



VISITSCOTLAND ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

2020-2021

Introduction

Tourism is not only a key driver for sustainable economic growth, but also has a special relationship with the Scottish environment and society, due to its unique dependency on quality environments, cultural distinctiveness, social interaction, security and wellbeing. Therefore, we at VisitScotland believe the success of Scotland's tourism industry rests not only on its economic competitiveness but also on protecting and enhancing the Scottish environment, society and culture, which are vital to the brand, the industry and sustaining Scotland's economic growth.

In line with the Scottish Government's ambition and newly updated Scotland: Outlook 2030 Tourism Strategy, VisitScotland aspires for Scotland to be a globally recognised leader in Responsible Tourism for a sustainable future. 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. VisitScotland will contribute to a more sustainable future for Scotland through taking direct action on issues under our control and engage, influence and support third parties such as strategic partners, businesses, destination communities and visitors, to enable and encourage adoption of responsible tourism practices.

VisitScotland's **Sustainable Tourism Policy** provides a clear rationale and plan for delivering our aspirations for sustainable tourism.

This year, 2020/21, has been exceptional and completely different from past years due to the global pandemic, therefore this annual sustainability report reflects and concentrates on the activities undertaken during this time to support our sustainability policy, as well as the Scottish Government's sustainability ambitions for Scotland and relevant legislation. These activities show that while the world has slowed down a bit, our activities have not, and many will be long lasting.

In November 2020, with a year to go to COP26, VisitScotland became the first national tourism organisation in the world to sign up to the '**Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency**' initiative, stepping up and demonstrating our commitment to responsible tourism and tackling climate change. Through our activity, we aim to play a leading role in the development of Scotland as a globally recognised low carbon responsible tourism destination. As part of joining the initiative we have also committed to publish a climate action plan within the first year.

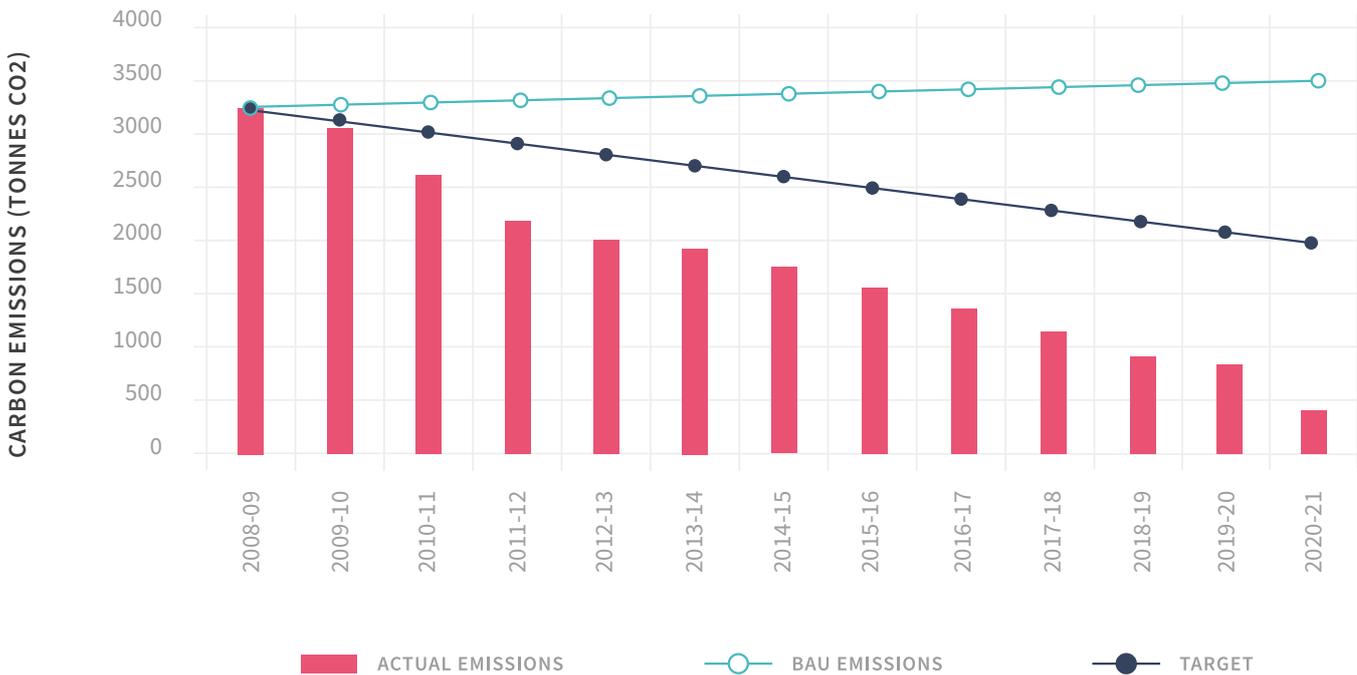
Climate Change Reporting

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.

As of the 31 March 2021, VisitScotland has achieved an 88% reduction in CO2 emissions from our base year, which exceeds the current 2030 target. The average reduction per year is 11% (averaged from our base year of 2008/9 to 2019/20), showing that the reduction of 55% within the pandemic year is higher than we would normally expect to see.

