

# TOOLKIT

## BUSINESS CRITICAL: SEVEN STEPS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Businesses and communities across the world are experiencing the escalating impact of the climate crisis. Our research shows that the UK public wants business to take action in ways that enable people and nature to thrive. Outlining Business in the Community's (BITC) Seven Steps for Climate Action and the principles to guide them, this toolkit includes powerful stories of businesses taking action.

### Introduction

2021 is proving to be a critical year for global climate action. The sixth report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that human activities were “unequivocally” causing climate change which was occurring at an “unprecedented” rate globally and was in some cases “irreversible”.<sup>i</sup>

We are already seeing this in the increasing incidence of severe weather events over the last year. Flash flooding occurred in China, Western Europe, and New York. Severe heatwaves moved across North America, Europe, and Africa, and wildfires hit most of the Mediterranean.<sup>ii</sup> These events highlight how climate change is no longer a distant threat but a real and current crisis.

Alongside this, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused people's priorities to shift. Global policymakers have seen the cost of inaction as they poured money into recovery efforts. Some estimates suggest that economic damage caused by climate change will be the equivalent of having a COVID-sized pandemic every ten years.<sup>iii</sup>

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**72% of people say it is important that the businesses they buy from take climate action.<sup>iv</sup>**

The UN's latest climate change conference, COP26, has been described as “our last opportunity to make the necessary step-change” and all eyes will be on the UK to lead a decisive climate settlement.<sup>v</sup> The pandemic caused the worst global economic shock since the Great Depression and its impacts on health, work and society will be felt for years to come. If we are to build back responsibly we must take swift and decisive action on the climate crisis to protect lives, livelihoods and the natural systems that support them.<sup>vi</sup>



### PRINCIPLES FOR CLIMATE ACTION

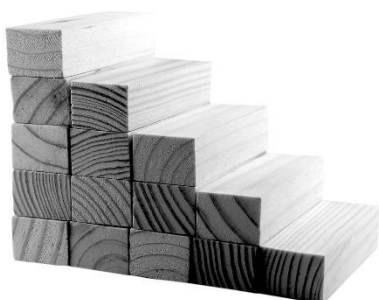
As well as huge structural changes across industries, the move to net-zero carbon requires new regulation and legislation from policymakers and significant lifestyle changes for individuals. The interplay of these changes will transform all our lives.

In making this transition we must ensure that the benefits are shared widely across society, that risks are mitigated and that any negative effects are minimised, especially for those who have the least resources and the most to lose. This must include communities that are already struggling or are at the greatest risk from climate impacts. This process is defined as a 'just transition'.

Originating in the US labour movement in the 1980s,<sup>vii</sup> the 'just transition' concept has, up until now, mainly been the preserve of governments and campaigning groups. As businesses step up, they must ensure their climate action is fair, equitable, and rebuilds trust with the communities they serve.

BITC's most recent research<sup>viii</sup> demonstrates the need for businesses to get serious about a just transition. It shows:

- Just 25% of people and 40% of businesses think the social benefits of the transition will be shared equally
- Three quarters of people and almost half of businesses (47%) think the negative impacts of the transition (such as job losses or higher taxes) will be shared unequally
- Only 36% of people (and 30% of young people) trust that businesses will do what they promise



### WHAT WE DO IS IMPORTANT. BUT HOW WE DO IT IS EQUALLY CRITICAL

If we are to leave a legacy we can be proud of, we must act now, with courage.

#### OWN THE PROBLEM

- Accept that the climate crisis is ours to fix
- Act with urgency and don't leave the task to future generations
- Be part of the solution and embed this into your organisation's purpose and personal leadership priorities to ensure your families, businesses, and communities can thrive

#### EXTEND HORIZONS

- Take action to rapidly cut carbon and build resilience in operations and value chains
- Think long-term, with broader definitions of value to ensure that business models are fit for the future
- Apply the same energy to delivering and rewarding non-financial outcomes as to financial ones

#### BE IN IT TOGETHER

- Be inclusive in developing strategies to enable society to thrive in a time of transformation and transition
- Recognise the founding principles of BITC: successful businesses depend on thriving communities.

