



Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy 2021-26:

Registers of Scotland
Roadmap to Net-Zero



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Foreword

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today, given its impact on the physical environment, human health and its potential to adversely affect economic growth.

I am proud to lead an organisation which is committed to helping deliver Scotland's ambitious emission reduction and climate action. At the heart of this is our pledge to net-zero direct greenhouse emissions by 2040 and indirect emissions by 2045.

I am pleased to report that Registers of Scotland (RoS) have already made great strides towards reducing our environmental footprint - and we will go further. Recognising the urgency of the climate crisis, the measures outlined in our Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy 2021-26, will widen the scope of our efforts to help achieve a better and more sustainable future for everyone in Scotland.

I believe it is vital that we maintain and build upon the changes we have made so that all RoS services are delivered in a way that is sustainable and ensures we are maximising our positive contribution to addressing the climate emergency. For example, continuing to innovate in the digital space, enabling hybrid working for colleagues, and hosting virtual events with customers, are some of the ways we will continue to deliver high quality services that have a positive impact on our environment.

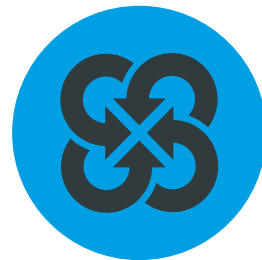
The changes we make also support improved sustainability opportunities for our customers. A sustainability focus has therefore been embedded throughout all of the activities that are being delivered within our [corporate plan](#).

We recognise our direct and indirect contribution to climate impacts. By doing so, we are able to shape our operations to address any potential climate change impacts. Our shift towards low-carbon technologies and practices includes the goods and services procured from our suppliers, how we manage our estate and investments, the delivery of our products and services, and our engagement with colleagues, customers and stakeholders.

We acknowledge the need to ensure that these objectives are achieved whilst supporting economic growth and prosperity across Scotland. Despite the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain absolutely committed to efforts that will support a green recovery and end Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045.



Jennifer Henderson
Keeper of the Registers of
Scotland

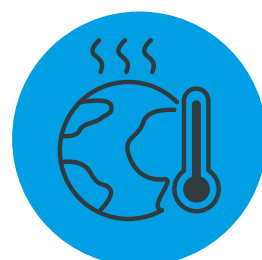


1. About Registers of Scotland

Registers of Scotland (RoS) was established in 1948 and is a non-ministerial office and part of the Scottish administration.

The organisation is responsible for compiling and maintaining 20 public registers relating to land, property, and other legal documents. Our aim is to achieve Land Register completion by 2024 and provide transparent, accurate and impartial information for our customers.

With locations in both Edinburgh and Glasgow which house over 1,200 members of staff, RoS has a responsibility to reduce our impact on the environment and is committed to being a low carbon organisation.



2. Climate Change and its Impact

Climate change is defined as 'a change in the state of the climate over time as a result of human activity.' (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2011)

The impact of climate change from greenhouse gases represents a significant worldwide threat. According to World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), it is 'the greatest environmental challenge the world has ever faced.'

The warming of our climate is evident in increasing global temperatures, rising sea levels, intense weather events and the subsequent impact on human health, freshwater, food, energy, animals, and land use. In Scotland, we are experiencing changes in temperatures with milder winters, increasing rainfall and flooding which causes damage to property, disrupts transport networks, and can lead to loss of business.

The largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions is carbon dioxide (CO₂) which is emitted when fossil fuels are burnt to meet energy demands.

With the rising cost of finite resources and tighter regulations on reducing greenhouse gases, there is increasing pressure for companies to tackle their own impact on the environment.





3. Legislation and Policy Drivers

International Context: Climate change and global warming

At the United Nations climate change conference (COP21) held in Paris in December 2015, 195 countries including the UK, signed up to the world's first legally binding global climate deal. The agreement set out a global action plan to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Under the Paris Agreement, each country must determine, plan, and regularly report on their contribution to mitigate global warming.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set up by the United Nations General Assembly and intended to be achieved by 2030. They are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to 'achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.' They address several barriers to sustainable development including inequality, poverty, climate change and environmental degradation.