VisitScotland annually reports on its compliance with its climate change duties through the **Scottish Sustainable Network reporting** tool.

Comparison of the actual emissions with the BAU increases and reduction targets predicted



Climate Change Reporting

CLIMATE CHANGE REPORTING*

VisitScotland has **Reduced CO2 emissions** since 2008/9 **by 88%**



Scottish Government Target was **56% by 2020** from 2008/09

MINIMISE RESOURCE WASTE AND PRODUCTION*



REDUCE IMPACT OF TOURISM TRANSPORT*

99% reduction in VisitScotland transport related Carbon emissions since 2008/9



SUPPORT ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

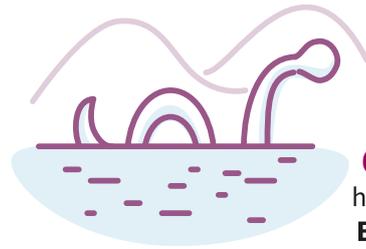
87% of VisitScotland properties have achieved **Green Tourism Certification**

35% gold 65% silver



MAKE HOLIDAYS IN SCOTLAND AVAILABLE TO ALL

An additional **151 Scottish businesses** have created an **Accessibility Guide** during 2020/21



Over **6,225 people** have experienced a **Break** since 2016

ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE IN SCOTTISH COMMUNITIES

Over **300** local Scottish suppliers involved in **Shop Local**

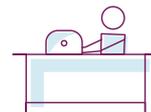


Almost **900 businesses** signed up to **Taste Our Best**

£11.7 million distributed to **56 projects** through the **Rural Infrastructure Fund** to date

IMPROVE QUALITY OF JOBS FOR ALL

hybrid working model developed for staff which will give the ability to **spread job roles across Scotland**



thereby **contributing to local economies** and creating more locally based jobs.



ADAPTATION

VisitScotland were the **first national tourism organisation in the world** to sign up to the **Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency** in November 2020



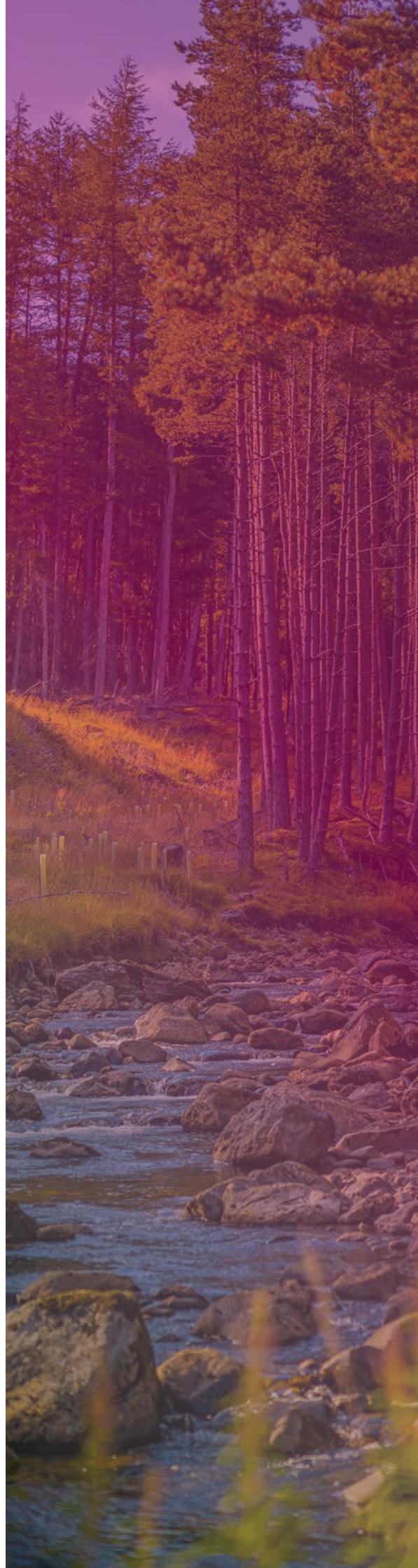
* 2020-21 carbon emission reductions are higher than normal due to the pandemic restrictions, homeworking and virtually no business travel.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

Promote the integration of sustainability in the tourism sector

'We will integrate sustainability principles into all our activities and influence improvements in the tourism sector across Scotland.'

