

APPENDIX 1

Wirral Borough Council

Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress 2024-25

1. Introduction

The Paris Agreement is a legal binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in December 2015. The overarching goal is to hold ‘the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels’ and pursue efforts to ‘limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels’.

Since 2020, countries have been submitting their national climate action plans, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). In their NDCs, countries communicate actions they will take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in order to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. Countries also communicate in their NDCs actions they will take to build resilience to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

During recent years, the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks far more severe climate impacts, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall. Scientists have said that for this to happen greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 at the latest and decline 43% by 2030.

In January 2025, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record, based on six international datasets. The past 10 years 2015-2024 are the warmest 10 years on record and 2024 was likely the first calendar year with a global mean temperature of more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said “It is important to emphasize that a single year of more than 1.5°C for a year does not mean that we have failed to meet Paris Agreement long-term temperature goals, which are measured over decades rather than an individual year. However, it is essential to recognize that every fraction of a degree of warming matters. Whether it is at a level below or above 1.5°C of warming, every additional increment of global warming increases the impacts on our lives, economies and our planet”.

1.1 Global Action of Climate Change

In 2024, the Conference of the Parties (COP29) took place in Baku, Azerbaijan. It was the latest annual United Nations (UN) climate conference, which negotiates collective global actions and sets an overarching framework for national level climate policies. It delivered mixed results against a background of wider geopolitical uncertainty, the warmest year on record, and major climate change-exacerbated extreme events occurring worldwide.

The UK had a strong presence at COP29. Announcement of the UK 2035 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) emissions reduction target of at least 81% below 1990 levels, in line with the Climate Change Committee's advice, was a clear statement of intent. It was well received by international partners during the COP.

Key outcomes of the conference included the long-awaited climate finance deal offered \$300bn (about £240bn) a year to developing nations by 2035, however the was recognition of the much greater scale of finance required in future. It also saw the agreement on the rules underpinning bilateral carbon trading and a centralised crediting mechanism. Functioning carbon markets can enable increased global ambition and emissions reduction delivery, subject to robust standards, which must now be developed.

There was limited progress on mitigation and a general failure to build on the first global stocktake from last year's COP 28. Urgent and substantial steps are required to contribute towards meeting the Paris Agreement temperature goal – notably the transition away from fossil fuels.

COP29 demonstrated the growing importance of adaptation and the need for greater support and guidance for countries. Some functional progress was made on defining indicators for the Global Goal on Adaptation, but key decisions were postponed to COP30, being held in Brazil in November 2025.

1.2 *National Action on Climate Change*

In a significant milestone for the UK's environmental progress, greenhouse gas emissions fell to their lowest level since 1872, according to analysis from Carbon Brief. The country's emissions dropped by 3.6% in 2024, reaching 371 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e). This marks the lowest level of emissions since Queen Victoria's reign and is comparable to the emissions levels in 1926, the year of the general strike.

The sharp decline in emissions was largely driven by the reduction in coal use, which fell to its lowest level since 1666, the year of the Great Fire of London. The closure of the UK's last coal-fired power station, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, and one of the final blast furnaces at Port Talbot steelworks in September were pivotal events in this reduction. Other factors contributing to the decline included decreased demand for oil and gas, a nearly 40% rise in the number of EVs on the road, above-average temperatures, and record levels of clean energy generation.

On the 26th of February, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) published its 7th Carbon Budget to the UK Government, outlining its recommendations for total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions during the five-year period from 2038 – 2042. This advice provides strong evidence for the UK to establish legally binding limits on permissible GHG emissions during this period. The CCC recommends an 87% reduction in UK emissions since 1990 by 2040, with a five-year budget of 535 MtCO₂e for the period of 2038-2042.

Electrification and low carbon electricity supply will make up the majority of emissions reductions along with nature-based solutions and low carbon consumer choices. The report has shown that not only is the transition to net zero possible but also highly beneficial, strengthening the economy, delivering a multitude of co-benefits and positioning the UK as a global leader in climate action. Local authorities will play a key role in the implementation of the transition, particularly in areas such as transport, buildings and waste management.

These changes have helped the UK reduce its emissions by 54% compared to 1990 levels, while the country's GDP has grown by 84%. This achievement highlights the potential for economic growth alongside substantial progress in reducing emissions, positioning the UK as a global leader in the push towards a sustainable, low-carbon future.

1.3 Local Action on Climate Change

As a borough, Wirral recognises the need to act on climate change. The Cool Wirral is a partnership of public, private and third sector organisations coordinating local action on climate change.

The [Cool2 Climate Change Strategy](#) was developed and endorsed by all Partners in December 2019. The Strategy sets out a local path towards safety. By taking this path individually we can all make a difference; by moving together we can succeed.

During 2024 work has been underway to update the strategy and develop new actions with partners. The strategy will be finalised in May 2025, and the final strategy will be endorsed by partners in June 2025 for delivery over the next 5 years.

In 2024 a Cool Communities sub-group was established to bring together community groups, both environmental groups, but also those that may not have an environmental focus, but that align with the ambitions of the Cool Wirral Strategy. Contributors to the group have been working on a bid to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund and will find out if this is successful in September 2025.

As a Partner of Cool Wirral, Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency through an all-party resolution in July 2019 and 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.

2. 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.

This year will be the first-year reporting on the updated action plan. As agreed, three of the priorities will now be delivered and reported by the Air Quality Strategy to ensure efficient working and avoid duplication. These are:

- ***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.***

A Power Bi dashboard has also been developed for internal use to allow the ECE Action Group to view reporting metrics at a glance.

