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A Practical Guide to
**Decarbonising
Your Business.**

 **GOOD BUSINESS
PATHFINDER** CORNWALL &
ISLES OF SCILLY

Small Steps, Big Impact

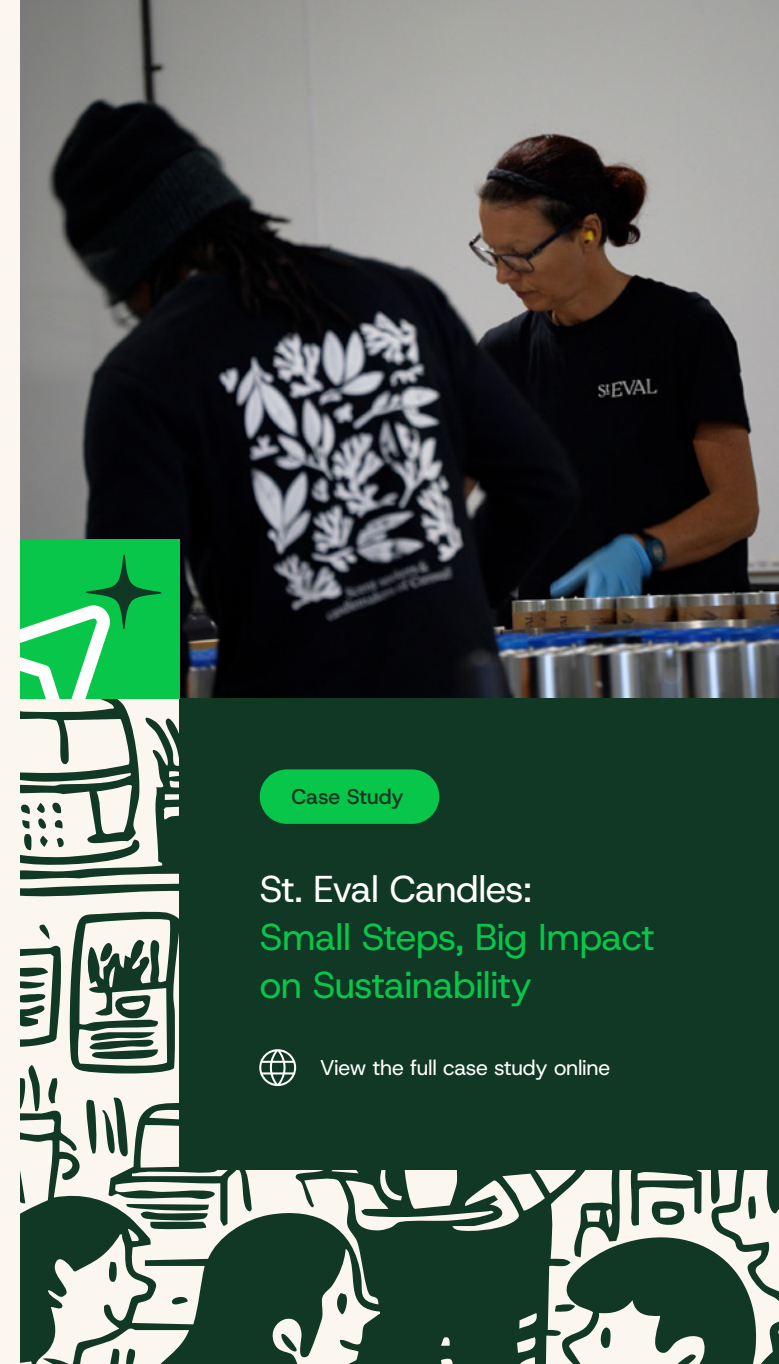
Running an SME in Cornwall comes with a unique sense of place and responsibility. Our landscapes, coastlines, communities and supply chains are closely connected to the environment. The good news is that becoming a more sustainable business doesn't have to be expensive, complicated, or disruptive.

Decarbonisation is not about perfection or overnight transformation. It's about making steady, thoughtful improvements that reduce your environmental impact while often saving money, strengthening your reputation, and engaging your team.

Cornish candle maker St Eval Candles shows what's possible. Over more than a decade, they have embedded sustainability into everyday decision


making – from generating over 70% of their own energy through renewables, to simple waste saving partnerships and staff-led ideas. Their journey proves that small, consistent actions add up to big impact.

This guide is designed to help Cornish SMEs take practical, affordable steps towards decarbonisation – whether you're just starting out, or building on work you've already done.



