

Luton Net Zero Roadmap and Action Plan

Progress Report 2024



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Executive Summary

The Progress Report covers key policy and project milestones from the beginning of the Net Zero Roadmap development process in January 2022 until July 2024, which marked the first anniversary of the Roadmap's formal adoption by the Council.

The Progress Report highlights the work and impacts under the key commitments of the "Setting the Foundations" stage of the Luton Net Zero Roadmap. It covers policies and initiatives that have been delivered in the following areas:



1. Strategic decisions



2. Local policies



3. Awareness raising



4. Pilot projects



5. Leadership projects

The report also contains an index of changes to the latest, updated Net Zero Action Plan. The Action Plan with status updates of all actions is appended to the Progress Report.

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Background

In 2020 Luton Council declared a climate emergency, and started work on establishing Luton's carbon emissions profile. This led to Luton Council developing a Climate Change Action Plan and holding a Climate Change Forum in February 2020.

Further development and delivery of actions had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In early 2022 work began anew on refreshing and extending the Climate Change Action Plan to set out the Council's commitment towards helping the town achieve net zero by 2040. A wide stakeholder engagement process and public consultation with dedicated youth survey led to development of a suit of deliverables, referred to hence as the Luton Net Zero Roadmap.

The Roadmap is split into chapters focused on key emissions sources in Luton such as:



The chapter on Biodiversity and Resilience covers the wider impacts of climate change and how the town is adopting to them and supporting nature recovery.

The Roadmap was formally adopted by the Council in July 2023.

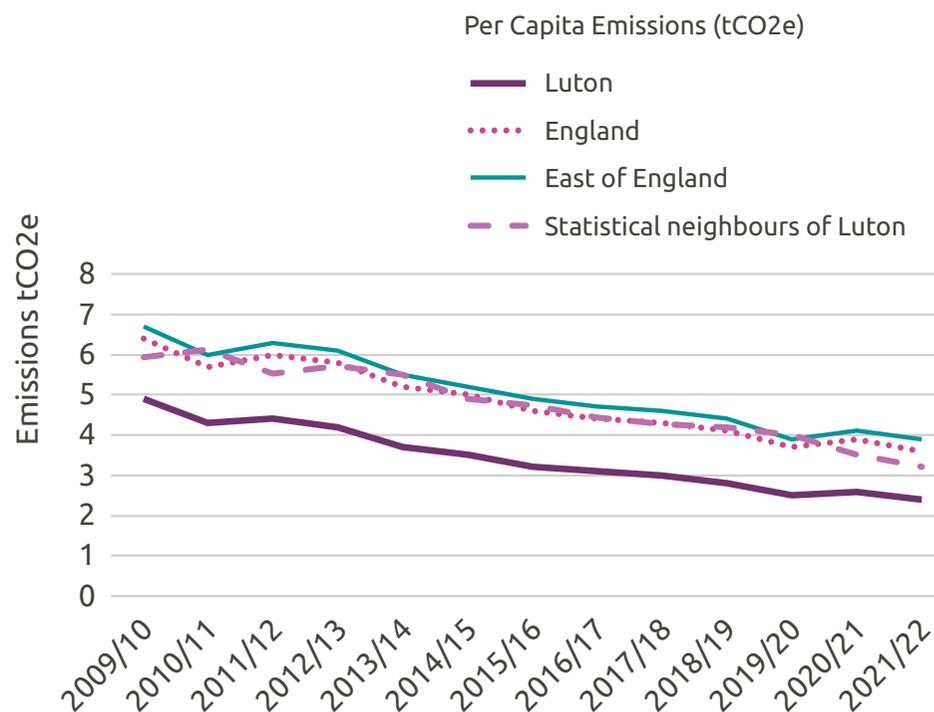
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Luton's greenhouse gas emissions

The latest government figures show that emissions produced in Luton by sector (homes, buildings, transport and industry) has shown an average reduction of 2.6% per year over the last 17 years (2005-2022).

This fairs favourably in the context of the national picture, especially when considering emissions per capita. In comparison, Luton's per capita emissions had reduced on average by 3.1% per year over the same period, well below national and regional figures.

