

# CREATING AN ENGAGING CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

A guide for creating an engaging climate action plan for organisations in Bristol and beyond.



Bristol Climate &  
Nature Partnership

# Foreword

The climate crisis and carbon reduction have become a major focus for organisations of all kinds. Creating an engaging climate action plan is key to turning awareness of the challenge into tangible change.








It can be difficult to know how to go about this, so Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership has created this guide to help. The Partnership is a network of over 1,200 member organisations that are committed to working towards a zero carbon, nature rich and socially just Bristol.

Five Partnership members who already have climate action plans were interviewed as part of the development of this guide, and we'd like to thank them for their contribution: Alec French Architects, City to Sea, the Diocese of Bristol, Eunomia, and the University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust. The guide forms part of the Partnership's Climate Action Programme, which aims to help organisations reduce their carbon emissions through a series of events, resources and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.





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# What is a climate action plan?





# The nuts and bolts

A climate action plan is the nuts and bolts of how to go about making changes within your organisation. It outlines:

- The impact areas where you can reduce your carbon footprint (e.g. energy, transport, waste, supply chain)
- Your targets and objectives
- The actions you will take to achieve your objectives
- Who needs to be involved and is responsible for each action
- How you will track your improvements

It is very much a living document that develops and updates over time. You do not need to wait to have all the answers or solutions to create a plan. Part of the benefit of creating a plan is understanding your organisation's starting point and where the gaps are.

A climate action plan will generally be set over a number of years, working towards your overarching climate reduction target. Many organisations are working towards net zero by 2025, 2030 or 2040.





# Why now?

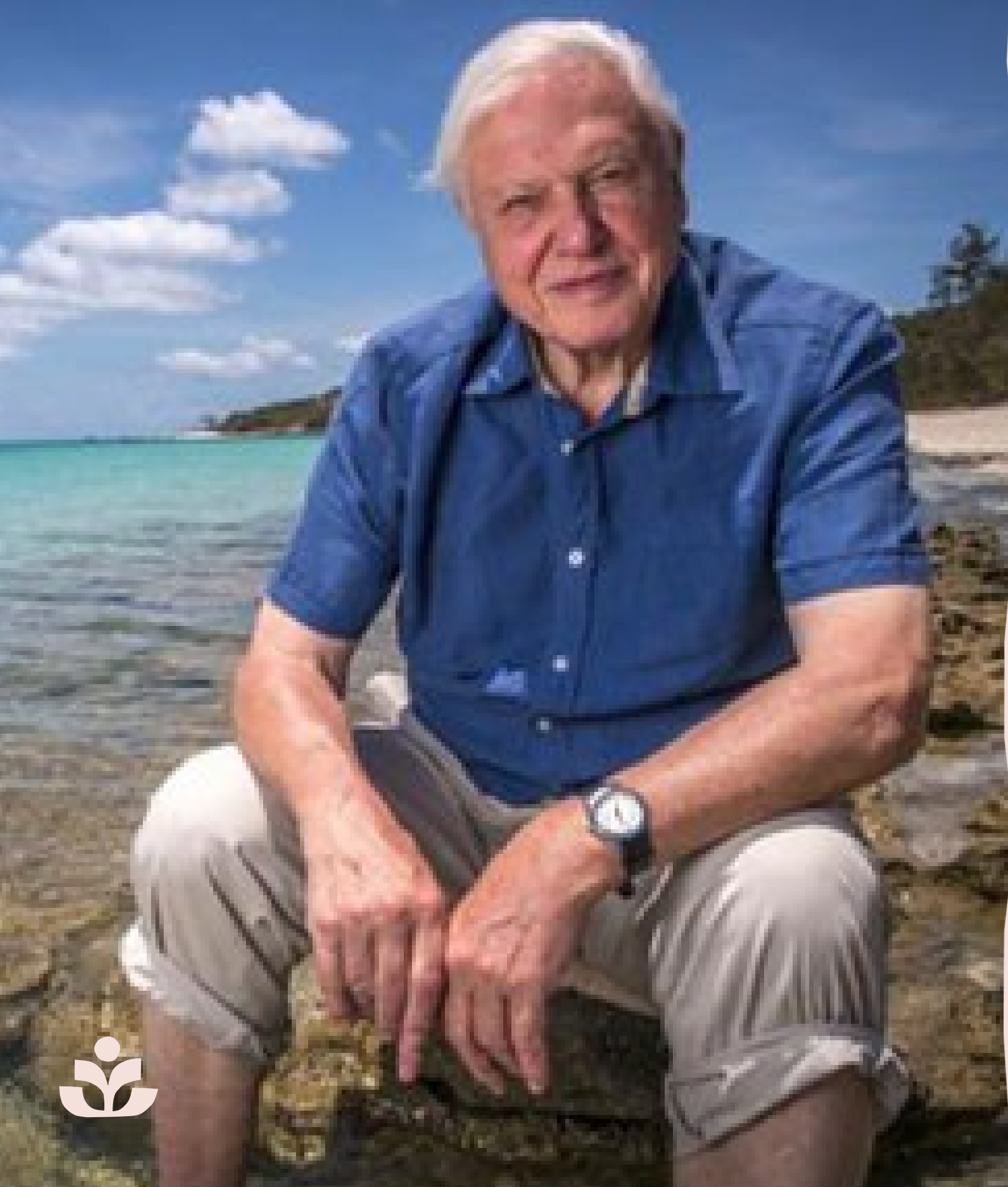
The importance of responding to the climate emergency has never been clearer. According to the 2021 IPCC report, the world can expect to hit 1.5 C warming within the next 20 years, and this warming will continue without drastic and immediate action.

