

Pathway to Progress

Aligning the Business Events Sector with the UN SDGs



Purpose of this Pathway

This document is designed to inspire action that will help our industry align more closely with the UN SDGs and embed them in our everyday ways of working. What is set out here is not finite or a direction; it is a vision to help event strategists, destinations, venues, and suppliers think about where they align and what action can be taken.

Each organisation's direction will be different, and it is important to note there is no standard way to align. This is your journey!



Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) 'provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go together with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.'

The UN SDGs offer a framework for prioritising people and the planet, guiding governments, organisations and individuals. As social and environmental sustainability continues to be a critical priority across the globe, the business events industry can be a world leader in aligning our business practises for the good of people and the planet.

The UN SDGs apply to all countries, with all sectors playing a role in supporting their delivery.

Legally committed to achieve Net Zero by 2050, the UK has adopted the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', together with all United Nations Member States in 2015; it is responsible for achieving the Goals domestically and for supporting their attainment internationally.



¹United Nations, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Sustainability, Legacy & DEI

The UN SDGs do not stand alone as a single entity. They are connected to three main pillars of sustainability and impact:



The UN SDGs feed into each pillar, creating interconnected frameworks that prioritise people and the planet.

As an example, let's look at how two UN SDGs connect to our three pillars:



How can the Business Events Industry Align to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals?

Aligning the business events industry with the UN SDGs offers a unique opportunity to leverage its influence, innovation, and global reach in support of sustainable development. This would not only have social and environmental benefits, but also enhance the industry's competitiveness, resilience, and long-term viability.



Impact and Contribution: The business events industry has the potential to make a substantial impact due to its reach and scale. By aligning with the UN SDGs, our industry can contribute directly to global efforts.



Global Reach and Influence: Business events attract participants from around the world, including policymakers, industry leaders, academics, and activists. By integrating the UN SDGs into these events, the industry can effectively raise awareness and mobilise action on key sustainable development issues on a global scale.



Innovation and Collaboration: The UN SDGs provide a framework for innovation and collaboration. The business events industry can drive innovation by showcasing sustainable practices, technologies, and solutions that support the UN SDGs. Collaboration among partners including event organisers, destinations, venues, and suppliers, can lead to collective efforts toward achieving sustainability goals.



Credibility and Reputation: Embracing the UN SDGs demonstrates a commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices. This can enhance the industry's credibility and reputation among participants, sponsors, and the broader public. Companies and organisations increasingly prioritise partnerships and engagements aligned with environmental and social sustainability.



Long-Term Resilience and Growth: Integrating sustainability into the business events industry can lead to long-term resilience, innovation and growth. Sustainable practices often lead to cost savings, resource efficiency, and reduced environmental impact. Meeting the expectations of environmentally and socially conscious participants can contribute to the industry's relevance.



Policy Influence: The business events industry can influence policy discussions and decisions related to sustainable development. By showcasing successful initiatives and engaging policymakers at these events, stakeholders can advocate for supportive policies and regulations that advance the UN SDGs.



Education and Capacity Building: Business events serve as platforms for knowledge exchange, learning, and capacity building. Integrating the UN SDGs into event agendas can educate participants about pressing global challenges and inspire them to act within their own organisations and communities.

The following pages are designed to inspire you to develop initiatives to support the UN SDGs. Your own actions will need to be tailored to your organisation's values and ambitions. Make a difference in the business events industry!

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

1 NO POVERTY



- Support and engage with the local community and consider local needs in marginalised populations
- Engagement with local enterprises to purchase and use regional product, charities to donate and reuse materials used during the event
- Ensure all suppliers involved in event pay living wage
- Event policies and education programme to stop discrimination and inclusive to all

2 ZERO HUNGER



- Sourcing local produce and suppliers in catering – creating smart menus from sustainable sources
- Designing events with guaranteed numbers (or using historical data), reduce options if buffet food is provided taking into consideration dietary needs
- Organise systems to facilitate food donations to local charities in accordance with local legislation
- Education programme for delegates with nutrition value

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



- Public outreach / engagement to communities through medical congresses and events
- Education programme and well-being activities for attending delegates
- Incorporate safe space for mindfulness or neurodiverse participants
- Mental health support services for team members and delegates
- Create high nutrition and healthy food menus which support good energy and attention levels

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



- Engagement with local schools, colleges and universities and access to event education
- Creation of new internship / apprenticeship opportunities from attending companies
- Create event content and education to support delegate learning in sustainable development

5 GENDER EQUALITY



- Engagement with marginalised gender owned businesses attending event and in area
- Create content to strengthen awareness and work towards gender equity
- Ensure full participation in leadership, content creation and decision making
- Work supplier base to adopt similar policies on gender equity

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



- Promotion of water efficiency and usage across the event and all venues
- Consider working with charities that support safe drinking water and sanitation
- Providing tap water for participants instead of bottled water
- Avoid using materials which can enter the water system

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



- Transition event venues and suppliers to use renewable energy sources
- Work with supply chain with transition plans to do the same (including food and travel)
- Incorporate in education programme or activities to raise awareness of green energy

