

Leicester's Sustainability Action Report

April 2017 – March 2018



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Cyclists in a Leicester park

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Flowers and flood prevention scheme at Ellis Meadows nature reserve

Foreword

Welcome to Leicester City Council's Sustainability Action Report for April 2017 to March 2018. This report discusses our environmental performance over the year, sets out some of the actions we're taking, and highlights our achievements.

One of the highlights of the year was the news that carbon emissions for the city council fell by 10.8% over the year. Emissions for Leicester as a whole also fell by 6% for 2016, the most recent year for which figures are available. This puts us on track to not only meet, but exceed our target of halving these emissions by 2025.

I'm also proud to say that Leicester's schools continue to lead the way on environmental education, with 35 receiving an Eco-Schools Green Flag award for their work, and many more working towards this achievement. Over 1,000 pupils from 15 local schools also took part in the Litter Less campaign, collecting an amazing 213 bags of rubbish in a single day. Energy efficiency improvements have also cut electricity bills in city schools, for example by 15% at Dovelands Primary, 16% at Spinney Hill Primary and by 32% at Mellor Primary. We've also had successes and achievements in a number of other areas over the year. These are outlined on the next page, and described in greater detail throughout the report.

Our progress isn't going to stop here of course, and we're already working towards new actions for the year ahead.



Councillor Adam Clarke

I'm particularly excited about the upcoming launch of Fosse Energy, our not-for-profit 'white-label' energy supplier. Fosse Energy will offer affordable, green energy to residents across the city, saving them money and cutting carbon emissions. I'm also looking forwards to developing our partnerships with other organisations such as Keep Britain Tidy as part of our Sustainable Leicester initiative.

I'd like to thank you for taking an interest in our sustainability work, and encourage you to take a further look at what the City Council is doing in this area. Links to more information about all of our actions are available at the end of this report.

Councillor Adam Clarke

Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for Environment, Public Health and Health Integration

Achievements

April 2017 – March 2018

City-wide carbon dioxide emissions (Ambition 1)

 <p>6%</p> <p>further reduction – on track to halve emissions by 2025</p>	<p>93 </p> <p>more small and medium companies helped to save energy</p>	<p> 141 more council houses saved energy through external insulation</p> <p> 422 more people benefited from our Health through Warmth programme</p>
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The city council's carbon footprint (Ambition 2)

 <p>10.8%</p> <p>further reduction – on track to halve emissions by 2025</p>	<p>£150,000</p> <p>more invested in energy efficient LED way-lighting</p>	<p>20 </p> <p>more vehicles removed from our fleet to cut costs and emissions</p>
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Air quality and healthier lifestyles (Ambitions 3 and 4)

 <p>206%</p> <p>more park and ride season tickets sold</p>	<p>7,547</p> <p>more walking trips recorded</p>	<p>15,000</p> <p>more invested in energy efficient LED way-lighting</p> 
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Engagement (Ambition 5)

 <p>298</p> <p>bags of reusable items collected in our student waste reduction campaign</p>	 <p>25</p> <p>more schools achieved a Green Flag Award</p>	<p>80 </p> <p>schools took part in the Food for Life programme</p>
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Open Space and Wildlife (Ambition 6)

<p>10 </p> <p>bee posts installed in parks</p>	 <p>53</p> <p>river clearance sessions – tackling litter and invasive plants</p>	 <p>9,237</p> <p>volunteers helped improve city parks</p>
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Introduction

Leicester City Council is responsible for providing a wide range of public services to the city's residents and organisations. This includes services such as refuse collection, libraries, environmental health and council housing. In order to deliver these services the council employs the equivalent of over 10,100 full time staff in approximately 200 offices, community facilities and depots, and 85 schools. It also runs a fleet of around 670 vehicles.

The council has the opportunity to make positive environmental impacts through many of the services it provides, for example in policies on transport, regeneration, waste and recycling, and managing the city's parks and open spaces. We also have an important role in enforcing environmental laws and regulations around planning, pollution and buildings. Providing all of these services also means that the council has an environmental footprint of its own. This includes our use of energy in buildings and for public lighting, travel by staff and service users and consumption of materials.

The council is committed to identifying and addressing the environmental challenges faced by Leicester, as well as managing our own environmental impacts through implementing our Environmental Policy. We have a rolling programme of projects and actions set out in Leicester's Sustainability Action Plan through which we are working towards achieving a more sustainable council and city. This report includes highlights of our progress towards many of the actions in this plan.

We have a council-wide approach to following environmental safeguards and good working practices in our day-to-day activities, and ensure that any impacts are carefully managed. We also use environmental criteria in our procurement to make sure that the goods we buy and the services we commission from outside organisations meet our environmental standards.



