

With Communications team for conversion into booklet

Climate Emergency Annual Report 2022-23

Foreword from Councillor Lappin (TBC)

In our journey to a low carbon future, Sefton have taken some great first steps. However, the scale of the challenge cannot be under estimated. We are taking a look at how we can continue deliver all of the vital services that residents, businesses and visitors rely on, whilst eliminating emissions and dealing with an already changing climate.

In summer 2022, for the first time ever in the UK, temperatures soared to over 40°C and heat across Europe fuelled Europe's worst drought for some 500 years. Here in Sefton, we saw the impacts of this in both positive and negative ways. The hot weather encouraged more visitors to our coastline, supporting local business. It also had a devastating impact on the natterjack toad breeding season, a very rare species native to our area.

We know that residents are concerned about climate change and are relying on organisations including Sefton Council to act responsibly to protect our area. In a recent survey (by the ONS) almost two-thirds (64%) of adults in Great Britain said they were worried about the impact of climate change and in particular about the impact on future generations. This is why we have consulted with residents in 2022 and are planning to improve our communications and engagement, in particular, with young people.

Collaboration and co-operation across all areas of the Borough, the UK and the planet are crucial for this important agenda.

The Council plays a vital role in determining how the Borough tackles the Climate emergency. We need to ensure the way we operate is exemplary when it comes to cutting carbon emissions in our buildings and service delivery, but also, how we communicate this to our local residents and businesses to encourage them to be part of the solution.

I hope this annual report will provide an insight into the ongoing work to bring about positive change.

Thank you.

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Executive Summary

Progress has been made across the Council to implement the Climate Emergency strategy and action plan, to reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

Emissions reduced by 748 tonnes during 2022-23 (7% reduction). This has mainly been driven by:

- The on-going large-scale LED Street lighting programme (year two of a four-year programme).
- Changes to building use during/post Covid pandemic.
- Improvements to the national energy mix (decarbonisation of the electricity grid).
- The post pandemic agile working pattern which supports a reduction in emissions.

Foundations have been laid for several long-terms projects, one of them being the purchase of green/renewable electricity from 1 April 2023, which will significantly reduce future emissions.

In Summer/Autumn 2022, the Council undertook a public climate consultation, the feedback from this has helped form a Climate Engagement Plan which will be updated regularly and reviewed annually up to 2030.

Further highlights this year include:

- A Council Fleet Review and development of a Low Carbon Transport Strategy.
- Publication of the LCR Pathway to Net Zero Document and ongoing development of the LCR Climate Action Plan, with support from key officers.
- Submission of two funding bids to the Low Carbon Skills Fund (awaiting decision).
- A successful funding application via the LCR Community Environment Fund for The Atkinson in Southport.
- Installation of energy-saving solar panels and battery storage to over 200 homes in the Borough via the LCR Solar Together Project.
- Delivery of several domestic retrofit programmes across the Borough, increasing energy efficiency of local homes.
- Continued roll out of the Climate Change e-learning and report authors training.
- Progression of Adaptation work via Green Sefton and officer workshops which have been launched to produce departmental risk registers.
- Continued educational support at the Eco Centre and across all schools in the Borough.

Whilst the Council is making good progress to reduce operational emissions (18% reduction to date), it is clear that there is a long way to go to reach net zero.

As an authority we will continue to map out the projects required to reach our target. However, it is clear a significant amount of financial support will be required, to meet these challenging targets.

Although Sefton Council operations only account for around 1% of the Sefton area carbon emissions, the council will seek to influence partners and encourage action through our role as a local leader.

Introduction

In July 2019 Sefton Council declared a Climate Emergency. A commitment was made to reduce operational emissions and reach net zero by 2030.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the progress made, in line with the Climate Emergency strategy and action plan and outlines the sources of carbon emissions linked to Sefton Council's estate and operations.

All activity described in the report relates to the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 (Phase 1, Year 3 of the action plan).

