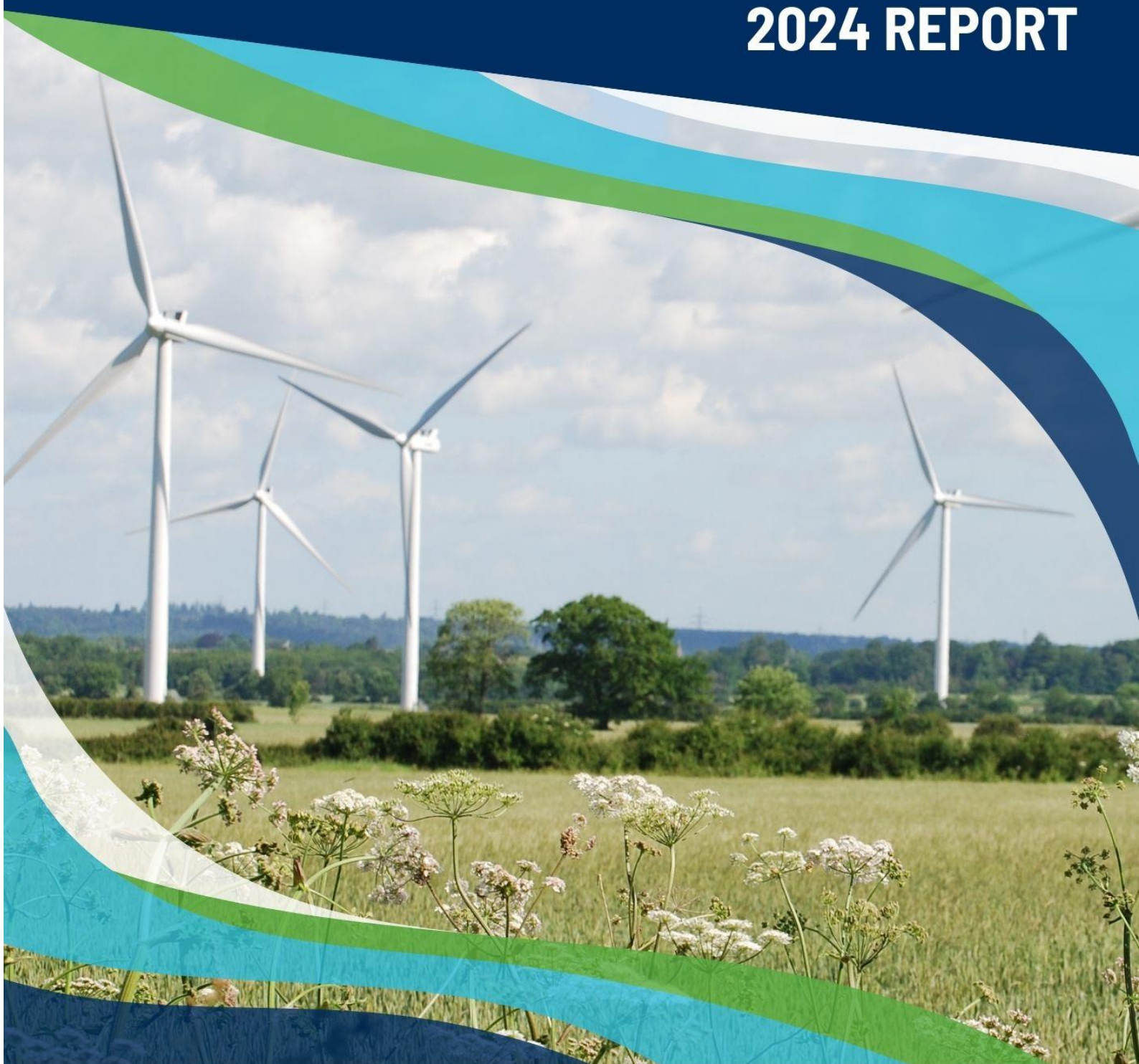




CLIMATE ACTION IN THE MIDLANDS 2024 REPORT



Supported by



Report information

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About the Midlands Net Zero Hub

Created by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in 2018, the Midlands Net Zero Hub provides free strategic and technical support to local authorities, public sector organisations, and community groups to develop net zero projects. The Hub takes net zero projects from the earliest stages of feasibility to investment and delivery.

The Hub's objectives are to:

- Increase the number, quality, and scale of local net zero projects.
- Enable local areas to attract private or public finance for decarbonisation projects.
- Raise awareness of the opportunity for, and benefits of, local net zero investment.
- Support regional co-ordination and collaboration between partners and share learning.

The Hub also works to deliver programmes developed and funded by the UK Government including:

- Supporting community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction, and energy supply projects through the Community Energy Fund.
- Leading domestic retrofit programmes that fund energy efficiency improvements including insulation, draught proofing, upgraded heating systems, solar panels, and heat pumps in low income and social homes.
- Helping public sector organisations access finance to make their own buildings easier, greener, and cheaper to heat and power through schemes such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.
- Upskilling the green supply chain by delivering short courses in a range of skills including insulation, heat pumps, and heat networks.

www.midlandsnetzerohub.co.uk

About Sustainability West Midlands

Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) was established in 2002 as an independent, not-for-profit company with the mission of making the West Midlands more sustainable, fairer and greener for all.

Our vision is that the West Midlands is leading in contributing to the national target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 whilst addressing health inequality and driving inclusive growth. We monitor the [West Midlands Sustainability 2030 Roadmap](#) which acts as a framework that all organisations based or operating in the region can use to help them make changes to their activities in the knowledge that they will contribute to wider regional ambition.

SWM's support our [members](#) and other local stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors to implement these changes by enabling them to demonstrate innovation and leadership and provide opportunities to collaborate and celebrate success.

www.swm.org.uk

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About CDP

CDP is a not-for-profit charity that runs the global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts. The world's economy looks to CDP as the gold standard of environmental reporting with the richest and most comprehensive dataset on corporate and city action.

CDP runs the global environmental disclosure system. Each year CDP supports thousands of companies, cities, states and regions to measure and manage their risks and opportunities on climate change, water security and deforestation. We do so at the request of their investors, purchasers and city stakeholders.

Over the last two decades we have created a system that has resulted in unparalleled engagement on environmental issues worldwide.

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Foreword

The climate crisis is one of the most pressing issues that our society has ever faced. Urgent action is required to reach net zero by 2050 and limit global warming as far as possible.

This global crisis can be overcome by finding local solutions that deliver benefits for local communities. Improved health, reduced bills, and new employment opportunities are all within our reach if we find innovative solutions to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and improve energy efficiency of our buildings.

The Climate Change Committee states that councils have influence over roughly a third of emissions in their local areas. This means that local authorities are well placed to lead the transition to net zero.

This leadership is reflected in the motivation of local authorities in the Midlands to tackle the climate crisis. Within the region are some of the most ambitious net zero goals in the UK, with more than 75% of councils aiming to be net zero on their own estate by 2041.

But delivering the transition to a green economy is not without its challenges, and there are barriers that we need to overcome to accelerate action. Local governments are confronted with many challenges, including limited resources and competing priorities.

While these issues can seem insurmountable on the surface, we have seen councils working in creative ways to drive their agendas forward.

Since the Midlands Net Zero Hub was created in 2018, we've secured more than £400m to support excellent projects across a range of decarbonisation schemes. The Midlands Net Zero Hub's Climate Action Benchmarking project has shone a light on where the region is excelling and where further support is needed.

Over nine themes, we have identified what is needed to accelerate the transition to net zero and detailed projects that will inspire local authorities as to what's possible in their area.

By working in partnership, we can unlock huge power by sharing knowledge and learning from projects that have come before.

Together, we can continue to make local net zero projects happen.



Michael Gallagher, Senior Responsible Officer for Midlands Net Zero Hub

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the project and this report

In collaboration with CDP and Sustainability West Midlands (SWM), the Midlands Net Zero Hub (MNZH) invited all local authorities in the Midlands region to participate in the Midlands Climate Action Benchmarking (CAB) project. The project aims to help local authorities understand their progress and identify areas for improvement as they work towards their climate goals.

The project covers the East and West Midlands region, which includes 71 individual local authorities and two combined authorities.

This report summarises the key findings of the CAB and provides recommendations for both councils and the bodies who support them.

1.2 Background

The MNZH funded the CAB project with the intention of building a deeper understanding of the actions that local authorities in the region are taking to meet their climate goals. Through the project, MNZH is particularly interested in discovering:

- Areas where councils are excelling and there are opportunities for greater collaboration or knowledge sharing.
- Themes where local authorities require additional support from MNZH, the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ), and other stakeholders.
- Barriers to delivering net zero projects.

The information collated for this project will be an evidence base for net zero support through the MNZH and shared with DESNZ to demonstrate the needs of the region.

Following a competitive tendering process, MNZH has chosen to work with CDP and SWM, who combined provide years of experience of benchmarking local authorities on their progress with climate action and wider sustainability issues.

Each year since 2019, local authorities across the UK have been requested to report to CDP's questionnaire for the local governments of cities, states and regions, hosted on CDP-ICLEI Track. The questionnaire covers a broad range of environmental and climate topics, including climate action governance, carbon emission reductions, resilience, and adaptation. The questionnaire also covers broad sustainability-related themes as explored in SWM's [previous benchmarking process](#) undertaken between 2021 and 2023 for West Midlands authorities and a similar benchmarking exercise between 2009 and 2016.



1.3 Methodology summary

Through this project, councils have been asked to submit their evidence to the benchmarking process through CDP-ICLEI Track, answering a series of questions on their progress on climate action. The portal was open between 04 July and 02 December 2024. CDP have supported local authorities through this process through drop-in sessions and one-to-one meetings.

SWM’s role has included summarising and synthesising the results in bespoke reports for each council who responded. SWM are also running a series of roadshow events in 2025 to share good practice, provide help and support, and hear from a range of leaders in the field.

Following analysis of the submissions to CDP-ICLEI Track, we have categorised the results into the following areas, in line with themes used by DESNZ and SWM through their [Roadmap to 2030](#):

Theme	Further information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, Strategy and Governance ➤ <i>This includes target setting, strategy development, and action planning, along with communications and staffing needed to accelerate climate action.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting to Climate Change ➤ <i>This includes assessing risks to climate change, identifying impacts, planning to adapt to these impacts, and implementation of actions.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Air & Water ➤ <i>This includes work to help alleviate air, water, and/or noise pollution.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat & Buildings ➤ <i>This includes activities to decarbonise heat and improve the quality, efficiency and performance of buildings and homes.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Environment ➤ <i>This includes activities on nature recovery, improvements to biodiversity, and the role of nature in tackling climate change.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power ➤ <i>This includes work to decarbonise the grid, electrification, and supporting community energy schemes.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Efficiency ➤ <i>This includes activities focusing on waste reduction, re-use, and recycling, as well as industrial symbiosis.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Equity & Health ➤ <i>This includes programmes to reduce the health inequality gap, fuel poverty alleviation, and ensuring climate action is equitable and just.</i>

Theme	Further information
 <p>Sustainable Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Growth ➤ <i>This includes supporting growth in the local Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services sector and helping businesses to improve their efficiency and performance.</i>
 <p>Transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport ➤ <i>This includes encouraging walking, cycling, and other modes of sustainable travel, and decarbonisation of vehicles and fleets.</i>

A detailed methodology is provided in Annex 1.

