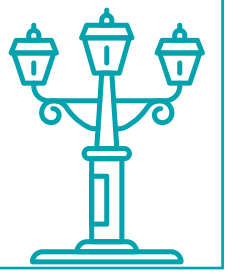
Bristol City Council
Corporate Environmental Performance Summary 2025–26

2025–26 Highlights

We set out to be carbon neutral by the end of 2025/26. We achieved a **75% reduction** of our carbon emissions over our 2015/16 baseline.

Our direct carbon emissions were 4,580 tonnes of CO_2e in 2025/26, **9% lower** than the previous year.

We've halved the electricity our street lights use by replacing them with LED lamps and better controls throughout the city. This project was completed in 2025, replacing a total of 36,000 lights.



Our renewable energy generators, which include solar panels and two wind turbines generated enough electricity to avoid **2,600** tonnes of CO_2e.

21% of our vehicle fleet is now fully electric. All 124 of those vehicles are supplied almost entirely by renewable energy.

The One Tree Per child and Tree Bristol projects planted **6,465** new trees on our land during winter 2024 – 2025.

Our Events team are now trained as A Greener Future assessors and our outdoor amphitheatre events stopped using polluting diesel generators, replacing with direct hook ups and a mobile battery.

We have reduced the use of pesticides by **46%** since 2020 and have made excellent progress in moving towards our target of 50% reduction by 2030

Over **6,000** native aquatic plants and **24** native trees have been planted on floating ecosystems at Capricorn Quay on the floating harbour.

2025–26 In more detail

Bristol City Council has been working on climate action for many years; reducing our own emissions whilst also helping the city to reduce its emissions and adapt to the changing climate. This report covers emissions from our own operations only, from running our services.

Carbon neutral organisation

In 2019, we set an ambitious target for Bristol City Council to be carbon neutral by the end of 2025/26. Being "carbon neutral" means balancing out the greenhouse gases our activities create either by stopping those emissions completely or making up for what is produced by removing an equal amount of carbon from the air. As an organisation, our goal is to cut our emissions as close to zero as possible and to meet our energy needs from renewable sources.

Scope 1 emissions are those that come from the fuel we use, e.g. diesel and petrol for our vehicles, and gas for heating our buildings.

Scope 2 emissions come from the electricity we use, e.g. in our buildings, streetlighting and traffic signals.

