NHS Green Plan for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly:

A Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Climate Commission (CIOSCC) Review Summary

July 2025

Abstract

This review evaluates the draft NHS Green Plan for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities. It synthesises local, regional, and national best practice and recent NHS sustainability guidance into actionable, time-bound recommendations. A summary table and key principles guide implementation, accountability, and future resilience.

Introduction

The draft Green Plan demonstrates ambition, strategic alignment, collaboration, and coverage of all key intervention areas outlined formerly by NHS England and now driven by DHSC and encapsulated in the NHS 10 year plan where " *All NHS bodies will be expected to decarbonise, reduce environmental impact and increase resilience to climate risks in line with the climate change duties set out in the Health and Care Act 2022*". However, translating high-level vision into measurable change, embedding equity, and strengthening accountability will enhance impact and future-proof Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's journey to net zero.

Methods

A thematic review was conducted comparing the draft plan against:

- NHS England Greener NHS guidance
- Sustainable Development Unit case studies
- Green Impact for Health Toolkit
- Health Anchors Learning Network resources.
- The NHS 10 Years Plan

Recommendations were organised by emergent themes and refined through the CIOSCC Task and Finish Group individual responses (Appendices) .

Findings

Strengths identified in the draft plan include:

- Clear alignment with national and local strategies
- Collaborative structures across system partners
- Coverage of core intervention areas (travel, prescribing, estates, digital)

Gaps and challenges include:

- Limited interim targets and accountability mechanisms
- Under-utilisation of primary care and anchor institution roles
- Insufficiently granular adaptation and resilience actions
- Variable community and workforce engagement
- Emerging needs in procurement, digital carbon management, and innovation

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Recommendations

1. *Strategic Focus: From Vision to Tangible Change*

- Translate strategic aims into measurable short- and medium-term milestones.

    - By 2027: reduce facility emissions by X%; convert Y% of fleet to EV.

- Define KPIs for travel, prescribing, digital, nature recovery (note link to CIOS LNRS), and other focus areas.

- Introduce annual "priority action sprints" aligned with the latest NHS guidance.

- Broaden the Plan beyond NHS estate: target poor-quality housing (fuel poverty, mould, injuries, respiratory/mental-health impacts) as a key health determinant and assess digital inclusion (10% non-digital) plus medicines optimisation (25% of NHS emissions) to prevent widening inequalities and reduce carbon.

2. *Prevention and Equity as Core Pillars*

- Fuel poverty and housing quality: - Urgent need for energy-efficient retrofits, including cooling and improved ventilation.

- Pilot wraparound green social prescribing for at-risk populations, measuring both inequalities and carbon impact.

- Audit digital and travel initiatives to prevent widening of health gaps among remote, older, or digitally excluded groups.

- Position NHS organisations as anchor institutions through initiative-taking procurement, hiring, and investment that deliver health, equity, and environmental co-benefits.

- Deliver universal GP surgery energy audits and follow-up audits required to confirm 456 tCO_2e savings and tackle barriers to implementation.

- Address basic energy-management issues: billing errors, smart-meter roll-out, full LED lighting and equip facility managers with training on refrigeration best practice, renewables, and solar PV options.

3. *Embedding Climate Adaptation and Resilience*

- To adapt to extended heatwaves create Community-managed "cool spaces" off-site to relieve pressure on surgeries 24-hour support for elderly and cardiorespiratory patients when night-time cooling fails.

- Careful resourcing and volunteer training to prevent emergency-service overload.

- Map and score all clinical sites for flooding, heatwave, and supply chain vulnerabilities.

- Conduct heatwave and severe weather response drills with a climate risk lens.

- Mandate installation of water resilience and green infrastructure (rain gardens, shade structures)

4. *Community and Workforce Engagement*

- Resource and visibly promote Net Zero champions in every organisation and directorate, with protected time and recognition.

- Convene annual climate health assemblies or citizen panels to incorporate public and patient priorities (utilizing existing VCS linkages and delivery partners e.g. Volunteer Cornwall, CIOSCC, The Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership (LNP))

- Develop a Cornwall and Isles of Scilly wide ICB led "climate and health" communications campaign featuring case studies and progress updates.

5. *Accelerating Key Enablers*

Procurement and Supply Chain

- Set local targets for the proportion of contracts awarded to suppliers meeting Net Zero Supplier Roadmap standards across all Cornwall & Isles of Scilly NHS providers.

- Pilot a carbon cost calculator for high-impact procurement categories across all NHS Providers

- Embed Biodiversity Net Gain and the Building with Nature standard in every healthcare project, using greenery and natural features for patient recovery, urban cooling, and climate resilience.

