

The background image is a scenic landscape. In the foreground, there are green grasses and several dandelions with white seed heads. The middle ground shows a rocky shoreline with a small pool of water. In the background, there is a large, flat-topped cliff or headland under a clear blue sky.

NHS Orkney's Annual Climate Emergency & Sustainability Report

2024/25

Annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability report 2024/25

DATE OF ISSUE – December 2025

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1. Introduction

This is NHS Orkney's Annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report for 2024/25 which produced in accordance with A Policy for NHS Scotland on the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development (DL (2021) 38) <https://www.publications.scot.nhs.uk/files/dl-2021-38.pdf>.

NHS Orkney is the smallest health board in Scotland, delivering healthcare services to approximately 22,700 residents across the Orkney Islands. The organisation employs over 600 staff and operates from 20 buildings spread across the archipelago. Orkney comprises 70 islands, 20 of which are inhabited. NHS Orkney manages land and facilities covering a total area of 32 acres.

NHS Orkney operates a single hospital, The Balfour, located in Kirkwall. This is supported by five mainland GP practices and ten island-based surgeries, ensuring healthcare access across the region.

2. Leadership and governance

- The Sustainability Champion on the Board is Rona Gold
- The Interim Executive Lead is Louise Wilson
- The Sustainability Steering group lead responsibility for climate change and sustainability
- The Sustainability Steering group create a quarterly newsletter which is sent electronically to all staff. Staff are encouraged to join the group and share ideas/opinions.
- Accountability and assurance is led by our Finance & Performance committee and onto our Board

As an organisation NHS Orkney is totally committed to meeting and complying with each of the policies and targets set by the government and has made a firm commitment to being compliant with Net Zero by the date set by the Scottish Government of 2040. Considerable work has been undertaken by NHS Orkney to remove carbon which is considered to be the biggest source of greenhouse emission's.



3. Summary of impacts

2040 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

At this stage, NHS Orkney have not yet established formal greenhouse gas reduction targets. However, we remain committed to exploring opportunities for reducing our environmental impact and will continue to review this as part of our ongoing sustainability efforts.

NHS Orkney aims to become a net-zero organisation by 2040 for the sources of greenhouse gas emissions set out in the table below. The table sets out the amount of emissions produced annually by NHS Orkney.

Greenhouse gas emissions 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)					
Source	2023/24 emissions (tCO2e)	2024/25 emissions (tCO2e)	Percentage change – 2023/24 to 2024/25	2024/25 – target emissions	Difference between actual and target emissions – 2024/25 (percentage)
Building energy	1,612	1,422	-11.79%	NHS Orkney haven't set local target emissions	
Non-medical F-gas	90.52	12.53	-86.21%		
Medical gases	95	79	-18.39%		
Metered dose inhaler propellant	277	245	-12.2%		
NHS fleet travel	19.63	12.06	-38.56%		
Waste	15.41	10.81	-35.08%		
Water	3.0	3.03	+1%		
Business travel	36.10	40	+10.8%		
Total emissions	2,148.66	1,824.43	-15.1%		
Carbon sequestration	We do not currently measure carbon sequestration				

The table below sets out how much of key resources we used over the last two years

Source	2023/24 Use	2024/25 Use	Percentage change – 2023/24 to 2024/25
Building energy (kWh)	6,586,867	6,042,050	-8.27%
NHS fleet travel (km travelled)	327,267.5	314,682.5	-3.84%
Waste (tonnes)	108.05	87.70	-20.79%
Water (cubic metres)	30,713	30,305	-1.33%
Business travel (km travelled)	115,008	132,856	+15.5%

2045 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

We are working to support reductions to greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2045 for sources of emissions over which we have less control and influence – emissions from the production and supply of the goods and material we use, patient travel and staff commuting. The following table sets out the latest estimates we have for these emissions:

***This information is not yet available from National Procurement**

Source	Latest estimate, Tco2e	Year of estimate
Supply chain		
Patient travel		
Staff commuting		

4. Climate change adaptation

Climate change makes existing health risks worse and introduces new challenges, ranging from the spread of infectious diseases to the intensification of heatwaves and extreme weather events that will impact the health of the population, healthcare assets and services. NHS Scotland plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the life and health of communities by developing climate-resilient health systems capable of responding to these evolving threats.