Carbon Footprint

The Government has identified 3 types of emissions:

Scope 1 - Emissions from activities that are owned or controlled by the Council and are released straight into the atmosphere for example, from Council owned gas/oil boilers and diesel/petrol vehicles.

Scope 2 - Emissions released due to electricity use.

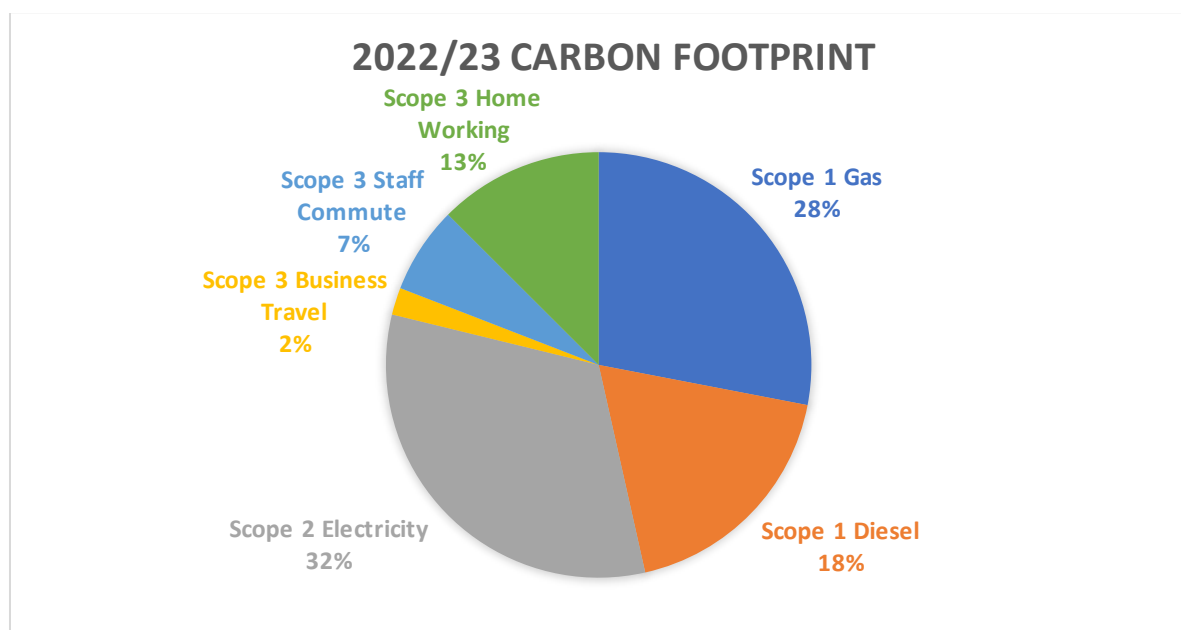
Scope 3 - Emissions from equipment or vehicles that don't belong to the Council but are used to deliver Council functions for example, officers using their own diesel/petrol cars for Council business.

Data from the following activities was used when measuring the Council's carbon footprint:

- Scope 1 – Council Buildings (Gas)
- Scope 1 – Operational Fleet (Diesel)
- Scope 2 - Council Buildings (Electricity)
- Scope 2 - Street Lighting (Electricity)
- Scope 3 - Business Travel
- Scope 3 - Staff Commute
- Scope 3 - Home Working

Sefton Council started to track its carbon emissions in 2019-20. Since then there has been a 2,036 tonne-reduction in total emissions, which represents an 18% decrease (7% reduction this year).

The chart below shows the Council's operational carbon footprint for 2022-23.



A significant proportion of emissions in 2022-23 came from electricity and gas use (60%), followed by emissions associated with the operational fleet (18%), home working (13%), staff commute (7%) and business travel (2%).

Electricity and Gas (Scope 1 and 2)

Energy use has continued to decline. Gas emissions have reduced by 17% since 2019-20 and electricity by 32%.

Reduced energy use has been driven by the large-scale LED Street lighting roll out, changes to building use during/post Covid pandemic and the decarbonisation of the national grid.

