

Things You Can Do At Work

A practical guide to workplace climate action for individuals and small organisations

Inspired by The People's Emergency Briefing · June 2026

Why a workplace guide?

We spend roughly a third of our waking lives at work. The decisions made in workplaces — about energy, travel, procurement, food, water, finance, and culture — collectively account for the majority of the UK's economic emissions. Climate action at work therefore matters enormously, and does not have to wait for a sustainability team or a government mandate.

This guide is a companion to **Things You Can Do**, which covers climate actions in personal life. There will be overlaps between the two documents — some actions appear in both, because the distinction between personal and professional life is not always clean. Both guides are designed to be used together.

The guide is focused on smaller organisations — where around 99% of people work. Each action is clearly labelled to show who is best placed to take it. But even if you are “just an employee”, you have more power than you may think.

Research from the SME Climate Hub (2024) found that 63% of small businesses take climate action because it is simply the right thing to do — and that over 60% reported that doing so enhanced their business reputation. Climate action at work is not a cost: it is a competitive advantage.

How to read this guide

Each action shows three colour-coded indicators:

Who can act (second column) — whether the action is primarily for employees, managers/owners, or both.

Effort (fourth column) — how easy or demanding the action is.

Carbon impact (fifth column) — the approximate scale of benefit, using the same four-band system as the sister document.

Who can act key

Employee	Manager / Owner	欄 Both
Action an individual employee can suggest or take	Action requiring management authority or budget	Action that both employees and managers/owners can drive

Effort key

Easy	Medium	Big step	
Can be done today	Requires planning or cost	Significant change or investment	(Column unused in effort key)

Carbon impact key

A good start	Meaningful	Significant	Game-changing
Under 0.5t CO ₂ e/yr, or non-carbon benefit	0.5–1t CO ₂ e/yr	1–2t CO ₂ e/yr	2t+ CO ₂ e/yr or large systemic leverage

Energy & Buildings

#	Who can act	Action	Effort	Carbon impact
1	欄 Both	Measure the organisation's energy use — and set a baseline Employee: Ask your employer whether they track energy consumption. Suggest installing a smart meter or using free energy management tools. What isn't measured can't be reduced. Manager/Owner: Install a smart meter or use the UK Business Climate Hub's free carbon calculator to establish your baseline. You can't manage what you don't measure. Source: UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); SME Climate Hub free calculators (smeclimatehub.org)	Easy	Game-changing Foundation step — enables all further savings
2	欄 Both	Get a smart energy meter — and use smart plugs to find the energy guzzlers Employee: Suggest to your employer that smart plugs be installed on high-draw equipment — computers, monitors, kitchen appliances, printers — to identify where energy is actually being consumed. Encourage turning off at the wall, not just on standby. Manager/Owner: Smart meters are free from energy suppliers and show real-time energy use in pounds and pence. Smart plugs (from ~£10 each) allow individual appliances to be monitored and scheduled via a phone app. A surprisingly small number of devices often account for a large share of energy use. Source: Centre for Sustainable Energy, Smart Plugs (cse.org.uk, 2025); Ofgem, Get a Smart Meter (ofgem.gov.uk); MoneySavingExpert (moneysavingexpert.com)	Easy	A good start ~0.1–0.3t CO₂e/yr depending on findings
3	欄 Both	Switch the workplace to a renewable energy tariff Employee: Raise this with your manager or facilities team. Many suppliers offer green tariffs at little or no extra cost. Manager/Owner: Contact your business energy supplier and ask to switch to a green or renewable tariff. Compare via the Energy Savings Trust or business comparison sites. Source: UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); Ecologi, 20 Impactful Climate Actions (ecologi.com, 2024)	Easy	Significant 0.5–2t+ CO₂e/yr depending on business size
4	欄 Both	Control heating, cooling and lighting — timers, sensors, thermostats Employee: Turn off lights and equipment when leaving a room. Suggest timers and motion sensors to your employer if they aren't already in place. Manager/Owner: Fit programmable thermostats, timers on extraction fans and security lighting, and motion sensors in low-use areas. Source: UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); Carbon Trust business energy guidance	Easy–Medium	Meaningful Typically 10–30% energy reduction
5	欄 Both	Switch to LED lighting throughout the workplace Employee: Flag this to your manager if your workplace still uses fluorescent or incandescent bulbs. LEDs use up to 80% less energy. Manager/Owner: Replacing all lighting with LEDs is one of the most cost-effective capital investments available to small businesses. Payback periods are typically 1–3 years. Source: UK Business Climate Hub success story: Lakes Story Ltd (businessclimatehub.uk); Carbon Trust LED guidance	Medium	Meaningful ~0.2–0.8t CO₂e/yr depending on premises size
6	Manage	Insulate the building and draught-proof it Employee: If your workplace is draughty or poorly heated,	Big step	Significant 0.5–2t CO₂e/yr depending