The changing climate is increasing risks for health and health services. More information on these risks in the UK can be found in the UK Climate Change Committee's Health and Social Care Briefing available here: www.ukclimaterisk.org/independent-assessment-ccra3/briefings/

What are the main risks from climate change that NHS Orkney have identified through its Climate Change Risk Assessment?

- Disruption to services caused by cold spells (including frost, snow & ice) including delivery of essential supplies
- Disruption to services caused by heavy downpours and driving rain (includes changes in moisture content of air and soil)
- Disruption to services caused by combined climatic effects (including storms, high winds, lightning, fog, mist and low cloud)

Does the Health Board have a plan to reduce those risks?

- NHS Orkney is a member of Orkney Local Emergency Co-ordinating Group (OLEG) which is an islands wide partnership group who organise training events, exercises and meetings are held throughout the year
- Early monitoring of weather forecasts
- Use of locums if staff were not available to work due to adverse weather conditions
- Proactive & reactive support in place from other local organisations
- Flexible and hybrid working is available to staff where appropriate
- The Balfour Hospital has backup generators to supply uninterrupted power
- Most departments have business continuity plans

What main actions has the health board taken to reduce those risks since the last report?

- Continue to follow plan above and review climate change risk assessment and adaptation plan (CCRA)

What main actions are going to be carried out to reduce those risks in future years?

- Reviewing our climate Change Risk Assessment regularly and taking any action required. Take advice from NHS Orkney's resilience officer

5. Building energy

We use renewable heat sources at all the buildings owned by NHS Orkney.

NHS Orkney has 20 buildings such as a dental surgery and health centres.

In 2024/25, 1,442.4 tonnes of CO2 equivalent were produced by NHS Orkney use of energy for buildings. This was a decrease of 10.52% since the year before.

In 2024/25, NHS Orkney used 6,041 MWh of energy. This was a decrease 8.35% since the year before.

Building energy emissions, 2015/16, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)				
	2015/16 energy emissions	2023/24 energy emissions	2024/25 energy emissions	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2024/25
Building fossil fuel emissions	1,509.1	560.4	302.4	-79.9%
District heat networks and biomass	0	0	0	n/a
Grid electricity	690.0	1051.6	1140.0	+65.2%
Totals	2,199.1	1,612	1,442.4	-31.4%

Building energy use, 2015/16, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, MWh				
	2015/16 energy use	2023/24 energy use	2024/25, energy use	Percentage change 2015/16 to 2024/25
Building fossil fuel use	4,956.1	1,798	972	-80.39%
District heat networks and biomass	0	0	0	n/a
Grid electricity	1,389.4	4,679.9	5,058	265%
Renewable electricity		114	11	-90.3%
Totals	6,345.4	6,591.9	6,041	4.79%

What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce emissions from building energy use?

NHS Orkney has been awarded an Energy Efficiency Grant. As a result, all NHS Orkney-owned properties have successfully eliminated the use of fossil fuels. Most of these facilities now generate electricity through solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient healthcare infrastructure.

What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce emissions from building energy use?

NHS Orkney has successfully secured additional funding to install more solar PV panels and battery storage systems. This investment will strengthen and expand the existing energy infrastructure, further enhancing the organisation's capacity to harness renewable power.

What projects are we planning for the longer-term to reduce emissions from building energy use?

When new technologies are available NHS Orkney will investigate what options there are for replacing the emergency backup generators at the Balfour.

The Balfour is maintained under a Non-Profit Distribution (NPD) contract which guarantees life cycle replacement of inefficient air conditioning units, upgrade to chiller units, and remedial works to other ventilation plan to improve functional efficiency.

6. Sustainable care

The way we provide care influences our environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions. NHS Scotland has three national priority areas for making care more sustainable – anaesthesia, surgery and respiratory medicine.

6.1 Anaesthesia and surgery

Greenhouse gases are used as anaesthetics and for pain relief. These gases are nitrous oxide (laughing gas), entonox (a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide) and the 'volatile gases' - desflurane, sevoflurane and isoflurane.

Through improvements to anaesthetic technique and the management of medical gas delivery systems, the NHS can reduce emissions from these sources.

NHS Orkney's total emissions from these gases in 2024/25 were 76 tCO₂e, an decrease of 16 tCO₂ from the year before.

