

London Borough of Lewisham: Reducing the carbon intensity of the Council's supply chain

Lewisham Council has been a leading authority in improving the resource efficiency of both its own operations and businesses in the local area. Work has included a [Zero Waste](#) scheme for residents and a [business recycling](#) project in 2008/9. Lewisham Council has taken part in the [Carbon Trust's Local Authority Programme](#) to reduce the direct carbon emissions from authority activities, and as a result is implementing a wide programme of measures to improve energy efficiency designed to cut the Council's CO₂ emissions in half by 2015.

Project Aim

The aim of this project was to extend the measurement of the Council's carbon footprint from direct operations covered by the Government's national indicator (NI185) to encompass the Council's supply chain. This work was intended to improve the Council's evidence base as a means of focussing carbon reduction activity and delivering a strong signal to suppliers of the Council's environmental commitment.

Project Delivery

The assessment of the supply chain incorporated 532 suppliers covering 77% of the council's supply chain. The data was compiled by Trucost Ltd who contacted each supplier and undertook an analysis of each supplier based on externally accredited data provided by the supplier, or if this was not possible, benchmarked carbon data according to the type of activity. Any suppliers that did not have an externally accredited measure of CO₂ were invited to submit data to Trucost's web-based portal and receive a bespoke report identifying their carbon emissions. The cost of this service to the supplier was £249.

Results

The results of the study calculated that the carbon footprint of the Council's supply chain was over 2.5 times greater than the direct emissions from the Council's activities. The assessment included suppliers from multi-national corporations to local voluntary organisations. The process of engagement generated a lot of interest, particularly for companies who had not previously undertaken a carbon footprint analysis.

The results showed the most carbon intensive areas were:

- Construction (22% of supply chain emissions)
- Utilities (22%)

- Social Care services (15%)
- Transport and fuel (7%)
- Catering (5%)

The research found that a large number of suppliers either do not measure or publicly disclose information on their carbon emissions.

Project Developments

The qualitative data provided has allowed the Council to direct policy and operational decisions to focus activity in areas which can have the greatest rewards. The Council's procurement systems are in the process of being updated to specifically require the disclosure of CO₂ emissions for future contracts.

Lewisham Council has begun to initiate the de-carbonisation of the supply chain. As a direct result of the project 31 Lewisham Council suppliers have undertaken a detailed carbon footprint analysis. The 31 businesses were self selecting, thus giving further indication of suppliers who are engaging with their environmental responsibilities. The Council has a number of priority areas in which it is involved in further dialogue with suppliers; these priority areas include businesses which specialise in council and public sector contracts and suppliers located in south east London.

A further outcome of the study is that many voluntary and community organisations working on behalf of the Council are keen to improve their energy and resource efficiency but lack the means to change. A new body of work will now be undertaken to address this gap.

The study has also created an opportunity for active engagement with Council's suppliers, and as a by-product, systematically updated records of contact details offering further opportunities for more targeted communications.

Review

The supply chain assessment was the first to be undertaken by a local authority in the UK. The outcome of the assessment is that the Council has a greater understanding of the impacts of its own operations and the areas in which greatest improvements can occur. The real outcome of this study is that there is a 'win-win' situation in which suppliers become less carbon intensive in their production techniques, the Council lowers its overall CO₂ footprint and opportunities are created for reducing costs associated with the production of carbon.

Contact	Martin O'Brien, Sustainable Resources Manager
E-mail	Martin.O'Brien@lewisham.gov.uk
Telephone	020 8314 6605