

NHS 24
BOARD MEETING
18 DECEMBER 2025
ITEM NO 9.3
FOR APPROVAL

NHS 24 CLIMATE EMERGENCY & SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT

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Action Required:
 The Board is asked to review and approve the draft Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme (CESP) Annual Report 2024/2025 for presentation and approval by the Board. The Report is normally due for submission to Scottish Government at the end of November, however due to the NHS 24 governance cycle the submission date has been extended until the end of December 2025.

Note: The document is a Scottish Government template for all NHS Boards to report in the same format, therefore layout and format should not be altered.

Key Points for the Board to consider:
 Responding to the climate emergency is one of the Scottish Government's highest priorities. CESP activities are part of the annual review for all health boards.

Governance process:
 The NHS 24 governance reflects that defined by the Scottish Government National Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme. The Service Transformation Programme Board monitors the progress of work covered by CESP to ensure success criteria are met, outcomes delivered, and climate change improvement benefits are realised.

Strategic alignment and link to overarching NHS Scotland priorities and strategies:
 The CESP report summarises for Scottish Government the progress towards NHS 24's sustainability strategy.

The paper aligns with the following key strategic priorities:

- NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy: 2022-2026.
- The Scottish Government (SG) Care and Wellbeing Portfolio and Public health priorities for Scotland are overall strategic reform policies and delivery framework within Health and Social Care.
- Realistic Medicine Action Plans
- NHS 24 CESP Strategy

Strategic alignment and link to Corporate Delivery Plan activity:

7.1a: Deliver a programme of activity to support efficiencies improvements that will lead to:
 • Cost reduction, cost avoidance and income generation

- Service Productivity Improvements

7.1b: Deliver interventions that seek to reduce negative impact to the environment and contribute towards net zero

Risk Management:

Risk management is aligned with the standing corporate governance process.

Financial Implications:

A key deliverable of the CESP programme is to identify any potential financial efficiency.

Equality and Diversity:

NHS 24 takes account of equality and diversity requirements in relation to Sustainability Development and environmental matters.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 The Board is asked to note the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme (CESP) Report for approval.

2. TIMING

2.1 The report is submitted to Scottish Government on an annual basis and will be sent in December 2025. The timing of the report allows boards to collate the data required for the submission.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Scottish Government created the annual CESP report, requesting all Health Boards complete the submission. This allows Scottish Government to understand the progress being made across the Health Boards and the continuing challenges being faced.

3.2 A number of working parties have been formed allowing Health Boards to share learning, expertise and approached, to the benefit of all.

4. ENGAGEMENT

4.1 To ensure accurate information has been provided within the report, engagement has included directorates across NHS 24.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any savings identified within the CESP work have been captured and reported to the Sustainability and Value Group.

6. MEASURABLE BENEFITS

6.1 The benefit of NHS 24 providing the various elements climate data within the report to Scottish Government is to allow a system wide monitoring of progress towards the net zero goal.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 Work will continue to improve the data capture and monitoring of the various environmental indicators. Action will also continue to reduce the impact of NHS 24 on the environment.

NHS 24

Annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report 2024/25

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1. Introduction

NHS 24 is committed to supporting a healthier Scotland by delivering care, advice, and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We do this through the 111 service and a range of digital platforms, helping people access the right care at the right time.

This report outlines NHS 24's progress and performance in relation to climate emergency and sustainability for the financial year 2024/25. It reflects our ongoing efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve environmental stewardship, and contribute to NHS Scotland's commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2040.

As a national health organisation, NHS 24 serves a population of approximately 5.48 million across Scotland. Our services are currently delivered from six main contact centre sites and five remote and rural locations, covering a wide geographical area that includes both urban and rural communities.

From April 2024 – March 2025, our average headcount and whole time equivalent were 2131 and 1491.41, respectively. Our workforce operates across a diverse estate comprising 6 buildings, with a total footprint of approximately 9600m² as of March 2025. Our estate strategy continues to evolve to support sustainability goals, including energy efficiency, reduced travel emissions, and improved staff wellbeing.

This is NHS 24's fourth Annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report. It builds on the foundations laid in previous years and aligns with the national Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme (CESP), NHS Scotland's Net Zero roadmap, and our own organisational strategy.

2. Leadership and governance

We have appointed a full-time Programme Manager to support the development of our Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme (CESP). A CESP Strategy and associated Action Plan has been developed, and aligns with the new Organisational Strategy, which was published in Summer 2023: [Our Corporate Strategy 2023 | NHS 24](#).

Staff engagement on CESP was included as part of ongoing engagement on the wider organisational strategy. We have actively sought to engage staff on the CESP agenda and to get their feedback and ideas on how we can proactively make changes within the organisation. The response from this engagement has been positive with staff motivated to make improvements that will help us achieve our sustainability and efficiency goals. This feedback has helped shape our action plan and we will continue to engage with staff beyond this development phase. We have continued the staff engagement through regular communications and updates.

Governance in relation to the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme is as follows:

- The Sustainability Governance Board (SGB) is delivered by the Executive Management Team (EMT) with the Medical Director as the named Executive Lead. Any SGB business is carried out during monthly EMT meetings.
- The Sustainability Development Group is chaired by the Sustainability Programme Manager. The group has been established with membership from all directorates across the organisation and is scheduled to meet regularly with a requirement to provide a status report on each directorate's progress towards their specific CESP actions.

As part of the Service Transformation Programme (STP) this work is aligned with the key strategic objectives and set out in the Annual Delivery Plan. Due to the amount of change and transformation activity across all projects and programmes, careful consideration is given to each initiative to ensure that it can be implemented as planned. As far as possible climate and sustainability elements have been incorporated into the other projects.

- NHS 24 has an appointed non-executive board member Sustainability Champion, to provide external analysis, receive regular updates from Executive Leads and Programme Manager and link into the Scottish Sustainability Board Champion network.
- A standing agenda item on the CESP is included on EMT and Board agendas, with formal decision making conducted at quarterly Planning and Performance Committee meetings.
- Updates on relevant aspects of CESP may be provided to other committees, as and when required.

3. Summary of impacts

NHS 24 is recognised as a low emitter within NHS Scotland. This status is reflected in recent Scottish Government guidance, which exempts NHS 24 from standard decarbonisation funding allocations due to our relatively low carbon footprint. Nevertheless, NHS 24 remains committed to further reducing emissions and will continue to pursue opportunities for improvement in energy efficiency and sustainability wherever possible.

