Essex County Council
Environment and Climate Action



# BUSINESS ADVICE PACK

Taking Action on Climate Change

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# Introduction

This is the third edition of the Climate Action Advice Pack for Businesses. The document has been developed to help businesses (particularly small and medium sized enterprises) across Essex take action to become more sustainable, tackle climate change and improve their impact on the environment.

New and updated government legislation and targets; policy decisions taken by individual professions and sectors; as well as increasingly sustainability-conscious consumers, will all **impact how businesses operate from a sustainability perspective**. This advice pack includes the most relevant information, advice, resources and signposting to funding (where available) to help businesses improve their sustainability, whilst also highlighting the potential financial and future-proofing benefits of taking action now.

Businesses across Essex are not only essential to our local economy and the success of our communities, but play a vital role in helping to drive down emissions and improving our environment. The aim of this advice pack is to collate available information and resources into one place to **support businesses in making decisions on their sustainability which work for them**. Big or small, the positive actions we all take today, will have a lasting impact on the success our county's economy, enviroment and wellbeing into the future.

# 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** | • Future-proof your business<br>• Reduce your carbon footprint<br>• Save money<br>• Work with community energy groups to lower your energy bills | • The Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant to cover part of the cost of replacing fossil fuel heating systems.<br>• Consider installing solar panels and battery storage through the group purchasing scheme, Switch Together Solar<br>• Work with community energy groups to lower your energy bills. Contact lowcarbon@essex.gov.uk to find out more about opportunities and support across Essex. | 26<br>27 |
| **Grants and Loans** | • Future-proof your business<br>• Reduce your carbon footprint<br>• Save money | • A full list of funding opportunities can be found in the 'Grants and Loans' section | 58 |
| **Green Economy & Skills** | • Future-proof your business<br>• Learn new skills | • Access resources via the Essex Green Skills Hub – and the Essex Opportunities portal (information and advice on jobs, careers, skills and training)<br>• Funded Green Skills and Retrofit qualifications from ACL Essex - ACL Essex: Adult Learning Courses and free Skills Bootcamps in Essex<br>• Essex Growth Agency Funding Finder | 52<br>55<br>59 |
| **Outdoor Space** | • Improve biodiversity<br>• Improve local environment<br>• Save money | • Free or subsidised trees available from certain organisations. For further information on tree planting, contact: environment@essex.gov.uk<br>• Discounted compost bins and water butts (with an Essex postcode) | 36 |
| **Procurement** | • Future-proof your business | • Carbon Reduction Plans – guidance and templates | 51 |
| **Transport** | • Gain access to transport advice and expertise<br>• Reduce carbon footprint<br>• Save money | • Grants for electric vehicle charging points and infrastructure and grants for low-emissions vehicles<br>• Join STEN (The Smarter Travel for Essex Network) for free | 59<br>42 |
| **Waste** | • Manage the waste your business produces more efficiently and sustainably<br>• Reduce the amount of waste your business produces<br>• Save money | • Get ready for Simpler Recycling regulations<br>• Waste audit guidance from WRAP and Recycle More<br>• Check the Circular Economy Directory to find circular businesses | 23<br>14<br>19 |
| **Water** | • Reduce water wastage and improve efficiency<br>• Save money<br>• Learn new skills | • Business Water Saving Calculator – can calculate money you could save and compare your water efficiency with other businesses in your sector<br>• Businesses are able to switch their water company to save water and spend less and can use the Open Water website from Ofwat to find out more<br>• An accredited Water Literacy Course is available for professionals to understand the impacts of water scarcity and how to improve water efficiency in your organisation | 35<br>35<br>34 |

# 2. Sustainable Business Planning



## The Essex Growth Agency

The **Essex Growth Agency** is your gateway to business support and growth opportunities across the county. Commissioned by Essex County Council, the Agency works with businesses of all sizes to help them thrive in a changing economy and prepare for a sustainable future. It is your single front door to business support.

### What does the Essex Growth Agency offer?

- **Tailored Business Support** – Whether you're starting out or scaling up, the Agency provides expert advice and guidance to help you achieve your goals.
- **Access to Funding and Finance** – Explore grants, loans and investment opportunities to support growth and innovation.
- **Skills and Workforce Development** – Connect with training programmes, apprenticeships and green skills initiatives to future-proof your business.
- **Sustainability Support** – Get practical advice and resources to reduce your carbon footprint and embed sustainability into your operations.
- **Networking and Collaboration** – Join events and programmes that bring together businesses, innovators and partners to share ideas and create opportunities.

**Visit The Essex Growth Agency website to find out more and access resources designed to help your business succeed.**

## Great Start: Your First Steps Towards Sustainability

No matter the size or age of your business, taking action on sustainability is essential for resilience and future growth. The **Great Start** programme provides practical, self-serve video content to help businesses across Essex begin their journey towards becoming more sustainable.

### What does Great Start offer for businesses committed to environmental action?

- **Foundations for Green Growth** – Discover simple, actionable steps to reduce your environmental impact, from energy efficiency to waste reduction.
- **Expert Guidance on Reducing your Impact** – Learn how to cut carbon emissions, choose sustainable suppliers, and prepare for upcoming environmental regulations.
- **Flexible Learning** – Access short, easy-to-follow videos at your own pace via our dedicated YouTube playlist.
- **Future-Proofing Your Business** – Understand how adopting green practices can improve resilience, attract customers, and unlock new opportunities in the growing green economy.

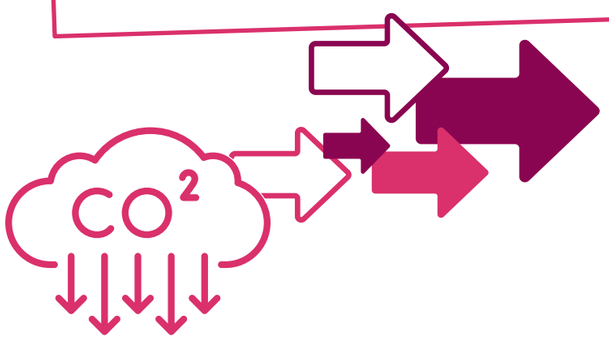
**Explore the full playlist and take your first steps towards a sustainable future today.**

# Sustainable Business Plans

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.

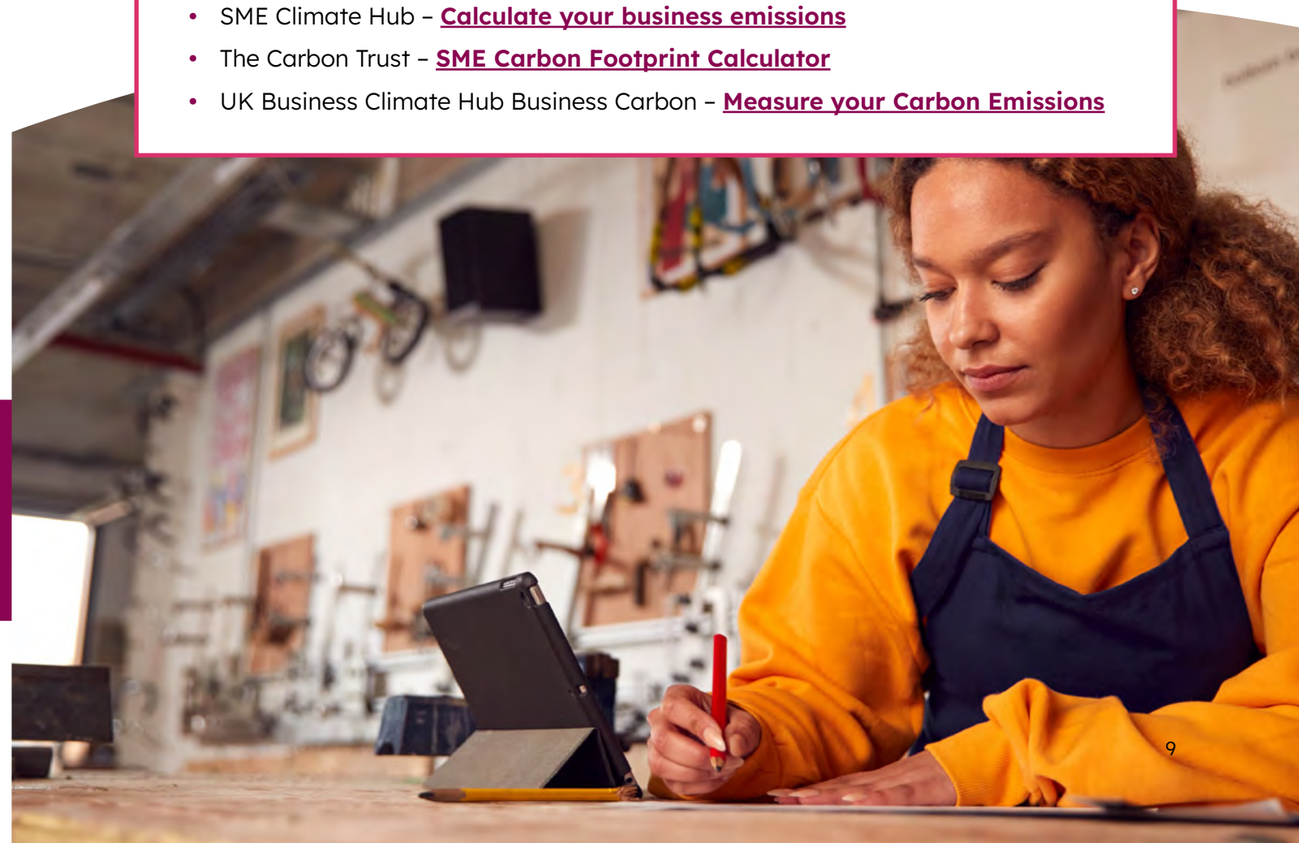


# Calculating Environmental Impact

Different commercial sectors are developing their own plans to reach net zero, such as the **Courtauld Commitment 2030** for the food supply chain; the **British Retail Consortium's Climate Action Roadmap** for the Retail Industry; and the British Fashion Council's '**Fashion's Path to Net Zero**'. 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**:

