Leicestershire County Council

2024-25

Environmental Performance and Progress Update Report

Published January 2026

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Introduction

1. The report is divided into two sections and six parts. Section 1 (Parts 1-4) provides details of the environmental performance and progress for Leicestershire County Council as an organisation, while Section 2 (Parts 5-6) provides details of the performance and progress for Leicestershire as a county, accepting that there are some areas of overlap.

2. Part 1 provides details of the environmental performance of the Council across a range of themes and key performance indicators.

3. Part 2 provides a summary of the Council's Greenhouse Gas Report for 2024-25, setting out the overall figure and the key sources of emissions.

4. Part 3 of the report provides a headline update of the progress in delivering the actions within the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan.

5. Part 4 provides an assessment of the context within which the Council's Environmental Management System was operating in during 2024-25.

6. Part 5 provides details of the environmental performance within Leicestershire against a range of themes and key performance indicators. It also provides the results of the Council's submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project during 2024-25.

7. Part 6 provides a headline update of the progress in delivering the actions within the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan.

8. The report finally provides a set of conclusions, on the performance and progress, firstly for Leicestershire County Council, and secondly for Leicestershire as a county.

Executive Summary

9. Overall environmental performance for 2024-25 was generally positive, with most indicators showing improvement. Of particular note was the fall of **9.5%** in net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to **8,404 tCO_2e**, for the council as an organisation compared to the previous year. This was particularly helped by a 16% reduction in emissions from fleet vehicles, mainly due to the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel, a 11.6% reduction in direct emissions from buildings, mainly due to better performance from the biomass boiler at County Hall, and a 11.3% reduction in emissions from streetlighting and traffic signals, mainly due to the trimming and dimming project.

10. There was an unexpected rise in non-operational waste from council buildings, increasing by 97 tonnes to **372 tonnes**, and an unusual corresponding slight reduction of 3.4% in recycling performance to **58.6%.**

11. Council emissions have now reduced by **76.5%** since the **2008-09** baseline year.

12. The amount of renewable energy generated as a percentage of consumption on County Council land and properties rose to its highest level at **20.7%.** This is still somewhat off the in-year target of 30.9%. The single largest contributor to renewable energy generation is the biomass boiler at County Hall, providing 82% of total corporate renewable energy, with the solar panels providing the balance.

13. Total reported water consumption fell by **11%** to **38,847m^3** compared to 2023-24. The amount of paper purchased also fell, by **3.4%** compared to the previous year, to **2.6m A4 sheet** equivalents. This is **68%** less than the pre-pandemic figure of **8.2m A4 sheets**.

14. There was a small reduction of **2.5%** in business mileage claims to **4.7m miles**. This is almost **16%** (874,000 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.

15. The amount of electricity used for streetlighting fell by **12.5%** to **7,045 MWh**. Traffic signals' usage also dropped by **5.2%** to **1,454 MWh.** This was achieved despite the number of lighting assets increasing by 326 to **86,413 items** and the fact that sunshine hours were lower in 2024-25 compared to the previous year.

16. The hectares of Council land in better management for nature largely remains unchanged at **3,729 hectares**, equivalent to **97%** of the suitable land that could be in better management for nature.

17. There was a continued gradual reduction in the proportion of staff indicating that the Council was doing enough to reduce its impact on the environment –

88.6% and indicating that staff understood how to contribute to green issues at work – **92%.** While these figures remain relatively high, there has been a fall of **4.4%** and **8%** in these figures respectively since 2017-18.

18. In terms of environmental compliance, the Council is performing relatively well. There were **two environmental complaints** upheld, **no environmental incidents** reported, **no enforcements or prosecutions**, **one minor non-conformity** found during the external ISO14001 audit, and **one major and two minor non-conformities** found during the internal environmental audit process in 2024-25.

19. At the end of 2024-25, there were **two (now one) 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. In October 2025, it was agreed to use a £2m fund towards addressing some of the flood risk in the County and to addressing the climate change risks that were identified.

20. The main highlights from the Council's Net Zero Action Plan were the securing of **£115,000** from the **Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund** to make energy efficiency improvements to four Council owned Family Hub buildings and good progress is being made on the **Electric Vehicle (EV) Fleet Transition pilot study**, with a trial to start soon on the use of a pool of EV vans at the Croft Highways depot and the Whetstone and Loughborough Waste depots.

21. In relation to the Council's **Environmental Management System** (EMS), there was a **change of Government** in July 2024, with the new Government setting out priorities, some of which may affect the EMS, such as the kickstarting of economic growth, making Britain a clean energy superpower, building 1.5 million new homes and forging ahead with nationally significant infrastructure. Action to clean up water, support farmers and lead on climate and improve climate resilience was also promised.

22. Two relevant bills were introduced during 2024-25, namely the **Planning and Infrastructure Bill** and the **Climate and Nature Bill.** A number of consultations by the Government also took place which may be relevant to the EMS, including on the National Planning Policy Framework Reforms, the Land Use Framework and Simpler Recycling in England.

23. In February 2025, the Government launched its updated **National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan**, which included targets to protect at least 30% of land and sea areas for nature, to reduce pollution to levels that were not harmful to biodiversity, and to promote sustainable agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry. While outside the period covered by this report, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland was launched in July 2025, which will support the delivery of some of these targets.

24. A number of changes to statutory duties introduced in the **Environment Act 2021** continued to come into effect or were delivered during 2024-25. The Act

introduced the requirement that local authorities within England should produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. In June 2023, the County Council was appointed as the 'Responsible Authority' for developing a strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Work started on developing the strategy in September 2023 with a draft strategy going out to public consultation between January and February 2025.

25. 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. The introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain is now fully operational.

26. 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. The first Biodiversity Report for the County Council is due to be produced in March 2026.

27. The Environment Act 2021 also 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 came into force in 2025 for businesses and non-household municipal premises, including the Council, and is due to come into force for households in 2026; 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.

28. 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 inevitably means that tough decisions will be needed on how the Council best spends its resources to deliver its statutory duties and priorities.

29. 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

30. Moving to how **Leicestershire** as a county is performing environmentally, the latest available figures from the Government for 2023 show that greenhouse gas emissions were **4.33 MtCO_2e.** This was a fall of **-5.2%** (238,000 tonnes) from 2022, with emissions now 11.7% (381,000 tonnes) lower than the County's 2019 baseline year.

31. In terms of the sectoral sources of the emissions, transport contributes the greatest proportion of Leicestershire's emissions at 42%, followed by domestic 20%, agriculture 13%, industry 12%, waste management 6%, commercial 6%, public sector 2%. Land-use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) helped remove 1% of emissions, by carbon sequestration.

32. All sectors saw some level of reduction compared to the previous year with the industrial and commercial sectors seeing the biggest reduction with both falling by over -13%, while transport fell by only -0.4%.

33. Per capita greenhouse gas emissions for Leicestershire have fallen by **45%** since 2005 to **5.9 tCO_2e**, which is **15.7%** lower than the figure for the 2019 baseline year.

34. The Council has continued to deliver 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 **Local Transport Plan** (LTP4) has been progressed to embed more sustainable travel options which are cleaner and produce lower emissions. This coupled with the roll out of electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints, funded by the **Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure** (LEVI) initiative, will help residents to reduce emissions from private cars and positively impact local air quality.

35. The **Leicestershire Collaborate to Accelerate Net Zero (LCAN)** demonstrator project has developed a Local Area Energy Plan, is boosting renewable energy production in communities and has established a central hub for carbon reduction information and resources. Through these initiatives, the Council is starting to lay a foundation for long-term collaborative local energy security and emission reductions.

36. More broadly, other contextual data in relation to activities that can contribute to reducing emissions in the County showed that there was a **24%** increase in the number of EV charging locations per 100,000 population, from 59.1 in 2023-24 to **73.5** in 2024-25, placing Leicestershire in the third quartile relative to comparative English authorities. The rate of EV ownership increased by **26%** to **272.7 per 10,000 population**, which moved Leicestershire from the third to the second quartile relative to comparative English authorities.

37. The latest available figures from 2023 showed a **27%** increase in renewable energy capacity in Leicestershire, rising to **433.3 MW**, while the amount of renewable energy generated increased by **12%** to **398,399 MWh**, placing Leicestershire in the third quartile relative to comparative English authorities for both indicators.

38. The percentage of new domestic properties with an Energy Performance Certificate of C or greater rose by 1.2% to **98.8%,** while the number of existing domestic properties with an Energy Performance Certificate of C or greater rose slightly to **54.1%.** This placed Leicestershire in the first quartile and the

third quartile relative to comparative English authorities, respectively for these indicators.

39. In terms of waste, the amount of household waste per household in Leicestershire was **961.3kg**. The amount of household waste reused, recycled and composted rose by 1.1% to **44.7%.** The percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill fell by 1% to **11.5%**, while the number of fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population increased from 4.8 in 2022-23 to **5.4** in **2023-24**, placing Leicestershire in the **second quartile** relative to comparative English authorities.

40. Moving to the wider environment, the latest figures from 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. While **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.

41. The latest available figures (2023) show that the amount of fine particulate matter, PM2.5 was **7.7 µg/m^3**. This was a decrease from 8.9 µg/m^3 in 2022. Leicestershire sits in the **fourth quartile** relative to comparative English authorities. There was **one NO_2 (nitrogen dioxide) exceedance** in Leicestershire. This was a decrease from 2022 when there were three exceedances.

42. The main highlight from the Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan was the continued delivery of the **LCAN project**, which was awarded **£2.56m** in 2023 to deliver four key work packages over the last two years. These work packages are focussed on delivering low cost, clean energy solutions across Leicestershire.

