

Wirral Council Environment and Climate Emergency Response

Climate Emergency Team

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Scene setting

Researchers say there is now a 66% chance we will temporarily pass the 1.5C global warming threshold between now and 2027. Breaking this limit (even for just one year) is a worrying sign that warming is accelerating and not slowing down.

The consequence of the breach is a greater risk of impacts from global warming, such as longer heatwaves, more intense storms (most recently in Italy, Myanmar and Bangladesh) and wildfires. Globally 2023 was the warmest year on record. 2023 is the tenth year in succession that has equalled or exceeded +1.0°C above pre-industrial temperatures (1850-1900).

- The global average temperature for 2023 was 1.46°C above the pre-industrial baseline.
- A transition into El Niño conditions contributed to further elevated temperatures for the latter part of the year.
- The Met Office global temperature forecast for 2024 is to be between 1.34°C and 1.58°.

In 2023 the UK experienced

- 11% more rain than average.
- Northern Ireland had its third wettest year on record.
- Some parts of the UK recorded a third more rainfall than normal.
- This is something we can expect to continue as a warmer atmosphere has a greater capacity to hold moisture.
- The impacts of climate change will be wide reaching and could include risk to water supplies, localised flooding, loss of biodiversity, increase of public health incidents such as heat stress, damage to infrastructure and increased food insecurity.

Over 570 Councils have declared a climate emergency. It is estimated that by 2050, the result of these declarations and consequential plans in the UK alone will have spared the planet's atmosphere approximately 2.5 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e)¹.

In January 2021, a United Nations (UN) survey with 1.2 million respondents in 50 countries found that 64% of people said that climate change was an emergency.

In more recent years, some UK councils have been criticised for not actioning a response to their climate emergency declaration. Furthermore, the UK government has not provided the guidance, funding and powers needed for local authorities to decarbonize the most effectively, as referenced in the [Skidmore Review](#). In 2022, the organisation Climate Emergency UK launched the [Climate Action Scorecards](#) to hold councils accountable to reduce carbon emissions within their scope and influence at the scale and pace required. In the last round of climate scorecards, Wirral Council scored an average of 42%² across the 7 sections, notably scoring high (69%) in the biodiversity section.

The previous government outlined an additional driver to support decarbonisation in the form of a carbon tax. The mechanism outlined that by 2027 a levy is to be placed on goods imported into the UK from countries with a lower or no carbon price to avoid so called 'carbon leakage' (avoiding emissions being displaced into other countries). Carbon leakage undermines the country's efforts to decarbonise as the world transitions to net zero.

¹ Source: www.climateemergencydeclaration.org

² Total average score across all councils of 35%

With the change in government, it is unclear how this will be implemented. However, it was reported that Labour is exploring how to align the UK and EU emissions trading schemes and carbon border adjustment mechanism which might result in the levy being introduced a year earlier in 2026³.

Overview national and international

Global action on climate change

- Globally, the United Nation's Paris Agreement seeks to keep average global temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.
 - To have a chance of staying within 1.5°C rise means cutting global emissions rapidly to reach 'net zero' towards the middle of this Century.
 - 'Net zero' is the point when the amount of pollution we release to the atmosphere is less than or equal to that which is removed naturally, or by artificial means.
- In 2021, the UK government changed its legally binding target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. This is consistent with the findings of the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the Paris Agreement temperature goal.
- The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) sixth report (AR6) provided a comprehensive assessment of the current state of the climate, including the latest scientific findings and projections. It highlights the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, floods and wildfires which are linked to climate change. It also emphasises the need for rapid and deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to limit the impacts of climate change.
- The 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from 30th November until 12th December 2023. COP 28 was particularly momentous as it marked the conclusion of the first 'global stocktake' of the world's efforts to address climate change under the Paris Agreement.
 - Having shown that progress was too slow across all areas of climate action – from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to strengthening resilience to a changing climate, to getting the financial and technological support to vulnerable nations – countries responded with a decision on how to accelerate action across all areas by 2030.
 - This includes a call on governments to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels to renewables such as wind and solar power in their next round of climate commitments.

Environment and Climate Emergency Declaration

- In recognition of the increasing threat posed by climate change, Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency (ECE) through an all-party resolution in July 2019.

³ Source: Financial times <https://www.ft.com/content/49c25a8e-cc95-4656-a03e-0f47afced24e>

- In March 2021 the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee approved the Council's Environment and Climate Emergency Policy, which committed the Council to being carbon emissions neutral within the decade.
- The commitment to action aims to:
 - Cut climate damaging pollution locally in line with global targets, whilst developing resilience to more extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels that impact Wirral.
 - Protect and enhance biodiversity.
- The Council can have a positive influence through how we organise our operations and services; the regulations and policies we set; the goods and services we buy; the investments we make; and the example we set to others. Tackling the ecological and climate crisis presents major opportunities locally to improve quality of life, health, well-being, and the economy.

Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP)

- The policy committed the Council to the establishment of the Environment & Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP) and the ambitious but achievable target of the Council and its entity being 'net carbon neutral' by 2030 – a 10-year journey.
- The ECEAP is the Council's locally determined contribution to the Cool2 climate strategy, which sets a target for Wirral as a whole, to be carbon neutral by 2041.
- During 2023/24 the climate emergency team alongside colleagues from across a wide range of services,
 - undertook a review of the environment and climate emergency (ECEAP) to incorporate recommendations made by the Audit team and enable better and more streamlined reporting and align with new legislation.
 - The plan now focuses on the 13 priorities outlined within the ECE policy to create a more joined up approach.
- During 2023/24 Environmental and Public Health teams developed an Air Quality Strategy (AQS) as mandated by government. The new AQS will sit alongside the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP), and will deliver on 3 of the ECEAP's priorities, specifically:
 - Priority 9 - Supporting and increase in use of 'active travel'.
 - Priority 10 - Working to support an increase in public transport use; and
 - Priority 11 - Securing investment to support the necessary shift to ultra-low carbon vehicles.
- This will ensure that there is no duplication of work across the two strategies. Work for the previous year will be summarised in the ECE annual progress report, however a more in depth AQS update will be provided to committee annually.
- Part of the review focussed on
 - Developing streamlined actions with clear milestones, timescales and key performance indicators.
 - A dashboard is being developed to allow better visualisation of actions and better monitor reporting metrics at a glance.
 - This will be incorporated into future ECE progress reports.

