

COMMITTEE:	East Lothian Council
MEETING DATE:	28 April 2026
BY:	Depute Chief Executive – Resources and Economy
REPORT TITLE:	East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 Update
REPORT STATUS:	Public

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the first annual update to Council on the progress of delivering the actions and commitments in East Lothian Council (ELC) Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2025–30.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve changes to the ELC Climate Change Action Plan outlined in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Note the key progress made delivering actions in the ELC Climate Change Strategy Action Plan 2025-30 and the achievements and developments set out in this report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The ELC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2025-30 was approved by Council in April 2025. Council also approved the commitments to review and update the Strategy annually as further national legislative and policy changes occur, to review and update the Action Plan annually, and to seek approval from Council for any revisions and updates on an annual basis.

- 3.2 In addition to the commitments set out in the Climate Change Strategy, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 puts statutory duties on the Council to: contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets, help deliver climate change adaptation, and act sustainably. East Lothian Council reports on these duties annually to the Scottish Government through a 'Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report'. The most recent report can be found in the East Lothian Council Members' Library Service.¹

Key National and International Climate Reports

- 3.3 The Scottish Government published draft Statutory Guidance for Public Bodies in fulfilling their climate change duties. The draft Statutory Guidance proposed introducing new requirements for local authorities, including having a plan to reduce emissions in their local authority boundary and developing a climate change risk register for their local authority boundary. East Lothian Council responded to consultation on this draft Statutory Guidance, explaining that meeting the new requirements will be extremely challenging without additional resource. Our response can be found in the June 2025 entry into the Members' Library Service.² The final Statutory Guidance, which includes these new requirements, was published on 6 March 2026. Officers are still reviewing all implications, and have already laid the groundwork for key activities after the consultation phase.
- 3.4 The Scottish Government published a Draft Climate Change Plan on 6 November, 2025, which aims to meet carbon budgets in 8 main sectors of emissions that gradually reduce to net zero by 2045. East Lothian Council responded to consultation on this draft Plan, explaining that there needs to be clarity about local authorities' role in meeting the carbon budgets, and links between specific funded policies and their emissions reductions. The Council's response to the draft Plan can be found in the February 2026 entry into the Members' Library Service.³
- 3.5 The Heat in Buildings Bill, intended to set new energy-efficiency and low-carbon heating standards for homes and commercial buildings, was delayed in March 2025 until after the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections.
- 3.6 The UK Climate Change Committee's 2026 report *Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland*⁴ was published on 25 February 2026. The report

¹ East Lothian Council – Public Sector Climate Change Reporting 2024/25

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/17561/members_library_service]

² East Lothian Council Response to Consultation on Statutory Guidance for Climate Change Duties

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/25895/5725_east_lothian_council_response_to_consultation_on_statutory_guidance_for_climate_change_duties]

³ Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-2040: East Lothian Council's Response

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/26492/1226_scotlands_climate_change_plan_2026-2040_east_lothian_councils_response]

⁴ Climate Change Committee, *Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland – 2025 report to Parliament*

[https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-reducing-emissions-in-scotland-2025/?utm_campaign=3512958_February%20Newsletter%202026&utm_medium=email&utm_sourc

finds that emissions and are now less than half of 1990 levels. However, while the proposed five-year carbon budgets to 2045 are feasible, the Committee warns that policy delivery must accelerate, with significant risks to meeting the second and third carbon budgets without clearer, faster action across transport, buildings, agriculture and land use. Reliance on negative emissions technologies also remains a risk.

ELC Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan

3.7 East Lothian Council’s emissions in 2024/25 were estimated at 14,999 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. This is a reported decrease of 11% compared to 2023/24.⁵ We have met the interim annual target for our ‘Transformational’ carbon budget, which indicates we are well-placed to work towards our most ambitious decarbonisation pathway in which we are more likely to reach net zero by 2045.

