

**Royal Borough of
Windsor & Maidenhead**

Environment and Climate Strategy 2026-2035



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Foreword by Cllr Karen Davies and Cllr Simon Werner - This is an emergency

In 2019, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM) declared a climate and environment emergency. This was a recognition that climate change is not just a future problem, it's happening now, and it's already affecting our lives, our environment, and our economy. Simply put, this means the borough must reduce emissions much faster than current trends, and every sector needs to contribute to this.

Mainstream science supports the data which evidences the rapid rate at which the world is warming. According to the latest Met Office data, 2024 was the hottest year ever recorded, with global temperatures reaching 1.55°C above pre-industrial levels. This was the first time the world has exceeded the 1.5°C threshold in a single year¹. The Met Office predicts that this trend is likely to continue, increasing the risk of more frequent heatwaves, heavier rainfall, flooding, pressure on food and water systems, and the loss of vital habitats².

These changes will affect everyone, especially our most vulnerable such as older residents, young children, and those with health problems. Therefore, we must act now to reduce emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Building on the work started in the 2020–2025 Strategy, the 2026–2035 Strategy is our next step in setting out how we will work together over the next 10 years to build a cleaner, greener, and more resilient borough. We are focusing on protecting and improving the quality of life and making sure generations can enjoy a healthy and thriving place to live.

This strategy recognises both the scale of the challenge and the practical steps we can take together. By considering ambition alongside realism, and strengthening our focus on local impacts and partnerships, we will make a significant impact.



Councillor Karen Davies
Cabinet Member for Climate
Change, Biodiversity &
Windsor Town Council



Councillor Simon Werner
Leader of the Council

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¹ 2025. Global climate predictions show temperatures expected to remain at or near record levels in coming five years - Met Office

² 2025. Global climate predictions show temperatures expected to remain at or near record levels in coming five years - Met Office

Local impacts of climate change

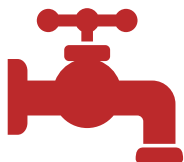
Climate change is already affecting daily life in the Royal Borough, and these impacts are expected to intensify in the coming years. Some changes are visible, such as heavier rainfall and hotter summers. Others are less obvious day to day but still carry significant long-term risks for communities, nature and essential services.



More frequent flooding - The borough is seeing more regular flooding from rivers, surface water and groundwater. Storm Henk in January 2024 resulted in around 250 flooded properties, road closures and pressure on drainage and sewer systems¹. Wetter winters increase the risk of river and groundwater flooding, while sudden heavy summer downpours make surface water flooding more common in built-up areas.



Hotter summers - The UK now experiences more days over 28°C, and heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense. This increases the risk of heat-related illness, particularly for older residents, young children and people with existing health conditions. It also puts pressure on local health services, transport networks and workplaces. As temperatures rise further, the risk of wildfires also increases.



Pressure on water supply - Climate change is expected to create longer dry spells and this puts pressure on water resources. While drought may not always be visible locally, it affects water availability for households, agriculture, nature and businesses. Lower river flows and stressed ecosystems will also reduce nature's ability to recover from other climate impacts.



Strain on food provision - Extreme weather can disrupt national and international food supply chains. Drought, flooding and heatwaves elsewhere in the UK and abroad can affect availability and cause food prices with the greatest impacts on low-income households. While the borough does not grow large volumes of food locally, residents still feel the effects through rising prices and reduced choice.



Stress on nature - Local habitats and species are already being affected by shifting seasons, increased temperatures and more extreme weather. Biodiversity decline reduces natural flood protection, affects pollinators, and weakens the ecosystems that support clean air and water.



Increased Health risks - Threat to human health is prevalent throughout the above local impacts. More specifically, the NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency refer to the following climate impacts as health risks:

- Increased respiratory and cardiovascular illness linked to air pollution.
- Higher rates of heat-related illness and mental health stress during extreme weather.
- Disruption to food systems and rising fuel poverty, which affect nutrition and wellbeing.
- Unequal access to green space, which contributes to health inequalities.
- Extreme weather events can also put pressure on healthcare services.

These risks affect everyone, but some people such as older residents, young children, and those with health problems are more at risk. Therefore, we need to plan carefully and ensure our response is fair, inclusive, and based on the best available evidence.

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¹ 2024, RBWM Section 19 Flood Investigation – Storm Henk January 2024

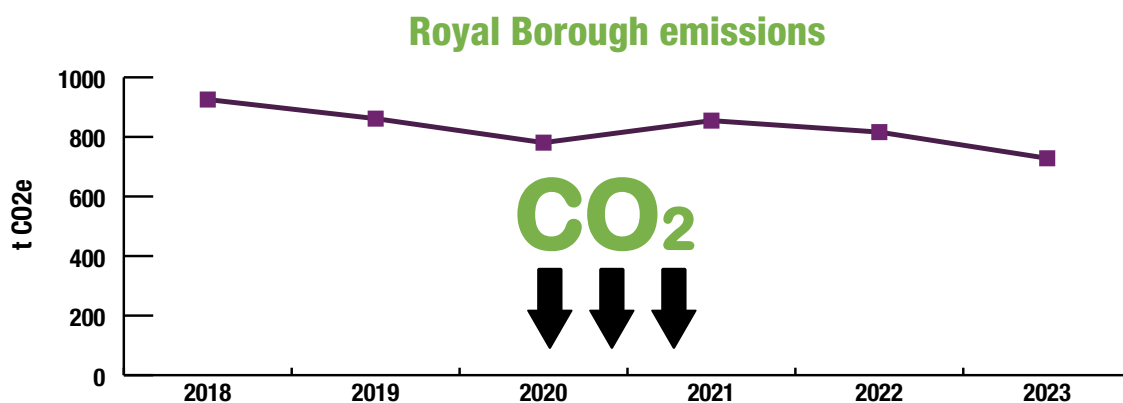
Reflecting on our progress

Since we launched our Environment and Climate Strategy in 2020 the Royal Borough has taken important significant steps in the right direction.

Between 2018 and 2023, Royal Borough emissions dropped by 24.4%, putting us in the top 10% nationally for reducing carbon emissions. Royal Borough emissions, also known as territorial emissions, are the total greenhouse gas emissions produced within the borough's boundaries, this is from sources such as homes, businesses, and transport.

Over the same period, we reduced council owned emissions by 33.4%, showing strong leadership in cutting our own footprint. These are the emissions from the council's own operations, such as buildings and services we directly manage.

We recognise we still have a lot more work to do.



See [Methodology Section](#) for calculation details and assumptions

Below are some highlights to date:

Moving towards a circular borough

- Our recycling rate has risen to 49.1% (2024/2025)
- We've supported swap shops, repair cafés, and plastic-free campaigns, helping residents reduce waste and reuse more¹.
- Food waste recycling has grown by over 8%, showing that small changes can add up to big impact².

Cleaner, Greener Energy

- We've secured over £9 million in funding to improve energy efficiency in schools and council buildings³.
- Over 200 solar panel arrays have been installed on homes through the borough-backed solar buying scheme⁴.
- The council now buys 100% renewable electricity for buildings across the council's estate⁵.

Nature on the rise

- We've planted more than 30,000 trees and rewilded areas within Ockwells and Battlemead⁶.
- As the lead authority for the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), we are helping to protect and restore local habitats⁷.
- 26.4% of land in the borough is identified as having potential for nature. However, a recent Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre report shows only 11.4% is confirmed to be in good ecological condition⁸. This highlights the scale of the challenge ahead.⁹

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¹ 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg 7

² 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg 7

³ 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pp8-9

⁴ 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg 9

⁵ 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg 9

⁶ 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg 10

⁷ 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg10

⁸ Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre RBWM Biodiversity Action Plan 30 X 30 Review May 2023

⁹ 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg11

Moving in the right direction

- We've improved walking and cycling routes, launched a School Street, and supported active travel in our town centres¹⁰.
- We've secured nearly £1 million to roll out electric vehicle charge points, with a target of 75 new charge points each year¹¹.
- Vehicle miles travelled in the borough have fallen by 6% since 2019 suggests that more people are choosing sustainable ways to get around¹².