Leicester streets at dusk

Our Performance and Progress

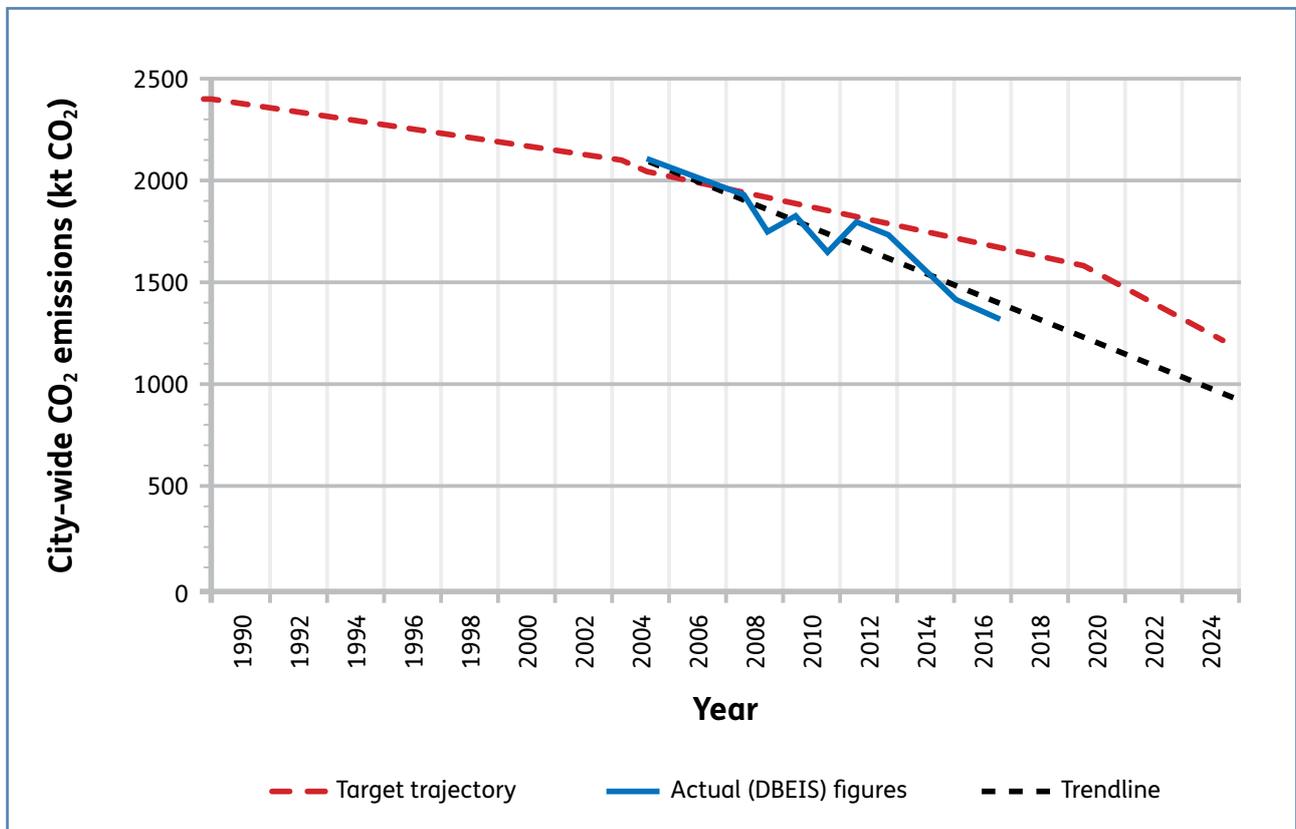
The following sections give a summary of progress towards our six sustainability ambitions, along with highlights of projects, and our performance on other key environmental issues. Except where stated otherwise, facts and figures refer to the period April 2017 to March 2018.

Climate Change

Ambition 1: Halve city wide carbon dioxide emissions by 2025

Leicester City Council's first sustainability ambition is for Leicester's total carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions to be halved from their 1990 levels by 2025, to a total of 1.19 million tonnes a year. Carbon dioxide is the main greenhouse gas, and is responsible for contributing to dangerous climate change. Figures published by the UK Government, from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) show that city-wide CO₂ emissions for 2016, the most recent year available, were 1.34 million tonnes. In the baseline year of 1990 emissions were 2.38 million tonnes, meaning that Leicester's emissions have reduced by 44% since 1990. It means that Leicester is on schedule to meet the target of halving emissions by 2025 if progress continues at the current rate. Figure 1 shows this progress.

Figure 1: Leicester's estimated carbon dioxide emissions by calendar year



The main cause of this reduction in 2016 was a fall emissions from industry, especially those relating to the use of electricity. This is largely a result of the continuing transition from more polluting energy sources such as coal to renewables including wind and solar power in the generation of electricity for the national grid. Emissions from housing also declined for similar reasons, although transport-related emissions increased over the year. The changes in emissions from Leicester are largely similar to those seen in other UK cities.

Although the reduction in city-wide emissions is largely due to these national trends, the council still plays an important role through its local influence and policies. Areas in which the council works, such as housing, planning, transport and economic regeneration can all play a significant part in reducing emissions within the city.

Some areas in which the city council has been working are outlined below:

- The European funded **Green BELLE** project worked with 93 businesses in the city, providing 54 grants to a value of over £295,000 for energy efficiency measures. These included LED lighting and energy efficient boilers and heating, as well as innovative measures such as solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and battery storage. Case studies of successful projects are available on the **Green BELLE website**.
- A rolling programme of energy efficiency improvements to council housing continued, with 1,342 homes receiving more efficient boilers, and 141 being fitted with external wall insulation.



