

Climate Change Plan and Routemap to Net Zero

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Executive summary

The impacts of climate change in Moray are already being felt by our environment, people and economy. From coastal erosion and flooding, to wildfires, severe weather events are becoming ever more frequent and disruptive to Council services.

The Council has a duty to mitigate emissions, improve community adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change, and embed sustainable principles at every level of its operations. Building on our climate emergency and nature emergency declarations, the Council is committed to achieving net zero emissions and restoring biodiversity in line with Scottish Government targets.

This update of the Council's Climate Change Plan and Routemap to Net Zero reports on the progress of the Moray Council Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 for financial year 2023/24. It details changes in the Council's recorded carbon emissions, provides an overview of our current actions, and looks ahead via our current emissions pathway.

This year has seen significant and meaningful emissions reductions across several areas of our operations which has resulted from connected strategies and investment. However, many of the largest emission sources have shown little to no improvement since reporting began in financial year 2017/18. This demonstrates the need for accelerated and decisive action to achieve our targets and statutory duties by realising the following fundamental principles:

- Strong leadership
- Sufficient resources
- Well-defined roles and responsibilities
- An empowering change culture
- Clear and transparent communication
- Knowledge and expertise

- Robust targets, measurement and evaluation

The Council will not reach net zero by 2030 at the current pace of action and the Council agreed to update the Climate Change Strategy adopting national decarbonisation targets. This update is due to be presented to Council in September 2025. This will provide an opportunity to reflect on existing commitments and to reprioritise efforts to meet the Council's aspirations in line with evolving statutory duties and targets.

To ensure compliance with these obligations, it is essential to accelerate the decarbonisation of our largest emissions sectors, particularly fleet and building heat. Groundwork in these areas has been completed, such as through the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, and the Zero Emission Fleet Replacement Strategy. However, further progress requires adequate support and external resources.

Moray's climate preparedness will depend on using nature-based opportunities to protect our communities and nature. The Council has produced its first report on climate adaptation, highlighting existing adaptation activities as well as critical areas for improvement.

Significant opportunities lay ahead to make progress in these areas, including through the Scottish Government's £500m North East Just Transition Fund.

1. Why we are taking climate change action

Introduction

Moray Council recognises the urgent need to take action to address the causes and impacts of climate change.

In June 2019, the Council formally declared a climate emergency, acknowledging the significant impact climate change will have on the local economy, public health and the environment.

In response, the Council adopted a Climate Change Strategy setting out an ambitious plan to lead by example through reducing our organisational emissions, while supporting local communities and organisations to decarbonise the wider area. An update to the Climate Change Strategy will follow this report, adapting the existing strategy to address new challenges and opportunities.

This Routemap to Net Zero supports the Climate Change Strategy, looking back on our progress to date and our path towards complying with our goals and duties in line with the Scottish Government's statutory net zero target of 2045.

The Council also declared a nature emergency in February 2023. This recognises the value of nature and its role in achieving climate targets, maintaining a strong economy and protecting the health and wellbeing of future generations. The importance of using nature-based solutions to climate change are well recognised, with positive outcomes for both mitigation and adaptation.

Impacts of a changing climate

The climate is changing faster than ever previously experienced. There is scientific consensus that the significant increase in global temperature over the last 150 years is primarily driven by human activities¹, especially the burning of fossil fuels, which release greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere (Figure 1). These gases trap heat, causing global temperatures to rise. To lower the risk of increased extreme weather events and sea level rise, drastic reductions in emissions are required to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

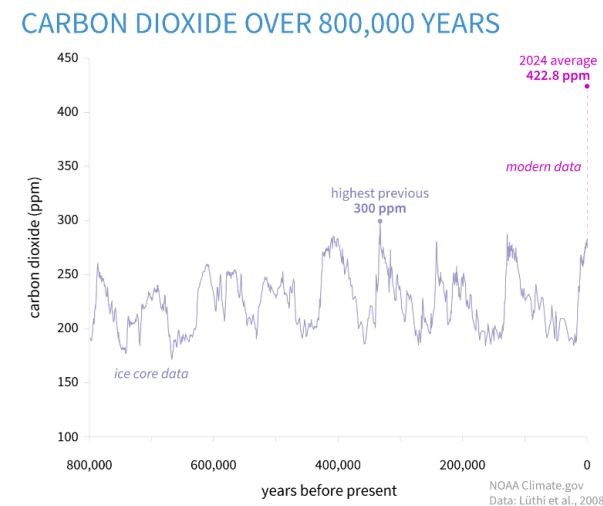


Figure 1. Atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration for the past 800,000 years based on ice-core data (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2025)

This is a global emergency, and all nations have a responsibility to act. The UK contributed most global emissions until the 1900s and remains a significant source (Figure 2).

¹ IPCC (2021) 'Human Influence on the Climate System'

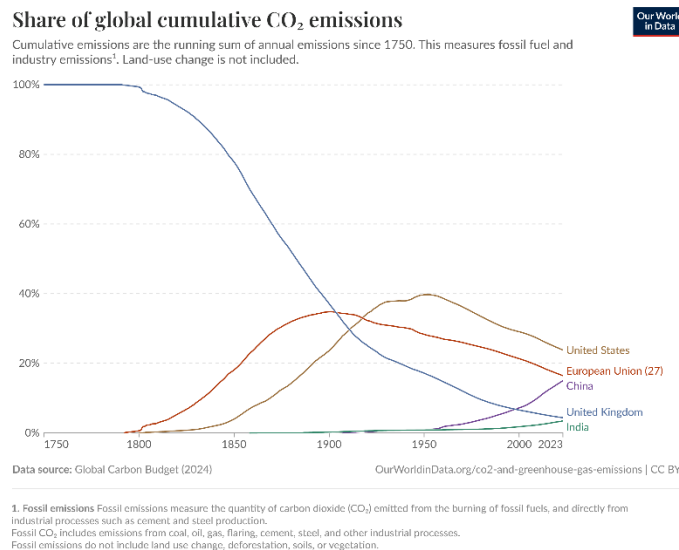


Figure 2. Share of global cumulative CO₂ emissions (Our World in Data, 2024)

Increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have profound implications for population health and economic stability. It is estimated that there is approximately 1 excess death per 4,500 tCO₂e emitted². The impacts will be felt globally, with the most severe risk posed to those on lower incomes who have had the smallest contribution to increasing emissions.

With Moray's annual emissions estimated at approximately 738,653 tCO₂e³, this leads to an estimated 164 excess deaths per year.

On a local level, the impacts of global temperature increases are already being experienced. Events such as heatwaves, floods, droughts and wildfires continue to increase in frequency in Moray, threatening our people and economy.

² Bressler (2021) 'The mortality cost of carbon'.

Our coastal communities are particularly under threat from rising sea levels and worsening storm surges leading to property damage and infrastructure disruption.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are deeply interconnected. The degradation of natural ecosystems is both a consequence of and a contributor to climate change. As biodiversity declines, our capacity to adapt to a changing climate is weakened, posing risks to key sectors in Moray such as forestry, food and drink, tourism, and public health.

The extent of future climate change will depend on how quickly and significantly we reduce greenhouse gas emissions. While rapid mitigation can limit the severity of impacts, some degree of change is now inevitable due to past and ongoing global emissions.

The Council must plan for a likely global temperature rise of 2°C, while also preparing for the possibility of increases up to 4°C by 2100, given current global emission trends and the long-lasting effects of historical emissions.

If global targets continue to be missed, the quality of life in Moray is likely to be fundamentally degraded by the end of the century. To avoid the most severe outcomes, there is an onus on all emitters to pursue deep and immediate emissions reductions, alongside robust adaptation measures to manage the unavoidable impacts.

Co-benefits of climate action

Moray Council and its partners play a key leadership role in embedding climate action and a just transition into all planning and investment decisions. Every council service influences climate outcomes and aligning

³ Scottish Climate Intelligence Service (2022) 'Regional Emissions Inventory'

the Council's £294.2 million budget with climate goals can deliver wide-ranging co-benefits.

By taking decisive climate action, the Council can secure economic benefits by reducing energy costs, supporting the creation of green jobs, and building local resilience against future threats. The potential social benefits of quick adoption of mitigation and adaptation measures include lifting people out of fuel poverty while protecting the population's health and well-being.

Climate action supports the Council's corporate priorities and vision. Climate actions such as improving housing and greenspaces would reduce inequalities by lowering energy bills, improving health and productivity and reducing social care costs. Investing in green-skills, low-carbon technologies and nature-based solutions would grow Moray's green economy, creating jobs, retaining young people and reducing the long-term costs from climate change.

