

London Borough of Brent

GREEN BUSINESS GUIDES

CONSTRUCTION



**Brent
Together**
Towards Zero

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INTRODUCTION

Starting your sustainability journey doesn't need to be complicated!

Brent Council has created this simple toolkit to share our top tips for going green.

The Covid-19 crisis has had a huge impact on the construction industry. As businesses start to recover, there is an opportunity to embrace a 'new normal' that is better for the planet and good for business.

Considering the environment as your business recovers from Covid-19 can help:

- Save money, for example through cutting down your energy and water bills
- Attract new customers, who want to fight climate change
- Create new opportunities for revenue and innovation, through offering new products and services

In the long-term, being 'greener' will help future-proof your business against increasing environmental laws and regulations. It will also protect you against some of the results of the climate emergency, such as water shortages and more extreme weather conditions. Take action now to minimise the negative impact on your business and to help the fight against climate change.

We've pulled together our top tips across three key areas:

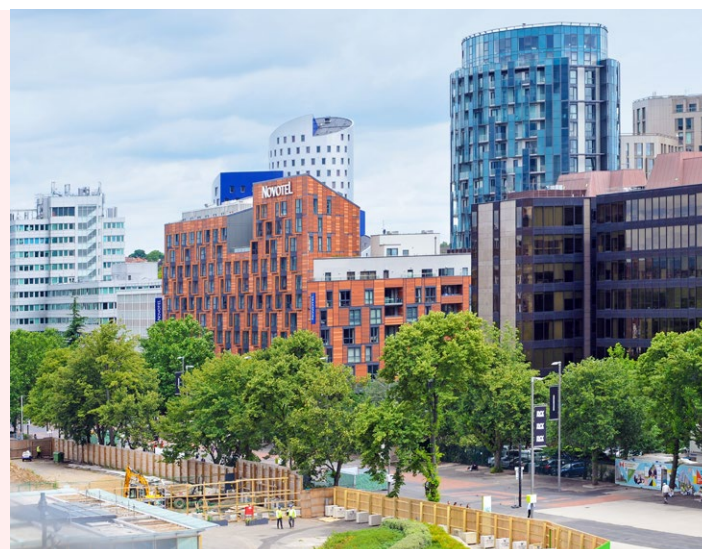


The words and phrases that are used to talk about climate can be confusing! That's why we've also put together a glossary of key terms at the end of the toolkit.

What is Brent Council doing?

In July 2019, Brent Council declared a climate and ecological emergency and committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. Brent's [Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy](#) sets out our proposed priorities and a pathway to carbon zero.

Some of the core objectives within our strategy are built around supporting the transition to a low-carbon, circular economy model, and supporting our businesses to go green and reduce the carbon footprint of their operations.



KEY ACTIONS TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS



REDUCING ENERGY USE

Saving energy is one of the simplest ways to increase your profits.

DID YOU KNOW?

The built environment contributes around 40% of the UK's total carbon footprint.
See: ukgbc.org 

Reducing your energy use saves you money on your bills, and with rising energy prices, this is more important than ever.

Reducing your energy use is also good for the environment. Energy is typically created by burning fossil fuels. This releases greenhouse gases into the air, contributing to global warming. Burning fossil fuels also causes poor air quality and can contribute to water pollution.



5 SIMPLE TIPS

Simple changes on site can make a big difference to cutting energy use – try these simple tips

1 Switch to more energy efficient vehicles and plant
Energy efficient models may not always look like the cheapest option, but they will save you money through lower running costs.

2 Reduce use of generators
Connecting construction sites to the grid earlier can reduce the need for powered generators.

3 Avoid idling
Leaving plant and vehicles idling can waste huge amounts of energy and money. Consider installing automatic engine shutdown devices and offering efficiency training for drivers and operators.

4 Maintain machinery
Regular maintenance can significantly reduce the amount of energy required to run machinery, also reducing the running costs.

5 Efficient onsite accommodation
Use site accommodation with energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of A, B or C to reduce heating and lighting costs.

REDUCING ENERGY USE (CONTINUED)

TOP TIPS

Monitor your energy use

Keeping a close eye on your energy bills will help you understand your progress and set targets to reduce your energy use.

Set targets

Set realistic targets for reducing energy use and give each one a deadline. For example, you might decide you want to reduce energy use by 30% over six months.

Get staff involved

Make sure that everyone understands how and why to save energy. You could use posters to remind staff to do their bit.

GO FURTHER

Consider the energy consumption of buildings

Most of the emissions created by buildings are from using them, for example through heating and cooking. Prioritising building designs that are energy efficient is a great way to minimise the carbon footprint of the project. The Carbon Trust's [Building Fabric Guide](#) introduces the main energy saving opportunities relating to building fabric.

