

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) 2022-2025

Environmental Growth Action Plan, Carbon Reduction Plan and Circular Economy Statement guide for Good Growth projects

Introduction

This guidance document has been created to assist Good Growth projects to create their own Environmental Growth Action Plans, Carbon Reduction Plans and Circular Economy Statements. These plans are usually required as a condition of Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) awards and they play an important role in driving Good Growth behavioural change.

What do we mean by Good Growth?

The intention is that the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) should drive Good Growth behavioural change in recipient organisations. This means that projects should deliver well paid, high quality and inclusive opportunities, as well as achieving environmental benefits from this economic growth. Finally, recipients should align their practices to the principles of Good Growth permanently.

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Good Growth Principles

Clean and green

- Reduction in CO2 emissions
- Circularity - reduction in use of virgin raw materials. Recycle and reuse principles
- Nature recovery
- Attracting private sector [green finance](#) income to CloS
- Projects that contribute to the [Environmental Growth Strategy for CloS](#)

Why do I need to do an Environmental Growth Action Plan, Carbon Reduction Plan or Circular Economy Statement?

Cornwall Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and adopted the ambitious target of a carbon neutral Cornwall by 2030. We need our local economy to gradually reduce the resources it uses with a view of transitioning to Net Zero in the coming years, which means significantly reducing emissions in combination with neutralising the impact of any emissions that remain. In conjunction the rapid biodiversity and ecosystem loss must also be tackled. For these Plans, the goal is to form a structured approach to actioning environmental improvements and the Net Zero journey.

Addressing climate change and the ecological crisis meaningfully will demand a substantial effort from every part of our society. Organisations play a crucial role in this transition, and it also brings clear business opportunities.

Taking steps to address climate change can help organisations seize opportunities and grow in the long run. By reducing resource use, organisations can cut operating costs, leading to increased productivity. Many actions that have environmental benefits also make logical sense and help organisations operate more efficiently, like adopting new technologies. Additionally, research indicates that the public is increasingly concerned about climate change and the environment. Communicating an organisation's commitment and actions on climate change can enhance brand identity and reputation. Similarly, aligning an organisation's values with those of its employees can boost staff engagement and retention.

The practical steps outlined below are suggestions for what could be included in the Plans, it is recognised that each entity will need to tailor their approach to their own context and needs. It is also important to be mindful that reaching Net Zero and conserving nature for many entities isn't an insignificant task, it will be on ongoing journey that requires sustained commitment.

It should also be noted that the Environmental Growth Action Plan, Carbon Reduction Plan and Circular Economy Statement do not necessarily need to be separate documents, as there may be overlap, they can be combined. The important part is that the document/s should detail how

meaningful action will be taken. Please note that the Grant Funding Agreement for your project will detail which plans are needed as a condition of the grant.

Practical steps and points for inclusion in the Environmental Growth Action Plan, Carbon Reduction Plan and Circular Economy Statement

1. Review the organisation's current state of play

To chart a path towards where the organisation needs to get to, first the current approach and resource use must be assessed, this is your baseline data.

- Gauge the level of commitment to environmental measures, emissions reductions and investment into new technologies from the top leadership. Transitioning to Net Zero and generally increasing sustainability is no small task, buy-in from those best placed to set the direction and bring about changes is essential.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the organisation's current greenhouse gas emissions, which will constitute the baseline that progress can be measured against. This includes emissions from operations, supply chains, and other activities. The SME climate Hub has a list of [free Carbon Calculator tools](#) and the Carbon trust also has a useful guide: [Carbon footprinting for businesses](#). We recommend doing this before any changes as a result of receiving funding take place.
- Assess the organisation's current position on environmental sustainability.
- Staff learning and development on environmental matters can be a tool to stimulate action. Review whether there is any training available, and if there is, review the quality and impact of this training. Are employees and leaders receiving training on environmental topics?

2. Consider refreshing the environmental policy or strategy

Strategies are useful because they can form the basis of a whole organisational approach to shaping workplace values and practises.

