

2023-24

Environmental Performance and Progress Update Report



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Introduction

1. The report is divided into two main sections. Section 1 provides details of the environmental performance and progress for Leicestershire County Council as an organisation, while Section 2 provides details of the performance and progress for Leicestershire as a county, accepting that there are some areas of overlap.
2. Section 1a focuses on the performance and progress in relation to the Council's commitment to net zero and the 2035 net zero target for Council operations. Part 1 of the report provides a contextual overview of the performance across a range of greenhouse gas emitting activities within the Council for 2023-24.
3. These greenhouse gas emitting activities feed into Part 2 of the report which provides a summary of the Council's Greenhouse Gas Report for 2023-24, setting out the overall figure and the key sources of emissions.
4. Part 3 of the report provides an update and a review of the progress on delivering the actions within the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan.
5. Section 1b provides details on the performance across a range of other environmental aspects which contribute to Leicestershire County Council becoming a greener council (Part 4). Section 1b also provides an assessment of the performance against the Council's Environmental Management System for 2023-24 (Part 5).
6. In Section 2 of the report, Part 6 provides details of the progress towards meeting the 2050 net zero Leicestershire target and also, it describes the progress in delivering the Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan. Firstly, Part 6a sets out the greenhouse gas emissions for Leicestershire, based on the latest figures for 2022, as provided by the Government. In addition, some contextual figures are provided setting out how the County is performing in terms of several activities that influence greenhouse gas emissions within Leicestershire.
7. Part 6b provides a summary of the Council's submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) Climate Scorecard.
8. Part 6c provides an update on the progress of delivering the actions within the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan.
9. Part 7 provides details of the performance on several other environmental aspects, such as nature, resource use and air quality. These provide some wider contextual information on the progress towards creating a greener county.
10. The report finally provides a set of conclusions, firstly on the performance and progress for Leicestershire County Council, secondly for Leicestershire, and thirdly on additional overall conclusions.

11. The report is supported by several appendices that provide more detailed or background information, that expands on the information provided in the body of the report.

Executive Summary

12. In December 2022, the Council adopted two key strategies: the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan, which set out how the Council aims to achieve net zero for its own operational emissions by 2030, and the 2045 Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out how the Council aims to work with partners to achieve net zero for the wider County by 2045. Since these commitments were made, the Council has been subjected to an increasingly constrained financial position with a significant deficit forecasted by the end of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy period. In February 2024, in light of this and the estimated increased resources required to reach net zero, the Council resolved to extend the net zero targets to 2035 for Council operations and 2050 for Countywide emissions, in line with the national target.
13. In terms of the Council's environmental performance for 2023-24, the report shows that the Council's net greenhouse gas emissions were **9,282 tCO₂e**, a fall of **254 tCO₂e (2.7%)** compared to 2022-23.
14. Emission reductions can be found across most sources, with scope 1 sources seeing an overall 4% reduction and scope 2 seeing a 0.7% reduction. Direct emissions from buildings had the largest reduction at 11.7%, with the majority of this decrease due to reduced gas use in corporate buildings, attributed in part to the warmer weather and greater use of the biomass boiler system at County Hall.
15. Emission reductions across all other sources were below 3%, which demonstrates that it is getting harder to seek out and gain substantial reductions without increased investment. The primary sources of the Council's carbon emissions are from buildings and fleet vehicles. To achieve further reductions in emissions, the Council would need to tackle these sources, for example by investing in electric vehicles (EV) and low carbon heating of Council buildings, recognising that additional funding would need to be secured to progress these initiatives.
16. The target level of **emissions for 2023-24 was 13,725 tCO₂e** (based on a 2016-17 baseline year and assuming a linear reduction in emissions to 2035). With an **actual emissions figure of 9,282 tCO₂e** in 2023-24, the County Council is ahead of target in year.
17. The Council benefitted in earlier years from making 'quick wins' to cut back its emissions substantially since 2008-09; however, the level of reduction has been decreasing over recent years. An average annual reduction in emissions of 5.6% is required in order to meet net zero by 2035. The annual reduction for 2023-24 was only 2.7%, which is less than half the rate required. If this rate of reduction was to continue, the Council would not achieve net zero carbon emissions for its operations by 2035, and calculations show that the Council would still be emitting approximately 4,600 tonnes of CO₂e by 2050, the national target for net zero.

18. This report provides an update on the progress towards the Council's revised target to reach net zero by 2035 with an update on the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan for the period December 2023 to December 2024 (Appendix D).
19. The Council continues to maintain its progress in taking action on nature with **97% of suitable Council land in better management for nature**. This is through the activities taking place on Council land such as Country Parks, County farms and on the roadside verges, with the Wildlife Verge Scheme winning a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Bees Needs Champion Award in July 2023.
20. The Council's **recycling rate** for office waste increased by over 10% to **62%** in 2023-24. This is likely to have been in part due to the increase in the total amount of waste produced, which increased by 8% to 275 tonnes.
21. In terms of environmental compliance, the Council is performing relatively well. There were no environmental complaints upheld, one environmental incident reported, no enforcements or prosecutions, two minor non-conformities found during the external ISO14001 audit, and one major and four minor non-conformities found during the internal environmental audit process in 2023-24.
22. At the end of 2023-24, there were **two environmental high risks** and **six climate change high risks**. Due to the limited staff capacity, it has not been possible to undertake significant work to address the climate change risks. Insufficient action on the climate change risks will expose the Council to the risk of harm from future extreme weather events. Work will be undertaken to see if the re-prioritisation of workload and reallocation of staff resources could enable action to be taken to reduce the risks identified.
23. In relation to the Council's Environmental Management System (EMS), a number of aspects have been noted such as the reduced but remaining uncertainty in relation to the role of the Office of Environmental Protection, the full implications of the Environment Act 2021, the introduction of new statutory duties and the introduction of future environmental policies and legislation. Also noted was the risk of the Council's financial position and the current staff capacity issues making it more difficult to achieve some of the Council's environmental targets and maintain its environmental performance.
24. Some **117** new or updated general environmental Acts, legislation, regulations, consultations, and guidance released during 2023-24 were identified as possibly relevant to the County Council. This included more details on the **new statutory duties** in relation to Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), Biodiversity Net Gain, the strengthened biodiversity duty, Simpler Recycling reforms including mandatory food waste collections and the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging.
25. The delivery of the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan and the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan will present opportunities for improving the environmental performance of the Council and in some cases producing financial savings for the Council over the medium- to long-term.

26. According to the latest data from the Government, **Leicestershire's greenhouse gas emissions for 2022** were **4.645 MtCO_{2e}**, which is a 3.4% decrease compared to 2021. While emissions overall are decreasing for Leicestershire, the average annual rate of emissions decrease shows the County is not yet on track to achieve its target of net zero by 2050. Emissions are now 7.6% lower than the Net Zero Leicestershire 2019 baseline year. However, the average change in emissions since 2019 is a 2.5% reduction per year. An average annual reduction in emissions of 3.2% is needed to reach net zero by 2050. Therefore, Leicestershire is not currently on track to reach net zero by 2050, assuming a continuation of the current rate of reduction.
27. During 2024, several County Council led projects and policies progressed, which will help to tackle climate change and the transition to net zero in Leicestershire:
- a) The Council, along with partners, secured funding from Innovate UK to take forward the **Leicestershire Collaborate to Accelerate Net Zero (LCAN) project**. This project will support the delivery of a number of key actions within the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan. Four work packages will be delivered which will focus on providing research and support to create effective governance to support net zero, developing a web based Local Area Energy Plan, boosting community energy projects in the County and supporting businesses and organisations to act on carbon reduction.
 - b) The County Council and its partners were successful in their bid for **Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)** funding to deliver 100 public EV chargepoints across Leicestershire. In September 2024, the Council's **Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy** was formally adopted, setting out the Council's approach to public electric charging provision and the delivery of public on-street chargepoints in residential areas. The strategy will also support the delivery of the Council's **Local Transport Plan 2026 – 2040 (LTP4)** which is currently in development and will embed carbon reduction objectives into transport planning to encourage more sustainable travel options and lower emissions.
30. Within Leicestershire, there were significant increases in EV ownership (approximately 40%) as well as increases in charging locations which will only be further expanded in 2025 through the implementation of the LEVI funding to roll out 100 additional public chargepoints across the County.
31. During 2023-24, the Council commenced work on preparing a report to the world's leading environmental reporting platform - the CDP, with the results expected in early 2025. The CDP recognises organisations for having an emissions inventory, implementing a mitigation plan and for taking action to reduce emissions, alongside having an awareness of the main local risks and impacts of climate change.
32. This report provides a progress update on the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan for the period December 2023 to December 2024 (Appendix E).

33. In terms of the wider environmental position for Leicestershire, the data shows that, like the rest of England, the County's rivers are not in a very good ecological or chemical status. Leicestershire remains in the fourth quartile¹ relative to comparative English authorities, for air pollution from fine particulate matter, while three nitrogen dioxide exceedances were recorded. The amount of household waste per household has increased 32.1 kg in 2023-24 to 960.2kg, while household recycling performance is at 43.6%. Waste performance is being affected by a number of local and national trends, such as the cost-of-living crisis, the light-weighting of packaging and a reduction in the amount of garden waste collected in the County.
34. The key conclusions of the report are as follows:
- i) The Council is currently **ahead of target in year**, in terms of its own operational emissions. However, the rate of reduction per annum (2.7%) is below where it needs to be (5.6%) to reach net zero by 2035.
 - ii) While emissions are gradually decreasing in Leicestershire, the County is currently **not on track to meet the 2050 net zero target**, assuming a continuation of the current rate of reduction.
 - iii) There will be a significant amount of work needed to implement the Collection and Packaging Reforms, that contribute to meeting the **national 65% recycling target by 2035**.
 - iv) The **insufficiency of action on climate adaptation is a risk**.
 - v) The current workload and staff capacity issues are a concern.
 - vi) Resourcing action on the environment is a challenge given the current financial position of the Council.
 - vii) There is a need to continually assess and prioritise how best to use the limited staff and financial resources on progressing the Council's environmental duties and commitments.
 - viii) The uncertainty regarding the Government's policy on the environment and implications of recent environmental legislation is a concern.

¹ The Council's performance is benchmarked against 33 English authorities which cover large, principally non-urban geographical areas. Where it is available, it is indicated which quartile Leicestershire's performance falls into. The first quartile is defined as performance that falls within the top 25% of relevant comparators (the best). The fourth quartile is defined as performance that falls within the bottom 25% of comparators (the worst). Quartile positions are updated annually.

Section 1: Leicestershire County Council

Section 1a: Net Zero Council

35. This section of the report provides details of the Council's performance and progress regarding its commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions for Leicestershire County Council as an organisation by 2035.

