

Sustainability Report 2018-2020

December 2020

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1. Introduction

In Skills Development Scotland's (SDS) Strategic Plan 2019-2022, one of the actions required to achieve Goal 4 is that we will 'Make efficient, effective and sustainable use of our resources'. This Sustainability Report covers the financial years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, providing a summary of our carbon footprint, the actions we have taken to mitigate and adapt to climate change and how we engage with colleagues on this topic.

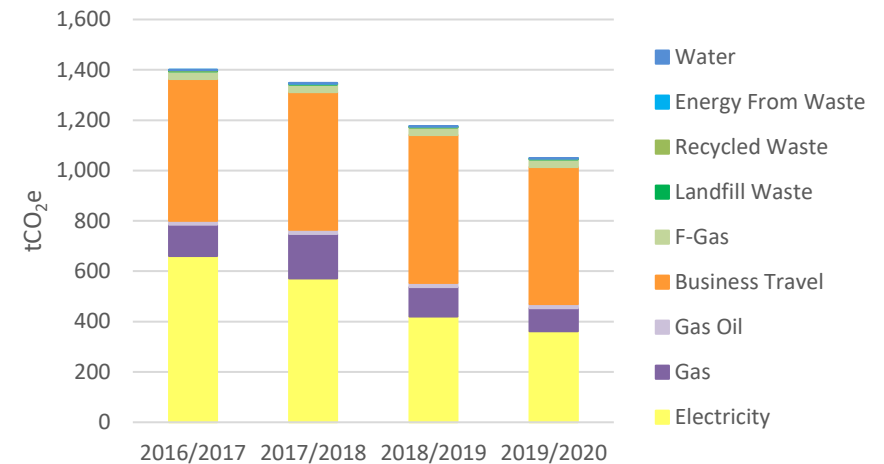
'Our continued contribution to Scotland's ambitious target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 will focus on improving our performance against key contributing factors such as our energy consumption and private car usage.'

A Human Future: Strategic Plan 2019-2022

Also included is our statutory obligation to report on our biodiversity duty as per the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.

We measure our environmental impact through an organisational carbon footprint which allows for the setting of reduction targets and tracking our progress towards being a low carbon organisation. This

graph shows the improvement that has been made in the past four years during which SDS's carbon footprint has decreased by 25%.



2020 Targets

In 2011 SDS launched a four-year Carbon Management Plan (CMP) which set out a 30% reduction target of our carbon footprint by April 2015 against a 2010/2011 baseline. This initial target was surpassed with a 35% reduction. As part of the second Carbon Management Plan 2015-2020, SDS set a second target to reduce our carbon footprint by 42% by April 2020 on a 2010/2011 baseline. At the end of 2016/2017 we successfully met this target three years early, achieving a 43% reduction. As a result, all targets were re-evaluated as part of the CMP review in 2017. The decision was made to set targets on consumption rather than our carbon footprint

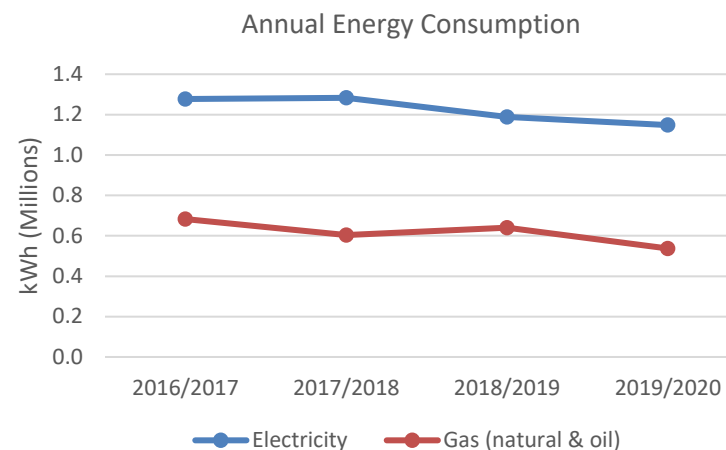
to remove the influence of external factors, such as the greening of the electricity grid, over which SDS has no control. The following targets were set on a 2016/2017 baseline to be achieved by April 2020:

Measure	2020 Target	Actual Achieved		
		17/18	18/19	19/20
Energy kWh consumption	-8%	-3%	-6%	-15%
Grey fleet (private car) mileage	-3%	-2%	+4%	+0.05%
Landfill diversion rate	95%	91%	90%	91%

2. Energy

Performance

To heat, cool and power our buildings across our estate we consume electricity and gas, which accounted for 42% of SDS's carbon footprint in 2019/2020. In 2019/2020 we consumed 1.7 million kWh of energy, covering 39 sites where we are either billed directly or a breakdown is provided by the landlord. This is equivalent to heating and powering 110 average UK houses for a year. Total energy kWh consumption decreased by 15% at the end of 2019/2020 on the 2016/2017 baseline.



