



“Creating sustainability by imbuing independence and strength into organisations; supporting services to be more effective and efficient”



# Eco Office Audit: Final Report

Three Rivers District

Presented by:

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Winners of:



**Finalists** 2019 Governance Professional of the Year:  
**icsa** | The Chartered **Governance** Institute



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## Summary of the Project

The Eco Office Audit is a sustainability programme created by Impactful Governance – CIC.

We designed the project after learning through research we had carried out in May, that community organisations were keen to become more eco-friendly, but they had neither the time nor resources to do this effectively. At the time, a lot of the organisations we contacted were in the middle of transitioning to working in person and, as they dealt with the challenges posed by Covid-19, sustainability could no longer be a priority. Impactful Governance recognised the need to support community organisations and the Eco Office Audit was born.

The Eco Office Audit is comprised of three parts: an Initial Environmental Assessment, a Company Audit, and a Final Report. If organisations require any further support, additional mentoring is also available, if requested.

### The Initial Environmental Assessment

The Initial Environmental Assessment was a remote online Microsoft Form designed to help us establish the companies' environmental strengths and weaknesses. The Questionnaire had twenty-seven basic questions and was split into the following sections: General Questions; Energy; Resources; Transport; Waste & Recycling; General Opinions; What are you currently doing to help the environment? How can we help you?; and Your Responses.

The Initial Assessment form can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/r/CKek24eide>

### The Company Audit

The Company Audit is an on-site visit to the organisations. This helped us find what resources they had, from which we could determine what eco-friendly alternatives might be a better option. This part of the Eco Office Audit was carried out in-person so we could get a broader overview of the organisation's environmental measures, which would later allow us to get an accurate picture of what needs to be done.

### Final Report

After the audit finished, each organisation received a personalised eco-guide containing what we found through the Initial Environmental Assessment and The Company Audit. It also included information on how they could make some sustainable changes in their organisation and some suggestions of additional funding sources to achieve the changes needed.

The Final Report was a preliminary, advisory guide. We are not trying to force any organisation to make these changes this is a basic assessment and by providing each organisation with a personalised eco-report, they have a good starting point from which they can begin to implement more eco-friendly policies within their organisation. Further expert support is offered to those wishing to advance to the next level through additional professional Mentoring support.

## Additional Professional Mentoring

When the initial part of the Eco Office Audit has finished, companies are encouraged to request additional support and professional Mentoring through our Qualified Mentors and Qualified Teachers within our sister company, Impactful Futures.

Impactful Futures specialises in business planning and mentoring whilst the Eco Office Audit provided a good baseline from which organisations could make environmental changes.

By engaging Impactful Futures, they can start to think about how they can reach their new targets. Furthermore, there is an additional focus on carbon offsetting.

## Project period:

**1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021**

## Objectives:

To have an invitation to open dialogue with Councillors in the appropriate forum.

Tackle environmental issues and assist the Council and local organisations to achieve Net-Zero Carbon emissions by 2030.

To achieve the best possible outcome from this pilot project within the extremely small £1,500 budget received, whilst working within limited funds.

## Marketing Strategy

Our marketing strategy involved a combination of approaches to engage community organisations that may be interested in participating in the Eco Office Audit. Before we started publicising the programme, we designed a leaflet and infographic. Once we had finalised the publicity materials, we began marketing. The leaflet illustrates a snapshot of what organisations could gain from the Eco Office Audit. However, the infographic briefly explained each stage of the programme and was later expanded into a banner that we displayed at various promotional events such as Hertfordshire Pride and outside Supermarkets.

### **Initial Marketing Strategy: Email**

Our initial marketing strategy involved sending out an email, with the infographic attached, to all the Three Rivers-based community organisations we had in our database. We followed this up with a phone call which is the most productive way to reach out to community organisations.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, we had a stand at Herts Pride in Watford Cassiobury Park. The event was a method of discussing the potential of the Eco-Office Audit tool, to meet other local community organisations and business owners and through some direct contacts that we met at the event, we heard about other environmental technologies and initiatives. We also engaged with potential future participants in the Eco Office Audit.

### **Second Marketing Strategy: Post**

For the next stage of our marketing strategy, we posted letters to twenty-one community organisations based in Three Rivers District; attached to each letter was a copy of the leaflet, printed on recycled paper and a copy of our Impact Report from 2020. We already had named senior individuals within our existing database and this added a personal touch to our publicity campaign. Similar to the initial marketing strategy, the letters and contacts were all followed up with phone calls.

### **Third Marketing Strategy: Outreach**

In September, we escalated our approach and take advantage of the more relaxed Covid regulations by visiting community organisations in person. We had our first day of outreach on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September where we completed some initial audits, distributed flyers and scheduled a publicity event.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, our Chief Executive attended an event for Hertfordshire community leaders. He delivered a presentation on the Eco Office Audit; this garnered more interest and we received further responses to our environmental questionnaire.

