



# VisitScotland Annual Internal Sustainability Report 2022/23

# Introduction

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Tourism is a force for good. It creates jobs, sustains communities, enriches lives and contributes significantly to the economy.

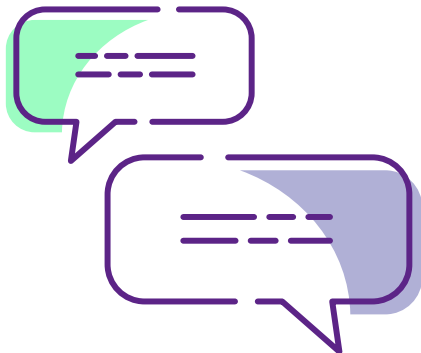
However, with increasing concern around the impacts of climate change and changing consumer behaviours, it has become clear that the industry's future success is dependent on responsible and sustainable development.

In line with the Scottish Government's ambition and Scotland: Outlook 2030 Tourism Strategy, VisitScotland will play a lead role in the development of responsible tourism practices, making Scotland one of the most economically, environmentally and socially sustainable destinations in the world.

This will be achieved by taking direct action on issues under its control and engaging, influencing and supporting strategic partners, businesses, destination communities and visitors, to enable and encourage the adoption of responsible tourism practices (see [VisitScotland's Sustainable Tourism Policy](#)).

VisitScotland is a signatory of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism and Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency. It is committed to reducing carbon emissions in its own operations, in line with its sustainability policy and the Scottish Government's climate change targets.

VisitScotland continues to develop as a climate conscious organisation, recognising where it needs to make improvements and learn lessons from others. Developments for this year include moves to increase Cloud-based IT systems, the adoption of a hybrid working model for staff, and Gold Green Tourism Awards achieved across all its estate.



# Climate Change

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires all public bodies to exercise their functions in a way that best contributes to the Act's carbon emission reduction targets, delivery of climate change adaptation program and overall sustainable practices. [The Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), which amends the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#), the Scottish Government has set ambitions to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040 against a 2008/09 baseline.

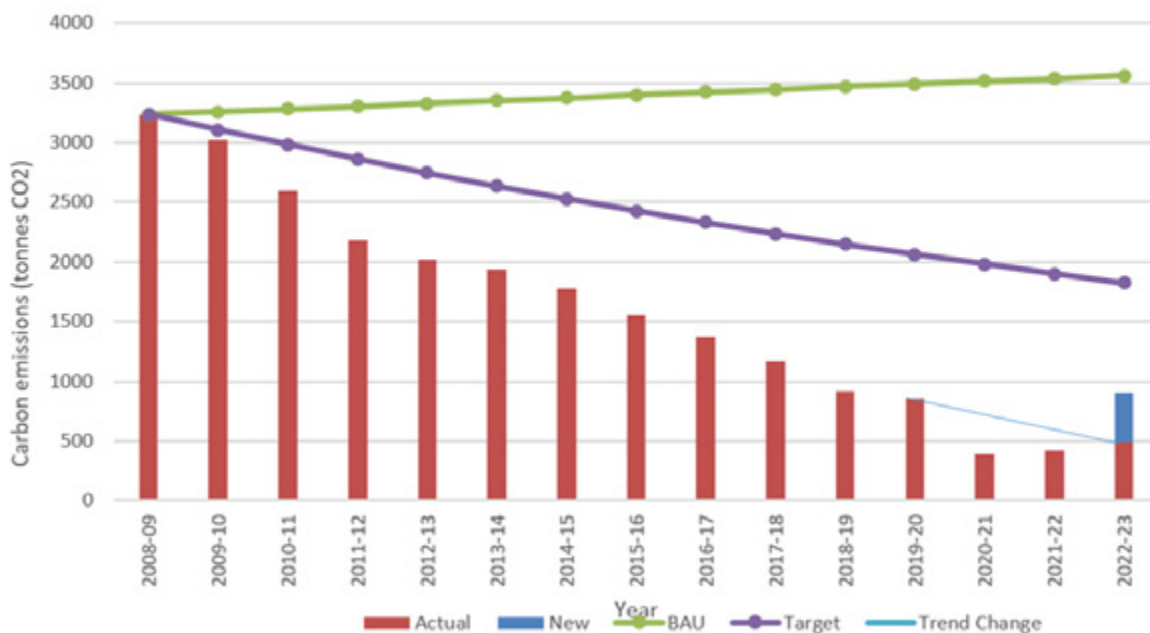
In its previous annual report, VisitScotland achieved an 87% reduction in CO2 emissions from its base year of 2008/09. VisitScotland has taken the decision to add some Scope 3 emissions not previously reported on for Home Working, Commuting, Hotel Stays and Electricity Transmission and Distribution. When including figures for those additional emissions, VisitScotland's CO2 emissions reduction totals 72% from its base year.

