

# Sustainability in the NHS (and Library Services)

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Banner image: "Warming Stripes for England from 1884-2020" from  
<https://showyourstripes.info>

Disclaimer: I'm still not an expert and will be painting in broad brush strokes, at least initially...

I'm here as co-lead of sus CoP (and chair of LSTF, trying to recruit and get ideas).



# What even is sustainability and why bother?



Get a definition from crowd...

“In 1987, the [United Nations Brundtland Commission](https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability) defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”” From <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>

Google’s Oxford languages def: [“avoiding the depletion of the natural world in going about our business”]

UN’s 17 sustainable development goals mention many facets.

NHS Confed: <https://www.nhsconfed.org/articles/sustainability-nhs-whats-theory-and-whats-practice> mentions triple bottom line/”3 pillars”: economic, social and environmental.

See <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/sustainability-society-and-you/0/steps/4618>



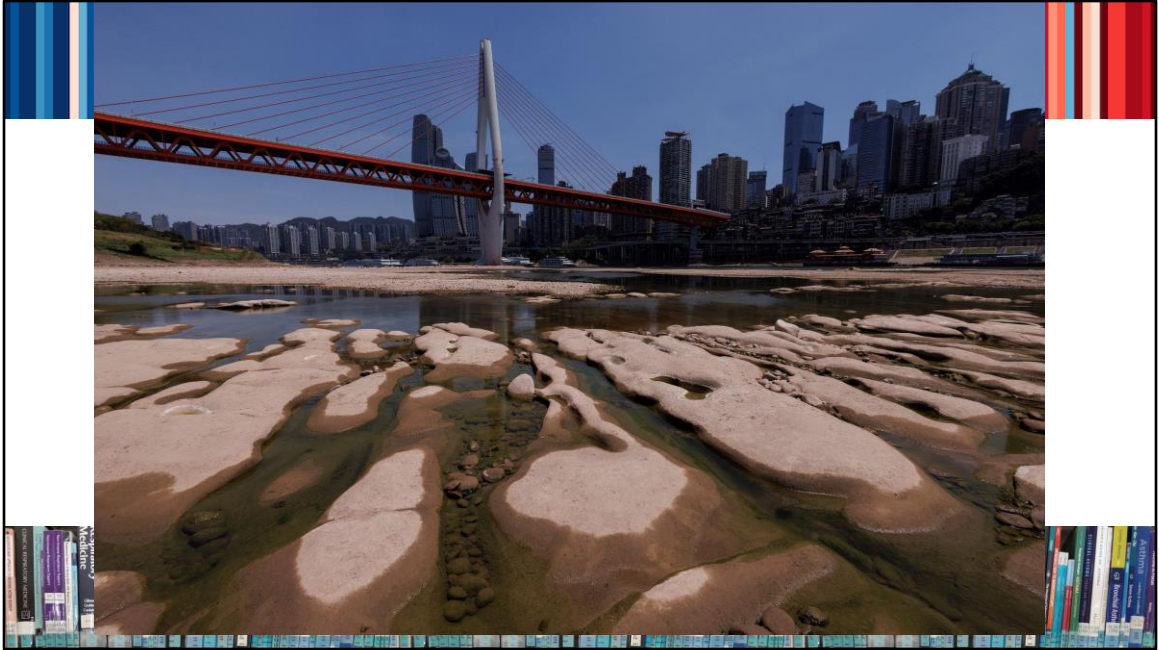
Why bother... Well to quote Sir David Attenborough to parliamentary business committee in 2019: “we are dependent on the natural world for every breath we take... And we’re in danger of destroying it” [source]: <https://www.joe.co.uk/politics/david-attenborough-parliament-climate-236503>

From July 2019 - 13 February **2020**, few months after he said this, and after my son was born wild fires along the entire west coast of Australia and on the west coast of America. Felt like the world was burning from the outside in, from the new world to the old. In 2021 I wrote in CILIP’s information professional that I often worry I’ve brought a child along to the end of the world. Course the global south is bearing the brunt and has been for a while, the people least responsible suffering the worst consequences for it. Is it overly dramatic to call climate change an existential threat. Attenborough and climate scientists don’t think so.

Since 2019, well...

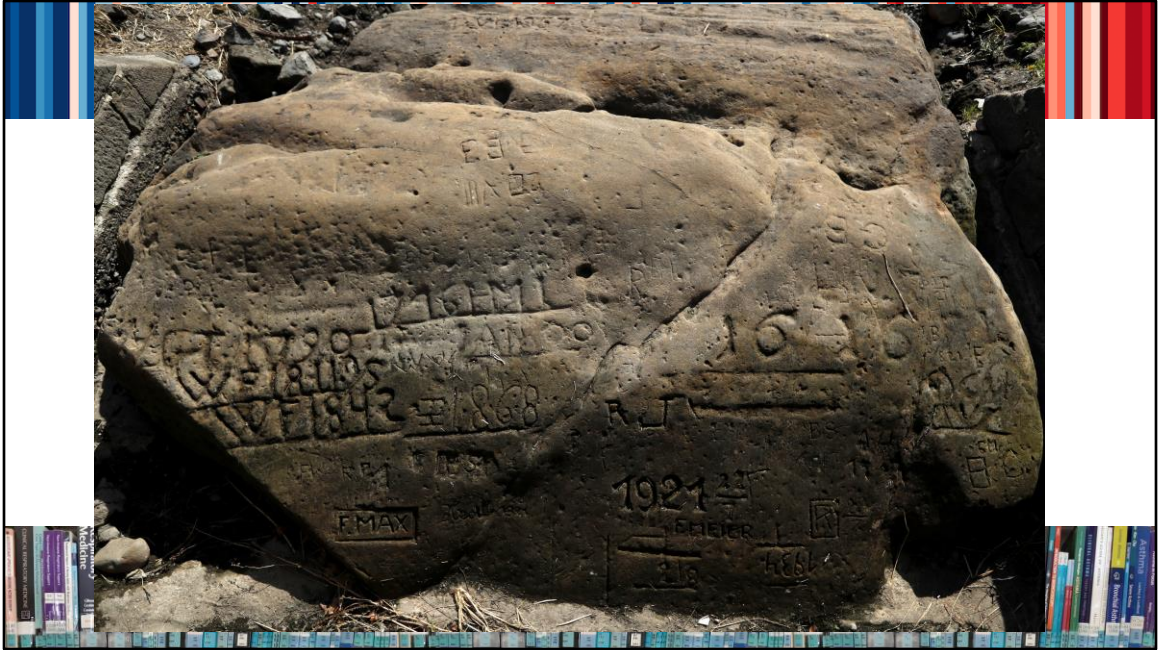
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019%E2%80%9320\\_Australian\\_bushfire\\_season](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019%E2%80%9320_Australian_bushfire_season)

Image: <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/one-year-australia-s-devastating-wildfires-anger-grows-climate-change-n1256714>



Jialing river running dry in August last year in Chongqing. Happened to the Yangtze too. This was their hottest period ever, until this week...