3. Key ECE achievements in 2024/25.

- ***£900k secured from PSDS Phase 3c to decarbonise Landican and Wirral Country Park.***
- ***£13.75m secured from PSDS 4 to decarbonise 7 council buildings***
- ***Overall trained 834 employees in Carbon literacy and reached the threshold to obtain Carbon Literacy Silver status.***
- ***Completion of a Power Bi dashboard for streamlined reporting and efficiency.***
- ***Completed the fleet review in preparation for 'greening the fleet.'***
- ***Adoption of the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy***
- ***Adopted a 'Brownfield only' local plan.***
- ***Progressed the Wirral Air Quality implementation plan***
- ***Climate Impact Assessment tool embedded within finance and project management templates.***
- ***Supported the Cool Wirral Partnership with the Strategy refresh.***
- ***Sustainability a key theme within the Wirral Borough of Culture Year.***
- ***Delivered the Green BiblioFest through Libraries, Parks and Ecoschools***

- ***Launched the Wild about Nature campaign***

4. Progress in 2024-25

- ***Case Studies***

Case Study 1 - Public Sector decarbonisation funding

Case Study 2 – Cool Communities Subgroup

Case Study 3 – Wirral Let’s breathe better campaign

Case Study 4 – Heat Network

Case Study 5 – Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

Case Study 6 – Cool Wirral Climate Challenge

Case Study 7 – Carbon Literacy Action Day

Case Study 8 – Green Bibliofest

Case Study 1 - Public Sector decarbonisation funding

Preliminary work on Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) Phase 3c work at Wirral Country Park and the Landican Buildings has begun. It is expected that the work will be completed by 31 March 2026. Moving away from fossil fuel fired heating at the two sites will reduce Scope 1 emissions by 127 tonnes CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent).

It has been confirmed that the PSDS Phase 4 funding bid (submitted on 20 November 2024) has been successful. The total value of the support that has been secured is £30.5m across the Liverpool City Region members who took part. Wirral's share of this allocation will amount to £15.632m of which £13.757m will be provided by PSDS grant funding.

The following sites are in scope:

- Birkenhead Central Library
- Floral Pavilion & Conference Centre
- Leasowe Leisure Centre
- Oval Sports Centre
- Wallasey Town Hall
- West Kirby Concourse
- Williamson Art Gallery

PSDS Phase 4 will be delivered over a 3-year period and must be completed by 31 March 2028. The delivery of the two initiatives (PSDS Phases 3c and 4) - which will eradicate the use of fossil fuels at 9 of the largest carbon emitting sites - is currently projected to reduce Scope 1 emissions by 1930 tonnes CO₂e per annum.



Aerial view of Birkenhead Central Library showing the existing solar panels



Main entrance view of Birkenhead Central Library showing solid wall construction

Case Study 2 – Cool Communities Subgroup

Established in November 2023, Cool Communities is a democratic, community-led partnership of over 30 Wirral-based community groups and the Council. The partnership aims to drive social change by addressing the needs and priorities of Wirral residents, particularly those in greatest need, through climate-positive community development and engagement.

The group has shared expertise and resources to enhance the impactful work of each partner. Notably, they have collaborated on several joint funding applications, including an ongoing application to the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund for £1.5 million. The Thriving Communities programme, based on extensive community listening and co-production, aims to deliver projects that address residents' needs, especially those facing barriers to climate action. A decision on the funding will be made in September 2025.

Key activities and successes include:

- Joint events such as COP 29 Faith & Climate (Nov 2024), Faith Community
- Eco Awards (Feb 2025), and Climate Action for Children & Youth (April 2025).
- Hosting climate cafes on home energy efficiency and heat pump installations to educate residents on reducing energy usage and available grants.
- A wellbeing litter pick in collaboration with Trash Free Trails.
- Bi-monthly partner meetings to strategize, share knowledge, and resources, enhancing each organization's impact.

The partnership continues to seek funding opportunities to deliver greater value for Wirral communities now and in the future.



Case Study 3 – Wirral Let's breathe better campaign

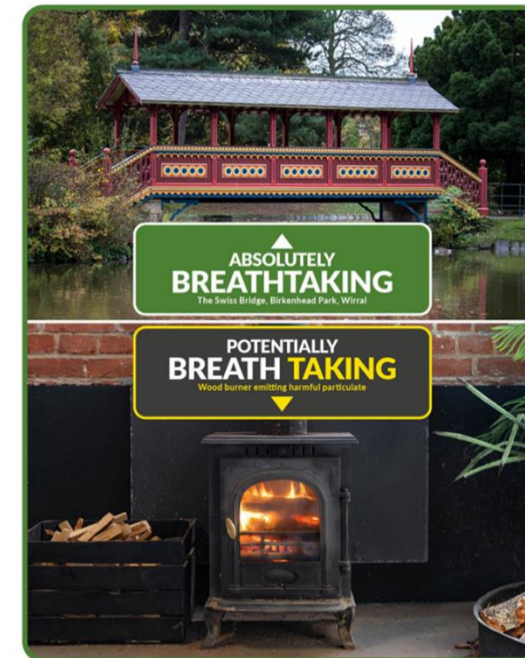
The Office for Health and Improvement & Disparities found that air pollution is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK.

Wirral Council received funding through DEFRA's Air Quality grant 2023/24 to deliver a behaviour change campaign that aimed at improving air quality by reducing particulate emissions from domestic burning. The campaign also sought to empower residents with the knowledge on how to protect themselves from air pollution through targeted information delivered via community and public health settings.

Initial findings through desktop and stakeholder research found that there is low awareness of the health risks associated with domestic burning. The primary motivators for people using domestic burning appliances were cost savings and habit.

Campaigns launched November 2023 and September 2024 focused solely on domestic burning and encouraging best burning practices. A campaign focused on general indoor and outdoor sources of air pollution launched in March 2024. A mix of media, including paid social ads, out of home advertising and materials in community settings was used to share campaign messages. Campaigns generated over 4 million impressions and 36,357 website clicks.

In a final evaluation survey, 35% of respondents recalled seeing the campaigns, primarily on social media but also in other areas such as community settings. Of those who said they had changed their behaviours, 12% said they now use drier, seasoned wood and 7% reported burning less. The project has laid the foundations for long-term, enhanced engagement at a much more local level e.g. increasing community outreach efforts through local events and partnerships with trusted community organisations.



Help your family breathe better by reducing
air pollution from your fire.
WIRRAL, LET'S BURN BETTER.

