



BUSINESS ADVICE PACK

Taking Action on Climate Change

Introduction

This is the second edition of the Climate Action Advice Pack for Businesses. This 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.

Consumers are ever more 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. The move towards sustainability is also being driven by government legislation and targets, as well as policy decisions being taken by individual professions and sectors. As such, a focus on sustainability will increasingly become a business priority and intrinsic to the future of your organisation's development. This may include meeting environmental targets set out in tender documents and procurement contracts or reducing emissions and use of hard to recycle materials.

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.

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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.

Annual Reports and Climate Action Plans




Each year, Essex County Council produces an annual climate action report, which examines action being taken across our county to tackle climate change and improve the environment.






You can read the latest report [here](#). The four-year [Essex Climate Action Plan](#) – developed in response to recommendations made by the Essex Climate Action Commission in the report Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral – outlines the actions ECC is taking directly and in concert with partners to drive effective progress against the Essex Climate Action Commission's recommendations. Supported by £200 million of funding, the Climate Action Plan sets out by theme initiatives underway to tackle climate change.

1. What Can I Do?



The below table aims to provide you with an overview of some key actions you can take at your business. More information can be found later in the pack. Please note this is **not an extensive list of actions your business can take**.

Issue	Opportunity	Support	Page
 Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future-proof your business Reduce your carbon footprint Save money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant to cover part of the cost of replacing fossil fuel heating systems. Consider installing Solar panels and battery storage through the group purchasing scheme, Solar Together 	19
 Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future-proof your business Reduce your carbon footprint & environmental impact Save money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full list of funding opportunities can be found on page 46 	46
 Green Economy & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future-proof your business Learn new skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access resources via the Essex Green Skills Hub - www.essexgreenskills.co.uk and the Essex Opportunities portal (information and advice on jobs, careers, skills and training) ACL Essex - Retrofit Academy (free training courses) UK Government: free Skills Bootcamps 	38

Issue	Opportunity	Support	Page
 Outdoor Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve biodiversity Improve local environment Save money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free trees from the Woodland Trust or Essex Forest Initiative. Contact: environment@essex.gov.uk Discounted water butts from the Floods team (with an Essex postcode) 	28
 Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future-proof your business Improve preparedness for social value and climate in public sector contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon Reduction Plans - guidance and templates 	39
 Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain access to transport advice and expertise Reduce carbon footprint Save money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for electric vehicle charging points and infrastructure and grants for low-emissions vehicles Join STEN (The Smarter Travel for Essex Network) for free 	32
 Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the waste your business produces more efficiently and sustainably Reduce the amount of waste your business produces Save money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste audit guidance from WRAP and Recycle More Check the Circular Economy Directory to find circular businesses 	12
 Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce water wastage and improve efficiency Save money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Water Saving Calculator can show money you could save and compare your water efficiency with other businesses in your sector Businesses are able to switch their water retailer and can use the Open Water to find out more 	26

2. Sustainable Business Planning

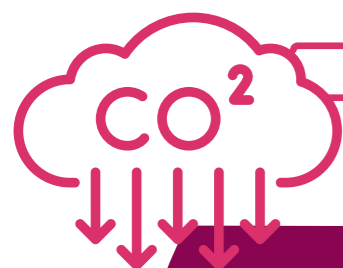
Perhaps one of the most important first steps you can take is to develop a sustainable business plan or strategy.



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 Climate Action 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 Cutting Essex App** – Personal carbon footprint tracker specific to Essex
- **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
- Small 99
 - » **Digital Emissions Calculator**
 - » **Small Business Carbon Footprint Calculator**
- SME Climate Hub – **Calculate your business emissions**
- The Carbon Trust – **SME Carbon Footprint Calculator**
- 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.



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.



The Essex Climate Action Commission [website](#) lists sustainability events happening all over the county. There are lots of opportunities for businesses to get involved and network with local sustainable businesses.



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.

You can read more about procurement, including social value and carbon reduction plans on page 39.

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.

Case Study

Climbing Trees is an award-winning performance ads and search engine optimisation (SEO) agency, which embeds sustainable practices throughout its business and undertakings.

The company decided to pursue accreditation (**B Corp Certification**), which Alex Holliman, Managing Director, said ‘has strengthened Climbing Trees’ foundation, leading to increased environmental focus, improved employee satisfaction and retention, enhanced customer engagement through feedback integration, and deepened community involvement’.

Since 2019, the company has reduced its carbon emissions from 5.3 tonnes per person per year to 3.69 tonnes per person per year. It has no scope 1 emissions, limited scope 2 emissions and is working to reduce its scope 3 emissions each year. The company has planted over 260,000 trees to help tackle emissions, which are beyond its influence. Climbing Trees has also adopted practices such as shifting to remote working, banking with an institution committed to being planet-friendly, and aiming to achieve net zero by 2030.

For other businesses considering accreditation, Alex recommends that you “look into different sustainable certifications so that you can go through your own business and come up with your own evaluation, then look at ideas that inspire you. Choose the one that aligns with your organisations’ values and demonstrates your commitment and do not hold back”. If you would like to find out more about Climbing Trees’ sustainability journey, please email: hello@climbingtrees.com

 Climbing Trees.



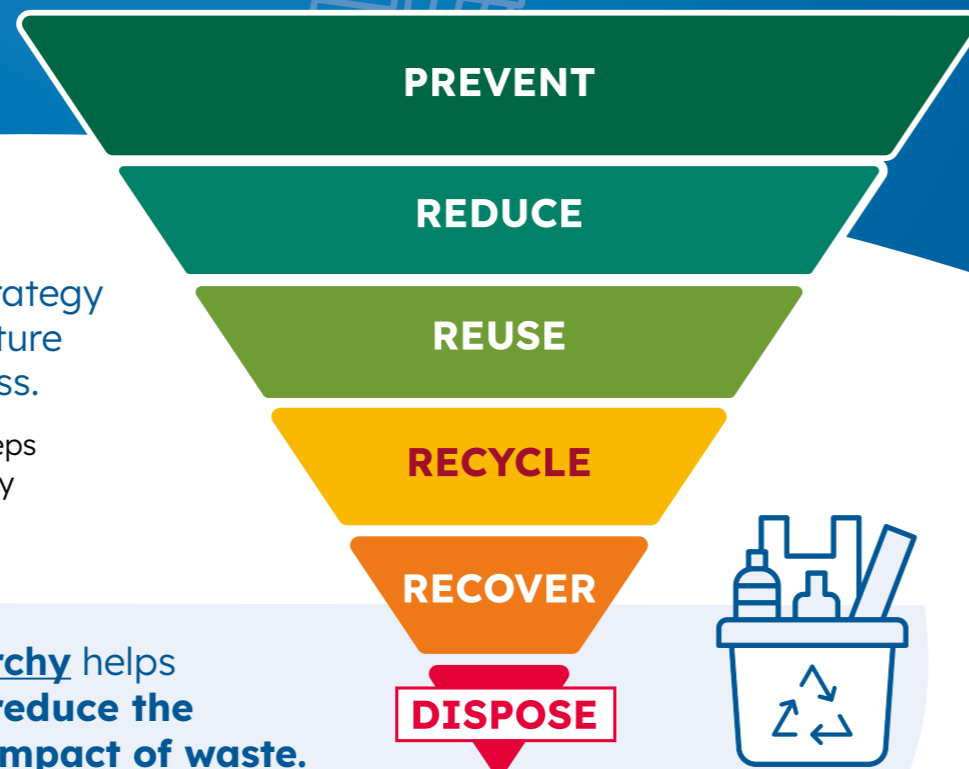
3. Waste

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.