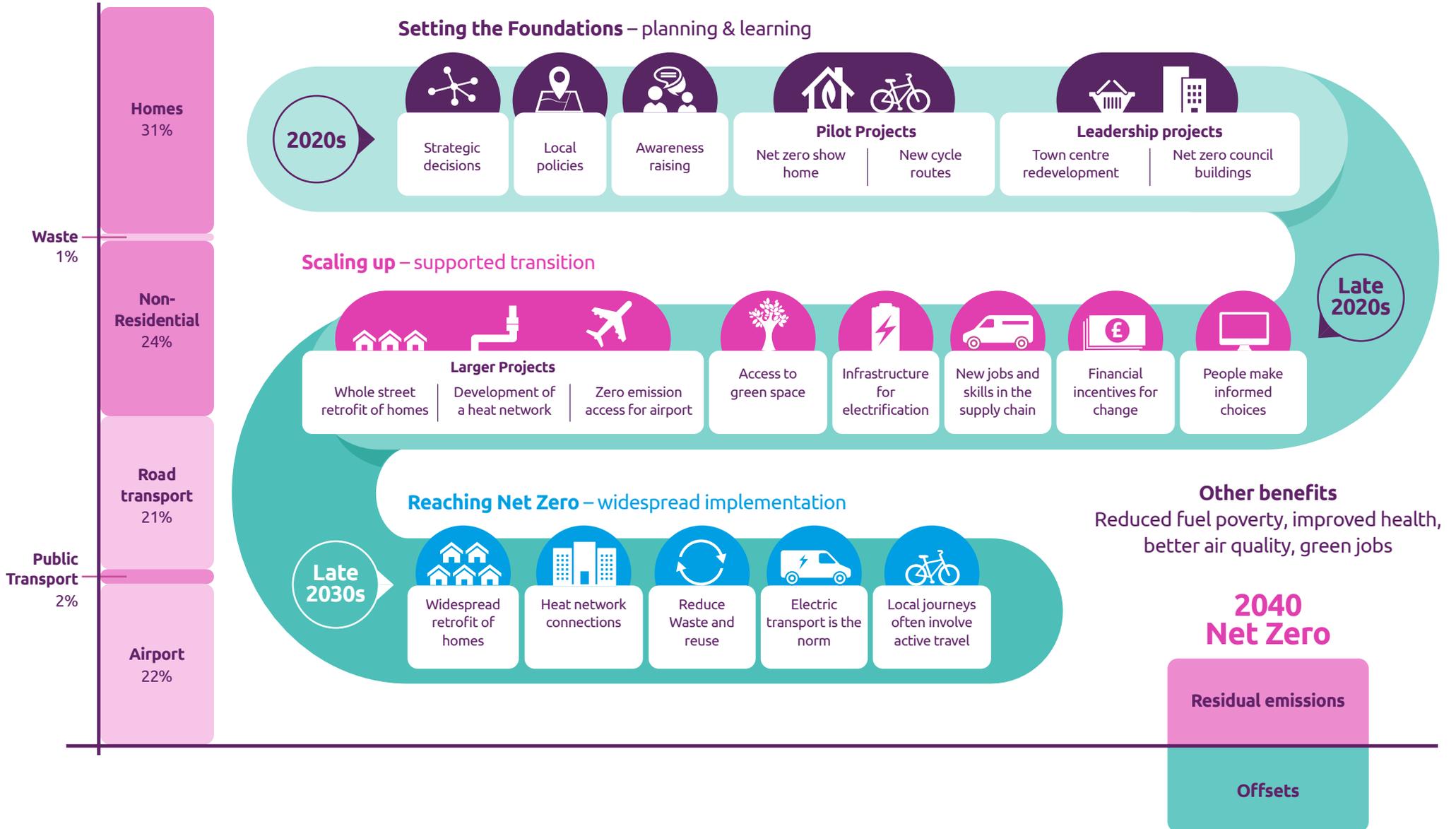
When assessing emissions data, per capita emissions is considered a more reflective data set than total emissions because it accounts for an area's population, offering a clearer sense of the average individual impact on climate change. In comparison to our statistical neighbours (such as for example Bradford, Sandwells, Leicester, Coventry, Peterborough), Luton ranks 1st out 16 Local Authorities' in per capita emissions, meaning our residents' carbon emissions are the lowest.



