

Green Communities



Introduction

Community groups can play a vital role in raising awareness of climate change, and helping people understand the role they can play in reducing carbon emissions.

One way community groups can help people recognise the impact they have on the climate is by conducting a community-led carbon footprint survey. This survey will reveal what actions are needed for people in your community to reduce their impact on the environment. Importantly, it will bring your community together behind a common cause.

- **What is a carbon footprint?**
- **What is a community carbon footprint?**
- **Why measure your community's carbon footprint?**
- **How to get the most out of measuring your community carbon footprint.**

What is a carbon footprint?

A carbon footprint is the measurement of carbon dioxide attributed to the actions of an individual, community, or business.

The Energy Saving Trust's Green Communities carbon footprint tool can be used to estimate your community's **direct emissions** from energy used in the home and transport over a period of one year in tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

You can find out more about **how to calculate your own direct household emissions** by visiting the government-approved **Act on CO₂ Calculator** (<http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk/carboncalc/html/faqs.aspx>)

Indirect emissions, produced as a result of the goods and services you consume, water used, waste generated and emissions from government activity (road building, military services etc) are not included in this calculation. That's because it's quite a complex process to measure them accurately. Do remember, though, to consider taking action within your



community to reduce waste and encourage water efficiency as both will help to reduce emissions.

What is a community carbon footprint?

You can use **the Green Communities carbon footprint** online tool to measure your community's carbon emissions.

Originally developed by the **East of England Development Agency**, the tool uses the government approved **Act On CO₂** model for measuring carbon dioxide emissions. It assesses your community's CO₂ emissions from your responses to a number of questions on:

- How you heat your homes
- How energy efficient the homes in your community are
- What electrical appliances are used in your homes
- Your community's travel footprint

You can also estimate **emissions from businesses and public buildings** in the Green Communities footprint tool: your local school, library or community hall, street-lighting, tennis courts etc.

If actual meter readings are available and entered into the footprint tool the CO₂ emission profile is significantly more accurate.

The Green Communities tool will give you:

- An **estimate of your community's carbon emissions**
- **Carbon footprinting forms** you can print and hand out – or fill in **online**
- A **summary of your community carbon footprint** and actions to improve it for everyone who takes part
- **Reports** which will help you identify ways to reduce the carbon emissions of your group

Why measure your community's carbon footprint?

If you decided to lose weight, you'd get on the scales first. In the same way, if you want to reduce the CO₂ emissions caused by your community, you need first to measure the amount you are generating and where those emissions are coming from. Then you'll know where to focus your efforts to reduce your carbon emissions.

It would be difficult to understand the impact of any reductions you make if you don't measure your starting point.



Your community group

Different groups may be defined as “communities”. You may be a community because you live in the same area. Or you may share membership of a particular group, a sports club for example. Measuring your community carbon footprint is something you can do, alongside other activities, to help your group become “greener”.

Getting people involved

Measuring your carbon emissions and providing advice on how to reduce them can help get a wide range of people involved in your group. It might help you kick start or prioritise similar environmental projects.

Other reasons to measure your community carbon footprint are:

- The exercise is a great way to **raise awareness of climate change**
- Conducting the survey is a good reason for **contacting and communicating with all members of your community**. Online and paper carbon footprints mean **everyone can take part**
- It's a good way to estimate and then work towards a more **accurate picture of your community's carbon emissions**
- It provides households with a **summary of how much carbon they are using** and an **action plan for reducing emissions**
- You'll be able to use the information to **set a benchmark to measure your improvement** against
- It's a fantastic opportunity to host “carbon footprint drop-in surgeries” and feedback events to **bring people together and inspire action**

There will be **challenges** if you do decide to measure your community carbon footprint.

These are:

- You need **a group of three to five** people to share the work involved
- The process **needs commitment** from community leaders who can encourage people to take part
- To turn awareness into action, you may need to hold **a number of different events** to engage the community
- You need **at least 10% of households in your community to take part** in order to get an accurate estimation of carbon emissions
- **Follow up surveys** may be needed: people rarely update their footprint online

How to get the most out of measuring your community carbon footprint

The Energy Saving Trust provides an online community carbon footprint tool. Depending on how much work you want to do, it can give you a quick estimate of your community's carbon footprint or if you are able to put in detailed information, a more accurate one.



