



Workplace Environmental Health

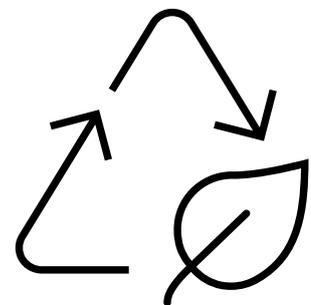
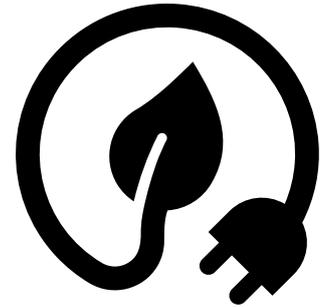
The Link between Environmental Health and Workplace Health:

- **Improved recruitment and retention of quality employees** - People increasingly want to work for companies who are "doing the right thing". According to Adecco, an international HR company, 52% of employed adults feel their companies should be more environmentally aware. Sustainability practices have become an underpinning factor in determining what a company is made of and how ethical its employees are. In fact, developing a corporate social responsibility program is one of the top five internal practices for ensuring an ethical corporate culture, found A Global Study of Business Ethics by the American Management Association.
- **Healthier work environment for employees** - Choosing more sustainable products have the added advantage of not only being planet-friendly but people-friendly, too. Eco-friendly cleaning products, for instance, which are plant-based and 100% biodegradable, contain no hazardous artificial chemicals. This means they're significantly less likely to be detrimental to the health of your (maintenance) employees, resulting in happier, healthier staff.
- **Increased preparedness for future legislation and costs** - Ernst & Young's report The Top 10 Business Risks for Business highlights the necessity to be prepared for tighter environmental regulations and increased energy costs. As soon as 2020, it is estimated that companies will legally be required to reduce carbon emissions by 25%, and for this figure to rise to anything between 50-80% by 2050. This will affect both the availability and cost of energy, which are expected to double within the next decade.
- **Natural/Environmental Light** - Numerous studies have shown that natural light in office spaces improves worker satisfaction and productivity. A 2017 study published by the National Sleep Foundation in its Sleep Health Journal found that workers who are exposed to high levels of natural light in offices reported better quality sleep compared to workers who weren't exposed to any natural light. That's because natural light helps regulate the body's natural circadian rhythms (sleep-wake schedules). In a Human Spaces Report, it was found that people who are exposed to natural light have a 15% higher level of wellbeing than those who work in environments devoid of nature.
- **Travel to work** - A study of 264,337 people found that cycling to work is linked with a 45% lower risk of developing cancer, and a 46% lower risk of cardiovascular disease compared to commuting by car or public transport. As little as 20 miles a week on a bike can reduce your risk of coronary heart disease by half, improve your mental health, and reduce your carbon footprint massively too.



How you can be greener at work?

- Install and encourage the use of a recycling bin
- Only boil as much hot water as you need
- Switch off the lights or power when not in use
- Invest in ecofriendly bean bag fill
- Introduce green challenges for employees
- Swap to plastic-free milk
- Go paperless
- Introduce compostable options to replace plastic
- Cycle or use public transport to get to work
- Use energy saving lights.
- Buy eco-friendly office supplies.
- For holidays, special events and birthdays, send e-cards instead of buying traditional cards and mailing invitations.
- Keep to virtual meetings when possible
- Fill the office kitchen or break room with reusable dishes and silverware.
- Use lights with motion sensors.
- Instead of paper towels, use hand dryers.
- Use natural light if it's an option
- Participate in Green Office Week
- Adjust the thermostat
- Look into alternative transportation
- Look at electric or hybrid for company cars
- Assess business travel
- Keep measuring





Tomorrow's Norfolk
Today's Challenge



Tomorrow's Norfolk
Today's Challenge

A Greener Norfolk

Taken from Norfolk County Council's: Tomorrow's Norfolk, Today's Challenge, A Climate Change Strategy for Norfolk.

'One of the greatest challenges facing Norfolk today is addressing how human induced climate change will affect the county. This understanding of climate change is now a mainstream economic and social issue, not just an 'environmental problem'.

