
Climate Action

Annual Report

2025/26



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

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is available via the Council website***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the progress Ards and North Down Borough Council has made during 2025–26 in reducing emissions from its own operations and preparing for the impacts of climate change. It demonstrates how the Council is meeting its statutory duties under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, while embedding climate action across services and strengthening governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Key Messages

1. Measured progress has been achieved, but further acceleration is required.

The Council has achieved an 11.54% reduction in carbon emissions from the 2019/20 baseline, representing continued progress towards the statutory target of a 48% reduction by 2030.

While year-on-year reductions provide a useful indicator of progress, the Council has not set formal interim annual reduction targets for climate mitigation.

Emissions reductions are expected to follow a non-linear trajectory, with more significant decreases anticipated as major energy, estate and fleet decarbonisation projects are fully implemented and begin to deliver measurable impact. This reflects the delivery-led nature of the Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan, where step changes in emissions are expected as key projects come online.

2. Strong governance, planning and reporting frameworks are now in place.

During 2025–26, the Council established the Climate Action Board to provide strategic leadership, oversight and coordination of climate activity across services. Both the Climate Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plans are reviewed by this Board.

3. Climate mitigation and adaptation activity were reported to DAERA.

This is the first statutory reporting of climate action activity. A new Carbon Dashboard has also been developed, providing a robust framework for monitoring Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions and tracking progress against agreed targets.

4. Climate action is being delivered across Council operations.

Practical action has been progressed across all service areas, with a particular focus on reducing emissions from the Council's estate and operations. This includes:

- Energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy installations across Council buildings
- Early progress in transitioning the fleet to low-emission vehicles and expanding charging infrastructure
- Improvements in waste management and recycling across Council services and public spaces
- Delivery of nature-based solutions across Council land, supporting both carbon reduction and climate resilience

These actions reflect a coordinated, organisation-wide approach to climate mitigation, supported by service-level delivery.

5. **Adaptation and resilience are becoming embedded in service delivery.**
Alongside emissions reduction, the Council has strengthened its approach to climate adaptation. This includes the development of a Climate Risk Register, integration of climate risks into the Corporate Risk Register, and delivery of actions to improve resilience to flooding, severe weather and coastal change. Nature-based solutions, infrastructure improvements and emergency preparedness measures are being embedded across services.
6. **Monitoring, data and continuous improvement are being strengthened.**
The introduction of the Carbon Dashboard, alongside the use of action trackers and enhanced reporting processes, provides improved visibility of performance and delivery. Work is also underway to develop the Council's approach to Scope 3 emissions, recognising the importance of improving the evidence base to support future decision-making and reporting.

Priorities for the Next 12 Months

To build on this progress, the Council will focus on:

- **Accelerating emissions reductions** across the estate and fleet to progress towards a 48% reduction by 2030
- **Strengthening governance and delivery**, including continued oversight through the Climate Action Board and use of action trackers
- **Enhancing data, monitoring and reporting**, including further development of the Carbon Dashboard and progression of Scope 3 emissions
- **Embedding climate action across all services**, through training, improved screening processes and integration into decision-making
- **Strengthening resilience**, through delivery of adaptation actions, green infrastructure and climate risk management

Conclusion

The Council has made progress in establishing the governance structures, plans and initial delivery needed to support climate action within its own operations. The next phase will require an increased pace of delivery, supported by strengthened monitoring and continued cross-council coordination, to meet statutory emissions targets and ensure that Council services and assets are resilient to future climate risks.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Climate Action Annual Report provides a clear and accessible overview of how the Council is reducing emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change. It summarises progress during the 2025–26 financial year, highlights key projects, and demonstrates how the Council is meeting its reporting obligations.

This is the first Climate Action Annual Report prepared by Ards and North Down Borough Council. It marks the beginning of an annual reporting cycle, with future reports intended to provide annual updates on actions delivered across Council services and progress towards our climate goals. By publishing this report, the Council aims to keep the public informed, build trust, and demonstrate its ongoing commitment to climate action.

Climate action is vital for Ards and North Down, as the borough faces increasing risks from coastal erosion, flooding, and changing weather patterns. These pressures affect communities, infrastructure, and natural habitats. Acting now will help protect residents, safeguard our coastline, and ensure the borough remains resilient and sustainable for future generations.

1.1 OUR APPROACH TO CLIMATE ACTION

The Climate Change Act 2022 imposed mandatory reductions in our carbon emissions with a target of 48% reduction over baseline data by 2030 and 100% (or Net Zero) by 2050.

Since declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019, Ards and North Down Borough Council has developed several policies and strategies to meet these targets, including:

- Roadmap to Sustainability (2022-2028)
- Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan (2025-2030)
- Climate Adaptation Plan (2024 -2030)
- Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030)
- Roadmap to Green Fleet (2024-2030)
- Tree and Woodland Strategy (2021-2032)
- Climate Ready Parks Action Plan (2026 +)

In 2025/26 we submitted both Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan and the Climate Adaptation Plan to DAERA in line with our statutory obligations. To support the actions within these plans we created a Carbon Dashboard, formed a Climate Action Board (Strategic), and continued to progress this work through quarterly meetings of a Climate and Sustainability Forum¹.

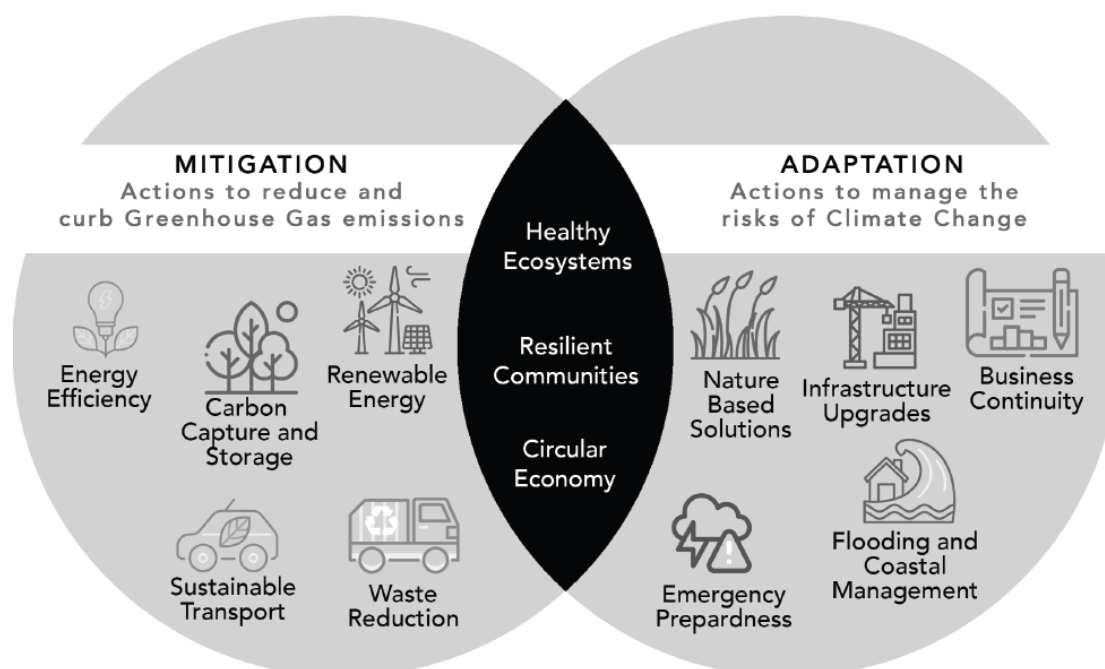
The Roadmap to Sustainability was also reviewed, and updated, to ensure alignment with new climate specific actions and to improve how implementation of actions across council are measured and reported.