Part 1: Greenhouse gas emitting activities

36. Part 1 of the report provides some of the contextual performance data in relation to the Council's greenhouse gas emitting activities, which contribute to the figures set out in Part 2 and the Council's Greenhouse Gas Report for 2023-24.

37. It covers performance in the following areas:

- Electricity consumption;
- Gas/Biomass consumption;
- Business mileage;
- Waste produced;
- Water consumption;
- Renewable energy generated.

C2a – Electricity consumption per m² in LCC buildings

38. This Key Performance Indicator (KPI) looks at the efficiency of electricity use in Council buildings. Only buildings that have been in the Council's portfolio for six years (currently 74 sites) are included, so the changes in energy consumption should reflect the actual changes in energy efficiency.

39. Some revisions and updating to the methodology were undertaken this year, which has led to some changes to previous figures, although the trends are similar. Note that this KPI does not currently include renewable electricity generated and used on-site.

40. The electricity consumption per square metre for 2023-24 was **56.9kWh/m²** compared to the target of 67.1 kWh/m², therefore it is ahead of target (low is good). The figure was approximately 6% less than the 2022-23 figure of 60.9 kWh/m² and is in line with the long-term trend.

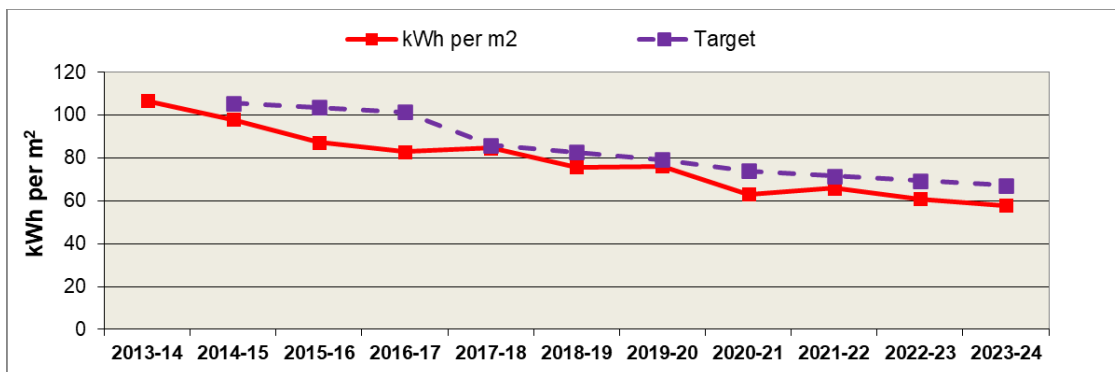


Figure 1: Electricity consumption per m² 2013-14 to 2023-24

41. This positive performance reflects lower grid electricity usage, which is now 1.7 GWh per year less than before the Covid-19 pandemic. This is believed to reflect a combination of lower building occupancy, reduction in non-seasonal ventilation, energy efficiency measures and increased solar photovoltaic (PV) output.

C2b – Gas/biomass consumption (weather corrected) per m² in LCC buildings

42. This KPI looks at heating efficiency in Council buildings. Only the buildings that have been in the Council’s portfolio for six years (currently 40 sites) are included so that any annual reductions seen in both electricity and gas consumption represent genuine efficiency improvements.
43. Gas/biomass consumption per square metre for 2023-24 has reduced by 5% to **119.4 kWh/m²** compared to the figure for 2022-23 of 126.1 kWh/m². This is still noticeably above the target of 85.8 kWh/m².
44. This reflects the fact that heating demand has not always fallen in line with milder weather, likely in part due to issues with the heating system at County Hall during the last two years. Measures by the Property Team has improved the position in 2023-24, especially at County Hall.

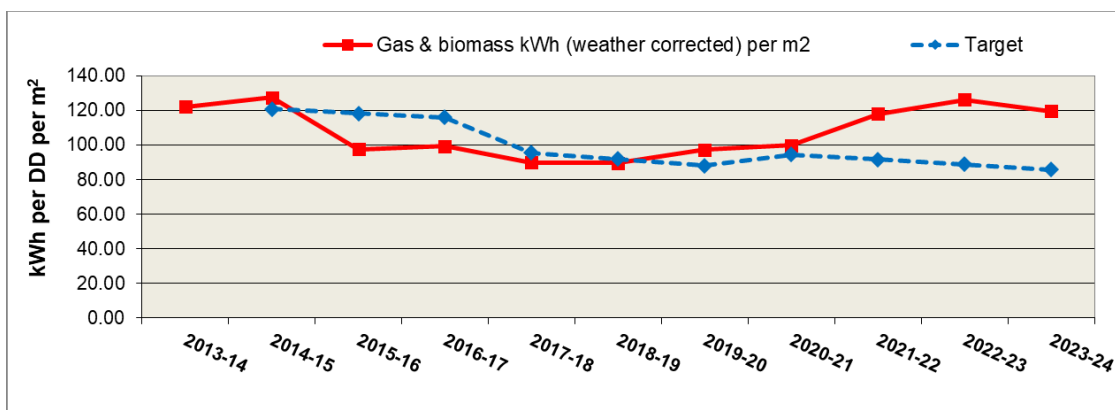


Figure 2: Gas and biomass consumption per m² 2013-14 to 2023-24

C18 – Total business mileage

- 45. Annual business mileage claims rose by almost **3%** in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23 with total business mileage of about **4.8m miles**. This gradual rise is a continuation of the rebound since the Covid-19 pandemic and reflects the resumption of working patterns that still rely to a significant extent on motor vehicles for visits to clients and sites. Business mileage for 2023-24 is still 13% below the in-year target of 5.4m miles. Note business mileage claims do not include commuting to and from work and only include mileage claimed by staff in carrying out Council business.
- 46. Business mileage claims are still over **16%** (almost 950,000 miles) **less** than the pre-pandemic level in **2019-20**. This can largely be attributed to many Council staff taking advantage of smarter working policies, such as online and hybrid meetings, and flexible working.
- 47. The biggest contributors to mileage claims in 2023-24 were staff from Adults and Communities (40%), Children and Families (35%) and Environment and Transport (12%). The proportion of total business mileage claimed for EVs in 2023-24 was 1.7%, slightly up on the previous year (1.4%), with an increasing trend in each quarter.
- 48. The type of data received changed with the introduction of the new Oracle Fusion system in quarter four of 2020-21. This year, improvements were made to the analysis method, to eliminate some minor inaccuracies. The data was re-calculated back to 2021-22.

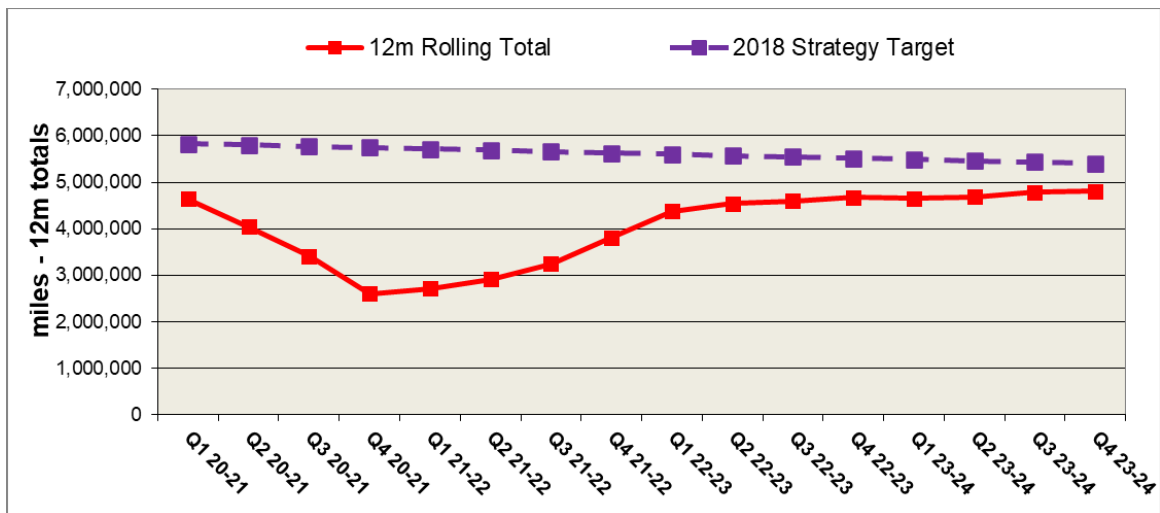


Figure 3: Rolling 12-month business mileage 2020-21 to 2023-24

LW1 – Total waste from LCC sites

49. The rolling annual total waste figure increased by **8%** (23 tonnes) in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23. The figure of **275 tonnes** is in line with the level of waste being generated since the Covid-19 pandemic. The figure is 23% (82 tonnes) less than the pre-pandemic level in 2019-20.
50. The increasing amount of waste may in part be due to the increasing occupancy levels at County Hall, as more of the building is occupied by tenant organisations, whose staff, in some cases, are more regular users of the building. It is currently not possible to measure the volumes of waste generated by Council staff or non-Council staff respectively at County Hall, without resourcing an extensive annual waste audit.

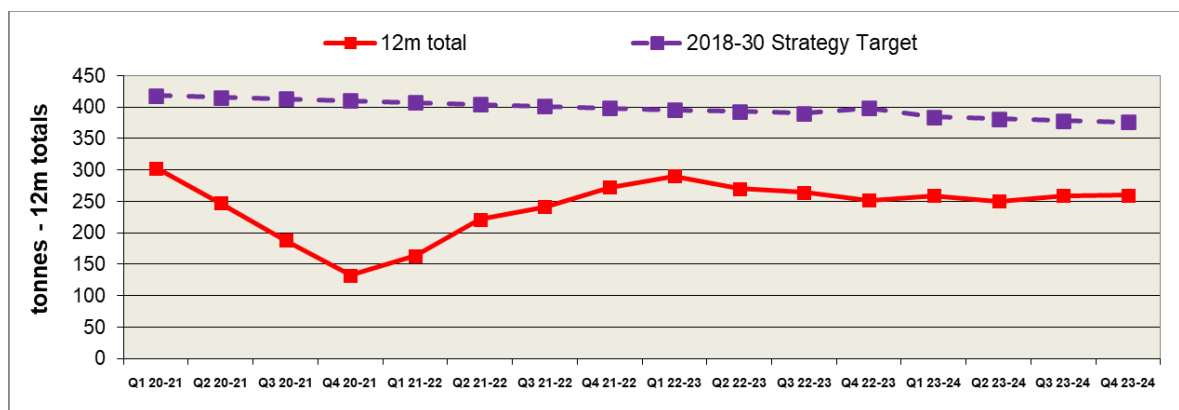


Figure 4: 12-month rolling quarterly total waste 2020-21 to 2023-24

WA1 - Total water consumption per FTE

51. The data for 2023-24 shows reported consumption of water increasing by **8%** to **43,875m³** compared to 2022-23. This level of water usage is over 8,200m³ less than the average usage of the last five years.
52. The number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff was broadly stable, so that the water consumption per FTE member of staff increased from 8.35m³ in 2022-23 to **9.08m³** in 2023-24. This still means that the performance once again was ahead of the target of 10.9 m³ (low is good).
53. Occupancy of the Council's main office buildings has varied significantly over the last few years, meaning that "per FTE" is a less useful measure than previously. There is a lack of precise and comprehensive occupancy data. However, occupancy levels appear to be rising slowly under the "Ways of Working" project (Project aim is to equip council staff with the technology and training to do their jobs effectively and flexibly, using a mix of workplaces to meet service and customer needs, and support staff wellbeing).
54. In addition, an increasing proportion of County Hall is being let out to partner organisations, some of which require 24/7 full-time attendance on site because

of the nature of their work. This may be affecting the level of water consumption in County Hall, but further analysis is needed. The floor area leased out is well documented, but there is less information about the numbers of staff and their occupancy rates.