The devastating consequences are already being felt, with extreme weather events increasing in all corners of the globe.

While it's understandable to feel overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge, there is still hope, if we act now. The report states that we still have the opportunity to halt further warming and possibly even see some reversal.







“What we do now, and in the next few years, will profoundly affect the next few thousand years.”

**DAVID ATTENBOROUGH**





# Why do you need a climate action plan?

It's brilliant that many organisations have declared climate emergencies and are setting ambitious goals to reduce their impact on the environment, but this intention needs to be followed with concrete change.

The easiest way to be accountable for your ambitions and ensure action is strategic and lasting is to create a climate action plan.

Benefits of having a plan include:

- ☰ Identifying all the areas and opportunities for taking action, including quick wins and long-term goals
- 👤 Involving colleagues in the development and delivering of the plan to motivate, support and enable them to act
- ✳ Tracking progress by developing a monitoring and reporting framework
- 🕒 Showing your organisation's genuine commitment to your climate ambitions to customers, clients and employees
- 🌿 Using it to work with suppliers and stakeholders to deliver targets
- 🌱 Enabling social co-benefits of carbon saving measures to be identified



# Do you need a separate plan?

You don't necessarily need a separate plan for your carbon reductions.

It may well sit within your existing sustainability or other environmental management documents, but these may need updating to reflect the required level and speed of change. Some businesses include climate targets and action in their overarching business strategy documents.

While this guide focuses on climate action, it is vital that your organisation also considers how it can help tackle the ecological emergency.

This could be done together or separately, and you can follow the same process outlined here.





# Creating your climate action plan

Set an overarching target





# Set an overarching target

Initially, it might be easier to have an overarching target around which to build your objectives and actions.

Thankfully, there are already a lot of initiatives that you can use, such as:

- Pledge to Net Zero
- Science-based targets
- Science-based target initiative for SME's (SBTi)
- Bristol's target to be carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030
- SME Climate Commitment
- Race to Net Zero campaign
- Your organisation's existing policies, commitments and climate emergency declaration

Lots of industries also now have climate emergency declarations, which include a set of statements and commitments to work towards, including:

- Culture Declares
- Architects Declare
- Landscape Architects Declare
- Tourism Declares
- Building service engineers
- Business Declares
- Health Declares

Alec French Architects is using the Architects Climate and Biodiversity Declaration to develop its targets, with 6 actions under each of the 10 pledges.

University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust used the net-zero by 2030 target to focus their objectives.





# Creating your climate action plan

Who needs to be involved?









# Who needs to be involved?

To get buy-in and engagement from colleagues to take action, it's important that they have a sense of involvement in creating your climate action plans.

However, developing an action plan with lots of people can also be challenging.

