



Scottish Public
Pensions Agency
Buidheann Peinneanan
Poblach na h-Alba

Reporting On Scottish Biodiversity Duty 2018-2020

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1. Introduction

The Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government employing over 300 staff at our office at Tweedbank in the Scottish Borders.



Our principal roles are:

- To administer, on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, the public service pension, premature retirement compensation and injury benefit schemes for which the Scottish Ministers have administrative responsibility so as to provide an efficient and effective service for those who use the schemes, at an economic cost to the public purse.
- To prepare in accordance with government policy the regulations governing these and other schemes for which the Scottish Ministers have regulatory responsibility.
- To determine questions under the regulations on which there is a right of appeal to the Scottish Ministers.
- To follow regulatory guidance and codes of practice issued by The UK Pensions Regulator in observance of its powers under the Pension Act 2004.
- To advise the Scottish Ministers on public sector pensions policy generally.
- To be a national centre of expertise for the administration of public pensions and the provision of policy advice.

Since relocating from Edinburgh in 2002, we have operated from purpose made office space at Tweedbank near Galashiels. Our building has been designed to minimise the environmental impact upon the surrounding rural landscape.

- The principles of sustainable development were of prime importance when developing the brief for the architects. The use of natural and renewable resources included specifying untreated timber for windows, doors and external cladding. The specification also included the use of recycled materials such as newspaper-based cellulose insulation and water minimisation such as low flush WCs. As reduction of CO2 emissions was also a key objective, the building is predominantly naturally ventilated and lit by the use of large areas of glass including clerestory windows. There are also solar collectors which contribute to our domestic hot water provision.

- These features coupled with a pond, pervious self-draining car park and natural landscaping substantially improve the biodiversity of the site which resulted in the development being assessed with a Very Good at Design Stage BREEAM rating.
- BREEAM rated developments are more sustainable environments that enhance the well-being of the people who live and work in them, help protect natural resources and make for more attractive property investments.

2. Biodiversity and the SPPA (Level 3 organisation)

Biodiversity provides many vital services that enrich our lives and that we depend on. Biodiversity underpins much of our food and drink production through maintaining healthy soils and pollination, it captures carbon and helps to clean and cool the air, it protects us against flooding, and it regulates our supply of fresh water.

Human activity is causing biodiversity to be lost at a greatly accelerated rate and these losses can be irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life systems we all rely on. Biodiversity loss and the climate emergency are closely linked.

Climate change increases the pressure on biodiversity while the living world provides us with nature based solutions to climate change and to a wide range of associated socio-economic outcomes in rural and urban areas alike.

Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) recognises the importance of tackling climate change and we are committed to reducing our impact on the environment through effective sustainable management of our operations and estate.



3. Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

We recognise that we have a responsibility to challenge ourselves to achieve the best results in terms of meeting sustainability targets.

During the reporting period, our organisation has progressed a digital agenda which has included increasing the number of services we can provide online for our pension scheme members and employer organisations. The launch of 'My Pension' member services continues to reduce the number of annual benefit statements that were historically printed and mailed. Our move to electronic communications has, therefore, greatly reduced our use of printed materials that have not only helped modernise our customer service but reduce our impact upon the environment.

Our Facilities Team oversee the delivery of a range of embedded actions that contribute to the considerate management of our workplace. Examples of actions include:

- Reusing stationery and encouraging the return of unused items by holding 'amnesties'.
- Sourcing photocopier/printer paper that is responsibly sourced and carries the FSC C008924 logo.
- Providing recycling points for paper, plastic, glass, batteries.
- Recycling 100% of confidential paper waste which is shredded on site.
- We have replaced bins throughout the office with new recycling, general waste and food waste bins all within close proximity of colleagues.
- We have provided 'Zero Waste' boxes throughout the office that are specifically for sweets and crisps wrappers.
- We also have 'Zero Waste' boxes for discarded stationary items that will be recycled through this scheme.
- Removal of desk bins throughout the office, to encourage recycling.
- We have worked closely with our Communications Team to promote environmental awareness events such as Recycle Week and Climate Week.
- We have staff that have volunteered to join a newly formed Green Champions Group, that would help promote good practice and environmental awareness events etc
- We have representation on the Environmental Managers Forum, where we share ideas, promote good practice and work closely to discuss future environmental topics.
- We have replaced the floodlights in the car park with LED to reduce electricity consumption.
- We have recently installed 2 x Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the car park that can charge 4 x electric vehicles at any one time for staff use and to encourage staff go electric when selecting their next car
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- Replacement of equipment throughout the office and replaced with energy efficient items.

