Westmorland & Furness Council

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Delivering a Fleet Decarbonisation & Replacement Strategy post Local Government Reorganisation

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Context

- Westmorland & Furness Council is a relatively new unitary authority in the North West of England.
- Established on 01/04/2023.
- July 2021 Government announced creation of 2 new unitary local authorities in Cumbria.
- Followed 4 separate submissions and public consultation.
- Previous 2 tier arrangements – Cumbria County Council and 6 district councils.
- Westmorland & Furness Council covers the former Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland district areas.
- Disaggregate Cumbria County Council and amalgamate with 3 district councils.
- 3rd largest council by land size in England.
- England's most sparsely populated local authority area.
- 225,000 population; 117,000 households and 11,800 businesses.
- Approximately 18 million visitors per year.

Context

- The Council is committed to becoming carbon net zero and this commitment is reiterated in the organisation's Council Plan, Council Plan Delivery Framework, Climate Action Plan, Carbon Management Strategy and Electric Vehicle Strategy.
- Local Government Reorganisation and the establishment of Westmorland & Furness Council as a unitary local authority created an opportunity to review the organisation's fleet of vehicles.
- The UK Government has confirmed the 2030 phase out date for new diesel and petrol cars, with hybrid cars and internal combustion engine vans to be sold until 2035.
- All new cars, vans and Heavy Goods Vehicles up to 26 tonnes sold in the UK must be zero emission vehicles by 2035 with a target of 80% of new cars and 70% of new vans being zero emission vehicles by 2030.

Strategy scope

- To ensure that the Council can meet its environmental targets and is prepared for the transition to zero emission vehicles, Westmorland & Furness Council commissioned Cenex, an independent, not-for-profit consultancy, to undertake a comprehensive review of the fleet and potential decarbonisation options.
- To develop a robust and evidence-based Fleet Decarbonisation & Replacement Strategy.
- Produce an accurate and up-to-date fleet asset list that each service area can use as a single source of information about their vehicles, depots and operations.
- Determine the current greenhouse gas emissions baseline of the Council's operational vehicle fleet against which fleet decarbonisation progress can be measured.
- Engage with key stakeholders to better understand their specific requirements and to inform the development of the Fleet Decarbonisation & Replacement Strategy.

Strategy scope

- Evaluate the technical feasibility of using battery electric vehicles, hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles and renewable fuels for the Westmorland & Furness Council fleet.
- Determine what infrastructure would be required to introduce zero emission vehicles and renewable fuels into the Westmorland & Furness Council fleet over the next five to ten years (2025-2035).
- Determine the capital and revenue cost implications of introducing zero emission vehicles and renewable fuels into the Westmorland & Furness Council fleet over the next five years (2025-2030).
- Develop a detailed Fleet Transition Action Plan outlining key milestones, roles and responsibilities, and potential delivery risks and mitigation strategies.

Strategy scope

- The score was to produce the following reports and deliverables:
  - Fleet Decarbonisation & Replacement Strategy 2025-2035.
  - Introduction to Zero Emission Vehicles and Renewable Fuels Report.
  - Introduction to Fleet and Infrastructure Review Methodology Report.
  - Fleet Baselining Report.
  - Stakeholder Engagement Report.
  - Options Review.
  - Stakeholder Workshop 1.
  - Stakeholder Workshop 2.
  - Request for quotes tender exercise.
  - Clarification questions.
  - 40% quality and 60% price evaluation.
  - Consultants appointed and contract signed.

Strategy development

- Project Sponsor – Assistant Director – Corporate Assets, Fleet & Capital Programme.
- Senior Responsible Officer - Senior Manager – Fleet Services.
- Highly mixed and ageing fleet of around 390 vehicles.
- Average age 7 years.
- 29% of fleet 10 years old or more.
- Acquired from 4 legacy councils.
- 9 Operating Centres on Operator's Licence.
- Many other deployment bases.
- Standard cars and vans, coaches, minibuses, gritters, tipper trucks, sweepers and refuse collection vehicles.
- Owned, leased and hired.
- Standard fuel types – petrol and diesel.
- Small number of electric vehicles.
- Baseline of fleet – vehicle categories, locations, directorates/teams, mileages, fuel consumptions, emissions, utilisation.

