West Suffolk Council

West Suffolk Council Environmental Statement 2024-2025

Action on Climate Change West Suffolk Council

Contents

1. Introduction

This report is a summary of the environmental impact from the activities West Suffolk Council (WSC) undertook to manage and reduce its carbon emissions during the financial year ending 31 March 2025.

In 2019 West Suffolk Council declared a climate and biodiversity emergency and subsequently agreed a Climate Change Action Plan that included initiatives to improve the environment in West Suffolk. Progress against this plan is reviewed annually by the Environmental and Sustainability Reference Group (ESRG) and the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and reported to Cabinet. A key part of the action plan was setting an ambition for the Council itself to be net zero by 2030 in relation to its own direct emissions. Good progress has already been made, and significant further investment is planned in the next few years, such as the removal of fossil fuel plant at Bury and Haverhill Leisure Centres and replacing with air source heat pumps (ASHPs).

The 2030 net zero target has raised the Council's ambition and commitment to tackle climate change, however for reasons outside of the Council's control such as the implementation of the Simpler Recycling scheme, it has become apparent that this specific ambition is unlikely to be achieved within this time. A comprehensive review of the Council's progress towards net zero has therefore been conducted, identifying areas for improvement and prioritising high-impact actions. This review concluded that a revised target date of 2039 would be achievable yet still ambitious. The revised net zero target and route map was approved by Cabinet on 20 May 2025. The revised trajectory has been summarised in five-year periods in Table 1, and the Roadmap to Net Zero provides a visual summary of how the council will achieve the new 2039 target. Measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e).

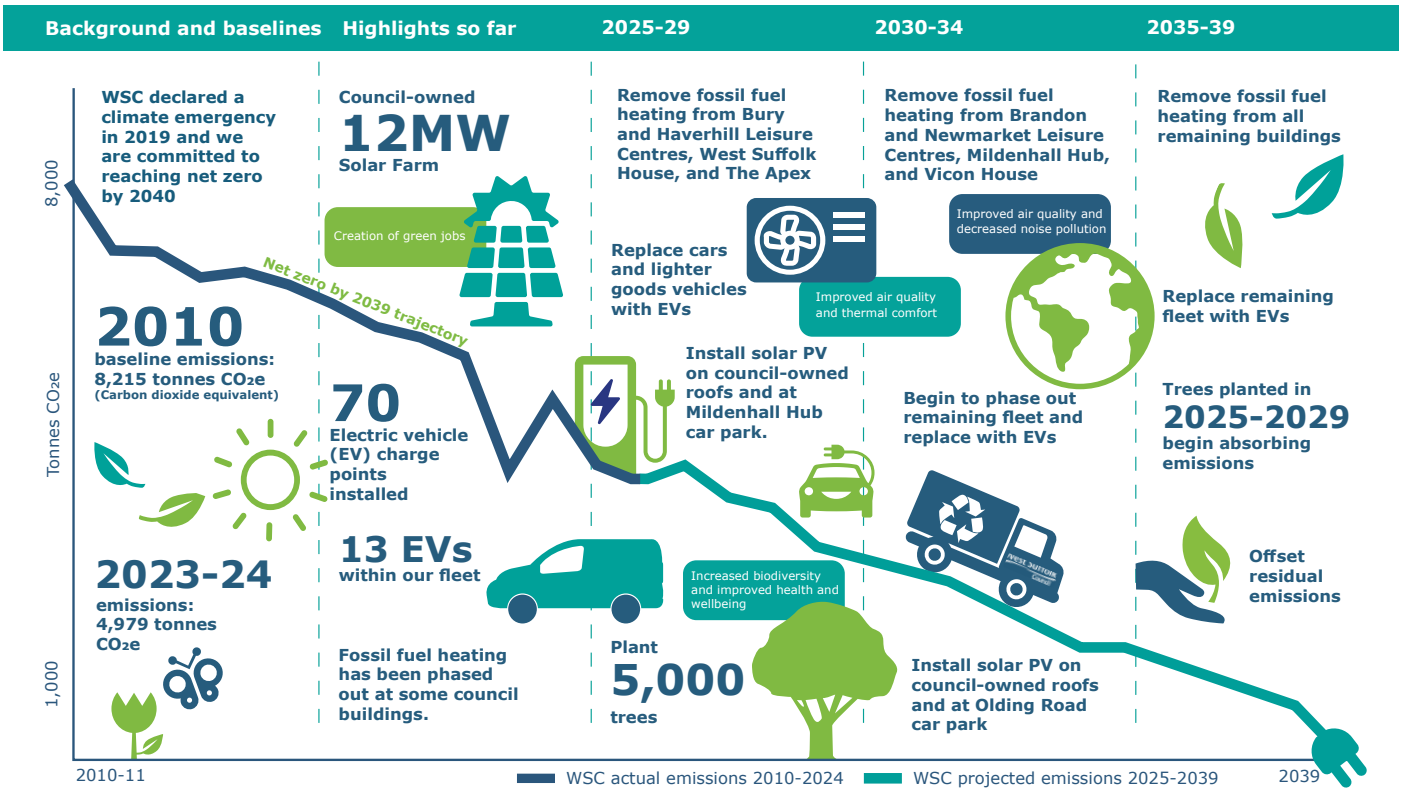


Figure 1 Roadmap to net zero carbon emissions

Table 1 shows the planned emissions reductions for meeting West Suffolk Council's revised 2039 net zero target.

Period	Emissions reduction during period	Emissions at end of period
2025-29	1,618 tCO_2e	4,060 tCO_2e
2030-34	1,198 tCO_2e	1,198 tCO_2e
2035-39	833 tCO_2e	2,029 tCO_2e
2039-40	2,029 tCO_2e *	Net zero emissions

*It is estimated that 1,320 of the council's residual emissions will come from electricity consumption. If the council continues to purchase renewable electricity in 2039, residual emissions will be much lower. Any residual emissions will be offset in a credible, transparent, and robust manner.

Overview of environmental performance during 2024-2025

Emissions

34%

Reduction in total emissions compared to 2010 baseline

Down 0.2% compared to 2023-24

13%

Reduction in total owned vehicle emissions compared to 2019-20 baseline

Down by 1% compared to 2023-24

Consumption and energy

206%

Increase in renewable energy generated compared to 2012 baseline

Up 8% compared to 2023-24

60%

Less business travel compared to 2010 baseline

Business travel up 17% compared to 2023-24

4%

Reduction in total water consumption compared to 2010-11 baseline

Down 10% compared to 2023-24

29%

Increase in grid electricity consumption compared to 2019-20 baseline

Down 3% compared to 2023-24

54%

Increase in gas consumption compared to 2019-20 baseline

Down 8% compared to 2023-24

35%

Reduction in office printing compared to 2019 baseline

Down 21% compared to 2023-24

Infrastructure and recycling

67%

Reduction in total West Suffolk House waste compared to 2012 baseline

Recycling rate 65%, down 11% compared to 2023-24

Down 4% compared to 2023-24

78

Electric vehicles (EV) can be charged at the same time using public chargers installed by West Suffolk Council

Energy delivered to drivers powered 546,241 miles up 30% compared to 2023-24

Environment and green spaces

6

Green Flags retained

Abbey Gardens, Aspal Close, Brandon Country Park, East Town Park, Nowton Park, West Stow Country Park

162

trees planted during 2024-25

Greenhouse gas emissions arising from West Suffolk Council activities

Target: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from West Suffolk Council activity to net zero by 2039. Measured in tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e).