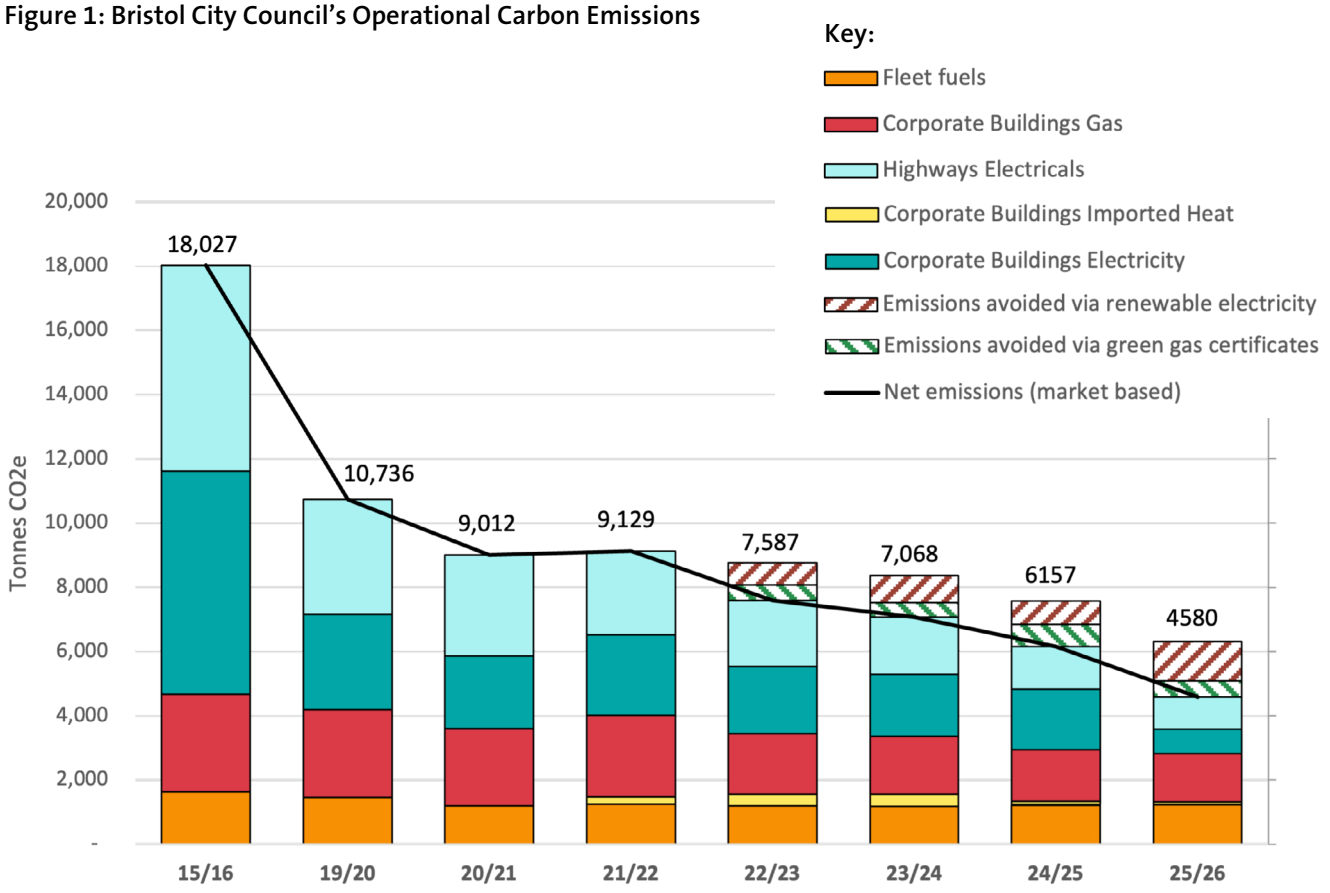
Scope 3 emissions come from sources that we have partial responsibility for, but do not own or control, e.g. goods and services we buy.

We have direct control over these emissions

We have some influence and a shared responsibility with other organisations for these emissions

Our total scope 1 and 2 emissions for 2025/26 were 4,580 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent (CO_2e).
See appendix A for more details.

Figure 1: Bristol City Council's Operational Carbon Emissions



At the end of the target period, we had achieved a reduction of 75% over our 2015/16 baseline - one of the largest reductions of any local authority in the UK. This achieved through a mixture of energy efficiency works (e.g. upgrading boilers, and replacing traditional lamps with LEDs in our corporate buildings and streetlights), reducing the number of buildings we own and operate, and from cleaner electricity supplied by national grid.

Whilst this is substantial progress we still have further to go, particularly in replacement of heating systems, installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and overcoming procurement barriers to source locally generated renewable energy. During the coming year we will develop the next phase of our plans to deliver fossil-fuel free operations.

Over the past two years we have continued our efforts to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel. Installation works have included air source heat pumps, rooftop solar arrays, chiller replacements, better metering and LED lighting replacements.

Through a purchasing system called 'Corporate sleeving' the electricity we consume is primarily supplied by our own wind turbines and solar panels. Across the whole of 2025/26 we generated more renewable electricity than we used. However, 6% of our electricity consumption came from a Combined Heat & Power plant connected to Bristol's Heat Network and a further 8% came from the grid at times when demand exceeded our generated supply. The grid top ups were also backed by Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin certificates for the first time this year, meaning that energy came entirely from renewable sources.

In 2025/26 11% of our buildings gas use for heating came from certified green gas (biomethane). This gas is low-carbon as it is generated from waste sources (e.g. food waste & organic matter).