43. The project will be completed by March 2026 with the main outputs being a Local Area Energy Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire, an advisory service for businesses, community organisations and individuals to support and guide them on how to be more sustainable (see www.greenerfutureleicestershire.co.uk), a community energy hub for Leicestershire that will support groups to maintain their operations, 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 gain access to low cost clean energy, and an overarching governance structure that brings partners together to support projects and attract investment into the County through the provision of an organised framework.

44. A successful bid for **LEVI funding**, received **£220,000** to deliver approximately **45 public EV chargepoints** across Leicestershire as part of the 'LEVI pilot' project. In collaboration with its partners at Midlands Connect and a consortium of other local authorities, the Council will receive a further **£3.151 million** from

the **'LEVI Full' Project** to take this work further and install up to **558** additional chargepoints across the County.

45. The Council's support for the **Solar Together project**, which is a group buying initiative that supports residents to purchase solar panel systems for their homes and cut their energy bills, saw **433 installations** completed across during 2024-25.

46. The **Public Health Warm Homes service** secured around **£5m in Warm Homes Local Grant funding** to deliver a three-year project (to March 2028) installing energy efficiency upgrades to low-income private sector homes. In August 2024, the Warm Homes service began administering the Flexible Eligibility mechanism to widen access to the Energy Company Obligation and Great British Insulation Scheme funding to private sector housing via wider health and income measures.

47. 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 expected trajectory of emission reduction suggests that net zero will not be achieved by 2035, due to the increasing difficulty and cost of reducing emissions. 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 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 mitigate the risks.

    iv) The **financial pressures** of the Council, combined with resource issues are making it more difficult to progress environmental improvements.

    v) 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.

    vi) The **LCAN** project has been a successful example of how bringing key partners together can drive forward sustainability work within the County.

    vii) Very good progress has been made in planting a **tree for every person** in Leicestershire.

viii) 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.

Section 1: Leicestershire County Council

Part 1: Environmental Performance

48. This section of the report provides details of the Council's performance and progress regarding a range of environmental key performance indicators (KPIs) across a number of themes and operational areas and covers the following:

- Electricity consumption;
- Gas / biomass consumption;
- Renewable energy generated;
- Waste produced and recycled;
- Water consumption;
- Paper purchased;
- Use of recycled aggregate;
- Fuel use;
- Business mileage;
- Land managed for nature;
- Staff perceptions;
- Compliance and
- Environmental and climate change risks.

a. Building operation

C2a – Electricity consumption per m^2 in LCC buildings

49. This KPI looks at the efficiency of grid electricity use in selected Council buildings. Only those buildings that have been in the Council's baseline set since 2013-14 (currently 70 sites for electricity) are included, so that any annual reductions seen in energy consumption represent genuine efficiency improvements. This KPI does not include renewable electricity generated and used on-site.

50. The grid electricity consumption per square metre for 2024-25 was **59.1kWh/m^2** compared to the target of 65.3 kWh/m^2, therefore it is ahead of target (lower figures are better for this KPI). The figure is approximately **2.2% higher** than the 2023-24 figure of 57.9 kWh/m^2. Despite this slight rise, it is 9.5% below target (low is good).

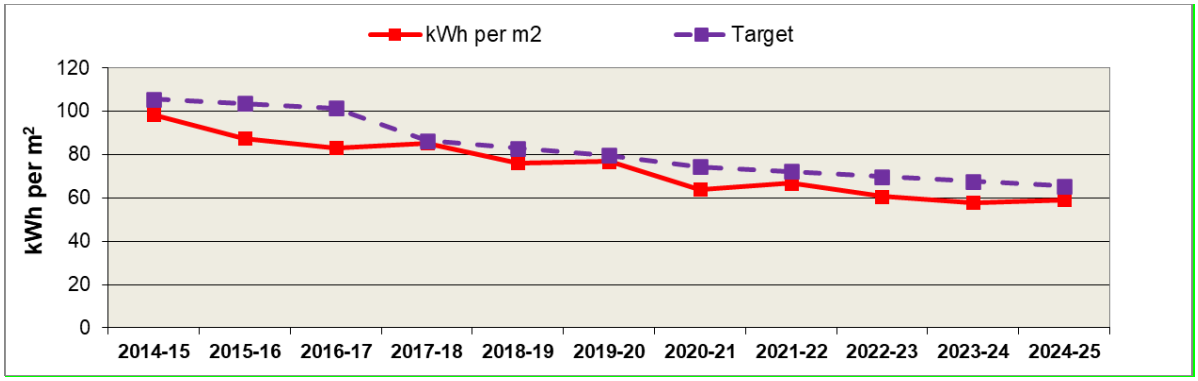

Figure 1: Electricity consumption per m² 2013-14 to 2024-25

51. In absolute terms, grid electricity usage for this set of buildings increased slightly by 100 MWh (1.8%) from last year, to 5,620 MWh. This is believed to reflect a growth in the average occupancy of offices. At County Hall, occupancy has grown every year since the pandemic and by 25% between 2024 and 2025, although still not back to pre-pandemic levels. There was also a comparatively negligible drop in solar PV production (about 35 MWh or -5.4%).

52. Despite the slight recent increase, grid electricity usage in the baseline buildings is now 1,702 MWh per year less than before the Covid-19 pandemic. This reflects a combination of generally lower building occupancy, successful energy efficiency measures and increased solar photovoltaic (PV) output.

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

53. This KPI looks at heating efficiency in Council buildings. Only those buildings that have been in the Council's baseline set since 2013-14 (currently 38 sites) are included, so that any annual reductions seen in energy consumption represent genuine efficiency improvements.

54. Gas/biomass consumption per square metre for 2024-25 has **fallen by 9.3% to 139.2 kWh/m2** compared to the figure for 2023-24 of 152.8 kWh/m2. This is still noticeably above the target of 107.5 kWh/m2.

55. This implies that heating demand has responded better to milder weather than in previous years, which can be attributed to tighter energy management at various buildings, including Beaumanor Hall, and progress in exploiting the energy efficiency measures installed in recent years at County Hall (such as the thermal store, and the new building management system).

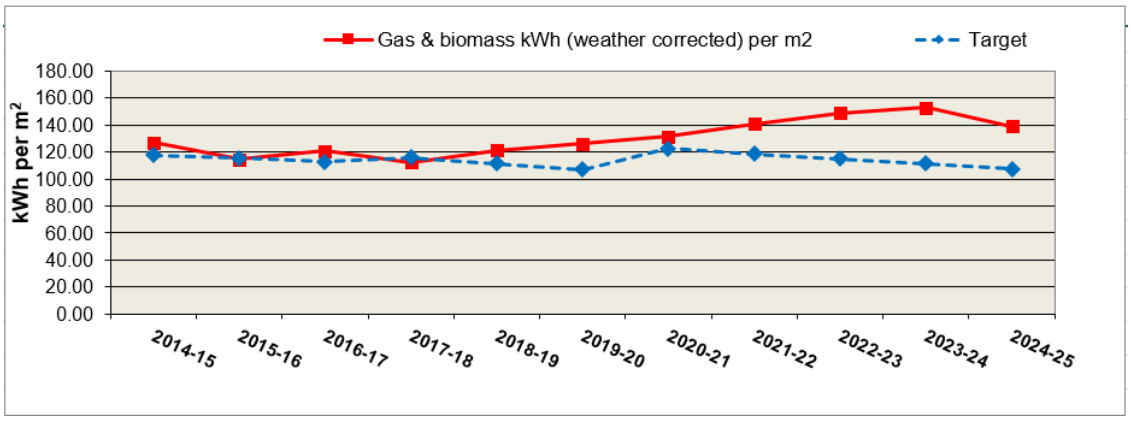

Figure 2: Gas and biomass consumption per m² 2013-14 to 2024-25

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

56. The amount of renewable energy generated on-site as a percentage of total energy consumed was **20.7%** at the end of 2024-25. This record out-turn is a significant improvement on last year (when 13.3% of usage was generated on-site).

57. The figure is still well below the target (of 30.9% for 2024-25), although the variance has reduced to 39% (from 57% last year). However, the targets for this indicator derive from the Strategic Property Energy Strategy 2020-30. The strategy and targets are currently under review by the Property Energy Team.

58. The single largest contributor to renewable energy generation is the biomass boiler at County Hall. During 2024-25, efforts by Property to resolve technical problems and improve operating arrangements resulted in much improved boiler availability.

59. Total annual biomass generation rose to a record **2,922 MWh** (non-weather corrected) in 2024-25, up from 1,613 MWh in the previous year. This amounted to **82%** of total corporate renewable energy and **28%** of County Hall's total heating energy requirement in 2024-25 (compared to 16% the previous year).

60. Solar energy generation at corporate sites (red bars in the chart below) had a solid year, with the second highest annual output ever recorded - albeit slightly (-5.4%) down on last year at 621 MWh. Reasons for the slight drop in production include some age-related equipment failures and lower sunshine hours during 2024-25 (10% less than average across the UK).

