

1. Introduction

Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), as a public body in Scotland, has a duty under Section 1 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to further the conservation of biodiversity - the wildlife, habitats and other forms of nature - in Scotland by how it exercises its functions. This is usually referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

The biodiversity duty aims to (1) protect biodiversity through the management of specific sites, habitats and species (2) increase the level of understanding and connection between people and the living environment (3) promote consideration of all our impacts on the natural world through our actions and decisions, including through procurement and use of resources and (4) encourage staff, partners and customers to engage with and understand and consider biodiversity. Public bodies are required to fulfil this duty in a manner consistent with the proper exercising their functions.¹

This report is designed to meet the accompanying requirement of Section 36 of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to report on our compliance with the biodiversity duty.

This is the second Biodiversity Duty Report CHS has produced and covers the 3-year period 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2020.²

2. About CHS

Children's Hearings Scotland is one of a number of organisations that work within the Children's Hearings System, Scotland's unique care and justice system that exists to ensure the safety and wellbeing of infants, children and young people in Scotland.

Our activities focus on recruiting, training and supporting volunteer Panel Members who make decision in children's hearings (sometimes known as the 'Children's Panel'), and Area Support Teams (ASTs) who provide support and direction at a local level.

CHS has around 40 staff (called the 'National Team') and is led by a Chief Executive, who also holds the role of National Convener (an independent position with legal responsibility to recruit suitable people to serve as Panel Members and ensure they have the right training), and a Senior Management Team.

CHS is governed by a Board, members of which are appointed for a period of three years.

¹ For more, see here: <https://www.nature.scot/scotlands-biodiversity/scottish-biodiversity-strategy/biodiversity-duty>

² The first is available here: <https://www.nature.scot/previous-biodiversity-duty-reports>

3. Relevance of Biodiversity at CHS

CHS is a small public body, with no specific environmental responsibilities. CHS does not own, regulate or manage land.

As of April 2019, CHS leases an office of approximately 304m² in central Edinburgh from the Scottish Legal Aid Board, where the majority of staff are usually based. CHS does not have responsibility for any outside space as part of this lease.

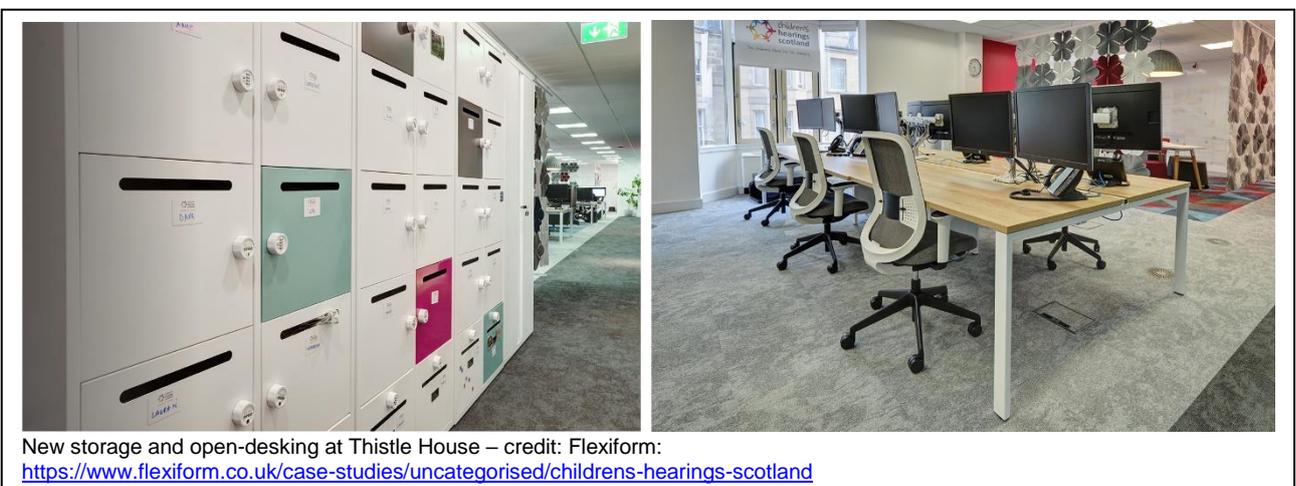
Nine roles, which were added in June 2019, are carried out regionally across Scotland. In most instances, these roles are based from desks (either permanent or hot-desking) within local authority-operated offices. These roles involve significant levels of travel across localities.

