

REPORT TO CABINET

March 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke

Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report

Summary

Climate change poses a real threat to society and biodiversity. We are already seeing the increasing impacts of flooding, high winds, heat waves, significant wildfires and species collapse. If we wish to limit climate change by reducing carbon emissions, we need to act, building on the work already achieved.

Local authorities are increasingly expected to play a central role in responding to climate change but are often constrained by severe resource limitations. Given current financial pressures, we are simply not able to take on the full breadth of climate-related responsibilities that national policy sometimes assumes.

However, the reality is that significant and potentially dangerous changes in weather patterns are already locked in due to existing global emissions. These impacts—more frequent extreme heat, flooding, coastal surges, and storm events—will continue to intensify over the coming years.

As a local authority, we have a statutory and moral duty to protect our residents, safeguard essential services, and maintain the conditions for local economic activity. This means that, irrespective of our capacity to act on mitigation measures, we will inevitably be required to strengthen the resilience of our local infrastructure.

Therefore, our focus in the coming years must shift toward:

- Prioritising climate adaptation and resilience, recognising that these measures will be essential to keep people safe and services functioning.

- Investing in the robustness of critical systems—transport, energy, water, digital connectivity—even where funding is limited, by embedding resilience into every decision, project, and procurement opportunity.
- Advocating for the necessary resources, so that local authorities are properly equipped to meet the challenges that are already unfolding.

Climate change is no longer a distant threat—it is a present and escalating risk. Our primary responsibility now is to ensure our communities can withstand the impacts that are already inevitable.

Stockton Council’s Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS), adopted in 2022 sets out the direction we need take and describes the actions that would contribute to the achievement of net zero. The Council has made significant progress within the resources available, achieving a steady decline in carbon emissions over a long period. However, substantial additional investment will be required in the coming years if we are to remain on target for Net Zero by 2032.

Continued concentration on measures to improve our energy efficiency and reduce emissions from our assets and fleet, are an urgent priority, alongside investing in solar energy generation and counterbalancing natural solutions.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

This report is to update Cabinet upon the actions following the adoption of the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32.

Cabinet is also invited to study the data which indicates the reduction of greenhouse gasses over a sustained period and the highlighted position of carbon emissions for the authority relative to targets.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet note the annual monitoring report.

Detail

1. In 2022 the Council implemented the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32. The aim of the strategy is for the Council to become Net Zero by 2032, and Borough wide by 2050.
2. The strategy seeks to make a difference in three ways.
 - a. By focusing on Council operations and infrastructure
 - b. Through the delivery of strategies, policies, and work programmes, and
 - c. By influencing others.
3. The strategy has set four overarching aims for environmental sustainability and carbon reduction.

<p>Aim 1: Achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Reduce energy demand wherever possible B) Accelerate the shift towards use of sustainable energy C) Take other action to reduce harmful emissions D) Capture and store carbon in woodlands and other natural habitats 	<p>Aim 2: Protect and enhance the natural environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Protect, extend and connect areas of natural habitat and help address the decline in native species. B) Help to improve air quality by reducing harmful emissions. C) Take action to improve water quality and reduce local demand for water
<p>Aim 3: Use all resources efficiently and minimise waste</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Ensure sustainable purchasing and procurement of goods and services. B) Maximise the use of existing resources, minimise waste and achieve high levels of re-use and recycling. C) Minimise litter and waste crime and encourage responsible disposal of waste. 	<p>Aim 4: Adapt to the impacts of climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Ensure essential services and operations are resilient to the likely future impacts of climate change. B) Increase the preparedness and resilience of local communities and businesses. C) Plan and adapt the built and natural environment to withstand the impacts of climate change.

Fig 1: strategy objectives.

Total emissions and change over time.

4. SBC reduced emissions by **1626.60T** from the previous year, with end recorded emissions of 5425.40T

5. SBC had a target to reduce emissions for 2024/25 by 881.5t from previous year of 7052T to 6170T to meet the Net Zero target by 2032, this means that during 2024/25 SBC succeeded in reducing the required emissions from the previous year.