NHS 24 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 emissions produced annually by NHS 24:

Greenhouse gas emissions 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO2 equivalent					
Source	2023/24 emissions (tCO2e)	2024/25 emissions (tCO2e)	Percentage change – 2023/24 to 2024/25	2024/25 – target emissions	Percentage difference between actual and target emissions – 2024/25
Building energy (Gas, Electric & District Heating)	809	835	+3.00%	801	+4.25%
Non-medical F-gas	<i>Not available but actively working to compile this information.</i>	<i>Not available but actively working to compile this information.</i>	<i>Not available but actively working to compile this information.</i>	<i>Not available but actively working to compile this information.</i>	<i>Not available but actively working to compile this information.</i>
Medical gases	<i>Not applicable to NHS 24</i>				
Metered dose inhaler propellant	<i>Not applicable to NHS 24 – Emissions data provided by PHS</i>	<i>Not applicable to NHS 24 – Emissions data provided by PHS</i>	<i>Not applicable to NHS 24 – Emissions data provided by PHS</i>	<i>Not applicable to NHS 24 – Emissions data provided by PHS</i>	<i>Not applicable to NHS 24 – Emissions data provided by PHS</i>

	<i>does not include NHS 24.</i>	<i>PHS does not include NHS 24.</i>	<i>provided by PHS does not include NHS 24.</i>	<i>does not include NHS 24.</i>	<i>PHS does not include NHS 24.</i>
NHS fleet travel	<i>Not applicable (no fleet)</i>	<i>Not applicable (no fleet)</i>	<i>Not applicable (no fleet)</i>	<i>Not applicable (no fleet)</i>	<i>Not applicable (no fleet)</i>
Waste	0.71 (Excluding Aurora House as data not available)	0.52 (Excluding Aurora House as data not available)	-26.76%	0.21 Reduce by 70%	+147.62%
Water	0.79 (Norseman and Cardonald only – unavailable for other sites)	1.11 (Norseman and Cardonald only – unavailable for other sites)	+40.51%	0.78	+42.31%
Business travel	52.75	47.78	-9.42%	58	-17.63%
Total emissions	863.25	884.41	+2.45%	859.99	+2.84%
Carbon sequestration	0	0	0	0	0
Greenhouse gas emissions minus carbon sequestration	863.25	884.41	+2.45%	859.99	+2.84%

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)	3,647,813	3,767,709	+3% *
NHS fleet travel (km travelled)	Not applicable to NHS 24 (no fleet)	Not applicable to NHS 24 (no fleet)	Not applicable to NHS 24 (no fleet)
Waste (tonnes)	59 (excluding Aurora House as data not available)	65 (excluding Aurora House as data not available)	+9.2% **
Water (cubic metres)	4453 (Norseman & Cardonald only)	7280 (Norseman and Cardonald only)	+63.49%***
Business travel (km travelled)	295209	257180	-12.88%

*** Increase in Building Energy:** Energy consumption has increased, primarily due to higher gas usage at Caledonia House, Cardonald. The principal contributing factor identified is the fluctuation in temperature setpoints and the transition between seasonal operating modes. It should be noted that electricity and district heating consumption are also included in these figures; both have decreased, as detailed in section 5.

**** Increase in Domestic waste:** Domestic waste volumes increased due to the planned Phase 1 refurbishment of Cardonald and the decommissioning of the 1st and 2nd floors at Lumina. Despite NHS 24's emphasis on recycling throughout these works and active staff engagement to promote appropriate waste segregation, the decluttering of spaces at both sites resulted in a notable rise in domestic waste.

***** Increase in Water usage:** A significant increase in water consumption has been observed at Caledonia House, Cardonald, and Norseman House compared to the previous year.

At Cardonald, the consumption data reflects a period of inaccuracy, likely attributable to data loggers temporarily going offline; this has resulted in apparent anomalies, as the month-on-month figures are generally consistent with historical patterns. The substantial rise recorded for 2024/25 is therefore considered to be largely artificial, except for June 2024, where a marked and genuine spike in usage was noted. This occurrence has prompted the host Board to consider potential causes such as maintenance activities or incidents involving water tank leaks.

At Norseman House, the increased consumption was primarily noted in April 2024, coinciding with a reported water leak from a mains-fed water cooler. The combination of data discrepancies and isolated incidents such as leaks are believed to have contributed to the recent surge in usage. Consumption levels are now being closely monitored monthly to identify any faults with data recording and to ensure all relevant maintenance activities or incidents resulting in increased water use are properly documented for future reference.

4. 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/

Risk assessment is not a theoretical exercise for NHS 24; it is a practical tool guiding decisions and resilience-building measures. The NHS 24 Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), as detailed in the NHS Scotland NHS 24 CCRA and Adaptation Planning Tool, identifies and prioritises climate-related risks to our core services, facilities, staff, and patients, and underpins our adaptation strategy.

Main Risks Identified

Through the CCRA, NHS 24 has identified the following principal climate risks:

- **Flooding (river, surface water, sea level rise):** Threatens site access, disrupts essential supplies, and risks structural damage to buildings and IT infrastructure. Key sites such as Aurora House (Clydebank), Caledonia House (Glasgow), and Norseman House (South Queensferry) are particularly exposed due to proximity to watercourses.
- **Combined climatic effects (storms, high winds, lightning, fog):** Can cause service disruption, damage to buildings, and knock-on impacts on national ICT networks and emergency response.
- **Heatwaves and extended periods of hot weather:** Impact the efficiency of IT and telecommunication systems, risk overheating of critical equipment (e.g., UPS, air conditioning, communications rooms), and increase demand for health services due to heat-related illness.
- **Cold spells (snow and ice):** Disrupt staff and patient access, risk damage to infrastructure (e.g., burst pipes, damaged equipment), and increase service demand due to weather-related incidents.
- **Extended periods of dry weather and drought:** Threaten water supply and welfare facilities, with knock-on impacts for business continuity.

