

# The Power of Shared Insight in Energy and Carbon Management

**In the drive to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, organisations often face similar challenges, from navigating complex regulations to implementing new technologies and driving behavioural change. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, there may also be no need to 'reinvent the wheel' every time. Sharing lessons learned, insights and practical experiences across the sector is not only valuable, it saves time, effort and a fair bit of frustration.**

At the EMA, we firmly believe everyone has something to offer, whether they are new to the industry or carrying 10, 20 or another truly impressive number of years of experience under their belt. This belief has been the driving force behind this publication since its inception and continues to guide this 50th edition.

To mark this milestone and highlight the impact and importance of knowledge sharing, we invited some of our past contributors to reflect on their experiences of sharing insight and expertise in energy and carbon management. Their responses celebrate how collaboration can break down barriers, scale successful initiatives, spark innovation and drive continuous improvement across the sector.

## MOTIVATION TO SHARE

**When asked what motivates them to share their experiences, our contributors emphasised a mix of responsibility, mutual benefit and sector-wide progress.**

**Mohammad Rafique, Head of Sustainability, Crown Prosecution Service**

My motivation is rooted in my early career and international background. I began my professional life in industry overseas, where I saw first-hand how environmental impacts were often driven by limited awareness and access to shared knowledge. When I later moved into sustainability roles in the UK, I benefited enormously from learning openly from others. That experience shaped my belief that sharing practical insights - especially real-world lessons, can empower people to act with confidence and purpose.

**Richard Frost, Building Services & Commissioning Manager at Queen Mary University of London**

My motivation for sharing experience stems from repeatedly seeing organisations across the sector encounter the same challenges. These range from tangible issues, such as ageing plant, incomplete metering and control limitations, to less visible pressures created by value-engineering decisions, deskilling and gaps in the professional team's knowledge. Together, these factors perpetuate the strain of delivering decarbonisation objectives alongside the day-to-day operational demands of large, complex estates.

**Sophie Mason, Energy & Sustainability Lead at Coventry Building Society**

Over the past 15 years, I've seen energy management roles develop from being focused on cost savings 'every £ saved in energy, is a £ saved in the bottom line', compliance driven reporting and 'top hat graphs'. Of course, this is still very important; however, the role has now evolved into a strategic discipline and it requires the ability to influence decisions across the entire business. Today, it shapes capital investment, risk management, procurement strategies and product development, all in service of reaching Net Zero. I enjoy the collaboration we have within our industry, as sharing experiences helps to shorten the learning curve and accelerates our progress towards our common goal. I'm motivated to build internal alignment and capability, so energy and carbon considerations become part of everyday decisions rather than an afterthought.

**Dan Fernbank, Energy & Sustainability Director at University of Reading**

The best ideas are usually somebody else's!! So, when I do think we've done

something well, I'm keen to share that experience – and of course, boost the University's reputation (and my own!).

**Roederer Rose Lyne, Net Zero & Emissions Manager, University of Aberdeen**

There is no one size fits all solution to issues like net zero, each organisation will need a unique solution and team to meet its commitments and ambitions. So, by sharing my successes, challenges and lessons learned insights, I am potentially helping a colleague complete their puzzle quicker.

**Mark Foden, Associate Director of Sustainability, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust**

Many of us are facing similar challenges in delivering decarbonisation, such as aging estates, tight capital,

valuable learning to be shared without compromising commercial or reputational concerns. Another emerging challenge is the diminishing number of specialist Energy Managers. Many roles are being diluted or replaced by more generalist sustainability positions which, while vital, may not always have the depth of operational expertise required. This makes effective knowledge sharing even more critical.

**Mohammad Rafique, Head of Sustainability, Crown Prosecution Service**

Barriers often include time pressures, organisational sensitivities and differing levels of technical understanding. I have learned that trust and clarity are key. By focusing on principles and transferable learning, rather than only raw data, and by communicating in plain language, these barriers can be overcome.



**Dan Fernbank, Energy & Sustainability Director at University of Reading**

It's always a challenge to justify the time to share my experience, and it's a case of learning from each experience whether it was a good use of time, whether I pitched well to the audience, and whether I would present differently, or indeed at all, next time.

