



Climate Change Strategy Progress Report 2020-22

April 2023

Foreword

Scotland was the first country to declare a climate emergency and subsequently set an ambitious target to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. In response, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) published a ten-year Climate Change Strategy in 2020, detailing our intended journey towards becoming a net-zero organisation and our anticipated activity in support of Scotland's wider environmental ambitions. I am pleased to present this first progress report on our Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030.

In this report we reflect on some of the important steps we have taken in the last few years. During this time, we have established our Strategy Monitoring Group to oversee the implementation of our action plan and progress towards our ambitions. The group has worked to establish the profile and prominence of the Climate Change Strategy within SDS and will continue to ensure it is a live document. We have made positive progress in the first two years, for example we have enhanced information on green jobs across our career information advice and guidance resources and are embedding sustainable practices into our work. We also developed, alongside key partners, the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan 2020-25 (CESAP) setting out the Scottish Government's plan to maximise the transition to net-zero for Scotland.

Over the past two years, the impact of the climate emergency has coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK's departure from the EU and the cost-of-living crisis, to create a 'perfect storm' of economic uncertainty for Scotland. However, responding to these challenges holistically provides opportunities and hope for a greener and more equal economy.

The potential to generate new, well-paid jobs from the transition to net-zero was highlighted in the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET). Scotland has a collective responsibility to deliver a just transition to net-zero, and effective collaboration will be required to generate the greatest impact. We will work with the Scottish Government, our partner enterprise and skills agencies and others to ensure that no one and no place is left behind. As the national skills agency, we will continue to help ensure that individuals and employers are supported to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the transition to a green economy.

SDS will not only support Scotland's workforce to develop the skills needed to meet our net-zero ambitions but also continue to work to becoming a net-zero organisation. Our aim by 2030 remains 'to be a lead contributor to a low carbon, inclusive and sustainable economy in Scotland, and on track to becoming a net-zero organisation'.

As we look ahead to the next few years of our strategy, we will continue to work on reducing our carbon footprint and mainstreaming sustainable decision making across our organisation.

Damien Yeates, Chief Executive Officer

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1. Introduction

About Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency. Our ambition is that skills contribute to a thriving, productive and inclusive Scotland.

Collaborating extensively, we work to deliver our vision for an agile, dynamic and employer-led skills and careers ecosystem, which enables all people to develop the skills, adaptive resilience, and personal agency to thrive in a vibrant and inclusive labour market.

Through intelligence-led delivery of Scotland's Career Service, apprenticeships and other learning and skills interventions, and the sharing of expertise and insight, we inspire and enable people and businesses to develop the right skills for a changing world. In doing so, we aim to generate the change that will lead to inclusive growth, greater productivity, a more prosperous and skilled workforce, and a fairer, more equal society.

Further details on SDS's strategic approach and operational activities can be found in our [Strategic Plan 2022-27](#).

About this report

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 mandates that public sector bodies, including SDS, must contribute to emissions reduction targets, support adaptation programmes and exercise their functions in a sustainable manner.

In our Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030, SDS set out its aim by 2030 to be:

“a lead contributor to a low carbon, inclusive and sustainable economy in Scotland, and on track to becoming a net-zero organisation.”

Our Strategy identified four workstreams across which we aim to deliver our environmental ambitions:

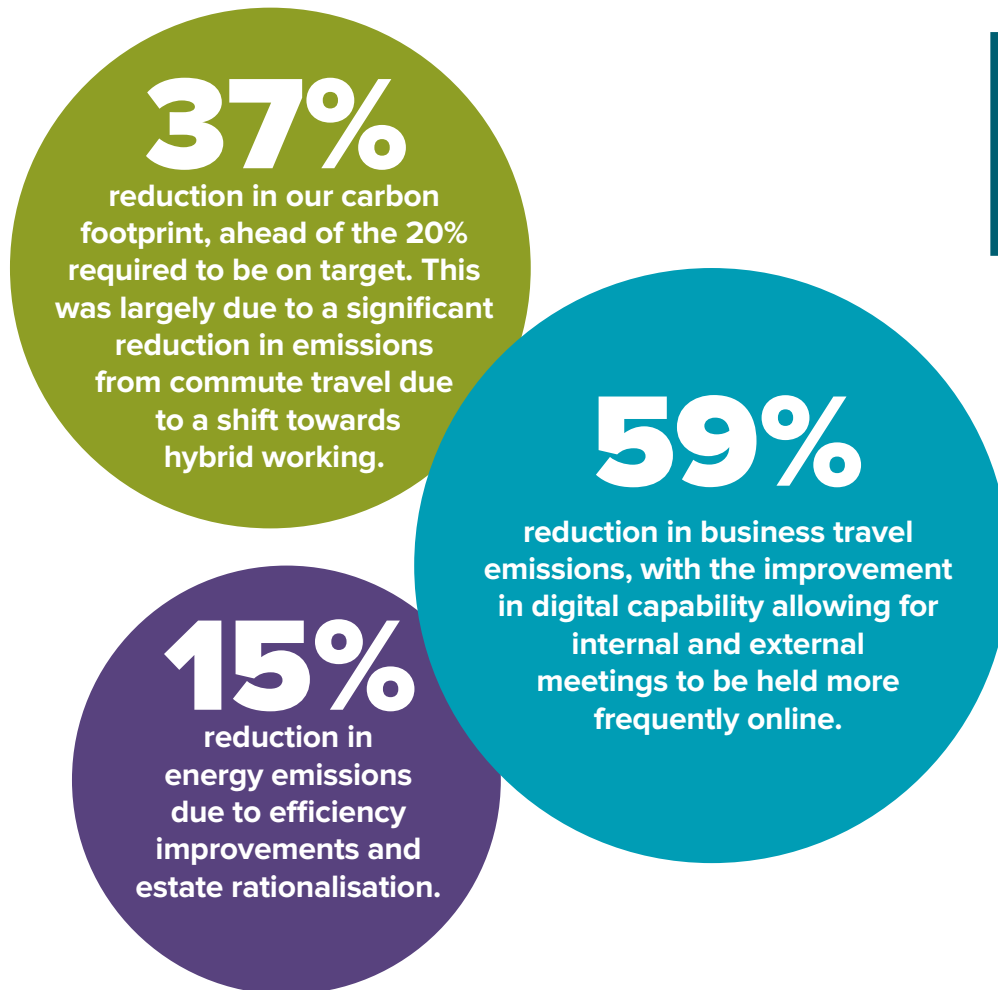
- **Supporting a green economy**
- **Digital capability**
- **Business processes**
- **Organisational culture**

An infographic showing our headline figures is given on pages 5 and 6 and an update on progress we have made in each workstream since 2020 is given on the following pages.

