



Worcestershire County Council

# Corporate Environmental Report

2021

Find out more online:  
[www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)



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# Foreword

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I am pleased to present Worcestershire County Council's latest annual Corporate Environmental Report which provides an overview of the Council's performance across several environmental themes. It is aligned with the United Nations international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Goals set a blueprint to achieve a truly sustainable future for all by 2030, and we recognise the part which we, Worcestershire County Council, play in this.



The Environment Act, a key legislative driving force behind action to improve the UK environment, became law in late 2021. This now sets the new framework for environmental protection with a particular focus on the protection of nature and biodiversity, clean air, water quality and waste reduction. With this new Act will come new binding targets, which will influence many areas of the Council's work going forward.

This Corporate Environmental Report 2021 provides an update on several areas under 'The Environment' priority of the Council's Corporate Plan, highlighting work undertaken in both financial year 2020/21 and calendar year 2021. This timeframe saw global emergence from the Covid 19 pandemic, and much of the Council's work was still hugely impacted by this. Despite these challenges, the Council alongside our partners, made good progress in our efforts to protect and maintain the environment within Worcestershire. Many of the Council's headline achievements are listed on page 4 with further detail throughout the report. This list of projects and programmes included in this report are by no means exhaustive, and we absolutely acknowledge there are several areas in which the Council can improve further, and we will continue to address and improve on these. Now, more than ever, it is fundamentally important for us to act to protect our environment, for the benefit of all.



**Richard Morris**

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment

# Headline messages at a glance...



**49% reduction** in the Council's net **carbon emissions** since 2009/10



The County's overall **carbon emissions per person** have decreased by **31.7%** since 2005

The Council's ambitious project to **plant 150,000 trees** in Worcestershire has continued at two key sites - **New Farm at Norton near Evesham and Blackstone near Bewdley**. These sites will be managed for a range of habitats including **woodland, pollinators, wetlands and orchards**



Invested **£4 million** into **LED street lighting** since 2019



Since 2017, the **Warmer Worcestershire Network** has supported over **800 householders** to apply for funding towards the cost of **energy efficiency** measures under the **Energy Company Obligation (ECO)** scheme



**BEEP** (Business Energy Efficiency Programme) assessments have identified over **£4 million pounds of annual energy savings** to date, saving around **14,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas** emissions per year

**43.3%** of household waste in Worcestershire is sent for **recycling**



During phase 1 and 2 of the **Low Carbon Opportunity Programme (LOCOP)** a total of **156 businesses** have so far taken up the assistance on offer and more than **£1,350,000** has been issued to SMEs in the form of grants. The projects will save approximately **1,300 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year**



The **Natural Networks programme** has supported **136 applicants** and awarded **43 grants** with a total value of **£506,166.94**, supporting the enhancement of over **40 hectares of land**



Retained **Green Flag awards** for our **Country Parks**

# United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations introduced the international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Adopted by all member states, they set out 17 Global Goals to achieve by 2030 – a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.



The Local Government Association (LGA) passed a motion at its annual conference in the summer of 2019 in support of the Goals and promoted the role of local government in delivering them.

All the SDGs go hand-in-hand and strive to deliver global prosperity whilst also protecting the planet. Within this report, the Council has aligned its actions with the UN SDGs to highlight how we are contributing to each of these.

Under each heading within the report, the relevant SDG is highlighted so that clear links can be made between the action which the Council is undertaking at the local level within Worcestershire, and how this also impacts on a global scale.

## WCC Net Zero Carbon Plan



### At a glance...

**WCC has reduced its absolute carbon emissions by 42%, and net carbon emissions by 49% since 2009/10**

On 15th July 2021 WCC declared a Climate Emergency and in doing so the Council acknowledged the need to act on the causes and impacts of climate change. The Council also reaffirmed its earlier commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero from Council activities and operations by 2050.

The Council published its [Net Zero Carbon Plan](#)<sup>1</sup> in late 2020 which sets out how the Council aims to reach its net zero<sup>2</sup> target. The plan focuses on cutting the Council's own carbon emissions through its operations and activities which account for at least 1.5% of Worcestershire's total county-wide emissions. The Council also has a significant role to play in addressing countywide carbon emissions and addressing the impact of climate change on the county. The Plan will be reviewed and updated throughout 2022.

### Worcestershire County Council Net Zero Carbon Plan



The Council takes its responsibility to reduce its own emissions seriously and, since 2002, has delivered a series of carbon management plans, of which the Net Zero Carbon Plan is the fourth. WCC is seeking to cut carbon emissions from its property, transport and street lighting, as well as emissions from contracts, such as highways maintenance and household waste management.

<sup>1</sup> **Net zero carbon /carbon neutral** - net amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere is reduced to zero because it is balanced by actions to reduce or offset these emissions. Achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions taken out of the atmosphere.

To date, WCC has reduced absolute GHG emissions by 42% from 2009/10:

	Absolute GHG (tonnes/CO <sub>2</sub> e)	Absolute GHG (tonnes/CO <sub>2</sub> e)	Absolute % Change from baseline
	2009/10	2020/21	Percentage change (non- Degree Day corrected)
<b>Scope 1</b>	<b>4,598</b>	<b>2,480</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Scope 2</b>	<b>16,672</b>	<b>5,273</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Scope 3</b>	<b>55,266</b>	<b>36,637</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (tonnes/CO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	<b>76,536</b>	<b>44,390</b>	<b>42%</b>