More detail on these emissions is set out in the tables below:

Nitrous oxide and entonox emissions, 2018/19, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO ₂ equivalent (tCO ₂ e)				
Source	2018/19 (baseline year)	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2024/25
Piped nitrous oxide	30	15	0	-100%
Portable nitrous oxide	4	0	2	-50%

Piped entonox	Not available	52	68	Not available
Portable entonox	55	16	6	-89.09%
Total	89	92	76	-14.61%
Volatile medical gas emissions, 2018/19, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)				
	2018/19 (baseline year)	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2024/25
Desflurane	20	0	0	-100%
Isoflurane	0	0	0	n/a
Sevoflurane	2	3	3	-50%
Total	22	3	3	-86.36%

What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce emissions from anaesthetic gases?

We have fully met the requirements set out by the National Green Theatres Programme to reduce our emissions from anaesthetic gases. We have stopped using desflurane and have decommissioned piped nitrous oxide.

What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce emissions from anaesthetic gases?

A National Green Theatres Programme was officially launched in 2023 to help reduce the carbon footprint of theatres across NHS Scotland and enable more environmentally sustainable care by:

- Working with clinicians and professionals to develop actions that reduce carbon emissions, waste and resource use.
- Supporting Boards to implement, measure and report on these improvements.

The Green Theatres Programme is based on actions developed by frontline staff and the Green Theatre Project at Raigmore, NHS Highland.

In 2024/25, NHS Orkney did the following to make operating theatres more sustainable:

We have stopped using desflurane and have decommissioned piped nitrous oxide.

What are we doing in 2025/26 to make surgery more sustainable?

We continue to work on all the targets set out by the National Green Theatres Programme and have completed most of them. The next task to work on includes the switch from single use to washable theatre hats.

6.2 Respiratory medicine

Greenhouse gases are used as a propellant in metered dose inhalers used to treat asthma and COPD. Most of the emissions from inhalers are from the use of reliever inhalers – Short Acting Beta Agonists (SABAs). By helping people to manage their condition more effectively, we can improve patient care and reduce emissions.

There are also more environmentally friendly inhalers such as dry powder inhalers which can be used where clinically appropriate.

We estimate that emissions from inhalers in NHS Orkney were [INSERT NUMBER] tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2023/24.

Inhaler propellant emissions, 2018/19, 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, tonnes CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)				
Source	2018/19 (baseline year)	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage change 2018/19 to 2024/25
Primary care	304	214	241	-20.72%
Secondary care	4.7	4	4	-14.89%
Total	308.7	277	245	-20.64%

What did we do in 2023/24 to reduce emissions from inhalers?

We continued to promote prescribing within our NHS Orkney and Shetland formulary which we developed in 2021 to support the use of 'green friendly' inhalers and reduce pMDI usage aligned with environmental, cost and clinical effectiveness.

What are we doing in 2024/25 to improve patient care and reduce emissions from inhalers?

Regular annual chronic disease reviews of respiratory conditions including Asthma and COPD where appropriate prescribing, patient adherence (including technique) with a 'green inhaler' focus has been adopted by all NHS Orkney GP Practices.

Working with LIST and GP cluster to constantly improve prescribing and awareness of 'green inhaler prescribing' across NHS Orkney.

What are we doing to raise awareness with staff and patients, including primary care?

Our GPST from a local practice ran an inhaler campaign in climate week to promote the use of 'green inhalers'. She had a stand in the Balfour during climate week to promote to clinicians, other staff and patients. She also promoted on NHS Orkney Social Media.

The Interim Director of Pharmacy is in talks with NHS Grampian to get their social media videos for use on NHS Orkney social media highlighting the importance of 'green inhalers'.

7. Travel and transport

Domestic transport (not including international aviation and shipping) produced 28.3% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2022. Car travel is the type of travel which contributes the most to those emissions.

NHSScotland is supporting a shift to a healthier and more sustainable transport system where active travel and public transport are prioritised.

What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce the need to travel?

To reduce the need for patients to travel off-island, NHS Orkney continues to utilise the Near Me video consultation service. In addition, the recent installation of a full-time MRI scanner at The Balfour represents a major step forward in local diagnostic capability. It is estimated that annually up to 800 patients will no longer need to travel to mainland health boards for MRI scans, significantly improving convenience and reducing travel-related stress and costs.

What did we do in 2024/25 to improve active travel?

NHS Orkney have successfully promoted the use of eBikes and the cycle to work scheme. There have also been Dr bike surgeries for all staff.