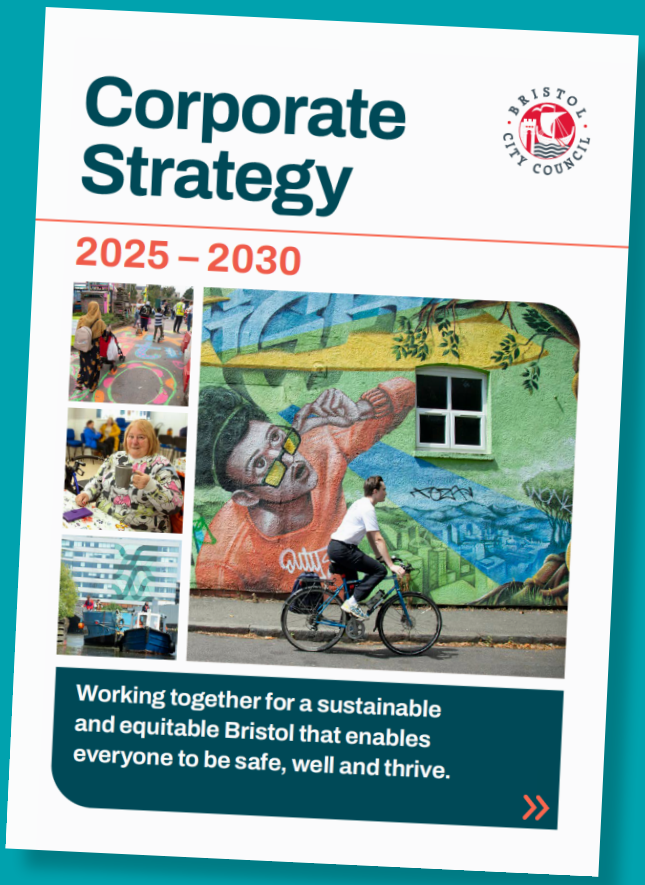
New Corporate Strategy

In May 2025 we adopted a new corporate strategy with updated environmental objectives. The strategy focuses on building a sustainable and equitable Bristol that enables everyone to be safe, well and thrive. The strategy highlights 5 key priorities, one of which is to accelerate climate action and nature recovery.

The new objectives are:

1. **Reduce carbon emissions and drive progress towards Bristol becoming a carbon neutral city**
2. **Improve resilience of Bristol's people and places to the impacts of climate change**
3. **Improve management of land, water and buildings in the city for nature.**

More information on how we can achieve these can be found on pages 5, 6 and 7.



Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Plans

In 2025 we published our ambitious new Climate Emergency and Ecological Emergency Action Plans. These set out the climate action and nature recover activities we're delivering for our own operations and those we're delivering to support the city's goals. You can read the Climate Emergency and Ecological Emergency Action Plans on the council's website.

Corporate Strategy objective 1:

Reduce carbon emissions and drive progress towards Bristol becoming a carbon neutral city

Bristol City Leap

Bristol City Leap is a twenty-year joint venture between Bristol City Council, Ameresco and Vattenfall Heat UK which seeks to deliver up to £1 billion of investment into Bristol's low carbon energy infrastructure. This includes renewable energy installations, retrofit of public buildings, and expansion of electric vehicle charging and heat networks in Bristol. A detailed overview is available in the latest City Leap business plan.

Corporate Estate

In 2025/26 energy efficiency works at 100 Temple Street were completed. Six rooftop solar schemes with funding from Ameresco, Bristol City Council and the West of England Combined Authority were completed in July 2026.

Ongoing project development included masterplanning for corporate estate - heat pumps and energy efficiency measures for around 25 council buildings, funding applications and detailed plans to replace Canford Crematorium's approximately 38-year-old gas cremators, and plans to upgrade the windows at City Hall. Around 10 wind and solar projects have had feasibility studies and further development progressed.

Capital Projects

We have published the Capital Project Sustainably framework and guidance internally, and have created a system for collecting key environmental data on capital projects, which we are using to drive performance improvements.

Buying things/goods and services

Carbon, waste and green travel plans are now included in our social value measures which are requested in all relevant contracts. For higher value contracts annual carbon reporting is now also a requirement.