- British Business Bank – **How to Measure your Carbon Footprint**
- **Carbon Cutting Essex App** – Personal carbon footprint tracker specific to Essex
- Carbon Trust – **SME Carbon Footprint Calculator**
- **Go Compare** – Energy Cost Calculator (comparative costs for different appliances)
- Small 99
  - » **Digital Emissions Calculator**
  - » **Small Business Carbon Footprint Calculator**
- SME Climate Hub – **Calculate your business emissions**
- The Carbon Trust – **SME Carbon Footprint Calculator**
- UK Business Climate Hub Business Carbon – **Measure your Carbon Emissions**



When calculating your company's environmental impact, is important to understand **scope emissions:**

- **Scope 1** – Direct emissions from owned or controlled sources (such as company vehicles)
- **Scope 2** – Emissions from your energy use, such as purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling
- **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, 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 **Sustainable Essex website** lists sustainability events happening all over the county. There are lots of opportunities for businesses to get involved, list their events, share case studies of what they are doing and network with local sustainable businesses.

# SME 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).

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.

Essex County Council hosts a **Supply Chain Portal**, which provides information and guidance for potential suppliers.

You can read more about procurement, including social value and carbon reduction plans on **page 51**.

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.

You can find out more about accreditation schemes from the **British Business Bank**, including a list of sample schemes.

**According to the British Business Bank, at least**

**77% of SMEs**

**have taken at least one action towards net zero.[1]**



## Case Study

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




The company was recognised for its outstanding sustainability efforts when it was awarded **The King's Award for Enterprise – Sustainable Development** in 2024.

In 2022, 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'.

The company 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 266,000 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 organisation's values and demonstrates your commitment and do not hold back".**



# 3. Waste

Minimising waste means lower expenditure and carbon footprint – disposal 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.



### Case Study

**Surgical Holdings** is a surgical instrument manufacture and repair business based in Southend-on-Sea.

The company recognises that the extraction of natural resources – vital to the production of surgical instruments – can pose significant environmental challenges. As such, Surgical Holdings has placed sustainability at the heart of its undertakings, including by installing solar panels across its entire manufacturing site.



**Medical instrument before (L) and after (R) refurbishment**

A key element of the company's work is the repair and refurbishment of surgical instruments. If maintained properly, the lifecycle of such equipment can be 20+ years, with refurbishment supporting and adding to this. This helps to avoid the disposal of instruments which could have their lifecycle extended, thus contributing to the circular economy for these items.

Focusing on refurbishment of medical instruments and the circular economy has also helped to future-proof the business. This is particularly important in relation to the potential strengthening of government regulatory frameworks and procurement criteria, which consider the sustainability of surgical equipment.

**The Department of Health & Social Care's 'Design for Life Roadmap' emphasises the importance of the circular economy ('circular medtech'), noting:**

'...reliance on linear supply also raises questions of sustainability. The **NHS clinical waste strategy** notes that medical devices are contributing to tens of thousands of tonnes of waste... each year... [some of which] are sophisticated, composite devices that can contain rare minerals such as titanium, palladium and platinum and can be valued in the £1,000s. Most of these products are disposed of regardless of the fact many of these materials are increasingly scarce, have high economic value and could be recovered for sale to cut NHS costs'.



## 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

**Colcheco** is a refill shop based in Colchester, Essex.

The refill shop was founded in 2020 with the goal to reduce waste whilst providing high quality foods, toiletries, and locally made artisanal products.

Customers simply bring containers to the shop, along with their shopping list. The staff are happy to support with filling and weighing the containers.

By buying loose, Colcheco helps customers to reduce their waste. Refill shops not only reduce plastic waste, but also food waste as customers can buy only what they need. In 2025, Colcheco was awarded a **Love Essex Fund** micro-grant for their work to reduce waste in Essex.

Colcheco said that since opening, the shop has **"become even more than we ever imagined; bringing back a nostalgic way of shopping, a friendly space where we refill empty containers, and a place to catch up with our customers"**. Colcheco also hosts various events and initiatives, therefore bringing an array of benefits to the community beyond sustainable shopping.





### Case Study

**Holly Blue** is a waste and recycling company based in Essex.

Offering tailored approaches to commercial waste disposal, Holly Blue considers sustainability to be a key component of its work – providing both environmental and financial benefits.

**The company's founder, Peter Brannon noted that:**
'as a general rule of thumb, the best commercial outcome will most likely be the best from an environmental point of view'.

Holly Blue introduced specialist food collections for one of its Essex-based customers. In the last quarter of 2025, this separated out 2.95 tonnes of food waste, which could otherwise have ended up in general waste and being burnt to produce electricity.
Most food waste is suitable for anaerobic digestion. During this process, it produces gas which is fed back into the national grid and the byproduct at the end is a high-quality fertiliser, which is then used by UK farmers. Both gas and fertiliser are products which are in high demand, particularly as supply can be affected by geopolitical events.

Furthermore, the specialist sorting and collection of food waste meant that Holly Blue's client was able to make savings by the removal of waste bins and reductions in overweight charges.



## 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.

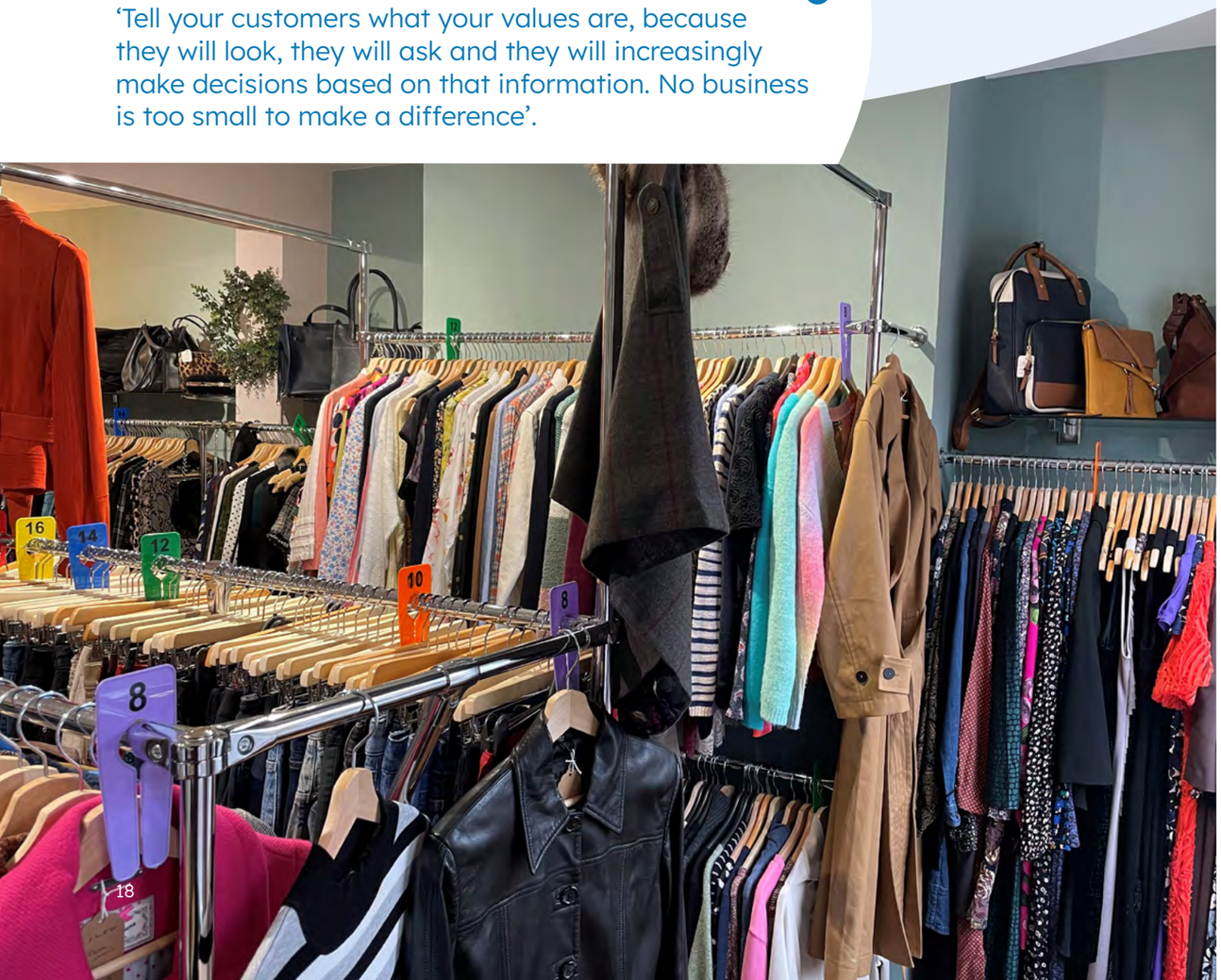
Linda Blanchette, owner of Consciously Clothed, was inspired to start her business after learning about the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry, whilst taking part in **Climate Assembly UK**. The idea of repairing and sharing items to help her local community and keep clothes in circulation.

