

A blurred photograph of several business professionals in a modern office hallway, walking from left to right. The background is a light-colored wall with a grid pattern. The floor is polished and reflects the people. The overall image has a sense of motion and activity.

**BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY**

GUIDE

SEVEN STEPS FOR FUTUREPROOFING BUSINESS

Building a future-ready
economy together

Together we can build a future-ready economy

Businesses are operating in a period of heightened uncertainty, where the foundations of economic growth are becoming less secure. Climate impacts, nature loss, resource pressures, geopolitical disruption, skills shortages and inequality are already affecting costs, supply chains, workforces, communities and investment decisions.

This guide updates Business in the Community (BITC)'s Seven Steps for Just Transition and aims to help businesses build a practical strategy aligned with creating a future ready economy. It shows how businesses can strengthen resilience, create shared prosperity and support the people, places and natural systems they depend on.

The Seven Steps are designed to be used by organisations at different stages of maturity. Some actions can be started quickly using existing teams and data. Others support deeper transition planning, investment and collaboration across value chains and places.

Macroeconomic risk and opportunity for the UK

The UK has an opportunity to unlock growth by building a cleaner, more resilient and more inclusive economy. BITC's [Creating a Future Ready Economy](#) report argues that addressing social and environmental challenges can drive economic growth, and that ignoring them creates risks to future prosperity. The UK can actively shape a transition that works for people and planet, or face forced change through resource scarcity, system disruption and compounding crises.ⁱ

The opportunity is already visible in parts of the economy. The Office for National Statistics estimated that the UK low carbon and renewable energy economy generated £77 billion in turnover in 2024, with an employment equivalent to 272,000 full-time roles.ⁱⁱ Government has also identified clean energy industries as a priority growth sector in the Modern Industrial Strategy,

with a sector plan focused on investment, productivity, resilience and good jobs.ⁱⁱⁱ

The macroeconomic case is not only about new sectors. It is also about reducing the cost of inaction. Climate impacts can disrupt infrastructure, supply chains, health, productivity, homes, insurance markets and public services. The Climate Change Committee has warned that the UK is not yet adapting at the pace needed, meaning avoidable costs and disruption are likely to rise without stronger action.^{iv}

The 2022 UK heatwave shows what this means in practice. When temperatures reached 40.3°C at Coningsby, the Met Office reported severe disruption to rail services from buckling rails, alongside disruption to roads, flights and the London Underground. The same heatwave also affected energy infrastructure, with 15,000 properties in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the North East reporting power losses and power lines operating at reduced efficiency. This illustrates why climate resilience is not a narrow environmental issue. Businesses depend on functioning transport, energy, water, digital and food systems, as well as communities that are healthy, skilled and able to participate in work and local economies. When these systems are weakened by heat, flooding, nature loss, inequality or resource pressures, business resilience and national prosperity are weakened too.^v

For business, this means future-ready action should not be framed only as compliance or cost: it is a route to lower exposure to shocks, stronger supply chains, improved productivity, innovation, skilled workforces and more trusted relationships with customers, communities, investors and government.

How future-ready action creates value

A future-ready economy helps businesses create value in five connected ways: for the business, for people, across value chains, for places and for the future. These value lenses can be used to test whether action is creating practical benefits, rather than staying at the level of ambition.

