

Great Western Society Limited
Didcot Railway Centre
Environmental Policy – Issue 7, November 2023

Vision

Our vision is for Didcot Railway Centre to be recognised for the international importance of its collection and the value of bringing to life the golden age of steam as a dynamic Living Museum.

Mission

Our mission is to fulfil our potential as a heritage venue at the centre of its community. Accessible to all, striving to engage and inspire the widest possible audiences in the history and heritage of the Great Western Railway – the pioneering transport infrastructure that laid the foundations for contemporary transport innovation.

Values

Authentic | Welcoming | Engaging | Innovative | Great Quality | Sustainable.

The policy

The Great Western Society Limited has adopted this policy to show its commitment to complying with the environmental legislation and regulations that apply to its operations, and to demonstrate its commitment to being a sustainable part of the local community.

We recognise that in our day-to-day operations we impact on the environment in a number of ways and we wish to manage the potentially harmful effects of such activity wherever and whenever practicable and viable to do so. We are committed to being a responsible member of the community.

The principles of this policy are:

- Enabling and encouraging our visitors, volunteers and staff to recycle.
- Encouraging, in so far as practicable, efficient use of natural resources
- Protecting our flora and fauna
- Encouraging energy conservation
- Contributing to the sustainable development of the local Didcot economy

We will do this in our day to day operations and project work.

Our impact on climate change and / energy efficiency

We recognise the significance of climate change, and in particular the contribution caused by pollution from burning fossil fuels such as coal. However, we also recognise that our existence as a working historical museum means that we cannot eliminate this aspect from our operations. We are aware that issues such as climate activism, as well as higher temperatures and an increased risk of storms, may affect our future operation.

In 2019 we calculated our carbon footprint. However, the calculator used was no longer available so in 2023 we used carbonfootprint.com to recalculate our carbon footprint for the years 2017 to 2019 and 2022. The calculations showed that our carbon footprint increased by 6% since 2017 and 5.3% since 2019. CO2 emissions from burning coal make up over 2/3 of

the site's carbon footprint with CO2 emissions from coal increasing by about 3% since 2019, while CO2 emissions associated with grid electricity have decreased by 3% since 2019.

Although the previous report calculated that our carbon emissions were equivalent to 65 tress, the exact number of trees needed to offset the DRC's carbon emissions is not easily calculated and more recent research¹ suggests that it can't be assumed that tress cancel out CO2 emissions. In 2019 the major recommendation was a reduction in waste, although it was recognised that was a challenging issue to address during the COVID-19 pandemic due to increased cleaning and sanitising requirements. The carbon footprint report was submitted to the SMT in August 2023 and is available on HOPS.

In order to minimise our effects on climate change we will aim to become progressively more energy efficient by:

- Only running our trains on public running days or when operationally necessary.
- Encouraging visitors, volunteers and staff to travel to the Centre by public transport by providing detailed information about trains and buses on our website. We are exploring options for offering discounted admission for public transport users.
- Encouraging visitors, volunteers and staff to use local cycleways and the new bike hub at Didcot Parkway Station.
- Encouraging our staff, volunteers and contractors to use fuel efficiently.
- Using thermostats to regulate the heating to ensure it is only used when needed and turn off electrical equipment that is not in use.
- Installing energy saving lighting (internal and external).
- Only using as much water as we need and ensure hot water tanks are insulated.
- Switching off engines when not in use.
- Keeping equipment regularly serviced and running as efficiently as possible.

Noise and nuisance

- Use the whistle only when operationally necessary
- Use the noise meter to ensure we minimise engine noise
- Avoid black smoke as far as possible
- Keep equipment regularly serviced
- Store fuels and chemicals appropriately
- Damp down coal and ash to avoid dust

Purchasing

When making purchasing decisions, we will endeavour to purchase goods and services with the best environmental performance, for example, by sourcing locally produced goods and services and minimising packaging and transport.

Storage, drainage and spillages

- We will ensure that hazardous substances are stored safely and securely and that appropriate spills kits are maintained.
- We will have in place an environmental emergency plan and ensure that relevant GWS staff and volunteers are aware of the plan and have access to control measures.
- We will maintain all drainage systems to the appropriate standard to prevent pollution.

¹ Moseman, A. (2022). How many new trees would we need to offset our carbon emissions? Available at: <https://climate.mit.edu/ask-mit/how-many-new-trees-would-we-need-offset-our-carbon-emissions>

Waste Disposal and Recycling

- We aim to maximise resource efficiency by reusing scrap material where we can and by selling scrap metal.
- We minimise waste to landfill. Our waste is collected by Grundon² who claim that 100% of the waste they collect is diverted from landfill. The waste is taken to a sorting facility where it is sorted by hand. Grundon recycles as much as possible and the remainder is taken to energy from waste (EfW) facilities where the waste is burned to generate power.
- We will ensure that all unrecyclable waste is disposed of in accordance with statutory legislation, including using Environment Agency approved contractors for disposal of recycled and non-recyclable materials, including electrical equipment.

