

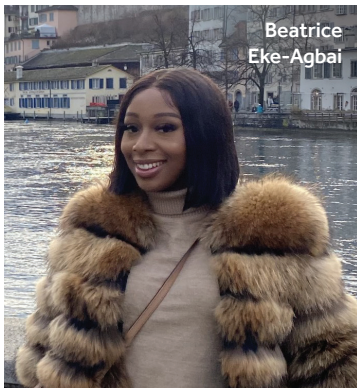
MY ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNEY

Beatrice Eke-Agbai, sustainability manager at AVK, explains the benefits of saving carbon as a career

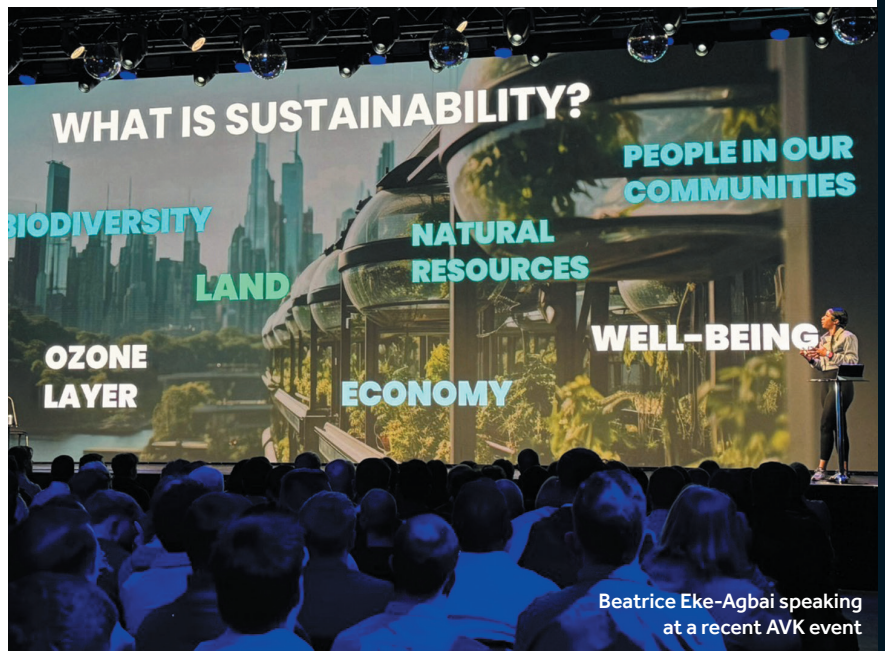
+ I'VE BEEN AWARE OF THE environment ever since I was very young. My mum is a very conscious recycler, so growing up she was always telling us things like 'Wash your containers and let them dry before you put them in a recycling bin'.

Initially, I was going to study pharmacy but then went travelling after my A-levels. During that time I noticed that a lot of countries outside the West don't have the same awareness of global warming and climate change. We talk about recycling and reducing emissions like it's a global thing and only successful if everybody does it. But it's actually a Western thing and many people are unaware of how dire the situation really is.

When I returned to the UK, I wanted to increase that awareness so began a degree in environmental science at university. I thought that if I got a better understanding of what climate change is, I could make more of an impact. Since every industry, from construction to design to marketing, needs environmental sustainability, working in environmental science allows me to do something I care about, as well as giving me the opportunity to work in a vast number of different areas.



Beatrice Eke-Agbai



Beatrice Eke-Agbai speaking at a recent AVK event

"For a long time, people would brush off the environmental factor, saying, 'We're trying'. That doesn't cut it any more"

THE ECO FACTOR

Sustainability now has a massive influence in projects involving transportation. When we tender for a job, it can make 10-20% of the tender. For a long time, people would brush off the environmental factor, saying, 'We're trying' or 'We're looking into it'. That doesn't cut it any more. Now clients demand to see your sustainability comments and reports.

More people are also starting to understand sustainability from a moral perspective. Getting across the importance of reducing carbon has always been difficult because it's invisible. We can see the effects of air pollution, but the long-term effects of carbon emissions are only just starting to cut through.

The problem is that we're going to sit on our hands until 2040 then spend trillions on trying to offset carbon. If we take responsibility for what we're doing now and start making that reduction, we could avoid that expense, as well

as reducing the harm done to the world's ecosystems.

LONE WOLF

The real highlight of my work is when I get project directors coming to me and suggesting solutions to environmental challenges. It means they are listening to me, my emails aren't being ignored, and when I speak at an event, people are actually listening to what I'm saying.

Working in sustainability can make you feel like you're a lone wolf. No one likes you; you're just going to make people's lives more difficult when you ask them to record a lot of data. So when senior leaders come over and initiate a conversation, I feel that my work is going somewhere.

At some point in the future, I would love to be able to raise more awareness around sustainability back in Nigeria, as well as show young people the careers that are available in the industry.



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