

Our Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan 2024-2026



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Executive Summary

Climate change is recognised as possibly the most significant global threat that we face. Its consequences will impact all areas of life that are essential to achieve and maintain good health. This has highlighted, once again, the profound interdependence between population, societal, economic and environmental well-being.

In the last two years, Public Health Wales has also recognised its role to tackle the effects of climate change and this is reflected in the organisation's revised long-term strategy.

Our Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan for 2024-2026 succeeds the organisation's first plan for 2022-2024. It outlines the work Public Health Wales will be undertaking over the next two years to meet the NHS Wales target of net zero by 2030 and our carbon negative objective by 2035, as set out in our Long-Term Strategy.

Building on learning from the development of the first plan, this version of the Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan 2024-26 has been developed internally, led by a Decarbonisation Action Working Group.

Due to the overlap between decarbonisation, foundational and circular economy, biodiversity and our role in implementing the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, this new plan also includes actions that take the principles of these sustainability agendas forward.

Following on from our previous plan, the actions in our new plan will continue to focus on the following 5 activity stream areas:

❖ Carbon Management
❖ Buildings and our estate
❖ Transport and travel
❖ Procurement
❖ Approaches to delivering our services

1. Introduction

We are Public Health Wales – the national public health organisation for Wales. Our purpose is ‘working together for a healthier Wales’. We help all people in Wales live longer, healthier lives.

We have a [Long Term Strategy \(2023-35\)](#) which sets out our vision for achieving a healthier future for people in Wales by 2035. We are committed to working towards a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives and where everyone has fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and well-being.

The Research and Evaluation Strategy is an enabling strategy which helps us deliver our Long Term Strategy.

Our Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan enables us to achieve our Long Term Strategy and details the action we will take over the next two years to be a carbon-negative organisation (removing more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than we release). This plan builds on progress in delivering our first Decarbonisation Action Plan 2022-24 which was approved in April 2022 and includes actions we are taking across the organisation to support the foundational and circular economy agendas and contribute to the goals outlined in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). We have integrated these agendas within the plan due to the significant overlaps between them and to ensure that we have one plan that demonstrates our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint.



2. Strategic context

2.1 Well-being of Future Generations Act

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) (2015) means that Public Health Wales and other public bodies, must strive for a sustainable Wales. This means thinking more about the long-term, working better with people of Wales, with each other and with our communities to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

The WFG Act remains pivotal to helping us to work towards a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives and where all people have fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and well-being, now and for future generations.

As an organisation we have embraced the Sustainable Development Principles and when making decisions we take into account the impact it could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. We will continue to apply the Five Ways of Working through the development of our Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan:



Long term thinking

Identifying where we can add value through action that supports positive outcomes in the long term, both for current and future generations.



Involvement

Involving and engaging staff from across the organisation to help develop the plan and incorporating the views of our stakeholders.



Collaboration

Collaborating with all parts of the organisation and working with partner organisations and the supply chain to reduce carbon emissions and identify how we can help meet each other's objectives.



Integration

Identifying how the Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan objectives will contribute to multiple well-being goals. Considering how the plan supports other objectives and our Long-Term Strategy and how they may impact on each other's organisational and well-being objectives.



Prevention

Focusing on preventative action and supporting others to do the same, support a sustainable primary and community care system and prevent emission levels from increasing to reduce our impact on climate change to help prevent future health problems.

There is a significant link between the impacts of climate change and the health and well-being of people. In 2023, we identified tackling the public health effects of climate change as one of our six strategic priorities within our Long Term Strategy. Public Health Wales has a key role in reducing its own carbon footprint, not only to support the NHS Wales net zero target and deliver the relevant actions within the NHS Wales’s Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan, but also to make our contribution to reduce the impacts of climate change.

2.2 NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan

NHS Wales has a significant role to play in delivering decarbonisation across the public sector; whilst maintaining a safe, effective and high-quality health service. Published by NHS Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) in March 2021, NHS Wales’s Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan (2021-2030) sets out key initiatives and targets to deliver an ambitious but achievable reduction in carbon emissions from NHS Wales’s operations including:

- Buildings & Estates
- Transport
- Procurement
- Approaches to Healthcare

The delivery plan sets out 46 initiatives for decarbonising NHS Wales. One of the headline commitments requires all health boards and trusts to develop Decarbonisation Action Plans, which will be updated regularly and committed to within Integrated Medium-Term Plans on a 2-yearly basis. The NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan will be assessed and reviewed in 2025 and 2030.

NHS Wales Decarbonisation Target	Emissions (tCO₂e)	Percentage reduction from 2018/2019	Cumulative savings from initiatives will total (tCO₂e)
2025	845,600	-16%	459,000
2030	661,500	-34%	1,982,500

2.3 Net Zero

Achieving Net Zero means reaching a balance between Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions released into the atmosphere and the GHG emissions removed through natural carbon sinks and/or carbon offsetting. To reach net zero, GHG emissions from buildings, transport, service delivery, and procurement will have to be reduced/offset in alignment with actions set out in the NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan in order to meet the ambition for the Welsh public sector to be collectively net zero by 2030, set out in the second carbon budget in October 2021.

Our Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan has been co-produced, incorporating feedback and suggestions received through engagement with staff and representatives across the organisation. The Plan outlines several key milestones identified within five activity streams to support the decarbonisation of our operations:

- Carbon Management
- Buildings, Estates Planning & Land Use
- Transport & Travel
- Procurement
- Approaches to Delivering our Services

2.4 Foundational Economy

Background

The foundational economy work considers how we spend money in Wales and how we can make better decisions on how to spend it. NHS Wales accounts for a significant share of public spending in Wales. We want to ensure that we spend this money in a way that will benefit our people and our economy.

The Foundation Economy programme focuses on:

- The direct goods or services we buy (e.g. food for hospitals)
- The workforce we directly employ
- How the location and co-location of our services affects communities and how they can access services

It looks at how and where we can procure goods and services that can help the Welsh economy and support our population. By spending our budgets in Wales, we will support Welsh companies that provide jobs and training in a local supply chain. Local supply chains are also better for our environment and more resilient to global changes.