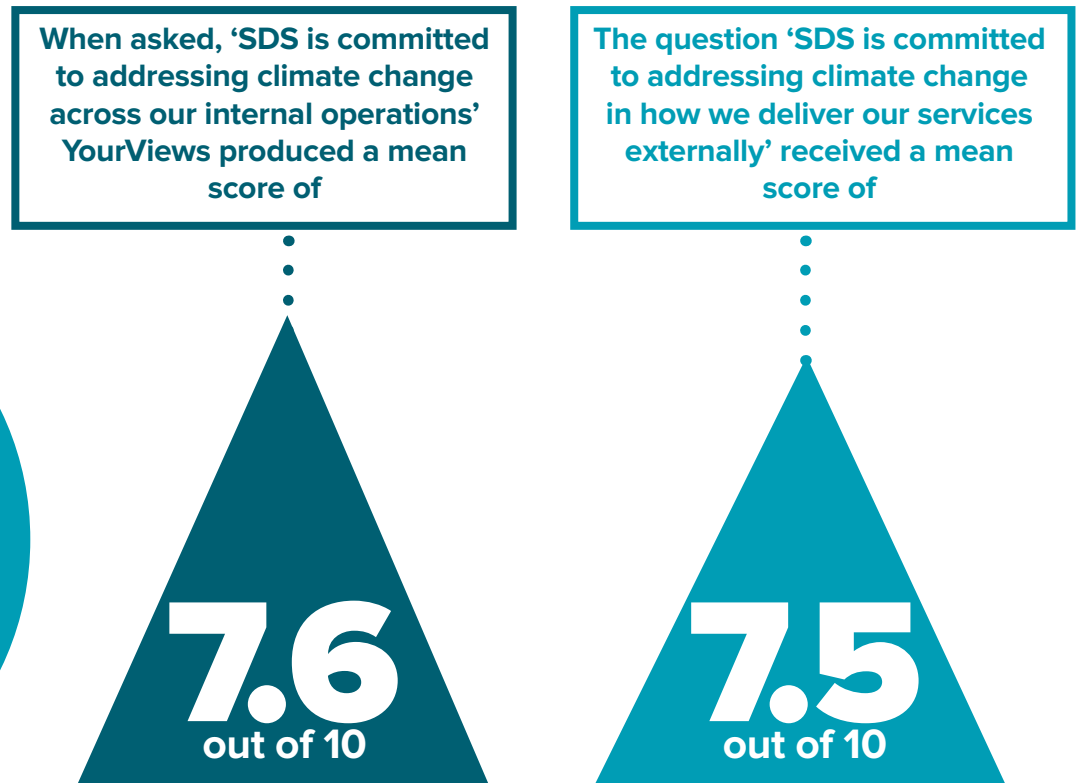
2. Key results infographic

SDS's target to reduce our carbon footprint by 67% by 2030 against our 2019/20 baseline.

At the end of 2022/23, in comparison to the 2019/20 baseline, we have achieved:



Two new questions were added to our staff YourViews survey in 2021 to monitor colleagues' perception of our commitment to tackling climate change:



2. Key results infographic continued...

In 2022, the Youth Board conducted research with young colleagues aged 16-30 across the organisation and found:

When asked to what extent respondents agreed that working for an organisation that is committed to addressing its environment impact is important to them, young colleagues scored an average of



When asked to what extent they care about the environmental impact of SDS, young colleagues scored an average of



Marketing print volumes have been steadily reducing since the pandemic as we have moved to digital alternatives. We only print for the purposes of accessibility or where a specific event or action demands a physical solution, for example the Results Helpline leaflet that all is included with exam results that go out to all pupils receiving results.

Table 1: Marketing sheets printed for 2019-2022

2019	2020	2021	2022
924,182	430,785	311,075	201,105

Table 2: Office sheets printed for 2019-2022

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Black and white	2,410,850	577,731	159,999	427,435*
Colour	1,874,755	380,869	105,153	339,122*

*SDS experienced substantial office closures in 2020 and 2021. While office printing increased in 2022 this remains considerably below 2019 due to changes in working practices.

3. Supporting a green economy



SDS's commitment:
across our work, we will support Scotland's ambitions for a green economy.

