Call for evidence: Environmental Impacts of Data Centres in London November 2026

The London Assembly Environment Committee has launched an investigation into the environmental impacts of data centres in London.

Background

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). [1] Data centres in the UK currently consume around 2.5 per cent of the country's electricity,[2] with this expected to grow four-fold by 2030.[3]

There are currently 99 data centres in London, with around 26 more in different stages of planning.[4]

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 June 2026, the Mayor of London stated "an ambition for London to be global leader in Green Data Centre Innovation"[5] and in July the GLA published the Draft London Plan, which includes for the first time a standalone policy GLE3 on datacentres.[6]

How to respond

The Committee 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.
We are particularly interested in hearing from residents who live near or next to data centres in London. You may wish to focus on the following questions:

Local resident experience:

1. What are your experiences of the environmental impacts of existing data centres in your area of London, specifically those relating to:
    a. Air quality
    b. Noise pollution
    c. Energy and water demands
    d. Local biodiversity
    e. Wider issues
2. How have data centre operators engaged with local communities around concerns about the potential environmental impacts of data centres?
3. Which communities in London might be at the greatest risk from the environmental impacts of data centre growth?

[1] UK Parliament POST What are data centres and how sustainable are they? POST note 762 16 March 2026
[2] House of Lords, Internet Activity: Energy Use debate, 27 January 2025
[3] NESO Our Clean Power Advice to Government, p2
[4] Buro Happold for GLA, London's Data Centre Future Growth Forecasts and Strategic Insights December 2025
[5] GLA, Mayor sets ambition for London to be global leader in Green Data Centre Innovation and pledges coordinated action to seize huge opportunities, 10 June 2026
[6] GLA, Draft London Plan, 16 July 2026

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4. For planned and/or potential future datacentres, do you feel you have/had sufficient information? What more would you like to have known?

Industry/experts:

5. What are the most significant environmental risks from data centres in London?
    a. How do the different types of data centre currently operating in (or planned for) London affect this?
6. How effective are the Mayor's plans likely to be at addressing the environmental concerns around data centres in London?
    a. To what extent do the GLA's policies and approaches to managing data centres already factor in sustainability?
    b. Are there opportunities for the GLA to do more to address the environmental impacts of data centres?
7. What can be done to address the resource (e.g. energy, water) demands of data centres in London?
8. Are London's data centres currently delivering any environmental benefits?
    a. Are there examples of good practice from data centres (in London or other contexts) that have successfully mitigated environmental impacts, or put in place effective standards?
    b. How are data centres delivering biodiversity improvements – such as through Biodiversity Net Gain and/or Urban Greening Factor requirements?
9. What existing and emerging technologies can be used to minimise the environmental impacts of data centres?
    a. What is needed to increase the use of waste heat from existing and future data centres?

The London Assembly is committed to hearing from a diverse range of voices which reflect the rich diversity of the city.

Please answer only those that are most relevant to you - you do not need to answer all questions. 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. We would welcome responses **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.

What we will do with the responses

The results will be used to inform the London Assembly Environment Committee's investigation. Responses may be used to form part of a report or output from the Committee.

In the large majority of circumstances, we will publish written submissions and the name of the individual or organisation that submitted it online. This is so that there is transparency about what evidence the Committee has received. Exceptions to this are usually applied where there is a legal reason for non-publication or if there is a safeguarding or welfare issue. If there is a reason that you would like your evidence not to be published with your name (submitted anonymously) or to not be published (submitted confidentially), please let us know and

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the Committee will consider it. However, this cannot be guaranteed, and the Assembly may be required to release non-personally identifiable information if requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Email submissions	scrutiny@london.gov.uk Please use 'Environment Committee environmental impacts of datacentres in London call for evidence' as subject line by **Tuesday 22nd December 2026**
Further information	Moonisah Iqbal, Policy Adviser, Moonisah.Iqbal@london.gov.uk
Media enquiries	Daniel Zikmund, External Communications Officer, Daniel.Zikmund@london.gov.uk

About the Environment Committee

The London Assembly consists of 25 elected London Assembly Members, who publicly examine the policies and programmes of the Mayor of London and associated bodies.

The Environment Committee examines and reports on matters relating to the environment and energy in London and leads on scrutiny of the Mayor's Environment Strategy. The members of the committee are:

- Gareth Roberts (Chair)
- Léonie Cooper (Deputy Chair)
- Thomas Turrell
- Andrew Boff
- Joanne McCartney
- Krupesh Hirani
- Keith Prince
- Zack Polanski