



Climate Action **Business Advice Pack**



Essex Climate Action Commission
Powering positive change



Essex County Council

Introduction

The world is changing. Tough environmental targets and increasing awareness of the urgency and scale of climate change means companies can no longer afford to work alone.

Consumers are increasingly conscious of the environment when deciding where to shop and the risks of climate change are beginning to shape how businesses will work in the future.

This advice pack has been specifically developed to help small and medium-sized businesses across Essex access the most relevant information in relation to climate change and sustainability, with tips and ideas throughout to help your business to thrive whilst keeping its impact on the environment low.

We are determined to work together to help drive down emissions and recognise the **vital role that businesses will play in this**. Ultimately, we know that is not down to one group or community to tackle climate change and reach net zero. It is by **all of us taking action** that we will create positive change.

Essex Climate Action Commission

In July 2021, the **Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC)** published its report **Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral**, after more than a year of research and engagement with experts, communities and residents from across the county. The report looked into key areas of action to understand what people and businesses across Essex can do to build a more sustainable future. The report sets out a number of recommendations for how we can reduce our emissions and reach net zero, many of which we will touch upon in this advice pack.

Contents

In this pack, you will find sustainability advice, resources and guidance in relation to the following areas:

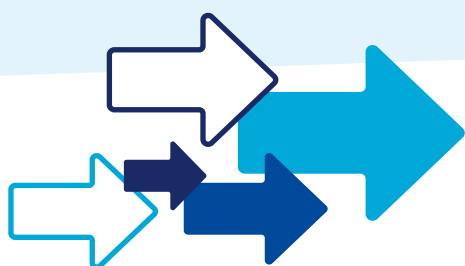
1. Sustainable Business Planning	3
2. Waste	8
3. Buildings & Energy	11
4. Outdoor Space	16
5. Transport and Travel	20
6. The Green Economy	24
7. Sustainable Business Networks	26
8. Funding	28
9. Resource Links	30
10. Glossary	33

1. Sustainable Business Planning

Perhaps one of the most important first steps you can take is to develop a sustainable business plan or strategy.

In its simplest form, a sustainable business plan should consider:

- 1.** Your company's **commitment to sustainability**
- 2.** How sustainability will be **interwoven** into your broader business plan
- 3.** **The steps you will take** across different areas (such as waste management, energy efficiency or supply chains)
- 4.** **How you will take these steps and implement change** (speaking to suppliers, upgrading to light-emitting diode (LED) or moving to a renewable energy tariff). You will need to consider budget, timescales and sources of funding
- 5.** **Your metrics for success** (how you will measure and evaluate your success – e.g., through meeting set targets). You may also want to consider short, medium and long term targets and how these will be measured over time



If you are a larger business and have the resources, you can always consider **hiring an environmental consultancy** to help develop a business plan around sustainability.

You can also join the **SME Climate Commitment** to halve greenhouse gas emissions before 2030; achieve net zero emissions before 2050; and disclose your progress on a yearly basis. This is recognised by the United Nation's Race to Zero campaign.





Calculating Environmental Impact

Different commercial sectors are developing their own plans to reach net zero, such as the [Courtauld Commitment 2030](#) for the food supply chain, and the [British Retail Consortium's Net Zero Roadmap for the Retail Industry](#).

Depending on which sectors your business operates across, you should be able to find more information about **environmental targets, advice and support from membership bodies and trade associations**.



There are a number of tools available online which can help you to **calculate your current carbon emissions and the potential amount you can save** – both from an emissions and financial perspective:



- [Carbon Footprint – Business Calculator](#)
- [Climate Hero Carbon Footprint Calculator](#) – allows you to measure personal and business-related operations, such as car journeys and hosting events
- [Go Ultra Low's car tax calculator](#) – calculates potential savings from moving to electrical vehicles
- [Greenhouse Gas Protocol – GHG Emissions Calculation Tool](#)
- [O2 Business – Green Savings Calculator](#)
- The Carbon Trust –
 - [SME Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
 - [Energy Benchmark Tool](#)
- [Zero Business Carbon – Calculate the cost of your emissions](#)

When calculating your company's environmental impact, it is important to understand **scope emissions**:

- **Scope 1** – Direct emissions from owned or controlled sources (such as company vehicles)
- **Scope 2** – Indirect emissions through purchases made (such as electricity, heat and steam)
- **Scope 3** – All other indirect emissions from a company's supply chain and associated activities (such as business travel, transportation and distribution, and purchased goods and services)

Further information about scope emissions is available from a variety of sources, including [**The Carbon Trust**](#).

You could consider undertaking a **carbon audit**. This could be conducted independently or via a consultancy. An initial investment in conducting an audit could reap longer term rewards, with reduced carbon emissions and bills in the future.

You can also find out about LoCASE's [**Steps to Environmental Management \(STEM\) accreditation scheme**](#) on [**page 7**](#).



If you're concerned about the upfront cost of transforming your business to be more environmentally-friendly – **don't fear**. The UK Government has a platform which allows you to search for [**finance and support for your business**](#) across a number of different areas and themes.



Communicating Sustainable Business Plans

For your own exposure and for customer inclusion, communicating your sustainable business plans and policies is important. This could be as simple as having a **dedicated page on your website**.

For potential business partners and your supply chain, make sure you have a **version of your sustainable business plan which you are happy to share** (an executive summary could be useful).

You can gain a **significant competitive edge by sharing your plans with increasingly environmentally conscious customers** and supply chains.



You could consider a **marketing campaign** around key relevant dates, a local business or community event, or even just when you launch your sustainability plan itself.

CASE STUDY

The Cheeky Panda

The Cheeky Panda is a sustainable business, which was founded in Essex. It produces 100% bamboo tissue paper. Bamboo's rapid growth rate means that it is considered a sustainable resource. The Cheeky Panda applied to **LoCASE** for a grant to support its **marketing initiatives**, including to showcase at trade shows and engage with retail magazines. This helped the business to increase its sales during its early stages. The Cheeky Panda has gone on to win a number of business and innovation awards.¹



Supply Chains

Who is supplying you? Whether it is parts, ingredients or expertise, it is worth **speaking to suppliers to find out more about their own sustainability plans.**

When commissioning new suppliers or services, think about **your wider carbon footprint** (this is counted in your scope 3 emissions, please see [page 5](#)).