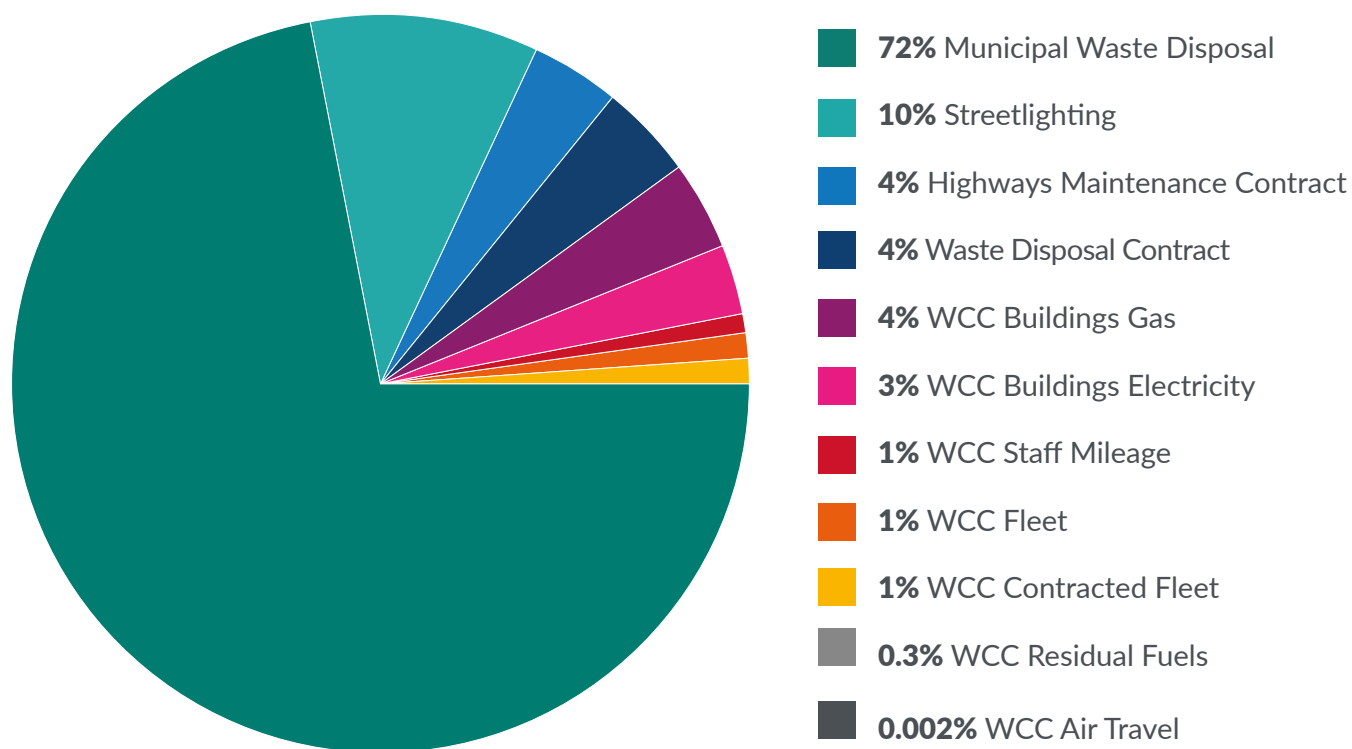
*Net zero carbon /carbon neutral - net amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere is reduced to zero because it is balanced by actions to reduce or offset these emissions. Achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions taken out of the atmosphere.*

There has been a significant reduction in GHG emissions under Scope 3 since the 2009/10 baseline in part due to the move from waste disposal via landfill, to energy from waste in the County. There has also been significant reductions in energy consumption from street lighting due to the LED lighting replacement programme, and reductions in gas and electricity consumption across the Council's buildings due to investment in energy efficiency measures and solar energy.

The Council reports on its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) every year and reporting is aligned with the international Greenhouse Gas Protocol guidance on emissions reporting. Emissions are categorised into 3 different 'scopes' which include the following:

SCOPE 1	SCOPE 2	SCOPE 3
<p><b>Direct emissions from Council activities and operations under the Council's control including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural gas use in WCC buildings (excluding schools)</li> <li>• Fuel use in WCC vehicle fleet</li> <li>• Residual fuel use (e.g., burning oil, LPG etc.) consumed at WCC sites (excluding schools)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Indirect emissions:</b></p> <p>Electricity use in WCC buildings (excluding schools) and street lighting (grid generation)</p>	<p><b>Other indirect emissions for which WCC can access data for, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electricity (grid transmission and distribution)</li> <li>• WCC staff business mileage and air travel</li> <li>• Electricity/gas use in buildings operated by Council's main outsourced contractors for Waste Management and Highways</li> <li>• Fleet/staff mileage undertaken by main outsourced contractors for Waste Management and Highways</li> <li>• Contracted fleet vehicle fuel use</li> <li>• Emissions from county-wide municipal waste disposal</li> </ul>

## WCC GHG Emissions Footprint 2020/21 – 44,390 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup>



Figures do not equal exactly 100% due to rounding up

### Carbon Offset

During 2020/21 WCC purchased REGO<sup>3</sup> accredited green electricity for all corporate sites and street lighting. All scope 2 emissions associated with the generation of REGO accredited electricity can be classed as a carbon offset for reportable purposes.

WCC has realised a 49% reduction in net GHG emissions since 2009/10.

	Net GHG Emissions (tonnes/CO <sub>2</sub> e)	Net GHG Emissions (tonnes/CO <sub>2</sub> e)	Net % Change
	2009/10	2020/21	Percentage change (non- Degree Day corrected)
<b>Scope 1</b>	<b>4,598</b>	<b>2,480</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Scope 2</b>	<b>16,672</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Scope 3</b>	<b>55,266</b>	<b>36,637</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (tonnes/CO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	<b>76,536</b>	<b>39,117</b>	<b>49%</b>

The total net emissions reduction from Scope 1 and Scope 2 combined (which WCC has most direct control over) since 2009/10 baseline is 88%.

<sup>3</sup> Renewable Energy of Guarantees of Origin



## Property



### At a glance...

**WCC successfully bid for just over £885,000 of Government funding to invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in Council buildings.**

Opportunities for investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy within the Council's estate have been and continue to be developed. The Council has overseen many energy efficiency projects, including installation of solar panels and improvement in the energy efficiency of buildings. Energy projects in corporate buildings, supported via the council's Energy Efficiency Spend to Save fund to date, are saving the Council approximately £200,000 every year. Throughout 2020/21, WCC generated 73,336 kWh of electricity from solar PV installations on 5 corporate buildings - Wildwood, Kidderminster Library, Redditch Library, St. John's Library and Stourport Civic Centre.

In December 2020, the Council successfully bid for £885,687 grant funding from the Government's Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to fully fund a number of further energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across WCC's estate. Funding has been secured for 34 discreet energy projects across 25 Council sites. Projects include insulation, lighting, glazing and energy management system upgrades, and the installation of solar panel systems. Once complete, all of the Salix-funded projects will result in financial savings of over £55,000 per year, and carbon savings of 170 tonnes/CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup> per year.