Our surrounding area

Our grounds are maintained by a local contractor who manages our surroundings according to agreed terms that specify:



- The efficient use of energy and water
- The use of biodegradable materials
- The avoidance of products containing ozone depleting substances and sprays containing propellants
- That engines/machinery are switched off when stationary on SPPA premises for longer than two minutes
- That we work closely with our contractor to identify low cost solutions to improve biodiversity within our grounds. This has included leaving the margins of some grassed areas uncut to encourage wildlife and also timing the cutting of hedges to avoid the bird nesting season. All cuttings are composted or chipped before use on site.
- The local bird population has been encouraged through the siting of nesting boxes around our building whilst a number of our staff maintain bird feeders.
- We are focused on enhancing the outside 'working' environment – we provide wooden outdoor tables and seating areas to encourage our staff to have outdoor meetings or breaks when the weather is suitable.

4. Mainstreaming

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places climate change duties on Scottish public bodies. Each year we submit our climate change duties report, detailing the climate change performance of our estate for that financial year, to the Scottish Sustainable Network.

As an Agency of the Scottish Government, we adopt many of the policies and practices established by the Scottish Government which then inform our actions at Tweedbank.



These include:

Carbon Management Plan: A framework for future carbon measurement, monitoring and forecasting:

- Energy use associated with the running of the building
- Water consumption
- Waste disposal

Cycle to Work Scheme: Allows all permanent staff to purchase a bike and safety equipment, paid for through monthly salary deductions.

Sustainable Travel: Guidance that helps staff find alternatives to travel for business purposes, including promoting audio, web and video conferencing. If travel is unavoidable then staff are encouraged to use the greenest, most efficient and cost-effective ways of travelling.

Procurement: Embedding sustainable public procurement principles to help maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits through effective and efficient procurement activity. We adhere to the sustainable procurement duty introduced by the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014.

SPPA Environmental Policy sets out our commitment to:

- Protecting the environment and minimising pollution arising from activities.
- Assessing the environmental impact of all business activities.
- Minimising our use of paper, energy, and other natural resources.
- Fulfilling our compliance obligations in line with Scottish Government legislation and the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.



5. Workforce Development

- Our onsite catering company is a locally run company that operate an organic farm. The meat used is reared locally and to a high welfare standard.
- We continue to purchase a number our bird boxes, outdoor seats and tables from Greenworks, part of the local Working Together social enterprise organisation which provides training and work experience opportunities for adults with learning disabilities throughout the Scottish Borders.
- Each year SPPA supports WWF's Earth Hour which raises awareness of climate change and it impacts at home and across the globe. The event encourages individuals, organisations and communities to show their support by committing to the gesture of switching off all non-essential lighting for one hour.
- We have recently initiated discussions with a local beekeeper about introducing a small number of hives to an unused corner of our grounds.
- We regularly collaborate with external organisations such as other public sector bodies. This allows for ideas exchange, support, and guidance in reaching our individual and collective climate change goals.
- As part of our work to minimise the impact of our operations in our waste streams and increase recycling rates, in 2020 we set up a group of Green Champions in the office. This led to recycling rates increasing and minimal contamination issues arising. This work continues to be ongoing.

6. Research and Monitoring

As part of our efforts to reduce the impact of our operations on our environment, the SPPA continues to remain up to date with key legislation, guidance, and publications. We regularly attend Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) workshops and webinars and we have carried out surveys and audits relating to recycling and staff travel which has supported in a reduction in associated pollution from our activities.

Monitoring is a key aspect of our sustainability work, we continuously collect, manage and report on data. This data is published in annual reports and within CMP progress reports, this supports in the implementation of relevant strategies and policies. Monitoring is essential to allow us to set key goals as we work towards meeting Scotland's overall climate change targets.

7. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges

SPPA has made significant reductions in our carbon footprint during the reporting period including exceeding most of our key targets under the Carbon Management Plan 2018 - 2020. We have continued to prioritise staff engagement on climate change by delivering campaigns based around key themes and will continue to work with our Communications team to develop this further



We have made good progress in reducing our impact across the last 2 years, some key achievements:

- Reducing our carbon footprint from the baseline year
- Worked with our catering contractor to remove all single use items and no longer provide these in the office for staff and visitors
- Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points for staff to use
- Installing new recycling points and establishing the Green Champion's network
- Raising awareness of environmental issues through events and blogs and being able to continue this virtually in 2020 with high engagement.
- The continued improvement of the online services we provide for our customers has represented a significant shift in the way in which we conduct our business. The amount of physical mail handled by the organisation is reducing as a consequence. From an environmental perspective we are using fewer resources such as print materials and associated impacts relating to mail delivery.

Our Sustainability Strategy

SPPA will publish a 5-year Sustainability Strategy in 2021 which will set out how we will contribute to the delivery of Scotland's emission reduction targets under the updated climate change plan. Under this strategy we will aim to reduce our impact on the environment and conserve biodiversity through these key areas:

- Reduction in our carbon footprint
- Reduction in resources and becoming digital by 2025
- Sustainable procurement practices
- Colleague engagement