



**Registers
of Scotland**
ros.gov.uk

Biodiversity report

2018-2020

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Biodiversity Duty Reporting: Level Three

Biodiversity provides many vital services that enrich our lives and that we depend on. Biodiversity underpins much of our food and drink production through maintaining healthy soils and pollination, it captures carbon and helps to clean and cool the air, it protects us against flooding, and it regulates our supply of fresh water.

Human activity is causing biodiversity to be lost at a greatly accelerated rate and these losses can be irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life systems we all rely on.

Biodiversity loss and the climate emergency are closely linked. Climate change increases the pressure on biodiversity while the living world provides us with nature-based solutions to climate change and to a wide range of associated socio-economic outcomes in rural and urban areas alike.

Registers of Scotland (RoS) recognises the importance of tackling climate change and we are committed to reducing our impact on the environment through effective sustainable management of our operations and estate.

Section 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

RoS was established in 1996 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. We have locations in both Edinburgh and Glasgow which house over 1,200 members of staff.

As a public sector organisation, RoS is committed to reducing our impact on the environment and aims to be a low carbon organisation. Through staff engagement, the principles of sustainable development are embedded into day to day working practices.

2. Biodiversity: Our Commitment

RoS has a responsibility under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to ensure we help to conserve biodiversity in Scotland.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of plant and animal life which surrounds us, as well as how different species interact with each other and the physical world around them. Although RoS does not directly interact with biodiversity as we do not own any land,

we remain committed to reducing the impact of our activities on the natural environment.

We remain focused on continuing to improve environmental management across our estate. During the period of this plan we focused on two types of biodiversity activities: awareness raising and staff volunteering.

3. Environmental Governance

3.1. Environmental Management Group

RoS is committed to reducing our carbon emissions by reviewing all operations and minimising our impact where possible. To ensure that there is leadership and support from across the organisation, it is important to have a fully defined governance structure in place.

An Environmental Management Group (EMG) was established, chaired by the Accountable Officer, to approve or recommend viable environmental projects presented by the Sustainability team and supported by the Environmental Working Group (EWG). The EMG acts as a forum to provide help and guidance to ensure projects are delivered and efficiency savings are achieved and reported upon.

3.2. Environmental Working Group

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.

Section 2: Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

1. Enhancing Biodiversity

1.1. Our Buildings – External

RoS has taken steps to enhance biodiversity in and around our offices at Meadowbank House (MBH) in Edinburgh and St Vincent's Plaza (SVP).

Both sites now have external wildflower planters to attract pollinating insects. The planters use peat free composts which helps to reduce biodiversity loss and the associated effects of removing peat from bogs for compost.

MBH has also installed a green sedum roof on the second floor, and SVP has a sedum roof on top of the external bike store which was installed this year. We installed these as among their benefits they help to encourage biodiversity in the city, as well as purifying the air.

In addition, MBH have trees within the car park area, though we don't own these directly a tree survey has been carried out with our grounds maintenance supplier which will be followed up with recommendations.

Invasive alien species threaten biodiversity and at MBH we aim to control the invasive species Japanese Knotweed, which has been identified on our embankment and is undergoing a 4-year treatment for eradication. Buddleia has also been identified and is not being treated but will be kept under control.

Though we share the building and grounds under a landlord contract in SVP, we have support from the landlord to install bird boxes on the many trees surrounding the site.

1.2. Our Buildings - Internal

We have carried our numerous projects in our offices to minimise pollution arising from our operations throughout the last 3 years. All projects have significantly contributed to savings in carbon emissions and reductions in our overall footprint, some of these include:

- Installation of new A rated energy efficient boilers in MBH
- Updated recycling system to facilitate an increase in recycle rates
- Switch to low emission pool car vehicles
- Reuse and recycling of office furniture
- Reduction in paper due to our digital transformation
- Encouraging our staff to actively travel to work

2. Biodiversity Awareness

RoS raises awareness of some of the key drivers of biodiversity loss through staff engagement projects which highlight climate change and pollution.

