

Solihull Net Zero Action Plan Annual Report

2023/24 Executive Summary

In 2019, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council declared a climate emergency. In response we developed our Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP), which was agreed in 2021. The NZAP outlines actions that the Council can take to support Solihull becoming a net zero borough by 2041. This is our third year of reporting against the plan, which covers the 2023/24 financial year.

The borough-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data is reported 2 years in arrears, with the most up to date data covering 2022. Between 2021 and 2022 we saw a 2.1% decrease in emissions, compared to a 5.5% increase seen in the previous year, (which was heavily influenced by the ending of COVID restrictions). 96% of Local Authority areas saw a decrease in emissions in 2022, with an overall 5% decrease in UK emissions.

Solihull's GHG emissions in 2022 were 2.7% higher than its net zero trajectory. This report also compares borough-wide CO₂ levels with the Tyndall Centre pathway and its recommended budget for carbon reduction, (in line with that required to limit global temperature increase to well below 2°C). In 2022 the borough's CO₂ levels were 33% higher than the Tyndall pathway. As is the case across the UK, we are not seeing the speed of reductions needed to bring the borough on track with this pathway. More national and local action is required, as council action alone will not achieve the reductions needed.

While we saw a small decrease in emissions across the borough in 2022, we have made significant progress against the actions in the NZAP. In 2023/24, nearly three quarters of the 202 actions were underway.

The Council acknowledges how important it is to lead by example and reduce our own emissions. Since 2017/18, the Council's own emissions have reduced by 55%. We have done this through a range of actions, including energy efficiency improvements and switching to low and net zero carbon energy, (for street lighting and waste collection vehicles).

The NZAP seeks to reduce emissions in all sectors, including challenging and high emitting sectors such as transport and domestic buildings. The Council is focusing significant action in these areas, such as building new zero carbon homes in Kingshurst and increasing our EV charging installations using Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding.

Another example of significant progress is the Council's Town Centre Energy Network, for which enabling works have now begun. Once completed, the scheme will bring low carbon energy to a number of local authority buildings, schools and businesses within Solihull Town Centre.

As a Council we know it is important for us to support residents in reducing their carbon emissions. Solihull's Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) programme is enabling homeowners to heat and power their homes using low and zero carbon energy systems, such as air source heat pumps and solar panels.

The Council has limited direct influence on many emission sources in the borough. Achieving the net zero target therefore requires the Council to work closely and engage with all stakeholders in the borough including businesses and community groups. This year the council has been able to offer local businesses and community groups support in reducing their carbon emissions through grant funded programmes such as the Net Zero business programme.

This year the Council approved Solihull's Air Quality Strategy and Natural Capital Investment Strategy, with sustainability at their heart. Both strategies support the decarbonisation of the borough.

There have been significant challenges in delivering the NZAP in 2023/24. These include changes in national policy, low uptake of renewable energy and the continued impact of high energy costs and inflation, which has had a significant impact on construction projects such as retrofit.

There is a lot of activity underway in the 2024/25 financial year including accelerating our installation of EV charging stations and delivering further net zero properties in Council-led developments, such as Kingshurst Village Centre and the Simon Digby housing development.

In 2025 we will refresh the Net Zero Action Plan to ensure that the plan remains focused on the right priorities.