Building thriving, resilient communities in Moray requires collective action through a just transition. Initiatives like improved transport, greenspace access, and community-led planning can boost local wealth, health, and empowerment - increasing public involvement in shaping a sustainable future.

Statutory obligations

Moray Council has a statutory obligation to undertake climate action.

Scotland aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to reach net zero by 2045. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a duty on all public bodies to act to deliver on the national climate change targets.

Under this legislation, Moray Council has three main duties:

- **Mitigation:** To contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- **Adaptation:** To help Moray adapt to the changing climate
- **Sustainability:** To act in a sustainable manner

The Council is required to report on compliance with these duties annually in accordance with the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015 and subsequent amendments.

The Council is required to provide the following information in annual climate change reports:

- its target date for achieving zero direct emissions;
- its targets for reducing indirect emissions;
- how its targets will align spending plans and use of resources to contribute to reducing emissions;
- how it will publish progress to achieving emissions reduction targets; and
- what contribution it has made to helping deliver Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) considers carbon, climate change and biodiversity by incorporating the national climate change targets into the local planning system to promote sustainable development.

The Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021 aims to regulate and support the development of heat networks. Heat networks distribute heat from a central source to multiple buildings, reducing the need for individual heating

systems and promoting energy efficiency. The council is required to undertake assessments of the potential for heat networks in Moray and develop plans to promote their use.

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022 requires the council to develop plans to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in buildings across Moray, to support the transition to net zero.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 aims to protect and conserve biodiversity and natural habitats. It places a duty on the council to consider biodiversity in its decision-making processes and to promote the conservation of local habitats and species.

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 aims to promote sustainable transport and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector. It has provided the council with greater powers to implement Low Emission Zones and improve active travel infrastructure.

Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (SNAP 3) sets out how Scotland will adapt to the risks identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment. The plan includes actions that fall under the council's responsibility, and those it has a supportive role in addressing.

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan commits to halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and to restoring and regenerating nature by 2045. The plan includes stronger guidance as to how the council is expected to meet its Biodiversity Duty.

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) requires the Council to assess the risk of emergencies occurring and maintain plans to ensure that services continue to be delivered in the event of an emergency. Severe weather and climate change are linked to emergencies that may result in wide impacts ranging from serious environmental damage to loss of life.

The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 requires the Council to implement and maintain flood protection actions and prepare local flood risk management plans. The Council is the lead authority for the Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District and works with partners to deliver the plan.

2. How we approach climate action

The Council recognises that a considered approach is necessary for successful climate action. To ensure the greatest impact from our resources, climate action measures should be designed into all services and budgets rather than considered in isolation.

A dedicated team of climate change officers are responsible for preparing, monitoring and implementing the Climate Change Strategy. The scope of this team continues to grow as more statutory duties are placed on the authority. The team also act as a consultee and provide guidance on planning applications and provide advice to support funding bids and delivery of Council and Community Planning Partnership projects including Moray Growth Deal, Elgin Neighbourhood Board and the Levelling Up Fund.

The Council's declaration of a climate and nature emergency places urgency on the pace and scope of all actions. The Climate Change Strategy sets out how the Council will respond to the climate and nature emergencies, and its statutory duties. To achieve this requires:

1. Strong leadership

Climate action is supported by elected members and the Council's corporate management team. They lead by example and are visibly involved in climate action initiatives and routinely engage in updates on the Council's progress to net zero. This outlines the importance of these actions to employees and encourages them to get involved.

Climate change is reflected as priority in corporate and service plans of the Council.

All tier 1-3 managers and elected members are encouraged to complete climate and nature emergency training, to improve understanding and encourage wider participation.

2. Sufficient resources

Implementation of projects is supported by sufficient resources and staffing. Embedding actions within ongoing transformation of services is essential to ensure that the Council reduces costs and its impacts on the climate and nature.

3. Well-defined roles and responsibilities

It is regularly promoted that everyone at the Council has a responsibility to act sustainably in the interests of the organisation and the environment.

A governance structure for climate action is included within the Climate Change Strategy. The Climate Change Board meets quarterly to review actions, and progress is reported annually to the Council via the Climate Change Plan and Routemap to Net Zero.

Two climate champions promote climate action within their respective remits and ensure effective communication. A Corporate Climate Change Champion, and the Elected Climate Change Champion who is chosen by members.

4. An empowering change culture

The Council fosters a culture that encourages and supports innovative ideas for reducing emissions and wider impact on the environment.

It does so by regularly consulting with colleagues and stakeholders and responding to their ideas. The Council celebrates success and milestones achieved through annual staff awards and the employee magazine, Connect. Climate change is an integral part of the annual staff conference, where officers update staff on progress and seek their feedback.

5. Clear and transparent communication

Communications around climate and nature should be clear and explain why action is being taken, to ensure understanding and promote behaviour change.

Elected members, staff and stakeholders are kept informed about the Council's progress on climate action, including any challenges, through the annual Climate Change Plan and Routemap to Net Zero update.

6. Knowledge and expertise

In addition to its climate change officers, the Council recognises the importance of upskilling to achieve its targets. Training and development opportunities are created and provided for employees and elected members on the climate and nature emergency.

The Council works closely with academic institutions such as UHI and industry bodies to leverage their expertise and knowledge.

7. Robust targets, measurement and evaluation

The Council's targets are measurable and recording mechanisms transparent and improved over time. Where there is uncertainty, assumptions backed by expertise will be made and stated clearly to avoid understating the Council's climate and nature impacts.

Reports should be candid in their evaluation of activities to provide opportunities for continuous improvement and learning by the Council and the wider community.

How we define net zero

Net zero means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions re-absorbed from the atmosphere – for example, by oceans and forests.

Emissions originate from sources directly within the Council's control (Scope 1), or where it is the direct user of a good or service (Scope 2), e.g. fleet vehicle emissions and grid electricity use. The Council's current target for net zero is to reduce direct operating emissions of the council to net zero by 2030. However, the Climate Change Strategy is currently being updated and the 2030 target is to be replaced with a series of targets for each area within the Council, in line with the Scottish Government targets. This will mean a backstop date of 2045 for overall net zero but could include earlier interim targets for each area as appropriate.

Other emissions originate from sources where the council has an interest but no direct control (Scope 3), e.g. procurement of food for school catering. Calculating these emissions involves a greater level of uncertainty: both in the emissions themselves, and the level of responsibility for them.

The Council has a statutory duty to report on all Scope 1 and 2 emissions, and all Scope 3 emissions from "relevant and significant areas of the organisation's indirect emissions" greater than 1% of total organisational emissions. *Figure 3* provides an overview of all emission scopes.

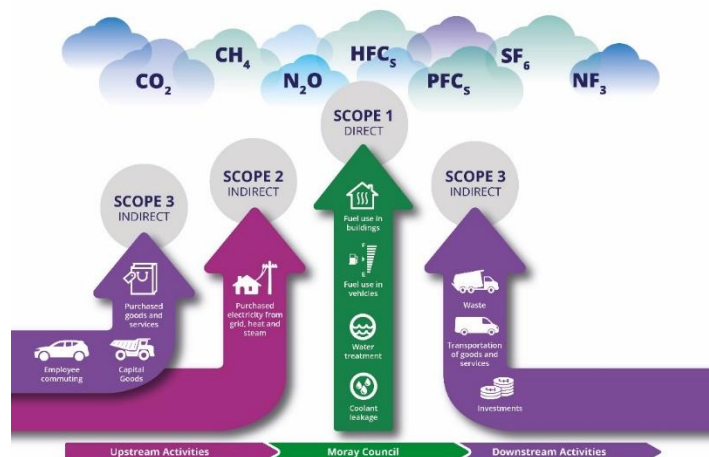


Figure 3. Emissions scope classification for Moray Council activities

Setting our targets

The Council's targets include direct and indirect emissions. They:

- Are clear on what is included in the scope of the Council's emissions;
- Cover all Scope 1 and 2 emissions and appropriate areas of Scope 3 emissions (e.g. municipal waste);
- Have interim reduction targets at set periods that align to the Scottish Government targets; and
- Reduce residual emissions to as low a level as possible and set out how carbon sequestration methods will be used to achieve net zero emissions.

The Council uses a carbon management hierarchy approach to prioritise its targets and necessary actions (Figure 4). This approach prioritises the avoidance of carbon emissions to deliver lasting change. Where avoidance of emissions is not possible then they should be reduced through service

efficiencies or redesign. Removal of emissions is required where further reductions cannot be achieved.