When considering what steps to take, the waste hierarchy comes in handy.

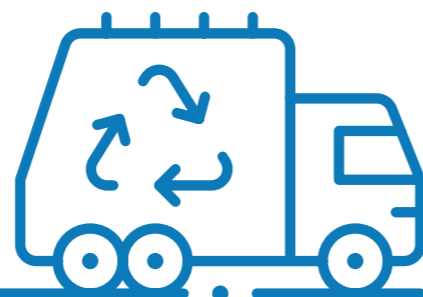


The **waste hierarchy** helps us take steps to **reduce the environmental impact of waste**.

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.
- Review your business processes or production methods to see if raw materials can be used more efficiently.

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.

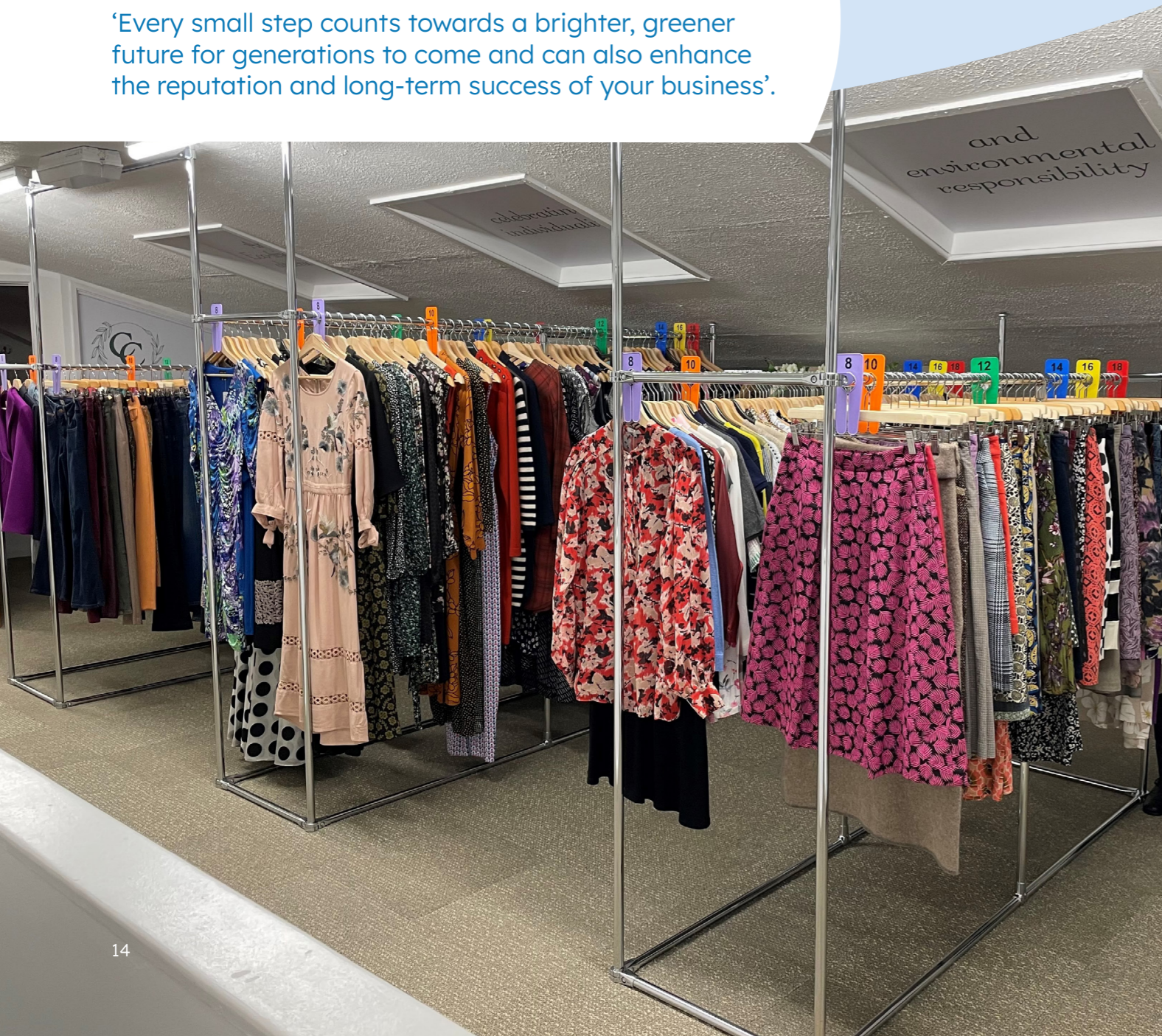
Case Study

Consciously Clothed is a preloved boutique based in Wivenhoe, Essex. It focuses on extending the life cycle of clothing and accessories, helping customers to achieve a more sustainable wardrobe.

Linda Blanchette, owner of Consciously Clothed, was inspired to start her business after taking part in [Climate Assembly UK](#). The idea of repairing and sharing items to help her local community, keep clothes in circulation and out of landfill resonated with her. Linda has also witnessed an evolution in how shoppers approach buying, with 'a growing community of people saying no to fast fashion and making second-hand fashion their first choice'.

Linda encourages all businesses to take action and make their company more sustainable:

'Every small step counts towards a brighter, greener future for generations to come and can also enhance the reputation and long-term success of your business'.



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 your waste collections:

- Ask your **local council** or **waste contractor** what business waste services they provide for recycling and for anything that cannot be reused or recycled. 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](#) or [The Ink Bin](#) to recycle empty printer cartridges.

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

- 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. For instance:
 - » By 31st March 2025, businesses with more than ten full time equivalent employees **must arrange for the collection of recyclables**. This includes: glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, and a separate collection for food waste.
 - » The government has introduced new responsibilities for businesses that produce or use packaging to help: reduce the amount of packaging produced; how much goes to landfill; and to increase the amount of packaging is recycled. You can find out if your business needs to take action [here](#).
- Repeat waste audits regularly and consider if you could do more to prevent and reduce waste.



Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Recycling (WEEE)



We **discard 155,000 tonnes** of electricals every year, instead of reusing or recycling them.¹

When electricals are discarded, valuable resources are lost forever. The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment recycling (WEEE) Regulations require your business to dispose of WEEE appropriately. The best approach is to work with your waste contractor to ensure WEEE items are recycled.

If your business sells electrical or electronic equipment, you must also provide a way for your customers to dispose of their old household electrical and electronic equipment when you sell them a new version of the same item. You can either provide a free, in store take back service to your customers or join the [Distributor Takeback Scheme](#). The aim of the regulations is to reduce the amount of electrical items that are incinerated or sent to landfill. You can find out more about WEEE on the UK Government [website](#) and [the Health and Safety Executive](#).