We have updated our Environmental Policy Statement and our Sustainability & Climate Change Policy to ensure they align with the revised requirements of our ISO 14001 Environmental Management System.

¹ This was formally called the Climate Change and Sustainability Champions Working Group with membership drawn from all services across council.

1.2 CLIMATE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

This report provides an overview of the Council's progress across both **climate mitigation** and **climate adaptation**, reflecting the two complementary plans that guide our approach to climate action.



The **Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan** focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions arising from the Council's own estate and operations, supporting the transition towards net zero and contributing to wider regional targets. The **Climate Adaptation Plan**, by contrast, focuses on preparing for the impacts of climate change, such as flooding, coastal erosion, extreme weather and biodiversity loss - by strengthening the resilience of our services, infrastructure and communities.

While these plans have been developed and approved separately, they are increasingly being delivered in a coordinated way, recognising that mitigation and adaptation are closely connected and must be progressed together.

The Scope of the Council's Role

The Council's Climate Action Plans focus on reducing emissions from our own estate and operations, building resilience within council services and assets, and influencing wider change through our role as a community leader, service provider and partner. However, it is recognised that most borough-wide emissions and climate risks sit beyond the Council's direct control and are primarily addressed through regional and national policy frameworks.

In this context, the Council is not responsible for borough-wide emissions but plays a supporting and influencing role, working with government, businesses, communities and other stakeholders to facilitate collaboration, align local activity with regional priorities, and influence behaviours and investment within its remit.

2.0 CLIMATE ACTION

This section outlines progress across the Council's climate activity, structured around mitigation, adaptation and borough-wide actions.

2.1 CLIMATE MITIGATION

This section outlines the actions taken to reduce Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from Council operations, focusing on direct emissions and those associated with energy use. The Council's carbon emissions are reported in line with recognised greenhouse gas accounting standards, which distinguish between direct emissions (Scope 1), emissions from purchased energy (Scope 2), and wider indirect emissions (Scope 3).

The Council's Carbon Dashboard currently focuses on Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from its estate and operations, providing a robust basis for monitoring and reporting progress.

Scope 3 emissions are not currently included in the Council's operational carbon footprint but will be incorporated over time as methodologies and data improve.

In 2025/26, the Council delivered a range of practical actions to cut carbon emissions across its estate and operations, guided by its Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan and other supporting strategies. The following section highlights the key mitigation actions delivered this year by service area, supporting progress towards the Council's statutory emissions reduction targets.

Climate mitigation is a shared responsibility across all council services. The following is a summary of the different mitigation projects carried out this year by various departments.

Estates Service

As part of the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy, the Estates team has delivered a range of projects to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions across the Council's estate. These projects focus on improving energy efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy, and supporting progress towards the Council's emissions reduction targets.

Key actions delivered during 2025–26 include:

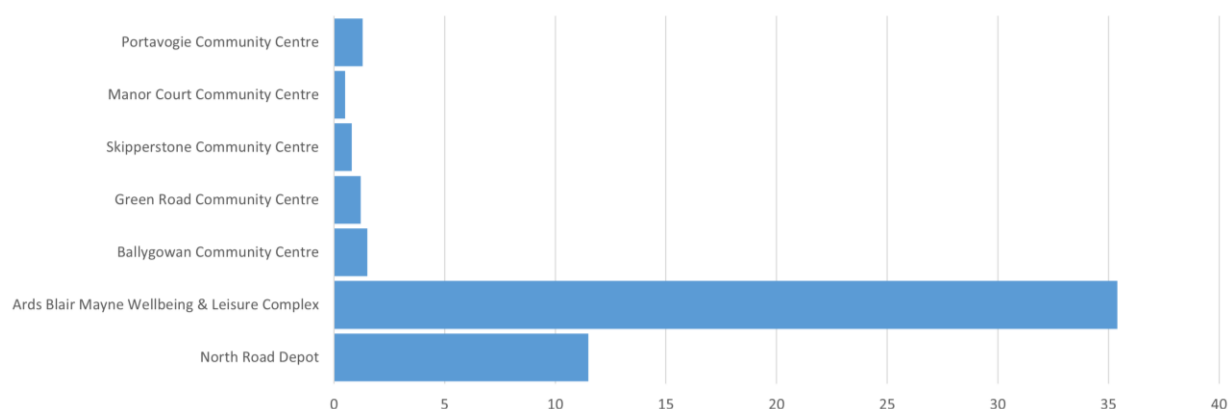
- **Solar PV installations** across several Council properties, including:
 - A 100kWp installation at North Road Depot
 - A 284kWp installation at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex
 - Smaller installations at community centres in Ballygowan, Green Road, Skipperstone, Manor Court and Portavogie
- **Energy efficiency improvements through LED lighting upgrades**, including:
 - Installation of dome lighting, daylight sensing and motion controls at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex
 - LED lighting replacements across multiple areas of Bangor Aurora Aquatic & Leisure Complex
 - LED lighting upgrade at Signal Centre, Bangor
 - Lighting upgrades across multiple zones in Queens Leisure Complex
- **Transition to low-emission transport**, including the addition of an electric van to replace a diesel vehicle
- **Expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure**, with additional charge points being introduced as part of the ongoing Car Park Strategy review

The projects to install solar Photovoltaic panels are expected to deliver measurable energy and carbon savings. For example²:

Description	Annual energy saving estimate	Annual tCO₂e reduction estimate
North Road Depot PV	65,000 kWh	11.5
Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex PV	200,000 kWh	35.4
Ballygowan Community Centre Solar PV	8,230 kWh	1.5
Green Road Community Centre Solar PV	6,758 kWh	1.2
Skipperstone Community Centre Solar PV	4,250 kWh	0.8
Manor Court Community Centre Solar PV	2943 kWh	0.5
Portavogie Community Centre Solar PV	7348 kWh	1.3

These figures are estimates based on current assumptions; actual energy generation and carbon savings will vary year to year due to factors such as weather conditions and operational use, with the Council's Carbon Dashboard enabling ongoing comparison between estimated and actual performance.

FIGURE 1: ANNUAL (PROJECTED) CARBON REDUCTION BY SITE FOLLOWING SOLAR PV INSTALLATION



Progress against the 2030 target will be monitored through the Carbon Dashboard, recognising that emissions reductions will not occur evenly year on year but will be driven by the delivery of key projects

² *source – Quarterly Energy Management Strategy Update

Parks and Cemeteries Service

Many of the activities delivered by the Parks and Cemeteries service contribute to both climate mitigation and climate adaptation. While adaptation focuses on preparing for the impacts of climate change (for example, reducing flood risk or managing coastal change), these actions also play an important role in mitigation by protecting and enhancing natural carbon stores. Tree planting, woodland creation, and improved management of grasslands and coastal habitats all increase the capacity of the Council's estate to absorb and store carbon. At the same time, measures such as pond desilting and dune restoration improve resilience to flooding and extreme weather. This overlap reflects the role of nature-based solutions, which deliver multiple benefits for climate, biodiversity, and communities.

The following examples highlight how this combined approach is being delivered in practice:

- The desilting of Ward Park ponds has improved capacity and therefore reduced flooding in the park/main road adjacent to it.
- Continuing to plant trees/hedgerow and orchards in line with the Tree & Woodland strategy
- A successful business case to Council approved £1m for land purchase for tree planting
- Work has begun with the RSPB on mapping of the Council's grasslands with the intention of calculating the carbon capture capacity for these spaces
- Sand dune management planning has progressed alongside marram grass planting in the community, with a shared education project to support this.
- Publication of a 'Climate Ready Parks Action Plan' to outline planned activity over the next few years. The actions include being better prepared for severe weather, developing nature recovery networks and staff training around climate change.

