

**rock trust**

**ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**

*Green Action Plan 2021*



## Foreword from Caroline Silke, Head of OVO Foundation

We are delighted to work with the Rock Trust on our Future Builders programme, which is built on our belief that the provision of affordable housing, in combination with training and job opportunities, can break the cycle of homelessness for young people. As OVO Energy's charity, we set out to give children and young people a greener, fairer world to grow up in. Plan Zero, our sustainability strategy, encourages us all to share responsibility in this mission as we urgently future proof our world. The Rock Trust's dedication to creating a Green Action Plan reflects how the importance and urgency of the climate crisis is intrinsically linked with the critical matters in housing and homelessness that they tackle in their daily work. Not only have they mapped out how they can take action, but they have also centred the young people they support - and their futures - at the heart of the Plan too. As climate awareness increases and attention turns to COP26, we have a unique opportunity to build momentum and drive change. It is brilliant to see the Rock Trust grasp this moment and we look forward to continuing our work together.



## Introduction

Our values; safety, fairness, respect, and positivity factor into everything we do. At Rock Trust, we care about the impact our actions and choices have on the environment. Our Green Action Plan sets out the steps we are taking to reduce our carbon footprint and the support we provide to our stakeholders to help them reduce theirs too. We aim to reduce, reuse, and recycle resources; to consider alternative practices to minimise our environment impact, to adopt sustainable purchasing practises. Above all, we are committed to improving the health, wellbeing, and prospects for young people. This aligns with our mission: to prevent youth homelessness and to support young people to build better futures.

Our agenda compliments the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; to recognise the importance of prosperity for all and our planet. Central to this agenda are 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all... that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change." For more information, [click here](#).

To reflect our shared values with these goals, we will initially focus on Good Health and Wellbeing and Affordable and Clean Energy, incorporating them into SMART objectives for 2021/22. In addition to this, we are accredited to ISO 9001:2015 in quality management. This provides a clear focus on continuous improvement practices. We are also working towards Investors in People IIP Platinum accreditation, to fulfil our commitment as a socially and environmentally responsible employer.

Our Green Action Plan outlines the following steps we are taking to be a more environmentally friendly organisation and our SMART objectives for a brighter future.

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# Our Employees

Our staff are our greatest asset. They support Rock Trust's values and are committed to making the organisation environmentally friendly.

## What are we currently doing?

- A recent study shows that around a third of an organisation's carbon footprint is attributable to the commute to work. We offer our employees a Bike2Work scheme. This helps to reduce carbon emissions; it also improves the health and wellbeing of our staff. We recently established a workplace cycling group where cyclists have an online space to share information and resources, etc, from tips for cycle maintenance to advice on road safety.
- Offer mileage rates for cycling - staff can claim a bike mileage rate of 20p per mile for using their bike for business journeys.
- We also subsidize public transport, allowing employees to further choose the greener option.
- Increased use of virtual meetings, reducing the need to travel. This allows colleagues from "differently located" teams to stay connected.
- Developing Rock Trust as a sustainable employer; we are a living wage employer, we are IIP accredited (gold), we promote health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- We support equality and diversity through working groups. Rock Trust works with organisations like LGBT Youth Scotland, and provides training to employees on diversity, equality and inclusion.
- Employees have access to outdoors green space and are encouraged to use this.
- We have a Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) approach to all aspects of our work, and we have an internal working group that assess and develops our approach on a continual basis.

## What more can we do?

- To help employees make the decision to change their commute option we will provide additional storage in the form of bike racks (by 2022). Following staff consultation, a recurring barrier to cycling was a concern for road safety/lack of cycling confidence. The cycling group has already posted links for organisations that run safety classes. To further support this endeavour Rock Trust can create better links with these organisations on behalf of employees and young people, possibly negotiating fixed rates for stakeholders.
- Install a staff shower facility to make active travel a desirable and practical option (by 2022).
- Create a "green team", of volunteers who are actively engaged in advancing sustainability within Rock Trust, to finding creative solutions to environmental issues, to inform about financial savings small changes can make, to set goals and share successes with all stakeholders. Utilize social media to connect with the wider community, potential supporters and donors.