**Sophie Mason, Energy & Sustainability Lead at Coventry Building Society**

A common barrier is concern of commercial sensitivity or fear of exposing failures (I've had plenty). I've found that reframing discussions around principles, approaches and outcomes, rather than proprietary detail allows meaningful knowledge sharing without risk. But the most important element to build with others, is trust and this is built through long term industry relationships over time - I wouldn't be where I am now without my trusted counsellors!

**Mark Foden, Associate Director of Sustainability, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust**

There can be hesitancy about sharing challenges, especially where schemes have stalled or not progressed as originally planned. In my experience, focussing on lessons rather than outcomes and being honest about constraints is far more useful. Shared learning doesn't just help delivery, it helps inform the planning and the assumptions around payback, risk and affordability, which often shapes what is considered possible in the first place.

reduced revenue budgets and evolving stakeholder considerations. That's a big part of why I'm motivated to share learning. I've benefitted hugely from hearing how others have navigated similar barriers, particularly around funding routes, business cases, and sequencing work when capital is limited. Those insights have helped avoid reinventing the wheel and made it easier to adapt approaches that already work in NHS settings.

## **BARRIERS TO SHARING**

**Sharing insights isn't always straightforward.**

**Concerns about commercial sensitivity or exposing failures often arise.**

**Richard Frost, Building Services & Commissioning Manager at Queen Mary University of London**

Barriers do exist. Commercial sensitivities can limit the level of detail that can be shared, while cultural challenges are equally significant. Acknowledging mistakes can feel risky in organisations that are less forgiving. These barriers can be mitigated by anonymising examples and focusing on core engineering principles, enabling

**Roederer Rose Lyne, Net Zero & Emissions Manager, University of Aberdeen**

A lot of the barriers comes from getting to talk to the right people. As organisations are complex and each have their own unique corporate organigram, key staff can often be spread out or in unexpected teams. I typically get around this by providing a brief primer ahead of a presentation or meeting, explaining who I feel would benefit most from the session.

### LEARNING FROM SHARED SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

**When asked how shared experiences have influenced their own approaches, our contributors reported that learning from successes and mistakes of others has been transformative.**

**Roederer Rose Lyne, Net Zero & Emissions Manager, University of Aberdeen**

It has reinforced that these topics are iterative, as we are not going to land on the perfect solution each time. It has helped me be bolder in putting forward solutions as I know that we will be constantly monitoring progress and will be as adaptable as required. 'Rome wasn't built in a day', very much applies to energy and carbon management.

**Mohammad Rafique, Head of Sustainability, Crown Prosecution Service**

Hearing others' successes and failures, especially from trials, has made my approach evidence based and people-focused. These shared lessons help me anticipate risks, strengthen programme design and scale effective solutions confidently.

**Richard Frost, Building Services & Commissioning Manager at Queen Mary University of London**

Both successes and failures continue to shape my approach. Strong outcomes reinforce the value of ensuring the foundations of good energy management persist, such as good design, comprehensive metering, robust control strategies and effective commissioning. While more difficult projects tease out and expose hidden assumptions and systemic weaknesses in the

organisation, these are all experiences for the Energy Manager to learn from.

**Dan Fernbank, Energy & Sustainability Director at University of Reading**

When something goes wrong, I'm always keen to help others learn from our experience, so I value the opportunity to learn from others too. This boosts our chances of success, and creates good networks and relationships for future knowledge sharing.

**Sophie Mason, Energy & Sustainability Lead at Coventry Building Society**

I've had plenty of successes over the years, but just as many failures and arguably I've learnt more from the latter. Some initiatives delivered strong technical



outcomes but failed to land because the wider business wasn't engaged properly or the commercial case wasn't clearly linked to strategic priorities. Sharing those experiences has helped others avoid making the same mistakes, whether that's been underestimating change management, overcomplicating data or moving too quickly with solutions without business buy in. Learning from both, my own experience and those of others, has reinforced the importance of collaboration, simplicity and timing. It has shaped an approach that focuses as much on people and decision making just as much as technology or targets.