2 Thematic breakdown: strengths and challenges

Based on local authority submissions input to the CDP portal, the following section summarises the general strengths and challenges against each theme. It provides an overview of what local authorities are doing well and where there are gaps in progress.

2.1 Adapting to Climate Change



Strengths - many local authorities have...

- Worked in partnership to support the rollout of local flood management schemes, including those utilising nature as a flood alleviation technique.
- Considered adaptation at a high level and recognise its importance.

Challenges - many local authorities have yet to...

- Mobilise action on climate change adaptation, due to resource and capacity constraints.
- Produce a climate change risk assessment and adaptation plan.
- Implement 'no regret' adaptation actions that can help strengthen the local area's resilience to climate impacts.

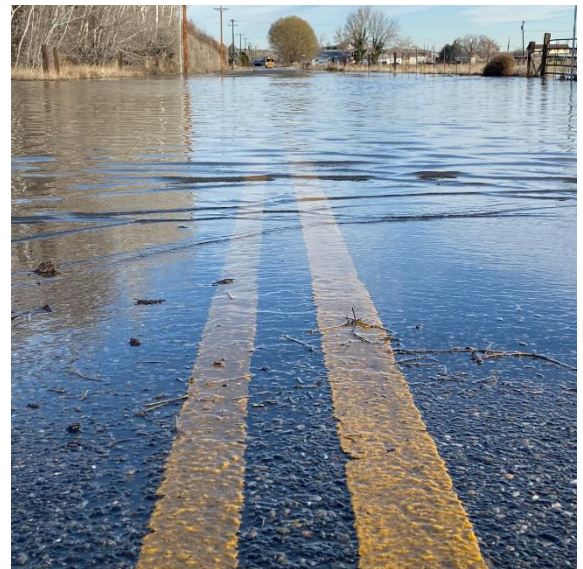


Photo of a flooded road (Canva)

Key recommendations against this theme

- Work with partners within your area to develop a place-based adaptation plan and risk assessment. This should be led by the top-tier council with strong collaboration with the district councils (where relevant) and other key stakeholders, such as local universities, NHS Trusts, communities, and businesses.
- Identify 'no regret' adaptation options that can be implemented quickly. This could include capacity building, community resilience schemes, communications, and further research. They should also be aligned with relevant work associated with net zero and local nature recovery.
- Integrate adaptation into other activities taking place or planned. This could include building in ventilation improvements to retrofit projects to deal with overheating, or ensuring tree planting programmes factor in the potential benefits to flood alleviation or enhancing urban shading.

2.2 Clean Air & Water



Strengths - many local authorities have...

- Invested and established programmes in the decarbonisation of transport, which in turn helps to alleviate air pollution in local areas.

- Set up air quality monitoring approaches (e.g. sensors) in key areas in urban settings, such as near to schools.

Challenges - many local authorities have yet to...

- Produce an air and water pollution alleviation action plan, capturing nuanced issues depending on how urban (where air quality is likely to be more of an issue) or rural (where issues such as agricultural pollution may be more prevalent) the authority is.
- Consider how new capital projects may affect air or water quality both during and after the design and implementation phase.
- Consider how to best utilise green infrastructure to help reduce particulates in urban areas or as a co-benefit to wider nature recovery programmes.

Key recommendations against this theme

- Learn lessons from the implementation of the [Birmingham Clean Air Zone](#) to ascertain its challenges and successes in order to assess the likely impact of rolling out similar concepts in other high polluting areas.
- Work with organisations such as the Environment Agency (water) and universities (air) to establish monitoring points in local authorities to determine possible pollution hotspots.
- Engage and influence high-polluting industries by supporting them with advice on how to reduce their overall emissions, and thus air and water pollutants.
- Continue to accelerate the uptake of clean and active travel options (see 2.9).

2.3 Heat & Buildings



Strengths - many local authorities have...

- Accessed funding and implemented retrofit programmes on their own council housing stock, and for other homes in their locality, saving tonnes of carbon and improving the quality of residences.
- Embraced the rollout of energy efficiency measures both within homes and on their own estates.



Whole-house retrofit work © Nottingham City Council

Challenges - many local authorities have yet to...

- Retrofit their own buildings, with prioritisation so far being on homes. This could be a quick-win to make rapid gains in carbon reduction.
- Investigate or collaborate in setting up a heat network. Some councils are supporting the establishment of heat networks of different types and lessons can be learned from elsewhere.
- Signpost opportunities to other organisations in their locality, especially businesses, with regards to retrofit funding and schemes that may be available to them.

Key recommendations against this theme

- Engage with your local MNZH representative; they are experts in this field and can provide support and advice to help accelerate your heat and building decarbonisation activity.
- Audit your council's estate for the potential for retrofitting options, aligned with funding opportunities.
- Through collaboration with local partners, identify the potential to get involved in a local heat network scheme.
- Prepare for the Heat Network Zoning scheme with the support of MNZH, who can provide support and advice to help accelerate your activity on heat network implementation.
- Provide basic signposting to heat decarbonisation and retrofit advice and funding opportunities on council websites for dissemination through various channels.
- Ensure all retrofit schemes are monitored for their impact on carbon emissions to help align with local authority net zero targets.
- Work with local government education departments and local education and skills providers to strategically support the development of the necessary skills for heat decarbonisation and retrofit.

2.4 Natural Environment



Strengths - many local authorities have...

- Established and are in the process of implementing tree planting programmes, with many ambitious planting targets in place in various local areas.
- Developed Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), as requested by central Government, helping to reverse the decline in biodiversity.
- Considered how Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) can be implemented effectively within new developments.

Challenges - many local authorities have yet to...

- Consider how their tree planting programmes adhere to the principle of 'right tree right place,' establishing the best places for trees to be planted that will likely result in multiple gains in areas such as flood risk alleviation, carbon sequestration, biodiversity enhancements, and biodiversity improvements.
- Analyse how they can integrate nature onto their own sites and land, through small projects including wildflower meadows and insect holes.

- Set tangible and measurable biodiversity improvement targets (although it is recognised that these may be established through the emerging LNRS process).

Key recommendations against this theme

- Once the LNRS is completed, ensure that there is an established monitoring process in place to keep track of impact, and develop a working group focused on driving forward delivery.



Photo of Ladybower Reservoir, Derbyshire (Pixabay)

- Ensure that the LNRS aligns with other biodiversity, nature, and green infrastructure-focused strategies that cover the same geographical area.
- Engage with local community groups, the Environment Agency, and your local [Wildlife Trust](#) to ensure local authority action taken to improve the natural environment complements existing work.
- Embed 'greening' into planning procedures, for example through the enforcement of Sustainable Drainage Systems or green roofs in developments.

2.5 Power



Strengths – many local authorities have...

- Implemented renewable energy technologies onto their own estates, especially focusing on solar PV onto the roofs of council-owned buildings such as leisure centres.
- Considered innovative, large-scale renewable projects that aim to provide clean energy to thousands of local homes.
- Looked at replacing inefficient street lighting with LED technology.

Challenges – many local authorities have yet to...

- Identify appropriate renewable energy or energy reduction targets that can be measured and implemented alongside net zero targets for their area.
- Invest in or strongly support the rollout of community energy programmes, especially in off-gas areas, to bring about resilience into the local system where future energy supplies may be vulnerable.
- Develop an energy resilience plan, factoring in how the council will support its residents during periods of soaring energy costs and including how supplies may be affected by a future climate.

Key recommendations against this theme

- Provide basic signposting to energy advice, including on renewable energy and how to set up local community energy schemes, on council websites for dissemination through various channels.
- Create a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) for your area to identify the best way to reduce carbon emissions. A LAEP will provide a collaborative, cost-effective, and credible net zero action plan.



Photo of offshore wind turbines in Lincolnshire (Canva)

- Engage with your local [MNZH](#) representative who can provide support and advice to help accelerate your activity on low carbon energy implementation.
- Ensure all clean energy and energy efficiency schemes are monitored for their impact on carbon emissions to help align with local authority net zero targets.
- Ensure that resilience is built into your energy supply and contracts, and that local residents are supported with energy price rises via provision of advice and signposting to expertise, encompassed by the production of an energy resilience plan.
- Maintain a network of ‘trusted gatekeepers’ for engaging with local residents and businesses about energy; these are unlikely to be primarily energy focused organisations.

2.6 Resource Efficiency



Strengths - many local authorities have...

- Developed and adopted a waste management strategy for their local area, focusing on both the council’s own waste and waste reduction within the community.
- Reduced waste and increased recycling levels within their own estates.

Challenges - many local authorities have yet to...

- Establish recycling or waste/plastic reduction targets to enable monitoring across the local area.
- Rollout long-term public engagement campaigns on waste reduction and recycling.
- Consider how to source their goods and services more sustainably and ethically, through adopting sustainable procurement protocols.

Key recommendations against this theme

- Prepare for the ‘[Simpler Recycling](#)’ requirements which are set out in the [Environment Act 2021](#). Simpler Recycling will reform recycling collections in England by ensuring that all households and workplaces can recycle the same core waste streams of plastic, metal, glass, paper and card, and food waste. Garden waste should be collected on request. This means that:
 - By 31 March 2025, all workplaces with 10 or more employees must recycle the relevant waste streams.
 - By 31 March 2026, all local authorities must collect the core recyclable waste streams from all households in England, including weekly food waste collections, except in areas with transitional arrangements.
 - Micro-firms, (workplaces with fewer than 10 employees), have until 31 March 2027 to comply, and plastic film collections from all households and workplaces, will also be included by then.

- Use the Local Government Association (LGA) [Waste Routemap](#) to help identify interventions that could embed sustainability in council services with a focus on waste, complementing existing council projects and actions. It enables you to reflect on your work in this area and how things could be improved. Good practice case studies are included.

- Sign up to updates from the [LGA Sustainability Hub](#) which includes focus on waste management in council services.

- [WRAP](#) (Waste and Recycling Action Programme) provides useful information for local authorities and organisations in relation to waste minimisation and recycling. Monitor their website and communications for information that can be shared locally.

- Consider supporting the establishment of a ‘Resource Efficiency Cluster,’ bringing businesses together to reduce their environmental impact and generate benefits. This is done by sharing resources and best practice and collaborating. Resource efficiency clusters typically focus on how resources are used, particularly focusing on reducing waste, energy, and water use, and minimising pollution and costs. SWM have undertaken [detailed research into this approach](#) in Telford & Wrekin on behalf of the Local Government Association.

- Undertake regular waste composition analysis to understand the make-up of waste across the area, the capture rates for current recycling schemes, and the opportunity to divert more waste from landfill or incineration.

- Use the findings of the waste composition analysis to design engagement campaigns to encourage greater capture rates for existing recycling collections.