### SEVEN STEPS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

The UK public is clear that it wants businesses to take action on climate change and the areas they want to see prioritised are in line with climate science.

The top three climate actions people want businesses to take are:

- 1. Use less energy and materials in products and services**
- 2. Protect nature and prevent biodiversity loss**
- 3. Cut the amount of greenhouse gas emissions they produce**

Drawing on climate science and input from leading responsible businesses, NGOs, and experts, BITC has developed the Seven Steps for Climate Action.

This critical set of outcomes and enablers is designed to equip businesses to tackle climate change and deliver a just transition for people and nature. The enablers are vital to ensure that the outcomes are achieved in a way that is fair for people as well as planet.

Practical examples from responsible businesses taking action can be found in this toolkit which demonstrate the impact you can have.



**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE THE CLIMATE CRISIS HISTORY**  
**[bitc.org.uk/climate-action](https://bitc.org.uk/climate-action)**

### STEP 1: Embed climate risks and opportunities into your strategy

*Take action to build resilience across your business and value chain.*

Recent changes to UK legislation require large businesses to report on the risks posed by climate change to their business model, as well as the steps required to mitigate these risks. These disclosures should also be in line with the recommendations of the Taskforce for Climate-Related Financial Disclosures.<sup>ix</sup>

Businesses now have a legal requirement to start embedding the risks and opportunities of climate into their business plans as well as disclosing their transition plans.<sup>x</sup> This could include radical changes to their operations to reduce their emissions and build climate resilience.

#### FOCUS ON: Anglian Water using waste heat to power food production

Anglian Water partnered with Greencoat Capital and Oasthouse Ventures to enable the development of two of the country's largest greenhouses, warmed by waste heat from our water recycling centres. This cross-sector collaboration was a world first, increasing resilience in agriculture and reducing the import of products from water-stressed regions of the world.

Covering 70 acres, the ground-breaking sustainable greenhouses provide a model for decarbonising agriculture and heat, reducing carbon footprint of produce by 75%.

The first two greenhouses will create 360 permanent new jobs in Norfolk and Suffolk, and an additional 120 seasonal jobs. The greenhouses will be capable of producing 12% of the UK's tomatoes.



### STEP 2: Target net-zero emissions as close to 2030 as possible

*Set a robust target, rooted in science, to achieve net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.*

Focus on cutting your emissions (at least 45% by 2030), across your operations and value chain before claiming net zero by offsetting residual emissions.

Setting your target is an important stage of your business' journey towards net zero. It helps to set a baseline and demonstrate your commitment to reduce climate-related risk. It also helps to identify opportunities to create value for people and nature on your journey to net zero.

At BITC, we urge businesses to be ambitious when setting targets. Remember that even the Paris agreement only gives a 50:50 chance of limiting temperature rises to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the maximum we can reach to avoid the worst impacts. Every day we delay makes recovery longer and more difficult. Net-zero targets must be set as close as possible to 2030 rather than 2050.

How you set your target will be unique to your business and the reach and nature of your operations. But we have tools and examples to support you.

#### FOCUS ON: Sky aiming for net zero by 2030 and driving change

Sky is transforming its business to become net zero by 2030, through reducing carbon emissions in real terms, as part of its long-standing commitment to the environment.

Over the next ten years it is cutting emissions by 50% from the use of products in customer homes, global supply chains and from within the business.

Sky's latest step has been to launch the world's first TV to be certified as a CarbonNeutral® product. Sky Glass can save up to 50% of carbon emissions by bringing three devices into one and is the only TV that comes in recyclable packaging, free from single-use plastics. Working with Natural Capital

Partners, Sky will power Sky Glass with renewable electricity for its first year of use.

Beyond investing in renewable energy infrastructure, Sky is working with partners to restore biodiversity and find nature-based solutions to offset emissions it can't yet cut. This includes a reforestation project to plant 200,000 native trees in the Cairngorms in Scotland.