C17a - Renewable energy generated as a percentage of consumption on County Council land and properties

55. The amount of renewable energy generated as a percentage of total energy consumed was **13.3%** at the end of 2023-24, significantly under the 30.9% target. The targets for this indicator reflect the Strategic Property Energy Strategy 2020-30, which has a target of 50% on-site renewable or zero carbon energy generation as a percentage of annual consumption at corporate Council buildings. The figure is up from the 2022-23 figure of 10.9%.
56. The largest contributor to renewable energy generation is the biomass boiler at County Hall. During 2023-24, technical problems with the boiler reduced output in both quarter one and quarter three. These problems were resolved in quarter four, resulting in a significant improvement in energy production. Total annual biomass generation rose to **1.6m kWh** in 2023-24 from about 1.4m kWh in 2022-23. This amounted to **71%** of total corporate renewable energy and **43%** of County Hall's total heating energy input in 2023-24.
57. Solar energy generation at corporate sites showed strong performance in 2023-24 with a second successive annual record of over **656,000 kWh**. These increases reflect continued investment in new arrays as well as maintenance and upgrades carried out up to June 2023.

Part 2: Greenhouse Gas Report

58. Part 2 provides a summary of what the performance figures set out in Part 1 above, as well as the other sources of emissions, have meant for the Council's overall greenhouse gas emissions as an organisation.
59. In 2023-24, Leicestershire County Council's net greenhouse gas emissions **decreased by 2.7%** (254 tCO_{2e}) compared to 2022-23 to **9,282 tCO_{2e}**. This is equivalent of **1.92 tCO_{2e} per full-time equivalent employee** (0.04 tCO_{2e} decrease compared to 2022-23).
60. Emission reductions can be found across most sources with scope 1 sources seeing an overall 4% reduction and scope 2 seeing a 0.7% reduction. Direct emissions from buildings had the largest reduction at 11.7%, with the majority of this decrease due to reduced gas use in corporate buildings, attributed in part to warmer weather and the increased use of the biomass boiler at County Hall. Emission reductions across all other sources were below 3% which demonstrates that it is getting harder to seek out and gain substantial reductions without increased investment.

61. Overall, Council emissions have now **reduced by 74.1%** since the 2008-09 baseline year. Table 1 provides more details of the figures behind the Council's greenhouse gas emissions for 2023-24.
62. On-site renewable energy generation, including solar power and biomass heating, avoided **414 tCO₂e** of greenhouse gas emissions in 2023-24 (equivalent to 4.5% of net emission), compared to if gas and grid electricity were consumed.
63. Based on a 2016-17 baseline year and assuming a linear reduction in emissions to 2035, the target level of emissions for 2023-24 was **13,725 tCO₂e**. With an actual emissions figure of **9,282 tCO₂e in 2023-24**, the County Council is **ahead of target in year**.
64. However, most of the past reduction in emissions has occurred the earlier years (see figure 6), with the level of annual reduction decreasing in recent years. An average annual reduction in emissions of **5.6%** is required to meet net zero by 2035. The annual reduction for 2023-24 was only **2.7%**, which is less than half the required rate of reduction. If this rate of reduction was to continue, the County Council **would not achieve net zero by 2035** (see red dotted line on figure 6), and calculations show the Council would still be emitting approximately **6,870 tCO₂e in 2035** and **4,600 tCO₂e in 2050**, the national target for net zero.
65. The Council's full 2023-24 Greenhouse Gas Report is attached to this report as **Appendix B**.

GHG emissions data for period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 (tCO₂e)						
	Sector	2023-24	2022-23	% Change	Base Year 2008-09	% Change
Scope 1 – Direct Emissions e.g., boilers, owned transport, air conditioning gases	Buildings	1,663	1,882	-11.7%	4,317	-61.5%
	Fleet vehicles	2,694	2,714	-0.8%	4,358	-38.2%
	Fugitive gases	114.9	59.7	92.5%	-	-
	Sub-total	4,471	4,656	-4.0%	8,675	-48.5%
Scope 2 – Energy Indirect e.g., purchased electricity	Buildings	1,299	1,297	0.2%	6,562	-80.2%
	Streetlighting & traffic signals	1985	2,009	-1.2%	15,581	-87.3%
	Sub-total	3,284	3,306	-0.7%	22,143	-85.2%
Scope 3 – Other Indirect e.g., business travel and water supply/treatment	Business travel	1,289	1,283	0.5%	3,237	-60.2%
	Electricity transmission & distribution losses	284	302	-6.0%	1,722	-83.5%
	Water supply & treatment	16.1	16.6	-2.5%	-	-
	Waste	5.7	5.2	10.2%	-	-
	Sub-total	1,595	1,607	-0.7%	4,959	-67.8%
Total Gross Emissions		9,351	9569	-2.3%	35,778	-73.9%
	Carbon offsets	0	0	-	0	-
	Renewable energy exports	-69	-33	107.7%	0	-
Total Location-based Net Emissions		9,282	9536	-2.7%	35,778	-74.1%
	Full time equivalent (FTE) employees	4,830	4,864	-0.7%	6,880	-29.8%
	Intensity measure: tCO ₂ e/FTE	1.92	1.96	-2.0%	5.2	-63.0%
	Renewable electricity tariff	3,284	3306	-0.7%	-	-
Total Market-based Net Emissions		6,067	6,263	-3.1%	35,778	-83.0%
	Petrol and diesel (outside of scope)	219.44	163.95	33.8%	-	-
	Woodchip (outside of scope)	717	694	3.3%	-	-

Table 1: Council 2023-24 greenhouse gas emissions, with a comparison to 2022-23 and the 2008-09 baseline year

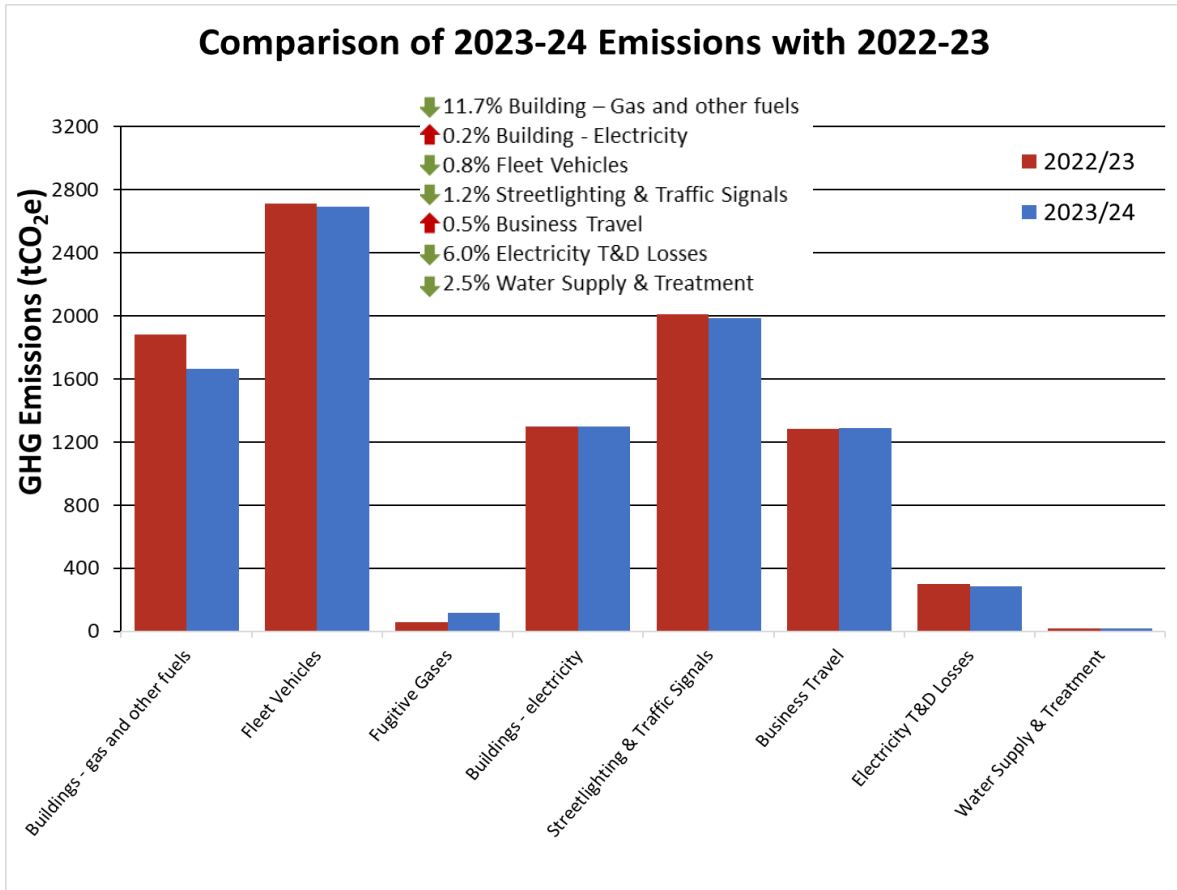


Figure 5: Council 2023-24 greenhouse gas emissions by source, compared to 2022-23

