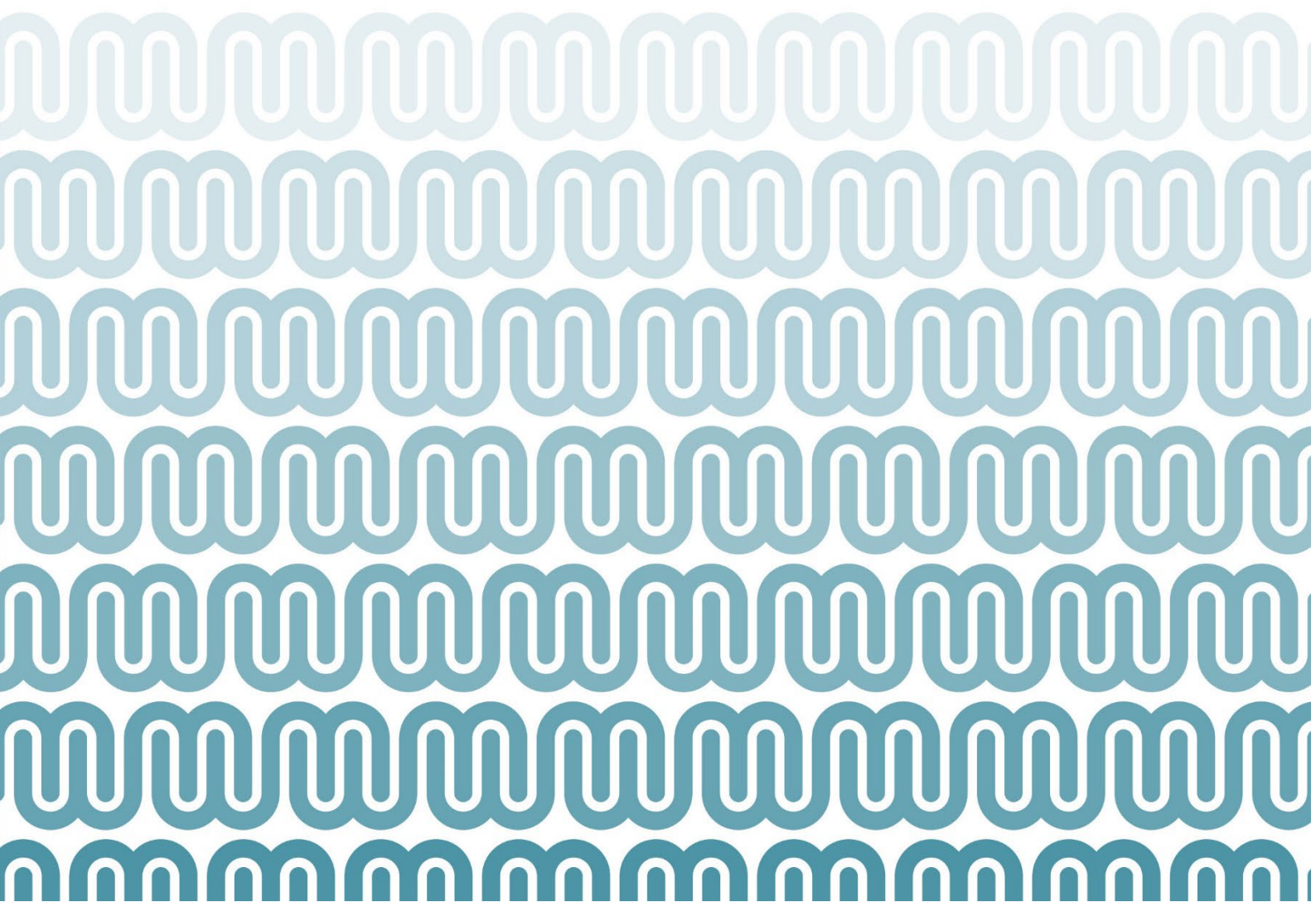


Sustainability strategy 2025-28

Corporate document

November 2025



Our mission and purpose

Our Mission

To be a leading and independent voice in promoting a society where people with mental illness, learning disabilities, dementia and related conditions are treated fairly, have their rights respected, and have appropriate support to live the life of their choice.

Our Purpose

We protect and promote the human rights of people with mental illness, learning disabilities, dementia and related conditions.

Our Priorities

To achieve our mission and purpose over the next three years we have identified four strategic priorities.