Actions Taken to Reduce Risks

Since the last report, NHS 24 has implemented and enhanced a range of adaptation and mitigation measures, including:

- **Flood Defences and Site Adaptation:** Business Continuity Plans now address site-specific flood risks, with regular SEPA flood map reviews and ongoing collaboration with local authorities and SEPA to identify and implement flood risk management interventions. Drainage surveys and maintenance have been increased to reduce the risk of water ingress and infrastructure damage.
- **Infrastructure and Equipment Resilience:** Regular structural assessments, condition surveys, and maintenance plans are in place for buildings and critical systems. Air conditioning and UPS systems are being upgraded, and temperature monitoring is being expanded in communications rooms. Emergency protocols for power outages and generator failures have been strengthened.
- **Service Delivery and Staff Support:** Enhanced winter planning, weather warning systems, and agreements for snow clearance and 4x4 volunteer support ensure staff can access sites during adverse weather. Flexible working arrangements, including increased home working for management and non-frontline staff, have been expanded to maintain service continuity.
- **ICT and Network Resilience:** Asset mapping of vulnerabilities and backup business continuity procedures are in place for national ICT networks. Routine testing and emergency exercises are conducted with key suppliers (e.g., BT, Vodafone) to ensure resilience of IT and telecommunication systems.

- **Public Health and Demand Management:** NHS 24 has worked with the Met Office and Public Health Scotland to analyse the impact of extreme weather on service demand, adapting clinical questioning and triage processes to seasonal risks (e.g., heatwaves, cold spells). Public health messaging and warnings are rolled out during extreme events.

Preparedness and Building Resilience

To further increase resilience and preparedness for climate impacts, NHS 24 is:

- **Expanding Predictive Analytics:** Using climate modelling and scenario planning to anticipate future risks and inform strategic investment in climate-smart infrastructure and low-carbon technologies.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Improvement:** Regularly reviewing risk registers, updating risk management strategies, and incorporating lessons from incidents and near-misses. Maintenance and adaptation measures are continuously evaluated for effectiveness.
- **Collaboration and Leadership:** Actively collaborating with other health boards, local authorities, and national agencies to share knowledge, data, and solutions. NHS 24 participates in the NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme, helping to set sector-wide priorities and contribute to national reporting and compliance frameworks.
- **Engagement and Co-Design:** Increasing engagement with staff, patients, and communities to co-design solutions that reduce risk and enhance resilience. NHS 24 is also advocating for policies that support a just transition to sustainable healthcare.

Conclusion

NHS 24's commitment to reducing climate risk is underpinned by rigorous risk assessment, strategic investment, and collaborative action. By embedding sustainability and resilience into its core operations, NHS 24 supports Scotland's health system in facing climate challenges and sets an example for health boards across the UK. The CCRA is a living document, ensuring NHS 24 remains agile and responsive to emerging threats, while taking tangible steps to safeguard public health and mitigate its own environmental impact. In the coming months, NHS 24 will be reviewing its Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan to ensure it remains aligned with evolving risks, national guidance, and organisational priorities.

5. Building energy

NHS 24 primarily operates from six main sites: Aurora House in Clydebank, Caledonia House in Cardonald, Lumina in Hillington, Norseman House in South Queensferry, Caledonian House in Dundee, and Forest Grove House in Aberdeen.

NHS 24 is the principal leaseholder and host board solely at Norseman House. Although NHS 24 does not own any properties, we are actively collaborating with the main leaseholders which may include a host board, the local council, or a commercial landlord to develop joint energy management plans.

As the host board for Norseman House, we are committed to transitioning to renewable heat sources at this site by 2038.

In 2024/25, **835** tonnes of CO₂ equivalent were produced by NHS 24 use of energy for buildings. This was a decrease of **51.6%** since 2015/16 (despite NHS 24's estate having significantly increased in size), and an increase of **3%** since 2023/24.

In 2024/25, NHS 24 used **3768** MWh of energy. This was an increase of **3%** since the year before.

In 2024/25, NHS 24 generated **0** kWh of energy from renewable technologies.

Building energy emissions, 2015/16, 2023/24 and 2024/25 – tCO ₂ e				
<i>N.B NHS 24 Estate has significantly increased in size from 2015/2016</i>				
	2015/16 energy emissions	2023/24 energy emissions	2024/25 energy emissions	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2024/25
Building fossil fuel emissions	149 (Norseman Only)	200 (Norseman & Cardonald)	232 (Norseman & Cardonald)	+55.7%

District heat networks and biomass	N/A - no NHS 24 sites had district heat in 2015/2016	18.1 (Aurora only)	17.6 (Aurora only)	(Baseline 23/24) -2.76%
Grid electricity	1577 (only Golden Jubilee, Norseman and Cardonald)	590	585	-62.9%
Totals	1726	809	835	-51.6%

Building energy use, 2015/16, 2023/24 and 2024/25 – MWh				
	2015/16 energy use	2023/24 energy use	2024/25 energy use	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2024/25
Building fossil fuel use	714 (Norseman only)	940	1087	+52.3%
District heat networks and biomass	N/A - no NHS 24 sites had district heat in 2015/2016	85 (Aurora only)	83 (Aurora only)	(Baseline 23/24) - 2.35%
Grid electricity	3175 (only Golden Jubilee, Norseman and Cardonald)	2622	2598	-18.2%

Renewable electricity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Totals	3889	3648	3768	-3.21%

During 2024/25, a series of targeted initiatives were advanced to manage emissions arising from building operations across the NHS 24 estate. Priority was given to optimising the use of mechanical and electrical infrastructure, ensuring that system controls such as agreed set points for air conditioning temperatures and the use of timer switches were calibrated to align with the operational requirements of each site. Regular adjustments and resets were implemented to maintain appropriate temperature levels and reduce unnecessary energy consumption.

Furthermore, a comprehensive maintenance programme was undertaken for all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) equipment to ensure optimal performance. Site lighting was systematically reviewed to confirm that LED fixtures and occupancy sensors were functioning effectively, with settings adjusted as necessary to further minimise energy usage.

NHS 24 maintained a consistent focus on staff engagement, encouraging staff to adopt energy-efficient behaviours such as switching off equipment when not in use and minimising unnecessary printing.

Enhanced monitoring and reporting systems were implemented to track energy consumption, identify areas for improvement, and provide regular updates on progress towards sustainability objectives.

Additionally, procurement practices were refined to prioritise the sourcing of energy-efficient equipment and services, with particular attention to the selection of white goods and adherence to high EPC ratings. The principal objective for energy reduction in 2025/26 is the progression of Phase 1 of the NHS 24 Estates Sustainability Plan. A significant action under this plan has been to exercise the lease break option resulting in the vacating of the first and second floors of the Lumina Building by 13 September 2025, with staff and services successfully relocated to optimise space utilisation at Caledonia House, Cardonald.