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Luton Net Zero Roadmap

2019 - 790 kt CO₂e



Luton Net Zero Roadmap

The Net Zero Roadmap identifies three stages in the journey to achieve net zero by 2040. These stages are:

“Setting the Foundations” – This phase in our Net Zero Roadmap is dedicated to building the essential structures and strategies that will guide us on the path to achieving net zero. At the initial stage, there is focus on defining clear goals, identifying key stakeholders, and securing leadership and governance to drive meaningful climate action.

“Scaling up” – This phase in our Net Zero Roadmap represents a key moment in our net zero journey, where we move beyond foundational strategies and pilot programs to large-scale implementation of climate solutions. At this stage, we are focused on amplifying our efforts across the entire town, driving widespread adoption of sustainable practices, and significantly reducing our carbon footprint.

“Reaching Net Zero” – Arriving at this phase marks the realisation that our long-term vision to eliminate our carbon footprint. Widespread residential and commercial retrofit and energy management will be practise, a meaningful circular economy would be established and a thriving transport approach and infrastructure that promotes EV’s and active travel. This phase reflects our commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors whilst investing in offset projects to address any remaining emissions.



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Setting the Foundations Stage- Progress Update

By setting a strong foundation, we are ensuring that our Roadmap to Net Zero is both ambitious and achievable, with the right structures in place to support continuous improvement, innovation, and resilience in the face of climate challenges.



Strategic decisions



Luton 2040. The Vision for Luton is ambitious and bold and strives to create a town where health, equity, fairness and sustainability is at the heart of a thriving area and where poverty is removed.

Luton's vision is built around five priorities, each of which contributes to achieving our overall ambition for the town.

1. Building an inclusive economy that delivers investment to support growth of businesses, jobs and incomes.
2. Improving population wellbeing and tackling health inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.

3. Becoming a child friendly town, where children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.
4. Tackline the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town with sustainable growth and a healthier environment.
5. Supporting a strong and empowered community, built on fairness, local pride and the powerful voice of our residents.

Tackling climate change and creating a more sustainable way of living in the near future, forms an important part of where we want Luton to be by 2040.

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Strategic decisions

The 2040 Vision has been refreshed in 2023 with five key focus areas for the Net Zero priority for the next five years (2023-28):

- Reduced net carbon emissions from businesses, organisations and households.
- A greener transport network with a reduction in car usage and increase in walking, cycling and sustainable public transport usage.
- The most sustainable airport in the UK.
- Enhanced green space and richer biodiversity that offsets emissions and enriches our local environment.
- Improved air quality across our town to support better health outcomes.

Climate Change Advisory Board

The Climate Change Advisory Board (CCAB) is a cross-party oversight board responsible for monitoring and reporting on the town's transition to net zero in 2040. The board initially set up as a task and finish group has been constituted as an advisory sub-committee of the Executive Committee and in October 2023 co-opted four youth councillors. The importance of having our young people represented within the democratic process is key to our inclusive decision-making and ensuring that the young person's voice is central to our 2040 ambitions. The CCAB reports annually to the Full Council.



Health Equity Town (Marmot Town)

In 2021, as part of Luton's strategic 2040 vision, Luton Council, in their efforts to encourage a health equity approach to improving health and wellbeing in Luton, became a Marmot Place. Since then, Luton have adopted and supported embedding thinking on tackling health inequalities and promoting actions that impact on the building blocks of health.

The council has facilitated and promoted activities that enable its partners to work together across the 8 Marmot principles. In order to support the development of our Marmot Town report, we set up a steering group of partners across the system to obtain buy-in. The work of the steering group contributed to the Reducing Health Inequalities in Luton: A Marmot Town report. The steering group have also coordinated actions across 4 agreed priority areas:

1. Children & Young People – Raising aspirations
2. Housing
3. Business, Employment and Skills
4. Net Zero

The report, Reducing Health Inequalities in Luton: A Marmot Town, is based on an assessment of data and local evidence and makes recommendations to reduce health inequalities and make Luton a fairer place to live, work, grow up and grow old in.



Local Policies

Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan

As set out in Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2017) and Gear Change policy (2020), a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is a strategic, long-term plan to enhance local cycling and walking networks. The LCWIP (adopted in 2023) identifies improvements to our cycling and walking network over a 10-year period (2023-2033). The plan includes:

- vision and objectives which ensure consideration is given to cycling and walking across the council's planning, transport, environmental, health and greenspace related policy
- a report which sets out the underlying analysis carried out and provides a narrative which supports a holistic approach to identified improvements to the network
- a network plan for cycling and walking which identifies safer and more attractive routes and areas for further development
- a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment
- a plan which helps Luton make the case for future funding to improve cycling and walking infrastructure.



