

A practical guide for businesses

Get More Sustainable Fast



**BANK OF
SCOTLAND**

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide pulls together handy hints and best practice from expert sources across four main areas of sustainability – energy, transport emissions, waste and recycling, and water usage. The tips range from simple, but often overlooked, ideas to more creative ways to go green. Wherever you are on your sustainability journey, and whatever the size of your business and your budget, there's something to help you take the next step.



WHY GET SUSTAINABLE?

Shaping a responsible future
Benefits of being sustainable

PRACTICAL STEPS TO TAKE



Energy: Top tips to help your business save energy



Transport: Greener travel tips to help you cut your emissions



Waste and recycling: How to reduce waste in your workplace



Water: Simple steps to help you start saving water



SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

Selling sustainability to your staff
Implement a sustainable future
Sustainability and hybrid working
How we can help you become more sustainable



Useful resources



SHAPING A RESPONSIBLE FUTURE

Sustainability is no longer a 'nice to have'. Businesses of all sizes have an essential role to play in helping Scotland meet its target of net zero emissions by 2045, by shifting to more sustainable ways of working and reducing their carbon footprint.

This transition to green business practices can be challenging, but the rewards are great. As well as helping to protect the planet, developing your organisation more sustainably can ultimately help you reduce costs, improve your reputation, retain staff and boost your bottom line. Customers are more likely to buy from a company that acts responsibly.

We hope you find this guide useful, and if you need more information about becoming sustainable, [please visit our sustainability hub.](#)



BENEFITS OF BEING SUSTAINABLE

Becoming more sustainable has direct benefits for your business, not just the environment.

Benefits include:

- ✓ Innovation and being more competitive
- ✓ Improved efficiency and increased productivity
- ✓ Recruitment and retention of talent
- ✓ Regulatory compliance
- ✓ Motivated and engaged employees
- ✓ Consumer choice and brand value
- ✓ Cost savings from a reduction in the use of resources
- ✓ Improved reputation among stakeholders and shareholders



ENERGY

The way you use energy can have a big impact on the environment. Lighting, heating and appliances all add to your carbon footprint. Reducing your energy consumption is one of the easiest ways to make your business more sustainable.

Industry and services accounted
for 34% of UK energy
consumption in 2020¹



ENERGY-SAVING BEST PRACTICE

ENERGY AUDITS

Carry out energy audits of your sites to compare monthly consumption and pinpoint where energy is being wasted.

ENERGY CHAMPIONS

Make someone responsible for managing energy-saving initiatives in your workplace and set targets to reduce emissions.

BOILER SERVICING

Service your boilers once a year – heating costs can increase by at least 30% if systems are poorly maintained².

INVEST IN TECH

Upgrade to smart thermostats that you can programme remotely to turn on at specific times and locations. Motion sensitive lights or light sensors ensure lights are only turned on when needed.

DIGITAL DOCUMENTS

Use e-signatures and digital documents instead of printed forms to save on paper and printing costs.



ENERGY SAVING IN ACTION

Scotland's greenest SME and leading ice cream manufacturer Mackie's has created a new refrigeration system which significantly reduces carbon emissions and is powered by heat energy from a new biomass system. The new system is projected to cut energy use and carbon emissions by up to 80% and is part of the company's drive to become 100% self-sufficient in renewable energy. The company also has four wind turbines and a solar panel farm which together have 5MW capacity³.

5 ENERGY-SAVING TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

These quick tips can help you to start saving energy straightaway and set you on your way towards some long-term gains.

1. Replace lightbulbs with energy-saving alternatives such as LEDs, compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) or halogen incandescents – greener bulbs can use as much as 80% less energy⁴.
2. Label the switches of operating machinery so staff know what they can turn off when not in use.
3. Encourage staff to turn their computers off at night rather than leaving them on standby. Laptops are typically more energy efficient than desktops, but people are more likely to leave them on constantly.
4. Put up posters and send out staff newsletters to raise awareness of efficient energy use. Make sure you share progress so staff can see their actions are having an impact.
5. Move cupboards or filing cabinets from in front of radiators so heat isn't prevented from circulating around the room.