### Solar Panels on Kidderminster Library



## Street Lighting



### At a glance...

Since 2019, WCC has invested £4 million into installing more energy efficient LED street lights

The County Council manages 56,800 street lights across Worcestershire which account for 10% of the Council's accounted carbon emissions. Street lighting carbon emissions have reduced by 65% since 2015/2016, despite an increase in the number of street lights across the county. Total annual emissions have reduced from 10,045 tonnes in 2015/16 to 3,525 tonnes in 2021/2022. In the same period the total annual kWh consumed by our illuminated highway assets has dropped from 20,240,000 kWh to approximately 15,400,000 kWh - a reduction of 24%. These reductions have been realised through:

- replacement of approximately 58% of luminaires with more energy efficient LEDs;
- the instigation of part-night switch-off of street lights on some roads; - as we are converting lights to LED we are reverting to all night operation with dimming regimes built-in so that we can retain street lighting throughout the night. This aims to improve safety for road users and pedestrians and help to keep the streets feeling safer. The County Council have benefitted through the Government's Safer Streets Fund and have been able to upgrade street lighting in parts of Worcester city centre and Redditch. All these improvements will involve LED lighting replacing conventional sodium lighting which will further reduce energy consumption. We continue to achieve significant savings by replacing part-night non-LED lanterns with all-night LED luminaires;
- de-illumination of some traffic signs;
- reduction in the carbon intensity of UK grid electricity;
- Ensuring not to over light streets.

In particular, since 2019, the Council has invested £4 million into installing approximately 23,300 LED street lights, and replacing 23,000 older obsolete street lights with LEDs. This has saved approximately 2.9 million kWhs. Replacing street lights with long-life LEDs reduces energy consumption by 59% and significantly reduces maintenance costs.

Since April 2020, the Council has purchased green electricity that can be classed as an offset for reporting purposes. When this is taken into account for the Council's street lighting, emissions from this are very nearly at net zero. To achieve net zero emissions from street lighting, the Council will continue to purchase 100% renewable electricity for all WCC streetlights; replace a further 20% of street lights with LEDs by 2022/23; and continue to review other opportunities to invest in more energy efficient street lighting technology e.g. smart lighting controls and management systems.

# Green Community

## The Environment Act

The Environment Act became UK law in late 2021 and now sets the new framework for environmental protection with a particular focus on the protection of nature and biodiversity, clean air, water quality and waste reduction. With this comes new binding targets, which will influence many areas of the Council's work.

## Worcestershire County Carbon Emissions



### At a glance...

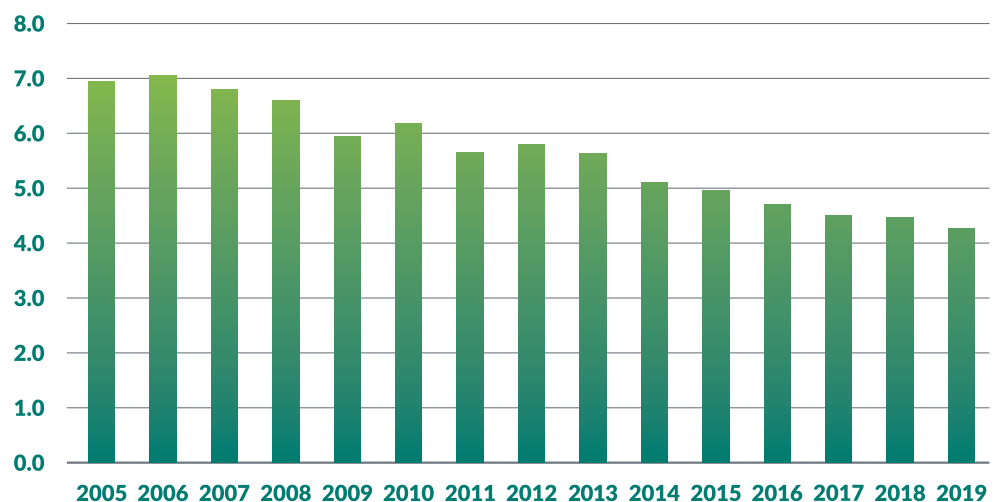
Carbon emissions (per person) in Worcestershire have reduced by 31.7% since 2005

From 2002, the Council led the development of a series of countywide climate change strategies for the Worcestershire Local Strategic Partnership. The strategies were produced in response to Government's call for organisations and authorities across the country to take action to ensure the UK was prepared to deal with the impact of climate change and to urgently take action to slow its progress. The most recent strategy, (2012-2020), set a target of 30% reduction in carbon emissions per capita by 2020 (from 2005 levels) and brought together public, private and community sector partners to develop a robust and achievable action plan.

The County's carbon emissions per person have decreased by 31.7% since the 2005 baseline year (2019 data<sup>4</sup>) - already exceeding the 2020 target, with average emissions per capita slightly above the West Midlands average. The graph below shows the change in per capita emissions for Worcestershire between 2005-2019

The graph shows CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per head of population in Worcestershire from 2005-2018\*.

Worcestershire per capita emissions (t)

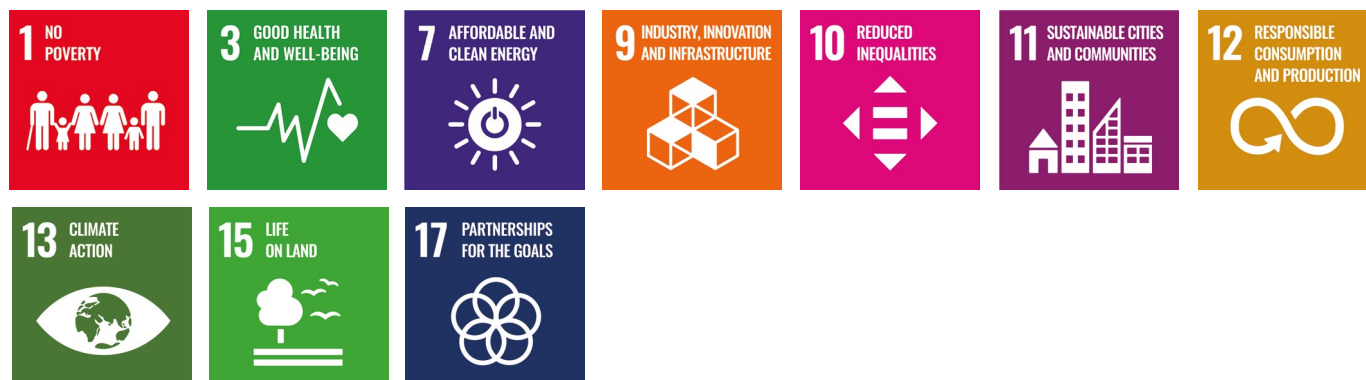


Source: BEIS

The County Council is now working as part of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver the [Worcestershire Energy Strategy](#), which has set a target of 50% reduction in Countywide CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030 (from 2005 levels).