- Establish a sustainable procurement policy that looks at the lifecycle and source of all goods and services procured by the council to ensure they are coming from ethical and sustainable sources, and consider integration of circular economy and reuse options.



Photo of an overflowing bin (Unsplash)

- Ensure that circular economy principles are included in decisions made by planning and procurement teams, and that relevant data is collected.

2.7 Social Equity & Health



Strengths – many local authorities have...

- Considered how their retrofit and energy saving programmes can benefit those in social housing who may be at risk or already classed as being in fuel poverty.
- Invested in active transport options to encourage walking and cycling, in part to boost health outcomes, and reduce air pollution.

Challenges – many local authorities have yet to...

- Join up their health and wellbeing strategies to the wider environmental agenda, in terms of considering how net zero activity can impact on all members of society.
- Consider how climate change risks and impacts could affect the most vulnerable in society.
- Develop a fuel poverty action plan, establish fuel poverty reduction targets, and use national statistics to monitor fuel poverty levels in their local area.

Key recommendations against this theme

- Share good examples of fuel poverty campaigns to the areas where performance is poorest and where fuel poverty levels are highest. This will be especially important given the current energy and cost of living crisis, to ensure the right support is in place for the winter.
- Implement fuel poverty reduction targets to help monitor the success of these measures, [using Government data](#).
- Work with public health teams, local NHS trusts, GPs, and other healthcare providers to ensure outcomes that can benefit both health and the environment are rolled out at a large scale, such as active travel programmes and social prescribing schemes.
- Encourage employees to act as champions in specific aspects of health and wellbeing, such as becoming [Mental Health First Aiders](#).

2.8 Sustainable Growth



Strengths – many local authorities have...

- Made use of the data in the Midlands Low Carbon Environmental Goods & Services (LCEGS) [study](#), commissioned by MNZH, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the sector across all local authority areas.
- Supported business growth in the low carbon sector and assisted businesses from any sector to reduce their energy usage and carbon emissions.

Challenges - many local authorities have yet to...

- Work collaboratively to develop an action plan to help maximise and accelerate low carbon activity in sectors that are most relevant in their areas, e.g. agriculture or manufacturing.
- Proactively signpost existing business support programmes, funding, or advice schemes.
- Consider how their approach to procurement can help to prioritise local, low carbon, and sustainable businesses.

Key recommendations against this theme

- Consult the recently completed [refresh of the LCEGS study](#), which quantifies the key areas in the sector as well as offering a number of recommendations to continue to grow the sector.
- Where they exist, work with your Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Growth Hub, Chambers of Commerce, combined authority, and the MNZH to become more confident in providing low carbon and sustainability advice to businesses in their well-established networks.
- Work with the above partners to ensure appropriate funding (e.g. Shared Prosperity Funding) is utilised and includes elements related to sustainability and low carbon. Use SWM's [funding pages](#) to keep an eye on other opportunities.
- Work with the above partners and nearby local authorities to develop a strategy to enable better working with local skills providers, education institutions, and LCEGS businesses to ensure training and apprenticeships are available to address the specific skills gaps in the area.
- Develop and promote a centralised directory of reputable low carbon suppliers and consultants to simplify the selection process for SMEs when pursuing low carbon technology installations, as well as increasing the awareness of local low carbon businesses.

2.9 Transport



Strengths - many local authorities have...

- Undertaken a fleet review and begun to implement low-carbon vehicles into fleets, including electric, hydrogen, and hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO).
- Started to extensively rollout electric vehicle infrastructure across their local area, including consideration of on-road parking charging points.
- Worked with local transport providers to encourage uptake of electric or hydrogen vehicles (e.g. local bus fleets).
- Considered active travel options and infrastructure as part of local transport planning.



Photo of buses in Birmingham (Canva)

Challenges - many local authorities have yet to...

- Invest significantly in public transport options, especially to help reverse the decline in local bus route provision, and improvements of ageing cycle networks.
- Deliver public campaigns or incentives to encourage residents to switch to public transport, walking, and cycling options.

Key recommendations against this theme

- Apply to the Government's [electric vehicle charging infrastructure programme](#) to further accelerate the rollout of a cleaner fleet and to help other local companies do the same.
- Learn from lessons that came about following Covid-19 lockdowns to encourage continued remote working where appropriate, and walking and cycling when travelling is required. Provision of simple information, such as signposting safe walking and cycling routes and green spaces, is a good place to start.
- Implement council-wide incentives so staff can travel in a more sustainable way, e.g. cycle schemes.
- Support and rollout incentives for local bus use, especially in rural areas.
- Share success and learnings from innovative low carbon transport programmes that have delivered a step-change in travel habits, to encourage similar work in other areas.

3 Case studies

The following section provides details of some best-in-class examples being demonstrated by local authorities against each of the themes included in this report.

3.1 Case study 1: Climate Change Impact Assessment tool

Local authority
Chesterfield Borough Council
Type
Borough/District (second-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural/urban mix
Funding accessed
n/a
More information
Visit the website

Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC) has committed to including climate change as a mandatory consideration whenever the council makes decisions. The impact assessment has two areas of focus: it develops a structured report to identify the impact of the activity on the climate, as well as the impact a changing climate may have on the activity.



The tool has been developed in Excel and, following analysis of each activity, graphs and infographics are produced that give a flavour of the impact climate change can have on the activity and visa-versa, and provides clarity over factors that may need to be changed as a result. The infographics show whether the activity being proposed is likely to have a **net benefit** dealing with climate change or a **net cost**.

The categories included in the tool are adaptation, buildings, business, energy, goods and services, influence, internal resources, land-use, transport, waste.

CBC are also very open about **sharing the tool with others** and helping other councils to assess the impact of their activities. The tool is [readily available on their website](#) for others to use, and it has been shared with partners through the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authorities' Energy Partnership and several councils within this partnership are already in the process of adapting this tool for their own use.

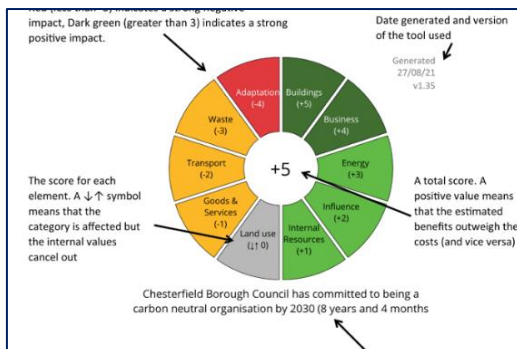


Image: Snapshot of an infographic produced by the tool © [Chesterfield Borough Council](#)

3.2 Case study 2: A clear plan of action to 2030

Local authority
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Type
Borough/District (second-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Urban
Funding accessed
n/a
More information
Visit the website



Image: Front cover of the delivery plan © Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (NULBC) has recently developed a Sustainable Environment Strategy & Delivery Plan which sets out **a framework for collective action** on climate change to achieve the council’s ambition to become net zero by 2030 and Newcastle’s ambitions of becoming net zero by 2050.



The strategy is split into four broad categories, these being Built Environment and Energy, Travel and Transport, Natural Environment and Sequestration, and Engagement and Behaviour Change. The strategy clearly outlines the governance that needs to be in place for the ambitions to be realised, and the actions and priorities are data driven, **using evidence to justify what is included**.

The accompanying delivery plan is clear in its structure and format, including **actions that are costed, timebound, and, where possible, carbon savings identified**. This adds to the level of justification for each action. Also included in the plan is transparency around the progress of each action upon the date it was published.

Given the limited resourcing borough councils have on taking climate action, this is a good example of a clear, engaging, and considered strategy and plan of action.

3.3 Case study 3: A Scope 3 Emissions Roadmap

Local authority	Broxtowe Borough Council
Type	Borough/District (second-tier)
Predominant Land Use	Urban
Funding accessed	n/a
More information	Scope 3 Carbon Footprint Report

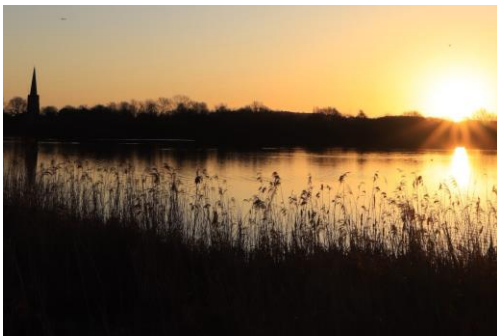


Image: Attenborough Nature Reserve located within the council boundary (Unsplash)

Scope 3 emissions are those which an organisation does not have direct control over, but occur up and down the value chain, therefore contributing to the organisation’s overall carbon footprint. Scope 3 emissions are the hardest to measure and reduce, yet they can often account for up to 80% of an organisation’s overall carbon emissions.



Broxtowe Borough Council successfully managed to measure some elements of their scope 3 emissions, such as business travel and upstream fuel and energy emissions, but struggled to quantify more complicated areas. These include emissions from purchased goods and services, housing and commercial properties, upstream transportation, waste disposal, water use, commuting, and more.

The council has recently had a baseline scope 3 carbon emissions report developed by the Carbon Trust, quantifying these remaining areas. This information will be used to inform the next stage, a high-level roadmap identifying priority areas of scope 3 emissions, and actions to take to reduce these.

The council has yet to set a council net zero target, as they believe it is important to have a clear understanding of their scope 3 emissions before doing so. Once the scope 3 emissions roadmap has been published, a high-level costing programme will be developed and a net zero target set.

3.4 Case study 4: Adapting Herefordshire to Climate Change

Local authority
Herefordshire Council
Type
Unitary
Predominant Land Use
Rural
Funding accessed
n/a
More information
Visit the website



The need for councils to accelerate action on climate change adaptation is becoming more urgent each year. The Midlands is experiencing more extreme weather driven by changes in the climate that are already being felt. Herefordshire Council recognised this as a priority, building on their excellent work in flood alleviation, by co-developing an adaptation plan for the county in 2023-24 with SWM and local stakeholders.

Alongside the new plan, the project included the development of a Climate Impact Assessment that focuses on how the county has been affected by severe weather in the past 15 years, a technical report that analyses how climate change may affect Herefordshire in future, and a climate change risk assessment for the county.

Stakeholder engagement was at the centre of the plan’s development to extract local knowledge, experience, and opinion. A combination of in-person and online workshops were run, including for elected members and communities, and in-depth one-to-one interviews with practitioners.

Since the plan was completed, the council has convened a county-wide working group to drive forward implementation of the highest priority actions contained within the plan.



Image: Swollen River Wye in Hereford © Herefordshire Council

3.5 Case study 5: Our City Our River

Local authority
Derby City Council
Type
Unitary
Predominant Land Use
Urban
Funding accessed
Local Growth, ERDF, City Council
More information
Visit the website



Our City Our River (OCOR) has been developed to reduce flood risk in Derby and create a high-quality riverside, linking the city centre with the river. It includes plans for defences which would provide a greater level of protection up to a 1 in 100 year chance of occurrence and provide opportunities to release the economic potential of riverside brownfield sites.

The scheme has unlocked strategic economic sites which are now investable, providing clear benefits to businesses and the city's economy.

