

NHS WESTERN ISLES

CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

2021/22

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	2
Leadership and governance	3
Greenhouse gas emissions	4
National Sustainability Assessment (NSAT)	5
Climate Change Adaptation	5
Building Energy	6
Sustainable Care	7
Anaesthesia and surgery	7
Respiratory medicine	8
Travel and Transport	9
Greenspace and Biodiversity	13
Sustainable Procurement, Circular Economy and Waste	14
Environmental Stewardship	16
Sustainable Construction	16
Sustainable Communities	17
Conclusion	18

NHS Western Isles Annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report 2021/22

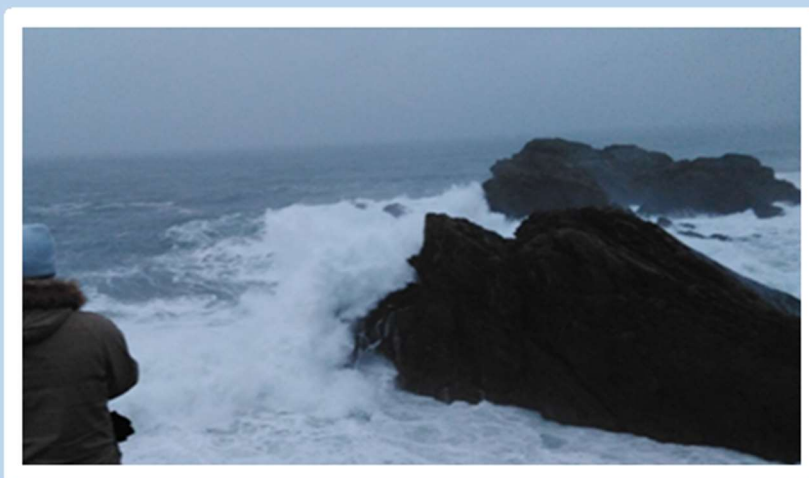
Introduction

This is NHS Western Isles' first annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report.

The planet is facing a triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution as a result of human activities breaking the planet's environmental limits.

The World Health Organisation recognises that climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. Health organisations have a duty to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, the cause of climate change, and influence wider society to take the action needed to both limit climate change and adapt to its impacts. More information on the profound and growing threat of climate change to health can be found here: www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health

The Western Isles Health Board provides health care to the approximately 27,000 people who live in the Western Isles and employs 1010 people. It has three hospitals supported by a network of GP practices. They also utilise a number of additional premises: a mix of owned and rented buildings. Providing healthcare services in remote, island and rural settings has a number of unique barriers, such as: staff retention, ageing populations, transportation issues, greater inequalities, higher rates of poverty and more expensive fuel and food, with fewer options. In addition, islands like the Western Isles are more vulnerable to the impacts of the climate emergency, which could lead to problems such as: freshwater contamination by salt water, flooding, increased storm frequency and intensity, coastal erosion, ecosystem damage and higher density of disease carrying insects like ticks. These could lead to travel infrastructure disruption and impact food production and supply and the digital connectivity. The Health Board is committed to tackling the environmental issues which is also linked to improved population health and well-being.



Storms are predicted to increase in size and frequency

Leadership and governance

The Board Sustainability Champion is Julia Higginbottom and the Executive Lead is Dr Maggie Watts, Director of Public Health. The committee with lead responsibility for climate change and sustainability is the Sustainability Group, chaired by Dr Maggie Watts and with a membership covering executives and senior managers from all the relevant board divisions and the Integration Joint Board.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of the Sustainability Group was suspended, only recommencing late in 2021 with a review of the terms of reference and purpose. Its initial refocusing has been on direct carbon emissions, with verification of the current status and exploration of straightforward measures to reduce fuel consumption.

Dr Watts is also a member of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) and the Health Board is a lead partner in the Climate Change subgroup of the OHCPP. This group has been exploring the localised responses to the Climate Emergency, including consideration of the environmental issues relating to the specifics of the remote and rural nature of the islands.



Western Isles Hospital, Stornoway

Greenhouse gas emissions

NHS Western Isles aims to become a net-zero organisation by 2040 for the sources of greenhouse gas emissions set out in the table below. The table sets out the amount of greenhouse gas produced annually by NHS Western Isles.

