



SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Status: APPROVED

Policy Lead :	Head of Asset & Sustainability
Owned By :	Head of Asset & Sustainability
Date Approved:	8 August 2023
Approved By :	BHA Board
Review Date:	August 2026
Regulatory / Legislative Considerations/ References	Climate Change Scotland Act 2009
Other Documents to be read in conjunction with this policy :	None

Policy Title:	Sustainability Policy
Purpose / Aim of policy:	The purpose of this policy is to set out Berwickshire Housing Association's ambition and approach to sustainability which enables us to make a positive contribution to the quality of life in the areas in which we operate.
Scope of Policy:	Environmental sustainability only
Definitions:	Sustainability – the avoidance of depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance.
Specific detail related to each strand in the scope:	None
Approval Source:	BHA Board
Equality Impact Assessment:	Not required
Glossary of Terms	None
Risk Implications:	This policy is currently an interim until such times as new guidance is issued around our properties. This will allow us to set specific targets to meet the requirements of the new guidance. In the meantime, there is a risk that the activities we undertake in this area do not meet the future guidance but will improve the impact of the cost of living on our customers.

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out Berwickshire Housing Association's ambition and approach to sustainability which enables us to make a positive contribution to the quality of life in the areas in which we operate.

The Scottish Government has set ambitious targets to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions by 42% by 2020 and an 80% reduction by 2045, compared to 1990 levels and whilst more specific targets were also issued relating to our assets (ESSH 2) these are currently under review leaving a gap in terms of the overall approach the social housing sector is being asked to take. Of course, sustainability is also wider than the decarbonisation agenda and we will also address other issues such as water use, biodiversity, the circular economy and water mgt etc. as part of our efforts moving forward.

Our initial challenge and focus is to continue to provide high quality services and reduce our carbon footprint based on the current information we have in regard to the wider policy agenda. Our challenge will be to continue to achieve positive outcomes on decarbonisation now but not pursue activities which may ultimately not meet the wider policy objectives when those are issued.

In view of this challenge this Policy will be conservative in the objectives focusing these at this stage on the building awareness and ensuring we have the groundwork in place to support the activities we decide to take forward. The objectives of this policy are therefore to:

- State our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and maximising our contribution to wider environmental considerations.
- Outline the role of Team BHA in enabling BHA to become a sustainable organisation.
- Encourage colleagues to consider non-traditional ways of working which value the environment.
- Ensure we have excellent data on our stock and business activities to enable us to understand our current position and identify and evaluate actions going forward to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Assist in the reduction of BHA's carbon footprint.
- Educate and inform our tenants about ways to live more sustainably in their home.

2 BHA's Sustainability Vision

We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment through a reduction in our carbon footprint, increased recycling and working with our contractors who are committed to sustainable procurement chains. We aim to reduce our energy usage and we will, wherever possible, encourage green travel options within our

organisation.

In all our activities we will adopt an approach that:

- Recognises the role of social and environmental issues in enhancing the delivery of services and takes the opportunity to review services to identify opportunities for improved sustainability.
- Seeks to develop our reputation in this area where this supports our strategic objectives.
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues and how we can make positive changes to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Increase operational efficiency and effectiveness as a method of ensuring our carbon footprint is minimised.
- Contribute to meeting the current and future needs of customers and how decarbonisation and wider sustainability can benefit them.

3 The importance of Sustainability

Sustainability is fundamental to everything we do and connects the world we live into our local communities. It covers areas including.

- Type of materials used in new developments and in routine and planned maintenance.
- Opportunities for recycling.
- Renewable energy.
- Embodied carbon in the materials we use for our repairs and maintenance functions.
- Transport methods chosen by colleagues and;
- BHA's general office working practices and recycling.

Sustainability is important because we have a duty as an organisation to reduce our carbon footprint and maximise our contribution to other areas such as water use and biodiversity by adopting sustainable methods of working. We will therefore look to use the "green alternative" wherever appropriate.

4 Asset Management

In all our asset management functions (repairs, planned maintenance, new build development and refurbishment) we will seek to maximise our sustainability approach by

- Ensuring we provide homes which are located where people want to live.
- Enabling place-making and creating living environments which are healthy, safe and secure.
- Ensure our homes are developed and maintained with sustainability and affordability for our customers in mind.

- Develop a BHA standard to be utilised across all our asset management functions which embeds sustainability both in the initial construction and future use.
- Procure with sustainability in mind and specifically enable our contractors to work efficiently reducing their carbon footprint.

We will look at the following in more detail:

- Construction methods
- Material specification
- Energy sources and energy efficiency
- The future use and maintenance of the buildings
- Waste management and site management

6 Customer Experience

Our approach to sustainability includes seeking to support tenants in maintaining their tenancies and addressing social and economic issues that impact on our customers.

- Work in conjunction with local partners, funding agencies and other relevant organisations to improve the social and economic well-being of those we house in our communities.
- Seek to develop customer involvement through our customer engagement approaches.

Through customer newsletters, social media, our website and any other communication methods we will:

- Provide customers with appropriate energy advice, or direct them to agencies to assist them enabling them to reduce their energy costs and create healthy, internal environments;
- Provide customers with information about how they can play their part in addressing environmental issues;
- Encourage customers to maximise their use of local recycling facilities.
- Through our housing services policies and procedures, in particular when dealing with the issues arising from rent arrears and anti-social behaviour. We will seek to assist customers to sustain their tenancies wherever possible.

7 General

BHA will also seek to maximise sustainability measures in our offices and other workplaces through:

- Reducing waste
- Reducing energy consumption
- Maximising recycling opportunities

In due course we will commission benchmark data to evaluate our carbon footprint and set out an action plan to reduce this where appropriate.

8 Colleague awareness and Engagement

BHA aim to be proactive in raising awareness amongst colleagues about sustainability issues and the practical contribution they can make to sustainable development. We encourage colleagues to share knowledge of best practice.

We will encourage colleagues to be involved in developing corporate social responsibility across the organisation, with a commitment by Leaders to 'lead by example' both in their own practices and in developing a long term environmental strategy.

9 Review

This policy will be reviewed dynamically as the wider context adapts and changes but will be formally reviewed when new guidance is issued around our assets. In line with our general approach to Policies, this policy will be reviewed no later than 3 years.