

Wirral Borough Council

Council Overview

[Wirral Borough Council](#) (WBC) is a Metropolitan District Council, which means it provides all local services, from larger areas such as transport and housing to environmental health and waste collection. The Council has 66 councillors across 22 electoral wards.

In May 2023, the council switched to a whole council election system, meaning that all the councillors were elected at the May 2023 election and will serve a majority in Wirral Borough Council. Labour holds the most seats in the Council with 29 seats, but does not hold a majority, as the Conservatives, Greens and Lib Dems hold 37 seats between them.

The council is led by the Labour group, with Leader and cabinet positions held by Labour councillors. Whilst Labour doesn't have more than half of the seats, given the political breakdown, it's hard to see, beyond specific local issues, where there's an alliance to overturn Labour-led decisions. The full breakdown of seats is as follows:

- Labour – 29 seats
- Conservative – 17 seats
- The Green Party – 14 seats
- Liberal Democrats – 6 seats

The Council leader is Councillor [Paul Stuart](#) (Labour).

Council System

The Council works on a committee system, meaning the council's power is balanced across a series of committees that make decisions on different issues. Places on committees are allocated in proportion to the number of council seats held by each political group. There are 31 committees in total, with the most relevant outlined below:

- Waste, travel, and broader climate crisis issues are overseen by the [Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee](#). The committee meets roughly every 1-2 months and previous agendas and minutes, as well as the date of the next scheduled meeting, can be found [on their website](#). The committee chair is [Councillor Elizabeth Grey](#)

- For issues considering buildings and development, you may wish to speak with the [Planning Committee](#). They meet once a month and the dates of past and planned meetings, as well as agendas and minutes, can be found [on their website](#). The committee chair is [Councillor Stuart Kelly](#).

These committees present issues at their meetings and resolve actions published in their meeting minutes. Council meetings also allow the opportunity for members and the public to ask questions submitted ahead of the meeting, members of the public may make speeches and submit petitions as well. There is then a central Council committee for oversight of the process. However, these committees allow a better balance of power between parties and better accountability for the decision-making process, as decisions are scrutinised across parties.

The Metropolitan Borough covers four Westminster Constituencies. Their names, current MP and Party are below (and we have provided research on each of them separately to this document):

- Wirral West, Labour, Matthew Patrick
- Wallasey, Labour, Angela Eagle
- Birkenhead, Labour, Alison McGovern
- Ellesmere Port and Brombrough, Labour, Justin Madders

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) was formed April 1st 2014 and consists of 6 constituent members, including Wirral Borough Council. The LCRCA has oversight of economic development, transport, housing and land assets, and employment and skills development. The Mayor of the LCRCA has been [Steve Rotheram](#) since 2017.

Understanding your council, and the powers they have can be confusing. We've put together a [separate factsheet linked here](#) where you can find out more about the roles and responsibilities of different tiers of councils, and how you can find out more information.

What is the Wirral Borough Council doing on Climate Change?

Wirral Borough Council declared a climate emergency on July 15 2019. In this [same announcement](#), they made an ambitious commitment to “achieve ‘net zero’ carbon emissions associated with [their] activities by 2030” and went even further to promise to act on promoting “wider action to help reach ‘net zero’ emissions for Wirral as a whole no later than 2041”.

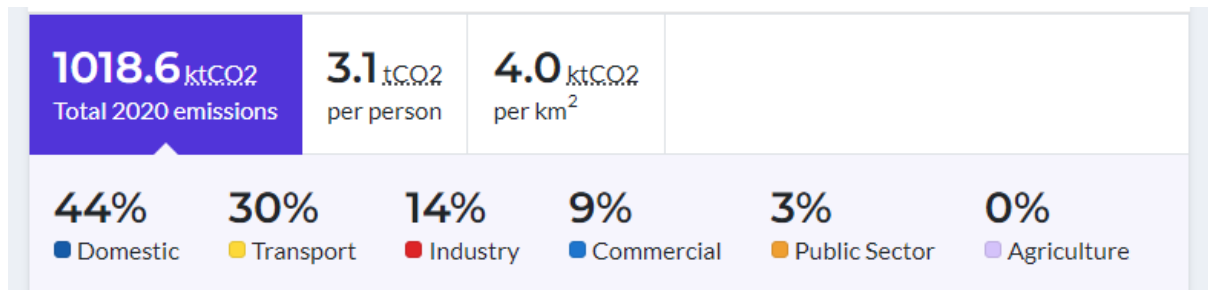
The council also has an [Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) outlining their achievements to date and ambitions for the future. The council spent £202,883 on the plan in 21/22 on projects including developing school travel plans, securing of funding for eCargo bikes, and the rollout of on-street residential EV charging ports. Notably missing from this plan were actions on public transport development or infrastructure investment. This is important as only 33% of residents in [the Wirral opt for a Green Commute](#) and developing public transport options can make a faster difference to this rate.

