

# **PHS Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach 2023–2026**

**Working together to build net zero, resilient  
and healthy communities**

**(cover/full doc to be designed)**

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## Executive Summary

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## Foreword

I am proud to introduce Public Health Scotland's (PHS) first Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach 2023-2026.

The climate emergency is here. We know the time to act is now. It has become increasingly evident that urgent and cohesive action is needed to address the threat climate change poses to our health and well-being. Everyone has the right to a healthy environment. Without it, humanity cannot survive or thrive.

Rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, air pollution, and shifts in disease patterns are just a few of the consequences that demand our collective attention.

Scotland already faces a number of significant challenges to population health. The COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis have widened Scotland's existing, deep-rooted inequalities. Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are falling in our most disadvantaged communities.

Climate change has the potential to further widen these inequalities and impact most severely on those who are already experiencing disadvantage. However, the action we take to mitigate and adapt to climate change presents us with the most significant opportunity to realise the transformational changes required in society to deliver improvements to health and reduce inequalities.

The things we do to tackle the climate emergency, if done through a just transition, will contribute to the building blocks of good health for all. By making homes more energy efficient, we can seek to reduce fuel poverty and the severity of cold in people's homes. And by shifting to more active, sustainable methods of travel and increasing access to natural spaces for all, we can create more ways through which to improve physical and mental health.

The publication of our strategic approach marks our ambition to capitalise on these opportunities. It commits us to a significant plan of action, not just through actions that we take to reduce our own direct carbon emissions, but in shaping and influencing Scotland's response to climate change.

Eliminating health inequity and addressing climate change requires a whole-system approach. If we do not act now on the vital opportunities that action on climate change has for improving health and address the risks that it presents – this issue will contribute to a worsening picture for population health as we move forward.

It is, therefore, imperative that we each focus our drive and aims, individually and collectively to preserve our climate, planet, and the welfare of the population against the biggest threat of our time to health. This is our chance to create a healthier and more equal society.

My thanks goes to PHS colleagues, and our partners and stakeholders that dedicated significant time, thought and effort into the development of this strategic approach. I look forward to joining forces with you all to see our ambitions progress, working towards creating a Scotland where everyone thrives.



**Paul Johnston, Chief Executive of PHS**

## Introduction

### About Public Health Scotland

Established on 1 April 2020, Public Health Scotland (PHS) is a national NHS Board. Uniquely, PHS is sponsored by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) on behalf of local government.

As Scotland's national public health body, PHS lead and support work across Scotland to:

- prevent disease
- prolong healthy life
- promote health and wellbeing.

[Our Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#) outlines the contribution we are making to achieve a Scotland where everybody thrives. Our programmes of work have a specific focus on reducing Scotland's widening health inequalities and increasing life expectancy.

Across PHS, our collective work contributes to the three **key domains of public health**:

**Health improvement** - enabling people and communities to improve their health and wellbeing by addressing the wider determinants of health

**Health protection** - preventing and responding to contagious or infectious diseases and environmental hazards, and promoting resilience to future risks

**Health and social care services** - maximising the quality of health and social care services for the population.

### About this strategic approach

As Scotland's national public health agency, we have a responsibility to ensure health and equity for all is placed at the heart of Scotland's population health response to the climate crisis.

Building on our existing work but with a step-change in ambition and urgency, this, our first strategic approach, sets out the unique contribution we will make over the next three years to help achieve Scotland's climate adaptation and net zero ambitions, in a way that protects and invests in health.

The first half of this strategic approach details the overarching context in relation to why climate change is important to health. The second outlines PHS' role in helping to protect Scotland's population from the impacts of climate change, while building climate resilience and achieving net zero in a way that promotes health and greater equity. In working with both national and local partners and stakeholders, we focus our role in three particular areas: population health, NHS Scotland and Health and Social Care delivery, and our role as a public body.

We recognise that future changes in policy and legislation, as well as in our understanding of how the climate is changing, will mean the actions set out in this strategic approach may need reviewed and updated.

## Climate and health: Why is it important?

**NB – section will be subject to revisions/shortening. All infographics subject to re-sizing and further editing.**

### Climate impacts on health<sup>1</sup>

The global average temperature rise has already reached 1.1°C. Achieving the Paris Agreement target of keeping global temperature rises to 1.5°C is, therefore, increasingly at risk. Higher temperatures increase the threat from climatic events, with consequences for human health. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report<sup>2</sup> has confirmed that human-caused climate change is already causing widespread adverse impacts on people, and that vulnerable communities are those who are being most disproportionately affected.

Local, national and international climate impacts, such as increased temperatures, flooding, coastal change, damage to buildings and infrastructure, and changes to the natural environment and habitats, will have wide-ranging effects on the health and wellbeing of the population. They will continue to do so over the coming decades even if greenhouse gas emissions are reduced rapidly.

Most climate change-related impacts will contribute to poorer health and risk worsening health inequalities. The amount of change that occurs beyond mid-century will depend on how successful we are in reducing greenhouse gas emissions globally.

