

# Meaningful actions that won't cost the earth

In a survey by Oxford Brookes University, **66 per cent of respondents** found that access to finance was the number one reason that SMEs in the South and Vale area are not taking action on net zero.



**Being a sustainable small business doesn't happen overnight!** It takes small steps over a long period of time. This guide sets out the many small things you can do to get started that don't involve significant financial investments, but are meaningful actions that will make a difference.

## Meaningful actions



### 1. Getting started on your net zero journey

If the term 'net zero' is overwhelming and you're not sure where to start, check out our 'Getting started on your net zero journey' and 'Energy focus' guides [on our website](#) for useful things to consider.



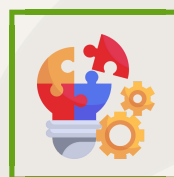
### 2. Tap into free resources and tools

Read our other net zero guides [on our website](#). The [Enterprise Oxfordshire net zero hub](#), [SME Climate Hub](#) and the [Carbon Trust](#) also have useful sustainability tips and advice.



### 3. Involve your staff

Your team is a great asset and could make a significant contribution to reducing carbon. The work may also present opportunities for personal development and boost morale amongst the team.



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#### 4. Understand and reduce your digital impact

Digital emissions can be a hidden part of your carbon footprint but often form a significant proportion of overall emissions, especially for smaller businesses. You can get an estimated figure for your annual digital emissions using Small99's [calculator](#).



Check out our '[Digital Carbon Footprint](#)' guide for practical advice on reducing your digital carbon footprint.



#### 5. Reduce waste

Work with your supply chain to reduce the amount of waste coming into the business – it's costing you money to dispose of it! Tips on working with your supply chain can be found in our 'Sustainable Procurement' guide [via our website](#).

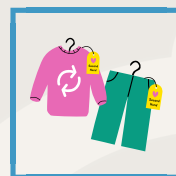


Look at the data provided by your waste management company to identify trends and volumes arising. For example, contaminated loads (like putting a non-recyclable item in a recycling bin) are bad for the environment but also cost the business more. Many waste management companies will visit your premises and ensure you have the right coloured and labelled bins in place.



#### 6. Circular economy

When looking to buy something for the business, consider whether the item be borrowed, leased or bought second hand or refurbished. Check out our '[Circular economy](#)' guide for useful tips and advice.



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## 7. Travel

As well as encouraging staff to use electric vehicles, consider implementing the government's [Cycle to Work Scheme](#), designed to help staff save money on a new work bike (including electric bikes) and spread the cost of the bike over monthly tax-free instalments.

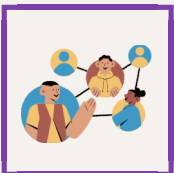


The scheme is free for employers to join. The employer recovers the cost of the bike from the employee's salary, and can save up to 15.05 per cent in National Insurance contributions for each employee who participates.



## 8. Switch to ethical banking

Many banks still invest in the fossil fuel industry and this exacerbates the climate crisis. Moving to a new provider who has a strong low carbon investment ethos can send a clear message for change. The [Bank for Good website](#) has more information.



## 9. Join a business network

Business networks can support you on the road to a lower carbon future. One example is [Oxfordshire Greentech](#), who are working with businesses to innovate, collaborate and exchange knowledge on the green agenda.



## 10. Keep an eye on funding sources

The [Enterprise Oxfordshire Funding & Grants page](#) showcases available funding to implement low carbon measures on both a local and national level, including grants, green financing and community renewables.



**TOP  
TIPS**



Check out our [other guides](#) for more handy tips and advice on getting started on your net zero journey.



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