

Moray Council Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030

Climate Change Plan and Routemap to Net Zero 2026 update



moray
council

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Executive Summary

From coastal erosion and flooding, to wildfires and power outages, severe weather events in Moray are becoming ever more frequent and disruptive to people's lives and Council services. Building on its climate emergency and nature emergency declarations, the Council is committed to achieving net zero emissions, taking action to adapt to climate impacts and restoring biodiversity in line with Scottish Government targets.

In 2024/25, the Council's recorded carbon emissions were 17,055 tonnes of carbon dioxide (tCO₂e); a decrease of 1,414 tCO₂e (7.7%) compared to reporting year 2023/24.

Significant progress has been made in building energy efficiency, fleet decarbonisation, and waste management, including:

- **Buildings:** Closure and consolidation of offices, smarter working practices, LED lighting upgrades, and solar PV installations now generate over 53,000 kWh of renewable electricity annually. Fuel oil use has fallen by 57% since 2017/18, while biomass systems and improved heating controls have contributed to further reductions.
- **Fleet:** Over 67 electric vehicles are in operation, supported by staff e-bike availability, helping cut diesel use and lower operational costs.
- **Waste:** Transition to the NESS Energy from Waste facility has dramatically reduced landfill emissions, combined with a high recycling rate.

Though these numbers look promising, some of the largest emission sources, such as building heat, fleet and staff commuting, remain stagnant or are heavily dependent on external funding.

The Council has continued to increase knowledge around climate risk by producing an adaptation benchmarking report and a local climate impact profile (LCLIP). The Council has successfully leveraged grant funding for coastal adaptation works and new community resilience plans.

Moray's climate preparedness will require nature-based solutions to protect people, infrastructure and nature. The proposed Moray Nature Network was completed in early 2025, providing strategic direction to restore nature connectivity on a region wide scale. Connecting people to nature is at the heart of this work, through local volunteering opportunities. Invasive species management, wildflower promotion, and habitat restoration contribute to both mitigation and adaptation outcomes, contributing to resilience against extreme weather events.

Climate action delivers multiple positive outcomes:

- **Economic:** Investment in low-carbon infrastructure and green skills creates local jobs, supports and develops new local supply chains, and reduces long-term operational costs across various sectors.

- **Social:** Measures have potential to improve public health, tackle fuel poverty, and enhance access to nature and active travel options.
- **Environmental:** Reduced emissions, enhanced biodiversity, and sustainable land management support long-term resilience and wellbeing.

Moray Council is committed to achieving net zero by 2045, guided by the Scottish Government's newly introduced five-year carbon budgets. By continuing to implement energy-efficient solutions, expand renewable energy, restore nature, and engage communities, Moray is on the path towards a greener, healthier, and more resilient future. Strategic investment, collaboration and innovation will drive progress, ensuring that climate action strengthens the local economy, protects and enhances its natural resources, and benefits all its residents.



1. Why we are taking climate action

1.1 Introduction

In June 2019, the Council formally declared a climate emergency, acknowledging the significant impact climate change will have on the local economy, public health and the environment.

The Council also adopted a Climate Change Strategy setting out an ambitious plan to reduce our organisational emissions and explore how to adapt to our changing climate, while supporting and encouraging local communities and organisations to do likewise. At the time of writing, public feedback is being sought on an update of the Climate Change Strategy to address new challenges and opportunities.

This Routemap to Net Zero supports the Climate Change Strategy, looking back on our progress to date and our path towards complying with our goals and duties in line with the Scottish Government's statutory net zero target of 2045.

The Council declared a nature emergency in February 2023. This recognises the value of nature and its role in achieving climate targets, maintaining a strong economy and protecting the health and wellbeing of future generations. The importance of using nature-based solutions to climate change are well recognised, with positive outcomes for both mitigation and adaptation.

1.2 Impacts of a changing climate

The climate is changing faster than ever previously experienced. There is scientific consensus that the significant increase in global temperature over the last 150 years is primarily driven by human activities¹, especially the burning of fossil fuels, which release greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere (Figure 1). These gases trap heat, causing global temperatures to rise. To lower the risk of increased extreme weather events and sea level rise, drastic reductions in emissions are required to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Levels of carbon in the atmosphere over time

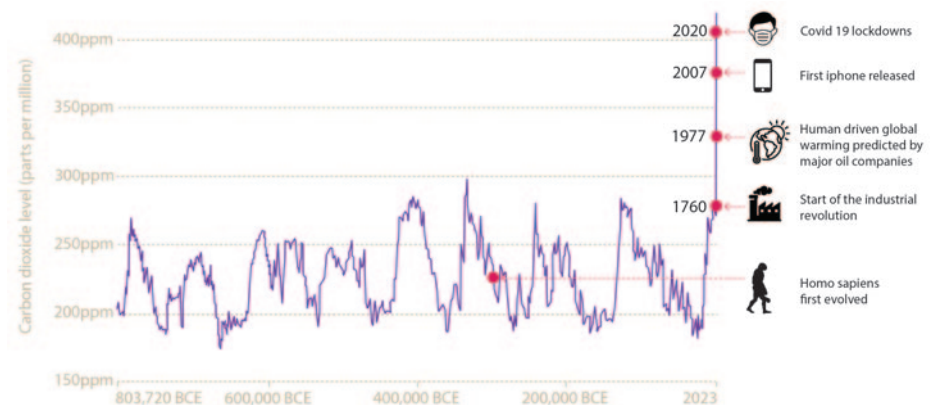


Figure 1. Global atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration from 803,720 BCE to present day. Data from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (2023)

¹ IPCC (2021) 'Human Influence on the Climate System'

On a local level, the impacts of global temperature increases are already being experienced. Events such as heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires continue to increase in frequency in Moray.

Heatwaves:

Scotland's 10 warmest years on record have all occurred since 1997. **The warmest year on record was 2025.** Heatwaves not only drive hot daytime temperatures but also elevate nighttime lows and can stress health systems, agriculture and ecosystems.

Flooding:

In 2024, SEPA issued a historically high number of flood warnings; the second highest ever on record, which reflects widespread flood risk around the country. Dry periods often increase run-off during sudden heavy rain, worsening flash flooding. Moray's coastal communities are particularly under threat from rising sea levels and worsening storm surges leading to property damage and infrastructure disruption.

Droughts:

Scotland historically has abundant rainfall, but summer drought periods are becoming more noticeable, linked with heatwaves and changing rainfall patterns. Models project increased drought risk and prolonged dry spells over the coming decades² 2025 saw early warnings for water scarcity as dry spells and hot weather increased wildfire risk dramatically.

Wildfires:

Scotland overall saw an exceptionally active wildfire year in 2025, with wildfire incidents and area burned far exceeding previous years. In late June and early July 2025, wildfires in and near Moray, especially on the Dava Moor, formed part of what has been described as the largest wildfire event in Scotland's history, which, combined with nearby Highland fires, burnt an area estimated at around 29,225 acres (≈11,827 hectares), which is the equivalent of roughly 10,500 football pitches.

² Changing climate | Scotland's environment web



Climate change and biodiversity loss are interconnected. The degradation of ecosystems is both a consequence of and a contributor to climate change. As biodiversity declines, our capacity to adapt to a changing climate is weakened. This poses risks to key sectors in Moray such as forestry, food and drink, tourism, as well as public health.

The extent of future climate change will depend on how quickly and significantly we reduce greenhouse gas emissions. While rapid mitigation can limit the severity of impacts, some degree of change is now inevitable due to past and ongoing global emissions.

The Council must plan for a likely average global temperature rise of 2°C, while also preparing for the possibility of increases up to 4°C by 2100³, given current global emission trends and the long-lasting effects of historical emissions.

If global targets continue to be missed, the quality of life in Moray is likely to be fundamentally degraded by the end of the century. To avoid the most severe outcomes, there is an onus on all to pursue deep and immediate emissions reductions, alongside robust adaptation measures to manage the unavoidable impacts.

³ [Independent-Assessment-of-UK-Climate-Risk-Advice-to-Govt-for-CCRA3-CCC.pdf](#)

1.3 Statutory obligations

The Council has statutory obligations to undertake climate action. To achieve net zero emissions by 2045 is a collective responsibility across local authorities.

Scotland aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to reach net zero by 2045. The **Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009** places a duty on all public bodies to act to deliver on the national carbon budgets.

Under the current legislation, Moray Council has three main duties:

- **Mitigation:** to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- **Adaptation:** to help Council services and communities adapt to the effects of a changing climate
- **Sustainability:** to act in a sustainable manner

The Council is required to report on compliance with these duties annually in accordance with the **Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015** and subsequent amendments.

The Scottish Parliament recently passed two pieces of climate legislation, the **Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024** and the **Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (Scottish Carbon Budgets) Amendments Regulations 2025**. These resulted in a new system of carbon budgets to replace interim targets, bringing Scotland into line with the rest of the UK.

The following policies represent statutory requirements that must be complied with and reported on by local authorities, and contain elements of climate change action:

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) incorporates the national climate change targets into the local planning system to promote sustainable development.

The Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021. Heat networks, also known as district heating, distribute heat from a central source to multiple buildings, reducing the need for individual heating systems and promoting energy efficiency. The Council is required to undertake assessments of the potential for heat networks in Moray and develop plans to promote their use.

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022 (LHEES) requires the Council to develop plans to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in buildings across Moray.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on the council to consider biodiversity in its decision-making processes and to promote the conservation of local habitats and species.

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan commit to halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and to restoring and regenerating nature by 2045. The plan includes strong guidance as to how the Council is expected to meet its Biodiversity Duty.

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 aims to promote sustainable transport and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector. It has provided the Council with greater powers to implement Low Emission Zones and improve active travel infrastructure.

Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (SNAP 3) sets out how Scotland will adapt to the risks identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment. The plan includes actions that fall under the Council's responsibility, and those it has a supportive role in addressing.

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) requires the Council to assess the risk of emergencies occurring and maintain plans to ensure that services continue to be delivered in the event of an emergency. Severe weather and climate change are linked to emergencies that may result in wide impacts ranging from serious environmental damage to loss of life.

The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 requires the Council to implement and maintain flood protection actions and prepare local flood risk management plans. The Council is the lead authority for the Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District and works with partners to deliver the plan.

1.4 Co-benefits of climate action

The Council, working with its partners, has a key leadership role in embedding climate action and a just transition across all planning, policy, and investment decisions. As every council service influences climate outcomes, aligning the Council's £294.2 million budget with climate objectives presents a significant opportunity to deliver environmental, economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Economic benefits arise from reduced energy and operational costs, investment in low-carbon infrastructure, and the growth of Moray's green economy. Targeted investment in green skills and technologies can enable a Just Transition creating high-quality local jobs, support for local supply chains, and helping to retain young people, while reducing the long-term financial risks and costs associated with climate change.

Social benefits include tackling fuel poverty, improving public health and wellbeing, and reducing inequalities. Measures such as improving housing quality, expanding access to greenspace, and delivering sustainable transport options can lower household energy bills, improve health outcomes and productivity, and reduce pressures on health and social care services.

Environmental benefits include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency and thermal comfort, and enhancing natural environments through nature-based solutions. These actions strengthen Moray's resilience to climate impacts such as extreme weather, flooding, and biodiversity loss, while supporting long-term environmental sustainability.

Delivering these benefits depends on collective action through a just transition. By involving communities in decision-making and supporting community-led initiatives, climate action can strengthen local empowerment, build resilient communities, and ensure that the transition to a low-carbon future is fair and inclusive for all.

2. How we approach climate action

The Council recognises that a considered approach is necessary for successful climate action. To ensure the greatest impact from our resources, climate action measures should be designed into all services and budgets rather than considered in isolation.