For instance, could you use couriers which use green means of transport – such as electric cars or bicycles? Perhaps you could source resources more local to you? **Buying locally** can both **help the local economy, while reducing carbon emissions** from lengthy transportation journeys and storage.

Additional resources in relation to green procurement which you may find useful include:

- **Business in the Community (BITC) – ‘Driving Sustainability Through Procurement’** guidance, designed to support procurement professionals to build sustainable purchasing practices
- **The Goal 13 Impact Platform** – an open access platform for businesses’ peer learning and the sharing of best practice
- **The Supply Chain Sustainability School** – an open access platform which offers free resources, e-learning modules and workshops on sustainability, supply chains and procurement for the built environment sector.



Environmental Business Accreditation/ Sustainability Certification

Obtaining accreditation for your business can demonstrate to **customers and clients your environmental credentials and commitment to sustainable practices**. There are lots of organisations which offer this accreditation, involving a dedicated consultant examining your business operations and working with you to implement positive sustainable changes.


There are also some **free accreditation schemes**, such as LoCASE's **Steps to Environmental Management (STEM)**. This can help to prepare your business for the recognised international environmental management system of **ISO 14001** (which maps out a framework that a company can follow to set up an effective environmental management system, demonstrating that environmental impact is being measured and improved). Please note that the LoCASE accreditation is not equivalent to ISO 14001.

▶ To find out more about LoCASE's STEM accreditation scheme, please check the **online calendar** for workshop dates.

Brentwood-based **PDT Sales Consultancy** took part in LoCASE's STEM (Steps to Environmental Management) programme and after attending three half day workshops (Blue, Silver and Gold), the business was then able to:



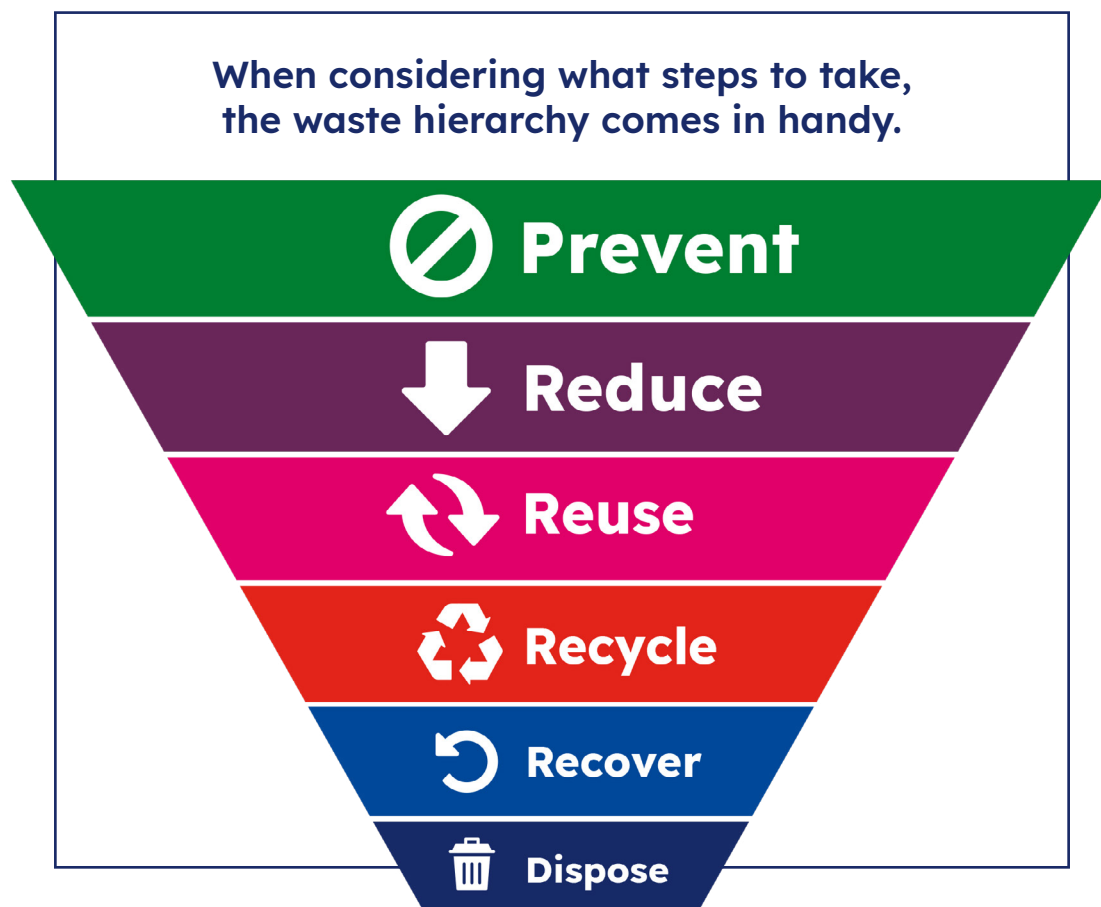
Other accreditation schemes are available. For instance, the British Standards Institute is working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to provide **100,000 copies of BS ISO 50005**.



You may also wish to consider alternative accreditation schemes, some of which are costed.

2. Waste

Minimising waste means lower expenditure and carbon footprint – landfill should be the last resort. By developing a sustainable waste strategy now, you could be future proofing your business.



Steps your business can take

1. Conduct a waste audit to understand what and how much you are throwing away.

- Follow the [WRAP guidance](#) or hire specialist consultancies. Then consider what could be avoided or reduced.



2. Prevent waste from happening:

- Limit what you print and use **digital solutions** such as e-receipts.
- Ensure effective stock **planning** through continuous **monitoring and evaluation** of purchases.
- **Ask suppliers** to reduce packaging delivered to you or return reusable packaging.



3. Keep items in use:

- Explore second-hand markets for items such as furniture. Could another business' by-product be a resource for you, or vice versa? Such as food waste used as animal feed, or textile waste used for home insulation.

