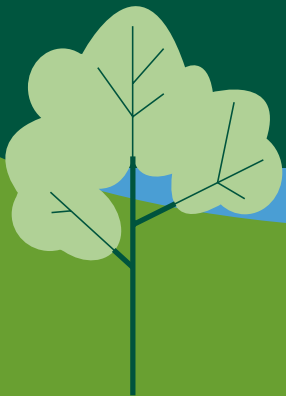




WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Preparing for a Changing Climate

A practical guide to help people and communities prepare for the effects of climate change in West Oxfordshire.



Preparing for a Changing Climate



Climate change, driven by emissions worldwide, is already affecting the conditions we experience locally. Preparing for these changes in weather patterns doesn't have to be complicated; practical steps taken by individuals can make a meaningful difference to safety, comfort, and community resilience.

We are experiencing hotter summers, heavier downpours, and more frequent flooding, and these patterns are expected to continue. To protect ourselves, our homes, and our communities, we must not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also learn how to live safely and comfortably with these changing conditions.

In West Oxfordshire and across the county, these impacts have become more noticeable over the past two decades. Looking ahead over the next 30 years, projections suggest wetter winters with a greater risk of flooding, alongside hotter summers that may lead to drought, overheating in homes, and pressure on water supplies (www.metoffice.gov.uk).

While climate change is a global issue, there is much that can be done locally to stay safe, reduce risks, and support one another. Simple actions - such as preparing your home for heavy rainfall, keeping cool during hot weather, saving water, or supporting local nature can make a big difference. Many of these steps also strengthen your neighbourhood, and there are opportunities to get involved in wider local efforts. (www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk).

This guide sets out practical, achievable actions to help you prepare your home, protect your wellbeing, and contribute to a safer and stronger community as our weather becomes less predictable.

What this means for Oxfordshire

Hotter summers – more frequent heatwaves and overheating homes

Heavier rainfall – increased surface water flooding

Drier periods – increased pressure on water supplies and gardens

Stress on nature – wildlife and habitats adapting to changing conditions



Regenerate Nature



Looking after nature is one of the simplest and most effective ways to build resilience to climate impacts. Healthy, diverse, natural spaces can help manage floodwater, reduce heat in built-up areas, support wildlife, store carbon, improve air quality and enhance both physical and mental wellbeing.

Protect and restore gardens and local green spaces

Gardens, verges and shared green areas play an important role in absorbing rainwater during downpours and keeping neighbourhoods cooler in hot weather. Planting drought-resistant species, reducing paved surfaces and creating habitats such as ponds, wildflower patches, or hedgerows can all help support local wildlife. For more ideas, explore nature-friendly gardening resources (www.bbowt.org.uk).

Grow trees or support new woodlands

Trees provide shade, help cool the air during heatwaves, stabilise soil, and reduce surface runoff during heavy rain. You can plant trees in your garden, join local tree-planting groups, or support woodland creation projects in West Oxfordshire. Be sure to check local guidance before planting to ensure the right tree is chosen for the right place.

Choose climate-resilient plants for your garden

Selecting plants suited to local conditions can help your garden cope with changing weather. Drought-tolerant plants in dry areas, and moisture-loving species in wetter spaces, can reduce the need for watering and improve resilience during prolonged dry spells or heavy rainfall. Choosing the right plant for the right place keeps gardens stay healthy, conserves water, and supports local wildlife. (www.rhs.org.uk).

Replace hard surfaces with permeable or green alternatives

Replacing driveways, patios or paths with gravel, permeable paving, groundcover plants or rain gardens helps reduce surface water flooding and creates habitats for insects and birds. Even small changes at home can make a big difference to flood prevention across a neighbourhood.

Support the creation and care of ponds, wetlands, or rain gardens

Ponds and wetlands store water during storms and provide valuable habitats for wildlife. Even a small garden pond or rain garden can support biodiversity and help manage heavy rainfall. Local wildlife groups often offer guidance on creating simple water features safely (www.bbowt.org.uk).

Work with landowners and local groups on better land management

If you notice areas that regularly flood, record the location, frequency and any photos. This information can be shared with the relevant authority (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk). You can also learn about how farmers, landowners, and river groups are working together to restore natural floodplains, reduce soil erosion, and improve drought resilience. Consider joining or supporting your local catchment river partnership (www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk).