Campaign funded by DEFRA
WIRRAL

Case Study 4 – Heat Network

Heat networks distribute heat or cooling from a central source or sources and deliver it to a variety of different customers. By supplying multiple buildings, they avoid the need for individual boilers or electric heaters.

In 2024/25, significant progress was made on the Birkenhead Heat Network, one of eight key catalyst projects within the Birkenhead regeneration Framework and a key component of both the climate and regeneration strategies.

A detailed project Development Study and Outline Business case have been completed and the project gained £887k funding from the Green Heat Network Fund to move to the commercialisation stage.

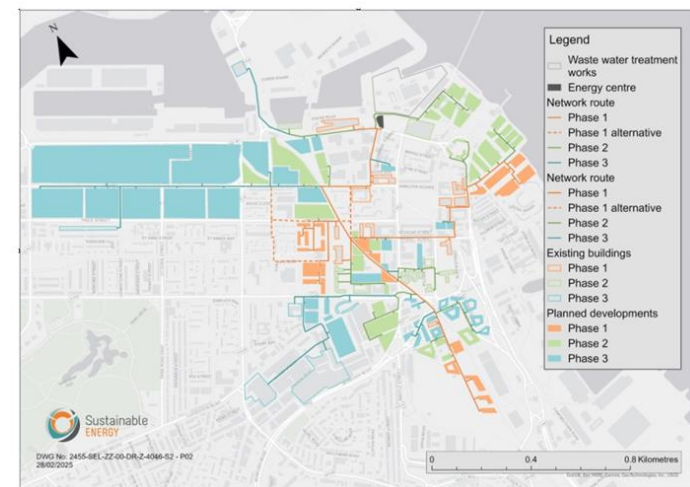
It is proposed that the heat network would utilise a water source heat pump to harness waste heat from the Birkenhead Wastewater Treatment Works. The development is of strategic importance as the heat network supports the council and wider borough's carbon reduction goals by replacing fossil fuel heating, encourage energy efficiency in new developments and reduce the strain of the electricity grid, in comparison with individual heat pumps.

The network, once operations is likely to save over 73,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over the next 15 years The network will be installed, maintained, operated and owned by a private sector partner, who will be appointed through a competitive procurement process.

Heat networks form an important part of the government's plan to reduce carbon and cut heating bills. Further exploration of heat networks across the borough are taking place to support a just transition to net zero.



Photo credit: Vital Energi



Heat Network route and alternative options

Case Study 5 – Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

Wirral Council has developed a comprehensive Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Strategy to support the transition to low-emission transport. The strategy recognises that of high-quality EV infrastructure is very important to achieving our commitments, but EVs are just one part of a much bigger picture in our journey to achieving net zero. It aims to facilitate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) by ensuring accessible, reliable, and future-proof charging infrastructure across the borough.

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- ***Support Net Zero Goals: Reduce transport-related carbon emissions to help meet Wirral's 2041 net-zero target.***
- ***Promote EV Adoption: Encourage residents and businesses to switch to electric vehicles.***
- ***Ensure Equitable Access: Provide charging solutions for residents without off-street parking.***
- ***Future-Proof Infrastructure: Plan for scalable and technologically adaptable charging networks***

Through the Have your say platform, residents were asked to suggest on street locations where they think EV charging is needed most. The locations submitted will then be assessed and subject to site surveys to determine their suitability.

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) have been awarded £9.6m of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) grant funding to deliver charging infrastructure across the city region.



Case Study 6 – Cool Wirral Climate Challenge

The Cool Climate Challenge was a 12-month campaign designed to engage residents in making small everyday changes over the year in support of climate action.

The challenge was designed and led by the Climate Emergency Team and began in January 2024 supported by the Cool Wirral Partnership. Supporting materials included lively and engaging calendar, social media campaign, workshops for residents and a residents engagement platform, hosted on Have your say.

Every 2 months residents were able to make a pledge on climate action that were focussed on the themes of food, waste, nature, travel energy and shopping. The challenges were about inspiring long lasting, environmentally positive habits. Participants were asked to feed back at the end of the two-month period to say which challenges they had completed and share feedback.

Alongside Cool Communities and other partners the Climate Emergency team organised workshops for residents to break down the barriers to participate in climate action. Workshops included seed planting, composting, bees, bugs and butterflies, heat pumps, cookery demonstrations and food waste talks, recycling workshops

Over 2000 residents received the Cool Wirral climate challenge calendar, 196 residents made pledges and over 150 residents attended the workshops.



Case Study 7 – Carbon Literacy Action Day

For Carbon Literacy Action Week, Wirral Borough Council delivered three full day Carbon Literacy training courses on the 11th, 13th and 14th November from Birkenhead Town Hall. The Climate Emergency Team trained officers from various teams across the council like Street Works, Pest Control, Highways, Libraries, Housing, and Adult Social Care.

The focus was on engaging staff whose roles don't typically align with climate action, helping them understand how their work connects to the council's Climate Emergency agenda.

Over the 3 training days Wirral Borough Council trained 200 officers across the organisation. 74 on the 11th November, 80 on the 13th November & 46 on the 14th November. The progress Wirral Borough Council has made since bringing the training in-house is highlighted in comparison to last year's Carbon Literacy Action Day training, 4th December 2023, with 17 officers in attendance.

Wirral Council's work during Carbon Literacy Action Week was recognised with the achievement of the CLAD Catalyst Award. This is an international award that celebrates organisations that plan and deliver a particularly impactful and catalytic version of Carbon Literacy, to have the strongest impact possible in tackling the effects of climate change.

At the time of writing, Wirral Council have 834 staff overall, with 434 staff passed and 106 assessments with the Carbon Literacy Project for assessment currently. To achieve Carbon Literacy Silver Status the council must achieve 600 officers passed.



Case Study 8 – Green Bibliofest

The Green Bibliofest was held as part of the wider Borough of Culture celebrations for Wirral. It was held between July and September 2024 and was a collaboration between Libraries, Parks, Climate Emergency and Culture teams.