For business: resilience, productivity and growth

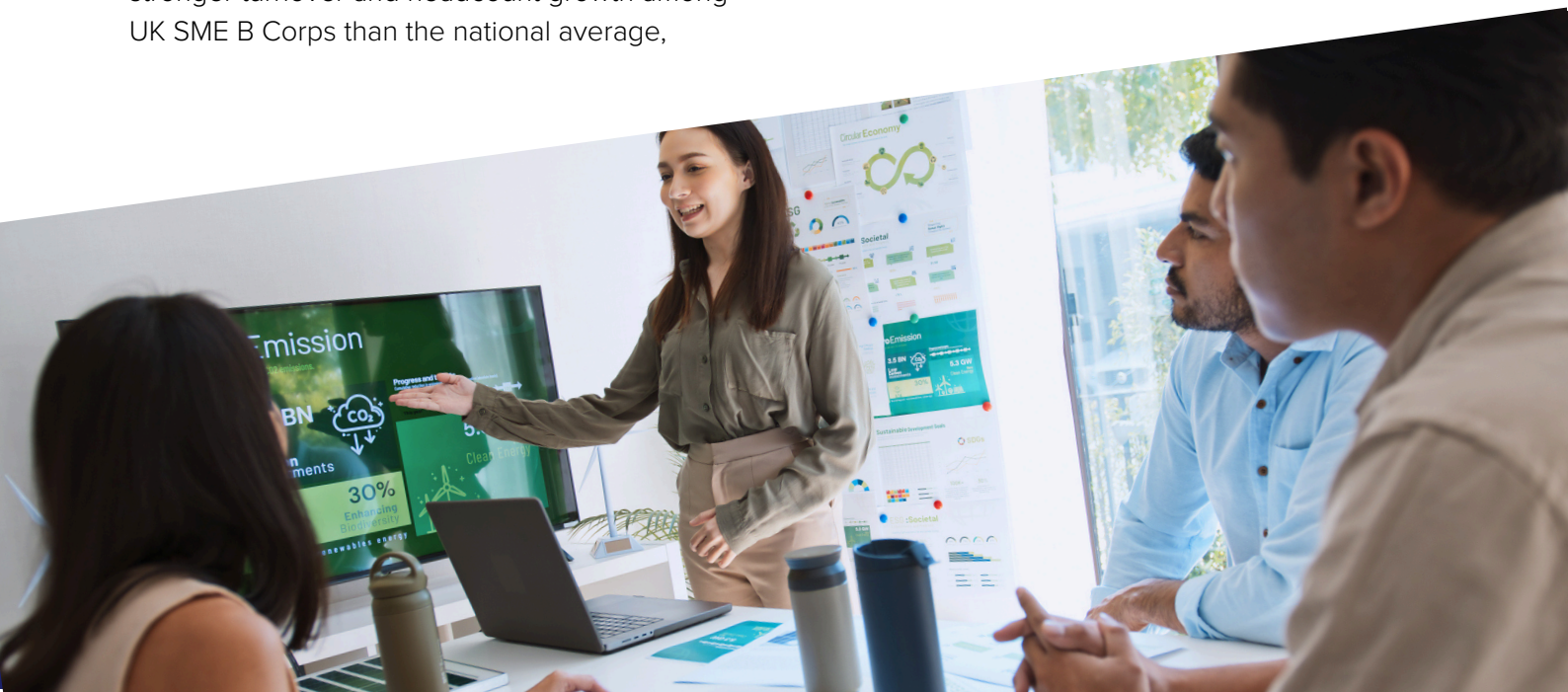
Future-ready action creates business value when it helps an organisation manage material risks, use energy, materials and capital more effectively, strengthen workforce capability, and respond to changing demand. For individual businesses, resilience is practical: fewer disruptions, less exposure to volatile costs, stronger supplier relationships, better investment decisions and greater confidence that products, services and assets will remain relevant.

There is also a growth case: CBI Economics found that the UK's net zero economy generated around £83 billion in gross value added in 2024, grew by 10% in one year and supported almost a million full-time equivalent jobs; each £1 of value generated created a further £1.89 across the wider economy.^{vi} The opportunity also extends to businesses embedding purpose and sustainability into strategy. B Lab UK reported stronger turnover and headcount growth among UK SME B Corps than the national average,

suggesting clear purpose and credible action to help people and the environment thrive can help build trust, attract talent and compete in changing markets.^{vii}

For people: opportunity, good work and wellbeing

Future-ready action creates value for people when it improves skills, confidence, wellbeing and access to good work, while helping to create healthier, more resilient places. The transition will not only create specialist roles in renewable energy or clean heat: it will also change existing jobs across the economy. PwC found that green job adverts reached 272,178 in 2024, more than double 2021 levels^{viii}, while LinkedIn found UK demand for green talent grew by 46% between 2023 and 2024, compared with 5.3% growth in supply.^{ix} These skills need to be practical and role-specific, from procurement understanding supplier emissions and fair work, to finance assessing climate and nature risk, estates managing heat and flooding, and customer teams helping people make lower-cost, lower-impact choices. Value to people is also wider than employment: good-quality green and natural spaces can support physical health, mental wellbeing and stronger community connection.^{x,xi}