Decarbonisation projects are by nature long-term projects. The LED Street lighting replacement programme is expected to be completed in 2024 and the full impact of this work will be seen in 2025.

Also, in April 2023 the Council moved to a Green/Renewable Electricity tariff (REGO). Altogether, there are 183 individual electricity supply points on this tariff (139 sites and Street Lighting). This is a key action in the response to reach net zero by 2030.

These two projects will see a 50% reduction moving forward in the Council's carbon footprint against the baseline.

Operational Fleet (Scope 1)

The Council's third largest emissions source is from transport (operational fleet) which has increased by 15% since 2019-20.

It is clear moving forward we need to transition to a transport system which produces fewer emissions.

Work has already started in this area; the Energy Saving Trust are currently completing a fleet review which is expected to be concluded this year.

Staff Travel and Home Working (Scope 3)

During 2022-23 emissions from staff commute increased by 37% (on the previous year) as people started to return to the office (post Covid pandemic). This equates to an increase in CO2 emissions of 227 tonnes. However, emissions have decreased from homeworking (28%) and business travel (53%) by 666 tonnes in total.

The Council promotes agile working and it is encouraging to see a working pattern which overall continues to support a reduction in emissions.

Climate Change Action Plan

We said, We did

In last year's annual report, we set out four key priorities for the year 2022-23. Progress has been made in all areas, as set out below.

1. Public Engagement

Sefton Council undertook a Climate Consultation in Summer 2022 for a period of 10 weeks.

The consultation included an online form as well as face to face drop in sessions across the borough, with additional information sent out to targeted youth groups to ensure their opinions were included.

There were 5 key takeaways from the Consultation, which has been used to form a Climate Engagement Plan due to be delivered in 2023. These are:

- There is a need for the Council to provide more information on how individuals can reduce their carbon footprint.
- A demand for more information particularly relating to what the Council is doing, how to save energy at home and current consultations which may impact our climate.
- There is a desire for people to work with the Council on this important agenda.
- Support for the Council to create a Climate Change Community Engagement Group/Assembly.
- An aspiration for the following areas to be covered particularly in the engagement group/assembly - renewable energy, waste, transport, clean air and reducing pollution and quality of public space.

2. Green Electricity

Electricity use is the biggest part of the Council's carbon footprint and the original climate emergency declaration required the Council to achieve 100% clean energy by 2030.

In order to reduce our ongoing emissions, it was agreed to switch to green electricity in phase 2 (2023-2026). As part of the procurement of a new electricity supplier from 1 April 2023, it was agreed to purchase REGO (Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin) approved energy, which ensures Sefton are supplied from UK renewable energy sources.

This is a key action in the response to reach net zero by 2030, which will result in a reduction in carbon emissions of approx. 37% next year.

