

Using the SDGs as a framework to help the built environment industry become more innovative and sustainable



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Introduction

In 2015, Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was designed to provide a road map for peace and prosperity for both people and planet, and to encourage partnerships to this end. It included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which would tackle humanity's biggest challenges and build on earlier work, including Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals.



The 17 global SDGs, supported by 169 targets and underpinned by 231 unique indicators, aimed to stimulate action at a scale and level of ambition that had not been seen before, to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path for the future (*United Nations, 2015*). They required collaboration and action from governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations and other actors to mobilise all available resources, and included a specific call to action for businesses across all industries.

However, with just five years remaining, progress against the SDGs falls short of what is required. Without massive investment and scaled up action, the achievement of these goals – the global blueprint for a more resilient, sustainable and prosperous world – will remain elusive. This was according to the annual Sustainable Development Goals Report (*United Nations, 2024*), which revealed that only 17% of the SDG targets were currently on track, with nearly half showing minimal or moderate progress, and one-third stalled or regressing. The lingering impacts of the pandemic, escalating conflicts, geopolitical tensions and growing climate chaos have hindered progress and continue to act as headwinds.





It is important that the built environment industry recognises its role in contributing to the SDGs and the benefits this can deliver both for organisations and wider society. The built environment created by construction directly impacts the achievement of many SDGs across various areas like health, housing and infrastructure development, as well as having significant impacts on the natural environment.

Roughly 40% of energy-related carbon emissions globally come from the construction, operation or maintenance of buildings. Heating, cooling and lighting buildings – operational carbon – account for 28% of global emissions, with the remaining 11% attributable to embodied carbon. The construction industry consumes large volumes of raw materials and generates one-third of the world's waste, while hard infrastructure is thought to be the second largest driver of man-made pressure on biodiversity.

Analysis shows that 74 of the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda (44%) are dependent on construction and real estate activities - of which 29 targets (17%) are directly dependent and 45 targets (27%) are indirectly dependent (*Goubran, 2019*).

Yet, with a few notable exceptions (including ARUP, BAM Construct, Cundall and Ramboll), the construction industry was slow to mobilise around the SDGs. As early as 2018, organisations like UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development were sounding the alarm for inadequate performance against relevant goals, highlighting the standard of homes, infrastructure and circular economy as areas for improvement (*UKSSD, 2018*). There was relatively low early uptake of the SDGs within the sector (*Bioregional, 2018*). As we will see, this has now changed considerably.



CIOB Presidential Theme 2024/25

In June 2024, Professor Mike Kagioglou of De Montfort University (at the time a global hub for SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, currently the global hub for SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities) was appointed as President of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), choosing the SDGs and the built environment as the theme of his 12-month presidency.

He presented the SDGs as a tool for challenging perspectives, asking how we can use the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework to help the industry become both more innovative and more sustainable, highlighting that the goals are about sustainability in the broader sense – the quality of our lives, access to justice, economic growth and productive employment as well as environmental sustainability.

Some of the SDGs specifically address the built environment:

- Goal 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
- Goal 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goals 13, 14 and 15 about climate change and biodiversity on land and in water hold huge relevance to an industry that uses significant amounts of land and natural resources.

These SDGs all have a clear and direct relevance to the work of the built environment industry. However, the relationship of our industry with the SDGs goes far beyond this, as the built environment affects everyone and is the foundation of economies everywhere. The industry impacts the quality of life of every single person in the world. So, from that perspective, we see that every single one of the 17 SDGs is relevant to us.

For example:

- Goal 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- Goal 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

In the presentation of this presidential theme, it was clear that the SDGs are not boxes to be ticked, they afford an opportunity to go beyond compliance, to show how our sector can do more than just minimise harm and actively support the development of a better planet and society. In doing so there is potential for a competitive advantage for companies that demonstrate leadership in sustainable development.

That question of how we can use the SDGs as a framework to help the industry become both more innovative and more sustainable became the focus of a yearlong campaign to engage the industry.





Learning from other sectors:

An example from Higher Education

CIOB was keen to draw on examples from other sectors, and the experience of the Higher Education (HE) sector (itself a significant source of construction client organisations) was used to provoke ideas for the built environment industry. This was one of the sectors to be an early adopter of the SDGs as well as demonstrating early leadership in sustainability, in part driven by stakeholder demands, including Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) requirements.

From 2007, universities were benchmarked in the People & Planet University Green League which ranked all UK universities by environmental and ethical performance. Compiled annually by the UK's largest student campaigning network, People & Planet, there was some pressure from students to complete the return. This established a principle of both publicly reporting on sustainability activities and competition early on. Just like any league table, University Vice Chancellors were motivated to perform well in this, and it helped sustainability practitioners secure buy-in, funding and resource from senior leaders.

More recently, the sector has been engaging closely with the SDGs and is now using the principle of benchmarking to measure and report against the SDGs in the form of a global impact ranking published in the Times Higher Education (THE) supplement.

The Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings identify and celebrate universities that excel across multiple SDGs and allow universities to showcase their commitment to addressing the world's most pressing challenges, including environmental sustainability, social inclusion, economic growth and partnerships.

This exercise is extremely competitive and more than 2,000 universities take part in these global rankings. It is a non-traditional league table; in that it measures impact in practice. There is no

expectation to submit data across all 17 goals, all universities must submit against a minimum of three goals plus the mandatory goal 17 (partnerships for the goals), underlining the importance of collaboration. HE institutions can pick their three strongest areas, plus the partnership goal. Some report across several or all goals voluntarily, but this is not essential. Data is submitted by an annual deadline.

What is key is that communication of the results builds interest and commitment and leads to momentum towards progress in a competitive environment, and this progress has been across a wide range of SDGs.

This provided food for thought on how one sector uses the SDGs to drive progress and build momentum. It is important to acknowledge that the context is very different in the HE sector, with universities well used to appearing in league tables for other areas of business such as overall university performance rankings, research, student satisfaction and graduate employment. This is a highly competitive, closely regulated sector, that is well advanced in working with the UN SDGs, and there are organisations such as People & Planet and Times Higher Education with the will and resources to take on the resource burden of managing a league table.



Higher Education Institution Case Study

De Montfort University: The first global academic hub for the SDGs

De Montfort University (DMU) has been collaborating with the United Nations (UN) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) almost since their inception by the 193 member states – embracing 17 goals with 169 targets aimed at improving the lives of billions by 2030.

DMU had been working with the UN since 2015, after its community volunteer programme in Leicester led to the offer of leading other higher education institutions in helping to change the negative narrative surrounding refugees during the European migration crisis of that year.

Within a year of launching the Join Together campaign at the UN headquarters in New York, 100 universities throughout the world had joined DMU in working to change both the narrative and offer physical support in their communities.

An impressed United Nations, in 2019, offered DMU the position as the first global academic hub for its new SDGs – Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. DMU was the only university in Britain to be offered global hub status.

In making the award, the UN's Director of Global Information Dr Maher Nasser noted:

"Earlier this year, I saw first-hand how DMU has taken the lead in supporting SDG 16 through its inspirational work on the Together campaign. Through its efforts, students from all six continents have found their voice and confidence in taking practical steps. The visibility given to the SDGs in the university's strategic plan will undoubtedly spark curiosity. And curiosity in the hands of young people, nurtured within the walls of this university, can help channel energy into activism, action, and the creation of a better world."



