

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT MATURITY REVIEW



Sustainable Procurement Action Plan

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Aberystwyth University Sustainable Procurement Action Plan, 2023

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1.0 Background

The Sustainable Procurement (SP) Action Plan draws on the findings of the WRAP Cymru Sustainable Procurement Maturity review (carried on 26 October 2023). This action plan provides recommended actions relevant to the findings of the SPMR review across the six key themes and related to the sub-themes (building blocks) for sustainable procurement (see Table 1). The actions and milestones for getting started are prioritised over the medium (e.g.12 years) and long term (e.g. 2-3 years). However, it is recommended that the University also adopts these actions according to their own priorities; resource availability, capability, wider procurement actions, and budget in order to ensure the best opportunity for take-up and progress within the SPMR framework.

THEME	ASPECTS
POLICY & STRATEGY	PS1 -Organisation commitments, policy, and strategy PS2 - Procurement policy and strategy
LEADERSHIP & CULTURE	LC1 - Leadership & influence LC2 - Organisational culture LC3 - Communications
CAPABILITIES	C1 - Knowledge C2 - Capacity
PROCESS	P1 - Pre-tender process P2 - Tender strategy development P3 - Procurement templates & tools P4 - Category, contract & supplier management
SUPPLY CHAIN	SC1 - Market dialogue & development SC2 - Forward planning
MEASUREMENT & REPORTING	MR1 - Measurement MR2 - Reporting

Table 1 Sustainable Procurement Maturity Review themes and aspects

2.0 Sustainable procurement

The University has a Sustainability Policy that references the impact procurement actions have on broader policy objectives, including, but not limited to, increasing resilience to climate change risks, and considering environmental and energy usage implications of procurement and development activities at an early stage as well as fully integrating lifecycle information into purchasing decisions to achieve the highest possible standards.

The University has not yet produced a sustainable procurement strategy but has undertaken a Scope 3 carbon footprint analysis of its procurement activities which will help prioritise areas for action within the new sustainable procurement strategy (due 2024). This carbon analysis is particularly important given the evidence presented in the review report

and the impact of procurement on the full carbon footprint (Scopes 1, 2 and 3).

Procurement is heavily referenced in the Towards Net Zero Carbon 203-0 strategy although current actions are limited to Scope 3 reporting areas (waste, staff travel etc). Procurement impacts are currently excluded due to lack of information and guidance about data collection and metrics beyond the simple spend-based analysis.

Section 3 highlights the circular and sustainable procurement actions that will contribute to reducing the University's overall carbon footprint through its procurement activities and to progressing from Level 1 (Foundation) towards a potential score of 49% (borderline Established) over the next few years.

Where possible, delivering these specific sustainable procurement actions should be combined with, and seen as part of, the University's existing Procurement Enhancement Plan.

3.0 Action areas

The following sustainable procurement actions recommendations are intended to help Aberystwyth University fulfil existing actions within the short to medium term i.e. next 1-2 years. The key action areas and aspects are summarised below and include the main barriers and key recommendations identified by the SPMR review¹.

3.1 Linking priorities to procurement

SPMR aspects addressed from the review:

Barrier	SPMR recommendation ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Current procurement approach contributes to a lack of strategic role of procurement and consistent sustainable procurement approach across purchasing, utilisation and disposal of goods, works and services in different departments.	PS1, PS2, LC1, LC2, LC3

The current structure is in the process of transitioning to a more coordinated category management approach. This will help once guidance is made available to the University on how to move beyond spend-based carbon reporting. However, the current lack of a sustainable procurement (SP) strategy that provides a clear framework for how procurement will deliver on the wider University policy objectives it has been linked to, is the key barrier that needs to be addressed. The University is in the process of addressing this gap and plans to finalise a sustainable procurement strategy from summer 2024 onwards. The main actions identified from the SPMR that relate to this activity are outlined below.

3.1.1 ACTIONS

1. The sustainable procurement strategy should include key performance indicators and a reporting framework for decarbonising procurement and engaging with key suppliers, in line with the environmental management plan objective. This action will address some of the areas for improvement identified in the recommendations in

¹ WRAP Cymru – Sustainable Procurement Maturity Review: Aberystwyth University, November 2023

Theme 5 (Supply chain – S1) and Theme 6 (Measurement – M1 and M2). Ideally the delivery of the new SP strategy should supersede the Procurement Enhancement Plan or being directly related to it.