Case Study

St. Eval Candles: Small Steps, Big Impact on Sustainability

 [View the full case study online](#)



Five Steps on Your Way to Decarbonisation

Think of decarbonisation as a pathway rather than a project. These five steps can be adapted to any size or type of business.



1. Start where you are	2. Set simple intentions	3. Prioritise what you can control	4. Bring people with you	5. Review, celebrate, repeat
<p>You don't need a complex strategy to begin. Start by understanding your biggest impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy use (electricity, heating, fuel) Travel and transport Waste and materials Purchasing and suppliers <p>Focus on what matters most to your business rather than trying to do everything at once.</p>	<p>A short environmental statement can be powerful. It might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why the environment matters to your business A commitment to reducing carbon where practical A promise to keep improving over time <p>Keep it short, honest, and relevant to Cornwall and your community.</p>	<p>Not everything is within your control – and that's okay. Focus on actions you can influence, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you use energy What you buy How staff travel How waste is handled 	<p>St Eval Candles emphasise "hearts and minds". Sustainability works best when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff understand why changes are happening Ideas are welcomed from across the team Changes are visible and easy to follow 	<p>Progress builds momentum. Check in regularly, celebrate small wins, and build confidence to go further next time.</p>



Guide

What You Can Do Tomorrow

These actions are low cost, low risk, and quick to implement.



Reduce energy waste

Turn off lights, equipment and machinery when not in use

Use simple reminder stickers near switches and sockets

Check heating timers and thermostat settings



Start the conversation

Tell staff you want to reduce your environmental impact

Ask for ideas. Frontline teams often spot easy wins.



Improve recycling and waste

Make recycling easy and clearly labelled

Speak to your waste provider about better segregation

Look for reuse opportunities (as St Eval did with laundered cleaning rags)



Choose greener defaults

Switch to recycled paper and eco labelled supplies

Default to virtual meetings where travel isn't essential

Insight

Guidance on building your Environmental Growth Plan



View online



Guide

What You Can Do Over The Next Three Months

Once the basics are in place, you can start planning slightly bigger changes.

Check out the [Good Practice Guide](#) created by the University of Exeter. It includes different ways of thinking about the impact of your business, including circularity and Net Zero.

 [View online](#)

Check out the [Better Business Toolkit](#) by the University of Exeter. It includes a Responsible Purchasing and Procurement guide.

 [View online](#)



Understand your energy use

[Review electricity, gas or fuel bills](#)

[Identify peak usage and inefficiencies](#)

[Explore green energy tariffs](#)



Improve travel and transport

[Encourage car sharing or public transport where possible](#)

[Review company vehicle use and mileage claims](#)

[Introduce a simple travel policy](#)



Review purchasing

[Ask suppliers about lower carbon options](#)

[Buy local where possible to reduce transport emissions](#)

[Reduce unnecessary packaging](#)



Create a simple action plan

[A basic plan might include:](#)

[One or two priority actions](#)

[Who is responsible](#)

[A realistic timescale](#)



What You Can Do Over The Next 12 Months

Longer term actions often bring the biggest carbon and cost savings. But it's also where things get a little more demanding.



Invest where it makes sense

St Eval Candles invested gradually in renewable energy, starting with one achievable step and building over time.

You might consider:

Solar panels or renewable heating (where viable)

Improved insulation or energy efficient equipment

Low energy lighting upgrades

Support and grants may be available locally, so it's worth exploring options through [Cornwall Council and business support networks](#).

 [View online](#)



Embed sustainability into culture

Include environmental responsibility in staff inductions

Make progress a standing agenda item at meetings

Share results with customers and partners



Measure and improve

You don't need to embark straight away into complex carbon accounting.

Simple indicators work well:

Energy bills

Fuel use

Waste volumes

Travel mileage

Create a baseline then review annually and set one or two new goals.




Conclusion


Progress, Not Perfection

Decarbonising your business is not about doing everything at once. It's about starting, learning what works, and building confidence over time.

St Eval Candles' story shows that sustainability is a journey shaped by practical decisions, creativity, and people working together. Their success didn't come from a single grand gesture, but from many small, thoughtful actions taken consistently.

For Cornish SMEs, the opportunity is clear: by taking affordable, achievable steps today, you can protect what makes Cornwall special, strengthen your business, and help lead the transition to a low carbon future.

 [View the full case study online](#)



Start small.
Keep going.
Celebrate progress.

Have a look at the [Environmental Responsibility](#) page of the Good Business Pathfinder for further information:

 [View online](#)

For further business support, get in touch with the [Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Growth Hub](#).

[Visit](#)



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