

The Verdancy Group

Sustainability Strategy

2023- 2028



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Foreword



The Scottish Government has committed to meeting Net Zero by 2045. At the Verdancy Group, we are absolutely committed to playing our part to achieve this.

We fully recognise the challenge that climate change presents many stakeholders in our economy and across society. However, we also recognise the immense opportunity that this transition presents.

The Verdancy Group wants to be at the forefront of this transition, helping partners across the public, private and third sector transition to Net Zero as quickly as possible. We believe that every job can, and should be a green job.

Nevertheless, we realise that we must adapt internally to meet Net Zero. This document hopes to communicate our strong ambition for change as we continue to grow and develop.

Steven Kiakowski
Director

"We believe that having sustainable minds leads to sustainable actions."

Introduction

Climate change poses a clear threat to our planet. Yet despite this, it is clear that the impact of climate change will not be felt equally across the globe. We therefore recognise that both internally and externally, that we must change the way we act and operate.

Our Sustainability Strategy 2023-28, acts to serve as a key resource for our organisation to guide us on our own journey and provide tangible targets for us to achieve. The five year plan provides a number of key immediate, and future steps to help develop our organisation.

Defining our Sustainability Strategy provides us with a clear pathway to reach our longer term target of reaching Net Zero by 2033.

This document recognises the multi-dimensional nature of sustainability, moving past the sole conception of environmental performance and incorporating wider elements from across education and recruitment. Through the direct consultation of our key stakeholders and staff, we believe we have created a robust document, that clearly details our future trajectory.

The Verdancy Group provide sustainability training and environmental guidance to organisations, schools and communities. We believe that through education and learning, we can empower people of every age to make informed and sustainable choices. We hope that this document reflects this belief.

Throughout this strategic document, close attention was paid to policy from both the Scottish and UK Government, as well as international targets and climate pledges, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. We hope that this document serves to provide evidence of this commitment.

Our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were adopted in 2015 by all member states of the United Nations.

These goals recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth.

The Scottish Government have set clear targets to become a Net Zero nation by 2045. To deliver on these targets, we must act on the SDGs.

We have prioritised four clear goals that we will use to set our internal strategy towards Net Zero. These goals are the following:



Core focus 1: Providing quality education



At the core, the Verdancy Group prides itself on delivering a high level of quality education to a wide range of participants across all sectors of society.

We recognise the importance that education can play in our ongoing mission to drive climate literacy and awareness. Already we strive to deliver education workshops to a number of marginalised communities, such as the delivery of our Joint REHIS Waste and Resource management programme to those within secure settings. Over the coming years we plan to upscale this process to provide further reach.

Already, we use a blended learning approach that is tailored to best suit the needs of our partners, with this offering a cost-effective and efficient way of delivering education and training. Over the next five years, we aim to develop this further so that we can provide learning to more charitable and school organisations.

We continue to make climate education as affordable and accessible as possible to the widest possible audience, and in the 2022 calendar year we pledged over £3000 worth of training, education and materials to supporting this throughout Scotland. Over the coming years, we aim to scale this up as we continue to grow.

Below outlines our current baseline as well as some key targets that our organisation is aiming to deliver on.

2023 baseline

We have delivered environmental learning at HMP Polmont to over 100 young people.

In the calendar year of 2022, we pledged over £3000 of support to supporting climate education across Scotland

2028 target

By 2028 we aim to have delivered this to over 1000 young people.

By 2028, we will provide a minimum of £5000 worth of training, education and support towards climate education across Scotland per year.

Core focus 2: Ensuring decent work and economic growth



The second key focus of our organisation, relates closely to SDG 8, ensuring decent work and economic growth. We apply this principle both internally with our own staff and externally with our partners. We fully embrace flexible working in our team, to both reduce our carbon emissions and improve employee wellbeing.

At the Verdancy Group, we respect that our employees deserve to be treated fairly at work and we will continue to strive to create this environment as we continue to grow. This includes providing equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, sexuality, race or disability and applying this through equal opportunities legislative compliance. We have a strong focus on maximising awareness within the workplace, and provide funding to make sure all our staff complete Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training, and refresh regularly.

