Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report

2024-2025



WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. Net Zero Commitment

Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has committed to achieving net zero carbon equivalent by 2030 for its own operations. This means we are measuring and reducing the greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted through our operations and activities (both direct and indirect), and then, for those emissions which can't be eliminated, offset to achieve net zero.

Key greenhouse gases we are including are carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. Other greenhouse gases, such as refrigerants, will not be included in our calculations but we will seek to ensure that these GHGs are identified if we use or emit them, and eliminated or reduced and offset.

To achieve net zero by 2030 for Council emissions, the below stepped increases in reduction have been agreed.

Table 1 – Watford Borough Council emissions reduction trajectory

Year	Percentage reduction (%)	Percentage offsetting (%)	Total (%)
2025	22	6	28
2027	40	11	51
2029	60	19	79
2030	75	25	100

To find out more about our path to achieving net zero, read *Watford's Environmental Strategy: Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency, 2023-2030* and the accompanying *Delivery Plan, 2023-2025.*



2. Council Overview

Watford is a vibrant and diverse borough, located just within the M25 in the south-west of Hertfordshire and is one of ten districts within the county. Watford is a predominantly urban borough, with a population of 102,000 (Census, 2021) covering just 8.3 square miles making it the most densely populated local authority area within England.

Table 2 – Watford Borough Council overview

Year	FY 2024-2025
Number of full-time officers	244 FTE
Operational sites – owned	36
Operational vehicles – owned	6
Leased sites – owned	2

Watford has a relatively small number of officers because several key services, such as leisure centres (Everyone Active), waste collection and parks and green spaces maintenance (Veolia), are contracted out. Watford does, however, own the waste collection and green space maintenance vehicles used by Veolia.

3. Reporting Period

April 2024 – March 2025.



4. Reporting Boundary

Watford Borough Council uses an operational control boundary methodology, as established by the GHG Accounting Tool produced by Local Partnerships for the Local Government Association (LGA).

This means the council will report on all sources of greenhouse gas emissions over which it has operational control. The authority has operational control over a service if it has full authority to introduce and implement its operating policies.

The council continues to seek to influence the reduction of emissions beyond its operational control.

5. Reporting Scopes

Watford Borough Council has included emissions for Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 categories. Of the fifteen Scope 3 categories identified by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (WRI, 2011: P.32), the following have been included either in-part or fully:

- Purchased goods and services
- Fuel and energy related activities
- Waste generated in operations
- Business travel
- Employee commuting
- Downstream leased assets

These categories are an expansion of the 2019 greenhouse gas emissions report and follow the same framework as the 2023/24 Greenhouse Gas Emissions report (available here). We continue to review opportunities to expand our Scope 3 emissions reporting, with a particular focus on Purchased Goods and



Services and Downstream Leased Assets. Our aim is to incorporate these categories into our reporting for the 2025/26 financial year, aligned with the implementation of our new delivery plan.

Below is a detailed explanation of the data collection process for these categories and our efforts to improve the completeness of our Scope 3 emissions data.

i. Purchased Goods and Services

Our 2019 baseline greenhouse gas emissions report only included emissions from water supply. Similar to the 2023/24 report, this year we have also included emissions from our IT equipment and paper and board, calculated based on the tonnage of materials used. For future reports, we are working towards including emissions associated with food and drink at council-run events.

ii. Fuel and Energy Related Activities

This refers to activities not included in Scope 1 or Scope 2, such as upstream emissions from purchased fuels and electricity. These are commonly referred to as Well-To-Tank (WTT) emissions for fuels, and Transmission and Distribution (T&D) losses for electricity. Both our 2019/2020 baseline and our 2024/2025 greenhouse gas emissions report include WTT and T&D emissions.

iii. Waste Generated in Operations

Calculating our waste generated in operations was added into our report in 2023/24. Like last year, we have calculated a proxy waste estimate for some of our operational sites, the Town Hall (refuse and



recycling) and the Market (general waste). We did not have access to the waste data from the Cemetery this year, therefore we used the amount from the 23/24 report. For the Town Hall, we tracked how full the bins were in March 2025 and converted the volume into tonnage, then into emissions. The waste at the Market is weighed using a compactor and includes all general waste. Earlier this year, the Market began separating cardboard waste, and we plan to include data on this cardboard in next year's report to further improve the accuracy of our waste emissions estimates.