Estates

- Expand on-site renewable energy generation to meet a minimum percentage of total energy by 2027.

- Introduce a region-wide Green Estates badge for top performers.

- Eliminate fossil-fuel heating in the highest-emitting buildings on an accelerated timeline.

- Reference and apply the NHS Net Zero Carbon Building Standard (In addition to BREEAM) across all estate-decarbonisation plan irrespective of funding source to ensure alignment with the CIOS ICB infrastructure strategy and Local Area Energy Plan.

Digital

- Monitor rebound effects and equity impacts of the digital shift.

- Set targets to reduce IT carbon footprint via device lifecycle management, server efficiency, and cloud optimisation.

- Promote telehealth sessions powered by renewable energy where possible.

6. *Innovation, Collaboration, and Leadership*

- Participate in and co-lead national pilots through the Net Zero Hub (e.g., low-carbon care pathways, nature prescriptions)

- Showcase local research at national and international forums.

- ICB led Partnerships with FE/HE institutions on sustainability apprenticeships (removing a dependency on individual NHS providers to establish and maintain bi-lateral relationships)

7. *Measurement, Accountability, and Transparency*

- Publish a quarterly ICB public dashboard tracking emissions, adaptation actions, and equity metrics.

- Appoint named Green Champions at executive or board level, each with published annual objectives in all NHS providers

- Escalate or remediate failure to meet reporting or progress expectations, mirroring NHS contractual mechanisms.

8. *Funding and Resource Mobilisation*

- Identify funding gaps and prioritise top-impact projects for external funding (UKRI, Net Zero Hubs, DESNZ, PPP)

- Develop business case templates that account for long-term health prevention and societal co-benefits.

Summary Table: Priority Improvements

Theme	Improvement Opportunity	Example(s)
Strategic Focus	Actionable, time-bound targets	% reductions/year; % practices carbon measured
Equity & Prevention	Targeted pilots addressing inequalities	Green social prescribing in deprived areas, home health prioritisation for deprived and or isolated communities
Accountability	Reporting, governance, transparency	Quarterly public dashboard; board champions. Demonstrate leadership beyond the NHS estate and supply chain by acting as a template of practice for public, corporate and VCS institutions to follow
Adaptation	Detailed climate risk and resilience steps	Site risk mapping: Severe weather drills, retrofit, new build
Community Engagement	Workforce and public input	Citizen panels; Net Zero champions network
Procurement	Supplier sustainability standards in contracts	% contracts Net Zero-compliant y-o-y Embed Biodiversity Net Gain and the Building with Nature standard
Estates	Energy efficiency and renewables	% renewable energy; Green Estates badge. GP surgery audits, advice guidance and implementation, checking ad embedding progress and practice. Reference and apply the NHS Net Zero Carbon Building Standard

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Digital	Carbon footprint targets and equity safeguards	Device lifecycle targets; renewables-powered telehealth
Innovation	New care models and youth participation	Net Zero pathway pilots; Youth Advisory Panel
Funding	Business cases with health and carbon ROI	Templates for pipelines; external funding bids

Key Principles

- Actionable: Bridge the gap between strategy and implementation.

- Transparent: Report clearly, make data public and meaningful.

- Inclusive: Ensure no geography or demographic is left behind.

- Innovative: Foster, celebrate, and scale local successes.

- Accountable: Define leadership roles, responsibilities, and consequences.

Exemplar References

- NHS England Greener NHS Guidance 2024–25 : https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/green-plan-guidance/

- Sustainable Development Unit Case Studies: https://www.supplychain.nhs.uk/programmes/sustainability/case-studies/ and https://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/about-us/sustainability-and-environment/our-sustainable-projects-and-case-studies/sustainability-case-studies/#:~:text=Reduction%20of%20individually%20packaged%20food,Sustainability%20case%20studies

- Green Impact for Health Toolkit : https://toolkit.sos-uk.org/greenimpact/giforhealth/login

- Net Zero Hubs: https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/view.php?id=650#section-2

- Health Anchors Learning Network : https://www.health.org.uk/funding-and-partnerships/our-partnerships/health-anchors-learning-network?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=1642812643&gbraid=0AAAAADunFmSzKMXQ3wf1IGORP-W0qpNJY&gclid=CjwKCAjwp_LDBhBCEiwAK7FnklumZsp3VXbRaZ1DahCrB2d_OvPjC9bjixJzx34h1oxb3DhGfcDYThoCZC4QAvD_BwE

- 10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future : https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future

- COIS Local Nature Recovery Strategy : https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/hub-page/naturerecoverystrategy