

Sefton Council Climate Emergency Annual Report 2021

What Sefton Council
are doing about
Climate Change



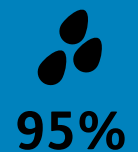
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Foreword

Climate change represents a significant threat to our future and preventing and protecting ourselves from climate change is a top priority.

Recent extreme weather events over several years have presented severe challenges to property, transport, agriculture and other services in the Sefton area and have led to the deaths and displacement of thousands of people worldwide.

The Meteorological Office clearly states that these kind of extreme weather events are significantly more likely if we take no action on reducing our carbon emissions; the main driver of man-made climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. In their report "Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 1.5C report", published in October 2018, they conclude that humanity has 11 years for "ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities" to deliver the "rapid and far reaching transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities" needed to turn this around, so we can avoid reaching tipping points where we would no longer have the ability to avoid extreme weather events.

Children in Sefton will be in their teens and twenties in 10 years' time. They deserve a liveable Sefton. We must act now to ensure this. Bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities, as well as improved wellbeing for people locally and worldwide.

Work on reducing carbon emissions does not start from a zero base. Sefton has been involved with numerous projects aimed at reducing emissions and will continue to do so, in the context of the climate emergency and with increased urgency.

We have a strategy that sets out our vision and broad aims and objectives and represents our commitment to maximise the opportunity within climate action and to protect our communities from that damage already caused by climate change.

It was followed by an implementation plans which detailed our journey towards net zero carbon operations by 2030.

We will be reporting our progress in a series of Annual Reports, detailing actions taken so far and progress towards our 2030 net zero carbon target.

This is the July 2021 Annual Report and is part of Phase 1 of our Implementation Plan

We are committed to taking responsibility for our carbon emissions and playing our part in limiting global average temperature rises. Business as usual is no longer an option.



Executive Summary

The Council's carbon footprint has fallen 10% from last year's baseline. This reduction means the Council are on track to meet net zero carbon by 2030.

This is a huge achievement, as this Annual Report is presented against a back drop of the Covid-19 pandemic - putting Council funding, resources and delivery of services under extreme pressure.

However, this has not derailed progress. There were some positive consequences of lockdown which the Council have embraced. For example,

- The pandemic provided an opportunity to change behaviour and embed new agile working arrangements which have reduced the Council's carbon footprint. Staff have embraced the change and work is underway to retain the benefits going forward.
- The lockdown led to the largest ever recorded global reducing in atmospheric CO2 emissions, including improvements to air quality in Sefton.
- The national response to 'build back better, build back greener' has provided unexpected funding streams which the Council have taken advantage of.

In addition to the pandemic, 2020-21 has been a year of extremes. The Met Office 'Look Back at 2020' stating that 2020 has been a year of extremes with the wettest February on record, the sunniest spring, a heatwave in the summer and a day in October breaking rainfall records. 2020 was also one of the top five hottest on record for the UK but was also one of the top ten wettest and the top ten sunniest years.



Executive Summary

This makes it clear that the general trend of warming as a consequence of climate change is being seen, not just at a global level, but in our own national temperature records. It is even being felt at a local level, for example, the extreme flooding event which led to the evacuation of residents in Maghull due to Storm Christoph in March 2021.

Such events act as a reminder of how important tackling climate change is and why it is an emergency.

The reduction in emissions during 2020-21 was largely driven by the Council embracing the change to working practices brought about by the pandemic, notably a move away from office working and into home working. We are working to ensure that we retain some of the new working practices post pandemic, for example, through agile working.

The foundations have also been laid this year for several key projects which will significantly reduce carbon emissions going forward. For example, this year the Council have approved the Asset Street Lighting Project and Town Hall Retrofits which will both lead to significant carbon savings in the future.

Work has also been undertaken to ensure that climate change becomes embedded in all areas of the Council. For example, through the introduction of climate change impact assessments in decision making reports and staff training.

The pandemic has limited progress with external stakeholders, but we hope that we can focus on this going forward, particularly during COP26 in November.



Introduction

In July 2019 Sefton Council declared a Climate Emergency. In declaring a Climate Emergency, it was agreed that:

Sefton Council is committed to reducing carbon emissions and resolves to go further than the UK100 Agreement and to act in line with the scientific consensus that we must reduce emissions to net zero by 2030, and therefore commits to:

- Declare a 'Climate Emergency' that requires urgent action.
- Make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030.
- Commit to municipalisation of energy supply by utilising public sector sites to generate energy where appropriate
- Ensure that all strategic decisions are in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030.
- Support and work with all other relevant agencies towards making the Sefton area Zero Carbon within the same timescale.
- Achieve 100% clean energy across Sefton Council's full range of functions by 2030.
- Convene an assembly of interested groups not directly represented on Council in 2020 to oversee and feed into the development of related action plans and budgets across the City.