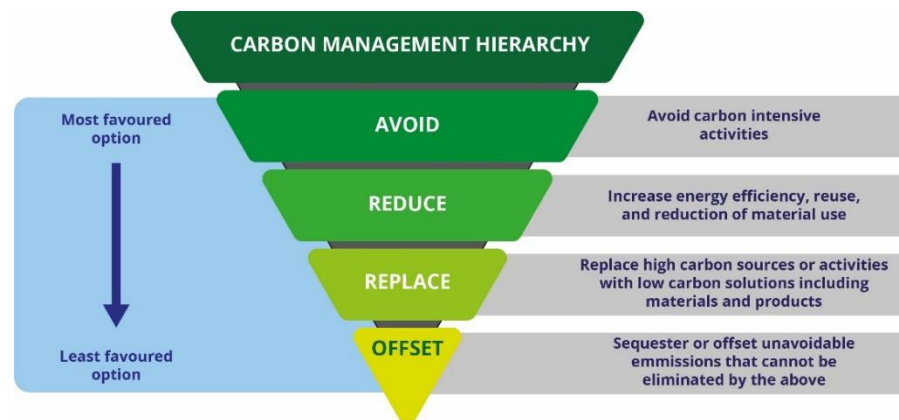


Figure 4. Moray Council carbon management hierarchy

Offsetting 'unavoidable' emissions through offsetting schemes should be considered as a last resort in target setting. Offsetting significant levels of carbon is discouraged as large-scale offsets are not sustainable and guidance makes clear that public bodies are required to reduce emissions as much as possible before considering offsets.

For example, actions might look like:

- **AVOID:** Redesign services to enable home working and avoid commuting
- **REDUCE:** Reduce energy use in buildings through smart timing solutions.
- **REPLACE:** Decarbonisation of our fleet by replacing diesel vehicles with electric alternatives.
- **OFFSET:** Plant an area of woodland to offset unavoidable emissions.

Baselining our emissions

Calculating a baseline of emissions helps to determine the level of intervention needed to achieve net zero carbon emissions, and to allow progress to be monitored.

The Council's carbon emissions from 2017/18 are used as a baseline for emissions (Table 1). This year was chosen as it was the earliest year that had a comprehensive return of emissions to the Scottish Government.

Staff commuting emissions have only been recorded since the 2022/23 period. However, to ensure consistency with the current scope of reporting, estimated historical emissions in this category have been added using known assumptions of the workforce size and staff transport modes. It should also be noted that this data is from prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and as such most staff worked from an office base, with home working emissions not recorded until during the pandemic.

Table 1-Moray Council 2017/18 baseline carbon emissions

Emission source by area and source		Carbon emissions (tCO ₂ e)
Building heat	Natural gas	4,077.9
	Gas oil	1,034.1
	Biomass	34.7
	Purchased heat and steam	15.4
Building electricity	Primary schools and nurseries	1,122.0
	Secondary schools	1,177.3
	Unmetered electricity	1,685.5
	Offices	523.8
	Community facilities	358.5
	Residential homes and day centres	145.7
	Sports facilities	249.6
	Industrial	346.2
	Other	611.0
Transport	Diesel	3,591.5
	Petrol	27.5
	Gas oil	776.6
	Electric vehicles	0.0
	Hybrid vehicles	0.0
	Marine fuel oil	68.2
Waste	Landfill gas	0.0
	Municipal refuse to landfill	9,130.3
	Commercial, industrial and clinical waste to landfill	2,048.7
	Recycling and composting	387.2
Operational emissions	Outdoor spaces	72.1
	Commuting emissions	3475.0
	Homeworking emissions	0.0
	Water supply and treatment	125.8
	Corporate travel	394.8

3. Our climate action progress

Meeting Legislative Deadlines

The Council is bound to several national legislative deadlines on climate change action, with the backstop of net-zero by 2045.

The Scottish Government has set a national target for zero direct emissions from public buildings by 2038. Moray Council has a large and diverse building portfolio which will be difficult to transition to decarbonised heating. Despite progress in carbon reduction, surplus property sales, and building retrofits, restricted budgets and slow pace of retrofits mean that not all buildings will be decarbonised by 2030.

Carbon emissions from electricity have been decreasing and will continue to decrease due to the increased national use of renewables within the grid. Moving to electric heating systems in our buildings will greatly reduce carbon emissions compared to the use of fossil fuels for this purpose. However, this will increase overall electricity consumption so total carbon emissions from electricity will be a balance over time. This transition can be aided by continuing the rollout of solar photovoltaics (PV) panels on Council assets, which can also lead to substantial energy cost savings.

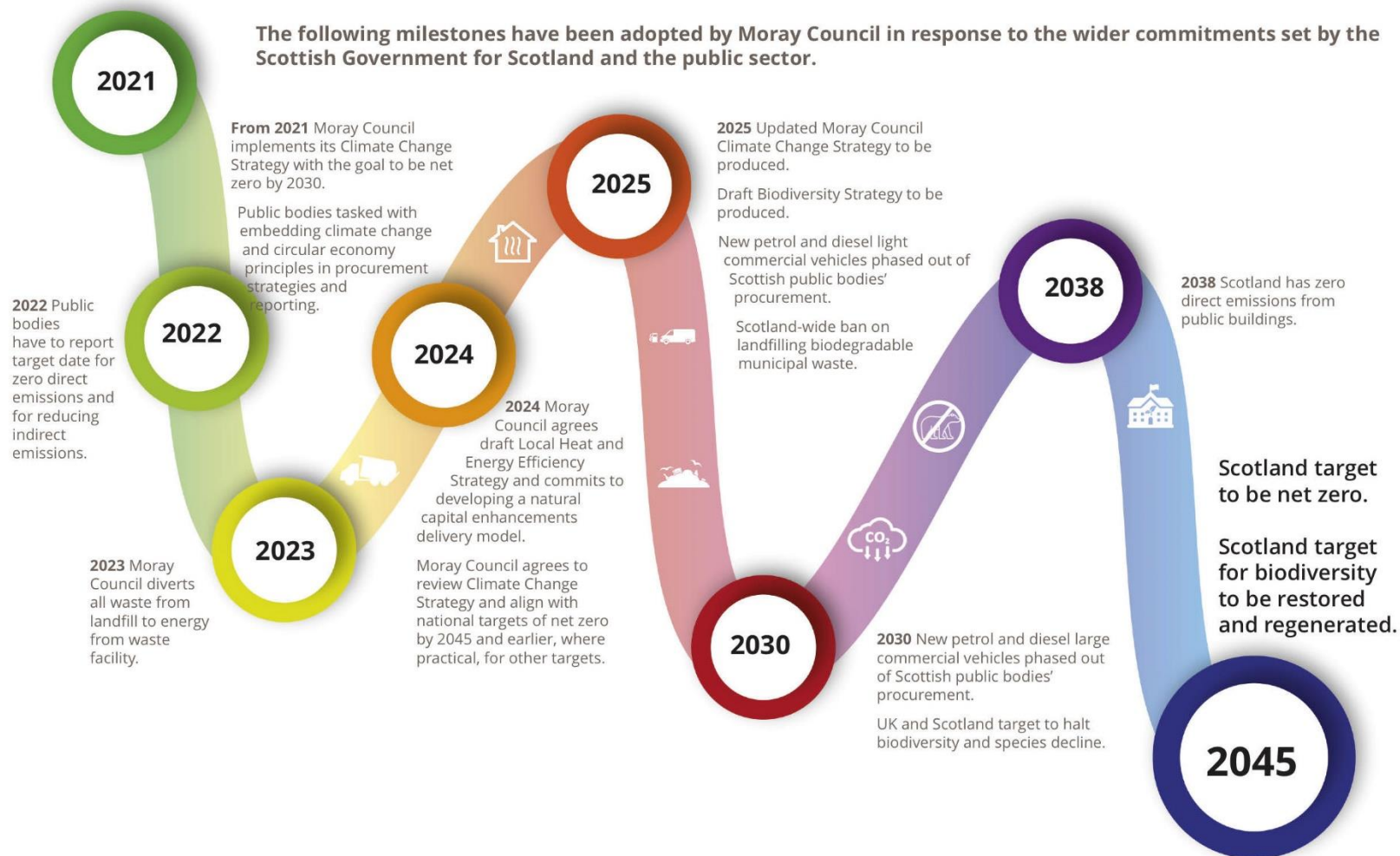
The Scottish Government also requires that, by 2025, new petrol and diesel light commercial vehicles are to be phased out of public bodies' procurement. New petrol and diesel large commercial vehicles are to be phased out by 2030. The Zero Emission Fleet Replacement Strategy adopts these targets for our fleet decarbonisation journey. These goals are challenging due to financial pressures and the immaturity of the market for low carbon large fleet vehicles. This means that we will still have fossil fuel vehicles operating well after the deadline to stop purchasing new ones. Consequently, the projected target for zero emissions from fleet is well beyond 2030.

