Sheffield City Council
Annual climate action report 2022/23

Executive Summary

Sheffield City Council

Introduction

I am pleased to introduce Sheffield City Council's first Annual Climate Progress Report, which outlines the actions that we are taking to tackle the climate emergency.

The climate emergency is arguably the most significant challenge we face globally. The consequences are already affecting us and will have greater impacts in years to come.

In response, the Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019 and, along with many other local authorities, has set a target for the local authority and the city to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2030. These ambitious targets are 20 years ahead of the Government's 2050 target for the UK to reach net zero.

Our target was set in 2019, in the run up to the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), when there was hope that the 2030 target set by many local authorities would influence government to act at pace. Since then, the UK's Committee on Climate Change has published increasingly pessimistic reports of progress towards the government's net zero 2050 target in the UK. There needs to be an urgent step change in approach from government.

Policy, legislation and funding needed has not been delivered at the pace and scale needed. In some areas, funding has been cut drastically and positive interventions, such as the ban on the sale of new diesel and petrol cars from 2030 and the ban on new homes having gas boilers from 2025, have recently been revoked. A lack of clear, consistent national policy and funding for retrofit and solar has also resulted in national skills shortages and supply chain issues.

All of this will make it more difficult for Sheffield and other local authorities who have committed to achieving net zero by 2030, to achieve those targets - in Sheffield, we are seeing this impact on progress towards our net zero target, which is below where we would hope to be by now.

Despite a lack of action nationally, we are making real progress in Sheffield. This includes drawing in millions of pounds of funding to support people to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, particularly people on low incomes and with health conditions affected by cold. We are supporting businesses to reduce their emissions and are improving transport infrastructure to make it easier for people to make healthier travel choices. We are delivering changes that are not only protecting the planet, but saving local people money, improving air quality and health and wellbeing, and supporting our economy to grow and prosper sustainably, long term.

We are proud of the changes that we have achieved, and I would like to thank officers and fellow councillors for the hard work that has taken place behind the scenes. Most of all, I would like to thank citizens and organisations of Sheffield for their determination to join together and help us tackle the climate emergency.

At the same time there is still a lot that Sheffield needs to do, and we are very aware that the scale and pace of progress will need to increase if we are to achieve our ambitions. This ambition must be backed up by support from government and we will continue to make that case. I hope that by outlining our progress and the scale of change needed, we can inspire further action across the city.

Cllr Ben Miskell, Chair Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee

Context

The human led changes to climate and the existential threat it poses to our society and economy are an accepted fact and, along with the majority of local authorities in the country, Sheffield City Council has declared a climate emergency. We were one of the first local authorities in the country to do so in 2019.

Along with many other local authorities, we have committed to working towards ambitious targets of 2030 for both the local authority itself and the city. Local authorities across the country have a range of targets. Nottingham City Council has a target to be carbon neutral by 2028, many are aiming to achieve net zero by 2030, and there are a variety of targets between 2030 and the legally binding target requiring the UK to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (there is also a legally binding target for the UK to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035).

National progress towards net zero

The transition to net zero and to adapting to climate change are recognised as being amongst the greatest challenges of our time. There is clear evidence to indicate that the cost of investing in achieving net zero early will be far less costly than delaying or failing to keep global climate increases to a maximum of 1.5 degrees centigrade. However, the up-front investment and socio-economic and political challenges required to make progress at the necessary pace are exceedingly challenging. Governments globally, and local authorities in the UK, are not making the progress that is needed.

The UK Committee on Climate Change reports annually on national progress. In June 2023 the committee reported that their confidence in the UK meeting interim target has decreased in the last year, and that policy change is too slow. Particular attention was paid to the need to reform planning policy, to develop demand-side and land use policies, as well as to develop a consistent public engagement strategy to support individuals to make low carbon choices.