This guide will show you how to measure your community carbon footprint in order to get an accurate picture, what is involved at each stage and what you can expect to get out of the process. We hope that this guide will help you to get the best results out of the carbon calculator.

Step one: Getting started

- **People**

To make real progress you will need a team to share the work.

Ideally you need at least three to five people. Sort out clear roles and make sure no-one is burdened with more work than they can easily handle.

You need:

- **Leader(s)** to bring the group together and keep the project to an approximate timeline
- **Well-connected people** who are linked in to local networks or bodies who can build up support for the project
- **Friendly people** who are happy to talk to members of your community and persuade them to take part
- **People who like dealing with details** and who don't mind administrative tasks – setting up your community profile (see step five), managing communication, uploading paper carbon footprint forms, and managing the budget
- **Analytical people** who will be able to help you understand the results

- **Planning**

You will need to survey **at least 10% of all households and businesses** and any buildings within your community that use energy and are not in commercial or private ownership. The bigger the sample size, the more reliable the results.

Communities have in the past managed to get 40% of households to take part in their survey. Judge for yourself how many you can expect to take part. It will, of course, depend on the size and nature of your community. **Think about how many people you want to survey and how** – online or door-knocking, or a mixture of both. This should give you some indication of the work involved.

Step two: Involving your local community

Local businesses and groups within your community

Some communities have found that their community carbon footprint survey has been more successful with the support of local businesses and groups, such as faith groups and sports clubs. These groups can contribute skills and time, and resources such as printing. They can also host events, and will be able to reach out directly to specific sections of the community. Get these groups involved from the beginning.



Schools, colleges and universities

Students at local secondary schools and colleges of further or higher education might have an interest in this project, especially those studying environmental or social sciences. They could help you with a door-to-door survey. That's what the community of Ashton Hayes in Cheshire did when they conducted the first community carbon footprinting survey in the UK.

Step three: Promoting and publicising what you're doing

About three quarters of your work should focus on promoting what you are doing. Good marketing is key to a successful survey, defined as at least a 10% response rate.

Ask anyone who has experience of or a flair for marketing, advertising, PR or sales, to lead on the publicity and promotion of your community carbon footprint survey. Everyone can help raise awareness though: word of mouth is often the best form of promotion.

Launch event

Once you have got a team of volunteers, a public launch event is a good way to engage your community. People can find out more about your ideas, ask questions and decide if they want to get involved, or even better, lend a hand!

Here are three things to think about when organising a launch event:

- 1. Venue:** Choose somewhere that people know and like and that's easily accessible.
- 2. Time:** Make it convenient and try not to clash with other events or popular TV shows. Evenings or weekends are generally best.
- 3. Food and drink:** Having snacks and drinks on offer can make your event relaxed, sociable and show that taking action on climate change brings people together.

Here are more general **top tips for promoting your project:**

- **Posters:** make them eye catching. Put them in key locations around the local area, eg shops, post office, doctor's surgery, bus stops, notice boards
- **Flyers:** putting information through letterboxes is very effective. Use a scaled- down version of your posters to save time
- **Publicity:** pitch articles to your local press, or to any appropriate newsletters
- **Advertise:** put an advert in your community newsletter
- **Events:** use local events to spread the news, e.g. fetes, open days, seasonal activities
- **Websites:** get a notice on local websites, ideally on the front page near the top
- **Emails:** does anyone have email addresses of people in your community? Can they pass them on or send a message for you?
- **Research:** create a positive message that helps people see that if they act, they gain something and so it is worth getting involved. For top tips on how best to communicate the need to act on climate change download this guide:
www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/RulesOfTheGame.pdf



Step four: Conducting the survey

4.1. Make sure you get a representative sample.

Some people will probably already be sympathetic to what you are trying to do and can help get momentum going. But you need to try and engage **everyone** in your community for two reasons:

- You need a sample that reflects **the diversity of your group** and isn't biased towards those with greener lifestyles.
- You will create greater change by **reaching out to people who don't know much about climate change**, explaining what they can do to reduce their household carbon emissions.

