

New digital tool enables easier energy and carbon reporting

A new digital tool will make it easier and more convenient for businesses to comply with energy and carbon reporting rules.

The Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) taxonomy allows businesses to report their energy and carbon data when they file digital accounts with Companies House.

The taxonomy has been developed by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) in collaboration with Companies House and the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and enables businesses to report information in XBRL format. Many companies already submit accounts using XBRL, but this is the first time it has been utilised to capture environmental data in annual reports.

SECR legislation, which came into force on 1 April 2019, requires all large UK companies and large LLPs, as well as all quoted companies, to report on their annual energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency actions they have taken. Other businesses can also include the disclosures on a voluntary basis.

Companies House and the FRC are responsible for ensuring businesses comply with the SECR reporting requirements.

Director of Digital at Companies House Ross Maude said:

This is a fantastic example of cross-government working to deliver a digital service that addresses an important issue.

Understanding the role businesses have in reducing energy and carbon emissions is central to delivering the UK's ambition to reach net zero by 2050.

Through effective collaboration, we can make it easier for businesses to play their part.

Project Director for Taxonomies at the FRC, Jennifer Guest, said:

Enabling companies to file their SECR reports digitally within their annual financial report is an important step in improving transparency of companies' energy reporting.

The SECR taxonomy has been carefully designed so it can be used with other accounting taxonomies making it simple and easy to use.

- SECR builds on the previous Mandatory Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting framework, which has been in place since 2013 for quoted companies and expands the reporting requirements from approximately 1,200 to 11,900 UK businesses. The Companies (Directors' Report) and Limited Liability Partnerships (Energy and Carbon Report) Regulations 2018, which implements SECR applies to annual reports for reporting periods which started on, or after, 1 April 2019.
- The SECR framework applies to all quoted companies and applies to large UK incorporated unquoted companies and large Limited Liability Partnerships with at least two of the following: 250 employees, annual turnover greater than £36m, or annual balance sheet total greater than £18m. The threshold should be considered at aggregate level when businesses are required to prepare and file Group accounts.
- A SECR report must be included in a company's Directors' Report (or a new Energy and Carbon Report for large LLPs) and filed with Companies House. Further information on the key requirements under SECR and example reporting templates can be accessed in the Environmental Report Guidelines.
- Companies that fail to comply with the new SECR requirements may have to resubmit their annual company accounts to Companies House or pay fines if missing filing deadlines. Failure to file Confirmation Statements or accounts is a criminal offence which can result in directors being fined personally in the criminal courts.
- Companies House is the register of limited companies in the UK. It incorporates and dissolves limited companies, registers the information companies are legally required to supply, and makes that information available to the public.

[British Embassy commemorates the Queen's Birthday Party](#)

Dear Friends,

Good morning. I am pleased to welcome you today to celebrate the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth Second. Thank you very much for being here.

My wife and I only arrived almost six months ago. Time has passed very quickly. My big challenge now is that I have met many people only once and my

memory of faces is very bad. Then help me this day if I'm confused!

Although six months is a very short time, there have been many big changes since September. There is a new government in Guatemala. The United Kingdom has left the European Union. In addition, we have learned new vocabulary – for example coronavirus. However, there is also much that has not changed. And something that stays the same are the priorities of the United Kingdom and the work of the British Embassy here in Guatemala. They are three:

1. support our people and our values
2. prosperity and commercial ties
3. as well as peace and security

We have been part of different campaigns on British values. From the Beyond Plastics initiative, for the reduction of single-use plastics, through the campaign on Freedom of the Press and our support for groups that suffer human rights abuses – for example, women, LGBTI and children.

During my few months here, I have worked with the government and NGOs on these issues, on major projects in many parts of the country. For example: Sexual and reproductive health, business and human rights, poverty reduction and climate change.

I have already seen the great contribution that these organizations have made to improve the lives of Guatemalans and their programmes in different priority areas. I have had the honour of visiting places – for example, Xela or Petén – where NGOs are using creativity, energy and experience to do very important things. Things with positive impacts for the most disadvantaged communities. We have worked and will continue working with a number of NGOs here in Guatemala.