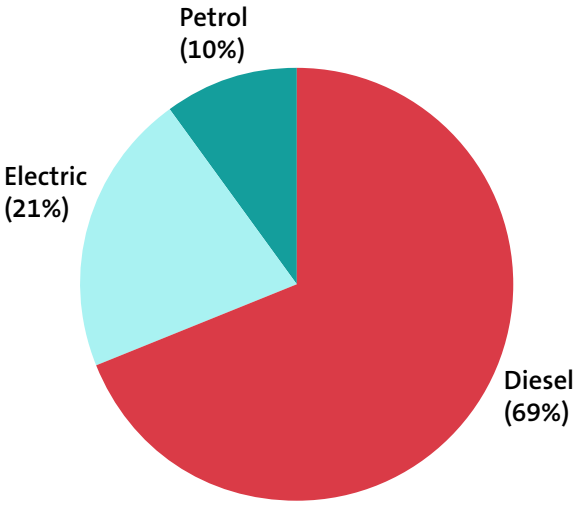
Fleet

There were 566 vehicles in our fleet at the end of March 2026. 121 (21%) of those vehicles were fully electric, powered primarily by renewable electricity.

Progressing to substantially higher proportions of EVs in the fleet now requires a step change in how we manage our vehicles, and the level of charging infrastructure installed at our depots. Detailed plans to substantially progress this are underway.

The Home to School travel team successfully made use of grant funding to purchase 27 electric vans and cars. These vehicles transport 56 children, and some adults in social care across 27 routes covering 2800 miles per day. By bringing these services in-house using low-carbon transport we have already saved 36 tonnes of CO2e.

Figure 2: Bristol City Council's fleet composition in 2025/2026



Training

We host online Climate Change Awareness Training which has been completed by 80% of our staff. In 2026 we released new eLearning on our internal Environmental Impact Assessment process, updated to better support staff to develop projects and proposals in ways that benefit our climate and nature action, resource management, and pollution prevention.

Webinars and live courses were run on a wide variety of relevant topics including: Tree planting schemes; River restoration; Managing for Nature and Nature Together; Adapting to Heatwaves; Sustainable Drainage Systems; and Beavers in the River Avon Catchment.

A staff led Green Team group is now active, comprised of colleagues from across the council and has been running staff events and shared learning sessions including clothes swaps, litter picks, and wellbeing sessions.

Staff Travel

60% of our staff travel to work using active travel (walk or wheel) or sustainable transport (bus or train). We run several initiatives for staff to encourage active travel including 'Dr Bike' free bike maintenance sessions at our offices, over the year we hosted 12 Dr Bike sessions over 4 sites with 115 staff members taking part.

Corporate Strategy objective 2:

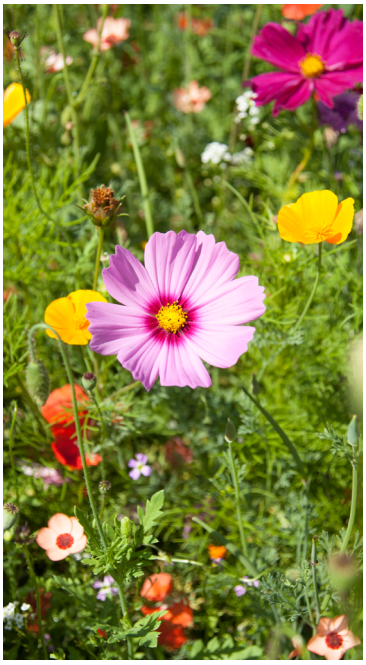
Improve resilience of Bristol's people and places to the impact of climate change

Whilst this report focuses on reducing our organisational environmental impacts, in the light of the recent heat waves we have also included some updates on ongoing climate resilience and adaptation work.

In 2025 we ran a Senior Leadership Forum for our senior management on Climate Risk and Adaptation, with presentations from Matt Palmer - Director of the UK National Climate Science Partnership, and Emma Howard Boyd - Chair of the independent National Heat Risk Commission.

We are developing Corporate Climate Change Risk Assessments to help strengthen our approach to managing climate-related risks across the organisation and improve our understanding of how climate change is, and will continue to affect, delivery of council services.

In summer 2025 we ran a Cool Spaces Trial with 13 community organisations across Bristol to learn what people want from a cool space and to understand how these sites perform during periods of hot weather. This learning is being used to shape a public network of cool spaces for the city where people can get information and respite during periods of extreme heat.



Corporate Strategy objective 3:

Improve management of land, water and buildings in the city for nature

We manage 924 hectares—an area equal to over 1,200 football pitches—of council land to our Managing for Nature standard, which is 18.2% of our land.

