

BASL

Environmental Sustainability Policy and Strategic Framework

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Introduction

Over the last few years the majority of us will have noticed gradual steps towards a more sustainable future, in what we eat, how we travel and almost every other aspect of our lives. These changes include a move to a more environmentally sustainable future for healthcare. The NHS (outlined in NHS-England policy) is leading this change internationally with plans underway to deliver the world's first net zero healthcare system ([delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf)).

This transformation requires a rethink of every aspect of NHS practice from heating and lighting to changes to the NHS constitution. This transformation delivers the potential to maintain or improve quality of care whilst lessening our impact on the planetary systems and natural world on which we all rely.

A sustainable healthcare system is achieved by delivery high-quality care and improved public health without exhausting natural resources and living within the ecological boundaries of our planet. The 4 main domains of sustainable healthcare are set out below adapted from Mortimer et al. ([Sustainability in quality improvement: redefining value | RCP Journals](#)).

 <p>Patient empowerment and self-care</p> <p>Support patients to take a bigger role in managing their own health and healthcare</p>	<p>Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Promoting health > Preventing disease > Reduce the need for healthcare 
 <p>Lean service delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Services where people need them > Streamlining care to minimise low value activity 	<p>Low carbon alternatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Preferential use of effective treatment and medical technologies with lower environmental impact > Minimising waste of medications, consumables and energy 

At BASL we acknowledge the very strong academic consensus from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change (<https://www.ipcc.ch>). If we are going to have any chance of limiting heating globally to 2.0 Celsius above preindustrial levels then systematic change across all aspects of society is required. The health impacts of the climate and ecological crisis are very severe

(<https://www.nejm.org/climate-change>) It is therefore incumbent on BASL to act urgently and appropriately.

Policy

Our policy is therefore to ensure that BASL activities align with the wider environmental sustainability aims.

In our routine business this will mean ensuring that:

1. BASL business meetings will be held virtually at least 50% of the time and offer virtual attendance options 100% of the time.
2. Our within-year educational offerings such as School of Hepatology and other topics of interest to BASL members will be held via webinars.
3. SIG business meetings will be held through virtual platforms 100% of the time.
4. Our venue based national conferences, SIG events, annual School of Hepatology and Basic Science retreats are accessible by public transport and are held in venues with clearly defined sustainability or climate change policies. Summary highlight recordings will be available after the meeting where real-time streaming is not possible.
5. Our catering will not include plastic cutlery and crockery or plastic water bottles and will offer vegetarian and vegan options as standard in addition to special dietary requirements.

In our professional association service to members this means ensuring that:

1. BASL members have access to information on sustainable healthcare as applied to the science and practice of hepatology.
2. BASL thus helps empower its members to consider the impact on the climate and global warming of healthcare innovations and research in liver disease.

In the context of the wider liver healthcare community this means urgently working in partnership with relevant bodies to expand and integrate data on climate change into the understanding of liver disease. This includes:

1. Joining the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (similar to our membership of the UK Liver Alliance, The Alcohol Health Alliance and the Obesity Health Alliance) to influence healthcare policy
2. Working with the BSG, EASL, AASLD and other national and international GI and Liver Societies as well as NIHR on position statements, guidelines, innovation and research to integrate climate considerations as a matter of usual process

Strategic Plan

As a strategy to achieve this policy BASL will promote environmental sustainability in all aspects of its practice through its charitable objectives of research and education in liver disease and the conduct of its routine business.

We propose the following approaches to education, guidance, innovation in research, meetings and conferences and divestment:

- **Education:** The interaction between climate /ecological emergency and health has historically received very little attention within healthcare curricula. Where possible this issue should be incorporated into training alongside the principles of sustainable healthcare (Prevention, Lean clinical pathways, Patient self-care and Low carbon alternatives). BASL should look to liaise with partners such as the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare ([Centre for Sustainable Healthcare](#)) and Greener NHS ([Greener NHS » Delivering a net zero NHS \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)). BASL can encourage and incentivise education within programmes not only in our own educational activity but also through its endorsement activity.
- **Guidelines and position statements:** When formulating guidelines and position statements, assessment of the environmental impact should be an integrated part of the process. This may include an assessment of carbon footprint, resource use for instance and may use a sustainability in quality improvement (<https://www.susqi.org>) framework where appropriate. Where data are lacking, this should be identified as a need for research.
- **Innovation and research linked to climate change and sustainability:** There is minimal data relating to climate/ecological emergency and liver disease at this point. BASL can encourage and incentivise research in this area through sustainable health care categories within our conferences. We should look to expand this urgently in partnership with other interested organisation such as EASL and AASLD and with research grant awarding organisations such as NIHR. We can encourage research and innovation through promoting sustainable healthcare within our conferences
- **Support strategies from other relevant organisations and endorse the BSG Strategy on Climate Change and Sustainability 2021** working with the whole UK liver community in collaboration with our partners in the BSG Liver Section Committee as an equal stakeholder in this strategy as it applies to hepatology.
- **Meetings and Conferences:** Medical conferences can have a very high carbon footprint which represents a paradox for the healthcare community. Sustainability and carbon footprint should be borne in mind at each stage including when selecting venues, catering, materials and waste management ([Carbon-neutral medical conferences should be the norm - The Lancet Planetary Health](#)). To minimise the environmental impact, both in person and online options should be explored and made available whenever possible. Low carbon modes of transport should be incentivised wherever possible. Carbon footprinting examination of conference options and delivery methods should be commissioned.
- **Fossil fuel divestment:** Any investments held should sit in funds that have divestment from fossil fuels wherever possible.



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