

— OFFICE OF THE —

SCOTTISH ROAD WORKS COMMISSIONER

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010

Sustainability, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy Statement

The Scottish Road Works Commissioner (SRWC) has a duty to report measures taken to promote and increase sustainable growth and to improve efficiency, effectiveness and economy in exercising his functions.

This is the SRWC's statement for the financial year 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

Functions of the Commissioner

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 details the three statutory functions that the Commissioner is required to carry out –

- (a) Monitoring the carrying out of works in roads in Scotland;
- (b) Promoting compliance with the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 Act and the obligations imposed under it; and
- (c) Promoting the pursuit of good practice.

Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy

The office of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner (oSRWC) is a small organisation, with 5 permanent members of staff in addition to the Commissioner. During the financial year 2022-23, efficiency, effectiveness and economy were forefront in guiding the development of the business and corporate plans, as well as in relation to management of the office. The lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to slightly limit the office's ability to undertake some activities, particularly site based activities, but the main functions of the office were able to continue utilising effective working from home practices.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The majority of the oSRWC resources are dedicated to helping the SRWC meet the statutory obligations set out by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. There is a significant requirement for experienced, competent staff in order to carry out the core functions of the five business areas of the office as defined within the 2022-23 business plan. In practice this means that the majority of the oSRWC's financial resource is spent on staffing.

The staff working for the Commissioner remain the main asset for the organisation. In order to focus on staff development and retention, the oSRWC has committed to on-going training opportunities for staff, on subjects such as Cyber Resilience and Records Management. As with previous years, accountancy support is still sought on an 'as required' basis from a Chartered Accountant. This has represented a significant continued saving for the organisation.

Staff now work mainly from home but with regular face-to-face team meetings becoming embedded through the year. Technology already in place has been developed with better online collaboration tools now available. Again, this technology was used to facilitate wider webinar events which offer considerable savings and efficiencies over in-person events.

Roles within the team were refined following the departure of the Policy Manager in November 2021 and a new Policy and Quality Manager role was created and filled in June 2022.

Economy

As the office of a 'Significant Other Body' and independent public official, the oSRWC has the option to be based in any location. The office of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner is located in Saughton House, which is part of the Scottish Government estate. The annual cost is approximately 25% of the cost of leasing commercial premises. In addition to the financial benefit of co-location, the oSRWC also utilises the following shared services, benefiting from economies of scale:

- IT, payroll and pension services provided by the Scottish Government.
- Scottish Government banking services, including the cost benefits from competitive rates.
- Scottish Government SEAS payment system.
- Scottish Government procurement for general office supplies and services
- Scottish Government meeting and conference rooms

The office also collaborates with the Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB) to utilise the accountancy package SAGE, resulting in a reduction of costs for the office.

Procurement of major services such as the supply of the Scottish Road Works Register has been by means of competitive tender. The re-tender for the Scottish Road Works Register (2018 onwards) was concluded successfully with the support and resources of Scottish Government specialists and Community stakeholders. The community and SRWC therefore have confidence that the associated risk with any procurement exercise has been limited as far as possible.

Sustainability

The Commissioner's primary functions are those laid out in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 and are detailed at the start of this report. The oSWRC is a small organisation with a specific remit. Whilst it is challenging to make a significant contribution to sustainable growth, the oSRWC uses all reasonable endeavours in pursuance of sustainability through management of staff and resources.

Staff have been closely involved in the development of a new Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Roads (SROR) and this work has had sustainability and carbon reduction at the fore.

Carbon Management

The oSRWC is accommodated within a Scottish Government building and as such, benefits from facilities provided to promote Carbon Management. In pursuance of sustainability, the staff of the oSRWC are encouraged to:

- Reduce the need to travel.
- To take public transport/pooled vehicle if travel is necessary;
- Choose more sustainable transport for commuting when possible;
- Use recycling facilities where available in Saughton House;
- Use recycled office materials where possible;
- Use reusable cups for beverages at meetings and within the office;
- Reduce the quantity of publications issued on paper e.g. the Annual Report, using electronic means as the prime method for distribution; Formal letters, issued by electronic mail and Invoices, issued by electronic mail.

Saughton House is situated near excellent integrated public transport links, including links to an international airport and train services. This benefits the oSRWC in terms of travel opportunities, and visitors to the SRWC who can make use of public transport.

Whilst staff travel has increased slightly from the pandemic period, it is still significantly lower than pre-2020. Most business journeys were undertaken in electric vehicles and staff home-to-work travel is now minimised due to working from home.

All publications and correspondence are now electronic with hard copy reserved for special requests.

Pursuance of Commissioner's Functions

In undertaking the functions outlined above, the Commissioner contributes towards improved planning, co-ordination and quality of road works in Scotland. This, in turn, leads to a reduction in the disruption caused by such works and contributes towards sustainable growth within Scotland. Less disruption means less delay. Reduced delays on roads reduce carbon emissions from waiting traffic.

However, in 2022-23, the number of road works rose above pre-pandemic levels largely due to the backlog of works and the roll-out of fibre broadband. Traffic levels remained below pre-pandemic levels.

The Scottish Roads Research Board (SRRB) annually commissions research and development work to deliver improvements in safety, construction, operation and maintenance of the Scottish road network. The SRRB is a partnership between Transport Scotland, the Society of Chief Officers for Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) and the Scottish Road Works Commissioner (SRWC). Improvement and innovation in this field will lead to a reduction in disruption caused by road works and deliver cost savings to roads authorities.

In 2022-23, the Commissioner sponsored an SRRB project examining the service life of reinstatements. This reported in March 2023 and results will be disseminated through 2023.