

# EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY INTO LANDSCAPING CONTRACTS

HOW TO...



Property managers play a key role in embedding sustainability requirements within landscaping contracts, and, alongside facilities managers, checking that contractors are operating as intended. Asset managers have an ongoing interest in ensuring that landscaping services comply with regulations alongside any additional requirements they may specify.

The way in which sustainability is incorporated within landscaping contracts must be stringent, fair and comprehensive to enable the intended interpreted by landscaping contractors and service providers. However, there must also be flexibility for a property manager to take into account any additional requirements guidance or best practice specified by asset managers.

The following considerations are paramount in ensuring best practice:

1. Choosing landscaping maintenance products that are designed for sustainability.
2. Working with suppliers so that they responsibly manage their impacts.
3. Minimising the environmental impacts that arise during landscaping operations.

Embedding sustainability requirements within landscaping services involves the consideration of the following elements:



## 1: PROCUREMENT PRACTICE

The procurement stage provides the primary opportunity to influence the sustainability impacts of landscaping contracts.

When agreeing the lease, sustainability issues should have been documented between the asset manager and its occupiers. Relevant sustainability requirements can then be cascaded within landscaping services contracts to define and confirm acceptance of responsibilities.

Due diligence and pre-screening questionnaires should include consideration of the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act. As this Act acknowledges landscaping as a high-risk service in relation to modern slavery, it is important that full checks have been undertaken in contractor selection processes prior to instruction.

Furthermore, landscaping contractors should pay at least the Living Wage, and have in place reasonable measures to ensure good working conditions. Given that importance of improving the gender balance within the landscaping sector, landscaping contractors should be actively encouraged to disclose and improve gender representation, and report periodically on their progress. There should be evidence to show that a landscaping contractor encourages and fosters an inclusive working culture and behavioural norms.

Ideally, landscaping sub-contractors should be required to operate a certified Environmental Management System, or at least have a documented process for identifying and managing significant environmental and/or social sustainability aspects and impacts.

Pre-screening should include a check whether landscaping sub-contractors have been convicted or had a notice served upon them for infringement of environmental legislation, with further investigation into the circumstances, with subsequent action, where necessary.

Contractors must also be aware of nuisance arising from their work, such as dust, noise, vibration and odours, and should work to mitigate and reduce these. Where complaints are made, property and facilities managers must ensure that these are clearly logged, and any relevant actions closed.

Importantly, if listed buildings or protected structures are present, property managers must ensure adequate protection measures are in place and adhered to.

It is important that property managers consider the development of specific clauses relating to sustainability for inclusion within landscaping contracts. The information set out within this guidance note may be helpful in guiding the development of these clauses.

While there are currently no set, standard sustainability clauses relating to landscaping contracts, property managers should consult a range of sources to develop relevant clauses that will drive continual improvement, and that are likely to be consistent with requirements set for landscaping contractors across the real estate sector. This process may include:

- Engaging facilities managers within a property or asset managers wider supply chain.
- Reviewing experience with existing contractors.
- Peer-to-peer discussions with other property managers in open forums.



## 2: PRODUCTS

Many pesticides used on landscaped areas can impact natural habitats. The use of pesticides and other chemicals should be understood and their impacts fully risk assessed to consider any effects on the environment and human health.

If the use of chemicals is deemed to be necessary, property managers must ensure that contractors possess relevant competency certificate(s), for example, LANTRA/BASIS for pesticides or RSPH/BPCA Level 2 Award in Pest Management for rodenticides.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) sheets are required and should be retained. The use of pesticides should be minimized, and can be avoided all together in some areas of landscaping. Formal agreements should be made with landscapers to document exactly what is acceptable.

Property Managers should any ensure landscaping products sourced have obtained relevant third-party sustainability certification standards where relevant.

In relation to the use of vehicles, property managers should consider including a requirement for an electrified fleet, especially if already supported by the adequate provision of onsite charging facilities.

### 3: TRAINING

Landscaping contractors have the potential to influence a property's sustainability performance, particularly in relation to energy and water consumption, biodiversity and waste generation.

It is important that early and ongoing engagement with landscaping contractors is undertaken to raise awareness sustainability objectives and targets, and to confirm that employees receive appropriate training.

Key aspects of awareness raising and training for landscaping contractors relates to, for example:

- Understanding industry-specific sustainability requirements, to meet asset and property managers' sustainably objectives and targets.
- Maintenance and improvement biodiversity in line with Property Manager's or Landlord's targets.
- The use of pesticides, chemicals and pesticide and rodenticide to align with asset managers' environmental objectives and targets.
- The efficient and effective use of energy-consuming equipment.
- Their use of water resources, including discharge of into waste water drains.

Landscaping personnel should have qualifications in place before coming to site. However, ongoing training is also essential. Training and targets should be reviewed periodically to ensure high standards are fully comprehended and met.

Training and sustainability performance targets should be reviewed periodically to support maintenance of high standards. Property and facilities managers should consider providing training material in languages other than English, to align with the demographics of the landscaping contractor's personnel.

### 4: LANDSCAPING AND ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY PERFORMANCE

The activities of landscaping contractors can have a significant impact on a building's sustainability performance, particularly in relation to biodiversity.

Improving biodiversity through landscaping at any property involves working with a variety of stakeholders who influence environmental impacts, with the landscapers having perhaps the largest influence.

A property manager should liaise with both the asset manager and occupiers to discuss how landscaped and planted areas, including internal planting, can be best managed, and should examine how they can be aligned to key objectives and targets.

Associated biodiversity objectives relate to:

- Improving aesthetics and general environment for the benefit of occupiers while aligning with health and wellbeing requirements.
- Contributing towards good air quality.

- Increasing the ability to absorb carbon and potentially insulate a property, for example, through a green roof.
- Creating natural barriers and covering certain areas, particularly in the context of car parks and retail parks
- Improving and increasing natural habitats



## 5: ONGOING MONITORING

### Performance standards

In order to ensure that high sustainability performance standards are achieved and maintained, it is important to review both the services provided and products used on a regular basis. This review should be against a clear set of output-based KPIs, and undertaken as part of annual contract reviews.

For landscaping, this could include, for example, data relating to landscaping waste generated and composted or health and safety incidents.

Where standards are found to be lacking, property managers should work collaboratively with the service provider to establish the reason for under-performance. This may relate to, for example, insufficient resourcing, training or communication. Following the review, an improvement plan should be mutually agreed and implemented.

### Regulatory requirements

Facilities Management should ensure there is a formal process in place to review changes in legislation and to ensure any applicable changes in legislations are included in contract renewals.



## 6: SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

As landscaping falls into a high-risk service category in respect of employment processes, checks should be undertaken routinely on the service provider.

This should include checking that directly employed staff and, as far as possible, any other staff in the supply chain are offered a safe place to work where there is no harassment, bullying, discrimination or unreasonable working conditions of any kind (e.g. unpaid work, excessive working hours). The Property Manager has responsibility for ensuring that there are demonstrable policies and processes in place to ensure this.