

# **London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

## **Annual Sustainability Report**

Reporting period: Apr 01, 2024 – Mar 31, 2025

Created using



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# 1. Introduction

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## a) Executive summary

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets mission is to create a safe, resilient, thriving environment that is a leading choice for people to live and do business in. Under the leadership of the Sustainable Development Team, our colleagues across the council have been instrumental in helping to achieve further ESG traction and have delivered several key initiatives this year in pursuit of a cleaner and greener Tower Hamlets for all.

Key sustainability programmes delivered during 2024/25 include staff consolidation into the off-gas Town Hall with solar PV and early fleet decarbonisation via biofuel (HVO).

As a result, we're proud to say that 2024/25 corporate greenhouse-gas emissions were 3,667 tCO<sub>2</sub>e – a 32 % decline year on year, and 59% vs. our baseline year 2018/19.

Looking ahead we are already working on decarbonising our supply chain with the launch of our supply chain sustainability programme, improving emissions data availability and expanding the asset portfolio in our organisational reporting boundary to include additional sites across schools, leisure centres, and residential properties. Our increased portfolio will necessitate a recalculation of our baseline in the next reporting year.

## b) Mission statement

We will deliver a fair transition to net-zero operations by the 2025/26 reporting year, improve local environmental quality, enhance biodiversity and climate resilience, and support residents and businesses to cut carbon and create operational efficiencies –with transparency, accountability and community partnership at the core.

## 2. Reporting preface

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### a) Company overview

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council covers an area of ~19.8 km<sup>2</sup> (7.6 sq mi) with a population of ~330,000 – one of the fastest-growing boroughs in London, and one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the UK.

It's eclectic mix of neighborhoods span historic estates to modern high-rise developments; from the medieval Tower of London to modern Canary Wharf – one of the main financial centres of Europe, home to banks, law firms, and tech companies.

Approximately 10,500 staff provide local public services including housing, education, waste and recycling, public administration, environmental health, planning, and community services to residents and businesses in one of the most densely populated areas in the UK.

It's operational emissions to date cover a portfolio of ~180 buildings spanning multiple uses including corporate buildings, community buildings, street-lighting and the Council-owned fleet.

### b) Report summary

This report summarises progress in 2024/25 with comparison to prior reporting years.

It references 2018/19 as the baseline year.

It outlines environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance, and sets plans and targets for 2025/26.

It calculates emissions in line with the GHG Protocol and utilises emissions factors from DEFRA.

### c) Materiality assessment

We used a double-materiality lens: (1) topics that materially impact the environment and people, and (2) topics that materially affect the Council's ability to deliver services and manage risk. Inputs included policy commitments, statutory duties, programme performance, risk registers, and stakeholder feedback from residents, businesses and staff.

### d) List of Material Topics

- Carbon & Energy (corporate estate, fleet, street-lighting)
- Air Quality & Sustainable Transport
- Waste, Recycling & Circular Economy
- Nature, Biodiversity & Green/Blue Infrastructure
- Climate Resilience (heat, flood)
- Sustainable Procurement & Supply Chain (incl. modern slavery)
- Water Stewardship
- Community Engagement & Just Transition

- Data Transparency & Reporting Integrity

e) KPIs

| KPI   | Baseline (2018/19) | Target 2025/26        | 2024/25 |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Total emissions (tCO <sub>2</sub> e, S1+S2+sel. S3) | 8,954              | 2,239 (75% reduction) | 3,667   |

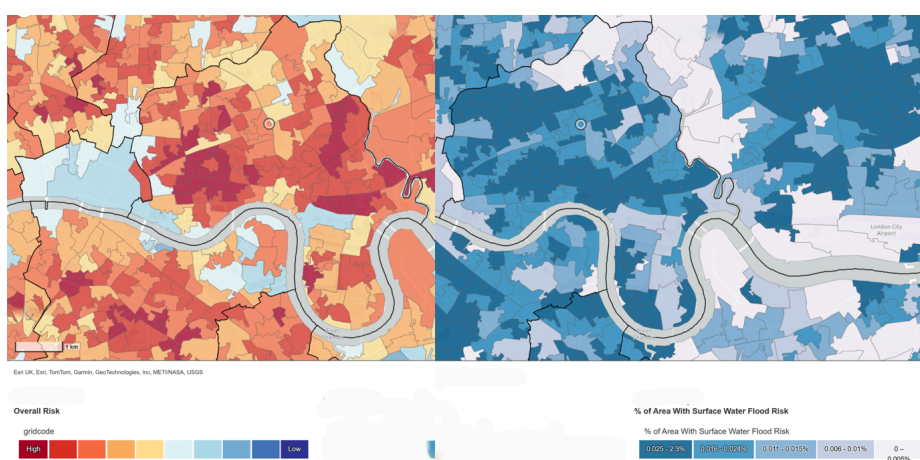
## 3. Environmental

### a) Overview of Environmental Matters

Climate change is a globally important issue, the effects of which are increasingly being felt by all global citizens.

