

# Conor Killeen

At Sterling, our highly experienced team members and their passion for what they do are central to who we are. We spoke with Conor Killeen, Environment and Sustainability Officer to learn more about Sterling's approach to environmental sustainability across its global facilities.

## Can you briefly describe your background and current role at Sterling?

I joined Sterling in May 2020 on an industrial placement for my dissertation, whilst in the process of studying for a masters in Sustainable Chemical Engineering. Following my industrial placement, I then spent a year at Sterling as an EHS graduate. I then stepped into the new role of Environment and Sustainability Officer based at Sterling's site in Dudley, Northumberland, UK in Autumn 2021.

## What is the Environment and Sustainability Officer's role at Sterling?

With mine being a new role within the organisation, my responsibilities are still constantly evolving. I am currently focusing on helping to develop Sterling's energy and carbon reduction programme, looking into how we manage waste on site and supporting the wider EHS team.

I also carry out a range of other activities, including participating in hazard studies, approving process environmental impact assessment documents (PEIADs), handling our EcoVadis submissions and other general energy reduction activities. I am also starting to get more involved with the process safety side of things, such as hazardous area classifications and beginning to roll out training on hydrogen sulphide hazards, as well as ground water monitoring and air emissions monitoring.

I collaborate with other departments across Sterling, such as new product introduction (NPI) and process engineering. This is to ensure environmental sustainability is considered during decision making throughout the company. We are in the process of developing policies to ensure that we continuously make better, green choices; aiming to make environmental considerations a standard part of continuously improving our sites when upgrading them.

Following on from my dissertation, carbon footprinting is also something I am involved with Sterling and I will be helping to roll this out across the company in order to understand the global impact of our operations.

I'm really excited to see where the role takes me and the organisation, especially given sustainability and the environment are such hot topics within the industry and across the globe.



## Fast Facts

### ROLE

Environment and Sustainability Officer

### STARTED AT STERLING

May 2020

### EDUCATION

MSc in Sustainable Chemical Engineering

### SPECIALISATIONS

Sustainability, chemical engineering, EHS

## Why is environmental sustainability top of mind for Sterling?

Environmental sustainability is a common theme amongst all organisations right now, not just those in the pharmaceutical industry, and everyone is seeking to innovate new ways to reduce their impact on our planet.

At Sterling we recognise our responsibility to reduce the impact of our operations on the environment and aim to lead the way in developing our policies and processes to eventually achieve carbon neutrality.

We have chosen to appoint a dedicated team to help us achieve our aims, and I think our recent investment shows how committed the company are to environmental sustainability. So it's an exciting team to work within, as we explore ways to continuously improve our processes, whether through incremental changes to systems, or larger investments, so that we minimise our environmental footprint, to help us achieve our goal of reducing our Dudley site's emissions by 50% by 2025.

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## How does your role fit in with and support the global organisation?

As a global business, we aim to create 'One Sterling'. This means our customers and employees will have the same experience of our organisation, regardless of which site they are visiting, have a project at, or are working at. The same applies to our environmental sustainability goals.

Currently, I am carrying out similar sustainability gap analysis exercises at our other facilities, to the ones that I conducted at Dudley. This will help us establish our current impact, globally, and how we might make changes and improvements to ensure we meet our overall environmental sustainability goals.

It will also highlight where we can adopt best practices from each of our facilities, and roll them out across the Sterling network, in the same way that we do with various other processes.

## What is Sterling doing to help meet its objective of reducing carbon emissions by 2025?

We do a variety of things, such as ensuring we use energy-efficient lighting within our facilities, our teams proactively try to use greener chemistries, and we constantly seek ways to reuse and recycle a variety of types of waste across our sites.

At Dudley, 85% of our electricity is generated through our on site combined heat and power (CHP) plant, but any electricity we do buy from the national grid is from renewable energy sources.

Our on site biological treatment plant treats our own aqueous waste, the waste from local businesses in our area and other pharmaceutical organisations, to help us and others reduce their environmental impact.

We also have an anaerobic digestion plant, which allows us to treat hazardous waste at our site; which creates low carbon biomethane that we supply back into the national grid.

Additionally, we are continuously reviewing and looking at how we can improve on site processes, whether that's changing the solvents we use or the way things are made, or looking out for leaks on plant, to help us minimise our environmental impact and create more efficient processes for our customers.

## Why should a customer choose to work with Sterling when seeking a CDMO who prioritises sustainability?

We have been awarded a gold medal by EcoVadis, which is an international ratings platform that assesses a company's sustainability on a range of criteria. The rating places our Dudley site in the top 1% of pharmaceutical companies globally, and I think that in itself demonstrates Sterling's commitment to sustainability and proves that we have priorities that extend beyond the bottom line. We want to make changes and choices that are better for our environment, our employees and their families, and the local communities we are a part of.

We have a team that is dedicated to assessing our environmental impact, and how we can work to minimise it, and I think that shows that we want to progress and the work our team does helps futureproof operations. It also helps make processes more efficient, shortens lead times, and demonstrates our commitment to innovation. We talk often about our innovative approach to customer processes and projects, and our sustainability commitment just adds another layer to that.



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