Furthermore with our partners, we strive to encourage them to create a collaborative and inclusive workspace. Inclusivity and providing equal opportunity is central to fighting climate justice, and we fully embrace this as seen through some key targets below.

2023 baseline

As of 2023, 25% of all our staff have completed EDI training from an external provider.

As of 2023, we allow our employees to work from home on a completely flexible basis to minimise our carbon footprint.

2028 target

As our business continues to grow, we will ensure that by 2028, 100% of all our full time staff have completed EDI training.

By 2028 we will implement a cycle to work scheme for our employees to minimise carbon emissions when commuting.

Core focus 3: Responsible consumption and production



The third key focus of our organisation, is that we ensure the responsible consumption and production of goods.

At the Verdancy Group we already recognise the importance of the circular economy. The proposed legislation by the Scottish Government for the Circular Economy Bill is one that we responded to, and one that we support.

We recognise our need to transition away from a linear "take and make" economy, and towards one that embraces the principles of circularity. This transition provides significant environmental and economic benefits to businesses and communities across Scotland. We must move away from landfill disposal, and we are actively seeking opportunities to manage and mitigate our business waste through partnerships and initiatives.

We pledge to rethink our value and supply chains, and recognise these scope 3 emissions can have on our planet. As part of our pledge to ensuring responsible consumption and production, we also pledge to fully re-evaluate our current supply chain as part of our target setting process.

2023 baseline

Currently, we make sure that no more than 25% of all waste produced on sight ends up in landfill.

Currently, around 70% of all our business products are shipped from overseas.

2028 target

By 2028, we will ensure that no more than 5% of all waste generated by our business ends up in landfill.

By 2028, we are targeting that 65% of all business materials are bought from UK suppliers.

Core focus 4: Driving climate action



The final core focus of our organisation in driving sustainability, is focusing on climate action.

Addressing climate action in light of the climate emergency is of utmost importance. As a sustainability and environmental education-based organisation, we have committed to becoming market leaders in this field of climate action.

Delivering tangible climate action should focus on tangible and ambitious targets, rather than words. Therefore below we have outlined just some of our ambitious targets to help us on this journey to Net Zero by 2033.

As well as driving climate action internally, we also strongly encourage our partners and customers to commit to greater climate action themselves. We therefore will embed behavioural change within our training packages as a strategy for continued education and action.

2023 baseline

Currently, energy efficient lighting is present within 35% of our office space.

Currently, 40% of all our training courses ask for those undertaking them to make a personal climate pledge.

2028 target

By 2028, we commit to be using 100% energy efficient lighting across all our office space.

By 2028, all of our training courses will ask those who take them to make a strong climate pledge and behavioural change.

Managing our emissions

At the Verdancy Group, we recognise that there are many sources of emissions within our business practices. Broadly, these can be broken up into three distinct categories. These include:

Scope 1 emissions

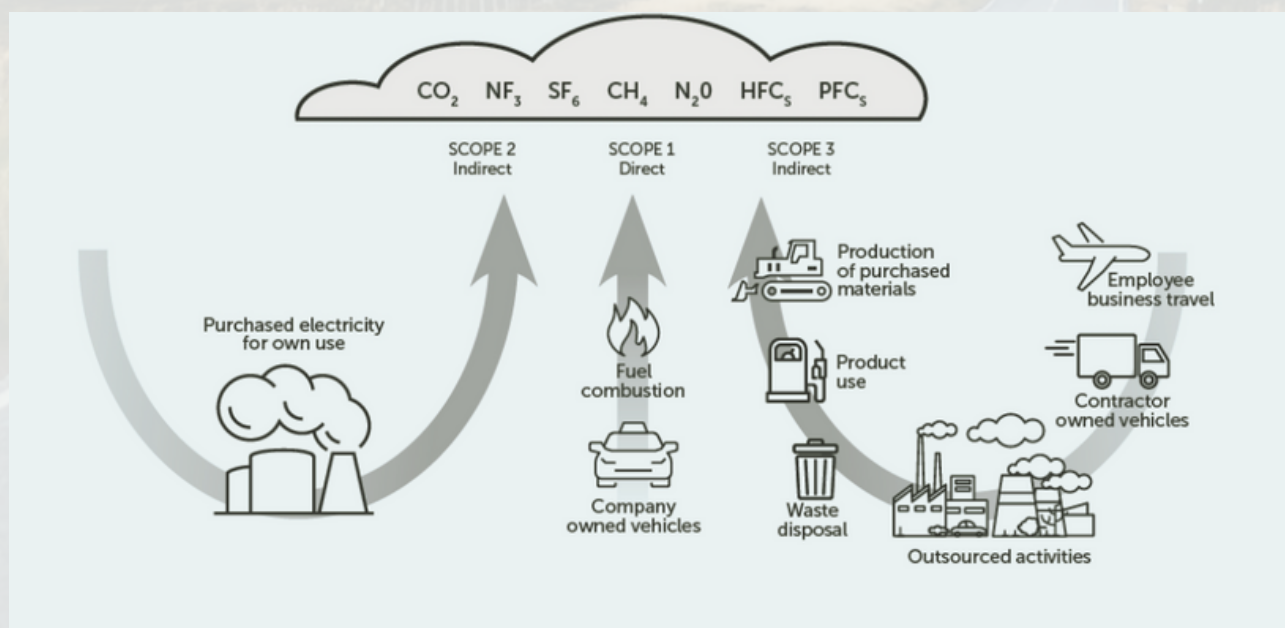
These emissions directly result from operations that are generated by the reporting company. This can include things such as fuel combustion from company owned materials and cars for example.