- Green Tourism certification directly supports the implementation of our sustainability objectives across the estate. As of 31st March 2021, 87% of the properties were certified with Green Tourism, of which 35% hold a gold award and 65% a silver award. We will submit new assessments during 2021 when the Green Tourism Green Check tool is launched, however work is underway to prepare for these assessments now.
- We share and discuss our carbon emission stats with our Green Champion network to make them more aware of the environment and need to reduce our carbon footprint. They share hints and tips through their dedicated Teams site to reduce energy and waste along with useful weblinks that they can promote to visitors.
- VisitScotland has incorporated sustainability actions into its Quality Assurance program since 2015 to encourage and support Quality Assured tourism businesses to undertake sustainability actions, covering a wide range of activity also reflected in our policy objectives, such as resource efficiency, transport, natural and cultural heritage, and community engagement. We encourage continuous improvement and maximising business benefits through increasing minimum requirements every year. In 2020/21 the on-site quality grading visits were paused, influenced by COVID restrictions, however our Quality & Tourism Advisors have carried out telephone consultations and virtual visits allowing businesses to continue to benefit from quality and sustainability advice.
- We continued with our sustainability comms plan in 2020/21 to deliver more consistent staff communication on the sustainability policy and activities undertaken and how staff can support the activity. This will be developed further for 2021/22.
- The Responsible Tourism and Climate Change steering (External) group chaired by the Director of Industry and Destination Development and with senior representatives from all directorates continued its work shape and drive the organisation's commitment a more responsible tourism for Scotland.
- We continue to work closely with our international partners, bi-laterally with other national tourism organisations, and with international bodies such as the UNWTO and NECSTouR, a network of European tourist authorities committed to competitive and sustainable tourism. Through this international engagement, we ensure two main benefits for VisitScotland: insight and best practice from around the globe on all facets of responsible development; and reputational benefit for VisitScotland as a world-class player and partner of choice in these fields.
- Collaboration and partnership are key to our activity. We work with a wide range of industry partners, such as Green Tourism, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Zero Waste Scotland, who are all planning and implementing activity to address climate change and make Scotland a sustainable destination.



Sustainability Policy Objectives

Actions Taken during 2020/21 to integrate sustainability

The following section demonstrates the action taken during this exceptional year and what impact these will have on our sustainability objectives going forward:

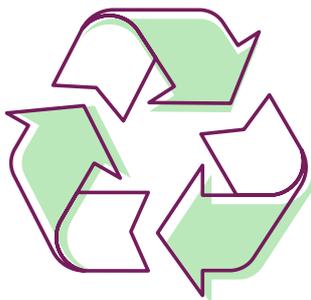
- The Responsible Tourism Team was created late in 2020 to develop a clear strategy, with related projects and support to drive the organisation's delivery of a more responsible tourism for Scotland through all our activity.
- We have undertaken a review of all content to ensure responsible tourism messages are built in across web pages, blogs, itineraries etc. and we are generating new content that aligns with the key themes – new content is being promoted as part of our UK & International market campaigns.
- During 2020/21 we were introduced to a Hybrid working model. With many members of staff working from home due to Covid restrictions, this experience and the learnings from it have informed the creation of a new Hybrid Working policy, which will be implemented for our return to office working in 2021 and will drive how we work in the future and contribute to working in a more responsible manner. The benefits will be reflected in reduced costs in travel, in time and in energy; improved communication, quicker decision making, greater collaboration and ability to spread job roles across Scotland thereby contributing to local economies and creating more locally based jobs. In addition, it will provide a better work-life balance for our staff.
- Reconnect Scotland took place in November 2020 and plans are underway for the event to take place again in April 2021 – an entirely online event for Scottish Tourism Businesses and DMOs who would normally have attended VisitScotland Expo. Using the b2b event platform, EventsAir, the travel trade event exclusively promotes Scotland and enables Scottish businesses to connect to buyers in important international markets, to attract visitors and help rebuild the country's industry following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We have taken up a number of opportunities with our international partners to share the work that we are undertaking in this area. We delivered a highly successful webinar: The Role of Data and Innovation in Driving a Sustainable Recovery, in Partnership with Scotland Europa. Where we were able to position VS as a thought leader and influencer. 100 attendees from over 15 countries were in attendance. We presented at NECSTour's best practise webinar on excellence in sustainable destination development: Green, Digital and SDGs – Building the Tourism Agenda 2050 for Sustainable Recovery. Attendees 90+ other NTOs and tourism networks and tourism authorities from 33 regions of Europe. Panellist at event led by the European Research & Innovation Network: Impact of COVID and strategies for Recovery, where we provided our perspective on opportunities for responsible recovery. We joined senior speakers from Portugal, Slovenia and the Balearic Islands.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

Minimise resource use and waste production

'Take action to encourage reduced resource use and waste production, both from our internal operations and those of tourism businesses operating in Scotland, contributing to reduced carbon emissions and climate change impact'

- Our resource use and waste related CO2 emissions are continuing to reduce annually. In 2020/21 we saw a 55% reduction from the previous year, where in a "normal" year our average reduction is only 11%.
- We have continued with our programme to improve our buildings efficiency; however, much of our decrease is due to the exceptional year where there was little business travel; limited use of our iCentres and no use of offices resulted in a moderate reduction in our energy, waste, and water. During 2020/21 changes within the VisitScotland estate reduced our floorspace by 1546m². We will continue to reduce the size of our estate, more than initially expected, due to the implementation of a hybrid working environment, accelerated due to COVID, and home working.
- We support the Scottish Government Targets of 70% recycling for all waste and a maximum 5% sent to Landfill by 2025 (baseline year 2012/13). In 2020/21 our recycling rate was 69%, and there was an 89% decrease in waste to landfill, by comparison in the two years prior to 2020/21 our average decrease in waste to landfill was 16.5%.
- VisitScotland continues to implement the Carrier Bag Charge (Scotland) Regulations across our iCentre network, which contribute to reducing litter and resource use. The iCentres were closed for the majority of 2020/21 and for the first phase of re-opening retail sales were not available. The centres re-opened with sustainable cotton bags, offered free of charge, and mirroring the VisitScotland sustainable messaging. Plastic bags will be phased out throughout 2021 and cotton bags will be sold thereafter.



