



Overview of key environmental issues

Professional and Commercial Services businesses are typically office-based and, although not resource intensive like heavy industry, make up a significant portion of the UK economy so present a large opportunity for improving the environmental performance of UK business.

The key environmental issues affecting this sector are: emissions from electricity use, heating and cooling systems, business travel and staff commuting; the impact of producing resources (computers, servers, water, paper etc.); waste disposal (e.g. food waste, paper, office equipment etc.); and water pollution (e.g. cleaning materials, run off from catering services and car parks).

Listed below are links to detailed information on the most relevant pieces of environmental legislation affecting your sector and essential 'Green Savings' to creating a greener, more profitable, business. A full report is available at <http://www.SurreyGreenSteps.com>

Legislation

CRC energy efficiency scheme

The CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRC) is a mandatory carbon trading scheme for businesses who consume above a set threshold of energy. Participant's performance will be published in a league table. More information is available at: <http://www.decc.gov.uk>

Energy performance certificates

An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) records how energy efficient a building is by rating it from 'A' (most efficient) to 'G' (least efficient). It also includes a report giving recommendations for improvement. With some exceptions, all properties must have an EPC when they are sold, built or rented. More information is available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk>

Air conditioning

Air conditioning systems over a certain size must be inspected regularly by an accredited assessor. These inspections are designed to improve efficiency and reduce energy consumption, operating costs and carbon emissions for your system. For further information there is an explanatory guide which can be downloaded from the DCLG website <http://www.communities.gov.uk>.

Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)

The WEEE Regulations aim to reduce the amount of electrical and electronic waste going to landfill and improve recovery and recycling rates. More information is available at: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

Vehicle emissions

You must ensure that all your motor vehicles comply with emission limits and weight regulations. More information is available at: <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk>

Green Savings

Calculate your carbon footprint

You can only make informed decisions about where to target carbon reduction policies when you have a complete view of your organisation's emissions. Plenty of business-friendly, free, advice is available on creating a simple corporate carbon footprint – highly recommended is Defra's GHG Reporting Guidelines <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/>. This document explains in clear terms how you go about creating a footprint – as well as how to report the result and set emissions targets. To help you calculate your business carbon footprint to the Defra standard we you can use the free Footprinter tool: <http://www.footprinter.com/>.

Implement an Environmental Management System

An environmental management system (EMS) supports your company's commitment to improving all aspects of its environmental impact. By adopting an Environmental Management System you will be in a position to reduce raw material, waste and energy costs, gain environmental credibility and be compliant with legislation. To encourage SMEs to adopt an Environmental Management System, Surrey County Council has licensed an e-learning package for use by Surrey SMEs. This can be accessed via the following link: [INSERT HERE](#)

Become energy efficient

It doesn't capture the imagination like some environmental initiatives but energy efficiency measures can yield big savings on your fuel and electricity bills – even the simple ones. An important first step to becoming a more energy efficient business is to ensure someone in your organisation takes responsibility for monitoring energy use and pushing forward energy projects. This will require discussion with staff from across your business as their behaviour and day-to-day decisions will directly affect the energy demands of your business. Visit the Energy Savings Trust (<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk>) and Carbon Trust (<http://www.carbontrust.co.uk>) for more information on energy efficiency in business.

Green your ICT

The objective of 'Green ICT' is to reduce the overall environmental impact of all aspects of 'information and communication technologies' at your business. The importance of ICT to modern businesses has meant that globally the environmental impact of burgeoning numbers of desktops, laptops, peripherals, communication devices and data servers is increasing quickly. When considering green ICT it is important look at the full life cycle of a piece of equipment: from design and production through to use and final disposal. As ICT equipment uses electricity often the dominant environmental impact comes in the form of carbon emissions from use – so buying efficient equipment and promoting efficient use by staff is an important first step. As such, green ICT is a good candidate for inclusion in a broader green procurement policy. For information can be found through The Green Grid – a global consortium of IT professionals seeking to improve efficiency.

Travel less, and more sustainably

Transport is often a major source of emissions for businesses – whether it's in the form of business travel, freight or staff commuting to work. Some tried-and-tested approaches to reducing business travel emissions include: Institute a 'no fly' policy for domestic and some short haul destinations; promote tele- and video-conferencing by providing good alternatives; ban the use of private cars for business travel and providing super-efficient pool vehicles. The Energy Savings Trust provides advice on green vehicle fleets. Commuting is consistently found to be a very significant source of business emissions. Although not under the direct control of an employer, steps can be taken to encourage staff to shift from low-occupancy car travel to more sustainable modes.

Think green

It cannot be emphasised enough that environmental policies will struggle to succeed if there is a lack of staff support across your business. There are a number of techniques that businesses of all sizes employ to get everyone thinking green. These include: get commitment to change from the highest level of management; understand the most important environmental impacts your business has; integrate green issues into all parts of your business strategy.