Here are some different approaches:

-  A core person or group develops the plan and seeks input from the wider organisation.
-  A green team with representatives from each department is convened to work on the plan and deliver change.
-  Focus groups are held with different departments on how they can help achieve the targets.
-  Teams/departments are tasked with incorporating targets and actions into their own planning processes so climate becomes embedded into their core work.





# Senior leadership buy-in

Due to the systemic nature of the changes required, it's vital that your plan has buy-in, commitment and sign-off from senior management. Find a senior team sponsor or friendly ally to help review plans before you take them to the full senior team. If presenting the need for a climate action plan to your board or senior management, develop a business case for doing so.

These questions might help you:

- ☰ What does your business care most about?
- ☼ What is its core purpose or mission?
- 👤 Where is your business most vulnerable to climate action?
- ☼ Is your current business model very reliant on fossil fuels or particularly carbon-intensive?
- ✱ How can climate action help make it future-fit?
- 🕒 Where could taking climate action help you to gain a competitive advantage?
- 💬 What climate action do your staff, customers and clients expect from you? If you don't know, can you ask them, e.g. in a staff survey?
- ☼ Where might climate action help you improve efficiency or reduce costs?
- ✱ Is there a moral/legacy case that might motivate your senior team?





# Additional expertise

Larger organisations may wish to bring in consultants or new members of staff to manage decarbonisation plans or provide support in areas where further expertise is needed.

Alternatively, you may decide to upskill people within your own organisation so they can lead on certain impact areas or workstreams.



When University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust presented to the board, they described the climate crisis as a health crisis, linking it with the core purpose of the organisation.



# Creating your climate action plan

Assessing impact and  
defining scope





# Assessing impact

In order to set targets, one of the first steps will be to understand your current emission levels.

This will help determine which areas of your organisation have the biggest impact and enable you to set a baseline to track progress against.

The Partnership produced a [Guide to Measuring and Monitoring Carbon Emissions](#) for SMEs to help organisations do this.

You will also need to decide what to include in your plan. Emissions are classified into Scopes 1, 2 and 3 (see next page), and the size and type of your organisation will determine the biggest opportunities for impact and what is possible to measure.

Don't get stuck by trying to include it all — focus on what is achievable and where you can create the most change.





# Defining scope

To avoid overwhelm and an onerous plan, you may want to start with the biggest impact areas and any quick wins and plan to expand the scope in future years rather than assuming you can do everything at once.

The Diocese of Bristol has a scope for their plan up to 2023 and then a wider scope for 2023 to 2030 which takes into account impacts like the embedded carbon in their new buildings.



- \* Scope 1: Emissions that your organisation creates directly, e.g. running boilers and vehicles
- ⌂ Scope 2: Emissions your organisation creates indirectly, such as electricity and gas it buys for heating and cooling buildings
- 🌿 Scope 3: All emissions the organisations is indirectly responsible for, up and down its value chain, e.g. travel, buying goods and services, financial investments



# Creating your climate action plan

## Setting targets





# Setting targets


Setting targets helps to focus action, motivate colleagues, and demonstrate progress over time, enabling reporting and celebrating success!

The most helpful targets are those that are SMART:

 Specific

 Measurable

 Achievable

 Realistic (although, given it's a climate emergency, they really need to be Radical!)

 Timebound (ideally within 5–10 years)

“Have an ambitious goal and challenge your team to come up with ideas to meet it. The answers are out there, your team is your greatest asset.”

**SAM WILLITTS**



University Hospitals Bristol and  
Weston NHS Foundation Trust

Alec French have set a net-zero target for the biggest impact areas e.g. their electricity supply and a 10% year-on-year reduction for other areas.



# Be ambitious

Setting ambitious targets can drive people to be more innovative and find the solutions needed.

Science-based targets are considered best practice. These targets are in line with what the latest climate science deems necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. There are standardised targets for SMEs and a streamlined process through the SBTi.

Setting emissions targets per employee can be a useful way to account for fluctuations in your workforce, which may inadvertently affect your data, leading to reductions without you taking any action, but people leave or increases when you have been making changes but employing more people.

If specific targets are not possible, setting more general objectives can also focus attention on the goal and help determine what action is needed.