3. Adaptation and Climate Risk

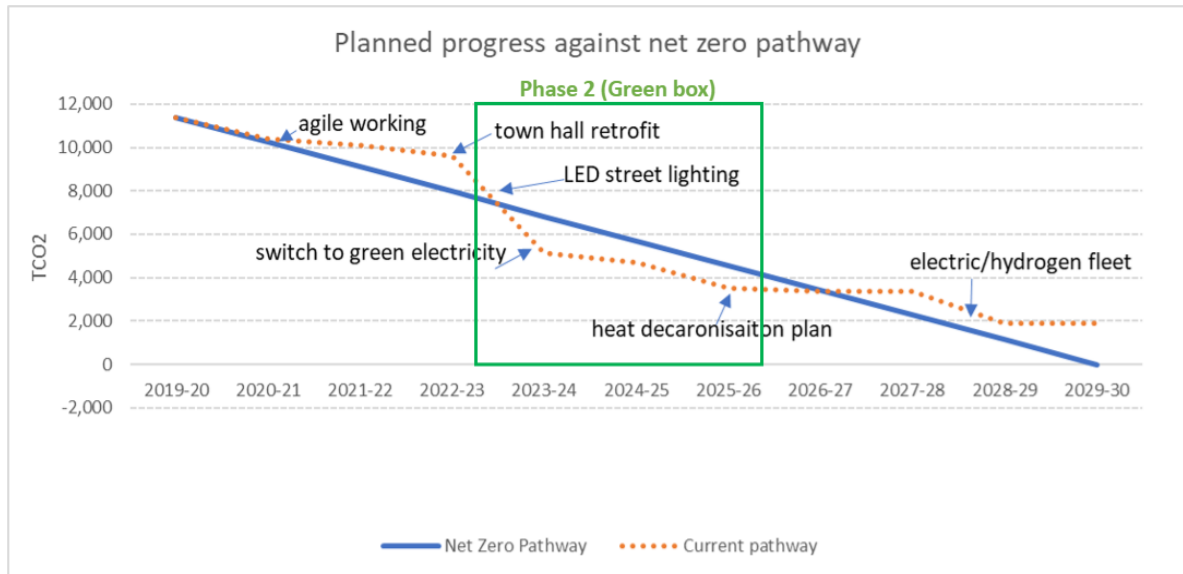
In September 2021, the Audit and Governance Committee agreed for Climate Change Risk to be on the Corporate Risk Register for the first time.

More recently a Climate DMT* officer group has been formed to support this agenda, to act as a conduit for information and activity across all Council departments. One of the first activities is to assess the risks and adaptation measures needed for service areas to adapt to already known/ locked in climate change events such as heat stress, flooding and storm events. This work is ongoing and will continue in 2023-24. *Departmental Management Teams

4. Phase 2 Implementation Plan

This year the Climate action plan has been reviewed and amended in preparation for Phase 2.

The graph below shows the linear pathway to net zero by 2030 (blue line) and also maps the current pathway (red dotted line), with a focus on the key actions for phase 2 (green box).



The strategy for phase 2 focuses on the huge challenges ahead but also the opportunities available.

It sets out:

- The work carried out to date and progress made.
- The key pieces of work required to meet the current 2030 net zero target.
- The challenges to achieving the target particularly around cost. e.g. decarbonation of buildings and reduction in emissions from fleet.

Other Projects

In addition to the four achievements above, there are also a number of other projects in 2022-23 which helped contribute towards achieving the aims of our strategy and action plan and the wider LCR target.

The strategy and action plan have seven key principles which make up a CLIMATE acronym.

Carbon Reduction
Leadership
Innovation
Mobilisation
Adaptation
Transformation
Engagement

The principles guide our work in this area.

Carbon Reduction

Street Lighting Project – In 2020 the Council approved a £12.750m invest to save project, the Street Lighting Asset Project, for the roll out of more energy efficient LED street lighting across the borough. The project continues to be delivered and will take four years to complete. To date the team has installed 11,337 new lanterns and 2,643 new column and lantern replacements. The work to date has reduced carbon emissions by over 700 tonnes

Solar Together LCR Project – Across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) residents were offered the chance to have solar PV surveys carried out with a quote for work if they were suitable. The programme was administered by the LCR to support reaching the ambitious target to be Net Zero by 2040 or sooner. 1,857 residents in Sefton registered interest (7,962 residents across the LCR) and so far over 200 homes in the borough have been fitted with energy-saving solar panels and battery storage, enabling residents to cut their energy costs while also reducing carbon emissions.

Transport - In 2022 the Energy Saving Trust began a Fleet Review which will guide the Council and support the move to low carbon vehicles, while setting out the financial support required to do it. The report is currently being reviewed with a response to the report expected in Autumn 2023.

The Strategic Transport Planning and Investment Team (STPI) are also in the process of developing a Low Carbon Transport Strategy (LCTS) and have identified the key areas of actions the Strategy would include. A public consultation is planned for later this year.

