



STATE OF THE REGION

REPORT



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FOREWORD

Over the last two centuries, the Thames Valley region has been on an extraordinary journey, growing into a major centre of industry, and later becoming home to major multi-national organisations and technology giants.

Through that time we have seen immense advances in the way we live our lives, in our health and healthcare, in our understanding of science, in economic development, in our use of technology and in becoming part of a truly connected world.

Yet within that time the world has also seen the damage caused by the pursuit of economic growth and overuse of natural resources, from a rapidly changing climate to the dramatic decline in the natural world, which increasingly threaten lives and livelihoods all around the globe.

There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that human activities, mainly burning fossil fuels and deforestation, have been responsible for a dramatic increase in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases since the start of the Industrial Revolution, and that this has already been the cause of a rise in average global temperature of over 1°C.

This warming trend is vividly represented in the warming stripes, which I developed at the National Centre for Atmospheric Science at the University of Reading, that have been widely embraced as a powerful way to communicate the changes to our climate.

Our changing climate has already led to more extreme weather events across the world, including in the Thames Valley region. These include more intense rainfall and floods, heat-waves and droughts. The impacts are predicted to increase over time, with winters getting warmer and wetter, while summers become hotter and drier. Preparing for these changes will be an essential part of our future resilience.

Public concern for the state of the environment has never been higher. Recent impacts of extreme weather have been making headlines around the world. The wildfires, floods and extremes of temperature now being experienced are all worryingly consistent with what the climate science has been predicting for several decades.

In 2018 the IPCC concluded that to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees – adopted by every country as an aspirational target in the 2015 Paris Agreement – would require ‘rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society’.

Warming stripes for Berkshire
(1863–2022)



We must set out a clear pathway to a net-zero carbon, resilient society and to harness the commitment of everybody who lives, works, studies or plays in our region to work together to achieve this ambition. The net-zero carbon transition presents huge challenges, but it is clear that the costs and risks of embracing it are far less than the costs and risks of not taking action.

Responding positively to these climate challenges can also support an aspiration to achieve clean and inclusive economic development from which the whole community benefits: as well as being a practical necessity, it represents a major opportunity. As one example, air quality will be dramatically improved with a move away from petrol and diesel vehicles, saving thousands of lives and improving the health of millions.

While the Thames Valley features many bustling urban environments, it also benefits from its precious green spaces, waterways and access to the surrounding countryside. Protecting our natural environment is a key ally in the battle against climate change as woodland, grassland, wetland and soils can all lock up carbon if managed correctly, yet the impacts of the changing climate also present a great threat to the natural world.

We must protect our habitats and biodiversity, and harness the opportunities for 'natural solutions' to help us reduce and adapt to climate change.

We must now increase our efforts to accelerate the journey towards net-zero carbon in the short time which the science suggests is available.

Our goal for climate action in the Thames Valley must be that everyone in the region understands a pathway to net-zero carbon, is equipped with the knowledge, tools and support required to play their part, and takes ownership and responsibility for the corporate and individual action required to get there.

In this decade we are at a pivotal moment in addressing the challenges the planet faces, and the choices we make today will have consequences for many centuries to come.

As custodians of this remarkable place in which we live, we must do everything we can to work towards a greater understanding of the challenges and solutions that will secure a better future for the region and for the planet.

Professor Ed Hawkins MBE

National Centre for Atmospheric Science

University of Reading

www.ShowYourStripes.info



**University of
Reading**





BACKGROUND

The Thames Valley is one of the most successful, fastest-growing regions, in the UK.

It encompasses companies from all over the world, alongside high-growth, small and medium-sized enterprises, and innovative University spinouts. These IP-rich, very productive companies, who operate across a wide range of sectors, drive an economy that justifiably means that outside of London, Thames Valley is the second engine of growth of the UK economy.

For several decades the technology sector has been a significant driver of the regions' prosperity and growth. More recently, sectors such as advanced engineering (including space), the creative industries and health and life sciences have strengthened the diversity of world-leading sectors. The coming together of these sectors has resulted in a cross-pollination of ideas and knowledge-sharing that continues to drive the wealth and prosperity of the UK's true turbo-economy.

This collision of sectors, ideas and innovation has driven several leading companies, thought leaders and academics across the Thames Valley, to come together and look at climate change, sustainability and consider the regions' pathway to net-zero.

“

“We will be defined by our courage.”

Joe Biden
US President

Thus, the Thames Valley's Sustainability Working Group (SWG) was born. A business-led forum, convened by the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) that has appetite, through business collaboration, to collectively achieve more in the race to net zero and leave tomorrow's Thames Valley in better health.

THE SWG WILL ACHIEVE THIS WITH

PURPOSE

Bringing businesses and their thought leaders together to help shape a regional response to the challenges presented by sustainability, climate change and our 'race to net zero.'

AMBITION

Developing and delivering a common, aligned framework of action focused on long-term societal benefit, to which business leaders are committed.

OBJECTIVE

Providing practical advice and establishing a consistent, comparable set of metrics for any business starting on the journey to net zero.

One action of the working group's agreed, yet evolving, working programme was to set out and establish a baseline of the region's pathway to net-zero. The State of the Region report, and survey aims, in a small way, to do this.



INTRODUCTION

This is the first Thames Valley State of the Region report.

It is a business-led initiative and the first, to consider a region-wide perspective on the Thames Valley's pathway to net-zero and how we are considering climate change and sustainability.

We hope this will be the start of an annual report that initially sets a baseline and then creates a set of measurable, attainable, and outcome-oriented indicators that help us understand and measure our journey to achieving net-zero ambitions.

The State of the Region report aims to become a comprehensive annual report based on a consistent set of indicators that measures performance and progress. The report will help to highlight issues and challenges, disseminate good-practice and shared learning, and identify opportunities for the region to lead on climate change and sustainability.

These indicators will provide an analytical foundation for key stakeholders, political leadership, and a bellwether that reflects selected fundamentals of long-term good practice that represent the best interests of the Thames Valley.

“

Climate change is real, tangible, and visibly affects us all. Keeping to within 1.5°C global heating is the biggest challenge we face as humans today; failure to do so will be catastrophic. However, the net zero revolution is the biggest business opportunity in human history, and those who establish themselves early as net zero leaders have the potential to capitalise most on this opportunity.

Sustainability Working Group

A Practical Pathway to Net-Zero: Business Checklist



Trees for Reading
Ethical Reading

Business-led, the report has been prepared in partnership with the Thames Valley's Sustainability Working Group (SWG) and the companies, thought-leaders and academics who have actively contributed. We thank all those companies which completed the complementary survey that has shaped our analytical assessment – with the equivalent of over 10% of the Chamber membership completing this survey, our research team consider this a good sample survey.

Finally, and deliberately, this Report makes no recommendations. We are of the considered opinion that the Report, and the survey results, should allow readers their own reflections as well as the opportunity to come forward to help shape future activity and action through the SWG and its work programme.



Biodiversity
Heathrow

“We are in the midst of a climate crisis of humankind's making and this is the single most important issue that the global community faces. It is critical that all businesses actively contribute to the net zero journey with vigour, as failure to seize this opportunity simply cannot be an option.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This report is for all Thames Valley-based companies and professionals allied to or interested in sustainability. In it, we are seeking to help identify the issues many businesses might be looking to raise, or may be fearful, and are hindering their ability to realise their sustainability objectives, or indeed, start on their journey towards better sustainability performance. More broadly, we hope to create an open conversation on how the region might best lead and help reset for the crucial decade ahead.



STRATEGY AND OVERVIEW

Our working group has discussed and developed a broad strategy that is shaping our work programme. This chapter provides an overview of the basis of our approach, methodology and assumptions.

But first -

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

Our definition, or understanding, of sustainability, is summarised as follows:

“Sustainability consists of fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations while ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care and social well-being”

And in so doing, it is important for businesses to consider their impact on the environment and how to work towards a net zero impact.

“Sustainability needs to revert to being a noun and not a verb. Sustainability is not an activity, nor is it an industry, or a theme - it is a specific point at which economic activity is maintained within sustainable limits. It is that or it is nothing.

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We are not here to preach; we are here to build something with you.

This is about individual AND collective progress.

Imperfect but trying (don't let perfect be the enemy of progress)



helping smallholder farmers in low- and middle-income countries

Bayer AG

STRENGTHENING YOUR PATHWAY TO NET-ZERO - THINK

Our overall framework considers six sustainability levers that a business can pull to decarbonise and progress on their pathway to net-zero.

1 THINK GREEN



Learn why a greener mindset benefits your business, your colleagues and the world

2 THINK BIG

become accredited
(e.g B-Corp)
hit net zero by

2030/
2050

3 THINK TARGETS



How much can your business and your people change for the better?

Energy - Sources of Power: Solar Energy

UN Photo/R. Kollar

“

“Our current economic system has two fundamental weaknesses: it is based on unlimited growth on a finite planet, and it benefits a small number of people, not everyone”.