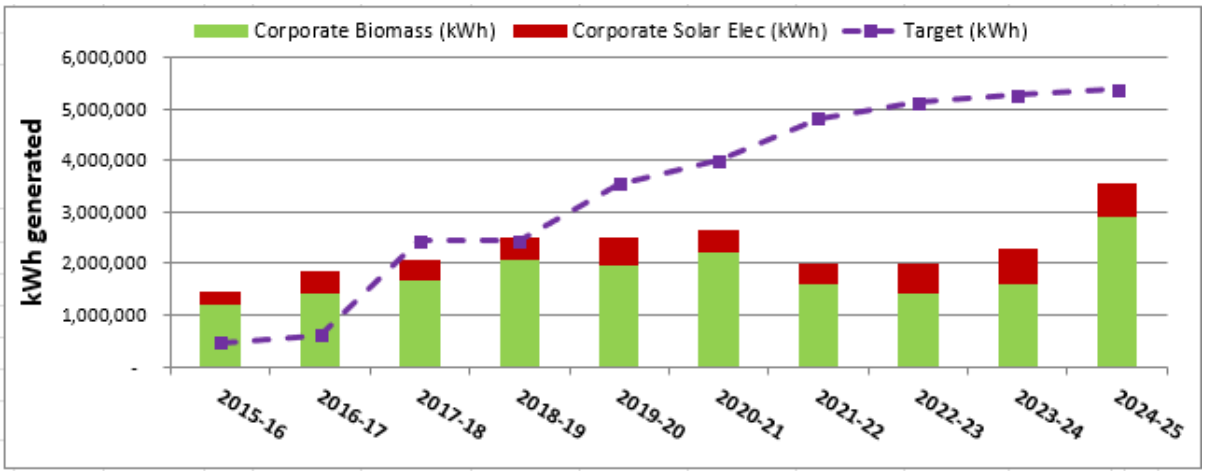

Figure 3: Corporate renewable energy generation compared to the target 2015-16 to 2024-25

b. Waste & resources

LW1 – Total waste from LCC sites

61. The rolling annual total waste figure increased by **35%** (97 tonnes) in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24. The figure of **372 tonnes** is significantly higher than expected and is not in line with the level of waste being generated since the Covid-19 pandemic. The figure is 4% (15 tonnes) higher than the pre-pandemic level in 2019-20.

62. This increase reflects rises in both residual waste (up 47.5% to 154 tonnes) and recycling (up 28% to 218 tonnes). Similar changes took place at the majority of sites, especially in quarter four, although about seven large sites were responsible for two-thirds of the increase.

63. The increases in recycled waste are seen mainly in dry mixed recycling and ICT waste.

64. A few extra sites appeared in the data, which accounted for some of the increase. Certain one-off events, including a large consignment of ICT waste in quarter four, also played a role (possibly along with office moves and clear-outs).

65. The very general increases in both dry mixed recycling and residual waste (especially in quarters three and four) may have multiple causes, but increasing occupancy in offices is thought to be a key factor.

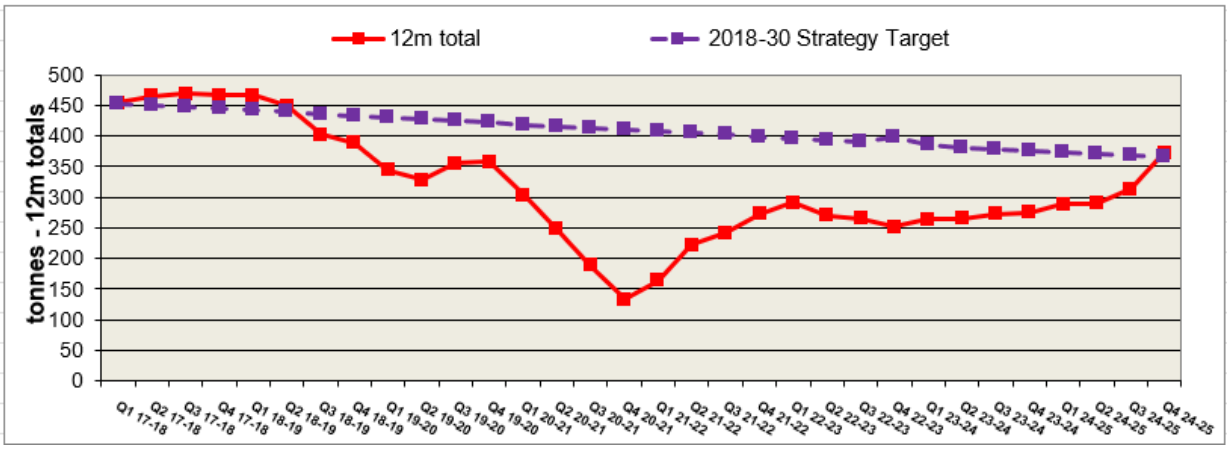

Figure 4: 12-month rolling total waste, 2017-18 to 2024-25

LW2 - % Recycled from LCC sites

66. The recycling figure for 2024-25 was **58.6%**, a decrease from the 2023-24 figure of 62%. This is below the target of 65.7% for 2024-25. The current target is to achieve a 70% recycling rate by 2030.

67. The rolling 12-monthly recycling figures rose to over 63% in the second half of 2021-22, fell back to around 52% in 2022-23. After bouncing back to about 62% for the second half of 2023-24, the rate has steadily declined again.

68. The lower recycling rate may reflect ongoing reductions in the weight and the amount of recyclable materials (such as less paper in the offices), as well as changes in staff behaviour.

69. The Greener Together initiative has worked to raise awareness of correct disposal through awareness days in the Food Court, articles in the Environment Bulletin, online information and new posters and labels on bins. More work is planned in 2025-26.

70. A major change occurred in April 2025, when mandatory food waste recycling was introduced across all County Council sites. This is expected to have a noticeable effect on recycling and waste figures from 2025-26 onwards.

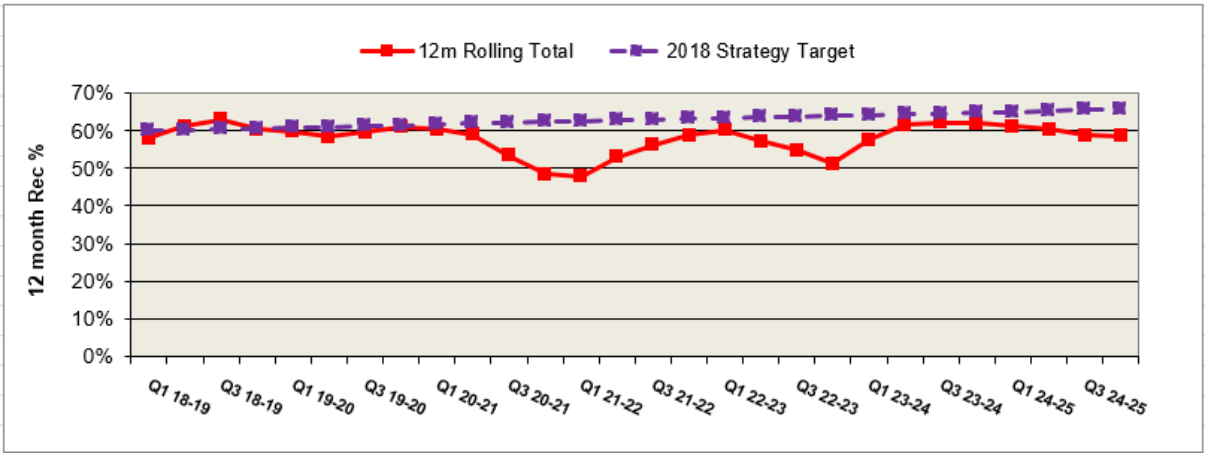

Figure 5: % waste recycled 2018-19 to 2024-25

WA1 - Total water consumption per FTE

71. The data for 2024-25 shows reported consumption of water decreasing by **11%** to **38,847m^3** compared to 2023-24 although the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff rose slightly.

72. Water consumption per FTE member of staff **fell by 13%** from 9.08m^3 in 2023-24 to **7.92m^3** in 2024-25. This meant that the performance once again was ahead of the target of 10.9 m^3 (low is good).

73. 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.

74. In addition, approximately 25% of County Hall is currently let out to partner organisations, some of which require 24/7 full-time attendance on site because of the nature of their work. These numbers are unknown to the Council and are not part of the FTE figures, which partially counteracts the statistical impact of staff working from home.

P1a - Total office paper purchased

75. The data is received directly from the Council's primary paper supplier.

76. The amount of paper purchased at the end of 2024-25 was **2.6m A4 sheets.** This was a **decrease** of **3.7%** (100,000 A4 sheets) on 2023-24, and significantly less **(68%)** than the pre-pandemic figure of **8.2m A4 sheets**.

77. The significant decline since 2019-20 reflects the persistence of changes arising during the pandemic, including the move to more digital service delivery, and the ability to work from home. 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

78. The proportion of recycled aggregates used over 2024-25 was **76%**, an increase on the previous year figure of 60%. The amount of recycled aggregate used varies from quarter to quarter, with almost 88% recycled aggregate used in quarter two of 2024-25.

79. 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. Fleet operation

80. The total volume of fuel used by the Council's vehicles in 2024-25 was almost unchanged from the previous year at **1,104,000 litres** (a fall of 0.04%). However, there were significant reductions in the use of diesel (down 16% to 881,000 litres) and gas oil (-91%) and a corresponding increase in Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel (up nearly six times to 173,000 litres).

81. The total CO_2e emissions from fleet fuel **fell by 16%** to **2,263 tonnes** (from 2,694 tonnes in 2023-24), mainly due to the displacement of a proportion of diesel fuel used by HVO.

d. Streetlighting

82. The amount of electricity used for streetlighting **fell by 12.5%** to **7,045 MWh**. Traffic signals' usage also dropped by **5.2%** to **1,454 MWh**.

83. The reduction in energy usage reflects ongoing work to "trim and dim" by reducing hours of use and/or lighting levels, where safe and practicable. The "8pm dimming" project had a particularly large impact on consumption.

84. This was achieved despite the number of lighting assets increasing by 326 to 86,413 items and the fact that sunshine hours were lower in 2024-25 compared to the previous year.

85. Further savings were made by moving more assets onto the Central Management System (CMS) and rolling out LED replacements for recently adopted assets that were not on the CMS.

86. The CO_2e emissions from streetlighting and traffic signals combined **fell by 11.3% to 1,760 tonnes.**

87. The drop in carbon emissions is almost entirely due to the lower energy usage, as the carbon factor for electricity remained almost unchanged from 2023-24 (0.01% lower).

e. Business travel

C18 – Total business mileage

88. Annual business mileage claims fell by **2.5%** in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24 with total business mileage of about **4.7m miles**. This is the first year that there has been a fall in business mileage since the continuous rebound following the Covid-19 pandemic. Business mileage for 2024-25 is still 13% below the in-year target of 5.3m miles. Note that business mileage claims do not include commuting to and from work and only include mileage claimed by staff in carrying out Council business.

