



PART 1

Social Value for Bedfordshire SMEs

A BedX programme guide – preparing Bedfordshire businesses for supply chain opportunities from major regional investment projects.



Why Social Value Matters

The Social Value Act 2012 and the Procurement Act 2023 mean Tier 1 contractors are legally required to consider social value in all major contracts. That obligation cascades down through every tier of the supply chain, so SMEs increasingly need to evidence their contribution too.

Procurement Weight

Under the Procurement Act 2023, social value must be explicitly evaluated in major public contracts. Tier 1 contractors score it in tenders and pass that requirement down – meaning SMEs at every level must be able to demonstrate it to win and retain work.

Legal Obligation – Not Just Best Practice

The Social Value Act 2012 and Procurement Act 2023 place a legal duty on Tier 1 contractors to consider social value. To meet their own compliance obligations, they require Tier 2 and Tier 3 suppliers to evidence social value too – making it a contractual expectation for SMEs, not optional.

Community Benefit

Demonstrating social value proves your business delivers measurable economic, social and environmental benefit locally – exactly what your customers, including Tier 1 and Tier 2 contractors, need to show their commissioners and clients.



A Major Opportunity for Bedfordshire

Projects such as **Universal UK (UDX Theme Park)**, the **Luton Airport expansion**, **Power Court Stadium** and **Luton Hoo Golf Club** are set to generate significant supply chain demand – creating a once-in-a-generation opportunity for local SMEs to grow alongside landmark infrastructure investment.

£bn+

Investment Scale

Combined capital value of major local projects

10k+

Jobs Created

Roles across construction, services and operations

500+

You're Needed

Local businesses are the backbone of these supply chains





DEFINITION

What is Social Value?

Social Value means the **economic, social and environmental benefits** your business delivers beyond its core service – the positive difference you make to people, places and the planet.

- Think of it as your business's contribution to the community, recorded and evidenced.

Key Social Value Areas



Local Employment

Hiring from the local area, reducing unemployment



Skills & Training

Apprenticeships, upskilling and professional development



Local Supply Chain

Spending with other local businesses and suppliers



Community Engagement

Volunteering, charity support and local partnerships



Environmental Sustainability

Recycling, energy reduction and carbon commitments



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

Care-leaver employment and support for disadvantaged groups

What SMEs Can Deliver



Jobs & Apprenticeships

Local hires and structured apprenticeship programmes



Local Supplier Spend

Purchasing goods and services from nearby businesses



Volunteering & Charity

Staff time donated and fundraising for local causes



Recycling & Energy

Waste reduction programmes and lower energy use

RECORD KEEPING

Tracking Social Value

Record your Social Value data across these five categories – and make sure nothing is missed. Even simple spreadsheets work as a starting point.



→ Employment Data

Local hires, hours worked, postcodes

→ Training Hours

Courses, qualifications, apprenticeships

→ Supplier Spend

Invoices from local businesses

→ Environmental Initiatives

Waste logs, energy bills, recycling records

→ Community Engagement

Volunteer hours, charity donations, community events and partnerships

Evidence is Essential

Every claim must be backed by **verifiable documentation**. Contractors and commissioners will scrutinise your evidence – so build your file as you go.