Taking into account the additional Scope 3 emissions, its overall emissions have increased from the previous year, although decreases are shown in electricity usage, waste and water. The largest increase is through its business travel which is due to more normal working conditions after restricted travel the year prior and additional travel by the UCI 2023 World Cycling Championships Team. VisitScotland will report on Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions changes year on year in this and future reports.

In comparison to pre pandemic business as usual year, 19/20, like for like there is a reduction of 368 tCO2 or 43% showing that the organisation is still reducing carbon emissions in previous reportable areas.

VisitScotland annually reports on its compliance with its climate change duties through the Scottish Sustainable Network reporting tool. In 2021-22 reporting included commuting data and a date when it anticipates being net zero in areas of direct emissions. VisitScotland's ambition is to be net zero in direct emissions by 2030. VisitScotland is developing a tool to identify all Scope 3 emissions which will lead to a more detailed plan for future reductions which will be implemented in 2023/24.

Comparison of actual emissions with BAU increases and reduction targets predicted



## CLIMATE CHANGE REPORTING

VisitScotland has **reduced CO2 emissions** since 2008/9 **by 72%**



Scottish Government Target **was 75% by 2030** from 2008/09

Total emissions **increased in 2022/23** for additional boundary reporting for home working, hotel stays and commuting

## SUPPORT ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

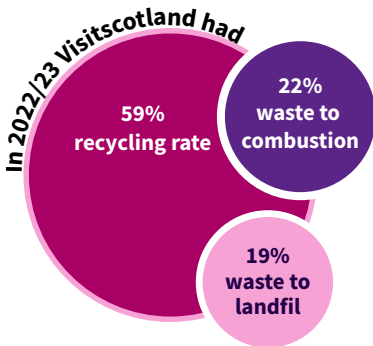


**100%** of VisitScotland properties have achieved **Green Tourism Certification**



## MINIMISE RESOURCE USE AND WASTE PRODUCTION

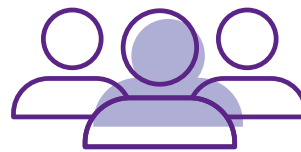
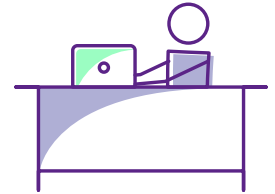
**16% reduction in CO2e emissions** from 2021/2



Scottish Government **recycling target is 70%** with no more than **5% to landfill by 2025**

