



Annual Progress Report on the Climate Crisis 2024-2025

Prepared by the Climate Response Team

Resident Services Directorate

September 2025

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1. Introduction and overview of performance

This Annual Progress Report (APR) provides an update on the progress that has been made on the Climate Change Corporate Programme over the past 12 months, covering the financial year 2024-2025.

In Autumn 2024, Wigan Council began a refresh of its Outline Climate Change Strategy and a restructuring of our Action Themes to reflect the work more accurately being carried out on climate change at Wigan Council. This process is still ongoing and as of drafting this report, the updated Climate Change Strategy has yet to be formally published. Ongoing efforts have been placed with the Climate Response Team to focus on ensuring that all Climate Response aligns with the new corporate plan 'Progress with Unity'. This report will still categorise climate action in the original six Action Themes as detailed by the original Climate Strategy, which are;

- Our Built Environment
- Our Transport and Air Quality
- Our Sustainability and Consumption
- Our Natural Environment
- Our Adaptation and Resilience
- Our Communities and Wellbeing

The report provides an update on:

- Progress taken on priority actions as defined in last year's Annual Progress Report (APR)
- Updates on climate action from the last 12 months by theme
- Wigan Council and borough emissions
- Areas of focus for 2025/26

The UK Met Office ¹ has highlighted the below key events in 2024 to show how the key events of the year fit into the wider picture of long-term human-caused climate change.

- Eight months of the year were warmer than average.
- Spring was the warmest on record for the UK, which saw a record-high average temperature for May.
- February was the second warmest on record for the UK and December was the fifth warmest.
- In contrast, the summer months of June, July and September were slightly cooler than average.
- On 28 January, a strong [Foehn effect](#) resulted in a temperature of 19.9°C at Achfary, Sutherland, marking the highest temperature for January since records began.

¹ [Met Office: A review of the UK's climate in 2024 - Carbon Brief](#)

- The year was relatively wet, with 7% more rainfall than average, making it the UK's 17th wettest in a series going back to 1836.
- Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire saw their second-wettest year on record, driven by large rainfall totals in February and September.
- Storm Lilian in August marked the first time that storm names reached 'L' in the alphabetised list since storm naming was introduced in 2015.
- An [attribution study](#) found that rainfall in the winter season of 2023-24 was 20% more intense due to human-caused climate change. It also showed the amount of rainfall observed during the season was 10 times more likely.

2. Overview of 2024/25 performance

In 2019, Wigan Council declared a climate emergency and committed to achieving Net Zero by 2038 or sooner, bringing the borough along on the journey with us. Since then, our Outline Climate Change Strategy and six Action Themes were launched, and the council has taken actions to reduce its emissions and embed climate change into business as usual. It is important to note that the Climate Strategy is currently undergoing a refresh and has not yet been published as of drafting this report.

In the previous APR, priority actions for 2024/25 were set out, and performance on those actions is outlined below:

- **Refresh Climate Change Strategy**

A first draft of the revised Climate Change Strategy is in progress and should be complete by early December 2025. The updated strategy will align closely with our Progress with Unity missions, ensuring climate action is embedded across council priorities.

- **Relaunch Event for the Wigan Climate Coalition**

Plans for a relaunch event in Spring 2025 were postponed allowing the Coalition to further consolidate and re-focus its priorities. Progress has been impacted by the resignation of both co-chairs from Heinz and the Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust (although both remain on the Coalition), with a new chair yet to be appointed. Work is ongoing to strengthen leadership and prepare for a future relaunch.

- **Develop a Suite of Energy and Heat Generation Projects**

A number of energy and heat generation initiatives are underway, including contributions to the Greater Manchester Heat Network and other borough-wide projects aimed at increasing local renewable energy capacity and improving energy resilience.

- **Work with Top 10% of Suppliers to Reduce Emissions**

The development of a sustainable procurement plan is progressing, and collaboration between the Climate Response Team and Procurement will now turn its focus to engaging with high-impact suppliers to help further reduce emissions.

- **Climate Awareness Training (CAT) for Senior Officers and Elected Members**

The CAT programme continues to gain momentum, with positive engagement from council staff and local businesses. The training was successfully delivered to elected members, with 17 participants attending across two sessions. Further rollout is planned to broaden reach and impact.

- **Improve Emissions Reporting and Allocation to Directorates**

Work with the Council's Joint Intelligence Unit (JIU) is ongoing. While the emissions reporting methods remain unchanged at present, discussions continue around improving data accuracy and better aligning emissions with Directorate level responsibilities.

3. Wigan Council Emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions for an organisation are broken down into 'scopes', which are defined as:

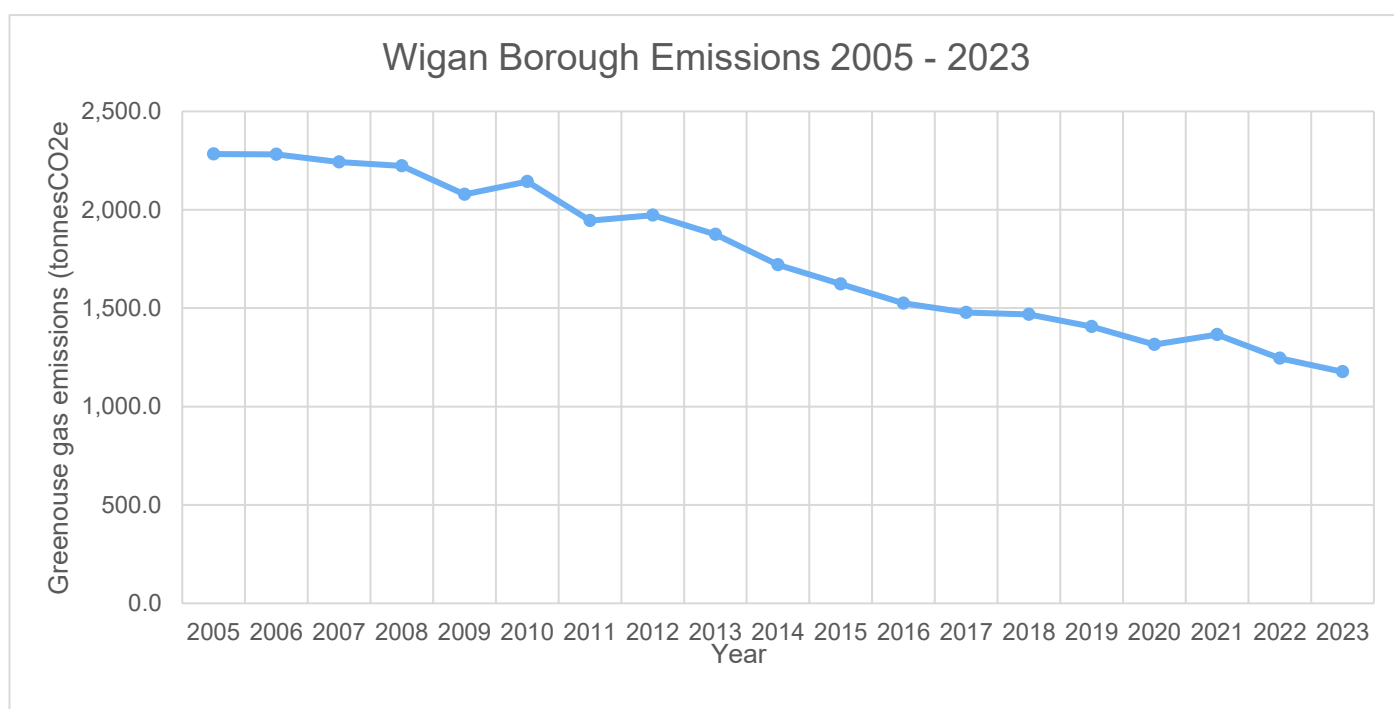
- Scope 1** – emissions from gaseous and liquid fuels such as gas used in corporate buildings and diesel used in fleet vehicles
- Scope 2** – emissions arising from electricity consumed in Council facilities such as within buildings and street lighting
- Scope 3** – emissions related to purchased goods and services, waste, water, employee business travel, commuting and home working and upstream emissions from the transmission and distribution of energy and fuel. Scope 3 emissions represent the largest portion of our total carbon footprint, making them critical for comprehensive climate action. They are however, often the most difficult to measure and manage.