That same week, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, we held a publicity event outside Marks & Spencer Supermarket in Rickmansworth. We set up a stall with banners, flyers and our impact report. The event was a great way to interact with the public; we met a lot of people and were able to arrange some more Audits. We also met a range of Councillors including the Chair of Three Rivers District who invited us to present at the Cabinet Meeting in October.

### **Final Marketing Strategy: Outreach, Part 2**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, we launched our final marketing strategy.

Like the outreach we had carried out earlier, we decided to visit organisations in person.

1. Our Chief Executive made the initial visit to the organisations first. He explained the Eco Office Audit and the importance of the programme.
2. This was followed up by a visit from our Environmental Researcher who would then conduct the Audit on the same day.
3. In addition to this, we approached both commercial and community organisations in the area.

## Summary

Our marketing strategy evolved steadily throughout the course of this project.

We found that emails, phone calls and sending letters were less successful than personal direct visit although they served the purpose of raising the profile prior to an initial discussion in person.

The most successful part of our marketing strategy was the outreach.

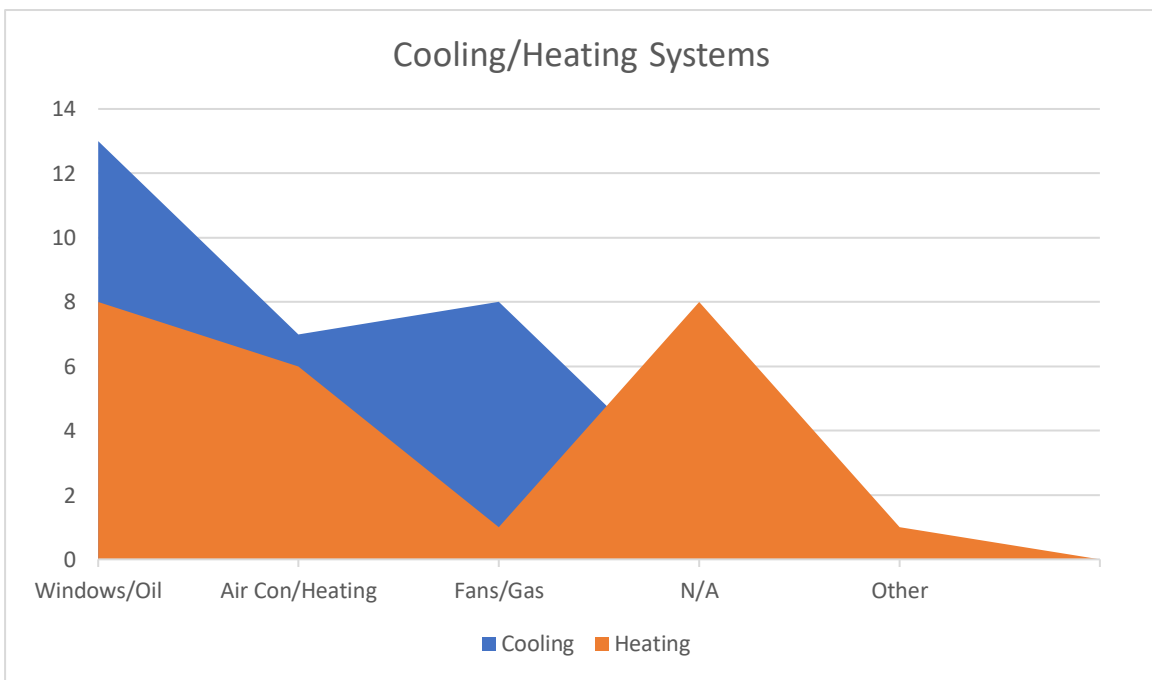
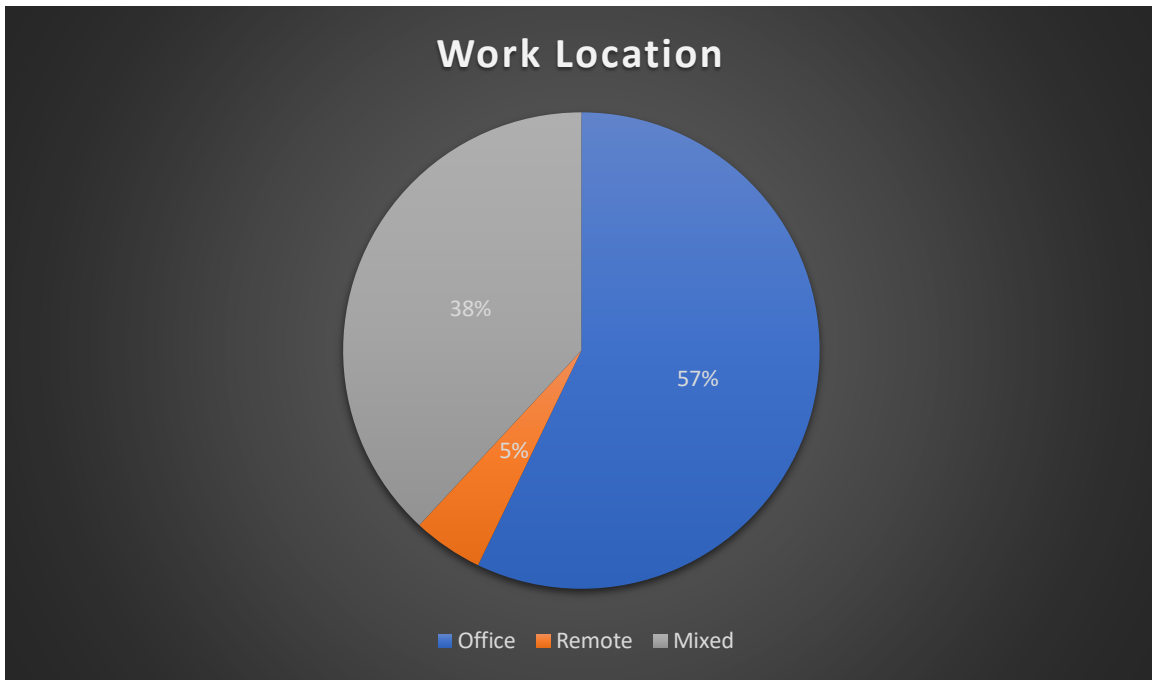
By talking to these organisations in person, we were able to effectively publicise and highlight the importance of participating in our environmental programme. The Audit itself took around one hour each and, when doing the outreach, some organisations allowed us to conduct the Eco Office Audit there and then.