# Creating your climate action plan

## Determining actions





# Determining actions

Once you have set your targets and objectives, you will need to determine how they can be achieved and who needs to be involved.

In order to compile the actions, you may wish to:

- ☞ Work with a team or lead staff member who is responsible for each area to determine what change is possible.
- ✱ Bring in a consultant or a part-time member of staff to assist you in developing your actions.
- ⌚ Upskill people within your team by attending one of the many available webinars or courses (see next page for some examples).
- 👏 Convene a working group with organisations within your sector to develop solutions together.
- 🏠 Are you part of a Trade Association that has, or would be willing to start, a climate working group?
- 🌱 Or set up your own — the hospitality industry has an interesting of this





# Resources

There are plenty of resources out there which can help you figure out how to achieve your objectives.

Here are just some to get you started:

To address supplier impacts, Eunomia are going to analyse their suppliers on their own commitments to the ecological and climate crisis, and then set timelines to phase out those that are not committed to change.



[Bristol Climate Hub](#)



[SME Climate Hub](#)



[Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership's Climate Action Programme](#)



[Carbon Literacy Training](#)



[10 actions to reduce carbon emissions from your business](#)



[IEMA qualifications](#)



[Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership](#)



[Project Drawdown — free online resources](#)



# Incorporate social co-benefits

When embarking on your organisation's climate action journey, it's important to consider how to do it fairly.

There is a risk that the steps you take could widen, rather than reduce, existing social inequalities in your local community.

Through your employees, physical location, supply chain and partners, your organisation is part of the city and community and needs to be aware of, and responsive to the wider social impact of your operations.

With consideration, transitioning to becoming a low-carbon organisation could bring a multitude of other co-benefits.

Incorporating explicit social co-benefits in your climate action plan could have the added benefit of making the plan more relatable and motivating as it reminds staff of the tangible impact on humans of climate change and climate action.





# Social co-benefits examples



Prioritise lower-paid or lower-skilled staff for any green training and development opportunities. Review internal policies and processes to ensure this is implemented fairly.



Offer work placements or apprenticeships to local young people from diverse backgrounds in areas where you are making green developments.



Diversity, inclusion, equality, and social value should be included in the decision-making process for any new climate action.



Commit to supporting the wider Bristol community when reviewing waste. For example, you could donate waste materials to charities such as Children's Scrapstore or excess food to food poverty charities.



Consider air quality and its impact on residents within the community you are located in when you are ambitious about your transport targets. The travel behaviours of your staff, as well as fleet vehicles, can directly impact the health and well-being of your neighbours.



Consider how your corporate social responsibility policy and corporate volunteering can be focused on supporting a just and fair transition hyper-locally. Could you sponsor initiatives supporting diverse young people's access to green sector employment, education, and training? Or could you directly support local community organisations with their climate and ecological priorities?



# Once you have a plan, what's next?





# What next?

The work doesn't stop once the plan is finalised.

There are a few important steps still to get through to make sure it has impact:

- Ensuring accountability
- Communicating to wider organisation
- Reviewing progress
- Shout about what you're doing!





# Ensuring accountability

Accountability is vital to ensuring progress and that the climate action plan does not gather dust on your (digital) shelf.

The main way to keep people on track and accountable is to normalise the actions into the daily working culture and processes of the organisation, rather than climate being a bolt-on or a 'nice to have'.

This can be achieved through:

In the first year after developing its plan, the Diocese of Bristol held monthly meetings to review all the items of each work stream on the action plan. In the second year, the actions were developed into teams' own planning processes, and managers reported against these at senior leadership meetings.



Ensuring there is a named person/team responsible for each action in the plan



Developing a regular reporting process (monthly, quarterly, annually)



Including climate action as a regular item in senior leadership team meetings



Linking employee objectives/KPIs to the plan's tasks and targets



Ensuring actions are embedded into the team's own management plans and processes



Ensuring there is a Board/Senior Leadership Member with ultimate responsibility for developing the plan



Linking delivery of your targets and plan to company bonus (if you have one) and Senior Leadership team remuneration



# Communicating internally

Presenting your plan at a staff meeting or event with an opportunity for feedback can greatly increase engagement, rather than just sharing the plan via email and hoping it gets read. You may also want to run climate literacy sessions for staff alongside the plan.