Strategy development

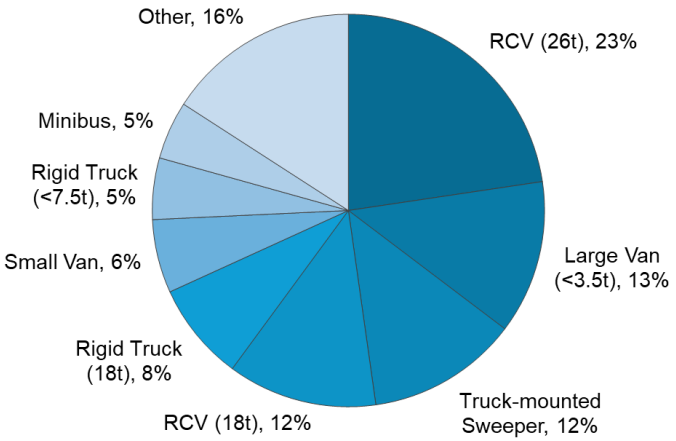
- In-house Fleet Services Team – 48 staff.
- Fleet Management Team.
- Fleet Compliance and Training Team.
- Fleet Maintenance Team.
- 5 workshops.
- Formal monthly meetings with main internal teams.
- Highways Delivery Team, Waste & Environmental Services Team and Children's Transport Operational Team.
- 2 in-person stakeholder workshops led by Cenex and Senior Manager – Fleet Services.
- Attendance by representatives of above teams plus Library Services and Community Equipment Service.
- Attended by enabling colleagues including Capital Programme Team, Climate and Nature Team, Communications Team, Corporate Assets Team and Electric Vehicles Infrastructure Team.
- Individual sessions with some internal teams.

Strategy development

- Workshop 1 – 04/11/2024 – introduce project, present results of fleet baselining study and better understand specific requirements of each service area.
- Workshop 2 – 20/01/2025 – present key findings from development of Strategy, obtain feedback on specific recommendations and start to put Strategy into action with input from stakeholders and develop immediate next steps.
- Regular dialogue with Service Managers, Lead Members, Portfolio Holders and Corporate Management Team.
- Briefing to All Members.
- Briefing to Cabinet Members ahead of final decision.

Strategy development

- The fleet of around 390 vehicles produces the same greenhouse gas emissions as approximately 1,400 cars.
- 84% of the fleet emissions come from specialist Heavy Goods Vehicles and Light Commercial Vehicles.



Options appraisal

- Battery Electric Vehicles and Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil are the only options available to Westmorland & Furness Council that can be deployed at scale over the next fleet replacement cycle.
- Hydrogen vehicles are not a viable option for most fleets. This is because there are limited vehicles that are commercially available (two cars and two vans), and the UK does not have a public network of hydrogen refuelling stations. The costs are also prohibitively expensive.
- Compressed natural gas vehicles using biomethane are not a viable option for most local authority fleets. This is because there are limited specialist Heavy Goods Vehicles available and the business case for councils only works when using public gas stations, of which there are none in the Council area.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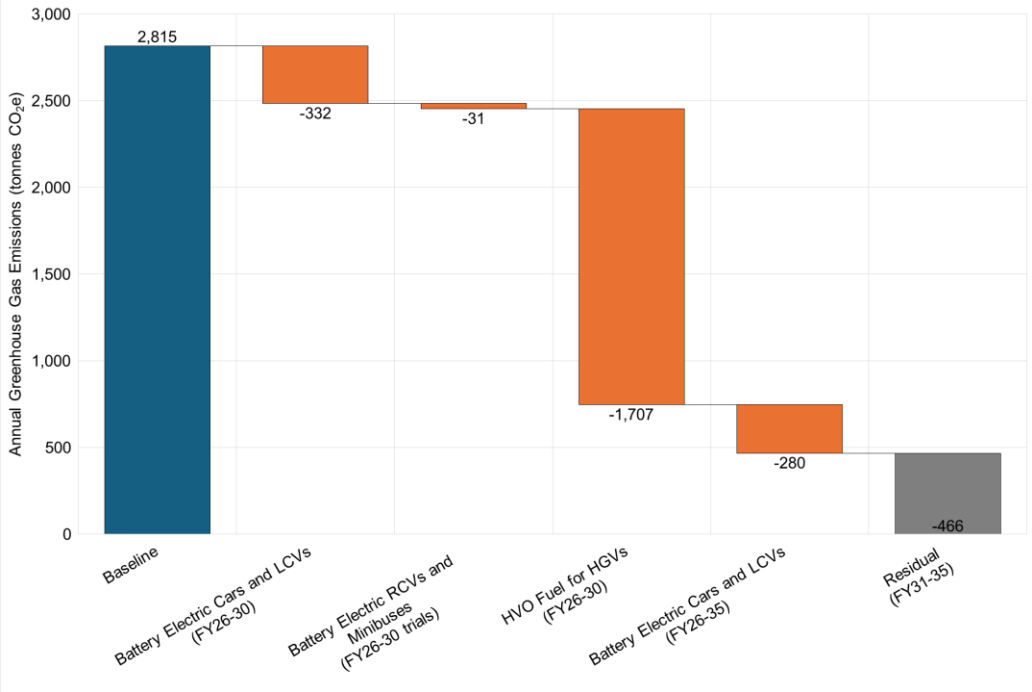
Fleet Emissions Reduction Pathway