In relation to the prosperity of our peoples, we work together with Guatemala on transparency issues, sharing our experience of good practices and lessons learned. We continue to support British companies, which have businesses or investments here. Similarly, we are helping companies with interest to do new deals. During February, we saw a good example of that with the visit of a delegation of security companies.

I am very pleased to know that the Government of Guatemala ratified the Association Agreement between Central America and the United Kingdom last year. This agreement is of great importance as it represents an opportunity to further deepen our relationship with Guatemala. Two years ago, a new British-Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce was inaugurated. This important platform will also help to increase trade and investment in both countries. I welcome its members who are with us this afternoon.

Education is a very important exchange sector between our two countries. The reputation of UK universities is recognized and their work transcends borders. For example, in Guatemala, the University of Bristol, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Liverpool have carried out close projects with INSIVUMEH to strengthen volcano-monitoring capacities in Guatemala. One of the ways in which we have further strengthened the relationship between

Guatemala and the United Kingdom has been through the Chevening scholarship programme. Today I am pleased to see many members of our Chevening Fellows Association.

Perhaps you have also noticed that the Embassy is very active on social media, which we use to promote all these initiatives. Recently, as an old man, I have tried to promote my own Twitter channel. If you still do not follow me, I invite you to do it, so that you are aware of our activities, topics about the United Kingdom and a bit of my magical experiences here in Guatemala.

You might also have noticed the word "Brexit". No more than two months ago, the UK officially left the EU, after 47 years of membership. This is something we do not celebrate, nor regret, is just a step taken by our government following the wishes of the British people through a democratic process that took place in 2016. We are going to work with our European partners to secure a trade agreement this year. Despite the UK leaving the EU, we remain part of Europe. Moreover, we will always work with our colleagues here and worldwide in our values, people, prosperity and peace.

I want to take the opportunity to project a global Britain, in four parts:

1. a new relationship with our European partners and at the same time from other parts of the world, as here in Guatemala
2. negotiate new agreements in other markets and reaffirm ourselves as a free trade partner
3. act with moral anchors around the world to continue protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law
4. and continue working for peace and security around the world, in all the organizations in which we have a membership, an active voice: permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, NATO, the European Council, the G7, G20, British Commonwealth of Nations and many others

If you ask me: What plans does the UK have for 2020? We are already in communication with many of you to carry out projects and programs to continue strengthening the bilateral relationship.

In addition to the trade negotiations that we will be carrying out around the world, including with Europe, this year we will be working hard as one of the two hosts of COP 26, which is the conference of member states for Climate Change, which will take place in Glasgow, Scotland in November. At the Embassy, we will work more on this topic during 2020, carrying out some projects. I think this is very important here in Guatemala because it is one of the countries most exposed to the challenge of climate change.

Before finishing, I would like to thank now the Guatemalan institutions that have supported the Embassy in consular cases this year, such as Proatur, Disetur and the National Civil Police. We are in uncertain times with the spread of the coronavirus, but I sleep better with the certainty that we have great support from these institutions.

I would also like to thank all the sponsoring companies that join us today.

My colleague Paola has named them all. Thank you!

I would also like to thank my wife for her support and my team at the Embassy, for all the work they do and their contribution to the relations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala, as well as the realization of this event.

Finally, thank you all for coming. It is wonderful to have you here and we look forward to continuing to work together in the months and years to come.

Thank you.

[Culture Minister leads calls to save Welsh medieval scientific manuscript](#)

- The work includes information that sheds new light on medieval understanding of science and mathematics
- Manuscript was completed by Welsh scientist Lewis of Caerleon, the personal physician to the Tudor King Henry VII

A 15th century manuscript that sheds new light on medieval scientific knowledge could be lost abroad.

Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage has placed a temporary export bar on the manuscript, which is worth £300,000, in a bid to save the work for the nation by offering a UK buyer or institution an opportunity to purchase the work for the national collection.

The manuscript was completed by Lewis of Caerleon (c.1440 – c.1500), a Welsh physician and highly accomplished astronomer. He played a crucial role in the royal court of the period, brokering the alliance of the future King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, serving as a physician and astrologer to both the Houses of York and Lancaster, including Henry VII himself. Lewis also spent time imprisoned in the Tower of London during the reign of Richard III for his close association with the Lancastrians.