Environment and Climate Emergency (ECE) achievements since ECE declaration in 2019

- Replaced 25,037 streetlights with LED.
- Installed 1853 retrofit measures in 1135 households using Liverpool City Region wide retrofit schemes
- Embedded Environment and carbon implications into our committee reports
- Installed 53 electric vehicle charge points throughout the borough.
- Developed a tree, woodland and hedgerow strategy and planted a total of 85,280 trees since 2020.
- Led a domestic retrofit taskforce to develop solutions to the challenges of retrofitting homes in Wirral
- Installed solar panels on 22 buildings generating approximately 388,000kWh annually
- Delivered an Eco schools programme to 53 Green flag schools.
- Developed a pollinator strategy and designated 65 pollinator sites to protect bees, butterflies and other pollinators
- 30 green flags awarded to our parks
- 6 e-cargo bikes used in our parks with 750 miles travelled
- 386 staff have undertaken carbon literacy training with 206 being registered as carbon literate.
- A total of 95.12 miles of cycle lanes installed on Wirral roads.
- 6 school streets

Environment & Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP) progress in 2023-24

- During June and July 2023, the climate emergency team held a survey on the Have Your Say engagement site.
- A total of 230 residents responded to the survey.
 - Following a review of the climate survey the results found that 61% of respondents believed that there is a climate emergency verses 31% who disagreed.
 - Over half of the people surveyed (62%) were concerned or very concerned about the climate emergency.
 - 54% of respondents felt that there were changes they can make that would make a difference to the climate.

- When asked where they would expect to get information on climate change the top sources were from Wirral Council (46%) and UK Central Government (58%).
- When asked what information or support is most useful to respondents, they said information about the facts of climate emergency (69%) and what the council or others are doing in response (63%).
- All the results of the survey can be found at <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/climate-survey>

Case Study 1: Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Trial

During 2023/24 a 24-week trial was undertaken replacing diesel fuel with a HVO alternative in refuse collection vehicles. HVO is a type of biofuel where hydrogen is used as a catalyst instead of methanol making it a more sustainable and eco-friendly option to diesel. The use of HVO can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 90%, and can reduce other harmful pollutants such as Nitrous oxides and particulate matter.

HVO is made from waste food oils and therefore does not require growth of crops or deforestation, unlike biodiesel. Because it meets EN 15940 it can also be used in normal diesel engines without modifications.

The trial looked at how much fuel was used, how the vehicles performed and the amount of carbon saved per litre burned (based on manufacturers data). The trial found that the drivers noted no change to the performance of the vehicle, however an increase of 2000l in the amount of fuel consumed was noted. This was factored into the calculations of carbon dioxide saved over the 24-week period.

The trial showed an overall reduction in carbon emissions of 89% based on a similar period, however due to the increased fuel use and higher purchase price of HVO it did result in a higher cost. This information will be used to inform decisions about the refuse collection fleet in future.



	Volume of fuel used (litres) in 24-week period	Amount of CO ₂ emitted per litre (kg)	Total amount of CO ₂ emitted (kg)
Diesel (litres)	17,500	2.5	43,966
HVO (litres)	19,500	0.25	4,899
CO ₂ saved (kg)			-39,067



Community Climate Action

Collective action on climate change in Wirral - your one stop website to reduce your carbon footprint and support climate action as a Wirral resident.



In the home



Travel



Nature



Personal



Get involved



Climate action in Wirral

In the home

Food

Waste

Utilities

Shopping and clothing

Investment and finance

Domestic burning

Case Study 2: Community Climate Action webpages

Following on from a survey undertaken by the Climate Emergency team Wirral Council was identified as a place people would go to look for information and support on the climate emergency. A need was identified for a single point of information for residents to find out more information about climate change and what they can do to take individual action on climate change.

The Climate Emergency Team developed an online Community Climate Action Hub to provide advice a guidance to residents on taking their own action on climate change. The webpages cover a broad range of themes; food, waste, utilities, shopping and clothing, investment and finance, domestic burning, nature and gardens, composting and travel.

The website gives an overview of how to lower your carbon footprint in each area and signposts to other useful resources. It also tells residents how to calculate their carbon footprint and provides a link for them to post it on the climate action hub.

Since the launch in mid-October 2023 there have been a total of 1886 views from 434 unique users visiting the site for information.

A total of 50 residents posted their carbon footprints with an average of 9.5 tonnes CO₂e per annum.

The website will continue to be updated to provide information to residents. A biodiversity toolkit for residents is planned in 2024 and will be made available through the website.

Case Study 3: Decarbonising Council Buildings

A key priority identified for 2023/24 was the continued development of a project pipeline to decarbonise council buildings. 80% of total net measured CO₂e emissions is from fossil fuel use from heating council buildings.

In 2022 the council started to develop a pipeline of projects that would enable decarbonisation of building, prioritising the highest emitting buildings first. In 2022/23 the council developed 11 heat decarbonisation plans (HDPs) using funding leveraged from the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) and the Liverpool City Region (LCR).

During 2023/24 working in partnership with the Northwest Net Zero Hub and LCR a funding bid was submitted to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). The bid included total capital funding of £14.756m to decarbonise 9 buildings with a potential annual emission reduction of 1,843 tonnes CO₂e. This would also deliver a cost saving for the council, ensuring that the buildings are more viable assets for the future whilst contributing to achieving net zero targets. The outcome of this bid is awaiting confirmation but if successful could reduce scope 1 emissions by approximately 40%.

An unsuccessful application for LCSF to develop additional HDPs was submitted in 2023 for 18 corporate assets. These sites have been resubmitted for consideration in 2024 along with 8 maintained schools. If successful, this could deliver heat decarbonisation plans with a potential reduction of 624t CO₂e for the council and 868t CO₂e for the wider borough target of net zero by 2041.



Existing PV system and rooftop areas suitable for solar PV highlighted, subject to structural survey.



Case Study 4: Air Quality Strategy

Wirral Council has developed an Air Quality Strategy for 2024 – 28, approved by committee in December 2023. The strategy was developed following wide consultation with the public and key external stakeholders. This consultation included a public consultation exercise to ensure it represents the priorities of the local community and outlines how local partners will work effectively together to achieve the collectively agreed vision, aims, and objectives.

