

Connected Voice

Environmental Policy

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1. Environmental Policy Statement

Connected Voice recognises that it has a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements. We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and to continue improving our environmental performance as an integral part of our business strategy and operational methods.

We are committed to achieving Net Zero by 2050. To this end, we will ensure we are compliant with all relevant environmental legislation and implement a process of continual improvement in reducing our environmental impact. We will proactively monitor our usage of consumables, water and energy as a key part of this commitment. Over the next two years, we commit to training our staff so we have a full understanding of the appropriate steps we can take to achieve Net Zero.

This Environmental Policy outlines the measures Connected Voice will take to reduce, reuse and recycle office waste and reduce energy consumption within the organisation:

Connected Voice will aim to do this by:

- Minimising the organisation's purchase and use of all consumables including water and energy
- Minimising waste produced in all areas of the organisation, reuse and recycle waste where possible and aim for waste-free processes
- Encouraging the use of sustainable travel options
- Monitoring our progress in doing these things and implementing action plans to achieve agreed targets
- Reviewing the results at the Connected Voice Management Group and publishing the results in our annual report
- Bringing up environmental issues with the landlord
- Communicating this policy to all staff and volunteers to ensure that each individual concerned understands the environmental impact of their work and associated activities

We recognise our workforce have a hybrid working approach, working from the office, from home and other resources and organisations in the community. Connected Voice will provide information and learning opportunities to equip staff to implement their own measures at home and to encourage the venues they work from to consider taking their own actions.

2. Policy implementation

All new staff will read this policy and have a session with a representative of the Climate Action Group as part of their induction.

Changes to this policy will be communicated to staff by email and in whole staff meetings.

The Connected Voice Climate Emergency group will develop action plans based on this policy for:

- Electricity consumption
- Water consumption
- Waste disposal
- Paper consumption

Action plans will assign named people and completion dates to each action.

The Connected Voice Climate Emergency group will meet regularly to review progress against these action plans.

Any new actions agreed will be communicated to staff by email and through signage, where appropriate. They will also be discussed in section team meetings.

Progress against action plans will be reported at whole staff meetings.

3. Waste Management

Connected Voice will apply the principles of the “waste hierarchy” in all of its processes and operations.

The waste hierarchy sets out, in order of priority, the waste management options that an organisation should consider as follows.

1. Prevent the waste being produced.
2. Reuse the waste.
3. Recycle the waste.
4. Recovery, e.g. energy recovery.
5. Disposal.

This “waste hierarchy” describes how effective some approaches to dealing with waste are when compared to others, principally that the prevention of the creation of waste in the first place is the best option and is more effective than recycling, while recycling is preferable to disposing of waste to landfill or incineration.

Therefore, Connected Voice will:

- cut down on the number of disposable or throwaway products used and adopt a policy of reuse wherever possible
- cut down on excess packaging and ensure that biodegradable packaging is used wherever possible
- improve its procurement systems by adopting a procurement approach where the organisation buys only what is needed and uses only sustainable sources
- purchase recycled paper and supplies wherever possible

- use durable products that last longer
- repair and refurbish broken or worn items where practicable
- ensure waste is disposed of according to the Connected Voice Waste Management Plan (see Appendix 1)

4. Purchasing

In addition to the considerations, of budget, availability and performance, Connected Voice will assess the impact the service or product would have on the environment. When considering replacing an item we will assess first whether a new item is needed by considering:

- opportunities to extend the life of the existing item or material
- meeting the operational need through a different means e.g. renting

When the purchase has been assessed as necessary, we will prioritise technology, products or services that:

- reduce consumption of natural resources or chemicals
- reduce waste eg through recycling or biodegradable packaging
- support a Circular Economy where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated.
- support biodiversity and healthy, resilient natural habitats and minimise exposure to substances which cause harm to people and the environment.
- support a diverse contractor base, prioritising local services including small, minority, and/or women-owned businesses.
- are independently certified as appropriate by a reputable third-party environmental and/or social product or service leadership standard.

When purchasing, Connected Voice will prioritise the following wherever possible:

- Products containing recycled materials
- Remanufactured toner cartridges
- Buying in bulk to reduce packaging waste
- Buying in returnable and refillable containers
- Second hand furniture and other office equipment
- Cleaning products which do not present a hazard to humans or the environment and are biodegradable
- Prioritising suppliers with proven sustainability actions

5. Energy and Water Consumption

Connected Voice is committed to reducing carbon emissions through efficient and responsible use of energy and water. We will monitor this within the constraints of shared meters within the building and implement any remedial actions as necessary.

To reduce energy and water consumption Connected Voice has implemented the following:

- Office lighting is LED
- SUDS drainage system
- Renewable energy photovoltaic (solar) panels on the roof
- BREEAM building – excellent rating – world’s first rating scheme for the built environment
- Lights automatically switched off in meeting rooms when not in use
- Heating system is A graded for energy efficiency
- Lighting and heating centrally controlled by building management to ensure responsible use of energy
- Photocopier is turned off at night and has a power down setting throughout the day
- Computers, monitors and printers are turned off at night and have a power down setting throughout the day when not in use
- Consideration of energy consumption when ordering new electrical equipment
- Zip tap that provides boiling water for individual cups of tea and coffee
- Taps are motion sensor so cannot be left running
- Plumbing is well maintained to avoid leakage of water

6. Sustainability

To encourage sustainability Connected Voice has agreed, whilst still seeking value for money, to:

- Rent an office in a sustainable building
- Use Fairtrade tea and coffee for staff and meetings
- Donate desks and furniture to recycling furniture service
- Ordering supplies of stationery from a local supplier
- Use community venues for meetings
- Use community caterers and locally sourced food if possible

