

# Can 14001 help drive sustainability?



**Paul Suff** finds out whether the international standard can assist companies in realising their sustainability ambitions

**S**ustainability is specifically referenced in ISO 14001: 2015, which was published last September. According to the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the requirements of the revised standard for environment management systems (EMS) will enable organisations to establish, implement, maintain and continually improve a framework in order to manage their environmental responsibilities while contributing to the 'environmental pillar' of sustainability.

To find out whether it can help organisations to be more sustainable, consultancy Ramboll Environ and *the environmentalist* hosted a roundtable with EMS practitioners (see pp18–19 for list of the participants).

## Help or hindrance?

To gauge how 14001 has been helping and hindering sustainability efforts in their organisations since it was last revised in 2004, **Greg Roberts**, manager at Ramboll Environ, who chaired the discussion, asked the panel about their experiences of it.

**Lugano Kapembwa**, environment manager at property company Canary Wharf Management, spoke about his involvement with environment systems in previous roles at News International and Gatwick airport. He said the standard had contributed to driving sustainability in both organisations, particularly at

Gatwick: '14001 was very helpful because the audit asked questions on the ground that could be traced back to senior management, so it felt embedded.'

'An EMS is more valuable when it is endorsed by senior management. We had that, so it was easier to spread it through the organisation.'

External pressure, in this case participation in People and Planet's Green League, was the main trigger for 14001 at the University of Greenwich.

However, head of sustainability **Simon Goldsmith** said the EMS was not really driving wider improvement at the university, which forced a rethink. 'It was too procedural and seemed somewhat separate to our strategic sustainability application,' he explained. 'We redefined our delivery of the EMS to become a programme of enabling accountability and management of all our key sustainability relationships. We also opened up the implementation of the system beyond the sustainability team so everyone, including senior managers, who perform audits now understand their role and what the organisation is trying to achieve. The EMS is now a really useful tool.'

**Claudia Dommett-Noehren**, sustainability specialist at infrastructure company Colas Rail, talked about how the 14001-certified EMS for the Infrastructure Projects division at her former company Network Rail had provided a good platform on which

## Making the transition

This IEMA-approved one-day course aims to help individuals with responsibility for implementing or maintaining an environmental management system (EMS) based on 14001 to adapt to the revised standard. Participants receive insights from IEMA on the new standard and the IEMA EMS gap analysis tool, and learn how to identify and plan actions so that their organisation can conform to the new requirements.

For a list of approved training providers running the course go to [training.iema.net](http://training.iema.net) or see the December 2015 issue of *the environmentalist*.



**Claudia Dommett-Noehren**  
sustainability specialist  
at Colas Rail

to build in other aspects of the sustainability agenda. 'It helped us link in social impact objectives when setting the environmental ones for the EMS,' she said.

Air transport communications and information technology company SITA developed its corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy seven years ago. Director of CSR **Amber Harrison** told the panel that 14001 had played an important role in developing the strategy. 'Using a recognised framework provided credibility and structure,' she said. 'It's a living, breathing document and we include social aspects in the EMS.'

**Mark Greenwood**, group HSE director at packaging firm DS Smith, is responsible for more than 300 sites. His experience suggests a correlation is not always evident between achieving certification and good site performance. 'But where a site is well managed it is likely to also be more sustainable.'



**Mark Greenwood**  
group health, safety and  
environment director  
at DS Smith

### Enter 14001: 2015

**Roberts** next asked whether the additional requirements in the revised standard, with its greater focus on leadership, context, stakeholders and communication, risks and opportunities, and lifecycle thinking, would help drive sustainability.

'Our chief executive has signed the UN Global Compact [UNGC] and we report to GRI4, so we already have some of the new areas in the 2015 standard covered, such as leadership,' said **Harrison**. 'The challenge is balancing the requirements of GRI, the UNGC and 14001. How do they fit together?'

**Marcus Pearson** is environment manager at DP World London Gateway, a new deep-water port and logistics park being developed on the River Thames. He is enthusiastic about the changes. 'The 2015 version will help me in around issue like procurement, leadership and organisational buy-in,' he said.

This is because some of the terminology in 14001: 2015 is more business friendly. Pearson said using the terms risk and opportunity would help embed an EMS and achieve further senior management engagement. 'I've done a lot training and trying to explain to a non-environment audience what aspects and impacts mean can be very difficult,' he said. 'Senior management understand risk and opportunity more than aspects and how they relate to the business.'

**Dommett-Noehren** agreed: 'It can take cross-functional personnel time to understand impacts and aspects, so the terms risk and opportunity are better. When I was developing the EMS on the Crossrail

programme at Network Rail, a risk manager facilitated an aspects and impacts workshop and her approach was much clearer; project managers tend to understand the language of risk.'

**Harrison** added: 'We have a corporate risk register and new risks are recorded in it, so I can see the standard becoming a core part of this process.'

**Dommett-Noehren** said 14001: 2015 would help practitioners drive improvements in organisational performance across the three pillars of sustainable development: 'The new standard gives the profession the tools to get sustainability on the agenda much more than the 2004 version.'

### Lifecycle thinking

A stipulation in 14001: 2015 that is of concern to the panel is the requirement to consider a lifecycle perspective when looking at activities, products and services.

'We don't make anything, we're a service company, so I think the lifecycle requirement might be complex to implement,' said **Maria Hughes**, UK environment manager, at consulting and outsourcing company Capgemini. 'We have a good procurement process and we do encourage clients to use our sustainable datacentre, but we'll need to think about how we approach lifecycle thinking as part of our EMS.'