New grass-cutting regimes were introduced in several sites to support meadow health and biodiversity, while maintaining public access and amenity, see How we manage our grasslands for nature. In November, the council published its first Weed Management Policy which sets out how the council will manage weeds, including how it will minimise the use of glyphosate. This new policy (which sits within the main Ecological Emergency Action Plan) contains steps that will further help the council's progress towards it's target to reduce pesticide use.

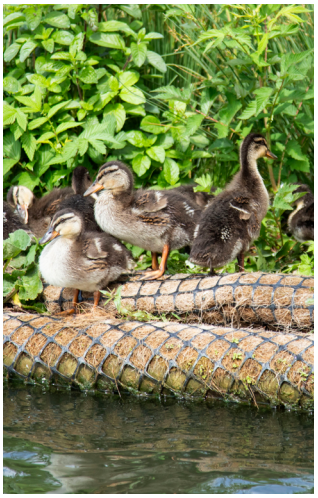
We refreshed our Ecological Emergency Action Plan 2026-2028 outlining plans to continue and expand nature improving activities – building on our previous plan with the aim of helping the city move towards a more nature rich, healthy and environmentally sustainable future which will benefit both people and nature.

We also published a Biodiversity Duty Report about work we are doing and plan to do for biodiversity improvement.

Natural England and Bristol City Council jointly hosted a delegation of green infrastructure experts and urban planners from Lithuania for a knowledge exchange visit. Read more about this visit here: Growing Green: How England's Cities are Putting Nature at the Heart of Development.

New floating wetland habitats introduced into our harbour

In partnership with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's 6,200 native aquatic plants and 24 native tress have been installed on floating pontoons at Capricorn Quay on the floating harbour. These eco-systems will provide homes, shelter and feeding areas for wildlife, it's one of the largest floating wetland habitats of its kind at 700 square metres. These new floating habitats will provide essential breeding grounds for wildlife, improve water quality and biodiversity while also helping to connect communities with nature.



Looking Ahead

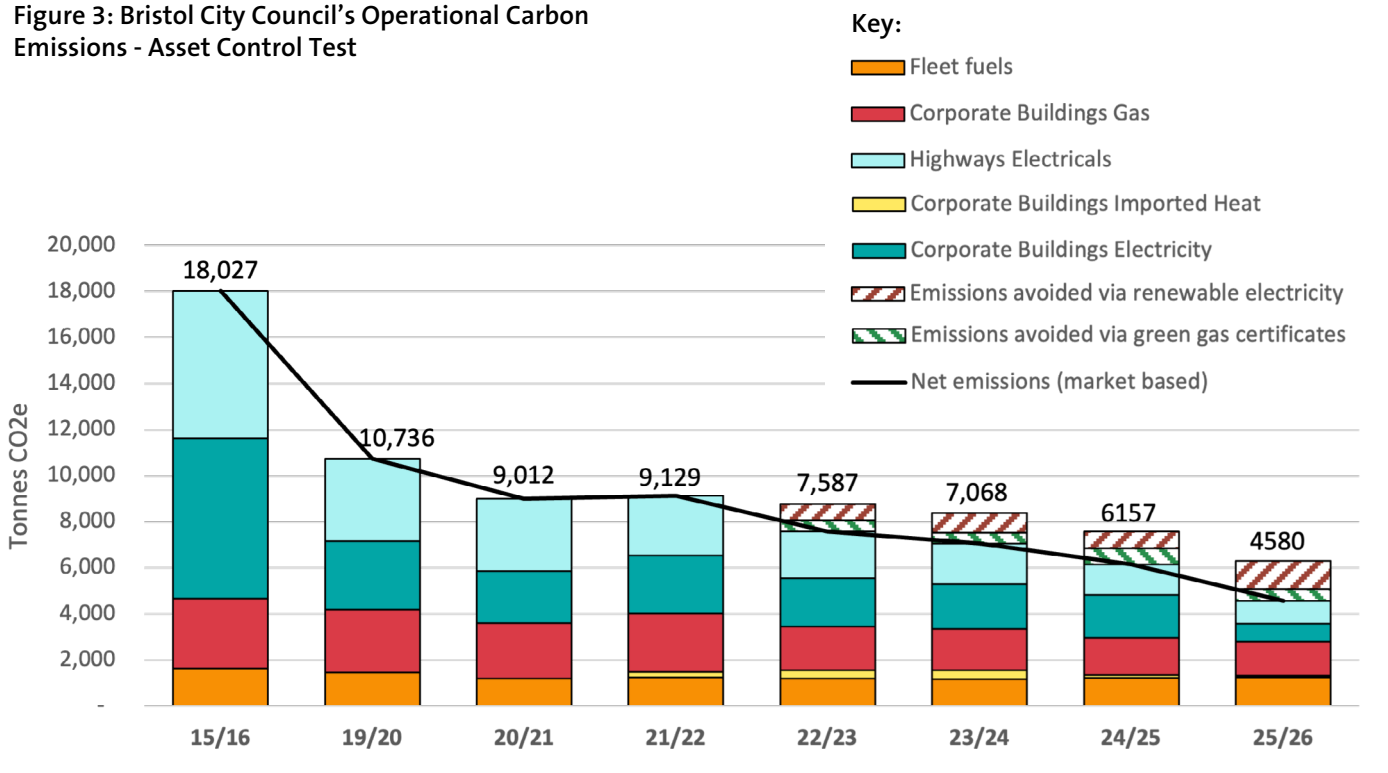
- Energy sleeving update - A new 'sleeved pool' contract is expected to begin in April 2027 and will meet all of BCC's operational demand
- We will set new internal goals around carbon neutrality
- We will update our staff Climate Change Awareness Training
- We will update our internal Environmental Policy
- In partnership with City Leap we will begin work to deliver a project to decarbonise three council buildings through measures such as Air Source Heat Pumps, loft insulation, LED lighting, Solar PV panels and upgrades to their Building Management Systems
- In partnership with City Leap we will replace 40 year old gas cremators at Canford Crematorium with brand new, more efficient electric cremators.