Sky has also launched the Sky Zero campaign to inspire customers and suppliers to join the business in reaching net zero. It has pledged to continue to use its voice to drive change, because the world cannot wait.

### STEP 3 Invest wisely and work thoughtfully to help nature thrive

*Ensure your investments deliver multiple benefits such as resilience to climate impacts, improved health and wellbeing, and carbon removal.*

When it comes to tackling the climate crisis, nature is our ally. Businesses must consider how to work with nature and support nature-based solutions as part of their climate action. While it is positive that awareness of the climate crisis has grown to a point that the public, businesses and governments recognise their responsibility to tackle it, the intense focus on reducing carbon emissions can mean the ecological crisis and solutions are overlooked. The sixth mass extinction is continuing at pace with around 150 to 200 species becoming extinct every day.<sup>xi</sup> Investing in nature is essential to turn the tide, and help people thrive long term, through:

- **Improved wellbeing:** employees with access to green spaces have been shown to have improved wellbeing as well as greater productivity<sup>xii</sup>
- **Climate resilience:** nature-based solutions can improve urban resilience by reducing heat island effects, reducing noise and air pollution, providing equal access to green spaces, and protecting against flood damage<sup>xiii</sup>
- **Protecting and creating jobs:** nature-based solutions can create new economic

opportunities as well as protecting the 1.2 billion global livelihoods that are reliant on healthy ecosystems<sup>xiv</sup>

- **Improved biodiversity:** habitat restoration and habitat creation, e.g. peatland restoration, green roofs in urban settings or seagrass and kelp in marine habitats<sup>xv</sup>

Investing in nature provides all of these benefits while also contributing to your net-zero targets by offsetting your carbon emissions.

### FOCUS ON: United Utilities working in partnership to restore nature

United Utilities has partnered with Moors for the Future to co-fund MoorLIFE 2020, a large-scale peatland restoration project across 95 square kilometres of the South Pennines. The project will stabilise erosion, reducing carbon loss and the cost of water treatment.

Revegetated peat helps to slow the overland flow of water so that, during heavy rain, it helps reduce the risk of flooding to communities downstream. Wetter habitats are more resilient to the impacts of climate change and will increase resilience to wildfire.

The project has improved biodiversity by restoring active blanket bog within a Special Area of Conservation, and increased the diversity of upland plants, birds, mammals, and insects under immediate threat from climate change.

The €16 million project received €12 million funding from the EU LIFE programme, the largest ever award to a UK nature conservation project.





### STEP 4 Ensure all employees have the skills they need

*Upskill and hold your people accountable for their part in your climate action, with clear deliverables that are rewarded alongside other performance measures.*

Engage people about their future and the changing nature of work. Provide training and opportunities to contribute to designing and implementing solutions.

Incorporating climate action into your business purpose will be essential to ensure that your business model is fit for the future. It makes climate action not just something that certain parts of an organisation focus on, but a core business activity that every employee must incorporate into their day-to-day operations. Ensuring you review roles, responsibilities, and reward systems to embed accountability is vital to ensure success.

Recent policy changes on climate-related financial disclosures will also mean that jobs in finance, accounting, and business strategy will need to incorporate more elements of sustainability. Other corporate functions which will need to adapt to support the transition to net zero include:

- **Facilities managers:** influencing energy consumption, installing facilities to promote active travel, or facilitating nature-based solutions<sup>xvi</sup>
- **Human resources: attracting talent, upskilling, and retraining existing employees,** offering opportunities to volunteer in nature and promoting sustainability principles as part of the recruitment process<sup>xvii</sup>
- **Procurement staff:** minimising waste by adopting circular and sustainability principles into their procurement criteria and using the procurement process as a lever for change right across the supply chain

Every role in your organisation should be considered through a climate lens. If there are functions that do not currently lend themselves sufficiently to sustainability, consider how to engage employees outside of their core job roles.



#### FOCUS ON: National Grid investing in graduates for sustainability

National Grid has set biodiversity targets and developed a natural capital tool that has enabled new graduates to deliver sustainability action plans at more than 50 of its sites.

