

A PRACTICAL PATHWAY TO NET ZERO DOCUMENT

Thames Valley Business Checklist

Welcome to the Thames Valley Business Net Zero Checklist

The [Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce](#) (TVCC), in partnership with EY, recognises the climate emergency and calls upon the Thames Valley business community to become the 'greenest region' in the UK.

Climate change is real, tangible and visibly affects us all. Keeping to within 1.5°C global heating is the biggest challenge we face as humans today; failure to do so will be catastrophic. However, the net zero revolution is the biggest business opportunity in human history, and those who establish themselves early as net zero leaders have the potential to capitalise most on this opportunity.

**Decarbonisation represents a transformation for every
business - it is either about survival or opportunity**

This checklist below is a tool for reviewing the carbon emissions of your business and identifying the actions that can be taken to help your company reduce its energy use and associated emissions. This document provides practical advice and information to help you on this journey.

The recommended actions have been developed by the Thames Valley [Sustainability Working Group](#) (SWG) a business-led roundtable of companies, academic institutions and industry leaders, located in the Thames Valley, with the appetite and ambition to take action collectively to leave tomorrow's world in better health.

The checklist is extensive, but not exhaustive. As such, some of the actions might not be applicable to your business, you might have already completed them, or they might not be a priority for your business. To use this checklist, complete the tick boxes in each section, before identifying which actions you will take as a business. The checklist can be printed off or completed by editing into the pdf form.

If you require any support during this process, please visit our [website](#) or contact the [SWG Team](#).

OUR COLLECTIVE APPROACH TO NET ZERO IS UNDERPINNED BY SIX THINK LEVERS:



Think Big

Set your net zero or B-Corp status targets. Becoming net zero not only has a positive effect on the planet but has numerous beneficial business outcomes such as cost saving, creating new revenue, risk mitigation, and boosting reputation.



Think Community

Learn from other companies in your industry and push each other to achieve more, utilising the business community and your wider networks. Give back to the community by engaging with CSR projects and charities.



Think Carbon

Measure your carbon footprint and focus on reduce, reuse, recycle. Start with small steps to reduce your carbon footprint such as, switching to green energy sources, reducing travel, and avoiding waste.



Think Green

It is important to understand why a greener mindset can benefit your business, your colleagues, and the world.



Think Targets

Push your business to achieve more by creating an action plan and setting manageable and attainable goals to make quick progress.



Think Checklist

Finally, use this checklist as a starting point for your decarbonisation journey – a practical pathway to net zero.

CHECKLIST

Stage 1 - 'Where do we start?'

These actions have been specifically chosen and drawn together for nearly all businesses to achieve and benefit from. They are relatively easy, and are a good place for businesses to start, when trying to move towards 'net zero'.

Already Done / up to date
Not Applicable
Not a Priority
Explore Further
Priority
Completed

1.Starting Point: Understanding the Challenge

1A	Measure your carbon footprint						
	<p>Measuring your carbon footprint allows for effective and focused reduction efforts. It is imperative to measure and understand your current carbon emissions to create a holistic picture of the environmental impact of your business and understand what the key drivers for emissions in your business are. Measuring your carbon footprint can help report and inform, allow business transparency, and enable more efficient business practices and decision-making processes with the end goal of enabling your business to reduce emissions, save cost and achieve sustainability targets.</p> <p>A carbon calculator is one way in which a business can understand their output. The Carbon Trust and MacKay Carbon Calculators are two online resources which allow you to calculate your business's carbon footprint. Alternatively, the DECC/DEFRA provide annual emission factors, which, when multiplied by your data, will provide your Greenhouse Gas Emissions.</p> <p>To do this, you will first need to collect data from relevant emission producing activities over your chosen period, such as: fuel consumption and energy usage, which can be found in bills and meter readings. In addition, you should consider air conditioning, water supply and treatment, waste disposal and commuting.</p> <p>Certain emissions will be easier to calculate than others. The Greenhouse Gas Protocol divides emissions into three categories: Scope 1, 2 and 3. Scope 1 is the direct emissions caused by the company's activities. Scope 2 describes the indirect emissions from external sources, for example, purchasing energy. These are relatively straightforward to calculate. However, scope 3 emissions, which are the indirect emissions caused by a business's activity, such as waste or employee commuting, can be harder to gauge. But by acting on them, your business goes above and beyond and gains a competitive edge for the net-zero future.</p>						