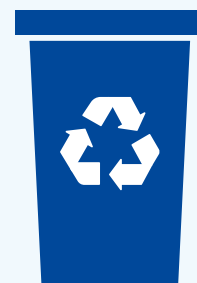
▶ **Maintain and repair** items such as machinery or uniforms.



- **Rent products** or specialised services required for a short period of time, such as tools or event services.
- **Use redistribution and sharing networks**, from donating surplus food using [Olio](#) or [Too Good To Go](#), to sharing infrequently used equipment such as gazebos.
- Donate end of line items to good causes.
- When you do need to buy new items, ensure they are climate friendly, such as energy efficient fridges or eco-friendly cleaning products for communal areas.

4. Engage your employees:

- Offer **training** or identify **webinars about sustainability**, demonstrating your company's commitment to the issue.
- Encourage reusable items such as water bottles and coffee cups. Company branded items could be offered to staff at a discount or for free and help to demonstrate your commitment to sustainability.
- Provide reusable cutlery and plates, and refillable products.
- Provide **recycling bins** and **clearly signpost** how to dispose of items.
- Promote ideas such as packed lunches in reusable packaging



5. Raise awareness with customers about preventing waste:


- Accept/provide reusable containers from/to customers.
- Adopt creative solutions to sell surplus stock such as fruit and veg boxes.
- Encourage customers to talk about your company's sustainability practices, such as on social media.

6. Check waste collections for anything that cannot be reused or recycled:

- Ask your **local council or waste contractor** what business waste services they provide. If you don't have a waste contract yet, visit the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' [register of waste carriers](#). Remember that your waste is your responsibility and check that your waste carrier is authorised.
- Support [Terracycle collections](#) or similar schemes, such as [Return A Toner](#) to recycle empty printer cartridges.

7. Research solutions and learn new ways to become more sustainable:

- Explore circular economy opportunities with the [Project Blueprint](#). Check the [Circular Economy Directory](#) to find circular businesses near you.
- Visit [WRAP](#) for further support, including on [plastic packaging](#), and [collections and recycling](#).

- 
- ▶ **Be aware of changes to the law** such as the [Plastic Packaging Tax](#), charged at a rate of £200 per tonne. This is a significant extra cost for businesses relying on plastic packaging.



- ▶ **Repeat waste audits regularly and consider if you could do more to prevent and reduce waste.**



3. Buildings & Energy

The physical space which your business operates in can be a big driver of your company's overall carbon footprint.

If you don't own your building, it is always worth trying to **speak to building owners and/or landlords** about how sites are being managed. Environmental legislation and incentives mean that many properties should be working towards improving their sustainability. Not only will building owners therefore be helping to **tackle climate change**, they will also be helping to **future-proof their premises**.



Energy

1. Energy audit – can you examine how and when you use energy?

- There are companies which specialise in conducting energy and broader sustainability audits of businesses. While many of these are costed, it could be a positive investment with long term financial gains, identifying where you can make both environmental and efficiency savings.
- The Carbon Trust's [Energy Benchmark Tool](#) has been designed to help UK-based businesses assess the typical energy use in their sector

2. Examine how you are using timers and other automatic settings

- Are lights and heating coming on automatically when no one is in the building? This is not only bad for the environment but will be costing money.
- Are lights, heating and computer monitors being left on after staff leave the building? You can set **building/appliance timers** to switch off lights/heating/screens after a set time.
- External lights left on overnight can also be detrimental to nocturnal wildlife
- **Motion sensors** – could you invest in motion sensor detectors, so lights turn off after a certain amount of time when no movement is detected?
- **Behavioural change** – raise with staff that there is a 'switch off' policy with lights and appliances

3. Are you using energy efficient equipment?

- The electricity office equipment consumes represents around 25% of total energy consumption in offices.²
- Could you explore **upgrading to more energy efficient equipment?** There are schemes and grants which may be able to provide assistance ([LoCASE](#)). Older equipment is less likely to be energy efficient.

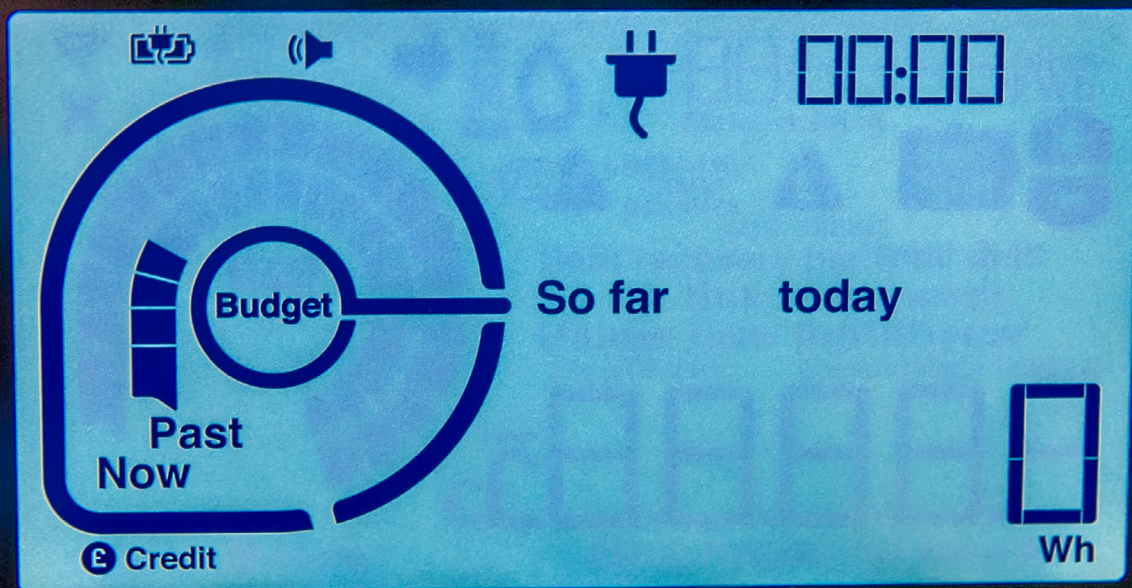
4. Move to LED lighting.