Actions Taken during 2020/21 minimising resource use and waste production

The following section demonstrates the action taken during this exceptional year and what impact these will have on our resource and waste production going forward:

- **Estate Changes**
 - ▶ Our planned preventative maintenance measures in place for general maintenance plus more awareness by our Information team members, allow cross department working with Facilities to improve heating and lighting and provide more sustainable options
 - ▶ An energy review was completed in Jedburgh, which resulted in Phase 1 of work replacing lights to LEDs and windows to more efficient units. We will monitor this throughout 21/22 but expect with lower energy and better insulation that our carbon footprint will reduce.
 - ▶ We removed our café from Ocean Point, which will lead to cost savings and reduction in energy, water and food waste once office operations resume
- **IT & Digital**
 - ▶ At the start of 2020, we were just embracing the new Teams technology but with the pandemic and home working, this has become the preferred way of calling/meeting. On average, from July 2020 to March 2021, we held 4752 Teams meetings and made 4120 calls per month throughout our network.
 - ▶ Our secondary data centre was moved to an external provider reducing our energy needs. Our supplier adheres to the very highest levels of energy efficiency in line with the EU code of conduct and power their data centres from 100% renewable energy, this success along with other factors will allow work to move our primary data centres to continue.
 - ▶ In addition to the data centre move, our IT department maximise server utilisation with virtualisation and consolidation, remove obsolete or underutilised servers and will continue to purchase more energy-efficient hardware servers.
 - ▶ Plans for the Year of Stories 2022 will focus resources on digital content with a reduction in printed collateral and branding.
 - ▶ Projects previously lined up for print solutions by our Marketing & Digital department have now embraced digital offerings instead. Where the only option could have been print for adequate circulation of a familiar 'in-hand' resource like a map or leaflet, the digital option has further reach where more consumers are expecting that the digital version is the norm when they cannot actually travel to retrieve a printed document. Digital solutions also can adapt to the changing circumstances where a print run would be out of date and have to be pulped.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

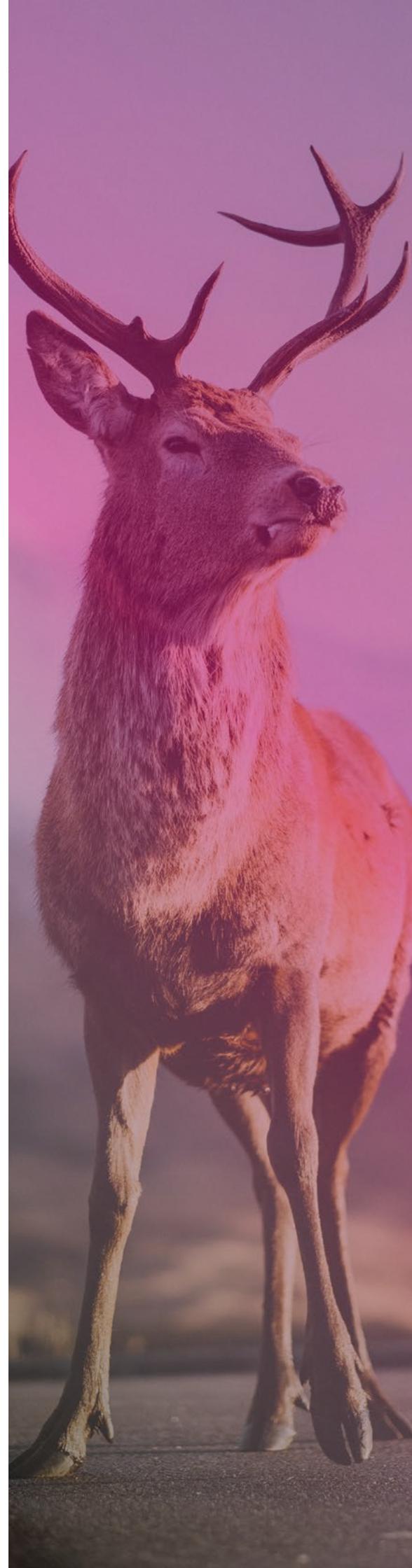
- ▶ A review of printed event programmes such as our Expo printed programme is being considered, this may reduce sponsorship income significantly. Consideration is being given to make both the Thistles and National Event conference digital only.
- **Online processes and procedures**
 - ▶ Many processes and procedures have now gone online, examples include but are not exhausted to:
 - ▷ electronic signatures accepted online by our Solicitors
 - ▷ all HR activities are now paperless allowing more efficient communication, sharing of information and quicker turnaround times as well as associated costs
 - ▷ our IT department are working to implement digital signatures, and this will reduce the supplier and contract paper chain.
- **Printing**
 - ▶ Almost all Teams have fulfilled their roles without printing anything for the past year – although some requirement will remain, many departments report a break in the printing habit will allow it to be the exception rather than the rule going forward.
 - ▶ During 2020/21 a new EPOS system was sourced for the iCentre network, with the view that it will reduce expenditure through using less paper for receipting and ticketing. This will be implemented during 2021/22 and reductions reflected in future years.
 - ▶ Our Engagement Team are onboarding the QTA team to SCRUM, this activity was planned pre-COVID and would always have resulted in less paper being used in the team, however working from home has helped to curtail the “printing” culture and we are using much less by way of hard copy than before.
 - ▶ Our EventScotland regular newsletter has not been printed during the pandemic and evaluation on the need to return to a physical printed copy going forward will be taken.
 - ▶ The EventScotland team have all reported a significant reduction in printed material particularly office papers
 - ▶ Although it has been a challenge for the Insights Team to read and comment/mark up 100+ page tender documents and research reports, they have successfully completed this during the past year.
- **Waste Awareness**
 - ▶ Working from home, we have become more aware of our waste habits on an individual level and following on from this, when we return to our office culture, we would expect a reduction in office waste
 - ▶ Our Information Retail Team are looking into more sustainable policies of our suppliers and will, where possible, reduce packaging as well as focus on local products.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

