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# Environmental and Social Responsibility Policy

**CGO Ecology Limited**  
**Bournemouth**

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**Contents**

- 1. Introduction 3
  - 1.1. Background 3
  - 1.2. Survey rationale 3
- 2. Environmental sustainability 3
  - 2.1. Overview 3
  - 2.2. Transport use 3
  - 2.3. Office and equipment 4
  - 2.4. Professional practices 5
  - 2.5. Carbon offsetting 5
  - 2.6. ISO 14001 compliance 6
- 3. Social Responsibility 6
  - 3.1. Overview 6
  - 3.2. Recruitment and training 6
  - 3.3. Working conditions 7
  - 3.4. Continued personal development 8
- 4. Voluntary activities and charity 8
  - 4.1. Volunteering 8
  - 4.2. Charitable giving 8

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Environmental responsibility**

- 1.1.1. This section is a statement of our business ethic and approach towards sustainable use of the environment. It describes the structured ways in which we aim to reduce and minimise our impacts on biodiversity and the environment. It also sets out general attitudes that we try to instil in our staff, associates, and those we do business with.

## **1.2. Social responsibility**

Our social responsibility policy sets out our approach towards our own staff and associates, and others we deal with; as well as any influence that we may have on people or society in general. In addition to individuals' legal rights, we believe that being valued and satisfied in the working environment is an effective incentive for productivity.

## **1.3. Voluntary activities and charity**

- 1.3.1. This describes our aspirations towards voluntary work and charitable giving. It sets out our targets for the amount of time given each year towards voluntary activities, and the amount of money we aim donate to charitable causes each year.

# **2. Environmental sustainability**

## **2.1. Overview**

- 2.1.1. Environmental protection is the core business area of CGO Ecology Ltd, and environmental sustainability is therefore of paramount importance to us. Aside from this practical reality, environmental sustainability is central to our ethical stance, and it is this that drives our business ethic. We believe that leading by example is the most effective means of promoting these views.
- 2.1.2. As far as possible, we operate sustainable practices, and encourage sustainable attitudes among our staff, associates and subcontractors. Given that our business is mainly concerned with advising and supporting other organisations, we also strive to influence their working practices in a positive way too.
- 2.1.3. Our policy focuses on an awareness of our carbon footprint, and that of our suppliers; and a constant mindfulness of how our activities can be made less damaging. It is our policy to calculate our carbon footprint annually, and offset it in an appropriate way.
- 2.1.4. The sections below summarise our policies for achieving energy efficiency, reduced carbon footprint, biodiversity and ecological protection, and general sustainability.

## **2.2. Transport use**

- 2.2.1. Ecological consultancy involves a lot of fieldwork and meetings requiring travel. This travel can be to and from remote places, and may need to occur many times. Often, travel is necessary to places that are not accessible by public transport, and at times that are not practical to use public transport. Nevertheless, we are acutely aware that our raison d'être requires us to put environmental issues foremost. Hence, to minimise our carbon emissions through transport, we observe the following guidelines:
- 2.2.2. Walking and cycling are promoted as much as possible; for example to local sites, within urban areas, or other short journeys. Time pressures are frequently cited as disincentives, but better planning can often free up time.

- 2.2.3. Public transport should always be used in preference to driving, if it is practical to do so. This is especially so in urban areas or other areas with good public transport links. There are many benefits to using public transport; not just the reduced carbon footprint, but the time it frees up for alternative activities such as work, emails, reading, phone-calls, or simply relaxation (especially important before and after a long day).
- 2.2.4. If a motor vehicle must be used, the possibility of lift-sharing and other carbon savings should be used. Journey times should be minimised by careful planning, and fuel-efficient driving style.
- 2.2.5. Choice of vehicle is important. Engine size should be modest, and fuel efficiency good. Four-wheel drive/off-road vehicles should only be used where necessary. Most 'off-road' scenarios are manageable in a typical saloon car.
- 2.2.6. Air travel is only acceptable if there is no practical public transport alternative within the time available. It is acknowledged that the price of air travel can often significantly undercut public transport, even within Britain; but we must be mindful of the very high carbon footprint it entails.
- 2.2.7. Public transport aside, air travel can potentially be more acceptable than driving long distances, and a pragmatic approach could justifiably opt for air travel in preference to driving alone.
- 2.2.8. A special car journey from the south of England to Scotland, with one passenger, can have a heavier carbon footprint than flying. Even using realistic calculations of per-passenger carbon cost of flying, the difference between flying and driving alone can be relatively small. Depending on one's viewpoint, one may also subscribe to the view that a plane is flying anyway, regardless of passenger load.
- 2.2.9. Minimisation of carbon cost should be the primary goal. Carbon offsetting should then be used to compensate the impacts of our activities, even those that cannot be minimised further. Various offsetting schemes are available on the internet, and the annual carbon footprint appraisal should enable calculation of the amount to offset.