Alongside this, there are additional benefits for the local community and for the environment. For example, areas on Duke Street, City Road, and Etruria Gardens have been landscaped with trees, shrubs, and grass to enhance the areas adjacent to the river. Other advantages include a multi-user pathway which has been built along the west bank of the river, improving connectivity via sustainable forms of transport.

The council and its partners have also engaged with local schools so that children can learn about the OCOR Project through visiting the site. Visits also create the opportunity to find out more about careers in the construction industry.

Over 2,000 properties are to be protected by the scheme.

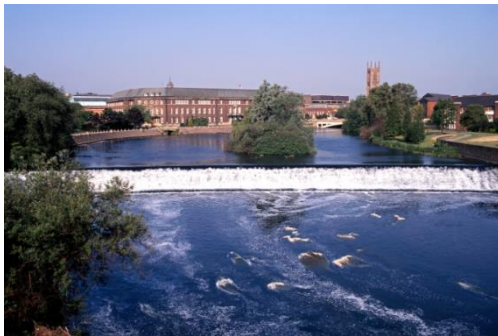


Image: River Derwent near Derby (Canva)

3.6 Case study 6: Reducing pollution outside schools

Local authority
Lincolnshire County Council
Type
County council (upper-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural/urban mix
Funding accessed
DEFRA Air Quality Grant
More information
Visit the website

Lincolnshire County Council has used funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to set up Clean Air Lincolnshire, a partnership between schools, councils, and businesses in the region to improve air quality in the county.



Air quality has been cited as the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK, and Lincolnshire reportedly has Nitrogen Dioxide concentrations nearly four times higher than the World Health Organisation’s recommended level, largely due to the large amount of agriculture in the county. The impact of poor air quality on health is particularly apparent in young and vulnerable people.

The aim of the Clean Air Lincolnshire project is to increase awareness of the sources and impacts of air pollution, explain the problems it can cause, and promote actions residents can take to improve air quality in the region.

Eight schools in the county are taking part in the project, and air quality monitoring sensors have been installed outside each one, with the daily air quality visible on the Clean Air Lincolnshire website. Ways for residents to reduce their impact on air pollution are shared both through the schools and on the website, including methods such as taking public transport, active travel, and avoiding idling outside schools.



Image: Lincoln Cathedral, Lincolnshire (Canva)

3.7 Case study 7: Town Centre Low Carbon Energy Network

Local authority
Solihull Council
Type
Unitary
Predominant Land Use
Urban
Funding accessed
UK Government, WMCA
More information
Visit the website



Image: Solihull town centre (Unsplash)

Solihull Council is working with partners to develop an innovative and reliable new district Energy Network that will deliver heat and hot water into the taps, radiators, and heating systems of connected town centre buildings.



Utilising low carbon solutions, including air source heat pumps, the energy will be generated at a new centralised Energy Centre and distributed to individual buildings via a system of underground pipes and cables.

This Energy Network will provide low carbon heat and electricity to a range of public and private sector customers within Solihull town centre, including council-owned buildings, education campuses, and commercial offices. The clean energy generated will provide significant carbon savings for the council, helping them progress towards their target of net zero council emissions by 2030, and a 2041 net zero local area.

In phase 2 and 3 of the development, the energy generated will be available to businesses and residents in and around the town centre, helping to reduce fuel bills and improve the sustainability of local operations.

The heat network has been fully designed, and is currently in the planning stage, awaiting confirmation before construction can begin.

3.8 Case study 8: Net Zero Neighbourhoods

Local authority
Dudley Council
Type
Unitary
Predominant Land Use
Urban
Funding accessed
WMCA
More information
Visit the website



Brockmoor Energy and Environment Scheme (Community BEES) is set to be the first 'Net Zero Neighbourhood' in the Midlands. Brockmoor was selected as the inaugural site by Dudley Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) who have contributed over £1.6 million towards the project.

The overarching priority of the Net Zero Neighbourhood programme is to create high-quality, net zero communities through improving housing stock, transport, green infrastructure, and energy management. Some of the measures used to achieve this include retrofitting loft, cavity and solid wall insulation, and wider energy schemes such as solar PV installations. Other initiatives including electric vehicle street charging points, improved active travel infrastructure, community food growing initiatives, public gardens, and nature-based solutions such as green roofs are being delivered.

As well as improving energy efficiency and helping to achieve net zero emissions, many social benefits will be realised. Energy and fuel costs will be reduced for residents, and accessible green spaces will be a key feature.

The objective is to standardise the approach and create a financial model that can then be replicated at scale across the wider West Midlands and UK.



Image: Black Country Living Museum, Dudley (Unsplash)



3.9 Case study 9: Million Trees

Local authority
Derbyshire County Council
Type
County council (upper-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural
Funding accessed
England’s Community Forests
More information
Visit the website



Image: Peak District, Derbyshire (Canva)

Million Trees is an initiative launched by Derbyshire County Council (DCC) in 2021 with the simple aim of planting one million trees in the county by 2030 to help tackle the effects of climate change.



DCC aim to reach this target by facilitating the planting of trees through engagement with volunteers, businesses, partners, and landowners, and providing tailored guidance to anyone wanting to help.

As of December 2024, 561,073 trees have been planted.

DCC has been granted UK Government England’s Community Forests funding to plant a further 300,000 trees on publicly accessible land by March 2025 as part of the Derbyshire Heartwood Community Forest, which covers 289 square miles of land including parks, playfields, and public spaces in urban areas.

The environmental benefits cited by the project include carbon sequestration, improved soil quality, natural flood management, improved air quality, and increased wildlife habitats and biodiversity. Additionally, social benefits include encouraging better health and wellbeing and providing an opportunity for education, fitness, and exposure to wildlife.

3.10 Case study 10: Investment in the Natural Environment

Local authority
Nottinghamshire County Council
Type
County council (upper-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural
Funding accessed
Nature for Climate Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund
More information
Trees for Climate
Miner2Major

Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) is actively enhancing its natural environment through a number of investment projects, such as Trees for Climate and Miner2Major.



Trees for Climate, managed by Greenwood Community Forest, is a woodland creation programme launched in 2020. NCC have utilised funding from the Nature for Climate Fund and have already planted over 300 hectares of new forest. The programme aims to plant 250,000 trees across Nottinghamshire by 2027.

Additionally, the Miner2Major scheme is a five-year Landscape Partnership Scheme supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, focusing on the heart of the Sherwood Forest area. Using over £2.45 million worth of grants, a range of projects have been carried out across the area, with the aim of engaging local communities to celebrate the forest’s important habitats, species, and heritage. These projects include woodland education courses, improving cycling and walking trails, and protecting and restoring key habitats.

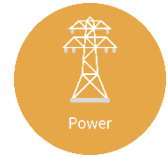
The quantity and quality of open green space in Nottinghamshire has dropped significantly over the last 100 years, and NCC see these new projects as an opportunity for great returns on investment, providing social, environmental, and financial benefits.



Image: Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire (Canva)

3.11 Case study 11: Solar Together Leicestershire

Local authority
Leicestershire County Council
Type
County council (upper-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural
Funding accessed
n/a
More information
Visit the website



Solar Together Leicestershire is a group-buying energy scheme that offers residents the opportunity to invest in high-quality solar panels and better storage systems at a reduced rate.

Independent group-buying experts, iChoosr Ltd, run a reverse auction with pre-vetted installers who bid for the installation work, with the lowest price winning. Residents will then receive a personalised recommendation, including information about the winning installer, initial costs, and savings, and can then decide whether they want to proceed.

The scheme has been delivered annually for the last three years, and over that time has secured average savings of 10-25% against the typical market price. In the first round of the scheme, 397 households across Leicestershire purchased and installed solar panels on their homes, generating 1,100kW of solar power and saving 589 tonnes of CO₂ emissions a year.

Leicestershire County Council deliver this scheme in partnership with all district/borough councils in the county as part of their Green Living Leicestershire programme. They have built on the success of similar programmes implemented across the UK over the last six years, during which time Solar Together has delivered more than 14,000 installations, leading to over 300,000 tonnes of avoided lifetime carbon emissions.



Image: Solar panels on a roof (Pixabay)



3.12 Case study 12: Increasing recycling through behaviours

Local authority
Gedling Borough Council
Type
Borough/District (second-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural/urban mix
Funding accessed
n/a
More information
View the article

A pilot scheme is underway in Gedling, investigating the use of bin tags to influence behaviour change and increase recycling rates.



According to data provided by Nottinghamshire County Council, some areas in Gedling Borough have as much as 25% of their recycling contaminated due to items being placed in the wrong bin, forcing the waste to be incinerated.

Tags will be placed on bins which have been put out but contain items that cannot be recycled. These bins will not be collected, and instead residents will have to follow a QR code on the tag that tells them to remove contaminated items before allowing them to request the bin be emptied as quickly as possible, rather than having to wait the full two weeks for the next collection. The labels themselves are recyclable and sustainable.

The aim of the scheme is to educate residents on what can and cannot be recycled, highlighting common items that are put in incorrect bins such as plastic bags, nappies, and pizza boxes.

The pilot is initially being implemented in areas with particularly high contamination rates (Mapperley, Lambley, and Burton Joyce) with plans to roll the scheme out on a large scale should it be successful.



Image: Bins in Gedling © Gedling Borough Council



3.13 Case study 13: Environmental and climate justice

Local authority	Birmingham City Council
Type	Unitary
Predominant Land Use	Urban
Funding accessed	n/a
More information	Climate risk and vulnerability map



England's second city is one of the most diverse, and the consideration of the range of backgrounds and individual's circumstances needs to be at the forefront of work to tackle climate and environmental change. Birmingham City Council is putting this at the heart of its activity, highlighted by two recent projects that it can now use to make decisions.

The council became the first UK local authority to develop a measurement tool for environmental justice, which is based on the existing Indices of Multiple Deprivation, access to green space, and considering possible negative environmental impacts that will become worse through effects of climate change. Each of the city's 69 wards has been given an environmental justice score; the higher this score, the less 'just' the ward is, allowing the council to target interventions to improve green spaces in these areas.

Building on this and working with the University of Birmingham, the council has since produced a Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA), a map that scores areas of Birmingham based on compiling the presence and extent of 11 different factors that may influence the effect of climate change. This will help the council and partners identify in which areas adaptation to climate change measures could be prioritised, and which measures are most appropriate.



Image: Canal in Birmingham City Centre (Canva)

3.14 Case study 14: Retrofitting to tackle fuel poverty

Local authority
North East Derbyshire District Council
Type
Borough/District (second-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural
Funding accessed
Local Authority Delivery, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund
More information
Visit the website



In order to address fuel poverty in the district, North East Derbyshire District Council have partnered with Rykneld Homes to install retrofit measures to houses in the region to improve their energy efficiency and reduce the cost of energy bills.

Fuel poverty is the situation in which a household is unable to afford to heat their home to an adequate temperature, either due to low income or energy-inefficient housing, making the cost of fuel bills unreasonably expensive.