This Annual Report highlights the actions Sefton Council have taken over the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 to address the Climate Change Emergency.



Strategy and Implementation Plan

Since declaring the Climate Change Emergency Sefton Council have produced a Strategy and associated Implementation plan/action plan. Both were approved by full council in September 2020.

The documents establish a path to lead the organisation to become net zero carbon by 2030.

Both the strategy and action plan have seven key principles to guide work in this area – guided by the acronym C.L.I.M.A.T.E

- Carbon Reduction
- Leadership
- Innovation
- Mobilisation
- Adaptation
- Transformation
- Engagement



CLIMATE

All current projects align with our CLIMATE strategy

arbon Reduction

Street Lighting Asset Project

The energy used by Street Lighting accounted for 26% of the Council's total carbon footprint in 2019-20 and these energy costs are increasing year-on-year at a rate above inflation incurring a significant cost to the Council.

The Council approved an investment of £12.750m in the Street Lighting Asset Project to improve the portfolio through the installation of energy efficient LED technology and replacement of life expired assets. The programme will generate significant operational cost savings over 20 years against current forecast expenditure without intervention. By the end of 2021, it is anticipated that Sefton will achieve financial savings of circa £240,000 based on 2020/21 rates.

The scheme is expected to reduce the council's emissions by 347tCO₂ over the course of 2021-22. When the project is complete, annual emissions are expected to reduce by 1,655 tCO₂ per year – which would mean street lighting accounts for around 10% of the Council's total carbon footprint (based on 2019-20 data).

This is a positive scheme for the Council, it is win-win in terms of long-term cost savings and reducing carbon emissions.

Energy efficiency work at Bootle and Southport Town Hall

The Council recently secured £875,000 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund to undertake works at Bootle and Southport Town Halls, with the aim of reducing heat loss at both sites. A specialist heritage contractor will work to improve the glazing and roof insulation in both buildings, ensuring that key historic features are maintained and protected.

Works are scheduled to be completed in late 2021 and will be carried out simultaneously alongside other essential maintenance projects. The works are expected to reduce emissions by approximately 59 tCO₂ per year - reducing the Council's carbon footprint and energy bill as well as creating a more comfortable working environment for staff and visitors.

In addition to these improvements, funding has been secured for the production of a Heat Decarbonisation Plan, covering 14 main corporate buildings. This plan will help to determine how the Council can move away from using fossil fuel heating and utilise alternative low carbon options, such as heat pumps instead.



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Procurement

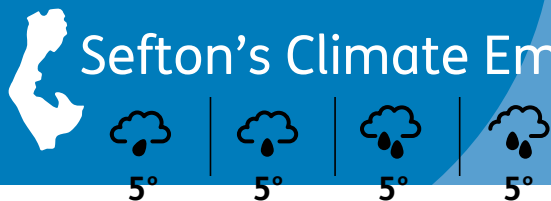
The Council's baseline carbon footprint does not include the emissions associated with the products and services which the Council 'buy-in' – this is in line with the international methodology for calculating carbon footprint. However, we estimate that we could add an additional 19% to the carbon footprint if it were included.

The Council have a leadership role in the community, therefore, have begun to procure in a way which helps ensure we buy sustainable products and services and work with companies who have a similar environmental ethos to Sefton Council. This year, environmental based social value questions have been introduced to large/carbon intensive tenders. Scored by the Energy and Environmental Management Team. A pilot of a new social value tool which better captures and quantifies carbon emissions has also begun at the Council.

The regeneration of Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre is an example of the Council requiring contractors, suppliers and stakeholders to consider climate change.

The tender for this regeneration included climate specific social value questions. The regeneration will include the installation of five electric charger points on site and the contractors have agreed the following measures:

- No plastic cups for water coolers
- Sorting all waste into appropriate bins/skips for recycling
- Using local suppliers and employees where possible to reduce mileage
- Minimising electricity, water and fuel use on site
- Looking at potential for employee cycle scheme
- These will all be reported against as part of their monthly update report.



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I nnovation

Housing retrofit

The Council are the accountable body for an ERDF funded project with Housing Associations retrofitting homes in Sefton and across the LCR with both innovative and traditional carbon reduction interventions – such as external wall insulation, floor insulation and electric heating.

The Council have also accepted grant funding for retrofit of approximately 245 homes within Sefton.