- Celebrate awareness days by creating events to coincide with “national days”; Global Recycling Day on 18th March, Earth Day, 22nd April, World Environment Day, 5th June etc. To encourage participation, improve employee cohesion and foster ongoing support for the cause. Using social media to create a positive “brand message”.
- Reduce food waste in our offices by setting up compost bins that can be reused to fertilize our Edinburgh garden for free. Organic matter sent to landfill produces methane which contributes to the climate crisis. There are easy guides online to help.
- The pandemic has shown we can work from home effectively. Continued flexible working will reduce the amount of waste generated and lowers our carbon footprint; from the commute to heating a large office space.

## Our Young People

“Our aim is to end youth homelessness in Scotland by ensuring that every young person has access to expert youth specific services to assist them to avoid, survive and move on from homelessness. We advise, educate, and support young people to enable them to build the personal skills and resources required to make a positive and healthy transition to adulthood.”

To support our young people to make informed choices that improve their health, wellbeing and financial status. This aligns nicely with goal 3 of the UN’s SDGs, Good Health and Wellbeing.

### What are we currently doing?

- Encouraging greener, healthier lifestyles – by providing cooking classes that promote cost efficient, healthy recipes. By helping young people to plan recipes, to buy only what is needed, to provide creative tips for using leftovers, or practical advice on freezing. This reduces food waste and helps young people budget. Reducing food waste is beneficial in creating a greener environment and it can save households up to £440.00 per annum.
- We support our young people to live a healthy life in the following ways: art therapy, healthy living workshops, drugs and alcohol advice, sexual health and healthy relationship support, including free condom schemes and information on STI screenings, emotional support, such as help with anger and conflict management.
- We promote active travel for young people by working with organisations like Venture Trust and their Change Cycle programme where young people build a bike, learn about bicycle maintenance and road safety.
- Run an in-house clothes swap shop. This enables our young people to update their wardrobe sustainably. It promotes the benefits of choosing second hand and donating. Recycled clothes find a new home rather than ending up in landfill.
- Through our Future Builders programme in partnership with OVO Foundation, we bring empty properties back into use to provide good quality, affordable accommodation for young people.

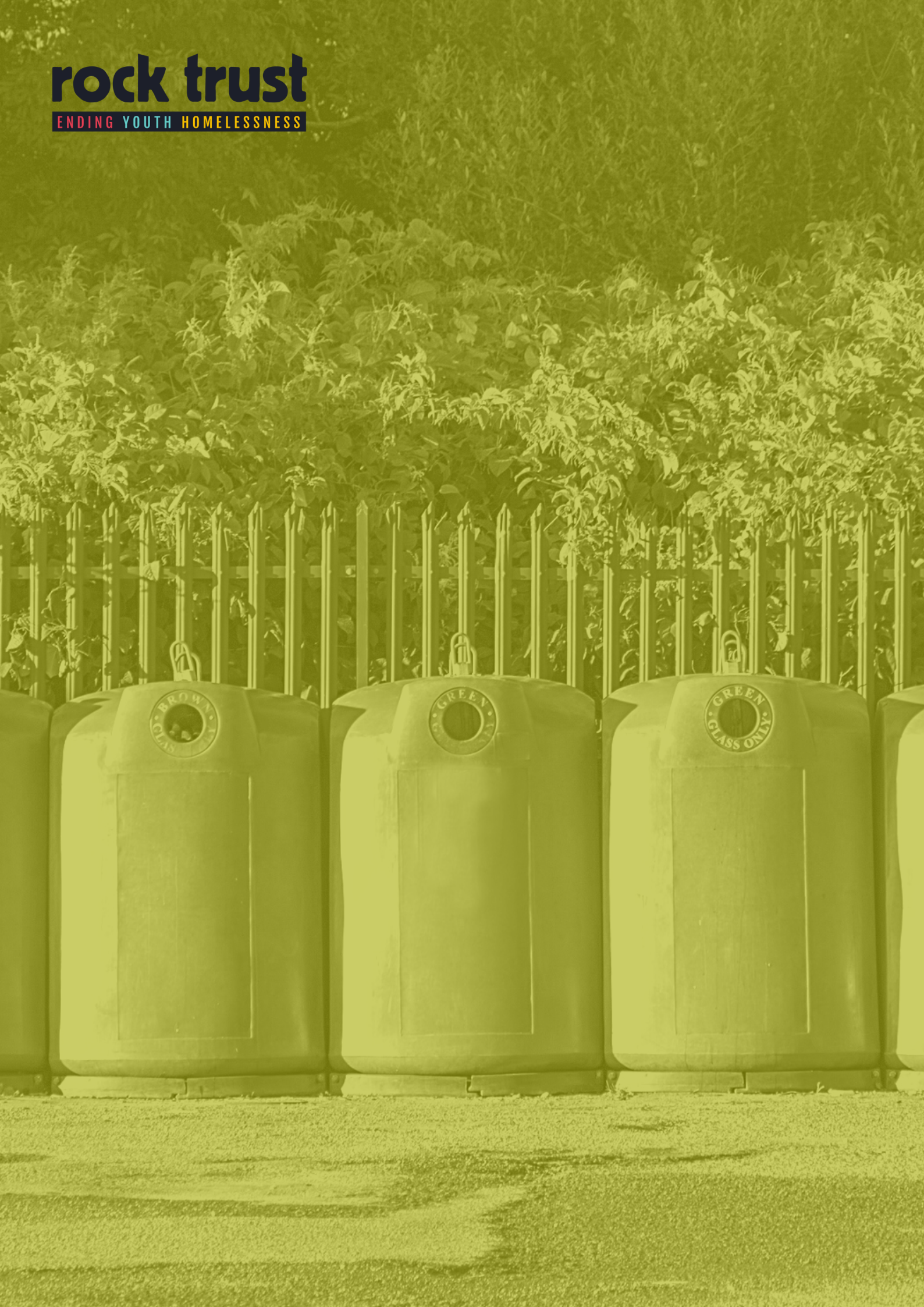
- Consulting our young people. Involving our young people in the conversation, to identify the issues that are important to them, or the challenges they face in their endeavours to be green is essential. Following a recent consultation, Rock Trust provided storage containers to aid household recycling at the request of one tenant. Another tenant wished to know more about renewable energy suppliers. So, we conducted market research to identify renewable energy suppliers, compared costs (tariffs) against the “traditional” suppliers to create a digital information leaflet. Understanding the reality that not all young people have access to digital information, we also created a small printed pamphlet.

