# NatureScot Net Zero Plan 2026-30

LET'S DO NET ZERO

NatureScot
NàdarAlba
Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

# Contents

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this Net Zero Plan. It sets out how we will continue to play our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through all aspect of our work. It is part of our leadership in tackling the joint nature and climate emergency.

The Plans set out clearly how we run our organisation to minimise our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. It sits alongside our work to make NatureScot more resilient to our changing climate and complements our efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity. It shows us addressing our own impacts.

Since nature is our business, NatureScot can and should lead by example. We have a target to reach net zero corporate emissions by 2035, and this plan covers half the remaining period to that target.

Reducing emissions is the priority. But, like other parts of the Scottish economy, we will have some unavoidable emissions and will need to compensate for them. In managing our land, especially our National Nature Reserves, we recognise their potential to remove greenhouse gases – for NatureScot and for others. Every step we take will bring measurable gains for nature too.

This Net Zero Plan goes hand in hand with our Corporate Plan, helping nature to thrive and people to flourish.

**Nick Halfhide**
**Chief Executive, NatureScot**

# Introduction and background

Nature loss and climate change are intertwined global issues driven by pollution, inequality and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. As a public body with responsibility for valuing, protecting and restoring nature, NatureScot must lead by example, minimising its operational emissions at scale in ways that prioritise benefits to nature and people.

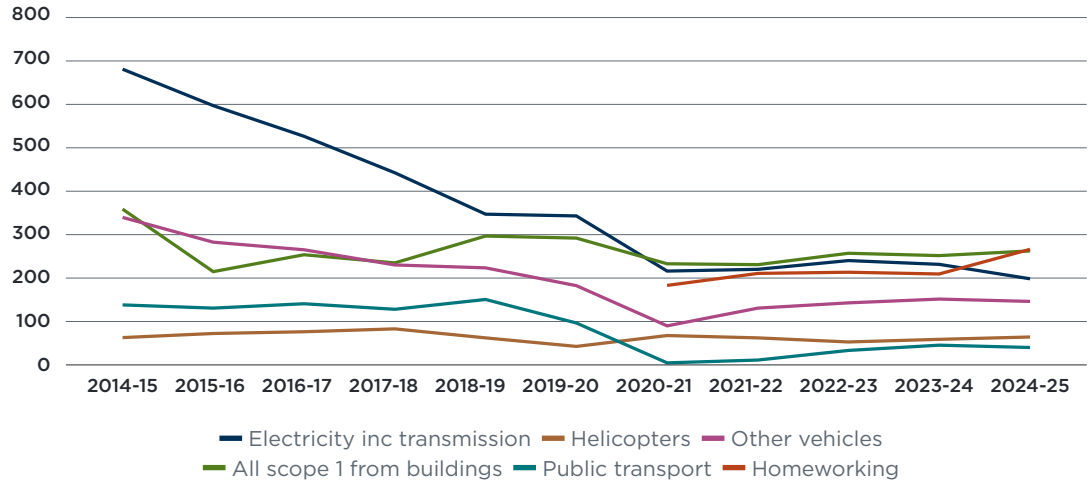
NatureScot reports its operational greenhouse gas emissions through the annual Public Bodies Climate Change Duties report process. Over the last decade our annual emissions have decreased by around 41%, from 1,564 tonnes $CO_2e$ in 2014-15 to 953 tonnes $CO_2e$ in 2024-25. Around half come from the buildings we own and lease, around one-quarter each from travel and homeworking, and around 6% from helicopters.

During this period we have made progress on our journey towards Net Zero in several key areas, including cutting emissions from our electricity consumption by two-thirds and replacing all petrol and diesel core fleet cars and vans with electric alternatives.

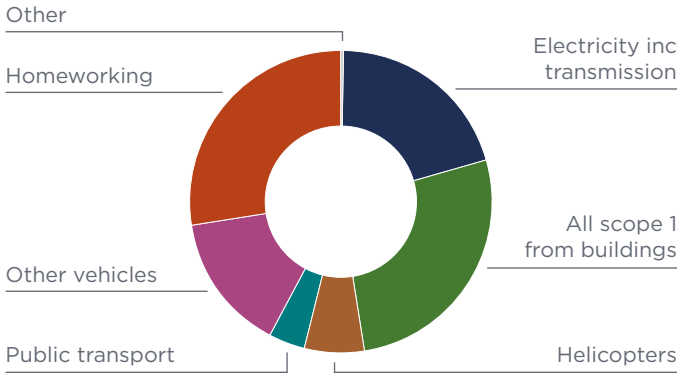
We also understand that the scale and sources of our operational emissions will be shaped over the period of this Net Zero Plan by several factors. These include priorities set out in the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act, such as increased wildlife management actions, and an expansion by Scottish Government of reportable 'Scope 3' emissions including digital systems, procurement of goods and services and commuting.'

The graphs and charts on the following page illustrate NatureScot's historic emissions trends.

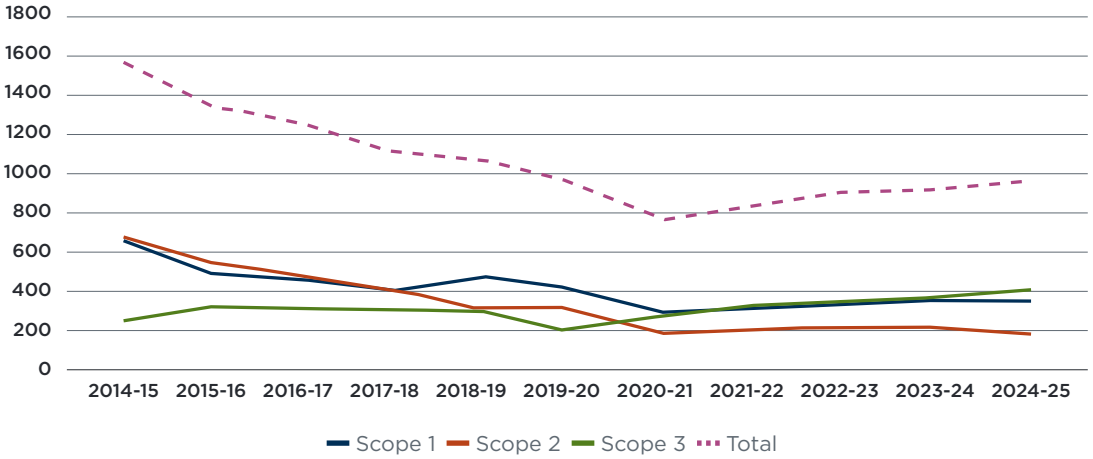
## Reported emissions by source 2014/15 - 2024/25 ($tCO_2e$)