Packaging Waste

Packaging helps protect goods, displays important information and supports efficient handling and distribution, however too much packaging can be a problem. If your business produces or uses packaging, or sells packaged goods, you may be classed as an obligated packaging producer. Obligated packaging producers must follow rules which help to:

- Reduce the amount of packaging produced in the first place
- Reduce how much packaging waste goes to landfill
- Increase the amount of packaging waste that is recycled



You can find out more about extended responsibility for packaging on the UK Government [website](#).



Increasing Recycling



Businesses dispose of **19% of all waste** produced in United Kingdom².

Increasing the amount recycled protects natural resources and reduces environmental impacts. **Businesses with ten or more full time staff will need to arrange collections and recycling of all food waste, glass, metal, plastic, paper and cardboard they produce by 2025.** Further materials and obligations on micro-businesses are expected to come into force in future years. The proposals for Simpler Recycling can be found on the UK Government [website](#).

Useful links:

- [Advice for businesses disposing of their waste in Essex](#)
- [Disposal of business or commercial waste](#)
- [Household and Business Recycling in England](#)
- [Right Waste, Right Place](#)



4. Buildings: Energy Management, Retrofitting and Water Efficiency

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 Management

The regulatory body Ofgem (Office of Gas and Electricity Markets), hosts a special portal providing [energy advice to businesses](#).

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 hosts a number of [office energy efficiency guides and resources](#).
- If you are a voluntary, community or social enterprise organisation and meet certain criteria, you can apply to the [VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme](#) for an independent energy assessment and can then also apply for a capital grant to install energy efficiency measures in your premises.

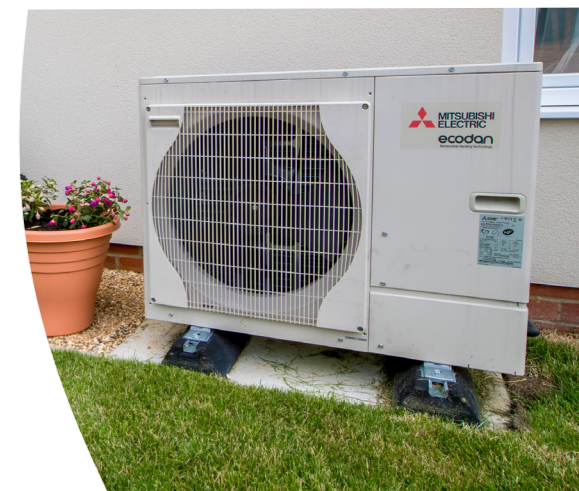


2. Examine how you are using timers and other automatic settings

- 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 offices³.
- Could you explore upgrading to more energy efficient equipment? Older equipment is less likely to be energy efficient.
- Could you consider having a new, more energy efficient boiler installed, or even a heat pump (a more environmentally friendly alternative)?
- **The Boiler Upgrade Scheme** (UK Government) could provide a grant to cover part of the cost of replacing fossil fuel heating systems with a heat pump or biomass boiler. Grants are available of up to: £7,500 for air-source heat pumps; £7,500 for ground-source heat pumps; and £5,000 for biomass boilers.



Case Study

Located in Brentwood, [ECOedge](#) is dedicated to helping homeowners and businesses navigate the challenge of enhancing energy efficiency and becoming sustainable. Its team is working to digitalise the whole building retrofit process in order to make it as easy as possible, and has been onboarded by the Innovate UK government body to accelerate this work.

Since its inception, ECOedge has successfully executed retrofit projects in Essex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk, delivering against the sustainability needs of both residential and non-residential clients. The ECOedge team has also assisted numerous businesses across the region in reducing their energy use and carbon emissions to achieve net zero.



up to
80%
cost
savings

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 business⁴.

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

- Speak to your energy supplier about **renewable energy tariffs**.
- Could you explore **installing a renewable energy source**, such as solar panels?
- A group purchasing scheme, utilising the benefits of residents and SMEs joint buying power to reduce the costs of solar panels and battery storage is available through the [Solar Together Essex](#) scheme. Essex businesses are eligible to join this scheme and can find out more [here](#).
- Community energy groups are growing with the ability to come together to deliver impactful projects for their local community, from energy advice to renewable energy projects – with examples including [Saffron Community Energy](#), [Tollesbury Climate Partnership](#) and [Community Energy Colchester](#). If you would like to find out more, please contact lowcarbon@essex.gov.uk for further information.
- Energy storage plays an important role in enabling more effective use of renewable energy generation by storing excess peak energy generation for later use. Additionally, opportunities to store electricity at cheaper times to be utilised when needed can have financial benefits. These often come in the form of battery storage solutions, but other options are available.
 - » Energy storage enhances resilience against power outages, ensuring uninterrupted operations and safeguarding critical processes as well as renewables integration enhances sustainability efforts, mitigates intermittency issues associated with renewables, and promotes a more resilient and environmentally friendly energy infrastructure for businesses.



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.
- 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? Further information on tree planting opportunities in Essex on page 28.
- **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?



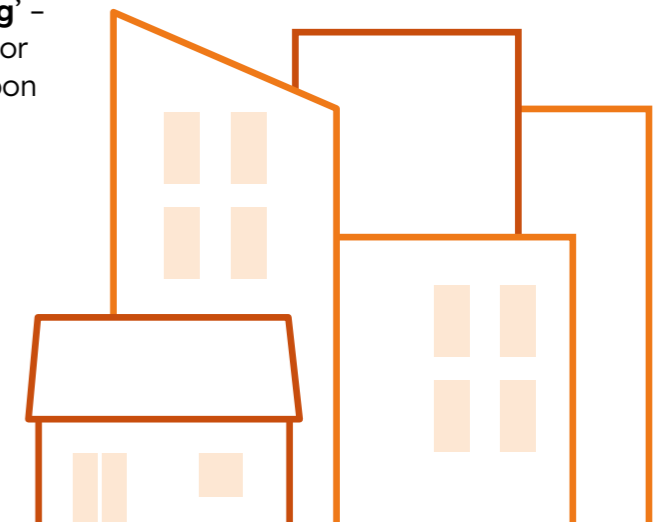
With increased chances of warmer summers and colder winters, it is important to consider insulation, ventilation and overheating **over the course of the year and seasons.**



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.





The Essex Construction Alliance

The Essex Construction Alliance supports large and small construction businesses, as well as those who are self-employed and sole traders in Essex.

Construction plays a vital role in our county's economy. It employs over 65,000 people in Essex and is set grow by more than 30% by 2040.



The Essex Construction Alliance aims to help businesses take advantage of growth opportunities and overcome future barriers. It hosts a regular series of events with guest speakers, many of which focus on net zero and sustainability. There is also a monthly bulletin produced by the group, sharing opportunities and updates from across the sector, as well as innovative 'green' studies.

If you would like to join the alliance or find out more, please email: constructionalliance@essex.gov.uk.

Retrofit and The Retrofit Academy

Construction is a sector with great economic opportunities to be seized and presented by the evolving landscape of energy efficiency and sustainability. This includes retrofitting – the process of upgrading our existing homes to make them more energy efficient.