The work has increased the natural value of the land, which is already providing benefits to the climate in terms of carbon sequestration and improved air quality. It has also reduced risk, improved visual impact and provided natural flood defences.

As part of the project, more than 250 new graduates have gained skills and knowledge in biodiversity, stakeholder engagement, business planning and sustainable business.

Community benefits include increased access to nature and recreation, as well as education and engagement with communities and schools on the benefits of investing in nature.

### STEP 5 Involve diverse stakeholders and support your communities

*Understand the concerns and aspirations of your communities, particularly those that are vulnerable or disadvantaged. Collaborate widely to solve shared challenges.*

A key element of businesses adopting principles of a 'just transition' is to ensure that actions to address the climate crisis are designed with their employees, the communities they serve and operate in, and support diverse groups who face the harshest effects of the climate crisis.

**FOCUS ON:** Hogan Lovells training ‘Solar Mamas’ to improve lives in remote areas  
Hogan Lovells has worked in partnership with its people, clients and social enterprise Barefoot College to train women from 35 countries to become solar engineers, or ‘Solar Mamas’.

The project has empowered women and girls and brought clean light to more than 230,000 people across remote communities in Africa and the Pacific Islands. Each Solar Mama brings electricity to around 100 households, reducing the burning of kerosine, and the associated black smoke, by 99%.

The three-year partnership has enabled Barefoot College to scale its operations, opening new solar training centres, while enabling Hogan Lovells to fulfil its commitment to empowering women and girls, taking climate action and addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

### **FOCUS ON:** EDF supporting Net Zero communities

EDF is backing Net Zero Leiston, an ambitious project to reach net zero carbon emissions in the Suffolk coastal town of Leiston.

Working with local councils, community groups, Sizewell C and industry experts, the aim is to explore and showcase various technologies and materials as pilot projects in the town.

There are three objectives:

- Create a route map from current emissions to net zero
- Create a socially acceptable pathway to net zero that the community can own
- Make sure this is replicable for others

On average, Leiston needs to reduce its emissions by >1,000tCO<sub>2</sub>e a year to reach net zero by 2030. That’s the equivalent of removing 567 petrol cars off Leiston’s roads per year and the plan will help Leiston achieve its aim of being a leading town in the new green industrial revolution.

## **STEP 6 Embrace circular economy practices**

*Drive innovation and efficiencies, and create new products, services, and processes to deliver lasting value.*

The ‘produce – consume – dispose’ model is unsustainable by design. Moving from this linear approach to a circular one means generating more value from Earth’s resources by making products that last longer, re-using materials, repairing and re-processing and, above all, asking if something really needs to be produced and consumed at all. Not only is designing out waste in this way a more cost-effective way to do business, but 45% of global emissions are linked to the production, use and disposal of products and materials.<sup>xviii</sup> We will not achieve net zero without addressing this issue.

With 61% of the public calling for businesses to reduce the energy and materials that go into products and services – the highest priority from BITC’s Just Transition research – there is also a huge opportunity for businesses to innovate, improve profitability and bolster their reputation by developing more circular business models. For example, the apparel resale market is growing 11 times faster than the market for new clothing and is predicted to reach \$77bn dollars globally by 2025 (from \$27bn in 2020).<sup>xix</sup> Companies that are not able to embrace this shift in public consciousness will lose out in the long run.

COVID-19, volatile geopolitics and increasing climate impacts are also disrupting supply chains like never before. A global shortage of semiconductors has impacted many businesses, from carmakers to IT companies. Developing more circular supply chains, where precious materials are captured and recycled can improve the security of supply while creating new jobs. Green Alliance and WRAP estimate that up to 450,000 jobs could be created in the UK by 2035 if we rapidly transition towards more circular systems.<sup>xx</sup>

### FOCUS ON: JLL's Circular fit-out for a low-carbon office

JLL's Manchester office delivered a low carbon fit-out using refurbished, recycled and reused pieces, from work booths and worktops to carpets and ceiling features.