89. Business mileage claims are still almost **16%** (874,000 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.

90. The largest contributors to mileage claims in 2024-25 were staff from Children and Families (45%), Adults and Communities (32%) and Environment and Transport (14%). The proportion of total business mileage claimed for EVs in 2024-25 was 2.3%, up on the previous year (1.7%), with an increasing trend in each quarter.

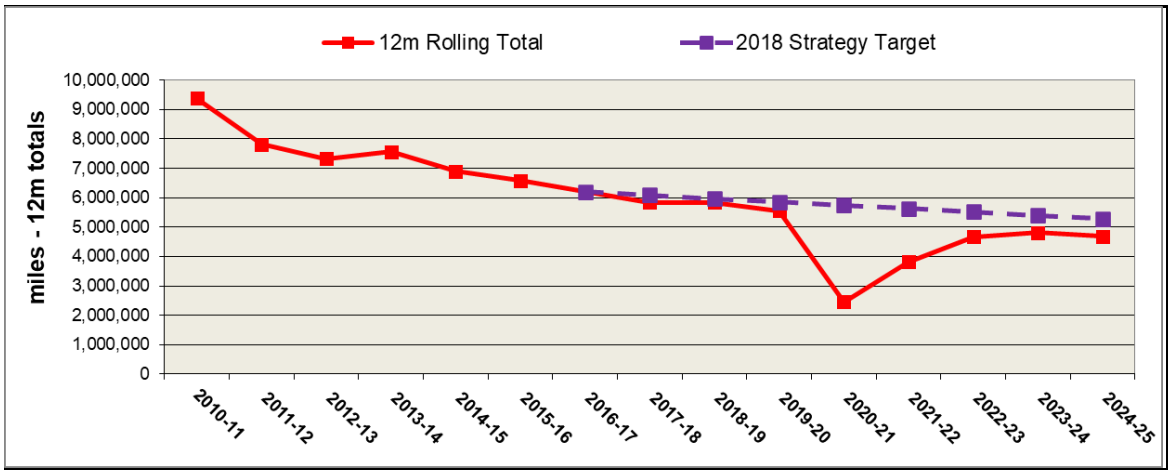

Figure 6: Rolling 12-month business mileage 2010-11 to 2024-25

f. Nature & biodiversity

a. Nature

B3a Hectares of LCC land in better management for nature

91. At the end of 2024-25, there were **3,729 hectares** of Council land in better management for nature. This is a decrease of 7 hectares compared to 2023-24. This change reflects the disposal of land since then.

92. This figure includes a combination of Council land, including Country Parks, rural and urban highway verges, county farms and playing fields.

93. Only land where there is a conscious decision made to manage the land in a way that protects or enhances nature is included in this indicator.

B3b % of suitable LCC land in better management for nature

94. At the end of 2024-25, **97%** of suitable Council land was in better management for nature, similar to 2023-24.

Wildlife verges

95. At the end of 2024-25, there were a total of **81 wildlife verges** and **54 parish councils** included in the Wildlife Verge scheme. The total area of wildlife verges was **41,588m^2.**

96. Up to the end of 2024-25, a total of **4,258 volunteer hours** were spent undertaking verge baseline surveys and **3,966 wildlife records** were generated, since the scheme started in 2021-22.

Tree Wardens

97. At the end of 2024-25, there were **113 Tree Wardens** and **71 parishes** participating in the local Tree Warden Scheme.

g. 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"

98. 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 these KPIs.

99. Of the staff that completed the survey in 2024-25, **88.6%** agreed that the Council was doing enough to reduce its impact on the environment, below the target of 90%. While **92%** agreed that they understood how they can contribute to green issues at work, below the target of 95%.

100. While these results are generally positive, a slight downward trend has been observed over recent years, across both KPIs. The percentage of staff believing the Council is doing enough to reduce its impact on the environment has fallen from a high of 93% in 2017-18 to the current figure of 88.6%, a drop of **4.4%** The percentage of staff agreeing that they understand how they can contribute to green issues at work has fallen from a high of 100% in 2017-18 to the current figure of 92%, a drop of **8%.**

101. This drop may reflect the current ways of working and the fact that many staff are working from home, for all or some of the time, so they feel less able to contribute to green issues in the workplace. In addition, with many 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.

102. A revamped staff behavioural change scheme called 'Greener Together' was launched in June 2023. As part of the new scheme, initiatives are and 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. The recent mandatory provision of food waste collection bins within Council buildings will enable staff to take very visible and tangible action to improve the Council's environmental performance, and this may also help to address the decline.

103. 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 over the coming year.

h. Compliance

M1 - Environmental complaints

104. There were **two environmental complaints** upheld during 2024-25 compared to none in 2023-24.

105. The complaints related to the correct process not being followed when asbestos was taken to a waste site, and disturbance arising from noise and vibrations from roadworks that were taking place outside of a property.

M2 - Environmental incidents

106. There were **no environmental incidents** reported in 2024-25 compared to one in 2023-24.

M5 - Environmental enforcements/prosecutions

107. There were **no enforcement notices or prosecutions** logged in 2024-25.

External and Internal Audit results

108. External audits are carried out annually by BM Trada to ISO14001 EMS Standard, with a full re-certification audit every three years.

109. An external ISO14001 EMS surveillance audit was carried out in February 2025. **One minor non-conformity** was found, relating to the objectives in the

EMS Manual not being up to date. Corrective action has since been taken, by updating the Manual, and a report sent to the external auditor.

110. A further eight observations were made, identifying opportunities for improvement.

111. Only those Council services that are 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.

112. As a decision has been made to cease the ISO14001 accreditation, 2024-25 will be the last year of external audit. The Council's ISO14001 accreditation ceases in January 2026. Changes will be made to the internal audit processes to partially compensate for the lack of external audit.

113. A set of six internal audits was carried out during 2024-25 as part of a rolling three-year programme. These covered the 1620s House (Heritage & Arts), Woodland Management (Highways), ICT - Data Centre, disposal of ICT equipment, management of waste from MFDs (Corporate Resources), Programme Management office (Strategic Property), Bardon Waste Transfer Station (Environment & Waste), and a site visit to the Council's biomass supplier (Operational Property).

114. **One major non-conformity** was found, relating to a lack of procedures for assessing impacts of construction projects on protected species, at the 1620s House. This has been followed up with the Council's Property Services and Heritage & Arts.

115. **Two minor non-conformities** were recorded, namely lack of a protocol for Invasive and Non-native Species (INNS) Management at the 1620s House, and an incomplete procedure for waste transfer notes for waste ICT equipment.

116. A total of **14 observations** (potential opportunities for improvement), such as grey squirrel damage to trees at the 1620s House) and **seven other recommended actions** (such as updating risk registers) were recorded following the internal audits.

i. Risks

i) Environment Risk Register

M3 - Environmental risks scoring >15

117. At the end of 2024-25, there were a total of **two** (now one) 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.

118. The remaining risks sat 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 (score of 16) 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 in place during 2024-25 were identified as often not being suitable for the storage of dog waste, resulting in leaching from the skips (risk score of 16).

119. 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. The risk in relation to the storage of dog waste at the Country Parks has been resolved with the introduction of the new waste contract from April 2025.

ii) Climate Change Risk Register

R1 - Outstanding actions on climate change risk register

120. There are **six high risks** on the climate change register at the end of 2024-25. 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 related primarily to highways and property assets, business continuity and flood risk.

121. 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. This is ow 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. This is now resolved, as an updated strategy and flood risk map were published on the Council's website in February 2024.

122. Due to capacity issues within the Environment Policy and Strategy team, to date, it has not been possible to undertake significant work to address the other climate change risks. However, the Council's Cabinet agreed in October 2025

to use the £2m Carbon Fund to support work on climate adaptation, including the provision of resources to support addressing the risks that were identified.

Part 2: Greenhouse Gas Report Summary

123. Part 2 provides a summary of what some of the performance figures set out in Part 1, as well as the other sources of emissions, have meant for the Council's overall greenhouse gas emissions as an organisation.

124. In 2024-25, Leicestershire County Council's net greenhouse gas emissions **decreased by 9.5%** (878 tCO_2e) compared to 2023-24, to **8,404 tCO_2e**. This is equivalent of **1.71 tCO_2e per full-time equivalent employee** (0.21 tCO_2e decrease compared to 2023-24).

125. Emission reductions can be found across all sources, except Scope 2 emissions from electricity in buildings, which grew by 2.8% after generally declining in recent years. This slight increase is believed to reflect the gradual increasing occupancy of buildings. In addition, the lower number of sunshine hours in 2024-25, which will have tended to increase lighting usage and reduce solar energy output (as discussed under C17a, para 41) is likely to have contributed to the rise.

126. Overall, Scope 1 sources saw a 15% reduction while Scope 2 (all electricity including street lighting) fell by 5.7%.

127. Of all the major emissions sources, fleet vehicles had the largest reduction at -16%. The majority of this decrease can be attributed to significant reductions in the use of diesel fuel and gasoil; with a corresponding increase in the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel.

128. Buildings' direct emissions (gas and other fuels) and street lighting & traffic emissions dropped by more than 11%. After an 8.1% rise in 2023-24, business mileage fell by 2.4%. Emissions reductions across all other sources were below 4%.

129. Overall, Council emissions have now **reduced by 76.5%** since the 2008-09 baseline year. Table 1 provides more details of the figures behind the Council's greenhouse gas emissions for 2024-25.

130. On-site renewable energy generation, including solar power and biomass heating reached an all-time high, rising to **20.9%** of energy consumption. This avoided **595 tCO_2e** of greenhouse gas emissions in 2024-25 (equivalent to **6.6%** of net emissions), compared to if gas and grid electricity were consumed.