The Council has complied with the Scotland-wide ban on landfilling biodegradable municipal waste by 2025 through use of our joint energy from waste facility in Aberdeen. However, our relatively high existing recycling rates make it challenging to secure funding for additional recycling and reuse infrastructure, making further decarbonisation in this area particularly difficult.

Operating emissions must align with the national net zero target of 2045, with various guidance available on specific areas like commuting and procurement.

We will ensure that these obligations guide our plans, aiming to achieve compliance as early as possible.

Milestones



3.1. Building heat and electricity

3.1.1. Overview

Moray Council owns and operates a diverse portfolio of buildings including offices, schools, libraries, sports centres, and depots. These vary widely in age, size, energy efficiency, and condition.

Most of these buildings are heated using natural gas or gas oil, though biomass systems have been installed at a few sites. Electricity is sourced from the national grid, with a small but increasing number of buildings equipped with solar PV panels.

In line with national policy, all publicly owned buildings must transition to zero-emission heating systems, with a final compliance deadline of 2038.

To enable this, support is being provided by the Scottish Government via the:

- Scottish Government Heat Network Support Unit Grant
- Scottish Public Sector Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme
- Scottish Central Government Energy Efficiency Grant Scheme

3.1.2. Current Emissions

Emissions from the Council's buildings are split into two categories: building heat and building electricity.

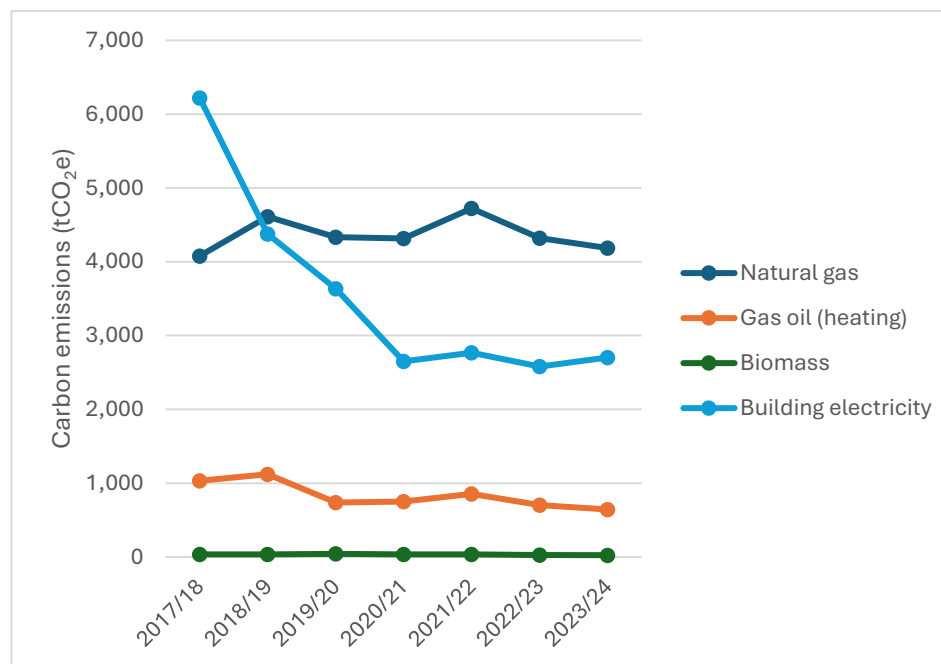
The Council's current largest emission source is providing heat to our buildings, contributing to 26% of total emissions. While gas oil emissions have fallen by 38% since the 2017/18 baseline, the Council remains dependent on natural gas boilers for most building heat. Emissions from natural gas heating has shown no decrease over the past seven annual reporting periods, with gas boilers continuing to be installed and replaced on cost grounds.

Emissions from our electricity usage have fallen by 60% since baseline. This is the combined result of the decarbonisation of the national grid, along with

energy savings from efficiency improvements such as through LED lighting replacements (See Case Study 1).

Despite electricity consumption falling slightly in the reporting year 2023/24 compared to the previous (by less than 1%), emissions from this usage increased by 172tCO₂e. This was due to an unexpected increase in the national emission factor of grid electricity, principally the result of an anomalous reduction in on-shore and off-shore wind farm electricity generation.

The Council's solar PV projects generated 51,466 kWh of renewable electricity in the last reporting year, an increase of 24% on the previous year. Further energy and cost reductions could be realised with the wider rollout of similar spend-to-save strategies, particularly through widespread adoption of roof-mounted solar PV panels.



Case study 1 - LED replacement programme on Council corporate buildings

The majority of the Council's building stock is currently illuminated by fluorescent lighting. In many cases this lighting is aged, yellowed and provides a poor quality of light for work while consuming more electricity than readily available alternatives.



A lighting upgrade programme is currently underway to replace inefficient fluorescent fixtures with modern LED bulbs. LED lighting can reduce electricity consumption by between 40% to 60% compared to fluorescent, while also cutting maintenance costs with LEDs lasting a lot longer than other bulbs.

All buildings within the Council portfolio are being considered in this program, with replacement going ahead at Moray Council HQ, HQ Annexe, Ashgrove Depot, Buckie Sports Pitch and Moray Resource Centre. Reductions in carbon emissions for the first three sites is approximately 140 tCO₂e annually, paired with substantial long-term financial savings.

3.1.3. Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Reduced heat and electricity consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing building user awareness of ways to reduce energy use and save utility costs Curtailling building opening times Identifying opportunities for heating and power refurbishment in the learning estate Promoting Smarter Working

More energy produced by renewables and low carbon sources

- Feasibility studies to consider renewable energy potential across the Council's property portfolio, and potential for connections to a heat network
- Installing renewable energy technologies on council-owned buildings and land
- Replacement of carbon-based heating systems when feasible

Reduced building carbon output and increased energy efficiency

- Aim to achieve zero carbon standards for all new buildings, including housing and schools
- Achieve Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) for all council housing
- Progress a 'fabric first' approach to building design

3.2. Transport

3.2.1. Overview

The Council's fleet is used by employees to conduct council business and deliver services for the people of Moray. It comprises over 500 cars, vans, buses, trucks, specialist vehicles and vessels.

Most of the fleet runs on diesel fuel. Marine fuel oil is currently used in council vessels. Petrol is used for open spaces machinery.

There are currently a series of national targets in relation to public sector transport fleets:

- All fossil fuel cars to be replaced by zero emission alternatives by 2025
- No purchases of fossil fuel powered light commercial vehicles (under 3.5 tonnes) after 2025, with remaining vehicles phased out by 2030
- Phase out heavy-duty vehicles by 2040

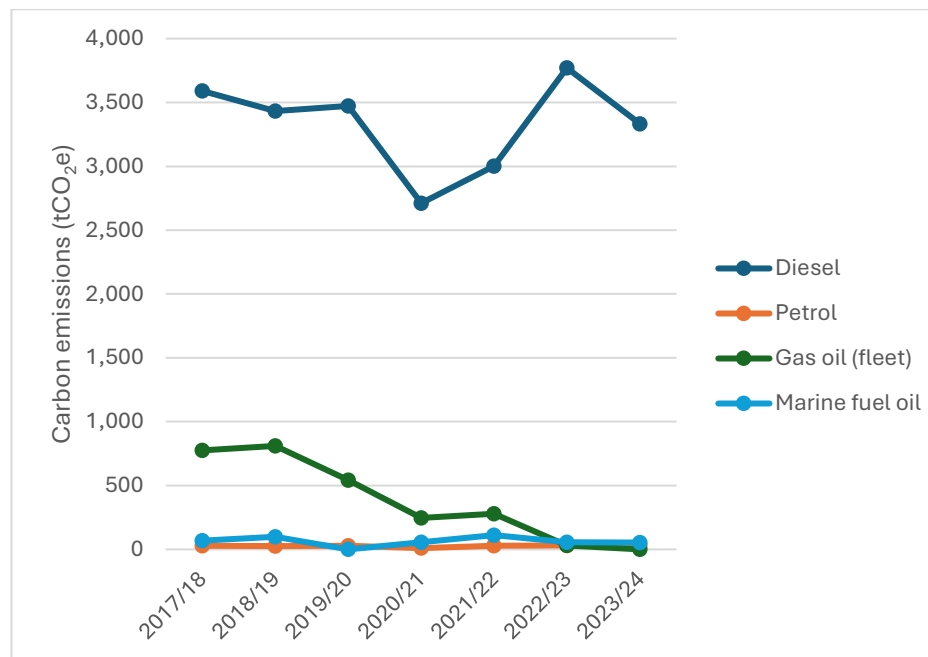
3.2.2. Current emissions

The use of diesel in Council vehicles makes up 97% of our transport emissions. Following a temporary reduction due to the COVID-19 pandemic working restrictions, emissions have returned to near pre-pandemic levels. A decrease of 12% from the previous reporting year was experienced, largely due to seasonal weather changes. For example, the milder winter resulted in reduced milage of the council's fleet of gritters. This emissions reduction can also be attributed in part to greater use of electric vehicles and increased fleet efficiency.

