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# CARBON OFFSET CALCULATOR ENABLES REGIONAL TREE PLANTING

To achieve its goal of planting 200,000 trees and raising awareness of carbon sequestration, the new initiative One Hull of a Forest (OHOF) needed to galvanise the region’s residents and businesses into action. Aware that its vision of a website with the world’s simplest carbon offset calculator to inspire donations and volunteers required specialist expertise, it turned to the Aura Innovation Center (AIC).

CASE STUDY: One Hull of a Forest

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## THE CHALLENGE

Develop a quick, simple way for people to calculate and offset their carbon emissions.

Hull and East Riding is the least forested region in the UK, with just 2.6% of woodland cover compared to the national average of 8.4%\*. OHOF aims to put Hull on the map for its reforestation efforts as part of the Government's Northern Forest initiative to plant 50 million trees along the M62 corridor.

"I hope that local people will get behind the project and help us create woodland areas for a better, greener environment and to address climate change issues," says founder Andy Steel, who has already identified 641 potential planting sites.

OHOF aims to do this by working with individuals, communities, schools and businesses to generate funds and train volunteers to plant and look after the trees.

To reach these groups and scale its support, OHOF set its sights on creating a dedicated website with an unprecedentedly easy way for people to calculate their carbon emissions and offset them by making a donation.

## THE SOLUTION

Having met AIC Innovation Manager Dave Dawson at one of the AIC's Energy Breakfast meetings, Andy approached him for his help.

Dave secured funding for the project from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and identified the University of Hull's Dr Dionysios Demetis - an academic specialising in information systems management - as the ideal expert.

Bringing his expertise in e-business strategy and design to bear, Dr Demetis analysed existing carbon offset calculators - and was struck by their complexity in terms of user experience.

"I gave up within seconds because of the level of detail and time they require from the user," he says. "In my view, they put off the overwhelming majority, even those who would like to make a donation to a good cause."

Dr Demetis determined to remove every single obstacle to user interaction and simplify the calculator process. After creating multiple options until he could simplify it no further, he customised an interface for the final version of the calculator with the website ([www.onehullofaforest.uk](http://www.onehullofaforest.uk)) - for which he also developed the site map and wireframes.

## THE RESULT

The website's carbon calculator requires visitors to input just one figure about their annual travel miles to generate carbon offset and proposed donation values.

The site's impact is expected to be much wider than this though. "It has the potential to act as an 'ethical gateway' to carbon sequestration for regional businesses" says Dave, "making it quick and easy for them to get directly involved in carbon-reduction activity."

OHOF has already scheduled to plant 20,000 saplings in school grounds across Hull and has a public relations campaign ready to go when the time is right to promote the website to target groups across the region. In the meantime, Andy is delighted, saying the AIC has helped "extend our skillset" and delivered an effective fund-raising website - ahead of time too!

"It was great to work with the AIC and the University of Hull," he says. "They not only have expert resources where we don't but were also supportive and completely understood our business issue and how they could navigate to get a solution."

\* [www.onehullofaforest.uk](http://www.onehullofaforest.uk)



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