Global Compact
Network UK

Measuring Up 2.0

How the UK is
performing on
the Sustainable
Development Goals

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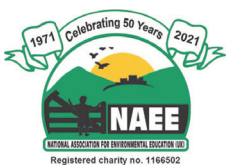
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A LETTER FROM THE
UN GLOBAL COMPACT NETWORK UK

Our network exists to promote practical sustainability leadership, share knowledge across sectors, and actively shape the responsible business environment to create a world in which we want to live and work. We use our power to convene business and other organisations to find practical solutions to global challenges. Importantly, we lead UK business action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs provide a powerful aspiration for improving our world – laying out where we collectively need to go and how to get there. UN Global Compact participants commit to supporting the SDGs and we firmly believe that the Goals offer us a path to achieve a better future: ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and protecting our planet.

In 2018, UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) took stock of the UK's progress on achieving the SDGs. Their Measuring Up report was the result of an open, transparent, and inclusive process where a wide range of stakeholders had opportunities to engage. We have sought to replicate this approach and, in so doing, energise stakeholders and re-focus attention on the Goals.

This report, Measuring Up 2.0, builds on the first edition with a fresh review of the UK's performance against the 17 SDGs and their associated Targets, focusing on progress and events over the last four years, and highlighting examples of good practice. We engaged more than 100 organisations and individuals to research, analyse, and review published data, assess the policy context and the mechanisms for delivering the Goals, and recent and historical trends which impact on their achievement.

As with the first report, there is a significant amount to celebrate in the UK's progress towards the Goals. In places our assessment may appear critical, but accelerating progress means striving for an improved future for everyone. There are still wide discrepancies between and within regions of the UK; many people who do not enjoy a decent standard of living; and challenges to reverse catastrophic damage to our environment.

We hope this report will galvanise action within Government and among business and other stakeholders. There are over 120 individual recommendations to advance the Goals now and nearly 50 inspirational business, civil society, national and local government case studies demonstrating what we can achieve when we focus our efforts and work in partnership.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this project, including UN Global Compact Network UK participants for their ongoing support. We are dedicated to working with all to accelerate action and delivery of the SDGs in the United Kingdom.

Dr Márcia Balisciano
Chair of the UN Global Compact Network UK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, the UK Government joined every other country in the world and committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Goals provide a holistic framework to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, combat catastrophic climate change, and protect our natural environment by 2030. Yet with just seven years to go, and already halfway through the 2030 Agenda, we are far from achieving the Goals in the UK.

Since the first Measuring Up report in 2018, the UK has met a number of crises. Most notably COVID-19, but more recently the worsening impacts of climate change, the knock-on effects of global conflict, financial and economic instability, and turmoil within our own Government. The SDGs offer a policymaking framework to prevent or minimise the severity of such crises and speed up our recovery. The absence of the SDGs in the Government's agenda has been a missed opportunity to address systemic issues holistically and to mobilise the stakeholders and resources that are already committed to ensuring all people in our country live a good life, prospering on a healthy planet. Progress on the Goals has stalled and even reversed in some areas of the country. Recognising the intrinsic importance of this agenda in the domestic context, and in the absence of strategic and top-level leadership on the Goals nor a commitment to undertake a second Voluntary National Review (VNR), the UN Global Compact Network UK decided it was time to measure up again.

What has changed in the UK

This year's research indicates that 132 of the SDG Targets are relevant to the domestic delivery of the Goals in the UK. This differs from the 143 Targets identified in the 2018 report, largely due to the omission of many SDG 17 Targets which had been included in the first exercise, but which we now consider to have a predominantly international focus.

Of the 132 Targets, we found that the UK is only performing well on 17% of them. There are gaps in policy or inadequate performance for 64% of them, and 11% where there is little to no policy in place to address the Target and where performance is poor or even declining. For the remaining 8% of Targets, gaps in available or appropriate data made it impossible to measure the UK's performance at this time. It should also be noted that the time lag in data does not yet reveal the full extent to which COVID-19 has impacted progress across the whole Agenda. Compared to the 2018 exercise, these results suggest improvements in 23 Targets, regression in 18 Targets, and no change in 65 of the Targets which were rated amber or red.

It has been rare for the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the Home Secretary, or even the Foreign Secretary to publicly refer to the SDGs and the lack of strategic direction and consistency in the Government's approach to delivering the Goals is a prevailing issue. The Government has made some progress in embedding the SDGs into its departmental objectives, but the latest iteration of these plans failed to address over a third of the 169 Targets. The Goals featured in neither the Government's COVID-19 recovery plan nor the Budget 2021.

There has, however, been a marked shift in engagement across the business and academic sectors, and from communities and local government. Some of the latest insights show that business engagement so far fails to reach the level of ambition needed. Business engagement must continue to increase, but it needs to shift beyond a communications exercise and towards

strategic integration. We need more organisations from all sectors in the UK to speak about the Goals and integrate them in their strategies.

Many of the Government's priorities – to invest in health and social care; to level up the country with better education, housing, skills, and infrastructure; to lead the way globally to reach net zero by 2050; and to strengthen the Union to help solve local problems – can be achieved through alignment with the SDGs and increased mobilisation of the many stakeholders from the business, investor, civil society, and academic communities that are already committed to the Goals. But the commitment of engaged stakeholders is not enough without an enabling policy environment and the partnership of Government.

The Government must demonstrate top-level political leadership on this Agenda. Without it, the SDGs will fast become a missed opportunity for the UK.

Leaving people and places behind

As with the 2018 iteration of the research, the UK's performance on the SDGs shows that people and places are being left behind. In many cases this has worsened since 2018. For example, performance against Target 2.1 – which seeks to end hunger and ensure that people have access to safe and nutritious food all year round – has worsened, with the number of emergency food parcels distributed by the Trussell Trust having continually increased, up to 2.1 million in 2021/22. We see clear evidence that the strong interconnections between the Goals (and their Targets) mean that tackling these issues will require systemic change. The Goals cannot be achieved in isolation.

SDG 3 provides an illustrative example of this. The health gap between and within communities persists and is compounded by, among other factors, access to services and infrastructure, and inequalities. Health outcomes in the UK are not just dictated by access to the NHS (though waiting time, service availability, and the location of provision are a major factor (SDGs 3 and 9); they are also closely connected to food insecurity and obesity (SDG 2). Health outcomes are generally worse in poorer communities (SDGs 1 and 10) where the ability to heat homes, or cool them in hot weather, and housing quality generally (SDGs 7, 11, and 13), and the ability to live an active lifestyle (SDGs 3, 9, and 11) are all compromised. Health outcomes and the related challenges are also exacerbated by deteriorating environmental conditions.

However, systemic approaches can improve both health and the environment: well-designed energy efficient homes and communities with easy access to affordable public transport or active transport routes, and a food system which prioritises sustainable and nutritious food that is affordable can all reduce our environmental impacts and lead to positive health outcomes (SDGs 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15).

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the links between Goals and Targets and health outcomes, but it shows how the SDGs

highlight these connections and can help us make coherent decisions that lead to multiple benefits. Persistent inequalities within and between communities in the UK mean that we will continue to leave people and places behind and fail to achieve the SDGs. We need an ambitious and overarching plan to achieve the Goals and forward-thinking, long-term decision-making from the Government if we are ever going to get to the root causes of these challenges.

What needs to happen

Based on the findings of this report, Government action in four broad areas is needed to achieve the SDGs in the UK by 2030:

1. **Planning:** We need to develop a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to deliver the SDGs. This overarching plan should identify how the SDGs are driving policy domestically as well as abroad. Cabinet Office is best positioned to lead this work.
2. **Leadership:** We need top-level political leadership and endorsement to guarantee that the cross-departmental action necessary to achieve the SDGs is implemented, to ensure policy coherence across Whitehall, and to recognise the domestic relevance and importance of the Goals. Responsibility for the Goals should ideally be in the Prime Minister's Office, or with a senior minister in a role with a significant domestic policymaking remit.
3. **Stakeholder engagement:** The Government must take immediate action to fulfil its commitment announced in the 2019 VNR to establish an effective mechanism to enhance stakeholder engagement and cooperation with departments, public bodies, and organisations in the domestic sphere.
4. **Reporting:** The Government should commit to undertaking a second VNR in 2024 and use this as an opportunity to engage stakeholders across the country and open a UK-wide dialogue with key actors on the SDGs.

We have drawn on the collective knowledge of our network and other stakeholders to provide this independent review of the UK's performance. We recognise that gaps in our expertise and knowledge remain despite our efforts to fill them, however, we hope this publication will make a valuable contribution to enable all stakeholders to understand where the opportunities and challenges lie in the achievement of this ambitious framework and to consider what role they may play.

The report includes Government actions for each SDG and recommendations for furthering the work that other stakeholders such as business can deliver to support this agenda. The report also features nearly 50 case studies as examples of good practice for the Goals, from which we hope business, civil society, national and local government can all take inspiration.

With thanks to the many organisations who have led, supported, or contributed to this research and the production of this report.

How the UK is performing on the Sustainable Development Goals

TARGETS	1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
1	🟠	🔴↓	🟢	🟠	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟠↑	🟠	🟠↑	🟠	🟠↑	⚪X	🟠↑	🟠↑	🟠	🟠
2	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟠	🟠	🟢	🟠	🔴	🟠	🟠↑	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	⚫X
3	🟠↓	🟠	🟢↑	🟠	🟠	🟠	🔴	🟠	🟠	🔴↓	⚪X	🟢↑	🟠	🟠	🟠↑	🔴↓	⚫
4	🟠	🟢↑	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟠		🟠	🟢↑	🟠↑	🟠	🟠		🟠	🟠	⚪X	⚫
5	🟠	🟢↑	🔴↓	🟠	🟠	🟠		🟠	🟠	🟢	🟢↑	🟠		🟠	🟠↑	🟠	⚫X
6		🟢↑	🔴↓	🟠	⚪X			🟢↑		⚫	🟠	🟠		🟢	🟢		⚫X
7		🟠	🔴↓					🔴↓		⚪		🟢↑		⚫	🟠X	🟠	⚫X
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a	⚫	⚫	🟠↓	🟢	⚪X	⚫	⚫	⚫	⚫	⚫	🟢↑	⚫	⚫	⚫X	⚫X	🔴	🟢
b	⚫	⚫	🟠↓	🟠↓	⚪X	🟢↑	⚫	🟠↑	⚫	⚫	🟠↓	🟠X	⚫X	🟠	⚪X	🟠	
c		⚫	⚫X	🟢	🟠					⚫	🟠X	🟠↓			⚫	⚫	
d			🟢														

🟢 The UK is performing well and has appropriate policy in place to address the Target

🟠 There are some gaps in policy coverage, the UK is not performing well enough, or performance is deteriorating

🔴 There is little or no policy in place that adequately addresses the Target, performance is very poor or deteriorating

⚫ The Target is not considered relevant to the UK domestic context or scope of this project

⚪ There is a data gap or the Indicator does not measure relevant data for the UK domestic context and data is unavailable for a more accurate Indicator

↑ Progress has improved since the assessment in 2018

↓ Progress has deteriorated since the assessment in 2018

X Progress is not comparable, for example if a Target is considered outside the scope or there is a data gap in one assessment, but has a performance rating in the other assessment.

INTRODUCTION

With ten years left to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2020 was branded as the start of a Decade of Action. It soon became apparent that COVID-19, rather than the SDGs, would transform the world. The pandemic exposed and exacerbated the depth of social and economic inequalities across the UK, and the missed opportunity we had to mitigate some of the damage if we had made earlier, further progress on the Goals.

The long-lasting impacts of the crisis have shown the critical importance of achieving the Goals and the need for the Government's recovery plans to ensure that we leave no one behind. Yet the pandemic also demonstrated that businesses, government, civil society, academia, and individuals can work together to create lasting and positive change that ensures all people in our country live a good life, prospering on a healthy planet.

Seven years ago, the UK Government joined every other country in the world and committed to Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and through it the 17 SDGs. The Goals provide a holistic framework to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, combat catastrophic climate change, and protect our natural environment by 2030.

They provide an internationally agreed 'to-do list', which can also work at national, regional, and local levels, alongside and reinforcing existing plans and commitments. They provide a framework which can help prioritise health and well-being, alongside prosperity, while recognising the ecological limits of our planet. They further enable the Government to work cross-

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Major domestic issues are fighting for the Government's attention and the Goals are only considered relevant to its foreign and international development work

departmentally and with stakeholders to create programmes and policies that are coherent with and balance the needs of our economy, society, and environment – both domestically and internationally.

In 2018, UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) coordinated Measuring Up, which reviewed for the first time how the UK was performing against the SDG Targets, the wider policy context, and the historical trends that affect us achieving the Goals. In that report, UKSSD found that more than three quarters of the 169 Targets were relevant to the domestic delivery of the Goals in the UK. Yet the UK was only making good progress on 24% of those Targets.

At the time, UKSSD and its community of over 190 organisations, called for the Government to place responsibility for the Goals in the Prime Minister's Office or with a senior minister to ensure top-level political leadership that could implement cross-departmental action and policy coherence for the SDGs. In 2019 the Government completed its first Voluntary National Review, which, though welcomed by stakeholders, was criticised for its failure to engage in genuine and meaningful dialogue with individuals and organisations, to offer an ambitious or clear plan for achieving the SDGs, and to mobilise action for anything other than business as usual. Unfortunately, little has changed since then.

Progress on the SDGs has stalled and even reversed in some areas of the country, in part due to the impact of the pandemic. Although emissions drastically reduced with lifestyles restricted, demonstrating the scale of change needed if we're to curb our climate impacts, this came at a cost to the mental health and well-being of everyone. The pandemic exposed systemic issues which impact on the fundamental needs of people, the stability of our economy, and the health of our natural environment – both now and into the future. Yet it also showed that business, government, civil society, academia, and citizens can work together to create long-lasting and positive change.

On 28 May 2020, then Prime Minister Boris Johnson called for a "fairer, greener and more resilient global economy" after COVID-19. He said: "There is every need for us to work together to get our shared goals back on track, including [...] the Sustainable Development Goals." The following month, the UN Global Compact Network UK and UKSSD coordinated

signatures from leaders of more than 150 companies, charities, universities, and trade associations in a letter to the Prime Minister which called on the Government to ensure the SDGs were put at the heart of the UK's COVID-19 recovery plans. The letter proposed that "we do not need to reinvent frameworks or agreements, we can instead use the global goals as the basis for a socially just and green recovery in the UK and abroad". Signatories of the letter asked that the SDGs be "used to consolidate and future-proof [the UK's recovery] plans" and recommended that they are used to:

1. Prioritise the most vulnerable in our society and level-up regional and societal inequalities
2. Build coherent policies for a healthy planet and to aid the transition to net zero
3. Unite all sectors behind a plan to build a stronger and more resilient economy

The breadth of support for the letter alone demonstrates the support and commitment to the Goals across UK society, including the business community, for the future they define. A response was issued by the Secretary of State for the Department for International Development who reaffirmed the Government's commitment to "supporting the implementation of the SDGs both at home and abroad" and its duty to "base our recovery from the pandemic on solid foundations".

However, the Government's COVID-19 recovery plan made no mention of the Goals, and even the Secretary of State's response included little reference to the relevance of the SDGs in the Government's domestic recovery efforts, instead focusing on our international work "with others" to accelerate the 2030 Agenda.

At home, the Government has faced significant turmoil in the past few years, and this seems to be getting worse with the energy and cost-of-living crises, industrial strikes, and the reverberations of Brexit and COVID-19 still impacting vital systems and infrastructure. These major domestic issues are fighting for the Government's attention and the Goals are only considered relevant to its foreign and international development work. But this agenda is intrinsically linked to everything that shapes the UK.

The Government's response to these events has been a missed opportunity to address systemic issues holistically and to

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The Government's response to these events has been a missed opportunity to address systemic issues holistically and to mobilise the stakeholders and resources that are already committed to the broader agenda of the SDGs

mobilise the stakeholders and resources that are already committed to the broader agenda of the SDGs or the causes contained within the 17 Goals.

UKSSD handed over the mission of their network to the UN Global Compact Network UK in 2020. In the absence of a commitment from the Government to undertake a second Voluntary National Review, of strategic and top-level leadership on the Goals, and a recognition of the intrinsic importance of this agenda in the domestic context, we decided it was time to measure up again.

This publication builds on UKSSD's Measuring Up report to reflect on the UK's domestic performance on the SDGs in the last four years. We hope it will make a valuable contribution to enable the Government and other stakeholders to understand where the opportunities and challenges lie in the achievement of this ambitious framework and to consider what role they may play.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

To leave no one behind is one of the universal principles of Agenda 2030 and underpins all 17 Goals. Through it member states have committed to eradicate poverty, end discrimination, and reduce inequalities. To leave no one behind is not just about getting as many people out of poverty as possible, but about reaching those that are the furthest behind first, whether as a result of vulnerabilities or persistently discriminatory policies and practices.

To effectively ensure no one is left behind, we need to consider this principle in all policy and decision-making regardless of whether it is an obviously relevant concern.

The 2018 Measuring Up report concluded that people and places in the UK were being left behind. Whether this is still the case or has got worse is an important component of our research in this iteration. It relies on an analysis of intersectional issues, for example whether both gender and race lead to disadvantage in educational outcomes.

However, much of this assessment relies on having data that is sufficiently disaggregated, complemented by

qualitative evidence to provide the depth of information needed on inequalities, which is not always available. Where possible we have attempted to reflect this in our assessment, though the extent and depth of the analysis necessary has not always been possible.

The SDGs are an interlinked framework with multiple connections and relationships across Goals and Targets – both explicit and implicit. Leaving no one behind provides one means of unlocking some of these interlinkages and understanding how issues persist. At the same time, the links between Targets can help unpick some of the challenges we face in leaving people behind. By considering these we are in a better position to understand how we may interact with these challenges and how we might play a part in solving them.

It is therefore important that we consider two principles when we approach the SDGs; where connections exist and who is being left behind. We have tried to apply this thinking in our analysis despite looking at each individual SDG separately.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This publication reviews the UK's progress on the domestic delivery of the SDGs since the first Measuring Up report in 2018. We have followed the approach that was established in the first exercise, drawing on the collective support from our network and other stakeholders to provide an independent review on the UK's performance. The 19 organisations that led the SDG chapters were selected for their relevant expertise. However, we recognise that gaps remain despite our efforts to fill them. The SDG framework is a vast agenda and, as such, many chapter leads synthesised what they felt was most pertinent for the final report. We hope to make some of the more extensive research publicly available at a later stage.

The report focuses on the implementation of the Goals within the domestic context of the UK, to sit alongside Bond's 2022 SDG Report, which evaluates the UK's progress from an international perspective.

Methodology

Phase 1 – Initial research
We provided our chapter leads with a proforma to complete. This was populated by researchers from Newcastle University and UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, host of Sustainable Development Solutions Network UK (SDSN UK), using the data from the Office for National Statistics Open SDG platform as a starting point, along with other relevant UK indicators and applicable policy and legislation. The chapter leads expanded on this data and included analysis on historical trends and the local to international dimensions of the Goal. Chapter leads then rated the UK's performance on the Targets on a red, amber, green (RAG) rating based on their analysis and the available data. You can see a key for these on page 7.

In places where a global Indicator or Target was ambiguous, or where it was not fully applicable to the UK context, some of the chapter leads referenced an alternative national Target based on existing Government targets, industry recommendations, or suggestions from the previous Measuring Up exercise. Where a Target is not applicable to the UK's domestic delivery of the SDGs, we have discounted it from review and offered no RAG rating. In 2018, this amounted to 26 Targets. In this second Measuring Up exercise, we identified a further 15 Targets which we considered to be outside the scope of this domestic review, largely SDG 17 Targets which we consider to have a predominantly international focus. Target 12.b, which was previously considered irrelevant, was rated this year due to the increasing recognition of the importance of domestic sustainable tourism. Targets 5.a and 5.b were also considered relevant this time, though we omitted a RAG rating for these Targets, along with others, as we felt we could not identify sufficient data or evidence to assess the performance.

Phase 2 – Stakeholder review
Where possible, once the initial research was complete, we invited other stakeholders to review and assess it for robustness, particularly in areas where chapter leads had identified specific gaps in the data or their expertise. Unfortunately, we were unable to get the support from as many stakeholders as we hoped due to resource and capacity restraints. Nevertheless, we hope with the response we gained we have ensured good coverage of the framework and a diversity of stakeholders taking part.

Phase 3 – Drafting and finalising the report
The chapter leads then summarised the research into the chapters presented here. A team of researchers and students from Newcastle University and UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose helped to review and proofread the chapters, and ensure there was consistency across the report. For brevity, further references not included in the report can be found online.

The UN Global Compact Network UK team identified examples from business, civil society, and government to showcase in the report. There were many case studies to choose from, more than the team could read, so the selection presented in the report is just a flavour of action that is going on across a diversity of sectors, different sized organisations, and geographical locations.

The team also drafted part two and three of the report before sharing it with stakeholders for consultation, although given the time constraints it is by no means exhaustive nor appropriate for us to suggest that our reflections represent all views in these sections.

Once this process was complete the UN Global Compact Network UK received the final documents, edited, and collated the report.

PART 1:
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Each of the following chapters presents the UK's performance against the SDG Targets and is a summary of a much larger research exercise. Where an SDG-relevant subject has not been covered in full it does not mean it has been excluded from the research. Our chapter leads and stakeholders who reviewed the information have focused on capturing the critical issues in the chapter based on their knowledge and expertise of the subject.

NO POVERTY

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Prepared by:

Introduction

Poverty must be eradicated. Aside from a social injustice, poverty is an impediment to economic development, and it impacts not only those who encounter it directly, but also all those who live around it. It is inextricably linked to a wide range of social problems and developmental challenges, both as a root cause of other problems, or as a consequence of them.

There was limited progress in reducing poverty in the UK in the first decade of the 21st century, notably for children, more markedly for pensioners, but not at all for adults of working age. The commitment to eradicate poverty was formalised with the passing of the Child Poverty Act 2010, but a more challenging economic climate, a change of government, and

a reorientation of political and spending priorities, led to the repeal of the Act in 2016.

While the Government continued to offer social protection and aspired to tackle some of the drivers of poverty, there was thereafter less explicit concern to tackle it directly. Then, the global pandemic hit. The Government can be credited with introducing actions to bolster social protection during the last few years. However, the scale, intensity, and everyday realities of poverty became more apparent as attention was drawn to how many households in the UK were encountering and struggling to manage economic vulnerability in 2022.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

1.1	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day.	🟠
1.2	By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.	🔴
1.3	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.	🟠
1.4	By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.	🟠
1.5	By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.	🟠
1.a	Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.	⚫
1.b	Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.	⚫

Key findings

1. The UK is among the most economically developed nations, with its citizens experiencing a relatively high material standard of living and established systems of national and local social protection.

2. The national indicator of relative income poverty that is widely accepted and used across Europe suggests that there has been virtually no change in overall levels of poverty in the UK for the last two decades.

3. The key trend is an intensification of poverty among those who experience it, with many metrics evidencing increasing levels of destitution.

4. Social protections for people experiencing poverty in the UK were reduced in the second decade of the 21st century. Some temporary additional protections have been introduced to counter the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis of 2022. However, it is unlikely that these will be sufficient to help the most vulnerable maintain their standard of living.

5. Scotland has legislated to eradicate child poverty by 2030 and is projected to meet its interim targets for reducing it by 2023/24.

Performance and progress

Eradicating poverty is a goal that has been pursued in various ways, at different times, and across different places – schemes to tackle poverty have been conceived for communities, localities, regions, nations, world-regions, and the global community.

For some years, the global project to eradicate poverty has been championed by the United Nations and the World Bank. The World Bank has developed the International Poverty Line (IPL), which can be credited with providing the means to estimate and monitor the extent of global poverty and acts as a stimulus for action to reduce it. The United Nations utilises this IPL as part of its broader programme of action to tackle global poverty and the problems it presents, first through the Millennium Development Goals (in which "the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger" was one of eight Goals) and now through the SDGs.

At present, the IPL is set at $1.90 a day. In the UK, the last reported data in 2016 suggests that 0.2% of the population

are below the IPL (Target 1.1). However, as highlighted in the first Measuring Up publication, how we define 'poverty' in the UK very much determines the conclusion we reach on performance and progress against SDG 1. A more appropriate metric is required to estimate the extent of poverty in the UK.

The latest best estimate is that 13.4 million people in the UK are currently living in poverty – one in every five people (Target 1.2). This number describes when a household's equivalised income, after housing costs, is below 60% of UK median household income in a particular year. This metric is used to describe the situation in which a household is unable to access what might reasonably be expected of the typical household in the UK because of inadequate income. These data are updated every year, with time series analyses available to track trends.

This approach to measuring poverty is widely used in advanced economies across Europe. The robustness of the most recent data release is less certain due to changes in how these data have been collected under 'lockdown' conditions. Therefore, it is more prudent to describe the scale of poverty within accepted levels of statistical confidence: statisticians advise

CASE STUDY: PROVIDING A LIFELINE TO FAMILIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS: 1.2, 1.5, 2.1

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Save the Children introduced an emergency grant for families who had been worst affected. Families were offered a range of products up to the value of £340, including essential household products, food vouchers, toys, educational resources, and COVID-19 resource packs, which contained ideas for low-cost learning activities, materials to help parents talk to

their children about coronavirus, advice for managing parents' own emotional well-being, and information on vital services.

As a result, the grant has already helped over 5,000 children in the UK, boosting their early learning at home and helping families meet their basic needs during the crisis.

" Three-quarters of children living in poverty live in a household where at least one of the adults is in paid employment

that between 11.8 million and 14.8 million people live in poverty in the UK. Even at the lower end of a credible estimate, poverty prevails in the UK.

Trend evidence conveys a mixed message. Over the last two decades, the risk of poverty in the UK – according to the relative income measure – has been stable. There have been no significant increases and no significant decreases. This might be viewed positively as this period has included the great recession (2007-2009), the Government's political project of austerity (2010-2019), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-) and the cost-of-living crisis, largely attributed to trade disruptions arising from the Ukrainian/Russian war (2022-). Alternatively, it might be suggested that there is no good reason why it was not possible to reduce poverty given that the average wage has increased steadily over the same period, inflation was low until recently, and there have been many more years of growth in GDP than contraction.

More damning is the emerging evidence in recent years of destitution in the UK. Destitution describes the deepening of poverty among the broader population who endure it. It has been estimated that 6.5 million people in the UK are living in deep poverty, an increase of 1.8 million since 2002/03. The Government's own estimates suggest that 36% of households receiving income-related benefits had marginal, low or very low food insecurity. Other metrics point to a deepening of crisis for many. According to evidence compiled by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, rough sleeping has doubled in the last decade, the number of emergency food parcels distributed by the Trussell Trust (just one provider of emergency food) doubled from 2015/16 to 2020/21, now at 2.1 million food parcels in 2021/22,

and the number of people admitted to hospital with malnutrition has trebled since 2007/08. All is far from well in the UK. The key trend is the intensification of poverty.

The risk of poverty (and destitution) is uneven. Once again, the social patterning of poverty is stable, with the same sub-populations at greater risk of poverty, also those who were at greater risk a few decades ago. For example the households below average income (HBAI) statistics find that in the UK the risk of poverty is greater in families where the youngest child is aged 0-4; it is four times greater among social rented sector tenants, compared to those buying a house with a mortgage; it is twice as high in families with three or more children; the majority of families of Bangladeshi ethnic origin live in poverty, compared to just less than one-in-five families of Chinese ethnic origin; it is almost twice as high in many families with both a disabled adult and child; almost one-third of children live in poverty, 50% higher than the rate of adults living in poverty; and poverty is less prevalent when there is more paid work in the household.

This is not to suggest that work is a sure-fire route out of poverty. Three-quarters of children living in poverty live in a household where at least one of the adults is in paid employment. There was a rise in in-work poverty (which is now levelling out), although protections such as the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage have increased financial returns from work completed for the low-paid. It need not be so. Some progress was made in reducing child and pensioner poverty in the UK in the first decade of the 21st century. It would be misleading to suggest that the Government is not concerned with tackling poverty in

CASE STUDY: TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETs 1.2, 1.3, 1.5

The Scottish Child Payment was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2021 to help tackle child poverty by supporting the costs of low-income families. Low-income families with a child under six who are eligible and apply will receive £80 per child, every four weeks – equivalent to £1,040 per year.

There is no limit to the number of eligible children in a household who can be supported by the Scottish Child Payment. The money can be spent on things like travel costs, nappies and other essentials, childcare, and family days out. The grant is due to be rolled out to eligible families with children under 16 by the end of 2022 with an increase to £25 per week.

CASE STUDY: BUILDING RESILIENCE IN BELFAST

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETs 1.5, 11.5, 11.7, 13.1

Connswater Community Greenway is a regeneration project in East Belfast, home to some of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland. The project combines flood prevention with the creation of public spaces and 16km of pedestrian and cycle routes.

Rather than a standalone flood alleviation scheme, Arup's project has demonstrated the power of green infrastructure and the value of adopting a holistic approach that the SDGs advocate for. Through better flood protection, the vulnerability of poorer households and the likelihood of them entering a poverty cycle is reduced. The project has also supported community cohesion, economic development, improvements in public health, increased biodiversity, and cleaner rivers.

the UK. The UK continues to provide a fairly wide-ranging system of social security and has articulated aspirations to improve children's life chances, promote social mobility, and to "level up" the most disadvantaged communities by targeting investment, regeneration, and development (Target 1.3). The scale of the social protection measures introduced to protect the population during the height of the pandemic must also be acknowledged. These included a temporary, and now withdrawn, £20 per week uplift for many who were eligible for welfare support. More recently, some enhanced support has been given to assist the most financially vulnerable, which will enable them to meet some of the anticipated rising costs of home heating.