Other organisations, after meeting us in person, were happy for us to come back and deliver the Eco Office Audit at a later date. We also printed out hard copies of the Initial Environmental Assessment before the visits, which further enabled us to complete the first two stages of the programme quite swiftly. We may not have achieved the same results, had we simply continued with our earlier marketing strategies of remote contact alone which focused on emails and phone calls; having that personal contact with businesses and building that rapport was vital to the success of this project. This highlights the importance of face-to-face engagement and the restrictions during Covid19 that limited the task during the early stages.



## Results of the Initial Environmental Assessments

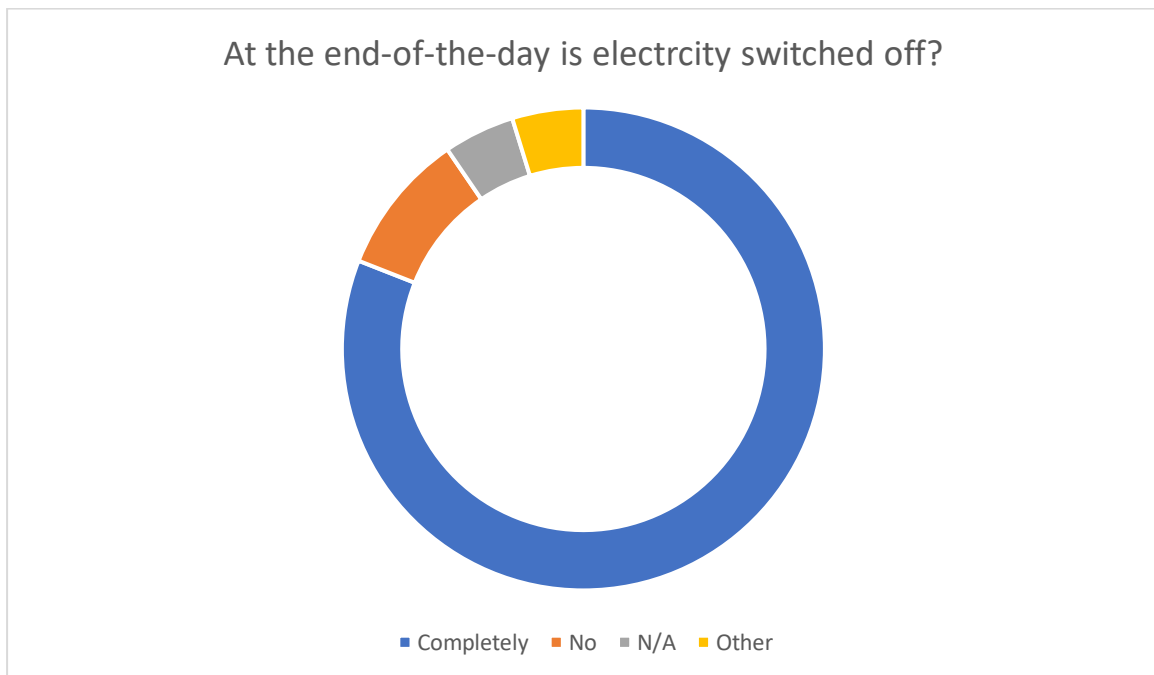
**21 organisations took part in the Eco-Office Audit with an average of 15 staff or volunteers.**