Source <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/18/china-drought-yangtze-river-heat/>

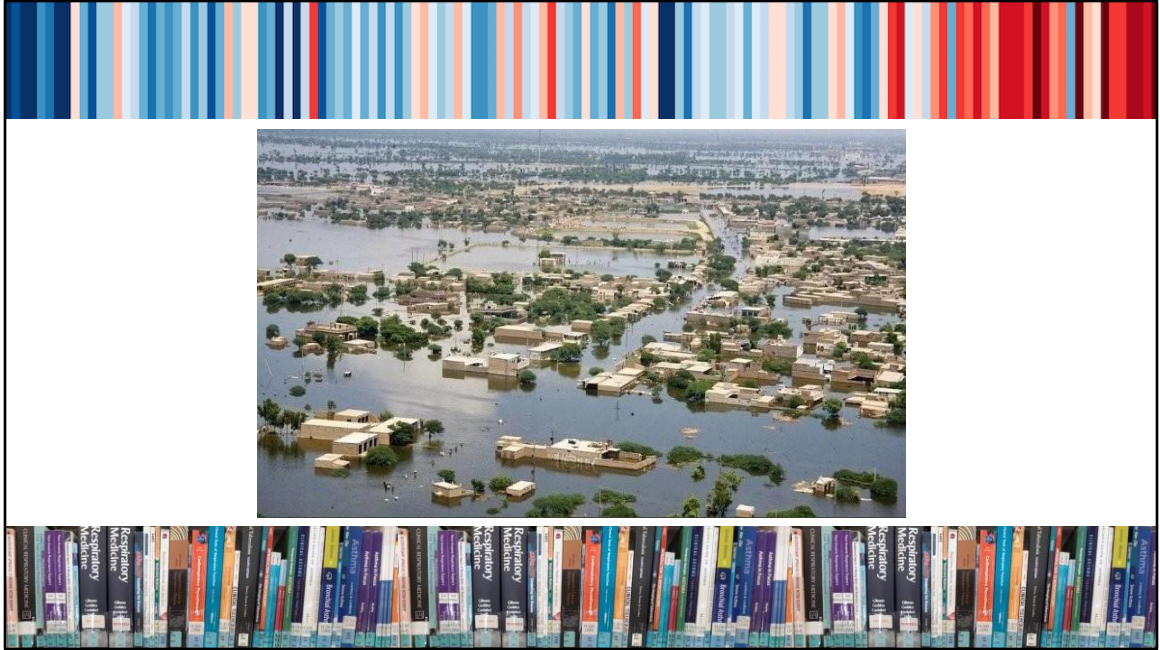


“Hunger stone on the bank of the River Elbe, in the [Czech Republic](#) town of Decin, has emerged this year, [as they do in times of extreme drought]. Noticed recently by German journalist Olaf Koens, it bears the inscription: “If you see me, then weep.””

This was during Europe’s own heat wave.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/drought-rhine-hunger-stones-river-b2145964.html>



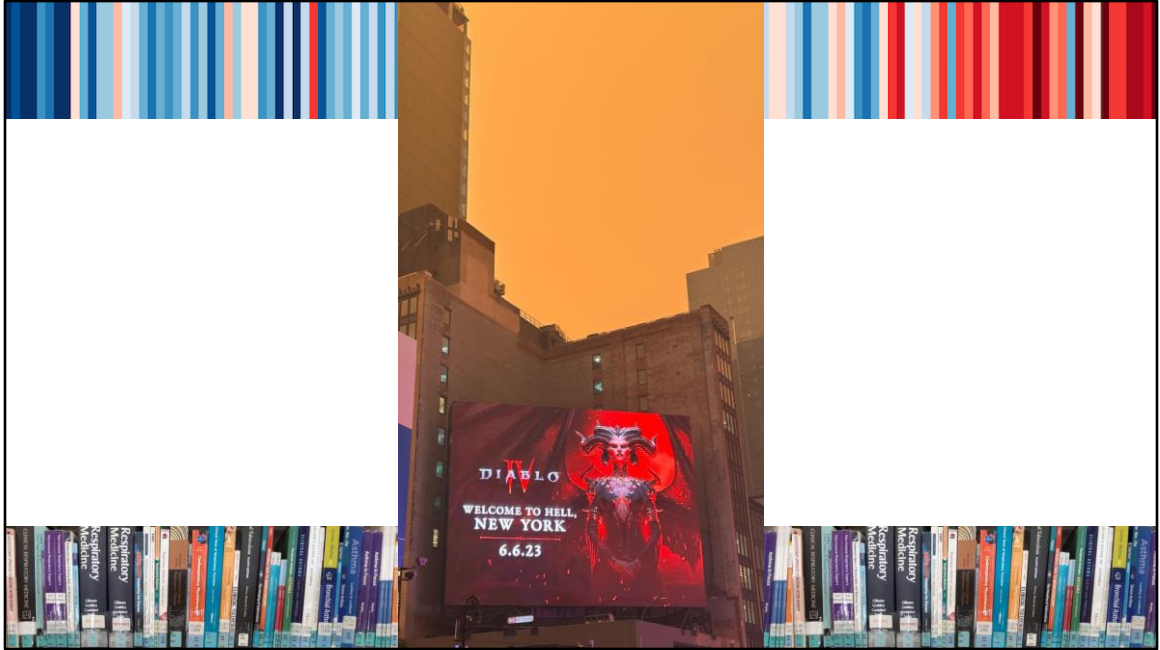


Flooding in Pakistan, September 2022: <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/news/2022/red-cross-and-red-crescent-respond-to-flooding-in-pakistan.html>

See also Louisiana bayou freezing over and Texas blanketed in snow in February 2021: <https://www.newsflare.com/video/411328/frozen-bayou-cypress-trees>

And wildfires in Scotland earlier this month: <https://news.sky.com/story/wildfire-in-scottish-highlands-has-burned-nearly-six-square-miles-of-land-12894488>

And this June is the hottest on record here.