Paul Polman
ex Unilever CEO

DEFINING ESG

The term ESG is often used interchangeably with the term's sustainability and corporate responsibility. The scope of topics covered by ESG includes, but is not limited to, the following:

SOCIAL

- Child Labour
- Diversity agenda
- Human capital
- Human rights
- Labour relations and working conditions
- Remote/Digital workforce tax (post-COVID) impacts
- Social impact of environmental policies and future work practices (post COVID)

4 THINK COMMUNITIES



Local Supplier,
Community groups,
Local charities

5 THINK CARBON

REDUCE

Use green energy sources, cut down on energy use, monitor, travel less etc;

REUSE

Avoid waste, engage with local schemes to reuse/share furniture etc;

RECYCLE

in packaging, with used materials

6 THINK CHECKLIST



A practical path to net-zero carbon for SMES

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Biodiversity
- Carbon pricing measures (e.g., carbon taxes, CBAM, ETS)
- Carbon Emissions
- Climate Risks
- Energy efficiency
- Environmental incentives and tax credits
- Mineral and resource taxes
- Plastic and packaging taxes
- Pollution and waste management
- Renewable energy incentives and tax credits
- Use of natural resources

GOVERNANCE

- Anti-money laundering
- Board diversity
- Business and tax strategy and governance
- Business ethics
- Compensation policies
- Corruption and bribery
- Risk tolerance
- Escalation protocols
- Increase in public disclosure and transparency for tax
- New business and operating models
- New incentives available with environmental focus
- Tax information in ESG ratings

FOCUS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY WORKING GROUP

Our focus to date has been and remains on the 'Environmental' component of ESG. In so doing, we have explored the 'Social' and 'Governance' aspects and recognise the importance each component makes to the sustainability debate and discussion. Capacity and funding have dictated our approach to date.

Notwithstanding, we remain open to findings of the survey and how this may inform and shape our future work programme.

WHAT A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS LOOKS LIKE?

We have taken an opportunity to refresh, we hope, several discussion points.

Firstly, what a business might consider, and be looking at, in terms of its journey to net-zero.

Specifically, this may mean, as appropriate, a business transitioning from a traditional business model (where profit, people and place are separate) to a sustainable business model (where people, planet and profit are truly integrated).

Secondly, where a business might be on its sustainability journey?

SUSTAINABILITY:

Is commonly
accepted, not
commonly
applied

It's good for
business

Climate is the
common priority
area



Biodiversity Beehive
Slough Trading Estate, Segro

Thirdly, to potentially thrive in a net zero economy, what companies might consider the challenges set for business:

- Climate change is real, tangible, and visibly affects us all – business must lead the way towards a net zero world for us (all) to succeed.
- The net zero revolution is the biggest business opportunity in human history – there will be big winners. There will be those who don't survive.
- Those who don't choose to act will be forced into action regardless – inaction will leave you playing catch-up and see you leave value on the table.

COMMON BARRIERS

We know, and our survey has confirmed, that there are a range of barriers, which might commonly be identified as Knowing what to do? Knowing how to do it? (Providing) Resources to get it done? Our simple aim is to try and break down these barriers through our work and activities to help share good practice and inform companies.



OPPORTUNITY

Our call to action is an opportunity for businesses, thought leaders, academics, and decision makers across the region to be part of a collective who do something extraordinary. Regional hubs, based on economic functional areas, are the fastest route to change.

To shape your thinking around the contribution you can make, we encourage you to think about the role you can play in relation to two separate, but connected, aspects:

YOUR OWN DECARBONISATION

Setting bold net zero targets and operationalising progress towards them.



CONTRIBUTING TO ECONOMY-WIDE TRANSITION

Playing your unique role in accelerating the pace of change for Thames Valley. Your role here will depend on what you do as a business and how you can support the region's infrastructure and other businesses. Examples may include:





A University scaling up its faculty focused on research into climate solutions and engaging relevant organisations with its research and practical insights.



A technology company convening others in the region to collectively set and work towards goals for making Thames Valley a green tech hub.

The progenitor of a movement, or sustainability guild for the region, we believe the Thames Valley can, and should, set the pace and show the way. A movement needs a beginning, an expedition needs a base camp, a project needs a headquarters.

We present this report not simply because we have something to say – who doesn't – but because we have something to do.

AS GRETA THUNBERG HAS SAID, "NO ONE IS TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE" – we do hope this report has created a spark. If so, we have a responsibility to fan the flames and invite you to help us. Join us.



Green Park Industrial Estate
Reading



STATE OF THE REGION SURVEY

Companies within the Thames Valley (and globally) have undoubtedly made great strides in adopting greener policies and sustainable initiatives, and taken the imminently necessary steps along the net zero journey in an effort to reach the Government mandated net zero by 2050 target, as a way of addressing the most pressing issue of our time – climate change.

The business community is undeniably headed in the right direction, our target is clear, but the question remains, where do we stand currently in relation to our target?

The compelling need to establish the current position that answers the question “Where are we now?”, is a vital component of any long-term strategy to achieve a desired goal/target and a baseline upon which to measure the success on the region’s pathway to net-zero moving forward.

This is unequivocally the case when it comes to addressing a global crisis which warrants a collective response, on behalf of thousands of businesses, resulting in a complex, multi-factorial journey towards net zero.

We know our target, we know where we ought to be, its time to figure out where we are now, so that we may be able to measure the distance and identify the hurdles separating us from our destination. It calls for some cathedral thinking and leadership of action on behalf of the UK’s true turbo economy and the businesses, thought leaders and academics who are shaping its future.

Our State of the Region Survey helped us establish just that – a baseline of the Thames Valley business community position along the net zero journey, simultaneously giving us the opportunity to track our future progress.

Our survey was developed alongside academic partners and leading experts in their field, helping us collect data from Thames Valley based businesses from a wide range of sectors and sizes.

Displayed in this Report are some, but not all, of the results from our State of the Region survey, coupled with our qualitative findings derived from interview with businesses.

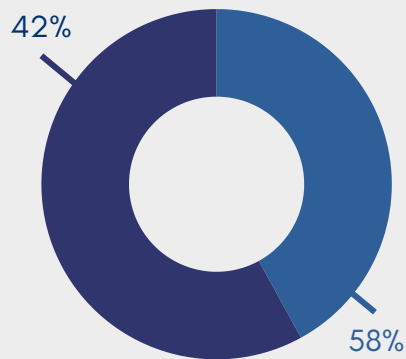
**To view the full survey results,
please [CLICK HERE.](#)**

QUESTION ONE

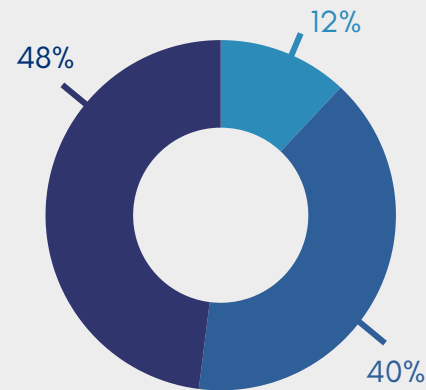
Would you agree that environmental impact reduction is part of your strategic plan/objectives?



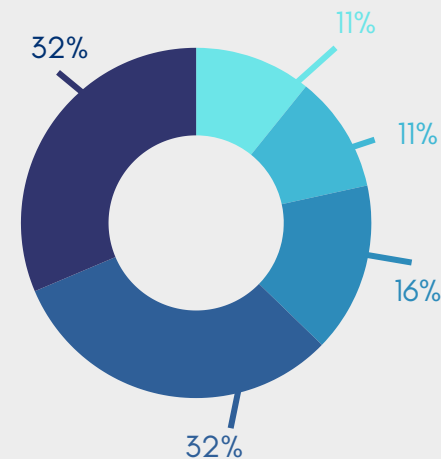
LARGE ENTERPRISE:
250 EMPLOYEES OR
MORE



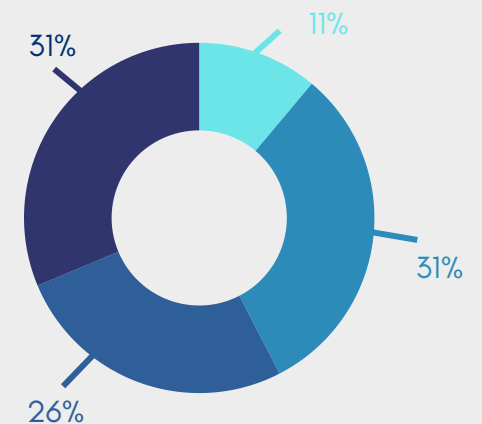
MEDIUM-SIZED
ENTERPRISE: 50 TO
249 EMPLOYEES



SMALL ENTERPRISE:
10 TO 49 EMPLOYEES



MICRO-ENTERPRISE:
1 TO 9 EMPLOYEES

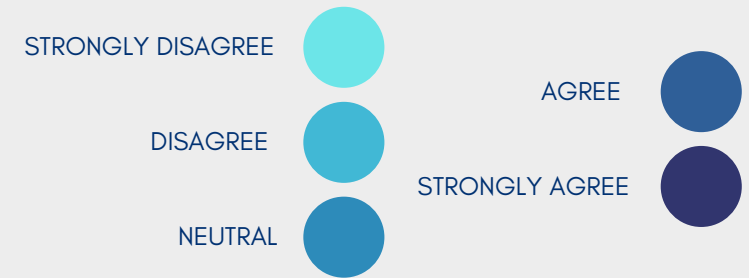


42%

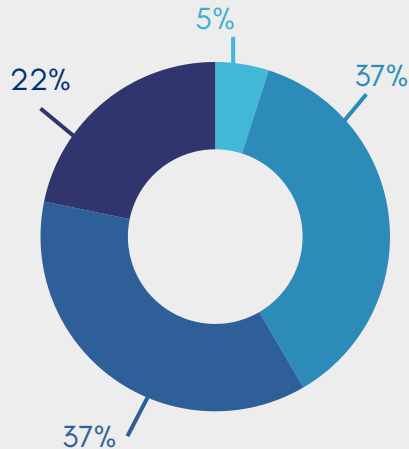
OF ALL BUSINESSES 42% **STRONGLY AGREE** THAT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REDUCTION IS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC PLAN/OBJECTIVES

QUESTION THREE

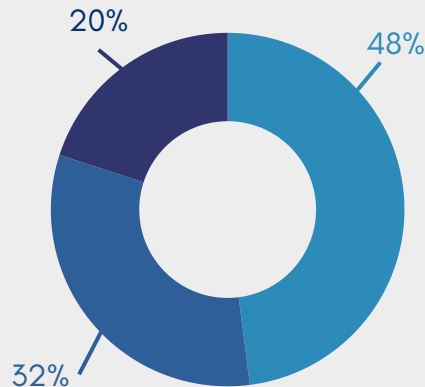
Do you agree that you have the skills and capability to reduce your environmental impact?



