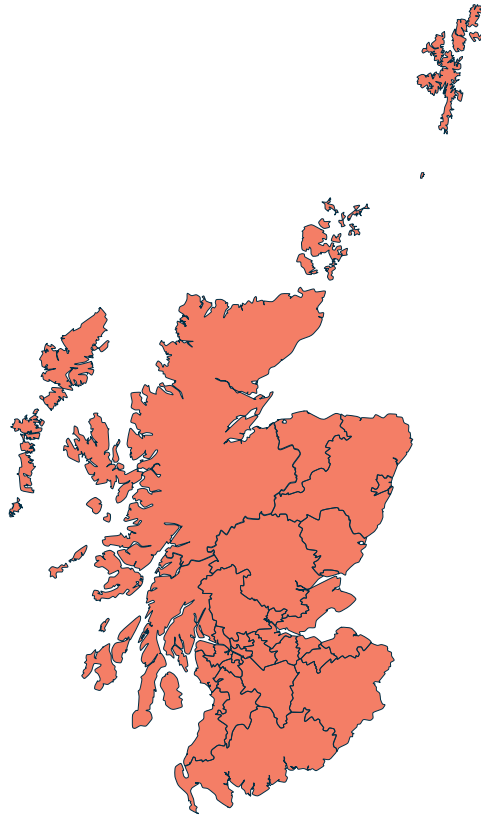


From a standard to shared practice – building better public sector buildings for Scotland



LOCATION: Scotland-wide

DATE: August 2026

OUTCOME:  Climate Change

The challenge

Scotland's public buildings, from schools and hospitals to leisure centres and college campuses, are central to everyday life. But reducing their carbon impact means balancing a range of priorities, including cost, health and comfort, heritage, reuse of existing assets and the needs of local communities.

Launched by the Scottish Government in 2021, the [Net Zero Public Sector Buildings Standard](#) (the Standard) was developed by Scottish Futures Trust with Zero Waste Scotland and NHS National Services Scotland to help public bodies meet this challenge.

Refreshed in 2023, the voluntary Standard now supports both new buildings and major refurbishments, as well as the transition of Scotland's existing public sector estate.



£3billion

BY 2024, PROJECTS VALUED AT MORE THAN
£3BILLION HAD REGISTERED FOR THE STANDARD



Moving beyond carbon

Built around six objectives, the Standard encourages public bodies to look beyond emissions alone and consider the wider impact of their decisions.

This includes prioritising reuse where possible, supporting better place-making, improving indoor environmental quality and protecting existing and historic buildings. Energy-efficient, low-carbon buildings can also reduce long-term running costs, helping public services make better use of their resources.

By late 2024, projects valued at more than £3 billion had registered for the Standard, demonstrating growing commitment across Scotland's public sector.



Building a community of practice

However, setting a Standard is only part of the solution. Delivering better, lower-carbon buildings requires organisations and professionals to share experience and learn from one another.

That is why the Scottish Futures Trust established the Meet the Standard event series, supported by the Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland.

Since launching in 2024, the events have brought together local authorities, NHS bodies, colleges, architects, contractors and specialists to explore some of the key challenges in delivering net zero buildings.

Topics have included embodied carbon, reuse versus rebuild, place and circular economy thinking, indoor environmental quality, retrofit and the decarbonisation of existing and historic buildings.

Most recently, the latest event explored new guidance, routes to conformance and lessons from projects already applying the Standard.

The outcome

Together, the Standard and the Meet the Standard events are helping to accelerate learning across Scotland.

Rather than individual public bodies tackling the same challenges in isolation, the growing community of practice enables experience, successes and lessons from one project to inform the next.

By combining clear guidance with opportunities for people to learn from one another, we are helping to turn ambition into practical action. The result is an approach that delivers benefits well beyond carbon reduction: healthier and more comfortable spaces, lower long-term costs, protection of valued assets and better places for the people and communities they serve.