

Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology

Progress Report – Spring/Summer 2025



Contents

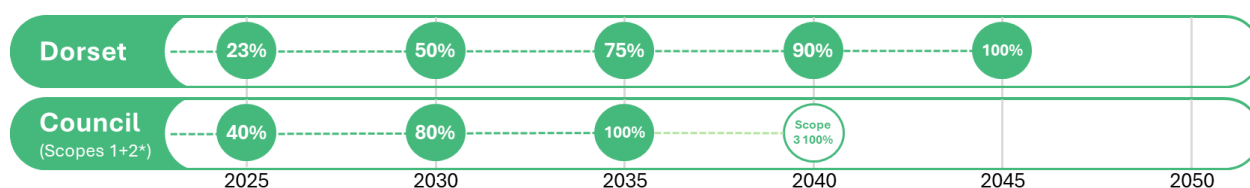
Introduction	3
Figure 1: Dorset Council's Net Zero Targets by Year	3
Our Council	4
Operational Dashboard	4
Building Retrofit Programme	4
Renewable Energy Generation	4
EV Fleet and Infrastructure	5
Fleet Replacement and HVO	5
Workplace Travel Plan	5
Council Operational Climate Risk Assessment	6
Our County	6
Local Transport Plan 4	6
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	7
Energising Dorset – Economic Growth Strategy	7
Residual Waste and Recycling	7
Public Sector Decarbonisation & Ecology Group	8
Delivering programmes to support residents and organisations	9
Low Carbon Dorset	9
Group Buying Renewable Generation	9
Farming in Protected Landscapes	9
Community focus	10
Climate Adaptation	10
Reducing Food Waste	10
Our Region, and Beyond	10
Energy Planning	11
The Great South West	11
Climate Ambassador Programmes	11
Procurement Toolkit	11
Public Sector Emissions Monitoring and Reporting Guidance	12

Introduction

This report gives a summary of how Dorset Council is progressing against the refreshed Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 2025, and the updated strategic priority set in the Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029.

Since the last progress report, the Dorset Council Plan was updated to include “Respond to the climate and nature crisis” as one of its four strategic priorities. In line with this plan, the council moved forward its net zero ambitions by five years: moving our target for the council’s direct emissions from 2040 to 2035¹, and carbon neutral Dorset from 2050 to 2045.

Figure 1: Dorset Council’s Net Zero Targets by Year



The Dorset Council Plan set a range of new climate-related targets, including:

- Transition all of our small vehicles to electric by 2030, and all larger vehicles to low emission fuels by 2026
- Add a further 5MW of solar PV to our estate by 2030
- Switch all our oil-fired heating to non-fossil fuel alternatives by 2028
- Cut emissions from staff business travel by at least 25% by 2029
- Develop adaptation plans for our services by March 2026
- A 65% recycling and composting rate by 2035
- Manage 80% of our urban verges for nature by 2030 (50% now)
- 70% of our county farms estate using sustainable farming practices by 2030 (5% now)
- 15,000Ha of Dorset covered by Landscape Recovery management agreements by 2030

Beyond Dorset Council’s internal targets, the council has a key leadership and place shaping role to work with its partners to affect change outside our immediate control. Despite making up only 2–5% of local areas’ emissions, local authorities can influence over a third of their areas’ total emissions.² Effective progress against our climate change goals requires effective systems leadership across our council, our

¹ Scope 1 emissions are the direct emissions from owned or directly controlled sources.

Scope 2 emissions are the indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy.

Scope 3 emissions are all other indirect emissions that occur in producing and transporting goods and services, including the full supply chain.

² [Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee](#)

county, and our region. This can be achieved by accelerating our own progress to show the requisite leadership, developing the effective alignment of strategic policy frameworks to deliver climate and nature goals and working with partners at a County and wider level.

Our Council

Our climate impact begins with the services we provide, both in how we mitigate our own operational emissions, protect nature and prepare services for the impacts of climate change. The council's Climate and Ecological Operational Group meets quarterly to monitor and coordinate the interventions carried out to mitigate the council's emissions. This group convenes the leads of various workstreams, building a stronger understanding of the critical interdependencies, and leveraging that connectivity in order to enable the climate interventions covered in this report. As of our last quantitative report for 2023/24, we had reduced our scope 1 and 2 emissions by 31% compared to our baseline year in 2019/20. The emissions data for 2024/25 will be released with our next quantitative report this autumn/winter.