This work will focus on the most inefficient homes of the poorest residents. Which will not only reduce the carbon emissions across the Borough – but also help to reduce the risk of fuel poverty for residents.

M obilisation

All Staff Climate Emergency eLearning module

An eLearning module has been developed in-house by the Teachers at the Eco Centre, the Energy and Environmental Management Team and the Corporate Learning Centre. The training will provide all Council staff with a basic understanding of what climate change is, why it's important, what the Council are doing in response and what we expect staff to do.

The training will be compulsory and takes around an hour to complete. The eLearning will be launched in June. The images are screenshots of the training package.





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All current projects align with our CLIMATE strategy

A daptation

Agile working

The Property Services Department are developing proposals to embed agile working changes including changes to office numbers, staff commuting, staff travel, IT use and building usage. The climate emergency carbon reduction targets are helping to inform the decisions made on how Sefton employees work in the future.

Agile working has dramatically reduced the daily commute and its associated emissions. It has also meant the underutilisation of offices which has led to emission reductions in the Council owned building. However, the emissions saved from the commute are largely offset by the emissions which result from home working (see Figure 3. This is because, for example, staff at home are using individual gas boilers which are less efficient than those of a larger scale use to heat offices and they tend to be older.

The emissions associated with home working have been calculated based on an industry recognised methodology. It is robust; however, it does include several assumptions. Work will be ongoing this year to test whether those assumptions are reflective of Sefton staff and to educate staff about energy use in the home. For example, heating costs and emissions can be reduced significantly by only heating the room you are working in – rather than the entire house, during winter.

Internal Communications

Periodic campaigns where run for staff throughout the year, for example, Halloween switch off campaign, Climate Change Christmas Advent Calendar and the creation of Energy Dashboards.

Staff at all levels have been involvement and input into the climate emergency workstream, either through the Climate Emergency Officers Working Group with Departmental Management Team representatives from across the Council to assist in the delivery of the climate change implementation plan and communicate climate change messages throughout the Council. Or through One Council or the Climate Change Emergency Member Reference Group.

Tree Planting

For the planting season 2020/21, 3,430 new trees have been planted in the borough (all via external funding sources), as opposed to 160 mature (dead, diseased or dying) tree's felled on the highway, and in parks and on the coast.

Tree's are a valuable carbon sink helping to absorb carbon and also aid adaptation to weather extremes – in terms of reducing flood risk and providing solar shading.



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Transformation

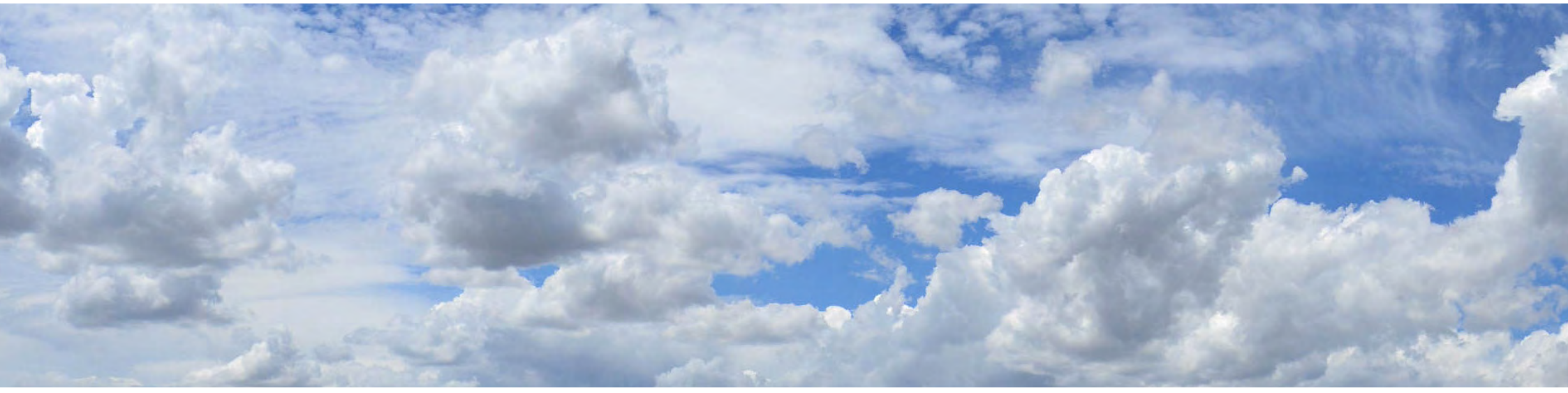
Climate Change Emergency in Decision Making Reports and associated staff training

From May all Cabinet and Council decision papers which go to Members will include a climate change impact assessment for the first time.

