

Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability Strategy 2024-27

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Collect, collate, and publish sustainability data to ensure accurate, valuable reporting

Engagement & Influence

We will:

- Promote sustainable practices both at work and at home
- Promote accessible information resources for all colleagues
- Support relevant national and international campaigns and initiatives



Positively influence and engage with colleagues

Reporting & Governance

We will:

- Measure and track our carbon emissions
- Report to internal and external stakeholders
- Maintain our environmental management system
- Maintain our Climate Change Adaptation Risk Assessment

Continuous improvement

We will:

- Identify sustainability improvement opportunities and provide a system for progression
- Monitor the environmental performance of our assets
- Build in sustainability considerations to decision making across all business processes



Maximise opportunities to reduce environmental impact across all operational activities

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Introduction

Who we are

1. The Ombudsman's powers and duties come (predominantly) from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002. We live our vision of putting people and learning at the heart of what we do. We aim to achieve the best outcomes for people, and we make a positive impact through our values.



2. This drives our activities and annual business plans. For details, please go to our website: [We are Scotland's Ombudsman | SPSO](#).

Our location

3. SPSO is based in a leased office premises in Edinburgh, at Bridgeside House. We share the building with other Scottish Parliament office-holders and a commercial tenant. We share a common vision to reduce our impact on the environment and achieve net zero.

Aims

4. The Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability Strategy aims to strengthen and drive forward our environmental performance; ensuring we have a sustainable

path for both for the SPSO and the fellow tenants of Bridgeside House. The aims of our strategy include:

- 4.1. meeting our climate change duties for reporting and governance;
- 4.2. responding to climate change and continually improving our impact on the environment by reducing our carbon emissions to achieve net zero; and
- 4.3. promoting sustainability and embedding climate change action into our organisational culture.

Background: climate change and its impact

5. Climate change is defined as 'a change in the state of the climate over time as a result of human activity' (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2011). The impact of climate change from greenhouse gases represents a significant worldwide threat. According to the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), it is 'the greatest environmental challenge the world has ever faced'.
6. The warming of our climate is evident in increasing global temperatures, rising sea levels, intense weather events, and the subsequent impact on human, freshwater, food, energy, animals, and land use. In Scotland, we are experiencing these climate impacts with changes in temperatures with milder winters, warmer summers, increasing rainfall and greater flooding which causes damage to property and disrupts transport networks.
7. The largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions is carbon dioxide (CO₂) which is emitted when fossil fuels are burned to meet energy demands. With the rising cost of finite resources and tighter regulations on reducing greenhouse gases, there is increasing pressure for organisations to tackle their own impact on the environment.

Public sector legislation and policy drivers

International Context

8. At the United Nations Climate Conference (COP21) held in Paris in December 2015, 195 countries, including the UK, signed up to the world's first legally binding global climate deal. The agreement set out a global action plan to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Under the Paris Agreement, each country must determine, plan and regularly report on their contribution to mitigate global warming and reduce carbon emissions.

Sustainable Development Goals

9. In 2015, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) were setup by the United Nations General Assembly and intended to be achieved by 2030. They are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to 'achieve a better and more sustainable future

for all'. They address several barriers to sustainable development including inequality, poverty, climate change and environmental degradation.

