

London Borough of Brent

GREEN BUSINESS GUIDES

RETAIL



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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 retail sector. 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 revenue and innovation, through offering new products and services that help tackle climate change

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 five 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?

A 20% cut in energy costs can represent the same bottom line benefit as a 5% increase in sales. 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. Improving the energy efficiency of your business can make it a more comfortable place for customers and staff, for example by keeping buildings warmer in the winter.

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

Try these simple tips from the [Carbon Trust](https://www.carbontrust.com)  to cut your business' energy use

HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING

- 1 Don't overheat**
Reducing heating temperature by just 1 degree can cut fuel consumption by up to 8%.
- 2 Keep in the heat**
Keep external doors open only at busy times or install automatic doors to maintain inside temperatures.
- 3 Maintain boilers and pipework**
A regularly serviced boiler can save as much as 5% on annual heating costs.
- 4 Make the most of natural ventilation and free cooling**
Use windows and doors to provide natural ventilation during warmer months.

- 5 Maintain ventilation system components**
Regular cleaning of ventilation systems can increase efficiency by as much as 25%.

REFRIGERATION

- 6 Regular maintenance**
Fridges that are not properly maintained will gradually use more energy.
- 7 Avoid over-cooling**
Energy consumption can be reduced by 2-4% if the temperature can be safely increased by 1 degree.

LIGHTING

- 8 Switch off policy**
Have a 'switch off' policy to encourage staff to switch lights off when not in use. You could use stickers above light switches as a reminder.
- 9 Install light sensors**
Sensors can achieve savings of up to 50%. They are especially useful in stockrooms and toilets.
- 10 Switch to LED lighting**
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.

Read more at the [Carbon Trust's Retail Sector Energy Efficiency Guide](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 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

Green deliveries

If you offer a delivery service, you could switch to an environmentally friendly option, like cargo bikes or electric vans. This could also save your business money if you operate within the [Ultra Low Emissions Zone \(ULEZ\)](#).

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 will come from indirect use of energy, rather than your own equipment and operations. 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 [Retail Sector Energy Efficiency Guide](#) from the Carbon Trust focuses on low-cost quick wins to save money on your energy bills.



REDUCING FOOD WASTE

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

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 

Cutting down on how much you buy and reducing waste disposal costs are both big money savers.

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

If food goes to the landfill and rots, it releases methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, which contributes to global warming.



3 SIMPLE TIPS

Try these simple tips to reduce your food waste


1 Don't overstock

Try and work out how much of each product customers are actually buying and order appropriate quantities. Buy smaller portions of fresh produce, and order more often. Don't assume customers are more likely to buy from a full shelf.


2 Offer discounts


Offer a discount on food with 'imperfections', or close to its sell by date, to avoid it going to waste.

3 Redistribute

Anything that can't be sold but is still safe to eat could be sold or donated. The Food and Drink Surplus Network from WRAP  (The Waste and Resources Action Programme) helps you find organisations that will redistribute surplus food.

Free tools and resources

The [Food Waste Reduction Roadmap Toolkit](#)  from WRAP allows you to measure and report food waste, and take targeted action to reduce waste in your own operations, your supply chain and consumers.


WRAP's guidance on [Food Retail Operations](#)  is designed to help food retailers measure and report food surplus and waste.

REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE

Reducing plastic waste is one of the biggest ways your business can fight climate change, and it makes financial sense too.

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) 


From April 2022, there will be a new **plastic packaging tax** , which will apply to all packaging that does not contain at least 30% recycled plastic. Alternatives to plastic are often re-usable, meaning you buy less and save money. Reducing plastic is also popular with customers, helps you build a good reputation, and reduces your waste disposal costs.


Most plastics are made from fossil fuels, meaning producing plastic contributes towards global warming. Many of the plastic items used in the hospitality sector are designed to be used only once, and then thrown away, creating huge amounts of waste. Plastic can take hundreds or even thousands of years to break down, so the environmental damage is long lasting.



Get started by taking action in the following areas:

1 Reduce unnecessary plastic
Use as little as possible whilst ensuring products are protected. List all the plastic packaging your business currently uses, and try to identify where you could swap this out for a more sustainable option, or remove it all together. In particular, avoid flexible plastics, like plastic bags, that can't be easily reused or recycled.

2 Offer reusable packaging
For example, encourage customers to purchase re-usable containers to fill with bulk items like rice or pasta. You could also sell re-usable shopping bags with your business name and logo. Why not offer a discount to customers who bring their own re-usable items, via **BuyBrent** , the local rewards app?

3 Choose recyclable packaging
Recycling your waste is often cheaper than general waste disposal. Brent Council offers a business waste collection service which is provided by our partner **Veolia** .

REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE (CONTINUED)



GO FURTHER

Talk to your suppliers

Request that suppliers use less plastic packaging, and use recycled and recyclable materials when possible.