Often when we think about the risks to health from climate impacts, we think about the direct effects. High temperatures are associated with an

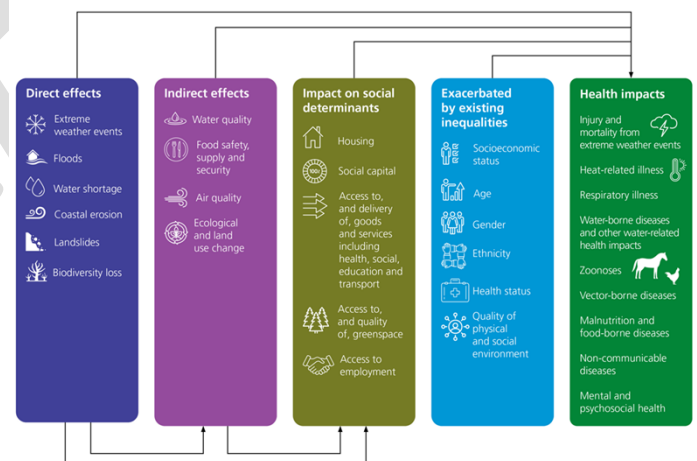
increased risk of acute mortality, particularly among older people and those with pre-existing health conditions. Extreme flood events can result in death or injury.

Climate impacts also affect health and wellbeing indirectly through the social, economic, and physical environment we live in. Known as the 'building blocks of good health', these factors include high-quality housing, transport systems and natural environments, strong social relationships and networks, good nutrition, and secure,

Examples of indirect to insert -tbc

high-quality employment.

Direct and indirect effects and impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing



<sup>1</sup> REF to update in this section

<sup>2</sup> REF

## Climate change and health inequalities

People living in social and economic disadvantage are often the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Poor-quality environments characterised, for example, by a lack of greenspace and poor-quality housing increase exposure to climate impacts, personal factors such as health status and age can increase the likelihood of a health impact whilst poverty, lack of resource and influence, social isolation and poor language skills can limit the ability of individuals and communities to adapt.

Climate change and these social, economic and personal factors act together as risk multipliers to increase the impacts on health and health inequalities.

To prevent the threat to health and health inequalities from our changing climate, we need to take urgent action to reduce GHG emissions and ensure people, communities and systems are prepared, adapted and resilient to changes in our climate. We need to do this in a way that is fair and just.

## Co-benefits of action

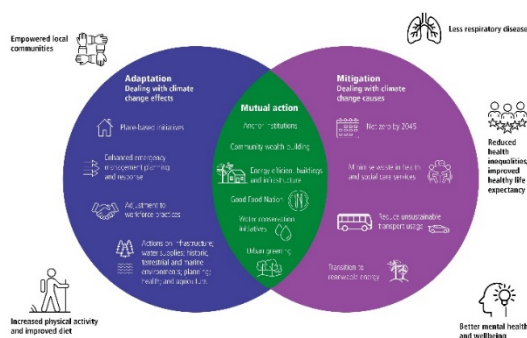
While climate change is often recognised as the greatest global health threat facing the world in the 21st century, it is also characterised as the greatest opportunity through which to redefine the social and environmental determinants of health [building blocks of health]<sup>3</sup>.

Creating net zero, climate resilient and healthy communities requires investment in areas such as transport, housing, the natural environment, and the economy.

Climate action that supports, for example, accessible and good-quality greenspace; warm and dry housing; sustainable transport systems that ensure access to local goods and services, sustainable and healthy diets; fair green jobs; and thriving local economies which create opportunities for community participation, can contribute towards better physical and mental health for the population, as well as help to protect health from climate impacts and other environmental hazards.

However, consideration still needs to be given to how national and local governments deliver climate action – to ensure that it maximises health co-benefits and does not inadvertently create risks for health or worsen health inequalities.

### Health co-benefits



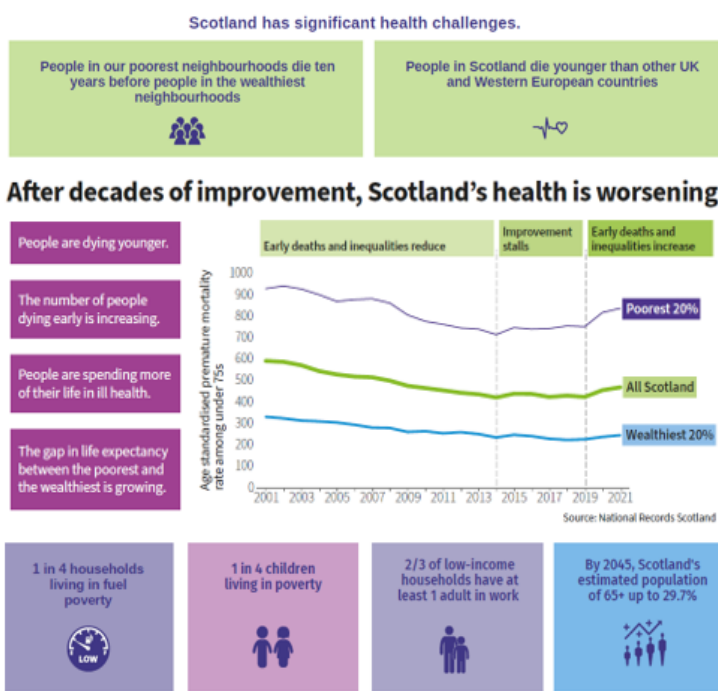
<sup>3</sup> REF – The Lancet

## Scottish context

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 sets out the legislative framework for climate change in Scotland. Recognising the urgency of the need to take decisive action to reduce global warming, the Scottish Government has set an ambitious target to achieve net zero by 2045. Policies and practice to progress towards this target across sectors are laid out in Climate Change Plan 2018-20324. The Scottish Government also contributes and responds to UK Climate Risk Assessment. The policies and practice to response to these risk and opportunities are laid out in the Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

Furthermore, a just transition to net zero and climate resilience is fundamental for Scotland. In 2018, the Just Transition Commission was set up to advise Scottish Ministers on how to apply just transition principles across sectors in Scotland. The aim is to ensure the journey to, and the outcome, is a climate resilience and net zero Scotland that is fair and just.