[Use our Green Buildings Tool](#) to help identify energy-efficient investments in your buildings



TRANSPORT

Transport accounts for over a quarter of UK greenhouse gas emissions, government figures show⁵. A proportion of this is due to corporate travel, commuting and courier deliveries. You may not be able to forego every business journey, but greener travel options can go a long way to reducing congestion and pollution, while considering how goods are delivered can have a significant impact.

27%
27% of UK emissions come from transport⁶



EMISSION-REDUCTION BEST PRACTICE

SMART POLICIES

Review your travel and company car policies. What are the barriers preventing staff from walking, cycling, using public transport or car sharing? How can you use your policies to modify behaviour?

GREEN TRAVEL GUIDANCE

Create a Green Travel Policy to share guidance on how people can make any trips more sustainable, this can include advice on the best modes of transport to use, approved 'green' hotels and tips to help people reduce waste on their journeys.

FLEET OPTIMISATION

Review your fleet of company vehicles and journeys made, to check you're using the right vehicle technology and fuel for the job. For city centre driving, a switch to electric or hybrid vehicles might be best, but diesel can be the lowest CO₂ option for long-distance motorway travel.

CAR-SHARE SCHEMES

Set up car-share schemes so employees can travel to work together instead of in their own vehicles.

BIKE FRIENDLY

Install bike racks and cloakroom facilities to make it more convenient for employees to cycle, run or walk to work.



DRIVING FOR CHANGE

Scottish manufacturer Emergency One has launched the world's first fully-electric fire engine after undergoing a management buyout with support from Bank of Scotland. To allow easy integration into existing fleets, the vehicle carries the same pump setup and offers similar controls to those seen in traditional firefighting appliances in the UK⁷.

5 TRANSPORT TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

Ready to get started? Start making changes and seeing benefits right away with these steps:

1. Cut down on air travel and car journeys by holding virtual meetings and webinars. The Covid-19 pandemic showed us how effective virtual meetings can be and as the world reopens it's important to assess which meetings actually need to be done face to face. Over nine in ten companies (93%) said they had replaced domestic business trips with virtual meetings during the pandemic⁸.
2. Review your homeworking policy and, where appropriate, encourage staff to work from home some, or all, of the time. But remember, while this cuts down on emissions related to commuting, it may lead to rises in other forms of energy consumption.
3. Give travel directions to your office prioritising the greenest options i.e. walking routes or public transport first, to encourage new staff and visitors to travel more efficiently.
4. Check you're using the most efficient routes and correct-sized vehicles for the volume of cargo in deliveries.
5. Review the couriers you use and look for greener options.



WASTE AND RECYCLING

Every company produces waste, and each has a legal duty to dispose of it responsibly. As the UK works towards being a Zero Avoidable Waste economy by 2050, businesses of all sizes can benefit from cutting waste.

19% of UK waste is generated by commercial and industrial activity⁹



RECYCLING BEST PRACTICE

RECYCLING BINS

Install bins for food waste in staff canteens and kitchens, and recycling bins in central areas – glass, cans, paper and cardboard are all recyclable.

SUPPLIER REVIEW

Assess your suppliers and make sure you're working with companies who can help you identify ways to reduce packaging and waste. Consider bulk buying or choosing products with a longer lifespan that need replacing less frequently.