## IMPROVE QUALITY OF JOBS FOR ALL

**Hybrid working model** adopted for staff which gives the ability to **spread job roles across Scotland**



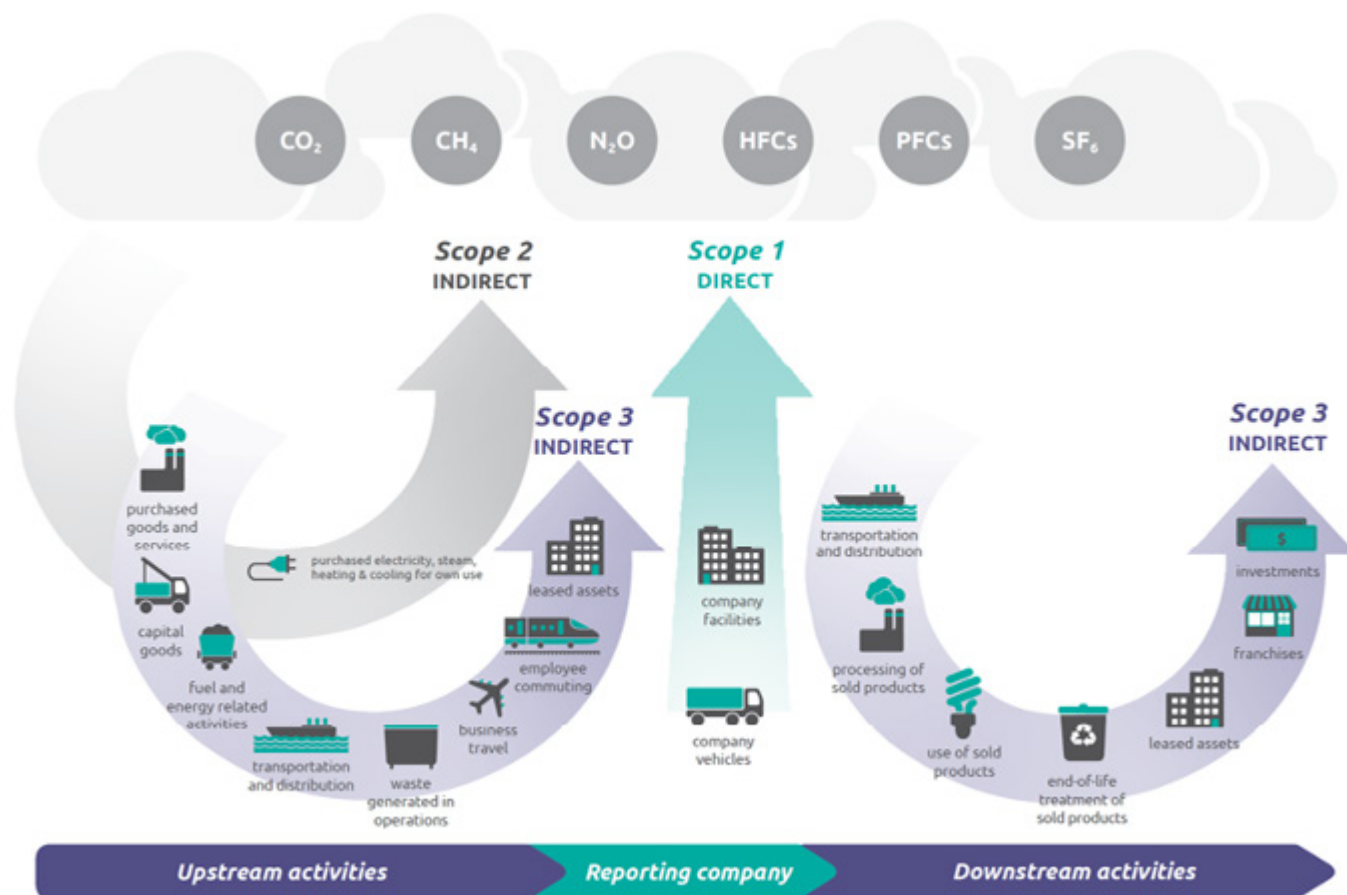
thereby creating **more opportunities** for locally based jobs

## REDUCE IMPACT OF TOURISM TRANSPORT

**233% increase in VisitScotland's business travel since 2021/22.** Reflective of increased travel from the year prior due to restricted travel & additional travel of 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships Team



## VisitScotland's GHG Emissions (by Scope)



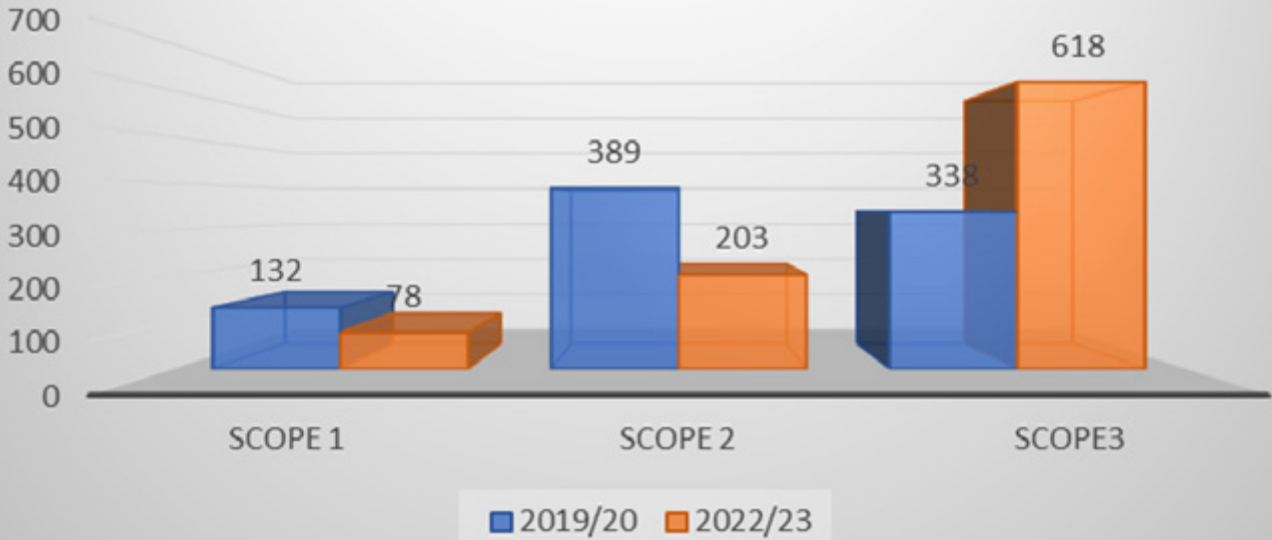
VisitScotland has, historically, reported on its Scope 1 and 2 emissions which are direct emissions within its control, along with Scope 3 emissions which, until the current reporting year, had only covered business travel, waste and water. From 2022/23, VisitScotland has increased the boundaries of its reporting to include home working, commuting, hotel stays and electricity transmission and distribution.