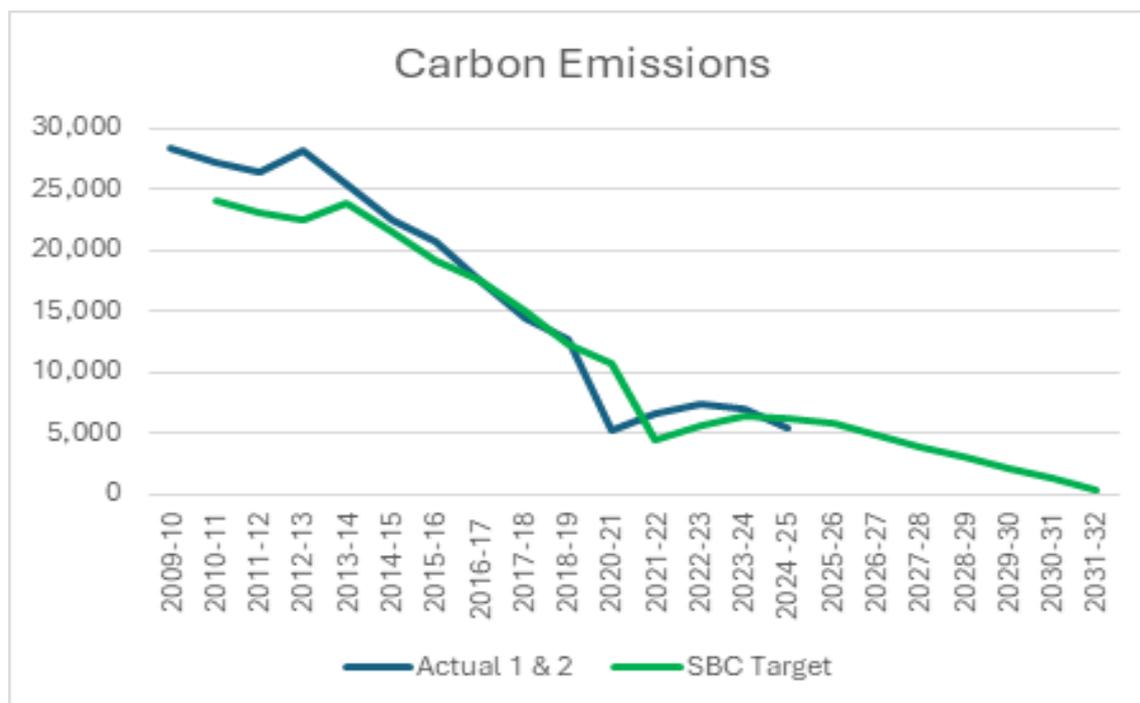


Fig 2: Carbon emissions since 2009/10

6. However, there has been little change in the way that SBC has used energy and fuel consumption. 2024/25 saw an increase in energy use which could be attributed to projects such as improvement in Preston Park and increase use of EV chargers at Cowpen Depot, there are a couple of other unusual increases that are being investigated by the Energy Team as possible anomalies that need further investigation.
7. Although there has been an increase in energy use, the emissions from purchased electricity are 0, as all electricity use was supplied by EDF on a 100% nuclear, green energy tariff.
8. Previous years supplies have been mixed fuel and there was no way to determine what percentage of use was from clean energy, leading to emissions from all purchased electricity and streetlighting calculated with the standard conversion factor of 0.207
9. Without the green energy tariff, the total emissions for 2024/25 would have been an increase on the previous year by approx. 1000T from 7052T to 8678T, which would have meant that the SBC emissions target would have been missed.
10. There is no guarantee that future energy tariffs on the NEPO framework will continue to be 100% green / clean energy and may return to mixed fuel in future years. However, procurement will always ask for a green / clean energy tariff during a tender process.