Working with a circular furniture partner, JLL procured more than 190 reused and refurbished furniture pieces, including booths, task chairs, soft seating, desks and tables. These included items such as a sofa from a music studio and signage made from a repurposed glass tabletop. Carpets were made from recycled plastic and repurposed yarn, and ceiling features were made of 70% recycled PET plastic. Plastic boards for reception and kitchen worktops were manufactured from waste yogurt pots.

The strategy avoided 77 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and it is the first office in the UK to achieve WELL Platinum, BREEAM Excellent and SKA Gold certificates in the same fitout. Over 90% of the former office clearance had a second life, including donations via Business2Schools which resulted in £30,000 of social value. The remaining 10% of materials were recycled.

### STEP 7 Measure and report progress rigorously and transparently

*Apply the same rigour and attention you give to financial performance to your performance on climate.*

Transparent and rigorous reporting is key. The legal requirements for businesses to report and disclose are increasing. But the benefits of regular and full reporting go way beyond being able to demonstrate legal compliance.

Reporting is a powerful way of communicating with your customers, staff, investors, and the wider community. It also gives businesses a platform from which to influence public policy, including pushing for more long-term thinking and long-term investment to deliver a just transition. Leading businesses are now reporting against their climate commitments in rigorous ways, for example, through environmental, social and governance

(ESG) reports or non-financial scorecards. Even though businesses are reporting more thoroughly than ever before, our research shows that the public still does not know what companies are doing, or fully trust them to deliver. It is time to rethink how to communicate so that all the effort being put into reporting is enabling better understanding amongst key stakeholders.

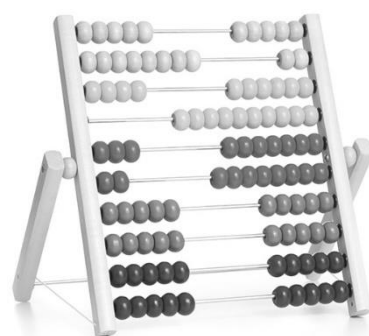
### FOCUS ON: bp embedding climate action through transparent reporting

bp launched its new purpose in February 2020, pivoting from an international oil company to an integrated energy company.

Its strategy is underpinned by a new sustainability framework that takes an integrated approach while focusing on three key areas where it believes it can make the most difference: get to net zero, improve people's lives, and care for our planet.

bp publishes an annual sustainability report alongside its ESG datasheet, materiality report and a basis for reporting, outlining key performance indicators, assured by Deloitte. From January 2021, it has accountability for sustainability at board level and a new committee at executive level to integrate sustainability into all its decisions and actions.

Since 2020, 30% of senior leaders' equity awards are linked to low carbon and for the bp leadership team, 25% of performance-based pay is linked to the the delivery of its new purpose.





### CIRCULAR, NOT LINEAR

The [Seven Steps for Climate Action](#) are designed to be circular, not linear, with outcomes and enablers feeding into one another. This will reverse the negative spiral of the escalating climate crisis to create a positive spiral of action from business, working alongside governments, the VCSE sector and individuals. Only through working together will we be able to achieve the dramatic changes necessary to secure lives and livelihoods for the future. Social enterprise Recycling Lives embodies this ethos in its operations.

#### FOCUS ON: Recycling Lives – green energy, green jobs, green lives

Recycling Lives is diverting waste from the end of life (ELV) vehicle recycling process into usable fuel and power, while also pioneering the use of electric vehicle batteries to store this power to give them a second life. This diverts waste from landfill and provides energy to power its business operations.

Together with its plans to develop a green vehicle fleet, Recycling Lives is expanding its operations, while increasing support for disadvantaged groups, including ex-offenders. The business supports these people within the business, giving them the skills they need for green jobs, now and in the future.

Its programmes are highly successful in reducing reoffending rates and improving life chances, and have achieved less than 5% reoffending rates compared to the 67% national average.

The benefits from this project are summarised as:

- reducing landfill (saving money and reducing environmental impact)
- generating green energy and fuel to power Recycling Lives' operations and green vehicle fleet
- further supporting ex-offenders and disadvantaged groups as the operations expand.