Amidst the challenges posed by climate change, Scotland also faces other significant health challenges, including the current health of population and health inequalities, demographic change, and the future burden of disease.



### The burden of disease in Scotland is forecast to increase 21% by 2043

Two thirds of this increase will be due to increases in:



By aligning climate action with public health priorities and the principles of primary prevention, there is the potential that Scotland can realise opportunities for health co-benefits – which go some way to helping address these challenges. For example, promoting active transportation, preserving green spaces, and supporting sustainable food systems contribute to improved physical and mental health outcomes.

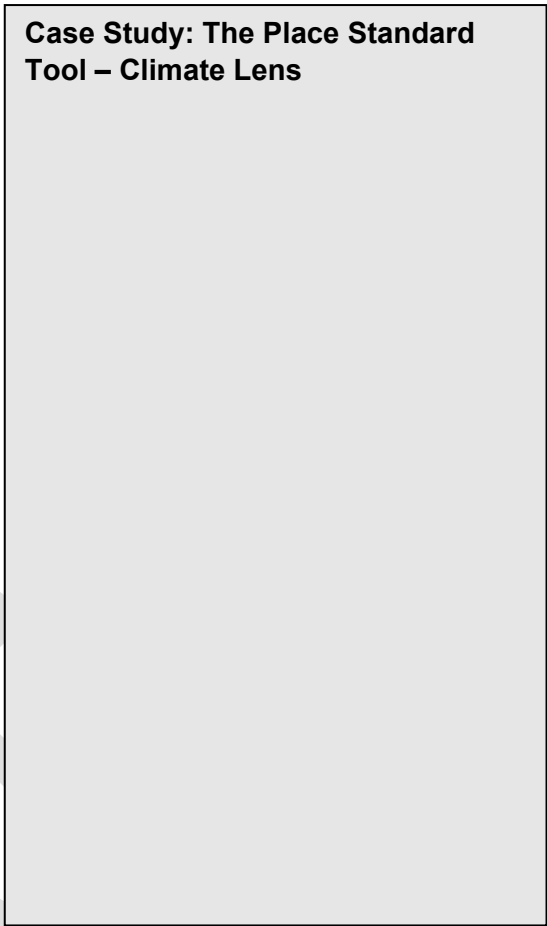
By capitalising on these opportunities, the country can build a more sustainable and healthy society while working towards its climate goals.

At national, regional and local levels multiple policies and plans already provide opportunities to strengthen



integration of actions to address the health, wellbeing and equity impacts of climate change in Scotland. This is shown in table X on page X.

**Case Study: The Place Standard Tool – Climate Lens**



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**Scottish Government national, regional and local strategies and policies that provide opportunities to strengthen integration of actions to address the health, wellbeing and equity impacts of climate change**

<b>National cross-sector strategies and policies</b>	<b>National sector plans</b>	<b>National Health and Social Care policies</b>	<b>Regional level</b>	<b>Local level</b>
<p>National Performance Framework</p> <p>Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015</p> <p>Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015</p> <p>Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill – forthcoming</p> <p>Education Reform Bill - forthcoming</p> <p>Human Rights Bill [right to a health environment incorporation]- forthcoming</p> <p>Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill - forthcoming</p> <p>Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation</p> <p>Climate Ready Scotland: climate change adaptation programme (SCCAP) 2019-2024</p> <p>Climate Change Plan 2018–2032 – update</p> <p>New Leadership, A Fresh Start for Scotland: First Minister's Priorities for Scotland</p> <p>Programme for Government/Resource Spending Review</p> <p>A Scotland for The Future: The opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population</p> <p>A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world</p> <p>Environment Strategy for Scotland</p> <p>Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2045</p> <p>Rural Planning Policy</p> <p>Just Transition Plans</p> <p>Open Space Strategy</p> <p>Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan 2022-2025</p>	<p>Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022</p> <p>National Planning Framework 4: A spatial place for Scotland to 2045</p> <p>Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan – ongoing</p> <p>National Transport Strategy 2</p> <p>Heat in Buildings Strategy - achieving net zero emissions in Scotland's buildings</p> <p>Scotland's National Housing Strategy: Housing to 2040</p> <p>Infrastructure Investment Plans 2021-2026</p> <p>National Flood Risk Assessment (Scotland)</p>	<p>Public health priorities for Scotland 2018</p> <p>National Care Service (Scotland) Bill - ongoing</p> <p>Scotland's Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>A Healthier Future: Scotland's diet and healthy weight delivery plan</p> <p>NHS Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2022-2026</p> <p>Integrated Joint Board Strategic Plans</p>	<p>Regional Economic Partnerships Agreements &amp; Strategies</p> <p>City Deal Plans</p> <p>Regional Transport Partnerships</p>	<p>Verity House Agreement</p> <p>COSLA's Blueprint for Local Government</p> <p>Local Outcome Improvement Plans</p> <p>Place Plans</p> <p>Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies</p> <p>Local Biodiversity Partnerships</p> <p>Local Authority Good Food Nation Plans</p>

## PHS response: Our vision for Scotland

**We want to see a Scotland where everyone thrives.**

An effective public health response to climate change is therefore essential to enhance public health preparedness, mitigate health risks, but also to capitalise on “win-win” opportunities for health and equity that action taken to address it can provide.