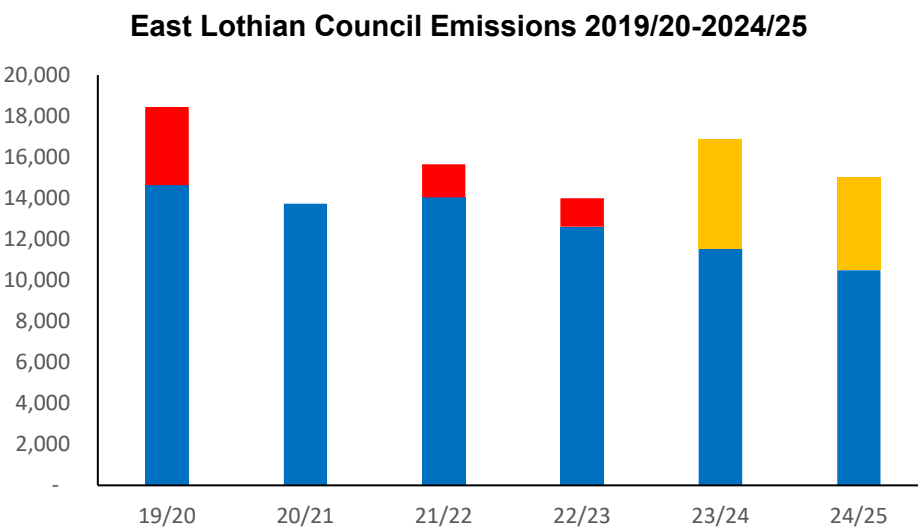


Figure 1: ELC annual greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). Y-axis = tCO₂e, x-axis = financial year (20xx/xx). Blue = ELC emissions not including staff commuting & homeworking; red = ELC staff commuting & homeworking emissions measured by Zero Waste Scotland tool; orange = staff commuting & homeworking emissions measured by CalCommuter.

3.8 Our largest source of emissions remains natural gas at 5,115 tonnes - almost exactly one third of the Council’s emissions. This is followed by staff commuting at 3,836 tonnes and electricity at 3,600 tonnes.

3.9 The greatest fall in emissions was from staff commuting. Officers continue to refine the methodology for calculating these emissions. Emissions from transport fell 20%, led by HGVs (-318 tonnes) which drove 53% fewer kilometres. This is variable and we cannot guarantee

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⁵ East Lothian Council – Public Sector Climate Change Reporting 2023/24

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/25389/15324_east_lothian_council_-_public_sector_climate_change_reporting]

these reductions in future years. Emissions from natural gas and electricity were also reduced by 3% and 7%, respectively.

3.10 Across all emissions categories, 7 increased. The Council processed 11% more food & garden waste for anaerobic digestion, but tonnage from landfill fell by 56%, so we can assume this is a net positive as residents recycle more food waste and send less to landfill. Emissions from hybrid and diesel fleet cars increased, as did business emissions from business travel in most vehicle types. Increases in emissions from these sources were outweighed by decreases elsewhere, but it should be noted that staff mileage in their own vehicles (grey fleet mileage) increased by 20%, which indicates it may be a challenging source of emissions in the future.

ELC Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Source

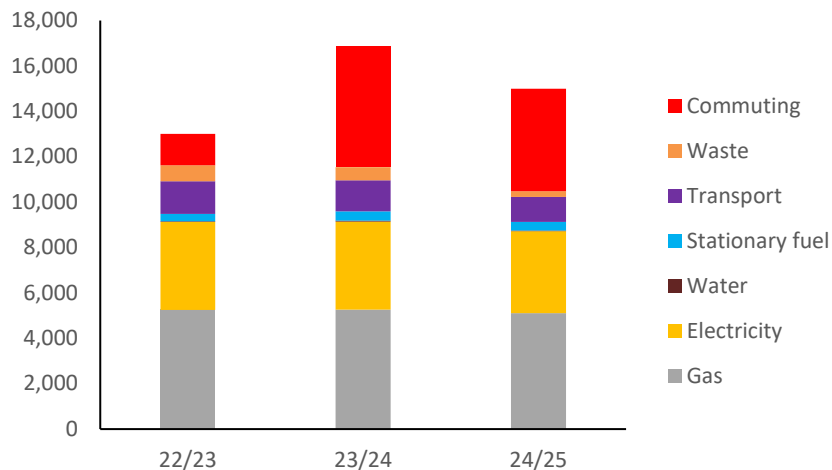


Figure 2: East Lothian Council (ELC) annual greenhouse gas emissions, expressed in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) divided by emissions source. Y-axis = tCO₂e, x-axis = financial year (20xx). Grey = gas; gold = electricity, including upstream losses; brown = water; blue = other stationary fuels; purple = business travel; green = waste; red = staff commuting & homeworking

3.11 Emissions from all other sources went down year-on-year from 2023/24. The emissions factor for electricity fell by 15% to 177gCO₂e/kWh, which is lower than natural gas. The emissions factor for both dry recyclates and combusted waste fell 27%. Compounded with the drop in landfill tonnage and an increase in recycling tonnage, emissions from waste fell by 314 tonnes or 55%.

