



RESEARCH COUNCIL
SWINDON COMPLEX

The Natural Environmental Research Council (NERC) took the role of lead research council in the bid for the Polaris House campus to obtain registration to the prestigious and internationally acclaimed environmental management standard, ISO 14001.

Polaris House is the building which houses all five research councils:

- NERC (Natural Environmental Research Council)
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)
- Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC)
- Science and Technologies Facilities Council (STFC)

The scope of the assessment was agreed as “the control of the impact on the environment of all the activities conducted at the Polaris House campus”. The site provides accommodation for 1200 staff and houses a variety of buildings and supporting services which include:

- Plant room – providing services for air conditioning, treated waste and heating.
- Generators and UPS systems for the IT systems
- Car parks for 600 cars
- Bicycle sheds and associated shower and changing rooms
- Reprographics facility

The campus itself is set in grounds of approximately 8 hectares which includes the buildings as well as green and wildlife areas.

Communications and decision making

Each research council has its own environmental team each of which sends representatives to the cross-council environmental group. The environmental expertise resides within this group who then develop initiatives and make recommendations to the cross-council operational research team whose decisions are endorsed by the research council strategy management group. Agreed environmental initiatives will then be implemented and monitored by the cross-council environmental group.

The plant room

Very recently, over £1m has been spent on the plant room introducing a number of technologies which have improved the environmental performance, for instance:

- Constant speed motors have been replaced with variable speed motors allowing the motors to respond to demand rather than being run continuously. It is anticipated that this alone will lead to a 10-12% reduction in carbon usage
- Water cooling has been replaced with air chilling eliminating the need to test for, and the associated risks of, legionella's disease
- Solar heating and photovoltaic panels have also been installed

The office areas

Various awareness and environmental campaigns have been run over the course of the project, the primary campaign being “ban the bin”. All personal bins have now been eliminated and all waste is now collected in dedicated recycling areas.

Additionally, as office areas have been refurbished, computer controlled lighting, which will improve the efficiency of lighting and the associated energy management, has been introduced.



Waste

As with many large organisations, various waste is accumulated and Polaris House is no different. A dedicated waste area is available which houses the food compost area and a series of segregated skips which are available for the collection of:

- Electrical equipment
- Wood
- Paper
- Plastics
- Aluminium
- Cardboard

It is calculated that the campus is now recycling 72% of all waste.

Food waste

As might be expected, the campus houses a number of refectory areas, for instance:

- A restaurant
- A bistro area
- 20 kitchenettes spread throughout the site

Food waste is now collected and composted in a rocket composter www.quickcompost.uk. The resulting compost is mixed with shredded green waste and then used throughout the grounds, eliminating the need to purchase and transport composting materials.

NERC environmental accounts

The financial director has, for the past five years, produced environmental accounts for NERC. "These are not precise audited accounts, but an indicative management tool that encourages thought and action to measure NERC's environmental impact and take cost effective steps to minimise them." Issues addressed within these accounts include:

- Impact on air arising from
 - Energy – electricity, gas, oil, petrol and diesel
 - Transport – mileage, commuting, NERC ships, NERC aircraft
- Impact on land
 - Waste disposed to land fill
- Impact on water
 - Water use and sewage

These accounts are also used to produce figures for category of emission, ie

- Carbon dioxide
- Sulphur dioxide
- Nitrous oxide particulate matter and hydrocarbons
- Methane

Benefits

Given NERC's environmental focus, it was not surprising that NERC took the lead role on this initiative. However, that is not to understate the hard work undertaken by all to gain certification to the standard at the first attempt; significant savings have been made and general awareness greatly increased.

For a consultative meeting or additional information, please contact a member of our sales team on 020 8460 3345. Alternatively, e-mail us at sales@stadius.com