Each of the goals has targets and indicators used to measure progress and in which UN member states are to use in setting their agendas.

National Context: World leading climate change legislation

In 2009, the Scottish Government passed world leading environmental targets, showing a strong commitment to tackling climate change. The Climate Change (2009) Act set out targets to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050, with an interim target of 42% by 2020. The Act created the statutory framework for greenhouse gas emission reductions in Scotland and set some of the world's most ambitious targets to reduce Scotland's national emissions.

Scotland's public bodies have a key role in delivering Scotland's ambitious emission reduction and climate action. The Climate Change Act places duties on public bodies under the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020, to lead in the delivery of these national targets, influence action and build resilience to a changing climate. RoS is mandated under these duties to complete an annual report detailing our progress against internal targets. Annual reporting is essential to drive decision making.



Figure 1 – UN Sustainable Development Goals

In 2018, the Scottish Government published its third Climate Change Plan which set out an emissions reduction target of 66% against the baseline for the period 2018-2032. As part of this plan, further expectations are placed on public sector bodies who play a critical role in the delivery of this plan. The public sector will be asked to ‘demonstrate how its own operations are driving down emissions.’

In May 2018, a new Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament. The Bill proposed to amend the 2009 Act and immediately increase Scotland’s emission reduction target to 90% by 2050.

Scotland’s New Climate Change Targets

In 2019, the Scottish Government became the first government in the world to declare a climate emergency, recognising the serious environmental, social, and economic challenges faced by climate change. Following this, the Scottish Government passed the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 where ministers agreed to commit to set a target for net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, with an increased interim reduction target of 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2040.

An update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032 was published in December 2020 which outlines a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and captures the opportunities of a just transition to net zero. It supports the UN SDGs and the National Performance Framework to tackle the global climate change crisis.

The evidence is clear, to avoid the worst climate impacts and limit global warming to well below 2 degrees, global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions need to drop by half by 2030 and reach net zero by 2045. Net zero refers to achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions removed from the atmosphere. This means for all emissions produced, there must be actions in place to remove the same level of emissions from the atmosphere.





4. Building on Success: Our footprint

RoS has measured the environmental impact across our estate since 2012 and we have made substantial efforts to reduce our carbon footprint through the implementation of projects and encouraging behaviour change.

We have achieved significant progress since the publication of our first Carbon Management Plan 2016-2020 (see Appendix 1 for progress to date). This plan provided a clear commitment from RoS to meet its climate change duties and outlined an approach to deliver a 22% reduction in our footprint by 2020.

We focused on reducing our carbon footprint in the following areas:

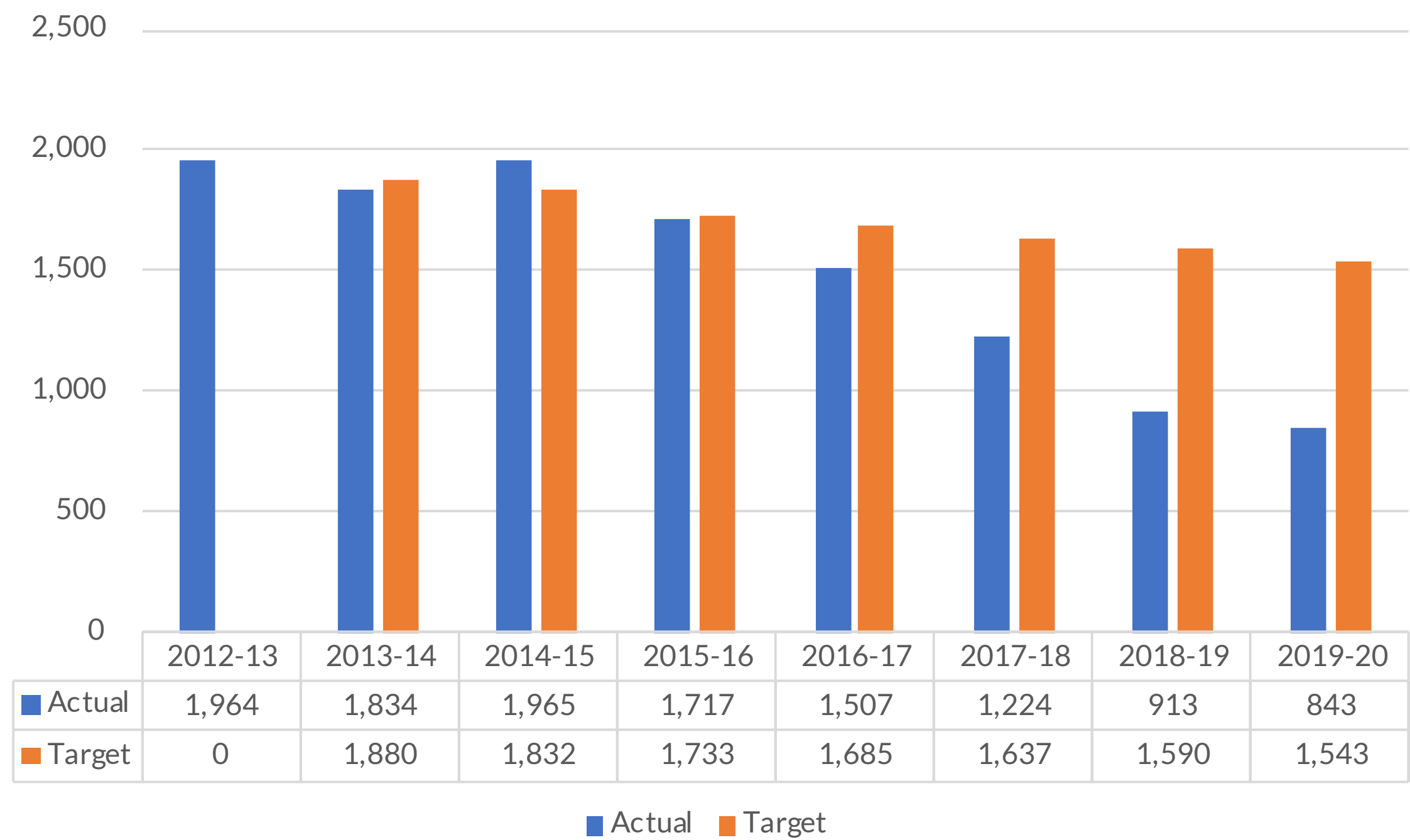
- Energy use associated with the running of our buildings
- Water consumption and sewerage treatment
- Waste disposal
- Business travel (pool car, hire cars, air, and rail).

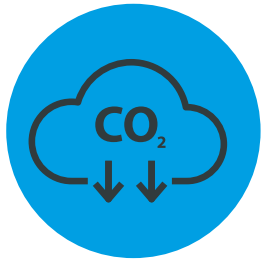
As of 2019-20, RoS has reduced our total emissions by 57% from the 2012 baseline (information for earlier years was not available). This was due to several successful projects and ongoing staff engagement. These include (but are not limited to):

- The installation of A rated boilers in Meadowbank House
- A move to St Vincent's Plaza, a new low carbon building in Glasgow
- Switching to a low emission pool car fleet
- Implementation of a new recycling system
- More efficient data centre
- Go Greener awareness raising campaigns

Graph 1 shows the downward trend in our footprint from the baseline year 2012-13 in tonnes of carbon.

Graph 1 – Emission reductions from the baseline year





5. Working towards Net Zero

In 2019 the Scottish Government set a target for Scotland to be net zero by 2045. Under the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020, RoS is required to define the year by which we expect to have reached zero for direct emissions¹ (scope 1). The order also requires public bodies to report on targets for reducing indirect emissions² in the 2021-22 reporting year (scopes 2 and 3).