It is important to highlight the effects decades of global warming are having on us locally in Tower Hamlets, in order to give credence to the climate emergency we and many other organisations and citizens have declared; and the urgent measures we are taking to mitigate further impacts.

The London Climate Risk Maps below illustrate the risk severity of heat and flooding events across large parts of our borough.



London Climate Risk Map -

<https://cityhall.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/media/index.html?appid=59236d2e842c4a3ba6480d9dac585d1e>

Priority areas: cutting operational emissions; improving air quality through cleaner fleets and active travel; reducing waste and improving recycling in dense, high-rise contexts; protecting and enhancing nature; and preparing for climate risks such as heat and flooding.

### b) Carbon footprint

Our carbon footprint has continued to reduce, with the current reporting year seeing a further 32 % drop year on year, and 59% vs. our baseline year.

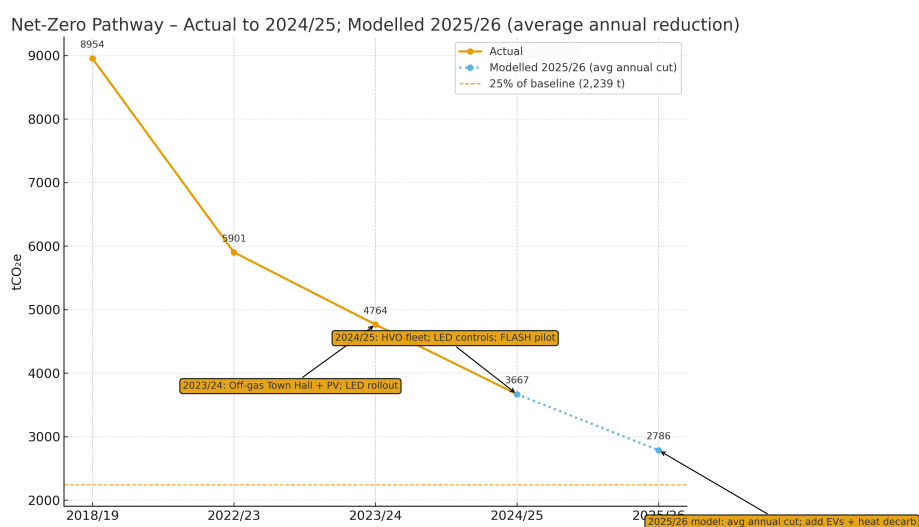
Notable changes include:

1. Scope 1 gas emissions increased due to use of estimated meter readings at a site that has given an inaccurate consumption and continues to be investigated.
2. Scope 1 Fleet emissions decreased dramatically due to the Fleet converting to using HVO biofuel.

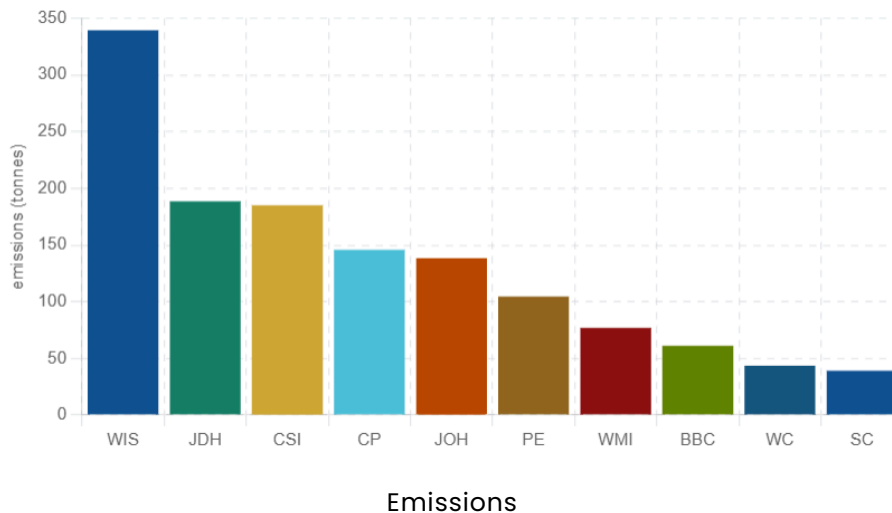
3. Scope 2 electricity reduced slightly across the estate.
4. Scope 3 staff travel reduced as a result of better transport links from the New Town Hall.

