

Guide from

[insert your firm’s name here]

Tel: [insert telephone number here] Email: [insert email address here] [Insert web address here]

[Insert a line about your business here]

**Essential guide to environmental business travel**

Reducing your carbon footprint is a growing priority for consumers and businesses alike, and a green transport strategy is an essential part of any business' green credentials.

A green travel plan is simply a set of ways to encourage staff to travel in a more environmentally sustainable way – with no loss of business efficiency. As well as reducing your costs, it can improve the health and morale of your workforce and boost your reputation.

**1. Green travel business benefits**

**Cut your costs**

* Buying a car with the smallest possible engine size, or an alternative fuel vehicle, should cut down your carbon emissions and use less fuel. Fuel costs for car-sharing are also less expensive than single-occupancy journeys.
* Avoiding unnecessary business journeys – booking a conference call instead of a meeting, for example – saves fuel costs or public transport fares.
* Allowing employees to work from home can cut your overheads as you may end up needing less office space or a smaller parking area. Your employees will save on commuting costs, too.
* You may benefit from green travel tax breaks.

**Generate positive PR**

* Going green can be a way of giving your firm an edge over your competitors. Public opinion favours environmentally-friendly firms and consumers may boycott businesses that cause environmental damage.
* A green travel plan can provide other benefits to your local community through, for instance, reduced exhaust fumes.
* Increasingly, public sector buyers need to be reassured about a business' ethical and environmental management before they award a contract. Include details of your green transport strategy in any government tenders.
* Advertise your green credentials. If your firm is making real efforts to cut energy use and carbon emissions, it is important that you tell people what you are doing – whether it is in your annual report or on your website.

**Benefit your business by forward thinking**

* If you are considering putting an environmental management system in place at work, a green travel plan is a key part of the process – and provides a step towards environmental accreditation such as ISO 14001.
* It is possible that in future firms will be legally required to adjust their working practices to reduce their carbon footprint. By making changes now, you can demonstrate to staff and customers that you are a forward-thinking business, not just following a trend and making token gestures.
* Your business could be required to produce a travel plan as part of a planning application or as part of a section 106 Planning Act agreement.

**Increase staff morale**

* Helping the environment can help you attract and retain employees. According to the Carbon Trust, three-quarters of employees want to work for a business that is taking steps to reduce its carbon emissions.
* Forming a green travel plan, and encouraging staff to be less reliant on cars, is good for their health and quality of life. They may also make cost and time savings.

**2. Your business travel footprint**

**Assess your current business and employee travel**

* Consider all the different modes of transport you and your staff use, both for commuting to and from work and for business travel.
* Include deliveries and travel by visitors, both to and from your premises.
* Identify congestion problems or access troublespots for cars.
* If your premises include a car park, look at who uses the spaces and when. If there is no car park, find out where people park, and how much it costs employees and/or the company.

**Understand how different types of business travel affect the environment**

* On the 544-mile journey from London to Aberdeen, a typical train might produce 44 kilograms (kg) of carbon dioxide per person, a car 83 kg, and a plane 130 kg, assuming average occupancy rates.

**Estimate your business travel carbon footprint**

* Measure the effect of your business travel on the environment by working out your carbon footprint. It will be impossible to calculate precisely, but getting an idea will help you understand how to make improvements and measure them.
* To work out the carbon footprint of your business per car or van, you need to consider the type of vehicle and the distance it travels per year. You should also include any other modes of transport you use, such as trains, buses and planes.
* While it is controversial, you can consider carbon offsetting. This involves calculating your emissions and then purchasing 'credits' from emission-reduction projects for an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide.

**3. Commit to a travel plan**

**Set clear aims**

* As well as reducing your carbon footprint, consider other practical measures for the business – such as saving money or reducing car park congestion.
* Be realistic about the types of measures you want to introduce. Research shows that a mixture of incentives for staff (such as offering season-ticket loans) and restrictions (such as limiting parking spaces) is the most effective when introducing change.
* Understand that timing the different measures is important. When you plan the launch, start with 'quick wins' or instant improvements to motivate staff.
* As you schedule rolling out the plan, introduce the incentives before the disincentives.