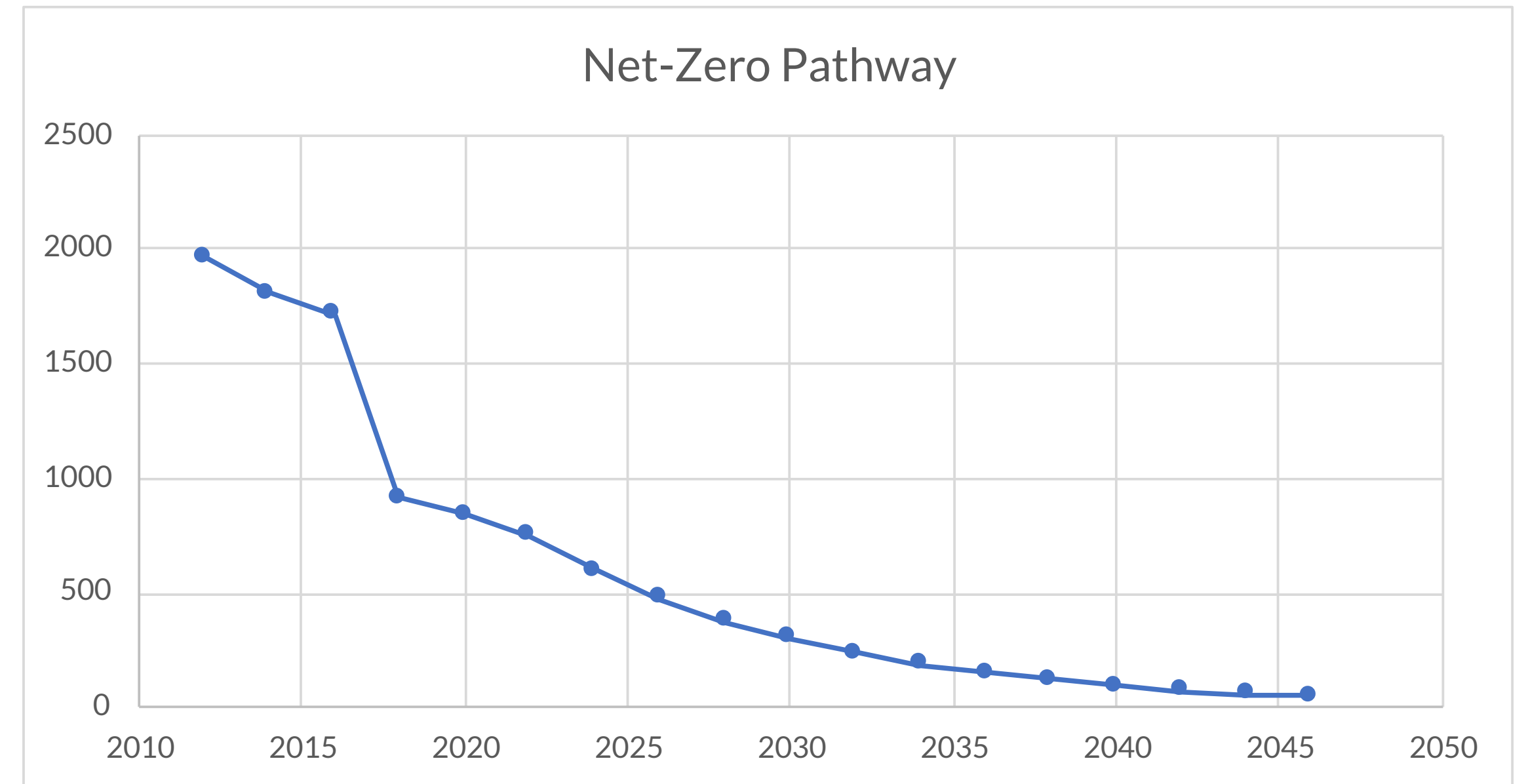
RoS will continue to reduce our carbon footprint in line with Scottish Government targets and capture the environmental impact across all our operations and embed change. Our net zero pathway will also enable us to positively contribute towards the UN SDGs.