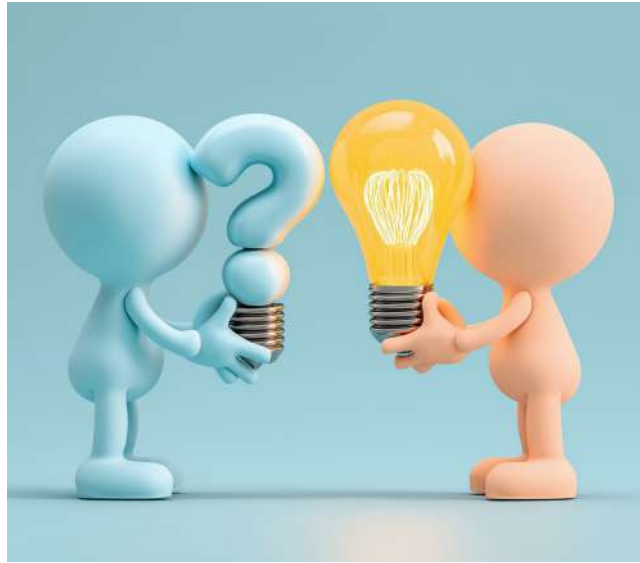
### THE POWER OF OPENNESS AND COLLABORATION

**Finally, our contributors were asked about the broader impact of greater openness in the sector.**

**The consensus was clear: openness and collaboration don't just benefit individual organisations, they can transform the sector as a whole.**

**Roederer Rose Lyne, Net Zero & Emissions Manager, University of Aberdeen**

It allows the sector to move beyond the fear of poor investment and rapidly progress towards better operations and net zero. Each generation of trailblazers communicating the problems and pitfalls allows the next to take up the standard and push forward.



**Mohammad Rafique, Head of Sustainability, Crown Prosecution Service**

Greater openness would build collective confidence, reduce duplication of effort and enable more credible progress towards Net Zero emissions and wider sustainability goals.

**Sophie Mason, Energy & Sustainability Lead at Coventry Building Society**

Greater openness and collaboration is essential if the sector is to move at the pace required. As I've stated already, it enables faster learning, avoids repeating mistakes and builds stronger business alignment. Collaboration allows us to share common challenges, such as data quality, investment priorities and balancing short term pressures with long term net zero goals. This being tackled collectively rather than in isolation also helps to create more consistent message for our supply chains, investors and policymakers, if we all come together ensuring we are a shared voice, enabling energy resilience and industry wide decarbonisation.

**Richard Frost, Building Services & Commissioning Manager at Queen Mary University of London**

Sharing lessons learned, particularly practical, experience-based insights, helps others avoid common pitfalls and replicate approaches that are proven to work. There is also an urgent need to capture the knowledge held by experienced practitioners before they leave the sector, a group that increasingly includes myself, with less than a decade of my working career remaining. In conclusion, greater openness and collaboration have consistently proven to deliver more effective solutions, reduce duplicated effort and strengthen our profession.

**Dan Fernbank, Energy & Sustainability Director at**

**University of Reading**

It would be naïve and counterproductive to think I had the best answers, or always get things right. For example, hearing recently about the benefits of solar farms which are not solely south facing, to flatten generation curves is insightful and in turn, I now share this insight regularly. Carbon management is increasingly about major investment projects which an organisation may only

deliver once, so greater collaboration will be key to our collective success.

**Mark Foden, Associate Director of Sustainability, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust**

Shared successes build confidence with senior leaders, while shared challenges encourage more realistic planning and collaboration. In my experience, it is this openness that is accelerating delivery, improving value for money while supporting more consistent progress on energy and carbon reduction.

In conclusion, through the exchange of lessons, learning from both successes and failures, and stronger collaboration, those in energy, carbon and sustainability roles, now so central to strategic decision-making, can scale initiatives, improve decision-making and accelerate the energy transition.

In a sector where multidisciplinary skills are essential to operate effectively, openness isn't optional - it's essential. And the good news? It's also easy and achievable.

Everyone has something insightful and valuable to share. Let 2026 be the year you give back - to yourself, your colleagues and the industry. Reach out, share your experiences and inspire others. Whether you have two hours or a full day, there are countless opportunities to contribute. The EMA is ready to help you get involved.