- These more **environmentally friendly** and **longer-life** lights will also **require less maintenance, saving money** in the long run. According to the Carbon Trust, switching from conventional lighting to LED luminaries could deliver cost savings of up to 80% for your business.³
- The Carbon Trust's [Lighting Business Case Tool](#) can help you calculate the business case for lighting upgrades.



5. Explore renewable energy sources (those which do not rely on fossil fuels, such as solar and wind power).

- Speak to your energy supplier about **renewable energy tariffs**
- Could you explore **installing a renewable energy source**, such as solar panels?
- Discussions with neighbouring businesses or landlords could lead to a group effort to share costs. This has been the case with the [Solar Together Essex](#) scheme. Essex businesses are eligible to join this scheme and can find out more [here](#). The 2021 scheme achieved an average **saving of 37% on market prices**.⁴
- Community energy groups are growing – with examples including [Saffron Walden Community Energy](#) and [Community Energy Colchester](#). If you would like to find out more, please contact lowcarbon@essex.gov.uk for further information.
- Some financial support may be available for SMEs to purchase solar panels, including from [LoCASE](#).



6. Insulation, Ventilation and Overheating

Insulation

- Are the **walls and ceilings in your premises effectively insulated?** If not, heat could be escaping – resulting in colder working conditions, more environmentally damaging emissions being produced and increased costs from keeping heating on for longer.
- Could you consider having a new, more **energy efficient boiler** installed, or even a **heat pump** (a more environmentally friendly alternative)?
- Are doors and windows being effectively insulated, **reducing draughts?** Are doors fitted so that they will close by default (an example being spring-loaded doors)?
- What materials make up your building? This will influence how heat is retained or escapes.

Ventilation

- Are you managing ventilation in your premises effectively, to ensure proper **air flow** and the **extraction of polluted air?**
- **Natural air ventilation** can be the simplest and most cost-effective means. Depending on the time of year and your business operations, this involves simple steps such as opening windows on opposite sides of a building floor to ensure proper air flow.
- **Supply or extract fans** – can provide fresh air to a space and extract fumes from an area (such as a kitchen or workshop), and can also circulate air within a premises.
- Effective ventilation can also **reduce the risk of damp** developing.

Overheating

- Consider **the sources of heat which affect your premises** (such as over exposure to the sun at certain times of year). This will vary from premises to premises.
- **Utilise natural resources** – shade from trees or foliage on buildings is a green means of reducing overheating, whilst also creating opportunities for increased biodiversity. Could you consider planting trees or plants to reduce overheating?
- **Blinds or heat reflective glass** can help to reduce areas of the building which are subject to overheating.
- **Consider how and when equipment is used** – ranging from computers to industrial equipment, the heat generated from electrical items will have an impact on your staff and operations. This will vary based on the type of equipment you use, but could you consider how best to manage heat generating equipment, particularly during the summer?



With increased chances of warmer summers and colder winters, it is important to consider insulation, ventilation and overheating **over the course of the year and seasons.**

- ▶ There are lots of in-depth resources which explore these issues, including The Carbon Trust's **[‘Heating, ventilation and air conditioning’ guide.](#)**

Some of the changes to buildings suggested in this section may be referred to as **‘retrofitting’** – the addition of new components, technology or features to a building, in order to reduce carbon emissions and increase efficiency.

It is important to speak to your local council about planning permission before undertaking building works. Many councils are supportive of works which improve sustainability and work towards net zero, but applying for permission will be necessary in some scenarios.





Low Carbon Across the South and East – LoCASE

You will find a list of grants and other funding opportunities on [page 28](#), but one of the most relevant to Essex businesses is [LoCASE](#). Its current round of funding (LoCASE 2) offers grants of up to £10,000 (until spring 2023), to make businesses more sustainable and reduce their carbon footprints.

LoCASE also offers a business accreditation scheme, which you can find out more about on [page 7](#).

Since the LoCASE funding programme started in 2016,

£2.6m has been awarded to **397** businesses, with an estimated **2,902 tonnes** greenhouse gases equivalent emissions reduction and

£992,534 cost savings per annum within Greater Essex (including Southend and Thurrock).⁵

CASE STUDY Cycles UK



Cycles UK – an Essex based bicycle business – was looking to consolidate its business operations into a single premises. As a low carbon business, it was eligible for a grant from LoCASE (and was awarded £10,000). As well as assisting with the move into a single premises, Cycles UK was able to use the money to install LED lighting and a modern cooling and heating system.⁶

CASE STUDY

Thurrock Rugby Football Club



Thurrock Rugby Football Club was awarded £10,000 by LoCASE (as well as advice and support), to install heating and hot water systems. This helped to deliver annual energy savings of 48,240 kWh, along with emissions savings of over 41 tonnes. Savings on energy bills amounts to almost £10,000 per annum. The club also installed new shower heads, which deliver water at seven litres per minute, rather than the 10+ litres per minute the club was using. The total cost for the project was over £26,000 and the total value of the grant requested was £10,000, representing a 37.31% grant intervention rate.⁷

4. Outdoor Space

Whether you have a large or limited amount of outdoor space, there are some simple steps you can take when it comes to outdoor areas to improve your sustainability, make your business look more attractive and your workspace more natural.