As an employer we want to ensure that local people have opportunities to train and find work in NHS Wales and social care at all levels. This will benefit our communities further. When considering the value that our spending can add to communities, we can also affect where services are located and how different services can be placed together to make them more accessible. We are working with stakeholders and suppliers to achieve the ambition of the foundational economy programme to prioritise spending our budgets in Wales.

Governance

We have established a Foundational Economy Oversight Group which is tasked with coordinating and driving forward opportunities and activities to further develop the Foundational Economy in Wales. This is a multidisciplinary group with representation from across the organisation.

Achievements to Date

We have made significant progress in supporting the Foundational Economy over the last two years, including:

- Embedded Foundational Economy as a theme throughout our strategy and plans.
- NHS Footprint Analysis developed with World Health Organization to inform Wales' foundation economy.
- Social Value Database and Simulator (SVDS) for Public Health developed and launched.
- Participation in a number of employment initiatives including Kickstart, Apprenticeships, Guaranteed Interview Scheme.
- Developed our estate and improved service locations to benefit the local population and economy.

- Worked with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership colleagues to develop our procurement reporting and to influence spend decisions in relation to the Foundational Economy.

2.5 Circular Economy

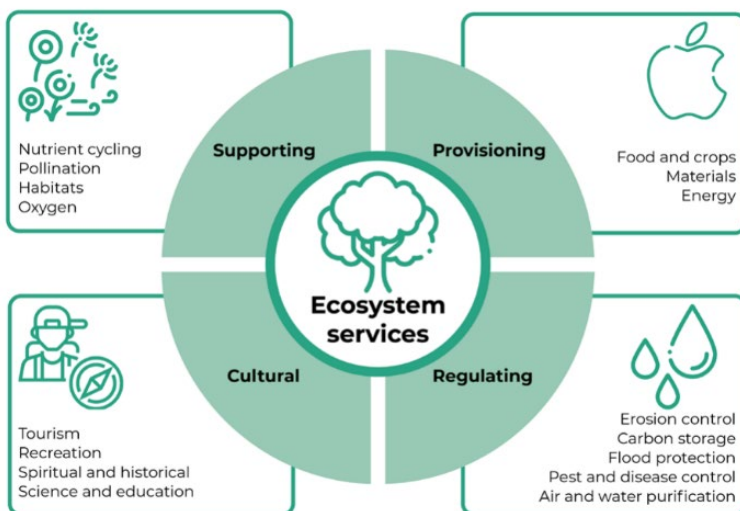
The circular economy is an alternative to traditional linear economies. In a linear economy, we take resources, make products, consume them, and then discard them as waste. This approach depletes finite raw materials and generates vast amounts of waste. In contrast, the circular economy aims to create a more sustainable and efficient system with the following benefits:

- **Reducing Waste:** By maximizing the lifetime of products and materials, the circular economy minimizes waste. It encourages practices like repair, reuse, and recycling, which help keep resources in circulation rather than ending up in landfills or incinerators.
- **Lowering CO2 Emissions:** Circular economy strategies can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For instance, efficient and circular use of materials in key industries (such as cement, steel, plastics, and aluminium) could cut global emissions by up to 40% by 2050. When circular approaches are applied to the food system as well, the impact could be even greater.
- **Optimizing Resources:** By designing out waste and promoting resource efficiency, the circular economy reduces our demand for raw materials. It encourages innovative solutions like product redesign, sharing platforms, and remanufacturing.
- **Sustainable Growth:** The circular economy ensures sustainable growth over time. It emphasizes recycling, repurposing, and giving waste a second life as new products. This approach benefits both the environment and the economy.

By adopting circular economy principles, we can become a more sustainable organisation and this is crucial for conserving resources, minimizing waste, and mitigating environmental impact. It's a step toward a more resilient and sustainable future.

2.6 Biodiversity

Healthy communities rely on healthy ecosystems. The ecosystems provide everything we need to survive – from clean air and water to food and medicines – and an interconnected network of plants and animals is vital to keep them functioning.



Categories and examples of ecosystem services.

Graphic taken from Welsh Parliament Senedd Research, 2021 [Biodiversity Research Briefing](#). Based on [UK National Ecosystem Assessment](#).

However, biodiversity is declining at an alarming rate. Globally over 1 million species are severely threatened, and in Wales one in six species is at risk of disappearing. Habitats are also shrinking due to changes in land-use, lack of management, the spread of invasive species and the impact of climate change.

The impact of this loss on ecosystem services could be catastrophic and threatens food and livelihood security as well as our physical and mental health.

In response to this, the Welsh Government declared a nature emergency in 2021 and the need to tackle the nature crisis is incorporated in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Section 6 of this Act requires public authorities to 'seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems' ensuring biodiversity is considered in business planning, policies, plans and projects.

Section 6 reports are carried out every three years and give an opportunity for us to review and evaluate the steps we are taking to support biodiversity, and to identify where we are having an adverse impact so that we can put positive steps in place towards reducing our impact. It also provides us with information that will allow us to review and update our Biodiversity Action Plan to ensure that it reflects new priorities and ways of working.

Our current Biodiversity Action Plan, which was published in 2019, is currently being reviewed with an updated plan due to be published in summer 2024.

3. Our Successes

We have delivered several projects over the last two years to reduce our environmental impact that contribute to the organisation's decarbonisation, circular and foundational economy agenda. A summary of these successes and achievements are set out below:

Changing our estate

We have continued to rationalise the estate, supporting staff to work differently in line with our Work How it works Best policy. This has reduced our carbon footprint by 60 tonnes CO₂e a year. During these projects circular economy principles have been applied and included the donating of furniture to communities and diverting waste from landfill. We have also modernised our Wrexham office and established two new Screening Hubs, upholding the principles of bringing health to the high street and supporting local communities. Facilities such as showers and bike racks have also been installed to support active travel. In addition to this the organisation achieved [ISO 140001 accreditation](#) in May 2023 covering our three main sites.

Embedding sustainable travel

In November 2023, our Abdominal Aortic Screening (AAA) Screening Fleet was replaced with hybrid and electric vehicles. Plans are also under development for the replacement of the existing fleet within Diabetic Eye Screening Wales (DESW), scheduled for replacement over the next two years.