Switch to renewable energy

Renewable energy is created from a natural source that can quickly be replenished, such as wind or sunlight. The Carbon Trust's [Renewable Energy Guide](#) outlines the benefits of using renewable energy sources, including lower energy bills, improved reputation, and the possibility of selling electricity back to the grid at a premium.

Encourage active travel

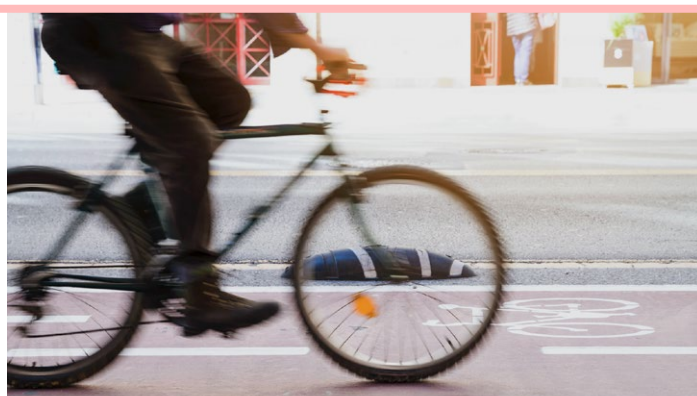
Many of your business's carbon emissions won't come from your equipment and operations, but from more indirect uses of energy. One example of this is the emissions created when staff travel to and from work.

You can reduce these emissions by encouraging staff to walk, cycle, or jog to work, rather than driving. Encouraging active travel can also increase productivity, lower employee sick days, improve staff retention and reduce car parking issues.

Transport for London's [active travel toolkit](#) provides practical tools to enable staff to choose active travel options to and from work.

Free tools and resources

The Supply Chain Sustainability School's [energy and carbon resources](#) includes over 200 videos, e-learning courses and other resources to help your business reduce carbon emissions.



REDUCING WASTE

Reducing waste is a great way to save your business money.

Cutting down on how much you buy and reducing waste disposal costs are both big opportunities to make savings.

Reducing waste is not only good for business, but also helps tackle climate change. When we waste items, we waste all the energy and water it takes to produce, transport and package them.

DID YOU KNOW?

13% of products delivered to construction sites are sent directly to landfill without being used. See Zero Waste Scotland's Best Practice Guide [↗](#)

7 SIMPLE TIPS

Simple changes on-site to reduce, re-use and recycle your construction waste can bring many benefits – try these tips to reduce waste on site

PREVENT

1 Careful ordering

Most waste is created through over-ordering or making mistakes in orders. Make sure to double check to avoid buying more than you need.

2 Better storage and handling

Focusing on how materials are stored and handled reduces damage and prevents them going to waste. Keep protective packaging on and make sure storage areas are secure and weatherproof.

3 Avoid excess packaging

Try to purchase materials with less unnecessary packaging, or consider suppliers that offer reusable packaging. Ask suppliers if they are able to take back bulky packaging.

4 Prioritise repair

Always prioritise repairing over buying new. This often saves money as well as preventing waste.

RE-USE

5 Re-use leftovers

Try to think about how leftover materials like off-cuts could be re-used in different ways. Make sure leftover materials are stored properly to avoid damage before re-use.

6 Redistribute waste

If you can't find a way to re-use, Material Exchange Platforms (MEPs) can help redistribute materials to other users. The Supply Chain Sustainability School's [MEP mapping tool](#) [↗](#) can help you identify a donation point. Local charities and schools may also benefit from unused materials.

RECYCLE

7 Recycle

If waste cannot be avoided or re-used it should be recycled whenever possible. Make sure you have clearly labelled recycling containers on-site, and that materials for recycling are kept clean and dry. You could also ask your waste contractor how they can support you in recycling more waste.



REDUCING WASTE (CONTINUED)

TOP TIP

Get staff involved

Engage with and train staff to make sure everyone understands their role in reducing waste on-site. Use examples, photos and posters to demonstrate best practice.



Free tools and resources

Zero Waste Scotland's [Best Practice Guide](#) to improving waste management on construction sites.

The Supply Chain Sustainability School's [guidance](#) on moving to a circular economy.

UKGBC's [Circular Economy Guidance](#) outlines how to apply circular economy principles at the project brief stage.



PURCHASING RESPONSIBLY

Everything you buy has an environmental impact. This means your purchasing decisions are a powerful tool for change.

Buying sustainable products and services is often cheaper, helps improve reputation, and can help get ahead of legal requirements. The bigger the demand for environmentally sustainable products and services, the bigger the market for these will grow, resulting in more options and reduced costs.



6 SIMPLE TIPS

Here are some ways you can make sure you are using your money more responsibly, whilst keeping costs to a minimum

1 Hire rather than buy

Hiring rather than buying outright reduces waste as well as cutting down the energy required in manufacturing. Fortunately, the UK plant-hire industry is one of the biggest in the world!