Tourism, Arts and Heritage Service

The Tourism, Arts and Heritage service primarily contributes to climate mitigation by encouraging more sustainable behaviours among visitors, businesses and partners across the borough

During 2025–26, this has included:

- Agreed a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan with the Community Planning Sustainable Tourism Group to promote Ards and North Down as a Sustainable Tourism Destination.
- Collaborated with the Sustainable Tourism Group to define sustainable tourism and create a Good Visitor Promise outlining expected visitor behaviours for Ards and North Down.
- Supported the delivery of the Tourism NI Sustainable Growth Programme for eleven local tourism businesses.
- Promotion of active travel by including park and ride options, as well as promoting the use of public or low-carbon transport for Council run events such as the Comber

Earlies Potato Festival, Tide and Turf in Portavogie and Sea Bangor.

- Achieving 100% segregation of waste at all major events to ensure no waste that could be recycled goes to landfill.

Community Planning & Climate Service

The Community Planning and Climate Service of Council is responsible for managing the framework for mitigation and adaptation work across Council. In 2025/26 they:

- Received senior leadership approval to establish a Climate Action Board (strategic)
- Published Ards and North Down Borough Council's first Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan in October 2025
- Submitted the first public report on climate mitigation action to the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in October 2025
- Submitted the first public report on climate adaptation action the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in March 2026
- Maintained ISO 14001 Environmental Management System Accreditation
- Launched a Big Climate Conversation to ensure communities have a voice in shaping how the Council responds to climate change, including their concerns and priorities
- Included (Climate) Resilience Communities as a priority workstream within the Big Plan endorsed by the Strategic Community Planning Partnership.
- Developed methodology that will help ANDBC assess its ability to contribute to reduce inequalities and prioritise anti-poverty.

2.1.1 THE COUNCIL'S CARBON DASHBOARD

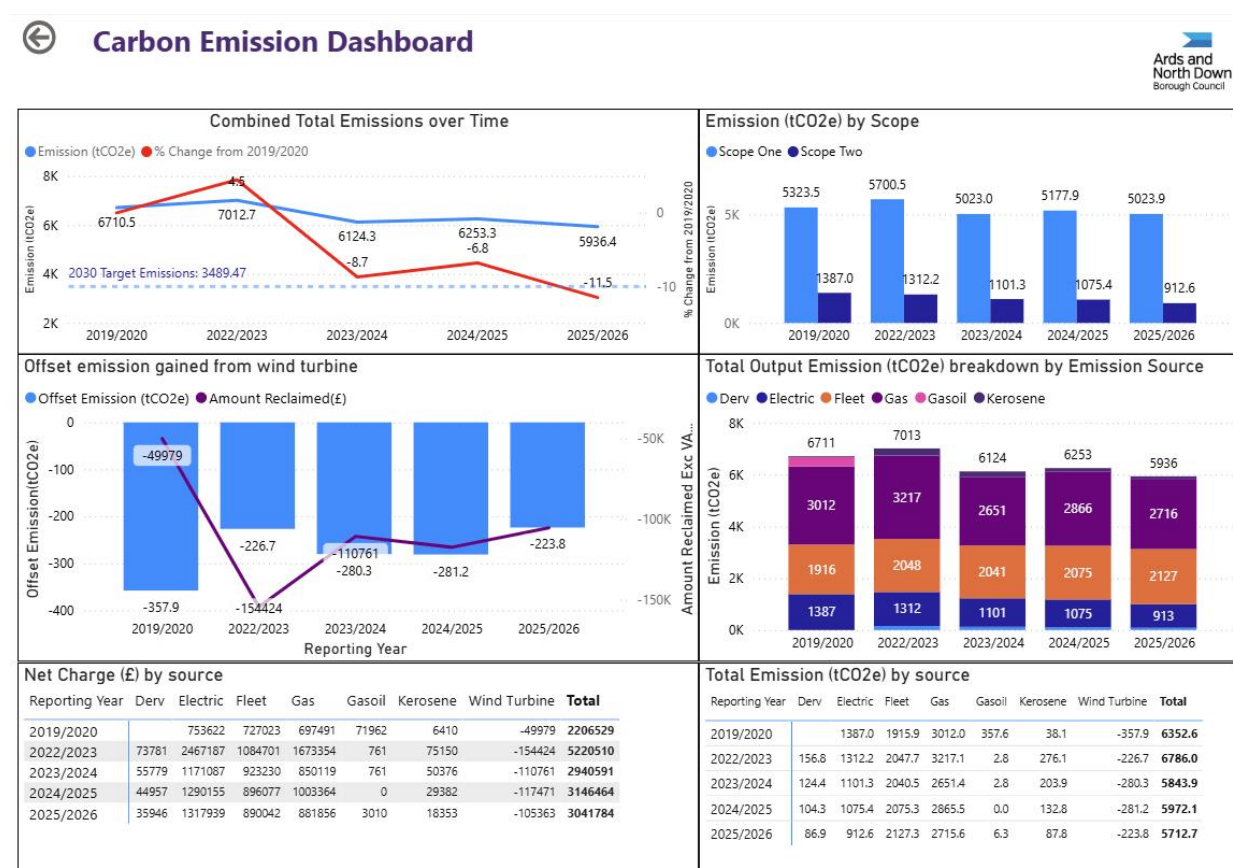
To stay on track to achieve a 48% reduction by 2030 the Council's Carbon Dashboard has been developed to monitor energy consumption and track progress towards the 2030 target and model the expected impact of planned projects, providing a clear line of sight to the longer-term target.

The Carbon Dashboard has been designed to monitor the Council's overall carbon emissions (scope 1 and scope 2) but is also designed to monitor the Council's consumption across key assets within the Council's Estate. These assets have been segmented as follows:

- Administrative buildings
- Community Centres
- Leisure facilities
- Parks & Cemeteries Depots
- Recycling Centres and Depots
- Fleet
- Others (feature lighting, toilets, Christmas lighting)
- Wind Turbine (both production and consumption)

The Carbon Dashboard collates the Council's yearly energy consumption and carbon emissions (in tCO₂e) against the targeted timeline of 48% reduction by 2030. Carbon modelling of the energy reduction of the projects within the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy's Action Plan, the Roadmap to Green Fleet are also included. This shows our predicted reduction in emissions and by when.

