



NHS WESTERN ISLES

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY & SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

2024/25



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## INTRODUCTION

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The climate emergency is the greatest health challenge of our time. Rising temperatures, air pollution and loss of biodiversity are driving increases in many health conditions. A healthy planet is also essential for its population to thrive. As one of the largest contributors to the UK's emissions, it is the NHS's responsibility to reduce our environmental footprint and confront these challenges by embedding sustainability into our services and building resilience for the future.

This is NHS Western Isles' third annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report for year 2024/25 and sets out the progress NHS Western Isles has made in its journey to becoming an environmentally and socially sustainable healthcare service. It also outlines plans for the coming year.

NHS Western Isles employs 898 full time equivalent staff and provides healthcare to approximately 26,200 people who live in 280 settlements located on 15 inhabited islands throughout Lewis, Harris, Uists, Barra and Vatersay.

There are three hospitals, one on each of the main islands, supported by nine GP practices. NHS Western Isles manages 35 sites – a mix of owned and rented – across the islands. As well as the hospitals and GP surgeries these include dental clinics, office buildings, storage and domestic accommodation.

Although a comprehensive number of services are delivered at the local hospitals, NHS Western Isles commissions some services to other boards. Inter-island travel is also necessary to deliver and receive many services. There are also a number of visiting locums and staff who complement staffing requirements.

The remote setting and scattered populations, alongside an ageing estate, 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, while future-proofing services through adaptation planning.



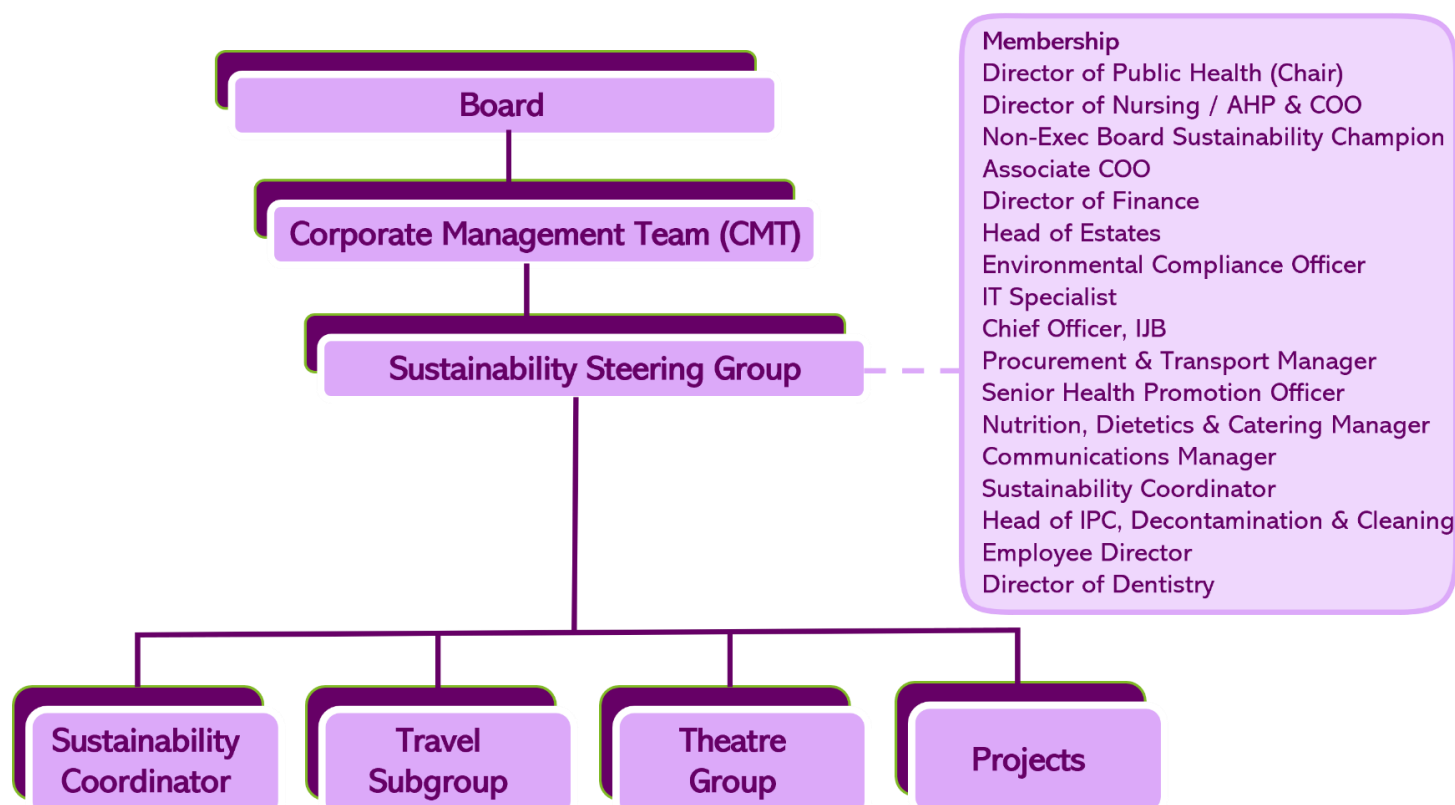
## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

NHS Western Isles (NHSWI) 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 we serve.

The Sustainability Steering Group oversees the Board's climate action and sustainability efforts across the organisation, helping to set objectives and deliver sustainability requirements. Membership includes representatives from every division who provide input in all work areas. The group meet quarterly, monitoring progress against defined national targets and outcomes. Two subgroups directly input to the Steering Group, the Sustainable Travel Subgroup and the Green Theatre Group, with short-life project groups reporting as required. A local action plan is in development, due for completion Autumn 2025, that will set out our priorities and commitments for reducing emissions and waste, enhancing biodiversity, and embedding sustainable practices across our estate and services.

Sustainability is integrated into the Board reporting process to ensure all proposals consider environmental impact and support sustainability goals.

Colum Durkan, Director of Public Health, remains Chair and Executive Lead of the Steering Group. 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 also regularly updates the CMT and Board on progress and highlights any concerns.



## SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

### 2040 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

2040 Net-Zero emissions	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Carbon footprint (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	3,858 <sup>1</sup>	3,764 <sup>1</sup>	5,525 <sup>2</sup>	4,217	4,393

<sup>1</sup> Building energy only

<sup>2</sup> Building energy, medical gases and inhaler emissions only

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 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)				
Source	2023/24 emissions (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	2024/25 emissions (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	% change – 2023/24 to 2024/25	2024/25 – target emissions
Building energy	3,435	3,697	+ 7.6%	NHS WI are in the process of implementing localised targets; until then national targets are being followed
Non-medical F-gas	0	0	0	
Medical gases <sup>1</sup>	119	63	- 47.1%	
Metered dose inhaler propellant <sup>1</sup>	386	379	- 1.8%	
NHS fleet travel <sup>2</sup>	60.5	52.5	- 13.2%	
Waste <sup>3</sup>	54.7	58.5	+ 6.9%	
Water <sup>4</sup>	20.7	9.1	- 56.0%	
Business travel <sup>5</sup>	141	134	- 5.0%	
<b>Total emissions</b>	<b>4,217</b>	<b>4,393</b>	<b>+ 4.2%</b>	
<b>Minus carbon sequestration</b>	We do not currently measure carbon sequestration			

<sup>1</sup> Figures are different to last year's report as updated emissions factors were applied.

<sup>2</sup> Calculated using average emission factors for car petrol/diesel, LCV diesel and LCV EV. Only total fleet mileage figures were available, so mileage was split by vehicle type in proportion to fleet composition.