Emissions Scope	Last year 2023/24 (tCO ₂ e)	This year 2024/25 (tCO ₂ e)	Change in tCO ₂ e
Corporate buildings and schools	7,933	8,003	+70
Fleet fuel	2,199	1,927	-272
Total Scope 1	10,132	9,930	-202
Corporate buildings and schools	4,574	3,744	-830
Streetlighting	1,131	964	-167
Electricity consumption of electric fleet	N/A	4	N/A
Total Scope 2	5,705	4,712	-993
Purchased goods and services; capital goods; waste	152,366	179,918	+27,552
Transmission and distribution losses	4,458	5,260	+802
Business travel	714	832	+118
Employee commuting	531	443	-88
Employee homeworking	977	828	-149
Total Scope 3	158,854	186,465	+27,611
Total (all Scopes)	174,691	202,186	+27,495

The above table outlines the scopes of emissions from the baseline year of 2019/20 through to the latest financial year of data for 2024/25. In 2023/24, Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions decreased by -9% compared to the previous year, however this financial year, overall emissions have increased by +16% compared to the previous. The increase relates to our Scope 3 emissions, which are indirect emissions and are a result of the council's activities. They come from sources outside of its direct control, such as those from suppliers or customers and relate to purchased goods and services, capital goods, waste.

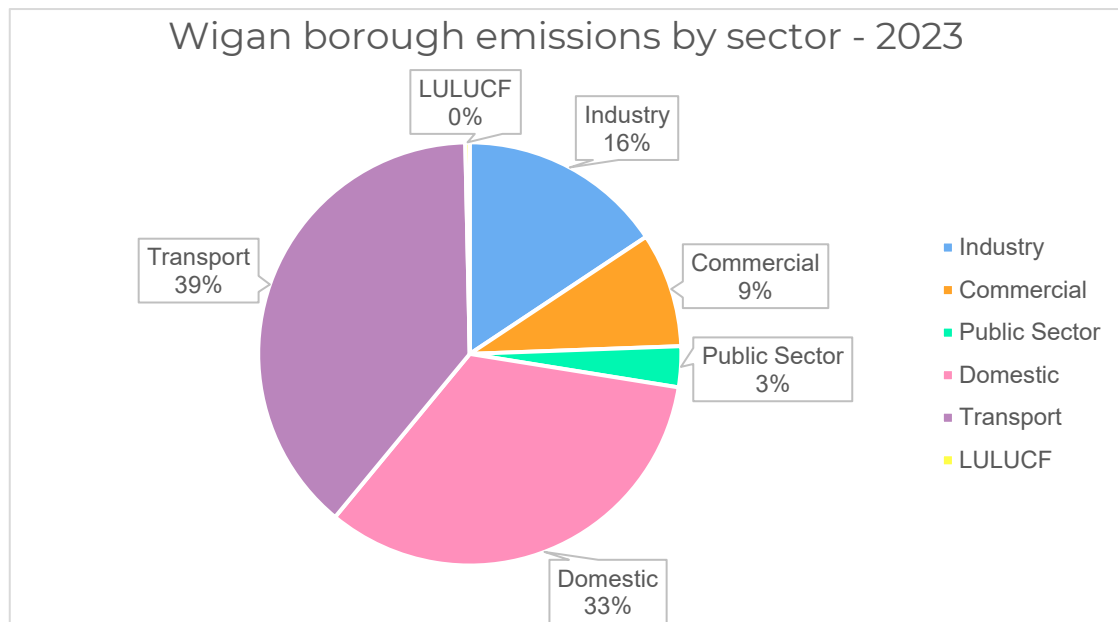
4. Wigan Borough Emissions

Based on figures provided by the government², the carbon emissions for Wigan borough in 2023 (latest year available) decreased by -5.5% compared to 2022. This is a similar reduction to that seen between 2019 and 2020 however, this reduction has seen a decrease after the 8% decrease seen between 2021-2022.



There continues to be an overall trend in emissions reductions since the baseline year of 2005, with Wigan borough observing a -48% decrease in emissions over the 17-year period. It should be noted that this decrease is due to a national shift away from reliance on coal power to less carbon intensive fossil fuels such as natural gas. This trend is seen across the country.

² [UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics)



Transport continues to be the largest source of emissions in the borough, accounting for 39% of emissions, followed by domestic at 33%. Transport emissions were down by - 2% between 22-23, while domestic emissions were down by 5%. This is in contrast to last year's report, which detailed that domestic had seen a decrease of 15% between the years 21-22 due to a mild winter thereby reducing the need for heating. LULUCF relates to land use, land use change and forestry and the percentage remains less than 1% of total borough emissions.

5. Climate Action at Wigan Council

The following section showcases the diverse work taking place across the Council, from decarbonising our own assets, making active travel easier and more enjoyable, to committing to protecting our precious and vital greenspace and habitats. We are working with residents, communities, businesses, VCFSEs, and other anchor institutions to deliver on our commitment to tackle climate change. All these actions have significant co-benefits that go far beyond emissions reductions, and contribute to the health, wealth, wellbeing and resilience of individuals and communities.

Our Built Environment

Social housing

The asset management team have been successful in securing 2 further rounds of grant funding and expect to receive a further grant for the SHDF (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) Wave 3.

This year, the asset management team expect to carry out works to approximately 157 dwellings by installing improved cavity wall insulation, insulated flat roofs, new PVC windows, energy efficient front & rear external doors and solar panels, which supports our longer-term goals of achieving a housing stock with an EPC rating of C or above.

The success of the Green Homes Grant has seen the installation of 26 air source heat pumps and 84 solar panels. The previous SHDF Wave 2 allowed the successful installation of 147 cladding/renders, 187 cavity wall insulation, 172 solar panels and 1 air source heat pump.

