

South Cambridgeshire District Council Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions Account 2025/26

1. Introduction

These accounts have been compiled to better understand the impact of the Council's estate and operations on climate change, and to inform action to mitigate this impact by reducing emissions. They have been drawn up according to the [Environmental Reporting Guidelines](#) issued by the Government's Departments for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) (formerly the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy), and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), updated March 2019.

The guidelines provide procedures and principles for accounting and reporting environmental impacts drawn from the internationally recognised Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard from the World Resources Institute and World Business Council for Sustainable Development, known as the "GHG Protocol Corporate Standard". These principles are that the accounts should be relevant, quantitative, accurate (insofar as is practical), complete (with any exclusions specified, disclosed and justified), consistent, comparable and transparent.

Under the GHG Protocol, emissions are defined in three different scopes.

- Scope 1: Direct GHG emissions from activities owned or controlled by the organisation.
- Scope 2: Indirect emissions associated with consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling.
- Scope 3: Indirect emissions that are a consequence of the organisation's actions, but which occur at sources not owned or controlled by the organisation.

The Council follows guidance from the [Environmental Reporting Guidelines](#) and reports two figures for its emissions based on different methods of carbon emissions accounting, the location-based method and the market-based method. The location-based method measures scope 2 emissions based on the carbon intensity of the grid in that area, whereas a market-based method of accounting considers the specific energy contracts an organisation has chosen, factoring in where an organisation has decided to purchase renewable energy.

Table 1 shows the key differences between a location- and market-based method of accounting.

Location-based	Market-based
Measures emissions based on the average emissions intensity of the grid in an area	Measures emissions associated with the type of electricity purchased
Uses the average grid emission factor	Uses supplier-specific emissions factor or renewable tariff factor
Reflects the emissions intensity of the electricity system	Reflects the procurement choices made by an organisation
Typically a higher figure for emissions	Typically a lower figure where renewable energy tariffs were used

Location-based	Market-based
Useful to allow comparison between organisations but does not account for procurement choices	Reflects organisational purchasing decisions however can reduce reported emissions without physical change in electricity generation at local level

2. Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Council's Estate and Operations

Table 2: Overall GHG emissions for 2025/26 showing the percentage change from the baseline year

	GHG emissions (tCO ₂ e) 2025/26	GHG emissions (tCO ₂ e) 2018/19 (baseline year)	Percentage change from baseline year
Scopes	2025/26	2018/19	2025/26
Scope 1 (direct emissions)	935	1374	-32%
Scope 2 (indirect emissions, electricity)	174	421*	-59%
Scope 3 (indirect emissions, other)	74	135**	-45%
Total gross emissions	1183	1929* (adjusted baseline)	-39%
Population ¹	172,793	157,519	+9.7%
Intensity measurement (tonnes of CO ₂ e per person)	0.0068	0.0122	-44%
Emissions from electricity generated from Council owned sources and exported to the grid	1	0	-
Emissions from electricity purchased on a renewable energy tariff	126	0	-
Total emissions using market-based method	1056	1929*	-45.3%

*Scope 2 emissions figure is different to that reported in 2018/19 due to the baseline recalculation of electricity 50% shared with Cambridge City Council at the Waterbeach depot and a further recalculation to include sites not previously included in accounting but which fall within scope.

**Scope 3 emissions figure is different to that reported in 2018/19 due to the baseline recalculation using the 'unknown' fuel type conversion factor

¹ Based on Office for National Statistics 2021 Mid-Year Population Estimates for 2024 provided by Cambridgeshire Insight: [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight – Population – Local Population Estimates and Forecasts](#)

Table 3: GHG emissions for 2025/26 by scope showing the percentage change from the baseline year

	GHG emissions (tCO ₂ e) 2025/26	GHG emissions (tCO ₂ e) 2018/19 (baseline year)	Percentage change from baseline year
Scope 1	2025/26	2018/19	2025/26

Gas consumption	174	285	-39%
Fleet	761	1089	-30%
Process emissions	n/a	n/a	-
Fugitive emissions	n/a	n/a	-
Total Scope 1	935	1374	-32%
Scope 2			
Purchased electricity	174	421*	-59%
Total Scope 2	174	421*	-59%
Scope 3			
Business Travel	74	135**	-45%
Transmission and Distribution losses	Not included	Not included	-
Employee commuting	Not included	Not included	-
Procured goods and services	Not included	Not included	-
Waste Disposal	Not included	Not included	-
Total Scope 3	74	135**	-45%
Total gross emissions	1183	1929	-39%

*Scope 2 emissions figure is different to that reported in 2018/19 due to the baseline recalculation of electricity shared 50% with Cambridge City Council at the Waterbeach depot and a further recalculation to include sites not previously included in accounting but which fall within scope.