Scope 1 emissions reflects its gas consumption. This shows as an increase of 4% on the previous year due to more usage in the five properties, some of which had been closed to staff in 2021/22. A second change in its reporting in Scope 1, is from its leased cars mileage, which was previously reported as Scope 1 fleet cars, but

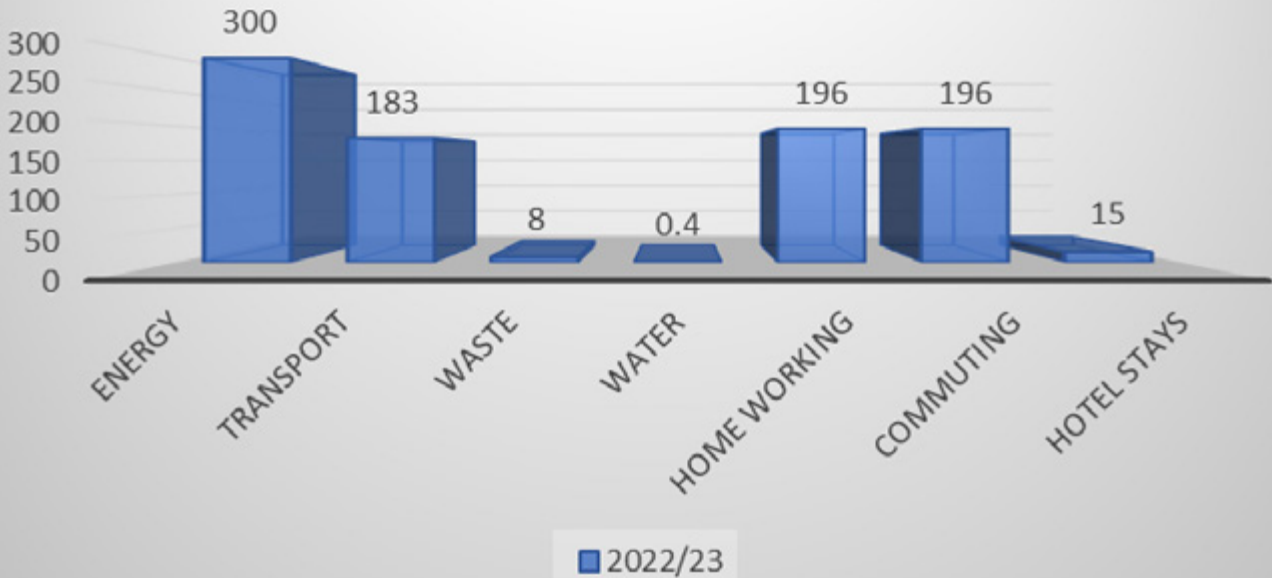
after consultation these have now been moved to business travel in Scope 3. Scope 2 is its electricity usage showing a decrease of 28% from the previous year, contributing to this decrease is concentrated usage of floor space in its main office and more efficient usage in its iCentres.

VisitScotland is working to improve its reporting on Scope 3 emissions, and in the reporting year has added over 400 tCO<sub>2</sub>e to its total emissions by including home working, commuting, hotel stays and electricity transmission and distribution within its Scope 3 boundaries. VisitScotland will continue to calculate further Scope 3 emissions over the coming years and will report its findings in its annual reporting.

## VisitScotland Carbon Emissions tCO<sub>2</sub>e



## VisitScotland Carbon Emissions tCO<sub>2</sub>e



# Internal Sustainability Policy Objectives

## Minimise resource use and waste production

*“Take action to encourage reduced resource use and waste production from our internal operations contributing to reduced carbon emissions and climate change impact.”*

VisitScotland’s resource use and waste related CO2 emissions are continuing to reduce from its baseline year. In 2022/23, it saw a 16% decrease on the previous year, however comparing to 2019/20 (its last full year of pre-pandemic results), it has a 41% reduction. This reporting year is the first full year reflecting its new hybrid working model.

