



Badenoch and Strathspey Community Hospital

INTRODUCTION

As a Scottish public body, we have a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity:

“It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity, so as it is consistent with proper exercise of these functions.” [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

The biodiversity duty is about connecting people with the environment and managing diversity in the wider environment all around us, not just in protecting sites.

The [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) places a duty on us to make a report publicly available every three years on our compliance with biodiversity duty.

This publication is our report of our activities for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023.

We also produce an annual sustainability report which details our environmental impact. The link to the 22/23 report can be found here [Sustainability Report](#).

OUR ROLE AND PURPOSE

As a centre of infrastructure expertise owned by the Scottish Government, our aim is:

'to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure investment and use in Scotland by working collaboratively with public bodies and industry, leading to better value for money and providing the opportunity to maximise the investment in the fabric of Scotland, and hence contribute to the Scottish Government's long term ambitions for inclusive economic growth, net zero carbon emissions and building sustainable places.'

Infrastructure connects people both physically and digitally to their communities and to economic opportunities; it deals with the energy, water and waste needs of daily life, and it keeps families and public services safe, warm and dry in homes and public buildings.

Increasingly infrastructure is also seen to encompass the natural assets of the green and blue spaces around us which contribute so much to the quality of our lives. High-quality infrastructure is therefore the underpinning element of an inclusive Scotland, with a flourishing economy, vibrant places and a sustainable environment.

As infrastructure specialists, we take a leadership approach and work hand in hand with our public and private sector partners to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits coming from their infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure is a long game, so the planning and implementation of Scottish Government's response to the climate emergency will be a 20-year mission; accelerating, refreshing and building on work which has already, in some cases, been decades in the making.

It will be undertaken in an era of unprecedented digital advancement of all industries, requiring increasing connectivity, and with care to both maximise for Scotland the economic benefits which it presents; and, with all people and places in mind, to create a just transition to a net-zero carbon economy.

OUR APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY

Our role is not directly linked to biodiversity and so we link in an indirect way. We do not own land and we have no direct role in the management and use of land or natural resources. We do not have a role in the promotion of sport, recreation, tourism, education and healthcare, social services or any of the other core activities set out in the Scottish Government's guidance on the biodiversity reporting duty but we do recognise that infrastructure investment and management has a significant biodiversity impact.

The biodiversity impact of the programmes we manage are accounted for by the organisations which have budgetary control of the projects within these programmes. We have an influence on these programmes and comment below on actions in our **programme activity**.

During most of the period of this report (1 January 2021 to September 2023), we occupied the second floor of a four-storey building on Thistle Street, just off St Andrew Square in the centre of Edinburgh. This was a privately leased office and our landlord was responsible for maintenance of the building, including arranging the gas heating for the building. However, we were responsible for the electricity in our office. As such, we were best placed to carry out a smaller, proportionate set of activities for biodiversity in our **corporate activity**.

As of October 2023, we occupy the fourth floor of a five-storey building in Thistle House, Haymarket, Edinburgh. Our public sector landlord, the Scottish Legal Aid Board, is responsible for maintenance of the building.

CORPORATE ACTIONS ON BIODIVERSITY

During the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023, we have taken the following actions on reducing the human impact on biodiversity:

- Continued with food waste collections in the office to ensure as little as possible ends up in landfill
- Continued to reduce the number of bins in the office and increased the amount of recycling receptacles

- Reduced our electricity use per employee by continuing to source all electricity in the period we were at Thistle Street, from a supply with formal Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin certification
- Identified mainland UK flights as a significant, avoidable source of carbon emissions and put in place a policy that stipulates trains should be used in the majority of circumstances in place of UK flights
- Circa. 60 SFT staff took part in planting, clearing, erecting fencing and other biodiversity activities at the Water of Leith Walkway in September 2023 as part of our annual staff development day
- Continued with our bike to work scheme to encourage cycling and reduce our carbon footprint
- Continued with plants in the office to improve the air quality

PROGRAMME AND PROJECTS ACTION ON BIODIVERSITY

Infrastructure development can have both significant positive and negative biodiversity impact. Positive impact examples from projects where we had a role include:

Learning Estate Investment Programme

This £2bn programme of new and refurbished schools is jointly supported by Scottish Government and local authorities and was launched in 2019. It aligned with the new Learning Estate Strategy which included the principles below:

- Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle
- Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes for walking, cycling and wheeling
- Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised

The programme has advanced these aims in the 37 projects announced to date and in our programme management role we have embedded these aims in programme requirements, tracked their progress in development and will gather feedback once they are operational. Examples of promoting biodiversity in specific projects include:

- Schools located adjacent to existing woodland to provide an educational and recreational resource
- Spaces provided to promote learning in relation to horticulture and agriculture
- Land and shelter on school sites to promote community/school allotments
- Encouraging projects in coastal locations to have shore access and viewing areas

We have hosted webinars on outdoor learning and also participated in sessions and discussions on outdoor environments at the Learning Places Scotland Conference. The third phase of projects was announced in November 2023 and these are located across a wide

geographical area providing opportunities to embrace the challenges of a wide range of locations and landscapes.

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An NHS Highland project, designed and built by hub North with the hub Programme that we manage of behalf of the Scottish Government.

- The hospital has been built within the Cairngorms National Park meeting all Cairngorm National Park requirements
- Cairngorms National Park called in the planning application and praised the environmental approach taken
- Significant ecological planning conditions were managed by a local Environment contractor as an integral part of the project
- The project design and construction solution incorporated new receptor area to translocate lizards
- The project also created a habitat compensation area
- The project was praised for its building design that complemented its prominent location within the park with extensive use of timber cladding and brown sedum roofs
- The project team engaged and commissioned local artists to improve the internal designs bringing local landscape scenes into the building

FUTURE PLANS

We are committed in the future, to:

- Mainstream biodiversity measures into our wider policies
- Continue to take steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Educate our workforce about biodiversity
- Engage with communities, young people and the public about biodiversity, where appropriate
- Take actions to increase understanding of nature and biodiversity externally and promote positive impacts on infrastructure projects and programmes in which we are involved, where possible
- Measure the impacts of the actions on biodiversity we have taken

Specific actions we are planning to take in the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026, include:

- Encourage staff to utilise their two days paid volunteering leave a year, on activities related to nature and biodiversity
- Create a biodiversity page on the staff intranet where articles on biodiversity can be highlighted

- Review policies, procedures and strategies to ensure biodiversity aspects are embedded across the organisation
- Raise awareness of biodiversity by introducing high level training sessions
- Carry out an annual review of our biodiversity actions and their impacts
- Raise awareness of biodiversity in our external work with the public and private sector across our broad range of infrastructure projects and programmes