**Scope 3 emissions figure is different to that reported in 2018/19 due to the baseline recalculation using the 'unknown' fuel type conversion factor

Chart 1: Total greenhouse gas emissions from South Cambridgeshire District Council's estate and operations 2025/26

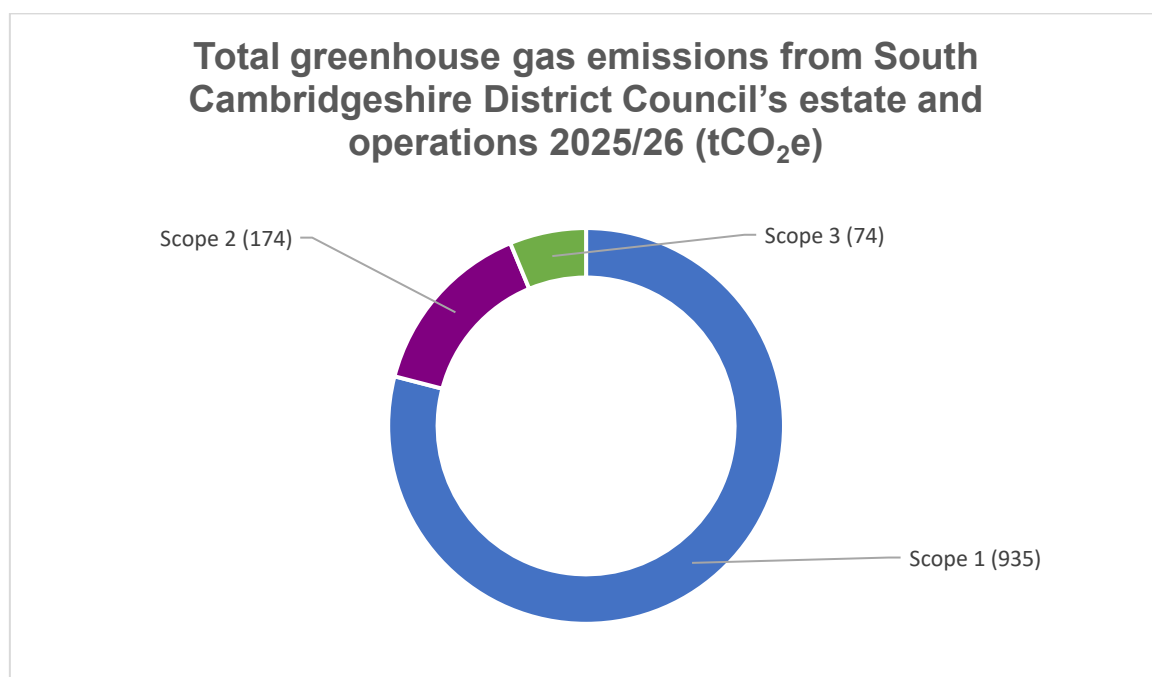


Chart 1 (above) Executive Summary: Greenhouse gas emissions were dominated by Scope 1 emissions (935 tCO₂e, 79%) in 2025/26, with smaller contributions from Scope 2 purchased electricity emissions (174 tCO₂e, 15%) and Scope 3 indirect emissions (74 tCO₂e, 6%).

Chart 2: Scope 1 emissions from South Cambridgeshire District Council's estate and operations 2025/26