Source	Description	Amount of greenhouse gas (tonnes of CO2 equivalent)			Percentage change since 2019/20
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2021/22
Building energy use	Greenhouse gases produced in providing electricity and energy heat for NHS buildings	3370	3861.5	3765.7	+11.7%
Non-medical F-gas use	Greenhouse gases used for things like refrigeration and air conditioning	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Medical gases	Greenhouse gases used in anaesthetics - nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), Entonox (which contains nitrous oxide), desflurane, sevoflurane and isoflurane	180 (Data only available for N ₂ O and Entonox. In 2018-19 all gases = 144)	112	211	+88.4% (from 2020/21)
Metered dose inhaler propellant	Greenhouse gases used as a propellant in inhalers used to treat asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD)	Data not available (2018-19 = 391)	398 *Primary Care only	422	+6.03% (from 2020/21)
NHS fleet use	Greenhouse gases produced by NHS vehicles	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Waste	The greenhouse gases produced by the disposal and treatment of waste produced by the NHS	Data not available	1.627 *Clinical waste only	1.183 *Clinical waste only	-27.3% (from 2020/21) *Clinical waste only
Water	The greenhouse gas produced from the use of water and the treatment of waste water	Data not available	26.8	5.6	-79.1% (from 2020/21)
Business travel	Greenhouse gases produced by staff travel for work purposes, not using NHS vehicles.	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Sub-Total		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Carbon sequestration	The amount of carbon dioxide captured per by woodland, trees, grassland and shrubs growing on NHS grounds.	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Greenhouse gas emissions minus carbon sequestration		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

It should be noted, that although some emissions have fluctuated over the last two or three years, prior to this we had been making significant reductions on our emissions until the COVID-19 pandemic halted, and reversed, some of our progress. For example, during the pandemic, some administrative buildings had to be heated every day and wards which had been closed and used for storage were re-opened to manage the patients with COVID-19 infections. We are now making gains again.

National Sustainability Assessment

NHS Scotland has developed a National Sustainability Assessment Tool (NSAT) which all Health Boards use on an annual basis to measure their progress across sixteen different areas of sustainability.

In 2021/22, NHS Western Isles scored 533 overall. Our three highest scoring areas were Ethics, Waste and Welfare. Our three areas with the most room for improvement were: Greenspace, Active Travel and Sustainable Care.

Climate Change Adaptation

The climate is changing due to the greenhouse gases already emitted into the atmosphere. While efforts to reduce the rate and scale of climate change continue, we must also adapt to new conditions we are facing.

The changing climate is increasing risks for health and health services. More information on these risks in the UK can be found in the UK Climate Change Committee's Health and Social Care Briefing available here: www.ukclimaterisk.org/independent-assessment-ccra3/briefings/

NHS Western Isles have completed and submitted their Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) and Adaptation Plan. This is a tool which allows the Board to identify and assess current and future risks, to prioritise and develop adaptation measures. We also submitted our first annual Climate Change Duties Report, which measures our greenhouse gas emissions, which aids us in prioritising areas of action and help manage them better.

NHS Western Isles is a member of the Outer Hebrides CPP Climate Change Group (OHCPP CCG) which was established in 2019. Membership includes the Local Authority, National Heritage, nature Scotland, Environment Protection Agency, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scottish Youth Parliament and many private, public and third sector bodies. The group remit is to improve understanding of the Climate Emergency to develop adaptation actions and plans for the benefit of the environment, community and economy. The OHCPP CCG published its Climate Rationale and Case for Action in October 2022 which presents an overview of the changing climate and its impacts, as well as the strategic



Uist and Barra Hospital, Balivanich

response to the challenges. There are a variety of initiatives already taking place or being planned, including rolling out training and awareness raising of the Climate rationale and Case for Action and community engagement in the Landscape Change project. They have established a Western Isles Climate Action Network (WICAN) and planned a series of events to deliver workshops, encourage discussion and guest speakers to talk on the topics.

Next year, we will continue our reporting commitments, working towards improving our performance in identified areas requiring action. Also, the OHCPP CCG will continue to develop their work and projects which address climate change and building resilience throughout the Western Isles.