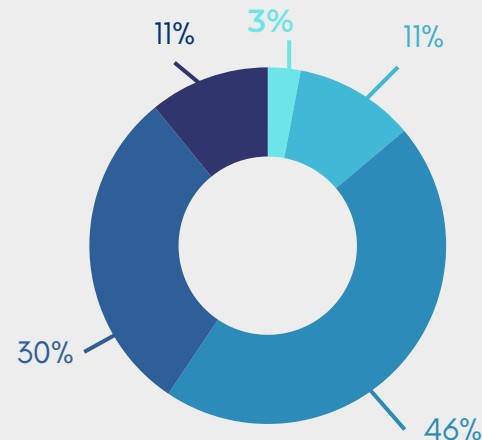
LARGE ENTERPRISE: 250 EMPLOYEES OR MORE



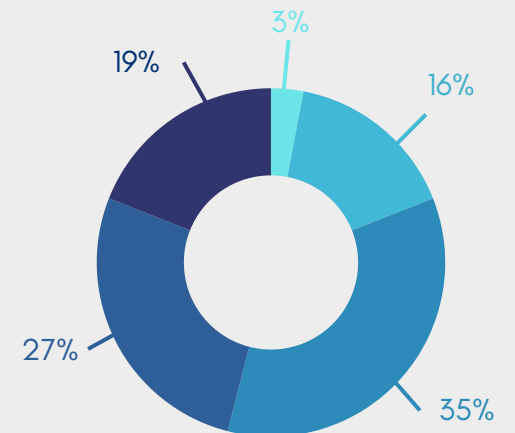
MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE: 50 TO 249 EMPLOYEES



SMALL ENTERPRISE: 10 TO 49 EMPLOYEES



MICRO-ENTERPRISE: 1 TO 9 EMPLOYEES



41%

OF ALL BUSINESSES 41% ARE **NEUTRAL** THAT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REDUCTION IS PART OF THEIR STRATEGIC PLAN/OBJECTIVES

QUESTION FIVE

What help do you need to reduce your environmental impact?

LARGE ENTERPRISE



MEDIUM ENTERPRISE



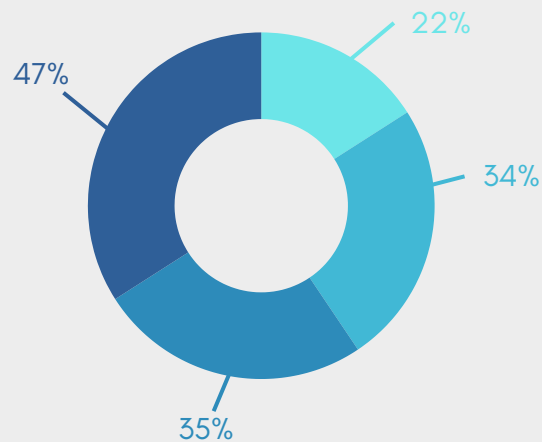
SMALL ENTERPRISE



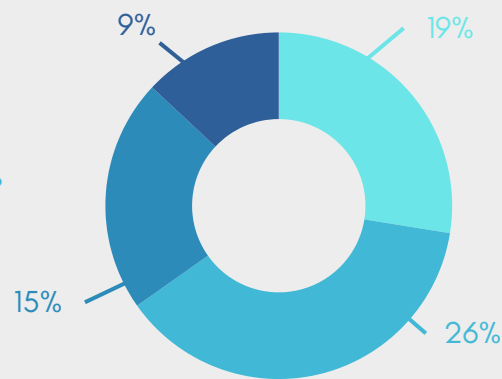
MICRO ENTERPRISE



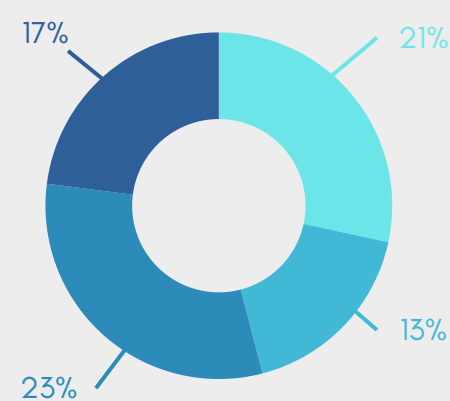
ADVICE, GUIDANCE
& INFORMATION



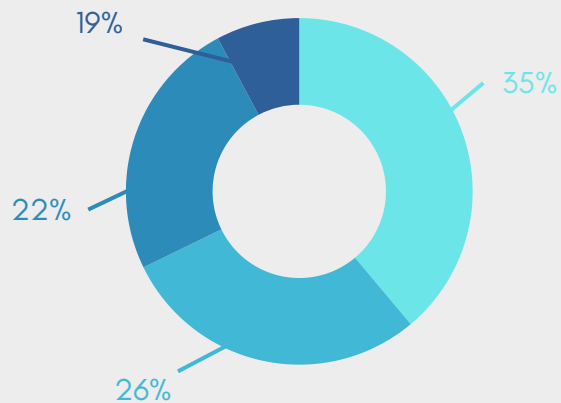
SKILLS TRAINING



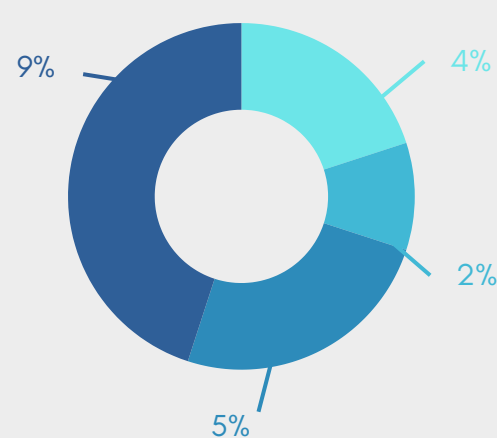
FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE



PARTNERSHIPS OR
COLLABORATIONS



OTHER



33%

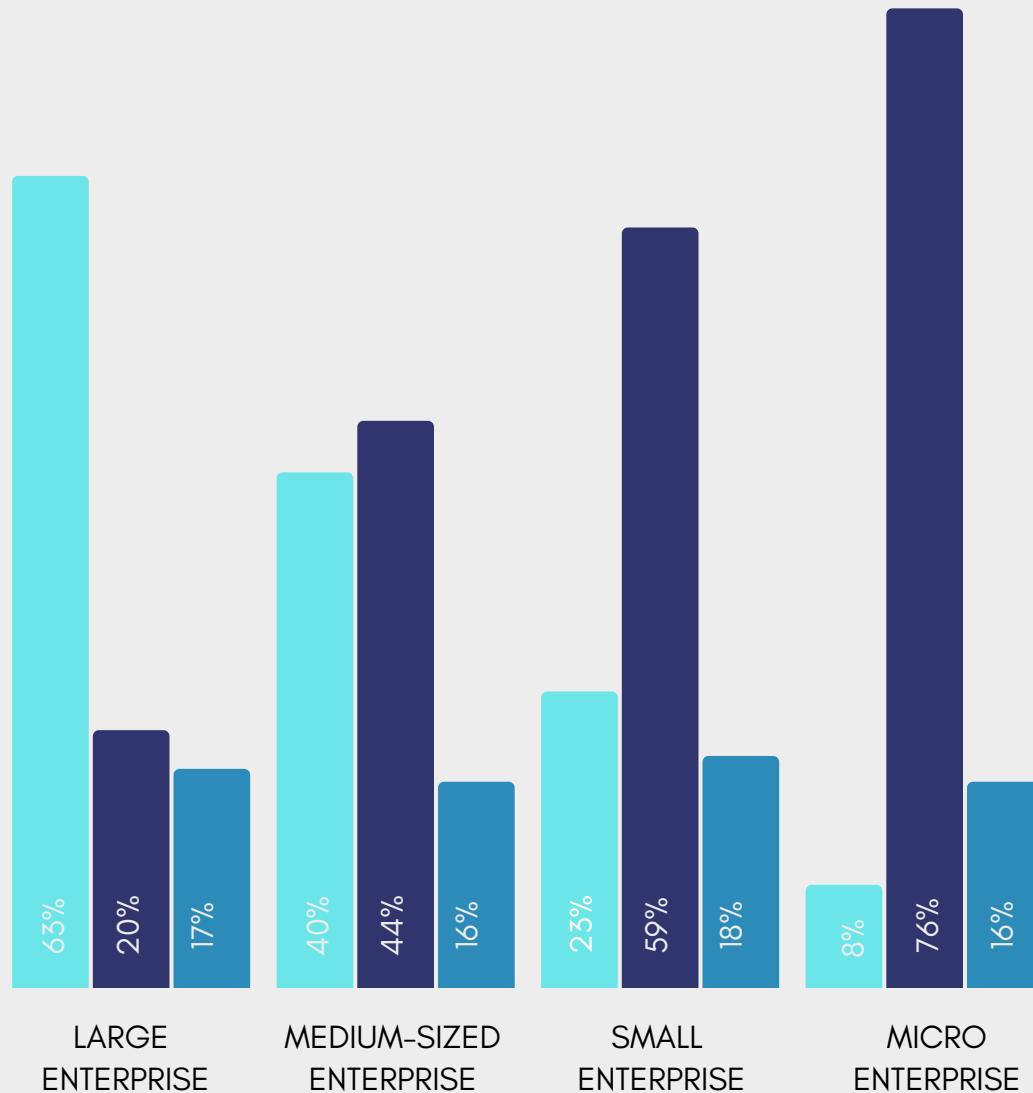
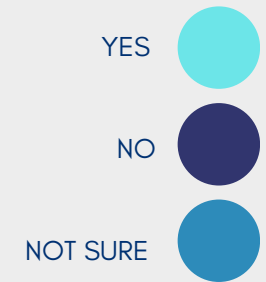
OF ALL BUSINESSES FIND THAT

