



## **SLC ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY 2023**

### **Introduction**

This document sets out the environmental management policy of the Scottish Law Commission. It has been prepared in response to a request from Scottish Ministers that public bodies put such policies in place. It is intended to be both a statement of our commitment and guidance for new and existing staff.

At the Scottish Law Commission we have carried out environmental audits to establish where we are in terms of our environmental performance. The information gathered has been, and will be used to set annual objectives and targets in areas such as waste minimisation, paper and water use, and energy efficiency. Improving environmental performance requires changes in the way we carry out our day to day business, which must nevertheless be consistent with our health and safety obligations, and also requires the support of every member of staff.

A summary of our specific objectives and targets for 2023 is set out in the appendix to this document. The policy and its specific objectives and targets will be kept under regular review by the Commission.

### **Move of premises**

Mention must be made of our move of office in June 2023 from 140 Causewayside into a newly furnished space within Parliament House. The effect of this on our environmental impact is not yet readily measurable but there are significant changes flowing from the fact that our previous building was occupied solely by ourselves whereas we now occupy a small part of a large building. So, whereas we were previously responsible for procuring, using and measuring our water, electricity, etc use, our utilities are now provided for us by those responsible for the building. We continue to be responsible for the reasonable minimisation of our usage of them but we do not have responsibility for their procurement or measurement. As an example, our only control over the heating is via the individual radiator valves but variables such as the times of operation of the boiler or its running temperature are outwith our power. This said, there remain many ways in which we can have an impact on the environment, for instance through our use of resources, and we continue to strive to improve our performance as detailed in this document.

The other point to note in connection with the move is that it was carried out with sustainability firmly in mind. One example is the fact that 79 surplus items of furniture were reused and over 36,600kg of material was recycled, with over 12,600 items diverted from landfill. It was calculated that the carbon saving of the furniture reuse was over 4,700kg.

## Climate change

Climate change is considered to be one of the biggest environmental issues facing the world today. The UK signed up to the Kyoto Protocol and is firmly committed to tackling climate change. The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 which amends the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, sets targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest. In common with other public bodies in Scotland the Commission aims to take appropriate steps to act sustainably, contribute to carbon emissions reduction targets and contribute to climate change adaptation, eg by minimising our energy use.

## Biodiversity

Since the commencement of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland have been subject to a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. The Commission is now required to take its impact on biodiversity into account in all aspects of its decision-making. The Commission's law reform functions themselves are unlikely to have implications for biodiversity (unless for example a law reform project were reviewing some aspect of environmental law – and in our 11<sup>th</sup> Programme we have a project on the consolidation of nature conservation legislation which we expect to begin in the next few year or two). The duties do, however, have an impact on aspects of the Commission's operations such as purchasing of supplies, disposal of waste, use of paper, and water and energy resources.

## Purchasing

The Commission generally purchases products and services through collaborative contracts of the Scottish Procurement Directorate (SPD). These contracts are for general use by the Scottish Government, Government Agencies, NDPBs (like ourselves), Associated Departments and the wider Scottish public sector. At present, the Commission uses such contracts for the supply of its taxi services, travel, IT consumables, paper, stationery and furniture.

To be awarded contracts by SPD, the contractors have to comply with a number of conditions in relation to their environmental performance. Further information can be found in the Scottish Government's [Sustainable Procurement Action Plan for Scotland](#).

The availability of collaborative contracts of SPD and the nature of the Commission's work means that we have no need to put out to tender contracts for the supply of goods and services whose value would equal or exceed current World Trade Organisation thresholds, which are contained in the Government Procurement Agreement. If we did, we would comply with SPD's Procurement Policy Manual.