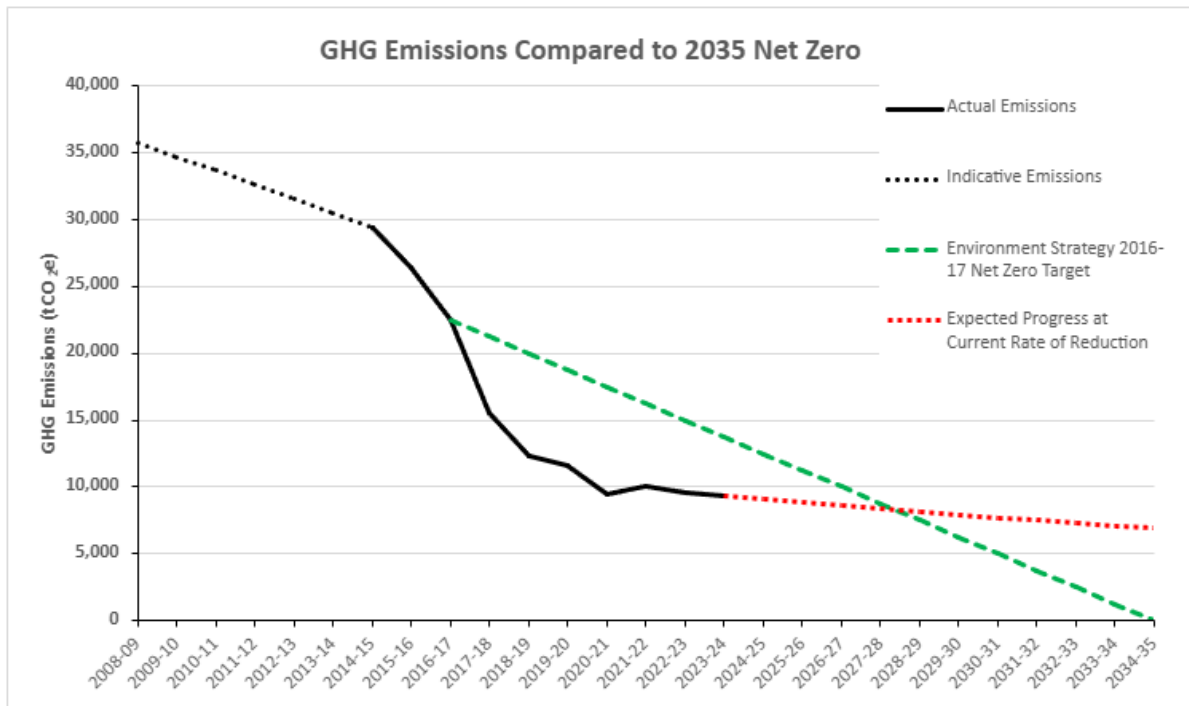


Figure 6: Council net greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2030 net zero

Part 3: 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan progress update

66. In December 2022, the County Council adopted the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan, which outlined how the County Council aimed to achieve net zero for its own operational emissions by 2030. Since these commitments were made, the Council has been subjected to an increasingly constrained financial position with a significant deficit forecast. In light of this, the Council resolved to extend the net zero targets to 2035 for Council operations and review the Net Zero Action Plan to reflect the resources available to deliver these actions.
67. This report provides a progress update of all of the actions within the Action Plan and a separate report ('Revised Environment Strategy and Net Zero Action Plans') will be presented to the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide a revised Action Plan for 2025-2030.
68. Appendix D of this report provides a progress update of all of the actions within the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan. The following actions are currently in delivery or have been completed:
- a) Carbon Reduction Actions:
 - i. A successful bid to Phase 4 of the Low Carbon Skills Fund resourced a series of energy efficiency and condition surveys across **62 Council buildings**. The surveys were completed in March 2024 and the results have been used to bid for further external funds to make fabric and heating improvements at several sites. The Council's Energy Team is in the process of finalising applications to be submitted to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which will be determined in May 2025.
 - ii. An **EV fleet transition study** has been undertaken and completed and it will now be used to advise on the potential next steps in EV fleet transition.
 - iii. A procurement exercise to implement Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel for part of the Council's fleet (hard to electrify vehicles) has been completed.
 - iv. An 18-month trial to dim and trim **streetlighting** in the County commenced in early 2024 and has resulted in projected electricity savings of 1,336,166 kWh, which equates to 277 tCO_{2e}. This is an estimated saving of £523,700 in this financial year (2024/25), based on the current energy tariff. The project was awarded 'Most Sustainable Project of the Year' at the Highway Electrical Association awards.
 - v. A project to reduce the Council **business mileage** has commenced with pilot projects planned to educate the Council's staff in carbon reduction and to consider how their service area could reduce business miles travelled.

b) Enabling Actions:

- i. A review and **refresh of the of Net Zero Leicestershire webpages** has been undertaken to ensure that all information is up to date.
- ii. Work has commenced to develop a **new training module for staff** which focuses on climate change and carbon reduction.
- iii. There is ongoing support and encouragement for **low carbon commuting** (such as bike loans, Dr Bike, Betterpoints, Cycle to Work scheme).
- iv. Reported to the environmental reporting platform CDP.

69. The completion of studies which will inform the development of the Buildings Decarbonisation Plan and the EV Fleet Transition Plan is a positive step. However, initial findings have identified that a significant level of financial investment will be needed in order to achieve reductions from Council buildings (36 % of the Council's emissions) and fleet vehicles (29% of the Council's emissions).
70. Without significant finances being made available from either the Government or from external funders, the Council's financial position will make the delivery of these key initiatives required to enable it to meet its net zero commitments by 2035 extremely challenging.

Section 1b: Greener Council

71. This section of the report sets out the Council's performance as an organisation on a range of environmental areas. It also provides an assessment of the performance against the Council's EMS.

Part 4: Wider environmental areas

72. Part 4 of the report provides details on the Council's performance across a range of environmental areas, which are not covered in Part 1, in particular:
- a. Nature;
 - b. Resource use;
 - c. Staff perception;
 - d. Compliance;
 - e. Risks.

a. Nature

B3a Hectares of LCC land in better management for nature

73. At the end of 2023-24, there were **3,736 hectares** of Council land in better management for nature. This is a decrease of 118 hectares compared to 2022-23. This change reflects the disposal of land since 2022-23.
74. This figure includes a combination of Council land including Country Parks, rural and urban highway verges, County farms and playing fields.

B3b % of suitable LCC land in better management for nature

75. At the end of 2023-24, **97%** of suitable Council land was in better management for nature, similar to 2022-23.

Wildlife verges

76. At the end of 2023-24, there were a total of **79 wildlife verges** and **52 parish councils** included in the Wildlife Verge scheme. The total area of wildlife verges was **40,427m²**.
77. Up to the end of 2023-24, a total of **4,208 volunteer hours** were spent undertaking verge baseline surveys and **3,648 wildlife records** were generated, since the scheme started.
78. In July 2023, the Wildlife Verge scheme won the Defra **Bees Needs Champion Award** under the Community Category. The award recognises and celebrates examples of exceptional initiatives undertaken by local authorities, community groups, farmers, and businesses to support pollinators.

b. Resource use

LW2 - % Recycled from LCC sites

79. The recycling figure for 2023-24 was **62%**, an increase from the 2022-23 figure of 51.2%. This is below the target of 64.9% for 2023-24. The current target is to achieve a 70% recycling rate by 2030.
80. The rolling 12-monthly recycling figures rose to over 60% in the second half of 2021-22, fell back to around 50% in 2022-23, and returned to around 60% for the second half of 2023-24.
81. The reasons for these changes are not fully understood. However, when total waste produced is lower, the recycling rate drops. In addition, some recycling streams have reduced or disappeared over the last few years, including:
- compost from staff kitchen areas (circa 20 tonnes per year pre-pandemic; halted for logistical reasons);
 - printer cartridges (mainly replaced by Kyocera MFD service contract);

- fluorescent tubes (largely replaced by longer-lasting LED lamps);
- lower weight of recyclable packaging (lightweight bottles and cans).

82. Finally, problems have been observed with the recycling system in the County Hall Food Court. This is frequently overwhelmed by the large proportion of single use packaging being used, leading to the contamination of the recycling and food waste bins. Through the Greener Together initiative, work is taking place with staff and the users of the Food Court to raise awareness and change behaviour. A successful series of awareness days was held in the Food Court in May 2024 and follow-ups are planned.

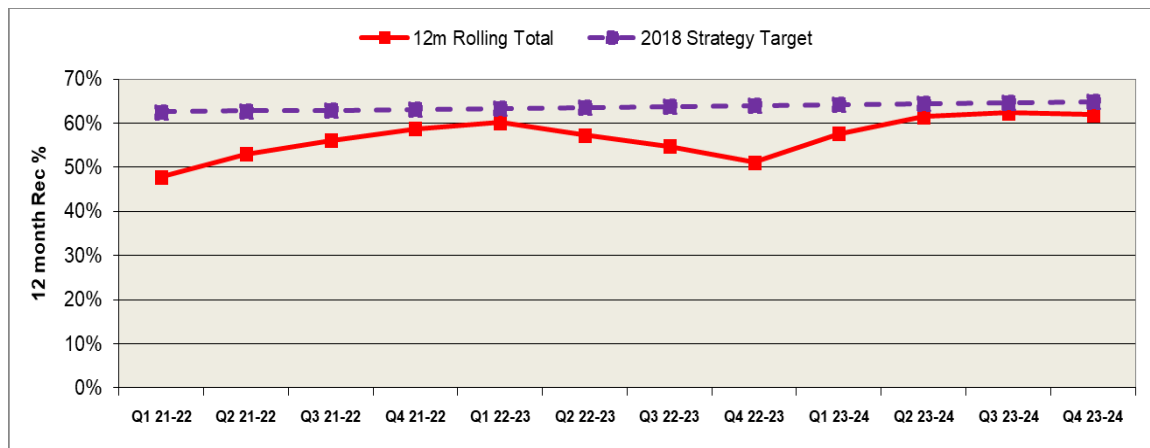


Figure 7: % waste recycled 2021-22 to 2023-24

P1a - Total office paper purchased

83. The data is received directly from the Council's primary paper supplier.
84. The amount of paper purchased at the end of 2023-24 was **2.7m A4 sheets**. This was a slight **decrease** of **1.5%** (40,000 A4 sheets) on 2022-23, and significantly less (**67%**) than the pre-pandemic figure of **8.2m A4 sheets**.
85. This reflects the persistence of changes arising during the pandemic, including the move to digital service delivery, and working from home (now part of the Council's ways of working). Work is and will take place to maintain the reduction in paper usage where possible. The reduction in paper use in part contributes to the fall in recycling performance, as there is less paper to recycle.

LW10 - % of recycled aggregates used in highways

86. The proportion of recycled aggregates used over 2023-24 was **60%**, a reduction from 89% the previous year. The amount of recycled aggregate used varies from quarter to quarter, with 100% recycled aggregate used in quarter four of 2023-24.