Hazardous waste

We try to minimise the amount of hazardous waste we produce, and segregate and dispose of any hazardous waste following HSE guidelines.

Flora and fauna

- We have reviewed our grounds management to optimise the environment for flora and fauna while keeping visitors safe and operating a living history museum. See Appendix A.
- We commissioned a Preliminary Roost Assessment of the Coal Stage and no evidence of bats was found internally or externally. The report recommended the addition of bird boxes to enhance bird nesting habitat in line with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.
- We have minimised the use of chemical weedkillers commensurate with operational safety and will only use an appropriate chemical weedkiller applied by qualified staff.
- We have produced a Nature Guide and encourage visitors to appreciate the wildlife at the Centre.
- We deal with invasive weeds and diseases in line with Environment Agency guidelines.
- We will provide designated wildlife areas.

Retail sales

- We do not use plastic bags in the Shop and only provide paper bags when asked by the customer.
- We have reduced single use plastics and use re-usable or recyclable crockery and cutlery.
- We will publicise that visitors have the option of bringing their own mug for hot and cold drinks.
- We provide vegetarian and vegan options in the Refreshment Room to help visitors reduce their meat consumption as personal contributions to climate change.
- We provide tap water and soft drinks to our volunteers and staff to drink from their own containers.
- We provide tap water to visitors as an alternative to bottled water and soft drinks.

² Waste Collection & Disposal Service. Grundon, www.grundon.com/services/general-waste/ and Energy From Waste. Grundon, www.grundon.com/facilities/energy-from-waste/

General

- We will support our volunteers and staff with the necessary training and capability to implement our environmental objectives as part of their contribution to our aims, including encouraging our volunteers and staff to become Carbon Literate³.
- We have introduced the requirement for all GWS Board reports to have considered the environmental impact of any decision.
- We will consider how we can develop measures for our environmental performance and monitor on a regular basis.
- We will include environmental improvements (e.g. energy saving, water recycling, solar, heat pumps, etc.) in all new building projects, commensurate with retaining the historical atmosphere of the Centre.
- We have designated our Chief Executive as our Environmental Champion.

Review

This policy was reviewed by the Didcot Railway Centre Senior Management Team on 19 October and approved by GWS Board on 25 November 2023. The policy will be monitored and reviewed biennially.

Ann Middleton
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³ <https://carbonliteracy.com/toolkits/museums/>

Appendix A: Vegetation management and control at Didcot Railway Centre

In general, we will keep all railway tracks, point levers and a three foot margin clear of vegetation for operational and safety reasons.

In the rest of the Centre we will maintain the areas, as defined in Maintenance Works Component Site Areas, as follows:

Ref	Area	Comments
1	Centre Sidings	Industrial area. No public access. No overall chemical weedkilling but spot removal of vigorous plants, e.g. buddleia, to prevent forestation and to keep the path to and from Portacabin clear. To be reviewed as part of Centre Sidings development. Public area between Steam Rail Motor Shed and Refreshment Room to be kept clear of weeds.
2	Between GWT Museum and Didcot Halt	Area beside Didcot Halt to be mown and kept clear of weeds that may be a hazard to visitors.
3	Main Line Platform	Main Demonstration Line to be kept clear of weeds. Area by Network Rail fence to be strimmed to prevent overgrowth. This would seem to be an ideal area for wildflowers, either self-seeded as now or supplemented with wildflower seeding and reflect the traditional trackside vegetation. It will die down over the winter and shrub re-growth should be easy to identify and remove.
4	Between site entrance and GWT Museum	Front of Shed to be maintained as industrial area and clear of weeds. Coal Stage to be strimmed to prevent overgrowth with periodic removal of vigorous species.
5	Engine Shed and Locomotive Works	Area beside Engine Shed and Loco Works, and between Engine Shed and Main Demonstration Line, to be mown and kept tidy. Wildflower areas around the margins to be maintained. Garden area by the Loco Works to be maintained. A lozenge shaped area of wildflowers could be created around the pollarded willow which would not impinge on the 'routes of desire' for pedestrians.
6	Sidings to rear of Locomotive Works and Picnic Area	Picnic Area to be mown and kept clear of weeds that may be a hazard to visitors, e.g. nettles Wildflower areas around the margins to be maintained.
6	Carriage Shed and Traverser	Traverser and surrounding area to be kept clear of weeds. Wildflower area to south of Traverser to be maintained.
8	Oxford Road	Area between Oxford Road and Siding to be mown and kept clear of weeds that may be a hazard to visitors, e.g. nettles, hemlock. Tree cover to be reviewed as part of Heyford Station Building Project.

Ref	Area	Comments
9	Broad Gauge	Broad Gauge and Branch Line to be kept clear of weeds.
10	Signalling (Didcot Halt to Transfer Shed)	All signalling equipment to be kept clear of vegetation. The S&T Department is responsible for the Branch Line garden areas.
11	Transfer Shed and Broad Gauge Engine House	Area between Oxford Road and Transfer Shed to remain a wildflower area-