The university's strategic plan meant the SDGs and sustainability became a cross-cutting theme, embedded within all aspects of DMU research, teaching and professional services. The SDGs are now embedded in more than 200 modules, all research and everyday university life.

In 2022, DMU was offered a second three-year term as the global hub for SDG 16 acting as the co-ordinator for good practice in research, teaching and engagement and piloting projects working with refugees and the UN's Football for the Goals programme, which harnesses the popularity of sport to raise awareness of the SDGs.

The UN's global academic hub programme was expanded in 2025 and DMU became the Chair for SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, supporting three other SDG 11-focused universities worldwide, and marking 30 years of pioneering work in the area. DMU was again the only British university to be appointed as a global hub chair.

DMU has been working with the city of Leicester on sustainable cities for more than 30 years and its research and engagement programme helped in the design and rebuilding of all the city's secondary schools from the year 2000 onwards.

The university's work on SDG 11 will have a focus on disaster resilience and building the homes of the future as part of the SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities brief. Part of that brief will also be about nurturing, supporting and raising the awareness of its students around the SDGs to help create that better world.



Built Environment Companies

Engaging with the SDGs

With just five years to go until the SDG target date, numerous organisations in the built environment are now engaged with the UN SDGs to some degree.

This is particularly the case among construction client organisations across a range of areas including infrastructure (such as SSE, EDF, Heathrow Lightsource bp, National Highways and TFL), housing developers (e.g. Barratt Homes, Berkeley Group, Persimmon Homes, Redrow, Taylor Wimpey and Thakeham), government departments like the Ministry of Defence, most universities, housing associations (e.g. Clarion Housing and Peabody) and water companies like Anglian Water.

Most Tier 1 contractors are now using the SDGs, including the likes of Balfour Beatty, BAM Construction (an early adopter), Kier Group, Morgan Sindall, Skanska, VINCI and Wates Construction.

Major materials manufacturers like Breedon, Ibstock, Kingfisher, Marshalls, Saint-Gobain, SigmaRoc, Travis Perkins and Wickes are also using relevant SDGs to inform and frame their sustainability strategy.

Many of these organisations have chosen to focus on a limited number of SDGs which are particularly material to their business, while others have taken a broader focus and mapped their impacts across all 17 goals to ensure interconnections are understood and no impacts (positive or negative) are overlooked.



CIOB Construction Leaders – Sustainable Development Goals Roundtables

It is vital that construction leaders are engaged in this topic. Construction has a significant impact on the natural environment and social well-being through its building practices and by adopting sustainable methods, it can play a crucial role in achieving goals like climate action, sustainable cities, clean energy and responsible resource consumption.

During 2024/25, CIOB has been working with a group of senior construction leaders from a broad spectrum of organisations. Through a series of roundtables chaired by the CIOB President, this working group of construction leaders (including both CIOB members and non-members) has considered how we can use the SDGs as a framework to help the industry become more innovative and sustainable.

A wide range of organisations participated in the roundtables, with representation from small to medium-sized enterprises through to large and multi-national organisations. This included client organisations, tier 1 and 2 construction contractors, professional services, engineering management, and development consultancy firms, experts in demolition and

remediation, a construction product manufacturer and supplier, temporary works and logistics specialists, academic institutions, and impact assessment services.

The group convened for a series of three roundtable meetings in October 2024, January 2025 and May 2025.

The inaugural meeting provided an opportunity to establish a focused leadership group for construction to work together to progress the topic of the CIOB presidential theme: how we can use the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework to help the industry become both more innovative and more sustainable.

By inviting senior leaders to attend this roundtable, the CIOB President was inviting them to work together to articulate what

the industry is already doing and help conceptualise an agenda for change. The target audience was individuals in senior leadership positions, with a genuine desire to contribute to the discussion, so that they are in a strong position to effect change within the industry.

By the end of the first session, it was clear that there were different levels of maturity in relation to using the SDGs, some excellent examples of leadership on this agenda from within the room, and a strong willingness to develop a collective understanding and ownership of this challenge. Monitoring and measurement were identified as key challenges, with members of the group mindful that the SDGs cover a wide range of potential metrics, with inconsistencies in how they are being monitored and measured across the





industry. Participants made a commitment to carry out a high-level self-assessment of their organisation's engagement with the SDGs and to share it with the group so that trends as well as opportunities and barriers could be identified. There was also a strong consensus to continue to work together on the topic.

The second meeting provided an opportunity for three members of the group to present their SDG self-assessments, to highlight insights gained from the process and to showcase areas of best practice, as well as shine a light on challenges and lessons learnt under Chatham House rules. The group agreed that the examples were compelling in bringing the SDGs to life to make the topic more tangible.

It was interesting to learn that for some organisations, the SDGs had not necessarily been part of their vocabulary, but the exercise had shown that they are contributing across several of the goals, and so the narrative had shifted to consider if they should now become part of the vocabulary.

This was followed by a group discussion and key themes have been captured below:

- Capturing exemplars and communicating them is important, but it is also important to openly and transparently share lessons learnt and as an industry we are not always as good at that.
- There are both positive and negative impacts in construction – some areas where we are less bad and some areas where we are generally having a positive impact – how do we capture that? It is recognised that the SDGs provide a framework for mapping both positive and negative impacts (as well as interconnections).
- There are several useful tools for carrying out an assessment. Those mentioned during the roundtable included the B-Lab B Impact Assessment which covers the full range of SDGs, the UN Global Compact Self-Assessment Tool which takes a materiality approach, and tools offered by organisations such as SDG Assessment.
- There was a strong consensus that guidance on using the SDGs in construction is needed, along with case studies and recommended approaches – this is particularly important for the large number of small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the industry.

- The group felt that the supply chain is critical in this transition and there needed to be a strong message about doing this, but with nobody left behind.
- Recognising interconnections between SDGs was highlighted as crucial, as is collaboration in addressing them. Case studies should be stories that show interconnectedness – characterised by partnership, innovation and agency.
- As well as exploring interdependencies between the goals, case studies can help highlight solutions for less obvious goals.
- Cultural and leadership challenge – language is so important i.e. evolve is better than change because change creates fear but evolve is about moving forwards. Negative language can disenfranchise or stall progress, but the SDGs provide a positive shared language.

The group went on to consider what support the industry needs and several outputs were recommended from the process, including:

- A report to be presented at CIOB Members' Forum in June 2025 and for wider publication
- Guidance for SMEs – i.e. a quick guide to the SDGs for SMEs
- Case studies for publication on the CIOB Academy Sustainability Zone
- CPD session demonstrating actionable steps (again focused on SMEs)

The third roundtable provided an opportunity to review and consolidate the learning and recommendations that had been gathered from the previous two roundtables, to share an additional case study from within the group, and to interrogate the barriers and develop recommendations further.

The group highlighted the importance of key stakeholder groups such as clients, who are there at the very inception of a project setting the specification and budget envelope, and other built environment professionals involved from an early stage, such as architects and designers, as opportunities may already have been missed in projects before construction management firms become engaged.





This was an interesting reflection, as a recent report by National Building Specification (NBS, 2024) shows that just 43% of construction professionals regularly achieve sustainability in their projects. The report on sustainability in architecture, titled the Sustainable Futures UK Report 2024, finds that sustainability decisions are still not being made early enough in the process of a project.

In architecture specifically, the number of professionals regularly achieving sustainability in their projects is just 35%, and a third of professionals say their projects rarely or never meet sustainability goals. The survey also shows that while 72% of respondents agreed that sustainability is considered in the design stage, a further 84% say that it could be addressed earlier in the strategy and brief stage. This would help to make sustainability goals clearer, establish appropriate budgets and aid in outcomes in the project's lifecycle (NBS, 2024).