**Lead by example**

* Make sure everyone in the business knows you are committed to green travel.
* Let the managers know they will be part of the changes, too.

**Create resources to put the plan in place**

* Contact your local authority to ask for help. Many local authorities offer help to small businesses looking to develop a travel plan and may be able to arrange partnership working amongst similar-minded organisations.
* Set aside a budget to put the plan in place. Allocate time and resources to check targets are being met and to monitor it regularly as part of standard business procedures.
* Appoint an employee to take charge of the travel plan.
* Allow the employee the time to create the plan and the resources to review it regularly. Make sure he or she manages the plan, becomes the first point of contact for employees, and keeps others motivated.

**Motivate your employees**

* Offer incentives or perks to employees who reduce fuel consumption by lift-sharing, cycling, taking public transport or walking to work.
* Create a reward programme to encourage employees to come up with their own ideas for a greener workplace.
* Set 'green goals' for your business, with rewards for employees when you meet goals.

**4. Drive smarter**

**Use eco-friendly vehicles**

* Maintain vehicles according to manufacturers' specifications. Poorly maintained vehicles use more fuel and emit more carbon dioxide.
* Consider buying low-emissions vehicles when you next update. In general, the smaller the model the greener it is. Smaller engines tend to use less fuel and produce fewer emissions. On the whole, smaller vehicles are also lighter and use less fuel.
* Consider purchasing a hybrid or electric vehicle. Hybrid vehicles combine a battery and electric motor to assist the petrol engine. Electric vehicles run on one or more batteries.
* An efficient diesel engine can be more efficient than a hybrid car for motorway travel.

**Consider car-sharing**

* Encourage employees to join a car-sharing scheme. This will help them save money on their commuting costs as well as cutting down on carbon emissions. This is also an effective way of reducing peak-hour congestion and can ease easing parking problems at your premises.
* Start the scheme by providing a form for employees to note their travel details and ask your travel plan manager to arrange shared journeys. Make registering for the scheme as easy as possible.
* Join forces with neighbouring businesses on the same site or nearby to produce a car-sharing scheme that will benefit you all.
* Consider car clubs. For an annual membership fee, a car club allows you and staff to hire cars for as little as 30 minutes a time. Reduced car ownership means less need for parking spaces in your business and fewer cars locally, benefiting the community.

**Consider a green fleet review**

* If you run a fleet of company cars, vans or lorries, consider a green fleet review. This can also help lower your running costs, through efficient vehicle allocation, reduced fuel use and driver education.

**5. Use public transport**

**Find out about public transport to and from your premises**

* Look at how close the nearest stations and stops are to your premises, how frequently services run and how much they cost.

**Check your premises access and facilities**

* Make sure that pedestrian access to work is safe – check footpaths are well-maintained, well-lit and free from obstructions.

**Encourage staff to use public transport**

* Provide up-to-date, reliable information about public transport for employees. Tell them what services run nearby and where the stops and stations are located.
* Consider offering interest-free season ticket loans to help staff control travel costs. Your business pays the full amount of the season ticket, then deducts the money from the employee in agreed instalments.
* Look at the mileage rates you offer for business travel. Are they so generous they might encourage employees to drive unnecessarily?

**6. Encourage greener alternatives**

**Encourage walking**

* Walking is suitable for commuting journeys of less than two miles.
* Check your staff travel survey to see if walking to and from work is worth promoting to staff.
* If walking the entire daily journey isn’t viable, check if walking rather than driving to and from the station, for example, would suit them.
* Promote health benefits and cost savings to staff.

**Make cycling a more attractive option to staff**

* Improve your facilities. Provide a place to wash, change and store bicycles to encourage staff to cycle.
* Consider registering with [Cyclescheme](https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/" \o "Cyclescheme" \t "_blank) or another cycle to work scheme provider. This initiative enables you to buy a bike, then loan it to an employee against monthly deductions from their pay. Employer and employee benefit from tax and National Insurance savings.

**Keep business flights to a minimum**

* Use alternative modes of transport where possible.
* Planes are not uniquely damaging in producing carbon emissions but the warming effect of aircraft emissions is about twice that of carbon dioxide alone, due to the other greenhouse gases produced by planes.

