



**Humber HEY**  
Skills Partnership

Skills, Innovation and Sustainability

**SDF2 HEY LEP  
Joint Activities -  
TNA Work Project  
Closure Report**



**brook**  
corporate developments

## What We Were Engaged to Do

---

Brook Corporate Developments were engaged by the TEC Partnership, the lead partner of the DfE's Strategic Development Fund projects covering Hull and East Yorkshire and Greater Lincolnshire, to conduct Training Needs Analysis (TNA) with employers across Hull and East Yorkshire to better understand the specific skills needs relating to the issue they are coming up against in their ventures to reduce their Carbon Footprint.

Hull and East Yorkshire as a region has ambitions to achieve net zero by 2030.

The original target was to engage with 60 businesses to undertake a diagnostic (the TNA) to review where they are currently on their journey to reduce their carbon output. We would also look at general skills shortages but also what support going forward businesses actually were looking for.

## Process – How We Went About Achieving This

---

Initially Brook looked to engage with the Hull Growth Hub, LEP Relationship Managers and the Humber & East Yorkshire Manufacturer Network to see if there were any businesses that had already expressed any concerns about achieving a net zero position, or if we could be introduced to any organisations who would provide good insight in to the struggles faced.

Unfortunately, nothing really came of this.

We approached all existing client contacts we had in the Region, posted several articles on LinkedIn and other Social Media platforms to look to promote interest. We further engaged with funding organisations we work with who operate in the Region to promote awareness. We also devised an online questionnaire around the struggles business' faced in their quest for net zero. This captured contact details as well as brief issues they were facing. The plan being to then contact these businesses to undertake a TNA.

The next step was to trawl through various business directories to identify organisations of various size, location and sector and start to make calls. This is where we obtained the bulk of the businesses we engaged with and then completed a TNA with.

To lessen the impact on participating businesses the TNA's were conducted via MS Teams/Zoom or 'phone call. This was also a nod in the direction of keeping unnecessary travel down and emphasising the carbon reduction angle.

The Brook staff undertaking the TNA's have all worked on previous Low carbon Project and/or Skills Assessment Projects, so knew how to steer an engaging conversation and set the business representative at ease whilst teasing out the relevant information. This experience also enabled us to give the businesses the benefit of our previous learnings to point them in the right direction of what they needed to look at and how these actions could link in with their overall business plan. This provided engaging businesses with a 'take away' for agreeing to take part.

The TNA's were conducted in the format of a chat, so the business did not feel as though they were being asked a hundred questions.

The key areas covered were the main challenges the business are facing; to what extent do they use digital technology in their operations?; how importantly do they view carbon reduction in their business?; is carbon reduction seen as an opportunity or threat?; what are their drivers for reducing their carbon footprint?; what level of skills/knowledge around carbon reduction do they have within the business currently?; what barriers does the business have to reducing their carbon footprint?; what are their general skills needs?; to what extent have the business used external training providers and how successful was this and what awareness do they have of support available in the area?

## Issues Faced

---

The biggest issues faced were the general apathy from a number of businesses contacted. A number didn't see any urgency in looking at reducing their carbon footprint. Some mistakenly thought that as they were operating from rented properties they had no obligation and it was all on the landlord. Some simply said they were not interested.

When 'challenged' on this thinking, it became apparent that a number were not aware of either the regional target for attaining net zero or the wider UK/World targets.

A number of businesses had no comprehension of the depth of action required to actually achieve net zero.

It appears that there is a general lack of knowledge of what carbon reduction/Net Zero actually is or what it involves.

Some businesses spoken to actually thought that carbon reduction was simply a Government initiative and "doesn't the Government think small business have enough to do surviving and recovering from the effects of Covid?".

Faced with the above objections it is difficult to get them to take part in a TNA despite the promise that areas identified could be used to influence future support provided.

It is fair to say that this was not the outlook of all businesses engaged with.

