



A three month placement in the Procurement and Sustainability teams at the Natural History Museum

As Category Manager: Responsible Procurement at LUPC, my role is to support our members with their responsible procurement activity. One of the ways that I am doing this is by working two days per week on three-month placements within member organisations. My first placement was at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) where I helped them use and apply the Electronics Watch procurement toolkit, supported them in writing their modern slavery statement and provided guidance for their ISO 20400 assessment. It was an enriching experience, working with the procurement team and learning from Cristian Martin, Head of Procurement, who is passionate and committed to embedding sustainability into LSE's procurement activities. I also had the opportunity to work with the sustainability team and experience first-hand how they engage with the community to develop their [Sustainability Strategic Plan](#).

More recently, I have spent time with the Procurement and Sustainability teams at the Natural History Museum (NHM), supporting the delivery of their vision for a future where 'people and planet thrive.' The NHM are a fantastic organisation to work with and I love the fact they have pledged to become the first museum in the world to set a science-based carbon reduction target. What a goal!

The NHM have a clear commitment to sustainability that is embedded within their organisational work culture. You can see it in everything they do: from using solar panels in their buildings to their drive to reduce waste and the responsibly sourced produce in their café. Being a procurement specialist, I was particularly interested in their [Responsible Procurement Strategy](#).

As a trusted source of knowledge, the NHM recognise they need to take the lead in spreading the message of using resources responsibly. A big part of their strategy is their plan to encourage NHM's suppliers to be 'advocates of the planet' encouraging suppliers to commit to a range of initiatives such as reporting their carbon emissions, publishing information on their environmental activity and sharing resources with and supporting SMEs. One of my tasks was to work with the NHM to develop and implement a strategy to meet this objective. Recruiting their top 30 suppliers (in terms of spend and business criticality) as 'advocates for the planet' for the museum is a smart way of getting their suppliers on board with the sustainability agenda.

Kimberley Lewis, Environment & Sustainability Officer at NHM said: "It has been an absolute pleasure having Marisol within the team. Her time here has reinforced the value of procurement and sustainability working closely together and has helped us better understand the gravity of the task at hand in achieving our aspirations. Marisol's input has also been invaluable in helping determine the best approach for identifying sustainable procurement priorities which will influence our future plans."

I also helped the Museum to get the most out of their membership of [Electronics Watch](#), which all LUPC members are affiliated to but many are not fully aware of the benefits this entails. Their [Public Buyer Toolkit](#) is really useful as it supports affiliates' communication with contractors and promotes

contract compliance within their supply chain. I guided NHM on how to use the toolkit to apply the Electronics Watch contract conditions (included in the National Desktop and Notebook Agreement) as fully as possible. This helped them identify the factory locations where their goods are being assembled. With this information, links can be established between the NHM and its ICT suppliers, strengthening their capacity to monitor workers' conditions in NHM's supply chains.

A key part of the Museum's Modern Slavery Statement is its commitment to utilise its Sedex membership to help it operate responsibly, protect workers and source ethically. Sedex is one of the world's largest collaborative platforms for sharing responsible sourcing data on supply chains and the Museum wants to increase the participation of the platform amongst its own suppliers. One of their goals linked to their Sedex membership is to ensure that all garments worn by Museum staff and contractors, as well as all museum related garments for sale at retail outlets, are manufactured in factories that are subject to regular social audits.

I checked all their garment suppliers and contacted those who were not on Sedex (including indirect suppliers that provide uniforms for their front of house staff) to include them on their database. I then verified self-assessment questionnaires, social audits and workers information available. This information will now be used by the Procurement team to engage with suppliers to improve workers conditions in their supply chains.

The NHM's, Procurement Manager, Andy Davies welcomed my support: "Marisol was like finding an extra gear for the Museum's responsible procurement programme. Not only was she able to pick up the ball with our suppliers of garments, electronics and other commodities by advancing the monitoring of supply chains and promoting respect for labour rights in factories, she was able to contribute constructively to our thinking. Our vision – for a future where people and planet thrive – requires figuring out how best to enlist our key suppliers as advocates for the planet. Marisol's knowledge and experience brought a different perspective to that thinking."

My dissertation for my Masters in International Law was on Business and Human Rights and I had the opportunity to research many businesses' approach in this area. For me, the Natural History Museum's attitude to sustainability is one we can learn from - I certainly did. They have a clear, measurable sustainability strategy which is looking to not only take into account their own activity but their suppliers' activity too. They are committed to responsible procurement and working with both the sustainability and procurement teams, I was able to see how the two functions go hand in hand. It was great to get on-the-ground experience working at such an interesting institution where sustainability is clearly at the forefront of all of their activity.

My top tips for any of our members, no matter where you are on the sustainability agenda are:

Make the most of any benefits you have from your membership of organisations like Electronics Watch and Sedex. Both have many tools and resources which you can use to help you procure responsibly. Electronics Watch's Public Buyer Toolkit is one of many and others include: [Company Performance Tracker](#); [Affiliation Action Guide](#) and other guidance created specifically for public buyers such as their latest [How to Protect Workers from Chemical Hazards in Electronics Supply Chains](#).

Secondly, it's not enough to just embed sustainability in your own organisation. You need to educate others in your supply chain, get them committed to responsible practices, share good practice. Keep spreading the message to those in your supply chain who may not have access to the Sustainability resources that you do.

My next placement, starting in January, will be at the Royal College of Physicians. Keep an eye out for my monthly blog where I will be sharing snippets of my learnings during my time there with you.

If you would like any support with your responsible procurement practices, please get in touch with [Marisol Bernal](#) Category Manager: Responsible Procurement at London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC).