

Net Zero Carbon Leicestershire 2045 Strategy and Action Plan

Consultation Summary



Lead, enable, inspire

Why a Leicestershire Net Zero 2045 Strategy and Action Plan?

Leicestershire County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, but we're proud to have a commitment to environmental action that dates back much further. Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. The release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) have caused global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to our climate. Despite pledges to reduce emissions and action from around the world, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere continues to increase and urgent and deep cuts in emissions are still required to avoid catastrophic climate change.

The last five-year period has been the hottest on record since 1850. This trend is predicted to continue, with global temperatures continuing to rise, alongside more extreme heatwaves, droughts and flood events across the world, including here in Leicestershire. To make a difference, we must act now.

The term net zero means achieving a balance between the carbon sent into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it. This balance - or net zero - will happen when the amount of carbon we add to the atmosphere through use of fossil fuel energy such as coal, gas, petrol and diesel is no more than the amount removed.

What is the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan?

The Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan sets out the approach to delivering the Council's ambitions to achieve net zero carbon emissions in Leicestershire by 2045 or before.

The Strategy takes a long-term view, setting out the end goal of net zero carbon by 2045 with interim targets and outlines how we intend to do this. The Action Plan sets out what needs to happen across the county to both support the journey to net zero and to directly reduce carbon emissions. The Action Plan includes what the council will do and where it aims to inspire and involve others such as businesses, organisations and residents.

Who is it for?

The Strategy and Action Plan is for all the residents, businesses and communities of Leicestershire. It will be overseen by Leicestershire County Council, but it is clear that the council cannot do this working alone. Buy-in from partners and local people is essential.

What does it say?

The Leicestershire County Council Net Zero Carbon 2045 Strategy sets out a vision and aims for reducing carbon emissions across Leicestershire and halting the county's contribution to global warming. It reflects the latest climate science, evidence on local carbon emissions and best practice guidance and checklists of what a good climate action plan looks like.

The vision sets out where we would like to be by 2045, while the aims set out how we will reach the targets. It is:

By 2045 Leicestershire will have ended its contribution to global warming and adapted to climate change. The transition to net zero carbon emissions will have improved the local environment for people and nature, increased prosperity and supported resilient communities.

As a leading organisation, the County Council aims to:

- **Lead** by example, achieving net zero carbon emissions for the council's own operations by 2030.
- **Enable** carbon reduction across the county by delivering and facilitating the required infrastructure.
- **Inspire** partners and the public to develop a joined-up approach that delivers net zero carbon emissions across Leicestershire by 2045.

Leicestershire will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UK target to cut greenhouse gas emissions:

↓ 78% **By 2035**
compared to 1990 levels

This means a further reduction of 42% between the baseline year 2019 and 2035



The scope of the countywide target describes what is included in the baseline emissions and the reduction targets. The areas with the most emissions as of the baseline inventory measurements of 2019 are transport and domestic and industrial energy use.

The Net Zero Approach section highlights that the actions we need to take to tackle climate change are many and varied and will require a different approach to energy use and production for heating, power and travel in the future. There are also opportunities for us to change the way we use land to remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it in natural systems like forests and soil.

This will require big changes and presents challenges to make sure that everyone can take part and that benefits from the changes will be available to everyone regardless of their characteristics or circumstances.

To tackle these challenges, the Strategy identifies priority principles that will guide the Council's actions to reduce carbon. These commit us to:

- Providing education and information on climate change and the steps needed to tackle it.
- Fairness, freedom and choice to choose the solutions that work in different communities.
- Maximising the co-benefits such as improvements for health and reduced pollution, boosts to the economy.
- Protecting and restoring nature while moving towards the net zero goal.

To get the maximum benefit from the work we do to reduce carbon, there will be a need to prioritise actions which have the largest impact on emissions.

The Strategy includes a preferred order in which to address carbon emissions: **eliminate** (stopping emissions being produced by doing things differently), **reduce** (using energy more efficiently), **substitute** (using renewable energy and low carbon replacements) and **compensate and neutralise** (support carbon reduction elsewhere and permanently remove carbon from the atmosphere).

There are many possible pathways to net zero carbon by 2045, so it will be important to choose actions that have a big impact on carbon, maximise value for money and also have other advantages. The council commissioned research to help inform its plans (and those of other organisations) which concluded that transport fuel switching, heat fuel switching, industrial measures, reduced demand for energy and transport mileage and installation of solar power provide the biggest contributions.

The UK Climate Change Committee estimates that local authorities have the power to control and influence over approximately 30% of the carbon emissions from their area (less in areas with two tiers of local government like Leicestershire) yet confirms there is a significant role for local government. Councils are uniquely placed to identify locally specific solutions through their connection with local people, knowledge and accountability.

The County Council has ambitions to lead, enable and inspire residents and other organisations to deliver net zero for Leicestershire by 2045. The Strategy and Action Plan takes a comprehensive view of what needs to be done to achieve this target and includes actions where the County Council will lead, for example within its own estate and fleet of vehicles, where it will seek to work in partnership or has asks of other key stakeholders and areas where the council seeks to influence national government or to seek buy-in from residents.