West Suffolk Council and Abbeycroft Leisure	
Baseline emissions 2010	8,215 tCO_2e
Annual emissions in 2024-25	5,443 tCO_2e

Carbon Dioxide equivalent (tCO2e) is a unit of measurement used to indicate the global warming potential of a greenhouse gas, expressed in terms of the global warming potential of one unit of Carbon Dioxide. It is used to evaluate the releasing (or avoiding releasing) of different greenhouse gases against a common basis.

We include emissions that arise from buildings and transportation. This includes the leisure centres operated by Abbeycroft Leisure (ACL) and other operational buildings such as the Apex; it also includes buildings that we purchase energy for but excludes buildings that we own and are leased to local businesses who pay their own energy bills. The figures do not include the staff commuting journeys to our sites.

Total emissions are down 0.2 per cent compared to 2023-24 - see Figure 2 below. There has been a 1.4 per cent decrease in emissions from council activity and a 2.1 per cent increase in emissions from Abbeycroft Leisure compared to 2023-24 – see Figure 3 on the next page. Finally, Figure 3 shows a breakdown of total emissions by source. Since the council declared a climate emergency in 2019 emissions have reduced by 9 per cent or 40 per cent when accounting for purchasing renewable energy.

Figure 2 – Combined greenhouse gas emissions by year

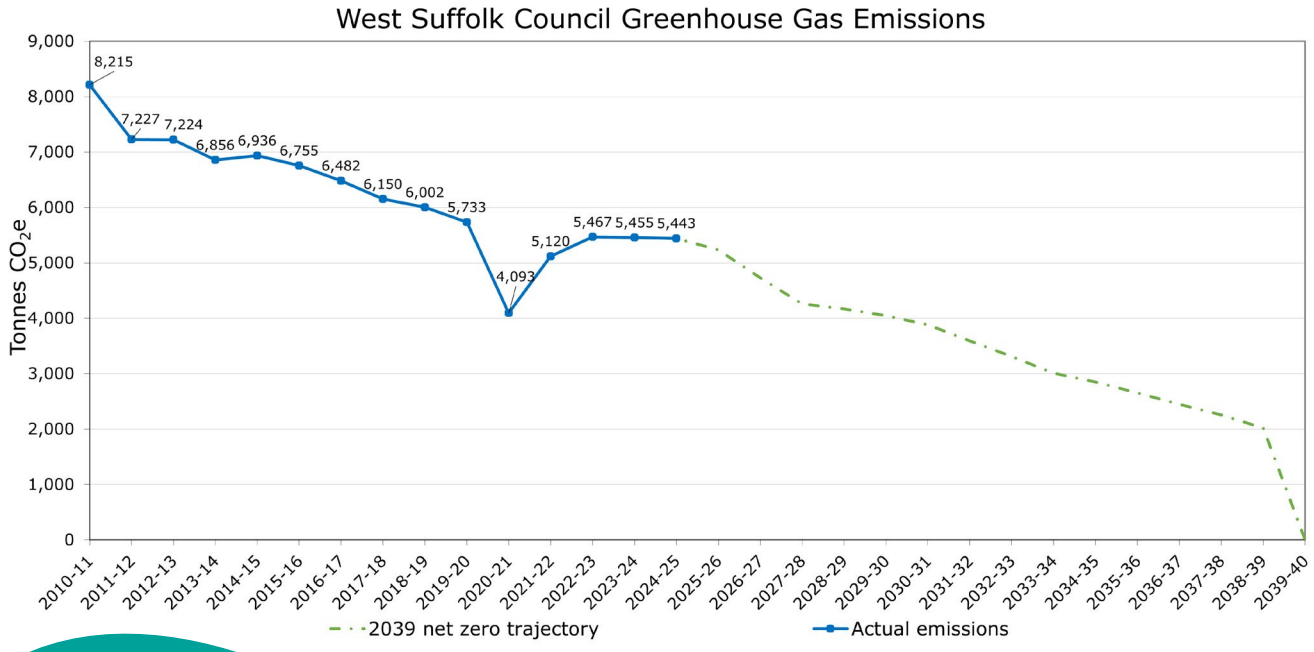


Figure 3 – Greenhouse gas emissions by organisation over time

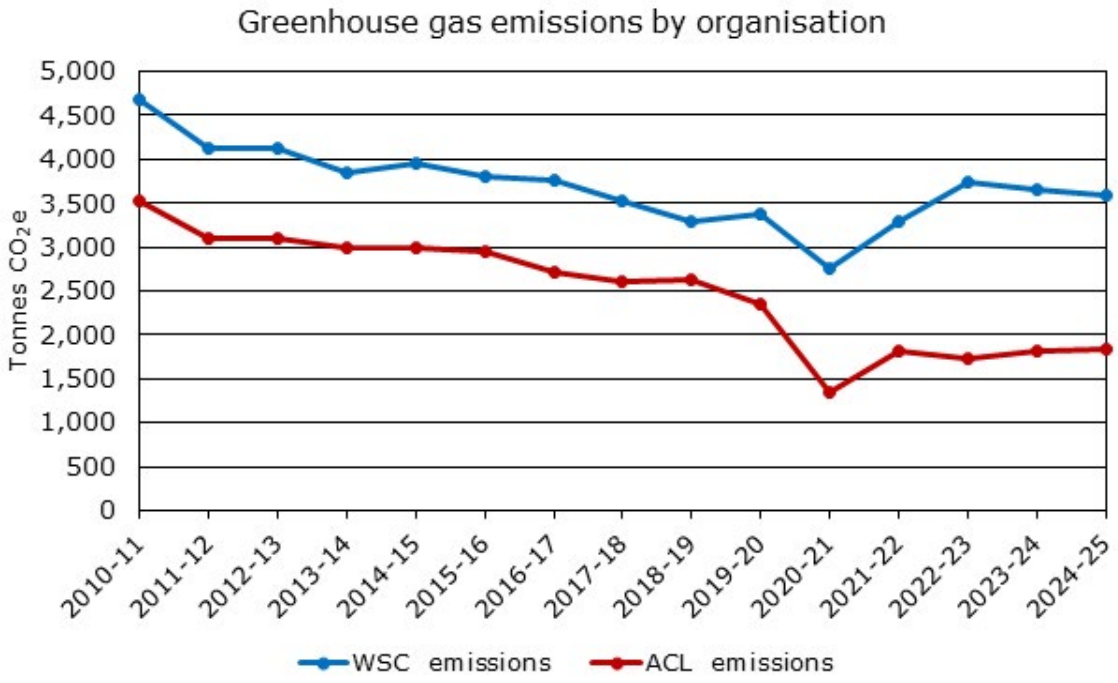
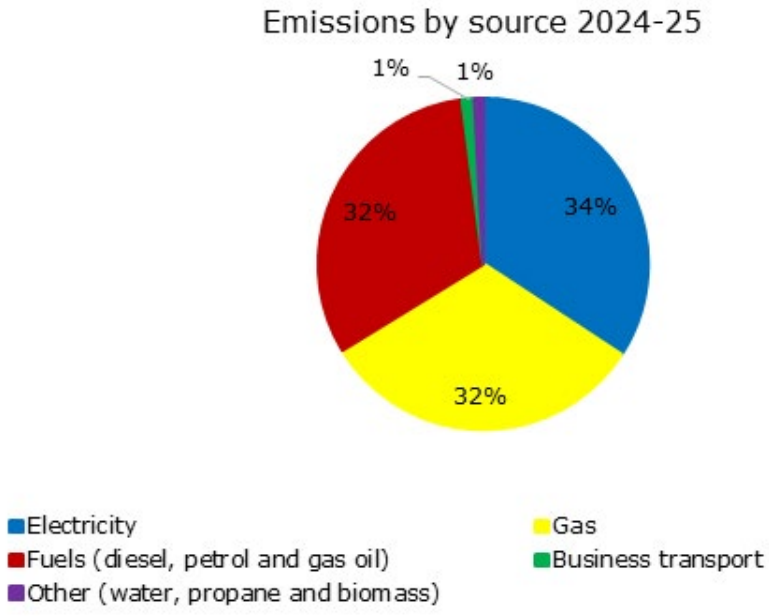