- The IT Team continue to drive projects that will significantly reduce power usage and remove the need for an on-premise data centre, due for completion in September 2023.
- Electronic, collaborative ways of working have led to a significant reduction in the amount of print across the organisation. A new contract with a multi-function device/ printer provider will reduce the number of devices.
- Electronic information provision in its iCentres has led to a reduction in the need for brochures and printed material.
- VisitScotland sources waste contractors who use combustion as an alternative to landfill, as a result the overall waste carbon emissions have reduced.
- VisitScotland’s Legal department introduced DocuSign, reducing the need for printing contracts for signature.
- VisitScotland continues to purchase REGO (Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin) Certificates demonstrating its commitment to its energy supplier investing in renewable technology.
- VisitScotland has gas heating in five of its locations and will remove these over the next 6 years.

## Buildings Scope 1 (gas), Scope 2 (electricity):

Energy in VisitScotland buildings equates to 300 tCO2e, a 15% reduction on 2021/22 and a 36% reduction on 2019/20 the last full pre-pandemic year.

- VisitScotland has continued with its programme to improve its buildings efficiency, through its planned preventative maintenance measures.
- During 2022/23 changes within the VisitScotland estate reduced its floorspace by 127.39m2, however it leased additional space for the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championship office in 2021/22 which is an additional 137.68m2 over 3 years.
- Wherever possible VisitScotland takes the opportunity to replace lighting with LEDs and this has been completed in its relocation of Fort William iCentre.
- In Fort William, VisitScotland also installed infrared heaters, UV film on the windows to reduce glare and heat during the summer months, negating the need for fans or aircon; opening windows and doors allow the direct flow of fresh air throughout. Other areas such as toilets and staff area were fitted with lighting sensors.
- Since the return of VisitScotland staff to office working in March 2022, the estate requirements of the organisation continue to be reviewed due to the implementation of the hybrid working policy.



## Waste and Water Scope 3 emissions

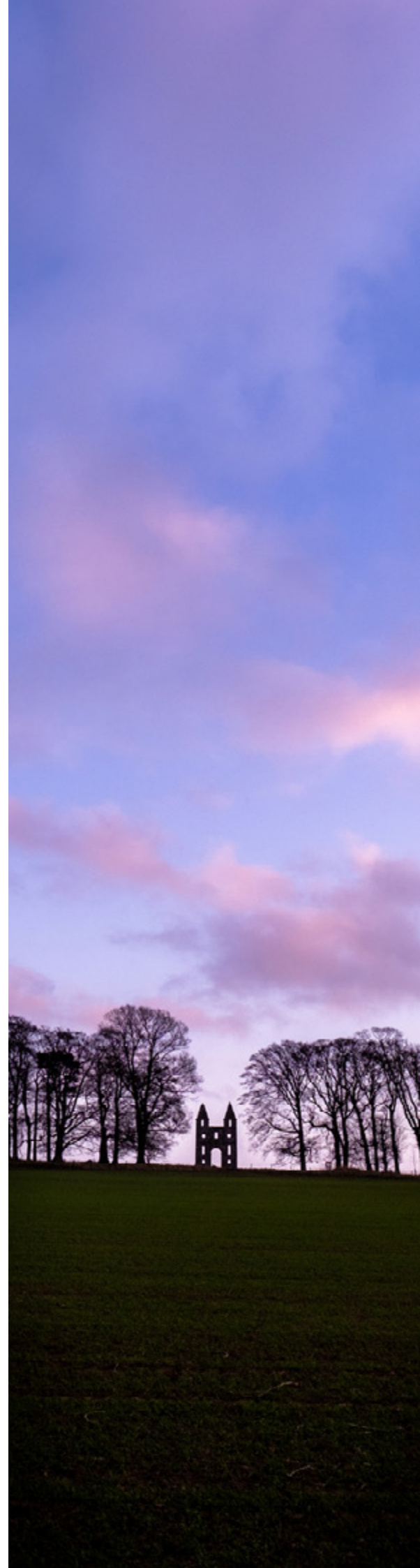
- VisitScotland's total waste currently sits at 19% to landfill, 22% to combustion and 59% recycled, its aim is to have no more than 5% to landfill and 70% to recycled by the Scottish Government target of 2025. Although VisitScotland's aim is to continue to decrease its volume of waste, as Local Councils improve their waste percentage to combustion, this will aid in reducing VisitScotland's percentage to landfill.
- Through internal comms, VisitScotland's sustainability team shared energy and food saving tips to encourage staff to switch off at home and in the office, along with packing a lunch to take to the office and using reusable cups; all encouraging staff not only to save money but to cut down on waste generated from purchased items and single use plastic wrappings.
- VisitScotland engaged with Home Energy Scotland with webinars on working from home and being energy efficient covering both home working and office environments.
- Printing is kept to an absolute minimum, favouring devices and the use of two screens to read documents. VisitScotland's IT Team entered a new contract with a multi-function device/printer provider which will reduce the number of devices required in 2023/24.
- Water supply and treatment equates to 0.4 of a tonne of CO2e based on VisitScotland's metered sites. Staff are encouraged to report any leaks and to use water wisely to reduce output.
- During the year, training of two new start Quality Tourism Advisors took place on the department's paperless ways of working; in addition, the majority of QA invoices are now delivered electronically.
- VisitScotland's International marketing team have introduced QR code merchandise for events and exhibitions.