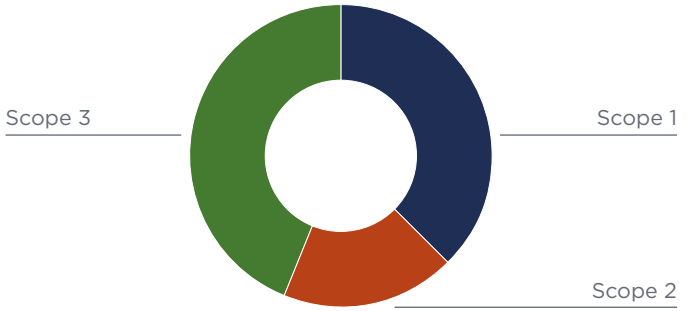

## Reported emissions by source (2024/25, $tCO_2e$)




## Reported $CO_2e$ emissions by scope 2014/14 - 2024/25 ($tCO_2e$)




## Emissions by scope (2024/25, $tCO_2e$)




**Scope 1** = direct emissions, e.g. from burning fuels in buildings and vehicles. **Scope 2** = emissions from national grid electricity consumption in buildings and vehicles. **Scope 3** = indirect emissions from all other sources, e.g. water, waste, public transport.

Achieving 'Net Zero' greenhouse gas emissions involves using Nature-based measures to reduce, as far as possible, the pollution from our activities before compensating for the remaining 'residual' emissions that cannot be prevented. It specifically includes reducing our use of all types of plastics in all of our activities across the organisation.

NatureScot's Net Zero Plan 2026-30 is underpinned by four key principles of action. Using focused and evidence-led mitigation actions, along with developing an appropriate insetting strategy, it is possible for NatureScot to reduce its emissions to Net Zero by 2035.

**Principle 1:** Knowledge informs action

**Principle 2:** Prevention is better than cure

**Principle 3:** Focus actions where we have most control

**Principle 4:** Embed adaptation and biodiversity in our Net Zero actions

## Principle 1: Knowledge informs action

By embedding basic, mandatory literacy on climate, biodiversity, Net Zero and Nature within all colleagues – and undertaking this on a frequent basis – we will better understand the environmental and social impacts of our decisions. This relies on support and clear policies, as well as enforcement, being in place so that it becomes *second nature*.

To achieve this, we will review the potential to develop an organisation-wide training programme, building on the voluntary learning sessions currently offered.

## Principle 2: Prevention is better than cure

The most effective way to reduce emissions is to stop generating them in the first place. Buildings and travel are currently our greatest sources, so focused emissions reduction actions in these areas are key. This approach must be extended so that our choice of goods and services, as well as use of digital systems, is driven by their impacts as much as their cost. Key activity areas in NatureScot have individual emissions reduction plans driven by the precautionary principle.

## Principle 3: Focus actions where we have most control

We have full control over our Scope 1 'direct' emissions (from gas, diesel, petrol and biomass for heating, hot water and vehicles) and some control over Scope 2 emissions (from our electricity demand). Eliminating Scope 1 and reducing Scope 2 emissions are critical but achievable actions. Where we can reduce Scope 3 emissions (e.g. in procurement of goods and services), we will take action.

## Principle 4: Embed adaptation and biodiversity in our Net Zero actions

Nature-based adaptation measures and biodiversity enhancement are crucial elements of achieving Net Zero, particularly across our buildings. The appropriate use of trees, shrubs, topography, swales etc. provides protection for our buildings against stronger storms, stronger sunshine, heavier rainfall and drought. With appropriate planning they also contribute to local biodiversity outcomes.

## Risks & Opportunities

While progress in reducing emissions has been made, much of this has focused on the 'low-hanging fruit' - actions with relatively little disruption or cost. The next decade requires a concerted, continuous and consistent push to make deep emissions cuts that support nature and human wellbeing.

It is easy to think that the challenge is too great, so strong leadership, clear and frequent internal messaging, support and encouragement are critical factors.

The challenge presents opportunities too: for NatureScot to lead by example on Nature-based Net Zero measures, and to embed literacy and confidence across colleagues to make Nature-positive decisions.

As we do this, we will align our actions with the guiding principles and conditions for success set out in our corporate plan, as well as exploring how our actions can contribute to complementary Scottish Government policies, including Public Health, Community Wealth Building, Circular Economy and a Just Transition.

## Corporate Plan Principles

### Urgency and scale

Move with urgency and at scale to achieve Scotland's biodiversity objectives, as we respond to the intergenerational demand to tackle the biodiversity and climate emergencies.

### People-focused

Action that supports a just transition to ensure the benefits derived from nature are distributed fairly and the risks from climate impacts are dealt with equitably.

### Embrace innovation

Through the competent and skilled deployment of flexible, adaptable, collaborative and digital ways of working, we will deliver place-based actions that maximise benefits from nature.

### Evidence-led

Target intervention and investment where evidence and forecasting show nature and people need it most, to strengthen resilience, especially in relation to the impacts from the climate emergency.

## Corporate Plan Conditions for Success

### Inspiring leadership from everyone

- We all lead with clarity, courage and purpose, effectively navigating complexity and uncertainty.
- We influence by earning trust, convening spaces, fostering engagement and managing differences respectfully, creating the conditions for effective dialogue.