4.2. Going door to door

Knocking on every door in your community is a highly effective tactic. It virtually guarantees you a good response rate.

You have two options:

4.2.1. **Minimum effort:** Ask people to **go online to complete their footprint survey** and only hand out paper forms when people do not have access to the internet at home. Leave people with a flyer or leaflet telling them to go online to complete their footprint survey. If they're not in, post this through their letter box. Make sure you ask people to return paper forms to a specific address by a clear deadline. Keep a record of which people weren't home so you can go back to them at a later date.

4.2.2. **Maximum effort:** Give **each person you meet a paper carbon footprint form** and a leaflet explaining what you are doing and why they should get involved. It should give details of when you will return to collect the form, and encourage people to go online instead of using the form.

There are lots of ways you can **adapt these two processes to suit your available time, budget and people power**. You might, for example, want to have a computer on a stall at meetings or events so that people can complete the online form. Building up a sense of momentum and meeting deadlines will give people a sense that something is happening and may encourage them to get involved.

Some communities have knocked on the doors of small sections of their community at a time, leaving a two-hour window between dropping off a paper form and returning to collect it. Others have covered their whole community in one go and left a week or two before collecting the forms.



4.3. Encouraging people to take part

During the collection process you can **sit down with anyone who wants your help** to complete their carbon footprint.

Offer something for everyone who takes part, or a big prize (or prizes) to a randomly selected winner. Choose something which is environmentally friendly and that you think your target audience would want.

4.4. Gathering data – Online or paper?

You can either **get people to enter data into the carbon footprint tool online** or you can **do it for them** when they have filled out a form. It takes about 10 to 15 minutes to upload a paper form.

The online method tends to get more **accurate results** because people can use it at home, with their utility bills and other information at hand. The paper form option is needed though because **some people will not be able to complete their footprint online** (they might not have a computer or an internet connection) and others may be unwilling to use an online tool. Both the online system and paper version allow participants to use real or estimated values (in pounds sterling or Kilowatt Hours kWh) for their energy use and vehicle's mileage. Estimated values (for example, an annual electricity bill of £300) are pretty accurate, but the **most** accurate results come from real data.

4.5. Uploading forms

When you set up your community online (see step five for how to do this), people can join and ask to become a member of your community carbon footprint management team by ticking a box in the registration process, or on their homepage. Once you accept them, they can **enter paper carbon footprint forms on behalf of members**. They just need to go to the "Manage paper footprints" link under Communities on their home page. You can upload a number of different footprints here and print out an individual report for each person.

4.6. Data protection

When people join your community online or via a paper carbon footprint form they will be asked to agree to **some terms and conditions**.

It's **your responsibility to protect the personal data of participants** and to securely store and process paper carbon footprint forms. It's a good idea to shred paper copies once they're uploaded.

The community management team will be able to send messages to the entire group, or individuals selected by name. **You will not be able to see details of people's carbon footprints** that have been entered online.



Some **people will ask to remain anonymous** and this is fine: these people can still have their carbon footprint added to the total footprint for your community. It's a good idea, however, to ask if they're happy for you to keep a separate record of who they are. That way you can provide them with a summary of their footprint and their suggested actions and include them in any future surveys.

Step five: Setting up your community profile

When you register your community on the footprint tool you need to **create a page to tell people who you are and what you are trying to do**, as well as **a profile outlining the size and make up of your community**. Consider getting someone with marketing skills such as good writing and with an eye for design to do that so that the page comes to life. Either get copy agreed with the whole group or delegate this to someone you can trust.

To set up your community profile, you need someone who likes dealing with lots of information, such as how many houses there are in your community, and how many are detached or terraced, old or modern etc. You don't have to know all the answers to these questions but the more you know, the more you get out at the end of the process.