Energy & Buildings

	r/ Owner	raise this with your employer as both a comfort and energy-efficiency issue. There may be government grants available. Manager/Owner: Loft insulation, wall insulation, and draught-proofing reduce heating costs and emissions year-round. Check eligibility for the Great British Insulation Scheme. Source: UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); UK Energy Saving Trust business guidance		on building
7	欄 Both	Install solar panels or explore on-site renewable generation Employee: Suggest this to your employer as a medium-term investment. Point them to the UK Business Climate Hub and available government incentives. Manager/Owner: Rooftop solar can significantly reduce electricity bills and carbon footprint. Many small businesses see payback within 5–7 years. Explore Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) if upfront cost is a barrier. Source: UK Business Climate Hub success story: Lakes Story Ltd (businessclimatehub.uk); Ecologi, 20 Impactful Actions (ecologi.com, 2024)	Big step	Significant 0.5–2t+ CO₂e/yr depending on system size

Travel & Transport

#	Who can act	Action	Effort	Carbon impact
8	欄 Both	Replace unnecessary business travel with online meetings Employee: Default to video calls for meetings that don't require in-person attendance. Suggest a travel-reduction policy if one doesn't exist. Manager/Owner: Implement a travel hierarchy: online first, then public transport, then car. Establish a clear policy and track business travel emissions. Source: UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); Project Drawdown, Climate Solutions at Work (drawdown.org)	Easy	Meaningful 0.1–1.5t CO₂e per avoided flight or long trip
9	欄 Both	Encourage and support active and public transport commuting Employee: Use the Cycle to Work scheme if your employer offers one. If they don't, ask your HR or manager to set one up. Manager/Owner: Offer a Cycle to Work scheme, season ticket loans, and public transport incentives. Provide secure bike storage and changing facilities. Source: Electric Car Scheme, Engaging Employees in Green Initiatives (electriccarscheme.com, 2025); UK Business Climate Hub (businessclimatehub.uk)	Medium	Meaningful 0.2–1.5t CO₂e per employee commuter shifted
10	欄 Both	Switch the business vehicle fleet to electric or hybrid Employee: If your role involves a company car or van, ask your employer about EV options. The salary sacrifice EV scheme offers significant tax savings for both parties. Manager/Owner: Switching fleet vehicles to electric can reduce Scope 1 emissions significantly. The government's salary sacrifice scheme for EVs is currently very tax-efficient (3% Benefit-in-Kind for 2025/26). Source: Electric Car Scheme, Green Employee Benefits (electriccarscheme.com, 2025); UK Business Climate Hub transport guidance	Big step	Game-changing Up to 2t CO₂e/yr per vehicle switched

Travel & Transport

1 1	Manager/ Owner	Offer flexible or remote working to cut commuter emissions Employee: If your role can be done remotely, make the case for hybrid working, framing it in terms of both productivity and the organisation's sustainability goals. Manager/Owner: Formalising hybrid or flexible working reduces commuting emissions (Scope 3), cuts office energy use, and is strongly linked to improved employee retention. Source: <i>Project Drawdown, HR & Operations Job Function Guide</i> (drawdown.org); <i>APS 101 Things</i> (2021)	Easy– Medium	A good start 0.1–0.5t CO₂e per employee per year
--------	-------------------	--	-----------------	--

