Environmental impact update 2024/25

CANCER
RESEARCH
UK

Together we are
beating cancer

Our commitment to sustainability

Cancer Research UK exists to beat cancer. We want to achieve our mission in a way that's good for the planet and human health, including people affected by cancer and their loved ones.

Since we launched our **environmental sustainability strategy** in 2024, we've been planning and preparing for its implementation. This includes identifying the actions we'll take to achieve net zero by 2050 as we strive to be operationally leading in sustainability within the UK charity sector.

Our strategy focuses on five objectives:

- To reduce our direct and indirect carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 from our 2022/23 baseline
- To achieve net zero emissions by 2050
- To achieve a 7% average year-on-year reduction of our emissions from 2023/24 until 2030
- To embed environmental sustainability in all that we do and influence our partners to do the same
- To set further goals beyond emissions reduction as we progress

Beating cancer is a long game and so is delivering on our environmental commitments. Ultimately, environmental sustainability plays a vital role in helping to achieve our vision of a world where everybody lives longer, better lives, free from the fear of cancer.

Our approach to being a responsible organisation

We exist to beat cancer for everyone. The ‘Sustain’ objective in our **organisational strategy** focuses on how we can achieve our mission in a responsible way to deliver sustainable long-term progress.

We’re committed to embedding responsibility towards our people and the planet into our work. To be a responsible organisation, we strive to reduce our environmental impact (planet), create meaningful impact for our people and the communities we support (people) and empower our people to act responsibly when making decisions (principles).

Our people

We value and celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and prioritise this in our work. Our refreshed EDI strategy (2025–2030) strengthens our commitment to reducing cancer and health inequalities, fostering inclusivity in research and governance, and engaging communities in accessible and meaningful ways.

Read our refreshed EDI strategy

Our planet

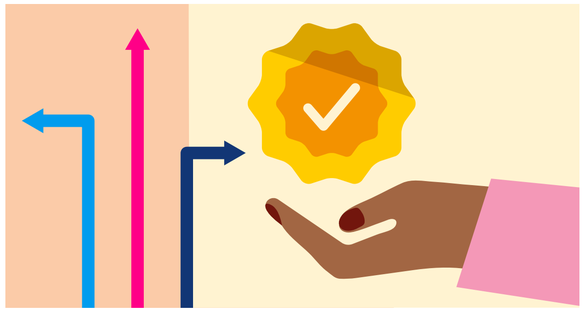
We play our part in slowing down climate change by minimising the negative environmental impacts of our work. And we integrate sustainability into our decision-making across specific focus areas to enable progress against our strategic objectives.

Read our environmental sustainability strategy

Our principles

We empower our people to make responsible decisions. Our Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics and internal policy framework ensures we have the right controls in place to respond to and manage organisational risks.

Read our Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics



Our progress against our strategy in 2024/25

We're pleased with the progress we've made in the six focus areas of our **environmental sustainability strategy**, but we know we have much more to do. This year, we've been building our carbon reduction plan. As we begin to implement our plan and focus on the operational changes we can make to reduce our emissions, we expect to see greater annual reductions between now and 2030. **Find our full emissions on page 8**

Research approach and laboratories

Research is our second largest source of emissions. Expanding our laboratories is essential to advancing our mission, but it also contributes to our carbon footprint. We endeavour to manage the environmental impact of our labs and influence wider change in the research community.

- All five of our Cancer Research Horizons Therapeutic Innovation labs have now been awarded Gold Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) level.
- By using the LEAF framework, these labs have:
  - saved 30% more energy by raising the temperature of freezers from -80C to -70C
  - saved 500kg CO2e by closing the sash on fume hoods
  - saved time, equipment and money by sharing results with other scientists and labs
- We were a launch signatory of the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice. **Read more about the concordat on page 11**
- We launched our environmental sustainability in research funding policy, which will require funded institutions to attain Silver LEAF level. **Read more about the policy on page 10**
- Emissions associated with our grants have reduced by 38%, as funded institutes advance net-zero commitments and reduce their carbon intensity.

Fundraising events

Our events are an important way for us to connect with our supporters and raise vital funds to help beat cancer.

- We continued to minimise waste and encourage use of reusable bottles and bibs at our events.
- The lanyards for our event medals are now made from recycled plastic bottles instead of polyester.
- We updated our processes to reduce the fuel and waste associated with producing our letters, sponsorship forms and running numbers.

Retail shops

Our shops raise funds by selling merchandise and donated goods and connect us with communities around the country.

- Emissions within this focus area fluctuate over time. The reduction of our retail estate has led to lower emissions from energy use, while the increased volume of goods sold in our shops has contributed to a rise in emissions associated with product usage.
- We installed building management systems in four of our superstores, which centrally monitor and control heating, ventilation, lighting and air conditioning systems to maintain efficient energy use.
- We continued to improve the kitchens, bathrooms and back-of-house ventilation in our shops to maximise efficiency and reduce energy use.
- We partnered with Currys to recycle donations of electronic items that cannot be sold in our shops.
- Our shops continued to extend the life of clothing and homeware by facilitating second-hand purchasing. We divert millions of pre-loved items from landfill and reduce the emissions associated with buying new products.

A volunteer at our Norwich shop. Credit: Laura Ashman

Electricity and travel

The electricity we use to run our operations and the ways our researchers, staff and supporters travel to our laboratories, events and facilities has an impact on our carbon footprint.

- We maintained 100% renewable electricity use for our retail shops and head office using Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin certificates, which we implemented in 2019.
- We installed LED lighting in 38 retail shops. Now 475 of our 565 shops have been upgraded.
- We introduced more hybrid petrol/electric cars. All our company cars are now either fully electric or hybrids.
- We trialled our first electric vehicle (EV) charging points at our fleet depot. We'll install EV charging points at our other retail distribution centres over the coming year.
- We've been using Lightfoot, an in-van telematics and tracking system, to help our drivers use less fuel and reduce carbon emissions.

Procurement

Procurement refers to all the goods and services we buy to support our operations, including our offices, shops, events and laboratories. Our procurement emissions are expected to change annually due to natural fluctuations in expenditure and the changing carbon intensity of the products we buy.

- Emissions in this focus area increased by 53% compared to 2023/24 due to increased procurement spend. As we implement our carbon reduction plan, we'll be considering carbon intensity in our buying decisions.
- We're embedding sustainability in supplier selection, mapping our supply chain risks and planning deeper engagement around sustainability with high-impact suppliers.

Investments and pensions

We hold some of our money as investments to strengthen our reserves and grow the funds we have available for our work. Our invested funds account for 40% of our carbon emissions, so it's vital that environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations are integrated into our investing approach.

Our pension funds contribute up to 5% of our baseline carbon footprint emissions. Where pensions are invested determines how intensive the associated carbon emissions are. In our **environmental sustainability strategy**, we committed to working with our pension providers over the next three years to understand how to reduce emissions in this area.

- Emissions from our investments decreased by 19% compared to 2023/24 due to the lower value of the portfolio at year end. As an organisation dedicated to beating cancer, we have a longstanding policy of not investing in any company that produces or manufactures tobacco. We are committed to balancing delivering strong financial returns with a conscious effort to limit exposure to major carbon-emitting industries, helping to ensure our investments don't unintentionally contribute to climate change.
- Emissions from our pension fund increased by 18% compared to 2023/24. However, we worked with our pension provider, Legal & General, to change our default pension to funds with significantly lower carbon intensity and expect this will lead to a 55% reduction in emissions associated with our pensions.