These achievements are the result of hard work, strong partnerships, and the commitment of our residents, schools, businesses, and community groups. They show what's possible when we work together - and they give us hope and momentum for the next stage of our journey.

Find more details in our [Impact Report](#).

How we developed this strategy

This strategy has been shaped by evidence, insight, and collaboration. It builds on the progress made since 2020 and reflects the voices of our communities, partners, and council teams.

The Climate Partnership

The Climate Partnership has been involved in shaping this strategy throughout. It brings together local businesses, charities, schools, and community groups to build connections and drive climate action across the borough. Their involvement reflects a key belief behind this strategy: tackling climate change is something we must do together.

While the council has a leading role to play, the scale of the challenge means it can't act alone. The Partnership helps share responsibility more widely, encouraging collaboration and unlocking wider benefits from better health and biodiversity to stronger local economies.

Evidence-based foundations

We started by reviewing the 2020–2025 Environment and Climate Strategy to evaluate the progress made. The [Environment and Climate Impact Report](#) and the [2025 Climate Emergency Scorecard](#) helped us see what is working well, where progress has been challenging, and opportunities to aim higher. These insights shaped the structure and priorities of this strategy, making sure it's built on real progress and clear reporting.

We also looked at best practice from other councils who scored highly on the Climate Emergency Scorecards. Their approaches and ideas helped us spot opportunities to improve our own strategy.

To strengthen these evidence-based foundations, we also need to understand the emissions landscape that shapes our challenge. This means looking not only at total emissions across the borough but also at the share the council can influence.

Understanding emissions: territorial and council influence

To tackle climate change effectively, we need to understand the different types of emissions that make up the borough's carbon footprint. Some emissions come from activities the council controls directly while other emissions are emitted from homes, businesses and transport which the council cannot control, but the council can influence through the likes of planning, infrastructure and engagement.

Territorial emissions

Territorial emissions include emissions generated inside the Royal Borough's boundary:

- energy used in homes and commercial buildings
- road transport, including private vehicles
- industrial energy use

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[10 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg12](#)
[11 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg12](#)
[12 2025, 2025, Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Impact Report, pg13](#)

- agriculture
- waste emissions

These emissions give us the full picture of the borough's impact on the climate. However, many of these sources such as how residents heat their homes or how much they drive are choices the council cannot control directly.

Council influenced emissions

The council only directly controls around 1% of borough-wide emissions. These are its own operations such as council buildings, fleet vehicles and street lighting. Beyond that the council can influence up to one-third of emissions through planning, procurement, infrastructure and community engagement. Examples of how the council can influence emissions include:

- Setting planning policies that require energy-efficient buildings
- Investing in active travel and EV infrastructure
- Running campaigns to reduce waste and improve recycling
- Supporting renewable energy schemes

This matters because it shows the council can shape the conditions that make low-carbon choices easier, more convenient and more affordable for residents. But lasting change depends on individuals, communities, businesses and partners taking action too.

Why does this matter?

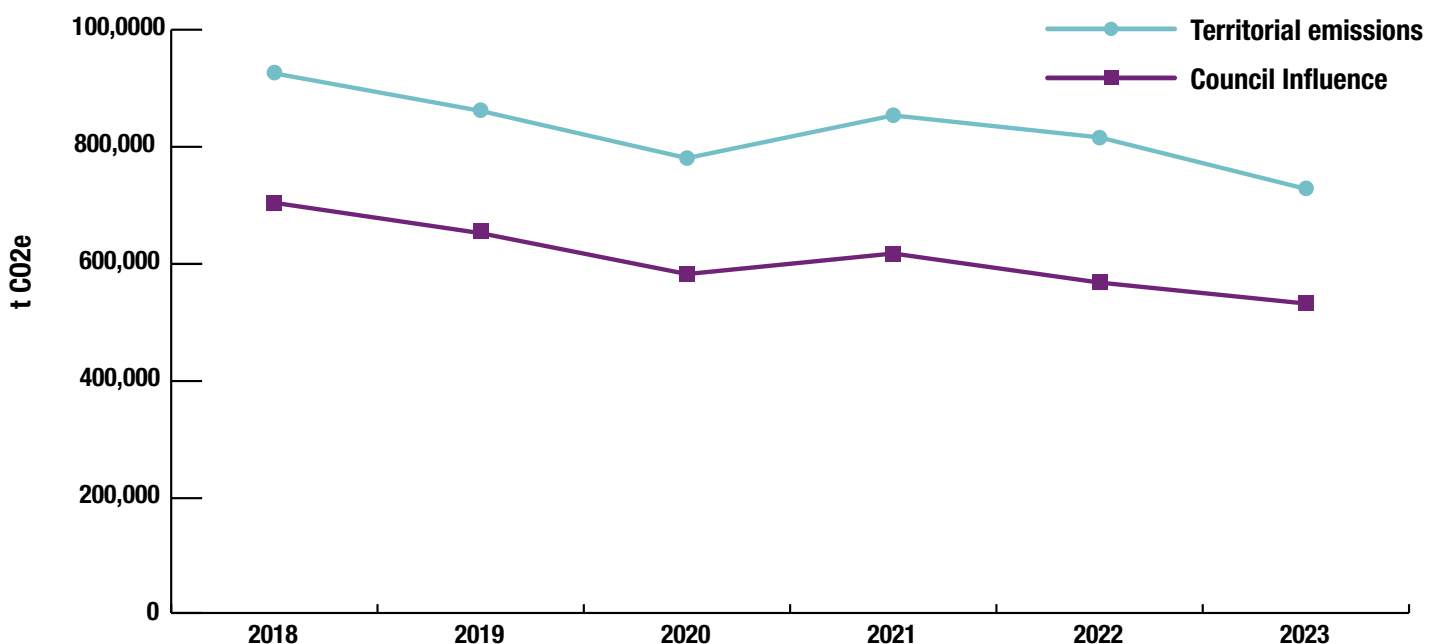
Understanding the difference between territorial emissions and the emissions the council can influence helps us focus our efforts.

- Territorial emissions show the borough's total progress towards net zero.
- Council influence emissions show where our actions can influence the biggest difference on a local scale.

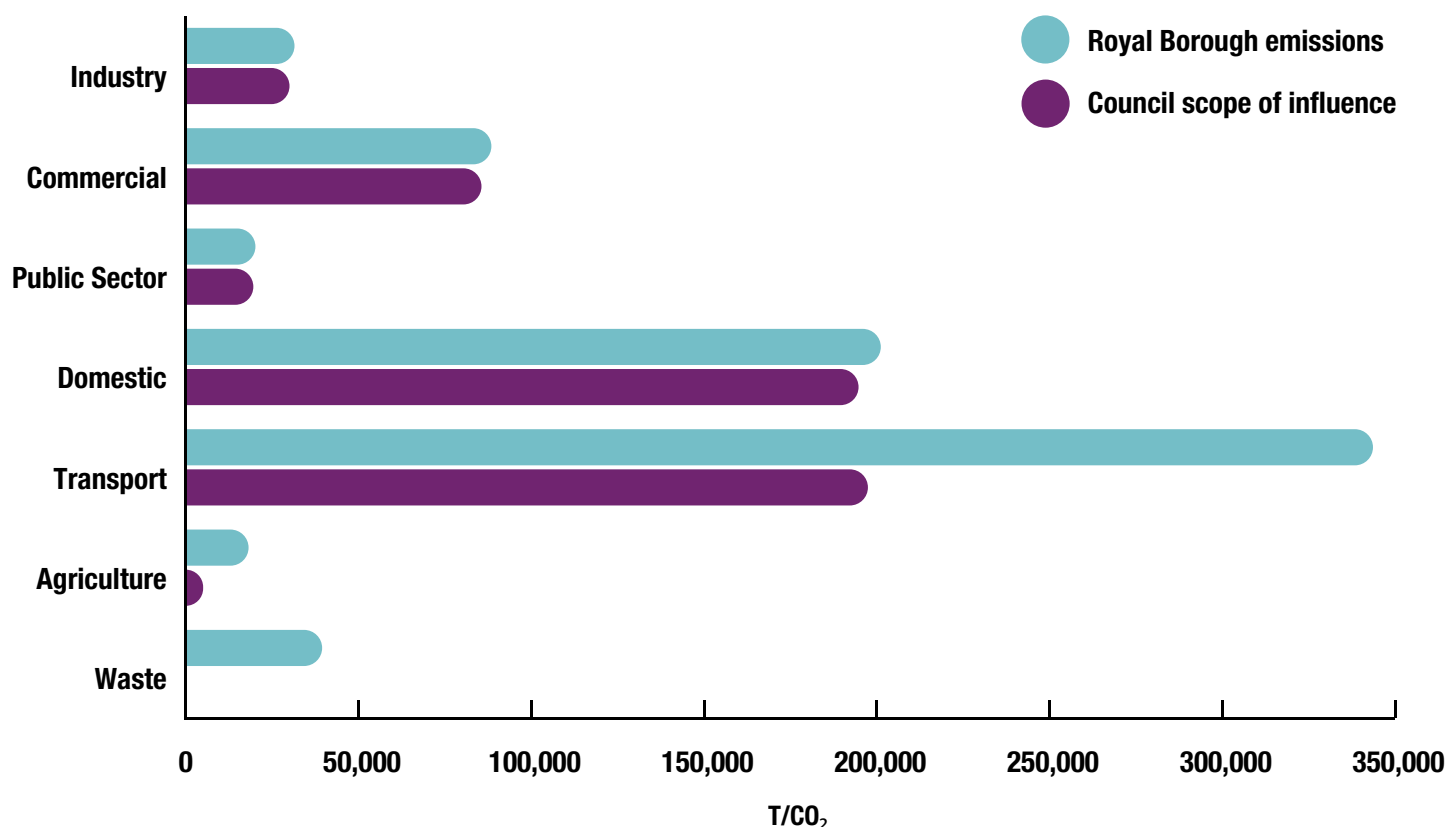
This distinction reflects a simple truth: climate action is a shared responsibility. The council can lead, enable and support change but real progress depends on everyone working together.