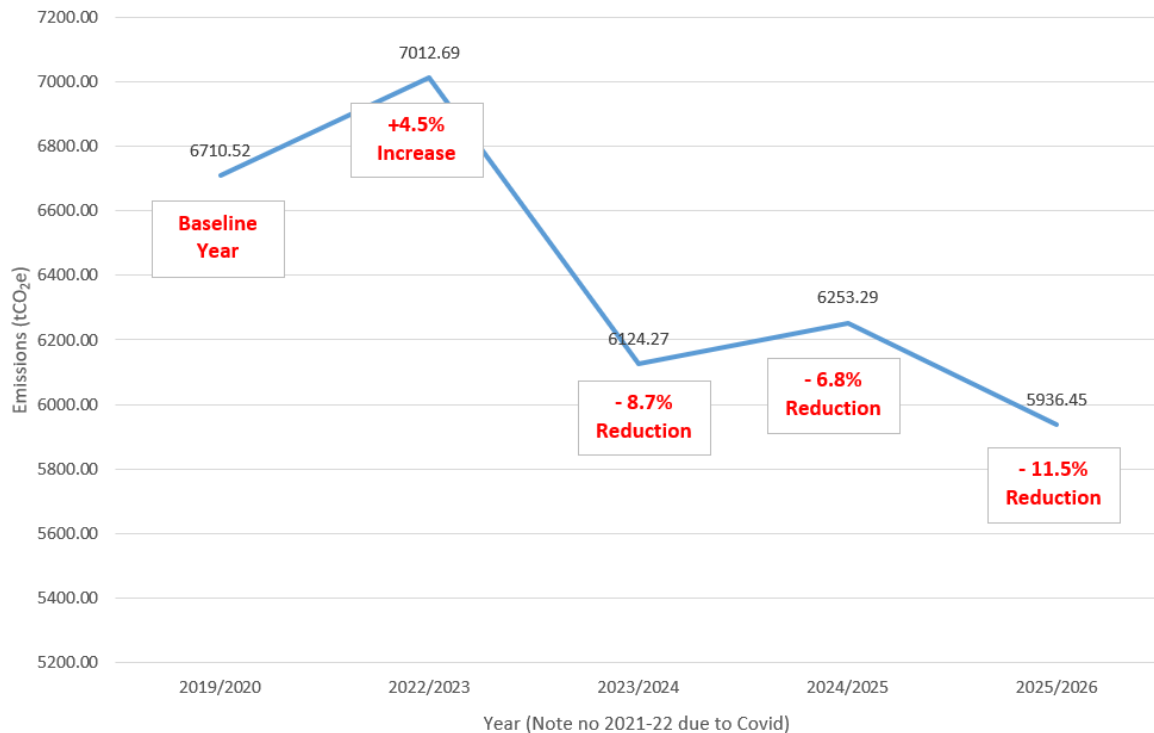
FIGURE 2: OVERVIEW OF CARBON DASHBOARD (SUMMARY PAGE)



2.1.2 ACTUAL CARBON EMISSIONS REDUCTION

The chart below, taken from the Council's Carbon Dashboard, shows progress in reducing carbon emissions from the 2019/20 baseline year. This provides a clear evidence base for monitoring performance and understanding the impact of actions delivered across Council services.

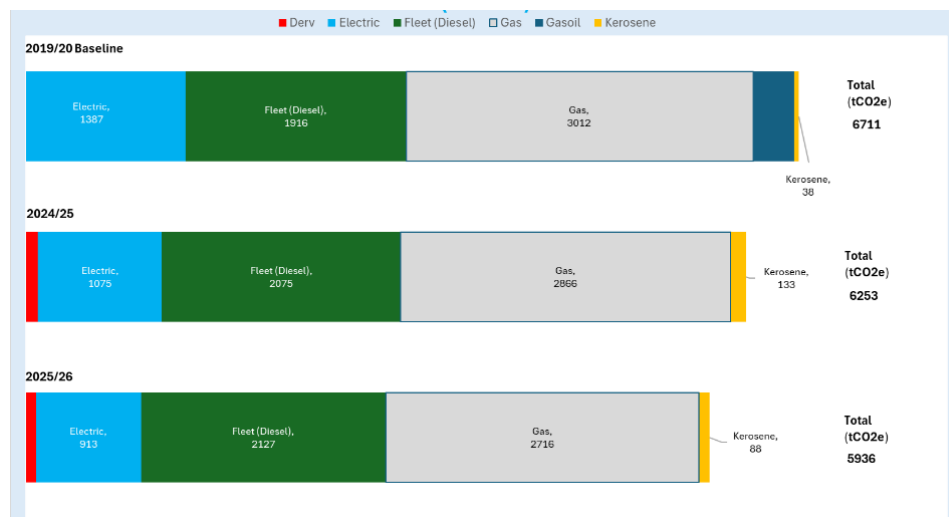
FIGURE 3: ANDBC CARBON DASHBOARD: SCOPE 1 AND 2 EMISSIONS (tCO₂e)



In 2025/26, the Council achieved an **11.54% reduction in carbon emissions compared to the 2019/20 baseline**, representing continued progress in reducing emissions from its estate and operations. This also reflects a **5.07% reduction from 2024/25**, demonstrating that progress is potentially starting to accelerate. These values are reflected in Figure 1, where emissions reduce from 6,710 tCO₂e in 2019/20 to 5,936 tCO₂e in 2025/26.

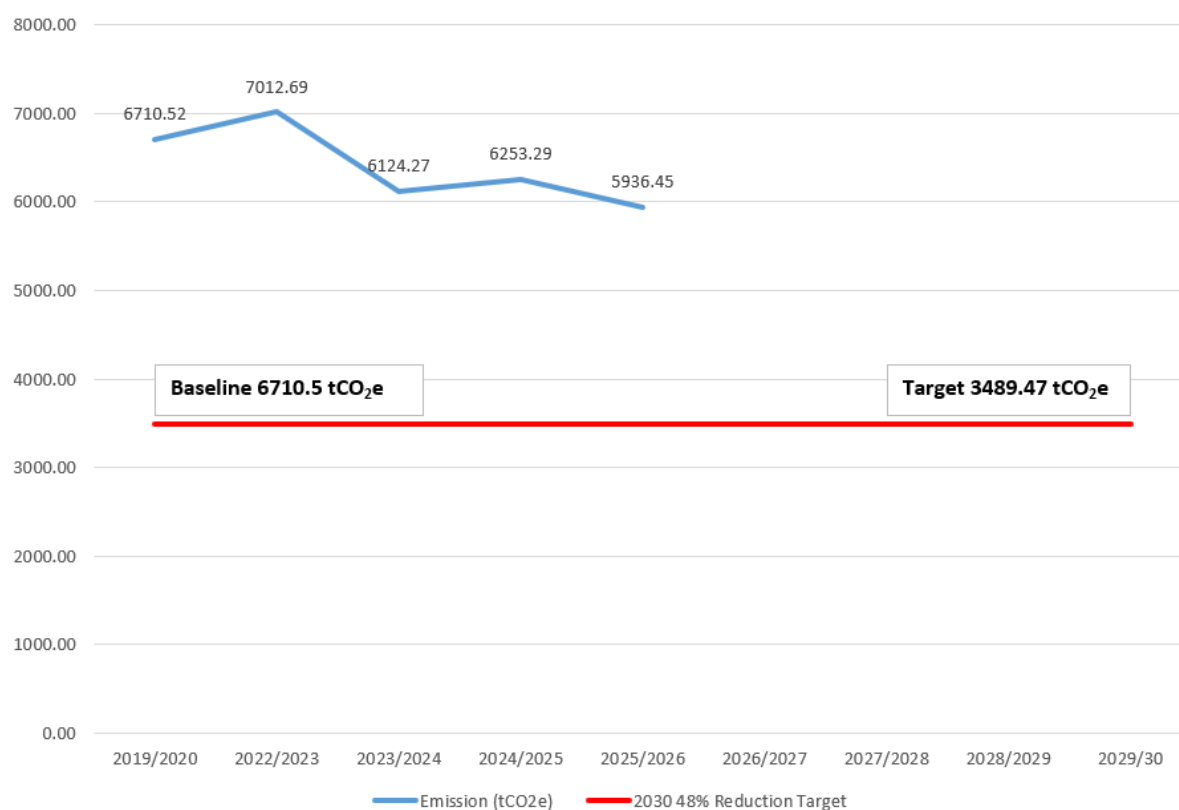
The chart below shows the sources of emissions and where the reduction has occurred.

FIGURE 4: ANDBC CARBON DASHBOARD - SOURCE OF EMISSIONS



The Council's primary target is a 48% reduction in emissions by 2030, in line with the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. While year-on-year reductions provide a useful indicator of direction of travel, the Council has not set formal interim annual reduction targets for climate mitigation.

FIGURE 5: ANDBC EMISSIONS TREND VERSUS EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGET



Emissions reductions are expected to follow a non-linear trajectory, reflecting the delivery-led nature of the Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan. More significant decreases in emissions are anticipated as major energy, estate and fleet decarbonisation projects are fully implemented and begin to deliver measurable impact. As a result, progress is likely to occur in step changes rather than as a consistent annual decline.