**Look for effective ways to avoid travel altogether**

* Allow staff to work at home where possible. This can also cut your overheads as you may end up needing less office space.
* Consider flexible working for staff. Allowing employees to commute outside the rush hour can reduce fuel bills if the journey avoids congestion.
* Use advances in telecommunications, such as video conferencing and messaging with clients and colleagues, to allow employees to work outside the office but stay in the loop.

**7. Green travel tax breaks**

**Minimise your Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) payments**

* Cars registered before 1 March 2001 continue to pay VED based on engine size.
* Cars registered between March 2001 and April 2017 pay VED based on fuel type and CO2 emissions.
* Since April 2017, both list price and CO2 emissions are used to determine VED.
* From 1 April 2023 there is one standard flat rate annual charge of £180 per year regardless of CO2 emissions, unless the emissions are zero, in which case there is no VED. There is a £10 discount for alternative fuel cars.
* However, in the first year of registration, VED rates vary significantly from £0 to £2,605 depending on emissions. There is also an additional supplement of £390 per year for the first five years of ownership for cars costing in excess of £40,000, but zero emissions cars are excluded.

**Save on company car tax**

* By investing in a low-carbon vehicle, you stand to benefit from low company car tax.
* A car’s carbon dioxide emission levels determine the tax paid for both new and existing vehicles, although vehicles registered before 1 March 2001 are still taxed on engine size.

**Benefit from favourable capital allowance rates by buying low-carbon cars**

* Capital allowances allow you to take a proportion of your purchase and write it off against your taxable profits to reduce your tax bill.
* Cars with emissions below 50g/km qualify for an 18% annual writing down allowance. The rate is 6% for cars with higher emissions.

**Avoid paying the congestion charge**

* You can claim road-pricing concessions for zero-emission cars. For example, electric cars are exempt from paying the London Congestion Charge. Schemes in other cities may follow in time.

**8. Monitor and review your travel plan**

**Assess your progress and look out for further improvements**

Before you roll out your travel plan, you should plan in advance for it to be regularly monitored with a view to developing and improving it. Consider:

* which targets you want to monitor (for instance, carbon reduction or money saved)
* who will be responsible for monitoring and informing staff and managers of the results
* how frequently each target will be monitored
* how the monitoring will be done
* how results will promote the development of the travel plan

**Improve your targets**

* Assess the targets that have been met and try to refine them. If some plans have not worked, reconsider and set more achievable goals.

**Dispose of your vehicles correctly**

* Businesses can now take their cars and vans to an authorised waste disposal facility for free. You need to make sure the site you use is properly authorised. Contact your environmental regulator for advice.

**Signpost**

* Find information on [green transport planning](https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/transport/) from the Energy Saving Trust.
* Calculate your firm's [carbon footprint](http://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator1.html) using the Carbon Footprint calculator (registration required).
* See [green car news, reviews and advice](http://www.greencarguide.co.uk/) from the Green Car Guide.
* Find out about [fuel consumption and exhaust emissions](https://www.gov.uk/co2-and-vehicle-tax-tools) figures from the Vehicle Certification Agency.
* Calculate your [company car tax](https://www.gov.uk/calculate-tax-on-company-cars) using the HM Revenue & Customs calculator.
* Find information about [Cyclescheme](https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/" \o "Cyclescheme" \t "_blank).
* Find information on [car sharing](https://liftshare.com/uk) schemes from Liftshare.
* Find [Environment Agency](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/services-information) services and information for businesses in England and Wales (03708 506 506).
* Find [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](https://www.sepa.org.uk/) services and information (03000 99 66 99).
* Get information from the [Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/) (0300 200 7852).

Brought to you in conjunction with [Atom Content Marketing](https://www.atomcontentmarketing.co.uk/). Offering practical advice to help small businesses succeed.

## *May 2023*

**ACCA LEGAL NOTICE**

This is a basic guide prepared by ACCA UK*'s* Technical Advisory Service for members and their clients. It should not be used as a definitive guide, since individual circumstances may vary. Specific advice should be obtained, where necessary.