(See graph: Royal Borough Emissions 2018-2023).

Royal Borough emissions 2018-2023



Royal Borough emissions vs council scope of influence by sector

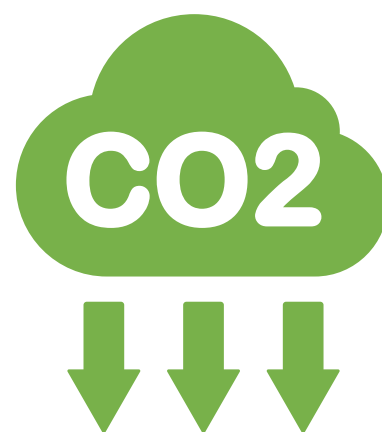


See [Methodology Section](#) for calculation details and assumptions

Territorial emissions also include sources beyond local influence such as motorway traffic and large-scale industrial activity. Council influenced emissions focus on what we can realistically impact.

For example:

- Transport dominates territorial emissions, but under council influence, the figure is much lower because national roads and freight are excluded. This means our strategy focuses on local journeys and encourage walking, cycling, public transport, and EV infrastructure.
- Domestic emissions remain high in both datasets. While the council cannot directly control how residents heat their homes, it can influence these emissions by creating the conditions for change through retrofit programmes, promoting energy literacy, and supporting renewable energy schemes.
- Waste emissions are almost negligible under council influence, so while waste reduction is not our biggest lever for carbon savings, it does represent a gateway to influence behaviour change. The manufacturing of products we later throw away carries a very high carbon footprint, which is why our focus starts with reducing unnecessary consumption. We can encourage conscious consumerism choices, provide infrastructure and education campaigns. Beyond that, we will promote reusing, repairing, and repurposing items before considering recycling and composting.



By understanding these differences, we can target actions where they will have the greatest impact, while working in partnership to influence broadly across the borough. This approach ensures our strategy is ambitious, evidence-based, and focused on what matters most for the Royal Borough.

Inclusive engagement

Engagement has been key to this process as the new strategy should reflect the priorities and ideas of the residents in the borough and across the council.

We have held numerous workshops across the borough for both the community and our council staff. We are pleased to report that our events were attended by passionate and knowledgeable audiences who already support us on our work, alongside audiences who have not previously engaged and are keen to get more involved.

Between July and August 2025, we held:

- Community workshops in Windsor (3 July) and Maidenhead (13 July)
- A youth council led workshop (14 July) - this workshop was produced and led by the RBWM Youth Council
- Officer engagement sessions across departments (ongoing throughout July, council officer workshop 28 July)
- A library roadshow visiting seven locations across the borough: Ascot, Dedworth, Eton Wick, Maidenhead, Datchet, Sunninghill, and Windsor (11–14 August)



1. Maidenhead community workshop, Town Hall officer engagement sessions and Maidenhead library roadshow
2. Braywick Nature Centre Youth Council workshop
3. Dedworth library roadshow
4. Eton Wick library roadshow
5. Windsor community workshop and Windsor library roadshow
6. Datchet library roadshow
7. Ascot library roadshow
8. Sunninghill library roadshow

These sessions were publicised in a variety of ways, including council newsletters, social media, direct emails to community groups, and posters in libraries and community centres. We also shared summaries of the workshop feedback on RBWM Together, ensuring residents can see the direct impact they are having on the strategy.

The most discussed themes from the engagement sessions were:

- **Energy:** Support for solar panels, retrofit, and energy literacy.
- **Sustainable transport:** Safer, more accessible active travel and EV infrastructure.
- **Nature:** Greener neighbourhoods, tree planting, and biodiversity.
- **Reducing waste:** better services, composting, and reuse infrastructure.
- **Climate adaptation:** action on flooding, heat resilience, and cool spaces.
- **Health and wellbeing:** clearer communications and more visible leadership.

This feedback directly influenced the creation of the strategy's five priorities, the inclusion of Behaviour Change, Climate Adaptation and Health & Wellbeing as golden threads, and our commitment to develop two five-year Climate Action Plans with an Engagement and Communications Plan to support the strategy.

Transparency and accountability

The first draft of the Strategy was taken to Overview & Scrutiny Panel (O&S) in September 2025. Overview & Scrutiny Panels allow elected members the opportunity to provide feedback on the strategy and shape its direction in the early stages. Taking the strategy to the panel this early in the process demonstrates our commitment to working closely with the community to deliver a strategy that truly matters to them.

The process

It is vital we continue to talk to the community and council officers as we move through the strategy development process.

The full process up to Cabinet adoption of the strategy is outlined below.

- **October 2025:** Respond and incorporate feedback from the O&S into the strategy, ensuring that early input from elected members and the public contribute to the final strategy and targets.
- **November 2025:** There were a series of events to develop the strategy and the Climate Action Plan. Further feedback was gathered through public and internal officer workshops to develop both the strategy and actions for the Climate Action Plan.
- **January 2026:** A six-week public consultation took place.
- **Spring 2026:** A second opportunity to gather feedback on the Strategy at a spring O&S panel before the final strategy is submitted to cabinet in April for approval at Full Council in the summer.



Our ambitions and challenges

Why net zero matters

To keep global warming below 1.5°C, the world has a limited carbon budget. The UK's Climate Change Committee highlights this in its Seventh Carbon Budget, which sets out the rapid and sustained emissions reductions required nationally to stay within our fair share of the global budget¹. Acting now is essential to avoid dangerous climate change consequences.

Carbon budgets are a set of legally binding milestones to achieve Net Zero which is overseen by the UK Climate Change Act (2008). These milestones can be used as a guide for society to work towards the Net Zero goal. For the Royal Borough, this means reducing emissions from energy, transport, waste, and land use while supporting nature-based solutions to increase the absorption (sequestration) of carbon.

Net Zero means balancing the greenhouse gases we emit with those we remove from the atmosphere



What is the Tyndall Centre?

The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research is a UK-based group of scientists and experts. It brings together researchers from several universities to study climate change. Their goal is to understand how climate change affects people and the environment, and to help society find practical solutions.

What is the Tyndall Curve?