EASY COLLECTION

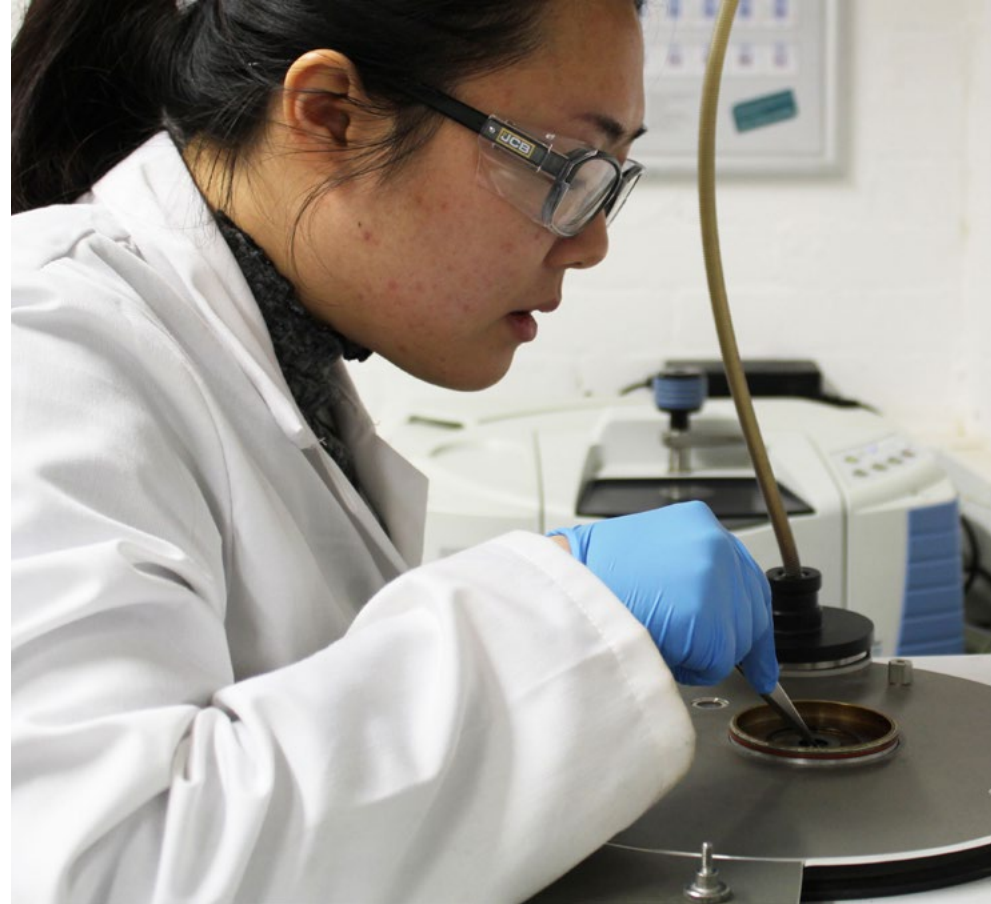
Find a reputable local recycling waste contractor who will collect the rubbish from your workplace and deliver it to a recycling plant.

CLEAR TARGETS

Create company-wide recycling targets, and provide updates on how teams are doing – it could even be turned into a competition.

GREEN CLEANING

Provide your cleaning staff with eco-friendly products and make sure they recycle correctly, or look for contractors who have an environmentally-friendly approach.



RECYCLED CONTENT

Independent materials and accredited testing laboratory Impact Solutions has acquired a new 27,500m² facility that gives it room to significantly scale up its operations and help it pursue new ventures including Project RECORD, which will see the firm develop a new industry-led standard to verify recycled content. Project Treepac, which aims to reduce plastic pollution through biodegradable tree guards, will also operate from the new facility¹⁰.

5 RECYCLING TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

Here are some quick wins which can lead to long-term gains in reducing waste in your workplace.

1. Set printers to print on both sides of the paper as a default and switch to draft quality where possible. Monitor printing behaviour and set targets for reduction.
2. Label each waste, recycling and compost bin clearly, with samples of items to show which bin they should be put into. Regularly check how well they are being used and remind staff if needed.
3. Invest in a cardboard baler. Cardboard is one of the biggest waste-streams for SMEs and a baler can help you flatten and compress boxes so they're easy to transport to recycling facilities.
4. Ban single-use plastic in the office and consider issuing all staff with a reusable water bottle or coffee cup.
5. Switch to using rechargeable batteries in devices and refillable ink cartridges in printers.



WATER

We often take water for granted but, in order to keep enjoying it, we need to conserve it. Reducing water use can also save on rates, and reduces emissions needed for treatment.

50 litres

UK office workers can each use up to 50 litres of water per working day¹¹



WATER-SAVING BEST PRACTICE

GET SUPPORT

Ask how your retail water company can help you. Providers offer different water efficiency services, from water audits and strategy development to online education tools. You may wish to switch to a new provider to access better support.

SOURCE SMART

Consider alternative water sources, such as harvesting rainwater collected on the roof or recycling wastewater from sinks and showers to use in areas where non-drinking water is needed.

CHECK USAGE

Keep track of water bills so you're aware of any unexpected spikes in consumption.