Looking ahead to Phase 2, NHS 24 intends to fully vacate the ground floor of the Lumina Building by June 2026, thereby achieving complete withdrawal from the facility. Interim measures have been implemented to manage the ground floor's energy use until this date. These include ensuring that air conditioning and lighting systems are deactivated when staff leave the premises each evening, effectively eliminating unnecessary 24/7 operation and further reducing overall energy consumption.

Furthermore, NHS 24 is pursuing additional energy reductions by implementing strategic zoning across its existing estate. This initiative, forming part of the Estates Sustainability Plan, directly results from recommendations outlined in the Phase 1 business options appraisal.

Looking ahead, Phases 2 and 3 of the Estates Sustainability Plan will maintain a strategic focus on optimising the use of NHS 24's existing estate. Consideration will be given to opportunities for co-location with other NHS Boards and public sector organisations, facilitating the shared utilisation of available space. By aligning with partners whose patterns of demand and capacity differ from those of NHS 24, there is potential to enhance space efficiency and achieve further energy savings through consolidated estate usage across the public sector.

In addition, comprehensive site energy management plans are being developed to establish long-term strategies for each location, ensuring that energy reduction targets are systematically set, met, and closely monitored. NHS 24 will be undertaking further energy reduction surveys to identify and assess high-level project opportunities. Collaborative efforts have already commenced with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) at one of our West Centres to ensure that all co-located Boards at this site participate in a unified energy reduction strategy, with joint projects currently in the development pipeline.

Long-term Infrastructure Plan and Capital Investment

NHS 24 faces challenges in reducing emissions amid limited capital investment, especially during lease renewals. To address these, the organisation will leverage lease renewals to reassess and consolidate estates, focusing on more energy-efficient premises. Operational efficiency will be improved through low-cost measures such as behavioural change programmes, smart controls, and regular maintenance. External grants, utility schemes, and partnerships will be explored to support emissions reduction, with careful attention paid to eligibility criteria. Staff engagement and directorate commitment are recognised as key to success, with initiatives to foster a culture of sustainability. Limited resources will be prioritised for high-impact, cost-effective interventions such as LED retrofits and insulation improvements. Planning for future investment will align infrastructure upgrades with lease cycles and

anticipated capital, involving asset mapping and stakeholder engagement. Circular economy principles will be adopted by reusing materials and equipment during relocations and refurbishments to minimise embodied carbon and reduce costs.

6. 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.

6.1 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.

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.

NHS 24 does not provide surgery and anaesthesia services, therefore no information on these areas is included in the report.

6.2. 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.

As part of our Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan, we have updated NHS inform with information on effective use of inhalers for breathing conditions like Asthma and COPD. In addition, a link to external information from Asthma + Lung UK as well as information on environmental impacts of inhalers (including the need for appropriate disposal) to support patients having conversations with their care provider about the right choice of inhalers for them has been added. This re-iterates the importance of compliance to prevent exacerbations of respiratory conditions that could lead to hospitalisations and a much worse impact on the environment. This is in line with our commitment to the principles of Realistic Medicine, which include reducing waste and harm.

6.3. Other sustainable care action

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

Building on the successful pilot with NHS Tayside reported in last year's Annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report (2023/24), NHS 24 has continued to embed sustainability into urgent care pathways through the Flow Navigation Centre (FNC) model:

- **Expansion to NHS Lanarkshire Flow Navigation Centre Plus (FNC+):** Following the successful establishment of the concept with NHS Tayside, Professional-to-Professional (P2P) call levelling has been expanded to NHS Lanarkshire FNC+ as of March 2025. Collaborative data analysis with NHS Lanarkshire indicates that 50% of patients who would otherwise have been advised to directly attend an Emergency Department within the hour are redirected to an alternative pathway of care following senior clinical decision maker P2P intervention.
- **Looking Ahead:** Early conversations have also taken place with other territorial boards—including NHS Lothian, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, NHS Highland, and NHS Grampian—regarding the expansion and implementation of similar processes. These developments reflect NHS 24's commitment to scaling sustainable urgent care pathways across Scotland, supporting both improved patient experience and measurable environmental benefits.

Realistic Medicine/Value Based Health & Care (RM/VBHC) Action Plan:

- In March 2025, NHS 24 agreed its Realistic Medicine/Value Based Health & Care Action Plan (RMAP), setting out how RM/VBHC would support delivery of the three-year Delivery Plan and sustainability goals.
- The Action Plan specifically aims to embed Realistic Medicine and Value Based Health & Care principles into urgent care pathways to help NHS Scotland meet its climate and sustainability targets. This includes further developing the Flow Navigation Centre Plus (FNC+) model to support “Right now, Right place” care closer to home and reducing the carbon footprint within the health system.
- NHS 24 established a Sustainability, Climate and Realistic Medicine (SCReAM) network in June 2025, which is helping to raise awareness and prompt staff action around sustainability and Realistic Medicine principles.
- The Action Plan also introduced collaboRATE questions into patient satisfaction surveys to assess shared decision-making, piloted with FNC outcome calls, supporting the principle of person-centred, sustainable care.

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

In 2025/26, NHS 24 will continue to advance sustainable care by:

- **Collaborating with other territorial boards** to explore and expand Flow Navigation Centre (FNC) models, building on the success achieved with NHS Tayside and NHS Lanarkshire. Early discussions are underway with NHS Lothian, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, NHS Highland, and NHS Grampian to support wider adoption of these approaches.
- **Promoting the Green FNC model** through national platforms and professional events, sharing best practice and supporting sector-wide sustainability.
- **Delivering the Realistic Medicine Action Plan**, which includes further development of professional-to-professional call levelling, ongoing partnership work to improve urgent care pathways, and continued efforts to embed sustainability and person-centred care principles across services.
- **Supporting staff engagement and awareness** through the (SCReAM) Champions Network, eLearning, and targeted communications.
- **Enhancing digital resources and self-care messaging** to improve accessibility and empower patients to make informed choices.

These priorities reflect NHS 24's commitment to reducing travel emissions, optimising estate use, and embedding sustainability into care delivery, procurement, and workforce development.

7. 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.

What did NHS 24 do in 2024/25 to reduce the need to travel?

