

London Borough of Brent

GREEN BUSINESS GUIDES

OFFICE-BASED COMPANIES



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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 Brent's businesses. 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, through cutting down your energy and water bills
- Attract new customers, who want to fight climate change
- Create new opportunities for 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 four 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?

Simple changes around the office could reduce your energy bills by up to 20%. Find out more at [carbontrust.com](https://www.carbontrust.com) 

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.

10 SIMPLE TIPS

Simple changes around the office can make a big difference to cutting energy use. Try these simple tips from the [Carbon Trust](https://www.carbontrust.com) 

HEATING, COOLING AND VENTILATION

- 1 Keep in the heat**
Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible when heating is on. Close curtains and blinds at the end of the day.
- 2 Maintain boilers and pipework**
A regularly serviced boiler can save 10% on annual heating costs.
- 3 Go natural**
Take advantage of natural airflow through windows and doors to save on cooling and ventilation costs like air conditioning.

LIGHTING

- 4 Switch off policy**
Have a 'switch off' policy to encourage staff to switch lights and other equipment off when not in use. You could use stickers above light switches as a reminder.
- 5 Install light sensors**
Sensors can achieve savings of up to 30%. They are especially useful in toilets, storerooms.
- 6 Switch to LEDs**
LED lights are highly energy efficient and can save a lot of money. It is usually possible to switch to LEDs without changing the light fitting.

EQUIPMENT

- 7 Switch off policy**
Switch off all equipment when not in use and enable power down modes. You could also install plug-in seven-day timers, which are cheap to buy and help prevent machines being left on out of hours.
- 8 Maintain equipment**
Equipment like printers should be checked and cleaned regularly to maintain efficiency.

BUILDING FABRIC

- 9 Insulation**
25% of a building's heat will escape via an un-insulated roof, driving energy bills up. Insulating roof spaces and cavity walls is a great way to cut down on heating costs.
- 10 Check for damp**
Damp can cause damage to buildings and insulation, so check for signs such as condensation at least once a year.

Read more at the [Carbon Trust's office energy efficiency guides](https://www.carbontrust.com) 

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 that can be easily measured, 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

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.

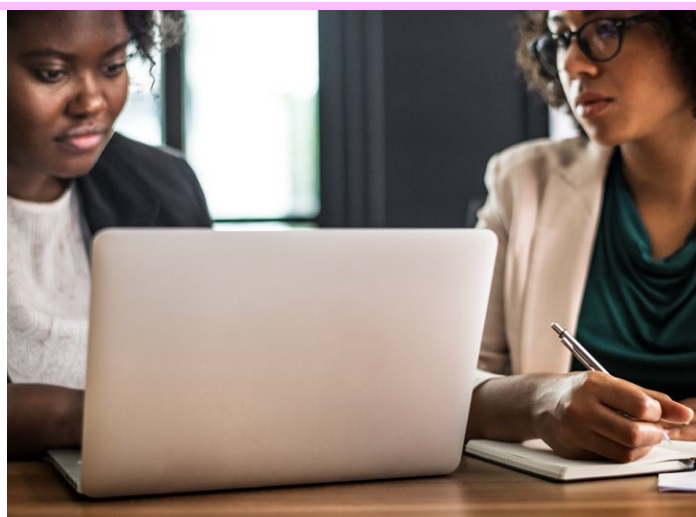
Transport for London's [active travel toolkit](#) provides practical tools to enable staff to choose active travel options to and from work.

Free tools and resources

The [office energy efficiency guides](#) from the Carbon Trust outline opportunities for savings across topics including lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, office equipment, and building fabric.

The Carbon Trust's [Building Fabric Guide](#) explains the key opportunities for energy saving in roofs and lofts, walls, windows, doors and floors.

[Quick Wins to Reduce Building Energy Consumption](#) from the Mayor of London.



REDUCING WATER USE

Saving water saves money, especially if you use a water meter.

If you reduce the amount of hot water used, you can also save money on your energy bill. Saving water can also help your business comply with current and future environmental legislation.

Saving water is also good for the environment. Water treatment facilities produce high amounts of carbon emissions, and transporting water around the country requires a lot of energy. Climate change and population growth are leading to hotter summers and drier winters. This means that there is increasing pressure on our water supplies, and that we are at risk of droughts. Taking action now can help make sure there's enough water to go around.



DID YOU KNOW?

Businesses can typically save around 30% of their water costs through simple and inexpensive measures. See water-plus.co.uk

5 SIMPLE TIPS

Here are a few simple ways to save water in your business

1 Check for leaks

Undetected leaks in pipes can cost your business thousands each year. Check your water meter when no water is being used. If the index is still moving, you may have a leak.

2 Efficient taps

Don't leave taps to drip! In most cases, dripping taps are cheap and easy to fix, and can save a large amount of water.

Tap aerators screw onto a tap, mixing air into the flow and reducing the amount of water by 50%, without reducing water pressure. They only cost around £5 per tap and are easy to fit.

Fitting taps with push button or motion sensors can reduce water use by 20% and pay back within a year through savings on water bills.

3 Save flushes

Using a water saving device (or Cistern Displacement Device) on toilets can save up to three litres per flush. Passive infrared (PIR) flush control can detect when urinals are in use in order to save water. A PIR sensor will usually pay for itself through reduced water bills.

4 Lag your pipes

Lagging is insulation for pipes, and it's easy and cheap to fit. This will protect them against freezing, leaking or bursting, which can waste large amounts of water.