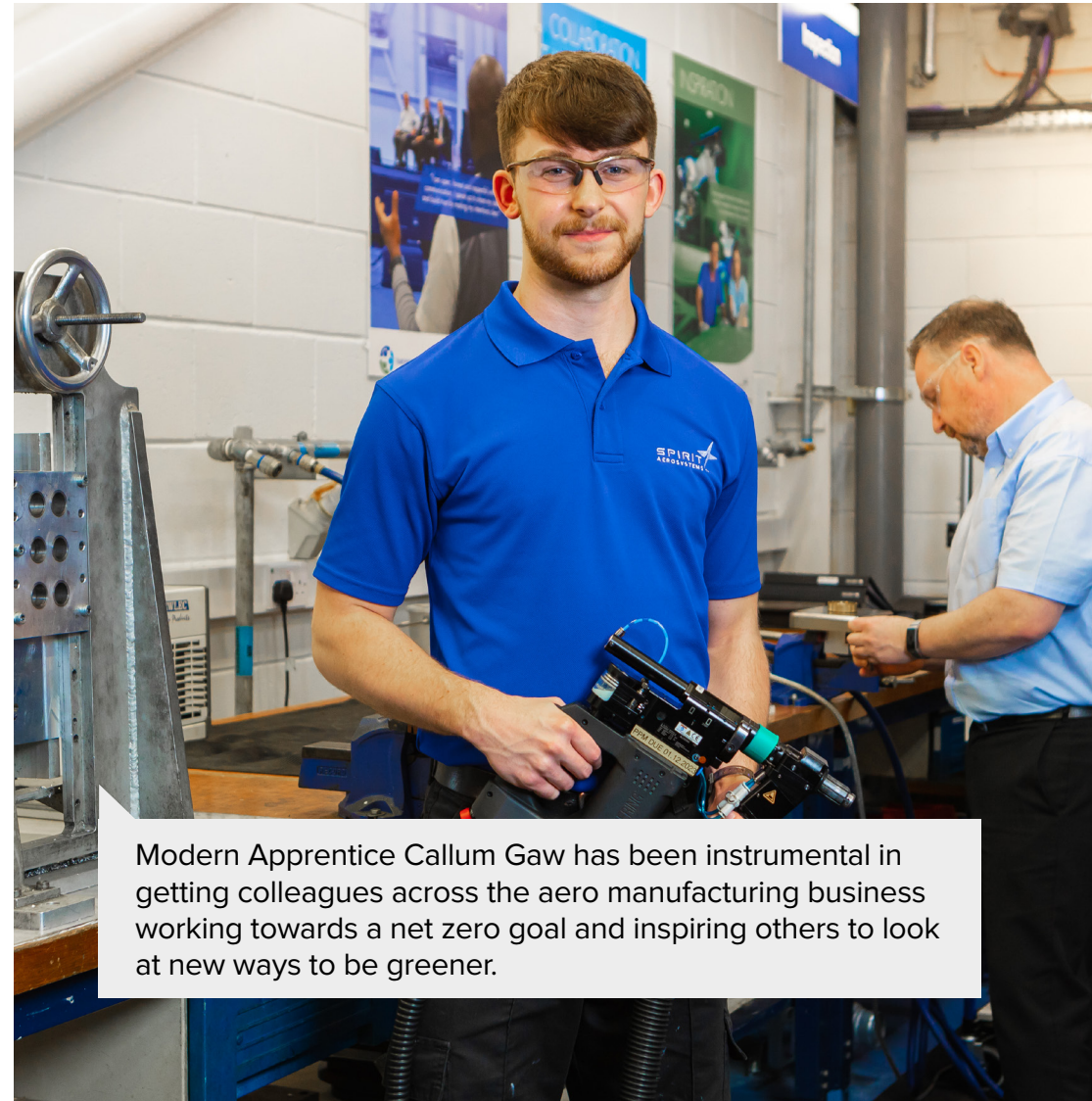
As part of the Supporting a green economy workstream we aim to:

- **Influence the skills system to be responsive to the climate emergency**
- **Help embed sustainability into learning provision.**

Achieving net-zero emissions by 2045 requires a rapid upskilling of Scotland's workforce across all sectors and occupations. SDS has a critical role to play in aligning the skills system with Scotland's green economic ambitions.

Activities SDS has undertaken to support this workstream include:

- **Leading the CESAP Pathfinders looking at the skills needs arising from the transition to net-zero.**
- **The first project is building an evidence base on green jobs, skills, investments, and provision.** It has developed a definition of green jobs through [Green Jobs in Scotland](#), researched employer demand for green skills, built a database of green jobs and skills literature, and mapped apprenticeships, upskilling and reskilling, and further education (FE)/higher education (HE) provision.



Modern Apprentice Callum Gaw has been instrumental in getting colleagues across the aero manufacturing business working towards a net zero goal and inspiring others to look at new ways to be greener.