87. The use of recycled aggregates is affected by availability and feasibility (such as not being suitable for base layers) and it is not always the best environmental option when processing, logistics and energy use are factored in. However, the use of recycled aggregates in certain schemes can significantly reduce transportation and waste costs, and therefore, it is encouraged where it is suitable and locally available.

c. Staff perception

E1 - Proportion of staff supporting the statement “I believe the Council is doing enough to reduce its impact on the environment” and E2 - Proportion of staff agreeing with the statement “I understand how I can contribute to green issues at work”

88. As part of a refresh of the mandatory Environmental Awareness E-Learning training in 2017-18, a survey was included in the module to gather data for this KPI.
89. Of the staff that completed the survey in 2023-24, just under **90%** agreed that the Council was doing enough to reduce its impact on the environment and just under **93%** agreed that they understood how they can contribute to green issues at work.
90. While these results are positive, a slight downward trend has been observed over recent years, with the percentage of staff that understand how they can contribute to green issues at work falling below the target of 95%.
91. This may reflect the current ways of working and the fact that many staff are working from home, so they feel less able to contribute to green issues in the workplace. In addition, with most staff working from home, there is less scope for staff engagement. The results may also reflect an increased public awareness and concern about the environment, and a recognition that more and urgent action needs to be taken.
92. A revamped staff behavioural change scheme called ‘Greener Together’ was launched in June 2023. As part of the new scheme, initiatives will be undertaken to support staff, tenants and building users to reduce the Council’s environmental impact. As the scheme is rolled out through information provision, training, and opportunities for staff to learn and work together on reducing the Council’s environmental impacts, it is hoped that it will address this decline.
93. As part of the new scheme, the mandatory Environmental Awareness training course for staff has been updated, with a more comprehensive revision of the course to take place in 2024-25.

d. Compliance

M1 - Environmental complaints

94. There were **no environmental complaints** upheld during 2023-24 compared to one in 2022-23.

M2 - Environmental incidents

95. There was **one** environmental incident reported in 2023-24. This related to the theft of diesel fuel from a bunded tank at one of the highways depots. This led to a minor diesel spillage next to the tank on an impermeable surface, which was contained and removed using spill kits, and did not reach the drains.

M5 - Environmental enforcements/prosecutions

96. There were no enforcement notices or prosecutions logged in 2023-24.

External and Internal Audit results

97. External audits are carried out annually by BM Trada to ISO14001 EMS Standard, with a full re-certification audit every three years.
98. An external ISO14001 EMS recertification audit was carried out in February 2024. **Two minor non-conformities** were found, one relating to contractor induction at Council properties and a second relating to the management of gas bottles delivered to County Hall. Corrective action has since been taken on both non-conformities.
99. Only those Council services externally certified to ISO14001 are subject to external audits. Namely, the Strategic and Operational Property Services – County Hall operations and Beaumanor Hall operations; the Central Print Services; the Countryside Services and the Environment Policy and Strategy team. Internal audits may be carried out on any service, but they are focussed on those previously identified as potentially having high environmental risks.
100. A set of internal audits was carried out during 2023-24 as part of a rolling three-year programme. These covered the Civic Car (Chief Executive's Department), the Snibston Country Park and Heritage Site, the County Hall Food Court, the Soft Facilities Management (FM) - (Waste Contracts and Central Print), the Hard FM (County Hall), and the Asset management/ Estates Commissioning (Strategic Property Services).
101. **One major non-conformity** was found, in relation to the Civic Car (risk of the pollution from manual full car washes entering the combined drainage). **Three minor non-conformities** were recorded, namely the Civic Car (risk of pollution from minor car washes), the Hard FM (environmental housekeeping checklist not in use) and the Food Court (some staff had not completed Environmental Awareness course).

102. A total of 24 observations (potential opportunities for improvement) and 18 other recommended actions (such as information sharing with the Environment team) were recorded across all the service areas.

e. Risks

i) Environment Risk Register

M3 - Environmental risks scoring >15

103. At the end of 2023-24, there were a total of **two** environmental risks scoring 15 or more. These environmental risks relate to areas where the Council is not meeting the legal requirements or the Council's policy is significantly failing to address Environment Strategy objectives.

104. The remaining risks sit within the Environment and Transport and Corporate Resources Departments and are summarised as follows:

- a) Biodiversity considerations not sufficiently taken into account in Highways mowing regimes (**one risk**).

Urban verge trials are continuing and expanding, but still make up only a small proportion (less than 1%) of the verge network. These are being used to inform possible changes to mowing regimes. There is an increasing public interest in having wildlife verges, but further systematic change is needed. This risk will continue to be reviewed to determine if a sufficient progress has been made to reduce this risk.

- b) Leaching from skips used to store dog waste at Country Parks (**one risk**).

The skips provided to Country Parks by the waste contractor have been identified as often not being suitable for the storage of dog waste, resulting in leaching from the skips. This matter has been raised with the Soft FM team to address as part of the re-procurement of the waste contract in 2024-25.

105. The previous high risk in relation to inadequate access to waste disposal outlets has been reduced by a new long-term contract for residual waste treatment and disposal coming online.

ii) Climate Change Risk Register

R1 - Outstanding actions on climate change risk register

106. There are **six high risks** on the climate change register at the end of 2023-24. This is a reduction of two since the completion during 2021-22 of a review and assessment of the risks to the Council from climate change. The identified risks relate primarily to highways and property assets, business continuity and flood risk.

107. The two risks that are no longer classified as high risks were in relation to:

- a) A flood risk to building services at one specific property. Now resolved, as the Council has vacated the property.
- b) The lack of an updated Flood Risk Management Strategy and flood risk map for the County. Now resolved, as an updated strategy and flood risk map were published in February 2024.

108. Due to capacity issues within the Environment Policy and Strategy team, it has not been possible to undertake significant work to address the other climate change risks. Work will be undertaken to see how the re-prioritisation of the workload and the re-allocation of staff resources might enable action to be taken to reduce the risks identified.

Part 5: Environmental Management System

109. Part 5 of the report provides an update on a range of aspects in relation to the Council's EMS. Many of these aspects relate to requirements within the ISO14001 standard, for which some service areas in the Council are certified to. It covers the following:

- a. External and internal issues relevant to the EMS;
- b. Needs and expectations of interested parties;
- c. Changes to statutory duties;
- d. Changes to environment legislation;
- e. Environmental risks and opportunities;
- f. Adequacy of resources;
- g. Relevant communications from interested parties;
- h. Opportunities for continual improvement.

a. External and internal issues relevant to the EMS

110. Some uncertainties about the post-Brexit legislation have reduced. For example, the role of the new Office of Environmental Protection is becoming clearer. Several key initiatives have been continued by the new Government, including regulations and guidance under the Environment Act 2021, such as the Simpler Recycling and LNRSSs. In other areas, such as renewable energy and planning, the Government is starting to make changes, which have been well advertised in broad terms, but where further detail on implementation is awaited.

111. Key recent policies and legislation from the Government, which may affect the environment and be relevant to the EMS and/or Council services, include:

- The Environment Act 2021 and subsequent regulations such as Simpler Recycling, Digital Waste Tracking, Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme.

- The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (first revision of 25-Year Environment Plan).

112. Recent and current consultations by the Government on the environmental policy, which may be relevant to the EMS and/or Council services, include:

- The review of highway and railway Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in the Planning Act 2008;
- Future Homes and Building Standards;
- UK Emissions Trading Scheme;
- Simpler Recycling in England.

b. Needs and expectations of interested parties, including compliance obligations and changes in political priorities/direction

113. The recently elected Government has given high-profile commitments to clean energy and solving sewage pollution and has reiterated its commitment to net zero targets. The position in relation to waste, clean air, farming, nature and strategic planning is less clear.

114. Since last year, the Council's Strategic Property team has required building energy usage and cost data from the Environment Policy and Strategy team to support Corporate Asset Management Plan reporting. This year, a new process was created to ensure that consistent data could be provided going forward.

115. Increasing cost pressures over recent years on the Council's budgets continue to make it more difficult to take action on the environment and progress identified projects. This will mean that tough decisions must be made about how the Council spends its resources to deliver its statutory duties and priorities.

116. During 2022-23, the Council responded to data and information requests from Climate Emergency UK as part of their scoring of all councils on the action that they are taking on climate change. The results of this scoring were released in October 2023, with Leicestershire County Council achieving a score of 46%. This was the fourth highest score for a county council in the UK. The average county council score was 35% and the highest county council score was 53%. More information on the scores can be found in this link:
<https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/scoring/county/>

117. During 2024-25, the Council responded to the data and information requests from Climate Emergency UK as part of their next round of scoring all councils on the action they are taking on climate change. The results of this scoring will be released in the summer of 2025.

c. Changes to statutory duties

118. The Environment Act 2021 and subsequent regulations resulted in changes to the Council's statutory duties in relation to the environment. The Act introduced a requirement that local authorities within England should produce a **LNRS**.
119. In June 2023, the County Council was appointed as the 'responsible authority' for developing a strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland. In September 2023, work started on developing the LNRS with a draft strategy completed in October 2024. For more information on what a LNRS is and what is taking place locally, follow this link:
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy/what-a-local-nature-recovery-strategy-is>
120. In addition, the Environment Act 2021 introduced a requirement that all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exceptions) will have to deliver **10% Biodiversity Net Gain** from February 2024. This placed a new statutory duty on local planning authorities, including the County Council, to support the delivery and administration of this new requirement.
121. The Environment Act 2021 also introduced a **strengthened legal duty for public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity** and new **biodiversity reporting requirements** for local authorities. Work commenced at the end of 2023-24 on meeting the requirements of this duty with the Biodiversity Duty Plan approved by the Cabinet in December 2024.
122. As noted in the last year's report, the Environment Act 2021 introduced several new statutory duties relating to waste which are due to come into effect over the coming years. These concern the **Simpler Recycling** reforms, including the **mandatory separation of waste including food waste collections**, which is due to come into force in 2025 for businesses and non-household municipal premises and in 2026 for households; the **Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging**, which is due to come into force in 2025; and a **Deposit Return Scheme** for drink containers, which is due to come into force from October 2027. Local authorities, including Leicestershire County Council, are working to prepare for these changes.

d. Changes to environment legislation

123. There were a range of new or updated general environmental Acts, legislation, regulations, consultations, and guidance released during 2023-24, with **117** identified as possibly being relevant to the County Council. A full list can be found in **Appendix C** of this report.
124. The main areas included were in relation to **waste, natural environment, chemical regulations, carbon emissions, and the energy performance of buildings**. Of most significance to the County Council were the regulations coming out of the **Environment Act 2021** in relation to new national environmental targets, LNRSs and Biodiversity Net Gain, the Government's

updated Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, and new guidance on the managing of waste containing persistent organic pollutants.

