard working group created, with early drafts and consultation plan underway	Complete our Sustainable Places Standard to set our vision for liveable homes and communities	Adopt Sustainable Places Standard in employers' requirements and audit adoption

Our people

The long-term vision

We'll be proud to have a culture of sustainability. All of our colleagues will be well versed in key sustainability issues and feel empowered to make sustainable choices at home and at work.

Our current position

We're proud of our thriving culture of sustainability. More than 70 colleagues actively participate in our sustainability work as Green Leaders. We've developed an NCHA Sustainability training package, with all colleagues given access to a Sustainability Awareness e-learning course and more than 50 colleagues attending our half-day Sustainability Action Course so far. Colleagues have contributed 550 hours of voluntary time to green causes. We now have a sustainable pension option so that all colleagues can choose to invest their pension in-line with our sustainability principles. We have sustainability specialists on our Board and Customer Committee, in addition to establishing our Sustainability Team.



Targets for this strategy

Our sustainable people 2024-2029

Area	Current	2026 Targets	2029 Targets
Green Leaders programme	75 colleagues have signed up as Green Leaders	Most green leaders engaged in sustainability projects or activities 100 colleagues signed up as Green Leaders	All green leaders have the opportunity to access personalised sustainability coaching
Carbon literacy training	Developed bespoke sustainability training, including an introductory awareness course and more advanced action course More than 50 colleagues attended half-day sustainability action course so far	All colleagues required to complete Sustainability awareness training (excluding front line Care & Support staff) 75 colleagues to have completed half-day action course Develop 'around 'toolbox talks' for roles with high environmental impact	Review of NCHA roles to highlight sustainability responsibilities, and align role profiles and training requirements
Volunteering	764 colleague volunteering hours committed to environmental volunteering 2021-23	Continue to build on the 2022-2023 staff volunteering hours with new environmental volunteering opportunities	1000 hours of colleague volunteer time given to environmental projects
Ethical pensions	Ethical pension option established and available to colleagues	Promote awareness of ethical pension options to all staff	Ensure maintenance and continued promotion of ethical pension option
Sustainable travel incentives	Colleagues are able to purchase cycles and EV's through salary sacrifice. Public Transport passes are also available to purchase through direct debit schemes	Adopt an NCHA-wide sustainable travel plan aligned with the sustainable transport hierarchy	
Sustainability awareness campaigns	Hosted an all-NCHA colleague conference on sustainability and created an internal sustainability communications plan Held a pilot Green Week and engaged in awareness campaigns including Veganuary and Second-Hand September	Host annual Green Week with a range of environmental activities available to colleagues To have hosted 20 "lunch and learn" events on a range of sustainability issues	Sustainability awareness in inductions for all new colleagues To have hosted 40 "lunch & learn" events on sustainability issues, creating a compendium of environmental expertise to be accessed on NCHA's intranet

Our business

The long-term vision

All of our business operations will be carbon neutral. We'll achieve this by ensuring our buildings and fleet vehicles are highly energy efficient, with any energy needs provided by renewable electricity. We'll also select carbon neutral suppliers, and ensure that our operations adopt a circular economy approach to minimise waste and resource consumption.

Our current position

Our new workplace at Clifton is under construction, and is on track to achieve BREEAM Excellence, placing it amongst the top 10% of sustainable commercial buildings in the UK. Clifton Place has been designed to support our commitment to halving our carbon emissions, improving our waste management and enabling colleagues to travel sustainably. We have embedded sustainability throughout our procurement processes across the business, including sustainability criteria in all of our major contracts. We're purchasing electricity from renewable sources. Our Care and Support operations are accredited to ISO14001 and supported by an all-electric car fleet.



Targets for this strategy

Our sustainable business 2024-2029

Area	Current	2026 Targets	2029 Targets
Carbon neutral Clifton campus	Construction underway with design achieving BREEAM Excellent	Complete BREEAM Excellent process at 70%+ and finalise EPC A	Ensure minimal in-use performance gap, with energy use monitored and wastage eliminated
Environmental management system	Retained ISO14001 for Care and Support Established NCHA-wide Aspects and Impacts register, the cornerstone of a business wide Environmental Management System	Ensure environmental legal register and Aspects and impacts register are embedded in departmental practices	Full EMS in operation, aligned to ISO14001 Decision on all-NCHA 14001 certification
Fleet efficiency and electrification	Seven electric vehicles in use by Care and Support Six EV charging points installed	Install EV charge points for colleagues and customers at Clifton Place Establish full EV infrastructure plan Ensure efficiency and right-sizing of existing van fleet	Finalise fleet electrification timetable
Sustainable procurement	Environmental criteria included in all major procurement exercises, with a sustainability risk review of all major tenders	Include enhanced sustainability criteria in all contracts of any size with sustainability risks	Create a sustainable supplier standard that must be completed by all new suppliers as part of onboarding with NCHA
Waste management	Generally over 90% landfill diversion reported from maintenance services	Complete waste management policy, embedding waste hierarchy Establish new waste procedures for relets, minimising travel and maximising opportunities for re-use and donation	Establish corporate waste reporting, achieving consistent 90% diversion from landfill
Energy and carbon management	Corporate utilities procured through a REGO-backed contract	Complete a costed net-zero carbon roadmap for all NCHA emissions sources Establish a meter-reading and invoice verification procedure	Complete Energy Management Policy aligning with ISO50001
Green technology services	Technology waste processed to ensure re-use where possible	Complete a green-IT plan to reduce the environmental impacts of our technology services	Ensure zero-carbon server storage Complete green-IT plan to minimise other NCHA impacts (heating, travel)



Delivering the plan

Governance structure

We have a sustainability governance structure that involves people from all levels of NCHA:

Sustainability steering group comprising members of our Executive team, our Senior Leadership team and our Head of Sustainability will oversee the delivery of this strategy.

Sustainability action group comprising the managers of departments who own targets in this strategy, alongside the Head of Sustainability will ensure progress against strategic targets.

Green Leaders network our board, customer committee and customer panels will also have regular involvement with steering our sustainability agenda will help us to embed a culture of sustainability in everything we do. The network will support members to develop our collective knowledge and strengthen our efforts to make more sustainable choices every day. Our board, Customer Committee and customer panels will also have regular involvement with steering our sustainability agenda.

Monitoring and reporting

Our Executive and Senior Leadership teams will maintain oversight of this strategy, with an annual progress report delivered to NCHA Board.

Governance and review

This strategy has been approved by the NCHA Board in March 2024 with a review to take place in March 2026