NHS Orkney remains committed to encouraging active travel by continuing to support and promote the Cycle to Work scheme.

The Communications Team actively promotes physical activity by highlighting staff experiences across a variety of activities and showcasing initiatives such as the annual Step Challenge

What did we do in 2024/25 to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?

The NHS Orkney website provides up to date information on public travel options and patients are encouraged to use active travel options. The comms team also promote active travel for staff & patients.

What are we going to do in 2025/26 to reduce the need to travel?

We will continue to use Near Me for appointments

What are we going to do in 2025/26 to improve active travel?

We actively promote the staff e-Bikes, these are also available to isles staff. Following the soft launch of our e-bike and trike fleet, we've seen a noticeable increase in staff uptake. For 2025/26, we plan to host "Come and Try" sessions aligned with national campaign days, such as Cycle to Work Day, to further promote active travel. To support cycling during the working day, we are also developing detailed cycle maps with route information between partnership sites, encouraging staff to choose cycling over driving.

What are we going to do in 2025/26 to improve public and community transport links to NHS sites and services?

- As part of our ongoing efforts to support health and wellbeing in Orkney, NHS Orkney is promoting active and sustainable travel to NHS sites.
- Key actions include:
 - Secure, undercover bike racks and an electric bike charging point at The Balfour
 - Public bus access directly into The Balfour car park
 - Accessible green spaces and outdoor seating to support active travel
 - Ongoing promotion of physical activity through our Public Health Facebook page
- How you can help:
 - Walk, cycle, or wheel to appointments when possible
 - Use the bike and e-bike facilities
 - Consider public transport to reduce congestion and emissions
- Together, we're making travel to NHS services healthier, greener, and more accessible.

Fleet and Business Travel

Greenhouse gas emissions, tCO ₂ e	2023/24	2024/25	Percentage change
Fleet emissions,	19.63	12.06	-38.56%
Business Travel	36.10	40	+10.8%

We have transitioned our entire fleet to zero-emission vehicles, eliminating all petrol and diesel-powered models. As a result, our fleet now operates at net zero, supporting our commitment to sustainability and carbon reduction.

The following table sets out how many renewable powered and fossil fuel vehicles were in NHS Orkney's fleet at the end of March 2024 and March 2025:

	March 2024		March 2025		
	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	Total vehicles	% Zero tailpipe emissions vehicles	Difference in % zero tailpipe emissions vehicles
Cars	35	60%	32	100%	40%
Light commercial vehicles	6	100%	5	100%	0%
Heavy vehicles	0	0	0	0	n/a
Specialist vehicles	0	0	0	0	n/a

The following table sets out how many bicycles and eBikes were in NHS Orkney's fleet at the end of March 2024 and March 2025:

	March 2024	March 2025	Percentage change
Bicycles	0	0	0
eBikes	0	8	+800%

The following table sets out the distance travelled by our cars, vans and heavy vehicles in 2024/25

Distance travelled, kms	Cars	Light commercial vehicles	Heavy vehicles	Specialist vehicles	Total
2023/24	16,3475	39,892	0	0	203,367
2024/25	161,067	34,508	0	0	195,575
Percentage change	-1.47%	-13.49%	0	0	-3.83%

Business travel is staff travelling as part of their work in either their own vehicles or public transport. It covers travel costs which are reimbursable and doesn't cover commuting to and from work. The table below shows our emissions from business travel by transport type

Business travel emissions, tCO2e	Cars	Public transport	Flights	Total
2023/24	Not available	Not available	402.5	Not available
2024/25	32	Not available	333.813	Not available
Percentage change	Not available	Not available	-17.1%	Not available



8. Greenspace and biodiversity

8.1 Biodiversity

Biodiversity, or the wide variety of living organisms within an environment, has declined at a rapid rate in the last 50 years. Evidence demonstrates that these trends are attributed to human activities, such as land use change, habitat degradation and fragmentation, pollution, and the impacts of climate change. The State of Nature report published in 2023 has highlighted the decline of nature across Scotland, with 11% of species now classed as threatened with extinction.

Public bodies in Scotland have a duty under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 ([Nature Conservation Scotland Act 2004](#)) to further the conservation of biodiversity, taking care of nature all around us. Furthermore, the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 ([Wildlife and Natural Environment Scotland Act 2011](#)) requires every public body to summarise their activities to meet this duty, through the production of a publicly available report.