Continued delivery of planned projects, supported by robust monitoring through the Carbon Dashboard, will be critical to maintaining momentum and ensuring alignment with the 2030 target.

2.1.3 FUTURE CARBON REDUCTION TARGETS

To support forward planning and decision-making, the Council is continuing to develop its approach to projecting future carbon emissions and identifying the potential impact of planned mitigation actions.

Current modelling work draws on a range of key strategies, including the Sustainable Energy Management Strategy and associated action plans, the Roadmap to a Green Fleet, and the Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan. Together, these provide an indication of the potential scale and timing of emissions reductions arising from planned projects, particularly those relating to energy use, fleet and the Council's estate.

Significant reductions are likely to occur as major capital projects, such as energy efficiency upgrades, renewable energy installations and fleet transition, are implemented and become fully operational. As a result, progress is expected to take place in step changes rather than as a consistent annual decline.

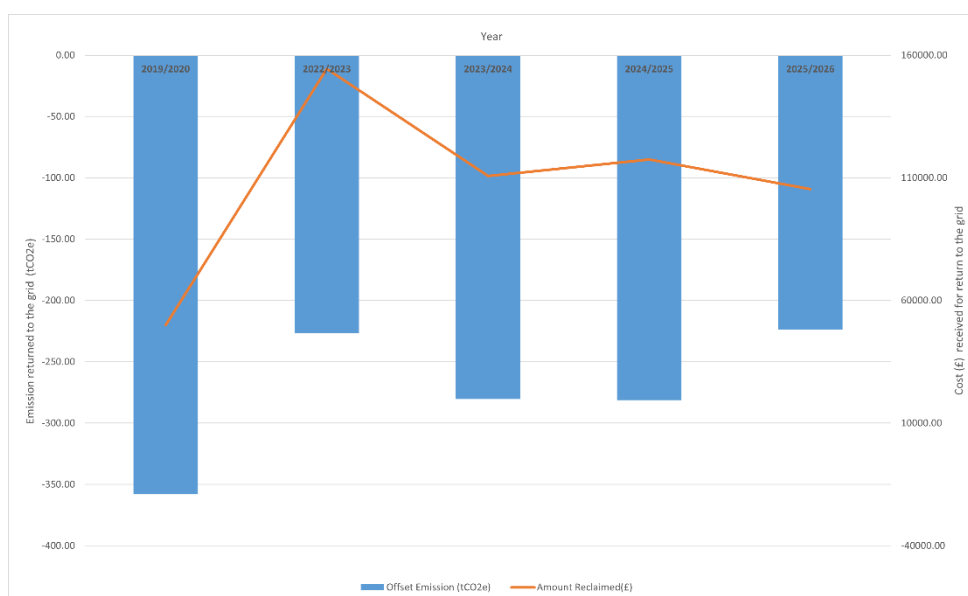
The Council will continue to strengthen its modelling capability during 2026/27, improving the quality of data and aligning projections more closely with the actions set out in the Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan. This will support more robust forecasting, clearer performance monitoring, and enhanced transparency in future annual reporting.

Future Climate Action Annual Reports will present updated projections alongside actual performance data, supporting a clear and evidence-based understanding of progress towards the 2030 target.

2.1.4 RENEWABLE ENERGY AND EMISSIONS OFFSET – WIND TURBINE

The Council's wind turbine generates renewable electricity that is used to partially power the Environmental Resource Centre in Bangor. This reduces reliance on grid-supplied, fossil fuel-based energy, lowering both carbon emissions and energy costs. Where generation exceeds on-site demand, surplus electricity is exported to the grid, ensuring no renewable energy is wasted and contributing to wider carbon reduction. Overall, the turbine supports progress towards the Council's statutory emissions reduction targets and demonstrates a commitment to on-site renewable energy.

FIGURE 6: ANDBC CARBON DASHBOARD - WIND TURBINE DATA



Variations between years reflect changes in generation, site demand, turbine performance and grid factors.

2.2 CLIMATE ADAPTATION

This section sets out the actions taken to strengthen resilience across Council services, assets and communities in response to climate risks.

The Council has taken a proactive approach to planning for a changing climate and building resilience across its services. Several policies and plans have been developed to ensure the Council is better prepared for the impacts of climate change, both in terms of its own operations and the communities it serves.

Progress to date in delivering climate adaptation measures is set out below, demonstrating the steps taken to strengthen resilience across Council services, infrastructure and communities:

Strategic planning and governance

- Development of the Climate Ready Action Plan, setting out a structured programme of adaptation actions across Council services
- Embedding climate considerations within decision-making, capital projects and regeneration activity
- Ongoing integration of climate change into operational discussions, including through the Green Flag Task and Finish Group

Nature-based solutions and green infrastructure

- Progress in delivering the Tree & Woodland Strategy, including identifying opportunities for land acquisition, partnership planting, and developing a tree stock resilient to climate extremes
- Expansion of rewilding spaces, with total coverage now at 132,000m², including partnership work with Buglife and Ecoseeds
- Development of Nature Networks and Nature Recovery, including enhancement of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) and the introduction of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in parks and open spaces
- Establishment of buffer zones around water bodies to support biodiversity, improve water management, and enhance carbon storage
- Delivery of actions within the Let's Grow Together Strategy, increasing access to growing spaces across the borough
- Embedding green infrastructure into capital and regeneration projects

Preparing for severe weather and climate risks

- Development of a Severe Weather Protocol, informed by previous events (e.g. Storm Eowyn)
- Implementation of proactive maintenance programmes, including drain clearance, tree management and winter preparedness measures (e.g. salt stockpiling)
- Ongoing collaboration with relevant services and partners to strengthen emergency planning and response arrangements

Community resilience and engagement

- Supporting community resilience through initiatives such as the Big Climate Conversation, helping to raise awareness of climate risks and encourage local action
- Incorporating climate considerations into wider programmes such as Age Friendly work, including guidance to support residents in preparing for severe weather events
- Supporting community groups and In Bloom initiatives to integrate climate adaptation into local activity

Skills, awareness and partnerships

- Delivery of climate change training for staff, including Carbon Literacy, to build organisational capability
- Continued partnership working with environmental organisations, academic institutions, neighbouring councils and government agencies to share knowledge and coordinate action
- Raising awareness of the role of green infrastructure in managing flooding, supporting biodiversity, and improving public health

Collectively, these actions demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to building resilience and preparing for the long-term impacts of climate change.

2.2.1 CLIMATE RISK ASSESSMENT

In addition to the actions set out in the Climate Adaptation Plan, the Council has developed a Climate Risk Register to identify and assess the key risks associated with climate change across its services and assets.

This register provides a structured approach to understanding the Council's vulnerabilities, including risks related to flooding, extreme weather, coastal change and service disruption. It supports more informed decision-making by highlighting where targeted adaptation measures are required.

Climate risk has also been integrated into the Council's Corporate Risk Register, ensuring that climate-related risks are considered alongside wider organisational risks. This approach strengthens governance and oversight, embedding climate resilience within existing risk management processes.

Together, these measures ensure that climate risks are actively monitored, managed, and reflected in both strategic planning and operational decision-making across the Council.

An updated version of the Climate Risk Register is planned for 2026/27.