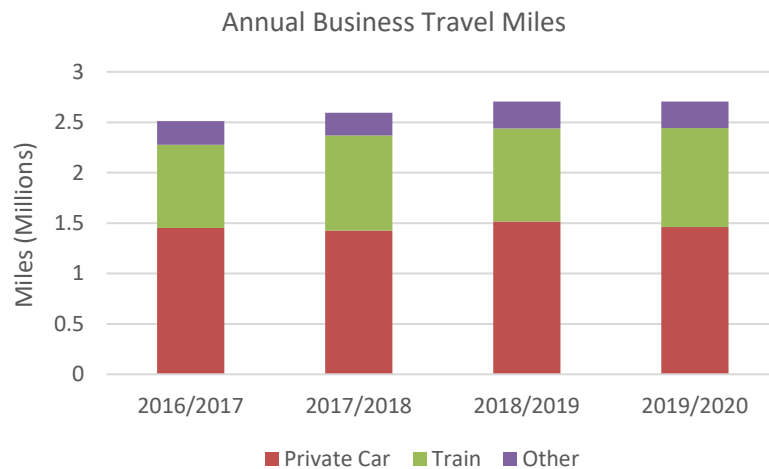
Actions

Improving the energy efficiency of our estate is a vital element of reducing our environmental impact. In 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 this entailed upgrading HVAC systems at three sites and upgrading heating/cooling controls at four sites. The saving potential of upgrading these systems and controls was identified using the half hourly data on our online Energy Dashboard. Through improved controls we can ensure heating/cooling systems are timed to align with working hours.

3. Business Travel

Performance

At SDS, business travel is frequently required due to the nature of our service delivery for which many colleagues travel to see external clients, visit schools/colleges or to meet training providers and conduct visits, sometimes over a large geographical area. Accounting for 52%, it was the largest contributor to our carbon footprint in 2019/2020.



Private car continues to be the most common mode of transport for business travel in SDS, at 2.7 million miles in 2019/2020. However, the percentage share of miles by car decreased from 58% in 2016/2017 to 54% in 2019/2020, with train conversely increasing

from 33% to 36%. This was reflected in a 3.5% reduction in the carbon footprint of business travel between 2016/2017 and 2019/2020.

Actions

We continue to take steps to aid in the reduction of the carbon footprint of our business travel for example through promoting increased use of online meeting technology and greater use of low carbon methods of transport. SDS's investment in online conferencing technology to allow colleagues to hold meetings remotely can help to reduce business travel miles, particularly for internal meetings. In 2018/2019, SDS introduced Office 365, which comes with the capability to make it easier to work collaboratively on projects irrespective of the physical location of group members. SDS also upgraded its internal storage system to IShare Online, which provides the option to sync files to then access offline. This can help with the promotion of the use of public transport over driving as it removes the requirement to depend upon sometimes unreliable public Wi-Fi networks to undertake work.

In February 2019, the fifth SDS 'Limited Internal Travel Month' took place. For this campaign colleagues were requested to limit their travel for internal meetings where feasible by utilising the available online meeting technology. This resulted in an overall 27%

reduction in private car miles and a 29% reduction in train miles claimed for internal business travel compared to February 2016 when there was no limit on internal travel.

In March 2019 and March 2020 SDS once again took part in the 'Scottish Workplace Journey Challenge', a campaign run by Sustrans to reduce the number of single occupancy car trips for commuting journeys. With promotion through intranet articles, Yammer posts and updates via all colleague communications and the Green Champion Network, the 31 SDS colleagues who participated in March 2019 recorded 717 active and low carbon journeys. This avoided the emission of 538 kgCO₂e and resulted in SDS achieving 6th place out of 54 organisations in our category of over 1,000 employees.

4. Colleague Engagement



In October 2019, a 'Life at SDS' initiative was launched to celebrate all the good things about working with SDS. 'Life at SDS: Environment' is the banner under which we communicate with colleagues on our activity to address climate change and what they can do to get involved. In January 2020, the new Climate

Change Strategy was chosen as the Colleague Choice topic for discussion at the Leading Change Forum, a group which aims to help all of us at SDS lead and engage with change within a culture of Everyday Leadership. More widely, the 'Life at SDS: Environment' Yammer group is used to generate discussions of environmental nature with colleagues across the organisation, encouraging peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

Through our aim to be a low carbon organisation we have the opportunity to highlight the environmental benefits of low carbon actions and the positive impact they can have on the choices colleagues make outside of work. By participating in behaviour change and awareness raising campaigns such as the Scottish Workplace Journey Challenge and Climate Week, colleagues gain valuable knowledge about sustainable behaviour which they can transfer to their home life. For example, discovering the benefits of commuting by active travel and public transport through taking part in the Workplace Journey Challenge can lead to changes in personal travel habits. The ongoing messaging in SDS around energy saving opportunities through simple actions such as ensuring lights and electronic equipment are switched off when not in use instils green behaviour awareness which can have a knock-on effect of energy and cost savings at home.

The SDS Youth Board, founded during the Year of Young People in 2018, has chosen climate change as one of their focus areas. This included the creation of a subcommittee who have engaged with the wider colleague base on environmental sustainability through actions such as holding a webinar on Sustainable Homeworking and have also been involved in the consultation and review process for SDS's new Climate Change Strategy.