The scale of the challenge is so great that no-one actor can tackle it alone. The COVID pandemic showed us that. As Scotland national public health agency, PHS has a distinct and unique contribution to make towards tackling the impacts of climate change. However, the nature of its impacts is so complex, it requires collaboration to be at the heart of our approach to ensure we can collectively work together to create a Scotland where everyone thrives.

*Quote from SG - Mairi McAllan MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition – tbc*

*Quote from COSLA spokesperson on the environment, Cllr Gail Macgregor - tbc*

“The Directors of Public Health in Scotland are clear that the triple planetary crises of climate change, air pollution, and biodiversity loss are driving a Public Health Emergency that requires our collective action. Local public health teams are engaged in activities to reduce air pollution and are contributing to local action to take forward climate change adaptation across the whole public health system in areas such as active travel, use of green and blue spaces, and energy use and poverty. Public Health Scotland’s first Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach sets out a very welcome set of actions that will enhance our existing national and local efforts to protect and promote human and planetary health”.



**Susan Webb, Chair SDsPH Group**

## Developing our strategy

The development of this strategic approach has been an iterative and adaptive process, based upon analysis of the evidence on the interface between climate and health, particularly from the World Health Organisation (WHO) COP26 special report on the health argument for climate action<sup>5</sup>. We have also undertaken significant internal and external consultation and engagement activities.

### Mapping our activity

We took into account the international, national and local policy context, and as part of doing so, used the WHO recommendations from the COP26 report (Figure X) to help us identify key contributions that public health actors can make to the climate change agenda. We mapped our current activity on climate change to these recommendations.

This highlighted, and helped us to consolidate our work, where we are already undertaking significant activity in line with these recommendations, but also allowed us to identify gaps in our delivery and prioritise any potential future action accordingly.

### Figure X: WHO Recommendations (adapted for PHS)

1. Commit to a healthy, green and just recovery from Covid-19
2. Place health and social justice at the heart of our international connections
3. Harness the health benefits from climate action and prioritise those with largest health, social and economic gains
4. Build climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health systems and support health adaptation and resilience across sectors
5. Guide a just and inclusive transition to renewable energy to save lives from air pollution, end energy poverty in households and care facilities
6. Promote sustainable, healthy urban design and transport system, with improved land use, access to green and blue spaces and priorities for active travel and public transport
7. Protect and restore natural systems as the foundation for healthy lives, sustainable food systems and livelihoods
8. Promote healthy, sustainable and resilient food systems which are affordable and deliver on Good Food Nation, climate and health outcomes
9. Transition towards a wellbeing economy
10. Mobilise and support the health community on climate action

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<sup>5</sup> REF

## Stakeholder engagement and feedback

In addition to substantial internal consultation with colleagues, PHS worked with the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) to engage with key, external stakeholders on the development of its strategic approach to climate change. Together, PHS and SSN hosted a series of four workshops, between May and July 2023, which brought together nearly 200 stakeholders.

Leveraging the multi-disciplinary nature of SSN's network, the workshops engaged stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds, including educational institutions, local authorities, transport partnerships, the Scottish Government, various parts of the NHS and other key public bodies.

Across the four engagement workshops, key feedback included:

- PHS has an important and valued role to play in being an active and vocal collaborator on climate and health policy, practice and partnerships.
- PHS is regarded as a trusted voice of expertise, and should play an active role in improving understanding, collaboration and decision-making across the public sector.
- PHS can contribute important data, insights and evidence to help public bodies, at national and local levels, better account for and deliver on climate and health outcomes.
- The key areas of action on climate change also connect well with many of the key policy areas relevant to public health outcomes, including energy,

transport and travel, food, and place-making and spatial planning. Public sector practitioners see an important and distinct role for PHS in these policy areas.

- The workshops supported PHS taking a systems approach to delivering public health outcomes and called for policy and action on climate and health to be better integrated and embedded across the public sector.
- The workshops identified the need for more to be done to foster consistent approaches, improve communications and public sector collaboration and to scale up the resources, tools and training available on climate and health. Delegates saw a vital role for PHS in fostering, advocating for and developing collaborative solutions to these challenges.

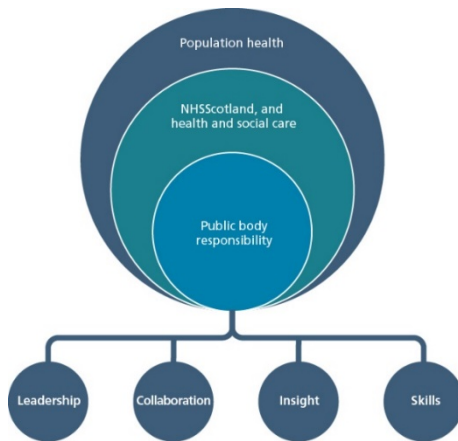
PHS took all feedback into account in the development and refinement of the ambitions and actions within this strategic approach, particularly in relation to where the organisation can bring a unique contribution and added value, at both a national and local level.

## Our action on climate change: enablers and key areas for action

For each area of focus we have:

- stated our overarching goal
- identified action that we will take between 2023-2026, which will contribute towards achieving that goal
- set out the long-term outcomes we want to contribute towards beyond 2026
- outlined a number of measures to track progress against these outcomes

Four key enablers have been identified as to support the delivery of this strategy. These are Leadership, Collaboration, People Skills and Insight



### Leadership

As Scotland's national public health agency, we have a unique role in shaping policy development and delivery, at a national and local level, which seeks to address our population health challenges and protect the health and wellbeing of our communities. We recognise climate change is a public health emergency and therefore, have a lead role to play in shaping the narrative on the risks that climate change poses to health, while also highlighting the opportunities that action taken to address these impacts can have for health and equity.



