

Cambridgeshire County Council



Annual Risk Report: Delivery of Climate Change and Environment Targets

October 2023 – October 2024

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1 Climate Reporting at Cambridgeshire County Council

1.1 Climate Change and Environment Strategy, targets, and action plan

Full Council approved its Climate Change and Environment Strategy (CCES) in February 2022. The strategy covers three areas - mitigation, adaptation, and natural capital – and sets out how the Council will support its communities, businesses, and wildlife to thrive whilst tackling the causes of climate change and dealing with the effects of a changing climate on services and people.

There are currently seven targets within the CCES across carbon reduction, adaptation and improving nature (Table 1).

Table 1 Cambridgeshire County Council's current targets within the Climate Change and Environment Strategy

| | |
|----------|---|
| Target 1 | Understand and grow our natural capital account to benefit people and nature by 2025 |
| Target 2 | The Council will reduce emissions from our buildings and fleet transport to net zero by 2030 (scopes 1&2) |
| Target 3 | The County Council will reduce its supply chain emissions (all scope 3) by 50.4% by 2030 |
| Target 4 | Improve our Biodiversity across Council estate by 2030 |
| Target 5 | Cambridgeshire carbon emissions will be net-Zero by 2045 |
| Target 6 | Support our communities and businesses to decarbonise by 2045 |
| Target 7 | All Council buildings and infrastructure to be resilient to climate change impacts by 2045 |

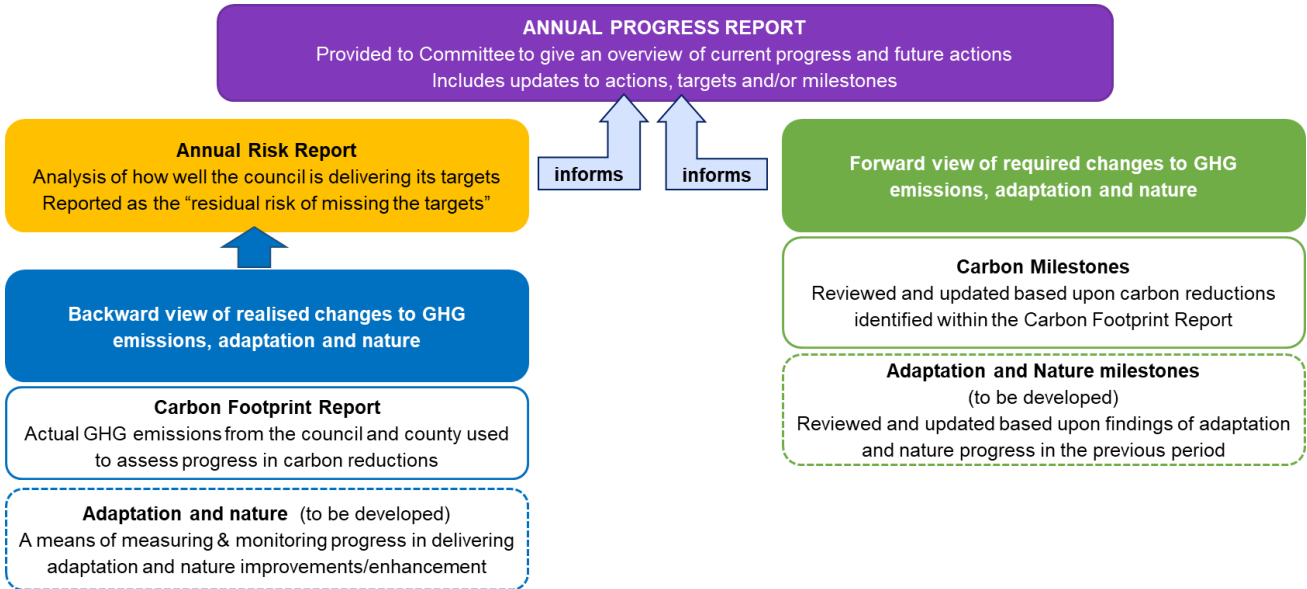
To deliver these targets the Council has an Action Plan which sets out the projects/interventions that will be implemented. The action plan is a “live” document, iterating as new approaches, policy and/or innovations come forward or where the Council’s residual delivery risk remains high. This ensures the Council is responsive to the rapidly evolving understanding of climate impacts and the needs of our communities.

