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Environmental and Social Responsibility Policy

CGO Ecology Limited
Bournemouth
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Version: 7 November 2014

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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. We aim to reduce our per-staff-member footprint each year.

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 employers' minimum legal obligations 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 members 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 payroll 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 print and electronic media, including social 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 members 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 pre-empt all future duties, it must be at least adequate for performing the duties anticipated in the short to medium term.

3.3. Remuneration and 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 team-working practicalities allow it, and they achieve an acceptable volume of work commensurate with the period worked.
- 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, owing to the nature of the work. Overtime is usually paid at normal hourly rate, but is sometimes negotiable, and may be offered at a higher rate for night work or antisocial hours.
- 3.3.4. Paid holiday entitlement is 24 days per year, or *pro rata* equivalent at two days per calendar month. Statutory holidays are paid in addition to this. We are amenable to employee requests for unpaid leave if they have no remaining paid leave, provided that cover can be found.
- 3.3.5. We believe that the remuneration we offer our employees is at the upper end of the typical wage brackets for respective roles. By paying staff well, and making them feel valued, we believe they will perform well, and have greater job satisfaction. We also mean to lead by example as employers in the ecological consultancy sector. We pay well over the UK minimum wages for all our employees, and well above the minimum living wage for any area of the country.
- 3.3.6. For subcontracted associates, the hourly or day rate we pay depends on the type and amount of work. Rates are typically higher for specialist disciplines, particularly if cover is required at short notice or under difficult circumstances. Other factors affecting subcontractor rates are market demand and antisocial hours. Rates are agreed prior to employment. They may vary over time if work becomes more regular than initially anticipated. Subcontractor rates are typically much higher than payroll staff, as the work is usually short-term or sporadic, without security, superannuation, holiday or sick pay.
- 3.3.7. We generally do not provide office space for our employees, and they tend to be based from home. Travel time to and from jobs is generally 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 overnight, and sometimes for antisocial hours. Whether we pay subcontractors for accommodation, travel and subsistence depends on the project(s) they are working on.

- 3.3.8. Health and safety is of the utmost importance to us. One of our staff is trained and designated as the health and safety lead, and several of our staff are ROLO-trained and CSCS-certificated.
- 3.3.9. We provide all payroll staff with personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to the range of tasks performed. We expect subcontractors to provide their own PPE and other equipment, but can sometimes supply or lend equipment and clothing to subcontractors.
- 3.3.10. 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.
- 3.3.11. We offer non-contributory pension schemes to our permanent payroll employees, but not to seasonal staff. The short-term or subcontract nature of contracts generally precludes this.
- 3.3.12. 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 the client. Sometimes it is not possible to provide welfare facilities, however; such as when working or travelling on foot in the countryside.
- 3.3.13. 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.
- 3.3.14. Risk assessments must be considered well and executed before any activity. They are not a box-ticking exercise; they are an effective way of making staff mindful of dangers, and minimising the risk.
- 3.3.15. We operate a RIDDOR system and accident/near-miss book.
- 3.3.16. We use COSHH documentation for any chemicals or dangerous substances used.
- 3.3.17. We ensure that our staff, associates and volunteers are fully briefed in our health and safety arrangements. This is especially important in field settings, working with power tools, or working alone.
- 3.3.18. Finally, we try to cultivate good working relationships among our employees, by offering occasional courtesies such as social outings, lunch or dinner paid for by the company.

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.
- 3.4.2. Our employees are typically provided with at least one external training opportunity per year, as well as attendance at conferences, workshops and meetings. The choice of CPD opportunity is usually down to individual employees, provided it fits their current or potential role.
- 3.4.3. Professional memberships required for execution of the job, or to maintain professional reputation, are encouraged. In some cases these may be paid for by the company. We aim to support employees in their quest for betterment, for example through application to higher grades of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) membership.
- 3.4.4. We aim to support employees in the training, mentoring and application processes needed for acquiring protected species licences.
- 3.4.5. We also typically pay for periodic renewal of existing qualifications such as First Aid at Work, Personal Track Safety (PTS) and hand-tool certificates.

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. The nature of the ecology and nature conservation sector is that work is often seasonal, and we sometimes have spare capacity that can be put to use in voluntary work.
- 4.1.5. In 2014, we supplied over 100 days of voluntary staff time, exceeding 10% of the total time worked. The cost to the company is notionally around £10,000.
- 4.1.6. Being a small to medium-sized enterprise (SME), we are mindful of the potential economic risk of donating staff time voluntarily, but we attach great importance to this aspect of our work.
- 4.1.7. Furthermore, we aim to support the career development of non-employee individuals who may approach us, by offering voluntary placements, work experience, and shadowing opportunities where possible.

4.2. Charitable giving

- 4.2.1. It is a central ethical goal of CGO Ecology to give a significant portion of company profits to charitable causes each year. We aim to give at least 10% of our profits and Director's salary combined to charity each year.
- 4.2.2. In 2014, we donated over £7000 to a range of charitable NGOs and projects around the world. In addition, our volunteering of staff time was equivalent to an additional in-kind donation of around £10,000.
- 4.2.3. The recipients of our donations span a wide range of good causes:
 - wildlife conservation
 - ecological research
 - education, training and capacity-building
 - ethical and sustainable tourism
 - carbon-offsetting schemes
 - sustainable development
 - progressive social and political movements
 - peace campaigning
 - poverty-alleviation
 - micro-loaning
 - medical and famine aid
 - disaster relief and war-zone aid
 - other humanitarian causes.
- 4.2.4. The recipients are chosen by the Director, who is open to suggestions.