Building Energy

We aim to use renewable heat sources for all of the buildings owned by NHS Western Isles by 2038. NHS Western Isles has 42 buildings including three main hospitals, GP clinics and administrative function buildings.

In 2021/22, NHS WI used 12,796,711 kWh / MWh of energy. This was a decrease of 0.63 % since the year before. During this time, in NHS Western Isles, none of the energy used was directly generated from renewable technologies. In 2021/22, 3771.3 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent were produced by NHS Western Isles' use of energy for buildings. This was a decrease of 3% since the year before.

NHS WI have commissioned Jacobs Engineering firm to provide a route map to net zero for the three buildings with the largest energy uses: Western Isles Hospital, Uist and Barra Hospital and the Health Board Offices. These buildings together account for 84% of buildings emissions. A baseline report has been generated and next year this will move to reviewing the options available to transition to net zero.

Other energy reducing initiatives that took place this year were the installation of new steam boilers with economisers and a new Building Management System. Also, new external doors were installed in Western Isles Hospital, and replacing fan motors and air handling units with more efficient units. We have also been installing LED lights across the estate and continue to support waste segregation and recycling of appropriate waste locally.



St Brendans Hospital, Barra

Sustainable Care

The way we provide care influences our environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions. NHS Scotland has three national priority areas for making care more sustainable – anaesthesia, surgery and respiratory medicine.

Anaesthesia and surgery

Greenhouse gases are used as anaesthetics and pain killers. These gases are nitrous oxide (laughing gas), Entonox (which contains nitrous oxide) and the “volatile gases” - desflurane, sevoflurane and isoflurane.

NHS Western Isles’ emissions from these gases are set out in the table below:

Anaesthetic gas use			
Source	2018/19 (baseline year) tCO ₂ e	2021/22 - tCO ₂ e	Percentage change since 2018/19
Volatile gases			
Desflurane	13.4	5.4	-59.7%
Isoflurane	0.2	0	-100.0%
Sevoflurane	3.4	3.4	0%
Volatile gas total	17	8.7	-48.82%
Nitrous oxide and Entonox			
Piped Nitrous oxide	59.0	127.8	+116.7%
Portable Nitrous oxide	4.0	14.1	+250.0%
Piped Entonox	0	0	0
Portable Entonox	63.9	60.4	-5.5%
Nitrous oxide and Entonox total	126.9	202.3	+59.1%
Anaesthetic gas total	143.9	211.1	+46.7%

With the resumption of, and additional, surgical and endoscopy sessions during 2021/22, our use of piped nitrous oxide rose. We have had early discussion around the Green Theatre principles and the use of desflurane has reduced, although not yet eliminated. We are looking to make progress during 2021-23. The use of nitrous oxide for dental sedation has ceased.

As a small Health Board with limited hospital facilities, including theatre and anaesthetic facilities, we do not consider it feasible to explore anaesthetic gas capture as it appears cost-prohibitive in terms of tight financial control. Our size also makes consideration of alternatives to Entonox/NO₂ challenging – the potential for us being Pentrox

(methoxyflurane) for analgesia or sedation but which has potential for renal failure and for interaction with sevoflurane (the suggested alternative to desflurane as an anaesthetic gas).

Theatres are striving to reduce their recyclable waste, particularly paper waste. The Green Theatre potential is being explored although it is noted that space within all of the NHS WI theatre areas is very limited and challenging to consider multiple bins.

Further consideration of measures to move more towards a Green Theatre model are being progressed.

Respiratory medicine

Greenhouse gases are used as a propellant in metered dose inhalers used to treat asthma and COPD. Most of the emissions from inhalers are from the use of reliever inhalers – Short Acting Beta Agonists (SABAs). By helping people to manage their condition more effectively, we can improve patient care and reduce emissions. There are also more environmentally friendly inhalers such as dry powder inhalers which can be used where clinically appropriate. We estimate that emissions from inhalers in the Western Isles were 422 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

Our primary care pharmacists review prescribing within General Practice and seek to encourage reduction of metered dose inhalers where alternatives exist. This is replicated in the Western Isles Hospital pharmacy where metered dose inhaler use is restricted and alternatives provided as appropriate.