Four key principles will underpin the approach that the Council will take to progressing climate change actions from 2025-35 (Figure 2):



Figure 2. Principles behind the Climate Change Strategy Update 2025

The Council's declaration of a climate and nature emergency places urgency on the pace and scope of all actions. The Climate Change Strategy 2025-2035 sets out how the Council will respond to the climate and nature emergencies within the existing financial settlement and achieve its statutory duties. This requires:

- **Strong leadership:** Climate action is supported by Elected Members and the Council's corporate leadership team. They are visibly involved in climate action initiatives, they routinely engage in updates on the Council's progress to net zero and Councillor van der Horn has been appointed as Climate Change Champion.
- **Sufficient resources:** Securing external funding is essential to progress the ambition in the Strategy. However, embedding actions within ongoing transformation of services is also essential to ensure that the Council reduces costs and its impacts on the climate and nature. Investment as spent-to-save ensures efficient use of limited resources.
- **Collective responsibility:** Everyone at the Council has a responsibility to act sustainably in the interests of the Council and the environment.
- **An empowering change culture:** The Council fosters a culture that encourages and supports innovative ideas for reducing emissions and wider impact on the environment.

- **Clear and transparent communication:** Communications around climate and nature should use non-jargon climate change language to ensure understanding and promote behaviour change.
- **Robust targets, measurement and evaluation:** Whenever possible, the Council's targets are measurable, and reporting mechanisms are clear and transparent.

2.1 How we define net zero

Net zero means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions re-absorbed from the atmosphere; for example, by oceans and forests.

Emissions can be categorised in three Scopes (see also Figure 3):

- **Scope 1:** emissions originating from sources directly within the Council's control, e.g. fuel use in vehicles or buildings (heating),
- **Scope 2:** emissions originating from sources outside the Council's direct sphere of influence, but where they are the direct user of a good or service, e.g. grid electricity use.
- **Scope 3:** emissions originating from sources where the Council can influence but has no direct control, e.g. procurement of food for school catering, or staff commuting to work.

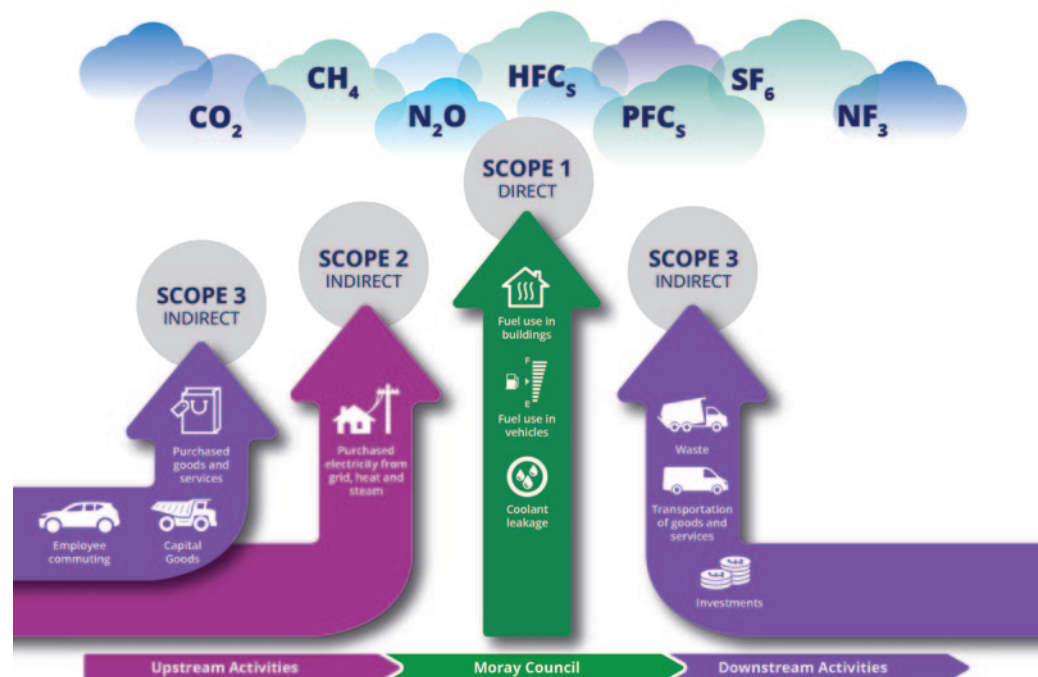


Figure 3. Emissions scope classification for Moray Council activities.

The updated Climate Change Strategy 2025-2035 will include a series of carbon budgets in line with the Scottish Government's carbon budgets (this will be discussed further on in this document). This will mean a backstop date of 2045 for Council activities to be net zero.

The Council has a statutory duty to report on all Scope 1 and 2 emissions, and all Scope 3 emissions from "relevant and significant areas of the organisation's indirect emissions" greater than 1% of total organisational emissions.

2.2 How we achieve carbon reductions

The Council uses a carbon management hierarchy approach to prioritise its necessary actions (Figure 4). This approach prioritises the avoidance of carbon emissions to deliver lasting change. Where avoidance of emissions is not possible then they should be reduced through service efficiencies or redesign. Removal of emissions is required where further reductions cannot be achieved.

For example, actions might look like:

- **AVOID:** Redesign services to enable home working and avoid commuting
- **REDUCE:** Reduce energy use in buildings through smart timing solutions
- **REPLACE:** Decarbonisation of Council fleet by replacing diesel vehicles with electric alternatives or the use of staff e-bikes
- **OFFSET:** Plant an area of woodland on Council land to offset unavoidable emissions

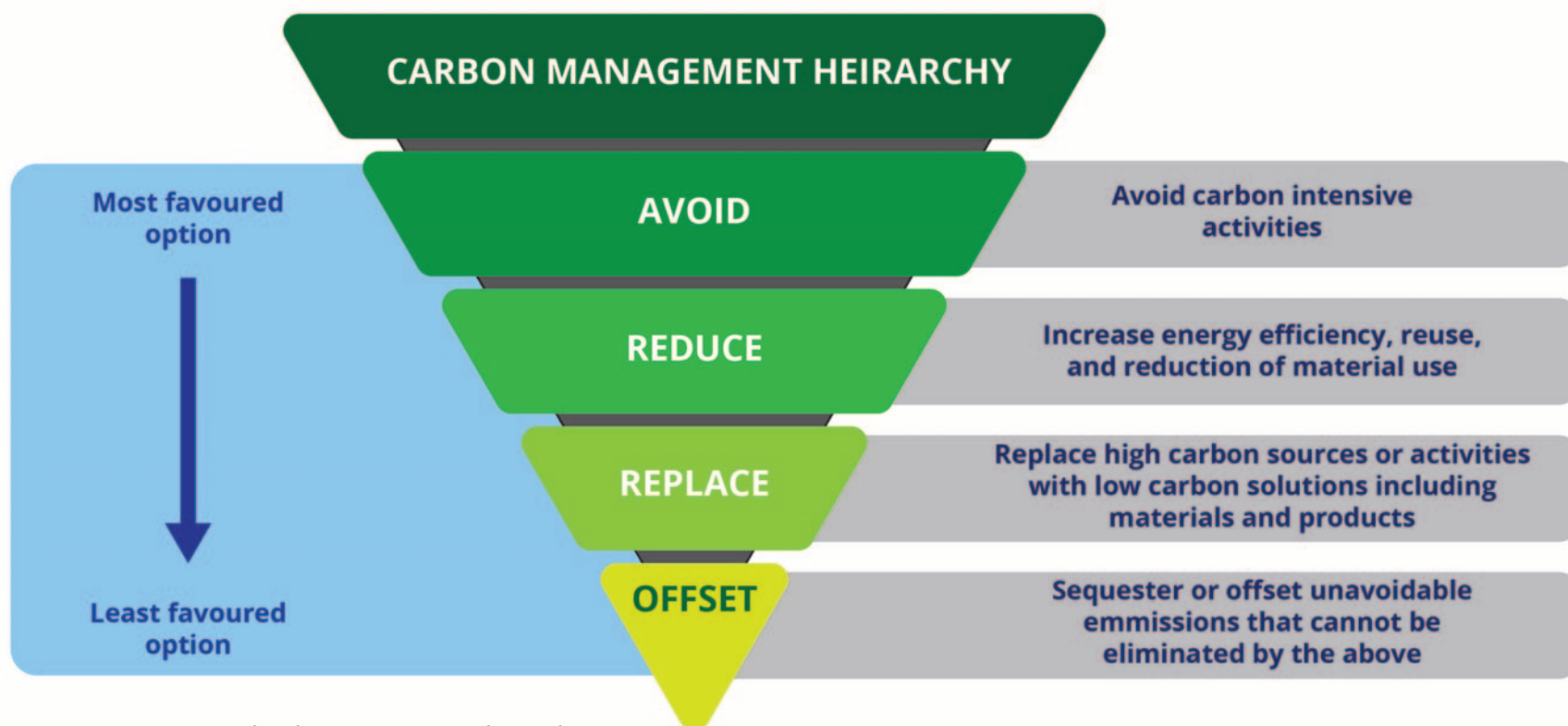


Figure 4. Moray Council carbon management hierarchy

Offsetting 'unavoidable' emissions through offsetting schemes should be considered as a last resort in target setting. Carbon offsetting is the process of compensating for carbon emissions by initiating projects that reduce or remove greenhouse gases elsewhere. This might include planting trees, supporting renewable energy, restoring peatlands, or investing in energy-efficient community initiatives.

Offsetting significant levels of carbon by the Council is discouraged as large-scale offsets are not sustainable and Scottish national guidance makes clear that public bodies are required to avoid, reduce and replace emissions as much as possible before considering offsets.

2.3 Baselineing our emissions

Calculating a baseline of emissions helps to determine the level of intervention needed to achieve net zero carbon emissions, and to allow progress to be monitored.

The Council's carbon emissions from 2017/18 are used as a baseline for emissions (Table 1). This year was chosen as it was the earliest year that had a comprehensive return of emissions to the Scottish Government.

Staff commuting emissions have only been recorded since the 2022/23 period, and 'refuse to combustion' has been added since 2024/25 following opening of the NESS Energy from Waste facility in Aberdeen. However, to ensure consistency with the current scope of reporting, estimated historical emissions in these categories have been added using known emission factors.



Area	Description	Emission Source	Baseline Carbon emissions (tCO ₂ e)
Building heat Scope 1 and 2	Emissions from heating of council buildings, such as offices, schools, medical centres.	Natural gas	4,077.9
		Fuel oil / Kerosene	1,034.1
		Biomass	34.7
		Purchased heat and steam	15.4
Building electricity Scope 2	Emissions from electricity use in council buildings.	Primary schools and nurseries	1,122.0
		Secondary schools	1,177.3
		Unmetered electricity	1,685.5
		Offices	523.8
		Community facilities	358.5
		Residential homes and day centres	145.7
		Sports facilities	249.6
		Industrial	346.2
Other	611.0		
Fleet Scope 1 and 2	Emissions from the operation of the Council's fleet vehicles and vessels.	Diesel	3,591.5
		Petrol	27.5
		Gas oil	776.6
		Electric vehicles	0.0
		Hybrid vehicles	0.0
		Marine fuel oil	68.2

Area	Description	Emission Source	Baseline Carbon emissions (tCO2e)
Waste Scope 3	Emissions from dealing with municipal and industrial-level waste.	Landfill gas	0.0
		Municipal refuse to landfill	9,130.3
		Commercial, industrial and clinical waste to landfill	2,048.7
		Recycling and composting	387.2
Operational activities Scope 3	Emissions generated by the council through its day-to-day work, including corporate travel. Some are emissions that the council can influence rather than control	Outdoor spaces	72.1
		Commuting emissions	3,475.0
		Homeworking emissions	0.0
		Water supply and treatment	125.8
		Corporate travel	394.8
			Total: 31,479.4

Table 1 - Moray Council 2017/18 baseline carbon emissions

3. Reducing Council Emissions

Progress in 2024-2025

Since reporting year 2023/24, there has been an 7.7% decrease in the Council's emissions. These are largely the result of a reduction in fuel oil / kerosene use and gas for heating, and a change in the treatment of municipal waste which now goes to the NESS Energy from Waste facility in Aberdeen. Compared to the last reporting year there has been an increase in diesel usage of 7%.