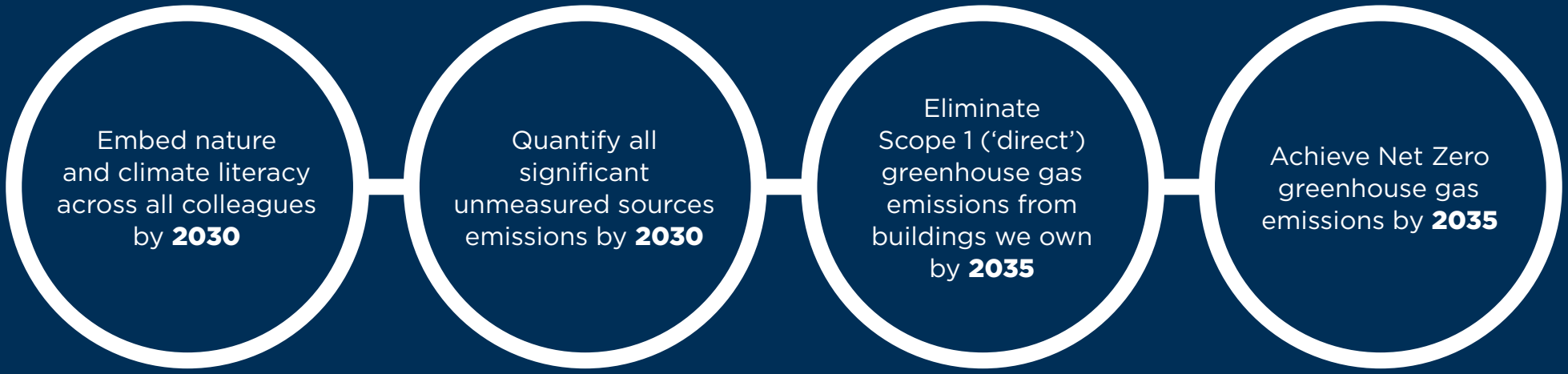
### Empowered people

- We work in partnership, creating the conditions where people collaborate effectively, feel engaged and take ownership to create impact.
- People are empowered, confident, skilled and trusted to use their judgement to make a difference.

### Impactful ways of working

- We make impactful decisions that are timely, transparent and embrace managed risks and innovation.
- We have highly effective and efficient ways of working, supported by technology and proactive mindsets that enable everyone to be flexible, innovative and solution-focused.

# Our commitments



# Activity areas

The Net Zero workstream sits within the Workplaces Team, in the Business Services & Transformation Directorate, and is overseen by a programme board which monitors progress, manages and identifies risks and puts plans in place to ensure this plan and its targets are achieved.

Although covering a period of four years, this Plan will be kept up to date to reflect the changing environment in which NatureScot operates and to ensure ongoing alignment with the wider Scottish public sector Net Zero programme.

The Net Zero workstream has actions that are spread across eleven activity areas, each of which will play its own part in achieving Net Zero by 2035, with individual milestones and actions between now and 2030.

Activities are arranged into three groups: A - those generating Scope 1 and 2 emissions, which can be controlled by NatureScot; B – those generating Scope 3 emissions that we currently quantify, and; C – those generating emissions that we aim to quantify in the period of this plan.

**Group A (Scope 1 & 2)**

- Property
- Fleet

**Group B (Scope 3)**

- Travel
- Helicopters
- Home and hybrid working
- Waste
- Water

**Group C**

- Land
- Digital systems
- Procurement
- People


# Activity Area 1: Property

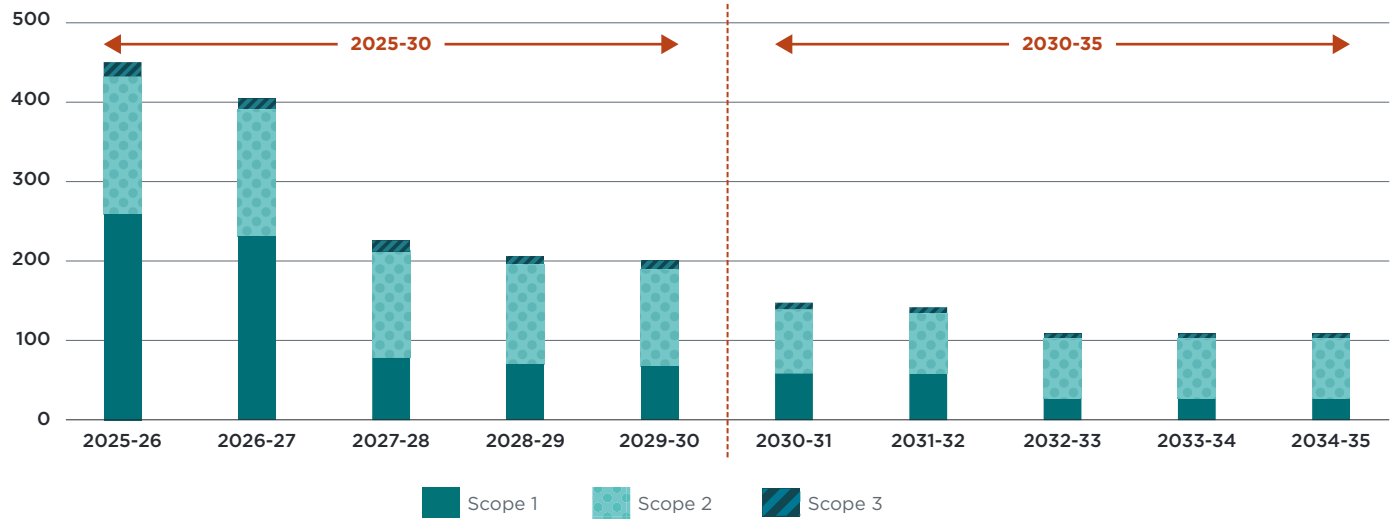
## 2030 Objectives:

- Continue to optimise our overall estate holdings.
- Reduce Scope 1 emissions from owned buildings by 80%.
- Reduce overall building emissions by 57%.
- Increase renewable electricity from 9% to 25% in buildings owned by NatureScot.
- In leased buildings encourage and support landlords to upgrade premises to net zero as soon as possible.

## Strategic actions on owned buildings:

1. Retrofit buildings with draughtproofing and natural insulation to reduce energy demand.
2. Replace polluting heating & hot water systems with clean alternatives.
3. Install renewables and batteries where none exist; optimise existing systems.
4. Implement Nature-based adaptation measures to deal with current and future impacts of climate change.
5. Support occupant behaviour that minimises energy consumption.
6. Accurately record water & energy consumption.