Waste, Resources & Water

#	Who can act	Action	Effort	Carbon impact
1 2	Both	Go paperless — or paper-minimal Employee: Default to digital documents, emails, and shared drives. Print only when essential, and on both sides. Manager/Owner: Implement a paperless or paper-minimal policy. Switch to digital invoicing, filing, and communications. Source: <i>UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins</i> (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); <i>Project Drawdown, Climate Solutions at Work</i> (drawdown.org)	Easy	A good start ~0.05–0.2t CO₂e/yr per office
1 3	Both	Set up proper recycling — and eliminate single-use plastics Employee: Ensure your workspace has clearly labelled recycling bins. Bring a reusable mug and water bottle. Suggest banning single-use plastic cups and cutlery. Manager/Owner: Remove desk bins and replace with shared recycling stations. Ban single-use plastics. Review your waste collection contract to reduce costs. Source: <i>UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins</i> (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); <i>Ecologi, 20 Impactful Actions</i> (ecologi.com, 2024)	Easy	A good start 0.05–0.3t CO₂e/yr depending on waste volumes
1 4	Both	Reduce food waste at work — especially at events and meetings Employee: Order or bring only what will be eaten at meetings and events. Share any surplus with staff or a local food bank. Manager/Owner: Implement a catering policy based on accurate headcounts and donate surplus via apps like Too Good To Go or Olio. Source: <i>Project Drawdown, Five Ways to Take Climate Action at Work</i> (drawdown.org, 2025); <i>UK Business Climate Hub</i> (businessclimatehub.uk)	Easy	A good start ~0.1–0.3t CO₂e/yr per office
1 5	Both	Review procurement — buy sustainably and locally where possible Employee: When ordering supplies, ask whether a greener alternative exists. Raise sustainable procurement with your manager as a policy discussion. Manager/Owner: Audit your main suppliers, prioritise local and ethical sourcing, ask suppliers for their sustainability credentials, and favour products with lower embodied carbon. Source: <i>David Suzuki Foundation, How to Create a Workplace Green Team</i> (davidssuzuki.org, 2025); <i>Project Drawdown, Climate Solutions at Work</i> (drawdown.org)	Medium	Significant Variable but potentially large — supply chain emissions (Scope 3)
1 6	Both	Embrace the circular economy — repair, reuse, and refurbish Employee: Before ordering new equipment, ask whether existing items can be repaired or repurposed. Report broken	Medium	Meaningful 0.1–0.5t CO₂e/yr depending on business type

Waste, Resources & Water				
		equipment promptly so it can be fixed rather than discarded. Manager/Owner: Adopt a repair-first, replace-second policy for office equipment, tools, and machinery. Buy refurbished where possible. Source: UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); Ecologi, 20 Impactful Actions (ecologi.com, 2024)		
17	Manager/Owner	Install a smart water meter — and switch to metered billing Employee: Suggest to your employer that the business switch to metered water billing and request a smart meter. This is free to install and makes leak detection much easier. Manager/Owner: A smart water meter measures consumption in near real-time and can detect leaks before they escalate into large unnoticed costs. Business Stream and most UK water retailers offer free meter installation. Metered billing means you pay only for what you use. Source: Business Stream, Ways to Save (business-stream.co.uk); Severn Trent Water, Smart Metering (stwater.co.uk)	Easy	A good start Indirect — reduces energy used to heat water; also cost saving
18	Both	Fix dripping taps and leaks immediately — and check regularly Employee: Report dripping taps, running toilets, or visible leaks to your facilities manager straight away. A dripping tap can waste up to 90 litres per week. Manager/Owner: A dripping tap wastes up to 90 litres per week. For businesses with multiple taps and toilets, even small leaks across the estate add up to thousands of pounds a year. Business Stream recommends a regular leak-check routine — and their High Bill Checklist (free online) can help identify hidden waste. Source: Business Stream, Business Water Efficiency Tips (business-stream.co.uk); Business Stream, Checking for Leaks (business-stream.co.uk)	Easy	A good start Small direct; significant cost saving at scale
19	Manager/Owner	Fit tap aerators, self-closing taps, and sensor taps in washrooms Employee: Suggest this to your facilities manager or employer. Tap aerators cost around £5–10 each and can be retrofitted to most existing taps with no plumbing work. Manager/Owner: Tap aerators reduce water flow by 30–60% while maintaining perceived pressure, and cost very little. In a workplace with multiple taps used throughout the day the savings can be substantial — commercial buildings may have 10s or 100s of taps. Self-closing or sensor-operated taps prevent taps being left running. Business Stream lists these as among the most cost-effective workplace water-saving measures. Source: Business Stream, Business Water Efficiency Tips (business-stream.co.uk); TheGreenAge, Tap Aerators (thegreenage.co.uk); Lime Kitchen & Bathroom (limekitchenandbathroom.co.uk)	Easy–Medium	A good start ~0.05–0.2t CO₂e/yr; meaningful water and cost saving at scale
20	Manager/Owner	Fit flush controls on urinals — and reduce toilet water waste Employee: Suggest fitting urinal flush controls to your facilities manager. These are inexpensive and reduce water waste dramatically. Manager/Owner: Uncontrolled urinal cisterns flush constantly — often 24 hours a day, even when the building is empty — and can waste up to 100,000 litres per year per urinal. Fitting a simple time controller or sensor costs very little and can pay back within weeks. Also consider dual-flush or low-flush toilet options when replacing fittings. Source: Business Stream, Business Water Efficiency Tips — Toilets & Urinals (business-stream.co.uk)	Easy–Medium	Meaningful Significant water saving — indirect carbon benefit
2	Manage	Switch to eco-certified and concentrated	Easy	A good start Small direct; ecosystem

