



Climate change poses the greatest environmental threat to the world today. Government, business and individuals all have a role to play in rising to the challenge of climate change. The Forestry Commission's Greenerways Project was launched in response to government targets to limit climate change. Through the implementation of an Environmental Management System (EMS), the Greenerways Project looks at how the Forestry Commission can reduce its carbon footprint by making small, but significant changes, to our daily working practices.

objectives

- To ensure we have a sustainably managed estate that is resource efficient - with low energy use, sustainable waste management and efficient work practices.
- To raise staff awareness of the issues relating to climate change and the Forestry Commission's involvement in the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, and encourage staff to adopt sustainable principles in their day-to-day working practices.
- To reduce energy consumption from office accommodation by 3% year on year in support of government objectives to make the office estate carbon neutral.
- To reduce carbon emissions for administrative travel by 5% year on year, in support of government objectives.
- To meet government objectives in waste reduction, and increases in recycling.
- To meet government mandates on new building design and refurbishment through the application of BRE's Environmental Assessment Method standards.
- To support the sustainable visitor experience.

actions

- Establish baseline data, shared targets and indicators, and mechanisms for monitoring and complete an environmental review of all major sites.
- Draft a framework EMS including an environmental policy and improvement plan that embeds the Greenerways Project into the Commission's day-to-day business practices.
- Determine and secure adequate resources including staff.
- Recruit local champions to undertake workplace duties such as energy, water and waste management, meter reading, and running recycling schemes.

achievements

- Collation of baseline environmental performance and carbon emission data.
- Introduction of policies to reduce energy consumption in Forestry Commission buildings, and carbon emissions from travel.
- Creation of Local Champions programme and ongoing training.
- Greenerways training for, and communications to, all staff.
- The Alice Holt Greening Committee (AHGC) is an example of collaboration between different departments in implementing practical green solutions at the Alice Holt office in Surrey. AHGC have set up schemes for the recycling and collection of waste materials (in 2006 10 less skips were filled), collated information on energy consumption, calculated the office's carbon footprint and are launching a car sharing scheme.

background

Our world is getting warmer. Over the last 100 years the average global surface temperature has risen by about 0.74°C. Eleven of the 12 hottest years ever recorded have all taken place since 1995. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts global temperature rises of between 1.4°C and 5.8°C by the end of the century. This will lead to changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels, and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Scientists agree that climate change is the result of human activity – through the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere creating the ‘greenhouse effect’. The UK Government has committed to reducing carbon emissions by 12.5% below base levels by 2008-12, in line with targets set out in the Kyoto Protocol. ‘Securing the future – the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy’ (2005) requires departments to report on their contributions to sustainability and prepare an action plan to reduce carbon emissions. Targets are to increase energy efficiency, source electricity from renewables, increase recycling figures and reduce waste arisings.

While the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) guides the sustainable management of forests, the Forestry Commission had not previously considered the environmental impact of its corporate activities. The Greenerways Project was set up to address daily working practices including waste management, energy and water consumption, procurement, travel and transport. Working to the EMS ISO 14001 – an internationally recognised standard for improving the environmental performance, quality, and effectiveness of the environmental management of organisations – Greenerways aims to develop a sustainable development action plan to reduce the environmental impacts of business operations. Greenerways encourages sustainable construction on the Forestry Commission estate, including the use of sustainable building materials and renewable technologies, such as woodfuel installations at visitor centres.

Greenerways is a GB-wide initiative and embraces the whole of the Forestry Commission.

quotes

“One of the ways we can support our Ministers is by giving them a platform for speaking on the world stage of a country and an organisation that is getting its own house in order. That is what Greenerways is about – getting our own house in order.” Tim Rollinson, Director General, Forestry Commission.

“To prepare, promote and instigate a Sustainable Development Action Plan for the Forestry Commission which both reflects Government policy and also captures the hearts, minds and commitment of all its staff.” Antony Wallis, Country Land Agent, Aberystwyth, Forestry Commission Wales.

“The Forestry Commission has worked very hard in the last 18 months to develop its EMS, and the commitment shown by its staff to this process should be commended. Atkins are delighted to be associated with this initiative and to be helping to steer the Commission towards its goal of full ISO 14001 accreditation.” John Foster, Atkins Consultancy, (ISO 14001 advisors)

lessons learnt

- Ensure information is complete to enable effective setting of targets and monitoring performance.
- Ensure effective communication to staff at all levels. Encourage leadership by example.
- Set out an achievable, rather than unattainable programme.