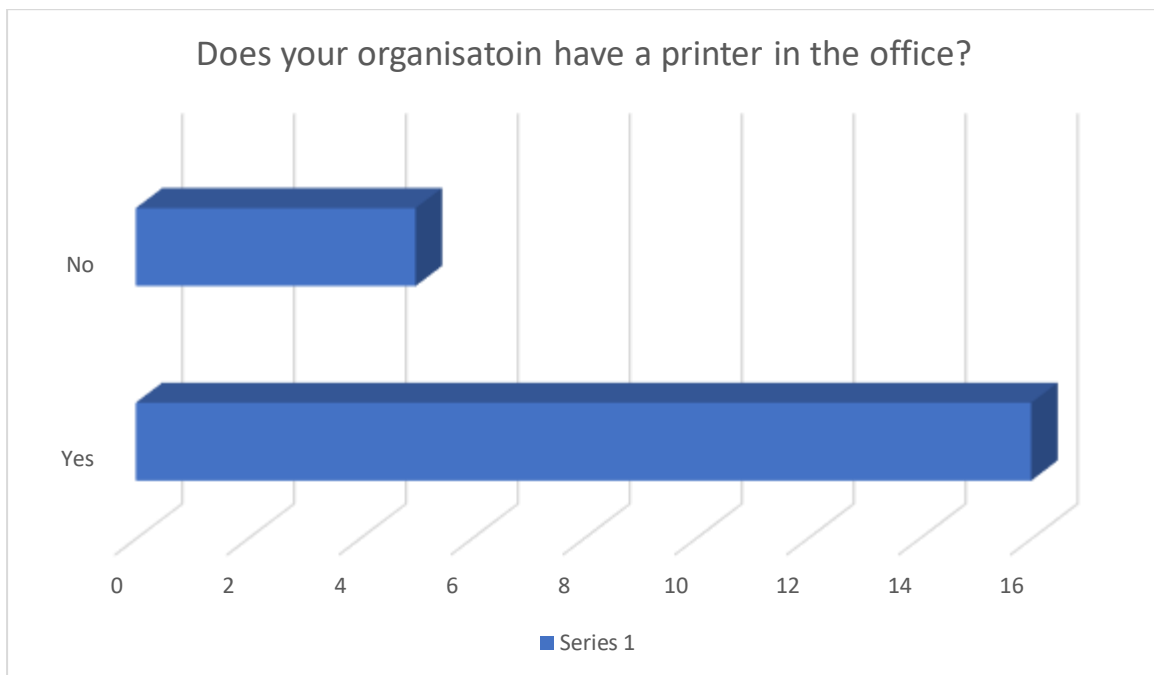
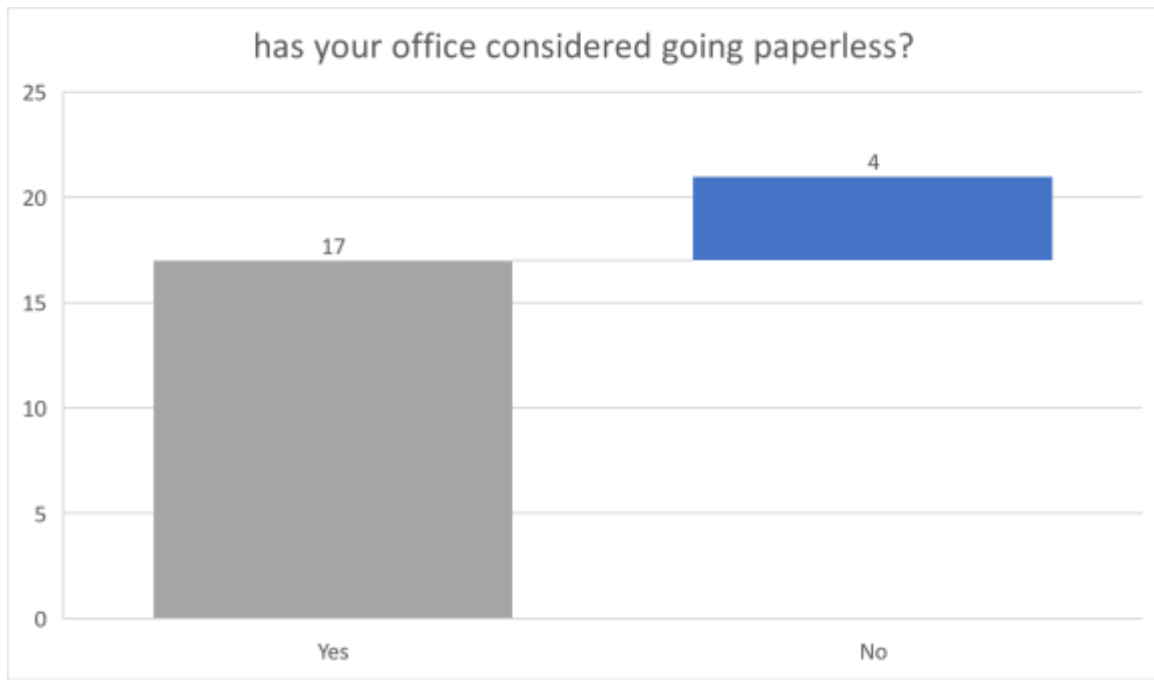


