



NHS WESTERN ISLES CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY REPORT - 2023/24

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*I'm happy at work when:
"I'm learning, growing and making a difference"*

INTRODUCTION

This is NHS Western Isles's annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report, produced in accordance with A Policy for NHS Scotland on the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development (DL (2021) 38). It sets out the progress NHS Western Isles has made in its journey to becoming an environmentally and socially sustainable healthcare service.

NHS Western Isles employs 898 full time equivalent staff and provides healthcare to approximately 26,000 people who live in 280 settlements located on 15 inhabited islands throughout Lewis, Harris, Uists, Barra and Vatersay. The islands stretch for over 100 miles and has a land area of 2,898 km².

The Western Isles have three hospitals, one on each of the main islands, supported by nine GP practices. NHS Western Isles manage 35 sites across the Western Isles – a mix of owned and rented. These include hospitals, GP surgeries, dental clinics, office buildings, storage and domestic accommodation. Stornoway, where the main hospital is situated, is the largest town, with over 30% of the population residing there.

The islands are connected inter-island and to the mainland via passenger and freight ferries. There are also 3 airports, situated in Lewis, Benbecula (Uists) and Barra. Although a comprehensive number of services are delivered at the local hospitals, NHS Western Isles commissions some services to other boards. This requires some patients, and escorts, to travel off-island for medical appointments. Inter-island travel is also necessary to deliver and receive many services. In addition, there are a number of visiting locums and other staff who complement the staffing requirements.

The remote setting and scattered populations bring unique challenges to becoming a climate resilient organisation. NHS Western Isles will work with our staff, patients, community, suppliers and partner agencies to deliver a net-zero service and fulfil our obligation to minimise the influence of health services on climate change.

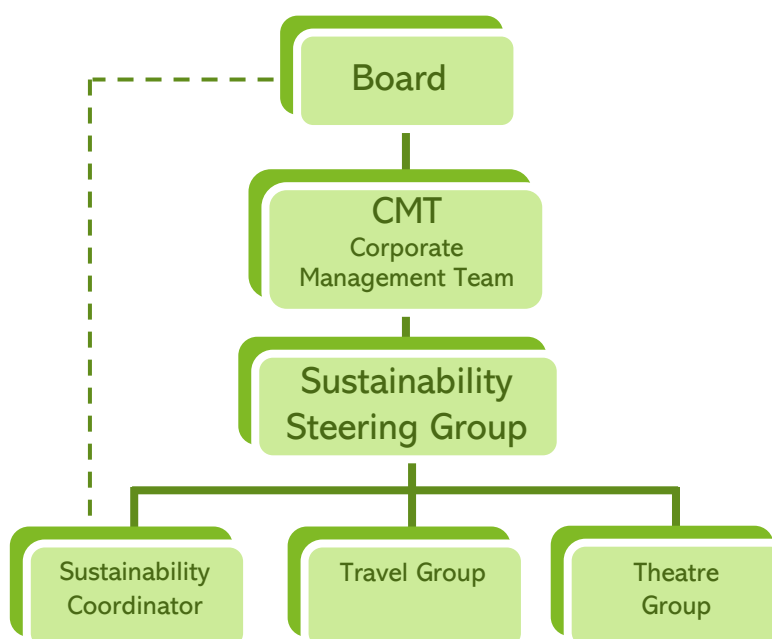
LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

NHS Western Isles is committed to embedding sustainability policies and practices into all aspects of its operations. We will reduce our environmental impact, enhance resource efficiency, and promote the long-term health and wellbeing of the communities it serves.

The Sustainability Steering Group oversees the Board's climate action and sustainability efforts across the organisation, helping to set objectives and deliver sustainability requirements. The group includes representatives from all divisions who provide input in all work areas, including energy, waste management, transport, active travel, procurement, theatres, IT, finance and the Integrated Joint Board (IJB).

Two subgroups directly input to the Steering Group, the Sustainable Travel Subgroup and the Theatre Group.

The Chair and Executive Lead of the Steering Group is Colum Durkan, Director of Public Health. Julia Higginbottom continues to represent the Board as the Sustainability Champion and is also a member of the Steering Group. The Chair is responsible for escalating issues to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Board, when appropriate. The Sustainability Coordinator regularly updates the CMT and Board on progress and highlights any concerns.



SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

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 emissions produced annually by NHS Western Isles.

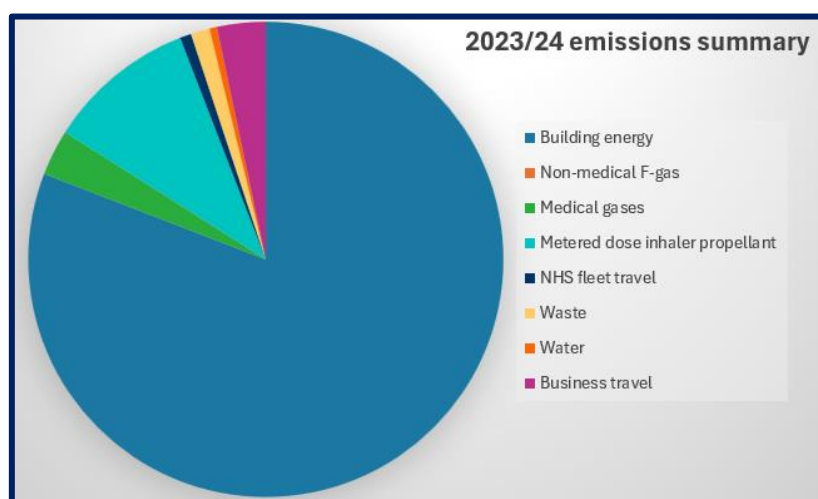
Greenhouse gas emissions 2022-2023 & 2023-2024, tonnes CO2 equivalent				
Source	2022/23 emissions	2023/24 emissions	Percentage change – 2022/23 to 2023/24	2023/24 – target emissions
Building energy	3,632	3,435	-5.4 %	NHS WI are in the process of reviewing localised targets; national targets will be followed in the meantime
Non-medical F-gas	0	0	0	
Medical gases	175	133	-24.2 %	
Metered dose inhaler propellant	423	430	+1.7 %	
NHS fleet travel ¹	u/k	53.6	u/k	
Waste ²	64.5	54.7	-15.2 %	
Water ³	15.4	20.7	+34.8 %	
Business travel ⁴	96.1	141.0	n/a	
Total emissions		4,300		
Greenhouse gas emissions minus carbon sequestration	We do not currently measure carbon sequestration			

¹ Calculated using average emission factors for car petrol/diesel, LCV diesel and LCV EV.