As of 2022, external wall insulation has been installed in over 400 properties, leading to annual reductions of 892 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. This has been funded predominantly by the council, who have made £8.5m available via financial planning and supplemented with an additional £1.6m obtained from the UK Government’s Local Authority Delivery (LAD) funding scheme. Additional funding was obtained through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, allowing a further 295 properties to receive energy efficiency technology between 2023 and 2024, with plans in place to complete a further 345 properties by September 2025.

To have the greatest impact on reducing fuel poverty, the homes chosen for retrofitting are either those with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating below C, or those with a household income below £30,000.



Image: Housing in Derbyshire (Canva)

3.15 Case study 15: Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS)

Local authority	Various, covers whole West Midlands
Type	Led by upper-tier councils/ WMCA
Predominant Land Use	Mix
Funding accessed	UK Government
More information	Visit the overarching website

Many public-sector run programmes designed to support business growth while reducing carbon emissions have ended following the UK’s departure from the EU. The UK Government has recognised this gap in support and provided funding for the pilot Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) that covers the whole West Midlands region.



BEAS provides free energy assessments and 50% match-funded grants for SMEs. Energy audits are conducted to identify areas for improving energy efficiency and reducing costs. Businesses can then apply for a grant to invest in energy improvement measures, which are administered by top-tier councils in each location.

The audits and the 50% match-funded grants for interventions can include ventilation, heating (including heat pumps), energy-efficient lighting (LED, controls, sensors), refrigeration, insulation, recycling and waste (compactors, balers and crushers), and water management.

The programme is run in partnership with the top-tier councils and the West Midlands Combined Authority, alongside Aston University, the Black Country Industrial Cluster, and the Warwick Manufacturing Group, who deliver energy-intensive assessments for manufacturers.



Image: Energy rating scale (Canva)

3.16 Case study 16: Fuelling fleet with vegetable oil

Local authority
Rushcliffe Borough Council
Type
Borough/District (second-tier)
Predominant Land Use
Rural/urban mix
Funding accessed
n/a
More information
Visit the website

In June 2024, Rushcliffe Borough Council announced the roll out of new HVO bin lorries. They are powered solely by waste oil not used by supermarkets, restaurants, and other suppliers.



The use of HVO reduces carbon emissions from the bin lorries by 90% and nitrous oxide emissions by up to 26%. As well as reducing emissions, the switch to HVO improves air quality, particularly for waste collection workers.

A total of 21 frontline refuse vehicles have made the switch to HVO power, with a further roll out expected to some of the smaller vehicles in the council's overall fleet of 60. It is estimated that this switch will reduce total transport emissions released by the council by 72%, contributing to ambitions to become carbon neutral by 2030.

HVO is a diesel-quality "drop-in" fuel, meaning it can be utilised in almost any vehicle that runs on traditional diesel without affecting the day-to-day running of the vehicles. While HVO does not lead to a 100% reduction in emissions, this makes it a perfect interim option for councils to use in current diesel vehicles whilst the feasibility of ultra-low emission vehicles is considered for future years.



Image: Refuse being collected (Canva)

3.17 Case study 17: Coventry's Very Light Rail

Local authority
Coventry City Council
Type
Unitary
Predominant Land Use
Urban
Funding accessed
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, and other partners
More information
Visit the website



Coventry Very Light Rail (VLR) is a research and development project, utilising automotive experience in the region to develop an innovative track design and vehicle, delivering an affordable light rail system for Coventry and beyond.

Traditional tram systems are expensive to install, particularly in urban areas, therefore Coventry VLR aims to deliver a solution that is cheaper, quieter, and more environmentally friendly than anything else available, while still offering the same benefits as traditional light rail. The vehicle is battery powered so it also eliminates the need for overhead wires. It will provide a low carbon alternative to the car, helping to improve air quality and reduce congestion.

Coventry VLR is funded by a number of partners: including the West Midlands Combined Authority, the former Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Coventry City Council, and the project is part of Coventry's bid to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

A trial run was successfully completed on testing tracks in 2023. Plans for the first route are under development, with a test pilot route planned for 2025. Once fully operational, the long-term vision is to roll out an integrated transport solution in cities across the country and globally.



Image: Aerial view of Coventry (Unsplash)

3.18 Case study 18: Commitment to an electrical revolution

Local authority	Nottingham City Council
Type	Unitary
Predominant Land Use	Urban
Funding accessed	Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA), Levelling Up Fund
More information	Electric Buses EV Charging Fleet Electrification



As part of their ambition to become a carbon neutral city by 2028, Nottingham City Council have made significant progress in electrifying travel, both public and private.

48 electric single decker Yutong buses have been ordered, with 24 already in operation and the remaining 24 entering service in early 2025. The council plan to have a full electric single decker bus fleet by 2026. The buses are zero emission in service, leading to a 79% reduction in well-to-wheel greenhouse gas emissions compared to existing Euro VI diesel buses.

Each bus has a range of over 250 miles, enough to last a full day before charging overnight at the Trent Bridge Garage depot. Nottingham City Transport (NCT) was awarded £13.4m funding from Transport Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) to install charging infrastructure and fully electrify the depot.

The council have also installed over 300 charging sockets within car parks, park and rides, and leisure centres across the city to support a transition to electric vehicles. This ranks Nottingham in the top 20% of authorities in terms of the number of EV chargers. These installations have been funded by £1m UK Government funding through the Levelling Up Fund.

Finally, the council have upgraded 42% of fleet vehicles to EVs in the last two years, including road sweepers and the world's first electric bin lorries. 45 of Nottingham's taxis have switched to EVs, and from 2025 only ULEVs will be eligible to register for taxi licenses.



Image: Zero Emission Electric Bus (© Nottingham City Council)

4 Overarching recommendations for local authorities

In addition to the specific recommendations provided against each theme in Section 2, this section outlines overarching recommendations that local authorities should consider as **initial first steps** to starting or accelerating their sustainability journey and delivering effective action at the local level. These are often associated with the 'Policy, strategy, and governance' theme included in this report.

People and engagement

- All councils should identify a lead officer whose role it is to drive forward climate action. While actions should be shared across a variety of service areas, there needs to be someone within each authority who is there to ensure delivery and who can act as the enabler towards implementation.
- Councils that are performing well against any or all of the key themes should help other authorities with their activities by sharing good practice and celebrating their success in an honest way, to include reflections on **why** and **how** the strong performing council has achieved what it has. MNZH, SWM, and CDP, with their combined networks and communications channels, can help with this.
- County councils should provide support to the district and borough councils that they envelope. This is within their own interest to improve county-wide progress on sustainability, and it is often the case that borough and district councils have less resourcing or influence than county equivalents. Collaborative working on projects should be carried out without exception. The same principal applies to combined authorities and the councils that sit within them.
- Given the urgency that we need to roll out climate action, councils should also engage with other sectors (NHS, businesses, universities, communities etc.) in their locality to drive forward and scale-up local action. Cross-sector working groups can be effective in enabling collaboration and unlocking private sector funding and resource. Some councils have already established these groups and others can learn from their approaches.
- Councils should provide training and upskilling opportunities to all staff around climate action and identify champions who can act as leaders in other parts of the organisation. It is critical that the consideration of climate change is embedded across the whole of the council's workforce, especially in teams such as public health, planning, and education.

Strategy, action planning, and targets

- The [English Devolution White Paper](#) was published towards the end of 2024 and is the Government's statement of their plans to reform local government. This includes a wide range of proposals on devolution and wider plans for local government reorganisation and changes to local audit. When considering their options, local authorities should ensure that clear strategies and plans remain in place and that there is continuity in prioritising climate action with associated responsibility.
- When developing strategies and targets, councils need to ensure these are realistic and achievable within the set timeframe. Ambitious targets are great if they can be achieved, but resourcing may prevent this. Establishing science-based targets that consider a range of factors is a good starting point.

- Councils that have not developed a climate action plan should do so to ensure that actions are prioritised and allocated to lead delivery teams. Collaboration with key local stakeholders (see above) and teams within the council should take place, and actions should have timescales and, ideally, costs attributed to them. Action plans should be endorsed and signed off by senior colleagues and passed through council scrutiny processes for robustness.
- Following completion of an action plan, a monitoring process should be established to ensure that actions are being implemented. This should sit with the lead officer for climate action as outlined above. This could be in the form of a simple spreadsheet, with progress from this being updated at relevant groups and within appropriate annual reports for transparency.
- Councils should embed sustainability across all strategic thinking. Ultimately, delivering council strategic plans and priorities in a more sustainable way will save on resources and help to deliver priority actions more efficiently. Again, authorities who have not done this should learn from those that have.

Funding and resources

- Councils should be proactive in researching and identifying suitable funding and financing opportunities. The most useful resource is [this webpage](#) produced by Government that shows live 'carbon net zero funding and grants' open at any given time. Councils can also liaise with their local MNZH contact who can provide an up-to-date picture of funding opportunities.
- In addition to support that can be provided by MNZH, SWM, and CDP, councils should also consult resources such as [Net Zero Go](#), the Local Government Association's [Climate Change Hub](#), Ashden's [Climate Action Co-Benefits Toolkit](#) and [Fit for the Future Network](#) for further support and guidance. The [Carbon Trust](#) and [Energy Saving Trust](#) can also support local authorities with engagement opportunities and advice.

5 Recommendations for supporting bodies

This benchmarking exercise provides evidence of the aspects of sustainability that local authorities are progressing well with, and where further support is required. As the local authorities are providing their own evidence to complete the benchmark, central Government and other bodies that support them can be confident that the evidence base is robust and indicative of progress across the Midlands.

As such, this section provides recommendations to supporting bodies as to how they should be supporting local authorities on the sustainability agenda, given the results of the benchmarking exercise. These supporting bodies include:

- Relevant Government departments (DESNZ, Defra, UK Health Security Agency, etc.)
- Relevant Government arm's length bodies (Environment Agency, Natural England, etc.)
- MNZH
- Local Government Association and Local Partnerships
- Other organisations that support councils, such as SWM, CDP, Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), Ashden, etc.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- There remains significant discrepancies in the progress made by local authorities on climate action, often commensurate with whether the council has a supportive cabinet member and/or a team of officers to drive forward action. While progress has been made in this area through Government-funded schemes such as the local Net Zero Hubs programme and Net Zero Go, Government and local bodies could take additional opportunities to ensure councils that do not have the same level of resource or support are provided with assistance to accelerate action.
- Additionally, supporting bodies could advance progress to scale-up and rollout successful projects to accelerate climate action over a wider area. For example, if one council develops a project that has shown positive results and that could be replicable elsewhere, MNZH should take a strategic approach to instigate rolling this out to other councils who may benefit from similar projects.
- Complicated governance structures remain an issue and there continue to be barriers to partnership working and transparency between (where relevant) combined authorities and local authorities, and county councils and district councils that cover the same geography. While this may be supported by local government reform, there is an ongoing role for Government departments and enabling bodies to explore additional ways to help bring organisations together to nurture collaborative opportunities and support joint bids for funding.
- Evident in the benchmark responses was a lack of knowledge of how to access a wide range of funding opportunities above and beyond those most well-known, such as SHDF and LAD schemes. There are also challenges for local authorities to resource finding and applying for funding competitions which often have short timeframes to bid. There is an opportunity for the local Net Zero Hubs and Government to provide a 'funding advisory service' to local authorities on an on-going basis, and to provide additional support with bid writing, especially for the poorer resourced authorities.

