

# OSCR Biodiversity Report 2017-20

## 1. Who we are and what we do

OSCR is the independent regulator and registrar for Scotland's 24,900 charities. We grant charitable status, monitor registered charities, and identify and take action where we believe misconduct including mismanagement has occurred.

We are a non-ministerial office of the Scottish Administration, operating independently of the Scottish Government, reporting directly to the Scottish Parliament.

All charities in Scotland must register with us and must meet annual reporting requirements to keep their status. We are an enabling regulator and offer a wide range of services to support and encourage improvement within the charity sector.

Our work with charities ultimately supports public confidence in the sector. We support and champion the charity sector through a collaborative working approach, working with other organisations, government and the charity sector to build strong and effective internal governance, share good practice and encourage improvement, in order to drive up standards within charities.

## 2. Our biodiversity duty

As a Scottish public body, we have a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity:

*"It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions"* [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

The [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) places a duty on us to make a report publicly available every three years on our compliance with the biodiversity duty.

This publication is a report of our activities from 2017-20.

### **3. Mainstreaming biodiversity in OSCR**

As a public body, we are committed to environmental sustainability and cutting our carbon emissions. How we plan to do this is set out within our three yearly strategic Corporate Plans and our annual Business Plans.

These plans are underpinned by the following policies:

#### Procurement

We are committed to buying goods, services and works in a sustainable manner, ensuring value for money, and delivering benefits for society, the economy and the environment. To achieve this we follow the Scottish Sustainable Procurement Action Plan, and use centrally negotiated contracts and frameworks developed using the Scottish procurement sustainability test.

We are committed to using centrally negotiated frameworks and contracts to maximise efficiencies and deliver sustainability.

#### Business Travel Plan 2016-20

Our Plan aims to reduce business travel and increase technology to participate in meetings. Our Plan actively discourages staff from unnecessary work travel and actively encourages the use public of transport, active travel, and using virtual systems. Where business travel is undertaken, we ensure that staff use only the recognised specification of hire cars (Band A & B cars only - these emit less CO2 emissions) and CEO sign off is required for all flights.

#### Environmental Strategy 2017-20

Our Plan sets out the activities we intend to undertake and track to decrease our carbon emissions over the 3-year period.

### **4. Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature**

We are a relatively small organisation, employing approximately 50 staff operating from one office in a shared building. Our building is accredited Very Good under the Buildings Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology. Heating, water, lighting, and waste collection are provided on a building-wide basis and are managed on a shared services basis.

Our ability to change our building is limited, however during 2017-20, we concentrated our efforts on changing and improving the services we provide and the infrastructure we use. In particular, we continued to move our services online and make use of technology to provide smarter ways of working, minimising our

impact on the environment and reducing our energy consumption, for example: we moved to cloud hosting, removing the need for several servers, operating in a climate controlled area within our office.

We introduced new technology, encouraging colleagues to attend meetings and events virtually: Skype, new, better video conferencing equipment, Zoom, and MS Teams.

We moved a high percentage of our learning activities online, using a new learning portal for staff.

Along with our building co-inhabitants, we introduced a number of planters to the entrance of our building, planted with bee and other insect friendly flowers; and we continue to appropriately maintain the very small piece of land our building sits on.

## **5. Our workforce development and practical activities**

During 2017-20, we focused our efforts on carrying out smaller, proportionate activities that positively reduced our impact on the environment and biodiversity.

We actively participated in a number of national and international campaigns including EWWR (European Week for Waste Reduction), Climate Week and Earth Hour.

We raised staff awareness of the importance of climate change and biodiversity by using our staff newsletter, all staff emails and our internal MS Teams channels, to encourage positive, sustainable behaviour both at work and at home.

We increased the number and type of office recycling points, asking staff to help collect and dispose of aluminium, glass, cardboard and paper.

Reinforcing the ethos of reduce/reuse/recycle, we held a number of staff events, including book swap/library, clothes swap, charity bag collection, and a love food, hate waste participative workshop. We also publicised local/regional events and have encouraged staff to get involved in a variety of environmental projects.

Through our membership of Healthy Working Lives, we encouraged our colleagues to get active, getting outside more and enjoying nature. Our staff have participated in a number of Step Challenges; have taken part in the Daily Mile Challenge and have held walking meetings.

## 6. Covid 19

Like many other organisations around the world in March 2020, our work was deeply impacted by the global pandemic.

Our immediate priority was for the health and safety of our staff. We moved swiftly to ensure the correct infrastructure was in place to support our staff working from home, and to allow for the continuation of our business and services. We continue to make sure that our resources are targeted at supporting delivery of our key functions.

While the timing of Covid 19 has had limited impact on this report, we expect the impact of our new ways of working to feature prominently in our next report.

## 7. Research and monitoring

Our small size and consequently our relatively low carbon emissions, together with the shared services we use, mean that opportunities for emissions reductions are limited. However, we are keen to demonstrate our commitment as a public body to take action against climate change.

This commitment is set out in our objectives within our [Corporate Plan 2020-23](#). We will:

- Use technology to provide smarter ways of working, delivering our outcomes successfully, while minimising our impact on the environment.
- Work towards becoming a carbon neutral public body.
- Use our role as regulator to raise awareness of climate change among charities, encouraging them to carry out their activities in a sustainable manner.

We will update our travel plan and environmental strategy for the 2020-23 period, and we will continue to promote staff awareness of climate change and biodiversity, encouraging positive changes in behaviour within and outside of work.

We will also promote and encourage our staff to get involved in Citizen Science activities, which improve biodiversity understanding and awareness of the natural environment.

## **8. Biodiversity highlights and challenges**

Due to the nature of our role and the size of our organisation, we do not have a direct impact on biodiversity in exercising our functions as a regulator. We operate from one office space, sub-let from another public body. We have no fleet of vehicles, and we do not have a role in promoting core biodiversity activities as set out in the Scottish Government's guidance on the biodiversity reporting duty.

However, as a small public body, we recognise our duties and responsibilities, and we will proactively continue to meet all of the Scottish Government's ambitious sustainability and climate targets and will encourage Scottish charities in this endeavour.