Linda has noticed that customers are increasingly seeking out more than just good products and services and want to purchase goods from ethical and responsible businesses.

After four years of trading, Linda is proud of the impact Consciously Clothed is having in her local community. She also supports local sustainable businesses by way of providing shelf space to display their goods in her shop.

**A key piece of advice Linda has for other business owners is:**

‘Tell your customers what your values are, because they will look, they will ask and they will increasingly make decisions based on that information. No business is too small to make a difference’.






### 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 to 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**.
- Repeat waste audits regularly and consider if you could do more to prevent and reduce waste.




The baler offers a **48:1 volume reduction**, resulting in approximately six tonnes or eight pallets of material being produced per year.

## Case Study

**Holly Blue** is a waste and recycling company based in Essex. Offering bespoke waste solutions to commercial clients, it aims to reduce environmental impact as a priority.

One of Holly Blue's Essex-based clients – a large manufacturing business – produced a significant amount of waste polystyrene. With processes already in place to avoid the polystyrene being thrown away, Holly Blue identified ways to make cost and efficiency savings, as well as to further improve the sustainability impact. As the polystyrene waste was being managed on site, it would need to be collected and moved to a storage collection point outside (a time-consuming exercise), with up 12 lorry movements required per year to collect this (adding carbon emissions).

The solution implemented was to add a polystyrene baler (pictured) on-site at a central efficient point to collect and bale the waste. The baler offers a 48:1 volume reduction, resulting in approximately six tonnes or eight pallets of material being produced per year, which Holly Blue will purchase and sell on to make more polystyrene. In around three years, the baler machine will have paid for itself and thereafter generate a small profit.

As a result, the polystyrene avoids being thrown away and is moved as far up the supply chain as possible, with the client improving efficiencies, as well as making mid to long-term financial savings/gains.



# Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Recycling (WEEE)

We **discard over 100,000 tonnes** of electricals every year, instead of reusing or recycling them.[2]

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 electronical 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**. You can find out more about WEEE on the UK Government **website** and **the Health and Safety Executive**.

If your business has laptops, tablets or phones it no longer uses, consider donating them to Digital Essex's device donations campaign. Laptops, tablets and phones your organisation no longer needs can still be securely repurposed to support children's learning across Essex, especially as many move away from Windows 10.

### How it works

- If you use an IT Asset Disposal (ITAD) provider, we can work directly with them to pass on suitable devices.
- If devices can't be reused, we ask for the residual value to help fund low-cost laptops.
- If you don't currently use an ITAD, we can advise recommended providers.
- Grade A (mint condition) or B (good condition) wiped devices that meet our specifications can also be donated directly to us by pre-arranged delivery to County Hall, Chelmsford.

### Why get involved?

It's a simple, cost-effective way to extend the life of your tech, support sustainability goals, and make a meaningful difference for young people in your community.

### Interested in donating?

**Email:** device.donation@essex.gov.uk

**More information:** www.essex.gov.uk/device-donations



## 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 under the Government's **Extended Producer Responsibilities (EPR) for Packaging** which help to:

- Reduce the amount of packaging produced in the first place
- Reduce how much packaging waste is thrown away
- 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 activity generates about **21% of total waste** produced in the United Kingdom.[3]

Increasing the amount recycled protects natural resources and reduces environmental impacts. **Businesses with ten or more full time staff must recycle food waste, glass, metal, plastic, paper and cardboard under the Government's Simpler Recycling legislation. From March 2027, this will be extended to all businesses.**

### Useful links:

- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – **Household and Business Recycling in England**
- Love Essex – **Advice for businesses disposing of their waste in Essex**
- **Right Waste, Right Place**
- WRAP – **The Business of Recycling**
- UK Government – **Disposal of business or commercial waste**



# 4. Buildings 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 and energy costs.

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.

## Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) require commercial properties to have a minimum of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E or above as of 1st April 2023. Government propose to increase these standards to EPC C by 2027 and EPC B by 2030.[4] The ambition is that this improves the energy efficiency of commercial buildings, reduces energy bills for tenants and reduces carbon emissions.

## 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.



By assessing how your business currently uses energy, you can identify how savings can be made. If you are considering an internal assessment/audit, you may wish to nominate a person within your business to have responsibility for conducting the assessment to ensure it is thoroughly carried out.

Since 2023, commercially rented properties must achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E or above. More information on government regulations is available here.




**There are a number of energy efficiency guides and resources available for businesses, including:**

- The Carbon Trust –
  - Hosts a number of office energy efficiency guides and resources
  - Better business guide to energy saving – aimed at businesses which are new to energy saving
- The Energy Saving Trust – A guide to energy efficiency in the workplace
- UK Government –
  - Energy Efficiency for Businesses
  - SME guide to energy efficiency

### 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 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 efficient equipment?

- Could you explore upgrading to more energy efficient equipment? Older equipment is less likely to be energy efficient. You could consider the **Energy Technology List (ETL)** – a scheme featuring over 8,000 independently verified and accredited energy efficient products across 62 sub-technology groups, backed by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).
- 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.
- **The Green Gas Support Scheme** (UK Government) is a government environmental scheme that provides financial incentives for new anaerobic digestion biomethane plants to increase the proportion of green gas in the gas grid.

## 4. Move to LED lighting

- These more **environmentally friendly** and **longer-life** lights will also **require less maintenance, saving money** in the long run






## 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 SME's joint buying power to reduce the costs of up to 25 solar panels and battery storage is available through the **Switch Together Solar Essex** scheme. Essex businesses are eligible to join this scheme and can find out more **here**.
- Community energy organisations can provide advice and guidance on your options for renewable energy generation, as well as also provide a model to fund the upfront capital costs of any installation. In Essex, there is a growing Community Energy network with the ability to come together to deliver impactful projects for their local community, from energy advice to renewable energy projects – with examples including **Common Green** in Chelmsford, **Peacock Energy** in Uttlesford, **Community Energy Colchester** and **Tendring Community Energy**. 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. Furthermore, 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 – Protects from heat loss in the winter and overheating in the summer

- Are the **roofs and ceilings in your premises effectively insulated?** If not, heat loss in the winter and air conditioning requirements in the summer, will mean your energy bills and your carbon emissions are higher than they need to be.
- 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.
- New builds, or fully refurbished homes with high air tightness, may consider the installation of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR). This ventilation system provides continuous fresh, filtered air while using heat exchangers which ensure that heat is not lost from the flow of air in and out of the building.
- Effective ventilation can also **reduce the risk of damp and condensation mould** 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 36**.
- **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?



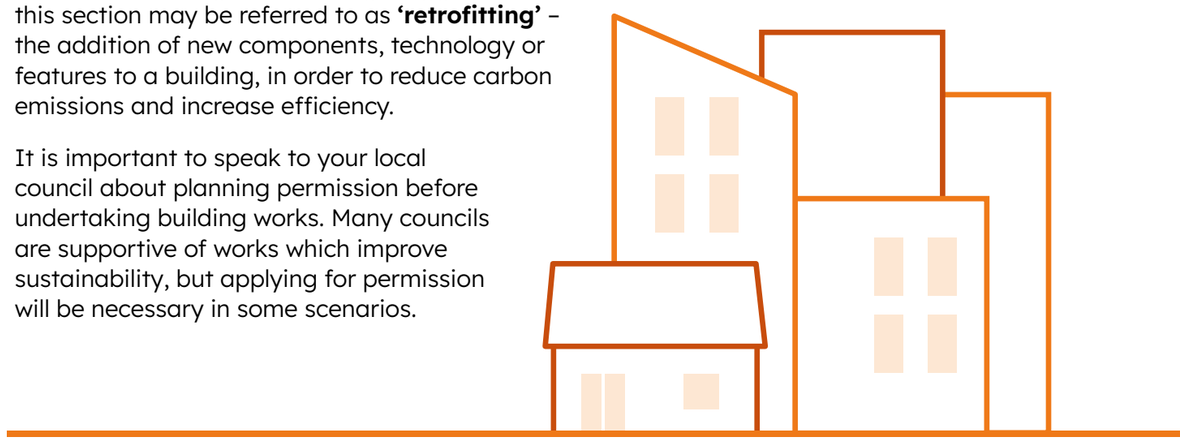


With increased chances of warmer summers and colder winters, it is important to consider insulation, ventilation and overheating **over the course of the year and seasons**.