Prior to the consultation, a workshop was held with local school children so that their thoughts could be heard by those stakeholders involved in the consultation process.

The development of this Strategy provides a framework for future action to improve air quality within Wirral. It is consistent with national guidelines and will assist the Council to achieve its objective of improving the air quality within Wirral to help to better the environment and the health and well-being of all residents and visitors to the area.

This strategy identifies five key areas for action, which are:

- Reduce emissions from transport,
- Improve indoor air quality,
- Reduce the impact from housing development and regeneration,
- Reduce domestic, commercial, industrial and agricultural emissions,
- Raise public awareness and encourage behaviour change.

Delivery of the agreed priorities will be driven by a strategy implementation plan, which is currently in development. The plan will be owned by the Wirral Air Quality Steering Group and actions within the plan will be developed in partnership with the relevant departments to ensure adequate resources and funding are available.



Case Study 5: Active Wirral Energy Efficiency Programme

In January 2023, Wirral Council's leisure service *Active Wirral* faced two pressing issues. In the short-term soaring energy costs, estimated at the time as a 45% rise in electricity and 112% in gas. Due to the energy intensive services provided, including heated swimming pools, air-conditioned fitness suites, and the sheer size of the service's buildings, Active Wirral is one of the largest consumers of energy across the Council. It accounts for 41% of corporate electricity usage (excluding street lighting), 53% of total gas consumption, and 49% of total emissions from electricity and gas.

To address these challenges, a comprehensive energy efficiency project was instigated. This was delivered through assembling a cross departmental task force to design and deliver a suite of high impact interventions. Interventions included installation of pool covers, repairing solar panels, installing low flow showers, and developing a culture of energy conscientiousness amongst staff. Importantly, interventions also included increased resource for ongoing planned preventative maintenance and optimising building management systems. The overall capital investment totalled £350k.

The project overdelivered on its financial target by 66% to deliver a **cost** avoidance of £231K and a payback period of 18 months. As these reductions are ongoing, this will lead to a cumulative cost avoidance of £1.23M by 2028. It also achieved emission savings of 335 tonnes CO₂e contributing to 23% of the Council's total emissions reduction target for 2023/24. To put this into perspective, this is equivalent to the total emissions generated by a small Wirral village of 30 families.

The success of the approach has secured senior officer buy in to commence a second round of interventions across the Council's wider asset base.

Case Study 6: Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy

The Biodiversity & Net Gain (B&NG) Strategy was approved in November 2023, and since then the Council has worked on a variety of biodiversity-related aims and targets, beginning with the appointment of a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Coordinator in the Climate Emergency Team.

Together with colleagues in Neighbourhoods and Planning, an internal 'BNG Team' has been established to spearhead the BNG requirements arising from the new responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021.

As an introduction to the new BNG legislation, training has been provided to council members, to colleagues in Regeneration, Planning, Parks & Countryside, Assets and several (Assistant) Directors. Steps have been taken to work efficiently by adopting new software, Mycelia, to aid with validating planning applications, saving a lot of time from both the Planning Officers and the BNG Coordinator, and S106 Enforcement Officers in future years.

As part of the B&NG Strategy, a resident-focussed Biodiversity Toolkit has been developed to be launched in Winter 2024, to inspire residents to improve biodiversity on the Wirral. This work was completed by a Work Based Learning student from Chester University.

The Wirral Biodiversity Forum (WBF) has been given a new life, and its revival has been met with lots of positive responses. The WBF will work together to create the new Wirral Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and will start their first cycle of meetings early 2025.

Currently the WBF holds 18 members, representing 1 different local groups and organisations with a wealth of local knowledge on Wirral's biodiversity.



Case Study 7: Carbon Literacy Training

Environment and Climate Emergency Policy on September 2020, a key action from the Environment and Climate Emergency Policy was becoming a 'carbon literate' organisation to embed carbon conscious decision making across the organisation. During July 2020 to December 2023, Carbon Literacy training sessions were delivered online by a third party for council staff across all departments.

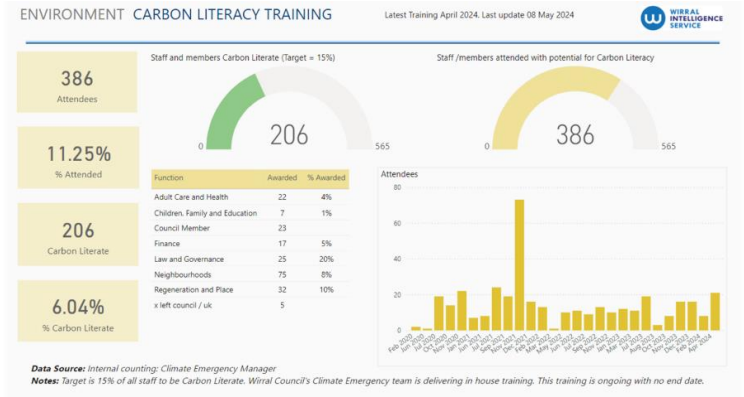
In 2022, Wirral Council was the first council in the Liverpool City Region to be awarded, Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO) status by the Carbon Literacy Project. To achieve silver status the council will be required to train 565 staff. Currently 386 staff have attended the carbon literacy training, however only 207 have both attended and received their carbon literate status as approved by the Carbon Literacy Project.

From December 2023, Wirral Council made the decision to bring Carbon Literacy training in-house. The decision to bring the training in-house was done after an increase in officers attending sessions but failing to submit their pledges within the allocated 2-week timeframe.

With training now being delivered in-person as opposed to online, staff engagement during the training sessions has increased greatly. The training has created the opportunity for officers across different services and job roles in the council to interact and discuss the impacts of Climate Change, while deliberating on what can be done to mitigate and adapt to these challenges.

To assist in embedding the climate emergency as a priority across council roles it has also been made mandatory for report authors, procurement commissioners and senior managers to become carbon literate. Progress on this is reported to Operational Performance Group.

Delivering the course in-house also has a cost saving to the council, estimated at approximately £24,000 based on the remaining officers required to achieve silver status. This can be reallocated to implement further climate positive actions.