RoS Net Zero Target

In line with the long term 2045 net zero emissions reduction target for Scotland, and the expectation that public sector bodies should be leading the way, RoS is committed to meeting net zero direct emissions by 2040. This target date is based on projections of the downward progression of our annual carbon footprint. The target date is also reliant on new and emerging technology to support organisations to reach net zero without offsetting.

Graph 2 shows the approximate required progression for our footprint in line with the Scottish Government net zero pathway.

Graph 2 – Carbon footprint net zero pathway

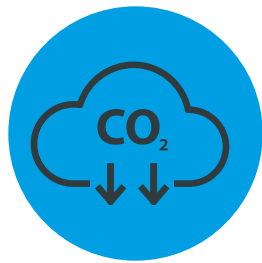


We are also setting interim targets to align with the Scottish Government, and we aim to achieve a 75% reduction in our footprint by 2030, reducing our emissions by 1,473 CO2t versus the baseline (1,964 CO2t).

We will however keep targets under review, with annual progress reports on delivery against the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

¹ Direct emissions are from sources that are owned or controlled by the reporting entity e.g. pool cars and gas.

² Indirect emissions are a consequence of an organisation's activities, but which occur at sources you do not own or control e.g. purchased electricity, water, waste, business travel, purchased goods and services.



6. How we will achieve Net Zero Emissions: Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026

Under the Corporate Plan 2021-2026, RoS has committed to embedding sustainability in every business decision we make; we will reduce our environmental impact and build sustainability into our business and operational framework. We will not just look at direct impacts but indirect ones too and the potential for unintended consequences.

Our operations cover a wide range of emission sources including energy consumption (electricity and gas), waste, water, and business travel. RoS will work towards net zero emissions by managing our carbon emissions through efficient monitoring and analysis to better understand our operations and identify improvements.

We will explore alternative energy options, continue to engage with our staff and collaborate with local organisations and other public sector bodies. The potential for offsetting will be reviewed in more detail in line with the Scottish Government’s next climate change plan review in 2026.

Organisational and Operational Boundary

Over the next 5 years under this strategy, we will continue to expand our operational reporting boundary to take responsibility for measuring and reducing our indirect carbon footprint beyond the sources currently in the scope of our net zero emissions target.

From 2021, we aim to capture the impact of purchased goods and services, staff commuting, and home working emissions associated with energy use into our footprint. Extending our boundary and including these areas under scope 3 will initially lead to an increase in our footprint, however this gives us a broader picture of the impact from our operations and allows for improvements to be identified.

The organisational boundary includes our offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow, Table 1 sets out the emission sources included under our footprint.

Table 1 – RoS Operational Emissions			
		Net Zero direct emissions target date	Net Zero indirect emissions target date
Scope 1 (Direct emissions)	Gas	2040	
	Pool cars	2040	
Scope 2 (Indirect emissions)	Electricity (Generation)		2045
	Electricity (Transmission & Distribution)		2045
Scope 3 (Indirect emissions)	Waste (emissions)		2045
	Water (supply & treatment)		2045
	Business Travel (Air, Taxi, Bus, Rail)		2045
	Hotels		2045
	Staff commuting		2045
	Purchased/ supplied goods and services		2045
	Home working emissions		TBC

The following section will detail each of our key themes and the associated actions we will take throughout the next 5 years as we work towards net zero emissions.

Key Themes

Energy Use and Water Management

RoS aims to manage and reduce energy and water consumption through improved efficiency.