Libraries across the borough transformed into event and theatre spaces, with workshops and live performances on the themes of climate, nature and sustainability, taking centre stage. Families and people of all ages were also invited outdoors to enjoy a programme of 48 events, including park ranger-led activities, including bushcraft workshops and pond-dipping safaris, in Birkenhead Park and Wirral Country Park.

Also, part of the festival were Interactive sessions on puppetry, up-cycling, dance, woodworking, sculpting, map reading, weaving, den making, fossil hunt and nature-themed story times. Nature kit bags scheme launched with Wirral's Eco Schools, Cool Wirral and Wirral Rangers teams (available from Bebington, Birkenhead, Wallasey and West Kirby)

The events were attended by 650 children and 350 adults. Attendees were asked to fill in an evaluation (135 responses). 99% of children and young people enjoying the workshops. 70% said their family felt more connected with nature, aware of the environment or encouraged to enjoy their local green and blue space after attending an event. 58% of people felt that the event or workshop had changed how they think about climate change and 60% felt that the event/workshop had encouraged their family to reduce their carbon footprint.



4.2 Progress by policy:

Policy 1: A net zero carbon council by 2030

Carbon budget reporting

Each year the council report progress in the reduction of carbon emissions from the baseline set in 2019/20. 2024/25 saw a reduction on the previous year in emissions from heating of -9.32%, however fleet use increased by 0.83% due to operational necessity. Overall emissions reduced by -7.05% to 5367t CO₂e and which is encouraging, however it is not enough to meet the target of 3414t CO₂e. Further information is contained within Section 5 of this report.

Procurement

Social value portal is now in place and social value delivered through climate related TOMs indicators can be measured. The supplier questionnaire is being strengthened with environmental information about suppliers and better data collection.

Finance

The climate emergency and net zero targets are included as a priority within the medium-term financial strategy 24/25 to 28/29. Climate impact assessments have been integrated into the finance template for decisions going to the change advisory board.

Power Bi dashboard

A Power Bi dashboard has been created and provides a tool for the Environment and climate emergency action group to track and drive progress. This is included within Appendix 1.

Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF)

MPF have set interim climate targets for decarbonisation, alignment of investment portfolios to the net zero trajectory and investment in climate solutions. The net zero targets were presented to the Pensions committee on the 30/7/24. Committee recommended to approve the setting of the proposed climate targets.

[Net Zero Investment TARGETS.pdf](#)

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. This saved 4142 tonnes CO₂e in 24/25 and over 16,500 tonnes CO₂e over the last 4 years.

The council also have solar arrays on 22 buildings, generating approximately 388,000kWh per annum.

Asset Strategy

In March 2025, Wirral Council's new [Asset Strategy 2025-2030](#) was approved. The strategy supports Wirral Council's goal to address the climate emergency and protect the environment, in line with the Wirral Plan 2023–2027.

It focuses on the efficient use of assets - reducing the number of buildings and improving their energy efficiency, which helps lower carbon emissions.

In addition, any new developments and regeneration projects should be planned with sustainability in mind, including energy-efficient buildings and green infrastructure.

The strategy also encourages the use of technology and remote working to reduce travel and reliance on physical office space. Overall, sustainability is embedded as a guiding principle throughout the strategy.

Building Decarbonisation

A combined bid through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) and North West Net Zero Hub was successful, with Wirral receiving just over £13.5m to decarbonise 7 buildings, saving an estimated 1803 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per annum. Further detail is provided in case study 1.

The council have also agreed to participate in the submission of a joint application to the Mayoral Renewables Fund by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) for capital funding to install rooftop solar PV technology on council-owned buildings, the chosen location for this funding within Wirral is Royden Park.

Leisure energy efficiency

In 2024 the council were recognised by the Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE), being awarded 'Best Demand Management initiative' for the energy efficiency project undertaken within leisure services to reduce energy from leisure assets. The project was aimed at providing low-cost interventions to achieve high collective savings and delivered fantastic outcomes. For a total investment of £350k spent on interventions such as low flow showers, swimming pool covers and improved planned preventative maintenance it achieved in year cost avoidance of approximately £230k, with associated carbon savings of 335t CO₂e/ year.

Low Carbon Material in Highways

Highways contractors are continuing to use recycled materials where possible and recycling any waste. On the waste KPIs that contractors report on, in most cases 95% of waste is recycled. Contractors are starting to report carbon savings during the life of the contract.

A trial of thermal patching has been undertaken; this heats up the area of road and reduces the amount of new material used and waste created.

Street lighting

Continuing to use LED for streetlighting and signage lighting. illuminated bollards have now been replaced with reflective ones to reduce energy usage.

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

New Waste and Recycling Strategy

During 2024/25 Wirral Council have developed a new waste and street cleansing strategy to support the new legislative changes which brought in requirements for simpler recycling and food waste collections. The new strategy aligns with the LCR Zero waste strategy which is based on the waste hierarchy and prioritises reducing waste at source. The new strategy will go to committee for approval in June 2025.

The council are part of the Liverpool City Region Waste and Resources Partnership which includes Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority (MRWA). The new Zero Waste strategy has been produced by the Partnership, which includes all the Merseyside councils and Halton Council.

Cool business

In partnership with Wirral Chamber and the council, Cool Wirral held the 'Green Business is Good Business' event at Egerton House. The event had three main themes; energy and water, waste and fleet, with content designed to inspire action, connect peers and showcase solutions with great advice and support for businesses on how to start their own journey to net zero.

The climate emergency team supported Wirral Chamber to update their business pages with environmental sustainability advice for businesses and has received 6271 views over the last 12 months.

Single Use Plastic

During 2024/25 the Single Use plastic policy was refreshed and approved by council in September 2024. Wirral Council aims to eliminate single-use plastics (SUPs) from its operations and reduce unavoidable use by promoting sustainable alternatives.

The policy integrates SUP reduction into procurement, supports staff and suppliers, and encourages borough-wide behaviour change. It involves collaboration with partners, event guidance, and community initiatives. The council will monitor plastic use, track progress, and report annually to support environmental protection and a circular economy.

