

Sustainable procurement

A **2021 SAP** survey showed that 83 per cent of UK adults are more likely to engage with a business that sources their products locally, and 55 per cent are willing to pay more for ethically sourced goods.

SMEs who can **move to more sustainable supply chains** can make a real difference.



Sustainable procurement is the process of making buying decisions that meet a company's needs for goods and services, while minimising its impact on the environment.

It's estimated that the top 10 products or materials for most businesses make up 30 - 40 per cent of their carbon footprint.



Steps



1. Buying local

Buying local products and services supports your local business network and helps the local economy to thrive. This will also reduce carbon emissions associated with transport and potentially the amount of packaging needed to transport goods.



Blenheim Palace states 'We will only purchase from suppliers who also have a commitment to sustainability. We will support local small businesses who traditionally find it hard to get involved with the larger suppliers'.



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2. Sustainable Procurement Policy

Develop a sustainable procurement policy, outlining what you want to achieve. This will help give a clear steer to your suppliers and staff responsible for purchasing.



It doesn't have to be over complicated – focus on a few areas that matter to you. For example, buying local, buying refurbished IT equipment and buying only certified timber products.



3. Work with your existing suppliers

Begin discussions with your existing supply chain to understand what plans they have in place to achieve net zero, and how you can work together to reduce waste and improve efficiency.



Ask your suppliers to start reporting on carbon (energy consumption, direct emissions generated during production and transportation, details on the materials used, and overall emissions footprint related to the products or services they provide to your company) as a regular part of their service to you.



Collecting this data will help you understand the carbon footprint of the goods and services you are buying and identify where the carbon hotspots are in your supply chain.



4. Ethical sourcing

Ethical sourcing is procuring goods and services in a manner that is respectful to the environment and beneficial to the people involved in the production process.



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Ethical sourcing starts with a commitment to transparency and accountability across the supply chain. This involves undertaking due diligence on suppliers, establishing clear codes of conduct and implementing regular audits to ensure compliance with ethical standards.



Some products have achieved a certification to say that they adhering to set criteria. The Ethical Consumer has put together a [guide](#) with more information.



Ethical trading and sustainability are very important to local business The Dark Horse Roastery. Emily sources direct as much as possible, building long term relationships with coffee producers. The team pay a premium, which reflects the quality of the coffee and allows producers to reinvest in their farms and communities, and support their families.



5. Transportation

Move to a low emission courier or logistics service to reduce the environmental impact associated with transporting your goods. These companies will provide you with details of how much carbon you can save by choosing this option. Local companies include [Darcica Logistics](#) and [Velocity Cycle Couriers](#).



6. Events

Sustainable events matter as your business image is very publicly visible. Setting sustainability guidelines for events is a great way to show leadership and influence others. Think about the choice of venue, accessibility by public transport, sustainable catering and choosing remote conferencing.



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7. Hosting your website

Switch your web host supplier to one that uses renewable energy. The carbon footprint of hosting a website often forms a significant proportion of overall emissions, especially for smaller businesses. Local business [Pentangle Technology](#) can help with this.



8. Buying or leasing items

Buying goods with recycled content, e.g. office paper, is a good way to help the environment and ensures that there is a market for recycled materials.



Choosing energy efficient products could save significant energy over the lifetime of the product.



Consider whether current items can be repaired or refurbished before buying new. Keeping items for longer than planned can save you money, but also avoid unnecessary use of materials. A stationery amnesty is a great example of this.



Look to lease or borrow items if possible. Consider buying second hand or refurbished. If buying new, ensure items are fit for purpose, and are durable with good longevity. Consider whether they can be easily repaired, upgraded or recycled at the end of their life cycle.



TOP
TIPS



Head over to [our website](#) to find more net zero guides, full of tips and helpful advice to get you started on your journey.



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