



# Wellcome's Environmental Sustainability Framework

How we approach environmental sustainability across our mission, leadership, and operations

March 2025

Photo: Getty Images



# Foreword

The science could not be clearer: humanity is facing a self-made climate and nature emergency of unprecedented scale, and urgent action is needed now to safeguard our common future.

This is already a health crisis as much as an environmental one. As a global funder with climate and health as one of our strategic priorities, Wellcome has an important role to play tackling this crisis by driving global impact through our mission and our leadership, and by addressing the negative impacts of our own operations.

We are at the start of a process to embed sustainability considerations in everything we do and to become net zero. Delivering on our ambitions requires working closely with our partners to develop fair and equitable solutions to these shared environmental challenges – working with our people, the institutions and researchers we fund, and our suppliers. We look forward to progressing this critical journey with you all.



**John-Arne Røttingen**  
Chief Executive Officer



Photo: Sujan Sarkar / Wellcome Photography Prize 2021

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# About Wellcome

## Our vision

**A healthier future for everyone**

## Our mission

Wellcome supports science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone.

## Our modes of delivery

### Discovery

Discovery Research  
Wellcome Collection  
Wellcome Leap



### Solutions

Climate and Health  
Infectious Disease  
Mental Health

Wellcome is a global charitable foundation established in 1936.

Through our work we support science to solve the urgent health issues facing everyone.

We fund curiosity-driven research, and we're taking on three of the biggest health challenges facing humanity – climate change, infectious disease and mental health.

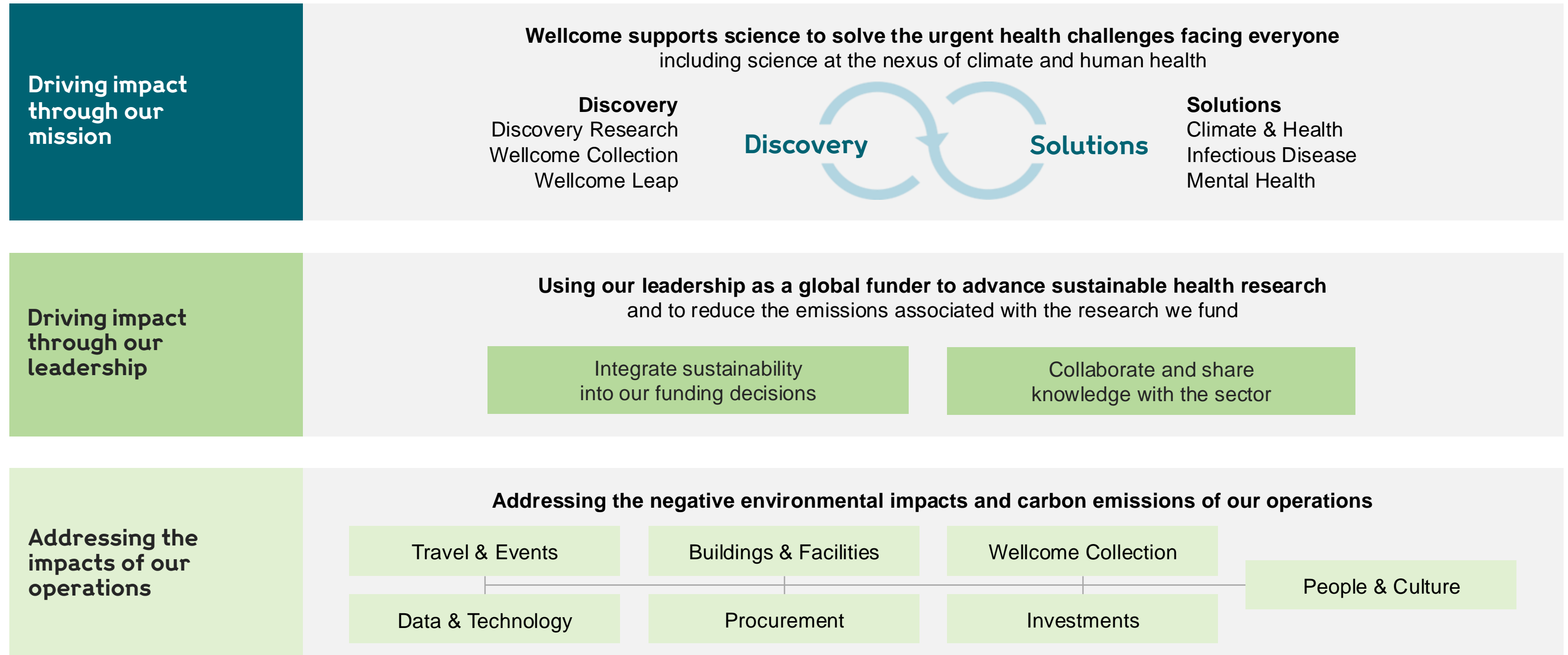
We're spending £16 billion in the decade to 2032 on research and advocacy supporting science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone.



Photo: Waldo Swiegers / Wellcome

# Environmental sustainability at Wellcome

Using our three levers for environmental sustainability impact:



# Translating environmental sustainability into action

Wellcome supports science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone including science at the nexus of climate and human health.