Recent research also suggests that there has been significant investment in better protecting households in the 20% most deprived areas of England from flooding, although inequalities still remain. There is little evidence that there will be the same levels of investment to reduce vulnerability from the increasing number of heatwaves in the UK, which are currently twice as likely to impact people in deprived areas than those in neighbouring places (Target 1.5).

This national system of Government social security support, and lack of joined-up thinking around people's vulnerability to crises, are insufficient to offer adequate protection to many at the current time. However, the many ways in which civil society provides resources and support to bolster the quality of life of those experiencing poverty must be acknowledged. This support includes coordinating crisis interventions, such as setting up food banks, and facilitating access to services, for example, free/reduced price access to leisure services and advice/support services. These actions serve to alleviate the worst excesses of the social exclusion that poverty causes.

In summary, the UK continues to deliver social security to protect its most vulnerable from the worst excesses of poverty and is concerned with promoting social mobility to ensure that poverty does not persist across generations. However, concerns are continuously raised about the Government's 'direction of travel', the adequacy of support, and its understanding of what constitutes poverty. Despite the additional support that has been made available to ease the impact of global crises at the start of the 2020s, this has been underpinned by a weakening of social security in recent years, with significant reductions in the level of resources that are at the disposal of some of the UK's most financially challenged citizens.

As observed in the first Measuring Up publication, food banks are becoming a necessary part of the social support landscape. There are no signs of this lessening and demands on crisis funds and welfare advice continue to increase.

Unless the UK adopts a different approach, everyday life for its most financially challenged will continue to become more difficult, and the prospect of achieving SDG 1 – if conceived of as a national indicator of income poverty – will be a remote possibility. These challenges have been exacerbated by a pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. However, the root cause of these problems lies beyond what may be viewed as unforeseen challenges. It is within the remit of the Government to do more with the resources at its disposal to tackle poverty.

Synergies and coherence

SDG 1 is inextricably connected to many other SDGs in the UK. The links are most evident for the SDGs that are primarily social or economic in orientation (SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, and 17). For example, people with a physical or mental health condition (SDG 3) or disability (SDG 10) are at a greater risk of needing a food bank referral and will remain so until better support and treatment can be offered.

Similarly, research found that people on zero-hours or temporary contracts were four times more likely to lose their job during the first COVID-19 lockdown, putting people already struggling to escape poverty under even greater pressure (SDG 8). Nevertheless, the more environmentally-oriented SDGs (6, 7, 13, 14, and 15) are pertinent too, as Target 1.5 evidences.

Local to international dimensions

As the UK is a part-devolved administration, there is variable capacity across sub-national units in the UK to formulate a localised approach toward 'ending poverty'. For example, with cross-party support, the Scottish Government legislated through the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 to eradicate child poverty in Scotland by 2030. The targets set are slightly more ambitious variants of those that comprised the 2010 Act for the UK. National (Scottish) and local programmes of action are being pursued with the second delivery plan, published in 2022.

The work programme targets three drivers of poverty (work and earnings; social security; and reducing household expenditure) and supports interventions that bolster the quality of life as lived. It can be seen as part of a strategy to eradicate poverty in the longer term but comprises actions to tackle the current problems that poverty causes. Significantly, the introduction and enhancement of social support are projected to divert the trajectory in Scotland from that of the UK, and the Scottish Government expects to meet its interim targets and to have reduced child poverty in Scotland from the baseline of 2017 by 2023.

Recommendations

1. Articulate what the Government understands to be implied by the SDG objective of 'ending poverty in the UK'.
2. Specify how existing work on 'levelling up' and improving life chances, and 'promoting social mobility' contributes to SDG 1 and 'ending poverty in the UK'.
3. Commit to a programme of government action to 'end poverty in the UK', paying attention to progress in those parts of the UK that have committed to protecting its citizens from economic vulnerability by strengthening social security.
4. Commit to more than annual monitoring of levels of poverty in the UK: the Government, at the very least, must complement these data with commentary on how its planned actions are expected to impact income poverty in the UK. Ideally, it would outline an action plan to tackle income poverty.
5. Present a differentiated anti-poverty strategy, which acknowledges that what is required to reduce poverty among adults of working age differs from what is required to tackle child poverty and, in turn, pensioner poverty.

ZERO HUNGER

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Prepared by the Chair of the Hunger and Hardship Committee

Introduction

Hunger and hardship are taking their toll on people in many damaging ways – through the physical and mental harm of constant stress, health problems due to hunger or only having access to less nutritious food, and the multiple obstacles caused by poverty that block people's progress and potential. Emergency food aid has been prioritised in the UK so far because we have failed to get to grips with the causes of poverty and food insecurity.

Food insecurity can be solved with a coordinated, compassionate, and committed effort to unlock millions of people from poverty and hunger, while also paying attention to the welfare of the environment, sustainable agriculture, and those who work within it, securing access to food for generations to come. Long-term structural change will give people the best chance of getting out of poverty and building better lives for themselves and their communities.

To build a healthy, food-secure society, free from hardship and hunger, we must begin laying the structural foundations crucial for lasting change.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET | RATING

2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round. 🔴

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons. 🔴

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment. 🟠

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality. 🟠

2.5 By 2030, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed. 🟢

2.a Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries. ⚫

2.b Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round. ⚫

2.c Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility. ⚫

Key findings

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated hunger and hardship, and the cost-of-living rises along with supply chains disruption are leading to more and more people suffering food insecurity.

2. Social protection, particularly during the pandemic, helped alleviate some of the hardships but these measures do not address the underlying causes of food insecurity.

3. Hunger is directly linked to poverty 60% of the time and an inability to physically access food 40% of the time.

4. 14.9% of the UK population experienced food insecurity in April 2022, marginal groups are disproportionately affected.

5. The charity sector provides a significant amount of emergency food aid, but this should only be a temporary measure, not a long-term solution.

6. UK agriculture supplies 54% of food consumed domestically. Land used for agriculture makes up 71% of the total area of the UK and the Government is taking some positive steps regarding sustainable land use. The UK performs well on genetic diversity, but these broader Targets risk masking the real issues of hunger in the UK under SDG 2.

Performance and progress

The COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions have compounded the serious pressures that were already piling up on people experiencing hunger and hardship (Target 2.1, Target 2.2), pushing people who were already struggling beyond their limits. The cost-of-living rises and likely future increases are now leading to more and more people going hungry and suffering food insecurity.

The Government brought in a range of much-needed, bold policies during the pandemic, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, which temporarily strengthened our social security system. A £20 uplift in Universal Credit, accommodation for homeless people and rough sleepers, and vouchers for free school meals to support low-income families while schools have been closed were also introduced. These measures show how some policies can provide temporary respite for families

from the multiple stresses they face, but are unlikely to solve the underlying causes of hunger and hardship in the long run.

As a nation, many resources have been funnelled into desperately supplying food banks in the hopes that this would fix both hunger and hardship together. However, we have so far failed to look at these two issues separately and first understand the underlying causes.

Currently, in the UK, hunger is only partially affected by issues with global food security. Instead, 60% of the time, hunger and household food insecurity is directly linked to poverty (SDG 1), an inability to physically access food makes up the remaining 40%.

Research from The Food Foundation demonstrates that 9.9 million people (7.3 million adults and 2.6 million children) experienced food insecurity in April 2022 (Target 2.1), representing a 57% jump in the proportion of households

CASE STUDY: FEEDING BRITAIN – AFFORDABLE FOOD CLUBS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET: 2.1

Feeding Britain have introduced Affordable Food Clubs; a collection of social supermarkets, pantries, food buses, and larders that offer essential and nutritious food to low-income households for a fraction of retail value.

The Affordable Food Clubs also provide specialist support surrounding debt advice, credit, and savings facilities to address the wider poverty-hunger cycle in which many

vulnerable families are entrapped. There are currently around 150 Affordable Food Clubs across the UK, helping approximately 20,000 households so far.

On average £5 will buy between £15 and £20 worth of products, saving hundreds of thousands of pounds each month across households through their membership in these projects.

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Soaring numbers of people, including families, individuals, and people in work, have had to turn to charity for emergency food aid

cutting back on food or missing meals altogether in just three months. These figures make up 14.9% of the UK population. The following groups are disproportionately affected by food insecurity: disabled people and clinically vulnerable people; food sector workers; people from a minority ethnic group; households with five or more members; and households with children, particularly lone parents.

In April 2022, inflation reached 9.1%, its highest recorded level since 1982, and the Bank of England is projecting that it will reach 11% in October 2022. In 2019/20, among households in the bottom tenth of incomes, 13.8% of spending was on food and non-alcoholic drink, compared to 8.5% of households with incomes in the top tenth. Rising food prices place a higher burden on low-income families. As energy prices are rising particularly quickly, the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that the lowest-income tenth of households will face 1.5% more inflation than the highest-income tenth.

Soaring numbers of people, including families, individuals, and people in work, have had to turn to charity for emergency food aid. The charity sector has been praised for its quick response to the crisis, and for continuing to provide emergency support throughout most of the year. For example, FareShare re-focused its priorities in response to the pandemic, distributing a record-breaking 132 million meals to food banks and community organisations. The foodbank organisation Trussell Trust provided more than one million emergency food parcels in six months between April and September 2020. IFAN distributed a further 354,613 emergency food parcels

from February to November 2020, a 110% increase from the previous year.

Nevertheless, food aid should only be a temporary measure. As hard as third-sector organisations continue to work, emergency food aid is not a dignified, nor long-term, solution for people to meet their needs. It does not always address the other essentials that people have to go without. We have the knowledge and resources to end hunger and tackle the root of the problem so that communities are no longer stressed, struggling, and experiencing the continuously escalating damage and the unnecessary impact that hunger and hardship create. Suppose charities no longer have to use all their resources on emergency provision. In that case, they could instead focus on community empowerment, bringing people together to share skills, knowledge, and connections to harness opportunities.

The longer we rely on emergency measures, the harder it will be to move past them and rebuild a better way. To continue as we are now has high costs for people who are often not getting the varied and nourishing food they need to live healthily. These high costs impact individuals, employers, and governments (central, devolved, and local) dealing with the impacts of diabetes, obesity, and mental health problems; and for the NHS, which alone spends £6.1 billion every year on diet-related illness.

The effects of malnutrition cause an array of health issues (Target 2.1). In England in 2019/20, 1.99% of children under

CASE STUDY: NEXT GENERATION DAIRY LEADERS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET: 2.4

Developed by Nestlé and First Milk, the Next Generation Dairy Leaders Programme aims to identify and develop young farming talent by teaching farmers about agriculture policies and dairy production, and building cost-effective businesses that are resilient to future challenges.

The scheme supports the development of future agricultural planning, specifically focused on lean

farming methods, which enable a reduction in emissions, environmental sustainability for soil, water, and biodiversity, and animal welfare.

The programme forms part of the company's plans to improve their farms' sustainability and to develop efficient supply chains with a lower environmental impact.

four showed signs of stunting, which has been rising since 2016/17. There is also nearly a whole percentage point between children in the most deprived quintile (2.44%) versus the least deprived (1.49%). Obesity in children is also on the rise, leaping to 14.4% in England and 15.5% in Scotland in 2020/21 compared to 9.86% and 10.3% respectively in 2019/20, although this may be in part due to changes in data calculations. A further 13.3% of children in England were classed as overweight in 2020/21, with the rate standing at 14% in both Scotland and Wales and 16% in Northern Ireland.

While poverty is the main cause of food insecurity, it is not the only one. There are physical barriers to accessing good-quality food too. For example, disabilities and health conditions can restrict people's access, and many people live in an area where there are few options for buying good-quality food at affordable prices.

The state of agriculture and food production in the UK is vital not just for food security but also for protecting biodiversity and the wider environment. UK agriculture supplies 54% of food consumed domestically and employs 1.44% of the population (Target 2.3). The annual statistics on agriculture found that the total income from farming fell 15.7% from 2019 to 2020. The same report showed a mixed picture in Farm Business Income (FBI), with just over one fifth of farms making a negative FBI, while over a quarter had an FBI of over £50,000. FBI also varies by region and there is a discrepancy in the average gross earnings of food producers by gender.

Land used for agriculture makes up 71% of the total area of the UK. The Government is taking some positive steps regarding sustainable land use (Target 2.4) under the 25-year Environment Plan and under the 3-year Agricultural Transition Plan, which fills the gap left by the Common Agricultural Policy. This plan includes the Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI), the Local Nature Recovery scheme, and the Landscape Recovery scheme. The SFI remunerates farmers for taking actions to encourage sustainable farming practices and increase positive outcomes for soil health and biodiversity.

This is certainly a step in the right direction, but the impact is yet to be seen, which is why the rating remains at amber. There is also still a long way to go; among other threats, the State of Environments: Soil Report found that 300,000 hectares of soil are contaminated, two million are at risk of erosion, and four million are at risk of compaction, with the cost of soil degradation standing at £1.2 billion every year. There will also be additional pressures to mitigate the worsening of climate change, the rise in microplastics, and the growth in crops for bioenergy.

The UK has an array of genebanks for conserving agrobiodiversity (Target 2.5), including the National Fruit Collection, the UK Vegetable Genebank, and the Millennium Seed Bank. The UK tracks these genetic resources as part of its Biodiversity Indicators, specifically the C9b: Plant genetic resources - Enrichment Index, which has seen positive improvements in both the long and short term.

Regarding the diversity of animal breeding stock, data from 2022 shows that the proportion of stock classified as "at risk" has gone up by 1% from 88%, where it had remained since 2016. Contextually the US also stands at 89%, while the European average is 83%. The Government has implemented several actions to mitigate the risks of extinction of native breeds, predominantly caused by the rise in intensive farming and the use of non-native breeds, but these may not be enough to counter the trend of population decline. Indeed, the UK assessed itself as having made some progress but at an 'insufficient rate'.

Synergies and coherence

Food can play an essential social role in strengthening our communities (SDG 11). As well as providing us with nutrition (SDG 3), food can be the key to bringing a community together and enabling us to develop and share skills and knowledge (SDG 4). By creating shared cooking spaces and areas for group interaction, communities strengthen their

relationships and encourage people to create their own support networks organically. Food activities are an effective way to tackle social isolation and loneliness. They increase opportunities for civic involvement and for people to change their own lives and the world around them – issues that are not solely experienced by people in poverty (SDG 1). In turn, this allows communities to grow, giving rise to powerful new economic potential and making for a stronger national recovery (SDG 8).

Many of the SDG 2 Targets are largely focused on broader food security, agriculture, and biodiversity (SDG 15), and resilience to climate change (SDG 13) rather than household food insecurity. Although the UK is performing well in many of these areas, these broader Targets risk masking the real issues of hunger in the UK under SDG 2.

Local to international dimensions

There are noticeable discrepancies across regions in the UK, but a local approach presents the opportunity to tailor needs to the community. For example, local authorities could increase funding to improve community transport services that connect elderly and disabled people to food outlets, adapt food parcels to needs, support community groups that provide a wealth of associated services, and track food insecurity at a neighbourhood level by including questions in existing local authority surveys to help build a better national picture.

Internationally, the war in Ukraine has exacerbated the cost-of-living crisis through inflating energy prices. The UK is also seeing price hikes in food, petrol, and other basic items. There is now an additional risk that the strain on people already struggling to access food will be exacerbated by the impacts of new trade arrangements with the EU, leading to disruptions in the supply chain and food imported into the UK. Just over half of the food consumed in the UK is produced in the UK, although this has increased by 5% from the figures reported in the previous Measuring Up publication.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen our safety net through sufficient social security and reformed local authority support, reducing reliance on charities to meet essential needs.
2. Expand eligibility for Free School Meals to all children up to age 17 whose parents/guardians are in receipt of universal credit or are low-paid households and low-income migrants.
3. Give Local Authorities the statutory duty and the needed funding and resources to ensure Holiday Food Provision and activities are available every day of the holidays to all children who need support.
4. Enable financial opportunity and create opportunities to thrive to protect people from hardship and poverty. This means increasing access to good-quality work; improving the availability of affordable homes; reducing living costs; and improving public services.
5. The Government must prioritise food insecurity as a national issue and should launch a Children's Right to Food Commission to join up policy across relevant departments and address critical policy gaps identified through the Children's Future Food Inquiry.
6. Establish national-level cash value voucher schemes that incentivise purchases and consumption of fruits and vegetables among low-income and vulnerable households in receipt of qualifying benefits.
7. Governments across the UK should consider initiating targeted 'Area Level' food security programmes that aim to improve not only food security but also nutritional security in most deprived communities.
8. Enable community-led action, strengthen community resilience, and improve the food system so that our society can truly build back better. Community food providers and charities could work collaboratively in the mapping of food provision for residents on low income/facing financial hardship.

CASE STUDY: MILLENNIUM SEED BANK

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET: 2.5

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, a non-departmental public body that receives approximately half its funding from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), is home to the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership; the largest, most diverse wild plant species genetic resource in the world.

The partnership houses some of the rarest, most threatened, and most useful species from across the globe,

banking approximately 15.6% of the world's wild plant species. The collection maintains seeds' genetic diversity, enabling innovation, adaptation, and resilience in UK agriculture.

The partnership also promotes international knowledge sharing to increase the quality and genetic diversity of other collections, which in turn aims to strengthen resilience in global agricultural supply chains.

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Prepared by:

UNIVERSITY of STRATHCLYDE
CENTRE FOR
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Universal access to healthcare through the National Health Service (NHS) plays a key role in good performance in the UK against many of the Targets under SDG 3. However, as SDG 3 recognises through its wide-ranging scope, the health of the nation requires efforts beyond the healthcare system, taking into consideration the wider determinants of health and the impacts of wider societal inequalities.

As such, this Goal cannot be considered in isolation but through the lens of the wider framework, and the impact other Goals have on health and well-being and vice versa.

The last two years have seen significant impacts on the delivery of both the curative and preventative health services because of the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially stalling, and in some cases reversing, progress against the SDG 3 Targets. In addition, the pandemic has brought into sharp relief the impact of longstanding health, gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequalities, across the UK and within home

nations, which must be prioritised if we are to make gains against the Targets.

There are a number of health-specific areas that require urgent attention if the UK is to meet its commitments to the SDGs. These include not only the disease-related Targets, but also retention and support of health workers across the sector. This is also affected by the difference in service provision and cross-sectoral collaboration across the nations of the UK through their devolved powers.

It is imperative that focused attention is provided to the principles of 'leaving no one behind', directing efforts to key demographics, and ensuring that the overlap and synergies with other SDG Targets is not overlooked, particularly in relation to poverty (SDG 1) and inequalities (SDG 5 and SDG 10).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET	RATING
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.	🟢
3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.	🟢
3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.	🟢
3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.	🔴
3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.	🔴
3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.	🟢
3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.	🟠
3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.	🟢
3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.	🟠
3.a Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.	🟢

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET	RATING
3.b Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all.	🟠
3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing states.	🟠
3.d Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.	🟠

Key findings

1. Although the UK does well on many SDG 3 Targets, with access to universal healthcare and a welfare state, there are signs of stalling and regression on several Indicators across both preventative and curative health.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on the health and well-being of the nation, however the long-term implications are yet to be seen in a number of areas.

3. The leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the UK continue to be primarily associated with non-communicable diseases, which are significantly driven by a range of metabolic, behavioural, and environmental risk factors.

4. Lower respiratory infections, not associated with COVID-19, continue to be a significant cause for concern in the UK, and are linked not only to smoking, but also air pollution, poor housing, and exposure to occupational hazards.

5. Socio-economic inequalities, deprivation, and poverty underpin a lack of progress across the Targets, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.

6. There is a crisis in the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals.

Performance and progress

As reported in Measuring Up in 2018, many public services with a bearing on SDG 3 are devolved, including healthcare, economic development, education, and housing policy. Each nation provides universal access to healthcare (Target 3.8) but the structure, priorities, and benefits provided can differ. This summary extends to the UK as a whole, unless indicated otherwise.

Pregnancy remains very safe in the UK (Target 3.1), yet the disparity associated with ethnicity is stark. Black women are four and a half times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than White women. Furthermore, women living in the most deprived areas are twice as likely to die as women living in the least deprived areas of the country. The national target to reduce maternal mortality rate by 50% by 2025 from 2010 levels has some good policy in place to achieve this, yet there is a lack of recent data available to understand current progress or effectiveness of these measures.

Similarly, although neonatal and under-five child mortality remains low in the UK (Target 3.2), there has been little improvement in recent years, and concerning trends are appearing in relation to ethnic and socioeconomic status. Comparatively the UK also under-performs; in 2019 it ranked 22nd out of 23 Western European countries for infant mortality under five years, indicative that both overall provision and provision to neglected groups can be improved across maternal, neonatal, and child services. Focus must be given to mutable and measurable factors that affect specific demographics with a view to developing contextualised and appropriate approaches that can tackle these disparities.

Despite the UK's successful COVID-19 vaccination programme, the UK's overall vaccination coverage rates present some concerning trends (Target 3.8). In 2020/21, for the third consecutive year, none of the routine vaccinations met the World Health Organization (WHO)'s 95% coverage target. This could be due to a range of factors, including the increased traction of vaccine deniers on social media,

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Efforts are needed to foster trust between professionals and clients across the health sector

reduced health service access, and school closures during the pandemic.

Progress in SDG 3 talks to the overall crises in the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals. This is potentially exacerbated by burnout and low morale arising from excessive workloads, and press and public criticism following adverse events. Efforts are needed to foster trust between professionals and clients across the health sector and working conditions must be provided that enable professionals to give their best at all levels.

In terms of communicable disease (Target 3.3), the UK has made steady progress since the 2018 Measuring Up report. For the first time, the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets were met with 95% of all people diagnosed, 99% of those in care on treatment, and 97% of those receiving treatment being virally suppressed in the UK. Nevertheless, because of the very large decline in HIV testing among heterosexuals in 2020 compared to previous years, it is likely that much of the observed progress in diagnoses in this group was due to reduced testing rather than evidence of reduced transmission. We have seen a decline in several other areas in Target 3.3, although there are some issues with data and fluctuating trends in malaria, which may be explained by reduced mobility and associated imported

cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be an area to watch as travel 'bounces back'.

Conversely, in terms of non-communicable disease (NCD) (Target 3.4), the UK is continuing to miss targets and in some cases is moving backwards from the previous report. If current adult BMI trends continue, the deprivation gap for obesity will increase by more than half in England and Scotland. During the pandemic, childhood obesity levels also saw their fastest rise on record, with children living in the most deprived areas more than twice as likely to be living with obesity than children from the least deprived. Linked to this is an increase in type 2 diabetes in children, and as such, tackling obesity is one of the greatest long-term health challenges the UK currently faces.

Cardiovascular disease has remained relatively stable in the last three years, with a higher proportion of premature deaths coming from deprived areas and a higher proportion of men affected. For example, in Scotland it is estimated that 4% of women and 7% of men are living with chronic heart disease.

Premature mortality from cancer has reduced across the UK, with an estimated 10% reduction over the last decade. However, disparities again exist with cancer mortality in deprived areas being up to 74% higher than least deprived

CASE STUDY: TIME TO TALK ABOUT THE MENOPAUSE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS: 3.7, 5.5, 5.6

Traditionally in the UK there has been very little support of menopause in the workplace. However, with women making up over 60% of Shoosmiths' workforce, the firm is committed to supporting the significant number of their employees who will at some point be impacted by it. Menopause support, alongside fertility and pregnancy loss policies, are now integrated into a reproductive healthcare programme at the firm.

Through a dedicated menopause resource page on the firm's intranet, Shoosmiths shares written pieces from colleagues and the Senior Leadership Team about how menopause has affected them, signposts to external support resources, and promotes guidance for line managers on supporting colleagues.

Colleagues are also able to seek expert 1-1 support through the firm's Employee Assistance Programme, and a menopause Healthline from the firm's private medical insurers. In addition to thought leadership pieces, the firm has hosted a number of webinars and roundtable events either with colleagues, a health and well-being expert, or in conjunction with Macmillan Davies, to discuss menopause symptoms and treatments, share practical tips, and engage HR professionals on menopause in the workplace.

Recognising the value of these open and honest dialogues, the firm will be launching further videos and events this year.

CASE STUDY: CUTTING SPEED TO SAVE LIVES

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET: 3.6

Although many UK towns and cities have 20mph limits on residential roads, Wales will become the first nation to impose it as the default on all restricted roads from September 2023 following a successful trial in parts of Wales, with Scotland set to follow suit in 2025. Reducing the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph will reduce the number of road collisions, particularly accidents that

involve children, due to it now being enshrined in law that roads outside of schools cannot exceed 20mph.

The Welsh Government claim that improved road safety and a reduction in average speeds could result in a £58 million saving over 30 years from reduced emergency service demand and subsequent hospital treatment.

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areas. The reduction in early diagnosis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to slow the current trend of reduced mortality, mostly in areas of social deprivation.

Lower respiratory infections (excluding COVID-19) continue to be of significant concern, with current air pollution estimated to reduce life expectancy by seven to eight months in the UK. This is compounded by smoking (significant policy changes in recent years have made good strides, however, national targets are currently off track), poor indoor air quality, and poor housing standards, which once again primarily impact those living in the most deprived areas of the UK. Reduction in this area is inextricably linked with Targets 3.9 and 3.b. Provisional suicide rate data and statistics from 2020 imply that COVID-19 did not significantly impact suicide rates as many assumed it would, although data from 2021 is still not available and rates may continue to be impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

In terms of substance and alcohol abuse (Target 3.5), overall the UK has seen a backwards trend from 2020 to 2021, which may be associated with lockdowns and the associated societal and economic challenges individuals faced. Alarmingly, in 2020 to 2021, the proportion of deaths of people in treatment for substance abuse increased from 1.1% to 1.4%. This is the largest increase since data has been collected. It's likely that a number of factors will have contributed to this, including changes to alcohol and drug treatment, reduced access to other healthcare services, changes to lifestyle and social circumstances during lockdowns, and COVID-19 itself.

For example, 17% (22,493) of adults entering treatment last year said they had a housing problem, and nearly two-thirds said they needed mental health treatment. This supports the need for a cross-sectoral approach to addressing substance and alcohol abuse. Alcohol abuse is still a significant problem in the UK, despite some good policy measures in place in Scotland and Wales to tackle it. For example, Scotland is the only country to experience a decrease in alcohol-specific death rates, falling by a third between 2006 and 2019, indicating that measures appear to be working. The rate of hospital admissions due to alcoholic liver disease in England increased by 18% from 2016/17 to 2019/20. Data on harmful use of alcohol during the lockdown is not yet available.

Despite a plateauing death rate from road traffic injuries (Target 3.6), the UK sits in the lowest 13 countries for global mortality rate from traffic at 2.26 per 100,000 population. The increased drive for active transport and green public transport must be coupled with better urban planning to maintain or further reduce this number.

Access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services (Target 3.7) is covered in detail in SDG 5, although it is noted here that there have not been any significant changes since the last assessment.

As outlined in the recent Marmot Review (2020), it is essential that we do not go back to the status quo of early 2020, and must instead emerge from the pandemic seeking to build a fairer and more equitable society and healthcare system, with well-being at its core.

Synergies and coherence

The determinants of health and well-being are wide ranging and encompass all 17 SDGs. This has never been clearer than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our analysis demonstrates a strong relation between health outcomes in the UK and inequalities (SDG 5 and SDG 10), demonstrating a need to address issues of economic and societal change. These are of course associated with poverty reduction (SDG 1, SDG 2), opportunities for decent work (SDG 8), and safe and healthy living environments (SDG 11). However, we must also be cognisant of the wider Goals such as climate action (SDG 13) and protecting our land and oceans (SDG 14 and SDG 15) which influence our health in terms of air quality, and our opportunities to access safe and healthy spaces for exercise, recreation, and well-being. Education (SDG 4) is critical for advancing health, for example in providing quality and easily accessible sexual education.

Lastly, we need to address the crisis of health sector staffing, both in terms of recruitment and retention, not only in the UK but globally. The need for strong institutions (SDG 16) and partnerships (SDG 17) are key in achieving this through both national and international funding, and promotion of intersectoral working.

Local to international dimensions

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, existing inequalities across the UK are widening between the least and most deprived populations. We need to strengthen our focused and contextualised approaches, particularly when considering specific issues around ethnic minorities, or populations at higher risk of NCDs as a result of socioeconomics and associated behaviours. Despite the devolved nature of health service provision in the UK, the challenges across the four home nations are similar. Therefore, continuing to share both good practice and where things have gone wrong across health boards and systems can help to save both precious time and resources for rapid and targeted improvements.

On an international level, the UK continues to perform poorly compared to many of its European neighbours, and again there are opportunities to learn from others.

The UK's progress towards SDG 3 is being undermined by the workforce crisis facing health and care services across the UK. International recruitment continues to be pivotal to the Government and devolved administration's plans to fill these vacancies. For example, by March 2022, almost one in five (18.8%) of those on the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) register were internationally educated. However, the UK is not the only country experiencing a health workforce crisis. Concerningly, in April-March 2022, 3,010 professionals from Nigeria registered on the NMC register, a country which has severe health workforce shortages and where active recruitment is not permitted. It is vital that all international recruitment is conducted ethically and in accordance with the UK and WHO Codes of Practice. The UK should work to introduce bilateral agreements, with the involvement of national nursing associations, to ensure recruitment is mutually beneficial for these countries and ensure effective SDG 3 implementation in the UK and around the world.