Some of the key areas of work are as follows:

Operational Dashboard

We continue to develop our dashboard for our operational emissions and are able to track monthly estimates of the council's emissions from streetlighting, business travel, highways materials, and a portion of our fleet. We are working with our partners and providers to automate the tracking of other operational areas, such as the remainder of the fleet and our estate. This dashboard will feed into the council's performance indicators to support the council plan's target measures.

Building Retrofit Programme

In the previous climate progress report — [Autumn/Winter 2024](#) — the largest contributor of our emissions continued to be our estate, despite the significant savings already achieved. In 2023/24, our buildings had made 42.3% savings compared to the baseline year of 2019/20. Further savings have been identified through decarbonisation plans, which have been produced for 120 properties. They identify the possible options for carbon reduction and enable us to strategically prioritise future building retrofit projects. We aim to do this for all our buildings over the next few years.

Renewable Energy Generation

One significant aspect of our building decarbonisation has been the installation of renewable energy technologies. So far, 6MW of Solar PV has been installed on Dorset Council sites, and over 100 of our buildings have now PV panels installed. Detailed assessments of nearly 50 more sites have identified 42 new schemes that could be deliverable, potentially generating an estimated 2.2MW of additional renewable energy. The next phase of procurement is now in the Procurement

Forward Plan, with procurement of these additional Solar PV installations planned for 25/26 and 26/27. Further schemes are also being explored on our leased estate, beyond 2027. These investments are important in not just decarbonising the council's estate, but also in reducing energy costs and generating income through the utilisation of the Smart Export Guarantee.

EV Fleet and Infrastructure

The renewable energy that has been installed is also contributing to decarbonising our fleet, by reducing the demand for grid electricity for our EV chargers. There are now 36 EV charge points installed on the council's estate, with 17 EV pool vehicles available to Dorset Council employees. A further 18 EV charge points across 3 sites are in the process of being installed at the time of reporting. An EV Infrastructure on Dorset Council land group has been set up to organise further phases of EV charging infrastructure, in order to support the fleet's transition to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) alternatives as outlined in the council plan. We are looking to trial a pool vehicle management system that will improve administration of the EV pool fleet, allowing us to base vehicles at sites across the council area.

Fleet Replacement and HVO

The council's 5-year fleet replacement programme aims to replace all small fleet vehicles (cars and car-derived vans) with EVs by 2030, and already EVs make up around one quarter of our small fleet. For our large fleet vehicles, however, Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) will act as a drop-in transition fuel until long-term ULEV alternatives are available. This switch to HVO will provide 80-90% carbon savings on diesel fuel. The council has proactively engaged with its supplier and received assurances that our HVO supply is used cooking oil derived, and not from palm or palm-derivatives. HVO is now available at all council fuel sites, and around 90% of our diesel vehicles have now transitioned to HVO. Before this transition, 98% of fleet emissions came from diesel. This is projected to save 4,000 tonnes of CO₂e per annum compared to an all-diesel fleet (31% of our scope 1 and 2 emissions).

Workplace Travel Plan

Alongside our work with our fleet, we continue to work on reducing and decarbonising our business travel carried out on the council's behalf. The Dorset Council Workplace Travel Plan 2025-2030 sets out an *Avoid, Shift, Improve* framework approach for reducing business travel, producing a series of tools for teams across the organisation to reduce their travel needs where possible, and reduce their emissions when unavoidable. The framework collects information and data from teams to build Transport Energy Efficiency Ratings, comparable to an EPC rating for buildings, to then inform tailored action plans on reducing mileage and emissions that can be measured and reported on. The Workplace Travel Plan was published internally this July and is available for employees on the intranet.