Our **climate** is changing fast, and this is having far reaching consequences for **human health** and wellbeing for people and communities globally. These health impacts are relevant to all our programmes: Discovery Research, Wellcome Collection, Wellcome Leap, Climate & Health, Infectious Disease, and Mental Health.

‘The health of people around the world is already being significantly affected by climate change – and the impact of a heating planet on human health is only set to get worse. We desperately need to act quickly to protect people and the planet.’

Alan Dangour, Director of Climate & Health

We are also committed to address the negative environmental impacts and carbon emissions of our operations, and work with the wider research sector to accelerate the adoption of environmentally sustainable research practices:



## Carbon

Rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of the climate crisis.



## Energy

Reducing energy demand of activities and phasing out the use of fossil fuels.



## Water

Conserving water and considering the water footprint of activities and goods purchased.



## Materials and waste

Taking a circular economy approach to materials use, to optimise resources use and reduce waste.



## Biodiversity

Considering impacts on the natural world, including biodiversity and natural habitats.



## Air quality

Identifying and reducing sources of air pollution, to improve air quality and human health.

# Carbon footprint

We have built an initial understanding of our carbon footprint and we will continue to improve its accuracy. We report our measured emissions in our Annual Report and use other estimated emissions to inform our approach and priorities for action.

Emission category	Target	Wellcome's Carbon Footprint			
		Upstream emissions Low to Medium level of control	W Own operations emissions High level of control	Downstream emissions Low to Medium level of control	
Scope 1 Direct emissions from our activities	Net zero by 2030		<b>Gas</b> 1,273 used to heat our buildings		
			Refrigerant gasses for air conditioning 144		
Scope 2 Indirect emissions from our energy use			<b>Electricity</b> 1,835 used for lighting, IT, ventilation		
Scope 3 Indirect emissions associated with our activities and supply chain	Net zero by 2050	<b>Energy supply</b> 372 Upstream emissions	<b>Business travel</b> 6,621 Air and rail, business mileage	<b>Research we fund</b> 300,000	
		<b>Goods and services</b> 17,000 we purchase	<b>Water</b> 10 we consume		<b>Our investments</b>
				<b>Public equities</b> 37% 313,000*	<b>Other assets</b> 63%
		<b>Commuting</b> 710 and home-working	<b>Waste</b> 2 we generate		

Greenhouse gas emissions associated with Wellcome's UK charitable activities, with the exclusion of all subsidiaries, FY 23/24

**KEY**  
**Carbon emissions**  
 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

- Measured**  
based on actual activities
- Estimated**  
provides indication of scale
- Not estimated yet**

Find out more about our carbon footprint and how we calculate it in our [Basis of Reporting](#)

\* see disclaimer page 24

# Carbon targets

We exercise different levels of control over the emissions associated with our activities. Our carbon targets reflect this, with more ambitious targets for the emissions we have the highest level of control over.

Wellcome's carbon emissions (tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e)				Carbon targets		
Category	Source	Associated with	Level of control	Target	Type	Key levers to deliver
Scope 1	Our own operations	Gas	High	Net zero by 2030	Direct target Delivery led by Wellcome	Electrification of heating systems
		Refrigerants				Renewable electricity purchase Energy demand reduction measures
Scope 2		Electricity		90% emissions reductions by 2030 + 10% mitigation		
Scope 3	Our own operations	Business travel Waste / water	High	Net zero by 2050 50% emissions reductions by 2035 90% emissions reductions by 2050 + 10% mitigation	Direct target	Travel Policy updates / engagement
	Our people	Working from home and commuting	Medium			Indirect target Delivery dependent on other parties
	Our supply chain (upstream)	Goods & services	Medium		Suppliers' engagement Integration in contract specifications	
		Cloud data	Medium		Integration into our funding decisions Collaboration with the sector	
	Our value chain (downstream)	Research we fund	Medium		Engagement as a tool to drive action Decarbonise our directly owned assets where we have majority control	
		Our investments	Low			



# Driving impact through our mission

Wellcome supports science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone.



Photo: Georgina Smith, CIAT 2016

Wellcome is committed to funding ambitious global research projects that will transform our understanding of life, health, and wellbeing.

Our biggest contribution to environmental sustainability is advancing the world's understanding of the interrelations between climate, nature and human health. All our Discovery and Solutions programmes have contributions to make: by investing in research, influencing change, and engaging people.

**£1,577 million**

Wellcome's charitable spend, 2023/24

# Driving impact through our mission

Our programmes and subsidiaries all have important contributions to make in tackling the impacts of the climate crisis on human health.