Flood Risk

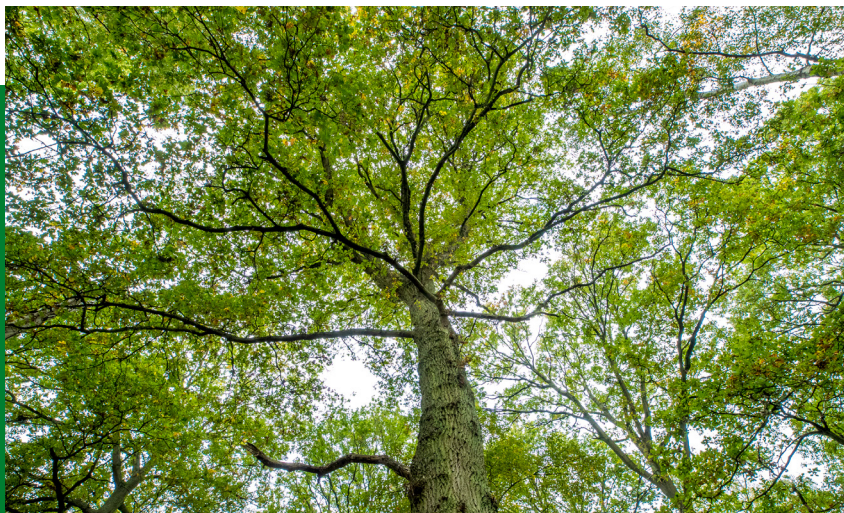
Across Essex, 36,165 residential properties are in areas at risk of surface water flooding in a 1 in 100-year return period.⁸ **Local flooding is set to become more of a reality for those at risk**, as our existing drains and watercourses will not always be able to cope.

You can search by postcode to **identify your flood risk** with a [tool](#) from Essex County Council.

You can help to reduce your flood risk through **effective land use and green infrastructure solutions. Planting trees** can reap many environmental rewards, not least reducing your flood risk through the absorption of excess water, as well as making your business look more attractive.

There are a number of schemes and resources available to support this, including the **Essex Forest Initiative (EFI)**, which will see tens of thousands of trees planted across the county.

If you would like to see **how your business can work with the EFI** (whether you have land to plant trees or would like to volunteer), please contact environment@essex.gov.uk with 'Essex Forest Initiative' in the subject bar.





Some initiatives you may wish to consider include:

- **Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)** – serve as an important means of managing water. SuDS may include:
 - Using permeable building materials;
 - ‘Green roofs’, whereby roofs have plants and other foliage incorporated into them to absorb rainwater;
 - SuDS planters, which capture water from roofs and funnel them down into planters.
- **Developing rain gardens** – an outdoor feature, a rain garden is a sunken area in the landscape that collects surface water and allows it to soak into the ground. Planted with grasses and flowering perennials, rain gardens can be a cost effective and attractive way to reduce surface water flooding issues and control runoff from your property. They generally only hold water during and after a rainfall event and are largely dry otherwise.
- **Water butts** are a great way to manage water on premises and can be used to store water for purposes such as watering gardens.
- **Understanding where water collects on site** – if you do not own your commercial premises, it is worth working with landlords and site managers to understand where water pools after it rains, so you can identify where flood reduction measures would be of most value.



▶ **Green spaces improve biodiversity and help ecosystems**



Green Spaces

Green spaces are proven to positively benefit the environment, as well as human health and wellbeing:

- Could you sow **wildflower seeds** in a small patch of land at your premises (or even a window box)?
- If you have **lawns** which are maintained, could you allow a certain amount to revert to its **natural state**?
- By taking these simple steps, you can **improve biodiversity** and help ecosystems – providing homes for butterflies, bees and other pollinators.
- Green spaces can also help to **pull carbon dioxide out of the air and store it**, releasing oxygen in the process
- Green spaces are preferable to land which has been paved over not only for reasons of biodiversity and carbon capture, but also in terms of providing permeable ground for reducing your **flood risk**
- **Vertical Green Walls for high-rise buildings.** Green walls and green roofs act as a nature-based solution, by reducing flooding on site and helping to cool the building naturally, as global temperatures rise.





CASE STUDY GRIDSERVE

Here in Essex, **GRIDSERVE** opened its first electric charging forecourt for vehicles in Braintree. Apart from the positive impact from its primary operations – keeping electric cars on the road and reducing the need for fossil fuel powered vehicles – it has adopted a holistic approach to reducing its impact on the environment through innovative building management and business operations, with a host of eco-friendly elements, including:

- Creating a **cascade effect on its exterior walls, with plants now a permanent feature of the building**. Alongside a wildflower area, this helps to **increase biodiversity and capture carbon**.
- Using energy generated from **solar farms** means it can deliver net-zero energy to all customers
- The Braintree Electric Forecourt has a 200kWp on-site **solar canopy**, which helps to power the site
- The **collection and storage of rain** is used to support running of on-site toilets
- An eco-flow unit is onsite, which produces **environmentally friendly cleaning solution**, reducing reliance on harsh chemicals.
- To offset any carbon created from the production of the electric vehicles leased to customers, **100 trees are planted** for each vehicle leased.



5. Transport and Travel

The way we get to and from work is a big part of tackling climate change.

The **Smarter Travel for Essex Network** (STEN) helps businesses with over 50+ employees prepare and implement effective travel plans to promote and encourage active and sustainable travel.

STEN can help your business:

- Increase travel choices to your site
- Reduce the cost of and demand for parking
- Attract and retain employees
- Reduce on-site congestion, air, and noise pollution
- Improve visitor/delivery access



STEN membership **is free** and includes:

- A support line offering unlimited advice and guidance via phone and email
- A bi-monthly e-newsletter ('Way to Go!'), providing information on new travel initiatives/campaigns, active travel related suggestions and activities, as well as examples of best practice
- Access to the Annual Travel to Work survey. Data collected will allow members to see which travel incentives they should consider, based on the popularity of travel methods used by employees.
- National Accreditation. Members will be eligible to apply for national travel plan accreditation, facilitated by **Modeshift STARS** – an online travel planning tool kit, that creates, develops, and supports travel plans
- A range of bespoke marketing materials for two targeted campaigns each year to promote different travel modes and help with achieving travel plan goals



If you would like to join STEN or have any queries, please contact:
travelplanteam@essex.gov.uk.

You can also promote **Active Travel** within your business, including walking and cycling, which reduces emissions and improves physical wellbeing. You can find out more about Active Travel in the briefing for business: **Smarter Travel for Essex: 'Embracing Active Travel to make a safer, greener and healthier Essex'.**

The **gov.uk website** provides guidance and options to employers on setting up a **Cycle to Work** scheme for staff. Could your business offer **bicycle storage, shower facilities** and other incentives to further encourage staff to cycle to work?



The Safer Essex Road Partnership also offers **adult cycle training**. To find out more, please email: cyclctraining@essexhighways.org.