<sup>3</sup> Excepting Clinical Waste, these are Western Isles Hospital data only. Municipal waste was only recorded from October 2022 so figure scaled up for that year using available data. Individual clinical waste streams data are not available; for emissions factor purposes, "orange" classification has been used as this is the biggest proportion of the clinical waste.

<sup>4</sup> Includes emissions from consumption and waste-water treatment.

<sup>5</sup> Includes flight and ferry business travel which was calculated using expenses cost data.

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

Source	2023/24 Use	2024/25 Use	Percentage change – 2023/24 to 2024/25
Building energy (kWh)	11,771,515	12,633,416	+ 7.3%
NHS fleet travel (km travelled)	315,255	286,577	- 10.0%
Waste (tonnes)	160	173	+ 8%
Water (cubic metres)	56,324	27,697	- 50.8 %
Business travel (km travelled)	721,800	688,450	- 4.6%

### 2045 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

We are working to support reductions to greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2045 for sources of emissions over which we have less control and influence – emissions from the production and supply of the goods and material we use, patient travel and staff commuting. The following table sets out the latest estimates we have for these emissions:

Source	Latest estimate, tCO <sub>2</sub> e	Year of estimate
Patient travel <sup>1</sup>	71.79	2024/25

<sup>1</sup> Calculated using finance data from patient flight, ferry and car travel costs

*“We are privileged to live and work in such a unique and special place. Spending time in nature is fundamental to health and happiness. I want to help conserve and give back something and help build a sustainable future.”*

Dr Eleanor Barkell  
NHS Western Isles Staff Green Champion

## CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Climate change makes existing health risks worse 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/](http://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.
- 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.

### ***Does the Health Board have a plan to reduce those risks?***

NHSWI has completed a Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) and Action Plan, which outlines climate-related risks and actions to mitigate them. This plan is reviewed and updated every five years to ensure it remains responsive to emerging threats and mitigating actions.

The *NHS Scotland Climate Change Risk Assessments and Adaptation Plans: A Summary Report* was published in January 2025, providing a national overview and set of recommendations. The report has been carefully reviewed by staff and further considered by the Sustainability Steering Group to identify practical actions for implementation. Many of these recommendations are already in place

across the Western Isles. We also benefit from strong, long-standing partnerships that continue to support effective collaboration.

Risk reduction assessments are an ongoing process. NHSWI continually reviews potential vulnerabilities and integrates appropriate mitigation measures as they are identified. This includes strengthening emergency preparedness, enhancing infrastructure resilience and improving staff training and awareness around the impacts of climate change on health service delivery.

Mitigation measures are also implemented on an ad-hoc basis, such as the sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) implemented at Ospadal Uibhist agus Bharraigh (Uist & Barra Hospital) and the Dental Centre car park located in Western Isles Hospital.

### ***What main actions has the health board taken to reduce those risks since the last report?***

We continue to employ our many robust risk management measurements detailed in the 2023/24 Annual Climate and Emergency Report and continually review for improvement.

There remains active engagement in multi-organisational partnership groups, such as the Western Isles Emergency Planning Coordinating Group (WIEPCG), who work together to build institutional and community resilience to climate change through identifying risks, skills gaps and by testing emergency plans; NHSWI also works with the Community Planning Partnership Climate Change Group (CPP CCG) to develop island-wide mitigation and adaptation strategies.

NHS Western Isles was a participant in the first Outer Hebrides Climate Conference, OH COP1, held in September 2024. This was organised through the CPP CCG, led by one of its member agencies, Climate Hebrides, and brought together 80 key decision-makers, frontline staff, local organisations, students, businesses, local community groups, and members of the public. The day offered a platform for sharing what has been done to combat climate change across our islands, what is currently underway, and what more can be achieved through collaboration. The event featured presentations and speeches from influential organisations, including NHSWI, and a Q&A panel discussion developing ideas on the day, delivering actions to take forward.

### ***What main actions are going to be carried out to reduce those risks in future years?***

We have completed a Business Continuity Plan focused on addressing the most critical maintenance issues that present immediate risks to service delivery and safety. This plan ensures the estate remains resilient in the face of high-risk scenarios, including those affected by climate change. The Business Continuity Plan will be superseded by the Whole System Infrastructure Plan (WSIP). The WSIP will provide a clinically led, evidence-based framework for long-term infrastructure investment, ensuring that our estate adapts to the health impacts of climate change and supports sustainable models of care and build climate resilience into our services.

Through our continued collaborations with local partnership groups and other public sector bodies, we will look for ways to develop best practice and identify areas to improve the resilience of the healthcare services and the wider community. This includes producing a short film highlighting the actions NHSWI is taking, to be shown at the OH COP2 event being held in September 2025.



## 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 2024/25, 3,697 tonnes of CO2 equivalent were produced by NHS Western Isles use of energy for buildings. This was an increase of 7.6 % since the year before.

In 2024/25, NHS Western Isles used 12.6 MWh of energy. This was an increase of 7.3 % since the year before.

Building energy emissions, 2015/16, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)				
	2015/16 energy emissions	2023/24 energy emissions	2024/25 energy emissions	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2024/25
Building fossil fuel emissions	2,685	2,740	2,971	+ 2.0 %
District heat networks and biomass	0	0	0	n/a
Grid electricity	1,666	695	726	- 56.4 %
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,351</b>	<b>3,435</b>	<b>3,697</b>	<b>- 26.6 %</b>

