

Carbon literacy case study

Silver award

February 2022

Who is Electricity North West

Electricity North West is the distribution network operator for the North West, responsible for maintaining and upgrading 13,000km of overhead power lines and more than 44,000km of underground electricity cables.

We cover diverse communities from the beautiful Lake District landscapes to the bustling city of Manchester and all the wonderful towns and villages in-between.



Our journey to net zero carbon

We began our journey to lead the North West to net zero in March 2019. Our plan was underpinned by £63.5m investment over the four-year period to 2023, focused on decarbonising our own activities, supporting our colleagues to act, and helping our customers start their own journeys to net zero. The plan to decarbonise our own activities and support our colleagues focuses on four main areas:

- Colleague engagement
- Carbon Literacy training
- Travel and transport
- Accommodation

Our intention is to reduce our own carbon footprint and share our ideas, experiences and learning with our stakeholders and customers to inspire them to take action in their homes, communities and businesses.

Colleague engagement

Our journey started by initiating a colleague carbon survey to understand our colleagues' knowledge on energy efficiency, transport, renewables and community energy. 552 or 27.6% of our colleagues took part in the survey; the main results were:

- 64% of respondents said they wanted to do more around energy efficiency
- 45% said they wanted helpful tips/guides
- an on-hand energy champion to provide advice and guidance was a key ask alongside incentives and personal recognition and rewards.

From this we developed a colleague engagement plan. One of the main activities was workshops with our wider leadership team, focused on asking: 'What do you need to enable you to engage with your team to make our *Leading the North West to zero carbon plan* a reality?'

Key themes included education and awareness, engagement and incentives. At our bi-annual executive leadership team roadshows we asked 1,298 colleagues to vote on 'What do they need help with to reduce their CO₂ emissions at work and at home?'

- 64% voted for incentives
- 21% said information that can help them make positive changes
- 15% said examples of how they can make changes.

Practical
guidance on
what they can
do to make a
difference

Top tips and
advice that's
relevant to
their work and
home life

Resources and
inspirational
content to
engage,
motivate and
inspire

Carbon literacy training

To build on the success of achieving our carbon literacy bronze accreditation and to drive further cultural change across the business, we have rolled out carbon literacy training across our leadership team. We did this to enable our managers to consider how they can modify their behaviour to reduce their own carbon emissions and those they're responsible for at work.

We began our training programme in 2020 and delivered face-to-face training to 102 colleagues. These sessions were carried out before the pandemic and were very interactive with six activities and several opportunities for discussion. We used a mixture of videos and graphics for visual learning, and an optional role play activity.

In March 2020 the national lockdown led to a pause in our training programme. We restarted training in December 2020, continuing with face-to-face sessions to provide an interactive experience for the learner. Following another delay due to the second lockdown, our final cohorts were trained face-to-face in June and July 2021.

All the sessions over the last 16 months have been interactive with opportunities for delegates to take part and contribute. In total 327 colleagues who make up the leadership team, have completed carbon literacy training, of which 92% would recommend the course to others and rated the delivery 'very good/excellent'.

Our colleagues' motivation to communicate climate change increased significantly after completing the training. The feedback received was largely positive and delegates committed to make changes in their part of the business. Among the actions, colleagues committed to question the need to travel for meetings if they can be held online, and to better coordinate operational engineers' work to minimise travel. After completing the training, all delegates agreed to carry forward their group action pledge into their annual personal company objectives.



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Colleague engagement

We have launched a new internal intranet portal to further support colleagues to complete their actions. This is in addition to the information we have on our main website for [carbon literacy](#). We have also introduced a mascot 'Count Carbon' to help make it easier for colleagues to find the right information to help them, and we have implemented an internal steering group with representatives from across the business to keep momentum and support new incentives.



In response to our colleague survey we have introduced 'net zero champions' who will attend carbon literacy training. Our champions are volunteers and have knowledge of their office/depot to allow them to react to any energy issue that may arise. The champions will help communicate between their site, our facilities team and our energy management colleagues and also help co-ordinate activities to help reduce energy, including encouraging colleagues to save energy where possible.

From March 2023 we'll deliver training to a further 35% (750) of our colleagues on our journey to achieve gold accreditation. We will look at how we deliver this training using a hybrid approach of face-to-face and online learning. We'll also deliver training to our network contract partners and agencies that help us to support our vulnerable customers to encourage them to start or support their journeys to net zero carbon. We intend to develop a toolkit to support other organisations on their carbon literacy journey and have already delivered training to all colleagues in our sister company [Electricity North West Construction and Maintenance](#) who are now a bronze carbon literate organisation.

Travel and transport

A large proportion of our colleagues travel all over the North West as part of their roles and business transport accounts for 52% of our business carbon footprint. At the start of our carbon literacy journey our company car list included a small number of hybrid vehicles with the most popular vehicles among our engineers generally being large 4x4 vehicles.



Travel and transport

We have since seen a shift towards the uptake of electric vehicles as a result of our [low carbon transport policy](#). Demand has been so high we are quickly reviewing and adding to the network of 100 charge points across our estate. This includes installing charge points at our substations to support and encourage field-based colleagues to make the switch to EVs.

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Accommodation

As part of our [Leading the North West to zero carbon](#) plan we committed to convert two of our depots to become exemplar net zero carbon sites – our training academy in Blackburn and our Oldham depot. These sites were used as a pilot to implement multiple energy saving initiatives, focusing on behavioural change, energy efficiency technology interventions (eg thermal optimisation, LED lighting, air source and ground source heat pumps) and on-site renewable power generation (roof-mounted, ground-mounted and car port solar installations).



Greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings account for approximately 28% of our carbon footprint, with 7% from depots and 21% from substations, so the next five years present an exciting opportunity for us to support the UK's climate targets by transforming a further five depots to net zero. This will encourage further stakeholder decarbonisation, collaboration and replication across our supply chain, and represents the first step of our journey to transform our remaining ten sites to become net zero by 2038.