The strategy will support the Council to deliver its net zero target by 2030, by influencing areas such as fleet, business and staff commuting. In addition, it will go further in addressing and influencing transport across the Borough, by helping to provide accessible infrastructure and influence transport choices for residents, community organisations, businesses and visitors.

The aim of the LCTS is to help to deliver reduction in emissions from transport both for the Council and to influence travel across the Borough. The strategy will support the Council to deliver its Net Zero target by 2030, by influencing areas such as fleet, business and staff commuting. In addition, it will go further in addressing and influencing transport across the Borough, by helping to provide accessible infrastructure and influence transport choices for residents, community organisations, businesses and visitors.

Bootle and Southport Town Halls

This year work was completed at Bootle and Southport Town Halls to reduce emissions by improving glazing and loft insulation. The work was supported by the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (phase 1). First year carbon savings are predicted to be around 59 tonnes per year.

Leadership

LCR Pathway to Net Zero Document and Climate Action Plan

All six authorities in the LCR have declared a Climate Emergency and are taking targeted action, sharing good practice and working towards reaching the ambitious target to be Net Zero by 2040 or sooner.

Earlier this year the LCR Combined Authority published the 'Pathway to Net Zero' strategy which outlines an ambitious plan to reduce carbon emissions across the entire LCR. More recently the focus has turned to the 5-year LCR Climate Action Plan which is currently being prepared and Sefton officers have contributed to.

Actions will be needed across all sectors including business & industry, domestic properties, transport. Some of the key actions include:

- Retrofit of housing stock (domestic emissions account for a third of LCR emissions).
- Delivery of the Mersey tidal electricity generation project.
- Delivery of the Hynet hydrogen and carbon capture network.

The plan will be published later this year.

LCR Community Environment Fund

This year the Council successfully obtained LCR Community Environment Fund funds to install honey bees onto the roof of The Atkinson in Southport. It also involved sharing knowledge about protecting solitary bees, improving pollinator habits around The Atkinson, hosting two public events, training a pool of staff and volunteers to become beekeepers and creating social media content. The project is progressing well and will continue into 2023-24

Climate Change Impact Assessment

Last year saw the introduction of a new requirement for all Cabinet and Council decision papers to include an assessment of the potential Climate Change impacts, to date 52 officers have completed the training. Further training sessions will be held in 2023-24.

Innovation

Climate Communications Strategy

Sefton Council conducted a Climate Consultation in Summer/Autumn 2022. The feedback received has been used to form a Climate Emergency Plan containing 9 key actions, one of them being the creation of dynamic Climate Communications Strategy. Work has begun to rebrand the Council's Climate Change campaign with a strong focus on behavioural change, supporting staff, residents and businesses to better understand the environmental and financial benefits of a low carbon society.

There will also be a focus on key themes which cross cut the Climate Change agenda such as transport, energy and waste and recycling. Specific campaigns will be developed but will link in with national events e.g. World Environment Day and Recycle Week.

This work is ongoing and will continue in 2023-24.

Mobilisation

Funding Applications

The Council's second largest emissions source is from gas (28%), which is primarily used to provide space heating and hot water to offices, leisure centres and civic buildings.

Unlike electricity, there is currently no alternative low carbon option to replace gas on a like for like basis. To reduce gas usage, the building needs to be better insulated and any gas or oil powered heating system replaced with a low carbon alternative.

To 'decarbonise' the buildings and remove the gas usage, Sefton have made two funding bids to the Low Carbon Skills Fund (round 4) to provide Sefton with detailed plans of how we 'decarbonise' each building. Successful applicants will be notified in Summer 2023 and if successful work would be undertaken during 2023-24.

Work will continue in 2023-24 to secure external funding. The next application window for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, (which is funding to carry out the work suggested by the decarbonisation plans) is expected to open in Autumn 2023.

Climate Training

In 2021 the Energy and Environmental Management Team developed a Climate Change e-learning module which to date has been rolled out to 2074 members of staff.

Adaptation

Natural environment is an important aspect of Sefton's decarbonisation journey, not only because our natural environment absorbs and stores carbon dioxide but also because of the co-benefits it has, these include better air quality and a reduction in flood risk.