Recommendations

1. Tackle inequalities in health as a priority. With this in mind, we need to ensure that current standards are maintained while specifically targeting high-risk groups to support improvements in those being left behind.
2. Develop and implement an urgent plan to address the crisis in recruitment and retention of healthcare workers.
3. Promote and invest in the full spectrum of health issues across preventative and curative health services and across the life course. This should recognise the direct and indirect influences of environmental, social, and economic factors which affect physical and mental well-being.
4. Develop more specific cross-sectoral action plans which are adequately resourced to reduce premature mortality across NCDs, alcohol, and substance abuse.
5. Provide a policy and structural environment which is conducive to cross-government and cross-sector action for the benefit of all, especially those being left behind. This would support tackling multifaceted complex challenges such as air quality, NCDs, behaviour change, etc.
6. Promote effective learning (both successes and failures) both within and outside the UK to accelerate positive change and action.

CASE STUDY: TACKLING AIR POLLUTION

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET: 3.9

Environmental charity Global Action Plan run the UK's largest air pollution campaign, Clean Air Day, to improve public understanding and mobilise action on tackling air pollution. By bringing together communities, businesses, and the education and health sectors, Global Action Plan aim to build awareness of how air pollution affects our health and explain some of the easy things we can do to tackle it.

The charity offers public tools such as the Air Pollution Calculator, which helps people track their own contribution to emissions. They also run the Clean Air Hub, an online information tool where citizens can find information about air pollution, air pollution data, and pollution forecasts. The aim is to help reduce the causes and effects of air pollution and make information about air pollution easily understandable and available to all, advancing Target 3.9.

QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Prepared by:
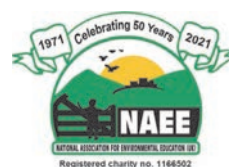
Introduction

Progress towards SDG 4 remains broadly satisfactory but currently exhibits some worrying trends. While most school-age children in the UK receive an appropriate quality of education, attainment results are significantly influenced by both geographical location and household income. This attainment gap is partially explained by the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ineffective policy applied to rectify the educational impact of COVID-19 will inevitably contribute to its long-term impact on SDG 4. This will impede efforts to promote inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities for all school-age children. A more focused, coherent, and systemic set of policy actions is necessary to ensure future progress in implementing SDG 4.

The continued low policy priority assigned to further education and vocational training is increasingly impacting the supply of qualified recruits to many sectors of the economy, particularly in the growing importance of the green economy. UK Higher Education Institutions continue to perform well in global rankings; however, both real public spending on education and the share of national income invested in all education sectors are still below their peak in 2010-2011. Also, the ratio of qualified teachers to pupils has grown from 17.8 in 2011 to 18.5 in 2020, indicating a growing teacher shortage problem. While educational facilities in the UK are generally good, enhanced educational policy and resourcing priorities are necessary to maintain quality and standards across the UK.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

	TARGET	RATING
4.1	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.	🟠
4.2	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.	🟠
4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.	🟠
4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.	🔴
4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.	🟠
4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.	🔴
4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.	🔴
4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.	🟢
4.b	By 2030, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.	🟠
4.c	By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.	🟠

Key findings

1. Most school-age children in the UK are offered an appropriate quality of education.

2. The educational attainment gap between pupils of different socio-economic standing or gender is now widening, exacerbated by COVID-19.

3. Progress is continuously limited in technical and vocational training due to the lack of political priority

assigned by the Government and insufficient investment within the Further Education sector.

4. UK Higher Education institutions still consistently perform well in global rankings.

5. Currently, across the UK, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is not given priority across all its political jurisdictions.

Performance and progress

Most school-age children within the UK receive an appropriate quality of education (Target 4.1). Ofsted, the official school inspector, categorised 99%, 88%, and 78% of nursery, primary, and secondary schools as either Outstanding or Good in 2021. However, the latter two have declined from 90% and 79% since 2016/17 (as reported in the first Measuring Up publication), indicating that many schools cannot deliver equitable quality education for all pupils.

The existence of small but persistently underperforming schools across the UK remains a significant issue. Many of these "intractable schools" have never been awarded any Ofsted Good or Outstanding inspection rating in the last decade. In 2019 there were 415 "stuck schools" which had not rated Good or Outstanding for 13 years. Of these schools, 53 had improved to Good at their most recent inspection, but 57 had not, and the rest are still awaiting assessment. The true scale of failing schools may indeed have been greater – data for more than 700 schools are missing from Ofsted statistics because their records were removed when they converted into academies. Therefore, persistently underperforming schools in the UK remains a major concern in fully implementing SDG 4.

As of March 2022, an estimated 10.4% of 16–24-year-olds were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (Targets 4.3 and 4.4). This represents a 1% decrease from pre-pandemic levels, taking the number of young people who are NEET in the UK to 704,000. This approximates to 11.2% for men and 9.5% for women. Women remain more likely to apply to higher education than men, with the gap in progression rates rising from 10.7% to 11.4% between 2018 and 2020 (Target 4.5).

Student attainment is strongly influenced by socio-economic status, gender, and ethnicity. In a Government study of 16-year-old attainment, White British, Black Caribbean, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean students from low socio-economic backgrounds had below average scores, slightly more pronounced in boys but with equal trends among girls. The gap in progression rates between those students, measured with the Free School Meals indicator (FSM), and non-FSM pupils also increased to 19.1%, its highest level since 2005/2006. Since Measuring Up in 2018, progression rates to Higher Education for White British pupils eligible for FSM remains lower than most other groups, with male students from this group particularly unlikely to participate. This gender discrepancy also appears to be widening.

CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING SMES WITH DIGITAL SKILLS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 4.4

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant demand for businesses to work remotely and shoppers to buy online. Research found that 34% of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) were not clear on what digital tools were right for their business needs, and 27% hadn't taken any steps to learn new technology.

Led by Vodafone, in partnership with Cisco, Enterprise Nation, and Samsung, Business-Connected will equip 800,000 small and medium-sized businesses in the UK with free digital

skills training over the next three years. The initiative has already helped over 115,000 SMEs since it launched. The training supports SMEs around productivity, collaboration and smart working, building an online presence, managing digital security, and optimising connectivity.

By supporting SMEs with quality technical education, the programme aims to strengthen the resilience of SMEs and promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

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The current policy priority assigned to education needs urgent strengthening to successfully enhance the implementation of SDG 4

Impact of COVID-19

A major factor impacting progress toward SDG 4 was the COVID-19 pandemic and its lasting impacts. It has affected schools' ability to deliver effective and efficient learning outcomes. The Government estimates that GCSE pupils could have lost as much as two thirds of in-person learning time for their course. Ofqual has quantified the learning time lost due to the pandemic, indicating that average study time during the pandemic dropped from six hours per day to 2-4.5 hours.

Government estimates on the educational impact that remote learning had in place of in-person teaching highlighted the larger than expected consequences to pupils' long-term development. In the early stages of the pandemic, Government policy was not implemented with sufficient urgency to counteract these consequences. Only during the second wave of school closures was there a legal requirement for secondary schools to provide five hours of remote learning per day. Subsequently, the proportion of students studying more than five hours per day increased from 19% in the first wave of school closures to 45%.

The educational attainment gap in the UK has ceased to close for the first time in a decade. Over 40% of respondents in a National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) survey thought increased pupil premium allocations (grants which provide additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to support disadvantaged pupils) should be the highest priority for education recovery following the pandemic. A successful transition towards the achievement of SDG 4 necessitates systemic action within all educational institutions to tackle the growing disparity of opportunity within UK education. Failure to provide sufficient equality of opportunity through policy prompted the Education Recovery Commissioner to resign in June 2021. He cited that the £1.4bn education recovery fund was insufficient and incapable of achieving a fully successful recovery on the scale necessary because it "betrays an undervaluation of the importance of education". Statistics support this sentiment – Government spending on adult further education (FE) halved in real terms from 2011-2022, with only a third of this loss in real spending being recouped in the recently lauded FE spending increases. This undervaluation signifies that the current policy priority assigned to education needs urgent strengthening to successfully enhance the implementation of SDG 4.

Devolution and education

In the UK, responsibility for education policy is devolved allowing for the divergent evolution of education for sustainable development (ESD) across the political jurisdictions of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales

CASE STUDY: CATALYSING CURRICULUM REFORM

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 4.7

SOS-UK, a student-led education charity, provided at least 112,250 students and young people with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies needed to lead on sustainability in the academic year 2020/21.

Their work seeks to deliver systemic change in the way education providers and educators frame and teach sustainability, by engaging students and academics in both pre-16 and post-16 education. For example, over 770 educators – reaching 140,000 students from more than 130 institutions – participated in their 2022 SDG Teach

In to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable development, to catalyse curriculum reform, and to embed sustainability across all learning.

The campaign has reached nearly 250,000 students in the past four years and continues to grow exponentially. A plethora of case studies demonstrates the widespread support and action from both students and educators to embed education for sustainable development and the SDGs in all subjects and disciplines, across all levels and types of education.

(Target 4.7). Good educational practice exists at all levels and in most learning contexts, indicated by high-quality teaching, enhanced learner outcomes, and innovative networks of ESD practice which communicate and converse on their best practices.

Wales alone has a substantive policy mandate for sustainable development written within its constitution in the 2006 Government of Wales Act. The Welsh Government has made sustainable development a central organising principle for all policy considerations of Welsh governments and public bodies, including schools, colleges, further education institutions, and universities. Scotland has also made substantive commitments to facilitate the integration of ESD into its educational provision. Their Learning for Change policy document advocates that creating a sustainable future for Scotland will require widespread understanding and huge cultural change – and key to achieving this is through the systemic integration of education for sustainable development.

The explicitly high value placed on ESD is now beginning to generate widespread changes in approaches to curriculum delivery. The recent introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) diffuses ESD throughout many subjects, including both sciences and humanities. There will, however, continue to be challenges to implementing this plan due to teacher wariness over the subject matter. In contrast, recent

policy initiatives focused on strengthening ESD practice have weakened in England. The Department for Education (DfE) no longer provides support for any school focus on sustainability, despite their assertion that multiple sources of evidence suggest that being a sustainable school raises standards and enhances young people's well-being

DfE Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy

The Government launched its sustainability and climate change strategy in April 2022. Although it has been welcomed as evidence that the Government has taken action toward Target 4.7, it has been widely criticised for coverage limitations, lacking an implementation plan, failing to commit to integrating sustainability and climate change content across the curricula. Hence this misses a critical opportunity to put the climate emergency and ecological crisis at the heart of the education system for all students.

As a part of this strategy, tenders are being sought to develop the National Education Nature Park that aims to help children and young people to get more involved in the natural world through increased biodiversity at schools and the provision of climate education resources. Children and young people will also be able to undertake a new Climate Award in recognition of their work to improve their environment. The most

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The Department for Education no longer provides support for any school focus on sustainability

significant curriculum innovation is an optional examination course for 14–16-year-olds in natural history, which will be introduced in 2025. There is also to be a new model primary science curriculum which will focus on nature, but at the time of writing, there have been no further details or time scales attached to this model.

A general criticism from teachers and young people is the lack of support. Climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability are still not part of the core curriculum, central to exam specifications, integral to school inspections, or part of the core framework for teacher training. Young people want to learn about climate change and the ecological crisis so that they can play a positive part in working to resolve the problems. The Government has not done enough to make this possible. Promotion of ESD remains left to the teacher's discretion and civil society organisations. Where discussion of climate change is found within courses, it tends to be marginal rather than meaningful, and teachers remain untrained in this area (source: Teach the Future).

Therefore, to realise Target 4.7 and optimise the synergies generated by Target 4.7 and SDG 4 more broadly, policy coherence on a nationwide scale is necessary. This requires the Government to produce a strategic framework which provides direction and scales up existing sustainable development initiatives, in addition to encouraging the formulation of new ones.

Synergies and coherence

Highlighted largely by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several variables that impact educational achievement that connect to the rest of the SDGs. For example, educational progress was exacerbated during the pandemic by a lack of technological access (SDG 9), disparity in home circumstances (SDG 1 and SDG 10), and variation in the quantity and quality of home learning support (SDG 5). For example, 34% of parents with children aged five to 16 years reported that their child did not have access to their own computer, laptop, or tablet from which they could access the internet at home. The upshot of this is pupils from the lowest socio-economic groups experienced a 13% larger absolute loss in learning (34%) than school-age children from the highest socio-economic groups (23%).

Local to international dimensions

The Global Learning Programme (BS1), cited in the first Measuring Up, constructed a national network of schools committed to equipping their pupils to make positive contributions to a globalised world through the study of teaching methods. This programme gave way to the three-year Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme, delivered by the British Council. Along with the Department for International Development (DfID), £38m of jointly funded support was made available for educators to introduce the

SDGs to students and teachers, and partner with other schools internationally to explore global issues. The project has now come to an end and an impact report is being compiled by IPSOS Mori. The UCL Development Education Research Centre have already published a number of reports and are planning to organise an event with the British Council to share the findings about the value of the programme. With Connecting Classrooms coming to an end, for the first time in over 40 years, there is no Government funding for development education and global learning. Environmental Education has not been in this position for a long time.

Recommendations

1. The Government and other stakeholders must identify, develop, and disseminate existing effective policy regarding core educational teaching and ESD across the UK.
2. Support all educational institutions and providers (pre-school to post-graduate provision) to further develop effective curricula and schemes of work that integrate SDG-related issues into students' experiences, including ecological imagination, critical thinking, and a greater awareness of the interdependence of all life on planet earth.
3. Revise, using proven strategic planning processes for sustainable development in all technical and vocational provision to make it fit for the 21st century and fit for the Government's established priorities such as the delivery of the net zero strategy.
4. Ensure that the SDGs feature prominently and consistently within all teacher education provision, with a focus on integration within subject, appropriate pedagogy, and assessment and evaluation. Establish a commission to oversee UK-wide strategies to support this programme of teacher education.
5. Seek new ways of resolving the issue of underachievement in all schools through participatory learning strategies, clear, realistic, and positive goal-setting for all those less motivated to learn, along with imaginative interaction with extended families.
    a. Have a voluntary sustainability lead to work on climate education in every educational establishment, leading on the development of a climate action plan and Sustainability Strategy.
    b. Retrofitting schools to meet a net zero standard should also be supported by the same level of commitment that all new schools will be built to a net zero standard.
    c. Environmental Education should be integrated into Ofsted's school inspection framework.

GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Prepared by:

Introduction

Since the 2018 Measuring Up report, progress has been made towards achieving gender equality, but much remains to be done.

The impacts of COVID-19 have adversely affected progress toward achieving gender equality in the UK. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) has intensified, and increased care work at home has affected women disproportionately. The gender pay gap remains stubbornly in place. Women continue to play a critical role in the response to COVID-19, as frontline health providers, care providers, and as managers and leaders of the response and recovery efforts, yet they remain under-represented in critical leadership roles.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.	🟠
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.	🟠
5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.	🟠
5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.	🔴
5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.	🟠
5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.	🟠
5.a	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.	⚪
5.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.	⚪
5.c	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.	🟠

Key findings

1. Approaches to gender equality differ across the four nations, specifically in the legislation and policy frameworks. For example, Northern Ireland has separate equality legislation which is not directly comparable to Great Britain.

2. More needs to be done to safeguard young women and girls and address harmful issues associated with online activity.

3. VAWG remains a significant issue. Loss of trust and confidence in the police and flaws in the justice system are detrimental to preventing VAWG. Violence against women parliamentarians poses serious challenges and impedes women's access to leadership and decision-making roles in public life.

4. The contribution of unpaid care work to the economy is immense but still remains unrecognised as work.

5. Access to digital technologies is life-changing for women and girls.

6. More research is needed to get the balance right between digital, telemedicine, and face-to-face sexual healthcare, including walk-in clinics.

Performance and progress

Since 2018, legislation and policy frameworks across the UK continue to be developed and implemented to increase progress on SDG 5, but significant gender gaps driven by inequalities still exist. Single equality legislation, comparable to the Equality Act 2010 for England, Scotland, and Wales, is yet to be introduced in Northern Ireland (Target 5.1).

The Equality Act and the Human Rights Act share the same foundational values. Many of the proposed changes in the Human Rights Bill may make it more difficult to challenge and secure justice for VAWG and could potentially widen gender gaps. Proposed reforms may also undermine the legislation planned by devolved nations to incorporate UN Human Rights into their own legislation, for example Scotland advocates embedding the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into its legislation and Wales is looking to strengthen its equality legislation incorporating CEDAW.

Concerns about the levels of VAWG have significantly increased, especially around domestic abuse, the extent of sexual abuse and harassment of girls in schools, and following the murders of Sarah Everard and others. This represents a very different picture to that reported in 2018 when the levels of physical, sexual, or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner over the previous 12 months were considered to be in decline (Target 5.2). Sexual offences recorded by the police were the highest on record for the 12-month period ending December 2021: 183,587; a 22% increase from the same period in 2020. Girlguiding research revealed that 45% of girls aged 13-16 and 74% aged 17-18 said they wanted public sexual harassment to be made a crime.

Initiatives and investment of resources to tackle VAWG include the Online Safety Bill which would establish a duty of care on technology companies to improve the safety of users online, including appropriate controls for online pornography sites. Additionally, the appointment of a National Police Co-ordinator for VAWG, the Ask for ANI Scheme, the 24-hour rape and sexual assault helpline, and the 'Act and Don't be a Bystander' initiative. These are important steps in the right direction, but critical to their success is restoring trust and confidence in the police and radical improvements and investment in the justice system. Improvements to rape investigations and prosecutions go beyond system processes. A cultural shift across all justice institutions is required. The need for VAWG training for staff at all levels in the justice system is critical.

> " Sexual offences recorded by the police were the highest on record for the 12-month period ending December 2021: 183,587; a 22% increase from the same period in 2020

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An estimated 1.7 million women are prevented from taking on more hours of paid work due to childcare issues

The Government finally ratified the Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women on 21 July 2022 albeit with two reservations. This is a significant step towards improved support for survivors, access to justice, effective prosecution of perpetrators, and gender equality. It enshrines women's rights to live free from violence into UK law and provides a minimum standard for accountability. However, the Government has chosen to 'opt out' of key parts of the Convention that provide essential protections for women, particularly migrant women, which creates an unfair and unacceptable two-tier system.

The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 that raises the legal marriage age in England and Wales to 18 will have a positive impact eradicating forced marriage in the UK, giving girls the right to complete their education and make informed choices (Target 5.3). Progress towards making virginity testing a criminal offence in the UK is welcome. Virginity testing is invasive, sexist, and a human rights violation, impacting the physical, psychological, and social well-being of women and girls. The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Enhanced Datasets show a downward trend between April 2019 and March 2021, but an increase between April 2021 and March 2022 in the number of women and girls attending NHS clinics where FGM is identified. Data is not disaggregated to show the impact on indigenous, migrant women, and other characteristics to better target initiatives.

Better measurement, improved disaggregated data collection, stronger evidence on programmes, and solutions to address unpaid care work must be prioritised (Target 5.4). An estimated 1.7 million women are prevented from taking on more hours of paid work due to childcare issues, resulting in an annual economic output loss of up to £28.2bn. A survey of 27,000 parents found that 62% of parents are now spending as much or more than their rent/mortgage on childcare. More must be done to put in place the policies, services, and infrastructure (including accessible and affordable childcare and mandatory shared parental leave) that recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work and prevent women having to choose between caring responsibilities and careers (see Global Institute for Women Leadership's Essays on Equality and their research with Ipsos).

Among all employees, the gender pay gap has decreased from 17.4% in 2019 to 15.4% in 2021. The Government must consider extending their planned review of gender pay gap reporting to smaller organisations, introducing ethnicity pay-gap reporting and making action plans mandatory. Omitting the Employment Bill in the Government's legislative agenda was a missed opportunity to address inequalities in the labour market, including segregated employment, low pay, family care, and domestic responsibilities, critical to closing the gender pay gap and creating more inclusive, fairer workplaces. The Government's planned review of the Future of Work is

CASE STUDY: WOMEN IN BUSINESS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 5.5, 5.a, 10.2

The Women in Business (WiB) programme, run by NatWest, provides tailored support, expertise, and access to finance for female entrepreneurs facing barriers to starting or growing a business.

The programme recognises that women often benefit from a different type of banking approach and relationship building, and therefore they now have over 1,000 independently accredited Women in Business specialists who specialise in the needs of women. Through this they are committed to supporting 35,000 businesses across the UK with their enterprise programme in 2022, with 60% of support going to females.

Today the NatWest WiB programme serves more than 100,000 customers across the UK. Commissioned by the Government, NatWest's CEO, Alison Rose, launched The Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship in March 2019, which examines the barriers that women in business face and what can be done to overcome them.

NatWest publish yearly progress reports to outline the extra support needed for female-led businesses to thrive, especially given the challenges women have faced during the pandemic.

CASE STUDY: IMPROVING THE RIGHTS OF GIRLS IN WALES

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 3.7, 5.1, 5.5, 5.6

Plan International UK developed the STAND With Girls programme to equip girls with tools and knowledge to affect change, delivered through four youth organisations and communities in Leeds, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Oxford. The programme increased the profile of girls' rights locally and nationally, helping to ensure their voices are taken into account when decisions are being made that affect their lives.

The Cardiff group, frustrated by a lack of positive and quality period education for girls living in Wales, met with the Education Minister and developed their own educational materials which have been added to the Welsh Education Hub, allowing them to be used by young people and educators across the country.

In Wales, Plan International UK also delivered Champions of Wales and Young Change Makers programmes, in addition to establishing the Girls' Rights Network Wales for professionals, volunteers, sector experts, and organisations who work with or on behalf of young women and girls to create a better Wales.

welcome but should not replace legislation needed to support women into work.

Women in politics make a difference in tackling gender issues and driving change (Target 5.5). However, women remain significantly under-represented as leaders: only 35% of all MPs are women, and there is a significant variation across political parties, with a lack of diversity of lived-experience and identities. In business, the greatest progress was made in women on boards; the same gains now need to be achieved for women in leadership generally.

Action to end harassment and abuse of women in politics and workplaces is critical. In politics, a toxic culture is driving women out and deterring others from entering public life. Fawcett found that the number of women unlikely to stand as an MP had risen from 59% in December 2019 to 74% in March 2021.

More accurate data is needed to better understand inequalities in access to contraception and sexual healthcare services, and to efficiently plan and commission services to meet women's needs (Target 5.6). Digital services, remote consultations, and telemedicine provide more convenient forms of access to contraceptive care for many women, including those in rural areas or those struggling to travel due to childcare responsibilities, disabilities, or financial constraints. The benefits of these forms of access including the postal abortion pill scheme (in England, Scotland, and Wales) proved invaluable during the pandemic for many. More research and consultations are needed to get the balance right between digital, telemedicine, and face-to-face care, including walk-in clinics.

After a long, protracted period the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 came into force in March 2020, however, implementation is problematic as services have not been commissioned by the Department of Health.

Across the UK, many women's health initiatives that have been introduced by governments and business, and supported by civil society campaigns, have been well-received, e.g. addressing period poverty, Women's Health Care Strategy, menstrual health care, but momentum must be maintained.

The digital technology Indicator for Target 5.b (the proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex) does not capture or reflect current technology usage and impact in the UK. A more accurate indicator for the UK should monitor the access to smart phones and the internet, which open myriad opportunities for women, including work, business transactions, personal banking, education, and personal safety. This is life-changing for women and girls both now and in the future. Connectivity is vitally important, especially for those living in rural areas, and must remain a priority for all governments. Older women and widows, in particular, can find it difficult to access appropriate services, technology, and support. This needs to be better understood and remedied.

More than 25,000 women run farms in the UK; 28% of the agricultural workforce is female (Target 5.a). In Scotland 14% of crofts are run by women, 66% are run by a woman and her spouse, however, only one person can be named as the tenant, and in the case of heterosexual couples it tends to be the man, which means that in the event of a divorce, women would lose access to the family home because it is part of the croft. In Northern Ireland women make up 22% of the local agricultural workforce, yet a survey found that only 15% of respondents felt that women are treated fairly when it comes to farm succession.

Recent research undertaken in Scotland and Northern Ireland looking at the barriers women face working in agriculture, including ownership of farms and land, is probably equally relevant to women farmers in the other nations. In Scotland, detailed research on childcare found that there are many wider challenges in rural childcare provision for example. Some progress is being made but there is much to do to achieve

gender equality in agriculture, and investment in infrastructure in rural areas as part of the Government's Levelling Up plan must be prioritised.

Policy and strategic frameworks in UK equalities legislation govern the approach to achieving gender parity and address discriminatory issues. Implementation and enforcement including tracking and monitoring progress are fundamentally important. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission and the Women Equalities Select Committee play an important role holding the Government to account on equality law and policy. Civil Society organisations also hold governments to account.

The Government should create a women's cross-party body at the highest level of government decision-making, and fulfil its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) which identifies actions to address 12 key barriers to gender equality (Target 5.c).

Synergies and coherence

Success in achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment is at the heart of attaining all the 2030 agenda Goals. Closing the gap on unequal access to education (SDG 4) and employment (SDG 8) also economically empowers women and leads to poverty reduction (SDG 1). Women's political participation (SDG 16) helps build inclusive communities. Ending VAWG contributes to building safe spaces (SDG

11), safe societies, and human rights (SDG 16). Women's participation in leadership and decision-making can enhance agricultural productivity (SDG 2), and women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health, rights, and services directly links to reductions in maternal mortality (SDG 3).

Barriers preventing access to digital technologies must be removed to enable women and girls to fully participate in the labour market. Access to education including Science, Technology, English, and Maths (STEM) and positive role models are an urgent necessity for women and girls, the economy, and innovation (SDG 9).

Local to international dimensions

Compliance with regional and international conventions and agreements including CEDAW and BPfA is fundamental to SDG 5. EU directives and conventions have been incorporated into UK domestic law, including those with a significant gender equality dimension. However the proposed Brexit and Freedoms Bill, which makes it easier to abolish laws inherited from Brussels and cut red tape on business, is concerning. Although no specific plans to review equality directives and conventions have been announced, tracking developments to keep existing protections and rights is needed.

EU funding supported VAWG services and research in the UK, which must now be safeguarded. Although all EU

domestic protection orders are automatically recognised and enforceable in the UK, reciprocal arrangements must be agreed for the EU to recognise UK protection orders. Modern slavery and trafficking victims must not be exposed to increased vulnerabilities as a consequence of new immigration regulations.

Recommendations

1. Build gender mainstreaming into policy, legislation, programme design, and spending. Track the impact of spending on gender equality to develop a comprehensive UK Roadmap to achieve SDG 5; including targeted action in the public and private sectors to close gender data gaps and ensure the design of policies and interventions that reflect gender differences. Provide clear guidance on the collection and use of sex- and/or gender-disaggregated data reflecting multiple discriminations in outcome monitoring and decision-making processes.

2. Implement measures to champion women in politics and work including mandatory reporting, use of targets and action plans, and initiatives such as mentoring, sponsorship, and remodelled recruitment practices to strengthen the pipeline for women to move into leadership and decision-making roles.

3. Drive forward change in the design and implementation of gender-equal, flexible working policies including the offer of paid shared parental leave as a minimum while working towards a mandatory model which provides a period of leave for both parents. Undertake a review of gender pay gap reporting and extend to organisations with less than 250 employees, introduce ethnicity gender pay gap reporting on the same basis, and make action plans to close gaps mandatory.

4. Accelerate implementation and increase investment in prevention strategies and responses across all aspects of VAWG. Introduce the Online Safety Bill, address the full range of harmful online activity, including pornography, and hold the private sector to account in remedying any adverse impacts in which they are involved.

5. Prioritise strengthening the domestic infrastructure in all urban and rural areas as part of the Government's Levelling Up programme to open up opportunities for a work life balance and enable women and girls to fully participate in the labour market. Address the patriarchal traditions/culture (including succession) which are deeply entrenched in the agricultural industry.

6. Ensure medical and health research takes account of the differences between women and men and involves women in the design and development stages of medicines, protocols, and health interventions.

Further references for this chapter can be found online.

CASE STUDY: SCOTLAND-WIDE FREE SANITARY PRODUCTS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 1.2, 1.4, 3.7, 5.6

In 2021, the Scottish Government introduced The Period Products (Free Provision) Act, which came into effect in August 2022. Under the Act, the Scottish Government has set up a Scotland-wide scheme to allow anyone who needs period products (such as sanitary pads and tampons) to access them free of charge.

Scotland became the first country in the world to require schools, colleges, and universities to make a range of period products available for free in their toilets in 2020, and the Scottish Government now has the power to impose this duty on other public bodies too. Since 2017, the Scottish Government has invested more than £27 million to fund

access in a range of public settings and the new law will cement this progress. It has also provided £500,000 of funding to FareShare to expand access to sanitary products through their network of third sector partners, reaching 35,000 people on lower incomes.

The other nations of the UK have established their own strategies to tackle period poverty: the Period Product Scheme operates in England, the Period Dignity Strategic Action Plan in Wales, and Northern Ireland have passed their own Period Products (Free Provision) Act as of May 2022.