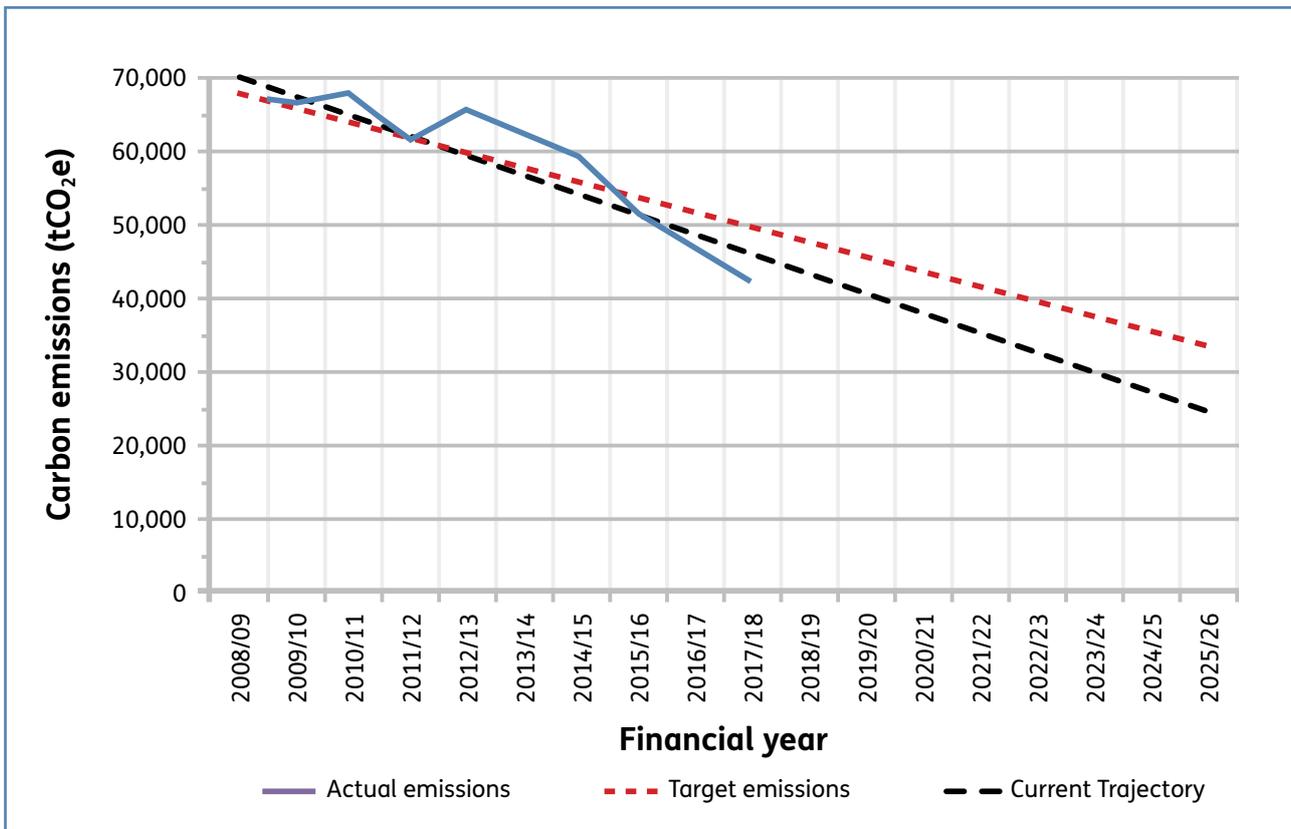
A house being fitted with external wall insulation

- During the year the council worked towards the upcoming launch of its own white-label energy company: Fosse Energy, which will begin to offer affordable green electricity for local residents during 2018/19.
- The council continued to apply planning policies requiring major development in the city to address climate change. Developments must be energy efficient and should take advantage of low-carbon sources of energy where feasible. They should also take account of how the climate is expected to change in the coming years – such as the increased risk of flooding in some areas. Schemes approved in 2017/18 included a University of Leicester project with solar photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps, and one at St George's Retail Park – also with PV panels.

Ambition 2: Halve the city council's carbon footprint by 2025

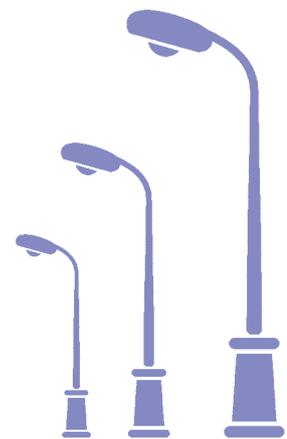
Leicester City Council provides a wide array of services for residents and communities across the city, as well as being one of the largest local employers. As such, the council has the opportunity to lead by example through reducing its own carbon emissions. The council has set an ambitious target to reduce our emissions by 50% by 2025, compared to 2008/09. Figure 2 shows that our emissions for 2017/18 are 37.2% lower than in 2008/09, putting us on track to exceed the 2025 target. Our carbon footprint stood at 42,557 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)¹ in 2017/18.

Figure 2: Leicester City Council's greenhouse gas emissions by financial year



There are a number of factors that have contributed to this reduction, some of which are national factors such as the reduction in carbon emissions from the generation of electricity from the National Grid. Leicester City Council has also undertaken a wide range of projects aimed at reducing our carbon emissions, including:

- Street lighting across the city has been upgraded and fitted with more efficient LED bulbs under the White Lights programme, with similar changes being made for traffic signalling, more than halving their energy consumption.



⁴ The council reports on its emissions of the 7 main 'greenhouse gases'. Figures for those other than carbon dioxide (CO₂) are converted into the equivalent quantity of CO₂ which would have the same impact on climate change i.e. their carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). This is so that a single figure can be reported.

- The council's vehicle fleet has been reduced by a further 20 vehicles this year. In addition, where vehicles come up for replacement, ultra-low emissions models are the preferred option where they are available and suitable.
- A further £150,000 has been invested into upgrading way-lighting in communal areas in the councils housing properties, replacing old lighting with LEDs to significantly reduce its energy consumption.
- The council has continued to consolidate its services and back-office operations into fewer buildings and to transfer some buildings which it no longer needs into community control. There was a reduction of 11 buildings in 2017/18. With fewer buildings to heat and light, this is helping us to reduce our energy use and carbon emissions.



Communal area lighting at a council housing property



Solar panels on a roof

Air quality and Health

Ambition 3: Meet EU target levels for air quality to create a healthier environment for city residents

Concern about air quality in the UK continues to grow, with a wide range of ill-health effects attributed to air pollution, especially in urban environments.