Help monitor local wildlife and environmental changes

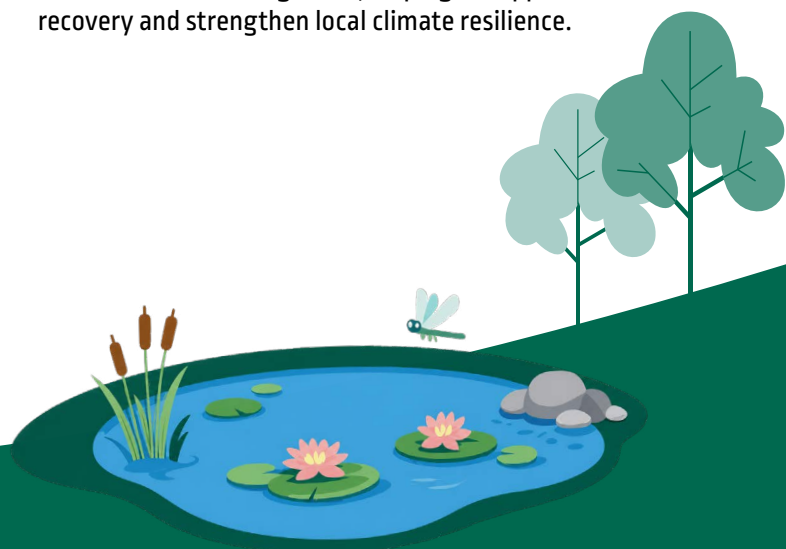
Taking part in citizen-science projects, such as the Big Garden Birdwatch, the Big Butterfly Count or share sightings with the [Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre](http://www.thamesvalleyenvironmentalrecordscentre.org.uk) which helps build a picture of how nature is responding to climate pressures. This information supports better local decision-making and helps identify where nature action is most needed.

Support local wildlife and nature projects

www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk and the community ecology service support communities, schools, and landowners to take action for nature recovery. They offer advice on habitats, wildlife conservation, and community projects that help create greener, more climate-resilient places for people and nature.

Volunteer to help care for local woodlands and wildlife

(www.wychwoodforesttrust.co.uk) offers opportunities to get involved in practical conservation work across West Oxfordshire. Volunteers help restore habitats, manage woodlands, repair dry stone walls, monitor wildlife, and create traditional hedgerows, helping to support nature recovery and strengthen local climate resilience.



Improve Housing and Neighbourhoods

Making small changes to your home and surrounding area can greatly reduce risks from flooding, damp and heat. These actions help protect your property, support vulnerable neighbours, and contribute to a safer, more comfortable community.

Install property-level flood protection

If your home is in an area that may flood, consider simple protective measures such as flood doors or barriers, covers for airbricks, and one-way valves on drainage pipes to prevent sewage backflow. These steps can reduce damage and provide peace of mind during heavy rainfall. For guidance, visit the Oxfordshire flood information pages (www.oxfordshiretoolkit.com)

Make sure you and others have suitable insurance

Insurance plays a vital role in recovering from weather-related damage. Check that your home insurance covers flooding, and encourage neighbours, especially vulnerable residents, to review their policies. Parish councils or community groups may also host information sessions on available support.

Sign up for flood alerts and local warnings

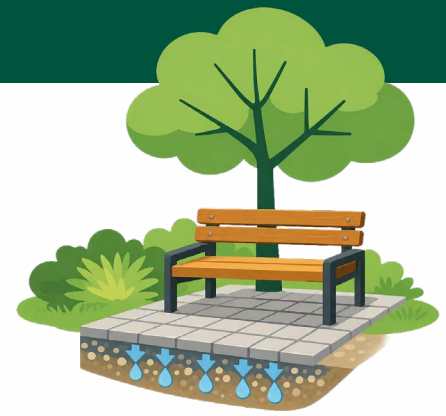
Early warnings give you more time to prepare. Sign up for the flood alert service (www.gov.uk) and follow {[West Oxfordshire District Council](#)} and Oxfordshire County Council updates during periods of severe weather.

Reduce damp and overheating in the home

Keeping gutters clear, repairing leaks and improving ventilation can prevent damp and mould, which can worsen during wetter winters. To stay cool in hotter summers, consider installing blinds, shutters or awnings, using reflective window films, or improving shading around your home. Simple steps like closing curtains during heatwaves or opening windows at cooler times can also help (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk).

Replace hard surfaces with permeable or green options

Paved gardens, patios and driveways increase flood risk by stopping water from soaking into the ground. Replacing these surfaces with gravel, permeable paving, rain gardens or planted areas slows runoff and boosts local biodiversity. Contact your council about opportunities to create more permeable surfaces or natural drainage features in your street or neighbourhood (www.oxfordshiretoolkit.com).



Help create cooler, more accessible outdoor spaces

Planting trees, adding shade structures, and introducing more green spaces in shared areas can keep neighbourhoods cooler during heatwaves. Cooler spaces are especially important for children, older people, and those with health conditions. You can support community planting schemes or suggest improvements through your parish or town council.