- People Services formal meetings held via Teams was introduced where possible, in order to reduce the need for participants to travel.
- People Services training sessions were moved to Teams-based training.
- Recruitment promoted our vacancies by creating virtual interactive information sessions for potential candidates to attend online.
- Introduced the use of our online digital provider for identity verification and right to work checks for new employees, resulting in minimal candidate travel to centres.
- Promoted and utilised virtual interviewing techniques for recruitment interviews.
- Created new opportunities for clinical staff to work in a hybrid way from one of our remote centres.
- Continued to advertise all eligible roles as being hybrid in nature.
- NHS 24 promoted sustainability through the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme (CESP), supporting NHS Scotland's net-zero goals. Each directorate developed action plans to reduce emissions, including measures to limit unnecessary travel.
- Staff were encouraged to participate in sustainability eLearning, which included guidance on reducing travel and making greener choices at work and home.
- The organisation highlighted the importance of remote working, digital collaboration, and paper reduction as ways to minimise travel needs.

What did NHS 24 do in 2024/25 to improve active travel?

- NHS 24 actively promoted walking and cycling for staff, including participation in National Walking Month and Mental Health Week, with campaigns encouraging staff to walk more during the working day and outside work.
- The “Greener ways to get to work” campaign provided practical advice on walking and cycling, and highlighted the Cycle to Work Scheme, which helps staff purchase bikes or e-bikes through salary sacrifice.
- **Key Features of the Cycle to Work Salary Sacrifice Scheme:**
 - **Eligibility:** Available to NHS 24 employees with a minimum of 6 months of service.
 - **Spending Limit:** Increased in 2024 from £2,000 to £4,000 to support electric bike purchases.
 - **Repayment Options:** Staff can choose between 12 or 18-month repayment periods, with the longer option introduced in 2024 to improve affordability.
 - **Retail Access:** Bikes can be sourced from ~460 Halfords stores, 21 Cycle Republic stores, and a network of independent bike shops.
 - The scheme was actively promoted as part of NHS 24’s sustainability and wellbeing initiatives. In 2024, the intranet page and policy documents were refreshed to reflect the scheme updates.
 - As of March 2024, 157 employees had participated in the scheme since its launch in February 2020, increasing to 173 as of September 2025.

Period	New to Scheme	Total
Feb 2020 - Mar 2023	113	113
Apr 2023 - Mar 2024	24	137
Apr 2024 - Mar 2025	20	157
Apr 2025 - Sep 2025	16	173

- Staff were encouraged to take part in step challenges and share their active travel stories, fostering a culture of movement and wellbeing.

What did NHS 24 do in 2024/25 to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?

- NHS 24 communications promoted the use of public transport, including trains and buses, as more energy-efficient alternatives to driving alone. Staff were encouraged to combine transport modes and use park-and-ride services where possible.
- Car sharing was also encouraged to reduce emissions and fuel costs, especially for staff working similar shifts or at the same centre.
- The organisation provided links to resources such as [Sustrans](#) for practical ideas on sustainable commuting, including winter cycling and walking safely.

Additional highlights:

- Staff were invited to share their own sustainability stories and ideas for improvement, helping to build a community of practice around greener travel and climate action.
- NHS 24's sustainability efforts were regularly communicated through themed weeks and campaigns, culminating in Scotland's Climate Week.

What are we going to do in 2025/26 to reduce the need to travel, improve active travel, and improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?

In 2025/26, NHS 24 will continue to advance sustainability and wellbeing by:

- **Reducing the need to travel** through ongoing use of digital tools for meetings, training, and recruitment, and by supporting hybrid working arrangements where possible.
- **Promoting active travel** via staff campaigns, the Cycle to Work Scheme, and resources that encourage walking, cycling, and participation in wellbeing initiatives.
- **Supporting public and community transport** by maintaining communications on sustainable commuting options and signposting staff to relevant resources.

These actions build on progress made in 2024/25 and remain central to NHS 24's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme, helping to lower emissions and foster a culture of climate action across the organisation.

Fleet and Business Travel Emissions

NHS 24 does not operate a vehicle fleet. As part of our commitment to sustainability, all petrol and diesel vehicles have been removed from service.

	March 2023		March 2024		Difference in % zero tailpipe emissions vehicles
	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	
Cars	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Light commercial vehicles	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Heavy vehicles	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Specialist vehicles	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

NHS 24 does not operate a fleet of bicycles or eBikes, but staff are encouraged to use the Cycle to Work scheme and other active travel initiatives.

	March 2023	March 2024	Percentage change
Bicycles	N/A	N/A	N/A
eBikes	N/A	N/A	N/A

NHS 24 does not have a vehicle fleet, so no distance travelled figures are reported for 2024/25.

Distance travelled, kms	Cars	Light commercial vehicles	Heavy vehicles	Specialist vehicles	Total
2024/25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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: RF refers to Radiative Forcing.

Business travel emissions, tCO2e	Cars	Public transport	Flights	Total
2019/20 (Baseline)	54.368	2.664	7.121 (13.470 w/ RF)	64.153 (70.502 w/ RF)
2023/24	51.408	0.938	0.399 (0.755 w/ RF)	52.745 (53.101 w/ RF)
2024/25	44.825	1.190	1.761 (2.981 w/ RF)	47.776 (48.996 w/ RF)

8. 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.

NHS 24 recognises the importance of biodiversity and nature for health and wellbeing, even though our sites have minimal greenspace. Biodiversity considerations are being embedded into our organisational approach in several ways:

- **Strategic Reporting and Collaboration:** NHS 24 contributed to the joint Biodiversity Duty Report (2018–2020) alongside five other Health Boards. This collaborative approach ensures that biodiversity is considered at a strategic level, even where direct site-based interventions are limited.
- **Policy Alignment:** Our Stakeholder Engagement team actively seeks opportunities to enhance greenspace and biodiversity in local communities, aligning with national guidance from NatureScot's 'Our Natural Health Service' and the Scottish Government's 'Let's Do Net Zero' campaign.
- **Anchor Institution Role:** As an anchor organisation, NHS 24 is committed to exploring ways to have positive social and environmental impacts, both within our workforce and in the communities surrounding our centres.

Partnership Working for Biodiversity and Greenspace

NHS 24 has engaged in several partnerships to benefit biodiversity and sustainable greenspace management:

- **Inter-Board Collaboration:** By contributing to the joint Biodiversity Duty Report, NHS 24 has worked closely with other Health Boards to share best practice and coordinate action.
- **Community Partnerships:** The “staff food growing” project at the Dundee Centre was delivered in partnership with Design Hopes and supported by Campy Growers, a community food growing initiative based in Camperdown Country Park, Dundee. Campy Growers provided seeds, seedlings, and soil, enabling the project to succeed.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** The project’s outcomes are being evaluated by Design Hopes, with the intention of sharing findings to encourage wider adoption by other NHS Boards. The project was also presented at the Faculty of Public Health Climate and Health conference at University College London, where it won “best poster.”