Policy 4: Helping to create resilient neighbourhoods

Wirral's New Local Plan (2021-2037)

A culmination of more than six years work, the new Local Plan is now the official policy for development across the borough for the next 15 years.

It will support and guide Wirral's bold and ambitious regeneration plans, outlining where new homes and employment sites can be delivered, as well as the additional infrastructure required to boost economic growth and improve quality of life for Wirral's residents.

The new Local Plan will support environment and nature through a number of policies that aim for development to:

- Reduce carbon emissions and support renewable energy.
- Prioritise building on previously developed land to protect and enhance green spaces.
- Create wildlife corridors and support local nature reserves.
- Encourage walking, cycling, and public transport.
- Support flood management through sustainable drainage and avoiding high flood-risk areas.
- Promotes recycling and efficient water use.
- Aims to cut air pollution through green buffers and traffic control.

Heat Networks

The Birkenhead Heat Network has obtained funding from the Green Heat Network Fund to move to the commercialisation stage.

The feasibility of further smaller localised heat networks is being explored throughout the borough. More detail can be found in case study 4.

Residential decarbonisation campaign

Over the past year the housing and climate emergency and communications teams have been working on a campaign to promote energy efficiency measure in homes. The Campaign is due to launch in June 2025 and will feature video case studies from residents that have installed energy efficiency measures, as well as some myth busting and signposting to financial grants or help. An inclusive approach has been taken using social and printed media, as well as targeted direct mail. The campaign hope to encourage the uptake to energy efficiency measures and reduce energy bills for homeowners.

Housing retrofit

Housing Services monitors the installation of publicly supported energy efficiency installations. These are funded by Ofgem through its Energy Company Obligation and administered by energy companies (for ECO 4 and the Great British Insulation Scheme) and funded by central government and administered by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (for the Home Upgrade Grant 2, and Social Housing Fund). The Solar Together programme is administered by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and uses a bulk-buy auction to reduce the cost of solar installations for landowners. Wirral Council has little insight into energy efficiency installations

- 3,440 measures were installed through the ECO programmes (which includes the Great British Insulation Scheme), of which 1,604 were installed through ECO Flex.
- At least 96 Wirral households had solar panels installed through Solar Together Round 3, with 20 of those households also installing a battery storage system.
- Wirral-based Registered Providers continue to use the Social Housing Fund (Wave 2.1) to improve their local stock.

- 17 households received energy efficiency measures through the Home Upgrade Grant 2. This programme was only available for properties off the gas grid, limiting its reach in Wirral.

In the coming year, Housing Services is looking forward to the launch of the Warm Homes programmes in Wirral. The Warm Homes: Local Grant and Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund are anticipated to further support the local domestic retrofit sector alongside the continuation of programmes like ECO and Solar Together.

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

Ecoschools Programme

The eco schools programme is devised by the Wirral Wide Eco Council, made up of student representatives from all the eco schools in Wirral, primary secondary and all our special schools. It is incredibly inclusive with equality of opportunity and experience provided for everyone.

All our special schools are eco schools! It also provides a programme that children can get involved in that teaches them project management skills, takes learning into action, combats eco anxiety and works with many community partners. The school children also work and make decisions together.

A total of 66 schools achieved their green flag last year, this was a massive increase of 13 on the previous year, highlighting how engaging and valued it is for schools, teachers and young people.

Some of the highlights were the Wild walls exhibition where school children and teachers were trained to create colourful graphic prints of wildlife to display in their outdoor spaces, as many schools lack green space. This was complemented by the RHS National Education Nature Park grants that the Ecoschools Programme manager helped the schools through arranging meetings, site visits and supporting applications. 20 schools received £10k to transform their educational spaces by introducing biodiversity and outdoor learning resources.

Another was the hedgehog friendly school campus. \$1 schools achieved the hedgehog award nationally and 25 of those were Wirral Schools. Heswall Primary school even created a [video](#) for their award.



Appendix 2 showcases a year in the life of Ecoschools and illustrates the broad range of activities schools can get involved in to complete their portfolio of evidence to become a green flag school.

Cool Wirral Climate Challenge

The Cool Climate Challenge was a 12-month campaign designed to engage residents in making small everyday changes over the year in support of climate action. More detail can be found in case study 6.

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

Significant progress has been made over the past year in delivering Wirral's Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy. This year saw a shift toward consolidating and strengthening the foundations for long-term tree management, with a clear emphasis on protecting our existing canopy as much as planting new trees.

Key work included the drafting of updated tree management plans for the Council's major woodlands; Eastham Country Park, Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve and Arrowe Country Park. These plans respond to growing threats such as Ash Dieback, storm damage, and the wider impacts of climate change. They also set a framework for identifying future planting opportunities while enhancing our resilience to pest and disease pressures.

We continued to promote the value of Wirral's trees through our expanding Wirral Tree Warden Network, which now has 105 members. The programme hosted 12 training events covering topics from tree biology to legal protection, and offered public engagement sessions such as blossom walks, seed collection events, and creative activities. These efforts, combined with strengthened working relationships with Street Works and Planning colleagues, have helped protect our mature trees and reinforce their value across council operations. Notably, Wirral was named a Tree City of the World for the second consecutive year, recognising our commitment to caring for Wirral's trees and woodlands.

In response to the increasing tree risk pressures, especially due to Ash Dieback, we undertook an extensive summer assessment of infected ash trees to establish a monitoring baseline. This will inform a follow-up survey and direct future tree risk management activities. A communications plan has been developed to support increased public awareness as more disease-related interventions take place across the borough.

Our community tree nursery at Dibbinsdale is progressing well, with raised beds and potting benches installed, seeds collected and sown, and structured volunteer sessions launched.

This space is already contributing to future planting efforts while deepening local engagement with tree care and natural regeneration.

Across 2024/25, the combined tree planting efforts have delivered an expected canopy cover at maturity of 51,788 m².

