

Written evidence submitted by the Cabinet Office, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Whole Life Carbon Assessment - Briefing Note for Environmental Audit Committee

What percentage of public projects have undertaken whole life carbon assessments?

Key points

- As Lord Callanan explained to the Committee on 19 January 2022, data is not currently held centrally on the percentage of public projects that have undertaken whole life carbon (WLC) assessments since 2020.
- There are however further examples¹ from across departments & ALBs where they have either introduced or are piloting an approach to WLC assessments including: The Environment Agency, the MoJ's New Prisons programme and DfE's school specification.
- The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) is leading work across government departments to develop and implement a common set of metrics to better understand construction performance across government and support organisations in improving delivery performance, including on whole life carbon.
- **The focus of this work is currently on attaining high quality and consistent WLC reporting in the run up to the requirement for public projects² disclosure of embodied carbon emissions by 2025 as part of the COP26 pledge.**

Background & Progress

- Through the '**Transforming Infrastructure Performance: Roadmap to 2030**' we are embedding outcomes for net zero, sustainability and environmental enhancement. This includes developing and implementing methodologies to measure whole life carbon performance for public projects and major built assets.
- The **Construction Playbook** requires government departments and their ALBs to have regard for the cross-government construction metrics, including for whole life carbon, which are under development by the IPA working with the Government Construction Board. This includes **all contracting authorities setting out strategies and plans for achieving net zero GHG emissions by or ahead of 2050.**
- Across the government, **inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of existing WLC standards** have been identified as a priority to address [a complexity that the EAC has also noted], as this could also impede the UK's decarbonisation ambitions.
- The IPA is working collaboratively with departments & ALBs, as well as with industry experts on existing workstreams to address these inconsistencies. This includes through a **cross-government Sustainability Metrics Working Group (SMWG)**, which will support the **sharing of best practice and lessons learned from current approach to WLC reporting.**
- The group also recognises the importance of ensuring that any **approach being developed can be tested by the construction industry**; Some departments are also working with some Tier 1 suppliers to identify how **the disparity in WLC assessment maturity level across the supply chain can be addressed** - especially evident with Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

¹ Lord Callanan mentioned some of the big infrastructure projects that are already undertaking assessments; EAC should also note other works ongoing across government.

² For the COP26 disclosure requirement, the scope of the term 'public projects' mentioned at the COP26 pledge is to be defined as part of the requirement under IPA's involvement with the IDDI working groups (For more information on IDDI, visit <https://www.unido.org/IDDI>).

- The IPA is due to discuss its plan of approach for WLC reporting with the Industrial Deep Decarbonisation Initiative's (IDDI) technical working groups. This will help ensure broader **alignment and to draw on the expertise from the international community to support consistency in disclosing the necessary metrics.**

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