Pro-active monitoring and reporting on these actions and their contribution to the targets is essential to provide assurance that targets are on-track for delivery, particularly given their medium and/or long-term nature. Where targets may be “off-track” further resource can be mobilised to ensure delivery is not compromised.

The council currently employs two mechanisms to monitor delivery of its climate and nature ambitions and is seeking support to set annual carbon milestones as advised by internal audit. Annual carbon milestones will provide the forward planning aspect. Set out below is a brief summary of the monitoring mechanisms and milestone settings and how they relate together.

1.2 Annual Progress Report – Committee Paper

This is a summary position for the delivery of the council’s climate ambitions. It brings together the findings from the monitoring activities and is the mechanism through which updates to the actions or targets are approved. The below illustrates how the mechanisms come together:



1.2.1 Annual Carbon Footprinting

Carbon footprints provide an account of the greenhouse gas emissions produced by both the council’s own operations and across the geographical county area. Reporting takes place annually and is always a retrospective view. They enable the council to understand the scale of emissions and where its highest emission areas are, to target action, and monitor the success of projects to reduce carbon, and track progress against relevant targets.

The council’s organisational emissions are compiled for the preceding financial year, and the data are collated and calculated by council officers. Emissions are reported across scopes 1, 2 and 3¹.

The county-wide emissions are compiled using national statistics data provided by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). These data sets are published

¹ Emissions-releasing activities of organisations are classified in the GHG Protocol Corporate Standard into three groups known as scopes.

| Scope | Description |
|---------------------------|---|
| Scope 1 (Direct) | Emissions that occur directly from sites or assets owned or controlled by the organisation (e.g. gas boilers at own premises, fleet vehicles). |
| Scope 2 (Energy indirect) | Emissions from purchased electricity, heat or steam. |
| Scope 3 (Other indirect) | Emissions that occur due to the organisation’s activities / products / services, but at assets not owned or controlled by that organisation (e.g. travel in employee-owned vehicles or public transport, purchased goods and services). |

two years behind the reporting year, with the most recent dataset for 2022 published in summer 2024.

The Annual Carbon Footprint Reports provide an overview of the operational and county-wide greenhouse gas emissions for the preceding period. The council is in its 6th year of carbon foot printing, for the year 2023/24. All the council's carbon footprint reports are [published on the councils website](#).

1.2.2 Annual Risk Report on Delivery of the CCES

This Annual Risk Report is an overarching view of how well the council is delivering its climate change targets.

The risk-based analysis methodology treats the Action Plan as a list of interventions that will manage down the risk of the council not meeting its targets. Where the interventions are insufficient to deliver the targets, they are amended, improved or new actions added to ensure delivery can bring us back on track. The residual risk reported is the risk of not achieving the target(s).

This method provides the journey to green and reaching the targets. It offers a realistic view of the Council's progress over time and represents a precautionary approach to manage optimism bias. In 2024, it is not expected that all actions can be delivered fully to reach targets. However, over time as current actions are implemented and new actions recommended for inclusion in the CCES action plan that the risk should decrease.

The first progress report using this approach was approved at [October 2023's Environment & Green Investment Committee](#) (item 5).

1.2.3 Forward-looking Milestones

Current monitoring on the climate change and environment strategy is all retrospective, providing assurance of delivered change. However, this approach lacks the ability to monitor in-year performance more proactively against a position/milestone that is aligned to the overall targets. This will enable faster identification of success and/or problems with delivery of the targets.

- Carbon Milestones – this uses established methodologies (Science based Targets Initiative (SBTi)) to calculate “carbon quotas,” annual reduction pathways and milestones out to 2030. Milestones are developed for scopes 1 and 2, scope 3 (excluding rural estate), and a separate set for agriculture and land use emissions will be developed. Separating out these emissions aligns with established best practice due to the nature of the emissions sources.
- Adaptation and Nature Milestones – these will develop similar pathways and milestones but for adaptation action and nature enhancement. The methodologies for these are not established yet but are likely to be on longer than annual timeframes due to the lag time between actions and benefit realisation. These will form part of the overall progress picture once developed.