The Council's emissions during reporting year 2024/25 by area is shown in Figure 5.

The main sources of emissions during reporting year 2024-2025 were:

- **Scope 1:** natural gas to heat the council's buildings - 23%
- **Scope 1:** diesel for its fleet vehicles - 21%
- **Scope 3:** commercial, industrial and clinical waste to landfill - 15%
- **Scope 3:** staff commuting to work - 13%

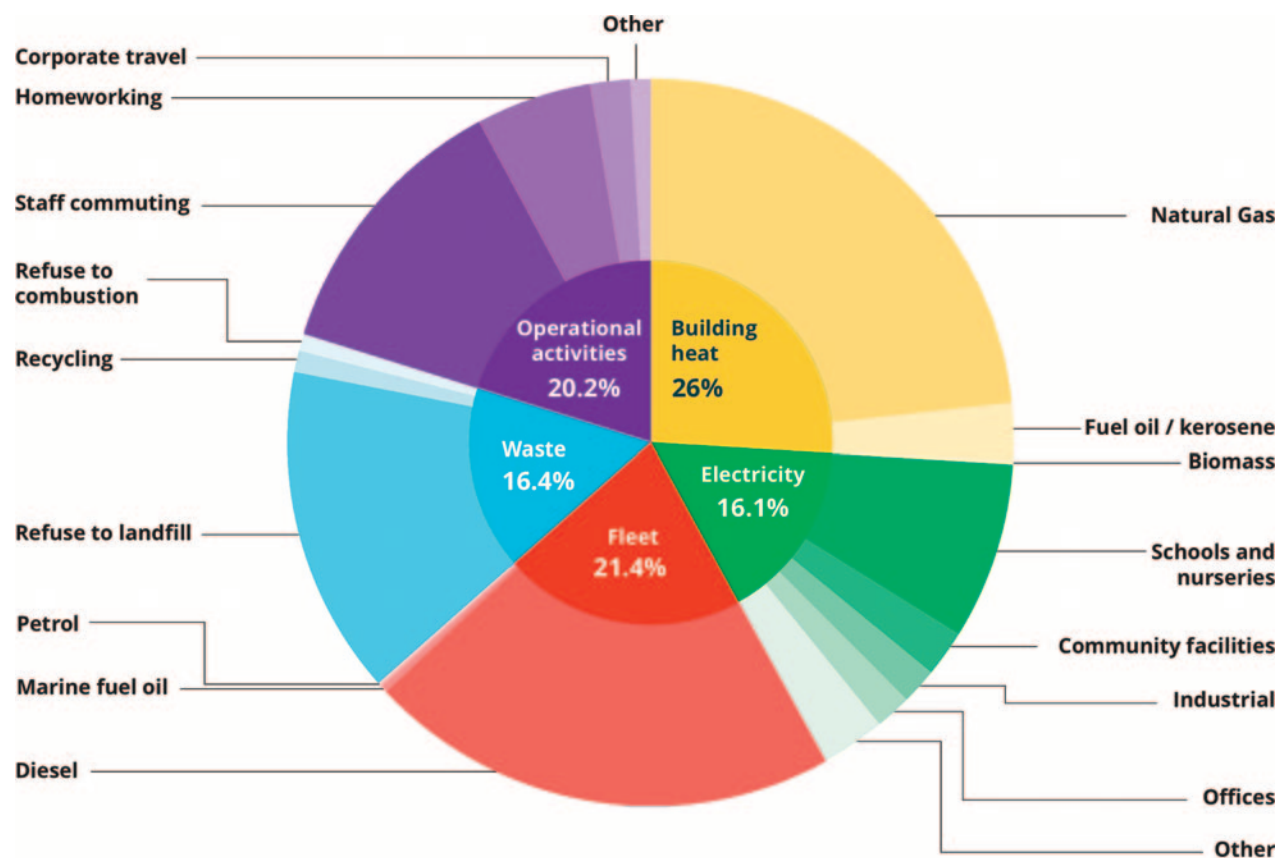


Figure 5. Moray Council emissions by sector during reporting year 2024-2025

3.1 Building heat and electricity

3.1.1 Overview

The Council owns and operates a diverse portfolio of buildings including offices, schools, libraries, sports centres, and depots. These vary widely in age, size, energy efficiency, and condition.

Most of these buildings are heated using natural gas or fuel oil / kerosene. Biomass systems have been installed at Speyside and Milne's high schools. There is a small but increasing number of buildings fitted with solar PV panels.

Closure and relocation of three offices has been completed since March 2025. This has reduced the overall building estate footprint and associated carbon emissions. Improved use of HQ, the HQ Annexe and Rose Cottage has enhanced efficiency and supports smarter working practices.

The Council building portfolio remains slow to transition to decarbonised heating. Despite progress in carbon reduction, solar PV installations, surplus property sales, and building retrofits, due to restricted budgets.

3.1.2 Current Emissions

Energy consumption from the Council's buildings for 2024/25 was 37,461,982 kWh, which is just over a 4% decrease compared to the previous year. Figure 6 gives an overview of recent year's energy usage changes:

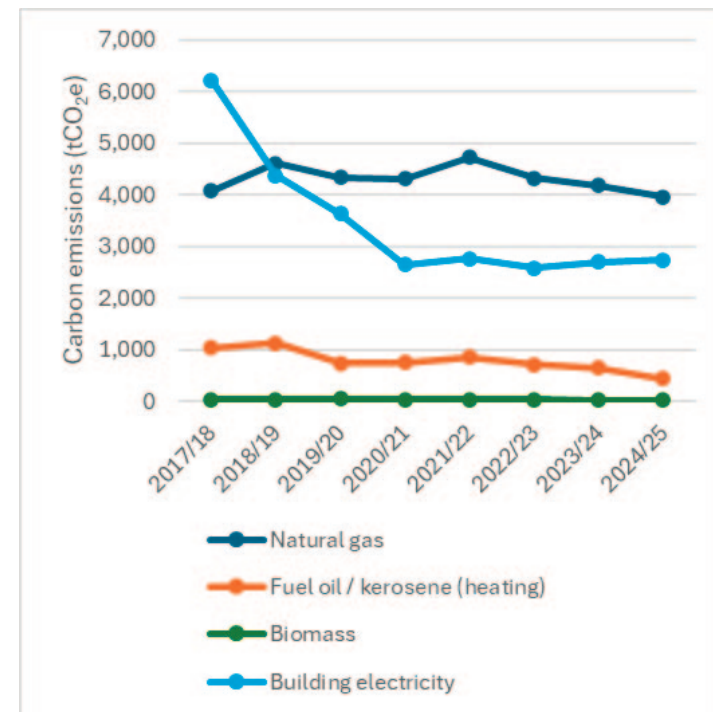


Figure 6. Carbon emissions from Moray Council's energy usage from reporting year 2017/18 to present.

Emissions from the Council's buildings are split into two categories: building heat and building electricity.

Building heat:

The Council's current largest emission source is the provision of heat to our buildings, contributing to 26% of total emissions. Building heat is generated by the usage of natural gas, fuel oil / kerosene and biomass. While fuel oil / kerosene emissions have fallen by 57% since the 2017/18 baseline, the Council remains dependent on natural gas boilers for most building heat. Emissions from natural gas have reduced by 3%.

The reduction in the burning of fuel oil / kerosene for heat has seen emissions fall by 206 tCO₂e in between reporting year 2023/24 and reporting year 2024/25. This is primarily due to less down time of biomass boilers as kerosene is used as a backup heat source. The subsequent increase in woodchip and wood pellets has led to an increase of around 1.4 tCO₂e giving a substantial overall saving in emissions

Heating consumption decreased by 4.6% compared to the previous year. This can largely be attributed to warmer weather conditions, the introduction of improved heating controls in some schools, improved monitoring and management of heating systems, and the vacating of several office buildings.

Two successful applications have been made to receive external funding:

1. A grant of £593,880 was awarded from Scotland's Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund via Salix towards building fabric improvements and changing to a zero direct emissions heating system in Cullen Primary School. Works have progressed on site with most fabric measures complete.
2. A feasibility study into the creation of a heat network in the centre of Elgin has been produced following grant funding from the Scottish Government's Heat Network Support Fund. Officers have now requested an addendum to this study. When this has been received and findings presented, further reports will be presented to Council with the findings and potential next steps required to progress the project.

Building electricity:

Emissions from electricity use have fallen by 60% since 2017/18, though a small increase of 1.5% has been recorded since the previous reporting year. This increase can largely be attributed to the new electricity shore supply at Buckie Harbour, which services vessels when in harbour and reduces ship exhaust emissions. However, the overall reduction is the result of the decarbonisation of the national grid, along with energy efficiency improvements such as LED lighting replacement and the installation of solar panels.

LED lighting can reduce electricity consumption by between 40% to 60% compared to older fluorescent bulbs. These last longer and have lower maintenance costs. Replacements have taken place at Council HQ, HQ Annexe, Ashgrove Depot, and Buckie sports pitches.

Solar PV projects on the rooftops of Ashgrove Depot (see Case Study 1), Council HQ, HQ Annexe and Elgin Library are now complete. The Council's solar PV projects generated 53,616 kWh of renewable electricity in 2024/25. This represents an increase of 4% in renewable energy generated compared to 2023/24.

Further energy and cost reductions could be achieved with the wider rollout of similar spend-to-save projects, particularly through widespread adoption of solar PV panels.



Case study 1 Solar PV on council buildings

Procured in August 2024 and commissioned between April and June 2025, solar photovoltaic (PV) panels have been installed on buildings at Ashgrove Depot. The project was funded internally under a “spend to save” approach. To date, the system has operated smoothly, generated electricity supporting lighting, workshop and office activities, EV charging, and other general electricity demands. Surplus electricity is exported to the grid. The system can be monitored remotely, enabling prompt identification and resolution of any issues.

The installation was led by Hub North Scotland Ltd (HNSL). Delivery by an external contractor enabled a faster project timeline than would have been achievable through in-house delivery, reduced pressure on internal resources, and ensured the project benefited from specialist expertise and capability.

Some figures:

Performance

- Annual PV Generation: 44,916 kWh
- Self-Consumption: 98.4% (44,219 kWh used on-site)
- Grid Export: 697 kWh

Financial

- Investment: £56,432
- Payback Period: 4.3 years
- Internal rate of return (IRR): 25.86%
- First-Year Savings: £11,932
- Lifetime Savings (25 yrs): approx. £514,467

Carbon Impact:

- Annual Avoided Emissions: 10.5 tCO₂e/year
- 25-Year Avoided Emissions: 262.5 tCO₂e

Outcomes	Actions include:
Reduced heat and electricity consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increase building user awareness of ways to reduce energy use and save utility costs● Continue to install LEDs and energy saving devices● Promote smarter working
More energy produced by renewables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Investigate feasibility of renewable energy potential across the Council's property portfolio, and potential for connection to a heat network● Install renewable energy technologies on Council-owned buildings and land
Reduced building carbon output and increased energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Progress a 'fabric first' approach to building retrofit● Identify opportunities for 'Heating and Power' refurbishment to be implemented in the next 10 years.● Replacement of carbon-based heating systems when feasible● Achieve Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) for all council housing

3.2 Fleet

3.2.1 Overview

The Council's fleet is used by employees to conduct council business and deliver services for Moray's residents. It comprises over 500 cars, vans, buses, trucks, specialist vehicles and vessels, most of whom drive on fuel through internal combustion engines (ICE). At present, the council's existing fleet contains a total of 67 electric vehicles (EV) with a further 6 on order. This currently represents 13.4% of the fleet rising to 14.6% by the end of reporting year 2024/25.