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, 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.[5]**

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, some 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**.

# Sustainability and Health

Cold, damp and poorly heated houses are widely recognised as major public health hazards, imposing heavy burdens on the NHS and the economy[6,7]. This is a particular issue in the UK, as it has the leakiest homes in the Europe, where over 50% receive Energy Performance Ratings of D or below[8]. These leaky homes are also expensive to heat, leaving residents with high fuel bills and potentially suffering from fuel poverty while living in cold homes.

**50%**
**of UK homes have an Energy Performance Rating of D or below**

Essex is making a concerted effort to address the environmental impacts from the construction sector, delivering healthy homes with high energy efficiency standards that cut energy bills, cut carbon emission and provide healthy, warm homes. To achieve this, Essex County Council has outlined its approach in two planning policy statements, which are being taken forward in local authorities across Greater Essex:

- The **Operational Energy & Carbon (Net Zero) Planning Policy Statement** provides a consistent policy approach towards net zero energy and carbon in operation for residential and non-residential development. Its clauses contain requirements for buildings to have high building fabric and energy efficiency standards, be fossil fuel free and generate renewable energy to match demand. This results in healthy, affordable to run, climate resilient homes that align with climate targets.



- The **Embodied Carbon and Circular Economy Planning Policy Statement** provides a consistent policy approach to limit upfront embodied carbon in new homes and buildings. Upfront embodied carbon represents the emissions released in the production of materials and construction of a building before it can be used.

Businesses involved in new developments should be familiar with these policy requirements. Essex County Council has provided design resources on the **Essex Design Guide** to support the delivery of buildings to these standards. These include the **Essex Building (Net Zero) Specification Guidance** and the **Essex Solar Design Guide**.

As these policies are taken forward more widely across Greater Essex, they will stimulate opportunities to expand net zero construction skills and encourage the growth of circular economy businesses offering locally sourced materials and products.

New-build housing offers a strategic opportunity to lock in health benefits from the outset. Homes built to standards outlined in the **Operational Energy & Carbon (Net Zero) Planning Policy Statement** are designed to be extremely airtight and well-insulated, with heat pumps and mechanical ventilation, including heat recovery to avoid damp and overheating. The adoption of low embodied carbon natural materials, as required by the **Embodied Carbon and Circular Economy Planning Policy Statement**, can also limit the risk of damp and mould, improving another aspect of indoor air quality.

A large proportion of natural low embodied carbon materials, like timber, wool and hemp, are classed as breathable products, which allow moisture to pass through them and evaporate. By incorporating breathable natural materials into the building fabric, moisture can permeate through, and the internal humidity of the building can be kept in balance.[9] This limits the build-up of condensation, which can lead to damp and mould. These design measures go hand-in-hand with creating a healthier indoor environment. These homes will be warm, with low energy bills and improved ventilation, and will have low mould and pollutant levels.



# Water Efficiency

## Government's Plan for Water and Regulations

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.



The government has promised to review water fitting regulations to address wasteful product issues on water-using products such as showers, washing machines and toilets, through introduction of **a mandatory water efficiency labelling scheme which is expected to be implemented in 2026**.

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.

In the meantime, while DEFRA prepares this guidance, the **Shared Standards in Water Efficiency for Local Plans (2025)** can be referred to by developers for recommendations on water efficient new development. This document was prepared by regional water companies in Eastern England and the Environment Agency, to support Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) deliver water efficiency in new homes and buildings through local plans. Its evidence-based recommendations encompass Essex and its level of water stress. These recommendations are set out in a model policy for local plans to adopt, which provides water efficiency targets for both residential and non-residential buildings.

The retrofit for 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. Essex and Suffolk Water has developed **water reuse systems guidance and advice**, which provides answers to practical questions on this topic.





**Essex is classified as a seriously water stressed area**

## Water in Essex

You can find out more about water usage and planning in our county from the **Water Strategy for Essex**.

Essex is **one of the driest counties in England** and is classified as a seriously water stressed area.

It is estimated that by 2050 the East of England will experience a **public water supply shortage of around 730 million litres of water per day** (Ml/d), equal to over a third of the predicted future need, if mitigating action is not taken.[10]

In Essex, our water companies predict that **by 2050 we will only have 63% of the water we need** available.[11]

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.**

An accredited **Water Literacy Course** is available for professionals to understand the environmental impact of water scarcity and the positive changes they can introduce to improve water efficiency in their organisation.

**Steps which can be taken to improve water efficiency include:**

- Tackling leakage
- Installing smart meters
- Installing water saving appliances
- Communicating water-saving practices with staff.

**It is also worth considering the options available from water companies, as some offer support for water efficiency and smart metering.**

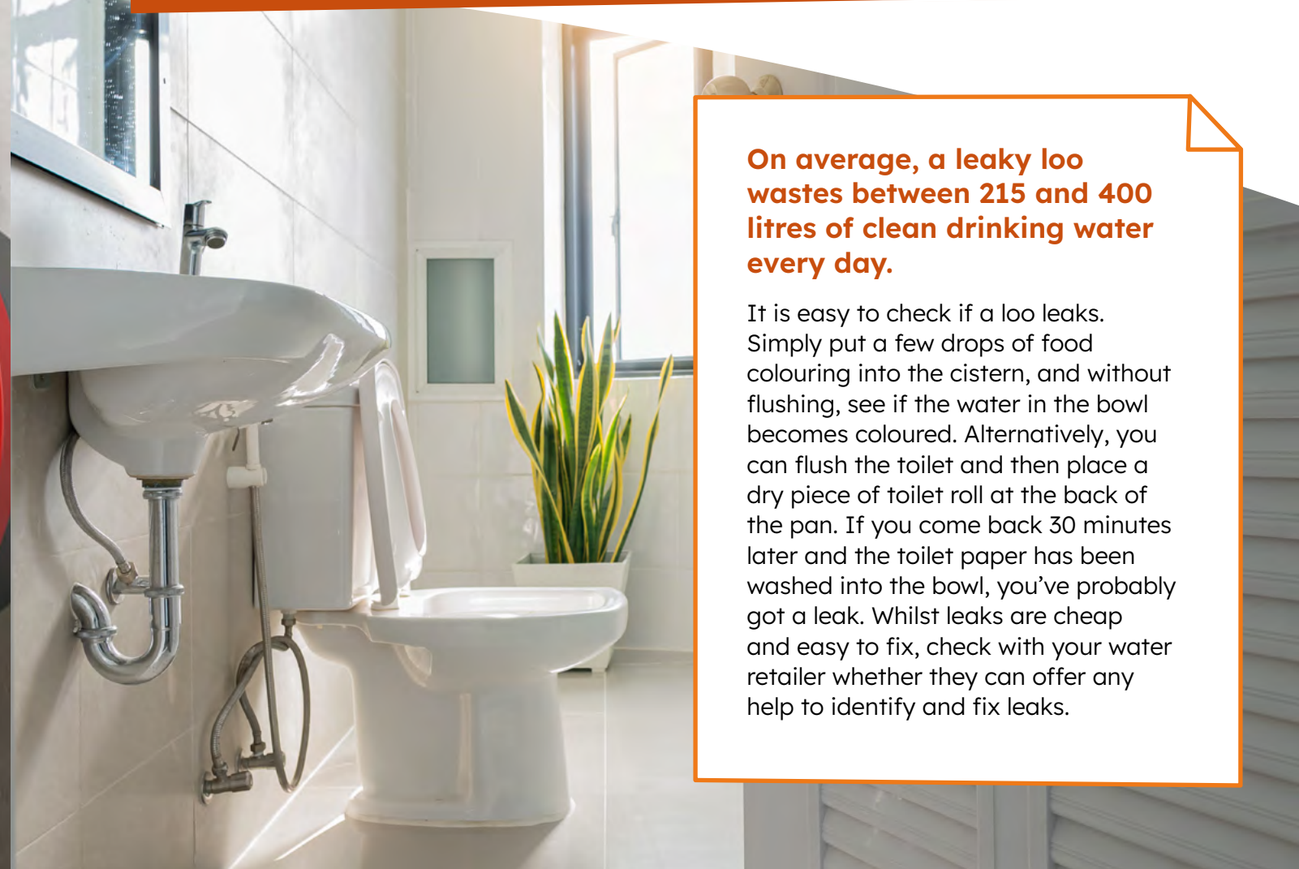



## Water Calculators and Useful Resources

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.