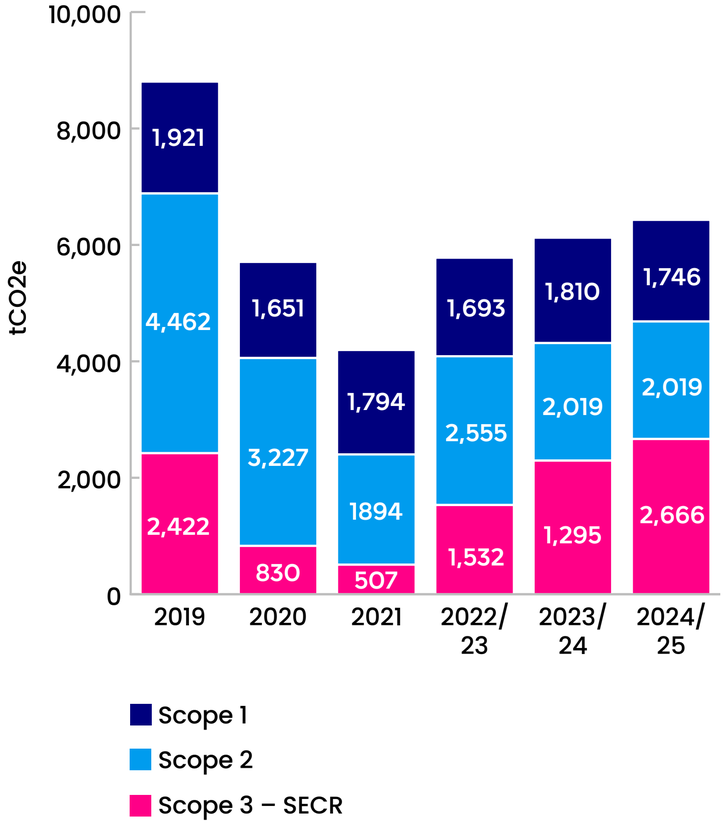
Our emissions in 2024/25

Our 2024/25 full scope carbon emissions are 4.3% lower than 2023/24, which is behind our annual reduction target of 7%. The reduction is largely due to the decrease in the value of our investments, which account for 40% of our baseline, and lower emissions associated with the grants we award, which account for 24% of our baseline.

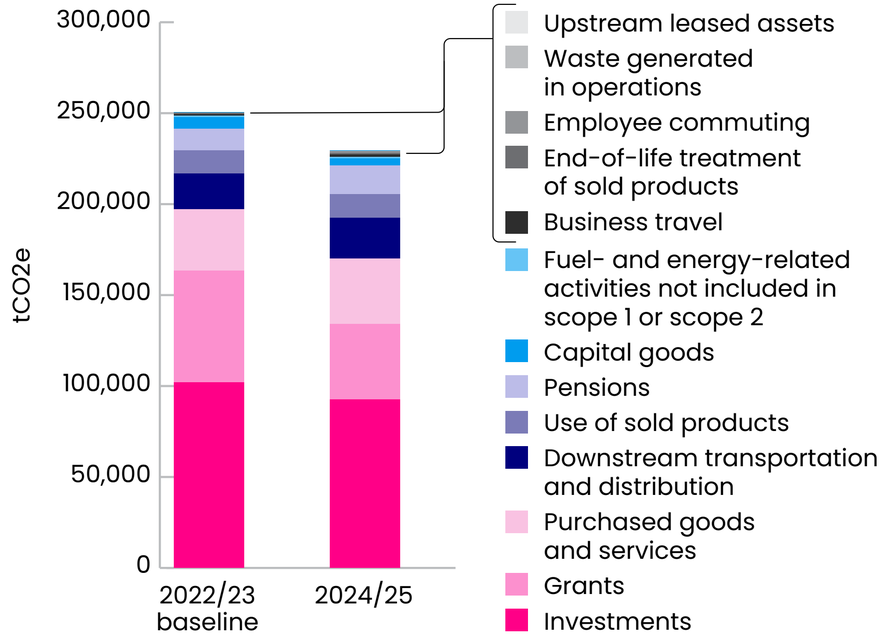
Our scope 1 and 2 emissions have decreased by 13% since our baseline of 4,248 tCO2e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) in 2022/23. In the last year, they fell by 2% from 3,829 tCO2e in 2023/24 to 3,765 tCO2e in 2024/25. This decline was initially driven by our transition to renewable energy procurement across our retail shops, which began in 2019. The fall in the last year is due to a reduction in the size of our retail estate: fewer shops means lower emissions.

More than 98% of our overall carbon emissions come from our scope 3 emissions. This year, our scope 3 emissions decreased by 4.3% – from 239,777 tCO2e in 2023/24 to 229,484 tCO2e in 2024/25. This equates to an overall reduction of 8.4% from our baseline of 250,409 tCO2e in 2022/23.