Could your business offer **bicycle storage, shower facilities and other incentives** to further encourage staff to cycle to work?



As a business which promotes and facilitates alternative means of travel for staff beyond cars, you will not only be **reducing your environmental impact** and potentially making **cost savings**, but could also be **improving the safety of your staff**. The **Safer Essex Road Partnership (SERP)** can provide – **free of charge** – workshops and support for businesses to **review or develop driving for work policies**. Such policies can help improve the safety of staff and the efficiency of business operations (including environmental impact). You can find out more about the support SERP can offer **here**.

The Energy Saving Trust also provides guidance on how **efficient driving can reduce carbon emissions**.

As the number of **people who own electric cars rises** in response to government legislation and increased environmental awareness, **electric vehicle charging points** will become increasingly important. If you rent your commercial space, it is worth talking to your landlord about their plans for the increased use of electric vehicles. There are **government grant schemes for electric vehicle charging infrastructure** available, with the **Workplace Charging Scheme** being particularly relevant.



Remember:

The UK Government has **set a target of 2030 for the ban on sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles**. This means that it will be increasingly expensive to drive petrol cars – costing your business money that could be saved when choosing more environmentally-friendly transport.



Electric vehicles:

- ✓ reduce harmful emissions
- ✓ future proof your fleet
- ✓ are less susceptible to sudden fluctuations in fuel prices



If your business owns vehicles, you could consider **transitioning to more environmentally friendly battery electric vehicles**. While an initial cost, they will serve to **reduce harmful emissions as well as future proof your fleet**, as fossil fuel powered vehicles are phased out. You will also be **less susceptible to sudden fluctuations in fuel prices** – as has been seen with petrol and diesel in recent years. If you offer a vehicle lease scheme, you could also consider offering battery electric vehicles.

Some useful resources include:

- [Go Ultra Low – Information about electrifying business vehicles](#), as well as [calculators](#), to help understand costs and benefits
- [Government grant schemes for electric vehicle charging infrastructure](#)
- [Government grant of up to £1,500 for new low emission vehicles](#)
- [LoCASE grant of up to £5,000 to purchase used electric vehicles](#)
- [The Carbon Trust – Fleet Upgrade Tool](#)



Flexible Working

Flexible working has become a new normal for many people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Can you support your employees to work flexibly **by providing laptops or reducing the frequency they need to be on site**? This can **reduce your running costs and associated emissions**. Flexible working can also **improve staff happiness and retention**.

6. The Green Economy

In its broadest sense, the Green Economy encompasses economic activity to do with a sustainability, green and low carbon focus, including examples such as the construction of wind turbines or the building of energy efficient homes, through to investment companies prioritising green initiatives.

The government's [Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener](#) was published in October 2021 and aims to support jobs, as well as leveraging up to £90 billion of private investment by 2030. The future potential for growth based on existing Government policy is outlined in documents such as the [10-Point Plan for a green industrial revolution](#) (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2020).



The **Green Economy's growth is spurred on by local government, national legislation and international agreements**, as well as **increasingly environmentally conscious consumers**.

Across many sectors, **aspects of the Green Economy are clear to see**. In others, **change is coming rapidly**. It is important for **businesses to be ready for change and indeed, to capitalise on it**.

It is worth considering the impact sustainability priorities will have on **tendering process** in the future. Larger business and public bodies are establishing social value criteria for tenders, whereby **social, as well as economic and environmental added value, is assessed** when a business applies for a contract.

You can find out more about public procurement via the [Social Value Catalogue](#), which includes [resources for SMEs, social enterprises and voluntary organisations](#). You can also access [Essex County Council's Social Value methodology](#), which includes details of how climate change is considered, with specific measures relating to climate change and the ECC TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) Social Value Calculator.

It is important to consider the implications of a larger business adopting sustainability strategies. For instance, a net zero commitment by a corporation may lead to a request for suppliers to provide details of their own sustainability strategies or figures such as greenhouse gas emissions.

► **Preparing now could help to save resources in the long term and make your business more attractive.**



Green Skills

The Essex Green Skills Infrastructure Review (2022) identified Green Skills as the knowledge, experience, values, attitudes and abilities that support carbon reduction and resource efficiency to increase climate resilience and enhance natural assets. Green skills are relevant to all sectors in the economy and are essential for future job growth.

For example, it is predicted that:



Construction:

The economic opportunity of delivering retrofit in Essex will be in excess of **£15 billion**, creating more than **13,000 jobs** (Local Government Association 2021)⁹



Low Carbon and Renewable Energy:

In Essex, **15,908 jobs** will be required by 2030 and **27,741 by 2050** (Local Government Association 2021)¹⁰



Life Sciences:

By 2040, Essex could gain around **10,000 additional jobs** in the life sciences sector (Cambridge Econometrics, 2021)¹¹

It is clear that there will be **thousands of green job opportunities across Essex**. It is important to emphasise that some of these jobs will be new and some will involve the **upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce**, such as car mechanics transitioning to focus on electric vehicles and gas boiler engineers retraining to service air source heat pumps. You can find training and employment schemes for your business on the UK Government [website](#).

7. Sustainable Business Networks

There are lots of local, regional and national sustainable business networks, which provide ideas, guidance and resources.



They can be a great source for information, inspiration and to connect with other businesses working to become more sustainable.

You may wish to consider:

- Check the **local business/environmental associations within your district**, such as the **[Brentwood Environmental Business Alliance](#)** or **[The Colchester Business Enterprise Agency](#)** (COLBEA is also commissioned by the **[North Essex Economic Board](#)** to support eligible businesses on low carbon projects. Please enquire directly with COLBEA). These local organisations can often offer tailored advice, guidance and host a wealth of resources on their websites. You can enter your postcode to identify your local council **[here](#)**.
- **[Better Business Act](#)** – A coalition of businesses committed to ensuring companies are working to improve their impact on the environment
- **[Sustainers](#)** – A community of business professionals who are committed to achieving global sustainability goals
- **[The Broadway Initiative](#)** – Collaboration between business organisations to support net zero and environmental goals
- The Net Zero Innovation Network (NZIN) – Brings together businesses, anchor institutions, universities and others to support a more sustainable future by promoting innovation. NZIN is working to make Essex a centre of excellence for innovation in addressing climate change and is developing a pipeline of projects, where members work collectively to help Essex become a net zero county by 2050. You can find out more about the network and if your business is eligible to join by contacting: **NZIN@essex.gov.uk**.