## General

- VisitScotland's Green Champion network achieved Gold Green Tourism Awards at all its sites, following on from the GreenCheck Assessments, supporting its sustainability objectives across the estate.
- VisitScotland's Shop local initiative aims to reflect the crafts and artisans in the region and support local projects and charities, it currently engages with around 300 local suppliers across Scotland. Selling through its network of iCentres, the Shop Local logo assures visitors that the items have been crafted or sourced within 50 miles. Recent examples are its collaboration with the Grassmarket Community Project, a social enterprise, which supports local people to adopt new skills and learn a trade; and by selling knotted basket kits from a local Shetland maker, it supports their promotion of critically endangered fair isle chairs. All VisitScotland's seventy-two food and drink suppliers are based in Scotland. Suppliers consider sustainable packaging options for their products, most using plastic free cards and limited to no packaging on their small souvenirs, and most hand deliver their products direct to the local iCentre.
- VisitScotland's iCentre Team produce a monthly "green" newsletter giving information on national sustainable days and what food is in season, examples are Earth Day/hour, walk to school week and no disposable cup day.
- The Staff Innovation Group managed and encouraged a range of sustainable (and health and wellbeing) projects from the organisation-wide litter picks; 'growing for wellbeing' and sharing tips; and finally, an eco-microsite encouraging 'greener and more sustainable' Christmas activities including shop local and sustainable decorations.
- The Internal Communications and sustainability team ran a programme of all staff comms (16 intranet hub stories and 3 Elevenses – staff briefings) to raise awareness of external issues such as visitor management and responsible tourism topics including climate week, energy saving and low carbon transport; energy saving tips for working from home, litter pick campaign and a December Learning Challenge themed on sustainability.
- Sustainability was discussed on several threads on Yammer groups including food waste action week, sustainable digital choices, plastic free July and World Earth Day.