Reduce the impact of tourism transport

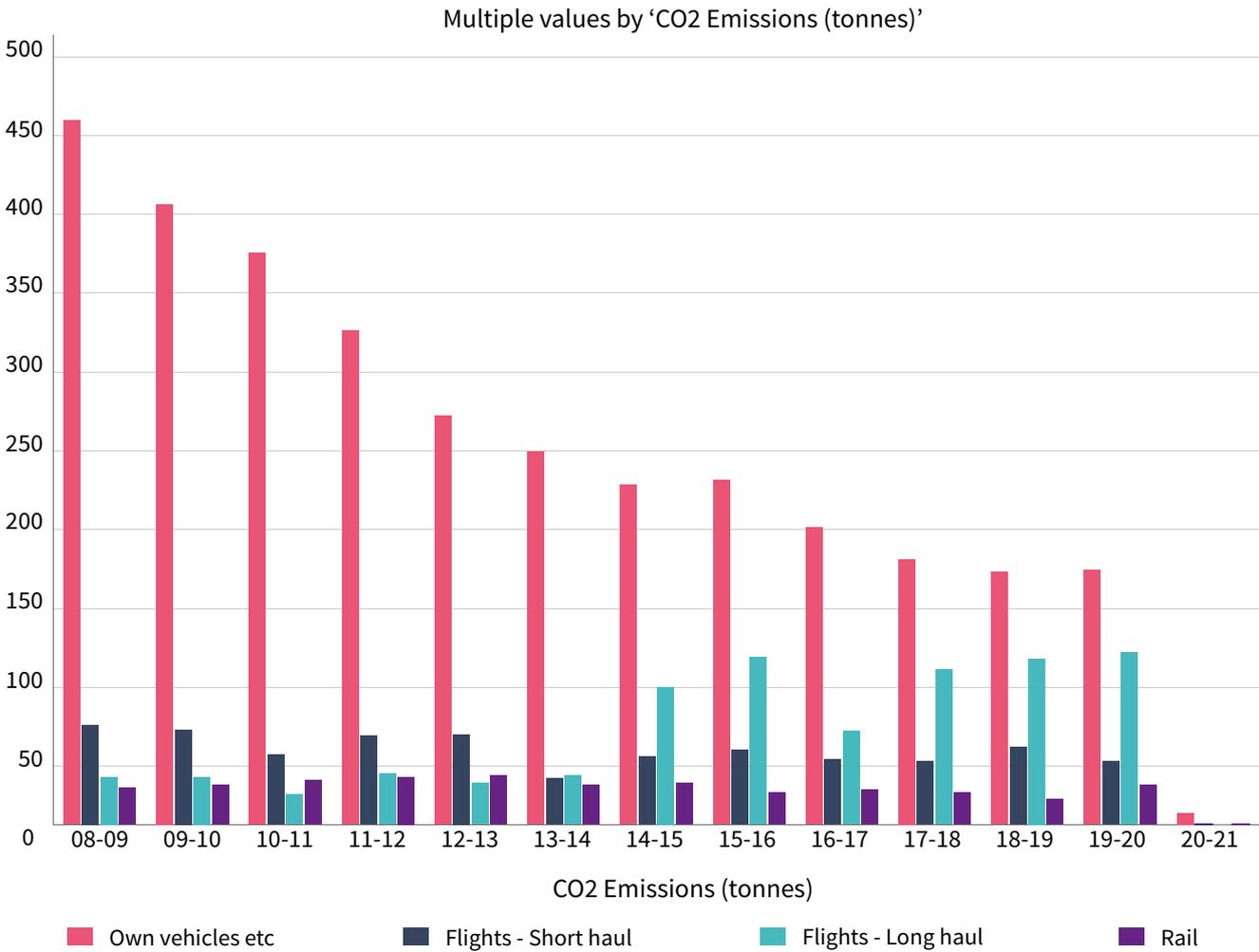
Focus on promoting a shift towards more environmentally friendly forms of transport (train, coach/bus, ferry, cycle, foot) both to and within tourism destinations in Scotland, aiming to reduce carbon emissions, air pollution, and congestion.