Gas oil use in transportation has reduced to zero in this reporting year as it is no longer permitted as road fuel.

The Zero Emission Fleet Replacement Strategy details the Council's plans to decarbonise the remainder of the fleet in line with the Scottish

Government's net zero targets. However, funding these plans is a challenge as the Council have cut its budget to achieve £7.5m of savings.



3.2.3. Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Decarbonised council fleet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Displacing fossil fuel powered vehicles and plant machinery with ULEV alternatives ▪ Trial HVO fuel in diesel fleet vehicles ▪ Monitor progress on hydrogen suitability for fleet vehicles ▪ Develop Ashgrove depot as a green hub
Increased awareness of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing and promoting travel plans for Moray Council, major employers and schools

actions and opportunities to reduce emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivering and promoting active travel to school campaigns ▪ Developing a calendar of sustainable events
Facilitating emissions reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing strategy and guidance for provision of public EV charging facilities in Moray ▪ Organising bicycle maintenance sessions and led rides for staff ▪ Parking management around schools and supporting modal shift from vehicles to active travel

3.3. Waste

3.3.1. Overview

Waste is collected across Moray from households and commercial organisations. At the end of 2023, the Council diverted its municipal waste from landfill to a new energy from waste facility, shared with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. The Council no longer sends municipal waste to landfill and is in the process of closing its landfill site at Nether Dallachy.

Disposing of waste within landfill is the worst option for the environment and leads to significant carbon emissions. It should be the last resort for waste disposal (Figure 5). Prioritising the waste management hierarchy is crucial for further reduction in waste emissions. This means encouraging and implementing initiatives which promote waste prevention, reuse and recycling wherever possible. Increasing recycling has the additional benefit of reducing the emissions required to extract and process further materials.



Figure 5-Scotland's waste management hierarchy (Scottish Government 2015)

There are several national targets in relation to waste management:

- Minimum recycling from all sources to be 70% by 2025

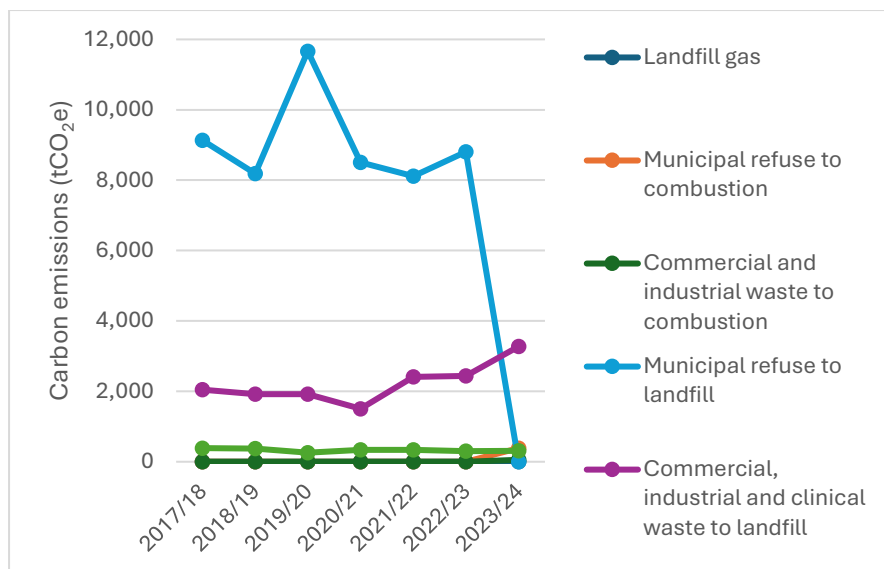
- Maximum of 5% of all waste sent to landfill by 2025
- 33% reduction in food waste by 2025

3.3.2. Current emissions

Significant investment in the joint NESS Energy from Waste facility has resulted in a 65% reduction in emissions from the Council's waste operations over the past reporting year. This facility processes non-recyclable waste to produce electricity for the national grid, and heat for a district heating network (See Case Study 2).

An increase in emissions from the landfilling of commercial and industrial waste was experienced during the past reporting year, as waste was diverted back to Nether Dallachy landfill during a maintenance shutdown of the NESS facility in August 2023.

Other emissions from waste management include those incurred from recycling and composting, now making up 8% of waste emissions.



3.3.3. Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Reduced emissions from non-recyclable waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverting non-recyclable waste to NESS energy from waste facility in Aberdeen
Reduction in residual waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Zero Waste Scotland and third sector partners to progress projects to reduce waste through re-use and recycling Carrying out education on recycling and waste reduction to improve sustainability awareness and recycling in schools and across council buildings Supporting creation and promotion of a Community Identified Benefits Portal, facilitating collaborative relationships between local construction firms/developers and circular economy initiative

Case study 2 – NESS Energy from Waste facility

Despite the Council's efforts to reduce residual waste through minimisation campaigns, recycling, composting and use of other treatments, a substantial quantity of residual waste that is generated will still need to be collected and cannot be landfilled anymore.



The NESS Energy from Waste facility, a collaboration between Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils, began full operation in December 2023 and diverts non-recyclable waste from landfill, transforming it into clean energy.

This state-of-the-art plant can process 150,000 tonnes of waste annually, generating electricity for the national grid and heat for a local district heating network.

The combustion of the residual waste at this facility produces approximately 96% less CO₂e emissions per tonne of waste compared to landfill.

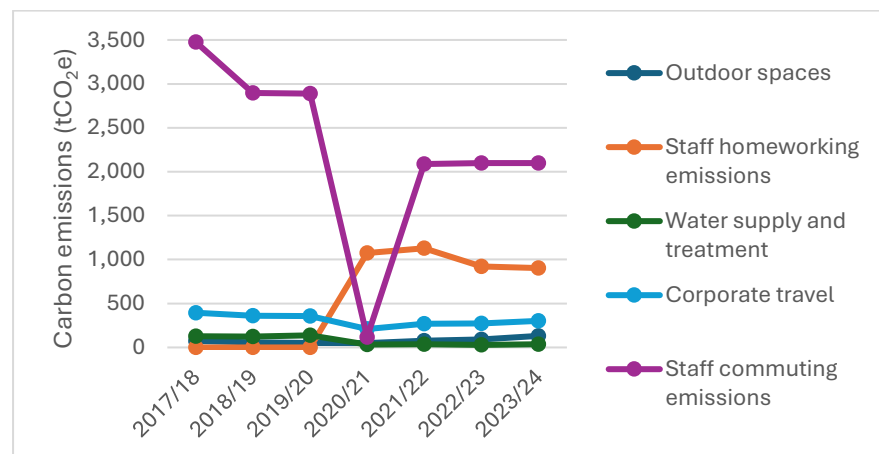
3.4. Operating emissions

3.4.1. Overview

Operating emissions result from the day-to-day work of the Council. This includes the estimated carbon emissions of employees working from home, commuting, electricity use in outdoor spaces (street lighting), the use and treatment of water, and corporate travel.

3.4.2. Current emissions

Council staff commuting emissions have been recorded since 2022/23 and comprise 60% of our operating emissions. Estimated commuting emissions prior to 2022 have been added to allow for a consistent scope. To provide better distinction between emissions sources, commuting emissions are shown separately to homeworking emissions. A [staff travel plan](#) has been developed to identify opportunities to support a behavioural shift to lower or zero emissions modes of transport where possible. The return to “business as usual” practices since the COVID pandemic has led to increased corporate travel, with 11% higher grey fleet mileage (personal vehicles used for business purposes).



3.4.3. Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Reduced emissions from operational actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting homeworkers to reduce their emissions through relevant advice and practical assistance Introducing an ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) salary sacrifice scheme for employees Promoting Smarter Working Increasing use of the cloud to reduce server network and electricity consumption Continue to make school meals more sustainable with a reduced carbon impact
Increased awareness of actions and opportunities to reduce emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and delivering climate and nature emergency training for staff and elected members Updating climate change awareness training as part of the employee induction process Increasing opportunities for ‘Learning for Sustainability’ within the school curriculum Applying zero and low carbon objectives as a factor in all investment decisions in relation to budgets and the Capital Plan Ensuring the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan are living documents and remain fresh and valid until 2030 Assessing climate change and biodiversity impacts as part of all reports to committee Supporting the development of knowledge and skills to promote innovation and effective carbon management across departments Supporting opportunities for teachers and pupils to access and share knowledge/resources to progress climate change work

3.5. Procurement and investment

3.5.1. Overview

Around a third of the country's emissions are dependent on sectors that are directly shaped or influenced by local authority practices, policy or partnerships⁴. It is to this end that procurement performs such a key role in reducing national climate impact.