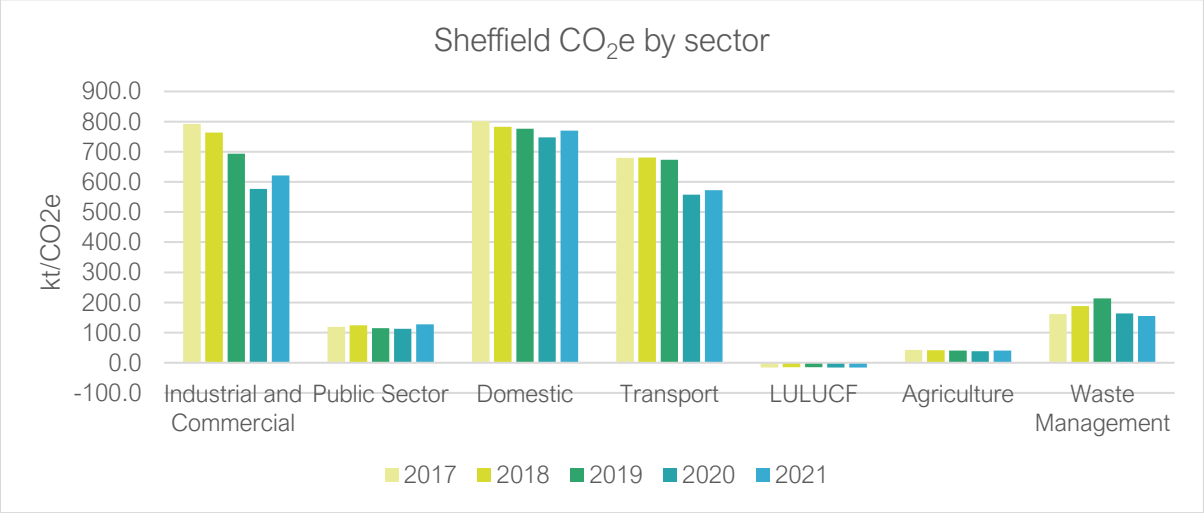
National local authority progress towards net zero

Local authority finance is in crisis nationally and Sheffield, like most other local authorities, is faced with severe challenges. Core funding for Sheffield City Council has reduced by £856 per household or 30% in real terms since 2010 and the Local Government Association estimate that by 2024/25 the real cost of delivering services for local authorities is expected to increase by 29% from 2021[1]. This situation, coupled with the limited progress in national policy and investment, alongside the ongoing challenges of Covid, means that all local authorities are struggling to make the progress needed to tackle the climate emergency, both in terms of reducing emissions and planning for the adaptation that will be needed as the climate continues to change.

[1] Save local services: Council pressures explained | Local Government Association

Sheffield's greenhouse gas emissions

The latest 2021 CO_2e emissions data set released by DESNZ shows that Sheffield has reduced emissions by 12% since 2017 and needs to reduce emissions by a further 68% to reach the 80% reduction that the Pathways to Decarbonisation report suggested might be achievable by 2030 (with the remaining 15% to reach the net zero target to be accounted for by large scale renewable generation).



Graph: Sheffield emissions by sector Local authority and regional area greenhouse gas emissions dataset for Sheffield's baseline year of 2017 to 2021, the most recent year for which data is available.

Sheffield City Council greenhouse gas emissions

The latest 2022 CO_2e emissions data indicates that Sheffield City Council has reduced emissions by 3% since 2019 and needs to reduce emissions by a further 77% by 2030 to reach the 80% reduction on 2019 emissions that the Pathways to Decarbonisation Report suggested might be achievable by 2030. However, due to the difficulty in accurately measuring council housing emissions, we cannot know this for certain.

Sector	2019 Baseline (tCO_2e)	Annual Change (%)			% change from baseline
		2020	2021	2022	
Domestic	149,951	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
Non-domestic	13,024	-13%	-4%	-12%	-27%
Fleet	6,175	-10%	+4%	+5%	-1%
Grey fleet	514	-36%	+34%	+24%	+6%
Streetlighting	3,871	-13%	-15%	-8%	-32%
TOTAL	**174,724**	**-2%**	**0%**	**-1%**	**-3%**

Table: Sheffield City Council emissions by Sector. Data supplied by SCC services for council baseline year of 2019 to 2022.