EFFICIENT EQUIPMENT

Review the water-efficiency of any equipment and upgrade where possible. Make water-efficiency a criteria on any new purchase.

INSPECT AND MAINTAIN

Regularly inspect and maintain your water system. Limescale can stop your taps and pipes working as efficiently, while a faulty hot tap may have to be run for much longer before the water gets warm.



WORKING FOR WATER EFFICIENCY

Property developer HFD, was the driving force behind the UK's first speculative 'carbon neutral' office development at the University of the West of Scotland. Rainwater harvesting is a key part of the buildings' sustainability credentials, alongside solar panels and electric car charging points¹².

5 WATER TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

Ready to start saving water? Here are some steps to help you in the first stages of your journey:

1. Educate your employees about the importance of saving water through online videos and newsletters.
2. Check for any leaks and drips in your buildings. 460 million litres of water are lost through dripping taps each year in the UK, enough to fill 184 Olympic-sized swimming pools¹³.
3. If you have a dishwasher in the office kitchen, consider replacing it with a newer, more efficient model, which could use as much as 50% less water¹⁴.
4. Install low-flush toilets and replace shower heads with eco alternatives.
5. Install automatic sensor taps so they cannot be left on.



SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

From engaging your staff, to deciding which areas to tackle first and setting clear and realistic goals, there's lots to think about when putting sustainability into action in your business...



SELLING SUSTAINABILITY TO YOUR STAFF

Buy-in from staff at all levels will really give any business's sustainability plan the boost it needs to make a real impact. Some people will already be passionate about sustainability issues, while others will need persuading to make changes. Think about how you can further empower actively-engaged employees, and encourage more reluctant workers to get on board.

Over half (53%) of the UK's workforce say sustainability is an important factor in choosing a company to work for¹⁵.

SHARE YOUR SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Communication is key to success. Let employees know how they can play a part in your vision, whether it's by going paperless or reducing water consumption. They're the ones on the frontline, so get your message across through company newsletters or your intranet.

LEAD FROM THE TOP

If senior management show that sustainability is high on their agenda it is more likely to ignite change among workers. But it's not just about talking about being green – leaders should be seen to be adapting their own behaviours and being early advocates for new ways of working.

ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE IDEAS

Your employees are an excellent source of creativity. Ask them to contribute their suggestions for improving sustainability, either during staff meetings or by sending ideas to a dedicated email address. Act on and reward the best ones.



APPOINT SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPIONS

Invite employees with an interest in environmental issues to form a green team. They can act as cheerleaders for improvements in your organisation's environmental performance. They could also take charge of writing sustainability policies for staff handbooks and induction courses.

MAKE TRAINING ENGAGING

Employees need to understand why sustainability is so important to your business. Make training relatable to their everyday lives using short videos and fun quizzes. Your sustainability champions could also attend conferences or train online and share what they've learned with colleagues.

All our relationship managers have been trained in partnership with the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. [Take a look at the courses on offer.](#)

SET TARGETS AND REWARD SUCCESS

Give employees responsibility for achieving sustainability targets, either individually or as part of a team. According to Carbon Credentials, 66% of employees would support a bonus incentive scheme to help cut carbon at work¹⁷. But it doesn't have to be a monetary incentive. Gift rewards can work just as well.

HOLD SUSTAINABILITY EVENTS

Hosting teambuilding activities in your local community not only gives employees an opportunity to unite outside of the workplace but also enhances your business reputation. You could plan volunteer events with local charities to plant trees or take part in beach clean-ups, for example.



TUI saw an improvement in sustainability knowledge in 90% of stores after introducing sustainability champions¹⁶.

IMPLEMENT A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Sustainability doesn't happen overnight, but hopefully the work you put in will be well worth it in the long run. These are the steps to take to implement sustainability in your organisation:

ESTABLISH YOUR BIGGEST OFFENDERS

The first step on the road to sustainability is to identify which area of the business you're best positioned to make changes in. Whether it's energy, transport or water, where could you save the most? By prioritising, you'll have a strong foundation to work with to start reducing your carbon footprint.

A sustainability audit can help you assess which areas you can have the biggest impact in. [Check out our Clean Growth Sustainability Audit Guide.](#)

SET TARGETS AND A TIMELINE

Having clear goals to work towards will motivate teams to drive sustainability faster. Start with small changes, such as cutting energy usage by 20% within six months or getting half your employees to use bicycles or public transport to get to work. Don't try to do everything at once.