- We have made a 99% reduction in our travel related CO2 emissions from the baseline year.
- We collaborate with public transport and active travel partners through VisitScotland Public Transport Working Group and work with Sustrans, we identified areas for sustainable growth. Due to the pandemic the pandemic and its restrictions it will be a challenge to rebuild public confidence to use public transport again post pandemic. We will continue to closely work with our public transport partners.
- We have 22 vehicles in our leased car fleet of which 3 vehicles are under 100g/km CO2 emissions and 4 vehicles are under 110g/km, with the remainder at or around 130g/km.
- With the Sustrans Workplace Journey Challenge not following its usual format for this year, 175 employees engaged with the Virgin Pulse Go Challenge in early 2021. Over 9 weeks, the aims were individually to achieve a minimum of 7,000 steps a day working up to 10,000. From surveys gathered pre and post Challenge, by the end of the Challenge, 24% of those taking part felt more productive at work, 18% increased taking at least 3 active breaks a day, 17% increased exercising 4 times or more during a week and 7% more reported having high energy levels than before the challenge. 94% of our staff feel our organisation is committed to their health and wellbeing.
- We encourage and promote the use of low carbon transport to our visitors through our range of marketing channels. Due to the impact of the pandemic and the exiting restrictions and reluctance to use public transport the promotion has been reviewed and adjusted, as necessary.
- We collaborate with public transport and active travel partners through VisitScotland Public Transport Working Group and work with Sustrans, identifying areas for sustainable growth. Due to the pandemic and its restrictions, it will potentially be challenging to rebuild public confidence to use public transport again in the immediate post pandemic future. We continue to closely work with our public transport partners.



Sustainability Policy Objectives

VisitScotland Carbon Emissions from Transport (2008-2021)



Sustainability Policy Objectives

Actions Taken during 2020/21 to reduce the impact of tourism transport

The following section demonstrates the action taken during this exceptional year to reduce the impact of transport, as well as our carbon footprint going forward:

• Business travel

- ▶ Little business travel, due to the exceptional year we experienced, has made the largest impact on our overall carbon emissions during 2020/21 and we envisage many of these changes will continue to all or some degree beyond the pandemic. This will include a review of our leased car scheme and a move to electric vehicles.

• Internal meetings

- ▶ There were more internal meetings across departments through Teams both formal and informal.
- ▶ improved communications and accessibility between and across departments
- ▶ increased the interaction between members for our geographically dispersed teams
- ▶ reduced our carbon emissions through travel, as well as cost and time, whilst allowing full team meetings to take place more regularly.
- ▶ increased attendance at online training and upskilling where before travel may have prohibited attendance

• External Meetings

Examples of where changes have been made and will continue to some extent, from the lessons learnt in 2020/21, include but are not exhausted to:

- ▶ departments making a commitment to utilise public transport as main transport choice
- ▶ online interviews
- ▶ virtual QTA visits and account management meetings
- ▶ Zero international travel allowed our Marketing teams to work with new and alternative technologies for key events and stakeholder meetings, proving sustainable long term activities, with fewer regular trips replaced with “bigger” annual or biannual trips as needed.
- ▶ Digital meetings and events platforms have been successful for our Engagement Team reflecting budget savings and less time spent travelling internationally and domestically for events, exhibitions, conference and stakeholder meetings. Giving the ability to meet regularly with no travel, meet multiple partners at the same time and more accessible engagement with international partners.

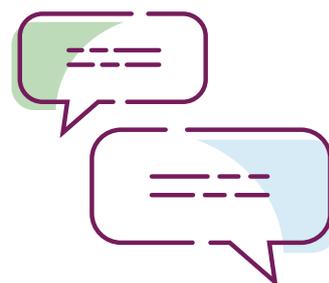
- ▶ Increased attendance at external meetings although a blended approach will be more likely going forward throughout the organisation.

• Commuting

- ▶ Our commuting to contractual base offices has been minimal over the past year, and with the introduction of our hybrid working policy in 2021/22 and staff having the opportunity to relocate to a more local office, we envisage our commuting emissions reducing when offices reopen.
- ▶ We ran a pilot utilising the ZWS commuting tool with pre COVID commuting requested – from a response rate of 47% of our staff, our CO2 emissions were 229 tCO2, we would expect to see a reduction in this figure when the survey is next completed.

• Events

- ▶ Although our Events Team have not travelled to any events during the past year, this activity will resume once events can restart, however it is expected that planning meetings will move to a hybrid of virtual and physical meetings, reducing the need to attend in person significantly
- ▶ Key events such as Scotland Week in New York were supported by virtual tours of Scotland along with virtual B2B events across the UK and International may influence a more blended approach to attendance going forward.
- ▶ Events industry development seminars and Steering group meetings (Expo and Thistles) moved online, maintaining engagement but removing the need for travel, these may continue as hybrid style meetings reducing longer distance travel
- ▶ Our Themed Years Steering Group and Working group meetings will continue to offer a virtual option to those partners who do not want to travel to meet in person.



