

SUSTAINABILITY – ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?



by Chris Conway, Board member and Chair of the Environmental Leadership Team, Business in the Community and Group Chief Executive, Translink

In spite of recent political and economic issues facing Northern Ireland, companies here continue to demonstrate that sound environmental practice can contribute to business success.

The Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey annually provides a clear indicator of current environmental trends. 2018 saw more participants than ever achieve high-ranking positions in the Survey and despite the challenges of maintaining continual improvement, the majority of companies have reduced their impacts across a number of key areas including energy, waste recovery and – of particular interest to me in my role as Translink Group Chief Executive – transport.

I am committed to doing what I can to encourage the adoption of sustainable approaches to business in Northern Ireland. As a participant, *(Translink has taken part in the survey every year since it began in 1998)*, and as Chair of the BITC Environmental Leadership Team I can see the benefits the survey offers and use my role to support and promote it.

What represents good practice when it comes to transport in businesses?

The recently published, Clean Air Strategy highlighted that air pollution is the top environmental risk to human health in the UK and that transport is a significant source of emissions causing air pollution. With over 81 million passenger journeys last year, the highest in 20 years, it's clear that Translink already presents an environmentally-friendly option to many. As well as encouraging individuals to use sustainable transport, we continue to lead by taking steps to reduce our own environmental impact through reducing waste, recycling, resource & fuel efficiency and reducing our carbon footprint.

We know many businesses share our passion and we have worked with many to support the move out of cars and onto sustainable transport options. Working together we can achieve greater social, environmental and health benefits by facilitating more active lifestyles for employees, cutting congestion and reducing air and noise pollution for healthier cities. Last year Arup, Edwards & Co, Secure Broadcast

and The Consumer Council all received awards in our #GetOnBoardNI Corporate Challenge to encourage staff to leave the car at home and use the bus or train.

In addition, with appropriate planning, changes to existing company vehicles and fleet management present an opportunity to both reduce emissions and operating costs, whether through replacement of current vehicles with Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) or implementing effective vehicle management technology and driver training.

The opportunities for improving business-related travel are wide and varied. In recent years, examples of initiatives demonstrated by Survey participants have ranged from incentives to commute by bus and train, provision of cycle sheds, car share schemes to trialling new fuels and relocating/centralising whole business operations. So whatever the size and nature of your organisation, there will always be opportunities to do something to reduce impacts from transport.

Together our combined efforts will help to improve our local environment and secure a more sustainable future for the region.



To get involved, please contact ian.nuttall@bitcni.org.uk, call (028) 9046 0606, or visit www.bitcni.org.uk

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Business in the Community seeks to help organisations from across Northern Ireland to improve the environmental management, performance and reporting.

Offering a range of initiatives to inspire and support companies in this area, if your business needs support, please get in touch.

Biodiversity

The Business & Biodiversity Charter, delivered in partnership with Ulster Wildlife, is applicable to organisations of all types and sizes. It provides a framework for addressing an organisation's impacts on biodiversity, engaging with employees and the supply chain, and fostering links with the community. The Charter provides third party recognition of achievement through a staged approach to implementation.

ESOS

Phase 2 of the UK Government's Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) is underway. It applies to businesses that meet the ESOS criteria (on the qualification date of 31 Dec 2018): employing at least 250 people or having an annual turnover in excess of €50 million, and a balance sheet of more than €43 million. Before 5 December 2019, qualifying businesses (unless currently certified to ISO50001) must:

1. Measure their total energy consumption
2. Conduct audits to identify cost-effective energy efficiency opportunities; and
3. Report compliance to their national scheme administrator – NIEA in Northern Ireland

Business in the Community has qualified Lead Energy Assessors available to conduct energy audits and ensure full ESOS Compliance.

Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey 2019

Since 1998, the Survey has operated as Northern Ireland's leading environmental benchmarking exercise, attracting organisations from all industry sectors, helping participants to identify environmental impacts, measure progress, drive improvement, and raise awareness of the environment as a strategic issue at board level.

The 2019 NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey will be available for registration in April. It is open to all organisations in Northern Ireland.

Circular Economy

In a Circular Economy, resources and the value provided by them are retained within the system, reducing demand for virgin raw materials and the need to dispose of waste products.

Business in the Community's Circular Economy programme can help your business find out about, and benefit from, the opportunities presented by a circular economy in Northern Ireland. Our Circular Economy Networks and regular events provide opportunities to share learning and experiences across a range of issues including plastics and the circular office. Our Circular Economy Hub provides online access to a range of resources including e-learning modules, webcasts, toolkits and research reports.

Environmental Management Systems

An Environmental Management System (EMS) is a structured framework for organisations to reduce and control their environmental impacts. Implementing an EMS can:

- Help achieve real cost savings – direct efficiencies in energy, water, waste, purchasing and transport
- Help manage environmental risk and ensure legal compliance
- Provide a valuable engagement process for staff and stakeholders
- Effectively demonstrate commitment and responsibility to key clients, regulators and the public
- Demonstrate the compliance of business with supply chain requirements

Business in the Community can advise and support companies wishing to achieve EMS certification – in particular to BS8555.

To find out more about each of these opportunities, contact ian.nuttall@bitcni.org.uk, call (028) 9046 0606, or visit www.bitcni.org.uk



The Responsible Business Network Northern Ireland