



# SUSTAINABLE STEEL - A JOURNEY

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Sustainability is, arguably, multifaceted. For Auckland-based structural steel contractor Grayson Engineering, it means minimising its impact on the environment, supporting the community and the wellbeing of its staff, and safeguarding the future of the industry.

“We look at the effect of everything we do; we’re focused on minimising our footprint,” says David Moore, managing director, Grayson Engineering. “But it’s not just about the environment, it’s also about keeping ourselves economically viable.

“Our aim is to carry out our business with the highest level of efficiency and minimal environmental impact. We believe we can do this by implementing effective processes and procedures, and embracing new technology where appropriate.”

It’s a process of continuous improvement and the Sustainable Steel Council (SSC) Charter has given Grayson the ‘tools’ to progress.

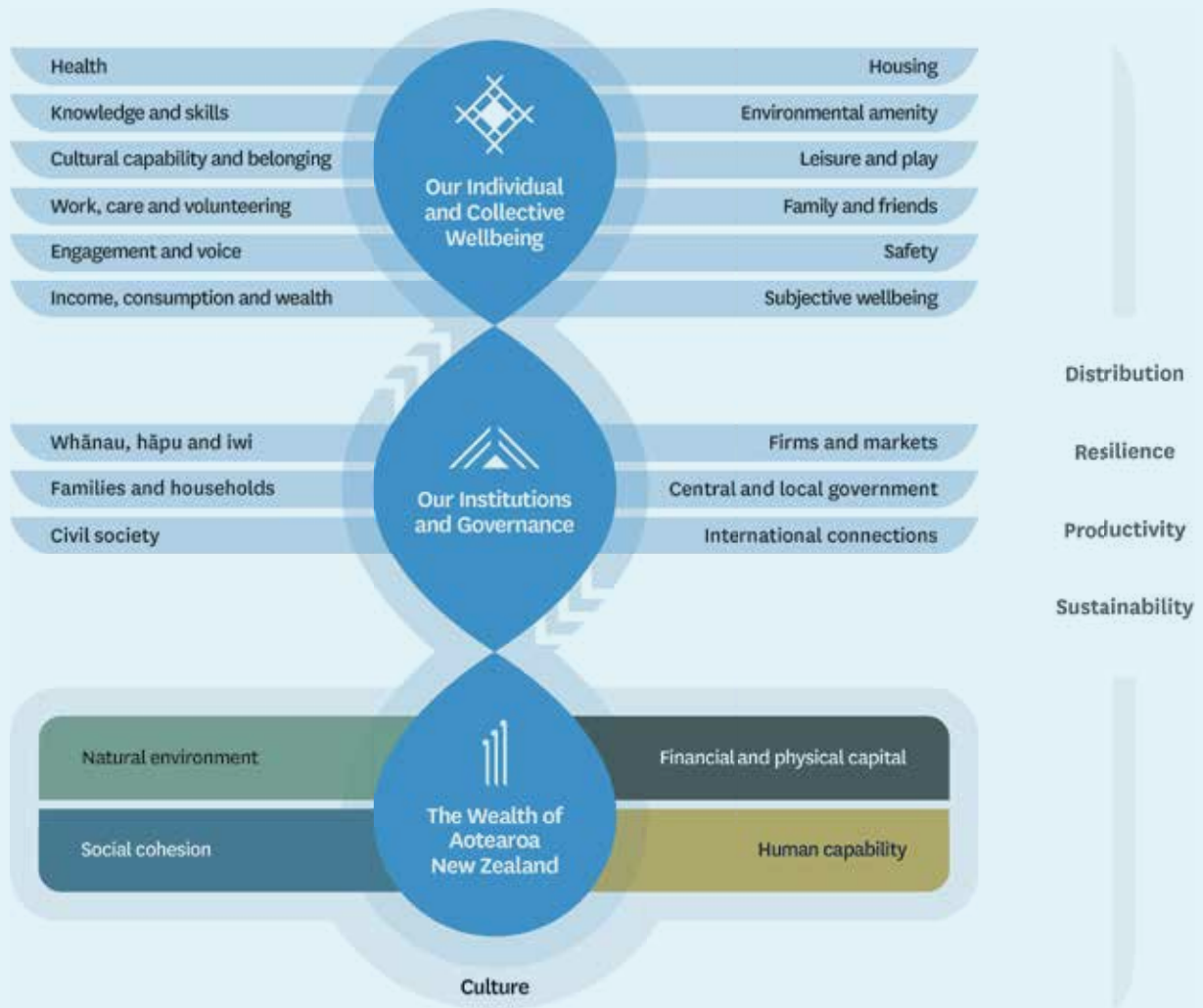
## THE SSC CHARTER

The SSC is educating its members about the carbon in their businesses, responsible sourcing, sustainable strategies and developing a supplier code of conduct. It also has plans to support members on the road to an environmental management system. Its debut initiative is the SSC Charter, which aims to guide businesses on their sustainability journey.

The path to Chartered status takes companies through an independent audit process, which rates them across the natural, financial, social and human capitals, in line with the Treasury’s Living Standards Framework and based on the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

Participants are awarded a score from zero to three – depending on their state of evolution – on topics ranging from waste reduction, energy consumption and supplier code of conduct to diversity, community engagement and staff wellbeing.