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

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Introduction

The UK has been at the forefront of implementing engineered solutions for providing clean water and sanitation services since the Victorian era. The majority of wastewater drainage systems since that time have been developed as 'combined' systems that collect all wastewater and surface runoff. While wastewater systems are managed by water utilities, the surface water drainage systems which connect into them are predominantly managed by local authorities, the highways agencies, and private property owners. While almost all of the UK population has access to clean water and sanitation, this legacy also comes with drawbacks that are starting to affect our capability to fully meet SDG 6.

UK water utilities face a triple challenge: i) the ageing water distribution system is now leaking significant amounts of abstracted water, ii) climate change and urbanisation are putting unprecedented pressure on the wastewater system

that was historically designed for lower population numbers, resulting in storm overflows increasingly releasing untreated or just-screened sewage into the environment, and, iii) this infrastructure is also struggling to tackle the increasing array of non-organic pollutants now entering wastewaters. Combined with enduring diffuse pollution, UK freshwaters are now receiving what the Westminster Parliament recently described as a "cocktail of pollutants".

Resources to address these challenges, and thus achieve sustainable water and sanitation management for all in the long term, have been estimated to cost many billions of pounds. A further challenge lies in balancing these costs with water affordability. Increased water poverty, the costs to natural ecosystems, and the well-being of future generations are yet to be properly accounted for.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all. 🟢

6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations. 🟢

6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally. 🟠

6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity. 🟠

6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate. 🟠

6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes. ⚪

6.a By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies. ⚫

6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management. 🟢

Key findings

1. The vast majority of the UK population has access to safe water and sanitation. However, one in ten people already suffer from water poverty, defined as a situation in which a person is unable to pay their water bills. This could increase in the next few years as the UK recovers from the pandemic, and water prices rise with increased investment levels.

2. Progress towards sustainability in the provision of water and sanitation is slow, and the UK is still not performing well enough when it comes to improving water quality, water-use efficiency, and integrated water resources management.

3. Despite initial strong progress with the implementation of EU Directives in the 1990s, the UK is still challenged by diffuse pollution and by some pollutants of concern. These namely include pollutants from untreated or not 'sufficiently treated' wastewater that are being discharged into water bodies, as well as pollutants from other sectors – such as agriculture, forestry, and mining – alongside direct abstractions and discharges from industry.

4. Improvements in water efficiency and demand management in some parts of the UK are still insufficient to offset current trends in climate patterns, with potential consequences for social, ecological, and economic resilience, and the delivery of associated SDGs.

5. Regarding progress towards protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems, the current quantitative Indicator, which focuses on the change in the extent of water-related ecosystems, fails to properly account for the lack of progress in increasing the health of water-related ecosystems.

6. Water is critical to life on Earth; thus progress on SDG 6 strongly influences progress on other Goals.

Performance and progress

Access to water in the UK has been historically very high (Target 6.1), and the percentage of the population using safely managed water has been stable over the past decade, reaching 99.8% in 2020. This is likely to remain the case since there are strong UK regulations already in place. However, access to affordable drinking water depends on what is considered affordable. The Independent Review of Water Affordability (2021) estimated that 4.1m households spend more than 3%, and 1.5m more than 5%, of their disposable income on water bills. In 2021, one in ten in England and one in eight in Wales already considered their water bill unaffordable. With recent rises in energy prices, and subsequent decreases in disposable income, water poverty – defined as the inability to pay water bills – is likely to increase. Therefore, while the rating of Target 6.1 is currently green, it may be downgraded to amber in the near future. Provision of support for those struggling to pay varies with location, and water bill costs vary between service providers, so the affordability of water tends to follow a postcode lottery.

In the UK, water bills reflect the cost of water provision and the equivalent volume of wastewater disposal, so that water poverty, and more broadly poverty or homelessness, also limits equitable access to sanitation (Target 6.2). However, as with clean water, current access to adequate sanitation is high, and likely to remain so. The proportion of the population using safely managed sanitation services is high and has remained stable over the past decade, reaching 93.6% in rural areas and 99% in urban areas in 2020. While the high usage pressures on the sewerage system set up in the Victorian era may have unwanted environmental consequences, planning permissions for new builds require investment in sustainable drainage systems that should reduce the volume of wastewater to be treated.

On the environmental side, the UK has struggled to make significant progress since the last reporting period. Monitored water quality (Target 6.3) improved considerably from the 1990s with many EU policies and guidance standards in place to protect water bodies from, for example, rural pollution and urban pollution. However, along with the rest of the

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With recent rises in energy prices, and subsequent decreases in disposable income, water poverty – defined as the inability to pay water bills – is likely to increase

Climate change and rising demographics are likely to result in increased water demand

EU, the UK has been challenged by diffuse pollution and by some pollutants of concern, namely from untreated or not 'sufficiently treated' wastewater discharged into water bodies. What constitutes 'sufficiently treated' is currently being redefined in the UK, but the challenge also lies in solving untreated sewage spills. Data on the composition and volume of spills is patchy and currently only publicly available for England and Wales, which limits evidence-based decision-making.

Over the past two decades, the Water Framework Directive status has been the benchmark against which to rate water quality. Overall, only 35.7% of UK surface water bodies were awarded "good" or "high" water quality status in 2020, with a strong variation between nations: Scotland achieved 63%, Wales 40%, Northern Ireland 31%, and England only 16% with none classified as "high" water quality. Improvements in water quality will require further investment, for example in wastewater infrastructure, and will also require regulatory change, namely within the farming and water industries. Controls at source are also needed, for example, to reduce the amounts of plastics, forever contaminants, pharmaceuticals, or wet wipes that enter wastewaters and thus freshwater environments.

Water-use efficiency can be measured in different ways. However, no specific legislation, other than the Water Industry Act 1991, directly applies to water efficiency, and no specific measurement of water efficiency is reported at the UK level

(Target 6.4). Nevertheless, the average water consumption per person, per day, provides an indicator of 'consumer water efficiency', and 'leakage' occurring in the drinking water distribution system provides an idea of 'utility water efficiency'. Both are indicative of the amounts withdrawn from the environment. While considerable progress has been made on reducing leakages over the past 20 years, resulting in a 40% average reduction in sector leakages across England and Wales, leakage remains a significant issue with little recent progress. For example, Scottish Water reduced leakage by 44% from 2002 – 2012, but this leakage profile has been relatively unchanged over the past decade. Leakage in the four home nations is similar, averaging around 20%. Per capita consumption has also stayed roughly level over the past five years, despite some increases linked to the pandemic, and currently stands at 145 litres per person per day. The high discrepancy (around 40 litres) between metered customers and unmetered suggests that more extensive metering would help improve water-use efficiency.

Climate change and rising demographics are likely to result in increased water demand. Accelerating the pace of innovation and nudging behaviour change through education or even smart tariffs will be key to achieving Target 6.4. Although water resource plans are in place across the UK as part of the duties of utilities set out in the Water Industry Act 1991, areas of water stress, defined as areas where demand is higher than rainfall, are likely to extend beyond the South East in the next decade. In England, 15 out of 23 areas were deemed to be

CASE STUDY: SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT IN NORFOLK

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.b, 15.1

Water Resources East have developed the Norfolk Water Strategy Programme; a cross sector water management project aimed at creating a plan to ensure sustainable water management in the region and the protection of the local natural environment.

The organisation works with a variety of organisations including Norfolk County Council, Anglian Water, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), to map out the threats posed by water security challenges to Norfolk's people and assess

how investing in nature-based solutions, at scale, to complement traditional grey infrastructure, can contribute to securing Norfolk's long-term water resilience.

The programme has already identified a shortlist of suitable nature-based solutions that can achieve multiple benefits in the Norfolk context and has been exploring the funding landscape for a proposed Norfolk Water Fund that could finance projects.

CASE STUDY: FROM LOCH TO LEATHER

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 6.3, 6.4, 9.4, 12.2

Scottish Leather Group sources 95% of its water from their own loch, and their ultrafiltration plant recycles up to 40% of its wastewater back into leather production. The remainder of the water is treated and returned to the river Clyde.

The recycling process decreases the intake from the loch, minimising the impact on the local watershed. This method also enables heat recovery, which accounts for up to half of Scottish Leather Company's water heating demand. Their circular water process means that their tannery uses 50% less water per hide (350 litres) than the industry standard, and for each of their products, the company measures water use according to the water scarcity index.

"seriously water stressed" in 2021, compared to eight in the previous survey in 2013. While there is no reporting at UK level, water situation area reports monitor regional water stress for each nation on a monthly basis. Unless there are significant improvements in water efficiency and demand, significant inter-basin transfers may be needed to offset current trends.

The UK attained a 79% degree of integrated water resource management implementation (Target 6.5) in 2020. This relatively high rating through stakeholder surveys reflects the fact that policies and plans are in place to move water across regions, between utilities, and across the four UK nations. However, none of the water bodies or aquifers registered in current plans have an operational arrangement for water cooperation, and the infrastructure and investment for integrated water resource management is yet to be sanctioned.

The current Indicator against which to assess progress for Target 6.6 relies on measuring the "change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time". This Indicator certainly provides information on quantitative changes, and various nation-specific reports (e.g. SoNaRR report in Wales, Natural England 'State of' reports) monitor this. This Indicator, however, does not inform on changes in ecosystem health. In healthy freshwater ecosystems, organisms and ecosystem functions play an important role in regulating water quality, providing fish for anglers, and sustaining river birds as culturally valued biodiversity, among many other roles. The current Indicator does not capture this, meaning that the overall goal of protecting and restoring UK water-related ecosystems is not appropriately informed.

In the UK, river basins are the local scale at which water and sanitation are managed. Each basin falls under the responsibility of one of the UK water companies, and these have established operational policies and procedures in place to ensure the participation of local communities in water and sanitation management (Target 6.b).

Synergies and coherence

Water is core to the survival of people and ecosystems, and given the scale of the challenge ahead, sustaining SDG 6 achievements while also meeting other Goals will require a joined-up approach. Some customers are already struggling to pay their water and sanitation bills (SDG 1). Water poverty contributes to reduced hygiene, which affects health and well-being (SDG 3). Poor water quality, often linked to areas of social deprivation which may already be experiencing water poverty, also affects the health of recreational water users with knock-on impacts on human well-being. Both climate change and the economic consequences of the pandemic are likely to worsen water poverty in these areas.

Synergies could be leveraged to achieve SDG 6 with positive outcomes for well-being, but also for climate (SDG 13), life below water (SDG 14), and many others. Integrated catchment management initiatives, which bring all catchment stakeholders together to manage freshwater ecosystems in a concerted way, have been expanding over the past five years. Many are looking towards the implementation of management actions that have multiple benefits, and nature-based solutions are gaining traction. For example, water utilities are increasingly considering the creation of wetland areas to capture excess surface run-off and filter water pollutants in a bid to reduce pressure on wastewater systems, reduce raw sewage discharge into rivers, increase recreational amenities for urban communities, and ultimately increase ecosystem health and local biodiversity more broadly (SDG 15).

Local to international dimensions

Data to inform SDG 6 assessment is good for the period concerned and can be readily compared with other EU countries since most Indicators for SDG 6 are part of EU reporting processes. Going forward, and given that water and sanitation is a devolved matter in the UK, aggregated compliance and performance data across the UK may be less readily available. There are some variations in the progress of the four UK nations in achieving SDG 6, but all have the policies

in place to achieve this Goal. Perhaps the largest variations exist between areas of high and low levels of deprivation.

From an international perspective, the UK will probably be seen to be progressing faster than other countries. However, we must also consider the effects of political and economic choices made in the UK on the ability of other nations to achieve SDG 6. The UK total water footprint was estimated at 75,000 m³/year in 2010, with 75% embedded in imported products and ingredients. Clearly, achieving SDG 6 for the UK should also require good water stewardship at the international level, as well as concerted efforts from the governments, businesses, utilities, investors, and consumers of each of the four nations.

Recommendations

1. The challenges created by increasing water poverty will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency, for example through the development of adapted social tariffs.
2. Monitoring of the quality and quantity of untreated sewage spills, and their impact on the environment, is required to fully understand the extent of wastewater impacts on the environment, as well as how to prioritise investment.
3. Further investment and legislation are needed across sectors to ensure sewage spills are reduced, that treated waters are appropriately treated, and that farming and other diffuse pollution sources are better managed, under an enforced regulatory regime.
4. Controls at source, including new regulatory controls and tax or levy-based incentives, are also sorely needed, particularly to reduce the amounts of plastics, forever contaminants, pharmaceuticals, or wet wipes that enter wastewaters and thus, freshwater environments.
5. The pace of innovation in water efficiency needs to be accelerated to prepare for climate and demographic changes. Smart tariffs that charge above a certain level of consumption need to be considered. Inter-basin transfers, further investment in leakage reduction, and a reduction in demand through education might help to offset current trends.
6. Climate change mitigation measures, coupled with resource management in some parts of the UK, are necessary to avoid unsustainable abstraction levels and potential damage to freshwater ecosystems. A better indicator for Target 6.6 that accounts for ecosystem health would help us understand the extent to which we are protecting or restoring UK freshwaters.
7. Balancing net zero objectives with the Goal of achieving clean water and sanitation for all will require innovative and integrated solutions that engage local stakeholders and work with nature rather than against it.

CASE STUDY: THE SUNRISE PROGRAMME

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 6.6, 6.b, 13.1, 15.1

Launched in 2018, SUNRISE is a programme of 16 interlinked projects achieving a network of "green and blue" infrastructure improvements across Stoke-on-Trent and urban Newcastle-under-Lyme.

In partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Groundwork West Midlands, the Wild Trout Trust, and the Environment Agency, the programme aims to improve water quality and river habitats and reconnect local communities with their environment. The partnership secured funding of £3.6 million, and, as a result, developed communities that are better connected to their local green spaces; reduced flood risks; produced more resilient river ecology to mitigate effects of urban diffuse pollution and climate change; and achieved 130 hectares of improved habitats, 25km of enhanced and improved river and brook corridors, and 0.5 hectares of remediated land.

AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Prepared by:

Introduction

In the UK, there has been progress on phasing-out the use of fossil fuels for energy. Carbon emissions from electricity generation have reduced by nearly 70% in the last 30 years. The Government has also set ambitious targets, including reaching net zero by 2050, operating a net zero electricity system by 2035, and developing 50 GW of offshore wind.

However, as outlined in the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) latest progress report, the UK is falling short on the delivery of net zero. There are gaps in policy and a lack of ambition in crucial areas such as energy efficiency, onshore wind, and the transition to low-carbon heating.

A low-carbon, reliable, and affordable energy system for all is possible, but is a challenge that requires sustained, effective collaboration between central Government, industry, local authorities, and communities. To unlock the full potential of the solutions needed to get to net zero and meet the UK's targets, a step change in the level of strategic direction, ambition, and funding is required.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET		RATING
7.1	By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.	🟠
7.2	By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.	🟠
7.3	By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.	🔴
7.a	By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology.	⚫
7.b	By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states, and land-locked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support.	⚫

Key findings

1. Government papers, including the Heat and Building Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy, have positive intentions and ambitious targets. However, they fail to outline the necessary funding, policy detail, and strategic guidance to meet those targets.

2. The UK continues to make significant progress on the decarbonisation of electricity with a target to run a completely net zero system year-round by 2035 and the ability to run a net zero system for periods of time by 2025.

3. While fuel poverty had been on a slow decline up to 2021, the gas and cost-of-living crisis has meant millions more households have been put in fuel poverty, with numbers rising and government support not going far enough.

4. The UK is severely behind on energy efficiency improvements. Current measures are not enough to drive the levels of building retrofit needed and do not match the heightened imperative to deploy energy efficiency to shield against rising gas prices.

5. An increase of at least three gigawatts (GW) of new wind capacity and three GW of new solar capacity is needed per year to achieve a net zero system that operates with 80% renewables in 2050, as identified in the Sixth Carbon Budget.

6. By 2035, over 25 GW of flexible capacity from batteries, other forms of storage, and demand-side response are needed to be able to manage a high renewables electricity system, while keeping the cost of the transition low.

Performance and progress

Across the UK, 100% of the population has access to electricity and clean fuels. Therefore, affordability and fuel poverty are the key aspects affecting the UK's performance on Target 7.1. Rising gas prices are driving up the number of UK households in fuel poverty, and though the UK had previously been on track to meet Target 7.1, the rating has now been downgraded to amber.

The most cost-effective way to tackle fuel poverty in the long term is to implement energy efficiency measures (Target 7.3). The Committee on Fuel Poverty's 2021 annual report highlighted that the Government failed to apply their own guiding principles to target available funding for those who need it most to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and help pay for their energy bills. The report highlights that the Government's 2025 target to "ensure all fuel poor households have energy efficient homes" will likely be missed. Among others, the Committee recommended approving new regulations to bring minimum

energy efficiency standards for social housing up to band C by 2030, and approve long-term funding for the Home Upgrade Grant and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The CCC's 2021 Progress Report to Parliament also identifies energy efficiency as a key area where further action is needed. One of the largest challenges in decarbonising the energy system is heating. As outlined in the CCC's latest progress report, the Government's current plan to use a market-based mechanism to encourage heat pump uptakes, which includes requiring boiler manufacturers to sell more heat pumps, is an untested approach. There is currently no other plan to encourage heat pump uptake if this does not work, putting Target 7.2 at risk.

On power, the importance of making progress on the Government's target to decarbonise the electricity system by 2035 is heightened by the current high cost of wholesale gas. To ensure this target is met in a way that provides long-term

CASE STUDY: AFFORDABLE WARMTH IN NORTHERN IRELAND

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 1.2, 7.1, 7.3

The Affordable Warmth Scheme, implemented by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, addresses the effects of fuel poverty and energy inefficiency for low-income households across Northern Ireland by working with local councils to deliver the scheme.

It provides grant aid to improve energy efficiency measures within homes up to the value of £7,500, or up to £10,000 if solid wall insulation is needed. The range of measures include the installation of insulation and draught-proofing, the replacement of heating and single glazed windows, and provision of solid wall measures.

" To increase the amount of renewable energy, urgent action is needed to address grid infrastructure challenges

affordability to UK citizens, a review of how markets operate is needed to ensure the current low cost of renewable energy passes through to consumer bills. This will hopefully be addressed in the Government's Review of Electricity Market Arrangements.

Target 7.1 also covers 'modern energy services' and reliability. The Government's updated approach to this is laid out in the Smart System and Flexibility Plan 2021. The Plan recognises the importance of flexibility to provide the electricity grid with the ability to better match demand to supply and enable the integration of more renewables in a decarbonised system, and promises delivery of tangible, measurable goals. This includes analysis stating that by 2030, 30 GW of low-carbon flexible assets (storage, demand-side response, and interconnection) will be needed to maximise the variable output of the 40 GW of wind on the system. Planning for long-duration storage is missing in the existing roadmap, but is critical in making the most of our future low-cost, low-carbon energy system.

Some of the solutions to achieve net zero, especially around flexibility, require consumers to have smart meters that send real-time data on how much energy they are using to their suppliers. The original smart meter rollout was not successful. After nine years, in December 2021, only 50% of households had smart meters, with even fewer (42%) in smart mode. Ofgem has reviewed and extended the time frames for smart meter rollout. All gas and electricity suppliers are expected to have binding annual installation targets to roll out smart and advanced meters to remaining customers by 2025. While many will benefit from a more modern energy system, it is also essential that

those unable or unwilling to participate in a digitalised system are not left behind.

Renewable energy is intermittent and cannot be deployed whenever it is needed (see A Day in the Life 2035). Increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix (Target 7.2) will mean hydrogen will likely play a crucial role in providing low-carbon dispatchable electricity generation, along with its use in hard-to-decarbonise sectors such as heavy industry. The Government is currently supporting all types of hydrogen, including that derived from fossil gas. The CCC emphasise that hydrogen derived from fossil gas should not be considered zero carbon and, if deployed in large quantities, will not meet the UK's long-term net zero targets. Whether hydrogen from fossil gas continues to be supported will depend on the Government's current review into implementing a low carbon assessment of the fuel.

In the past year (from April 2021), renewables made up approximately 35% of the electricity supply, with wind power making up 23% of this figure. New renewable generation has been slow in the past three years, but there have been positive developments regarding recent improvements in market conditions, as well as the opening of Contracts for Difference (CfD) auctions to include onshore solar and wind, as recommended in the last Measuring Up.

To increase the amount of renewable energy, urgent action is needed to address grid infrastructure challenges. There currently isn't enough capacity on the grid to plug in new renewable projects, which is the single biggest issue stopping

CASE STUDY: MEET THE GENERATORS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 7.1, 7.2

Good Energy is an energy supplier which boasts a 100% mix of renewable energy, consisting of wind, biogeneration, solar, and hydroelectricity projects. They source their energy entirely from their network of 1,900 renewable generators across the UK.

Their 'Meet the Generators' campaign features a series of short films from its community to raise awareness

of their vital contribution to customers' savings of more than 100,000 tonnes of carbon emissions. Independent businesses, non-profits, and local communities are substantially increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. Good Energy's campaign hopes to see others across the UK generate their own power and become more energy independent.

the development of renewable energy projects. This is true even for existing projects. For example, the Orkney islands generate 130% of the electricity needed by their population, but with so much clean electricity generated across the islands, the power cable back to the mainland often gets overloaded, meaning that energy companies have had to cap how much clean electricity is generated. Proposed measures in the energy security strategy go some way towards addressing these issues, including commitments to encourage Ofgem to allow investment ahead of need. However, further support, as outlined in the recommendations below, is needed.

A clear inconsistency in the Government's policies regarding net zero, and Target 7.2, is the support for new oil and gas projects. Both the International Energy Agency (IEA) and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have stated that there can be no new oil and gas projects to reach the world's climate goals, but there are proposals in the Energy Security Strategy for new oil and gas production projects and the potential to reopen fracking. These proposals are at odds with the delivery of clean and affordable energy.

Synergies and coherence

There are important synergies with many of the other Goals. The most obvious is with climate action (SDG 13), as transitioning to clean energy is a vital part of reducing emissions from fossil fuels. A just transition to low-carbon energy technologies and systems also has the opportunity to positively impact decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) as well as industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9). Being able to access affordable energy (SDG 1) and have a warm, comfortable work and home environment through using clean energy for heating is also essential to good health and well-being (SDG 3).

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Transitioning to clean energy is a vital part of reducing emissions from fossil fuels

CASE STUDY: DELIVERING HOUSEHOLD ENERGY EFFICIENCY

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 7.3

From 2018 to 2022, Changeworks delivered 'Change Works' in Argyll; a pilot project helping the people in Arrochar and rural West Loch Lomond communities in Argyll and Bute Council to improve the energy efficiency of their off-gas homes and businesses, under the Energy Efficient Scotland programme.

Personalised engagement was used to raise awareness of low-cost energy efficient home improvements and encourage low-carbon behaviours through specialist talks, learning activities, and outreach events. The team built strong relationships with local stakeholder groups and worked with a number of organisations to offer interest free loans and tailored advice to facilitate homeowners and business' decisions.

Over the course of the project, 16 measures were installed ranging from draught proofing to underfloor heating, which resulted in over £16,000 of private investment and 50 tonnes of lifetime carbon savings.

When the project ended, a further 20 measures were being explored by households and businesses with the potential to generate £41,200 in investment and 59 tonnes of lifetime carbon savings.

Local to international dimensions

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought energy security to the forefront of policy decisions. The most effective way to boost energy security now in the UK is to ramp up support for energy efficiency and to unlock the pipeline of shovel-ready renewable projects ready to deliver electricity quickly and at the lowest cost.

In many ways, the UK is leading the world in deploying low-carbon technologies. For example, 80% of global offshore wind resources sit in deep water areas. The UK is unlocking new geographies to harness clean energy through the world's largest floating offshore wind farm, which sits just off the coast of Aberdeenshire, as well as finding innovative solutions to the issues that arise from having a high percentage of renewables on the grid. As other countries follow in their decarbonisation journeys, the UK can share knowledge and experience with others. For example, Wales is one of the founding members of the Under2 Coalition, joined by 270 governments, including the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, committed to sharing knowledge to achieve net zero emissions.

Recommendations

1. Develop a combined strategy for energy efficiency and low-carbon heat, prioritising the fuel poor and most vulnerable.
2. Deliver a nationally-funded, locally-coordinated programme of energy efficiency and home retrofit by bringing all houses to a minimum standard of having an Energy Performance Certificate band C.
3. Provide funding and incentives to encourage the switch to low-carbon heat, such as rebalancing levy costs on electricity bills, and support community energy organisations, local authorities, and other local groups to communicate the need and benefits of home improvements and fuel switching.

4. Act on current ambitious renewable and hydrogen targets to create a clear strategy and path to meet goals: double the capacity of renewables supported in the CfD auction; speed up the process to reform the Electricity Systems Operator (ESO) into full system architect, focused on ensuring network infrastructure is in place to enable a net zero system; include a specific duty in the remit of the energy regulator (Ofgem) to prioritise decarbonisation; amend the planning regime to allow further development of onshore wind in England and support the development of community-owned renewables at all scales through new support to replace community energy funds and/or a community scale CfD scheme.
5. Unblock progress to deploy more renewable technologies by ensuring market reform is focused on enabling the delivery of secure and affordable net zero power. Require a clear action plan from Electricity Transmission Networks and the Electricity System Operator to address capacity constraints, working with the Distribution Network Operators. Ensure the systems, markets, and infrastructure are in place to deliver the target for decarbonised power by 2035 and speed up progress on delivering the measures set out in the Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan.
6. Go further and faster in devolving net zero responsibility, powers, and funding and providing a clear long-term framework for local government to provide leadership.

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Prepared by:

Introduction

In 2022, the UK faces a range of economic challenges – notably inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. This evolving context overshadows some of the detailed analysis of strategies and policies below. The central pillars of SDG 8 – namely economic growth that is environmentally sustainable and inclusive, secure employment, and decent work – remain fundamental. Sustainable economic growth and an inclusive work environment are necessary precursors for resolving any economic issues.

The UK has marked a few notable achievements under SDG 8, however, it will take far more work than is currently being delivered to achieve the Targets by 2030.

This report also comes at a time when the UK economy is still trying to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has posed several challenges in the progression of the

SDG 8 Targets. Measuring up against these Targets will require mindful consideration of the pandemic and its impacts. There has been some good progress in policy development and implementation. This has led to performance improvements for Targets related to economic growth, economic productivity, sustainable tourism, and strategy for youth employment. On the other hand, ensuring diversity and equality in employment, job safety and security, developing the future workforce for higher-level economic activities and service economy, and access to financial services will require more effort to achieve the Targets in the time frame.

Although not far behind, the UK is performing worse than most European countries on SDG 8. It is time for the UK to make a serious effort to design, drive, and deliver policy initiatives by keeping the timeline of 2030 under the spotlight.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries. 🟠

8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors. 🟠

8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services. 🟠

8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead. 🟠

8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value. 🟠

8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training. 🟠

8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. 🔴

8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment. 🟠

8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products. 🟠

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

8.10	Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all.	🟠
8.a	Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries.	⚫
8.b	By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization.	🟠

Key findings

1. The UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate is not significant, but this is likely due to the pandemic. The growth rate is now back on track for the pre-pandemic level and has started showing a positive trend.

2. The Government has put some commitments to sustaining economic growth through the development of green infrastructure, skills, and innovation, but more needs to be done to ensure a just transition to net zero.

3. The proportion of informal employment is decreasing. However, with projections of inflation set to rise, there is a growing gap between the minimum wage that workers are receiving and the real living wage that workers will need to face rising costs.

4. The gender and age pay gaps are still a significant problem. Despite the wage rate improving, it has had no impact on reducing the gaps. Even though job vacancies are at a record high, this has also not improved earnings for women.

5. The UK has marginally reduced the percentage of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) (now at 10.4% Q1 of 2022), however, this is far from the Target ambition to substantially reduce the numbers.

6. Access to bank accounts and financial services remains an issue.

Performance and progress

Overall, the UK has made some progress in ensuring decent work and fostering economic growth since Measuring Up in 2018. The UK economy is under a lot of stress and uncertainty in 2022. Still, there has been good progress in the real GDP growth rate since the end of the COVID-19 lockdowns, with an uplift of 1.7% GDP per month on pre-pandemic levels (Target 8.1, Target 8.2).

Although the pandemic severely affected real GDP per employed person, the Government has recognised the need for achieving a higher level of productivity through technology and diversification in their Build Back Better plans. This strategy addresses the essential grounding of infrastructure, skills, and innovation to ensure long-term and sustainable per capita economic growth and productivity through development in high value-adding sectors. This is all with a focus on a "green industrial revolution" (Target 8.3, Target 8.4). Critical

to achieving this will be ensuring a just transition – putting in policies, processes, and sufficient investment to guarantee that the rapid transition to net zero leaves no one behind. This means creating opportunities for reskilling, redeploying, and meaningfully engaging workers that guarantees everyone has access to fair and decent work.

At COP26, the Government signed a declaration to support the conditions for a just transition internationally, but at home, it appears Scotland is committing the most work to this. It remains to be seen, though, how current energy cost and inflation crises impact nationwide policies to make economic activity environmentally sustainable.

