

Ethical and Sustainable Purchasing Policy

Background

1. The Scottish Seabird Centre (SSC) is a conservation and education charity (Registered Scottish Charity no. SC025837). Our purpose is to conserve seabirds and the environment, inspire and educate people about the Scottish marine environment, and to motivate people to care for it. Our work is underpinned by a not-for-profit visitor experience - the Scottish Seabird Centre Trading Limited (registered Company no. SC183214) - and net income generated is re-invested in the Charitable objectives.
2. We recognise that in delivering our charitable activities we may also have some adverse impacts on the environment. Our main environmental impacts arise from greenhouse gas emissions from energy use and travel, waste generation, water use, and the use of non-renewable resources. We are committed to continual improvement in our own environmental performance, to meeting our statutory environmental obligations and to reducing our environmental impacts.
3. As consumers, our daily choices can significantly affect the environment and contribute to global warming. The things we buy, and sell, can have a large impact on energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, resource use and depletion, plastic pollution and waste generation. The demand for products drives the extraction of natural resources, leading to deforestation, water scarcity, and loss of biodiversity. Excessive use of plastics, especially single-use plastics, contributes to pollution in oceans and landfill, harming wildlife and ecosystems. By making small changes in our daily lives, what we buy and where we buy it from, we can collectively reduce our environmental footprint, reduce waste produced and help combat global warming.

Principles

4. One of the ways in which we can minimise our impacts on the environment is through the choices that we make when purchasing goods and products. We strive to make informed purchasing decisions that prioritise ethical practices, companies and that support environmental sustainability.
5. We are committed to minimising the environmental impact of our operations and aim to meet the following principles:
 - i. Embrace the principles of a circular economy by following the waste hierarchy, and purchasing products that are of good quality, made from sustainable materials, recyclable and minimise waste. Also see SSCs Waste and Recycling Policy for further information.

- ii. Working with our suppliers to ensure our environmental objectives align, and our impact through the supply chain is minimised including, materials, packaging, biodiversity and transportation impacts.
- iii. Working with and screening our corporate partners and suppliers to ensure products are ethically and sustainably sourced.
- iv. Using fully recyclable packaging and minimising our use of packaging and plastics.
- v. Minimising our use of chemicals that can have a negative effect on the environment.
- vi. Buying as durable and efficient (i.e. energy and water) appliances and equipment as budgeting allows.
- vii. Working to ensure that our approach supports the principles of being ethically and socially responsible.
- viii. Promote the value of sustainability to our members and supporters.
- ix. Raise awareness of environmental issues with our suppliers, staff and visitors encouraging them to observe best practice, inspiring them to act and helping them be conscious consumers.
- x. Horizon scan to ensure that we keep abreast of research that informs ethical and sustainable choices.
- xi. Review our performance against our objectives annually.

Product choice

- 6. To meet our objectives, our purchasing approach will be guided by the Ethical Trade Initiative – Base Code, Fair Trade Codes of Practice, and Regulations and Standards for environmental sustainability. When selecting products, we aim to:

Sustainable materials

- 7. Select products made from materials that are sustainably sourced and do not damage the environment. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
 - *Paper, card and wood*: We will use recycled paper wherever appropriate over virgin pulp. If the latter is used, we will expect suppliers to provide a certificate that demonstrates that their source is FSC (or similar) approved. We will source paper and wood products that come from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC),
 - . We will seek to ensure that any new timber or wood products can be reused or recycled.
 - *Avoiding PVC*: PVC (polyvinyl chloride) is an environmentally damaging chemical and products we purchase, and sell will be PVC free. We encourage re-use, but where single-use products are required, we use Vegware or similar plant-based fully biodegradable products for takeaway food.

- *Are Peat Free:* Any seed or plant related product that we purchase and/or sell will be grown in a peat-free medium to prevent the destruction of one of the world's most important habitats and carbon reservoirs.

Transport miles

8. We endeavour to source products locally to support local businesses, reduce transport miles and the carbon impact of transport. While not all products we wish to sell are available within the local area (e.g. at present, apart from Ocean Plastic Pots which are produced in Scotland, most of the beach waste products we sell are produced in England) our aim is to source the products and food we sell following the area hierarchy below:
 - East Lothian
 - Lothian
 - Scotland
 - UK
 - Europe
 - Rest of the world

Packaging and waste minimisation

9. We are committed to sourcing products where packaging is minimized, plant based, biodegradable, recyclable or where biodegradable plastics are used as an alternative to conventional plastics.
 - See Appendix 1 for further information on "Packaging and waste minimisation"

Supply chain for sustainability and biodiversity

10. We are committed to screening our suppliers and working with them to minimise our impact on the environment and biodiversity. We do this by responsibly selecting and sourcing suppliers, and the products we buy and sell.
 - See Appendix 2 for further information on "Supply chain for sustainability and biodiversity".
 - See Appendix 3 for further information on "Supplier screening" and questions to ask existing and potential new suppliers.

