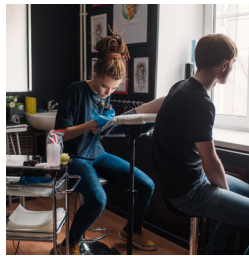


Sustainability Ideas for SMEs

Good for Business - Good for the Environment - Good for Customers



Practical ideas and actions for SMEs to reduce waste, costs and your carbon footprint.



BROUGHT TO YOU BY
**Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall**
Fingal County
Council



SUPPORTED BY



Sustainability makes sense

Fáilte chuig ár dTreoir maidir le hInbhuanaítheacht d'Fhiontair Bheaga agus Mheánmhéide.

Fingal County Council is committed to supporting SMEs to become more sustainable and providing leadership at a local and regional level in achieving Climate Change Action targets. The European Green Deal, which sets out a number of policy initiatives relating to the circular economy, building renovation, biodiversity, farming and innovation with the aim of making the EU's economy sustainable, will also provide opportunities for green business.

Sustainability might sound like a challenging objective for a small business but it makes sense. A sustainable business approach can lead to efficiencies, cost savings and has the ability to position your business to win new customers and secure new contracts. Green procurement can increase efficiency, improve public image and reduce impact on the environment.

Focusing on sustainability will help your business to become more resource efficient by using less raw materials, less energy, and less water. National and EU policy asks business to focus on transitioning to a circular economy approach, where resources are reused and recycled, with waste streams being repurposed as resource streams for other production.

From our own perspective, Fingal County Council adopted its Climate Change Action Plan in September 2019 which outlined 133 actions across five themes: Energy and Buildings; Transport; Flood Resilience; Nature-Based Solutions; and Resource Management.

We have published our first annual progress report which showed significant progress in a number of areas. One of the four targets set out in the Action Plan was the improvement of energy efficiency of the Council of 33% by December 2020 which has been achieved a year ahead of schedule.



The Energy Management Team's Energy Review for 2019, in collaboration with Codema, Dublin's Energy Agency, saw the Council's energy efficiency improve by 34.5%, effectively exceeding the 33% target. The Council has converted 70% of public lighting to LED in the county and anticipates completion of the programme in 2021. We are also working towards the transitioning of our vehicle fleet to an electric one with 34 fully electric road vehicles in operation and 15 more on order.

Over the coming decade, Ireland has ambitious carbon reduction targets. This will be a challenge for all of society. Each of us will need to take actions, be it at home or in business, and that's why the Council has produced this practical guide for business to inspire ideas and actions to help your business make a positive contribution to meeting the challenges of climate change.

You will find more information and useful resources on: www.fingal.ie/sustainablebusiness

Put simply, Sustainable Business is:

- **Good for Business**
- **Good for the Environment**
- **Good for Customers**

Small changes can make a huge difference, so get inspired and start planning ahead today.



Cllr. David Healy
Mayor of Fingal



AnnMarie Farrelly
Chief Executive

Tá leagan Gaeilge den bhróisiúr seo ar fáil ar fingal.ie/ga/gnoinbhuanaithe



Benefits for your business



In addition to reducing the carbon footprint of your business, there are other benefits of introducing sustainable thinking into your business:

1 Cost Savings:

By eliminating excessive energy use and unnecessary waste, businesses can reduce energy and waste management bills by up to 10% per annum.

2 Build A Positive Reputation:

Climate action is an issue that consumers care about. Playing your part in reducing carbon emissions and waste builds positive connections with customers and can impact on their purchasing decisions.

3 Increase Competitiveness:

Preparing for the future, including incorporating green procurement, keeps you ahead of the curve and helps drive business competitiveness.

4 Attracts A Conscientious Team:

Employees are increasingly looking for their employer to take action around climate change. A meaningful Sustainability Action Plan in your business can help attract and retain the right staff.

Make It a Team Effort:

As a business owner/manager, you can make greater strides towards sustainability by getting your team involved. Explain to them what you are trying to achieve. Identify and encourage energy saving behaviours and possible changes that can be made. Build on each other's ideas. Set a goal to reduce energy usage (between 5-10%) across the business. Display them clearly for all the team to see. Consider a team reward for meeting energy saving targets. Discuss progress regularly to keep everyone involved.

Be inspired by the actions of other local businesses. See our video case studies on: fingal.ie/sustainablebusiness-case-studies.

Encourage staff to complete the SEAI Energy Academy modules. These 20 minute online sessions focus on Business Energy Efficiency and Energy and Climate Change. Links to these SEAI modules and other useful energy saving materials can be found on fingal.ie/sustainablebusiness

WIN



A Free Sustainable Assessment for your business.