Raising Awareness, Engagement, and Understanding

NHS 24 has taken several steps to raise awareness and engagement with biodiversity and nature:

- **Staff Engagement:** The staff food growing project was piloted at the Dundee Centre and then offered to staff at all NHS 24 Centres and Ninewells Hospital. Around 60 staff participated, receiving growing kits and sharing their progress via a padlet board and diaries. This hands-on engagement has increased staff awareness and understanding of food growing, biodiversity, and the benefits of nature.
- **Evaluation and Communication:** Diaries from the project will be analysed to evaluate the intervention, with the aim of supporting wider interest and adoption. Plans are in place to further communicate and share the project’s success across Scotland.
- **External Recognition:** The project’s recognition at a national conference has helped raise the profile of biodiversity and nature-based interventions within NHS 24 and beyond.

9. Sustainable procurement, circular economy, and waste

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when our demand for resources exceeds what earth can regenerate in that year. In 2025, Global Earth Overshoot Day is 24th July, 8 days earlier than in 2024.

For the UK, the picture is more worrying. In 2025, the UK's Earth Overshoot Day was 20th May. 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 2024/25 to reduce the environmental impact and the quantity of the goods and services we buy?

In 2024/25, NHS 24 continued to strengthen sustainable procurement practices and reduce the environmental impact of the goods and services we purchase.

A major procurement exercise was undertaken in 2024/25 for our new Contact Centre/CRM system, which included sustainability and accessibility as part of the tender evaluation. 5% of the overall tender score was allocated to "Social Value & Accessibility", reflecting our commitment to ethical, equalities, and environmental sustainability considerations. This section comprised 23 questions, spanning both mandatory and desirable requirements.

Examples of these requirements included:

- Demonstrating how the service provider would deliver additional environmental benefits in the performance of the contract.
- Ensuring that disabled people can access NHS 24 services through a range of accessible communication channels and tools, such as text-based communication, video relay services, speech recognition, and voice command.

This approach not only ensured that sustainability and accessibility were meaningfully weighted in the evaluation process, but also provided a practical blueprint for future, larger-scale procurements. By rewarding suppliers who can clearly evidence good practice in these areas, NHS 24 is helping to drive positive change across the supply chain and supporting the delivery of our climate emergency and sustainability objectives.

The recent CC/CRM procurement demonstrates how NHS 24 is moving beyond compliance to proactively incentivise suppliers to deliver social value and environmental benefits, setting a benchmark for future procurements within the organisation and potentially across NHS Scotland.

Other key actions in 2024/25 included:

- **Adopting Circular Economy Principles:** NHS 24 promoted stewardship and resource efficiency, working with other health services to reduce supply chain emissions.
- **Contract Reviews and Improvements:** The Procurement Improvement Team reviewed existing contracts, with a focus on broadening access for small and medium-sized enterprises, the third sector, and supported businesses. Contracts were assessed for innovation, sustainable technologies, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Community Benefits and Fair Work:** NHS 24 expanded the use of community benefits requirements, embedded fair work practices, and promoted equality and tackling inequality in contracts.
- **Lifecycle Impact Mapping:** Sustainability tests now include lifecycle impact mapping to ensure long-term environmental benefits.
- **Waste Reduction Initiatives:** NHS 24 reduced confidential waste by consolidating pick-up schedules and optimising waste console placement, resulting in fewer contractor journeys, lower emissions, and significant financial savings (approx. £36,000). Staff were engaged through educational campaigns to improve recycling and waste segregation.

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

Looking ahead to 2025/26, NHS 24 is building on previous progress by:

- **Sustainable Procurement Criteria:** Continuing to work with procurement colleagues to ensure sustainability is a key factor when assessing suppliers. Contracts meeting sustainable procurement criteria are highlighted at Procurement Improvement Team meetings.
- **Encouraging Creative Solutions:** Staff are challenged to find innovative ways to reduce environmental impact when tendering, such as reducing delivery frequency and prioritising local suppliers.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Ongoing monitoring of contracts for sustainability outcomes, with regular reviews to identify further improvements.
- **Exploring New Technologies:** NHS 24 is considering the integration of smart bins and tracking systems to enhance recycling and waste management, supporting continual improvement.
- **Staff Engagement:** Educational campaigns and awareness sessions continue to encourage staff participation in sustainability initiatives.

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 three years:

Type	2022/23(tonnes)	2023/24(tonnes)	2024/25(tonnes)	Percentage change – 2022/23 to 2024/25
Waste to landfill	N/A	0.7	0.45	-35.71%
Waste to incineration	N/A	30	35	+16.67%
Recycled waste	N/A	27	28	+3.70%
Food waste	N/A	0.62	1.18	+90.32%
Clinical waste	N/A	N/A	0.18	N/A

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 2026	
Target – reduce domestic waste by	25.50 tonnes <i>* Calculated from 2023/24 as no data available from 2012/13</i>
Performance – domestic waste reduced by	+16.67% (waste increased from 30 t to 35 t)
Outcome	NOT ACHIEVED YET
Further reduction required	9.5 tonnes 9.50 tonnes (to reach target of 25.50 t from current 35 t)

Ensure that no more than 5%, and less where possible, of all domestic waste is sent to landfill – by 2026
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Target – reduce waste sent to landfill by	Target has been met Thresholds for reference: ≤ 1.50 t (5% of 30 t, 2023/24) and ≤ 1.75 t (5% of 35 t, 2024/25)
Performance – waste sent to landfill reduced by	0.25 tonnes
Outcome	ACHIEVED
Further reduction required	0.45 tonnes

Reduce the food waste produced by 33% compared to 2015/16 – by 2026	
Target – reduce food waste by	0.20tonnes
Performance – food waste reduced by	increase of +90.32% instead of reduction (food waste increased from 0.62 t to 1.18 t)
Outcome	NOT ACHIEVED YET
Further reduction required	0.765 tonnes (to reach target of 0.415 t from current 1.18 t)

