

BUSINESS SERVICES SECTOR HAS A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

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The Business Services Association is a policy group for major companies providing outsourced services to companies, public bodies, local authorities and government departments and agencies. The combined annual turnover of BSA's 19 member companies in the United Kingdom is around 45 billion euros. Among the wide range of services that its members offer, the most widely-used is high quality facilities management.

The rapid ascent of environmental issues up the political agenda over the course of

the last 18 months has influenced a raft of new proposals and initiatives at European, national and local levels of government. The result has been a more inward looking approach by key stakeholders across all sectors of industry, asking what role they can play in tackling climate change.

**THERE IS ONLY SO
MUCH SERVICE
PROVIDERS CAN DO**

There is a need for an increased awareness of the role that the business services providers can play in enhancing the sustainability of buildings and how the business services sector, given the right incentives, has a vital part to play in efforts to become more energy efficient.

BSA members have a track record of taking a proactive approach to tackling those issues that come under the broad banner of Corporate Responsibility (CR). This includes the promotion of sustainable service-based solutions and providing services that not only take into consideration environmental issues but also welcome opportunities to promote them. BSA's work in this area predates the current focus on the environment and climate change. In January 2005, long before Britain's Conservative Party championed the issue or Sir Nicolas Stern produced his ground-breaking report, BSA launched a CR Code of Practice in response to a challenge by UK Government minister Stephen Timms MP. All 19 BSA member companies are signatories to the Code, clarifying their commitment to promoting CR in their business. In the first part of 2007, BSA, with strategic partners Deloitte, will be undertaking a survey of its members' CR policies in line with this Code. The findings will hopefully show how BSA companies are taking a proactive approach to promoting the CR agenda and demonstrate the role that the business services sector has to play in this area.

Although companies in the business services sector are more than willing to play a role in driving up energy efficiency and driving down carbon emissions, practical problems remain. There is a need to understand the commercial realities that underpin the way in which outsourced services operate. Government, whether it is at national or European level, often calls for business to take a more proactive and environmentally friendly approach, yet there

is only so much service providers can do. A high quality, cost-driven service delivery which also focuses on the client's needs can make it difficult to achieve or justify a higher-than-normal environmental standard. As a result, we believe it is essential for policy-makers to understand that when it comes to reducing emissions and promoting environmentally friendly practice, the client must understand the extra cost involved and cater for this when budgeting. Future proposals should take this into account and provide incentives, economic or otherwise.

THE BUSINESS SERVICES SECTOR HAS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE TO PLAY IN ADDRESSING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

This problem extends to more specific issues at an operational level. Sufficient attention needs to be given to the vital contribution that effective facilities management (FM) services can provide to a building's lifespan, reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency. The affordability of sustainable design must be taken into account when budgeting is considered on the tender of a FM contract. Using certain materials and designing buildings in a specific manner in order to achieve the most sustainable design possible can result in higher costs. If these costs are not factored into the bid process then ultimately sustainability will not be seen as an important factor in the maintenance of that building. Cost constraints will reduce the incentive to use more sustainable (and therefore expensive) materials and could

lead to a greater inclination to use cheaper (and therefore less sustainable) materials. There is also a need for any procuring authority in the public sector to understand that contractors are often more than willing to provide environmentally friendly building services and facilities at best value; factoring in sustainable features to a bid is not simply an exercise for the private sector to increase its profit margins.

There is a need for a change in attitude on the part of those groups involved in each stage of building procurement. From the drawing up of the building specification through to administering and managing design and construction, FM expertise needs to ensure that the integration of facilities has a decisive effect of a building's sustainability. This requires a move away from the traditional scenario which sees a new building simply being handed over to a facilities management contractor without any prior consultation. Instead, the procuring body should provide a sustainable FM brief to architects and construction groups. Increased involvement at all stages would also mean better understanding of the impact of the design on long-term maintenance and is likely to improve understanding of how the building is designed to work.

The business services sector has a significant role to play in addressing the environmental issues that we all face and BSA members strongly believe that this role needs to be recognised. Our members also believe that policy makers and governments need to understand the commercial sensitivities involved. Working together to emphasise how effective and well-funded FM can add to a building's environmental credentials and deliver greater energy efficiency returns, the business services sector plays a leading part in tackling climate change and in helping to provide services that allow other sectors to contribute, too.