If we were to aim to reduce emissions by approximately the same amount each year, we would need to reduce emissions in each sector by the following per cent, per year from 2019 to achieve net zero by 2030:

- Non-domestic 7%
- Fleet 10%
- Grey fleet 11%
- Streetlighting 7%

We are unable to calculate the annual reduction needed in relation to housing emissions due to the lack of up-to-date emissions data since 2019.

Progress against the 10 Point Plan and routemap thematic areas

Whilst progress against the targets is limited, and there is still a lot to do, a great deal of work has been taking place. Wherever possible, interventions aim to achieve other benefits in addition to reducing carbon emissions, with benefits including reducing energy bills; increasing transport options; improving air quality; improving health and well-being; increasing skills for the transition to a net zero economy and adapting to the increasingly extreme weather that is being caused by the changing climate. Some of the key activity is outlined below.

Preparatory and structural work to position the council and city to make progress at greater scale

- Improving governance, monitoring and programme management;
- Carrying out feasibility studies on large infrastructure projects, including the expansion of the district heat network;
- Working with other cities, the private sector and the Connected Places Catapult to explore options for accessing large scale investment and taking part in a Government pilot to explore the potential for expanding our district heat network to provide affordable and low energy heat for homes and businesses;
- Using our planning and regulatory plans to shape the city in a way which will help the city meet its climate and nature recovery commitments.

Delivering interventions that can directly reduce the emissions in the local authority and city

- Millions of pounds of funding secured to deliver transport infrastructure improvements to make it easier and safer for people to travel sustainably and healthily – we have delivered school streets to make it safer for children travelling to and from school and to reduce pollution around schools; cycle infrastructure and active travel neighbourhoods which also improve air quality and noise levels;
- Securing £4m of Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding (SHDF 2.1) which will upgrade 374 council homes currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C to bring them up to that standard. It will support the installation of

energy performance measures to help deliver warm, energy efficient homes, reduce carbon emissions, tackle fuel poverty, support green jobs, develop the retrofit sector and improve the comfort, health and wellbeing of our social housing tenants.

- 354 council homes will have their external walls insulated under External Wall Insulation (EWI) phase 2, which went live in October 2023 and External Wall Insulation (EWI) phase 3, which went live in July 2023.
- Delivered £1.5m of decarbonisation projects (£1.1m secured from Phase 1 of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme) including draught proofing and a new building energy management system at Town Hall; air source heat pump, 20kWp solar PV and LED lighting at Acres Hill Store and LED lighting and 32kWp solar PV at Moor Market.

Drawing in millions of pounds of funding to make it easier for residents and businesses to access advice, support and grants to reduce their emissions

- Millions of pounds of funding has been brought into the city to provide energy efficiency grants that help reduce carbon emissions and support residents in the face of the cost of living and energy crises. Warm Homes Sheffield is a partnership with energy experts AgilityEco, that provides a single route to access energy advice and different sources of grant funding to help Sheffield residents to reduce energy use and stay warm and well;
- Housing support has focused particularly those on low incomes and living in homes with low energy efficiency, and with health conditions affected by the cold.
- Almost £4.5m of support have been provided for businesses and community and cultural organisations to reduce their emissions and save money on energy;
- Securing funding to install electric vehicle charging points, including for new on street chargepoints in residential areas with high levels of demand for electric vehicles and low levels of off-street parking.

Adapting our city to the changing climate

- Our climate is changing and we are already experiencing more frequent and more extreme weather events than the average for the industrial era. We are increasing our focus on adapting the city to thrive despite the changing climate.
- We have invested in improved flood defences and our river flood defences and work with communities, and our approach to nature based solutions and Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS). This includes the award winning Grey to Green and innovative natural flood management with partner organisations and landowners is paying dividends. During recent extreme rain events, despite record breaking rain, several hundred properties were prevented from flooding that would have flooded without intervention.