BCIS®

CARBON ASSESSMENTS FOR COST EXPERTS:
10 TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

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There are four essentials for the construction industry to successfully carry out carbon assessments: competent professionals using a consistent methodology and reliable carbon data to deliver assessments using tools that harness both.

As a competent cost professional, you are perfectly positioned to measure and report on both costs and carbon at the same time, streamlining processes and enabling upfront, operational and whole life decisions that balance budget with environmental responsibility.

But what if you haven't worked with carbon data before?

Here are our top 10 tips to getting started.

1 Familiarise yourself with basic carbon terminology and the scope of carbon assessments

Don't be put off by **carbon acronyms**. The skills required for carbon estimating are the same as are used in cost estimating, and the same life cycle stages are followed for both, making integration of calculations more efficient.

2 Familiarise yourself with the RICS whole life carbon assessment (WLCA) for the built environment standard

At 220 pages long, it's unlikely you'll fly through the standard in a lunch time. However, understanding what's included in it and how you would find the information you need is a great first step.

3 Understand the regulatory framework you're operating in

There is no single national mandate for whole life carbon measurement and reporting - yet - but many projects already require assessments, depending on their location, type or size, and may determine the required format. Outside of these frameworks, delivering a standard RICS WLCA is a good starting point.

4 Explore the Built Environment Carbon Database (BECD)

Developed by BCIS in collaboration with key industry bodies, **BECD** facilitates free carbon data sharing across the industry. It includes project assessment data (buildings and infrastructure) and Life Cycle Assessments and Environmental Product Declarations you can use in your own assessments.

5 Practice on an existing project

While you familiarise yourself with carbon assessments, it can be useful to work on a previous project. Using past projects to assess what could have been done differently provides valuable insights for future projects.

6 Start early with both costs and carbon

Like cost estimating, carbon measurement should start at an early stage of a project with high-level assumptions, using average figures or archetype models, becoming more specific as the project progresses. As with costs, the greatest opportunity for carbon reduction exists at the start of a project where the most impactful changes are possible.

7 Identify carbon reduction strategies you can apply to live projects

Popular measures include focusing on materials selection, like exploring low-carbon alternatives, and design efficiencies, which includes optimising structural and operational performance to reduce embodied and operational carbon.

Remember, common assumptions are often incorrect. Some high-carbon upfront materials may result in lower whole life emissions and vice versa. And don't let the absence of a specific carbon reduction target hold you back. You could set an initial goal, say a 20% or 30% reduction, and track how close you come to achieving it through an iterative design process. Ultimately, any emissions reduction achieved is a step in the right direction.