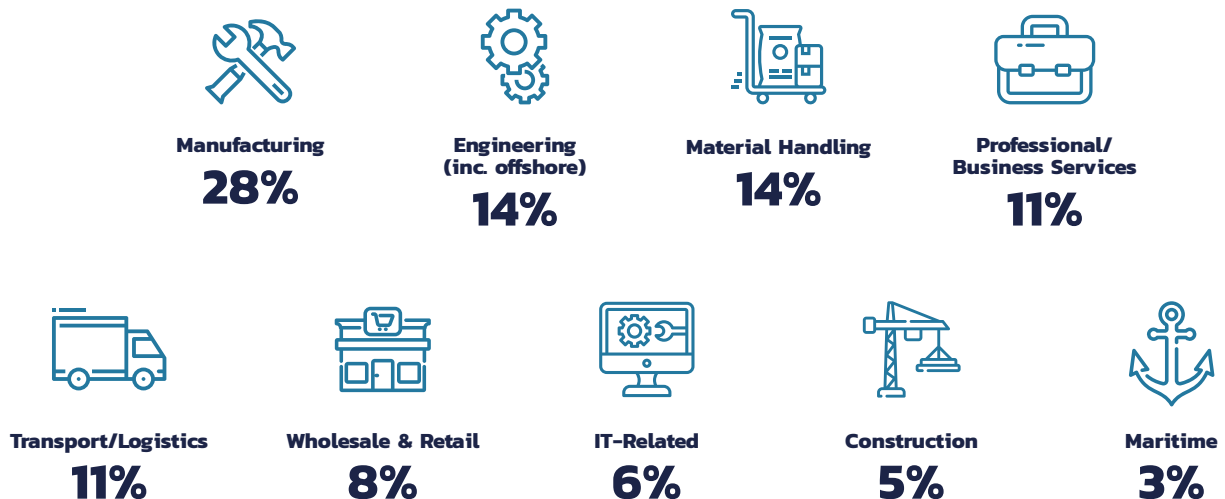
Other issues encountered along the way mainly fell into two camps, firstly, convincing the business we would not take up too much of their time (in these cases usually the business sighted a lack of time as a barrier to them striving for carbon reduction too) and secondly, getting past the gatekeeper or finding the right person to speak with in the business.

## Statistics

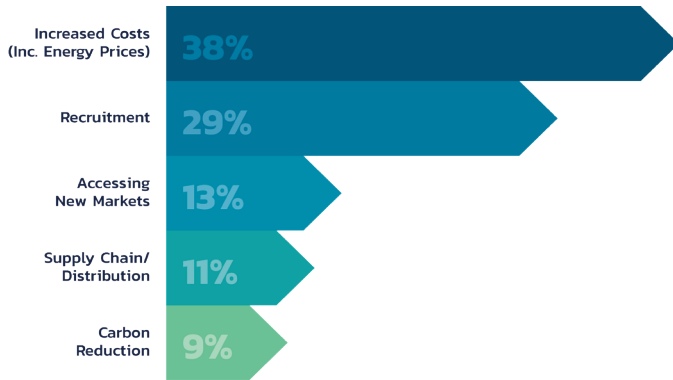
---

We spoke with 232 businesses across the Region and completed 44 Training Needs Analysis.

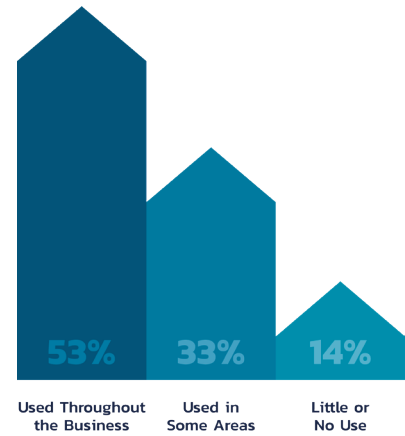
### Sectors Covered:



### The Main Challenges Businesses are Facing Currently:



### The Extent of Digital Technology Adoption:



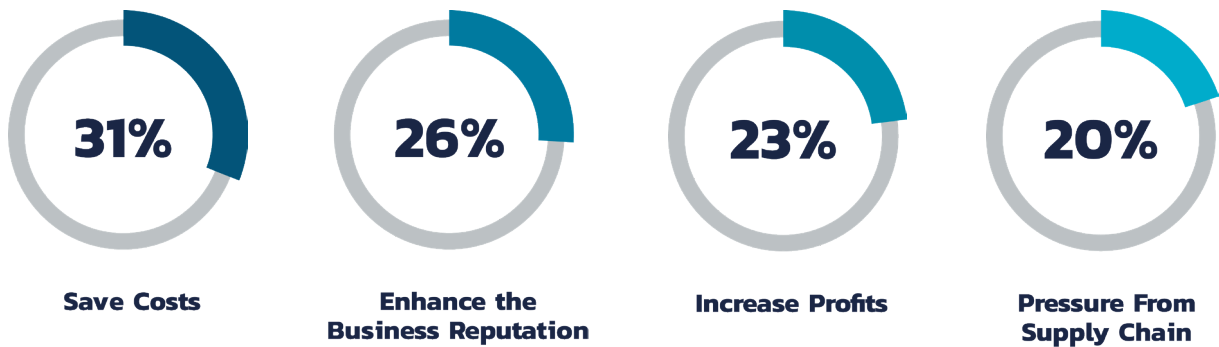
### The Importance of Reducing Carbon Footprint to the Business:



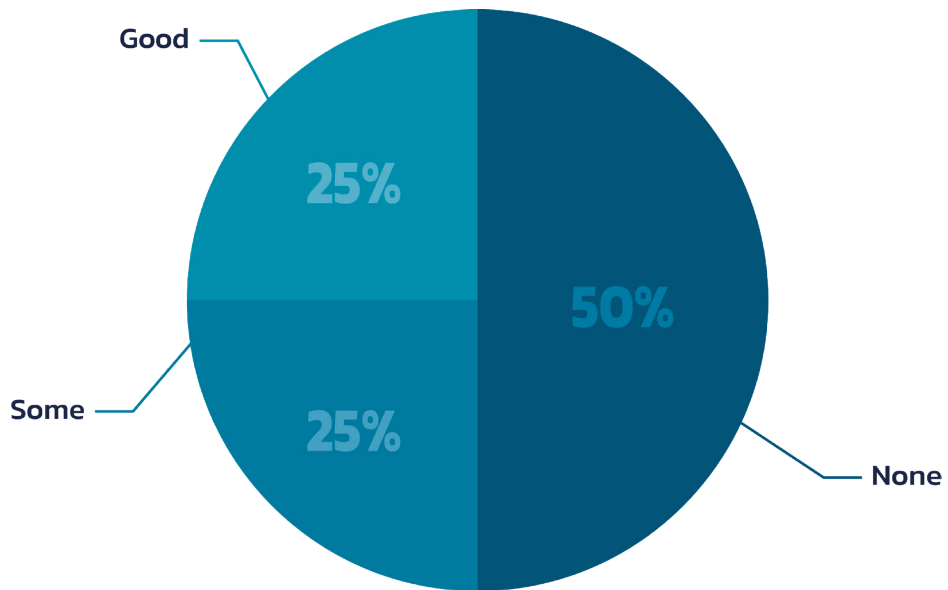
### Is Carbon Reduction an Opportunity or a Threat?



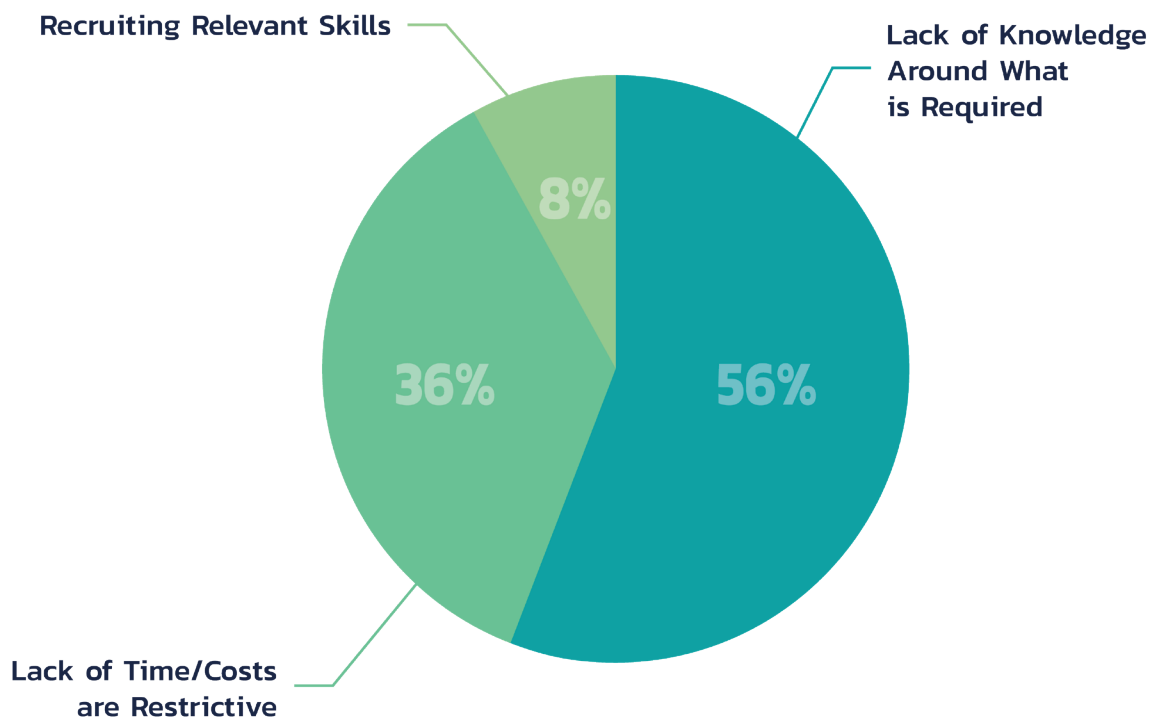
### The Key Drivers to Reducing Carbon Footprint:



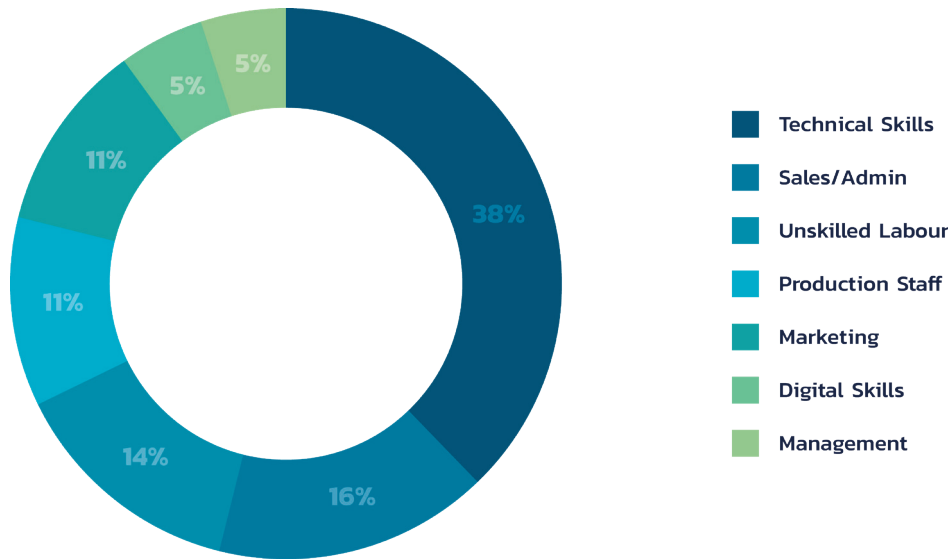
**Current Level of Knowledge/Awareness of Staff Regarding the Need to Reduce Carbon Levels:**



**The Main Barriers Seen to Achieving Net Zero:**



The Skills Currently Required Across Businesses:



General Support Findings

How Businesses Would Prefer Support to be Delivered:



From the Businesses Engaged With...



## Findings

---

The headline findings were that businesses had a general lack of knowledge around carbon reduction. They also didn't know where to turn to find this knowledge. The internet is a mine field of conflicting advice. Approaching experts for assistance is both difficult to find someone and expensive if you do. The experts know they are in demand. Similar to import/export experts post Brexit.

Tied into the first point is the fact that businesses didn't know what to do once they attained some knowledge.

The majority of businesses spoken with didn't have a carbon reduction plan. A number of the ones that had a plan of sorts had not linked this to their overall business plan and therefore it was always going to be at odds with their business strategy.

Most people spoken to had no idea how to calculate their current carbon footprint therefore didn't even know their starting point.

Even in the businesses who had some knowledge of what was required there was a lack of understanding of the three different Scopes (1,2 and 3) that require attention to make a business truly carbon neutral. In simple terms Scope 1 is the Green House Gas (GHG) emissions a company makes directly; Scope 2 relates to emissions it makes indirectly e.g. electricity or energy it buys for heating; Scope 3 this is all the emissions associated, not with the company itself, but that the organisation is indirectly responsible for up and down its value chain. So includes suppliers and buyers. This is the tricky one.

