Guidance on meeting Suffolk’s Environmental Ask

In 2019, Suffolk’s local authorities declared a climate emergency and committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their operations and services as well as working with partners in support of the aim of a net zero Suffolk by 2030.

All Suffolk’s local authorities have jointly adopted Suffolk’s Environmental Ask to improve the environmental impact of our procurement of goods, services and works. When purchasing goods, services and works we will evaluate the environmental response of bidders for our contracts.

This document provides guidance for our suppliers on how to meet Suffolk’s Environmental Ask.

Supply chain

We expect our suppliers to:

- have a positive environmental impact when delivering goods and services
- measure and report annually their **carbon emissions** as an organisation alongside other environmental impacts
- develop and deliver a **carbon reduction plan** to achieve **net zero** emissions
- work to create a **positive impact** on the environment through initiatives such as waste and resource management, water management and biodiversity enhancement.

Section 1: To measure and report annually their carbon emissions as an organisation alongside other environmental impacts

Carbon emissions (or greenhouse gas emissions) are released by an organisation’s activities. These emissions can be a result of direct activity by the organisation, such as the gas burnt to heat buildings, or indirect activity on the organisation’s behalf, such as staff commuting to work. Human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are the primary driver of climate change.

Studies have shown that organisations that measure and monitor their carbon emissions are more likely to achieve reductions in these emissions. Reductions are necessary for an organisation to lower their contribution to climate change and to achieve net zero emissions.

In addition to the environmental benefits, monitoring and reducing carbon emissions can also lead to cost savings, improvements in operational efficiency, business resilience and innovation.

Many public and private organisations include environmental criteria within their procurement processes, recognising suppliers that demonstrate environmental awareness and performance. Suffolk’s Environmental Ask was produced in consideration of recognised approaches, including the UK Government’s Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/21: Taking account of carbon reduction plans in the procurement of major government contracts, to ensure consistency and reduce the reporting burden for suppliers.

How to measure the carbon emissions of your organisation

To accurately measure your organisation's carbon emissions, you will need annual fuel and energy consumption figures in units for example, kilowatt hours (kWh) or litres. You can then input this data into a free online tool which will calculate your carbon emissions for that period. There are several free carbon emissions calculators available online, including the SME Climate Hub – Calculate your business emissions tool.

Activities you need to include

As a minimum, you should include all activities of your organisation that generate carbon emissions for example anything that uses energy and that:

1. You as an organisation have direct control over, or
2. You do not have direct control but have identified as a key area to manage.

To help organisations understand where their emissions come from and how much control they have over them, carbon emissions are categorised into scopes:

Scope 1 – Direct emissions from fuel you burn such as gas, petrol, and so on.
Scope 2 – Indirect emissions produced to make energy you use such as electricity.
Scope 3 – Other Indirect emissions from the company's activity, such as staff commuting mileage.

You should include all Scope 1 and 2 emissions, and a subset of Scope 3 emissions, including business travel (transportation of employees for business activities in vehicles not owned or operated by the organisation) and employee commuting.

Other environmental impacts you should include

- Waste generated in operations

If you have access to data for other high impact activities, you could include these too.

How you should report your organisation's carbon emissions and other environmental impacts

The GOV.UK - UK Government's Carbon Reduction Plan Template (PPN 06/21) Taking account of Carbon Reduction Plans in the procurement of major government contracts may be used as a template to report your organisation's carbon emissions to the council, or you are welcome to create your own or use another available template.

The report should be shared with your contract manager on a regular basis and your contract may stipulate an annual or more frequent basis.

Section 2: To develop and deliver a carbon reduction plan to achieve net zero emissions

A carbon reduction plan (CRP) is a statement summarising an organisation's measured carbon emissions and their plan of action to reduce emissions over time. A CRP is an organisation's roadmap to net zero emissions.