Most of the fleet vehicles run on diesel fuel. Marine fuel oil is currently used in council vessels. Petrol is mostly used for open spaces machinery. However, strimmers, lawnmowers etc are being exchanged for rechargeable battery machines.

The **Zero Emission Fleet Replacement Strategy (ZEFRS, April 2024)** details the Council's plans to decarbonise the remainder of the fleet in line with the Scottish Government's net zero targets. However, funding these plans is a challenge as the Council have cut its budget to achieve £7.5m of savings. This cut will need to be carefully assessed, and a decision made on future priorities. The ZEFRS is being revised to take account of the changes in capital budget and a spend to save case is currently being produced to look at the interplay between revenue maintenance of the Council's fleet and capital costs to replace vehicles.

3.2.2 Current emissions

The use of diesel of Council vehicles makes up 97% of the Council's Fleet emissions. Following a temporary reduction due to the COVID-19 working restrictions, emissions have returned to near pre-pandemic levels. Compared to reporting year 2023/24, emissions derived from diesel usage, have gone up by 7%.

Gas oil use in transportation has reduced to zero since reporting year 2023/24, as it is no longer permitted as road fuel.

EV charging consumption increased from 544,371 kWh in 2023/24 to 606,912 kWh in 2024/25, which is an increase of 11.5%.



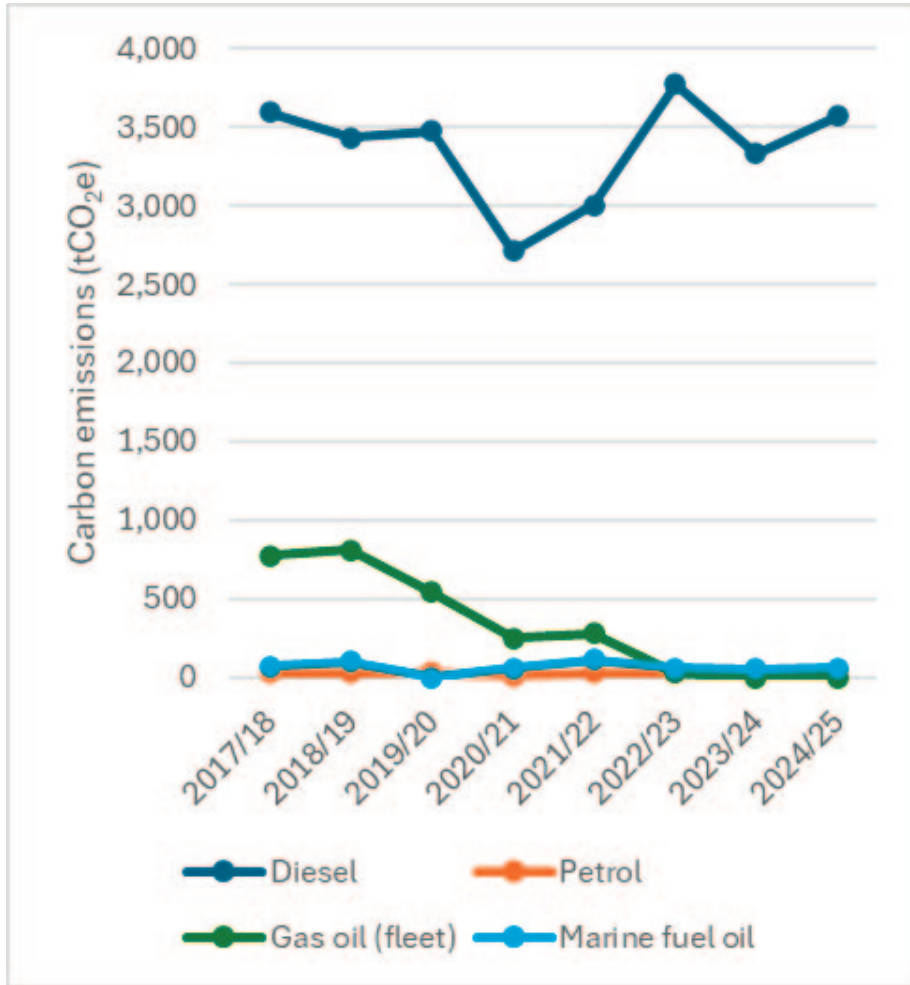
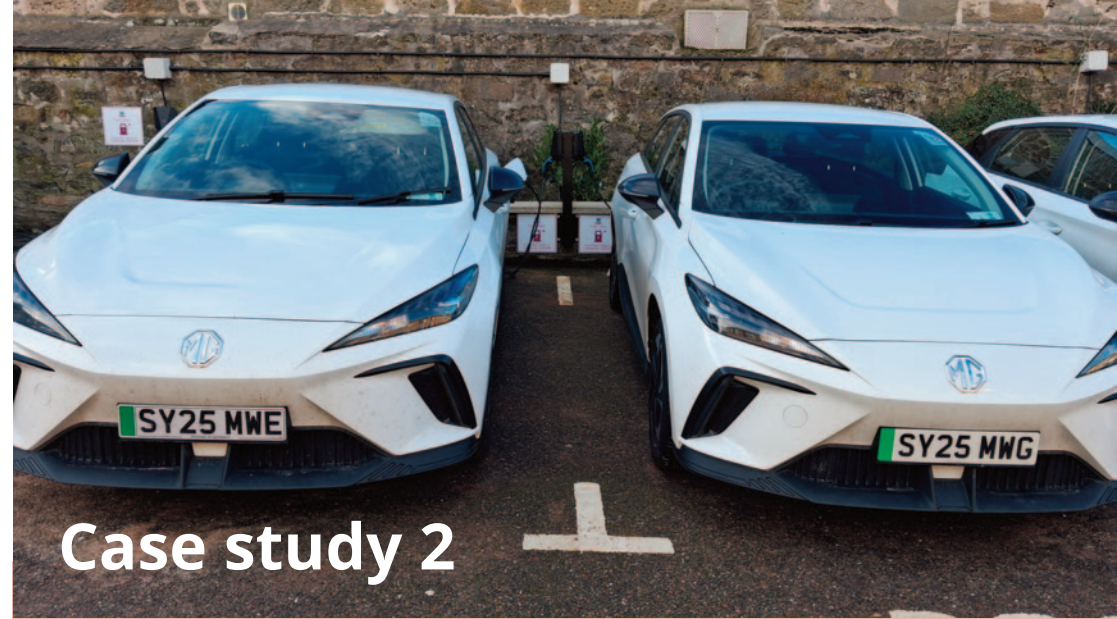


Figure 7. Moray Council's Transport related emissions over time



Case study 2

In 2025, 9 EV charging points were installed in Rose Cottage car park to be used for pool cars. 6 diesel pool cars which each travel around 80,000 miles on average were replaced with 6 electric vehicles. They were chosen for their 8-year warranty, low cost, long range, and good internal size.

These changes resulted in:

- Environmental Impact: CO₂ emissions reduced by approximately 11.5 tons annually
- Financial Impact: fuel savings; £5,000 per year; maintenance costs reduced by 75%
- Operational Impact: vehicles met all performance requirements

The replacement was based on a feasibility study around the demand for more EVs, availability of power at the location, and a 'spend (capital) to save (revenue)' approach - where the lifetime costs are less than similar sized diesel vehicles.

The main challenge has been around load-balancing. This involves allowing the maximum number of cars to be charged over a period of time without depriving HQ of power which it needs for office functions & heating. That has been dealt with through using load balancing software and maximum load hardware.

3.2.3 Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Decarbonising council fleet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Displace fossil fuel powered vehicles and plant with ULEV alternatives (as budgets allow) ● Trial HVO fuel in diesel fleet vehicles ● Monitor progress on hydrogen suitability for fleet vehicles ● Develop Ashgrove depot as a green hub
Actions and opportunities to reduce commuting emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote active travel for Moray Council employees ● Monitor uptake of ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) salary sacrifice scheme for employees
Facilitating emissions reduction from travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete delivery of Pathfinder Project to provide more public EV charging facilities in Moray (delivered by EZO, <u>see Electric Vehicle Charging - Moray Council</u>) ● Parking management around schools and supporting modal shift from vehicles to active travel

3.3 Waste

3.3.1 Overview

Waste is collected across Moray from households and commercial organisations. At the end of 2023, the Council diverted its municipal waste from landfill to the NESS Energy from Waste facility, shared with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. The Dallachy landfill site has now been fully capped and reinstated. Moray Council are no longer actively landfilling any waste from its operations or as received from private sector operators, which is a milestone after decades of disposing of waste through landfill.

Disposing of waste within landfill is the worst option for the environment and leads to significant carbon emissions. It should be the last resort for waste disposal (Figure 8). Prioritising the waste management hierarchy is crucial for further reduction in waste emissions. This means encouraging and implementing initiatives which promote waste prevention, reuse and recycling wherever possible. Increasing recycling has the additional benefit of reducing the emissions required to extract and process further materials.

In October 2025, SEPA released the official **Household Waste Recycling Performance** results for all Local Authorities across Scotland. The results were based on performance within the 2024 calendar year. Moray was 2nd place for recycling performance from all 32 Local Authorities with 56.7% of all waste recycled. 1st place was Clackmannanshire with 57.2%.



Figure 8 - Scotland's waste management hierarchy (Scottish Government 2015)

In addition, the Council secured £130k of funding through the **Scottish Governments Recycling Improvement Fund**, for new and improved communal recycling bins for selected locations around Moray where contamination was high through misuse. These bins have been rolled out, and the reduced levels of contamination mean that the council captures slightly higher volumes of good quality material, improving recycling and reducing the volume of material rejected and ultimately being sent away for incineration.

Moray Council's partner, Moray Climate Action Network (MorayCAN), released an insightful video on the journey of waste in Moray: **Moray Climate Action Network**.

3.3.2 Current emissions

Significant investment in the joint NESS Energy from Waste facility has resulted in a 30% reduction in emissions from the Council’s waste operations over the past reporting year, and an overall 76% reduction compared to the NESS was operational (2023). This facility processes non-recyclable waste to produce electricity for the national grid, and heat for a district heating network (See Case Study 3).

Other emissions from waste management include those incurred from commercial, industrial and clinical waste to landfill, and recycling and composting, now making up 89% and 6% of waste emissions respectively. This can be seen in Figure 9.

3.3.3 Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Reduced emissions from non-recyclable waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divert non-recyclable waste to NESS Energy from Waste facility in Aberdeen
Reduction in residual waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Zero Waste Scotland and third sector partners to progress projects to reduce waste through re-use and recycling

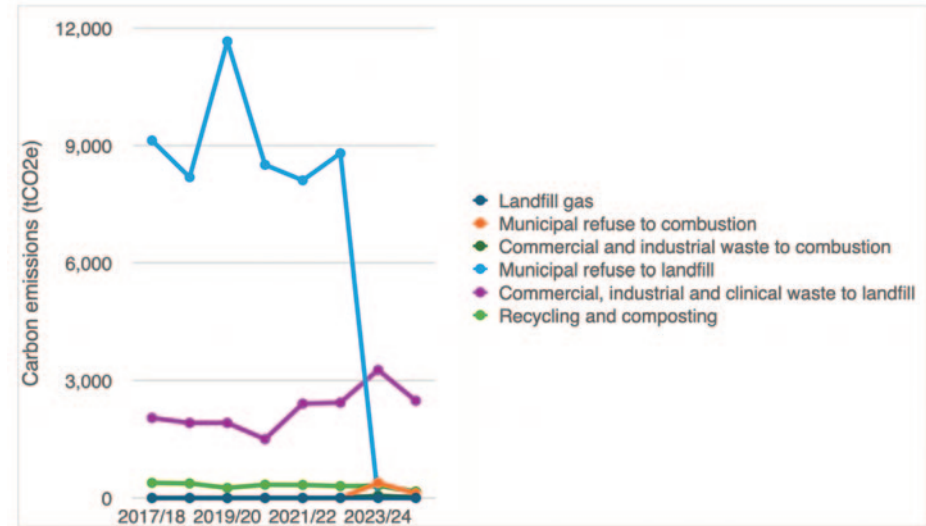


Figure 9 - Moray Council's Waste related emissions over time



Case study 3 NESS Energy from Waste facility

The NESS Facility serves three council areas, handling waste from over 226,000 homes. Each year, up to 150,000 tonnes of non-recyclable household waste is collected by the councils and delivered to the facility, which operates 24 hours a day to ensure continuous processing. On average, around 307 vehicles tip weekly at the site.