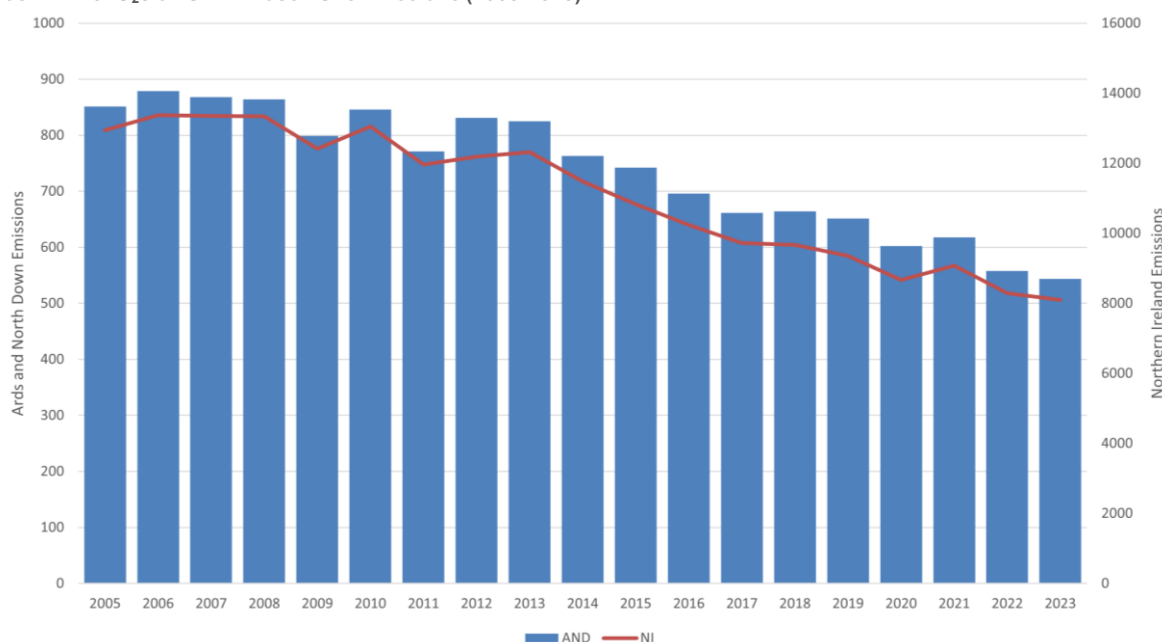
2.3 BOROUGH WIDE CLIMATE CHANGE

This section highlights activity led or supported by the Council that can influence wider climate outcomes across the borough, including service delivery areas such as waste and recycling and engagement initiatives such as the Big Climate Conversation, recognising that responsibility for borough-wide outcomes does not sit with the Council.

2.3.1 BOROUGH WIDE CLIMATE EMISSIONS

The chart below shows the latest published local-area greenhouse gas emissions trend for Ards and North Down (2005–2023)³. It is important to note that Council is **not responsible** for borough-wide emissions, and many of the biggest drivers are shaped by national and regional policy, infrastructure, market conditions and individual choices. This trend data is useful as it offers evidence for borough-wide trends.

FIGURE 7: ktCO₂e OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS (2005-2023)



This data can help the Council target areas where we **do** have influence (for example through waste and recycling services, local leadership and engagement such as the Big Climate Conversation, planning and procurement), and to work with partners to support wider action where decisions sit elsewhere. The dataset is included to support local indicators and reporting, recognising that it should be used alongside other local monitoring and programme evidence.

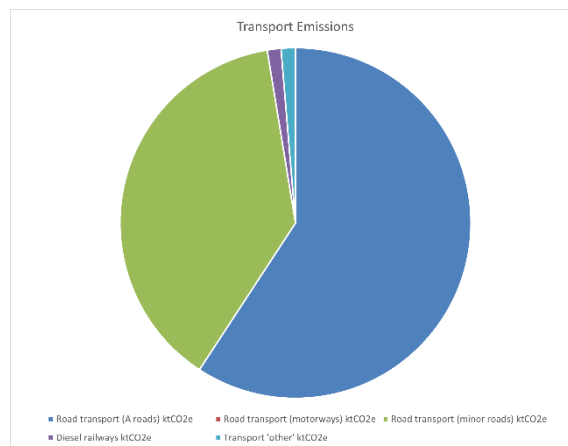
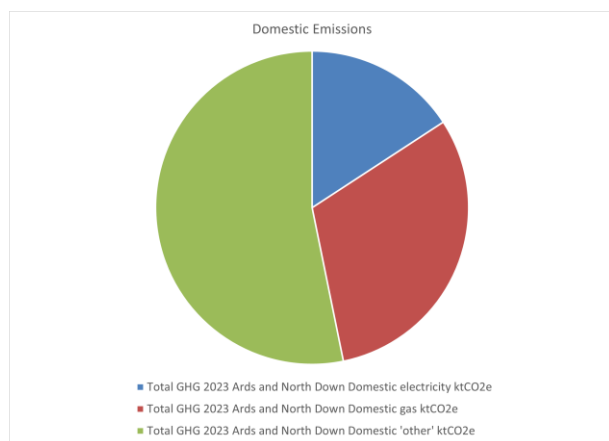
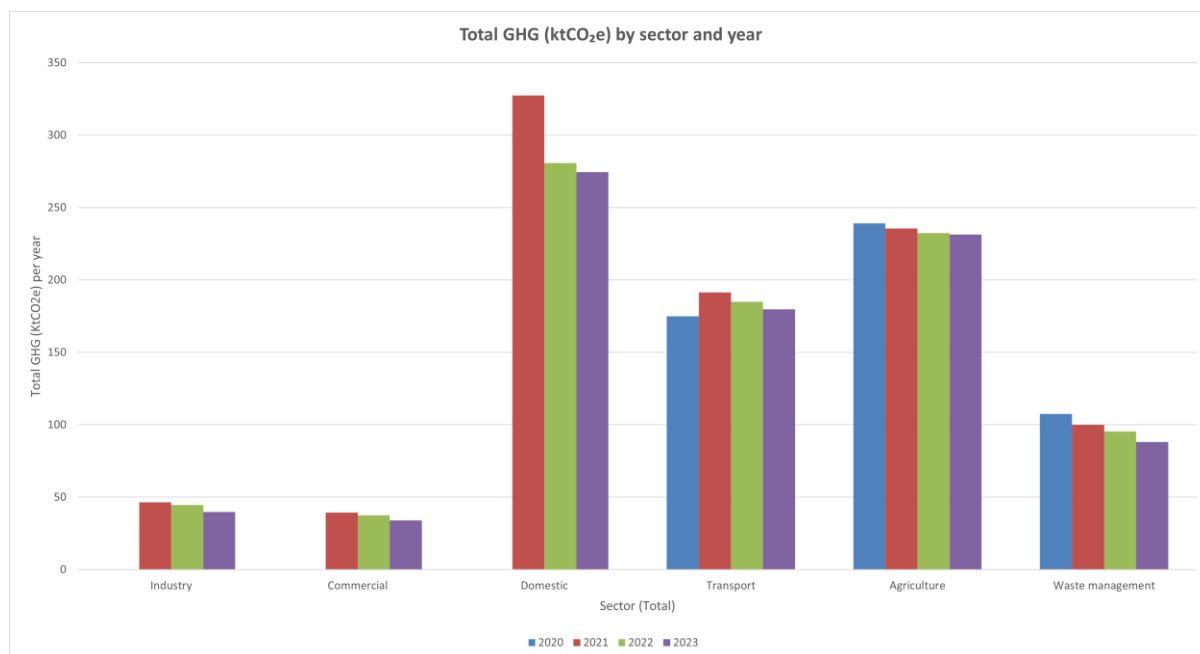
% decrease in GHG emissions across AND since 2005 is 36.2%. Emissions in Ards and North Down have decreased by approximately 17% since 2019, reflecting more recent progress in addition to the longer-term reduction since the baseline year. This is a slightly larger decrease than across Northern Ireland (14%).