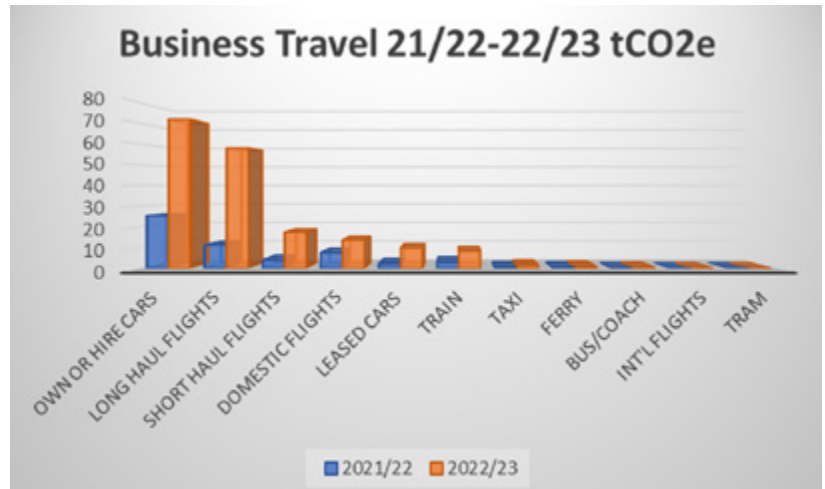


- VisitScotland engaged with Pawprint Eco app allowing its employees to measure their carbon footprint then take actions and create new habits to reduce their footprint. Over two years, over one hundred staff completed 25,655 actions creating 2,124 new lifetime habits, collectively reducing their carbon footprints by 521,508 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e equating to driving a car 38 times around the world. The habits formed were home and work-related, under topics such as staying healthy, saving money, saving energy, food & drink and travel.
- Requests for print, promotional items and display collateral are managed centrally to ensure best value to organisation, high quality control measures, provide creative solutions, and that we meet environmental standards. Advise on alternative sustainable options for all types of collateral. All display materials are held in storage and checked to see if they can be reused with new graphics which also saves money to the organisation.
- VisitScotland's internal sustainability group engaged with local corporate catering suppliers for use in its local offices meeting space, ensuring sustainable criteria was met. This covered using local and in season produce, using sustainable packaging and delivery to its offices, engaging with suppliers who deliver by e-bike, by electric vehicle and by walking. Signs created internally, accompany the lunch, allow meeting delegates to see the sustainable credentials of their lunch.
- The 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships Team created a SharePoint list function to enable 2023 UCI Cycling Worlds & Event Delivery Partners to measure emissions from energy, waste, travel and linked this to a Power BI Emissions Impact Dashboard.
- VisitScotland has contacted its pension providers to monitor progress of their long-term investment plans and understand how they are addressing the climate emergency; it will share progress in its future annual sustainability reporting and annual accounts.



## Reduce the impact of transport

*“Focus on promoting a shift towards more environmentally friendly forms of transport (train, coach/bus, ferry, cycle, foot) aiming to reduce carbon emissions, air pollution, and congestion.”*



- VisitScotland’s business travel has increased during the reporting year, reflecting an expected increase following 2021-22 where restrictions meant little business travel, however based against 2019/20 its business travel is 45% reduced. In addition to its business as usual emissions in 2022/23, VisitScotland’s increase in business travel emissions take into account an additional 31 tCO2e generated by the UCI 2023 Cycling World Championships team.
- VisitScotland has reduced its leased car numbers to 9 from 17 vehicles during the year, with all cars under 130g/km. After consultation on the definition of Scope 1 fleet car emissions which VisitScotland have historically reported their leased cars in, it has moved these emissions to Scope 3 business travel.
- VisitScotland’s Green Car Scheme to encourage staff to privately lease a greener car, further reducing its commuting and business travel emissions, currently have five staff engaged.
- VisitScotland’s business travel increased during the reporting year reflecting staff travelling to more events which had not taken place the two years prior; however, the organisation is still embracing virtual activities, keeping travel to a minimum, with Teams the preferred way of meeting internally.
- When its office locations reopened to all in late March 2022, the return was based on a hybrid working model which will continue to positively impact on its commuting emissions in the future.
- As many of its teams are regionally spread, meetings are predominantly held online to reduce the need for travel, supported by the IT Team who maintain the tools to enable everyone to work from any location.
- VisitScotland’s Government and Parliamentary Affairs department work to reduce travel ensuring international speaking opportunities can be done remotely where possible and developed a robust process for justifying travel where it is deemed necessary.
- VisitScotland’s Human Resources (HR) and Learning & Development Team continue to use Teams technology for selected training programmes and interviews (where possible) reducing the requirement for travel.
- VisitScotland’s industry development team, piloted a virtual Quality Assurance (QA) visit programme which saved on ninety-four live grading visits, demonstrating how business travel can be reduced. Further to this and reducing more business travel, the QA membership has moved to a biennial visit programme previously annual. A new virtual ‘pre-visit’ call helps prepare businesses for their first grading visit and reduces the requirement for additional live grading visits.
- As an industry-facing department, engagement with businesses has long involved a great deal of travel across Scotland not least by its Industry Relationship Managers (IRM) and Quality Tourism Advisors (QTA) teams. As a result of segmentation of target businesses and making the most of business’ adoption of virtual practices, IRMs now work more effectively at the same time as reducing their travel emissions.
- The 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships Team based in Glasgow have access to Brompton Folding Bikes used by some staff to commute to work and others for traveling to local meetings.