The work of 2021-22 will continue in 2022-23 and we will support the national information programmes to change patient expectations.

We are introducing Electric Vehicles where appropriate and safe. We strive to reduce patient travel by repatriation of services where appropriate (e.g., diagnostics) and advocate for remote consultations (with connectivity available throughout the Western Isles).

The principles of Realistic Medicine support sustainability and our examples of remote consultations and patient support using digital means are in line with both Realistic Medicine and sustainability.

We have supported our primary care colleagues to maintain digital services for consultations, information sharing and remote access to GP surgeries. We have moved fully to the Vaccination Transformation Programme with economies of scale for community treatment and assessment clinics and vaccination clinics.

Travel and Transport

Domestic transport (not including international aviation and shipping) produced 24% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2020. Car travel is the type of travel which contributes the most to those emissions.

NHS Scotland is supporting a shift to a healthier and more sustainable transport system where active travel and public transport are prioritised.

For the population of the Western Isles, choosing Active Travel outside of the main towns is challenging due to issues such as: highly inclement weather, single track roads and an embedded culture of car use that is driven by these issues. As well as pursuing Active Travel initiatives we have also taken the approach of improving general activity levels and access to physical activity exercises. This encourages people to be more active which will lead to them being more willing to undertake Active Travel for leisure purposes, when appropriate. Active travel routes are also promoted. Some initiatives include:

- Walk leader training: building a network of walk leaders who initiate walking groups in their own areas and get people who were previously inactive moving again.
- Walk on Hebrides campaigns: promotion of health walks, in person throughout the whole islands and virtual campaigns.
- Providing a step-count challenge for the Outer Hebrides population.
- Move More: a collaborative service between NHS WI, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and MacMillan Cancer which offers virtual or in-person, one-to-one and group activities for people suffering from Long Term Conditions (including cancer), leading to personalised programmes which keep these groups active and in better health for longer.
- Promotion of the physical and mental benefits of being active.

To reduce the need to travel, NHS Western Isles implemented a Working From Home Policy, allowing staff the opportunity to reduce the number of journeys to work base. This is particularly impactful here as public transport access is limited and the majority of work journeys are made by car and staff often have to travel long distances to get to their work base.

Most meetings are now conducted via Teams, even where travel distances are short. There is a robust travel signing process where all requested travel needs to be signed off by the department head as well as the Chief Executive. There needs to be strong justification why the travel needs to occur and why the business cannot be conducted online. This includes inter-island and mainland travel. The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a major transformation of national and regional meetings, replacing face to face with Teams or similar. This has been particularly helpful for the island Boards where travel (and time) costs to mainland meetings are very high; we will seek to maintain those with a return to the 'new normal' to ensure that those living and working remote from the Central Belt continue to be fully included.

In addition to these, Community Health Walks were developed and launched in rural communities across the islands, to support inactive people to increase their physical activity and active people to maintain their physical activity. Offering community Health Walks in rural communities makes them more accessible for the population and reduces the need to travel to Health Walks in more populated areas.



*Health Walks in Grimsay, North Uist (left)
and in Northbay, Barra (above)*

NHS WI also operates and promotes the cycle to work scheme. To encourage this, we have installed bike shelters in key locations, which we are aiming to expand.

Last year, five new Near Me hubs were funded. These allow people to attend a videoconference appointment at home, or somewhere else more convenient, and reduces the need for people to travel to the main centres. NHS WI also established a number of digital hubs to allow people with Long Term Conditions, who may lack equipment, coverage or skill in technology to access online and Near Me services.

Improving community and public transport links to NHS sites and services is difficult in rural settings, however in the last year, we have been trying to gather baseline data to work on this as well as continuing discussions with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar around this. We are also aware that some community land estates have community buses to improve links.

With the ability to deliver chemotherapy treatments locally now, we have reduced the need for patients and their escorts to travel to the mainland. In Western Isles Hospital Ambulatory Care Department, we deliver varying cancer treatments to around 24 patients on one of the days. Cancer patients are increasingly supported closer to home through use of Near Me technology to support oncology clinics and development of the local Macmillan Team to coordinate care. This is leading to carbon footprint reductions; it also alleviates some of the associated stress and anxiety and overall improved patient experience.