Energy accounts for a large proportion of our overall carbon footprint and therefore it is important that we take action to reduce energy consumption and improve efficiency within our buildings and across our operations. To meet net zero for direct emissions by 2040, we must significantly reduce our gas or install alternative heating systems.

We will review where and how energy is used within our buildings and continue to invest in new technology which delivers energy savings. We will also assess energy wastage by improving controls to make heating and ventilation more responsive. RoS will review the potential for installing renewable technologies to provide an element of our building’s energy requirements. Under the expansion of our operational reporting boundary, we will capture home working emissions and support staff to reduce their energy use at home.

Water consumption will be closely monitored, which will allow us to better understand our usage and identify areas where savings can be made. We will introduce water efficiency projects and investigate greener water management measures to minimise our overall usage.

Waste and Circular Economy

RoS will minimise waste and maximise recycling by purchasing smarter and engaging with our staff.

RoS has made significant progress in managing our waste and we remain committed

to reducing waste by minimising waste by reviewing what we purchase, reusing the items we no longer require and recycling as much waste as we can with support from our contractor. A new recycling system was recently implemented and to support this, a network of trained recycling champions was created to support our staff to recycle effectively and minimise contamination, this led to increased recycling rates.

Over the next 5 years we will build on this and focus on smarter purchasing and reducing waste in our supply chain to ensure the products, services, and systems we procure support in minimising waste. We will continue to work closely with our waste management contractor to derive value from waste where possible and utilise public sector networks and local charities to reuse.

Digital Innovations

RoS will minimise our use of paper and utilise digital technology.

In March 2020 in line with government guidance related to the Covid-19 pandemic, RoS closed our offices and staff began to work from home where possible. This move marked an unprecedented challenge in how we continue to support the Scottish property market as a predominately paper based organisation previously using over approx. 4 million sheets of paper per year.

Over a number of years, RoS has been making improvements to digital systems and increasing digital interaction with our registers, replacing paper based processes, and increasing efficiency. This work accelerated due to the pandemic, with the rapid introduction of a new digital submission service, that negated the need for paper submissions to all but one of our registers. This allowed us to operate digitally throughout the pandemic and led to an 84% reduction in paper use by RoS. In addition, our customers also reduced their use of paper significantly. Work remains ongoing to digitise the full registration process further and support our work to reduce paper.

We are also moving from an on-premise data centre to cloud-based computing. Building on the significant reductions in energy use through reducing the footprint of the MBH data-centre, we will now progress this even further. Over the last year, we have been able to move one of our registers wholly to the cloud, along with a large proportion of our back-office systems. Cloud providers are able to manage our data highly efficiently, with much less carbon impact, than in-house.

Sustainable Travel and Staff Commuting

RoS will encourage active and sustainable travel for commuting and business travel.

There are many benefits to travelling actively including reduced air pollution and congestion and increased physical and mental health.

RoS has a Green Travel Policy in place which outlines our main aims and objectives to encourage greener travel by all staff both to and for work. The primary aim is to reduce the use of single occupancy vehicles and encourage staff members to make sustainable travel choices.

We have introduced several initiatives to encourage sustainable travel, these include:

- A cycle to work scheme
- Advanced season ticket purchase of bus and train travel
- Bicycle parking facilities
- Shower facilities
- Working with Dr Bike during Go Greener campaigns

As part of the extension of our emissions reporting boundary, we will capture commuter emissions into our carbon footprint with the support of annual surveys. This will help us to identify further options to facilitate active and sustainable travel and to encourage walking, cycling, and taking public transport improve air quality in our local environment.

Sustainable Procurement

RoS will measure and reduce the environmental impact of our supply chain by working with suppliers and contractors.

We will meet the needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis and generates benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society, the economy, and the environment.

RoS is conscious that our activities affect the environment in which we exist, and we are acting to minimise negative environmental and social impacts associated with the products and services we purchase by integrating environmental requirements into all procurement activities. We aim to capture the emissions associated with our supply chain into our footprint.