iv. Business Travel

Business travel was included in 2019 baseline greenhouse gas emissions report. We use the expenses data for business travel by car to calculate the emissions. We currently do not have the relevant data to include business travel by public transport, and we continue to work with our Human Resources team to resolve this.

v. Employee Commuting

While employee commuting was included in last year's greenhouse gas emissions report, it was not part of our original 2019 baseline. We continued to calculate emissions from employee commuting this year. In February 2025, we distributed a staff survey with questions about commuting habits and homeworking. With 83 responses in 2025, an increase from 68 in 2024, we were able to estimate the associated emissions for both activities. To improve the consistency and accuracy of our data, we have introduced a quarterly



staff travel survey and are currently developing a Staff Travel and Homeworking Plan to encourage more sustainable travel across the organisation.

vi. Downstream Leased Assets

Our 2019 baseline greenhouse gas emissions report included emissions from our leisure centres, parks and green spaces maintenance and waste contractors. We are continuing to work towards reporting emissions associated with our web server services and data centre operations.



6.2019/2020 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Baseline year)

Watford Council commissioned APSE to calculate our greenhouse gas emissions in the financial year 2019/ 2020.
In 2019/2020, Watford Council emitted 2,228 tonnes CO_2e[1].

Table 3 – Watford Borough Council Baseline Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2019/2020

Scope	Emission Source	Tonnes CO_2e	% Split
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	278.24	12.49
	Fuel – Petrol	9.66	0.43
	Fleet – Waste Collection	297.25	13.34
	Fleet – Parks and Green Spaces	165.05	7.41
2	Electricity	431.39	19.36
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	3.87	0.17
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	221.71	9.95
	Business Travel (Car)	5.63	0.25
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	815	36.58
Total		**2227.8**	**100**

[1]Our baseline figure was revised from 1,980 to 2228 tonnes CO_2e, after updating our leisure centres data and including the WTT emissions of our contractor travel.

7.2024/2025 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Overview

The Council reports greenhouse gas emissions using two figures. The first is the 2024/25 emissions calculated using the same emission sources as the 2019/20 baseline year. The second is the total 2024/25 emissions based on updated and expanded emission sources, which now include the additional Scope 3 emissions introduced in the 2023/24 greenhouse gas report. This dual-reporting approach allows for consistent comparison with the baseline, while also presenting a more complete dataset.

2024/2025 Greenhouse Gas Emissions – baseline emission sources

2,043.09 CO_2e

Council emissions have dropped by over 176 tonnes CO_2e since our 2019/2020 baseline. This reduction is largely due to the Town Hall decarbonisation works, which have significantly lowered gas and electricity demand in key operational buildings,

2024/2025 Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions – updated emission sources

2,610.13 CO_2e



8. 2024/2025 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Baseline)

In 2024/2025, Watford Council emitted **2043.09 tonnes** CO_2e. Per resident, that's **19.97** kilograms CO_2e.

Table 4 – Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2024/2025 (baseline)

Scope	Emission Source	% Split	Tonnes CO_2e		% Change from 2019
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	6.31%	128.86	991.73	-16.1
	Fuel – Petrol	0.00%	0		
	Fleet – Waste Collection	21.62%	441.75		
	Fleet – Parks and Green Spaces	7.20%	146.99		
2	Electricity	13.42%	274.13		
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	0.03%	0.58	1,051.36	0.49
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	4.70%	95.96		
	Business Travel (Car)	0.29%	6.02		
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	46.43%	948.8		
Total		**100**	**2,043.09**		**-8.29**

*Table 5 – Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emission Progress**

Scope	Emission Source	2019/20	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	278.24	161.21	137.48	128.86
	Fuel – Petrol	9.66	0	0	0
	Fleet – Waste Collection	297.25	462.53	459.04	441.75
	Fleet – Parks, Green Spaces and Streets	165.05	181.22	156.52	146.99
2	Electricity	431.39	254.54	244.78	274.13
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	3.87	1.35	2.04	0.58
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	221.71	103	92.19	95.96
	Business Travel (Car)	5.63	5.48	5.75	6.02
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	815	903.2	993.9	948.8
Total		**2227.8**	**2072.53**	**2091.7**	**2,043.09**

*Financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 have not been included in this progression comparison because lockdowns from Covid-19 render results a misrepresentation of typical council operations.



Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report: 2024-2025

This year, the Council has received £892,000 in funding from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to support energy efficiency improvements across three buildings. This investment will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of each site and lead to a measurable decrease in emissions. Essential upgrades will take place, including replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps and installing new insulation.

The decrease in greenhouse gas emissions for purchased goods and services (Water) can be attributed to a recalculation from the previous year's greenhouse gas report. Following the publication of the 2023/24 report, we received a rebate for water usage at one of our sites, which revealed that actual water consumption was significantly lower than originally calculated. As a result, the associated emissions for this category have decreased in the 2024/25 Greenhouse Gas Emissions report.

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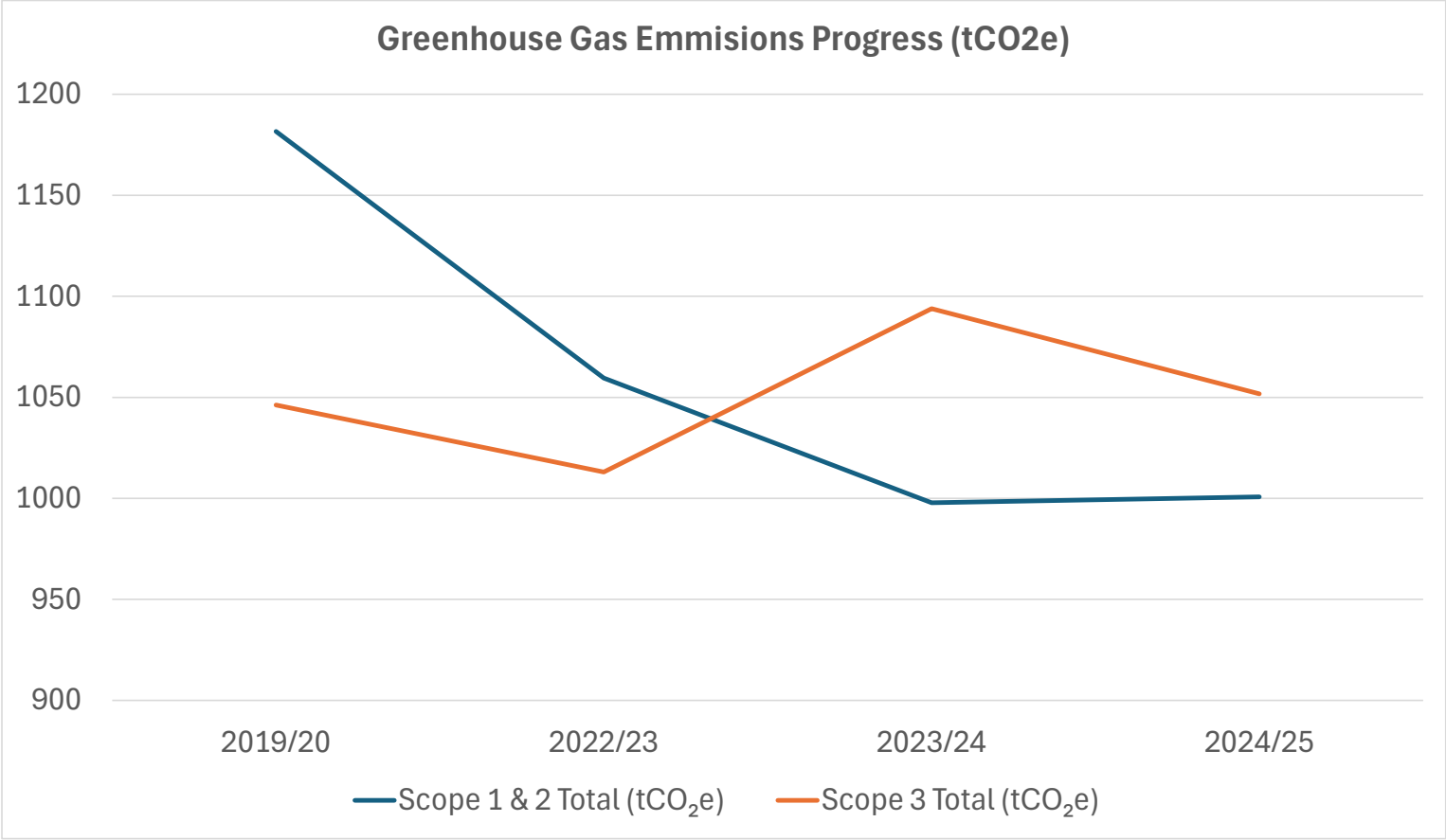
Last financial year (2023/24), Watford Borough Council was awarded £403,900 from Sport England to reduce energy usage at Woodside Leisure Centre's swimming pool. This funding enabled the successful installation of 655 solar photovoltaic (PV) panels at the leisure centre in May 2025. As a result, a reduction in energy consumption at the centre due to the solar PVs should be seen over the coming years. This year, we have already seen some reduction in emissions from the leisure centres from 993.9 tCO_2e in 2023/24 to 948.8 tCO_2e in 2024/25, which is likely due to both lower energy consumption and cleaner electricity from a decarbonising grid.