Case Study 8: Eco school British Antarctic Survey Ship Live

As part of raising awareness and engaging action on climate change Wirral Council Climate Emergency Team and Ecoschool Programme Manager created a project which allowed 80 pupils to learn more about climate science and green jobs.

A total of eighty pupils from seven secondary schools were invited to attend the event. Pupils led the introductions, followed by a virtual tour of the ship by John Drummond the Project Director during the build at Cammell Laird and some statistics on the scale and complexity of the build.

Pupils then heard via live link to research scientists Flo Atherton, Emily Rowlands, Marine Environmental Ecologist and Sophie Fielding, Zooplankton Ecologist aboard the British Antarctic Survey ship the RRS Sir David Attenborough. Around twenty students were then invited to ask questions to the researchers on subjects as broad as 'what happens to your waste?' to 'What advice would you give to a young person who wants a career in science.'

The event allowed pupils to take part in a unique experience and learn first-hand about climate science and jobs in science and engineering. They agreed that the legacy of the project would be a film which they would promote to other schools, and which was streamed on STEM Live during National Science week and was viewed by an estimated 4000 pupils.

The event was also covered by local and regional news, bringing the local issues of climate change to a new audience and fulfilling the Wirral Cool 2 strategy theme of 'Wider Understanding' and inspiring residents to get involved with climate action through the Cool Wirral climate challenge.



Policy 1: A net zero carbon council by 2030

Carbon budget reporting

Carbon budget targets for 2023-24 were not achieved, largely due to limited progress with the decarbonisation of council assets. Further information is contained within the annual carbon budgets 2023-24 reported to committee alongside the ECEAP Progress report and summarised in Section 5.

Procurement

Work has been undertaken to ensure that environment and carbon reduction procurement Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) can be made mandatory in 2024. Explored systems to enable better reporting of outcomes and decided upon the social value portal. When this system is in use, it will enable the Council to mark certain environment and carbon reduction TOMs as mandatory. Furthermore, the recording element of the commitments made through the Social Value Portal will have a much stronger measurement system to record outputs against.

Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF)

MPF to progress its climate strategy towards meeting its Net Zero investments by 2050 commitment, utilising the Net Zero Investment Framework (NZIF) established by the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC). Interim targets are a 50% reduction of portfolio emissions by 2030 (from 2019 baseline); 100% of in-scope portfolio aligned with below 20-degree trajectory by 2030 and at least 5% of total Fund invested in climate solutions by 2030.

Policy 2: An energy and resource efficient council using 100% clean renewable energy

Green electricity purchase

During 2023/24 the council continued to purchase green electricity which ensured our emissions from electricity use across council assets and schools was zero.

Leisure energy efficiency

In January 2023, Active Wirral, facing soaring energy costs and a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, initiated a comprehensive energy efficiency project. More information is included in Case Study 6: Active Wirral Energy Efficiency Project

Building Decarbonisation

The council worked with the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and Northwest net zero hub to submit bids for Low Carbon Skills funding (LCSF) and Public Sector decarbonisation scheme (PSDS) funding. Case study 3 provides more information on the progress of this.

Energy efficiency module

Launched in August 2023 on the internal training platform Flo, a module on Energy and Water was designed to help council employees save energy both at work and in their homes.

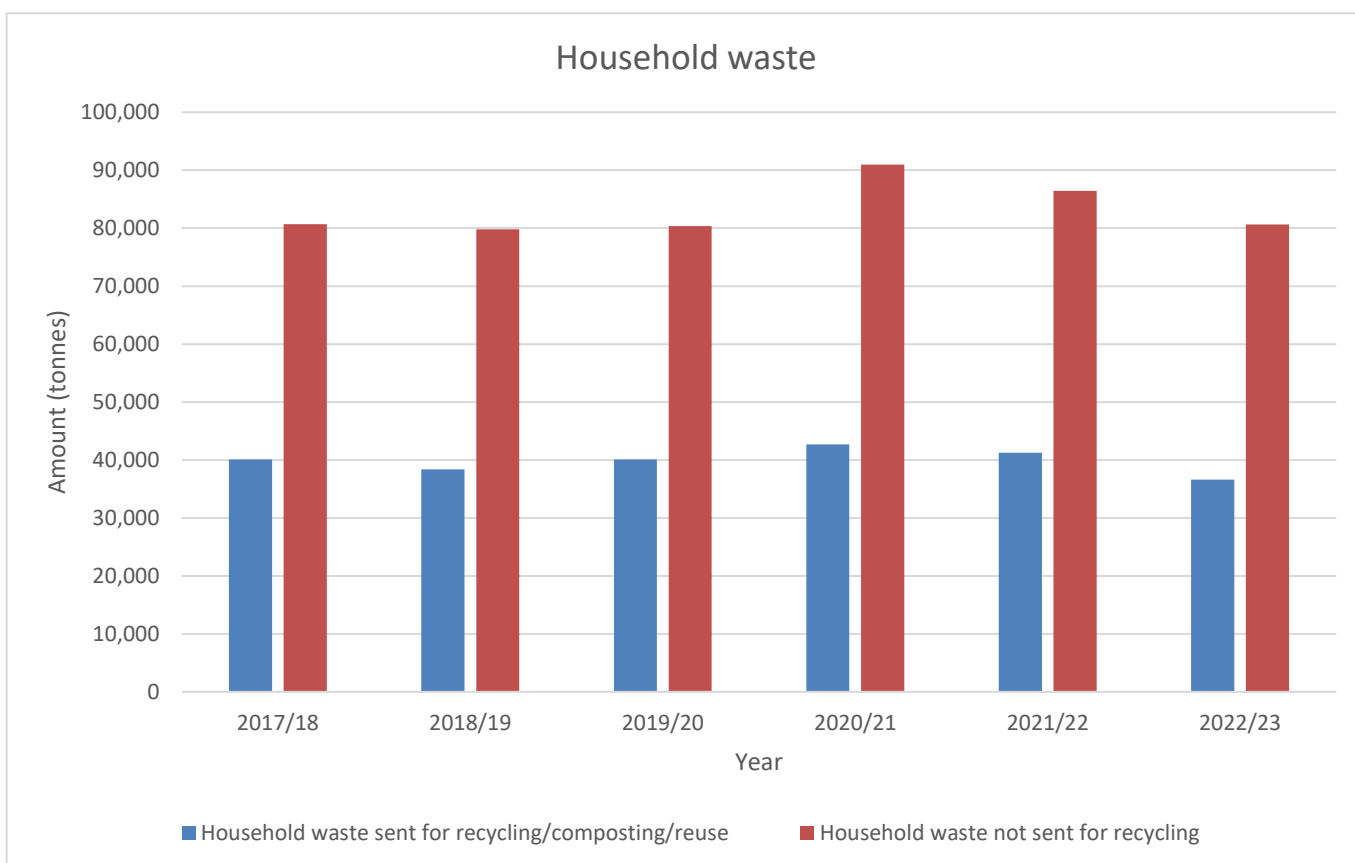
Low carbon materials in highways

Increased utilisation of recycled materials in the surface dressing annual programmes.

