

BOARD
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Item:
Net Zero Route Map Work Plan 2025/26 Progress Report
10

CORPORATE / ASSURANCE / OPEN

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PURPOSE

This paper details the significant progress that Scottish Canals has made and subsequent successes towards a number of strategic commitments published with the Net Zero RouteMap (the RouteMap) (2023). Priorities for financial year 2026/2027 are outlined alongside a number of operational opportunities to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the RouteMap.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board is asked to note this report and be assured that suitable progress has been made towards achieving our strategic ambition of net zero by 2030.

BACKGROUND

Scottish Canals has committed to achieving 90% reduction (Scope 1 and Scope 2) greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 with the remaining 10% achieved through verified offsets. Emissions continue to be benchmarked against the 2019/20 baseline of 1,123 tCO₂e. This ambition is articulated within the organisation's Net Zero Routemap, first launched in 2023 and reaffirmed through subsequent reporting and stakeholder engagement.

As of 2024/25, statutory reporting shows emissions reduced by 456.8 tCO₂e (59% of baseline), with stronger results demonstrated when using the organisation's market-based calculation, which accounts for the 100% green electricity tariff.

The legislative context relating to net zero is complex and has evolved since the publication of the RouteMap in 2023. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Acts 2019 and 2024 and supported by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Budgets) Amendment Regulations 2025. The Scottish Governments target of net zero emissions by 2045 remains, supported by a statutory Climate Change Plan (2026-2040).

Scottish Canals is broadly on track to deliver its 2030 ambition; however, further focussed action, investment and governance will be essential.

ASSESSMENT

By considering the market-based method for carbon reduction as outlined in the RouteMap which recognises the organisation's 100% green energy tariff with EDF Energy, Scope 1 emissions for 2024/25 were calculated as 260.3 tCO₂e and Scope 2 emissions for 2024/25 were calculated as 0 tCO₂e. Analysis has shown that Scottish Canals only requires a further 13% carbon reduction (3.8% per year) plus 10% carbon offsetting per year to achieve net zero by 2030.

Delivery of the Net Zero Action Plan 2025/26

The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager continued to deliver at pace on a cross-organisational programme of work targeting employee engagement, improvements to buildings and assets and fleet management. A brief summary of achievements is provided below.

Employee Engagement

This has been a focus area during 2025/26 with a series of employee webinars to increase awareness of climate change and net zero alongside a programme of work targeting behaviour change on water, electricity and heat usage across the estate. The environment and sustainability teams published several articles in Scottish Canals' electronic magazine, Canal Connections, to increase awareness and celebrate success with our climate change and net zero initiatives.

Buildings and Assets

The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager continued to support improvement and transformational initiatives across our estates and placemaking team to ensure that building modifications and developments reflect current energy efficiency practices and are sustainable. Significant consultation during 2024/25 include upgrade to The Falkirk Wheel Visitor Centre as part of the TFW Masterplan, the installation of solar canopies and canal side chargers for the holiday hire boats.

Fleet Management

Three additional Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points have been installed at Crinan, Corpach and Clachnaharry to increase capacity to charge Scottish Canals increasing EV fleet. A new partnership with Green Power to host and maintain public EV chargers was confirmed with additional upgrades to hardware and software to be undertaken in mid-2026. The retrofit of the Antonine tour boat was completed in the autumn of 2025 with the installation of a zero emission engine. The retrofit of Archimedes is scheduled for completion by the end of March 2026.

Generation of Renewable Energy

The solar arrays at The Falkirk Wheel Visitor Centre, New Port Downie, Auchinstarry and Seaport Marina all continued to produce renewable energy for use on Scottish Canals sites, resulting in an estimated 27,000 kWh of electricity generation in 2024/25.

Scope 3 Emissions

Scottish Canals have partnered with Greenly Earth to quantify Scope 3 emissions which concluded that only 6% of organisational emissions were in Scope 1 and Scope 2 (combined) with the remaining 94% from Scope 3. This was not unexpected and we will continue to work with Greenly Earth to explore practices and programmes that will significantly reduce Scope 3 emissions over the coming years.

Awards

The Falkirk Wheel won the Gold Tourism Award for the fourth time, extending this title to 12 years. This was an outstanding achievement, highlighting the sustainability credentials of the site and resulted in significant media and stakeholder interest.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

The Sustainability and Climate Change Manager will continue to develop climate literacy across the organisation through a partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful. Scottish Canals will install smart meters at strategic locations and accurately measure electricity consumption. Further updates to the Fleet Policy will ensure improvements with sustainable transport and feasibility studies will be commissioned to explore heat pump options within our estates.

SUMMARY

In general, Scottish Canals is making great progress towards achieving their Net Zero Goals, with a 77% reduction already achieved using the market-based calculation. Further focus on reducing Scope 1 emissions through electrification of sites and tools and promoting sustainable transport across the organisation is key to reducing the remaining emissions. Retaining the 100% Green Tariff with EDF Energy is vital to maintaining this progress. Further exploration of offsetting options within the organisation and finding ways to reduce Scope 3 emissions in the supply chain are also key pieces of work over the next six years.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS ANALYSIS

Strategic Priorities	The RouteMap is a key strategic document and aligned to the Corporate Plan 2023-28 to "Implement our Net Zero Action Plan to reduce direct carbon emissions" and for Scottish Canals to become a more resilient canal network which supports transition to a net zero and greener Scotland.
Health & Safety	The delivery of the RouteMap will have a positive impact on health, safety, and wellbeing. This includes creating safer workplaces and ensuring that the local and regional impacts of climate change on canal operations can be managed appropriately.
Financial	Implementation of the RouteMap will require investment in a number of climate mitigation and adaption work streams. This is considered part of the annual work plan and budget setting process.
Legal	The RouteMap supports Scottish Canals legal duties in relation to carbon reporting, maintaining operational canals, and improving customer experience.
Risk / Risk Appetite	The actions contained within the RouteMap, and current progress reflects and supports Scottish Canals averse risk appetite for compliance.
Sustainability	The RouteMap aligns with Scottish Government targets for carbon reduction and net zero.
Environment	The RouteMap will have a direct positive impact on Scottish Canals environmental and strategic obligations, and compliance.
People	N/A
Fair Work	No immediate implications. Achieving net zero does have significant equalities and Just Transition considerations.
Communication	Engagement with internal and external stakeholders is pivotal for the successful delivery of the RouteMap. This will be an ongoing process throughout the lifespan of the RouteMap.

Community & Third Sector	The RouteMap will open up potential collaborations with community partnerships and volunteering.
Commercial	The RouteMap will increase renewable energy production and enhance the customer experience. Improvements to the commercial estate will be attractive to potential investors.
Asset	The RouteMap will have a positive impact on asset creation, maintenance, and longevity. This includes renewable energy production and Heating/Ventilation/Cooling systems will reduce operating and maintenance costs.