We have supported and enabled staff to work from home reducing the need to commute daily. Staff are encouraged to consider impact on the environment when deciding how they travel to/from work and the cycle to work scheme has been promoted to staff as well as Healthy travel champions identified.

In December 2022 we achieved the [Cardiff Healthy Travel Charter](#) commitments and work is continuing to develop charters for other parts of Wales.

Enabling our staff to make sustainable choices

The work of our Health and Sustainability Hub has continued to encourage and support behavioural change to benefit the health and wellbeing of our staff, partners and wider community. We have developed a Sustainable Travel Toolkit as part of the Work How it Works Best initiative. A survey to understand how staff travel to and for work is also currently being undertaken, the results of which will be used to support staff to make healthier and more sustainable travel choices.

The Health and Sustainability Hub has also secured funding to take forward a research project to look at reducing single use plastics, high waste streams, PPE and associated emissions within our microbiology laboratories. This research will inform the action we will take over the next two years.

Working with Cynnal Cymru-Sustain Wales, we have developed the Sustainability Improvement for Teams 'SIFT' Healthy Environment Workshop. This two-hour virtual workshop enables workplace teams and individuals to identify and reduce their environmental impacts. We have continued to work towards our target of 20% of teams using the workshop each year and this was supported through three train the facilitator workshops that took place during October to December 2023.

To support our internal decarbonisation actions, we have created a staff network to support sustainable development. Our Green Advocates network has continued to grow and provides informal quarterly lunchtime sessions to enable discussion, learning, and action at team and individual level. We have also developed various e-guides and resources to support staff to embed sustainable behaviour, to help reduce

their emissions in work and at home. This includes the [‘Be the Change Sustainable Home and Agile Working’ e-guide](#) and the [‘Well-being Goals Challenge’](#).

Foundational and Circular Economy

Group established in 2023. Key achievements include:

- Developed and shared knowledge, resources and tools to help build a Wellbeing Economy in Wales with the NHS as a driver and a Foundational Economy. This includes starting to embed and promote a Value-Based approach to budget spending and investment prioritisation towards population health, well-being and equity.
- Worked with NWSSP Procurement Services to undertake a data review of PHW existing suppliers to establish the region and Health Board of Welsh spend, enabling further understanding of the Welsh Supplier base and areas for future action.
- The [Trauma and ACE \(TrACE\) Toolkit](#) is now being rolled out to every Further Education College in Wales and via the Area Planning Boards across all community and clinically based substance misuse services. Evaluations of the work in both sectors have measured the impact of the implementation of the toolkit on workforce and service users with positive change reported in user experience and health and wellbeing. Roll out will continue into 2024.

Supporting the system

As ‘champions of education’, we invited staff from across NHS Wales to attend ‘Call to Action’ online workshops in 2022. These online workshops were designed to help identify actions to reduce our impact on Climate Change to support the transition to a healthy, low carbon Welsh NHS. We are also developing our training offer, which has included Carbon Literacy sessions, with over 100 staff participating in the last two years. The Hub has also published an [infographic](#) to support staff to take actions to reduce their own carbon footprint and a [film](#) highlighting what staff are already doing to take action on climate change.

We launched the [Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme](#) in June 2022. It has been designed to support primary care contractors in Wales (general practice, community pharmacy, community optometry and primary care dental) implement mitigation and adaptation environmentally friendly actions. Consisting of over 50 clinical and non-clinical actions, the Scheme helps practices consider how they can be more environmentally sustainable in where they work, how they work and how they influence others, especially patients and the public, with regard to climate change.

We are also working across the system and with partners across Wales and the UK to provide leadership and help NHS Wales tackle specific priority areas identified in the NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan. Examples include education by increasing the knowledge amongst the primary care workforce on climate change; healthcare and medicines management through addressing key areas of medicines management particularly the high global warming potential of inhalers and through tackling pharmaceutical waste and specifically exploring inhaler recycling waste schemes.

4. Where are we now?

4.1 Climate Emergency & Net Zero Wales

In October 2021, the World Health Organization declared climate change to be the single biggest health threat facing humanity, due to rising global temperatures.

The earth has already warmed by 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels due to human activity. Urgent action is needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C to prevent devastating harm to health. Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better choices of transport, food and energy leads to improved health, particularly through reduced air pollution.

Wales has the environment and legislation to support the transformation needed to tackle climate change. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 makes sure that the climate is considered when everyday decisions are being made. This world-leading legislation places a duty on us to support the seven well-being goals put in place by the act.

We have a long history of work on climate change and sustainability, inside and outside of our organisation. We set up our Health and Sustainability Hub in 2016 to help put in place the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Hub has helped develop our approach to sustainability and to reducing our carbon-dioxide output. With our key stakeholders, we developed a comprehensive [health impact assessment of climate change in Wales](#), which was published in July 2023 to inform decision-making and policy on adapting to climate change.

In 2021, we carried out a review of the Climate Change Risk Assessment for Wales report (CCRA3). This report assessed 61 risks and opportunities from climate change, across sectors such as health, housing, the natural environment, business and infrastructure, and risks from the international effects of climate change. The report identified a significant number of risks that needed urgent public health action.

Since 2021, work has been underway across Public Health Wales and the wider health system to respond to the climate emergency. This has involved including activity on climate change in existing programmes, for example, Healthy Working Wales and work in Improvement Cymru, or developing new action programmes such as the Greener Primary Care Wales Scheme. We recognise that reducing our carbon emissions and taking action on climate change will help bring about direct improvements for public health and health equity.

4.2 The Role of Public Health Wales

As a key provider of NHS services across Wales, Public Health Wales has an important role to play in supporting sustainability activities. We align our own ambition with key priorities and targets set out in the NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan to ensure we reduce our carbon emissions to work to achieve Net Zero emissions. Public Health Wales will continue to work in co-ordination with our partner NHS health boards and trusts and with NHS Wales's Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP), to deliver our 2024-2026 Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan. We recognise that Public Health Wales can also provide an advisory role to support the wider delivery and inform future development of NHS Wales's Decarbonisation Strategic Action Plan. Our role as a system enabler, also contributes to the sustainability of the Welsh NHS and public services as detailed in the [March 2024 position statement](#) and includes programmes such as Greener Primary Care.

