Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

In Step 4, you will compile all the components of your plan developed in Step 3 into a cohesive, actionable report and finalise with senior colleagues. Focus on ensuring that ownership of each action is clearly defined and that resources are allocated appropriately. By this point, if you have followed the governance and engagement recommendations from earlier steps, key roles and responsibilities should already be taking shape and relevant staff will have some understanding and buy-in.

It is up to you as to how best to hold meetings with relevant internal stakeholders to review, finalise, and agree on these areas of responsibility. While you can do this as a group, it will likely be important to hold one-to-ones with action owners to get direct agreement and confirmation. This process helps ensure clarity on who is accountable for which actions, making it easier to drive progress and monitor implementation. This document will provide advice on how to prepare for and organise those meetings, to ensure you get what you need from each.

1. Organising Meetings with Colleagues

An effective meeting is key to securing agreement and commitment from your colleagues or senior staff. Here's a guide to organising these discussions:

Preparation:
Before the meeting, ensure that each participant receives a clear, concise summary of the priorities relevant to their area and how climate action fits with and supports existing work. This should be no more than a few key bullet points, and very easy to understand.

a. **Structured Agenda:**
   Use a structured agenda to ensure the meeting stays focused and productive and only raise items for which they are responsible, to keep it as efficient as possible. It could follow this format:
   i. Overview of the climate action planning process so far
   ii. Presentation of the plan's priorities, as relevant to their area of responsibility.
   iii. Proposed actions for their department, and discussion of roles and responsibilities.
   iv. Action items: who will do what after the meeting, and by when.

b. **Clear Objectives:**
Identify what decisions you need from each stakeholder and give them a clear ask. This could be one or more of the following:
    - Confirmation of the wording of actions and agreement to include in final plan.
    - Suggestions for additional actions.
    - An assessment of available funding or resources.
    - Identification of any existing work or ongoing projects that align with the proposed actions.
    - Insights into work happening in other organisations that could contribute to the objectives.

2. Sign-off Process

Before your plan can be put into action, final approval is essential. The sign-off process may vary based on your organisation's structure and governance. Here are some common scenarios:

- **Executive Approval:**
  This might be as simple as obtaining the green light from your chief executive or another senior leader.
- **Steering Group or Committee Consensus:**
  Other organisations may require consensus from a steering group, executive committee, or elected officials.
- **Public Consultation:**
  In some cases, organisations may opt to involve the public through consultation or stakeholder engagement. Gathering external feedback can provide valuable insights and buy-in from the wider community.
- **Peer Review:**
  It may be beneficial to share key parts of your climate action plan with an organisation similar in size, structure or that occupies a similar sector. For example, sharing your risk register or action plan with a peer can ensure that you share lessons on the form and content of your plan, improving clarity and accuracy, checking for obvious gaps and hopefully raising ambition.
- **Third Party Verification (Mitigation):**
  You may wish to verify your emissions results with a third party such as CPD, see Step 4 of Net Zero NI for more detail on this.

Usually, the sign-off process will involve a combination of the above. It may also take some time to pass through these processes so give yourself plenty of time and plan for potential delays.