



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Environmental Plan

2025 to 2028

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

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Foreword

We are proud to introduce Social Security Scotland's first Environmental Plan. This is a significant milestone in our journey towards becoming a more sustainable and responsible public sector organisation. The development of our plan has involved working with colleagues in Social Security Scotland, as well as across the Scottish public sector.

This plan reflects our commitment to tackling the climate emergency and supporting Scotland's ambition to become a net zero country by 2045. It sets out how Social Security Scotland will reduce its environmental impact, empower our colleagues, and embed sustainability into our culture and operations.

Our values of dignity, fairness and respect guide everything we do. These values are equally important in how we respond to the climate crisis. Through this plan, we will take meaningful action—whether by reducing emissions, improving how we manage our buildings and services, or supporting our people to make environmentally conscious decisions.

We know that climate action is not a one-time effort. It requires ongoing learning, collaboration and adaptation. That's why this plan is designed to evolve, ensuring we remain aligned with the latest science, legislation and best practice.

Our colleagues have been central to the development of this plan. Their passion and dedication are helping to shape a greener future for Social Security Scotland and for the communities we serve.

Together, we can make a difference.

Introduction and background

Climate Change and the Climate Emergency

Climate change refers to “long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns”. Whilst climate change can be natural and it is normal to see changes in weather fronts, long-term and sustained changes to our climate have largely been caused by humans. The burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas create greenhouse gas emissions that directly impact our environment, economy and society.

The Scottish Government declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 following a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the world was on course to warm by more than 1.5 degrees. This level of global warming can and already does have catastrophic effects on our planet.

Legislative context

The Scottish Government has made a commitment that Scotland will become a net zero country by 2045 and in this Social Security Scotland has a duty to act. The [Programme for Government 2025 – 2026](#) lists Tackling the Climate Emergency as one of its four key priorities and includes steps being taken to help us adapt as a country to a warming planet, decarbonising transport and protecting Scotland’s natural habitat and species.

[The Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) and the [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) are two key pieces of legislation that provide guidance and reporting duties we must follow. This legislation is aligned to advice from the [UK Committee on Climate Change](#) and is aligned to the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Our [Corporate Procurement Strategy 2024-2027](#) sets out how we will meet the requirements of [The Procurement Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#). It is aligned with [The Public Procurement Strategy for Scotland 2023 to 2028](#) and The Programme for Government 2025-2026. The sustainable procurement duty, as defined in section 9 of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act, applies to all regulated procurement and means that we must consider how we can improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the authority’s area. We will also follow Scottish Public Procurement Policy notes on taking account of climate and circular economy considerations.

Purpose of our Environmental Plan

Since Social Security Scotland became an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government in September 2018, our main and continued purpose is to deliver devolved benefits to the people of Scotland. Everything Social Security Scotland do is underpinned by our values of dignity, fairness and respect.

Although this is our first Environmental Plan, we have already taken steps to reduce our environmental impact. We have a fleet of electric pool cars, energy efficient heating and cooling systems in our central buildings, sustainable procurement approach and environmental learning. We have also identified our baseline carbon emissions that will be used to record our progress towards reducing our emissions and form our Carbon Management Plan.

Our Executive Team has made a commitment that Social Security Scotland take climate action seriously, we now have a dedicated team in place to support business areas and colleagues.

In this, our first Environmental Plan, the focus is on developing our understanding of our environmental impact, adapting to climate change, and providing our colleagues with the tools and knowledge they need to act.

Climate change action is a dynamic and evolving space. The purpose of this plan is to provide us with a solid foundation to minimise our environmental impact and allow us to meaningfully contribute to the national 2045 net zero goal.

Our four workstreams demonstrate the actions that Social Security Scotland will take over the next three years. These actions align with the Foundation Outcomes of the [Sustainable Scotland Network's Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist](#) and Adaptation Scotland's Climate Adaptation Capability Framework.



Our Environmental Plan workstreams



Organisational culture

Social Security Scotland has a large and diverse workforce, and our colleagues are key to delivering our Environmental Plan. To make climate action part of our everyday culture, we will embed our values, behaviours and ways of working with sustainable practices.

