

# Environmental Strategy

## 2024–2027



The Royal College of Anaesthetists is dedicated to reducing its environmental footprint. We also want to make sure that any changes we make follow the best scientific evidence, led by the appropriate experts. We are keen to ensure cross-disciplinary consultation for any changes that fall outside our area of expertise, and to foster collaborations across the sustainability disciplines.

By approving this strategy, the College will join the growing number of organisations around the world in declaring a climate and ecological emergency. The [World Health Organisation](#) describes climate change as the single biggest health threat facing humanity.

The College has committed in '[Our Five-Year Commitment](#)' to:

- 1 Commit to promote environmental sustainability for the specialty.**
- 2 Commit to deliver environmental sustainability at the College, and work towards carbon neutrality.**

## Background

It is widely accepted that climate change and environmental degradation are already impacting on the wellbeing of the current generation, in part as a consequence of the unsustainable use of global resources and production of waste and pollution.

The Lancet Countdown 2022 Report states that "*climate change is undermining every dimension of health monitored*" and "*increasing the fragility of the systems that health depends on*".

The NHS contributes significantly to the UK's CO<sub>2</sub> production, with estimates suggesting as much as five per cent of CO<sub>2</sub>e based on estimates for NHS procurement, staff and patient travel, infrastructure, and waste management.

## The College

The College accepts it must change and will advocate strongly for others also taking action/ making changes to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. However, we acknowledge that meaningful change depends on huge alteration of population lifestyles.

We can contribute by making our membership aware of the effects of their behaviour.

Therefore, the College should seek to actively promote strategies and policies that have a positive impact on planetary health whilst having the co-benefit of improving population health and/or reducing health inequalities.

The College is using relevant national and international initiatives to inform its planning in the delivery of this strategy.

We will ensure the College conducts its business in an increasingly sustainable manner, embedding sustainability in everything we do and in doing so we must consider with our staff and volunteers the environmental impact of our activities.

We recognise and will use the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change's [commitments](#) as a basis for College work on sustainability in terms of influencing policy and delivering sustainable healthcare.

However, we also recognise we are a small organisation with limited resources, who will deploy these resources as best we can to maximise our impact.

## Progress so far

### College activities:

- 1 Appointment of an Environmental Advisors Group.
- 2 Active membership of the [UK Health Alliance on Climate Change](#).
- 3 Disinvestment from fossil fuels.
- 4 Providing the *BJA*, *BJA Education* and *College Bulletin* as digital products only.
- 5 Reducing volunteer travel following the COVID-19 pandemic, by mandating a mix of face-to-face and virtual meetings for College governance, events, and examinations.
- 6 Revising our travel and subsistence policy to encourage use of more sustainable travel.
- 7 Our current caterer is passionately committed to environmental matters, sourcing significant amounts of produce from within fifty miles of the College.
- 8 Switching College electricity supplies to renewable energy.
- 9 Revising the College procurement policy to ensure that purchasing decisions are made that minimise the carbon impact of the College.
- 10 Embedded virtual written examinations that reduce the need for candidates to travel.
- 11 Using SharePoint and Teams to reduce paper usage.
- 12 Encouraging active transport for our staff through participation in cycle to work scheme and provision of secure bike storage and showers.
- 13 Our two College pension providers have made net zero commitments.

### Specialty practice:

- 1 Issuing a [Joint Environmental Policy Statement](#) with the Association of Anaesthetists.
- 2 Working with system partners to supporting net zero in our specialty including with:
  - The British Society of Gastroenterology, the Joint Accreditation Group and Centre for Sustainable Health on a joint consensus on [practical measures for environmental sustainability in endoscopy](#).
  - Working with the Association of Anaesthetists and NHS England on [plans to decommission desflurane](#).
  - The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, England and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow collaborating to produce the [Green Theatre Checklist](#).
- 3 Hosting regular sessions within our events on the subject of environmental sustainability.
- 4 Publishing an e-learning resource on sustainability.

- 5 Inclusion of environmental sustainability in the curriculum.
- 6 Reducing wastage in supporting the recommendation for decommissioning nitrous oxide manifolds.

## Strategic priorities

### 1 Encouraging greener anaesthetic practice in the NHS

- Engage with the NHS and policymakers on climate and health.
- Support members to take action against climate change both within and outside of work (eg [RCPCH toolkit to support paediatricians approaching their local councils about air pollution](#)).
- Support the implementation of initiatives which align with the Centre for Perioperative Care and other NHS projects such as GIRFT that promote efficient and cost-effective use of healthcare resources that both reduce variability of care and improve patient outcomes.
- Contribute to understanding the environmental impact of updates to Guidelines for the Provision of Anaesthetic Services (GPAS), suggesting evidence-based good practice that minimises environmental impact whilst maintaining or enhancing safety and quality of care.
- Assess the environmental impact of anaesthesia in anaesthetic curriculum and training.
- Ensure the continuing inclusion of relevant environmental topics across College educational events and conferences, to support members in achieving carbon literacy and providing them with evidence-based and cost-effective healthcare interventions and pathways.
- Collaborate with partner organisations such as the Association of Anaesthetists to deliver the NHS sustainability agenda.
- Ensure our environmental work considers the impact of waste and water on the climate and environment.

**Objective 1: The College to declare a climate and ecological emergency.**

**Objective 2: The College to sign the [Fossil Fuel Treaty](#).**

### 2 Reducing the College carbon footprint

- 1 The College has made efforts to improve its environmental impact in both its estate, travel, and investments under the first strategy.
- 2 For this strategy, the College needs to both initially measure and then remeasure at the end of the strategy its carbon footprint to understand if the strategy has delivered a successful reduction in our environmental impact.
  - This measurement will encompass all College activities including travel to and from the College of both volunteers and staff as well as the environmental impact of our activities including waste created, water used, and College data stored on the cloud.
  - Once we understand our carbon footprint, the College will develop and implement a Climate Change Adaptation plan to minimise its environmental impact. This plan will set targets and timelines for the modification of College activities that reduce our impact.

- The College understands that its estate will be a large contributor to the environmental impact of the College. The College should ensure that any future decisions regarding the estate being contemplated by the current estates review, are informed by an environmental assessment of their impact.

**Objective 1: To measure our carbon footprint and remeasure this again in 2027.**

**Objective 2: To develop a climate change adaption plan.**

**Objective 3: The College to undertake environmental impact assessments on future estate options.**

## Governance and reporting

The College will form an Environmental Sustainability Committee that reports to the Board of Trustees on environmental matters.

The Environmental Sustainability Committee due to the nature of the Environmental Strategy will report both to the Council and Board of Trustees through the joint chairs of the committee.

Boards and Committees will be asked to consider the environmental impact of their decision making.

Progress will be shared with the membership in the annual report and through additional articles and news stories.

**Royal College of Anaesthetists**

Churchill House, 35 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4SG

020 7092 1500 | [info@rcoa.ac.uk](mailto:info@rcoa.ac.uk) | [rcoa.ac.uk](http://rcoa.ac.uk)