11. Gas use is still the biggest contributing factor to carbon emissions for SBC with just over half the total emissions, and fuel use a very close second with 49%.

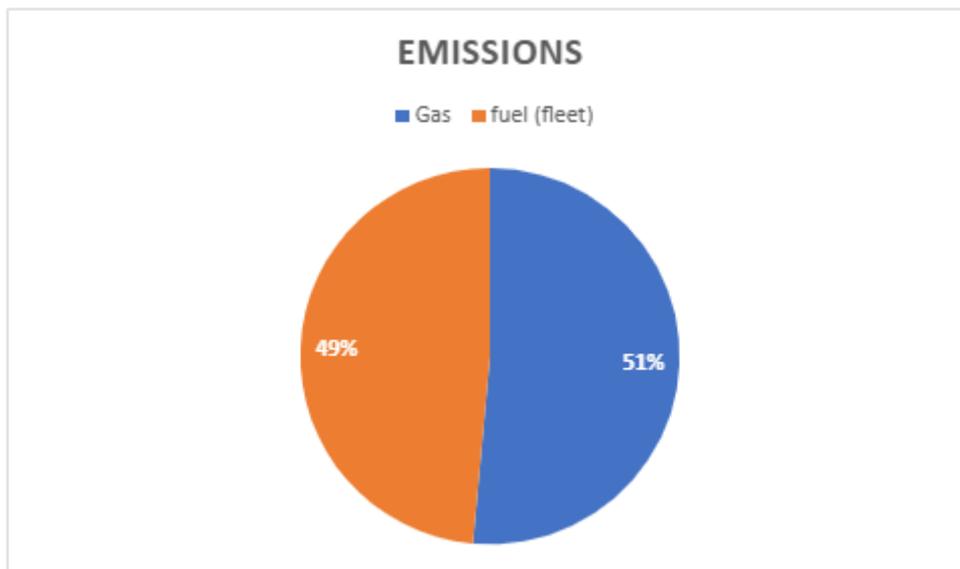


Fig 3: Breakdown of carbon emission sources

12. Scope 3 emissions are defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol as all indirect emissions that are not included in Scope 1 (direct emissions from owned or controlled sources) and Scope 2 (indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy).
13. Scope 3 emissions as provided by Oxygen Insights procurement tool, identifies that Scope 3 emissions at 48.09 K t. this is the highest over the last 5 years, however this data is purely based on spend and a calculation is given to a particular service spend i.e residential care or construction etc.
14. The Scope 3 data can give an indication on focus areas, however, does not account for the potential efficiencies and emission saving technology being used in those areas. For example, a care home might be operationally net zero using renewables, but the actual SBC spend on residential care may be calculated as a Scope 3 emission.
15. Due to the discrepancies in the Scope 3 data, it is not currently considered in the overall targets for SBC Net Zero. However, this is something that continues to be considered with new technologies and reporting tools being developed and it is expected to be a reporting requirement in the future.