Aside from a spike in raw material consumption in 2015, there has been little progress by this measure on improving resource efficiency, although data is only available up to 2018. However, the use of fossil fuels shows a consistent decline both in overall material footprint and domestic material consumption. Target 8.4 to "decouple economic growth from environmental

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While hourly earnings have increased over the years, the gender and age pay gaps are not reducing significantly

degradation" is still an unclear endeavour, and the UK needs to ensure a massive effort to make any impact on this by 2030.

There is little noticeable progress in tackling the low-wage sector and, particularly, inequalities in the marketplace (Target 8.5). On a positive note, the proportion of informal employment is decreasing (for both sexes), which means more people are able to find stable work, especially after the initial impact of the pandemic. The proportion of estimated jobs paying below minimum wage has also reduced since 2018, although there are still believed to be around 1.8% of people earning below this line.

Due to the rate of inflation, the rate of pay in real terms has also decreased, with April-June 2022 seeing a record fall of 3% compared to the same period last year. With projections of inflation set to rise until at least the end of 2022 and remaining high for, at a minimum, the next year, it is vital that the Government puts in place measures to protect those on low wages. Over 10,000 UK employers have committed to pay the real Living Wage, but for all other workers on national minimum pay, it is estimated that an extra £800 per year will be needed in 2022; the difference of 13 weeks of food or ten weeks of housing costs.

While hourly earnings have increased over the years, the gender and age pay gaps are not reducing significantly. Although there has been a decline in the last decade, the rate of change is too slow. Last year saw an increase in the gender pay gap from 7% to 7.9% for full-time employees, and from

14.9% to 15.4% among all employees. The Government's effort to ensure decent work and equal pay for all is still a far-fetched target to achieve by 2030.

Moreover, there is no new or improved measure to ensure the safety and security of those who are in formal employment (Target 8.8). There has been a slow but steady reduction in fatal and non-fatal injuries, but the younger and the older workforces remain the most vulnerable groups. Additionally, the UK's trade union membership is also decreasing. This is particularly alarming because of trade unions' roles as key actors in promoting labour rights in the workplace, the importance of collective bargaining and their recognition as stakeholders in UN processes around the SDGs.

Modern slavery, child labour, and child exploitation (Target 8.7) remain a challenge in the UK, as discussed in the SDG 16 chapter. According to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and other government efforts, there are tools and mechanisms to identify and refer potential victims of modern slavery to ensure they receive the appropriate support. However, total eradication of these crimes remains an issue.

One milestone of progress with regards to employment is the awarding to the UK of a band-3 (the highest) score from the International Labour Organization (ILO) for its strategies on youth employment (Target 8.6, Target 8.b). Alongside the national plans, there are also separate youth work strategy plans for Scotland and Wales. However, a recent report published by the Youth Unemployment Committee made

CASE STUDY: THE REAL LIVING WAGE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 1.1, 8.5, 10.1

The Living Wage Foundation established the real Living Wage: a UK wage rate that is based on the cost of living and voluntarily paid by over 10,000 UK employers who commit to giving their staff a wage that meets their everyday needs.

Unlike the Government's national living wage, the real Living Wage rates for London and the rest of the UK are independently calculated based on what people actually need to get by. Since its establishment in 2011, over

300,000 employees have received a pay rise amounting to over £1.8bn as a result of the campaign and 93% of businesses have seen benefits since accrediting. The Living Wage Foundation has developed a number of resources, such as the NHS toolkit, to help organisations implement the Living Wage with guidance on the accreditation process, case studies, and advice from existing Living Wage providers. The Foundation identified eight SDGs that the real Living Wage can contribute to.

a series of recommendations, including focusing on the structural nature of youth unemployment, funding for post-18 education, and developing long-term plans regarding skill-matching for growth sectors.

Future plans will be crucial to help reduce the NEET rate – which has risen to 10.4% despite a decline to 9.3% in 2021 – but also to support improving performance against other SDG 8 Targets. For instance, strategies on youth employment should enhance diversity and inclusivity in the future workforce, weaken informal employment dynamics, and fill skills shortages in areas such as green technology (Target 8.3, Target 8.5). It could also guide growth in service sector employment and an inclusive workforce in the tourism sector (Target 8.9).

Recently, the UK has struggled to improve financial support and access to financial services (Target 8.10). There has been little change to the proportion of adults who have access to a current bank account or an alternative e-money account, estimated to be at 97.7% of adults (18 years and over) in 2020. There has been a notable decline among those aged 65+, and 18-24 year olds account for almost one in four of all unbanked adults. Barriers include cost, failure to provide creditworthiness or adequate proof of identity to banks, and low levels of awareness about basic bank accounts designed for those who would not qualify for a standard current account.

There has been a sharp decline in the number of ATMs and bank branches per 100,000 adults since 2016, which has a more severe effect on those living in smaller or more rural communities. In the future, access to financial and banking services might be ensured through digital platforms (while addressing 'digital divides'), but this will not address some of the more pressing barriers as mentioned above.

Alongside SDG 12, sustainable tourism is also addressed (Target 8.9) under SDG 8. The pandemic may have superseded

any plan and policy in place for this before 2020, and there has been a significant drop in tourism due to the pandemic. However, the Government has provided a plan and forecast to recover tourism. Both domestic and international tourism need serious support to achieve the Target by 2030. Within 2018-19 there was slight growth in the number of jobs in tourism; however, it was still lower than the growth in the overall economy. What is less clear is how the UK should address the environmental impacts of tourism: at the time of writing, the Government's Sustainable Tourism Plan, promised in the Recovery Plan, has yet to be made available.

Synergies and coherence

Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) are closely related to the performance of a few other Goals, and thus, plans for achieving the Targets must be simultaneously assessed with them. A reduction in NEET and an increase in high-value productivity would help to end all forms of poverty (SDG 1).

Moreover, NEET, decent work for all, and youth employment will benefit from the progress in quality education (SDG 4). At the same time, ensuring diversity and inclusivity in all types of the workforce is a precursor to gender equality (SDG 5) and reduction in inequalities (SDG 10). Similarly, ensuring protections for workers, and the exploitation of vulnerable groups relies on strong institutions and systems of justice (SDG 16). Sustainable consumption and production pattern (SDG 12) is another Goal aligned with improving a quality workforce and working environment. Therefore, the most effective ways to address the underperforming Targets should be designed through collective and orchestrated plans considering all the aligned Targets from other SDGs.

CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING A JUST TRANSITION

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 4.4, 8.3

In 2020, SSE published their Just Transition Strategy, which outlined a framework of 20 principles to help guide SSE's decision-making and influence greater fairness for those impacted by the decline of high-carbon economic activity and increase the opportunities of climate action.

Their approach is framed into two themes: that the just transition requires "transitioning in" to new or reformed activities with low or reducing carbon emissions, while simultaneously "transitioning out" of high-carbon operations. Under these themes, SSE considers principles

for good, green jobs; consumer fairness; building and operating new assets; supporting people in high-carbon jobs; and supporting communities. The strategy has been described as the world's first business strategy for a just transition.

As a result, SSE recently ranked at the top of the World Benchmarking Alliance's 2021 just transition assessment of 180 global companies. SSE engages with a number of collaborations and is focused on open feedback, stakeholder engagement, and consultation to enable continuous improvement as the just transition agenda evolves.

CASE STUDY:
BRISTOL WORKS – PROVIDING ACCESS TO WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 4.4, 8.6

Leading post-16 providers in Bristol have developed a collaborative strategy for building a post-16 system to address high levels of disengagement with young people. A key part of this includes the Bristol WORKS programme. Devised by Bristol City Council, it provides access to quality work experience and apprenticeships to every young person in the city.

The programme is based on research that young adults are five times more likely to engage in further education, employment, and training if they have had four or more meaningful experiences of work while at school. In 2020-2021, the programme delivered 2,850 experiences of work to young people and this included supporting young people with additional needs.

Local to international dimensions

Several sectors in the UK workforce rely heavily on foreign labour. The SDG 3 chapter touches on this with regards to the health sector workforce, and the SDG 10 chapter considers seasonal workers and visas for temporary migrants to work in the UK edible and ornamental horticulture, and agriculture sectors. Other notable sectors however include hospitality, transport and storage, and information, communication, and IT.

This can have a considerable impact on the achievement of decent work, well-being, and equality. For example, in 2020, foreign-born workers were more likely to work night shifts and in non-permanent jobs than UK-born workers (source: The Migration Observatory). This has local implications for the UK. In 2020, London was home to 35% of the UK's foreign-born population, despite only homing 14% of the UK's overall population. There was thus a significant decline in London's population and workforce during the pandemic due to the decline in foreign national workers, although numbers have since recovered, particularly with an increase in non-EU migrants.

Recommendations

1. Government plans, notably around Building Back Better and youth employment, need continuous follow-up and improvement. In order to reduce the NEET percentage, national plans, policies, and budgets need to ensure the quality and availability of decent jobs. Both public and private sector investments must also be aligned with these plans.
2. A sustainable service economy needs to have higher priority to ensure higher-level productivity. Financial service should be at the core of these plans, and the Government should develop its Sustainable Tourism Plan as promised
3. Diversity and equality across all industries and job levels requires strong guidance and monitoring. Future policies need to address the lack of monitoring and reporting from stakeholders.
4. Labour rights must be enhanced through clear policy, law, and communication. Public and private efforts are essential to ensure equal opportunity. Work environment safety and work stability, and proper wage guarantee are crucial, particularly in light of the cost-of-living crisis. The Government must ensure routine checks, reporting, and recognition.
5. Along with access to bank branches and ATMs, policies also need to consider access to banking and financial services that ensure no one is left behind. Mobile and digital financial services need to be safe and secure for all types of individuals, a responsibility of both Government and institutions.
6. The need for resource efficiency and reduction in material consumption needs to be widely communicated. Without willing consumer participation, it will not be possible to reduce domestic material consumption.

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Work environment safety and work stability, and proper wage guarantee are crucial, particularly in light of the cost-of-living crisis

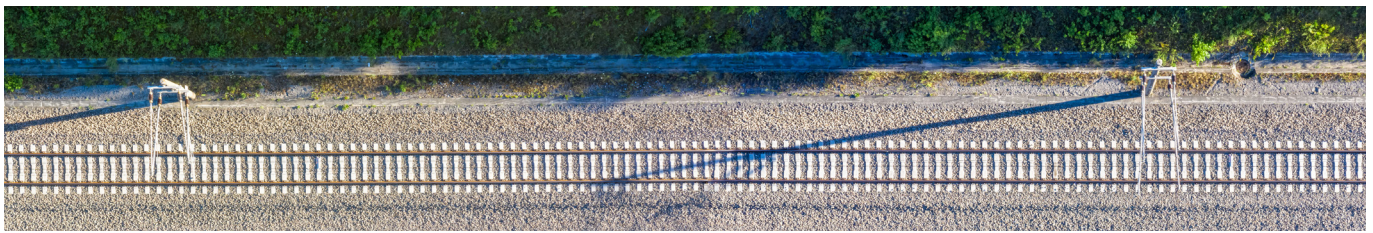**9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Prepared by:

ARDEN UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The UK's industrial strategy was conceived with the aim of enhancing productivity by creating skilled jobs, improving bottom-line, and developing public-private partnerships, solid infrastructures for businesses, and technological innovations.

It is suggested that the UK has made progress in Target 9.4, however there is still work to be completed in order to improve the remaining Targets.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET		RATING
9.1	Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.	🟠
9.2	Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries.	🟠
9.3	Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets.	🟠
9.4	By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities.	🟢
9.5	Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending.	🟠
9.a	Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.	⚪
9.b	Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities.	⚪
9.c	Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.	⚪

Key findings

1. The UK's Net Zero Strategy has gone some way to showing commitment to the decarbonisation of all sectors of the UK economy. £26 billion of investment has gone into the 'green revolution' although it is unclear how this funding will be spent.

2. The Government has made some good progress in greening homes and commitments to improve the sustainability of the transport sector, but investment must be spread particularly to rural areas to combat the severe discrepancies in transportation links.

3. Despite a decline in the number of businesses between 2020 and 2021, the UK continues to supply finance to support smaller businesses.

4. The overall spend on research and development is below both the EU and OECD average following a period of decline, but the Government plans to boost investment to 2.4% of the GDP by 2027. The 2021 Innovation Strategy is the first of its kind in 15 years, demonstrating a renewed focus on this area.

Performance and progress

Following the developments in infrastructure (Target 9.1) in the UK from 1990 to 2010, recent developments have been less positive, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Construction is an essential component in the creation of infrastructure and electricity has accounted for most of the new work since 2014. Significant investment in renewable and other energy infrastructure in Yorkshire and The Humber in 2020, for example, saw a "spectacular increase" (174.8%) of new construction work from previous measures. Further UK industrial and infrastructural growth can be achieved if the Government promotes largescale investments not only in the energy sector but also in digital technology.

Inclusive and sustainable industry (Target 9.2) is vital for meeting SDG 9. The latest ONS estimates show turnover in the low carbon and renewable energy economy is fractionally lower than since the previous Measuring Up report, standing at £41.2 billion, although with no significant change since 2014 when the data set began. However, the Net Zero Strategy has gone some way to demonstrating commitment to the decarbonisation of all sectors of the UK economy, as well as ensuring that the benefits of growth in green industry are spread across the country. As part of the Levelling Up strategy, £26 billion of investment has gone into the "green revolution". While this is a good direction of travel, there is still limited

detail as to how this funding will be spent, and clear strategies must be in place to use these funds efficiently, holistically, and inclusively. It is also worth noting that while the Levelling Up strategy does include a discussion of net zero, it is not included as one of its 12 key missions, which sadly lacks ambition for centring the agenda horizontally through government policy.

Transport and travel (Target 9.1) were largely affected by the COVID-19 restrictions in both 2020 and 2021, so comparative data is not necessarily available. Nevertheless, it remains the highest emitting sector in the UK. The Government has committed to ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2030. The step aims to see 100% of cars on roads as zero-emission capable by 2035. The Net Zero Strategy also pledges £2 billion for new pedestrian and cycle paths and £3 billion for integrated bus networks. There are currently only 42,000 electrical vehicle (EV) charge points across the UK, but to meet predicted demand by 2030, it is estimated that 700 new charge points will need to be installed every day until the end of the decade. For these plans to meet the Indicator, the pledge for zero-emission buses and supportive infrastructure must be guaranteed.

Investment must be spread throughout the country, especially in rural areas, to combat severe discrepancies in transportation links and ensure that no one is left behind. Although the vast majority of the UK population has access to all-season roads (99.7%) (Indicator 9.1.1), less than half of public transport users

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> ## The Government has committed to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2030 in a step which aims to see 100% of cars on roads as zero-emission capable by 2035

CASE STUDY: DRIVING EV TAKE-UP WITH INNOVATIVE DESIGN

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 9.1, 9.4

Commissioned by the Department for Transport (DFT), PA Consulting and the Royal College of Art have designed a prototype for EV charging points to be rolled out across the UK. EV charging points are increasingly common but positive action is now needed to encourage wider adoption.

The innovation and design of the charging points was therefore guided by user experience. Not only did the product design have to be functional, inclusive, sustainable, and affordable, but ultimately people have to love it.

Extensive stakeholder engagement with EV users, non-users, and disability and consumer groups was undertaken to create the design. Through its influence of heritage street furniture, the charging point positions the UK at the forefront of advances in EV manufacturing, charging infrastructure, and battery technology as the Government seeks to build a comprehensive charging network across the UK.

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in rural areas have access to places with 5,000 or more jobs within 45 minutes, compared to 91% in urban areas. Moreover, 51% of users living in rural areas do not have access to their nearest hospital within an hour, compared to 8% of users in urban areas. In addition to the restricted access to services and employment, the Government identified further interrelated challenges for rural populations, such as the social isolation and mental health impacts associated with limited transport options and the heavy dependence on private cars.

The Government's ambition is to enable the delivery of 10% of aviation fuel to be made from sustainable sources by 2030. Regarding green infrastructure (Target 9.4) in other sectors, the Government's Future Homes Standard will apply to all new buildings from 2025 and aims to achieve a 75-80% reduction in CO_2 emissions compared with those currently being built. Additionally, a move to low-carbon heating systems in homes and workplaces by 2035 under the Net Zero Strategy aims to eradicate the sale of new gas boilers. Strengthening energy efficiency rating requirements for private landlords is also a positive step in lowering energy usage and subsequent costs amongst renters. Further detail on the building sector is included in SDG 13. The Government has plans towards Target 9.4, but net zero ambitions need to remain high. The Government must ensure that they deliver on their commitments and integrate them across all sectors.

A new mandate on disclosing climate-related financial information for all public and large private companies may help to promote a focus on green investment. Although, in 2021, 99.2% of the total business population in the UK was made up of small businesses with less than 50 employees (Target 9.3). Between 2020 and 2021 the number of private sector businesses decreased by 389,600 (6.5%). The decline in the number of businesses with no employees correlates with a decline in the population of self-employed workers during the pandemic. According to the Labour Force Survey, the number of self-employed workers was 14% lower in Q2 2021 compared to Q1 2020, partly due to people changing their survey responses during the pandemic to qualify for the Coronavirus

Job Retention Scheme. Despite this decrease in enterprises, the UK continues to supply finance to smaller businesses through Start-up Loans of up to £25,000 along with several finance options via the British Business Bank, which increased its financial support by more than £80 billion between April 2020 and March 2021. The Government's SME climate hub is a one-stop-shop climate action platform. It provides access to practical guides and hands-on tools to help small businesses identify, measure, report, and reduce their carbon emissions.

Research on innovation trends suggests that there was a relatively slow rate of development and investment in the UK from 2020. In the aerospace and automobile sectors, investment was concurrent. In the pharmaceutical industry, the trend declined somewhat as contracts were not renewed. This could be credited to the COVID-19 pandemic as the focus was targeted towards developing vaccinations. The Government has, however, extended its investment in innovation initiatives.

Pertaining to innovation (Target 9.5), the UK has performed relatively poorly at the overall amount of research and development (R&D) that it undertakes. The UK currently spends only 1.7% of GDP on R&D, which is below the OECD average of 2.4% and the EU average of 2.0%. The Government has focused its efforts on boosting investment into R&D as part of the Build Back Better strategy post-COVID-19. Starting with an injection of £39.8 billion over the next three years, it aims to kickstart an increase in total investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. While this is a record investment, it follows a period of decline in funding for R&D.

The National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) estimates that had the UK kept up with the OECD average, R&D would have received £44 billion of additional investment over the last decade. The new strategy explicitly links to the levelling up agenda, with an aim to spread this investment throughout the UK. The 2021 Innovation Strategy details the plans for development through research and innovation. It is the first of its kind in 15 years, showing a renewed focus on this area. It has been praised for its clear and strategic priorities

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Access to superfast broadband is a vital part of infrastructure needed to connect communities and businesses across the UK

(including energy and environmental technologies), and its focus on linkages between the public and private sectors. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is the national funding agency investing in science and research in the UK.

Operating across the whole of the UK with a combined budget of more than £6 billion, UKRI brings together the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK, and Research England. In positive first steps, the initial delivery plan by UKRI cited the missions of securing net zero, a healthy population, and education for young innovators as key underpinnings of the strategy. This is directly supporting Target 9.5 as well as providing synergies between SDGs 3, 4, 7, and 8. Investment in R&D is critical. Some of the UK's largest cities – such as Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, and Manchester – lag behind their international comparators when it comes to productivity and incomes.

By evaluating industrial development, infrastructural development, and innovation plans, it is evident that the UK is progressing in terms of SDG 9, but there can be more strategic plans to uplift in shorter time and with limited resources. Underpinning progress on SDG 9 is the ability of the current workforce to address these challenges. Up-skilling people and ensuring the engineering profession can rapidly adopt more sustainable practices over the next eight years is critical to the success of SDG 9, and several interrelated SDGs. In July 2022, Engineering UK published a report suggesting the UK could be

"sleepwalking towards a net zero engineering skills shortage". It is imperative that engineering companies, universities teaching engineering, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Engineering Council, and professional engineering institutions respond quickly to support the broader profession to drive education and skills development effectively and use its resources to deliver the improvements needed.

Synergies and coherence

There are a number of synergies between SDG 9 and the other Goals. Many Targets relate to the UK's ability to meet its net zero ambitions, which will rely on action in SDG 7 and SDG 13, along with sector-specific progress, for example, in sustainable agriculture (SDG 2). There are strong synergies with developing sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). Skills and lifelong learning (SDG 8 and SDG 4) will be critical to levelling up (SDG 10) and are essential to delivering net zero ambitions and future productivity. This will also increase regional investment and create future opportunities and prosperity. Support for interdisciplinary and challenge-focused research is particularly important in tackling a range of other SDGs, which links in with research and development.

CASE STUDY: TACKLING SOCIAL CHALLENGES THROUGH TECH

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 9.3

Mission Studio is a partnership between Nesta and Founders Factory which creates, spins out, and scales up new tech start-ups that tackle some of the UK's most pressing social challenges.

The studio advances Nesta's three missions – a fairer start for children, a healthy life for all, and a sustainable future – by investing in ventures that will narrow the outcome gap for children, create healthier food environments, and slash household carbon emissions.

Mission Studio will invest in three innovative new ventures each year until 2024. The founders of the ventures that get selected will have access to a venture design and build programme to go from idea to scale, access to a £300,000 investment pot, support from an expert team, and the ability to leverage Nesta and Founders Factory's global networks. By supporting businesses, Mission Studio helps to accelerate the growth and revenue of the founders' ventures so that they deliver both commercial return and a social impact.

Local to international dimensions

Access to superfast broadband is a vital part of infrastructure needed to connect communities and businesses across the UK. Around 123,000 homes and businesses (0.4%) in the UK are still without access to a decent broadband connection, but this differs vastly across regions: in England, the figure is estimated at 0.2%, whereas in Northern Ireland, 2.1% of the population are unable to get decent coverage.

Access to superfast broadband specifically for businesses vastly differs between urban and rural areas, and again between nations: 95% in urban areas and 79% in rural areas in England, and 95% in urban areas and only 62% in rural areas in Northern Ireland. Likewise, for mobile coverage, 4% of the UK sits in a 'not spot', meaning it doesn't have any mobile coverage, yet this figure sits at 5% in Wales and 11% in Scotland. The devolved nature of the UK means that these nations have implemented their own strategies to tackle these issues. For example, the Scottish Government has committed to enabling access to superfast broadband to every home and business and improving 4G mobile coverage across Scotland.

As highlighted in the first Measuring Up report, the UK's design and construction expertise could have a valuable impact on the development of infrastructure across the world, which is both an economic opportunity for these organisations and the UK's economy.

Recommendations

1. Mobilise further, significant investment in low-emission transport, including public transport networks and EV charging points.
2. Develop the Future of Transport: Rural Strategy, as promised in September 2021, to reduce the heavy reliance on private cars, reduce the overall need for travel, and focus on delivering societal impacts and improving the quality of life in rural areas.
3. Continue investing in infrastructure and capacity building, and implement incentives that encourage investment in advanced manufacturing.
4. Set and implement industry-specific CO_2 emission reduction targets. This will help to ensure any progress is in line with the UK's net zero target.
5. Continue to support small businesses, focusing on access to finance and opportunities and building climate-related capability and awareness.
6. The increase in public R&D investment to £20bn by 2024-25 and the target for total UK R&D investment to reach 2.4% of GDP by 2027 must see every region of the UK experience an uplift in investment.
7. Rapidly accelerate the development of critical skills in engineering to enable the delivery of sustainable outcomes.

CASE STUDY: LIGHTING UP CUMBRIA

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 7.3, 9.4

Since 2014, Cumbria County Council has invested £12.9 million into its LED Street Lighting replacement and improvement programme, replacing over 45,000 streetlights with more efficient and cost-effective LED technology.

As a result, the programme has enabled the council to reduce the consumption of energy through the network by approximately 60% each year, reduce its annual lighting energy bill by over £1 million, and save more than 9,000 tonnes of CO_2 per year. The new streetlights can also be directed to reduce light pollution to minimise any potential harmful effects on nocturnal wildlife and light sensitive people.

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Reduce inequality within and among countries

Prepared by:

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

Introduction

SDG 10 focuses on empowering and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of sex, discrimination, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, and economic or other status. If achieved, the Goal offers progress on a range of existing inequalities and would be transformative for many individuals in the UK. There has been some, although limited, success in achieving this Goal, although the percentage of people at risk of poverty continues to increase.

In Great Britain, the Equality Act (2010) harmonises and replaces previous equality legislation (such as the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995). In seeking to reduce socio-economic inequalities in Great Britain, the Equality Act requires agencies to have regard to a number of "protected characteristics" when making strategic decisions, namely, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

Northern Ireland continues to utilise a range of separate pieces of anti-discrimination legislation. For example, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places a statutory obligation on Public Authorities to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in respect of all characteristics.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET	RATING
10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.	🟠
10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.	🟠
10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.	🔴
10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.	🟠
10.5 Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations.	🟢
10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.	⚫
10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.	⚪
10.a Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements.	⚫
10.b Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes.	⚫
10.c By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.	🟠

Key findings

1. Income inequality has increased since the 1960s and 1970s but largely plateaued around 30% over the last ten years. Levels of relative low income have been fairly steady over the last five years, although this varies between sub-groups.

2. Wage inequality has fallen since the introduction of the National Living Wage in 2016. However, it is clear that women (20.4%) are more likely to earn below the real Living Wage than men (13.9%), and Black workers are approximately 50% more likely to earn below the real Living Wage than White workers.

3. While overall employment levels have increased 2% from 2016 to 2021, employment levels in lower paid jobs have fallen.

4. The number of UK households at risk of poverty is increasing and is particularly significant for specific population groups, including ethnic minorities, people who are in social and private rented accommodation, and families who have a member with a disability.

5. The number of work-based visas issued by the Government decreased during the pandemic although there has been a large increase in the provision of seasonal worker visas (for the horticultural and poultry sectors), from 2,500 in 2019 to 30,000 available visas in 2021.

6. The number of asylum seekers and people seeking protection entering the UK decreased by over 40% between March 2020 and 2021. Tragically, the numbers of people who have drowned while trying to cross the channel from France to the UK has increased since 2014, with the highest number of deaths by drowning recorded in 2021.

Performance and progress

Income inequality

The indicators of income equality are measured via the increase in income of the bottom 40% of the income population in each country. Success is determined by how the benefits are shared with those who are most in need within society. In recent years, income inequality in the UK has remained fairly stable (Target 10.1). In 2019/20, 42% of all disposable household income went to the fifth of UK households with the highest household incomes, while 7% went to the lowest-income fifth.

In terms of household income, income inequality of retired households remains at near historical highs, although it is consistently lower than non-retired households. The general trend in terms of disability, gender, and race has been one of improvement, but significant differences still remain. For example, in 2018, in a slight improvement from the previous three years, people with a disability earned on average 12.2% less than non-disabled people than per hour. Likewise, in 2019, individuals from ethnic minorities earned 2.3% less than those in the White ethnic group, an improvement on the previous year's figure of 3.8%. There is however discrepancy for different ethnic groups, with inequality for Pakistani (15.4%) and Bangladeshi (15.3%) individuals the greatest. While there is a long-term decline in the gender pay gap, women earned on average 15.4% less than men per hour in 2021.

The Gini coefficient is an international standardised gauge of how incomes are distributed across all individuals: the greater the number, the larger the gap between those with higher incomes and those with lower incomes. By this measure, income inequality in the UK decreased from 35.4% in the financial year ending (FYE) 2020 to 34.4% in FYE 2021. Levels of relative low income have been fairly stable, but this varies between population groups: the number of children and pensioners in relative low income has increased in the past five years.

> ## " The general trend in terms of disability, gender, and race has been one of improvement, but significant differences still remain

" It is predicted that the typical working-age household faces an income fall of 4%, or £1,100, in 2022-23

Wage inequality

The pandemic has undoubtedly affected social protection (Target 10.4) in many areas, including participation in the labour market. While the overall level of employment increased by 2.0% between 2016 and 2021, many lower-paid and lower-skilled occupations saw falls in employment during this time. For example, employment in cleaning occupations fell by 36%, an absolute fall of 265,000 jobs. In comparison, many high-skilled and high-paid sectors witnessed a rise in employment in the same timeframe.

Following the introduction of the National Living Wage in 2016, wage inequality fell dramatically for the first time since at least the late 1990s. However, although increases in minimum wages have raised the earnings of many workers and reduced earnings inequality, household income inequality remains high and in-work poverty rates have increased. The National Living Wage is determined by the cost of living in the UK, although it is not mandated by law. Data from the Living Wage Foundation in 2021 indicated that 4.8 million jobs (17.1%) pay below a living wage: a decrease from 2020 which was 5.4 million (20.2%). The region with the highest proportion of jobs paid below the Living Wage was Northern Ireland (21.3%), followed by areas in Midlands and the North. At the other end of the scale, the regions with the lowest proportion of jobs paid below the Living Wage are the South East (12.8%) and Scotland (14.4%). Women (20.4%) are more likely to earn below the real Living Wage than men (13.9%), and further data suggests that Black workers are around 50% more likely to earn below the Living Wage than White workers.

Poverty

Although extensively covered in SDG 1, poverty also features in SDG 10 with regards to the empowerment and protection of all people irrespective of their characteristics (Target 10.2). In 2019/20, poverty rates were highest for people in households from Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic groups and lowest for those from White ethnic groups. In terms of housing, 46% of social renters and 33% of private renters were in relative poverty in 2019/20, compared to 15% of people who owned their home outright. Families with a disabled member have a median income that is £110 lower than families with no disabled members, before housing costs are considered. The extra costs that disabled people face, like insurance, therapies, and essential services and equipment, further widens this income gap. The projections for the next five years appear dismal as it is predicted that the typical working-age household faces an income fall of 4%, or £1,100, in 2022-23. Unsurprisingly the greatest impact will be on the poorest quarter of households who are set to see their incomes fall by 6%.