- **The South East Business Hub** – part of BEST Growth Hub. It is provided by the **South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** and works to develop economic activity and support businesses. It hosts a number of resources for SMEs – including a **Net Zero portal**.
- Larger business membership bodies, including:
 - **British Chambers of Commerce**
 - **Confederation of British Industry**
 - **Federation of Small Businesses**
 - **Institute of Directors** – includes **sustainability events and webinars**

8. Funding

For many businesses, funding can be an obstacle to taking steps to become more sustainable.

There are a number of regional and national funding schemes which are open to businesses to support their sustainability journey.

A selection of funding schemes which may be relevant to your business are listed below. Please note that these schemes are subject to change and are often time limited.

 **It is always worth applying early to avoid disappointment.**

- **Backing Essex Business** – Provides up to **12 hours of professional business advice, group and one to one mentoring**, as well as **loans for business growth and start-ups**.
- **Clean Growth Fund** – Invests in companies focused on driving clean growth in the low carbon economy
- **Evergreen Fund** – Provides seed and growth capital to ‘companies and social enterprises that are focused on delivering measurable, beneficial and sustainable environmental impact’
- **Grants Online** – Newsletter includes UK and regional green funding opportunities
- **I-Construct** – Support and grants for businesses working in the construction and built environment sector
- **KEEP+** – A partnership of six academic institutions, which can provide **funding and expertise** to support SMEs
- **LoCASE** – Grants of up to £10,000 for SMEs to support sustainability development and of up to £5,000 to support the purchase of used electric vehicles until spring 2023 (or when funds run out)
- **Smarter Choices** – SMEs with energy bills above £20,000 per year can access a limited number of free energy assessments and free measurement and verification equipment

- **South East Business Boost** Offers up to **12 hours of free business support** and **Growth Grants of up to £10,000**. While grant applications must focus on growth, this can also include sustainability focused projects.
- **South East New Energy Project** – Part of a University of East London led programme, eligible SMEs can benefit from free energy audits and surveys for renewable energy projects. Grants of up to £30,000 to support investment in energy projects are also available. Please contact sene@uel.ac.uk to enquire.
- UK Government – Platform for businesses to **explore finance and support available** to them
- UK Government (electric cars and charging infrastructure) – **Electric vehicle charging infrastructure grants; new low emission vehicle grant; Government grant of up to £1,500 for new low emission vehicles**
- **Zero Carbon Business** – Regularly updates UK-wide and regional funding opportunities
- If your business is based in **Uttlesford**, it is worth checking sustainable grants available in Suffolk. Due to historical boundaries, Uttlesford-based businesses may sometimes be eligible to apply for funds from initiatives, such as the **Eastern New Energy scheme**

Financial Institutions

Many high street banks now offer **special green or sustainable financial options** for their business customers. It is worth **speaking directly to your bank** about potential funding support or options which may be available to you.

British Business Bank

The **British Business Bank** was established by the UK Government and aims to support SMEs. It has a **sustainability hub** and a number of resources available for SMEs:

- **Smaller Businesses and the Transition to Net Zero**
- **Net Zero: An A to Z Guide**
- **What is Net Zero? An Introduction for Small Businesses**
- **Net Zero: How being carbon neutral can help your business grow**

9. Resource Links



Business Accreditation

- British Standards Institute and BEIS – providing [100,000 copies of BS ISO 50005](#)
- [LoCASE](#) – Check the [calendar](#) to see dates for Steps to Environmental Management business accreditation (for more information, see [page 7](#))



Calculators – Emissions/Savings

- [Carbon Footprint – Business Calculator](#)
- [Climate Hero Carbon Footprint Calculator](#) – measure personal and business-related operations, such as car journeys and hosting events
- [Go Ultra Low – car tax calculator](#) – calculates potential savings from moving to electrical vehicles
- Greenhouse Gas Protocol –
 - [GHG Emissions Calculation Tool](#)
 - [Scope 2](#)
 - [Scope 3](#)
- [O2 Business – Green Savings Calculator](#)
- The Carbon Trust –
 - [Energy Benchmark Tool](#)
 - [SME Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
 - [Fleet Upgrade Tool](#)
 - [Lighting Business Case Tool](#)
- Zero Business Carbon – [Calculate the cost of your emissions](#)



Finance, Funding and Support

- [Backing Essex Business](#) – Offers advice, mentoring and business loans
- [British Business Bank](#)
- [Clean Growth Fund](#) – Invests in companies focused on driving clean growth in the low carbon economy
- [Evergreen Fund](#) – Provides seed and growth capital

- **[Grants Online](#)** – Newsletter UK and regional green funding opportunities
- **[I-Construct](#)** – Support and grants for businesses working in the construction and built environment sector
- **[KEEP+](#)** – Can provide **[funding and expertise](#)** to support to SMEs
- **[LoCASE](#)** – Energy efficiency and sustainable business growth grants
- **[Smarter Choices](#)** – Free energy related support for SMEs with energy bills above £20,000 per year
- **[South East Business Boost](#)** – Offers business supports and grants
- **[South East Business Hub](#)** – Business support and advice
- **[South East New Energy Project](#)** – Offers free energy audits and surveys for renewable energy projects, as well as grants of up to £30,000
- UK Government –
 - **[Finance and support for your business](#)**
 - **[Training and employment schemes for your business](#)**
- **[Zero Carbon Business](#)** – Regularly updates UK-wide and regional funding opportunities



Sustainability Hubs

- **[British Business Bank](#)**
- **[British Chambers of Commerce](#)**
- **[Federation of Small Businesses](#)**
- **[Institute of Directors](#)**
- South East Business Hub – **[Net Zero portal](#)**
- UK Government – **[SME Climate Hub](#)**



SME Sustainability Guidance (General)