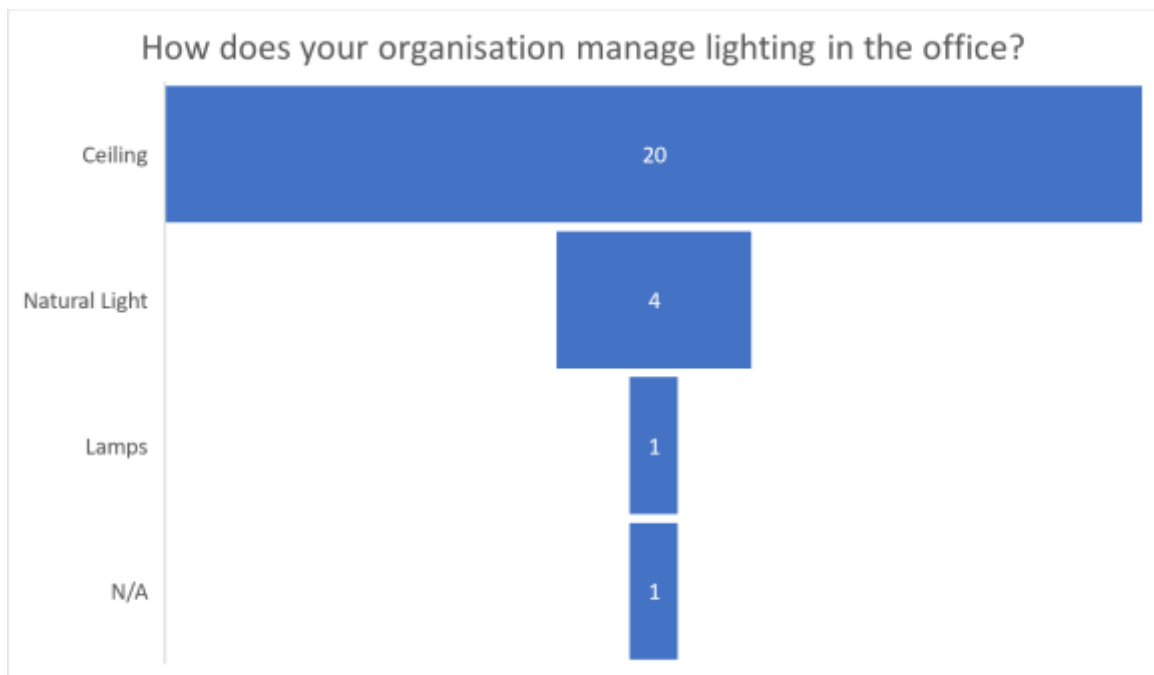
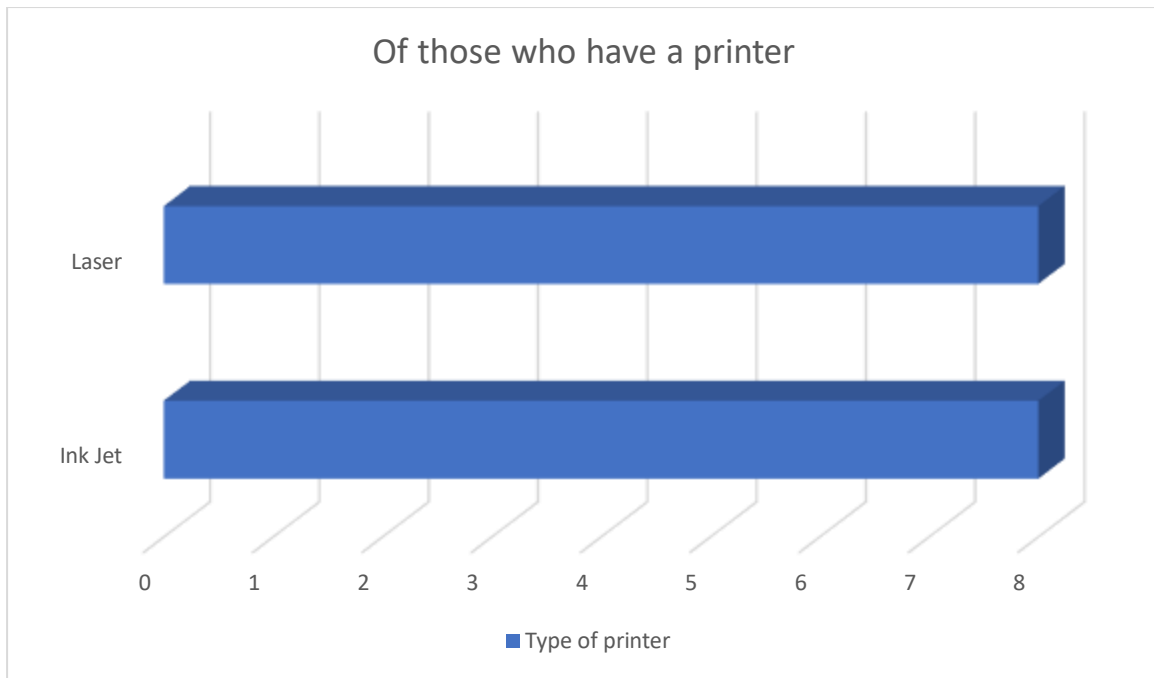




Note: organisations had the option of selecting N/A if they did not own the building, rent the building or are working remotely









Does your organisation have  
company vehicles?