Check out our competition on page 14.



Let's start with energy saving



Most businesses can save money and energy by focusing on energy usage. Energy wastage happens primarily when we don't think about it: leaving lights, heating and equipment running unnecessarily. You can use this checklist to help you identify where you can start reducing energy usage, save money and help our planet.

1 Lighting:

Quick and simple actions to reduce energy usage on lighting:

- Maximise natural light by positioning work areas close to natural light, cleaning windows and skylights regularly and making sure windows are not blocked.
- Consider replacing bulbs and fittings with more efficient alternatives e.g. LEDs or T5 fluorescents. Clean light fittings at least once a year.
- Turn lights off when not in use. Last person out, should check all unnecessary lights are off.
- Consider installing timers or motion / daylight sensors.
- If replacing blinds, choose horizontal (rather than vertical or roller) to allow greater control of natural light, leading to less glare on screens and more usable light in the room.



2 Heating:

Actions to reduce energy usage on heating:

- Ensure thermostat is set so that heating is at 19°C and cooling is at 24°C or higher.
- Make sure the thermostat timer is correct, and has been set to take into account periods when the premises are empty.
- Ensure that radiators are not obstructed by furniture.



- Air conditioning, if used, is turned off when not needed.
- Consider upgrading your thermostat to a modern electronic one. Wireless versions are extremely easy to install and give you greater control over usage.
- Ensure that annual boiler services include a combustion efficiency check. The results of this check provide valuable insights to help you make better decisions.



3 Office Equipment:

While many of these actions may seem obvious, establishing these new habits will reduce energy usage:

- Set computers and monitors to power down (or switch to standby) when not used for more than 10 minutes.
- All staff should switch off their computer at the end of the day.
- Designate a member of staff with responsibility for turning off all the communal electronic equipment (photocopiers, printers, coffee machines etc.) at the end of the day.
- Adjust the brightness of computer monitors – too bright wastes energy and can lead to eye strain.
- Make sure that infrequently used printers etc. are turned off until needed, not routinely switched on each day.
- If your staff use PCs, consider switching to laptops and flat screen monitors, both of which reduce energy use.
- If you have several small printers, consider switching to one large one to increase efficiency and has the added benefit of getting staff up and active during the day.



Consider changing to an energy supplier who delivers energy from renewable resources.



4 Other Equipment:

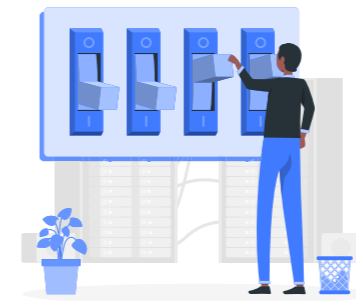
Businesses use a variety of other types of equipment. Here are some more energy reduction ideas:

- Ensure that fridges and freezers close properly and are set to the correct temperature.
- Schedule regular defrosting of freezers.
- Use fridge space efficiently: they work best when $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
- Keep doors to cold storage closed; if they need to be kept open for long periods, or used to store frozen goods, then consider fitting strip curtains.
- Dishwashers are more efficient than sink washing if you need to clean large amounts of crockery, but make sure they are full before being run. Set business dishwasher to an eco-cycle as standard.
- Only fill and boil kettles with the amount of water that is needed.
- Talk to your accountant about the tax advantages available through the Accelerated Capital Allowance (ACA). This scheme allows you deduct the full cost of the equipment from your profits in the year of purchase.

5 Production Equipment:

Quality production is crucial for the running of many businesses but it can also a huge energy drain. Ideas for energy reduction include:

- Establish a routine for turning off all production equipment at the end of the day.
- Label equipment switches so that staff can turn off anything they're not using.
- Keep motors clean and well maintained, to maximise efficiency.
- Establish the optimum settings for your equipment and communicate clearly to staff.
- Turn off idling machines e.g. compressors.
- Ensure good ventilation around the compressor.
- Consider reusing the waste heat from your compressors.
- Listen for and fix compressed air leaks.
- Set the pressure to the lowest possible level required for the application.
- Consider installing a variable speed drive to improve the efficiency of your motor.



6 Transport:

Transport may or may not be another cost-centre in your business. If it is, consider the following ideas to reduce energy wastage:

€ Enrolling drivers on an eco-driving course: aggressive driving is not only dangerous but it can cost >10% more in fuel costs. Visit ecodrive.ie for more information.