Procurement of goods and services with the Council amounts to some £126 million annually. The Council therefore has a significant influence locally and regionally on climate change through procurement.

The **Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014** introduced a sustainable procurement duty for local authorities. This requires that before the Council buys anything, it must think about:

- how it can improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of Moray, with a particular focus on reducing inequality
- how its procurement processes can facilitate the involvement of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), third sector bodies and supported business
- how public procurement can be used to promote innovation

Climate change and procurement officers have worked to develop a simple process for suppliers to evidence their carbon reduction actions when bidding for smaller contracts.

The Council has also developed Sustainable Procurement Guidance and an associated training module and embedded this within the tender process to reflect the priorities and actions of the Climate Change Strategy.

The Council has an obligation to report on progress towards a more sustainable procurement process in our [annual procurement report](#), as well as part of our [Public Bodies Climate Change Duties](#) reports. In 2023/24 it

was reported that 5.68% of contracts commenced during the year had a sustainable target, with the Council aiming to achieve 20%.

3.5.2. Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Maximise opportunities for climate action through procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Continue to deliver and record non-cash benefits such as sustainability, climate change and community wealth building through the procurement process.▪ Deliver sustainable procurement guidance to officers.

⁴ UK Climate Change Committee (2020) 'Local authorities and the sixth carbon budget'.

3.6. Nature and carbon sequestration

3.6.1. Overview

The Council has a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out its work.

Many of the Council's activities have the potential to drive biodiversity loss or nature recovery. These include discharging responsibility as Planning Authority through application of policy, as a landowner by how the estate is managed, and as Education Authority through how young people are connected with nature. The Council's biodiversity duty should be exercised through all these responsibilities to support the national target to restore and reverse biodiversity loss by 2045.

Enhancing biodiversity can also sequester carbon through well managed soil and vegetation, thereby reducing net emissions.

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy recognises the key role that local authorities must play in delivering nature recovery. This includes through the management of public greenspaces, developing Nature Networks, securing positive effects for nature through planning decisions, and integrating biodiversity into transportation infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage solutions.

NPF4 places the climate and nature crises at the centre of planning policy, in addition to rebalancing planning policy to ensure that positive effects for biodiversity are secured. Significant weight is to be given to the climate and nature crises in all development decisions, so that biodiversity is enhanced, and nature networks strengthened. The policies also promote the use of nature-based solutions.

3.6.2. Current Activity

Some of the work to improve council land for biodiversity during 2024 included a collaboration with Wild Things environmental education charity to deliver actions across three council nature sites, Elgin Oakwood, Millbuie and the Wards Wildlife Site. This work included removing invasive species, old tree protectors, planting native trees and shrubs and caring for the wetland and wildflower patch at the Wards.

This partnership created opportunities for forestry and nature-based skills development and supporting wellbeing through nature connection. This work has engaged people of all ages from across Moray.

The wildflower and living lawn project progressed, with a few new sites added and existing sites maintained (See Case Study 3).

However, most of the Council's land is not being managed with biodiversity as primary objective. This currently includes most park land, roadside verges, school playgrounds, and land around housing and other buildings.

In terms of the council's wider influence, planning continues to be a focus. Developments of every size are required to enhance biodiversity and should also use nature-based-solutions where possible. With planning permission granted for over 12,000 units each year in Moray, this presents a significant opportunity to secure positive effects for nature.

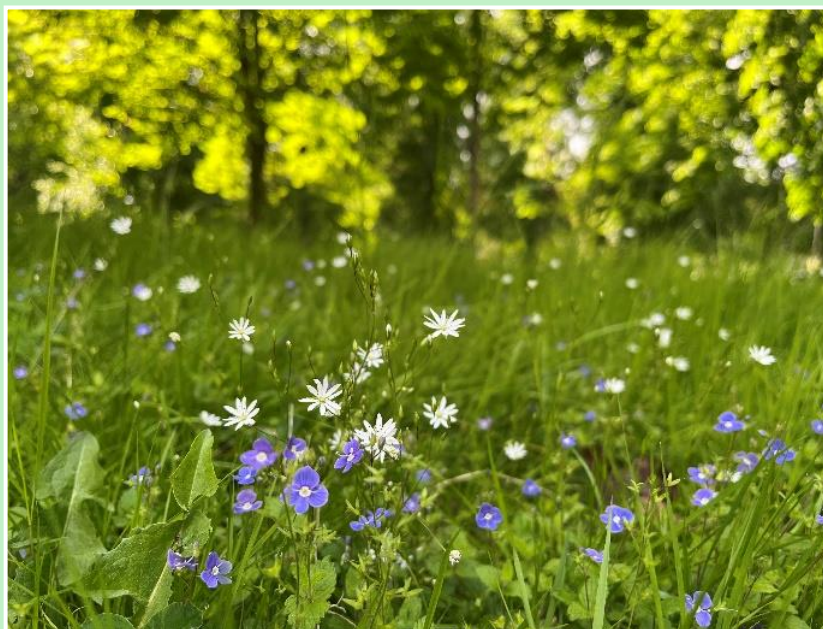
The development of a Moray Nature Network is now in progress. This is spatial mapping of opportunities to strengthen connections between protected sites and to create urban-rural wildlife corridors. The Moray Nature Network is drawing input from a range of stakeholders, facilitating regional collaboration from across different sectors and is informing the Local Development Plan 2027 and Draft Biodiversity Strategy (within both of which the Nature Network will be embedded).

As well as joining up nature rich sites, Nature Networks also aim to connect people to nature. The council has continued to collaborate closely with

partners, the North East Biodiversity Partnership and Moray CAN, to support communities to learn about and engage with nature through ways such as providing advice, distributing small grants, and holding workshops.

Case Study 3 – Wildflower and living lawn case study

Moray's wildflower and living lawn program has continued to operate, with new sites added each year. This work supports the national strategy for action on pollinators, and over 40 areas across Moray now benefit from wildflower plantings as well as adjusted mowing patterns. Simple signage has engaged public support for these improvements, alongside careful design and management to make these places beautiful as well as biodiverse.



3.7. Adaptation

3.7.1. Overview

The Council has a statutory obligation within its annual Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting to record how it is contributing to Scotland's Adaptation Programme (SNAP 3). There is also a statutory duty to carry out actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The key outcomes that the Council is required to contribute to include:

- **Nature connects** across our land, settlements, coasts and seas
- **Communities** are creating climate-resilient, healthy and equitable places
- **Public services** are collaborating in effective and inclusive adaptation action

NPF4 identifies the Scottish adaptation programme as a crosscutting policy link, requiring LDPs to adapt to the current and future risks of climate change by promoting nature recovery and restoration in Moray and introducing policy requirements which ensure that developments consider and take steps to address a range of climate risks.

3.7.2. Current Activity

During 2024, early engagement with key services on how the Council is prepared for, and adapting to, the impacts of climate change continued. The first report on the readiness of the Council to adapt to climate impacts was presented to committee, highlighting council activity which contributes to the Scottish adaptation programme and areas for improvement. It was agreed to produce a local climate impacts profile, assessing historical impacts to increase understanding of the potential future costs to the Council from climate change.

SNAP 3 was published in September 2024, informing the development of the Council's approach to adaptation. Notably, SNAP 3's first outcome is Nature Connects, reinforcing the Council's current approach to closely align

biodiversity with wider climate action. For example, work has been in progress to map climate risk and nature-based opportunities to support adaptation in Elgin, and there are plans to replicate this for other large towns. This spatial exploration of how factors such as tree cover interact with risk of surface heat and flooding and deprivation, will be used in conjunction with Nature Networks and the Local Development Plan to inform priority areas for urban greening and community connection to nature activities.

The Scottish Government's guidance outlines the need for flexible measures to be taken to adapt to climate change risks to critical infrastructure.

Moray Council is a national leader on coastal change, applying an innovative pathway approach through a Regional Coastal Change Adaptation Plan and ten local plans. These enable the council to plan for, and react to, different scenarios as they are triggered. Moray is covered by Regional and Local Flood Risk Management Plans that identify vulnerabilities and actions in place to address risks. Coastal and flooding plans are reported on every 3 years, so there are no updates at present.

The Council continues to support the establishment of Community Resilience Groups, with eight plans now in place.

