



# CASE STUDY

## CARBON LITERACY AT BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY NI

The responsible business network has implemented Carbon Literacy throughout the organisation.

### About the company

[Business in the Community](#) stands for responsible business. Set up in Northern Ireland in 1989, we are the largest business-led coalition dedicated to corporate responsibility and in Northern Ireland our 270+ members employ more than 40% of the working population.

**Our vision** is to achieve a world where responsible business is at the core of every organisation and **our purpose** is to inspire and support business to be a force for good.

A registered charity and membership organisation, we exist to support and challenge business to be a force for good in society. We have a presence in all parts of the UK and a sister organisation in the Republic of Ireland and our network is comprised of companies of all sizes and from all sectors.

Our ability to convene business is one of our greatest strengths and we use that power to encourage collaboration to tackle key societal and environmental issues.

### The issue

With a focus on the planet, Business in the Community Northern Ireland (BITCNI) considers Carbon Literacy as a top priority, understanding that there is a general lack of awareness of climate/environmental issues within many organisations and that education is the first step to addressing this void.

Alongside our member offer initiatives to drive positive environmental performance and after identifying a gap in our own internal approach, we have embarked internally on a transformative journey to reduce our environmental impact.

BITC developed the CORE standard to certify businesses who can demonstrate their commitment to workplace, societal and environmental values, including biodiversity, carbon emissions and circular economy measures. We apply the principles of CORE internally and our external remit works off three key pillars of action within in business, people, place and planet to drive overall sustainability.

Recognising the intrinsic connection between our line of work as the planet team and our responsible business campaigning, we have prioritised the development of an effective Environmental Strategy.

Our commitment to this endeavour became evident in 2020 when we embarked on our Carbon Literacy journey internally and across our member organisations. This deliberate step has allowed us to deepen our internal understanding of carbon emissions, climate change, biodiversity and the measures we can take to improve our environmental footprint.

### What the company did

Our goal is 100% of the workforce to be trained as Carbon Literate. To support this goal, we're in the process of training all staff on carbon literacy, organising certified training for new starts at induction, and training placement students and associates. Staff have really enjoyed learning more about the climate and found it beneficial to know how to take action within the organisation and in their personal lives. As a result of the training, many of our staff group pledges have helped to reduce carbon emissions externally, positively impacting wider community groups.

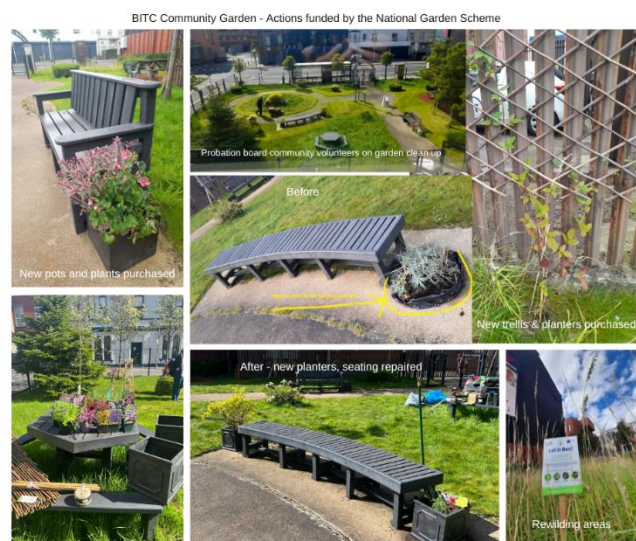
Staff total (current)	34
Staff trained (current)	31
Staff certified (current)	29
Other associates trained	15

Other ongoing initiatives, training, and changes to reduce our Carbon Footprint:

- Digital clean-up Day - to remove unnecessary files on our servers & delete emails
- Stripped back our email footers

- New internal communication policy using teams
- Review of our website's Carbon Footprint - streamlining pages as a result.

From our internal Carbon Literacy training we recognised the connections between climate and biodiversity, and the benefits of Nature-Based Solutions. In 2023, our environment team and selected membership team employees completed Climate 101: Biodiversity Training with Veri Connect, including workshops and practical sessions. Following this training we implemented the [All-Ireland Pollinator Plan](#) within our community garden.



We focused on planting various herbs, fruit trees and providing a space for nature across 2023, with the first success of chicks hatching in our bird boxes in 2024.



In 2024, we planted more fruit trees and are in the process of planting a native blackthorn fence. We were awarded a plaque from the National Garden Scheme in 2023 for our work in turning this former carpark into a community garden.