**Property emissions by scope 2025-2035 ($tCO_2e$)**




Anticipated emissions in 2030: **193t$CO_2e$**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **109t$CO_2e$**

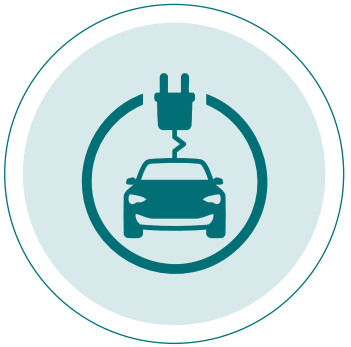
# Activity Area 2: Fleet (including operational vehicles)

## 2030 Objectives:

- Reduce Scope 1 emissions by 20%.
- Quantify emissions from operational vehicles, e.g. quads, by 2030.
- Support increased public transport, active travel and EV grey fleet for all journeys, incl. commuting.
- Calculate embodied carbon of owned fleet.

## Strategic actions:

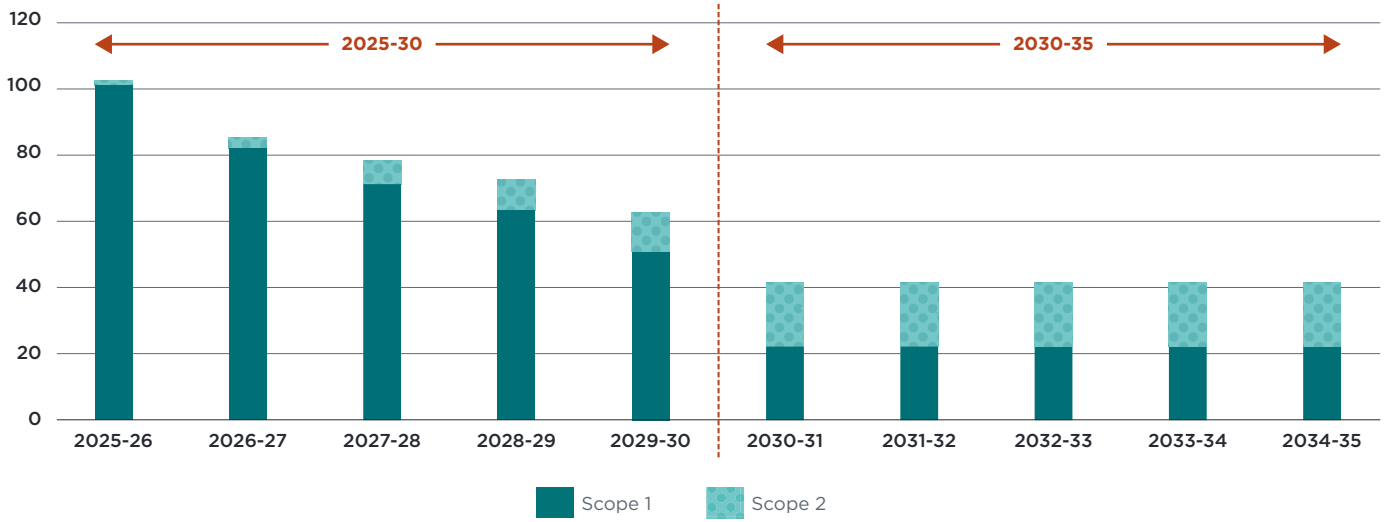
1. Replace 'core' diesel 4x4s with appropriate electric alternatives.
2. Work with other teams to identify pathway to reducing non-core vehicle emissions.



Anticipated emissions in 2030: **63tCO$_2$e**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **42tCO$_2$e**

**Fleet emissions by scope 2025-2035 (tCO$_2$e)**



# Activity Area 3: Travel (including home to work commuting)

## 2030 Objectives:

- Support increased public transport, active travel and EV grey fleet for all journeys, incl. commuting.'
- Reduce travel emissions by 10%.

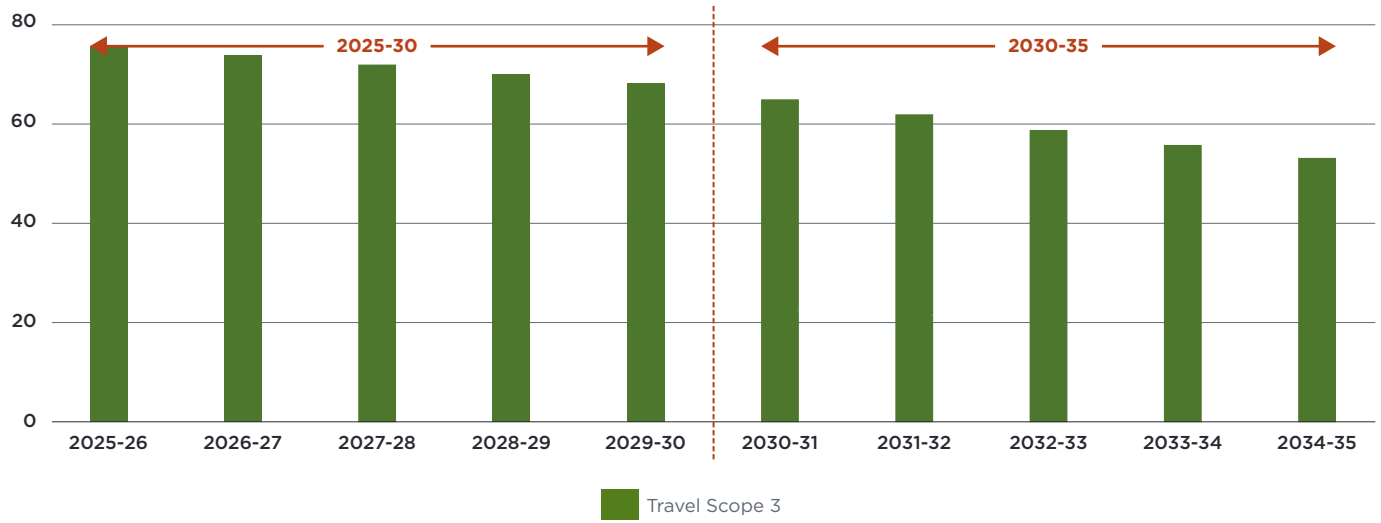
## Strategic actions:

1. Review flying policy to minimise climate impacts.
2. Use internal comms to support low-carbon travel decisions in new and existing colleagues.
3.