### Collaboration

We recognise that we will only achieve progress on our ambitions by working closely across teams within PHS, and together with a range of external partners, take a whole system approach at a national and local level. Within PHS, this means integrating climate change into existing programmes of work. Externally, this means collectively taking action with partners and stakeholders to embed health and equity in policy and action across all sectors.



### Insight

Public health knowledge, intelligence and evidence to inform actions and monitor their impacts, is fundamental to achieving an equitable and sustainable transition to net zero in Scotland and to creating more resilient places. PHS' insights will further our collective understanding of the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing, and of the impact of climate action (adaptation and mitigation) on health, equity and sustainability outcomes. Sharing this understanding nationally supports spread and scale of what works locally.



### Skills

As individuals, it is important that we all focus on the changes we can each make and embrace the role we play in influencing others to take positive action on climate change. However, transformational change requires building capacity and capability within and beyond the public health workforce about the building blocks of good health and how these connect to climate impacts and actions that deliver benefits for climate, health, and equity.



## Population Health

**Our Goal:** *We will play a lead role in ensuring that the transformational action required to achieve a just transition to a net-zero, climate resilient Scotland maximises the opportunity to integrate health co-benefits and reduce inequalities, while understanding and addressing the population health risks of climate change.*

### The outcomes to which we will contribute:

- The climate emergency is communicated and understood as a health threat and our response to it as a great opportunity through which to improve health and equity.
- Climate related health impacts, including the differential impacts on specific geographical locations (e.g., rural communities) and population groups, are better understood and used to create more climate-resilient communities.
- National and local decision makers have access to public health knowledge, intelligence and evidence to inform and prioritise policy and action related to climate change, and use this to minimise health harms, maximise health benefits and address health inequalities.
- National and local decision-makers in all relevant areas integrate a Health in All Policy approach<sup>6</sup>.
- Climate, health and equity outcomes are integrated into place-based approaches.

## Delivering against this goal

Our actions focus on:

- **Creating understanding** - Raising awareness about the connections between climate change and health, engaging with policymakers, and the public, to communicate how our changing climate effects health and how climate action can contribute to improved health outcomes.
- **Developing and enhancing research and evidence** - Contributing to research in order to understand health vulnerabilities to, and differential impacts of climate change in Scotland, and gather evidence on climate-related health opportunities and risks.
- **Driving leadership and collaboration**– Through stakeholder engagement and advocacy, integrating population health and equity into national, regional and local climate policies and practices.
- **Ensuring preparedness and response** – Anticipating climate-related risks, prioritising preparedness and response measures.

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<sup>6</sup> A [Health in All Policies](#) approach supports partnership working across sectors to maximise the health co-benefits of decision making and minimise health harms. This will improve population health and health equity by directly and indirectly impacting on the building block of health.

## Key measures

- Number of designated Scottish public body climate change policies and strategies that explicitly recognise the climate emergency as a public health issue.
- Number of public body climate change strategies that explicitly recognise health equity, demonstrating a commitment to ensuring that climate actions benefit all communities, especially those disproportionately affected by climate-related health risks.
- Completion of feasibility study on development of Scotland- specific climate related health indicators.
- Number of cross-sector national and local policies relevant to climate that adopt a Health in All Policy approach, as demonstrated through the use of Health Impact Assessments, and similar tools.
- Measurement of public awareness and engagement levels related to climate change as a public health issue, indicating the success of communication and education efforts to mobilising public support.

“Climate change is not just an environmental challenge; it's a profound public health issue. Embracing climate action is fundamental to safeguarding the well-being of present and future generations.

That is why our climate strategy prioritises the achievement of net zero, and climate resilience and adaptation, aiming to create a Scotland where communities thrive amidst changing environmental challenges”.



Ewan Pow, PHS Non-Executive Director and Board Climate Change & Sustainability Champion



<b>To work towards achieving this goal, by 2026 we will:</b>	
<b>Create understanding - Communicate and raise public awareness of the vital links between climate change and population health</b>	
Work with key partners to develop a national communication strategy on the climate emergency as a public health issue, highlighting the co-benefits of action taken at both an institutional and individual level, to tackle climate change. This links into the Scottish Government's <a href="#">Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change</a> .	
Use PHS public health programmes to disseminate relevant climate and health messages through their activities and communication channels, such newsletters and blogs. This includes promoting messages which highlight the potential co-benefits for health of climate change action.	
Evaluate the impact of PHS public communications on climate and health messaging, taking into the account the most recent evidence on behavioural science and risk communication in continuing to improve our messaging.	
<b>Develop and enhance evidence and research - Gather, analyse, and share data and encourage research and evaluation to produce a clear understanding of health status, inequities, vulnerabilities that are related to climate change impacts, and wider impacts of climate action on health and wellbeing.</b>	
Continue to provide evidence of effective interventions to generate health benefits from climate action.	
Support the use of Health Impact Assessments approaches in the development of national policy related to climate change.	
In collaboration with partners, identify gaps in the evidence regarding the health co-benefits of action on climate change, and influence the direction of future research and/or commissioning in response.	
Develop our health surveillance capacity, data and intelligence in relation to understanding the direct and indirect impacts of climate change in Scotland (e.g., vectors; health impacts of adverse weather, unintentional injuries; contamination; infection) and work at a national and local level to ensure these data inform responses.	
Undertake a feasibility study into the potential to develop Scotland-specific climate-related health metrics and indicators to build understanding on the population health impacts of climate change, including how population groups are being differentially impacted.	
<b>Drive leadership and collaboration- Provide public health leadership and contribute to enabling effective partnership working on climate change at a local, regional, and national level</b>	
Build on cross-agency climate health dialogues with other UK public health agencies to share ideas, intelligence and best-practice in relation to our activity on climate change and health. Through dialogue and cooperation, identify opportunities for joint projects, policy alignment, and collective advocacy on climate action and its impact on public health.	