Upgrade of traffic signals

Sites upgraded to LED traffic signals. 7 sites remaining. Bollard de-illumination completed in 2023. The majority of signs that no longer require illumination have been switched off and the remaining illuminated signs are being converted to LED.

Policy 3: Supporting transition to a 'circular economy' designing out waste and environmental damage



Source: Data from Wirral council waste management team (May 2024)

Verified data is not yet available for Quarter 4 of 23/24, however preliminary data shows that 82,125 tonnes of general waste were collected in 2023. The majority of Wirral' general waste is sent to an energy from waste plant at Wilton in Teesside, which burns the waste to generate electricity and heat.

Overall recycling in 2023 was 32.3% which represents a small increase on the previous year, this includes a dry recycling (grey bin) rate of 19% and garden waste (brown bin) composting of 13.3%. The rise in recycling is mostly due to the increase in garden waste due to a better growing year. There had been a dip in dry recycling during 2022, due to disruption to recycling services caused by industrial action and inclement weather. This returned to normal in 2023.

There are changes to collections on the horizon and the Council is currently planning for weekly food waste collection and increased range of dry recycling to be introduced in line with new legislation.

Zero waste Framework

Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA) are the public body responsible for dealing with household waste and recycling once it has been collected from homes. MRWA is a local government body consisting of nine elected Members representing the five constituent district councils in the Merseyside area. On the 3rd February 2023 members of the MRWA committee approved the adoption of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Zero Waste 2040 Strategic Framework to minimise waste related carbon emissions through actions to prevent, reduce, recycle and re-use waste. The accompanying Zero Waste website and communications package is designed to support everyone across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) to prevent waste and reuse, repair and recycle more.

Cool business

In September 2023 during Global goals week, Wirral Council, in partnership with Wirral Chamber held the first Cool business workshop bringing together businesses to hear speakers from the 2030 hub and Bristol Myers Squibb. Further workshops are planned in 2024.

Single Use Plastic

The Council have a single use plastics (SUP) policy that was developed in November 2018. One of the actions within the policy was the phasing out of single use plastics in its activities over the next two years. In response to the COVID pandemic the council saw an increase in the use of SUP personal protective equipment.

Prompted by the change in legislation and 5 years having passed since the policies inception it was agreed that an audit of single use plastic within council buildings was undertaken. These buildings included Cheshire Lines Building, Floral Pavilion, Birkenhead Town Hall, Sandford Street, Sailing Centre and Arrowe Park golf course, libraries and leisure centres. This highlighted areas where SUP is still being used and led to a review of procurement procedures and alternative products. The SUP policy is being reviewed and will be taken to members in Autumn 2024 for approval.

Policy 4: Helping to create resilient neighbourhoods and sustainable regeneration

Local plan update

The Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037 will, once adopted, replace the Unitary Development Plan and will provide the framework for planning decisions in the Borough for a fifteen-year period. The Submission Draft Local Plan is currently undergoing Examination in Public.

The next stage will be consultation on Main Modifications in summer of 2024 following which it is hoped to adopt the Local Plan by the end of 2024/early 2025. Some of the modifications centre on the energy efficiency policies (WS8.2) contained within the Local Plan which should be modified to reflect a ministerial statement on the use of energy-based metrics.

The Submission Draft Local Plan can be viewed here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/wirral-new-local-plan/new-local-plan>

Heat networks

Wirral Council is awaiting a decision from Government regarding the Green Heat Network Fund grant application for the Birkenhead Project. A decision is expected in June 2024. If this application is successful, tenders for commercialisation will be issued at the end of 2024.

The Council is also exploring the feasibility of a heat network project in Wallasey/Seacombe. A consultant was appointed in March 2024 to undertake this work and the outcome of the study is anticipated in November 2024.

Residential decarbonisation

Wirral Council led the Residential Retrofitting Task & Finish Group, formed to take forward recommendations from the Cool Wirral Partnership's Zero Carbon Buildings Taskforce. The group met three times in 2023 and there were representatives from Energy Projects Plus, Wirral Private Landlords Forum, Port Sunlight Trust, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Magenta Living and Wirral Council.

Three targets were set out:

- 1) A comprehensive cross-sector public engagement and awareness raising campaign in the residential sector.
- 2) Financing mechanisms identified for private owner occupiers, tenants and landlords.
- 3) Wirral-based case studies written and published on exemplar and pilot projects

Policy 5: Investment in Future generations to be climate ready and resilient.

Update on Ecoschools programme

53 eco schools achieved Green flag status with assistance from the Eco school Programme Manager. Wirral has an extremely successful eco school programme with many participating schools and is one of only a few local authorities to have over 50 Eco schools within their borough. This is testament to the investment in environmental education and the dedication of the Eco school Programme Manager. A short progress report on the activities undertaken within the Eco school curriculum for 2023/24 is available as Appendix A to this report.

Eco school British Antarctic Survey Live event

The climate emergency team held an event at Eureka Science and Discovery Centre for Wirral Eco schools to live link with the British Antarctic Survey ship deployed in Antarctica. More information is found in case study 8.

<https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2024-01-19/wirral-schools-chat-to-scientists-in-the-antarctic>

Youth engagement

Led by the Council's Participation and Engagement team, the Cool Youth group resumed in Autumn 2023. As a group, they attended a Northwest Youth climate meeting in Manchester. One of the group members was asked to present at the Net Zero event in November at the Museum of Liverpool, on a platform with CEOs of Northwest Business on how they can engage youth further into wider programmes and jobs in the environment. Going forward, the decision has been made to develop the group into a hybrid session as a way of reaching out further to young people across Wirral.