² Includes clinical waste, recycled and landfill (landfill only recorded from Oct 22 so figure scaled up using 6 months data). Individual clinical waste streams data are not available; for emissions factor purposes, “orange” classification has been used as this is the biggest tonnage of clinical waste.

³ Includes emissions from consumption and waste-water treatment.

⁴ Improvements to business mileage tracking systems in 2023/24 prevent direct comparison with 2022/23 data. 2023/24 also includes flight, ferry and train data, and well to tank emissions.



The table below sets out how much of key resources we used over the last two years

Source	2022/23 Use	2023/24 Use	Percentage change – 2022/23 to 2023/24
Building energy (kWh)	12,544,846	11,771,515	-6.2 %
NHS fleet travel (km travelled)	u/k	315,255	
Waste (tonnes) ⁵	189	160	- 15.2 %
Water (cubic metres) ⁶	37,741	56,324	+49.2 %
Business travel (km travelled)	611,200	721,800	+18 %

⁵ Western Isles Hospital only for Cardboard, Metal, DMR and Municipal, plus Clinical Waste for all areas.

⁶ Consumption only

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Scotland's climate is changing faster than expected according to research published by the James Hutton Institute in December 2023. According to this research:

- “Between 1990 to 2019, February and to a lesser extent April have become wetter, particularly in the west, by up to 60%, exceeding the projected change by 2050 of 45-55%.”
- “Scotland is on track to exceed “a 2°C increase in temperature by the 2050s, with the months from May to November experiencing up to 4°C of warming over the next three decades (2020-2049).”
- “The number of days of consecutive dry weather – an indicator for drought and wildfire risk – are also expected to increase in drier months, such as September.”

Climate change exacerbates existing health risks and introduces new challenges, ranging from the spread of infectious diseases to the intensification of heatwaves and extreme weather events that will impact the health of the population, healthcare assets and services. NHS Scotland plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the life and health of communities by developing climate-resilient health systems capable of responding to these evolving threats.

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/



What are the main risks from climate change that the Health Board has identified through its Climate Change Risk Assessment?

- **Storm surges causing road closures and ferry/flight cancellations:**
 - This could disrupt the ability of the public to access health services or collect medication.
 - Healthcare staff could be unable to attend work, potentially closing some clinics; community staff may not be able to reach clients and people in need in the community.
 - Staff travelling to and from off-island may be unable to deliver specialist services.
 - Family may not be able to attend hospital visits or regular home welfare checks, impacting the physical and mental health of people needing care and their support network.
- **Energy supply failure:**
 - Frequent severe weather events, particularly heavy storms, pose a significant risk to the Western Isles' power infrastructure, potentially leading to widespread outages that could critically disrupt healthcare service delivery across the archipelago.
- **Goods supply disruption:**
 - Causing shortages of essential medical supplies, medications, and food.
- **Building and structure damage:**
 - Structural issues could lead to partial or complete evacuations of parts of the building.
- **Water pipes freezing:**
 - Causing leaks or burst pipes.

What actions has the health board taken to reduce those risks – what has changed since the last report?

- NHSWI is a member of the Western Isles Emergency Planning Coordinating Group (WIEPCG), which is an islands-wide partnership group that coordinates resilience and emergency planning within the Western Isles. It works to build resilience through activities including identifying risks, capacities, skills gaps and testing emergency plans.
- **Storm surges causing road closures:**
 - We have a responsive and robust communications network which issues storm alerts.
 - NHSWI also has protocols in place to alter shift-patterns and deployment of staff to suit weather conditions.
 - Where necessary, and if clinical practice is cancelled, communications via NHSWI and partners is published detailing the impacts. Alternative clinical appointments are arranged.
 - The Board also has several contractors undertaking deliveries as well as access to several 4X4 vehicles.
 - We also maintain a close working relationship with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Roads Dept.
 - Flexible and hybrid working is available to staff, where appropriate.
- **Energy supply failure:**
 - All three hospitals have automatic change over to backup generators to supply uninterrupted power.
 - Critical areas such as high dependency, theatre also have UPS battery backup for short term supply if generators fail.
 - IT systems are backed up on site as well as off site.
 - Most GP surgeries have backup generators.
 - Most departments have business continuity plans.

- Flexible and hybrid working is available to staff, where appropriate.
- **Goods supply disruption:**
 - Contingency plans include stockpiling essential supplies, establishing alternative supply routes, and coordinating with local authorities for emergency response.
- **Building and structure damage:**
 - The Estates department operate a 24 hour on call service and have a list of approved contractors to assist in making buildings safe under emergency scenarios.
- **Water pipes freezing:**
 - All the hospitals have connection points for mobile tanker water supplies and contingency plans are in place with Scottish water to supply them with tanker water if required.

What are we doing to be prepared for the impacts of climate and increase the resilience of our healthcare assets and services?

NHS Western Isles is a member of the Outer Hebrides CPP Climate Change Working Group who, in collaboration with Adaptation Scotland, outline priorities for action to build climate resilience throughout the islands and the next steps to implementing measures. The Climate Rationale, Case for Action and interactive maps of the Western Isles showing flood risks and anticipated erosions data can be found here: <https://adaptation.scot/app/uploads/2024/08/ohcpp-climate-rationale-final.pdf>

We also support and promote the local citizen science climate change concerns map (<https://climatehebrides.com/projects/our-climate-story/>). This tool also allows staff to highlight operational concerns, such as being unable to reach patients or attend work.

In September 2024 the first Outer Hebrides COP (OH COP1) is scheduled to be held in Stornoway, bringing together key decision-makers, frontline staff, local organisations, students, businesses, local community groups, and members of the public. NHS WI will be a key member of this conference.