These population groups will experience further social and fiscal vulnerabilities due to the economic impact of the pandemic. The reduction of Universal Credit by £20 per week in 2021 was the biggest overnight reduction experienced by poor income families since the inception of the Welfare State. However, the Government has recently introduced a universal credit taper cut and an increase in the National Insurance earning threshold for low-income families, effective from July 2022.

CASE STUDY: IMPROVING WELL-BEING AND INCLUSIVITY

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 4.4, 8.5, 10.2

Ikkaido is a UK-based charity whose primary purpose is to improve the well-being and quality of life of people who are socially excluded due to disability or disadvantage.

The organisation runs a series of programmes and courses designed to advance well-being and remove barriers to society including the Bullying Education Awareness and Tactics for Inclusion and Tolerance (BEAT-IT) project which addresses issues of e-safety, lack of digital literacy, and

critical thinking skills for those with lived experience of bullying, intolerance, and prejudice. Other projects include EmployABLE which empowers young disabled participants by giving them a stronger sense of identity, competences, and strengths, and EVA-FEM which has been designed to empower young women and girls from backgrounds of conflict and disaster, physical and sexual violence, trafficking, prostitution, or those that suffer a life-changing disability or severe stress and trauma.

Discrimination

Hate crime, also covered in the SDG 16 chapter, falls under Target 10.3 to eliminate discrimination. In 2021 the Law Commission made a number of recommendations for reform including levelling up the protection for disability and LGBT+ victims, tackling sex and gender abuse, and protecting freedom of expression. These recommendations are due to current problems with legislation, namely, that the criminal law does not treat all of those protected characteristics equally. This means that someone who is assaulted based on disability is not afforded the same protection as someone who is assaulted because of their race.

Asylum seekers, refugees, and worker migrants

People migrate to the UK for many reasons including work, study, asylum, and protection but data is not available for many of the Indicators that sit under Target 10.7. In terms of work-based reasons for migration, there were 122,512 work-related visas granted in the year ending March 2021 (including dependants), 37% lower than 2020. While it is reasonable to assume that this is a direct correlate of COVID-19, it is also important to note that there was a decrease over the last few quarters before the pandemic.

Seasonal workers were the only former Tier 5 route to see an increase in numbers, in line with quota increases for the seasonal worker visa route, which increased from 2,500 in 2019 to 30,000 available visas in 2021. A new visa route, running from 2022 to 2024, permits 38,000 temporary migrants to work in the UK edible and ornamental horticulture sectors and 2,000 visas for temporary migrants to work in the UK poultry sector. Although it is not clear what protections are to be made available for the workers who will be employed on a seasonal basis.

The UK offered protection, in the form of asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave, and resettlement, to 8,640 people (including dependants) in the year ending March 2021. Despite the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, this figure remains the lowest level since 2012.

The number of drownings in the English Channel has increased exponentially from nine in 2020 to 37 in 2021. The Government has a duty to protect life not only under refugee and human rights law, but also under the law of the sea on search and rescue (Article 98(1) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea). Once a boat is in UK waters, the UK's responsibility for search and rescue is initiated. In addition, the Dover Strait – the narrowest part of the English Channel across which migrant boats usually travel – is not designated as international waters due to the proximity to France so that the UK's primary responsibility is triggered the moment a boat leaves French waters. There has been an influx of individuals attempting to enter the country via gang-controlled illicit journeys across the English Channel. Numbers of deaths have fluctuated since 2014 but there was a spike in numbers as a result of an illegal transportation of people in October 2019; where the bodies of 39 Vietnamese people were found in the trailer of an articulated refrigerator lorry in Grays, Essex.

At the end of March 2021, 44,825 asylum seekers waiting on their status decision were receiving support under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, similar to the previous year. In addition, 6,122 individuals were in receipt of support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; up 50% from the previous year in 2020. This support is provided where a claim has been rejected but the individual is temporarily unable to leave the UK.

Synergies and coherence

There is a hugely significant overlap between SDG 10 and SDG 1, particularly in relation to child poverty and poverty stratified by age, gender, and ethnicity. Predicted rises in energy prices will disproportionately affect low-income households who spend a larger proportion on 'essentials', and increases of the price of fuel will increase fuel poverty (SDG 7).

Those hit hardest by the current downturn in the economy in 2022 are in low-paid, part-time, and zero hours contract work (SDG 8), and the current levels of employment and income

CASE STUDY: MAKING THE RIGHT MOVE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 4.4, 10.2, 10.3

In 2021, the Government defined Bradford as one of 12 opportunity areas in social mobility "coldspots" across the country. These areas are characterised by a lack of education, training, and employment opportunities for young adults.

Deliberately located in one of these areas, PwC's Assurance Centre in Bradford demonstrates their commitment to

tackling social mobility; investing in jobs and training for their employees and a wider group of people. Within Bradford, PwC has created opportunities and expectations that previously didn't exist. Around 200 people have been employed at the Centre, the vast majority from the local area. This cutting-edge measure will simultaneously tackle the lack of social mobility in the area and promote PwC's community engagement in Bradford.

CASE STUDY: FUNDING BOOSTS TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 1.3, 10.3, 10.4, 11.1

The Homelessness Prevention Grant, announced by the Government in 2021, will see tens of thousands of people protected from homelessness as a result of a £316 million funding boost. The grant aims to support people in England who are homeless or at risk of losing their home. Councils will use the funding to help them find a new home, access support for unexpected evictions, and secure temporary accommodation where needed. The funding includes an additional £5.8 million to support people forced into homelessness by domestic abuse.

This boost in funding coincides with the Government's commitment to ensure people at risk of becoming homeless, across the country, get help more quickly. Since the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in 2017, over 400,000 households have been prevented from losing their homes or supported into settled accommodation, meaning rough sleeping levels fell by 37% between 2019 and 2020.

disparities between men and women, with women more likely to access lower paid, insecure jobs below the active living wage, demonstrates the intrinsic links with achieving SDG5.

Local to international dimensions

Disposable income may be measured before or after deducting housing costs. Since 2011, the before housing costs and after housing costs Gini coefficients have been gradually rising, sitting at 35% and 39% respectively in 2019/20, and the UK is lagging behind the Gini coefficient for all European countries, calculated at 30% in 2020. The Government's focus on Levelling Up after COVID-19 recognises that geographical inequality is a "striking feature" of the UK.

As part of its plans, the Government will establish a new framework to extend, deepen, and simplify local devolution in England to empower local decision-makers to address inequalities. This includes simplifying the disparate funding landscape and bring local leaders "into the heart of Government decision-making" with a new role for bringing mayors and local leaders to shape local growth strategy.

Recommendations

1. Government policy should provide further social protection reform for specific groups who are at risk of poverty, including ethnic minorities, people who are in social and private rented accommodation, families who have a member who has a disability, and children and pensioners who live in low-income households, particularly in view of current and foreseeable fuel poverty and rising inflation.
2. Following the universal credit taper cut and increase in the National Insurance earning threshold for low-income families, a formal and independent evaluation should consider the short- and medium-term impact of these measures on low-income families and individuals.
3. Businesses should pay the real Living Wage and in turn, enjoy the benefits that being an accredited Living Wage Employer provides.
4. The Government should enact the Law Commission's recommendations for reforms of hate crime laws to level up the protection for disability and LGBT+ victims, tackle sex and gender abuse, and protect freedom of expression.
5. The Government should implement specific social protection measures to assist workers who will be employed on a seasonal basis in the UK.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Prepared by:

Introduction

Cities play an increasingly integral role in the functioning of our regional, national, and international systems. They are the hubs of our economies, education systems, and social and physical infrastructure, and they are growing in size and density. It is predicted that by 2050, 70% of the world's population will live in cities, which will force leaders across the globe to re-evaluate what it means to be a healthy city that accommodates all.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET	RATING
11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.	🟠
11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.	🟠
11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.	⚪
11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.	🟠
11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.	🟢
11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.	🟠
11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.	🟠
11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.	🟢
11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.	🟠
11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials	⚫

Key findings

1. Housing remains a key issue for UK cities, with affordability worsening and many homes still falling short of the criteria for providing 'adequate' living conditions.

2. Transport systems are not decarbonising quick enough to meet the country's ambitious net zero carbon targets.

3. There are increasing and emerging climate risks to cities. People living in UK cities are more likely to face death from flooding, fire, and excess heat as heavy precipitation and heatwave likelihood increases.

4. Pollution levels may be falling across UK cities, but waste levels are rising, and air pollution has not yet fallen to meet World Health Organisation (WHO) standards.

5. While over 90% of the UK population lives within 900m of green spaces, there is no data on the quality of these spaces nor their safety.

Performance and progress

The UK is a highly urbanised nation, with over 83% of England's population living in urban spaces. The affordability, quality, and sustainability of housing in urban areas (Target 11.1) is a key issue in the UK, but there has been little progress on housing quality and affordability since 2015. The Decent Homes Standard is based on housing that is in a reasonable state of repair, with a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, no category 1 hazards (hazards where the most serious harm outcome could result in death, permanent paralysis, permanent loss of consciousness, loss of a limb or serious fracture), and has reasonably modern facilities. Across England, the percentage of dwellings that failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard decreased to 16% in 2020. This is made up of 21% of non-decent homes in the private rented sector (one-fifth of homes), 16% among owner-occupied homes, and 13% of social rented homes.

The cost of poorly insulated housing is exacerbated by the cost of heating homes, which negatively impacts most on those who are already experiencing poverty, and is likely to affect more people with the increase in energy costs and cost-of-living crisis. Over the past ten years, there has been little to no change in affordability indices for house buying and the most recent house price data indicates that housing will have become less affordable again in 2021-22. The English Housing Survey found that as buying houses has become less affordable, the proportion of those who rent privately and live in overcrowded housing has increased.

Furthermore, the Household Resilience Survey found that rental costs impact some of the most socially vulnerable the hardest, with single-parent renting households the most likely to be in rent arrears.

The UK's transport system is relatively advanced and this is particularly true in the UK's cities (Target 11.2). However, much infrastructure is dated and needs retrofitting to make it more sustainable and modern. Carbon emissions from the UK's transport system have decreased. However, these trends are currently not fast enough to meet the UK's 2050 net zero ambition, and transport still accounts for around one-third of our carbon emissions. Furthermore, a recent report ranked the UK's three largest cities as the worst for the affordability of public transport among the EU's 36 largest cities. Despite this, the National Transport Survey found that the UK has relatively high rates of accessibility both in terms of satisfaction with the services provided and the accessibility of transport infrastructure. Additionally, more can be done to encourage and develop active travel approaches in cities.

While the UK generally has a robust system of public participation in planning (Target 11.3), as well as local democratic structures which function to provide transparency, these are largely focused on public consultation rather than priority setting or deeper, more participatory processes. The Royal Town Planning Institute argues austerity has undermined the ability of local authority town planners to serve the public interest. The central Government continues to exercise significant powers and can override local decisions.

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The most recent house price data indicates that housing will have become less affordable again in 2021-22

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The use of the SDGs in the development of planning policy could provide an integrated way of incorporating key aspects of sustainable development in urban planning

This has been particularly true in several instances where central Government has called in and overturned rulings to allow development to happen because of national interests. There is also a lack of data to demonstrate how the rate of land consumption to population growth changes over time and across the UK geographically, one of the key Indicators for Target 11.3 and in understanding disparities in land use planning across the UK. The UK Cities Climate Investment Commission found that for the UK's core cities alone, £206 billion of investment is needed to achieve their net zero pledges.

There is a clear need for sustainable investment sources alongside sustainable planning to make cities efficient and sustainable. Following the inclusion of cities during the discussions around COP26, there is a need to further net zero financing in cities with improved support for cities to access private sector finance. The use of the SDGs in the development of planning policy could provide an integrated way of incorporating key aspects of sustainable development in urban planning. Further funding for local government planning departments would also strengthen the opportunities for meaningful, locally appropriate planning and consultation capacity.

Britain's cultural exports have long outweighed its relatively modest size as a country. However, the UK is currently failing

to protect many of these cultural assets (Target 11.4). Since the last Measuring Up report, UNESCO has stripped Liverpool of its UNESCO heritage status after the UN committee found that developments had threatened the value of the city's waterfront. Funding for natural and cultural heritage has declined, most prominently at the local authority level. Furthermore, funding cuts to local authorities have made it increasingly difficult to maintain key cultural assets, including libraries, museums, and parks. Since 2010, local governments have closed over 800 libraries across the UK due to sharp cuts in local authority funding.

The UK has very low levels of risk in relation to natural hazards (Target 11.5). Despite this, there are severe concerns about the growing risks that heatwaves and flooding will present. The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change AR6 report found that the UK is particularly at risk of increased heat-related human mortality, increased heavy precipitation, and potential heat-induced wildfires. For cities, this is especially important where flooding is more likely and can have a higher impact. Extreme heat is more intense than in surrounding rural areas and can exacerbate air pollution and reduce the functioning of key infrastructure.

Climate risks are further exacerbated in cities if housing quality is poor (Target 11.1) and urban planning systems (Target 11.3) do not consider the urban heat island effect. These risks

CASE STUDY: CITIES OF CULTURE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 11.4

The UK City of Culture is a UK-wide programme, run by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and developed in collaboration with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The competition invites places across the UK to set out their vision for culture-led regeneration every four years. Derry/Londonderry was the inaugural UK City of Culture in 2013, followed by Hull, Coventry, and most recently Bradford for 2025.

The winning city spends the year in the cultural spotlight, telling their local story on a national stage and reaching out to local communities who do not traditionally engage with arts and culture. In Hull, the City of Culture programme was directly responsible for at least £89.3m of investment in the city and contributed to a 9.7% increase in tourism that year. Additionally, more than 5.3 million people, including more than 90% of Hull's residents, attended at least one of the 2800 City of Culture events and activities during 2017.

will also be compounded by wildfires, with recent wildfires following the UK's hottest recorded temperatures causing widespread damage across the UK. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that the impact of these risks is felt hardest by the most socially vulnerable in society (the poorest, youngest, oldest, and those who are disabled). It is also harder for these groups of people to adapt to the growing risks. Work is occurring to improve the UK's infrastructure through a National Resilience Strategy but whether this will occur quickly or comprehensively enough is unclear.

Ensuring the material footprint of cities is reduced is fundamental to making UK cities sustainable (Target 11.6).

Overall, waste volumes across the UK continue to rise despite higher levels of recycling (see also SDG 12). Additionally, a lack of investment in processing capacity across the UK, coupled with plastic and landfill import bans from key UK waste destinations, has meant increased stored waste across the country.

There is a need for the UK to develop a coherent strategy towards a zero waste and circular economy, which ties into the existing work that is occurring in Wales and Scotland. Progress has been made with air pollution as levels have been dropping, though the levels of air pollution still do not meet WHO standards.

CASE STUDY: SEASIDE REGENERATION

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 8.9, 11.5, 13.1

The beach at Colwyn Bay in Wales eroded over time, leaving the seaside town vulnerable to storms and flooding. The local economy relied on tourism, but with fewer visitors each year, levels of unemployment in the town began to grow.

Mott MacDonald designed a coastal defence project which included rebuilding the promenade and replenishing the beach with 1Mt of dredged sand to protect 200 properties and road and rail infrastructure from flooding, while also creating a new amenity which has reinvigorated the area.

The project focused on the delivery of social, cultural, economic, and environmental outcomes. Students from a local university prepared concept designs for parts of the promenade, one of which was selected and built; the student is now employed by a local architecture business.

A new watersports centre and restaurant provide ongoing employment for local residents. The project used discarded paving from other council projects in the construction to reduce carbon emissions.

CASE STUDY: TRANSFORMING NEIGHBOURHOODS

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 11.2, 11.7, 11.a

Funded by the Scottish Government, Sustrans Scotland's Street Design Programme is an award-winning design and engagement service, empowering communities to transform their neighbourhoods to create streets and urban spaces that are liveable and safer for people to move around independently. Their ultimate goal is to create communities where people are healthier and happier.

The programme has already helped transform four streets in Dumfries, a town in the south west of Scotland, into a vibrant and high-quality space for people to enjoy, walk and cycle through. The team at Sustrans collaborated with the local community at each stage of the project to deliver the community's vision for their local area. Through local community group DG1 Neighbours, it engaged local residents, businesses, and schools to help with the aspirations and inclusive design of the project.

National data on access to green spaces (Target 11.7) shows that over 90% of the UK population are within 900m of a green space or public park garden or playing field, and over 50% of the population are within 300m. However, it is not possible to tell from the existing data what variations there are within the quality and safety of these spaces, which are key to understanding whether the UK is meeting Target 11.7.

Synergies and coherence

Cities are fundamentally concentrations of people and contain high levels of both poverty and wealth (SDG 1). Consequently, the delivery of equal, just, and sustainable cities provides synergies in delivering every other Goal. Targeting action in cities on issues like waste (SDG 12), inequality (SDG 10), consumption, food systems (SDG 2), and climate action (SDG 13) could therefore make or break the delivery of the SDGs.

Local to international dimensions

The flows of waste, pollution, and resources from cities have regional, national, and international consequences. Because cities cluster production and people, their outputs have profound implications on national and international sustainability ambitions. Many of the issues and synergies that SDG 11 has with delivering other Goals (described above) that have local to international dimensions have the potential to help deliver the Goals not only in UK cities but also around the world. Further to SDG 11, details on the role that cities and local governments play in delivering the entire SDG Agenda can be found in Part 2 of this report.

Recommendations

1. Following the success of incorporating the voice of cities in the COP26 declaration and the UK Cities Climate Investment Commission, the Government should further support local authorities with financial support. Accessing private sector finance would help to further deliver on decarbonising cities and ensure that the voice of cities is represented in international discussions.
2. Action is needed to decarbonise the UK's housing stock. This will help to tackle fuel poverty, improve housing adequacy, and deliver on multiple other SDG ambitions.
3. Widescale retrofit and insulation programmes would be a cost-effective and efficient way to improve the quality of UK housing, tackle the cost-of-living crisis and reduce our national carbon emissions.
4. Government and local councils must work together to ensure the number of cities in breach of WHO targets on air pollution is drastically reduced. This should use an appropriate mixture of regulations and incentives while also ensuring that it is not the poorest who pay for the transition away from polluting vehicles and industries.
5. More holistic support is required for vulnerable communities in the UK who suffer from a disproportionate risk of harm from climate-related hazards and weather events such as flooding, the health impact of poor air quality, and the increasing challenges from heatwaves and wildfires.
6. The Government should support incorporating the SDGs into local planning frameworks. This will improve intercity collaboration and allow UK cities to learn from one another while providing a common language for public, private, and third sector engagement in local government action.
7. Support coordinated local action by stabilising city finances and supporting local partnership-building with dedicated resources.

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Prepared by:

GCU
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Introduction

Sustainable consumption and production has risen up the agenda for the UK public, as a result of the 'Attenborough effect' and organisations such as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation highlighting the scale of plastic pollution. Large businesses are focusing on their environmental and social impacts, with SDG 12 being a priority Goal for both FTSE100 and FTSE250 companies.

However, public awareness of the SDGs in the UK remains low in comparison to other developed nations and despite positive moves against some of the SDG 12 Targets, there remains an unwillingness to commit to simply producing and consuming less. Furthermore, inconsistencies in reporting, tax and investment loopholes, and a plateauing of recycling rates threaten the UK's ability to achieve SDG 12 by 2030.

As a member of the G7, the world's sixth largest economy, a top five tourist destination, and one of the world's most popular study destinations, the UK has potential to influence policy and leadership on SDG 12 not just domestically, but also internationally. The UK hosted COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, giving it a global platform upon which to set out its agendas, including the establishment of Task Force Net Zero and commitments to support a green recovery.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

12.1	Implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries.	🟠
12.2	By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.	🟠
12.3	By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.	🟢
12.4	By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.	🟠
12.5	By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.	🟠
12.6	Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.	🟠
12.7	Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities.	🟢
12.8	By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.	🟠
12.a	Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.	⚫

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

12.c Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities.

Key findings

1. Sustainable consumption and production is being integrated within national and regional legislation, as well as sector-level guidance.

2. The UK has slightly exceeded the annual improvement needed to halve per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030.

3. Almost nine in ten UK households are 'regularly' recycling, however, UK consumption levels continue to exceed planetary boundaries. Despite progress in recyclable materials, the UK still uses five million tonnes of plastic every year, nearly half of which is packaging.

4. Mandatory measures now require large UK companies to disclose climate-related financial information and set out detailed public plans for how they will move to a low-carbon future.

5. 87 of the FTSE 100 companies now provide sustainability information in annual reports. Over four-fifths of these businesses actively support the SDGs with a significant rise in support for SDG 12, making it the Goal most consistently and widely reported on.

6. Domestic tourism presents some opportunities to address SDG 12 along with other SDGs, but sustainability is largely missing from current tourism plans.

Performance and progress

There is no unified approach to achieving the SDG 12 Targets across the national and local governments. Despite this, there are positive signs that sustainable consumption and production is being integrated within national and regional legislation as well as sector-level guidance. Although the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published in November 2020, does not include the term "responsible consumption", it does set out a plan for net zero framed as a "Green Industrial Revolution". The 2018 Resources and waste strategy for England (RWS) combines actions and policy commitments in the immediate and long-term in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan pledging to use resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently.

The 2019 Global Resource Initiative (GRI) was established to ensure the UK's global commodity supply chain footprint is sustainable, avoids deforestation and other environmental degradation, and supports livelihoods and investment in resilient and sustainable food systems.

Since leaving the EU, material footprint for the UK can no longer be estimated using the Eurostat approach. However, the UK has maintained and even extended targets in some areas and engages with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns ("10YFP", see Target 12.1). The UK Industrial Strategy commits the UK to raising R&D investment to 2.4% of GDP to "help bring down the cost of the net zero transition, nurture the development of better products and new business models, and influence consumer behaviour".

City-level monitoring is particularly important since, according to the OECD, almost two-thirds of global energy, 80% of greenhouse gas emissions, and half of global waste emanates from cities.

There are positive signs that sectors are extending voluntary agreements related to SDG 12. These include the Waste and Resources Action Programme's (WRAP) Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP) and the Sustainable Beauty Coalition which is working through the British Beauty Council Roadmap. The proportion of the public concerned about food waste has risen

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Overall, WRAP reports that, assuming current rates of progress are maintained, the UK is on a trajectory to meet Target 12.3

from 42% in 2010 to 51% in 2018 (Target 12.3). This concern is well placed. According to the most recent WRAP report, the UK produced around 9.5 million tonnes of food waste in 2018, although encouragingly this is a 15% reduction from 2007. WRAP estimated households were responsible for 70% of this waste with 16% coming from manufacturers, 12% from hospitality and food service, and the remaining from the retail industry.

The UK has appointed a Food Surplus and Waste Champion and published a Food Waste Reduction Roadmap for the food sector, as well as having updated the strategies contained within the Food surplus and waste hierarchy in 2021. According to a progress report published in 2020, 261 organisations have committed to the Roadmap, including 16 retailers, 162 producers/manufacturers, and 35 hospitality and food service businesses.

Representing its largest material category in waste stream and residual waste, England commits to halving global food waste at consumer and retail levels by 2030. The voluntary Courtauld Commitment 2030 agreement targets reductions in food waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and water stress covering the entire UK food chain from farm-to-fork.

Scotland's Food Waste Reduction Action Plan (developed with Zero Waste Scotland) introduced a target to reduce food waste by 33% (from a 2013 baseline) by 2025: this was the

first such target in Europe. Wales conducts weekly food waste collections from 99% of its households. Wales was the first administration in the UK to introduce a landfill allowances scheme to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill. Their circular economy strategy Beyond Recycling targets a 50% reduction in avoidable food waste by 2025, 60% by 2030, and zero waste by 2050. In response to Northern Ireland's 2015 Food Waste Regulations, there are reported increases in rates of reuse, recycling, or composting of household waste. Overall, WRAP reports that, assuming current rates of progress are maintained, the UK is on a trajectory to meet Target 12.3.

The UK Government committed in its 25 Year Environment Plan to making sure that chemicals are safely used and managed, and that the levels of harmful chemicals entering the environment (including through agriculture) are significantly reduced (Target 12.4). Manufacturing industries often have complex supply chains crossing UK-EU borders multiple times. Commercial and industrial activities are consistently the largest source of hazardous waste and guidance on managing hazardous waste and potentially harmful chemicals aligns with various international multilateral environmental agreements.

The Government's Clean Growth Strategy defined the aim of zero avoidable waste as eliminating all waste where it is, "technologically, environmentally and economically practicable

CASE STUDY: A CENTRAL ROLE FOR RE-USE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 8.3, 8.4, 12.5

SUEZ's most ambitious re-use strategy is currently being rolled out in Greater Manchester through its development of a central re-use hub, which is equipped with repair pods, storage and skills training areas, and space for hosting community events.

As part of a partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the hub serves a network of re-use shops which renew the value of household items, through cleaning and repairs, to reduce the number of wasted household items. The shops enable SUEZ to provide affordable goods to

residents and create green employment opportunities. All sales proceeds go back to the community through the Greater Manchester Mayor's Charity and the Recycle for Greater Manchester Community Fund.

SUEZ operates across the UK and its re-use activities, including 29 re-use shops, resulted in the diversion of 2,000 tonnes and more than 418,000 items in 2021. In Greater Manchester alone, an estimated 600 tonnes of waste will be diverted to reuse each year, supporting the city-region's target to be carbon neutral by 2038.

to do so, [while] working to support innovation in new materials, products and processes that extend the range of materials covered by this categorisation".

The recycling rate for most material categories has risen significantly. Aluminium, steel, glass, and plastic have all seen substantially increased recycling rates. However, this is somewhat negated by reduced levels of recycling for paper and cardboard (which represent the most common material category for packaging), and wood. The significant growth in the amount of paper/board packaging placed on the market without a corresponding increase in the amount treated means the total recycling rate for packaging material has risen from just 61% in 2012 to 62% in 2020. Furthermore, whereas treatment of glass mostly occurs within the UK, the majority of the recycling for paper and cardboard treatment takes place overseas, adding to the UK's footprint.

Of the 22.1 million tonnes of household recycling collected in 2019, nearly half was recycled, composted, or prepared for reuse. Despite almost nine in ten UK households saying that they "regularly" recycle, nearly as many (85%) also say that they are putting one or more items in the recycling bin that are not accepted locally, with plastics being a category that many are mistakenly "wishcycling". Consumers remain confused about recycling symbols and there is an inconsistent provision of services including, for example, kerbside collection.

There has been rising public concern about consumption of single-use plastics. The Government introduced a ban on the sale of plastic microbeads in 2018. This was followed in 2020 with a ban on plastic drinking straws, stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds. Having previously announced a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in England (and possibly UK-wide) for single-use drinks containers in 2018, this has subsequently

CASE STUDY: RECYKE Y'BIKE!

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 12.5

Based in Northeast England, Recyke y'bike is a charity that specialises in refurbishing donated bikes and selling them at reasonable prices to fund their projects, which centre around advancing public health and education towards cycling.

Unwanted bikes are saved from landfill and then refurbished by a team of volunteers who are supported by professional mechanics. The bikes are then either sold or

given away to groups in need including schools, community groups, and individuals on low incomes such as refugees and people seeking asylum.

Of the approximately 5,000 bikes that get donated every year, around 2,500 get refurbished and go on to have a second, third, or even fourth life. The bikes that can't be saved are recycled: the charity separates the components and different metals so that nothing gets wasted.

" There is a risk that we become complacent and fail to make significant changes to total consumption levels

been delayed until at least 2024. The UK's first DRS will launch in Scotland in 2023.

The UK Plastics Pact is the first of a global network of Pacts enabled by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy initiative bringing together businesses from across the entire plastics value chain with UK governments and NGOs to tackle plastic waste. Their Annual Report 2020/21 shows a 46% reduction in problematic and unnecessary plastic items since 2018, with 70% of plastic packaging now reusable or recyclable. Just over half (52%) of plastic packaging is recycled, up from 44% in 2018, and the average for recycled content has doubled to 18% (Target 12.5).

There is, however, a popular misconception that all products made from recycled materials are circular. On the contrary, when plastic bottles are recycled into clothing, the plastic is removed from circular recycling loops and under current conditions the clothes are sent to incinerators or landfills.

Although a focus on recycling is necessary to achieve SDG 12, there is a risk that we become complacent and fail to make significant changes to total consumption levels. Without addressing these, the UK will continue to overconsume beyond planetary boundaries. The UK's material footprint has been on a general downwards trajectory with current levels at nearly half of the 1990 figure, placing the UK among the lowest of the OECD countries. However, the UK is increasingly a net importer of materials. Where domestic extraction accounted for 40% of the UK's material footprint in 1997, this fell to 27% by 2018.

Ahead of COP26, the Government set out a plan to green the financial system to align with the UK's net zero commitment. Large UK firms and financial institutions will be required, by 2023, to set out detailed public plans for how they will move to a low-carbon future (Target 12.6). This is undoubtedly a positive move, although it does not guarantee that those plans are implemented.

