

On so many levels the last 12 months have been extraordinarily unusual. Whilst it would be difficult to extract too many positives from the pandemic, the major drop in energy demand – enabled by a dramatic increase in home working and a decisive reduction in global air travel – is surely the most significant.

In its latest 'net zero' progress report, published in October, the EU acknowledges that the past year's energy efficiency targets "may be met even though there were insufficient measures in place before the crisis". Accordingly, it stresses that there can be no grounds for complacency: "This is expected to be a temporary situation because the reduction of energy consumption has not been driven by structural measures. Without targeted climate measures, the economic recovery is likely to bring energy consumption back towards pre-Covid-19 crisis levels." (1)

"Now is the time for those in the built environment to capitalise on the recent reductions in carbon emissions and make the case for a more holistically energy-efficient future", writes Priva's Thierry Colignon.

Meanwhile, in the EU, the need for 'structural' change has been reinforced by the recent decision to increase the previous target of a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030 to at least 55% (2). With building and construction responsible for 39% of all carbon emissions in the world (3), the need for those in the built environment to 'step up' their efforts could hardly be more apparent.

The good news is that organisations and resources which can guide companies, consultants and installers towards a greener future have never been more plentiful. The World Green Building Council is a case in point, with its website and partner Green Building Councils providing a wealth of documentation that promotes an "intelligent approach to energy".

While individual improvements such as the installation of LED lighting and more efficient heating, ventilation and cooling can make a real difference, there is no substitute for a holistic approach. Hence the WorldGBC's call to minimise energy use in all stages of a building's life-cycle – not least by the integration of "renewable and low-carbon technologies to supply buildings' energy needs once their design has maximised inbuilt and natural efficiencies."

Here at Priva we are in no doubt that an overarching building management system (BMS) – such as our popular Priva Blue ID solution – can be hugely beneficial in this regard. By bringing together the management of individual building systems – such as air-conditioning, heating and lighting – a good BMS makes it far easier to monitor and control energy consumption. But in a period when the awareness of workplace wellness has improved significantly, it also enables changes to be made that nurture the health and productivity of employees.

These factors are set to become even more important as general awareness of carbon issues improves. Workers are sure to be drawn to companies that can demonstrably show their commitment to carbon reduction and the creation of healthier workspaces. So it's no wonder, then, that in December the

WorldGBC reported a significant increase in the number of organisations to have signed up to its 'net zero' carbon buildings commitment (4).

Simply put, organisations that don't play their part are going to be left behind in the mature green economy. So now really is the time to partner with a specialist or two and make those changes that ensure your company is helping to achieve those all-important decarbonisation targets.

Sources:

(1)

https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/progress_report_towards_the_implementation_of_the_energy_efficiency_directive_com2020954.pdf

(2) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1599

(3) <https://www.worldgbc.org/news-media/WorldGBC-embodied-carbon-report-published>

(4) <https://worldgbc.org/news-media/worldgbc-announces-18-new-signatories-net-zero-carbon-buildings-commitment>

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