Figure 4 – Total greenhouse gas emissions by source



National grid decarbonisation

The long term 'decarbonisation' of grid electricity is a key component of the UK emissions reduction targets. However, emissions arising from each unit of grid supplied electricity during 2024-25 were comparable to 2023-24 levels. Appendix 2 contains information on emission reporting scopes.

2. Building energy use

Target: remove fossil fuels from council property portfolio by 2039.

West Suffolk Council and Abbeycroft Leisure	
Emissions in 2010	5,436 tCO_2e
Emissions in 2024-25	3,626 tCO_2e

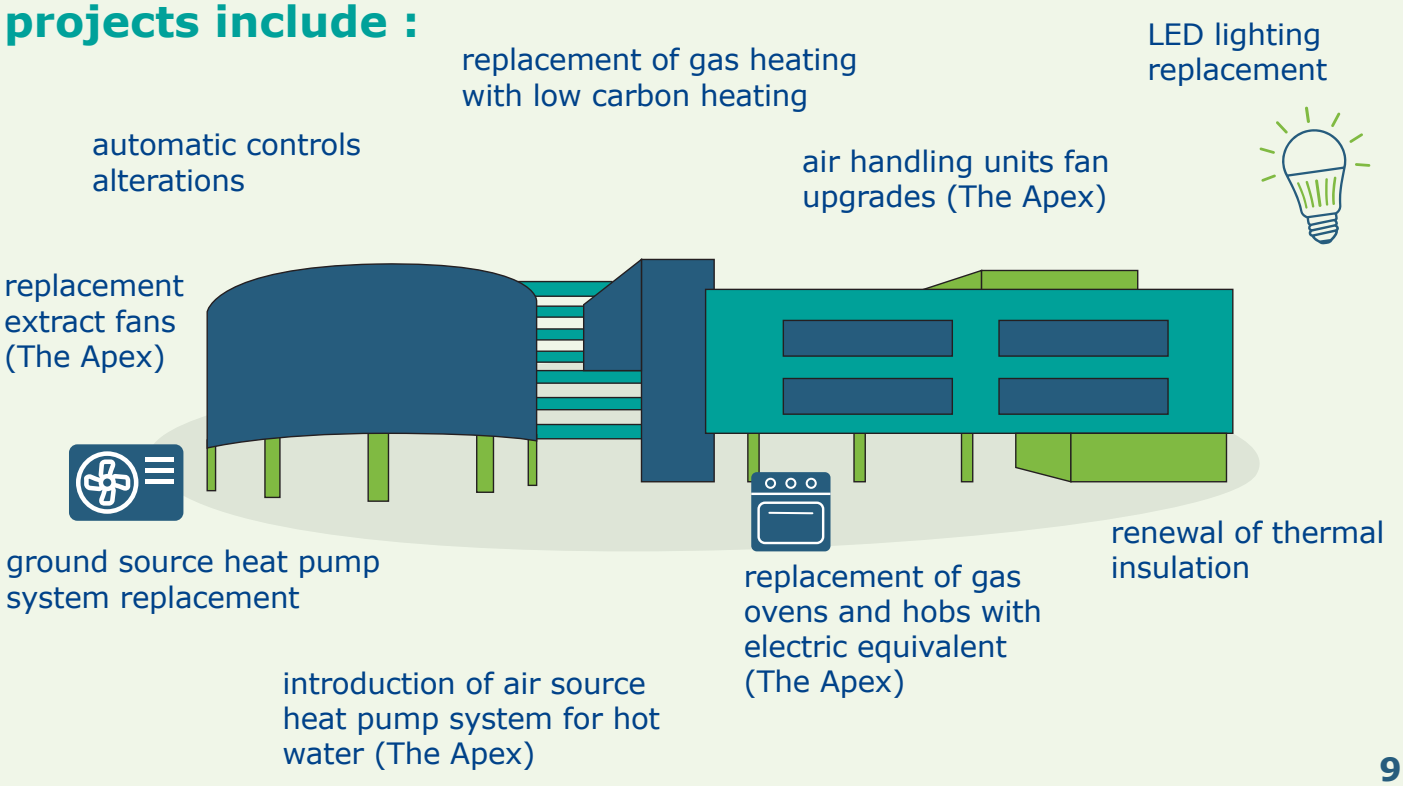
Emissions arising from all gas, electricity and biomass consumption are included in this section. Biomass is a fuel stock comprised of wood chips. Combined emissions from WSC and ACL buildings are relatively stable. In comparison to 2023-24, total emissions from buildings are down by 0.1 per cent and are down 33.3 per cent compared to 2010. Figure 4 shows the overall decrease in emissions over time.

During 2024-25 WSC was awarded Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero delivered by Salix Finance. £4.1 million has been awarded for decarbonisation projects at Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill leisure centres; a range of measures will be installed at the sites including solar PV canopies, various insulation measures and building management system upgrades with projects due to complete by spring 2027. Further details can be found here- West Suffolk Council awarded £4.1 million for decarbonisation projects.

The Apex & WSH decarbonisation

During 2024-25 WSC have established two separate, although similar in nature, plant renewal and decarbonisation projects. Project development for The Apex progressed through 2024 and culminated in RIBA Stage 4 designs in November 2024. This resulted in receiving detailed tender pricing for the works in early 2025 with works expected to commence in the second part of 2025. The WSH project follows the same path with progress shifted in time to allow for incorporation of learnings from The Apex works.