- Additionally, Government funding for councils that focuses on climate action could be reviewed and re-allocated as necessary to fill in any gaps where performance is slow. An example of this is climate adaptation, where at present there is limited funding available for councils to build adaptive capacity or take forward actions in this area, save for reactive local flood risk management.
- The benchmarking responses also highlighted a wider disconnect between climate mitigation and adaptation. The latter is poorly supported, governed, and funded compared to the former. This means that action at the local level, which is paramount in building resilience, is currently inconsistent. Government could take action to support acceleration around climate adaptation by assisting local authorities to build adaptive capacity as a matter of urgency, using local experts on this topic.
- Government and the MNZH, working with local stakeholder engagement experts, could explore providing engagement opportunities for local authorities on a more regular basis to help them connect with each other on topics causing the greatest challenge in accelerating climate action. In a similar way to the roadshows that will take place as part of this benchmarking project in early 2025, these could be events (either online and in person) where councils can come together to collaborate, learn from each other, and gain help from expert supporting bodies.
- Linked to this is the need for the re-establishment of a 'Midlands Climate Action Local Authority Network,' building on something like that which SWM ran from 2009 to 2023, but was ceased due to removal of funding. This will allow local authorities to engage with each other on climate action on an on-going basis, with the potential to establish forums and opportunities to collaborate and share information on funding, policy, and guidance.
- Ahead of the above, organisations who provide a role in supporting councils in climate action (e.g. LGA, Ashden, and APSE, along with the local Net Zero Hubs, CDP, and SWM) could look to formalise collaboration with the intention of setting out how each partner is delivering climate action engagement to reduce the risk of duplication and identify potential collaboration opportunities. This will help to identify where any gaps in engagement are, and where themes are already covered. These partners could also make a more conscious effort to collaborate on promoting each other's events and activities.
- Wider signposting is required to tools that have been created to support local authorities to accelerate their climate action, such as Net Zero Go. A consistent approach along with additional templates and guides would help those authorities with fewer resources.
- Case studies and examples of good practice should be widely shared digitally across platforms that are frequently engaged with by councils. Again, collaboration between engagement partners would be beneficial to avoid duplication and maximise outreach.
- Finally, the number of authorities who responded to this benchmarking exercise was 39 out of 73 (a return rate of 53%). This relatively low response rate is likely to be due to the lack of capacity local authorities have to complete the process (rather than them not wanting to), and having to also respond to the annual Climate Emergency Benchmark whose Freedom of Information Request approach to benchmarking requires councils to respond to prevent potential reputational damage. A review of how the CDP/SWM benchmark process can be simplified needs to take place in the early part of 2025, to encourage greater uptake. There also needs to be more weight and backing given to a single benchmark process by central

Government, so that local authorities can prioritise that which is seen as the most credible, useful, and considered approach. This will allow councils to contribute to one project that they can trust will make a positive difference to their work on climate action, without naming and shaming their lack of progress in the process.



6 Key resources and datasets

This section highlights some the key resources, guidance documents, and reports that are available to help local authorities develop various elements of their sustainability work (6.1). It includes a range of strategies, policies, and legislation from central Government or arm’s length bodies which act as statutory or non-statutory levers to accelerate action (6.2). Thereafter is provided a list of datasets, most of which are broken down into local authority boundaries (6.3), which can be used to monitor progress, in a similar way that SWM uses them to monitor its [Sustainability Roadmap to 2030](#).

6.1 Resources and guidance

Spotlight resource: Net Zero Go

The Net Zero Go platform has been designed to make local net zero projects easier for local authorities. By signing up to the platform, you will get access to a huge range of tools and resources, including:

- A library of over 1,000 guides, case studies, and datasets
- A discussion forum with a network of experts
- Training materials



Net Zero Go is freely available for all UK local authority teams working on net zero projects, from energy to transport, and building decarbonisation to behaviour change.

Over 250 local authorities across the UK have already signed up to Net Zero Go and are using the platform to find knowledge, build their skills, and deliver successful projects.

Net Zero Go is funded by DESNZ and provided by Energy Systems Catapult.

[Sign up for free here](#)

Theme	Resources and guidance
	Organisations/ resources that could help with your overall strategy include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DESNZ Net Zero Go • Carbon Footprint calculator • Carbon Trust • Energy Saving Trust • LGA climate change resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashden local authority adaptation network • Local Partnerships Adaptation Toolkit • Met Office Local Authority Climate Service • SWM Climate change adaptation: practical examples for local authorities • SWM's climate change adaptation support offer

Theme	Resources and guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Agency pollution reporting • Severn Trent Water pollution advice • University of Birmingham: West Midlands Air Quality Improvement Programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthesis SCATTER tool • DESNZ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme • DESNZ Low Carbon Skills Fund • Midlands Net Zero Hub Tenant Engagement Toolkit for Retrofit Projects • Midlands Net Zero Hub Retrofit Toolkit • LGA/SWM: regional retrofit action plan training toolkit • Salix financing options • Sustainable Energy Association resources • RISE: Retrofit Information Support and Expertise • DESNZ Schools Climate Action Plan - Building Decarbonisation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Council Best sites for tree planting • Wildlife Trusts Changing Nature report • Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Energy England website • Energy Systems Catapult local authority resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA advice on single use plastics and recycling • LGA Waste Routemap • Waste Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) website • WRAP Love Food Hate Waste • WRAP Recycle Now
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate UK et al Climate Just • Greener NHS resources • St John Ambulance Mental Health First Aid training
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNZH Midlands LCEGS Sector study • SWM Sustainable funding options • SWM Weathering the Storm - a resilience guide for businesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Transport (DfT): Transport Decarbonisation - local authority toolkit • DfT: Active Travel - local authority toolkit • DfT: Zero emission fleets - local authority toolkit • DfT: Transport in rural areas - local authority toolkit • DfT and OZEV: Electric vehicle charging infrastructure - help for local authorities • MNZH Electrification of Council Depots guide • Campaign for Better Transport Toolkit for greener business travel • OZEV electric vehicle chargepoint and infrastructure grant guidance for installers

Theme	Resources and guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustrans for cycle routes and information • Traveline journey planning • Zap Map for electric vehicle charging station




6.2 National strategies and legislation

Theme	Strategies and legislation
	<p>Overarching strategies that cover a variety of factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DESNZ: National Net Zero Strategy (2021) • Midlands Engine: Ten Point Plan for Green Growth (2021) • UK Government: Climate Change Act (2008)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Committee: UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2021) • Defra: National Adaptation Programme (2023)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra: Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery (2023) • Defra: Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (EP Regulations) (enforcement) • Defra: Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 (enforcement)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DESNZ: Heat and buildings strategy (2021)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra: Biodiversity Net Gain (2024) • Defra: Environment Act (2021) • Defra: Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) • Defra: Local Nature Recovery Strategies (2023) • Defra: Green Finance Strategy (2023)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DESNZ: British Energy Security Strategy (2022) • DESNZ: Powering Up Britain (2023) • NESO: Clean Power 2030 (2024)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra: Environmental Protection (Plastic Plates etc. and Polystyrene Containers etc.) (England) Regulations 2023 (enforcement) • Defra: Environment Act 2021 • Defra: Resources and Waste Strategy for England (2018) • UK Government: Climate Change Act (2008) Single Use Carrier Bag Charge (enforcement)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DESNZ: Sustainable warmth: protecting vulnerable households in England (2019)

Theme	Strategies and legislation
<p>Sustainable Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DESNZ: The ten point plan for a green industrial revolution (2020) • DESNZ: Green finance strategy (2019)
<p>Transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfT: Decarbonising Transport: a better, greener Britain • Active Travel England's corporate travel plan (2023)

6.3 Key datasets

Theme	Datasets
<p>Adapting to Climate Change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Agency: Flood Risk Maps • Met Office: Local Authority Climate Service
<p>Clean Air & Water</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Health and Social Care: Fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution • DESNZ: Greenhouse gas emissions by local authority area • Defra: Air pollution index • Defra: Air quality data
<p>Heat & Buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra: Sub-national gas consumption data • Energy Systems Catapult: datasets for local authorities doing local area energy planning • Energy Systems Catapult: Net Zero Go - a tool to help plan energy projects • Energy Systems Catapult: Open Data - datasets from innovation projects across the whole energy system
<p>Natural Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra: Local Sites in positive conservation management
<p>Power</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DESNZ: Regional Renewable Statistics • DESNZ: Sub-national electricity consumption data • Energy Systems Catapult: datasets for local authorities doing local area energy planning • Energy Systems Catapult: net zero datasets (cost to access) • Energy Systems Catapult: Open Data - datasets from innovation projects across the whole energy system • Net Zero Go - a tool to help plan energy projects
<p>Resource Efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defra: Local authority collected waste: annual results tables • Defra: Local authority collected waste management - annual results

Theme	Datasets
 <p>Social Equity & Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate UK et al: Climate Just • Department of Health & Social Care: Local Authority Health Profiles • DESNZ: Fuel poverty statistics
 <p>Sustainable Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MNZH: Midlands LCEGS sector study
 <p>Transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfT: National Travel Survey 2023 • DfT: Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles uptake • Energy Systems Catapult: Open Data - datasets from innovation projects across the whole energy system (including electric vehicles)

Annex: Detailed methodology

This Annex describes the process undertaken to facilitate the completion of the Climate Action Benchmarking process for Midlands authorities.

Benchmarking process

CDP portal overview

As the world's leading climate reporting platform and progress accountability mechanism for cities and local governments, CDP helps 'Disclosers' understand their impact. Reporting is the first step towards effective and tangible climate action.

CDP's questionnaires evolve annually to push ambition further, to align with the latest existing science and robust reporting frameworks globally, and support local governments, states, and regions, public authorities, companies, and financial markets to transition in line with a 1.5°C, nature-positive world.

Since 2019, CDP and ICLEI have partnered to present one unified portal, CDP-ICLEI Track, for local government climate reporting. Local governments only report once, on one platform, to the Cities questionnaire. Their data is analysed and aggregated by organizations and relevant partners and initiatives including C40 Cities, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM), ICLEI's GreenClimateCities, Race to Zero, Race to Resilience, Science Based Targets Network, SWM, and MNZH. This makes for streamlined, simpler reporting, and stronger, standardised data.