- To challenge and to promote change
- Focus on the most vulnerable
- Increase our impact (in the work that we do)
- Improve our efficiency and effectiveness

Our Activity

- Influencing and empowering
- Visiting individuals
- Monitoring the law
- Investigations and casework
- Information and advice

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Introduction

This is the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland's (the Commission) first sustainability strategy. The Commission recognises that the effect of its activities on the environment is important and will so far as is reasonably practical mitigate the environmental impact of its activities, in a way that is proportionate to the organisation's size and available resources.

As a public body, the Commission aims to ensure legal compliance and adopt best practice initiatives to help reduce its overall carbon footprint and mitigate the environmental impact of its operations.

This three-year strategy sets out the main areas where the Commission will focus its efforts in order to develop a more environmentally aware, efficient and sustainable business operation.

As this is the first sustainability strategy developed by the Commission, the objectives set out herein should be considered as in their infancy. It is anticipated that targets and commitments will become more sophisticated once practices become embedded.

Objectives

The Commission will ensure sustainability is considered as part of all strategic and operational decision-making, with all SBARs containing a mandatory sustainability section.

In particular, the Commission will focus its efforts on the following key areas:

1. Procurement
2. Travel
3. Building/facilities
4. People
5. Community

1. Procurement

The Commission will ensure that sustainability is a key factor in procurement decisions (including assessment and validation decisions). This will be achieved by ensuring the Commission's Procurement Policy is reviewed annually and aligns to the latest version of:

- Scottish Procurement Policy Handbook
- Scottish Public Finance Manual
- Scottish Procurement Policy Notes

The Commission makes use of the Scottish Government (SG) framework for procurement, which will also have considered wider green credentials.

2. Travel

The Commission's core business and statutory functions require travel across Scotland on a regular basis, for visits to mental health services, investigations and engagement/participation services with key stakeholders and people with lived or carer experience. The nature of this work (protecting and promoting the human rights of people with mental illness, learning disabilities, dementia and related conditions) means this largely cannot take place online and travel is therefore unavoidable.

There are also other challenges in trying to mitigate the Commission's travel emissions, including:

- Edinburgh-based organisation/single site but nationwide remit.
- Whilst an updated Travel & Subsistence Policy has been developed and advocates for public transport rather than motor vehicle travel, this is not always possible due to geography, lack of public transport serving rural areas, workforce wellbeing/health needs, and where it would create inefficiencies (i.e. increased travel time taking staff away from their duties for longer).
- The Commission is covered by SG's hire car contract. Whilst this contract allows for electric vehicles, the hire cost is prohibitive at almost three times the cost of a petrol vehicle and the range/charge times causes adverse operational impact.

Whilst the Commission is committed to sustainable development, the current fiscal pressures make it challenging to do as much as it would like in this area; particularly at a time when the number of visits is increasing. With that in mind, the Commission does not intend to measure its carbon footprint, as it is not feasible to set improvement targets for the reasons stated above.

However, the Commission will:

- Publish an updated Travel and Subsistence Policy, which will prioritise public transport over other means of travel, wherever possible, with a sign off and audit process to monitor compliance.
- Establish a means of reporting (from 2026 onwards) on % of public transport v other means of travel, with year-on-year trend analysis, to measure anticipated reduction in use of hire cars and private vehicles for business travel.
- Keep the use of electric vehicles on the hire car plan under review, for example, when SG negotiates a new framework agreement, in case the charges become less prohibitive.
- Conduct a formal review of the Designated Medical Practitioner (DMP) service, with a view to supporting virtual second opinion assessments where appropriate. The benefit of any increase in virtual assessments will be a reduction in travel for in-person assessments.

In addition, the Commission offers a generous Hybrid Working Policy, where staff can largely (with some exceptions) choose to work from home, with a minimum commitment of one day per month in the office (subject to business need). This will have a significant and tangible benefit in offsetting the Commission's carbon footprint arising from travel/commuting to the workplace.

3. Building/facilities

In terms of the Commission's premises (Thistle House):

- The Commission is one of several tenants in a building owned and managed by Scottish Ministers
- The Commission has approximately 70 employees with desk space for 36.
- Meeting/conference, kitchen and washroom facilities are shared with the other third floor tenant
- The lease was renewed in April 2024 for an expected duration of 5 years.
- With the exception of confidential waste, all other waste/refuse/recycling facilities are provided by the landlord
- The building's EPC rating is E+

Given the foregoing, the Commission's ability to influence meaningful change in this area is limited. However, the Commission has taken a number of active steps (and will continue to undertake) to provide a more sustainable office space, including:

- Reduced the floor space by 45% in 2019. The total space equates to 372m² (approximately 55% of the third floor and 10.406% of the overall building) plus two car parking spaces in the basement

- Published (and will regularly review) the Hybrid Working Policy
- Review office space requirements ahead of next lease expiry
- Provision of full on-site recycling facilities
- Provision of office planting
- Not offer single use plastics
- Not use coffee machines
- Use e-documents wherever possible, with limited photocopying/printing
- Reconditioning of laptops/IT equipment wherever possible

In addition, the landlords publish their own [Carbon Management Plan](#) (new plan in development) for the building and take steps to plan for climate change adverse events.