3.8.External influence

3.8.1. Overview

Many of the Council's statutory duties focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the wider Moray area. This includes actions such as supporting energy efficiency improvements in homes, encouraging active travel and promoting green skills training as part of a just transition away from fossil fuels.

While this will not reduce the Council's direct carbon footprint, the Climate Change Strategy also seeks to reduce carbon emissions across Moray by demonstrating leadership and good practice.

The leadership role of local authorities is reflected in the Scottish Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change, to support the wider area to understand, participate and act on climate change. This includes being prepared for the impacts of climate change, and several of the Council's responsibilities to the wider area cross over with the duty to support delivery of the Scottish National Adaptation Programme. In delivering the Biodiversity Duty, the Council must also aim to engage the wider community with nature alongside embedding nature conservation in service delivery.

Engaging with the community is essential to understand local concerns and bring about necessary change. A collaborative approach can lead to more effective policies, behavioural changes, enhanced community resilience and a reduction in climate change impacts.

3.8.2. Current activity

The Council has produced its first Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and accompanying action plan. This strategy is crucial for communities as it aims to provide affordable and sustainable heating solutions, reduce energy consumption and alleviate fuel poverty. LHEES can help to create jobs in the green sector, improve health and wellbeing, and

contribute to achieving net zero – thus ultimately benefitting the local economy and wider environment.

NPF4 will help to guide the location of new housing, transport links and infrastructure, ensuring that communities have access to the services they need whilst enhancing the environment and meeting net zero targets.

NPF4 introduces the concept of Local Place Plans (LPPs) which are community-led plans that provide a framework for shaping the future of local places. LPPs are an essential tool for engaging with communities and fostering local democracy, ensuring that Moray's towns and villages are designed with the people who live there in mind.

The Council's Hydrogen Strategy seeks to encourage a local supply chain for hydrogen production and use, providing job opportunities and economic benefits for the region. Using green hydrogen as a fuel for transport, heating and industrial processes is likely to be essential for cutting Moray's regional carbon emissions.

The Council is also engaged in work with the Scottish Climate Intelligence Service (SCIS) to better understand Moray's area-wide emissions and develop a Regional Climate Change Strategy in partnership with the Moray Climate Action Network (Moray CAN).

3.8.3. Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Develop skills and the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increasing provision of relevant skills and knowledge for a greener economy to support delivery of the Moray Apprenticeship Strategy▪ Supporting the planning and delivery of awareness raising events for businesses to transition to a green economy▪ Joining support networks to assist the progress of climate change action

Enabling the community to understand and take action on climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consulting community groups and residents about climate action and delivering the Climate Change Strategy ▪ Supporting the work of Moray CAN ▪ Engaging with communities to facilitate renewable energy projects ▪ Promoting Moray-specific climate emergency training for community groups and organisations ▪ Promoting the Active Travel Strategy ▪ Delivering the LHEES programme ▪ Continuing the Energy Efficiency Scotland: Area Based Scheme (EES: ABS) ▪ Implement ECO4 scheme for energy efficient home improvements targeted at tackling fuel poverty. ▪ Delivering the Moray Hydrogen Strategy ▪ Support the reporting of area wide emissions and actions
Strategic planning which reflects the climate and nature emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementing NPF4 policies relating to the climate and nature crises. ▪ Updated the Council's Climate Change Strategy and contributing to a Moray-wide climate strategy ▪ Developing a Regional Spatial Strategy ▪ Developing 20-minute neighbourhood concepts for Moray's main towns and embedding within the next Local Development Plan ▪ Promoting and supporting brownfield over greenfield development ▪ Providing sustainability guidance to support Moray Growth Deal projects ▪ Implementing and reviewing carbon guidance for planning applications in line with NPF4

4. Where are we going

Pathway to net zero

The Council currently faces a significant challenge in meeting its carbon reduction targets, both locally and nationally. Existing efforts haven't achieved the desired impact, and a more robust approach is needed.

The current pathway of recorded emissions is a projection created using the data from the annual emissions contained in our Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reports, in addition to other known data relating to the Council's pre-planned actions. Only activities which are highly likely are accounted for within this projection.

This current pathway is illustrated in Figure 6, with Table 2 describing how we divide our emissions into the five categories in the forecast chart. The pathway chart highlights the increase in emissions following the return to a 'business as usual' approach after the pandemic, with the overall trend of emissions reductions returning in the period of 2023-24. This was primarily due to the diversion of landfill waste to the NESS energy from waste facility, and further reductions from this measure are expected in the next reporting period. From 2024-25, subsequent estimated emissions reductions are smaller, requiring further intervention to bring remaining emissions within a level where they may be offset by a carbon sequestration scheme.

The current pathway aims to show a realistic projection based on current plans and constraints on speed, technological limitations and funding. Avoiding late adoption of technology and measures to reduce carbon emissions is critical because demand could impact on the cost of supply as the 2045 deadline approaches and public and private sectors are potentially legislated to take action.

A balanced approach to the implementation of measures is more likely to benefit from reducing costs of measures as the scaling up of production

reduces costs. This could also allow planned solutions to align with national infrastructure investment. For example, vehicles could continue to transition to zero carbon using batteries, or hydrogen could become more dominant if electricity distribution networks are unable to cope with the electrification of both heat and transport.

The calculations for the current pathway account for:

- **Internal factors:** Known internal changes that will impact on emissions, e.g. confirmed waste management change.
- **External factors:** Known external changes that will impact on emissions, e.g. ongoing decarbonisation of the national grid.
- **Population change:** Annual changes in population, based on the 2018 Scottish Sub-National Populations Projections for Moray, which may impact future emissions.

Table 2-Explanation of emissions categories used in carbon emissions reporting

Category	Description
Operating emissions	Emissions generated by the council through its day-to-day work. These consist of emissions that the council can control and influence. These are recorded in the annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting.
Waste	Emissions from dealing with municipal and industrial-level waste. These are recorded in the annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting.
Building electricity	Emissions from electricity use in council buildings. These are recorded in the annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting.
Transport	Emissions from the operation of the Council's fleet vehicles and vessels. These are recorded in the annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting.
Building heat	Emissions from heating of council buildings. These are recorded in the annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting.

