



Environmental Report 2023

Introduction

Optimum ELITE is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and overall impact on the environment. This report outlines Optimum ELITE's total carbon footprint in 2023, as well as the current mitigants in place, the action plan to implement future mitigants and initiatives to offset our footprint.

Carbon footprint breakdown

Optimum ELITE's carbon footprint in 2023 was made up from the following emissions:

- Office electricity usage: 3,973 kgCO_{2e}
- Office gas usage: 1,391 kgCO_{2e}
- Business miles - car: 4,380 kgCO_{2e}
- Business miles - air: 1,600 kgCO_{2e}
- Business miles - rail: 30 kgCO_{2e}
- General office emissions: 480 kgCO_{2e}

Total carbon footprint: 11,854 kgCO_{2e}

Average carbon footprint per employee*: 1,078 kgCO_{2e}

*(Average carbon footprint per employee is the KPI used by Optimum ELITE to monitor environmental impact.)

Internal mitigants in 2023

Online meetings

By the end of 2023, Optimum ELITE had a total of 52 advisers under the commercial finance network. To reduce business miles on the whole we carried out the majority of firm meetings online, limiting office visits to just one per firm.

Combined meeting days

Alongside limiting the amount of face to face meetings in 2023, we also made a significant effort to visit multiple firms within the same area in one day, reducing overall business mileage.

Car sharing & environmentally friendly travel

In 2023, we encouraged staff (where possible) to car share on their commutes, as well as walking or cycling to work.



Company vehicles

In 2023 we reduced our fleet of company vehicles from a total of four to three company cars. In September, we replaced one of the vehicles with a plugin hybrid. This was the first step in our initiative to make the majority of company vehicles either plugin hybrids or EVs.

Working from home

Employees are given the option to work from home where possible, especially if they have a substantial commute. This is supported with the usage of Microsoft Teams for video calls and our fleet of digital systems to make working remotely a simple alternative to working from the office.

Recycling

We further encouraged recycling with all employees and added additional recycling bins to the office.

Going paperless

On 1st October 2023, Optimum ELITE implemented a paperless policy. This was implemented using our digital systems and employee training. All email footers now include a message encouraging recipients to consider environmental responsibility prior to printing.

External mitigants in 2023

Green incentive lending

Changes in EPC requirements have had an impact on the commercial lending sector. We have partnered with specific green focused lenders that offer incentives to clients where energy performance improvements are being made. We also work with lenders who offer discounted rates for ground up development schemes that are green focused and short term lenders that help support landlords where fast improvements are needed. Information on which lenders this applied to was communicated with the network via our digital systems.

Specialist lending for renewables

There is an ever increasing requirement for lending facilities in the renewable sector such as solar panels, ground source heat pumps, wind turbines and electric vehicles. As the costs continue to soar for businesses, this sector we feel will only go one way. Therefore, we have a collective focus on this area to ensure client delivery throughout the network. Information on which lenders this applied to was communicated with the network via our digital systems.

Future mitigants

Company vehicles

We intend to further our initiative to to make the majority of company vehicles either plugin hybrids or EVs. This will be considered when replacing or adding new vehicles to the fleet.

Solar panels

The Directors are currently reviewing options to add solar panels to the Optimum offices. This will significantly increase the percentage of renewables within our energy mix, substantially reducing our carbon footprint.



Carbon offsetting

Optimum ELITE has invested in two QAS approved carbon offsetting projects. The total carbon offset was 12,000 kgCO₂e, making the business carbon neutral.

Yorkshire & Humber tree planting

Tree planting is a great way to help sequester carbon emissions. Through photosynthesis trees absorb carbon dioxide to produce oxygen and wood. By ensuring that the trees planted are native broad leaf species this scheme helps to preserve the UK's environment and biodiversity. Planting takes place in school locations and other biodiversity sites. All trees are high quality cell grown 'whips' (year old saplings).

Kenya reforestation

As well as offsetting carbon emissions, this reforestation project in Kenya highlights the importance of having a great coverage of vegetation in the forests. Without, the springs and rivers dry up, soil erodes, wildlife emigrates which can lead to human-wildlife conflict. This can lead people to be displaced and homeless; also, animal species can become sparsely populated which can drive them to endangerment as the likelihood of reuniting the population is slim.

2024 employee target

The employee target to improve environmental protection is to reduce carbon emissions per employee per annum from the 2023 number of 1078 kgCO₂e to <900 kgCO₂e. We aim to achieve this through employee training in team meetings.

Conclusion

Optimum ELITE is proud of the work it has put in to reduce environmental impact across the business, as well as the support of chosen carbon offsetting schemes. In 2024, we are committed to furthering and improving on our already implemented initiatives whilst encouraging environmental responsibility both internally and externally.



Optimum **ELITE**
Promoting environmental sustainability