This year, a business case is being developed and progressed to install an MRI unit in Western Isles Hospital, which will reduce the number of trips to the mainland. We are also investigating the possibility of setting up working hubs throughout the islands, utilising community halls and other available spaces. These would be joint initiatives with local businesses, Local Authority and Third Sector. They would allow staff to share a workspace nearer their home, reducing their need to travel, ease costs on heating homes and provide social contact for some who may be isolated.

The robust approval process for travel requests and encouraging the use of online training/meetings will continue. The Community Health Walks in rural communities across the islands will continue to be expanded and Volunteer Walk Leader training will be extended to help the provision in more locations throughout the islands. We will also continue with the physical activity promotions, encouraging active travel and active travel routes as part of this.

To help improve active travel opportunities, we are preparing a bid to Sustrans to look at implementing walking, wheeling and cycling routes around the three main hospital sites. These will be open to staff, patients, visitors and members of the community. Two of the hospitals are situated near areas identified as areas of high deprivation so should give residents more options on being active and choosing Active Travel. The bid includes installing cycle parking and repair stations, pedestrian links with nearby areas, zebra crossings, improved lighting and signage, benches and stop-off areas for people to rest and, in one area, an Active Travel connection between the school and the hospital as well as easy access to a proposed cycle training area. Another route will connect to an established coastline walking route. It is anticipated that this work leads into the wider network so active travel can be a choice for people and be expanded across the Western Isles for patients, staff and the communities.

NHS are working towards Employer Cycling Friendly award, which supports employers to increase staff cycle rates. As part of this, a staff travel survey has been circulated to allow staff to have their say in how sustainable travel to and from work can be achieved. This allows the specific challenges of each location to be reviewed separately, identifying the barriers and how best to engage people. Achieving the award opens up funding possibilities to help further improve staff transitioning to cycling more.

The Outer Hebrides CPP co-ordinating group, of which NHS WI is a member, will look at six masterplans which are in key locations in the Western Isles to review transport around NHS key services.

This year, as part of the Sustrans bid, we will look at how to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services this year. We will also be reviewing the information available on patient travel routes, looking at common routes and identifying travel access to these areas.



We are working to remove all petrol and diesel fuelled cars from our fleet by 2025. The following table sets out how many renewable powered and fossil fuel vehicles were in NHS Western Isles fleet at the end of March 2022

	Renewable powered vehicles	Fossil fuel vehicles	Total vehicles	Percentage renewable powered vehicles
Cars	5	12	17	29.4%
Light Commercial Vehicles	0	0	0	
Heavy vehicles	0	0	0	

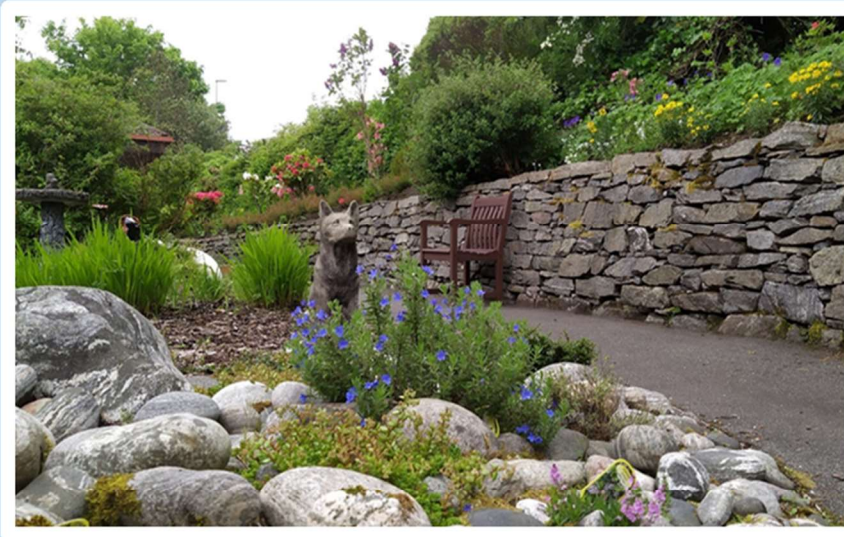
The following table sets out how many bicycles and eBikes were in NHS Western Isles' fleet at the end of March 2022.