Over the next three years, Social Security Scotland will empower our people through learning. Building a solid foundation through collaboration, innovation and the sharing of knowledge. By offering meaningful learning opportunities, we will support colleagues to feel confident and empower them to take action to reduce our environmental impact at work, at home and in our communities.

Making climate action part of Social Security Scotland's culture means it becomes a natural part of how we work. This will take time and it is key that we do not rush to do everything all at once.

Social Security Scotland's organisational culture needs to be nurtured and given the time, care and space to grow. Our colleague-led Environmental Network will play a key role in this journey, helping us tell our story, learn from each other and lead by example. Network members will also participate in Carbon Literacy training to enable them to champion environmental causes in their teams and across the organisation.

What we will do:

Develop and promote environmental learning for colleagues, building on existing talent and expanding local expertise

We will develop and promote environmental learning for our people in collaboration with Organisational Development, core Scottish Government and industry experts.

Host an Environmental Network to empower colleague led activity

We will facilitate a colleague led Environmental Network to coordinate environmental activities, empowering our people to think of climate-related actions and act as a critical friend during development of climate-related guidance and procedures.

Engage with our corporate charity and engagement group to promote environmental volunteering opportunities

We will identify and promote nature-based volunteering opportunities for colleagues. This will allow to demonstrate action towards obligations such as our Biodiversity Duty, as well as align with our Social Impact Pledge by making a positive difference to our local communities and support our colleagues' wellbeing at work.



How we work

As a public sector organisation in Scotland, Social Security Scotland has a duty to support the Scottish Government's goal of becoming a net zero country by 2045. To do this well, we'll need to understand how our work affects the environment.

We must ensure that Social Security Scotland's way of working allows us to reduce our environmental impact in a way that does not affect the quality of service we provide to the people of Scotland. We need to equip our colleagues with ways that help us adapt to a changing climate while fulfilling their roles.

Social Security Scotland will have Subject Matter Experts, equipped with the appropriate technical learning to support us delivering our services in a sustainable way, incorporating environmental considerations into our business as usual processes. This will allow us to identify and manage climate-related risks in our processes.

Social Security Scotland will look at ways of doing things differently and make evidence-based decisions through an environmental lens, providing accountability and transparency. As we continue to support a digital first approach, which will support reducing our impact from travel, we recognise that digital tools have their own environmental impact. We will be mindful of the carbon impact of our digital footprint and work together to optimise our use of digital storage.

What we will do:

Encourage adoption of environmental impact assessments for new and existing services

We will encourage the adoption of Environmental Impact Assessments to better understand the carbon footprint of how we design and deliver our services, as well as identifying opportunities to reduce our environmental impact.

Ensure environmental consideration is incorporated into decision making through appropriate governance and risk recognition

We will incorporate climate risk, governance and assurance into our processes. We will do this by implementing and regularly reviewing our Climate Change Risk Assessment, escalating relevant risks through the existing risk framework.

Support the sustainable delivery of our services to the people of Scotland

We will assess how we deliver our services to the people of Scotland, ensuring that the delivery of our service is done in a sustainable way. We will promote digital solutions where possible to help minimise our impact through travel.



Supporting a sustainable economy

Social Security Scotland is committed to helping build a greener, fairer economy in alignment with the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024.

To support this, we will help our people build the skills and knowledge they need to help us meet our environmental responsibilities, especially in areas like buying goods and services and working with our suppliers. This means they support our Procurement team to monitor how suppliers are performing on environmental aspects, and make sure contracts support our ambitions.

Social Security Scotland's [Corporate Procurement Strategy 2024-2027](#) sets out how we will ensure that our procurement practices contribute to the Scottish Government Just Transition approach to addressing the climate emergency and decarbonising our economy

A key focus is on buying goods and services in a way that is sustainable. Social Security Scotland aims to work with suppliers who prioritise green policies and net zero goals, ensuring that environmental considerations are central to procurement decisions. This approach not only supports the organisation's environmental goals but also contributes to Scotland's broader climate change targets.