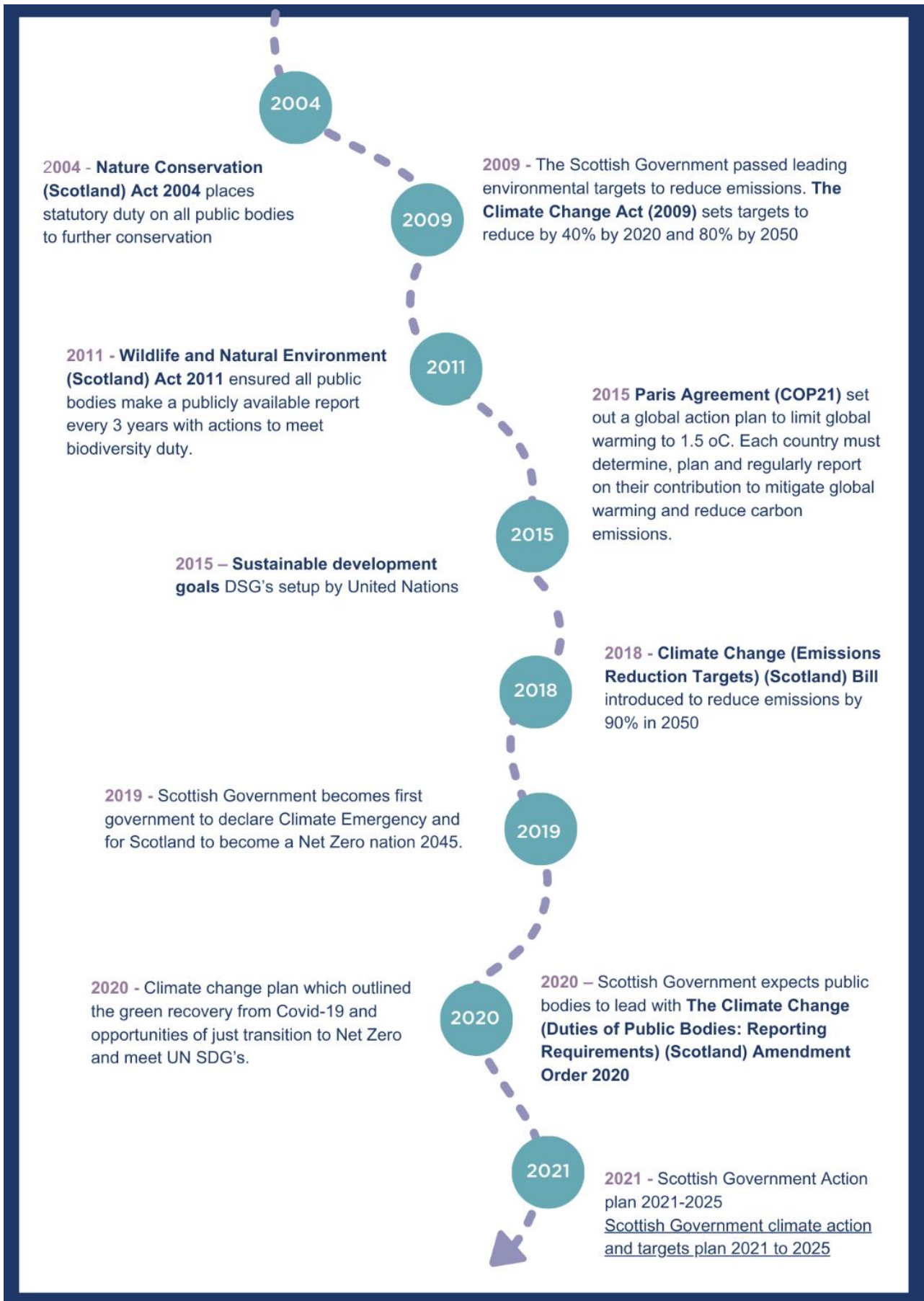
10. Each of the goals have targets and indicators used to measure progress in which UN member states are to use in setting their agendas.

The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals



National context: World leading climate change legislation and targets

11. The Scottish Government has shown a strong commitment to tackling climate change setting an example for others to follow. Below is a timeline of legislation which has shaped climate change actions over the past 20 years and influenced SPSO.