- 13% reduction in emissions by introducing the first 90 electric cars and Light Commercial Vehicles, as well as two electric Refuse Collection Vehicles and two electric minibuses.
- 61% reduction in emissions by transitioning all remaining Heavy Goods Vehicles and minibuses to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel as an interim solution instead of using fossil diesel.



- Eventually the entire fleet needs be transitioned to zero emission vehicles using renewable electricity, either to directly power battery electric vehicles or to produce green hydrogen to power fuel cell electric vehicles.

Priority actions

- The Strategy proposes 21 priority areas with the following highlighted actions.
- Westmorland & Furness Council should adopt an Electric Vehicle first approach for cars and Light Commercial Vehicles where practical and cost effective to do so.
- Westmorland & Furness Council should complete trials of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil at Skirsgill Depot, Penrith then consider using HVO as an interim solution for the highest emitting Heavy Goods Vehicles.
- Westmorland & Furness Council should purchase a limited number of battery electric waste and recycling vehicles and minibuses to trial them on a representative selection of rounds and routes to better understand their operational capabilities and infrastructure needs to inform long term planning across the wider fleet.
- 15 Risks and Mitigations Strategies.

Capital Funding Implications

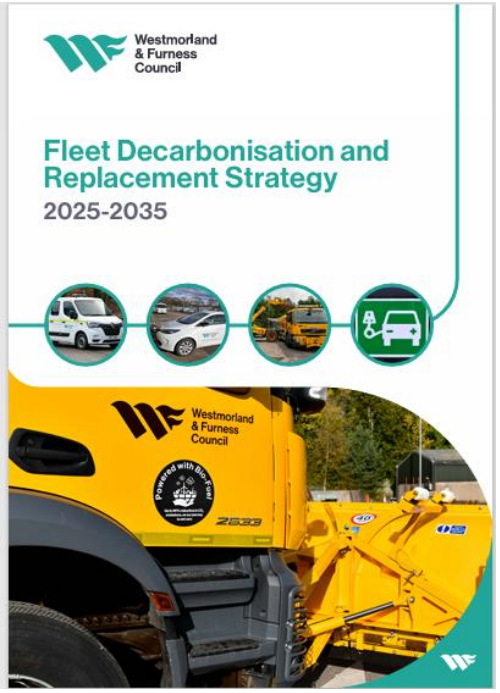
- Scenario A – replacing the entire fleet with diesel and petrol vehicles - £24.100m in capital expenditure - £3.443m a year over the next 7 years.
- Scenario B – introducing 90 battery electric cars and vans, 4 battery electric Heavy Goods Vehicles, and switching to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil for the remaining HGVs - £26.160m in capital expenditure - £3.737m a year over the next 7 years. This was the recommended option.
- Scenario C – transitioning the entire fleet to zero emission vehicles - £45.000m in capital expenditure - £6.429m a year over the next 7 years.

Strategy approval and implementation

- Council's Cabinet – 14/10/2025.
- Covering report and appendices.
- Approved the Westmorland & Furness Council Fleet Decarbonisation and Replacement Strategy 2025-2035.
- Noted that to support the delivery of the Strategy recommendation additional capital and revenue funding would need to be approved by Full Council on 26/02/2026 which was subsequently endorsed . This will form part of the strategic planning process and be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026-2031.

Strategy approval and implementation

- Communications – staff magazine and weekly e-mail newsletter, resident's magazine, website, news release and social media messages.
- Results Dashboard to inform replacement programme.
- Proactive and reactive approach.
- Develop vehicle specification with service managers.
- Service managers – operational needs requirements.
- Fleet Services Team – technical vehicle input.
- Some leasing or hiring arrangements.
- Capital Delivery Group application process
- Robust governance.
- Progress reporting via Decarbonisation Review Group.
- Regular updates to Lead Members.
- Use telematics system to report on actions.
- Sharing resources and expertise between teams.
- Policies, plans and strategies | Westmorland and Furness Council



Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

- Electric Vehicles Infrastructure Team input.
- Tender for infrastructure installer – estate, car parks and on-street.
- Policies for charging processes and tariffs.
- Charging infrastructure is essential to transition fleet vehicles from petrol and diesel to electric alternatives.
- The EV charging infrastructure is deployed in phases across 7 depot sites based on grid capacity, site readiness, and fleet replacement priorities.