Eco school council

During 2023 the Eco school programme manager supported schools to establish an Eco-school Council. The Eco-council met for the first time at Bidston Gold Club to establish a programme of work for the 2023/24 academic year.

Policy 6: A Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow strategy to double canopy cover

Tree planting

During the 23/24 season, our tree, hedgerow, and woodland strategy saw significant progress and engagement. We achieved a net gain of 16,164 trees, with an additional 2,517 replacements for those that had failed in previous seasons, bringing our total to 85,280 since the strategy was adopted in 2020.

Currently, the draft of the revised strategy is under review by the Tree Strategy Advisory Board, it is expected to be finalised in summer 2024 and encompasses updated policy references, new chapters on 'Tree and Development' and 'Natural Regeneration,' along with community engagement case studies. Looking ahead, our focus for the coming year includes developing management plans for each Parks and Countryside site. Additionally, an Ash Dieback action plan will be developed.

Community engagement

Engagement flourished with a variety of events, including five school planting sessions, six Wirral Council staff planting sessions, two public tree giveaway events, and thirteen community planting events, which involved 190 volunteers.

Furthermore, we conducted five tree warden training modules, with 79 individuals registering to be wardens since the relaunch in October and 42 being inducted.

Policy 7: Transforming our open spaces and enhancing biodiversity

Pollinator strategy

The council's initial Pollinator Action Plan, agreed in February 2020, aimed to trial two locations as pollinator sites. This has been extended to include many more sites - with there now being a total of approximately 65 pollinators and wildflower sites. Wirral now has a Pollinator Strategy 2022-2030 sets out 5 main aims to address the decline in pollinators and support Wirral Councils commitment to respond to the Climate Emergency.

Funding has been made available for 2024/25 to convert 73,000m² of rewilding areas into pollinator areas. A project is currently being initiated to survey suitable areas, with planting expected to commence from the Autumn onwards.

Green flag parks

Green Flags are an international award that recognise the good quality parks and green spaces with each of the sites recognised for having good environmental standards, being well maintained and providing clean and safe visitor facilities.

Across the borough, 33 Green Flags have been awarded which recognise the dedication of parks and countryside staff, as well as Friends Groups and members of the public who volunteer their time and effort, to make improvements to these important areas.

<https://wirralview.com/sustainable-environment/33-sites-wirral-recognised-green-flag-awards>

Biodiversity and Net Gain Strategy

In November 2023, the councils Biodiversity and Net Gain Strategy was approved by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport committee. The overall aim of the strategy is to increase biodiversity in Wirral both through the implementation of biodiversity net gain through developments (case study 6), the development of a biodiversity action plan and education of residents. To drive the strategy the council appointed a Biodiversity Net Gain coordinator.

Allotments

Since the Allotment Partnership Strategy was agreed progress has been made as follows:

- 32 raised bed allotments have been created at Bebington Road and another area at the site identified to create more raised bed allotments.
- 16 unlettable plots bought back into use.
- 29 new plots created as part of the Mosslands extension and are currently being let.
- Plans to create a further 60 plots (subject to planning permission) and bring 47 unlettable plots back into use by the end of 2024.

The service continues to seek suitable land that could be converted to allotment plots.

Policy 8: Adapting to climate change and working with nature to build natural resilience

Flood alleviation

The West Kirby Flood Alleviation Scheme was completed at the end of September 2023. West Kirby faced a 10.4m storm surge from Storm Pierrick in April 2024 and an investigation is ongoing into the performance of the defence.

Flood resilience

In 2023/24 the Lead Local Flood Authority received 89 planning consultations, comprising pre-application advice, full applications, outline applications and discharge of conditions. Focus has been on working with planners and developers to encourage the implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage surface water flood risk to and from new major developments and reduce flood risk overall by restricting surface water flows into existing sewers and watercourses to mimic greenfield rates where possible.

Street Trees

101 street trees were planted in the borough.

Staff Travel

As part of the planning conditions a framework travel plan for Mallory has been submitted and a full travel plan will need to be developed within 6 months of occupation. This will build on the framework travel plan and the data collected from the staff travel survey to set some SMART targets for sustainable travel.

Modeshift stars

Modeshift STARS is a nationally accredited initiative, supported by the Department for Transport (DfT). The STARS Education scheme recognises schools and other educational establishments that have shown excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel.

The Junior Travel Ambassador initiative runs concurrently in these schools by elected pupils to take the message of safe, active and sustainable transport to their peers. Surveying the school community helps us to understand the barriers to safe active travel and an action plan to address the issues is implemented through capital measures, active travel weeks, park and stride sites as a few of the potential solutions.

Two Active Travel Officers have been employed utilising external grant funding provided via the Liverpool City Region to work with schools delivering the School Street initiative and Modeshift. This aims to reduce cars travelling in and around school locations to reduce emissions and air pollution. Schools who have achieved Modeshift accreditation currently include 13 at green status and 1 at bronze. A number of other schools have been submitted and are awaiting accreditation status.

Bikeability training

The Council's Road Safety Team support schools with safe sustainable travel and active travel initiatives. Cycle Training is offered to all Wirral Schools. Bikeability level 1 and 2 combined sessions, are aimed at Y5/6 pupils and are provided by the Bikeability provider selected by the Liverpool City Region. The road safety team actively advertise and signpost these sessions to all Wirral schools by several means, including the use of a school road safety newsletter. There is also "Learn to Ride" sessions which are for early primary school ages, and "Own the Ride" sessions for late secondary/6th form, also run by Bike Right and funded by LCR. These provisions promote safe active travel for pupils on the journey to and from school.

School Streets

Wirral Council has implemented School Streets initiatives that involve closing streets immediately outside school gates at drop-off and pick-up times to most vehicle traffic (there are exemptions for residents, blue badge holders, emergency services etc.). It aims to create safer and more pleasant environment for everyone around the school by encouraging walking, cycling and scooting or parking further away from the school and walk the last part of the journey and by preventing vehicles from entering specific roads around the vicinity of the school. Wirral Council have delivered six School Street pilots across Wirral. Three schemes have been made permanent.