| Metric (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)                          | 2018/19      | 2022/23      | 2023/24      | 2024/25      |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Scope 1 - Gas  | 1,394        | 1,274        | 903          | 980          |
| Scope 1 - Fleet (owned)                              | 541          | 2,047        | 1,902        | 143          |
| <b>Total Scope 1</b>                                 | <b>1,935</b> | <b>3,321</b> | <b>2,805</b> | <b>1,123</b> |
| Scope 2 - Purchased electricity                      | 6,202        | 2,560        | 2,588        | 2,533        |
| <b>Total Scope 1+2</b>                               | <b>8,137</b> | <b>5,881</b> | <b>5,393</b> | <b>3,656</b> |
| Scope 3 - Business travel                            | 38           | 21           | 17           | 10           |
| Scope 3 - Waste & recycling collection (now Scope 1) | 779          | 0            | 0            | 0            |
| <b>Total Scope 3</b>                                 | <b>817</b>   | <b>21</b>    | <b>17</b>    | <b>10</b>    |
| <b>Grand Total (S1+S2+S3)</b>                        | <b>8,954</b> | <b>5,901</b> | <b>5,410</b> | <b>3,667</b> |

As evidenced by our carbon reduction pathway we remain on track to be Net Zero by 2025/26. We plan to offset remaining emissions forecast as 2,786 tonnes.



Emissions charts - top sites:



### c) Carbon footprint in the supply chain (Scope 3)

Beyond selected categories (business travel; historic outsourced waste services), full value-chain emissions have not yet been quantified.

In 2025/26 we will conduct supplier screening with initial focus on our Purchased Goods & Services, before rolling out to other GHG categories. We aim to develop sustainability KPI's for suppliers and review alignment to ISO 20400 Sustainable Procurement Standard. This aligns with our commitment to responsible sourcing and consumption and SDG 12.

Given that scope 3 represents the largest share of our corporate emissions we have launched our supplier sustainability programme to help drive supply chain decarbonisation. The programme provides support for all companies who we do business with, from small or micro-businesses to large enterprises. Through collaboration and partnership, we will improve sustainability practices and help companies realise the benefits of doing so.

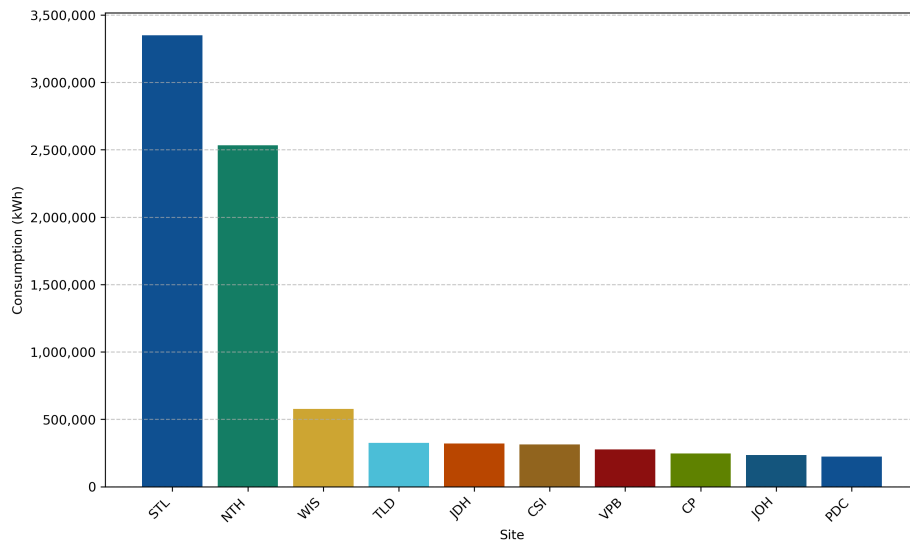
Outputs: A Scope 3 baseline and 3-year reduction plan.