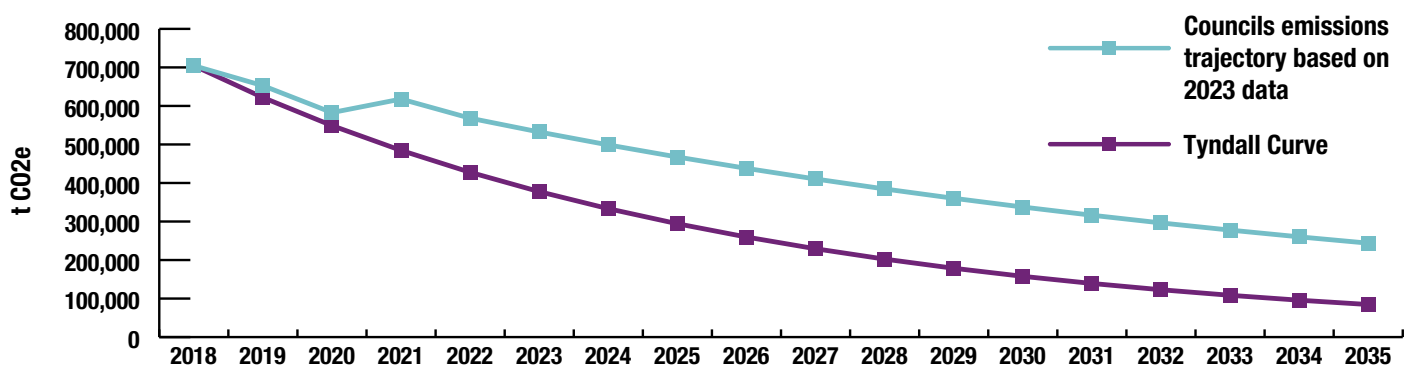
The Tyndall Curve is a simple visual idea used to explain how quickly we need to reduce carbon emissions. It shows that to limit global warming (for example, to 1.5°C), emissions cannot just fall slowly - we need rapid and early reductions.

Our ambition

We are working to align with the Tyndall Centre trajectory, which requires an 88% reduction in borough-wide emissions by 2035 compared to 2018 levels and from 2025 to 2050 will require a further 12% reduction in carbon emissions.

- **Baseline (2018):** 100% emissions (704 ktCO₂e)
- **Current data available (2023 data):** Tyndall Curve requires a reduction of 532 ktCO₂ however the council achieved 384 ktCO₂
- **Target for 2035:** 88% reduction from 2018 baseline (84 ktCO₂e remaining by 2035)

Council influence emissions projecting to 2035 vs Tyndall trajectory



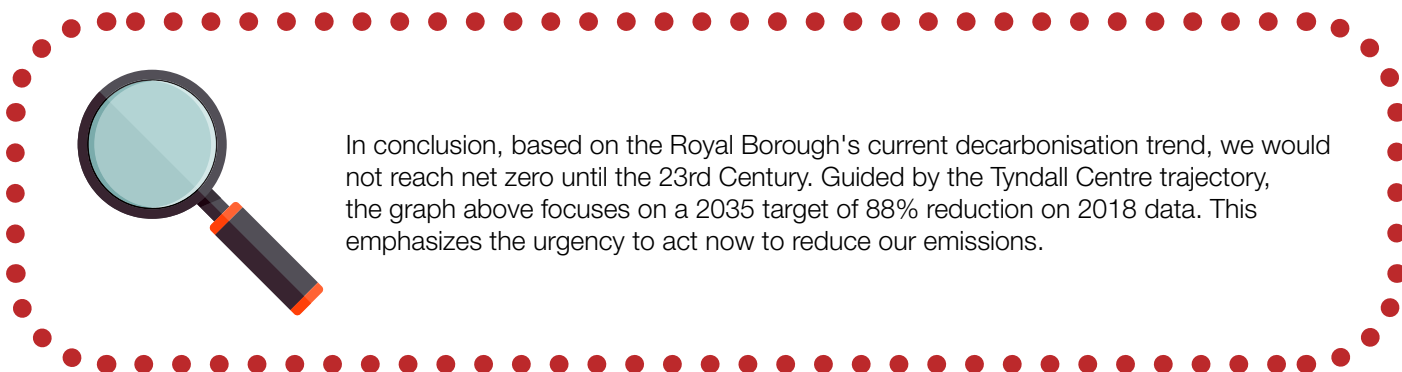
See [Methodology Section](#) for calculation details and assumptions

This is a significant challenge for a local authority with limited powers and resources. We directly control only around 1% of emissions but can influence up to one-third through planning, services, and leadership. Achieving this will require partnerships with community, charity, and business sectors, behaviour change, and prioritising cost-effective actions.

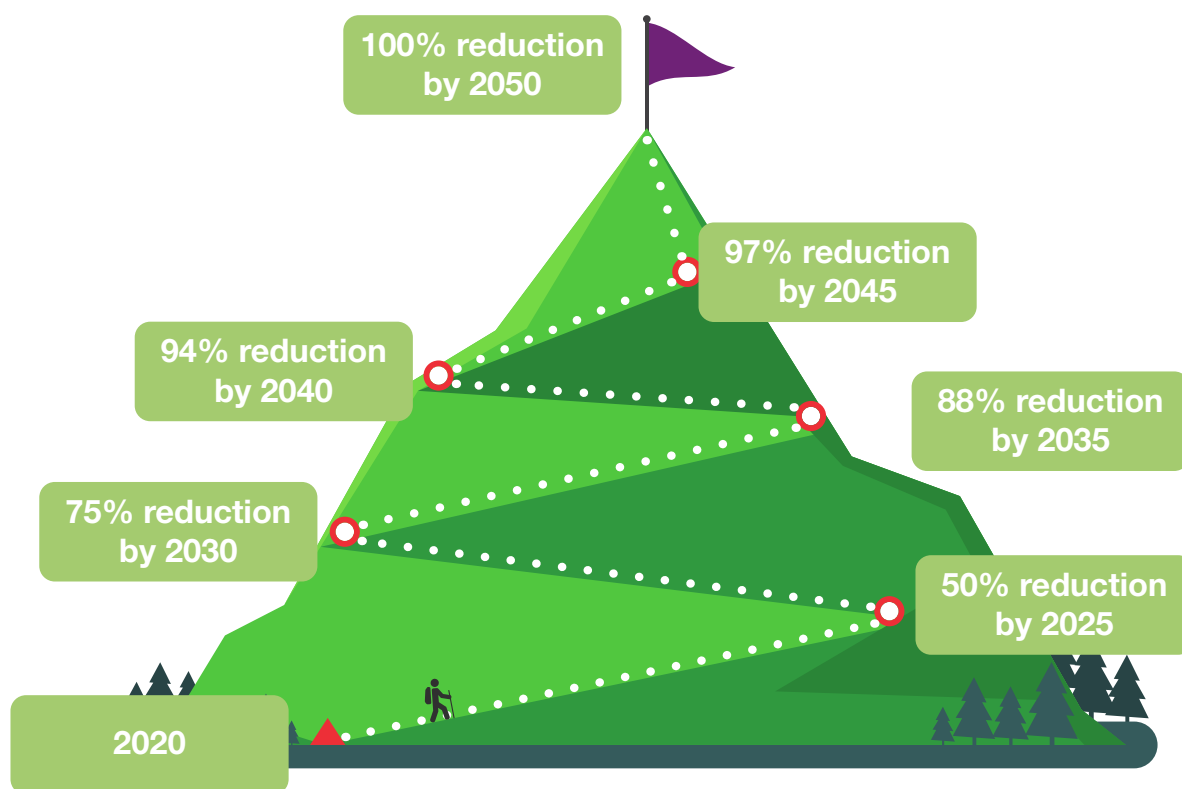
Our analysis of government data shows that if the Royal Borough continues to reduce emissions at the same rate observed between 2022 and 2023 (around 6.3% annually), we will see a gradual decline in emissions. This reflects the impact of national policies and local actions already in place.

However, this trajectory is not enough to meet the science-based target set by the Tyndall Centre. The Tyndall pathway requires steeper reductions of approximately 13% per year, starting immediately, to stay within our fair share of the global carbon budget.

