

# CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

2025–30



Sustainable success in a climate-affected future



# The East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 outlines how we will respond to the climate emergency, adapt to climate change and how we will continue reducing our emissions to work towards reaching Net Zero by 2045

*Cover: Bass Rock from John Muir Way, East Lothian – Cheyne Hamm*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

East Lothian Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and adopted its *Climate Change Strategy 2020-25* the following year. This strategy is created to refresh that document and to align with the latest guidance from the **Sustainable Scotland Network** and **Audit Scotland**. It also aligns to other updated policies including our Council Plan, and to new legislation such as *National Planning Framework 4* and the *Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3*.

**Our approach to climate adaptation** is to follow an **urgency-based framework**. Southeast Scotland is already about 1.2°C above last century's average temperatures, and we see the effects of climate change with wetter winters and dramatic coastal erosion. With these effects in mind, we identify areas and operations at greatest risk from climate change, assess whether we are adapting sufficiently already, and plan to improve our response where there is a shortfall. This is the methodology used in the *UK Climate Change Risk Assessment*.

**Our approach to climate mitigation** is to follow the **mitigation hierarchy**. This is a framework which orders the types of changes that are effective at reducing emissions. Following this hierarchy will identify proven effective methods of reducing emissions and is compatible with the need to make financial savings. We will (in order of priority): avoid activities which create emissions where possible, reduce the level of emissions-creating activities, and lastly replace emissions-intensive activities with low- or no-emissions ones.

Like all public sector bodies in Scotland, we have a legal obligation to reach **net zero** emissions by 2045. Emissions should be as low as possible on the way to net zero to keep global warming levels as low as possible.

## **The more global warming we mitigate, the less climate change we will need to adapt to.**

The Scottish Government will set carbon budgets, which are emissions reduction targets that will keep global warming levels low if met, and we will align with this approach. As a local authority we experience significant policy and financial uncertainty, so this Strategy presents three budgets based on three possible futures with varying levels of investment and legislative change. Carbon budgets range from a Transformational scenario, in which we are best placed to meet net zero by 2045, to a Business-as-Usual scenario, which would leave a significant gap.

1. **Transformational** (67,800 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e)
2. **Continual** (73,360 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e)
3. **Business-as-Usual** (75,890 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e)

Pages 14-17 describe these budgets in more detail.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategy divides our climate actions into four key themes:



Actions in these themes are tied together by shared approaches and action types.

Themes are broken down into Focus Areas, which address specific areas of the outcomes:

- **Governance:**  
**Leadership, Adaptation Capability, Carbon Literacy, Procurement, and Resources**
- **Assets:**  
**Buildings and Transport & Vehicles**
- **Services:**  
**Education & Training; Waste; Planning; Libraries, Parks & Sports; and Care**
- **Place:**  
**Communities, Green & Blue Networks, Commuting, Economy, and Homes**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There will be challenges in delivering the aims of this Strategy. Pressures on public finance mean that finding the resource for climate projects will be difficult. We partially overcome this challenge by focussing on actions in the top tiers of the **Mitigation Hierarchy** - 'Avoid' and 'Reduce' - but there may still be a gap. Nevertheless, the cost of inaction will outweigh the cost of adapting and reaching net zero. Delivery of the Strategy must be flexible as new opportunities and unforeseen changes appear in the coming years. There will also be a challenge when we begin reporting on emissions from procurement, which could make it appear that our emissions rise significantly and will require more planning to address. Lastly, East Lothian has a growing population so in some cases we may need to ramp up activity to provide adequate services.

This Strategy is paired with **East Lothian Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30**.

Almost every council service has actions to complete, which they co-created with the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer. Actions were developed using logic modelling, which maps the action against available resources and a desired outcome. Every action has a quantitative performance indicator which will be reported annually by the action owner so that we can track progress objectively year-on-year. The Action Plan explains in detail what climate action we plan to do, while the Strategy text explains how we approach it more generally.

Progress delivering this Strategy will be overseen quarterly by officers at the Climate and Nature Emergency Group and by Elected Members at the Cross-Party Climate Change and Sustainability Forum. Updates on actions will be collected annually and reported alongside the Council's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report, which is submitted every November and is a statutory obligation. The Sustainability & Climate Change Officer will produce a summary of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report, the Strategy, and the Action Plan to report to Cabinet annually for public scrutiny. All will be publicly available in Members Library reports and linked to on the Council's climate change web page.

## CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

# Strategy Purpose & Structure

The East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025–30 is our plan to respond to the climate emergency. It outlines how we will adapt to climate change and how we will continue reducing our emissions to work towards reaching net zero by 2045. It explains how we are approaching climate adaptation and mitigation as an organisation, and it lists actions for individual services which support that wider approach. This document will not be able to cover everything the Council does in response to climate change, but it shows how we are going to enhance our planned and proposed climate actions.

**This Strategy sets out how we are doing what we can with what we have in order to set ourselves up for success in a climate-affected future.**

The Strategy begins by reviewing the background to climate action, including the successes of the previous Climate Change Strategy 2020–2025. It also explains the science of climate change and the predicted climate impacts of climate change in East Lothian. It then explains why we must act, including policy drivers such as the UK's nationally determined contributions, Scotland's target of net zero by 2045, and our own declaration of a climate emergency.

It then explains our organisation's approach to climate adaptation and to climate mitigation. Those principles form the basis of the entire plan that follows. Our corporate approach to climate adaptation is to follow an urgency-based framework, where we identify and address the most immediate risks to our operations. Our organisational approach to climate change mitigation is to follow the mitigation hierarchy, where we look to avoid making emissions as a top priority, reduce emissions if this is not possible, and replace high-emissions activities with low-emissions technologies. Offsetting is not currently part of our strategy, because there is still scope to reduce our own emissions.

The bulk of the Strategy explains how we can achieve climate-positive outcomes from our various operations and roles. These functions are divided into four key themes: **Governance**, **Assets**, **Services** and **Place**. Each theme has an outcome statement, which is what we aim to achieve by 2030. The themes are further divided into Focus Areas, which describe how we will improve the resilience and sustainability of specific functions and areas of influence. See the diagram below for a visual overview of the Strategy's structure:

Communication is the golden thread throughout the Strategy. Each Focus Area of the Strategy contains a Communication Objectives section to explain how we plan to share our plans and improve understanding of the need to act. It is important for people both within and outwith the Council to understand what climate action we are taking, why we are doing it, and how they can participate. There will be a **Make a Difference** communications campaign to support the Climate Change Strategy 2025–30.

## CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

# The Greenhouse Effect

Climate change is the shift in weather patterns caused by global warming and greenhouse gas particles in the atmosphere. These weather patterns include higher average temperature and more intense rainfall. Greenhouse gases also make the seas more acidic and reduce air quality. These shifts are extremely dangerous to humans and the natural environment because our way of life depends on a narrow window of climatic conditions that is now being disrupted. The world ocean and our natural environment have absorbed the impacts of climate change, but continued industrial exploitation means that planetary systems may soon reach 'tipping points' where they harm rather than help regulate the climate. Therefore, what is occurring is a climate and nature emergency.



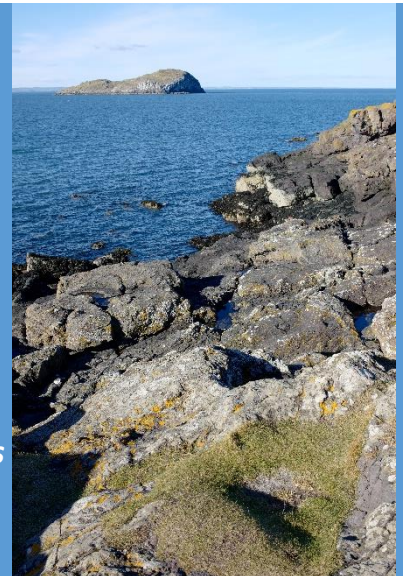
*The ocean is our greatest ally in the face of climate change. It has absorbed about 90% of the excess heat from global warming and 30% of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. However, this has*



*come at a cost. The ocean is becoming more acidic and warmer, which damages marine life that people depend upon and reduces the ocean's ability to*



*continue absorbing carbon dioxide. We have a close relationship with the ocean, but climate change means sea levels are rising and our coast is eroding faster.*



Greenhouse gases are emitted by human activities which burn carbon-based fuels like petroleum and natural gas, which are called 'fossil fuels.' These activities might include driving petrol cars or using gas boilers. Greenhouse gases can also come from agriculture and from industries which make goods. The main greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

Climate change is a difficult issue to govern because it is a global issue – emissions generated elsewhere will affect us in East Lothian and vice versa. The rapid industrialisation which is enabled by burning fossil fuels also generates significant wealth for certain countries, while others have not been able to see those benefits. Countries that have not benefitted from industrialisation are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Most greenhouse gases were emitted in the past, and we are already locked into a significant amount of climate change, which will continue even if all emissions were to stop today. It is a critical global imperative to cut emissions and adapt to climate change rapidly to avoid costly and devastating levels of disruption to humans and natural systems. Every fraction of warming that we can avoid will save lives and avert damage.



# CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

## Drivers for Change

The science behind climate change is unambiguous. It is accelerated by human activity and we must cut emissions rapidly to avoid a global climate breakdown. We acknowledged this when we declared a climate emergency in 2019 and published the East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2025. This strategy must be updated to reflect the latest guidance and developments. We are also guided by a trauma-informed approach and The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.<sup>1</sup>

The United Kingdom is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, which was signed in 2015 and commits us to achieving net zero emissions by the year 2050.<sup>2</sup> Scotland has gone one step further in the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions) (Scotland) Act 2019<sup>3</sup> and committed to reaching net zero by 2045. We as a local authority must align with and contribute to achieving these targets. Previously set national targets were determined to be infeasible and will be altered in 2025.<sup>4</sup> We will now set our own targets based on our current trajectory of emissions reduction, aligning with the Scottish Government's approach where possible.

This Strategy is also aligned with the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3,<sup>5</sup> which was adopted in September 2024. We have focussed our adaptation actions on the relevant Outcomes of the Plan from the outset of the Strategy's development. This includes identifying nature-based solutions to climate impacts, working with communities to improve their resilience to climate change, and delivering our services accounting for extreme weather and climatic shifts.

Adaptation to climate change and emissions cuts must be made in a challenging time for public finances. Inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, with all the pressures they bring, restrict our ability to undertake unilateral transformative change. However, we also recognise that the cost of inaction will be far greater if we do not act and allow climate breakdown to affect us unmitigated.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/1/contents/enacted>

<sup>2</sup> <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15/contents>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2024/03/20/scotlands-2030-climate-goals-are-no-longer-credible/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://adaptation.scot/about/about-the-scottish-governments-national-adaptation-plan-snap3/>

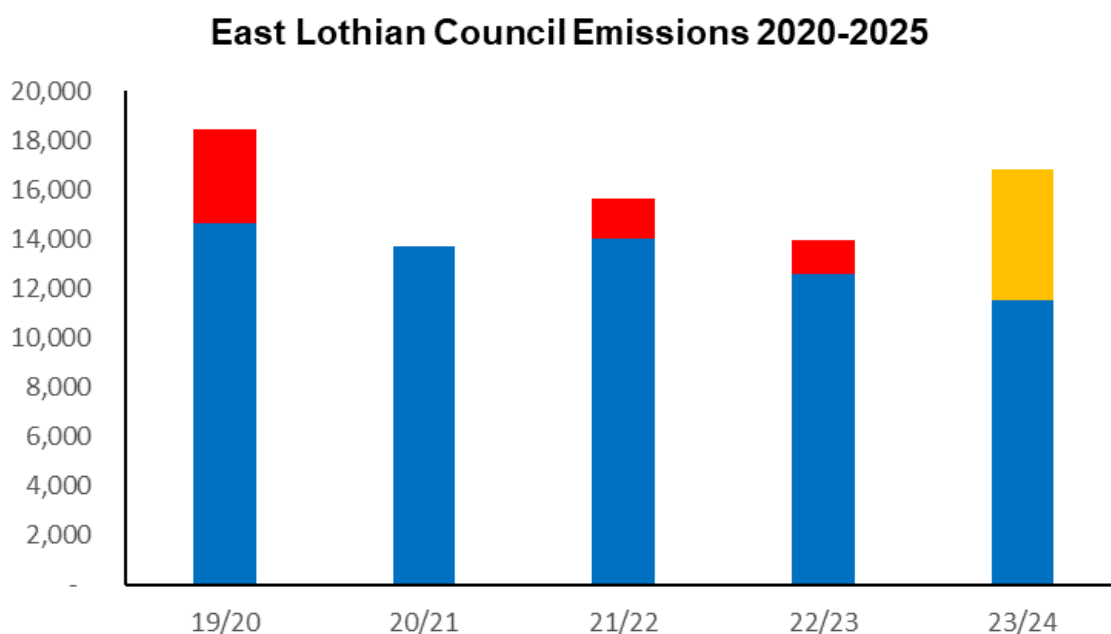
## CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

### Previous Strategy (2020–25)

The East Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2020–25 was one of the first climate strategies passed by a local authority in Scotland. It was innovative for its clear, well-defined outcomes and Council-wide approach to climate action. It balanced whole-Council policies with actions for individual services. The Strategy had a robust process for collecting data annually and reporting it to Council, which tracked progress well and kept climate change on the agenda.

Many of the previous Strategy's aims were achieved. A significant portion of our fleet is now low- or zero-emissions, we have the sixth highest rate of recycling in Scotland, and new schools are built to a high standard of energy efficiency. Actions from the previous Strategy which we are no longer progressing or cannot complete on our own have not been carried forward.

By the end of the 2020-25 Strategy cycle, Scope 1 and 2 emissions (plus transmission losses from electricity) were reduced by about 20%. However, we now robustly report on emissions from staff commuting, which are higher than previously thought. This is still a positive development because we better understand and report on our emissions, and we can now identify our priorities for climate action going forward. The 2020-2025 Strategy laid the foundations for well-integrated climate action and robust reporting, and it allows us to set clear targets for the coming Strategy cycle. The diagram below shows our emissions over the 2020-2025 Strategy's lifetime:



The blue bars represent our emissions which are measured consistently, the red bars represent emissions from staff commuting estimated by the staff commuting survey & Zero Waste Scotland's tool, and the gold bar represents emissions from staff commuting & homeworking as measured by CalCommuter.

# CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

## Development

Developing this strategy began with a Strategy Action Plan. Actions were co-developed with the services responsible for delivering them and are based on recommendations by Audit Scotland, the Sustainable Scotland Network, and actions from the Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025. New actions were also created to capture the excellent work on climate action being done across the council already. Some actions from the 2020-2025 Strategy were not brought forward to this Strategy because we have stopped doing them or because they are outwith our scope of influence.

Actions were written using logic modelling, where the action is based on the services' available resources and directly linked with a desired outcome. This includes maximising co-benefits, which are positive effects from climate action additional to improving climate readiness or sustainability – for example, addressing health or inequality. Actions are measured quantitatively, with either a yes-no answer or a numerical value so that year-on-year progress can be tracked objectively. A few actions are indicators of our performance, which may be the result of several individual projects.

The Strategy text was written after the Action Plan and divides the actions into Focus Areas. These Focus Areas group our actions thematically based on a shared challenge, approach, or target. The thematic Focus Areas are more approachable than dividing up actions by Service. Focus Areas will also not change in the event of a restructure. The text captures the unique circumstances of each Focus Area, links actions to our overall approach, and makes connections to other Focus Areas.

Elected Members have been involved from the outset by consulting them at the Cross-Party Climate Change & Sustainability Forum and at a Members' Seminar. Staff and the public were consulted on the Strategy in autumn 2024. There were 4 sessions for council officers to respond to and feed back on the Strategy. There were also in-person drop-in sessions at each of the 6 East Lothian Area Partnership geographies, where the public shared their views with our Sustainability & Climate Change Officer. Feedback was also collected online on the East Lothian Consultation Hub.

Per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024,<sup>6</sup> children have a right to be heard in matters affecting them and for their voices to make a difference. With this in mind, children were also consulted on the objectives of the Climate Change Strategy. This was done by conducting a classroom activity on sustainability in pilot classrooms, followed by a poll of students which was entered by the teacher. The activities and questions were made accessible for children and aligned with Learning for Sustainability objectives. The results of the polls were that, with some exceptions, children found more value in sustainability activities outwith the classroom. This includes learning outside, enhancing green spaces, and getting involved in community groups. Children surveyed tended to prefer activity-based objectives over learning-based objectives. This process had an influence on the direction of the Strategy by encouraging officers to include more hands-on activities in the Education & Training section of the Climate Change Strategy and by improving the balance between energy-focussed and environment-focussed goals in the Strategy.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/1/contents/enacted>

# CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

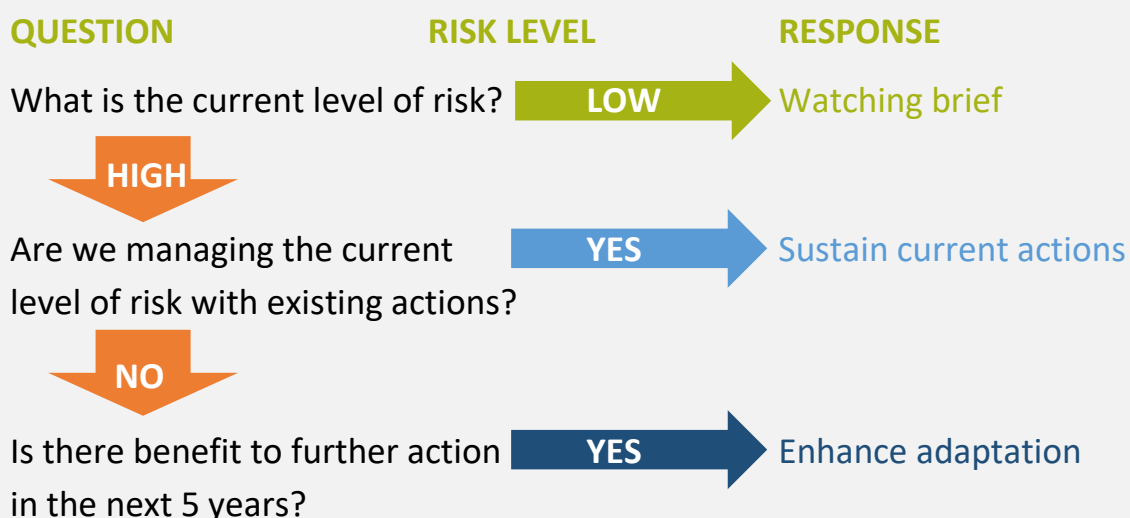
## Adaptation

Climate Change is already affecting us, and we must adapt to sustain our livelihoods. Southeast Scotland is experiencing average temperatures about 1.2 degrees Celsius above last century's average and this is causing hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Globally, temperatures surpassed 1.5°C above pre-industrial times in 2024 – this may not be a permanent shift but it is a clear warning sign. Given these effects are already here, we must improve our adaptation to climate change without losing focus on reducing emissions.