Appendix A: Carbon Report

Our reporting methodology follows Defra's environmental reporting guidelines. All figures are expressed in tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e) and government conversion factors are used where available. Reported figures are based on all available data at the time of publishing. Historical data may be subject to revisions where methodological changes, revised emissions factors, or improved source data becomes available.

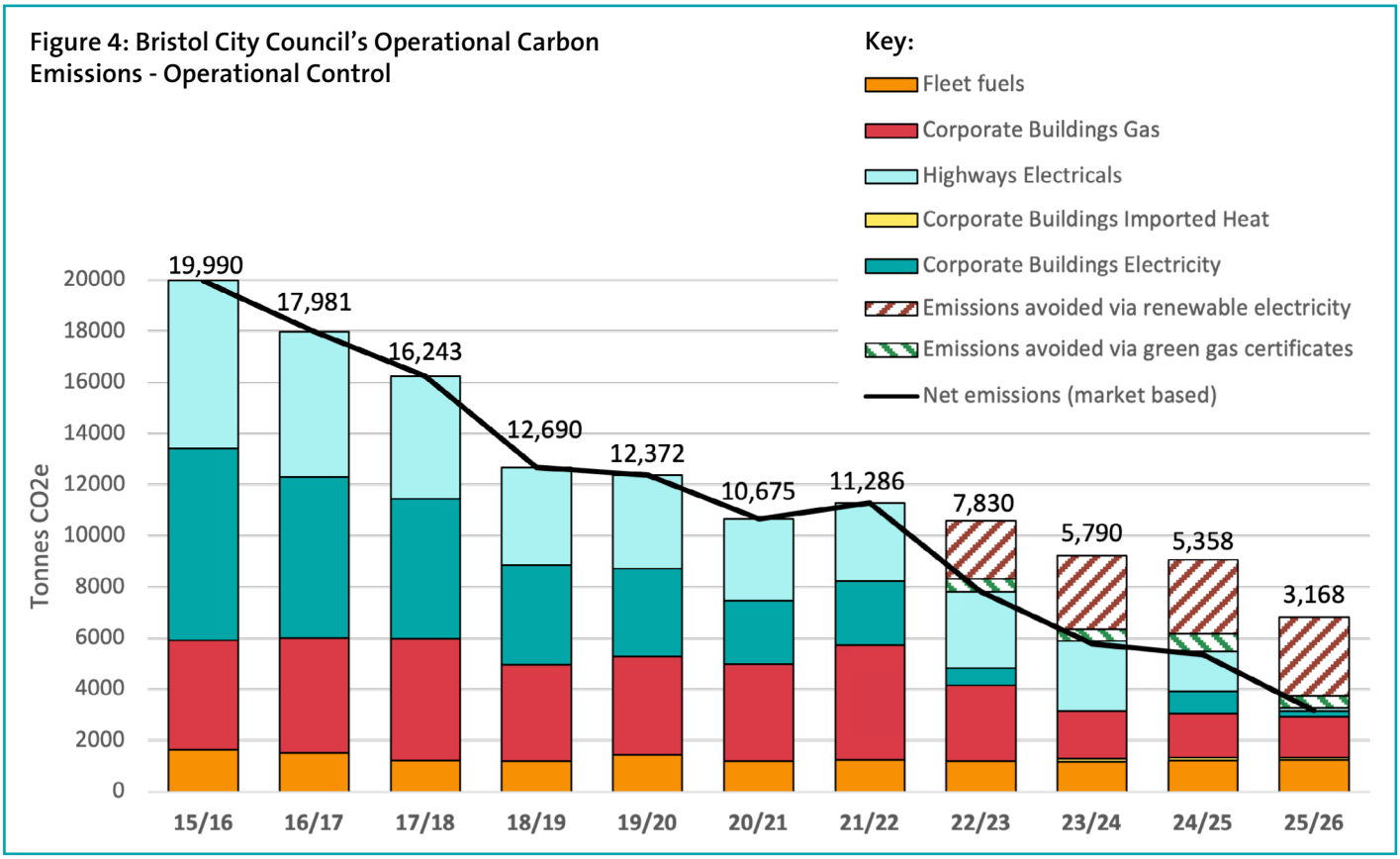
Since 2019 we have consistently used a methodology referred to as Asset Control Test to determine our reporting boundary. Using this approach our scope 1 and 2 emissions include BCC owned and operated offices, libraries, museums, children's homes, elderly persons home, highways signals and street lighting, a public mortuary, two crematoria and vehicle fleet. Schools are excluded from this list as we do not have direct control over their operations. The graph below shows our carbon emissions dating back to our 2015/16 baseline.

