



# FACTSHEET

## LIVING SUSTAINABLY IN LOCKDOWN

JUNE 2020

There has been commentary on some of the environmental benefits of the otherwise devastating COVID-19 pandemic: from dolphin sightings in the canals of Venice to estimates that the virus could prompt the largest ever fall in CO2 emissions, to the tune of 1,600m tonnes, or 4% of 2019's total global emissions<sup>1</sup>.

These gains are fragile though. When the lockdowns end the focus will be on rebuilding national economies, regenerating employment, and for business to return to profitability. The question remains as to *how* we can adapt during and after this crisis to make sure we rebuild towards a zero carbon, circular economy.

With the closure of workplaces, much reduced work-related travel and altered living patterns under lockdown, many businesses' environmental impacts have become distributed across many thousands of employees' homes across the UK – a trend that may continue as businesses realise how effective mass homeworking can be. At the same time, employers are rated as the most credible source of information during the COVID-19 crisis<sup>2</sup>,

and need to adapt communications with teams whilst they work remotely, or are furloughed.

This guide seeks to provide practical guidance to share with teams while they work from home, to help us all build the right behaviours to contribute towards a cleaner future for our environment post-pandemic.

**4,550% increase in Google searches related to “How to live a sustainable lifestyle” since lockdowns began**

### Reducing food waste

The spread of the virus will continue to impact global food supply, with borders closing, planes being grounded and labour being restricted<sup>3</sup>. In the UK, 1.5 million (3%) people have gone a whole day without eating since the lockdown came into effect (3 weeks prior to writing), and 7.1 million (14%) say someone in their household has had to reduce or skip meals because they could not access or afford sufficient sustenance<sup>4</sup>. These statistics alone reinforce the importance of reducing the amount of food we waste to simply ensure sufficiency for the

<sup>1</sup> Coronavirus set to cause largest ever annual fall in CO2 emissions (2020); Evans, S; *Carbon Brief*. Available at: [carbonbrief.org/](https://carbonbrief.org/)

<sup>2</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report on Covid-19 Demonstrates Essential Role of the Private Sector (2020); *Edelman*; available at: [edelman.com/](https://www.edelman.com/)

<sup>3</sup> Coronavirus could double the number of people going hungry (2020); *The Guardian*; available at [theguardian.com/](https://www.theguardian.com/)

<sup>4</sup> Three million Britons are going hungry just three weeks into lockdown; (2020); *Food Foundation*; Available at: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/new-food-foundation-survey-three-million-britons-are-going-hungry-just-three-weeks-into-lockdown/>



UK during this crisis. However, doing so also has significant environmental benefits: food waste counts for 8% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, with about 50% of food waste in the UK occurring in the home, according to [WRAP](#).

As we all eat more meals at home during lockdown, trying to reduce our waste and make food go further saves money, reduces the risk of spreading the virus and helps to ensure there is enough food to go round.

## 50% food waste in the UK occurs in our homes

### Five ways to tackle food waste at home

**Meal planning.** Just under half of food and drink is wasted because too much was cooked, prepared or served. WRAP's [portion calculator](#) also allows people to check how much of different ingredients may be needed for a family meal.

**Storage.** The [Love Food Hate Waste](#) campaign has resources to reduce the chance of food going off. The [A-Z of Food Storage](#) provides guidance on how to store foods to extend their lives.

**Share.** Food banks and community groups have an urgent need for food. Apps such as [Olio](#) help to connect with the community to offer up leftovers.

**Cook with kids.** Getting kids involved in cooking has been shown to broaden their tastes and reduce fussiness<sup>5</sup>. The BBC has some [tips](#) on how to get started according to age group.

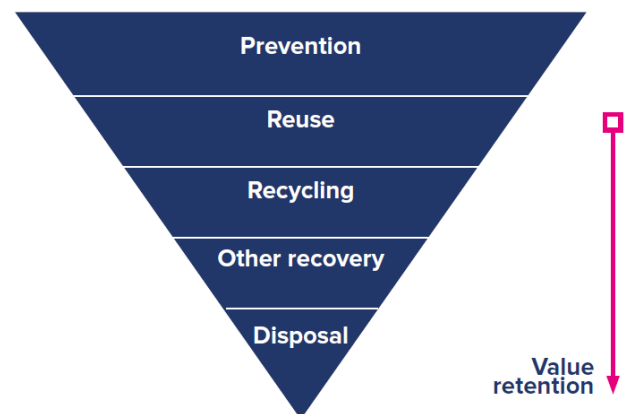
**Compost.** At a time when waste services are being stretched, reduce the burden by home composting unavoidable food waste scraps. You do not need a garden to compost – go to the [RHS advice on home composting](#) for info.

<sup>5</sup> Involving children in meal preparation. Effects on food intake (2014); van der Horst, K.; Science Direct; available at [sciencedirect.com/](https://www.sciencedirect.com/)

### Reducing household waste

While 85% household waste services are functioning normally, there has been a 60% reduction in capacity of local waste and recycling centres. This has led to a spike in fly-tipping, placing added strain on key workers responsible for collection.

#### THE WASTE HIERARCHY



- **Use this time to try and create a zero-waste home**, focusing on those things you really need. If you need to get rid of old household items, save bulky waste disposal until recycling centres reopen fully.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, **protect key waste workers** by adhering to [DEFRA's guidance on medical waste](#) disposal.
- Follow [government guidance](#) on how to **create face masks from old fabrics** rather than single use PPE.
- Think about opportunities to **reuse and repair household items** to extend their lives and prevent waste. Sites such as [IFIXIT](#) and [RepairClinic](#) offer guidance on fixing common household items and can supply spare parts too.
- Join the **clothes resale** market by using sites such as [Depop](#) or [Vinted](#) to give old outfits a new



home, or think about listing other **unwanted items** on [Ebay](#) or in the community via [Preloved](#).