As a low-lying county with a soft coastline and a growing population, Norfolk is particularly vulnerable. The challenges of coastal erosion, flooding and water shortages could have serious consequences for the homes, livelihoods and well-being of our population and the economy, as well as wildlife and landscapes. At the same time climate change could bring a number of opportunities for the county, in sectors such as renewable energy, low carbon technology, agriculture, local food and recreation.

The strategy has identified two key goals –

1. To cut carbon emissions by reducing energy consumption and promoting a shift to low-carbon technology (mitigation)
2. To improve Norfolk's resilience to the changing climate, including reduction of the socio-economic and environmental risks associated with flooding and coastal erosion (adaptation)

The Future

By the 2080's Norfolk is likely to experience:

- an average temperature rise of 1-5 degrees Celsius
- hotter, drier Summers
- Wetter winters
- Sea levels rise of up to 0.88m
- More extreme events (heatwaves, gales, storms, tidal surges, intense rain)



The following may be affected in the future if we do not act –

- Transport & Infrastructure – Flooding can affect roads and rail, winds can affect land, sea and air transport, high temperatures can affect both roads and rail.
- Health – Extreme events can cause injury and mortality, rising temperatures increase medical problems associated with heat and a reduction of air quality which can lead to UV damage.
- Economy & Tourism – Flooding and tourism would affect Broads-based tourism as well as on the coastline, as well as businesses being affected by water shortages.
- Energy & Communications – High winds and storms can damage the national grid and more and make it harder to get supplies to those cut off. Lots of energy stations are vulnerable to flooding.
- Water Supplies – Higher temperatures and dryer Summers will cause increased pressure on water supplies,
- Agriculture – Crop qualities and yields will reduce over the course of the high temperatures and dry Summers, and increased rainfall in winter can cause more issues with nitrate runoffs.
- Biodiversity – Sea levels rising, and storm surges can result in a loss of habitats and local wildlife, as will rising temperatures and lack of rainfall.
- Buildings – Extra air conditioning will have to be added to many buildings at a cost and with extra environmental impacts, as well as many being susceptible to flooding.





PUSHING AHEAD

YOUR JOURNEY, YOUR WAY



In June 2016, Norfolk County Council was awarded funding as part of the Department of Transport's Sustainable Travel Transition Year.

The project; Pushing Ahead is built on existing partnerships and successful active travel initiatives to maximise the use of the current and planned investment into infrastructure for walking and cycling and will have its own website providing more information shortly.

The project focuses on the growth areas in Norwich and Great Yarmouth by:

- **Reducing single occupancy car trips**
- **Increasing active travel to reduce congestion and improve air quality**
- **Improving public health**
- **Supporting access to work and learning**
- **Improving safety**

Active Travel, and in particular the commute to and from work, can have significant benefits. It eases congestion, reduces pollution while positively impacting both the physical and mental well-being of those taking to two wheels, or two feet. Not to mention, active travel is a cheap option that can result in significant savings.

For the employer the benefits are numerous too. Fitter, healthier, more productive staff. Increased staff retention and motivation, and a reduction in the requirement for car-parking spaces. In addition, supporting your staff to travel actively demonstrates corporate social responsibility and contributes towards carbon-neutral ambitions.

Why now?

Lockdown saw unprecedented levels of cycling and walking in England and we want to channel this enthusiasm for active travel, to support long term behaviour



change. Now is the moment to focus on the opportunities presented by active travel, particularly the role it plays in enabling social distancing.

Active Travel Champion Training - Delivered virtually, this 90 minute session will explore in greater depth the benefits of an active workforce, how your organisation can support active travel among staff, and detail the package of support that we have available to help you achieve this.

Following the training, Pushing Ahead will work with you to identify from the following list which elements of support are most suitable for your employees.