Social Security Scotland will embed in our procurement activity the application of circular principles. By including the waste hierarchy and life cycle carbon emissions we ensure we think about the full environmental impact of the goods and services we buy. We will also work with our suppliers to include environmental related Community Benefits.

Social Security Scotland's buildings are a significant contributor to our carbon footprint, we need to understand the impact of how we manage these spaces and how they are utilised. This approach will help us identify where we can make positive changes and ensure our buildings are operated in a sustainable manner.

What we will do

Sustainable Procurement Duty and Tools

We will continue to meet our responsibilities under the Sustainable Procurement Duty through the use of Sustainable Procurement Tools to help us make environmentally responsible choices when buying goods and services.

Identifying opportunities to improve facilities, assets and processes, to drive a more sustainable Social Security Scotland

Within available resources, we will look to continuously improve the management of our estate and assets by looking for ways to innovate and drive carbon savings. This includes reviewing our buildings for energy efficiencies and improving digital meeting capability to reduce the need for travel.

Supporting a Circular Economy

We will support a Circular Economy by reusing and recycling across our buildings where we can. We'll also collaborate with suppliers to support local supply chains, and encourage local, seasonal products in our cafes.



Monitoring performance

At Social Security Scotland, accurately monitoring, assessing, and reporting our climate impact is essential to tracking our progress and performance against our environmental ambitions.

We will also align our climate action under our plan with the four pillars of the [Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures](#) framework: Governance, Strategy, Risk Management, and Metrics and Targets.

Aligning with the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures framework will ensure transparency and accountability; enabling us to monitor the delivery of both short-term and long-term environmental goals. We will publish regular progress reports in addition to meeting our legislative obligations, including, but not limited to, Scotland's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties.

Recognising the evolving nature of climate policy, legislation, and environmental science, we are committed to routinely and proactively reviewing our actions under our plan. This will ensure our action remain compliant, relevant, and aligned with Scotland's national climate ambitions.

What we will do

Ensure robust management information

We will strengthen our climate reporting data by engaging with all divisions and data specialists to understand what we have and where the gaps are. This will allow us to have confidence in data accuracy to support legislative and internal reporting, and aid effective environmental decision making. We will continue to work with colleagues across the wider Scottish public sector who peer review our reports and enable benchmarking across the sector

Increase awareness of our organisation's environmental impact

We will increase organisational awareness of Social Security Scotland's environmental impact. We will do this by presenting performance indicators, trends and insights in an accessible and meaningful way. This will enable colleagues and business areas to reflect on their impact and explore ways to improve.

Align to the Taskforce on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure recommendations

We will explore how we can align our financial resources to mitigate climate change and work towards aligning with the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures. We will continue to work closely with internal finance colleagues and Audit Scotland, to ensure that we are feeding in the right information.

Measuring our success

Measuring the successful delivery and implementation of our plan will take on many forms.

We will report on a quarterly basis on progress towards achieving plan deliverables and outcomes which are outlined in the below table Workstream Deliverables & Alignment to Leaders Climate Emergency Checklist. This reporting frequency will allow us to monitor progress and take further action as required.

As noted in the plan, the environmental science and legislative context is evolving, as such, we need to remain flexible to ensure that our actions and deliverables remain aligned with our objective of minimising our environmental impact, and in turn, supporting the Scottish Governments ambition of Scotland being a net zero country by 2045. By reporting on a quarterly basis, under our four workstreams, we will be able to make meaningful adjustments to our actions to ensure we realise the outcomes of this plan.

We will continue to report our organisational emissions via the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD) report on an annual basis on behalf of the Scottish Ministers; we will contribute to the annual Section 76 report regarding the efficiency of our buildings and submit our Biodiversity Duty Report in December 2026.

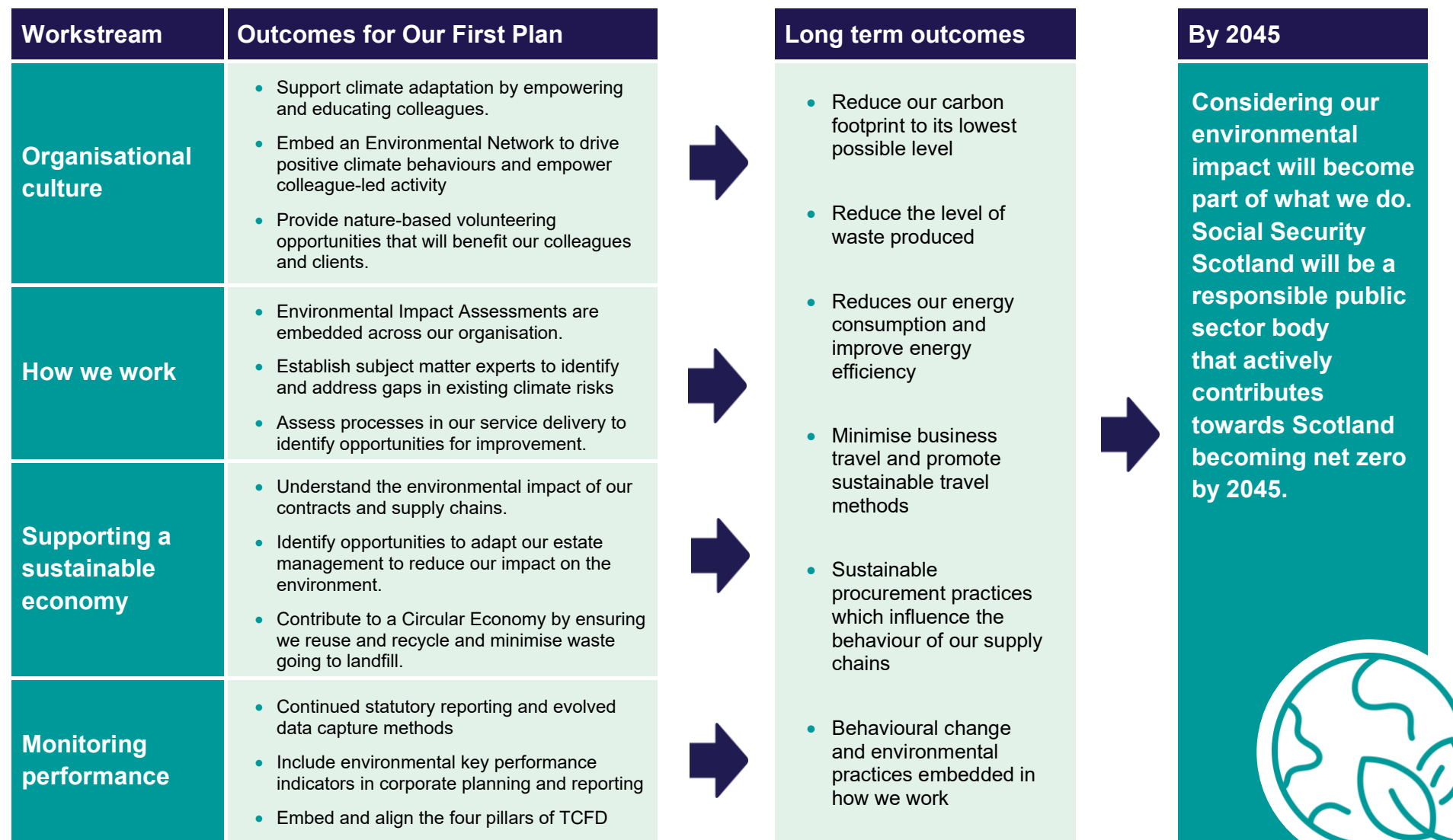
We will monitor and report on how we have met our procurement key priorities in our Annual Procurement Report which allows us to record and publicise our performance and achievements in delivering our procurement strategy.

Further, our Carbon Management Plan will demonstrate our carbon emissions boundaries and performance, detail projects undertaken to reduce our carbon impact and align with Greenhouse Gas Protocols reporting methods.

A key indicator measuring our success will be colleague engagement and adoption of environmental ways of working. We will track completion of Environmental Impact Assessments and support colleagues to complete them. We will also track completion of our environmental learning and take up of nature-based volunteering opportunities.



Our environmental outcomes



Workstream deliverables & alignment to Leaders Climate Emergency Checklist

Environmental Plan themes & actions		Deliverable	Leaders Climate Emergency Checklist (Foundation)						
			Strategy	Targets	Governance	Delivery	Finance	Performance	Skills
Organisational culture	Develop and promote environmental learning for colleagues, building on existing talent and expanding local expertise	E-learning package. Promote and host environmental events.				✓		✓	✓
	Host an Environmental Network to empower colleague led activity	Coordinate Environmental Network.	✓		✓	✓			✓
	Engage with our corporate charity and engagement group to promote environmental volunteering opportunities	Environmental volunteering.	✓			✓			✓
How we work	Encourage adoption of environmental impact assessments for new and existing services.	Establish Environmental Impact Assessments.	✓		✓	✓		✓	
	Ensure environmental consideration is incorporated into decision making via appropriate governance and recognition of risk impacts	Complete Climate Risk Assessment.	✓		✓	✓			
	Support the sustainable delivery of our services to the people of Scotland.	Establish Subject Matter Experts and review current processes and behaviours.		✓		✓		✓	✓

Workstream deliverables & alignment to Leaders Climate Emergency Checklist

Environmental Plan themes & actions		Deliverable	Leaders Climate Emergency Checklist (Foundation)						
			Strategy	Targets	Governance	Delivery	Finance	Performance	Skills
Supporting sustainable economy	Sustainable Procurement Duty & Tools:	Assess supplier climate commitments		✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Identifying opportunities to improve facilities, assets and processes, to drive more sustainable operation of Social Security Scotland	Assess estate and assets.		✓	✓			✓	
	Supporting a Circular Economy	Assess existing suppliers.	✓			✓	✓		✓
Monitoring performance	Ensure robust management information	Assess existing information.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Increase awareness of our organisation's environmental impact	Develop reports. Publish and promote reports where applicable.	✓			✓		✓	✓
	Align to the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure recommendations	Clarify and understand TCFD recommendations.		✓	✓			✓	

How our workstreams align with Social Security Scotland's Plans & Charter

Environmental Plan themes & actions		Our People Plan					Corporate Plan					Our Charter				Programme for Government			
		Our Health and Wellbeing	Resourcing our Services	Developing our People	Defining How we Work	Improving our Performance	Operational Delivery	Critical Digital Maintenance	New Social Security Benefits	Business Plan Priorities	Preparing for the Future	A People Service	Processes that Work	A Learning System	A Better Future	Eradicating Child Poverty	Growing the Economy	Tackling the Climate Emergency	Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services
Organisational culture	Develop and promote environmental learning for colleagues, building on existing talent and expanding local expertise		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Host Environmental Network to empower colleague led activity		✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
	Engage with our corporate charity and engagement group to promote environmental volunteering opportunities	✓			✓					✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	
How we work	Encourage adoption of environmental impact assessments for new and existing services.	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
	Ensure environmental consideration is incorporated into decision making via appropriate governance and risk recognition				✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
	Support the sustainable delivery of our services to the people of Scotland.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓

How our workstreams align with Social Security Scotland's Plans & Charter Cont.

Environmental Plan themes & actions		Our People Plan					Corporate Plan					Our Charter				Programme for Government			
		Our Health and Wellbeing	Resourcing our Services	Developing our People	Defining How we Work	Improving our Performance	Operational Delivery	Critical Digital Maintenance	New Social Security Benefits	Business Plan Priorities	Preparing for the Future	A People Service	Processes that Work	A Learning System	A Better Future	Eradicating Child Poverty	Growing the Economy	Tackling the Climate Emergency	Ensuring High Quality and Sustainable Public Services
Supporting sustainable economy	Sustainable Procurement Duty & Tools				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
	Identifying opportunities to improve facilities and assets, to drive more sustainable Social Security Scotland				✓	✓	✓			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
	Supporting a Circular Economy	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitoring performance	Ensure robust management information				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
	Increase awareness of our organisation's environmental impact				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
	Align to the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures recommendations				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓



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