This underlines the importance of collaboration along the full value chain of projects, including construction clients and built environment professionals across all disciplines.

Other key themes are summarised below:

- Culture is critical – culture change in construction can be slow moving and must be driven through every stage of the project process (specification, design, etc).
- How do we ensure the sustainability vision of a project is not lost as the project progresses with contractors/sub-contractors inevitably becoming more focused on delivering on time and in budget than on that strategic vision?

- Consistent metrics are crucial – How do we move towards consistent and meaningful but proportionate monitoring and measurement, without adding burden? There was some discussion about whether this could be embedded in existing required processes and required documentation, such as Common Assessment Standards, Construction Management Plans and Construction Logistics Plans.
- Interconnections between goals can create unintended consequences so a holistic approach is encouraged.
- How we maintain momentum beyond the current CIOB Presidency, linking this presidential theme to those for the forthcoming two years.

Further recommendations included:

- Exploring the topic of monitoring and measurement with other relevant organisations (including Build UK and wider built environment professional institutions).
- Development of a more detailed Communications Plan for wider dissemination of this work, and the potential to engage the network of CIOB Sustainability Ambassadors in this.
- A recommendation to build a narrative strand into the 2025/26 Presidential theme around the power of the SDGs to engage young people or attract career changers into construction and address the skills gap.



Analysis of self-assessments

Roundtable participants made a commitment to carry out a high-level self-assessment of their organisation's engagement with the SDGs and to share it with the group so that trends as well as opportunities and barriers could be identified. A simple template was provided for this exercise. From the assessments which were completed and shared with CIOB, some interesting trends were identified.

One third of organisations represented were demonstrating impact across all the SDGs, and the B-Corps within the group made a strong contribution here. The UK B-Corp Movement encourages organisations to map their impacts across all 17 goals.

As Williams, Haack and Haanaes (2023) highlight, if organisations start the SDG mapping process with all 17 goals, they can ensure that no positive or negative impacts are overlooked. Starting holistically with all 17 can also help improve the chances of identifying untapped SDG opportunities and uncovering potential trade-offs and interdependencies.

Some 56% of organisations represented were addressing more than 15 of the goals, with 40% of organisations represented addressing between ten and fourteen goals.

None of the organisations who submitted their self-assessments were contributing to fewer than ten goals.

It must be acknowledged that there may be an element of self-selection here as those organisations who are already committed to contributing to the goals may have been more willing to engage with the roundtables in the first place and complete their self-assessments. However, this still demonstrates a broad contribution and engagement across a wide range of areas, highlighting the potential positive impact the construction industry could have on the delivery of the SDGs.

The goals with the strongest levels of action were goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; goal 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; and goal 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

There was a good level of engagement with goal 3 Health & Wellbeing, goal 4 Quality Education, goal 5 Gender Equality, goal 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, and goal 13 Climate Action.

The exercise demonstrated moderate engagement with goals 1 No Poverty, 6 Clean Water and Sanitation, 10 Reduced Inequalities, 14 Life Below Water and 15 Life on Land. Given the impact of the industry on nature and biodiversity goals 14 and 15 are identified as areas for improvement. CIOB can have an ongoing role in highlighting this issue through its extremely successful digital series *The Nature of Building: Biodiversity and the Built Environment*, which has attracted extraordinary levels of engagement since its launch in October 2024 (CIOB, 2024).

There were low levels of engagement with goal 2 Zero Hunger (which may not be considered material by some built environment organisations) and goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, although you would expect strong governance arrangements are undoubtedly in place at both an organisational and project level. This indicates that understanding of the relevance of this goal could be enhanced.

It must be noted that this is a small sample size, so may not be reflective of the wider industry, but it does demonstrate the potential for impact across a wider range of areas.



Case Studies

Members of the construction leaders working group were able to highlight best practice case studies from across a wide range of Sustainable Development Goals.



ACO Technologies:

Advancing Sustainable Infrastructure

ACO Technologies, a prominent provider of sustainable drainage solutions, operates with a deep commitment to environmental stewardship, encapsulating its mission to “care for water.” As a signatory to the UN Global Compact, and an active participant in the UN CEO Water Mandate, ACO systematically aligns its business practices with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This overarching commitment is vividly demonstrated through the introduction of the ACO Carbon Smart Framework, an innovative approach designed to deliver lower-carbon, sustainable infrastructure solutions.

The ACO Carbon Smart Framework represents a significant development in the company's sustainability journey. It is a transparent and auditable classification for products that achieve carbon neutrality, demonstrating a dedication to reducing embedded carbon, utilising renewable energy, upholding ethical supply chain practices and fostering responsible manufacturing. While the framework explicitly addresses carbon performance, ACO's holistic approach to sustainability means that products within this designation often contribute to a much

broader range of global goals. ACO Qmax, a high-capacity slot drainage system and recipient of a Queen's Award, serves as a leading example of this framework in practice. Its inclusion as the first product line to carry the “Carbon Smart” designation highlights how established solutions can be re-evaluated and enhanced to meet evolving environmental performance standards, while also illustrating contributions to several SDGs:

- SDG 13 – Climate Action:
A core pillar of the Carbon Smart Framework, operational carbon emissions associated with Qmax are reduced using renewable electricity and renewable gas at ACO's UK manufacturing sites.

Beyond climate action, Qmax's integrated design and ACO's operational practices also



significantly contribute to other vital SDGs:

- **SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation:** Qmax integrates into broader water management strategies, supporting Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). This functionality contributes to the effective management of stormwater and helps to mitigate pollution risks, thereby safeguarding water resources. ACO's participation in the UN CEO Water Mandate further underscores its dedication to responsible water management.
- **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Ethical considerations are integrated into ACO's operational framework. Suppliers are subject to stringent audits against Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria to ensure adherence to responsible sourcing and fair labour standards. Furthermore, ACO operates as a Living Wage employer, providing opportunities for career progression and training to foster a supportive and equitable work environment.

- **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:** The design of Qmax reflects a commitment to industrial innovation, directly addressing challenges related to climate adaptation and water resilience. Its capabilities support the development of robust infrastructure by facilitating high-capacity stormwater management, essential for urban and industrial areas.
- **SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Engineered to manage storm exceedance, Qmax plays a role in protecting critical infrastructure from flooding. Its application within SuDS contributes to the creation of resilient and adaptable urban environments, supporting safer and more sustainable communities.
- **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production:** At ACO's UK manufacturing premises, Qmax is produced with a minimum of 10% recycled materials. Internal production processes for Qmax are designed to be zero-waste, aligning with circular economy principles,

and minimising environmental impact throughout its lifecycle.

Recognising that the path to sustainable is a journey, materials and processes need constant improvement, but that is not an excuse to do nothing. Any remaining cradle-to-gate carbon emissions in the Qmax Carbon Smart programme are offset through high-quality, Gold Standard-certified projects. These offsetting initiatives are selected for their direct contributions to other UN SDGs, extending the positive environmental and social impact globally. Examples include projects providing Gender Equality Certified Clean Water in Uganda, Clean Water in Sierra Leone, a Cookstove Project in Malawi and Wind Energy in Turkey.

The ACO Carbon Smart Framework, as exemplified by the Qmax case study, underscores ACO's ongoing dedication to integrating comprehensive sustainability into its operations, supporting global development goals, and fostering innovation across the built environment.