The Commission is able to operate fully remotely (as demonstrated during the Covid pandemic) but the Commission will ensure its business continuity plan is updated and includes climate change response as part of its planning.

4. People

The Commission will continue to promote good environmental practices through:

- Health Promotion and Wellbeing Framework
- Cycle to work scheme
- SG travel pass scheme
- Hybrid Working Policy
- Health and Safety Policy and supporting procedures
- Signposting to climate change/environmental awareness training materials

5. Community

The Commission raises funds from time to time for charities with other public sector bodies in Thistle House, for example, through bake sales/coffee mornings and Christmas food hamper/gift collections.

That will continue and the Commission will explore appetite for a Social and Charity Committee to progress further initiatives in this area where possible.

In addition, the Commission will explore the feasibility of volunteering days for staff.

Governance and reporting

All staff are responsible for adhering to the strategy and being mindful of its principles.

The chief executive, executive leadership team (ELT), senior managers/extended executive leadership team (EELT) are responsible for embedding the strategy in their respective areas and ensuring staff awareness and compliance.

The head of culture and corporate services (HOCCS) is responsible for reviewing the strategy, measuring/reporting progress in the annual returns to ELT and SG, and ensuring there are systems for delivering on the commitments.

Public bodies in Scotland have had statutory duties on climate change since 2011 under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Since 2015-2016, public bodies have been submitting mandatory annual reports on compliance with their climate change duties under the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order. It is mandatory for all 150 'major players' listed within this order to submit a Scottish Public Bodies Net Zero Emissions Target Statement by 30 November annually, using the standardised reporting template. The Commission is not part of the '150 major players list' and is not mandated to report, however, it is best practice for smaller organisations to voluntarily report on progress on areas where they do have influence and the Commission has provided voluntary returns since at least 2020, including goals for the year ahead.

That approach will continue and those returns will be the primary means of measuring and reporting against the commitments set out in this strategy, to provide one consistent means of reporting.

Whilst consideration has been given to resurrecting a former 'Green Group' within the Commission and/or inviting sustainability champions, it is not felt proportionate to do so at this stage, given:

- The Commission's size and available resources
- Limited procurement exercises
- Challenges in reducing carbon footprint on travel and buildings for the reasons noted

The efficacy of the strategy will also be reviewed as part of the programme of internal audit.

Action plan

Area	Actions	Owners/Timeline
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that sustainability is a key factor in procurement decisions (including assessment and validation decisions) • Review the Procurement Policy annually 	Finance and IT manager / ongoing
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish an updated Travel and Subsistence Policy, which will prioritise public transport over other means of travel, wherever possible, with a sign off and audit process to monitor compliance • Establish a means of reporting (from 2026 onwards) on % of public transport vs. other means of travel, with year-on-year trend analysis • Keep the use of electric vehicles on the hire car plan under review, for example, when SG negotiates a new framework agreement, in case the charges become less prohibitive • Review DMP service 	<p>HOCCS – completed August 2025</p> <p>Finance and IT manager – July 2026</p> <p>HOCCS/Finance and IT manager – ongoing</p> <p>Executive director (medical) – March 2026</p>
Building/facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly review the Hybrid Working Policy • Review office space requirements ahead of next lease expiry • Ensure provision of full on-site recycling facilities • Provide office planting • Not offer single use plastics 	<p>HR manager – Annual</p> <p>HOCCS - 2028</p> <p>Office manager – Ongoing</p> <p>Office manager – Ongoing</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not use coffee machines • Use e-documents wherever possible, with limited photocopying/printing • Review/update business continuity plan 	Office manager – ongoing Office manager – ongoing HOCCS – December 2025
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Promotion and Wellbeing Framework • Cycle to work scheme • SG travel pass scheme • Hybrid Working Policy • Health and Safety Policy and supporting procedures • Signpost to climate change/environmental awareness training materials 	HOCCS – completed July 2025 Finance and IT manager – ongoing HR manager – annual HOCCS – ongoing HOCCS – December 2026
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore appetite for establishing Charity and Social Committee • Explore feasibility of volunteering opportunities 	HOCCS – March 2026 HR manager – July 2026



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