Cancer Research UK Group SECR emissions by scope (tCO2e)



Cancer Research UK Group overall scope 3 emissions breakdown by category (tCO2e)



SECR emissions

In 2023/24, our scope 1 and 2 SECR emissions were incorrectly reported due to an overstatement in our scope 2 emissions for our Scotland Institute at the University of Glasgow. We reported 4,637 tCO2e, when it should have been 3,829 tCO2e. In our 2024/25 SECR reporting, we've corrected this miscalculation to ensure an accurate representation of our actual emissions.

Reducing our carbon emissions in 2025/26 and beyond

Our ambition is to be operationally leading on environmental sustainability in the UK charity sector. We'll continue to use our environmental sustainability strategy as the framework to help us achieve this.

With the support of experts from the Carbon Trust, we're developing a detailed carbon reduction plan. We've established an operational governance structure, comprising a steering group and a delivery team led by senior leaders from across the organisation. And we're now prioritising which activities to implement each year between now and 2030. As we move out of the planning phase and into the implementation of the plan, we'll be monitoring progress to ensure we're on track to deliver our emissions reduction target of 7% each year.

Science-based targets

Last year, we began the process of verifying the carbon reduction targets for our two commercial subsidiary companies – Cancer Research Trading and Cancer Research Horizons – with the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi). However, we have reviewed our reporting requirements and have decided to no longer seek formal accreditation. This means Cancer Research Trading and Cancer Research Horizons will not obtain SBTi verification for their carbon reduction targets, which represent 7% of our total baseline emissions. We'll still continue to follow SBTi's methodology, report progress and work towards the targets set out in our **environmental sustainability strategy**, which cover all our carbon emissions.

Evolving research through the environmental sustainability concordat

In April 2024, we committed to reducing the environmental impact of our research activities by becoming a launch signatory of the **Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice**.

The concordat is an agreement developed by the UK research and innovation sector. By signing, we've pledged to work with other UK-based organisations to manage and reduce how research and innovation affects the environment. We'll also share data, ideas and solutions with each other.

One of the six focus areas of our **environmental sustainability strategy** is 'Research approach and laboratories'. The concordat provides a framework to guide our activities across six priority areas:

- Leadership and system change
- Sustainable infrastructure
- Sustainable procurement
- Emissions from business and academic travel
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Environmental impact and reporting data

Previous activity and achievements

We developed our first action plan for addressing the environmental sustainability concordat (**see page 11**) and we completed the following activities:

- We published our **first environmental sustainability in research funding policy** (and are one of only a few funders to do so). And we consulted research organisations on their experience of working to meet the policy.
- We introduced a question in the application form for our **clinical funding scheme** asking applicants to describe how they will undertake their proposed research in an environmentally sustainable way.
- We showcased best practice in making clinical research more environmentally sustainable on **Cancer News**.
- We **surveyed researchers and research professionals** to understand more about their views, motivations, challenges and suggestions for being more environmentally sustainable.

> "The environmental sustainability in research funding policy has been a great driver in increasing engagement around sustainability. It's encouraging to see more conversations and actions happening."
>
> Survey respondent

More than

4 in 5

of our 81 survey respondents **feel positively** about our environmental sustainability in research funding policy

Our concordat action plan for 2025/26

Our actions for 2025/26 are informed by our consultations with the cancer research community. We're prioritising changes we can make quickly to accelerate improvements across the concordat's six priority areas.

Leadership and system change

- Roll out our **environmental sustainability in research funding policy** from 2026 across response-mode funding, monitoring its impact on research and providing support to researchers and research institutions when needed.
- Use our prominent position and voice to raise awareness of the environmental impacts of cancer research and highlight best practice to mitigate them.
- Integrate at least one sustainability talk at a Cancer Research UK-led conference or symposium.

Sustainable infrastructure

- Achieve LEAF Silver level at our four core-funded institutes from 2026, supporting culture change and continuing to facilitate practice-sharing between them.
- Ensure all our core-funded infrastructure is aware of our plan to pilot raising the temperature of freezers from -80C to -70C to reduce energy usage.
- Encourage all our core-funded infrastructure to provide basic sustainability training to researchers.

Sustainable procurement

- Promote green procurement choices and approaches to reducing waste through written communications.
- Support clinical trial units to reduce waste, such as through sharing established guidance.
- Facilitate cancer researchers in archiving resources and case studies in sector databases that enable more sustainable procurement.