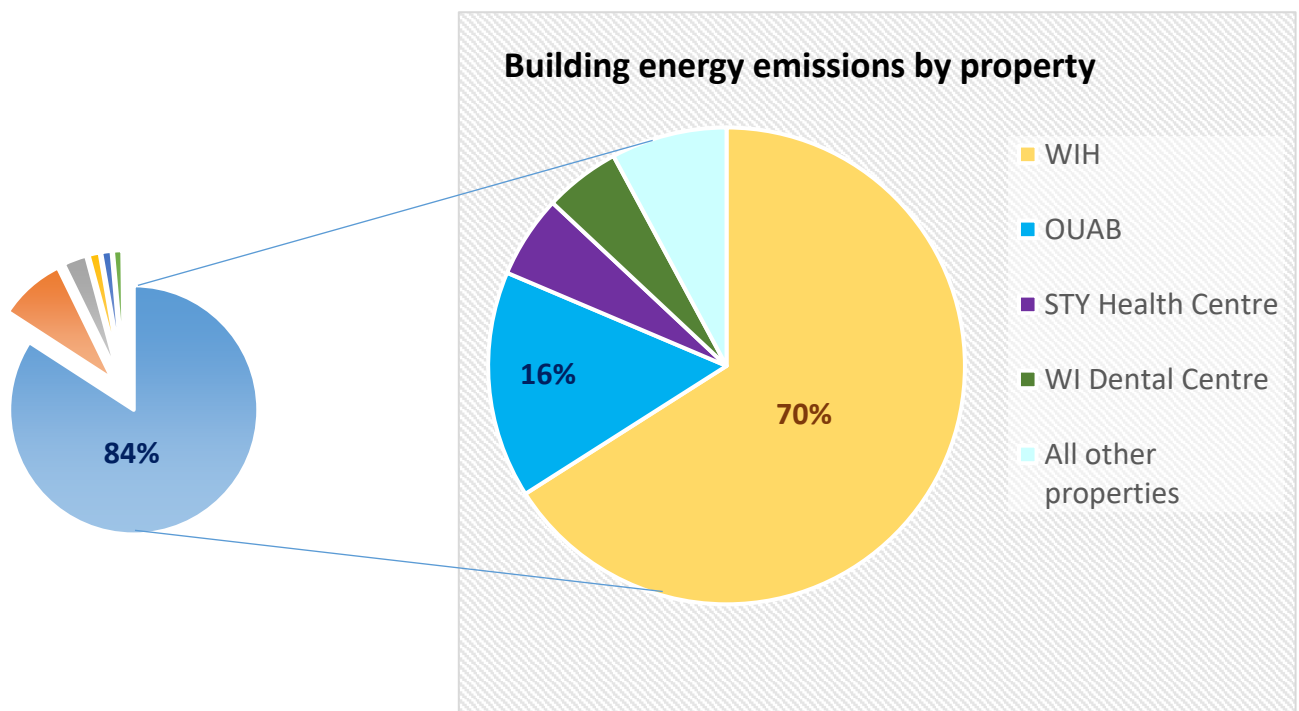
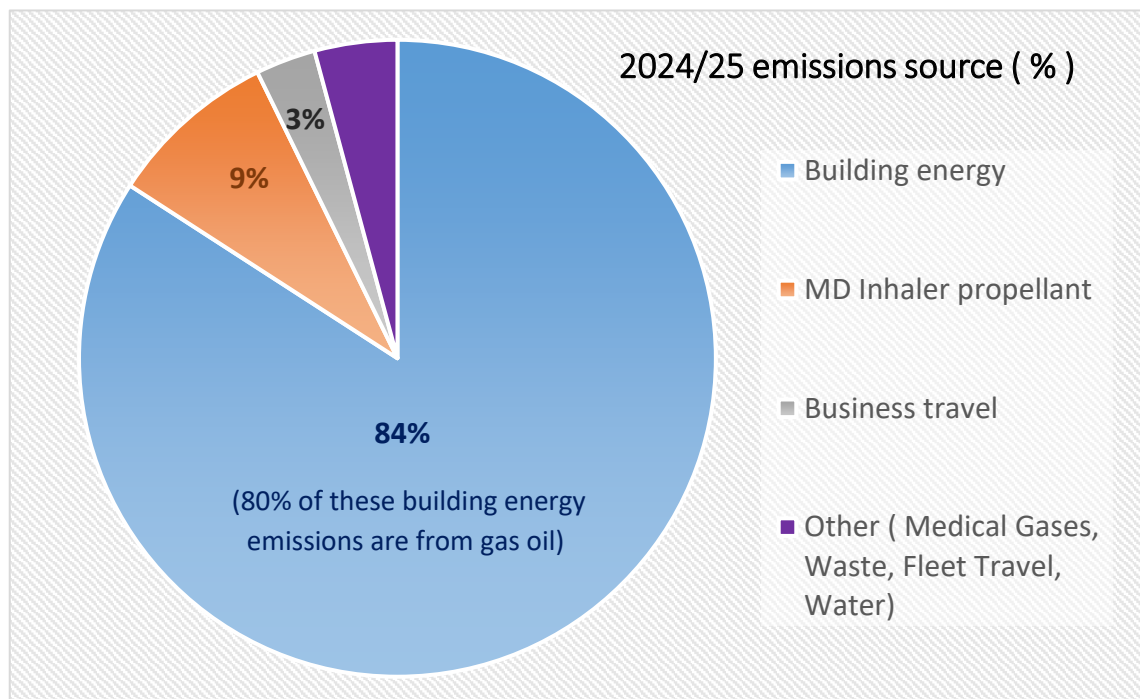
Building energy use, 2015/16, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, MWh				
	2015/16 energy use	2023/24 energy use	2024/25 energy use	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2024/25
Building fossil fuel use	8,250.0	8,680.6	9,414.0	+ 14.1 % %
District heat networks & biomass	0	0	0	n/a
Grid electricity	3,355.3	3,090.9	3,219.4	- 4.1 %
Renewable electricity	0	0	0	n/a
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11,605</b>	<b>11,771</b>	<b>12,633</b>	<b>+ 8.9 %</b>

## Building emissions analysis

Last year we made improvements in our overall emissions in every area except from building energy and waste.

The majority (84%) of NHSWI direct emissions is generated by building energy; from a mix of electricity and gas oil. Most of these emissions are generated by gas oil, which is the most used heating fuel throughout the whole of the Western Isles.

Western Isles Hospital (WIH) is responsible for two thirds of the total building emissions. (Ospadal Uibhist agus Bharraigh (Uist & Barra Hospital, known as OUAB)) is the second largest contributor.



The table below sets out where the largest variations in energy emissions occurred between last year and this year. Slight increases were generated in WIH but greater increases came from OUAB. These are the two highest emitting buildings therefore any percentage increase is significant.

**Buildings with largest variance from last year**

	Electricity Emissions	Gas Oil Emissions
Western Isles Hospital	↑ 0.8%	↑ 6.7%
OUAB	↑ 29%	↑ 37%
Health Board Offices	↓ -17%	↑ 24%
Community Clinic (BEB)	↑ 36%	
Habost Clinic	↓ -30%	

Possible explanations include:

- Met Office data confirms that the Western Isles average temperature was 1 °C lower during summer 2024; we also sustained some spells with much higher-than-average monthly rainfall. The islands experience wind speeds that are stronger than those found in most other Scottish regions. This adds a wind chill factor which can significantly lower the “feels-like” temperature, requiring buildings to be heated for longer periods.
- OUAB now hosts a dental clinic and areas of the hospital that were previously unused are now in use every day. The dental clinic has a new ventilation system with more daily air changes, increasing electricity consumption.
- In the Health Board Offices (HBO), although some heat saving upgrades have been implemented, it is an old building that is difficult to heat. All portable electric heaters used by office staff were removed for safety reasons. The central heating was subsequently increased and run for longer spells. This lowered electricity consumption but increased gas oil use.

**Other considerations**

While the option to transition to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel remains open this will incur higher supply costs. Additionally, gas oil, as the dominant fuel source throughout the isles, is readily available via multiple storage depots. Our sites lack adequate storage facilities and 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.

It is also important to note that some building improvements involve mandatory upgrades that can lead to increased energy use. An example of this is the ventilation system in the OUAB dental clinic.



Similarly, the planned installation of an MRI scanner in 2026 will raise energy demand, although it will deliver other environmental benefits, such as reducing patient travel-related emissions.

### ***What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce emissions from building energy use?***

- LED lights have been installed in more properties.
- Another feasibility study was delivered to transition Laxdale Court accommodation and office premises to more environmentally sustainable options. The cost analysis is to be delivered by summer 2025.

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

### ***What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce emissions from building energy use?***

- We have secured grant funding to complete installation of LED lights in all properties.
- A complete financial assessment of installing green energy sources to Laxdale Court premises will be delivered.
- The NHSWI Sustainability Steering Group will assess whether to pursue transitioning HBO to greener energy sources, given the potential costs involved (~£4.5 million) in upgrading an old building and the disruption to staff with temporary relocations required.

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

- We are evaluating adding HVO to our gas oil based on trial results from other boards and the cost analysis. Consideration will be given to conducting small scale trials in the first instance, for example using a mix of HVO and gas oil in one of the smaller properties first.
- There are plans to replace St Brendans Hospital on the Isle of Barra, with a new healthcare hub as part of the Barra & Vatersay Community Campus. The campus will integrate health, education, and community facilities. It will be built to achieve net zero in building energy.
- IT will be seeking funding to rework the virtual environment and rebuild the communications room, which will reduce energy consumption if implemented.



***I'm interested in encouraging easy  
and everyday behaviours and  
practical actions that create a more  
sustainable environment at work, as  
we do at home***

Lee Bolton  
NHS Western Isles Staff Green Champion

## 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 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 2024/25 were 62.7 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>(e), a reduction of 47% from the year before.