131. Based on a 2016-17 baseline year and assuming a linear reduction in emissions to 2035, the target level of net emissions for 2024-25 was **11,810 tCO_2e**. With an actual net emissions figure of **8,404 tCO_2e in 2024-25**, the County Council is **ahead of target in year**.

132. However, most of the past reduction in emissions has occurred in the earlier years (see figure 8), with the level of annual reduction decreasing in recent years. The expected future trajectory of emission reduction suggests that the Council will not achieve net zero 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.

133. The Council's full 2024-25 Greenhouse Gas Report can be found on the following link: https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/LCC-Greenhouse-Gas-Report-2024-2025.pdf

GHG emissions data for period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 (tonnes of CO2e)						
	Sector	**2024-25**	**2023-24**	**% change**	**Base Year 2008-09**	**% change**
Scope 1 – Direct emissions e.g. boilers, owned transport, air conditioning gases	Buildings	1,469	1,663	-11.6%	4,317	-66.0%
	Fleet vehicles	2,263	2,694	-16.0%	4,358	-48.1%
	Fugitive gases	68	108	-37.1%	n/a	n/a
	Sub-total	**3,800**	**4,471**	**-15.0%**	**8,675**	**-56.2%**
Scope 2 – Energy Indirect e.g. purchased electricity	Buildings	1,336	1,299	2.8%	6,562	-79.6%
	Streetlighting & traffic signals	1,760	1,985	-11.3%	15,581	-88.7%
	Sub-total	**3,096**	**3,284**	**-5.7%**	**22,143**	**-86.0%**
Scope 3 – Other Indirect e.g. business travel	Business Travel	1,259	1,289	-2.3%	3,237	-61.1%
	Electricity Transmission & Distribution losses	274	284	-3.5%	1,722	-84.1%
	Water supply & treatment	12.8	16.1	-20.5%		
	Waste	2.4	5.7	-57.9%		
	Sub-total	**1,547**	**1,595**	**-3.0%**	**4,959**	**-68.8%**
Total Gross Emissions		**8,444**	**9,351**	**-9.7%**	**35,778**	**-76.4%**
	Carbon offsets	0	0	0%	0	
	Renewable energy exports	-40	-69	-42.3%	0	
Total Location-Based Net Emissions		**8,404**	**9,282**	**-9.5%**	**35,778**	**-76.5%**
Intensity measure: Tonnes of CO2e per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee (location-based)*	FTE	4,903	4,830	1.5%	6,880	
	tCO2e/FTE	**1.71**	**1.92**	-10.9%	**5.20**	
	Renewable grid electricity tariff	**1,158**	**3,284**	-64.7%	-	
Total Market-Based Net Emissions		**7,286**	**6,060**	**-20.2%**	(n/a)	(n/a)
	Petrol and diesel (Out of Scope)	634.95	219.44	189.3%	(n/a)	(n/a)
	Woodchip (Out of Scope)	1,639	717	128.5%	(n/a)	(n/a)

Table 1: Council 2024-25 greenhouse gas emissions, with a comparison to 2023-24 and the 2008-09 baseline year

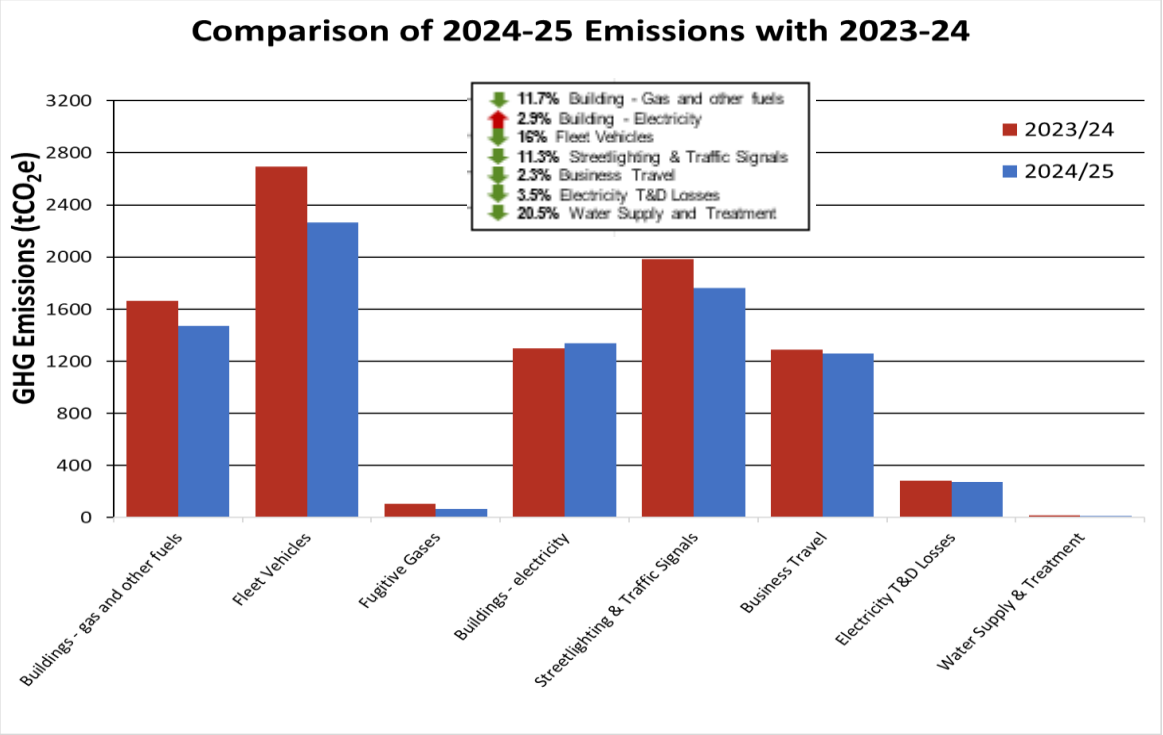

Figure 7: 2024-25 Council greenhouse gas emissions by source, compared to 2023-24

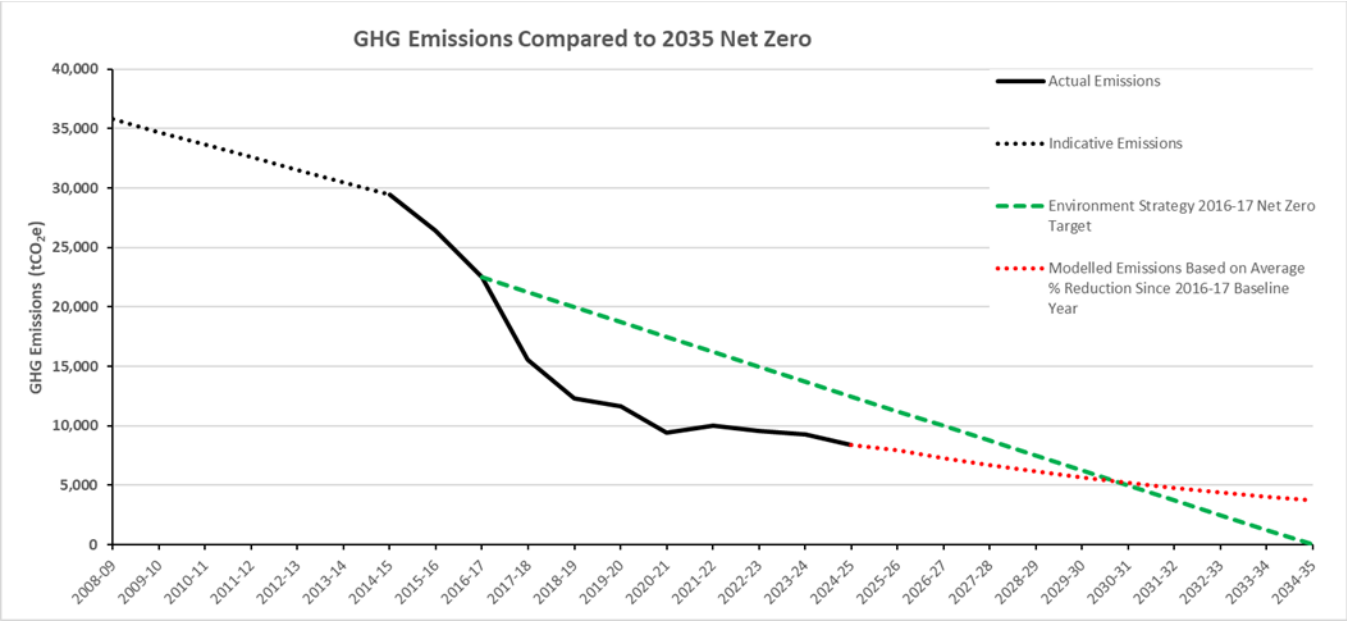

Figure 8: Council net greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2035 net zero target

Part 3: 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan headlines update

134. This section of the report provides a progress update on the highlights of the Net Zero Council Action Plan. A separate review of this action plan is being undertaken to reflect the County Council's more recent change in priorities to include more work on climate adaptation and resilience.