NHS WI have also partnered with members of the OH CCWG and The Open University in applying for funding from the UK Research Institute to fund the creation of a climate change adaptation hub to provide evidence on how to increase the resilience of people, ecosystems and infrastructure in the Western Isles. If successful, this will lead to an island wide adaptation plan.

BUILDING ENERGY

We aim to use renewable heat sources for all the buildings owned by NHS Western Isles by 2038.

NHS Western Isles has 35 sites across the Western Isles, including 3 hospitals and 9 GP practices.

In 2023/24, 3,435 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent were produced by NHS Western Isles use of energy for buildings. This was a decrease of 5.4 % since the year before.

In 2023/24, NHS Western Isles used 11,772 MWh of energy. This was a decrease of 6.2 % since the year before.

NHS Western Isles does not generate energy from renewable technologies.

Building energy emissions, 2015/16, 2022/23 and 2023/24 – tCO ₂ e				
	2015/16 energy emissions	2022/23 energy emissions	2023/24 energy emissions	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2023/24
Building fossil fuel emissions	2,685	2,968	2,740	+2.0 %
District heat networks and biomass	0	0	0	n/a
Grid electricity	1,666	664	695	-58.3 %
Totals	4,351	3,632	3,435	-21.1 %

Building energy use, 2015/16, 2022/23 and 2023/24 – MWh				
	2015/16 energy use	2022/23 energy use	2023/24, energy use	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2023/24
Building fossil fuel use	8,250.0	9,401.4	8,680.6	+5.2 %
District heat networks and biomass	0	0	0	n/a
Grid electricity	3,355.3	3,143.5	3,090.9	-7.9 %
Renewable electricity	0	0	0	0
Totals	11,605.2	12,544.8	11,771.5	+1.4 %

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce emissions from building energy use?

- More energy efficient Rointe heater and LED lights were installed throughout the properties.
- A feasibility study was delivered to transition the Health Board Offices in Stornoway from gas oil to Air Source Heat Pump heating. To implement will cost in the region of £4.5 million and require external funding.

These projects were funded internally by the Works and Estates department.

What are we doing in 2024/25 to reduce emissions from building energy use?

- Another feasibility study is planned to assess transitioning the Staff Accommodation and offices in Laxdale Court from gas oil to Air Source Heat Pump heating. This is to be paid by the Works and Estates department.
- It is hoped to complete LED installation in all properties. National energy grants will be sought to complete this.

What projects are we planning for the longer-term to reduce emissions from building energy use?

Subject to securing capital grant funding, we will investigate transitioning both properties to Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs).

We will evaluate adding HVO to our gas oil based on trial results from other boards and cost analysis.

Other considerations

Our commissioned net-zero route map recommended substituting gas oil for HVO biofuel. This option remains open but using HVO will incur higher costs. Security of supply would also need to be assured. Gas oil, as the dominant fuel source throughout the isles, is readily available via multiple storage depots. Our sites lack adequate storage facilities, therefore HVO would require special shipments, potentially compromising fuel security.

Many properties now have energy efficient, electric, hot water and heating systems. The age of the properties (with inadequate insulation) and the disruption to clinical services required to retrofit for renewable energy sources, or energy reduction measures, is a major barrier to achieving net-zero targets. Achieving meaningful sustainability progress requires substantial funding support.

At the end of 2022, during routine testing, elevated levels of the bacteria Legionella were discovered in some pipelines at Western Isles Hospital. Remedial action has been taken but the water system requires to be flushed three times per day, increasing water usage. This will continue indefinitely.

SUSTAINABLE CARE

The way we provide care influences our environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions. NHSScotland 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 for pain relief. These gases are nitrous oxide (laughing gas), entonox (a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide) and the ‘volatile gases’ - desflurane, sevoflurane and isoflurane.

Through improvements to anaesthetic technique and the management of medical gas delivery systems, the NHS can reduce emissions from these sources.

NHS Western Isles’ total emissions from these gases in 2023/24 were 133 tCO₂(e), a decrease of 42.4 tCO₂(e) from the year before.

More detail on these emissions is set out in the tables below:

Nitrous oxide and entonox emissions, 2018/19, 2022/23, 2023/24 – tCO ₂ e				
Source	2018/19 (baseline year)	2022/23	2023/24	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2023/24
Piped nitrous oxide	59.0	108.2	54.0	-8.5 %
Portable nitrous oxide	4.0	6.0	5.0	+24.5 %
Piped entonox	0	0	0	n/a
Portable entonox	63.9	54.6	69.0	+8.0 %
Total	126.9	168.8	133.0	+0.8 %

Volatile medical gas emissions, 2018/19, 2022/23, 2023/24 – tCO ₂ e				
	2018/19 (baseline year)	2022/23	2023/24	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2023/24
Desflurane	13.4	2.7	0	-100 %
Isoflurane	0.2	0	0	-100 %
Sevoflurane	2.6	4.0	5.0	+47.0 %
Total	17.0	6.6	5.0	-70.6 %

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce emissions from anaesthetic gases?

- The N₂O pipelines were decommissioned in November 2023, reducing emissions from leakages. Some cylinders of Entonox have been retained for use in Maternity, where required.
- The use of desflurane in surgery has been discontinued.

What are we doing in 2024/25 to reduce emissions from anaesthetic gases?

A National Green Theatres Programme was officially launched in 2023 to help reduce the carbon footprint of theatres across NHS Scotland and enable more environmentally sustainable care by:

- Working with clinicians and professionals to develop actions that reduce carbon emissions, waste and resource use.
- Supporting Boards to implement, measure and report on these improvements.

The Green Theatres Programme is based on actions developed by frontline staff and the Green Theatre Project at Raigmore, NHS Highland.

In 2023/24, NHS Western Isles did the following to make operating theatres more sustainable:

Good progress has been made in many areas, such as reducing emissions from medical gases and striving to reduce waste. Some of the bundle actions have been difficult to implement due to operational restrictions (e.g. switching off the scavenging systems and infection control issues (e.g. being unable to implement “rub not scrub” due to the Legionella issue).

Green Theatres are a standing agenda item of the Theatre Group and they will determine further actions to be adopted, implemented and tracked in line with National Green Theatres achievements. We will continue to work with the National Green Theatre Team to deliver validation and measurement reports as well as meeting the reporting requirements.