In terms of the risk of short-term exposure to peaks of pollution, Leicester remained well within the national and EU targets for exceedances of maximum hourly/daily average levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particles (PM₁₀) at its five roadside monitoring stations in 2017. As Table 1 shows, the limits were exceeded only six times during the year – well within the maximum allowed at all locations.

Table 1: Exceedances of limits for hourly or daily average levels of nitrogen dioxide and particles at Leicester's roadside monitoring stations in 2017

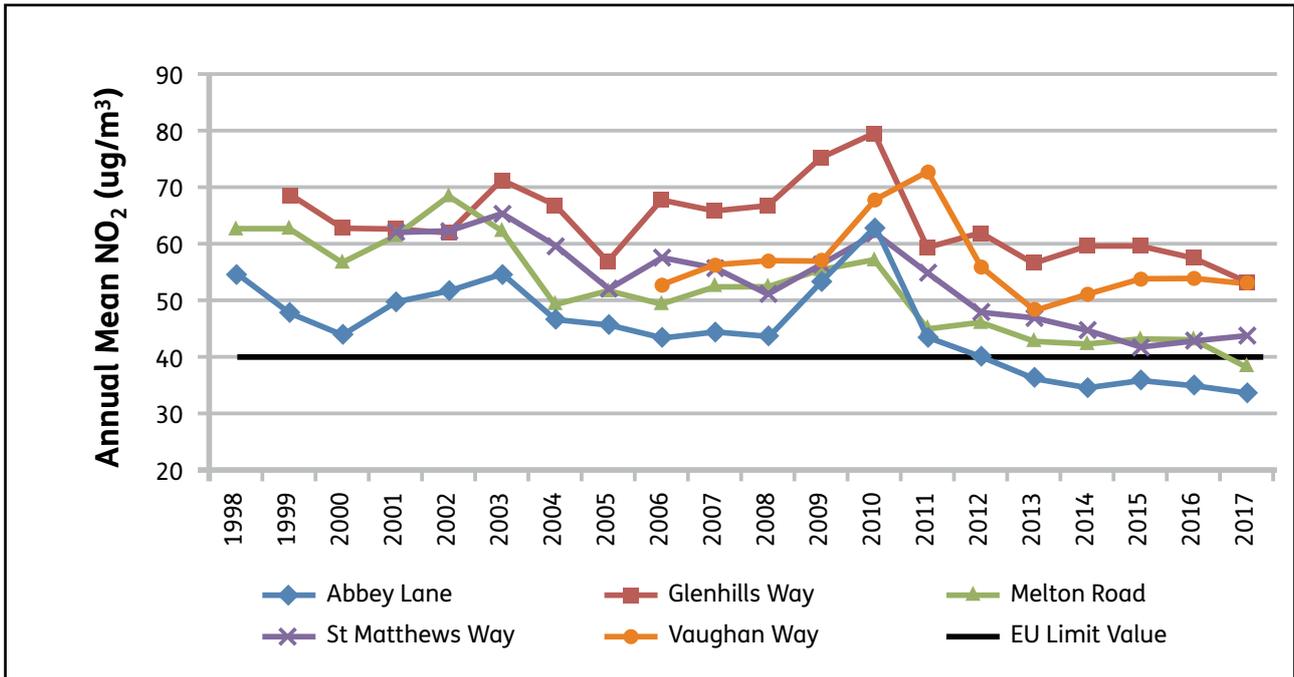
Location	NO ₂ hourly mean level (200µg/m ³ limit)		PM ₁₀ 24-hourly mean level (50µg/m ³ limit)	
	No. of times limit exceeded (18 allowed per year)	Max. hourly mean level reached	No. of times limit exceeded (35 allowed per year)	Max. 24-hourly mean level reached
Abbey Lane	0	143	0	39
Glenhills Way	1	209	2	58
Melton Road	0	151	2	57
St Matthews Way	0	113	Not monitored at this station	
Vaughan Way	0	105	1	53

Longer-term indicators of air pollution are measured through yearly averages, with a target of keeping nitrogen dioxide levels below 40 micrograms per cubic metre of air (µg/m³). Leicester has areas where this limit is exceeded, as do many other UK and European cities, although as Figure 3 below shows, these levels have dropped significantly since their peak in 2010 at Leicester's monitoring stations, falling within the EU target level in two areas for the first time this year. PM₁₀ annual levels over the same period have only exceeded the EU target of 40µg/m³ once (in 1999).



A bee visiting a flower

Figure 3: Annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations at Leicester's roadside monitoring stations



Although modelling carried out by the UK Government suggests that all stations will meet their target by 2020, the council is still implementing a number of projects to tackle air quality issues through its Air Quality Action Plan. The main source of these emissions is traffic, and many of the actions in the plan are aimed at improving this issue, including through reducing the council's vehicle fleet, encouraging cycling and walking and improving public transport options in the city.

Progress towards achieving these aims in 2017/18 includes:

- Season ticket prices for Leicester's Park & Ride scheme were revised, with the aim of encouraging more people to use the service instead of driving into the city. This led to a 206% rise in season ticket sales, as well as a 5% increase in journeys.



The Leicester 303 Park & Ride bus service

- In February 2018 the council signed a new agreement with major bus companies, which will lead to the setting up of a Clean Air Zone and upgrading of the city bus fleet to meet the Euro VI emissions standard by 2021.
- Travel Plans have been developed by 41 local organisations, with support from the council. These plans are sometimes required as part of gaining planning permission for new development. They encourage staff or residents of buildings to walk, cycle, car share or use public transport, reducing congestion and pollution, as well as promoting healthy lifestyles.
- A Healthier Air for Leicester Schools Award was launched, encouraging city schools to get pupils and families walking and cycling, and increase public transport usage.
- The Choose How You Move Car Share scheme added over 1,000 new members. The scheme enables its members to offer and accept lifts, saving money and reducing their transport emissions.