The council has also implemented a single-use plastic policy to eliminate this form of waste. However, wider action on increasing the [dismal recycling rates](#) has not been taken.

Climate Action Scorecard

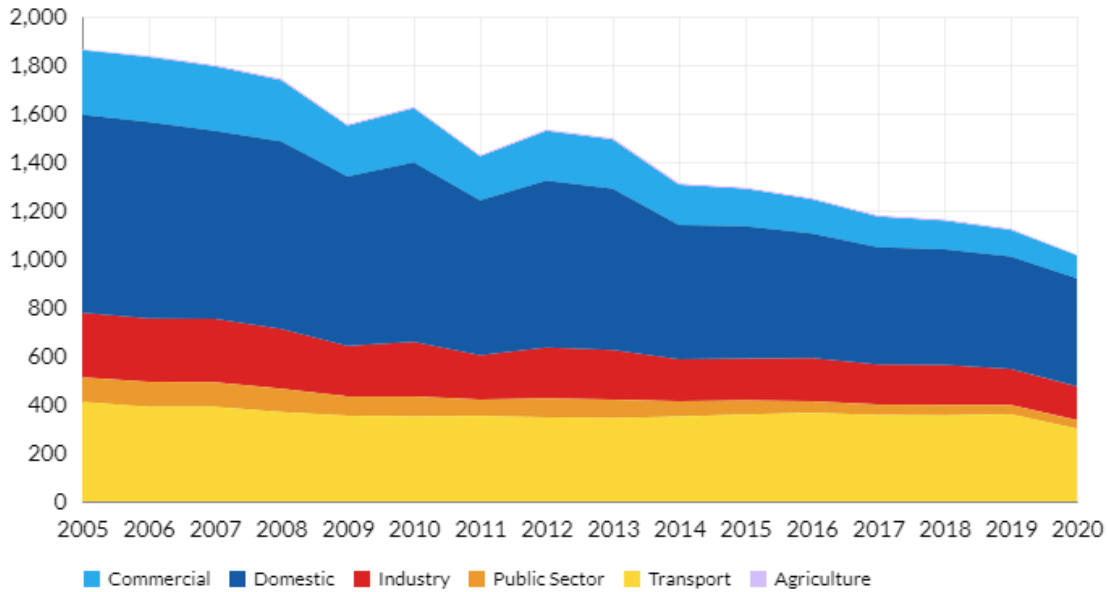
According to the [Climate Emergency UK Local Council Scorecard](#), Wirral Borough Council scores 42% on their climate action, achieving 6% higher than the average single-tier council. Their best areas are Buildings and Heating (Score: 14/22) and Biodiversity (Score: 8/10). However, they score below the average council on Collaboration and Engagement (Score: 7/18) and Waste and Recycling (Score: 4/15)

Local Climate Stats



Historic emissions by sector, 2005–2020

Wirral Council, ktCO₂e



Domestic sources are the largest producer of emissions in the local area, followed by transport.

Key Councillors

It can be helpful to work with multiple levels of your local authority on the same campaign to achieve maximum impact, however we'd always recommend working with either your ward councillor or a sympathetic councillor first to build a relationship and gather information. Ward councillors are an important first step in developing a network of information and support within the council.

We have also outlined some councillors who would be helpful allies to push forward your areas of interest:

Cllr Elizabeth Grey

Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee

Political Party - Labour Party

Ward - Bidston and St James

Cllr Grey is strongly committed to addressing the climate and nature crisis but will be constrained by the financial challenges that most local authorities have. As Chair of this committee she will be in the best position to understand, from her work with council officers, where there are opportunities to secure funding for measures that will make a real difference to your agenda. For example, where large funding

streams are available. She will be able to establish what the barriers to progress are and you can build a positive relationship with her where you are helping to show community support for action on climate change and/ or nature loss.