1.Starting Point: Understanding the Challenge

1B	Understand where your energy outputs are						
	<p>After calculating your carbon footprint, you should now have a more transparent understanding of what your company's biggest emitters are. This will allow you to be more mindful of the amount of energy you use and identify the areas where the most change is required. If most of your emissions come from your building, can you consider better insulation, using more natural light or switching to low energy lightbulbs? If it is travel; can you find alternative fuel or encourage public transport or lift share amongst your employees?</p> <p>Nevertheless, it is important not to neglect the less impactful aspects of your business. Adjusting even the smallest emitters can make all the difference in the fight against climate change.</p>						
1C	Understand the climate change emergency and the part you play						
	<p>Recognising the gravity of the climate change emergency is the first step to tackling it. Whether as individuals or as businesses, we all have a role to play in reducing our emissions and being more sustainable. We can only combat climate change if we work together and all participate, doing the things we can do, and aspiring to go beyond that.</p> <p>By understanding the facts and the consequences of our actions we can better position ourselves to think green and take action. Educating ourselves on how to be more sustainable, as well as keeping up to date on the latest Government policy and advice is a good first step, using news outlets and businesses such as the UK Committee on Climate Change and Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to read the latest findings on climate change. For general climate information, please see here for the University of Reading and here for the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment (Imperial College and the LSE).</p>						
1D	Make a start, even if you do not have all the answers						
	<p>Adopting sustainable practises does not necessarily mean a fundamental shift in your business. By simply turning off the lights, using recyclable office supplies, minimising or avoiding disposable cutlery and crockery or encouraging more sustainable employee travel, you are reducing your carbon footprint, at little to no cost to your business. Any action is better than no action.</p>						

2.Set Goals and Create Action Plan

2A	Set simple, short-term goals to start you on your journey						
	As a starter, follow this checklist. Once you have established your journey, review your short-term goals, and start to set longer term goals. If you are in a position to, set your company's net-zero target, for example, 'We will be net zero by 20XX'.						
2B	Create an action plan						
	<p>Once you have established a starting point, create a definitive action plan. Identify all the tasks needed to achieve your goal, give them deadlines, and identify your most important ones (using this checklist as a starting point). Next, allocate these tasks to appropriate teams and employees within your business. Ensure you regularly assess your progress and report and discuss it with your staff, as this will convey a sense of shared purpose and achievement, thereby enhancing morale (see also 3B below). For example, the University of Reading's Net Zero Plan, here.</p> <p>Reducing your businesses' carbon emissions may seem like a mammoth task, but when broken down into manageable, attainable goals, you can make quick progress.</p>						
2C	Sign up to well recognised decarbonisation initiatives						
	<p>For Example, Science Based Targets and PAS 2060 Carbon Neutrality The UK government has almost £5 billion of funding available for businesses to become greener. They also offer discounts on Climate Change Levy (expand CCL) tax, for those signed up to their Climate Change Agreements.</p> <p>Please also see General Government Policy and Government guidance on How to Fund Change. There are also some sector-specific codes and guides, for example, for the construction sector, the British Research Establishment has the BREEAM (BRE Environmental Appraisal Methodology), or the Green Building Council equivalent.</p>						

3.Commit to Employee Engagement and Education

3A	Assign or appoint a 'Climate Change Champion' (CCC) in your business or team						
	<p>A climate champion can play a central role for a business to reduce their carbon emissions. They are a focal point for a businesses efforts in reducing their carbon footprint and thus play an important part in making change happen. The CCC should be able to work with other members of your business to identify the appropriate actions your business can take to decarbonise, sharing insights with the rest of the businesses and facilitating the necessary work. Depending on the size of your business, appoint multiple CCCs which sit in different teams or departments for a joined-up approach.</p>						
3B	Be transparent with your employees						
	<p>It is important to present and share the results of measuring your carbon footprint with your employees to ensure they understand the challenges your business faces in terms of sustainability. If your employees understand the gravity of the issue as well as the areas that require improvement, they may be more conscious of them whilst working.</p>						
3C	Involve all employees in the process, a bottom-up approach						
	<p>Create time and space for employees to share their ideas and initiatives inside and outside of the workplace. It is important to mobilise the whole workforce, as every aspect of the business can reduce their footprint. Greater involvement will make employees feel more valued and will encourage them to think actively about their sustainable practises.</p>						
3D	Educate yourself and your staff						
	<p>Make sustainability part of your culture and ensure that employees understand the individual requirement to commit to more sustainable practices, not just the business case for doing so. Regularly reinforce the sustainable vision, so it becomes engrained within the company. It is important everyone is on the same page about sustainability, so it is easier to tackle together.</p> <p>Introduce coaching and team workshops to improve staff understanding of your business management systems, corporate policies, and the importance of sustainability in the workplace and beyond. Improving staff knowledge on waste management, climate change and biodiversity will help your business reach its sustainability goals. For example, University of Reading offers free online programmes through FutureLearn for individuals and for businesses.</p>						