**ADVICE,
GUIDANCE &
INFORMATION**

IS THE MOST HELPFUL IN HELPING TO
REDUCE THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

QUESTION TWELVE

Have you measured your carbon footprint?



OF ALL
BUSINESSES

49%

SAID THAT

**THEY
HAVEN'T**

MEASURED THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT

↑ STATE OF THE REGION SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Points to cover:

- Why it's important – line in the sand to measure future progress and identify areas where TVCC can support
- Areas covered in the survey – E & (SG)
- Process – survey and follow up interviews
- Results – no. of respondents, type of businesses etc. (pie chart showing business size)

The full results from the survey can be found in the appendix with detailed breakdown of results by business size for each question. In this section we have highlighted some of the most important themes coming from the survey and follow-up interviews.

KEY THEMES COMING FROM THE SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

SUSTAINABILITY IS AN IMPORTANT STRATEGIC ISSUE FOR BUSINESSES IN THE THAMES VALLEY



Sustainability has been identified as an important strategic issue for businesses within the Thames Valley with over three quarters of respondents agreeing that the reduction of negative environmental is part of their strategic objectives.

SUSTAINABILITY



It appears from the survey that sustainability is more important to larger businesses. However, this is most likely due to the government regulation targeted at larger businesses driving focus and action.

LARGE BUSINESSES



Despite the strategic importance sustainability is still seen as a cost or constraint by most businesses, rather than an opportunity for growth.

COST OR CONSTRAINT

MOST BUSINESSES DO NOT MEASURE OR REPORT ON THEIR CARBON EMISSIONS

34%

Only 34% of businesses measure carbon emissions and less than a third regularly publish an ESG report.

LESS THAN A THIRD



Larger businesses are more likely to measure their emissions, implement carbon reduction initiatives and report on progress.

LARGER BUSINESSES



The lack of quality data is the most pressing challenge when it comes to measurement for businesses of all sizes

LACK OF QUALITY DATA

HIGH ENERGY PRICES ARE DRIVING ACTION IN THE SHORT-TERM, BUT CUSTOMERS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DRIVER OF POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION



The immediate pressure of high energy costs is encouraging businesses to look be more efficient and in doing so reduce their emissions.

HIGH ENERGY COSTS



However, the biggest strategic driver of change is meeting customer requirements – both business customers and consumers.

CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS



For smaller businesses in the supply chain of larger business this is becoming a key factor in maintaining existing customers and winning new customers as regulation begins to drive change in larger businesses.

IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

REGULATION IS BEGINNING TO WORK, BUT MORE REGULATION IS REQUIRED; ENFORCEMENT IS NEEDED



Businesses of all sizes consistently cite the importance of regulation to drive positive change across the business sector.

IMPORTANT REGULATION



Regulation is currently aimed at large businesses and is starting to drive change. It is expected that regulations will become more demanding and businesses will need to do more.

LARGE BUSINESSES



However, for regulation to be effective it needs to be consistently enforced. There is a belief that this is not currently happening and there are opportunities for businesses to

CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED

BUSINESSES NEED GREATER SUPPORT TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE



A third of businesses say they want more advice on how to be more sustainable.

A THIRD OF BUSINESSES



Difficulty in measurement consistently mentioned as a key area of support required across all businesses.

DIFFICULTY IN MEASUREMENTS



Lack of resource (time and money) is cited as a key barrier for smaller businesses to engage in sustainability.

LACK OF RESOURCE

PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE



People with a passion for sustainability are making the biggest difference in businesses.

PASSION FOR SUSTAINABILITY



Often sustainability initiatives are driven by individuals rather than by a coherent and structured approach by businesses.

STRUCTURED APPROACH



Leadership engagement in sustainability is the biggest single differentiating factor between businesses that are doing the most to drive positive environmental action and those that aren't.

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



Forbury Place

Photo by UCEM Media



MOVING FROM DATA TO ACTION: NEXT STEPS

In our introduction we highlighted that we believe this Report is the first business-led initiative to consider a region-wide perspective on the Thames Valleys' pathway to net-zero in the context of climate change and sustainability.

It is very much an initial step in setting a baseline (a line in the sand) and, in due course, create a set of SMART indicators that can guide an effective business response and inform progress on our collective journey to achieving net-zero ambitions.

When reading this Report, we feel it is important to emphasise that the report is not trying to offer solutions, nor make specific recommendations. We are not aiming to be prescriptive in regard to what a business or organisation should or should not be doing.

Rather we have:

Ambition to create discussion; to build on the passion we have seen from many individuals and look to embed this across the wider business community.



Aim to help get businesses either moving faster or getting going along the road towards their pathway to net-zero.



Alignment on the areas where the Chamber can support and mobilise our wider business community to deliver the above and continue hosting the region's only business-led sustainability working group and its work programme.

Intention to showcase good practice that helps unlock positive action on net zero and shape a coherent and structured approach by business.



An approach driven by the benefit businesses say they are seeing through sharing knowledge and information to help build greater understanding.



CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

It is timely that our Report has been prepared alongside a report, convened by The Climate Change Committee, and prepared by their expert advisory group on business (AGB), chaired by Shevaun Haviland, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce. The AGB report "The Power of Partnership: Unlocking business action on Net Zero". frames in its summary a number of proposals to strengthen business action, centred around the **'Five I's'**:



IMPLEMENTING

Net Zero through supply chains, procurement, and infrastructure only applied

INTEGRITY

and transparency of impact and actions

INVESTMENT

into low carbon solutions

INNOVATIVE

industries and workers

INFLUENCE

on business and society

As we consider both reports, many of the key messages are shared and we have an opportunity to both align and look to encourage the opportunity for the Thames Valley business community to lead.

Additionally, whilst the survey asked a broad range of questions across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) triangle for sustainability, the focus of the sustainability working group to date has – deliberately and driven by business – centred on the 'E'.

LINKING TO OUR RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

We thank and appreciate the support all those businesses who completed our survey and participated in the more detailed interviews. This research and subsequent analysis have enabled our team to frame the Report and inform our next steps. Encouragingly it has confirmed some things, refined our thinking and understanding, and identified new areas of focus.

The research and analysis provides an informed foundation upon which shape our future work and, we trust, mobilise the business community behind a set of purposeful action. These are summarised in the table below and in the remaining part of this section.

REFLECTION ON THE REPORTS FINDINGS	AREA OF FOCUS TO SUPPORT THAMES VALLEY PROGRESS
Progress is dependent on the buy-in and drive from the most senior leaders of businesses	Convening and supporting leaders in the region to integrate sustainability into the day-to-day running of their organisations
Net zero is now an economic opportunity but how to leverage this is relatively unknown	Making clearer the commercial and economic opportunities the pathway to net zero affords businesses across the Thames Valley and how to access them
Enhanced regulation and greater clarity on policy and incentives is required	Lobbying government for a more consistent, timely and equitable approach to developing, delivering, and enforcing regulation as well as policies and incentives for near-term action
Progress requires a high degree of engagement and cannot be achieved by a business in isolation	Opportunities for business beyond reducing operational emissions, by enabling change through supply chains and in broader influence on society
Sustainability is a set of intertwined priorities for businesses	Consider how we may bring forward and integrate other E, S and G components

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

In developing our State of the Region Report, we have gathered the views (through our survey, working group, face to face interviews) of a broad range of businesses – by size and sector – and academia. Throughout our work we have been struck by the extent of a shared sense of commitment and ambition for business to progress along their respective pathways to net zero.

This Report has been created as both a position statement as well as a framework to facilitate action and engage wider stakeholders (inc. local government) on action-led discussion.

We now look forward to working with the business, academia, and our wider community to move forward on our collective pathway to net zero.

CALL TO ACTION AND MONITORING PROGRESS

The unique partnership we have with the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), in representing the independent voice of business, provides opportunity to directly engage government and strengthen our messages that together we can create a compelling offer on net-zero.

