



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### THE 2014 BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FACILITIES MANAGEMENT (BIFM) SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY TO ORGANISATIONS.

The survey and accompanying report, which is based on the views of internal and external facilities managers (FMs), says 60% of respondents believe their organisation is **“very effective”** in implementing sustainability policies.

Facilities managers believe legislation has helped engage their management board with sustainability issues, and has given them an opportunity to discuss sustainability with senior levels of the business.

However, the report notes that for further progress to be made towards fully embedding sustainability practices throughout the business, facilities managers must become more skilful at collecting and interpreting accurate data on building performance.

It says:

**“ Facilities managers find themselves unable to hold a conversation with senior management and come to informed decisions because they are unable to collect the right level of data, interpret it effectively and communicate its implications to the business.**

**The lack of robust and granular data and poor communication is restricting facilities managers’ ability to drive organisational change. Overcoming these weaknesses is critical to delivering a sustainable FM service provision. ”**

With operational budgets for energy and waste forecast to increase significantly in coming years, the report says it is critical that facilities managers can understand and communicate up the chain the implication of any changes in the workplace. Only by exercising operational management of the building in the face of increased compliance costs will the facilities management function be able to deliver best practice.

The report notes that although tools exist to ease data collection and communication, these are commonly not commissioned correctly or not utilised to their full extent. There are a number of reasons for this, including a lack of training or understanding of the business benefit and ignorance of how to use the tools, or a lack of investment in ensuring the tools are maintained and operating correctly.

A further challenge for the FM sector identified in the report is the short term nature of organisations’ view of sustainability measures. Most commercial organisations look at getting a return on investment within a few years, which makes it difficult to justify capital projects. However, this simple-payback approach does not present the whole picture of the value of the sustainability upgrade.

There is also a lack of examples of good practice that has delivered significant benefits for limited capital investment. Difficulties in providing examples and communicating about **“lower key”** operational and behaviour changes, are being compounded by the media being interested purely in new buildings or technologies that require significant capital expenditure. The report notes that this is creating cynicism amongst facilities managers, and a general but incorrect assumption that asset replacement is the only significant change possible in existing buildings.

## The report makes four main recommendations:

1. To make the best use of the opportunities created by management's need to demonstrate compliance, FMs must change the way they talk about sustainability. They **should adopt a forward looking and risk based approach** in order to better articulate the potential impacts and ramifications of decisions that are made.
2. To help asset managers make justifiable investment decisions, FMs must follow a standardised approach to data collection and **develop a solid evidence base that is robust** in terms of granularity and accuracy. Without this, it will be hard to make a case that the returns from spending on sustainability are compelling.
3. Communication and engagement with suppliers, staff and senior management is often poor, and must be further developed and tailored. Lack of staff and supplier engagement can be a key gap in meeting organisational policy aims. A clearer approach that connects with everyday life is required, and this **should become an integral part of the organisational culture**.
4. Sustainability initiatives, particularly those involving outsourced providers, **must be spelt out as a requirement within the contract**. Otherwise, the survey shows, they will be overlooked.

## Editorial notes

The online survey of facilities managers was conducted by BIFM running from 8 April to 7 May 2014.

Of those responding, over 95% of the respondents were members of the BIFM. The sectoral split saw over 55% from private sector, 36% from the public sector with the remaining from third sector and not for profit organisations. Fifty-two per cent of respondents were from in-house FM departments, 32% from FM companies, with the remaining respondents from suppliers and consultancy practices. The survey helped establish trends, which were then investigated further in a workshop held on 4 June 2014 with eight invited FMs from across the FM spectrum, chosen to reflect the respondents from the survey.

The survey was originally developed by the BIFM and University of Reading, and was sponsored this year by Open Energi and supported by Acclaro Advisory.



## About BIFM

The British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM) is the professional body for facilities management (FM). Founded in 1993, we promote excellence in facilities management for the benefit of practitioners, the economy and society. Supporting and representing over 14,500 members around the world, both individual FM professionals and organisations, and thousands more through qualifications and training.

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