Arup:

The SDGs as a framework for project sustainability ambitions

The Acre is a landmark commercial retrofit project, which transformed the Richard Seifert-designed 1980s brutalist building at 90 Long Acre in Covent Garden.

There was an ambition from the client, Northwood Investors, for The Acre to be a global sustainability exemplar back in 2019, when the design kicked off. To ensure this, a bespoke project sustainability strategy was developed by Arup with Platform and the design team.

The project's sustainability strategy was developed with the aim to maximise the potential of the development to address a wide breadth of environmental, social and economic sustainability considerations. Initial workshops to determine the objectives of the strategy were held in October 2019 and January 2020 to identify high-level aspirations for The Acre development. Platform, Arup Sustainability, Arup MEP, Arup Structures, Gensler and Core5 were all in attendance.

The initial workshop focussed on the client's aspirations for the project in the context of:

- Westminster City Plan (2016): Policy S28 Design
- Westminster City Plan (2016): Policy S40 Renewable energy
- City Plan 2019-2040: Policy 36 Energy
- Draft London Plan (2018): S12 Minimising Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Draft London Plan (2018): S17 Reducing Waste and Supporting the Circular Economy.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were used as a framework to understand

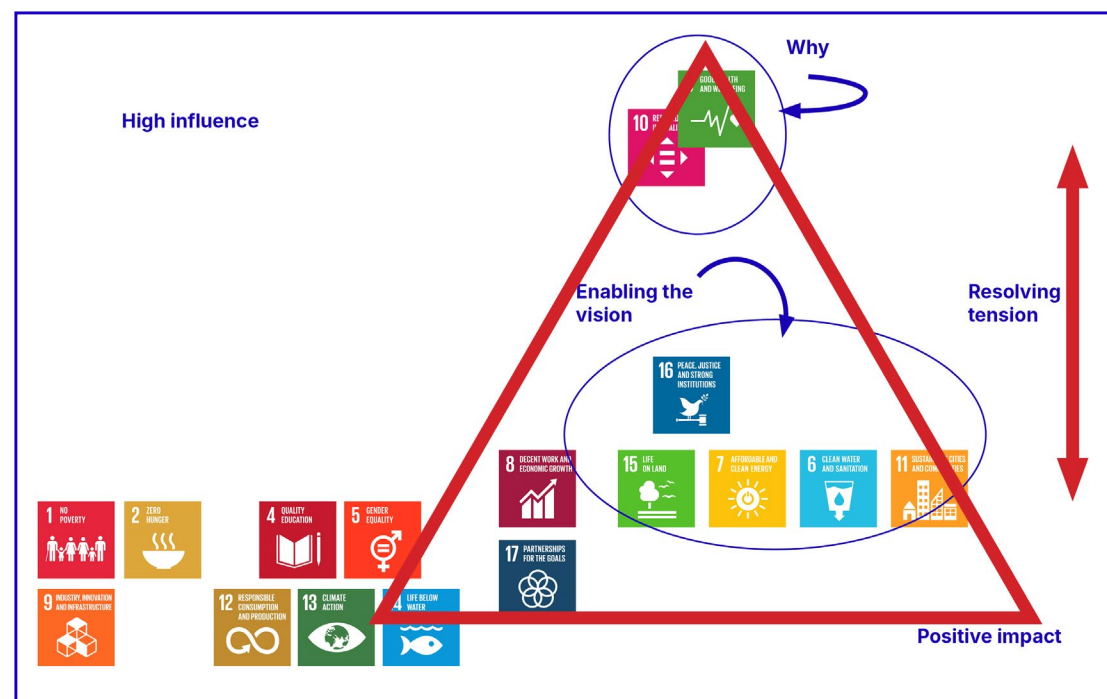


Figure 1



the extent of the sustainability ambition for the project. They were identified as they are a globally recognised tool fit for sustainable development. The team plotted each of the 17 goals on an axis of level of influence the project could have against the level of positive impact the project could have on each. Figure 1 is an image of the outputs of this exercise: this sketch highlighted potential tensions between different aspects of sustainability, for example, the need to resolve a desire for optimised indoor air quality (and therefore ventilation rates) and a target for reduction in energy consumption.

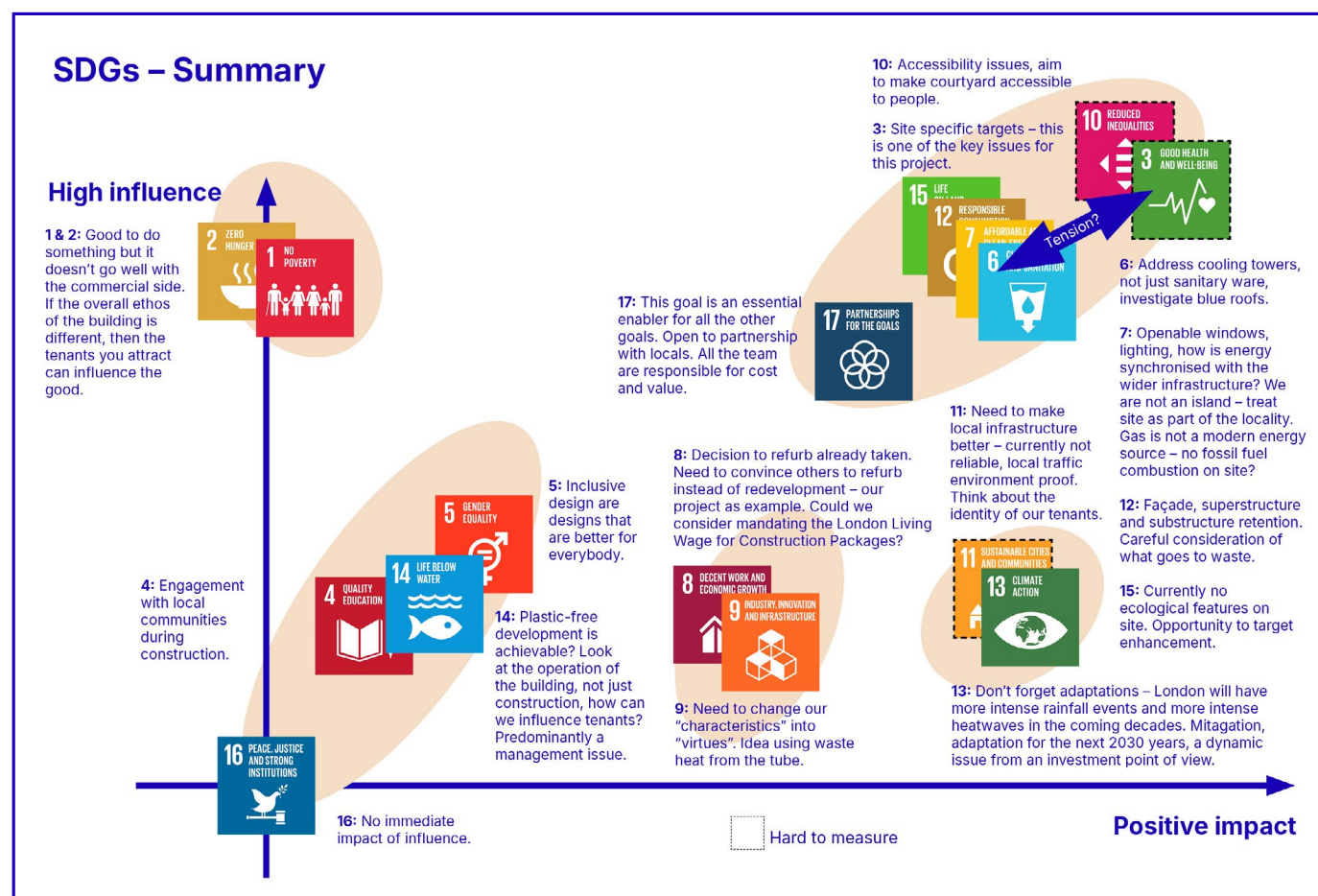
The second workshop, which took place in January 2020, explored further opportunities to focus on relevant SDGs based on influence and positive impact, opportunities for a net zero carbon target; pursuit of a BREEAM Excellent or potentially Outstanding rating; and opportunities for enhancing local ecology.