What actions have been taken to identify, protect and enhance biodiversity across your organisation?

NHS Orkney are part of the Nature Network Delivery Group led by Orkney Islands Council, which supports the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Delivery of the nature networks contributes to NHS Orkney's biodiversity duty.

What actions have been taken to contribute to the NHSScotland Estate Mapping programme, or to develop an internal mapping programme?

NHS Orkney has completed GIS mapping of its estate, providing a detailed visual representation of all properties and their boundaries.

What actions have been taken to mainstream biodiversity across the organisation?

NHS Orkney has developed a comprehensive Biodiversity Report, reflecting its commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment across its estate.

NHS Orkney has held a drop in event for people to find out how gardening at the three polytunnels has been helping hospital patients, NHS staff and wider community groups to rest, relax and recover. People were shown round the polytunnels to see what has been happening so far and how they can get involved. Species on the Edge People Engagement Officer gave information about wildflowers, bumblebees and how you can garden for wildlife as well as how nature connection can help health and wellbeing.

How have nature-based solutions been utilised to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies?

NHS Orkney has implemented nature-based solutions to address climate and biodiversity challenges through the introduction of 'Nature Prescriptions.' Launched in June 2024, this initiative is a collaboration with RSPB Scotland and the conservation programme Species on the Edge. It aims to enhance patients' physical and mental health by fostering a deeper connection with nature. A Nature Prescription involves a guided discussion between a healthcare professional and a patient, focusing on how engaging with the natural environment can improve well-being. Patients receive a Nature Prescription Calendar featuring seasonal activities tailored to help them connect with nature in meaningful ways. Activities include listening to various bird calls, selecting a nearby outdoor spot to observe seasonal changes, keeping a 'nature diary,' and noting subtle natural details like light and shadow movements. By promoting Nature Prescriptions, NHS Orkney not only supports individual health but also encourages environmental stewardship. This approach fosters a greater appreciation for local biodiversity, contributing to broader efforts in addressing climate and biodiversity emergencies.

What actions have been undertaken to raise awareness, engagement and understanding of biodiversity and nature?

NHS Orkney are supporting the Species on the Edge wildflower growing project led by the RSPB Engagement Officer. Awareness talks for staff, patients and members of the community will be held at the Polytunnels by the local RSPB Engagement Officers.

What surveys, monitoring or assessment of biodiversity have been undertaken? If you have – have systems been developed to continue monitoring long-term?

NHS Orkney operates within a legislative framework that encourages biodiversity conservation. Collaborations with local organisations such as the Nature Networks Delivery Group, and adherence to national biodiversity duties allows NHS Orkney to engage in future biodiversity monitoring and conservation efforts.

8.2 Greenspace

The design and management of the NHSScotland green estate for human and planetary health, offers an opportunity to deliver a range of mutually beneficial outcomes. These include action on climate change (both mitigation and adaptation), biodiversity, health and wellbeing for patients and staff, community resilience building and active travel.

The table below outlines any key greenspace projects and their benefits.

Project name/ location	Benefits of project	Details of project
MacMillan Memorial Garden	Holistic gardens for members of the community. Increase in biodiversity and wildlife etc.	To enhance an unused area of greenspace on the NHS Orkney Estate. This project is in the early stages of planning at the moment and will be developed more fully in 2026.

9. Sustainable procurement, circular economy and waste

The greenhouse gases produced in creating the goods and materials used by NHS Orkney are estimated to be * tonnes of CO2 equivalent every year.

*This figure is not available from procurement.

We aim to reduce the impact that our use of resources has on the environment through adopting circular economy principles, fostering a culture of stewardship and working with other UK health services to maximise our contribution to reducing supply chain emissions to net-zero by 2045.

What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce the environmental impact of and the quantity of the goods and services we buy?

The Medical Physics department has upskilled staff to take on equipment servicing in-house, reducing the need for external technicians to travel to Orkney for maintenance contracts.

NHS Orkney continues to prioritise sustainability and ethical sourcing in its procurement practices. Wherever feasible, goods are sourced locally, including butcher meat, fresh fish, and selected fruit and vegetables. This approach will be maintained into the coming year. Environmental, sustainability, and socio-economic credentials are embedded within both the commercial questionnaire used in tenders and the supplier review scorecard, ensuring these values are consistently evaluated. NHS Orkney also maintains active engagement with the National Procurement Sustainable Procurement Steering Group to minimise environmental impact and stay aligned with emerging guidance.