Chemicals

11. The chemicals we purchase, and products we use containing chemicals, can have a negative impact on the environment. We are committed to ensuring that the chemicals and products we use are as environmentally friendly as possible.

- See Appendix 4 “Chemicals” for further information and things to look out for.

Equipment

12. The equipment we buy, and use has an impact on the environment and our resource use in the centre (i.e. energy and water). We are committed to purchasing the most efficient equipment that our budget allows.
 - See Appendix 5 “Equipment and general items (including IT)” for further information and things to consider when buying equipment.

Identifying and managing retail products

13. The products we sell will both abide by the standards set out in our policies and, where possible, seek to inspire and engage our customers with our overall mission of conserving the natural environment
14. In addition to the ethical, socially responsible and sustainability principles that we adhere to we also need to ensure that the products we sell are aligned with the Charity’s conservation and education objectives. We need to offer products that appeal to different customer profiles throughout the year – whether a local resident, day tripper or traveller and to reflect different ages and interests.
15. The product lines that we sell will be varied to reflect both the seasonal changes in our customer profile, market demand, the seasonal changes in our local wildlife and our learning and discovery experience themes. We will use our forward work plan to inform the selection of products that complement major events or marketing campaigns that we engage with (our own or in partnership). This will require flexibility and tailoring of our product choice and should lead to more variety in the products that we offer.
16. Our approach to product selection should ensure that, by scanning the marketplace, we make purchases at the optimum time, cost, volume, profit margins and spend per head. When we are bringing in new product lines, we will minimise the initial volumes purchased to test demand and reduce risks.
17. Our stock levels will be regularly monitored and evaluated (at least annually) to inform our future choices based on a slow movement stock analysis, best performers (volume and profit-margin) and against our overarching principles. Where required, we will take steps to reduce older stock through sales.

Visitors and customers

18. We are committed to encouraging sustainable and ethical purchasing practices within our team and visitors. We do this through promoting sustainable products, incentivising sustainable options and educating our visitors about their impact as a consumer.
- See Appendix 6 “Visitors and customers” for further information on how we do this.

Feedback

We are always looking to improve our performance and organisations sustainability, so if you have any thoughts, comments or suggestions on this policy, please get in touch at info@seabird.org stating the name of the policy in the subject line of the email.

Updated: April 2025

Approved by: Harry Huyton

Date for Review: April 2026

Appendix 1: Packaging and waste minimisation

Where possible we seek to source products where packaging is minimal, plant based, recyclable and/or where biodegradable plastics are used as an alternative to conventional plastics.

- Recycled or FSC certified or equivalent products should be used for carton board and paper packaging.
- Packaging must be fit for purpose and meet all legislative requirements.
- As we are responsible for the costs of processing waste and recycling, we also have a commercial incentive to minimise packaging.

Suppliers

At present packaging from our suppliers represents one of the largest contributors to our waste streams. While the majority of this is recyclable, our aim is to minimise this.

- We are committed to working with our suppliers to reduce the amount of packaging products are delivered with and minimising plastics in the supply chain.

Retail

We are committed to minimising our packaging impact on the environment through:

- Use of recycled brown paper bags which we brand (hand stamped) in house (with water-based ink) to further minimise and reduce the environmental impact of chemical use and printing energy use.
- Ensuring all our parcels and packaging are 100% recyclable.
- Using the [Royal Mail](#), who are committed to Net Zero, to deliver packages throughout the UK.

Café

We are committed to eradicating harmful “single use” items in our café and providing sustainable alternatives where packaging is needed for take away food.

- We minimise the consumption of single use items by:
 - Providing a water refill station to re-fill water bottles
 - Incentivising the use of reusable mugs by offering a 50p discount to those that bring their own take away mugs
 - Our sauces (Mayo, Tomato sauce etc.) are available from large dispensers using small compostable cups to avoid plastic “single use” sachets.
- Where single use items are used we minimise their impact by:
 - Providing Vegware take away containers for the majority of our takeaway packaging for food and drinks. This is made from plant-based products and is fully biodegradable.
 - Providing Vegware takeaway cutlery, which is made from sustainably sourced beech wood.
 - Providing plastic free drinks bottles, and paper straws.

