



British  
Geological  
Survey

# Environmental Sustainability Strategy



# Foreword

This report is published by the British Geological Survey (BGS) and outlines how we are moving towards greater environmental sustainability (minimising harm and enhancing benefit) whilst staying at the cutting edge of our research. Our strategy follows our parent organisation's (UKRI) vision to 'embed sustainability in everything we do' (UKRI Strategic Prospectus, 2018<sup>1</sup>). We will embed it in all we do and continue to make a positive contribution by lowering our environmental impact and addressing current environmental challenges and global sustainability issues.

## BGS Environmental Sustainability Strategy

BGS is a world-leading geological survey and environmental science organisation, delivering a programme of research internationally. We are focused on research to understand the Earth and its associated environmental processes and, by doing so, we contribute to creating a more secure and sustainable future. As the national geological survey, we are the UK's premier provider of objective and authoritative scientific data, information and knowledge to help society understand our Earth.

We recognise that we are experiencing a period of unprecedented environmental change and societal expectation to respond to this change. Positive action is needed to address the environmental sustainability challenges, including climate change and loss of biodiversity, both of which are a result of human actions.

Our research, focusing on decarbonisation and resource management, environmental change adaptation and resilience, and multihazards and resilience, enables us to understand how our planet is changing and to contribute solutions and adaptive responses. We acknowledge, however, that the research we undertake and how we support it has its own impact on the environment. We must understand this impact and work toward reducing it to a minimum. This is the focus of our Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

This document outlines how we will move towards greater environmental sustainability (minimising harm and enhancing benefit) whilst staying at the cutting edge of our research through 16 commitments. Our strategy follows our parent organisation's (UKRI) vision to 'embed sustainability in everything we do' (UKRI Strategic Prospectus, 2018). We will embed it in all we do and continue to make a positive contribution by lowering our environmental impact and addressing current environmental challenges and global sustainability issues.

### Our strategy

Our strategy implements the UKRI Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2020)<sup>2</sup> and the NERC Responsible Business Statement<sup>3</sup>. It also complements BGS policies on equality, diversity and inclusion<sup>4</sup>, health and safety, research ethics<sup>5</sup> and well-being<sup>6</sup>. It outlines our ambitions for the first five years as well as the longer term in moving towards achieving a 'net zero' carbon position by 2040.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20200516093312/https://www.ukri.org/about-us/strategic-prospectus/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-050920-SustainabilityStrategy.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nerc.ukri.org/about/policy/responsible/statement/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/about-bgs/working-with-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-edi/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/about-bgs/our-work/bgs-research-ethics-and-research-integrity-policy/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/about-bgs/working-with-us/working-at-the-bgs/>

The strategy applies to all BGS sites, although we have several managed sites where we will work with the respective estate owners/managers, such as:

- Lyell Centre, Edinburgh (Heriot-Watt University)
- Wallingford (UKRI/UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology)
- Cardiff (Cardiff University)
- Belfast (D for the Economy)
- London (Natural History Museum)

The Keyworth campus (BGS head office) is where we can change estate management directly and where we operate large research laboratories and facilities. At Keyworth, we can actively record and manage our environmental sustainability performance.

BGS also collaborates with other organisations in the UK and internationally and we will actively support our and their environmental sustainability agendas and encourage them to share our values.

We pay for a wide range of goods and services (e.g. energy; water; computing; transport) and we will positively influence environmental sustainability performance of our suppliers and the choices we make.

### Values

Like UKRI and NERC, we will adopt an ambitious environmental sustainability strategy. We will:

- embed environmental sustainability into our corporate decisions and ways of working through our collaborative research
- ensure that our approach to research has a positive impact on the environment
- be transparent about who we work with and why
- ensure our collaborations address environmental sustainability

### Timescale

We aim to achieve net-zero carbon for our directly managed estates and research in line with the UKRI commitment. By 2030, we will have substantially raised our standard for environmental sustainability and we will have fully embedded it in our science strategy and estate management; we plan to work beyond compliance.

We will be transforming the way we work, firstly by baselining and benchmarking the current environmental performance of our estate (electricity; gas; water; waste). This will identify gaps in the way we collect data and build a foundation for improvement.

We will work with our funders and supply chain to drive positive environmental improvements. We acknowledge that major investments are required and will make cases for these, for example:

- increase on-site renewable energy generation (solar; ground-source heat pumps)
- increase use of electric hire vehicles
- introduce a staff carbon budget for business travel

In addition, we will make quick-win improvements where we can, for instance phasing out all non-recyclable and single-use plastics. We will ensure our catering is more sustainable, e.g. using local, organic, plant-based and reducing high-impact foods. We will increase biodiversity on our estate by planting more trees, allowing areas to naturalise, designating no-mow areas between April and October to encourage wild flowers, and enabling staff to have a community garden. Where we are not the owners or managers of the sites that we occupy, we will seek to influence the organisations that are to meet similar environmental sustainability targets.

We will publish our environmental sustainability plans with clear milestones at six-monthly intervals, establish KPIs and report performance and progress towards the strategy to the staff, the BGS Senior Management Board, the BGS Board and UKRI.

**Priority areas**

To achieve significant improvements in our environmental sustainability we have identified three priority areas within which we will take action. These reflect our assessment of areas where we impact the environment and where we can make significant improvements. These are:

- the BGS estate
- our business travel
- working practices

We have set out our key 16 commitments which will be actioned and monitored by a nominated responsible person(s) and reporting line for each of these areas (Table 1). Our pathway to delivery will be published every year, where commitments will be refreshed and achievements summarised.

Table 1 Summary of Commitments of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Area of Improvement	Commitment
<b>BGS Estate</b>	1) Reduce energy and fossil fuel consumption on site
	2) Reduce water usage
	3) Reduce waste sent to landfill
	4) More sustainable IT infrastructure
	5) Increase biodiversity on Keyworth Site
	6) Sustainable internal catering
	7) More sustainable laboratories
	8) More sustainable infrastructure
	9) Advocacy and education
<b>BGS Working practices</b>	10) Low-carbon working
	11) Environmental responsibility (projects)
	12) Procurement
	13) External communications
<b>Business travel</b>	14) Environmental impacts of business travel
	15) Carbon emissions cuts
	16) Cultural change in the BGS travel attitude

**Governance**

A successful delivery plan requires a governance strategy:

- BGS Director: accountable for delivery and effective resource allocation.
- BGS Senior Management Board: responsible for strategic delivery and implementation.
- BGS Environmental Sustainability Strategy Group: provides the evidence and advice to BGS to ensure implementation.

**Communication**

External and internal engagement will be key to drive environmental improvement. Our communication team will ensure all BGS staff are fully informed and feel part of the process via a communication plan, which will communicate our environmental sustainability performance in a coherent way for both internal and external audiences. Environmental performance will be

framed in the context of the UN Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>7</sup> where applicable.

At the end of year five, we will obtain independent external assurance of our performance against our objectives.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>