- Anglian Water – **Save Water Advice**
- CCW – **Offers impartial advice and guidance to business consumers**
- Essex & Suffolk Water – **Save Water Advice**
- MOSL – **Water Efficiency Dashboard** (Benchmarking)
- Open Water – **Lists water retailers and eligibility to switch checker**
- Thames Water – **Business Water Saving Calculator**
- Waterwise
  - **How to save water page** (At work section)
  - **Water Efficiency Strategy to 2030**
  - **Water Literacy Programme website**

**Reducing the amount of water used 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. Simply 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.

# 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, around 200,000 properties in Essex are at risk of flooding from surface water, rivers or the sea.[12] **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**. Take a look at the **Green Infrastructure Strategy** and the **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** to explore opportunities to build resilience and support biodiversity in Essex.

**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.

Essex County Council provides advice and support for landowners and individuals interested in woodland creation and agroforestry. If you would like to see **how your business can work with** Essex County Council (whether you have land to plant trees or would like to volunteer), please contact **environment@essex.gov.uk**.

You can also find out about funding and grants to support tree planting from the **Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs**. The National Farmers' Union also hosts **tree planting information for farmers**, while **The Woodland Trust** offers some funding opportunities for farmers and landowners.



**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 materials (e.g. permeable paving);
  - » '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**? You could do this by reducing the frequency of mowing, or less frequently using herbicides and pesticides.
- Install wildlife nesting boxes, such as owl, bird and bat boxes.
- 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 can also improve air quality by diluting and dispersing pollution.
- 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

The installation of an urban beehive on the roof of Chelmsford Civic Centre demonstrates the creative ways in which biodiversity, pollination and green spaces can be supported in our towns and cities.

The colony of 50,000 honeybees (native black bees) was installed by the organic beekeeping business, Plan Bee (based in North Essex). With bee numbers in sustained decline, the colony is contributing to reviving bee numbers, which as pollinators are vital to our food chain.

Tony Briggs, Owner of Plan Bee said:

**'I allow my bees to live as they do in nature. Where I can, I let the bees decide what to do and this includes their environmental, genetic and management decisions. I only install small bespoke apiaries with wooden and beeswax hives, and I don't use any chemicals or plastics. I'm thrilled to have a hive on the [Chelmsford Civic Centre] rooftop, with the bees working away as we speak'.**



# 6. Transport and Travel



The way we travel to and from work plays a vital role in reducing carbon emissions.

Walking, cycling, or using public transport can significantly cut emissions while improving health and wellbeing – and creating cleaner air for everyone.

**Could your business explore ways to cut travel altogether by encouraging working from home?**

## Consider the travel hierarchy

1. Explore ways to reduce unnecessary travel (such as by offering digital solutions)
2. Encourage walking
3. Encourage cycling
4. Public Transport (including the Essex Bus Network)
5. Taxis, Shared Transport and Travel Apps (such as DigiGo or taxi apps)
6. Some car journeys are unavoidable, but you could consider trying to move to Electric Vehicles

**Promoting sustainable travel isn't just good for the environment. It can make your workplace safer, ease congestion, and even lower business costs.**



## Case Study

### Reducing Staff Car Usage at Stansted Airport

Stansted Airport employs around 13,000 people across a complex site made up of dozens of independent businesses and service providers, as well as providing a 24 hour airport operation.

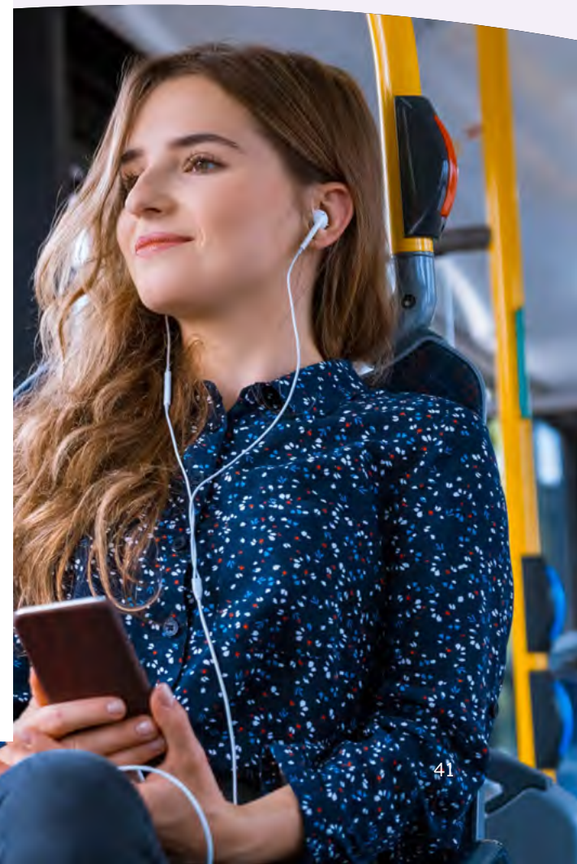
This fragmented setup makes it challenging to coordinate sustainable travel initiatives, which is why Stansted offers such an interesting case study in cross organisational collaboration.

Before the COVID 19 pandemic, Stansted had relatively low levels of car dependency amongst staff, with 55% driving to work in 2019. The pandemic changed that dramatically. By 2021, car use had jumped to nearly 80%, driven by reduced public transport options and concerns about sharing travel.

Since then, Stansted – working under the leadership of Manchester Airports Group (MAG) – has renewed its focus on sustainable travel planning. MAG brought together the many employers on site, aligning them around shared goals and coordinated actions. By 2023, these efforts were paying off: car use among staff had fallen to 67%, and the recent 2025 staff travel survey that was carried out has shown a further reduction to around 58% single car occupancy. The 2025 survey also shows that public transport use for staff has increased from 26% in 2023 to 34%.

### What made this work?

- **Partnership Working:** The Stansted Area Transport Forum provides the framework for MAG to engage with local authorities and transport providers to develop and deliver a single vision of their Sustainable Development Plan.
- **Collaboration across operators:** MAG played a key role in bringing together the different businesses on site and driving progress.
- **Shared responsibility:** A collective approach meant consistent messaging, aligned incentives, and more effective delivery of initiatives.
- **Managing scale and complexity:** Changing travel habits across a workforce of 13,000 shows the power of structured, multi stakeholder engagement.
- **Investment:** MAG have continued to invest to develop the bus and coach network to connect to key conurbations that meet the needs for staff and passengers, providing a real sustainable choice.



# 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.**



# Flexible Working

Many businesses have found staff can work successfully from home, cutting commuting journeys. Is this something you could consider?

When staff need to travel, 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.

# Walking and Useful Apps

Walking to work offers significant benefits for both employees and employers. There are clear sustainability benefits, such as cutting carbon emissions and promoting a positive corporate image as an environmentally responsible organisation.

**Furthermore, for employers, encouraging walking helps foster a healthier workforce, which can reduce absenteeism and improve morale.**



For staff, walking is an easy way to increase daily physical activity, improving overall health, reducing stress, and boosting energy levels – leading to better focus and productivity throughout the day. Walking also saves money on travel costs and reduces reliance on cars or public transport, making commuting more predictable and less stressful.

**Go Jauntly** is a useful wayfaring and nature app, which showcases the landscapes, green spaces, coastal paths, heritage and architecture that Essex has to offer. There are over 100 free routes to explore, which have been created in partnership with the borough and district councils. These routes offer a variety of walking activities, from self-led active travel walks to leisure routes. You could even use the app and make your next team meeting a walking one!

# Cycling

The **gov.uk website** 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**.

Cycling is a great way to stay active, save money, and reduce your carbon footprint. Essex County Council offers **Adult Cycle Training** sessions designed to help you ride with confidence and enjoy the benefits of cycling. Training includes:

- **One-to-One Training** – Tailored sessions to suit your ability and goals.
- **Flexible Locations** – Training near your home, workplace, or a convenient spot.
- **Qualified Instructors** – Delivered to nationally recognised Bikeability standards.



**To apply, visit the Essex County Council Cycle Training webpage, complete the online booking form and choose your preferred date and location.**





# Public Transport

The Essex Bus Network offers opportunities to travel across the county. Could you consider incorporating bus journeys into your travel for work?

**DigiGo** is an on-demand and pre-bookable transport service, that works to best suit your travel needs, rather than having set routes and timetables. The service offers 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. DigiGo operates seven days a week, from 6am to 10pm on weekdays and from 7am to 10pm on weekends with the single fare currently capped at £3. If your business is in the DigiGo operational area, your employees could opt to use this method of transportation.