In East Lothian, the most prevalent climate risks we are already experiencing locally are flooding, coastal erosion, and heat. Rainfall events are already 20% heavier and on our current trajectory this may accelerate a further 10-20%. Sea level rise will probably be a further 10-20cm by the 2050s, and our number of summer days will likely quadruple. For more information about climate projections, see the Met Office's Local Authority Climate Service.<sup>7</sup> All these climate risks are at the forefront of our minds when we adapt to climate change.

We will adapt using the Climate Change Committee's Risk Assessment<sup>8</sup> methodology, which uses an urgency-based framework to assess the climate adaptation actions that will provide the greatest benefit to resilience in the next 5 years. We will improve our understanding of how climate change affects our operations and area, and we will choose the most effective and lowest-emissions adaptation method which addresses the area of greatest urgency.

How the assessment identifies the most urgent climate risks:



<sup>7</sup> <https://climatedataportal.metoffice.gov.uk/pages/lacs>

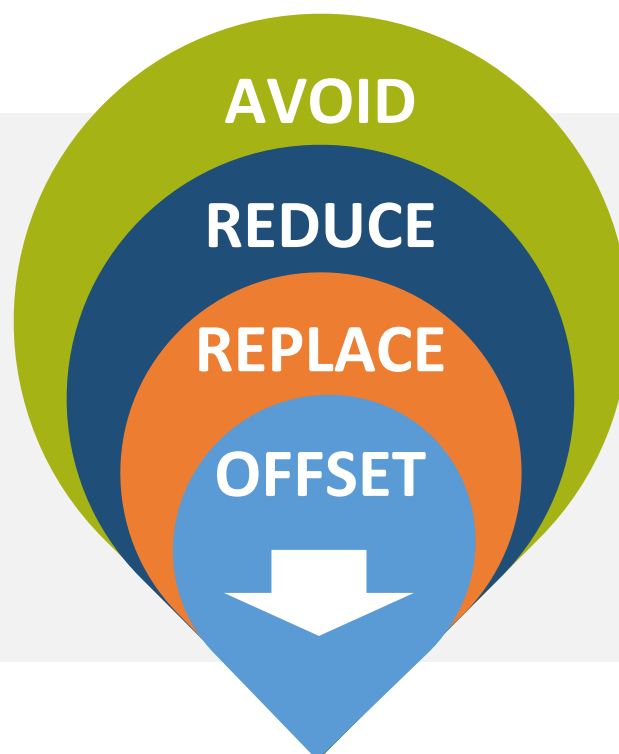
<sup>8</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61e54d8f8fa8f505985ef3c7/climate-change-risk-assessment-2022.pdf>

# CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

## Mitigation

Mitigating climate change is about reducing our emissions so that climate change is less severe. *The faster we reach net zero, the less climate change we will have to adapt to.* We must cut our emissions reliably and effectively within a constrained budget, so we will adapt the mitigation hierarchy to appropriate council operations. By looking to avoid creating emissions in the first place, we will align emissions reduction with the need to focus on core council services. The following diagram is called the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' and visualises which climate mitigation actions are the highest priority.

We will also look to reduce the emissions we produce at source by improving the efficiency of our operations. This can be achieved by using more efficient technologies, or by thinking logistically about how we work & travel to minimise the emissions we create from our activities.





# CARBON BUDGETS

We must achieve net zero emissions by 2045, along with the rest of Scotland. To ensure we reach this goal, we must set interim targets that are credible, aligned with a national strategy, and sufficiently funded to make the necessary changes. We do not know what will be in the Scottish Government's national strategy, but we know it will adopt a carbon budgeting approach.

Carbon budgeting means that we will set ourselves a limit on the emissions we can produce while keeping global warming below 1.5°C. In the United Kingdom, carbon budgets are set for a 5 year period with steadily reducing annual targets to keep the total below the 'budget.'

We are uncertain about a few key factors. One is policy uncertainty. Many of the changes that will make the biggest difference to us as a local authority happen at a national level, such as the emissions factor of electricity. Another type of uncertainty is about funding. Emissions reduction and climate adaptation projects are often dependent on external funding, which is sporadic and allocated year-by-year. Lastly there is a scientific uncertainty: we do not know exactly the precise effect each of our actions will have.

We will therefore set carbon budgets for three different scenarios set out on the following pages at varying levels of ambition and capacity. All scenarios are data-based and feasible based on our current trajectory of emissions reduction.



# CARBON BUDGETS

## Transformational scenario

These are the targets we are aiming for, as this is the scenario in which we are best placed to reach net zero by 2045. In this scenario, governments at all levels realise that reaching net zero is shifting from a long-term to a medium-term target and they make the required level of investment and legislative change that enable us to swiftly decarbonise our operations. Grid electricity decarbonises quickly because national energy projects come online and innovative heat solutions take burden off the grid, which allows for quicker electrification. We will reduce emissions using proven and reliable methods, including producing our own energy, which improves resilience and reduces cost in the medium-term. In this scenario, we are able to set ourselves an absolute target of cutting 1,100 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per annum, which is approximately equal to year-on-year changes leading up to our baseline year of 2023/24.

The main risk to realising this scenario is finance. Due to funding challenges, there would need to be significant external funding to enable us to think about energy in the medium-term and improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings. Barriers to decarbonisation of our fleet, such as cost and meeting the requirements of insurers, will need to be overcome. Achieving these ambitious targets is also likely to depend on large renewable developments coming online, which themselves depend on upgrades to the national electricity grid. Meeting our transformational targets is ultimately lower-risk and lower-cost because we will be more likely to reach net zero emissions by 2045 and will have less climate change to adapt and respond to.

Our emissions budget in this scenario is 67,800 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e and our interim targets are:

<b>2024/25</b>	<b>15,760</b>
<b>2025/26</b>	<b>14,660</b>
<b>2026/27</b>	<b>13,560</b>
<b>2027/28</b>	<b>12,460</b>
<b>2028/29</b>	<b>11,360</b>

# CARBON BUDGETS

## Continual scenario

This carbon budget assumes that the rate at which our emissions have been falling is accurate, but the starting point should have been higher because we were underestimating emissions from commuting. In this scenario, there are still hurdles to climate change mitigation locally and nationally. We will continue to prioritise energy use reduction, which also saves costs, and lay the groundwork for using low emissions technologies. Completing the actions in our Action Plan proves effective and we are able to accelerate emissions reduction compared to our expected trajectory.

In this scenario, resources remain our biggest risk. Because of this, we may not be able to continually reduce emissions while delivering an acceptable level of services. While this scenario represents improvement over business-as-usual, the rate of progress tapers off and challenging residual emissions remain by 2030, which means we will need more adaptation to climate change and redoubled efforts to reach our legal requirement to achieve net zero emissions in the subsequent 15 years to 2045.

