

Apex VA Environmental Impact Assessment

9th September 2024

Apex VA is a 1-person business running from home, and as such the sustainable impact and choices of the owner on a personal level are very much intertwined with the business operations.

GOAL: To be more aware of the business's environmental impact and take positive action to reduce it.

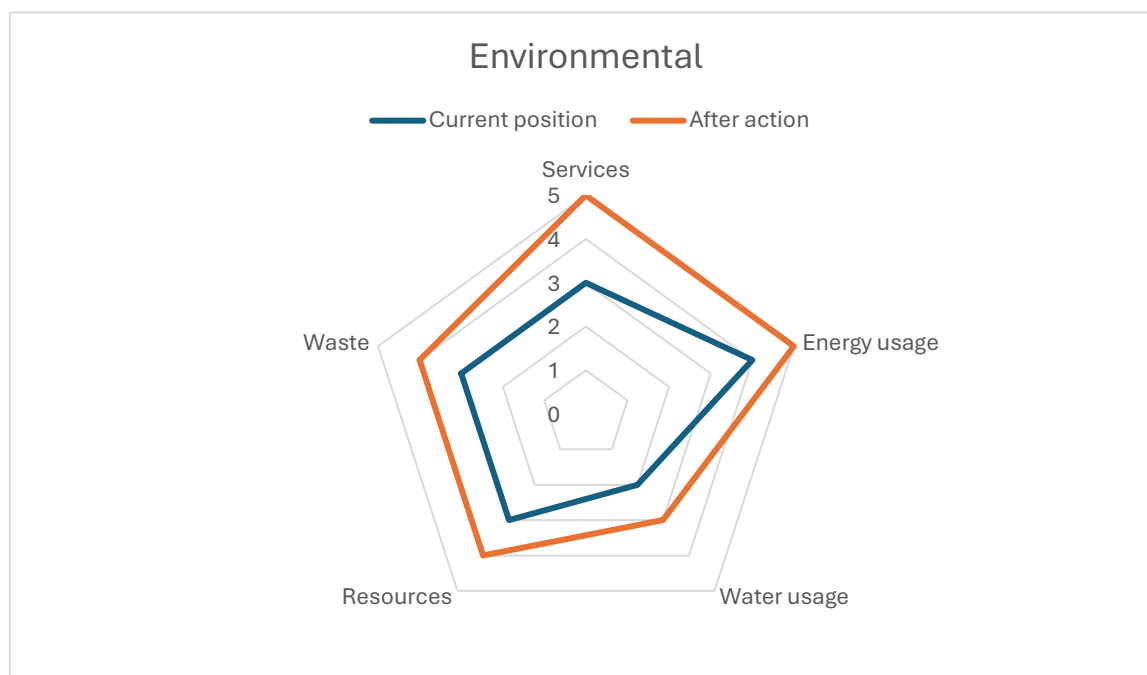
What Apex currently does:

- Uses smart meters with an IHD (In Home Display) unit to monitor energy usage and take active steps to reduce it, (e.g. using one heat/movement producing item at a time to ensure maximum use of energy created by solar panels).
- Solar panels installed.
- Water butt installed.
- Ethical energy supplier (Octopus, 100/100 on GSG). 100% renewable fuel mix.
- Top 10 ethical UK bank (Starling). Since Starling is a paperless, branchless bank, its carbon footprint is significantly lower than some of its competitors. It uses renewable energy to power its four offices and its debit card is made from recycled PVC plastic. Starling will plant a tree for every friend you refer – so far it says it's planted 60,000 trees. **However**, in 2021, Starling was criticised for accepting funding from Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, despite its longstanding opposition to fossil fuels. Critics pointed to the hypocrisy of this move, given the key role that fossil fuels play in Qatari financing. As a result, Starling Bank receives a middle rating for Other Criticisms (Good Shopping Guide).

Key Actions:

- Second-hand tech
- Recycled paper
- Check bank and octopus
- Sustainability statement
- Research digital waste and reduce mine!
- Mini impact assessment
- Possibly change bank?
- Digital Waste reduction service – clearing out clouds, emails, Canva, etc.
- Change mission statement (targeting beneficiary group – low income customers, reduced fee for charities, conserving the environment)
- Charitable donations
- Social media posts – spread the word!
- Put 'Save paper – please avoid printing if you can!' on all paperwork sent out (contracts, booklets, etc.)