Regular updates on progress will also inspire and motivate people to take action and normalise climate action as part of your business culture.

When you are close to climate action, it is easy to think that everyone shares your enthusiasm and interest.



Often, this is not the case, so it's important that you communicate in a way that is relevant to your audience... what might reducing emissions mean to them, and how does it align with their values?

It could be:

-  Financial savings that could be spent on something else
-  Improving the air quality in the local community
-  Increased staff wellbeing, morale and health benefits
-  Ensuring a thriving planet for future generations



# Interactive events

Putting on interactive events or green action weeks are other ways to bring climate action to life and make it relatable to people's everyday lives and routines.

Or run a fun Do Nation campaign to improve internal awareness of carbon impacts and carbon literacy more generally.

There are also plenty of resources which might help engage staff, such as these short videos:

- WWF: Our Planet, Our Business
- Waterbear



University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust launched its climate action plan as a public event, and it was the most highly attended event that the sustainability department had ever held.

Alec French Architects host an annual Green Week which has a different theme each year. They also plant trees locally as an offsetting exercise and a visual representation of their businesses' carbon footprint.



# Reviewing progress

Regularly reviewing progress is vital to maintaining momentum and making changes to the plan where possible. It also allows you to celebrate successes! The impact area and how slowly or quickly you are making changes will dictate your review process.

For some areas, you won't want to wait till the end of the year to see if your initiatives or interventions have made a difference, so you may choose more frequent review points.

If your team already has a reporting process, can you incorporate climate action reporting so it becomes second nature?



City to Sea's Scope 1-2 emissions disappeared overnight when the team moved to remote working, their office contract ended, and all travel stopped due to the pandemic.

After reviewing its climate action plan, a number of changes were made, and it identified its digital footprint and supplier commitments as areas for carbon reduction.

However, the biggest opportunity for the organisation is now to focus on its sphere of influence and use its channels of communication to share their learnings and inspire climate action.



# Shout about what you're doing

Your organisation can have an even greater impact by communicating your plan and progress to staff, customers, clients, and partners. Think about your sphere of influence and how you can encourage others to reduce their emissions.

When ideas are shared and action is visible, progress happens faster and easier.

Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership can help to shout about what your organisation is doing, so get in touch!

If you're not already a member, [find out how to join on our website.](#)



The Diocese of Bristol said, “Even if no one has taken action in your sector, don’t let that hold you back. The Diocese of Bristol declared a climate emergency first and prompted the Church of England to do the same. Now, there is a nationwide action plan and targets to work towards.”



# Action plan headings

Here are some suggestions for headings for your action plan (not all are essential):

- Overarching targets
- Impact areas
- Baseline data
- SMART objectives
- Actions to achieve objectives
- Lead person/team for each objective
- Commitment to social justice
- Monitoring plan and timeline

## Suggested impact areas:

The size and type of your organisation will impact which of these you cover:

-  Energy
-  Transport
-  Waste
-  Supply chain
-  Digital footprint
-  Food
-  Green space and biodiversity
-  Communications and influence





# Example plans

Here are some sections taken from some organisation’s climate action plans to give ideas of how information can be presented:

Emissions category	Actions taken	Target (All against baseline analysis 2019/20)	CO2 reduction
Electricity use	Work with office managers to enable switch to 100% green energy tariffs at all locations. Support office managers to undertake an energy audit and identify actions to reduce energy use. Produce a guide to energy use reduction for staff. Audit and guide to support reductions in both electricity use and heating.	100% of offices using green electricity. 100% of offices to have an audit undertaken. Guide distributed to all staff.	x tCO2
Building heating	Identify an office location willing to explore decarbonised heating options as an example for others. Audit and guide, as above, to support reductions in both electricity use and heating.	Remove 10% of emissions from heating offices. 100% of offices to have an audit undertaken. Guide distributed to all staff.	x tCO2
Staff travel	Support office managers to dis-incentivise car use in favour of public transport and active travel. Provision of facilities to support active travel, i.e. bike racks, showers. Support flexible working and digital remote meeting solutions.	50% reduction in car miles for commuting to office locations	x tCO2





