

OSCR Biodiversity Report 2020-23

1. Who we are and what we do?

OSCR is the independent regulator and registrar for Scotland's 25,931 charities. We grant charitable status, monitor registered charities, and identify and take action where we believe misconduct including mismanagement has occurred.

We are a non-ministerial office of the Scottish Administration, operating independently of the Scottish Government, reporting directly to the Scottish Parliament.

All charities in Scotland must register with us and must meet annual reporting requirements to keep their status. We are an enabling regulator and offer a wide range of services to support and encourage improvement within the charity sector.

Our work with charities ultimately supports public confidence in the sector. We support and champion the charity sector through a collaborative working approach, working with other organisations, government and the charity sector to build strong and effective internal governance, share good practice and encourage improvement, in order to drive up standards within charities.

2. Our biodiversity duty

As a Scottish public body, we have a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity:

"It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions" [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

The [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) places a duty on us to make a report publicly available every three years on our compliance with the biodiversity duty.

This publication is a report of our activities from 2020-23.

3. Mainstreaming biodiversity in OSCR

As a public body, we are committed to environmental sustainability and cutting our carbon emissions. How we plan to do this is set out within our three yearly strategic [Corporate Plan](#) and our annual [Business Plan](#). These plans are underpinned by the following policies:

Procurement

We are committed to buying goods, services and works in a sustainable manner, ensuring value for money, and delivering benefits for society, the economy and the environment. To achieve this, we follow the Scottish Sustainable Procurement Action Plan, and use centrally negotiated contracts and frameworks developed using the Scottish procurement sustainability test.

We are committed to using centrally negotiated frameworks and contracts to maximise efficiencies and deliver sustainability.

Business Travel Plan 2021-24

Like many other organisations around the world in March 2020 our work was deeply impacted by the global pandemic. This had an impact on how we work, the ways in which we work and where we work. Since April 2022, we have adopted a hybrid approach and much of our business has moved online.

Our Plan actively discourages staff from unnecessary work travel and the majority of our meetings and events are held using virtual systems such as MS Teams. We have also invested in improved video conferencing equipment, to better support this way of working. Where that is not possible, we actively encourage the use public of transport and active travel. Where business travel is undertaken, we ensure that staff use only the recognised specification of hire cars (Band A & B cars only - these emit less CO2 emissions) and choose hybrid/electric options when available. In addition, CEO sign off is required for all flights.

Environmental Strategy 2022-23

Our Plan sets out the activities we intend to undertake and track to decrease our carbon emissions over the period.

4. Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

We are a relatively small organisation, employing approximately 50 staff operating from one office in a shared building. Our building is accredited Very

Good under the Buildings Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology. Heating, water, lighting, and waste collection are provided on a building-wide basis and are managed on a shared services basis.

Our ability to change our building is limited, however during 2020-23, we concentrated our efforts on changing and improving the services we provide and the infrastructure we use. We continued to move our services online, and make use of technology to provide smarter ways of working, minimising our impact on the environment and reducing our energy consumption. We use cloud hosting for our technical infrastructure, which removed the need for several servers operating in a climate-controlled area within our office. We also replaced our lighting in 2022-23, moving to more energy efficient LED lighting. Emissions associated with the LED lights are considerably lower than conventional incandescent or compact fluorescent lights thereby reducing our emissions significantly.

We have expanded the Online services we offer to stakeholders, significantly reducing the requirement for printing and postage.

A high percentage of our learning activities are online, accessed through a learning portal which we developed for staff.

Along with our building co-inhabitants, we continue to maintain a number of planters to the entrance of our building, planted with bee and other insect friendly flowers; and we continue to appropriately maintain and manage the very small piece of land our building sits on, to encourage biodiversity.

5. Our workforce development and practical activities

During 2020-23, due to the pandemic, staff were based at home and the country was in “lock down”. Since moving out of the pandemic during late 2021, we have focused our biodiversity related efforts on carrying out smaller, proportionate activities that positively reduced our impact on the environment.

We actively participated in a number of campaigns such as Climate Week and introduced a Healthy Working Lives hour for all staff. Staff are encouraged to take 1 hour away from their “desk” each week during the working day, to take a walk, exercise or engage in meditation and relaxation exercises.

We raised staff awareness of the importance of climate change and biodiversity by using our staff newsletter, all staff emails and our internal MS Teams channels, to encourage positive, sustainable behaviour both at work and at home. We also introduced a staff intranet site to further raise awareness of these issues alongside any current topical issues including climate change,

Earth Hour and the importance of wellbeing.

We provide office recycling points, asking staff to help collect aluminium, glass, cardboard and paper which are then recycled appropriately.

Reinforcing the ethos of reduce/reuse/recycle, we publicised local/regional events and have encouraged staff to get involved in a variety of environmental projects.

6. Covid 19

From December 2021 we opened our office to trial a hybrid approach. Staff were encouraged to attend the office 2 days per week while working at home for the remainder of the week. This approach was formally adopted from April 2022.

We have introduced a new online system for charities as we continue to move our services online. We actively promote the use of our online services via our website, newsletter and online webinars.

We have also moved the majority of our meetings and events online via TEAMS and have introduced new enhanced video conferencing equipment to further facilitate hybrid meetings.

7. Research and monitoring

Our small size and consequently our relatively low carbon emissions, together with the shared services we use, mean that opportunities for emissions reductions are limited. However, we are keen to demonstrate our commitment as a public body to take action against climate change.

This commitment is set out in our objectives within our [Corporate Plan 2020-23](#). We will:

- Use technology to provide smarter ways of working, delivering our outcomes successfully, while minimising our impact on the environment.
- Work towards becoming a carbon neutral public body.
- Use our role as regulator to raise awareness of climate change among charities, encouraging them to carry out their activities in a sustainable manner.

We have updated our travel plan for the 2021-2024 period and our environmental

strategy for the 2022-23 period, and we will continue to promote staff awareness of climate change and biodiversity, encouraging positive changes in behaviour within and outside of work.

8. Biodiversity highlights and challenges

Due to the nature of our role and the size of our organisation, we do not have a direct impact on biodiversity in exercising our functions as a regulator. We operate from one office space, sub-let from another public body. We have no fleet of vehicles, and we do not have a role in promoting core biodiversity activities as set out in the Scottish Government's guidance on the biodiversity reporting duty.

However, as a small public body, we recognise our duties and responsibilities, and we will proactively continue to meet all of the Scottish Government's ambitious sustainability and climate targets and will encourage Scottish charities in this endeavour.