Our emissions budget for this scenario is 73,360 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e and our interim targets are as follows:

2024/25	15,950
2025/26	15,210
2026/27	14,580
2027/28	14,050
2028/29	13,570



# CARBON BUDGETS

## Business-as-usual scenario

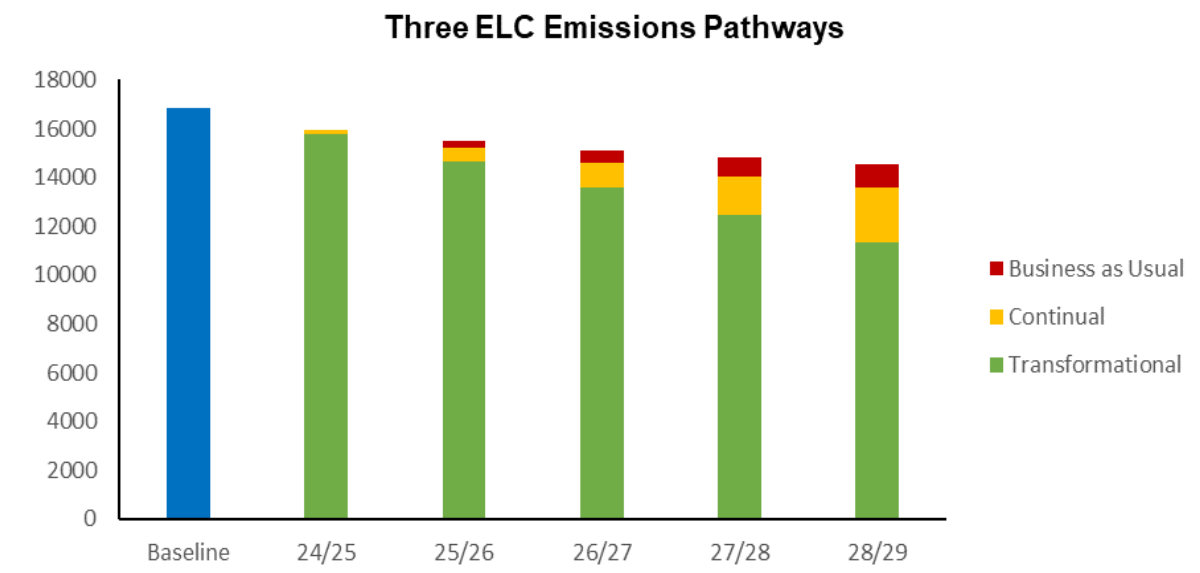
This carbon budget is modelled on the assumption that, because emissions from staff commuting are higher than previously estimated, our emissions reduction has not been as substantial as suggested. In this scenario, funding crises in the public sector continue and the need to deliver statutory services at the lowest possible cost takes precedence over value. We will carry on making our operations more efficient, thinking about mitigating climate change in various operations, and making incremental changes. This model assumes that grid electricity will decarbonise gradually as it has in prior years. Our rate of emissions reduction will slow dramatically by 2030 if this scenario is realised.

Our growing estate and inadequate decarbonisation of grid electricity are the risks to meeting these targets. If there is not enough renewable energy capacity to meet the demand for electricity, there is a risk to meeting these targets despite improving electrification. We may be able to realise this scenario with relatively minimal investment, but this will also create risk. If we are unable to meet or exceed these targets, we will face a significant challenge to achieve net zero emissions by 2045 and will have to adapt even more to our changed climate.

Our emissions budget for this scenario is: 75,890 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e and our interim targets are as follows:

2024/25	15,950
2025/26	15,490
2026/27	15,120
2027/28	14,800
2028/29	14,530

These three possible future pathways can be:



# CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

## Outcomes

By 2030 we want to achieve the following outcomes for each of our key 4 themes:

### GOVERNANCE

All our employees and partners understand how climate change affects us and what our responsibilities are.

### SERVICES

We will design our services to be lower impact and resilient to climate-induced disruption

### ASSETS

Our buildings and vehicles are lower emission and adapted for climate change

### PLACE

Through partnership working, we enhance nature and our built environment. Communities benefit from the energy transition

These four Outcomes are easy-to-remember and achievable aims which every service in the council can support. If we achieve them by 2030, we will be positioned well to thrive in a climate-affected world. The Outcomes capture both sides of climate action - **adaptation** and **mitigation** - and are supported by organisation-wide approaches.



# GOVERNANCE

**OUTCOME: *All our staff and partners understand how climate change affects us, and our responsibilities.***

Climate actions under the Governance theme are those that improve our understanding, reporting, and commitment to climate action. These actions will help us be a climate-ready and climate-positive organisation. The outcome means that, by 2030, we should have a deep understanding of how we are contributing to climate change and how it affects what we do. We should also be clearly demonstrating how we are dealing with the dual challenge of mitigating and adapting to climate change.

## Focus Area: **LEADERSHIP**

Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the public sector is tasked with leadership in the climate emergency. We must contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets, deliver Scotland's climate Adaptation Plan, and act sustainably.<sup>9</sup> Communities look to councils to implement climate action in a locally-informed way. Local authorities are responsible for about 2% of emissions in the UK, but according to the Climate Change Committee, can have a much wider influence in the area.<sup>10</sup> This is why leadership is integrated throughout the Strategy as we improve our governance and implement proven-effective climate action across our operations.

This Strategy is focused on what is within our powers, but this does capture some actions we do to affect the wider area. We have already adopted a **Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy** (LHEES), which guides the region's approach to improving energy efficiency in homes and switching to low-emissions sources of heat. We will also produce a Good Food Nation Plan, which will set out how we lower the emissions from food supply in the county. We will use our convening powers to co-develop a climate change plan for the entire county in partnership with communities and public sector partners. Communications is also a critical part of leadership, which is why objectives to improve communications and behaviour change are embedded throughout the Strategy.

The governance of this strategy will be led by the Climate and Nature Emergency Group and by the Cross-Party Climate Change & Sustainability Forum for Elected Members. Progress implementing the Strategy and its Action Plan will be reported annually, so Members and the public will be able to scrutinise our progress and senior management will have an opportunity to consider how we overcome challenges. The Strategy draws our climate action plans in one place and facilitates us working as a team to tackle climate change, recognising

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/contents>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LA-Report\\_final.pdf](https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LA-Report_final.pdf)

that every team has a responsibility to deliver our shared vision. For more information about leadership, see Sustainable Scotland Network's guidance for public bodies.<sup>11</sup>



**Communications Objectives:** Sustainability will be part of our everyday thinking as a Council. Residents, partners, and staff should clearly understand what our sustainability goals are and how we plan to get there. Council staff, reports, and press statements should clearly link our work to climate outcomes where appropriate and should use consistent and accurate language.

## Focus Area: **ADAPTATION CAPABILITY**

Adaptation Capability is a framework used by Adaptation Scotland to support public sector bodies. Moving through this framework will improve how prepared we are to deal with the risks posed by climate change. The effects of climate change are accelerating – we are already locked into significant sea level rise and more extreme weather. Having this improved capability means we are more prepared for and resilient to these effects.

Our target is to reach the advanced stage (Stage 3) of the Adaptation Capability Framework by 2030. Our capability will be assessed annually at workshops, and the results of these workshops are one of the Top 50 Indicators of Council performance. We will look to enhance our Capability by taking actions which integrate right thinking about resilience throughout the organisation, from business cases to Council reports.

Our adaptation aims fully align with the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (SNAP3).<sup>12</sup> This includes using nature-based solutions wherever possible and planning for the impacts of climate change on our operations to ensure we deliver services consistently. To support SNAP3, we are also developing a Coastal Change Adaptation Plan, which will identify areas of greatest vulnerability along our coast and propose solutions. We will also publish a Climate Change Risk Register which highlights the places, people, and services that will be most affected by climate change. All our adaptation planning will consider vulnerability alongside exposure to risk and the severity of the hazard.

East Lothian Council helped to develop the refreshed Adaptation Capability Framework, which was published in January 2025. More information, see the Adaptation Capability Framework on Adaptation Scotland's website.<sup>13</sup>



**Communications Objectives:** Council staff and residents are more aware of climate adaptation. They will better understand what climate adaptation is and how it is applicable to their work. Staff understand who has responsibilities for climate adaptation, and it is considered as a near- and medium-term financial priority rather than only a sustainability issue. Staff and residents understand how adaptation will affect them and the benefits.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/10/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/documents/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/govscot%3Adocument/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://adaptation.scot/about/about-the-scottish-governments-national-adaptation-plan-snap3/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://adaptation.scot/take-action/adaptation-capability-framework/>

## Focus Area: **CARBON LITERACY**

Carbon Literacy is how well we understand climate change, its causes, and what action we can take to respond. By improving Carbon Literacy across the organisation, we can integrate the principles of emissions reductions at every level of service delivery and make improvements in everything we do. Carbon Literacy Training is delivered through courses certified by the Carbon Literacy Project. Delivering this training to staff is one of the Top 50 indicators for council performance, with a target of training 500 staff by 2027. The Council Management Team and senior elected members will also undertake Carbon Literacy training.

We will further improve our organisational understanding of and reporting on climate change throughout council processes by including climate impacts in policies, plans, and strategies that are adopted by the council. Any reports that have a significant impact on the environment will report what that impact is expected to be and how it will be mitigated, and officers will have updated guidance to support them doing so.



By enhancing our Carbon Literacy, we empower leaders, officers, and frontline workers to make transformational change across the organisation. This includes links to [Education & Training](#), where Learning for Sustainability leads will be certified Carbon Literate. This enables our current generation of learners to have a holistic understanding of sustainability. We want every decision to be a climate-positive decision, and every role to be a climate-positive role.



**Communications Objectives:** Staff believe in the importance of taking organisational responsibility for climate change. They know how to access knowledge about climate change and feel comfortable speaking about how their roles relate to sustainability. We communicate with residents about climate change in plain English. Residents feel we are being transparent. We will link extreme weather and other disruption to climate change wherever there is evidence.