Scope 2 emissions

This scope of emissions are generated through indirect activities associated with energy, heating or cooling. This can include things such as heating the office space and electricity consumption within the building.

Scope 3 emissions

This scope of emissions are another form of indirect emissions not accounted in scope two that form part of the longer value chain. These emissions include all emissions generated throughout the supply chain that the business is responsible for, including the transportation and waste management of goods and services.



Source: (IEMA, Introduction to Net Zero)

Mapping our emissions

Addressing our own carbon footprint internally will require dealing with emissions across all scopes. Therefore for full transparency, we have mapped our main sources of greenhouse gas emissions to help us manage these emission sources.

Below outlines some of the key sources of emissions that are produced throughout by our organisation across all three scopes.

Our emissions sources

<u>Scope 1 emissions</u>	<u>Scope 2 emissions</u>	<u>Scope 3 emissions</u>
The use of our company car to travel for business purposes.	Our electricity usage on our company grounds.	Employee business travel for work purposes.
Any fugitive emissions leak from refrigerating units within our office.	The use of heating systems within our office space.	Business waste disposal and waste management.
		Transporting business goods and materials.

Calculating our current carbon footprint

Below, outlines a calculation of our organisations carbon footprint, based on our emissions generated throughout the year. This calculation was produced with the assistance of a specialised tool produced by the Carbon Trust, to provide a good breakdown of the sources and scope of our emissions.

Data was collected through a wide variety of channels both internally and externally to provide an accurate estimation. For a full list of sources, please see the reference list at the end of this documented.

Scope 1 and 2 emissions were the main focus of our calculations, as we have the greatest control to mitigate change within these areas.

However, we also attempted to capture our Scope 3 emissions as well, to give a truly reflective breakdown of our carbon footprint. We recognise the significant impact that Scope 3 emissions have and therefore aim to report them whenever possible. We recognise that Scope 3 emissions may be underrepresented in our calculation, so this figure in particular is subject to change.