Spotlight - Haigh Hall and Grounds

Significant progress has been made in the refurbishment of the Hall, marking an important step toward its future re-occupation. The recent completion of essential fabric repair works included the full replacement of the roof. While natural slate was used to preserve the building's character, the team also took the opportunity to enhance the insulation, improving energy efficiency in preparation for its renewed use.

Looking ahead, plans are in development to modernise the Hall's heating system. The existing oil-fed boilers are set to be removed and replaced with a combination of ground source and air source heat pumps, aligning with our commitment to sustainable energy solutions. This transition to low-carbon heating technology will reduce the building's greenhouse gas emissions, which support the Council's wider climate goals and contributing to a cleaner, more sustainable future for the site.

Work continues at pace on the implementation of the horticultural masterplan for the estate, with a range of innovative and sustainable practices now underway:

- **Creation of the Tree Garden**

The Amphitheatre has been opened as the site for a new tree garden—the first formal garden established on the estate in over a century. The planting beds,

constructed using rubble from the demolition of the former model village, have proven highly effective, with plants thriving in the arid conditions.

- **Transition to Perennial Planting**

A phased replacement of traditional annual bedding plants with longer-lived perennials has commenced. This approach will reduce maintenance requirements and support long-term biodiversity.

- Replacing annual bedding plants with longer-lived perennials reduces the need for frequent replanting, transportation, and nursery production—all of which are carbon-intensive processes. Perennials also tend to require less water and maintenance, further lowering energy use.

- **Sustainable Land Management**

Chickens have been introduced to assist with grass clearance. This natural method improves soil fertility and organic matter content and has delivered promising results.

- Employing chickens for grass clearance eliminates the need for petrol or diesel-powered machinery. Their natural activity also enhances soil health, reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers, which are energy-intensive to produce and apply.

- **On-Site Recycling and Material Reuse**

A strong emphasis has been placed on retaining and repurposing materials within the estate. For example:

- Rubble from the model village demolition was reused to construct planting beds in the Amphitheatre.
- Excavation spoil from the Amphitheatre was used to level the former model village site.
- No materials were sent to landfill.
- All felled trees are chipped and reused on-site as mulch.

- **Horticultural Apprenticeships**

New apprenticeships have been launched, focusing on food production and sustainable horticultural practices, helping to build local skills and capacity.

- Training future horticulturists in sustainable practices ensures that low-emission methods become embedded in long-term estate management, multiplying the impact over time.

- **Chemical-Free Gardening**

A commitment has been made to eliminate the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides across the gardens and wider estate, supporting ecological health and public safety.

- Avoiding chemical pesticides and herbicides reduces emissions linked to their manufacture, transport, and application. It also supports healthier ecosystems, which can sequester more carbon over time.

Our Transport, Active Travel and Air Quality

EVCI (Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure)

Wigan Council has adopted Greater Manchester's Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure Strategy, and supporting residents in the transition to EVs is a key priority in the Wigan Borough Transport Strategy.

The Council recognise that the availability of convenient and affordable charging facilities is essential to encouraging EV use. In 2024, Greater Manchester Combined Authority was awarded £16m to provide public charging points across Greater Manchester and set up a Greater Manchester Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure working group. Wigan Council forms part of this working group and we have been allocated approximately £2.5m of this funding to deliver EV charging points within the borough. The funding will be used to provide charging points both on-street and within car parks, and work is currently being undertaken to identify the preferred locations for these. It is anticipated that the first charge points will be installed in 2026 and that the public EV charging network will continue to grow over the next few years.

To support the growth in EV charging points, the Council's website has been updated to provide a dedicated webpage detailing the Council's position on electric vehicles and charging facilities. The website includes the facility to allow residents to request locations for new EV charging points to be provided so that these suggestions can be used to guide future work.

Trials are also being set up with two EV charge point operators to provide on-street charging points to a limited number of houses with no off-street parking available. The locations for the trials are still to be confirmed. The trial will enable charging point technology to be tested by households, and the trials will be monitored to evaluate their success and inform future work.

Active Travel Infrastructure

In 2024, Phase 2 of the Wigan to Standish Walking and Cycling Network was delivered in partnership with Eric Wright. This scheme builds on the success of Phase 1 in Wigan Town Centre and the Mineral Line in Standish, and the new route joins up the network providing a continuous off-road route from Gidlow Lane to Standish Wood Lane. This is to encourage more active travel between Wigan and Standish.



The Whelley Loop Line Extension has now linked the Whelley Loop Line at Whelley to Hall Lane in the Haigh Hall Plantations. The improvements included surface upgrades, improved drainage, and a new accessible ramp to Hall Lane Bridge, enhancing access to Haigh Woodland Park.

Monitoring

Counters have been installed on the above two projects (as well as a third project), that show that these improvements have led to increased foot traffic, indicating that people are moving out of their cars.

The data shows that between May and July 2025, these areas saw a significant increase in walking and cycling activity compared to the same period in 2024.



- 2024 there were 1152 daily cyclist trips and 15082 pedestrian trips
- 2025 there were 1677 daily cyclist trips and 16401 pedestrian trips

This uplift reflects the growing popularity and accessibility of active travel routes across the borough, supported by new infrastructure and improved connectivity.

The most notable increases occurred midweek, particularly on Wednesdays (+14.5%) and Thursdays (+13.4%), suggesting a shift toward weekday active travel for commuting and errands.

Air Quality

Wigan Council has two automatic monitoring stations which monitor a range of different emissions, gases and matter across the borough. The annual mean concentration for NO₂ (Nitrogen Dioxide) recorded at Wigan Centre in 2024 was 13µg/m³, which is an improvement over 2023's annual mean of 15µg/m³. This remains well within the legal limits.

In 2024, Wigan Council deployed a total of 51 nitrogen dioxide passive diffusion tubes at 49 locations, with tube 180, located at Winwick Lane recording an annual mean of 38.1µg/m³. This tube has previously always recorded an exceedance of the legal limit (40µg/m³) and this represents an improvement in air quality at this location. This correlates with the introduction of camera-enforcement for vehicles using the south-bound route that exceed the 7.5-ton weight limit.

The only other tube that recorded an exceedance measured in 2023 was tube 245, located on Wallgate in Wigan. This tube recorded a level of 39.7µg/m³ which is just below the legal limit, and as such shows a decrease in levels of air pollution in the area.

In 2024, no exceedances of the legal limits for monitored air pollutants were recorded in Wigan Borough. This is the first time we have recorded no exceedances.

Road Safety

More schools have renewed their travel plans to increase walking/cycling and reduce vehicles around schools. This improves air quality, fitness levels and improves road safety in the area, and as such reduces emissions from the transport sector.