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

Nitrous oxide and entonox emissions, 2018/19, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)				
Source	2018/19 (baseline year) <sup>1</sup>	2023/24 <sup>1</sup>	2024/25	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2024/25
Piped nitrous oxide	52.5	48.1	0	- 100 %
Portable nitrous oxide	3.6	4.5	3.6	0 %
Piped entonox	0	0	0	n/a
Portable entonox	56.8	60.1	49.9	- 12.2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>112.9</b>	<b>113.6</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>- 52.6 %</b>

<sup>1</sup> Figures are different to last year's report as updated emissions factors were applied

Volatile medical gas emissions, 2018/19, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)				
	2018/19 (baseline year)	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2024/25
Desflurane	13.4	0	3.6 <sup>2</sup>	- 73.3 %
Isoflurane	0.2	0	0	- 100 %
Sevoflurane	3.4	5.0	5.6	+ 64.4 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>- 46.1 %</b>

<sup>2</sup> Desflurane is no longer in use. The reported emissions for 2024/25 are a result of four expired cylinders being returned.

### *What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce emissions from anaesthetic gases?*

We have completed the most significant steps to reduce emissions from anaesthetic gases: removing piped nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) manifolds and discontinuing the use of desflurane. These actions have eliminated the most impactful sources of emissions. We will continue to monitor practice and explore further opportunities to reduce emissions, in particular those from portable Entonox.

### *What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce emissions from anaesthetic gases?*

We will monitor gas use, support low-emission anaesthetic practices and explore any further opportunities for improvement.



*I'm quite new to the island, with the beauty and tranquillity of the natural environment being a huge draw for me. Sustainability makes sense to island living, and I'm keen to be a part of any improvements that can result in reducing the NHS's footprint on our local environment.*

Tara Taylor-Shayle  
NHS Western Isles Staff Green Champion



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.

### ***What did we do in 2024/25 to make surgery more sustainable?***

In 2024/25, NHS Western Isles did the following to make operating theatres more sustainable:

Implementing the Green Theatres Programme remains a standing agenda item of the Theatre Users Group and they will determine further actions to be adopted, implemented and tracked in line with National Green Theatres bundle actions. We have completed or made progress on the majority of recommended actions, while receiving dispensations for others where local circumstances prevent implementation or where the benefits are minimal. One such example is the “rub not scrub” initiative, which promotes the use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) for surgical hand disinfection in place of antimicrobial soap and water. In our case, this cannot be adopted due to the need to maintain water flow as part of ongoing Legionella control measures.

We have begun adopting lean tray measures in Surgery through optimising the contents of the surgical instruments tray by assessing the removal of items that are never or rarely used.

The Infection Prevention and Control Team continue the “Gloves Off” campaign where they work with ward managers, sharing information and animations from the NIPCM, available on TURAS. There are 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 are delivered as part of the campaign.

### ***What are we doing in 2025/26 to make surgery more sustainable?***

We will continue to work with the National Green Theatre Team to implement new bundle actions, deliver validation and measurement reports as well as meeting the reporting requirements.

We will ensure representation in the upcoming Green Renal and Green Endoscopy Programmes, so we can shape sustainable practices, contribute to greener healthcare and put solutions into action.

## 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 (DPIs) which can be used where clinically appropriate.

We estimate that emissions from inhalers in NHS Western Isles were 379 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2024/25.

Inhaler propellant emissions, 2018/19, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)				
Source	2018/19 (baseline year)	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2024/25
Primary care	356	377	370	+ 29.0 %
Secondary care	7	9	9	+ 3.9 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>+ 4.4 %</b>

### *What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce emissions from inhalers?*

We have run extensive awareness raising campaigns through social media, press releases (including the local radio station) and staff Team Briefs.

Both Primary and Secondary Care have been working towards reducing emissions from inhalers through awareness raising initiatives and by signposting prescribers to national guidance. This has resulted in a reduction in emissions from inhalers of 1.8% since last year. Two specific examples of work being done are:

#### **1 – Practice-Led Change**

Benbecula Medical Practice translated concern over the impact of inhaler emissions into action and adopted a range of steps:

- Clinical and staff meetings were used to share data and discuss practical steps and potential options.
- Staff completed training, and up-to-date inhaler prescribing guidance was displayed in consulting rooms.

- ScriptSwitch guidance was implemented to favour greener options and the specialist respiratory nurse reviewed patients to switch them to DPIs.
- Information was shared on noticeboards to inspire patients to switch to DPIs.
- By focusing on prevention, rather than relief of symptoms, fewer inhalers are in use.

This work has been very successful and between December 2022 and December 2024 they have reduced their emissions from 38.5 kg CO<sub>2</sub> to 21.7 kg CO<sub>2</sub> (per 1000 patients).

## 2 – WIH Pharmacy Department

- Staff and patients are being reminded to use appropriate bins for used inhalers.
- ScriptSwitch guidance has been updated and now signposts prescribers toward more sustainable inhalers.
- Patients are assessed for suitability to switch from propellant Metered Dose Inhalers to greener Dry Powder Inhalers, or to move to combination inhalers like triple therapy options, or MART, as appropriate.
- Prescribers have new asthma guidelines available, focusing on reducing the number of inhalers issued through better disease control.
- Pharmacy dispensing bags will soon be labelled to remind patients to return used inhalers for proper destruction. Posters will also be displayed in community pharmacies and dispensing practices.

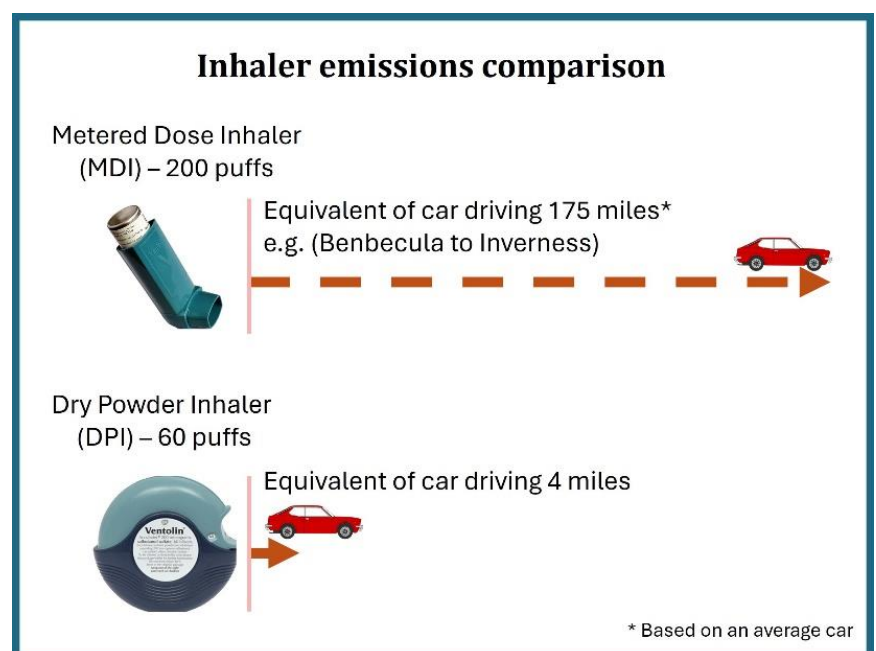


## What are we doing in 2025/26 to improve patient care and reduce emissions from inhalers?

We will continue building on the successful work initiated last year to reduce inhaler emissions in both primary and secondary care and will look for ways to improve and extend this work.

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

We use a wide range of communication channels to raise awareness with both staff and patients, including those in primary care. This includes targeted updates through the staff Team Brief newsletter, social media campaigns and coverage via press releases. Within surgeries, posters are displayed to highlight key messages, and stickers are placed on prescription bags to reach patients directly.