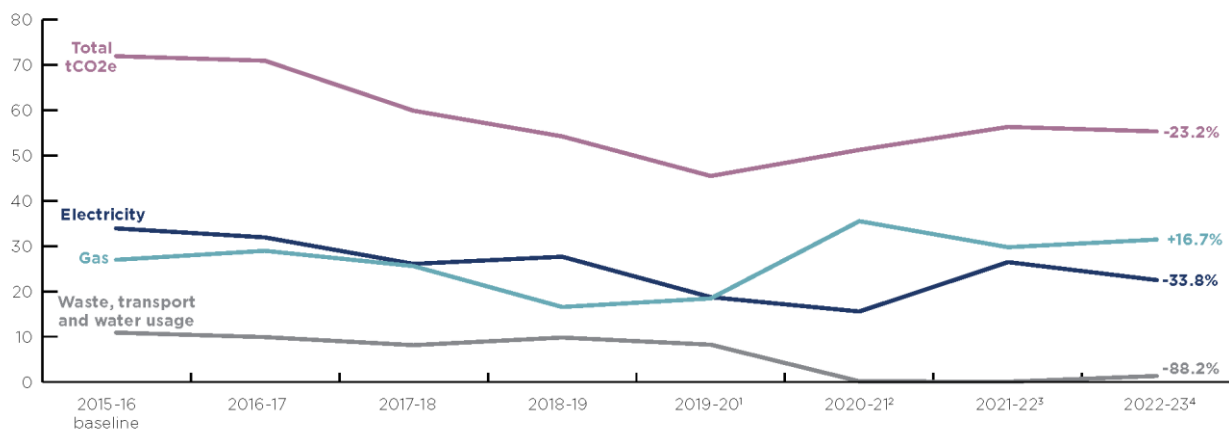


12. The evidence is clear, to avoid the worst climate impacts and limit global warming to below two degrees, global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions need to drop by half by 2030 and reach net zero by 2045.
13. Net zero refers to achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions removed from the atmosphere. Therefore, there must be an action plan in place to remove the same levels of emissions from the atmosphere as produced.

Climate change targets: SPSO our progress so far

14. SPSO has been measuring its office carbon emissions since 2009 and have made significant progress in reducing our emissions, with a 35 percent reduction in our carbon footprint from our baseline (85.3 tCO₂e in 2015/16). This has been achieved through the implementation of sustainable projects and initiatives, and by encouraging behavioural change. We have focussed our efforts on reducing our carbon footprint in the following areas

- 14.1. waste disposal, water and recycling of materials;
- 14.2. work-related travel, and
- 14.3. energy use of buildings and equipment.



1 SPSO plus CYPCCS and SHRC (shared accommodation in BH)
 2 SPSO plus CYPCCS and SHRC (shared accommodation in BH)
 3 SPSO plus CYPCCS, SBC and SHRC (shared accommodation in BH)
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Green recovery: hybrid working

15. The coronavirus pandemic led to changes in the way SPSO operates. The office has adopted a hybrid working approach, with staff supported by new digital platforms, leading to a paper-lite or paper-free working style. The switch to hybrid working also provides an opportunity to reduce the emissions associated with commuting, building occupancy, and business travel.

16. With the introduction of hybrid working, comes less requirement for office space, so we are actively exploring sharing our building with other organisations to make the most efficient use of the space.
17. Further details of actions and activities that have led to these reductions are in our Environment, Sustainability and Biodiversity Reports and our Climate Change Duties reports on our website: <https://www.spsso.org.uk/sustainability-reports>.

Building on success: working towards our net zero ambition

SPSO net zero target

18. SPSO are committed to continuing to reduce our carbon footprint and environmental impact across our operations in line with Scotland's long term 2045 net zero emissions target. SPSO wants to show leadership in this area and is working towards meeting net zero emissions by 2030. This target date is based on continued downward projections, but we recognise this will be difficult to maintain without the new and emerging technology to support organisations to reach net zero without offsetting emissions.

Engagement and influence

19. Working with our landlord and our funding body, the Scottish Parliament, we will explore alternative energy options to help decarbonise. We will also continue to positively influence and engage with staff to embed a net zero focus across everything we do, while collaborating with local organisations and other public bodies to identify and share best practice and current information.