Payroll Data

Confirms local employment and hours



Training Logs

Certificates, attendance records, CPD



Supplier Invoices

Spend with local and regional businesses



Charity Confirmations

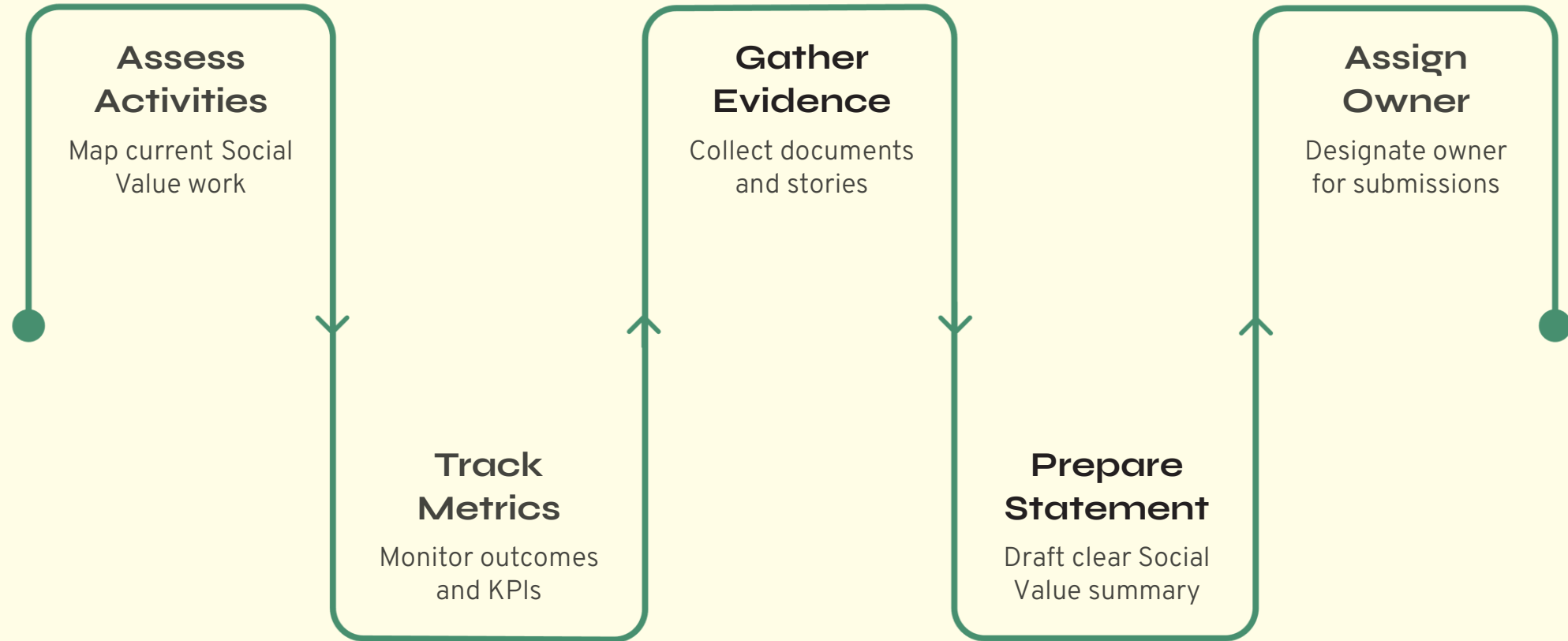
Letters, receipts and volunteer logs



Waste Records

Disposal certificates and energy bills

Becoming Tender Ready



Being tender-ready means your Social Value story is **documented, evidenced and ready to submit** – giving you a genuine competitive advantage when bidding for supply chain contracts.

Your 30-Day Action Plan

Week 1 – Assess

Review current activities across employment, training, supply chain and environment

1

2

Week 2 – Gather Data

Collect existing records: payroll, invoices, training logs and volunteering activity

3

Week 3 – Draft Policy

Write a clear Social Value policy and assign an internal owner to lead it

4

Week 4 – Prepare & Commit

Set up reporting templates and make measurable commitments for future tenders

The Outcome

Measure it. Evidence it. Win it.

Businesses that measure and evidence their Social Value will be **better positioned to join Tier 1 supply chains** – turning Bedfordshire's major investment projects into real, lasting growth for local SMEs.

- ❑ Ready to take the next step? Complete the free BedX Tender Readiness Diagnostic to understand where your business stands across all nine Bid Readiness Dimensions – and get a clear action plan to win work from Bedfordshire's major investment projects.



PART 2

Carbon Tracking & Net Zero

Carbon reduction is a core component of Social Value – this section shows you how to measure, evidence and report your environmental impact as part of your wider Social Value story.

- ❏ Carbon tracking is one of nine Bid Readiness Dimensions that BedX uses to help local businesses prepare for supply chain opportunities – everything in this section feeds directly into your Social Value evidence file.

COMPANION GUIDE

Carbon Tracking & Net Zero for Bedfordshire SMEs

A practical guide to measuring your carbon footprint and meeting Tier 1 contractor requirements



Why Carbon Matters for SMEs

Carbon reporting requirements don't stop at the top of the supply chain. The cascade effect means that if you supply to someone who supplies to a Tier 1 contractor, you will be expected to evidence your carbon footprint too.

Procurement Requirement

Carbon credentials are increasingly scored in tenders – and the requirement cascades down through every tier of the supply chain, not just Tier 1.