4 There is a two-year delay in the publication of national Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data by Government

## Tackling Fuel Poverty



### At a glance...

**14.4% of households in Worcestershire are considered to be fuel poor and therefore struggle to heat their home to an adequate temperature. This equates to 36,915 households.**

**However, the Warmer Worcestershire Network is running a number of programmes to reduce fuel poverty.**

Worcestershire County Council coordinates the Warmer Worcestershire Network, which is a partnership between public and voluntary sector organisations in the county who are all working towards the same goal to reduce fuel poverty and help households heat their home effectively and efficiently to keep warm and well.

In Worcestershire 14.4% (2019 Low Income Low Energy Efficiency data) of households are considered to be fuel poor and therefore struggle to heat their home to an adequate temperature. This equates to 36,915 households. In some areas of the county there are pockets of much higher fuel poverty with the highest proportion of households considered to be fuel poor in a single LSOA being 36%. It is expected fuel poverty will increase with the rising cost of energy seen in 2022. It is expected that the average household energy bill will increase by £700 per year from April 2022 and increase by a further 20% in October 2022. The Winter Households Support Fund has demonstrated that over the winter of 2021/22, applicants had an average of £700 fuel bill debt.

In the last year, the Warmer Worcestershire Network has coordinated several projects to support Worcestershire residents heat their homes more affordably:

- The Warmer Worcestershire network has been successful in securing funding for first time gas central heating in urban areas through the National Grid Warm Homes Fund. The project has resulted in 51 installations across Worcestershire.
- Energy Company Obligation (ECO) - Since new legislation came in in Autumn 2017, we have supported over 800 householders to apply for funding towards the cost of energy efficiency measures. These applications were completed under the ECO Flexible Eligibility which allows a Local Authority area to define what fuel poverty means in their local area. A new scheme will begin in Spring 2022.
- Each district council has access to funding to support low-income households to retrofit their home to improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating.

## Household Waste and Recycling



### At a glance

The Covid pandemic changed people's lives significantly with more people working at home and home schooling, so inevitably this created a rise in waste generated in Worcestershire. WCC is running a number of waste minimisation campaigns and initiatives to support residents to reduce their household waste.

Communications and engagement play a major part in reducing waste in the County. Due to the impact of Covid, social media has played a major part in the communication of messages, particularly as events, talks and other more "traditional" methods of engagement have ceased.

The [Let's Waste Less](#) in Worcestershire Facebook page continues to increase its members and has had nearly over 80,000 impressions during the year.

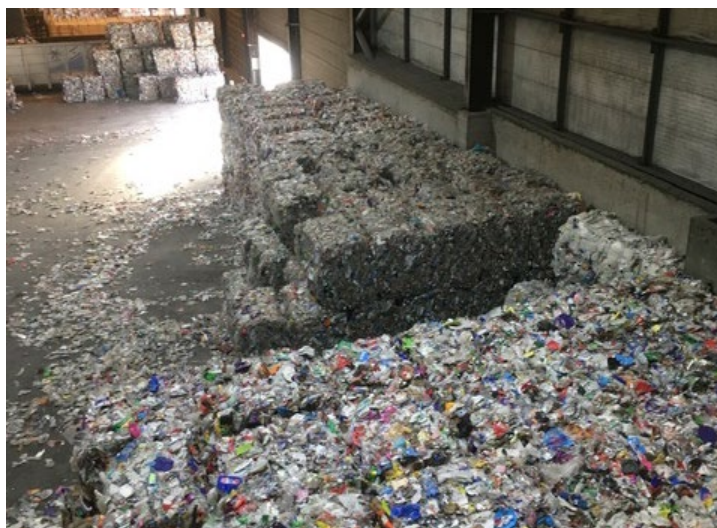
The Let's Waste Less volunteer programme changed providers in January 2021, to Resource Futures. Due to the ongoing effects of Covid the programme faltered slightly due to lack of events and schools work, but we continue to work closely with Resource Futures to expand the social media output of the volunteers. More targeted community engagement will be undertaken by Resource Futures going forward to spread waste prevention messages.

The One Waste Worcestershire group, made up of representatives from all the district councils and Worcestershire County Council, continues to work hard to ensure consistency in branding and messages across the county. The Let's Waste Less branding has been updated to make it more accessible, and a new set of brand guidelines have been written to reflect this. The Let's Waste Less website has a new landing page to make it easier to navigate. The group continues to work together at major times of the year when waste traditionally increases, such as Easter and Christmas. The group also participated in the first WRAP developed Food Waste Action Week in March which highlighted the impact that food waste has on the environment.



Food waste continues to be a priority for Worcestershire County Council, as it makes up such a significant part of residual waste. A Community Food Forum was held in February and attended by over 50 people representing charities, churches and housing associations. From this, three more Community Fridges have been set up and momentum is growing with the hope that additional fridges will be set up in the coming months.

The sale of subsidised compost bins has slowed down after a spike during Covid but continue to be consistent. A small increase in food digesters, such as HotBins and Green Johanna's, is starting to show as well higher sales in water butts.



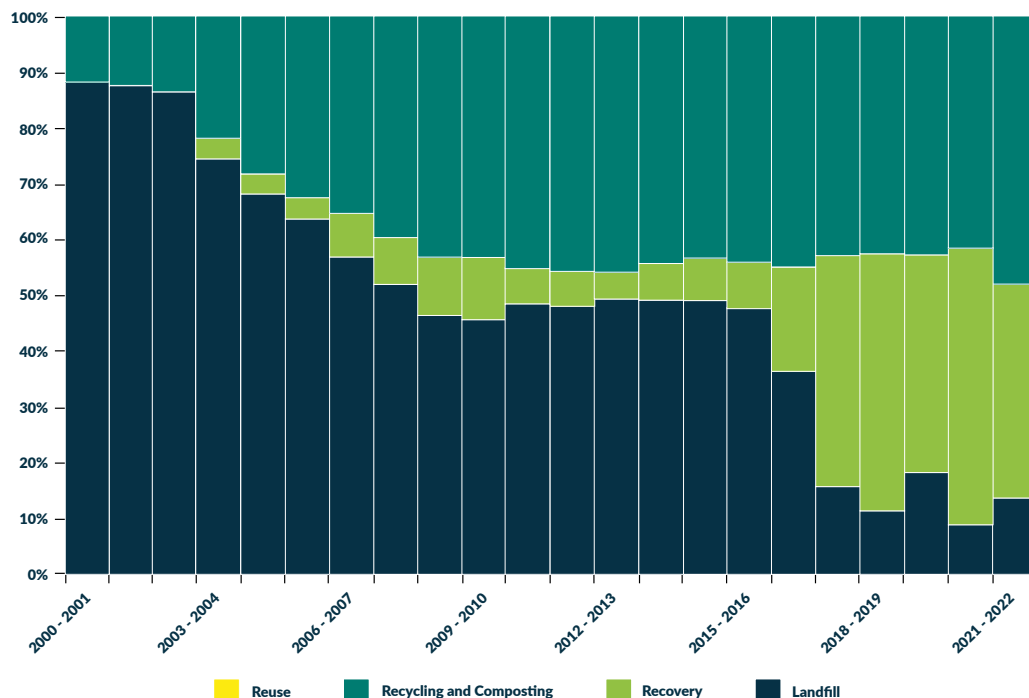
The reuse of clothing continues to be a high priority and we undertook our first joint clothes swap in September with the Duckworth Worcestershire Trust. There was a good turnout and 219 pieces of clothing, equating to 60.05kg, was swapped.

Worcestershire Nappy Library were given a grant by WCC to increase their reusable nappy kits to meet the demand. Since reintroducing the £30 cashback, 214 parents have taken up the offer and received £30 Love2Shop vouchers.

The percentage of household waste that was sent for recycling in Worcestershire in 2020/21 was 43.3%. The County's recycling facility, EnviroSort, hosted a total of 83 visits during 2021, which included 47 school visits (17 face to face and 30 virtual), 30 non-school groups and 6 outreach visits.

The percentage of waste sent to landfill has fallen since 2000/2001 with the majority of Worcestershire's waste now being either recycled and composted or sent for energy recovery at our local Energy from Waste plant. The change in disposal routes since 2000 is shown in the table below:

Reuse continues to be promoted via advertising and social media. Information about reuse organisations and what items they take was produced for the Let's Waste Less website. WCC, Herefordshire Council and Severn Waste Services continue to work in partnership with local charities to ensure that suitable items for reuse are segregated at the Household Recycling Centres. There are now containers at 9 sites across Worcestershire that collect items on behalf of a number of local charities, who then sell them on to raise funds.



The Government's recent Environment Act consultations around waste and recycling included waste prevention. The priorities in this consultation are ensuring items which can be repaired or reused such as furniture, clothing, electrical items are manufactured in such a way to facilitate this as well as reducing single use plastic and encouraging reductions in food waste. All of these are priorities for WCC too.

## Schools - Bikeability, Road Safety Education and School Crossing Patrols



### At a glance...

**Due to Covid, much of the face-to-face cycle training provision for children was paused. Road safety education was offered online to schools as an alternative.**

Cycle training (known as Bikeability) is delivered by the County Council's team of National Standards trained Cycle Instructors working within the Road Safety Team. Over 5,000 pupils normally benefit from Bikeability Training throughout the County each year, however in the year April 2020-March 2021 numbers were slightly down due to Covid-19 lockdown periods and cancellations. The majority of training is delivered at Bikeability Level 2; an introduction to safer riding on the road, but the team also delivers a wide range of training from *Balance*, *Learn to Ride* and Level 1 training for the younger pupils to Bikeability Level 3 – advanced level road training to pupils in High Schools. The team are also working in partnership with other providers to ensure as many pupils as possible can benefit from cycle related activities. The Road Safety Team also delivers a programme of road safety education including pedestrian training, in Worcestershire Schools. 8,000 pupils normally receive road safety education annually, however in April 2020-March 2021 all practical training had to be paused due to Covid. Road safety education was offered online to schools as an alternative but uptake for this was not able to be monitored. All of these schemes have been a great success and assist with the promotion of sustainable transport and increased road safety awareness amongst the Worcestershire population. The team also manages the School Crossing Patrol Service helping pupils cross the road to schools at sites that meet criteria countywide.



## Local Flood Risk



The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) requires all Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA) to produce a **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)** which sets out how the County Council as the LLFA will assess and address flood risk in the county, including assessment of areas of flood risk and their severity, application of national policy, development of local policy and priorities for action.





## Natural Flood Management



### At a glance...

**The Worcestershire Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project has proven the benefits natural flood management can have on a catchment and will be expanded by opening NFM opportunities to the wider Worcestershire area.**

The Worcestershire Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project, funded by Defra and the Environment Agency, is hosted by Worcestershire County Council and covers three core catchment areas in Worcestershire: Dowles Brook, Barbourne Brook, Cotswold Tributaries (River Isbourne, Merry and Badsey Brooks). This three-year project has proven the benefits natural flood management can have on a catchment, both to managing water, but also to habitats and wildlife. The trial will now be expanded by opening NFM opportunities to the wider Worcestershire area, working closely with partners, communities, and landowners in order to better manage water within the county.

Examples of the differing types of NFM measures that have been installed include:

- Leaky Woody Dams which work to hold back the water and slow the flow during times when the water level is high.
- Wetlands and ponds created along spring lines, creating habitats with additional capacity for water storage when needed.
- Tree Planting in the upper reaches of a catchment to help intercept run off, slowing the flow of water travelling downhill and allowing water to be taken out of the system via infiltration.
- Sward lifting / aeration of the soil to enable water infiltration and reducing run off.

Flood Management aims to slow the flow of water in upstream areas. A few interventions on their own will not be enough to make a difference to downstream flooding. Maximum benefits will come from hundreds of different types of interventions across the catchment. Land management also plays a large part and making changes in the way farmers use the land, planting hedges to break up flow paths, the use of cover crops in winter, can all help.



## Local Nature Partnership



Worcestershire County Council (including Strategic Planning and Environmental Policy, Flood Risk Management, Sustainability and Historic Environment) is a leading member of the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP). It continues to provide the secretariat and support to ensure that the partnership thrives. Areas of focus align closely with those of the County Council, including green infrastructure, climate change, water resource management and flooding.

Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) amended its constitution to reflect the Natural Environment White Paper's aspiration for LNPs to provide environmental leadership. To assist in achieving this, the LNP widened its membership to reflect this role, and now includes landowner representation from both the NFU and CLA in addition to developing links with other policy areas such as public health and well-being. The LNP has also worked closely with the Worcestershire LEP.

The programme for the Local Nature Partnership in 2021 has been varied. As a result of the COP26 conference in Glasgow, the LNP dedicated time at its meetings to understanding the latest projections for climate change and convened a special meeting to dedicated to climate change, the aspirations and actions on its membership.

The Environment Act 2021 has again been a focus for presentations and discussion with contributions from Natural England on Nature Recovery Networks and WCC on the refresh and update of the Habitat Inventory, essential to addressing the biodiversity net gain and recovery requirements of the Act.

A key aspect of the partnership is to share the innovative initiatives which are being developed to benefit the wider environment, including the 8 Hills Project in North Worcestershire; Woodland Trust's tree planting projects and WCC's management of roadside verges.

## Natural Networks Programme



### At a glance...

**136 Worcestershire applicants have received expert advice from the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and a total of 43 grant applications with the total value of £506,166.94 have been approved.**

The Natural Networks<sup>5</sup> Programme is a Worcestershire-wide scheme offering grants and advice to projects which aim to create or restore wildlife-rich habitats. Various types of organisations and businesses can apply for grants (up to 45% of the total project cost) to help undertake the works required to enhance the quality of County's blue and green infrastructure.

The programme has been provided with £1,043,460.00 in capital funding (funded by the European Regional Development Fund), which is to be dispersed to various projects throughout the duration of the programme.

So far, 136 Worcestershire applicants have received expert advice from the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and a total of 43 grant applications with the total value of £506,166.94 have been approved.

The Natural Networks Programme has already supported the enhancement of over 40 hectares of land. With increased interest from various organisations, the programme pipeline has been growing with more variety of biodiverse projects.

The Programme also offers a series of events throughout the year, working with partners to provide further insight and expert advice to interested parties.

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<sup>5</sup> The Natural Networks programme is receiving up to £1,249,680.00 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Department for Communities and Local Government (and in London the intermediate body Greater London Authority) is the Managing Authority for European Regional Development Fund.

Established by the European Union, the European Regional Development Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>



The Council was successful in gaining grant funding to support the establishment of new areas of wonderful wildflowers at County Hall. The project also included the installation of interpretation boards for the project, and the installation of a bee brick and bee posts to support pollinators on County Hall campus.

In 2015 the Council made a commitment to be a 'pollinator friendly' organisation and in 2020 the county's Pollinator Strategy was published. Pollinators include various species of bees, butterflies, moths, beetles and hoverflies. They are vital to our food supply and are particularly important in a county such as Worcestershire with a large agricultural and horticultural industry.



## Neighbourhood Plans



Many of the communities in Worcestershire, particularly in the rural areas, are interested in developing Neighbourhood Plans to guide development in their parish. We have continued to develop our approach and are now working with communities to assist them in developing their plans, providing data and assisting with the understanding and interpreting of the data sets, and how this can be shaped into policy for a plan.

## Green Infrastructure



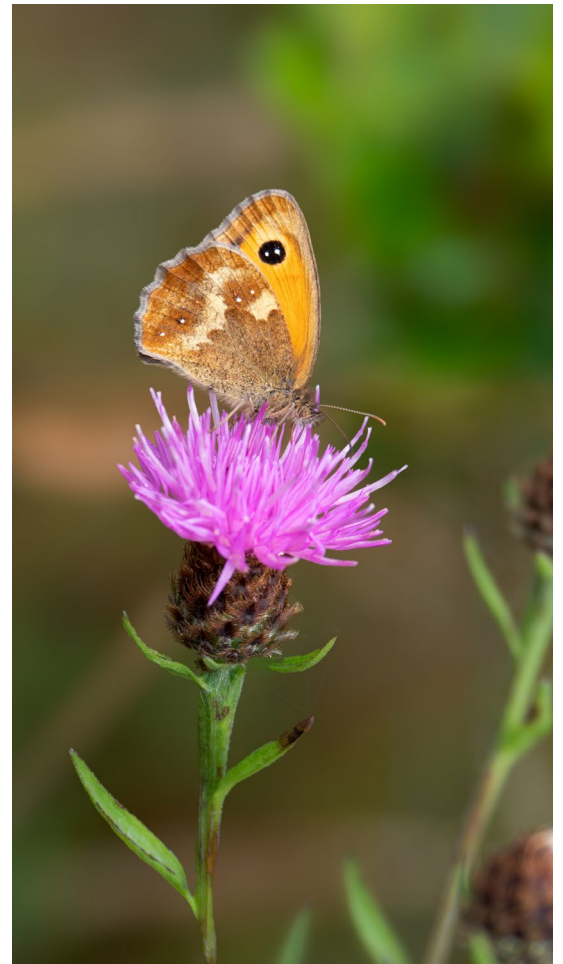
### At a glance...

**Lea Castle Village is the first Homes England site to receive Build with Nature Green Infrastructure accreditation**

The Council continue to work on Green Infrastructure (GI) in the county and have worked in partnership on a number of development sites, including strategic housing sites and the “game changer” employment sites, to promote green infrastructure as an integral part of the proposals. Lea Castle Village (the first Homes England site to receive Build with Nature Green Infrastructure accreditation) and Kidderminster East strategic development corridors are the primary focus of GI Concept Planning work.

Work continues to support the Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Local Development Plan following its Examination in Public and the Council are also supporting development of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) Review both through the refinement of GI policies and also through GI task and finish groups promoting a GI-led masterplanning exercise for the emerging Rushwick and Norton strategic development allocations.

Work has commenced on a review of the Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy and its evidence bases to reflect changes in national planning policy and advice, best practice and updates to the supporting data. All of the GI Framework documents, which provide the underpinning evidence base for the GI Strategy, have been updated and published. The GI strategy itself will be updated in 2022 to align with the recent Environment Act and will embed key concepts contained within the Act such as Nature Recovery Networks and Biodiversity Net Gain.



## Biodiversity Net Gain

The Council secured funding from Defra's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund in 2021 to deliver a project that will ensure the county Local Planning Authorities are in a position to secure effective delivery of the Biodiversity Net Gain mandate contained within the Environment Act. The Council is working with the six District Authorities to identify and design solutions to the increased requirements for capacity and resources applicable to the new duty. The project will report in September 2022.

## Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)



The third version of the Worcestershire BAP (2018-2027) is being used across the county to help inform biodiversity and conservation priorities, helping shape planning decisions, ecological opportunities and project development. Case-studies are being gathered from across Worcestershire on a rolling programme which highlight good practice in delivery of the BAP's objectives and targets. These are presented on an [interactive mapping tool on the Council's website](#).

The BAP will form part of the evidence base for the development of a county Local Nature Recovery Strategy, due to begin in late 2022, which is a new requirement under the Environment Act.





## Pollinators



**At a glance...**

**WCC is committed to being a pollinator-friendly county.**

In July 2020 WCC published the Worcestershire Pollinator Strategy which sets out our priorities and objectives for pollinator conservation aligned with our commitment to be a pollinator friendly county. Building on partnerships developed during previous pollinator conferences and workshops the Strategy sets out opportunities for businesses, communities and residents to help promote pollinators. We have worked with the national charity Buglife to map a number of B-Lines which are intended to provide linear corridors as priority areas for promoting opportunities for pollinators, joining up regionally and nationally to a wider network of B-Line corridors. These are described further in the Pollinators Strategy and are also mapped within our Biodiversity Action Plan. [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/pollinatorstrategy](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/pollinatorstrategy)



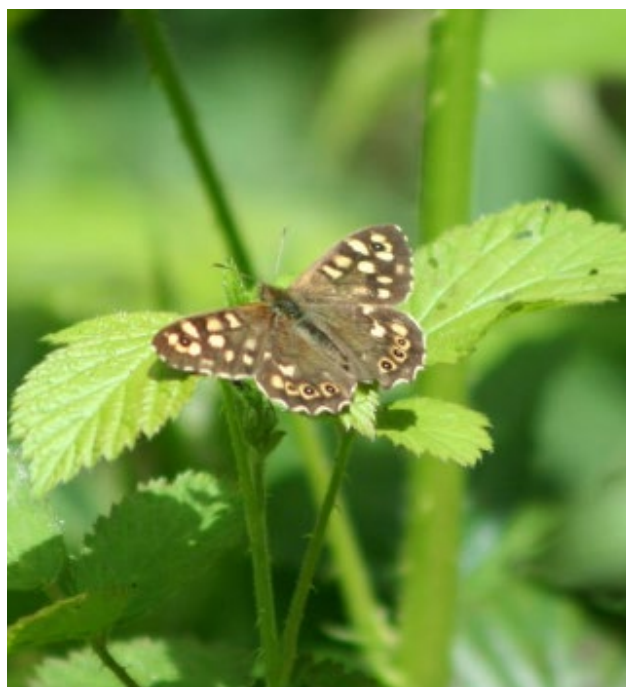
## Worcestershire Habitat Inventory



### At a glance...

The Habitat Inventory is used as a key planning tool and was updated in 2021 to enable support for functions including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Nature Recovery Network and Biodiversity Net Gain duties as set out in the Environment Act.

The [Worcestershire Habitat Inventory](#) is a mapping tool that displays land use and habitat data for the county of Worcestershire at a field-by-field scale. First developed in 2005 – 2007 it provides a baseline of information about the natural environment of the county. The dataset has been used historically as a strategic environmental assessment and project development tool to inform planning and land-use decisions. It's been used both internally and by our partners, for example in assessing potential development allocations, preparing evidence bases to support neighborhood plans, and in undertaking statutory assessments of plans and projects. In 2021 we updated the Habitat Inventory taking advantage of new remote surveillance technology and datasets including refreshed aerial and satellite imagery, and machine-led habitat identification. The refreshed Habitat Inventory is now suitable to support functions such as a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Nature Recovery Network and Biodiversity Net Gain duties as set out in the Environment Act.



## Countryside Services



### At a glance...

The Countryside Service has retained three Green Flag Awards at Worcester Woods Country Park, Waseley Hills Country Park and St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve.

Worcestershire prides itself on the availability of natural green spaces for all in the County. The Council's Countryside Service manages 18 countryside sites including 2 country parks, nature reserves and picnic places for biodiversity, landscape character, historic environment and informal recreation. Access to these sites have become increasingly important for people during the Covid pandemic as people's quality of life, physical and mental wellbeing has been significantly affected.

The Countryside Service has retained three **Green Flag Awards** at Worcester Woods Country Park, Waseley Hills Country Park and St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve.

**Worcester Woods Country Park**, England's first Accredited Country Park, is a 38-hectare Country Park with a large area of ancient coppice woodland with traditional meadows grazed by rare breed cattle. It has a very popular visitor centre incorporating the award-winning Orchard Café which specialises in local, organic, fair trade and free-range produce.



**Waseley Hills Country Park** provides unique views over Worcestershire, Birmingham and the Black Country, covering 150 acres of pasture with some woodland and historic hedgerow boundaries. The Park provides an excellent habitat for invertebrates and birds, and Skylarks breed on the hilltops every year. The Park provides an opportunity for people to access and learn more about the countryside and has a superb visitor centre and café, which offers local, free-range and Fair-Trade products, housed within a restored 400-year-old threshing barn.

St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve is the site of a former World War II hospital hidden away on the edge of Malvern, now home to a diverse range of wildlife including birds, insects, slowworms and grass snakes, which reside across the tranquil 22-hectare site. The Reserve has large areas of wildflower meadow and young native woodland, with areas of mature woodland and scrub, for the public to enjoy.

Worcestershire's Countryside Service works with over 450 volunteers who help to improve Worcestershire's environment on countryside sites, Public Rights of Way and in local communities.

The County Council's ambitious project to plant 150,000 trees in Worcestershire has commenced. Two key sites; New Farm at Norton near Evesham and Blackstone near Bewdley have been selected as new countryside sites that will be managed by the Countryside Service in the future. Work started in autumn 2020, with 3,000 trees and shrubs being planted at the Blackstone site. The remaining 3,000 trees will be planted on this site during winter 2022. Planting at the Norton site commenced in February 2021, with a further 3,500 to be planted during winter 2022. These sites will be managed for a range of habitats including woodland, pollinators, wetlands and orchards.



## Public-Sector Energy Efficiency Programme (PEEP)



### At a glance...

**PEEP has so far awarded over £110k in grant funding, supporting almost £300k of investment in low-carbon project work. The approved projects will save over 260 kWh and 74.25 tonnes of carbon.**

PEEP was launched in October 2020 to support public-sector organisations in Worcestershire to improve their energy efficiency and invest in renewable technologies. PEEP offers a free energy assessment service for public buildings and capital grant funding for low-carbon project work. The scheme is available to organisations who receive over 50% of their main funding from central or local government. Typically, this includes- local authorities, emergency services, state-funded educational institutions, the NHS, government agencies and bodies, etc.

PEEP aims to:

- Meet the need to improve energy efficiency in public sector buildings;
- Provide local, high profile, low-carbon exemplar projects;
- Increase local generation of renewable energy;
- Strengthen the local market for innovative low-carbon measures.
- Public-sector organisations can apply to receive a free energy assessment, conducted by procured energy specialists - Briar Associates. The assessment includes a half-day site visit, written recommendation report, and follow-up support. Recommendations will include no cost, low cost and higher cost energy saving measures and renewable technologies. Additional support is available to present the report's findings to decision makers and budget-holders, write tender specifications, and apply for funding. To date, 35 reports have been issued.

PEEP has a total £1.37 million grant funding to support low-carbon capital project work. Organisations can apply for grant funding between £2k-£200k+, representing a maximum 40% of the total NET capital project costs. Eligible project work should seek to reduce the annual energy usage (kWh) and GHG (CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup> tonnes) of existing public property. PEEP is focused on innovative solutions, including renewable energy technologies, smart LED lighting systems, BEMS, low-carbon heating, etc. Standard retrofit activity including insulation, glazing, gas boilers etc. are not eligible for PEEP funding, unless they comprise part of a whole building approach.

To date, PEEP has awarded over £110k in grant funding, supporting almost £300k of investment in low-carbon project work. The approved projects will save over 260 kWh and 74.25 tonnes of carbon.



# Green Economy

## Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP)



At a glance...

**To date BEEP assessments have identified over £4 million pounds of annual energy savings and around 14,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas reductions per year. £677,000 of grant funding was awarded to businesses in 2021.**

Worcestershire County Council's highly successful Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) continues to provide free energy efficiency assessments and grant support to small and medium size enterprises in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. BEEP's funding has now been extended until June 2023.

BEEP helps businesses to become more energy efficient and improve profitability, whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The free energy and resource efficiency assessments (2 days of support) provide technical assistance to measure current energy usage and provide recommendations for improvements, which could be funded through a grant of up to £20,000. They also now look at waste and water management opportunities too.

The most popular grant support measures provided continue to be LED lighting, more efficient heating systems, air compressors, fast shutting warehouse doors and insulation.

Despite COVID restrictions the Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) (second phase of funding) - provided a further 122 businesses with free energy efficiency assessments during 2021 taking the programme total (since October 2016) to 701.

Rising energy prices, more awareness of environmental issues following COP26 and increased marketing activities have seen high demand from business for support in this area.

To date BEEP assessments have identified over £4 million pounds of annual energy savings and around 14,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas reductions per year. £677,000 of grant funding was awarded to businesses in 2021.

One of the business BEEP funded this year, was The Silk Bureau Ltd in Evesham, who specialise in textile printing and received grant funding of £12,000. This was for LED lighting and also for a new system which recovers waste heat from excess steam and then use this to pre heat water in other processes, reducing the need for gas and electricity.

These measures will realise estimated minimum annual energy savings of £8,200 and 19 tonnes of reduced

greenhouse gas emissions.

BEEP also runs a quarterly sustainability forum through Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, providing wider and ongoing support to businesses.

Worcestershire County Council in partnership with Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, Herefordshire Council, Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council and Worcestershire Councils are receiving up to £3,095,466 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020 for an Extension to the Business Energy Efficiency Programme.

For more information visit [www.business-central.co.uk/beep](http://www.business-central.co.uk/beep)



## Low Carbon Opportunities Programme (LOCOP)



### At a glance...

During phase 1 and 2 of LOCOP a total of 156 businesses have so far taken up the assistance on offer. More than £1,350,000 has been issued to SMEs in the form of grants and approximately 1,300 tonnes of annual GHG emissions will be saved.

The Low Carbon Opportunities Programme, now in its second phase, is a project that supports Worcestershire SME's (Small and Medium Enterprises) with free low carbon innovation and renewable energy feasibility support, as well as grants towards installation of renewable energy technologies and commercialisation of innovative low carbon products, services and technologies.

Businesses are provided with either a free renewable free energy efficiency assessment or a low carbon innovation business assistance (both are 2 days of support).

They are able to apply for grant funding for up to 40% of the total cost of a project (to a maximum contribution of £50,000 for renewables and £30,000 for innovation).

In 2021 a further 35 businesses were receiving support and £336,000 of grant funding was awarded.

Rising energy prices, more awareness of environmental issues following COP26 and increased marketing activities have seen high demand from business for renewables energy.

During phase 1 and 2 of LOCOP a total of 156 businesses have so far taken up the assistance on offer. More than £1,350,000 has been issued to SMEs in the form of grants and approximately 1,300 tonnes of annual GHG emissions will be saved.

Most of the renewable energy grants provided have been for roof mounted solar PV systems to generate clean electricity, reducing electricity bills, displacing more carbon intensive grid supplied electricity. Systems have ranged from 15 kWp to 250 kWp. Some of the larger installations this year are at St Peter's Garden Centre just outside Worcester, Sparlonz in Redditch and Chessgrove Park near Bromsgrove.

The programme also supports businesses in the clean tech innovation sector and those who want to diversify into this sector through the development of new low carbon technologies, which will help others to save energy or reduce their waste.

One business who is benefitting from Low Carbon Opportunities Innovation support is Farm Green Energy Ltd, in Wychavon. They are receiving funding and support to develop, build and trial a Biomethane dispenser to utilise local anaerobic waste, which will replace the need for diesel by local transport companies and farmers. This will give these companies financial savings on fuel costs and drastically lower CO2e emissions.

The Programme will also offer a series of events, working alongside local partners, to provide further support and learning opportunities to businesses.

The Programme is receiving up to £2,015,444 from the European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014–2020. It is a partnership between Worcestershire County Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council, Wyre Forest District Council and Shropshire County Council.

For more information, visit <http://www.business-central.co.uk/locop/>





Please contact us if you need this document in another format, or if you have any questions.

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