

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Policy

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours

Document control

Policy title	Environmental Sustainability and Climate Policy
Organisation	Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours (THFN)
Charity number	1099403 (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)
Version	0.1
Status	Approved
Author	Rita Chadha, Chief Executive
Approved by	THFN Board of Trustees — 1.07.2026
Date adopted	1.07.2026
Next review date	Annually
Applies to	All trustees, staff, sessional workers, volunteers and contractors

Contents

1. Purpose 3

2. Scope..... 3

3. Why this matters to THFN 3

4. Our commitments..... 3

5. Our priority areas for action 4

6. Helping our community stay safe in a changing climate 5

7. Engaging our people 5

8. Roles and responsibilities..... 5

9. Measuring progress 6

10. Review 6

11. Related policies..... 6

1. Purpose

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours (THFN) exists to reduce isolation and build friendly, supportive neighbourhoods, with a particular focus on older and housebound residents. Caring for our environment is part of caring for our community: a changing climate affects everyone, but it falls hardest on the people we support.

This policy sets out our commitment to reducing the environmental impact of our work, and to helping our community stay safe and well as the climate changes. It is intended to be realistic for a small charity — a set of practical steps we can actually deliver, rather than promises we cannot keep.

2. Scope

This policy applies to everyone who works on behalf of THFN — trustees, staff, sessional workers, volunteers, and contractors where relevant — and to all of our activities, premises, events and the decisions we make as an organisation.

3. Why this matters to THFN

Climate change is not only an environmental issue; for our community it is a health and wellbeing issue. The residents we support are among the most exposed to its effects:

- **Heat.** Older and housebound people are at greater risk during heatwaves, which are becoming more frequent and severe.
- **Cold and damp.** Rising energy costs leave many older residents unable to heat their homes adequately, with serious effects on health.
- **Isolation.** Extreme weather can keep vulnerable people indoors and cut them off from support — exactly the isolation we work to prevent.

Acting on sustainability is therefore consistent with, and supports, our charitable purpose. It also helps us reduce running costs, meet the expectations of funders and supporters, and set a good example in our sector.

4. Our commitments

THFN is committed to six guiding principles.

Commitment	What it means in practice
Do no harm	We consider the environmental impact of our decisions and avoid choices that cause unnecessary harm.
Proportionate action	As a small charity we focus on practical steps within our control rather than promises we cannot keep.
Protect our community	We recognise that climate change hits older, housebound and low-income residents hardest, and we factor this into our work.
Lead by example	We use our networks and voice to encourage good practice across our community and partners.

Commitment	What it means in practice
Honesty over spin	We are open about what we are and are not able to do, and we avoid “greenwashing.”
Continuous improvement	We start where we are, make steady progress, and review our impact each year.

5. Our priority areas for action

We will reduce our environmental impact through practical steps in the areas we can most influence. None of these requires significant spending; most simply mean doing what we already do a little more thoughtfully.

Area	What we will do
Energy and the spaces we use	• Switch off lights, heating and equipment when rooms and the office are not in use. • Choose energy-efficient settings and equipment where we have the choice. • Raise energy efficiency with any venues and landlords whose spaces we hire or share.
Travel and transport	• Favour walking, cycling and public transport for local visits and meetings. • Use online meetings where they are as effective and reduce unnecessary journeys. • Plan home visits and outreach efficiently to cut down on travel.
Resources, waste and recycling	• Reduce first, then reuse, then recycle. • Recycle paper, card, cans and bottles wherever facilities allow. • Avoid single-use plastics at our events and activities.
Purchasing and suppliers	• Buy only what we need, and choose durable, repairable items. • Favour local, ethical and lower-impact suppliers where cost allows. • Reuse and share equipment across our projects and with partners.
Digital and paper	• Default to digital documents and reduce printing. • Print double-sided and in black and white unless there is good reason not to.

Area	What we will do
	Delete data we no longer need, in line with our data retention practices.
Food and events	- Order sensibly to avoid food waste, and offer plant-based options. - Use reusable crockery and cutlery rather than disposables where we can. - Choose accessible venues that people can reach without a car.

6. Helping our community stay safe in a changing climate

Because of who we support, the most valuable thing THFN can do may be to help our community cope with the effects of a changing climate. Where resources allow, we will:

- check on members during heatwaves and cold spells, and share simple, trusted advice on staying safe;
- explore seasonal support — such as summer heat and winter warmth packs — for older and housebound people, funded through cost-of-living, community foundation or other grant sources;
- signpost members to help with energy costs, home insulation and fuel poverty support; and
- make sure climate resilience is considered in how we plan our services and activities.

7. Engaging our people

This policy works only if it is part of how we all think and act. We will:

- share this policy as part of induction for new staff and volunteers;
- encourage everyone to suggest practical improvements;
- celebrate good ideas and small wins; and
- use our newsletters and networks to share good practice with members and partners.

8. Roles and responsibilities

Who	Responsibility
Board of Trustees	Owns and approves this policy and assures itself that environmental impact is considered in significant decisions.
Chief Executive	Leads on putting the policy into practice, supports staff and volunteers, and reports progress to the Board.
Staff	Follow this policy in their day-to-day work and suggest practical improvements.

Who	Responsibility
Volunteers	Follow the spirit of this policy in any task they do for THFN.
Contractors and suppliers	Are made aware of this policy where relevant and are expected to support our aims.

9. Measuring progress

As a small charity we will keep monitoring simple and useful rather than burdensome. Each year, alongside our normal reporting, we will:

1. note the practical steps we have taken under this policy;
2. identify one or two priorities to focus on for the year ahead; and
3. track a small number of indicators where we reasonably can, such as reduced printing, reduced waste, or energy use in any space we control.
4. Report on this as part of our annual report

We will be honest about progress, including where we have not done as well as we hoped.

10. Review

The Board will review this policy at least once a year, and sooner if our activities, premises or circumstances change significantly. We will keep an eye on relevant guidance, including from the Charity Commission and our funders, and update the policy as good practice develops.

11. Related policies

This policy should be read alongside THFN's:

- Financial and Procurement procedures;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Volunteer Policy; and
- Data Protection / data retention practices.

Approval

This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees of Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours.

Signed: _____ (Chair of Trustees)

Name: Anne Worlledge

Date: 1.07.2026