The Infection Prevention and Control Team undertook a “Gloves Off” campaign where they worked with ward managers, sharing information and animations from the NIPCM, also available on TURAS. There were also interactive sessions empowering staff and encouraging peer support, to come up with innovative ways to highlight and reduce the overuse of gloves. Hand hygiene sessions were delivered as part of the campaign.

We investigated sourcing green oxygen in conjunction with the green hydrogen project at the local biodigester plant. At present it has been deemed unworkable due to the risks associated with the oxygen compressors.

What are we doing in 2024/25 to make surgery more sustainable?

The Theatre Group will continue to review the Green Theatre actions and identify areas for improvement.

The “Gloves Off” awareness sessions will continue.

We will assess oxygen resilience for the Western Isles, including reviewing cylinder types and manifold design.

Respiratory medicine

7.3. 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 NHS Western Isles were 430 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2023/24.

Inhaler propellant emissions, 2018/19, 2022/23, 2023/24 – tCO₂e				
Source	2018/19 (baseline year)	2022/23	2023/24	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2022/23
Primary care	377	412	420	+11.4 %
Secondary care	7.9	10.7	10	+26.7 %
Total	385	423	430	+11.7 %

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce emissions from inhalers?

As part of the QI/cost savings workplan, Primary Care and Western Isles hospital pharmacy review patients who are prescribed MDIs for the possibility of transitioning to DPIs. This is performed during

general medication reviews when areas of general deprescribing are investigated, focusing on reducing polypharmacy reviews.

The hospital pharmacy promotes inhaler recycling through labelled dispensing bags, encouraging patients to return used, partially used, and unwanted inhalers for proper disposal via incineration.

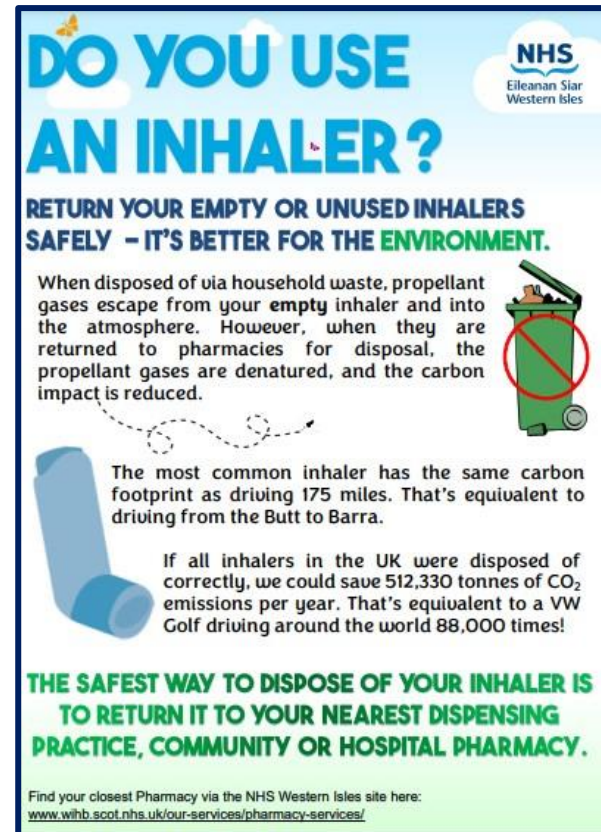
What are we doing in 2024/25 to improve patient care and reduce emissions from inhalers?

Patient inhaler and medication reviews will continue.
Switchscript guidance will be updated to signpost prescribers to greener inhalers.

What are we doing to raise awareness with staff and patients, including primary care?

Scriptswitch guidance will encourage prescribers to change to more sustainable inhalers. Posters and leaflets will be produced for dispensing doctors and community pharmacies, explaining the need for proper disposal of inhalers and asking them to put stickers on dispensing bags to encourage people to return inhalers to pharmacy, as well as reminders to put them in purple top bins for incineration and higher temperature

We are also planning a waste campaign to encourage patients to only order the medication that is needed when they request a new prescription.



Other sustainable care action

What else did we do in 2023/24 to make care more sustainable?

The hub model, previously the Primary Care Pharmacy team worked from GP practices, which limited the access to the service and involved significant travel across the islands with the practice locations being spread out. With the introduction of the hub (and the support from IT of a remote access solution), they now have a base from which they can provide Pharmacy support to all 9 practices remotely, with Monday to Friday access, reducing the travel requirements. 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).

We continue to promote Realistic Medicine, which supports sustainability; our examples of remote consultations and patient support using digital means are in line with this.

What else are we doing in 2024/25 to make care more sustainable?

In the coming year, we will promote the upcoming NHS Scotland staff TURAS module to develop understanding of how the environment affects human health; the impact of delivering healthcare services; actions being taken by NHS Scotland and how staff can contribute and make a difference.

The climate emergency, sustainability and healthcare will be included in the Corporate Induction, meaning all staff will have an understanding of the issues, and how they can make a positive impact to address them, when they begin their employment.

A network of Green Champions is being established who will be advocates for sustainable practices, identifying and promoting initiatives within their own work areas and sharing knowledge and practices with Champions in other areas.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Domestic transport (not including international aviation and shipping) produced 28.3% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2022. Car travel is the type of travel which contributes the most to those emissions.

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

Lack of funding and infrastructure has impeded the transition to a fully electric fleet. NHSWI also has an added carbon budget as some services are required to be commissioned off-island or inter-island, combined with the necessity of complementing staffing with visiting locums and other staff. Digital solutions and recruitment and retention initiatives, which we continually strive to improve, have alleviated some of these pressures.

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce the need to travel?

A Sustainable Travel Subgroup, reporting to the Sustainability Steering Group was established and will work towards developing and implementing local targets to reduce travel emissions.

We continue to provide remote clinics through the Near Me clinics, allowing patients to attend some GP and hospital appointments from home, by videocall, reducing miles travelled.

We continue to apply the Working from Home policy.

We continue to promote meetings by Teams; all inter-island and mainland travel requests undergo a robust approval process, being approved first by the department manager and finally by the Chief Executive. Mainland travel is only approved if all efforts for online meetings have been exhausted.