EV ChargePoint strategy (2022-25)

The Council released its first ever EV ChargePoint Strategy in November 2022. The strategy helps the borough build on its aims and objectives laid out in the Net Zero Action Plan and Local Transport Plan. With the Council keen to support the transition to EV's, the strategy primarily focuses on the Council's role in increasing the provision of domestic EV charging for residents without driveways and across the Council estate.

Luton Town Centre Desing Guide – SPD

The Town Centre design guide SPD was launched in July 2023. The Guide supports the Luton Town Centre masterplan vision to deliver high-quality housing in the town centre. The Guide promotes the use of LETI Climate Emergency Guide and Easi Guide to Passivhaus Design. It also promotes the policy principles of the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Climate Challenge 2030, a compelling list of principles for designers to follow to build sustainable homes.



Local Policies

Luton's vision for a town centre is one that:

- meets needs - focused on serving its local community in the best way possible (including housing needs)
- is diversified - embracing the need for big change and adapting well to future challenges (including the introduction of attractive places to live)
- is connected - improving physical and social connections
- is clean and green - with great green spaces and inviting public spaces (including high quality amenity spaces to support residential environments).

Luton Tree Policy and Tree Management Strategy

The Luton Policy and Tree Management Strategy, supported by an action plan, sets out the framework for the sustainable management of trees across the borough of Luton over the next 10 years. The document has been adopted in April 2022.

The Strategy and policies set out the strategic vision - an increasingly healthy, diverse, growing and resilient tree population that enhances the lives of all those living, working and visiting Luton now and for future generations and includes the councils aims to ensure that tree related decisions and activities are made in a structured and consistent way and that Luton residents and stakeholders understand how the council resources the management of its tree stock.



Luton's Employment and Skills Strategy

Luton's Employment and Skills Strategy 2022-27 outlines commitment to establish Green Skills Groups, work with local businesses to understand skills gaps, strengthen partnership with education sector and develop a detailed greens and digital pathway plan.

Integrated Impact Assessment toolkit – Environmental Assessment refresh

January 2023 saw a refresh of Council's internal Integrated Impacts Assessment process. New templates, guidance and training programme had been launched. The Council wants to ensure that all council policies, plans and strategies support our corporate plan and vision for Luton 2040. A particular emphasis is given to environmental considerations of our decision-making process. The Environmental Impact Assessment which is embedded into our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) toolkit helps policymakers and project leads to understand and mitigate against environmental impacts throughout the lifecycle of the decision.



Local Policies

In progress

Council Housing Design Brief and Council Housing Net Zero Guide

Following publication of the Town Centre SPD, the Council has launched its own future homes design brief and net zero sustainability guidance. This guidance looks at best practices around energy efficient standards, renewable energy integration, sustainable construction practices, water conservation and building regulation and compliance.

Local Transport Plan 5 – refresh of the existing policy

The latest refresh of the Local Transport Plan is currently underway. Into its fifth iteration, the LTP will now be based on quantifiable carbon reduction and improving health as its main themes. The Plan highlights the importance of travel behaviour around carbon impacts and encourages a more sustainable way to travel in the borough.

Urban Planning and Development – review of the Local Plan

A Local Plan sets out local planning policies and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built where. Adopted local plans provide the framework for development across England.



A refresh of Luton's Local Plan is currently underway, with the Council's strategic objective to be net zero at the cornerstone of the Plan's aspirations to create a more sustainable, positive growth in Luton.

Nature recovery and biodiversity

Work is in progress on Bedfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Surveys on desired changes and priorities for nature had now been completed. Consultation on the draft Strategy is expected in Spring 2025.

From February 2024 developers are required to conduct a biodiversity assessment at the beginning of the planning process to evaluate existing habitats and species on-site. These assessments quantify the biodiversity value of the site and guide the level of improvement or offset required to meet biodiversity net gain targets.





Awareness Raising

Climate Action Teachers Champions (CATCh) Programme

The Climate Action Teachers Champions Programme is a dedicated support programme aimed at working with local teachers and their schools to unlock their sustainability goals and ambitions. The Programme has received national recognition in 2024, with the Local Government Association (LGA) profiling the project as part of its exemplar education case study's series. In 2023 and 2024 the programme has been completed by 27 schools.