	Number
Bicycles	0
eBikes	0

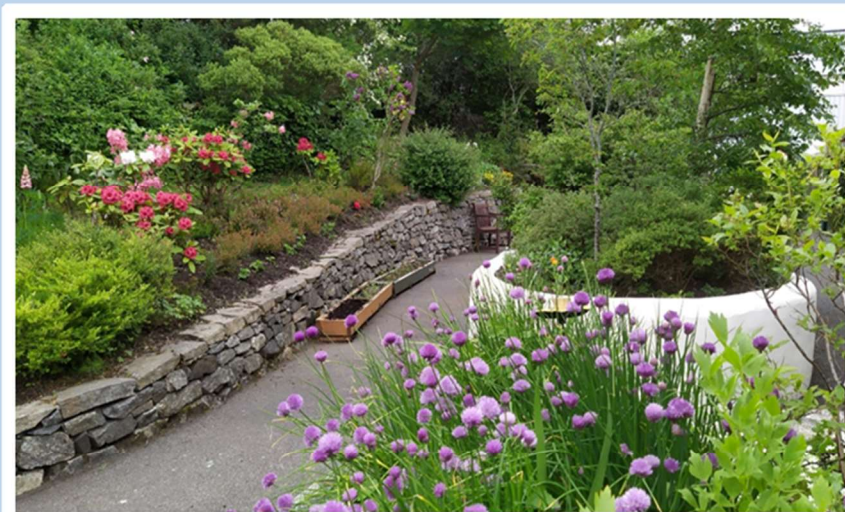
Transitioning to electric vehicles is going to be particularly challenging for our islands and may result in delays in meeting targets. The infrastructure is not in place to support it: there are insufficient charge points throughout the islands and those that do exist seem to be frequently non-functioning. There are also no facilities to service or repair EVs on island, resulting in them being shipped off island, which is added cost pressures and creates delays, reducing fleet capacity. We are currently reviewing a transport strategy and will formulate actions from there.

Greenspace and Biodiversity

In addition to health benefits for patients and staff, investment in greenspace around hospitals and healthcare centres helps tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.



*The new hospital
garden project at
Western Isles Hospital*



To help improve biodiversity, last year the “Our Hospital Garden Project”, led by the local Rotary Club, rejuvenated the Clisham Garden in the Western Isles Hospital and planted of a number of perennials, shrubs, plants and flowers. As well as improving biodiversity, this also provides a tranquil green space for patients, staff and visitors.

We have funded Polytunnels in the Cearns housing estate in Stornoway, an area that has been identified as an area of high deprivation. This has been very successful and more families have taken up the opportunity to grow their own, making it a better use of greenspace as well as food sustainability.

This year, our Hospital Garden Project will see the creation of a woodland walkway and a wildflower meadow. Some external areas will be a landscaped green space which will also allow the outside area to be used in more of our Hebridean weathers.

The Sustrans bid for walk, wheel and cycle routes around the hospital estates will include planting of flowers, bushes and trees around the routes.

Sustainable Procurement, Circular Economy and Waste

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when our demand for resources exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. In 2020, the Global Earth Overshoot Day was 22nd August. In 2021, it was 29th July. The current global trend shows a concerning picture of over consumption. For the UK, the picture is more worrying. In 2022, the UK’s Earth Overshoot Day was 19th May. The current level of consumption of materials is not sustainable, it is the root cause of the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

We aim to reduce the impact that our use of resources has on the environment through adopting circular economy principles, fostering a culture of stewardship and working with other UK health services to maximise our contribution to reducing supply chain emissions to net-zero by 2045.

For local procurement contracts, NHS WI considers the sustainability and ethical credentials of local suppliers in the decision-making process. There will always be a tension between the cheapest goods – almost always available from mainland suppliers, and supporting local businesses which may be greener, less food miles, but more expensive.

We received financial donations from the public and national charity bodies, intended to thank staff for their hard work during the pandemic. Although the money was given specifically to improve staff wellbeing, as much of it as possible was spent with local business. This included the use of staff with vouchers that could be redeemed with local suppliers who signed up to the scheme. This reduced delivery miles, but also, as many local suppliers source goods locally, they were also the more sustainable option.