What did we do in 2023/24 to improve active travel?

Active Travel is a challenging choice for the Western Isles population, especially outwith the main towns, 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.

- The Cycling Employer Friendly Award was achieved by Western Isles Hospital and the Dental Clinic in Stornoway.
- A staff travel survey was circulated assessing how people travel, the barriers to active travel and why travel choices are made. 155 staff members responded. Results indicated that to improve uptake of Active Travel staff wanted safer walking and cycle routes, improved washing, drying and storage facilities, and increased access to initiatives such as the cycle to work scheme. Almost 50% of respondents indicated that nothing could encourage them to cycle or walk for their commute or work-related travel. Almost 65% have no plans to purchase an electric or hybrid vehicle.
- NHS Western Isles continues to support and promote the Cycle to Work scheme. The value has increased from £1,000 to £1,500.
- Through Sustrans, a Places for Everyone bid has been approved to deliver a walk, wheel and cycle pathways in the three main hospital sites. The monies will be released in April 2024 and a consultancy firm will be secured to deliver the project objectives and scope.
- A series of “Bike Ready” events were held throughout the Western Isles to encourage the use of, and increase confidence in, cycling. Working in collaboration with Cycling UK, Rural Connections, UHI and Dr Bike, staff were given the opportunity to try out e-bikes and regular bikes, be taken on a led ride, be given free sessions on basic bike maintenance and offered general advice on things like the cycle to work scheme.
- The Clean Air Day campaign was used to promote the benefits of active travel and the initiatives that make the transition to active travel more attractive.



- A dedicated cycling page through Teams has been developed, dedicated to hosting upcoming cycle events, past events, photos, features links to our NHS Western Isles Cycling Teams Channel, and other cycle-related information.
- With funding from Cycling Scotland, HITRANS, Cycling Friendly, Social Housing and Residential Cycle Storage & Parking Development Fund we have purchased 6 cycles and 4 e-bikes for staff to use for business commutes, as well as several cycle shelters and Velobox units for some of our sites. They are due for delivery in summer of 2024.
- We continue to deliver a number of Active Travel training and campaigns, such as:

- Walk leader training: we continue to build on our network of walk leaders who 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.
- Step-count challenges.
- 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.
- Community Health Walks: supporting people in rural areas to increase or maintain their physical activity, reducing the need to travel to a main hub to participate.
- Promotion of the physical and mental benefits of being active.
- A winter walking campaign was held, which will include giving out free hi-vis waistcoats.

What did we do in 2023/24 to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?

As part of a partnership on Community Led Local Development, we have commissioned a needs assessment and review of community transport. Once complete the findings will be used to address any gaps in access to NHS sites.

What are we going to do in 2024/25 to reduce the need to travel?

- We will continue to look for opportunities to expand the use of Near me clinics.
- We will continue to apply the working from home policy and promote online meeting.
- We will begin a campaign among staff to encourage car-sharing.

What are we going to do in 2024/25 to improve active travel?

- The Sustainable Travel Subgroup will begin work on a localised Action Plan, including active travel initiatives.
- Once funding is received, work will begin to deliver three walk, wheel cycle route plans in each hospital, aimed at increasing active travel opportunities and uptake.
- The new ebikes and cycles will be promoted for staff use and inductions will begin.
- Bike shelters and Velobox units will be installed in North Harris Practice, the Health Centre Springfield Road Stornoway, Health Board Offices Stornoway and Uist & Barra Hospital.
- We will continue working towards the Cycling Friendly Employer Award by upgrading and improving cycling facilities, such as shelters and showering facilities.
- We will continue to promote active travel initiatives and campaigns, including Step Count challenges with hi-viz armbands and prize incentives to those who demonstrate both the highest steps and the greatest improvement.

What are we going to do in 2024/24 to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?

We continue to support the local authority and partner agencies to improve transport links.



The NHSWI cycle to work scheme certificate is now £1,500

Also, you can now claim business mileage for cycling on eExpenses

Air pollution impacts our health from our first breath to our last



You can turn your green and healthy travel into digital currency

Earn points in the Better Points app and then treat yourself or donate it to charity

www.betterpoints.app

Walk or wheel to school this Clean Air Day



NHSWI will soon be purchasing a number of ebikes and manual bikes for staff to use when travelling between sites

Details will be circulated soon

We are working to remove all petrol and diesel fuelled cars from our fleet.

The following table sets out how many renewable powered and fossil fuel vehicles were in NHS Western Isles fleet at the end of March 2023 and March 2024:

	March 2023		March 2024		Difference in % zero tailpipe emissions vehicles
	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	
Cars	6	0	10	0	0 %
Light commercial vehicles	22	32 %	19	37 %	+5 %
Heavy vehicles	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Specialist vehicles	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a

The following table sets out how many bicycles and eBikes were in NHS Western Isles' fleet at the end of March 2023 and March 2024:

	March 2023	March 2024	Percentage change
Bicycles	0	6	+600 %
eBikes	0	4	+400 %

The following table sets out the distance travelled by our cars, vans and heavy vehicles in 2023/24

Distance travelled, kms	Cars	Light commercial vehicles	Heavy vehicles	Specialist vehicles	Total
2023/24 ¹	109,781	205,474	n/a	n/a	315,255

¹ based on a monthly average

Business travel is staff travelling as part of their work in either their own vehicles or public transport. It covers travel costs which are reimbursable and doesn't cover commuting to and from work. The table below shows our emissions from business travel by transport type:

Business travel emissions, tCO ₂ e	Cars	Public Transport	Flights	Total
2023/24	139 ¹	1.12 ²	0.50	141

¹ Includes WTT

² Rail and ferry

We are committed to transitioning our fleet to electric vehicles (EVs) as our cars and light commercial vehicles come up for renewal. We plan to replace one internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicle with an EV in the 2024/25. However, this transition will be guided by the vehicle's intended use, as the islands' current charging infrastructure limits long-distance travel capabilities.