LAUNCH YOUR INITIATIVE

Once you have your strategy in place, it will need to be communicated to employees. Whether you're a design agency, clothes retailer or bus manufacturer, anyone reading the policy

should have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve. Follow up your strategy launch with emails and short briefing sessions with staff.

MEASURE THE BUSINESS BENEFITS

As sustainability becomes embedded in your company culture, it's essential to evaluate the impact of your strategy. Measure the KPIs to show the results of your efforts, whether it's cost savings on waste reduction or staff take-up of car-share schemes. Have behavioural patterns changed?

FUTURE-PROOF YOUR STRATEGY

It's one thing launching an initiative but quite another maintaining it and sustaining everyone's interest. Get regular feedback from employees to see which areas are working well and which could be improved. Being sustainable means constantly evolving, so don't rest on your laurels. Keep improving and keep tracking the data. It's also worth sharing details of your plans and progress with your customers and employees to show them you are serious about being greener.



SUSTAINABILITY AND HYBRID WORKING

A growing number of employees are dividing their time between home and the workplace, with a recent Atkins survey suggesting that employees expect to spend around 50% of their week in the office¹⁸.

While the shift to hybrid working has the potential to lower emissions in some areas – i.e. commuting – it does have other implications, for example, each worker will be heating their home individually and staff have greater responsibility for turning off equipment etc. It's therefore important to take steps to educate staff about the changes they can make to be more sustainable while working from home.

5 TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE HOMEWORKING

1. Send reminders to encourage staff to turn off and unplug their computers on evenings and weekends – this can also help promote a better work-life balance.
2. Offer incentives to encourage staff to switch to a green energy provider.
3. Start a forum where staff can share tips for being more sustainable while working from home. You could offer a prize for the most innovative ideas and share them in a regular newsletter.
4. Provide grants or loans to help people invest in green home improvements such as draught-proofing or insulation.
5. Think carefully about the equipment people need to do their jobs – can you cut down on the number of electronic devices each staff member has? Or can you provide them with more efficient versions?



HOW WE CAN HELP YOU BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE

Whatever level of support you need for your sustainability goals, talk to your Relationship Manager to find out more.

We are committed to supporting the UK's Clean Growth strategy by providing funding for sustainability projects and helping businesses across the UK with the transition to a sustainable business model.

Funding can support a broad range of investments in sustainable business – from small improvements in environmental impact, right through to large-scale renewable energy infrastructure.

CLEAN GROWTH FINANCE INITIATIVE

You can access discounted lending for green purposes through our [Clean Growth Finance Initiative](#). We've teamed up with leading sustainability consultants to develop a list of qualifying green purposes.

These green purposes include:



Reduce
emissions



Energy
efficiency



Low carbon
transport



Reduce waste
and recycle



Improve water
efficiency



USEFUL RESOURCES

For more information on our green finance products and insights and guidance on green business practices, [visit our Sustainable Business Hub](#).

[From Now to Net Zero: A Practical Guide for SMEs](#)

To deepen our understanding of how we can best support you on your journey to Net Zero, we've surveyed more than 1,000 SME businesses, undertaken in-depth interviews and focus groups with expert commentary, and held follow-up conversations with our customers about where they are on their journey, and what Net Zero means for them. We've used the findings from our research to create a five-step guide to support your business on your journey.

[Clean Growth Sustainability Audit Guide](#)

It can be difficult to pinpoint exactly what sustainability changes are right for your business. This is where a sustainability audit comes in.

Examining the various areas of your business allows you to more accurately assess them against sustainable best practice and identify what opportunities are available and what changes – big or small – you'd like to implement.

[Green Buildings Tool](#)

Our interactive digital tool can help you identify energy-efficient investments in your buildings.

[Green Vehicle Fleet Support](#)

See how Lex Autolease can help you assess your fleet's fuel mix and help you stay ahead on the Sustainability Curve.

[Sustainability Voices Road to Net Zero Series 1 and Series 2](#)

Experts and customers discuss their own experiences and the opportunities and challenges facing businesses on the road to net zero.



SOURCES

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

All lending is subject to status.

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