Council Operational Climate Risk Assessment

Climate change will also impact our services and staff, and we will need to adapt to a changing climate over the coming years. We have therefore started a risk assessment of these impacts across the council. Following input from all services we are now refining the statement of risks and mitigations for our draft operational climate risk assessment. The purpose of this is to increase corporate visibility, oversight and management of these risks, leading to future adaptation plans for those services at risk. We are considering the impacts from changes in average conditions (e.g. average temperature or sea levels), greater incidence and severity of extreme weather events (e.g. heatwaves, heavy rain fall and wildfire), and spillover effects from non-local impacts. It comprises 44 impact areas within 7 impacts themes:

- Health, safety and wellbeing
- General operations
- Assets, infrastructure and equipment
- Transport and travel
- Supplies and supporting services
- Resourcing and finance
- Strategic, democratic and assurance.

The outputs will be a set of 44 council-wide risk statements, service-specific risk scores, and a narrative document detailing further service-specific nuance. The work is due to complete over the next six months.

Our County

The council's leadership reaches beyond its own operations, both in how we support and facilitate mitigation efforts within the county, and how we inform, collaborate with, and learn from residents, businesses and communities on climate resilience and adaptation. Our work along with that of many other organisations, communities, individuals and other national players will over time have the potential to help the county to become carbon neutral by 2045 and adapt to future climate change impacts, and the development of our policies is a key element of this.

Some of the key areas of work are as follows:

Developing a strategic policy framework

Local Transport Plan 4

The new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) continues to be developed alongside BCP Council to set out the long-term goals, strategy, and policies for improving transport for everyone over the next 10 to 15 years. A report on the new LTP4 will be

presented to the Place and Resources Overview Committee on the 15 July to review and provide feedback on the new vision and objectives of the draft Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) 2026–2041. Consultation on the Draft LTP4 Strategy and Implementation Plan will commence alongside the Dorset Local Plan consultation in late summer/Autumn. LTP4 will commit to reducing transport emissions in line with national and local net zero targets. It will target increasing active travel and public transport use, alongside the rapid uptake of zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). For more information, please visit <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/roads-highways-maintenance/transport-planning/local-transport-plan>

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Dorset's local nature recovery strategy has been collaboratively created with local people and organisations. There is an opportunity for people to help shape this new plan for nature in our county during the public consultation between May – July 2025.

The strategy sets 12 nature recovery priorities, each supported by practical activities that people in different sectors across the county can deliver to help nature recover. The strategy also has a local habitat map, which will be used to help target efforts to achieve the biggest benefits for nature.

Priorities include enhancing grasslands, woodlands, heathlands, rivers, wetlands, coastal habitats, and urban nature spaces, plus boosting species diversity and supporting those species that need bespoke efforts to recover. The strategy also promotes sustainable farming practices and nature-based solutions to address environmental issues like flooding and pollution.

Following the consultation, publication is expected in winter 2025. The council will then be instructed to review the strategy by Defra every 3 – 10 years, setting new priorities and activities based on progress. For more information please visit: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/nature-recovery-strategy>

Energising Dorset – Economic Growth Strategy

The new economic growth strategy, “Energising Dorset”, was adopted by cabinet in June. It highlights the opportunities for clean energy in Dorset, due to the county's geography, geology, deepwater port infrastructure, nuclear license and industrial history. The strategy includes an ambition to create a Clean Energy Super Cluster around technologies such as Offshore Wind, Hydrogen, Carbon Capture and Storage and Nuclear; offering a huge strategic opportunity for investment, energy security, and technological and economic growth – while tackling climate change.

Residual Waste and Recycling

The Dorset Waste Strategy 2024 sets a strategic vision for waste management in Dorset, focusing on actions over the next five years due to anticipated legislative changes. The strategy will detail how we will continue to minimise waste and maximise recycling within Dorset and will identify the policy framework required for

future decisions regarding service delivery, infrastructure developments and treatment options/facilities.

For household waste, we now fully adhere to the 'Simpler Recycling' reforms through our 'Recycle For Dorset' kerbside collection scheme which includes paper, card, plastics, glass, metal, food and garden, drink cartons and aluminium foil. By March 2027, local authorities are legally required to collect plastic films and flexibles. Work is ongoing to determine how we could potentially collect these materials, but it will be heavily reliant on sufficient sorting infrastructure and end markets being available.