Climate Change Guide

In preparation to reach our commitment of net zero emissions by 2040, we've released our first ever climate change guide in 2022. The guide is aimed at:

- raising awareness of climate change
- helping people to identify their carbon footprint
- helping people to reduce their carbon impact
- key facts and figures in energy conservation and carbon reduction measures.

An electronic copy of the Guide is available to download on the Council website



Over 200 Luton businesses completed Staff Travel Plans by now

Staff travel plans have been developed amongst Luton's largest employers, including the Council, University of Bedfordshire, Luton and Dunstable Hospital, Luton Point businesses and others. Staff travel plans encourage our local employers to support their staff's ambitions to lead a healthier, more sustainable lives. The Council supports the Modeshift STARS certification scheme, where businesses are led through a structured recognition and support process evidencing how their organisations are showing excellence in supporting active and sustainable travel.

Carbon Literacy Training

The Council is currently rolling out a range of Carbon Literacy Training amongst staff and leaders, with Member training being planned for 2025. CLT has offered a chance to work on carbon knowledge, understand the organisation's ambition and to create effective pledges that could shape service delivery going forward.



Awareness Raising

Net Zero Innovation Programme

The Energetic Lifestyles project explored young people's perspectives, in establishing an improved understanding of the perceptions and barriers to energy efficient behaviours among young people and ethnically diverse communities. By doing so, the project has identified ways to enhance engagement of young people in particular in discussing, understanding and disseminating critical approaches to the development and adoption of (new) energy efficient initiatives.

World café Guide

Through the Net Zero Innovation Programme, the Climate Change team had the opportunity to work with academics from University of Bedfordshire, Aston University, London Southbank University, and University College London to explore engagement techniques for research purposes. This work eventually developed into the publication of the World Café Guide, an innovative and effective engagement approach.

An electronic copy of the Guide is available to download from the Council website.



The Strategy Rooms

The Strategy Room is an immersive experience which uses facilitated discussion and social psychology to find out what non-experts really think about climate change policies. It's a way for someone to walk in off the street and within 90-120 minutes, to imagine the benefits of a Net Zero future, and to have their say on how we get there.

Luton was one of eight Authorities that took part in the study. A copy of the study and its findings can be found on the Council's website.

Community Climate Action Guide – coming soon

Emerging Community Climate Action Guide is aiming to bridge the gap between understanding of global climate change and a local action. Community groups and organisations engaged in the Fairness Taskforce process and benefiting from Citizens Funds allocations (managed by the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation) have been given chance to work with council officers and environmental experts to embed climate training and raise awareness on what could be achieved at a local level. Learning had been captured in a dedicated toolkit aimed at local community groups and organisations.