Install or support the installation of shade for vulnerable groups

Schools, playgrounds, care homes, and community centres benefit from shaded seating, shelters, or pergolas to provide protection during hot weather. You can raise this with local organisations or volunteer to help install simple shade solutions where appropriate.

Report blocked drains and local issues promptly

Blocked drains and gullies can worsen surface water flooding. Report clogged drains to your district or Oxfordshire County Council using their online reporting tools (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk). If you notice problems with sewer flooding or slow drainage, also inform Thames Water (www.thameswater.co.uk) so they can investigate.



Support Self-Sufficiency

Becoming more self-sufficient helps individuals reduce costs, stay safe during extreme weather, and strengthen community support networks within their community. Small, practical steps can your homes more resilient and contribute to wider local preparedness.

Keep essential household equipment for emergencies

Items like torches, batteries, first-aid kits, warm blankets, bottled water and battery-powered radios can be invaluable during severe weather or power cuts. Create a small household emergency kit and encourage neighbours - especially vulnerable people - to do the same.

Support energy efficiency and energy independence

Simple changes like better insulation, draught-proofing, LED lighting and smart thermostats can reduce bills and keep homes comfortable during heatwaves or cold snaps. Where possible, consider renewable options such as solar PV or solar hot water. You can also support or join community energy groups to learn more about shared local energy initiatives.



Use water efficiently at home and in the garden

Collecting rainwater using water butts helps reduce pressure on mains supplies during dry periods and lowers runoff during storms. Use stored water for plants and cleaning and choose drought-tolerant plants to reduce water demand

[\[www.thameswater.co.uk\]](http://www.thameswater.co.uk)

Grow your own food or join local edible gardening projects

Even a small vegetable patch, window box, or herb pot can help reduce food costs and support sustainable living. Community gardens offer shared growing spaces, learning opportunities, and social connection. Look for local food-growing groups or allotment schemes [\[www.livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk\]](http://www.livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk).

Learn basic preparedness skills and share knowledge with others

Knowing how to shut off utilities, use emergency equipment, provide basic first aid, or recognise heat-related illness can make a real difference. Share your knowledge with neighbours or attend local training sessions offered by councils or community groups.

Build supportive local networks

Checking in on neighbours, especially older adults, isolated individuals or families with young children, helps ensure no one is left behind during extreme weather events. Strong neighbourhood connections make communities more resilient and better able to cope with disruption.

Connect with or support community resilience groups

Many towns and parishes have community resilience teams that help coordinate local responses during flooding, heatwaves or power outages. Individuals can join these groups, assist with information sharing, or learn local emergency procedures [\[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk\]](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk).

Help regenerate, maintain or improve community facilities

Village halls, playgrounds, sports fields and community centres often act as hubs during challenging weather. Supporting maintenance, volunteering, or suggesting improvements, such as shade structures, water-saving systems, or energy-efficient upgrades, helps keep these spaces safe and accessible for everyone.



Getting Around

Travel can be affected by heavy rainfall, flooding, heatwaves or storms. By making small changes to how we move around and supporting local improvements to paths, roads and transport, we can help ensure safer, more accessible, and more reliable travel for everyone, even during challenging weather.

Prepare vehicles and travel equipment for extreme weather

Keeping vehicles and travel equipment well maintained helps reduce disruption during severe weather. Checking tyres, light, and brakes, and carrying basic supplies such as water, warm clothing or a phone charger can make journeys safer during storms, heatwaves or winter conditions. Being prepared helps ensure journeys remain safe if conditions change unexpectedly.

Explore or support shared transport options

Car-sharing, community transport schemes, lift-sharing apps and demand-responsive services can help reduce travel costs and emissions, especially in rural areas. Shared transport also eases pressure on local roads during adverse weather, when driving may be more difficult. Check what services are available locally (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk).



Plan journeys with weather risks in mind

During periods of heavy rain, heatwaves or icy conditions, check local alerts and travel updates before setting out. Avoid driving through floodwater, carry water during hot weather, and allow extra time in winter. Simple travel planning can prevent accidents and keep you and your family safe.

Choose active and low-carbon travel where possible

Walking, wheeling, and cycling can be safer and more pleasant when good-quality paths and shaded routes are available. Using active travel for short journeys reduces congestion and supports healthier communities. Look for local route maps or cycling groups to help build confidence. (www.cyclinguk.org)

Support efforts to keep roads, paths and rights of way resilient

Extreme weather can damage paths, tracks, and local roads. Reporting issues such as erosion, blocked drains, fallen trees, or damaged surfaces helps councils and landowners respond more quickly. You can also support local groups maintain footpaths and bridleways, ensuring they remain safe and accessible throughout year-round.