- The second project tests the approach identified in the heat decarbonisation sector and has pilots in Glasgow City and Shetland. Work completed includes a mapping of planned investment to support heat decarbonisation, analysis of job demand in the pilot areas, interviews with key stakeholders to understand new and emerging jobs and skills, and established engagement with relevant partners and stakeholders.
- **Creating a green careers area on My World of Work to encourage customers to explore sustainable career opportunities and pathways.** The site provides information on the different routes into green jobs, the variety of skills required, and industries included.
- **Updating the Labour Market Information (LMI) toolkit with resources for green jobs.** This is an internal hub for Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) colleagues to use with customers, parents and partners. The toolkit now includes a range of videos with green insight on a range of sectors, including Construction, Rural Economy, Tourism and Hospitality, and Life and Chemical Sciences. The following resources have been added to the LMI toolkit:
 - The 'Green Hub' includes information on green training, net-zero and the circular economy.
 - The 'Rural Hub' includes information on sustainable farming and nature restoration.
- **Developing The Green Jobs Workforce Academy, which launched in August 2021.** This aims to help people take a greener approach to their careers, from accessing training and learning new skills to finding a new job. The academy will help ensure Scotland's workforce has the skills it needs to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2045. A key action from the [Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan \(CESAP\)](#), SDS carried out this work on behalf of Scottish Government as one of their key policy commitments for the first 100 days of the new parliamentary term.
- **Piloting a Climate Change Foundation Apprenticeship in 2020/21.** The one-year project focused on the green economy and was supported by Morgan Sindall and Arnold Clark. The pilot enabled 25 young learners to develop knowledge on climate change and carbon footprint reduction, and gather an understanding of how this relates to the construction and automotive industries. It offered practical opportunities for young people to deploy their knowledge and participate in workshops on renewable energy and zero-waste.

Case study:

Building green skills in the North East

Aberdeen's Energy Transition Zone (ETZ Ltd) is repositioning the North East of Scotland as a globally recognised integrated energy cluster focused on the delivery of net-zero which brings sustainable jobs and growth for the region.

The National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) was established as part of the Aberdeen's ETZ, and is a partnership between Robert Gordon University, the University of Aberdeen and North East Scotland College, and is supported by SDS. It aims to prepare the workforce for the energy transition by providing access to new skills and capabilities needed for the move to net-zero.

NESA Project Manager, Lauren Braidwood, had the opportunity to reskill and upskill for her current job. She said:

“I'm from a Geophysics background, and in my last job I worked as a services director for an oil and gas acquisition service company. I've learned huge amounts on the job, particularly coming out of a corporate environment into an educational and skills setting. But my core skills around managing people and data have stayed the same, I'm just applying them in different ways.

“A huge part of our move to net-zero is harnessing the incredible skills of our existing workforce and shifting them towards greener outcomes and process, and the energy industry is really blazing a trail on that work in Scotland.”

Chris Brodie, Director of Regional Skills Planning and Sector Development at SDS said:

“With the transition towards net zero picking up pace, the establishment of NESA is an important step for the industries which drive the regional economy.

“SDS is committed to working with partners to ensure people can build the skills they will need to succeed in this growing part of our economy throughout their career.”



Lauren Braidwood, NESA Project Manager

4. Digital capability



SDS's commitment: we will continue to enhance our digital capability, in line with technological advancements, to support our wider sustainability ambitions.

As part of the Digital capability workstream we aim to:

- **Enable colleagues to understand and have the confidence to deliver digitally**
- **Enhance our service offer, making best use of digital technology.**

Improving our digital capability and use of technology allows us to deliver our services with improved efficiencies and enhanced capacity. Digital technology allows us to work in a flexible way that reduces the need to travel and improves access to both our services and jobs in rural and remote communities. We remain committed to a blended approach to service delivery with customer choice and flexibility at its heart. This acknowledges that in-person support will always be best for some of our customers, including those who face barriers to engagement such as a lack of digital skills, digital poverty, disability, or comprehension or language support needs.

Activities SDS has undertaken to support this workstream include:

- **Developing our capability to deliver webinars, events, and customer engagements digitally.** Over the last two years, several events have been held digitally using different online platforms, including National Parents and Carers online events, 'Introduction to Redundancy Support' webinars, and CIAG post school webinars on Positive Steps to Career Success. We also held a

series of all-CIAG events on 'Delivering Customer Excellence' and 'Focus on the Future' that were delivered entirely online to up to 600 colleagues. Furthermore, SDS held its first internal Equality Festival in 2022 entirely online, with all presentations and workshops available for staff to view online after the event.