Sustainability Policy Objectives

Protect and enhance Scotland's natural and cultural heritage

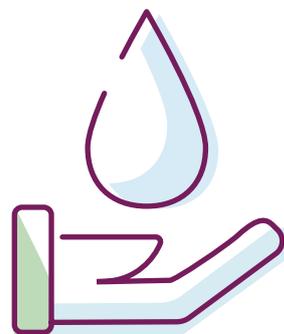
Promote Scotland's natural and cultural heritage to visitors and support the activities of organisations responsible for its protection and enhancement

- Through a wide range of channels, we are providing potential visitors and visitors in Scotland with a range of information on Scottish Wildlife and its natural landscapes, as well as promoting the Outdoor Access code.
- 2020 is designated as Scotland's Year of Coast and Waters and has a strong connection to sustainability. The year aims to sustain and build upon the momentum of Scotland's preceding Themed Years to spotlight and celebrate Scotland's unrivalled Coast and Waters, inspiring future visits, as well as encouraging responsible engagement. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Year of Coast and Waters will extend into 2021.
- In 2017 VisitScotland started working with Plan Bee to adopt Beehives, using the money collected for the 5p carrier bag charge, which we committed to donate to an environmental good cause. We will be collaborating with Plan Bee to highlight the plight of Bees with our staff as well as externally with communities and visitors. The sponsored beehives have been installed at the House of an Art Lover in Glasgow. This will directly support the Scottish Government's Pollinator Strategy. This commitment has continued in 2020/21 and the bees continue to thrive and produce honey.
- Although halted in 2020-21, volunteering opportunities for VisitScotland staff will recommence when safe to do so, allowing up to 1 day per year per staff member to undertake activities such as litter picking and beach clean and clearing invasive species.
- 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.

Actions Taken during 2020/21 to protect and enhance Scotland's natural and cultural heritage

The following section demonstrates the action taken during this exceptional year and what impact these will have on our carbon footprint going forward:

- No volunteering was undertaken during the year of this report but will recommence during 2021/22
- The work done through the Visitor Management Strategy and Steering Group looks to encourage responsible visitor behaviours, being respectful of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, which reduces the impact on natural and cultural heritage (see detail under 'Scottish Communities' objective)



Sustainability Policy Objectives

Enhance quality of life for Scottish communities

Support Scottish communities across all regions through promoting year-round tourism activity including local accommodation, events, attractions and products to visitors, conscious of varying destination carrying capacity. We will also advocate local engagement and empowerment in tourism planning and management and the wider community development process.'

- VisitScotland continues the work of the Responsible Tourism Group (External Facing), to accelerate our work in this area, and ensure leadership and commitment to our responsible tourism ambitions. The group identifies opportunities and sustainable projects, encouraging all VisitScotland's activity to be viewed through the lens of responsible destination development.
- VisitScotland works with industry and partners like Scotland Food and Drink to increase the sourcing of quality Scottish Food and drink to enhance the visitor experience, as well as support local businesses and communities. VisitScotland's Taste Our Best accreditation, which showcases businesses that provide and promote a quality Scottish Food and Drink experience, was achieved by almost 900 businesses by the end of 2020.
- Shop local initiative in iCentres now sources products from over 300 local Scottish suppliers.
- To ensure that tourism supports and benefits communities across Scotland, our marketing activity promotes strong geographical and seasonal spread, encouraging visitors to stay longer, visit all year round and explore more of what Scotland has to offer. Due to the COVID pandemic this was heightened with the need for visitors to get out into rural Scotland which brought a number of challenges. As a result, the Visitor Management work was undertaken and specific activity relating to this was needed.
- The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), administered by VisitScotland, supports projects to deliver sustainable, well planned, inspiring, and collaborative infrastructure projects that focus on improving the visitor experience and enable more visitors to enjoy Scotland's rural communities as well as reducing negative impacts on the community. To date RTIF has awarded £11.7m to 56 successful projects from across 15 Local Authority areas and both National Park Authorities. RTIF addresses Sustainability through the Fund criteria with specific questions within the application forms relating to sustainability, low carbon approaches and responsible tourism actions and through the scoring system. Successful projects include composting toilets and parking at Bla Bheinn on Skye, a new boardwalk across the peat, with parking and toilets at Hermaness on Shetland to address the damage caused by visitors and improve the facilities, and new parking with multiple EV charge points, toilets and cycle provision at the RSPB Reserve at Loch Leven.

- Managing the success of tourism in hotspots across Scotland, and identifying capacity and capability is key to the success of responsible development. Working closely with the tourism industry, intermediaries, and destinations, we support and steer the growth of quality, responsible products and experiences.

Actions Taken during 2020/21 to support Scottish communities

The following section demonstrates the action taken during this exceptional year and what impact these will have on our sustainability objectives going forward:

- Register of Sensitivities regularly updated & referred to – to ensure all local concerns are captured and adhered to in our social content calendar.