**Yes: 3**

**No: 18**



**(Out of the 3 organisations that have company vehicles)**

**What type of vehicle is it?**

**Electric: 1**

**Petrol: 2**

**Diesel: 0**



On a scale of 1 – 5, (on behalf of your organisation) how serious do think the current climate situation is?

[1 = Not serious at all, 5 = Extremely serious]

**Average response: 4.48**

On a scale of 1 – 5, how big of a priority is sustainability for your organisation?

[1 = Not a priority at all, 5 = Extremely high priority]

**Average response: 4.43**

## Analysis of the Results

### The Environment

#### **What are organisations doing well?**

We found that most of the organisations we spoke to and conducted the Eco Office Audit were making some efforts to be more sustainable. Every organisation mentioned and is aware that recycling as one of the ways in which they try to be eco-friendly; 81% of the organisations have considered going paperless and, 81% also made sure to turn all electrical equipment off at the end of the day although there is scepticism that once recycled the final part of the journey is not being fulfilled and goes into landfill.

The concept of re-using first had not featured heavily within the organisations we spoke with other than some innovation that is taking place through community organisations to help the environment: Beyond recycling, a few organisations were choosing local and eco-friendly suppliers. Even though buying local goods can sometimes be more expensive, it was a choice they were willing to make to help the environment. Another organisation mentioned how they reuse old costumes and props for their productions by turning them into something new. The transition to hybrid working has also allowed companies to reduce their direct energy costs. However, the fact that more individuals are working at home means every single employee is using a different source of energy and this may mean that the organisation's carbon footprint is actually much higher than it may first appear.

#### **What challenges have they faced?**

When asked what challenges the organisations had faced, one of the recurring themes was cost. Community organisations often do not have the funds required to make environmental changes as their priority is supporting members of their respective communities. For example, one organisation we spoke to was aware that LED light bulbs are better for the environment; however, they did not have the means to change every fluorescent bulb in their building whilst trying to recover from a pandemic or periods of closure.

The other recurring theme was the lack of ownership.

Most of these organisations do not own their buildings so, things like boilers, heating and renewable energy are not something they can control. One organisation spoke of installing solar panels on the roof of their building and electric car charging points in their car park but, even if they had the funds, this would not be possible because they rent the property.

#### **What support do they required?**

Many of the organisations we conducted the Eco Office Audit with said they require support from the Council. The Council owns a lot of the buildings rented by community organisations; therefore, they cannot make any environmental changes without the Council's support.

In addition to this, various organisations mentioned the need to support the High Street.

Covid-19 has negatively affected community organisations, local shops and businesses where many feel they have not been assisted sufficiently well through the crisis. Local business comment that the High Street barriers remain closed from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

and stay closed for the entirety of the weekend. Business owners expressed to us that this discourages customers, at such a crucial time when they are trying to recuperate their losses. Furthermore, some feel that big chains are favoured over local businesses that have been there for decades and, they would benefit from more support.

Even though we designed this Eco Office Audit with the sole purpose of helping community organisations with their environmental goals, we discovered that there is a distortion with other issues which community organisations need to also prioritise in balance with the environment.

Many felt that if they received more support from the Council, they would have more time and resources to become more environmentally sustainable.

Community organisations also voiced their concerns about a lack of expertise in supporting them to become environmentally sound. They neither knew what changes they should make nor where to seek funding.

Many were also not aware that every company in the UK will need to reach Net-Zero by 2050. Therefore, in our personalised guide for each organisation, we included information on Net-Zero and where they could get funding for any environmental projects.

## Recommendations

1. More of this type of support could be offered to business and community through Not-for-Profit organisations who are able to support the wider community and make environmentally friendly suggestions to achieving net-zero. Having a neutral partner to conduct this service allows genuine feedback and engagement on a personal level.
2. A follow-up to this initial basic project is needed.
3. A more in-depth level of Mentoring and coaching by Qualified Mentors, Teachers and Environmental Auditors on a face-to-face peripatetic approach will reap the best rewards.
4. A recognition programme for this service can be offered:
  - a. Organisations who complete the process at level 1 will receive their report and an accreditation logo.
  - b. Organisations who achieve level 2 are on their way to achieving Net-Zero by 2050 and window sticker and e-logo at level 2.
  - c. Organisations achieving level 3 will achieve Net-Zero by 2030 and receive their window sticker and e-logo at level 3.
5. Explore a partnership between Three Rivers Council and Impactful Governance that will raise awareness and achieve recognition of the Council's work around achieving Net-Zero by 2030.
6. Secure a mechanism to host a full-time post, managed by Impactful Governance at a cost of approx. £20,000 for ongoing environmental research and implementing the findings of this report.