## Discovery



### Discovery Research

**Our Discovery Research work is broad and catalytic in nature. It aims to transform understanding of life, health and wellbeing.**

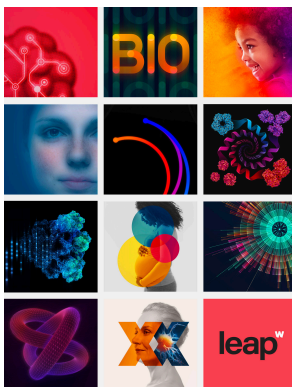
Wellcome supports researchers to investigate big questions, take on difficult problems, and adopt creative and innovative approaches. It is the type of work that is needed to catalyse research breakthroughs that will help to solve health and climate change challenges. [Read more](#)



### Wellcome Collection

**Wellcome Collection is our free museum and library where everyone's experience of health matters.**

Wellcome Collection brings social, cultural, historical, personal and artistic perspectives to Wellcome's work, building deeper understandings of health across society. This includes exploring how the climate crisis is impacting people's health today and imagining how we can change the future. [Read more](#)



### Wellcome Leap

**Wellcome Leap builds bold, unconventional programs, and funds them at scale.**

Programs optimised to deliver breakthroughs in human health over 5–10 years and demonstrate seemingly impossible results on seemingly impossible timelines. Wellcome Leap is a wholly owned US subsidiary of Wellcome.

[Read more](#)

## Solutions



### Climate & Health

**Our vision is a world where catastrophic climate breakdown is averted in a way that allows human health to flourish.**

Our Climate and Health programme seeks to significantly increase our understanding of the effects of climate change on human health and define the interventions and policies that can respond to the climate crisis in a way that protects and improves human health. [Read more](#)



### Mental Health

**Climate change has major implications for mental health.**

With mental health challenges holding back millions of people every day, it's crucial we design solutions that can help understand and address mental health problems in the context of climate change and rising global temperatures. [Read more](#)



### Infectious Disease

**Many infectious diseases are climate sensitive and swift climate action is needed to avoid an escalation in their spread.**

A failure to slow global warming is providing many deadly diseases with the opportunity to expand their reach, putting the health of millions of people at risk. [Read on](#) how climate change effects infectious diseases.

# Driving impact through our leadership

Using our leadership to advance sustainable health research and to reduce the emissions associated with the research we fund



The way in which research is conducted cannot be divorced from the research that is carried out. We need to consider how environmentally sustainable the research we fund is, in order to deliver our mission now and into the future.

Research needs to be conducted in a way that protects our environment. This includes reducing the carbon emissions associated with research practices and using natural resources at a pace that allows their regeneration and limits waste<sup>1</sup>.

All research activities give rise to carbon emissions. For instance, clinical research alone is estimated to be responsible for 100 million tonnes of carbon emissions each year – equivalent to the carbon footprint of the 40<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world<sup>2</sup>. And we will need to consider the impact of new research practices, such as the use of Artificial Intelligence.

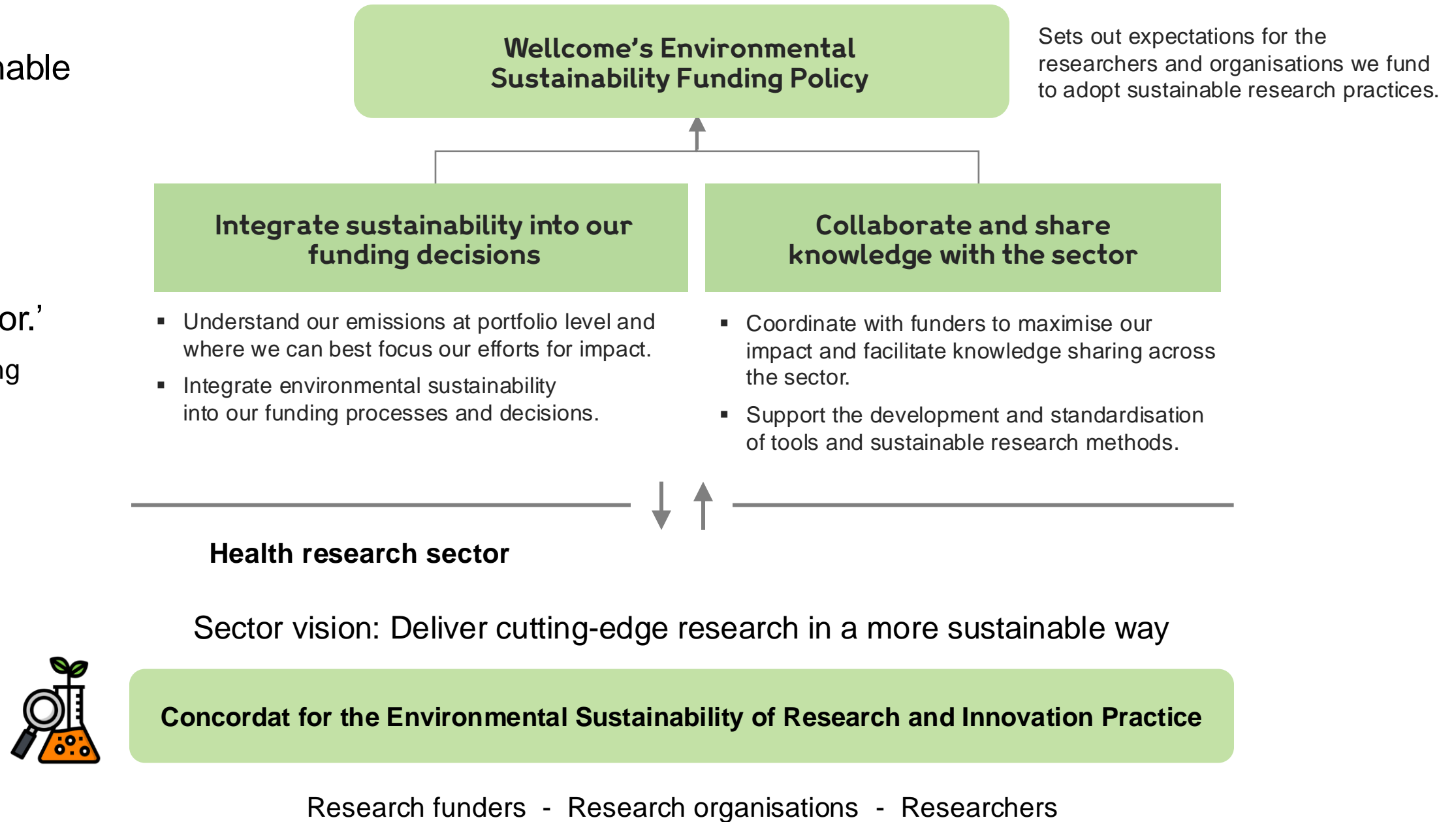
Through our approach to integrating sustainability into our funding decisions and collaborating with the sector, we hope to accelerate the development and adoption of environmentally sustainable research practices.