Our emissions sources

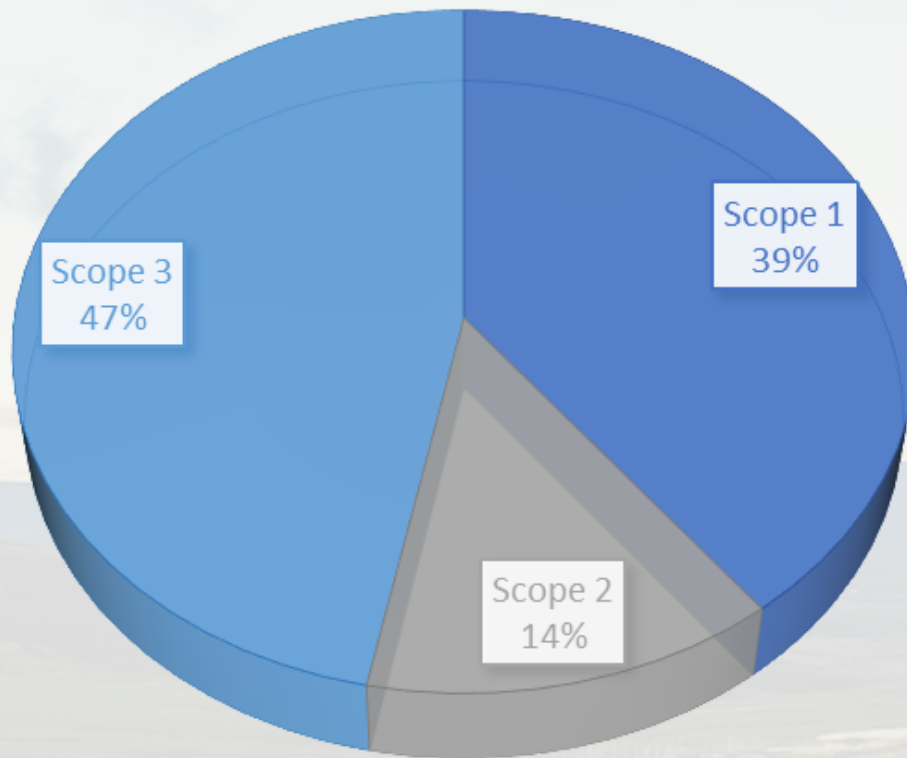
<u>Scope 1</u>	<u>Scope 2</u>	<u>Scope 3</u>
2.63TCO ₂ e	0.96TCO ₂ e	3.13TCO ₂ e

**6.72
Tonnes
CO₂e**

Is our estimated carbon footprint based on our calculation.

Visualising our Carbon Footprint

Our carbon footprint can also be expressed visually as seen below.

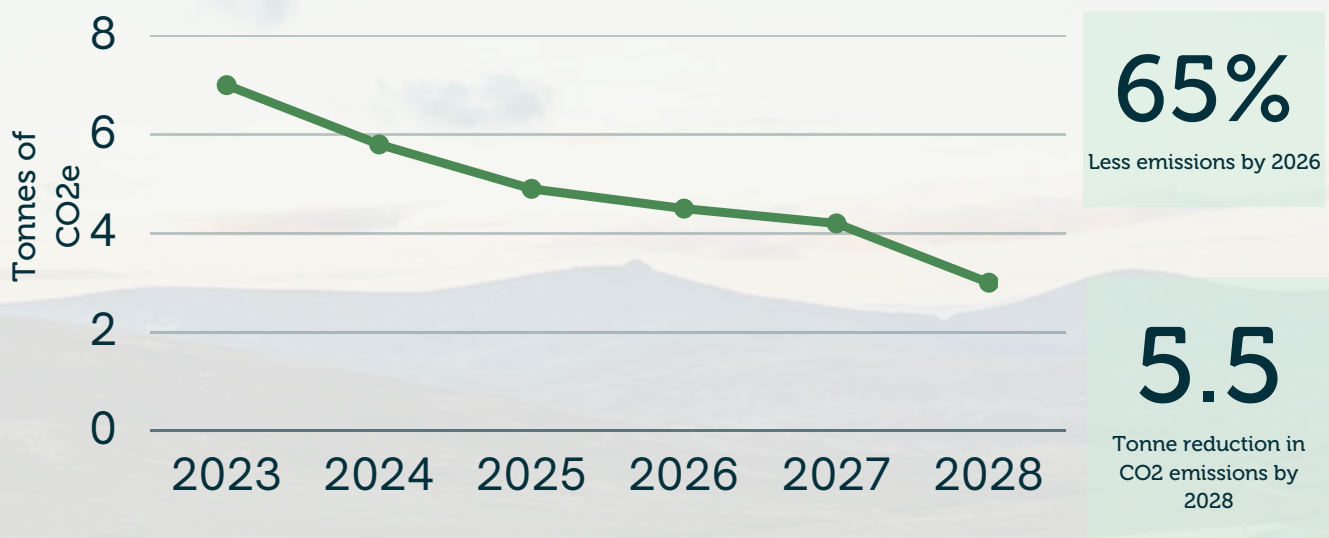


This shows that there is clear rationale to act. The next section looks to set our targets and timeline for emissions reduction in our journey to reach Net Zero by 203.