GREENSPACE AND BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity

Biodiversity, or the wide variety of living organisms within an environment, has declined at a rapid rate in the last 50 years. Evidence demonstrates that these trends are attributed to human activities, such as land use change, habitat degradation and fragmentation, pollution, and the impacts of climate change. The State of Nature report published in 2023 has highlighted the decline of nature across Scotland, with 11% of species now classed as threatened with extinction.

Public bodies in Scotland have a duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 ([Nature Conservation Scotland Act 2004](#)) to further the conservation of biodiversity, taking care of nature all around us. Furthermore, the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 ([Wildlife and Natural Environment Scotland Act 2011](#)) requires every public body to summarise their activities to meet this duty, through the production of a publicly available report.

What actions have been taken to identify, protect and enhance biodiversity across your organisation?

- NHS Western Isles has an ongoing awareness raising campaign, to inform and educate staff of the cause and effect of the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity. We will also raise awareness and understanding of the importance of biodiversity and nature through the Induction Programme that all staff need to undertake when they start employment.
- A project led by the Stornoway Rotary Club, Our Hospital Garden and the Jubilee Rose Garden, which are situated in the grounds of Western Isles Hospital, offers an extensive variety of carefully curated plants, flowers that are supportive of local biodiversity. As well as providing a therapeutic retreat for staff, patients and members of the public, it provides essential habitat

and resources for local wildlife. This green space exemplifies our commitment to providing holistic healthcare environments that nurture both people and nature, demonstrating how hospital grounds can promote environmental stewardship

What actions have been taken to contribute to the NHSScotland Estate Mapping programme, or to develop an internal mapping programme?

- Mapping data has been submitted to Public Health Scotland and validated. The information will be used in the NHSScotland Greenspace Assessment.

What actions have been taken to mainstream biodiversity across the organisation?

How have nature-based solutions been utilised to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies?

What actions have been undertaken to raise awareness, engagement and understanding of biodiversity and nature?

What surveys, monitoring or assessment of biodiversity have been undertaken? If you have – have systems been developed to continue monitoring long-term?

- We reported in 2023/24 that we would review our estates and how to best protect and enhance our biodiversity and promote nature-based solutions. Competing priorities has delayed this, but we aspire to complete an assessment and implement meaningful plans.
- An extensive campaign to raise the profile of Our Hospital Garden and Jubilee Rose Garden is planned for Spring 2025. This will include information on the importance of protecting our biodiversity and highlight the variety of species of flora and fauna the garden contains and attracts to it.



Greenspace

The design and management of the NHSScotland green estate for human and planetary health, offers an opportunity to deliver a range of mutually beneficial outcomes. These include action on climate change (both mitigation and adaptation), biodiversity, health and wellbeing for patients and staff, community resilience building and active travel.

The table below outlines any key greenspace projects and their benefits.

Project name/ location	Benefits of project	Details of project
Our Hospital Garden	<p>Increased biodiversity.</p> <p>Walking routes to encourage physical activity.</p> <p>A space to relax in a tranquil, green area.</p> <p>Teaching staff gardening and grow-your-own skills.</p>	<p>Led by the local Rotary Club, the greenspace within Western Isles Hospital was rejuvenated by planning a number of perennials, plants and flowers, as well as seating areas for staff, patients, visitors and members of the community. The first and second phases and the internal courtyard and rose garden are complete. It has also been extended to include a woodland walkway. Some promotional work has been done with staff but a more comprehensive campaign will begin Spring 2025, targeting staff, patients, visitors and community through social media, press releases, leaflets and posters throughout island venues. Staff will also eventually be encouraged to volunteer to learn gardening skills and help maintain the garden.</p>
Community Polytunnels	<p>Encouraging grow-your-own and promoting community resilience.</p>	<p>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.</p>
Sustrans Walk, wheel and cycle paths	<p>Increased biodiversity</p> <p>Providing a safe, convenient, peaceful area for people to undertake physical activity.</p>	<p>With Sustrans, a Places for Everyone bid has been submitted to build three walk, wheel and cycle pathways on each of the main hospitals to improve active travel opportunities. These will include areas where local plants and flowers will be planted along the routes.</p>
Community growing project	<p>Encouraging grow-your-own and promoting community resilience.</p>	<p>We will evaluate a section of unused land at Uist & Barra Hospital for potential community garden partnerships with local growing groups.</p>

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT, CIRCULAR ECONOMY & WASTE

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when our demand for resources exceeds what earth can regenerate in that year. In 2024, Global Earth Overshoot Day is 1 August, a day earlier than in 2023.

For the UK, the picture is more worrying. In 2024, the UK's Earth Overshoot Day was 3 June. The current level of consumption of materials is not sustainable and 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.

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce the environmental impact and the quantity of the goods and services we buy?

We continue to include sustainability and ethical credentials of suppliers when procuring goods. Where possible, goods are sourced locally including butcher meat, fresh fish and some fruit and vegetables. We will continue with this into the next year. Both the commercial questionnaire document used in tenders and the supplier review scorecard used in our supplier management processes have sections for evaluating environment, sustainability and socio-economic credentials.

We continue to liaise with the National Procurement Sustainable Procurement Steering Group to reduce our environmental impacts and follow any new guidance.

What are we doing in 2024/25 to reduce the environmental impact of the goods and services we buy?

Replacing goods and services with more sustainable alternatives will continue to be assessed. In the coming year we will replace plastic medicine cups with paper.

A project is planned to assess replacing single-use cups in the hospital dining rooms with re-usable takeaway cups. This would reduce the amount of waste produced and emissions from the production and disposal of single-use cups, as well as give financial savings.

The inclusion of sustainability in the corporate induction programme will give staff the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions when ordering goods. The planned staff Green Champion network will also inform good practice and guidance on sustainable procurement.

We begin departmental waste audits in the coming year.

The table below sets out information on the waste we produce and its destination for the last three years.

NB. This information is for all Western Isles Hospital waste and all clinical waste only. Clinical waste from all properties is taken to Western Isles Hospital and sent on for treatment. Municipal and recycled waste uplifts in other properties are undertaken by the local authority, during their normal household runs. It is therefore impossible for us to measure municipal and recycled waste tonnage outside of Western Isles Hospital.