Reporting and governance

20. We will collect, collate and publish sustainability data to ensure accurate, valuable reporting. SPSO will use monitoring and analysis to better understand emissions and identify opportunities for improvement.

Continuous improvement

21. We have made strong progress but there is still more to do to meet our 2030 ambitions. SPSO will use Resource Efficient Scotland's Climate Change Assessment Tool (CCAT) to assess our response to climate change and consider future actions for continual improvement. This will be carried out against a backdrop of growing challenges including changes to public sector funding, and rising energy, living and inflation costs. Our focus will be on the following key areas:
 - 21.1. reducing energy consumption;
 - 21.2. reducing waste;
 - 21.3. digital and ICT development;

- 21.4. sustainable procurement; and
- 21.5. sustainable travel.

Net zero pathway

22. Looking forward, we can see that achieving further reductions in our emissions will be a challenging task. The SPSO staffing levels have increased by 50 percent since the 2015-16 baseline figures. Additionally, we have increased our reporting boundary to include a further four organisations since moving to Bridgeside House in 2018. SPSO is the leaseholder.

		2015/16	2022/23	2026/27	2029/30
1	Gas	29	32	30	28
2	Electric	32	22	20	19
3	Travel	9.6	1	1	1
4	Waste	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
5	Water	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1
	Total	71	55	51.3	48.2

23. For the period of this plan, our target is to reduce emissions by 27 percent compared to 2015/16 levels. The following assumptions have been made.

- 23.1. A 2 percent annual reduction in emissions. Further reductions minimal without landlord participation in heating modifications for the whole building.
- 23.2. A 2 percent annual reduction in emissions, through exploring technological power saving interventions.
- 23.3. Further reductions unlikely.
- 23.4. Minimal scope to reduce waste emission.
- 23.5. Minimal scope to reduce water emission.

24. The interim target reflects our commitment to do everything we can to reduce our emissions through the actions outlined in our CCAT assessment. To continue our journey towards net zero beyond this target will require investigating the opportunity for off-setting activities in the medium-term against the uncertainty around Scottish Government expectations for these activities.

Delivering the strategy

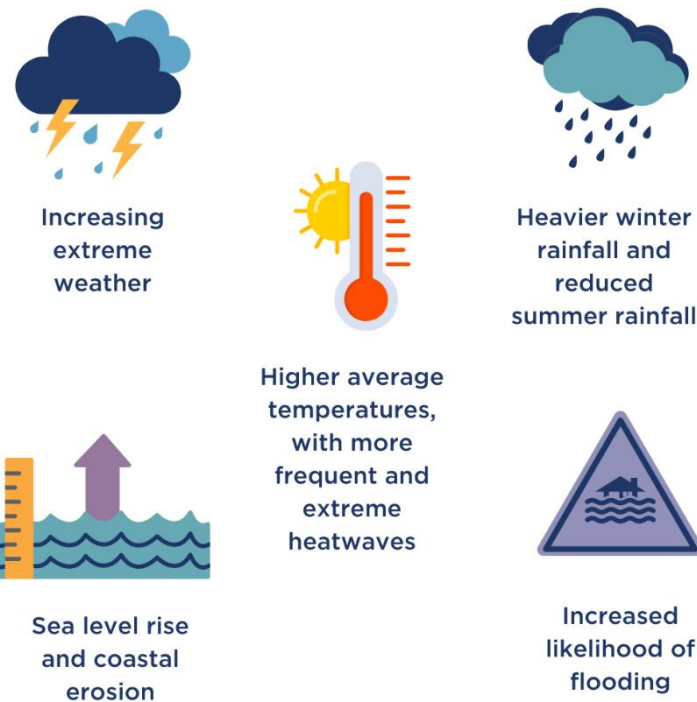
25. The Leadership Team (LT) is responsible for the strategic direction and implementation of this strategy, with advice and recommendations from the Climate Change and Green Group (CCGG). The CCGG is SPSO's environmental working group which is chaired by the Building Coordinator. The primary aim of the group is to present and recommend actions to the LT and drive the strategy and action plans. The group includes staff from teams across SPSO and other Bridgeside House office-holders. The group run campaigns to raise awareness on numerous climate change issues, help reduce emissions and contribute ideas for future project work.
26. Quarterly review of progress on our actions from our CCAT assessment will ensure continuous improvement toward our environmental and sustainable goals.
27. We will continue to monitor and report our progress on our objectives through our Climate Change Duties report and through measuring our progress on actions identified through the CCAT assessment, which are embedded in our annual business plan. The Climate Change Duties report is submitted annually to the Scottish Government and internally audited every three years. Progress on our annual Business Plan is reviewed by the leadership team on a quarterly basis.