### **2.3. Office and equipment**

- 2.3.1. A significant volume of our time is spent in office-based activities, usually on a computer, and often connected to the internet, on a telephone, or in a meeting. All of these activities use energy, especially office heating, running computers and other hardware, and using the internet (including the 'hidden' energy usage of ISPs and search engines). These activities should be carried out mindfully, with energy usage incorporated into carbon footprint and offsetting calculations.
- 2.3.2. Energy suppliers should be ethical where possible.
- 2.3.3. Office heating should be used efficiently.
- 2.3.4. Home working is preferred unless it would result in increased energy consumption.
- 2.3.5. Electrical devices and lights in offices should be switched off when not in use.
- 2.3.6. Energy-saving light bulbs and other efficient devices should be used where possible.
- 2.3.7. Rechargeable batteries should be used wherever possible.
- 2.3.8. Equipment and stationery suppliers should be selected with ethical and sustainability issues in mind.
- 2.3.9. Refuse and recyclables should be separated and disposed of accordingly, using all recycling facilities available locally. Local authority policy on recycling should not be used as a cap on aspirational goals for recycling.

## **2.4. Professional practices**

- 2.4.1. Our business is to advise and assist others in matters of biodiversity, ecology and environmental protection. Typically we are in a position of influence over other organisations and projects, and can have a tangible impact on many aspects of sustainability. Awareness and mindfulness of the following issues are essential, as is a degree of pragmatism.
- 2.4.2. The most sustainable ecological and environmental solution should always be advised, even if it involves a significantly greater cost to the client. The client can make their own decision, but they should be presented with the facts and knowledge to do so.
- 2.4.3. The most sustainable solution might be difficult to ascertain, and nature conservation guidelines might be counter-intuitive in terms of sustainability (for example the sheer level of effort deemed necessary for EPS mitigation).
- 2.4.4. Local surveyors and other operatives should be used wherever possible. If long-distance transport is necessary, local accommodation should be sought rather than making long daily journeys. Overnight living expenses costs can often be less than mileage and travel time costs combined anyway.
- 2.4.5. The number of capture visits in a mitigation/translocation project should be the minimum that can reasonably be expected to deplete a population to undetectable levels.
- 2.4.6. Exclusion fencing should be avoided if it will cause disproportionate habitat damage (e.g. installation in a narrow/linear site), and if it is not justifiable in terms of carbon footprint. Exclusion fencing involves a large volume of materials and energy. The wildlife benefits should be weighed up and used to inform decision-making, even if this appears to conflict with statutory advice. Common sense should always prevail.
- 2.4.7. It is the ecologist's duty to advise the most ethical, sustainable and least ecologically-damaging course of action when advising a client. Planning consent issued by a local authority does not mean that the proposed course of action is acceptable. Modifications and pragmatic advice should be offered if appropriate to do so.
- 2.4.8. 'Making the best of a bad job' is sometimes the unfortunate duty of an ecological consultant, especially when brought in late to a process. Nevertheless, if issues are tackled sensitively, clients can usually be persuaded to adopt practices that exceed their legal duties.
- 2.4.9. Biosecurity measures should be employed where appropriate. Invasive species and diseases are seen as one of the biggest threats to biodiversity in the future.
- 2.4.10. Continued professional development (CPD) of staff should include awareness of germane ecological, environmental and sustainability issues.