7. Transport

Connected Voice encourages staff to:

- Cycle to work if possible and offers a Bike to Work salary sacrifice scheme as a benefit to staff
- Keep car journeys to a minimum and to walk or use public transport whenever possible
- Cluster client visits in the same geographic area to reduce car mileage
- Car share for meetings wherever possible
- Use larger taxis to transport staff to meetings instead of using several cars
- Use public transport for longer journeys
- Pay cycle mileage for essential travel during working hours

- Encourage visitors to use public transport by including information on the website about bus stations and metro stations
- Book venues for events near to public transport links

To support staff, Connected Voice will provide:

- Cycle racks and showers for staff to encourage cycling to work
- A mileage allowance for employees who cycle to meetings
- A discounted corporate metro ticket to encourage employees to use metro system instead of car

8. Leadership and Influence

Connected Voice as an infrastructure organisation has a part to play in influencing the voluntary and community sector to be more environmentally aware. This will include:

- Raising awareness of climate emergency and how it will affect local voluntary and community organisations
- Providing model environmental policies and advice on action plans
- Providing skill building sessions
- Producing a list of achievable actions
- Including statements about using public transport, bicycles and walking for participants at Connected Voice events
- Engaging with public sector partners, environmental voluntary sector organisations and universities to use their expertise for the benefit of members
- Being a voice for the sector and feeding into future plans for new developments and transport plans across Newcastle, Gateshead and other regions
- Training staff so they can share suggestions on environmental sustainability with the organisations we work with.
- Our Chief Executive representing the VCSE sector on the Newcastle Net Zero Task Force

9. One Strawberry Lane Office

Connected Voice has made a conscious decision to move to a sustainable building, near to all public transport routes and to have cycling provision to deliver its services.

The Connected Voice office at One Strawberry Lane has the following:

- Renewable energy photovoltaic (solar) panels on the roof
- Energy performance - A rated EPC certificate
- Designed for green commute – emphasis on multi model transport. Car park has electric charging points
- Storage for bikes, showers and changing facilities to encourage cycle to work

- Core of inside of building is lined with a living wall
- BREEAM building – excellent rating – world’s first rating scheme for the built environment
- LED lighting
- SUDS drainage system
- Smart Score building certification – first building in the region to commit to Smart Score
- Wired Score – Platinum rating – highest accreditation available

In addition to this Connect Voice will:

- Maintain and service all office machinery to optimum operating efficiency and longevity
- Ensure the landlord maintains the building to optimum efficiency and sustainability as agreed in our service agreement.

Appendix 1: Waste Management Plan

We will aim to follow the waste hierarchy where possible.



Our main resource materials coming into Connected Voice are:

- Paper
- Cardboard
- Food
- Packaging
- Single use cups
- Office furniture
- ICT equipment

Prevention of Waste

Type of waste	Activity	Action	Executor
Paper	Printing for events, meetings, promotion	Consider how to share papers and promotion of events digitally rather than as hard copies	Staff arranging or presenting at meetings and events.
Cardboard	Cardboard		
Food	Catering at events	When catering for events agree the latest time an order can be	Member of CV staff responsible for arranging catering at the event.

		adjusted with the caterer to reduce any over ordering of food. Prior to the event arrangements will be in place to donate and transport any food/refreshment where it will be used eg hostel, foodbank.	
Packaging			
Single use cups	Staff bringing a takeaway beverage back to the office	Reusable insulated cups have been purchased for staff to loan if they don't have their own reusable cup. Posters and emails remind staff to borrow or bringing their reusable cup.	Staff purchasing drinks away from the office, Climate Change Group for reminder notices and emails
Office furniture			
ICT Equipment			
Hazardous waste (batteries, bulbs)	Replacing spent batteries	Inform Office manager so items are taken to recycling point	

Disposal of Waste and Recycling

Where disposal is unavoidable, the following details the streams of waste generated by Connected Voice and how each are collected.

Type of waste	Action	Emptying frequency	Executor
Municipal waste (cans, plastic)	Plastic is washed and pressed together. Cans are rinsed and recycled in the mixed recycling bin Soft plastics have a separate bin and are taken to supermarket for recycling	3 times a week	Contractual supplier
Food waste	Waste is disposed of in designated	3 times a week	Contractual supplier

	food waste bin provided by the contractual supplier		
Paper and cardboard, including packaging	Paper is disposed of in the mixed recycling bin	3 times a week	Contractual supplier
Coffee cups	These can be collected separately and disposed of in nearby cafes and restaurants ¹ .	As needed	Connected Voice staff
Confidential paper waste	Dispose of this in the confidential waste bin Quicksilver is a company that collects and shreds this	Once a month	Contractual supplier
Hazardous waste (batteries, bulbs)	Give to the Office Manager who will take to a disposal bin to be recycled	As needed	Owner and Office Manager
Print cartridges	Give to the Office Manager who will take to a disposal bin to be recycled		
Glass waste	Take home to recycle in glass bin	As needed	Owner and Green Champion
Old furniture	Donate to other charities if possible Dispose of through an outside agency that recycles it appropriately.	As needed	Connected Voice
Electrical waste (including keyboards, mouse and small electrical items)	Donate to other charities if possible One Strawberry Lane will collect waste for the full building then	As needed	One Strawberry Lane and external recycling company

	external recycling company will collect.		
IT waste (computers etc.)	Donate to other charities if possible External recycling company will collect IT waste	As needed	External company

Connected Voice has 7 bins:

- 1 general waste bin for all household waste that cannot be recycled
- 2 mixed recycling bins
- 1 coffee cup recycling bin
- 1 confidential paper waste bin
- 1 Food waste bin
- 1 Soft plastics bin

Bins will be checked weekly by the Climate Change Group for compliance.