Lewis of Caerleon was a highly skilled astronomer who carried out observations and recorded detailed calculations aimed at predicting eclipses. He commissioned this beautifully bound manuscript from a professional scribe as a gift to a patron or library, to showcase his own scientific achievements. While some of its texts and tables are similar to those in Lewis's personal notebook held in the collections of Cambridge University Library, a number are unique to this manuscript and hold the potential to shed new light on late-medieval mathematical astronomy.

Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage said:

This manuscript is an important part of the story of how ancient beliefs led to our modern scientific understanding of the world we live in.

It is a remarkable piece by a Welsh scholar that would make an excellent contribution to the national collection. I hope a buyer can be found so we can keep this important work in the UK.

The Minister's decision follows the advice of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA). The committee noted that the manuscript displayed the progression from ancient theories of astronomy toward a modern, mathematical approach. They agreed that Lewis of Caerleon was a significant contributor to the study of astronomy and the development of science in the late medieval era.

Committee Member Peter Barber said:

This beautifully written volume, still in its handsome original binding, was made for presentation, very possibly to Henry VII. Its author – a Welshman serving a Welsh king, a patriotic antiquary who was also a physician/scientist – prefigured great figures of a century later, like John Dee, while himself building on the writings of his medieval predecessors. At a time when astronomy and astrology were synonymous, Lewis of Caerleon's skills had political ramifications. They may well have contributed to Richard III's decision to keep him out of harm (and the later Henry VII's) way in The Tower. The text was meant by Lewis, who annotated it in his own hand, to be the definitive version of all of his writings and calculations. It includes notes on how far his predictions of eclipses had been fulfilled and also full versions of hitherto only partly known writings by medieval scholars. It would be a great pity if this volume by an early Welsh scholar who deserves to be better known, with its links to courtly culture, with a distinguished provenance and with its immense research potential, were to be allowed to leave this country.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the manuscript's outstanding significance to the study of medieval mathematical and scientific knowledge and for the Welsh contribution to the history of science in the British Isles.

The decision on the export licence application for the manuscript will be deferred until 12 June 2020. This may be extended until 12 September 2020 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £300,000.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the manuscript should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200. □
2. Details of the manuscript are as follows: The object is a manuscript on parchment, containing the collected scientific works (in Latin) of the physician and astronomer Lewis of Caerleon. It was produced in England, probably in London or Cambridge, in the later 15th century. It contains 64 leaves, and measures c.445 x 330mm. It is generally in good condition. The manuscript survives in a contemporary decorated binding, which allows the grandeur of its original presentation (unusual for the subject-matter) to be fully appreciated. □
3. Provenance: The original patron of the manuscript is unknown. The secure stages of later provenance identified in the catalogue description are as follows: Sir Henry Spelman (1563/4-1641), antiquary; Walter Clavell (1676?-1740), barrister; William Jones (1675- 1747), scientist and mathematician; George Parker, 2nd Earl of Macclesfield (1697?- 1764); by descent to the 9th Earl (b. 1943). □
4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria. □
5. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk □

[Civil news: providers praise new online 'Apply' tool](#)

A pilot group of providers are testing a new modern digital services platform designed to improve the efficiency of submitting legal aid applications.

The system will be used by both law firms and other providers of legal aid to process applications on behalf of clients. It will also be used by clients to progress their part of any legal aid application.

What are the other benefits?

It will 'trail-blaze' open banking and improve means testing by enabling clients to give us access to their bank statements online instead of on paper.

In future, we intend that the service will automatically access data from other government departments about an applicant's income and remove the need for scanned payslips.

Typical comments from the test group of providers working on domestic abuse applications, include:

new system is dynamic and smart.

Apply asked only necessary questions.

Generally, a much quicker and efficient way of doing it.

Apply is great, we've got it down to 6 minutes.

It's really good that you can edit the 'check your answers' page. I really like that I can edit just one section.

Providers on the trial say that they can spend more time helping clients rather than filling in forms.

What does this mean for CCMS?

Apply is part of our efforts to put the user first when we look at how we work with our contracted providers.