Wherever possible, and where national contracts allow, we source food locally – using local butchers and fish suppliers and some fruit/vegetables.

This year we will continue with the above.

We want to reduce the amount of waste we produce and increase how much of it is recycled. The table below provides information on the type of waste we produce.

Type	2020/21 (tonnes)	2021/22 (tonnes)	Percentage change
Waste to landfill	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Waste to incineration	0	0	n/a
Recycled waste	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Food waste	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Clinical waste	16.6 (Recorded from Oct 2020 - Dec 2020)	131.9	Data not available

All main properties now have recycling bins. As our recycling waste is shipped off-island it is not the most sustainable option, so we emphasise that reducing waste is better. Staff are encouraged to only print documents when absolutely necessary. They are also advised to order responsibly, keeping minimal stock to reduce wastage.

The Resources Service has reduced the leaflet and information titles available in stock and are directing people to non-printed formats. The service has been moved to a more centralised department to enable more accurate monitoring of stock, reducing the circulation of unnecessary leaflets and the wastage of titles that go out of date before distribution.

To help reduce the amount of waste produced, a new local Food Waste Strategy is being prepared, to support the national target to reduce waste by 33%. The strategy aims to understand and monitor food waste, create a baseline position to inform an action plan and share good practice across Scotland.

Next year, we are preparing a bid for capital funding is to install an onsite Waste Treatment Unit which would autoclave and shred all low-risk clinical waste. At present all clinical waste is shipped to the mainland for processing. It is anticipated that such a unit would reduce the amount of waste being sent away by approximately 75%. The Food Waste Strategy Action Plan will be further developed and more initiatives identified to help reduce food waste, both in staff and patient areas.

Additionally, 50% of all food waste is now being sent to the local Anaerobic Digester and used to generate electricity and hydrogen, and all electronic waste is recycled. The capability to send all food waste to the Anaerobic Digester will be increased to 100%. As an alternative, we are also investigating the suitability of installing a food drying unit which would also convert waste to compost or fish food.

Environmental stewardship

Environmental stewardship means acting as a steward, or caretaker, of the environment and taking responsibility for the actions which affect our shared environmental quality. This includes any activities which may adversely impact on land, air and water, either through the unsustainable use of resources or the generation of waste and pollution. Having an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place provides a framework that helps to achieve our environmental goals through consistent review, evaluation, and improvement of our environmental performance.

NHS WI has an EMS in place, which provides data analysis, governance and education tools.

This year, the Board's Sustainability Group was re-established, having last met in 2019 before being paused due to the pandemic. The group will give leadership to the Board's environmental commitments and provide a platform for the management and promotion of these areas.

An awareness raising campaign is being planned – making staff, visitors, patients and the public aware of the new national strategy, its aims and targets. This is intended to give them the knowledge necessary to make more sustainable choices in work and home and to empower staff, establishing a culture of stewardship within the organisation.

This year, the Sustainability Group will continue to review the work being done and implement new workstreams, including developing a local Strategy and Action Plan. We also intend to establish a network of "Green Champions" who will lead change from within their own work areas, with support from the Sustainability Group and the network.

Sustainable construction

Where there is a need for new healthcare facilities, we want both the buildings and grounds to be safe, nature-rich, sustainable, resilient and accessible. NHS Western Isles is working on the following building projects.

St Brendan's hospital in Barra was built in the 1980s and it is recognised that it can no longer deliver the service required for the community and planning for a new Community Campus is underway. The new Barra and Vatersay Community Campus will comprise early learning, primary school and secondary school facilities, social care housing, primary health centre, hospital, blue light facilities, community space and office space with associated parking, bus drop off and provision of external landscape and sports spaces in the Castlebay area of Barra. The vision is one of substantive, beneficial, long-term step change that places the islands and their citizens on a path to enhanced health, wellbeing and community resilience for the 21st century.

Care is being taken to ensure the building fits in with the surrounding landscape and all shrubs and trees removed by the build will be replaced with a suitable local species mix that will enhance biodiversity. It will be built to the current net-zero environmental and sustainability guidelines. However, it should be noted that construction of such a site on an island will have a higher carbon budget, due to the shipping of goods and personnel to the island. Best practice will be followed.