## **2.5. Carbon offsetting**

- 2.5.1. CGO Ecology attempts to mitigate its carbon footprint wherever possible, to minimise our carbon impact. However, we believe that offsetting is still necessary to compensate our remaining carbon footprint. It is the only realistic way of achieving a meaningful level of sustainability; and by following what we believe to be best practice, it sets a good example to others.
- 2.5.2. Once a year, the carbon footprint of our activities is calculated, and the necessary financial offset made via third-party providers.
- 2.5.3. Our carbon footprint in 2012 was XX tonnes. We aim to reduce our per-staff-member footprint in 2013, and year on year thereafter.

## **2.6. ISO 14001 compliance**

- 2.6.1. We have an environmental management system (EMS) that we believe is compliant with the international standard on sustainable business and organisational activity – ISO 14001. Its objectives and processes are implemented via this Environmental and Social Responsibility Policy, and through our ongoing staff training and development.
- 2.6.2. We measure our progress by setting targets on annual carbon footprint, and monitoring factors that are measurable for individual staff members and for the business as a whole.
- 2.6.3. We constantly re-evaluate our EMS, and strive to make progress against the objectives set out in this policy, with the aim of continual improvement in the future. Our ethos is to exceed expectations, rather than to meet minimum expectations.

## **3. Social responsibility**

### **3.1. Overview**

- 3.1.1. In addition to the minimum legal obligations that employers have towards their employees, volunteers and others, CGO Ecology Ltd aims to provide an enjoyable, satisfying and rewarding work environment for all.
- 3.1.2. We believe that people are most productive when they are happy; and in the work environment they are happiest when they are busy and productive, and feel valued and respected. When people are happy and productive, teamwork is most fruitful, work rates are highest, and staff are at their most cost-efficient to the business.
- 3.1.3. All of these things point towards it being a logical necessity that employers value and reward their employees and others who work with them. The best-valued employees logically have the best work ethic.
- 3.1.4. We aim to achieve a productive work ethic by valuing our employees, volunteers and others we work with; and by offering them a useful and rewarding role.
- 3.1.5. Working in ecological consultancy is intrinsically more satisfying than many other sectors in the employment market. People working in the ecological and environmental disciplines often relish being employed to do something that in many cases has been a lifelong passion. This does not mean that people should be undervalued or underpaid, however, even though many ecologists also carry out a lot of unpaid work.
- 3.1.6. Whilst ecological professionals often regard themselves as lucky - to have something that used to be considered a hobby for their job - it is essential to remember that when employed, one is working for someone else, and one should be suitably rewarded and valued.

### **3.2. Recruitment and training**

- 3.2.1. When opportunities arise for us to recruit paid staff, associates, volunteers or others, we use the appropriate channels to do so. This may be by word of mouth or personal recommendation if we believe this to be the best approach to find the right candidate(s).
- 3.2.2. We will normally circulate details of employment opportunities widely though, using a variety of electronic and print media.
- 3.2.3. We aim for our selection procedures to be fair and open, and in keeping with Government policy and UK and European law on equal opportunities on ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, physical and mental ability, social status, and any other considerations.

- 3.2.4. Our full-time and part-time employed staff members are fully briefed on the nature of the work, and the necessity for flexible working arrangements, prior to their employment. This is an essential part of the recruitment and interview process.
- 3.2.5. The nature of our work often requires 'antisocial' hours (evenings, early mornings and weekends), and it is not to everyone's taste. When recruiting, we consider whether a person is suited to the work on offer, and whether they will fit into the working and team environments.
- 3.2.6. Staff are given induction and training at the point of employment appropriate to their role, and continuing training *ad hoc* thereafter. Whilst initial induction and training cannot preempt all future duties, it must be at least adequate for performing the duties anticipated in the short to medium term.

