

# Environmental Policy

Descriptor	Changes made	Date	Version
Policy first implemented	-	March 2016	0.1
Review no.1	Target figures updated and addition of addressing single use plastic as another action area.	April 2018	0.2
Review no.2	Restructured to align with SDS policy template and clarify responsibilities. It contains less detail than previous version on actions required to deliver on our environmental obligations due to the publication of the Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 and its associated action plans.	October 2022	0.3
Review no.3			

Name of policy being superseded (if applicable)	
Related policies	Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 Procurement Policy
Related SOPs	
Related Guidance	
Equality Impact Assessment completed	N/A
Intended Audience	All SDS staff
Team responsible for policy	Carbon Management
Policy owner contact details (email)	alison.hunter@sds.co.uk
Policy due for review (date)	October 2024

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## 1. Policy summary

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The Environmental Policy establishes what SDS will do as a public sector organisation to adhere to our statutory climate change duty and deliver on our commitment to be a low carbon organisation. It also sets out the roles and responsibilities across the organisation.

## 2. Policy purpose and objectives

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Climate change is one of the biggest challenges of our time. At Skills Development Scotland we are committed to adopting best practice to minimise our environmental impact and to contribute to the Scottish Government's climate change ambitions and net zero target. This policy outlines what SDS will do to keep our environmental impacts to a minimum and have a positive influence where possible and informs staff of their role.

## 3. Strategic context

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As a public sector organisation SDS is required to adhere to Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009: 'Duties of public bodies relating to climate change'. In this duty SDS must act:

- a) In the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of the national emissions reduction targets. This is known as mitigation.
- b) In the way best calculated to help deliver adaptation programmes
- c) In a way considered most sustainable

The declaration of a climate emergency by the Scottish Government in April 2019 and the setting of an ambitious net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2045 have made it clear that organisations must address their environmental impact.

The policy should be read in conjunction with SDS's [Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030](#) which provides detail about our ambitions. The Procurement Policy explains how sustainability is accounted for in our procurement process including the embedding of the Sustainable Procurement Toolkit.

## 4. Definitions

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- **Net zero:** any emissions would be balanced by schemes to offset an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, such as planting trees or using technology like carbon capture and storage.
- **Climate emergency:** there is no single internationally agreed definition, but the following is provided by the Oxford Dictionary: "a situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it".

- **Climate change:** Long term shift in global or regional climate patterns, measured by yardsticks such as average temperature and rainfall, or an increase in the frequency of extreme weather conditions. This variation is caused by both natural processes and human activity.
- **Mitigation:** Actions that help reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases e.g., improving energy efficiency of buildings and switching from car to public transport
- **Adaptation:** Actions that help reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change e.g., construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels or provision of equipment for home working in case of extreme weather events.
- **Carbon footprint:** The measurement of the amount of carbon emitted by an individual or organisation over a given period, or a product over its lifecycle. The common measurement unit which SDS uses is tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). It is calculated by multiplying activity data e.g., kWh of energy and miles of business travel into greenhouse gas emissions using the appropriate emissions conversion factor.

## 5. Scope

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The Environmental Policy applies to our whole estate and to all staff, whether part-time, full-time, permanent, temporary, a contractor or seconded.

## 6. Policy detail

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SDS is committed to reducing our environmental impact and supporting the Scottish Government's climate ambitions and net zero target. To achieve this, we will:

- Minimise the adverse environmental impacts of our offices through energy efficiency projects and recycling provision, adhering to national waste regulations<sup>1</sup>.
- Continue to improve digital capability to reduce paper use and travel related to both internal and outward client facing activities.
- Provide meaningful carbon footprint data to be used in decision making and target setting, continually looking to expand the scope and accuracy of data included in our calculations.
- Regularly monitor this data to identify emissions reduction opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> [Waste \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) and [Waste Electrical Electronic Equipment Directive 2006](#)

- Engage with and support colleagues and their teams to understand their role and responsibility in supporting SDS's environmental objectives through campaigns, internal communication channels and a mandatory eLearning module on climate change.
- Provide guidance to support staff in meeting requirements of this Policy.
- Set targets to drive continuous improvement of our environmental performance.
- Provide adequate resources to meet our environmental objectives.
- Collaborate with other organisations, particularly within the public sector, to share best practice and peer-to-peer learning.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

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### 7.1 Senior Management

The Directors Group has accountability, delegated from the Chief Executive, for ensuring the implementation of this Policy. The Directors Group has specific responsibilities:

- To demonstrate visible commitment to SDS's climate change ambitions.
- To ensure that SDS processes and procedures enable this Policy to be implemented.
- To review environmental performance in the quarterly Director's Group Reports.

### 7.2 Climate Change Strategy Implementation and Monitoring Group

Formed from the development of the Climate Change Strategy, this group has representatives from across the organisation. Convening bi-annually, this group is responsible for implementing actions to help SDS achieve our climate change ambitions.

### 7.3 Carbon Management Executive

The responsibility for coordinating SDS's organisational response to the climate emergency sits with the Carbon Management Executive. This includes:

- Defining the content of this Policy, updating as necessary.
- Providing environmental content for supporting policies, procedures, and strategies, updating as necessary.
- Gathering and analysing relevant data.
- Coordinating the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy Action Plans.
- Providing support and advice to managers and employees on environmental matters to ensure compliance with this Policy.
- Assessing SDS's adaptation capabilities in line with Adaptation Scotland's Framework.

- Being the primary point of contact for external environmental regulatory bodies.

#### **7.4 Facilities Team**

SDS's Facilities Team is responsible for working alongside the Carbon Management Executive to ensure that identified environmental related projects are implemented across the estate.

#### **7.5 People Managers**

People Managers are responsible for ensuring that this Policy and supporting policies and procedures are understood and followed by their direct reports and others under their management.

#### **7.6 Green Champions**

A voluntary position, each team has a Green Champion who is responsible for:

- Attending regular update calls.
- Sharing relevant environmental information with their teams, including information on campaigns, planned and ongoing activities and related policies and procedures.
- Acting as a first point of contact for questions relating to climate change for their team.

#### **7.7 All Employees**

There is an expectation that all employees support SDS's commitment to achieving our environmental objectives and ambition to be a low carbon organisation. Employees also have specific responsibility for:

- Following office and home working green [top tips](#) including switching off lights and devices when no longer in use, minimising waste and recycle, and dressing appropriately for the weather to avoid overuse of heating/cooling systems.
- Completing the ['End of Day Switch Off Regime'](#) if last to leave the office, to ensure that energy isn't wasted outside of office hours.
- Adhering to the travel hierarchy by first considering whether travel is necessary and then choosing public transport or active travel over car use where possible.
- Holding meetings online where possible. Colleagues are encouraged to make best use of available meeting technology to minimise the need for travel.
- Recycling waste in the correct bins by following the signage. All SDS offices have dedicated recycling bins.

- Avoiding printing where possible. SDS's digital offering helps with paperless sharing of documents and note taking.
- Engaging with their team's Green Champion to support environmental initiatives.

More detail on these actions can be found on the [Sustainability](#) area of the intranet. All employees are welcome to email [carbonmanagement@sds.co.uk](mailto:carbonmanagement@sds.co.uk) directly with any questions or ideas regarding our environmental commitments.

## 8. Further guidance

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The [Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030](#), annual Sustainability Reports and the annual Public Sector Climate Change Duties reports provide staff and external parties with more detail on our commitments and progress.