## Appendix – Quotes from participants

### What eco-friendly practices do you currently have within your organisation?

1. Eco-efficient Laser Printer.
2. Now working from home so reducing fuel costs and all courses are online to reduce use of rooms and transport to get there.
3. We do not own the building so are limited to the changes we make. However, we try to reduce energy consumption, only print when absolute necessary and recycle as much as we can.
4. Working from home and utilising communication technology has reduced our transport fuel bill considerably.
5. Trying not to print unnecessarily. Re-using props and costumes. Sourcing second-hand equipment, props, and costumes. Car sharing when appropriate. Turning off lights, and unplugging equipment when leaving office. Looking for donations for office supplies and re-using equipment from larger organisations. Recycling where possible, including disposing of any scenery, props or materials.
6. Recycling. Timed Lights + Heating.
7. Trying to work online and avoid printing. Energy saving through lighting, regular checks of building.
8. Recycling. Nothing goes to waste Rotation: If it doesn't get sold, it either goes to another shop, the price gets reduced, or it gets recycled The plastic bags they use to store clothes in is made of a sustainable material Have started going paperless, got the new laptop on Friday 24 September Paperwork will all be digital Management is extremely conscious of the environment As an charity that seeks to protect animals, all products must be checked: they can't contain any animal products, they can't be produced in factories that harm animals, they can't be tested on animals etc.
9. Lights. Electricity from renewable supplier, eon NB. all plugs switched on, except fridge which is on a timer, when it gets to the right temp it switches off, like a thermostat Double glazing Five little boilers which only switch on when hot water is needed. In the kitchen and the bathrooms.
10. Sell donated furniture. Try not to throw anything away --> if they have to "dispose" of something, they have someone they give it to (like a tin man). They make things out of other things, i.e. upcycling. For example, if they receive something that they can't really sell, they break it up and turn into something new, which is then sold.
11. LEDs. Communicated with suppliers that they don't want to receive any more plastic packaging and any plastic packaging they do have is reused.
12. Eco freezer. Display lights and freezer lights are LEDs. Recycling. Electricity supplier uses green energy.
13. Recycling. Took part in Sustainability Week a few weeks ago. Local suppliers and local produce. Pay extra to be sustainable. Loyalty cards are made from old t-shirts. In addition to the food and drink they serve/sell, they have a stand selling organic, vegan and local produce (they don't make any profit from this).
14. People must book to use the gym so electrical equipment is only switched on when required. They do a lot of things personally, e.g., only using big appliances in the

evenings, try to save water, go on litter picks. Only turn on outdoor lights when necessary.

15. Recycling

16. Unsure

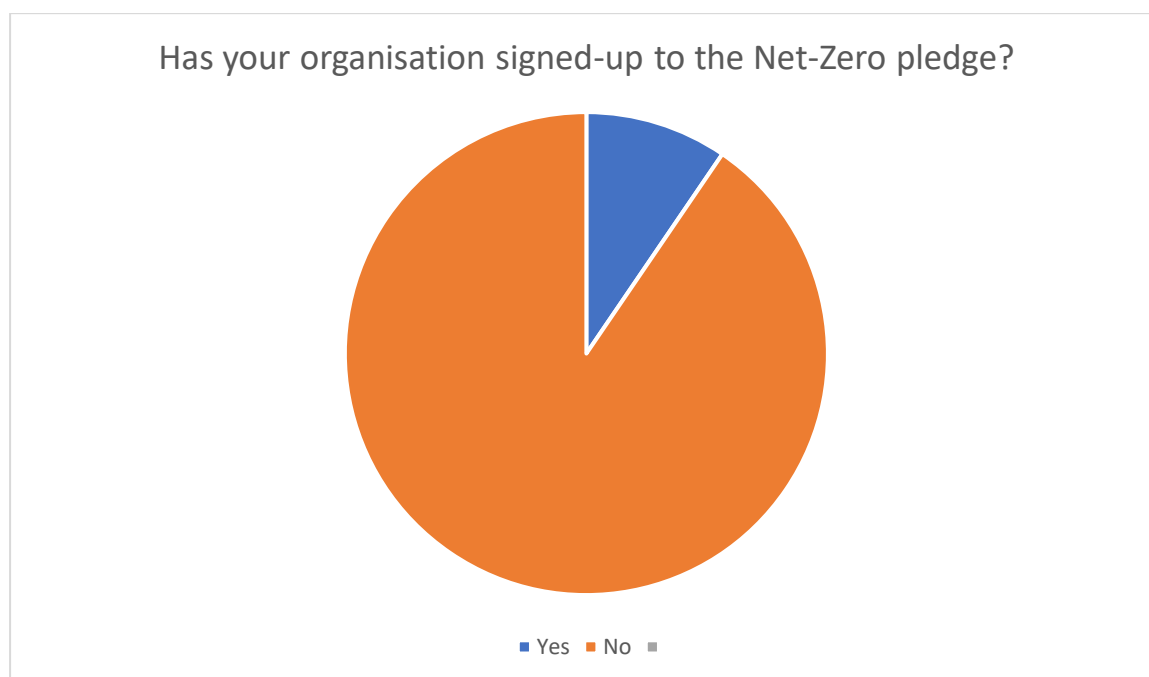
17. Recycling. Hangers are sent back to Head Office. Manufacturing, e.g., jeans, eco-friendly, organic cotton. Head Office are extremely conscious about being eco-friendly. Moving away from fast fashion. The CEO recently released a company strategy and the environment is a massive part of that.