3.12 This is the first year of reporting on the Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30, so the action updates are effectively a baseline. Despite this, 42% of actions were identified as already making good progress and given a green rating. A further 50% actions were given an amber rating because they are still progressing, but not yet fully underway. Six actions have made no progress and designated with a red rating. And 20 actions have been requested to be changed by the actions' owners.

- 3.13 Across the four Themes of the Climate Change Strategy, Services had the highest proportion of green-rated actions, followed by Assets, Place, then Governance. Performance in the Services Theme is led by the Waste Focus Area, which had 100% of actions rated green. The Focus Areas which have the most amber rated actions are Adaptation, Planning, Carbon Literacy, and Buildings.

Key Projects & Achievements of the East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30

- 3.14 Our museums have thoroughly and meaningfully taken steps to eliminate single-use plastics. No plastic bags are sold in shops, glasses and china are used in place of disposable cups, and museums encourage green crafts which avoid purchasing plastic packs.
- 3.15 We have the third highest recycling rate in Scotland: 55.3% of waste was recycled last year, which is 2% higher than the previous year. This indicates success of our approach to waste collection, which aligns with the Scottish Waste Charter.
- 3.16 We are approaching completion of Climate Ready South East Scotland Phase 2. This phase built on the risk and opportunity assessment produced at the end of Phase 1 and identifies key actions which can add value by working with neighbouring local authorities and partners. Our priority actions will be: community resilience, climate resilient economic development, nature networks, and cascading risks to infrastructure.
- 3.17 We have over 400 vehicle chargers in East Lothian, including journey chargers in all our large towns, to support the shift to electric vehicles. We also have a network of Journey Hubs and are constantly improving our active travel network to support the modal shift away from private car journeys.

Key Risks Delivering the Climate Change Strategy Actions

- 3.18 East Lothian's population is rapidly growing, and new infrastructure, developments, and services will be required to meet demand. It makes the Council's journey towards net zero challenging, as decarbonisation needs to match and exceed the pace of growth. However, this also presents opportunities to redesign and improve the sustainability of existing services.
- 3.19 Delivery of climate change mitigation and adaptation is dependent on funding, which can be intermittent. Low-emissions travel schemes, nature restoration, and energy efficiency upgrades are among the projects which are dependent on external funding. This makes it challenging to plan our activities and set reliable targets. Decarbonising buildings and transport are vital for the Council to achieve its net zero target and contribute to Scotland's wider net zero targets, but current financial constraints place these targets at risk. Despite this, the cost of

inaction will be far greater because every fraction of a degree of global warming that is avoided will save lives and cost.

Conclusion

- 3.20 East Lothian Council met the interim annual target for our most ambitious carbon budget, which indicates we are making good progress reducing our emissions and are on track to reach net zero by 2045 if we continue this trajectory. We also met expectations for the first report year of our 5-year Climate Change Action Plan and expect to see continued improvements.
- 3.21 However, several risks and challenges remain. The Adaptation Focus Area of our Climate Change Action Plan, which represents half of the challenge posed by climate change, has several amber-rated actions. This reflects in our Adaptation Capability Framework score, which is adjusted down. Additionally, progress on key challenging sources of emissions, such as natural gas, is not keeping pace with wider emissions reductions. Remaining within our transformational carbon budget is feasible but will require continuing levels of demand reduction and decarbonisation.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are a number of policy implications arising from this report that will be considered and incorporated in future local and regional policy development work in due course.