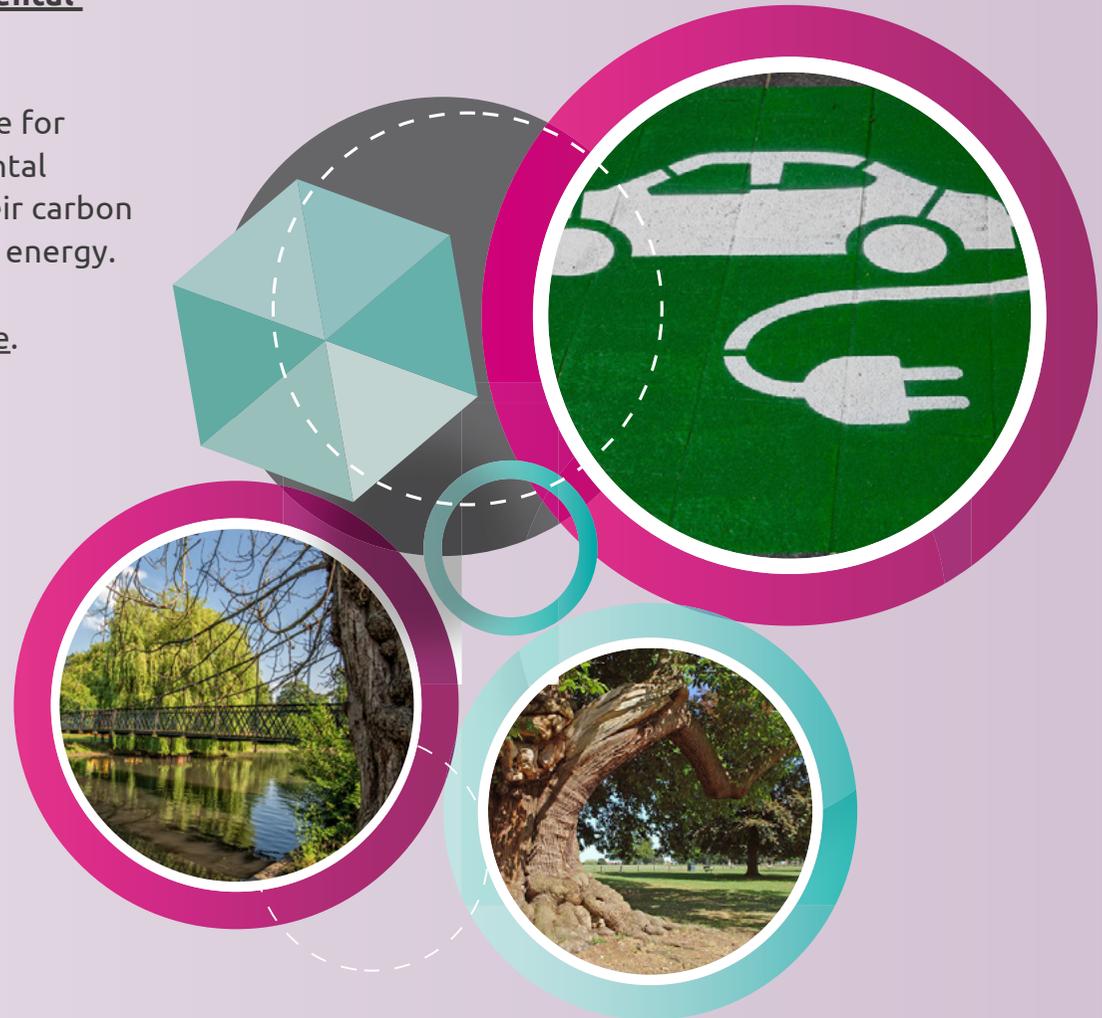
Awareness Raising

Save the Planet Level 1 Qualification in Environmental Awareness

Summer 2024 saw a launch of Luton 4 week challenge for residents to gain a Level 1 qualification in environmental awareness and apply their knowledge to reducing their carbon emissions, eating a more sustainable diets and saving energy.

More details could be found on the [provider's website](#).

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Pilot Projects

Low carbon retrofit home

The low carbon retrofit home was a partnership project between the Council's Climate Change and Housing teams and Luton Rising. The retrofit project was an exemplar project aimed at showcasing the latest renewable energy and energy efficiency technology in a residential property. The property was open to the public for an 8-week period in late 2023 and attracted more than 200 visitors in that time. The property included measures such as:

- Ground Source heat pumps
- Solar PV
- IoT lighting
- Sensor heating panels
- Smart air warm technology
- Insulation
- Draughtproofing
- Water harvesting

The low carbon retrofit reduced household energy bills by 70% in the home and proved to be a success in showcasing sustainable homes. The project was shortlisted for the 2024 Unlock Net Zero awards.



Sustainable Drainage Scheme (SuDS) in schools

Luton Borough Council's "SuDS in Schools – William Austin Junior School, Luton" was the overall winner of the 2024 Susdrain SuDS Awards. The project was recognised for its use of surface water as a resource, rather than something to be disposed of.

The project included:

- **SuDS planters:** Redirect rainwater from roof downpipes through the soil to promote plant growth
- **Tree pits:** Capture runoff and store it in an underground tank
- **Rainwater harvesting system:** Collects rainwater from the school's roofs to flush toilets

The project's benefits include:

- **Reduced flood risk** - SuDS slow down rainwater flow, which can help alleviate pressure on the drainage system
- **Improved water quality** - SuDS features like permeable paving filter rainwater of pollutants and oil before it returns to a watercourse
- **Benefits for people and wildlife**

SuDS create opportunities for rainwater recycling and attractive water features.

The 'Susdrain SuDS' Awards recognise projects that go above and beyond to encourage and deliver SuDS.