1. Sustainable biobanks: a case study for a green global bioethics, [Samuel et al., 2022](#)
2. Good science shouldn't cost the earth, [Luck & Farley, 2023](#)

# Our approach to advancing environmentally sustainable health research

‘We will use our leadership as a global funder to advance sustainable health research and reduce the emissions associated with the research we fund, by integrating sustainability into our funding decisions and collaborating and sharing knowledge with the sector.’

Alyson Fox, Director of Research Funding



# Progress so far

Some of our progress so far using our leadership to advance sustainable health research and to reduce the emissions associated with the research we fund.

## Integrate sustainability into our funding decisions

- Our **Environmental Sustainability funding policy**, published in May 2024, sets out our expectations of the researchers and organisations receiving Wellcome funding to adopt sustainable research practices. This helps ensure the research we fund is of high quality and will support reducing its environmental impact and associated carbon emissions. [Read more](#)
- We worked to establish an estimated baseline of the **carbon emissions associated with the research we fund**, which form part of our scope 3 emissions. We will use this to better understand the carbon intensity of the different research activities we fund, and where we are best to focus our efforts to support emissions reductions across our funding portfolio.

## Collaborate and share knowledge with the sector

- As a global funder, Wellcome has an important role to play in the health research sector in the UK and beyond, working with the institutions and researchers we fund, and other funders, to help advancing environmentally sustainable research practices.
- The **Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice**, supported by Wellcome, is a commitment for the UK research sector to work collectively to design and carry out environmentally sustainable research and innovation. [Read more](#)
  - The **Research Sustainability (RESUS) project**, commissioned by Wellcome, identified tools and methods used to measure and reduce the environmental impacts of health research. [Read more](#)



# Addressing the impacts of our operations

Addressing the negative environmental impacts and carbon emissions of our operations



How we operate is part of our impact in the world, and we are committed to tackle our own environmental impacts and become net zero across our key enabling functions.

We will focus our efforts on the following, which we have identified as the biggest opportunities to address our environmental impacts:

- Travel & Events
- Buildings & Facilities
- Wellcome Collection
- Data & Technology
- Procurement
- Investments
- People & Culture

**Net zero by 2030 for scope 1 & 2**  
our target for direct emissions from our operations

**Net zero by 2050 for scope 3**  
our target for indirect emissions from our operations

# Areas of focus to embed environmental sustainability in our operations

We identified opportunities for action across targeted areas of activity:

## Travel & Events (page 16)

Addressing the carbon impact of our business travel and making our events more sustainable.



## Data & Technology (page 19)

Reducing the environmental impact of our data and technology and use it as an enabler for change.



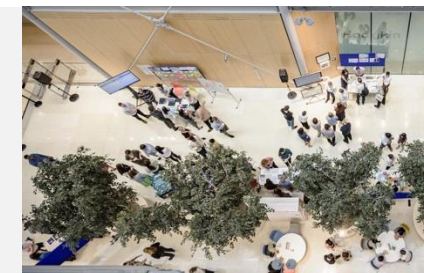
## Procurement (page 21)

Embedding environmental sustainability in how we purchase goods and services and work with our suppliers.



## People & Culture (page 23)

Engaging, upskilling, and empowering our people to embed sustainability in our culture and the delivery of our mission.



## Buildings & Facilities (page 17, 18)

Embedding environmental sustainability into how we operate, maintain and develop our buildings and facilities.



## Wellcome Collection (page 20)

Embedding sustainability considerations in how we care for our collections and deliver our public programmes.



## Investments (page 22)

Driving down carbon emissions and reaching net zero for our investment portfolio.