By upskilling your workforce to offer services in the retrofit sector and installation of low carbon net-zero heat and energy technologies, you can position your company at the forefront of the green revolution. There will also be increased demand for professional services in retrofit coordination, assessment, and advice, as well as the need for experts who can navigate the complexities of retrofit projects, ensuring seamless execution and maximum efficiency gains.

The Retrofit Academy aims to train over 200,000 competent retrofitters by 2030 and offers a number of fully-funded courses, including Level 2 and Level 5 qualifications. These courses provide a comprehensive understanding of domestic retrofit and are ideal for individuals aspiring to join the industry. To qualify for a funded place on a Level 2 course, you must either reside or work in Essex. For further details, please get in touch with **ACL Essex**.



Planning Policy – Net Zero

The built environment (in operation) is estimated to account for **23% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions**. This proportion is substantially higher when emissions embodied in the materials and construction process of new buildings is included.

As such, it is vital that new build development is built to be net zero carbon in operation from the outset and minimises carbon emissions through all stages of a building's life cycle. Furthermore, for a building to be net zero carbon in its operation then it must be an ultra-low energy building that meets high building fabric and energy efficiency standards (while not using fossil fuels and providing renewable energy to at least meet the buildings demand).

Essex County Council's Climate and Planning Unit sets out key guidance in order to support this in: **Planning Policy Position for Net Zero Carbon: Homes and Buildings in Greater Essex**.


The built environment accounts for **23% of our emissions**



Water Efficiency

Essex is classified as a seriously water stressed area and could experience water shortages of nearly 150 million litres per day if we don't act. The Waterwise [UK Water Efficiency Strategy](#) explains that the largest water efficiency savings can be found in existing non-household organisations, including shops, factories and other businesses. **Being water efficient means understanding water needs, using as little as possible and avoiding any water waste.** Tackling leakage, installing smart meters and water saving appliances are steps towards water efficiency.

The Government's [Plan for Water](#) includes a target to reduce non-household water use by 9% by 31st March 2038. There is also a commitment to work with [Ofwat](#) to ensure the water industry can play a central role in retrofitting water efficient products in households, businesses, charities and the public sector. Each water company 'Business Plan' discusses how they will support businesses, as well as detail around implementation.



You can use the [Business Water Saving Calculator](#) by Thames Water to **find out how much you could save and compare your water efficiency** with other businesses in your sector. Saving water can help save on energy bills too. Businesses are also able to switch their water retailer and can use the [Open Water](#) website for further advice.

Reducing the amount of water we use is an immediate action we should all take to reduce pressure on our future water resources.

On average, a leaky loo wastes between 215 and 400 litres of clean drinking water every day. It is easy to check if a loo leaks. Either put a few drops of food colouring into the cistern, and without flushing see if the water in the bowl becomes coloured. Alternatively, you can flush the toilet and then place a dry piece of toilet roll at the back of the pan. If you come back 30 minutes later and the toilet paper has been washed into the bowl, you've probably got a leak. Whilst leaks are cheap and easy to fix, check with your water retailer whether they can offer any help to identify and fix leaks.

The government has promised to review water fitting regulations to address wasteful product issues with toilets and enable other new water efficient technologies, including putting [water efficiency labelling in place for new appliances by 2025](#).

In larger buildings where water demand is high, reuse systems become most cost effective. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs has also committed to developing clear guidance on 'water positive' or 'net zero water' developments and roles for developers and water companies, including water company incentives. The retrofit of reuse and recycling of grey and rainwater is more complicated, but there are projects and pilots ongoing to provide more evidence on the installation and maintenance costs.



You can find out more about water usage and planning in our county from the [Water Strategy for Essex](#).



Essex is classified as a seriously water stressed area

5. 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 period⁵. **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. You can get a [discounted water butt](#) when buying in an Essex postcode.
- **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.





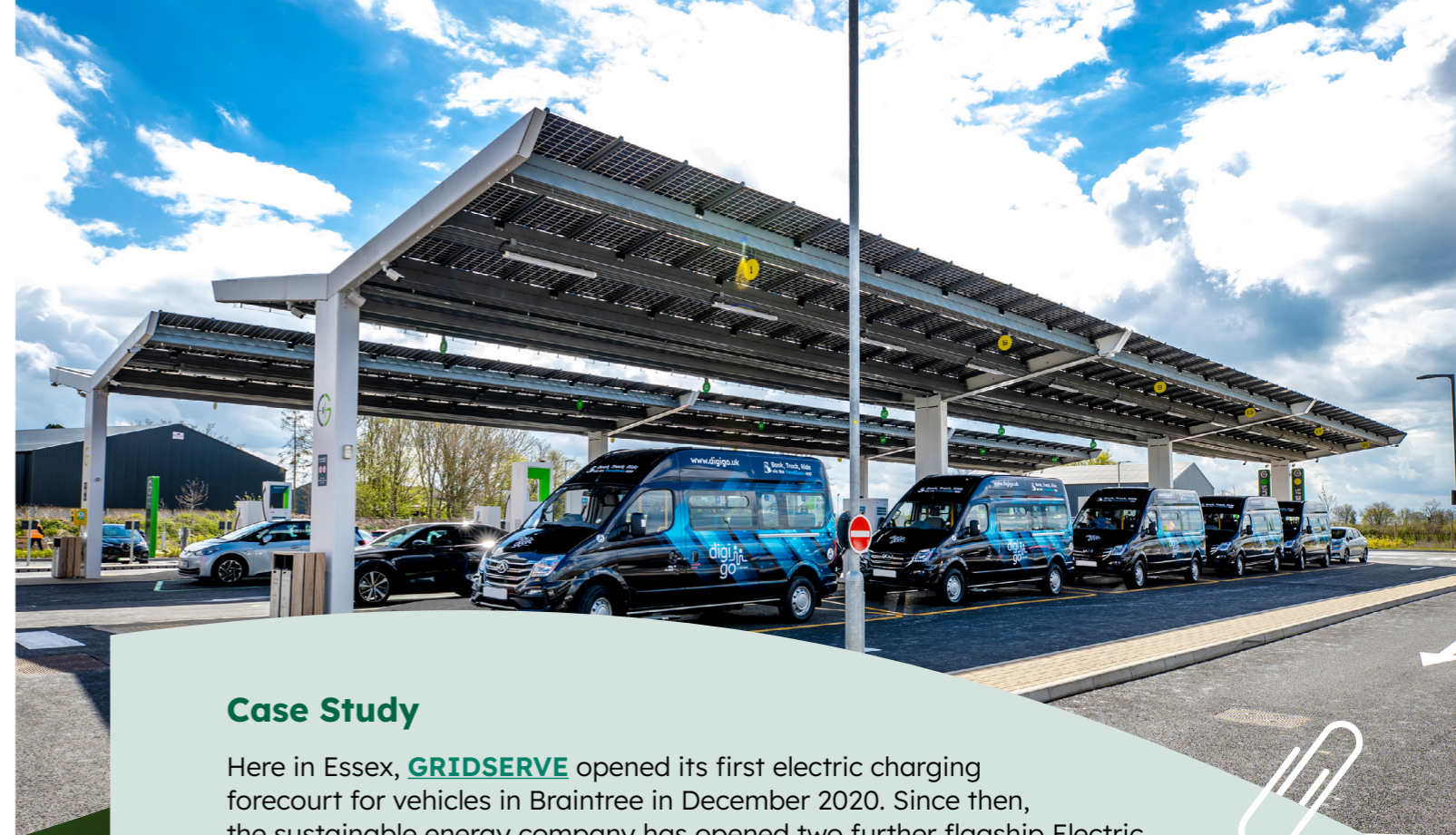
Green Spaces

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.