We expect that by the end of 2025, emissions within council influence would fall to around 468 ktCO₂e under the current trend, compared to the Tyndall-aligned target of 294 ktCO₂e. By 2035, emissions would still be around 244 ktCO₂e, far above the Tyndall-aligned 84 ktCO₂e.



This gap highlights the scale of the challenge ahead. Closing it will require accelerated action, significant investment, and strong collaboration across the borough. The strategy sets out how we aim to bridge this gap, while acknowledging the difficulties such as funding constraints, limited local powers, and the need for widespread behaviour change.



Tyndall Centre Trajectory featured in the RBWM Environment and Climate Strategy 2020-2025 Strategy

Closing the gap

We acknowledge the need to push on to close the gap and have identified opportunities which will accelerate our progress.

- **Central Government policy and enforcement:** Stronger national policies, legislation, and funding streams to enable local delivery at scale such as building retrofit standards, EV incentives, and long-term investment in green infrastructure.
- **Local action:** Delivering ambitious measures on retrofit, EV infrastructure, and nature-based solutions.
- **Significant investment:** Securing funding from government, private sector, and other sources.
- **Behaviour change:** Shifts in how people travel, heat homes, and manage waste.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with businesses, charities, and community groups.
- **Integrated governance:** Climate considerations embedded across all council decisions.
- **Risk management:** Proactive planning for climate shocks and financial resilience.

Engagement strategy

Real progress depends on people. Engagement is not an add-on, it's a core part of delivery. Our approach will:

- **Empower communities:** Work with local community groups and other partners on campaigns and events that make climate action accessible and positive.
- **Reach wider audiences:** Use targeted communications, roadshows, and digital platforms to engage residents who haven't previously been involved.
- **Build carbon awareness:** Provide either training or resources for residents, schools, and businesses to understand their role in reducing emissions.
- **Celebrate success:** Share stories of local action to inspire others and create momentum.

This engagement strategy will be developed as a separate document but will work in tandem with the Climate Action Plan, ensuring that every action is supported by clear communication and community involvement.



Our priorities

We've chosen five strategic priorities:

- Energy
- Sustainable Transport
- Natural Environment
- Reducing Waste
- Governance, Finance and Risk

The priorities have been chosen because they have been common threads throughout the engagement and feedback sessions and we therefore believe they are representative of where we can make the greatest impact locally.

Alongside these priorities, we have identified three golden threads that run through every aspect of our strategy - Behaviour Change, Climate Adaptation and Health & Wellbeing. These threads underpin the whole strategy because delivering net zero is not only about cutting emissions, it's about enabling people, services and places to thrive in a changing climate.

Behaviour change

Behaviour change is essential because many of the biggest emissions reductions rely on everyday decisions such as how we travel, heat our homes, use energy, buy products and interact with nature. Technology alone cannot deliver net zero. That's why behaviour change is a golden thread, woven into each strategic priority and delivered through practical actions in the Climate Action Plans. This ensures we make low-carbon choices easier, more attractive, and more accessible for everyone.

Climate adaptation

The impacts of climate change - hotter summers, heavier rainfall and increased flood risk are already being felt across the borough. Adaptation must be built into every decision we make from how we design buildings and infrastructure to how we manage land, support vulnerable residents and plan services. As a golden thread, climate adaptation ensures our actions are resilient, future proof and able withstand a changing climate.

Health & wellbeing

Climate action is fundamentally about improving people's lives. Warmer homes reduce fuel poverty and respiratory illnesses; cleaner air supports cardiovascular health; access to nature improves mental wellbeing; and active travel boosts physical health. By embedding health & wellbeing as a golden thread we sure every climate action delivers wider social benefits and supports the most vulnerable, contributing to a fairer, healthier borough.



Strategic Priority 1: Energy

Why it matters

Energy use in homes, schools, businesses and public buildings are the largest source of emissions in the borough. Reducing energy demand, switching to low-carbon heating, and increasing renewable energy generation are essential to reaching net zero while also ensuring the residents are protected from the impact of energy supply challenges.



Behaviour Change

Supporting behaviour change is vital to maximising the impact of energy efficiency and low carbon technologies. Even simple actions like using heating controls effectively, reducing energy waste, improving ventilation, or adopting energy efficient habits can make homes more comfortable and significantly lower bills. Improving understanding around energy and providing clear, practical advice, we will help residents, particularly those most at risk of fuel poverty to make informed choices that benefit their health as well as the climate. Meanwhile, behavioural change initiatives will complement technical measures to ensure that homes, workplaces, and community spaces use energy efficiently and affordably.

Climate adaptation

As climate challenges intensify, the place we call home will become impacted and therefore we must ensure our homes are resilient to extreme weather events. This means ensuring that buildings are not only energy-efficient but also able to cope with heatwaves, cold weather and power disruptions. Adaptation measures such as passive cooling and improved insulation will help protect residents and the operation of services around the borough.

Health and wellbeing

Decarbonisation of energy sources and homes can improve health significantly. Warmer homes reduce respiratory illnesses; cleaner air from low-carbon heating improves cardiovascular health, and affordable energy reduces stress and financial hardship. The energy action plan will prioritise vulnerable groups to ensure everyone benefits from healthier living environments.

Our vision for 2035

By 2035, homes and buildings across the borough will be comfortable, cheaper to run, and powered by clean energy. Residents and businesses will have access to affordable, low-carbon energy, and the borough will be a leader in local renewable generation.



Our ambitions:

1. Decarbonise buildings and increase renewables generation

Accelerate borough-wide energy efficiency and retrofit across homes, council assets, public buildings, community facilities, and business premises. This can be achieved by installing low or zero-carbon measures, deploying renewable technologies such as solar PV and heat pumps, upgrading end-of-life systems with sustainable alternatives, supporting community energy schemes and working closely with development planners and developers to ensure new infrastructure in the borough aligns to the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document and relevant forthcoming policy.

We have set an ambitious target to retrofit 75% of homes currently rated EPC bands G–D to at least a C rating by 2035. This measure could deliver an estimated 84,000 tCO₂e reduction, making it one of the most impactful actions in our net zero pathway. Retrofitting will not only cut emissions but also reduce energy bills, tackle fuel poverty, and create healthier homes.

To increase our energy from renewables, we will work closely with the community, DNO's and neighbouring local authorities to identify appropriate sites for renewable infrastructure and to support the on-going development of renewable energy provision in the local area.

We have set an ambitious target to retrofit 75% of homes currently rated EPC bands G–D to at least a C rating by 2035. This measure could deliver an estimated 84,000 tCO₂e reduction, making it one of the most impactful actions in our net zero pathway. Retrofitting will not only cut emissions but also reduce energy bills, tackle fuel poverty, and create healthier homes.

2. Improve air quality

Improved air-quality is a co-benefit of supporting cleaner energy sources. we will support healthier environments and better indoor air quality by aligning with the council's [Air Quality Management Strategy](#) and complementing interventions in buildings, transport, and nature. This includes maintaining a focus on ventilation and low-emission materials in retrofit and development projects. We will also work closely with the Public Health Team to explore opportunities for improving indoor air quality awareness and monitoring, particularly in sensitive settings such as schools and care facilities.

3. Health equity and behavioural change

Work with health and wellbeing teams to support residents at risk of fuel poverty, improve energy literacy, and support residents' access to advice and renewable energy grant schemes. Embed carbon awareness across council teams, partners, and businesses to encourage energy-conscious behaviours. Behavioural initiatives will complement technical measures to ensure retrofit and renewable technologies are used effectively.

Strategic Priority 2: Sustainable Transport

Why it matters

Transport is the largest single contributor to emissions in the borough and a major factor in local air quality, congestion, health inequalities, and community safety. Reducing dependence on private car use and making walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport safer and more convenient will have long term positive impact on emissions and wellbeing.



Behaviour change

Behaviour change is central to reducing transport emissions and creating healthier, more accessible streets. Encouraging small everyday changes such as choosing to walk or cycle for short journeys, using public transport more often, sharing car journeys, or planning routes more efficiently can significantly cut congestion, improve air quality and physical health and reduce travel costs. By improving awareness of sustainable travel options and increasing confidence through clear communication we will make low carbon travel choices the most appealing option. These behavioural changes will complement infrastructure improvements which ensures sustainable transport becomes a practical and attractive option for everyone.

Climate adaptation

As climate risks increase, our transport infrastructure must be resilient to flooding, heatwaves and other extreme weather. This can be achieved by designing streets, cycleways, and public transport systems that can withstand extreme conditions. For example, more rain gardens help green urban environments, improve biodiversity and reduce local flood risk. Adaptation also includes ensuring safe routes during emergencies and maintaining access to essential services.

Health and wellbeing

Active travel, which is defined as walking, cycling, and wheeling, offers significant health benefits as it has been proven to reduce risks of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers as well as improving mental wellbeing¹.

Our vision for 2035

By 2035, most local journeys in the borough will be made by walking, cycling, wheeling or public transport. Streets and public spaces will be safer, cleaner and more accessible, with better-connected routes informed by the LCWIP and shaped by local needs. Public transport will be easier to use, more reliable and better integrated with walking and cycling networks. Electric vehicles will support the transition away from fossil fuels, alongside a borough wide network of charge points. The greatest progress will come from reducing reliance on private cars and enabling convenient, active, and affordable alternatives for everyday journeys.



Our ambitions:

1. Prioritise walking, cycling and wheeling for short journeys

Create safer and better-connected active transport routes in line with the LCWIP². This includes improving junction and crossing safety, maintaining routes to a high standard, re-allocating road space where appropriate, and supporting School Streets. We will also enhance routes with greener, nature-friendly features to support biodiversity to make active travel more pleasant and resilient to climate impacts. Working with communities, we will build confidence and support behaviour change that shifts short journeys away from private car use.

2. Improve public transport connectivity and reliability

Work with bus operators and regional partners to improve the accessibility and visibility of public transport. This includes better passenger information, clearer promotion of available routes, and improvements to stop infrastructure. Guided by the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the Local Transport Plan, we will help residents feel more confident choosing public transport, while recognising that service decisions are made by commercial operators.

3. Support the transition to zero-emission vehicles

Enable the shift to cleaner vehicles by expanding a reliable, accessible network of public EV charge points and supporting the move to zero-emission fleets where vehicles remain essential. EVs will play a supporting role alongside active travel and public transport, helping reduce emissions and improve air quality. Delivering a borough-wide charging network and enabling around 50% EV uptake by 2035³ (approximately 55,000 vehicles) could save more than 120,000 tCO₂e, making it an impactful measure in the transport pathway to net zero.

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¹ 2024, Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2024 – Health in Cities pp 333-335

² RBWM Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

³ Electric vehicle chargepoint implementation plan pg 5

Strategic Priority 3: Natural Environment

Nature is central to the borough's resilience and wellbeing. Biodiversity loss threatens the natural systems that regulate climate, provide clean air and water, support food security, and protect us from flooding and heat. Protecting and restoring nature is therefore essential to climate adaptation, human health, and environment and economic stability. This strategy recognises the urgency of halting nature loss and supporting ecological recovery across the borough.



Behaviour change

Behaviour change plays an important role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Actions such as choosing to garden for wildlife, reducing pesticide use, creating space for nature at home, joining community planting or conservation activities or looking after local green spaces help support biodiversity, strengthen the borough's resilience to climate impacts. We will work with communities to improve people's awareness around the benefits of nature-friendly behaviours by promoting actions which are easy, enjoyable and beneficial for health. These behaviours not only support local ecosystems but also improve wellbeing, strengthen community pride, and create greener neighbourhoods for everyone.

Climate adaptation

Natural environments are one of our most powerful tools for adapting to climate change. Wetlands, woodlands and green corridors help store floodwaters, while planting in urban areas promotes natural cooling and buffer communities from extreme weather. By investing in nature-based solutions we strengthen the borough's resilience while enhancing biodiversity.

Health & wellbeing

Studies have found that proximity to green or blue spaces significantly reduced the odds of anxiety and depression, especially in deprived communities¹. NHS England's Green Social Prescribing Programme has shown that nature-based activities like walking, gardening, and conservation can improve mental health outcomes, reduce loneliness, and lower demand on health services².

Our vision for 2035

By 2035, nature will be recovering across the borough as we will have more diverse and better connected habitats in parks, woodlands, watercourses, verges, and community spaces. Residents will live within easy reach of high-quality green space which will be in line with local accessibility standards, and communities will be actively involved in protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

Our ambitions

1. Protect and increase nature for biodiversity, climate and health

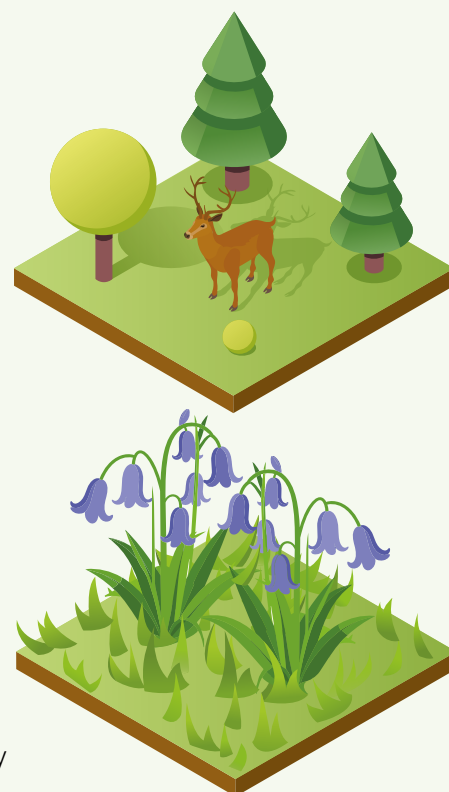
Achieve and maintain the national target of managing at least 30% of land for nature by 2030 at a Berkshire-wide level. RBWM will contribute to the Berkshire 30x30 goal by prioritising the areas within the borough that offer the greatest potential for biodiversity gain, climate resilience, and community benefit. This includes enhancing existing public open spaces, restoring and connecting habitats, expanding tree and hedgerow planting, and supporting community-led nature projects.

2. Embed nature-based solutions across planning and flood management

Ensure all new developments contribute meaningfully to nature recovery by delivering high quality green infrastructure and nature-based solutions. We will strengthen the ecological value of existing places by enhancing habitats, improving ecological connectivity, and integrating sustainable drainage and natural flood management into local planning and infrastructure. Guided by the Berkshire-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy we will prioritise areas where nature-based interventions deliver the greatest benefit for biodiversity, climate resilience, and communities.

3. Strengthen local partnerships for biodiversity and inclusion

Work with partners, landowners, community groups and volunteers to deliver practical nature recovery across the borough, recognising that long-term ecological improvement depends on collective action far beyond statutory requirements. We will coordinate delivery of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, support community led conservation projects, and collaborate with major landowners and parish councils to improve habitat quality and access to green space. By building local capacity and encouraging active stewardship of nature we will help create a more connected, inclusive, and an ecologically resilient borough.



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¹ 2023, Ambient greenness, access to local green spaces, and subsequent mental health: a 10-year longitudinal dynamic panel study of 2.3 million adults in Wales - [The Lancet Planetary Health](#)

² 2025, NHS England > [Green social prescribing](#)

Strategic Priority 4: Reducing Waste

Why it matters

Reducing waste and reusing materials helps cut emissions, save money, and protect natural resources. A circular economy keeps materials in use for longer, reducing the intensity of our resource consumption.

Behaviour change

Behaviour change is key to reducing waste and supporting a more circular borough. Small, everyday actions such as choosing to repair or reuse items, avoiding unnecessary purchases, separating recycling correctly, and reducing food waste can help residents save money. Waste is often the easiest and most visible place for people to start their climate journey, making it a powerful gateway into wider behaviour change. By providing clear guidance, supporting community-led initiatives, and making reuse and recycling accessible, we will help residents adopt simple habits that benefit their household budgets, strengthen community connection, and contribute to a cleaner and greener environment.

Climate adaptation

Waste systems must be resilient to climate risks. Flooding and extreme heat can disrupt waste collection and processing, while incinerator emissions contribute to climate instability. By reducing waste and improving infrastructure, we can build a system that is more robust to face future climate shocks.