Whilst leading on our own actions, outlined below, and structuring a clear purpose to our work, where appropriate we will also utilise the power of the BCC network to lobby government and other key stakeholders.

IN THE FIRST SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS (TO APRIL 2024), WE WILL LOOK TO:

- Host the Thames Valley's sustainability working group.
- Expand the 'community' and create the tools (e.g. social media) that allow businesses to engage, share and access information, expertise and good practice.
- Continue to promote and develop our dedicated portal as a gateway to information, knowledge sharing and good practice. We will also look to work with partners to prepare a series of 'cheat sheets' on key information and/or actions on sustainability.
- Independently convene both business leaders and passionate employees to understand how to support them to enable greater progress.
- Invite leading businesses and practitioners to help us develop and present a programme of podcasts (or similar) providing advice on how to be more sustainable.
- Shape our survey questions further to reflect feedback and to ensure relevance moving forward.
- Re-present our Thames Valley business checklist – a practical pathway to net zero as a document business can utilise for reviewing and reducing carbon emissions and energy use.

IN THE SECOND SIX TO EIGHT MONTHS (TO DECEMBER 2024)

In addition to maintaining the momentum on the above we will look to:

- With business support seek to secure a dedicated regional resource for sustainability through the University Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme.
- Consider how best to provide a resource available to businesses to undertake 'sustainability audits' at discounted rates.

Finally, and reflecting on the words of Professor Ed Hawkins MBE, in our foreword, "as custodians of this remarkable place in which we live, we must do everything we can to work towards a greater understanding of the challenges and solutions that will secure a better future for the region and for the planet".

Our goal for climate action in the Thames Valley must be that everyone in the region understands a pathway to net-zero carbon, is equipped with the knowledge, tools and support required to play their part, and takes ownership and responsibility for the corporate and individual action required to get there.

- With our sustainability working group, utilise the information gathered and tools we have developed (including our checklist) to develop set of performance indicators that can help establish a consistent measurement for all businesses in the region to use.
- Encourage our business community to engage and adopt our collective approach to net-zero underpinned by the six levels identified in our checklist (Think Big, Think Community, Think Carbon, Think Green, Think Targets, Think Checklist).
- Lobby government, in partnership with the BCC, to emphasise the importance of appropriate regulation, and its consistent enforcement, to drive positive change and action.
- Present the global market opportunity for Thames Valley businesses and competitive advantage the pathway to net-zero offers business.



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THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

FUTURE CLIMATE RISKS IN THE THAMES VALLEY

Professor Nigel Arnell,
*Department of Meteorology,
University of Reading*



As the world warms, climate risks in the Thames Valley will inevitably change.

By the 2050s, average summer temperatures will be up to 3°C higher than in the recent past, and extremes will become more frequent: the chance of having a heatwave could more than double so that one occurs every year. Cooling degree days – a measure of the demand for cooling – could also more than double. Cold weather extremes will become less rare but will continue to occur, making planning for them more challenging.

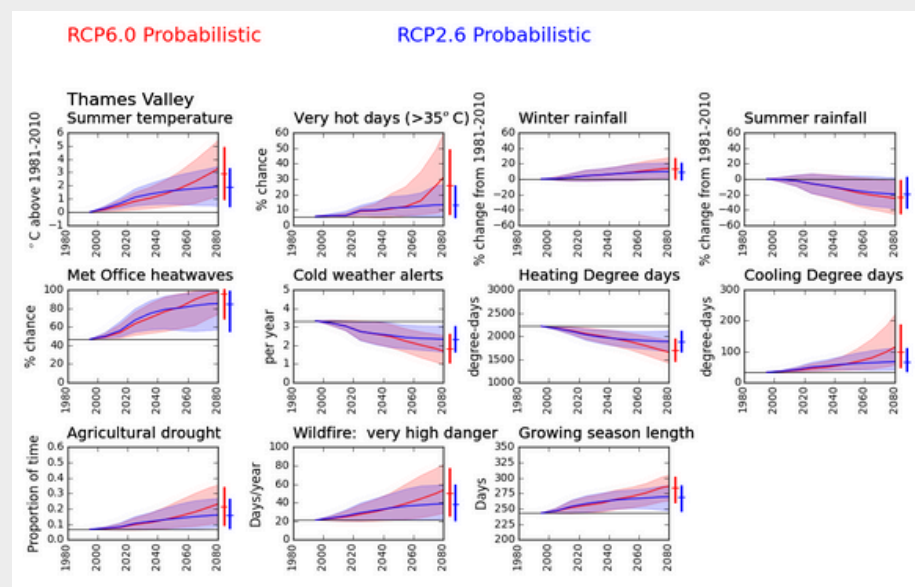
Rainfall in winter will increase but total summer rainfall will decrease by up to 40%. Hotter and drier conditions mean that the number of days with high danger of wildfire could also more than double.

Wetter winters and more frequent intense rainstorms in summer increase the frequency of river and pluvial flooding. The growing season will lengthen but will contain more frequent hot extremes, and the proportion of time spent in drought could more than double.

We are already committed to substantial changes in climate risk by the 2050s and therefore need to adapt to increase resilience, but how risks change beyond the 2050s depends on actions taken now to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Figure 1 shows some indicators of climate risk in the Thames Valley, with two different assumptions about how future greenhouse gas emissions increase.

Climate risk indicators for the Thames Valley (from uk-cri.org). The figures show climate risk under two emissions pathways, representing low emissions consistent with national and international policy targets (RCP2.6: blue) and higher emissions which would arise if no further action over current policies were taken to reduce emissions (RCP6.0: red). The indicators are calculated using UKCP18 climate projections, and the shaded areas represent uncertainty bands.





THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

MISTAKES IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Neil Trivedi,
The Perfect Process
Company

THE PERFECT PROCESS



When organisations are trying to reduce their environmental impact, a key mistake is to take a mechanistic approach and ignore behaviour.

Take room lights for example: no matter how efficient the bulbs, the benefits will be lost if they are not turned off when the room is empty – despite the same individuals being more likely to turn off the lights at home to save on their domestic energy bills!

In the factory environment there are many examples: gas burners being turned on an hour before “so we don’t forget”, machines left running with no product over lunch, and pumps left on 24/7 “so we don’t have to worry about it.” Automation or remote monitoring could reduce some of these losses, but the costs may be prohibitive and do not address the root cause – the behaviour of people.

Changing behaviour is not easy. It is the outward expression of personal values and to change these takes significant work and effort. Engaging employees with the greener journey is a way of addressing behaviour through the practical experience of change.

Running a regular green workshop to reduce the environmental impact of a business soon starts to change the mentality, moving the mindset from *should I change my behaviour?* to *how can I change my behaviour?* For example, getting the team to empty out the recycling bins to see what’s in them and how well they are segregated is a fun, practical activity which provides a very visual result.

Appointing a rotating ‘Monitor of the Bins’ soon turns poachers into gamekeepers and will result in everyone improving their recycling segregation. This approach also creates a learning environment for the whole team so they can continually improve.



Hartcliffe Way Refuse Shop
Bristol Waste



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS: CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN TURBULENT TIMES

*David Simon,
Professor of Geography
and Director of External
Engagement, School of
Life Sciences and
Environment, Royal
Holloway, University of
London*



The political, economic, environmental and socio-cultural turbulence – both near and far – of recent years is continuing apace.

The uncertainty and anxiety for both households and businesses that such conditions naturally trigger, mean that most people and firms prioritise meeting the immediate necessity of surviving today and tomorrow. Longer-term challenges, including the 'wicked problems' of transforming our activities and lifestyles to tackle climate change and increase sustainability and resilience, tend to be sidelined in the interim.

The national context has been truly challenging for firms. Many of the main unexpected crises – like the COVID-19 pandemic and impact of the war in Ukraine on energy, food and other prices – have been global or at least Europe-wide in their impact.

However, one profound and principally British source of turbulence has been having to try to navigate the prolonged uncertainties about what form Brexit might ultimately take and then to dealing with the inadequacies and anomalies of the Brexit agreement. Regardless of economic sector, and even for those not exposed to the additional jeopardy of trading with one or both parts of the island of Ireland, the pain and cost have been considerable.

Whatever the claims and counterclaims by politicians, it is evident that new opportunities from Brexit have been dwarfed for most firms by the problems and additional costs, some self-imposed in the form of new British regulations that appear to serve no useful purpose. Some problems have eased but others, including labour shortages and visa restrictions, the threat of additional checks and bureaucracy on some imports from the EU later this year and, as I write, also new jeopardy for the electric vehicle industry, seem set to continue for a considerable while longer.

What also puts British commerce and industry at an internationally competitive disadvantage is that these challenges overlay the disruption and additional costs of COVID-19 and the Ukraine crisis. Small wonder, then, that the climate crisis and sustainability feel like one headache too many for numerous firms. In that context, it is impressive how many firms are actually engaging or at least realise the importance of doing so, even if they currently lack the wherewithal.

This all applies no less to businesses in the Thames Valley, despite the region's economic strengths and dynamism. The last few years have thrown up almost unprecedented uncertainty and thus business risk, with many issues beyond the control of individual firms.

Finding the headspace to understand and be aware of the issues and knowing how and where to find appropriate information and tools to act prudently and take precautions, is crucial to the ability to manage the risks.