## Waste

The amount of waste the Commission transfers to landfill sites has been measured, at least in respect of the period when we occupied 140 Causewayside. The data collected indicates that there is limited scope for setting meaningful reduction targets by volume. However, in 2016 we reduced our general waste collections from once a week to once a fortnight. We believe we can further reduce the amount disposed of by continuing to review our current practice and by employing the 4 R's - Repair, Reduce, Re-use and Recycle – whenever possible. Recycling schemes for cardboard, paper, toner cartridges, food tins, aluminium cans, glass, plastic bottles and plastic vending cups are already in place. Recycling of food waste has been investigated, but the costs of doing this at an official level in such a small office would outweigh any benefits. Nevertheless staff are encouraged to take appropriate measures for themselves in this regard.

Past measures include: cancellation of our subscription to daily newspapers; resulting in less recyclable waste being sent for disposal; donation of superseded books from our law library for re-use in Malawi and in Zambia; and disposal of surplus stationery supplies to a local primary school. Surplus computer hardware, printers and other electronics are disposed of responsibly in accordance with Scottish Government protocols. We aim to reuse or recycle surplus office furniture. Disposal of waste to landfill should be a last resort after all the above options have been pursued.

**OBJECTIVE:** to reduce further the amount of waste being transferred to landfill sites and increase the proportion of waste which is reused and recycled

## Paper

For in-house printing and photocopying paper the Commission uses 100% recycled paper.

Since 2000 we published all discussion papers and reports on our website, but also issued our publications in hard copy. In the period from then to 2016 we periodically reviewed our distribution lists to reduce printing orders, increasingly relying on online publication.

Then in 2016 we began to publish Commission papers online only, where it is open to us to do so, for environmental reasons and in order to save costs.

The Commission's news Bulletin issued twice a year is distributed as an e-Bulletin by e-mail only.

Paper carries a cost both in terms of purchasing and disposal that can be minimised through reduction in use, re-use and recycling. We will aim to reduce significantly the cost and amount of paper being used by following standard conservation guidelines in our day to day work. In particular we will:

- ensure photocopying and printing is double-sided and on recycled paper whenever possible.
- cancel junk mail and unwanted publications.
- produce printed stationery in-house to reduce wastage by tailoring volume more closely to need; in practice, we send almost no letters in hard copy nowadays.

- use electronic communication where possible to reduce printing and refrain from printing unless necessary (eg to keep on file, as our official record remains the paper file).
- collect all paper that has been printed on one side and re-use it for printing in draft or for scrap message pads.
- re-use envelopes where possible, especially for internal mail within the Commission and with the Scottish Government; otherwise, recycle used envelopes.
- place all waste paper in the recycling bins provided. Any cardboard is sent for recycling, and confidential paper is now shredded onsite (rather than disposed of as confidential waste under contract with a waste company, as we did previously).

Our paper consumption fell by 40% during 2016-17, a significant achievement reflecting our decision to publish reports and discussion papers online only where it is open to us to do so. Then during the period of the coronavirus pandemic from March 2020, the Commission's work was almost entirely carried out at Commissioners' and staff members' homes and the access to Commission printing facilities was severely restricted. This resulted in a considerable reduction in the use of paper during the pandemic period. However, the Commission's official record remains the paper file and so there has been a business need to continue to produce some printing in order to fulfil our records management duties.

**OBJECTIVE:** to reduce the amount of paper used in the office.

**TARGET:** to reduce the consumption of A3 and A4 paper in the office in 2023 in comparison with the 2021 level

## Water

The Government's current guidelines advise that in a good practice office building the level of water consumption per person per year should be around 7.7m<sup>3</sup> (7700 litres). Our aim is to further reduce consumption and we hope to achieve this by conserving water where possible by means of the following measures:

- ensuring that taps (especially hot water taps) are turned off properly and not dripping
- using a geyser rather than kettles for boiling water
- economic use of water when hand-washing, dishwashing and showering.

**OBJECTIVE:** to monitor water usage.

**TARGET:** to reduce as far as practicable the level of our water consumption in 2023 to achieve the good practice benchmark of 7.7m<sup>3</sup>.