135. The following actions are currently in delivery or completed:

a) The Council's Energy Team developed a successful bid to the **Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund** which secured £115,000 to carry out improvements to four Family Hub buildings to make them more energy efficient. The money will be used at these buildings over a two-year period to replace the end-of-life boilers with air source heat pumps and to add rooftop solar PV panels.

b) The **Electric Vehicle Fleet Transition** pilot study has been progressed to provide an insight into fleet vehicle use, and the Council will trial a small pool of EV vans at the Croft Highways Depot and the Whetstone and Loughborough Waste Depots. This pilot is due to conclude in Autumn 2026, and it will provide an understanding of the practical application of such vehicles and the potential savings that could be made on fuel costs if the Council switches from diesel to electric to inform a wider business case into the use of EV's in the Council's fleet. There are also pressures from Government policy to transition to EVs, with a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and a ban on hybrid sales by 2035.As a result there is a need to understand what investment is needed to provide electric charging infrastructure at the depots, which will be a next step in this project.

c) An 18-month trial to dim and trim **streetlighting** in the County commenced in early 2024 and has now been completed. This has resulted in a reduction in emissions of 14.3%, and has saved the Council an estimated £540,000 on energy bills in the financial year (2024-25), based on the current energy tariff. The project was awarded the 'Most Sustainable Project of the Year' at the Highway Electrical Association awards. The Council's Cabinet agreed to the permanent implementation of the trial in September 2025. Additional work has now commenced to consider converting all illuminated signs to LED with CMS capabilities.

d) A project to reduce the Council's **business mileage** has commenced. Sessions with individual high mileage teams across the Environment & Transport Department have been delivered to understand how staff travel to undertake their work and to consider what they could do differently to reduce business miles. The results of this study will be considered alongside the options to support staff to reduce their business mileage where it is possible.

Part 4: Environmental Management System

136. Part 4 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. Changes to statutory duties;
    c. Changes to environment legislation;
    d. Environmental risks and opportunities;

137. The Council agreed in 2024-25 to no longer continue with certification to the ISO14001 standard. The existing certification will last until January 2026.

a. External and internal issues relevant to the EMS

138. In July 2024, a new Government was elected on a manifesto that set out five "Missions", which included kickstarting economic growth and making Britain a clean energy superpower. It committed to build 1.5 million new homes and "forge ahead" with nationally significant infrastructure, without weakening environmental protections. Action to clean up water, support farmers, strengthen animal welfare, lead on climate and improve climate resilience was also promised.

139. Some key initiatives that were started under the previous Government, and highly relevant to local authorities, have been maintained, including regulations and guidance under the Environment Act 2021, such as the Simpler Recycling and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (both of which are discussed elsewhere in this report).

140. The Government has set up Great British Energy (GBE) (a Government-owned company) to deliver its objectives of promoting clean energy, energy security, billpayer protection and new jobs. GBE's Strategic Priorities were published in September 2025 and so far, announcements have been made of support for local renewable energy projects and offshore wind supply chains.

141. Two relevant bills were introduced during 2024-25:

- **Planning and Infrastructure Bill** – this bill aims are to speed up the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure. The key features included new consenting regimes for Nationally Significant Infrastructure and electricity infrastructure, introduction of the Nature Restoration Fund and Environmental Delivery Plans, reforms to town and country planning processes including local fee setting, and promotion of sub-regional strategic planning. Part 3, covering development and nature recovery, has been subject to extensive amendment during the parliamentary process.

As of late October 2025, the Bill was in the House of Lords, which was considering the latest set of Government amendments.

- **Climate and Nature Bill** – the key features included setting legally binding targets, the development of a joined-up Climate and Nature Strategy, and the need for a Just Transition. This was a Private Members Bill. It was adjourned after the second reading. The Government has committed to pursue its "spirit and substance" through future legislation.

142. Consultations by the Government on environmental policy, which may be relevant to the EMS and/or Council services, included:

- National Planning Policy Framework Reforms;
- Land Use Framework;
- Extending the ECO4 Scheme;
- UK Emissions Trading Scheme; and
- Simpler Recycling in England.

143. In February 2025, the Government launched its updated National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan, titled the "Blueprint for Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss", which includes targets to protect at least 30% of land and sea areas for nature, to reduce pollution to levels not harmful to biodiversity, and to promote sustainable agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry.

144. While outside the period that is covered by this report, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland was launched in July 2025.

145. Increasing cost pressures over recent years on the Council's budgets continue to make it more difficult to take action on the environment and to progress the 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.

146. 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. In July 2025, the Cabinet have resolved to change the focus of the activities 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 for the Council's strategic outcomes.

147. During 2024-25, the Council responded to the data and information requests from Climate Emergency UK as part of their scoring of all councils on the action they are taking on climate change. The Council was scored on 93 questions across seven different sections, each covering important actions that local authorities can take on climate change. The final score was created by adding up the overall section scores and applying section weighting based on the council's impact and control.

148. Leicestershire County Council scored 50%, a 4% increase from 2023. This placed the Council in the top five for all of the County Councils that were scored. The highlights included a score of 88% in buildings and heating (up from 75% in 2023), 76% in collaboration and engagement (up from 75% in 2023) and 75% in waste reduction and food (up from 50% in 2023).

b. Changes to statutory duties

149. 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 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

150. 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 going out to public consultation between January and February 2025. The LNRS was subsequently launched in July 2025. This sets out at a landscape scale the strategic priorities and measures for supporting nature recovery across the area and will contribute to meeting the Government's National Biodiversity Strategy. For more information on what a LNRS is, and the latest position, please follow this link: https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy/leicestershire-leicester-and-rutland-local-nature-recovery-strategy

151. In addition, the Environment Act 2021 introduced a requirement that all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exceptions) 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. The introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain is now fully operational, although the Government is currently considering some possible changes.

152. 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. The first Biodiversity Report for the County Council is due to be produced in March 2026.

153. 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 came into force in 2025 for businesses and non-household municipal premises and is due to come into force for households in 2026; 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.

c. Changes to environment legislation

154. There were a range of new or updated general environmental Acts, legislation, regulations, consultations, and guidance released during 2024-25.

155. The main areas of relevance to the County Council were in relation to **waste, the natural environment, and climate change**, most of which have already been covered within this section.

156. From 31 March 2025, as part of the Simpler Recycling legislation, all businesses in England with 10+ employees must separate dry recyclables, collect food waste separately and comply with the new bin and collection standards. The County Council has and is putting in place measures to meet these requirements. All of the Council's sites now have food waste collections.

157. 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 an update of the Council's legislation register three times a year, including the notification of new potentially relevant legislation.

d. Environmental risks and opportunities

158. 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 paragraphs 120-121 for details.

159. Due to the limited staff capacity and the need to progress other priorities, it has not been possible to make significant progress on the other recommendations. The insufficient action on the climate change risks will expose the Council to the risk of harm from future extreme weather events. This risk will be somewhat mitigated by the Cabinet decision to utilise some of a £2m fund to provide a resource to support addressing the report recommendations and the risks identified.

160. 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.

161. 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.

162. On the other hand, the current ways of working arrangements 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.

163. The latest public attitudes data (2025)[1] shows that between 77%-80% of UK adults remain concerned about climate change. However, only 53% rank it among the most important national issues, down from 69% in 2023. This drop is largely attributed to the cost-of-living crisis and concerns about the NHS. 80% of people support the use of renewable energy, though this is down from 87% in 2021. 76% of adults report making lifestyle changes to help tackle climate change.

164. While these figures remain high, there are signs of a gradual reduction. It will be important to understand these trends as the Council continues to take action on meeting its statutory duties and seeks to minimise its environmental impacts. The Council will need to consider any reputational risks arising from its environmental performance record.

[1] Various sources: [1] www.gov.uk
[2] www.climatescorecard.org
[3] www.ons.gov.uk

Section 2: Leicestershire

Part 5: Environmental performance

165. Part 5 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 2023, 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. Leicestershire greenhouse gas emissions

C20 Greenhouse Gas Emission from Leicestershire

166. Using the latest available datasets[2] from the Government, Leicestershire's emissions during **2023** were **4.33 MtCO_2e.** This did not meet the in-year target of **4.27 MtCO_2e**, missing the target by 58,000 tonnes. However, the gap between the actual emissions and the target figure was about half that of the previous year, which is a slight improvement.

167. Between 2022 and 2023, the total emissions decreased by **238,000** tonnes (-**5.2%**). Leicestershire's emissions are now 11.7% lower (381,000 tonnes) than the County's 2019 baseline year. For Leicestershire to meet its net zero target by 2050, emissions need to fall by an average of 163,000 tonnes (3.2%) per year. Figures show that the average fall per annum since the 2019 baseline year has been 144,000 tonnes (2.9%). Therefore, Leicestershire is not currently on track to reach net zero by 2050.

C20a Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Leicestershire by sector

168. Figure 9 provides a breakdown of these emissions into eight key sources. The breakdown by sector shows that transport contributes the greatest proportion of Leicestershire's emissions at 42%, followed by domestic 20%, agriculture 13%, industry 12%, waste management 6%, commercial 6%, public sector 2%. Land-use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) helped to remove 1% of emissions, by carbon sequestration.