Appendix 2 - Supply chain for sustainability and biodiversity

Along with our educational and conservation work to educate, encourage and support biodiversity in the marine and wider environment, it is important that we consider the impact of items we purchase on the environment, its biodiversity, and try to minimise these.

- We are committed to screening our suppliers and responsibly selecting, and sourcing products we buy and sell.

Food and drink

Ideally all food will be provided by local suppliers who know the farming or catch method of the product, understand and minimise the impact on our environment and biodiversity through responsible sourcing, methods and actions.

If food is from larger suppliers, we should procure food complying to certification and labelling standards to ensure that its production is minimising damage to the environment, biodiversity and produced in fair working conditions.

Some examples of these, labelling and products covered are:

- [Marine Stewardship Council](#) (MSC) - Fish and shellfish caught in the sea.
- [Friends of the Sea](#) (FOS) – Farmed/wild fish and shellfish.
- [Aquaculture Stewardship Council](#) (ASC) – Farmed fish and shellfish.
- [Pasture for Life](#) – UK grazing animals
- [RSPCA assured](#) – UK meats and poultry
- [LEAF Marque](#) – Fruit, veg, grains, dairy products and meat.
- [EU Organic](#) – Leaf Logo – Organic EU produce.
- [Rainforest Alliance scheme](#) - Coffee and tea, chocolate.
- [Fairtrade](#) - Bananas and other fruit, chocolate, tea, coffee and fruit juice.



A summary of these and other recognised food labels covering; sustainability, welfare, food safety and popular food assurance labels is available from Which.

See the following links:

- [Decoding food labels: sustainability, welfare and food safety - Which?](#)
- [11 popular food assurance labels and what they mean - Which? News](#)

Retail products

Ideally all products we sell will be from local suppliers who know the manufacturing and construction method of the product, understand and minimise their impacts on our environment and biodiversity through responsible sourcing, production methods and actions.

We are committed to minimising the environmental damage from products that we sell. The following aspects will be considered and prioritised when reviewing existing, and selecting new products:

- Those that have positive environmental benefits (i.e. seeds for biodiversity, products made from waste recovered from the environment etc.).
- Use recycled materials and content.
- Are made from sustainable and natural materials.
- Are from local producers/suppliers.
- Are recyclable at the end of their life.
- Are well-made and durable.
- Have a low embodied carbon content (from materials, production and distribution).

Appendix 3 - Supplier screening

We are committed to working with local suppliers who understand climate change, are making commitments to reduce their environmental impact and appreciate the importance of these actions.

We are committed to working with our suppliers to reduce the overall environmental impact of our combined operations. This includes feeding back on products supplied, packaging and checking that they understand, and commitments towards, reducing their impact on the environment and climate change.

Smaller suppliers may only have an understanding and appreciation of climate change and their impact on the environment. Possibly they will also be committed to reducing energy use and carbon emissions.

Larger suppliers should be committed to net-zero, be actively engaged in reporting and reducing their carbon emissions and reducing their organisations' impact on the environment through their policies and programmes.

When engaging a new supplier, or renewing existing contracts, we should be asking the following questions/ensuring that they do at least one of the following:

Smaller/Local Suppliers :

- *Do they have an awareness of climate change?*
- *Are they aware of their responsibility to decarbonise?*
- *Do they have (or are they developing) a decarbonisation strategy or policy?*

Larger/National Suppliers:

- *Do they measure their Scope 1, 2, and 3 Green House Gases (GHG), or have other net-zero/decarbonisation commitments, for GHG emissions reduction?*
- *Can they provide a carbon footprint for the product/s they are selling?*
- *Do they have independent certification for climate-related standards (e.g., [B Corp](#), [1% for the Planet](#), [Carbon Trust](#))?*
- *Are they committed to net-zero?*

For food product suppliers:

- *How has the produce been grown?*
- *How are the impacts on the natural environment minimised, including impacts on biodiversity, freshwater and soils?*
- *Have pesticides and artificial fertilisers been used, and how have their impacts been minimised?*
- *For beef/pork/mutton/chicken etc.*
 - *How have the animals been reared?*
 - *What have the animals been fed?*
 - *What welfare standards have been met?*
- *For fish/shellfish and wild game etc.*
 - *How and where has the produce been caught?*

Appendix 4 - Chemicals

The chemicals we purchase, and products we use containing chemicals, can have a negative impact on the environment. We are committed to ensuring that the chemicals and products we use are as environmentally friendly as possible.