Looking ahead

28. To date, SPSO have significantly reduced carbon emissions since 2015—16, mostly through adaptations to the physical office environment and updating ICT applications and processes to work digitally. We will continue to identify further ways to reduce our carbon emissions through the implementation of actions generated from the CCAT. There will be the continued promotion of environmentally friendly behaviours to further embed awareness of environmental issues and emission reduction with staff. SPSO will continue to adapt to climate change while considering our wider social impact and sustainability.

Annex: adapting to climate change

1. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires that action is taken in relation to both adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development and an organisation's wider influence in relation to climate change already happening and consider how to limit the impact of this.
 - 1.1. increased temperatures and extreme weather events;
 - 1.2. increased rainfall and flooding, and
 - 1.3. higher winds and storms.



Adaptation

2. Scotland is already seeing massive disruptions and experiencing the effects caused by the changing climate. Climate projections indicate these trends will not only continue but intensify in the future and continue to cause disruption to our lives. Therefore, adapting and building resilience to these impacts is necessary, alongside our actions to reduce emissions. Adaptation measures can both be reactive; responding to disruptions already here, and proactive; responding to anticipated disruptions. No matter how strongly we mitigate emissions, adaptive practices will have to be implemented, therefore appropriate adaptation needs to be proactive as well as reactive.
3. In 2022 the SPSO added climate change risk to our risk register. This measures the impact climate change has on the organisation, office, hybrid working and travel, with

a focus on how SPSO adapts to be resilient and flexible to climate change. The Adaptation Risk Assessment can be seen here: [Climate Change Adaptation Risk Assessment](#).

Mitigation

4. Mitigation refers to the actions we take to reduce the effects of the climate change and its impact on the organisation. This typically means reducing or eliminating our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The mitigations have a large reliance on staff engagement and individual efforts to help make the changes and reach the emission reduction targets. We will also work with our partners and fellow office holders to influence change in energy reduction and increase efficiency in our work and this is followed through by our action plans.

Sustainability

5. Sustainability is not a standalone concept but something to be weaved into the process of our practices and processes. There are several immediate steps we have taken, such as increasing what we recycle and ensuring nothing goes to landfill, however, the most effective is for waste not to arise in the first place. A truly sustainable organisation will be contributing to the circular economy; where resources are reused and waste minimised. This is why adopting sustainable practices in our procurement, business plans and waste management is important for our long-term benefits; reputationally and environmentally. We will continue to analyse our Sustainability with the Government Flexible Framework assessment tool, measuring and monitoring to improve our level of sustainability. We will also focus our sustainable procurement action against the sustainable prioritisation assessment tool.

Wider Influence

6. SPSO understands that meaningful change depends on people and is committed to continuing to improve staff awareness, involve everyone to collectively meet our climate targets, and work together towards a greener and more sustainable future, both within the organisation, across the shared building and at home. We are actively involved in the Scottish Government annual week long awareness campaign Scotland's Climate Week.

[Climate Week | Net Zero Nation](#)