Figure 3: Bristol City Council's Operational Carbon Emissions - Asset Control Test



From 2026/27 we will adopt a revised accounting methodology referred to as Operational Control which will provide greater accuracy, a slightly expanded reporting boundary, and aligns more closely to the latest international reporting standards. The graph below shows our carbon emissions under the new methodology.

Figure 4: Bristol City Council's Operational Carbon Emissions - Operational Control



Appendix B: Glossary

Adaptation: In relation to Climate Change this is about preparing buildings, vehicles, and ways of working so that they will be more resilient to increasingly frequent instances of extreme weather.

Biodiversity: The variety of plants and animals in a place. More biodiversity generally means a more stable and resilient ecosystem.

Carbon: Commonly used as a shorthand for carbon dioxide, the most important greenhouse gas released by human activity.

Carbon Neutral: When the greenhouse gas emissions from a set of activities have either been eliminated or balanced by an equivalent amount of removals of greenhouse gases.

Climate Change: The rapid warming of the atmosphere caused by human society's use of fossil fuels. This warming is creating a wide range of impacts that are destabilising natural systems and our ability to reliably grow food.

Climate resilience – Ability to withstand and respond to the effects of the changing climate such as more frequent hotter or wetter weather and flooding.

CO_2e: Standard unit of measurement to track the climate impact of climate changing gases. (Stands for carbon dioxide equivalent)

Combined Heat and Power Plant: A way to harness both electricity and excess heat from a power source to use in a building/s'

Ecology: The relationships between plants, animals, and their habitat

Emissions: In relation to climate change, this is where greenhouse gasses are produced and released into the atmosphere, increasing the overall warming.

Greenhouse Gases: are the gases that act like a blanket by trapping heat from the sun.

Pesticides: Are substances that are used to control pests such as weeds or unwanted insects.

Pontoon: A floating structure on water

Scopes (1, 2 and 3): Categories of activity that generate emissions. These are used for carbon accounting (see page 2).

Social Value: in procurement is about making sure that what we buy creates an overall positive impact on people and communities.

Solar panel: A device that changes energy from the sun into electricity.

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