The lifecycle element is also a concern for **Greenwood**: 'There's nothing particularly radical about most of the new requirements, but lifecycle thinking is different. Because of purchasing decisions we can exercise a good degree of control over our upstream suppliers, but we have far less control over our downstream customers. Once our cardboard leaves the factory we have little influence over how it is used or disposed of. To suggest we have leverage over the end-user is absurd.'

'Lifecycle thinking is the one area that stands out and will be difficult to apply,' said **Goldsmith**. 'The other issues [leadership, context, stakeholders and communication, risks and opportunities] are relatively straightforward. Get the leadership right and everything else in the standard should flow. That's not the case with lifecycle thinking.' The university spends around £40m a year on procurement but, **Goldsmith** said, the lifecycle requirement would force it to examine how it engaged suppliers. 'We will also need to more effectively look at our core business – teaching and research. These have historically been challenging areas to engage with.'

**Kapembwa** said firms should be able to exert influence over suppliers but feared this might disrupt longstanding procurement practices and relationships.



**Simon Goldsmith**  
head of sustainability at  
University of Greenwich



**Amber Harrison**  
director of corporate  
social responsibility  
at SITA



'If customers start asking for more information about goods and services, suppliers may begin to equate 14001 with time-consuming questionnaires,' he warned.

'The potential impact of lifecycle thinking on procurement is a big issue for me,' conceded **Pearson**. 'We have more than 2,000 suppliers and do lots of tenders. So the whole lifecycle thing is frightening to some extent. Our 14001 EMS will need to focus more on procurement.'

**Goldsmith** said one answer would be to ensure departments such as procurement properly understood their role in the EMS: 'Give them ownership and explain exactly what it means for them; how what they're doing helps to drive improvement. [The profession] should see the lifecycle requirements as an opportunity to knock on the door of the procurement and other core departments.'

'Yes, we need to illustrate it for others or it just becomes a technical exercise,' said **Pearson**.

**Roberts**, a member of the ISO working group that revised 14004, the guidelines on implementing an EMS that were published on 1 March to reflect the changes in 14001, said one approach to lifecycle thinking was to apply it only where it was significant.

### Adding value

Another potential worry was whether the auditing community had the competence generally to assess compliance with the new standard effectively.

**Harrison** compared her experiences from audits in five countries to doing the hokey cokey. 'Each had their own set of aspects and they'd expect to see those covered. An auditor with an engineering background would be looking for one thing, while someone with financial sector experience would be looking for something else. We'd put something in for one auditor and have to take it out for another. That was really frustrating.'

She offered advice on what to look for in an auditor. 'We use BSi now and are very happy with them but, when we first started, some assessors claimed they could audit us in an afternoon. It shouldn't be that easy. A good auditor should always find room for improvement. If not, they're not doing their job.'

The panel was unanimous in expecting audits to add value. 'We want more than a check of the aspects register and a site inspection,' said **Pearson**. **Kapembwa**

added: 'If the EMS is just a folder that the auditor flicks through and says it is fine, then it's not adding value. How the system is audited is a major issue.'

**Goldsmith** too said auditors must show that their work was adding value: 'Someone will be signing off the budget for the audit and they should require evidence that past assessments have triggered improvements.'

'Auditors need to act as your critical friend,' said **Hughes**. **Pearson** agreed: 'We don't mind being told to make things better, particularly if it produces cost savings.'

**Greenwood** advised practitioners to mark the auditor's findings. 'We do not accept something if we disagree; if it goes wrong and you didn't challenge it, that could present a problem when the regulators investigate.'

### Summing up

**Roberts** asked the panel to reconsider his original question about whether 14001 was good for sustainability in light of the changes that had been made to the standard.

'I'm excited by 14001: 2015,' said **Dommett-Noehren**. 'The new standard will really help knit sustainability into my organisation. I think it will encourage other organisations to engage in the broader sustainability issues, though that might also depend on who has ownership of the EMS and how they sell it to the rest of the business.'

The new standard will be good for my organisation and our drive to be sustainable.

We want to push the EMS more into CSR

**Hughes** also expressed enthusiasm, believing the revised standard was an opportunity to take a fresh look at her organisation's systems. 'I did the IEMA 14001 transition training course [see panel, p18] as we were going through the new requirements. I thought, yes, we'll be OK. But I still want to take our EMS back to basics, to pull it apart and put it back together rather than bolt on the new bits. It's an opportunity for innovation.'

**Pearson** also viewed the changes positively. 'It'll be good for my organisation and our drive to be more sustainable. We want to push the EMS more into the corporate social responsibility arena. It's an opportunity to rethink our system. It may also allow us to bid farewell to the language of aspects, at least when we're talking to non-environmental colleagues.'

**Greenwood** said: 'I'm hoping the changes will enable us to get to the stage where 14001 is one of the indicators we can use to assess whether a site is sustainable. If that happens it will help drive sustainability.'

'The revised 14001 holds practitioners to a higher standard,' said **Goldsmith**. 'It moves us away from environment management to sustainability. It should help push the profession forward.'

**Harrison** was also positive, although she was cautious about how easy it would be to move from the 2004 version. 'Complying with some of the new requirements will be more of a challenge than others ... and I'm glad we've got 18 months to make the transition.'



**Maria Hughes**  
UK environment manager at Capgemini



**Lugano Kapembwa**  
environment manager at Canary Wharf Management



**Marcus Pearson**  
environment manager at DP World London Gateway



**Greg Roberts**  
manager at Ramboll Environ