Sustainable Communities

The climate emergency undermines the foundations of good health and deepens inequalities for our most deprived communities. The NHS touches every community in Scotland. We have a responsibility to use our abilities as a large employer, a major buyer, and one of the most recognised brands in the world – an ‘anchor’ organisation – to protect and support our communities’ health in every way that we can.

NHS WI has strong links with local community groups and Third Sector organisations with representation on many local groups, such as: local CPPs (e.g.: Anti-poverty, Quality of Life); youth clubs; Sports Councils; Community Association groups. We offer funding to many of these groups, to provide activities and services to help the whole population This includes providing support to complete applications for external funding bids.

NHS WI is committed to using its assets to support the local community health and well being. We support a number of initiatives to support this. The Sustrans bid to create walking, wheeling and cycling Active Travel routes around NHS WI properties will be open to the public, enabling them to enjoy the benefits from the project.

We have implemented five new Near Me Hubs, across the WIs to reduce the distance some patients have to travel for appointments. The digital hubs allow patients with limited skills or electronic equipment to access remote services, such as Near Me, reducing the need to travel and providing a more convenient and less stressful experience.

The decision to spend Donations/Endowment monies locally, wherever possible, was taken to boost the local economy, post-pandemic.

Regular training sessions are offered to staff, local businesses and the general population. The list is extensive, but some of the areas covered include: Poverty; Mental Health; Dementia; Substance Abuse; Pregnancy and Early Years. These are a mix of in-person and online to allow the maximum reach.



An online awareness raising event—the event was open to all island residents and was attended by people throughout the island chain

Improving resilience of the local communities is also important to the board. As a member of the Outer Hebrides CPP Climate Change Group, NHS WI has a key part in developing the Climate Rationale and Case for Action. This includes adaptation and resilience planning. We have also finalised the Adaptation and Risk Assessment plan, highlighting where and how to improve the resilience of the service and the local communities.

NHS WI is also a full member of regional resilient partnership for North of Scotland and a local resilience partnership for the Highlands and Islands. We are also a member of the Western Isles Planning Group for the Western Isles. All these groups have a focus on resilience issues.

Conclusion

NHS Western Isles established a Sustainability Group in 2019 to work towards creating a more sustainable service, but the COVID19 pandemic put this on pause. As a small Board we have limited resources and all available personnel were diverted to pandemic work, for its duration. Despite this, the Western Isles NHS Board has made great progress in many areas, whilst recognising we have more progress to make in other areas. The Sustainability Group has now been reinstated with an updated membership and remit.

Being an island in a rural setting brings unique challenges and we will work at finding solutions where we can and make reasonable adjustments where we can't. The Sustainability Group is working towards producing a local Strategy and Action Plan to tackle the issues. This will include incorporating better data capturing methods. We have been able to find the resources for a temporary Sustainability Worker who has facilitated implementing the road to Net Zero and the Climate Change and Sustainability work. A permanent post will be created, although finding the resources for this will be challenging.

Until the pandemic we had been making significant gains in reducing our building energy. We are continuing to work on this and the net-zero route map we are commissioning from Jacobs Engineering can be used as a blue print for other properties.

The new Food Waste Strategy is an important step in tracking our food waste and will allow us to assess where savings can be made and actions that can be taken. If we can secure capital funding to install a Waste Treatment Unit on site at Western Isles Hospital, this will give major reductions on waste that is presently being shipped to the mainland, some of it as far as North Wales.

Recognising the challenges of active travel in such a rural area with highly inclement weather, we will continue to find innovative ways to promote it – particularly through continuing our very successful physical activity promotions – but also through pursuing projects such as the Sustrans walk, wheel and cycle routes. Transitioning to electric vehicles will be difficult for the organisation, but we are committed to pursuing options and driving forward initiatives and are working towards a transport strategy to do this.

It is important to us that our staff are invested in the work we are doing so the awareness raising campaign will continue, with a network of green champions planned to help facilitate this. We will also continue to work with a wide variety of local partners to build resilience into our communities and plan adaptation measures, as well as expanding our role as an Anchor Organisation.