Ambition 4: Encourage healthier lifestyle choices and double everyday cycling numbers by 2018, and then again by 2024

Increasing activity levels among city residents is a crucial part of promoting healthier lifestyles, and the council is keen to help residents get outside, walking and cycling. This can also help to reduce car use, which will contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions from transport, as well as improving air quality. The council's ambition to double everyday cycling numbers by 2018 and again by 2024 is therefore set out in the Cycle City Action Plan. Figures from automatic counters suggest that cycling levels have continued to increase in 2017/18.

A range of actions were undertaken during the year with the aim of increasing walking and cycling levels in the city:

- We've helped to get more city residents walking, with a 2% increase in recorded walking trips in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17 and 306 people taking part in the Leicester Walking Programme.
- The 2017 Ride Leicester cycling festival was a success, with 15,000 participants taking part in cycling-related activities.
- Progress continued on the Connecting Leicester scheme, with new or improved cycle lanes and more space for pedestrians completed on 6 more streets: Millstone Lane, Hotel Street, Welford Place, New Market Square, Market Place North and Market Place East.
- The Legible Leicester project improved pedestrian and cycling signage across the city centre, encouraging walking and cycling trips by making it easier for people to navigate around Leicester.



Child cyclist taking part in an event at Leicester Cathedral



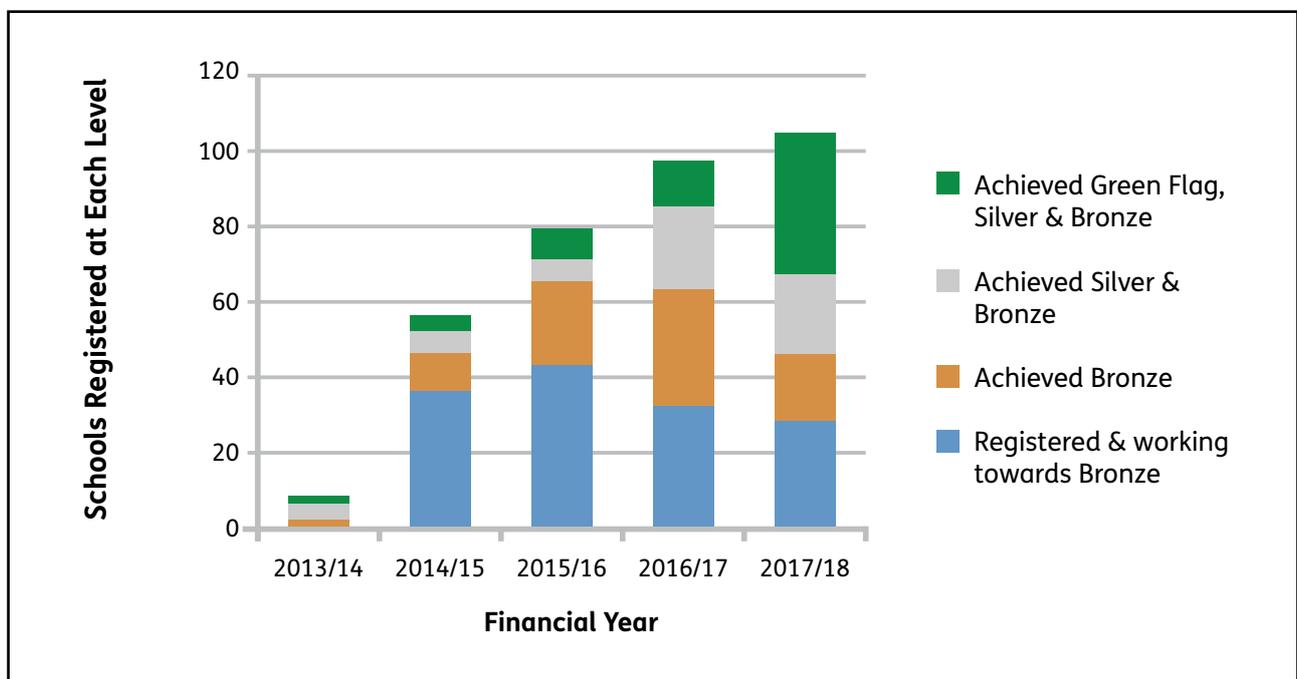
A cycle path

Environmental awareness

Ambition 5: Engage with more individuals, households, schools and employers each year in order to improve environmental awareness

Getting city residents and organisations involved in environmental projects, and increasing their understanding about the benefits of doing so, is vital to achieving change across the city. The council engages with the public through a variety of projects, getting people to volunteer in parks and providing vital services such as waste and recycling collections. Engagement with schools is also a key part of raising environmental awareness, and schools across the city have been assisted to take part in the Eco-Schools programme, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Number of Leicester schools at each level of Eco-Schools



Although the resources available for engagement work have become more limited in recent years, achievements in 2017/18 included:

- Progress in promoting volunteering opportunities to residents led to a total of 64,467 hours of volunteering being carried out by 9,237 volunteers. This included work to manage meadows and open spaces and enhance sites for both residents and wildlife.
- Examples of projects carried out by volunteers included planting orchard trees, removing scrub and restoring meadows in Aylestone Meadows, and restoring wetlands, managing hedges and planting at Braunstone Lakes



A volunteer cutting back brambles at a city park

- There are now over 100 local schools registered with the Eco-Schools programme, with 35 having achieved a Green Flag, the highest award level. Eco-Schools educates pupils about their environment, helping them to make positive changes within their school and spread the word to their families.