2. The University Corporate Policy should be updated to reflect the role of the new SP strategy and to reflect the impacts that the University Sustainability policy recognises through procurement. The Corporate Procurement Policy currently states:

The University ensures, whenever practicable and proportionate, that due consideration is given as part of bid evaluations to the sustainable elements of purchasing decisions generally.

This statement, along with mandated use of the Sustainability Risk Assessment (for relevant threshold projects), could be strengthened.

3. Communicate the sustainable procurement strategy to all relevant staff and departments, category managers and procurement-related personnel so they are aware of, and bought into, the targets, actions, roles, responsibilities and associated timelines.

Developing relevant, measurable and robust metrics is an enabling action alongside the adoption of the new sustainable procurement strategy. The metrics, although important in reporting outcomes, should not delay the development or adoption of the SP strategy.

3.2 Timely reporting of SP outcomes

SPMR aspects addressed from the review:

Barrier	SPMR recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of sustainable key performance indicators (including performance) improvement embedded in tenders and linked to organisational sustainability and carbon reduction objectives 	P1, P2, S1, M1, M2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of robust monitoring and reporting framework in contract management (linked to awareness /incentivisation of roles and responsibilities) 	LC1, LC3, P1, P2, M1, M2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in calculating tangible benefits 	P1, P2, P3, M1, M2

Encouraging smarter contract management and performance improvement is fundamental to normalising sustainable procurement practices within day-to-day operations given the organisational structure of the University. This is linked directly to the ongoing transformation towards category management that the University has initiated development and the roll-out of proportionate suite KPIs with relevant contracts and operational activities.

3.2.1 ACTIONS

1. Three key actions around KPIs will help address the lack of transparency in understanding impacts of procurement:
 - a. define operational targets and measures that are outcome based and linked to the University’s strategic objectives and targets through a procurement strategy;
 - b. ensure relevant carbon and environmental KPIs are included in a proportionate manner within relevant tenders alongside developing guidance to aid measuring, monitoring, and reporting; and,

- c. close the gap between core procurement function within the Finance team and site/department contract managers responsibilities to ensure contract monitoring and timely reporting.
2. Combine metrics and KPIs with bespoke sustainability requirements and criteria for regular inclusion alongside consideration of specific criteria on case-by-case basis. Utilising a criteria suite and related KPIs could be rolled out initially through the category management model. A simple common SP criteria suite could be constructed based on existing criteria from publicly available sources (e.g. [EU GPP criteria suite](#), [UK Government Buying Standards](#), and online criteria wizards e.g. Irish Government² etc) that can be used as core requirements for key sustainability aspects for tenders above a chosen value, e.g. waste reduction and packaging reduction and recyclability, whilst more circular criteria relating to recycled content and reuse strategies (closing materials and product loops) could be used for high value, high profile contracts (see for example the Dutch circular criteria suite³).
 3. Further guidance on indicators and reporting through the *National TOMs (social value) Framework – Wales* should also be considered as responsibilities under the Social partnership and Strategic procurement (Wales) Bill become clear⁴.

3.3 Embedding sustainable procurement in practice

SPMR aspects addressed from the review:

Barrier	SPMR recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consistent and proportionate SP criteria within tenders and tender evaluation process 	P2, P3, S1, S2, M1, M2, M3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of whole life costing embedded in procurement decisions and practice 	PS1, C1, C3, P1, P3, M1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low potential of the University’s purchasing power to drive markets and contribute to Scope 3 carbon reduction due to current lack of signalling future direction and pace of change to the market 	LC1, LC2, P3, SC1, S3

Action 3.2.1.2 (see above Section 3.2.1) addresses the first barrier in part but also requires a process that ensures criteria and KPIs are being considered and used in a consistent and proportionate way. The University should also ensure, where possible, that procurement processes and budgetary mechanisms within the University facilitate (rather act as a barrier to) a more consistent approach to sustainable procurement and support wider actions around sustainable development across the University departments and estate.

3.3.1 ACTIONS

1. Consistency in procurement practices across the key categories, service areas and departments will accelerate delivery of carbon and sustainability goals. Developing a robust, proportionate assessment approach (for projects within different financial

² Cardiff Council reference the use of the [Irish Government criteria wizard](#) for example.