Ensure that 70% of all domestic waste is recycled or composted – by 2026

Target – recycle or compost	32 tonnes
Performance – recycled or composted	28 tonnes (current rate ~45–48% vs 70% target)
Outcome	NOT ACHIEVED YET
Further increase required	4 tonnes

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

- **Increase in Domestic waste:** Domestic waste volumes increased due to the planned Phase 1 refurbishment of Cardonald and the decommissioning of the 1st and 2nd floors at Lumina. Despite NHS 24's emphasis on recycling throughout these works and active staff engagement to promote appropriate waste segregation, the decluttering of spaces at both sites resulted in a notable rise in domestic waste.
- **Policy and Governance:** NHS 24 circulated its updated Waste Management Policy for comment, with publication scheduled for April 2025. This policy underpins efforts to reduce overall waste tonnage and promote effective recycling practices across sites.
- **Food Waste:** Food segregation has increased and we are now reporting food waste at Cardonald.
- **Reuse and Recycling:** During estates work at Cardonald, NHS 24 collaborated with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to repurpose glass panels and office doors for new office configurations. This approach ensured materials in good condition were reused, reducing waste and delivering financial benefits for both organisations.
- **Furniture and Equipment Redistribution:** Surplus furniture and fittings from Cardonald and Lumina were donated or redistributed to other NHS 24 sites and partner organisations, maximising reuse, and minimising landfill.
- **Waste Data Collection:** NHS 24 continued to gather waste data for sites under its direct control (e.g., clinical, and hazardous waste), aiming to improve reporting frequency from six-monthly to quarterly.

- **Staff Engagement:** Educational campaigns, quizzes, and features in staff communications (e.g., Team Talk) highlighted recycling achievements and encouraged participation in waste reduction initiatives.

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

- **Policy Implementation:** The NHS 24 Waste Management Policy is now live, supporting the development of site-specific Waste Management Plans and an overarching organisational plan.
- **Appointment of Waste Management Officer:** NHS 24 has appointed a dedicated officer to lead on waste compliance and efficiency, in line with Scottish Government requirements.
- **Environmental Management System (EMS):** NHS 24 is maintaining and updating its EMS, which supports compliance with environmental legislation and reporting to the Scottish Government. Estates and Facilities have made significant progress, with NHS Assure commending the system.
- **Training and Development:** Estates and Facilities staff have attended waste management training and site visits, with plans to introduce toolbox talks and develop an e-learning module tailored to domestic waste management.
- **Staff Engagement:** Quarterly communications continue, and staff are encouraged to participate in recycling and reuse initiatives, especially during estate changes and refurbishments.
- **Estate Sustainability Plan:** The waste hierarchy is actively applied, with ongoing efforts to identify reuse opportunities in Cardonald Phase 2 and other projects.
- **National Waste Targets:** NHS 24 is working towards Scottish Government targets (15% reduction in total waste, 33% reduction in food waste, 70% recycling rate, and less than 5% landfill by December 2025). However, due to ongoing challenges in gathering complete waste data from all sites (especially those managed by landlords), it is currently difficult to confirm progress against these targets. The recent relocation from Lumina to Cardonald has increased waste volumes at Cardonald due to higher staffing, but this is offset by reductions at Lumina.
- **Defra Reporting and Landlord Data Collection Process:** DEFRA reporting represents a potential means of obtaining the required information for public sector buildings. However, there are notable challenges associated with this approach. Its primary applicability is to public sector properties, and the data provided may not always be sufficiently detailed or disaggregated in a manner that aligns with the requirements of either the CESP reporting structure or the NHS24's internal reporting system. NHS 24 will therefore continue to explore alternative data sources, such as published reports, to obtain the necessary information wherever possible.

In Summary

NHS 24 is taking a multi-pronged approach to waste reduction, focusing on policy, staff engagement, reuse, and improved data collection. While significant progress has been made, especially in reuse and recycling, full measurement against national targets is not yet possible due to data limitations. Work continues to improve reporting and ensure compliance as the Scottish Government landfill ban approaches.

10. 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.

In 2024/25, the Estates and Facilities team at NHS 24 initiated the development and implementation of our Environmental Management System (EMS) as part of our commitment to environmental compliance and continuous improvement:

- **Legislative Review:** The team undertook a comprehensive review of relevant environmental legislation to determine its applicability to NHS 24. Each regulation was categorised as compliant, compliant risk, indirectly applicable, or not applicable, ensuring a targeted and proportionate approach to compliance.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Team members participated in a series of EMS workshops and training sessions to build competence in using the system and to deepen their understanding of its operational impact on NHS 24.
- **System Integration and Data Input:** The team began populating the EMS with relevant data and documentation, systematically collating evidence required to demonstrate compliance with applicable environmental standards.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Improvement:** This initial phase has laid the foundation for continuous monitoring, with the team committed to refining processes and enhancing environmental performance across NHS 24's estate.

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

- *Aurora House*
- *Caledonian House - Dundee*

- *Caledonia House - Cardonald*
- *Lumina*
- *Norseman*

To build on the initial implementation of our Environmental Management System (EMS), the Estates and Facilities team at NHS 24 will undertake the following actions during 2025/26:

- **Policy and Manual Development:** We will develop and implement a formal Environmental Policy and EMS Manual to establish clear principles, procedures, and responsibilities for environmental compliance across NHS 24.
- **Cross-Directorate Collaboration:** The team will work closely with all directorates to identify and assign areas of responsibility for EMS compliance, ensuring that environmental obligations are understood and embedded throughout the organisation.
- **Audit Preparedness:** We will ensure that all necessary evidence is collated and readily available to support internal and external audits, demonstrating our commitment to transparency and continual improvement.

While NHS 24 has made significant progress in implementing the Environmental Management System (EMS) across its core estate, the satellite sites remain outside the scope of direct implementation. This is due to the fact that these premises fall under the operational responsibility of other NHS Health Boards.

To enable EMS implementation for these locations, the following steps will be required:

- **Collaborative Engagement:** We will initiate and strengthen collaboration with the relevant NHS Health Boards to explore joint approaches for EMS integration at shared sites.
- **Shared Responsibility and Alignment:** Discussions will focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, aligning EMS objectives, and identifying opportunities for harmonised environmental practices.
- **Evidence and Compliance Support:** We will work with partner Boards to ensure that appropriate evidence is available to demonstrate compliance and support future audit requirements.