Across value chains: security, quality and shared standards

Future-ready action creates value across value chains when businesses work with suppliers, customers and sector partners on shared risks, instead of treating sustainability as a site-level issue. For many organisations, the biggest exposure to climate, nature, resource, human rights and quality risks sits beyond direct operations. Better visibility, stronger relationships and clearer shared standards can improve security of supply, product quality and trust. CDP reported that businesses could unlock US\$165 billion in financial gains by tackling scope 3 emissions, and that the cost of failing to address these risks was almost three times higher than the cost of action.^{xii} A practical approach starts with identifying the suppliers, commodities, geographies or services most material to continuity, cost, emissions, nature or social impact, then using procurement, contracts, data, capability-building and longer-term partnerships to improve resilience and quality over time. See our Managing Emissions in the Supply Chain guide to find out more.

For places: local resilience and shared prosperity

Future-ready action creates value for places when it strengthens the local systems that businesses, employees, customers and communities depend on. Places are where risks and benefits become visible: heat, flooding, high energy costs, skills gaps, poor health, weak local services and low trust. They are also where business action can create tangible benefits through lower bills, better jobs, healthier environments, stronger local suppliers and more resilient infrastructure. A place-based approach matters because different communities face different risks and opportunities, so businesses add most value when they understand their local role and work with partners around shared priorities. The Local Power Plan aims for every UK

community to have the opportunity to benefit from and own a local energy project by 2030.^{xiii} Natural England also highlights how community-led green infrastructure can support health, climate resilience and community bonds.^{xiv} For business, place quality affects recruitment, retention, demand, operating conditions and licence to operate.

For the future: long-term investment, innovation and accountability

Future-ready action creates value for the future when businesses make decisions that remain credible under changing conditions. This means investing in assets, products, services, skills and partnerships that are more likely to be resilient in a low-emissions, climate-resilient and resource-constrained economy, and being honest about uncertainty, trade-offs and progress. The investment case is becoming clearer: the National Wealth Fund has £27.8 billion of core capitalisation to support the UK's growth and clean energy missions, crowd in private capital and generate a return for the taxpayer.^{xv} Accountability is also central, because future-ready action cannot rely on ambition statements alone. The Transition Plan Taskforce Disclosure Framework links ambition with implementation, engagement, metrics and governance.^{xvi} For businesses of all sizes, the principle is the same: use future-ready action to decide where to invest, what to stop, what to redesign, who to work with and how to measure progress.



The Seven Steps for Futureproofing Business

The seven steps, as shown on the following pages, are intentionally practical sets of actions. Businesses do not need to do everything at once. Start with the steps most material to the business, where action can create visible value and build confidence for wider change.



Step one: Embed social, geopolitical and environmental risks and opportunities into your strategy

Build resilience into core business decisions by identifying the risks and opportunities that could materially affect costs, revenue, service delivery, assets, suppliers, employees or customers. A future-ready strategy considers climate, nature, resources, people and communities together, rather than as separate workstreams. A credible transition plan can show how this analysis is used in governance, investment decisions and investor dialogue.^{xvii,xviii}

What businesses can do over time

Short term

- Bring together risk, finance, procurement, operations, estates, people and sustainability teams.
- Ask where they already see disruption, rising costs, customer demand or new opportunity.
- Agree a small number of priority risks and opportunities to explore, based on likely business impact.

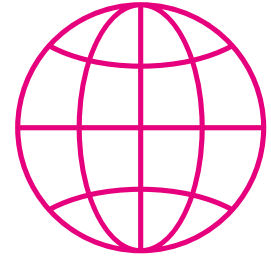
Medium term

- Examine one or two priorities using clear business questions, such as which sites are exposed to heat or flooding, which suppliers rely on water-stressed areas, or where changing demand could create revenue.
- Gather practical evidence, including site locations, disruption records, insurance claims, energy use, customer insight, regulation, supplier data and product margins.
- Compare findings with existing investment, maintenance, procurement, product and continuity plans.

