

Managing the Carbon Reduction Commitment

On the first anniversary of the **Carbon Trust** Standard, a handful of environmental and facilities managers from key British properties gathered together to discuss the coming Carbon Reduction Commitment and the challenges and rewards it offers. **Ella Taylor** joined them.

Among the birthday muffins and coffee a good discussion took place, with Standard bearers including **Ian Shaw**, environmental and energy officer for the **London Fire Brigade**, who discussed the challenges that the 113 fire stations around the capital face. Having already achieved the Carbon Trust Standard, the **Greater London Authority** had now set the London Fire Brigade a target of achieving a 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions. He said that whereas previous London mayor **Ken Livingston** said the service “aspired” to cut 60%, **Boris Johnson** has now dropped the word “aspire”.

Mr Shaw said that with the fire stations in London being old buildings, retrofitting and adding micro renewables is extremely difficult. In one case it managed to fit solar heating onto a 1970s extension to the main 18th century building, but often **English Heritage** says no to such requests. Despite the difficulties, the London Fire Brigade has recruited 165 ‘green champions’ around the city, who are in charge of making sure lights are turned off and energy is saved in the stations.

Similarly, **King’s College London** tries to recruit all new students as helpers in sustainability, explained energy and environment manager **Keith McIntyre**. Although the university does not teach sustainability it wants to be a green one, he said, adding that it is very difficult to get renewables into London buildings old or new. He said that with 20,000 students coming into the university every year, it gives out a sustainability information booklet to all first year students. It seems to work in accommodation, he said, but then goes out the window when they get into the university, with computers and other appliances often left on all day.

Mr Shaw said that the average fireman doesn’t care about the fact that the London Fire Brigade has attained the Carbon Trust standard, adding that Display Energy Certificates drive them more, as they create competition between the different stations. **Dave Farebrother**, environmental director of **Land Securities Group**, added that

initiatives like recycling league tables work well, engaging companies and individuals similarly.

Asked whether it was up to tenants or landlords to save energy in buildings, **Lynda Simmons**, head of environmental impact management at **MITIE**, said that landlords often make it hard to improve a building’s efficiency. However Mr Farebrother said that in his experience tenants are often not interested. He said that Land Securities offered free energy audits to its tenants but still didn’t get much interest, yet even though the landlord puts in the funds and effort to upgrade buildings, the Carbon Reduction Commitment rewards or punishes tenants. He said he would prefer the personal carbon allowance idea suggested by **David Miliband**, where individuals are financially accountable for their emissions trading, rather than companies.

Francesca Jordan, facilities manager for **Thames Valley Housing Association** and representative of **The British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM)** sustainability group, agreed that people are important, and suggested employers recruit people who care about energy saving, rather than others. However Ms Simmons argued that one should always hire the best person for the job, but then educate them about energy efficiency and get them on board from the start.

Ms Simmons brought up the question of whether emissions should be normalised or absolute. If a company grew, she pointed out, then their total emissions would also have technically grown with the extra staff and offices, even if the emissions are down in terms of per person.

Harry Morrison, general manager of the **Carbon Trust Standard Company**, said the Carbon Trust doesn’t want to penalise companies for growing, especially the green companies, and suggested that a relative approach may be necessary.

However a debate started, with Ms Simmons agreeing that companies shouldn’t be penalised, but suggesting that employees may just be moving emissions around

different companies when they change jobs. **Peter Cordy**, immediate past chairman and board member of BIFM, similarly agreed that there was a risk of “carbon shunting”, which won’t actually reduce emissions. He said the Carbon Reduction Commitment needs to be much more refined in this area, and give a baseline for companies to start from.

Asked how much the CRC would cost them in carbon credits, Mr Shaw said the London Fire Brigade would spend £200,000, Mr McIntyre said King’s College London would spend £750,000 and Mr Farebrother said Land Securities would spend about £3m a year.

The marketability of a building with a good DEC or EPC rating is increased, argued Ms Simmons, but Mr Farebrother replied that you can’t quantify the results as a good rating doesn’t mean an extra penny in rent at the moment, despite the spend.

Mr Cordy said that all county councils will be included in the Carbon Reduction Commitment, including the education sectors for each area. He believed the cost of this would be around £500,000 a year for a mid-sized council, which could have an impact on their service. He said schools are big issues, and that the government is misguided if it thinks Local Authorities can control them. He said he thought that the CRC will become marginal in the future, with organisations looking instead to places like the Carbon Trust to assess and establish benchmarks.

Asked to give their tips for the CRC, Mr Morrison advised companies to take early action and set a long-term strategy including a carbon management plan, as the carbon trading costs will only get bigger. Mr Farebrother said it was important to know what you’re using, to give a start point. Ms Jordan advised companies in a multi-tenanted building to get a submeter, to avoid paying for other spaces and Ms Simmons advised getting a voluntary DEC as, even if the rating comes out lower than expected, it is still a starting point from which to improve.

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