

Case Study: Ordnance Survey

Company Background

Ordnance Survey is the national mapping agency for Great Britain, responsible for creating and updating the definitive map of England, Scotland and Wales. It offers a wide range of products, from traditional paper maps to digital data products. As a Trading Fund, it has responsibility for its own finances and planning, within a business plan approved by Ministers. There are 1,473 staff working at the head office in Southampton and across a national network of regional field offices.


Sustainability Achievements


In looking at the three core components of sustainability, Ordnance Survey have succeeded in minimising the environmental impacts of its operations and core business and contributed to local employment. However, what is most noticeable about Ordnance Survey is their social achievements and how they appear to be sustaining themselves as an organisation, through many people-orientated policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are designed to help and support the well-being, balanced and productive nature of its workforce and their interaction with the surrounding community.


“Ordnance Survey appears unique in its very progressive, transparent staff-driven approach to management.”


Assessor

Summary of Key Achievements

- Combined heat and power plant installed (with significant reductions in energy use and CO₂ emissions) 

- Comprehensive transport plan, with active initiatives to reducing car travel 

- Employee-focused staff policies, aimed at maintaining work/life balance 

- Local and National community-support and service schemes 

KEY



Leadership & Management



Economic Achievements



Social Achievements



Environmental Achievements

Environmental Achievements

In managing the impacts of its operations, one of the most significant achievements for Ordnance Survey has been the installation of a combined heat and power (CHP) plant at its office, generating energy for processes and heat for the building. With the remainder of energy requirements being supplied from renewable sources, the following have been achieved:

- Reduction of 250 tonnes CO₂ produced in 2004-05
- Energy savings of 4,679,020 KWh (44%)

In managing resource use and waste in the map-making process, Ordnance Survey have looked into their paper requirements and have changed the size of paper at the supply point which is sourced from sustainable forests in Northern Europe. They also ensure that waste map paper produced is recycled which together with the introduction of specific recycling points has led to reducing waste produced by 29% (343 tonnes) in 2004-05.

There is a very proactive transport plan and associated transport initiative. Firstly, the fleet of pool cars has been replaced with low CO₂ producing Ford Focus C-Max, which also have low fuel consumption. The organisation also has two Peugeot 106 electrically-powered cars for use in local journeys. To reduce car travel to and from work, there is a policy of reducing parking spaces aiming to reduce single car occupancy from 64% to 54%. A “Bike2Work” day encouraged 113 employees to cycle to the HQ, with 36% considering making it a permanent habit.

There is strong support and communication for the travel plan through:

- active communication on an internal internet
- Bicycle Users Group
- Discounted bus fares
- A car-sharing group
- An online discussion forum
- Staff questionnaires, with responses used to form new policies and initiatives

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Social Achievements

Ordnance Survey has a very proactive and positive approach to protecting and supporting the safety, health and well-being of its staff, in order to sustain its own productivity and longevity. There are proactive policies and procedures in relation to physical safety and an innovative programme to safeguard people's emotional security aimed at removing risks of bullying, stress and harassment.

To positively support the needs of a diverse workforce, there are many active initiatives, aimed at maintaining a work-life balance, including:

- Flexible working hours, with emphasis on "family-friendly" and home working
- On-site occupational health services
- A nursery service

Ordnance Survey have achieved Investors in People status and actively encourages career and personal development with all staff having development goals supported by a range of life-long learning resources, including an onsite library and education service.

In supporting the local community staff are granted one day's paid leave per year to get involved with voluntary activities in the community. There is a mentoring programme with Southampton school children. Ordnance Survey also sponsor local charities, such as Leukaemia Busters, donate computer equipment locally and provided a customised map for Southampton area midwives.

Nationally, Ordnance Survey launched a 'free maps for 11 year olds' initiative during 2002 where Year 7 pupils are offered a free Ordnance Survey map of their local area. So far over 2 million maps have been given away.

Further national initiatives include sponsorship of the Scout Associations Navigator Badge and the design and print of an outdoor education guide for the English Outdoor Council.



One of Ordnance Survey's electrically powered Peugeot 106 vehicles

Economic Achievements

As a Trading Fund, Ordnance Survey's procurement activity places best value for money, based on open and transparent competition, at the heart of its procurement policy. This includes ensuring that environmental and social responsibility issues are considered within the evaluation and spending process. A fair and ethical approach is paramount for both the organisation itself and its suppliers, which sometimes replaces short-term cost savings with long-term value.

Ordnance Survey contribution to the local economy is through its staff base, currently 1,024 of the 1,473 employees are from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Leadership and Management

In addition to the flexible working approach Ordnance Survey have a very transparent and staff-driven approach to management. Employee issues are addressed swiftly and there are many opportunities for employees to put forward their views.

In terms of managing Ordnance Survey commitment to environmental and social issues, there are very good monitoring systems in place, with a dedicated Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Officer, EMS manager and three members of the Corporate Social Responsibility Team.

In recognition of its contributions to society, Ordnance Survey's "free maps for 11 year olds" scheme recently won the Geographical Award from the Royal Geographical Society for providing outstanding non-commercial support for school pupils learning geography.

Public Sector Category

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