Waste, Resources & Water

1	Manager/Owner	cleaning products Employee: Suggest this to whoever manages facilities or procurement. Concentrated products reduce packaging and often cost less per use. Manager/Owner: Replace conventional cleaning chemicals with eco-certified, concentrated, or refillable alternatives. This reduces chemical pollution, packaging waste, and often costs less in the long run. Source: UK Business Climate Hub, Quick Wins (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026); GWU Online Public Health (onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu)		and indoor air quality benefit
---	---------------	---	--	--------------------------------

People & Culture

#	Who can act	Action	Effort	Carbon impact
2 2	Both	Start or join a workplace green team Employee: Form a small group of climate-interested colleagues to identify and champion sustainability improvements. You don't need seniority to start one — just enthusiasm and a few allies. Manager/Owner: Formally support a green team with time, a small budget, and access to decision-makers. Research shows green teams are one of the most effective ways to embed sustained climate action. Source: Project Drawdown, <i>Climate Solutions at Work</i> (drawdown.org); David Suzuki Foundation, <i>Workplace Green Team guide</i> (davidsozuzuki.org, 2025)	Easy–Medium	Game-changing Multiplier effect — unlocks many other actions
2 3	Both	Talk about climate — make it a normal workplace conversation Employee: Raise climate and sustainability in team meetings, 1:1s, and staff forums. Share what you're learning. Normalising the conversation shifts organisational culture. Manager/Owner: Create space for climate to be discussed openly — in all-staff meetings, newsletters, and strategy sessions. Culture change starts with leaders modelling openness to the subject. Source: Project Drawdown, <i>Five Ways to Take Climate Action at Work</i> (drawdown.org); SME Climate Hub survey (smeclimatehub.org, 2024)	Easy	Game-changing Cultural multiplier — leads to systemic change
2 4	Both	Provide climate literacy training for all staff Employee: Ask HR or management to include climate basics in onboarding and ongoing training. Project Drawdown's free Climate Solutions 101 video series is an excellent starting point. Manager/Owner: Integrate climate literacy into induction programmes and annual training. SME Climate Hub offers free training resources. Source: Project Drawdown, <i>HR & Operations Job Function Guide</i> (drawdown.org); SME Climate Hub free resources (smeclimatehub.org)	Medium	Game-changing Cultural foundation — enables all other actions
2 5	Manager/Owner	Integrate climate into performance, job descriptions, and recruitment Employee: Include your organisation's sustainability goals in your own performance objectives. Manager/Owner: Add sustainability responsibilities to job descriptions and performance reviews. Research shows 70% of workers consider a company's environmental record when applying. Source: Project Drawdown, <i>HR & Operations Job Function Guide</i> (drawdown.org); Electric Car Scheme, <i>Green Employee Engagement</i> (electriccarscheme.com, 2025)	Medium	Game-changing Systemic — embeds climate into organisational culture

People & Culture				
26	Manager/Owner	Give staff paid time to volunteer with climate or nature organisations Employee: Ask your employer whether they offer a volunteer day policy. If they do, use it for a climate or nature initiative. If they don't, propose it. Manager/Owner: Offer one or two paid volunteer days per year for climate or nature initiatives. This strengthens employee engagement and is a visible signal of organisational values. Source: Project Drawdown, HR & Operations Job Function Guide (drawdown.org); David Suzuki Foundation Green Team guide (davidssuzuki.org)	Medium	Meaningful Community and nature benefit; motivational impact
27	欄 Both	Make the SME Climate Commitment Employee: Suggest to your employer that they make the SME Climate Commitment — a public pledge to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero before 2050. Manager/Owner: Sign up to the SME Climate Commitment via smeclimatehub.org. It is free, publicly recognised by the UN Race to Zero campaign, and unlocks a suite of free tools and resources. Over 8,000 SMEs worldwide have already committed. Source: SME Climate Hub / UK Business Climate Hub, SME Climate Commitment (smeclimatehub.org, 2024); businessclimatehub.uk	Easy	Game-changing Framework for all subsequent emissions reductions