Using our knowledge and expertise, provide national leadership on the prioritisation of public health priorities within the climate agenda. This will ensure the cumulative impact of climate change is considered and addressed in tandem with other major, linked issues in Scotland, including, for example, the cost-of-living crisis, widening health inequalities.	
Influence the integration of health, wellbeing and equity impacts into national climate change adaptation and mitigation policy development. Between 2023-2026, this includes our contribution to the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, Scottish Climate Change Plan, Climate Change Adaptation Programme and Just Transition Plans, and input into the Scottish Government's Care and Wellbeing Portfolio.	
Work with national and local government to ensure climate change mitigation and decarbonisation policy and investments across sectors (including transport, food and energy systems, housing, natural environment, the economy and spatial planning) maximise co-benefits for health and prevent widening inequalities and negative impacts on health and wellbeing.	
Continue to embed net zero and climate resilience in our work on transport, housing, natural spaces and place-based working and scope out how we integrate climate into our programmes of work including food and diet, the economy and mental health.	
Develop our understanding of the added value that PHS could bring at a local level to support the integration and delivery of place and population-based adaptation and mitigation measures to achieve health benefits.	
Share and promote use of resources and tools (e.g., the use of Health Impact Assessments and the Place Standard Tool) with our partners at a local level to advance the delivery of climate-related health action and interventions, engaging through key forums such as Community Planning Partnerships, Integrated Joint Boards, Regional Economic Partnerships and City Region Deals.	
Advocate for the integration of health considerations into public body climate action plans at both a local and national level	
<b>Ensure preparedness and response - Build capacity to effectively anticipate, prepare for and respond to emerging climate-related health emergencies</b>	
Work with the Scottish Government and other partners to develop an Adverse Weather Plan for Scotland.	
Further develop monitoring systems to better understand the changing factors that may affect disease spread in health and social care settings and to further understand the risk of disease spread in health and social care settings	

**Case study page to be completed/designed**

**Case Study: Adaptation Scotland  
and Improvement Service  
Partnership**

**Case Study: Public Health and  
Sustainable Transport  
Partnership Group**

**Case Study: Adverse Weather  
Planning**



## NHS Scotland and Health & Social Care Delivery

***Our Goal:** We will support the delivery of NHS Scotland and Health and Social Care climate ambitions, in particular by encouraging NHS Boards to look beyond delivery of their core functions and consider how they can maximise their contribution to improving the wellbeing of communities.*

### **The outcomes to which we will contribute:**

- NHS Health Boards fulfil their anchor institution<sup>7</sup> responsibilities and contribute to creating net zero, climate ready, healthy and equitable communities across Scotland.
- NHS Scotland has the relevant public health data and intelligence to monitor progress on delivery of its Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy.
- The NHS workforce has a high-level awareness and understanding of climate change as a significant public health issue.

### **Delivering against this goal**

PHS has an established anchor institution programme which supports NHS Boards. Hospitals and health and social care settings have a significant impact on their surrounding places and the environment. By engaging with their communities, they can leverage their resources, expertise and long-term commitment for the benefit of those communities to address the interconnected challenges faced by Scotland today including poverty, inequality and the climate emergency.

PHS recognises the importance of equipping the NHS and social care workforce with a better understanding of the link between climate change and health. For example, health services and clinicians can also play a role in advocating for health promoting, environmental action in areas such as transport and access to nature. We will work with our partners to develop climate change awareness training and educational resources for the NHS workforce.

It is also imperative that NHS Scotland has access to the relevant data and evidence to monitor and assess progress against its Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy – we will continue to engage with the Scottish Government and health boards to determine how and where we can most effectively contribute.

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<sup>7</sup> Public Health Scotland, [Anchor Institutions](#).

“The climate emergency is no longer a potential or a distant threat. Instead it is a public health emergency, already unfolding in multiple ways and affecting people globally. It requires greater action now to prevent its worst impacts and health and care services must make their contribution in understanding and reducing these impacts. Clinicians and staff can be at the heart of work to achieve a culture of stewardship within NHS Scotland, where resources are safeguarded and used responsibly to provide environmentally sustainable healthcare that delivers both for our patients and for our planet”.



Professor Sir Gregor Smith  
Scotland's Chief Medical Officer

## Key measures

- NHS Health Boards actively engaged in initiatives to fulfil their anchor institution responsibilities
- Number of NHS Health Boards using the Place Standard tool with climate lens to engage with local communities.
- Number of collaborative Green Health Partnerships established
- Completion of GIS mapping of the NHS outdoor estate.
- Development of health and wellbeing component of a Natural Capital Assessment tool.