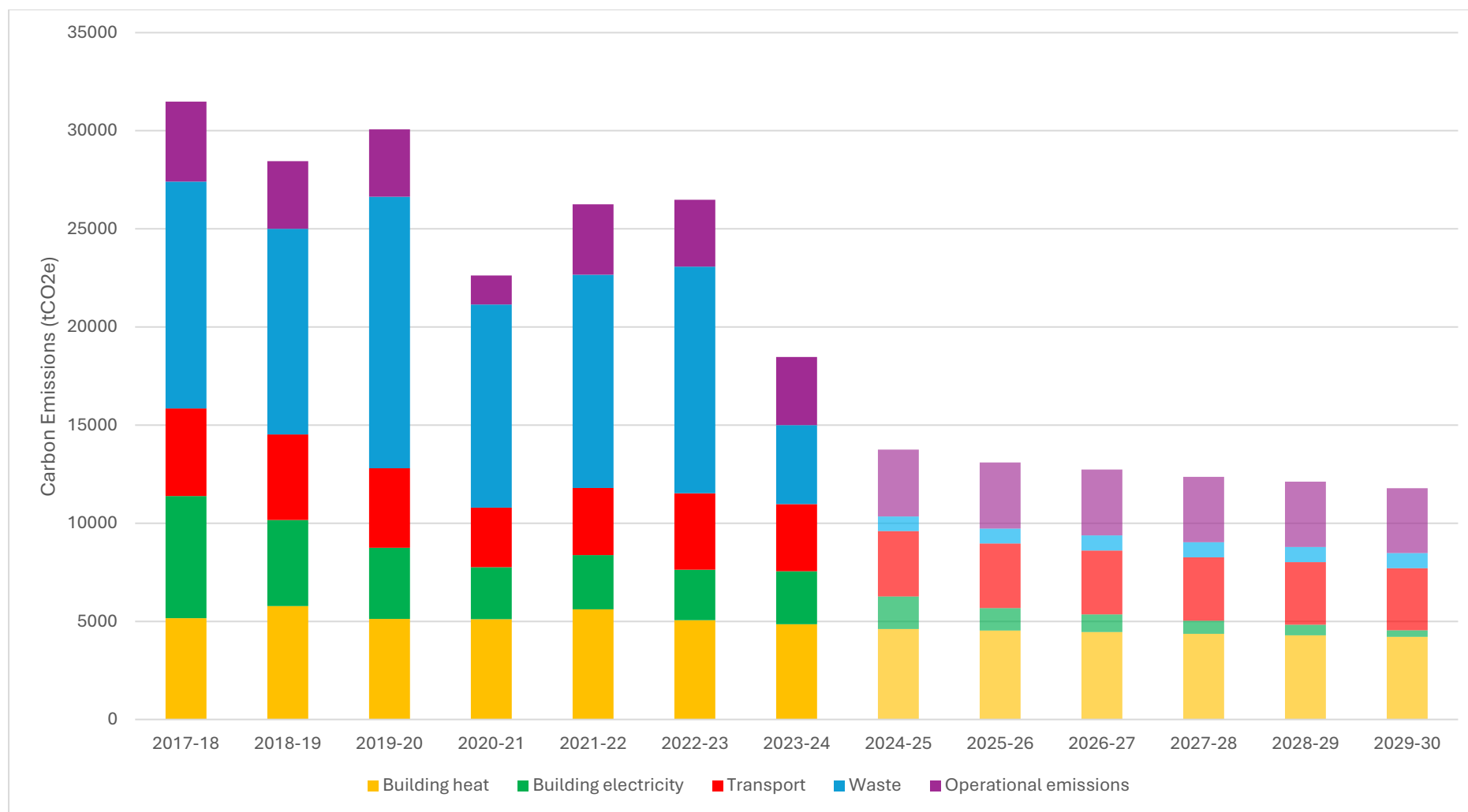


Figure 6 - Current pathway of recorded carbon emissions from baseline date to 2030. Figures from 2024-25 and onwards are forecast estimates and denoted by a lighter colour

Concerns on Carbon Reductions

Progress on carbon emissions reduction has been restricted. There are several reasons for this:

- Services within the Council increasingly lack the resources or expertise needed to develop effective carbon reduction projects and secure external funding;
- Opportunities to collaborate and integrate climate change into existing work often missed due to existing work practices;
- Insufficient understanding of climate change at all levels within the Council can hinder buy-in, proactive action and sustainable development;
- Reductions in capital budget have led to delays in the delivery of carbon reductions, such as with the Council's fleet replacement strategy.

The upcoming update to the Climate Change Strategy presents an opportunity to reassess the Council's approach and to begin addressing these issues.

The areas of building heat and fleet are the largest areas of emissions for Moray Council and among the most difficult to reduce. Relevant strategies on these areas currently use national decarbonisation targets. Savings from other areas and carbon sequestration will not take overall carbon emissions down to net zero by 2030.

As set out in the carbon management hierarchy (Figure 4), measures which remove or reduce emissions are considered higher priority than offsetting. However, a level of carbon sequestration will be necessary for the Council to reach net zero and will be factored into the upcoming Climate Change Strategy update. Agreeing a delivery model for carbon offsetting through natural capital enhancements presents an opportunity to invest in a variety of benefits for communities whilst reducing emissions.

To inform a robust and impactful updated strategy, the Council needs to address several key issues and decide on its net zero targets. These decisions will lay the groundwork for a cohesive approach that delivers on the Council's aspirations.

Net zero must be budgeted for and taken into consideration in the pace of decision making around the renovation and rationalisation of the council building stock. This will enable the production of accurate estimates of financial costs and emissions reductions which will assist future planning.

Identifying and allocating sufficient resources is essential for effective project management. This will ensure the successful implementation of carbon reduction initiatives.

Restoring nature

The Council's commitment to nature conservation has grown, but future success hinges on securing new funding sources and integrating biodiversity efforts with other initiatives. While statutory targets and the uncertain future of Scottish Government funding pose challenges, the Council plans to address these through a new Moray Council Biodiversity Strategy, improved staff training, and a focus on community engagement and evidence-based actions.

The level of nature positive activity taken by the Council has been steadily increasing since the 2018-20 Biodiversity Duty report. The Scottish Government's Natural Environment Bill may lead to statutory targets for nature restoration, likely to also bring further responsibilities for local authorities.

In terms of land management, improvements largely relied on dedicated funding through the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, which runs until 2025/26. There is a risk that progress will slow if this funding stream ends, so alternative sources including private finance and embedding biodiversity within other projects such as the Moray Growth Deal

and town centre improvements will be essential. As the Council's natural capital study recommends, carbon sequestration should also be delivered in conjunction with biodiversity enhancement.

A Draft Biodiversity Strategy has been produced alongside this report, focussing on achievable actions for the council that are balanced with the urgency of reversing biodiversity loss. Engaging communities and increasing opportunities for young people to engage with nature to bring additional benefits should be a priority and support the sourcing of funding. Actions and improvements should be evidence led, using national guidance and measurements as they are available.

Statutory responsibilities for biodiversity have significantly increased through the introduction of NPF4, introducing additional work that is currently being met within existing staff capacity. Improved guidance and training are being developed to support the planning service to deliver positive effects for biodiversity in Moray. Ecological expertise will be drawn upon for larger and more complex developments. Going forward there should be an emphasis on biodiversity assessment of all developments, resulting in specific plans that enhance biodiversity and help link to the wider environment.

A significant challenge over the coming years will be the delivery of a Moray Nature Network, which is a requirement of the LDP. While the Scottish Government has funded mapping and engagement, delivery and monitoring will require additional resources. This should be delivered through an integrated approach, bringing wider community benefits while also supporting climate adaptation and mitigation.

Being ready for climate impacts

There remains a critical gap in the Council's readiness for the impacts of climate change. A recent assessment revealed a lack of understanding about the Council's vulnerability to climate impacts and the potential financial implications.

Lack of data means it is difficult to estimate the cost to the Council of climate impacts, however as the Scottish Fiscal Commission have outlined, 'the implications of not investing in adaptation would be harmful in the long term and could lead to even more pressure on future Scottish Budgets'. Improved recording and plans for detailed climate change risk assessment will lead to a better understanding of likely future costs.

An adaptation plan will be embedded within the upcoming Climate Change Strategy Update. The plan will set out how adaptation can be better incorporated into the Council's organisational processes, and its responsibility and influence on the wider area. This includes mechanisms to facilitate adaptation in Moray through partnership working, planning policy, coastal change adaptation plans, community resilience plans and Nature Networks.

The Scottish National Adaptation Programme (SNAP 3) places greater emphasis on the interconnection between climate and nature, drawing close links to the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and NPF4. With the publication of SNAP 3, the Council's climate change strategy update will be able to integrate the planned national outcomes with local needs, as well as develop measures that align with the national monitoring framework.

5. Sustainability

Sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This requires balancing social, economic and environmental considerations to ensure changes are equitable, and these values closely align with our corporate vision:

- Our young people grow up safe, well-educated and reach their full potential
- People lead healthy lives and have access to quality care when they need it
- Our businesses and communities prosper
- Our natural environment thrives for the betterment of all

All Public Sector Bodies must demonstrate how they are progressing sustainable development as part of their Best Value duties, ensuring that sustainable development is:

- Reflected in their vision and strategic priorities
- Embedded in their governance arrangements
- Contributed to in the way resources are planned and used
- Effectively promoted through partnership working

The Council approved a Sustainable Development Statement in November 2024, including six actions identified to progress over the short to medium term (before December 2025):

Outcomes	Actions include:
Realising opportunities to embed sustainability in the Council's processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review Implications Section of Committee Reports to ensure sustainable development is embedded within proposals ▪ Embed Framework reporting in Quarterly Performance Reports, Annual Corporate Plan report and Public Performance Report ▪ Identify any further sustainable development gaps in Climate Strategy Review with resources to address ▪ Approve Sustainable Development Statement
Supporting sustainable development through partner and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scope out Partnership interest in shared Sustainable Development priorities/actions in the LOIP Review ▪ Consider and Embed Community views on sustainable development in the revised Climate Change Strategy

As part of the process of updating the Climate Change Strategy in 2025, the Sustainable Development Statement will be reviewed.

Further guidance has been produced on how officers can include sustainable development in the implications section of committee reports.

6. Conclusion

The Council acknowledges the need for improvement in its response to the climate and nature emergencies. Though progress has been made, current efforts fall short of local and national targets. Whilst challenges lay ahead, there is significant scope to turn these into opportunities for the Council and the wider community. The upcoming Climate Change Strategy update presents a critical opportunity to address these challenges.

It remains feasible for the Council to achieve net zero if key decisions on building decarbonisation and rationalisation of the estate are taken, and progress is made to enhance solar provision on buildings, consistently improve fleet vehicles and reduce waste in the future. There is also a need to develop a suitable delivery model for natural capital enhancements which will provide any necessary carbon offsetting opportunities.

Alongside climate change capital funding already earmarked for building renewables, securing external funding will be essential if these aspirations are to be met. Success will require a combination of strong leadership, collaboration across services, knowledge building and adequate resourcing to realise opportunities.