The facility not only manages waste efficiently but also generates energy: it exports 12MW of electricity to the national grid; enough to power approximately 20,000 homes and can produce up to 10MW of heat for the local district heating network. To achieve this, it burns roughly 450 tonnes of waste per day, which is equivalent to about 19 tonnes per hour, converting everyday household waste into a valuable resource for the community.



NESS opening event, 25 April 2024: L-R: Councillor Gillian Owen, Leader of Aberdeenshire Council; Councillor Ian Yuill, Aberdeen City Council Co-leader; and Councillor Kathleen Robertson, Leader of Moray Council.

3.4 Operational Activities

3.4.1 Overview

Operational emissions result from the day-to-day work of the Council. This includes the estimated carbon emissions of employees working from home, staff commuting emissions, electricity use in outdoor spaces (such as street lighting, public EV charging, car parks and public parks), the use and treatment of water, and corporate travel by public transport or employees' own vehicle.

3.4.2 Current emissions

Council staff commuting emissions have been recorded since 2022/23 and comprise 61% of the Council's operational emissions. Estimated commuting emissions prior to 2022 have been added to allow for a consistent scope. To provide better distinction between emissions sources, commuting emissions are shown separately to homeworking emissions. A Staff Travel Plan⁴ has been developed to identify opportunities to support a behavioural shift to lower emissions modes of transport where possible.

Water supply and treatment have reduced considerably. The Council's water consumption was 18.1% less than in the previous year. This can be attributed to the repair of leaks and water efficiency projects.

⁴ Published in March 2021 and up for renewal by March 2027, subject to funding.

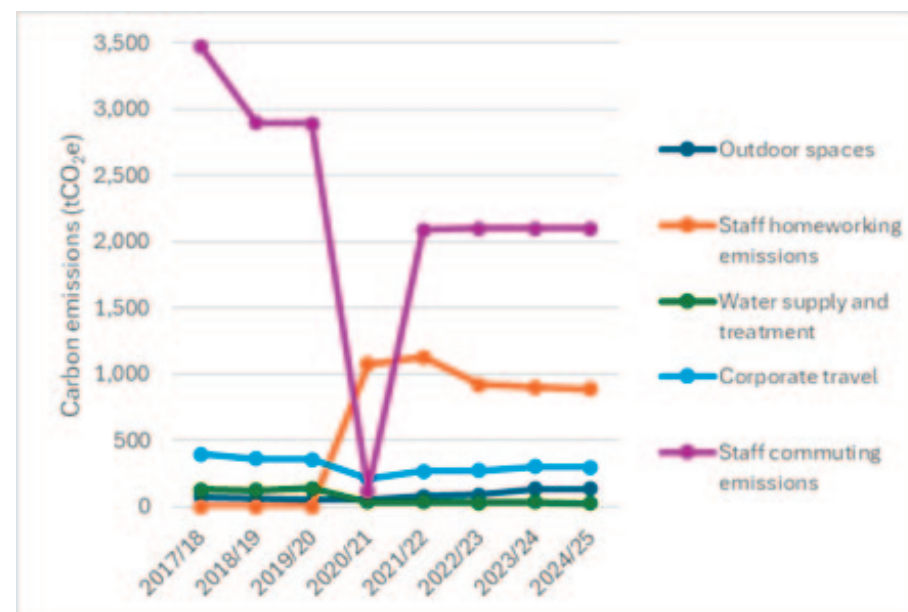


Figure 10 - Moray Council's Operational emissions over time

An online climate change training module was launched and has been completed by 518 members of staff, in between 1 March 2024 and 29 October 2025.

Communications have published numerous articles including a Climate Week Interchange article.

The Staff Travel Survey, a bi-annual survey amongst Moray Council employees, was completed in June 2025. It was completed by 178 council employees and included the following information:

- 44% live within 5 miles of work
- Cycling to work has increased from 5% to 8% and cycling for council business has increased from less than 1% to over 5% of respondents.
- Bus use has seen a noticeable jump – from less than 1% to over 5% this year.
- Walking remains the most popular form of active travel for commuting with 14%.
- 75% of staff still drive petrol or diesel vehicles with 2% using an electric vehicle. Convenience and flexibility are the main factors influencing travel choices, followed by distance.
- When asked what would encourage more active travel, the top responses were safer cycle routes and footpaths, better showers and changing facilities and secure cycle parking.
- For public transport, the most common requests were for more frequent and reliable services and cheaper fares.
- Car sharing divided opinion, 45% said nothing would encourage them, though some wanted help finding suitable lift share partners.

Five completed led rides and cycle confidence sessions have been delivered to council staff. Staff are encouraged to use the available staff pool bikes (push- and e-bikes) available at HQ, for nearby business travel or trialling commuting. Those who participated said the sessions made them more confident to use a bike in town as well as route planning.

54 Applications were made to the Cycle to Work (C2W) scheme in the last round, with an average spend of £1,457. C2W is now open twice a year.

3.4.3 Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Reduced emissions from operational actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting homeworkers to reduce their emissions through relevant advice and practical assistance
Increased awareness of actions and opportunities to tackle climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and deliver climate and nature emergency training for staff and elected members ● Update climate change awareness training as part of the employee induction process ● Increase opportunities for 'learning about climate change and nature' within the curriculum. Improve the quality of outdoor learning and play spaces ● Support the development of knowledge and skills across departments – newsletters and informal engagement, lunch & learn sessions.

Outcomes	Actions include:
<p>Integrate climate considerations in decision making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applying low carbon objectives as a factor in all investment decisions in relation to budgets and the Capital Plan ● Embed main CC Actions within relevant service plans and similar to ensure they are developed and progressed by service area ● Ensuring the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan are living documents and remain fresh and valid until 2035 ● Review climate change and biodiversity assessment of committee papers ● Continue to develop climate change guidance for the mandate decision process ● Contribute to the work of Scottish Climate Intelligence Service (SCIS) and ClimateView ● Incorporate climate risks into the corporate risk register

3.5 Procurement and investment

3.5.1 Overview

Around a third of the country's emissions are influenced by local authority practices, policy or partnerships⁵. Procurement of goods and services with the Council amounts to some £126 million annually. The Council therefore has a significant influence locally and regionally on climate change through procurement.

The **Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014** introduced a sustainable procurement duty for local authorities. This requires that before the Council buys anything, it must think about:

- how it can improve the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of Moray, with a particular focus on reducing inequality
- how its procurement processes can facilitate the involvement of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), third sector bodies and supported business
- how public procurement can be used to promote innovation

Staff procurement training was delivered in September 2024 and included a reminder about the importance of considering sustainability in tenders.

⁵ UK Climate Change Committee (2020) 'Local authorities and the sixth carbon budget'.

Only 4.08% of contracts commenced during the year included a sustainability target (in comparison to 5.68% in the previous reporting year). This falls short of the target of 20%. Work continues to explore how future procurements can include sustainability elements.

The Council has an obligation to report on progress towards a more sustainable procurement process in our **annual procurement report**, as well as part of our **Public Bodies Climate Change Duties** reports.

3.5.2 Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Maximise opportunities for climate action through procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Continue to deliver and record non-cash benefits such as sustainability, climate change and community wealth building through the procurement process● Deliver sustainable procurement guidance to officers.

4. Adapting to Climate Change and Restoring Nature

4.1 Adaptation

4.1.1. Overview

The Council has a statutory obligation within its annual Public Bodies Climate Change Duties PBCCD reporting to record how it is contributing to Scotland's Adaptation Programme (SNAP 3). There is also a statutory duty to carry out actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The key outcomes that the Council is required to contribute to include:

- **Nature connects** across our land, settlements, coasts and seas
- **Communities** are creating climate-resilient, healthy and equitable places
- **Public services** are collaborating in effective and inclusive adaptation action

NPF4 identifies the Scottish adaptation programme as a crosscutting policy link, requiring LDPs to adapt to the current and future risks of climate change. This should be done by promoting nature recovery and restoration in Moray on the one hand, and by introducing policy requirements on the other, which ensure that developments consider and take steps to address a range of climate risks.

4.1.2. Current Activity

During 2024-25, engagement with key services on how the Council is prepared for, and adapting to, the impacts of climate change continued. The council's first adaptation benchmarking report was completed, informing the development of improved recording and monitoring of adaptation activity and gaps. Information was gathered to produce a Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) 2018-2023 in 2025, assessing historical impacts to increase understanding of the potential future costs to the Council from climate change.

SNAP 3 was published in September 2024, informing the development of the Council's approach to adaptation. Notably, SNAP 3's first outcome is Nature Connects, reinforcing the Council's current approach to closely align biodiversity with wider climate action. For example, work has been in progress to map climate risk and nature-based opportunities to support adaptation in Elgin, and there are plans to replicate this for other large towns. This spatial exploration of how factors such as tree cover interact with risk of surface heat and flooding and deprivation, will be used in conjunction with Nature Networks and the Local Development Plan to inform priority areas for urban greening and community connection to nature activities. An example can be seen on Figure 11:

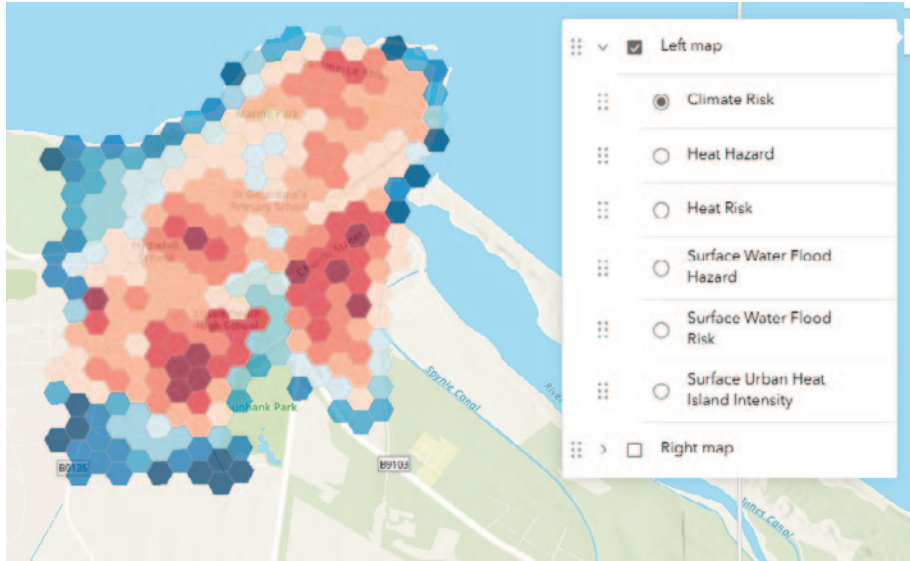


Figure 11: Draft example of combined climate risk in Lossiemouth

The Scottish Government’s guidance outlines the need for flexible measures to be taken to adapt to climate change risks to critical infrastructure.

The Council is a national leader on coastal change, applying an innovative pathway approach through a Regional Coastal Change Adaptation Plan and ten local plans. These enable the Council to plan for, and react to, different scenarios as they are triggered. Moray is covered by Regional and Local Flood Risk Management Plans that identify vulnerabilities and actions in place to address risks. Coastal and flooding plans are reported on every 3 years, and there are no updates at present.

However, grant funding was secured for several case studies, such as along various Moray coastlines. **Targeted works along the Kingston coastline and within Findhorn Bay** aim to significantly improve local resilience to flooding. Moray is the first area in Scotland to complete all **Coastal Adaptation Plans**, giving a clear roadmap for managing future coastal risk.