Visitor Management 2020/21

- As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted last year, 2020 witnessed a massive increase in domestic visitors to rural and coastal areas including hotspots like the National Parks with resultant increase in pressure placed upon our communities, on facilities and infrastructure, such as waste disposal, toilets and parking. A consequence was that in many parts of the country community sentiment towards visitors hardened.
- Following the first Visitor Management Summit at the end of 2020, A multi-agency Visitor Management Strategy and Steering Group, led by Scottish Government and VisitScotland, was convened.
- Visitor Management activity has been planned and implemented through sub-groups dedicated to three key areas: Education and Marketing, Investment & Infrastructure and Prevention, Regulation & Reassurance. The groups have used learnings from 2020 to take a coordinated approach to addressing the main issues early on for 2021 season.
- A second Visitor Management Summit, convened by Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing and facilitated by VisitScotland, was held on 19 March 2021 providing an update on the activity and plans of the visitor management groups.
- With our Visitor Management partners we launched our Responsible Tourism Campaign "Lets Keep Scotland Special" on 19 March and a new Responsible Tourism visitor pledge to encourage visitors to get outdoors and at the same time to 'care for Scotland'. Our job is to support the industry and communities during this difficult time and, as we look to recovery, encourage visitors to enjoy our outdoors and attractions in the most responsible way possible.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

Make holidays in Scotland available for all

‘Support the development of inclusive tourism in Scotland, which aims to create products and destinations where everyone feels welcome.’

- Priority this year during the height of the Pandemic was to raise awareness of the concerns of disabled people, senior travellers, and families with young children in participating in tourism once restrictions were lifted. Working alongside three charities, Tourism for All, Euan’s Guide and the Edinburgh & Lothians Carer’s Centre – VOCAL, these target groups were asked specific questions about making day visits and overnight stays once Coronavirus restrictions were lifted. Data and feedback from all three surveys were used to compile advice on what additional support and reassurance businesses could offer to potential customers to help them return and participate in tourism once again. This advice was shared via our corporate website. A webinar was delivered to 80 members of Association of Visitor Attractions focused on what simple but effective measures could be put in place to welcome people back. Working with key partners such as PurpleTuesday, Euan’s Guide and industry groups we encouraged 151 additional businesses to produce an accessibility guide detailing their access facilities and hygiene safety measures.
- A series of free-to-use training videos produced by Purple providing tips on a range of topics from how to make your website accessible to share tips for front-line staff on how to welcome disabled customers was also made available on our corporate website.
- VisitScotland was asked by the Convenor of the Cross-Party Group on Disability at the Scottish Parliament to lead their December 2020 meeting. The meeting was focused on the promotion of Accessible Tourism. There were 40 attendees who participated in the virtual meeting. Presentations were made by VisitScotland, Euan’s Guide and PurpleTuesday.
- Our social tourism programme, ScotSpirit began in 2016 in partnership with the Family Holiday Association, a national charity that delivers breaks for low income families. To date over 90 businesses and organisations from across the tourism industry have enabled 1,627 families to experience the magic of a short break or day out in Scotland. That’s 6,225 people, including 3,495 children – an incredible achievement only possible with the collective support of so many partners. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic this programme was put on hold. However, as part of the Scottish Government recovery fund the Scotspirit Holiday Voucher scheme is being developed and will be launched in 2021.
- Access Guides give disabled people, families with young children and senior traveller important information about access and specific services such as Autism or Dementia friendly tours offered to them by tourism businesses, to date 557 businesses have registered to complete an Access Guide and 252 have completed and published their guide.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

Improve the quality of tourism jobs

Support initiatives to improve the quality of jobs both across the tourism sector and as well as implement them within VisitScotland.

- Our Learning and Development Team have facilitated Elevenses initiatives for our own staff around sustainability, climate change and carbon literacy.
- During 2020/21 we have not undertaken any Career Ready Internships, however several digital workshops to promote employability took place with schools.

Actions Taken during 2020/21 to improve quality of jobs

The following section demonstrates the action taken during this exceptional year and what impact these will have on our sustainability objectives going forward:

- The anticipated Introduction of hybrid working, and creation of a policy will give the ability to spread job roles across Scotland thereby contributing to local economies and creating more locally based jobs.
- Improved communications with our employee counselling service moving online along with our staff consultation meetings including liaison with PCS now online
- Creation of part virtual induction programme for new starts
- All Learning & Development activities were moved online to virtual classroom settings or utilising eLearning packages. While we move back to some classroom learning in the future, we will continue to question each programme and where possible retain some or all of the learning online, making it more inclusive for staff to attend regardless of their location. Business mileage to the central belt where most activities took place will be reduced as a result.



Sustainability Policy Objectives

Support climate change mitigation and adaption in the tourism sector

'Recognise the importance and urgency of addressing climate change and take action, not only to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation), but also to adapt to the unavoidable consequences of climate change and support tourism businesses and destinations to do the same.'

- Demonstrating our commitment to responsible tourism and tackling climate change VisitScotland became the first national tourism organisation in the world to sign up to The Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency in November 2020. Through our activity, we aim to play a leading role in the development of Scotland as a globally recognised low carbon responsible tourism destination. As part of joining the initiative we have also committed to publish a climate action plan within the first year.
- We recognise that addressing the climate emergency is imperative in protecting our planet, and our country, for future generations. We want to set out our commitment to being part of the solution by:
 1. Take action to reduce carbon emissions as an organisation and encourage Scotland's tourism industry to consider and address their carbon footprint.
 2. Work collaboratively with the Scottish tourism and events industry to educate and share best practice around effectively reducing carbon emissions.
 3. Play a leading role in the development of Scotland as a globally recognised responsible destination.
 4. Engage our communities to make sure they are at the heart of our responsible tourism future.

Tourism and events can be forces for good growth and positive change. They support economic development, protect our environment, sustain local communities and contribute to meaningful cultural exchange

- We have 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.