## What more can we do?

- Working with young people through individualised tailored support plans to educate and draw attention to household green initiatives. Support young people to review their suppliers on a regular basis and switch where they identify greener or cheaper options; to support the understanding of different tariff options.
- Increased joined up working with local community projects for example, Edinburgh & Lothian Greenspace Trust, ELREC’s Communities for Conservation, Granton Community Garden. Expand opportunities to work with community conservation projects in Perth and Fife. Investment in “green” jobs is increasing, for example the Scottish Governments Youth Guarantee which provides increased opportunities for “green” apprenticeships across public sector bodies. Providing opportunities for young people to volunteer improves their options. Our Peer Mentoring Programme is developing links with the John Muir Awards and Venture Scotland, to provide outdoor opportunities for young people with a conservation slant.
- Currently developing links with The Bike Station, Edinburgh, which encourages the purchase of used bicycles rather than new, providing support around maintenance. Additional bike racks in HQ can also be used by all stakeholders; young people, visitors, volunteers. As before, link in with providers of cycling safety courses. Extend our reach on behalf of young people by developing relationships with similar schemes across our geographical areas.
- Encourage our tenants to recycle by extending the provision of recycling storage boxes to all tenants. Provide simple recycling tips including information regarding the nearest recycling facilities. Create home-made, information videos, to share with all the young people we work with and other stakeholders.
- Further engage our young people in the conversation by asking them to join our green team, or to be a young person “green champion” for Rock Trust.
- Share young people’s thoughts about climate change, and the small changes they are making to tackle it, via social media.
- Encouraging and supporting young people to cultivate/make use of any available green space linked to their tenancies.
- Create opportunities for young people to get involved in local initiatives to clean up local communities or organise our own – a beach clean for example.

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## Energy Efficiency

Scotland has set an ambitious target to become “Net Zero” by 2045. The Scottish Government recognises home energy efficiency as a National Infrastructure Priority, driven by a significant policy focus on both climate change and fuel poverty.