125. The Environment Policy and Strategy team has access to a specialised Environmental Legislation Information and Register Service, which provides a database, alerts and training on energy and environmental law and regulations. The supplier also provides a regular quarterly update of the Council's legislation register, including notification of new potentially relevant legislation.

e. Environmental risks and opportunities

126. During 2021-22, a comprehensive review and assessment of the risks to the Council from climate change was carried out. This assessment identified eight high risks and 56 medium risks from climate change on the Council's services, with the report putting forward seven recommendations. Since then, three of the recommendations have been completed as part of the process of approving the report. The number of high risks has reduced to six – see paragraph 107 for details.
127. Due to the limited staff capacity and the need to progress other priorities, it has not been possible to make a significant progress on the other recommendations. Some work has taken place on defining what would be involved in developing an area wide climate adaptation and resilience strategy, and discussions have taken place with neighbouring authorities and partners. Some research support was secured from De Montfort University to examine models of communication and engagement with different audiences to encourage understanding and taking action on reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change.
128. The Government has released guidance to local authorities on climate adaptation reporting, including how to undertake a climate change risk assessment and to develop an action plan. This was as part of rolling out the voluntary reporting on climate adaptation to local authorities under the fourth round of the adaption reporting power (ARP4). The Council has not taken part in the reporting, due to the insufficient staff capacity and the lack of additional funding to local authorities to undertake the reporting.
129. The insufficient action on the climate change risks will expose the Council to the risk of harm from future extreme weather events. Work has been undertaken to assess if the re-prioritisation of the workload and reallocation of staff resources could enable the action to be taken to reduce the risks identified. This exercise revealed that it was not possible to release sufficient capacity without impacting on other statutory and important work areas. Where opportunities arise to progress action on climate adaptation, they will be taken, especially where this can be done with the support of others.
130. The ways of working and the financial pressures on the Council are making it more difficult to achieve some of the Council's environmental targets. This is particularly the case for the 2035 and 2050 net zero targets as well as the target to achieve 70% recycling of the Council's office waste by 2030.

131. On the other hand, the ways of working are helping some of the Council's other environmental targets, in particular those in relation to electricity consumption, business mileage, paper use, and the total office waste produced.
132. There is a combined risk and opportunity in relation to the increased public awareness of and activism on environmental issues, particularly with the increasing concern about climate change and the loss of nature. This could provide an opportunity in terms of the public support for the Council in taking action on the environment; however, it could also be a risk in terms of greater public scrutiny and expectations of the scale and nature of any actions taken.

f. Adequacy of resources

133. There were no vacancies in the Environment Policy and Strategy team during 2023-24. The new post of LNRS Project Manager was recruited to in September 2023 who has led on the work to develop a LNRS for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.
134. Efforts continued on improving processes and using technology to make performance reporting more robust and efficient. Nevertheless, the team continues to manage its resources carefully, for example by only planning high-priority audits.
135. During 2023-24, two posts became vacant requiring re-recruitment. As a result, there was a shortfall in team resources for a period, resulting in a need to reprioritise the workload and reduce certain activities. However, the addition of the new staff has bolstered the team resources and it will improve project delivery into the future.
136. In addition, there has been two new temporary posts added to the Carbon Reduction team which are a result of the successful **£2.56m Innovate UK Fund Pathfinder Places** bid in November 2023. These staff are specifically funded by the bid to deliver the **LCAN project**. This project is one of seven demonstrator projects across the country, and it will deliver cutting edge research as well as support delivery of the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan.
137. More broadly across the Council, difficulties with retaining and recruiting staff, as well as increased workloads, have put pressure on some teams to maintain service levels and to ensure that there is a continued positive environmental performance.
138. In 2024, the Council resolved to extend the net zero targets for the Council and the wider County commitments and, in addition to this, requested that officers revise the Actions Plans for the Environment Strategy and both 2035 and 2050 Net Zero Strategies. Alongside these revisions, a prioritisation exercise was undertaken to consider the current staff resources and what is needed to deliver against these Action Plans and the statutory requirements of the Environment Branch (Environment Policy & Strategy and Carbon Reduction teams). This work has now been completed and the revised Action Plans,

which reflect the staff and financial resources available, are the subject of a separate report for consideration by the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

g. Relevant communications from interested parties

139. During 2023-24, **71 Freedom of Information / Environmental Information Regulation requests** were received in relation to the Council's environmental activities. These included requests in relation to carbon reduction, climate adaptation, ecological polices, waste, trees and eco-anxiety.

h. Opportunities for continual improvement (EMS, including opportunities for improved integration with other business processes or environmental performance)

140. Access to the legislation update service continues to support ongoing work to improve the robustness and effectiveness of the EMS.
141. Work continues on implementing the environmental sustainability performance monitoring and reporting software, with a view to replacing large elements of the current spreadsheet-based system. The Rio environmental monitoring and performance system will provide a more effective and stable system for monitoring a significant portion of the Council's environmental performance.
142. Work is ongoing to better understand the impact of severe weather events on the Council and the County by improving the use of existing Council data from sources such as flooding, property, and highways. This work will inform updates of the Climate Change Risk Registers as well as the planned high risk service areas climate adaptation action plans.
143. The Climate Change Risk Review and Assessment report and the recommendations therein provide an opportunity to improve how the Council responds to the threats from the environment in the form of the impacts from climate change.

Section 2: Leicestershire

Part 6: Net Zero Leicestershire

144. Part 6 of the report provides details of how Leicestershire is performing as a county in relation to the Council's commitment to work with others to achieve net zero by 2050 for the County area. Data is presented based on the figures provided by the Government for 2022 on the levels of greenhouse gas emissions attributed to Leicestershire, as well as other contextual data on how Leicestershire is performing in relation to activities that can contribute to reducing the County's emissions.

a. Greenhouse Gas Emission Figures for Leicestershire

145. Using the latest available datasets² from the Government, Leicestershire's emissions during **2022** were **4.645 MtCO₂e** - above the in-year target of 4.545 MtCO₂e by 100,000 tonnes. Figure 8 below provides a breakdown of these emissions into eight key sources. The breakdown by sector shows that transport contributes the greatest proportion (40%) of Leicestershire's emissions, followed by domestic (20%), industry (14%), agriculture (12%), waste management (6%), commercial (7%), public sector (2%) and land-use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) helped remove 1% of emissions, by carbon sequestration.

146. While emissions overall are gradually decreasing in Leicestershire, the County is not yet on track to achieve the target of net zero by 2050. Between 2021 and 2022, emissions decreased by **165,000 tonnes (3.4%)**. Calculations show that Leicestershire's emissions have decreased an average of **127,000 tonnes (2.5%)** per annum since 2019. This is below the **163,000 tonnes (3.2%)** per annum which is needed to meet the 2050 target.

147. Although emissions have been declining, a closer look at individual sectors shows varied progress. Transport remains the largest contributor to Leicestershire's emissions, accounting for 40% of the total. This reflects the national trend of transport being the highest emitting sector in 55% of UK local authorities. This is largely due to continued reliance on road traffic, which includes both personal and commercial transport.

148. The domestic sector contributed 20% of emissions in 2022, showing a steady decline from 1.6m tonnes in 2005 to 0.9m tonnes. This trend can be attributed partially to improved building insulation and efficiency standards, as well as warmer temperatures in recent years, reducing heating demands.

149. Industry emissions in Leicestershire have nearly halved since 2005. Reductions in industrial electricity and gas usage have contributed significantly to this substantial reduction. The commercial sector is also showing a significant

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2021>

decrease since 2005. This can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as lower energy usage (driven by milder temperatures and rising energy costs) and a growing share of renewables within the UK's power supply.

150. Compared to 2021, agricultural emissions have declined by 2.7% due to decreases in emissions from agricultural machinery and nitrous oxide emissions from soils. Although, this sector's emissions have declined more gradually when compared to other sectors.
151. Waste emissions have shown a gradual increase since 2008. This trend is reflected in UK wide figures also. Landfill methane remains a significant source of waste emissions. However, improvements to waste processing and methane capture technologies are anticipated to reduce these emissions in the future.
152. The LULUCF sector slightly offsets emissions in Leicestershire, with carbon sequestration from land use contributing to a 1% net removal of emissions.
153. While there has been a great progress towards reducing emissions in Leicestershire's industrial, commercial, and domestic sectors, additional efforts are needed in transport and waste management to meet the 2050 net zero target.
154. The Council has implemented several key initiatives which will contribute to the broader Leicestershire target of net zero by 2050. The Warm Homes scheme focuses on improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty by supporting vulnerable households with insulation, heating upgrades and other energy saving measures. The LTP4 is also being developed, embedding carbon reduction policies into transport planning to encourage more sustainable travel options and lower emissions. This coupled with the roll out of EV chargepoints, funded by the LEVI initiative, will help residents to reduce emissions from private cars.
155. Finally, the LCAN demonstrator project aims to develop Local Area Energy Plans, boost renewable energy production in communities and establish a central hub for carbon reduction information and resources. Through these initiatives, the Council is starting to lay a foundation for long-term collaborative climate action and emissions reductions.

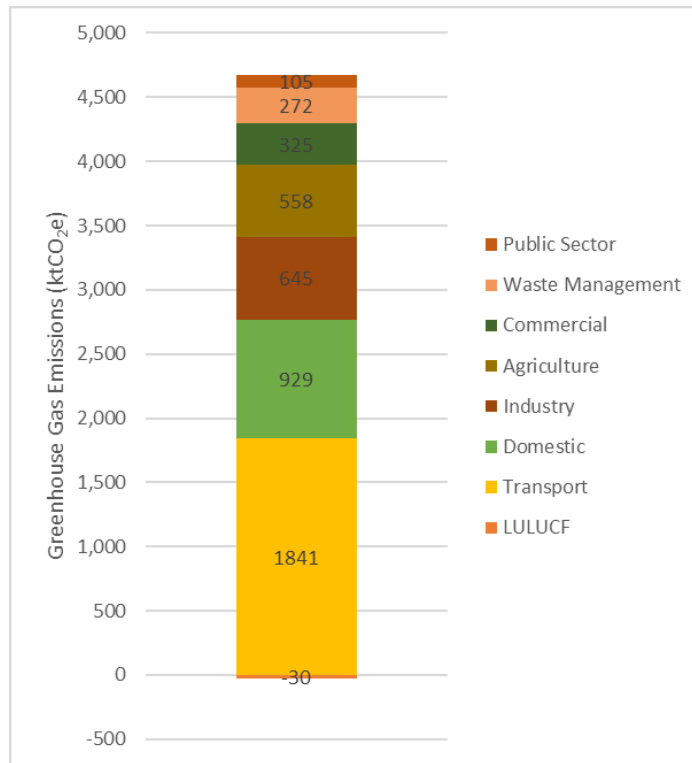


Figure 8: Leicestershire's 2022 greenhouse gas emissions by source

156. Since 2005, greenhouse gas emissions across Leicestershire have reduced by **31%**, meanwhile per capita emissions have reduced by **40%** to **6.43 tCO₂e**. Emissions in 2022 returned to a downward trend after a year of increase in 2021 due to the post Covid-19 pandemic bounce back. Emissions are now 7.6% lower than the Net Zero Leicestershire 2019 baseline year. The average fall in emissions since 2019 is a 2.5% reduction per year, an annual average reduction in emissions of 3.2% is needed to reach net zero by 2050. Therefore, Leicestershire is not currently on track to reach net zero by 2050, assuming a continuation of the current rate of reduction.