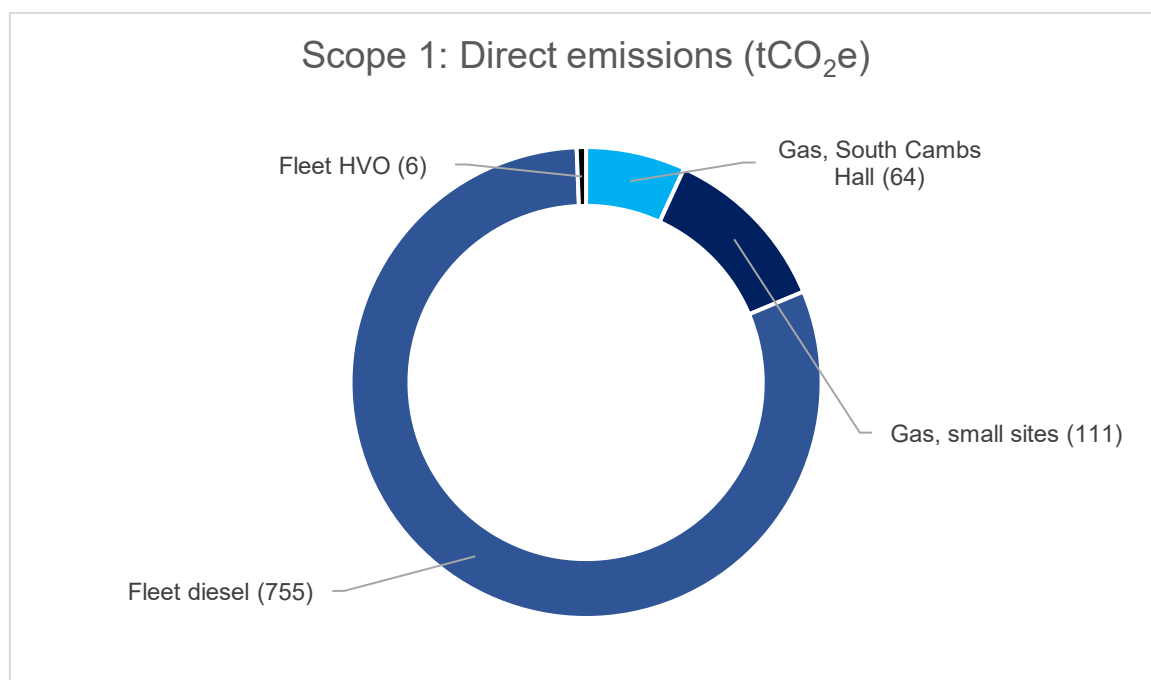


Chart 2 (above) Executive Summary: Scope 1 emissions were primarily driven by fleet diesel use (755 tCO₂e, 81%), with smaller contributions from gas use at small sites (111 tCO₂e, 12%), South Cambridgeshire Hall (64 tCO₂e, 6%), and fleet HVO (6 tCO₂e, 1%).

Chart 3: Scope 2 emissions for South Cambridgeshire District Council's estate and operations from purchased electricity 2025/26



Chart 3 (above) Executive Summary: Scope 2 emissions were mainly from electricity use at small sites (85 tCO₂e, 49%) and South Cambridgeshire Hall (65 tCO₂e, 37%), with smaller contributions from footway lighting (13 tCO₂e, 7%) and electricity usage at Waterbeach Depot (10 tCO₂e, 6%).

Chart 4: Scope 3 emissions for South Cambridgeshire District Council's estate and operations from other sources 2025/26

