

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPONSOR: AMELIA MORGAN****Scottish Canals Net Zero Goals and Outcomes Update****Purpose**

This paper presents an update on the corporate programme of work relating to the delivery of the strategic outcomes and goals outlined in the Scottish Canals Net Zero RouteMap (the RouteMap) (2023).

**Priority**

Routine

**Background**

As a public Body, Scottish Canals has a statutory duty under The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (the Act) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, contribute to the delivery of the Scottish National Adaption Plan, and to act in the most sustainable way possible. Scottish Canals published an ambitious and targeted approach to climate adaptation and mitigation in the form of a RouteMap in 2023. The overall strategic ambition set by Scottish Canals was for the organisation to become net zero in greenhouse gas emission (Scope 1 and Scope 2) by 2030. This reflected the then Scottish Government policy of achieving a 75% reduction in greenhouse gas emission by 2030. This target has since been removed; however, the Scottish Government has maintained their commitment of achieving their long-term target for Scotland to reach net zero by 2045.

**Key Points for Noting**

As previously reported, November 2024 marked the first anniversary of the launch of the RouteMap. Scottish Canals has made significant progress towards achieving our stated goal of achieving a 90% reduction in Scope 1 and Scope 2 gas emissions by 2030. This includes the following successes:

- Scottish Canals total carbon footprint has reduced by 23% from the 2019-2020 baseline.
- A 30% reduction in fossil fuel (oil and gas) heating emissions from across the operational estate, two years ahead of the target outlined in the RouteMap.
- 77% of all waste generated by Scottish Canals has been diverted from landfill with 74% of general waste being recycled, composted, or used to generate electricity.
- A 67% reduction in the staff travel carbon footprint compared to 2022-23 levels.
- Increased the number of Electric Vehicle charging locations from 4 to 8 and reduced fleet travel emissions by 18% through the procurement of electric fleet vehicles and changes to driver behaviour.
- 67 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide was saved through low carbon projects including the installation of solar panels and heat pumps. The Falkirk Wheel Visitor Centre electrical supply is now solely derived from natural sources.

In October 2024, Scottish Canals appointed Daniel Musenga-Grant as Sustainability Manager to provide technical and professional leadership to the organisation and in particular, with the delivery of the RouteMap. He has undertaken a detailed Gap-Analysis and building upon our successful outcomes, he has identified five priority areas:

1. **Soft skills and communication** – Raising awareness of sustainability through staff engagement and targeted training coupled with both internal and external communications using a variety of media. This will build confidence and competency across the workforce and influence key stakeholders of the positive choices available to reduce emissions and protect the environment.
2. **Improvements to buildings and assets** – A broad spectrum programme of work to improve heating systems, improved lighting, the upgrade of external cladding and installation of smart metering throughout the estate.
3. **Fleet management** – Building upon previous successes, continue with the electrification of the corporate fleet and improvements to the charging infrastructure including electric tour boats, and the replacement of diesel vehicles and heavy plant with zero-emission alternatives. This will be balanced against organisational need, available technology, and financial impact.
4. **Generation of renewable energy** – exploration of energy producing actions to provide sufficient capability to be fully energy resilient across the estate and operations. This will not only reduce direct emissions but drive cost reductions and improve efficiency. This includes the introduction of mini-hydro schemes at several strategic locations across the canal network and significantly increasing the number of solar panels/solar PV arrays on rooftops and in car parks.
5. **Carbon offsetting** – Achieving net zero is an exercise in carbon accounting. Scottish Canals is committed through the Net Zero RouteMap to achieve a 90% reduction in emissions by 2030, with 10% residual emissions offset. Scottish Canals will explore local, regional, and national carbon capture and sequestration programmes as a legitimate means of carbon offsetting subject to sustainable investment principles.

A detailed work plan to address the five priorities highlighted in this report is currently being finalised and subject to approval from the Executive management Team and will be implemented from quarter 1 of 2025/26.

### Corporate Considerations

- **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.
- **Risk/Risk Appetite:** The actions contained within the RouteMap, and current progress reflects and supports Scottish Canals averse risk appetite for compliance.
- **Legal:** The RouteMap supports Scottish Canals legal duties in relation to carbon reporting, maintaining operational canals, and improving customer experience.

- **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.
- **Human Resources:** No direct impact on human resources is anticipated.
- **Fair Work First:** 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.
- **Environment:** The RouteMap will have a direct positive impact on Scottish Canals environmental and strategic obligations, and compliance.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Scottish Canals have made significant progress with the delivery of the strategic objectives outlined within the RouteMap. Five focus areas have been identified by the Sustainability Manager for the next six years that will ensure, subject to ongoing review, that the commitments within the RouteMap are achieved in full.

The Board is invited to:

- a) Note the current position.

**Author(s):** Brian Auld  
**Title:** Head of Health, Safety and Sustainability  
**Date:** 20 March 2025