Figure 2 highlights those SDGs which the team identified as most relevant to the overarching sustainability strategy for The Acre. The key themes were identified and the below KPIs identified as indicators to develop strategies to improve against throughout the design, construction and operation of The Acre. A baseline level for each KPI was identified, and best

practice targets were defined. Some KPIs also had stretch targets to strive for better than best practice.

Now that the project has completed, it has achieved stretch target level for a large majority of the KPIs identified in the strategy, with none of the KPIs falling below the minimum target level identified.

Figure 2



Alandale Group:

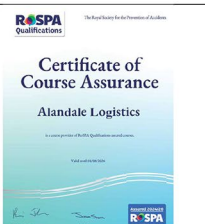
Sustainable Development Goals

The Alandale Group provide a wide range of Construction and Planning Support services to various sectors and industries through their Logistics, Scaffolding, Building & Fit-Out, Temporary Services and Security companies.

Alandale Group identified various SDGs where they make a particularly positive contribution. For example, the development of a Traffic Marshal course 'Take Control', which is assured by ROSPA, has created and maintained employment opportunities within the business and has resulted in the multiskilling of the workforce, bringing benefits to clients and valued team members. In the last year, they have delivered 15 courses, over 700 hours of training, trained 120 traffic marshals and created employment opportunities on multiple projects. This makes a strong contribution to goal 4 Quality Education, as well as supporting goals 3 and 8.

On goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, as part of their commitment to working with local communities, they also attended the Broxbourne Council and Google Jobs Fair. With over 300 residents attending, it was a fantastic opportunity to connect with everyone and share opportunities to support local recruitment for a major project located within the borough.

Working in partnership with the Community Wood Recycling social enterprise network, for the last quarter of 2024, the scaffolding business has rescued over 46 tonnes from the waste stream; of which 14.7 tonnes was reused, 0.7 tonnes (2%) was turned in to kindling or firewood and 31.2% was recycled into woodchip and particle board. This saved 23 tonnes of CO², contributing to goal 13 Climate Action.

 UN Sustainable Development Goals		
Positive contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals:		
		As part of our commitment to working with local communities, one of our initiatives was attending the Broxbourne Council and Google Jobs Fair. With over 300 local residents attending, it was fantastic to connect with everyone and share opportunities to support local recruitment for our major project located within the borough.
		Working in partnership with the Community Wood Recycling social enterprise network, for the last quarter of 2024, our scaffolding business has: - Rescued over 46 tonnes from the waste stream; 14.7 tonnes reused 0.7 tonnes (2%) turned in to kindling / firewood and 31.2% recycled into woodchip and particle board. - We saved 23 tonnes of CO²
		The development of our Traffic Marshal course 'Take Control' which is assured by ROSPA has created and maintained employment opportunities within the business and has resulted in the multiskilling of the workforce. Bringing benefits to our clients and also our valued team members. In the last year we have: - delivered 15 courses - over 700 hours of training - trained 120 traffic marshals - created employment opportunities on multiple projects.



Colemans:

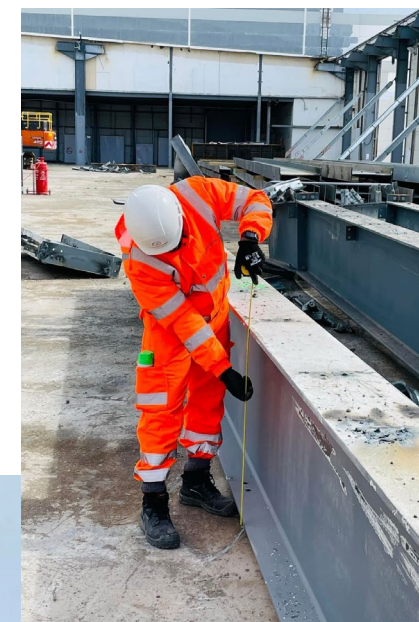
The World's Largest Emerald Steel Initiative

Colemans, pioneers in engineered deconstruction, recently spearheaded "The World's Largest Emerald Steel Initiative", a landmark project redefining sustainable material recovery within the built environment.

This ambitious undertaking, commissioned by a leading global technology company, involved the meticulous deconstruction of a 90,000m² portal frame building in South Wales. Coleman aimed to showcase their commitment to the circular economy and demonstrate the viability of repurposing high-grade steel for new construction, significantly contributing to global carbon reduction targets.

Leveraging unparalleled experience and advanced technologies like Building Information Modelling (BIM) and 3D scanning, Coleman meticulously managed the deconstruction of 5,000 tonnes of primary structural steel. A unique proof-of-concept project in London alleviated initial client hesitancy, proving the meticulous process of scanning, testing, designing and fabricating the steel. From this, over 600 tonnes were directly repurposed into the new data centre on site, with the remaining reusable steel distributed to various projects across the UK. This pioneering approach resulted in an impressive 8,000 tonnes of carbon saved compared to using new steel – a truly monumental achievement that significantly offsets Coleman's annual carbon footprint of 1,500 tonnes.

Overcoming onerous planning conditions and tight timescales, Coleman engaged with local authorities to implement an alternative schedule and a complex façade retention system, ensuring maximum material recovery. This project not only set a new global benchmark for sustainable resource management but also positioned Coleman as a world leader in engineered deconstruction, proving that innovation and precision can drive substantial environmental and economic benefits.



Howard de Walden Estate:

Supporting the SDGs through Sustainable Procurement

At Howard de Walden Estate (HdWE), procurement plays a critical role in our journey toward net zero carbon by 2040.

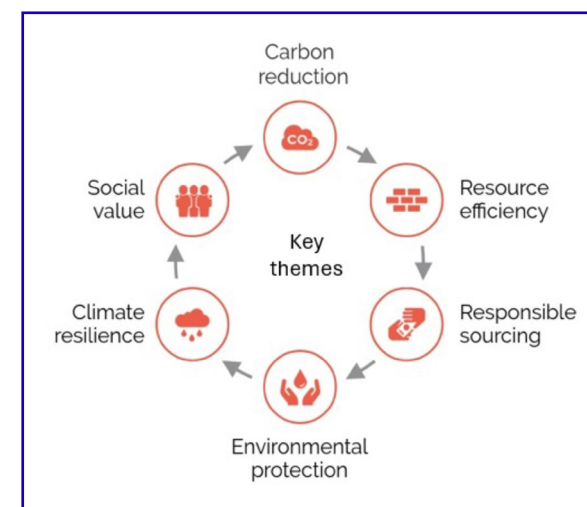
Over 70% of our total carbon footprint comes from the goods and services we procure, highlighting the importance of our supply chain in achieving our sustainability and business objectives, to avoided property obsolescence and plan for a net zero carbon future.