Impact Assessment Graphs:



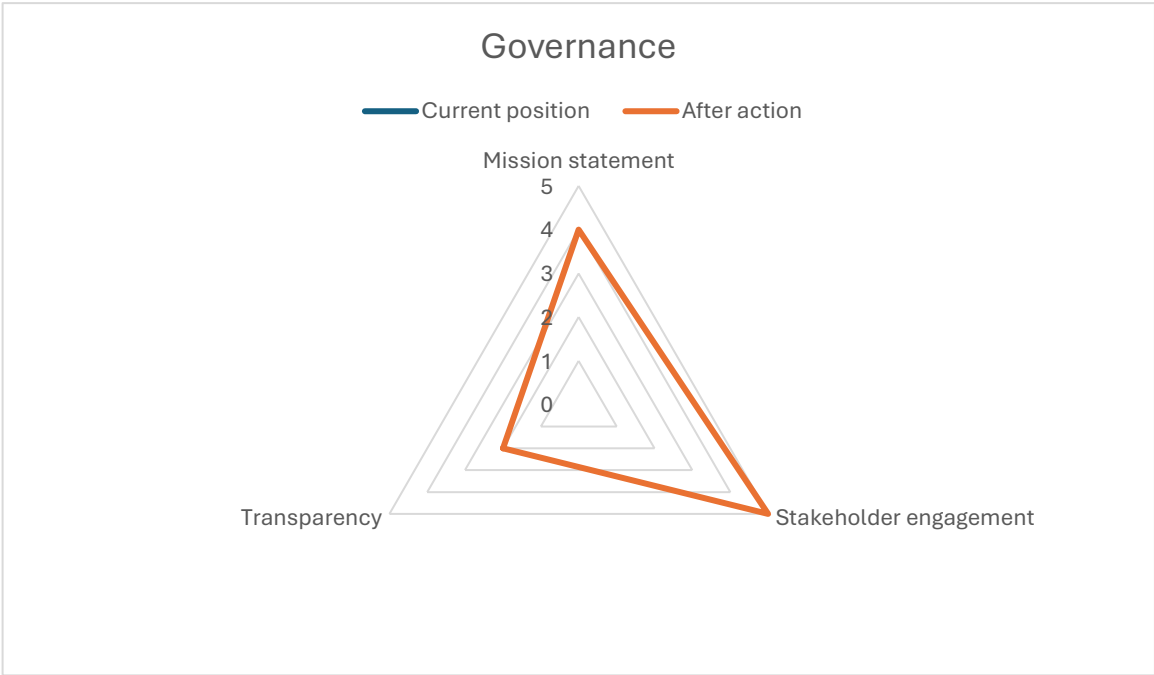
Key points:

- Apex VA currently only offers online services and as such, waste produced by production/products is zero. However, the business needs to look into actively engaging in the circular economy through circulating digital resources, e.g. creating templates. Also, digital waste (and specifically it's storage), is a growing problem. Not only will Apex VA clear out it's own digital waste, (e.g. on OneDrive/Dropbox, Canva, emails), but it will offer this as a VA service to clients).
- Resources used are kept to a minimum, but a conscious effort will be made to take notes digitally as opposed to physically, and going forward all paper purchased will be recycled. Apex VA will investigate the possibility of pens made from recycled plastic, or make more use of pencils. When it comes to upgrading tech, Apex VA will investigate the possibility of using second hand hardware.
- Apex VA will continue to ensure that hazardous waste, (e.g. batteries), are disposed of safely – including old mobile phones.
- Apex VA will continue to monitor energy usage and water usage. Keeping this at the forefront of our minds will help us continue to improve in these areas.



Key points:

- Apex VA is run by a woman and currently the only outsourced work is also to a woman-owned business. Apex VA will keep diversity at the forefront of their mind when making decisions about further outsourcing and business purchasing.
- Apex VA will make an effort to buy local when it comes to making purchases.
- Apex VA uses a UK top 10 ethical bank, (Starling), but there are some question marks surrounding their funding from Qatar's sovereign wealth fund – this may be looked into in due course.
- When it is financially viable, Apex VA will consider offering a price reduction on VA services to charities. Apex VA would also ultimately like to offer scholarship places on coaching programmes to those most in need (again when financially viable).
- Apex VA will start to make charitable donations of £10/month.



Key points:

- Apex VA will review it's mission statement to include environmental, social and economic values.
- Apex VA will inform it's stakeholders (clients), of it's new drive and mission statement. It will include a statement about not printing/saving paper on all paperwork sent out.
- Apex VA will publish it's Environmental Action Plan on the website