Nevertheless, large companies now also have to disclose climate-related financial information on a mandatory basis. Of the FTSE 100 companies, 87 provide sustainability information in annual reports – this is the highest figure in Europe and the second highest in the G10 behind Japan (96%). Positively, most of these companies are working with their supply chains on environmental and social issues, and over four-fifths (83%) actively support the SDGs with a significant rise in support for SDG 12 (49% since 2018). It is important that this extends to SMEs and that, across the board, the SDGs are used for more than communicating current practices. Further analysis and recommendations for business can be found in Part 3 of this report.

The RWS highlights the Government's role in procurement practices which aim for sustainability, encompassing environment and social issues (Target 12.7). National and local governments are increasingly focused on circularity, zero waste, and social impact. While this is certainly to be commended, aspirations must be met with KPIs, targets, and regular reporting in order to assess progress.

Training and education are essential to achieving SDG 12 (Target 12.8) and are covered in our SDG 4 and SDG 13

CASE STUDY: CUTTING FOOD WASTE FOR THE FUTURE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 12.3

In 2020, the Government announced £1.15 million of funding to tackle food waste in households and supply chains. The funding will be separated into two small-scale grants, the Citizen Food Waste Prevention Grant worth £650,000 targeted at SME businesses and not-for-profit organisations, and the Value from Food pilot project grant, worth £500,000 and open for organisations of any size.

The new grants are one of the latest steps in the Government's drive to reduce food waste in the UK by 20% by 2025 and form part of a wider £15 million scheme to specifically address surplus food from the retail and manufacturing sectors.

chapters. Although many still lack the information and awareness to implement sustainable consumption and production behaviours in their lifestyles, climate change and sustainability issues are increasingly covered by some, but not all, sections of the mainstream print and broadcast media.

Tourism and natural landscapes are part of the UK's country brand, and provide opportunities for the redistribution of economic activity and wealth from urban to rural and seaside areas, alongside opportunities to advance SDG 12. The Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism included sustainable development as the core planning principle, but this has been revoked and sustainability is largely missing from the current Tourism Recovery Plan (Target 12.b). Both Scotland and Wales have identified sustainable tourism as growth sectors that deliver positive impacts on SDG 12 and people and places more generally through environmental sustainability, social and cultural enrichment, and health benefits.

Synergies and coherence

There is a need to address wealth disparity in consumption (SDG 10). The charity retail sector is an example of a successful large-scale resale market. WRAP reported that two-thirds of people donate their used clothing to charity and, with estimates that the global resale market is growing at a rate 11 times faster than traditional retail, this has an important role to play in reducing poverty (SDG 1) as well as advancing SDG 12.

Job creation (SDG 8) and well-being issues (SDG 3) should be added to sustainable consumption and production narratives. Education (SDG 4) is also critical to achieving SDG 12 – the fact that consumers are generally unaware of their rights to repair is one example which highlights the importance of education. SDG 12 is also undermined when the costs of new products are significantly lower than repairing existing ones or when those services cannot be sourced (SDG 9).

Local to international dimensions

In 2021, Glasgow was the first UK city to sign the Circular Cities Declaration accelerating the transition from a linear to a circular economy and the creation of a resource-efficient, low-carbon, and socially responsible society. Leeds is also working towards becoming a circular city by 2030. City-level monitoring is particularly important for SDG 12 and it will be difficult to achieve the SDG if material footprint continues to be measured at UK-level with no breakdown available for local authorities, or even for the constituent nations.

Across SDG 12 Targets, the UK has roles in a series of global initiatives and networks. On prevention and management, it has roles in forums such as the Champions 12.3 group, the G20, and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The UK is participating in the OECD's Environment, Health and Safety Programme developing tools and guidance to be used

by regulatory agencies and industry in assessing chemical safety. The UK is a signatory of the G7 Ocean Plastic Charter, committing over £55 million to drive a more resource-efficient management of plastics across their lifecycle. The UK is on the Advisory and Steering Committee for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Consumer Information Programme and is a member of the 10YFP Western Europe and Others Regional Group and the G7 Alliance for Resource Efficiency.

Recommendations

1. Move away from weight-based towards impact-based targets and reporting, grounded in a consistent, specific definition of what achieving SDG 12 requires for the UK domestically and internationally.
2. Common metrics and reporting standards would lower the implementation costs of sustainability practices. Country-wide standardisation should be aligned with the responsibilities of central and local government, the devolved administrations, civil society, and business.
3. Introduce funding, infrastructure, and tax incentives to encourage more sustainable products and practices alongside regulations and tax penalties to deter unsustainable ones.
4. The Government should support onshoring of manufacture and invest in infrastructure and technologies for local recycling, including of complex materials.
5. The Government should extend the mandatory climate-related financial disclosures beyond just the UK's largest companies.
6. Businesses should embed circular economy principles within procurement and product development processes.
7. Educate businesses and consumers to increase repair and recycling rates. Implement policy to educate and help the wider population make sustainable and ethical consumption choices.
8. Establish a cross-departmental group working across the Department for Transport, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs to review needs of rural and seaside destinations and suggest initiatives to enhance sustainable tourism, reduce social exclusion, and support rural and seaside economies.
9. The UK should begin reporting against the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST), recognised by the UN as the main tool for monitoring the contribution of tourism to the SDG Agenda.

13 CLIMATE ACTION

CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Prepared by:

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Introduction

The Government has made significant progress since 2018 in terms of increasing the scale and scope of its climate change ambitions. Notable actions include setting a legally binding net zero target in 2019, submitting stronger nationally determined contributions (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) under the Paris Agreement, and publishing its 'Net Zero Strategy' (Indicator 13.2.1).

However, the UK risks exceeding its upcoming Carbon Budgets and failing to meet broader climate-related commitments.

While acknowledging the progress made, the Government is not on track and, in some cases, the data is lacking to assess progress on achieving SDG 13 as expressed in its six key Indicators. With the impacts of climate change becoming more severe, the need for urgent action has increased exponentially, and the associated costs and challenges have become greater than if mitigation action had been taken earlier.

If the UK is to meet its climate action-related targets, it must overcome multiple risk areas.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET | RATING

	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET	RATING
13.1	Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.	⚪
13.2	Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.	🟠
13.3	Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.	🟠
13.a	Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible.	⚫
13.b	Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing states, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.	⚫

Key findings

1. The Government has made significant progress since 2018 in increasing both the scale and scope of its efforts to tackle climate change. This includes setting a legally binding net zero target in 2019 and publishing its Net Zero Strategy. However, the UK is at risk of exceeding its upcoming carbon budgets and not meeting its broader climate-related commitments.

2. There are policy and delivery gaps within key areas, including transport, heat and buildings, and education.

3. The Government's approach to planning and funding its climate ambitions often has a short-term focus. This has hindered its ability to drive and incentivise actions to combat climate change.

4. Issues around policy and strategy coherence as well as implementation alignment have been identified both across levels of government and across sectors. This raises concerns that opportunities for coordination, for example between renewable energy and low-carbon building initiatives, are being missed and it reduces the likelihood that trade-offs are limited and managed appropriately.

5. Making meaningful progress on combating climate change relies on robust and comprehensive data. However, there are significant data gaps that currently hinder our understanding and monitoring of climate change.

6. Climate action cannot be measured or conceptualised as a solely national issue. The UK has the opportunity to demonstrate international leadership, but it can only do so by fulfilling its domestic commitments and recognising its interconnections with others.

Performance and progress

National policies, strategies, and planning

Although the Government has published its 'Net Zero Strategy', which articulates for the first time how it plans to achieve net zero by 2050, important policy and delivery gaps persist. Significantly, the strategy has recently been found to be in breach of the Climate Change Act by the High Court for lacking detailed climate policies that demonstrate how the UK's carbon budgets will be met. This section highlights these policy gaps using examples from the transportation and heat and buildings sectors, as well as considering the current state of the economic context, data, and education for SDG 13. The highlighted examples do not diminish the importance of taking action in other sectors – from land management to food systems – to address climate change.

Transport is the highest emitting sector in the UK. The rapid roll-out of electric vehicles (EVs) for both private use and public transport is essential to transport decarbonisation, as is emphasised in the Government's latest Transport Decarbonisation Plan. However, as the Government has acknowledged, there is scope for further action to reduce reliance on private car travel. The transition to EVs alone does not address the expected increase in traffic with its associated emissions and risks locking in car dependency. To decarbonise the transport sector, the transition to EVs should be coordinated with reducing overall transport demand through improved access to affordable public transport, shared modes of transportation and active travel options, as well as greening electricity generation (Indicator 13.2.2).

A second example is the buildings sector. The Government published its Heat and Buildings Strategy, outlining the UK's approach to reducing emissions from heating buildings. This has been criticised for its lack of comprehensive plans and significant delivery risks. For example, the Government committed to installing 600,000 heat pumps annually by 2028, but there are no clear plans on how to achieve this. The Government has been strongly encouraged to provide a coherent policy environment to transition to domestic low-carbon heat. This includes publishing a roadmap for low-

> ## "
> ## The rapid roll-out of electric vehicles for both private use and public transport is essential to transport decarbonisation

CASE STUDY: COLLECTIVE CLIMATE ACTION

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 12.6, 13.2, 13.3

Forster Communications is leading the way for SMEs, recognising that in addition to cutting emissions themselves, albeit on their relatively small carbon footprint, they have significant leverage and influence as a supplier and a buyer.

In January 2020, Forster launched their Climate Positive Plan and were the first communications agency to include their whole value chain – employees, clients, and suppliers – and the wider community in their plans. By March 2022, 98% of their suppliers had made a commitment to achieving net zero through Scopes 1 and 2 emissions by 2030, and this is on track to be 100% in the coming year.

Forster are helping their clients improve their climate performance and building a portfolio so that from April 2023 they will only work with clients who have publicly committed to reducing their emissions.

By choosing to have conversations with clients and encouraging action, the number of clients with emission reduction targets has increased from 37% to 52% over the last year, and the organisation is on track to reach 100% in the coming months.

carbon heat technologies, as well as coordinating with other policy areas such as energy efficiency upgrades, upskilling of workers, and adequate financial support schemes. Concurrently, enabling increased public participation and engagement is a crucial element of low-carbon policies and technologies, "ensuring these urgent transitions are just, democratic, and publicly accountable".

The broader macroeconomic and financial context of Government policy-making does not currently facilitate the changes required to tackle climate change. For example, there is still an emphasis on using existing financial models which promote 'market-based' approaches and wider resistance when it comes to engaging with the longer-term investments needed for net zero transitions. Looking at finance, tackling climate change requires patient, long-term strategic public finance to direct and shape new zero-carbon markets as part

of the green transition. The Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB), established in 2017 by the Scottish Government, with support from the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP), is an example of a National Investment Bank created to take a long-term view by providing patient finance over ten years to new firms and technologies across three mission areas, including climate action.

The Government continues, however, to follow a short-termist approach to planning and funding its climate ambitions, hindering its ability to drive significant actions to tackle climate change. An illustrative example is the HM Treasury's 'Green Book', which provides an evaluative framework for "measuring and comparing future costs and benefits with those that arise today". A discount rate is applied to future benefits and costs, which favours benefits generated now over those realised in the longer-term, disincentivising spending in risk management.

CASE STUDY: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 8.2, 8.3, 9.4, 13.2

The Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme, operated by the Department for Transport (DfT), provided £270 million of investment between 2021-2022 to help local transport authorities (LTAs), outside London, introduce zero-emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

The funding supported 1,278 zero-emission buses across 17 LTAs and is part of the wider National Bus Strategy for buses to be both tools of inclusion and the transport of choice.

Working together and funded by the ZEBRA scheme, City of York Council and First Bus have ordered 44 Electric Vehicle buses, part of a total of 193 nationally in one of the largest zero-emission bus orders outside of London. These are expected to begin arriving in the city in 2023, in addition to the 21 double-decker electric buses already operating on their Park and Ride fleet. The new buses will more than treble the number of electric buses in use in the York area, helping to reduce York's carbon footprint and improve air quality across the city. The buses will save nearly 2,700 tonnes of CO_2 every year and secure green jobs across the UK.

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Climate adaptation must be integrated across all sectors, particularly in the land sector and infrastructure

Moving forward, the Green Book's cost-benefit framework and in-built incentives must favour long-term future preparedness over short-termism (Indicator 13.1.2).

Finally, on adaptation, the Government has failed to keep pace with the required actions, despite the benefits of long-term investment in risk reduction – and particularly in climate adaptation measures – substantially outweighing the short-term costs. Climate adaptation must be integrated across all sectors, particularly in the land sector and infrastructure, to ensure the UK is resilient to a warming world. In its latest Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Government accepted that adaptation must be "mainstreamed" across government policy in a "much more holistic way", which includes accounting for synergies between adaptation and mitigation. Mitigation solutions should integrate suitable adaptation measures if they are to be successful (e.g., an increasingly electrified power system that is resilient to a warmer climate; Target 13.1 and Indicator 13.2.1)

Furthermore, effective national and local resilience strategies and implementation depend on cohesiveness, yet current approaches are fragmented, as indicated in both the CCC's Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk (2021) and the House of Lords 2021 report Preparing for Extreme Risks: Building a Resilient Society. Both reviews found inconsistent and piecemeal adaptation planning across Government (Target 13.1).

For greater cohesiveness, introducing a robust net zero test, as recommended by a range of organisations, would enable all government departments to use a common methodology

when designing and implementing policies to ensure alignment and coherence. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommends two broad approaches for a net zero test: assessing the consistency with the net zero pathway as part of all policy-making processes, and considering the lower-carbon options wherever possible, as well as the publication of a regular assessment of the overall emissions impact of fiscal decision-making against the Net Zero Strategy (Indicator 13.2.1).

Data gaps

Meaningful progress on climate change relies on robust and comprehensive data. However, there are significant data gaps which currently hinder our understanding of climate change. For instance, for Indicator 13.1.1, data available from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) tracks the number of deaths from disasters, but it does not currently provide clear information on missing persons or persons affected by disasters.

The 2018 Measuring Up report assessment of the primary risks facing the UK from climate-related hazards rings true, particularly in light of the recent extreme UK heatwave: "Heat-related deaths and flooding are projected to increase and pose the highest direct climate change-related risks to the UK population and infrastructure, with the poorest being most vulnerable to these impacts." Recent global examples of devastating flooding in South Africa and the intense heatwave in Europe bring into focus the unpredictable nature of such threats. Measuring the effects from natural disasters beyond merely tracking mortality numbers will aid preparation for climate-related hazards in the UK.

CASE STUDY: THE GLOBAL GOALS CENTRE, BRISTOL

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 4.7, 12.8, 13.3

The Global Goals Centre is a Bristol-based education charity that creates engaging experiences that inspire learning and action on climate and equality in everyday lives. Being inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals, they work with multiple partners to promote creative solutions and deliver inspiring educational projects.

Their Groundbreakers project, for example, is a competition across greater Bristol to inspire and equip young people to take action in their schools and colleges for climate and social justice. Currently, the charity is working to create the world's first immersive visitor centre in Bristol that brings the SDGs to life, taking visitors on an interactive journey to inspire and motivate change.

Additionally, according to Indicator 13.1.3, the national and local resilience strategies should be aligned with the Sendai Framework. The only government department that showed clear alignment was Public Health England, which has now been replaced by UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Other government departments or units and local authorities or devolved governments may also be aligned; however, without suitable data, it is not possible to assess this. The UK Government has the opportunity to use its UK data for the Sustainable Development Goals platform (maintained by ONS) to create up-to-date, comprehensive data dashboards on risk, resilience strategy alignment across departments and local authorities, and progress on net zero targets.

Education
Target 13.3 focuses on the education sector. While the impacts of climate change can already be felt globally, "the decisions taken now on climate action will most affect today's young people", who need to be equipped with knowledge about the mechanisms, challenges, and solutions to climate change if they are to be empowered to engage with it effectively.

The UK national curriculum has insufficient focus on climate action. For example, despite progress through the inclusion of the Natural History GCSE, the latest UK National Strategy on Sustainability and Climate Education remains focused on teaching climate change in a "traditional" manner, within the curricula of sciences and geography. Climate change is interdisciplinary and therefore, climate change education should be embedded across all phases and subjects, using an interdisciplinary approach, to enable pupils to develop and adopt systems thinking.

The strategy offers little strategic guidance for UK higher education institutions. However, there are opportunities for the UK higher education institutions to provide national and global leadership in this space through advancing research, teaching, and new policy ideas on climate change. Addressing gaps in climate education is a complex area that requires long-term policy development, including adequate funding and training, if the education system is to respond adequately to climate change.

Synergies and coherence
Looking at the energy and buildings sectors as an example, there is a clear synergy between energy efficiency, energy security, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions that is not being capitalised on by the Government, as evidenced by departments pursuing contradictory objectives (SDG 7 and SDG 9). It remains unclear if the current geopolitical focus on energy security could accelerate the expansion and adoption of renewable energy sources, or if this will result in reliance on fossil fuels for longer than planned in the name of energy security.

The latter is apparent in the latest 'British Energy Security Strategy', which includes increasing oil and gas production from the North Sea and exploring new attempts at fracking. Continued reliance on gas aligns with energy security aims, but it is not compatible with achieving net zero. Concurrently, the strategy sets no new commitments or fresh funding to improve the energy efficiency of the UK housing stock. Some funding has been committed to energy efficiency improvements, particularly for "fuel poor" homes, but there is potential for much more robust support for social housing as well as owner-occupied homes and private rented properties (SDG 1 and SDG 11).

Local to international dimensions

On the national to local dimension, 30% of emission reductions will depend on actions involving local authorities; however, the partnership between local and central government lacks a coherent framework to support the delivery of net zero, a gap that is amplified by inadequate resourcing, capacity, and capability (Indicators 13.2.1, 13.1.3). Against this need for local government action, the 'austerity' economic and fiscal policies since 2010, amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, have created a challenging context. Grants to local authorities have been reduced by £18.6bn (in 2019/20 prices) between 2009/10 and 2019/20, a 63% reduction in real terms. According to the Local Government Association (LGA), funding is the overwhelming issue in relation to tackling climate change for most councils (Indicator 13.1.2).

Climate action is also an international issue. The Government has made international legal and moral commitments to address the climate crisis, but these involve overcoming significant challenges. For instance, the UN Refugee Agency's COP26 Key Messages and Calls To Action highlights the growing reality of climate change driving displacement and migration. Therefore, domestic resilience strategies and policy formulation must anticipate increased migration levels to the UK as a less climate-vulnerable location (Indicator 13.1.2).

The UK has significant global trade ties. Claims regarding the UK's success in decarbonising its economy are normally made in reference to its territorial emissions. However, this excludes the UK's consumption-based emissions and Scope 3 emissions. UK international trade deals should include climate-related risks and their quantified impact on its overall consumption footprint to ensure its global trade footprint is reduced and domestic decarbonisation efforts are not undermined (Indicator 13.2.2).

More broadly, the UK should voluntarily increase transparency in tracking and communicating progress on a consumption basis to encourage focus on demand reduction, material circularity, and resource efficiency, to reduce embodied emissions in imported goods. This could also feed into the UK's industrial strategy.

Climate change is an issue that must be tackled by strong domestic action and a keen awareness of its international dimension. The UK holds the COP Presidency until November 2022 and should work with Egypt, host of COP27, to ensure momentum is maintained in relation to the commitments outlined in the COP26 Glasgow Climate Pact. The UK can demonstrate leadership on the international stage by following through on its domestic commitments and by creating truly cohesive and integrated approaches to combating and preparing for climate change. (Indicator 13.2.1)

Recommendations

1. The Government should take a more proactive role and set the strategic direction to accelerate the green transition required across all sectors, to reach net zero by 2050. It can use its unique position and tools, from state investment banks to industrial strategy, to shape the transition.
2. Policy gaps must be closed in key areas, including transport, heat and buildings, education, and skills.
3. A net zero test would enable all government departments to use a common methodology when designing and implementing policies to ensure these are in line with net zero aims. Significant prototyping work has already been completed by WWF UK.
4. Review systems that promote short-termism; for example, the cost-benefit framework of the Green Book. Incentives built into the system should favour long-term future preparedness, rather than short-termism.
5. The Government should use its UK data for the Sustainable Development Goals platform to create up-to-date, comprehensive data dashboards on risk, achieve resilience strategy alignment across departments and local authorities, and progress on net zero targets.
6. As the COP Presidency holder until November 2022, the UK should work with Egypt, host of COP27, to ensure momentum is maintained following the COP26 Glasgow Climate Pact, while following through on its domestic commitments.

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Climate change is an issue that must be tackled by strong domestic action and a keen awareness of its international dimension

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

LIFE BELOW WATER

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Prepared by:

MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Introduction

The UK has 17,820km of mainland coastline and the widest range of marine habitats of any coastal waters in Europe. Our marine environment supports the economy with crucial jobs, seafood, and raw materials. But from seabirds and marine mammals at the top of the marine food web to plankton at the bottom, there have been large spatial and temporal changes in species' abundance and distribution in UK seas in recent decades.

Fishing, pollution, and climate change are increasing pressure on marine ecosystems. We are amidst a nature and climate emergency, and evidence shows that ocean health is vital if we are to successfully address both. Industries operating in and around our oceans have a vital role to play in tackling climate change and contributing to the goal of net zero carbon emissions. In the face of such threats, action is needed urgently if the UK is to even get close to meeting its obligations under SDG 14.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET	RATING
14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.	🟠
14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.	🟠
14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels.	🟠
14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.	🟠
14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.	🟠
14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation.	🟢
14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.	⚪
14.a Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing states and least developed countries.	⚪
14.b Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.	🟠
14.c Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of "The future we want".	⚪

Key findings

1. Despite leaving the EU and creating ambitious new UK legislation, recovery of UK fish stocks remains a challenge, with almost a third of stocks overfished and a similar amount lacking the monitoring required to truly determine their status.

2. The UK has now designated over 30% of its seas as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Despite this progress, management remains absent for most sites, and in some UK areas, the legal protection underpinning these sites is now at risk.

3. Marine pollution remains a concern. Macroplastic levels remain considerably higher than the threshold value required to achieve Good Environmental Status. Microplastics and harmful chemicals have very limited monitoring, and persistent pollutants continue to increase due to a lack of legislation.

4. The role of blue carbon in the fight against climate change has now been recognised globally through the COP26, for which the UK was president, and progress is being made to determine how and where best to protect these carbon sinks.

Performance and progress

Novel entities, including chemicals and plastics, have exceeded the safe operating space in the planetary boundaries model. UK legislation post-EU exit has not reacted to this level of threat of pollution compared to the EU, leading to persistent pollutants continuing to build up in the environment (Target 14.1).

The UK is currently transposing the chemicals legislation, EU REACH, into UK REACH. However, it is already falling behind more progressive legislation being developed by the EU to protect the environment. This includes restrictions on highly persistent chemicals such as poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) and intentionally added microplastics. Furthermore, the development of a UK Chemicals Strategy has continually stalled, which may be reflective of the level of ambition going forward.

Since 2018, the UK has brought forwards a raft of new policies and legislation to govern the UK's marine area. Some changes

are broadly positive; the UK Fisheries Act, for example, includes objectives to consider the impact of climate change from fishing activity and take steps to minimise it. As the UK seeks to establish its own bespoke governance, there has been a much greater divergence in the application of legislation and policies across the four nations of the UK. Where previously the delivery of marine management across the four administrations shared common goals, the development of new policies is increasingly single-country focused, losing some of the cross-border cooperation as a result.

The Government, responsible for the management of English inshore, offshore, and Northern Irish offshore waters, has replaced the functionality of the European Court of Justice with the newly created Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). Such a step is positive news if the UK is to ensure the protection and improvement of the environment by holding the Government and other public authorities to account. In stark contrast, the direction of policy change indicated from the Government, within both the Levelling Up and Regeneration

CASE STUDY: SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 14.1

Water quality issues remain a major threat to the marine environment, and governments have been slow to act in addressing the improvements required. Despite this, pressure from civil society organisations and their supporters has brought about real change to English seas.

Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) began as a grassroots movement and is now one of the UK's most active and successful environmental charities operating on this issue. Alongside other environmental charities, they have been

instrumental in forcing the Government and water companies operating in England to act with their #EndSewagePollution Campaign. Galvanising public support, the campaign has led to huge impacts on the recent Environment Act.

Surfers Against Sewage's actions demonstrate the power of civil society in bringing about environmental change, playing a vital role in making 98.5% of the 625 designated bathing waters around the UK now classified as excellent, good, or sufficient.

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Commitments to develop new legislation for the management of waste, chemicals, the MPA network, and UK fisheries, while underway, are slow in their delivery

Bill, and Energy Bill which plan to reduce the level of protection afforded by the Habitats Regulations, suggest a weakening of the EU laws that previously regulated English waters. These changes risk undermining not only the level of protection currently afforded to the network of MPAs (Targets 14.2 and 14.5), but also the commitments to achieve Good Environmental Status – a key step in delivering the UK's SDG Targets.

In Scotland, the extent of devolved power enables the Scottish Government to set a new course. Following commitments to remain closely aligned to their EU partners, new policies and laws are being drafted accordingly. In Wales, marine management is devolved to a lesser extent. Where legally possible, fully new methods may be developed through the new Infrastructure Bill, enabling an ecosystem-based approach to be taken. In Northern Ireland, the continued political uncertainty means policy and legal changes for marine management are likely to be delayed or determined by central Government.

Commitments to develop new legislation for the management of waste, chemicals, the MPA network, and UK fisheries, while underway, are slow in their delivery – perhaps partially because of these diverging approaches. Despite the Government holding the joint presidency of COP26 and recently chair of the Commonwealth, where environmental decline was raised as a major concern, prioritisation of environmental restoration has

not received the required level of attention or investment to avoid further degradation.

This is perhaps best demonstrated by the 2019 UK's four administrations' joint report on progress towards their shared ambition of achieving "clean, healthy, safe, productive, biologically diverse oceans and seas" – a goal they have been working towards since 2012 through the UK Marine Strategy. The report showed that – by their own admission – our governments are failing to protect our seas, with only four out of 15 indicators achieving Good Environmental Status.

Overall, there are policies in place under the UK Marine Strategy. However, these are frequently lacking in scope and effectiveness, meaning that progress is slow, if made at all. Particular concern has been raised over the lack of monitoring for contaminants to cover emerging chemicals which have already impacted the marine environment.

While some new legislation has been adopted and has ambitious objectives, like the Fisheries Act, the pace of delivery has been slow. The actions identified in law to address overfishing will not be enacted until at least 2023, three years after the Act was passed into law, and even then will only cover a proportion of UK stocks.

There has been some recent progress to address fishing impacts on MPAs (Targets 14.4 and 14.5). In April 2022,

CASE STUDY: REGULATION TO REGENERATE THE SUSSEX COAST

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETs 14.2, 14.4

The Sussex Nearshore Trawling Byelaw was approved by the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs in 2021. The Byelaw is intended to help safeguard seabed habitats, ensuring sustainable coastal fisheries. Trawling is now banned throughout the year in large areas along the Sussex coast.

The measures also aim to help rewild the seabed by enabling Sussex's once extensive kelp forest to regenerate. The long seaweeds that grow in the forests support

marine wildlife by providing a home for hundreds of species, including important commercial fish species such as bass, black seabream, lobster, and cuttlefish, and working towards halting biodiversity loss.

The kelp forests can also store large quantities of carbon dioxide (carbon sequestration) and reduce coastal erosion by absorbing the power of the waves. The Byelaw strengthens the area's marine resilience and has taken action to achieve healthy and productive oceans.

the Government announced significant restrictions on bottom towed fishing practices within four offshore MPAs in England, most notably including Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation. The remaining 36 English offshore MPAs are due to have measures in place by 2024.

There have been significant steps forward in managing UK seas, with England committed to identify and designate pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) in English waters by the end of 2022. In Scotland, plans are underway to designate at least 10% of Scotland's seas as HPMAs. These will restrict all damaging and extractive activities, prioritising nature recovery by 2026. However, it is important that this momentum is not lost: the wider UK MPA network must also be rapidly reviewed if the UK is to deliver its ambition for at least 30% of seas to be well managed by 2030.

Following their leadership at COP26, the Government has begun to explore the role UK seas can play in addressing the climate change threat, beginning to map blue carbon stocks and sequestration (carbon capture) across UK Seas. The research intends to identify the risks and opportunities from activities which could impact those stocks and future sequestration. In addition, the Government is working to include blue carbon habitats such as saltmarsh and seagrass, which can store large amounts of carbon for many generations, within the UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory. This should open the way for the expansion of investment in marine nature-based

solutions. While progress is steady, these initiatives do take the UK further in recognising the climate relevance of the ocean and should inform management to deliver both climate and SDG commitments.

Opportunities exist in developing a responsible UK market, that uses homegrown aquaculture products, including seaweed, shellfish, and fish, for both human consumption and as alternative animal feeds for the existing domestic livestock and aquacultures market. Moves in this direction could reduce the burden on wild fish stocks, already under significant pressure, and provide lower carbon alternatives to existing animal feed.

Synergies and coherence

SDG 14 is closely interlinked with – and dependent on – almost all the other SDGs, due to many marine pressures arising on land. Pollution, both chemical and plastic, is one of the main drivers of the current biodiversity crisis, and therefore there are links to SDG 12, specifically around chemicals and waste. Pollution and contaminants will impact future food security. Highly persistent pollutants will reduce the availability of safe and sustainable food.