5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Finance: The Council has so far addressed climate change adaptation and mitigation within service budgets. However, it will be a financial challenge to achieve net zero by 2045 and meet interim targets relating to our fleet and estate. The Council will continue to work closely with national and regional partners to influence and align to national ambitions to ensure that the necessary measures, powers, and resources are in place to deliver a just transition to net zero and a climate-ready place.
- 5.2 Human Resources:
- 5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT):
- 5.4 Risk:

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 *Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.*

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on: equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

or

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	
Storage/collection of personal data	
Other	

The Integrated Impact Assessment relating to this report has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality_and_diversity/12014/integrated_impact_assessments

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix 1: Summary of changes to ELC Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30
- 7.2 Appendix 2: Gantt Chart summary of ELC Climate Change Action Plan Update 2024/25

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 East Lothian Council Climate Change Strategy 2025-30 - https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/34732/climate_change_strategy_2025-2030
- 8.2 East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30 - https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/34733/climate_change_strategy_2025-2030_action_plan
- 8.3 Members' Library Service report 153/24 East Lothian Council – Public Sector Climate Change Reporting 2024/25 - https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/26421/13725_east_lothian_council_public_bodies_climate_change_duties_report_2024_25

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

Report Author(s)

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Head of Service Approval

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Designation	Head of Development
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Done
Approval Date	15 April 2026

Appendix 1: Summary of changes to ELC Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30

<p>Change the Owner of action G1.4 from Infrastructure to Corporate Support.</p>	<p>Change the performance indicator for Action G1.11 to ‘% of services represented.’</p>	<p>Change Action G2.7 from ‘Update Roads Extreme Weather Plan to account for climate change’ to ‘Update Winter Maintenance Plan to account for climate change.’</p>
<p>Add an Action in the Procurement Focus Area. The proposed action will be coded G4.7, with the existing Action G4.7 changed to G4.8 and so on. The proposed action is ‘Move from 4-year to 6-year refresh cycle for secondary school Chromebooks in line with the 1:1 initiative.’ The proposed Performance Indicator is ‘Y/N’ and proposed owner is ICT. This is a Scope 3 emission.</p>	<p>Change Action G4.1 to ‘Consider adaptation to deluges, coastal erosion, and extreme heat at an early stage as part of commodity strategy development of a construction project’ and change the owner to Procurement.</p>	<p>Change Action G4.2 to ‘Consider reducing emissions through the whole life-cycle of a construction project at an early stage as part of commodity strategy development’ and change the owner to Procurement.</p>
<p>Change Action G4.8 to ‘Consider reducing waste from construction projects by following the waste hierarchy at an early stage as part of commodity strategy development’ and change the owner to Procurement.</p>	<p>Change the performance indicator for Action G5.10 from ‘£ of intervention’ to ‘# of interventions.’</p>	<p>Change Action G5.11 to ‘Where appropriate, support for business will consider business progress/ambition toward being climate resilient and reducing emissions’ with a performance indicator of ‘# of support programmes that include evaluation of climate-positive endeavours in decision making.’</p>
<p>Change the performance indicator for Action A1.17 to ‘tonnes CO2e direct emissions from our buildings.’</p>	<p>Stop tracking Action A2.1 because it is not a project the Council is able to progress at this stage.</p>	<p>Change the performance indicator for Action A2.8 to ‘tonnes CO2e from fleet vehicles per annum.’</p>
<p>Change Action A2.15 to ‘Provide 100 tonnes of road planings (reclaimed asphalt) to the public to be reused for hard standings, haul roads, building sub bases, and farm tracks’ with a</p>	<p>Change Action P1.1 to ‘Support community groups to improve their preparation for climate change.’</p>	<p>Change Action P1.4 to ‘Applications criteria to the Community Intervention Fund include evidence of climate positive endeavours from applicants in their applications’ with a</p>

Performance Indicator of 'Tonnes of plantings per annum.'		performance indicator of 'Y/N.'
Change Action P1.5 to 'Applications criteria to One Council Partnership Fund include evidence of climate positive endeavours from applicants in their applications' with a performance indicator of 'Y/N.'	Change Action P2.4 to 'Continue to implement biodiversity enhancements and nature networks in parks, green spaces, and open space' with a performance indicator of 'Y/N.'	Change Action P4.1 to 'Support projects that further climate adaptation' with a performance indicator of '# of projects that include an element of climate adaptation.'
Correct the document referenced in Actions P4.3 and P4.4 to the 'East Lothian Local Economy Strategy Delivery Plan.'	Change Action P5.6 to 'Maximise insulation measures & renewables for Council housing' with a performance indicator of 'Number of insulation measures and renewables installed per annum.'	Remove Action P5.9 because it is effectively a duplicate of Action P3.22, and instead update Action 3.22 to 'Set lower minimum parking standards for areas that are well-connected by public transport.'