Diablo advert, Times Square New York, Canadian wildfires covering city in smoke:  
<https://twitter.com/realjoshuareid/status/1666574123118608388>

There are many many other images I could share of different parts of the earth literally looking like Christian hell, but you get the idea.

We're all about the evidence here, and the evidence irrefutably proves that mankind's destabilized the climate: all those images were previously one-in-a lifetime, generational events, now they're regular occurrences.

We used to call these things "acts of God". Human activity warms the atmosphere, water's kept in the air more, hurricane seasons are longer and more devastating, extremes of weather are more frequent and severe.

Sustainability is inextricably linked to climate change/the climate crisis... and is about mitigating the risk of it, adapting to it and changing how we live and work to avoid the worst of its effects

But you may rightly ask "I'm a librarian, how are we going to cat' & class' our way out of this one?"

I don't have an answer! We've all got spheres of influence though, and we've geared our working lives within this one sphere of library work, but we can direct our efforts in certain ways and focus on certain things. Pulling together we can increase the spheres of influence until they're all-encompassing. We can work from the bottom-up and pull for change from the top-down. Hopefully, I can share some things that are happening and you can share what else you've been doing and spread your ideas...

Even if you don't consider the degradation of the natural world an existential threat, if you're cynical/"realistic" – heck, even a climate denier that's "done your own research" - this is still important, as "Sustainability" is also a buzz word now, a concept with different meanings to everyone as we've just heard, but one that opens up possibilities and opportunities. Library's have a central offer that people know but beyond that we can expand into new areas.





## What does it mean for the NHS, and what are we doing about it?

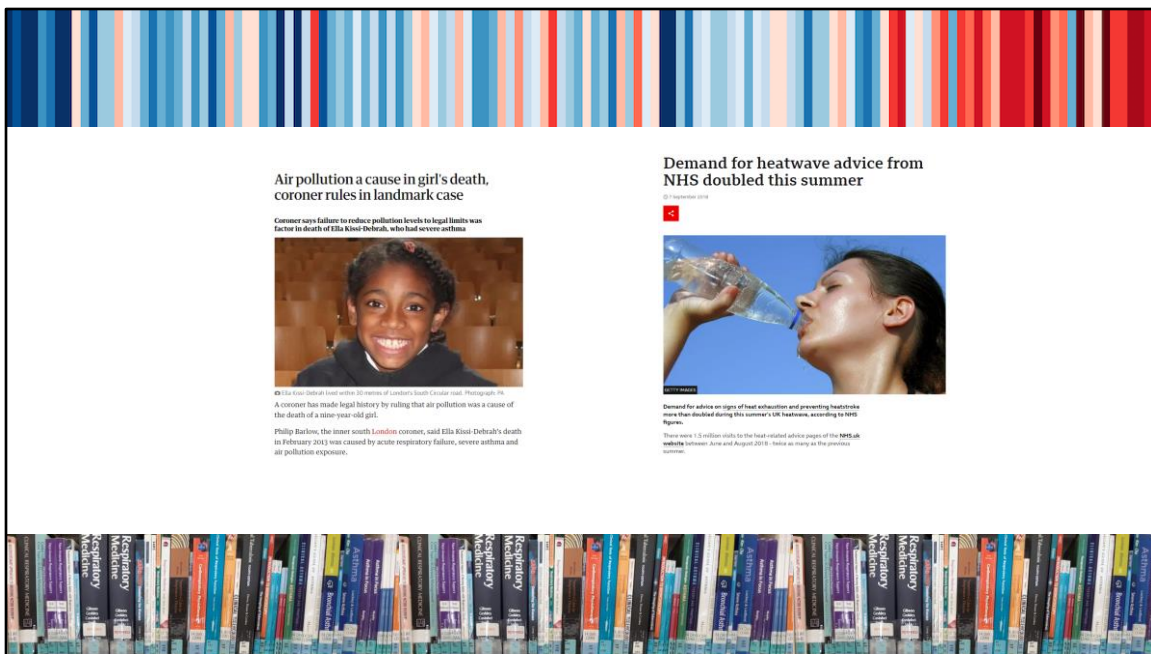


Well first of all...

We're kind of part of the problem.

NHS causes up to 5% of the nation's carbon footprint (see Knowledge for Healthcare), we've the emissions of a small country and more than Gatwick airport annually, and 1 in 20 road miles is estimated to be NHS-related (see e-lfh environmentally sustainable healthcare module).

So we're partly causing some of the problems that we're treating our patients for...



Huge population health issues.  
Climate change is affecting the populations we serve...

Children struggling with asthma

Ella Kissi-Debrah, first child to have died of air pollution (she lived in Tower Hamlets, London and died in 2013. The coroner ruled in 2020 that air pollution a major contributing factor):

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/16/girls-death-contributed-to-by-air-pollution-coroner-rules-in-landmark-case>

Barts Health's lead pharmacist for medicines... Tase Oputu drove the RPS to declare a climate emergency and divest from fossil fuels following Ella's death: <https://bartshealth-nhs.libguides.com/c.php?g=690801&p=4955447>

Heat strokes in summer

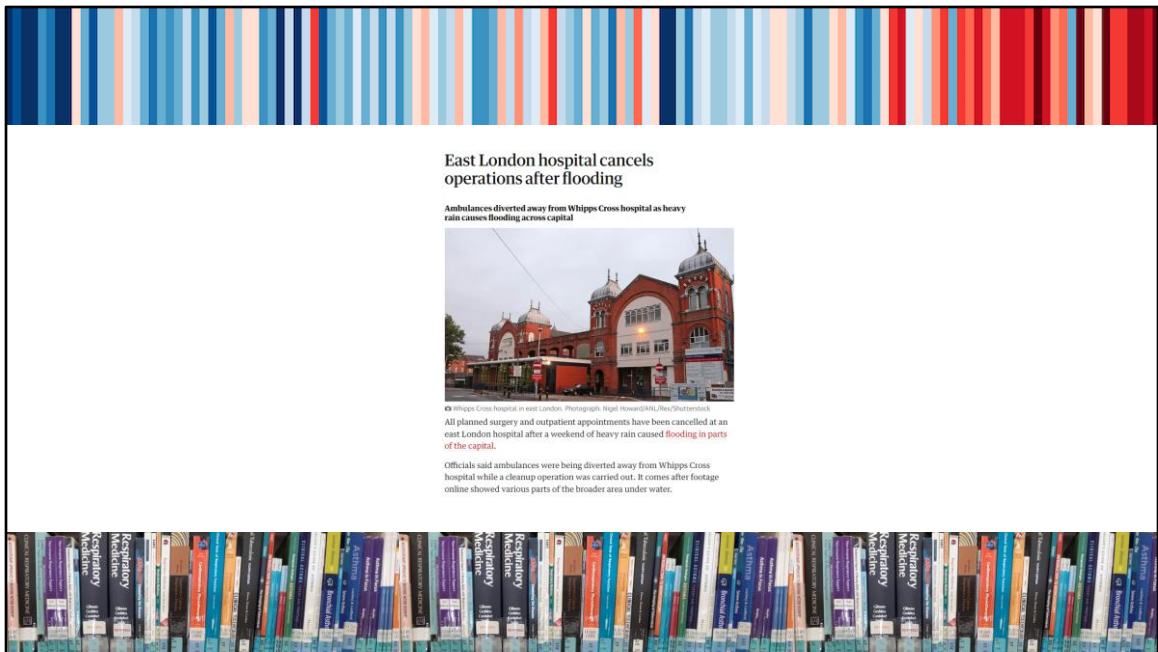
Visits to NHS website section on heat stroke tripled week before last:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/06/nhs-website-sees-surge-in-heat-exhaustion-advice-as-temperatures-sizzle/>