5. Adaptation

SDS must also ensure that as an organisation we are aware of and are equipped to deal with the risks associated with climate change. The deployment of technology, such as laptops and online meeting software, has been crucial for this as it creates flexible working conditions which increases our adaptation capacity. If physical access to an office is not possible due to an extreme weather event, such as flooding, which are projected to increase in frequency due to climate change, employees would still have access to their work resources via their laptops and able to fulfil their role. It is essential that the laptops are reliable therefore a rollout of upgraded models began at the end of 2018, with all staff receiving them within the first two quarters of 2019/2020. Some of SDS's offices function on a hot desk system making it easy for employees to work out of other offices. We also have agreements with other public sector

organisations to allow our staff to work from their premises if required. Our internal 'Adverse Weather and Disruption to Public Transport' policy explains what colleagues should do if they cannot get to their normal place of work due to adverse weather and provides advice on alternative arrangements. To further our approach to climate change adaptation we will be working through the steps of Adaptation Scotland's Capability Framework which was launched in 2019 for the public sector.

6. Biodiversity Duty

SDS has a responsibility under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to ensure we help to conserve biodiversity in Scotland with the requirement to report on related activities every three years as per the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. Biodiversity is the variety of plant and animal life which surrounds us. Whilst SDS operations do not directly interact with biodiversity as we do not own land or buildings, we can still have a positive impact on the natural environment. For the 2017-2020 reporting period, SDS has done our bit to conserve biodiversity through three key areas:

1. Waste

Following the waste hierarchy of reduce, re-use and recycle is a way through which SDS can have a positive influence on

biodiversity. Below are examples of what we do in each level of the hierarchy:

Reduce: Single use plastic is a well-known risk to biodiversity therefore in 2018 the purchasing of single use plastic cups was banned in SDS with the item removed from the office supplies catalogue, avoiding over 33,000 plastic cups being discarded each year¹. Our Procurement Team provides Demand Management guidance to all contract managers, encouraging them to question conspicuous consumption in their area of the organisation.

Re-use: When moving out of an office, if the furniture is not fit for our purpose, we offer it to the landlord for use by the next tenant, put it up for sale or donate it to a not for profit organisation. This can have a community benefit and avoids these items ending up in landfill. For optimising home workstations during the COVID-19 pandemic, colleagues were encouraged to use a charity shop or local sustainable business to purchase a sustainable chair or desk, if required, which could be claimed back through expenses.

Recycle: We continue to improve the signage on internal bins to make recycling easier to understand therefore increasing the recycling rate and reducing contamination. We also encourage our

offices to participate in TerraCycle's Recycling Programmes for items that cannot be easily recycled such as those for writing instruments or crisp wrappers. In 2019, on site evaluations of the external bins for selected sites was undertaken with Mitie Waste to ensure bin sizes and number of uplifts scheduled are appropriate. Each April, a marketing review is undertaken to ensure that SDS is not overproducing material resources. This annual exercise resulted in a 41% reduction in the number of print items in the warehouse between 2016 and 2018.

2. Volunteering & Colleague Engagement

SDS encourages staff to engage in a range of volunteering activities, which can include activities which support the conservation of biodiversity. Various SDS teams decided to use their team days for environmental volunteering. For example, the Estates & Facilities Team supported the 'Irvine Clean Up Crew' through a litter picking session at Irvine beach, the Falkirk CIAG Team have volunteered to clear and tidy flower beds along the High Street, the Perth CIAG Team helped out at a local walled garden, and the Centre for Work-based Learning Team helped set up a community vegetable garden through the Inverclyde Community Development Trust. Moreover, SDS colleagues have used some of

¹ Between April 2017-May 2018 SDS purchased 33,100 single use plastic cups

their 21 hours of paid volunteering special leave entitlement for environmental volunteering in their communities, including regular litter picking at the beach or their local parks through organised community groups. Information on environmental volunteering opportunities is provided for staff on the Sustainability area of the intranet.

SDS colleagues have been engaging in conversations on Yammer around waste reduction, particularly single use plastic, and enhancing biodiversity through planting bee-friendly flowers and growing their own vegetables in their private gardens. We have used the annual Climate Week campaign to get staff thinking about and acting on the importance of conserving biodiversity, with offices holding 'One Planet Picnics', bringing in dishes made with home grown or local produce.

3. Service Delivery

As the national careers and skills body for Scotland, SDS has an important role in providing advice on work and training opportunities in biodiversity and the wider environmental sector. By linking human resources with natural resources, SDS is helping Scotland to harness the protection of the natural environment. For example, SDS's partnership with Lantra, the Sector Skills Council which supports skills and training for people and businesses in the land-

based and environmental sector, is helping to drive employment in areas which are vital to supporting the biodiversity of Scotland. Additionally, the My World of Work website, a service offered by SDS, allows users to search for volunteering opportunities specifically in Conservation/Gardening.