Biodiversity

RoS will protect and enhance biodiversity on our estate and contribute further afield.

We will increase and support local plant and animal biodiversity across our estate with the expert guidance of our grounds and internal planting contractor. We will also continue to work with external stakeholders to contribute to projects further afield, such as our tree planting work with Forestry and Land Scotland which led to over 700 trees being planted at a site in Cupar, Fife in 2018. We will document our actions in our Biodiversity Duty Report.





7. Green Recovery: Hybrid Working

The Coronavirus pandemic led to changes in the way RoS operates and all staff who were normally office based were able to work from home supported by new digital platforms. This allowed for flexible approach to the way we work and going forward RoS will introduce a hybrid model of office and home working.

The switch to hybrid working provides an opportunity to reduce the emissions associated with our building use and business travel. To capture the impact of hybrid working, we will calculate our home working emissions using appropriate guidance and include this data in our footprint going forward.

The sustainability team will continue to support staff to reduce emissions both at home and in the workplace through staff engagement campaigns with support from the Environmental Working Group (EWG).

With the introduction of hybrid working, comes less requirement for office space, so we will actively be exploring sharing our buildings with other organisations to make most efficient use of the space.





8. Delivering the Strategy

Reviewing Progress

A formal review of progress against the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy will take place annually against the targets set out. This process will be overseen by the Sustainability & Climate Change Manager and reviewed by the Environmental Management Group. The following areas of the Sustainability Strategy will be considered in the annual progress review:

- Progress towards overall carbon reduction target
- Identified carbon reduction projects
- Associated costs of key projects
- Wider benefits
- Stakeholder engagement

Annual progress reports will be presented to the EMG.

Governance

RoS is committed to reducing our carbon emissions by reviewing all operations and minimising our impact where possible. To ensure that there is effective and ongoing ownership of the Sustainability Strategy, it is important to have a fully defined governance structure and buy in from staff.

Environmental Management Group (EMG)

The EMG is responsible for the strategic direction and implementation of this strategy.

The primary aim of the group, which is chaired by the Accountable Officer, is to approve or recommend viable environmental projects presented by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) which support the Sustainability Strategy. The EMG acts as a forum to provide help and guidance to ensure projects are delivered and efficiency savings are achieved and reported upon.

The EMG meet quarterly and advise and recommend actions to the Executive Management Team (EMT) to embed climate change mitigation and effective environmental management across all operational areas within RoS. It's a free-standing advisory entity which also has decision making powers to approve environmental project works.

Proposed projects will be reviewed by the EMG, including inputting to business cases where financial investment is required. A primary route to achieving emission reduction targets is to consider sustainability in spending decisions. Financial savings can also be seen by embedding strategic cultural changes across the organisation supported by key projects. The Sustainability budget will be reviewed on an annual basis, along with the contribution of other budgets to delivery of this strategy.

Environmental Working Group (EWG)

RoS has an Environmental Working Group (EWG) which is chaired by the Sustainability and Climate Change Manager. The primary aim of the group is to present and recommend actions to the EMG on projects that support the Sustainability Strategy and Environmental Policy. The group, which includes staff from different levels and departments across RoS, aims to run campaigns and raise awareness on numerous sustainability issues as well as contributing to ideas for future project work.