The Procurement Service continues to assess purchased products to identify more sustainable alternatives. The majority of our supplies are sourced from the National Distribution Centre (NDC), with a single weekly delivery schedule that helps minimise transport-related emissions. All deliveries arrive via ferry, eliminating the need for air transport and further reducing our environmental impact.

We have reduced the use of plastic medicine cups by introducing paper-based alternatives. There has also been a reduction in water coolers which has as a result reduced the number of plastic cups used, contributing to our efforts to minimise single-use plastics.

All staff have been issued reusable containers for use in the hospital dining area. To encourage sustainable practices, a loyalty scheme has been introduced: staff earn points each time they use their reusable container. After collecting 10 points, they are rewarded with a complimentary hot drink.

What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce the environmental impact of the goods and services we buy?

NHS Orkney remains committed to identifying and implementing more sustainable alternatives for goods and services. We will also continue to look for opportunities to further reduce single use items.

We want to reduce the amount of waste we produce and increase how much of it is recycled.

The table below sets out information on the waste we produce and its destination for the last four years:

Type	2021/22 (tonnes)	2022/23 (tonnes)	2023/24 (tonnes)	2024/25 (tonnes)	Percentage change – 2021/22 to 2024/25
Waste to landfill	Not recorded	0.5	1	1	Not available
Waste to incineration	Not recorded	77.8	46.28	34.36	Not available
Recycled waste	Not recorded	9.2	5.5	8.3	Not available
Food waste	9.296	8.646	9.073	6.346	-31.73%
Clinical waste	74	40.6	46.2	33.7	-54.46%

We have set targets to reduce the amount of waste we produce and the tables below provide information on our performance against those targets:

Reduce domestic waste by a minimum of 15%, and greater where possible compared to 2012/2013 – by 2025	
Target – reduce domestic waste by	2012/13 figures not recorded. Domestic waste has reduced by over 50% since 2022/23
Performance – domestic waste reduced by	
Outcome	
Further reduction required	

Ensure that no more than 5%, and less where possible, of all domestic waste is sent to landfill – by 2025	
Target – reduce waste sent to landfill by	No target set yet
Performance – waste sent to landfill reduced by	
Outcome	
Further reduction required	
Reduce the food waste produced by 33% compared to 2015/16 – by 2025	
Target – reduce food waste by	2015/16 food waste figures not recorded. Food waste has reduced by 2.7 tonne over the last year
Performance – food waste reduced by	
Outcome	
Further reduction required	

Ensure that 70% of all domestic waste is recycled or composted – by 2025	
Target – recycle or compost	Recycling options in Orkney are currently limited to glass, cans, plastic, and paper. We are actively recycling all available waste streams. Should additional recycling options become accessible in the future, we are committed to expanding our efforts accordingly.
Performance – recycled or composted	
Outcome	
Further increase required	

What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce our waste?

Auditing played a pivotal role in driving waste reduction efforts. All acute waste yards underwent thorough audits to ensure adherence to best practices. Our mandatory Pre-Acceptance Audits (PAAs) also served as a valuable platform to promote awareness around correct waste segregation within clinical areas. Additionally, a comprehensive review was conducted to identify clinical waste bins placed in non-clinical settings, with clear directives issued for their removal.

We have made substantial progress in improving the quality and accuracy of our waste data, positioning us to effectively use this information for future planning and performance monitoring.

The catering team introduced a charge for single use containers which has encourage staff to bring their own reusable containers. We introduced a plated meal service on the wards, this has reduced food waste by up to 50%.

What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce our waste

We are exploring mandated Waste eLearning for all staff.

We will also continue to look for opportunities to reduce single use items in conjunction with the procurement team.

Our Central Disinfection Unit are a member of the Decontamination of Reuseable Medical Devices Expert Group (RM-DEG) and will review practices to embed sustainability.

10. Environmental stewardship

Environmental stewardship means acting as a steward, or caretaker, of the environment and taking responsibility for the actions which affect our shared environmental quality.

This includes any activities which may adversely impact on land, air and water, either through the unsustainable use of resources or the generation of waste and pollution. Having an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place provides a framework that helps to achieve our environmental goals through consistent review, evaluation, and improvement of our environmental performance.

What steps did we take in 2024/25 to develop and implement our EMS?