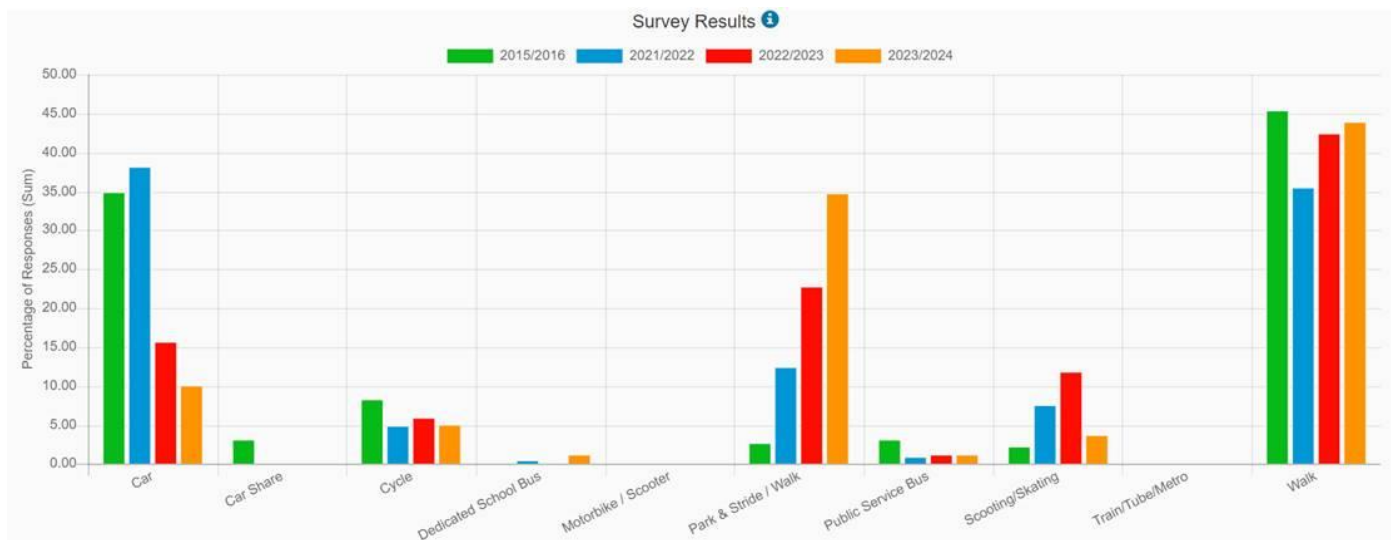
St Mary's CE primary school, who the Council are currently working with, has managed to reduce the number of vehicles outside of their school by over half. In the process they have won Local Authority School of the Year, Northwest School of the Year and were one of the runners up in UK STARS School of the Year.

The borough continues to lead on School Street Schemes, with nine schools currently onboard, the highest number in Greater Manchester. These schemes aim to improve safety and air quality around school entrances by restricting vehicle access during peak times, encouraging walking, cycling, and other forms of active travel.

To complement these initiatives, follow-up road safety lessons have been delivered to pupils from Year 3 to Year 8, covering key topics such as cycling safety, pedestrian awareness, and the benefits of active travel.



In addition to school-based education, numerous residents have been engaged through community events focused on road safety and visibility. These include Cycle Safety Exhibitions, Be Bright Be Seen campaigns, and Walk to School Week activities, all designed to promote safer travel habits and raise awareness of sustainable transport options. The below graph demonstrates the reduction in vehicles and the increase in walking/cycling/park and stride at St. Mary's Primary School in Abram.



Spotlight – Active Travel Activation

Throughout 2024/2025, the activation team worked across education, community and workplace settings with some of the key highlights including:

- Continued growth of Leigh Bike Library. The library recently surpassed 400 members with 350+ residents loaning bikes through our library. 55% of bikes loaned are sold to individuals and families at a subsidised cost.
- Leigh Cycle Hub developed regular cycle training such as Learn to Ride and Bikeability balance offered for young people. Pedal Parties were developed at Pennington Flash for families to cycle regularly.
- 1141 free bike checks and basic repairs across School and Community settings, delivering approximately £45,000 worth of repairs.
- Continued partnership with British Cycling and our part time Cycling Community Developer leading on projects to encourage more young people (with a focus on girls) to cycle more.
- Engaging with 10,000+ individuals in walking, wheeling and cycling activities across 360 active travel sessions.
- Following the success of the scooterability trial across 12 schools, scooter training has been introduced to our activation offer across schools.
- Engaging with 40+ schools to offer active travel programmes including walking buses, litter picks, Dr Bike, scooter training, Bikeability and Bikeability balance and cycle maintenance training.
- Delivery of two Cycle Three Sisters events, our flagship mass participant cycle events. Our August event attracted record number with 1,100+ attendees.
- Recruitment of two cycle mechanics, following the end of our tender with Gearing Up Cycle Workshop. Our two mechanics will continue to deliver Dr Bikes, support Leigh Bike Library and maintain our fleet of 10 bikes.

- Monthly Walking/Cycling Safari's setup to showcase new walking/cycling infrastructure.
- Activation plans developed and activities delivered across NEW schemes including Whelley Loop Line, Wigan to Standish, Wigan Canal scheme, and Ashton Town Centre scheme. This is in addition to legacy activation across older schemes.
- Working closely with our Be Well Cycling and Walking Teams who led 1,500+ leisure walks/rides with 15,000+ attendees delivered by a team of 60 volunteers

Our Sustainability & Consumption

Waste

Time Period	Recycling Rate (%)	Household Waste Per Capita (kg)	Amount Sent to Landfill (%)
2023/24	51.5	401.7	1.7
2024/25	50.2	445.5	1.0

Compared to the previous year, the borough's recycling rate has decreased by 1.5%, however the amount of household waste per capita has increased by 43.8kg. It is important to note that the amount of waste sent to landfill declined by 0.7%.

Although some of these indicators are positive and heading in the right direction, some have declined, and this is in line with the national trend. The main reason for the decline in the recycling rate is due to adverse weather conditions that have impacted the amount of garden waste generated, alongside the overall increase in waste collected. One contributing factor to the increase in waste generation is the reduced impact of the cost-of-living crisis compared to previous years.

The waste team are also aiming to achieve a recycling rate of 65% by 2035. There are numerous waste initiatives planned by DEFRA and DESNZ which will impact on how waste is managed locally across Wigan borough, including:

- **Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (EPR)**
 - The EPR for packaging is a regulatory framework that holds producers accountable for the full cost of managing their packaging at the end of its life. This includes the collection, recycling, and recovery of packaging waste. The UK has introduced new legal obligations for packaging producers under the EPR regime, which came into force on January 1st 2025.
- **Simpler Recycling**

- Under Simpler Recycling, more items will be collected via the brown bin. Liquid and food containers, and aluminium tubes will be added by the end of March 2026. Flexible plastics like carrier bags, plastic films etc will be added by March 2027.
- **Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)**
 - The DRS scheme will see the removal of drinks containers made of aluminium, steel and PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate) from the brown bin by October 2027. Residents buying these items will pay a deposit on purchase which will only be redeemed if returned to point of sale or a return point. Reverse Vending Machines will be used at transport hubs and hospitals to enable the deposit to be redeemed.
- **Emissions Trading Scheme**
 - Emissions trading schemes work on the 'cap and trade' principle, where a cap is set on the total amount of certain greenhouse gases that can be emitted by sectors covered by the scheme. Within this cap, participants receive free allowances and/or buy emission allowances at auction or on the secondary market, which they can trade with other participants as needed. Each year, installation operators and aircraft operators covered by the scheme must surrender allowances to cover their emissions. The cap is reduced over time, so that total emissions must fall.