This innovation helps strengthen Recycling Lives' position as the largest and most responsible ELV processor. It allows the recovery of useful energy/fuels from the more difficult-to-recycle plastics, composites and non-metallic elements that are increasing within modern cars.



### ADDITIONAL TOOLS

BITC can provide more content and guidance on these issues. Below we have outlined key pieces of content that provide detailed support against each of the steps in this toolkit. Please note that some of these pieces will include links to exclusive content for BITC members.

#### STEP 1: Embed climate risks and opportunities into your strategy

Read more about what TCFD means for your business in our [Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures factsheet](#).

Our factsheet on the '[social cost of carbon](#)' can also help your business to think about ways to measure and embed these risks.

#### STEP 2: Target net zero emissions as close to 2030 as possible

Find out more about how to get started on setting an emissions reduction target in our [Target Setting: Getting started on your net-zero journey factsheet](#).

For those, that are more advanced, read our '[Addressing emissions in your supply chain](#)' guide to ensure that all your emissions are captured.

#### STEP 3 Invest wisely and work thoughtfully to help nature thrive

Understand the business benefits of nature-based solutions in our [IGNITION report](#). Other toolkits can help to draw the link between [nature and improved wellbeing](#), and provide detailed instructions on [greening your workspace](#).

#### STEP 4 Ensure all employees have the skills they need

Our [mobilising employees to take action on your net-zero journey factsheet](#) provides detailed steps on how to engage your employees. For information about what skills are required for green jobs, read the [insights from our inclusive green recovery roundtable](#).

#### STEP 5 Involve diverse stakeholders and support your communities

BITC's expert Advisers can provide advice and guidance on how to effectively engage internal and external stakeholders. Email [advisory@bitc.org.uk](mailto:advisory@bitc.org.uk) for more information.

#### STEP 6 Embrace circular economy practices

Our Circular Economy Taskforce has contributed to a range of resources to help businesses embrace circular thinking. These include:

- [Accelerating to net zero with the circular economy](#)
- [How to tackle emissions in your supply chain](#)
- [Circular procurement toolkit](#)
- [The circular office guide](#)
- [Greater resource productivity and responsible waste management](#)

#### STEP 7 Measure and report progress rigorously and transparently

Contact [advisory@bitc.org.uk](mailto:advisory@bitc.org.uk) to discuss how BITC's expert Environment Advisers can support you to identify measures and reporting mechanisms aligned to your environment strategy.



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We would like to thank the following BITC members for supporting with the creation of this toolkit and the [Seven Steps for Climate Action](#):

- Anglian Water
- Sky
- United Utilities
- National Grid
- EDF
- JLL
- bp
- Recycling Lives
- Sainsbury's
- Capgemini
- Greggs
- Shoosmiths
- Boots
- Costain
- Hogan Lovells
- PwC
- Lloyd Banking Group



## NEXT STEPS

Our Challenge 2030 campaign calls for businesses to create climate action plans that increase:

- **The scale** of their ambition in climate action plans, using Taskforce for Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) thinking to embed risks and opportunities
- **The speed** with which they will achieve net zero carbon, as close to 2030, and aligned with the UN's [Race to Zero](#)
- **The scope** of influence, developing and implementing an inclusive strategy in collaboration with diverse stakeholders to unlock barriers to action

These seven steps have been designed to help businesses take the practical action needed to rise to that challenge and deliver a just, fair and inclusive transition to a resilient, net zero future where people and nature can thrive. For detailed content, see our exclusive member-only Climate Action, Nature, and Circular Economy content on [myBITC](#) and free content at [bitc.org.uk](#)

Take part in the [Responsible Business Tracker](#), It enables participants to assess their starting point and measure progress.

BITC's expert Advisers can provide advice and guidance on all of the topics covered here. Email [advisory@bitc.org.uk](mailto:advisory@bitc.org.uk) for more information.

## ENJOYED THIS CONTENT?

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- [Read more about our Climate Action work](#)
- [learn more about our advisory services](#)
- [join us for one of our upcoming events](#)



Talk to one of our expert team [today](#) to learn how membership of BITC can help you take your responsible business journey further and drive lasting global change.

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