But we will also continue to maintain and improve the Client and Cost Management System (CCMS) for the submission of other proceedings, amendments and bills. See below for how to access CCMS training and resources.

How will the LAA roll out Apply?

A small number of providers in the pilot group working on high volume domestic abuse applications have started testing Apply on live cases. So far, we have received more than 70 applications using Apply.

The feedback they have provided will enable us to make further improvements before we increase the number of users and case types.

In the future, we aim to expand the test group of providers working on domestic abuse cases – see below for details if you are interested in applying to take part.

Further information

ATP@justice.gov.uk – email the transformation team with questions or register an interest in taking part in the trials if you work on domestic abuse cases

[Economic secretary speech to the ABCUL](#)

Thank you Liz Barclay. It really is a great pleasure to be here in Manchester for the second year running.

Not many City Ministers are invited to speak to ABCUL twice...

...in fairness, not many City Ministers have lasted long enough in the role to qualify, but I'll take my invitation as a compliment nonetheless.

I count myself fortunate to be asked by the Prime Minister to continue in post.

With the political turbulence of the past few years hopefully behind us, my aim is to serve as a point of continuity within the Treasury, and a trusted advisor to our new Chancellor, Rishi Sunak.

In that capacity, I very much remain an advocate for credit unions and community lenders; and having last year called for a new conversation between the Government and the sector I'm pleased to be able to continue that conversation today and reflect on the progress we've made.

It strikes me that the relevance of this sector and the potential it represents has grown over the past 12 months.

I'm sure you've heard the Government talk about the need to level-up opportunity, investment and growth across the country.

Much of the focus has been on physical infrastructure like roads, railways and fibre-optic cables.

But just as important is the social infrastructure. Communities need to be financially inclusive and resilient if they are to be attractive, productive and fulfilling places to live and work.

There is no convenient one-size-fits-all model for the country.

Nor is it all about spreadsheets and number crunching, as much as economists love to try. It's about people and places too.

Credit unions, by their very nature, reflect the communities they serve. You have the insight and connections to meet diverse local needs in ways that big banks and big government often can't.

And with matters of responsibility, sustainability and trust rising up the consumer agenda, credit unions also have an authenticity that the corporate world is sometimes seen to lack.

You can reach parts of society that others can't.

You can beat the loan sharks and payday lenders to win the trust of lower-income borrowers who might not otherwise give mainstream financial services a second look.

And you can provide consumers of all types with an ethical home for their savings, where they can be confident their money is being used for good.

Challenges facing the sector

Despite these advantages, despite growing relevance, you will know as well as I do that the credit union movement in this country is not nearly as strong or successful as it could be.

As ABCUL's Town Hall consultation recognised, too many credit unions fail. Too few grow in a way that is sustainable. Many have struggled with matters of governance, leadership and regulatory compliance.

Don't get me wrong. I know there are shining examples of successful credit unions doing great things. I've visited several. I hear about others from fellow MPs and from constituents, and the Treasury has first-hand experience with some in our Prize Saver pilot.

To all those credit unions represented here today, I say congratulations and thank you. The good you do every day is recognised by me, and by the Government.

But for all the individual achievements, for all the promise and conviction, the sector somehow remains less than the sum of its parts.

Ironically, your great strength – your diversity – has also been a weakness.

Collectively, credit unions have found adapting to new technology and changing consumer needs difficult.

Together, you have struggled to have your voice heard, and as a result the sector remains in the margins when it has the potential to be so much more.

So, what needs to happen to unleash the potential that I know exists?

Let's start with what doesn't need to change – namely, the values that make you special.

The fact that credit unions are run by and for your members...

...that you are rooted in local communities...

...and exist to encourage responsible saving and affordable borrowing...

...these are all qualities to be cherished and nurtured.

Your members will always come first...but for some of you, it's about grasping the opportunities that exist around how you serve them.

It means offering a wider range of relevant and tailored products to serve changing consumer needs and expectations.

It means figuring out how to communicate the strengths of the mutual model to the next generation, and how to make credit unions relevant to their needs.

And it means working together to develop solutions to the shared challenges you face, harnessing the latest technology, including Open Banking.

Government Support

Government has a role to play, through legislation and regulation, and by helping the sector innovate.