How to create a new community online

1. **Visit [www. greencommunitiescc.org.uk](http://www.greencommunitiescc.org.uk).**
2. **Enter your contact details to log in** and you will be taken to a screen where you can choose to join a community, or to create a new community.
3. **You will be asked to name your new community**, add a brief description of what you want to achieve and details about why you are setting it up. Define the community type: is your community based on shared interests, geographical location or a work group?
4. **Enter the number and type of houses there are in your community**. If you don't know, there's an option to input this information later. You can just put in the number of houses, not the type of housing and the footprint tool will use national averages to fill in the information. This will set up the assumed footprint for your community.
5. You will arrive at your "**personal homepage**". This is your access point to your personal carbon footprint, and all the community management tools.
6. Click on "Manage this community" and then on the Assets or Businesses tabs in the middle of the page to **add information on communal buildings**, sports clubs, and other fixtures or **businesses within the community**. You will need to know buildings' overall size in metres squared, whether offices have air conditioning, and what retail stores' area of business are. Do a small survey of businesses and community buildings before you sit down at the computer so that you've got accurate facts at your fingertips.



7. Next, you get the opportunity to **fill in your own personal footprint**, or return to this later.
8. Your community is now live and you can **edit your community's poster page**. This is the bit that people looking to join a community can see when they use the Green Communities search function so you need to make it appealing and accurate. You can add a picture or logo, use some descriptive text and set up a specific web address for your community.

Step six: Using the information effectively

The carbon footprint tool can provide you with three reports which can be used in different ways.

1. **Summary details:** showing how many members you have and your total carbon footprint. You can post these findings on your online community poster page.

2. **Detailed community report:** a breakdown of your community carbon footprint based on your specific data and using Energy Saving Trust and Carbon Trust resources.

The report will give you specific information about how your community builds up its carbon footprint. You'll be able to discover specifics, such as how many people in your community have inadequate loft insulation, or cavity walls that have not been insulated, or that you have a very high percentage of people with old boilers, or few energy saving light bulbs.

The report contains guidance to help you understand what your results are telling you.

You can use the report to:

- **Circulate** to all community members who took part in the survey, **summarising the report in an email**.
- **Discuss environmental sustainability** with your community carbon footprint team.
- **Conduct a feedback meeting**, inviting all the people who took part and **giving a presentation of report findings**. This will allow everyone to have an ongoing sense of collective ownership and responsibility for making things happen in future and provide the best platform to discuss what to do next.

3. **Data from your community in an excel spreadsheet:** useful for groups who would rather analyse the data on their own.

You can use the report to:

- **Pass raw data on to another organisation.**



Step seven: Following up

The footprint tool records progress made over time so it can be a useful means of charting your progress. Saving energy is, after all, an ongoing process. It's a good idea to stay in touch with people to remind them of this.

Ideas for how you can do this are:

1. **Send a reminder email** to community members to encourage them to update their footprints annually.
 2. **Repeat the survey**, and report back to the community, **after one or two years**, even if the results are not completely positive.
 3. **Conduct a second survey** at around the same time of year as the first so the estimations of bills and other information are comparable.
 4. **Make sure you have the latest paper carbon footprinting form**. This is likely to change after 12 months, and there will be updates to the government Act On CO₂ system over time.
 5. **Compare second surveys with original ones**. The system records every single change in data.
4. **Do a follow-up survey involving businesses, schools and community buildings** if you didn't get to involve them as much as you wanted to in the main survey of households.

Step eight: What to do if your community carbon footprint increases

Remember that your carbon footprint can go up or down. If you repeat the survey and it goes up, don't panic.

You may have **underestimated emissions** in your original carbon footprint and now have more accurate information. Also, your overall community carbon footprint is influenced by everyone's individual footprint. If the first people to complete their carbon footprints are all very environmentally aware, theirs might be lower than average. This can make your overall carbon footprint look low when, in fact, it isn't.

If your footprint has increased, use the breakdown of emissions to find out why your community's carbon footprint has increased. It might be because of more travel emissions, electricity use or perhaps be because it has been a cold winter. Once you've done that, decide what actions to take to get back on track.



Finding support

You don't have to go it alone!

The Green Communities team can provide you with advice and support and attend your events. Visit the Green Communities website at: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/community or give the team a ring on 0844 848 0077.

Your **local authority** may also be able to provide support. They might put you in touch with a home energy conservation officer, a climate change officer or a community support team.