³ [Dutch MVI tool](#)

⁴ <https://socialvalueportal.com/resources/guide/measurement-implementation/welsh-national-toms-guidance/>

levels above the £50k threshold) in the procurement pre-tender stage will help identify the SP impacts and potential benefits for relevant tenders and help address all 3 barriers noted. This links to the need for a clear, simple monitoring and reporting framework to develop meaningful impact data based on KPI reporting (see 3.4 below).

2. Develop a pre-tender process that procurement and budget holders / project commissioners are required to follow to reflect key policies and commitments. Where relevant (e.g. on higher value tenders above the £50k threshold) this could require the mandated use of the WG sustainability risk assessment. Pre-tender assessment should ensure consideration of carbon reduction potential in relevant tender exercises at earliest opportunity along with wider SP requirements for example, the need for an Equality Impact Assessment, delivery of the organisations' Wellbeing objectives etc. This should be based on, or integrated with, the Gateway Review Form used in the Category Management process.
3. Communicating the contract register/forward contract plan should be done in sufficient detail to identify and plan resource requirements and enable lead in time for sustainability opportunities to be identified for high priority procurement exercises. This should be based on, or integrated with, the Gateway Review Form used in the Category Management process that already exists.
4. Developing a proportionate approach to whole life costing within tenders (e.g. above the £250k threshold over contract lifetime), for example in large-scale construction and estates management projects will provide evidence of impacts and cost-benefits over the full product/purchase lifetime, i.e. impacts of costs and maintenance in utilisation as well as costs of alternative (potentially more circular) disposal options at end of life. Simple tools (e.g. spreadsheet-based assessments used by Scottish Government) are available alongside more complex WLC tools that are more appropriate for use and larger more complex tender exercises⁵.

3.4 Building capacity

SPMR aspects addressed from the review:

Barrier	SPMR recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness around sustainability and impacts across the organisation activities 	LC1, LC2, LC3, C1, C2, S1, M1, M3

Sustainability and sustainable procurement training for key staff was identified in the review as one of the weakest areas. Developing capabilities to meet minimum standards now will address this barrier and assist in enabling future procurement to deliver broader sustainable development outcomes.

3.4.1 ACTIONS

1. Specific training for staff on sustainable procurement linked to existing carbon literacy and general sustainability training should be identified and applied. Sustainable procurement training should be systematically rolled out across all key stakeholders carbon literacy, social value, and whole life costing (where relevant), alongside the core

⁵ See for example <https://sustainableprocurementtools.scot/>

procurement training (e.g. process, project management, equality and diversity, modern slavery awareness, etc.).

2. Develop and maintain a formal knowledge and/or skills training matrix to ensure the wider procurement resource has the most up to date and relevant knowledge base with respect to procurement and sustainability issues. This would enable topic experts (e.g. estate managers, waste, transport, energy) to be identified more easily across the University departments and sites rather than duplicating effort where resources are limited.
3. Collaborative action already takes place (e.g. Ceredigion Procurement Group, EAUC etc). However, the review noted that market engagement, in particular, had stalled post-COVID. Recognising the potential for sustainability gains and cost savings along with supporting local suppliers in engaging with the University procurement process will help ensure the University supply chain is encouraged to innovate in pursuit of more sustainable procurement outcomes.

3.5 Leading by example

SPMR aspects addressed from the review:

Barrier	SPMR recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transparent organisational commitment and awareness to sustainable procurement impacts at departmental level within the University 	LC1, LC2, LC3, C1, C2, M2

High level organisational commitment and desire to lead by example is evident within the University’s published commitments. The review identified that this commitment needs to be translated into practice, therefore action is required to embed sustainability within the University’s operations and procurement practices at a practical level.

3.5.1 ACTIONS

1. Communicating the role of procurement to operational staff internally, and as prioritised in the environmental plan, to key suppliers externally, requires ‘cultural’ and behavioural change within the University staff, students and supply chain particularly within the budget holder/operational/technical managers currently initiating procurement activity. Communication should also include reporting and celebrating successes identified through more sustainable procurement activities.
2. Embedding a clear and simple monitoring and reporting framework into procurement across the departments and sites as part of the new sustainable procurement strategy will enable real impact reduction data to be used in monitoring progress against reduction objectives (see 3.2 above).

4.0 Summary

Timescales have not been assigned to actions as these will require consultation within Aberystwyth University on how to prioritise actions within available time and resources - which is outside the scope of this assignment. However, all actions identified are assumed to be easily implemented and consistent with the sustainability commitments already adopted

by the University. Subject to resource constraints these could all be implemented within the next 18-24 months.