Anticipated emissions in 2030: **68t$CO_2e$**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **53t$CO_2e$**

**Travel emissions 2025-2035 (t$CO_2e$)**



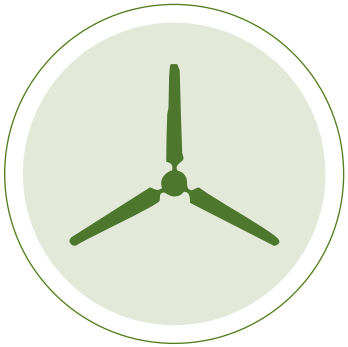
# Activity Area 4: Helicopters

## 2030 Objectives:

- Note that increased levels of wildlife management (e.g. due to Natural Environment (Scotland) Act) will result in greater helicopter use and emissions in the short term.
- Drones are used for at least 25% of all wildlife and habitat surveys (by area).

## Strategic actions:

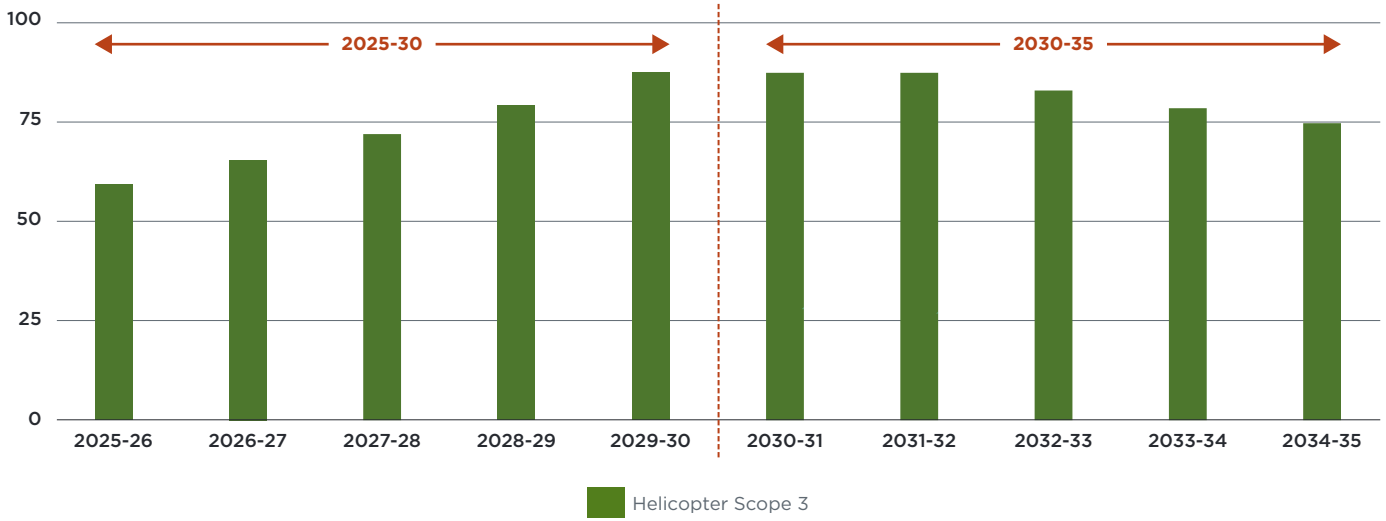
1. Continue to invest in technology and methods that actively reduce $CO_2e$ emissions, e.g. thermal cameras and drone surveys.
2. Support and encourage legislation changes to extend drone range, decreasing reliance on helicopters.



Anticipated emissions in 2030: **87t$CO_2e$**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **75t$CO_2e$**

**Helicopter emissions 2025 - 35 (t$CO_2e$)**



# Activity Area 5: Home & hybrid working

## 2030 Objectives:

- Emissions have reduced by 10%.
- Colleagues are aware of sources of information and funding on how to reduce energy use in their homes.

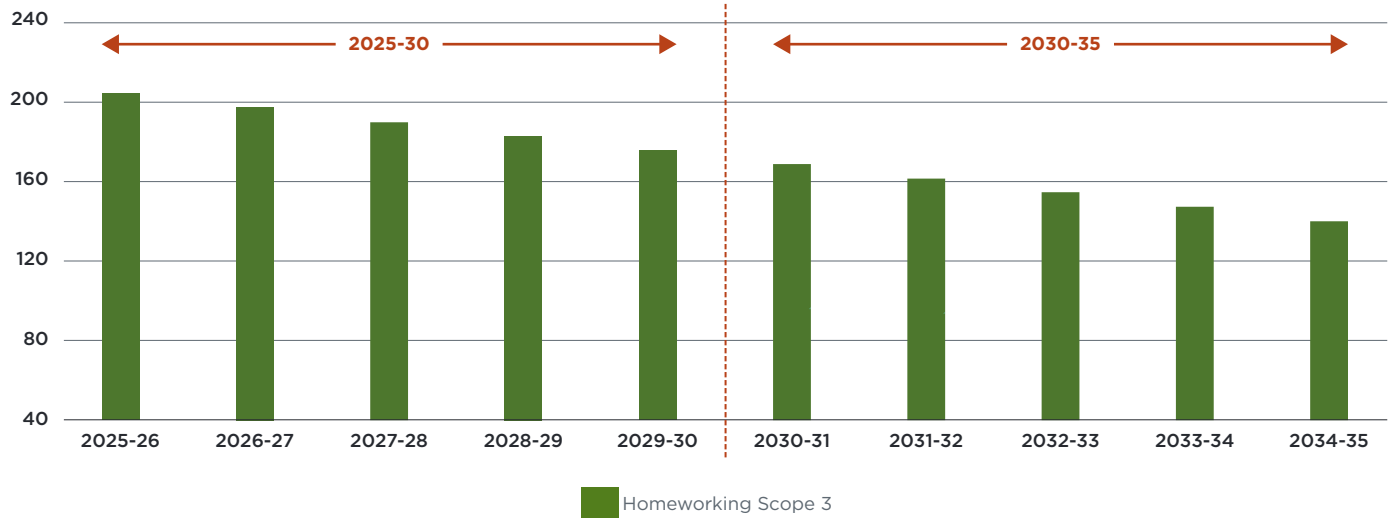
## Strategic actions:

1. Remain aware of trends in home energy reduction, e.g. insulation, draughtproofing, clean heating, domestic renewables and grid decarbonisation.
2. Share information with colleagues through formal and informal channels. Encourage discussions and provide support.