## LIVING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK



Moore says Grayson barely scraped through with a pass following the first audit. “We didn’t have a clue what the first audit would be like. Essentially, it was a bare bones look through our organisation.”

Grayson’s approach was complete transparency. “There’s no point making stuff up and saying you’re doing something when you’re not, it defeats the purpose,” says Moore. “The intent is to make you aware of what you are doing and what you need to do.”

According to the SSC, many organisations are doing plenty in this space already without realising it.

Grayson was no exception. “What really cost us our points in the first audit was the fact that, implicitly, we had various procedures already, but we hadn’t documented them and we needed to provide further evidence to move from a score of zero or one up to a three,” says Moore. “It was just a matter of formalising the procedures, creating policy documents and circulating them throughout the business.”

At the end of the first audit, Grayson had a sustainability benchmark for the business and, importantly, a ‘roadmap’

to help focus its efforts ahead of the next audit.

“We picked out the things that we weren’t getting full marks on and did our very best to remedy the situation and boost our score,” says Moore.

For example, there were post-audit actions related to staff training and wellbeing, the environmental impacts of different activities and general record keeping.

Grayson assigned the work to a team of two to progress: a senior manager to provide guidance on the procedures and another to “do the heavy lifting” and develop the supporting documentation. For the latter, Moore estimates it took 10 hours per week for 10 weeks.

He says that having an available resource is important. “Support someone by giving them the time and the space to work on it, between a half and one day per week, and you’ll have it sorted in no time.

“But make sure to chip away at it each week, don’t skip because it’s very hard to maintain momentum and get motivated to jump back in,” says Moore.



Grayson Engineering managing director David Moore (R) consulting with a staff member on the workshop floor.

**The audit provides structural steel contractors with a sustainability benchmark for their business and a roadmap with things to focus on. But they don't have to choose to do everything at one time.**

It was a model that worked well for Grayson. Following the second audit, it achieved an impressive 96 percent, making Grayson the most improved SSC Chartered company.

Moore attributes this success to taking the process seriously and not getting offended by being marked low. "We didn't treat it like criticism. To pass the audit you have to meet a standard; if you're not meeting that standard you have to make changes. Like any system you need a datum to start from and things should only get better from there."

Of the policies and procedures, Moore says they should be easily accessible and simple to understand, not onerous

and impractical. He also says that they're not worth the paper they're written on unless the team is "walking the talk" and adhering to them. Enforcement is par for the course and it's the job of two members of Grayson's health and safety team to remind others.

"You do have to take employee wellbeing and health and safety seriously; a lot of this is well embedded in both SSC and Enviromark," says Moore. "On the health and safety side it's enhancing our work environment and we're deriving satisfaction from the fact that we're striving towards something better."

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- DAVID MOORE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GRAYSON ENGINEERING

## STEPPING STONE TO ENVIROMARK

Now, Grayson is on the road towards an Enviromark certification, which ensures organisations are meaningfully managing their environmental impacts and have a robust environmental management system in place.

“We’re seeing Enviromark or ISO embedded in close to 20 percent of the technical specifications of work we’re bidding for, and that figure is growing,” says Moore.

He says the SSC Charter is a solid, low-cost entry point and a natural building block for Enviromark. “It gives you a head start. If you get an SSC mark in the 90s you’ve probably cut your workload by about a third for achieving Enviromark bronze certification.”

Grayson has engaged environmental services company Toitū to guide it towards Enviromark bronze standard and beyond.

“Toitū said we’re ploughing through it more quickly than others,” says Moore.

The team is digging deeper into everything it does. The aim is to ensure that it is totally compliant with the rules and regulations for the region. In Grayson’s case this is

the Auckland Unitary Plan, and all of the subsets of that plan that dictate how a business is operated from an environmental and sustainability perspective.

“Around the country there will be different rules and regulations, which may be more or less onerous than Auckland,” says Moore.

He advises anyone going down the SSC or Enviromark accreditation road to be prepared for little surprises. “It forces you to look at every aspect of your business. The process raised our awareness of the issues and risks in our business so that we could mitigate them before someone knocks on our door. There’s nothing more costly than having to spend a large amount of money or even being partly shut down because you’re not compliant with something.”

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**“DON’T BE INTIMIDATED BY IT. PROVIDED YOU’RE RUNNING A BUSINESS THAT IS REASONABLY COMPLIANT AND YOU HAVE SOME GOOD SYSTEMS IN PLACE, GIVE IT A GO. WE DID, AND IT WAS A REALLY GOOD JOURNEY AND A LOT EASIER THAN I THOUGHT.”**

– DAVID MOORE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GRAYSON ENGINEERING

## TANGIBLES

It’s not just about policies and procedures, there are also some tangibles. For example, scrap metal generated from drilling holes (swarf) with a cutting oil is collected in bins that go out into the yard. These bins have holes in the bottom so any rainfall goes straight through onto the ground. The oil residue coating the swarf could be washed down with it into the stormwater.

“So we have to come up with a solution for that,” says Moore. “It may be that we keep the swarf inside until the scrap merchant comes to pick it up. But it begs another question: what steps are they taking to ensure the oil doesn’t enter the drains. So we generated a supplier code of practice.”



Want to know more? Visit the SSC website, [sustainablesteel.org.nz/ssc-certification](http://sustainablesteel.org.nz/ssc-certification).