5. Our Journey to Net Zero

5.1 Our Emissions

Public Health Wales is required to submit its carbon emissions as part of the Welsh Government Public Sector reporting process¹ Following submission of 2022/23 data in September 2023, the table below summarises the latest emissions for the organisation.

Table 1 Emissions reported in kt CO₂e

	2021-22	2022/23
Buildings	0.44	0.40
Business Travel	0.18	0.28
Commuting	Not reported	Not reported
Fleet	0.18	0.28
Homeworking	0.61	0.50
Land	N/A	N/A
Supply Chain	30.21	15.62
Waste	0.09	0.08
Total	31.71	17.16

At the time of reporting, commuting data is not available as data is not collected. Methods for collating this information will be explored for future reporting. Business travel data also does not currently include all business travel. Further work in these areas is planned for 2024/25 (see travel section). Public Health Wales does not own or manage any land, so this reporting area is not applicable.

Whilst the data shows that we have reduced our carbon footprint by 45% since 2021/22, activity that increased our carbon footprint in 2021/22 was heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic response. This is particularly evident by the increased spend resulting in higher supply chain emissions in comparison to 2022/23.

The data also shows that building emissions and waste have remained similar but business travel and fleet emissions have increased by 55%. This is likely to be a result of more staff travelling for work purposes due to restrictions easing and our screening services recovering to pre pandemic activity levels. Due to the nature of our estate across Wales, it is not always possible to get accurate data and in some cases estimates have been included. For general and recycled waste, we only have one site where accurate data can be included where contract is provided by Biffa and landfill diversion reports are available. For other sites this has been

¹ <https://www.gov.wales/public-sector-net-zero-reporting-guide>

estimated based on volume collected. Stericycle (SRCL) provide accurate weight information for all of our clinical waste. Power, Gas and Water information is based on actual usage through 2022/23, provided as part of our energy contracts. Public Health Wales currently has one site that generates electricity through Solar PV.

Homeworking data is based on information collected in June 2022, staff headcount data and ongoing monitoring of usage of our estate. A number of assumptions have been made as data is not complete and working patterns vary throughout the organisation. It is estimated that currently 77% of homeworkers work 1-2 days a week from Public Health Wales premises. Supply chain data has been provided by our Procurement Team.

As can be seen in the data above supply chain is the most significant emissions source, accounting for over 90% of emissions. Public Health Wales follows the Welsh Government prescribed approach to calculating supply chain emissions. Welsh Government have recognised that supply chain emissions are very uncertain, as they are based on a screening assessment method and this estimate needs to be improved over time through the development of more accurate methods.

Whilst we have seen a reduction in carbon emissions from 2021/22 this will have been impacted by several factors and will be further impacted in the future by-

- Changes to non-recurrent expenditure, such as Covid-19 spend.
- Organisational growth
- Service transfers such as Improvement Cymru
- Developing methodologies for emission categories we are currently unable to calculate, such as staff commuting carbon footprint.

As a result, it is likely that we may not continue to see a future reduction in emissions across some areas such as business travel, our fleet and as we improve our data collection processes and methodologies, the organisation will have an improved position of our progress to a net zero target however we may see increased reporting of carbon emissions.

5.2 Progress implementing our Decarbonisation Action Plan 2022-24

Our current Decarbonisation Action Plan 2022-24 contains 75 actions. Progress updates have been provided by action leads, adopting the same process that has been established for updating the milestones within the Integrated Medium-Term Plan.

A number of the actions, whilst they have due dates for completion, will continue to be delivered, some are ongoing actions and others have due dates for delivery in future years so work may not have commenced but are marked as on track. These are being reviewed as part of the development of the next iteration of the plan.

As at quarter 3 2023/2024, 52% of the actions agreed in April 2022 have been completed (an increase of 15%) from August 2023, 43% are on track for delivery within the agreed timescales or ongoing action and 5% (same as last reporting period) are behind schedule.

Actions that are behind schedule or not completed have been replanned and included in this plan where relevant.

5.3 Progress implementing NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan

The NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan has been developed to drive an ambitious but realistic reduction in carbon emissions from NHS Wales's operations. The Delivery Plan sets 135 actions across 46 initiatives for decarbonising NHS Wales.

Due to the nature of the organisation, not all of the actions in the delivery plan are applicable to Public Health Wales and we are exempt from reporting against these. We are required to report against the Delivery Plan on a quarterly basis providing both a RAG status and delivery confidence assessment against the 58 actions applicable to the organisation.

As at quarter 3 2023/2024, 58 actions, 36% of the actions in the Delivery Plan have been completed for Public Health Wales (an increase of 15% since the last reporting period), 50% are on track for delivery within the agreed timescales or ongoing action and 13% are behind or at risk of falling behind schedule (a decrease of 2% since the last quarter). Detail of the actions behind schedule are included below. Actions that are behind schedule or not completed have been replanned and included in this plan where relevant.

It should be noted that many of the actions that are included in the Delivery Plan are dependent on funding being available. As this is not our Delivery Plan, we have little influence of timescales and where we are behind schedule with delivery. We will continue to work to achieve the action in line with the timescales set out in our Decarbonisation Action Plan.