Work is ongoing to develop this forward-looking approach.

2 Overall Position Across All Targets

A summary of the risk change is highlighted below (Table 2 Figure 1). The risk profile has improved as indicated in the October 2024 position, with four of the seven targets showing a decreased risk position. The remaining three targets are unchanged since last year, but detailed planning is underway.

Table 2 Overall Climate Change & Environment Strategy delivery risk.

| Pre-CCES Status | October 2023 Status | | | New Average Programme Status Oct 2024 | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk |
| 25 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 16 |

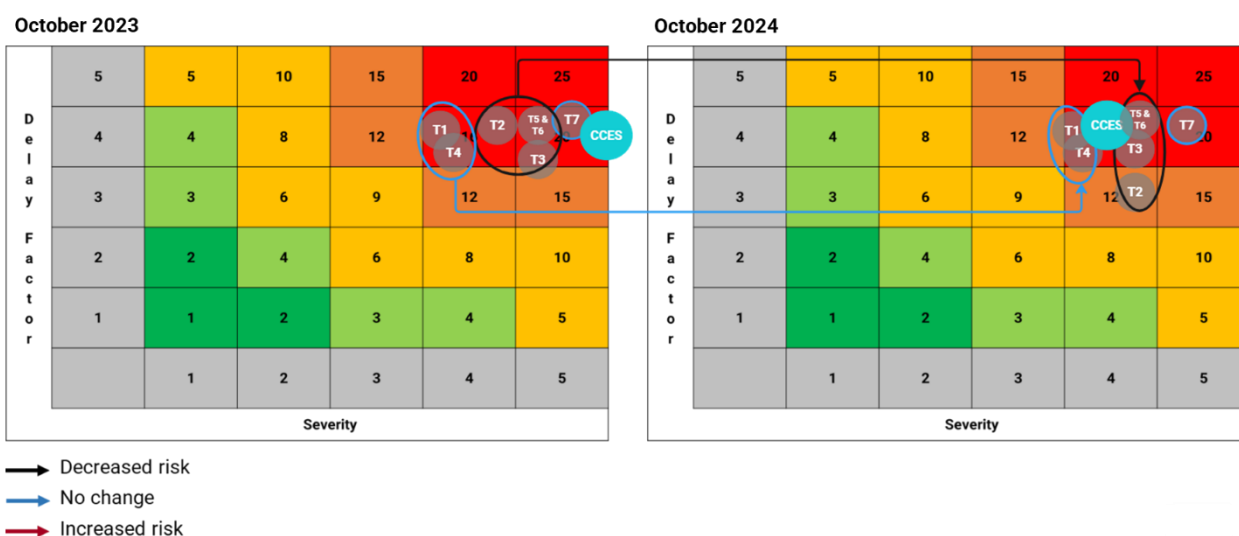


Figure 1 Comparison of residual risk between October 2023 and October 2024.

The overall residual risk in October 2024 has decreased since the last report in 2023. The risk of non-delivery of the council's targets is now 16 – this decrease reflects the substantial action that has been implemented but that continued and sustained action is needed to manage the pathway to green over the next 6 years. **Error! Reference source not found.**

3 Risk Analysis by Target

3.1 Target 1: Understand and grow our natural capital account to benefit people and nature by 2025

| Initial (2022) | 2023 Average Target Status | | | 2024 Average Target Status | | | Risk Direction |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | |
| 25 | 4 | 4 | 16 | 4 | 4 | 16 | steady |

There are 18 actions mitigating the risk of non-delivery of this target. Progress establishing the Council's strategic approach to biodiversity, trees and woodland, and natural capital is underway. For example, work has continued on development of the

Local Nature Recovery Strategy and collaborations with Fenland Soil to develop approaches to peatland management.

Biodiversity and the Tree and Woodland Strategies have been drafted from a robust evidence base encompassing the Council’s estate and coming to committee in January 2025 for approval. This work and evidence base can now inform the development of SMART targets. Work to finalise the new targets is underway, and to recruit further resources to upscale delivery of key actions.