This year Green Sefton have progressed in a number of key areas, these include:

- Planting over 1600 trees (6,243 since 2019-20).
- Assessing its operational risks because of the predicted Climate Change impacts and continuing to identify mitigation and adaptation opportunities.
- Updating service plans with Climate Change embedded as one of the key drivers for the service.
- Revising maps for surface water flood risk with the latest data, to ensure the Council and communities understand the risks.

Transformation

Domestic retrofit programmes offer an opportunity to increase the energy efficiency in some of the most poorly insulated homes in the borough. Activities can range from fitting energy-efficient light bulbs, to installing solar panels.

During 2022-23 the council improved 222 properties (230 energy saving measures) via the Government's Green Home Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme, which fully funded work including external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, solar PV and window replacement.

Phase 2 of this funding was completed in September 2022, with Phase 3 continuing into 2023.

Engagement and Education

Eco Centre

The Council run a dedicated environmental Eco Centre which offers learning opportunities for Sefton residents and school children from across the city region.

This is an area where the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority believe Sefton are leading. Their 'Pathway to Net Zero Report' sets out that "Sefton Council are leading on engagement with younger people, led by the innovative Eco Centre, with specialist resources for climate education."

This year the teaching staff have delivered climate related education to over 3,000 school children. They have also continued to develop www.cleanaircrew.co.uk - a curriculum linked resource to raise awareness of air quality issues and promote positive action and behavioural change.

In 2022 a new Immersive room was launched at the centre and has opened up wider opportunities for more direct community engagement.

School Engagement

All schools across the borough are provided with advice and support. This year through the council's ECO Saver programme schools have the following support:

- Energy & water reduction audits with signposting to information and support on wide range of issues including Climate.
- Assemblies on energy and water use in schools linking back to climate change.
- Support for 30 schools in partnership with United Utilities and the Department for Education to look at water issues on site. Work carried out is saving over 40,000 litres of water a day.
- Governor training on Utility saving, also linking to the climate emergency and how they can play their part in this.
- Providing regular updates of consumption of electricity and gas use on site and how to reduce.
- Promotion of and support for Switch off Fortnight (November 2022).

Challenges

Whilst the Council is making good progress to reduce emissions, it is clear, there are challenges ahead.

As an authority we can map out the projects we need to complete to reach our net zero target. However, significant financial support will be required, in particular the initial capital cost, which given the current cost of living crisis, can be challenging to secure.

Government funding, such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) is critical. However, funding such as this tends to be short term in nature, with limited scope and time to deliver. These funding streams may also require matched funding and staff to deliver the work.

In terms of tackling emissions across the entire borough, the Council do not have direct control of emissions outside of our operations. Therefore, the council will continue to work with partners across the Borough to adopt net zero strategies and support the LCR 2040 net zero target.

It is vital that moving forward we have a robust plan of meaningful engagement with our community that moves beyond traditional communications into a more tailored and focussed approach.

Priorities for 2023-24

We have made progress in many areas over recent years, in line with the Climate Emergency strategy and action plan.

The focus for 2023-24 will be:

- Increased engagement with the community on climate change through implementing the new Climate Engagement Plan.
- Developing strategies and plans to address transport emissions (Low Carbon Transport Strategy and Fleet Review).

- Roll out of adaptation workshops and producing operational risk registers for all service areas.
- Working with the Liverpool City Region to secure funding for decarbonisation projects (buildings and transport).

Conclusions

Sefton Council is committed to protecting the environment and a considerable amount work has been undertaken to date, as highlighted in this report.

This update reaffirms the pledge made by the Council in July 2019, to reduce operational emissions and reach net zero by 2030 (18% reduction to date). The Council remain on track to meet its net zero target, however, the coming phases of work will be very challenging.

The Council are also looking ahead and beginning to plan for the regional 2040 net zero target as well as the legally binding national 2050 net zero target.