# Travel & Events

Addressing the carbon impacts of our business travel and making our events more sustainable

Travel and events can be an important tool to deliver our mission: connecting with the researchers and institutions we support and work with, building relationships and partnerships globally.

It is also one of Wellcome's biggest direct environmental impacts and we are committed to take steps to address its carbon impact.

We do this by taking a more thoughtful approach to our travel choices, travelling only when it has clear mission benefits and adopting mode and classes of travel with a lower carbon impact when possible.

## Metrics & targets

**6,621 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e**

associated with air and rail travel in 2023/24,  
the majority of which from international air travel

**58** global events / **8,900** attendees

Event format: **43%** in-person / **5%** virtual / **51%** hybrid

## Opportunities for action



### Reducing the carbon impact of our business travel

- Analyse our business travel and the opportunities for carbon reductions.
- Encourage the uptake of more sustainable travel choices, including the use of lower carbon transport modes and classes of travel.
- Review our travel policies, booking processes and other mechanisms to incentivise the use of more sustainable travel choices.



### Making our events more sustainable

- Upgrade video conferencing software to better support hybrid attendance.
- Provide vegetarian food options as default, using local and seasonal produce.
- Prioritise digital over print materials and use recycled materials if printing.
- Use venues that consider sustainability and environmental issues.



Photo: Getty Images



# Buildings & Facilities

Embedding environmental sustainability in how we operate and develop our buildings and facilities

Our office and museum buildings in London give rise to a diverse range of environmental impacts, and we are committed to actively address these in a systematic way as part of our Environmental Management System externally certified to the ISO 14001:2015 international standard.

## Metrics & targets

**3,253 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e**

**scope 1 & 2 carbon emissions**

linked to our energy use (location-based reporting)

**15,823,765 kWh**

**energy use** (gas & electricity, 2023/24)

**28,455 m<sup>3</sup>**

**water use** (2023/24)

**266 tonnes**

**of waste generated** (2023/24), 65% recycled

## Opportunities for action



### Energy

Reduce the energy demand of our buildings by investing in demand reduction measures, including lighting controls, optimising our Building Management System, and upgrades to our Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning systems.



### Water

Analyse and better understand the water use of our buildings, to target investment in water efficiency measures and technology.



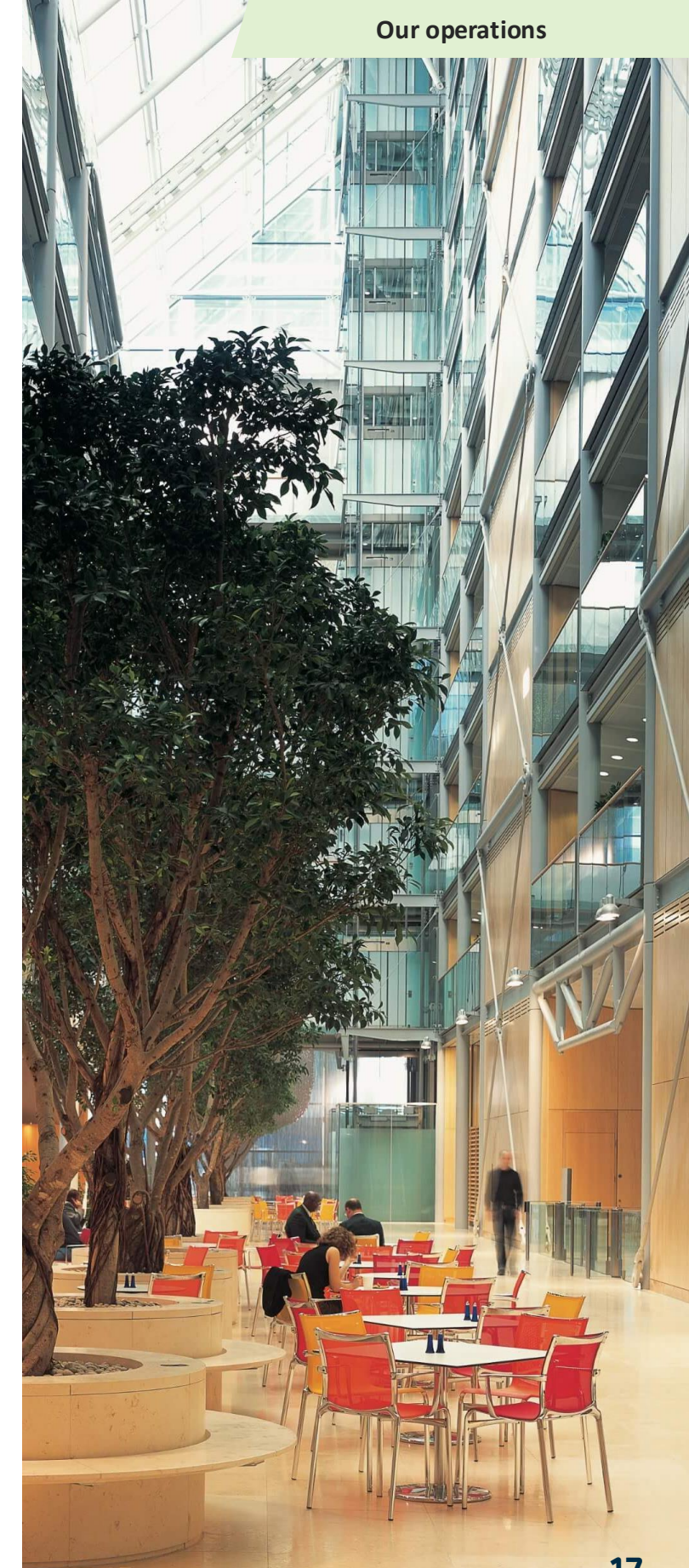
### Materials & Waste

Apply circular economy and waste hierarchy principles to minimise waste in the first instance, encourage materials reuse, and increase recycling.