The Council continues to support the establishment of **Community Resilience Groups**, with eight plans now in place. These plans help communities to be prepared for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, including those made more likely by climate change, such as severe storm events.



4.1.3. Action Areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
<p>Increase understanding of climate risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create and maintain a climate impacts log ● Produce climate risk and nature-based solution maps for larger towns ● Embed adaptation within climate training and mainstreaming ● Move towards the production of a Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA)
<p>Align adaptation activities with Council's priorities Deliver and monitor adaptation action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrate or mainstream adaptation action into relevant service plans, strategies and reports ● Undertake annual benchmarking exercise ● Implement flooding and coastal risk action plans ● Incorporate adaptation into the LDP ● Implement a Moray Nature Network ● Embed adaptation in the delivery of other council activities, where appropriate
<p>Work collaboratively with partners to progress adaptation action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage communities to consider climate risk and adaptation

Case study 4 Coastal monitoring stations

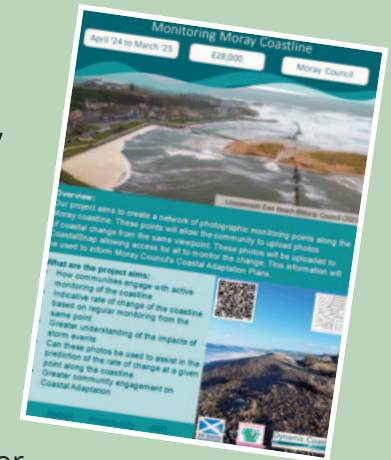
Moray Council has established a network of monitoring stations along its coastline. These monitoring points allow visitors to take photographs of the same locations over time, creating a photographic database that supports the assessment of coastal change. This evidence helps to identify whether coastal change is occurring and to determine the most appropriate management measures to be undertaken.

More information and uploading images can be done through the Coastsnap website or by installing the app.

The stations are located at the following places:

- Findhorn - 2
- Lossiemouth - 4
- Buckpool (Buckie) - 2
- Kingston - 4
- Cullen - 2

Signage at the location will be improved by installing new signs.



4.2 Biodiversity, nature and carbon sequestration

4.2.1. Overview

The Council has a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out its work and many of the Council's activities have the potential to drive biodiversity loss or nature recovery. These include discharging responsibility as Planning Authority through application of policy, as a landowner by how the estate is managed, and as Education Authority through how young people are connected with nature. The Council's Biodiversity Duty should be exercised through all these responsibilities to support the national target to restore and reverse biodiversity loss by 2045.

Enhancing biodiversity can also sequester carbon through well managed soil and vegetation, thereby reducing net emissions.

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy recognises the key role that local authorities must play in delivering nature recovery. This includes through the management of public greenspaces, developing Nature Networks, securing positive effects for nature through planning decisions, and integrating biodiversity into transportation infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage solutions.

NPF4 places the climate and nature crises at the centre of planning policy, in addition to rebalancing planning policy to ensure that positive effects for biodiversity are secured. Significant weight is to be given to the climate and nature crises in all development decisions, so that biodiversity is enhanced, and nature networks strengthened. The policies also promote the use of nature-based solutions.

4.2.2. Current Activity

The Council continued to collaborate with Wild Things! environmental education charity to deliver actions across council sites. This partnership created opportunities for forestry and nature-based skills development and supporting wellbeing through nature connection for people of all ages from across Moray. Wild Things! continued to progress aspects of this work and nature connection in council woodlands through their other programs.

The wildflower and living lawn project progressed with 5 new sites added and existing sites maintained. Ecological training was provided to Open Space operations teams to support professional knowledge around planting and management practices.

Many spaces, including woodlands, are working hard for biodiversity and climate sequestration with no active or planned management. However, most of the Council's land is not being managed with biodiversity as a primary objective. This currently includes most park land, roadside verges, school playgrounds, and land around housing and other buildings.

In terms of the Council's wider influence, planning continues to be a focus. New local guidance for biodiversity was approved, providing greater clarity on how NPF4 policy 3 is to be applied in planning decisions. Developments of every size are required to enhance biodiversity and should also use nature-based-solutions where possible. With planning permission granted for over 12,000 units each year in Moray, this presents a significant opportunity to secure positive effects for nature.

Moray Nature Network mapping was completed in early 2025. The proposed Nature Network is an aspirational plan to strengthen connections between protected sites and to create urban-rural wildlife corridors. Preparation of the Local Development Plan 2027 and Biodiversity Strategy 2026 - 2036 continue to embed the Nature Network.

As well as joining up nature rich sites, Nature Networks also aim to connect people to nature. The council has continued to collaborate closely with partners, the North East Biodiversity Partnership and Moray CAN, to support communities to learn about and engage with nature through ways such as providing advice, distributing small grants, and holding workshops.



Case Study 5

Connecting people with nature through conservation activity

Over 2024-2025, the Council partnered with Wild Things! environmental education charity to progress action plans at three sites the Council manages for nature; Millbuies, Elgin Oakwood and the Wards.

This collaboration recognised the wider benefits of spending time in nature for people's wellbeing and physical health, and is an approach the Council continues to pursue. 59 residents, including school groups and adult volunteers, helped to:

- Plant approximately 200 native trees
- Remove 1,000 old tree protector tubes
- Remove large areas of invasive non-native trees and plants
- Record wildlife sightings and submit them to the North East Scotland Biological Recording Centre
- Care for wildflower and wetland areas

They also explored the nature they were in, and had fun! The charity reported that "in addition to actioning the specific tasks required of the contract, Wild Things is particularly proud of the strong community engagement with the work, which demonstrates a deep sense of community care and concern for the natural habitats around us."

Outcomes	Actions include:
Maximise opportunities to sequester carbon within existing Council assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Progress and monitor carbon sequestration opportunities on Council land holdings, beginning with the development of a suitable delivery model
Promote nature recovery on Council land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Produce and deliver nature positive management plans for Council greenspace ● Maintain the biodiversity benefits of living lawns and wildflower program, and seek to expand it ● Increase urban canopy cover and other nature-based solutions to climate risk, providing multiple benefits to communities and developing nature networks
Nature recovery through policy and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that planning policy, guidance and decisions deliver positive effects for biodiversity ● Identify and deliver a Moray Nature Network
Work with communities and partners to progress biodiversity actions at the local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitate the development of skills and knowledge to protect and restore biodiversity in Moray ● Help facilitate community connections with nature



5. Sustainable Development and Wider Influence

5.1. External influence

5.1.1. Overview

Many of the Council's statutory duties focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the wider Moray area. This includes actions such as supporting energy efficiency improvements in homes, encouraging active travel and promoting green skills training as part of a just transition away from fossil fuels.

While this will not reduce the Council's direct carbon footprint, the Climate Change Strategy also seeks to reduce carbon emissions across Moray by demonstrating leadership and facilitating good practice.

The leadership role of local authorities is reflected in the Scottish Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change, to support the wider area to understand, participate and act on climate change. This includes being prepared for the impacts of climate change, and several of the Council's responsibilities to the wider area cross over with the duty to support delivery of the Scottish National Adaptation Programme. In delivering the Biodiversity Duty, the Council must also aim to engage the wider community with nature alongside embedding nature conservation in service delivery.

Engaging with the community is essential to understand local concerns and bring about necessary change. A collaborative

approach can lead to more effective policies, behavioural changes, enhanced community resilience and a reduction in climate change impacts.

5.1.2. Current activity

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

The Council has produced its first **Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy 2023-2028** and an accompanying Delivery Plan. This Strategy aims to support the provision of affordable and sustainable heating solutions, reduce energy consumption and alleviate fuel poverty. This can help to create jobs, improve health and wellbeing, and contribute to achieving net zero – thus ultimately benefitting the local economy and wider environment.

Housing Support

Two housing improvement projects (non-council owned) have taken place during 2024/25:

- 1) **Energy Efficiency Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES: ABS)**
Mobilisation of the ABS projects was hindered due to delays receiving grant confirmation. However, 49 properties have benefitted from energy efficiency measures from the 2024/25 allocation, bolstered by over commitment from previous year with an investment value of £1.02 million. Works included insulation, ASHP, PV, and battery installation.

Learnings from this year regarding marketing is that the Moray area seems to respond best to in-person efforts such as telephoning. Uptake from social media ads, postcards, and letter drops has been low. The aim would be to engage in more in-person canvassing, events, and continuing telephone calls for future projects. With the announcement that solar PV will no longer need to be a special project, we are also confident that we will get higher uptake with this measure back on offer.

2) ECO4 Flex

Since May 2024 until present, the Energy Company Obligation project (ECOECO4 Flex) has:

- Provided £2M in ECO funded upgrades to Moray Private Housing; 120 installations complete.
- Displaced 595 tCO2 emissions annually
- Saved householders roughly £209k annually in bill costs

The ECO4 Flex programme is due to end March 2026. However, up to 2025 the following measures have been installed:

	Total per measure
Air Source Heat Pump	90
Battery Storage	1
Cavity Wall Insulation	11
Electric Storage Heaters	10
Gas boiler upgrade	7
Internal Wall Insulation	24
Loft Insulation	36
Other	3
Room-In-Roof Insulation	14
Smart heating controls	32
Solar Photovoltaic	98
Underfloor Insulation	7

Figure 12: ECO4 Flex programme - energy saving installations in reporting year 2024/25.

Heat network

The Council is investigating the feasibility of a heat network for the centre of Elgin. The Scottish Government Heat Network Support Unit (HNSU) funded a feasibility study where Buro Happold was appointed to carry out engagement and produce a high-level feasibility study. The feasibility study is being complimented by an addendum looking at opportunities to include community energy and waste heat from nearby business.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

NPF4 must address the global climate emergency and nature crisis by ensuring the spatial strategy will reduce emissions and adapt to current and future risks of climate change. It will help to guide the location of new housing, transport links and infrastructure, ensuring that communities have access to the services they need whilst enhancing the environment and meeting net zero targets.

NPF4 introduces the concept of Local Place Plans (LPPs) which are community-led plans that provide a framework for shaping the future of local places. LPPs are an essential tool for engaging with communities and fostering local democracy, ensuring that Moray's towns and villages are designed with the people who live there in mind.

Hydrogen Strategy

The Council's Hydrogen Strategy seeks to encourage a local supply chain for hydrogen production and use, providing job opportunities and economic benefits for the region. Using green hydrogen as a fuel for transport, heating and industrial processes, is likely to be essential for cutting Moray's regional carbon emissions.

When it is financially viable, the Council will consider piloting a small number of hydrogen vehicles within its fleet using hydrogen produced elsewhere, in a move to provide demand for hydrogen.

SCIS

The Council is also engaged in work with the **Scottish Climate Intelligence Service** (SCIS) to better understand Moray's area-wide emissions and develop an area-wide Climate Change Strategy in partnership with the Moray Climate Action Network (Moray CAN).

EV charging

EZO has been awarded the contract to deliver charging infrastructure across the north of Scotland, covering the Highlands, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Moray Council areas. These chargers will be migrated from ChargePlace Scotland as part of the transition process. More information can be found on the **Moray Council website**.

Just Transition

The Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund, launched in 2021, is a £500m ten-year commitment to support projects in the Moray and the North East which contribute towards a just transition away from carbon-intensive industries. The fund represents a significant economic opportunity for Moray with the potential for the creation of jobs, support for innovation and enterprise, and the development and maintenance of a skilled workforce.

Funding for a 2-year fixed-term senior project officer was approved by the Council in February 2025. This officer joined the Strategic Planning and Development section in August 2025 and has responsibility for leading on project development for the Just Transition Fund.

It is anticipated that future projects will build upon earlier work commissioned through the Council's 2022 Just Transition funding bid.