Climate Change is a global threat which is causing significant damage to our planet and those who inhabit it. With the further declaration of a Climate Emergency, we want to do what we can as business to raise awareness and our aim is to encourage and facilitate everyone to get involved in tackling these issues by sharing information via our intranet and holding environmental events.

2.1. Environmental Awareness Events

Climate change increases the pressure on biodiversity such as extreme weather which contributes to habitat loss and degradation. With the announcement of a climate emergency by the Scottish Government in 2019, and with biodiversity loss and the climate emergency being closely linked, we wanted to further raise awareness of these issues.

The sustainability team alongside the EWG have ran numerous 'Go Greener' campaigns with our Environmental Working Group since 2018 based around key themes throughout the year, alongside annual global and national events such as Recycle Week and Climate Week. This can include up to 4 weeks of events, workshops and educational blogs based on key themes.

In partnership with local charities and social enterprises, some of the themes we have focussed on include reusing and recycling, saving water, renewable technology, reducing energy, sustainable travel, and minimising food waste. We have raised funds for charities including Willow's Animal Sanctuary and the Marine Conservation Society.

With an aim to introduce beehives on our roof at MBH, we held a 'Bee-o-diversity' workshop in partnership with the Good Bee Co., who brought along live bees to highlight the importance of bees on biodiversity. Most recently, for World Environment Day 2020 we released a blog to raise awareness on biodiversity and tips on taking action to protect the environment.

Engagement remains a key focus for the sustainability team and we have been involved in podcasts and presentations both internally and externally to raise awareness of our commitment and environmental achievements.

3. Environmental Volunteering

Alongside our events we have organised staff volunteering days through our environmental campaigns centred on encouraging and mitigating impacts to biodiversity.

3.1. Litter Picks

Discarded litter affects wildlife from land to sea. To raise awareness of just how much our society throws away, in both 2018 and 2019 we held an MBH voluntary litter pick in Lochend Park and Holyrood Park Edinburgh. Most of the items found include plastic bags, plastic bottles, and confectionary wrappers – highlighting the need to cut down on plastic.

In 2019 volunteers from SVP also completed a litter pick at Dover Park in Glasgow litter. Both events were registered with Keep Scotland Beautiful so they can gather a nation-wide picture of our litter problem and tackle it more effectively.

3.2. Tree Planting

The paper industry is responsible for 40% of the world's commercially cut timber making it a key contributor to the endangerment of species that live in the forests. The production of paper is also damaging from beginning to end - it starts off with a tree being cut down and ends its life by being burned – emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

To replace a small portion of the trees we're currently using, we have planted trees annually in partnership with Forestry and Land (formerly Forestry Commission Scotland). In 2018 we took a team of 10 volunteers and planted 700 trees to offset our paper usage at Gravelpit Woods in Cupar, Fife.

The following year, we returned to carry out maintenance of the wood – replacing dead trees or tubes, planting more trees and working to encourage growth in the area.

Section 3: Mainstreaming biodiversity

1. Overview

Registers of Scotland is committed to an effective sustainable management programme to ensure we reduce and minimise our impact on the environment. We recognise the importance of tackling climate change and our responsibility in contributing towards a low carbon future.

We aim to embed sustainability throughout all purchasing, project work and decision making to ensure we are addressing our impact on the environment and realising the benefits of reducing our use of resources. To track our impact, we have corporate targets relating to reducing our environmental impact – paper reduction and carbon footprint, which are monitored and reported on.

RoS also formally reports our climate change impact to the Scottish Government under the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015.

2. Biodiversity: Responsibilities

2.1. Environmental Policy

RoS' Environmental Policy¹ sets out our commitment to:

- Protecting the environment and minimising pollution arising from activities.
- Assessing the environmental impact of all business activities.
- Minimising our use of paper, energy, and other natural resources.
- Fulfilling our compliance obligations in line with Scottish Government legislation and the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.