- **Introducing the use of QR codes to increase engagement with customers seeking careers help.** Customers can scan a QR code to request a call back from SDS's National CIAG Helpline and ensures a quick response. The innovation, which has been nominated for an award with the Career Development Institute, offers customers more choice and increases the likelihood they will access the CIAG service by phone, opposed to taking transport to an SDS centre.
- **The continued development and delivery of digital training for colleagues to enhance their remote working capability and minimise travel requirements.** The continued roll-out of O365 applications and functionality to all staff, including MS Teams, has increased the prevalence of online meetings, and encouraged greater use of remote collaborative working approaches.
- **Undertaking an audit of our online content to reduce the environmental impact of our websites.** Improvements and benchmarking activities are ongoing.
- **Introducing greater usage of technology including digital signatures for contract management.** You can read more about this on page 11.

Case study:

Use of digital signatures

Achieving greater use of digital signatures for contract management purposes, and thereby reducing reliance on hard copy documentation, was identified as an early action in our Climate Change Strategy.

To encourage this change, SDS made arrangements for all documentation related to Modern Apprenticeship (MA) contracts to be available in a digital format for providers, employers and apprentices. SDS agreed to accept a range of software, including DocuSign, Adobe DC and Eversign, making it as easy as possible for providers to adopt digitised documentation.

In 2022, SDS arranged and promoted a webinar for colleagues and training providers to promote best practice from existing providers using digital signatures, with over 250 people attending.

Marie Ruddy, National Operations Manager at SDS said: “The webinar showcased how digital signatures have allowed providers to improve their service to apprentices and employers. SDS have seen an increased use of digital signatures and a reduction in paper waste as a result.”

This has been part of a wider programme of continuous improvement to embed sustainability within the Specification and Conditions for MA administration, and to reduce the environmental impact of working practices. This work has also resulted in improvements in how providers are audited to ensure compliance with the MA contract, generating a related reduction in business travel.

Digital records have the added benefits of being very secure, user friendly and of providing a strong audit trail. The programmes track if recipients have opened the document and will email updates to the document owner.



Case study:

Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) webinars

Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) is the Scottish Government's strategic partnership framework for responding to redundancy situations. It ensures that local public sector agencies respond to potential and proposed redundancies as quickly and as effectively as possible.

In response to the pandemic, the PACE partnership worked quickly to redesign their approach to service delivery, including the development and delivery of a national helpline and online webinar programme, to ensure employers and their employees could continue to access this vital support. Previously, PACE services had only been delivered face to face at the employer site.

Now operating hybrid delivery, the continued delivery of webinars allows PACE colleagues to reach a wider audience of people facing redundancy while significantly reducing business travel and use of hard copy resources that would have previously been shared at events.

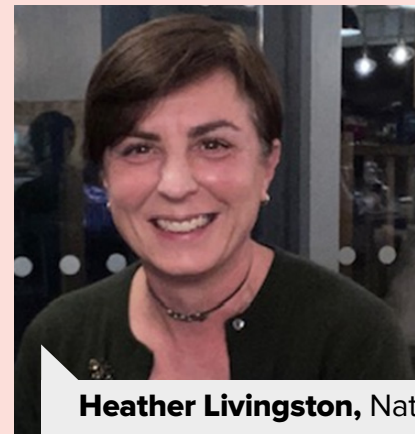
Six webinars are regularly delivered on subjects such as embracing change, identifying and communicating your skills and strengths, and finding job opportunities. Customers have the option to join live sessions or watch back recordings at a time which is convenient to them.

Through anonymised feedback, a PACE customer said:

“It was great to hear about the support available. The links to additional resources and sources of information was very helpful. I will focus on myself more and start looking into what happens next after redundancy. I have already booked other webinars and will use Positive Steps handbook.”

Heather Livingston from SDS said:

“The digital approach as a model of delivery is now business as usual and our hybrid offer to customers, which includes online and face-to-face options, ensures individuals dealing with redundancy can seek support in the way that suits them best.”