5.1.3. Action areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Develop skills and the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increasing provision of relevant skills and knowledge for a greener economy to support delivery of the Moray Apprenticeship Strategy ● Support the planning and delivery of awareness raising events for businesses to transition to a green economy ● Joining support networks to assist the progress of climate change action
Enabling the community to understand and act on climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consulting community groups and residents about climate action and delivering the Climate Change Strategy ● Support the work of Moray CAN ● Engaging with communities to facilitate renewable energy projects ● Support the development of a Moray-wide climate strategy ● Support the reporting of area wide emissions and actions Promoting the Active Travel Strategy ● Continuing the Energy Efficiency Scotland: Area Based Scheme (EES: ABS) ● Implement ECO4 scheme for energy efficient home improvements targeted at tackling fuel poverty

Outcomes	Actions include:
Delivering the LHEES Delivery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving the energy efficiency of buildings while supporting a wellbeing economy, and a Just Transition ● Decarbonising building heat sources including supporting heat networks while tackling fuel poverty and improving health
Delivering the Moray Hydrogen Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to support a hydrogen steering group and develop relationships with key partners and adjacent Councils ● Develop a hydrogen fleet pilot when availability of hydrogen and suitable vehicles allow
Strategic planning which reflects the climate and nature emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implementing NPF4 policies relating to the climate and nature crises ● Developing a Regional Spatial Strategy ● Embedding climate change into new place based, people centred, delivery focussed LDP ● Developing 20-minute neighbourhood concepts for Moray's main towns and embedding within the next Local Development Plan

Outcomes	Actions include:
<p>Strategic planning which reflects the climate and nature emergency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting and supporting brownfield over greenfield development ● Deliver Moray Growth Deal Housing Mix Delivery project ● Update climate change guidance for planning applications in line with national guidance

Case study 6

M.Connect



M.Connect is an on-demand bus service which aims to reduce transport-related emissions by 30 tonnes of CO₂e per year by 2030 and is making strong progress toward its carbon reduction targets. The service has encouraged a clear shift from car to bus travel, with 9,763 additional passenger journeys in 2023/24 and a further 19,712 in 2024/25. This modal shift resulted in indirect emissions savings of 11.6 tCO₂e in 2023/24 and 23.18 tCO₂e in 2024/25, compared with the same journeys being made by car.

Across 2023/24 and 2024/25, the service covered 126,363 miles, generating 15.36 tCO₂e from electricity use. By comparison, operating a diesel fleet over the same distance would have produced an estimated 52.32 tCO₂e. Electric operation also delivered cost savings, with electricity costs of £22,246 compared to an estimated £29,148 in diesel fuel.

Both the M.Connect project and PTU's routine fleet replacement programme remain aligned in their commitment to investing in electric vehicles (EVs). In 2027, two 33-seat EVs with improved range are expected to be introduced, allowing them to operate fully on timetabled service routes. The project also plans to install 200 kWh charging units across the network, significantly reducing charging times and increasing vehicle availability. Further EV procurement is planned for 2029, 2030 and 2031, supporting a sustained transition to a low-emission public transport fleet.

5.2. Sustainable Development

5.2.1. Overview

Sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This requires balancing social, economic and environmental considerations to ensure changes are equitable, and these values closely align with our corporate vision and key priorities, as can be found in the **Corporate Plan 2024-2029**:

- 1) Tackle poverty and inequality
- 2) Build thriving, resilient, empowered communities
- 3) Build a stronger, greener, vibrant economy

5.2.2. Current activity

All Public Sector Bodies must demonstrate how they are progressing sustainable development as part of their Best Value duties, ensuring that sustainable development is:

- Reflected in their vision and strategic priorities
- Embedded in their governance arrangements
- Contributed to in the way resources are planned and used
- Effectively promoted through partnership working

The Council approved a **Sustainable Development Statement** in November 2024, including actions identified to progress over the short to medium term. Further guidance has been produced on how officers can include sustainable development in the implications section of committee reports.

The Council's approach to sustainable development reporting and activities will go out for public consultation as part of the process of updating the Climate Change Strategy 2025-2035.

5.2.3. Action Areas

Outcomes	Actions include:
Embed sustainable development into daily service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ensure sustainable development is included within Council decision making● Identify any further sustainable development gaps● Consider and embed community views on sustainable development

6. Where are we going

6.1 Pathway to net zero and carbon budgets

The Council currently faces a significant challenge in meeting its carbon reduction targets. Existing efforts have shown promising results, but haven't yet achieved the desired structural decline, and a more robust approach and firmer commitment is needed.

The current pathway of recorded emissions (Figure 13) is a projection created using the data from the annual emissions contained in our Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reports, in addition to other known data relating to the Council's pre-planned and approved actions.

The current pathway aims to show a realistic projection for the years ahead, based on current plans and trends, and constraints on implementation, technological availability and funding scarcity. Avoiding late adoption of technology and measures to reduce carbon emissions are critical because demand could increase costs as the 2045 deadline approaches, and public and private sectors are potentially legislated to take action.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (Scottish Carbon Budgets) Amendment Regulations 2025 aims to establish legally binding carbon budgets for Scotland, setting limits on greenhouse gas emissions for the periods 2026-2030, 2031-2035, 2036-2040, and 2041-2045. This replaces the annual target approach as they are highly vulnerable to year-to-year fluctuations, whereas multi-year carbon budgets provide a more reliable framework for sustained emissions reduction progress. The proposed national budgets are in line with the advice from the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the Scottish Government's own assessments.

The average level of emissions for Scotland over each five-year period are:

- 57% lower than 1990 levels for 2026 - 2030
- 69% lower than 1990 levels for 2031- 2035
- 80% lower than 1990 levels for 2036 - 2040
- 94% lower than 1990 levels for 2041 - 2045

The assumptions for our current plans are included in carbon budget 1 (2025-30) as can be seen in Figure 14. The necessary reductions to meet carbon budgets 2 (2030-35) and 3 (2035-40) are greater because of the expected timing for decarbonising areas such as transport or heating. This anticipates accelerated decarbonisation at a later stage when low and zero emissions technologies become more established and cost effective.

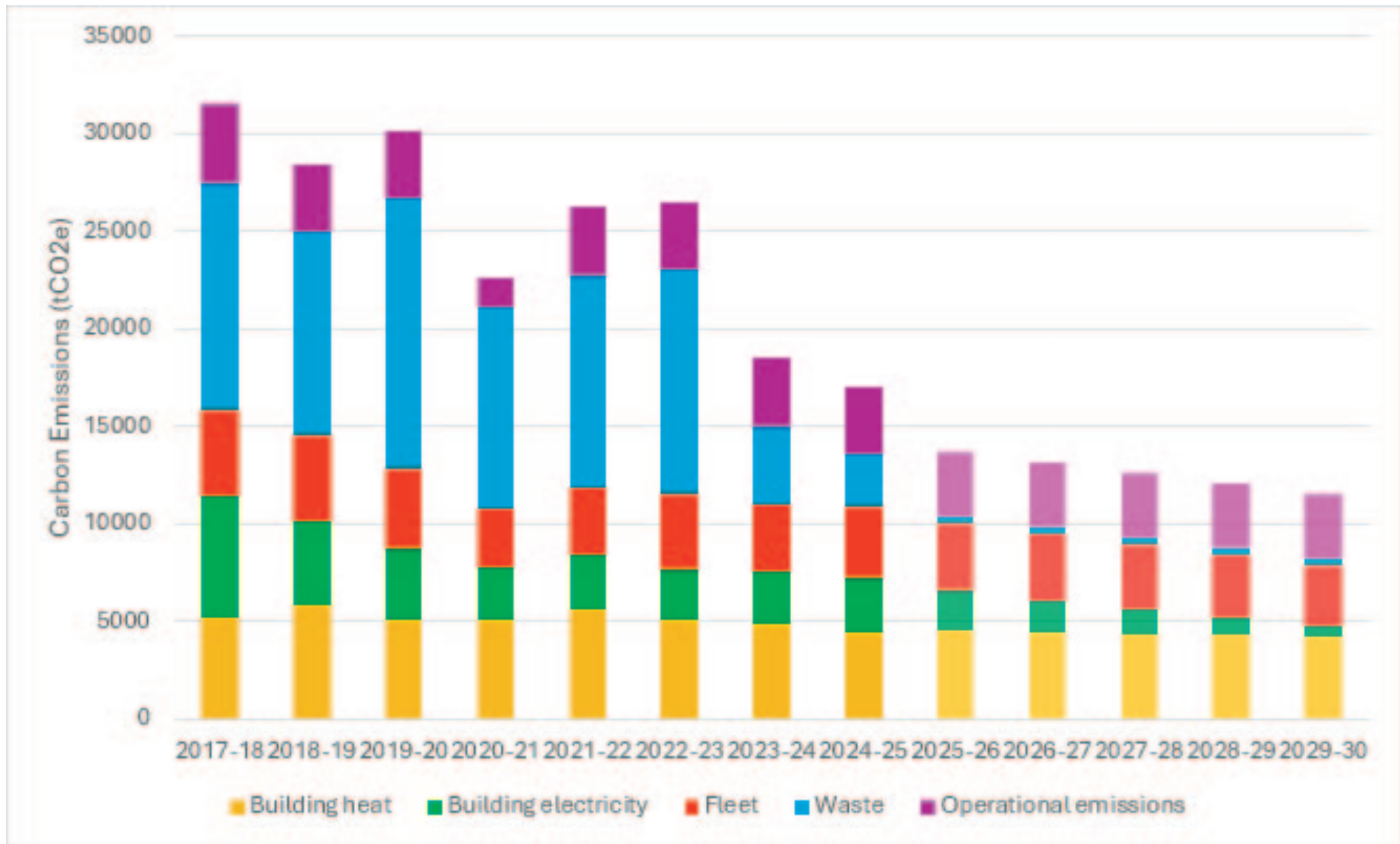


Figure 13 - Current pathway of recorded carbon emissions from baseline date to 2030. Figures from 2025-26 and onwards are forecast estimates and denoted by a lighter colour.

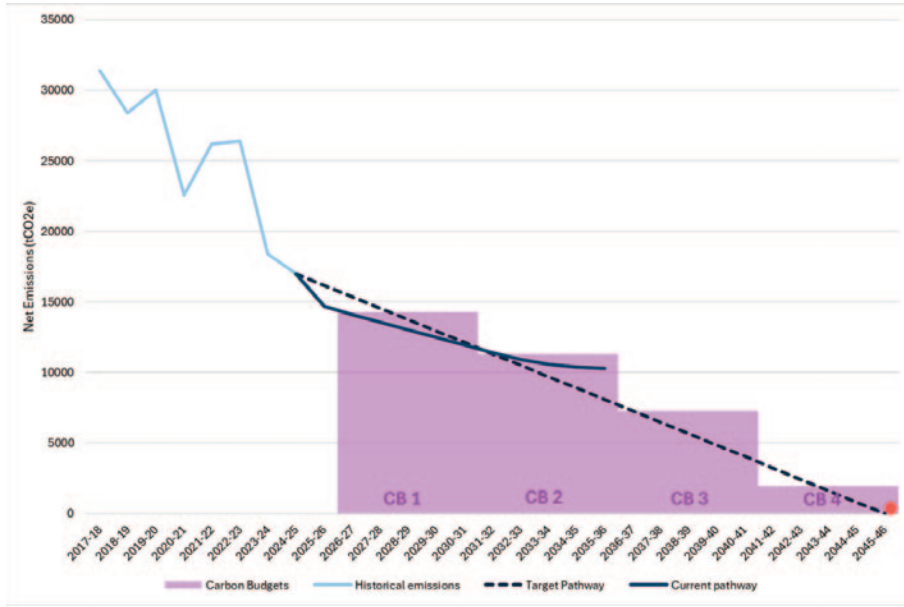


Figure 14. Proposed carbon budgets and current emissions pathway

The current pathway shows only approved current plans and external savings. To reach net zero by 2045 the Council needs to be on the target pathway. The areas of building heat and fleet are the largest areas of emissions for the Council and among the most difficult to reduce. Therefore, the Council should progress additional plans at pace to reduce its emissions from building heat and fleet vehicles from 2030 to ensure the Council is within its carbon budget.

