

**SCOTTISH
PUBLIC
SERVICES
OMBUDSMAN**



People Centred | Improvement Focused

Environment, Sustainability and Biodiversity Report 2019-20

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Who we are

1. About us

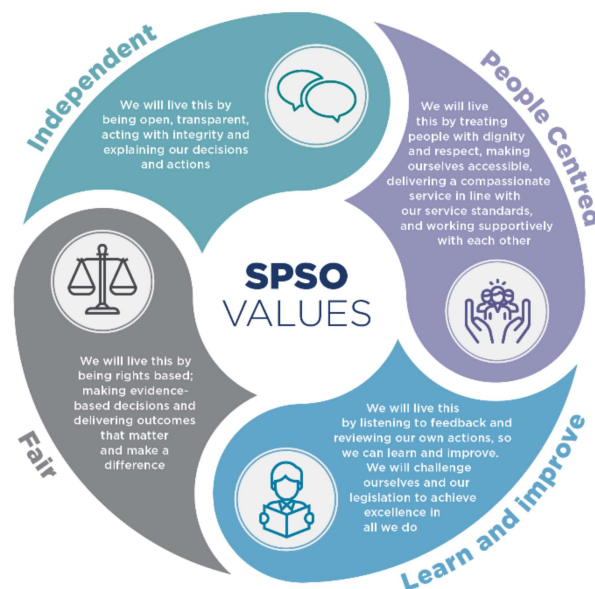
1.1. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman has a wide remit, covering a variety of functions and services. The Ombudsman's powers and duties come (predominantly) from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002, which gives her four distinct statutory functions:

- the final stage for complaints about most devolved public services in Scotland including councils, the health service, prisons, water and sewerage providers, Scottish Government, universities and colleges.
- specific powers and responsibilities to publish complaints handling procedures, and to monitor and support best practice in complaints handling.
- independent review service for the Scottish Welfare Fund with the power to overturn and substitute decisions made by councils on Community Care and Crisis Grant applications.
- the role of Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) for the NHS in Scotland, the final stage for complaints about how the NHS considers whistleblowing disclosures and the treatment of individuals concerned.

1.2. All of the SPSO's services are free and independent.

2. Values

2.1. We are committed to living our values to deliver our functions efficiently, effectively and economically. While our remit is wide, and expanding, we aspire to deliver our business coherently and consistently across all functions. We strive to continue to give great service to all who come to us; whether to make a complaint about a public body, seek our advice and support, ask for a review of a Scottish Welfare Fund decision or complain about how the NHS has handled a whistleblowing concern.



3. Vision

3.1. We contribute actively and positively to high performing Scottish public services. Recognised for our innovative world-leading approach, we put people and learning at the heart of all we do.

3.2. We will live our values through four strategic themes that drive our activity and annual business plans.

- Accessibility
- Access to justice
- Capacity
- Standards

Summary

- 3.3. Scotland has ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, along with other public-sector bodies, SPSO recognises its role in taking forward this agenda. In May 2019, the Scottish Government declared a climate emergency and in June 2019, the First Minister launched 'The Big Climate Conversation'. This conversation will look at how Scotland becomes a net-zero emissions nation.
- 3.4. Most of the SPSO's resources are dedicated to delivering its statutory functions. However, the SPSO can make a direct contribution to sustainability by ensuring that it implements policies and procedures that continue to reduce its carbon footprint.
- 3.5. Critical to measuring progress against Scotland's action plan to reduce emissions and progress climate action, the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015 requires an annual report to be submitted using the Scottish Government's online system. The SPSO has been voluntarily publishing these figures on an annual basis since 2011-12.
- 3.6. Additionally, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 introduced a further statutory requirement for public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty.
- 3.7. This report is our response to these duties.

4. Performance in carbon emissions

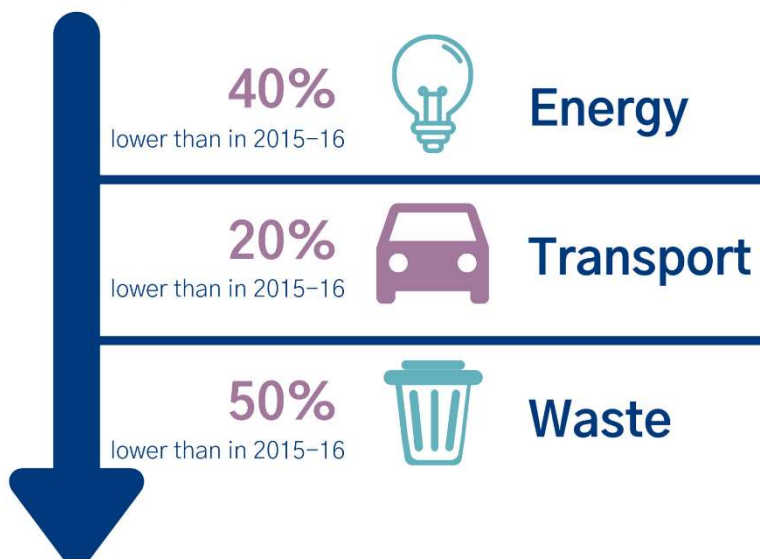
- 4.1. The SPSO became the leaseholder for Bridgeside House in August 2018 on behalf of all three office-holders – Children and Young Person's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS), the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The carbon emission figures contained in this report include the waste and utility figures for all three organisations and transport figures for SPSO.
- 4.2. In 2019-20, we reduced our emission by 8.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted (tCO₂e) compared to the previous year and 26.6 tCO₂e since 2015-16. The SPSO had a target to emit no more than 50 tCO₂ by 2020 which we have achieved.