Emissions from business and academic travel

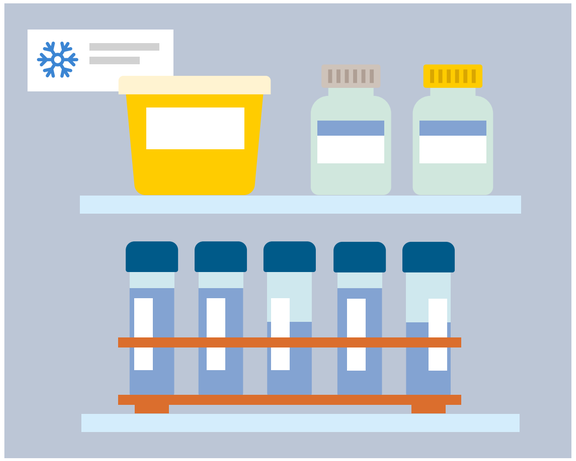
- Consider travel requirements when planning our research events.
- Review the travel we undertake for research activities to understand its environmental footprint.

Collaboration and partnerships

- Reference environmental sustainability in partnership negotiations, emphasising shared goals and data transparency.

Environmental impact and reporting data

- Work with other research funders to develop accurate approaches to calculating grant-related emissions.



> "Ultimately, a funder has the opportunity to influence whether a research team considers sustainability."
>
> Survey respondent

Investments

We measure our investment portfolio emissions and compare them to the broader investment universe. By considering ESG in our approach to investments, the emissions financed by our portfolio are significantly lower compared to reference benchmarks (read a definition of our reference benchmark in the box below right). We track the emissions of our portfolio through multiple metrics, including total emissions (absolute emissions) and emissions per unit of company sales (carbon intensity), which allows for comparison between companies of different sizes.

The absolute emissions of our portfolio are 39% lower than the reference benchmark and the carbon intensity of our portfolio is 32% lower than the reference benchmark. In 2024/25, the absolute emissions of our portfolio decreased by 19% compared to 2023/24, and the carbon intensity decreased by 4%. As changes in the value of our investments are directly linked to the associated carbon emissions, the 19% reduction in absolute emissions reflects the market conditions at year-end compared to the previous year.

Data credit

Goldman Sachs and MSI ESG.

Supplied by our investment provider Goldman Sachs

We aim to invest across lots of different industries and sectors. The lower emissions compared to the reference benchmark are primarily achieved through investing in sector leaders with lower emissions than their peers and partly driven by lower allocations to high-emitting sectors, such as energy and utilities.

In 2024/25, our high-yield implementation was changed from one manager to three for purposes of greater diversification. The addition of these two new managers marginally increased our fossil fuel reserves emissions, yet we remain 74% below the benchmark and will continue to monitor all exposures on a regular basis.

Reference benchmark

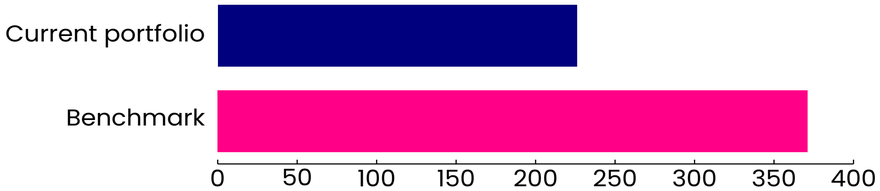
The reference benchmark (Goldman Sachs PWM Sustainable Solutions Group, MSCI) is a composite of the underlying strategy benchmarks. It's used to represent the broad investment universe that matches the asset allocation of the portfolio.

The resulting difference of the portfolio versus the benchmark therefore reflects the ESG decisions of each manager and strategy within the portfolio, rather than any asset allocation decisions.

CO2 conversion metrics

Metric	Portfolio	Benchmark	Difference
Absolute emissions (tCO2e)	90,938	149,858	-39%
Fossil fuel reserves emissions (tCO2e)	91,968	353,040	-74%

Carbon footprint (tCO2 / $million invested)



Greenhouse gases

Greenhouse gases are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases. Carbon dioxide is the primary greenhouse gas emitted through human activities. For all emission-related data, we use both the direct and indirect emissions of each company. This is obtained from each portfolio company's most recently reported or estimated scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions.

