

Carbon Reduction Code for the Built Environment Case Study – City Building Engineering Services (CBES)

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City Building Engineering Services (CBES) Ltd

CBES Ltd is a construction and building services engineering company with a key and innovative focus on delivering constructive solutions in project, maintenance and service activities.

Employing circa 750 colleagues the company has eight regional offices in the UK, working in various sectors including construction, food retail, logistics, local government etc. <https://www.cbes.co.uk/>

Why did you sign up to the Code and what benefits did it bring?

CBES is extremely proud to be one of the early adopters of the Code. Signing up to the Code made perfect sense to our company, since the Code PLEDGER commitments really aligned with our environmental values. Timing was perfect as we had just outlined our net zero strategy and established our carbon footprint against our 'scoped' activities, allowing us to have an initial baseline and marker to improve our performance.

We also readily acknowledge that we have a part to play in reducing the overall construction carbon burden by taking responsibility for our own activities and that of our value chain. Signing up to the Code has been hugely beneficial, being part of a larger movement and industry and a recognised initiative gives greater importance and impetus to our commitments and stands up well against any critique.

Having a better understanding of our carbon footprint has always been a key driver for us and the requirement for annual reporting has really allowed us to focus on the progress we are making every year against our most significant emissions, and this in turn has also allowed us to implement further carbon reduction initiatives in areas such as fuel usage, use of PV, biofuels, business travel and waste management.

What challenges did you face in signing up to the Code? How did you address/overcome them?

CBES did not find many significant challenges when signing up to the Code because we had already been committed to the understanding our emissions, route-map and strategy to achieve net zero. Probably the biggest challenge we had was understanding how we could comply with Commitment 1.2 and setting interim targets to 2030 where the majority of cuts were required to be made.

With this in mind, the organisation adopted a logical approach by setting key milestones during the first few years of our strategy whilst understanding the trajectory and timeline of innovation, technology advancement and legal requirements as they develop.

Our annual reporting has allowed us to see where we are on our journey in the short term and has helped with setting up realistic longer-term objectives to support our strategy moving forward to meet our emissions reduction goals at 2030 and 2045.

What are a few key areas in your organisation where you are actively pursuing continuous improvement in carbon reduction?

CBES has, so far, established scope 1, scope 2 and partially scope 3 carbon emissions and identified that the most significant emitters are in fuel usage (vehicles and site power generation). This has allowed the organisation to focus and give more attention in the areas where it can have the greatest impact.

As result we have reinvigorated our fleet strategy with a key focus on decarbonisation, through a supply of hybrid vehicles and electrification where there is availability whilst working closely with our suppliers to ensure we use biofuels, HVO and PV technology to provide energy on our sites as an alternative to fossil fuels.

How do you see the Code evolving to enable industry transformation?

We see the Code evolving as a collaboration point of reference, as stated in the introduction to Code. 'It is a first step' and getting commitment and traction with meeting the commitments is vital. What is also important, however, is sharing knowledge and making improvement.

It's not clear how many have signed up to the Code, but there will be a range and diversity of organisations that have, from micro to large, and most will be at different stages of the journey. This will provide plenty of opportunities to learn from other companies either already signed up or currently thinking about it.

It is not easy to define a net zero strategy and establishing long term targets that may be realised in 20-25 years is a hard task, in particular if we take into account the current economic and political landscape. It is therefore important to understand what small steps can be taken just now and how they can make all the difference.

For more information, please contact carboncode-enquiries@eng.cam.ac.uk.