UK Health Alliance on Climate Change: "summer heatwaves will affect the health of up to 12 million people in the UK?" <https://ukhealthalliance.org/resource/this-report-comes-with-a-health-warning/> [as quoted in e-lfh [Environmentally Sustainable Healthcare \(ESH\)](#) "Building a Net Zero NHS"]

Increases in diseases like Lyme disease also: <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/lyme-disease-climate-crisis-ticks-b2136409.html>

And encephalitis also!



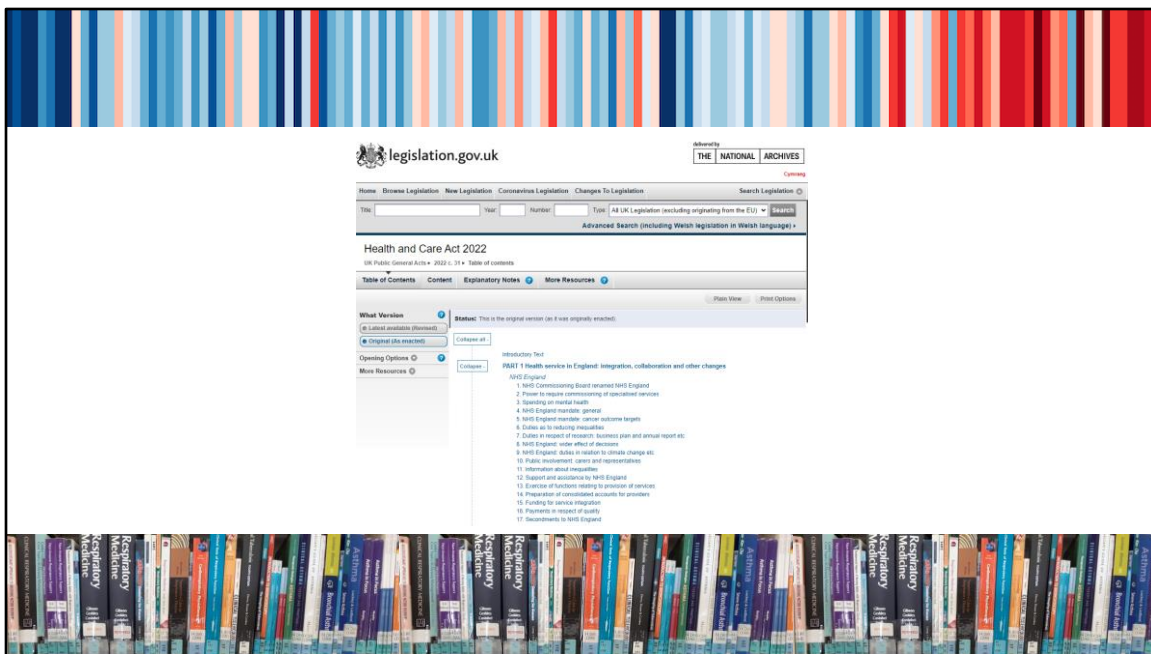
... And impacting on our operationality, our estates and facilities, see the flooding of Whipps Cross ED in July 2021:

[London flooding: Whipps Cross Hospital moves surgeries for third day after building and electrics damaged | UK News | Sky News](#)

Wes Streeting said my hospital is by far the worst he's ever seen:

<https://twitter.com/SkyNews/status/1673394444198879246?s=20> "patients sweltering in it", and leaking, flooding in heavy rain.

60% of NHS estates in areas prone to flooding/other environmental risks.



October 2020 NHS published “Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service” outlining plans to make the NHS the first net carbon zero health service (in midst of COVID, no less):  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/publication/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service/>

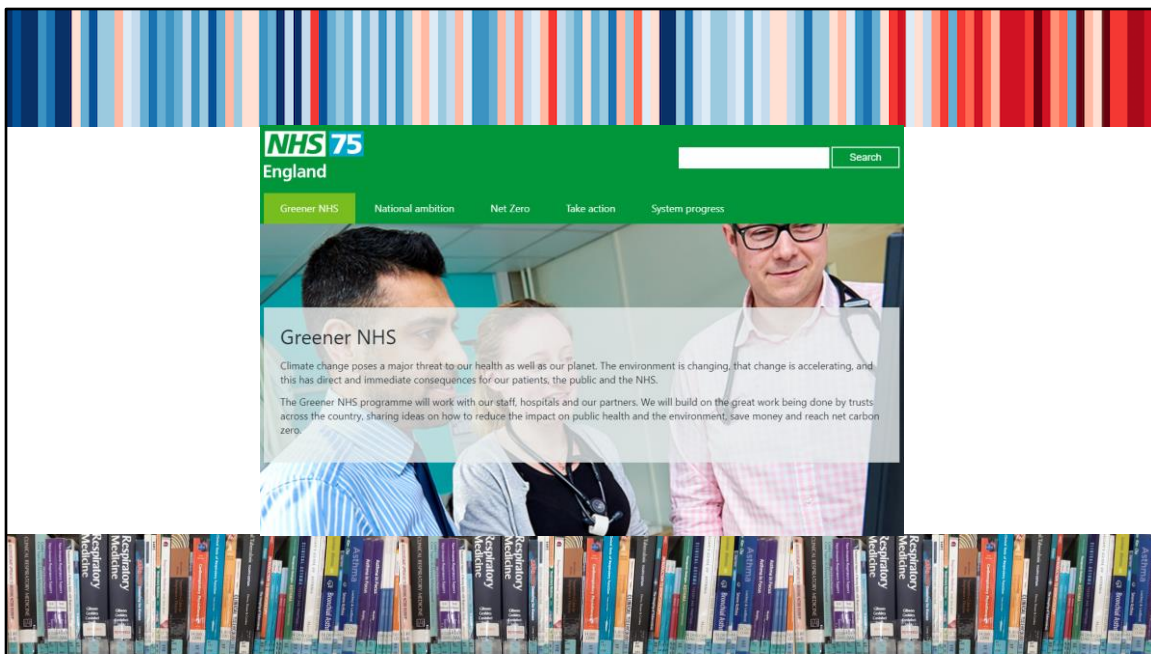
On 1 July 2022, the NHS became the first health system to embed net zero into legislation, through the [Health and Care Act 2022](#). That updated [Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service report](#) is now issued as statutory guidance.  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/31/contents/enacted>