Taken from a recent report created by the Energy Saving Trust on behalf of the Scottish Government, we can see where our responsibilities as a youth homelessness charity and, as a social landlord, begin to gain context:

‘The Scottish Government has stated that they are “determined to lead the world” in tackling climate change and end “Scotland’s contribution to climate change, definitively, within a generation”. Action on fuel poverty, which remains a significant issue in Scotland with 25% of households estimated to be in fuel poverty in 2018, is driven by the Scottish Government’s ambition to achieve a “fairer, socially just and sustainable Scotland” and this is also an area where the Scottish Government intends to be a world leader.’

Our commitment to reduce fuel poverty for young people aligns with the UN’S SD Goal (7), Affordable and Clean Energy.

### **A comment from our partners Home Energy Scotland on Rock Trust’s energy efficiency commitments through our Green Action Plan:**

Home Energy Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Energy Saving Trust to provide free, impartial advice on energy saving, keeping warm at home, renewable energy, greener travel, cutting water waste and more. We have been working with the Rock Trust to upskill staff, review their housing stock and engage their young people. We are delighted to see the formalisation of this work, and much more, through the creation of this Green Action Plan.

This Green Action Plan makes links between international targets and Scottish Government ambitions, while acknowledging the devastating impact of fuel poverty, which currently affects almost 25% of the population in Scotland.

From building staff awareness, to reviewing and improving their own stock, the Rock Trust are taking a holistic approach to the issue of energy efficiency. By engaging young people, Rock Trust will ensure a legacy to this work, equipping them to take positive action to protect the planet as they progress through life. We support the Rock Trust in their commitment to embed sustainability and look forward to working in partnership with them in the years ahead.





## What are we currently doing?

- Improved understanding of energy efficiency. Service delivery staff attend workshops run by Changeworks, HES and Energy Saving Trust to better educate our young people around the benefits of energy efficiency, to improve both physical and mental health and to reduce energy bills. It is also good for the environment. Work with Energy Saving Trust to create A Rock Trust specific login, for online courses, available to young people and staff.
- Designed simple, digital leaflets for young people, with useful tips to save money and energy.
- Support young people to make informed choices about their money; by providing useful budgeting advice we can also encourage young people to consider paying more for energy saving versions of household items like lightbulbs.
- Educate staff and young about the costs of leaving items on standby and encourage them to switch off devices and appliances when not in use. Encouraging staff to make use of natural light wherever possible.
- Carry out EPC surveys in our domestic properties, where practical, adopt energy saving home improvements to make our properties more comfortable for our tenants. The Energy Efficiency (Domestic Private Rented Property) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 mean that the minimum EPC requirement is under review. As a landlord, we have a responsibility to review the EPC ratings of our properties accordingly.

## What more can we do?

- Researching financial initiatives to carry out any necessary and desired property upgrades to improve home energy efficiency, such as cavity wall insulation, damp proofing, central heating upgrades.
- Advise young people about the benefits of using smart meters. Smart meters provide insight into energy usage, display use in pounds and pence, can potentially help our young people change their habits to save money and reduce their carbon footprint. Unfortunately, not all energy suppliers have rolled out smart meters for pre-payment meters yet.
- Complete an energy audit of our commercial properties. We already complete an energy audit of our rental properties (EPC), extend this to include our office space, to identify energy saving opportunities and to promote shared responsibility. Circulate findings to all staff.
- In the office use posters to remind staff to turn off electrical equipment when not in use. Share simple energy saving tips, e.g., a desktop computer in sleep mode only uses a few watts of energy, you can go to your computer settings to set up a timer for sleep mode preferences. This could be anywhere from five to ten minutes of inactivity. Saving plenty of energy during the day.
- Install motion sensor lights in bathrooms where the lights tend to be left on all day.

- Assess the lighting throughout the commercial premises and replace with LED lighting where required. When managing the void process in untenanted flats replace missing lightbulbs with energy efficient LED ones. Supply our tenants with replacement LED bulbs.
- Turn down the thermostat in the office space by 1°C.
- Switch to a renewable energy supplier. By choosing a sustainable energy supplier for our office space we can reduce our carbon footprint.
- Create a bespoke training course for young people covering energy efficiency, billing, meters, to complement our digital leaflets.



# Create a Sustainable Procurement Policy

Sustainable Procurement is “a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment”.

Rock Trust currently works closely with local government across Scotland who are committed to reducing the impact of services on the environment. Our service level agreement in Edinburgh states, “The Contractor shall use their best endeavours to achieve the efficient use of energy and, where possible, to maximise the use of biodegradable or recycled products.”.