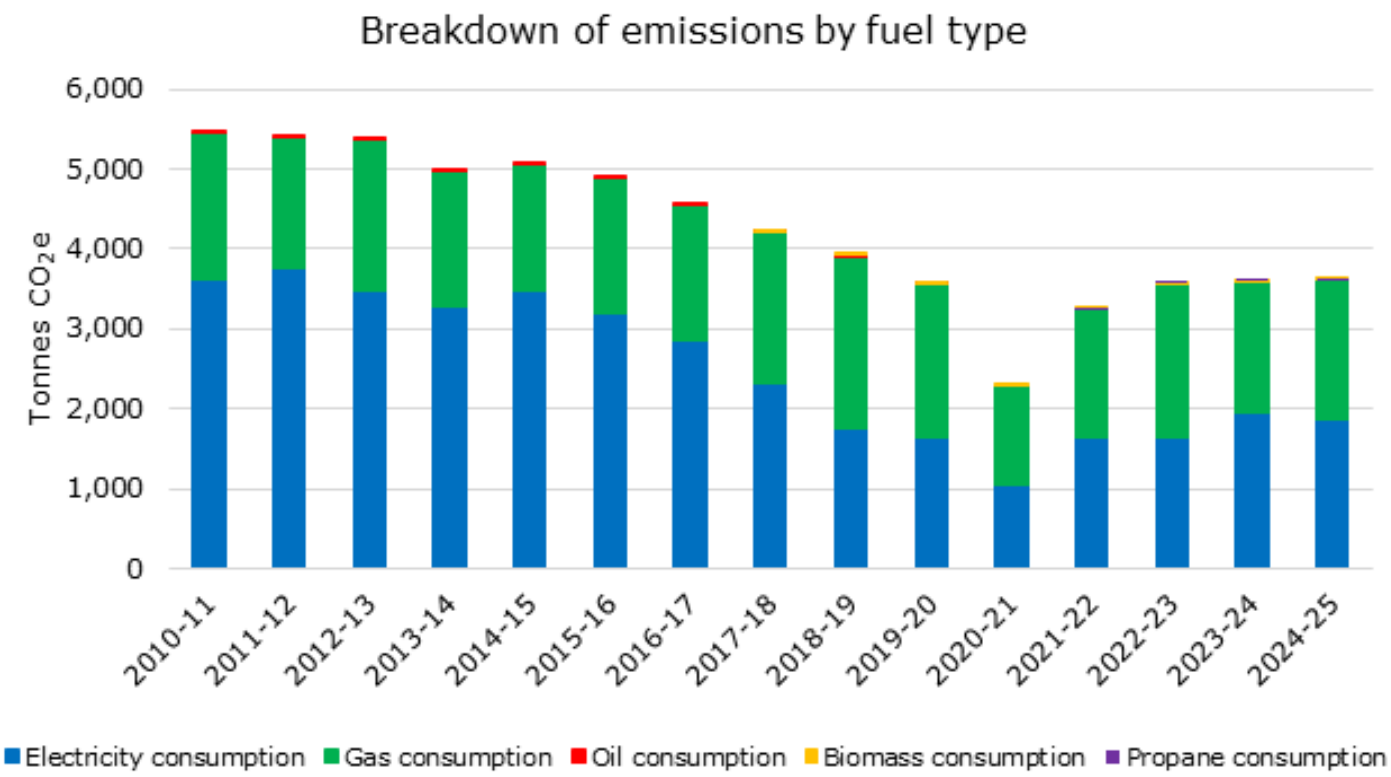
Building improvements in both projects include :



Both schemes are set to deliver:

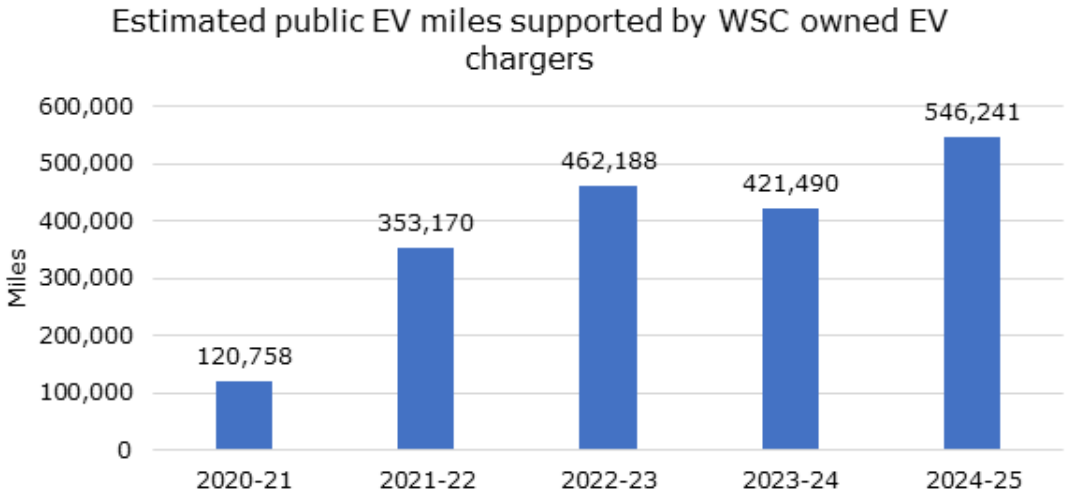
- energy efficiency improvements and reduced in energy costs
- total decarbonisation of the site
- renewal of end of life or expired life systems
- deliverable programme with minimal disruption to all the stakeholders including public

Figure 4 – Emissions from building utility consumption over time



Electric vehicle charging

The cumulative number of EVs that can charge simultaneously using public charging infrastructure installed by WSC is 78 which supported an estimated 546,241 miles in battery electric vehicles. This is the equivalent of driving from John O Groats to Lands End 906 times.



During 2024-25 new chargers were installed in Parkway carpark Bury St Edmunds and The Guineas carpark Newmarket, further details are included in the following press release- Powering a greener future: New EV chargers bring renewable energy to West Suffolk towns.

New EV chargers at The Guineas carpark.

Additional charging infrastructure will be delivered during 2025-26 in collaboration with Suffolk County Council and support from the government's electric vehicle infrastructure fund- Suffolk to benefit from huge £7.3 million EV investment - Suffolk County Council.
The electricity provided to support public charging infrastructure in West Suffolk accounts for 24tCO_2e.

3. Renewable energy

Target: Increase the amount of renewable energy generated each year.

Renewable energy generated	
Baseline generation in 2012-13	300,220kWh
Generation in 2024-25	919,101kWh

The council has installed solar PV systems to reduce its electricity costs and carbon emissions. The energy generated by all systems installed on council offices, parks, cafés, depots, and leisure centres are totalled in this section.

