

Charter Requirements and Application Guidance Notes

The Suffolk Carbon Charter is designed to recognise the achievements of businesses and organisations who are tackling climate change by putting in effective carbon management systems and measures. It is designed to apply to a wide range of SMEs, from the largest to the smallest. Measures will, therefore, vary, but should be appropriate to the nature and scale of the businesses activities and operations.

There are three levels of Charter; bronze, silver and gold, each demonstrating increasing commitment to reducing an organisation's footprint. These notes set out the minimum requirements for achieving each of these levels.

Organisations will be awarded the charter subject to satisfactory evidence being provided at an independent on site audit. The charter is awarded on an annual basis and is renewable by audit.

Organisations achieving the Suffolk Carbon Charter will receive certification confirming the level of charter achieved and will be entitled to use this charter mark in their corporate literature. Charter certified organisations will be invited to an annual celebration event.

All certified organisations will feature in a register on the Suffolk Greenest County website (www.greensuffolk.org)

Am I Charter ready?

Our assessment process will decide if you are eligible for the Charter at one of the 3 levels; Gold Silver and Bronze. To help you judge if you are likely to be successful, please check your progress against the requirements for each level:

BRONZE – You have a working carbon policy and systems in place to monitor and reduce carbon usage.

SILVER – In addition to bronze requirements, you are making significant progress on carbon reduction

GOLD – In addition to silver requirements, you are spreading the message to others.

More details on each level are available below. To avoid disappointment, **Please consider carefully whether you meet the bronze requirements or higher.**

If you don't think you've got to that stage yet, there is plenty of advice available via www.greensuffolk.org/at_work/services.

Bronze Level

Summary:

In order to meet the Bronze level of the Suffolk Carbon Charter you must have a working energy/carbon policy, have developed an action plan relating to the policy and be able to show the auditor that you have systems in place to measure and monitor your progress. It is not necessary at this level to have achieved any progress against the action plan, but you must be able to demonstrate that all the above elements are in place. If your organisation has an Environmental Management System (EMS) you may have all or some of these things in place already.

WORKING POLICY

- Your organisation's carbon/energy policy should be a short document (set out over one or two pages) providing a brief description of the activities undertaken by your organisation and committing your organisation to continued improvement of its carbon/energy management performance.
- The policy should have top level support and should be signed and dated by senior management.
- The policy should describe (in brief) the targets set out in the associated action plan and the main areas of work you will be carrying out to achieve these targets.
- It should be a working document and should contain a commitment to ongoing review, to ensure that it remains current in the context of changing organisational activities and demands.
- The policy should be communicated and understood by everybody within the organisation and should also be available for public inspection.

ACTION PLAN

- To develop an action plan for your organisation, you should first undertake a basic review of your organisation and its activities. The auditor will expect this review to contain an assessment of current utility and fuel use and an auditable carbon footprint. You should use the review process as an opportunity to identify where best you can undertake measures to improve your energy use and reduce your carbon footprint. This may involve identifying processes or items that are energy intensive (e.g. heating or air conditioning systems, boilers, lighting or industrial plant) and measures that you can take to reduce their consumption. At this stage, it may be useful to consider having an independent energy audit to provide you with the information you need. The Suffolk Climate Change Partnership provides a free business energy advisor service for SMEs (suffolkbusinessadvisor@groundwork.org.uk) which can help you carry out a carbon footprint, an initial review and put a carbon action plan into place.



- The action plan should set out your overall goals (e.g. a 10% reduction in electricity consumption, or a 5% reduction in mileage) and the timescale over which you expect to achieve this (i.e. immediately; six months, two years)
- The plan should also detail the actions you are going to take to achieve your targets, when they will be completed (or reviewed) and who will be responsible (e.g. office manager to replace all incandescent lights by October).
- This may mean that a number of people within the organisation are given new areas of responsibility or job objectives (for example nominated staff members may be asked to check that equipment is turned off when not in use or your accounts department reporting monthly electricity consumption figures.)