Anticipated emissions in 2030: **176t$CO_2e$**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **140t$CO_2e$**

**Homeworking emissions 2025 - 45 ($tCO_2e$)**



# Activity Area 6: Waste (landfill & recycling)

## 2030 Objectives:

- Emissions have reduced by 10%.
- Waste and landfill are reported consistently and accurately across all sites.

## Strategic actions:

1. Review, refine and roll out waste reduction advice for colleagues across the organisation.
2. Deploy waste reduction measures to all sites proportionate to their impacts.

Anticipated emissions in 2030: **3.0tCO$_2$e**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **2.7tCO$_2$e**

### Waste emissions 2025 - 45 (tCO$_2$e)

# Activity Area 7: Water (supply & wastewater)

## 2030 Objectives:

- Emissions have reduced by 4%.
- Emissions from water consumption are reported consistently and accurately across all sites.

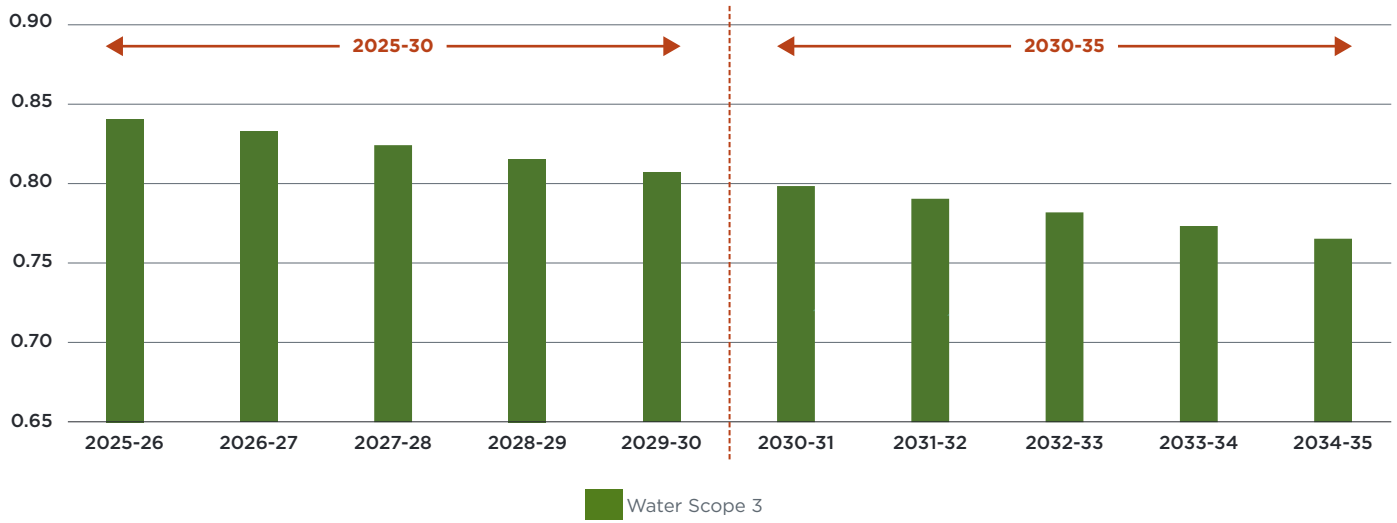
## Strategic actions:

1. Include emissions from water supply & filtration system operation on all off-grid sites, e.g. Isle of May, Creag Meagaidh etc.
2. Review extent of water consumption reporting across all owned buildings. Ensure consistency.
3. Deploy water saving measures to all sites proportionate to their impacts.

Anticipated emissions in 2030: **0.81tCO$_2$e**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **0.77tCO$_2$e**

### Water emissions 2025-45 (tCO$_2$e)



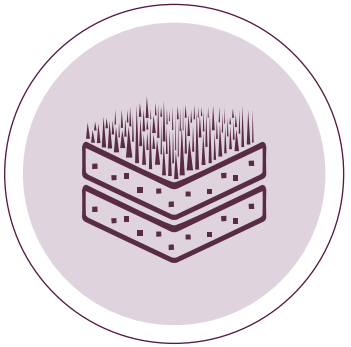
# Activity Area 8: Land

## 2030 Objectives:

- We have agreed an appropriate frequency and methodology to calculate carbon storage and $CO_2e$ sequestration and emissions rates across owned and managed land.

## Strategic actions:

1. Select a pilot series of 10-year National Nature Reserve plans and quantify likely changes to carbon storage and $CO_2e$ sequestration rates resulting from planned measures.



Anticipated residual emissions in 2030:
To be completed as data obtained

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035:
To be completed as data obtained

NatureScot owns and manages over 40,000Ha of land across Scotland. Preliminary figures (using 2026 data) suggest that this is net emitter of around 900t$CO_2e$ per year, i.e. it releases more greenhouse gases than it absorbs, though this is currently being refined.

Land use change in Scotland typically occurs over timescales significantly greater than individual years. Having a preliminary figure enables us to understand what impacts our work to protect and enhance protected natural features will have on carbon storage and sequestration rates.

# Activity Area 9: Digital Systems (including hardware, cloud and eWaste)

## 2030 Objectives:

- Quantify total cloud impacts on climate and nature (carbon and water as a minimum).
- Reduce annualised hardware emissions by 10%.
- Minimise digital waste going to landfill.
- Reduce hardware carbon footprint by 4% annually.

## Strategic actions:

1. Use hardware carbon footprint data and use TCO Standard to choose lower impact equipment.
2. Carry out climate impact review of NatureScot's digital systems.
3. Support colleagues with advice to minimise the climate impacts of their digital footprint.

Note: 2030 and 2035 emissions targets are for hardware only.

Anticipated emissions in 2030: **139t$CO_2$e**

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035: **113t$CO_2$e**

**Digital hardware emissions 2025 - 2035 (t$CO_2$e)**

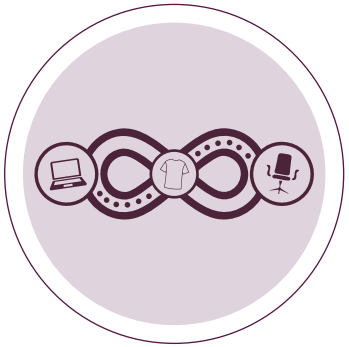
# Activity Area 10: Procurement (goods & services)

## 2030 Objectives:

- We know our Scope 3 procurement emissions.
- Suppliers for 25% (by value) of procured items have signed up to the Supplier Code of Conduct for Environmental and Social Impacts.