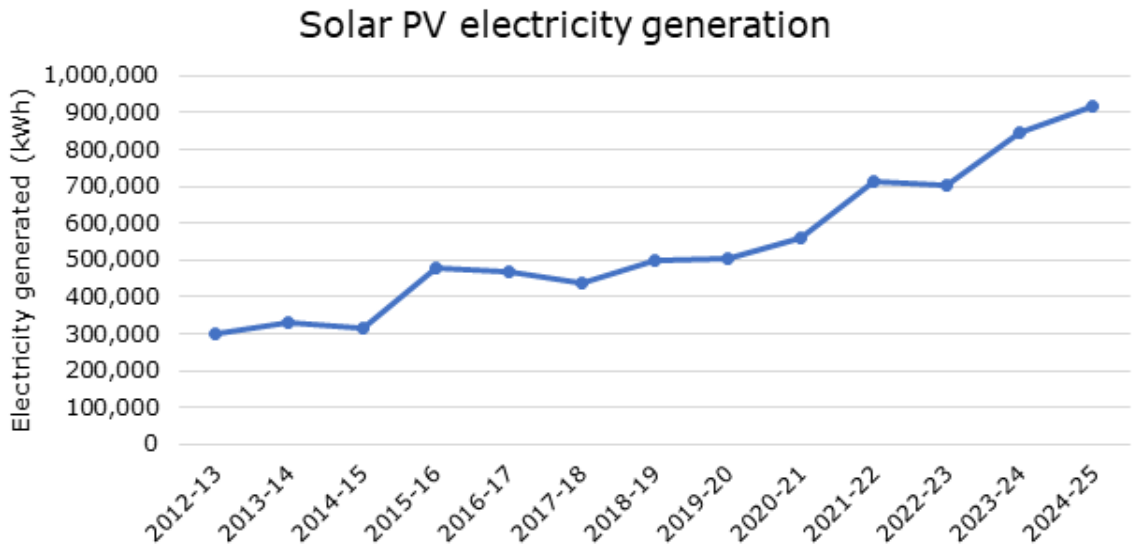
The total capacity of the PV systems installed on West Suffolk Council property and leisure centres stands at 1,324 kilowatt peak (kWp) and they generated 919,101 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity during 2024-25, which is enough to power 259 average sized homes for the year. This figure is more than last year due to installing additional PV systems at Newmarket Leisure Centre.

Newmarket Leisure Centre solar PV

In 2024-25 the council installed more solar PV at Newmarket Leisure Centre. The new installation increased the solar capacity at the site by 217kWp, and is estimated to generate 195,000kWh and save 20tCO2e per annum.

Figure 6 below shows the amount of electricity generated per year which is generally increasing over time.

Figure 6 – Annual renewable electricity generation on council properties.



We also install solar PV on third party buildings through the council's Solar for Business scheme. In 24-25 a total of 824kWp of new solar was installed, bringing the total to 8,458 kWp. This is not included in our carbon accounting, as the electricity is consumed by third parties.

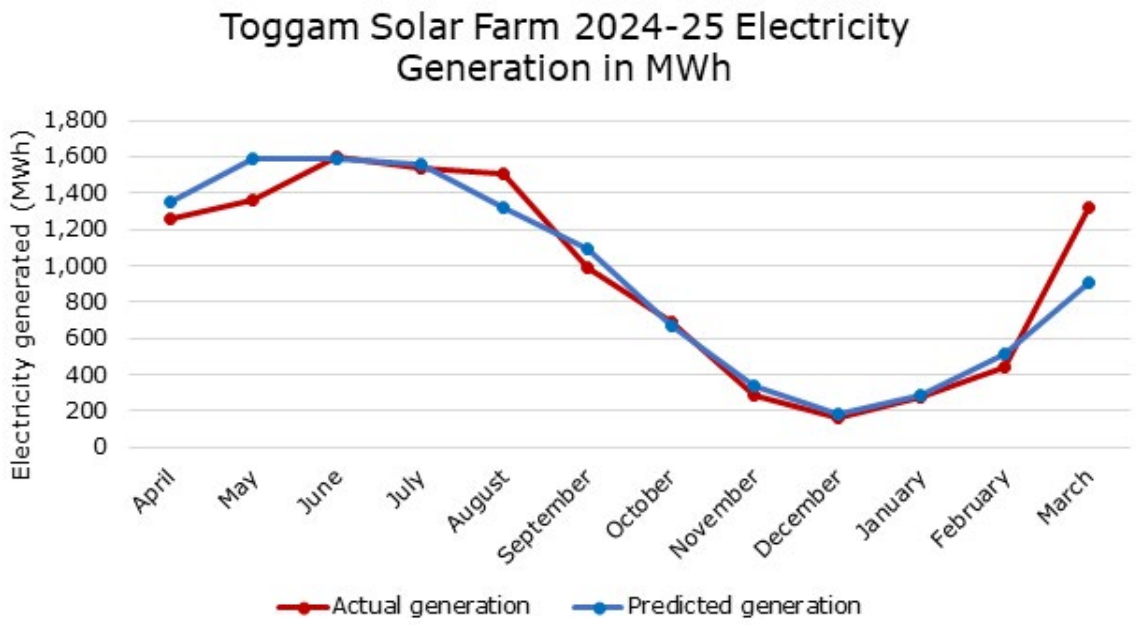
Toggam solar farm

During 2023-24 the solar farm generated 11,420 megawatt an hour (MWh) of renewable electricity which was 0.3 per cent above target for the year. Figure 6 shows the target electricity generation along with actual generation for Toggam Solar Farm in 2024-25.

The financial performance far exceeded the original business case due to the high value of electricity during this period. Since the purchase of the solar farm in 2016, £17m has been generated in energy sales, and the original investment of £14.3m was repaid in the summer of 2024. The original business case forecast a payback of 10 years, but this has been achieved in 8 years.

The electricity that is sold into the National Grid is enough to power around 3,199 homes and offset the carbon dioxide emissions from 1,454 cars.

Figure 7 – Chart showing electricity generation during 2024-25



4. Fuel use

Target: Reduce the emissions from total fuel consumption from the baseline year in 2010.

Fuel use	
Consumption in 2019-20	773,431 litres
Consumption in 2024-25	700,004 litres

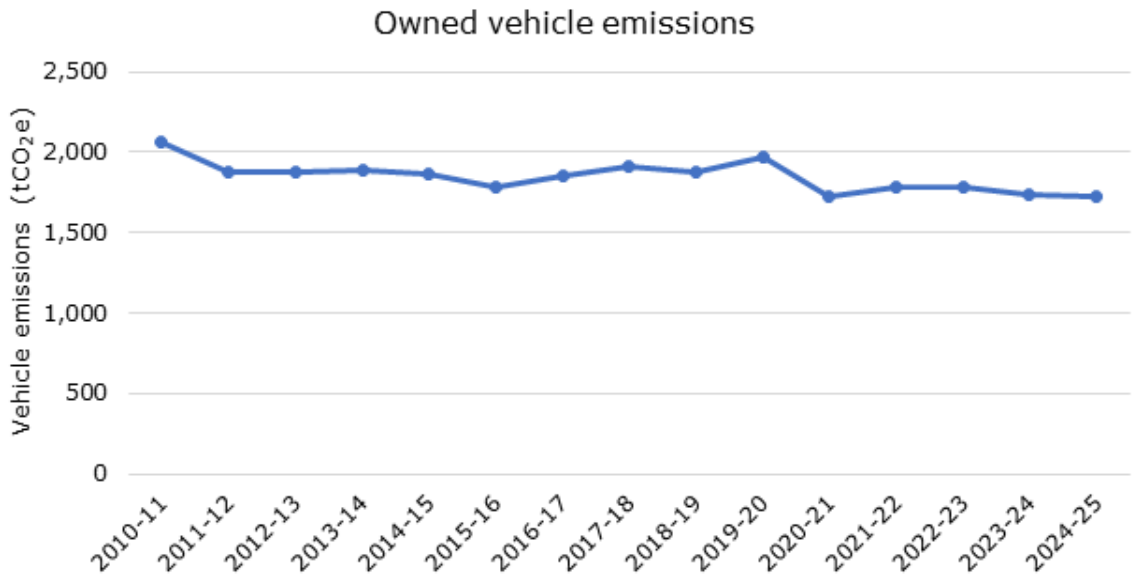
This section includes the total litres of fuel used in, but not limited to, refuse collection vehicles, road sweepers, grounds maintenance vehicles, petrol or diesel bought using fuel cards and industrial mobile machinery.