Long term

- Use findings to change decisions, not just reporting.
- Build the strongest insights into risk management, procurement, insurance, capital investment, transition planning and leadership accountability.
- Make future-readiness risks and opportunities part of normal strategic and financial planning.

2



Step 2: Use energy and resources more effectively

Reduce exposure to energy volatility, material scarcity and waste by improving efficiency, cutting emissions and designing products, services and operations that use fewer resources. This brings together energy, emissions and circular economy action as connected business resilience issues. The UK Business Climate Hub advises businesses to reduce energy use to cut costs and emissions^{xx}, while circular economy guidance emphasises keeping products and materials in use through maintenance, reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycling.^{xx}

What businesses can do over time

Short term

- Gather existing bills, meter readings, waste reports, procurement data, maintenance logs and site knowledge.
- Walk through priority sites or processes with facilities, operations and finance teams to spot obvious waste, such as inefficient heating, lighting, leaks, idle equipment, packaging or material loss.

- Choose three to five no-cost or low-cost actions with clear owners, deadlines and a way to check whether costs or resource use have fallen.

Medium term

- Create a simple baseline for the sites, products or material streams with the greatest cost, waste or disruption risk.
- Identify who controls demand for energy, water and materials, and which suppliers or customers influence it.
- Build energy and resource performance into procurement, design briefs, maintenance, fit-out decisions and investment cases.

Long term

- Redesign products, services, sites or fit-outs around circular models where there is a clear customer and commercial case.
- Set resource productivity targets and track whether savings are reinvested into deeper improvements.
- Collaborate where shared collection, repair, reuse, recycling or logistics systems are needed.

3



Step 3: Protect and restore nature to strengthen resilience and improve wellbeing

Understand how the business depends on nature and invest in nature recovery where this supports resilience for people, places and the economy. Nature supports water security, food production, climate stability, flood protection, cooling, health, wellbeing and economic value. Access to nature, green space, shade, cleaner air, reduced flood risk can all affect physical health, mental wellbeing and the quality of places where people live and work. The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) LEAP approach^{xxi} provides a practical sequence: locate the interface with nature, evaluate dependencies and impacts, assess risks and opportunities, and prepare to respond and report. Environment Agency guidance also highlights nature-based solutions for flooding, heat and water stress.^{xxii}

What businesses can do over time

Short term

- Identify where the business touches nature through sites, supply chains, raw materials, products, customers or communities.
- List the most relevant dependencies and impacts, such as water, soil, pollination, habitats, biodiversity, air quality, flood protection, cooling or raw materials.

- Choose one priority location, catchment, commodity or supply chain where nature could affect cost, continuity, quality, health, wellbeing or community resilience.

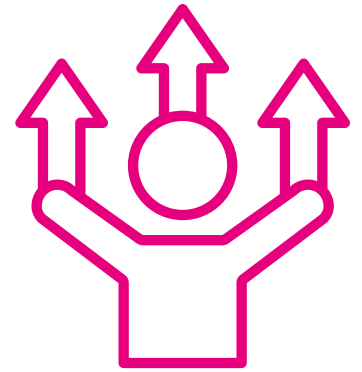
Medium term

- Use available data and local knowledge, such as flood maps, water stress data, heat risk information, land use, supplier locations, community insight or specialist advice.
- Ask what could happen if the natural system became weaker, and who would be affected.
- Identify actions that reduce risk and create co-benefits, such as sustainable drainage, shade and cooling, water stewardship, habitat restoration, soil health or greener sites.

Long term

- Build nature considerations into procurement, property, site investment, risk management, community partnerships and transition planning.
- Invest in nature-based solutions, stewardship agreements or pooled funding where governance, maintenance and community benefits are clear.
- Track outcomes such as reduced flood exposure, water resilience, cooling, biodiversity, wellbeing or use of green space.