**Green spaces
improve biodiversity
and help ecosystems**



Case Study

Here in Essex, **GRIDSERVE** opened its first electric charging forecourt for vehicles in Braintree in December 2020. Since then, the sustainable energy company has opened two further flagship Electric Forecourts® in Norwich and London Gatwick Airport and developed a nationwide network that supports 200,000 EV charging sessions each month.

The Braintree site has also developed to include battery storage that provides grid support in times of peak demand and a dedicated charging bay for electric HGVs with trailers. It also helps nearby businesses – such as Royal Mail – keep its fleet of electric delivery vehicles charged. GRIDSERVE also helps to keep the fully electric **DigiGo** public minibus service charged – a service which welcomed more than 10,000 passengers in its first year (see page 35 for more about DigiGo).

Electric vehicle registrations in the Braintree district continue to index at double the national average, with the Braintree forecourt also offering test-drives of EVs.

Apart from the positive impact from GRIDSERVE's 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.

6. Transport and Travel

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



Our cars are the biggest source of personal carbon emissions. We recognise that for most of us in Essex, a car is vital for our daily lives. However, perhaps there are some journeys where we could consider alternatives.

It can also improve the safety of your staff and reduce business costs.

The Smarter Travel Network for Essex (STEN)

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 monthly e-newsletter, 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.

Cycling and Travel Apps

The [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk) 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?**

There are a number of free apps which encourage cycling (and active travel more broadly), such as [Love to Ride](#).



The Essex County Council Cycle Training Team also offers adult cycle training. To find out more, please email: cycletraining@essex.gov.uk

The free [Travel Essex](#) app helps to search and plan sustainable journeys across Essex by train, bus, bike and walking. You can plan journeys up to seven days in advance. The app is free to download from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). Encourage your employees to use the Travel Essex app to plan their commute using public transport.

[DigiGo](#) is a fleet of fully electric minibuses that work on-demand, at a time that is best for you, rather than having set routes and timetables. These electric minibuses offer an **environmentally friendly** mode of transport for residents in suburban and rural areas of Essex, who may have little or no access to existing public transport links. This puts you in control of your journey. If your business is in the DigiGo catchment area, your employees could opt use this method of transportation.

Book journeys, track the vehicle and pay for tickets for DigiGo within the [Travel Essex](#) app. You can also contact DigiGo on: digigo@essex.gov.uk or by calling 03330 137 138.



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**.





Driving and Electric Vehicles

One third of Essex road deaths and serious injuries involve someone driving for work. The [Safer Essex Roads Partnership](#) (SERP) can support you to develop or review your Travelling for Work Policy and can also deliver bespoke interactive workshops to improve safety and fuel efficiency. You can find out more about business driving and [training courses and consultations](#) on the SERP website.

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 2035 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.

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:

- [Government grant schemes for electric vehicle charging infrastructure](#)
- [Government grant of up to £1,500 for new low emission vehicles](#)



Flexible Working

Flexible working can reduce pressure on the network at peak times of the day. 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.

Where appropriate, consider implementing a hybrid working model to provide flexibility for your employees and reduce emissions from commuting to work.



Travel Management for Businesses

Many commercial travel companies, including train companies, now offer business platforms for their customers. These platforms include features such as spend reports, expense receipts, reward programmes and information about carbon saved compared to other travel methods for the same journey (such as by car).



7. 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.**



Procurement

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 and social value via **The Social Value Catalogue**, which includes **resources for SMEs, social enterprises and voluntary organisations** when bidding for public sector contracts. You can also learn about **Essex County Council's Social Value approach**, which includes details of how climate change is considered, through specific measures, ECC TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) and the Social Value Calculator. You can also **explore The Social Value Themes** to access further guidance and resources.

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.

Businesses bidding for government contracts need to have a clear and credible Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP). This means demonstrating that you – as a bidder for a contract – have taken steps to understand your business' environmental impact and carbon footprint in relation to the delivery of the contract. This will be assessed.

A CRP confirms the supplier's commitment to achieving net zero by 2050, contains greenhouse gas emissions reported for all required reporting scopes and indicates the environmental management measures that the supplier will be able to apply when performing the contract. The central government's approach only focuses on CRPs in tenders over £5 million. However, ECC has developed a bespoke process which could be adapted for lower levels of spend and which could be adopted by smaller, local and less carbon mature suppliers. Hence, the requirement at ECC level is for climate to be considered in all tenders over £100,000. For more guidance and a CRP template, please see **Procurement Policy Note 06/21**.



Opportunities

‘Net zero is the economic opportunity of the 21st century’⁶,

was one of the conclusions of the ‘[Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero](#)’ by Chris Skidmore MP. Another report by Arup and Oxford Economics found that ‘new goods and services that facilitate the net zero transition will be worth \$10.3 trillion to the global economy by 2050 – that’s equivalent to around 5% of projected GDP’⁷.

By taking action now, you can help your business to take advantage of the growing green economy and the opportunities it offers. Furthermore, taking steps to implement changes in the short to medium-term can help to future-proof your company, which will save resources in the long-term.



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 2021⁸)



Low Carbon and Renewable Energy

In Essex, **15,908 jobs** will be required by 2030 and **27,741 by 2050** (Local Government Association 2021⁹)



Life Sciences

By 2040, Essex could gain around **10,000 additional jobs** in the life sciences sector (Cambridge Econometrics, 2021¹⁰)

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](#), as well as on the Essex Opportunities [website](#). The [Essex Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service](#) can assist SMEs in funding apprenticeship training costs, whether it is for new apprentices or for enhancing the skills of your existing workforce through apprenticeship programmes.




Construction, Retrofit and Green Skills

Construction is a sector with great economic opportunities to be seized and presented by the evolving landscape of energy efficiency and sustainability. This includes retrofitting – the process of upgrading our existing homes to make them more energy efficient. This usually involves; improving the fabric of the house through installing insulation upgrading the building services and introducing renewable energy and heat sources.

By upskilling your workforce to offer services in the retrofit sector and installation of low carbon net zero heat and energy technologies, you can position your company at the forefront of the green revolution. For instance, the impending Future Homes Standard and legislative changes phasing out gas boilers by 2035, investing in these skills now ensures your business stays ahead of regulatory requirements and meets the growing demand for eco-friendly solutions.

In addition to upskilling for installation, don't overlook the significance of offering professional services in retrofit coordination, assessment, and advice. As the demand for energy-efficient upgrades surges, there's a burgeoning need for experts who can navigate the complexities of retrofit projects, ensuring seamless execution and maximum efficiency gains. By providing comprehensive assessment and advice, you can guide clients towards the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly solutions, enhancing their properties while reducing carbon footprints.