Total emissions from fuel use are 13 per cent below the baseline year of 2019-20 and down by 1 per cent compared to 2023-24. Out-of-scope emissions from fuel use in 2024-25 totalled 107tCO2e. See Appendix 2 for more details on out-of-scope reporting.

The council's road registered electric fleet vehicles have travelled 58,652 miles during 2024-25, producing zero point of use emissions. Driving the electric vehicles has saved 10.8tCO2e compared to driving the same distance using similarly sized diesel equivalents. During 2024-25 we replaced 3 road vehicles with EVs.

The increase in EV mileage has been supported by the installation of additional EV chargers at the council depots in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. During 2025-26 an EV charger will also be installed at the Mildenhall depot. More information can be found in the press release: Driving the future: West Suffolk Council's new electric fleet and charging infrastructure.

Figure 8 – Chart showing owned vehicle emissions by year



5. Business travel

Target: Reduce the amount of grey fleet miles from the baseline year in 2010. Grey fleet includes vehicles that are owned and used by council employees.

Distance travelled	
Baseline 2010	673,285 miles
Distance travelled in 2024-25	272,576 miles

Business travel includes staff and councillor journeys, pool car use and other owned or leased vehicles. Business travel has increased 17 per cent compared to 2023-24, as shown in Figure 8 below however, the total miles travelled remains 60 per cent lower than the 2010 baseline. Business travel contributed 64.6tCO_2e to the council's total emissions. Of the total distance travelled, private car use (grey fleet) increased by 17 per cent and pool car use increased by 461% per cent to 2,356 miles compared to 2023-24. During 2024-25, 12.7 per cent of total staff milage claims were for journeys taken in a pure electric vehicle and the council aims to increase this percentage over time. Appendix 1 contains a breakdown of the total claims by vehicle fuel type.

Although the council doesn't own the vehicles used for business mileage, it is responsible for the emissions created from business activity. These emissions are reported in scope three. Appendix 2 contains more details on emissions scopes. The continued use of agile working and technology such as Microsoft Teams has helped to keep staff mileage lower than pre pandemic levels. The council will continue to use these arrangements, helping to minimise emissions from business travel.

Figure 9 – Chart showing business passenger miles travelled

Public transport

Staff used public transport to cover 12,709 miles during 2024-25 which was 37 per cent higher than last year. Use of public transport produced 767 kgCO_2e during 2024-25.

6. Water consumption

Target: Reduce the amount of water used in council activities from the baseline year in 2010.

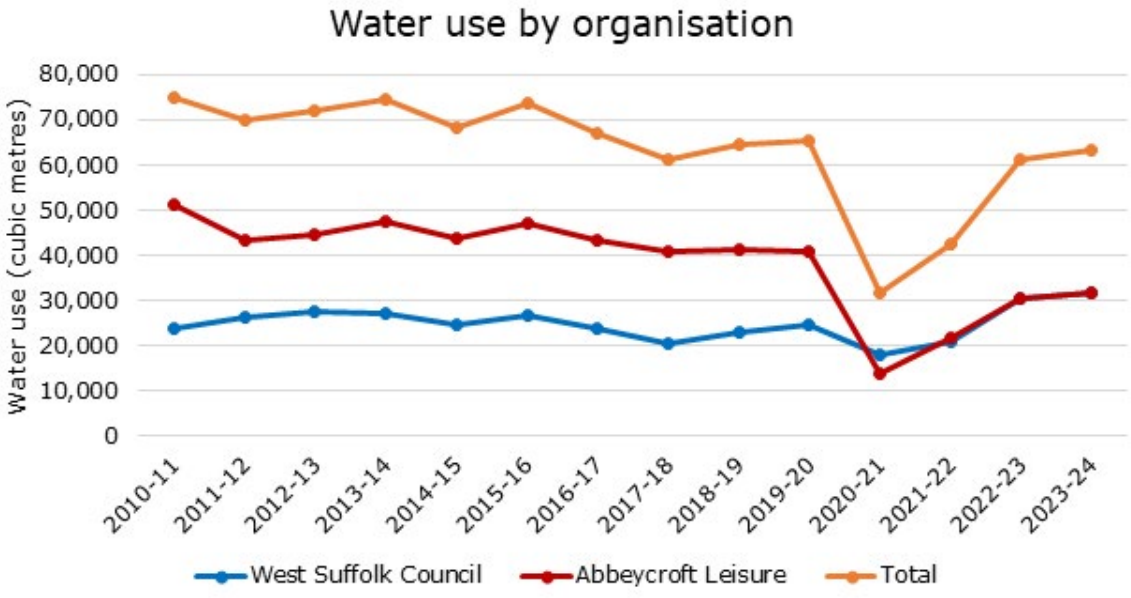
Water consumption (m3)	
West Suffolk Council baseline consumption in 2010	23,827M³
West Suffolk Council consumption in 2024-25	33,970M³
Abbeycroft Leisure baseline consumption in 2010	51,076M³
Abbeycroft Leisure consumption in 2024-25	37,778M³
Total baseline consumption in 2010	74,903M³
Total consumption in 2023-24	**71,748**M³

This section includes the total of water consumption from all WSC owned and operated properties, as well as those run by ACL. Total water consumption contributed 24tCO2e during 2024-25.

Total water consumption has decreased by 4 per cent compared to the 2010 baseline and consumption has decreased by 10 per cent compared to 2023-24.

This is comprised of a 19 per cent decrease in water consumption for WSC driven by improved metering and reporting as part of a new water supply contract and uniform consumption for ACL compared to 2023-24. Figure 10 shows the change in total water consumption over time and by organisation. The council continues to install water saving taps that started with publicly accessible sites to reduce water consumption.

Figure 10 – Chart showing total water consumption by year



7. Office waste

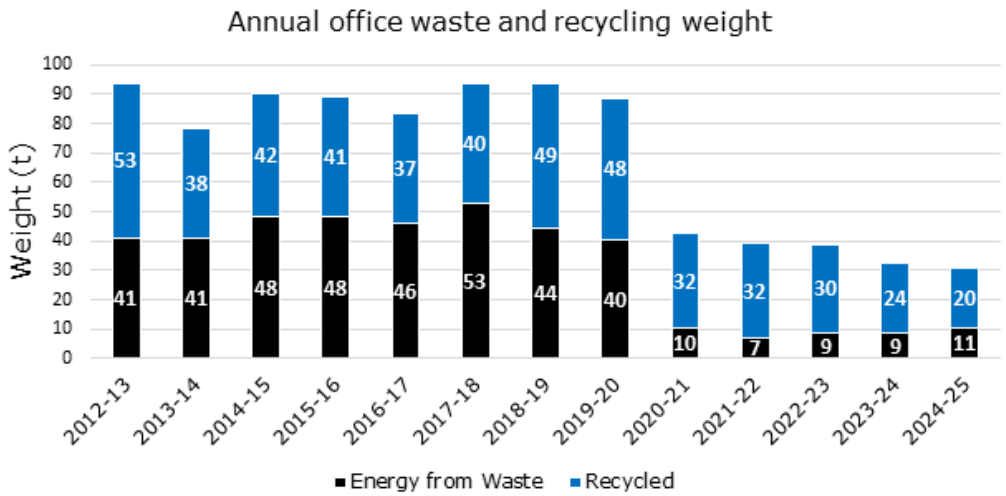
Target: To increase the office waste recycling rate and decrease the total waste arising from council operations from the baseline year 2018.