Pilot Projects

Private Sector Housing Energy Campaign

Following the success of a pilot project, which helped landlords and letting agents in understanding their responsibilities under new energy efficiency standards (MEES), the Council's Private Sector Housing team, launched a year-long program funded by Public Health Luton. The initiative continued to provide advice and support to active landlords and letting agents to help them meet their Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) obligations. The regulation required Landlords of all privately rented domestic properties to ensure that their premises had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of at least Band E before granting a new or renewed tenancy. However, the law changed slightly in April 2022 to include domestic rented properties which must now ensure that their properties had met these requirements.

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HACT Carbon retrofit credits scheme

The HACT Carbon retrofit credits scheme is a collaborative initiative designed to support carbon reduction in the UK's social housing sector while promoting social impact. This scheme enables social housing providers to secure funding for energy-efficient retrofitting by generating verified carbon credit, known as "Retrofit Credits", which are then sold to organisations looking to offset their carbon emissions.

Luton Council had been enlisting Council housing properties onto the scheme since it's formal launch at the end of 2022. Funding gained from sales of retrofit credits had been re-invested into further energy efficiency installations.

Making Cycles E-asier (MCE) project and Council staff e-bike scheme

The growing demand for e-bikes has been highlighted through the Council's staff e-bike scheme and the Making Cycles E-asier project. The MCE project is a national level pilot in Luton and Dunstable and aims at offering e-bike rental free to Luton and Dunstable residents for a whole month.

The DART

The Luton DART (Direct Air-Rail Transit) transfers passengers from Luton Airport Parkway station to the terminal of London Luton Airport in under four minutes. The electricly powered DART supports the future sustainable growth of London Luton Airport by reducing environmental impact of journeys to and from the airport and congestion on surrounding roads. It aims to increase rail modal share for passengers accessing the airport and support Luton's vision to become net zero by 2040.

The DART opened on 27 March 2023 and carried more than 2.7 million passengers during the first year of operation. Over the year, the Luton DART has achieved 16.2% modal share for passengers accessing the airport, peaking at 21.6% for week commencing 5 November 2023. This represented an 18% increase on the previous bus transfer service for the same week a year earlier.

Service reliability has exceeded 99 per cent, with no significant downtime other than for safety reasons following the airport car park fire.

The Luton DART service is rated 'excellent' under independent Net Promoter Score (NPS) surveys.

Bus Improvement Service Plan

Following a bid to the government's National Bus Strategy fund the Council was successful in receiving an allocation for its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The amount of £19.1 million has been confirmed to support measures over 2 years to March 2025, including:

- lower fares for children and families and those who use a concessionary pass
- development of improved bus priority lanes
- more Red Routes to help priority routes
- more enforcement cameras to help parking services
- development of a Park & Ride facility at Butterfield
- ticketing reforms including cross boundary arrangements.
- extension of time to provide pre-9.30am travel for those using concessionary bus passes.
- better information systems
- later bus services
- working with neighbouring Local Authorities on a Passenger Charter
- working with Bus Operators to ensure better services across Luton for all

Hat Gardens

Luton town centre's first pocket park, Hat Gardens, was officially opened in May 2023 and since then has been the place for people to get together for events or quiet enjoyment. £1.9 million investment transformed derelict land on Bute Street into a community space and opened up 50m of culverted River Lea. The project won Project of the Year at National Building and Construction Awards 2023.



The Stage

Work has begun on a £136M mixed use regeneration project called The Stage providing almost 300 energy efficient homes and a performance venue near the Luton Town train station. The project provides nearly 200 spaces for cycle parking, communal gardens and significant biodiversity net gain.





Net Zero Action Plan update - July 2024

On the first anniversary of adoption, the Net Zero Action plan has been updated to reflect the current progress against our initial actions identified in the Roadmap. Since the initial

inception the action plan had been evolving; some actions have been removed, some updated to better reflect current activities and others added to the plan.