6. Our Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan

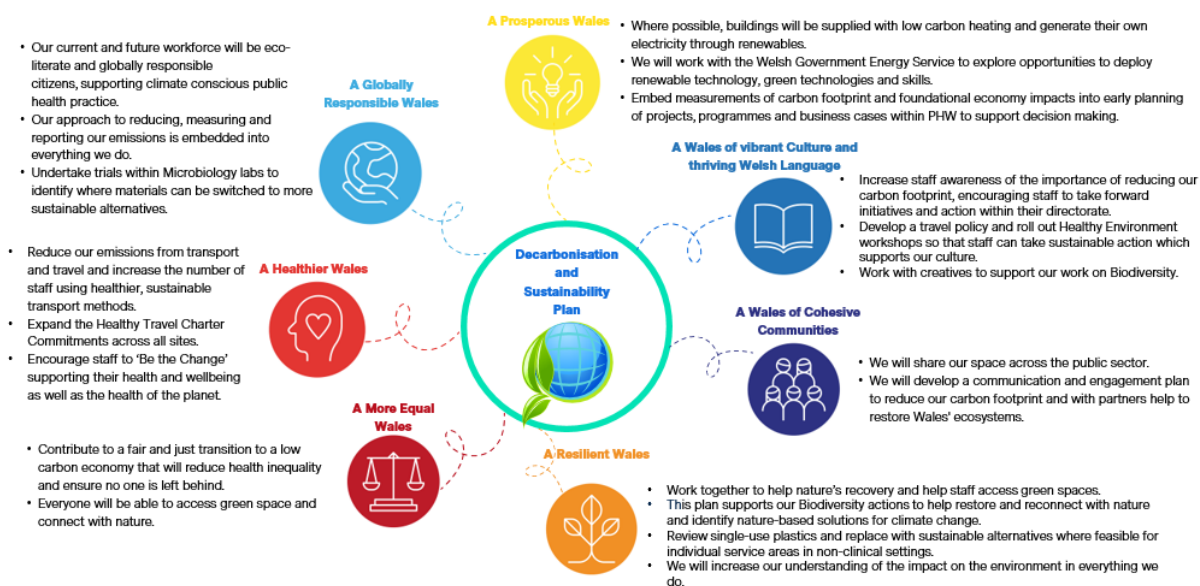
6.1 How we developed our plan

Our 2024-2026 Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan has been developed internally by the Decarbonisation Action Group, informed by ongoing work on decarbonisation, actions and learning from the process of developing and implementing our current plan and involvement and collaboration from groups and staff across the organisation such as our Decarbonisation, Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Collaborative, Green Advocates and Foundational Economy Group. We have also drawn on learning from colleagues in other health boards and organisations which has helped shape our plan.

We are committed to the Sustainable Development principle of the WFG Act and ensure that our decisions consider the impact it could have on staff, our workforce and people living in Wales now and in the future. We seek to fully embrace the Five Ways of Working to help us work better, avoid repeating past mistakes and address the long-term challenges we are facing. We will incorporate this approach in the planning and implementation stage and help us evaluate the impact the plan.

We recognise our contributions towards achieving the 7 Well-being goals of the WFG Act and we plan to capture case studies to demonstrate how our actions support all of the goals and applying the Sustainable Development Principles.

How our plan contributes to the 7 well-being goals?

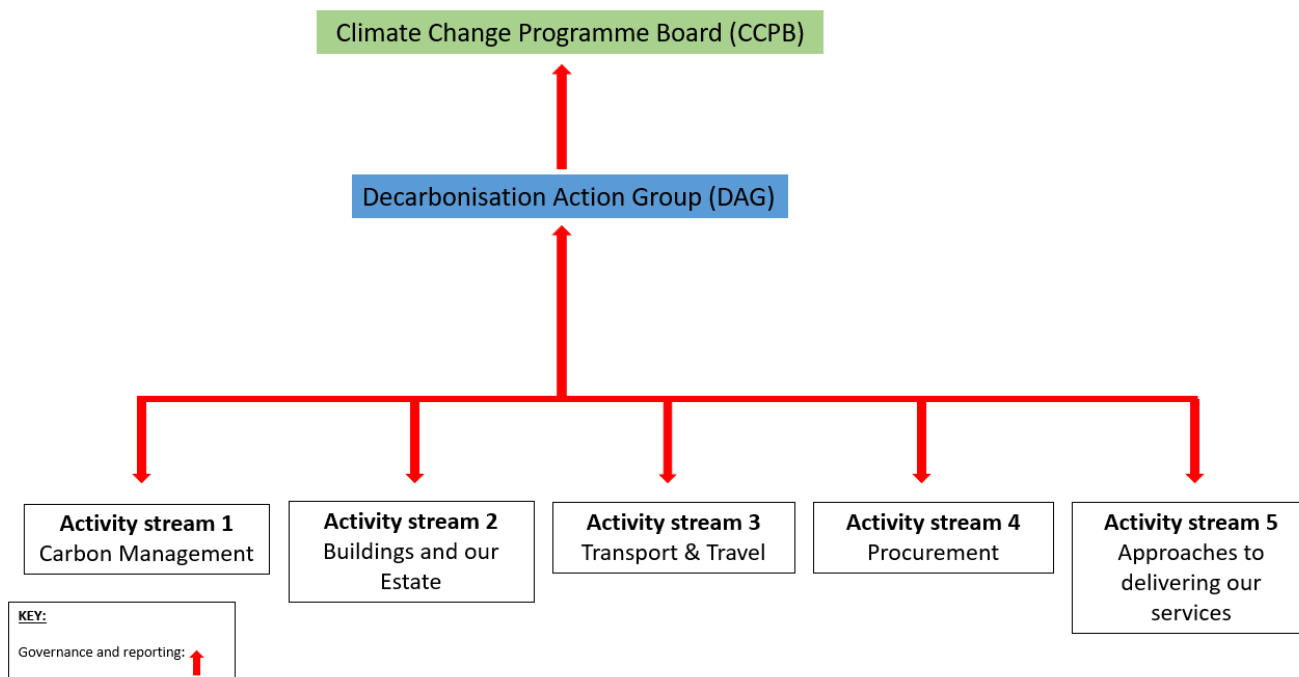


6.2 Managing our plan

A Climate Change Programme Board was established in 2022 to oversee all action related to climate change and decarbonisation, as well as manage the new strategic priority on climate change in our Long Term Strategy 2023-2035. The decarbonisation work stream has been formed and, over the course of 2023/24, Public Health Wales has invested in a Programme Manager to review and develop a proposal for improved governance arrangements which will come into effect on 1 April 2024. This includes identifying a lead for each of the five activity streams set out in the plan and development of the Public Health Wales Climate

Change Community of Practice that launched on 22 January 2024 to enable staff across the organisation involved in the delivery of our climate change agenda to come together and share learning and best practice.

The diagram below outlines the governance structure for decarbonisation within Public Health Wales.



6.3 Format of our plan

Our plan is split into five different activity streams and sets out the action that will be taken to reduce our carbon footprint and also work that is being undertaken to support our foundational and economy agendas.

