

...and energy saving tips from an expert

Getting energy efficient

Andrew Pegg analyses the commercial case for energy efficiencies and suggests 13 actions companies can take to improve their environmental impact.



MANY London businesses consider the capital to be an expensive place to work, and some may believe that tackling the 'green' issue will just add to the cost. But this is not necessarily the case.

There is a lot of talk currently about 'green' and 'sustainable' issues, in all sectors of the community. Cynics would argue that what lies behind this drive is not altruism, but hard-headed commercialism. It may well be a combination of both.

Sustainable housing is already here – Energy Performance Certificates are now mandatory in the residential sector. And commercial property is also affected by increasing environmental regulations.

Already, the latest amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations (2006) specify how new buildings and major refurbish-

There are immediate and relatively low cost actions that many businesses can take to improve their environmental impact:

On relocation – choosing well located properties on public transport routes, or better still, "hubs" to reduce the need for car travel.

Bike racks and showers may encourage employees not to drive to work

Ultimately, **good locations** will reduce employee 'attrition', by reducing travel costs – in time and money.

Ensuring office layouts are as **flexible** as possible, to accommodate changing business needs

IT – flexible working arrangements and flexible IT solutions, both in office and

offsite, may reduce the need for expensive infrastructure "churn" and the need for in-office working.

Comprehensive, flexible working policies, suiting both employees and company, can be extremely effective in space-saving and the time and cost of journeys.

Air conditioning is normally the greatest consumer of water and is energy hungry. But in city centre locations a modern, well maintained and managed system will improve a building's sustainability by allowing higher optimum occupation densities, greater productivity, and less overall floorspace.

Heating – systems allowing for local heating controls and used, as required, with energy saving heat reflectors

Lighting – movement sensitive/auto off and low energy lighting in appropriate areas; smaller circuits which turn off when not needed

Energy purchasing – from renewable sources e.g. Scottish hydro versus installing wind turbines that may not produce viable paybacks.

Water – single, self turn-off taps help save water, as do dual or low flush toilets and waterless urinals systems. Developers are looking at rainwater harvesting and 'grey-water' recycling to improve 'green credentials'.

Equipment – turn off computers, rather than leave on standby.

Recycling – everyone can play a part – from dealing with day-to-day rubbish – to neutralising harmful products and waste.



“The challenge is to identify meaningful measures with an acceptable financial payback”

ments must now conform to much higher energy efficiency standards.

However, 75 per cent of the existing stock comprises pre-1960 buildings which aren't energy efficient and won't be without major upgrades.

European Commission research has indicated that improving energy efficiency could reduce carbon emissions from buildings by 22 per cent.

Six years ago, the Commission published the proposed *Directive on The Energy*

Performance of Buildings, whose principal objectives are:

- To promote improved buildings' energy performance through cost effective measures
- To promote convergence of building standards towards those member states already at ambitious levels.

However, there is unlikely to be any financial case to support businesses investing in their buildings to make them more sustainable given relatively short-term tenure or lease constraints.

Landlords will generally only invest in making their properties more sustainable if there is regulation, as in Part L, or if it will lead to a greater total return, or they can

fully recover the costs from the tenants.

The chief advantage to a business, when considering sustainability, is in demonstrating its CSR credentials.

The challenge to many business executives is to identify meaningful measures with an acceptable financial payback.

Many employees like to work for companies that are making real efforts to be sustainable, so such policies may well help to attract, and keep, better employees producing better work.

And finally, although EU laws are not yet here, many local planning authorities are starting to take sustainability seriously.

The issues surrounding future sustainability of commercial buildings are already being

hotly debated. The challenge is to match long-term, sustainable environmental benefits with short-term commercial concerns and costs.

There is no doubt that these requirements will gather pace, particularly as legislation comes into force.

And companies leading the field will be those whose executives wish to make a difference in their own time, without being forced – making their workplaces and companies more commercially sound, healthier and happier.

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