4.3. We have maintained a continuous reduction in our level of carbon emissions year-on-year. We have reduced our carbon footprint by thirty-seven per cent against our 2015-16 baseline, and by more than forty-five per cent since 2009-10 (85.3 tCO₂e).

Carbon emissions 2015-16 to 2019-20



4.4. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the scope 3 figures for business car travel for 2019-20 are not available. Therefore, SPSO have calculated the scope 3 figures using the 2018-19 emissions from business car travel. Car travel usually accounts for one to two per cent of the carbon emissions for the business year. The figures will be adjusted when 2019-20 business car emissions are able to be calculated.



Scope	1 Gas	2 Electricity	3 Waste, transport and water usage	Total tCO2e
2015-16 - baseline	27	34	11	72.0
2016-17	29	32	10	71.0
2017-18	25.6	26.1	8.2	59.9
2018-19	16.5	27.7	9.9	54.2
2019-20 – SPSO plus CYPCS and SHRC (shared accommodation in Bridgeside House)	18.4	18.7	8.3	45.4
% change 2019-20 versus 2015-16 baseline	-32%	-45%	-25%	-37%

4.5. Further details of these reductions are in our sustainability reports on our website: <https://www.spsos.org.uk/sustainability-reports>.

5. Environmental and sustainable development

Facilities

- 5.1. The SPSO continues to explore opportunities for sharing services with the officeholders supported by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB). One of these opportunities arose when the lease for the existing office became due for renewal.
- 5.2. Following an extensive 18-month project, managed by the SPCB, the SPSO became the leaseholder for Bridgeside House from August 2018. The SPSO adopted a reuse and upcycle philosophy for the accommodation move to Bridgeside House in 2018, significantly reducing the requirement for new furniture and equipment. Additionally, SPSO used the existing floor covers and paint work where possible and installed limited closed office spaces. The lockable cabinets installed in the office for storing confidential waste were also made from wood residue from the sawmill industry rather than timber, decreasing our impact on deforestation.
- 5.3. Bridgeside House has double glazed windows with trickle vents to allow temperature control and lots of natural light. This allowed the SPSO to remove the need for desk lamps and personal heaters. It also has LG7 compatible and motion-

sensor lighting to reduce electricity use as well as lower ceilings to allow better conservation of energy. The SPSO encouraged the installation of smart meters, providing the ability to better track electricity usage.

- 5.4. The air-conditioning provided throughout the building is tempered fresh-air mechanical ventilation, for energy efficiency and good health, and the temperature is regulated using thermostats timed to operate only during office hours. Air-cooling facilities are only installed in the large, shared meeting spaces.
- 5.5. Further environmentally conscious decisions included the installation of zip heater water boilers in t-points, combi-ovens and induction hob in shared kitchen, no use of chrome in any fittings, and a 'follow me' printing system, requiring an ID card to print documents, significantly reducing our volume of paper waste.
- 5.6. Each t-point and printer station has recycling facilities, and no one has a personal bin at their desk, thereby encouraging appropriate recycling. As part of the Health and Safety induction, new staff are advised of SPSO's recycling procedures and commitment to reducing carbon emissions/waste. All of the SPSO's general waste is recycled, alongside items such as toner cartridges, batteries, pallets and electrical appliances such as heaters. As part of DSE training, staff are also advised to use the stairs in the office, if possible, to reduce energy use.
- 5.7. The new facilities have enabled us to continue to reduce the total emissions for all three organisations, even when compared with SPSO sole output in previous years. These equate to less than 0.55 tCO₂e per FTE employee or 0.01 tCO₂e per square metre (m²) floor space we occupy.

Transport and travel

- 5.8. Our Travel and Expenses Policy encourages staff to travel on public transport wherever possible for work related business.
- 5.9. We converted two secure car parking spaces into bicycle storage for up to 22 bikes, and three car parking spaces into a purpose built shower block to support sustainable transport options for staff.
- 5.10. In order to encourage bike travel, the SPSO also offer a bicycle and safety equipment loan, which has been met with great interest and moderate take-up.