UK government now legally bound to make us as a country/countries net zero by 2050... Too little too late?

And its own advisors the Climate Change Committee have warned they’re making no progress:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-66032607>

Net zero vs “carbon neutral”:

[https://ecologi.com/articles/blog/carbon-neutral-vs-net-zero-whats-the-difference?utm\\_term=carbon%20neutral%20vs%20net%20zero&utm\\_campaign=EX++UK++Brand++Blogs++%3CBlogs++UK%3E++Conversions&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&hsa\\_acc=3450399250&hsa\\_cam=1997654972&hsa\\_grp=155698762691&hsa\\_ad=661252821569&hsa\\_src=g&hsa\\_tgt=kwd-1215675258427&hsa\\_kw=carbon%20neutral%20vs%20net%20zero&hsa\\_mt=p&hsa\\_net=adwords&hsa\\_ver=3&gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwkeqkBhAnEiwa5U-uMy3b95m2\\_oNAVoTM0NyKUuG2z0vEMI-n3WQtfQFVbpr\\_FxKSew-qhoCDvEQAvD\\_BwE](https://ecologi.com/articles/blog/carbon-neutral-vs-net-zero-whats-the-difference?utm_term=carbon%20neutral%20vs%20net%20zero&utm_campaign=EX++UK++Brand++Blogs++%3CBlogs++UK%3E++Conversions&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&hsa_acc=3450399250&hsa_cam=1997654972&hsa_grp=155698762691&hsa_ad=661252821569&hsa_src=g&hsa_tgt=kwd-1215675258427&hsa_kw=carbon%20neutral%20vs%20net%20zero&hsa_mt=p&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_ver=3&gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwkeqkBhAnEiwa5U-uMy3b95m2_oNAVoTM0NyKUuG2z0vEMI-n3WQtfQFVbpr_FxKSew-qhoCDvEQAvD_BwE)



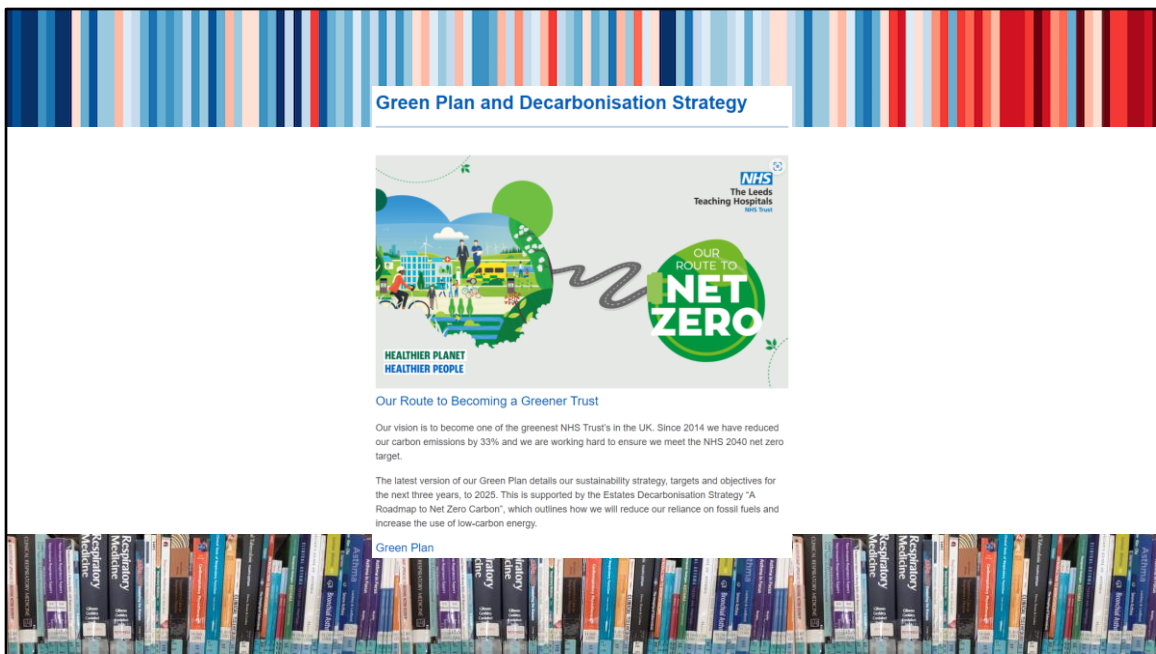
Greener NHS programme: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/>

Greener NHS created the e-lfh learning modules on environmentally sustainable healthcare, which are... well, like statmand honestly, but informative:

<https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/environmentally-sustainable-healthcare/> (the dentistry one is dogshit, sorry).

Peter May, Net Zero Policy & Delivery Manager at Greener NHS, will be talking at our Sustainability in NHS KLS Community of Practice's online meeting on Friday 8/9/23, 2pm-4.30pm, about their work.

