

Appendix B. Environment and Climate Change Annual Report highlights 2022 (up to October 2022)

4.1 People act now to tackle climate change and protect the environment

To achieve net zero carbon emissions, we need people to take action to reduce their environmental impacts, such as by being more resource-efficient and travelling by sustainable modes.



Our aim by 2026

- More residents actively involved in tackling climate change

Progress in 2021/22

- A major new 2045 Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan for Leicestershire developed and consulted on ahead of upcoming approval.
- £1m of Government funding secured towards the delivery of around 100 public Electric Vehicle charge points across the county.
- “Green Living Leicestershire” launched which supports vulnerable households to reduce their bills by installing cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, solar panels, air source heat pumps and other energy efficiency measures. We have also worked with Solar Together to provide residents with the opportunity to reduce their energy costs by investing in solar panels.
- Our Green Homes Grant delivered 278 environmental measures across 224 homes to improve energy efficiency.
- “Energy Company Obligation” referrals supported 2,357 households to access insulation and heating upgrades.
- Initiatives to promote biodiversity and environmental protection have been included in 38 Neighbourhood Plans.
- Warm homes newsletter launched to inform residents of new initiatives to support energy efficiency improvements.

- An interactive map of 1,800 miles of public footpaths made available to the public to encourage walking.

4.2 Nature and the local environment are valued, protected and enhanced

Biodiversity describes the enormous variety of life on Earth. Biodiversity and the ecosystem clean our water, purify our air, regulate the climate and provide us with food and resources for medicines. Loss or damage of natural environments is among the biggest threats to wildlife. In Leicestershire, where more than 80% of the land is farmed, our wildlife continues to decline due to a lack of good habitats.



Our aim by 2026

- Increase in the percentage of county land which promotes diversity of habitats and species

Progress in 2021/22

- Over 130,000 trees have been planted following the launch of the Leicestershire Tree Charter, which pledged to plant 700,000 trees over the next 10 years.
- The Leicestershire Lieutenancy promoted the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting initiative to mark the Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Residents from across the County were invited to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee".
- Shire Environment Grants worth £16,000 were awarded to local projects that improve the biodiversity of Leicestershire.
- Planning permission was granted for restoration of Croft Quarry which will provide over 60 hectares of habitat including reed beds, open water, wet grassland, wet woodland, acid grassland, open mosaic, species rich grassland and woodland.
- A new partnership with local wildlife charity Nature Spot aims to boost biodiversity and wildlife by leaving wildflowers on urban roadside verges across the County. Last year, over 330 species were recorded across 26 different wildlife groups including wildflowers, grasses and insects. The urban wildlife verge scheme now includes 71 verges across 57 parishes.

- Delivery of the planned Bardon link road will produce a biodiversity net gain through new landscaped features and wetland areas.

4.3 Resources are used in an environmentally sustainable way

We are using the planet's resources at a faster rate than they are being replenished and in a way which does not allow them to be reused. To address this, we need to move to a more efficient alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) where resources are used for as long as possible, then recovered, regenerated, or recycled.

Our aim by 2026

- Increase in the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting and reduction in the percentage landfilled

Progress in 2021/22

- The Leicestershire Waste Partnership has reviewed the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy, with a public consultation receiving 5,000 responses. The Strategy includes a range of initiatives to reduce waste sent to landfill and to promote waste prevention, reuse and recycling.
- A campaign to reduce contamination in recycling was delivered. This included adverts on TV and instore at supermarkets, as well as a 'Digivan' travelling around the County. We also promoted national Recycle Week.
- Our Kibworth Household Waste and Recycling Site is being improved and expanded. The redevelopment will allow for more bays and will make the site safer and easier to use.
- Nearly 1000 subsidized home composting bins were sold during 2021/22 to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. We also supported Compost Awareness Week to promote home composting.
- 50 two-hour theatre sessions were offered to all primary schools in the County to inspire future generations to adopt more sustainable behaviours by reducing, reusing and recycling.
- Free workshops were provided to community groups covering how to cook healthy meals from scratch and how to make the most from leftovers, as well as furniture restoration and textile reuse.
- Promoted campaigns to reduce food waste, such as "Love Food Hate Waste", a national campaign devised by WRAP, a leading sustainability charity. This included Food Waste Action Week, which highlighted the link between food waste and climate change.
- We began to use plants and artificially created salt marshes to clean oils and chemicals in water collected from road gullies as part of our Ecological Treatment System at our Croft Highways Depot to treat water collected from drains.

4.4 Economy and infrastructure are low carbon and environmentally friendly

Decarbonising the economy and infrastructure is one of the key solutions to addressing the climate emergency, as nearly 70% of Leicestershire's emissions come from commercial, industrial and transport sources.

Our aims by 2026

- Net zero carbon emissions from the Council's own operations by 2030
- Work with partners to ensure Leicestershire is on track to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045

Progress in 2021/22

- We developed a 2030 Net Zero Action Plan to achieve net-zero carbon emissions across our operations. The Council reduced its operational emissions by a further 20% in 2020/21 and has achieved a 74% reduction since 2008-09.
- Plans have been approved for our new solar farm that will generate enough electricity each year to power all our properties and thousands of streetlights. The green energy complex is to be built on a 55-acre farmland site, north of the A6 near Quorn. It will save around £600,000-a-year in energy bills.
- The Normandy Way development in Hinckley will include our first zero-carbon primary school. This follows development of a new primary school standard design in line with the Council's Net Zero Carbon policy which achieved an excellent external rating for the sustainable built environment.
- A successful bid with Midlands Connect and four other local authorities is providing £935,000 Government funding for 349 electric vehicle charging points across the Midlands with up to 100 further charging points across Leicestershire.
- A Hydrogen Skills Academy, backed by Loughborough, Nottingham and Derby Universities, is being progressed to open in November 2023. It complements innovative hydrogen projects being undertaken by the region's Hydrogen Task Force and will be the UK's first practical, industry-based training centre associated with the production, handling, storage and use of hydrogen. Helping put the East Midlands at the forefront of the UK's Net Zero transition.
- We are developing further plans to generate renewable energy, run electric park and ride buses and convert council fleet vehicles to run on renewable fuels. We are also fitting solar panels and low energy lights to buildings.
- A Leicestershire visitor economy intervention with UK Shared Prosperity Funding has been developed to promote sustainable tourism with a focus on improving the green credentials of businesses and celebrating our natural capital as a tourism and leisure asset.