Encourage customers to recycle

Make sure product packaging is recyclable where possible, and use posters to remind customers to recycle at home.

Recycle Now [🔗](#) have free resources for organisations looking to promote recycling.

Free tools and resources

The [Compostable plastic packaging guidance](#) [🔗](#) from WRAP provides clarifications around using compostable packaging.

[Plastic Free July](#) [🔗](#) offers resources to help businesses go plastic free, including advice on packaging and engaging with staff and customers.



REDUCING CLOTHING AND TEXTILES WASTE

Reducing clothing and textiles waste is an opportunity to innovate.

By offering new services that help tackle waste, you can increase profits, attract new customers, and improve your businesses' reputation.

The fashion industry is a big contributor to global warming, producing 2-8% of global carbon emissions (source: www.fashioncharter.org).

When clothes and textiles are wasted, the energy, water and other resources taken to produce and transport them are wasted too. [Greenpeace](#) reports that global production of clothing has doubled in the past 15 years, contributing to the £140m worth of clothing sent to landfill every year in the UK.



DID YOU KNOW?

It takes around 3,781 litres of water to make a pair of jeans. This emits around 33.4 kg of carbon, the same amount created by driving 111 km. See unep.org

3 SIMPLE TIPS

Here are some ways your business could help reduce clothing and textiles waste

1 Start a take-back scheme

Encourage customers to donate unwanted clothing to be re-used, up-cycled or recycled. WRAP's [Retailer Clothing Take-Back Guide](#) helps you get a scheme set up.

2 Join the sharing economy

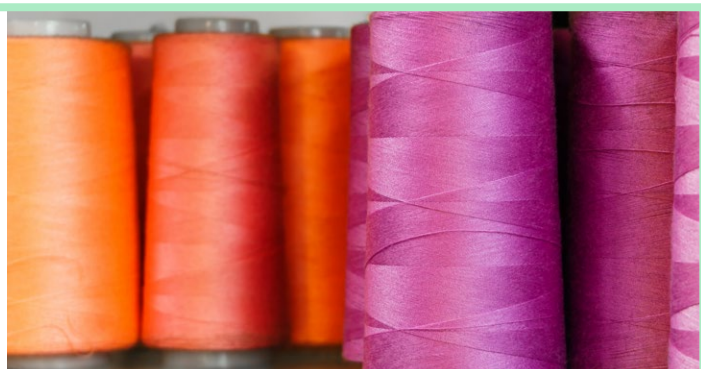
Allow customers to pay to rent clothes rather than own them. This helps reduce waste and allows you generate extra revenue without needing to invest in new products.

3 Repair

Offer repair services or give advice on how to mend clothing, to help your products last longer. This is a great way to engage with customers and encourage brand loyalty, as well as creating new revenue streams.

Free tools and resources

[Textiles 2030](#) is WRAP's expert-led initiative to accelerate the fashion and textile's industry's move towards circularity and system change in the UK. Visit their website to sign up and receive regular business briefings.



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 Source locally
Buying from local suppliers is often cheaper, reduces transport costs and emissions, and supports other local businesses. This reduces carbon emissions from travel such as flights.

2 Stock seasonal ingredients
Food that's in season is usually cheaper, fresher and reduces transport costs and emissions. [Eat the Seasons](#) outlines which produce is in season at different points of the year.

3 Stock less meat and dairy
Meat and dairy production accounts for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. See the [Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock report](#) by The Food and Agriculture Organization.

Vegetarian and vegan alternatives are growing in popularity, and are often cheaper than meat and dairy, meaning a bigger profit margin.

4 Buy second-hand
For items like furniture and decor, this is usually cheaper and reduces waste.

5 Choose durable and efficient products
The cheapest option is not always the best, and can lead to greater costs and waste further down the line.

6 Minimise waste
Only buy what you need. Regularly review orders to correct any over-orders. Choose products with minimal packaging, and where any packaging can be easily re-used or recycled.

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 these certifications that mark food as more sustainable and/or ethical



Red Tractor

This logo is found on British food and drink products that have been responsibly sourced, safely produced, and comes from crops and animals that have been well cared for



RSPCA Assured

This logo recognises a high level of animal welfare



Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Marque

This logo recognises more sustainably farmed products



Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

The MSC blue label can be found on wild fish and seafood from fisheries that are more sustainable



Rainforest Alliance Certification

This logo shows that farmers and companies are making their products more sustainable



Fairtrade Mark

This logo shows that the product has been fairly produced and traded. It also means that the product is fully traceable from farm to shelf



Soil Association Organic Standards

This logo shows that food and drink meets the EU and UK standards on organic products

Free tools and resources

Julie's Bicycle's [Sustainable Procurement Guide](#) offers practical advice on buying with environmental sustainability in mind.

The [SU-EATABLE LIFE](#) project aims to reduce carbon emissions related to food choices.



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.

Published by Brent Council
www.brent.gov.uk