4



Step 4: Equip people with future-ready skills and good work

Support employees, suppliers and communities to access the skills, confidence and opportunities needed for a changing economy. Skills action should not be limited to sustainability teams. It should help people understand how resilience, resources, nature, climate and fairness affect their work. The World Economic Forum identifies the green transition, technology and economic change as major drivers of skills transformation, while UK labour market evidence shows growing demand for green skills.^{xxiii, xxiv, xxv}

What businesses can do over time

Short term

- Identify the business changes that require people to work differently, such as reducing resource use, engaging suppliers, improving data, adapting sites, advising customers or redesigning products.
- Start with roles most involved in delivery, including operations, procurement, finance, risk, estates, digital, HR, learning and customer-facing teams.
- Ask managers and employees what knowledge, confidence or tools they need first.

Medium term

- Add practical future-ready economy content into existing induction, management development, apprenticeships, role-based training and supplier engagement.
- Update job descriptions, objectives and learning plans for key roles so relevant skills are built into normal work.
- Work with suppliers where delivery depends on their workforce capability, using support and clear expectations rather than requirements alone.

Long term

- Work with employers, schools, colleges, training providers and community organisations to build routes into good work where future-ready skills are needed.
- Use recruitment, progression and learning plans to widen access for people who may otherwise be excluded.
- Track capability, job quality, progression, retention and access to opportunity, not only the number of people trained.

5



Step 5: Co-create transition plans with the people affected by change

Move from top-down consultation to genuine co-design with employees, customers, suppliers, young people and communities. Future-ready action is more likely to succeed when people can shape decisions that affect jobs, costs, services, places and local assets. The British Academy highlights the importance of community engagement, trust and governance in place-based decarbonisation. The Transition Plan Taskforce (TPT) framework also treats engagement with value chains, government, communities and civil society as part of credible transition planning.^{xxvi, xxvii}

What businesses can do over time

Short term

- Choose one live decision or project where people will be affected, such as a site change, new service, procurement shift, community investment, workforce change or customer-facing initiative.
- Map who will experience costs, benefits or disruption, who is usually heard, who has less power or visibility, and whose voice is missing.

- Explain in plain language what is changing, why it matters, what is already decided and what is open to influence.

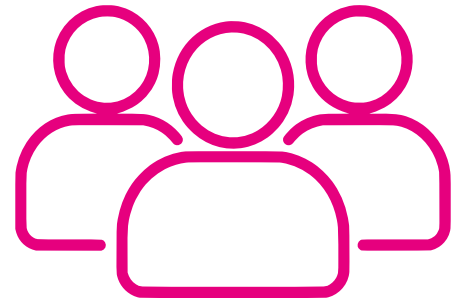
Medium term

- Build listening and design into project planning before decisions are finalised, using methods suited to the people involved.
- Share what was heard, what changed as a result, what could not be changed and why.
- Create feedback loops so people can see whether promised benefits are being delivered and can raise issues early.

Long term

- Make co-creation part of transition governance, with clear decision rights, skilled facilitation and fair resourcing for participation.
- Build long-term relationships with worker representatives, suppliers, customers, community organisations and local partners.
- Use learning from co-created projects to improve transition plans, investment decisions and reporting.

6



Step 6: Invest in building resilience with the communities you serve

Use business resources, purchasing power, expertise and partnerships to strengthen local resilience and shared prosperity. Community resilience is not only about charitable giving. It is about how everyday business decisions help places prepare for shocks, retain value and access opportunity. Place-based approaches are strongest when shaped around local needs and governance, while policy on local power and green infrastructure shows how energy, nature, skills and local ownership can create visible community benefits.^{xxviii,xxix,xxx}

What businesses can do over time

Short term

- Define the communities most connected to the business, such as places of operation, customers, suppliers, employees, future talent, local small businesses or people affected by investment decisions.
- Use existing data and conversations to identify local issues linked to business resilience, such as skills gaps, high energy costs, transport disruption, flood risk, poor health, weak suppliers or low trust.
- Choose one community where the business has a credible role and can create visible benefits using assets it already has.