It was pleasing to see that a good proportion of companies wanted to do something about their carbon footprint, but one or more of the above were cited as barriers to achieving this.

Alongside lack of knowledge, time and money were cited as the biggest obstacles for the smaller businesses.

Some businesses stated that they were afraid to approach 'specialists' as they believed there were a number of unscrupulous people out there who would take advantage of their lack of understanding.

The flip side of the businesses really wanting to do something, the 'right thing' as they see it, it was disappointing to note a good proportion of businesses who actually see the whole carbon reduction process as either a waste of time ("I won't be around so it's not important to me") or deemed it to be another way for Local or Central Government to "bash businesses". Again, this attitude can only be attributed to a lack of actual knowledge in the first place and ignorance in the second.

A more niche finding was from conversations with businesses in the retail sector. They complained that their own attempts to improve their carbon usage were hampered by larger businesses in their supply chain who were still using excessive plastic in packaging and they were left with having to dispose of this. Classic Scope 3.

In a similar vein, we engaged with a business who makes the only 100% Biodiesel generators in the UK, based in Hull who cannot get to speak with anyone at Associated British Ports with regards to supplying them. This element of looking local in your supply chain is a major way forward for a Region achieving net zero much quicker.

Outside of the pure low carbon findings, other issues businesses in the Region are having are as follows.

Recruitment is an ongoing problem. Employees with specialist skills are attracted to the likes of Leeds by larger salaries. 18-24 year old Junior Managers are particularly difficult to attract. They study at local institutions but then do not stay in the area, according to the businesses engaged with. We were also told that there has been a move of Senior Management out to better paid roles, again a loss of skills to the Region.

Still on the recruitment angle, skilled engineers appears to be an issue. The initial recruitment and then retention.

It was pleasing to note that apprenticeships were popular with a number of businesses engaged with. Those that have used them before planned to do so again and others were considering to do this in the future.

Some businesses are still feeling the effects of Covid – where they lost workforce during the pandemic and have not been able to replace them. These businesses cited the current cost of living situation as a further hamper. Some still feel that if things don't change soon they could go out of business.

There was a mixed view across the business' engaged with regarding their knowledge of what support was available across the Region. Some saying they were aware of support and how to go about finding it. There were also those that said they weren't aware and didn't know how to find support. Stating that support available is not widely promoted and not easy to access.

There is a split when it comes to the type of support businesses are looking for. Larger organisations prefer 'classroom' type training that they can send staff on, either physically or remotely. Whereas smaller operations prefer 'on the job' or 'in the workplace' options to train their staff.

There is a widespread belief across the businesses we engaged with that there is no real support for them to attain a carbon neutral status. Many were surprised to hear of Hull and East Yorkshire's ambition to attain a carbon neutral status by 2030. From this we deduce that, although there are schemes on offer, they are not being publicised in the places businesses look.

## Recommendations

---

There is clearly a real demand for some spread of knowledge around carbon reduction. Without general education, the majority of businesses in the Region will not move forward.

Access to a carbon footprint calculator to enable businesses to measure their current position and establish a baseline to work from.

Training support to a) help businesses understand their current position b) develop an action plan to reduce their carbon footprint c) support with implementing the plan. This could perhaps be done in a group situation and even delivered remotely with access to one to one support as they progress.

Some form of grant support to help businesses with the above would be well received by those we spoke with. Most accepted they would have to contribute something but, especially the smaller SME's were worried about overall cost to become carbon neutral.

It may be worth exploring ways of getting the message out to smaller businesses as to what support is available to them.

It would definitely benefit the Region's carbon reduction drive and general business support offer, if the different support agencies across the Region worked closer together. From our experience most were not prepared to engage with us and therefore, not support the initiative. This is not unique to the Hull and East Yorkshire region, I have personal knowledge of this from my time at Sheffield City Region (as it was then, SYMCA now). All have the aim of assisting businesses for the betterment of the Region, so why not pull together for that end goal?

I hope that these findings and recommendations are useful to the TEC Partnership and help to scope future support for the businesses of the Hull and East Yorkshire region.

### **Andrew Rowley**

*Business Support and Compliance Director  
Brook Corporate Developments*





**Humber HEY**  
Skills Partnership

Skills, Innovation and Sustainability



**brook**  
corporate developments