Electricity usage has increased compared to the 2024/25 Greenhouse Gas Report. While we are aware of this rise, the cause is currently unknown. We will continue to monitor and review the data regularly in collaboration with the Facilities Team. Additionally, new water and energy metering will be introduced this year, which will help support more accurate tracking of trends and data over the coming years.



Figure 1 - Cumulative Progress for Environmental Strategy period 2023-2030





9.2024/2025 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Updated)

Table 6 - Watford Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2024/2025 (updated)

Scope	Emission Source	2024-2025 Tonnes CO_2e	% Split
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	128.86	4.94
	Fuel – Petrol	0	0
	Fleet – Waste Collection	441.75	16.92
	Fleet – Parks, Green Spaces and Streets	146.99	5.63
2	Electricity	277.38	10.63
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	1.07	0.04
	Purchased Goods and Services – Paper, IT	238.8	9.15
	Fuel and Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	98.31	3.77
	Waste Generated in Operations	14.4	0.55
	Business Travel (Car)	6.02	0.23
	Employee Commuting and Home Working	307.75	11.79
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	948.8	36.37
Total		**2,610.13**	**100**

Table 7: Watford Borough Greenhouse Gas Emissions updated comparison to 2023/2024

Scope	Emission Source	2023/24	2024/25	% Change from 2023
1	Fuel – Natural Gas	137.48	128.86	-0.72
	Fuel – Petrol	0	0	
	Fleet – Waste Collection	459.04	441.75	
	Fleet – Parks, Green Spaces and Streets	156.52	146.99	
2	Electricity	249.2	277.38	
3	Purchased Goods and Services – Water	2.04	1.07	+2.97
	Purchased Goods and services-Paper, IT	285.12	238.8	
	Fuel/Energy Related Activities – WTT and T&D	92.19	98.31	
	Waste Generated in Own operations	12.25*	12.63	
	Business Travel (Car)	5.75	6.02	
	Employee commuting and home working	150.8	307.75**	
	Downstream Leased Assets – Leisure Centres	993.9	948.8	
Total		**2554.72**	**2,610.13**	**+2.17%**



* This is a recalculation of the 23/24 data.

**The emissions are calculated as a proxy and this year we had over 20 more respondents than 2023. The increase in emissions from employee commuting and home working may be due to a number of factors, from more accurate data collection, to the people who responded living further away, to having a more accurate way of estimating mileage, to the time of year the survey was completed. In 2025/26 we intend to carry out more regular surveys, so get a better estimate and enable us to take targeted action.

References

- WRI (2011) Greenhouse Gas Protocol Scope 3. Available at: Corporate-Value-Chain-Accounting-Reporing-Standard_041613_2.pdf (ghgprotocol.org).