## Other sustainable care action

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### *What else did we do in 2024/25 to make care more sustainable?*

- Used digital platforms like “digital dermatology” to reduce referrals.
- Developed resources to highlight activity to referrers, share data, highlight new guidance and ensure all relevant information is provided before referral.
- Primary Care are also looking at areas of general deprescribing which they can focus on during polypharmacy reviews, to reduce medication burden and medicines in circulation.

We have also been promoting the implementation of Realistic Medicine practices by:

- Ensuring appropriate laboratory testing – reducing patient transport and waste.
- Working to reduce the number of urine infections and urine testing in care homes which reduces unnecessary testing, treatment and antibiotics.
- Working to reduce the need for patients to travel by implementing remote monitoring and increasing the use of initiatives such as Hospital at Home and the remote heart failure service, as well as promoting video and telephone consultations.

The Pharmacy Department in WIH have implemented a number of measures:

- Patients are encouraged to only order medicine they need with their repeat prescriptions.
- Oral dosing is being encouraged rather than IV, where appropriate, and reviewed after 48 hours if IV is being used.
- Prescriptions of low clinical value are regularly reviewed.
- After arthroplasty, injectable anticoagulants are being replaced by tablets, which many patients prefer and can self-administer.
- Non-cytotoxic waste is being sent for incineration to prevent chemicals from entering the atmosphere or water.

### *What else are we doing in 2025/26 to make care more sustainable?*

- We will continue all of the above and look for opportunities to expand, e.g. Pharmacy are planning to reduce ordering medicine to every 3 days instead of every 4 days.
- The new MRI scanner due to be installed 2025/26 will reduce the need for patient and escorts travel to the mainland.
- The Pharmacy Department is preparing to sign up to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Greener Pharmacy Toolkit — a digital self-assessment tool designed to help community and hospital pharmacy teams take practical steps to reduce the environmental impact of pharmacy services, pharmaceutical care, and medicines, while continuing to support patient care. The department has already implemented many of the recommended measures.

## 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.

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

### *The transition to electric vehicles*

The transition to a fully electric fleet has been hindered by limited funding and infrastructure. NHSWI also faces an added carbon burden due to the need to commission certain services off-island or between islands, as well as the reliance on visiting locums and other temporary staff to support the workforce. While these challenges persist, ongoing efforts in digital innovation and recruitment and retention initiatives have helped to ease some of these pressures.

A Fleet Management Strategy Report has been completed by the Finance Director. It lists the fleet vehicle types, contains a funding update, details the electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, discusses the financial implications and delivers recommendations on decarbonising the fleet. This includes case-by-case considerations to replace small cars and vans with EVs; larger vehicles will continue to be replaced by traditionally fuelled cars, to be reviewed in 18 months.

To address the infrastructure challenges, we will commission a review of the EV charge point network throughout the islands in the coming year. This review will guide the planned expansion, with a view to installing 23 additional charge points on our estate. We will also renegotiate our maintenance contract to ensure faster response times and improved reliability when faults occur.

Next year we will launch a salary sacrifice scheme, allowing staff to lease vehicles at reduced cost. While all vehicle types will be available, we will highlight the environmental, cost and tax benefits of choosing electric vehicles, to encourage greater uptake.

### *What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce the need to travel?*

NHS Western Isles have created a Sustainable and Active Travel Subgroup, with leads from Procurement, Finance, Works and Public Health, to create and deliver on an Action Plan. This plan includes actions to encourage low-carbon transport, improve accessibility and support healthier, more sustainable travel choices.

We strive to reduce patient travel by repatriation of services where appropriate (e.g., diagnostics) and advocate for remote consultations.

Additionally:

- Where possible, full prescriptions are being supplied by Western Isles Hospital Pharmacy, rather than, e.g., monthly, reducing the number of trips needed.

- Reducing medicine orders to four days per week will decrease transport-related emissions from the central belt.
- Replacing injectable anticoagulants to tablets after arthroplasty reduces the need for some nurse home visits to administer injections to those unable to self-administer.
- By buying higher pressure oxygen cylinders we have reduced the number needed and the transport requirements to deliver them.
- We continue to promote initiatives to reduce travel, such as car sharing, Near Me and digital health services.

### *What did we do in 2024/25 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. In addition to our Active Travel initiatives we aim to increase general activity levels and access to physical activity exercises. This encourages people to be more active which, in turn, will lead to them being more willing to undertake Active Travel for leisure purposes, when appropriate. Active travel routes are also promoted.

There are a number of initiatives we have undertaken:

- With funding from Cycling Scotland and HITRANS, Cycling Friendly, Social Housing and Residential Cycle Storage and Parking Development Fund we purchased 4 e-bikes and 6 bicycles for staff to use for business commutes, as well as several cycle shelters and Velobox units for some of our sites. 45 staff members have been through induction.
- A new bike shelter has been installed on Western Isles Hospital premises and Velobox units installed in North Harris Practice, the Health Centre Springfield Road Stornoway, Health Board Offices Stornoway and Uist & Barra Hospital.
- 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.
- We began work on the Sustainable Travel Action Plan which will outline measures to increase and promote active travel uptake.
- We continue to promote cycling friendly initiatives such as the cycling eExpenses allowances and the Cycling Teams channel, as well as promotional events that allow staff to try out the e-bikes and get maintenance and finance advice.
- The Dental Department will review increasing remote access to services.
- A consultant was hired with Sustrans and Places for Everyone to deliver a comprehensive options appraisal report to identify and evaluate opportunities to enhance walking,





wheeling, and cycling access across the three NHS Western Isles hospital sites in Stornoway, Benbecula and Castlebay. The report was delivered March 2025. The methodology to complete the report included on-site visits and an extensive engagement programme with staff, patients, community members, schools and stakeholders. The report will be reviewed over the coming months and if agreement is reached to progress to the design stage, funding will be sought early 2026 to deliver this next stage.

- The IT Department have implemented an online booking platform for staff pool bikes, and Estates have installed secure KeySafes, both of which improves the ease of booking staff pool bikes.
- The Commonplace Engagement Tool was launched, mapping the most common cycle and walking routes, to identify improvements that would make the routes a safer and easier choice for people to use.
- We continue to deliver several Active Travel training and campaigns, such as:
  - The Big Winter Step Challenge – walking a virtual North Coast 500 route.
  - The Spring Challenge to walk a virtual route to Portugal which began in March 2025. This is facilitated through the Big team Challenge app and as an added bonus, they will plant 1 tree for every 10 active participants that join the step challenge.
  - Distributing 300 hi-viz armbands to members of the community to use when walking outdoors during the dark months.
  - Networking at HITRANS events to explore using Cycle Trains and digital availability to hire e-bikes.
  - The Health Promotion Practitioner has been trained on upskilling Walk on Hebrides Walk Leaders to become Dementia Friendly Walk Leaders and Strength and Balance for Walk Leaders.
  - Walk on Hebrides was used as a case study into the benefits of providing grant funding through Walking for Health.
  - Continuing promotion targeted at those struggling to meet the 30 min daily physical activity recommendations, including “Walk your way to strength and balance” exercises offered by Walk Leaders.
  - Walk Leaders from the local Third Sector project “Embark” worked in partnership with NHSWI Occupational Therapy Team to deliver Wheelchair Handling training to support those in Wheelchairs and their carers to attend Health Walks
  - Five new Adult Bikeability instructors were trained to increase confidence and safety among those wishing to cycle more.

### ***What did we do in 2024/25 to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?***

In 2024/25, we continued to liaise with the local authority and partner organisations to provide support where possible in improving public and community transport links to NHS sites and services. However, it is important to note that responsibility for transport lies with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES), and NHS Western Isles has limited influence in this area.