This includes a range of planting schemes across the borough, supported by eight community events attended by 40 volunteers, reflecting a strong local commitment to climate action and green space enhancement.

Policy 7: Transforming our open spaces and enhancing biodiversity

As part of the council's Pollinator Strategy, 15 new wildflower meadows covering more than 73,000 square metres of land are being created on land designated as 'rewilding areas': in addition to the two created last year at Mersey Park and the Tower Grounds.

Following field surveys at each location, which providing an understanding of the plant and animal life currently present, the sites were selected as ones where other important plants were least likely to be impacted from the planting of the wildflowers.

Work to plant the seeds from which the new wildflowers will grow started at Magazine Promenade in New Brighton and Egremont Promenade in Liscard, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The other 13 sites are being funded from the Neighbourhoods Investment Fund agreed by councillors last year. Signs will be displayed to inform residents and visitors that these areas are being managed as wildflower meadows to encourage and support bees, butterflies and other pollinator insects.

The 15 areas where wildflower meadows are being created, and the electoral wards are:-

- Hoylake Road (Bidston & St James)
- Lennox Lane (Bidston & St James)
- Bradmoor Field (Bromborough)
- Shorefields (Bromborough)
- The Rake (Bromborough)
- Heygarth Road (Eastham)
- Broadway greenspace (Greasby, Frankby and Irby)
- Frankby Road, between Hambleton Drive and Pump Lane (Greasby, Frankby and Irby)
- Telegraph Road, at the corner of Thurstaston Road (Heswall)
- Roman Road (Hoylake and Meols)
- The Red Noses (New Brighton)
- Magazine Promenade (New Brighton)
- The Esplanade (Rock Ferry)
- Delta Road East (Rock Ferry)
- Egremont Promenade (Liscard)

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. Green Flag awards in the United Kingdom are managed and awarded by Keep Britain Tidy.

Any green space that is described as 'freely accessible to the public' is eligible to enter for a Green Flag Award. Awards are given on an annual basis, in July, and parks and open spaces must apply each year to be included in the judging for their Green Flag Award.

In 2024/25, a total of 35 Green Flags were awarded to parks and open spaces in the borough, an increase of 2 on the previous year. This included 31 Park Awards, 2 Heritage Awards, and 2 Community Awards. These prestigious awards really celebrate the continual work and effort put in by those who look after these recognised sites.

Biodiversity and Net Gain Strategy

In 2024 Wirral developed the Biodiversity and Net Gain Strategy which set out the commitment to nurturing biodiversity, enhancing our natural heritage and embracing ecological resilience.

The work to develop a new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has started with the revived Wirral Biodiversity Forum. The group has met twice since the start of 2025, and have started the review of the previous habitat priorities in the old BAP. This work is scheduled to be completed by September 2025, after which the species priorities from the old BAP will be reviewed. The aim is to finish the refreshed BAP by March 2026.

Since the implementation of the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation in February 2024, 45 planning applications have been submitted to the council that are subject to BNG. To aid the implementation of BNG, the council is also exploring opportunities to set up Habitat Banks to generate Biodiversity Units to be able to offset our Regeneration Schemes. There are also first conversations with a private landowner who is interested in setting up their own habitat bank on the Wirral to be able to sell Biodiversity Units to private developers.

Wild about Nature

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

The campaign runs for a year and includes an activity booklet and workshops for residents to participate in. Success of the campaign will be reported in 25/26.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/climateaction/get-involved/wild-about-nature>



Allotments

The extension to Dawson Allotments has commenced, with Phase One of the work seeing the clearance of the site and the erection of a new boundary fence. This work has now been completed. To mitigate the removal of trees on the site as part of this phase, a number of trees have been planted on the Kings Road playing field perimeter. Phase Two of the work at Dawson will see the layout of the new road network and this is scheduled to start in June/July. This scheme will create 42 new full allotment plots and 16 half-size allotment plots.

At Love Lane Allotments, additional land has been identified to extend this site. It is planned and if resources allow, that the development of this scheme will begin later this year. At Bebington Road Allotments, an area has been identified for the development of a number of raised beds which are specifically aimed at improving availability of plots for disabled/wheelchair users. As part of this scheme, we will be seeking input from appropriate groups to help us to develop this appropriately.

Following Wirral Council's introduction of a Clean Air Policy, we have consulted with the allotment community on the Bonfire Policy for allotments. A number of options were consulted on, ranging from a complete ban of burning through to a reduced period in which bonfires would be allowed. Following the review of the consultation, the decision was made to restrict burning from October to the end of February.

The Allotment Working Group has been reviewing a number of documents, including the Tenancy Agreement and the Site Secretaries Agreement. This has resulted in these two documents being updated and reissued. Two other documents which support the Tenancy Agreement – the How It All Works document and the Useful Information document – are also being reviewed. The How It All Works document review has been completed and is ready for issue. The Useful Information document is part of a final consultation with Site Secretaries.

As part of this year's Winter Works programme, a maintenance team was funded which has enabled us to bring back into use 41 previously unlettable plots back into use. The Allotment Working Group will shortly be looking at how Wirral's Allotments support biodiversity, with the aim being to further develop and improve biodiversity across our allotment sites.

A successful Capital Bid to see the replacement of standpipes on Allotments was agreed by Council. This followed an audit undertaken by United Utilities which identified that the vast majority of standpipes on our Allotment sites required upgrading to meet the latest legal requirements and regulations. This work has recently gone out to tender, and the work is planned to be completed within this financial year.

Wirral Council continues to support the Wirral Allotment Community in their annual competition. The competition is judged in June/July and the awards evening held in October or November.

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

Natural Flood Management

In 2025 committee approved a Natural Flood Management (NFM) scheme at Hoylake Carrs, a 24.7-hectare area of Council-owned coastal floodplain grazing marsh. The project aims to reduce flood risk for the Meols "Community at Risk" by creating wetland features such as scrapes and footdrains, which will hold approximately 46,000m³ of water. This will help slow water flow during floods and improve water retention in dry periods, while also enhancing habitats for wildlife.

