



ENVIRONMENT, FLOODING AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 JANUARY 2026

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024-25

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides details of the Council's environmental performance and progress in delivering its Environment Strategy 2018-2030, and subsidiary strategies and plans, and an assessment of the context within which the Council's Environmental Management System (EMS) was operating for 2024-25.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Cabinet approved the Environment Strategy 2018-2030 on 6 July 2018. The vision of the Strategy is that "Leicestershire County Council will minimise the environmental impacts of its own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action. The Council will continue to play a significant role in protecting and enhancing the environment of Leicestershire, meeting the challenges and opportunities of climate change, and seeking to embed environmental sustainability into both social and economic development in the county."
3. A revised Strategy was subsequently adopted by the County Council on 8 July 2020 to account for the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in May 2019.
4. The Climate Emergency declaration committed the Council to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 for its own operations. Furthermore, the declaration committed the Council to working with partners and lobbying the Government to work towards limiting global warming to less than 1.5°C in line with the Paris Agreement.
5. Subsequently, the County Council signed up to the UK100 Race to Zero Pledge and the Council committed to achieving net zero emissions for Leicestershire by 2045.
6. In December 2022, the County Council adopted the 2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan and the 2045 Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan.

7. Since these commitments were made, the Council has been subjected to an increasingly constrained financial position with a significant deficit forecast. In February 2023, in light of this and the estimated increased resources that are required to reach net zero, the Council resolved to extend the net zero targets to 2035 for the Council's operations and to 2050 for the Countywide emissions, in line with the national target.
8. On 15 July 2025, the Cabinet resolved to change the focus of the activities that were to be delivered under the Net Zero Action Plan from carbon reduction to climate adaptation and responding to severe weather events, and projects that deliver financial savings, or social, economic or environmental benefits, in support of the Council's strategic outcomes.

Background

9. The full Performance Report has been appended to this report. It is divided into two 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 the progress for Leicestershire as a County, accepting that there are some areas of overlap.
10. The environmental performance of the Council, and of Leicestershire, is presented across a range of themes and Key Performance Indicators. The report also provides a summary of the Council's Greenhouse Gas Report for 2024-25.
11. The report is produced to comply with commitments made in the various environmental strategies of the Council, such as the Environment Strategy, to monitor and report on performance. It also meets the Government's requirements to produce and publish an annual Greenhouse Gas Report.
12. The report provides an assessment of the context within which the Council's EMS was operating in during 2024-25. The EMS is a set of policies, processes and procedures that manage the environmental aspects of the Council, such as waste, pollution and resource use, helping the Council reduce environmental harm and improve efficiency. It also seeks to reduce the impact of the environment on the Council by managing climate risks.
13. The report also provides a headline update on the progress in delivering the actions within the 2035 and 2050 Net Zero Action Plans.
14. Where circumstances have changed since the end of 2024-25 in relation to environmental risks, the current position is provided where appropriate. Reference is also made to more contemporary changes that may affect the EMS where this is appropriate. Progress highlights in delivering the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan and the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action Plan are provided, as of November 2025.

Report Headlines

15. The main headlines from the 2024-25 Environmental Performance and Progress report are:

- a) Leicestershire County Council:
 - i. There has been a 9.5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for the Council's operations compared to 2023-24, with emissions at 8,404 tCO₂e [tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent];
 - ii. The Council's emissions have reduced by 76.5% since 2008-09;
 - iii. Electricity use for street lighting was down 14.3%;
 - iv. Business mileage claims were down 2.5%;
 - v. Water consumption was down 11%;
 - vi. On-site renewable energy generation reached a record 20.7% of total consumption, though still below the 30.9% target.
 - vii. The total office waste rose by 97 tonnes and the recycling rate fell to 58.6%, below the in-year target of 65.7%;
 - viii. The amount of office paper purchased fell by 3.4% to 2.7m A4 sheets. This is 68% less than the pre-Covid-19 pandemic figure of 8.2m A4 sheets;
 - ix. The percentage of Council land in better management for nature remains at 97%;
 - x. There was a continuation of the gradual declining staff confidence in the Council's environmental efforts, though still relatively high at 88.6%;
 - xi. There were two environmental complaints upheld. They related to asbestos not being dealt with properly at a waste site, and disturbance from noise and vibrations from roadworks that were taking place outside of a property;
 - xii. There were no environmental incidents, enforcement notices or prosecutions;
 - xiii. There was one minor non-conformity found during the external audit of the Council's EMS, relating to the objectives in the EMS manual not being up to date. This has since been corrected;
 - xiv. During the internal audit process, there was one major non-conformity and two minor non-conformities found. They related to the lack of procedures for assessing the impacts of construction projects on protected species, at the 1620's House, the lack of a protocol for Invasive and Non-native Species Management at the 1620s House, and an incomplete procedure for waste transfer notes for waste ICT equipment, respectively;
 - xv. There were two (now one) environmental high risks (biodiversity and highways mowing regimes);
 - xvi. There are six climate change high risks (Highways assets x3, supplier resilience, property policies and building specifications);
 - xvii. In July 2024, a new Government was elected, and a number of their manifesto 'missions' are expected to be relevant to the Council's EMS;