As part of our effort to continuously improve our operations and environmental performance, we set a number of objectives. Included in this is a key objective to protect and enhance biodiversity on our estate and contribute further afield.

2.2. Carbon Management Plan

RoS has measured the environmental impact from across our estate for several years and has made substantial efforts to reduce our carbon footprint through the implementation of projects under our Carbon Management Plan (CMP) 2016-2020, and by encouraging behaviour change.

A CMP was produced to provide a clear commitment from RoS to meet our climate change duties, outlining our approach and projects to deliver a 22% carbon footprint reduction from the 2012/13 baseline year. The main streams of data input were:

- Energy use associated with the running of both buildings
- Water consumption
- Waste disposal

Annual targets were set under our CMP 2016-2020 to reduce the carbon we produce and reduce our impact on the environment by implementing key projects. The plan came to an end in Spring 2020 and a new 5-year Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy will be published in 2021. As of March 2020, we have achieved:

- Electricity & Gas – annual reduction of 2.5% - we have exceeded this target and reduced electricity by 32% and gas by 35%
- Waste - annual waste to landfill by 1% - as of 2014, no waste was sent to landfill
- Water - annual water reduction of 2% - we have exceeded this target and reduced by 44%

¹ <https://www.ros.gov.uk/about/publications/policy-and-guidelines/2019/environment-policy>

- Paper - annual paper reduction of 2.5% - we have exceeded this target and reduced by 50%

The implementation of a CMP allowed RoS to measure our achievements and implement several projects to ensure we continued to meet our reduction targets, improved our efficiency, and ultimately reduced our impact on the environment.

We exceeded the original target and met a 44% saving, with significant savings across each of the data streams. We have also saw a 31% reduction in paper use over the reporting period. Business travel was however omitted from the CMP due to limited data from the baseline year, however this data has been monitored since 2016 and will be included in future reporting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reduction in our carbon footprint with most staff working from home since March 2020. Digital transformation of services accelerated due to the pandemic to ensure an ongoing service could be provided for our customers. Due to this our paper use has decreased by approximately 96%.

2.3. Staff Travel

RoS continues to encourage our staff to reduce the use of single occupancy vehicles and make sustainable travel choices when commuting. We also promote green travel through our environmental campaigns and staff engagement.

As part of our commitment, we replaced our pool car fleet to low emission and now have fully electric car and plug-in hybrid cars. To support and encourage our staff to switch to low emission travel, we installed electric charge points at our MBH offices with SVP due to take place in 2021. This helps to improve air quality in our local environment.

RoS has taken part in the Scottish Workplace Journey Challenge, Pedal for Scotland, and Bike Week. We have a cycle to work scheme and have recently passed the renewal for the Cycle Friendly Employer Award. Additionally, we use telephone conferencing and encourage skype meetings, reducing the need for face to face meetings and reducing travel between our offices.

2.4. Sustainable Procurement

RoS is committed to reducing our impact on the environment throughout our operations, including in the purchase of goods and services. This encompasses environmental impact, health and safety, equalities, professional ethics, ethical sourcing and removing barriers to allow small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to participate in RoS procurement.

Our Sustainable Procurement Policy (available on the RoS website), sets out our aim to minimise adverse impacts on the environment and act in an environmentally responsible manner in the purchases of goods and services. Ethical processes are followed to understand and capture the impact of our suppliers into our carbon footprint. CSR initiatives have also been a key focus throughout the last year where we have been working with suppliers such to engage with local schools and carrying out litter picks. Sustainability in procurement including reuse, will become a key focus as we go into 2021.

Section 4: Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity

1. Climate Emergency

We aim to reduce our impact on the local environment through our business targets, staff engagement and projects, which help us tackle climate change and support the aim of achieving net zero targets.

Our Carbon Management Plan came to an end in April 2020 and we have made significant savings from the baseline year. We are currently in the process of writing a new Sustainability Strategy which will include biodiversity and taking action for pollinators, including beehives on MBH roof.

2. Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

RoS is actively managing and reducing our impact on the environment. At our offices, we aim to include nature-based solutions in the ways available to us.

There is evidence that green roofs can help to lock up and absorb pollutants such as carbon dioxide, improving air quality and temperature, as well increasing the amount of habitat to benefit biodiversity. Therefore, we aim to increase resilience to climate change by investing in green infrastructure:

- MBH has a green Sedum installed on the roof of the second floor. This is maintained, repaired when required to check all rainwater outlets are running freely and the roots checked for pest attack to ensure the green roof is maintained to a high standard to support a habitat for wildlife. SVP also has recently had a sedum roof installed as part of the new bike store.
- In our planters we choose wildflowers which help Scotland's pollinators, and we use peat free compost as standard.

We aim to reduce pressures on ecosystems, habitats, and species from:

- Invasive non-native species: we have a contract to eradicate the non-native species Japanese knotweed on our embankment by implementing a four-year treatment plan, and we will monitor and respond to any new arrivals.

Section 5: Workforce development

1. Staff Training

As part of our work to minimise the impact of our operations in our waste streams and increase recycling rates, in 2019 we set up a network of Recycle Champions across both offices in partnership with our EWG members. Training sessions were held to widen the expertise within RoS and allow for champions to be based in each wing across the organisation. This led to recycling rates increasing and minimal contamination issues arising. This work continues to be ongoing.

2. Collaboration

We regularly collaborate with external organisations such as other public sector bodies. This allows for ideas exchange, support, and guidance in reaching our individual and collective climate change goals.

Section 6: Research and monitoring

1. Research

As part of our efforts to reduce the impact of our operations on our environment, RoS continues to remain up to date with key legislation, guidance, and publications. We regularly attend Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) workshops and webinars and

RoS has carried out surveys and audits relating to recycling and staff travel which has supported in a reduction in associated pollution from our activities. In our scoping work to introduce beehives on to the roof of MBH, a report was created including a risk assessment to ensure the local environment will support bee biodiversity.

2. Monitoring

Monitoring is a key aspect of our sustainability work, we continuously collect, manage and report on data. This data is published in annual reports and within CMP progress reports, this supports in the implementation of relevant strategies and policies. Monitoring is essential to allow us to set key goals as we work towards meeting Scotland's overall climate change targets.

In the next three years, as part of our new sustainability strategy we will look to carry out further monitoring of our impact on biodiversity and continue with staff awareness raising and engagement.

Section 7: Biodiversity highlights and challenges

1. Achievements

RoS has made significant reductions in our carbon footprint during the reporting period including exceeding all our key targets under the Carbon Management Plan 2016-2020. We have continued to prioritise staff engagement on climate change by delivering campaigns based around key themes.

We have made great progress in reducing our impact across the last 3 years, some key achievements:

- Reducing our carbon footprint by 56% from the baseline year
- Removing single use coffee cups from our offices
- Switching to a low emission pool car fleet and installing electric charge points for staff in MBH
- Raising over £1,900 for charity
- Switching to 100% recycled paper
- Installing new recycling points and establishing the recycle champion's network
- Raising awareness of environmental issues through events and blogs and being able to continue this virtually in 2020 with high engagement.

The COVID pandemic has led to an acceleration of our digital transformation work and we will continue with our transition project to rethink our ways of working.

2. Challenges and Aims

RoS will publish a 5-year Sustainability Strategy in 2021 which will set out how we will contribute to the delivery of Scotland's emission reduction targets under the updated climate change plan. Under this strategy we will aim to reduce our impact on the environment and conserve biodiversity through these key areas:

- Reduction in our carbon footprint
- Reduction in resources and becoming digital by 2020
- Sustainable procurement practices
- Staff engagement

We will continue, where possible, to expand our biodiversity plans and implement the planned projects delayed due to COVID including bird boxes at SVP and beehives at MBH.



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