

Getting started on your net zero journey



Net zero means cutting down a company's carbon emissions as much as possible, and balancing out any remaining emissions by removing the same amount from the atmosphere. This helps protect the climate and reduce the risk of serious environmental damage.

A survey by [Oxford Brookes University](#) revealed that **70 per cent of SMEs** in South and Vale have started their net zero journey, while 24 per cent are looking to get started.

Business benefits



1. Reduce your bottom line

Rising costs are putting businesses under pressure. Greater efficiency can reduce costs and increase profit margins, whilst making your business more resilient.



Consider:

- introducing good energy management procedures
- LED lighting and energy efficient heating
- installing smart meters
- reducing waste
- switching to local suppliers to decrease transportation distances
- re-designing products that are fit for purpose but require fewer inputs
- reducing packaging.



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2. Attract new customers

Offering innovative 'green' products, services or business models may open new business opportunities. PwC's 2024 Voice of the Consumer Survey found that consumers are willing to spend an average of 9.7 per cent more on sustainably produced or sourced goods, even with cost-of-living and inflation concerns.



3. Be ready to meet stakeholder requirements

Large companies, the public sector and financial institutions are coming under increasing pressure to improve sustainability performance and mitigate climate risks.

All businesses, no matter their size, need to be prepared to demonstrate their net zero commitment to customers, funders, supply chain and lenders. Companies who cannot demonstrate this risk missing out on sales, future contracts and growth opportunities.

Consider:

- making a commitment to reduce carbon emissions within a set timeframe
- putting a sustainability plan in place
- monitoring and reporting your progress.



4. Attract and retain talent

When seeking a new role, 1 in 4 people consider sustainability as a top non-negotiable when evaluating a company's culture and values. For existing staff, sustainable practices enhance employee morale and engagement, by fostering a sense of pride and purpose.



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5. Enhance your reputation

Making a commitment to net zero can significantly enhance a company's image. It positions the business as forward-thinking, responsible and ethical. A survey by the [SME Climate Hub](#) found that over 60 per cent of SMEs felt their climate efforts had improved their business' reputation.

Tips to get started



Measure

To understand your carbon emissions, you'll need to work out where your business impacts lie (e.g. energy use, travel and waste) and establish a baseline to measure any reductions against. Check out our guide to [measuring your carbon footprint](#).



Set goals

Goal setting should be tailored to fit your business, considering your ethos, ambitions, the resources available and what timeframe is realistic for you.



Develop a clear path

Develop a sustainability plan that breaks down what tasks are needed, by when and who's responsible. Check out our guide to writing a sustainability plan [via our website](#).



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Collaboration

Make sure you engage with your staff, customers and supply chain at an early stage. Join a [networking group](#) relevant to your business that is active on net zero. Talk to other businesses who you will be able to learn from or work with on net zero.



A to Z of climate terms

The language used to speak about the climate can be confusing. Check out these [definitions](#) of commonly used terminology.

Most importantly, just get started!

The journey towards sustainability demands genuine effort and strategic thinking. You won't have all the answers immediately, but **make a start** with what you do know.

The benefits that net zero promises — not only for the planet but for the companies who engage — make it a compelling path for businesses.

TOP
TIPS



Check out our other net zero guides for useful tips and advice [via our website](#).



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