3.2 Target 2: The Council will reduce emissions from our buildings and fleet transport to net zero by 2030 (scopes 1&2)

| Initial (2022) | 2023 Average Target Status | | | 2024 Average Target Status | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Risk Direction |
| 25 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 4 | 3 | 12 | decreasing |

There are 16 actions mitigating the risk of non-delivery of this target. Actions are progressing well on building decarbonisation, and the residual risk level for this target has reduced substantially this year.

The biggest source of scope 1&2 carbon emissions is heating of council buildings using gas or oil. To date 25 sites have been decarbonised by replacing gas and oil boilers with air source heat pumps. The most recent low carbon heating projects to be completed in 2023-24 are those at March Community Centre, St Neots Library and Tennyson Lodge. Projects to decarbonise a further 9 sites are now underway for 2024/25 and 2025-26. Work funded via the Council’s Climate Change and Environment Programme has also completed decarbonisation plans for 44 corporate buildings which has identified which decarbonisation technologies are suitable for which sites and estimated costs of implementation.

To maintain progress, funding and project resource will be needed to decarbonise the remaining 26 sites that still use gas or oil heating (unless any of these sites are disposed of).

1.1. Fleet is the other key focus. A Review of the Council’s Fleet was conducted during 2024. This identified a range of options to improve fleet provision, efficiency, and sustainability, with a business case now under development to deliver the report’s recommendations.

1.2. It will require proactive management to ensure timely delivery in support of the target.

3.3 Target 3: The County Council will reduce its supply chain emissions (all scope 3) by 50.4% by 2030

| Initial (2022) | 2023 Average Target Status | | | 2024 Average Target Status | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Risk Direction |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|----|---|---|----|------------|
| 25 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 16 | decreasing |
|----|---|---|----|---|---|----|------------|

There are 26 actions mitigating the risk of non-delivery of this target. Decarbonisation baselines and plans have been delivered for the Rural Estate, Highways and Schools. These have provided useful insight into the scale of emissions and the type of actions required to effectively decarbonise. Work now turns to developing deliverable projects informed by the plans. Key areas of note include:

Emissions from waste were 13% higher than the previous year, and 42% higher than the baseline year 2018-19. Consultancy was procured to inform where and how carbon emission reductions could be identified for different waste disposal options. This has informed current and ongoing work by the Council on its waste strategy and operations.

Significant work has been completed to support the consideration of climate and nature within procurement. Low Carbon Purchasing Guidance, Net Zero by Design Guidance and a Carbon Charter have all launched. Attention turns to monitoring implementation to understand any implications of greater environmental requirements on contract delivery and value - potential funding implications remain a key risk along with highly limited ability of some already stretched markets to make changes (e.g., social care provision, school bus provision); and

Baselining of the rural estate’s emissions has completed. This has highlighted both the challenges of decarbonising agriculture - it is not possible to have a zero-emission agriculture system using current technology – and best practice for setting targets for agricultural emissions, which regards these emissions differently to other sources. For example, both the UK Climate Change Committee and the Science Based Targets Initiative use different definitions of Net Zero for agriculture and land use emissions than those used for all other sources of emissions. While there are actions the council is exploring, it is proposed to remove rural estate emissions from the current scope 3 target and to collaborate on a more specific target for the rural estate.

3.4 Target 4: Improve our Biodiversity across Council estate by 2030

| Initial (2022) | 2023 Average Target Status | | | 2024 Average Target Status | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Risk Direction |
| 25 | 4 | 4 | 16 | 4 | 4 | 16 | steady |

There are 20 actions mitigating the risk of non-delivery of this target. As with Target 1 actions are in their infancy, with a focus on developing specific plans and strategies to inform our approach to biodiversity as stage 1 and then progress actions that will deliver SMART targets. As with Target 1, the intention is to make this a SMART evidence-based target.

Delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy and Updated Tree & Woodland Strategy will support delivery of this target, and consideration for nature is also incorporated into council asset decarbonisation plans. Similarly, the Rural Estates and Highways Service

decarbonisation plan incorporate improvements to nature in their scopes. Management of this target will rely on effective implementation of these strategies and plans.