Dorset Council now has one of the lowest quantities of residual waste per household in the country at 363.01 kilograms in 2023/24. Residual waste sent to landfill has been reduced to just 0.5%. The majority of our residual waste is now sent to the New Earth Mechanical Biological Treatment plant in Poole where organic and recyclable materials are extracted and leftover material is turned into fuel

Dorset is now the #1 unitary council in the country for recycling, with us now recycling 60.5% of collected waste, compared to a (declining) 43.4% national average. The team also facilitate a range of reuse activities, including maintaining the online 'zero waste' map, swish and give & take days, financial incentives and discounts for reusable nappies and feminine hygiene products, and subsidised home composters.

We continue to maximise community engagement through a wide range of means, such social media, in-person events, direct mail, and messaging on containers and vehicle livery. A project that the team is currently working on is the round improvement programme which identifies collection rounds that have low food and/or recycling tonnages.

The waste team is also currently using an ICT system to enhance waste collection efficiency through a route optimisation project, using data from in-cab devices to redesign household waste collection routes, aiming to improve service delivery and accommodate future growth.

Public Sector Decarbonisation & Ecology Group

The Council is working with other public sector organisations in Dorset to develop a joined-up approach to tackling climate change and nature recovery. Through this partnership we have begun to explore areas such as, sustainable procurement, joint carbon reporting, climate resilience strategy for Dorset and public sector decarbonisation. As well as share best practice and learning.

Delivering programmes to support residents and organisations

Low Carbon Dorset

Following the European Regional Development funded programme (ERDF 2018-2023), Dorset Council's Low Carbon Dorset programme (LCD) continues to support businesses, community and public sector organisations within the Dorset Council area with support from UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). In just the past two years we have received 281 expressions of interest, completed 181 energy efficiency site visits, and provided grant support to 79 low carbon projects, worth over £1.27M awarded and £1.8M match funding, for SMEs, community and public sector organisations. This resulted in an estimated saving of 844 tonnes of CO₂ pa and 3.17MW of installed capacity. An additional one-year continuation of the Low Carbon Dorset programme (1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026) has been agreed with UK SPF & REPF funding.

In its 8 years to date, LCD has helped over 700 businesses, communities and public sector organisations across Dorset, installing 13MW of renewable energy generation as well a wide range of other low carbon technologies and demonstration projects, saving 25,000 tonnes of CO₂e per year.

A photo exhibition of LCD success stories for local organisations has been touring the county at town and parish councils, schools and colleges, and local fairs, and will continue to tour libraries through 2025. For more information about Low Carbon Dorset, please visit <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/low-carbon-dorset>.

Group Buying Renewable Generation

To support local residents, the council is soon to launch a Dorset Solar Together scheme, a group buying scheme that helps residents install solar PV and battery systems at reduced cost by leverage of economies of scale. The council's role will be to promote the scheme, whilst the company that runs the scheme, iChoosr, undertakes customer liaison, helplines, and installer selection and vetting. We have signed up to participate in Scheme 4 (for registrations opening in October 2025 and installations in mid-2026), with the aim for residents to receive letters this August to sign up for the first round in autumn.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Within the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) programme, 25 projects which reduced flood risk were delivered, including the Devil's Brook and Cheselbourne Stream multi-benefits project, several Natural Flood Management schemes, and a project converting a redundant slurry pit into a rainwater-fed reservoir, for use by a horticulture business.

Seven projects included elements to improve understanding of carbon storage, carbon emission and climate change impacts, including workshops for dairy farmers in the Axe catchment, and knowledge sharing sessions concerning maximising use of farmyard manure as a nutrient source to improve soil health.

Three hectares of tree canopy and woodland cover were created by planting 2,381 trees, as well as planting 2.9 km of hedges (more than 17,000 individual plants).

Community focus

Climate Adaptation

We have committed to working with partners and communities to develop a countywide Adaptation Strategy, putting residents front and centre of how this shapes up as they need to be at the heart of it. We are working with climate engagement specialists to involve over the coming months to hold a community conversation and visioning exercise, involving a citizens panel and public survey. This will be supported by an advisory group, consisting of community and specialist groups representing key areas of climate adaptation. The aim is to publish the findings and recommendations by December 2025. The outcomes of this engagement will feed into and help shape a strategy development process involving wider stakeholders and more technical working groups on areas such as the economy, infrastructure, utilities, communities, nature and agriculture. It is anticipated the development of a Dorset climate adaptation strategy will begin in early 2026.