The tables include colour intensity status to help the organisation understand the impact the work will have to reduce our carbon footprint and to support decision making and prioritisation. To calculate this, we have reviewed the potential impact of each action for reduction of carbon emission and assigned shades of colour increasing from low to high. This is a subjective assessment, which we hope to refine over time to more accurately measure impact of actions. We have also identified where actions link to the foundational and circular economy agendas for Public Health Wales for each of the actions.

Next steps: 2024-2026 - We are building on the work and governance arrangement developed as part of the first Decarbonisation Action Plan, learning from what has worked to date to reduce our carbon footprint, integrating principles of circular and foundational economy into our plans.

Making progress: 2026 - We are on course to contribute and support the collective net zero NHS Wales target. The impact we are making on the environment is considered in everything we do and consistent methodologies for calculating our carbon footprint are embedded in our decision making.

Realising net zero: 2030 - We have met our net zero goal and we are on track to be a carbon negative organisation by 2035 as detailed within the Public Health Wales Long Term Strategy.

7. Activity stream action plans for 2024-2026

7.1 Carbon management

Public Health Wales commits to introducing best practice carbon management processes which form a solid foundation to enable successful implementation of our Action Plan. Best practice carbon management goes beyond the monitoring and reporting of our GHG emissions to include the development and implementation of decarbonisation action plans, target setting, and supporting behavioural change in relation to decarbonisation. We recognise that there needs to be a dedicated shift within our processes to place greater emphasis on decarbonisation across our operations; facilitated by embedding carbon management within our directorates. To enable this, we need to support staff to understand the impact of their action on the environment and improve how we measure our carbon emissions.

Realising net zero 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We understand the impact on the environment of everything we do
Making progress: 2026-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can measure our carbon footprint accurately and the approach is embedded within programme and project methodology and our decision making process
Next steps for 2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued development of our approach to capacity building and training to support climate conscious public health practice Increased staff awareness of the importance of reducing our carbon footprint, encouraging staff to take forward initiatives and action within their directorates and divisions.

Action reference	Key action	Action delivery date	Potential impact for carbon emission reduction	Links to Foundational Economy	Links to Circular Economy
CM01	Set up process and undertake quarterly review and comparison of data to clarify progress and inform the ongoing development of interim internal targets in-line with NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan targets.	02 September 2024	Low		

CM02	Incorporate our Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan within Public Health Wales Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP) reporting process.	31 May 2024	Low		
CM03	Develop and publish updated Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan 2026-28.	31 March 2026	Medium	✓	✓
CM04	Agree decarbonisation themes to be submitted for development in Public Health Wales Climate Change Community of Practice.	31 March 2026	Low		✓
CM05	Continue to develop our approach to capacity building and training to support climate conscious public health practice. This will include promoting existing online training modules (available within ESR), carbon literacy style training and the Hub's Healthy Environment toolkit.	31 December 2025	Low		✓
CM06	Develop a communications and engagement plan for activity we will use to embed our action plan and raise awareness throughout the organisation and support action to reduce carbon footprint.	31 July 2024	Low		✓
CM07	Roll out Healthy Environment workshop to 100% of Directorates within Public Health Wales by March 2026.	27 February 2026	Medium		✓
CM08	Develop decarbonisation internet and intranet pages for staff, to promote the action plan and Public Health Wales's carbon emission reduction/ achievements. Include links to foundational/circular economy, WBFG and biodiversity on other intranet pages.	15 November 2024	Low	✓	✓
CM09	Develop improved and automated methods for the collation of data to provide a more accurate position on our carbon footprint and baseline, including home working carbon emissions.	30 April 2025	Low		

CM10	Embed measurement of carbon footprint and foundational economy impacts into early planning of projects and programmes and business cases within Public Health Wales to support decision making.	22 December 2025	Medium	✓	
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7.2 Buildings and our estate

Public Health Wales manages our services across Wales. Due to the variety of services we deliver for our local communities, we operate from a variety of different buildings including clinics, laboratories, and offices within larger hospital and health care settings, the majority of which are leased from partner health boards and trusts within NHS Wales. The most significant source of GHG emissions from our site-based activities is associated with the use of electricity and gas.

Realising net zero: 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New buildings and developments are built to a net zero standard • Where possible, all buildings are supplied with low carbon heating and generate their own electricity • We share our space across the public sector
Making progress: 2026-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing buildings will be highly energy efficient or scheduled for replacement & renewable heat schemes will be rolled out. • We have worked with health boards to reduce carbon emissions and increase energy efficiency at hospital sites • Single use plastics are not used within Public Health Wales
Next steps: 2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our construction programmes include mandatory net zero objectives. • We have reduced our waste and implemented recycling best practice across the organisation • We understand the carbon emissions of staff working from home more accurately

Action reference	Key action	Action delivery date	Potential impact for carbon emission reduction	Link to Foundational Economy	Link to circular Economy
BE01	Undertake a costing exercise for our estate to inform investment in future decarbonisation technology.	31 March 2025	Medium		

BE02	Work with Welsh Government's Energy Service to explore opportunities to deploy renewable technologies (e.g. Solar Photovoltaics) in appropriate buildings across the Public Health Wales estate	31 March 2026	Medium		
BE03	Undertake a review of current workplace processes to determine methods for directorates to reduce waste across all operations where feasible and incorporate the circular economy.	31 March 2025	Medium		✓
BE04	Establish audit process to ensure all Public Health Wales sites continue to comply with waste recycling requirements across Wales and meet national recycling targets.	31 March 2026	Low		✓
BE05	Ongoing communications to support the correct segregation of waste by staff through providing space, bins and visual aids.	30 September 2024	Low		✓
BE06	Work closely with waste contractors and building landlords to improve waste collection data.	31 March 2025	Low		✓
BE07	Review use of single use plastics and replace with sustainable alternatives where feasible for individual service areas in non-clinical settings.	31 March 2026	Medium		✓
BE08	Investigate wider opportunities for carbon offsetting schemes that benefit the local environment and communities (e.g., tree planting programmes).	31 March 2025	Medium	✓	
BE09	Undertake review and identify areas to improve how energy is used within buildings/sites (e.g. reduce unnecessary cooling in summer and heating in winter in office buildings).	31 March 2025	Medium		

7.3 Transport and travel

Public Health Wales recognises that it has an important role to play in decarbonising its vehicle fleets as well as supporting our employees to make healthier and more sustainable transport choices. Reducing exhaust emissions from our vehicle fleet will help not only to reduce our GHG emissions but will also contribute to improving air quality within the communities we serve. The majority (52.3%) of our transport emissions result from travel completed by our Grey Fleet (vehicles owned by staff and driven for business purposes). Unlike our owned fleets where we can directly intervene to reduce emissions, reducing emissions from our Grey Fleet requires Public Health Wales to support our staff to adopt sustainable transport methods and enable flexibility to work in different ways.