Scope 1 emissions are those from sources owned or controlled by the company, typically direct combustion of fuel as in a furnace or vehicle.

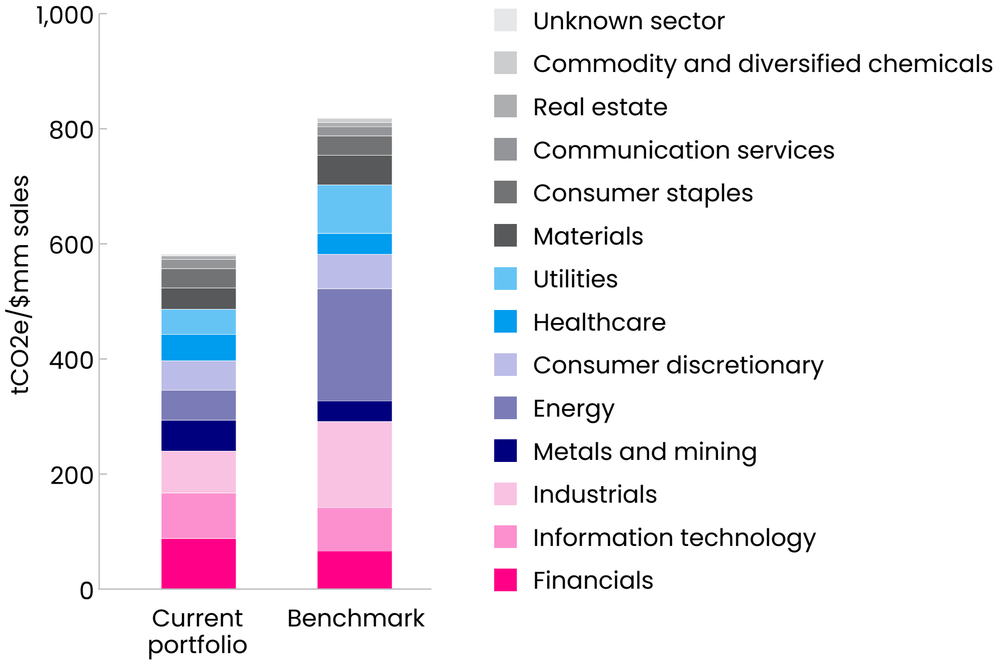
Scope 2 emissions are those caused by the generation of electricity purchased by the company.

Scope 3 emissions include an array of indirect emissions resulting from activities such as business travel, distribution of products by third parties and downstream use of company products (i.e. by the customers).

Absolute emissions are the total greenhouse gas emissions associated with a portfolio, expressed in tCO2e. Emissions are allocated to the investors based on an equity ownership approach. This means that, for example, if an investor owns 5% of a company's total enterprise value including cash, then the investor owns 5% of the company as well as 5% of the company's greenhouse gas emissions.

The portfolio carbon intensity is a weighted average of each portfolio company's emissions normalised by sales in US dollars. By normalising volume of carbon emissions by a unit of economic output (revenue), this metric enables comparable evaluation of companies on risk exposure and decarbonisation efforts.

Carbon intensity (tCO2 / $million sales)



Data credit

Goldman Sachs and MSI ESG.

Supplied by our investment provider Goldman Sachs

SECR reporting, methodology and disclosure summary

The reporting period is the most recent financial year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Our environmental data is compiled and analysed by ECA Business Energy. All our environmental reporting data, methodology and final figures are independently audited by CLS Energy Ltd.

This report has been compiled in line with the March 2019 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy **Environmental reporting guidelines: including Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting requirements**, and the Energy Managers Association methodology for SECR Reporting. All measured emissions from activities which the organisation has financial control over are included as required under The Companies (Directors' Report) and Limited Liability Partnerships (Energy and Carbon Report) Regulations 2018, unless otherwise stated in the exclusions statement. Emissions have been calculated using the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard.

The carbon figures have been calculated using the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero 2023 carbon conversion factors for all fuels. The only exceptions are:

- travel expenditure figures, which have been taken from market averages
- travel-agent-sourced business travel, which has been sourced directly from the agency
- market-based electricity, which has been taken from SSE Airtricity, BPG Energy, Drax, Ecotricity, EDF Energy, Guernsey Electricity, Jersey Electricity, NPower, Opus, ScottishPower, SmartestEnergy and TotalEnergies Gas & Power as the UK suppliers

The intensity measurement of full-time equivalent (FTE) has been selected to compare emissions with company growth and for consistency with similarly reporting businesses to review the market position.