Policy 10: Securing investment to support the necessary shift to ultra-low carbon vehicles (Note: this policy will be reported within the AQS in future years)

E-cargo bikes

The council have 5 e-cargo bikes and trailers in use in the parks. Bikes were deployed in January 2023 and used within Birkenhead Park, Leasowe Castle, Birkenhead Central Park and Flaybrick Cemetery. 16 parks staff have been trained to use them in their daily roles and covered 360 miles in the financial year 2023/24.

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

25% (37,056) of Wirral properties do not have access to a drive or a garage. The Liverpool city region (LCR) has been awarded £9.6m in Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding to help support the roll out of charge points focused on residential areas with no off-street parking, plus £737,000 capability funding to support the project.

The funding will be used to leverage private investment and is planned to deliver 600-800 standard chargers and 1000-1300 fast chargers within the LCR.

Wirral council is currently developing an Electric Vehicle Strategy which is aiming to be taken to through governance in Sept 2024. The final report will consist of a technical report to be used internally and a public facing document. This will be used to further inform the roll out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure utilizing the LEVI funding.

Fleet review

A review of the council fleet has taken place with the aim of consolidating the fleet and introducing electric vehicles across the various services. The mayor has a fully electric car, and an electric van is now in use at Birkenhead Park.

Bike lanes

In Wirral, to date, there are approximately ninety-five miles of cycle lanes, approximately 4 miles of Segregated cycle lanes on highways and approximately twenty-three miles of Traffic free cycle routes away from the highway.

Installation of Active travel Fund (Tranche one) scheme. The Harrison Drive / Bayswater Rd Active Travel Fund 2 scheme was completed in January 2024.

Policy 11: Working to support an increase in public transport use (Note: this policy will be reported within the AQS in future years)

Cycle Storage

Secure cycle storage is offered at the majority of train stations in Wirral and aims to encourage people to cycle to their nearest train station for the next stage of their journey by train, by providing secure bike storage facilities, as well as bike racks. New cycle storage was also funded for Birkenhead library.

Bus

There are currently forty-four hybrid buses in operation in Wirral, which are operated by Arriva. There are also twenty-two buses operating for Arriva Wirral from Laird Street, Birkenhead that have been retrofitted to Euro 6 standard: the most rigorous European standard for emissions. Stagecoach (Rock Ferry) have seven vehicles manufactured from new to Euro 6 standards and six vehicles that have retrofitted to Euro 6 standards. This is for a peak vehicle requirement of forty-seven.

Train

Fully electric battery-power trains are now in use on the Wirral line and within the Liverpool City Region. Using sliding step-technology, these trains are some of the most accessible and sophisticated trains on the UK rail network and are the latest step towards the Mayor's commitment to deliver a London-style integrated transport network for our city region.

Ferry

One new-build ferry, which will be greener and more energy efficient, has been ordered by the LCRCA from Cammell Laird / Damen. Extensive refurbishment has been undertaken at Seacombe Ferry Terminal and refurbishment is planned to the landing stages at Woodside Ferry Terminal.

Policy 12: Become an accredited carbon literate organisation

Carbon Literacy training

During 2023-24, 70 council staff were trained as carbon literate, with 47 completing their pledges and being accredited as carbon literate. To increase staff engagement the decision was made to bring the carbon literacy training in-house. Since December 2023, the course has been delivered internally by two members of the climate emergency team. This has ensured that the number of pledges being completed has risen and have given the team the opportunity to network with more staff and follow up on the outcomes of pledges.

Policy 13: Transforming the way we operate and function

Carbon Impact Assessment

During 2023 research was undertaken into the use of carbon impact tools within councils. A CIA tool would allow the carbon and environmental impacts of projects to be considered at the scoping stage of a project and allow changes to be made to ensure the project is more environmentally sustainable. The project scoped out the various carbon impact tools available and worked with organisational development to test the 5 tools across various projects to determine their suitability. After testing completed, one tool was chosen to use and this is now being trialled across further areas.

Cool Wirral

The Council are a fundamental partner of the Cool Wirral Partnership providing secretarial duties and facilitating the updates. The Partnership held 5 meetings during 2023, including 'Cool Yule' during November 2023 which was a celebration of climate and environmental achievements over the past year in Wirral. The event with workshop sessions based on themes of food, homes, adaptation, circular economy and travel with actions being taken away for the partnership to action and consider in the strategy review.