### d) Energy performance

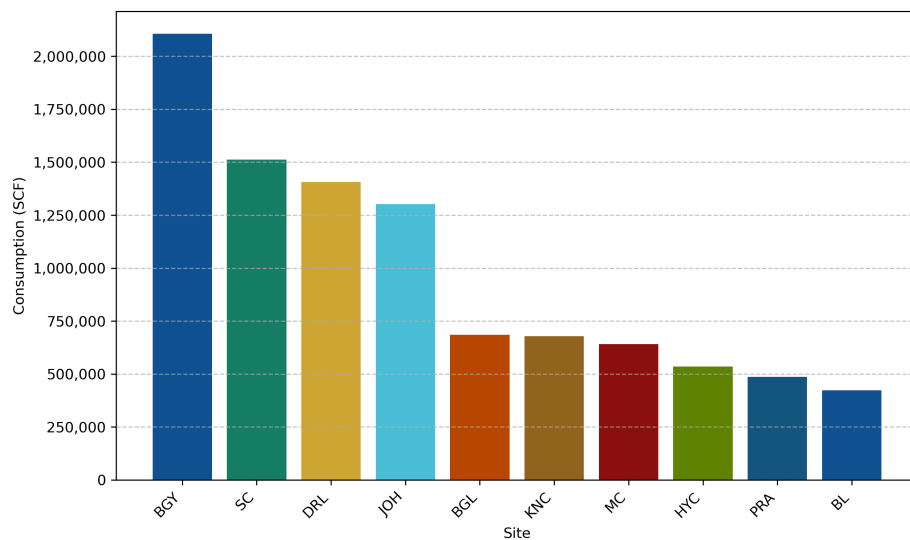
Electricity demand has fallen significantly since 2018/19, driven by LED street-lighting and estate rationalisation.

Energy charts - top sites for electricity:





Energy charts – top sites for gas:



#### Key Energy Initiatives:

1. In 2025/26 we will complete remaining LED conversions and optimise dimming profiles.
2. We'll also assess our whole portfolio against future renewable solutions and carbon reduction plans.

2025/26 priorities: advanced controls, further PV on suitable roofs, and building-level optimisation.

## e) Water use

Baseline consumption and intensity metrics are being assembled from utility data. For 2025/26 we will: (i) roll out automated reads on priority sites, (ii) fix leaks identified as soon as possible (iii) install low-flow fixtures on refurbishment, and (iv) publish total m³ and m³/FTE.

KPI: 5-10% reduction at top-10 sites.

## f) Waste management

Time-banded waste and recycling collections were launched for high streets/town centres (twice daily, seven days a week) to improve street scene and recycling. The FLASH pilot introduced daily collections for flats above shops on selected corridors. 2025/26 focus: scale successful elements of the pilot, reduce contamination, and expand repair & reuse events.

## 4. Social

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### a) Overview of Social Initiatives

As an organisation we are present to service the individual and business residents in our borough and improve quality of life in many aspects.

Further we support residents and community organisations to participate in the climate transition through grants, events and partnerships—including the Climate Partnership, Carbon Reduction Community Grants, London Repair Week activities, and Tower Hamlets in Bloom.

### b) Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to an inclusive workforce that reflects our diverse borough.

### c) Employees' development

We will expand carbon literacy and sustainability training for service managers and frontline teams.

KPI: average training hours per FTE on sustainability; % of fleet drivers completing eco-driving training; and number of managers completing carbon-aware decision-making modules.

### d) Employee' health and safety

We continue to prioritise staff wellbeing and safe operations.

### e) Social initiatives

Key 2024/25 programmes: Carbon Reduction Community Grants (11 new projects; programme total 45), SME sustainability support (up to 80 businesses), London Repair Week 'Swap & Repair', and community greening via Tower Hamlets in Bloom.

### f) Managing social issues in the supply chain

We will strengthen responsible procurement through a Supplier Code of Conduct, Modern Slavery Act compliance checks, social value requirements in tenders, and contract-management KPIs on labour standards.

## 5. Governance performance

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### a) Overview of Governance

Sustainability is overseen by the corporate leadership with Cabinet-level accountability. A cross-council officer group coordinates delivery, supported by service leads (fleet, facilities, waste, parks etc).

### b) Governance structure

The Sustainable Development Team works across the entire organisation to effect its sustainability mandate.

The governance structure provides suitable overview & scrutiny of the climate emergency, functional planning and delivery of key initiatives.

We have also identified service leads such as those responsible for fleet, facilities/energy, highways/ lighting, waste operations, oversee day to day implementation and KPI tracking.

External partners such as business alliances and community groups contribute towards best practice guidelines and accountability against our plans.

### c) Corporate goals

- NetZero operations by 2025/26 ( $\geq 75\%$  reduction vs 2018/19, with verified offset of residual).
- Re-baselining in 2025/26 given material change in size of property portfolio
- Launch of the supplier sustainability programme
- Cleaner streets and higher recycling participation, especially in dense housing and high streets.
- Improved air quality via cleaner fleets, school streets and active travel.
- Nature-positive public realm with equitable access to green/blue spaces.
- Transparent reporting with timely, assured emissions data and KPIs.

## 6. Assurance

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### a) Assurance body and process

The Council will apply the GHG Protocol Corporate Standard with Defra/BEIS/ activity specific emission factors for each reporting year. Data will undergo internal QA (meter/fuel data checks, variance analysis, and reconciliations) followed by external limited assurance on Scope 1 and 2 totals and selected Scope 3 when feasible.