A Case Study from Px³

The British Film Institute Takes Steps to Measure and Reduce its Carbon Footprint

Establishing baseline figures and selecting a zero-carbon supplier are important steps on the journey to Net Zero

Founded in 1933, the British Film Institute (BFI) is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter and the UK's lead organisation for film and the moving image. A distributor of National Lottery funds, the BFI seeks to support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers. It also promotes the UK's screen industries including programmes and festivals while growing and caring for the BFI National Archive, the world's largest film and television archive.

Having declared a climate and ecological emergency, the BFI has pledged to reduce its emissions to Net Zero, exploring how quickly this can be done across plant, buildings and archives and committing to publishing its plans and progress.

Supporting its Digital First strategy, the BFI was keen to examine the emissions created the use of its information and communications technology (ICT), both by the organisation itself and by some of its key technology suppliers.

In order to establish a "baseline" assessment the BFI approached specialist consultancy Px³ late 2021 to undertake an investigation and analysis. The study examined the energy used and emissions created by various information technology

sources, including the computers used by staff and the databases and systems hosted on site.

The BFI also wanted to ensure that the energy and emissions from external services were captured as well, so Px^3 sought information from the major suppliers about their services, where they were located and how their energy was supplied.

Px^3's methodology and modelling, which has been used to calculate the carbon emissions of around a million ICT devices in use across 164 countries, reported detailed analysis and some surprising results.

Overall the BFI's use of ICT is calculated to be responsible for just over 77 metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per annum. This is equivalent to driving over 280,000 miles a year on the UK roads in a non-electric vehicle (about 11 times round the planet) and would require a forest of more than 90 acres of mature trees to remove the pollution from the atmosphere.

Notably more than 95% of the BFI's emissions were identified as being created by the on-site data centres and the equipment located within them, however one external supplier was notable for creating zero emissions. The BFI has selected Positive Internet to host some of their services and the organisation is based in a carbon negative business park, drawing their power directly from wind farms on the Cambridgeshire fens.

Reviewing the findings, Ewen Anderson, CIO at Px3 responded "It's great to see organisations like the BFI taking such an active role on sustainability. Gathering the data needed to understand the source of their emissions is a key step to delivering on Net Zero pledges and the selection of carbon-neutral suppliers is a very positive step. As a major cultural organisation, the BFI are playing a key role by taking actions to back up their commitment and vision, setting an example for others to follow."

The project lead at the BFI was Sustainability Lead Frank Horn, who commented: "On our journey to zero carbon, we are continuously looking to reduce our emissions in all activity areas. We were mindful that digital activity is only set to grow and that we were about to embark on essential digital upgrades. Establishing where our largest impacts were, ahead of this work, has helped inform the digital strategy going forward. Our thanks to Px^3 for assisting us with this important piece of work."