## Focus Area: **PROCUREMENT**

A significant amount of our emissions come from sources that we are responsible for but didn't produce ourselves, like purchased goods and our staff driving to work. These are called Scope 3 emissions. All public bodies, including councils, have a Sustainable Procurement Duty<sup>14</sup> which requires us to consider the environment with our contracts and goods. ELC also has our own Sustainable Procurement Policy. Our Procurement Strategy,<sup>15</sup> which was refreshed in 2023, aligns with all the above and contains actions to embed circular economy principles and climate change mitigation into our procurement activities.

We will be required to report on some categories of Scope 3 emissions in the next 5 years, including procured goods and services. We expect that support will come from the Scottish Government to assist calculating this, but it will be up to us to clearly report how this affects our journey to net zero. We will use this baseline to set targets for reducing our procurement emissions once we have the details. Including procurement emissions in our reporting means that our emissions will appear to go up significantly. However, similar to emissions from staff commuting, it is rather that a more robust methodology to calculate and report them will give us a clearer picture. Preparing for this change early will mean that Scope 3 targets and a path to net zero can be integrated smoothly into our plans.

Even before we have these details, we can undertake best practice to bring our emissions down using the principles of the Mitigation Hierarchy. By shifting to an approach which looks to minimise new goods and to reuse and repair rather than replace, we lower whole lifecycle emissions. We will include these ideas in our tenders and contracts. Procurement is also the first step in Waste reduction. By only buying what we need and how much we need, we can be more efficient with our use of resources and have less waste to handle. We will also grow the amount that we spend with local suppliers to reduce emissions from our contractors' travel and support our Community Wealth Building objectives (see: Economy).



**Communications Objectives:** *Staff feel confident answering the questions 'whether to buy, how much to buy, how to buy.' We link responsible and sustainable procurement to reducing waste and shortening supply chains. We are learning how to measure emissions from our procurement. Staff and communities understand what it means to measure Scope 3 emissions and staff feel confident planning to reduce these emissions.*

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/policies/public-sector-procurement/sustainable-procurement-duty/>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/27544/procurement\\_strategy](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/27544/procurement_strategy)

## Focus Area: **RESOURCES**

It is a challenging time for public finances. Inflationary pressures, including the costs of energy and materials, mean that the council is focussing on statutory services. There is virtually no financial headroom to deliver transformational decarbonisation projects on our own. However, we also understand that we must act sustainably and align the resources that we do have with progressing our climate change targets. We will show this alignment by including climate change in our business cases and by linking climate-positive outcomes with our infrastructure projects. We have already signed a letter to our pension provider, Lothian Pension Fund, to divest from fossil fuels and our position remains firm on that issue.

We must align our resources to the needs of a climate-ready and climate-affected world. Any investment that isn't resilient to climate change is an investment at risk. We will be a positive influence in the area and can improve the climate resilience of the whole area by, for instance, making key assets like the Cockenzie site adapted to known effects of climate change. We will demonstrate how our budget delivers on our net zero and climate adaptation goals by enhancing assessment of our budget and including climate change in our financial reporting.

Our aims to make our resources more climate-positive are supported by work in other areas. By bringing in funding from developer contributions and working with our partners, we are improving how we identify and bring in resources for climate action. This enables us to realise benefits for the climate, our natural environment, and our residents by making more change with the resources we already have available to us.



**Communications Objectives:** *Investing in sustainability is investing in our future. Resilience to climate change will become a routine part of our thinking. Staff understand how to apply their existing resources more sustainably and use available levers to be more sustainable without costing more. Decision-makers understand the links between financial and emissions savings.*





# ASSETS

## OUTCOME: *Our buildings and vehicles are lower emissions and adapted to climate change.*

This section focusses on our corporate, leased, and school buildings and on our staff's business travel. We use gas and grid electricity –which produces emissions when it is generated- to heat and power our buildings. Transport is also a contributor, as most of our fleet of uses internal combustion engines. These emissions are the Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions that we report on annually, so we have the most control over these. Our buildings are dispersed throughout East Lothian, so they also share climate vulnerabilities to flooding and overheating as other buildings in the area. By making sustainability improvements to our assets, we can drastically reduce our emissions and improve the resilience of the whole area.

### Focus Area: **BUILDINGS**

Energy used in the council's buildings is our single largest source of emissions. Natural gas accounted for  $\frac{1}{3}$  of our emissions in 2023/24 and electricity is a significant source too, though this can fall as grid electricity decarbonises. Some of our estate will struggle with the intense heat and rainfall which climate change is expected to exacerbate. We must also make sure our buildings are resilient to longer intense windstorms, which may increasingly be northerly or easterly. These challenges mean that improvements to the climate-related performance our estate can make a significant difference to our organisation and area's emissions.

East Lothian Council has adopted a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, which sets out a routemap to decarbonising heat in East Lothian buildings, including our non-domestic estate. In every situation, our preferred solution will be the technology that is low-cost, low emissions, and supports community wealth and skills. For more details, see our LHEES.<sup>16</sup> Some of our buildings will be particularly challenging to decarbonise, so we will develop plans for these buildings on a case-by-case basis which will include decarbonising electricity use on-site where possible

We have not lost sight of the fabric-first approach and mitigation hierarchy, so we will also reduce emissions from our buildings by improving the energy and water efficiency of our

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<sup>16</sup>

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/34704/local\\_heat\\_and\\_energy\\_efficiency\\_strategy\\_lhees](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/34704/local_heat_and_energy_efficiency_strategy_lhees)

buildings. Sensors which manage lights and heating are routinely installed when we re-wire our buildings to reduce energy use when unoccupied. We also regularly improve the layout of buildings in response to weather events and will use nature-based solutions such as SuDS to ease surface flooding.

We recognise that the need to have fewer and more efficient buildings may lead staff and residents to travel more to access work sites and services. This will be mitigated by improving digital connectivity and online services. Active Travel support at council work sites will be rolled out to improve safety and assets will be sited in places that are well-connected by public transport (see: [Commuting](#)). As part of the wider effort to improve the utilisation of our estate, the buildings we retain will be more accessible for community. We also recognise that transferring ownership of a building reduces our corporate emissions but not area-wide emissions. We will work to address this challenge with our community and public sector partners through the development of a county-wide Climate Change Strategy.



**Communications Objectives:** *We will look to reduce water use in buildings, emphasising that doing so saves energy and improves climate resilience. Relevant staff and decision-makers understand the climate risks to each of our buildings and how its users can respond. Staff and residents will travel more sustainably between our buildings, taking advantage of facilities to do so.*

## Focus Area: **TRANSPORT & VEHICLES**

In our semi-rural county, transport is one of the most challenging parts of our operations to decarbonise. We deliver services across the county, which provide significant social benefits to residents. Some travel-intensive services like waste collection even help our environmental goals by improving recycling rates. We already have a fleet that is 100% compliant with Scotland's low emissions zones and a significant portion of it is electric. We will work to overcome remaining barriers to a zero-emissions fleet where possible and when appropriate funding is provided. Over the next 5 years, we will do the preparatory work needed to transition to a fleet of vehicles that produces zero tailpipe emissions.

We are working to integrate the Transport Hierarchy across the organisation, which encourages active travel & public transport over private car journeys, even in zero-emissions vehicles. We will enable staff to travel actively by having infrastructure at our buildings that supports cycling & walking between work sites. Staff will also be supported to work from home or with hybrid working arrangements. Digging deeper, we will share journeys with other staff and ensure that the vehicles we do have are well-used in their lifetime. These efficiencies will save fuel and cost, as well as emissions. Taking fewer journeys and making our approach to business travel more climate-positive will also make us more resilient to climate-induced extreme weather events. We can maximise resilience while minimising cost

emissions by using electricity produced at council sites, which will make us less reliant on volatile global supply chains.



**Communications Objectives:** We will see active and sustainable transport as the norm for business travel. Staff will go from 'I should travel sustainably for council business' to 'I will travel sustainably for council business.' Staff feel comfortable trying and familiarising themselves with zero emissions vehicles, and then feel confident using them. We will routinely ask the question: 'do I need to travel for business?' The case for a modal shift from private cars to active travel & shared transport is clear and supported by council culture.

## Travel options; from most to least sustainable:

- Walking, wheeling & cycling
- Public transport
- Taxis & shared transport
- Private cars



Public bike racks, Haddington





# SERVICES

OUTCOME: *We will design our services to be lower impact and resilient to climate-induced disruption.*

Our assets are responsible for most of our emissions, but this doesn't happen in a vacuum - we use them to deliver services. When we change the design and the delivery of our services to be low-impact and resilient to climate change, resource and energy use will follow. Our services are also where residents have the most interaction with us, whether in schools or through planning decisions. We can inform our residents about climate change and encourage them to participate in our climate action through our service delivery.





## Focus Area: **EDUCATION & TRAINING**

Education is the way we will create a climate-positive East Lothian for the future. Schools are one of our core services and school buildings account for most of our estate. East Lothian schools have done well in achieving Eco Schools's Green Flag award. The Scottish Government has set out its Target 2030, which calls for every 3-18 place of education to be a Sustainable Learning Setting by 2030. There is also a national Learning for Sustainability action plan which we will align to with our own strategic plans.