18. Don't have a separate bin for recycling so they keep a separate box for recycling and take it all home to recycle.

19. Extremely environmentally conscious. Recycled plastic bags. Have gone paperless. Canvas, reusable bags. Stock and clothing are meant to last a lifetime. Compostable knickers. Make sure they choose eco-friendly, sustainable suppliers. Will never have heating and windows open at the same time.

20. Use a lot of eco-friendly products, e.g., sachets for shampoo, hairbrushes made from recycled plastic. Make an active effort to look for eco-friendly suppliers

21. Recycling. Recycled paper. Energy-efficient boiler



**(Out of the 2 organisations that have signed up to the Net-Zero Pledge) When have they signed up to be Net-Zero?  
2030: 2**

**Has your organisation encountered any challenges when trying to become sustainable?**

**[E.g., the cost, the pandemic, the amount of time it would take to make changes, lack of resources, etc.]**

1. Lack of charging points for an electric car to be viable
2. We are within a rented space and are very small so have few new options available to us
3. Keen to learn about what else we can do as a small VCSE org and what we can do to encourage and support others to do the same in our role as a CVS.
4. We are in a rented office so it has proved difficult to get the Landlord to move on to more sustainable solutions
5. Lack of funds and time make it harder to be completely eco-friendly. Being reliant on renting office space, and workshop spaces managed by other organisations means we are unable to monitor a lot of our sustainability.
6. Cost. Lack of support in the form of grants/funding. Pandemic. Lack of resources (charity)
7. Not considered
8. Haven't encountered any challenges Been doing it for so long they don't really take much notice, it's 2nd nature
9. No. Low energy resources don't cost a lot of money so it's better for the organisation to keep costs down
10. Cost.
11. Cost - it's quite expensive to recycle packaging. Had to ask suppliers not to use plastic packaging but the suppliers buy in bulk so it's costing them and it takes more time.
12. Not really.
13. Sourcing. Finances: It costs extra to be sustainable and they need to ensure this cost doesn't get put onto customers. Sometimes you have to wait extra for supplies if buying local produce.
14. Not particularly.
15. Not really.
16. Unsure.
17. At store level, wouldn't really know. It's down to Head Office.
18. Cost. Time.
19. More support from the council.
20. None.
21. Knowledge. Personnel resources. Cost.

### What support would your organisation like to become more sustainable?

1. Electric car charging points on the pavement outside my house, like the old-fashioned parking meters.
2. Not the highest priority at the moment
3. Ideas of simple changes we can make
4. I feel this will be limited due to current working practices. Maybe see what the landlord can do for the entire site? Our lease runs until 9/2022 when we are intending to go Virtual
5. An analysis of the areas in which we could be more sustainable, and ideas to do so. Support to write a sustainability policy and ensure we have the correct procedures in place and are able to disseminate this throughout the organisation.
6. Return of solar 'feed-in' tariff Grants for solar panels
7. Ideas on how we can make our Centre's more sustainable
8. None required
9. No
10. Would like to be made aware of funding they can access.
11. Doing everything they can from LED lights to recycling and reusing plastic packaging. Unless someone tells them they're doing something wrong, they don't require any additional support.
12. More guidance, e.g., things like the lights. They know they need to change them to LEDs. More support from the council. Council should support businesses to become sustainable. What grants are available? (Specifically grants from the government)
13. The council need to do more to promote local businesses that are doing things. They need to home in on the value of the area. Rents of buildings and rates - rate breaks in comparison to costa.
14. They're doing everything they can
15. Don't really want any support.
16. Unsure
17. Their building is quite old. They need to have the doors open because it encourages people to enter and also because of Covid, but it also means that any heat leaves the building.
18. Not sure
19. More recycling facilities. Shouldn't have to pay for recycling. Pressure on councils who are producing items. Supplies come in recycled plastic bags, but there's no facility to recycle them.
20. What will we need to do eventually, e.g., boilers? What products are more eco-friendly?
21. Quick/low-cost wins. Advice re. buildings as to insulation/energy saving. Advice re. green energy providers. Advice re. grants that may be available.