Realising net zero: 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have reduced our carbon footprint for transport and travel to levels seen during the pandemic
Making progress: 2026-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have increased the number of staff using sustainable transport methods and increased percentage undertaking active travel Supported more staff to work flexibly, making use of shared spaces and reducing the need for our estate
Next steps 2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a fully electric/ hybrid fleet of vehicles and supporting infrastructure across Wales We understand the carbon footprint of our staff business and commuting travel

Action reference	Key action	Action delivery date	Potential impact for Carbon emission reduction	Link to Foundational Economy	Link to Circular Economy
T01	Undertake a review of provision of EV charging for staff vehicles and engage with site owners to increase the provision of infrastructure.	28 February 2025	Low		
T02	Procure battery-electric vehicle replacements and/or ultra-low emissions vehicles (hybrids) to replace DESW fleet.	31 March 2026	High		
T03	Review options and feasibility for electric bike charging for staff and engage with site owners to increase provision.	28 February 2025	Low		

T04	Develop a Public Health Wales travel policy to incorporate sustainable travel and consider feedback from the 2023 staff travel survey.	31 March 2025	High		
T05	Use the data and insights gathered as part of the staff travel survey and focus groups to consider potential interventions, explore opportunities and promote options to support healthy, sustainable travel behaviours and promote greener commuting and business travel.	23 December 2024	Medium		
T06	Expand the Cardiff Healthy Travel Charter commitments to all Public Health Wales, covering all sites across Wales.	31 March 2026	Low		
T07	Process developed to capture emissions data for all forms of staff business travel (including train, bus, ferry, air, car – single occupancy, car – car sharing etc.)	30 June 2024	Low		
T08	Capture and collate staff commuting data annually	31 March 2026	Low		

7.4 Procurement

The procurement of goods and services through NWSSP Procurement Services represents Public Health Wales’s largest indirect environmental impact but also an opportunity to support cross-sector decarbonisation across our supply chain. Public Health Wales will look to understand how our current behaviours surrounding procurement contribute to our GHG emissions and will identify actions to improve the sustainability of our procured goods. Reducing the amount of single-use plastic promotional items procured and reviewing the requirement to have hard-copies of publications, are just two examples of where we can look to reduce our GHG emissions.

Realising net zero: 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Health Wales has a near net zero, Welsh supply chain
Making progress: 2026-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have worked with our largest suppliers to explore opportunities to reduce climate impacts and our associated carbon emissions Requesting zero carbon alternatives and using principles of circular economy are routine practice and supported across the organisation

Next steps 2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All procurement activity has a minimum weighting given to carbon reduction • We have worked with NWSSP to gain an improved understanding of the carbon emissions associated with our supply chain and identified areas of greatest impact
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Action reference	Key action	Action delivery date	Potential impact for Carbon emission reduction	Link to Foundational Economy	Link to Circular Economy
P01	Incorporation of sustainability into all organisational specifications, to ensure inclusion in procurement evaluations.	31 January 2025	Medium		
P02	Creation of updated guidance for writing specifications and weighting of sustainability elements in tenders. Incorporate Circular and Foundational Economy Principles within all tender specifications.	31 January 2025	Medium	✓	✓
P03	Undertake an exercise with contract managers to develop action plans following review of the green credentials/foundational economy/living wage employer considerations of our five highest spend suppliers.	11 April 2025	Medium	✓	
P04	Work with contract managers to undertake evaluation of the action plans exercise and consider ways in which Public Health Wales may be able to influence in these areas.	30 May 2025	Medium	✓	
P05	Work with NWSSP procurement team to undertake a review of Public Health Wales vs hosted services procurement, to better understand Public Health Wales carbon footprint.	30 September 2024	Low		
P06	Embed sustainability / WBFGA within our procurement policies and practices.	31 March 2026	Medium	✓	
P07	Implement a project of work to further reduce paper usage and towards Public Health Wales being paper-free at a future date.	25 October 2024	Medium		✓

P08	Implement recommendations from single use plastics report in our Microbiology Services and develop action plans to scale up across service.	30 Sept 2025	Medium		✓
P09	Review of spend with procurement managers to identify key spend areas that can be focussed on for greatest impacts in carbon reduction.	31 October 2025	Medium		
P10	Develop and publish a Sustainable Procurement Code of Practice to aid interaction with our suppliers. To include risk assessments, inclusion of carbon management in tenders etc.	31 March 2025	Medium	✓	✓
P11	Develop information guide for suppliers on Public Health Wales requirements in relation to procurement and carbon footprint.	27 June 2025	Low		
P12	Review current procurement behaviours in the organisation and provide useful engagement and messaging for staff to support behaviour change and promote best practice. Include promotion of 'Be the Change – Procurement that doesn't cost the earth' e-guide. Creation of a case study on procurement best practice in Public Health Wales.	31 March 2025	Low		
P13	Engage with the scoping and development of the 'Public Health in the Well-Being Economy' programme to support NHS as a Foundational Economy and investing in prevention for the NHS, Wales and WHO. Under strategic priority Sustainable health & care system, SO4.2	30 April 2025	Low	✓	

7.5 Approaches to delivering our services

It is well documented that there is a significant link between the impacts of Climate Change and the health and well-being of people. Health and well-being related impacts resulting from Climate Change are wide ranging; impacting upon physical, mental, and financial wellbeing of the communities we serve.

Existing economic and health inequalities mean that health and well-being risks are likely to disproportionately impact those on lower incomes. Our approach to service provision needs to factor in these impacts and ensure we can continue to effectively provide for our service users.