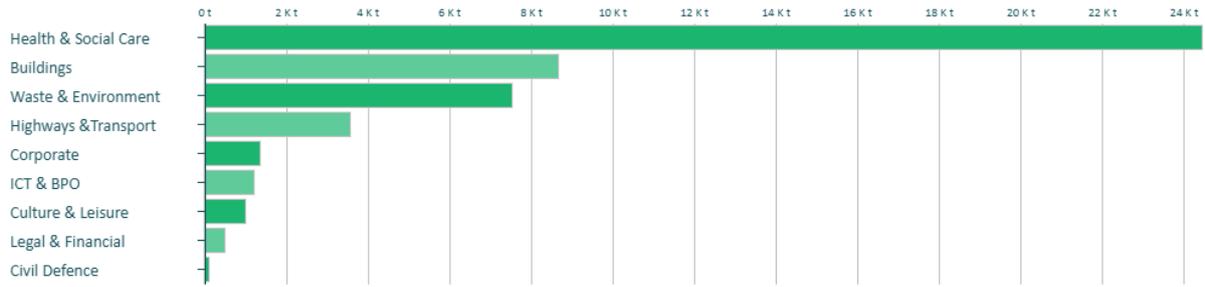
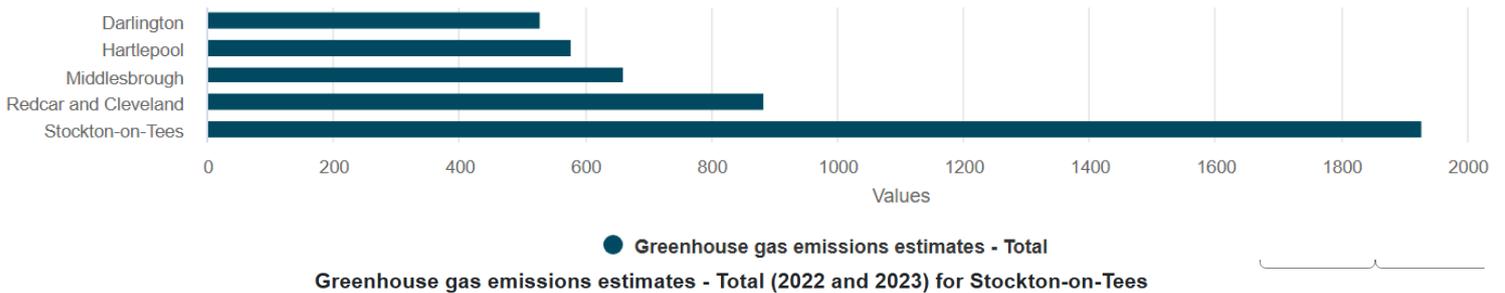


Fig 4: Scope 3 carbon emissions by service area

16. Borough Wide greenhouse gas emissions show that there has been a positive reduction on the previous year's data. However, the last data available from national Government is two years old. The figure covers borough-wide emissions for all major sectors (Industry, domestic, transport, agriculture etc) In comparison to neighbouring local authorities, Stockton-on-Tees has the highest emissions, and this is attributed to being a high industrial area.

Total greenhouse gas emissions 2023 for Stockton-on-Tees and Combined authorities



Greenhouse gas emissions estimates - Total (2022 and 2023) for Stockton-on-Tees

Total greenhouse gas emissions				
Kilotonnes				
Period	Stockton-on-Tees	Minimum for Tees Valley combined authority	Mean for Tees Valley combined authority	Maximum for Tees Valley combined authority
2022	1,973.2	550.6	980.5	1,973.2
2023	1,927.4	528.6	915.6	1,927.4

Fig 5: Total greenhouse gas emissions 2023 for Stockton-on-Tees and Combined authorities.

Renewable energy:

17. Throughout 2024/25 SBC have successfully secured grant funding for renewable energy projects including the following:

- GB Energy Programme covering the cost of installing solar PV on Fairfield primary and Thornaby Academy, via a scheme called Solar for Schools. Solar of Schools has calculated significant savings on solar installations over the lifetime of the panels.

- SBC have secured the Mayoral Renewables Fund Grant for £260k which will cover costs of solar installations on Allensway and Lanark Close Care Homes, providing a saving to SBC of approximately £18K per year.
- We secured £500k of funding from Sport England to install solar PV on Billingham Forum and IB leisure, which was unanimously approved by councillors and had no objections from residents.