## Improve the quality of tourism jobs

*“Support initiatives to improve the quality of jobs within VisitScotland.”*

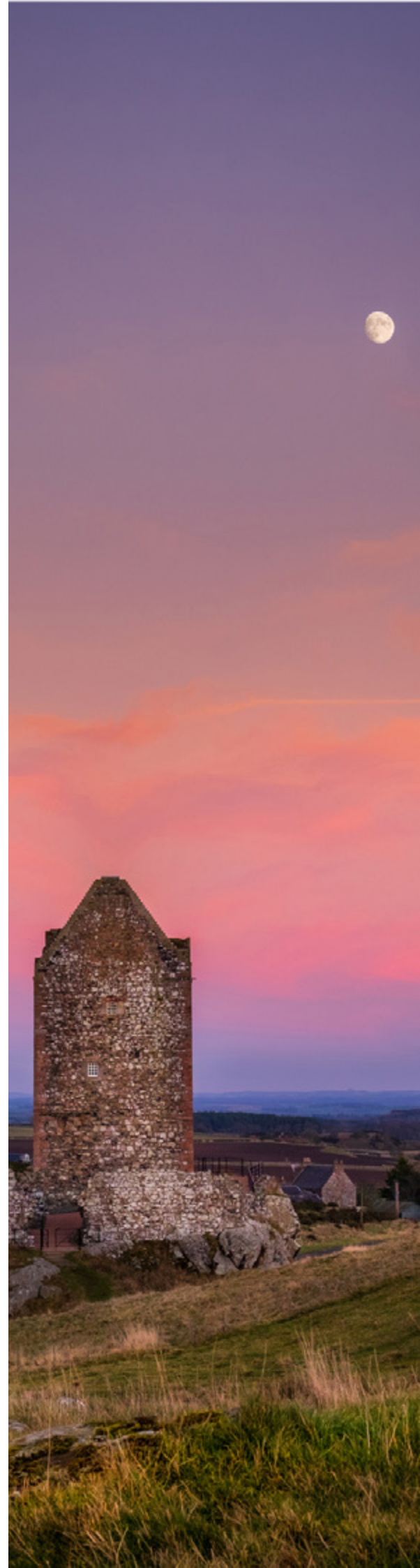
VisitScotland’s offices have now operated under a full year of a hybrid working model. The benefits are a reduction in commuting, in time spent travelling and in energy of our buildings; it allows improved communication, greater collaboration and the ability to spread job roles across Scotland thereby creating more locally based jobs. In addition, it allows a better work-life balance for VisitScotland’s staff.

- Although halted in 2020-22, volunteering opportunities for VisitScotland have restarted, allowing up to one day per year per staff member to undertake activities such as litter picking and beach clean and clearing invasive species.
- During October 2022 and Spring 2023, VisitScotland staff participated in the litter campaigns in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful. Teams and individuals from Shetland to Jedburgh took part, some joining community-led litter picks.
- VisitScotland’s Learning and Development Team introduced and managed carbon literacy training within its core learning calendar, educating fifty-six staff to date, with more training to follow in future years.

## Support climate change mitigation and adaptation

*“Recognise the importance and urgency of addressing climate change and take action, not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation), but also to adapt to the unavoidable consequences of climate change.”*

- VisitScotland has reviewed mitigation needs across the estate as part of the buildings review with a focus on energy performance certificates and recommendations to reduce rating.
- Condition surveys undertaken on all locations to identify opportunities for sustainable improvements. An improvement example would be its introduction on windows of UV film and blinds to reduce glare and heat during summer months and using natural air flow to negate the need for fans or carbon intensive aircon units, and using electric fans over aircon where required.
- VisitScotland has a responsibility under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to further conservation of biodiversity in Scotland and publicly report on its related activities. VisitScotland published its latest Biodiversity Duty report for 2017-20 in 2020, with the new report for the years 2020-2023 due in 2023.



## Future Sustainable Planning

- VisitScotland will keep its sustainable management plan under review through regular meetings of its Internal Sustainability Steering Group.
- VisitScotland will continue to drive reduction in all scopes of emissions.
- VisitScotland is working to understand its Scope 3 emissions. Working with a Consultancy firm, VisitScotland is identifying its major emission sources across its internal value chain with a view to creating a Scope 3 prioritisation strategy and, following on from analysis, creating reduction targets. This work continues into 2023/24 when VisitScotland will be able to report more on its findings. It is expected that there will be a change of where carbon is accounted for in Scopes 1, 2 and 3 once the findings are complete.
- VisitScotland is also creating a measurement and calculation tool to quantify the carbon emissions of included Scope 3 categories; as well as a tool to allow carbon budget forecasting for future projects and business as usual activities.
- VisitScotland through its Scottish Government Public Duties Climate Change Duties reporting has confirmed its ambitions to be net zero in Scope 1 by 2030.
- VisitScotland will also work within its own events activities, such as Thistles and trade events, to ensure they are aiming to be net zero events.

VisitScotland recognises its role as a leader in the development of responsible tourism practices across the industry to make Scotland one of the most economically, environmentally and socially sustainable destinations in the world. This will be achieved through four key objectives under its Responsible Tourism Strategy:

- Supporting Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy.
- Ensuring tourism and events in Scotland are inclusive.
- Ensuring tourism and events contribute to thriving communities.
- Supporting the protection and considerate enjoyment of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage.

VisitScotland will prepare the industry, destinations, communities, and visitors for what a future centered around responsible tourism must look like. This will be reported in [VisitScotland's Annual Report](#).