4.Switch to Sourcing Renewable Energy

4A	Switch to sourcing renewable energy supplies where possible						
	Phase out fossil fuels and switch to 100% renewable electricity and 'green' gas. Energy suppliers such as Ecotricity and Green Energy UK are just examples of a growing number of companies offering 100% renewable energy. If possible, consider producing your own energy, by use of solar panels or wind turbines, for example.						
4B	Switch to renewable tariffs where possible						
	Buying a green tariff will offset some of your unrenewable energy use, as energy companies will match your purchases with renewable energy.						
4C	Carbon offsetting						
	For emissions that cannot be avoided, companies can pay to have their equivalent emissions saved elsewhere. This will demonstrate your commitment to becoming net zero. If you do choose to offset some of your emissions, the UK Government has set out guidance (page 115) to help ensure the initiative(s) you choose are good quality. Not all those offered by airlines and car hire firms, for instance, necessarily represent good value or quality.						

5.Commit to Reducing Energy Consumption

5A	Install a smart meter						
	Installing a smart meter allows companies to monitor energy use, take control of energy bills and potentially save energy and money.						
5B	Get an up-to-date Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for your premises						
	This will give an indication of how much it costs to heat and power your property, as well as recommend efficiency improvements, their costs, and their potential savings. To do this, you will need to find an assessor to arrange a viewing, who will give you a certificate upon completion.						

5. Commit to Reducing Energy Consumption

5C	Replace all incandescent and halogen lightbulbs with LED bulbs						
	LED lightbulbs consume approximately 75% less energy than traditional incandescent and halogen light bulbs. Furthermore, LED's last longer and greatly save lighting costs.						
5D	Turn all lights off when not needed and/or install motion sensor lighting						
	UK households emit 37.4 million kg of carbon dioxide daily by leaving lights on. By simply ensuring lights are off when not in use, your business can save the environment and energy costs. The instalment of motion sensor lighting will further increase your efficiency.						
5E	Reduce your use of air conditioning						
	<p>Air conditioning units require vast amounts of energy to run and so reducing their usage is an important factor for sustainable businesses. By ensuring your buildings are properly insulated, the air conditioning will not need to work as hard or as long to keep the room cool, saving energy and money. Keeping ducts and vents clean with regular maintenance will further increase efficiency, with an added health benefit for your employees.</p> <p>Consider amending your company's dress code. For example, wearing a suit during periods of hot weather will inevitably require more air conditioning. During days of no representation, could you alter your employee dress code?</p>						
5F	Review heating settings and turn the thermostat down						
	Research shows that by turning the thermostat down just 1°C, you can greatly save on energy costs, with minimal difference to the work environment. Match your heating settings to your usage, so you only run the heating when necessary.						
5G	Ensure all appliances are energy efficient (A+++ rating)						
	<p>Replace old appliances with A+++ rated appliances, old appliances with poor energy ratings are not built to run at optimum efficiency.</p> <p>Switching to a new A+++ appliances means you can make up the cost of using an old appliance in under nine years, which in the long run is not a huge amount of time but could save you money and energy.</p>						

5.Commit to Reducing Energy Consumption

5H	Reduce unnecessary travel by car						
	Where possible, conduct meetings and conferences virtually. Encourage more sustainable commuting, such as public transport or car sharing. If you have a fleet of cars, when can you turn them electric? Can you encourage more fuel-efficient driving amongst your drivers and increase the proportion of multi-stop deliveries or multi-purpose trips?						
5I	Reduce the use of water in the workplace						
	Fresh water is a precious resource, so using less water is much better for the environment. Thames Water estimate that water scarcity looms, combined with water demand expected to exceed supply within the next decade, which is likely to cause severe water shortages. It is important to identify any leaks in your plumbing to make sure no water is wasted. Installing a water meter can enable substantial savings. Regularly check the meters as spikes in usage could indicate a new leak. Install low-flow, efficient taps, toilets, and showerheads, to use less. Educate and remind your employees to be mindful of their water use when in the workplace. Read Thames Water's, ' Water Saving Tips ', article for more information.						
5J	Add plants to your workplace						
	Having plants in and around your workspace can not only reduce stress and increase productivity but reduce carbon dioxide levels in the air.						
5K	Green Web Hosting						
	Website servers require constant energy to maintain. If you are choosing where to store your data, opt for a carbon neutral option, for example Google.						
5L	Insulate your buildings						
	Non-domestic buildings are responsible for 9% of UK greenhouse gas emissions every year. Properly insulating your windows, walls, doors, roof, chimneys, and pipes will reduce your energy use, cutting emissions and saving you money on bills.						