Key Features and Experience

- **The portal:** CDP's new response portal, launched in 2024, includes built-in guidance, and introduces features for local governments to manage responses, improve collaboration with colleagues, and connect with support. The portal is intended to make it easier to disclose, track progress, and access data and disclosure information.
- **Accessing the portal:** When the portal opens for responding, Disclosers receive an email with instructions on how to access the questionnaire, set it up, and start reporting.
- **Copy forward:** This functionality auto-populates answers from previous responses into the current questionnaire, where applicable. This is a key streamlining feature for those local authorities who have reported to CDP-ICLEI Track in previous years.
- **Saving and editing:** Disclosers can save their progress as they work to complete the questionnaire, returning to and editing sections as they progress.
- **Submission and amendment:** There is no minimum requirement for completeness – Disclosers can answer as many questions as they wish, including as much or as little information as they chose. When the Discloser is ready to do so, they can submit their questionnaire. Following submission, local governments can amend and resubmit their questionnaire response, making any necessary changes. This functionality is available until the portal closes.

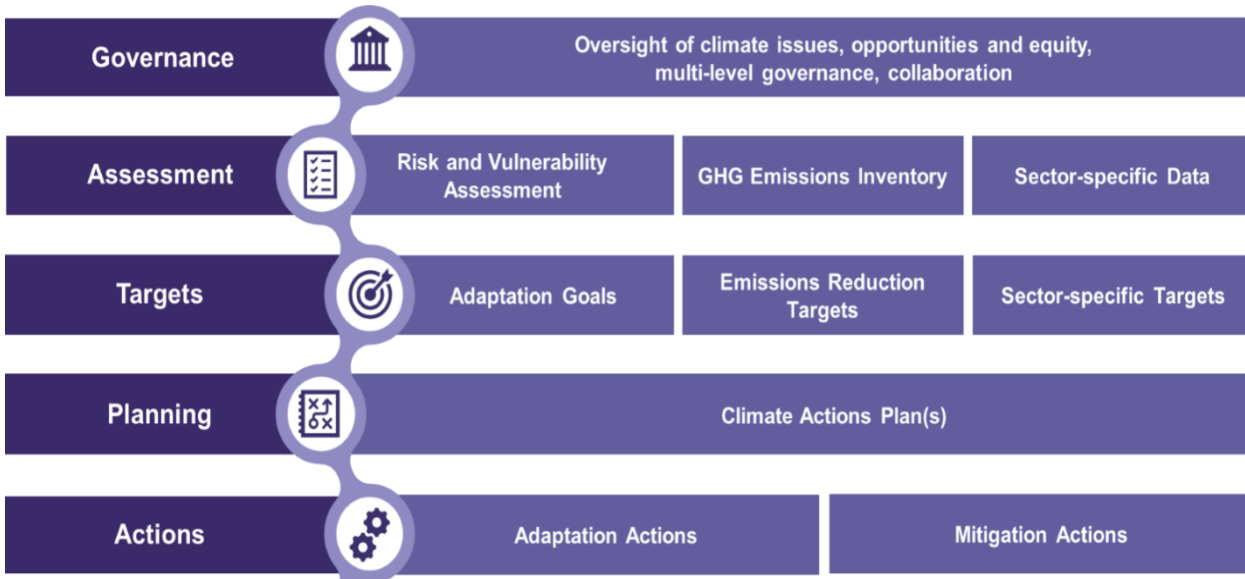
2024 Reporting Cycle

CDP-ICLEI Track is open for responses for a limited period during the year. The Midlands Climate Action Benchmarking project aligned with the 2024 reporting cycle to support effective disclosure. Key milestones were:

- **04 July:** CDP-ICLEI Track open for local authority access.
- **24 July:** Midlands Climate Action Benchmarking onboarding session for participating local authorities.
- **16 October:** CDP-ICLEI Track scoring deadline. Local authorities who submit before this date will receive score and individualised feedback from CDP.
- **02 December:** CDP-ICLEI Track closes.

Questionnaire Structure

CDP-ICLEI Track Disclosers are requested to respond to questions across five modules - Governance, Assessment, Targets, Planning, and Actions.



Questionnaire Pathways

The Cities questionnaire is divided into three distinct pathways which streamline reporting, allowing Disclosers to respond to the most appropriate questions. Respondents are recommended a pathway during their questionnaire setup based upon their response to three jurisdictional attributes: per capita emissions, population, and Human Development Index (HDI). For the Midlands Climate Action Benchmarking project, local authorities were recommended Pathway 2 to ensure consistency of responses between participating local governments.

Full list of benchmarking questions

The list of questions presented to a given Discloser is dependent on several factors including Pathway selected, membership of initiatives (such as Global Covenant of Mayors), and answers to previous questions. Conditional logic is applied to the questionnaire, meaning that local authorities only see the questions that are relevant to them. The following list provides a comprehensive overview of questions that participants in the Midlands Climate Action Benchmarking project could be shown. Disclosers are also given the opportunity to provide comments and further information to support their answers throughout the questionnaire.

Governance

- What language are you submitting your response in?

- Provide details of your jurisdiction in the table below.
- Provide information on your jurisdiction's oversight of climate-related risks and opportunities and how these issues have impacted your jurisdiction's planning.
- Report how your jurisdiction assesses the wider environmental, social, and economic opportunities and benefits of climate action.
- Report on your engagement with other levels of government regarding your jurisdiction's climate action.
- Report your jurisdiction's most significant examples of collaboration with government, business, and/or civil society on climate-related issues.

Assessment - Climate Risk and Vulnerability

- Has a climate risk and vulnerability assessment been undertaken for your jurisdiction? If not, please indicate why.
- Provide details on the most significant climate hazards faced by your jurisdiction.
- Identify and describe the most significant factors impacting on your jurisdiction's ability to adapt to climate change and indicate how those factors either support or challenge this ability.

Assessment - Emissions Inventory

- Does your jurisdiction have a community-wide emissions inventory to report?
- Does your jurisdiction have a consumption-based emissions inventory to measure emissions from consumption of goods and services? The consumption-based approach captures direct and lifecycle GHG emissions of goods and services and allocates GHG emissions to the final consumers, rather than to the producers.
- Do you have an emissions inventory for your government operations to report?

Assessment - Sectoral Data

- Report information regarding your jurisdiction-wide energy consumption.
- Report the percentage of households within the jurisdiction with access to clean cooking fuels and technologies.
- How many households within the jurisdiction boundary face energy poverty? Select the threshold used for energy poverty in your jurisdiction.
- Report information on access to secure energy for your jurisdiction.
- Report your jurisdiction's passenger and/or freight mode share data.
- Report the total emissions, fleet size, and number of vehicle types for the following modes of transport.
- Report waste-related data for your jurisdiction.
- Report on how climate change impacts health outcomes and health services in your jurisdiction.
- Report the air pollution data for the jurisdiction.
- Provide details of the household access to water, sanitation services and water consumption in your jurisdiction.
- What percentage of your population is food insecure and/or lives in a food desert?
- Report the total quantity of food that is procured (in tonnes) for government-owned and/or operated facilities (including municipal facilities, schools, hospitals, youth centres, shelters, public canteens, prisons etc.). If available, please provide a breakdown per food group.
- Report the sources of your jurisdiction's water supply, volumes withdrawn per source, and the projected change.

Targets - Adaptation Goals

- Does your jurisdiction have an adaptation goal(s) in place? If no adaptation goal is in place, please indicate the primary reason why.

Targets - Mitigation

- Does your jurisdiction have an active greenhouse gas emissions reduction target(s) in place? Please include long-term and/or mid-term targets. If no active GHG emissions reduction target is in place, please indicate the primary reason why.

Targets - Sectors

- Provide details of your jurisdiction's energy-related and other environment-related targets active in the reporting year.

Planning

- Does your jurisdiction have a climate action plan or strategy that addresses mitigation, adaptation (resilience), and/or energy?
- Report details on the other environment-related plans, policies and/or strategies in your jurisdiction.
- Does your jurisdiction have a strategy for reducing emissions from consumption of the most relevant goods and services?
- Does your jurisdiction have a strategy or standard for reducing emissions from the jurisdiction's procurement and purchase of goods and services?

Actions

- Describe the outcomes of the most significant adaptation actions your jurisdiction is currently undertaking. Note that this can include those in the planning and/or implementation phase.
- Describe the outcomes of the most significant mitigation actions your jurisdiction is currently undertaking. Note that this can include those in the planning and/or implementation phases.
- Describe any planned climate-related projects within your jurisdiction for which you hope to attract financing.
- Report the factors that support climate-related investment and financial planning in your jurisdiction.

Scoring process

What is a CDP score?

A CDP score provides a snapshot of environmental disclosure and environmental performance for any entity or organisation that discloses through CDP such as companies (including Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, or SMEs), cities, states, and regions. Bold environmental action must begin with an accurate, transparent assessment of environmental impact and progress, which CDP scoring makes possible.

CDP has been scoring companies since 2010, and cities since 2018. Our scores show these entities - and their stakeholders - where they are on the road towards operating in line with a 1.5°C future. By disclosing over consecutive years, companies, cities, states, and regions can understand the trajectory of their environmental journey.

We use our scoring methodology to incentivise entities to measure and manage environmental impacts through the CDP questionnaire. Disclosure drives action, and by scoring local governments from D to A, we take them on a journey from disclosure through awareness and management, and finally to leadership.

Our scoring methodology is fully aligned with the Taskforce for Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) S2 Climate-related Disclosures, and it therefore provides a comparable dataset across sectors.

How do CDP scores work?

Jurisdictions are assessed across four scoring bands which represent the steps jurisdictions move through as they progress towards climate leadership.

- Disclosure (D- or D)

A jurisdiction in the Disclosure scoring band has just started the journey of understanding and reporting on climate impacts. These jurisdictions understand the value of collecting data to drive climate action but may not have structures or resources in place to obtain the necessary information. Jurisdictions in the Disclosure band report on the degree to which climate impacts and risks have been measured.

- Awareness (C- or C)

A jurisdiction in the Awareness scoring band is in the process of assessing the main risks and impacts of climate change. These jurisdictions have begun developing an assessment and measuring impacts to get a holistic understanding of the main effects climate change has on their jurisdiction and are beginning to take action to reduce them.

- Management (B- or B)

A jurisdiction in the Management band has managed to gather data on the main risks and impacts of climate change and is taking action to adapt to and reduce these effects. These jurisdictions have worked collaboratively with key stakeholders to understand their risks and impacts and now have plans in place to mitigate and/or adapt.

- Leadership (A- or A)

A Leadership jurisdiction demonstrates best practice standards across adaptation and mitigation, has set ambitious goals and made progress towards achieving those goals. Jurisdictions in the Leadership band have strategic, holistic plans in place to ensure the actions they are taking will reduce climate impacts and vulnerabilities of the people, businesses, and organisations in their jurisdiction.

Score weighting and calculations

Questionnaires are scored in categories for each sector across environmental issues. Each scoring category at Management and Leadership levels is weighted according to its relative importance to the overall score.

What is CDP's scoring methodology?

CDP's scoring methodology assesses the level of detail and comprehensiveness in an entity's response, as well as their awareness of environmental issues, management methods and progress towards environmental stewardship. Questionnaire scoring is conducted by accredited scoring partners trained by CDP.

Our internal scoring team then collates all scores, running data quality checks to ensure that scoring standards are accurate and consistent. CDP continues to raise the bar for what qualifies as leadership. Therefore, there is no guarantee that an entity will remain on CDP's A List year-on-year if they do not also evolve their environmental journey alongside the scientific consensus.