Partnership working with FCC

1. Rebuild with Hope

Wigan Council and its partner FCC Environment, which operates three recycling centres in the borough, has linked up with a local charity to send donated items from the recycling centres to their shops. Other initiatives include sending bikes to local prisons to be refurbished, before they are donated back to local charities. Not only does this give skills to people in the prison system but also generates vital funds for local charities.

2. Biodiversity

Working with FCC, the Council have jointly increased the biodiversity at all our recycling centres and transfer stations. Large areas of the sites have now been given over to nature rather than having grassed areas that are regularly mowed. This has already attracted many insects and rare plants.

3. Battery Disposal Awareness campaigns

The Council have for many years been jointly campaigning with FCC to highlight to residents the importance of correctly disposing batteries. Incorrectly disposing of batteries can create many issues to the waste industry, including fires in waste collection vehicles and at waste facilities, consequently putting lives in danger and potentially causing millions of pounds in damage to vital infrastructure. This

campaign has engaged countless residents across the borough and raised awareness about the ongoing problem of battery disposal.

Fleet

Wigan Council currently operate a fleet of 317 vehicles, all of which are now either fully Euro 6 compliant or Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs). Fleet Services continues to drive forward both its own and the Council's commitment to achieving net zero, and in recent months has been developing recommendations to support the next phase of our vehicle replacement programme, which will scale up in 2026/27.

Over the past 12 months, vehicle orders have been limited. However, the Council have recently procured a 7.5-tonne full BEV box van for the Waste Services team. This is scheduled for delivery and operation in early 2026 and marks a significant milestone as it will be the Council's first fully electric HGV.

In addition, Fleet Services is currently reviewing BEV options for the Mayoral vehicle and a Pest Control light commercial vehicle (LCV).

The Council operate 317 vehicles on fleet in total, of which 308 are Euro 6 Compliant and 10 are zero emission vehicles. In line with Fleet Services' continued commitment to net zero by 2038, all commercial vehicles that are hired will be a minimum of euro 6 or zero emission.

Fleet Services continue to review the fleet replacement programme to ensure this falls in line with government requirements and mandates.

Spotlight – Tool Shed

The Tool Shed is a new environmental initiative developed by the Tenant Engagement Team to support tenants and residents across the borough, by providing affordable access to gardening and DIY tools. The project aims to reduce financial barriers to garden maintenance while promoting sustainability through the sharing and reuse of resources.

Working in partnership with local community organisations, the initiative is building a borough-wide network of Tool Sheds. These hubs allow residents to borrow tools at minimal or no cost, helping to reduce the need for individual purchases and the number of unused items sent to landfill.

The Tool Shed ethos is rooted in accessibility and environmental responsibility. By encouraging tool sharing, the initiative not only supports tenants in maintaining their outdoor spaces but also contributes to a circular economy model that reduces waste and promotes reuse.

In collaboration with local recycling centres, the Tool Shed Network is expanding to include Second Chance Saloon Distribution Centres. These centres receive salvaged items such as tools, paint, furniture, pots, and garden accessories, which are then

redistributed to community groups, schools, allotments, and individuals for reuse or upcycling.

The initiative has already demonstrated positive outcomes, including enabling some residents to take on paid gardening work, and supporting community cohesion through shared resources.

The Tool Shed was showcased at the 2025 Youth Climate Summit, where attendees had the opportunity to view both new and repurposed tools saved through the Second Chance Saloon initiative. The event also served as a platform to recruit new groups, schools, and organisations to join the Tool Shed Network.

This follows successful engagement at the 2024 Youth Climate Summit, where consultation with over 100 young people led to the launch of a youth-specific funding programme. This fund offers up to £2,000 to support youth-led environmental initiatives across the borough.

The Tool Shed initiative continues to grow, with further opportunities being explored to support projects such as the River Douglas Revitalisation Project, where Tenant Voice Officers are working to involve schools and residents, and potentially allocate funding through the Tenant Together Fund.

How the Tool Shed Initiative Reduces Emissions

- **Less manufacturing:** Sharing tools means fewer new ones need to be made, cutting down on emissions from production and transport.
- **Waste reduction:** Tools and other items are saved from landfill, lowering methane emissions and reducing disposal-related carbon impacts.
- **Encourages reuse:** Promotes a circular economy by giving items a second life through repair, repurposing, or upcycling.
- **Supports low-carbon lifestyles:** Makes it easier for residents to maintain gardens, grow food, and improve green spaces—all of which help absorb carbon.
- **Reduces demand for high-emission services:** Access to tools allows residents to do work themselves, avoiding emissions from commercial services using petrol-powered equipment.

Our Natural Environment

Our Biodiversity

Hindsford Brook NFM Project

The wooded area which runs alongside Hindsford Brook (Atherton/Tyldesley) has recently been enhanced for both its ecological value and for its natural water storage capacity. The area of land downstream of the project area is liable to flooding, and this project aimed to store rain and surface run-off within the woodland, slowing the water entering Hindsford Brook.

This has been achieved by re-profiling drainage ditches which had silted up over time. These were implemented in a non-linear manner, connecting through the woodland before entering newly dug out pond areas, further slowing the flow of water. Leaky dams were installed within some of the ditches. Woodland and wetland wildflowers were seeded to give the area a biodiversity boost.

The last phase of the work involved improving the footpaths as they are key walking and cycling routes between housing estates either side of the brook, to the local shops and the local schools. This improved surface encourages local residents to walk and is already being well used, with users providing positive feedback.

Manchester Mosses NNR

Earlier this year, a new National Nature Reserve (NNR) was declared in Greater Manchester. This declaration, part of the Kings Series of National Nature Reserves, nationally recognises the importance of the Greater Manchester mosslands/peatlands (and associated habitats such as fen, wet woodland and lowland heath), and exists to protect these sites for the future. Peatland acts as a significant carbon sink, capturing and storing carbon in greater quantities than any other landscape habitat. Additionally, they also store large amounts of water which helps to reduce flooding risk in a changing climate. Peatland sites also provide safe refuge for specialist species such as the Large Heath butterfly ([Rare butterflies thriving after reintroduction bid - BBC News](#)), Bog-bush cricket ([Push to bring back rare insects back to Lancashire and Manchester - BBC News](#)), sphagnum mosses, lesser bladderwort and sundews. Wigan's contribution to this NNR is that of Highfield Moss, a peatland site located in the township of Lowton. This site is 12 hectares in size and provides habitat for Sphagnum mosses, carnivorous sundews, solitary bees, green tiger beetle and many species of bird.