As successive global, national and regional reports and assessments, from the IPCC and WMO to the UK's Climate Change Committee, consistently highlight, the pace of climate change is accelerating and the urgency of addressing it has never been greater. Like the pandemic, its impacts are and will continue to be socially, spatially and economically uneven, exposing fault lines in society. The likely impacts represent the outcome of the interaction between its two main components:

THE INCREASING FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF EXTREME EVENTS (LIKE THE FLOODS, DROUGHTS AND ASSOCIATED WILDFIRES AND THE DEVASTATION THEY ARE CAUSING AROUND THE WORLD)

THE GRADUAL ATMOSPHERIC AND OCEAN WARMING AND ASSOCIATED SLOW-ONSET CHANGES, LIKE SEA LEVEL RISE, THAT ARE LONG-LASTING ONCE THEY ARISE.

All is not doom and gloom, however. Climate change also provides important business opportunities as we build back better and promote economic circularity by minimising waste and turning it into resources through reuse, repurposing and recycling; retrofitting existing buildings and building new low- or zero-carbon buildings; converting operations to sustainable and renewable energy; electrifying vehicle fleets and developing integrated transport systems and multifunctional green 15/20-minute neighbourhoods and cities; adapting design and construction standards; enhancing blue-green infrastructure, and building resilience through having flexibility, adaptability and some spare capacity.

This is where the Chamber plays a crucial role in collating and sharing economic and financial intelligence, good practice, and facilitating networking. Neither the timing of its decision to establish a Sustainability Working Group (SWG) nor the decision – after wide consultation and discussion – to focus its initial efforts on the SME sector, which generally lacks in-house expertise or capacity to tackle climate change and promote sustainability, even in 'normal' times, is coincidental. The SWG has combined expertise and insights from the region's universities and colleges with those from professional consultancies and a diversity of firms for collective benefit. Its efforts are explained elsewhere in this Report.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

NAVIGATING A COMPLEX SUSTAINABILITY LANDSCAPE

*Richard Collins,
CEO, CRS Accreditation*



The world has changed considerably in recent years, especially our attitude towards environmental and social responsibility. It's not just the environmental issues that we are aware of but social issues such as 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Me Too'.

Sustainability has to be addressed by employers, employees, stakeholders, customers and consumers. We need to work collectively to make significant impacts that will leave a positive legacy for future generations. Sustainability should be part of all jobs.

This has led to change in the sustainability landscape. It seems like that landscape has become over complicated with a lot of jargon, acronyms and sector language. It can be confusing and intimidating.

There is an increased focus on environmental issues associated with climate change. The sustainability landscape is influenced by pressing environmental issues such as climate disaster, deforestation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, pollution, and resource depletion. These challenges drive the need for sustainable practices and solutions.

We have also seen the importance of how sustainability can help build a strong company culture, creating a workplace that's inclusive. Employees are increasingly demanding transparency, accountability, and sustainable practices from the companies that they work for.

An ESG rating is now essential for anyone looking to invest in a business. The adoption of ESG practices points to a growing understanding that a healthy profit doesn't have to come at the expense of people or the planet – in fact, there is a direct link between profitability and simultaneously striving to make the world a better place. Investors now routinely analyse information on ESG performance alongside other financial and strategic information in order to gain a better understanding of companies' risks and future prospects.

Committing to socially and environmentally equitable practices may seem overwhelming at first, especially when returns to the business are unclear or hard to quantify.

However, when properly implemented, a CSR policy and good ESG performance can provide the guiding principles and measures that make social commitments actionable and directly beneficial to all stakeholders.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

THE PASSION AND FRUSTRATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE GENERATION

Filip Velkov
*BA Politics and
International Relations,
University of Reading*



**University of
Reading**

**The youth of today have a propensity to 'save the planet'.
Why is that and where does it come from?**

Colloquially dubbed the generation of technology, today's youth have grown up with digital screen-time as part of their daily routine. Social media and phone apps intertwined with our existence have undoubtedly affected our perception of the world, but have also made us aware of the single biggest threat facing humanity today, in ways which the previous generations haven't experienced.

The bombardment of 'in your face' information of the effects of climate change have planted a seed in this generation; through graphic depictions of forest fires, graphs of global temperature over time, 'before and after' maps of ice caps melting, a passion is born out of necessity; necessity which the newspapers of the past failed to convey to their generations.

Yet, we are only the youth; our generation hasn't yet reached the C-Suite, we aren't Managing Directors or Partner level employees, we do not have the decision-making authority through which we can channel all our pent up passion; frustrated, all we can do now is hope to influence those that 'run things' to see what we see and act so that we may be in a good position to eventually take over, and show them how its done.

Our generation is next in this relay race, all we ask for is a favourable handover of the baton ... if by that time there is a baton at all.



Whiteknights Campus
University of Reading



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

A YOUNG PERSON'S PLEA

Toby Ralphs
*BA, Geography,
University of Liverpool*



THE UNIVERSITY
of LIVERPOOL

When asked what the word sustainability means to me, it became apparent that it no longer carries the weight it once did. And for those in charge, those who have designated my existence as collateral, it has also become apparent that the word carries very little meaning to them.

Their promises lie undone like the laces on my trainers and as I sip my pint, cherishing the wavering sunset and looking at all my friends, I know our empty laughter and masked smiles are the only things that hold us up from the crushing weight of our generational burden.

Now I am not naïve enough to believe that change comes overnight and I am very welcoming and greatly appreciative of the Chamber's work and the reciprocal efforts of its members. But not enough is being done. I implore you not to get sidetracked – continue educating yourselves, continue engaging in dialogue and continue directing your businesses towards to net-zero.

My experience negates my optimism, but there is still hope. I conclude with a passage from Dr Suess', *The Lorax*:

“The Lorax said nothing. Just gave me a glance...just gave me a very sad, sad backward glance...as he lifted himself by the seat of his pants. And I'll never forget the grim look on his face when he heisted himself and took leave of this place, through a hole in the smog, without leaving a trace.

I understand that as a byproduct of our youth, our voices are quiet. So look at us instead. And when you look at us, I ask you not to forget the grim looks on our faces and remember that we cannot take leave of this place.



CASE STUDY

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACE



A sustainable workplace is critical for Net Zero, but it's also essential for attracting new clients, green finance, retaining staff and reduced corporate risk.

With no formal CSR, sustainability or carbon emissions programme in place, Advanced UK's challenge was to collate the many positives of the company and to produce a sustainability report.

“ESG represents the single biggest global shake-up for business in modern history. As we have grown, we have embraced the sustainability journey, and we're champions of ESG, carbon neutrality, and CSR

Joe Gallagher,
Director: Advanced UK

Joe Gallagher, a board member of Advanced UK and key sponsor explained: *"We made the decision to work with ESG PRO to help us build an ESG report to help us with our growing sustainability agenda and help us maintain existing client relationships and improve our win rate on new bids and tenders".*

With objectives, targets and project plan set and an ambitious nine-month timeframe, Advanced UK set about their task. The programme devised, the business had bite sized chunks to complete and share each week. When confused with some questions the business simply flagged these with their consultant for help and clarification.

After four months the business got its first report, receiving excellent feedback, recommendations, and valuable quick-win suggestions to improve their rating. On time and on budget, nine months after the project kicked off, Advanced UK received their first ESG rating with a most impressive score of BBB.

Remarkably, this makes Advanced UK the only non-publicly owned office technology vendor in the UK, to date, to have an ESG rating. For the business the evolution continues with a series of next steps together already defined:

To achieve verified carbon neutrality by

2024

More than

80%

of any company's carbon is in its supply chain they're going to reduce it!

They're advising on how to demonstrate social value through
COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

PROCUREMENT OPTIMIZATION
conducting workshops to enable the future sustainability to be self-funding.

Read more about Advanced UK journey [HERE](#)



CASE STUDY

B-CORP ACCELERATOR

COTSWOLD FAYRE*

Cotswold Fayre certified B Corp in 2015 and was one of the few first B Corp businesses in the UK. This came after a few years of soul searching, realising that businesses were often doing more harm than good to the planet and people, and finding out about the B Corp community gave Cotswold Fayre a renewed sense of purpose.

Cotswold Fayre CEO, Paul Hargreaves, has since advocated for the B Corp movement and better practices in businesses, including promoting the Better Business Act being proposed to the UK Government.

But as a business that works in the food and drinks industry, known to be high drivers of negative impact on our planet, more needed to be done.

The B Corp framework has given Cotswold Fayre an opportunity to look internally to foster change. Eventually, it became obvious that the same effort needed to apply to their supply chain – strong of over 400 suppliers, and 4000 products.

Because Cotswold Fayre already works with likeminded companies, they privileged a supportive approach to supply chain improvement. Initially by hosting conferences for their suppliers on positive social and environmental business practices, and through Paul's advocacy.

The pandemic pushed a lot of businesses globally on the same self-reflection journey Cotswold Fayre had done prior to 2015. Many realised the world could not go on as usual, and this was also felt in the company's supply chain. Many suppliers turned to Cotswold Fayre for guidance, which gave the idea to start a dedicated short course to help suppliers become B Corp.



Download Cotswold Fayre's Impact Report **here**.

Led by an experienced consultant, Andy Hawkins, the course started in January 2022 and has since helped 15 suppliers on the journey.

The course is organised in cohorts of maximum 10 companies, who meet each week for 3 months to complete the B Impact Assessment in a structured and supportive environment and get all the guidance needed to collect the evidence and set high ambitions for themselves.