Because schools are a critical part of what we do, we will make our teaching more climate-forward while we improve efficiency and reduce emissions from the schools themselves (see: '[Buildings](#)'). We aim for our teachers to become [Carbon Literate](#) and for that expertise to be passed onto learners. Educating and preparing for climate change will also improve our preparedness. We will support education and training that considers the impacts of climate change from the outset and minimises risks from the energy transition for the region.

We will integrate Learning for Sustainability in our curriculum. Its objectives will be taken on board holistically, so that learners will get hands-on with climate action even outside of the classroom to learn how sustainability interacts with their home and school lives. These were the themes that emerged from consultation with children, which we have taken on board as priorities. We will also measure children and young peoples' confidence with the Learning for Sustainability objectives and their confidence in us to improve our sustainability.

Training and upskilling will also be critical to securing a climate-positive future. We can look to improve employment in the area by connecting residents with green skills and education, and we must do so in order to create a local workforce that enables us to make transformational changes to our assets and infrastructure. We need frontline workers to retrofit buildings and to service net zero emissions energy infrastructure. We will help residents get skills for the green jobs of the future as part of our Community Wealth Building objectives (see: [Economy](#)).



**Communications Objectives:** *Education staff feel confident interacting with young people about climate change and responding to climate-induced weather events. We recognise that today's young people will bear the brunt of climate impacts. We are responding by delivering educating them about climate change and giving them skills for a climate-affected world. We are also listening to the concerns and needs of young people and our learners. Training a local workforce will create a healthier, more local, and lower-impact economy.*

## Focus Area: **WASTE**

We collect waste from our residents, but we cannot control what goes into the waste bins. Nonetheless, we can use our collection times and our messaging to encourage better recycling rates. We collect recycling every week and organise the materials so they have maximum recycling value. Our general waste collection limits capacity to 70 litres every 3 weeks, which encourages more recycling, and virtually all residual waste is diverted from landfill to an energy-from-waste plant which burns the waste and uses the heat to generate electricity. This does produce emissions and some air pollution, but crucially it makes use of the waste which would otherwise go to landfill. We follow the Scottish Household Waste Charter and waste hierarchy outlined below in our procurement & waste management:



We will continue to measure the amount of municipal waste that we recycle every year, as well as emissions from the waste we manage. By tracking these figures year-on-year, we will be able to measure improvements and identify which waste reduction measures are most effective. Our waste education officers engage directly with and support provide residents and businesses to reduce their waste, manage it correctly, and follow the waste hierarchy.

We do not measure our operational waste separately from municipal waste, but we can take proven steps to reduce our waste. Reducing waste begins with Procurement, where we have already included the waste hierarchy in our Sustainable Procurement Guidance. We guide employees to procure only what they need and buy goods that can be disposed of responsibly. We then trust our excellent waste management processes to minimise emissions at the end-of-life of goods.



**Communications Objectives:** *We will communicate the benefits of reducing waste and link reducing waste with more responsible procurement and other performance outcomes. We will connect residents and employees with practical ways to follow the waste hierarchy and improve recycling rates. Residents will understand how to dispose of waste responsibly and how our waste practices align with this imperative.*

## Focus Area: **PLANNING**

Local authorities can have a significant influence on the emissions produced in their area from buildings and transport,<sup>17</sup> which we do through planning. It is important that our local planning policy and decisions are climate-conscious. It is currently a critical juncture in the planning policy landscape. The Scottish Government has recently produced a National Planning Framework 4, which outlines the principles which should guide planning policy and makes climate action a critical part of its approach. We are currently developing our second Local Development Plan (LDP2) which fully aligns with the National Planning Framework. Planning policy and decisions must balance competing demands for space for agriculture, housing, and green spaces.

We already know some of the climate-related policies we will adopt with LDP2, and through developing this Climate Change Strategy we have also decided to develop additional guidance to support developers and planners to make developments climate-ready and low-emissions. Building a climate-ready East Lothian will require planning for the effects of climate change. Our guidance will include ways for developments to be resilient to flooding and other climate impacts, or sited and designed to minimise their exposure to these hazards outright. On a landscape level, we will include provision of Green & Blue Networks to help mitigate climate change and improve climate resilience through nature-based solutions and food growing.



The guidance we develop will support renewable energy and set criteria for developers to align with our sustainability aims. This includes proposals to decarbonise energy with on-site generation that keeps the benefits in East Lothian. Our climate-forward approach to planning will also have a positive effect on our heritage. We will support re-using existing buildings to reduce embodied emissions and plan for accessible and well-connected living in towns.



**Communications Objectives:** *We are looking to conserve the character of our settlements and enhance natural spaces while preparing our area for a climate-affected future. There are co-benefits to be gained by planning responsibly and achieving climate-positive outcomes. Planning decisions will be informed by climate-positive thinking, which is made possible by our improved Carbon Literacy and clearer, locally relevant guidance.*

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<sup>17</sup> [https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LA-Report\\_final.pdf](https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LA-Report_final.pdf)

## Focus Area: **LIBRARIES, PARKS & SPORTS**

We have libraries and community centres, which must be decarbonised and made climate-ready along with the rest of our estate. We also manage parks, pitches, and sports clubs for the benefit of amenity of residents and visitors. Libraries are the original circular economy, and most of our libraries, museums, and parks are well-sited and accessible by public transport. Our parks already showcase our commitment to tackling the climate and nature



emergencies by expanding nature networks, natural play opportunities, and climate resilient planting (see: [Green & Blue Networks](#)). However, we can always make improvements. It was clear during public consultation that residents want using our customer-facing services to be climate-positive and we will aim to deliver that to the best of our ability.

It is critical that these spaces reflect our understanding of climate change and commitment to combatting it. We use nature-based solutions to improve the climate resilience of our outdoor spaces, including in parks and green spaces in more urban environments.

We will improve the sustainability of our customer-facing services, with particular emphasis on re-use. We will also make information and activities related to climate change available to residents at our public-facing locations. Any hand-outs will be lower-plastic and focussed on reusability, including sports kit. We will continue to encourage residents to reach facilities by active & sustainable travel (see: [Commuting](#)) and aim to deliver sports activities close to residents to minimise travel. Library services are also increasingly available online. By completing actions in this section, the spaces we offer our services will be sustainable centres of learning and amenity.



**Communications Objectives:** *Residents should feel that libraries are an accessible, climate-resilient space that enables them to access services and enjoy themselves with low or no environmental impact. Users, residents, and staff should access sports facilities, parks, and libraries using active or sustainable travel. We continue to look for and take opportunities to naturalise our parks, outdoor sports, and play facilities to make council land into climate-positive space.*



## Focus Area: CARE

East Lothian Council delivers care through the Integrated Joint Board (IJB), which operates in cooperation with NHS Lothian. NHS Lothian manages most of the buildings and some of the services, while the council operate services, use vehicles, and use goods.

Our partners share our vision for sustainability. We all have a strong desire to work in concert rather than in silos and to deliver effective climate change action. The IJB and its partners will produce a region-leading Sustainability Plan which will address 3 shared priorities: Buildings; Waste; and Travel. Improving climate resilience in these areas is critical for all partners, as patients are likely to be among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It is therefore critical that patients are accessible in extreme weather events and are in spaces that are resilient to extreme weather.

Collaborative action to address these priorities will dovetail with the council's activities. By working with regional and national partners, improvements in procurement and waste can be shared widely so that the entire public sector in East Lothian can work more sustainably. Combining our efforts will accelerate emissions reductions in the areas most relevant to the delivery of care in the region.



**Communications Objectives:** *Care managers should always have a 'Plan B' to continue patient care in case of extreme weather. The council and NHS are aligned in our priorities, and we are confident we can effectively deliver services in a low-cost, low-impact way.*



East Lothian Community Hospital, Haddington

# PLACE

**OUTCOME: *Through partnership working, we enhance nature and our built environment. Communities benefit from the energy transition.***

We recognise the influence we have outwith the Council estate & operations. We look after the county's land and represent the people of East Lothian, so we must help both to be more climate-ready. The county's environment and communities will have a thriving relationship that improves resilience to climate change and reduces emissions. We will support the people and environment of our place to reduce emissions and enhance resilience to climate change.

## Focus Area: **COMMUNITIES**

The wellbeing and resilience of our communities is our motivation to take climate action. We must mitigate the devastating effects of climate change and help our communities adapt to a climate-affected world. The Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (see: [Adaptation Capability](#)) places community resilience as one of its central themes. The Council will support that objective by providing logistical support to community councils and volunteer groups to help residents prepare for climate-induced weather changes. We are also working closely with partners including the community-led East Lothian Climate Hub to co-create our plan for area-wide climate action (see: [Leadership](#)). These approaches mean that the Council and communities will support each other on the journey to climate readiness and net zero energy.