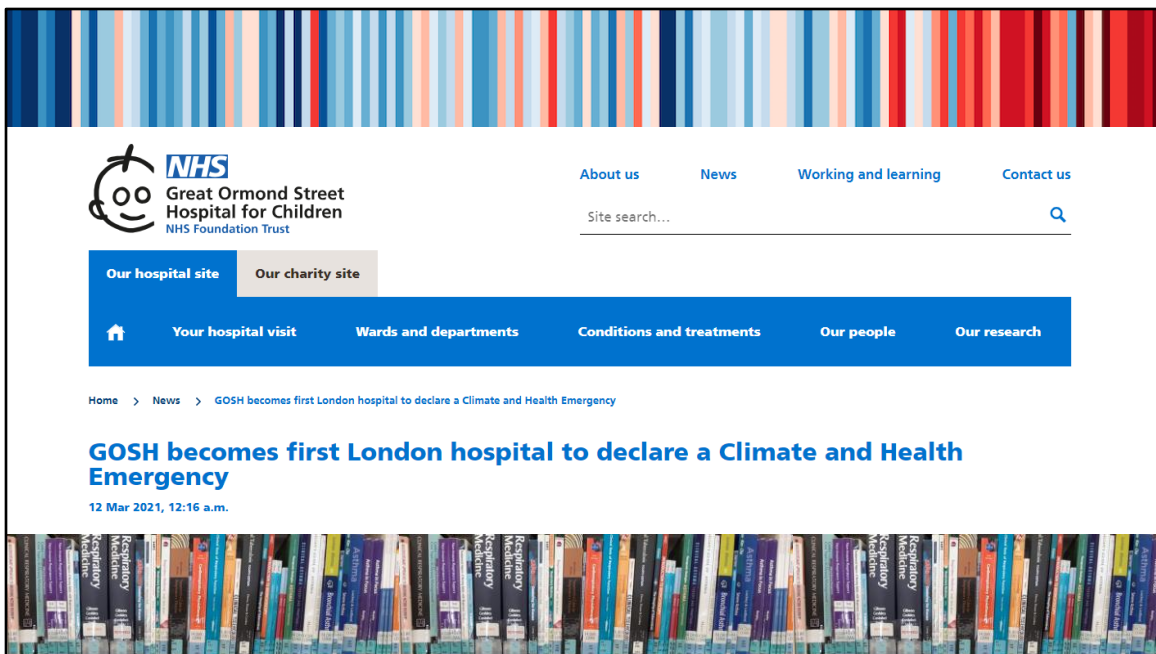




All NHS Trusts have a green plan now

<https://www.leedsth.nhs.uk/about-us/sustainability/green-plan/>

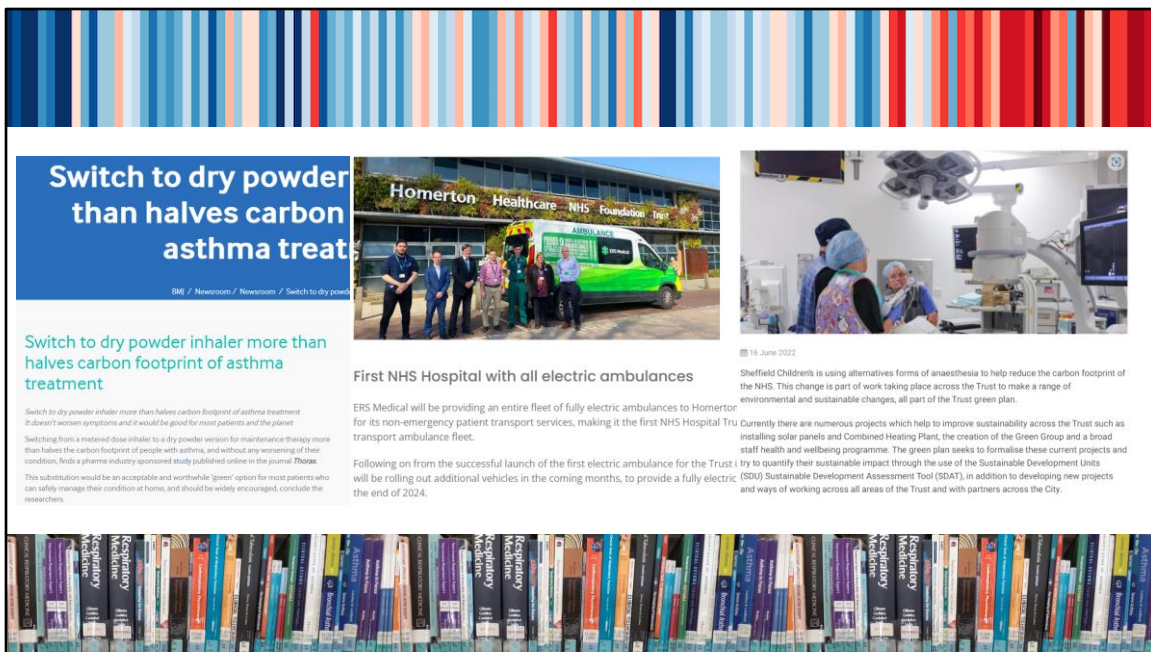
My own Trust's plan has lacklustre presentation: <https://thh.nhs.uk/sustainability-at-the-trust/>



Some Trusts have even declared a climate emergency, like GOSH:  
<https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/gosh-becomes-first-london-hospital-declare-climate-and-health-emergency/>  
 GOSH led on number of projects like “Gloves Off”.

Newcastle Hospitals was first to do this in June 2019: <https://www.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk/about/ambitions/climate-emergency/>

Many others followed, like south west trusts, local governments and other bodies too  
 (... was this a fad that has had its time? Did Covid put an end to that?)



## Success stories:

Dry inhalers: <https://www.bmj.com/company/newsroom/switch-to-dry-powder-inhaler-more-than-halves-carbon-footprint-of-asthma-treatment/>

Electric patient transport: <https://www.ersmedical.co.uk/first-nhs-hospital-with-all-electric-ambulances/>

Green procurement: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/get-involved/suppliers/> [see last LSTF session notes]

Adoption of telehealth etc.

Anaesthetic gases changing:

NHS decommissioning desflourance by 2024:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/2023/01/putting-anaesthetic-emissions-to-bed/>

See also... <https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/news/sustainable-changes-reducing-the-use-of-anaesthetic-gases/>

Specialties /professional groups have their own green groups... like GHASP in case of Anaesthetists.

All these departments optimizing and reducing in so many ways...