- Check vehicle tyre pressure at least once a month.
- Change gear smoothly, using the highest possible gear at the lowest possible RPM; avoid over-revving the engine and change gear between 1,500 (diesel) and 2,000 (petrol) RPM.



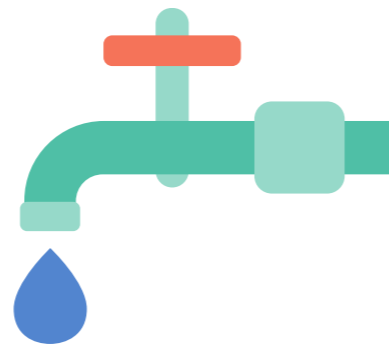
- Encourage staff to walk or bike to work. Providing safe and secure bike parking/storage area, may further encourage staff to cycle. Note the added benefit of contributing to staff health and well-being and reduced traffic emissions.
- Only carry what is needed in the vehicle. Empty boot frequently to keep weight down and minimise fuel use.
- When replacing vehicles, consider electric: grants are available, they are cheaper to maintain and there are tax advantages. Search SIMI Drive Greener for details of the technologies and grants available.

WHAT GETS MEASURED, GETS DONE!

- Ensure you know how to read your electricity and gas bills. Talk to energy suppliers and ask if they can analyse your bill to help you understand when your business uses most energy. Check if there is a better tariff for your business by shopping around.
- Locate your gas and electricity meters and learn how to read them.
- Start tracking your energy usage. A simple spreadsheet tracking your electricity, gas and water usage will help you to identify patterns. Consider adding a column for your black, green and brown bin waste. Tracking information and identifying patterns will help you to take action to further reduce energy and waste.



What's next? Water!



Like energy, much of the water wastage in a business is unconscious. By focusing on water usage and actions to reduce waste, you can significantly reduce water use in your business.

1 Getting started:

- Get to know your existing water usage. Learn how to read your water bills and start to keep a record of water usage in order to measure your progress.
- Talk to your team: Make colleagues aware of the environmental cost of treating and delivering drinking water and the limitations on the treatment systems.
- Conduct a water audit: identify processes or areas of your business where water is used and examine whether small changes would help to reduce usage.

2 Reuse your water:

- Harvest rainwater: A harvesting system allows you to collect rainwater. You can then install systems to use rainwater in your toilets, dishwashers, and showers. A simple water butt can collect rainwater to water plants, or wash windows and cars.
- Grey water system: Used water is known as grey water. It's made up of wastewater from sinks, shower drains or washing machines. Grey water systems collect and reuse this wastewater. You can then use it to flush toilets, water plants, and wash external areas of the building.



3 Reduce your water use:

- Don't leave taps running: a running tap can waste up to 6 litres of water per minute.
- Detect leaks and fix dripping taps.
- Use water efficient settings: Use existing eco-settings on dishwashers and washing machines.
- Chose ecological cleaning products to reduce harmful emissions into water.
- Raise awareness with customers and employees, putting water conservation notices in key positions.
- Low-Tech Changes: There are some low-tech, low cost, fast actions that can be taken. Retrofit a dual flush system into older toilets, invest in toilet cistern bags, or use shower timers.
- Upgrade to water efficient equipment: When replacing equipment, upgrade to more water efficient appliances and devices. Taps, shower heads, toilets, and dishwashers can all make a big difference.
- Clean Consciously: Think about how often you wash building exteriors, clean windows or wash vehicles. Try to limit the use of power washers as they use large amounts of water.
- Think Waterless: Implementing waterless processes can dramatically reduce your use. This can include air-vacuums, high-pressure air jets, and dry sweeping.
- Measure Up: Track usage, identify patterns and benchmark your usage against other businesses in your sector. This will help identify leaks and excessive use.



Keep Drains Clean:

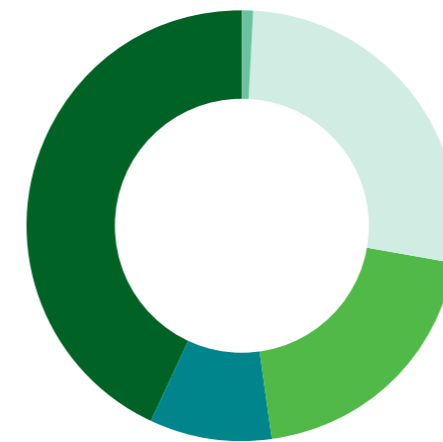
Build-up of fats, oil and grease in drains cause serious blockages and pollution to water.