Reducing Food Waste

Food waste makes up the largest component of our household black bag rubbish (19%). The waste team therefore undertake various targeted activities to increase participation and use of the kerbside food waste collection service by targeting low participation areas (as identified by crews), doorstepping in those areas and handing out food containers. Other activities include the 'bonster monster' school programme, food waste animations on social media and banners promoting the food waste service on waste collection vehicles and buses. As noted above, all food waste collected continues to be treated in-county using anaerobic digestion which produces biogas used to generate electricity, and biofertilizer sold as a soil improver for plants and crops. The waste team also places a large focus on the successful 'Love Food, Hate Waste' campaign, which encourages people to reduce the amount of food that they produce, whilst saving money at the same time. It also highlights the close links between waste food and climate change (i.e. waste food accounts for more greenhouse gases than flying).

Our Region, and Beyond

The effects of climate change, and the interventions to mitigate and adapt to them, stretch beyond Dorset's borders. We have a critical role to working with partners across the southwest and the country to pioneer new thinking, leverage economies of scale, and to lobby for regional influence and national policy.

Some of the key areas of work are as follows:

Energy Planning

The scrutiny review into grid capacity in 2024 clarified changes to how the energy system is planned, regulated, and funded – and the opportunity for us to have more strategic influence on grid investment. A new national framework for strategic energy planning is emerging, including ‘Regional Energy Strategic Planners’ (RESP) – on whose Board there will be local government representation to create a regional energy system plan. RESPs are just now being established and engaging us; a transitional plan will be in place in early 2026 ahead of establishing the regional boards and developing the regional plan proper for adoption in 2027. One way to prepare is to create a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) for Dorset. We have commissioned Regen and CSE to help us consider how we should do energy planning: starting with visioning, baselining, creating a data repository, and clarifying our next steps.

The Great South West

Working with our regional partners we have helped shape a prospectus for the South West, with the aim of highlighting the key strategic economic opportunities in the region. This enables us to showcase the unique opportunities that exist in the South West in areas such as renewable energy development and provides a mechanism to engage with national government to ensure Dorset and the rest of the region receive the support that is required to deliver our ambitions.

Climate Ambassador Programmes

We are working with the Met Office and Children's Services to build a Climate Ambassadors Network of specialist expert volunteers to support schools to create and implement climate action plans. This approach has been trailblazing on a national level and is being used by others as best practice. The first stages have included a variety of practical approaches in different educational settings, such as beach cleans with over 200 students, and training and support for developing action plans with a large multi-academy trust and college. We are also working to support town and parish councils by working with them to building a toolkit and develop a sustainability champions network to support each other and the wider community.

Procurement Toolkit

We are coming towards the end of our year-long sustainable procurement project, working with our public sector partners as part of the national Innovate UK Fast Followers programme. This will help us to better understand and tackle our Scope 3 emissions by understanding where the biggest emitters are in what we buy, develop a strategy for how we can tackle it over the next 15 years, and develop a toolkit that can practically help colleagues. We are therefore developing a baseline and hotspot analysis of our procurement emissions footprint, a strategic roadmap on how we can embed it better and ratchet up requirements over time, and a practical toolkit and

training package. The webtool gives product-specific guidance for 45 product categories for the main lifecycle stages, including on supplier selection questions, tender criteria, model responses, contract KPIs, standards and labels, and proportionality guidance for inclusivity for SMEs and VCSEs. We are now engaging internally in order to gain feedback on the toolkit and training for refining.

Public Sector Emissions Monitoring and Reporting Guidance

In October 2024, the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero announced it planned to develop and publish guidance for public sector organisations on emissions monitoring and reporting for the sector. We have been proactive in working with regional and national partners on shared areas of interest, such as pain points and potential innovations in reducing emissions, and plan to lobby and feed into the consultation process. This is an opportunity to both raise the profile of Dorset's programmes, and to enable some of our more innovative concepts on renewable energy and carbon sequestration. DEZNS plans to publish the guidance by the end of 2025.