Health & wellbeing

Circular economy initiatives, like repair cafés and reuse shops, can foster social connection and improve mental wellbeing by encouraging community participation and reducing financial stress on households. Cleaner environments contribute to better health. Reducing litter, food waste, and single-use plastics improves air and water quality, reduces pest-related health risks, and supports community pride.

Our vision for 2035

By 2035, the borough will be a leader in waste reduction and reuse. Recycling will be easy and accessible and more residents will be part of a growing circular economy.

Waste emissions are small compared to other sectors, but waste reduction is a powerful gateway for behaviour change. Encouraging residents to refuse, reduce, and reuse before recycling builds habits that support wider climate action and conscious consumption.

Our ambitions

1. Build a successful circular borough

Reducing waste is not just about disposal it's also about cutting the carbon emissions linked to manufacturing the products we later throw away. Encourage reuse, repair, and recycling through community-led initiatives and behaviour change campaigns that make sustainable choices easier and more accessible. We will strengthen links between council waste services and community-led projects to maximise impact.

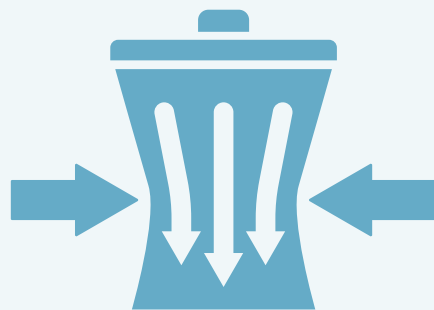
2. Strengthen engagement and education

Empower residents through targeted communications, events, and youth programmes to reduce waste, improve recycling habits, and support low-carbon lifestyles. This includes education for younger audiences through schools and youth networks, and clear guidance on recycling soft plastics and other hard-to-recycle materials.

3. Improve everyday waste services

Enhance the reliability and reach of waste and recycling services, including support for flats and estates, and promote cleaner public spaces through local community action and enforcement. We will complement this with behaviour change campaigns using existing community networks to make sustainable habits the norm.

To support this, we have set a headline ambition to reduce the proportion of household waste sent to energy recovery to 44% by 2035. Achieving this will require improving service reliability, expanding opportunities for recycling and composting, and making it easier for residents to reduce avoidable waste at home.



Strategic Priority 5: Governance, Finance and Risk



Achieving net zero and becoming resilient to climate challenges requires more than technical solutions. It also demands strong governance, financial alignment, and proactive risk management. Embedding climate considerations into council decision-making, budgeting and oversight ensures that sustainability is a core principle guiding everything we do.

The council is operating under significant financial pressure, which means that budget constraints will sometimes dictate the scale of actions we can deliver and the influence over our procurement options. We remain committed to achieving our climate goals but financial constraints in the public sector can require us to prioritise cost-effective measures and seek external funding wherever possible.

Behaviour change

Behaviour change within the council is essential to embedding climate considerations across governance, finance, and risk management. The everyday decisions made by officers and leadership teams from procurement choices to project design, contract management, budgeting, and estate management all shape the borough's environmental impact. They also set expectations for partners and suppliers. By improving carbon awareness, building confidence to apply sustainability tools and normalising climate aligned decision making we will support a cultural shift where low carbon, resilient and financially sustainable choices become the default. The council is committed to ensuring all staff have the opportunity to inform and influence the Strategy and Action Plans.

Climate adaptation

Robust governance and risk planning help us prepare for the impacts of climate change. A climate risk register will identify vulnerabilities across council services and infrastructure, enabling us to act early and protect residents. Financial planning must also account for future climate shocks, ensuring long-term resilience and the identification of funding opportunities to create and scale-up projects should be a regular action.

Health & wellbeing

Good governance supports public health by ensuring that climate actions are equitable, inclusive, and evidence based. Oversight mechanisms such as ESG monitoring help ensure that health outcomes are considered in every investment and policy decision.



Our vision for 2035

By 2028, climate considerations will be part of everyday decision-making across the council—from finance and procurement to planning and service delivery. Every department will understand how its choices affect emissions and resilience and will have the tools and confidence to act. By 2035, this integrated approach will ensure risks are actively managed, investments support a fair and green transition, and climate impact is a core principle guiding everything we do.

Our ambitions

1. Integrate climate into council governance and decision-making

Embed climate and equalities considerations into council processes through toolkits, reporting frameworks, procurement, and budget-setting, while supporting parish councils and aligning with the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

2. Align finance and investments with net zero principles

Ensure financial decisions, pension funds, and investment policies reflect net zero ambitions through regular reviews, responsible investment updates, and climate-focused audits.

3. Strengthen risk management and transparency

Develop a Climate Risk Register, introduce ESG monitoring across contracts and operations, and explore using tools like the Microsoft emissions dashboard to improve accountability and guide long-term resilience planning.

Partnerships

Why collaboration matters

The council plays a vital role in leading local climate action, but it cannot do it alone. While we have direct control over the assets we own, most emissions are only within our influence, and much of the change needed to achieve our climate goals depends on actions beyond our direct powers. That's why partnerships, such as the Climate Partnership, are important.



Working together for change

Reaching net zero and building resilience will require collaboration with communities, charities, businesses, and residents. Behaviour change; which is how people travel, heat their homes, manage waste, and interact with nature, is at the heart of this strategy. These changes are most powerful when they come from within the borough, driven by shared values, local leadership, and community action.

The Climate Emergency Coalition, a non-partisan alliance of community organisations in the Borough working in partnership and have provided valuable insights that have informed this strategy. We look forward to working with the CEC member groups, other community partners and residents to make climate action accessible, positive, and inclusive.

Turning strategy into action

The two Five-Year Climate Action Plans will ensure actions remain realistic, properly costed, and able to respond to new evidence, funding opportunities, and technologies. Climate science, national policy and local circumstances will continue to change over the next decade, so a single long-term plan would quickly become out of date. Having two plans allows us to set clear short-term actions while regularly reviewing progress, updating priorities and working with partners to make sure the borough stays on track for our 2035 goals.

An Engagement and Communications Plan will also be developed to make sure our climate work is communicated clearly, consistently, and effectively. This will help residents and partners understand what's happening, why it matters, and how they can get involved.

We will communicate updates and share findings with the borough residents, businesses, councillors and council staff. This will include:

- Progress summaries
- Examples of good practice
- Integration with existing reporting mechanisms, such as the Climate Risk Register and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy



Foundations for delivery

- Foster a collaborative approach that delivers wider co-benefits bringing together diverse voices and expertise.
- Work with local community groups such as Wilds, Eco Action, Green Skills Library, GoodGym, Cookham Footprint, various RBWM Forums and Pride to co-design and deliver inclusive climate solutions.
- Partner with Leisure Operator, sports communities, and Achieving for Children (AfC) to embed sustainability into everyday borough life.
- Align and collaborate with the NHS, Optalis and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ensure climate actions support health and wellbeing.
- Support local businesses and schools to become climate champions, sharing knowledge and resources.
- Encourage residents to take part in climate action through volunteering, education, and community-led initiatives.



Our commitment

We will continue to listen, learn, and adapt. By building trust and working together, we can create a borough where climate action is shared, supported, and sustained by everyone who lives and works here.

Communications and Engagement Plan

Real progress depends on people and engagement is a core part of successful delivery. Our Communications and Engagement Plan will ensure residents, communities, partners and businesses under the journey to net zero and feel able to take part in it in a way that works for them.

- **Empower communities:** Work with local community groups and other partners on campaigns and events that make climate action accessible and positive.
- **Reach wider audiences:** Use targeted communications, roadshows, and digital platforms to engage residents who haven't previously been involved.
- **Build carbon awareness:** Provide either training or resources for residents, schools, and businesses to understand their role in reducing emissions.
- **Celebrate success:** Share stories of local action to inspire others and create momentum.

The Communications and Engagement Plan will be developed as a separate document but will work in tandem with the Climate Action Plan. It will focus on how we communicate, who we reach and how we involve people ensuring that every action is supported by clear messaging and meaningful opportunities for involvement.