## What are we currently doing?

- Choose and support local suppliers.
- Purchase used furniture for our domestic flats. Agreements with local charities enable us to transfer discounts to young people for their own homes, thereby encouraging buying recycled goods.
- Receive donations; of furniture, bedding, TVs etc.
- Renew end of life electrical appliances with energy efficient ones.
- Think sustainably about consumables such as paper, card, printer inks, etc — we buy recycled paper.
- Have a robust purchasing process (paperless), where purchases are monitored and sign off.

## What more can we do?

- Adopt the practice of supplier diversity -this is a proactive business program which encourages the use of minority-owned, women owned, veteran owned, LGBT-owned businesses. This inclusive practice fits well with our values. It provides opportunities for under-represented groups to tender for services. Which in turn, promotes innovation through the introduction of new products, services, and solutions.
- Responsible Supply Chain - to seek suppliers who are environmentally responsible, committed to minimising their own carbon footprint and whose environmental outlook matches our own.
- Ask our current suppliers about their own green policies, ask them to use sustainable packaging, or to recycle any waste packaging.
- Appeal to corporate donors/supporters who share our green values.
- Share best practice, let partner organisation know about good deals.

- Reap the benefits of mutual social media “shout outs” with local, community run organisations that provide green services, e.g. our suppliers of recycled furniture.

## *ISO 9001 and IIP*

The quality systems in place enable us to look at our current processes, to continually review them, to bring about change, to improve them. These accrediting bodies are recognised globally and set a benchmark for good practice. They demonstrate to our stakeholders that Rock Trust values quality and safety, thereby installing trust in our services.

As an organisation, and specially, as landlords, we are increasingly finding ourselves having to address the move towards a greener, more sustainable future. The UK Government recently announced its commitment to an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 and housing has been earmarked as an area where reductions will have to be made to offset higher emissions in areas such as aviation.

### **What more can we do?**

- Invest in ISO 14000: this globally recognised standard provides practical tools to help organizations manage their environmental performance, to minimise their negative impact on the environment, to stay ahead of changing regulations, thereby gaining a competitive advantage and the trust of stakeholders.
- Become a green landlord. The incentives include making tenancies more comfortable for tenants, offer lower energy bills, reduce future maintenance bills, get ahead of future, tighter laws.

## *Rock Trust Branding and Values*

Going green, or more accurately, cataloguing our current actions in a Green Action Plan, with recommendations for improvements, provides an opportunity to promote Rock Trust and our values. It signals to external stakeholders, such as supporters, volunteers, and young people, that we are committed to doing good. We can lead by example, which can lead to increased stakeholder loyalty. It can also attract future employees and new supporters.

### **What can we do in 2021?**

The following SMART objectives clearly outline our immediate aims:

- Share new Green Action Plan with stakeholders on social media, to coincide with World Environment Day, 5th June 2021.
- Create a green team of 5-10 volunteers to educate and empower employees and young people around sustainability issues to identify more environmentally sound solutions. Consult stakeholders about joining by August 2021. Using social media platforms to share good news stories and case studies.

- Improve the energy efficiency rating, from E to D in three flats by April 2022, to reduce fuel poverty in our flats and improve our tenant’s wellbeing.
- Install five new bike racks in the lower basement courtyard for staff and other stakeholders by December 2021.
- Survey all 35 Edinburgh tenants to establish if storage boxes will encourage them to recycle by July 2021, to calculate how many items to purchase. Evaluate tenant feedback by August 2021. Roll-out the same survey to our young people in West Lothian, Fife and Perth by September 2021.
- Develop links with local conservation projects in the Lothians, Fife and Perth by October 2021, to identify opportunities for young people to volunteer.
- In HQ, replace two old tube lighting units with LED lighting in 2021. Continue to upgrade the lighting throughout the building over a period of five years.
- Apply for funding from Transport Scotland to create new shower facilities for employees before grant application period ends in June 2021. If the grant is successful, obtain three quotes for the works by July 2021.
- We already have Arts & Crafts groups & Music groups, perhaps we could have Outdoor groups, where young people can go on walks in rural areas and parks with nice scenery, perhaps plant flowers and trees and picking up any litter that they see, when they are out.

## Any Questions?

Contact us on:

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