Waste arisings	Tonnes (t) or percentage
Baseline 2018	93.53t
Waste arisings in 2024-25	30.85t
Recycling rate 2024-25	65.38 per cent

During 2024-25, the total amount of waste generated was 30.85 tonnes. Of this, residual waste accounted for 10.68 tonnes and recycling was 20.17 tonnes.

Figure 10 shows the proportion of waste recycled compared to that sent to the Energy from Waste (EfW) centre each year. EfW aims to move waste up the waste hierarchy, unlocking useful electricity from waste which would otherwise have gone to landfill. More information on the Suffolk EfW facility can be found at Suffolk EfW.

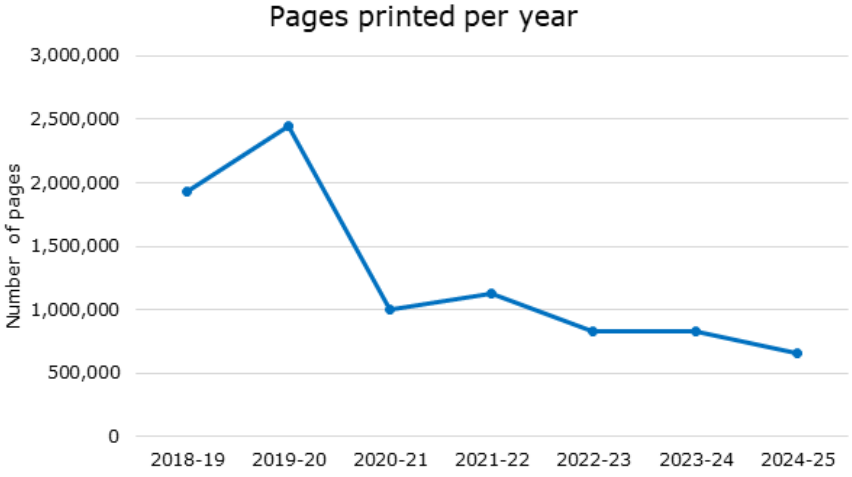
Figure 11 – Chart showing annual office waste and recycling weights



Office printing

In 2024-25, 652,026 pages were printed. This is a 21 per cent decrease from 2023-24 and is 35 per cent lower than 2018-19.

Figure 12 – Chart showing number of pages printed per year



8. Biodiversity and parks

Target: Maintain or increase the number of green flag accredited sites compared to the baseline year 2016.

Green flag status

The following sites successfully retained Green Flag accreditation during 2024-25:

- Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds
- Aspal Close, Mildenhall
- Brandon Country Park, Brandon
- East Town Park, Haverhill
- Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds
- West Stow Country Park, Bury St Edmunds

More information on Green Flag Awards can be found at Green Flag Award.

Tree Planting

- 5 x Hornbeam at Lowry Close, Haverhill.
- 2 x Hornbeam, 4 x Cherry, 1 x Acer at Weavers Lane, Marham Park, Bury St Edmunds.
- 150 x willow coppice trees have been planted at Brandon Country Park including the planting of a willow archway.

We have utilised the Local Authority Treescape Fund managed by the Forestry Commission in previous years to fund tree planting and aftercare. This source of funding has now closed. During 2025-26 we will continue to seek further grant funding for tree planting.

National Tree Planting Week – Black Poplars

To celebrate National Tree Planting Week WSC and local community groups planted a black poplar tree at No Mans Meadows in Bury St Edmunds. The tree was grown as part of a species stock at Nowton park, which is the established Suffolk clone bank for the Black Poplar Project that increases the trees genetic diversity. The black poplar is one of Britain's most endangered native trees, with only a few thousand mature specimens remaining. They are known for their ability to grow quickly and absorb carbon dioxide efficiently and therefore contribute to the broader goal of creating a sustainable environment in the face of climate change.

Water Meadow Management

WSC in partnership with the Bury Water Meadows group have been working in partnership to improve the management of No Mans Meadows and the Crankles to optimise the biodiversity value of this green corridor, enhancing the visual amenity of the wider area, and implement traditional grassland and wetland management practises.

Sheep grazing at Ram Meadow, Bury St Edmunds.

Creation of Wildlife area at Nowton Nursery

Park volunteers, Community Payback and Rangers have created a wildlife area within the walled garden at Nowton Park. Wildlife friendly plants and pollinators have been donated from Realise Futures, Volunteers and Rangers plus plants are now being grown from seed. The garden also includes a bug hotel constructed from recycled materials. 'Margarets pond' donated by one of the regular walkers in Nowton Park is currently being used by mallard ducklings to learn to swim which have chosen the walled garden as their home this spring. The wildlife garden is also utilised by the local school and nursery children to learn about biodiversity, plants and wildlife.
As well as mallards a variety of other wildlife is using the garden including toads, frogs, newts, bees and butterflies.

Bug hotel and Margarets pond at Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds.

School children and volunteers planting naturalising bulbs in Abbey Gardens

Volunteers and 60 school children from Guildhall Feoffment school planted early flowering bulbs to enhance the naturalised area near the entrance to the Abbey Gardens. The Project involved planting the Green City mix that included around 8,500 bulbs for a biodiversity mix of early flowering bulbs.

Spring flowering bulbs at the Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds

Rural England Prosperity Fund Projects

Landscape improvements have been undertaken in Haverhill and Brandon funded by the Rural England Prosperity Fund. The opportunity has been taken to simplify and improve access on these open spaces whilst improving their biodiversity through the use of wildflower grass seed mix and native shrub planting.

Langham Way - Haverhill

Turner Close - Haverhill

Lowry Close - Haverhill

Gainsborough Road - Haverhill

Lakeside improvements at Brandon Country Park

Improvements have been made to the surrounds of the lake by refurbishing the perimeter path, making repairs to the damaged liner and eroded banks of the lake and replacing the lake aeration pump. The banks have been planted with native grasses and wildflowers. These changes have made an overall improvement to the biodiversity of the lake.

A collage of photos showing improvements around the lake at Brandon County Park.

Conservation work at Brandon Country Park

160 square metres of wildflower meadow has been established in Brandon Country Park and Flying Fortress open space, the meadows at East Town Park have also been enhanced by the planting of additional wildflowers. 50 metres of hedging has been thinned ready for the establishment of new hedging plants in 2025-26.

Improving biodiversity in East Town Park and Kedington

We've extended our wildflower planting and introduced snakes head fritillary into suitable meadows and an extensive water vole survey was conducted last year with positive sightings along the brook and in the meadow ponds. A Bramley 'Original' tree has been added to the heritage orchard which was propagated from the original Bramley tree in Southwell. In addition, work to ensure the ditches continue to flow and other drainage work in problem areas has helped reduce areas of problem water accumulation. We've created a new monthly volunteer group at Risbridge meadow in Kedington. The team have laid an old hedge along a boundary, giving it a new lease of life and snow drops were planted along the river walk, plus more general tidying jobs also undertaken.