In March 2025, over 50 suppliers gathered at a HdWE event to learn about our new Sustainable Procurement Policy and how we can collaborate to achieve our net-zero goals and responsibilities across a broader range of sustainability-related issues. We believe acting decisively through our supply chain purchasing decisions is essential to safeguarding our long-term interests and dealing with climate change. Our new Policy communicates this imperative by setting out our mandatory and preferred procurement requirements.

The themes addressed within this policy include carbon reduction, resource efficiency and waste, responsible sourcing and materials, environmental protection, climate resilience, biodiversity and social value, supporting several SDGs. The scope of the Policy covers our building management operations, development and refurbishment activity, internal and public events, and our head office activities.

Our colleagues are expected to consider sustainability in every purchasing decision and actively manage the Policy and its requirements throughout the contracting and delivery stages.

We believe that close alignment on these issues with our suppliers will help to strengthen our relationships and improve our overall success outcomes. Partnerships built on a shared sense of endeavour are essential to address the sustainability challenges within the built environment; and we believe this is good for business in the long term. This is why we are prioritising partnerships with suppliers who take steps to align with our vision.



Mabey Hire

Mabey Hire is a leading temporary works specialist in the UK, with over 60 years of engineering excellence.

They have the expertise and trusted solutions across every type of temporary works for civil engineering, building and utilities that enable their customers to build with confidence.

When transitioning their responsible business plan from traditional CSR to the ESG framework, Mabey Hire saw an opportunity to better align with the UN SDGs and used the “SDG Compass” guide for business action on the SDGs to help them put sustainability at the heart of the new strategy. By conducting a value chain impact review and materiality assessment, they identified 7 SDGs that were most relevant and presented the biggest opportunity to positively contribute, so these became the foundation of the strategy.

Since the strategy launch in 2023, several achievements have contributed to the SDGs. These include a 34% reduction in carbon intensity from a 2022 baseline, supporting Goal 12: Responsible Production and Consumption and Goal 13: Climate Action. Initiatives

involved reducing electricity usage across 17 depots, transitioning company cars to hybrid models, investing in a Euro 6 compliant HGV fleet and optimising transport routes. In 2025, they launched an Embodied Carbon Calculator based on industry standards and best practice and now include a carbon figure on all their designs to support customers in their own carbon reduction journeys, which supports Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.

In line with Goal 4 Quality Education, Mabey Hire updated its approach to early career engagement and professional development pathways for employees. This led to the employment of eight graduates, full utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy with eight apprenticeships initiated, the launch of an internal mentoring programme and a revamp of its STEM Education Programme. The latter has resulted in over 4,700 student engagement hours so far and the creation of a national community of 18 STEM Ambassadors.



Other employee initiatives in support of Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing have included the establishment of a Mental Health Champion network, which serves as the first point of contact for individuals seeking support. Additionally, Mabey Hire has partnered with Mates in Mind to provide targeted support for their operational employees. To encourage healthy habits, they have implemented a cycle-to-work scheme, offer free fruit on a weekly basis and introduced a Volunteering Policy that allows employees to dedicate up to two days per year to support a local charity or community cause. Mabey Hire is honoured to have received the RoSPA President's Award in 2025, marking 13 consecutive years of achieving Gold Awards.



Saul D Humphrey LLP:

A Project Management consultancy delivering against the SDGs

Saul D Humphrey LLP is a project management consultancy dedicated to exclusively delivering sustainable construction projects.

The Consultancy is a B Corp and the Managing Partner, Saul Humphrey, won the 2024 CIOB Sustainability Award. Saul is also Professor of Sustainable Construction at Anglia Ruskin University, and he will be the CIOB President in 2026/27.

The Practice is rare in that it positions every project to all 17 SDGs seeking positive alignment by intervention across every goal. The Practice also publishes its performance in an Annual Report to allow public scrutiny and to encourage others to emulate and exceed the best practice showcased.

The Consultancy uses detailed analysis and mapping to make sure their approach is consistent, verifiable and exemplary. Each project the team leads is assessed for its impact and alignment with the SDGs. They also use the B Corp Impact Assessor to verify the business's alignment and ensure comprehensive ESG compliance.

The Strategy is guided by the Values that identify the Consultancy. The Vision or Purpose of the Practice is to 'shift the paradigm of construction towards more sustainable development.' That commitment is embedded within the Consultancy's Articles of Association (as required for B Corp accreditation).

The term Value(s) is used as a metric of commercial sustainability too. By reducing embodied and operational carbon across eleven current projects, the saving in carbon emitted is measured and celebrated. Alongside this measure, the corresponding net increase in asset value

is estimated and the annual energy saving is calculated. These financial metrics might immediately align to SDG 8, but the interactive nature of the SDGs means the actions benefit a whole suite of indicators.

The strategy underpinning this practice evolved through a mix of formal and informal interactions that have been repeated regularly since formation in 2019.

These incorporate insights from ISO accreditations, B Corp assessments, SWOT workshops and PESTLE analysis, as well as from customers, advisory boards and ESG reviews.

Over time, the Corporate Strategic Model has adapted and expanded, with new targets being set as performance is tracked. Sustainability and the UN SDGs are at the very heart of the strategy and the business processes. As a result, the Consultancy has consistently met or exceeded most of its targets but still strives for continuous improvement.



Tilbury Douglas:

The SDGs in action - from biophilic design to net zero carbon in operation

The St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy project, part of the St Ralph Sherwin Multi Academies Trust, was awarded to Tilbury Douglas via the Department for Education (DfE) Framework.

The existing school fell victim to an arson attack, with the school housed in temporary accommodation. The rebuilding of the school was an opportunity for the DfE and the school's Trust to implement a biophilic brief, whilst using the project as a pathfinder scheme to investigate elements of net zero carbon in operation on future school projects.

The new two-form entry primary school accommodated Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils and a 60-place on-site nursery. The school consisted of five single-storey timber-frame buildings linked by an exposed canopy. Between each building are landscaped areas and play areas that fulfil the aim of bringing the outside in.

External construction methods consisted of timber frames, cedar cladding, with internally exposed services, timber glulam beams, woodwool acoustic panels and polished concrete floors. Furniture was also made from natural materials such as timber where practical, to promote repairs to damages, rather than replacement. M&E service installation was also different to the standard DfE school projects, incorporating intelligent actuated natural ventilation systems with light shelves to reduce glare and promote internal comfort by keeping cold air buoyant.

Through the delivery stages of St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Tilbury Douglas included appropriate design elements in response to the biophilic design brief set by the client.

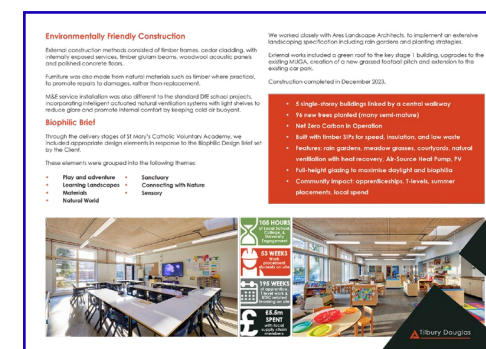


These elements were grouped into the following themes:

- Play and Adventure
- Learning Landscapes
- Materials
- Natural World

Tilbury Douglas worked closely with Ares Landscape Architects, to implement an extensive landscaping specification including rain gardens and planting strategies. External works included a green roof to the Key Stage 1 building, upgrades to the existing MUGA, creation of a new grassed football pitch and extension to the existing car park.