## Case Study: Mapping NHS Scotland's Outdoor Estate

<b>To work towards achieving this goal, by 2026 we will:</b>	
<b>Place-based impact – Engage in climate and health planning that maximises community benefit</b>	
Encourage health boards to deliver on their NHS Anchor Organisation role, utilising a place-based approach to maximise the health co-benefits for communities in a way that best meets their needs.	
Lead development of the health and wellbeing component of the Natural Capital Assessment process in NHS Scotland to value the NHS Estate.	
Support health boards to develop Green Health Partnerships to maximise the therapeutic benefits of the environment for staff, patients and their local communities.	
PHS will contribute to support GEP in development of NHS greenspace interventions	
<b>Data and intelligence – Provide data and evidence insight to assist in delivery of the NHS Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy</b>	
Scope out the health data and intelligence requirements of Scottish Government and NHS Boards in relation to supporting the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the NHS Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy	
<b>Learning and development – Work in partnership to enhance NHS workforce, and wider, understanding of the relationship and interface between climate change and population health</b>	
Work with NHS partners including NSS and NES to develop e-learning modules for NHS Scotland colleagues which strengthens their understanding of the climate emergency as a public health issue.	
<b>NHS strategy governance – Actively participate and support the delivery of the NHS Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy</b>	
Continue to participate in, and provide health improvement and health protection input, into the Board and delivery workstreams on the building blocks of health and equity and generation of health benefits through climate action.	

## Public body responsibility

**Our Goal:** *We will become a net zero, climate resilient and sustainable organisation.*

### The outcomes to which we will contribute:

- We are a net-zero, climate resilient and sustainable organisation by 2040, earlier if possible.
- Environmental considerations are embedded into our strategic, business and organisational plans, policies, and procedures.
- Structures are in place to ensure oversight, accountability and transparency in climate-related decision-making and to track progress.
- Enhancement of our digital capability, in line with technological advancements, to support our sustainability ambitions.
- Our workforce adopts green practices and sustainable ways of working, with co-benefits for their own health and wellbeing.
- Our ways of working clearly demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, leading change in others.
- Our environmental performance is proactively managed and goes beyond mandatory requirements.
- We understand the potential impact of climate change on the organisation and have the flexibility and skills to adapt to a changing climate.
- We expand our work with partners to share resources, whether physical or knowledge/skills, to make the most efficient use of our shared assets and reduce waste.

## Delivering against this goal

PHS is taking measures to address its own emissions and contribute to the broader efforts to combat climate change in Scotland.

Working closely with our shared service provider and other national Health Boards, we will continue to implement proactive strategies across energy efficiency, sustainable procurement, waste management, and use of active transport to reduce our carbon footprint.

We will promote sustainability and climate action across our workforce – demonstrating our commitment to environmental stewardship.

### Case Study: Glasgow office move/co-location

## Key measures

- Number of environmental performance metrics tracked beyond legal requirements, reflecting PHS' proactive approach to managing its environmental impact to reach its net zero target by 2040 or earlier.
- Clearer inclusion of environmental factors in business planning & reporting.
- All papers to PHS Board and governance committees include climate impact considerations
- Increase in the adoption and implementation of digital technologies and innovations to enhance sustainability efforts and PHS' carbon footprint.
- Increase in the proportion of PHS staff who report using sustainable modes of travel to work from baseline survey.
- Number of staff that participate in climate-related colleague engagement campaigns and initiatives.
- Assessment of PHS' ability to identify and tackle potential climate change impacts on its operations, measured through adaptation plans and successful implementation of resilience measures.

"It is now very clear: climate change is real, it is happening now, and we must take effective action to prevent or minimise the harmful impacts of the Climate Emergency on the health of the Scottish population. Reducing the levels of greenhouse gas, making our health and care systems less damaging to the environment, and building more sustainable communities are all important ways in which we will adapt to meet the challenges of the Climate Emergency. By making work to address the Climate Emergency part of its everyday core activities, Public Health Scotland's new strategy is providing an example to across Scotland."



Phil Mackie, Consultant in Public Health, NHS Grampian, and on behalf of the Scottish Directors of Public Health in his role as Chair of Climate Emergency and Sustainability Sub-Group



<b>To work towards achieving this goal, by 2026 we will:</b>	
<b>Defining the scope of our contribution – Contribute to emissions reduction targets where possible, support adaptation programmes and exercise our functions in a sustainable manner.</b>	
Develop a route map with clear milestones which charts our journey towards becoming a net zero carbon and climate resilient organisation.	
Ensure a robust environmental management system to measure carbon emissions from direct PHS activities and support the prioritisation of improvement activities on those areas of greatest impact.	
Deliver a PHS Estates Strategy that ensures the organisation can achieve net zero carbon by 2038.	
Manage our offices, working with co-location partners and building owners, to minimise our use of energy and physical resources and reduce waste.	
<b>Business processes –Continue to enhance our business processes so they better reflect our net zero ambitions.</b>	
Ensure our environmental ambitions are clearly expressed through our strategic and business planning processes, to drive ownership across our workforce	
Ensure integration of climate ambitions into the PHS Procurement Strategy	
Work with other building tenants and owners to improve our ability to use data to internally monitor and report our progress towards becoming a net zero organisation.	
<b>Digital technology – Monitor, assess, and where possible, enhance our digital capability in line with our sustainability ambitions</b>	
Work with NSS, to maximise our digital capability, making effective use of our existing technology and resources, and seeking out new solutions where appropriate, to reduce our carbon footprint.	
Regularly review and audit our online content and physical publications to reduce their environmental impact	
<b>Organisational culture – Support PHS colleagues to develop their understanding of climate change and embrace more sustainable ways of working that contribute to personal and organisational health and wellbeing</b>	
Deliver a Sustainable Travel Strategy with the purpose of continuing to reduce our business-related travel through smarter and more effective ways of working and using of more sustainable methods of transport.	
Ensure that our business processes and policies encourage our workforce to choose the most environmentally sustainable options.	