The feedback received to date has been overwhelmingly positive, with one supplier saying it has helped demystify the process, and another adding that the course has *“provided the framework to rethink how we do business and ensure the processes and ambitions are in place to continually improve.”*

Meanwhile, Cotswold Fayre’s supply chain has increasingly embraced the B Corp movement: in 2019, only 6 suppliers had the certification against 55 in March 2023, and the number keeps increasing.

Any business’ impact on the environment comes mainly from their supply chain, and so companies can minimise their impact by making better procurement choices.

What helps Cotswold Fayre achieve that is also a culture in the company that promotes good business practices and encourages all employees to participate in the choices made as a business. The procurement and buying teams are aligned with the company purpose and this is reflected in how the range is selected.



Heathrow Airfield View
Heathrow



CASE STUDY

ARE YOU A SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPION IN YOUR BUSINESS?



A sustainability champion is an individual who seeks to lead change in a company to help transform that organisation into a smarter, more successful, and more sustainable business. The term was coined by Bob Willard, author of The Sustainability Champion's Guidebook

Sustainability Champions are tasked, inter alia, with spearheading the sustainability efforts of a business and keeping the sustainability programme/roadmap of that business on track needs.

Every organisation's journey, on its pathway to net zero, is going to be a little bit different and there is no one-size fits all solution. The most important thing is simply to get started. Just make sure you have a competent and capable sustainability champion to carry the torch and lead the way. Choose them wisely.

“

“Think Big, Start Small, Act Now”

Lead your field. Own our genius. Impact the world.

Robin Sharma

At Ethical Reading, they are supporting Thames Valley businesses by connecting sustainability champions at organisations across the region to help them make an even bigger positive difference.

Are you enthusiastic and passionate about helping to improve your company's eco credentials? Are you already shaking things up to minimise your business's impact on the environment? Or are you simply frustrated about issues in your workplace like poor waste management?

If any of these sound like you, you would be welcome to join Ethical Reading's growing network of sustainability champions. You will receive invitations to exclusive events and will be able to connect with fellow champions through our dedicated branch of the Sustaineers forum, for mutual support and inspiration.



Climate Stripe Bus

Reading



CASE STUDY

A GREEN JOURNEY – ONE SME'S ACTION IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO START SAVING



Energy is one of the largest controllable overheads for most businesses, which means there are many opportunities to make savings.

Reducing energy consumption not only saves money but improves working conditions, which can increase staff productivity. Furthermore, the environment will benefit from reductions in energy use and carbon emissions which enhances corporate reputation.

Our example business has been driving down their carbon footprint for the past 8 years, reducing irrespective of production and staffing levels. This has been driven by a commitment to the following essential elements, that any SME (Small and Medium Sized Enterprise) could adopt, and which have contributed to their success.

**Leadership
engagement**

**High quality,
reliable data**

The following are three simple and affordable examples of the action that took to reduce their carbon footprint:

1. **LED Lighting** – replaced 400 440wlights with Coreline High Bay lighting (155W each) resulting in an annual saving of 58,800Kw/h of electricity and over £12,000. It has taken 2.5 years for the savings to cover the initial investment costs.
2. **Waterless Urinals** – following an initial trial in2018, all five urinals were replaced in 2019 with a waterless system, resulting in an average total annual water saving of 400m³. There are wider cost savings associated with cleaning and maintenance.
3. **Temperature monitoring** – invested in a range of equipment, such as internal and external temperature monitors and secondary gas meters to segregated department information, led to :
 - a. *preventative energy use, e.g., ongoing monitoring of temperatures in office areas to enable adjustment of heating settings to improve efficiency solutions.*
 - b. *reactive resolutions of faults, the discovery of excess gas, used in factory heating, contractors found no fault. However, gas and temperature information confirmed fault and contractors continued to investigate until resolved.*

**Regular
analysis**

**Staff education
and involvement**

For more information on how to improve energy efficiency in your office visit the [Carbon Trust](#) and a wider range of [guide, reports and tools](#).



CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH,
GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY

Heathrow

“The world now looks very different from a few short years ago. Aviation is a force for good in the world. But those benefits cannot come at any cost. Climate is an existential threat to aviation, to us all personally and it must be addressed.”

This is a key tenant in the ambitions of Heathrow Airport who are leading the way with its strategy, Heathrow 2.0: **Connecting People and Planet, published in 2022.** Its goal is: to protect the benefits of aviation for the future, the carbon must be taken out of flying. Like every other part of the global economy, aviation needs to reach net zero emissions by 2050. That may seem like a long time, but if the substantive changes that are needed have not been made by 2030, the industry won't be on track for its 2050 goal.

“

It has never been more important for aviation to take the lead on sustainability as aviation needs to reach its net-zero emissions by 2050. If we are to deliver substantive change, this is the decade to make a difference.

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Blunkett
Chair of Heathrow Local Recovery Forum

A **year on from the launch**, Heathrow report that over half of the commitments towards net zero aviation and making Heathrow a great place to live and work have been marked as 'on track' or 'progressing.'

In
2022

Heathrow became the first airport globally to launch a Silicon Aviation Fuel (SAF) incentive programme that covers up to

50% of the extra cost

of SAF to make it more affordable for airlines. Since then, airlines representing

76% flights

at the airport have made a commitment to at least

10% SAF usage by 2030

This means, that in

2023

Heathrow's SAF incentive is expected to save

81,000 tonnes of CO2

On the ground, numbers of **passengers using public transport**

to get to the airport has steadily improved to

43% in Q4 2022.

We should expect an upward trend to continue now the

Elizabeth Line,

with direct services from

East London,

is completed. We continue to push for the timely delivery of the

Western Rail Link to Heathrow



Heathrow Director of Sustainability Matt Gorman;

*Dr Helaina Black, a senior soil scientist & an honorary
associate of the James Hutton Institute;
Agricarbon Co-Founder Stewart Arbuckle*

“

A year on from the launch of Heathrow 2.0. I am thrilled our 2030 carbon reduction goals have achieved SBTi validation and are consistent with a 1.5-degree carbon reduction trajectory. We still have a long way to go, but our world leading SAF incentive programme demonstrates that greener, cleaner flying is possible.

Matt Gorman

*Director of Carbon
Heathrow Airport Limited*

Heathrow 2.0 is an umbrella strategy that brings together sustainability goals from across the airport, aiming to reduce emissions in the air and on the ground, while delivering for the local community as a responsible neighbour to all here in the Thames Valley.

Heathrow's focus in the community continues to be on sharing the benefits of living close to the UK's largest single site employer. This includes the benefits of doing business with Heathrow, with over 100 local SMEs attended Heathrow's annual Business Summit, already delivering against the target of over 50% of the local supply chain being small or medium businesses.

Read Heathrow's Sustainability Report 2022 (updated March 2023)



CASE STUDY

LEAVE BLUE SKIES FOR OUR CHILDREN – HONDA'S RACE TO NET ZERO

HONDA

Honda may be a global giant, industry leader and innovator, but one of the key messages at the launch of their latest European Environmental Report was “we are just one company ... the journey towards sustainability requires participation from all parts of society”.

Honda is committed to achieving carbon neutrality and has set a goal of zero environmental impact by 2050. The report provides an update on their progress to achieving sustainability, environment, and social commitments across Europe.

In Europe, Honda's sustainability activities are focused on three core areas – Reducing environmental impact; Supporting circularity and Improving safety – which are probably common across any business. To achieve this, their sustainability activity encompasses action from electrifying vehicles to ramping up their use of renewable energy, to developing services to support the transition to net zero.

The 2022 Honda Europe Environment Report highlights progress in delivering significant CO2 reductions – click [HERE](#) to read more and download the Report. See also case study entitled “Second Founding”.

Use 100% renewable electricity in all Honda European operations by 2025.



Announcing the first electric moped for the European market and are leading a consortium to develop swappable batteries for electric scooters and motorcycles.



To electrify our entire mainstream passenger car line up

Continuing to meet the target of zero waste to landfill from our manufacturing operations.

Honda considers core to its philosophy, two phrases, for all businesses to perhaps keep in mind, firstly: “It wants to be a Company society wants to exist” and secondly, “Action without Philosophy is a lethal weapon, Philosophy without Action is worthless”. Learn more by visiting Honda's dedicated sustainability website [HERE](#).



CASE STUDY

SECOND FOUNDING

HONDA

Honda may be a global giant, industry leader and innovator, but it holds a strong philosophy that might be common to all companies who place sustainability at the centre of their business operations, “to embed sustainability into our business thinking and traditionally this has largely been the self-driven desire to do the right thing”.

Now consider, that this philosophy may now be colliding with, or perhaps even being overtaken by, the external pressures of the global climate crisis.

Within Honda, this has driven an inflection point in their history – what is being called their “Second Founding” which may well be pertinent to all business.

Customers and stakeholders are increasingly asking questions that fundamentally examine the right for Honda to assert that they are a Company society wants to exist (we might now, or very soon extend this to staff (existing and new) and suppliers.

But Philosophy without Action is worthless – so an elemental shift in Honda’s product development and direction is underway framed by the Triple Action to Zero (see Honda Europe Environment Report) and making a significant impact on reducing CO₂ emissions.