This will help ensure that climate change is a visible part of the decision-making process in the future, helping to embed climate change thinking into everything we do across the whole council.

A new reporting template has been developed by Democratic Services and the Energy and Environmental Management Team.

The associated reporting guidance note to authors has also been updated to include advice on how to complete the new climate emergency implications section. So far, over 90 staff members have been trained in completing a climate change impact assessment.





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ngagement

A draft Communications Plan for the climate change emergency has been created. It focuses on awareness raising campaign's both internally and externally, largely using digital methods (website, Twitter, Yammer etc due to budget constraints).

External Communications have been carried out in conjunction with key partners such as Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (CVS).

The Council continue to attend Nature Connected (the LCR Local Nature Partnership with engagement in projects and campaigns accordingly - such as reporting on the Fields In Trust initiative in Liverpool City. As part of the Nature Connected Board involvement, Green Sefton have been involved with the development of a Natural Capital baseline work with John Moores University – which will now feed into the Strategic Land Use Plan which highlights the huge contribution landscape can make to the climate change agenda – both adaptation, and mitigation.

The pandemic has meant that the Council have not been able to progress engagement workstreams as much as hoped. However, as the pandemic eases, this can be a focus in 2021-22.

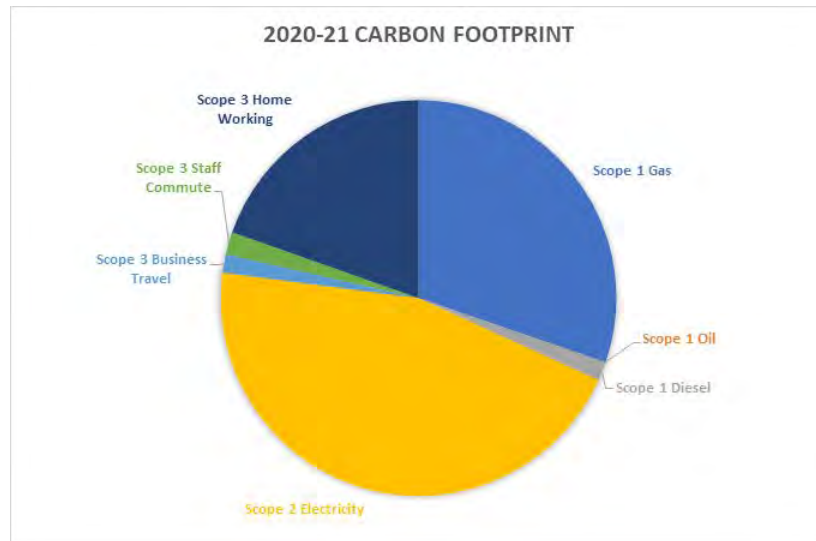
Air Quality

The Council have been involved in the work the LCR have been doing and their consultation on the regions Spatial Strategy. The LCR Environment Fund has been utilised to improve and roll out of Sefton Council's Clean Air Crew Website – which is an online learning tool which communicates messages about air quality, the environment and climate change to primary school children across the entire LCR.

The Council have also received funding from Defra to invest in air quality and create an immersive room/experience at the ECO Centre – which will be a valuable engagement tool available to the Council in the future.

Carbon Footprint

The Council's baseline carbon footprint was calculated in 2019-20 and will be used as a baseline against which to chart progress towards net zero carbon.



The scope of the Council's carbon footprint was determined as Council operations and details of how this was calculated are available in the Sefton Council Carbon Footprint Report 2019-20.

The footprint was calculated as 10,017 tCO₂ in 2019-20.

This compares to 9,035 tCO₂ for 2020-21. This is a decrease of 982 tCO₂, which is 10%.

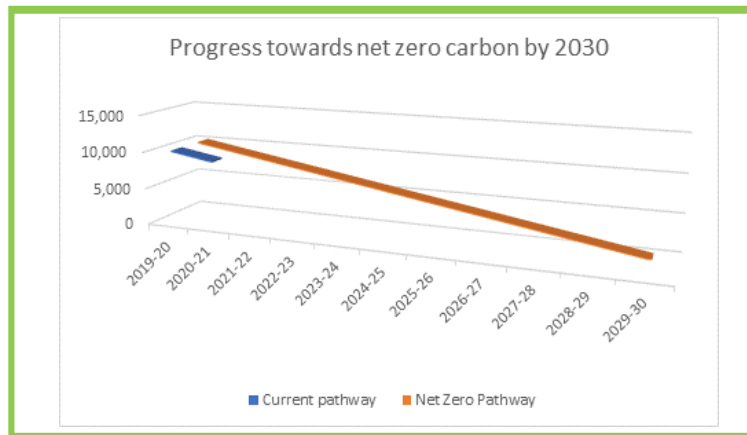


Carbon Reduction

The reduction was largely driven by changes to working practices brought about by the pandemic, notably a move to home working.