## What are library services within the NHS doing?

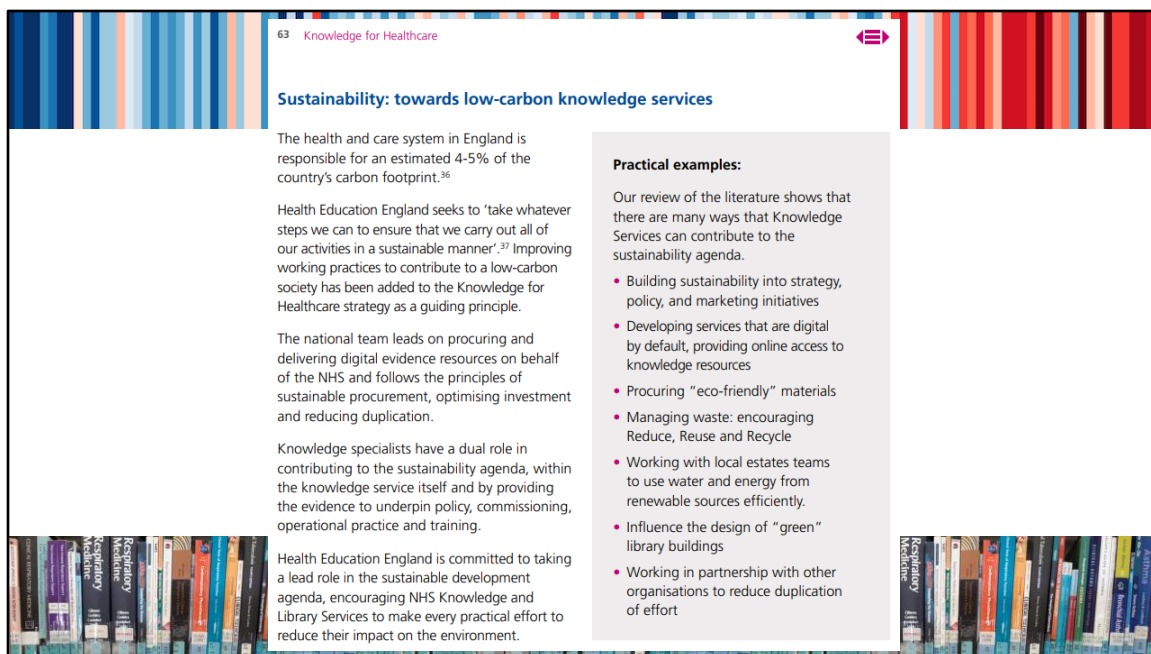


So what are libraries doing?

Are we kidding ourselves, and pissing in the wind?

“what about China?!?!” We don’t live in China.

Like I mentioned, we’ll need ground-up and top-down change. It’s starting to happen but there is a lot of work to do...

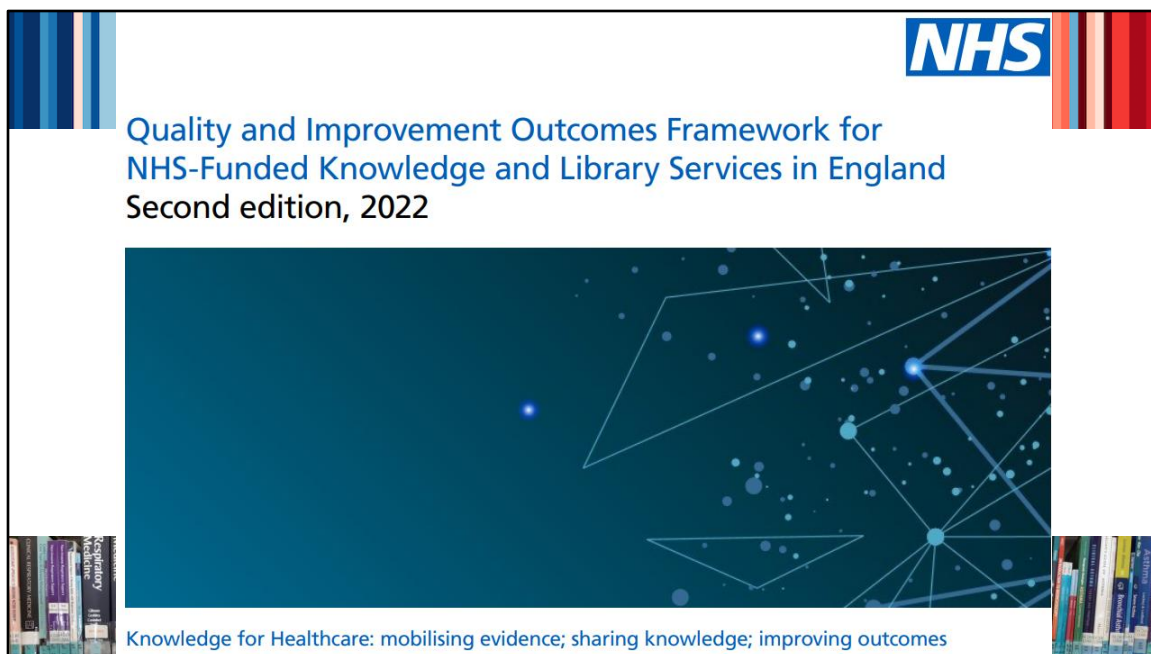


Knowledge for Healthcare: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/knowledge-for-healthcare>

What it says:

Sustainability is one of KfH's "Guiding Principles" (see Appendix 5), though there is little in the way of concrete guidance/advice even within this strategy document, besides the "practical examples" listed on p63, "Sustainability: towards low-carbon knowledge services".

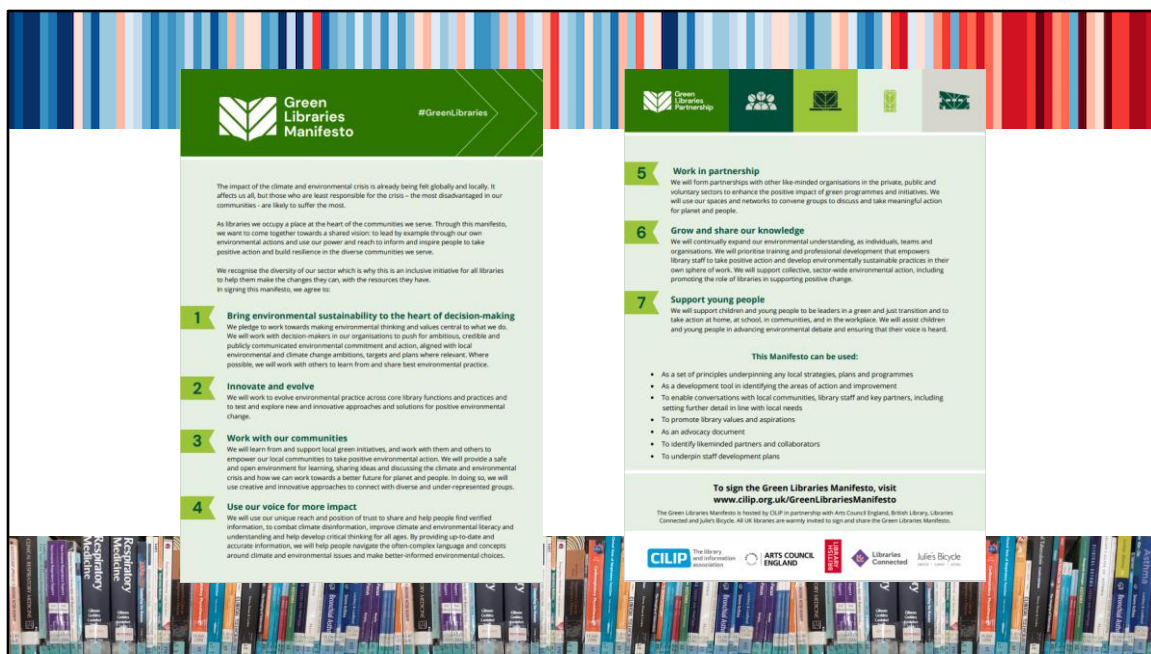
The practical examples here do demonstrate though how we are already doing this stuff, and we can lead by example...