8 Compare materials thoroughly

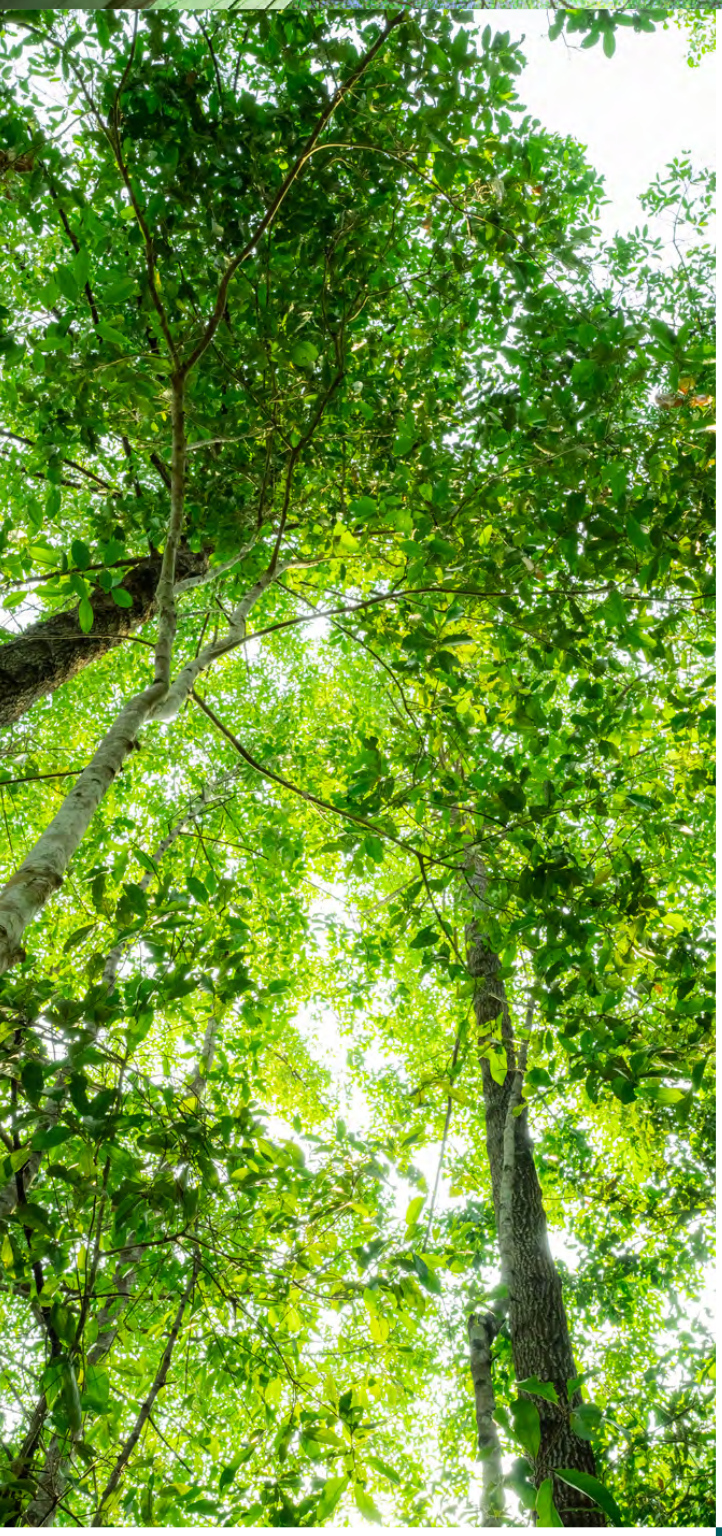
When evaluating upfront, operational or whole life materials costs and carbon values, ensure comparisons are made on a like-for-like basis. The BCIS Cost and Carbon Materials Database (part of BCIS Life Cycle Evaluator) standardises materials by unit of measure, enabling them to be realistically and reliably compared by factors including current and 12-month forecast costs as well as carbon values. If you're using other data, you'll need to ensure it's comparable.

9 Maintain an audit trail of any assumptions made

Keep a clear record of all assumptions in cost and carbon assessments to ensure transparency, consistency and reliability in reporting. This will be particularly helpful when carrying out further assessments on the same project and will also be crucial when reporting findings to project stakeholders.

10 Ask questions and seek feedback

Engage with colleagues and industry experts to refine your understanding and improve your approach. The integration of cost and carbon is a growing field, so collaboration and continual learning are key.



BCIS Life Cycle Evaluator

BCIS Life Cycle Evaluator simplifies and streamlines carbon estimating for cost experts. This tool guides you through the project stages to measure and report on cost and carbon at the same time, providing:

- BCIS's 60+ years of trusted construction cost data
- carbon data from the ever-expanding Built Environment Carbon Database
- full compliance with the RICS whole life carbon assessment (WLCA) for the built environment standard
- an audit trail of assumptions and calculations
- access to the BCIS Cost and Carbon Materials Database, enabling like-for-like comparisons of materials options
- archetype models for common building types to support early-stage, high-level cost and carbon estimates
- dashboard insights into materials and elements with the greatest cost and carbon impacts
- charts to plot trade-offs between, for example, the impact of future maintenance against upfront cost and carbon emissions
- reporting on the construction, operation and whole life stages, including NRM1, NRM3 and WLCA formats.

Ongoing support

BCIS regularly hosts **free webinars** and publishes **news** and **insights articles** on cost and carbon.

To stay updated, follow BCIS on **LinkedIn** and register for the **BCIS Carbon Newsletter**.