A collage of photos showing signage and wildflowers at East Town Park and

9. Environmental compliance

Target: No incidents leading to formal action being taken by regulatory bodies.

Target date: Ongoing

The council continues to maintain environmental permits for two operational sites located in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill, which are used to support the strategic management of West Suffolk's municipal waste. The Environment Agency have carried out regulatory inspections and reported there have been no compliance issues, breaches of the permit conditions or any action required by them in any aspects of the requirements.

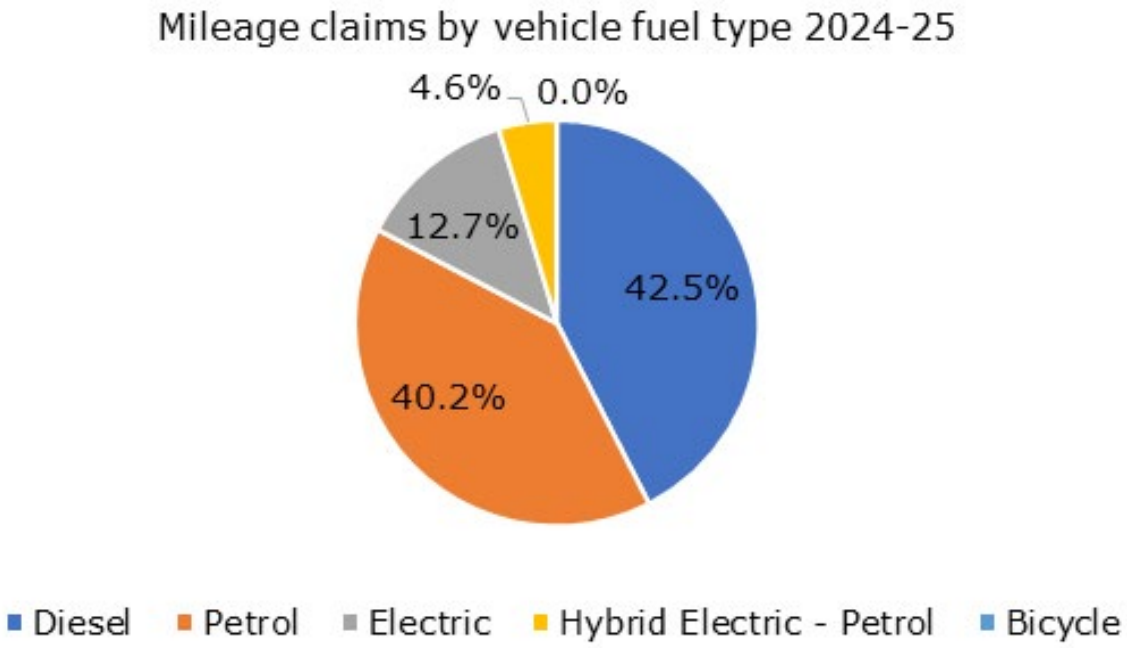
The central government reforms to waste collection in England and will commence in 2026. We continue to work closely with strategic partners to meet the forthcoming challenges and to maintain compliance while ensuring that waste collected is managed in a safe, efficient, and cost-effective way .

A collage of photos showing environmental projects from 2024-25

Appendix 1

Figure 13 shows the breakdown of mileage claims by vehicle fuel type.

Figure 13 - Total mileage claims by fuel type



Appendix 2

Emissions scopes

Figure 14 shows the total greenhouse gas emissions by reporting scope. The greatest proportion of emissions originates from Scope 1, referred to as direct emissions; this includes emissions from the consumption of gas and owned transport. Table 2 details where each source of emissions sits within the reporting framework.

Figure 14 – Total emissions by reporting scope

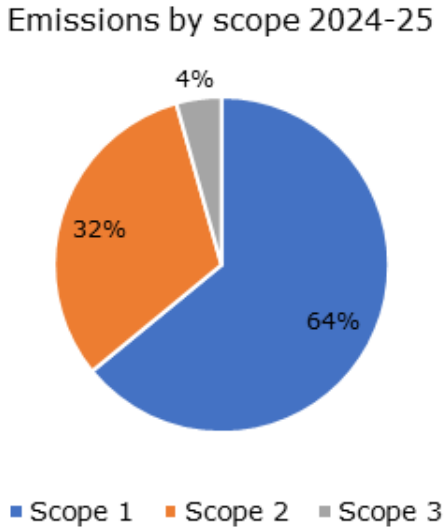


Table 2 – Sources of emissions by scope

Emissions scopes	Activity	Emissions
Scope 1 – direct emissions Emissions from the activities of an organisation or under its control.	• WSC gas consumption • WSC owned transport • WSC propane • ACL gas consumption • ACL biomass	3,488tCO_2e
Scope 2 – indirect emissions Emissions from electricity or other energy purchased and used by the organisation. These emissions are created during the production of the energy by another before they are used by the organisation.	• WSC purchased electricity • ACL purchased electricity	1,718tCO_2e
Scope 3 – all other indirect emissions All other indirect emissions from activities of the organisation, occurring from sources that it does not own or control. The council currently only reports key Scope 3 emissions sources.	• WSC purchased electricity trans-mission and distribution • ACL purchased electricity trans-mission and distribution • WSC public transport • WSC water consumption and treatment • ACL water consumption and treatment • WSC pool cars • WSC staff and councillor mileage in personal vehicles	237tCO_2e
Total emissions		**5,443tCO_2e**
Emissions per resident Resident population: 186,063 Data source: Suffolk Observatory		29.25KgCO_2e/ resident
Out of scope Direct carbon dioxide impact of burning biomass and biofuels where the Scope 1 impact of these fuels has been determined to be net zero – since the fuel source itself absorbs an equivalent amount of CO_2e during the growth phase as the amount of CO_2e released through combustion.	• WSC fuel consumption with average biofuel blend • WSC biomass use • ACL biomass use	187tCO_2e

Methodology notes

This statement focuses on the council's own emissions. There is also a significant amount of pro-environmental work across the district which is not covered in this statement. This work is carried out both by the council directly and in conjunction with partners. More information can be found on the council's webpage tackling climate change.

- The methodology used to write this report is based on the Government's Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) requirements. The council is not obliged to report under these regulations but reports on a voluntary basis. A breakdown of reporting scopes and details of any estimated data is included in Appendix 2.

- Total emissions from Mildenhall Hub have been included in this report and consumption data has been backdated to ensure full and transparent reporting for emissions associated with the site. This change ensures that emissions reporting for multi-occupant sites is uniform across the council's portfolio and enables the council to show the positive benefits from decarbonisation works.

- Calculations include floor area apportionment for gas, electricity & water at Mildenhall Hub.

- Total emissions for Mildenhall Hub have been accounted for in this statement and the previous three years have been updated accordingly. This update will help to show the full emissions from the site and the positive impacts from decarbonisation interventions in the future. The amended method also brings the emissions reporting in line with other multioccupancy buildings operated by the council.

- Calculations exclude water consumption and use estimated data for gas and electricity at Skyliner leisure centre due to metering issues.

- The council is working to secure accurate data where omitted, and the environmental statement will be updated once data becomes available.

West Suffolk Council