### ***What are we going to do in 2025/26 to reduce the need to travel?***

We will continue to promote and, where possible, expand and improve on our current initiatives, including delivering a completed Sustainable Travel Action Plan.

Additional measures we will implement:

- Aiming to launch a salary sacrifice scheme, allowing staff to lease vehicles at reduced cost. While all vehicle types will be available, we will highlight the environmental, cost and tax benefits of choosing electric vehicles to encourage greener choices.
- Undertake an investigation into the barriers of using remote digital appointments and then deliver a targeted campaign highlighting the benefits, with the aim to improve uptake.
- IT will be reviewing digital services and patient management functionality which will include digitising patient services and providing access to online appointments and medical records, if implemented.
- Dentistry is reviewing increasing remote access to services, reducing patient travel.

### ***What are we going to do in 2025/26 to improve active travel?***

We will continue to promote and, where possible, expand and improve on our current initiatives, including delivering a completed Sustainable Travel Action Plan.

Additional measures we will implement:

- Initially, staff can only use pool bikes for business purposes. We will achieve necessary permissions to allow staff to also use for leisure purposes.
- Funding has been received to purchase an additional e-bike for the Uist sites.
- We will continue upgrading staff bike shelters and Veloboxes will be installed in more sites.
- The Cycle to Work voucher scheme allowance limit for purchasing e-bikes will be reviewed as they are typically more expensive to buy than manual cycles.
- When appropriate we will prepare to apply for Stages 3-4 (design) of Sustrans funding to install Walk, Wheel and Cycle paths in the three main hospital sites.
- 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 2025/26 to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?***

We continue to support the local authority and agencies to improve transport links through partnership working.

We will be exploring ways to make it easier for patients to plan trips to appointments through apps and websites, enabling them to make better choices public transport and active travel choices.

## Fleet and Business Travel

Greenhouse gas emissions, tCO2e	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage change
Fleet emissions <sup>1</sup>	60.5	52.5	- 13.1 %
Business Travel <sup>2</sup>	141	134	- 5.0 %

<sup>1</sup> updated emissions factors used (The UK Government Conversion Factors for greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting)

<sup>2</sup> includes WTT for cars; rail and ferry emissions only recorded for public transport, using expenses data

We are working to remove all petrol and diesel fuelled vehicles 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 2024 and March 2025:

	March 2024		March 2025		Difference in % zero tailpipe emissions vehicles
	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	
Cars	10	0	11	9 %	+ 9 %
Light commercial vehicles	19	37 %	18	39 %	+ 2 %
Heavy vehicles	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Specialist vehicles	2	0 %	2	0 %	0 %

The following table sets out how many bicycles and eBikes were in NHS Western Isles' fleet at the end of March 2024 and March 2025:

	March 2024	March 2025	Percentage change
Bicycles	6	6	0
eBikes	4	4	0

The following table sets out the distance travelled by our cars, vans and heavy vehicles in 2024/25

Distance travelled, kms	Cars	Light commercial vehicles	Heavy vehicles	Specialist vehicles	Total
2023/24 <sup>1</sup>	109,781	205,474	n/a	n/a	<b>315,255</b>
2024/25 <sup>2</sup>	108,510	178,067	n/a	u/k	<b>286,577</b>
Percentage change	- 1.2 %	- 13.3 %	n/a	u/k	<b>- 9.1 %</b>

<sup>1</sup> based on a monthly average

<sup>2</sup> Calculated using average emission factors for car petrol/diesel, LCV diesel and LCV EV. Only total fleet mileage figures were available so mileage was split by vehicle type in proportion to fleet composition.

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, tCO2e	Cars <sup>1</sup>	Public transport <sup>2</sup>	Flights	Total
2023/24	139	1.12	0.50	<b>141</b>
2024/25	132	0.78	0.89	<b>134</b>
Percentage change	- 5.0 %	- 30.4 %	+ 43.8 %	<b>- 5.0 %</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes WTT

<sup>2</sup> Ferry and rail



## 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?***

- Our Hospital Garden and the Jubilee Rose Garden, which are situated in the grounds of Western Isles Hospital and managed by the local Rotary Club, offers an extensive variety of carefully curated plants and 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. The garden will be temporarily relocated to make space for the installation of the new MRI scanner, so in Spring 2026, we plan to launch a promotional campaign inviting staff, visitors, and members of the public to rediscover and enjoy the garden once it has been fully restored to its original state.
- NHSWI aims to work in partnership with our local GP practices and support them in their journey to becoming more sustainable. One of them, Broadbay MP, which is situated in the centre of the main town Stornoway, have transformed a barren courtyard into a natural haven. The area is now alive with seasonal plants, wildflowers, and shrubs that provide food and shelter for birds, bees and pollinators. See page 25 for more information.

#### ***What actions have been taken to contribute to the NHS Scotland 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 NHS Scotland Greenspace Assessment.

## Broadbay Medical Practice

*Transforming a courtyard into a tranquil garden haven*



Marion Macleod, Broadbay Medical Practice's dedicated footcare practitioner, brings healing not only through her clinical expertise but also through her remarkable gift for creating spaces of tranquillity. In her spare time, Marion lovingly tends to the small courtyard garden, cajoling and coordinating other members of staff into giving a helping hand. Her efforts transformed an overlooked space into a peaceful sanctuary that brings joy to patients and staff alike.



The garden has become a haven in the centre of Stornoway, alive with the sounds of visiting birds who frequent feeders, baths, and nesting boxes, the latter built by Gordon Macleod, the Lead ANP. The practice is proud to support Marion's vision by providing plants and materials, recognising that this garden represents something precious—a reminder that healing encompasses not just clinical care, but the nurturing of spaces where both body and spirit can find restoration. Marion's dedication to creating beauty for others perfectly embodies the compassionate care that defines the practice.





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

- In Spring 2025, the organisation will take part in the No Mow May campaign across several of our properties, helping to raise awareness of the benefits that wild spaces bring to the natural world. Much of our estate is already left wild throughout the year, supporting biodiversity and encouraging wildlife to thrive.

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

- NHS Western Isles promotes regular awareness raising campaigns, including informing and educating staff of the cause and effect of the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity as well as educating on the importance of biodiversity and nature through the Induction Programme that all staff need to undertake when they start employment.

## Greenspace

The design and management of the NHS Scotland 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 planting a number of perennials, plants and flowers, as well as installing 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 undertaken with staff but a more comprehensive campaign will begin Spring 2026, targeting staff, patients, visitors and community through social media, press releases, leaflets and posters throughout island venues. Staff and volunteers 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 supported a local volunteer-led community association by funding Polycrubs in the Cearns housing estate in Stornoway, an area that has been identified as experiencing high deprivation. The "Grow Project" has continued to expand, with additional raised vegetable plots added to meet growing demand and improve access. The project provides additional benefits to local residents by allowing them to grow healthy food. The project is coordinated by Iain Leng, a dedicated resident whose passion is transforming the site into a thriving, organic green space. Local residents enjoy the fruits of their labour and any surplus is given to the Community Fridge</p>
Community growing project	<p>Encouraging grow-your-own and promoting community resilience.</p>	<p>We will evaluate funding opportunities to transform a section of unused land at Uist &amp; Barra Hospital for potential community garden partnerships with local growing groups.</p>



## SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT, CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND WASTE

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 2024/25 to reduce the environmental impact of and the quantity of the goods and services we buy?*

- The Corporate Induction Programme now includes climate change and sustainability topics, along with the environmental impact of healthcare provision. This addition will give new staff members an understanding of these critical topics and equip them with the knowledge to drive positive change.
- We regularly promote the TURAS eLearning Environmental Sustainability and Waste Management courses to staff.
- Around 90% of properties have access to recycling bins. The other sites will be assessed for additional need in 2025. We will continue staff awareness raising of these and the importance of reducing waste and ensuring correct disposal. We continue to carry out pre-acceptance audits of clinical waste to ensure segregation is carried out as required and recycling rates are maximised.
- A number of departments are undertaking ongoing waste reduction measures. We will continue to support and promote these. They are also being reported in staff communication channels, such as the Team Brief, Social Media posts and Press Releases; this celebrates the achievements staff are making as well as giving examples of good practice that can be adopted by other departments.