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



- Leverage events to generate new inward investment and foreign direct investment opportunities, as well as new innovation programmes
- Provide platforms for small enterprises to engage with attendees – develop new job opportunities
- Ensure all workers, event contributors and supply chain are on fair living wage and fair employment policies
- Organise neighbourhood programmes / recommendations of places to visit that include local enterprises

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



- Invest in new infrastructure that reduces delegate and event emissions
- Provision of charge stations at venue, rail and public transport for delegate travel
- Develop and share research which can lead to new investment and development
- Promote to delegates use of more sustainable solutions in travel, food, materials, local businesses to include within event

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



- Equal pay and social protection for all event contributors
- Education programme with skills training and career coaching
- Ensuring event is inclusive and accessible across all inclusions and communications
- Use event to promote social, economic, gender, religious and political inclusion

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



- Promote use of public transport and greener travel systems for delegate orientation
- Social programmes visiting diverse neighbourhoods and hospitality providers
- Policies to protect environment and incorporate local culture and heritage

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



- Demand sustainability policies from supply chain – alignment to event policy
- Creation of circular design systems to reduce, reuse, recycle across event
- Smart menu and catering choices – reduce food waste
- Education for delegates across all programmes on responsible consumption to then adopt in their organisations

13 CLIMATE ACTION



- Event policy with green choices throughout programme including transport, material and food choices
- Guidance and support for delegates to adopt practices which reduce overall event emissions
- Provide hybrid options for delegates
- Guidance on robust offsetting or insetting programmes

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



- Implementation of product life cycles in menu choices – educate delegates
- Use material that does not end up in water systems such as single use plastics
- Organise social programme which supports regions' biodiversity operations

15 LIFE ON LAND



- Outline and create reduction strategy to reduce overall consumption of natural resources (food and material)
- Responsible sourcing of goods applying environmental and social standards
- Organise social programme which supports regions' biodiversity operations

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



- Training with workers and delegates on violence prevention and human trafficking
- Leverage events to advocate for global and local challenges / injustices

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



- Seek partnerships in and outside event to accelerate sustainable development across all SDGs
- Educate delegates on how to spread the word

Connected

For easier reading, the examples of UN SDGs actions above have been divided per goal. However, each action doesn't have positive effects on a single goal, but it can be connected to multiple goals - see below some examples.

<p>Consider your industry and/or field of academic research. What outreach to schools, universities and communities could you conduct to advocate for your industry, public causes and education that contribute to the UN SDGs?</p> 	<p>Work with suppliers to ensure environmental and social sustainability is key to their work. Ask for sustainability polices as part of your RFP/tender process.</p> 
<p>Research opportunities to include local policy makers in your content to create opportunities for advocacy in improvement in connected legislation to your area of industry/academic field or causes close to your delegates.</p> 	<p>How well do you know your delegates or team? Data is key to understanding what voices feel underrepresented and allow action to be implemented to ensure true inclusion is realised.</p> 
<p>Consider recruitment procedures and job description wording that will encourage applications from different socioeconomic backgrounds. What additional support can be offered to applicants?</p> 	<p>What partnerships can be created to support your organisation's values and drive to support the UN SDGs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charities & social enterprises • Climate change specialists • Local government collaborations • Industry associations 
<p>Create food waste programmes. Work with event organisers and suppliers to reduce food waste and establish post-event food donation programmes in line with local legislation.</p> 	<p>Work with event organisations, local partners, and government to seize opportunities for the industry to contribute to national aims of health, well-being, education, reduced inequalities etc.</p> 
<p>Champion for better, cleaner transport systems. Partner with public transport providers and prioritise electric vehicles and investors in biofuel.</p> 	<p>Offer volunteer programmes for delegates and staff around the conference that support charities and social enterprises engaged in UN SDG targets.</p> 

Additional Resources

Sustainability

In partnership with GDS-Movement and isla, VisitBritain developed some sustainability toolkits to support you in your journey towards sustainability:

- **Event guide** to organising a sustainable event; this guide supports you in your comms to event organisers and can be included in any content to possible proposals. The guide has been created to provide a general narrative to support in the approach of organising a sustainable event.
- **Event sustainability checklists** with some detailed practical tips across the 4 main areas to manage: Energy, Food & Water, Production, Travel & Transport.
- **Responsible delegate guide** to bespoke using information from your destination to support responsible choices by visiting delegates.

Legacy & Impact

In partnership with #MEET4IMPACT, VisitBritain introduced a **Legacy and Impact Toolkit** designed to help you create the greatest possible impact through the activities you undertake, specifically congresses and events. It supports DMOs to work collaboratively with clients and partners and create impactful change from the events it helps attract.

For a more technical assessment with direct event indicators, please refer to **VisitBritain BE Impactful Framework**®, developed to help you track and measure your impact. The framework builds on guidance from the toolkit and enables you to apply event impact strategies according to eight capitals (Natural, Built, Social, Human, Intellectual, Cultural, Financial and Political) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

In partnership with New Intent, VisitBritain launched a new **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion framework** to understand more how to embed DEI into your event design. The document provides wider definitions and best practices in understanding DEI, it explores the relevance within event transformation and offers practical advice to support organisations and event teams to accelerate positive change.

All resources are available to download at [VisitBritain Business Events - Learning and Development Hub](#).

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