Pupils and teachers attending an Eco-Schools event at Leicester's City Hall

- Pupils from 15 primary and secondary schools took part in the worldwide Litter Less campaign, coming together to clean up their neighbourhoods. In all, 213 bags of litter were collected by the pupils from their schools and surrounding streets.
- An Eco-Schools roadshow was held at schools across the city, educating pupils and staff on a wide variety of sustainability topics. In total the six events held were attended by over 400 students and 50 staff from 27 primary and secondary schools.
- Schools across the city have also benefitted from energy efficiency improvements which, along with behaviour change activities, have significantly reduced their energy bills. For example Mellor Primary School saw a reduction in electricity bills of 32%, and reductions of 15% and 16% respectively were achieved at Dovelands and Spinney Hill Primaries.
- Information was provided to university students in around 2,000 properties in the city, promoting a partnership with the British Heart Foundation to donate good reusable items to charity instead of throwing them away.

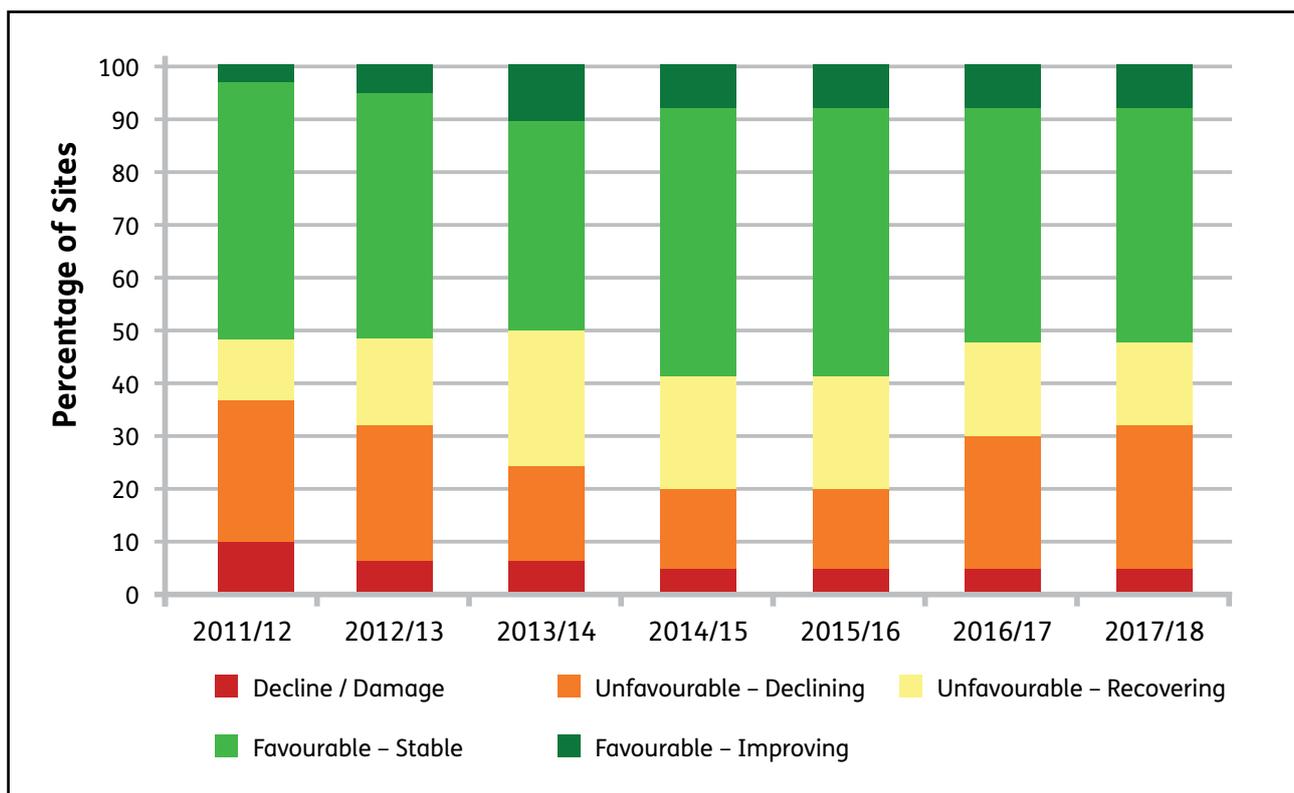
Open space and wildlife

Ambition 6: Protect and enhance open space and improve connectivity to wildlife areas

The Council manages and monitors 971ha of publically accessible open space and is responsible for over 150,000 trees throughout the city. There are many benefits to the city from protecting and enhancing aspects of the natural environment including trees and open spaces. They provide space for leisure activities and enhance wellbeing, improve the appearance of the city and act as a habitat for a wide range of plants, animals and insects. If well managed, the natural environment can also help to mitigate against climate change risks such as flooding and heatwaves, as well as absorbing and storing carbon emissions from the atmosphere and improving air quality.

Local Wildlife Sites are those areas of land meeting criteria for their value to wildlife. Their condition is monitored, with each site graded into one of five categories. The number of sites falling within each category in 2017/18 is shown below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Trends in the Ecological Condition of Local Wildlife Sites



The majority of Local Wildlife Sites, areas especially important for wildlife, are in the same condition as 2016/17. Over half of the sites are either in 'favourable - stable' or 'favourable - improving' condition. One site has changed this year, from 'unfavourable - recovering' to 'unfavourable - declining' due to an issue with the management of its grassland area. As well as the larger sites monitored above, there are currently 95 mature/veteran trees designated as Local Wildlife Sites, which are managed to prolong their life and nature conservation value. We are also expecting to reach the milestone of 100 designated trees in the 2017/18 financial year.