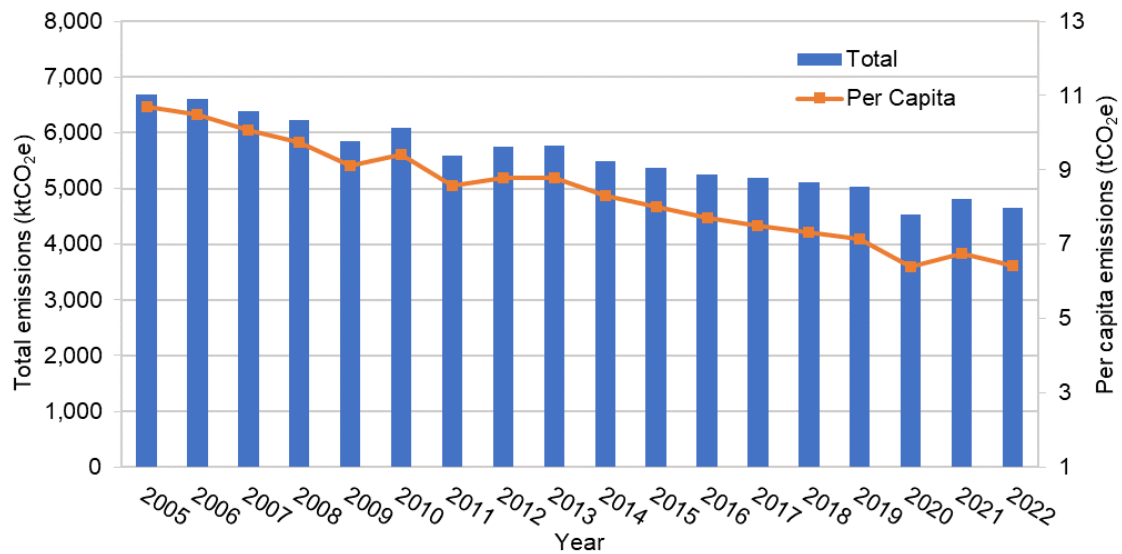


Figure 9: Leicestershire's total and per capita greenhouse gas emissions 2005 to 2022

157. The following paragraphs provide other contextual data on how Leicestershire is performing in relation to activities that can contribute to reducing the County's emissions.

Electric vehicle charging locations per 100,000 population

158. At the end of 2023-2024, there were **59.1 electric vehicles charging locations per 100,000 population** in Leicestershire. This was an increase from the 41.1 figure for 2022-23. This saw Leicestershire move from the fourth to the third quartile relative to comparative English authorities.
159. Following a successful bid to the Government, alongside Midlands Connect and four other local authorities (Lincolnshire County Council, Herefordshire County Council, Rutland Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council), the County Council has been allocated approximately £220,000 of the first portion of LEVI funding to deliver up to 100 public EV chargepoints across Leicestershire. These chargepoints will be focused within the most populated settlements across the seven district councils. The County Council has worked with Midlands Connect and a consortium of other local authorities to consider the next steps to secure further capital funding through the LEVI fund, and the County Council is awaiting advice from the Government on the future of the fund. If successful, this will bring hundreds of additional public EV chargepoints to Leicestershire, to help meet the needs of the growing EV market.
160. In September 2024, the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy was approved by the Cabinet. This strategy sets out the Council's approach to public electric charging provision and the delivery of public on-street chargepoints in residential areas which will be available for all Leicestershire residents. The strategy will also support the delivery of the LTP4 and the Council's vision for transport in Leicestershire.

Electric vehicle ownership rate per 10,000 population

161. At the end of 2023-24, the EV ownership rate was **216.5 per 10,000 population** in Leicestershire. This was an increase of about 40% compared to the figure of 154.1 for 2022-23. Leicestershire sits in the third quartile relative to comparative English authorities. Previous local figures showed that 32% of the EVs owned in Leicestershire are in the Harborough District area (while containing 13.7% of the County's population), while only 5% are in the Oadby and Wigston District area (while containing 8% of the County's population). These results are highlighting an uneven distribution of EV ownership across the County.

Renewable electricity generated in the area (MWh)

162. The latest available figures (2022) show that **355,263 MWh** of renewable electricity was generated in Leicestershire. This was more than the figure for 2021 of 326,528 MWh. Leicestershire sits in the **third quartile** relative to comparative English authorities for 2022.

Renewable electricity capacity in the area (MW)

163. The latest available figures (2022) show that the renewable electricity capacity for Leicestershire was **340.2 MW**. This was a slight increase from 2021 when the figure was 333.4 MW. Leicestershire sits in the third quartile relative to comparative English authorities. The Council has limited influence over County-wide renewable energy capacity, which tends to change in response to the Government incentive schemes and the wider energy market.

% Domestic properties with Energy Performance Certificate rating C+ (new properties)

164. At the end of 2023-24, **98.8% of new properties** in Leicestershire had an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or greater. This was a slight increase of 1.1% compared with the previous year's figure. Leicestershire sits in the **first quartile** relative to comparative English authorities.

% Domestic properties with Energy Performance Certificate rating C+ (existing properties)

165. At the end of 2023-24, **51.2% of existing properties** in Leicestershire had an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or greater. This was a slight decrease on the figure for 2022-23 of 52.6%. Leicestershire has fallen to the **second quartile** relative to comparative English authorities.

166. The Council is part of the "Green Living Leicestershire" (GLL) group, working with the district councils to support vulnerable households and those in or at risk of fuel poverty to reduce their bills by installing cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, solar panels, air source heat pumps and other energy efficiency measures. The GLL group also works with Solar Together to provide residents with the opportunity to reduce their energy costs by investing in solar panels.

Carbon Disclosure Project Reporting

167. During 2023-24, the Council commenced work on submitting a report to the CDP, with the submission being made in October 2024. The results of this are expected in early 2025.
168. As the world's leading environmental reporting platform, the CDP enables the Council to publicly disclose Leicestershire's climate change mitigation and adaptation risks, plans, actions, and impact. Leicestershire's disclosure is evaluated by the CDP to help identify gaps, benchmark its performance against peers and find areas of opportunity to help deliver its environmental commitments.
169. Through reporting to the CDP, Leicestershire is helping to inform policy and decision making far beyond the County boundary, including within the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Health Organisation, and the World Bank, helping to shape national and international climate policy and initiatives.
170. The Council's 2023 disclosure is available through the CDP Open Data Portal (<https://data.cdp.net/>).

b. Net Zero 2050 progress

i) 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan Update

171. In December 2022, the County Council adopted its Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan. These documents outlined how the Council intended to work with others to achieve net zero for Leicestershire by 2045. Since these commitments were made, the Council has been subjected to increasingly constrained financial position with a significant deficit forecast. In light of this, the Council Cabinet resolved to extend the net zero target for Leicestershire to 2050, in line with the national target. In addition, it was agreed that officers would review the current Net Zero Action Plan and reprioritise this to reflect the revised targets and current staff resources available to deliver against the actions.
172. Appendix E provides a list of all of the actions within the Action Plan and an update on each of these actions, including the current delivery status of the action and the progress made since the Council's last update in December 2023. Many actions are only deliverable with others such as partner organisations. Such actions are labelled with 'Ask' or 'Influence' from a County Council perspective. Updates have been sought from partner organisations where possible to help update and refresh these actions as necessary.
173. A separate report ("Revised Environment Strategy and Net Zero Action Plans") will be presented to the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which will provide the revised draft 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan.

174. Since the Action Plan was adopted in December 2022, there have been staff capacity issues within the Carbon Reduction team which has put a strain on the team's ability to drive forward actions within the Plan. However, work has progressed well in some areas.
175. To support the delivery of the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan, in September 2023 the County Council led a funding bid with a consortium of partners to the Innovate UK fund as part of the Pathfinder Places initiative. The partners included the National Grid, the Energy Systems Catapult, De Montfort University, the University of Leicester, Community Energy South and Green Fox Community Energy. This funding bid was announced as being successful on 30 November 2023, and the Council and its partners were awarded £2.56m of funding to manage the LCAN project, which will deliver four distinct work packages to drive forward net zero activity across Leicestershire. Leicestershire was the only County Council to be successful with its bid and it will deliver one of seven nationally important demonstrator projects. Its work and findings will contribute to national policy on net zero delivery, and it is intended to be replicable across other local authority areas.
176. Work package one is being led by De Montfort University to research and develop a governance model for Leicestershire, which will provide a framework to support future delivery of net zero activity, alongside deliver assurance and investment potential to possible funders.
177. Work package two is being led by the Energy Systems Catapult, which are national experts in the development of decarbonisations pathways. This work package will develop and deliver a Local Area Energy Plan for Leicestershire which will provide a place-based plan for the County Council and City Council areas, focusing on the current energy provision and what interventions will be needed, where they should be located and by when, to get the County to net zero by 2050. These interventions will include renewable technologies, heat networks, and EV charging infrastructure, and the map will be provided on an online interactive tool which will enable organisations and individuals to 'zoom in' to their area and find out the recommendations for low carbon and energy saving technology.
178. Work package three will provide support, tools and guidance to community groups to train and upskill them to set up Community Energy Projects. This work package is led by the national experts Community Energy South in partnership with the local community energy organisation Green Fox Community Energy. This work package will support groups to develop community share offers to enable them to fund low carbon technology in their local community and provide energy saving advice and measures, which support residents to save money while supporting the drive to net zero.
179. Work package four is being led by the University of Leicester and it will provide an advisory service for businesses, community organisations and individuals to support and guide them on their journey to net zero. This advisory service will

be web based and provide tools, training and information and link people through to the outputs of the above work packages.