The CCS already recognises the need for external funding to accelerate the pace of decarbonisation. The recent capital budget cuts (totalling £34.2M over the next 3 years) significantly limits financial flexibility in the short term. As a result, capital-intensive actions must either be 'spend-to-save', linked to existing approved expenditure, or externally funded. While the Council has successfully secured external funding for climate change projects, many available funding sources are challenging to access. Some are limited by annualised funding cycles, while other funding is offered in the form of loans.

To ensure that carbon reductions can continue it is important to prepare by strategically developing projects to advance the Council's priorities, enhancing our ability to respond to external funding opportunities when they arise.

6.2 Being ready for climate impacts

There remains a critical gap in the Council's readiness for the impacts of climate change. A recent assessment revealed a lack of understanding about the Council's vulnerability to climate impacts and the potential financial implications.

Lack of data means it is difficult to estimate the cost to the Council of climate impacts, however as the Scottish Fiscal Commission have outlined, 'the implications of not investing in adaptation would be harmful in the long term and could lead to even more pressure on future Scottish Budgets'. Improved recording and plans for detailed climate change risk assessment will lead to a better understanding of likely future costs.

An adaptation plan will be embedded within the upcoming Climate Change Strategy Update. The plan will set out how adaptation can be better incorporated into the Council's organisational processes, and its responsibility and influence on the wider area. This includes mechanisms to facilitate adaptation in Moray through partnership working, planning policy, coastal change adaptation plans, community resilience plans and Nature Networks.

The SNAP 3 places greater emphasis on the interconnection between climate and nature, drawing close links to the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and NPF4. With the publication of SNAP 3, the Council's Climate Change Strategy update will be able to integrate the planned national outcomes with local needs, as well as develop measures that align with the national monitoring framework.

6.3 Restoring nature

The Council's commitment to nature conservation has grown, but future success hinges on securing new funding sources and integrating biodiversity efforts with other initiatives. While statutory targets and the uncertain future of Scottish Government funding pose challenges, the Council plans to address these through a new Moray Council Biodiversity Strategy, improved staff training, and a focus on community engagement and evidence-based actions.

The level of nature positive activity taken by the Council has been steadily increasing since the 2018-20 Biodiversity Duty report. The publication of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Plan has informed the actions being developed within the Council's Biodiversity Strategy, including one for Council owned and managed greenspace, to have management and maintenance plans that reflect biodiversity and open space priorities. As further guidance is produced by the Scottish Government on this action, it will support the Council to manage more areas of land with biodiversity as a priority. The Scottish Government's Natural Environment Bill may lead to statutory targets for nature restoration. This is likely to bring further responsibilities for local authorities.

In terms of land management, improvements largely relied on dedicated funding through the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, which runs until 2025/26. There is a risk that progress will slow if this funding stream is not renewed. Alternative sources, including private finance and embedding biodiversity within other projects such as the Moray Growth Deal and town centre improvements, will be essential. As the Council's Natural

Capital Study recommends, carbon sequestration should also be delivered in conjunction with biodiversity enhancement.

As the Draft Biodiversity Strategy makes clear, engaging communities and increasing opportunities for young people to engage with nature to bring additional benefits should be a priority and support the sourcing of funding. A new pilot project, Moray Climate Ready Schools, started working with targeted schools in 2025. The project is a partnership between the council and environmental education charities Wild Things and Nature 4 Health, and aims to deliver biodiversity enhancements in school grounds alongside providing climate and nature learning opportunities for pupils and staff. This project is ongoing with five schools currently taking part. Wider work to support all Moray schools to deliver quality outdoor learning and Learning for Sustainability, includes the Moray Growth Deal's STEM project and planned outdoor learning centre.

Statutory responsibilities for biodiversity have significantly increased through the introduction of NPF4, introducing additional work. Training will be offered to support the planning service to deliver positive effects for biodiversity in Moray while ecological expertise will be drawn upon for larger and more complex developments. Wider engagement with councillors, staff and developers is also needed to mainstream these recent changes and forthcoming new Local Plan policies.

A significant challenge over the coming years will be the delivery of the Moray Nature Network, which is a requirement of the LDP. While the Scottish Government has funded mapping and engagement, delivery and monitoring will require additional resources. This should be delivered through an integrated approach, bringing wider community benefits while also supporting climate adaptation and mitigation.

6.4 Sustainable development

Actions which promote sustainable change are included throughout this report. These and other activities will be considered for inclusion in the corporate annual Best Value Self-Evaluation. Any possible alterations will be incorporated into the next iteration of the Sustainability Statement. There will also be opportunities to scope out Partnership interest in shared Sustainable Development priorities and actions in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) Review.



7. Conclusion

This report shows that Moray Council continues to make tangible progress in reducing its carbon emissions while delivering essential services. Since the 2023/24 reporting year, the Council's emissions have decreased by 7.7%.

The Council's largest sources of emissions remain building heat, fleet operations, and staff commuting. Reductions in fleet and buildings are complex capital-intensive and constrained by the Council's budget pressures. Nevertheless, progress has been achieved through estate rationalisation, energy efficiency measures, renewable energy installations, and targeted fleet electrification, often delivered through "spend-to-save" or externally funded approach. Waste emissions have reduced substantially following the move away from landfill, however, waste prevention and increased recycling must remain priorities to ensure long-term sustainability. Encouraging more sustainable staff travel continues to be challenging, often influenced by factors such as high public transport costs and limited timetables, the need for flexibility, and a perceived lack of a consistent active travel network.

Looking ahead, the national shift from annual emissions targets to legally binding multi-year carbon budgets represents a significant change in policy framework. These carbon budgets provide a more stable and realistic basis for planning, replacing year-on-year targets that were vulnerable to short-term fluctuations.

The Council can contribute to these targeted reductions by adopting carbon budgets in the updated Climate Change Strategy. The Council's current actions align with the first carbon budget period, however, steeper reductions will be required in subsequent periods to remain within future budgets and achieve net zero by 2045.

Meeting this challenge will require accelerating the decarbonisation of building heat and fleet vehicles, strengthening project readiness to secure external funding, and embedding climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity considerations across all services and investment decisions. It is important to recognise that climate change action is not an additional burden, but an integral part of how the Council services operate. Investing now will help to avoid higher costs in the future. Continued leadership, partnership working and a strategic, budget-led approach will be essential to ensure progress is maintained and scaled in line with the new carbon budget framework.

The Just Transition Fund has considerable potential to build on existing activity and stimulate new, innovative and structural initiatives that can deliver lasting, carbon-neutral benefits for people, place and the environment.

Alongside efforts to reduce the Council's own emissions, it is essential to continue preparing for a future in which climate impacts are expected to increase. Taking action to adapt now will help to protect communities and reduce costs in the long term.

8. Glossary

Active travel (AT)	Journeys made by modes of transport that are fully or partially people-powered, irrespective of the purpose of the journey. It includes walking, people using wheelchairs, cycling (including e-bikes) to name a few.
Adaptation	Adjustments in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.
Baseline	Historical period specified for the purpose of comparing greenhouse gas emissions.
Biodiversity	The variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems (UN 1992).
Carbon	Umbrella term used to describe all of the greenhouse gases.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂)	A naturally occurring gas, CO ₂ is also a by-product of burning fossil fuels (such as oil, gas and coal), of burning biomass, of land-use changes and of industrial processes (e.g., cement production). It is the principal anthropogenic greenhouse gas that affects the Earth's radiative balance.
Carbon neutrality	See net zero.
Carbon sequestration	A process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and held in solid or liquid form.
Circular economy	A circular economy is one in which resources are kept in use for as long as possible.
Climate action	Efforts taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and respond to the impacts of climate change (adaptation)
Climate change	The state of the climate that can be identified (e.g., by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer.

Climate emergency	A situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.
Co-benefits	The positive effects that a policy or measure aimed at one objective might have on other objectives, thereby increasing the total benefits for society or the environment. Co-benefits are often subject to uncertainty and depend on local circumstances and implementation practices, among other factors. Co-benefits are also referred to as ancillary benefits.
Direct emissions	Emissions directly under the organisation's control. Also referred to as Scope 1 emissions.
Drought	A prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall, leading to a shortage of water.
EV	Electric vehicle; vehicle that runs on electricity, provided by an internal battery.
Energy Company Obligation (ECO)	The ECO4 Flex is a UK government scheme that requires large energy suppliers to help households improve their energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.

EES: ABS	'Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes' is a Scottish Government programme delivered by local authorities to improve the energy efficiency of homes and reduce fuel poverty. It provides direct and free or heavily subsidised energy-saving measures in targeted neighbourhoods, helping households to lower their energy bills, improve comfort, and cut carbon emissions.
Flood	The overflowing of the normal confines of a stream or other body of water, or the accumulation of water over areas that are not normally submerged. Floods include river (fluvial) floods, flash floods, urban floods, pluvial floods, sewer floods and coastal floods.
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions	Any gas that contributes to the greenhouse effect by absorbing infrared radiation in the atmosphere.
Green jobs	Employment opportunities that contribute to environmental sustainability.

HNSU	The Heat Network Support Unit (HNSU) supports the growth of large-scale heat network projects in Scotland. It does this by addressing key challenges in the pre-capital stages of project development and building capacity across the public sector to deliver successful heat network projects through grant funding and expert advice.
Heatwave	A heatwave is an extended period of hot weather relative to the expected conditions of the area at that time of year. In Moray, a heatwave event is defined as at least three consecutive days with daily maximum temperatures meeting or exceeding 25°C.
ICE	Internal Combustion Engines; vehicles that drive on fuel such as diesel and petrol.
Indirect emissions	Emissions outside the organisation's control but over which it has an influence. Also referred to as Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions.
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A scientific body established by the United Nations to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the state of climate science and the potential impacts of climate change, as well as strategies for mitigation and adaptation.

Just transition	Ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies.
LCLIP	The Local Climate Impact Profile for Moray highlights the significant local climate impacts, including rising temperatures, increased rainfall, and rising sea levels. The profile also discusses the potential for sea level rises and the impact on the environment, food and water supply, infrastructure, and the health of the population. So far, one LCLIP has been produced (in 2025) and covers 2018- 2023.
LDP	Local Development Plan
LHEES	Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy
LPP	Local Place Plans: Community-led plans that provide a framework for shaping the future of local places. Local Place Plans - Moray Council
Mitigation	A human intervention to reduce emissions or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.
Nature emergency	The rapidly worsening state of the natural world, including the loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, and the threat of ecological collapse, caused by human activities such as habitat destruction, pollution and climate change.

Nature network	A network which connects nature-rich sites, including restoration areas and other environmental projects, through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors, and stepping-stones. Moray Nature Network - Moray Council
Net zero	Net zero emissions are achieved when anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere are balanced by anthropogenic removals over a specified period.
Offsetting	The practice of compensating for carbon emissions by funding projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions outside of the organisation's own landholdings.
PBCCD	Public Bodies Climate Change Duties
Renewable energy	Energy derived from natural sources that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed.
SCIS	Scottish Climate Intelligence Service
Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 (SNAP 3)	Sets out how Scotland will adapt to the risks identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment. The plan includes actions that fall under the Council's responsibility, and those it has a supportive role in addressing.

SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Solar Photovoltaics (PV)	Photovoltaic (PV) solar technology converts sunlight directly into electricity using solar cells.
Sustainable development	Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
tCO_{2e}	Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. A metric measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases on the basis of their global-warming potential (GWP), by converting amounts of other gases to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide with the same global warming potential.
Wildfire	Any uncontrolled vegetation fire which requires a decision, or action, regarding suppression.
ZEFRS	Zero Emission Fleet Replacement Strategy