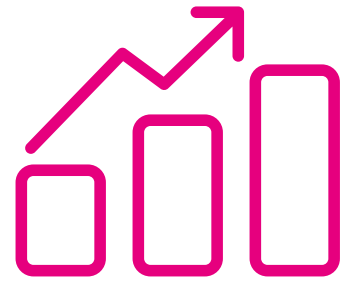
Medium term

- Identify practical business levers, such as procurement, recruitment, apprenticeships, volunteering, space, data, funding, convening power, technical expertise or supplier support.
- Work with local partners to shape a focused project around local priorities rather than a pre-set corporate initiative.
- Agree what benefit should be visible, such as lower costs, stronger suppliers, better skills, improved green space, warmer buildings or better preparedness for shocks.

Long term

- Support place-based partnerships with clear governance, shared priorities and a realistic role for business.
- Use purchasing, recruitment, investment and partnerships to help more value stay locally, including through SMEs, social enterprises and community-led models where appropriate.
- Link nature, skills, local energy, retrofit, inclusive procurement or community wealth-building where this reflects local priorities and business materiality.

7



Step 7: Measure what matters and report progress transparently

Track financial, social, environmental and community outcomes, and be honest about progress, challenges and learning. Future-ready action needs measures that show whether business activity is strengthening resilience for the business, people, places and nature, not only whether activity has happened. The TPT framework emphasises metrics, targets and governance, while HM Treasury's Green Book recognises economic prosperity, climate, environment, health, wellbeing and distributional effects as part of social value.^{xxxix, xxxii}

What businesses can do over time

Short term

- Start with actions already being taken and ask what change should be visible if they are working.
- Choose a small number of measures that connect business value with wider outcomes, such as costs reduced, energy saved, suppliers engaged, people trained, nature improvements, community benefits or risks reduced.
- Use existing data first, and define who owns each measure, how often it will be reviewed and which decision it should inform.

Medium term

- Test whether measures are useful in real decisions, such as board discussions, investment cases, procurement, risk management, workforce planning, supplier engagement and performance reporting.
- Check whether measures make sense to affected stakeholders and show outcomes, not only activity.
- Use qualitative evidence where numbers alone are not enough, such as what changed because people were involved or how a place or supplier relationship strengthened.

Long term

- Report progress in plain English, including what worked, what did not, trade-offs and where partners or policy change are needed.
- For larger or more mature businesses, align reporting with relevant transition planning, climate, nature, social value or sustainability expectations.
- Review and update metrics as the strategy, evidence and stakeholder expectations develop.

Using the Seven Steps in practice

For businesses starting out

Start with one or two material steps. For many organisations, the most useful first actions will be a short list of priority risks and opportunities based on information the business already holds, a simple energy and resource baseline, and a short stakeholder map showing who is affected by planned change.

For larger or more mature businesses

Use the Seven Steps to test whether transition planning is genuinely connected to business value, workforce planning, value chain resilience, place-based impact and transparent reporting. This can help align with emerging expectations on transition plans without making the document feel relevant only to companies already in scope of formal disclosure requirements.

For teams inside the business

- Strategy and finance: use the steps to connect long-term resilience to investment decisions.
- Risk and procurement: use the steps to identify hotspots and improve supplier expectations.
- People and HR: use the steps to build skills, good work and inclusive access to opportunity.
- Sustainability and responsible business: use the steps to connect climate, nature, people and places in one practical narrative.
- Communications and reporting: use the steps to explain value clearly and avoid vague claims.

Where to start: the first 90 days

- Agree which future-ready economy risks and opportunities are most material to the business, using existing information rather than creating a complex new assessment from scratch.
- Identify affected stakeholders, priority places and value chain hotspots, starting with what teams already know about suppliers, customers, employees, sites and communities.
- Identify three quick actions that reduce cost, risk or waste and create visible benefits.
- Choose one action that requires collaboration with suppliers, communities or local partners.
- Agree a small set of measures to track progress and learning.



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Business in the Community (BITC) champions responsible business as essential for long term economic growth and resilience. We convene, campaign, and consult with business to tackle society's most pressing challenges—from climate change and place-based regeneration to inequality, workplace wellbeing, and inclusive growth.

Founded by His Majesty King Charles III in 1982, BITC has over four decades of experience in engaging business and delivering measurable impact in both business and in communities through evidence-based interventions. As a trusted partner to business and government, BITC convenes leadership, influences policy, and accelerates action—helping shape a future-ready economy that works for everyone.

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