- British Business Bank –
 - **[Smaller Businesses and the Transition to Net Zero](#)**
 - **[Net Zero: An A to Z Guide](#)**
 - **[What is Net Zero? An Introduction for Small Businesses](#)**
 - **[Net Zero: How being carbon neutral can help your business grow](#)**
- British Chambers of Commerce – **[From Now to Net Zero: A Practical Guide for SMEs](#)**
- British Retail Consortium – **[Climate Action Roadmap](#)**

- Business in the Community – [Driving Sustainability Through Procurement](#)
- [Business Sustainability Kit](#)
- CDP – [A Climate Disclosure Framework for SMEs](#)
- Confederation of British Industry –
 - [ESG Tips](#)
 - [Financing Green – Guide for SMEs](#)
- [Council for Sustainable Business](#)
- [Essex County Council – Social Value Catalogue](#)
- [Goal 13 Impact Platform](#)
- Make My Money Matter – [SME Pensions Guide](#)
- Small Business Britain –
 - [Small Business Sustainability Programme](#)
 - [Small Business Planet](#)
- [Supply Chain Sustainability School](#)
- The Carbon Trust –
 - [The Journey to Net Zero for SMES](#)
 - [Heating, ventilation and air conditioning](#)
- World Wildlife Fund – [Emission Possible](#)
- Zero Carbon Business – [Guides, events and ideas](#)



Transport and Travel

- [Cycle to Work Scheme](#) – guidance and options for employers
- Energy Saving Trust –
 - [Business Transport](#)
 - [Efficient Driving](#)
- Essex Highways Report – [Smarter Travel for Essex: ‘Embracing Active Travel to make a safer, greener and healthier Essex’](#)
- Go Ultra Low – [Useful information about electrifying business vehicles](#), as well as [calculators](#) to help understand costs and benefits
- [Modeshift STARS](#) – an online travel planning tool kit
- Safer Essex Road Partnership – [free support for driving to work policies](#)
- [Smarter Travel for Essex Network](#)
- The Carbon Trust – [Fleet Upgrade Tool](#)
- UK Government –
 - [Electric vehicle charging infrastructure grants](#)
 - [Government grant of up to £1,500 for new low emission vehicles](#)

10. Glossary

Biodiversity

The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. The term also means, the variety of life at every hierarchical level and spatial scale of biological organisations: genes within populations, populations within species, species within communities, communities within landscapes, landscapes within biomes, and biomes within the biosphere.

Carbon Footprint

The total greenhouse gases emissions generated directly and indirectly by human activities, which are expressed as carbon dioxide equivalent during the period of a year.

Carbon Neutral

A state by which the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere as a result of an activity, is balanced by an equivalent amount being taken away via “offsetting”, or removing from the atmosphere, an equivalent amount of carbon. Carbon neutrality is not associated with a commitment to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate Change

A change in the state of the climate that can be identified (eg by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period (typically decades or longer).

Green Economy

A model of economy where the reduction of the environmental impact of business enterprises results in economic advantages for the companies themselves.

Green Finance

Financial activity that employs financial instruments and services promoting the development of sustainable business models and mobilise investment that ensure a clean and resilient growth with environmentally positive outcome.

Green Growth

A model of economic development that promotes environmental sustainability and synergies between environment and economy.

Green Public Procurement

A process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured.

Green Skills

Green skills are knowledge, experience, values, attitudes and abilities that support carbon reduction and resource efficiency to increase climate resilience and enhance natural assets.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG)

Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to climate change. This causes the greenhouse effect. Water vapour (H₂O), carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), methane (CH₄) and ozone (O₃) are the primary greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Net Zero carbon

The state where there is a balance between the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere by a human activity, and the amount which is removed.

A commitment to net zero carbon is associated with a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to achieve this balance.

Retrofitting

Retrofitting refers to the addition of new components, technology or features to a building, in order to reduce carbon emissions and increase efficiency. This may include the introduction of smart meters, improved insulation or the fitting of new windows.

Scope Emissions

- Scope 1 – Direct emissions from owned or controlled sources (such as company vehicles)
- Scope 2 – Indirect emissions through purchases made (such as electricity, heat and steam)
- Scope 3 – All other indirect emissions from a company's supply chain and associated activities (such as business travel, transportation and distribution, and purchased goods and services)

Social Value

Social value is defined through the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 which came into force in January 2013 and requires all public sector organisations (and their suppliers) to look beyond the financial cost of a contract and consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.

Sustainable Procurement

A process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only for the organisation, but also for society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.

Sustainability

A characteristic or state whereby the needs of the present and local population can be met without compromising the ability of future generations or populations in other locations to meet their needs.

References

- 1 [LoCASE Case Studies](#)
- 2 The Carbon Trust, '[The Journey to Net Zero for SMEs](#)': Net-Zero-SME-v4.pdf, pg.11
- 3 The Carbon Trust, '[The Journey to Net Zero for SMEs](#)': Net-Zero-SME-v4.pdf, pg.6
- 4 [Essex County Council, press release](#), 7th February 2022
- 5 '[Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#)', Essex Climate Action Commission, pg.73
- 6 Basildon District Council, '[A LoCASE Case Study Success Story](#)'
- 7 [LoCASE Case Study](#)
- 8 Environment Agency data
- 9 Local Government Association, '[Local green jobs – accelerating a sustainable economic recovery](#)', 2021
- 10 Ibid
- 11 Cambridge Econometrics, '[Essex Economic Scenarios 2021, Final Report](#)', 2021

Throughout this pack, we have aimed to provide sustainability advice and tips, as well as links to the most relevant resources and sources of funding available to SMEs.

We hope that we have made your journey towards becoming a more sustainable business a bit easier. By taking into account the guidance in this pack, your business can take steps to become greener, more prepared for the future and make cost savings.

We hope to have demonstrated that even small changes can have a large, positive cumulative impact. You are playing a vital role in helping Essex reach its ambition of becoming a net zero county by 2050 and supporting our communities in tackling climate change.

We look forward to working with you on your journey towards greater sustainability.

Keep up to date with the work of the Essex Climate Action Commission:

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