Actions to be added on the Net Zero Action Plan

| Priority Area | Headline Action | New Action | Lead |
|---------------------------|------------------|--|------------|
| Biodiversity & resilience | Planting project | Protect existing tree canopy in line with the Tree Strategy target to work towards increasing the tree cover by 1 hectare by 2025 (with progress monitored). New requirement to consult about removal of street trees introduced in November 2023 requires additional resource. | Parks team |
| Biodiversity & resilience | Funding | Investigate additional sources of funding to bring new areas of Conservation Grassland into appropriate management. | Parks team |

Actions to be Updated on the Net Zero Action Plan 2024

| Priority Area | Headline Action | New Action | Old Action | Lead |
|---------------|------------------------------|--|--|------------------|
| Residential | Retrofit homes | Invest in software which collects up to date data on number of homes which have already been retrofitted and identifies those homes which still require retrofit | Set out the level and likely cost of homes retrofits required to meet net zero by 2040. | Housing Strategy |
| Residential | Retrofit Council-owned homes | Following the stock condition survey, set decarbonisation target date for Council owned homes and identify the first properties to retrofit as trials for heating technologies including considering district heat schemes. Monitor impacts on sample of individual homes. | Following the stock condition survey, set decarbonisation target date for Council owned homes and identify the first properties to retrofit as trials for new fabric improvements and heating technologies including considering district heat schemes. Monitor impacts on sample of individual homes. | BTS |

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|------------------------|-------------|--|---|-------------------------|
| New Builds | New Builds | New housing developers to provide low carbon new homes built to the Future Homes standard/new future standards | New housing developers to provide low carbon new homes built to the Future Homes standard | Housing Strategy |
| Non-residential | Engagement | Provision of support and advice to local businesses on transition to net zero | Provision of support and advice to local business on transition to net zero, potentially building on support being provided by Wenta and using Luton Heritage Forum | Council Change team |
| Transport | Modal shift | To assess road user charges and its impacts locally | Road user charging e.g., Implement a workplace parking levy or Clean Air Zone to fund transport improvements | Sustainable Travel team |

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|------------------|------------|---|--|---------------|
| Transport | Governance | To produce a monitoring and evaluation report that will quantify the impact of Luton’s recently implemented TRL UTC system on the environment and provide recommendations specific to Luton around potential improvements including: supporting the shift to active travel; and bus priority. | Implement monitoring mechanisms e.g. Urban Traffic Management Control. Traffic data will be essential in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of AQ and carbon reduction interventions. | Highways team |
|------------------|------------|---|--|---------------|

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| <p>Waste & Consumer choices</p> | <p>Community Engagement</p> | <p>Explore food business schemes that support healthier menu transformation (including waste minimisation practices).</p> <p>Promote and provide information to the community on local and national resources to help manage food waste.</p> <p>Reviewing local capacity and resources to introduce an appropriate food business scheme.</p> | <p>Community and business partnership initiatives applying waste minimisation and circular economy principles: examples such as collaboration on methods to reduce food waste in hospitality businesses and swap shops and repair cafes</p> | <p>Public Health – Food</p> |
|--|-----------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>Waste & Consumer choices</p> | <p>Planning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and refresh Luton Food Plan: taking on directive from National Food Strategy (2022) and framework from Sustainable Food Places to guide local approach - continue to emphasise connections between public and planetary health. • Explore development of council Corporate Food Policy that would encompass elements of food sourcing and waste management. • Work directly with schools and early years to increase promotion and awareness of links between food choices and planet | <p>Review the Luton Food Plan and consider developing a Food Strategy, taking on board the Government Food Strategy (2022) and recognising that nutrition and sustainability are interrelated and can no longer be tackled in isolation</p> <p>Promote a more plant-based and low food miles diet within the council culture and work directly with schools</p> | <p>Public Health - Food</p> |
|--|-----------------|--|---|-----------------------------|

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|--|--|------------|
| Biodiversity & resilience | Planting projects | Increase take-up of existing allotment provision | Increase access to allotments and equivalent spaces for growing food. | Parks team |
| Biodiversity & resilience | Planting projects | Identify resources/budget to increase tree planting across the Borough taking account of “right tree, right place” to contribute to the Tree Strategy target to increase future tree canopy by 1 hectare by 2025 (with progress monitored) | Identify tree planting opportunities across the Borough to work towards increasing the tree cover by 1 hectare by 2025 (with progress monitored). | Parks team |
| Biodiversity & resilience | Planting projects | Investigate opportunities to increase biodiversity and carbon capture in highway verges and amenity grass land where appropriate | Increasing biodiversity and increase carbon capture in highway verges and grass land where appropriate, with related public information provision about changes. | Parks team |

Luton Net Zero Roadmap and Action Plan

Thank you for reading

Visit www.luton.gov.uk/netzero
to find out more



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