Mayor of London logo

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Environmental impacts of data centres in London



Key information

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Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

This investigation aims to assess the environmental risks and impact of data centre growth to Londoners. Specifically, it will aim to:

- Hear from Londoners, experts and operators about their experiences and concerns around the environmental impacts of data centres.
- Explore how significant the risk is to London's environment from current data centres, and those planned in the future, and the impact they may have on London’s climate targets
- Scrutinise how effective the Mayor’s plans are likely to be at addressing environmental concerns.

Key issues

- Data centres house, connect and operate computer systems, such as servers, for data storage, processing or distribution. They are crucial to cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI). Data centres in the UK currently consume around 2.5 per cent of the

country’s electricity, with this expected to grow four-fold by 2030.

- There are currently 99 data centres in London, with around 26 more in different stages of planning. Around 80 per cent of data centres in London are ‘co-location’ datacentres5– which may use 5-50MW (or even higher) - and tend to be located near areas where they are needed, to minimise latency (delays transferring data).
- Concerns about the environmental impacts of data centres have become more prominent in recent years, particularly in relation to energy and water use, pressure on grid capacity, heat generation, noise, and air quality impacts associated with backup power systems.
- In 2026, the GLA published the Draft London Plan for consultation. The Plan includes a stand-alone data centre policy (policy GLE3) for the first time. The Mayor has also set “an ambition for London to be a global leader in Green Data Centre Innovation”. The London Plan will set the policy framework for local planning authorities in London to follow.

Key questions

1. What are Londoners’ experiences and key environmental concerns?
2. How much is known about the environmental impacts of current and planned data centres in London, is the information publicly available, and how will these impacts affect London’s climate targets?
3. How effective are the Mayor’s plans likely to be at addressing the environmental concerns around data centres in London?
4. What insights are there from comparable cities around managing these impacts?

Call for Evidence

The Committee has launched a and would like to invite organisations or individuals with relevant experience or expertise to provide evidence to inform the work of the Committee and influence its recommendations to the Mayor. The Committee is particularly interested in hearing from residents who live near or next to data centres in London.

Written submissions should be sent to scrutiny@london.gov.uk with ‘Environment Committee environmental impacts of datacentres in London call for evidence’ as the subject line by Tuesday 22nd December 2026 if possible. Please get in touch if this is not possible, and you would like the Committee to consider an extension.

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