Reporting and monitoring

Delivering this strategy requires clear, consistent and transparent reporting. To achieve this, we will develop a monitoring framework that links directly to our two five-year Climate Action Plans. This framework will track progress across all strategic priorities and ensure the borough remains on course to meet its 2035 goals.

- Carbon emissions reporting using the Government's emissions conversion factors
- Project-specific metrics, such as engagement data, measures which assess the impact of behavioural change initiatives, efficiency and usage analysis of technical decarbonisation interventions
- Co-benefit indicators, such as health and wellbeing outcomes, air quality improvements, and footfall in green spaces

Carbon emissions data will remain an important part of our reporting and will help guide decision-making. However, we recognise that carbon alone does not reflect the full picture. That's why we will also monitor wider datasets such as biodiversity, public health, and community resilience to understand and communicate the broader benefits of climate action.

How we will review progress

Progress will be reviewed every year by the council and the Climate Partnership. Their annual review will provide independent insight, challenge and support, helping ensure the strategy remains fair, evidence-based and responsive to local needs.

How we will communicate progress

We will share public updates on progress through our communications channels including the council website, RBWM Together, newsletters and social media so residents, councillors and partners can see what is happening and how the borough is progressing. These updates will highlight key achievements, learning and next steps.

This approach strengthens transparency and accountability while allowing us to adapt to new evidence, funding opportunities and technologies over time.



Methodology for emissions data and projections

1. Data source

All emissions data used in this strategy are drawn from the UK Government's Local Authority Greenhouse Gas Emissions dataset (2005–2023). This dataset provides territorial emissions by sector for each local authority, including CO₂, CH₄, and N₂O expressed as tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e).

2. Baseline and scope

- Baseline year: 2018, consistent with Tyndall Centre methodology for local carbon budgets.
- Territorial emissions: Total emissions within Royal Borough's geographic boundary, including sources beyond local influence (e.g., motorway traffic, large industrial sites).
- Council influence emissions: Estimated share of emissions the council can influence through planning, infrastructure, procurement, and engagement. This excludes sources outside the borough's direct or indirect influence.

3. Projection approach

- Current trend projection: Assumes an annual reduction of approximately 6.3%, based on observed change between 2022 and 2023.
- Tyndall trajectory: Science-based pathway requiring ~12.7% annual reduction to achieve an 88% cut by 2035 compared to the 2018 baseline.
- Projections highlight the gap between the council's current trajectory and the Tyndall-aligned target.

4. Sector breakdown

Emissions are reported by sector: Domestic, Transport, Industry, Commercial, Public Sector, Agriculture, and Waste. Council influence estimates were calculated using DESNZ conversion factors and local activity data, including:

- EPC ratings for domestic retrofit scenarios
- EV uptake and modal shift assumptions for transport.

5. Key assumptions

- Transport: Petrol/diesel car emissions factor = 0.175 kg CO₂e/km (DfT/DESNZ).
- Domestic Retrofit: Savings calculated using average emissions per EPC band; upgraded properties assumed to achieve Band C performance.
- EV Adoption: Each electric vehicle assumed to save ~2.2 tCO₂e/year.

6. Limitations

- Projections do not account for future policy changes or technological breakthroughs.
- Behavioural change impacts are estimated and may vary.
- Waste emissions under council influence are minimal; most waste-related emissions occur outside the council's direct control.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the many organisations, partners, community groups, and individuals who have contributed their time, expertise, and commitment to the development of this strategy. Climate action in the Royal Borough is strengthened by the dedication and passion of our communities, and this strategy reflects the collective effort of everyone involved.

Climate Emergency Coalition (CEC)

We are grateful for the valuable insight and collaboration of the Climate Emergency Coalition and its partner organisations, whose contributions have helped shape the direction and ambition of this strategy. CEC members include:

- Cookhams Footprint
- DraughtBusters
- ECO Action
- Filling Good Cooperative
- Green Skills Library
- Library of Things
- MaidEnergy Ltd
- Maidenhead Great Park
- Maidenhead Waterways
- Repair Café
- Rotary in Maidenhead
- Save Energy
- Waltham Place
- Wild Cookham
- Wild Eton Wick
- Wild Maidenhead
- Wild Windsor
- Wildlife in Ascot
- Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead Active Travel

We thank all volunteers, members, and supporters across these groups whose ongoing work continues to drive community-led climate action.

Climate Partnership Steering Group

Our thanks go to the Climate Partnership Steering Group, whose guidance, challenge, and feedback have strengthened this strategy throughout its development. Their continued engagement has been invaluable in ensuring that the strategy reflects local priorities and opportunities.

Council Teams

We extend our appreciation to the many council teams whose ambition, expertise, and commitment have shaped this strategy and will play a crucial role in delivering the Climate Action Plans. Their leadership across services has been essential to embedding climate considerations throughout council operations.

Kerith Church

We would like to thank Kerith Church for generously hosting one of our community workshops in Dedworth, providing a welcoming space that enabled meaningful conversation and engagement.

Youth Council

We are especially grateful to the Royal Borough Youth Council, whose passion and leadership in organising an extraordinarily successful Youth Climate Action Day attended by 57 students has brought forward new ideas, energy, and perspectives. Their contributions highlight the importance of empowering young people in our journey toward a fair and sustainable future.

Our Community

Finally, we thank the residents, schools, businesses, charities, and partners who took part in workshops, roadshows, consultations, and conversations throughout this process. Your insight and lived experience help ensure that climate action in the borough is inclusive, community-led, and meaningful.

Glossary

Atmosphere

The layer of gases that surrounds the Earth. It's made up of things like oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide, and it protects us by keeping in heat, giving us air to breathe, and blocking harmful rays from the sun.

Biodiversity net gain

A development approach that leaves nature in a better state than before, by enhancing habitats and ecosystems.

Carbon emissions

The release of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other carbon compounds into the atmosphere, primarily from burning fossil fuels, industrial processes, and land-use changes. Carbon emissions are a major contributor to climate change because they trap heat and raise global temperatures.

Carbon literacy

Understanding the causes and impacts of climate change and knowing what actions can reduce carbon emissions.

Carbon cost effectiveness

The lifetime cost per tonne of CO₂ saved over the lifetime of the carbon offset measure.

Carbon sinks

Natural places like forests, oceans, and soil that absorb more carbon dioxide from the air than they release.

Circular economy

An economic system aimed at eliminating waste and keeping materials in use through reuse, repair, and recycling.

Climate adaptation

Adjusting systems and behaviours to cope with the impacts of climate change, such as flooding or heatwaves.

Climate mitigation

Actions taken to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases, such as switching to renewable energy or improving energy efficiency.

Climate risk register

A tool used to identify and manage risks posed by climate change to council services, infrastructure, and communities.

EPC rating (Energy Performance Certificate)

A measure of a building's energy efficiency, rated from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient).

Energy literacy

Understanding how energy is used in our daily lives—like heating our homes, charging devices, or travelling—and feeling confident about making choices that save energy and reduce waste.

ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance)

A framework used to assess the sustainability and ethical impact of operations.

Green and blue spaces

Natural areas such as parks (green) and rivers or lakes (blue) that support biodiversity and improve wellbeing.

Greenhouse gases (GHGs)

Gases in the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat, creating the greenhouse effect. The main GHGs include carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and fluorinated gases.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

A plan to protect, restore, and connect nature across a local area, supporting biodiversity and climate resilience.

Net zero

Balancing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted with the amount removed from the atmosphere, aiming for no net increase.

Rewilding

Restoring land to its natural state by allowing ecosystems to regenerate and wildlife to return.

School Streets

Road closures or restrictions around schools during drop-off and pick-up times to improve safety and air quality.

Tyndall Curve

A trajectory developed by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research that shows the required rate of greenhouse gas emissions reduction over time to meet climate targets (such as limiting warming to 1.5°C or achieving net zero by a specific year).

WEEE (Waste electrical and electronic equipment)

Waste electrical and electronic equipment for recycling and proper disposal.

Zero-emissions vehicle (ZEVs)

Vehicles that produce no exhaust emissions when being driven. This includes vehicles (EVs) powered entirely by batteries, and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles because they do not burn petrol or diesel. These vehicles help reduce carbon emissions.



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