³ The data show territorial carbon dioxide emissions estimates within the scope of influence of Local Authorities. The emission estimates are allocated on an end-user basis. This subset dataset excludes large industrial sites, railways, motorways and land-use. Note each year the time series going back to 2005 is revised to take account of methodological improvements, so estimates presented here supersede previous ones. For further information see the UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics>).

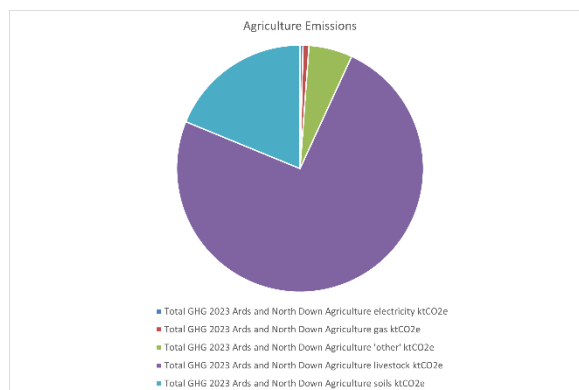
The chart below shows a breakdown of emissions by sector using the latest (2023) local authority dataset.

The data show territorial emissions estimates allocated on an end-user basis. The data include the greenhouse gases; carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. More detailed information across the different sectors is available on NISRA's website⁴.

FIGURE 8: TOTAL GHG (ktCO₂e) BY SECTOR BY YEAR IN ARDS AND NORTH DOWN



The pie charts provide more information on how the 'total' emissions for each sector is calculated. This information can be useful when analysing where carbon reduction activity is possible.



⁴ GHGALL - Greenhouse gas emissions - full dataset data.nisra.gov.uk

2.3.2 WASTE AND RECYCLING

This section highlights the role of waste and recycling in supporting the Council's climate mitigation objectives. Waste and recycling play a significant role in reducing carbon emissions. Across Northern Ireland, recycling activities are estimated to avoid substantial greenhouse gas emissions each year, with council activity alone preventing hundreds of thousands of tonnes of CO₂. These savings arise from diverting waste from landfill and using recycled materials in place of more carbon-intensive virgin resources, with impacts calculated using recognised UK tools such as WRAP's Carbon Waste and Resources Metric.

While this section focuses on waste and recycling activities led by the Council, emissions from waste generated by residents and businesses are not included within the Council's carbon footprint. These are instead captured within borough-wide emissions reporting (see Section 2.3.1).

In 2025/26, the Council made progress to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency across its operations and public spaces. Through targeted initiatives, service improvements, and partnership working, the Council has focused on reducing waste sent to landfill, increasing recycling, and supporting more sustainable behaviours.

TABLE 1: % OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE ARISING SENT FOR PREPARING FOR REUSE, RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING

	2019/20	2024/25		2025/26	
		Tonnes (000)		Tonnes (000)	
Preparation for Reuse		0.32	0.41%	0.35	0.43%
Dry Recycling		17.29	22%	20.3	25%
Composting		26.26	34%	26	33%
TOTAL	54.5%	43.87	56%	46.6	58%

While our recycling rates have increased. The amount of waste being collected that is then sent to land fill has steadily declined.

TABLE 2: % OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE TO LANDFILL

	2019/20	2024/25	2025/26
Household waste to landfill rate	39.4%	29%	TBD

2.3.3 ECONOMIC GROWTH

Economic Development has also contributed to climate mitigation by supporting local businesses to reduce their carbon footprint. This has included targeted work with a small number of businesses to help them understand their emissions and identify practical steps to reduce energy use and improve resource efficiency. While these activities do not directly reduce emissions from Council operations, they support wider mitigation across the borough by building capacity within the local economy and encouraging more sustainable business practices.

2.3.4 CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Capital projects delivered within the Borough contribute to emissions during construction and over their operational lifetimes and are therefore reflected within borough-wide emissions data. The Council's capital programme, including regeneration, leisure, public realm and infrastructure schemes, influences emissions through material use, construction activity, energy demand and long-term travel behaviour.

The Climate Action Plan requires carbon considerations to be embedded into capital decision-making to ensure new assets are energy-efficient, resilient and aligned with a net-zero future; as a result, improvements in building standards, heating systems and overall energy performance mean that newer assets are expected to perform significantly better than older stock, supporting a gradual reduction in borough-wide emissions over time.

Carbon assessment within capital decision-making reflects Green Book principles⁵ and public sector procurement requirements, including those applying to Belfast Region City Deal projects, ensuring a consistent approach across publicly funded investment.

2.3.5 GREENWAYS AND ACTIVE TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Borough's expanding Greenway network represents a key long-term intervention influencing borough-wide emissions from transport, which remains one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions locally. Investment in greenways supports walking, cycling and wheeling as viable alternatives to short car journeys and improves connectivity between towns, employment areas, schools and services.

Major investment secured through the Levelling Up Fund is supporting the development of a 52km Greenway network, including the Newtownards–Bangor and Comber–Newtownards routes. While construction activity contributes to short-term emissions, the primary purpose of these schemes is to enable sustained modal shift away from private car use, delivering long-term emissions reductions and wider health and wellbeing benefits.

Transport-related emissions associated with residents' and visitors' travel choices are reflected in borough-wide emissions figures rather than the Council's operational footprint.

⁵ The Green Book is HM Treasury's appraisal guidance for public sector investment, requiring whole-life costs, benefits and risks to be assessed, including quantified and valued carbon emissions, using the Five Case Model. These requirements apply across publicly funded projects, including City Deal investment.

2.3.6 SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY CHAINS

Borough-wide emissions include those associated with the production, transport and disposal of goods and services purchased across the local economy. As a significant procurer of works, goods and services, Ards and North Down Borough Council influence these emissions through the standards it sets in procurement and commissioning.

The Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Policy commit to integrating sustainable development principles into all activities, including purchasing decisions, with a focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste, water use and pollution across supply chains. This includes specifying energy-efficient products, encouraging low-carbon delivery methods and embedding environmental considerations within tender evaluations when appropriate.

The Procurement Service Unit has drafted a Social Value in Sustainable Procurement Policy. The policy is based on placing the strategy within the context of Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy and The Procurement Act 2023 and will link back to the existing strategies which govern the Council.

Once this Policy has been approved by Council, council officers will be advised to include Social Value in all contracts, regardless of value and where it is appropriate to do so.

While supply-chain emissions (scope 3) are not yet reported within the Council's operational carbon footprint, they are reflected in borough-wide emissions totals. Currently when tendering, suppliers are advised that they may be asked to provide information about their own emissions (for example, energy use, fuel, travel, and waste). This will help the Council meet its legal reporting obligations.

Looking ahead, the Council will take a more structured approach to understanding and reporting Scope 3 emissions, starting with key categories such as procured goods and services, capital projects and commissioned services. Future annual climate action reports will progressively improve transparency by identifying priority Scope 3 sources, setting consistent reporting boundaries, and aligning with national reporting guidance as data quality and availability improve.

2.3.7 THE BIG CLIMATE CONVERSATION

During 2025–26, the Council launched the Big Conversation on Climate Change, creating opportunities to engage with residents, communities and partners on the challenges and opportunities presented by a changing climate. This initiative supports both mitigation and adaptation objectives by raising awareness, encouraging behaviour change, and helping to shape a shared response to climate risks. Further work will be progressed during 2026–27 to build on this engagement, deepen community involvement, and ensure that local voices, including children, continue to inform the Council's climate action.