Strategy & Advocacy				
#	Who can act	Action	Effort	Carbon impact
28	欄 Both	Measure your organisation's carbon footprint across all scopes Employee: Ask whether your employer measures its Scope 1 (direct), Scope 2 (energy), and Scope 3 (supply chain and travel) emissions. If not, suggest the SME Climate Hub's free calculator. Manager/Owner: Use the SME Climate Hub's free emissions calculator to measure your Scope 1, 2, and 3 footprint. This is the essential foundation of any credible sustainability strategy. Source: SME Climate Hub, Start Measuring (smeclimatehub.org); UK Business Climate Hub free tools (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026)	Medium	Game-changing Foundation step — enables targeted reductions
29	Manager/Owner	Build a simple Climate Action Plan Employee: Suggest that your employer develops a written climate action plan. The UK Business Climate Hub offers a free Climate Action Planner tool. Manager/Owner: Use the SME Climate Hub's free Climate Action Planner to identify your biggest emission sources and set realistic reduction targets. A written plan signals commitment and can help win clients and contracts. Source: SME Climate Hub, Build a Climate Action Plan (smeclimatehub.org); UK Business Climate Hub (businessclimatehub.uk, 2026)	Medium	Game-changing Strategic — drives systematic reductions across the business
30	欄 Both	Review and green the business pension scheme Employee: Use Fossil Free Funds to check whether your workplace pension invests in fossil fuels. Ask HR whether a greener pension option is available. Manager/Owner: UK pension schemes invest £88 billion in fossil fuel companies. Switching to a pension provider with a credible net-zero strategy is one of the highest-leverage financial decisions a business can make. Source: Make My Money Matter / Reed Talent Solutions (reedtalentsolutions.com); WWF Sustainable Pensions guide; Electric	Medium	Game-changing Potentially very large — pension investments dwarf operational emissions

Strategy & Advocacy				
		Car Scheme (electriccarscheme.com , 2025)		
3 1	欄 Both	Ask your suppliers about their climate credentials Employee: When working with suppliers, ask about their sustainability practices. This signals that these things matter and can shift supplier behaviour over time. Manager/Owner: Include sustainability questions in your supplier selection process. Scope 3 emissions — from your supply chain — are typically 60–80% of a small business's total footprint. Source: <i>Procurement Magazine, Sustainable Supply Chains</i> (procurementmag.com, 2026); <i>Project Drawdown, Climate Solutions at Work</i> (drawdown.org)	Easy–Medium	Game-changing Scope 3 — typically 60–80% of a business's total emissions
3 2	欄 Both	Use your business voice — advocate for policy change Employee: Suggest that your employer signs the NEB open letter, responds to government consultations on net zero, or joins a business climate network. Manager/Owner: Write to your MP, respond to government consultations, join the SME Climate Commitment's Race to Zero campaign, or speak publicly about why climate action is good for your business. Source: <i>National Emergency Briefing</i> (nebriefing.org, 2026); <i>SME Climate Hub advocacy resources</i> (smeclimatehub.org); <i>UN Global Compact</i> (unglobalcompact.org)	Easy	Game-changing Political leverage — potentially enormous systemic impact
3 3	欄 Both	Share your sustainability story — with customers, suppliers, and the public Employee: Celebrate your employer's sustainability progress on social media or in client conversations. Manager/Owner: Communicating your climate actions builds customer trust, attracts climate-conscious talent, and encourages suppliers and peers to raise their own ambitions. Over 60% of SMEs in the SME Climate Hub survey reported that climate action enhanced their business reputation. Source: <i>SME Climate Hub survey</i> (smeclimatehub.org, 2024); <i>Ecologi, 20 Impactful Actions</i> (ecologi.com, 2024)	Easy	Meaningful Reputational and market multiplier effect

Where to go next

Every business is different. The most important first step is to measure your emissions and your water use so you know where to focus. From there, the most impactful actions for most small organisations are switching to renewable energy, reducing business travel, greening the pension scheme, and using your business voice to advocate for systemic change.

This guide is a companion to **Things You Can Do**, which covers climate actions in personal and community life. Carbon figures are indicative; actual savings depend on organisation size, sector, and baseline.

UK Business Climate Hub: businessclimatehub.uk · **SME Climate Hub:** smeclimatehub.org · **Project Drawdown:** drawdown.org · **Business Stream water efficiency:** business-stream.co.uk · **People's Emergency Briefing:** nebriefing.org