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2023

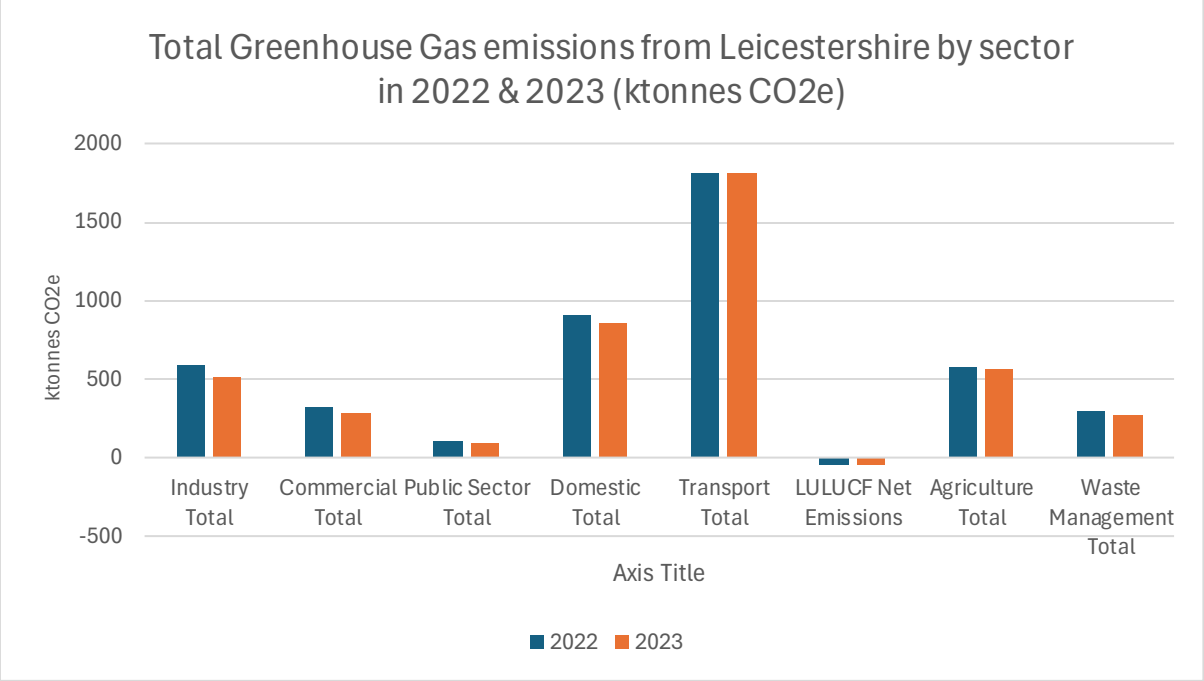

Figure 9: Leicestershire's 2022 & 2023 greenhouse gas emissions by source

169. Although emissions have fallen between 2022 and 2023, a closer look at the individual sectors shows varied progress. The greatest reductions were in the Industry and Commercial sectors (both falling over 13%). Emissions from the waste management, domestic and public sectors fell by 7.8%, 6.3% and 4.5% respectively. Agriculture fell by a more modest 3.1%, while transport was almost unchanged at 0.4%. Carbon removals by LULUCF increased by 14.1%.

170. Transport remains the largest contributor to Leicestershire's emissions, which reflects the national trend of transport being the highest emitting sector in 58% of UK local authorities. This is largely due to continued reliance on road traffic, which includes both personal and commercial transport.

171. The domestic sector continues a long-term decline in emissions from 1.6m tonnes in 2005 to 0.85m tonnes in 2023. This can be attributed to reduced gas use for heating, lower electricity demand, and an increased share of renewables in the energy mix. Ongoing high energy costs following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 also contributed to reduced consumption alongside improved building insulation and efficiency standards. Warmer temperatures have further supported the downward trend.

172. Emissions from agriculture have declined by 3.1% due to lower fuel use in agricultural machinery. In addition, there have been lower nitrous oxide and methane emissions thanks to improved fertiliser management and a slight decrease in livestock numbers. However, the agricultural sector continues to show a slower rate of decline compared to other sectors due to the complexity of biological emissions and higher uncertainty in measurement.

173. Industrial emissions in Leicestershire fell 13.5% compared to the previous year, with reductions driven by lower electricity and gas usage, particularly in large industrial installations. These emissions have nearly halved since 2005.

174. The commercial sector also saw a significant decrease in emissions of just over 13% which can be attributed to a combination of factors including milder temperatures and rising energy costs pushing industry to seek efficiencies, both of which reduced energy consumption. Along with lower carbon intensity in the national grid, this contributed to reduced carbon emissions.

175. Waste emissions have fluctuated since 2008, with a period of stability followed by a sharp rise peaking in 2018, and a gradual decline afterwards. Though emissions had a slight increase between 2021 and 2022, there has been a decline of 7.8% between 2022 and 2023. 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.

176. Public sector activities have reduced their emissions by 4.5%, which is likely to reflect reductions in energy use for similar reasons to those discussed above, as well as a lower national carbon emissions factor for electricity.

177. The LULUCF sector continued to act as a carbon sink in Leicestershire, contributing to a net removal of emissions by carbon sequestration in woodlands, grasslands and soil of just 1% of net emissions. This is, however, 14.1% more than in 2022.

178. While Leicestershire has made significant progress reducing emissions in industrial, commercial, and domestic sectors, further effort is needed in the transport and waste sectors to meet the 2050 national net zero target.

179. The Council has continued to deliver 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 Local Transport Plan (LTP4) has been progressed to embed more sustainable travel options which are cleaner and produce lower emissions. This coupled with the roll out of electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints, funded by the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) initiative, will help residents to reduce emissions from private cars and positively impact local air quality.

180. Finally, the LCAN demonstrator project has developed a Local Area Energy Plan, is boosting renewable energy production in communities and has established a central hub for carbon reduction information and resources. Through these initiatives, the Council is starting to lay a foundation for long-term collaborative local energy security and emission reductions.

C21 Greenhouse Gas emissions from Leicestershire per capita

181. Since 2005, per capita greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by **45%** to **5.9 tCO_2e**, which is **15.7%** lower than the figure for the 2019 baseline year.

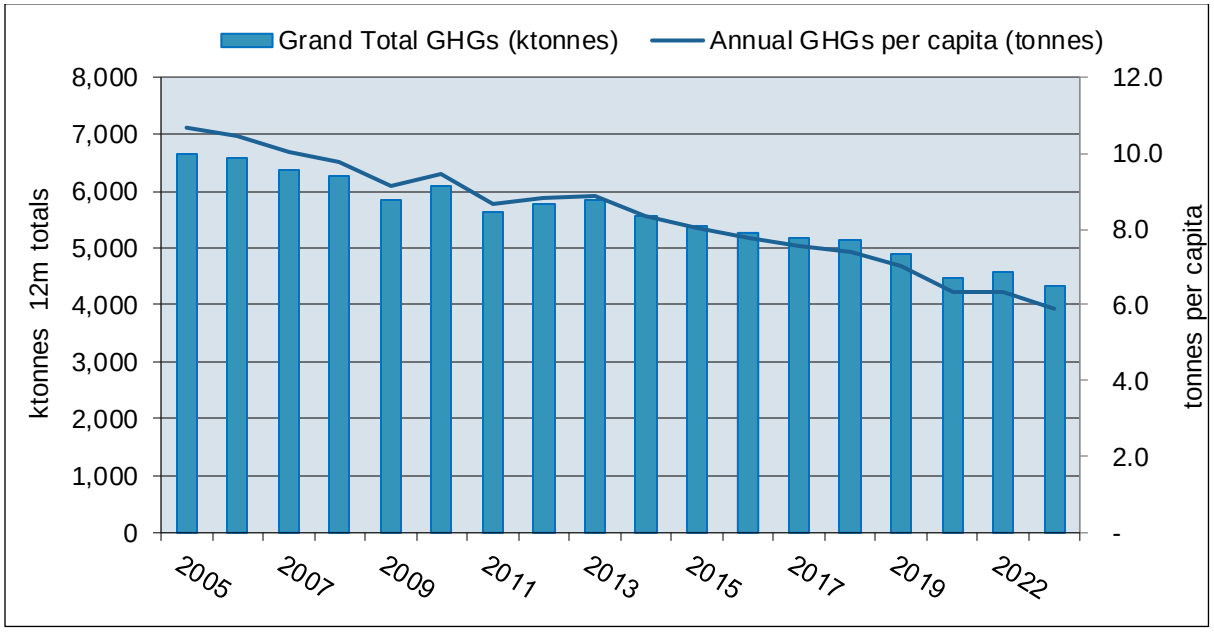

Figure 10: Leicestershire's total and per capita greenhouse gas emissions 2005 to 2023

182. 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

183. At the end of 2024-2025, there were **73.5 EV charging locations per 100,000 population** in Leicestershire. This was an increase of **24%** compared to the 2023-2024 figure of 59.1. Leicestershire remains in the third quartile relative to comparative English authorities.

184. Following a successful bid to the Government in 2024, 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 received approximately £220,000 of the first portion of LEVI funding to deliver approximately 45 public EV chargepoints across Leicestershire as part of the 'LEVI Pilot' Project.

185. This work is now being implemented with Wenea, the appointed ChargePoint Operator. There is a focus on locating the chargepoints within the most populated settlements across the seven district councils. The County Council and its partners (Midlands Connect, Worcestershire County Council, Warwickshire County Council and Rutland County Council) have received a

further £3.151 million from the LEVI fund to install up to 558 chargepoints across the county under the 'LEVI Full' project. The consortium is currently concluding an ongoing procurement process with the consortium members.

186. In September 2024, the Council's EV 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

187. At the end of Q3 2024-25, the EV ownership rate was **272.7 per 10,000 population** in Leicestershire. This was an increase of about **26%** compared to the figure of 216.5 for 2023-24. This also saw Leicestershire move from the third to the second quartile relative to comparative English authorities.

Renewable electricity generated in the area (MWh)

188. The latest available figures (2023) show that **398,399 MWh** of renewable electricity was generated in Leicestershire. This was more than the figure for 2022 of 355,263 MWh. Leicestershire sits in the **third quartile** relative to comparative English authorities for 2023.

Renewable electricity capacity in the area (MW)

189. The latest available figures (2023) show that the renewable electricity capacity for Leicestershire was **433.3 MW.** This was a significant increase from 2022 when the figure was 340.2 MW. Leicestershire sits in the third quartile relative to comparative English authorities. The Council has limited influence over the County-wide renewable energy capacity, which tends to change in response to the Government's incentive schemes and the wider energy market.

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

190. At the end of 2024-25, **98.8% of new properties** in Leicestershire had an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or greater. This was a slight increase of 1.2% 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)

191. At the end of 2024-25, **54.1% of existing properties** in Leicestershire had an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or greater. This was a slight increase on the figure for 2023-24 of 51.2%. Leicestershire has fallen to the **third quartile** relative to comparative English authorities.

192. 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 insultation, 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.

b. Nature and biodiversity

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

193. 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. The latest data was not available at the time of writing.

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

194. 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. This data is produced by the Environment Agency, with the next results due to be available in 2025. The latest data has not yet been made available.