The scheme is supported by £430,000 in funding from the Environment Agency and Defra, with delivery planned from 2025 to March 2027, pending approvals. Cheshire Wildlife Trust will implement and manage the project in partnership with the Council, aiming for long-term sustainability through agri-environment funding.

Flood Alleviation

In recent years (2022 onwards) the council have delivered 2 schemes to reduce flood risk to properties:

- West Kirby Flood Alleviation – reduced risk to 90 properties (present day).
- Wallasey Embankment Toe Reinforcement – reduced risk to 1563 properties (present day).

Flood Risk

The Environment Agency have included changes to flood risk due to the impacts of climate change into the updated NaFRA2:

It now uses UK climate projections (UKCP18) to assess both current and future flood risks. Higher resolution more detailed maps show flood depth and extent under climate scenarios. The new mapping combines national data with local models for more precise risk assessments.

This will influence on planning development rules—more areas now require flood risk assessments, with a greater number of properties at risk of flooding from surface water. The Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority for the Wirral borough and will consider the new mapping in its role as statutory consultee for planning applications.

Policy 9: Supporting an increase in use of active travel

Modeshift STARS

The Modeshift STARS accreditation schemes provide a simple 5-step process that empowers organisations to enhance everyday journeys.

Schools are supported by 2 Active Travel Officers to create, deliver, and track the effectiveness of their Travel Plans whilst working towards national accreditation. In Wirral 50 schools are engaged in the scheme. 4 are silver accredited (very good travel plan), 19 are bronze (good travel plan), 13 are green (with an approved travel plan) and 14 are working with an active travel officer to develop their plan.

School Streets

A total of 6 school streets schemes have been trialled in Wirral and five have been made permanent. These are:

- Greenleas Primary School, Wallasey
- Christchurch Primary School, Birkenhead
- Liscard Primary School, Liscard
- St George's Primary School (lower site), Wallasey
- Raeburn Primary School, Bromborough

On the 3 December 2024, a report was taken to the ECET Committee. It set out the prioritisation of future school street schemes. We have committed to delivering a further three schools in 2025/26.

Wirral walking festival 2024

Wirral walking festival 2024

Wirral Walking Festival is held each year and helps to get people more active, provides an opportunity for social interaction whilst experiencing the beautiful nature within Wirral.

In 2024, 25 additional walks were held alongside the 24 regular weekly walks. Over 300 people took part in the additional walks across Wirral.



Supporting staff to get active

Active Wirral and the Climate Emergency Team have established and lead a well-being walk each Thursday, for staff to get away from their desk and get outside in nature.

Active Wirral also led the January step challenge, where a total of 54 teams took part, achieving over 77 million steps!

The initiatives aim to get people walking and continue this momentum after the challenge to both support staff mental and physical health and encourage walking as a form of active travel.



Policy 10: Securing investment to support the necessary shift to ultra-low carbon vehicles

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

Throughout 2024, Wirral Council were developing an electric vehicle charging infrastructure strategy to support the transition to low-emission transport. The Strategy was approved by the ECET committee in October 2024. Further detail can be found in case study 5.

Green Fleet review

A review of the council fleet was undertaken in 2024 to identify the type, number, location and duties carried out by the existing council fleet. This will inform the consolidation and updating of the fleet to low or zero emission vehicles.

The fleet management system has been upgraded to TranSend, a unique platform for fleet management that makes it easier for organisations to improve road safety, optimise running costs, and increase fleet productivity, thus reducing fuel and carbon emissions.

Resource has been secured from the project management team to assist in the next phase and a Fleet Management Review Board has been established to oversee the transition from diesel vehicle to electric and lower emission vehicles over the coming years.

Policy 11: Working to support an increase in public transport

This is now reported in the Annual Air Quality Strategy Update to committee.

Policy 12: Become an accredited carbon literate organisation

Carbon Literacy

From 2023, the carbon literacy training was taken in house, with great results. At the time of writing, Wirral Council have 834 staff overall, with 434 staff passed and 106 assessments with the Carbon Literacy Project for assessment currently. To achieve Carbon Literacy Silver Status the council must achieve 600 officers passed by the Carbon Literacy Project which will be achieved in 2025, the culmination of a great deal of work with an enormous impact across the council.

During Carbon Literacy Action Day 2024, the Climate Emergency Team trained over 200 staff focussing on an inclusive approach which led to the Council being Awarded the CLAD award.

Policy 13: Transforming the way, we operate and function

Carbon Impact Assessment

A Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) was developed using best practice from other organisations. This tool was then refined through testing, working with the Project management and Finance Teams, which resulted with the integration of a scoping assessment and more defined guidance for use.

The tool prompts users to determine if the project will have a positive or negative impact on 6 areas of concern. By asking project leads to think about this at the project initiation stage mitigations can be built into the projects from the outset.

The CIA tool has been incorporated both within the project management and finance (capital bid) templates and adds another level of scrutiny on the impacts of council activities on the environment.



Partnership working

Cool Wirral is a partnership of public, private and third sector organisations working together to tackle climate change. Each year the Climate Emergency team produce an update report to track progress on actions from the partnership and also progress on decarbonisation within the borough. Wirral Council are a key partner of the Cool Wirral Partnership providing secretarial support and undertaking actions set out in the strategy.

In 2024 the partnership started to update the strategy to reflect the progress made, in line with the latest scientific evidence, new technologies and shifting focus. The Climate Emergency Team have lead on the refresh, organising workshops to formulate new actions, and undertaken a resident engagement process through in person events at libraries and on the 'Have your say' platform. Over 150 residents expressed their view on the new actions which will inform their delivery and be a focus for delivery locations. The new 'Cool 3' strategy is scheduled for ECET committee in July 2025.

Procurement

Using data from Oxygen Insights on our procurement contracts during 2024, the estimated total emissions associated with the good and services the council purchased was just under 94,000 tonnes CO₂e. This makes up our scope 3 emissions and is significantly more that our direct emissions. Therefore, it is important to focus our attention on reducing the emissions from our purchased goods and services.