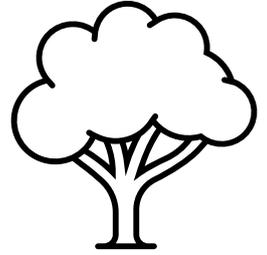
- Beryl Bike vouchers* – Access free bundles to enable your staff to use the Norwich bike sharing scheme for local journeys. Find out more about Beryl [here](#)
- Cycle maintenance vouchers – Give your tired bike a makeover at a local bikeshop with one of our £50 vouchers
- Cycle Confidence Training – we understand that a big barrier to active travel is confidence; British Cycling have created a series of videos full of tips and advice, whether you're a seasoned commuter or cycling to work for the first time
- Cycle Loan Scheme* – fancy trying a bike before you take the plunge. The Norwich Cycle Loan Scheme enables you borrow a bike for up to 4 weeks, no strings attached! You can find out more [here](#).
- Personal Journey Planning – offer your staff a free journey plan to explore the active travel options available – tailored to take in to account journey distance, time of day and preferred mode of transport (cycle, walk)
- Active Travel Infrastructure Grants – Do you have a simple fix at your workplace that would make it easier for your staff to travel actively? Perhaps cycle parking, showers or lockers. If you have a simple solution that you need help funding, let us know and we may be able to help with a grant of up to £5,000.

*Norwich-based residents only – unfortunately, these offers are only currently available in Norwich.





Bringing Nature and Work together



Spending time in green spaces during the day or bringing nature into your work can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. It can:

- **improve your mood**
- **reduce feelings of stress or anger**
- **help you take time out and feel more relaxed**
- **improve your physical health**
- **improve your confidence and self-esteem**
- **help you be more active**

Things you can do to bring nature into your workplace –

- **Natural Lighting** – Like we have said before, natural lighting is one of the key parts of improving your employee's wellbeing through nature. Even if natural light is hard to come by in your office's location, having windows and a view to the outdoors is key in letting your employees engage with nature throughout the day. A new study titled, "Impact of Workplace Daylight Exposure on Sleep, Physical Activity, and Quality of Life," concludes that there is a strong relationship between workplace daylight exposure and office workers' sleep, activity and quality of life, all surrounding your body's circadian rhythm.
- **Plants** – The benefit of plants in your workplace are wide ranging, from reducing stress, fatigue, sickness rates and even noise pollution whilst increasing productivity and creativity. The introduction of plants will also leave you with cleaner air in your workspace, with chemicals such as benzene, trichloroethylene, and formaldehyde being removed as well as carbon dioxide being reduced too.
- **Outdoor Space** – Having a space to engage with nature outdoors doesn't just encourage us to take regular breaks but also creates so much more for employees. Outdoor work areas not only provide the open space required to reduce disease transmission right now but also fresh air benefits for our cognitive functions and wellbeing. Sunlight reduces our negative stress response, lowering our heart rate and blood pressure while stimulating reward neurons in the brain for higher productivity and creativity—something we could all use a bit more of right now.
- **Company initiatives** – Company initiatives that range from walking meetings to bike storage to vegetable gardens will not just be fun for employees to engage with but will get them out in nature as well. Walking Meetings are the

perfect way to mix business with nature, where instead of discussing your meetings in the boardroom, you can explore the local area and increase your creativity by up to 60%.

- Corporate Volunteering/Support – A great way to be actively involved in nature is to grow your corporate social responsibility programme to include volunteering and other help for local nature projects. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust offer many ways for employees to get involved, with either employee volunteering days available to help local wildlife habitats, or a corporate sponsorship programme to allow for your employees to feel that they're part of something bigger. Volunteer days to allow your employees to help put in building these wildlife projects can go a long way in increasing employee morale and employee engagement.



Stress Reduction and Nature

Most fortunately for us, certain environments can help us limit our exposure to stress and the associated mental and physical health risks: specifically, those found in nature.

In 1991, the researcher R. Ulrich developed Stress Reduction Theory (SRT), based on numerous studies, notably those carried out in hospital settings, to explain our emotional and physiological reactions in the presence of natural elements. This theory states that looking at scenery containing natural elements like greenery or water creates positive emotions and feelings like interest, pleasure, and calm, and has a restorative effect, easing our state of alert following a stressful situation. Our response is then improved rapidly and spontaneously.

Resources

- Carbon Footprint Calculator - <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/sme-carbon-footprint-calculator>
- Pushing Ahead Norfolk - <https://www.pushingaheadnorfolk.co.uk/>
- Government Advice on Climate Change - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained>
- Thriving Workplaces - <https://thrivingworkplaces.org.uk/>
- The benefits of birdsong on your mental health - <https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2020/dec/15/why-should-we-listen-to-birds-part-one-podcast>
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust - <https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/home>
- How to work from home and stay connected with nature - <https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/blog/hiwwt/how-work-home-and-stay-connected-nature>

