

# How to develop and use an Environmental Policy



## Micro Business Fact Sheet: Environmental Policy



This fact sheet explains what an environmental policy is, discusses the benefits of developing and using one and provides a framework to get you started.

### What is an environmental policy?

An environmental policy is a written statement that sets out an organisation's commitment to comply with legislation and to manage the environmental effects of its operations, whether these relate to waste generation, emissions or water consumption.

Although it is not yet a legal requirement for all businesses to have an environmental policy, an increasing number have them, as they help to demonstrate a serious commitment to the environment and, often, customers (particularly large organisations and the public sector) will expect to see them. They can help show you have a serious commitment to the environment, and often customers (particularly large organisations and public sector) will expect to see them. If you wish to implement an environmental management system (EMS), an environmental policy is an essential component to ensure the EMS is appropriate and effective. The structure and content of an environmental policy are not regulated under UK legislation, although if you adopt a formal EMS it will have certain requirements – this is discussed below.

### The benefits of having an environmental policy

Having an environmental policy in place can provide **significant business benefits**, by helping you to:

- ensure legal compliance;
- monitor your use of resources (e.g. raw materials, water use and energy consumption);
- reduce environmental incidents;
- save money through greater operational efficiency and increased awareness arising from resource monitoring activities;

- develop new business, as often customers require suppliers to be able to demonstrate their environmental credentials; and
- develop a positive corporate image which helps you foster good relationships with stakeholders such as your regulator (SEPA or Local Authority), local community, insurance company and investors.

However, to achieve these benefits, your environmental policy **must be integrated into your business practices**. For example by:

- monitoring the use of resources and implementing actions to reduce consumption;
- implementing a programme of continual improvement;
- developing an auditing system to ensure awareness within your business about relevant environmental legislation; and
- checking that the requirements of the legislation are met.



## Promoting your green credentials

Once you have developed your environmental policy, it is vital to keep it up to date, and regularly review your performance in light of the objectives you have outlined in it. You can use it to track your environmental performance, which you can then use to promote your green credentials.

Promoting your green credentials can be done in several ways, for example:

- entering environmental award competitions, such as VIBES (<http://www.vibes.org.uk/categories>), or the Green Awards (<http://www.quaydigitalscotland.co.uk/sites/events/green-awards/abouttheawards.html>).
- featuring your environmental policy and the progress you have made in marketing materials or other customer communications, such as your website.

## Environmental Management Systems

An EMS is a framework that can help you achieve your environmental aims and objectives by the use of a control system to manage your operations. An EMS is essentially a documented system which follows a repeated cycle, based on the idea of continuous improvement, as is shown below.



The key requirements for an effective EMS include:

- a commitment by management to develop an environmental policy and an EMS;



- a planning stage which includes assessing your business activities, products, processes and all services that might affect the environment, identifying relevant environmental legislation, and determining how it applies to your business;
- the establishment of environmental aims and objectives and a monitoring system to assess progress against these objectives;
- periodic auditing of the system to evaluate its effectiveness and performance against the aims and objectives; and
- the formal review and approval of the EMS by management.

Several formal EMSs are available for businesses to follow and businesses can gain accreditation by an appropriate external body for their system. The most common formal systems available are:

- **ISO14001**. This is the international standard for EMSs. Visit [www.iso.org/iso/home.htm](http://www.iso.org/iso/home.htm) for more information;
- **The Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)**. This is a voluntary EU-wide scheme. Visit [www.emas.org.uk](http://www.emas.org.uk) for more information; and
- **BS8555**. This breaks down the implementation process for ISO 14001 or EMAS into six stages. Visit <http://www.iema.net/acorn/bs8555> for more information.

For more information on EMSs, download ZWSs guide **EMS Building Blocks**.

**Environmental Policy**

**What to focus on when developing an environmental policy**

You need to consider:

- compliance with legislation;
- use of materials, water and energy;
- waste minimisation, recovery for reuse and recycling, treatment and disposal;
- measuring, monitoring and the setting of targets;
- procurement;
- suppliers and service providers;
- community impacts and transport issues; and
- training, education and awareness.

**Templates and guidance**

A typical environmental policy occupies no more than one side of A4 paper and incorporates the following elements:

Environmental policy section	Information
<b>Introduction and aim</b>	Company name. Which aspects/part/location of the business the policy covers. Links to other aspects of the business such as quality systems. The overall aim of the policy.
<b>Responsibility</b>	State who is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• integrating environmental considerations into the business; and</li> <li>• maintaining the environmental policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	State that you will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make resources available to implement the policy (e.g. time); and</li> <li>• provide training to staff and stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	State the company's environmental objectives, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complying with relevant regulations;</li> <li>• reducing material, water and energy consumption;</li> <li>• reducing hazardous waste generation; and</li> <li>• minimising the impact of activities on neighbours and the environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b>	Give specific targets and actions relating to your objectives, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• percentage reduction in waste from a known baseline;</li> <li>• percentage reduction in water use from a known baseline; and</li> <li>• percentage reduction in energy consumption from a known baseline.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring and auditing</b>	Indicate the systems to be used to monitor progress, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviews and assessments to allow for continuous improvement;</li> <li>• data collection;</li> <li>• annual audits; and</li> <li>• the publication of annual summaries of progress against policy objectives.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	Who will be given a copy (e.g. all employees and customers). Name and title of person to contact with any queries. How to obtain a copy (e.g. a telephone number and address of company website).
<b>Controlled</b>	The policy should be signed and dated by management.

### Sources of further information: Environmental Policy

- Business Gateway –  
<http://www.business.scotland.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?site=202&topicId=1080502869>
- EMAS provides example policies –  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/toolkit/toolkit\\_4\\_3.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/toolkit/toolkit_4_3.htm)

### Further information

If you have a specific query or require more information on an area covered in this fact sheet, please visit [www.zerowastescotland.org.uk](http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk) or contact the free Helpline on **0808 100 2040**.

#### On Course for Zero Waste

Zero Waste Scotland offers a free online training course for Scottish small and medium-sized enterprises/organisations (SMEs) – On Course for Zero Waste. This training has been designed to give individuals the skills and tools they need to improve the resource efficiency and environmental performance of their organisation – and, of course, save money too. For more information visit <http://smetraining.zerowastescotland.org.uk/>



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