6.Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

6A	Implement measures to reduce waste and improve your office recycling systems						
	Make recycling easy for employees, providing more bins with ease of access. Give more options, ensuring there are food bins and bins for plastic, glass, cans, and paper etc. Engage with local schemes and charities to reuse or share old furniture. Encourage employees to bring their own coffee cups and packed lunches.						
6B	Recycle old or unused electronic goods or give them to charity						
	Discarded electricals are one of the fastest growing sources of waste. Giving old technology to charities or schools engages with the circular economy and helps promote a sustainable ethos. For example, Green Machine Computers .						
6C	Go paperless						
	Less paper will reduce your supply costs, as well as making a more clutter-free and productive workspace. Communicate any ideas or instructions you have via email where possible and hold meetings digitally. Use cloud storage and computer filing to store any documents. Encourage the use of note taking apps, rather than post it notes or notepads. Filestream are a digital document management specialist based in Berkshire.						
6D	Use sustainable, renewable, and recyclable materials in your products, packaging, and marketing						
	Aim to switch to recyclable packaging, such as paper, cardboard, metal, or glass. Phase out the use of plastic. Source your packaging locally where possible. Use biodegradable packaging. Switch to online marketing instead of printing.						

7. Work with Greener Suppliers

7A	Understand what your expectation of a supplier is						
	<p>Sustainability does not just end with your business. Companies should be asking questions of themselves and their suppliers to consider the environmental and human impact of your products from raw materials sourcing to production, storage, and delivery. What materials are used to make your product, where are they made? How are they produced and delivered to you?</p>						

7. Work with Greener Suppliers

7B	Use sustainable suppliers and business partners, sourcing locally where possible						
	By using sustainable and local suppliers, you are promoting sustainable business, whilst joining a network of like-minded, environmentally friendly companies within the Thames Valley.						
7C	Ask questions of your suppliers and supply chain						
	Ask your suppliers to join you on a journey. Request ESG reports and if they cannot supply them ask that they can supply one in 12 months. Ask them if they can supply more sustainable materials, support you in the quest to reduce, reuse, recycle. If the supplier cannot address these questions, companies should review whether they can find more sustainable alternatives or purchase more locally.						

8.Utilise your Network and Commit to Social Good

8A	Find out how others can help you be greener, and support others to be greener						
	<p>Attend business events and speak with other companies, large and small and from a range of sectors, asking how their company is tackling the climate change challenge. Learn from your peers and replicate ideas, policies, and activities within your own business. TVCC hosts a range of networking events throughout the year, find out more here or speak to our Member Services Team.</p> <p>TVCC is putting together a range of case studies and good practice examples that showcase world leading and or industry leading work of businesses located in the Thames Valley helping to achieve sustainability targets or ambitions and delivering the business on a pathway to net zero. These can be found here on the TVCC Website.</p> <p>Other examples include: ReadingCAN</p>						
8B	Donate to charities within the Thames Valley Community						
	Donating your unwanted clothes, books, furniture, and technology has several environmental benefits, including promoting re-use and recycling, ensuring that less ends up in landfill, and thus reducing CO2. Not only this but donating directly to local charities ensures that these are items are kept in the local area, supporting the region and with profits going to charity.						

IDENTIFYING NEXT STEPS AND ACTION PLAN

Checklist completed by:	
Date completed:	

A) Actions that have been marked as 'Already Done/ Up to Date' which have positively impacted our carbon footprint are:

1	
2	
3	

B) Priority Actions: Identify the next step for those actions which you have marked as a 'Priority'.

	Action	Who is responsible?	Target date for completion
1			
2			
3			
4			

C) Further Actions: Identify any actions which you have marked as 'Explore Further'.

	Action	Who is responsible?	Target date of completion
1			
2			
3			
4			

D) Barriers: Have there been barriers that have prevented you from completing an action, if so, please identify and explain them.

1	
2	
3	