Hand Soaps in WCs and Retail

We will source soaps and toiletries that are paraben free, and, wherever possible:

- Are organic.
- Do not contain sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS).
- Do not contain palm oil
- Minimise plastic packaging.

Laundry detergents, cleaning chemicals and products

Laundry detergents and cleaning products can contain harsh chemicals which are harmful to the environment. We will switch all chemical cleaning products to plant-based alternatives and ensure that wherever possible our cleaning products are:

- Phosphate free.
- Natural based.
- Chlorine/Chloride free (or low chlorine concentrations <10%).

Thought should also be given to packaging and the disposability of cleaning consumables, such as cloths and mop heads, at the end of their lives. These should ideally be:

- Made from recyclable or biodegradable materials.
- Minimise plastic and plastic packaging.

Pesticides and Biocides

Pesticides and biocides can contain very toxic chemicals that not only cause significant environmental damage but can also cause severe health issues in people.

Our garden areas are maintained chemical free by North Berwick in Bloom, and our SOS Puffin project uses manual removal methods. We generally do not use, or need, pesticides or biocides on site, however if we do, we should:

- Look to use ethical and non-lethal weed/pest control methods.
- Use environmentally friendly products.
- Have sufficient training to use domestic chemical products safely.
- Where industrial chemicals are required, use qualified and licenced professionals.

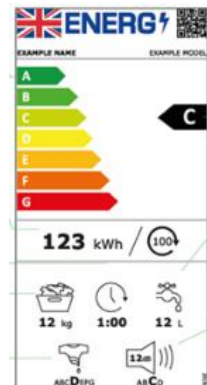
Appendix 5 - Equipment and general items (including IT)

The equipment we buy, and use, has an impact on the environment and our resource use in the Centre (i.e. energy and water). We are committed to purchasing the most efficient equipment that our budget allows.

The following aspects will be considered prior to replacing or purchasing any new equipment:

Energy rating (if applicable)

The equipment energy rating scale runs from A to G, with A being the most energy efficient, and G the least energy efficient. Look for a good energy rating (i.e. A rated) as this will be the most energy efficient with lowest running costs and CO₂ emissions.



Materials used

Look for products made from organic, recycled, or upcycled materials. Certifications like “Recycled Content” can be helpful indicators.

Durability

Material and product durability is important as it is a measure of how long a product can last without breaking, requiring repairs or needing replacing. Longer guarantee periods often reflect more durable items.

Water efficiency and use (if applicable)

Water efficiency helps reduce stress on our freshwater sources, decreases energy used for water heating, alleviates the strain on water processing and waste treatment facilities.

End of life considerations

Consider what happens to the product at the end of its life. Products that are biodegradable, compostable, or easily recyclable are better for the environment

Re-furbished products

Consider whether a refurbished product would be suitable. Buying refurbished products positively impacts the environment by boosting the circular economy, lowering the replacement cycle, reducing CO₂ emissions, e-waste, and reducing energy and fuel consumption.

Appendix 6 - Visitors and Customers

We are committed to encouraging sustainable and ethical purchasing practices within our team and visitors. We do this through promoting sustainable products, incentivising sustainable options and educating our visitors about their impact as a consumer. Example of this currently in place at the centre are:

Single use items

To reduce the use of single use plastic bottles we are a water refill station.

To reduce the use of single use cups/lids we offer a 50p discount on takeaway hot drinks to those who have brought their own reusable cup.

Travel

To encourage the use of public transport, we offer a 20% discount to the Discovery Experience for those that can show a valid (same day) Scot Rail train or East Coast bus ticket.

Retail

We offer and sell products that have good environmental credentials, are made from recycled materials, are recyclable or have a positive impact on the natural environment and biodiversity (e.g. wildflower seeds). With these products we seek to inspire and engage our customers with our overall mission of conserving the natural environment

We highlight the provenance of items with information displays within the retail section and through our media channels.

Messaging

We will develop appropriate messaging on the ethics, social responsibility and environmental sustainability of the products that we sell and highlight these both on site and through our digital platforms.

This will help ensure that our product choices visibly contribute to our purpose of inspiring and educating people about the Scottish marine environment, prompt behaviour change and help our visitors and customers become more conscious consumers.