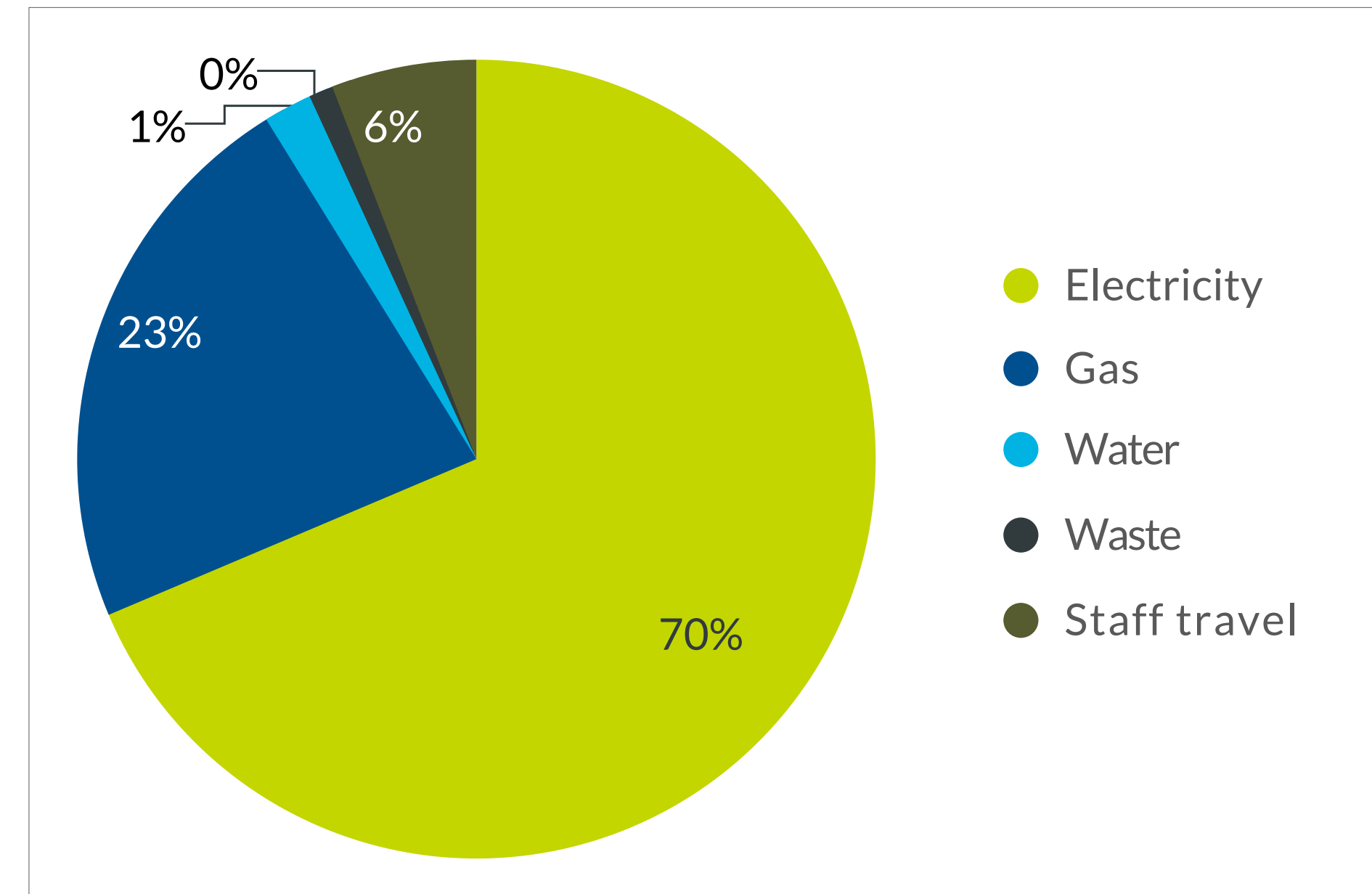


Appendix 1: Carbon Footprint

Carbon Management Plan 2016-2020

	2012-13 (Baseline)	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Natural Gas	302	237	264	278	276	224	168	195
Electricity	1,558	1,484	1,600	1,348	1,154	904	645	592
Waste	11.29	6.93	2.74	3.75	2.25	2.07	2.37	2.38
Water	9.26	6.07	6.42	6.29	6.95	6.08	6.46	6.46
Business Travel	83	73	92	80	68	87	91	48
TOTAL	1,964	1,807	1,965	1,717	1,507	1,223	913	844

Carbon Footprint 2019-20





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