Do	Don't
Clean excess food off plates before putting in dishwasher.	Put fats, oils, grease or food scrapings down the sink.
Collect all cooking oil into suitable container for collection by an authorised collector. Check with Fingal County Council Environment/Operations if oil collection can be done by your local recycling centre and up to what level?	Put fats, oils, grease or sweepings down floor drains.
Use strainers in sink plugholes. Use dedicated wash-up sinks	Clean equipment in food preparation sinks.
Ensure grease trapping equipment is properly maintained and serviced regularly by qualified contractors.	Pour harmful chemicals down the sink to dissolve fats, oil or grease to unblock drains.

If fats, oils or grease (FOGS) are discharged from your premises and causes blockages and flooding, you may be liable for covering the costs. This would include hiring specialist machinery, specialist personnel, loss of stock and premises clean up. Source: Irish Water

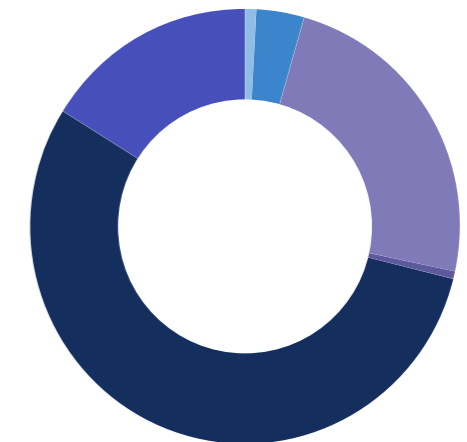
How do you compare?

Water use in offices



- Cleaning 1%
- Washing 27%
- Urinal flushing 20%
- Canteen use 9%
- WC flushing 43%

Water use in food manufacturing



- Offices and kitchens 1%
- Leaks and overflows 3.6%
- Cooling towers 24%
- Effluent treatment 0.4%
- Processing/cleaning 55%
- Boiler house 16%



Next up, eliminating & reducing waste!

We're all familiar with the expression: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and know the benefits. But let's take that a step further and really examine what practical actions that you can take in your business. This is the Waste Hierarchy.

This simple visual with the accompanying questions helps business owners to look at different aspects of waste production and plan a course of action. It is a highly effective tool in reducing waste and the associated costs.



ELIMINATE

1. Eliminate: What can you do to avoid producing waste in the first place?



REDUCE

2. Reduce: What can you do to minimise the amount of waste your business produces?



RE-USE

3. Re-Use: What can you do re-use items as many times as possible?



RECYCLE

4. Recycle: After it has been re-used as much as possible, what can you recycle?



DISPOSE

5. Dispose: Dispose of what's left in a responsible way.

A TEAM EFFORT:

As with energy & water, discuss it with your team & get their ideas & input into how waste can be reduced.



1 Office Waste:

- Firstly, stop and think, what actually needs to be printed? Review processes that involve printed documents to see if this can be avoided. Encourage staff not to print documents unless absolutely necessary.
- With the recent move to more remote working, can you go more digital? Can you use digital authorisations or digital signatures to sign documents? Can ordering or inspections move from paper-based to tablets?
- Do you have paper/cardboard window displays, could these be replaced with digital displays which can be constantly updated? Do you have paper-based brochures, can you email these to new/existing customers instead?"
- Set-up printers and photocopiers to print on both sides of the paper. This can halve your costs and reduces paper usage.
- Remove individual desk bins and replace them with central waste and recycling points – this makes people think before they throw and may even encourage people to change their behaviour to produce less waste.
- Place reminder signs and posters in strategic places to remind people how to eliminate, reduce, re-use and recycle.
- Cancel junk mail and unwanted publications – remember that you are paying for them to be disposed of or recycled.
- Review what might be recycled that currently isn't and make arrangements for collecting it. Ensure cleaning staff are aware of what can/can't be recycled
- Encourage staff to use reusable water bottles rather than plastic cups or bottles.



2 Hotel & Hospitality Waste:

- Choose minimally packaged products or ask your suppliers to supply products in less packaging. Where possible, buy materials with recycled content.
- Ensure that staff, especially cleaning and housekeeping staff are aware of and understand your recycling scheme. Use washable cloths rather than paper towelling.



