# **Biodiversity Report 2018-20**

## **OUR BIODIVERSITY DUTY**

The Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS) has a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out its responsibilities. This duty is set out in the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004).

As a Scottish public body we are also required under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011) to provide a publicly available report on our compliance with our biodiversity duty.

We are required to publish the report every three years and it should demonstrate the actions we have taken to meet our duty.

## **OUR ROLE**

WICS was formed on 1 July 2005 under the Water Services etc. (Scotland) Act 2005. We are a small non-departmental government body.

In summary, our statutory duties are to:

* promote the interests of Scottish Water’s customers and, in so doing, to have regard to the interests of future customers;
* ensure that customer charges reflect the lowest reasonable overall cost for Scottish Water to deliver the Scottish Ministers’ Objectives for the industry;
* comment on Scottish Water’s reporting of its performance, challenging Scottish Water to become more efficient and sustainable;
* facilitate the entry of retail water and sewerage providers that wish to supply non-household customers in Scotland; and
* support the Scottish Government’s vision of ensuring that Scotland is a Hydro Nation, and to meet our obligations under the Water Resource Act 2013.

## **ACTIONS TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY**

We are the economic regulator of the Scottish water and sewerage industry. Although we do not interact directly with biodiversity, we make a significant indirect contribution through responsible economic regulation of Scottish Water.

We follow the guidance that is provided by the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework (NPF). This sets out a clear vision for Scotland, with broad measures of national wellbeing covering a range of economic, health, social and environmental indicators and targets. Additionally, we endeavour to focus our efforts on raising staff awareness and through implementing sustainability measures throughout our office.

This report covers the three years 2018-21. During the later parts of this period our working arrangements were impacted by the covid-19 pandemic, with all staff working remotely from home in the period from March 2020 until the current time. We are currently reviewing our future working arrangements and consulting with staff on their preferences.

**Transport and travel**

As transportation is one of the largest sectors of greenhouse gas emissions, we aim to tackle the carbon emissions from business travel by encouraging employees to switch to greener ways of travel.

During the period 2018-20, before the pandemic struck, staff were largely based at our offices in Stirling. The office was conveniently located within walking distance of direct train and bus links. To support staff with cycling to work we participated in the government’s Cycle to Work scheme. We also provided facilities such as secure bicycle racks, showers, and lockers.

Before the pandemic we had already been taking steps to reduce our carbon footprint by providing flexible work arrangements, such as working from home. We were also holding many of our meetings via conference call for external meetings. Since March 2020 all of our external and internal meetings have taken place remotely, eliminating the carbon emissions from commuting and business travel.

We are committed to supporting the Scottish Government’s Hydro Nation initiative, which is setting out to build partnerships internationally, sharing knowledge and expertise on water-related issues and undertaking joint research. The aim is to use Scotland’s reputation and expertise internationally in order to improve global water management. Historically much of our Hydro Nation work involves some international travel, including the period covered by this report. To compensate for necessary international travel, we now offset our carbon emissions by funding an equivalent carbon dioxide saving elsewhere. From 2019-20, we contributed a total of £3,083 to a Scottish woodland scheme, planting 239 trees.

**Energy**

During 2019, we participated in a pioneering green heating network lead by Stirling Council. The project was the first in the UK to successfully harness energy from waste water. This has allowed for low-cost, low-carbon heating for the office, delivering significant environmental and economic benefits.

Other controls that supported our efforts in energy conservation include installing devices that track and monitor both our electricity and gas consumption, installing an energy efficient hot water dispenser, using natural light throughout the day where possible and operating a ‘lights out’ policy overnight. Full disclosure on our energy consumption can be found within our annual report published on our website.

**Waste reduction and recycling**

Within the office we put in place a sustainable procurement policy for office materials and were employing the ‘4 Rs’ (Refuse, Reduce, Re-use and Recycle) approach.

We use 100% recycled paper when printing and photocopying is required, although we also try to reduce the amount of printing by scanning and printing on double sided paper. We publish all of our reports and other documents on our website and encourage staff to share documents online.

We seek to avoid creating landfill waste as far as practicable by putting into effect recycling schemes for cardboard, plastic, aluminium, glass, and food waste. All confidential paper is shredded and 100% securely recycled. From 2018-2020 we recycled approx. 5,492kg which was the equivalent of saving approx. 145 tonnes of carbon, 110 trees and 145 tonnes of landfill.

**Sustainable procurement**

As a public body we are conscious of our obligations to deliver value for money. We consider sustainability when procuring services and goods, ensuring we achieve value for money by making sustainable choices and encouraging sustainable products and services. We achieve this by purchasing through the Scottish Procurement Directorate (SPD) wherever possible. Any contracts that are awarded by the SPD are required to comply with specific environmental performance conditions.

## **MAINSTREAMING & PARTNERSHIP**

The water industry will have a vital role to play in helping deliver net zero emissions by 2045, the target set by the Scottish Government in response to the climate emergency.

Scottish Water has a substantial operational and embedded carbon footprint and has been set a highly demanding target by Scottish Ministers to achieve net zero five years earlier, by 2040. The Scottish Ministers have also required Scottish Water to increase the generation of renewable energy that it hosts to treble the level of its own use.

In future Scottish Water will need to operate, invest in new assets and refurbish and replace its existing assets in an economically optimal way (in other words, in a way that takes account not only of the cash costs, but also of the wider costs and benefits to society and the environment). This will be essential to maintaining service and helping Scottish Water achieve its net zero target.

## Our final determination took steps to ensure that Scottish Water is equipped to address these challenges and to deliver the Scottish Ministers’ vision for the industry. This includes moving to a jointly agreed regulatory approach, one founded on candid and transparent conversations combined with robust analysis and evidence. The final determination also set out our expectations in relation to the transformation that will be required of Scottish Water in order to align with this new approach.

## **PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

The covid-19 pandemic has meant that we must carry out our duties using a significantly different working model. Given the success of remote online working our future working arrangements are likely to include a move away from traditional large office space and instead towards a mixture of hybrid working that allows for greater flexibility while providing overall sustainability.

We are currently looking at options for future working arrangements and will report on our decisions in our next annual report (2021-22).