2 Smart ordering

Try to condense deliveries from the same suppliers wherever possible, to reduce the number of journeys needed to and from site.

3 Use reclaimed materials

'Reclaimed' materials from dismantled buildings are often cheaper to source and are a great way to reduce waste. Some common examples of reclaimed materials include steel beams and paving stones.

4 Opt for sustainable materials

Timber, straw and compressed earth have lower carbon footprints than cement, as well as absorbing CO₂ while growing. Opt for manufactured materials or components with significant and known recycled content. The Supply Chain Sustainability School's [guidance on materials](#) covers a range of topics relating to sourcing materials sustainably.

5 Avoid carbon-intensive materials

Such as cement, concrete, plasterboard, brick and ceramics, which all require a lot of energy to manufacture. Around half of carbon emissions in the industry are from cement production. If you do need to use cement, low-carbon cements are increasingly available.

6 Source locally

Sourcing materials locally reduces the distance they need to be transported, which often cuts costs as well as carbon emissions.

PURCHASING RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



GO FURTHER

Ask your suppliers about their environmental credentials

Try to only buy from businesses that have sustainable practices.

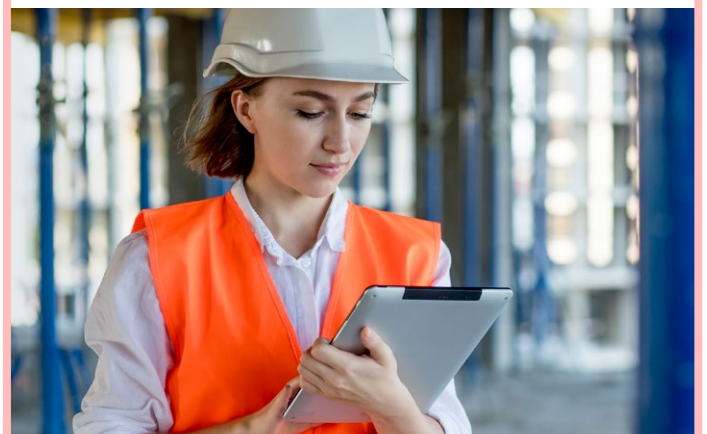
Watch out for 'greenwashing', where suppliers may claim to be 'eco-friendly', but are unable to back up claims with evidence.

Look out for certifications

Look out for certifications that mark materials as more sustainable, such as the [FSC certification](#) for timber.

Free tools and resources

The Supply Chain Sustainability School offers a [free course](#) on sustainability skills for procurement professionals.



NEXT STEPS

Not sure where to go next on your sustainability journey? Why not...

1 Set a goal

The Government is calling on businesses of all sizes to commit to cutting carbon emissions in half by 2030 and reaching 'net zero' emissions by 2050. The [SME Climate Hub](#) provides a one-stop-shop to making a climate commitment and accessing tools and resources to help you on your journey.

2 Write a plan

Make a checklist of all the changes you need to make in order to achieve your end goal. From there, you can assign each action a deadline and a member of staff responsible for achieving it. Use your plan to track progress and celebrate success.

3 Get involved

We all need to work together in order to reach Brent's goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

The [Brent Environmental Network](#) is a network of local residents, businesses, community groups and schools. As part of the network, you will receive a monthly newsletter packed with ideas and practical tips for reducing your environmental impact, as well as inspiring stories from local people who are taking on the climate emergency.

4 Get in touch

Did this toolkit help your business make sustainable changes? [Get in touch](#) to let us know how for the chance to feature in our newsletters or on our social media.



GLOSSARY

Air quality

A measure of how clean or polluted the air is.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂)

A gas in the Earth's atmosphere. It occurs naturally, and is also created by human activities such as burning fossil fuels. It is the main greenhouse gas produced by human activity.

Carbon footprint

The amount of carbon dioxide produced by an individual or organisation in a given amount of time, or the amount of carbon dioxide produced during the manufacture of a product.

Carbon neutral

A process where there is no overall release of carbon dioxide, because the amount of carbon dioxide produced is the same as the amount taken out of the atmosphere.

Circular economy

A circular economy is an economic model that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible, to extend the life cycle of products and reduce waste.

Climate change

A pattern of change affecting global or regional climate caused by both natural processes and human activity.

Climate emergency

A situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.

Fossil fuels

Natural resources, such as coal, oil and natural gas, containing hydrocarbons. These fuels are formed in the Earth over millions of years and produce carbon dioxide when burnt.

Global warming

The steady rise in global average temperature in recent decades, which scientists believe is largely caused by man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse gases (GHGs)

Natural and industrial gases that trap heat from the earth and warm the surface.

Renewable energy

Energy created from sources that can be replenished in a short period of time. The five sources used most often are biomass (such as wood and biogas), the movement of water, geothermal (heat from within the Earth), wind, and solar.

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