Realising net zero: 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of all our services we deliver to the public are carbon neutral
Making progress: 2026-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have reduced the percentage of single use plastics procured and used within our Microbiology and Screening Services We have reduced the waste our services produce across Public Health Wales by 50% Social Prescribing is the norm across Wales
Next steps: 2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have transitioned to reusable PPE for screening and microbiology services, where appropriate.

Action reference	Key action	Action delivery date	Potential impact for Carbon emission reduction	Link to Foundational Economy	ink to Circular Economy
A01	Undertake a review of current service delivery operations to identify where procedures and process can be changed or optimised to make these more sustainable.	31 March 2025	Medium		
A02	Working with the Digital Design Data Authority group, complete a review of the current approach to delivering our services to identify areas of Public Health Wales that may significantly benefit from digitalisation.	25 April 2025	Medium		
A03	Complete an internal review across Screening Programmes to identify areas where reductions in paper can be achieved through digitalisation and LIMS system.	23 December 2024	High		
A04	Transition to reusable PPE for screening and microbiology services, where appropriate.	31 March 2025	Medium		✓
A05	Work with Public Health Wales's five highest spend suppliers to identify potential areas where wastage can be reduced.	11 April 2025	Medium		
A06	Promote the use of the "National Framework for Social Prescribing".	21 June 2024	Low		

A07	Undertake trials within our Microbiology Services to identify where materials can be switched to more sustainable alternatives. Focus on highest carbon impact items including loop sterilisation, sample. specimen bags, solution bottles and agar plates.	28 November 2025	Medium		✓
A08	Publish a new Biodiversity Action Plan by the end of 2024.	22 December 2024	Low		
A09	Publish Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty report in late 2025.	31 December 2025	Low		

Issues

The issue register will outline details of all issues (problems that have already occurred) identified that are negatively impacting the work of the decarbonisation programme and plans to resolve. Review of the issue register will take place at Decarbonisation Action Group meetings and issues identified as severe in relation to impact will be escalated to the Climate Change Programme Board for review.

Issue	Mitigation
Due to the nature of our estate across Wales, there are limited options to invest in decarbonisation infrastructure and to influence energy supply. This is due to much of the estate being leased or being managed by health boards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain ongoing discussions with landlords. • Continue monitoring of current leased estate and ongoing requirements of the organisation, to assist with future decision making.
Difficulty in assessing some areas of Public Health Wales carbon emissions for continued monitoring of progress against net zero target.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with relevant departments in the organisation and data/performance analytics team to establish baseline. • Maintain connections to receive information on the development of standardised methodologies for calculating emissions and reduction.

Risks

The risk register will outline details of all risks (potential issues) identified relating to the work of the decarbonisation programme and plans for mitigation. Review of the risk register will take place at Decarbonisation Action Group meetings and risks identified as severe in relation to impact and likelihood will be escalated to the Climate Change Programme Board for review.

Risk	Mitigation
There is a risk that Public Health Wales may not achieve the actions set out in the Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan due to insufficient capacity across the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider opportunities to align roles and processes to coordinate activities, maximise efforts and promote achievements. • Embed into existing governance arrangements • Identify existing key action leads within service areas across Public Health Wales • Identify opportunities for partnership projects with other health boards/ trusts • Climate Change Programme Board to monitor deliver and support the delivery of action across the organisation.

<p>Insufficient understanding of the financial implications to deliver the Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify financial implications over the course of 2024-26; Public Health Wales will need to commit resources and make financial allocation decisions through in future years • Integrate actions into IMTP and Individual Directorate/ Service area Planning • Take advantage of opportunities for external funding to deliver actions, including The Wales Funding Programme, Invest to Save Schemes and WG funding • Identify opportunities for partnership projects with other health boards/ trusts to support funding opportunities • Capture opportunities to work with WG and other available services including the Welsh Government Energy Service and Carbon Trust
<p>There is a risk that we do not understand the true organisational position in relation to achieving net zero as we are unable to calculate the carbon emissions for all our activity. This may result in the organisation not achieving the net zero target by 2030.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of a Performance Management Analyst to help with measurement to inform appropriate decision making on most impactful areas of focus. • Close monitoring of progress against the two yearly organisational decarbonisation action plans. • Maintaining communication with other NHS organisations for sharing of information, ideas and success stories.

Appendix 1

Key Terms and Definitions

The following key terms are used in this Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan. For reference, a definition of each term has been provided in the following table.

Key Term/Acronym	Definition
Biodiversity	Biodiversity means the variety of life on earth – plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms. Biodiversity is not just about species but the variety of ecosystems they inhabit, which exist at a range of scales, such as from an individual soil micro-habitat to a whole landscape.
Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO ₂ e)	Standard unit of measurement of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions used to compare relative impacts of different GHG's based upon their global warming potential.
Circular Economy	The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended.
Decarbonisation	The process of first reducing then removing, GHG emissions released into the atmosphere from our operations.
Ecosystem	An ecosystem is a group of inter-connected organisms (animals, plants and microbes) and their physical environment found in a particular area, for example mountains, rivers and woodland.
Foundational Economy	The foundational economy is the part of our economy that creates and distributes goods and service that we rely on for everyday life.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG emissions)	Greenhouse Gas gases defined as gases which are capable of absorbing infra-red radiation (heat) from the sun, contributing to the Earth's greenhouse gas effect.
Net Zero Carbon	A balance between GHG emissions emitted into the atmosphere and the GHG emissions removed through removals and/or carbon offsetting.
NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan	Strategic delivery plan developed by NHS Wales covering (2021-2030) which sets out key initiatives and targets to deliver an ambitious but achievable reduction in carbon emissions.
Total GHG Emissions (per annum) (tonnes CO ₂ e)	An organisation/entity's annual GHG emissions total before adjustments are applied for sequestration or GHG removals, measured in tonnes CO ₂ e.
Well-being of Future Generations Act	Welsh Government Act which sets out seven well-being goals which are designed to improve the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Wales.
Well-to-Tank GHG Emissions (tonnes CO ₂ e)	Emissions from the processing and refinement of fuels and energy consumed by reporting organisations.