This is part of our commitment internally, to meet the principles & requirements of our [Business and Biodiversity Charter](#). We also have promoted this Charter and its benefits for nature to our member businesses and beyond, with 13 businesses now holding the Charter.

We have been running the [Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey](#) for 25 years but have set increased targets to maximise potential impact externally. The survey focuses on driving waste & carbon emissions reductions, and positive biodiversity impacts across NI businesses, helping us expand the reach of beneficial environmental action. In 2023 we had 121 participants, the highest number of participants in recent years.

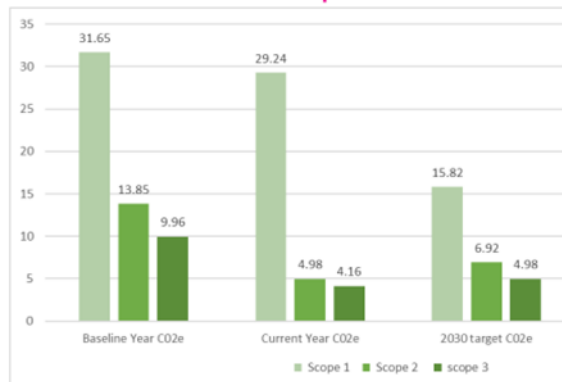
For our 2024 Annual Responsible Business Awards in Northern Ireland, we have introduced a Nature and Biodiversity Award to help drive biodiversity action further in NI and recognise best practice in this area. We also annually present an award for Climate Action which was created in 2022.

In 2020, Business in the Community Northern Ireland successfully secured funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund to develop a [Climate Action Programme](#). The programme worked towards supporting businesses who, via the programme, underwent [Carbon Literacy Training](#), reduced their scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions; and signed the [Climate Action Pledge](#). Furthermore, the programme helped participating businesses to build capacity, assist with net-zero planning, and increase levels of reporting and capacity building to enable delivery of immediate and long-term climate action. Through the CRF Climate Action Programme 122 individuals were certified as Carbon Literate. Since then, BITCNI has continued to run the programme in partnership with Danske Bank, which has seen a further 58 individuals certified as Carbon Literate.

We also have implemented a new [Responsible Procurement Policy](#) internally, driving action across the organisation, this has improved office efficiency.

Through the [Climate Action Pledge](#), we have a committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030. Our Climate Action Pledge currently has 99 signatories, these are companies within NI who have committed publicly to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 or sooner. To help achieve our 50% reduction by 2030, we have a comprehensive [Carbon Reduction Plan](#).

Carbon Reduction Plan expected outcome



In 2023 we installed a new energy efficient boiler with remote digital command and open our offices three set days a week under our Hybrid Working Policy, to eliminate office emissions Friday to Monday. We hold the BS8555 phase 3 environmental management system standard, having renewed this in 2023. Since 2018/19 we have achieved a 24.80% tCO2e in our carbon emissions.

We publicly report our [Walk the Talk](#) achievements. To us, 'walking the talk' means embedding all the positive changes within our organisation so that we are leading by example for the benefit of our planet. We also then strive to spread this message to as many member & non-member businesses through our workshops and talks. Furthermore, in 2023 we used our volunteer day to create a biodiverse garden space for Praxis at one of their residential sites.

Over the past two years our Carbon Literacy Training (CLT) has trained almost 700 people, with over 500 people from external companies certified as Carbon Literate, inspiring a range of actions to reduce emissions. Our CLT has received fantastic feedback with 82% of participants rating it 5 stars overall, with 94% finding the content clearly communicated.

### CLT Participant Feedback

**“A THOUGHTPROVOKING  
TRAINING COURSE THAT REALLY  
MADE YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR  
IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT”**

We have also trained many more people in basic Environmental Awareness and Carbon Consciousness through our short online courses.

We have developed a series of advisory workshops and an online tool to help businesses to measure and reduce their carbon emissions, further providing mentoring to help them embed changes within their organisations strategy that will achieve those reductions.

At BITCNI, we will continue to strive to educate and empower environmental action internally and externally, with a key focus on Carbon Literacy Training and on carbon emission reductions through our Climate Action Pledge.

BITCNI remains committed to fostering environmental awareness and action both within our organisation and throughout the Northern Ireland business community. As Kieran Harding, Managing Director, emphasises, 'Together, through initiatives like Carbon Literacy Training and our Climate Action Pledge, we can make meaningful strides towards a sustainable future.' Let's embark on this journey together.