3.5 Error! Reference source not found. Target 5: Cambridgeshire carbon emissions will be net-Zero by 2045 and Target 6: Support our communities and businesses to decarbonise by 2045

| Initial (2022) | 2023 Average Target Status | | | 2024 Average Target Status | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Risk Direction |
| 25 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 16 | decreasing |

| Initial (2022) | 2023 Average Target Status | | | 2024 Average Target Status | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Risk Direction |
| 25 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 16 | decreasing |

Due to their strong overlap, these two targets are discussed together. Across these targets there are 40 actions -the majority of the action plan.

As described in the Annual Carbon Footprint Report, Cambridgeshire-wide emissions are varied and largely outside of direct control of the council. Instead, actions focus on facilitating, enabling, and supporting delivery of decarbonisation in partnership or by other parties, e.g. communities and businesses; with collaborative/partnership working a key underpinning theme.

Successful collaborative work on schools’ energy retrofit and supporting communities via the Cambridgeshire Action on Energy Partnership, along with developing the council’s approach to Community Energy, are key areas where the Council has delivered over the last year. Local Area Energy Planning is progressing with Local Authority partners and the CPCA along with collaborations aligning Cambridgeshire’s climate ambitions through a shared evidence base and Locally Determined Contribution to inform Devolution planning for Climate and Net Zero. Continued efforts to strengthen both community, business and partner collaborations is required to sustain engagement and support for Net Zero into the future.

Engaging the community is key to change. Our Communities, Libraries and Skills teams have a range of climate initiatives underway to build social capital and have developed a net zero action plan for their service. Actions underway include the libraries hosting sustainability events, sharing their experiences of having air source heat pumps installed enabling residents to “experience” what a heat pump is like and identifying new ways to collaborate with community groups to share environmental messaging.

Evidence indicates that one of the most effective roles the Council could play in supporting communities and businesses to decarbonise relates to delivery of strong engagement, centred around practical advice, support and signposting. A collaborative

approach with CPCA and key partners is in development however resource has limited outputs.

3.6 Target 7: All Council buildings and infrastructure to be resilient to climate change impacts by 2045

| Initial (2022) | 2023 Average Target Status | | | 2024 Average Target Status | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Severity | Likelihood of Delay | Residual Risk | Risk Direction |
| 25 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 5 | 4 | 20 | steady |

There are 22 actions mitigating the risk of non-delivery of this target. While significant progress in managing flood risk across the County is recognised within the risk analysis, there remains a key challenge in ensuring the council and its infrastructure are resilient to the additional pressures the changing climate may bring.

Work is underway to improve the preparedness of the council’s highways to flood risk, focussing on improved gulley management. Funding has also been secured to explore solutions to the region’s peat affected roads.

The Just Transition Fund is funding work to understand the Councils current and future exposure to climate change is in development. This will develop an understanding of the scale of the risks, identify opportunities for action and will support the organisation to take the necessary steps towards being suitably adapted to a changing climate. The timing of this proposal is important as it requires senior and member level engagement to ensure a successful project. Once the timing for this work is agreed and the project commences it will provide a major step forward towards delivery of this target and planning for future demand risk on key services. This must be a key focus for the Council over the next year.

4 Next Steps

This report demonstrates continued progress towards delivery of the council’s targets, with the risk of non-delivery decreasing for four of the seven targets since the previous year. The remaining three targets are holding steady. It highlights where significant progress has been made and the key activities underway that are anticipated to further mitigate target delivery risk in the coming 12 months.

The Carbon Milestones, outlined in section 0, will be further developed over the coming year. This will allow next year’s report to be better placed within the context of the carbon reductions the organisation needs to deliver annually, providing further quantified assurance that delivery of targets is on-track. Bringing forward similar forward-looking milestones for adaptation and nature will also commence, although a methodology for these is more complex than for carbon.

While the council is confident that progress is being made, there remains significant further work to do. The scale of the challenge is large and complex, and the council continues its efforts to understand what needs to be done using robust evidence to plan

and deliver on its climate change and environment commitments. This will support a “greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire” to be realised.