11. Sustainable construction

At NHS 24 Estates and Facilities, we are committed to the highest standards of design, implementation, and delivery of our construction projects (primarily fit outs/refits). To ensure these standards are met, we collaborate with Lead Advisors who bring extensive expertise and support to our initiatives.

A key aspect of our construction projects is the integration of sustainable construction practices. Our Lead Advisors are dedicated to embedding sustainability within the scope of works, ensuring that each project not only meets but exceeds environmental standards. This commitment to sustainability encompasses all stages of the project lifecycle, from initial design through to completion.

By prioritising sustainable construction, we aim to minimise environmental impact, promote energy efficiency, and support the long-term health and well-being of our communities. Our approach aligns with best practices and regulatory requirements, reflecting our dedication to creating a positive and lasting legacy through our construction projects.

NHS 24 Estates and Facilities, with the guidance of our expert Lead Advisors, continue to champion sustainability as a fundamental component of our construction endeavours.

12. 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 communities?

NHS 24 is committed to its role as an anchor institution by leveraging its scale, influence, and resources to benefit local communities:

- **Inclusive Employment and Skills Development:** Our talent acquisition and recruitment teams actively engage with local schools near our six regional centres, supporting careers events and information sessions. These initiatives raise awareness of NHS 24 career opportunities and help students understand the skills and pathways needed for future employment with us. Over the past 18 months, we have also worked with employability partners to deliver candidate information and application support sessions, breaking down barriers to employment and ensuring fair access for all, especially those in areas close to our centres. This approach encourages applications from people living in social housing, supports local businesses and transport providers, and reduces staff travel-related emissions.
- **Supporting Priority Groups:** NHS 24’s Employability Lead collaborates with the National Employability Leads Group and partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions, Developing the Young Workforce, Princes Trust, Enable, Fedcap, West of Scotland Regional Equality Council, and Street League to share best practice and expand routes into employment. We are also part of the National Armed Forces Talent Programme, supporting armed forces leavers, veterans, and their families into NHS roles, and raising awareness of their transferable skills among NHS Scotland staff.
- **Community Health Engagement:** Our engagement team delivers key health messages at local events, including freshers’ fairs and annual winter campaigns, and distributes guides to NHS 24 services to communities across Scotland.

- **Strategic Collaboration:** NHS 24 is working with Public Health Scotland (PHS) and NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) to align the Anchor Progression Framework with the NHS Climate Emergency & Sustainability Strategy. This aims to help health boards fulfil their anchor responsibilities and contribute to net-zero, nature-positive, climate-resilient, healthy, and equitable communities. NHS 24 will be a pilot site for this new model once finalised.

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

NHS 24's climate adaptation and resilience work, as detailed in our Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), directly supports community resilience:

- **Risk Assessment and Adaptation:** We systematically assess climate risks to our facilities, services, and supply chains, identifying vulnerabilities such as flooding, extreme weather, and heatwaves. Adaptation measures include flood defences, enhanced drainage, business continuity planning, and collaboration with local authorities and SEPA to manage site-specific risks.
- **Service Continuity and Access:** By improving staff access during adverse weather (e.g., snow clearance, 4x4 volunteer support, flexible working), NHS 24 ensures uninterrupted health advice and triage services for communities, even during climate-related disruptions.
- **Public Health Messaging:** NHS 24 works with the Met Office and Public Health Scotland to deliver targeted health messaging during extreme weather events, helping communities prepare for and respond to climate impacts (e.g., heatwaves, cold spells)
- **Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** We participate in national programmes and share data, lessons learned, and best practice with other boards and agencies, helping to build sector-wide and community resilience.
- **Supporting Vulnerable Groups:** By targeting recruitment and engagement in deprived areas, and supporting local employment, NHS 24 helps address social determinants of health and reduce inequalities exacerbated by climate change.

In summary

NHS 24 acts as an anchor institution by supporting local employment, engaging with priority groups, delivering health messages, and collaborating strategically to build healthier, more resilient communities. Our climate adaptation work, grounded in the CCRA, ensures that both our organisation and the communities we serve are better prepared for the impacts of climate change, now and in the future.

13. Conclusion

In 2024/25, NHS 24 continued to strengthen its commitment to climate emergency and sustainability, building on the foundations laid in previous years. This year's report demonstrates notable progress across several domains, including energy management, sustainable procurement, waste reduction, biodiversity, and climate adaptation.

Key achievements include:

- **Staff Engagement:** Ongoing staff engagement through communications, intranet resources, and the development of a Sustainability, Climate and Realistic Medicine (SCReAM) network, has fostered a culture of stewardship and innovation.
- **Energy and Estates:** Targeted initiatives have optimised building energy use, with continued progress in consolidating the estate and implementing energy-efficient technologies. The phased withdrawal from the Lumina Building and strategic zoning across sites are expected to deliver further reductions in energy consumption.
- **Sustainable Care Models:** The expansion of the Flow Navigation Centre model and collaboration with other boards has reduced unnecessary patient travel, improved care pathways, and delivered measurable environmental benefits.
- **Sustainable Procurement and Waste:** NHS 24 has embedded circular economy principles into procurement, broadened access for SMEs and supported businesses, and prioritised contracts with sustainability criteria. Waste management has improved through policy implementation, staff education, and innovative reuse initiatives, although data collection challenges persist for some sites.
- **Biodiversity and Community Engagement:** The staff food growing project and partnerships with local organisations have enhanced biodiversity awareness and engagement, with external recognition for these efforts.

Ongoing challenges and areas for focus:

- **Waste Data and Targets:** While progress has been made in reducing landfill waste and increasing recycling, full achievement of national waste targets remains dependent on improved data collection, particularly at sites managed by external landlords.
- **Water and Waste Emissions:** Increases in water and waste emissions highlight the need for continued monitoring and targeted interventions, especially following estate changes, and relocations.
- **Climate Adaptation:** NHS 24's Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan remain living documents, guiding resilience-building measures in response to evolving climate risks.

Looking ahead to 2026/27:

NHS 24 will maintain its focus on:

- Enhancing data collection and reporting to support achievement of national sustainability targets.
- Further embedding sustainability into procurement, service delivery, and estate management.
- Scaling successful care models and community engagement initiatives.
- Strengthening collaboration with partner organisations to maximise impact and share best practice.

The progress made this year reflects the dedication and creativity of NHS 24's workforce and partners. Their ongoing commitment is vital as we continue our journey towards net zero, improved environmental stewardship, and resilient, sustainable healthcare for Scotland.