3.0 PUBLIC REPORTING ON CLIMATE ACTION

In 2025/26, Ards and North Down Borough Council completed and submitted both its Climate Action (Mitigation) Plan and Climate Adaptation Plan to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), fulfilling its statutory duties under the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Council's responsibilities included coordinating information from across services, reviewing and quality assuring the evidence and actions reported, confirming governance and internal sign-off arrangements, and submitting the final returns to DAERA within the required timescales. This process demonstrates how the Council is reducing emissions, managing climate risks, and embedding climate action into decision-making and service delivery.

DAERA will use these returns to monitor progress across local government and inform Northern Ireland wide reporting and policy development.

The next statutory reporting deadlines are 31 October 2028 for mitigation and 31 January 2030 for adaptation.

Annual Reporting of Climate Action

Each summer, Ards and North Down Borough Council will publish its annual Climate Action Report, providing a clear and transparent account of the progress made over the previous year in reducing emissions, strengthening climate resilience, and embedding sustainability across Council services and the wider Borough. The report will bring together key information on both climate mitigation and adaptation activity, highlighting actions delivered, actions underway, and how climate considerations are being integrated into decision-making, service planning and partnership working.

It forms part of the Council's statutory response to the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and supports good governance, accountability and continuous improvement.

Alongside the main report, an easy read version is also produced to ensure the information is accessible to a wider audience, using plain language and clear summaries to explain what climate change means, why action is important, and what the Council is doing to protect people, communities and the environment.

4.0 LOOKING AHEAD: NEXT 12 MONTHS

Over the next 12 months, Ards and North Down Borough Council will continue to deliver a coordinated and ambitious programme of climate action, aligned to the Climate Action Plan (mitigation), Climate Adaptation Plan, and the wider Roadmap to Sustainability.

This programme will be underpinned by robust governance arrangements, with strategic oversight provided by the Climate Action Board. The Board will play a key role in ensuring delivery remains aligned to agreed priorities, monitoring progress, managing risks, and supporting cross-Council coordination. Progress against commitments will be tracked through a strengthened system of action trackers, enabling clear lines of accountability, improved performance management, and transparent reporting through the annual Climate Action Report and corporate governance structures.

The Council will focus on translating the commitments set out in both the mitigation and adaptation plans into tangible, measurable outcomes, ensuring that climate action is consistently embedded across all service areas.

Programme Delivery – Key Projects and Actions

A number of significant projects and actions will be progressed over the coming year to reduce emissions, build resilience and support sustainable communities:

- **Waste and Resource Management**
 - Rollout of public recycling bins across parks and green spaces in collaboration with Parks & Cemeteries.
 - Continued implementation of the Internal Recycling Plan to improve performance across Council facilities.
 - Progression of a coordinated communications strategy to drive behaviour change and increase recycling rates.
- **Decarbonisation of Council Operations**
 - Expansion of the Council's low-emission fleet, including the addition of electric vans.
 - Delivery of further solar photovoltaic (PV) installations across the Council estate.
 - Continued rollout of LED lighting upgrades with smart controls to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions.
- **Natural Environment and Biodiversity**
 - Ongoing delivery of the Tree and Woodland Strategy, supporting carbon sequestration, biodiversity and climate resilience.
 - Continued development of rewilding and nature-based solutions across Council-managed land.
- **Strategic Programmes and Partnership Delivery**
 - Implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan, supporting a greener, more resilient visitor economy.
 - Delivery of the Big Climate Conversation, including targeted engagement with children and young people to inform future action.
 - Expansion of community growing initiatives, including new Peace Plus-funded projects across multiple locations.
 - Council-wide transformation programmes (including Digital by Default) will support delivery by improving internal processes that help embed climate action across all services.

- **Emissions Measurement and Reporting**

- Investigation of best practice approaches to capturing emissions from Council supply chains.
- Progression towards the inclusion of Scope 3 emissions within the Council's reporting framework, strengthening the overall evidence base for decision-making.

Strengthening Monitoring, Reporting and Governance

To support effective delivery, the Council will continue to enhance how climate action is monitored, measured and reported:

- Further development of the carbon dashboard to provide more accessible, accurate and real-time data on emissions and performance.
- Continued use and refinement of action trackers to monitor delivery of mitigation and adaptation actions across all service areas.
- Regular review of progress through the Climate Action Board, ensuring that activity remains aligned to strategic priorities and that barriers to delivery are addressed proactively.
- Integration of climate performance into wider corporate reporting and committee structures, supporting transparency, auditability and continuous improvement.

Embedding Climate Action Across the Organisation

A key priority over the next year will be to ensure that climate action is fully embedded in how the Council operates:

- Delivery of a structured training and awareness programme for staff, senior management and Elected Members, ensuring clarity on roles, responsibilities and opportunities for action.
- Review and strengthening of the Council's screening methodology, ensuring that climate mitigation and adaptation are explicitly considered in policy development and decision-making alongside wider sustainability impacts.
- Continued implementation of sustainable procurement and events guidance, including use of the Council's events checklist to promote environmentally responsible practices across all Council-led and supported activities.
- Developing methodology and collating data to understand and improve the carbon footprint of council run events.

Supporting Communities and Addressing Inequalities linked to climate change

The Council recognises that climate action must also deliver social value and support those most vulnerable:

- Continued focus on reducing inequalities and contributing to poverty reduction, recognising the co-benefits of climate action in line with the Corporate Plan and wider community planning priorities.
- Establishment of a Resilient Communities Workstream to consider how to work with local organisations and residents to better understand community needs, improve preparedness for severe weather events, and support local adaptation planning.

Engagement, Behaviour Change and Whole-Borough Action

Climate action will continue to be shaped through engagement and collective effort:

- Progression of the StAND for Sustainability campaign, supporting behaviour change within the Council and across the wider Borough.
- Ongoing engagement with residents, businesses and partners to build awareness, encourage participation, and support a shared response to climate change.
- Continued development of a whole-borough approach, recognising that meaningful progress depends on collaboration across sectors and communities.

Delivering on Our Commitments

Across all of this work, the Council will remain focused on delivery — ensuring that the actions set out in the Climate Action Plan and Climate Adaptation Plan are actively progressed, monitored and reviewed.

By strengthening governance, improving the quality of data and reporting, and embedding climate action across all areas of the organisation, the Council will continue to lead by example while working with partners and communities to build a cleaner, greener and more resilient Ards and North Down.

A Sustainability Fund has been established to help deliver climate action.

5.0 CLOSING STATEMENT

Ards and North Down Borough Council reaffirms its strong and ongoing commitment to meaningful climate action. We remain focused on reducing our environmental impact, strengthening resilience to climate risks, and delivering sustainable outcomes through our own operations and services.

Our progress to date reflects the collective effort across Council services to embed climate action in how we plan, manage and deliver our work. From decarbonising our estate and fleet, to improving waste management, enhancing biodiversity across Council land, and strengthening how we monitor and report on emissions, this work demonstrates a coordinated, organisation-wide approach. Supported by clear governance through the Climate Action Board, robust action tracking, and improved performance monitoring, these efforts ensure that commitments set out in our Climate Action and Adaptation Plans are translated into delivery.

Through continued collaboration between services, evidence-based planning, and responsible stewardship of resources, the Council will continue to lead by example, demonstrating what can be achieved through sustained, practical action within our own organisation.

We extend our sincere thanks to staff across all departments for their continued commitment and contribution. The progress made reflects shared responsibility and a collective focus on delivery, with each service area playing a vital role in advancing the Council's climate ambitions.

Looking ahead, we will maintain our focus on implementation, strengthening governance, improving the quality of our data and reporting, and ensuring that climate action is fully embedded in decision-making across the organisation.

By continuing to take practical, measurable steps within our own operations, we will further reduce emissions, build resilience, and ensure that the Council is well placed to meet its obligations and lead by example.