But tackling the sustainability challenge is not something that one company, government or country can do by itself. So, through this State of the Region Report, Honda are affirming they stand ready to collaborate with Thames Valley companies in developing new products and services, educate, inform and share good practice on new technologies and support our local and national governments in their efforts to develop the required infrastructure.



SMART VEHICLE CHARGING SERVICE

Honda



CASE STUDY

RESPONSIBLE SOURCING

Lonza

About Lonza

Lonza Biologics is a preferred global partner to the pharmaceutical, biotech and nutrition markets. We focus on enabling treatments that prevent illness and support healthier lifestyles. Slough is home to Lonza's multi-product cGMP manufacturing and development facility for Mammalian Biopharmaceuticals. It is Lonza's global development centre of excellence for gene to GMP supply. Learn more [HERE](#).



Lonza Slough office
copyright: Lonza Ltd

For Lonza, Responsible Sourcing means a commitment to upholding the highest social, environmental and governance standards when making sourcing decisions, including spend categories, raw materials and services.

Lonza undertakes a risk analysis process that enables the business to identify high-risk materials and geographies and take adequate mitigation actions.

Wherever you may sit within your respective supply chains, responsible sourcing is becoming an increasingly common approach.

It is a collaborative approach, aimed at driving forward sustainability ambitions, and setting out key ethical, social, environmental and governance standards and principles.

To underline their Commitment to Sustainability, Lonza have developed a binding Supplier Code of Conduct that it expects its suppliers, business partners and their contractors to adhere to, both globally and locally.

It is an important criterion in their selection and evaluation of suppliers. Crucially, they expect suppliers to ensure these standards and principles are upheld throughout their supply chain.



CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE WORKING GROUP (SWG) – A PRACTICAL PATHWAY TO NET-ZERO



The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce's SWG recognises the climate emergency and calls upon the Thames Valley business community to become the 'greenest region' in the UK. We have a collective appetite and ambition to act collectively to leave tomorrow's world in better health.

Climate change is real, tangible, and visibly affects us all. Keeping to within 1.5°C global heating is the biggest challenge we face as humans today; failure to do so will be catastrophic. However, the net zero revolution is the biggest business opportunity in human history, and those who establish themselves early as net zero leaders have the potential to capitalise most on this opportunity.

“

“Decarbonisation represents a transformation for every business – it is either about survival or opportunity.”

Ben Morrison,
EY

Developed with businesses, academics, industry leaders and other stakeholders on the SWG, we have shared a checklist to assist businesses on their journey to net-zero. This checklist is intended to be a tool for reviewing the carbon emissions of your business and identifying the actions that can be taken to help your company reduce its energy use and associated emissions. The document provides practical advice and information to help you on this journey.

The checklist is extensive, but not exhaustive. Some of the actions might not be applicable to your business, you may have completed them already, or they might not be a priority for your business.

To access the full checklist, which includes in-depth explanation of the principles and 'think-levers' underpinning the collective approach to net zero which enables you to gain an understanding of the actions and aims of the checklist, click [HERE](#).

If you are ready to take action, and start ticking off the steps towards net zero or use our compact, workbook version which will help you track your progress by clicking [HERE](#).

A PRACTICAL PATHWAY TO NET ZERO DOCUMENT

Thames Valley Business Checklist

Welcome to the Thames Valley Business Net Zero Checklist

The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC), in partnership with EY, recognises the climate emergency and calls upon the Thames Valley business community to become the 'greenest region' in the UK.

Climate change is real, tangible and visibly affects us all. Keeping to within 1.5°C global heating is the biggest challenge we face as humans today; failure to do so will be catastrophic. However, the net zero revolution is the biggest business opportunity in human history, and those who establish themselves early as net zero leaders have the potential to capitalise most on this opportunity.

Decarbonisation represents a transformation for every business - it is either about survival or opportunity

This checklist below is a tool for reviewing the carbon emissions of your business and identifying the actions that can be taken to help your company reduce its energy use and associated emissions. This document provides practical advice and information to help you on this journey.

The recommended actions have been developed by the Thames Valley Sustainability Working Group (SWG) a business-led roundtable of companies, academic institutions and industry leaders, located in the Thames Valley, with the appetite and ambition to take action collectively to leave tomorrow's world in better health.

The checklist is extensive, but not exhaustive. As such, some of the actions might not be applicable to your business, you might have already completed them, or they might not be a priority for your business. To use this checklist, complete the tick boxes in each section, before identifying which actions you will take as a business. The checklist can be printed off or completed by editing into the pdf form.

If you require any support during this process, please visit our [website](#) or contact the SWG Team.





CASE STUDY

PATH TO NET ZERO

OXWASH

Reaching net zero is undoubtedly complex process, but it all starts with the desire to do the right thing.

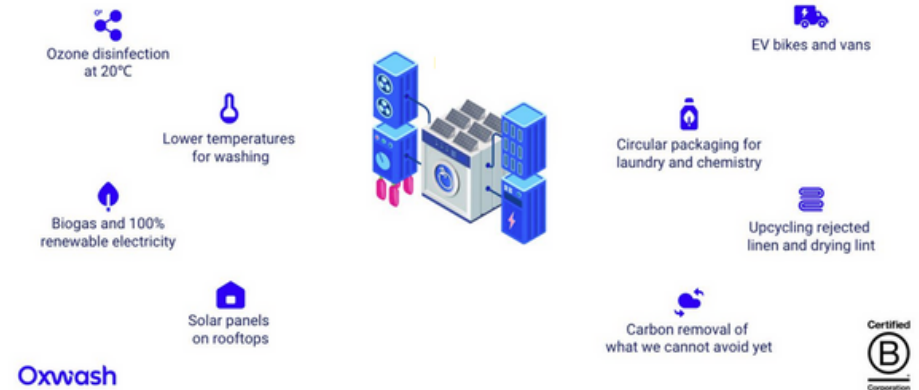
Knowing your baseline, identifying the opportunities to decarbonise and employing the right strategies are some of the ways you can get started on the net zero journey.

Oxwash is doing just that; re-engineering the laundry process from the ground up, determined to be the first truly sustainable, net zero impact washing company in the world.

Steadfastly pursuing the science-based net zero target, aiming to attain net zero in scopes 1 and 2 by 2025 and across all scopes by 2028, their initial step includes understanding their carbon footprint by employing the Greenhouse Gas Protocol for emission calculation; reducing these emissions is the next.

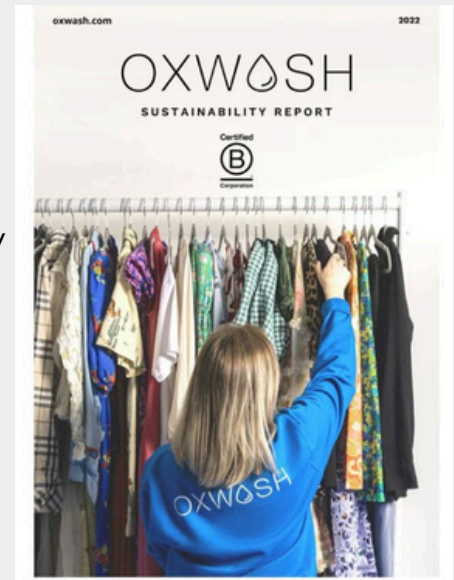
Oxwash's emissions reduction strategies include:

Reducing textile cleaning emissions



In order to compensate for the carbon they cannot avoid emitting yet, Oxwash is investing in carbon removal technologies to eliminate atmospheric carbon emissions permanently. In 2022, the company removed 135 tonnes of CO₂e emitted in 2021 by their operations and supply chain.

Learn more about their activities and to look at their 2022 sustainability report, click [HERE](#).





CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UNITED NATIONS



In 2015, UN member states agreed to 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all.



The SDGs are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.

These 17 goals create a common framework – with targets and KPIs for companies, governments, and society to achieve a sustainable world by 2030. They remind everyone and encourage all companies to have actions that focus on environment, social and economic sustainability: seeking to contribute to society AND run an efficient and sustainable business.

“

“No single country, sector, organisation, or discipline alone can solve the global sustainability issues we face today”

Dr Hilary Lynch,

*previous Global Challenges Strategy Manager
Royal Holloway, University of London (2018–21).*

The UK is committed to the delivery of the SDGs and across Europe, we are at the forefront of the sustainability transformation, with regulators and society driving increasingly high social, environmental and ethical standards.

Do you know your SDGs? Watch [HERE](#). Learn more about the SDGs [HERE](#).

↑ SUSTAINABILITY WORKING GROUP

OUR MEMBERSHIP

THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE SWG IS SHAPED AND
DEVELOPED BY ITS MEMBERSHIP

We are thankful for their commitment in delivering to date:

- A dedicated website portal
- The Business Checklist – Pathway to net-zero available to share [HERE](#)
- A 'Strengthening your company's pathway to net-zero' webinar available to watch on demand [HERE](#)
- A portfolio of shared learning, thought leadership and case stories to read and share [HERE](#)
- The commitment to expand the information sharing and portfolio of learning available, particularly to the SME business community.
- Awareness raising of the sustainability services, expertise and courses on offer from our in-region academic institutions, including University of Reading, University College of Estate Management and Royal Holloway, University of London
- A willingness to lead by example and champion sustainability and climate change issues and enable companies to act effectively and efficiently.
- The endorsement and support for the Chamber to coordinate a business-led approach.



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Heathrow



SUSTAINABILITY WORKING GROUP

OUR MEMBERSHIP

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