In 2025 new procurement guidance notes came into force, this provides an opportunity to review our existing processes and better integrate low carbon decision making in our procurement process. The supplier questionnaire is being updated to require further information on environmental policies and carbon reduction.

The Social value portal is now available which tracks the committed social value from the themes and measures including carbon reduction and is reported within the ECE dashboard (Appendix 2).

5. Carbon Budget Reporting

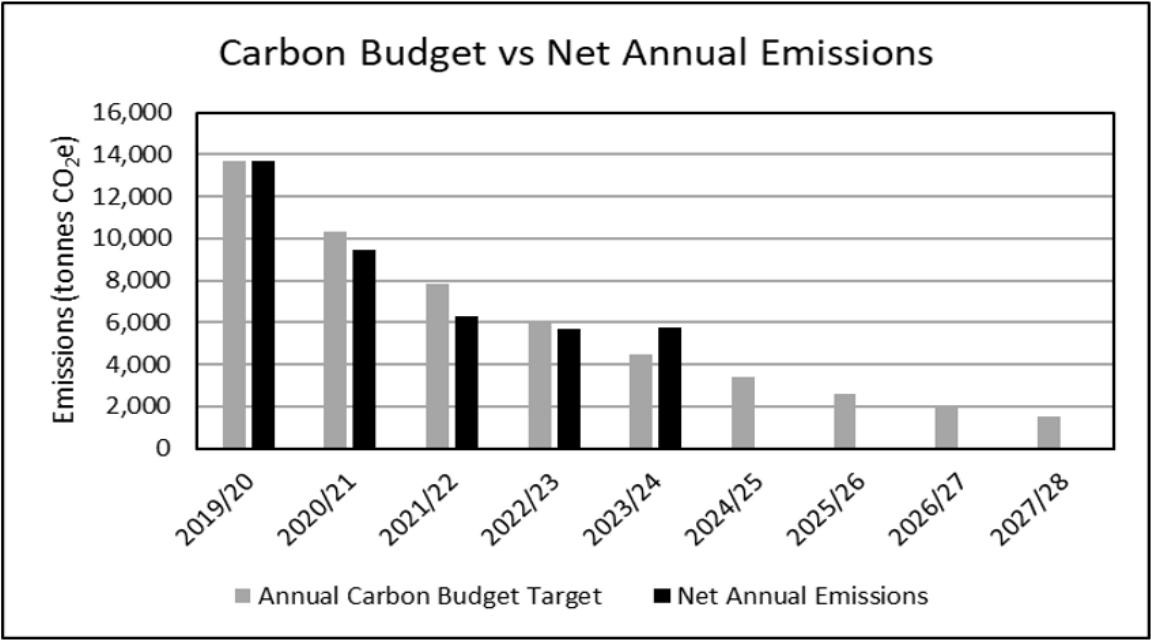
In 2019.20, Wirral Council set a baseline for their carbon emissions of 13,656 tonnes CO₂e. A carbon budget target was set for each year, marking the trajectory to net zero 2030, with a re-baselining in 2026/27.

A summary of the Council's actual emissions verses the carbon budget is outlined in **Table 5.1**.

The Carbon Budget emissions limit for 2024/25 was 3,414 tonnes CO₂e. Net actual emissions were 5,367 tonnes CO₂e which is 1,953 tonnes CO₂e above the limit set for the year.

The 7.05% year-on-year reduction of net emissions is positive but was insufficient to meet the 2024/25 annual target.

Table 5.1: Carbon budget verses net annual emissions



The Carbon Budget sets a limit of 2,587 tonnes CO₂e for 2025/26 – a reduction of 2,780 tonnes CO₂e in comparison to 2024/25 performance. This reduction will only be achieved if fossil fuel use for heating and fleet transport is reduced significantly. The reduction of emissions associated with use of fossil fuels is reiterated as a key issue that needs to be prioritised.

It has been acknowledged that a stage would be reached when the easier low-cost actions would be exhausted and that measures to tackle the remaining emissions would be more difficult to implement, particularly with in the councils current financial position. 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.

Over 2024/25 funding has been secured from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phases 3c and 4. When complete Scope 1 emissions associated with use of fossil fuels are expected to reduce by 1,930 tonnes CO₂e.

To continue to see reductions, the council need to progress the pipeline of asset decarbonisations and further work to secure additional funding will take place in 2025/26.

Planned and possible asset disposals have the potential to reduce gross emissions by approximately 235 tonnes CO₂e. This makes a positive contribution to meeting the 2030 carbon net zero target.

Further information on decarbonisation initiatives being pursued and other issues relating to the carbon budget reporting requirements are contained within the Carbon Budget Report.

6. Priorities for 2025 – 2026

The Carbon Budget sets a limit of 2,587 tonnes CO₂e for 2025/26 – a reduction of 2,780 tonnes CO₂e in comparison to 2024/25 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 2024-25 and summarised in the priorities below.

Additional priority actions have been identified for action in 2024/25 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:

- Progress the Cool Community subgroup ‘Thriving communities’ bid for £1.5m over 3 years to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund.
- Launch the Cool Wirral Partnership ‘Cool 3’ Strategy and deliver a sustainability week
- Become a silver award Carbon Literate Council
- Integrate sustainability and climate adaptation within the regeneration of Birkenhead.
- Move to commercialisation of the Birkenhead Heat Network and explore feasibility of additional heat networks.
- Deliver a home retrofit communications programme for residents
- Deliver a carbon sequestration audit of all tree and woodland planting since 2020.
- Continued green electricity purchase.
- Integrate the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funded heat decarbonisation projects with Asset plans to facilitate delivery.
- Develop and expand project pipeline for heat decarbonisation plans with the intention of bidding for further support from the PSDS.
- Progress plans to improve energy efficiency of the Council estate by building on lessons learnt from Leisure facilities.
- Complete development of Green Fleet strategy. Ultimately this will reduce emissions as the use of petrol and diesel is displaced.