**New NHS ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COURSE** launched

Interested in environmental sustainability?  
Want to know how you can help the NHS tackle climate change?  
A new TURAS Learn environmental sustainability course has been launched

The course introduces sustainability concepts, topics and issues, and will develop your understanding of:

- ✓ the effect the environment has on health
- ✓ the environmental impacts of delivering healthcare services
- ✓ action that NHSScotland is taking to become more sustainable
- ✓ action we can take as individuals to contribute and make a difference

Log in to your TURAS account to access the course.  
TURAS learn is available to all NHS staff.

### *What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce the environmental impact of the goods and services we buy?*

- We have embedded sustainability considerations into the tender process. The option to be scored on environmental performance is added where appropriate. We also use the national frameworks that remain best practice, ensuring best value while also encouraging suppliers to adopt more sustainable practices.
- Efforts to reduce paper waste are currently underway. These include expanding the use of hybrid email, exploring electronic communication options for appointment letters and other

correspondence, and implementing a digital platform for lab test requests/results to reduce the need for paper. Additionally, a transition to unbleached recycled paper is under consideration. There are longer term plans to move to digital patient records.

- We continue with awareness raising initiatives such as the “Gloves Off” campaign and supporting national sustainability campaigns.
- The organisation currently provides a staff site where unwanted office furniture can be given away and requests for items can be advertised. In 2025/26, this site will be renewed and rebranded as the **Office Freecycle** page, expanding its scope to include not only furniture but also general office equipment and supplies. To support this, a prompt will be added to the front page of the Pecos ordering system, reminding staff to check the Office Freecycle page before placing new orders.

We want to reduce the amount of waste we produce and increase how much of it is recycled.

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

***NB. All waste streams from Western Isles Hospital (including recycled, municipal, and clinical waste) are measured. For the other sites, only clinical waste is recorded, as this is transported to the hospital before being sent for disposal. Other waste streams from these sites (such as municipal and recycling) are collected by the local council during their regular domestic runs and therefore cannot be measured by us.***

Type	2022/23 (tonnes)	2023/24 (tonnes)	2024/25 (tonnes)	Percentage change – 2022/23 to 2024/25
Waste to landfill	92.4	69.4	68.2	- 26.2%
Waste to incineration	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Recycled waste	12.2	18.5	16.3	+ 33.6%
Food waste <sup>1</sup>	u/k	u/k	28.4	u/k
Clinical waste <sup>2</sup>	84.4	72.5	88.8	+ 5.2%

<sup>1</sup> Data available from September 24 to March 25 and extrapolated to full year

<sup>2</sup> Municipal waste was only recorded from October 2022 so figure scaled up for that year using available data. Individual clinical waste streams data are not available; for emissions factor purposes, “orange” classification has been used as this is the biggest proportion of the clinical waste.

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

TARGET	OUTCOME
Reduce domestic waste by a minimum of 15%, and greater where possible compared to 2012/2013 – by 2025	<p>Currently, NHS Western Isles is working to national targets.</p> <p>The exception is Food Waste where we have committed to reducing food waste by 33% by 2027 compared to baseline 2024/25, when data recording started</p>
Ensure that no more than 5%, and less where possible, of all domestic waste is sent to landfill – by 2025	
Reduce the food waste produced by 33% compared to 2015/16 – by 2025	
Ensure that 70% of all domestic waste is recycled or composted – by 2025	

### *What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce our waste?*

- Two new food dryers have been purchased for the Western Isles Hospital. Installation is expected late 2025. This will reduce food bulk by up to 90%; waste food can then be sent to landfill and no longer needs to be macerated and flushed in the water system. It will also improve food waste data collection. All food waste (plated (wards), dining room waste and production waste (kitchen)) is currently being recorded manually.
- Climate change and sustainability issues, along with the environmental impact of healthcare provision, has been incorporated into the Corporate Induction Programme. This addition will give new staff members an understanding of waste management.
- A network of Staff Green Champions has been established, with members from all areas of the Western Isles. They promote and implement green initiatives, including waste reduction.
- IT waste is being reviewed. We aim to establish a process of upcycling IT equipment to be donated to local charities. A division restructure alongside an already heavy workload has delayed progress. It is hoped to work in partnership with local groups to facilitate, but we have as yet been unable to find one to work with us.
- A bid for an on-site Clinical Waste Treatment unit was submitted in 2023/24 but was declined due to projected higher running costs. The bid will be reviewed every 18–24 months to reassess its cost-effectiveness.
- All waste reduction measures and sustainability initiatives are shared through staff communication channels such as the Team Brief, social media platforms, and press releases. This not only highlights staff achievements but also showcases good practices that other departments can adopt.

### ***What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce our waste?***

- In the summer of 2025, WIH and OUAB dining rooms will begin applying a 25p surcharge to anyone using a single use takeaway cup. We will provide staff with a reusable cup, funded by the Endowments Fund, to encourage them to make the switch.
- The Dental Clinic will run a pilot scheme to send appointment letters electronically with the potential to move to digital correspondence throughout the wider organisation.
- The Dental Department digital scanner is expected to be in use by end 2025. This will reduce the need to take impressions and subsequently the waste from alginate and gypsum, as well as reducing supplementary equipment/postage emissions. The department continually reviews practices to identify waste reduction measures.
- In Winter 2025, we will launch a comprehensive Waste Awareness Campaign aimed at all staff, covering every waste stream. The campaign will refresh training resources and guidance and promote better segregation as well as encouraging a reduction in waste.
- The IT team is reviewing medium- and long-term plans, which include:
  - Enhancing digital platforms to simplify booking appointments and requesting or receiving lab tests/results, which would significantly reduce paper use.
  - Digitising paper records to improve efficiency and sustainability.
  - We will be submitting a proposal to move from using bleached, virgin paper to using unbleached, recycled.



***I enjoy encouraging friends to be more sustainable, including one who made a New Year resolution to recycle more and another who takes the bus instead of a taxi on the mainland!***

***Now, I try to spread the message of not cutting the grass too early in the year. This saves the dandelions for the bees – I have already converted a few people***

Margaret Ann Morrison  
NHS Western Isles Staff Green Champion





## Spotlight on Sustainability

### Western Isles Hospital - Pharmacy Department

The Pharmacy Department at Western Isles Hospital has been actively implementing measures to reduce waste and enhance sustainability. Sue Price, Chief Pharmacist and Staff Green Champion, said “The impacts of climate change are showing all around us, affecting the rugged beauty of the Hebrides. I was astonished to learn that medicines contribute about a quarter of the NHS carbon footprint, inhalers account for about 3% and manufacturing and use of other medicines accounts for 20% of the total carbon footprint from primary care.

In recognition of this, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has established a greener pharmacy workstream. NHS Western Isles Pharmacy are signed up to this and have already achieved Bronze level certification. Staff have been asked to make climate pledges and these vary from taking a quicker shower, increasing meat free meals or choosing environmentally friendly cosmetics.