4. Actions to Protect Biodiversity and Connect People with Nature – *what we are doing to benefit biodiversity directly, to tackle the main drivers of biodiversity loss, or to achieve wider outcomes for nature and people.*

In April 2019, CHS moved to new premises at Thistle House. The need to reduce landfill waste and maximise recycling opportunities was considered as part of this move. Paper, glass, plastics and cans, food waste and landfill are therefore managed separately within the office. Reducing energy use is consistently encouraged throughout the office, with lights being switched off in rooms not in use, and monitors being turned off at the end of the day.

The move to Thistle House saw the introduction of open-desking to CHS as part of a wider smart working initiative, facilitated by the Scottish Futures Trust. Improving environmental performance and reducing CO₂ production was one of the explicit stated aims of this work.

No member of staff based at Thistle House now has an assigned work space, with equipment being stored in small lockers rather than at fixed desks. This, along with work to improve how effectively electronic documents are stored, has led CHS to becoming a largely paperless organisation.



5. Mainstreaming Biodiversity – *what we are doing to incorporate biodiversity measures into its wider policies, plans or strategies, including decision-making structures and staff and organisational roles and responsibilities.*

As referenced above, the smart-working initiative that CHS embarked on had CO₂ reduction as one of its planned primary aims.

6. Nature-Based Solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity – *what we are doing to integrate biodiversity into nature based solutions to the climate emergency and other socio-economic outcomes.*

CHS has not used any nature-based solutions over the reporting period.

7. Workforce Development – *workforce skills and training*

In September 2020, CHS promoted ClimateWeek2020 amongst its staff. As a result, staff attended webinars/training courses on:

- Sustainable transport
- Energy bills
- Sustainable fashion
- Reducing carbon footprint through flexible working

As referenced above, the Scottish Futures Trust facilitated the move to smart working at Thistle House. This involved a number of staff workshops to ensure it was effectively developed and embedded.

8. Research and Monitoring – *research we are undertaking relevant to biodiversity or nature and monitoring we have undertaken to assess the impact of our actions.*

CHS voluntarily reports its environmental impact in our Annual Report and Accounts, presenting CO₂ footprint figures for:

- Grid electricity usage
- Natural gas usage
- Water supply and treatment
- Recycling
- Commercial waste
- Staff travel by car

Since moving to Thistle House, CHS has worked with our landlords to have access to data to ensure a degree of consistency of monitoring reporting from previous years.

The past three financial years data is presented here:

	2019/20 Carbon Footprint (tCO₂e) - estimated	2018/19 Carbon Footprint (tCO₂e)	2017/18 Carbon Footprint (tCO₂e)
Grid Electricity	11.79	11.54	11
Natural Gas	6.51	5.07	6
Water – supply	0.03	0.05	0
Water – treatment	0.05	0.08	0
Car, petrol, unknown engine size	16.48	6.96	4
Recycling	0.04	data not available	0
Commercial waste	0.09	data not available	data not available
Total	34.99	23.70	21

CHS's carbon footprint increased by 47% between 2018/19 and 2019/20. There are two reasons for this: (1) more data being available in CHS's new office and (2) increase in mileage claims due to new staff, based across Scotland and working in regions, rather than being based at Head Office.

9. Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges – *our main achievements and the challenges we face*

CHS has embraced, in a significant way, ways of working that are mostly paperless in its new office. This move was carefully planned and delivered in partnership with other organisations and represents, we believe, a major achievement for a public body.

CHS' limited capacity to take action that has a direct impact on biodiversity will always present a challenge.

10. Future Plans – *how we will look to further develop our work within the biodiversity duty over the coming years*

Over the coming years, we intend to:

- Make more biodiversity/environmental learning opportunities available to staff
- Embed the sustainability of these learning opportunities through engagement of the CHS staff forum.
- Include environmental considerations in a review of our flexible working policy.
- Continue to monitor our carbon footprint, and use this to identify and take actions to reduce this where possible.
- Continue to look for opportunities to deliver our functions, particularly training and meetings, online to reduce the need for travel.
- Continue to look for opportunities to reduce our paper use (for example, rolling out digital hearings packs).