Support improvements to local transport infrastructure

You can help shape better travel options by providing feedback to local councils on transport consultations, proposing safer walking routes, or supporting schemes that improve cycle paths, bus reliability, shaded walkways, or flood-resilient crossings. These sustainable travel improvements benefit the whole community and help everyone adapt to changing conditions.

Growing Skills and Employment

Developing new skills and supporting local enterprise can help individuals and communities thrive as the climate changes. Learning more about local risks, taking part in training, or supporting green jobs can all contribute to a stronger, more resilient economy in West Oxfordshire.

Share and learn from local climate experiences

Speak with your local council, community groups, or neighbours to understand how weather events, such as heatwaves or flooding, have affected your area. Sharing your own experiences and observations helps build a clearer picture of local risks and supports better planning. Councils often run surveys or engagement events where your input is valuable.

Build skills for current and future green jobs

Many growing industries like renewable energy, sustainable construction, nature recovery and low-carbon transport, offer opportunities to learn new skills. Free or low-cost courses are often available through colleges, community centres or online platforms. Building these skills can improve employment prospects while supporting a more sustainable local economy (www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk).

Develop practical repair and maintenance skills

Learning skills, such as repairing household items, maintaining tools, or fixing bicycles and appliances, can reduce waste, save money, and strengthen local resilience. Community workshops, repair cafes (www.repaircafeoxfordshire.org), and local training sessions provide opportunities to learn practical skills and share knowledge. These abilities help households adapt to disruptions and support a more resource-efficient local economy.

Support or start community-led enterprises

Community-led projects, such as repair cafés, tool libraries, community energy schemes, refill shops or local food initiatives, provide practical services while building resilience and keeping money within the local area. Getting involved can help you develop new skills in business, governance or sustainability, or simply provide opportunities to volunteer and support your neighbourhood (www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk).

Volunteer to gain practical experience

Volunteering with conservation groups, community gardens, flood groups, or local charities offers hands-on experience in areas such as land management, biodiversity, energy advice, or emergency preparedness. These experiences build confidence, strengthen local resilience and may open pathways into new careers.

Take part in local training and workshops

Look out for workshops on topics such as home energy efficiency, first aid, digital mapping, food growing, or climate awareness. These sessions can equip you with practical skills that help in everyday life and during extreme weather events.

Support local businesses

Choosing local businesses that focus on sustainable products, repair services, local food, or environmental solutions strengthens the local economy and supports climate resilience. These businesses provide services that help communities adapt to changing conditions, create jobs, retain skills locally, and encourage innovation.



Connecting with Others

Strong connections between neighbours, community groups, and local organisations make a big difference when dealing with climate-related challenges. Working together helps share knowledge, build confidence and ensure that everyone—especially vulnerable residents—can access the support they need.

Help develop or maintain your community's emergency plan

Parish and town councils often lead on local emergency plans, which outline how communities respond during floods, heatwaves, or power cuts. You can help by sharing local knowledge, supporting vulnerable neighbours, or volunteering during emergencies.

Stay connected with neighbours and offer support during severe weather

Checking in on neighbours, especially older adults, people with disabilities or those living alone, helps ensure everyone stays safe during extreme heat, cold snaps or flooding. Simple acts of communication can strengthen resilience across your street or community.

Contact your local councillor to share concerns and encourage action

Local councillors can raise issues, influence decisions, and help push for stronger national and local policies on climate resilience. You can contact them to share your experiences, ask questions, or support positive change in your area. Find your local councillor here (www.westoxon.gov.uk).

Join or support a local environmental or community group

West Oxfordshire has many active groups—such as Oxfordshire Community Action Groups (CAGs) —working on repair projects, food initiatives, nature recovery, and community resilience. Joining a group is a great way to meet others, learn new skills and support practical climate action close to home.

(www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk).

Join or follow your local river catchment partnership

Catchment groups work with volunteers, landowners, and environmental organisations to improve river health, reduce flood risk and restore natural habitats. Getting involved can help you learn more about local water issues and support practical projects that benefit your whole area

(www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk).

Explore Climate Action Oxfordshire for tips and opportunities

Climate Action Oxfordshire brings together advice, events, local projects and practical steps you can take to reduce emissions and prepare for changing weather. It's a useful starting point for finding community initiatives or learning more about what individuals can do.

(www.climateactionoxfordshire.org.uk).

Contact the West Oxfordshire Climate Action team for advice and updates

If you have questions, need more information, or want to learn more about local climate and nature action, contact the Climate Action team (climate.action@westoxon.gov.uk). They can provide guidance, share resources and connect you with local initiatives. You can also sign up for the [Climate and Nature Action Bulletin](#) for updates on projects, events, and opportunities across the district.



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