We will support climate action in physical and digital spaces that the council manages. The continued successful roll-out of vehicle chargers is ongoing, which is an example of the strong links between fostering sustainable communities and climate mitigation action in the **[Commuting](#)** Focus Area. We will build on success stories such as Sustainable Preston Seton Gosford to enhance our connection to sustainable community voices in other Area Partnerships. We will also make efforts to empower community climate action by connecting projects with land and funding. This will include initiatives such as community food growing and energy production, which will improve resilience to climate change and can enhance people's health and well-being.





**Communications Objectives:** We are working to express more clearly what support there is for community climate action. Communities should feel they are able to access clear, useful, and relevant information about how to be more resilient to climate change. They should also feel that their views on sustainability are valued and there are avenues to express those views.

*East Lothian benefits from having a community-led climate action hub, part of a network of 24 Scottish Government-funded hubs around Scotland. **East Lothian Climate Hub** works closely with us and supported consultation on this Strategy as part of their remit to empower communities to influence policy.*

*They strengthen the voices of communities, linking with over 80 organisations and enabling climate change projects throughout the county. Some of their projects include community-led retrofit projects and working with farmers to enhance biodiversity.*

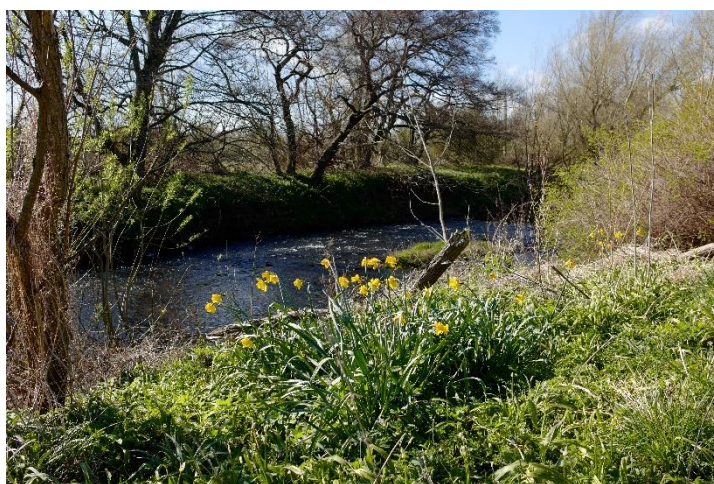
For more information visit [eastlothianclimatehub.org](https://eastlothianclimatehub.org)

# East Lothian Climate Hub

## Focus Area: **GREEN & BLUE NETWORKS**

Green and blue networks are natural and created areas such as grasslands, woodlands, and water features. They are connected to form networks to maximise their ability to absorb greenhouse gas emissions, manage water, and enhance biodiversity. These outdoor spaces are valued by our communities and visitors. They provide health and wellbeing benefits such as informal play spaces for children. The council manages open space across the county from parks and green networks within settlements to coasts and beaches.

These areas need support to retain the qualities that make them so valuable. As well as absorbing greenhouse gases, green and blue networks provide flood management and shade during hot summers. We are already building nature networks which connect key habitats for plants and animals across the county. We will continue improve the quality and connectivity of our green and blue networks, with particular emphasis on areas which provide benefits to climate resilience. These improvements protecting and enhancing sand dunes to increase resilience, enhance water courses to manage flood risk, and planting trees in the right places to increase shade cover for heat wave events. We will also identify and enhance green spaces in built-up areas so there are fewer barriers between ourselves and the natural environment, expanding our nature networks and improving resilience to climate change.



We will favour nature-based solutions and green infrastructure for climate resilience wherever possible. This will be supported in policy by identifying Nature Networks in our Local Development Plan 2 (see: [Planning](#)) and linking these networks with our in-development Open Space Strategy. We will continue to plant trees and naturalise grasslands. We will develop a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan that will dovetail with the Climate Change Strategy to improve green and blue networks in East Lothian.

**Communications Objectives:** *Press statements and releases will clearly link the climate and nature emergencies. Staff should understand that delivering nature-based solutions has the dual benefit of addressing both emergencies. Staff will be encouraged to consider how they can deliver positive effects for biodiversity and climate change.*



## Focus Area: **COMMUTING**

Staff and agency commuting is one of our 'stickiest' sources of emissions. It was our second-largest contributor in our baseline year 2023/24, accounting for 29% of our reported emissions, and Transport is the second largest source of emissions in the area after Industry.<sup>18</sup> This is a nationwide challenge, as domestic transport is the largest source of emissions in Scotland.<sup>19</sup> The Scottish Government have a target of reducing car kilometres 20% by 2030 compared to 2019, but Audit Scotland's latest report indicates this target is unlikely to be met.<sup>20</sup> We share this challenge as a semi-rural local authority with many staff who must work on-site for service delivery and well-being. Despite this, we must enable a shift to walking, cycling, and public transport for our staff and residents to achieve net zero by 2045. Accordingly, Commuting is the section of the Action Plan with the most actions.

Reducing reliance on employee commuting will also mean having a resilient workforce that is more flexible and better able to continue in instances of severe weather and flooding. We support many of our desk-based staff to work from home and will better understand how to manage the balance between home and office working when we complete our asset review. This will mean that staff are equally resilient to weather-induced disruption whether in the office or working from home.

We must also develop an approach to encourage less and more sustainable commuting outwith the county. Many residents work in larger cities and commute via private car journeys, so we will facilitate modal shift to active, shared, or sustainable travel options. We will continue our roll-out of Journey Hubs which connect different routes and modes of sustainable travel. The growth of our vehicle charging infrastructure has also been a success, and we will continue to provide excellent connection options for those who get around with an electric vehicle.



**Communications Objectives:** *We understand why our commuting emissions are higher than previously thought and what that means for the overall emissions of our organisation. Staff go from 'I should travel sustainably to work' to 'I do travel sustainably to work.' Residents are aware of the work we are doing that makes it easier to travel sustainably and take advantage of these schemes.*

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2022>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-statistics-2022/pages/section-b--results/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://audit.scot/news/minimal-progress-on-reducing-car-use#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20Scottish%20Government,it%20is%20unlikely%20to%20meet>

## Focus Area: **ECONOMY**

Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, we must use our powers to reduce emissions in the area. This may be through growing skills for a low-emissions economy, economic development policies, and using our own economic power. We adopted our East Lothian Local Economy Strategy 2024-34<sup>21</sup> in April 2024, which has 'Green and Sustainable' as one of the key principles. Our objective is to facilitate and realise benefits from a net-zero economy, including renewably generated energy and regenerative agriculture, and support a climate-ready economy.

The East Lothian Partnership's Community Wealth Building Charter<sup>22</sup> is the only such document in Scotland to include climate change as a sixth pillar alongside the other 5 community wealth building pillars. We will progress the actions in this pillar alongside our fellow anchor institutions, NHS Lothian, Edinburgh College, and Queen Margaret University. The Community Wealth Building Charter will seek to maximise the community benefits of climate action through our spending, energy projects that progress in East Lothian, and through restoring nature. We will also make progress on our Poverty Plan<sup>23</sup> to reduce inequalities in the county. Communities with high levels of wellbeing are more resilient to climate change and more empowered to take climate action, so achieving this aim will support the county to be more climate positive.

Visitors and businesses will continue to be encouraged to use sustainable travel, supported by Journey Hubs and an expansion of our active travel network (see: [Commuting](#)). We will also aim to have more climate-positive businesses in East Lothian -which has the co-benefit of less commuting- and we will tie our funding to climate-positive outcomes where we can. This links to our goals in [Education & Training](#) to upskill, reskill, and future-proof East Lothian's workforce so that residents can find secure, climate-positive jobs and we can procure from local firms to support our climate change actions. Learners are the workforce of the future, so our work to implement Learning for Sustainability in [Education](#) will also support a green local economy in the years to come.



**Communications Objectives:** Local businesses and prospective business owners are aware of the avenues of support we offer to improve sustainability. The sustainability advice we provide is relevant, attractive, and is accessed more often. Businesses are aware of how climate change will impact them and are motivated to take action. Staff will identify links between community wealth building and climate-positive outcomes, and residents can identify instances where our climate action has addressed poverty and built community wealth.

<sup>21</sup> <https://investeastlothian.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SUMMARY-EAST-LOTHIAN-LOCAL-ECONOMY-STRATEGY-2024-34-FINAL-004.pdf>

<sup>22</sup>

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34532/east\\_lothian\\_community\\_wealth\\_building\\_charter\\_final.pdf](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34532/east_lothian_community_wealth_building_charter_final.pdf)

<sup>23</sup>

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34964/east\\_lothian\\_partnership\\_poverty\\_plan\\_2024-28.pdf](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34964/east_lothian_partnership_poverty_plan_2024-28.pdf)



## Focus Area: **HOMES**

East Lothian is one of the fastest-growing counties in terms of population and homes are being built to meet this demand, but it also has an irreplaceable and nationally important cultural and natural heritage. We must balance the demand for new housing reflected in the affordable housing emergency with the need to conserve existing communities and the value of surrounding green spaces. We must also decarbonise the heat and energy of existing homes, with our preferred approach for different property and town types detailed in our LHEES. Actions and goals in this section of the Strategy are split between new and existing homes, and also between Council-owned social housing (24% of housing stock) and private housing (76% of housing stock).