The Retrofit Academy aims to train over 200,000 competent retrofitters by 2030 and offers a number of fully-funded courses, including Level 2 and Level 5 qualifications. These courses provide a comprehensive understanding of domestic retrofit and are ideal for individuals aspiring to join the industry. To qualify for a funded place on a Level 2 course, you must either reside or work in Essex. For further details, please get in touch with **ACL Essex**.

Training Opportunities and Further Information

- **Essex Green Skills Pledge** – invites organisations, including SMEs, to commit to developing skills for a net zero future. This includes providing training and development opportunities for staff. There are eight pledge actions available and you can commit to as many or as few as you like! We need your help to foster skills to fill these vacancies
- **Heat Training Grant** – offers a discount of up to £500 for heating engineers to take part in heat pump training courses. You can find a list of training providers in the East of England [here](#)
- **The Retrofit Academy** aims to train over 200,000 competent retrofitters by 2030 and offers a number of fully-funded courses, including Level 2 and Level 5 qualifications
- The UK Government offers **Skills Bootcamps** (which includes Green Skills). These are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks. You will be offered a job interview with an employer once you complete the course. You can find out which courses are available in the East of England [here](#). Please check [eligibility](#)
- Training and employment schemes for your business may be found on the UK Government [website](#) and the Essex Opportunities [website](#)



If you're a heating engineer, you could receive a discount of up to £500 towards the cost of heat pump training



8. 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. You can enter your postcode to identify your local council [here](#).
 - » For instance, in Colchester, the group People, Planet, Pint meets regularly to network, share advice and best practice in relation to business sustainability. If you would like to find out more about the group, contact local business owner Alex Holliman (Managing Director, Climbing Trees): hello@climbingtrees.com
- **The BEST Growth Hub** – Funded by the UK Government and commissioned by Essex County Council on behalf of Greater Essex. This service signposts businesses to the support they need and has a number of resources for SMEs, including a [Net Zero portal](#)
- **Better Business Act** – A coalition of businesses committed to ensuring companies are working to improve their impact on the environment
- **The Broadway Initiative** – Collaboration between business organisations to support net zero and environmental goals
- **The Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT)** – Can offer advice on nature friendly projects you might be considering, through to partnering on multi-year, biodiversity projects. The EWT runs networking events for those looking to connect with people and businesses about the environment. These networking sessions are a place to ask questions and share ideas, whatever stage you are at in your environmental journey

- 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 **North Essex Economic Board** can provide advice and support for businesses in Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford
- Retrofit Forum – A soon to launch network supporting retrofit and construction businesses committed to sustainability and innovation, with the ambition to help tap into the green economic benefits associated with retrofit projects. The forum is dedicated to breaking down silos, overcoming challenges and barriers encountered by businesses involved in retrofit initiatives. The forum will provide opportunities to gain valuable insights, collaborate with industry leaders and identify key strategies to capitalise on the burgeoning green economy. To find out more and register your interest, please contact: Rebecca.Thorpe@essex.gov.uk
- **#SustainFE** (in association with Adult Community Learning Essex) is a community of practice founded in 2022 to facilitate Further Education practitioners in the development of sustainable knowledge, skills, behaviours and values in their settings. It is a community that has created a supportive space for networking and sharing amongst FE practitioners, who have a passion for sustainability and aim to transform Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) practice across the sector
- Larger business membership bodies (which may encompass paid for membership costs), including:
 - » **British Chambers of Commerce**
 - » **Essex Chambers of Commerce**
 - » **Federation of Small Businesses**
 - » **Institute of Directors** – includes [sustainability events and webinars](#)
- There are also other membership bodies, which focus on particular regions of the country and/or specific issues, such as sustainability. One such Essex-based example is the [Organisation for Responsible Businesses](#) which offers membership (at a cost)



9. 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.

- [Anglia Ruskin University](#) – Provides business support and may be able to assist with **identifying funding opportunities**
- [Ashden Awards](#) – An annual funding programme of up to £25,000 open to businesses, NGOs, government organisations, and social enterprises
- [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.**
- [The Boiler Upgrade Scheme](#) (UK Government) could provide a grant to cover part of the cost of replacing fossil fuel heating systems with a heat pump or biomass boiler
- British Business Bank – [Start Up Loans](#) – Loans of up to £25,000 to help start or grow a business
- [Clean Growth Fund](#) – Invests in companies focused on driving clean growth in the low carbon economy
- [The Essex Green Entrepreneurs' Programme](#) – Supports entrepreneurs, with a sustainable business idea. Includes fully funded workshops led by expert facilitators. Participants can pitch their idea to receive up to £5,000 funding
- [Grants Online](#) – Newsletter includes UK and regional green funding opportunities
- The [Heat Training Grant](#) – Offers a discount of up to £500 for heating engineers to take part in heat pump training courses. You can find a list of training providers in the East of England [here](#)
- [The Oli Bennett Charitable Trust](#) – A charity which provides financial grants to help young people, from all backgrounds, get their business ideas off the ground and turned into sustainable, profitable organisations, whatever their scale. Applicants must be aged 18 to 30

- [The Prince's Trust](#) – Start-up grants of up to £5,000 and loans of up to £25,000 to help cover your business start-up costs. Applicants must be aged 18-30. In order to apply for a grant or loan, you must take part in the [Enterprise Programme](#)
- [UK Business Climate Hub](#) – Regularly updates UK-wide and regional funding opportunities
- 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](#)
- [University of Essex](#) – Expertise, business support and funding. Includes Innovate UK Funding opportunities
- [UnLtd](#) – finds, funds and supports social entrepreneurs. Offers funding of up to £8,000 for start-ups and those trading for under a year; and up to £18,000 for scaling up.

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](#)



10. Business Support Available by Essex Local Council/Authority

Essex-wide Support

Ambitious Essex

- Business support, events and accelerator programmes shared and delivered by Essex County Council (LinkedIn - [Ambitious Essex](#))
- Ambitious Women in Essex - a growing community set up to support and celebrate Essex women in business (LinkedIn - [Ambitious Women in Essex](#))

Anglia Ruskin University

- Provides [business support](#) and may be able to assist with [identifying funding opportunities](#)

Backing Essex Business

- [Business support and advice](#) (including up to 12 hours of free business advice)
- [Business loans of up to £150,000](#)

BEST Growth Hub

- [Business support and advice](#)

NWES

- [Start-up loans](#)

University of Essex

- [Expertise, business support and funding](#) - includes Innovate UK Funding opportunities



Basildon Borough Council

Business Support

- [Basildon for Business - Support for Business](#)

Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

- [Basildon Council - Getting involved in the Green Economy](#)

Other Useful Links

- [Basildon for Business - Business Networks](#)
- [Basildon Business Leaders](#)
- [Basildon for Business - e-Newsletter](#)
- [Basildon Alliance for Social Enterprise Support](#)

Support Available

- [Basildon for Business - Funding](#)



Braintree District Council

Business Support

- [Braintree District Council](#)

Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

- [Braintree District Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- [North Essex Economic Board](#)



Brentwood Borough Council

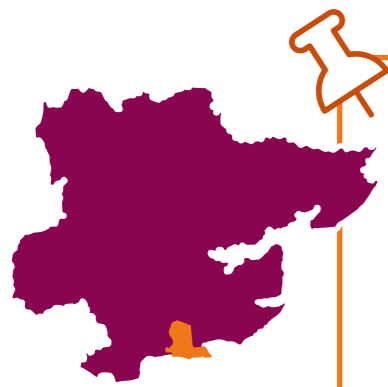
Business Support

- [Brentwood Borough Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- Sign up to receive regular updates on business events, advice, funding and support at: [brentwood.gov.uk/BusinessNews](https://www.brentwood.gov.uk/BusinessNews)





Castle Point Borough Council

Business Support

- [Castle Point](#)
- [Castle Point Business Newsletter](#)
- [Castle Point Climate Action Group](#)
- [Choose Local Castle Point](#)
- [Castle Point Business Accelerator](#)

Chelmsford City Council

Business Support

- [Chelmsford City Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- [North Essex Economic Board](#)
- [Love Your Chelmsford](#)

Support Available

- [Lean2Green](#): In partnership with MKR Solutions, Chelmsford City Council is supporting businesses to develop decarbonisation plans, to help reduce their carbon footprint and increase productivity.



Colchester Borough Council



Business Support

- [Colchester Borough Council](#)
- [Colbea](#)
- [Colchester Ultra Ready for Business](#)

Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

- [Colchester Borough Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- [North Essex Economic Board](#)

Epping Forest District Council

Business Support

- [Epping Forest District Council](#)

Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

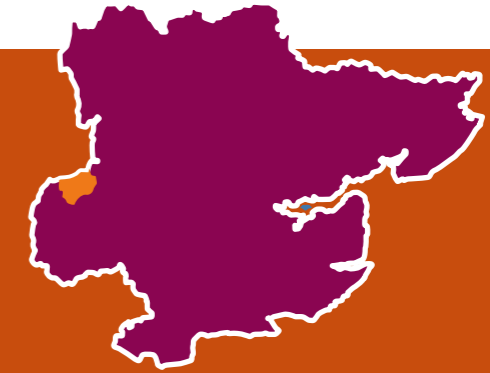
- [Epping Forest District Council](#)

Support Available

- [West Essex Business Support](#) – Fully-funded advice & consultancy to help businesses grow



Harlow District Council



Business Support

- [Harlow Business](#)

Support Available

- [West Essex Business Support](#) – Fully-funded advice & consultancy to help businesses grow
- Fully funded training at Harlow College available up to March 2025 for the following courses: Installation and Maintenance of Heat Pumps Systems (Non-refrigerant Circuits), Electric Vehicle Routine Maintenance. For further information email: business@harlow.gov.uk (the above courses are funded through UKSPF)

Maldon District Council



Business Support

- [Maldon District Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- [North Essex Economic Board](#)
- [Maldon District for Business Newsletter](#)



Rochford District Council

Business Support

- [Rochford District Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- [3 Chambers](#) – incorporating Rayleigh, Hockley & Rochford Chambers of Trade.

Support Available

- To receive the latest Rochford District business news, sign up for free to receive Tell Me More Business Bulletins at www.rochford.gov.uk/tellmemore



Southend-on-Sea City Council

Business Support

- [Southend-on-Sea City Council](#)

Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

- [Business-on-Sea](#)

Other Useful Links

- [Southend Climate Action](#) (contact: Climatechange@southend.gov.uk)

Support Available

- [Business-on-Sea](#) – Provides one to one business support (contact: economicd@southend.gov.uk)
- [Deyton Bell](#) – Support for pre-start & early-stage entrepreneurs (contact: economicd@southend.gov.uk)
- [Let's Do Business Group](#) – Financial support & advice for established/expanding SMEs (contact: economicd@southend.gov.uk)
- [UK Shared Prosperity Fund Grants](#)



Thurrock Council

Business Support

- [Thurrock Council](#)

Support Available

- [UK Shared Prosperity Fund Grants](#)
- Subsidised memberships (savings of up to £150) to join the Federation of Small Businesses for Thurrock SMEs. Please email Nadine.LaReine@fsb.org.uk for further information
- Support for early years providers provided by Colbea. Please email: enquiries@colbea.co.uk
- Support for social enterprises provided by BASES CIC. Social Enterprise Network Thurrock (SENT) offers support to existing and start-up social enterprises in Thurrock. Includes training, support with funding and administration, mentoring and networking opportunities. Please email: info@basildon-socialenterprise.co.uk
- Business Buzz monthly newsletter, which you can subscribe to [here](#)



Uttlesford District Council

Business Support

- [Uttlesford District Council](#)

Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

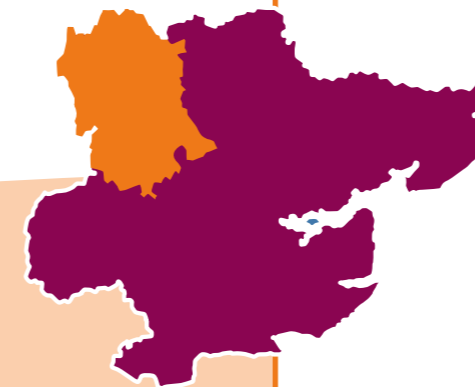
- [Uttlesford District Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- [North Essex Economic Board](#)

Support Available

- [Uttlesford Skills Programme](#)



Tendring District Council

Business Support

- [Tendring District Council](#)

Other Useful Links

- [North Essex Economic Board](#)

Support Available

- [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) and [Rural England Prosperity Fund](#)



11. Resource Links



Calculators – Emissions/Savings

- [Carbon Cutting Essex](#) – personal carbon footprint tracker for residents and businesses in Essex
- [Carbon Footprint – Business Calculator](#)
- [Climate Hero Carbon Footprint Calculator](#) – measure personal and business-related operations, such as car journeys and hosting events
- Greenhouse Gas Protocol –
 - » [GHG Emissions Calculation Tool](#)
 - » [Scope 2](#)
 - » [Scope 3](#)
- Small 99
 - » [Digital Emissions Calculator](#)
 - » [Small Business Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
- SME Climate Hub – [Calculate your business emissions](#)
- The Carbon Trust –
 - » [Carbon Reduction and Net Zero for SMEs](#)
 - » [Office energy efficiency guides and resources](#)
 - » [SME Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
- Zero Business Carbon – [Calculate the cost of your emissions](#)