The Net Zero Action Plan sets out cross cutting actions to support the transition to net zero and carbon reduction action themes and objectives.

To create the right conditions for the transition to net zero carbon there is a need for:

- **Leadership** - the council will demonstrate leadership and share its knowledge and experience.
- **Collaboration** - a team effort with buy-in from residents and partners for a joined up approach.
- **Research & Innovation** - to fill gaps in knowledge and to develop and test new solutions.
- **Informing, Engaging & Involving** - regular communications and campaigns and listening to the voice of local stakeholders and the public to shape net zero plans.
- **Finance** - unlocking investment from across society and attracting green business.

Deep and rapid cuts in carbon emissions are also required. The section on carbon reduction themes and action tables includes broad themes for cutting emissions and increased carbon capture and storage that reflect the key emission sources for Leicestershire. These broad aims and actions are:

Decarbonising Transport

To deliver sustainable, affordable transport choices for all that minimise carbon emissions.

1. Encourage changes to travel behaviours
2. Reduce the need to travel by car
3. Encourage and enable more cycling, walking and other active travel
4. Support people to choose public transport
5. Support the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles for example, electric and hydrogen fuelled
6. Reduce the impact of freight movement within and across the county

Net Zero Infrastructure and Development

To reduce demand for energy, support the switch to low carbon energy and heat, increase renewable energy generation and the sustainable use of natural resources.

1. Change behaviour to reduce demand for energy
2. Improve the energy efficiency of homes and other buildings
3. Decarbonise the heat supply
4. Modernise the grid and ensure capacity is available to support net zero
5. Increase local renewable energy capacity
6. Minimise emissions from new builds in construction and use
7. Support the transition to a circular economy including the sustainable extraction, use and end of life management of natural resources
8. Engage with government and business to unlock joint solutions and investment
9. Increase carbon removals by supporting the development of carbon capture and storage solutions

Green Economy

To grow the county's low carbon economy and increase demand for low carbon goods and services.

1. Support existing businesses to go green and benefit from the low carbon economy
2. Attract low carbon business, industry and investment and develop local supply chains and circular economy
3. Identify and develop skills to support the net zero transition
4. Stimulate demand for low carbon goods and services
5. Encourage the uptake of green tourism and opportunities for green spending

Climate Friendly Communities

To inform, engage and involve our residents in identifying and delivering local solutions to achieve net zero carbon.

1. Raise awareness of the climate emergency and the net zero targets
2. Promote sustainable consumption and behaviours that reduce carbon emissions
3. Deliver a fair and just transition to net zero carbon emissions that maximises the co-benefits for health, the economy and nature
4. Deliver inclusive information, engagement and consultation to help everybody to have their say on our plans
5. Enable individual behaviour change and sustainable choices
6. Enable community climate action
7. Embrace innovative models of providing community information, public involvement and action

Nature and Land Use

To develop a growing and resilient network of land and water that is richer in plants and wildlife, optimises carbon storage and supports climate resilience.

1. Develop and maintain high quality data to inform decisions and action for nature and carbon storage
2. Promote land management practices that benefit nature and increase carbon storage
3. Protect and enhance existing spaces for nature that may also remove and store carbon as an additional benefit
4. Create new, well-connected spaces for nature that provide the greatest opportunity for nature recovery and other public goods

The final section on the implementation, monitoring and reporting progress confirms that approval and implementation of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan will be overseen by the council's cabinet and guided by officers from across the council. Ongoing discussions with local interested parties will guide the approach to partnership working and plans for closer collaboration.

How has the Strategy and Action Plan been developed?

The council commissioned the Net Zero Carbon Leicestershire 2045 Roadmap¹ research to provide information on the baseline emissions from Leicestershire to gain a better understanding of what sources contribute the most to the county's emissions. The study also looked at pathways to net zero by 2045 by considering current national and local commitments and alternative, more ambitious changes that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Some of these changes are through technology shifts such as more renewable energy generation, fuel switching to electricity and hydrogen and others include behaviour changes that reduce the demand for energy in buildings and transport such as installing insulation and low energy equipment and using public transport, cycling and walking more. The research also investigated the costs and co-benefits (advantages in addition to carbon reduction) of the net zero transition and other supplementary analysis. This technical study is available for use by all local organisations, may be of interest to some residents and has informed the writing of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan.

The development of the Strategy and Action Plan has also been informed by recent stakeholder and public engagement and has involved officers from across the County Council. The consultation will extend this opportunity to the public and other organisations and businesses to shape the final plans.

The Strategy and Action Plan has also involved undertaking an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening assessment, which considers any potential adverse impacts on a particular community or group of people with protected characteristics.

**You can view the documents at
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/have-your-say/current-engagement**

**For paper copies of the survey questions, please email
netzero@leics.gov.uk or call 0116 305 8019.**

The closing date to complete the consultation survey is 26 July 2022.

**You can find out more about tackling climate change at
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/netzeroconsultation**

¹ www.leicestershire.gov.uk/netzero