## Strategic actions:

1. Quantify emissions from procurement of goods and services, identifying key areas by spend.
2. Repeat emissions calculation annually.
3. Develop and implement Supplier Code of Conduct to drive reductions in nature and climate impacts of goods and services.
4. Establish formal Net Zero procurement support service in NatureScot.
5. Refine existing procurement policies (e.g. clothing) to consider full lifecycle impacts.



Anticipated residual emissions in 2030:
To be completed as data obtained

Anticipated residual emissions in 2035:
To be completed as data obtained

Procurement of goods and services represents one of NatureScot's most significant and challenging sources of Scope 3 emissions. While robust data and reporting are essential first steps, achieving meaningful emissions reductions will require a shift in how procurement decisions are made across the organisation.

Over the period of this Plan, NatureScot will move beyond measuring procurement-related emissions towards actively using this information to influence purchasing decisions. Climate and nature impacts will increasingly be considered alongside cost, quality and delivery, with the aim of reducing whole-life environmental impacts while supporting a just transition and resilient supply chains.

# Activity Area 11: People

## 2030 Objectives:

- All NatureScot colleagues have basic literacy in nature, climate change, biodiversity, Net Zero and adaptation, through appropriate training.
- Climate and Nature impacts are valued equally to cost in all decisions, including policy.

## Strategic actions:

1. Develop and implement Second Nature learning programme.
2. Establish a Net Zero Help Desk to provide support and guidance across the organisation.
3. Re-establish 'greening' measures and activities.
4. Use formal and informal internal communication channels to influence and encourage Nature-positive decision-making.

People make any organisation and NatureScot is no different

Pollution is a key cause of Nature loss and climate change

People make any organisation and NatureScot is no different. Together with the rules and regulations that govern our activities, our decisions and actions – both individually and collectively – determine our impacts on Nature. However, as our impacts end up so far away from us and are in a form that is difficult to relate to, we often don't consider them. Who really understands what a kilogram or ton of carbon dioxide looks like and what it does to Nature?

Pollution is a key cause of Nature loss and climate change. It is driven by a lack of connection to, and value of, Nature: by valuing Nature and feeling connected to it we are less likely to pollute the air, water and soil that keeps us alive.

NatureScot holds a unique position as the public body responsible for Scotland's natural heritage. We work to improve our natural environment in Scotland and inspire everyone to care more about it.

Embedding this sense of care, connection and valuing of Nature within every colleague is a crucial step in empowering us to reduce our contribution to pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss so that it becomes Second Nature.

# Routemap

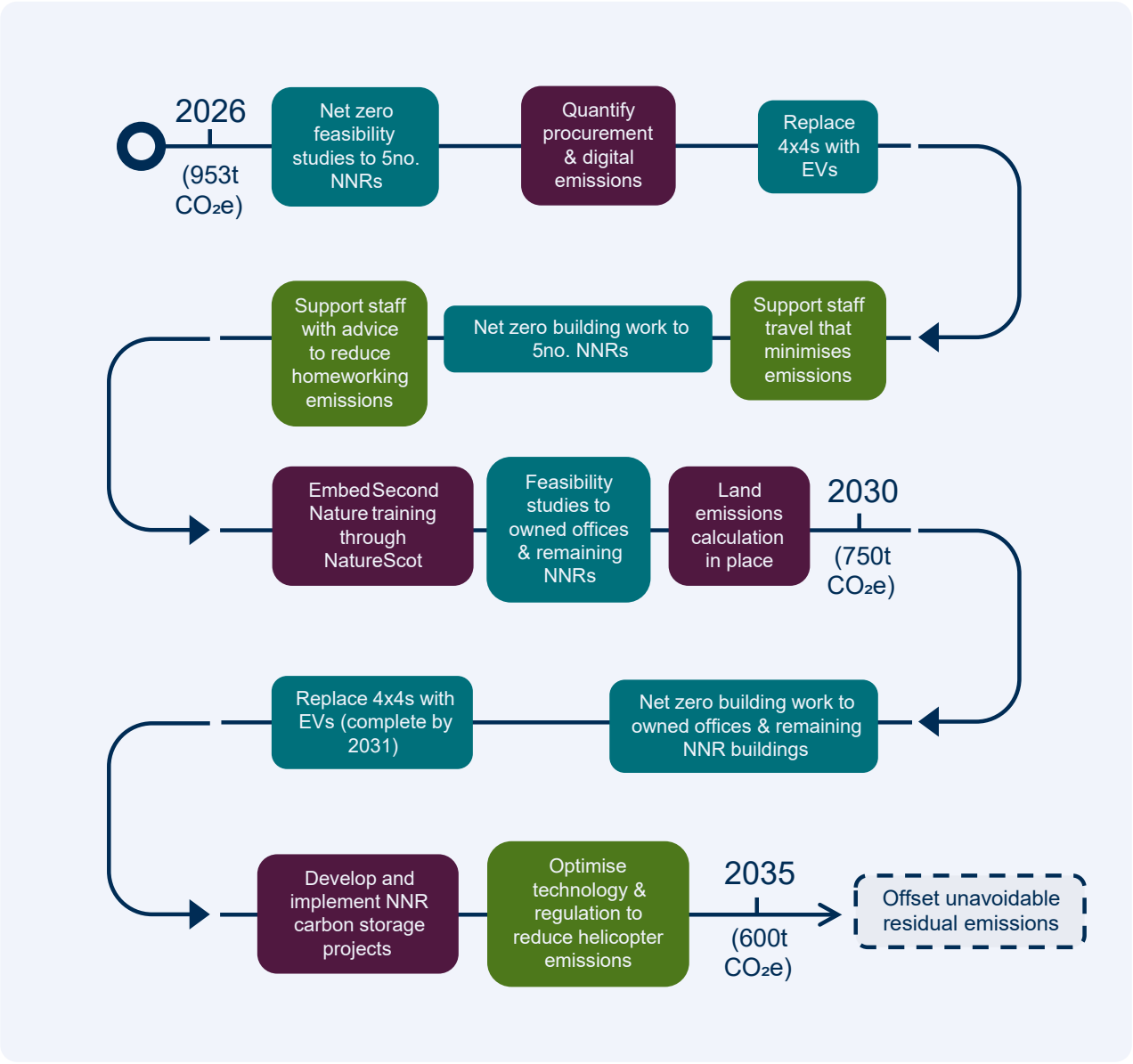
NatureScot's journey to Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions is driven by our experience of how pollution and climate change negatively affect Nature and our mission to reduce our impacts as far as possible.

