

Introduction

Climate change is a global issue affecting us all, and we all have a part to play. As a major food producing region with coastal towns and areas just above sea level, Suffolk is particularly susceptible to the damaging effects of climate change. With Suffolk local authorities declaring a climate emergency and aiming to be net-zero by 2030, we must take action now. However, for SME's it can be difficult to know where to begin. Suffolk Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Suffolk public sector have put together ten easy steps to help SME's on their journey to net-zero.

01

Calculate your carbon footprint



To understand the impact your organisation has on the environment, it's best to work out your carbon footprint. **This free tool analyses the environmental impact of your business through everyday activities including heating, electricity and transport** (all you have to do is register). Once all of your information is inputted, the tool will generate a report of your carbon footprint and tips on how to reduce it.

Other measuring tools are available and you can often pay for an independent analysis of your business.

02

Business strategy & carbon reduction policy



Once you know your businesses environmental impact, you can begin to think about reducing it and what you would like to achieve. A good first step is to create a carbon reduction policy which will outline your key environmental impacts and commit to reducing them. To turn this into reality, why not create an action plan, a live document which outlines quantifiable targets, with assigned responsibilities and completion dates, this can be monitored to check your progress. **Advice and guidance on an action plan can be found here.**

Don't forget, it may also be worth updating your overall business strategy or plan to include references to the environmental work you are doing. Customers are now more aware of a business's environmental credentials, and it may be a competitive advantage to outline your commitments.

03

Staff engagement



To make a success of any carbon reduction measures, you will need buy-in from staff. Why not discuss ideas, behaviour change and consider making someone a 'green champion'. Staff will feel more involved in the process and may suggest other ways to improve. Each business will be different but staff can be vital for speeding up change and setting an example to others.

Take a look at some guidance here on ways to engage with staff.

04

Make your buildings more efficient



In a business, heating and air conditioning are two of the biggest sources of wasted energy. Insulation is a great place to start to improve energy efficiency, and being relatively cheap means a shorter payback period. On top of this, check the settings and timers on any heating and air conditioning to make sure it is being used effectively. Try to only use these during the working day and for rooms staff are using. Grants may also be available for insulation or improved energy efficiency, and if you rent, try speaking to your landlord.

Quick win: switching your lighting to LEDs and installing sensors can save up to 70% in running costs!

05

Consider renewable energy



Why not check your energy tariff and switch to renewable electricity (green tariff) if available. Ensuring the energy you are using comes from renewable sources can help speed up the production of renewable energy and help energy companies and industry move towards net-zero.

[Check out the energy savings trust website for further information on green tariffs.](#)

You could also consider upgrading your own energy systems such as replacing gas boilers with an air source heat pump. If space allows, why not look into installing your own renewable energy such as solar panels, wind turbines, or even an anaerobic digester for those in the agriculture/food and drink sector. **[Further information on installing renewables can be found on the energy savings trust website.](#)**

06

Transport



Transport is a major source of carbon emissions and there are several ways businesses can change for the better. If your business relies heavily on deliveries, such as moving goods and production, vehicle trackers and route planning may help reduce mileage and fuel consumption, as could grouping deliveries into multiple orders. If you have your own fleet, you could look at switching to electric vehicles and where possible, adding the necessary charging infrastructure to your premises.

With the roll-out of faster broadband and mobile connectivity, many businesses are now offering home-working solutions, remote technology can help us all cut-down on our need to travel. Working from home or holding remote meetings can save money, time, and emissions, as well as reducing mileage and boosting productivity. However, if travel is a necessity, then consider alternatives such as the train, bus, walking or cycling.

For staff, carpooling could also be option, and **[liftshare](#)** is one platform which can help set this up.

07

Minimise waste and recycle



Disposing of waste generates large amounts of emissions, as well as creating other environmental issues. If possible, try to re-use products as much as possible such as bags or through the paper that you buy. In terms of disposing waste, try to do this in the correct manner by having a recycling scheme with clearly labelled bins which staff are aware of. If you use a waste contractor, speak to them about where the waste ends up and understand the recycling process for other products or items you buy, such as electrical items.

08

Supply-chain



Not only is it worth thinking about your own emissions, but the emissions of your supply-chain (also known as scope three emissions), such as contractors and suppliers. These emissions when accounted for can actually be the largest part of a business's carbon-footprint. To improve your supply-chain, consider buying products which are more sustainable and produced in an environmentally friendly way. Consider switching to eco-friendly packaging and plastic-free options; buying or sourcing local can also help cut down on emissions in the supply-chain.

Top tip: when bidding for contracts, many tendering opportunities will now outline an environmental responsibility that all contractors must adhere to. This could include your commitment to net-zero such as a policy, managing the energy use of your buildings, sourcing environmentally-friendly materials, recycling, or carbon offset measures such as tree planting.

09

Carbon offsetting



Carbon offsetting involves paying projects or providers to reduce or offset emissions, for example, through tree planting or renewable energy projects. Really, this is a last option for when you cannot reduce your own emissions any further, but it can be useful for driving forward the net-zero agenda and when showing business leadership and commitments to sustainability.

[A free guide on carbon offsetting can be found here.](#)

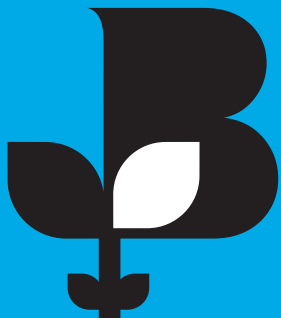
10

Quick wins



The above nine actions will help the majority of SME's begin their net-zero journey. However, for some quick wins, consider some of the following actions:

- Ditch single-use plastics such as cups, plastic bags and straws
- Provide staff with reusable and sustainable water bottles
- Buy recycled paper and only print when absolute necessary
- Look into building insulation to improve energy efficiency
- Introduce a cycle-to-work scheme with safe storage for bicycles in the workplace
- Encourage staff, and suppliers to buy-local wherever possible



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Additional resources

There is a lot of information out there for SMEs and businesses, much of which can be confusing so we hope the above steps have been useful. However, if you wish to do more and would like further reading materials, the following may be useful:

Carbon Charter

The Carbon Charter is a Suffolk led initiative aimed at Suffolk and Norfolk's small and medium sized-business community. The Carbon Charter is a paid for service which provides an environmental assessment which will look at the major environmental aspects of your business, and how to address your carbon footprint.

New Anglia Growth Hub

The Growth Hub offer free, impartial advice to businesses and can signpost you to grants, funding opportunities and more information. Our in-house, net-zero advisors are on hand and ready to answer questions and provide advice. Call 0300 333 6536.

SME Climate Hub

The SME Climate Hub has been set up by the UK Government to help SME's move to net-zero. The Hub allows businesses to commit to climate action with a pledge, and includes a range of tools, reading materials and further information to help them on that journey.

Climate Change Commercial Ask

Suffolk County Council have outlined their Climate Change Ask of their supply-chain in a simple one-page document.



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