Construction was completed in December 2023, and the delivery included 5



single-storey buildings linked by a central walkway, 96 new trees planted (many semi-mature), net zero carbon in operation, built with timber SIPs for speed, insulation and low waste. Sustainability features include rain gardens, meadow grasses, courtyards and natural ventilation with heat recovery, air-source heat pump, solar PV, full-height glazing to maximise daylight and biophilia and community impact: apprenticeships, T-levels, summer placements and local spend.

This project demonstrates a clear contribution to several SDGs including goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, goal 13 Climate Action, goal 15 Life on Land and goal 4 Quality Education.



Ward Williams:

B Corp Certification intrinsically linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Ward Williams, a multi-disciplinary built environment consultancy, has distinguished itself not only through the delivery of core professional services but also through a strong commitment to sustainability and innovation in construction and operations.

In 2020, Ward Williams became the first chartered surveyors in the world to achieve B Corporation certification, setting a new benchmark in ethical and sustainable business practices and subsequently recertified in 2023 through the B Corp Impact Assessment improving their score by 21%. This was followed by the Queen's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development in 2022, recognising Ward Williams' collaborative ethos and positive environmental and social impact.

The company's B Corp Certification is intrinsically linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As part of their membership of the CIOB SDG Roundtable Working Group, Ward Williams completed a self-assessment to evaluate progress across all 17 SDGs, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement.

A standout initiative is the Futures Programme, which supports SDG 4: Quality Education by providing personal and professional development opportunities for staff, including carbon literacy training, aligned with SDG 13: Climate Action. The company also supports 26 apprentices across the UK, investing in the next generation of built environment professionals. Demonstrating a strong commitment to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, Ward Williams reinvested 1.78% of its annual turnover into local communities in 2024 through volunteering, school engagement, donations and pro-bono services.



Wates Construction:

Reimagining Talent for the SDGs

Wates' purpose is to reimagine places for people to thrive. Importantly, this includes supporting people who face the greatest challenges.

People with a criminal record often face extraordinary barriers to employment. Being unemployed post-release significantly increases the likelihood of reoffending, leading to materially worse outcomes for them and for the communities where they live. Consequently, at Wates we have a distinct focus on supporting people with criminal records into employment and equipping them with the skills to maintain that employment.

Understanding that employment practices may have evolved while they're serving their sentence, we've created a pre-employment programme that's been delivered successfully in six prisons so far. Through this, candidates develop their ability to find and access opportunities, present themselves successfully at interview and understand their rights and obligations regarding disclosure of offences. We work with Ministry of Justice employment and resettlement teams to identify and recruit candidates for this programme.

We have also created a mini version of our off-site manufacturing arm, Prism, in a Category C prison. In this workshop, we train and employ people in custody, helping them learn skills they can use on release.

A further part of the puzzle is to understand that work is just one facet of anyone's life. With this in mind, we work in a multi-agency capacity with statutory and non-statutory services, ensuring that people released from custody have housing, finance, health and wellbeing support to help them transition to life in their new community. This increases their ability to maintain the employment they have secured.

Finally, with 12.5 million people holding a criminal record in the UK, we have removed barriers in our own organisation to employing ex-offenders. This has involved changing policies, processes and risk management procedures, supporting colleagues with training and support and helping labour agencies to open opportunities to people with criminal convictions.

This work all supports SDGs 1, 8, 9 and 10, ranging from addressing poverty and inequality through to supporting decent work and economic growth.





Addressing barriers and challenges to implementation

We must acknowledge the considerable diversity in the sector, including different levels of maturity in relation to sustainability, but there are also areas of commonality in how projects are delivered.

It is important to highlight the difficult context for the built environment currently. Increasingly, stakeholders want much more from the industry, and the urgency of the climate and ecological crisis, and the role the sector plays in this, means we have no choice but to act now. However, the sector and its supply chains are navigating significant financial challenges, including a high rate of insolvency within the industry, and changing geopolitics are increasing uncertainty and creating contradictory narratives. At the same time, construction companies are being asked to do more: build more homes, deliver net zero, achieve better quality and attract more talent. This is a difficult context for progressing an urgent change agenda.

Some organisations highlighted that the policy framework is not in place to ensure widespread action across all goals (although, of course, there are exceptions to this, with some sustainability areas already well regulated).

This observation highlights that while there will always be leadership exemplars, our industry can be compliance-led. As early as 2016, an exploratory study demonstrated that a sustainable built environment had a critical role to play in achieving the SDGs, highlighting the development of smart cities and sustainable communities, sustainable procurement, design and construction of infrastructure, and the provision of renewable

energy technology, such as solar on built assets, as critical roles. It also underlined that the built environment could act as a driver for realising the SDGs, but this was only or most likely if backed by the right government policies and strategies (Opoku, 2016).

One member of the group highlighted work in Wales, following the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in 2015 (an innovative piece of legislation placing sustainability at the heart of public life), to develop seven well-being goals which translated the SDGs into the Welsh context, and articulated the nation's contribution to the SDGs. The Future Generations Report 2025 highlights progress towards these goals as well as learning, highlighting that delaying action makes change more expensive and difficult in the long run (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2025).

Indeed, the role of policymakers in providing the framework to drive progress is a critical one. Walker et al (2023) highlighted that the built environment holds significant potential for accelerating the implementation and attainment of the SDGs, acting as an enabler for sustainable development, but to realise this potential, actors in the built environment and policy fields must work collaboratively and systematically toward achieving the 2030 Agenda, capitalising on synergies and innovating to solve interdisciplinary challenges.





While there have been increasing levels of collaboration around the sustainable development goals and related topics, this has not necessarily been at a systemic level, and in the UK at least, changes in government priorities and leadership, over a sustained period, along with international challenges such as the implementation of Brexit, the global pandemic and a changing geopolitical landscape, may well have stalled efforts at various points during the implementation period.

Other challenges include the concerns around resource (time and cost), knowing where to start and what to focus on, balancing other priorities, knowing how to measure progress, impact and value to the business and wider society. The group were keen to highlight that these are particular challenges for SMEs, with more limited resources.

It was also highlighted that SMEs may be deterred from engaging with the SDGs because these are global goals, so it is unclear whether a small organisation can make a meaningful contribution. The goals may seem like lofty aspirations, which at first appear as though they might be best tackled by national or regional governments.

SMEs may perceive their impact and influence to be at a local and regional level. They may see the goals as being too big in breadth and scope for them, and more relevant for larger, global institutions. It may be hard to imagine their own efforts making a significant impact.

There was a broad consensus that SMEs would benefit from using the SDGs as a framework to help the built environment industry become more innovative and sustainable, not least because the goals provide a framework to help organisations to use a shared language and align goals with their value chain. But they need more help to do so.

It is certainly true that given the SDGs are global goals, SMEs need not feel pressure to change the world on their own. Yet focusing on small steps can make a big difference when you consider the combined impact of all SMEs taking these incremental steps. Collectively, SMEs are far from insignificant. In fact, worldwide, they comprise 90% of businesses and create 50% of all employment. Further, in emerging economies, they contribute up to 40% of GDP (World Bank, 2019). Without the commitment of SMEs, it is difficult to see how the SDGs will be achieved at all. This should be a particular area of focus for CIOB and larger organisations with SMEs in their supply chain.