Type	2021/22 (tonnes)	2022/23 (tonnes)	2023/24 (tonnes)	Percentage change – 2022/23 to 2023/24
Waste to landfill		92.4	69.4	-24.8 %
Waste to incineration		n/a	n/a	
Recycled waste		12.2	18.5	+52.0 %
Food waste		u/k	u/k	
Clinical waste ¹		84.4	72.5	-14.11 %

¹ Clinical waste includes some material that is recycled but these data are not available

We have set targets to reduce the amount of waste we produce and the tables below provide information on our performance against those targets:

Reduce domestic waste by a minimum of 15%, and greater where possible compared to 2012/2013 – by 2025	
Target – reduce domestic waste by	No target set yet
Performance – domestic waste reduced by	
Outcome	
Further reduction required	

Ensure that no more than 5%, and less where possible, of all domestic waste is sent to landfill – by 2025	
Target – reduce waste sent to landfill by	No target set yet
Performance – waste sent to landfill reduced by	
Outcome	
Further reduction required	

Reduce the food waste produced by 33% compared to 2015/16 – by 2025	
Target – reduce food waste by	A target has been set to reduce food waste produced by 33% by 2027, compared to a baseline from 2024/25.
Performance – food waste reduced by	
Outcome	
Further reduction required	

Ensure that 70% of all domestic waste is recycled or composted – by 2025	
Target – recycle or compost	No target set yet
Performance – recycled or composted	
Outcome	
Further increase required	

Food Waste Reduction

No data is available pre-2024. A new data gathering system is planned for Autumn 2024 which will collect data on food production, patient plated, patient untouched, and dining room and retail waste. 2024/25 data will become the baseline year. It should be noted that food waste reduction initiatives have already begun, but progress has not been quantified.

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce our waste?

- A business case for a Waste Treatment Unit was prepared. If funding can be sourced, around 75% of waste will be processed on-site at Western Isles Hospital and autoclaved to a lower volume floc which can be sent to local landfill or the biodigester, rather than shipped to the mainland for incineration.
- A Food Waste Action Plan has been delivered, committing to reducing food waste by 33% by 2025 from a 2015/16 baseline – this will be moved to 33% by 2027 from a 2024/25 baseline. Progress has been hindered as staff retention and recruitment problems has given rise to a 20% vacancy level. This issue is being addressed and once personnel is at full capacity the Action Plan will be progressed.
- Food waste was reduced though an awareness raising campaign with staff on untouched meal wastage, appropriate ordering and stock-rotation.
- Patients using Wegovy are given a pre-paid pencycle returns box. Once full, this is returned to the manufacturer who recycle the injection pens.
- We continue to promote the use of recycling facilities, available in all main properties, as well as reducing consumption where possible. A new example of this is that all school toothbrushes are now disposed of in recycling bins.
- We reviewed transitioning to greener data centres, but at present it is cost prohibitive.
- The Maternity Department has undertaken a number of waste reduction measures, such as:
 - Co-operation with community members who knit clothing and blankets for babies and also pass on good quality second hand baby clothing.
 - Breastfeeding is widely encouraged and colostrum is harvested.

- Transitioning to reusable SpO₂ monitoring probes.
- Single-use items are separated from pre-packaged procedure packs and only opened when needed (e.g. catheter packs).
- Changed over to 10-packs of sanitary pads for new mothers, rather than individual plastic wrapped ones.
- In-person home visits have been reduced to 3, 5 and 10 days, replaced by phone calls – unless more visits are necessary or requested. This reduces travel requirements.
- When hospital visits with the midwife are required, attempts are made to liaise with patients and find a time which can be combined with another visit to town.
- Unnecessary physical resources, such as leaflets and brochures, have stopped and replaced with online versions.
- Online parent education classes are available, with modules from “Real Birth”.
- A birthpool has been found to reduce the need for other forms of pain relief and pharmaceutical products, such as nitrous oxide.

We have a legal obligation to carry out PAA's (pre acceptance audits) on all clinical waste that is uplifted from the Western Isles Hospital. These audits give us an accurate snapshot of the waste generated and disposed of as clinical waste. Along with the PAA we carry out in the WIH, as a duty of care we also audit the waste from all our GP practices. Overall segregation in the clinical waste stream is good. We have reduced waste by:

- Removing clinical waste bins in communal and public areas, that had been in place since the Covid19 pandemic.
- Reviewing sharps bins waste and installing the correct size bins or the location to ensure maximum filling. We have also with ward managers to ensure that the bins are full to reduce space required in the waste trailer.
- Overstocking goods with short shelf lives, including consumable and hazardous waste. By working with the dining room and procurement, improvements have been made.
- The use of Biobins in the Laboratory for non-sharps waste. These sturdy paper bins have replaced the plastic ones and significantly reduce the kg CO₂ emissions associated with use.
- Radiography have reviewed all necessary stock items. Single-use slide sheet have been discontinued and launderable sheets are now in use.



What are we doing in 2024/25 to reduce our waste?

- If funding can be secured to purchase a food dryer, food waste bulk would be reduced by up to 90% and the product either sent to landfill, or to the local biodigester which produces methane that fuels the on-site CHP, as well as some oxygen and green hydrogen production.
- A network of staff green champions is to be established. They will be advocates for sustainable practices, identifying and promoting waste reduction and sustainable initiatives within their own work areas and sharing knowledge and practices with Champions in other areas.
- The plan to replace single-use takeaway tea/coffee cups with reusable cups will reduce waste sent to landfill or composting facilities. It will also reduce emissions associated with the production and transport of single-use cups.
- Planned audits of the Pharmacy and Dietetics departments will identify opportunities to reduce waste, minimize single-use items, and implement more sustainable practices. For example, Dietetics will review single use items, such as enteral syringes.
- We will continue to engage with ward staff on waste segregation practices.
- Climate change and sustainability issues, along with the environmental impact of healthcare provision, will be incorporated into the Corporate Induction Programme. This addition will give new staff members an understanding of these critical topics and equip them with the knowledge to drive positive change.
- A digital scanner has been purchased for the Western Isles Hospital dental centre. This will reduce the need to take impressions and reduce waste from alginate and gypsum.
- Last year's proposal to mail Childsmile consent forms was not implemented due to concerns over low return rates and potential damage to established relationships. Instead, Childsmile interventions in schools will be reorganised on an area basis rather than individually.
- We aim to establish a process where IT equipment will be upcycled for use within the organisation or donated to community groups, local education centres or charities.
- NHSWI Central Disinfection Unit are a member of the Decontamination of Reuseable Medical Devices Expert Group (RM-DEG) and will review practices to embed sustainability.