Finance, Funding and Support

- [ACL Essex: Adult Learning Courses](#) – Find courses that focus on retrofitting and learn about sustainable concepts. If you are interested in working in the retrofit industry through training, ACL Essex can support you. Explore Level 2 and Level 5 qualifications today and enrol.
- [Ambitious Essex](#) – Business support, events and accelerator programmes shared and delivered by Essex County Council
- [Ambitious Women in Essex](#) – A growing community set up to support and celebrate Essex women in business
- [Anglia Ruskin University](#) – Provides business support and may be able to assist with [identifying funding opportunities](#)
- [Ashden Awards](#) – An annual funding programme of up to £25,000 open to businesses, NGOs, government organisations, and social enterprises
- [Association of Disabled Professionals](#) – Provides information, advice and support to disabled people and those with long term health conditions, who run, or want to run, their own business
- [Backing Essex Business](#) – Offers 12 hours of free bespoke advice for all sectors, as well as group sessions, events and more
- [BEST Growth Hub](#) – Business support and advice
- [The Boiler Upgrade Scheme](#) (UK Government) could provide a grant to cover part of the cost of replacing fossil fuel heating systems with a heat pump or biomass boiler
- British Business Bank
 - » [Finance Hub](#)
 - » [Start Up Loans](#) – Loans of up to £25,000 to help start or grow a business
- [The Business Climate Hub](#) – Regularly updates potential sources of funding for businesses (and other organisations)
- [Clean Growth Fund](#) – Invests in companies focused on driving clean growth in the low carbon economy
- [The Essex Wildlife Trust](#) (EWT) – can offer advice on nature friendly projects you might be considering, through to partnering on multi-year, biodiversity projects. The EWT also runs networking events for those looking to connect with people and businesses about the environment.
- [The Great Start Scheme](#) – The aim of the Great Start Scheme is to promote sector growth opportunities for businesses and support them on their journey, whilst transitioning towards net zero through watchable content.
- [Grants Online](#) – Newsletter UK and regional green funding opportunities
- [Greater South East Net Zero Hub](#) – Collates and signposts to funding sources for net zero projects (including for businesses)
- [The Green Entrepreneurs Programme](#) – Supports entrepreneurs with a sustainable business idea. Includes fully funded workshops led by expert facilitators. Participants can pitch their idea to receive up to £5,000 funding

- The [Heat Training Grant](#) – Offers a discount of up to £500 for heating engineers to take part in heat pump training courses. You can find a list of training providers in the East of England [here](#)
- [The Oli Bennett Charitable Trust](#) – A charity which provides financial grants to help young people, from all backgrounds, get their business ideas off the ground and turned into sustainable, profitable organisations, whatever their scale. Applicants must be aged 18 to 30
- [Prowess Women in Business](#) – An online centre for women in business resources, inspiration and information
- [Start Up Donut](#) – A hub providing advice and resources for start-ups
- [Start Your Own Business](#) – Provides free advice and resources for start-ups
- The Prince's Trust
 - » [Enterprise Programme](#) – A course which provides advice, mentoring and ongoing support for people aged 18-30 wishing to start their own business.
 - » [Start Up Grants and Loans](#) – Grants of up to £5,000 and loans of up to £25,000 to help cover your business start-up costs.
- [UnLtd](#) – finds, funds and supports social entrepreneurs. Offers funding of up to £8,000 for start-ups and those trading for under a year; and up to £18,000 for scaling up
- [UK Business Climate Hub](#) – Regularly updates UK-wide and regional funding opportunities
- UK Government –
 - » Carbon Reduction Plans – [Guidance and templates](#)
 - » [Finance and support for your business](#)
 - » [Skills Bootcamp](#) (including Green Skills) – Offers free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks. You will be offered a job interview with an employer once you complete the course. You can find out which courses are available in the East of England [here](#). Please check [eligibility](#)
 - » [Training and employment schemes for your business](#)
- [University of Essex](#) – Expertise, business support and funding. Includes Innovate UK Funding opportunities

Sustainability Hubs

- [British Business Bank](#)
- BEST Growth Hub – [Net Zero portal](#)
- [British Chambers of Commerce](#)
- [Federation of Small Businesses](#)
- [Institute of Directors](#)
- 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 – [Building Sustainable Futures for UK Businesses](#)
- 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](#)
- [Essex County Council – Social Value Catalogue](#)
- [Goal 13 Impact Platform](#)
- Ofgem – [Energy Advice for Businesses](#)
- Small 99
 - » [Digital Emissions Calculator](#)
 - » [Small Business Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
- Small Business Britain – [Green Skills for Small Businesses](#)
- SME Climate Hub – [Calculate your business emissions](#)
- [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
- [DigiGo](#) - a fleet of fully electric minibuses that work on-demand in specific areas in Essex.
- 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’](#)
- [Modeshift STARS](#) – an online travel planning tool kit
- Safer Essex Road Partnership – [free support for driving to work policies](#)
- [Smarter Travel for Essex Network](#)
- [Travel Essex app](#) - search and plan sustainable journeys across Essex.
- UK Government –
 - » [Electric vehicle charging infrastructure grants](#)
 - » [Government grant of up to £1,500 for new low emission vehicles](#)



Waste

- [Recycle More](#) – Waste audit guidance
- [WRAP – Waste audit guidance](#)



Essex-based social media pages



Facebook:

- [Eco - Essex](#)
- [Essex Climate Action](#)
- [Essex Forest Initiative](#)
- [Essex Wildlife Trust](#)
- [Love Essex](#)



Instagram:

- [Eco - Essex \(@ecoEssex\)](#)
- [Essex Climate Action \(@essexclimatecommission\)](#)
- [Essex Wildlife Trust \(@essexwildlifetrust\)](#)
- [Love Essex \(@lovesessexuk\)](#)



X (formerly Twitter):

- [Essex Climate Action \(@essex_climate\)](#)
- [Essex Wildlife Trust \(@EssexWildlife\)](#)
- [Love Essex \(@lovesessexuk\)](#)



YouTube:

- [Essex Climate Action](#)
- [Love Essex](#)



National social media pages



Facebook:

- [Energy Saving Trust](#)
- [Royal Horticultural Society](#)



X (formerly Twitter):

- [Royal Horticultural Society \(@The_RHS\)](#)



Instagram:

- [Energy Saving Trust \(@energysavingtrust\)](#)
- [Royal Horticultural Society \(@the_RHS\)](#)



YouTube:

- [Royal Horticultural Society](#)

12. 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.

Grey Water

Wastewater from non-toilet plumbing systems such as hand basins, washing machines, showers and baths. As it has not been in contact with sewage, if handled correctly, grey water has potential for reuse.

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.

Conclusion

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.

References

- 1 [Problems with electrical waste - Recycle Your Electricals](#)
- 2 [UK statistics on waste - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 3 [The Carbon Trust, 'The Journey to Net Zero for SMEs': Net-Zero-SME-v4.pdf, pg.11](#)
- 4 [The Carbon Trust, 'The Journey to Net Zero for SMEs': Net-Zero-SME-v4.pdf, pg.8](#)
- 5 Environment Agency data
- 6 ['Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero', Chris Skidmore MP, 2022, pg. 20](#)
- 7 [Arup and Oxford Economics, 'The Global Green Economy: Capturing the opportunity', 2023, pg. 20](#)
- 8 [Local Government Association, 'Local green jobs - accelerating a sustainable economic recovery', 2021](#)
- 9 [Ibid Local Government Association, 'Local green jobs - accelerating a sustainable economic recovery', 2021](#)
- 10 Cambridge Econometrics, 'Essex Economic Scenarios 2021, Final Report', 2021 34

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Essex Climate Action Commission

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