195. 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

196. At the end of 2024-25, there were a total of **494,240 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 **57,020 trees** were recorded as planted during 2024-25.

c. Waste

HW1 – Kg of household waste per household

197. During 2024-25, the amount of household waste per household in Leicestershire fell to 952.1 kg; a fall of 8.1kg (0.8%) compared to 2023-24.

198. This fall can largely be explained by less green waste being collected during the year, largely influenced by the weather. The lightweighting of packaging may also have contributed to the reduction. The overall reduction was offset in part by an increase in the total waste that went through the Recycling Household Waste Sites. As more houses are built in the County each year, there has been a decrease in the kilograms of household waste per household.

HW2 - % Household waste reused, recycled, and composted

199. The annual household waste recycling figure was **44.8%** for 2024-25. The recycling performance has increased by 1.2% compared to the previous year.

200. This increase in performance was mainly due to more wood being sent for recycling rather than energy recovery. However, market conditions are volatile, and this may change in the future.

201. The **Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy 2022-50** includes a range of initiatives to reduce the waste that is sent to landfill and to promote waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. It includes a commitment to reduce the waste that is sent 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'.

202. Legislation in the Environment Act 2021 will enable waste reforms, such as a consistent set of recyclables through Simpler Recycling, a Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers and Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging which makes producers pay the full net costs of managing packaging, including the recycling and disposal. Collectively, these three waste reforms are known as the CPRs and introduce major changes to how waste is paid for and collected.

Annual percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill

203. At the end of 2024-25, **10.3%** of Leicestershire's municipal waste was sent to landfill. This was 2.3% less than the 2023-24 figure of 12.6%. The Council has committed to reduce waste to landfill to 5% or less by 2025, while this has not yet been achieved good progress is being made.

204. The reduction is in large part due to the diversion from landfill of black bag and bulky waste to energy recovery.

Total fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population

205. The latest available figures are for 2023-24 and they show that there were **5.4 fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 population** in Leicestershire. This was up from 4.8 incidents in 2022-23. Leicestershire sits in the **second 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.

d. Air Quality

PM2.5 Air pollution – fine particulate matter

206. The latest available figures (2023) show that the amount of PM2.5 was **7.7 µg/m^3**. This was a decrease from 8.9 µg/m^3 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/m^3, however, levels have been fluctuating between 7 µg/m^3 and 9 µg/m^3 since then, indicating that levels are largely flatlining at this general level.

NO_2 exceedances in Leicestershire

207. The latest available figures (2023) show that there was **one NO_2 (nitrogen dioxide) exceedance** in Leicestershire. This was a decrease from 2022 when there were three exceedances. Overall, the trend is downwards since 2017 when the figure was 11 exceedances, though the figure for 2022 was the first rise since then.

e. Carbon Disclosure Project Reporting

209. During 2023-24, the Council commenced work on submitting a report to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), with the submission being made in October 2024. Leicestershire County Council received a score of B. This score showed that the Council understood the main local risks and impacts of climate change and that the Council had plans and actions in place to adapt to and / or reduce these effects.

210. 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 any gaps, to benchmark its performance against peers and to find any areas of opportunity to help deliver its environmental commitments.

211. The Council's 2024 disclosure is available through the CDP Open Data Portal on the following link: https://data.cdp.net/.

Part 6: Net Zero 2050 Action Plan headlines update

212. The Council has a 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy and Action plan which was adopted in December 2022.

213. This section of the report provides a progress update on the highlights of this County-wide action plan. A separate review of this action plan is being undertaken to reflect the Council's more recent change in priorities to include more work on climate adaptation and resilience.

214. The County Council and a consortium of partners (the National Grid, Energy Systems Catapult, De Montfort University, the University of Leicester, Community Energy Pathways and Green Fox Community Energy) were awarded £2.56m of funding from Innovate UK in November 2023 (of which the Council received £0.6m) to deliver the LCAN project. The project has been working to deliver four key work packages over the last two years. These work packages are focussed on delivering low cost, clean energy solutions across Leicestershire.

215. Leicestershire County Council was the only County Council to be successful with its bid, and the Council is delivering one of seven nationally important demonstrator projects. The Council's work and findings are intended to be replicable across other local authority areas.

216. Work package one has been led by De Montfort University, and it was to research and develop a governance model for Leicestershire, which will provide a framework to support future delivery of local clean energy opportunities, along with assurance and investment potential to possible funders.

217. Work package two has been led by Energy Systems Catapult, who are national experts in clean energy planning. This work package has developed and delivered a Local Area Energy Plan for Leicestershire, which provides a place-based plan for the County Council and City Council areas. This plan has been co-developed with local stakeholders to focus on the current energy provision and make recommendations on what interventions will be needed to support the county to transition to a locally produced, reliable, clean energy system.

218. These interventions, which include renewable technologies such as heat networks and EV charging infrastructure, are shown on an online interactive map, enabling organisations and individuals to 'zoom in' to their local area and find out the recommendations for low carbon and energy saving technology.

219. Work package three has provided support, tools and guidance to community groups to train and upskill them to set up community energy projects. This work package has been led by the County Council in collaboration with national experts Community Energy South and local community energy organisation Green Fox Community Energy. It has provided grants to seven community groups which has assisted them to set up community energy organisations within Leicestershire.

220. It has also assisted local groups to come together by forming a community energy hub for Leicestershire. This hub will continue to support groups in the future to maintain their operations, develop community share offers to enable them to fund community energy projects and provide energy saving advice and measures, which support residents to gain access to low-cost clean energy.

221. Work package four has been led by the University of Leicester and it provided an advisory service for businesses, community organisations and individuals to support and guide them on how to be more sustainable. This advisory service has provided direct support to 179 businesses and supported over 1,000 businesses at various engagement events to embed more sustainable practices in their operations through a series of training courses, information and web-based tools. A website has been developed – www.greenerfutureleicestershire.co.uk – which will continue to provide information guidance and signposting to business, residents and community organisations on sustainable work and life practices.

222. All four work packages have been designed to support each other and to 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.

223. The LCAN project is funded for 24 months, and its outputs will be completed by February 2026.

224. The Council and its partners were successful in their bid for funding to deliver 45 EV chargepoints across Leicestershire as part of the 'LEVI pilot' project, and a further 500 chargepoints across the County as part of the 'LEVI full' project.

225. Solar Together is a group buying initiative which support residents to purchase solar panel systems for their homes and cut their energy bills. This project was supported by the Green Living Leicestershire group in 2024-25 and it saw 433 installations completed. Of these, 374 were solar panels equalling 1.67MW of capacity; and 59 were battery storage systems. To-date the Solar Together Leicestershire schemes have delivered 1,122 installations in the county, resulting in 4.4 MW of installed capacity, and over £9.9 million in private resident investment into energy saving technology.

226. The Public Health Warm Homes service has secured approximately £5m in Warm Homes Local Grant funding to deliver a three-year project (to March 2028) installing energy efficiency upgrades to low-income and below average energy efficiency private sector homes. This has been funded via the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and it is being delivered on behalf of six Leicestershire district councils (excluding Oadby and Wigston Borough Council) as part of the Green Living Leicestershire Group, and a

consortium of projects via the Midlands Net Zero Hub. It is estimated that the scheme will support in the region of 384 homes by March 2028.

227. In addition, in August 2024, the Warm Homes service began administering the Flexible Eligibility mechanism to widen access to Energy Company Obligation and Great British Insulation Scheme funding to private sector housing via wider health and income measures. In 2025 1,741 household applications were received via this mechanism of which 1,448 were approved as eligible.

228. The Warm Homes service completed delivery of the Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 project in March 2025 having delivered circa £1.1m capital measures across 108 private sector properties receiving 145 energy efficiency measures, uplifting the average home by 21 SAP points.

229. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland contains measures which will support the capture and storage of carbon emissions through the improvement and increase of different habitats.

Conclusions

a. Leicestershire County Council

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

i) 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 rate of reduction in emissions is starting to plateau, as the quick win opportunities to reduce emissions diminish. The expected trajectory of emission reduction 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 considering the amount of new burdens funding 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 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

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

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.

Appendix A: Environmental Performance Summary Dashboard

Performance Summary

Report for 2024-25 Year End

	KPI	Your Rating	Trend
Carbon / Energy			
C1a	Total CO2e from LCC operations (tonnes)	GREEN	improving
C2a	Elec consumption per M2 in LCC buildings	GREEN	worsening
C2b	Gas consumption per m2 in LCC buildings	RED	improving
C17a	Renewable energy generated as % energy consumed (annual)	RED	worsening
C18	Total business miles claimed (annual)	GREEN	improving
C20	Greenhouse gas emissions from Leicestershire (total)	GREEN	improving
C20a	Greenhouse gas emissions from Leicestershire (all sources by sector)	AMBER	improving
C21	Greenhouse gas emissions from Leicestershire (all sources) per capita	GREEN	improving
R1	Outstanding actions on climate change risk register	RED	no change
Waste			
LW1	Total waste from LCC sites (tonnes)	AMBER	worsening
LW2	% recycled from LCC sites	RED	worsening
HW1	Total household waste per household	no target	improving
HW2	% household waste reused, recycled & composted	RED	improving
LW10	% recycled aggregates used in highways	No target	improving
Resources			
P1a	Total office paper purchased (A4 sheets)	GREEN	worsening
WA1	Potable water consumed per FTE	GREEN	improving
Staff engagement			
E1	Staff agreeing - council doing enough for environment	AMBER	improving
E2	Staff understanding how to contribute to green issues	AMBER	worsening
Quality and compliance			
M1	Environmental complaints upheld	no rating	worsening
M2	Environmental incidents	no rating	no change
M3	Environmental risks scoring >15	RED	no change
M5	Environmental enforcement/prosecutions	GREEN	no change

Appendix B: Environmental Performance Infographic

The 2024-25 Environmental Performance Infographic can be found on the following link: https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/Environmental-Performance-2024-2025-summary_0.pdf