Paper use

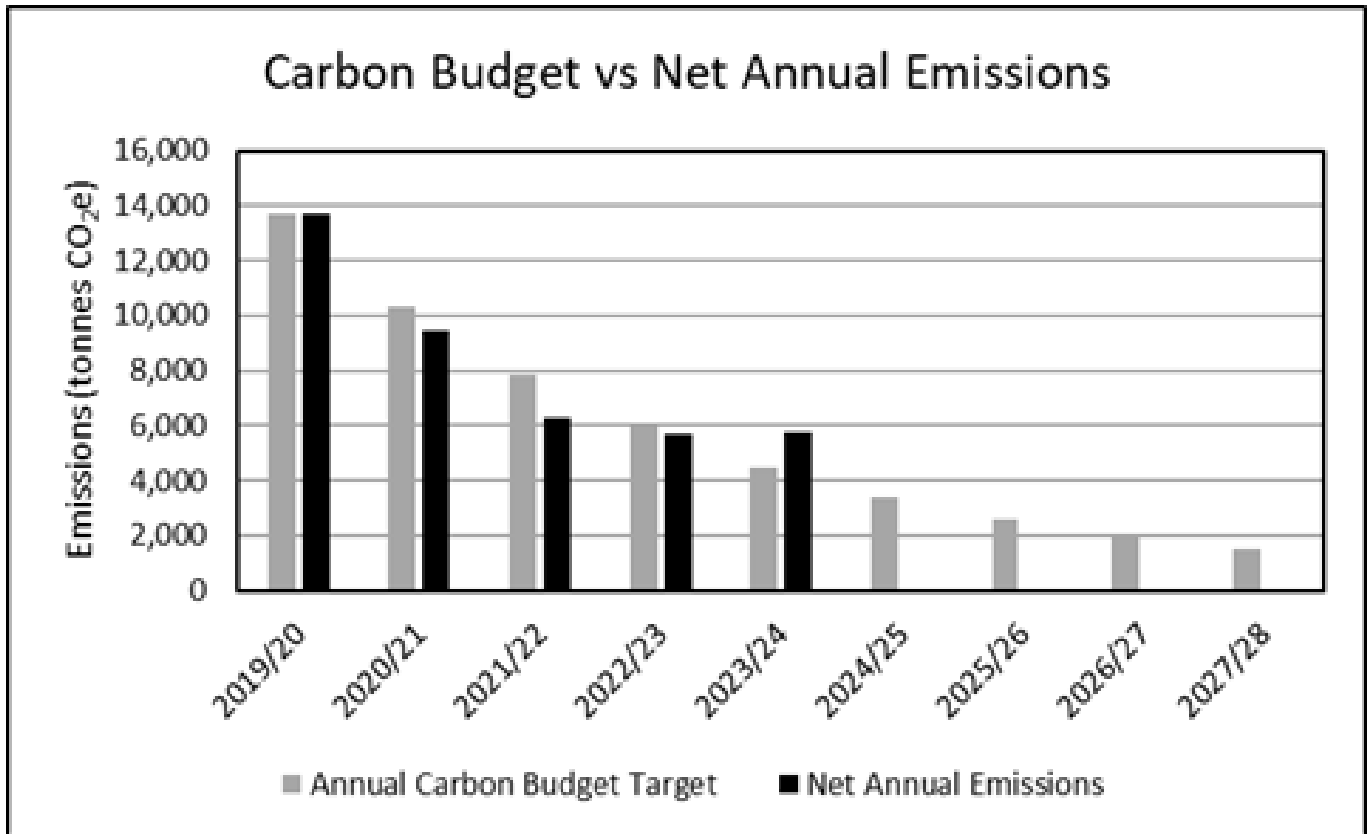
The volume of photocopying in 2023/24 was 2,095,667 which is a reduction of approximately 5% on 2022/23 (2,200,489). Total printing was 474,789. All printing and photocopying totalled 2,570,445 which is slightly less than was seen in 2022/23. Printer and photocopier use stabilised in comparison to pre-Covid use which was 9.1 million prints and copies.

Wirral Council Plan

In 2023 the Wirral Council Plan was updated. The revised plan sets out 7 priorities, one of which is 'To play our part in addressing the climate emergency and protecting our environment'. Delivery theme 5 sets out the outcomes, what we will do and how this will be measured. These deliverables are embedded in the ECEAP and other strategies.

Carbon budget reporting 2023/24

- In 2019/20 Wirral Council set a baseline for their carbon emissions of 13,656 tonnes CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent emissions). A carbon budget was set for each year marking the trajectory to net zero by 2030, with a re-baselining in 2026/27. A summary of the Council's actual emissions verses the carbon budget is outlined in the Table below.



Source: Wirral Council, Climate Emergency Team, Internal Data Source (2024)

- Carbon equivalent (CO₂e) emissions have remained relatively stable, with a slight increase due to a 2.9% increase in gas use. This can be attributed to increases in the emissions factors for both gas and electricity.
- Emissions factors are calculated annually and for electricity, depend upon the fuel mix used in power stations and the proportion of net imported electricity. Gas emission factors consider a number of variables such as the quantities and source of imported gas making up the UK supply to calculate a weighted emissions factor.
- It should be noted that the carbon budget only includes only those buildings within scope at the time of the baseline study in 2019. Additional buildings and emissions sources are reported separately in the carbon budget report and will be included when re-baselining takes place in 2027.
- This plateauing of the CO₂e emissions was highlighted in the 2022-23 progress report as a possibility. It was acknowledged that the easier actions had been exhausted and that measures to tackle the remaining emissions would be more difficult to implement. This is being addressed by attempting to take advantage of the support available from government to deliver emissions reduction projects at minimum cost to the Council.

Priorities for 2024-25

The Carbon Budget sets a limit of 3,414 tonnes CO₂e for 2024/25 – a reduction of 2,360 tonnes CO₂e in comparison to 2023/24 performance. This reduction will only be achieved if fossil fuel use for heating is reduced significantly.

The measures by which to do this are outlined in more detail within the Carbon budget performance report 2023-24 and summarised in priorities below.

Additional priority actions have been identified for action in 2023/24 to ensure the Council continues the trajectory to keep pace with the carbon budget to meet the net zero target by 2030 and support the Cool2 strategy objectives. They are:

- Completion of a Power Bi dashboard for streamlined reporting and efficiency.
- Progress plans to improve energy efficiency of the Council estate by building on lessons learnt from Leisure facilities.
- Delivery of PSDS funded decarbonisation and continued development of a project pipeline through heat decarbonisation plans with support from the Liverpool City Region and Northwest Net Zero Hub.
- Integrate heat decarbonisation plans with Asset delivery plans.
- Finalise the fleet review and develop an outline business case to transition the fleet to low or zero emission vehicles
- Adoption of the council Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy and publication of a public facing report.
- To drive forward an implementation plan for the new Wirral Air Quality Strategy, to include delivery of priorities 9,10 and 11 of the ECE Policy.
- Support the update of the Cool Wirral 'Cool 2' Strategy for the borough.
- Implement the Social Value Portal to enable environmental outcomes from procurement to be tracked and reported.
- Embed carbon impact assessment throughout major projects and financial decisions.
- Review and update the risk register with regards to risks from climate change.
- Establish a methodology for calculating and reporting carbon sequestration and air quality improvement statistics from our tree stock.

References

- Equalities Impact Assessment – Climate Emergency Action Plan <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/communities%20and%20neighbourhoods/Equality%20Impact%20Assessments/EIA%20since%202017/Delivery/Climate%20Emergency%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Wirral%20Council%20EIA.pdf>
- Wirral New Local Plan <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/wirrals-new-local-plan/new-local-plan>
- Wirral Council Plan <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/council-plan>
- Cool Wirral Partnership [Cool 2 Strategy](#)
- UN Sustainable development goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

- UN Paris Agreement http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf
- IPCC Sixth Assessment Report <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>
- Committee on Climate Change Progress Reports 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/committee-on-climate-changes-2019-progress-reports-government-responses>

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