Estimation methods used

All emissions calculations are taken from activity data. In 2024/25, pro rata extrapolation was used for 2.2% of scope 1 and 6.2% of scope 2 consumption across all sites. Direct comparison was used for 1% of scope 1 consumption. These estimations were made for our Scotland Institute, Cori Building, Grantham and other sites with data gaps. Overall, these estimations total 3.2% of consumption across all reported sources.

Intensity ratio (tCO2e/FTE)

Year	Location-based	Change vs previous year
2024/25	2.37	14%
2023/24	2.09	3%
2022/23	2.03	14%
2021	1.78	9%
2020	1.63	-28%
2019	2.28	-

FTE 2023/24	**3,744**

Emissions factors used: fuel type (SECR)

		Location-based method		Market-based method			
	Units	Base year 2019	Second year 2020	Third year 2021	Fourth year 2022/23	Previous year 2023/24	Current year 2024/25
Scope 1							
Combustion	tCO2e			1,172	953	1,079	1,101
Transport	tCO2e			622	740	731	645
Total scope 1	**tCO2e**	**1,921**	**1,651**	**1,794**	**1,693**	**1,810**	**1,745**
	kWh			**9,030,679**	**8,328,013**	**9,006,724**	**8,774,025**
Scope 2							
Purchased electricity	tCO2e			1,407	1,841	1,519	1,475
Purchased heat	tCO2e			436	290	222	210
Purchased cooling	tCO2e			51	424	278	334
Total scope 2	**tCO2e**	**4,462**	**3,227**	**1,894**	**2,555**	**2,019**	**2,019**
	kWh			**18,151,079**	**22,621,294**	**21,123,131**	**20,856,490**
Scope 3							
Mandatory transport	tCO2e		130	57	119	99	69
Voluntary transport	tCO2e		368	114	1,016	1,821	2,219
Transmission and distribution	tCO2e			336	397	375	378
Total scope 3	**tCO2e**	**2,422**	**830**	**507**	**1,532**	**2,295**	**2,666**
	kWh			**230,257**	**481,263**	**407,183**	**285,424**
Total all scopes	**tCO2e**	**8,805**	**5,708**	**4,195**	**5,780**	**6,124**	**6,430**
Total all scopes	**kWh**	**29,376,106**	**23,733,671**	**27,412,015**	**31,430,570**	**30,537,038**	**29,915,939**

Our detailed carbon emissions in 2024/25

Cancer Research UK Group overall scope 3 emissions (tCO2e)

	2023/24	2022/23
Purchased goods and services	13,928	33,484
Capital goods	4,780	6,105
Fuel- and energy-related activities not included in scope 1 or scope 2	2,135	1,092
Waste generated in operations	104	96
Business travel	978	710
Employee commuting	125	127
Upstream leased assets	3	3
Downstream transportation and distribution	24,523	19,831
Use of sold products	12,245	12,635
End-of-life treatment of sold products	684	701
Grants	57,510	61,650
Investments	109,680	101,896
Pensions	13,082	12,079
Total scope 3	**239,777**	**250,409**

The above categories are listed in order of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol categories 1–13.

Green electricity tariff detail 2023/24

Tariff type	Main supplier	tCO2e	tCO2e reduction
Green	TotalEnergies Gas & Power	0	
Brown	Npower	9	
Green	ScottishPower	0	
Brown	SSE Airtricity	47	
Brown	Drax	0	
Brown	BPG Energy	7	
Green	Ecotricity	0	-44%
Green	Opus	0	
Green	Guernsey Electricity	0	
Brown	Jersey Electricity	1	
Green	EDF Energy	0	
Green	SmartestEnergy	0	
Brown	Landlord	2,759	

Greenhouse gas breakdown totals

	tCO2e	tCO2	tCH4	tN2O
	7,143.73	7,074.42	24.15	45.16
Cash figure	238.04	-	-	-
	7,381.77	**7,074.42**	**24.15**	**45.16**