Tracking our emissions reductions

Quite simply, one of the most important ways in which an organisation can help reach Net Zero is by reducing their emissions. At the Verdancy Group we are no different.

This shows a short timeline of our anticipated CO2 reductions pathway between 2023 and 2028. As our business continues to grow, we recognise that we need to keep making changes to our practices.



We interpret this journey to reach Net Zero as one that requires internal and external change from our organisation. We must:

- Address the tangible changes we can make across Scope 1 and 2 emissions.
- Reduce our carbon footprint where possible across the supply chain.
- Manage our business waste more efficiency.
- Continue to inform and educate our staff on the importance of Net Zero as we grow.
- Consider sustainability at the forefront of our operations.

2033

Is the year that The Verdancy Group will become Net Zero

Supporting a Just Transition in Scotland

At the Verdancy Group, we recognise the importance that climate change and climate action has for the future of our planet. We all must act now to play our part in mitigating the ongoing impact of climate change.

One of the most important aspects of change that is required to make our transition to Net Zero successful, is through education. We recognise the Scottish Government's commitment to a Just Transition to Net Zero, ensuring that nobody is left behind in the process.

Yet despite this, it is clear that not enough is being done to support this transition. Within our local council area many families and communities do not have access to the same opportunities, and are often underrepresented in both formal and informal education.

Education is critical to our transition to Net Zero and the wellbeing of communities. We therefore will provide direct education and support to schools and community groups within West Lothian and the surrounding areas through direct and indirect financial and time commitment.

**From 2023-
2028**

We pledge to commit a minimum of £1500 per year to helping develop the education of those within West Lothian and surrounding areas .

This support will come from a combination of direct teaching, education and training as well as online learning resources. We feel through these methods this gives the wider community the best possible chance to learn and access information.

Responsible emissions offsetting

Despite our best intentions like many other likeminded organisations we recognise that often a reduction of carbon related activities will not be enough to achieve our transition towards Net Zero.

Nevertheless, until 2024 at the earliest, we will NOT implement any form of carbon offsetting or investment in reduction technologies as our main focus will be on reducing our internal carbon emissions wherever possible.

To make the necessary changes post-2024, we plan to offset our emissions through a number of targeted initiatives. We recognise the complex and often contradictory nature of offsetting carbon emissions. Therefore we strive to deliver projects that have a strong impact through a number of key success criteria.

These include:

Accreditation

We will use recognised accreditation in our emissions offsetting to ensure an equitable and environmentally beneficial strategy to further reduce our emissions.

Transparency

We will prioritise transparency in our emissions offsetting, committing to not withhold any information regarding the projects.

Meaningful impact

We will consult closely with experts in the field such as those at Forestry and Land Scotland to deliver a project that provides the maximum ecological benefit to our organisation.

Our planned carbon offsetting project: Forestry and Land Scotland

From 2024 onwards, we will partner with the Forestry and Land Commission to deliver a meaningful and localised strategy to offset our emissions.

The Forestry and Land commission provide the gold standard of environmental offsetting across Scotland, working to restore peatland and woodland areas through a holistic landscape approach.

Through this partnership, we hope to provide real environmental benefit to the surrounding landscape, helping to restore biodiversity and ecosystems to the benefit of local wildlife and the community. As this project evolves, we will continue to develop our strategy.



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

In summary

Our Sustainability Strategy outlines the key steps that we will take to support the transition to Net Zero and how we will adapt to the ongoing climate emergency.

Broadly, the three key steps we will take between now and 2028 to achieve this include:



Reducing our emissions where possible as a first step for climate action.



Being transparent in reporting and updating key targets.



Continuing to support a Just Transition through education provision and training.

References

Briefing: What are Scope 3 emissions? | The Carbon Trust -

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Just Transition - A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Scottish Government response - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-fairer-greener-scotland/>

Scope 3 Emissions (unglobalcompact.org.uk) - <https://www.unglobalcompact.org.uk/scope-3-emissions/>

Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018–2032 - update - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/>

Take Action for the Sustainable Development Goals - United Nations

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What are scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions? | National Grid Group - <https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-are-scope-1-2-3-carbon-emissions>