

How can you reduce the carbon output of your building?

With buildings and the construction sector a significant contributor to carbon emissions, now is the time to look at reducing your building's carbon footprint.

Rebecca Rider provides a useful list of points to consider.



Rebecca Rider
Senior Associate

T: 020 7551 7691
r.rider@bateswells.co.uk

Rebecca advises a wide range of charities, responsible businesses, commercial organisations and public bodies in relation to all aspects of commercial real estate. She deals with acquisitions and disposals of a range of property and drafts and negotiates leases, acting for both landlords and tenants.

The world is 0.8°C warmer today than it was a century ago and since 1990 we have experienced the 10 warmest years in the UK's history. In May 2019, the UK became the first country to declare a climate emergency and the UK government has made a legally binding commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Never before has it been so crucial that all of society steps up in a collective effort to reduce its carbon output; drastic change is needed to achieve this.

All organisations must think carefully about how to reduce their carbon footprint. Buildings are a good place to start, as buildings are the third-largest carbon emitting sector in the UK, with building and construction responsible for 39% of all carbon emissions in the world.

Reducing a building's carbon footprint makes sense: not only will it make a positive impact on the environment but it could also reduce running costs, improve employee morale and increase the property's value.

Tenants are, of course, constricted to a large extent by the actions of their landlords (see previous pages), but arguably we are at a point in time when it is incumbent upon tenants to demand best practice of their landlords.

Below is a list of ways to reduce the carbon output of your building, which may provide a starting point when drawing up a list of 'tenant demands'. The obvious opportunity to do this is when you are negotiating a new lease or when the building is being refurbished, but there is no reason why you should not approach your landlord now.

- **Efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems** – you may not be able to negotiate new state-of-the-art ventilation systems, but you can work with what is there already. Are the building's heating and cooling systems scheduled to run only during pre-determined 'peak' hours and then to turn off overnight and at the weekends?

- **Lighting** – have old-fashioned halogen bulbs been replaced with low energy LED lighting? You could manage the costs of this by upgrading in stages. Are the lights linked to motion sensors to ensure that they turn off when they are not needed? Are there solar control window films on the windows to control solar thermal gain so that it warms offices in the winter but does not overheat them in the summer?
- **Toilets** – how efficient are the toilets? Is there a reduced average flush volume?
- **Energy suppliers** – what energy suppliers does the building use? Could it choose renewable suppliers?
- **Is renewable energy generated on site?** – is there room for solar panels on the roof? Could rain water be collected on the roof and used for the toilet systems throughout the building? Is there space to plant trees or plants (particularly ones which encourage pollinators)?
- **Recycling** – what are the building's recycling practices? How much of the building's waste is actually recycled? Could this be improved?
- **Interior fit out** – does the building's interior fit out utilise recycled products? From paint to furniture, there are recycled and more sustainable options – does your building choose these? Is the building well insulated with environmentally-friendly materials?

While most of these energy saving measures only require small changes, collectively they could contribute to the change that is desperately needed, and by implementing just one or two you could start your organisation on a journey towards more significant carbon savings.

FIND OUT MORE

Information on the contribution of building and construction to climate change from <https://www.worldgbc.org/news-media/WorldGBC-embodied-carbon-report-published>