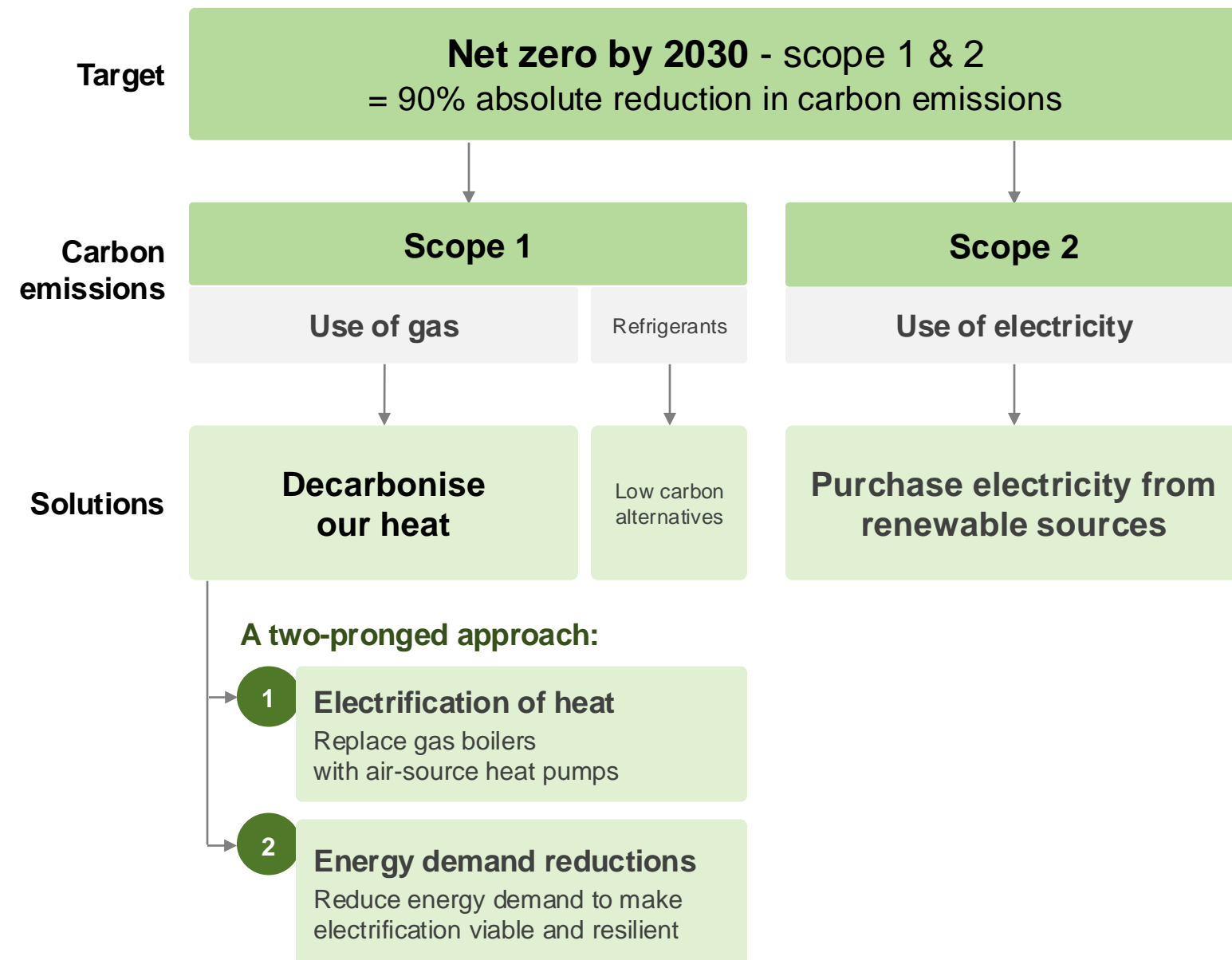
### Service partners

Working closely with our service partners, including catering, cleaning, and maintenance, to deliver on our mutual sustainability ambitions.



# Buildings & Facilities: Delivering our net zero by 2030 target

Achieving net zero across our direct operations by upgrading our office and museum buildings on Euston Road (London, UK)



**Our net zero by 2030 target for scope 1 & 2 requires a 90% absolute reduction in carbon emissions.**

## Scope 1 - Direct emissions from gas use

The removal of gas boilers and transition to air-source heat pumps in our buildings is our focus to achieving net zero emissions.