Green eyed Hawker (Norfolk Hawker)

This species of dragonfly is a recent coloniser to the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh NNR, as its distribution has spread northwards as a result of climate change. Previously confined to ditches across the Norfolk Broads, this species spread North, settling in the ditches on Amberswood. This year, a new population has been identified on Bickershaw County Park. Although this is great news for Wigan's biodiversity, it is the result of climate change happening in real time.

Spotlight – Increasing Biodiversity in our parks

As part of our ongoing commitment to improving green spaces and supporting biodiversity across the borough, a number of planting projects have been delivered in parks and community areas. These initiatives contribute to habitat creation, seasonal interest, and carbon absorption, while also enhancing the visual appeal of public spaces.

Key planting activities include:

- **Wildflower Meadows**
 - 100m² planted at Firs Park
 - 150m² planted at Central Park
 - The meadows support pollinators and increase ecological diversity.
- **Wetland Planting**
 - 200 marginal wetland plants introduced at Lilford Park. This supports aquatic habitats and improves water quality.
- **Spring Bulb Planting**
 - Approximately 9,500 bulbs planted across Mesnes Park, Astley Street Park, Alexandra Park, and Leyland Park. These bulbs provide early-season nectar sources and vibrant displays.
- **Woodland Enhancement**
 - Bluebell seed sowing carried out at Stockley Park. This contributes to native woodland restoration and seasonal biodiversity.
- **Community Orchard Development**
 - 16 apple trees planted at Mosley Common as part of the “Bloomin’ Mosley Common” initiative. This supports local food growing and community engagement.

The projects reflect our commitment to sustainable land management and community-led environmental improvement. The projects also contribute to wider climate goals by supporting carbon sequestration, reducing urban heat, and encouraging nature-based solutions.

Our Adaptation and Resilience

Flood Management

Climate change is increasingly contributing to the severity and frequency of urban flooding and is due to the air warming from climate change. Warming allows for the air to retain more moisture, resulting in heavier and more frequent downpours, which in turn contribute and escalate urban flooding. Urban flooding occurs when rainfall exceeds the capacity of drainage systems, leading to water accumulation in streets, homes, and infrastructure. Built environments with limited permeable surfaces are

particularly vulnerable, and an example of this is the flooding that occurred in Platt Bridge on January 1st 2025.

This New Years flooding impacted approximately 1,000 residents across the borough, and the Council responded by forming a unique partnership with two technology companies: KaarbonTech and Hello Lamp Post to co-design a solution that empowers communities, streamlines response, and informs future planning.



This collaborative initiative created a simplified and citizen-driven way to gather, verify, and act on flood information. The result is the KaarbonTech Public Flood Reporting Tool; a cross-innovation integration of KaarbonTech's flood asset management software with Hello Lamp Post's 24/7 interactive webchat platform.

The system provides residents with a trusted route to report flood events, receive tailored support, and contribute to long-term adaptation decisions. For the Council, it unlocks real-time intelligence that improves emergency response, statutory compliance, and operational planning.

The aim of the partnership was to transform how the Council interacts with residents during and after flood events, while also improving the efficiency of internal workflows.

Outcomes

The result is a fully integrated, resident-facing flood reporting tool that improves visibility and speeds up action. Residents now play an active role in Wigan's flood resilience strategy.

The tool has two key functions:

- A public reporting tool to capture real-time flooding data, including photos and location data
- A 24/7 environmental webchat that guides users to flood-related support, advice and local resources

Data flows from Hello Lamp Post directly into KaarbonTech's flood management system via a shared link, where it becomes part of Wigan's operational and planning evidence base.

Measurable Impacts and Benefits

The collaborative partnership has delivered tangible, trackable benefits across operational efficiency, regulatory compliance, and community empowerment:

- Improved flood intelligence – enabling faster, more informed decision-making during events
- Simplified Section 19 Flood Reporting – by automatically collecting usable data and evidence

- Out-of-hours engagement – residents can report and receive help without relying on call centres
- Better support for vulnerable communities – especially those less likely to engage via traditional channels
- 30% increase in resident feedback during and after flood events
- 80%+ question accuracy in Hello Lamp Post webchat (tracked via user feedback)
- 20% of residents redirected from Hello Lamp Post to the KaarbonTech reporting tool
- Staff time saved by diverting non-urgent queries away from contact centre teams

Spotlight – Community Resilience in Higher Folds

- R4C (Resilience for Communities) has moved from assessment to delivery in 2025. The RCIFund-backed “Higher Folds Community Environmental Action” programme (May 2025–Apr 2026) is live, led locally by Groundwork CLM with HF (Higher Folds) Works CIC, in partnership with Wigan Council and R-Cities.

What’s been delivered / initiated this year

- **Programme mobilised (May):** Grant executed (\$125,000), partners onboarded, delivery plan agreed with Wigan Council. Four components: (1) Community environmental action incl. SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage)/NFM demonstrator, (2) Youth employment & training via HF Works, (3) Green Doctor household support, (4) Community engagement & leadership.
- **Weekly nature volunteering & site works:** Regular environmental action days launched to improve green/blue spaces and support future SuDS/NFM locations; citizen-science baselining underway.
- **SuDS/NFM groundwork:** Baseline SuDS survey completed to identify a demonstrator site and co-design options with residents (e.g., rain gardens, smart butts, rainwater harvesting). Technical liaison active with EA & United Utilities.
- **Youth pathways started:** HF Works employment and on-the-job training initiated (grounds maintenance, gully/drain checks, planting, flood response basics) with a view to establishing maintenance pathways with the Council.
- **Green Doctor launched:** Training completed and neighbourhood delivery starting in October (clinics and home visits for efficiency measures; links to AWARM and grants). Additional grant secured to run for 12 months.
- **Community engagement:** Two awareness/training sessions scheduled/delivered in the Jul–Sep window; Green Community Hub activity initiated to anchor ongoing participation.
- **Arts & culture strand:** Turnpike Gallery’s **Make.Believe** programme began community engagement, building towards a May 2026 exhibition that platforms local stories and creativity alongside the resilience agenda.

Systems / policy influence (Wigan-specific)

- **From assessment to action:** The 2024 CRMC assessment (surveys, focus groups, agency roundtables) identified priority risks (notably surface-water flooding) and

social factors shaping resilience in Higher Folds—e.g., modelled flood depths up to **750 mm** in places; only **43%** strong confidence in public services; **~21%** unsure if they live in flood-prone areas. This evidence now underpins local delivery.

- **Operational changes already adopted:**
 - **Seasonal land aeration** prior to winter to hold/store more water.
 - **Increased EA inspections** of the local watercourse to inform de-silting.
 - **Technical modelling** discounted a new bridge option; work has shifted to **retrofit SuDS** (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) exploration—**first time** SuDS have been considered as a flood-resilience measure by Wigan Council, informing future practice.