180. All four work packages are designed to support each other and link together, with the Business Advisory Service hosting information on its website, including the Local Area Energy Plan, community energy information and signposting to support, with the overarching governance structure bringing partners together to support projects and attract investment into the County through the provision of an organised framework.
181. The LCAN project is funded for 21 months, and its outputs will be completed by December 2025.
182. The Council and its partners were successful in their bid for LEVI funding, allocating £220,000 to deliver 100 public EV chargepoints across Leicestershire. The Council is in the process of bidding for a second round of funds which will further roll out charging infrastructure to support the uptake of EVs in the County.
183. As mentioned in paragraph 160 above, the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy was approved by the Cabinet in September 2024. This strategy coupled with the development of LTP4 will support the Council's transition to net zero through embedding carbon reduction objectives into transport planning to encourage more sustainable travel options and lower emissions.
184. The Solar Together project has been supported by the County Council this year and it saw 223 installations across the County, with 87% of participants opting to add a battery to their solar panel installation. The scheme delivered a total of £2.2m of private resident investment in renewables in 2023 and it is estimated to deliver over 4,500 tonnes of carbon reduction over 25 years.
185. Leicestershire's Warm Home service launched its Home Energy Retrofit Offer project, funded by the Midlands Net Zero Hub, to offer personalised energy and retrofit advice, targeting hard-to-reach individuals and properties, delivering in person home visit advice to low income or health vulnerable residents. The Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 is currently in delivery, delivering fully funded energy efficiency measures to eligible homes heated by non mains gas appliances. The delivery runs to March 2025, with an estimated 190 homes deliverable and anticipated capital budget up to £2.85m.
186. To facilitate continued funding, the Warm Homes Local Grant is being explored to deliver further grant funded energy efficiency measures to lower income households. The grant will support on and off mains gas private sector households and, pending further guidance from the Government, it will provide funding for three-to-five year projects. This is anticipated to represent a multi-million-pound capital spend opportunity to enhance energy efficiency of low income and below average energy efficiency homes. Projects will be able to start from April 2025 onwards, but the mobilisation is anticipated to commence by September 2025.

187. The Warm Homes project has implemented a flexible eligibility mechanism to widen access to the national Energy Company Obligation, which provides grant funded energy efficiency upgrades to low-income private sector households. This mechanism enables households to be declared eligible by the Warm Homes service where meeting expanded criteria considering health, housing and financial circumstances outside of the existing means tested benefit route.
188. A good progress has been made on developing the LNRS for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, with the draft Strategy going out to public consultation in January 2025. The LNRS will contain measures which will support the capture and storage of carbon emissions as well as enabling the reduction of emissions, for example in agriculture, through the move to more regenerative farming practices.
189. Over the last year, the Carbon Reduction team has undertaken some behavioural change activities with residents using a small pool of staff to attend as many public events as possible to engage with people and help them to understand climate change and the activities they can take to reduce their carbon footprint.

Part 7: Greener County

190. Part 7 of the report includes details of the performance across several environmental aspects for Leicestershire, namely:
- a. Nature;
 - b. Resource use;
 - c. Air quality.
191. These are intended to provide a picture of the wider environmental situation across the County, in addition to that set out above in relation to greenhouse gas emissions.

a. Nature

% of Leicestershire rivers (excluding Leicester) in good ecological status

192. The latest available figures (2019) show that **9.4%** of Leicestershire rivers (excluding Leicester) were **in good ecological status**. The figure for England was 14%; therefore, Leicestershire's rivers are in a poorer ecological status than the England average. This was an improvement for Leicestershire compared to the previously available figure from 2016 when just 0.67% of the County's rivers had good ecological status. This data is produced by the Environment Agency, with the next results due to be available in 2025.

% of Leicestershire rivers (excluding Leicester) in good chemical status

193. The latest available figures (2019) show that **0%** of Leicestershire's rivers (excluding Leicester) were **in good chemical status**. This reflected the figure

for England which also showed that no rivers in England had a good chemical status. This was a significant decline for Leicestershire compared to the previously available figure from 2016 when 99.6% of the County's rivers had good chemical status.

194. It should be noted that the main reason for this significant decline is that for the 2019 assessment there were new substances added to the assessment list (ubiquitous, persistent, bio-accumulative, toxic substances) as well as new standards, improved techniques and methods. This resulted in a more sensitive and accurate assessment of the chemical status of England's rivers.

A Tree for Every Person – Number of trees planted

195. At the end of 2023-24, there were a total of **398,920 trees planted** in Leicestershire, since July 2021, under the Tree for Every Person initiative, which aims to plant 700,000 trees by 2030. A total of **150,573 trees** were recorded as planted during 2023-24.

b. Resource use

HW1 – Kg of household waste per household

200. During 2023-24, the amount of household waste per household in Leicestershire rose to **960.2kg**; a rise of 32.1kg (3.5%) compared to 2022-23.
201. This rise can largely be explained by an increase of 30kg in the amount of recycling and of 6kg in the amount of green waste per household compared to 2022-23. These increases may be due to the influence of economic factors, namely the easing of the cost-of-living crises and the difference in weather, which increased the amount of green waste that was produced.

HW2 - % Household waste reused, recycled, and composted

202. The annual household waste recycling figure was **43.6%** for 2023-24. Recycling performance increased by 1.8% compared to the previous year.
203. A number of local and national trends are affecting recycling performance. The amount of garden waste collected in Leicestershire has fallen from 175kg per household in 2017-18 to 153kg in 2023-24, which may reflect the increased conversion of gardens to other uses and / or changes in the production of green waste due to climate change / adverse weather. The light-weighting of packaging and the ongoing drop in the consumption of newspapers and magazines also means that less recyclable material is being produced.
204. Finally, it seems likely that economic factors (specifically, the cost-of-living crisis since mid-2022) were largely responsible for the short-term variation over the last two years, by affecting the amount of consumables that were purchased, and hence the amount of materials and packaging that were being disposed.

205. The **Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy 2022-50** includes a range of initiatives to reduce waste sent to landfill and to promote waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. It includes a commitment to reduce waste to landfill to less than 5% by 2025, well in advance of the national target of 10% by 2035. The Strategy also includes a pledge to 'put in place collection systems to contribute towards the achievement of the national 65% recycling target by 2035'.
206. The Government consulted on several separate, but interlinked, legislative changes known as the Collection and Packaging Reforms (a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers, the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging, Simpler Recycling and Digital Waste Tracking). These changes are being introduced with the intention to reduce waste and increase recycling, although there remains some uncertainty on implementation dates.

Annual percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill

207. At the end of 2023-24, **12.5%** of Leicestershire's municipal waste was sent to landfill. This was almost half the 2022-23 figure of 23.7%. Despite this, Leicestershire still sits in the **fourth quartile** relative to comparative English authorities. The Council has committed to reduce waste to landfill to less than 5% by 2025.
208. The reduction is in large part due to the new energy from waste contract that started in April 2023.

Total fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population

209. The latest available figures are for 2022-23 and they show that there were **4.8 fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population** in Leicestershire. This was down from 5.6 incidents in 2021-22. Leicestershire sits in the **first quartile** relative to comparative English authorities. Overall, the trend has been relatively static since 2017-18, except for a peak of 8.6 incidents in 2020-21.

c. Air quality

PM2.5 Air pollution – fine particulate matter

210. The latest available figures (2023) show that the amount of PM2.5 was **7.7 µg/m³**. This was a decrease from 8.9 µg/m³ in 2022. Leicestershire sits in the **fourth quartile** relative to comparative English authorities. Overall, the trend is downwards since 2017 when the figure was 9.7 µg/m³, however, levels have been fluctuating between 7 µg/m³ and 9 µg/m³ since then, indicating that levels are largely flatlining at this general level.

NO₂ exceedances in Leicestershire

211. The latest available figures (2022) show that there were **three NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide) exceedances** in Leicestershire. This was an increase from 2021 when there were no exceedances. Overall, the trend is downwards since 2017

when the figure was 11 exceedances, though the figure for 2022 is the first rise since then.

Conclusions

a. Leicestershire County Council

212. The following key conclusions for Leicestershire County Council have been identified:

- i) The County Council has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 2.7% in 2023-24 compared to the previous year. The figures show that the Council is currently ahead of target compared to the linear trajectory to achieve net zero from the 2016-17 baseline year to 2035. However, the level of annual reduction is starting to plateau as the quick win opportunities to reduce emissions diminish. If the current rate of reduction of 2.7% was to continue, then the County Council would not achieve net zero by 2035.
- ii) Emission reductions were found across most sources, but the majority of these reductions were less than 3%. This demonstrates that it is getting harder to seek out and gain substantial reductions without increased investment. Funding will be required to enable investment, in particular in EVs and decarbonising Council buildings, to support future carbon reductions.
- iii) The value of undertaking environmental audits to improve the environmental performance and compliance has been highlighted by the number of non-conformities and observations identified.
- iv) The EMS is likely to be affected by the recent change in the Government, its policy positions on the environment, and the roll out of new statutory duties.
- v) The scale of environmental change is signified by the number of (117) new policies, legislation, changes in regulation, and guidance that have been issued by the Government which are of relevance to the County Council.

b. Leicestershire

213. The following key conclusions for Leicestershire have been identified:

- i) Data from the Government shows that Leicestershire's greenhouse gas emissions for 2022 had decreased by 165,000 tonnes since 2021. However, the average annual reduction since the 2019 baseline year is 2.5%, and an average annual reduction of 3.2% is required in order to reach net zero by 2050. Therefore, Leicestershire is not currently on track to reach net zero by 2050, assuming a continuation of the current rate of reduction.
- ii) While the wider County is currently not on track, several County Council led projects and policies have progressed during 2023-24, which will

support the transition to net zero going forward. These include the LCAN project; the LEVI scheme and associated Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy, supported by the development of the LTP4; and the development of the LNRS.

- iii) Concerns continue about the water quality of the County's rivers.
- iv) There has been a very good progress on planting a tree for every person in Leicestershire.
- v) There is some concern that Leicestershire remains in the fourth quartile relative to comparative English authorities, for the level of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5).
- vi) There will be a significant amount of work needed to implement the collection and packaging reforms, that contribute to meeting the national 65% recycling target by 2035.

c. Overall

214. The following additional overall key conclusions have been identified:

- i) The environment and net zero agenda, statutory duties and commitments are expanding as a result of increased public interest and new emerging policies from the Government. For the Council, this adds pressure to support the delivery of activities from a resource perspective.
- ii) To address this, the Council has undertaken a reprioritisation exercise to ensure that resources are optimised to undertake the essential delivery items such as statutory requirement. However, there remains a risk around the capacity to deliver in some key areas, such as climate adaptation and seeking to secure external funding via bid writing.
- iii) The Council recognises that achieving net zero by 2050 (and other overarching environmental commitments) requires action from all sectors of society.

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