Kitchen & Food:

- Review kitchen practices to ensure that energy and water are not wasted.
- Look at your suppliers. Can you source your produce locally?
- Portion control – check to see how much people are leaving on their plate. Adjust portions to suit and reduce food waste.
- Give your chef freedom to put specials on that use up leftover ingredients.
- Visit brownbin.ie, epa.ie/waste and stopfoodwaste.ie for advice on managing organic and food waste, which is a legal requirement for the hospitality sector.
- If you are selling directly to customers with home deliveries, can you team up with another local business to share deliveries?



2 Hotel and Hospitality Waste Cntd:

Guestrooms & Front of House:

- Use refillable tamper-proof soap and shampoo dispensers.
- Use refillable spray containers for cleaning equipment and buy in bulk.
- Have a towel re-use policy where only towels left on the floor are washed.
- Provide a separate bin for guests to segregate their waste for recycling.



3 Retail Waste Cntd:

- Do not bale card which has been contaminated with food or food waste or wet cardboard. Dispose of this in the General Waste bin.
- Ensure all bins are clearly labelled. Check general waste bins to ensure that no recyclables (cardboard, plastic, paper, plastic bottles, aluminium cans etc) are being misplaced. Use clear bags for all waste, to ensure that waste is being segregated properly.
- Control bins which are available to the public e.g.in the car park.
- Become part of the Circular Economy. Find out more on Page 14.
- All paper should be recycled, including office paper, till receipts, pamphlets, junk mail etc.
- Have paper recycling bins at checkouts.
- Cut back where possible on newspapers & magazines which are not selling, especially those where the full copy is not returned to main distributors.
- When shelves are being stacked, place card and plastic packaging in separate containers. This will help to increase recycling rates and prevent these streams going to landfill.
- Stop company representatives and merchandisers from using stores general waste bins.
- Visit brownbin.ie, epa.ie/waste and stopfoodwaste.ie for advice on managing organic and food waste, which is a legal requirement for the food service sector.



3 Retail Waste:

- Place reminder signs and posters in strategic places to remind people how to reduce, re-use and recycle. Ensure cleaning staff are aware of what can/can't be recycled.
- Consider replacing paper-based brochure by going digital and emailing these to customers. Use digital displays instead of cardboard displays which gives you the option to constantly update your display and offers.
- Consider baling cardboard packaging such as outer boxes after contents have been shelved and promotional cardboard display signs, (unused promotional literature should be recycled with newspaper and magazines).

IN IRELAND

22,000
Coffee Cups are
disposed every hour



85%
Of Fast Fashion
ends up in landfill



1/3
Of food
purchased
ends up in
the bin



8 MILLION
Tonnes of plastic
waste created
every year.

Source: Mywaste.ie, 2020

Visit MyWaste.ie for more ideas on waste reduction,
both in the workplace and every day life.



Circular Economy

The Circular Economy is the concept of eliminating waste and striving towards the continual use of resources renewably.

Can your business become part of the circular economy? Can you make a profit from your waste? Can your by-products or waste be used by another business as a raw material in their production process?

Could you replace current materials with materials made from another business' waste? Could you collaborate with another business in the area on material waste exchanges and localise your supply chain? Could you combine forces with another business for last mile deliveries?"

There are lots of opportunities for business in the Circular Economy. To discover more, visit:

**World Business Council
for Sustainable Development:**
wbcsd.org



Venturewell: Design for Circular Economy (Design for Lifetime):

Win



FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL ARE GIVING AWAY A SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT & ACTION PLAN TO ONE LOCAL BUSINESS.

A consultant from Patel Tonra Ltd, Environmental Solutions, will conduct a 2-3 hour site visit and assess your business under some or all of the following headings:

- Waste Reduction & Management
- Water & Energy Management and Conservation
- Other Environmental Impacts on site
- Supply Chain & Procurement
- Management and Leadership
- Staff and Community Engagement

The business will receive a follow-up report and action plan, highlighting areas for improvement.

The main focus of the audit will be the individual businesses environmental and social impacts.

To be in with a chance to win, visit
fingal.ie/sustainablebusiness



Use the opportunity to check out the additional Sustainability resources for business including training courses, grants and lots of additional tips on energy, water and waste reduction.

Join us

Fingal County Council are committed to playing our part in Ireland's response to Climate Change.



YOU CAN PLAY YOUR PART BY:

- Taking action to run your business sustainably.
- Exploring how your business can become part of the Circular Economy.
- Working to meet the challenges of climate change.

YOU CAN ALSO HELP US BY:

- Engaging with the Council on climate change.
- Opening a conversation between the Council and business on the circular economy and advising us on how Fingal can become more sustainable.





SUSTAINABLE
FINGAL

*An initiative of
Fingal County Council*