Electrification is a recognised net zero pathway for buildings in the UK when coupled with the purchase of electricity from renewable sources.

This needs to be accompanied by energy demand reductions, to make an electrification solution viable and to avoid increasing overall energy use.

## Scope 2 - Indirect emissions from purchased electricity

To achieve our net zero target, we will continue to purchase electricity from renewable sources, such as wind and solar.

Using a 'market-based' reporting methodology, Scope 2 electricity can be accounted at zero-emissions. In line with best practice, we will continue to take a dual reporting-approach to include 'location-based' emissions, reflecting the average carbon impact of electricity sourced from the UK grid.

As part of a robust approach to the purchase of renewable energy, we will consider opportunities in the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) market, recognising this as emerging best practice for supporting the development of additional renewable energy generation capacity.

# Data & Technology

Reducing the environmental impact of our data and technology and use it as an enabler for change

Data centres, cloud services, and other technology infrastructures are typically substantial energy consumers. At Wellcome, we can lessen our environmental footprint by choosing sustainable service providers, procuring energy-efficient equipment, and implementing robust control measures.



Photo: Getty Images

## Opportunities for action

### Cloud Storage & Data Centres

- Calculate baseline emissions to develop measurable sustainability goals.
- Implement effective data management strategies to reduce storage and energy.
- Set clear sustainability standards for software suppliers, emphasising energy efficiency and transparent reporting practices.

### Technology & Equipment

- Formulate comprehensive procurement guidelines and establish minimum energy performance criteria.
- Channel investment towards the development and integration of smart-building technology as part of building upgrades.
- Implement software solutions to encourage more energy-efficient power management.

### End-of-Life

- Collaborate with contractors fully committed to the principles of the circular economy.
- Support communities by donating functional equipment we no longer need to educational institutions and charitable organisations.
- Incorporate durability in product procurement decisions, prioritising long-term sustainability and value.

# Wellcome Collection

Embedding sustainability considerations in how we care for our collections and deliver our public programmes and services.

Wellcome Collection is our free museum and library where everyone's experience of health matters. Through our collections, exhibitions, events, books, and online content, we delve into the past, present, and future of health, including the effects of the climate crisis on human health and well-being. We are committed to addressing the environmental impacts of how we develop and deliver this broad range of work.



Photo: Thomas S.G. Farnetti

## Opportunities for action

### Caring for our collections

- Introduce energy management system to optimise our collections storage conditions.
- Analyse staff and courier travel requirements to target potential impact reduction initiatives.
- Work with our suppliers to embed sustainability considerations in the way our collections are loaned, stored and moved - e.g. reducing packaging waste.

### Managing our programmes

- Formalise comprehensive sustainability guidelines and minimum expectations for the design of our exhibitions and procurement of materials.
- Analyse material use, reuse and waste while exploring best practice monitoring procedures to facilitate continual improvement in our performance.
- Continue to develop programming content that explores climate change and its impact on human health.

### Retail and catering

- Collaborate with our supply chain to establish and enforce minimum sustainability standards for all food, drink, and gift shop products.
- Minimise waste impact by selecting sustainably produced, durable, and recyclable product ranges.
- Engage our patrons in climate issues through carbon labelling and other sustainability initiatives.

# Procurement

Embedding environmental sustainability in how we purchase goods and services and work with our suppliers

Wellcome's overall impact on the environment goes beyond that from our own direct operations. We purchase goods and services every day that have been sourced from raw materials and have embedded carbon in their production and transport. We have a responsibility to influence sustainability in our purchasing decisions and processes.

## Metrics & targets

**Over 2,300 suppliers**

circa **50,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e**

FY2023/24 Scope 3 emissions estimate  
from purchased goods and services

**31% of spend is covered by suppliers'  
SBTi aligned net zero targets or commitments**

## Opportunities for action



### Setting expectations and targets

- Develop a Supplier code setting our expectations around environmental impacts.
- Establish the % of our top suppliers that have a net zero target aligned to SBTi.
- Consider supply chain sustainability targets and develop plans to achieve them.



### Targeted engagement with suppliers

- Work with selected suppliers to improve environmental outcomes specific to selected contracts, where material sustainability improvements can be identified.
- Develop requirements to be met by suppliers (e.g. KPIs), agree process for tracking and monitoring, and performance management.



### Embedding sustainability in new contracts

- Ensure we embed sustainability considerations at an early stage when goods or services being procured are likely to have a high environmental impact.
- Integrate sustainability considerations in our supplier selection process.

# Investments

Driving down carbon emissions and reaching net zero across our investment portfolio

Our funding to help solve urgent health challenges comes from the returns from our investment portfolio. As a major investor, we are working with the managers of our assets to strengthen their resilience in the face of climate risks and opportunities. We are a member of the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC) and we have set a target of net zero by 2050 at the latest for the scope 1 and 2 emissions associated with our portfolio. [Read more](#)

## Metrics & targets

**£37.6 billion**

Total investment portfolio value, 2024

**circa 313,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**

Scope 1 & 2 carbon footprint of our public equities, 2024

## % of total portfolio with net zero targets

% of portfolio by value that has	2023-24
A company-declared net zero target	36%
A near-term science-based target	25%
A science-based net zero commitment	12%

## What we are doing



### We measure emissions and publish data every year

- We monitor and publish the proportion of our portfolio by value with science-based and company-declared net zero targets in place (see bottom left).
- We monitor and publish the carbon footprint of our public equities. We will gather baseline data for other asset classes as availability and accuracy improves.