The council also continues to work alongside the Environment Agency to manage flood risk to the city, and inform residents of the risks. Residents have been engaged through drop-in events across the city and a stall at Leicester's Riverside Festival. The European funded POWER project has developed a digital social platform for 'Leicester's Water Community', providing members of the public with flooding information and a chance to contribute their thoughts and suggestions. A consultation on a new Integrated Flood Risk Management Strategy was also carried out, with detailed modelling of Leicester's waterways undertaken to inform the strategy.

Some of the areas in which we've made progress in protecting and enhancing these areas in 2017/18 include:

- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems were created at Oxleas Road, Sock Island, St Mary's Allotments and Ashton Green. These systems have the dual benefit of providing a vital habitat for wildlife and reducing flooding risk on these sites.
- Work started on the Loughborough Road culvert, a £5 million project to install a floodwater bypass culvert on the River Soar. When complete this work will reduce flooding risk for 600 homes and businesses in the area, as well as providing better public access to the riverside, and improving riverside habitats for wildlife.
- The council's Urban Buzz project, in collaboration with the charity BugLife, has worked to support pollinating insects in the city, as they are a vital part of our natural environment. This includes creating new meadows at Western Park, Bennion Pools, Castle Hill Country Park, Aylestone Meadows and Ocean Road Open Space, and installing 10 new 'bee posts' to provide a safe home for nesting bees.
- 53 river clearance sessions were carried out by volunteers, keeping the city's waterways clean and healthy by tackling litter and invasive plants.
- Veteran and mature trees continue to be identified at council sites, with 23 more ready to be submitted for designation as Local Wildlife Sites alongside the 95 currently designated.



The clock tower of Leicester's Town Hall

Flowers in a local meadow



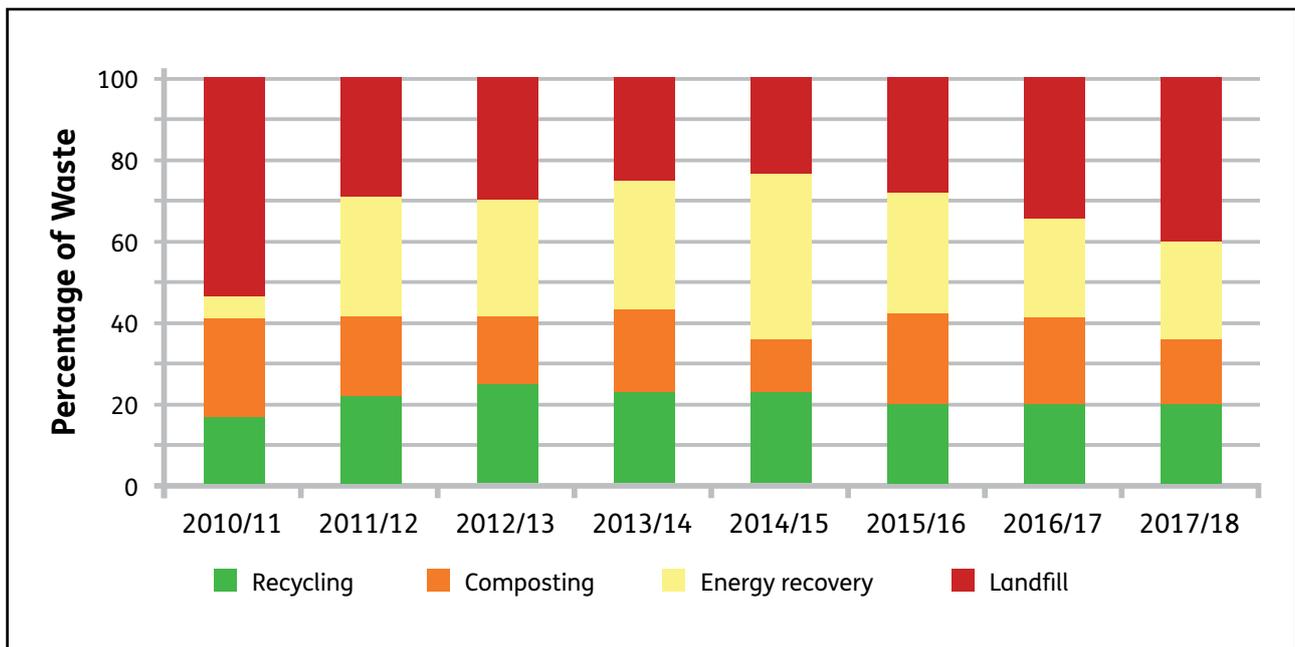
Waste and use of natural resources

Collecting, reducing and recycling waste, dealing with litter and ensuring that the items and services we procure are responsibly sourced are some of the other key areas covered in our Environmental Policy.

Leicester provides a weekly service offering collection and disposal of recycling and other refuse for residents, which aims to ensure that as much waste as possible is recycled, composted or diverted to energy from waste. There are also two recycling centres in the city, where residents and businesses can safely and correctly dispose of a wide range of waste. The Gypsum Road Recycling Centre is also home to the LOROS re-use shop, selling re-used and upcycled items, which also helps to support a local charitable cause.

Figure 4 shows that there was an increase in the amount of household waste sent to landfill in 2017/18, and a reduction in the amount sent for composting. The landfill diversion and composting figures have been negatively affected by issues at Biffa's Bursom ball mill and Wanlip anaerobic digestion plant in quarter four of 2017/18. Both facilities were out of action for an extended period of time due to mechanical problems. This meant that the amount of black bag waste that Biffa treated was lower than expected and less compost was produced as a result. The amount of waste recycled or sent to energy from waste remained similar to 2016/17 levels.