Representatives from NHS Orkney joined the national EMS group and are part of the National Teams group so information is shared between boards. Staff have also attended ISO14001 Foundation Course training.

We are working to have a fully implemented EMS to ISO14001 standard at all NHS Orkney sites but this is challenging due limited staff availability.

What steps will we take in 2025/26 to further develop and implement our EMS?

We will continue to update to the EMS system as time allows

What did we do in 2024/25 to reduce our environmental impacts and improve environmental performance?

By implementing an EMS for all sites this identifies compliance risks which are regularly monitored.

What are we doing in 2025/26 to reduce our environmental impacts improve environmental performance?

Compliance risks are reviewed and if possible resolved to reduce environmental impact, if we are not able to fully resolve issues then we will continue to work towards resolving this.

What factors have prevented implementation of EMS to ISO14001 Standard for any sites in NHS Orkney's estate which have not yet reached that standard?

Staffing resources continue to be a limiting factor in completing the EMS, as there is currently no individual assigned specifically to this responsibility. The absence of a dedicated role means that EMS-related tasks are often deprioritised in favour of other operational demands, resulting in delays and incomplete progress.

11. Sustainable construction

Where there is a need for new healthcare facilities, we want both the buildings and grounds to be safe, nature-rich, sustainable, resilient and accessible. NHS Orkney is not currently working on any new build projects.

12. Sustainable communities

The climate emergency undermines the foundations of good health and deepens inequalities for our most deprived communities.

The NHS touches every community in Scotland. We have a responsibility to use our abilities as a large employer, a major buyer, and one of the most recognised brands in the world – an ‘anchor’ organisation – to protect and support our communities’ health in every way that we can.

What are we doing to act as an anchor institution for our local community / communities?

Actions included relate to:

- Mental Health and employment
- Digital literacy of staff
- Understanding Procurement social value data
- Reducing food waste

What are we doing to improve the resilience of our local communities to climate change?

In September 2024, a Climate Awareness week was run by NHS Orkney. Various literature was provided by Orkney Islands Council to educate staff on how to reduce waste. In September NHS Orkney started to charge for single use containers in the restaurant which has encouraged staff to bring their own reusable cups and containers and reduced waste. A number of reusable cups and loyalty cards for recycling were handed out free of charge at the Climate Awareness Week.

NHS Orkney Public Health Team, and the Facilities Team, continue to engage with our partners to work together in our ambition to redirect wealth back into the Orkney community to help address the wider determinants of health inequalities. This is achieved through engagement in sustainability focussed groups, the Local Employability Partnership and the Community Planning Partnership.

NHS Orkney are involved in the 2025 Vision for a Climate Resilient and Net Zero Future with other public agencies (Orkney Islands Council & emergency services).

Our Climate Risk Assessment & Adaptation plan includes:

- Develop clear, locally relevant adaptation objectives.
- Coordinate across departments to manage climate risks.
- Integrate climate resilience into core service planning.
- Monitor and evaluate adaptation progress effectively

The Balfour features a dedicated green space, including polycrubs, which are actively used by both staff and members of the public.

13. Conclusion

In 2024/25, NHS Orkney has made significant progress in advancing its climate emergency and sustainability agenda. Notable achievements include a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, the complete transition of our vehicle fleet to zero-emission models, and the successful elimination of fossil fuel use across all NHS Orkney-owned properties. Our commitment to sustainable procurement, waste reduction, and biodiversity enhancement has been demonstrated through local sourcing, innovative waste management initiatives, and the introduction of nature-based health interventions.

We have also strengthened our approach to climate change adaptation, ensuring that our services and infrastructure are increasingly resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and other climate-related risks. The expansion of active travel schemes, investment in renewable energy, and ongoing engagement with staff and the wider community further underpin our commitment to a net-zero future.

However, challenges remain. The absence of formal local greenhouse gas reduction targets, limited recycling options, and resource constraints in implementing a fully ISO14001-compliant Environmental Management System highlight areas for continued focus. In the coming year, NHS Orkney will prioritise the development of measurable targets, further reduce single-use items, expand staff training on sustainability, and continue to foster partnerships that support both environmental and community resilience.

By building on the progress made to date and addressing these ongoing challenges, NHS Orkney remains dedicated to delivering high-quality, sustainable healthcare for the people of Orkney, while playing its part in Scotland's transition to a net-zero, climate-resilient future.