ZERO WASTE							
RECYCLING (ES)							
<b>Objective</b> To reduce our recycling waste and reduce CO2e emissions if applicable	<b>Target</b> Reduce recycling waste by 10% on 2018 figures	<b>Measure</b> Kg / recycling stream	<b>Frequency</b> Weekly monitoring for each recycle waste collection	<b>Performance Indicators</b> kg / waste kg CO2 / waste	<b>Baseline</b> 2018 recycling figures	<b>2019 target</b> 10% Reduction Eliminate single use plastics	<b>2021 target</b> Eliminate single use plastics
WASTE (ES)							
<b>Objective</b> To reduce general waste to landfill	<b>Target</b> Reduce waste by 10% on current figures	<b>Measure</b> Black bin bags	<b>Frequency</b> Monthly	<b>Performance Indicators</b> kg / waste	<b>Baseline</b> NA?	<b>2019 target</b> To reduce total amount of waste going into landfill	<b>2021 target</b> 25% reduction on current figures.
ZERO CARBON							
ENERGY USE - ELECTRICITY (KM)							
<b>Objective</b> To reduce electrical usage	<b>Target</b> 10% reduction on current figures	<b>Measure</b> kWh	<b>Frequency</b> Monthly	<b>Performance Indicators</b> kWh and CO <sub>2</sub> if applicable	<b>Baseline</b> 2018 figures	<b>2019 target</b> 10% reduction on 2018 figures	<b>2021 target</b> 35% reduction on 2017 figures
ENERGY USE - GAS (KM)							
<b>Objective</b> To reduce gas usage.	<b>Target</b> 10% reduction on current figures	<b>Measure</b> m3	<b>Frequency</b> Monthly	<b>Performance Indicators</b> kWh and CO <sub>2</sub>	<b>Baseline</b> 2017 figures	<b>2019 target</b> 10% reduction on 2017 figures	<b>2021 target</b> 35% reduction on 2017 figures
CARBON EMISSIONS & AWARENESS (ZN)							
<b>Objective</b> To offset our business carbon emissions on a yearly basis.	<b>Target</b> To offset 100% of our emissions	<b>Measure</b> tCO <sub>2</sub> e	<b>Frequency</b> Carbon assessment to be undertaken once / year	<b>Performance Indicators</b> tCO <sub>2</sub> e / month	<b>Baseline</b> 2018 figures ~ 46 tCO <sub>2</sub> e	<b>2019 target</b> To offset 100% of our emissions	<b>2021 target</b> To offset 100% of our emissions

	A	B	C	P	R	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	
3	Commitment		Implementation	Responsible	STATUS	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Notes
4	1. Embed climate action within the organisations	1	Climate champions established in each of the regions	SLT	Completed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
5		2	Update website to signpost and disseminate information and resources	JamesS	On track	-								Awaiting con
6		3	Introduce a regular climate action section to internal newsletter	JamesS	Completed									
7		4	Organise an annual themed climate week of action	FatimaP	On track	-	-	-	-					
8		5	Training session for press and communication staff on climate action	JamesS	Completed	-								Took place or





# Find out more

Thank you for using this guide, we really hope it helps your organisation create a useful and impactful climate action plan. We'd love to hear your feedback about the guide, and what other resources would be useful to you. Please get in touch at [contact@bristolclimatenature.org](mailto:contact@bristolclimatenature.org).

This guide is part of Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership's Climate Action Programme, which offers events, communications, and resources to help organisations at all stages of their climate action journey reduce their carbon emissions. The programme also includes the Climate Leaders Group for those with ambitions to be carbon neutral by 2030. Find out more about the programme [here](#).

If you aren't already one of the Partnership's 1,200+ member organisations and would like to join, please visit [our website](#) to register. You'll be the first to hear about our events, activities and opportunities to get involved and support our work. You'll be in good company.

## Acknowledgments

A huge thank you to Alec French Architects, City to Sea, the Diocese of Bristol, Eunomia, and the University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust for their help with this guide.



# With thanks to our Climate Action Programme sponsors



## and Partnership supporting members



[bristolclimatenature.org](https://bristolclimatenature.org)

# WORKING TOGETHER FOR BRISTOL'S FUTURE



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