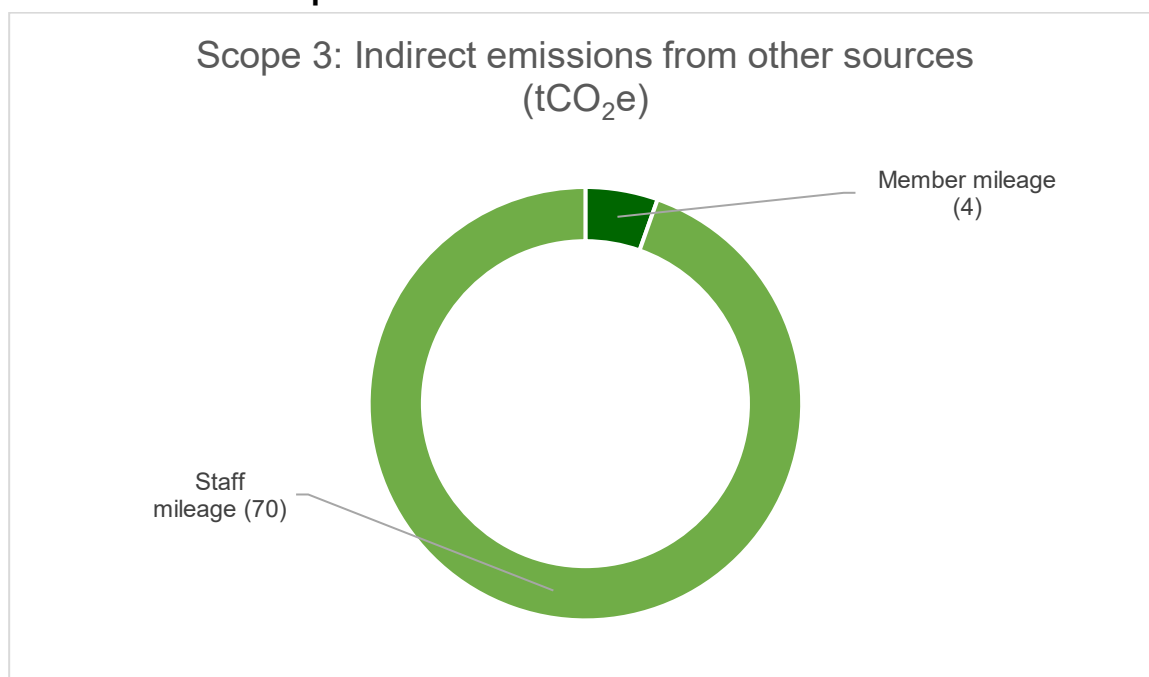


Chart 4 (above) Executive Summary: Scope 3 emissions were almost entirely from staff mileage (70 tCO₂e, 95%), with member mileage contributing a small proportion (4 tCO₂e, 5%).

3. About the Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council is a non-metropolitan district authority and is responsible for providing a range of services to residents of South Cambridgeshire, visitors to the district, businesses and other organisations based in the district. Services include housing, refuse and recycling collections, licensing, planning and building control, Council Tax collection, and environmental health services. The Council serves a population of 172,793 (estimated) living in 106 parishes and settlements, has 45 elected Members, and employed 767 members of staff as of 01 April 2026. Further information about the Council can be found on our website at www.scambs.gov.uk.

4. Reporting Period

1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

5. Approach

We have followed [Government guidance, published by DEFRA](#).

6. Organisational Boundary

We have defined our organisational boundary following the Financial Control approach which means we have included operations which the Council owns and controls. Further detail on which operations or activities have been included within our organisational boundary for the purposes of compiling this greenhouse gas report is provided under Section 7 'Operational Scopes' below.

7. Operational Scopes

We have included Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions for all properties and vehicles that we fully own and control and for properties that we lease from others, where the Council is delivering a service.

We reported Scope 3 emissions where we have access to comprehensive and reliable data; and where we have a degree of control over the operation/ activity in question. See Table 3 for details.

Table 4: Rationale for Inclusion and Exclusion of Emissions

Source of Emissions	Included in reporting?	Reason for exclusion (where applicable)
Source 1 (Direct)		
Gas consumption in buildings we own and control	Yes	This includes the main office buildings, our three hub offices and our sheltered housing community rooms.
Gas consumption in buildings we lease to others	Partially	We have only included emissions arising from energy used in the communal areas of some of the buildings that we lease out (energy used in communal areas is provided and paid for by the Council). We have not included data on energy used in Council housing, Ermine Street Housing (the Council's private sector housing company), or in the commercial building, 140 Cambridge Science Park, owned by the Council.
Gas consumption in buildings we lease from others	No	The Waterbeach Depot is the only building which the Council leases from others. No gas is consumed on these premises.
Fuel consumption in owned transport	Yes	Includes Shared Waste Services transport, e.g., refuse collection vehicles, operating in South Cambridgeshire; excludes Shared Waste Services transport operating in the City Council.
Process emissions	No	Not applicable.