Heather Livingston, National CIAG Executive at SDS

5. Business processes



SDS's commitment: we will continuously improve our business processes so that they better support our environmental ambitions.

As part of the Business processes workstream we aim to:

- **Embed sustainability into our business processes**
- **Drive environmental performance reporting**
- **Improve efficient use of resources.**

To deliver our green commitments as an organisation we are embedding environmental considerations into our organisational plans, policies, and procedures. We are exploring more sustainable ways to carry out our 'business as usual' activities that will allow us to meet our carbon reduction targets.

Activities SDS has undertaken to support this workstream include:

- **Introducing an Environmental Impact Assessment process for business cases.** This aims to ensure new projects consider any potential environmental impacts at an early stage and then identify and implement any necessary mitigations. Factors considered include general implications for climate change, use of resources (digital and physical), additional business travel and alignment to the Climate Change Strategy 2020-2023. A tracking sheet is included for project staff to follow up on any clarifications and improvement suggestions.
- **Developing a Carbon Management Dashboard in Power BI that allows management to view environmental data including the carbon emissions from business travel and volume of office paper printing.** By monitoring this data, teams can take ownership over their impact and make positive behaviour changes.
- **Conducting a business wide cleanse of electronic records and hardcopy documents to minimise the environmental impact of data stored.** Retention periods of digital documents have been reviewed to ensure we are only saving essential records.
- **Successfully rolled out a power plan across all SDS devices to minimise inactive screen time, with optimal power balance settings.**
- **Transitioning from a physical on site server to cloud-based Microsoft Azure hosting which uses less energy.** You can read more about this on page 14.
- **Reducing waste by recycling laptops through the Turing Foundation, which empowers disadvantaged communities using information technology-enabled learning.** In future, SDS laptops will be re-used and distributed to Scottish, UK, or African charities and very old or damaged laptops will be recycled in a sustainable way.

Case study:

Hybrid cloud hosting services

Enterprise Information Services (EIS) is a shared IT service between SDS and enterprise partners. EIS has conducted a project which moved from on-premises hosting to hybrid cloud-based hosting (Microsoft Azure).

EIS previously moved from regular supplier-based data centres to a hybrid cloudbased platform. This platform can support future systems they may use and allows them to control costs better, using a 'pay as you go' format. The services can be capped during quiet periods, or completely switched off at certain times, reducing costs and energy demand. Additionally, the service is very adaptable and can be scaled up or down to suit demand.

The continuous improvement of the contract supports EIS's existing hybrid cloud environments, with the option to onboard any additional services from traditional data centres to cloud-based hosting. This updated service operates through a smaller provider who offers support services to Hybrid Cloud offerings.

EIS also committed to using this reporting to work with IT teams to reduce CO2 footprint via monthly optimisation meetings. Ideas for optimisation included automatically switching off non-production environments out of hours and replatforming legacy applications to benefit from hybrid cloud efficiency. IT and Carbon teams will work together to deliver this.



6. Organisational culture



SDS's commitment: we will help our people to consider their existing work practices and embrace more sustainable ways of working.

As part of the Organisational culture workstream we aim to:

- **Drive sustainable colleague behaviours and use of our resources**
- **Adopt exemplar green practices, leading change in others.**

Meeting the net-zero target is dependent on a culture shift in workplaces across Scotland. As a public sector organisation, SDS aims to demonstrate strong leadership in our commitment to environmental sustainability.

Activities SDS has undertaken to support this workstream include:

- **Promoting an environmentally conscious organisational culture through the SDS Green Champions Network.** Green Champions have a role to advocate for SDS's climate change ambitions within their teams and support their colleagues with any related activities. There are currently 74 Green Champions from across different teams, geographies and levels of seniority within the business.

- **Using internal communications to engage colleagues in thinking and acting more sustainably:**

- The 'Life at SDS' podcasts were launched around Earth Day 2022. The first podcast discussed the work of the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan and what is happening with green skills in Scotland and the second podcast discussed SDS's progress against its own climate targets.

- A series of events and resources were launched during Climate Week 2022 as part of SDS's wider support for the Scottish Government's 'Let's Do Net Zero' campaign.