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## IMPACT STORY: JLL

Real estate adviser JLL is developing a Living Green Guide to support residents and building managers in the properties it manages. Energy-saving tips such as cooking with the most efficient appliance (microwave is more efficient than oven, toaster is more efficient than grill), using sunlight smartly (slanting blinds down to keep warmth inside when cold, slanting blinds up to keep inside cool when hot), and washing our clothes on a lower temperature (75% of carbon emissions from laundry are just from heating the water) is something we can all follow as we spend more time in our homes during lockdown.

### Low-impact choices at home

Most businesses have been forced to transform their approach to home working within a matter of weeks, with offices closing across the UK. This is expected to speed up a more permanent transition towards homeworking<sup>6</sup>. Environmentally, this drop in commuting may lead to lower transport emissions and air-quality improvements, but WSP estimate that due to inefficient heating systems in homes in the UK, remote working may actually lead to an 80% increase in carbon emissions per employee per year<sup>7</sup>. These tips can help to reduce this environmental impact while working at home.

- Consider **switching your energy tariff to renewables**. [bigcleanswitch.org](http://bigcleanswitch.org) suggests that homes save £230 a year on average by switching to renewables.

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<sup>6</sup> COVID-19 could cause permanent shift towards home working (2020); Hern A.; The Guardian; [available at theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com)



- The [Energy Saving Trust](#) has information on how to **improve the energy efficiency of your home**, from insulation to PV panels to only boiling as much water as is needed. [Waterwise](#) offer equivalent advice to help **save water**.
- WWF's personal [carbon footprint calculator](#) is easy to use and provides tailored guidance on which areas of life can the **carbon impact be lowered**.
- For those with a smart meter, [Smart Energy's](#) education pack contains fun experiments that will **teach kids about saving energy**, build their STEM knowledge and keep them distracted.
- **Cut down on using the car** by cycling or running to combine daily exercise with trips to the shops. This is a good time to get used to cycling on roads while there is reduced traffic.
- **Support small businesses** and local supply chains by shopping with local independent shops, or restaurants that have adapted to provide takeaways.

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## IMPACT STORY: PwC – SUSTAINABLE LIVING GUIDES

PwC has run employee engagement campaigns on sustainability for over 10 years. Previously, this focussed on behaviours related to the office such as avoiding business travel, increasing recycling and adopting low carbon commuting.

Following the lockdown, these campaigns were reshaped into a Sustainable Living at Home programme that delivered environmental, personal wellbeing and business benefits. A digital library was created with ideas and information on how to tackle food waste, utility costs and carbon footprints

<sup>7</sup> Office vs Home Working: How We Can Save Our Carbon Footprint (2020); WSP. available at [wsp.com](http://wsp.com)



and making the most of a lockdown holiday. It's been hugely popular: thousands have made use of the support and it's contributed to increased engagement scores throughout the pandemic.

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### Nature and wellbeing

*"We will not save what we do not love – and we rarely love what we cannot name or do not see."* – Robert Macfarlane

Fostering a personal connection to nature has been shown to support improved immune functioning, mood enhancement, reduced stress and a greater ability to feel in control<sup>8</sup>. We are also more likely to value and protect nature if we feel connected to it, so establishing practical ways to engage with nature has multiple benefits for ourselves and the planet. BITC's guidance on supporting employee wellbeing provides advice on building resilience during the lockdown, and you can also use nature in different ways to support yourself during the crisis and beyond.

- Designed for all ages, [Earth School](#) is a range of free educational resources designed by TED-Ed, UNEP, BBC and others to **build knowledge and interest in nature during lockdown**.
- **Growing your own food** - in a garden, on a balcony, or even simple herbs on a windowsill, is good for mental and physical health and can take some pressure off the store cupboard.
- **Watch WWF's Our Planet series**. Whilst we might not be travelling to visit our incredible planet first-hand at the moment, you can still see it, up close, thanks to the Netflix- Silverback Films-WWF series, [Our Planet](#).

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<sup>8</sup> Use nature to support your well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020); Toth E.; Birmingham University; [available at Birmingham.ac.uk](http://available.at.Birmingham.ac.uk)



- Cambridge University Botanical Garden are offering virtual [Wellness Wanders](#) for those that cannot go outside, or do not have access to green space.
- Drawing or sketching nature is a form of **nature-based mindfulness** that can alleviate stress while building a connection with nature. [BoggyDoodles](#) is offering free sketching guidance during lockdown.
- Help protect biodiversity by counting flowers in the garden that support pollinators, through [Plantlife](#), or get involved with free **nature-based citizen science** projects via [Zooniverse](#).

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### IMPACT STORY: ANGLIAN WATER – BIOPHILIA

Biophilia, or the benefits that nature can bring to our wellbeing, is a natural extension to the work that Anglian Water has been doing on managing total wellbeing. Managers have received training on this and wider mindfulness through modules on personal resilience in their Transforming our Leadership programme. This can be practiced individually, with the act of leaving the desk to spend a part of the lunch break connecting with nature or encouraged as part of a team activity, such as walking meetings. This gives people a chance to see beyond the office walls, lift their heads to look up at the sky or be closer to any green space in the area, all of which are known to improve mood and wellbeing.