- xviii. Two relevant bills were introduced by the Government: the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and the Climate and Nature Bill;
- xix. The election of a new administration in May 2025 at Leicestershire County Council has resulted in new and evolving priorities which may be relevant to the EMS and the delivery of the Council's current environmental policies and commitments.
- xx. The introduction and implementation of regulations in relation to statutory duties for local government introduced as part of the Environment Act 2021 continued. This included, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Biodiversity Net Gain, the strengthened biodiversity duty and the new biodiversity reporting requirements, as well as new duties from the Simpler Recycling reforms;

b) Leicestershire:

- i. Greenhouse gas emissions for Leicestershire in 2023 were 4.33 MtCO₂e, down 5.2% compared to 2022;
- ii. Per capita emissions are down 45% since 2005, to 5.9 tCO₂e;
- iii. The number of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging locations per 100,000 population increased by 24% to 73.5;
- iv. EV ownership has increased by 26% to 272.7 per 10,000 population;
- v. Renewable energy generation rose 12% to 398,399 MWh;
- vi. Renewable energy capacity increased by 27% to 433.3 MW;
- vii. 54.1% of existing domestic properties and 98.8% of new properties have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or greater;
- viii. There has been continued good progress in planting a tree for every person (current target is 700,000 trees) in Leicestershire by 2030, with 494,240 trees planted;
- ix. The amount of household waste per household in Leicestershire fell by 0.8% to 952.1kg;
- x. The amount of household waste reused, recycled and composted increased by 1.2% to 44.8%;
- xi. The amount of municipal waste sent to landfill fell by 2.3% to 10.3%;
- xii. Based on the latest available figures for 2023-24, the number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population increased slightly from 4.8 to 5.4 incidents;
- xiii. The latest available figures from 2023 show that the amount of fine particulate matter, PM2.5 was 7.7 µg/m³, down from 8.9 µg/m³ in 2022 and that there was one NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide) exceedance in Leicestershire;
- xiv. The Council, working with its partners (the National Grid, Energy Systems Catapult, De Montfort University, the University of Leicester, Community Energy South and Green Fox Community Energy), continued to deliver the £2.56m Innovate UK Leicestershire Collaborate to Accelerate Net Zero (LCAN) project;
- xv. The Council and its partners commenced delivery of the £220,000 LEVI (Local EV Infrastructure) funded project to deliver approximately 45 public EV chargepoints across Leicestershire;
- xvi. The Solar Together group of local authorities buying initiative, which supports residents to purchase solar panel systems for their homes

- and cut their energy bills, saw 433 installations completed across the County;
- xvii. The Public Health Warm Homes service continued to deliver the Warm Homes Local Grant scheme, installing energy efficiency upgrades to low-income private sector homes. It also began administering the Flexible Eligibility mechanism to widen access to the Energy Company Obligation and the Great British Insulation Scheme funding to private sector housing via wider health and income measures.

Conclusions

16. The following key conclusions have been drawn from the report:

- a) Leicestershire County Council:
- i. The Council is currently ahead of the target in year, in terms of its own operational emissions. However, the expected trajectory of emission reductions suggests that net zero will not be achieved by 2035, due to the increasing difficulty and cost of reducing emissions, and therefore some form of carbon offsetting will be needed to reduce net emissions to zero.
 - ii. The introduction of the Environment Act 2021 continues to place additional statutory duties on the Council, such as food waste collections, Biodiversity Net Gain, the Biodiversity Duty and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The Council will need to consider how it delivers these new duties in light of the amount of new burdens funding that is provided by the Government and the financial position of the Council.
 - iii. Continued limited action on the identified climate change risks due to capacity is a concern, though the recent decision to redirect resources towards addressing flooding and these risks will help to mitigate the risks.
 - iv. The financial pressures of the Council, combined with resource issues, are making it more difficult to progress environmental improvements.
- b) Leicestershire:
- i. 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.
 - ii. The LCAN project has been a successful example of how bringing key partners together can drive forward sustainability work within the County.

- iii. Very good progress has been made in planting a tree for every person in Leicestershire.
- iv. 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.

Resource Implications

- 17. The report has identified concerns regarding the current financial position of the Council and how it may affect the resourcing of action on the environment.
- 18. The Environment Act 2021 and subsequent legislation have placed new or additional duties on local government, such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Simpler Recycling Reforms. As these are better understood, it will be necessary to assess whether there are any further resource implications for the Council.
- 19. Business cases will be developed for specific projects as required, which may identify future resource implications.
- 20. The Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Corporate Resources have been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under Local Issues Alert Procedure

- 21. None.

Equality Implications

- 22. There are no equality implications arising from the content of this report.

Human Rights Implications

- 23. There are no human rights implications arising from the content of this report.

Environmental Implications

- 24. This report shows how the Council is performing in terms of reducing its impact on the environment and provides an indication of the state of the environment in Leicestershire, based on the data that is currently available and used. The report however highlights concerns that insufficient staff capacity and financial resources are likely to make it more difficult for the Council to meet its environmental targets and commitments, which may result in environmental implications.

Background Papers

Environment Strategy 2018-2030 –

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2020/7/13/Environment-Strategy-2018-2030-delivering-a-better-future.pdf>

2030 Net Zero Council Action Plan -

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/net-zero-council-action-plan.pdf>

2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy & Action Plan –

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/environmental-policies-and-reports>

Action for Nature document –

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/8/16/action-for-nature-strategic-approach-to-biodiversity.pdf>

Biodiversity Duty Plan -

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/LCC-Biodiversity-Duty-Plan.pdf>

Appendix

2024-25 Environmental Performance and Progress Update Report

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