There is such a lot we can do when we work together with other healthcare professionals and patients. Some examples of initiatives we have started are:

- 🌱 Patients are encouraged to only order medicine they need with repeat prescriptions. Putting medicines down the toilet or burning on a fire can release active medicines or toxic chemicals into the water or air.
- 🌱 Encouraging patients to bring their own medicines to hospital.
- 🌱 Reviewing the ordering process for wards and double-checking things aren't being over-ordered.
- 🌱 Pharmacy have been reducing printing by increasing the use of paper records, moving to a CD register rather than paper and using electronic records.
- 🌱 Providing patients a recycling kit for used weight-loss and insulin pens, to be returned to the manufacturer.
- 🌱 Using drinking water to reconstitute oral solutions; this reduces bottled water associated waste.
- 🌱 Ordering higher pressure oxygen cylinders. We need half as many cylinders to transport the same volume of oxygen which reduces transport by road and ferries.
- 🌱 Swapping from intravenous treatments to oral therapy reduces carbon footprint, costs and nursing time significantly. The amount of plastic waste is reduced, the weight of goods being moved here is reduced and, usually, the patients are much happier with tablets.
- 🌱 Changing from injections to anticoagulant tablets after joint replacement surgery has resulted in a significant cost saving and has reduced plastic waste and clinical waste. Patients seem to prefer taking tablets to injecting every day and it helps to cut down on some district nurse home visits
- 🌱 Swapping patients from metered dose inhalers to dry powder inhaler where appropriate. Patients are being encouraged to return inhalers to the pharmacy or dispensing doctor for proper disposal, reducing the amount of propellant gases being released into the atmosphere.

It's great to see how often the green projects bring financial and other advantages too. We're always looking out for new ways of working to keep moving things along.”



Sue Price  
NHS Western Isles, Staff  
Green Champion

**NHS Western Isles** is committed to a creating a **healthy,**  
**green and resilient** service and community

## 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 2024/25 to develop and implement our EMS?***

Relevant staff leads were identified and undertook training on the RIO EMS platform. This will allow them to update the system, although resources and staff availability to work on this is limited.

### ***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 2025/26 to further develop and implement our EMS?***

We will maintain contact with the national team to identify and take forward any opportunities to develop our EMS. However, given current constraints on staff time and expertise, we anticipate that progress will be limited. We will work with national support teams to address this.

### ***What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce our environmental impacts and improve environmental performance?***

- Achieved major cuts in anaesthetic gas emissions, with a 47% overall reduction.
- Extensively promoted greener inhaler use, delivering a 2% reduction in related emissions.
- Engaged staff widely, embedding sustainability in induction and launching a Green Champions network.
- Reduced travel emissions through lower fleet mileage and business travel.
- Ran many successful active travel initiatives, including new staff pool bikes, e-bikes and new cycling facilities.
- We strengthened waste management practices through staff awareness raising initiatives.

***What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce our environmental impacts and improve environmental performance?***

- Expanding energy efficiency measures, including completing LED lighting upgrades across all sites and assessing opportunities for renewable energy installations.
- Supporting sustainable travel, through a new salary sacrifice scheme for electric vehicles, expansion of EV charging points and promotion of digital consultations to reduce patient and staff travel.
- Reducing waste, with a waste awareness campaign and pilots in digital correspondence.
- Embedding a culture of sustainability, through the Green Champions network and ongoing staff awareness campaigns.

***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**

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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?*

- We have awarded a number of Capital Grants that have supported investment in local facilities, population wellbeing and community resilience across the islands. In December 2024, we launched the next funding round, inviting organisations to submit their bids.

Examples of awards already given:

- To Climate Hebrides to purchase a new electric vehicle and e-bikes to support their outreach efforts in raising awareness about climate change.
- To Cycling Without Age Scotland to purchase a trishaw and two e-bikes to enable care home residents to enjoy regular enjoyable scenic trips to different locations.
- To upgrade the roof of an indoor riding arena to better withstand extreme weather and making the facility more resilient to future climate impacts.
- For Macaulay College to purchase a Portakabin accessible toilet unit. The farm offer activities on the farm such as animal care, horticulture, creating jams and chutneys, and selling eggs, as well as craft/artwork. The one-to-one support has a focus on health, wellbeing and being part of the community.

There are many more bids under consideration. Some that are due to be awarded in 2025/26 include:

- For Point and Sandwick Community Coastal Path Committee to purchase a truck and trailer to transport e-bikes and cargo bikes which members of the public can borrow. This includes people on low incomes or recovering from health conditions and will allow them to undertake physical activity and access outdoor spaces.
- To make improvements to the existing Newmarket Gateway Trust Blackwater Trail walkway from Newmarket moor into Tong. This is especially needed for parents and carers with prams and buggies and those using mobility scooters or who may struggle with rough terrain, due to areas being degraded and often unpassable.
- Hebridean Celtic Festival have applied for a funding grant to purchase durable, interlocking ground guards designed to minimise turf damage and soil compaction on the festival site. They will be used annually, making it a long-term investment in site sustainability and supports the festival’s drive for environmental responsibility.
- 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.



- We have distributed a number of Wonderbags to community groups to distribute to those in need. A Wonderbag is a portable, padded thermal bag that acts as a non-electric, insulated slow cooker designed to retain heat from food that has been brought to a boil, allowing it to continue cooking for several hours without additional fuel or electricity. It reduces energy use, saves time, and helps cut carbon emissions while also keeping food warm.
- 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.

- In the coming year we will work with some partner organisations to promote Scottish Interfaith Week. The theme this year will be to encourage communities to explore issues close to the hearts and minds of Scotland's youth: education, climate, mental health, poverty and discrimination.



*Members of the public out and about on trishaws and e-bikes which were purchased for Without Age Scotland using NHSWI capital grant funding. This enables care home residents to enjoy regular enjoyable outdoor scenic trips to different locations.*

### *What are we doing to improve the resilience of our local community?*

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 participated in The Outer Hebrides Climate Conference OH-COP1 (the first event was held September 2024 and OH-COP2 is scheduled for September 2025). These events help raise awareness of local climate challenges, fosters collaboration between organisations and residents and generates ideas for practical, locally driven projects. This empowers communities to adapt, respond, and plan for a more sustainable and resilient future.

We partnered with members of the OH CCWG and The Open University in applying for funding from the UK Research Institute and from The Lottery Fund, to finance 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. These bids were unsuccessful, but we will continue to support other similar opportunities.



*I became a green champion, because the environment is very precious to me, because I have already tried to make changes at work to protect the environment, and I would like to encourage others to do the same.*

*Dr Kate Dawson  
NHS Western Isles Staff Green Champion*



## CONCLUSION

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In 2024/25, NHS Western Isles made meaningful progress in reducing our environmental impact and embedding sustainability across our services. We achieved substantial reductions in emissions from anaesthetic gases, promoted greener inhaler use, reduced travel-related emissions, and expanded active travel initiatives. Our efforts in waste reduction, staff engagement, and biodiversity enhancement have further strengthened our commitment to environmental stewardship.

Despite challenges such as an ageing estate, high reliance on fossil fuels and limited staff capacity, we have continued to identify opportunities for improvement and invest in long-term change. Our greatest asset is our staff and the launch of the Green Champions network, integration of sustainability into induction and training and active participation in local and national climate partnerships highlight our growing sustainability culture.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, we will build on this progress by completing energy efficiency upgrades, expanding sustainable travel options and reducing waste through new campaigns and digital means. We will continue to support greener models of care through initiatives such as the Green Theatres, Green Renal and Green Endoscopy Programmes, as well as sustainable prescribing. At the same time, we will contribute to wider island resilience by working with community partners on adaptation planning, biodiversity, and greenspace projects.

Through these combined efforts, NHS Western Isles will continue to move toward our net-zero commitments, ensuring we play our part in protecting both the health of our population and the health of the planet.



small acts when multiplied by millions of people can  
**transform the world**



## Author

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