What your carbon reduction plan should include

Your carbon reduction plan should include the following elements:

- Your baseline carbon emissions– these are a record of the carbon emissions that your organisation has produced in the past before your organisation introduced any strategies to reduce emissions. They are established by analysing fuel consumption data from a previous year and calculating the emissions for that period using a calculator tool or conversion factors. Your baseline emissions provide a critical benchmark for evaluating the success of your reduction efforts. The SME Climate Hub – Calculate your business emissions tool is one of many free carbon emissions calculators available online.
- Your current carbon emissions– your carbon emissions calculated from your most recent annual fuel consumption data. This will be your baseline carbon emissions if your organisation has not previously calculated emissions.
- Emissions reduction targets– your projected reductions in emissions over a period of time, including a target date for net zero.
- Carbon reduction initiatives– describe projects you have introduced and/or will be introducing to reduce your organisation's carbon emissions in line with your reduction targets.

The GOV.UK - UK Government's Carbon Reduction Plan Template (PPN 06/21) Taking account of Carbon Reduction Plans in the procurement of major government contracts may be used as a template.

Offsetting can be used to help achieve net zero emissions

While some offsetting is often required to achieve net zero emissions, it should be reserved for the emissions that are hardest to abate once all possible reductions have been undertaken, known as residual emissions. Note that Suffolk's Environmental Ask stipulates working towards net zero emissions instead of carbon neutral (where offsetting can be used on more than just residual emissions).

It is important to make sure that carbon offsetting schemes are certified by recognised standards.

Section 3: To work to create a positive impact on the environment through initiatives such as waste and resource management, water management and biodiversity enhancement

Alongside reducing negative impacts, organisations can work to create positive outcomes for the environment through initiatives such as the following:

- Waste management– by monitoring your waste levels and setting targets to reduce the amount of waste you produce, your organisation can reduce waste going to landfill and/ or incineration.
- Resource management– adopting resource efficiency and circular economy principles saves raw materials and reduces waste and emissions.
- Water management– reducing water usage through mindful consumption, installing conversation technology at your offices, such as rainwater harvesting, water saving fixtures, reducing pollution and surface run-off.

- Biodiversity enhancement – supporting local tree planting, habitat creation or restoration projects within your local community. Enhancing garden or outdoor areas at your buildings through and adding 'wild areas'.

Initiatives such as those listed above can benefit your organisation in multiple ways.

For example:

- Embracing effective waste, resource and water management can lower your operational costs by reducing your spending on raw materials, reusing and refurbishing existing products and optimising water and energy consumption. Reduced reliance on raw materials also means your business is more resilient and less exposed to resource price fluctuations and supply chain disruptions.

- Having access to green areas at the workplace and volunteering on local projects to enhance biodiversity can improve staff wellbeing and foster team building. You can find opportunities through the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) - Local habitat map or by engaging with your local council or wildlife trust.

The above initiatives can also enhance your organisational reputation, attract more customers and create competitive edge, which in turn can increase profitability for your business.

Example of quality question the council may include in our tender evaluation

West Suffolk Council has declared a climate emergency and has a target to achieve net carbon emissions zero by 2039. All operations and services run by the council need to contribute to this ambition to achieve net carbon emissions zero by 2039.

Please provide **evidence** of how your organisation **and** products or services for this specific project demonstrate sustainability principles.

This can include, but not limited to:

- evidence of compliance with accreditation schemes, such as ISO 14001
- use of an environmental policy statement
- having a target, and evidence, of working towards net zero carbon emissions
- waste minimisation measures and or use of recycled materials
- water and energy saving measures, including use of renewable energy
- use of electric or low emissions vehicles for business travel
- commitment to local tree planting
- and procurement of local goods and services.

Please visit our website for more information on 'Green business and sustainable procurement' Selling to the council page.

Further support

Delivered by Groundwork East and overseen by the Environment Agency and Suffolk County Council, the Carbon Charter provides guidance, support, and recognition to small and medium businesses throughout Suffolk and Norfolk as they take positive action towards business efficiency. Fill in the online form at Carbon Charter – Contact us to find out how the Carbon Charter can help you on your sustainability journey.