Engagement and partnerships

18. In 2024-25 SBC has increased community engagement and partnerships.
19. Tees Urban Nature Network –SBC was a key partner with neighbouring local authorities and the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust to secure a successful bid from Heritage Lottery Funding, National Trust and Natural England. The project will support local people to shape how the Tees Valley region’s natural environment is planned, protected and celebrated by local communities.
20. Big Community Switch – SBC has supported residents to join the Big Community Switch, a collective energy switching initiative to help residents save money on their energy bills. There were two auctions during 2025. In the June auction there were 291 registrations with a £208.00 saving per resident. In September 2025 there were a further 2393 registrations, providing a £233.00 saving per resident.
21. Warm Homes Healthy People – in 2025, 80 residents were supported with boiler repairs and servicing to ensure energy efficiency for the residents and assist towards tackling fuel poverty.
22. SBC colleagues have set up a Green Champions group, which is made up of a group of employees, from a range of service areas, who develop ideas about how to influence behavioural change, and reduce emissions within our day-to-day work. In 2025 the Green Champions group was officially recognised as an Employee Network. Behavioural change is being witnessed across the council employees, and 2025 saw the implementation of a 10p reduction in cost of a hot drink at the Dunedin Café for employees who use a reuseable cup.
23. Climate Coalitions are now established and in their second year, with 214 active members. The Coalitions have developed their own action plans which compliments the Environmental and Sustainability Carbon Reduction Strategy and assisting in part with the Council’s efforts to influence residents in reducing their carbon emissions.
24. In 2024/25 SBC hosted the second Environment Fair in Stockton High Street. This coincided with ‘Great Big Green Week’ which provided the public with the opportunity to engage with organisations such as, litter picking groups, Fairtrade, and Cleveland Beekeepers to name a few. The event was very well received from

the public and a great opportunity to help influence the Borough in reducing carbon emissions.

25. In 2025 the Council hosted the third Festival of Thrift as part of a three-year agreement at John Whitehead Park, Billingham. The festival is a celebration of sustainable living and attracts around 50,000 visitors to the region. The festival is a nationally recognised event championing sustainable living and has a very clear vision to create positive, sustainable change in people and places and the programme aims to do just that by celebrating ways to live more sustainably and look after the planet we call home. More than 80 performance art installations and over 90 independent traders and makers contributed to the festival Thrift.



26. Joint partnerships have been established between Stockton Borough Council and Teesside University. Two research PHD projects have commenced led by Mary Blackwell and Rach Butler, these are:

- *Valuing and Managing Local Authority Land for Multiple Benefits: An Ecosystem Services and Stakeholder Led Approach in Stockton-on-Tees*
- *What are the multiple risk and opportunities for local authorities' land now and under the future climate change projections? The Case of Stockton on Tees Borough Council.*

Adaptation Planning.

27. The ESCR has four main aims, with Adapting to climate change being Aim 4 of the strategy. To date most of the work in the council has worked towards the mitigation and the reduction of our own carbon emissions to enable the council to become net zero by 2032 and influence the Borough to become Net Zero by 2050.
28. Under the Climate Change Act, 2008 the Act requires a climate change risk assessment (CCRA) to be carried out every five years with a National Adaption Programme (NAP) which responds to the risk highlighted within the CCRA. At present Local Authorities were asked to voluntarily submit their report to the

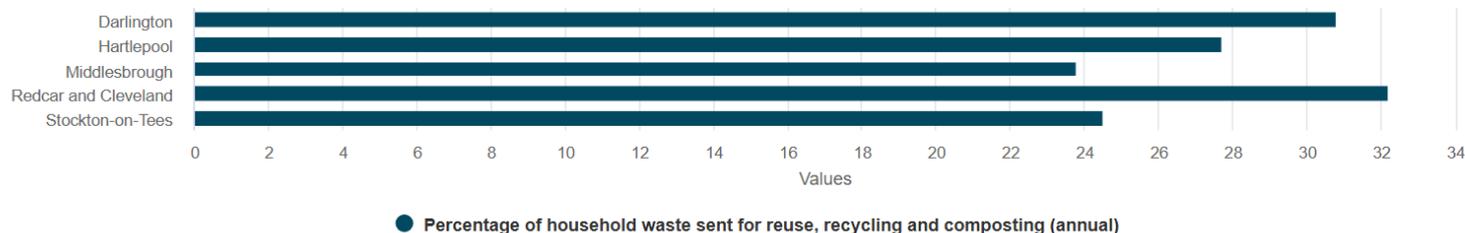
National Reporting Power (NRP) however following a successful pilot programme in 2024 it is proposed that all local authorities will have to provide a climate adaptation report as mandatory by 2029.