- Formulate a long-term vision of where the organisation would ideally like to get to on environmental matters, alongside a clear commitment to a final Net Zero resting place.
- If you are a business, make the commitment to work towards Net Zero – You can do so and access lots of free sector specific support and guidance via the Governments [SME Climate Hub](#).
- To make these commitments meaningful, it's important to allocate explicit budgets or resources to assess various actions that could significantly reduce resource use.
- The key individuals in the organisation who may hold responsibilities and even own the application of the policy or strategy.
- Establish a regular reporting system to openly track and share progress toward goals. Include a process for updating the plan as new technologies or opportunities emerge, and as the organisation's circumstances change.

3. Derive an action plan or statement from the environmental policy

- There should also be specific provisions for each of the Good Growth principles listed above.
- Are employees and leaders receiving training on environmental topics? Consider climate literacy training, awareness programmes and incentives. Think about how more environmentally minded team members can be encouraged to drive forward positive change amongst colleagues.
- Consider energy-efficient technologies and practices to reduce energy consumption in operations and facilities. This includes upgrading equipment and adopting energy-saving

practices. Please see here for [guidance on building energy use](#) as well as government supports and scheme available. Community Energy Plus is a Cornish energy advice charity that offers [free impartial advice](#) on energy saving matters.

- If you are a smaller community group, think about the achievable first steps you can take such as: changing your lighting to energy efficient bulbs; recycling your waste; switching to a green energy supplier; draft proofing your building; use sustainable suppliers; think about how you and others travel to and from the building; go paperless; turn electrical equipment off when not in use, etc.
- Address emissions associated with the supply chain. Perhaps encourage suppliers to reduce their emissions and consider sourcing from suppliers with strong environmental commitments.
- Explore investing in innovative technologies and processes that generate efficiency savings and reduce emissions. Employee involvement in generating innovative ideas could be encouraged.
- Has sustainable construction and refurbishment been considered? Please see the [Good Growth Net Zero construction guide](#). The UK Green Building Council leads in the area of sustainability in the built environment and there is a [robust resource library](#) on their website.
- **Environmental growth and net biodiversity gain:** Take simple steps to protect and enhance nature, such as installing bird and bat boxes, planting appropriate trees, making space for nature, simply mowing less and minimising external lighting. For more information and easy guides, please see the [Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership nature recovery toolkit](#).
- **Circular Economy:** For the Circular Economy Statement, have a look at the materials and items that are used or manufactured within your organisation. A circular economy is where systems of production, such as a business, are designed so that materials never become waste. The principles of a circular economy are important because they provide a roadmap towards growing the economy, increasing consumption and tackling climate change, biodiversity loss, waste and pollution all at the same time. Please see the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation Circular Economy Overview](#) for a wealth of resources and there are further resources at the bottom of this guidance note.

4. Evaluate the Impact

After a certain period, which could be specified in the Action Plan, the project should reassess the approach and impacts.

- The best way to calculate and demonstrate change is to carry out another Carbon Calculation. You can then compare your baseline data to your new data.
- Have the efforts on sustainability had the desired effects? This could be displayed in a simple table format as shown:

Area for consideration	Current impact (baseline)	Action	Result	New impact (datapoint)

- What more can be done?

Further Resources

[Take a look here for more information on the Cornwall Council Environmental Growth Strategy](#) and please contact the Good Growth team for further guidance and signposting if needed at: goodgrowth@cornwall.gov.uk

- The [UK Business Climate Hub is a resource bank](#) for the purposes of empowering entities to possess the knowledge to take action on climate change.
- Harvard Business Review: [The Circular Business Model](#)
- McKinsey Quarterly: [Mapping the benefits of a circular economy](#)
- UK Government: [Circular Economy Package policy statement](#)
- World Economic Forum: [What is the circular economy, and why does it matter that it is shrinking?](#)
- [The Tevi toolkit](#). Tevi was a previous EU funded project that provided SMEs with expert advice and grant funding for environmental goals.
- The Carbon Neutral Cornwall [Together We Can Toolkit](#) has resources and tools to help community groups and local councils in their response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency.
- [Local investment in nature – Lets Talk Cornwall](#)
- [An introductory guide to growing private funding for natural capital.](#)