Supply Chain Pressure

Large contractors must report Scope 3 emissions – which includes YOUR emissions. Their Tier 2 suppliers will face the same pressure, passing it down to Tier 3 and beyond. The waterfall effect means no supplier is exempt.

Future-Proofing

Net Zero commitments protect your business from rising costs and regulation.



DEFINITION

What is a Carbon Footprint?

A Carbon Footprint is the **total greenhouse gas emissions** caused by your business activities – measured in **tonnes of CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)**.

- Think of it as your business's environmental impact, recorded and evidenced – just like Social Value.



Understanding Carbon Scopes

Emissions are categorised into three scopes. Most SMEs start with Scope 1 and 2 – but Tier 1 contractors increasingly require Scope 3 data too.



Scope 1 – Direct Emissions

From your own operations (gas boilers, company vehicles, on-site fuel).



Scope 2 – Indirect Emissions (Energy)

From purchased electricity, heat, or steam consumed by your business.



Scope 3 – Other Indirect Emissions

All other indirect emissions from your value chain (supply chain, business travel, waste, employee commuting).

What SMEs Can Measure



Energy Use

Gas and electricity consumption from utility bills.



Business Travel

Mileage, flights and public transport.



Waste & Water

Waste disposal, recycling rates and water consumption.



Supply Chain Spend

Emissions from goods and services purchased.

RECORD KEEPING

Tracking Your Carbon Data

Consistent data collection turns everyday activity into a credible carbon baseline. Start with your utility bills – even a simple spreadsheet is enough to begin.



Evidence is Essential

Every carbon claim must be backed by **verifiable data**. Contractors and commissioners will scrutinise your evidence – so build your carbon file as you go.

Utility Bills

Gas and electricity invoices showing kWh consumed

Mileage Records

Fuel receipts, fleet logs and business travel claims

Waste Certificates

Disposal records and recycling tonnage data

Supplier Invoices

Spend data to estimate supply chain emissions

Carbon Reports

Annual calculations or third-party assessments

DEFINITION

What is SBTi?

The Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) sets a framework for businesses to reduce emissions in line with climate science – specifically limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

- SBTi for SMEs is simpler than you think – it starts with measuring your baseline and committing to reduce it.



Carbon & Social Value – Better Together

Carbon tracking and Social Value are two sides of the same coin – and the requirement for both cascades down through every layer of the supply chain. Whether you're Tier 2, Tier 3 or beyond, Tier 1 contractors increasingly expect both from every business in their chain.

Environmental Social Value

Carbon reduction IS a Social Value metric – evidence both together.

One Report, Two Wins

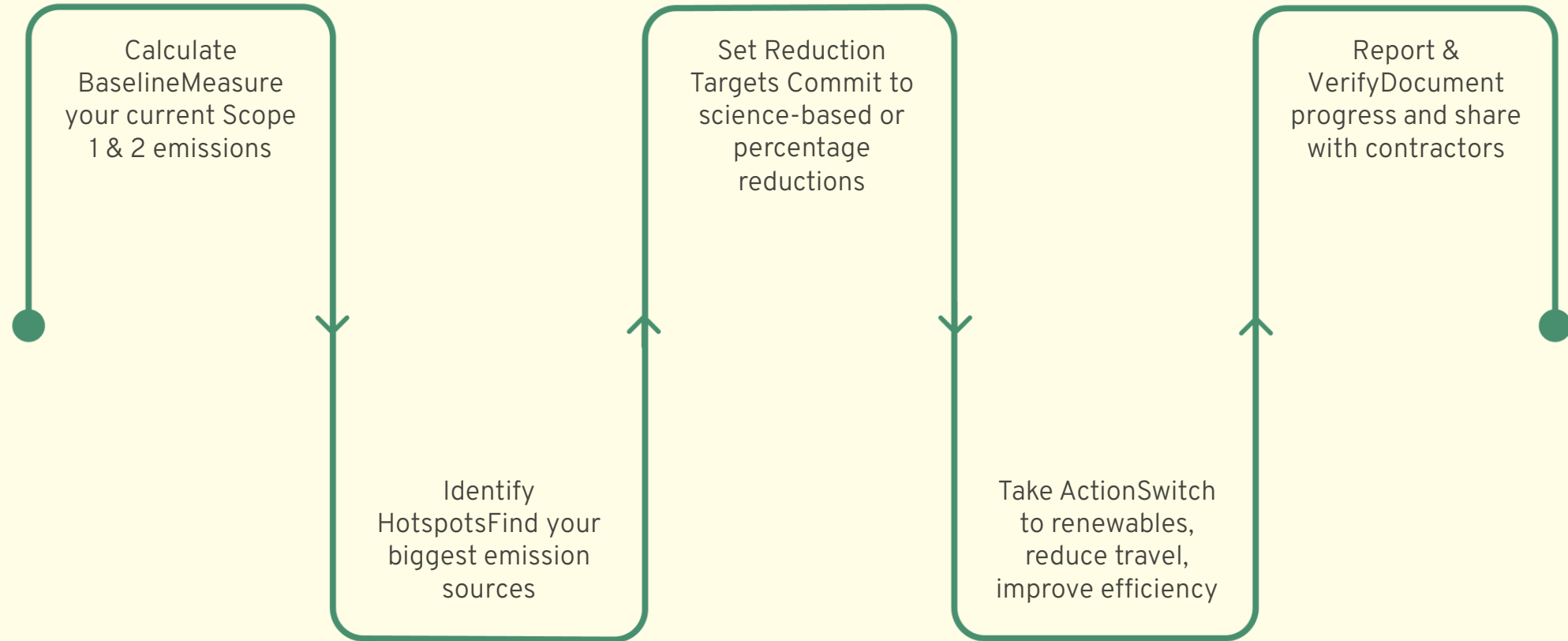
A single data collection process can satisfy both carbon and Social Value requirements.