Cllr Naomi Graham

Ward - Prenton

Political Party - Green Party

Naomi won Prenton in May 2023 by a significant majority, with her and her fellow Green Party Councillors (Harry Gorman and Christopher Cooke) winning 59.5% of the vote collectively. She serves as a member of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee. Naomi is actively campaigning on issues concerning transport, [having co-signed a letter to protect the 418 bus service in November of last year.](#)

Cllr Jo Bird

Ward- Bromborough

Political Party - Co-Leader of the Green Group

Jo won Bromborough with 57.3% in 2023 and continues to be an active campaigner and councillor on local issues. She [left the Labour Party in 2021](#) and moved over to the Green Party. In January 2023 she [opposed the construction of a waste incineration facility next to Port Sunlight River Park.](#) She serves on the Economy Regeneration & Housing Committee which, amongst other duties, oversees planning permissions and development projects

Both Cllr Jo Bird and Cllr Naomi Graham are strong political allies within the council to build relationships with. They are both in a minority party (The Green Party) but one with a significant presence in the council (14 seats). This positions them well to hold the majority party to account on green issues and also utilise their positions on multi-party committees to build common ground and create strong alliances that can push forward issues on behalf of their constituents, particularly when combined with your group's ward councillors.

Areas of Common Ground

Transport

Transport is the biggest source of emissions in the UK and increasing use of public transport and active travel is vital to reach net zero targets. As well as reducing

emissions, especially in the current cost of living crisis, an affordable, reliable and accessible public transport service is vital for communities across the UK.

Currently, around [1/3 of households in the bottom income bracket lack access to a car](#), which highlights the necessity to ensure that public transport is at the cornerstone of any decarbonisation plan.

WBC committed to developing its public transport infrastructure in its [2022 Local Plan](#), stating a commitment to:

“Secure sustainable travel, improve accessibility, connectivity, and ease of movement and direct new development to Strategic Objective 3 locations which will provide easiest access to existing centres, high-frequency public transport corridors, and pedestrian and cycle routes. Thus reducing both the need to travel and the reliance on private cars and helping to ensure local travel is largely fossil fuel free by 2030.”

More recently, there have been some very positive signs of progress from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. They have recently announced that their [local transport plan is under the public consultation phase](#). Even more recently, the Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham has stated that Liverpool buses will maintain [the £2 bus fare cap](#), furthering the national £3 cap from the government. This shows the intention of the LCRCA. Wirral Borough Councillor Steve Foulkes is the chair of the LCR Transport Committee and therefore there is scope to engage with Steve and the wider Wirral Council to make sure the plans for the local transport systems are ambitious in scope.

Engaging with the [LCR Transport Plan](#) during its public consultation phase is a pivotal opportunity to have your voice heard on plans for Wirral transport. Working with councillors to ensure your lived experience of the current transport system is considered in their decision making and using this period of change and reflection to push forward key areas is a unique opportunity.

Waste Management

Promoting a circular economy through reducing and recycling waste is key to reducing the emissions created through the production and distribution of disposable products.

In the Wirral district, only [35% of household waste is recycled, reused or composted](#). 89% of people surveyed in the Wirral area claim to make an effort to recycle, therefore the changes made must be made on a systemic level.

WBC has identified the need for better recycling and, in their [Local Plan](#), outlines plans to open new waste management sites in the Wirral area. It states:

“New waste management development will be permitted in accordance with the spatial strategy, policy criteria and site allocations for new waste management development set out in the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton adopted in July 2013.”

The plan does not specify, however, if these are required to be recycling sites. Additionally, reports show that rates of recycling [are actually reducing over time](#).

Cllr Jo Bird and Cllr Naomi Graham both advocate strongly within the council for better funding for waste management and recycling, stating in their June 2023 newsletter:

“The 2023-24 budget would have seen more cut budgets for waste, recycling, bulky refuse and environmental health support, had Greens not intervened.”

However, further action could be encouraged from them to ensure these new waste sites are recycling sites and that the poor recycling rates in the Wirral are reversed.

More recently, the council have announced a [£2.377 million investment in upgrading their waste collection system to add food waste recycling](#). This plan also includes exploring options post 2027 when their contract with Biffa (who are currently contracted for local waste management) wraps up. The proposals will seek to address, in particular, low recycling levels in the Wirral area.

You could use this key period of change within the Wirral’s Waste Management systems to work alongside key councillors and stakeholders to push for more ambitious recycling goals and propose more effective recycling schemes to improve local waste management outputs. Additionally, you could discuss with councillors how including access to repair and reuse tools could be included in waste management budgets, by looking beyond recycling as a means to waste reduction.

We’d also love to hear from you!

Please do [get in touch](#) with us too at info@hftf.org.uk or by calling 0114 312 2619 if you’d like to discuss asks for other areas of common ground, as well as accessing our free, tailored support for engagements with your MP.

Please keep in touch with us and let us know how your engagement progresses. We use this information to help us work as effectively as possible and to report to our funders so we can continue to provide this service to others.

HFTF Completed: 12/11/2024