29. As a local authority, we owe a duty to our residents to ensure that we can continue to deliver services they rely on, despite a changing climate.

30. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a central government policy document that serves as a key material consideration in local planning. The framework contains guidance on climate adaptation, and recent amendments have included consideration of climate change adaptation in decision-making as well as plan-making, and a broader coverage of hazards to consider drought and overheating. Chapter 14 of the NPPF specifically focuses on “*Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change*” and states that local plans are expected to: “*take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures...*”

Waste and recycling

% household waste recycled 2023/24 for Stockton-on-Tees and Combined authorities



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Fig 6: Percentage of household waste recycled 2023/24 for Stockton-on-Tees and Combined Authorities.

31. As highlighted in the previous CMT report (March 2025) The following will be implemented in 2026.

- The Council will collect food waste and recycling every week and collect the other residual waste (non-recyclable waste that normally goes in residents' green wheeled bin) on a fortnightly basis.
- Each household will receive an additional weighted bag for the collection of dry recycling and a new 5 litre indoor and 23 litre outdoor caddy (including caddy bags) for food waste, giving every household the opportunity to increase the amount of waste that can be collected and recycled on a weekly basis.
- Work completed by WRAP on behalf of Stockton Council anticipated that a move to the fortnightly refuse collections with the introduction of a mandatory weekly food waste collection would see an increase in kerbside recycling on 12% taking

our total recycling rate to around 36%, above the average for the Tees Valley and across the North East.

Resource needs and grants

36. There are several time limited Government grants linked to carbon reduction, biodiversity uplift and climate change. There are numerous schemes to support tree planting for example. However, the required changes such as fleet decarbonisation, improvements to building efficiency, climate change adaptation and modal shifts in transport, have limited funding and are often confined to pilot projects and modest one-off grants with short lead-in times.

Further resources will be required to develop Building Decarbonisation Plans. Officers will develop costed proposals for technical work in the pursuit of Public Sector Decarbonisation funding.

Data collection

37. As highlighted previously to CMT Improvement in data collection is still an ongoing required to ensure consistency in data, to enable better analysis, comparisons with other authorities, and to identify areas where further work is required. Officers are working on systems improvements, alongside other service areas, to develop a more robust and streamline approach to data collection and analysis.
38. We expect that Environment Act legislation will require Local Authorities to deliver and evidence progress against several targets. Although these targets and duties have not yet been set, we should plan for the formalisation and integration of monitoring into wider Council performance monitoring and data analysis processes. We understand that there will be an increased requirement around data collection on waste disposal in line with the requirement for 'waste tracking,' which will essentially digitise waste disposal data. We believe that future Extended Producer Responsibility payments will be based around diverting waste from landfill and energy from waste plants.
39. It is expected that all Local Authorities will be mandatory required to report the climate adaptation and resilience planning in line with the UK Adaption reporting in 2029, following a successful pilot programme of 18 local authorities in the 2024 reporting period. Local Authorities will be required to provide an adaption plan every 5 years.
40. Saving energy can have a positive impact upon reducing emissions and finances, using less will cost less! By improving energy efficiency, the same tasks can be accomplished with less input, resulting in lower emissions and lower energy bills.
41. Due to number of decarbonisation grants that have been secured for the installation of solar PV there has been no requirement to use the prudential borrowing to fund capital investments which Council had agreed on the 19th of February 2025, in the Medium-Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy.

42. Officers continue to seek out external funding opportunities to support decarbonisation.

Consultation and engagement

Included within the report detail

Next Steps

Included within the report detail

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