Stronger Tender Bids

Combining carbon credentials with Social Value evidence makes your bid significantly more competitive.



Becoming Carbon Ready



Being carbon-ready means your emissions data is **measured, evidenced and ready to submit** – giving you a genuine competitive advantage in supply chain bids.

Your 30-Day Carbon Action Plan

Week 1 – Measure

Gather 12 months of energy bills, mileage logs and waste records.

1

2

Week 2 – Calculate

Use a free carbon calculator (e.g. DESNZ conversion factors) to estimate your tCO₂e.

3

Week 3 – Set Targets

Identify your top 3 emission sources and set a reduction goal.

4

Week 4 – Commit & Report

Write a simple Carbon Reduction Plan and assign an internal owner.

Where to Get Help

You don't have to figure this out alone. These organisations offer free or subsidised support specifically for SMEs on carbon, net zero and sustainability.

Cranfield University

Climate Action Planning for SMEs – a 2-day programme to build your carbon reduction plan and set a Net Zero target. Green scholarships available. Also offers the 18-week Ready for Net Zero Growth programme.

cranfield.ac.uk/som

Green Business Network

Local support for Bedfordshire businesses navigating environmental legislation, carbon reduction and sustainability. Free membership available for Central Bedfordshire businesses.

greenbusinessnetwork.co.uk

GB UK Business Climate Hub

Government-backed hub offering free net zero sector guides, carbon footprint calculators and practical tools tailored for SMEs. No sign-up required to access most resources.

businessclimatehub.uk

Carbon Trust

Free SME Carbon Footprint Calculator covering Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Trusted by thousands of UK businesses as a starting point for carbon measurement.

carbontrust.com

NatWest Carbon Planner

Free online tool – open to all UK businesses, not just NatWest customers. Guides you through four steps: measure, diagnose, plan and deliver. Developed with 2,000+ businesses.

natwest.com/carbonplanner

SME Climate Hub

Global initiative with free carbon calculators, action guides and a 1.5°C target-setting framework. Simple tools for businesses under 50 staff and more advanced tools for larger SMEs.

businessclimatehub.org

 Many of these resources are free. Starting with one tool – even a basic carbon calculator – puts you ahead of most SMEs in the supply chain.

The Outcome

Measure it. Report it. Win it.

Businesses that measure and evidence their carbon footprint will be **better positioned to join Tier 1 supply chains** – turning Bedfordshire's major investment projects into real, lasting growth for local SMEs.

- ❑ Ready to take the next step? Complete the free BedX Tender Readiness Diagnostic – Social Value and Carbon credentials are two of nine Bid Readiness Dimensions that will determine your competitiveness in Bedfordshire's major supply chains.

