

Sustainability in practice: The journey to Net Zero

2 years ago



Colin Donnelly, Health, Safety & Environmental Manager at ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions, discusses the company's journey towards Net Zero, and how organisations can implement more sustainable operations.

Businesses play a crucial role in the government's goal of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050, whether they are large multinational corporations or independent SMEs.

Around one in three of the UK's largest businesses are leading the way in the world's transition to a low carbon economy, committing to align with UK government ambitions and eliminate their contribution to climate change by 2050^[1].

Many companies understand the issues around decarbonisation and recognise the need for the transition to Net Zero. However, there is a significant gap in turning this general understanding of the issues into tangible plans and action.

For example, small businesses have struggled with how to implement sustainability into their operations. A survey^[2] found that although 99% of small firms recognise the importance of sustainability, three quarters of them (77%) don't know how to measure their carbon emissions and need support.

The recent 'Mission Zero'^[3] independent review of Net Zero makes recommendations for transitioning to a thriving green economy, and suggests it could be a lucrative economic opportunity.

But hundreds of businesses consulted in the review made it clear that guidance and help is needed in areas such as skills, energy efficiency, support for SMEs, and providing a tax environment that stimulates investment.

Shifting focus

Instead of seeing the transition to Net Zero as an exercise which requires sacrifice, ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions has used this initiative as a driver to innovate and boost business while lowering operations costs.

What's more, there is also a potential competitive advantage to be gained through pioneering Net Zero plans, although this can be challenging in cases where sustainability endeavours are not integrated with a corporate strategy.

We have increased our focus on sustainability in recent years, and subsequently were included in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index Europe in recognition of our progress and our ambitions.

This is due to our combination of focused initiatives and continuous improvements, as well as ensuring sustainability is closely aligned to, and is a positive enabler of our Group strategic objectives. Essentially, our business strategy is also our sustainability strategy.

As a Group, we align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which provide the global community with a roadmap for how to combat global challenges related to economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Our increased focus on sustainable buildings is a growth driver and we invest in a sustainable product offering, with accompanying transparency and verification documentation.

Collaborative working is key, and ensuring the entire organisation buys into the concept of a more sustainable future – everyone from those in the factory, to office workers and senior management.

So, how are we implementing more sustainable operations at our production sites?

Implementing change

We have recently created a significant reduction in carbon emissions at our Lisburn site through a variety of methods, including advances in packaging, lighting and welfare facilities.

By introducing the new Eco pallet wrap, we have reduced packaging CO2 emissions by 56%, resulting in 115 fewer trees that need to be planted to offset CO2 per year. What's more, the product offers a cost reduction of 39%.

We also implemented a lighting upgrade, removing existing lighting within both steel and timber door production areas, installing high efficiency 150-Watt LED lighting. These LED lights are made operational via motion sensors omitting the use of switches on walls.

Also included is a control system which enables the user to dim the brightness as required on individual lights, offering an annual reduction in energy consumption of 54,332 kWh.

One of our ageing compressors has been changed out with a replacement unit providing efficient new technology. With its new air pump system the new compressor will improve efficiency within the factory by approximately 94,500 kWh annually and a subsequent reduction in air leaks due to this technological advancement.

A project was also identified to upgrade existing welfare facilities within the Lisburn site, to implement sensor technology within the sanitaryware to help reduce unnecessary water usage.

New touchless sensor water taps and cisterns were installed to replace push taps and traditional push cistern technology, offering an annual water saving of 624m².

There is still a long way to go, but by introducing these kinds of innovations at production sites we can implement more sustainable operations, and help propel our journey towards Net Zero.

For more information on ASSA ABLOY Opening Solutions, please visit <https://bit.ly/3gGLU3R>.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/third-of-uks-biggest-companies-commit-to-net-zero>

[2] BT Survey with Small Business Britain –
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/calling-all-small-businesses-to-lead-the-charge-to-net-zero>

[3]
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128689/mission-zero-independent-review.pdf