Despite this, sustainability and net zero isn't mentioned in QIOF, so there's a disconnect... I'm aiming to change that (sorry everyone, lols).

Though we have guidance like this, it seems to me like developments in our field are coming from the ground-up, mainly.





<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/GreenLibrariesManifesto>

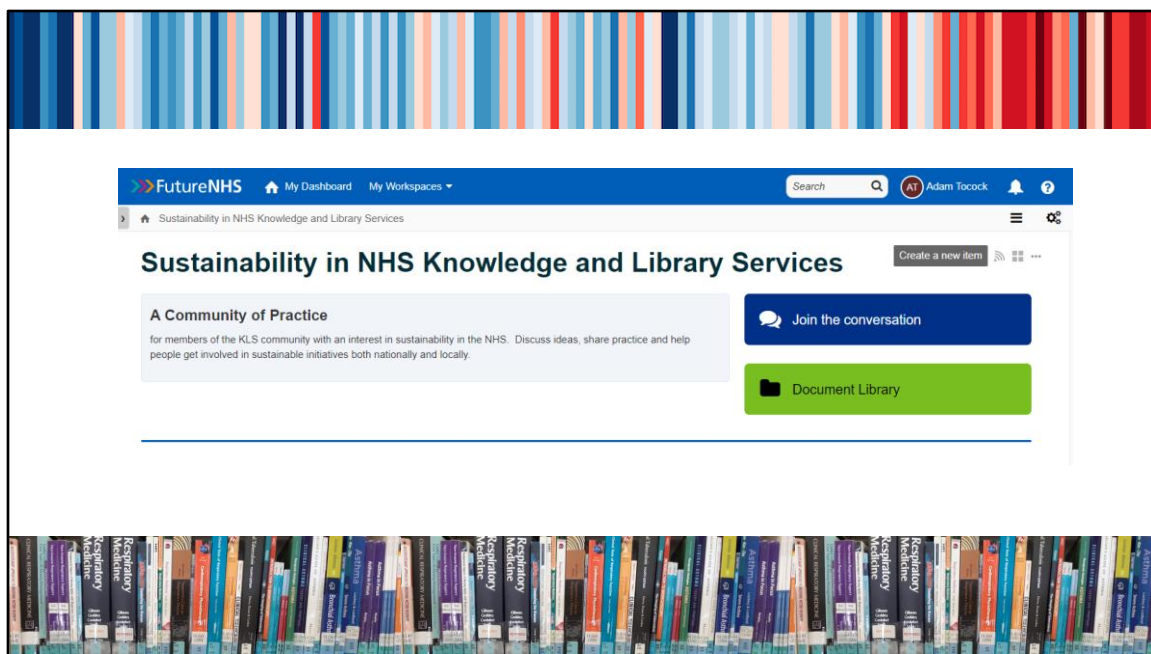
Healthcare libraries clearly weren't the focus of the Green Libraries partnership and its manifesto, so we're underrepresented (though you can help address this by signing-up).

Some of us from the CoP attended the first ever green libraries conference in March, and Blerina Hashani from the Green Libraries Partnership (and BL) was a guest speaker at our CoP's last meeting, so we're working in partnership now (as per point 5)...

Lots of the conference content sadly inapplicable to us as NHS libraries: while most of the attendees don't work for organisations that have pledged to go carbon neutral, they have a little more freedom in terms of estates etc. than we do.

Again, it seems like the best work's coming from the ground-up...

One very useful thing from Colin Jackson of Hampshire County Council Property Services' presentation: "The greenest library building is the one you've already built", better to work with that. To work out energy efficiency - divide energy bills by the floor area (measuring your energy per square metre). That figures a good start to work from.



The Sustainability in NHS Knowledge and Library Services Community of Practice aims to share the work that's happening on the ground...

<https://future.nhs.uk/SustainabilityinNHSKnowledge/groupHome>

JOIN US! how to join...

How this came to be: Launched by HEE's (as they were then called) Richard Bridgen with an event on 2/2/22

Couldn't give it the time it deserves so asked for volunteers to handle it in October 2022, Lucy Gilham of Hampshire Hospitals NHS FT and myself offered to do it, and that's what we've done.

What's been shared/discussed – success stories:

Sam Stormont's (West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust) matrix of suppliers (it's like the green procurement I mentioned earlier)

Sustainability bulletins from Lucy

Working with our Trusts' sustainability teams and our QI teams (introducing SusQI from the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare)

Working with staff volunteer/special interest groups like Green at Barts Health: <https://bartshealth-nhs.libguides.com/GreenatBartsHealth>

What's coming...

Friday 8/9/23, 3-4.30pm online meeting: Peter May from Greener NHS


Wednesday 8/11/23, 11am-12.30pm online meeting: Sophia Lentzos from NIHR on decarbonizing healthcare

More colab's with Green Libraries Partnership – we're interacting on their BaseCamp now

Talk of a Librarians for XR group also after librarians weren't among the professional groups we saw represented at XR's The Big One protest 20-24/4/23.



What are you doing, and what  
will you do, to help your Trust  
and the NHS reach net zero?



So, that's the end of my presentation but hopefully the start of some discussion in a Knowledge Cafe

There's a question for all of you here, but first, any questions about what I just went through?

I'd love you to share how you are helping with your Trusts' green plans etc.