Book journeys, track the vehicle and pay for fares within the **TravelEssex app**. You can also contact DigiGo on: **digigo@essex.gov.uk** or by calling **0345 603 7633**.

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**.

## Travel Apps

The free **TravelEssex 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 Store**. Encourage your employees to use the **TravelEssex app** to plan their commute using public transport.





## 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 (cars and vans)**. This will be a phased process, and by 2030, 80% of cars and 70% of vans must be zero emissions vehicles.[13] 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.

By 2030, **80% of cars** and **70% of vans** must be zero emissions vehicles





## 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).

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**



# 7. The Green Economy

The **UK Government's response to the Willow Review** recognises the vital role Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play in driving sustainable growth and outlines a series of actions to help them realise the financial and operational benefits of sustainability.

The response highlights that **67% of SMEs investing in sustainability report reduced operational costs**[14] and that **many attract new customers through their environmental commitments.** To accelerate progress, government commitments include expanding access to advice through the **UK Business Climate Hub**, supporting SMEs with energy-saving assessments via the **Zero Carbon Services Hospitality trial**, rolling out smart meters to improve efficiency, and addressing the Willow Review's eight recommendation areas – such as improving access to green finance, reframing sustainability messaging, and integrating sustainability into core business support services.



**As of December 2024, the UK had 22,800 net zero businesses.**[15]





## The Green Economy – What Businesses Need to Know

The Green Economy now spans all activity that cuts carbon, improves efficiency, or builds environmental resilience. This includes renewable energy, low-carbon construction, retrofit, greener supply chains and emerging green finance opportunities – all rapidly expanding markets.

### A Fast-Changing Policy Landscape

The UK's regulatory environment is tightening. **The Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan (2025)** sets updated requirements across all sectors, following legal rulings demanding more robust climate planning.

**In 2026, several policies directly impact businesses:**

- Stricter building and energy-efficiency standards for new developments.
- Mandatory **Biodiversity Net Gain** for infrastructure and developments.
- Businesses with ten or more full time staff must recycle food waste, glass, metal, plastic, paper and cardboard under the **Government's Simpler Recycling** legislation. From March 2027, this will be extended to all businesses.
- The **Warm Homes Plan**, replacing ECO in 2026, scaling up retrofit and heat-pump deployment.
- Supply-chain due-diligence rules, including deforestation-linked import restrictions.
- Enhanced climate-risk reporting and stronger green finance expectations.

**These changes mean higher compliance expectations – but also more opportunities for funding, innovation and competitive advantage.**

### Clean Energy and Infrastructure Growth

The UK is accelerating clean-energy investment. Grid upgrades of £10 billion per year and new support for long-duration energy storage will strengthen renewable supply and create commercial opportunities in installation, engineering, digital technology and supply chains.[16]

Planning reforms are shortening approval times for offshore wind and major energy infrastructure, creating more certainty and market growth for construction and related sectors.

## Opportunities for Businesses in Essex

Essex's **Climate Action Plan 2021–2028** strengthens local support for businesses adopting low-carbon practices, with a focus on renewable energy, sustainable transport, green skills and climate-resilient development.

Essex continues to position itself as a hub for green sector growth, offering strong transport links, a collaborative business ecosystem and targeted sustainability programmes including tools, guidance and green entrepreneurship support.

### Essex Growth Agency – Your Single Front Door for Support

**The Essex Growth Agency (EGA)** acts as the single front door for businesses, providing coordinated access to advice, funding routes, sector-specific guidance and tailored support on becoming more sustainable and competitive. Whether you're beginning your net-zero journey or scaling green innovation, EGA helps you navigate the landscape quickly and easily.

### What This Means for Your Business

Acting now can help you:

- Reduce energy and operating costs
- Strengthen supply-chain resilience
- Meet new regulatory requirements early
- Improve competitiveness in procurement
- Attract customers, partners and investors increasingly focused on sustainability

The Green Economy is shaping how every sector operates. By preparing early and accessing the right support, your business can stay compliant, competitive, and ready for future growth.





## Public Procurement

If you are bidding for public contracts, sustainability matters.

### Legislative and Policy Landscape

**The Procurement Act 2023** and the **National Procurement Policy Statement** **(NPPS) strengthened the requirement for public sector bodies to consider carbon and broader environmental factors in their tenders.**

### Key Changes

- Public bodies **must consider broader factors beyond just cost, including social and environmental impact,** when evaluating bids.
- Public authorities are legally required to "have regard to" the NPPS priorities, which include "tackling climate change and reducing waste". This is a stronger obligation than the previous "consider" requirement under the Social Value Act 2012.
- Mandatory Carbon Reduction Plans (CRPs): For central government contracts over £5 million annually, businesses must publish a Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) detailing their Scope 1, 2, and 3 greenhouse gas emissions and their commitment to achieving net zero by 2050.
- For contracts over £5 million, public authorities must set and publish at least three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and monitor supplier performance against these annually. This means businesses must be able to reliably **measure and report their climate-related performance.**

Strong environmental, social, and ethical credentials are no longer just a bonus; they provide a significant competitive edge in securing public sector contracts. For more details on securing public contracts see Essex County Council's **Provider Hub**.

# Opportunities

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) reports that the UK's net zero economy is expanding rapidly, growing by around 10% in 2024 and generating **£83 billion in Gross Value Added**, with **over 950,000 full-time jobs.**[17]

The net zero sector is now **growing three times faster than the wider UK economy,** with more than **22,000 net zero businesses,** the majority SMEs.[18]

The UK's net zero economy grew by around

10%

in 2024

# Green Skills

Green Skills are 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 the clean energy workforce in the East of England and London will see the highest growth rates, with clean energy workforces in both regions needing to grow by at least three times their current size by 2030.[19] There are expected to be around **55,000 – 60,000 direct clean energy jobs** in the East of England.[20]







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 significant economic opportunities, particularly as the landscape shifts towards energy efficiency and sustainability. This includes **retrofitting** – the process of upgrading our existing homes and buildings to improve energy performance. Retrofit measures often involve improving the fabric of a building through insulation, upgrading heating and electrical systems (installing a heat pump) and integrating renewable and low-carbon technologies (solar panels).

By upskilling your workforce to offer services in retrofit installation and low-carbon, net-zero heat and energy solutions, your business can position itself at the forefront of the green transition. With the introduction of the **Future Homes Standard** for new builds, meaning high-insulation standards and heat pumps are mandatory on new developments, investing in these skills now will ensure your organisation stays ahead of regulatory requirements and meets rising market demand for eco-friendly solutions.

In addition to insulation, heat pumps and renewables, businesses should not overlook the growing need for professional services such as retrofit assessment, coordination, and technical advice. As demand increases for high-quality energy upgrades, there is a rising requirement for qualified experts who can oversee retrofit projects, ensure best-practice standards, and support property owners in making informed decisions. Offering these services can help you add value for clients, reduce carbon footprints, and support Essex's wider sustainability ambitions.

# New Support for Essex Construction Businesses

To help local businesses take advantage of these opportunities, Essex County Council has introduced several support services:

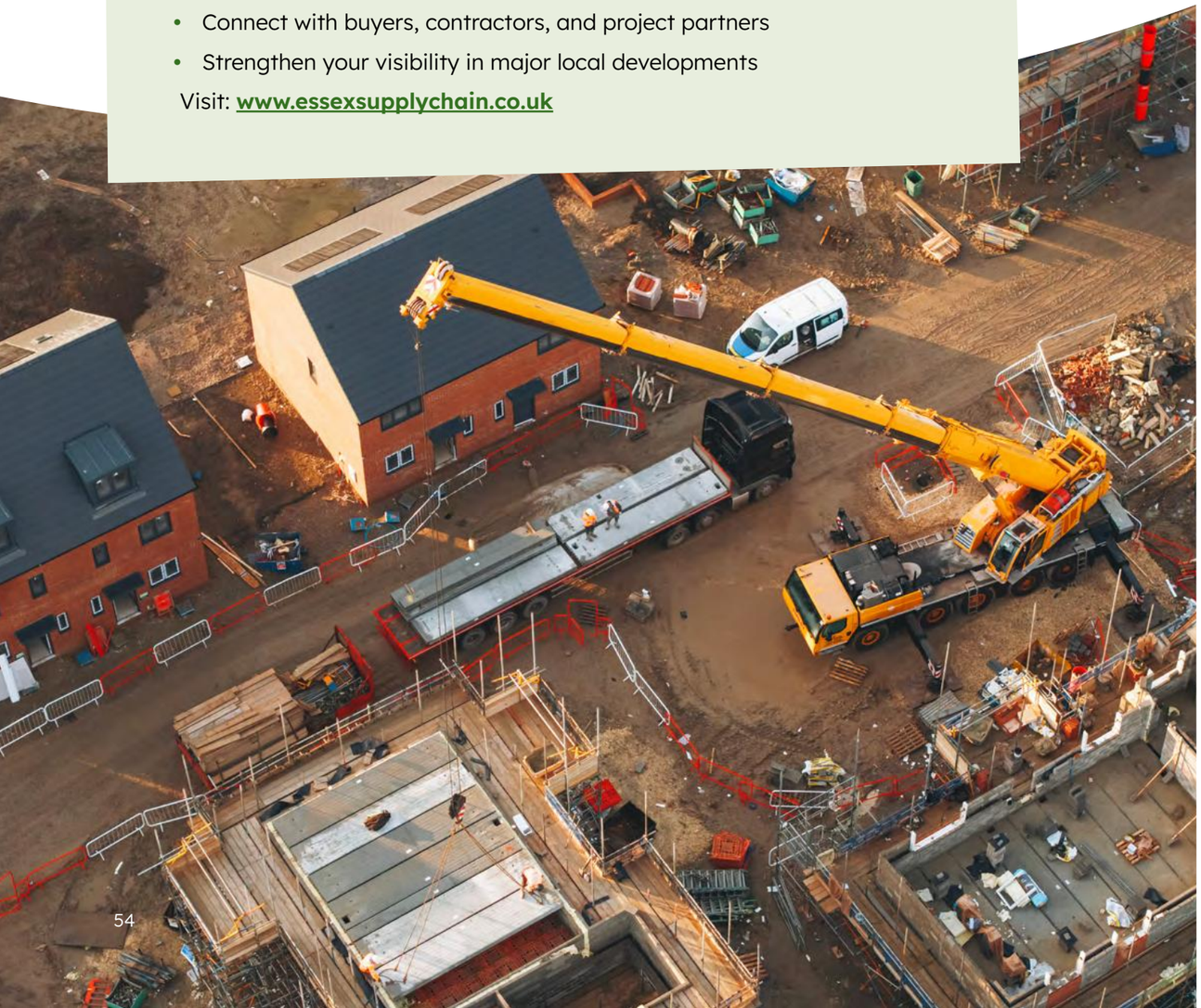
## Essex Supply Chain Portal

An online resource designed to strengthen the pipeline of opportunities for local suppliers across construction, retrofit, and wider infrastructure programmes.

**Use the portal to:**

- Register your business and showcase your capabilities
- Access upcoming contract opportunities across Essex
- Connect with buyers, contractors, and project partners
- Strengthen your visibility in major local developments

Visit: **www.essexsupplychain.co.uk**





## 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**
- Funded by the UK Government, Essex County Council offers **Skills Bootcamps in Essex** (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 Essex.
- Training and employment schemes for your business may be found on the UK Government **website** and the Essex Opportunities **website**



If your organisation is interested in developing retrofit or green skills capability – including accredited qualifications in insulation, low-carbon heating, renewable energy installation, and professional retrofit roles – **contact the Essex Growth Agency** to explore the specialist skills programmes and training pathways available across the county.

## Construction Business Support

Further support for businesses will continue to be published on the **Essex Growth Agency** website. This includes:

- Ambitious Essex Construction Compliance and Readiness Support – Specialist support to help construction and retrofit businesses develop their capabilities, navigate new sustainability requirements, and prepare for emerging market opportunities
- Job Brokerage Service – A dedicated construction Job Brokerage to support employers with recruitment and to connect residents with roles in construction and the green skills sector.

# 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, there are informal groups such as **People, Planet, Pint**, which are active across the UK and meet to network, share advice and best practice in relation to business sustainability.
- **Ambitious Essex** – The countywide business support service for SMEs, offering free expert advice, business diagnostics, grant navigation, tailored events, finance guidance, mentoring and signposting across Essex.
  - **Ambitious Essex Funding Finder** – A go-to-tool for discovering funding opportunities across Essex. The portal is aimed at micro and small businesses, charities and social enterprises. It is fully funded and can help you to find grants, loans and awards tailored to your needs
- **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 North Essex Economic Board** can provide advice and support for businesses in Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford
- **#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**
  - **Confederation of British Industry**
  - **Essex Chambers of Commerce**
  - **Federation of Small Businesses**
  - **Institute of Directors** – includes **sustainability events and webinars**
  - **Small Business Britain**
- 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. Grants and Loans

A range of **regional and national programmes** support organisations in reducing emissions, improving efficiency, and driving green innovation.

**Please note that funding schemes often evolve or close, so early application is recommended.**

Below is a selection of schemes that may support your sustainability ambitions:

- **Ashden Awards** – An annual funding programme, celebrating outstanding climate solutions and offer of up to £40,000 in grant funding (category dependent).
- The **British Business Bank** (BBB) has received over £4.5 billion under the Government's **Backing Your Business** plan, significantly expanding its support for SMEs. Key initiatives include:
  - **Growth Guarantee Scheme** – Designed to support access to finance for UK smaller businesses as they look to invest and grow.
  - **Start Up Loans** – provided through the **Start-Up Loans Company**, which is funded by the UK Government. You can borrow between £500 and £25,000. When you apply, you're paired with a dedicated business adviser, who supports you with completing your application form. If your application is successful, your loan comes with the option of 12 months of **free mentoring**.

## Sustainability & Clean Tech Funding

- **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
- **Clean Growth Fund** – Invests in companies focused on driving clean growth in the low carbon economy
- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – **Tree planting funding and grants**
- **Made Smarter** Adoption Programme – National programme providing funding and technical support for SMEs investing in energy efficient and digital manufacturing technologies. In 2026, the Government added £2 million in new funding to help SMEs cut costs through upgrades such as heating improvements, insulation, and solar installations.
- **The Woodland Trust** – Tree planting funding for farmers and landowners.



## Training & Skills 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**.
- **Essex Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service** – Supporting SMEs to access fully funded apprenticeship training through levy transfers from larger employers - **meaning smaller businesses can receive the financial support they need to cover the cost of training their apprentices**.

## Support for Young Entrepreneurs

- 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 King'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**.

## Green Transport & Electric Vehicles Grants

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) & Charging Infrastructure Grants** - several home and workplace chargepoint schemes have been extended to March 2027, with grant levels rising from £350 to £500 per socket.
- The **Electric Car Grant Scheme** (reintroduced in July 2025) provides up to £3,750 off eligible EVs under £37,000 and remains available in 2026.

## General Funding Portals & Networking

Searchable **digital tools to help you identify**:

- Grants
- Loans
- Innovation funding
- Sector-specific opportunities

- **Ambitious Essex Funding Finder**
- **Grants Online** – Newsletter includes UK and regional green funding opportunities.
- **UK Business Climate Hub** – UK's central platform for SME net-zero guidance, including updated funding listings. Regularly updates UK-wide and regional funding opportunities.
- **UnLtd** – Finds, funds and supports social entrepreneurs.

## 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.

# 10. Essex-wide Business Support Programmes



## Ambitious Essex

**The main countywide business support service.**

Ambitious Essex provides free expert advice, business diagnostics, grant navigation, tailored events, finance guidance, mentoring and signposting for SMEs across Essex.

## 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:

- Benefits of ESG for Small Businesses
- Environmental and Sustainable Accreditation Schemes
- Finance Finder Tool
- How to Measure your Carbon Footprint
- Net Zero: An A to Z Guide
- Net Zero: How being carbon neutral can help your business grow
- Smaller Businesses and the Transition to Net Zero
- Sustainability for Small Businesses
- What is Net Zero? An Introduction for Small Businesses

## Universities & Local Support

Anglia Ruskin University – Provides business support, innovation guidance and collaboration opportunities. ARU may also assist businesses in identifying funding opportunities.

University of Essex – Offers access to research expertise, collaborative projects, and Innovate UK funding pathways for businesses seeking to develop sustainable solutions.



## Essex Connect to Work

Essex Connect to Work is a **free, voluntary programme** supporting residents who face barriers to employment. It offers tailored one-to-one help with job searching, CVs, interviews, and access to local opportunities. Training offers aligned with employer needs and support for issues like mental health, housing or addiction.

## Essex Skills Bootcamps

Essex Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible **up to 16-week** training programmes for adults aged 19+, helping them to gain in-demand skills, including:

- Career progression
- Job entry
- Digital and AI skills
- Health and social care
- Construction and retrofit
- Leadership and management

**Many courses include a guaranteed interview, and employers can enrol staff at subsidised rates.**

## Visit Essex (Tourism Business Support)

Visit Essex promotes Essex tourism businesses and offers:

- Marketing and visibility support
- Business resources
- Membership benefits

## Essex Construction Alliance

Countywide support helping construction businesses access:

- Skills development
- Supply chain opportunities
- Collaboration and training

To join the alliance or find out more email: constructionalliance@essex.gov.uk.

## The UK Government's Business Growth Service

The Business Growth Service is a centralised support platform for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), offering streamlined access to funding, expert advice, and export opportunities through a single digital hub.