6. Biodiversity

- 6.1. The Ombudsman is committed to supporting the Scottish Government's policies on environmental and sustainable development and understands her obligation to publish a biodiversity report. The SPSO does not own or manage land and, therefore, we have limited opportunity to carry out activities for biodiversity. The main functions of the SPSO are carried out from a single location in central Edinburgh.
- 6.2. We support biodiversity through:

- reducing our carbon footprint;
- encouraging staff to reduce their personal carbon footprints by running an interactive session as part of our business planning day;
- minimising waste and reducing waste to landfill through recycling;
- using products made from recycled material including office supplies such as Ecolabel certified paper and pens;
- providing filtered mains tap water to reduce plastic bottle use;
- switching to fully biodegradable and fragrance-free cleaning products in Bridgeside House;
- using local and environmentally-minded suppliers wherever possible;
- reducing the total kilometres travelled on business and choosing more sustainable travel options or video conferencing;
- supporting 'paper lite' meetings and introducing an electronic file-sharing platform to reduce our reliance on paper;
- raising awareness of biodiversity and sustainability issues through our climate change working group;
- supplying recycling outlets throughout the office;
- implementing a 'wash it and squash it' campaign to reduce waste volume; and
- reminder labels to 'switch it off' at light switches and monitors.

7. Climate change group

- 7.1. A climate change working group was introduced during 2016-17, made up of staff representatives across the organisation. The group aims to share best practice, think creatively about sustainability opportunities and lead on new green initiatives.
- 7.2. Notably, with encouragement from colleagues in the climate change working group, staff make a variety of annual pledges each Climate Week. Pledges focus on changing behaviour, and include individual commitments to cut down on food packaging, take food waste home to compost and to upgrade all lightbulbs at home to energy saving versions.
- 7.3. The climate change group have also led recycling awareness sessions in their teams to encourage staff to recycle correctly and have visited our provider's local recycling centre to see what happens to our waste when it is recycled .

8. Working in partnership and communications

- 8.1. The SPSO's stationery and paper shredding suppliers are accredited to the ISO14001 international standard for environmental management systems. The paper we use in the office is recycled and sourced from a local supplier. We also work with Changeworks Recycling who have won awards for environmental best

practice. 100% of SPSO's shredded paper is delivered to paper mills in Scotland where it is recycled into low-grade tissue products.

- 8.2. The Ombudsman publishes a Climate Change Duties Report on an annual basis that provides specific detail on her office's wider environmental sustainability efforts. These can be found on the SPSO website here at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/sustainability-reports>.

9. Looking ahead

- 9.1. So far the SPSO have significantly reduced our carbon emissions by 26.6 tCO_{2e} since 2015-16. We recognise that future reductions may not happen at the same rate and will be harder to achieve. We will continue to identify ways to further reduce our carbon emissions.
- 9.2. Going forward, the SPSO will aim to continue reducing emissions wherever possible and embed awareness of environmental issues and the need to mitigate climate change, and consider our wider social impact.

Monitoring

- 9.3. Gas and water are currently paid for via a service charge to the Bridgeside House landlord. Therefore, the SPSO is currently unable to access accurate meter readings for the use of these utilities. One of the SPSO's future actions will be to gain accurate meter readings for both gas and water. This will enable us to report more accurate emissions figures going forward and help us to work towards the goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Policy and strategy development

- 9.4. The SPSO will also work to further develop our climate change working group and network of green champions. It is hoped over the coming year, the climate change working group will draft a sustainability strategy incorporating actions resulting from implementing the Climate Change Assessment Tool (CCAT). The strategy will provide carbon emission targets, cover actions to improve biodiversity, and promote sustainable working practices. Initial discussions around biodiversity actions include supporting a Scottish charity dedicated to reversing biodiversity loss.

Working practices

- 9.5. In March 2020, the SPSO moved to a secure, electronic file-sharing platform. Looking ahead, we hope this tool will remove the need for creating a paper casefile for a majority of our cases, and encourage further electronic sharing of case documentation. This will reduce our reliance on couriering casefiles, thereby reducing our emissions and paper waste while increasing our data security.
- 9.6. From April 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been necessary for the majority of SPSO staff to work from home. Among other changes, this has resulted in staff routinely using video and telephone conferencing tools to attend meetings

'virtually', further reducing the environmental impact from travelling in person to meetings.

- 9.7. Additionally, all staff have been provided with laptops, which collectively use less energy than traditional desktop computers.

Looking past the pandemic, these changes to working practices may continue in an adapted form, as we review the learnings and outcomes from this new way of working.

Behaviours

- 9.8. As the new working practices are expected to result in significantly more working from home for all staff, the climate change working group will also focus on raising awareness amongst staff to further reduce emissions and work towards reducing their personal carbon footprints, by reducing energy use and making environmentally conscious decisions at home. For example, this may include encouraging staff to consider switching to renewable green energy tariffs, switching off unused electrical items, reducing food waste, or reducing thermostat temperatures.