### Using our influence to drive action

We encourage the management teams of assets in our portfolio to:

- Adopt a net zero strategy and trajectory, appropriate for each asset class.
- Undertake targeted engagement, for example with buyout managers to encourage them to work with portfolio companies to encourage increased disclosure, set science-based targets, and facilitate sharing of best practice on decarbonisation plans.



### Delivering net zero for our directly-owned assets

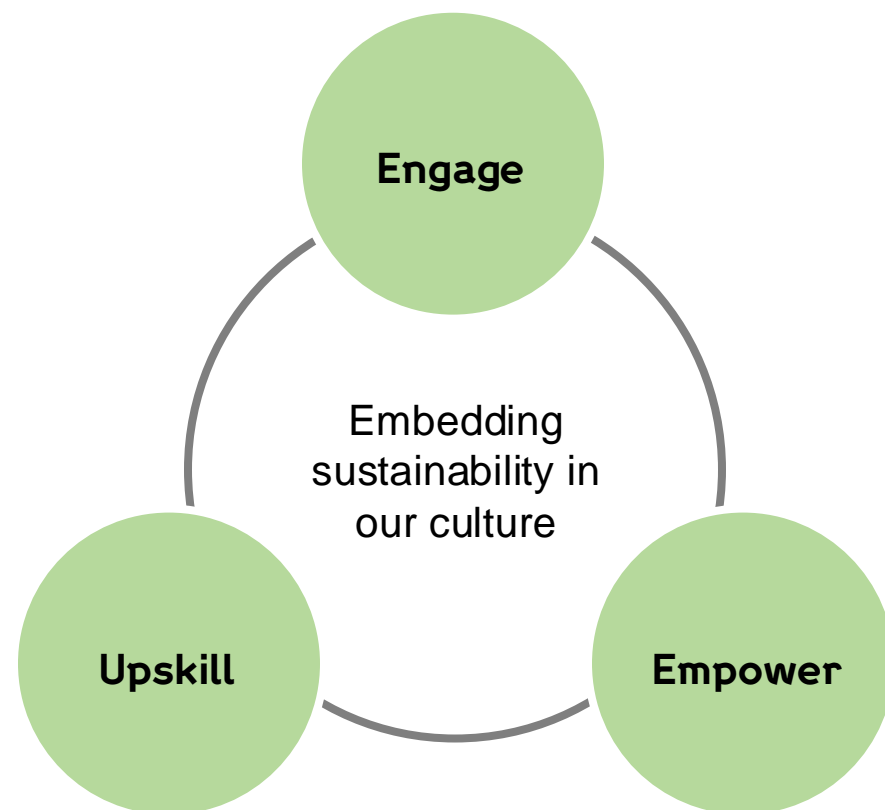
- For the directly-owned assets where we have control, we have measured baseline and set targets in line with overall portfolio net zero target.
- We are working to improve energy efficiency, energy mix, and to influence occupier behaviours in properties we own when feasible. We're taking specific decarbonisation measures when properties become vacant.

# People & Culture

Engaging, upskilling, and empowering our people to embed sustainability in our culture and the delivery of our mission

Being thoughtful by considering the consequences of our actions and our impact on the environment is integral to our values, which guide how we behave, work and lead – both individually and as an organisation.

The success of our sustainability ambitions relies on our people, and we want to equip and empower them to make positive sustainable change by embedding sustainability in our culture and the delivery of our mission.



## Opportunities for action



### Engage

- Embed sustainability in our culture, making it part of our internal conversations, showcasing positive impact and role models.
- Listen to our people as we develop our sustainability approach.
- Learn from organisations who are ahead of us on this journey and share our learnings with others to support sector change.



### Upskill

- Raise our people's awareness of the environmental impacts of their decisions and the sustainable actions they can take.
- Identify the training and development needs required for our people to be adequately equipped to support our sustainability ambitions.
- Integrate environmental considerations into the workflow of our teams to encourage sustainable habit formation.



### Empower

- Provide a clear framework for our people to be able to actively support the delivery of our sustainability objectives in their roles and teams.
- Apply our beliefs and values to engaging our people with progressing Wellcome's environmental sustainability ambitions.

# Acknowledgements and disclaimers

## Acknowledgements

We are thankful to all our partners and colleagues who have contributed to the development of this Framework.

For generously sharing their knowledge and insights, we are grateful to the Sustainability teams at:

- Francis Crick Institute
- PwC UK
- Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
- Sanger Institute
- The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
- UKRI

We would also like to thank our Wellcome colleagues for their time, contributions, and enthusiasm working with us.

*Wellcome's Sustainability team*

## Disclaimers

The information contained in this document is accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of publishing but may be subject to change as we develop our approach and the accuracy of data improves.

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