<b>Leading the change – Empower PHS colleagues to lead the change through example and advocacy</b>	
Create a Green Champions Network for PHS colleagues– to help encourage colleague-led activity which promotes more sustainable behaviours and practices across PHS, and in our personal lives.	
Support our colleagues to embrace more environmentally conscious decision-making at work, from waste reduction and recycling to choices on project design and delivery.	
Develop and equip our workforce with the knowledge, and our key messages, regarding climate and health intersections to contribute at meetings, conferences, and in other external forums.	

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## Measuring Progress

A monitoring and performance framework has been developed to track the delivery of our strategic approach, ensuring we report accurately and transparently on progress achieved. A summary of the framework can be found on page X.

In addition to our commitments under Scotland's Public Bodies Climate Change Reporting Duties, throughout the life of this strategic approach, we will produce an annual progress report. It will detail the action we have taken in that period and provide an update on progress towards achieving the identified outcomes.

We have a well-established cross-organisational Climate and Sustainability Programme Group, led by our Chief Officer. This group will hold responsibility for monitoring activity and progress made against this strategic approach, and for meeting both internal and external reporting requirements. It will also ensure this remains a live document, with an ongoing profile.

Delivery of our strategic approach will support the core aims of the Scottish Government's Care and Wellbeing Portfolio. Through the Portfolio, we are working to bring together key reforms into a single coherent portfolio to improve population health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities and improve the sustainability of the health and social care system.

Finally, to ensure our actions make a positive contribution to national and international climate change ambitions, we have aligned the outcomes in our strategic approach to both the National Performance Framework and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. See Appendix X.

A summary of our high-level actions can be found in Appendix X and a glossary of terms in Appendix X.

"This strategic approach reflects the spirit of collaboration, uniting public health professionals, national and local policymakers, and communities to forge a sustainable and healthier future for Scotland.

We look forward to work with all our partners, and the people across Scotland, to bring our approach to life"



Manira Ahmad, Chief Officer, PHS

**Monitoring and Performance Framework – *to be completed once actions, outcomes, measures finalised/approved***

Workstream and actions	Long-term outcomes	Measures
<b>Population Health Leadership</b>		
<b>NHS Scotland and Health and Social Care</b>		
<b>Public Body Responsibilities</b>		

**Appendix 1 - Mapping our performance to national and international ambitions - *to be completed/designed as infographic once outcomes, measures finalised/approved***

<b>United Nations Sustainable Development Goals</b>				
<b>Scottish Government</b>	<b>NPF Indicators</b>			
	<b>NHS Scotland Delivery /NHS Plan Priorities</b>			
<b>PHS Strategic Plan</b>		<i>Vision and key objectives to be inserted</i>		
<b>PHS Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach 2023-2026</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Population Health</b>	<b>NHS Scotland and Health &amp; Social Care</b>	<b>Public body responsibilities</b>
	<b>Outcomes</b>			
	<b>Delivery measures</b>			

**Appendix 2 – Summary of high-level actions - *to be completed once actions finalised/approved***

<b>Population Health</b>
<b>NHS Scotland and Health and Social Care</b>
<b>Public Body Responsibilities</b>

## Appendix 2 – Glossary of terms

**Adaptation:** Adjustments in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities."

**A whole-system approach to climate resilience, health and equity:** Involves applying systems thinking, methods and practice to better understand challenges and identify collective actions. Adopting a whole-system approach requires partnerships between a broad range of stakeholders to deliver better lives for the people of Scotland.

**Building blocks of health:** The non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.

**Community wealth building:** An economic approach to supporting a local economy which in turn can reduce inequalities, reduce poverty and improve environmental sustainability and economic stability.

**Greenhouse gas:** A gas which absorbs infrared radiation emitted from the surface of the Earth, helping to retain a portion of that energy in the atmosphere as heat.

**Health and wellbeing co-benefits:** Broader benefits to health and wellbeing beyond those intended by the climate action. For example, green infrastructure can be used to increase absorption of rainfall, slow the rates of run-off and reduce overheating by providing shade. It can also contribute to better mental and physical health by providing opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and relaxation.

**Health inequalities:** The unjust and avoidable differences in people's health across the population and between specific population groups. Health inequalities go against the principles of social justice because they are avoidable. They do not occur randomly or by chance. They are socially determined by circumstances largely beyond an individual's control. These circumstances disadvantage people and limit their chance to live longer, healthier lives.

**Health in All Policies:** An approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies and avoids harmful health impacts, in order to improve population health and health equity.

**The Just Transition:** The process of designing policies to ensure the benefits of climate change action are shared widely, while ensuring the costs do not unfairly burden those least able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes. The recent report from the Climate Change Committee for the Scottish Government Just Transition and climate change adaptation extended the working definition of the just transition process to climate impacts and adaptation interventions.

**Mitigation:** Reducing the greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere in order to slow or stop global climate change. This involves using your car less, flying less, buying local food, refurbishing boilers to make them more efficient and reducing your energy consumption

**Net zero:** Net zero emissions are achieved when anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere are balanced by anthropogenic removals over a specified period.

**Place-based approaches:** An approach that seeks to understand the issues, interconnections and relationships in a place and coordinating action and investment to improve the quality of life for that community.

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