Appendix 2: Gantt Chart summary of ELC Climate Change Action Plan Update 2024/25

Key:

	No return possible
	No progress
	Limited progress
	Good progress

Actions are listed under 'Reference.' For full action descriptions and Performance Indicators, see the full ELC Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34733/climate_change_strategy_2025-2030_action_plan.pdf

East Lothian Council Climate Change Action Plan 2025- 2030	2024/25		2024/25
Reference		Reference	
Theme: Governance			
G1.1		G2.10	
G1.2		G2.11	
G1.3		G2.12	
G1.4		G2.13	
G1.5		G2.14	
G1.6		G3.1	
G1.7		G3.2	
G1.8		G3.3	
G1.9		G3.4	
G1.10		G3.5	
G1.11		G4.1	
G1.12		G4.2	
G2.1		G4.3	
G2.2		G4.4	

G2.3		G4.5	
G2.4		G4.6	
G2.5		G4.7	
G2.6		G4.8	
G2.7		G4.9	
G2.8		G5.1	
G2.9		G5.2	
G5.3		G5.8	
G5.4		G5.9	
G5.5		G5.10	
G5.6		G5.11	
G5.7			
Theme: Assets			
A1.1		A1.21	
A1.2		A1.22	
A1.3		A1.23	
A1.4		A2.1	
A1.5		A2.2	
A1.6		A2.3	
A1.7		A2.4	
A1.8		A2.5	
A1.9		A2.6	
A1.10		A2.7	
A1.11		A2.8	
A1.12		A2.9	
A1.13		A2.10	
A1.14		A2.11	

A1.15		A2.12	
A1.16		A2.13	
A1.17		A2.14	
A1.18		A2.15	
A1.19		A2.16	
A1.20		A2.17	
Theme: Services			
S1.1		S2.4	
S1.2		S2.5	
S1.3		S3.1	
S1.4		S3.2	
S1.5		S3.3	
S1.6		S3.4	
S1.7		S3.5	
S1.8		S3.6	
S1.9		S3.7	
S1.10		S3.8	
S1.11		S3.9	
S1.12		S3.10	
S1.13		S3.11	
S1.14		S3.12	
S1.15		S3.13	
S1.16		S4.1	
S1.17		S4.2	
S1.18		S4.3	
S1.19		S4.4	
S1.20		S4.5	

S1.21		S4.6	
S1.22		S4.7	
S1.23		S4.8	
S2.1		S4.9	
S2.2		S4.10	
S2.3		S4.11	
S4.12		S4.17	
S4.13		S4.18	
S4.14		S4.19	
S4.15		S5.1	
S4.16		S5.2	
Theme: Place			
P1.1		P2.14	
P1.2		P2.15	
P1.3		P2.16	
P1.4		P3.1	
P1.5		P3.2	
P1.6		P3.3	
P1.7		P3.4	
P1.8		P3.5	
P2.1		P3.6	
P2.2		P3.7	
P2.3		P3.8	
P2.4		P3.9	
P2.5		P3.10	
P2.6		P3.11	
P2.7		P3.12	

P2.8		P3.13	
P2.9		P3.14	
P2.10		P3.15	
P2.11		P3.16	
P2.12		P3.17	
P2.13		P3.18	
P3.19		P4.10	
P3.20		P4.11	
P3.21		P4.12	
P3.22		P4.13	
P3.23		P4.14	
P3.24		P5.1	
P3.25		P5.2	
P3.26		P5.3	
P3.27		P5.4	
P3.28		P5.5	
P3.29		P5.6	
P4.1		P5.7	
P4.2		P5.8	
P4.3		P5.9	
P4.4		P5.10	
P4.5		P5.11	
P4.6		P5.12	
P4.7		P5.13	
P4.8		P5.14	
P4.9			