Active vs Passive Infrastructure

- Active infrastructure includes operational chargepoints, while passive infrastructure (with pre-installed connections) prepares sites for future expansions with minimal disruption. A total of 97 chargepoints are planned for deployment.

Charger Types and Use Cases

- 7–22kW chargers suit overnight recharging for most vehicles; higher-powered 50kW+ chargers offer operational flexibility.

Fleet Usage Modelling

- Modelling fleet patterns like arrival, departure, and mileage helps schedule charging to reduce peak electricity demand.

Electric Vehicle chargepoint infrastructure

Grid Demand and Cost Efficiency

- Charging rates are modulated based on vehicle needs, site capacity, and constraints to manage energy demand efficiently.
- Smart charging reduces grid upgrades and ensures charging infrastructure can be provided at lower cost whilst still meeting operational requirements

Capital Investment and Coverage

- The programme's budget covers chargepoint installation, electrical works, and infrastructure across sites.
- Government grants like the Depot Charging Scheme may help offset capital costs and speed up deployment.

Operational Costs and Management

- Operational costs are managed through Radio Frequency Identification based internal recharging, promoting transparency and efficient usage.

Key Performance Indicators

- Strict KPIs will be in place to ensure rapid response to faults, and that users can have a high degree in confidence that chargepoints will be operational.
- Tender evaluation week commencing 15/06/2026.
- Contract in place by late Summer 2026.
- Workshop improvements and staff training.

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil

- Up to 90% reduction in Carbon Dioxide emissions compared to regular diesel.
- 6 months' trial at main operational depot.
- Tank and fuel management system funded from decarbonisation budget.
- Used in larger fleet vehicles – Fleet Services Team, Highways Delivery Team, Children's Transport Operational Team and Care Services Team.
- Windermere Ferry.
- Permission to use in some hired and leased vehicles.
- Promotional livery on vehicles and tanks.
- Safe and fuel-efficient driver training delivered by Fleet Compliance and Training Team.
- Mitigate increased cost of HVO.
- Plans to install HVO tanks at 5 other depots.
- Expand range of fleet using HVO including refuse collection vehicles.
- Reduce use of fuel cards.
- Increase fuelling options for colleagues at depots.
- Procurement of training truck.

Vehicle Leasing Salary Sacrifice Scheme

- Launched 01/09/2025.
- Reduce emissions from staff travel inside and outside work.
- Make lower emission vehicles more affordable.
- Support Council's climate change aspirations.
- Attracting and retaining staff.
- 4 year contract with NHS Fleet Solutions procured via Crown Commercial Service framework.
- Lease vehicle – monthly payments over 2 or 3 years.
- Scheme includes provision of vehicle, insurance for up to 5 drivers, routine servicing, tyre replacement, road tax, breakdown cover, windscreen cover and home charging unit to keep at end of lease.
- Employee – savings on income tax, National Insurance and pension.
- Employer – savings in pension and National insurance contributions.
- Promoted internally in staff magazine, intranet, e-mail messages, posters, leaflets and staff events including roadshows plus Conference and Expo.
- Promoted externally in recruitment campaigns including website and social media.
- Highlight all considerations to be made.
- 77 vehicles ordered at 08/06/2026 – 54 fully electric and 21 electric hybrid.

Other initiatives and challenges

- Local Government Reorganisation workstreams.
- Appointment of Technical Lead.
- Monthly, minuted meetings with legacy council officers.
- Applying for 2 new Operator's Licences and MOT Test Centre Accreditation.
- Allocating legacy Cumbria County Council fleet and staff.
- New governance arrangements for Cumbria Fire & Rescue Services and establishing Service Level Agreement.
- Shared roles.
- Standardising working practices and policies.
- Harmonising the waste and recycling service.
- Implemented new fleet management system.
- Standardising vehicle telematics to report on Strategy.
- New fleet of pool cars and booking portal.
- APSE Energy Awards 2026.
- Winner of Clean Energy – Heat award.
- Shortlisted for Decarbonising Transport award.

Contact details

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Thank you
Any questions?