The driver for our activity on Housing is our Local Housing Strategy 2024-2029,<sup>24</sup> which guides us to create sustainable and well-connected neighbourhoods, as well as develop an approach to reach net zero on our own social housing stock. We also have had success improving the energy efficiency of private homes through delivering the Area-Based Scheme and we will continue these fabric-first improvements where funding allows. Compliance with ambitious Energy Efficiency Standards in Social Housing (EESH) is excellent, and we aim for this to continue when new Social Housing Net Zero (SHNZ) standards are introduced, though we anticipate this standard to be more stringent and therefore a challenge to reach across our estate.

We will also use our Planning powers to site new housing in climate-resilient or –adaptable locations and build neighbourhoods that are accessible by sustainable transport to reduce reliance on private car journeys. Through planning, we will encourage green infrastructure for new housing and ensure provision of suitable green space (see: Green & Blue Networks).



**Communications Objectives:** Staff and residents understand that using water and energy more efficiently has the dual benefit of lowering emissions and improving resilience. Using existing homes can help us keep embodied carbon to a minimum as we work to address the local affordable housing emergency. Staff and residents understand that electrification is a long-term decarbonisation solution, while gas is cheaper in the short term but cannot be decarbonized.

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/33828/approved\\_local\\_housing\\_strategy\\_lhs\\_2024-2029](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/33828/approved_local_housing_strategy_lhs_2024-2029)

# CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-30

## Monitoring & Reporting

Our Climate Change Strategy 2025–30 has over 200 actions, all with quantitative performance indicators. Updates on these actions will be collected from the respective action owners annually. A summary will then be presented in a master spreadsheet to elected members alongside the latest emissions data in the first quarter of each calendar year. Progress on each action will be colour-coded and compiled into a Gantt chart to enable an at-a-glance check of the Council’s climate actions.

The results of the annual action updates will be reported to an officer group called the Climate and Nature Emergency Group, to an Elected Member group called the Cross-Party Climate Change & Sustainability Forum, and to Cabinet. All will be publicly available in Members Library reports and linked to on the Council’s climate change web page.



# CLIMATE CHANGE

## Glossary

**Active travel:** Travelling by walking, cycling, wheeling or other modes without motorised transport.

**Adaptation:** Averting damage from the effects of climate change, such as heavier rainfall and rising sea levels. It is especially important in areas that are vulnerable due to the nature of a climate hazard or their ability to manage.

**Area Partnership:** East Lothian Council divides its Connected Communities into 6 geographic areas: Dunbar & East Linton, Fa'side, Haddington & Lammermuir, Musselburgh, North Berwick Coastal, and Preston Seton Gosford.

**Baseline:** The tCO<sub>2</sub>e of emissions for one year, against which reductions are measured.

**Biodiversity:** The variety of species, habitats, and ecosystems. Improved biodiversity leads to stable ecosystems and a more suitable living condition for human beings.

**Carbon budget:** A limit on the emissions that can be produced over 5 years which keeps global warming at a sustainable level.

**Circular economy:** An alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which resources are kept in use by sharing and repairing, which means less extraction and use of brand-new materials.

**Climate change:** The long-term shift in global climate patterns, including extreme weather events and rising sea levels, linked directly with the warming of the Earth's atmosphere.

**Climate emergency:** Because climate change poses severe risks to the ways we live and work, East Lothian Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. Climate change is sometimes called 'the climate emergency' or 'the climate crisis.'

**Climate-positive:** Addresses climate change by either adapting to its effects or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Climate ready:** Prepared for the effects of climate change, such as flooding and extreme heat, and for the way we live and work in a world affected by climate change.

**CO<sub>2</sub>:** Carbon dioxide -often referred to as just 'carbon'- is the most well-known greenhouse gas that causes climate change. It is released into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels for transportation and energy.

**CO<sub>2</sub>e:** Carbon dioxide equivalent. A way of measuring global warming potency which includes greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide, such as methane and nitrous oxide, which have varying warming effects. The warming effect of carbon dioxide is well-understood, so impact is often expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e).

**Co-benefits:** Social, environmental, and economic benefits from climate action that are incidental to directly addressing climate change. For example, undertaking more active travel will result in improved cardiovascular health.

**Coastal erosion:** The change in our coastline caused by waves and storm events. It is expected to accelerate due to climate change. Also called 'coastal change.'

**Decarbonise:** Delivering a service or using an asset with fewer or no emissions. Carbon is used as a stand-in for all greenhouse gas emissions.

**ELC:** East Lothian Council.

**Embodied emissions:** The greenhouse gas emissions made from constructing a building, including manufacturing and transporting materials. All buildings created emissions when they were built, and their embodied emissions per year can be minimised by extending their lifespan.

**(Greenhouse gas) Emissions:** Gases in the atmosphere that trap the Sun's radiation within the Earth's atmosphere and cause global warming. This effect is similar to a greenhouse. Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and water vapour. Usually measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e).

**Emissions factor:** The emissions produced per unit of energy used. Usually expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e).

**Energy-from-waste:** Capturing the heat from incinerating waste and using it either to directly heat water for use in homes or businesses or to create steam that generates electricity.

**Fabric-first:** Upgrading the energy efficiency performance of a building so that energy demand is as low as possible ahead of switching to a low-emissions heat source.

**Fossil fuels:** Fuels such as oil, coal, and natural gas which derive from decomposed organic material – hence 'fossil' fuel.

**Global warming:** An increase in the world's average temperature because of greenhouse gases trapping the Sun's heat in Earth's atmosphere.

**Green & blue networks:** Spaces for nature including hedgerows, parks, and water features like rivers. Includes nature networks.

**Heat network:** Hot water pipes, heated by a central source, which connect to homes, businesses, and public buildings.

**LfS:** Learning for Sustainability.

**LHEES:** Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.

**Lifecycle emissions:** The emissions that were generated to create a building or product from the extraction and manufacture of materials through disposal and waste.

**Low emissions zone (LEZ):** A geographic area where travel is only allowed by active travel or with low-emissions vehicles.

**Mitigation:** Reducing, eliminating, or offsetting the greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activity, which will lessen the impacts of climate change.

**Modal shift:** Travelling less by private car and more by active travel and public transport.

**Naturalise:** Mowing and managing green spaces less so that biodiversity can flourish. Also called rewilding.

**Nature emergency:** The rapid and dramatic decline in the quality of nature and biodiversity globally due to human activity. Nature is critical to normalise the global climate, so what is occurring is a climate and nature emergency. The Council unanimously declared a nature emergency in October 2023.

**Nature-based solutions:** Climate adaptation and mitigation measures which leverage nature rather than hard engineering or technology. For example, planting trees for shade will also sequester emissions and support biodiversity.

**Net zero:** A balance between the emissions generated and removed from the atmosphere – this means the activity does not contribute to climate change.

**Offsetting:** Removing greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere to balance creating unavoidable emissions. Offsetting is not currently part of our approach.

**Performance Indicator (PI):** The change we record to determine the progress of an action.

**Pre-industrial:** Referring to global temperatures before human activity began to induce rapid climate change. Usually this means around the year 1850.

**Regenerative agriculture:** Farming techniques which replenish the quality of soil, improving its ability to cope with climate impacts and reducing emissions from agriculture.

**Renewables / renewable energy:** Energy which is generated using equipment that harnesses natural resources that are virtually limitless such as wind or solar energy.

**Resilience:** Preparing for and working around the impacts of climate change.

**Retrofit:** Upgrading the fabric of an already-constructed building for energy efficiency.

**S&CCO:** East Lothian Council's Sustainability & Climate Change Officer.

**Scope 1 emissions:** Emissions which we directly generate ourselves, such as burning fuel in vehicles or boilers.

**Scope 2 emissions:** Emissions created from generating the electricity which we purchase from the grid.

**Scope 3 emissions:** Emissions produced by other organisations because of our purchases or decisions. For example, staff commuting to work for us is our second-largest source of emissions.

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS):** Natural flood management techniques like wetlands and ponds which collect and drain surface water and enhance biodiversity.

**Sustainability:** For climate change, sustainability means we do things in a way that can last well into the future by maintaining a stable climate and without relying on finite resources like fossil fuels.

**Tailpipe emissions:** The greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels to drive internal combustion engine vehicles.

**Transmission losses:** Electrical energy which is lost on its way to the consumer due to resistance in the grid. This means electricity suppliers need to generate about 2% more electricity than is actually used by consumers, creating more emissions which the consumer is ultimately responsible for.

**Upskilling:** Learning skills that are useful for industries that adapt to climate change or support net zero energy.

**Vehicle chargers:** Public or staff plug-in stations to charge the batteries of electric vehicles.

Versions of our strategy can be provided in Braille,  
large print, audiotape, or your own language.

For assistance please call: 01620 827 827

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact  
us via [www.contactscotland-bsl.org](http://www.contactscotland-bsl.org)

All information correct at time of publishing 29/04/2025

## Contact us

Visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210657/climate\\_emergency](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210657/climate_emergency)

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