As we increasingly record the sources of our emissions, our reported figures will initially go up. We understand that they are already occurring; we simply haven't acknowledged them yet. Emissions from procurement and digital systems are likely to be significant.

By 2030 we anticipate total reported emissions (excluding new sources) to be at a similar level to 2024/25 figures. By 2030 multiple Net Zero activities will be in progress across the organisation, driving down annual emissions.

By 2035 – NatureScot's Net Zero target date – we anticipate our residual emissions from sources we currently report on will be in the region of 600 tonnes $CO_2e$. Around one-quarter will be from Scope 1 and 2 sources, which will be compensated for on NatureScot land.

Achieving this reflects both the maximum feasible reduction of NatureScot's operational emissions and the responsible offsetting of unavoidable residual emissions, consistent with our role as Scotland's nature agency.



# Insetting

Scotland's climate change legislation is clear that emissions offsetting by public bodies must only be used as a last resort. This reflects the principle of 'asymmetry,' which notes it is more effective to prevent emissions than to try to remove them.

**Prevent:** NatureScot aims to eliminate all Scope 1 emissions from buildings and vehicles it owns by 2035. Most remaining Scope 1 emissions at this point are expected to come from buildings we lease from others. Other remaining emissions will include Scope 2 (mains electricity) and Scope 3 sources including travel, homeworking, commuting, helicopter use, digital systems and the annual purchasing of goods and services.

Societal, economic and technological developments are anticipated to continue driving the national decarbonisation of energy, further reducing unavoidable Scope 2 and 3 emissions from most areas of our operations.

**Remove:** NatureScot owns and manages more than 40,000Ha of land, inland water and coastal habitat across nearly 30 National Nature Reserves. As part of Scotland's land resource this plays a critical role in achieving national net zero objectives and addressing unavoidable emissions from multiple sectors. Put simply, it is not just for us.

1. **From 2035, NatureScot aims to inset all unavoidable Scope 1 and 2 emissions within its own geographic operational boundaries.** This is estimated to be around 150t$CO_2$e. This will be achieved using nature-based compensatory measures including tree-planting, ecosystem restoration and peatland renewal to actively sequester and store greenhouse gases that would not otherwise take place.

In line with Scottish Government policy, all compensatory measures will have high-integrity, and deliver additional, durable and climate-resilient carbon sequestration alongside measurable benefits for biodiversity and geodiversity.

NatureScot's task is to understand the range of available options and which are most appropriate. This process will be undertaken over the period of this Net Zero Plan.

Offsetting – emissions compensation measures undertaken beyond our geographic boundaries – will only take place where insetting is absolutely not possible.

## 2030 Objectives

- NatureScot has a clear insetting plan in place.
- Appropriate and effective emissions compensation options have been identified.
- Commitment and policy are in place to inset unavoidable Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from 2035 onwards.

## Strategic actions

- Commission the preparation of an emissions compensation strategy that balances climate action and nature restoration, and prioritises insetting.
- Commission a review of insetting approaches in Scotland and recommend options.
- Secure commitment and funding to implement the recommendations.
- Engage colleagues with a *prevention is better than cure* mindset so that residual emissions are minimised in absolute terms.

# Summary

Messages from the IPCC, Climate Change Committee, climate scientists, activists and Scottish Government are clear: **we need to go faster and bigger to reduce nature loss, global pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.**

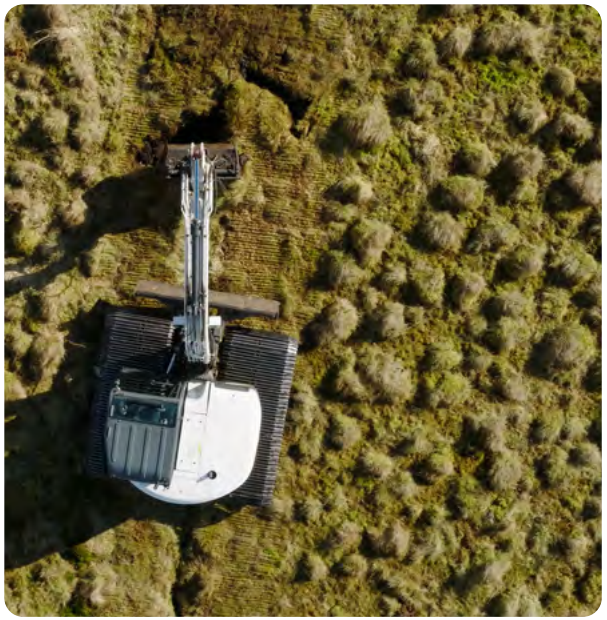
We all have a crucial role to play in achieving this and adapting to the impacts of climate change, and our Net Zero actions must prioritise Nature recovery.

We will adopt a wholesale attitude of ***Prevention is Better than Cure*** across the organisation, using our influence and control to cut Scope 1 ('direct') emissions from our buildings' heating and hot water systems and from our operational vehicles. Retrofit projects will be supplemented by nature-based adaptation measures and biodiversity enhancements.

We acknowledge that reducing Scope 3 emissions is a significant challenge but also recognise that **our people are our biggest ally.** By embedding Nature knowledge and skills across the organisation and an equipped and well-resourced Net Zero Team to provide support, colleagues will be better placed to make decisions that minimise their nature and climate impacts.

By 2035, NatureScot aims to reduce its reported annual emissions (excluding procurement, digital systems and land) by around 34% compared to 2023/24. We will be insetting unavoidable emissions with integrity, durability additionality and permanence to make a meaningful difference.

To achieve this, we are focusing on what we can and must do to play our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, so that we limit our contribution to climate change, pollution and Nature loss.



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