5 Upgrade equipment

Upgrading equipment that use lots of water, such as dishwashers and ice machines, to more efficient models can help make big savings. Look out for equipment with an AA+ efficiency rating, as these will be the cheapest to run.

Read more at the [Water Plus online water saving guide](#)

REDUCING WATER USE (CONTINUED)



TOP TIPS

Monitor your water use

Comparing your water bills will enable you to track progress and set targets to reduce water use.

Set targets

Set realistic targets that can be easily measured, and give each one a deadline. For example, you might decide you want to reduce water use by 30% over six months.

Identify key opportunities

Try walking around the building and write down all the opportunities you spot to make water savings. Use these opportunities to create a plan for reducing your water use.

Get staff involved

Make sure staff are aware of why saving water is important and how they can help make a difference.


Talk to your water company

Your water supplier may be able to help you save water through advice or free water saving devices.

Some suppliers offer audits to see how efficient your water use is, and some may even offer a personalised water management package to help you be as efficient as possible.

If you don't already have one, asking your supplier to install a water meter can help you save money and water.

Free tools and resources

[Waterwise](#)  provides free advice for businesses looking to save water, save money and help the environment.



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.

Plastic can create a big problem, as when it is wasted it can take hundreds or even thousands of years to break down, creating long lasting environmental damage.

Food waste is also a major issue. When food is not disposed of properly, it releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, which contributes to global warming.

DID YOU KNOW?

The world produces about 300 million tonnes of plastic waste every year – nearly the weight of the entire human population. See [unep.org](https://www.unep.org) 



5 SIMPLE TIPS

Try making changes in the following areas

1 Reduce plastic waste

Consider banning single-use items, like plastic water bottles, in the office, and encourage staff to buy a re-usable bottle instead.


2 Reduce food waste

Only buy what you need – this saves money up-front and on waste disposal costs. For example, pre-ordering catering for meetings means food can be cooked to order and there is less risk of over-ordering.

3 Reduce packaging waste

Ask suppliers to take back or re-use bulky packaging. Where possible, opt for suppliers that use minimal packaging or offer a packaging re-use scheme.


4 Recycle


Recycling waste is often cheaper than general waste disposal. Brent Council offers a business waste collection service which is provided by our partner [Veolia](#) .

Make sure you have plenty of clearly labelled recycling bins in the office for staff to use.

When you buy electronic equipment, ask your supplier how it can be sustainably disposed of.


5 Redistribute

Any leftover food that is still safe to eat could be donated rather than thrown away. The Food and Drink Surplus Network from [WRAP](#)  (The Waste and Resources Action Programme) helps you find organisations that will redistribute surplus food.

Look for local charities or Freecycle networks to donate items like electronic equipment and furniture. Organisations including the [Reuse Network](#)  can help you find donation points.

REDUCING WASTE (CONTINUED)

DID YOU KNOW?

The amount of food and drink wasted in the UK in 2018 that could have been eaten would fill eight Wembley stadiums. See [wrap.org.uk](https://www.wrap.org.uk) 



TOP TIPS

Reduce, reuse, recycle (in that order!)

Reduce: Buy less, and only buy what you need.

Reuse: Where possible, try re-usable options or think of creative ways to re-purpose waste.


Recycle: Reprocess waste into something new.

Get staff involved

Encourage staff to do their bit to reduce waste around the office. You could appoint a 'zero waste champion' to organise office campaigns and drive forward change.



Free tools and resources

The [Waste Management in Buildings guide](#)  from Julie's Bicycle's outlines how to take an informed look at your waste management needs and system, and helps you make cost effective decisions in managing waste sustainably.



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, borrow or share
Consider whether you need to actually buy something, or whether it could be hired, borrowed or shared with another business.

2 Reduce waste
Buy only as much as you need, and make sure to correct over-orders. Opt for suppliers that use minimal packaging, especially plastic packaging, or who offer a packaging re-use scheme.

3 Buy second-hand
For items like furniture and décor, buying second-hand is usually cheaper and stops items going to waste.

4 Choose durable and efficient products
The cheapest option isn't always the best, and can lead to greater costs and waste further down the line. For example, equipment with a high energy efficiency rating will save you money on energy bills as well as reducing your carbon emissions.

5 Source locally
Sourcing items and services locally reduces travel, which often cuts costs as well as supporting other local businesses. For example, opt for local catering and cleaning services where possible.

6 Look for recycled and reclaimed content
For items like paper and stationery, look for products made from recycled material. Look out for furniture that has been 'upcycled' or 'reclaimed', meaning it has been made from waste materials.

PURCHASING RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)

TOP TIPS

Write a list of all the things you buy, your suppliers and your annual spend

Think about where you spend the most money and what you buy most of. From there you can establish where you can make more sustainable swaps.

Reduce, reuse, recycle (in that order!)

Reduce: Only buy what you actually need, and prioritise long-lasting products.

Reuse: If you need to buy, buy second-hand.

Recycle: If second-hand isn't possible, buy products made from renewable, reused or recycled materials.



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 that marks products as more sustainable, such as **FSC certified paper** [↗](#), which shows that paper has been produced from well-managed forests.

Write a sustainable procurement policy

A sustainable procurement policy outlines your business's requirements for suppliers, products and services. It also helps communicate your commitments to new suppliers. Julie's Bicycle's **Sustainable Procurement Guide** [↗](#) outlines advice on integrating environmental sustainability into your procurement policies.

Free tools and resources

The **Guide to Sustainable Procurement** from Legal Sustainability Alliance.

The Carbon Trust's **Green Business Directory** [↗](#) is a list of Carbon Accredited Suppliers and installers of energy efficiency and renewable technology.



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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