What's next (Oct–Dec 2025)

- **Community sessions:** Two further training/awareness events and two additional community-led nature projects.
- **Commercial pathways:** Define routes for **HF Works** to be contracted for routine grounds/SuDS maintenance.
- **Design finalisation:** Pin down SuDS/NFM demonstrator delivery plan and co-funding mix with Council/Environmental Agency/United Utilities.
- **Green Doctor scale-up:** Continue clinics/home visits through winter, linking households to grants and heatwave/cold-weather advice.

Why this matters?

- Higher Folds faces compounded climate risks (flooding + heat), subsidence, single-access constraints and socio-economic pressures; targeted SuDS, local maintenance, trusted engagement and household support were top recommendations from the assessment and multi-agency roundtable.

Our Communities and Wellbeing

Community Engagement

Throughout 2024, the Climate Response Team actively engaged with residents across the borough at a variety of public events, including Cycle Three Sisters, local libraries, and community gatherings. Our outreach efforts provided valuable opportunities to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds, raising awareness and fostering dialogue around key environmental challenges.

The team interacted with hundreds of individuals, covering a broad spectrum of topics such as waste reduction, recycling, energy efficiency, climate adaptation, and the increasing impacts of extreme weather events. The conversations helped to build public understanding of how climate change affects daily life and what actions individuals and communities can take to respond.

By embedding climate engagement into existing community spaces and events, the team ensured that climate action remains accessible, relevant, and inclusive. Our

approach supports the borough's wider sustainability goals and strengthens local resilience by empowering residents with practical knowledge and resources.

Local Businesses

In December 2023, Wigan businesses began working with Green Economy, an organisation which aims to grow the green tech sector and support businesses to decarbonise in Greater Manchester.

Between September 2023 and July 2025, Green Economy, part of The Growth Company, helped 49 Wigan businesses access decarbonisation support, 18 green tech businesses have accessed support, and 32 Wigan green tech businesses are on Green Economy's marketplace. This information showcases the installers, suppliers and manufacturers of low carbon technologies and services including heat pumps, EVs, solar panels, insulation and wind turbines.

This type of support is helping local businesses reduce their carbon footprint, build resilience, and seize the opportunities that the net zero transition presents. Lastly, 5 Wigan businesses have attended Green Economy's accredited Journey to Net Zero training course between February 2024 and February 2025.

Climate Awareness Training

As part of the borough's ongoing commitment to climate action and sustainability, climate awareness training has been successfully delivered to several private sector organisations. Notably, DMR Training and Anthony Grimshaw Associates have participated in the sessions, which aim to raise awareness of climate-related challenges and promote practical steps businesses can take to reduce their environmental impact, while reducing their emissions as businesses and individual staff members.

Skills and Careers

Supporting Educators to Promote Green Careers

In 2024, over 40 careers advisors and teachers from across the borough participated in two dedicated training sessions aimed at enhancing their understanding of climate change and the evolving landscape of green careers. These sessions were designed to equip educators with the knowledge and tools needed to better guide young people towards sustainable career pathways.

Green careers are careers that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment and they span a wide range of sectors including renewable energy, sustainable construction, environmental consultancy, low-carbon transport, circular economy industries, and nature conservation. As the UK transitions towards net zero, these roles are becoming increasingly vital, not only for meeting climate targets but also for driving innovation and economic growth.

For young people, green careers represent more than just employment opportunities—they offer a chance to be part of the solution to one of the most pressing challenges of our time. These roles often align with values such as environmental stewardship, social

responsibility, and long-term sustainability, making them particularly appealing to a generation that is deeply concerned about the future of the planet.

By upskilling educators, the borough is taking proactive steps to ensure that students are informed about the breadth of green opportunities available to them and are empowered to pursue careers that make a positive impact. This initiative supports both climate action and youth development, fostering a workforce that is prepared for the green economy of tomorrow.

Public Health

In 2024/25, the Health and Wellbeing Board held a focus workshop in terms of climate change progress within the Borough and its effects on residents, particularly regarding the health impact and inequalities and linked to the Progress with Unity missions. The Health Protection Board also held a climate change deep dive considering how it can further support climate change action involving community engagement and resilience given the experience of events such as the flooding at Platt Bridge, 1st January 2025.

The Health Protection Board has also undertaken several preparedness exercises looking at how Wigan would cope during events that may become more prevalent due to climate change, such as heat effects on local health and social care system, power outages and flooding. The Public Health team are holding “bite size” briefing sessions around climate change in order to highlight the scale of the issue and what we can do to support communities; this will highlight the wider corporate training on offer mentioned elsewhere in this report.

Climate change and air quality continue to be key priorities of the Health Protection Board as part of forward planning in 2025/26. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) cold and heat health alerts are used in the borough in order to warn and inform communities ahead of adverse weather conditions. In the last year, this has also included information and advice in relation to summer travel, ticks and mosquitoes. Some of the warnings such as mosquitoes warning are now as a result of changes in weather conditions that otherwise wouldn't have been needed in previous years.

Climate Awareness Training (CAT)

The Climate Response Team has delivered in-person training to over 500 members of staff across all directorates since it was launched in February 2024. The training was developed by the Climate Response Team to highlight the ways in which climate change is already impacting Wigan borough and puts a strong emphasis on actions staff can take in work and as an individual.