What do CDP scores mean?

At CDP, we continue to review our scoring methodology to ensure that they help entities strive for excellence in an evolving world of environmental disclosure.

Previously we only scored entities for disclosing their climate impacts, whereas now this is only the first step. A large portion of the CDP questionnaire now measures entities on environmental action – the strategies and changes they implement following disclosure. The aim is that, by continuously

evolving our methodology, we can ensure that our questions always cover the most important metrics that entities need to measure to understand and improve their performance.

To receive an A or B score, entities must demonstrate both awareness of their impacts on the environment, and appropriate actions taken to reduce these in line with the 1.5°C trajectory laid out in the Paris Agreement. The CDP score is based on information disclosed by an entity in its CDP response. Significant actions or activities not mentioned in the CDP response are only considered at a final leadership level.

CDP scores alone are not a comprehensive metric of an entity's level of sustainability or 'greenness' but instead indicate the level of action reported by the organisation to assess and manage its environmental impacts during the reporting year.

[Read more about CDPs Scoring Methodology here.](#)

Supporting local authorities to fill in their returns

Throughout the disclosure cycle, there was a range of support available to local authorities:

- An initial webinar provided an overview of the project and introduced the key aims of the benchmarking work.
- A guidance document highlighted the areas of particular focus for the project, identifying those aspects of disclosure that are most relevant to driving local climate action in the Midlands.
 - One-to-one support, via email or a call, was available to each participating local authority. Disclosers were supported to understand how CDP-ICLEI Track disclosure works and ensure optimal submission.
 - Drop-in support sessions enabled Disclosers to connect with other local authorities and discuss common queries.
 - Comprehensive guidance and support resources:
 - [CDP 2024 Reporting Guidance](#) - detailed question-level guidance on how to approach the CDP questionnaire.
 - [Introduction to Scoring](#) and [CDP 2024 Scoring Methodology](#) - information about how CDP will score your submission.
 - [Aiming for A](#) - tools, resources and examples highlighting best practice across the sections of the CDP questionnaire.
 - [CDP Open Data Portal](#) or response search - Disclosers could use these to search for previous submissions by other local governments around the world and find examples of best practice. This is a useful exercise for those who have not previously disclosed and are unsure of the types of data that should be reported.
 - [CDP Help Centre](#) - a repository of knowledge articles that support use the CDP portal.

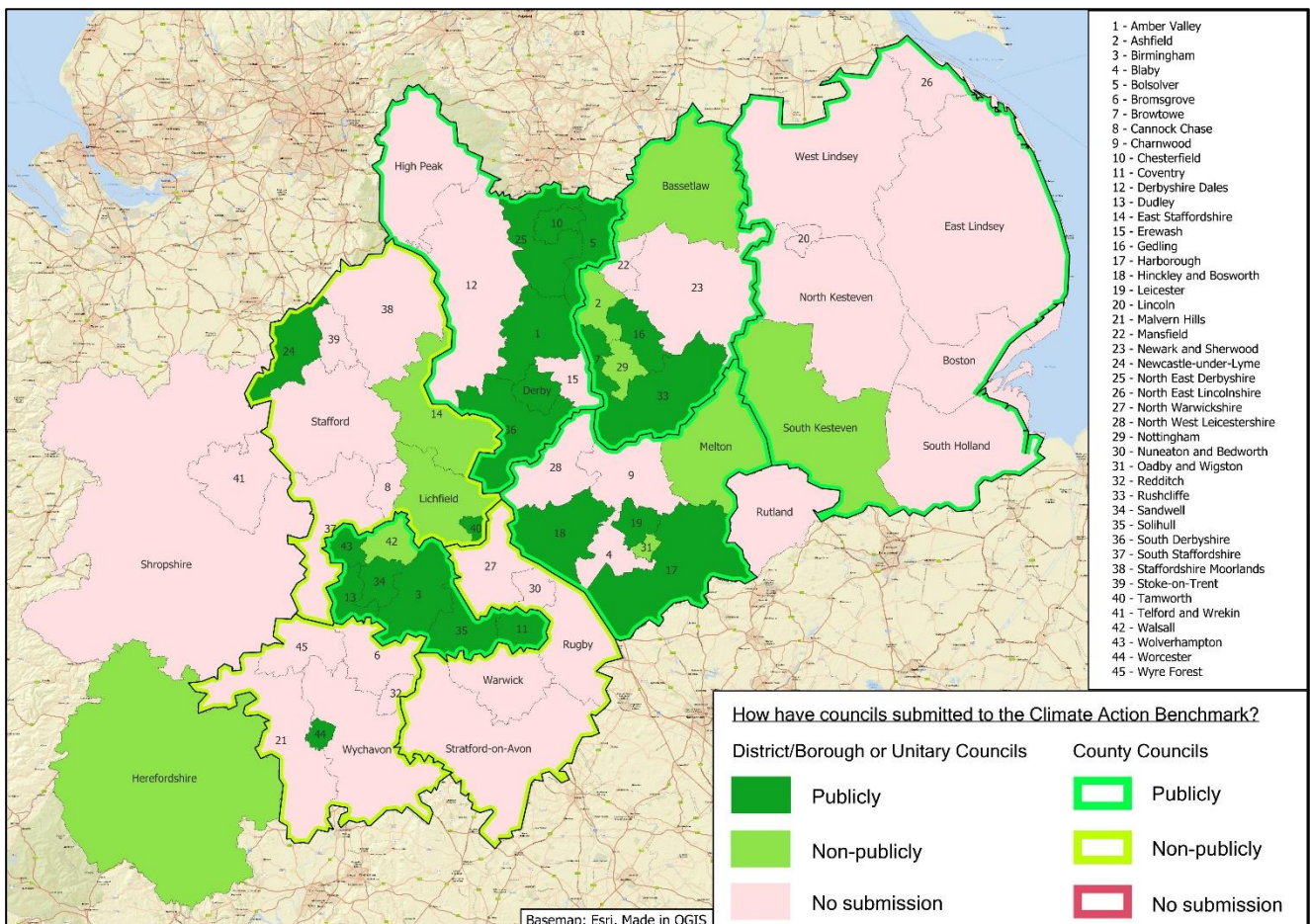
List of local authorities and their completion status

All 73 authorities in the Midlands (East and West) were invited to respond to the benchmark process. In total 39 authorities (53%) completed the benchmark. The authorities that completed the process are listed below in full.

Amber Valley Borough Council	Gedling Borough Council	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Ashfield District Council	Harborough District Council	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Bassetlaw District Council	Herefordshire Council	Solihull Council

Birmingham City Council	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	South Derbyshire District Council
Bolsover District Council	Leicestershire County Council	South Kesteven District Council
Broxtowe Borough Council	Lichfield District Council	Staffordshire County Council
Chesterfield Borough Council	Lincolnshire County Council	Tamworth Borough Council
City of Leicester	Melton Borough Council	Walsall Council
Coventry City Council	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	Warwickshire County Council
Derby City Council	North East Derbyshire District Council	West Midlands Combined Authority
Derbyshire County Council	Nottingham City Council	Wolverhampton City Council
Dudley Council	Nottinghamshire County Council	Worcester City Council
East Staffordshire Borough Council	Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	Worcestershire County Council

The above list of authorities that completed a benchmark response is shown in map form below, which also shows whether the authority chose to disclose its response publicly or privately. The West Midlands Combined Authority also reported (publicly), emphasised by the light green border around the West Midlands conurbation.



Completion of recommendation reports

Following local authorities' submissions to the CDP portal, SWM was sent Word versions of each response (not including the scores given by CDP). We used these to complete a short recommendation report for each local authority that participated. These are private to each authority as they provide bespoke recommendations based on their areas of progress or challenges they are experiencing.

These reports included:

- Our perspective on how the local authority is demonstrating leadership and good practice against the same themes conveyed in this report.
- Examples of emerging areas of promise; activities that are in the pipeline but have yet to start or have only just commenced.
- Ideas and areas for improvement against each theme; this is essentially a list of recommendations for each council to consider covering the breadth of sustainability themes.
- Good practice examples from nearby councils; we included this primarily to identify any potential collaborative opportunities which may arise, especially between neighbouring districts or districts/ boroughs and counties.
- Our top five initial recommendations for each council; based on our independent view from their benchmark return, what should the council do next as a way of prioritising its actions?

For those local authorities that did not complete their benchmark returns, this report was circulated to them so that they could still look at our headline recommendations. They have also been invited to attend all of the roadshow events (see below).

This overarching report was then produced that summarises the key issues, case studies, and recommendations for local authorities bearing in mind the submissions to the benchmarking exercise. This report also includes recommendations for bodies who support councils, including the MNZH, so that they can help local authorities to accelerate their climate action.

Stakeholder engagement

Alongside drop-in and online engagement that took place as part of the benchmarking process, led by CDP, following completion of the reports SWM will be leading on a series of roadshow events aimed at highlighting and sharing good practice with stakeholders, discussing barriers, and solutions to these, and facilitating peer-learning between authorities to nurture collaborative opportunities and provide peer support.

These Roadshows will only be for local authorities in the Midlands, and those supporting this project (MNZH, SWM, CDP). The themes of the events have been selected based on the responses to the benchmarking process, and have focused primarily on themes whereby a greater number of challenges/ less rapid progress has been identified. The programme is as follows:

Date (2025)	Theme/ description	Online or in person
10 February	Climate change risk and adaptation planning	Coventry
11 February	The planning system as a lever of change	Solihull
13 February	The Scope 3 challenge	Worcester
24 February	Funding and financing climate action 1	Online

25 February	The key issues faced by rural councils	Lincoln
03 March	Equitable climate action	Online
04 March	Funding and financing climate action 2	Online
05 March	Electrification of transport and depots	Nottingham
06 March	Decarbonisation of heat	Online
11 March	Changing public behaviours on climate change	Matlock
12 March	How do we turn stated intent into implementable climate action?	Online
13 March	Climate Action Online Surgery	Online

An example agenda is provided below; this is the agenda for the adaptation themed event, although many others follow a similar structure.

09:45	Arrival, refreshments and networking
10:00	Welcome Introduction to the Climate Action Benchmark and Roadshow SWM, Midlands Net Zero Hub
10:05	Opening address: Central Government department
10:15	Summary of overarching CAB results CDP
10:25	Case study 1: Adaptation plan and action in an urban area Coventry City Council
10:45	Case study 2: Adaptation plan and action in a rural area Lincolnshire County Council
11:05	Q&A
11:15	Comfort break
11:30	Workshop: Adaptation planning and action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the fundamental ingredients needed to develop a successful plan?</i> • <i>What does adaptation look like in practice?</i> • <i>What role should a local authority play in adaptation?</i>
12:00	Summary of overarching recommendations SWM
12:10	Next steps MNZH
12:20	Close

-END-

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Midlands Net Zero Hub

Midlands Net Zero Hub is funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to support local authorities and the communities they serve to accelerate their decarbonisation initiatives. We make local net zero projects happen.

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