Figure 4: Disposal of Leicester's Household Waste



Areas where work has been undertaken in this area in 2017/18 include:

- A successful application for funding has allowed an expansion of the LOROS re-use shop, allowing them to increase the number of electrical items they are able to re-use and sell.

A council employee at the LOROS reuse shop

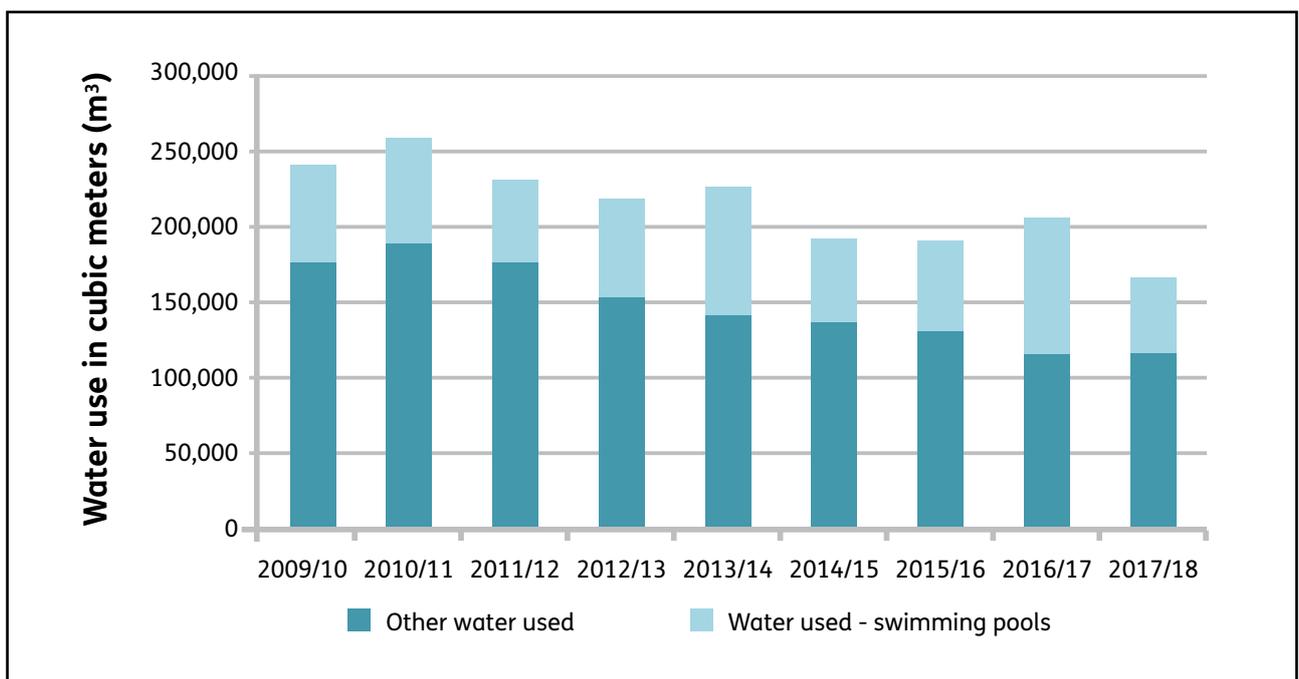
- Work is also being carried out to address the council’s own waste, with the ongoing rollout of a new office waste recycling service to further council office buildings in the city, which will be further supported by the use of a new waste collection vehicle in 2018/19.
- As detailed under Ambition 5, engagement work was undertaken this year to encourage responsible waste disposal by university students when leaving their accommodation at the end of the year.

Monitoring of the condition of Leicester’s streets also takes place, to ensure that street cleaning services are working to a high standard. A trial of a new street washing vehicle also took place, with plans to procure two of these vehicles in 2018/19 to further improve street cleanliness. Table 1 below shows that in 2017/18 performance continues to meet a satisfactory standard at a large majority of sites.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Litter (%)	87%	88%	88%	88%	90%	88%	86%
Detritus (%)	92%	90%	93%	94%	95%	95%	95%
Graffiti (%)	84%	85%	86%	89%	89%	90%	94%
Flyposting (%)	98%	99%	99%	99%	98%	98%	98%

Automated monitoring of our buildings allows us to assess our use of water, electricity and gas, and respond to any problems, helping us to minimise consumption. Use of electricity and gas is monitored as part of our carbon footprint, covered in Ambition 2. In terms of monitoring consumption of mains water, Figure 5 below shows that water use in swimming pools declined significantly. This is likely to be due to a leak from one of the swimming pools during 2016/17 being fixed. Although there was a small increase in other water use, it remains below levels prior to 2016/17. In the coming years the council hopes to continue reducing water use by fitting more water-efficient appliances as buildings undergo refurbishment.

Figure 5: Council water use



Further Information

Leicester's Sustainability Action Plan

leicester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies/environment-and-sustainability/sustainability-action-plan/

Leicester City Council's Environmental Policy

leicester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies/environment-and-sustainability/sustainability-action-plan/environmental-policy/

Sustainability

sustainability@leicester.gov.uk

 +44 (0)116 454 2110

For information about the Council's work to address climate change and to manage our environmental impacts. Also details of environmental support available for Leicester schools.

Energy Projects Team

energygrant@leicester.gov.uk

 +44 (0)116 454 2284

Support for small and medium sized businesses to reduce their energy bills and carbon emissions.

Promoting biodiversity

leicester.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation/nature-and-biodiversity/promoting-biodiversity/

Links to information about volunteering in parks and nature areas, as well as biodiversity events in the city.

Air quality

leicester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies/environment-and-waste/air-quality/

Information about city air quality levels, and Leicester's Air Quality Action Plan: Healthier Air for Leicester.

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