SYSTEMS IN PLACE TO MEASURE AND MONITOR PROGRESS

- To ensure that the actions within the plan are being carried out, you should ensure that systems are in place to review and evaluate progress. This may involve making this the responsibility of an individual employee or setting up a team to monitor and track progress. You may find it useful to add carbon management to the agenda of your existing meetings. However you chose to do this, your auditor will want to see evidence that you have a system in place for making regular reviews of progress.
- You will need to keep a record of your energy, utility and other resource consumption.
- In addition to energy and utility consumption, you will need to keep a record of your action plan review processes.

The Interreg IVB
North Sea Region
Programme



*Investing in the future by working together
for a sustainable and competitive region*



ANSWER
A NORTH SEA WAY TO ENERGY-EFFICIENT REGIONS

European Union



The European Regional Development Fund

Silver Level

Summary

The Suffolk Carbon Charter Silver Level requires that you have in place all of the requirements of the Bronze Level, and in addition, that you can show measurable progress in implementing the action plan. Again, the organisation will be independently audited to ensure that both the Bronze level requirements remain in place and that the requirements for the Silver level have been met.

MEASURABLE PROGRESS

- The audit will look for clear evidence to ascertain whether measurable progress has been made against specific actions in the action plan.
- The evidence will vary depending upon the size and nature of the organisation, its activities and the specific action plan developed, however, the following examples provide an indication of the sort of things that auditors will be looking for:
 - A record of actions completed with dates and individuals responsible (this may be an annotated copy of your action plan).
 - Documents identifying the progress made i.e. copies of bills showing power consumption dropping in line with targets.
 - Documents identifying the purchase and installation of new, energy efficient equipment (eg. receipts for the purchase and installation of low energy lighting).
 - Minutes of meetings where progress against actions was discussed.
 - Documents and procedures to ensure that staff undertake activities in an energy efficient manner, (e.g. procedures for staff informing them that all machinery must be switched off when not in use).
 - Budgets (both in terms of time and money) allocated towards ensuring that the action plan is achieved.
 - The physical installation of new energy saving equipment (i.e. new boilers)
 - Feedback from staff identifying that they understand their responsibilities in ensuring that the organisation meets their actions. i.e. "I understand that I need to switch off lights when not in use as it helps us achieve our target of 10% reduction in electricity use."

Gold Level

Summary

The Suffolk Carbon Charter Gold Level requires that you have in place all the requirements of the Bronze and Silver levels, but in addition, you must be able to show that you have achieved significant reductions to your carbon footprint and also demonstrate exemplary business practice e.g. developing a sustainable procurement system, engaging in staff and/or community development, and/or facilitating or encouraging carbon efficiency and spreading the resource efficiency message within your business sector.

SIGNIFICANT CARBON REDUCTIONS

- In the context of the above statement “significant reductions” means a minimum reduction of 10% in your organisation’s direct (scope 1 and 2) carbon footprint¹. (*This could be an absolute or relative reduction e.g. carbon emissions per tonne of product or per employee*).
- Measurable reductions in your indirect, scope 3 (third party) emissions (e.g. commuting or water use) will also be expected.
- In order to demonstrate these reductions you will need to be able to show the auditor both a current and previous (benchmark) carbon footprint, both of which must be supported by auditable data.
- The 10% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved by reducing energy consumption through any mixture of “scope 1 and 2” activities i.e. it can be achieved through one single large saving in one area, or through a series of smaller savings in various areas. The final mixture is entirely the choice of the organisation.

EXEMPLARY BUSINESS PRACTICE

Evidence of exemplary business practice will vary depending upon the nature of the organisation and its activities, however, the following examples provide an indication of the activities that your auditor will be looking for:

- Developing new products, or changing existing systems to enable others to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Engaging with staff to help them cut their carbon emissions at home or in the community.
- Promoting resource efficiency and carbon reduction to your customers.
- Engaging with the local community to reduce carbon emissions.
- Influencing or facilitating change in other businesses by specifying low carbon goods and services from your supply chain.
- Influencing other businesses carbon use practices or national or local government policies through carbon reduction work with a trade or professional body or a local government or NGO sponsored group.

¹ World Resources Institute, Greenhouse Gas Protocol. Scope 1 emissions are those from fossil fuels directly used by the organisation eg. oil, gas and diesel; scope 2 emissions are those from ‘bought in’ power eg. electricity.