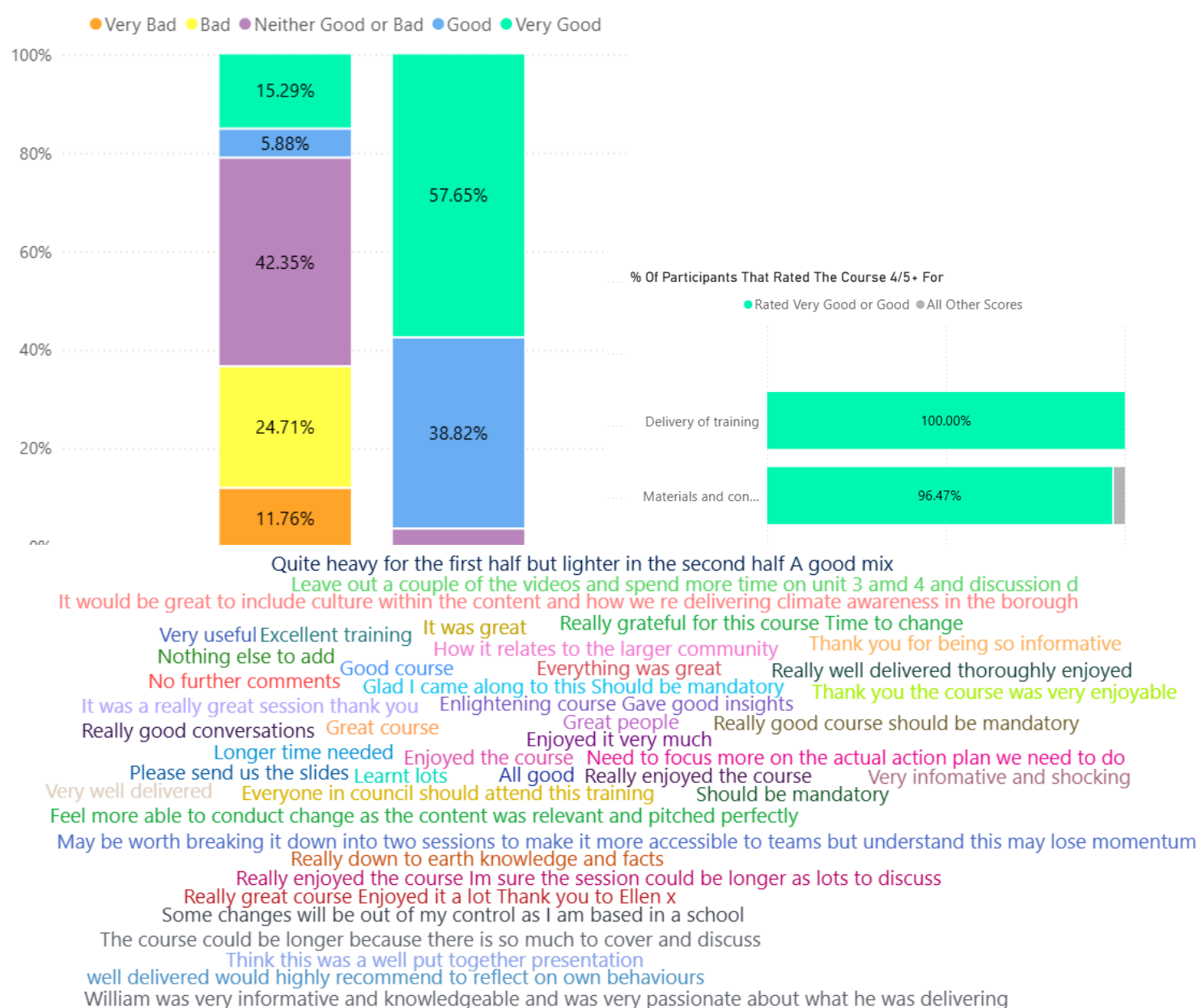
In 2025, the Climate Awareness Training (CAT) programme was successfully extended to elected members, with 17 councillors attending across two sessions held at Leigh and Wigan Town Halls. This marked a significant step in embedding climate literacy within local leadership and decision-making.

Additionally, two further CAT sessions were delivered to child carers and nursery staff from across the borough. These sessions aimed to raise awareness of climate issues within early years settings and empower staff to incorporate sustainable practices into their daily routines.

Both sets of sessions received highly positive feedback, reflecting strong engagement and interest from participants. In response to this success, the Climate Response Team is exploring opportunities to expand the CAT programme further, ensuring broader access and continued momentum in climate education across sectors.

The training is delivered over a 3-hour period, and staff are required to complete 6 pledges at the end of the session. So far, almost 3000 pledges have been made, with the following images displaying the positive feedback, along with subject knowledge and the delivery of training.

Subject Understanding Before Vs After



Climate Education

The Climate Education Officer continues to actively support local education settings in delivering impactful and positive climate education. A range of initiatives and resources have been provided to help embed sustainability across schools and colleges:

- **Sustainability Guidance**

Practical advice and tailored support offered to help education establishments become more environmentally sustainable in their operations and curriculum.

- **Free Educational Workshops**

Delivery of assemblies and classroom-based lessons focused on climate change, sustainability, and environmental stewardship.

- **Support for Eco Events**

Assistance provided for organising and delivering events such as Green Week, Earth Day, and other themed activities that promote environmental awareness.

- **Staff Training**

Provision of Climate Awareness Training to build staff confidence and knowledge in delivering climate-related education.

- **Partnership Working**

Connection to external organisations such as Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Groundwork, and City of Trees to enhance learning opportunities and access to resources.

The Climate Education Officer has delivered a strong programme of engagement across local education settings. To date, 25 school and college visits have been undertaken, and 3,330 pupils have participated in climate education activities. These figures reflect the growing interest and commitment among educational institutions to embed sustainability and climate awareness into their learning environments.

Spotlight – Wigan Youth Summit

In October 2024 the Climate Response Team held its third Wigan Youth Climate Summit, where 23 schools and colleges, and 32 organisations attended to share information and ideas on how to address sustainability and climate change in school/college. The theme for 2024, was 'Empowered Youth, Conscious Consumers: Building a Sustainable Future', and young people learned about how the things we buy affect our planet and our mental health, in particular – fast fashion. Feedback from this was 77% excellent and 23% good.

This year, October 2025 The Climate Response Team held the 4th Annual Youth Climate Summit. It had strong engagement from both educational institutions and stall holders:

- **School Bookings**

This year's Youth Climate Summit had a successful booking rate of pupils from the primary schools, secondary schools and colleges attend as usual. We had pupils from across the borough attend from 26 educational settings, encompassing of 140 students.

- **Stall Holder Participation**

Stall holder participation was at 40 this year. Historically, stall holder numbers range between 20 and 30, proving that each year, the Summit is proactively gaining momentum with outside organisations

The theme of this year's summit is Green Futures: Youth Action for a Greener Tomorrow, with the aim to enthuse younger generations and invites us to reimagine how schools and colleges can become beacons of sustainability and innovation.

A key part of this movement is *positive activism*—the belief that change begins with hope, collaboration, and bold ideas. Young people have the power to influence peers, families, and communities by raising awareness, challenging norms, and inspiring action through creativity and compassion. Whether it's through campaigns, storytelling, or hands-on projects, their voices matter.

6. Priority Actions for 2026

Proposed Climate Strategy Aims for 2026

Building on the progress and challenges of the previous year, the following aims have been identified to guide climate action across the borough over the next 12 months:

1. Finalise and Launch the Updated Climate Change Strategy

Complete the internal review process and publish the refreshed Climate Change Strategy. The strategy will align with the Progress with Unity missions and provide a clear framework for borough-wide climate action.

2. Rebuild and relaunch the Wigan Climate Coalition

Recruit new leadership and relaunch the Wigan Climate Coalition with a public-facing event by Summer 2026. This will strengthen cross-sector collaboration and highlight local climate achievements.

3. Accelerate Delivery of Local Energy and Heat Projects

Support the research and development of at least two new community-scale energy or heat generation projects. These initiatives will contribute to local decarbonisation and energy resilience.

4. Reactivate the Sustainable Procurement Strategy

Resume development of the sustainable procurement plan and begin engagement with the top 10% of suppliers to reduce emissions. This will help address Scope 3 emissions and embed sustainability into procurement practices.

5. Expand Climate Awareness Training (CAT)

Deliver CAT to all senior officers and at least 20% of council staff. Offer more sessions for elected members and roll out the offer to more local businesses across the borough.

6. Improve Emissions Reporting and Accountability

Develop a revised emissions reporting framework in collaboration with the Joint Intelligence Unit (JIU). The new approach will allocate emissions to individual Directorates and introduce quarterly progress tracking to enhance transparency and accountability.