At this Conference last year, I spoke about the Prize Linked Savings pilot to raise awareness and membership of credit unions.

In October last year, fifteen credit unions from across Great Britain launched new PrizeSaver accounts.

Since then, over 7,000 new accounts have been opened and 63 members have won prizes, including a Post Office worker who won £5,000 just before Christmas.

I understand Nationwide has already launched their own prize-linked savings account, which just goes to prove that imitation really is the sincerest form of flattery.

Our own pilot runs until next March. We will be assessing its success over the coming year to establish whether it is a financially sustainable model for the future.

Another innovation has been the Affordable Credit Challenge.

The Government made £2 million available to encourage FinTech firms to apply their ingenuity to the aim of widening access and awareness of affordable alternatives to high cost credit.

In Wednesday's Budget, the Government announced the three winners, each of which receive a further grant of £200,000 to take their ideas forward.

These include the Police Credit Union's partnership with Credit Kudos and Capital Credit Union's partnership with Nivo and Soar.

Meanwhile, Fair4All Finance is up-and-running. It was established to funnel £55 million from dormant bank accounts toward the cause of financial inclusion. This includes a pilot programme to develop capabilities in the affordable credit sector, including crucial skills around operations, governance and leadership.

Lastly, on the regulatory front, I was pleased to support the Prudential Regulation Authority's recent review of capital requirements for credit unions, including proposals to remove the 'cliff edge' in the capital requirements regime for larger credit unions.

Action Plan

Ultimately, however, it is not for government to bring about the change the sector needs.

Even if it could, it runs contrary to what credit unions are about. Your success is driven from the bottom up, not the top down.

The responsibility, and the opportunity, rests in the hands of you, and your members.

Last year, I urged the movement to come together to chart its own vision for the future.

A vision that you share and own, so you can speak with one voice.

I congratulate ABCUL for embracing this challenge so fully.

You've had the courage to ask difficult questions, and the ambition to demand more from the sector.

And I'm grateful to all those credit unions which made their voices heard in the Town Hall events.

ABCUL can only be effective in representing your needs to the Treasury if you engage with them.

'Vision 2025' represents a clear set of objectives around which credit unions can unite.

It provides a strategic and comprehensive view of the future.

Crucially it also offers a series of meaningful, practical measures to navigate the challenges you face in order to become stronger, more resilient and more successful.

And it outlines how ABCUL needs to change in order to help its members achieve this.

Now the hard work begins to make it a reality.

Where you can make a clear case for the Government to help, then we will.

As a case in point, I am delighted confirm that this week's Budget included the announcement that the Government is to bring forward legislation to amend the Credit Unions Act.

This will permit credit unions to offer a wider range of products and services than ever before.

Not only helping you better meet the needs of existing members, but also to reach new audiences, supporting the sector to grow in a way that is sustainable.

This might include helping people who aren't insured secure the protection they need.

Or it could involve helping people buy goods on hire purchase at more affordable rates, providing an alternative to exploitative rent-to-buy schemes.

No credit union will be forced to offer products and services it doesn't wish to.

This will be entirely optional and, of course, subject to regulatory oversight, PRA supervision and securing relevant FCA permissions.

The point is that the choice will rest with credit unions themselves – and with this choice, comes the freedom to pursue new revenues, new members and greater relevance.

As I said, it is for credit unions, individually and collectively, to decide what they want for the future.

But for those credit unions that have been calling for change, I hope this measure demonstrates that the Government has not only listened but has acted accordingly.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, there is a lot of action underway on many fronts.

The Government will continue to listen to credit unions and affordable lenders and, where we can, I want to do more to help the sector meet its ambitions for the future.

My door remains open to ABCUL. I'm looking forward to taking your questions in a moment.

And later this month I'll be speaking at an event in Parliament hosted by Pentecostal Credit Union.

But, as I hope I've conveyed, success rests not on what the Government can do for the sector – but what the sector can do for itself.

I'm encouraged by what I've seen and heard in recent weeks.

You have the people, the passion and now you have a Plan too.

Don't let it gather dust on a shelf – make it happen.

And I hope I can return next year, to reflect on your progress and continue this important conversation.

Thank you.