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Pilot project to shrink carbon footprints

SIX local organisations - including two listed companies, a law firm and a university - are leading the way in measuring and managing the environmental impact of their activities.

They are doing this through an innovative online tool launched last week under a pilot project by British carbon-management consultancy The Carbon Neutral Company.

The programme, the first of its kind in Singapore, enables the organisations to specify their activities on Internet-based software, which then computes their carbon footprints.

The tool lets companies check their carbon emissions in real time, as well as helps them identify ways to reduce energy usage and save money, said Carbon Neutral's Asia Pacific managing director Rani Virdee.

The pilot programme combines CarbonView, a Web-based carbon management software tool developed by supply chain consultancy Viewlocity, with the carbon reduction expertise of The Carbon Neutral Company, said Ms Virdee.

A build-up of greenhouse gases has been widely blamed for climate change, a growing concern and a key global agenda item in recent years.

Companies have increasingly come under pressure to account for and reduce their environmental impact.

The six entities involved in the latest project are: mainboard-listed property developer City Developments and Pan-United Concrete, law firm WongPartnership, trading firm Jebsen & Jessen (SEA), ship repair firm Drydocks World Singapore and the National University of Singapore.

All except NUS paid to join the programme, with the fee based on the organisation's size.

WongPartnership managing director Dilhan Pillay Sandrasegara said the firm, which has a 'green force' to brainstorm ways to reduce its carbon footprint, was excited about being the first law firm in the pilot programme.

Carbon Neutral's pilot project is supported by the Economic Development Board, under its urban solutions programme.

EDB's director for clean-tech and urban solutions Goh Chee Kiong noted that, as a small and highly urbanised nation, Singapore needs carbon management to enhance its competitiveness in an increasingly carbon-constrained global economy.

'This pilot programme not only has the potential to address Singapore's emission reduction needs but can also be scaled up for use in other cities and countries,' said Mr Goh.

Singapore Environment Council executive director Howard Shaw said the pilot was 'a move in the right direction, as we're moving into a new era where carbon disclosure will become a necessary part of business reporting'.

Such tools, however, should be rigorously tested to ensure accuracy and standards, he added.

'There still needs to be a degree of standardisation in terms of carbon emission measurement,' he said.

Ever since the pilot programme was launched, Carbon Neutral has seen more interest from local companies, said Ms Virdee.

'Our experience shows us that organisations that implement carbon reduction programmes benefit from reducing operational costs, winning more business and enhancing their corporate reputation,' she added.

JESSICA CHEAM