# 11. Business Support Available by Essex Local Council/Authority

## Basildon Borough Council

### Business Support

- Basildon for Business – Support for Business
- LinkedIn: Basildon 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
- Billericay BID
- Facebook: Billericay BID
- Small Business Networking – Basildon
- Wickford BID
- Facebook: Wickford BID





## Braintree District Council

### Business Support

- Braintree District Council – Business Growth Services

### Other Useful Links

- Braintree District Council – Climate Change



## Brentwood Borough Council

### Business Support

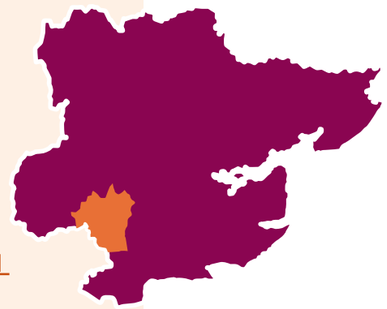
- Brentwood Borough Council

### Other Useful Links

- Building Better Business for Brentwood – Brentwood Chamber of Commerce

### Support Available

- Sign up to receive regular updates on business events, advice, funding and support at: 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

Invest Chelmsford Business

### Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

Climate Emergency Declaration and Action Plan

### Other Useful Links

North Essex Economic Board

Love Your Chelmsford





## Colchester Borough Council

### Business Support

- Colchester Borough Council
- Colbea
- Invest Colchester

### Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

- Business Support & Networks – Invest Colchester

### 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

### Other Useful Links

- Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce - Supports local businesses, provides networking opportunities, and advocates for the interests of the local business community

### Support Available

- Epping Forest High Streets Support

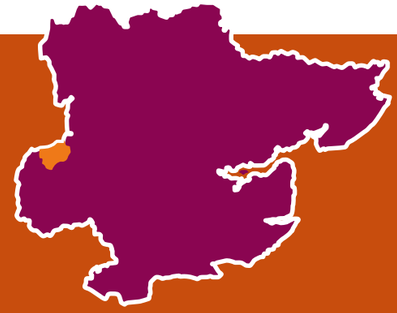
Available exclusively to high street businesses in Waltham Abbey, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Chigwell, The Broadway, and Buckhurst Hill. Free to register. Participating businesses will receive:

- 1 to 1 support
- Tailored mentoring and guidance
- Signposting to relevant services
- Training sessions designed around individual business needs
- Access to a local network of business owners for peer-support

Email: epping-highstreets@deytonbell.com



## Harlow District Council



### Business Support

- Harlow Business

### Support Available

- Nwes – Free business advice available at the Harlow Enterprise Hub including Net Zero training workshops.

## Maldon District Council



### Business Support

- Maldon District Council
- LinkedIn
- Maldon District for Business – Facebook

### 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 and 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 Support and Advice
- Southend-on-Sea City Council – Contact Us
- Business-on-Sea
- Email: economicd@southend.gov.uk

### Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

- Southend Climate Action
- Email: Climatechange@southend.gov.uk



## Tendring District Council

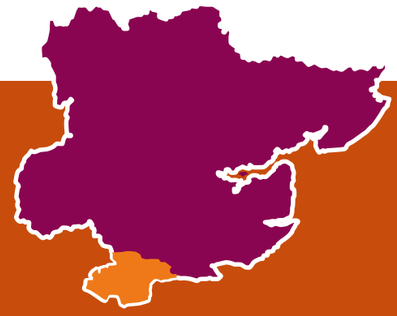


### Business Support

- Tendring District Council



## Thurrock Council



### Business Support

- Thurrock Council

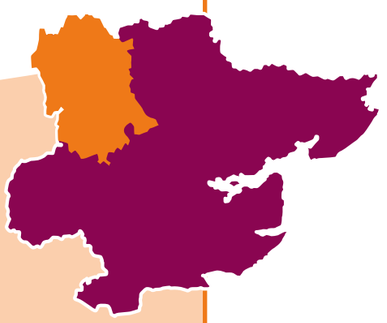
### Other Useful Links

- Nwes Property Services manage the Council's three business centres, the Old Courthouse and Centre for Business in Grays and Tilbury Riverside Business Centre. These offer a range of office and workshop space, along with virtual tenancies.
- For Grays Centre enquiries, contact: ochteam@nwes.org.uk
- For Tilbury enquiries contact: tilburyreception@nwes.org.uk

### Support Available

- 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
- Business advice and support available to start ups and SME, including face to face provision and regular programme of workshops. Contact: hilary.fearn@nwes.org.uk
- Support for early years providers from Nwes Property Services. Please email: christopher.chapman@nwes.org.uk
- Business Buzz monthly newsletter, which you can subscribe to here and Council Economic Development Team via business@thurrock.gov.uk

## Uttlesford District Council



### Business Support

- Uttlesford District Council

### Business Sustainability Hub/Advice

- Uttlesford District Council

### Other Useful Links

- North Essex Economic Board

### Support Available

- Pedal Perks Initiative

# 12. Resource Links

## Calculators – Emissions/Savings

- Carbon Cutting Essex – personal carbon footprint tracker for residents and businesses in Essex
- Carbon Trust – SME Carbon Footprint Calculator
- Go Compare – Energy Cost Calculator (comparative costs for different appliances)
- 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
- UK Business Climate Hub Business Carbon – Measure your Carbon Emissions

## Energy and Energy Efficiency

- The Carbon Trust –
  - Hosts a number of office energy efficiency guides and resources
  - Better business guide to energy saving – aimed at businesses which are new to energy saving
- The Energy Saving Trust – A guide to energy efficiency in the workplace



- UK Government –
  - Energy Efficiency for Businesses
  - SME guide to energy efficiency

## Finance, Funding and Support

- ACL Essex: Adult Learning Courses – Find courses that focus on energy efficiency, sustainability and retrofitting
- Ambitious Essex – Free expert business support and advice, with access to a grants and a funding finder
- 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
- 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 Finder Tool
  - 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
- Essex Air – Provides information about air quality across the county, including how pollution impacts our health and what to do about it, as well as readings from live air quality monitors
- 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 King'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.
- **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**
- **British Chambers of Commerce**
- **Federation of Small Businesses**
- **Institute of Directors**
- UK Government – **SME Climate Hub**



## SME Sustainability Guidance (General)

- British Business Bank –
  - **Benefits of ESG for Small Businesses**
  - **Environmental and Sustainable Accreditation Schemes**
  - **Finance Finder Tool**
  - **How to Measure your Carbon Footprint**
  - **Net Zero: An A to Z Guide**
  - **Net Zero: How being carbon neutral can help your business grow**
  - **Smaller Businesses and the Transition to Net Zero**
  - **Sustainability for Small Businesses**
  - **What is Net Zero? An Introduction for Small Businesses**
- 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**
- 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 electric minibuses that can be pre-booked or booked on-demand in specific areas in Essex
- Energy Saving Trust –
  - Business Transport
  - Efficient Driving
- 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

- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – Household and Business Recycling in England
- Love Essex – Advice for businesses disposing of their waste in Essex
- Recycle More – Waste audit guidance
- Redistribution and sharing networks (surplus food):
  - Olio
  - Too Good To Go
- Right Waste, Right Place
- WRAP –
  - The Business of Recycling
  - Waste Audit Guidance
- UK Government –
  - Disposal of business or commercial waste
  - Simpler Recycling regulations



## Water

- Anglian Water – Save Water Advice
- CCW – Offers impartial advice and guidance to business consumers
- Essex & Suffolk Water – Save Water Advice
- MOSL – Water Efficiency Dashboard (Benchmarking)
- Open Water – Lists water retailers and eligibility to switch checker
- Thames Water – Business Water Saving Calculator
- Waterwise
  - How to save water page (At work section)
  - Water Efficiency Strategy to 2030
  - Water Literacy Programme website

## Essex-based social media pages

### Facebook:

- Eco - Essex
- Essex Climate Action
- Essex Local Nature Recovery
- Essex Wildlife Trust
- Love Essex
- Sustainable Essex

### Instagram:

- Eco – Essex (@ecoessex)
- Essex Climate Action (@essexclimatecommission)
- Essex Wildlife Trust (@essexwildlifetrust)
- Sustainable Essex
- Love Essex (@loveessexuk)

### LinkedIn:

- Essex Climate Action
- Sustainable Essex

### YouTube:

- Essex Climate Action
- Love Essex

### X (formerly Twitter):

- Essex Climate Action (@essex_climate)
- Essex Wildlife Trust (@EssexWildlife)

# 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 gas 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 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 secure a high quality environment, now and into the future.

We are keen to make sure that this document remains relevant and helpful to businesses over time. As such, we aim to produce updated versions of this action pack as discussions, legislation and priorities around sustainability issues evolve. If you have any ideas or resources which could be included in this pack – or if you think your business could feature as a case study – we would like to hear from you. Please contact: **environment.climatecommunications@essex.gov.uk**

**We look forward to working with you on your journey towards greater sustainability.**

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