- **Adopting a blended format for Scottish Apprenticeship Week and Careers Week events from 2021 onwards, providing flexibility for participants with the choice of in person and virtual events, including moving the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards online.** Colleagues are encouraged to attend local events to minimise unnecessary travel.

- **Introducing an interim hybrid working approach, drawing on learning from our pandemic experience.** This provides a framework to enable colleagues to make simple, customer-focussed decisions on where we work and, in doing so, cuts commuting travel substantially compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Case study:

SDS Youth Board action

SDS's Youth Board takes an active interest in climate and sustainability issues. One of the Youth Board's main goals is to contribute towards the environmental sustainability of SDS through influencing how SDS can continuously improve to reduce environmental impacts and sharing information to colleagues about climate change and sustainability.

Some of the projects the Youth Board has worked on recently include:

- **The group undertook research on young colleagues' views on sustainability and published the findings in the Youth Board Climate Emergency Report. The report revealed that young people at SDS are deeply concerned about the climate emergency and place significant value on working for an organisation that acts sustainably. They are keen for SDS to continue to reduce its own carbon footprint and use its position to influence wide-scale changes as we work towards net-zero.**
- **Key stakeholders joined the Youth Board to discuss climate change in a two-part podcast. Panellists shared their motivations for working in sustainability and discussed the COP26 legacy.**
- **A regular Climate Change Newsletter is produced by the Youth Board for colleagues which provides access to climate related resources and information. This includes links to reports and articles highlighting the impacts of global warming, examples of innovation and activism that can make us hopeful in tackling the climate emergency, and information on what SDS is doing to contribute to net-zero ambitions.**

- **The Youth Board organised a litter pick for members, utilising SDS colleagues' entitlement to 21 hours paid time off per year for volunteering activities during working hours. Lucy Miller, Climate Change Workstream Lead said:**

“The Youth Board litter pick was a great day and really rewarding – it was a good way to use our volunteering hours in a sustainable way and feel like we were making some sort of difference to the local community. I would definitely like to do this again as there was so much more we could've done even in the small area we focused on.”

The Youth Board are always looking for ways in which they can get involved in helping contribute to SDS's climate goals, and work closely with the Green Champions Network to share ideas and opportunities.



Case study:

SDS commute travel survey

To understand and monitor the influence that flexible and remote working can have on our environmental impact, we have explored ways to calculate and monitor home working and commuting emissions.

In August 2022, SDS used a commute travel survey tool developed by Zero Waste Scotland to undertake an organisation wide survey of commute travel habits for the financial year 2019/20. This provided a pre-hybrid working baseline of emissions from SDS colleagues commuting into offices.

With a baseline in place, from 2023 onwards this survey will be undertaken annually to allow for ongoing analysis of how frequently colleagues are commuting and what modes of transport are being used.

This second survey has shown that emissions from commute travel dropped by 42% in 2022/2023 compared to the 2019/2020 baseline largely due to the introduction of hybrid working. Although working from home does have a carbon footprint due to the energy used, that is outweighed by the savings made in the reduction of commuting.

Commuting and business travel are among the major carbon contributors for all organisations and are therefore a key area for carbon reduction.

The series of travel surveys conducted over the past two years has demonstrated SDS's commitment to changing to more sustainable commuting habits to mitigate our carbon footprint.



4. Looking ahead

As set out in our Climate Change Strategy, SDS remains committed to becoming a lead contributor to a low carbon, inclusive and sustainable economy in Scotland, and to being on track to becoming a net-zero organisation by 2030. We will continue to progress the ambitions and workstreams outlined in that Strategy for 2020-2030, as we transition towards becoming a net-zero organisation by 2045.

A range of internal monitoring and reporting mechanisms exist, including our Strategy Monitoring Group, to track actions and progress towards this ambition. As committed to previously, we will publish an update against our Strategy every two years, with the next report due in 2025. Key performance relating to reducing our carbon footprint will also continue to be published annually in the SDS Annual Review.



Skills Development Scotland

1st Floor, Monteith House
11 George Square
Glasgow G2 1DY

www.sds.co.uk

