

Public procurement pioneers

CDP Public Procurement was launched by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) in 2008 with the aim of fostering engagement on climate change between public sector organisations and their suppliers.

The report was written by Peter Martin of CarbonSense with additional help from Fraser Durham.

Following a pilot programme with the London Borough of Camden, the eight founding members were the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Essex County Council, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Gloucestershire County Council, London Borough of Islington, Leeds City Council, the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A).

The CDP process enabled the members to request disclosure on climate change strategies and carbon management from suppliers and, as a consequence, begin to quantify supply chain emissions and better understand the associated risks and opportunities.

Two hundred and thirty-eight suppliers, ranging from large corporations with international operations to micro-businesses and sole traders, disclosed information. In total, they reported emissions totalling over 100 million tonnes.

Some suppliers undoubtedly considered that participation could help their business relationship with the requesting member. It would appear that many sought the guidance that the process provided.

In general, suppliers that had previously disclosed to CDP, and larger companies in carbon-intensive sectors, were more likely to respond and to respond more fully. While this has helped to consolidate corporate involvement, a notable success of this first public sector CDP programme was the extended reach of the carbon disclosure process, with SMEs and a few charities taking part.

Becoming involved appears to have helped some of these organisations to pay serious attention to the issues for the first time and enabled them to begin to play their part in responding to the challenges of climate change. Many of the responding suppliers have made their responses available to the public via the CDP database.

The results show that there is considerable potential for public sector organisations to have an influence on supply chain emissions and to make progress towards sustainable procurement and lower carbon public services.

As well as taking forward the integration of climate change strategies and carbon accounting into their own operations, the eight founding members have helped to advance understanding that will be of value for participants in future years.

The outstanding challenge is to integrate the information that suppliers provide, and the broader understanding that this enables, into the public procurement process.

Colin Challen MP and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change, wrote that the report, written by CarbonSense, *drives home the message that throughout the supply chain we need to develop climate change awareness and transparency if we are to meet the ever-deepening challenge climate change poses.*

The Report was launched at the House of Commons on 4th March 2009 and can be downloaded free of charge at the Carbon Disclosure Project website www.cdproject.net.