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.

What steps did we take in 2023/24 to develop and implement our EMS?

No progress was made in 2023/24 due to a lack of resources and knowledge.

We have fully implemented EMS to ISO14001 standard at the following sites:

No sites have implemented EMS to ISO14001 standard.

What steps will we take in 2024/25 to further develop and implement our EMS?

We will assign EMS implementation leads and establish a training and meeting schedule for 2024/25.
Progress will be gradual due to limited staff availability

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce our environmental impacts and improve environmental performance?

We have reduced our emissions in the past year in some key areas:

- Energy: emissions reduced by 5.4% and kWh use by 6.2%
- Medical gas emissions have reduced by 24%
- Waste tonnage generated and emissions have both reduced by 15 %

We have also successfully implemented a number of inspiring new Active Travel initiatives.

What are we doing in 2024/25 to reduce our environmental impacts improve environmental performance?

- We will maintain our commitment to emissions reduction efforts.
- Active Travel initiatives will continue to be expanded, promoted and supported.
- Waste reduction projects will begin.
- EMS: A dedicated working group comprising key staff members will be established. They will receive comprehensive training in the use of Rio software. This will advance EMS compliance.
- The establishment of the staff Green Champions network and inclusion of sustainability in the Staff Corporate Induction programme will embed a culture of environmental awareness, leadership and innovation, ensuring sustainability becomes integral to work practices.

What factors have prevented implementation of EMS to ISO14001 Standard for any sites in NHS Western Isles estate which have not yet reached that standard?

Implementation has been delayed due to limited expertise in key areas and labour resource constraints. Our focus on staff developments will improve progress in the coming years.

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 not currently working on any building projects. The proposed new hospital to replace St Brendans in Barra has been postponed. Due to national pressure on NHS capital budgets, a Scottish Government decision was taken to defer the project until 2026/27.

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.

What are we doing to act as an anchor institution for our local community communities?

- The first NHS Western Isles Anchor Strategy (2023 -2026) was delivered in 2023. As an Anchor Organisation, the health board aim to have a positive influence on our local community by the actions we take to improve health and reduce health inequalities.
- The IJB has published the Strategic Framework for 2024-27 following public enragement . The framework sets out the Board's mission over the next year years and defines the outcomes we are working towards collaboratively with all partners.
- We continue to work with partner agencies. One of the biggest collaborations is as a member of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Climate Change Working Group (CPP CCWG), who are tasked with improving understanding of climate change in the Outer Hebrides, building collaboration across organisations, and developing plans and priorities to embed in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), a number of projects and initiatives are being undertaken or due to be launched.

Through the group we support a variety of initiative such as releasing a Climate Rational (available <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/616539390/>) and Case for Action (<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/616121670/>), community mapping website, community events and interactive climate maps.

- NHS Western Isles is also a member of the Western Isles Food Partnership, a local multiagency group. The group’s aim is to achieve a Sustainable Food Place Award, develop an island-wide Food Action Plan and Good Food Growing Strategy. With NHS Western Isles using their influence as an Anchor Institution, this will reduce food waste and create a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable food community.
- Place Standard interviews and questionnaires were carried out and circulated to people of all ages throughout the Western Isles for their comment. Elements of sustainability were included and the Information has been gathered and passed to the local authority to progress.

What are we doing to improve the resilience of our local communities to climate change?

We aim to improve NHS Western Isles role as an Anchor Organisation through the Strategic Actions outlined in the Anchors Strategy. This will be achieved by continuing to work in partnership with other anchor institutions, through the Community Planning Partnership and the priorities adopted in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan to working towards:

- Sustainable population
- Sustainable economy
- Improving quality of life and wellbeing

NHS Western Isles will be an active participant in the very first Outer Hebrides COP 1, planned for Autumn 2024. This is being organised through the OH CPP CCWG, led by one of its member agencies, Climate Hebrides, and will bring together key decision-makers, frontline staff, local organisations, students, businesses, local community groups, and members of the public. During the day, the specific climate issues faced by our islands communities will be addressed, fostering collaboration to combat the effects of climate change.

Growing projects throughout the islands, existing and planned, will promote local food sustainability while strengthening community connections

We partnered with local celebrity chef, The Hebridean Baker, to demonstrate the Wonderbag, an energy-efficient cooking tool. Once food is brought to boil, the insulated Wonderbag continues cooking without additional energy input, functioning like a slow cooker. This innovative approach offers both energy savings and affordable healthy meal options.



The Hebridean Baker demonstrating the Wonderbags

CONCLUSION

The Board is committed to meeting the requirements of DL (2021)38 - Scotland's policy on Climate Emergency and sustainable development. Our Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) sets out steps to advance this work. While we acknowledge the significant investment required for transitioning to renewable energy and sustainable practices, particularly during current financial constraints, we are actively pursuing innovative and cost-effective solutions to progress these important environmental goals.

This Annual Report outlines NHS Western Isles' progress toward delivering net zero, sustainable healthcare. Despite energy emissions being our most demanding challenge, we achieved notable reductions in both emissions and kWh consumption over the past year, as well as significant reductions in our medical gas emissions. We've also successfully launched several innovative Active Travel initiatives, meeting the unique challenges of the Western Isles' remote geography and demanding climate conditions.

While leadership drives our sustainability agenda, we recognize that sustainable practices must be embedded at every level of our organization. Engaging and empowering staff is crucial for lasting change. We will support this by launching a Green Champion Network, incorporating sustainability into staff induction programs, and providing environmental training resources for all employees.

The Western Isles also enjoys a very close community spirit and NHS Western Isles has strong links with many local groups. We will continue to work with our partners to build on the achievements made to date, providing an island wide coordinated approach and commit to common targets to tackle the issues our islands will face as a result of the climate emergency.



We are happy in work when we know we make a difference

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