### **3.3. Working conditions**

- 3.3.1. We endeavour to ensure that our employees, associates and volunteers are content and satisfied in the work we ask them to do. Most of our work takes place during daylight hours, and much of it within a 'normal' working day, but some takes places at times that can potentially interrupt one's personal life. Much of our work is field-based (i.e. outdoors), and can involve work in all weathers, and on difficult terrain in remote locations.
- 3.3.2. It is a necessary prerequisite that our employees are willing to work antisocial hours, within reason; and we make this clear at the recruitment stage. In fact, our employees tend to value the flexibility that we give them in return for working antisocial hours. For example, we often give employees the freedom to choose which days they work, provided they achieve a fixed volume of work within a fixed period of time.
- 3.3.3. Where staff are employed on the payroll, their contract of employment states the hours they are expected to work, and their overtime and holiday entitlements. Notionally, we work to an eight-hour day, and a forty-hour week, though the number of hours generally has to be flexible. Overtime is usually paid at normal hourly rate, but is sometimes negotiable. Paid holiday entitlement is 25 days per year, or *pro rata* equivalent.
- 3.3.4. For subcontracted associates, the rate we pay depends on the type of work (often a specialist discipline), the need, the timing, and the availability of practitioners. The rate is agreed prior to their employment. Subcontractor rates are typically much higher than payroll staff, as the work is usually very short-term, with no security, no superannuation, and no holiday pay.
- 3.3.5. We generally do not provide office space for our employees, and they tend to be based from home. Travel time to and from jobs that are not their normal place of work (i.e. anywhere other than their home) is therefore included in the time worked by employees. We pay accommodation and subsistence allowances for payroll employees in the event that they are working away from home all day, overnight, or at antisocial times.
- 3.3.6. We currently have Employer's Liability insurance cover up to the value of £10,000,000, and public liability insurance up to the value of £5,000,000.
- 3.3.7. We are currently unable to support non-contributory pension schemes for our employees. The short-term or subcontract nature of contracts often precludes it as a possibility anyway.
- 3.3.8. When our employees are working in the field or away from home, we endeavour to ensure that welfare facilities are available whenever possible. Often this is the responsibility of our client, as we are typically consultants drafted in to assist them. Sometimes it is not possible to provide welfare facilities, however; such as when working in the countryside for extended periods of time.
- 3.3.9. CGO Ecology Ltd has a Health and Safety Policy in place, including lone working arrangements using a buddy system, and generic risk assessments to be tailored to different scenarios.

- 3.3.10. We ensure that our staff, associates and volunteers are fully briefed in our health and safety arrangements. This is especially important in field settings, and especially when working alone.
- 3.3.11. Finally, we try to cultivate good working relationships among our employees, and reward their efforts, by occasional courtesies such as staff outings or dinners.

#### **3.4. Continued personal development**

- 3.4.1. We aim to provide our staff with ongoing training and continued personal development (CPD) opportunities appropriate to their role. We believe that staff should be allowed, and encouraged, to develop their skill sets during the course of their employment.

### **4. Voluntary activities and charity**

#### **4.1. Volunteering**

- 4.1.1. CGO Ecology Ltd encourages its staff to partake in voluntary activities that support environmentally and socially-responsible goals. It does this by providing flexible working arrangements and pay incentives.
- 4.1.2. The nature of these voluntary activities is not defined by the company, and is ultimately at the discretion of staff, although employees of ecological consultancies are naturally drawn to ecological and wildlife conservation activities.
- 4.1.3. Voluntary activities that we are typically involved in include: field-based biological recording schemes, habitat conservation tasks, committee business, fund-raising, and administrative duties for NGOs and voluntary organisations.
- 4.1.4. As a company, we aim to provide voluntary staff time, on a cost-free basis, to the equivalent of at least 10% of the total staff days worked by the company. For example, if the company worked 500 days in 2012, we would aim to supply 50 of these cost-free to voluntary schemes.
- 4.1.5. In 2012, we have supplied 40 days of voluntary staff time, which exceeds 10% of the total time worked.
- 4.1.6. As a business, we also aim to support voluntary schemes, and the career development of individuals, by offering voluntary placements, work experience, and shadowing opportunities.

#### **4.2. Charitable giving**

- 4.2.1. It is a central ethical goal of CGO Ecology to give a portion of company profits to charitable causes each year. We aim to give 10% of our profits and Director's salary to charity each year.
- 4.2.2. In the last three years, we have achieved an average donation of over £2000 of per year.
- 4.2.3. The recipients were a range of charities spanning the following sectors: wildlife conservation, carbon-offsetting, sustainable development, progressive political and peace campaigning, poverty-alleviation, micro-loaning, disaster-relief, medical, famine and war-zone aid, and other humanitarian charities.
- 4.2.4. Selection of the benefiting organisations is at the discretion of the company Director.