## Energy

Due to the nature and age of the building and the heating system, the Commission's office at 140 Causewayside was expensive to heat. However we were able to make savings by switching off heating during the summer months. In addition, we aim to reduce our electricity consumption and consequently our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by following some simple guidelines:

#### Heating:

- windows should not be opened when the heating is on unless absolutely necessary or unless in fulfilment of requirements or good practice resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

#### Lighting:

- natural light should be used whenever possible.
- We encourage staff to switch off their lights during the day whenever possible.

#### Office equipment:

- All office machinery, including PC monitors, should be switched off when not in use, with the exception of photocopiers which take some time to warm up. In addition, all monitors and printers should be shut down at night where practicable.
- Identify little used or redundant machinery for disposal or relocation within the office in order to reduce running costs and maximise operating efficiency.
- New laptop computers were purchased utilising a Scottish Government Framework agreement. The environmental benefits of the new equipment include a reduction in carbon emissions.

#### Website:

- We changed our web host to one which uses liquid rather than air cooling to reduce server temperatures. This is estimated to be 30% more energy-efficient than the equivalent air cooling.

Due to the complexity of our electricity metering system it has not so far been possible to monitor consumption reliably.

Our new premises in Parliament House are much more energy efficient than was the case at 140 Causewayside.

**OBJECTIVE:** To keep electricity consumption as low as practicable by following the conservation measures in place.

## Travel

To contribute to an increase in sustainable travel, both for commuting and business, Commission staff are encouraged to consider whether their journey to work or any journey they have to make within Edinburgh on Commission business could be undertaken by bus, cycle or on foot rather than by taxi or their own car or, failing that, whether any informal car-sharing arrangement with a colleague would be possible. For making local deliveries we normally use cycle couriers.

Staff are encouraged to use MS Teams conferencing, where appropriate, to reduce the need to travel. In 2015 we purchased a Polycom SoundStation 2 conference phone for facilitating virtual meetings, but the introduction of MS Teams in 2020, with the resulting ability for all at

the Commission to use audio and video conferencing while working remotely, has now superseded that technology.

We make eligible staff aware that the Scottish Government offers free purchasing advances for annual travel tickets, bicycles and accessories. Shower facilities are available in the building, and bicycle parking is also available. Car use is strongly discouraged at a practical level by the fact that we have no entitlement to any car parking spaces in Parliament House.

Our separate [travel plan](#) gives fuller details of these measures.

**OBJECTIVE:** to encourage use of audio and video conferencing where appropriate in order to reduce the need for travel.

## Environmental management system

The induction for new members of staff includes information on the Commission's environmental policy. All staff will be brought up to date regularly on environmental issues through our redeveloped intranet, and other relevant material will be circulated for information when appropriate.

A regular reminder will be sent to all staff to make them aware of the importance of good environmental management

## Contact

If you have any comments to make on the policy or any further suggestions as to how we can improve our environmental performance, please use the [contact us](#) page.

## Useful links

- <https://www.gov.scot/environment-and-climate-change/>
- <http://www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/>
- <http://www.thecarbontrust.co.uk/carbontrust/>

**December 2023**

## APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS FOR 2023

### WASTE

**Objective:**

To reduce further the amount of waste being transferred to landfill sites and increase the proportion of waste which is reused and recycled.

### PAPER

**Objective:**

To reduce the amount of paper used in the office.

**Target:**

To reduce the consumption of A3 and A4 paper in the office in 2023 in comparison with 2021 levels.

### WATER

**Objective:**

To continue to monitor our water consumption.

**Target:**

To reduce as far as practicable the level of our water consumption in 2023 to achieve the good practice benchmark of 7.7m<sup>3</sup> per person per year.

### ENERGY

**Objective:**

To keep electricity consumption as low as practicable by following the conservation measures in place.

### TRAVEL

**Objective:**

To encourage use of audio and video conferencing where appropriate in order to reduce the need for business travel.