Despite both real and perceived challenges, there are significant opportunities for organisations that engage with the SDGs. For businesses, the SDGs not only represent an opportunity to contribute to global efforts to make the world a better place, but also provide a strategic framework for developing robust sustainability plans that can drive innovation, enhance brand reputation, and open new markets, perhaps driving a competitive advantage.

Depending on where an organisation focuses their efforts, the SDGs can help achieve regulatory compliance, manage risk, improve resilience, and achieve cost savings and operational efficiencies. Companies committed to sustainability are more likely to attract and retain employees who value purposeful work, and they can also provide a framework for communicating and reporting on your sustainability progress, by providing a shared language, recognised by other stakeholders such as clients.



Taking the agenda forward and accelerating progress

CIOB has a clear opportunity to provide support to its members to accelerate ambition and action in relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

CIOB's objectives, defined by its Royal Charter, include the promotion for the public benefit of the science and practice of building and construction, as well as the advancement of public education in that science and practice. No current definition of public benefit can neglect our role in tackling the environmental crisis, and CIOB must continue to provide visible leadership for sustainability, promoting environmental sustainability in construction practice, and advancing the development of relevant knowledge and skills to enable members and wider industry to make a positive contribution to a sustainable future.

The CIOB Corporate Plan 2023-28 identified Environmental Sustainability as a focused strategic theme and outlined three ambitions to:

- equip CIOB members (individual and company) with the knowledge and skills to manage and deliver the construction process in environmentally sustainable ways.
- embed environmental sustainability into relevant learning programmes across schools, colleges and universities.
- support industry and stakeholders in building the case for change through environmentally sustainable activities and metrics.

It is therefore completely consistent with the CIOB Corporate Plan to continue to raise awareness,

provide support, develop knowledge and encourage action in relation to the SDGs.

Recommended actions for CIOB, which were proposed by the construction leaders working group, included continued awareness raising activities through the various channels available to the organisation, developing a report to be presented at CIOB Members' Forum in June 2025 and then disseminated more widely, supported by a communications plan, engaging the network of CIOB Sustainability Ambassadors in the dissemination of this work, developing guidance for SMEs, publishing SDG-related case studies from organisations of different scales at different positions in the value chain and providing CPD demonstrating actionable steps. The digital series, *The Nature of Building: Biodiversity and the Built Environment*, can also be used to support the acceleration of awareness and action on SDGs 14 and 15. These are all actions that the professional institution will take forwards.

A further recommendation was to continue to promote collaboration with other professional institutions on the topic of sustainability and the contribution that our industry can make to the SDGs as it is essential that all related professions contribute in a holistic manner.





of the digital series, *The Nature of Building: Biodiversity and the Built Environment*, CIOB could explore whether a future collaboration with Content with Purpose on the topic of the SDGs could be possible.

Furthermore, the incoming CIOB President for 2025/26 made a commitment to build a narrative strand into his Presidential theme around the power of the SDGs to engage young people (and attract career changers) into the construction industry, which could make a significant contribution to attracting future talent and addressing the skills gap.

Other potential recommendations, which would require additional resources beyond current budgets include:

- Develop a CIOB SDG maturity model, some sort of tiered self-assessment framework allowing organisations to assess their maturity in SDG engagement from awareness through to integration and leadership. This would help CIOB members understand their progress and tailor interventions accordingly and give CIOB essential data for future reports and assessments. It would also encourage more organisations to map their impact across all 17 goals.
- Create a sector-specific SDG toolkit for procurement that could provide guidance for integrating SDG-aligned criteria into procurement processes, particularly focused on social value, circularity and biodiversity, enabling more effective supply chain transformation.





"Over the last 12 months as President of CIOB I had the privilege of engaging with many companies and organisations globally, being very impressed of the work we all do to make our lives better, our cities more liveable and to ensure a built, human and natural environment is sustainable and resilient. As this report and many others have demonstrated it is simply not enough to continue at our current pace. The UN SDGs offer a useful tool and framework for addressing our approach in a holistic way. Perfectly aligned to CIOBs strategy around modern professionalism, quality and skills, and sustainability, it presents an opportunity for all of us to engage with renewed energy and enthusiasm in picking up the pace and delivering greater benefits for us all. Join us as we continue our work to make a difference in our sector. The companies presented in this report are already doing so. I am sure that there are hundreds more, globally. Become the inspiration for others and ensure a brighter future for us all!"

Professor Mike Kagioglou



With thanks to members of our construction leaders working group on the Sustainable Development Goals for their participation in this project:

ACO Technologies

Alandale Group

Anglia Ruskin University

ARUP

Chartered Institute of Building

Colemans – Engineered Deconstruction

De Montfort University

Gordon Brown Sustainability Project Management

Greendale Construction

Howard de Walden Estate

Loughborough University

Mabey Hire

Madaster UK

Mott MacDonald

Ridge & Partners LLP

Saul D Humphrey LLP

SDG Assessment

Tilbury Douglas

Ward Williams

Wates Construction

Whitebox Construction Management



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Appendix 1: Key Definitions

Agenda 21 – Agenda 21 was a non-binding but comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment.

B-Corp – A Certified B Corporation, or B Corp, is a business that has been verified by B Lab to meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. B Corps are driven by a purpose beyond profit, aiming to benefit all stakeholders, not just shareholders.

Biodiversity – Biodiversity is the extraordinary variety of life on Earth, from genes and species to ecosystems and the valuable functions they perform. Short for biological diversity, it can be summarised as the variety of all living things and their interactions.

Carbon Literacy – Carbon Literacy is the knowledge and capacity required to create a positive shift in response to climate change. This includes an awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.

Climate resilience – Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate change.

Circular economy – The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, based on the reuse and regeneration of materials and products (for example through sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible). In this way, the life cycle of materials and products is extended.

Embodied carbon – Embodied carbon encompasses the total amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and equivalent (CO₂-e) emissions produced by all materials and processes involved over the entire life cycle of a building or infrastructure, excluding energy for heating, lighting, and other utilities during the building's operational phase.

Green skills – Green skills are the knowledge, behaviours and capabilities needed to tackle environmental challenges, such as the transition to net zero.

Operational carbon – Operational carbon refers to the carbon emissions produced by a building or infrastructure during its use and operation. This includes emissions from energy used for heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting, and other operational needs.

Members Forum – CIOB Members' Forum is a bi-annual event, bringing together leading construction professionals globally, with many activities to take part in, including site visits, workshops and strategy development meetings.

Millennium Development Goals – The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were eight international development goals established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. These were later superseded by the Sustainable Development Goals.

Net Zero – a target of completely negating the amount of greenhouse gases produced by human activity, to be achieved by reducing emissions and implementing methods of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Sustainability Ambassadors – CIOB Sustainability Ambassadors are volunteer members of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) who represent a regional CIOB Hub Committee and actively promote sustainable practices within the construction industry.

Sustainable procurement – Sustainable procurement means integrating environmental, social, and governance factors into an organisation's procurement processes to ensure products and services are sourced in a way that minimises negative impacts and maximises positive social and environmental outcomes throughout their lifecycle, while still meeting the needs of the organisation.

Whole-life carbon – refers to the total carbon emissions associated with a building or infrastructure project throughout its entire lifecycle, from material extraction to demolition and disposal. It includes both embodied carbon (emissions from materials and construction) and operational carbon (emissions from building use).





For more information about CIOB's sustainability work,
please visit:

www.ciob.org/industry/sustainability