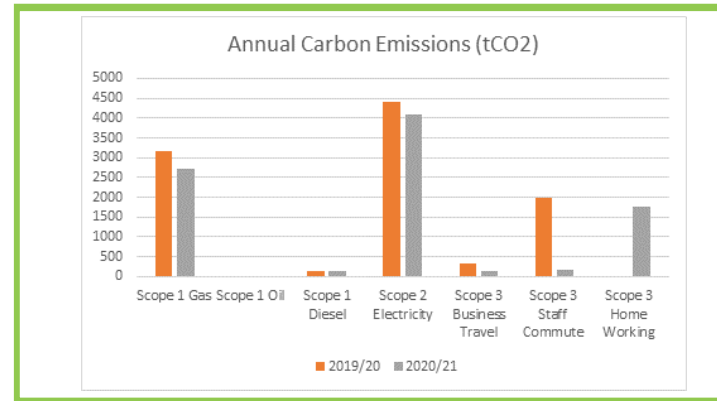
This meant that staff did not commute to the office (reducing commuter emissions and also reduced the energy consumed in Council owned buildings – when buildings were closed or had a reduced number of staff working on site).

Scope 1 emissions (gas, oil and diesel emissions) fell by 13% and Scope 2 electricity emissions fell by 7%. Also, emissions as a result of the staff commute to work fell by a dramatic 92%.



The change in working practice has led to a large proportion of emissions being shifted away from the Council but into staff homes. Therefore, we have followed best practice in capturing and accounting for the emissions associated with staff working from home.

This is a discretionary element of the carbon footprint but given the scale of home working this past year – the emissions associated with home working will be accounted for by the Council.



The chart above, shows a breakdown of the Council's carbon emissions in 2020-21 and compares it to 2019-20.

Work is underway to ensure that the carbon savings which have resulted from the new ways of working are retained by implementing a new agile working policy.

The progress made in one year is very positive and the achievement should not be underestimated. But a report by Manchester University Tyndall Centre for Climate Change provides a stark warning that there is a lot still to be done, not only in the Council's operations but across the entire Borough.

The United Nations Paris Agreement sets the UK a carbon budget. If the UK stick to this budget the UK will be playing its part in ensuring global temperatures don't rise above 1.5 degree Celsius.

The Tyndall Centre state that if the Borough of Sefton continue to emit carbon in the way it currently is – it will have used its entire carbon budget up in 7 years. The budget needs to last until 2100. So, it will have used up its entire allocation of carbon 73 years ahead of schedule!

Sefton is not unique in its position, nearly all the Local Authority areas have the same stark warning, but it serves as an important reminder of the challenge.

Conclusion

In addition to the roll out of projects and processes we have outlined, in 2021-22 there are a number of key projects scheduled to commence, in line with the Action Plan.

- Climate Change Risk Assessment (adaptation). A full risk assessment of climate change impacts, identifying threats and how they can be managed as well as realising the opportunities.
- Focus on Customer Engagement particularly linking to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) due to be held in Glasgow in November.
- Investigate the potential to switch to a 100% renewable/green electricity tariff when re-procuring the Council's supplier (for supply beginning 1 April 2023). This would enable the Council to entirely remove electricity from the carbon footprint, which made up 45% of the 2020/21 carbon footprint. Traditional procurement routes would be utilised, but the Council would opt for an accredited 'REGO backed' renewable electricity tariff. There is an additional cost associated with the purchase of renewable/green electricity under Sefton's current contract which is driven by market forces. Based on the current market price and 2019/20 annual consumption the additional annual costs would be around £19,500 for corporate sites. If we took a broader approach to also included school and new direction sites, it would be an additional £42,000 per year (Corporate, schools and New Directions). This offsetting would be carried out alongside electricity demand reduction projects, such as the LED Street Lighting projects following the energy hierarchy.
- Explore options for local offset via climate adaptation programmes and local landscape enhancement

Conclusion

After the first year of the Council's ten-year climate change emergency action plan – the Council is on track to reach net zero carbon by 2030, with emissions falling by 10%. This is an achievement, especially set against a backdrop of the global pandemic.

The Street Light Asset Project and energy efficiency works at Bootle and Southport Town Hall projects which have begun this year will translate to further emission reductions in the future (17%). This means plans are in place to have a total reduction of 27%.