Source of Emissions	Included in reporting?	Reason for exclusion (where applicable)
Fugitive emissions, e.g., from air conditioning units	No	Excluded due to difficulty and/or cost of obtaining data.
Scope 2 (Indirect, energy)		
Purchased electricity in buildings we own, occupy and control	Yes	This includes our main office buildings, our three hub offices, our sheltered housing community rooms and the two Traveller sites, Whaddon and Blackwell.
Purchased electricity in buildings we lease to others	Partially	We have only included emissions arising from energy used in the communal areas of some of the buildings that we lease out (energy used in communal areas is provided and paid for by the Council), as well as sites where we recharge for electricity used but which fall within our financial scope. We do not have access to data on energy used by our tenants.
Purchased electricity in buildings we lease from others	Yes	The Waterbeach depot.
Purchased electricity used in street lighting owned by the Council	Yes	1,851 streetlights.
Scope 3 (Indirect, other)		
Purchased goods and services	No	Excluded due to difficulty and/or cost of obtaining data. There is ongoing work to obtain data on these emissions from the Council's largest contracts.
Business travel	Yes	This includes mileage claimed by staff and Members.
Commuter travel	No	Excluded due to difficulty and/or cost of obtaining data.
Waste disposal	No	Excluded due to difficulty and/or cost of obtaining data.
Water usage	No	Excluded due to difficulty and/or cost of obtaining data.
Outsourced activities	No	

8 Conversion/ Emissions Factors Used

The emissions factors used to calculate the emissions in this report are those provided by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero titled: 'UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting' which is available at: [Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2025](#)

9. Geographical Breakdown

All our operations and activities are carried out in the UK.

10. Baseline Year

1 April 2018 - 31st March 2019

11. Base Year Recalculation Policy

For consistent tracking of performance over time, the Council may need to recalculate the baseline year to compare current emissions with historic emissions. The reasons for change are documented in Part 9 of the guidance on how to measure and report your greenhouse gas emissions provided by the Department for Environment, Food and rural Affairs (DEFRA). For example, changes in calculation methods or improvements in the accuracy of emission factors or activity data that result in a significant impact on the base year emissions data.

Since the 2018/19 report was published, a survey identified the number of footway lamps in use to be 1,796, not 1,677 as originally reported. Although this figure of 1,796 was used in 2019/20, this number changed again in 2020/21 to 1,803 due to the identification of more footway lamps not captured in this survey. Further to this, the close of the streetlighting LED upgrade project produced a full inventory of the streetlights, listing 1,851 lamps. Due to the very small difference in numbers and the fact that a small number of streetlamps are due to be disconnected, a baseline recalculation is not necessary.

Further baseline recalculations have been made to reflect that 50% of the electricity usage at the Waterbeach depot is shared with Cambridge City Council, and the amendment to the fuel conversion factor from 'diesel' to 'unknown' which is used for the business fuel consumption.

Owing to a change in the availability of data, recalculations of the business mileage figures for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were possible. Data before this point is not available. This has not altered the baseline figures but has allowed for further accuracy in the emissions calculations.

Further recalculations were carried out to the baseline figure in 2025/26 due to the emergence of data for sites which were not previously captured. These are sites where the Council recharges for the energy used, however, under our emissions accounting these are now captured to increase its robustness and strengthen our reporting as these fall within the Council's financial scope. A recalculation of the usage back to the baseline year for these sites was possible, however, it should be noted that due to data availability, it was necessary to provide estimations for certain sites based on same period figures for subsequent years.

12. Intensity Measurement

We have included an intensity ratio of 0.0068 tonnes of CO₂e per resident of South Cambridgeshire, which is based on 2024 mid-year population statistics from the Cambridgeshire Insight 2021 Census population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics. This is a reduction from the intensity ratio of 0.0122 in 2018/19 and serves to reflect the number of residents served by the Council.

The dataset is available at: [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight – Local Population Estimates and Forecasts](#)

13. External Assurance Statement

The Authority's Internal Audit service has had opportunity to review the reported emissions figures, as well as the most recent rebaselining, supporting calculations, and sample test available source data, and have provided assurances on the figures provided.

14. Avoided GHG Emissions

For South Cambridgeshire Hall and the majority of the Council-owned small sites, the Council has purchased a renewable energy tariff. This has been factored into the market-based method for calculating Scope 2 emissions.

15. Amount of Electricity Generated from Owned or Controlled Sources

The solar array on the Waterbeach Depot started exporting electricity in March 2019. We have included the total renewable electricity exported from the array as avoided emissions. This is split 50:50 with Cambridge City Council. South Cambridgeshire Hall also possesses a solar carport; the energy is not exported and is accounted for in the reduced electricity usage of the building.

16. Amount of Heat Generated from Owned or Controlled Sources

South Cambridgeshire Hall has installed ground source heat pump and Environmental Management System.

For further information about this report, please contact:

Grace Vaudin, Climate Strategy Officer, Climate, Environment and Waste
Grace.vaudin@scambs.gov.uk