With food security high on the agenda, securing sustainable agriculture and fisheries (SDGs 2, 6 and 12), must have equal priority to ensure food security is delivered in both the short

CASE STUDY: OCEAN RESCUE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGET 14.1

Sky launched the Ocean Rescue campaign to increase awareness of the significant challenge of plastic waste in the oceans. As of 2020, Sky has eliminated single-use plastics from their products and operations. The company also invested via the Sky Ocean Ventures Fund in start-ups with solutions to reduce single-use plastics.

Sky's campaign also engaged 'hard to reach markets' such as sporting events and organisations. Sky supported the

Premier League to launch their climate and ocean health topic as part of their schools programme and worked with a number of clubs in the Premier League to remove single-use plastics. One such club was Tottenham Hotspur, who worked on the removal of single-use plastic and a zero to landfill waste management programme at their stadium, amongst other measures. The club has since been named the Premier League's 'greenest club'

and long term, and not at the expense of a healthy marine environment.

Combined with existing threats, climate change will increase pressure on our ocean. Rapid deployment of clean energy (SDG 7) to address climate change (SDG 13) must be underpinned by good governance, and developments at sea delivered in a nature-positive way. Recent developments such as commitments to 'net gain' for the marine environment in England, which is particularly relevant with the planned significant expansion of offshore wind, hold potential for a 'win-win' for climate and environment if appropriately applied.

Local to international dimensions

With the UK's new position outside the EU, international cooperation has become even more crucial to SDG 14 delivery. In negotiating new trade deals, the UK must consider the impacts of exports, and imports, in the context of SDG 14. UK seafood remains primarily a global export, and much could be done to improve the domestic market to increase sustainable seafood consumption, reduce the carbon footprint of seafood meals and address concerns over food security.

The UK governments will need to support and drive businesses to integrate a fully circular approach. Products must be designed to be free from hazardous chemicals, with any waste becoming a valuable resource, replacing the current system where problematic matter is exported, thereby shifting the pollution problem to other nations.

The UK itself must also step up its action at home to reflect the global role it has played through the Commonwealth, and leadership shown through COP26, by acting to resource the restoration and management of its own seas.

Recommendations

1. The governments of the UK must set robust strategies for the recovery of the sea area, detailing what success looks like, with clear milestones and deliverables to achieve by 2030.
2. Level up the Marine Protected Area network – striving to make the entire network legally robust and well-managed by 2030, avoiding reduction of protection already afforded.
3. Underpin truly world-leading solutions to the challenges of pollution and developing a circular economy by drawing on the ambition and experience of European counterparts.
4. The governments of the UK should develop a blue carbon strategy to restore and protect blue carbon sinks, tackle the carbon-intensive nature of the seafood industry, and remove harmful fuel subsidies.
5. Explore and adopt marine nature-based solutions to the climate and nature crises, increasing support and engagement for local collaborative action to improve marine biodiversity.
6. Proactively support the growth of responsible aquaculture, for both human consumption and in a restorative capacity.

LIFE ON LAND

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Prepared by:

Introduction

SDG 15 is a critical 'home' for environmental protection in the SDGs, with Targets on the protection and conservation of ecosystems and species, on biodiversity and sustainable forestry, on the integration of environmental protection into policymaking, and on finance to support commitments on these issues. Across SDG 15, the availability of high-quality and official data to assess progress on the Goal is relatively good. In part, this owes to the UK's reporting duties under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) and the accompanying 2011-2020 Aichi Targets, but also to long-standing UK work to gather data on species and habitats.

The UK maintains a set of regularly updated biodiversity indicators in response to the CBD, and our assessment here reflects both the plentiful information available in certain respects, and the gaps in that data too. Environmental protection powers and responsibilities are devolved to Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish administrations. The analysis here, to a large extent, focuses on England. The UK's overseas territories are also important in the context of SDG 15 and need additional study.

On the data available, overall performance is not good. As in the 2018 Measuring Up report, only one of these Targets is rated "green". It is worth stressing that this assessment is not especially controversial: on the Government's own 2019 assessment of performance, only five Aichi targets were assessed as "on track to achieve target", with 14 targets where there was "progress towards target but at an insufficient rate" (for one, no assessment was made).

This performance gap sets out the challenge for two key developments as identified in the UK's 2019 Voluntary National Review. First, England's 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021 are new developments in planning, governance, and accountability around the objectives of SDG 15. Second, the UK's departure from the EU in 2019 presents both opportunities and risks for the achievement of this Goal.

The ongoing reconfiguration of laws in response to Brexit presents a key challenge to design, as the VNR put it, "a new environmental land management system [...] to reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmental outcomes and public goods". The Aichi targets, and so parts of SDG 15, are bound to a 2020 timeline.

In light of the ongoing negotiations on a post-2020 framework, it will be imperative to keep ambition high in the negotiations and adequately address the obligations that result; in particular to see how well the Environment Act, and its accompanying processes and targets, function in measuring up to that ambition.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET	RATING
15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.	🟠
15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.	🟠
15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.	🟠
15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.	🟠
15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.	🟠
15.6 Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed.	🟢

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

15.7   Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products.   🟠

15.8   By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species.   🟠

15.9   By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.   ⚪

15.a   Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems.   🔴

15.b   Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation.   ⚪

15.c   Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.   ⚫

Key findings

1. Performance across SDG 15 metrics is generally insufficient to achieve the Targets. This finding is in line with other assessments of UK action on these issues.

2. The condition of the UK's protected areas has been worsening slightly in recent years.

3. While there is evidence of reforestation, the UK's most important woodlands are under threat.

4. In terms of finance, the proportion of GDP the UK spends on the environment has decreased significantly in recent years.

5. The Environment Plan, Environment Act, and Office of Environmental Protection – while welcome – face key challenges around integrating nature into policymaking.

Performance and progress

Terrestrial ecosystems

A range of evidence and indicators must be taken into account when assessing the UK's performance on the "conservation and restoration" of terrestrial ecosystems (Target 15.1). Looking at the extent of protected areas on land, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) concludes there has been "no change" in the short-term. In the context of a stated ambition to protect 30% of land by 2030, the current total proportion of UK land designated as Special Protected Areas (SPAs) is just 10.6%. Furthermore, in a 2022 report, the British Ecological Society (BES) finds that "when considering the

strictest International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories (Ia - IV)[...] the proportion of effectively protected land might be as little as 4.9%".

In terms of the condition of SPAs, the proportion of them that are in favourable or improving condition has fallen, with the five-year trend assessed by the JNCC as negative: from a high of 84% in 2011 through to 2014, dropping to 74% in 2021. More relevant data to support an "amber" judgement comes from the UK Biodiversity Indicator 'C3a. Status of UK Habitats of European Importance', which has also been judged by the JNCC as experiencing both long- and short-term decline. The BES Report similarly finds that only 43% – 51% of sites were

" The preservation and restoration of ecosystems – and thereby habitats and species – is closely linked to biodiversity

in a favourable condition. The Environment Plan calls for "restoring 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition". Looking at current trends, the prospect of achieving this appears unlikely.

The preservation and restoration of ecosystems – and thereby habitats and species – is closely linked to biodiversity (Target 15.5). UK assessments of national conservation status drawing on IUCN criteria are better established in their coverage of birds. The current number of bird species at a "red" level of conservation concern stands at 70, up from 67 in 2015 and almost double the 36 from the first review in 1996. The first official red list for British mammals conducted in 2020 found that 11 of 47 British mammals were classified as being "at imminent risk of extinction", with a further five near threatened. The red list also found one in five UK species of plants to be threatened.

National Biodiversity Network's State of Nature Collaborative Report 2019 offers a range of data supporting a judgement that the relevant indicators are moving in the wrong direction. Of the 8,431 species assessed, 15% are now at risk of extinction and 2% are already extinct. There has been a 13% decline in average species' abundance in the long and short run, and a 5% decline in average species' distribution. Overall, 41% of the species assessed have decreased in abundance. Again, the Environment Plan contains a specific commitment

to take action "to recover threatened, iconic or economically important species of animals, plants and fungi, and where possible to prevent human induced extinction or loss of known threatened species in England and the Overseas Territories", but current performance shows the extent of the challenges that must be overcome if this commitment is to be fulfilled.

Forest ecosystems are highlighted under Target 15.1 and also as a 'standalone' in Target 15.2. Efforts to promote sustainable forest management beyond minimum international commitments in the UK centre around the voluntary UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). Only 44% of UK woodlands are certified to the UKWAS. In terms of forest cover, 13,300 hectares of new woodland were created in the UK in 2020-21, 3% lower than the previous year. In 2021, the Government committed to increasing tree-planting rates to 30,000 hectares per year by March 2025.

Despite progress in some respects, the overall picture for the UK's forests is mixed. According to the Woodland Trust (2021), "although woodland cover is gradually increasing, woodland wildlife is decreasing, and existing native woodlands are isolated and in poor ecological condition", with just 7% of Britain's native woodland in good ecological condition. Ancient woodland covers 2.5% of the UK. Over 1,225 ancient woods across the UK are under threat from development, and at least 981 have been permanently lost or damaged in the last 21 years.

CASE STUDY: ELIZABETH LINE BRINGS GOOD NEWS FOR WILDLIFE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 14.2, 15.3, 15.5

RSPB, in partnership with Crossrail, have developed a project on Wallasea Island in Essex, making use of the 3.5 million tonnes of earth which was excavated when building the Elizabeth Line. By shipping it to the Island, the partnership restored some of the lost intertidal habitats which once dominated the Essex Coast and created a nature reserve twice the size of the city of London. Within two years of the coastal wetland restoration project being complete, wintering bird numbers were at 12,000. They now stand at 20,000.

In addition to the benefits to wildlife, the creation of the habitat serves as an effective sea wall, protecting communities against coastal flooding and rising sea levels.

Coastal wetlands capture and lock in large amounts of carbon and prevent chemical pollution running off into the sea. Wallasea Island has also created a space for people to explore and relax with 15km of trails through wild coastal landscapes.

Land and soil degradation, a pressing problem in the UK, is addressed by Target 15.3. In England and Wales, almost four million hectares of soil are at risk of compaction and over two million hectares of soil are at risk of erosion, according to the Environment Agency. Intensive agriculture has caused arable soils to lose about 40-60% of their organic carbon. Soil degradation was calculated in 2010 to cost £1.2 billion every year. In 2019, The ONS estimated that only 22% of peatlands are in a near natural or rewetted condition, with almost 80% damaged or deteriorating. While there had been a small rise in peatland habitats classed as being in "favourable" condition (a total increase of 2,303 hectares between 2011 to 2018), sites classed as "unfavourable" also rose by 5,969 hectares across the same time period.

A recent Environment Agency report highlights insufficient data as a key challenge to soil management. The most recent national dataset was collected in 2007. In response to both data challenges and the evidence of degradation outlined above, the 25 Year Environment Plan sets an ambition to have all of England's soils managed sustainably by 2030.

Our assessment of UK action on invasive species (Target 15.8) follows the assessment of the UK's report on progress against the Aichi Targets, which concluded that the UK is making progress towards the target, but at an insufficient rate. The UK Biodiversity Indicator: B6 'Pressure from invasive species' offers relevant data covering freshwater, marine, and terrestrial invasive species. It shows there has been a long-term increase in all three categories from 1960-2021.

Policy and finance
Target 15.a has a component that looks specifically at funding for biodiversity within the UK. We rate this red, as did the previous Measuring Up report, since funding has fallen despite an overall context of economic growth. The most recent period 2019/20 saw a total of £502 million of UK public sector funding allocated to biodiversity in the UK. This is an increase of 74% in real terms since the time series began in 2000/01. However, as a proportion of GDP, the picture is less positive. In 2009, this funding peaked at 0.038% of GDP, but has since

declined in real terms, representing a decrease of 25% over the last five years to 0.023%. The poor performance outlined across the indicators above underscores the need for targets and commitments on protecting the UK's environment to be accompanied by meaningful funding.

Target 15.9 focuses on a specific demand from the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, that biodiversity values should first be "integrated into national and local planning processes", and secondly, be "incorporated into national accounting and reporting systems". One question prompted by this is what integration should look like, and what the terms of that integration should be. The Aichi assessment notes that "action is in place across the various plans and policies", but our assessment is that there is insufficient data to make this judgement. Importantly, the presence of standalone pieces of legislation or initiatives that focus on environmental protection does not amount to the integration of biodiversity, without understanding how these laws interact with the rest of the system of governance.

On the second requirement that the value of biodiversity be incorporated into national accounting, the relevant UK Biodiversity Indicator A3 'Value of biodiversity integrated into decision making' has neither a current nor proposed future measure for determining the monetary value of nature due to the methodological difficulties involved. It is true that there have been efforts to identify the value of nature (e.g. the State of Nature Report 2020), but it is not clear how this value would improve decision-making around environmental protections. We might envision the role of this capital is to constrain or redirect decisions that would otherwise seem like "value for money" despite their environmental costs.

Much will depend on the success of two recent developments that aim to give force to the 25 Year Environment Plan. The first is the 2021 Environment Act, which brings into action legally binding targets for aspects of environmental protection. With consultation on the first iteration of these targets just concluded, it is too early to judge how effective these targets will be. It is worth highlighting, though, that the SDGs provide

a standard for judging these targets in both the areas of environmental protection they cover and their ambition.

The Environment Act also established an Office of Environmental Protection (OEP) as a "watchdog" body. Again, having been established for less than a year, it is too early to see what kind of role the OEP might take in practice. Any kind of body tasked with scrutiny and accountability is, arguably, better than having no such body. However, if the hope might be that the OEP would address the worrying shortfall in spending on biodiversity or ensure that natural capital is accurately valued and reflected in government decision making, it is sobering to note that taxation, spending, and the allocation of resources within government are specifically excluded from the OEP's scrutiny.

Synergies and coherence

The "services" provided on a local and global scale by the UK's ecosystems underpin many other SDG objectives. These include removing pollutants from the atmosphere, enhancing cultural value (SDG 11), and promoting global biodiversity. In turn, these services contribute to important outcomes for humans positively impacting health and well-being (SDG 3), food production (SDG 2), disaster risk reduction, and more. Natural capital accounting considers some aspects of this value. Progress on other Goals, for example sustainable agriculture (SDG 2), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), is key to achieving the outcomes of SDG 15, while regression in these areas can conversely threaten positive outcomes.

In particular, SDG 15 is closely linked to taking action on climate change (SDG 13), as the UK's wild places can help to mitigate its rapid threat. Since 1990 for example, UK forests have removed the equivalent of 495mn tonnes of CO_2 from the atmosphere, and in 2019 alone removed an estimated 16mn tonnes. The removal of CO_2 performed by mountains, moorlands, and heath was estimated to be valued at £130 million in 2017. It is important, though, that a narrow focus on climate change does not come at the expense of a broader

environmental protection agenda. The climate and biodiversity crises are interlinked, and the response to one should not come at the cost of the other. Instead, there is a real need for policy coherence between both the "environmental" and "economic" aspects of the SDGs, and within the environmental agenda itself.

Local to international dimensions

Protection of the UK's ecosystems and those of the UK's overseas territories should not merely be seen as a domestic matter, but rather a global one given the importance of our wildlife and habitats for global biodiversity and the mitigation of climate change. The impact of the UK on sustainable development globally, and in other countries, is considered in SDG 12. Activity covered by other SDGs have an impact on environmental protection in other countries, especially through supply chains. For example, the UK was the second largest net importer of forest products in 2019, behind China. It is important to recognise that our importation of products from other countries can lead to increases in threats to biodiversity, or prevent/delay restoration of biodiversity, in those countries.

Recommendations

1. England's 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021 must be fully supported with the investment and policies needed to achieve their high ambitions.
2. More dedicated funding, efforts to fill data gaps (for example around soil monitoring), and greater efforts at mainstreaming environmental protection into wider plans and policies, should be key priorities.
3. The reconfiguration of laws following the UK's departure from the EU must put environmental outcomes and public goods first, so as to maintain or raise standards of environmental protection.
4. Ambition must be kept high in the ongoing negotiations on a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and the UK's laws and processes must be 'fit for purpose' to address the obligations that result.

CASE STUDY: FORESTS FOR OUR FUTURE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 13.1, 15.2

Northern Ireland's Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs launched Forests for our Future in March 2020. The initiative provides a grant scheme to encourage landowners to plant their own woodlands. The programme aims to plant 18 million trees by 2030, creating 9,000 hectares of new woodland to increase reforestation and restore degraded forests.

The Department has already committed £6.4 million of funding, which has delivered the planting of 1.75 million trees in two years. The Forests for our Future programme generates numerous environmental benefits, including carbon capture, conserving biodiversity, improved flood mitigation, and the societal and health benefits related to public access to forests and green spaces.

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Prepared by:

Introduction

All countries face challenges in implementing SDG 16 Targets, including the UK. These Targets are crucial to leaving no one behind. A country without peace, justice, and strong institutions cannot deliver for the most vulnerable in society. SDG 16 draws attention to societal issues of peacebuilding, gender, justice, and human rights, including accountability and participatory politics.

Domestically, while improvements in crime recording and data collection are going some way to help gain a more accurate picture of crime in the UK, the findings show that there is much work to be done. Trust in institutions, particularly the Government and the police, have been waning in recent years. There are also areas that require further research, where a lack of data reflects uncertainty in the state of affairs in the UK, this is particularly prominent in the case of Target 16.4.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic saw a drop in the levels of many violent crimes, however, it has also seen a slowing down in many receiving justice with fewer cases going to court and being charged, as well as a backlog in prisoners on remand. This also goes across Government with record delays in access to Freedom of Information, a vital mechanism for transparent institutions.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET		RATING
16.1	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.	🟠
16.2	End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.	🟠
16.3	Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.	🔴
16.4	By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.	⚪
16.5	Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.	🟠
16.6	Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.	🟠
16.7	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.	🟠
16.8	Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance.	⚫
16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.	🟢
16.10	Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.	🟠
16.a	Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.	🟢
16.b	Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.	🟠

Key findings

1. Changes in police recordings of crime, data collection, and public reports make it difficult to interpret many long-term trends. Incidents of sexual assault have fluctuated although rape has remained constant.

2. 'County lines' and the drug market is contributing to the rise in serious violence, but not enough is being done to prevent children from being exploited and communities being blighted.

3. Methods to capture incidents of human trafficking, modern slavery, and child abuse have improved but these crimes remain difficult to monitor. Eradication remains an issue.

4. The new Nationality and Borders Act 2022 permits the Government to strip a person of their British citizenship without informing them. It is unclear in the Act, if any rights of appeal exist.

5. Public perceptions of safety have degraded. More people are not confident in the police than are confident in them. Opinions towards public services have also seen a decline.

6. The percentage of people who feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area has remained broadly unchanged at 26.6%.

7. The level of recorded hate crime continues to increase – largely driven by improvements in police records but also due to events such as the EU Referendum and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Performance and progress

SDG 16 has seen less progress than some of the other Sustainable Development Goals: only Targets 16.9 and 16.a are on track as found in the last Measuring Up report four years ago. The UK played a crucial role in the adoption and implementation of SDG 16. In particular, the UK was instrumental in ensuring peace was part of the Agenda, which includes respect for human rights, accountability, participatory politics, and transparency. Domestically, SDG 16 can be broadly categorised under three key areas: crime and justice, inclusive and transparent institutions, and rights and equalities. The data here largely applies to England and Wales, unless stated otherwise.

On crime and justice (Targets 16.1 and 16.2) the results are mixed. Trends have been impacted both by the impact of COVID-19 and corresponding lockdown measures, while changes in police recordings of crime as well as ONS data collection also impacts the figures. In violent crime, there was a decrease in homicides in the year to March 2021 following an

uplift in the previous period, reflecting a lack of any clear long-term trend over the last decade.

In 2020/2021, the number of recorded victims of homicide per 100,000 was at 0.995, a decrease from previous years and the lowest since 2016 (1.16). It is likely that the pandemic restrictions and limited social contact were a factor in this decline, although caution must be taken when making sense of these figures. Past analyses of long-term homicide data have revealed inconsistencies between the dates of events and recording of outcomes, for example delays in reporting skewed the data around the Hillsborough inquest of 2017 and the Shipman inquest of 2003.

In the last three years, 29% of homicide suspects were known to be drug dealers. The proportion of homicides that have been related to drugs has increased over the last decade, from 40% in the year ending March 2011 to 52% in the year ending March 2021. The Government needs to ensure that there is more action to address 'county lines' and changing drug markets, more long-term support for neighbourhood policing, and much

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In 2020/2021, the number of recorded victims of homicide per 100,000 was at 0.995, a decrease from previous years and the lowest since 2016

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Public perceptions of safety have degraded, with 63% of people reporting feeling unsafe walking in quiet spaces after dark

more early intervention and prevention work to prevent young lives from being lost. The Government has released a new 10-year drug strategy, although further detail on how and where funding and investment is directed will be welcome.

Progress on inclusive and transparent institutions (Target 16.3) has seen mixed results: while the percentage of incidents of violence reported to the police has seen an upward trend over the past few years, it is still yet to reach the peak of 52.7% seen in 2015 following a steep drop in the years to 2017.

Sexual assault, while seeing a decrease in the last year, over the longer-term has fluctuated between 1.5% and 3.0%. Rape specifically has remained constant at around 0.5%. Although rates of sexual assault recorded by the police has almost tripled since 2012, this has trailed off in the last couple of years, and it is estimated that fewer than one in six women and one in five men report a rape or sexual assault. Furthermore, it is estimated that of these only 1.6% end up with someone being charged. Rates of physical violence have remained broadly stable over the last five years.

In practice, police referrals for a charging decision have decreased for the year ending March 2021, charging rates for domestic abuse related crimes are also down, and prosecution rates have decreased for the fifth year in a row. England, Wales, and Northern Ireland have made steps forward in

their laws around domestic abuse, with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 both widening the scope of what constitutes abuse, such as psychological and emotional harm.

The proportion of prisoners on remand has also been increasing since 2019 reaching a record high (since the start of the data set in 2009) at the last measurement of 16.2%. This rise has been seen across the whole UK, with Scotland and Northern Ireland also recently recording their highest figure of the last decade.

Public perceptions of safety have degraded, with 63% of people reporting feeling unsafe walking in quiet spaces after dark (compared to 60% last year) and 37% of women (compared to 30%) actively choosing not to make these walks. Feeling unsafe in public spaces and on public transport was particularly pressing for women and disabled people, in all settings, both night and day. The latest data found that 27% of women and 16% men reported experiencing at least one form of street harassment in the last year.

The eradication of modern slavery (and human trafficking) (Target 16.2) is a matter of high priority internationally and described by then Prime Minister Theresa May as "the great human rights issue of our time". Indeed, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was the first of its kind in Europe but its intended

CASE STUDY: THE DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 16.1, 16.2, 16.3

In 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act gained Royal Assent and entered into law. The Government hopes this will strengthen the support for victims: as of March 2020, an estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the previous year.

Hogan Lovells, along with Hestia and Gordon Nardell QC of Twenty Essex, were instrumental in delivering this landmark piece of legislation. For the first time ever, children fall under the definition of victims of domestic abuse. By acknowledging their experience, this will help support services recognise the hundreds of thousands of child victims in the UK. The definition also recognises

economic abuse and coercive or controlling behaviour and brings in the new offence of non-fatal strangulation.

In addition to their work on the Domestic Abuse Act, Hogan Lovells has been appointed as a "beacon" in tackling domestic abuse by the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA); recognising their commitment to driving business awareness and action, as well as their provision of pro-bono services to survivors of domestic abuse in need of protective injunctions. The firm has also contributed pro bono to EIDA's new handbook, providing practical guidance for employers to support employees if they come forward as a victim of domestic abuse.

effect has been undermined to an extent by immigration priorities known as the Hostile Environment Policy. As many as one in 12 female prison inmates serving sentences in jails are victims of modern slavery and trafficking but have not had the exploitative aspects identified. The UK's approach has been criticised for its undue focus on prosecutions over victim support. Yet despite this supposed focus, the number of both prosecutions and convictions for human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK is considerably lower than other countries.

The ONS has made some positive progress in adapting their methods to try and capture crimes which are especially difficult to monitor, such as human trafficking and modern slavery, and child abuse. As such, analysis of trends in these issues are almost impossible to capture. However, the most recent Crime Survey for England and Wales, estimated that one in five adults had experienced at least one form of child abuse before reaching the age of 16, in addition to almost half a million experiencing neglect. There has been an uplift in modern slavery offences recorded by the police, increasing by over 50% between 2018 and 2019, as well as a 46% uplift in the referral of victims through the National Referral Mechanism. In 2021 there was a year-on-year increase of 9% in the number of potential child victims of modern slavery. Although this could be seen as a positive in terms of awareness, it is clearly an issue of magnitude.

In December 2021, the Government introduced laws permitting them to remove a person of their British citizenship without informing them, through Clause 9 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022. The Act is unclear if any rights of appeal exist. Considered in the national interest, those affected will not be able to hear the evidence against them in a court of law. The case of Shamima Begum is the most recent high-profile case of a British citizen whose citizenship was removed on national security grounds and denied the right to hear and contest the evidence against her in an open UK court.

A recent YouGov survey found that in 2021 more people are unconfident (48%) in the police than are confident in them (43%). Opinions towards public services (Target 16.6) across the UK has also seen a decline, with a steep drop in health services tempered by a slight rise in satisfaction with local police and fire services – although it must be acknowledged that this survey was taken against the backdrop of the pandemic. The percentage of people who feel they are able to influence decisions in their local area (Target 16.7) has remained broadly unchanged at 26.6%, though a report on opinions towards political institutions nationally by the Hansard Society last published in 2019 showed the starkest results in the 15 years the survey has been running. In it, 40% said that the country's problems could be dealt with more effectively if the Government didn't have to worry about parliament, 72% said that the system of governing needs "quite a lot" or "a great deal" of improvement, and 60% believe that our system of governing is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful. Half of the public don't believe that the main parties and politicians care about them, and 75% of people think the main political parties are so divided within themselves they cannot serve the best interests of the country. In the 2019 election the turnout of registered voters was 67.3%. There was a discrepancy between regions of over 10% and a discrepancy in age groups: those 18-24 were least likely to vote (47%), with those over 65 most likely to vote (74%).

On rights and equality, the level of hate crime recorded (Target 16.b) increased by 8% in the period ending March 2020, continuing the upward trend seen over the last five years. Although this is driven predominantly by improvements in police records, there have been spikes following certain events such as the EU Referendum and the COVID pandemic.

The presence of a National Human Rights Institution (Target 16.a) and birth registrations (Target 16.9) meet the Target, while access to information (Target 16.10) has the relevant policy in place, though it should be noted that the percentage of information requests refused as well as request decisions overturned by the Information Commissioner's Office have both risen substantially in recent years, calling into question the continued effectiveness of this mechanism. In some cases, the lack of available data makes an assessment incredibly difficult to make. Targets that fall within this more ambiguous group are 16.4 and 16.5.

CASE STUDY: THE TRANSPARENCY TASK FORCE

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 16.4, 16.5, 16.6

With over 5,500 people involved, the Transparency Task Force is a campaigning community dedicated to raising the levels of transparency in financial services around the world. Their mission is to promote the ongoing reform of the financial sector so that it serves society better, being more transparent, truthful, and trustworthy.

Having a broad remit, some of the many issues they work on include trust, engagement, and understanding deficit, conflicts of interest, regulatory capture, and hidden costs and risks. The organisation has also developed the Finance Development Goals (FDGs) as a framework for finance reform, inspired by the SDGs, and are the secretariat to the APPG on Personal Banking and Fairer Financial Services.

Synergies and coherence

SDG 16 closely links to SDG 10, for example around hate crime and discrimination, and the protection and facilitation of migrants. The incidences of sexual assault and domestic violence are heavily skewed towards women and girls (SDG 5), as is the proportion of the population who feel unsafe walking alone after dark, and education will be key to tackling this (SDG 4). Tackling modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour is also integral to achieving decent work (SDG 8). Cohesive and resilient communities (SDG 11) will also help foster a strong and peaceful society in the UK.

At the time of writing, criminal barristers are planning an indefinite strike in response to the Government's insufficient investment in criminal legal aid. Along with unprecedented backlogs and delays in the justice system, the lack of funding has led to increased workloads and severe retention and recruitment problems in the sector (SDG 8). If unresolved, this could have significant implications for the legal aid system which provides legal advice for anyone who does not have the means to pay for it themselves (SDG 1).

Local to international dimensions

In April 2022, the Prime Minister announced that any asylum seeker considered to have arrived in the UK "illegally" since the start of the year may be transferred to Rwanda to enable their claims to be decided, with the possibility of resettlement in that country with UK financial support. It was claimed to be a "safe and legal route", but Rwanda's human rights record is contentious and the UK acknowledges it. The Russia-Ukraine conflict, and resulting knock-on impacts in the UK, are a stark reminder of the importance of delivering SDG 16 both internationally and at home. The UK has committed to

spearhead the global efforts to end harassment and modern slavery, and protect children from violence, abuse, and exploitation. UK companies should ensure their operations protect the vulnerabilities of workers involved in global supply chains. In 2018, the UK launched a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security which puts women and girls at the heart of the UK's work to prevent and resolve conflict, recognising the importance of equality and inclusion.

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement measures, and invest in socioeconomic development, that will reduce crime and violence.
2. Improve confidence in the criminal justice system and other public services.
3. Implement Sir Christopher Bellamy's recommendations following the independent review of criminal legal aid in full, fast-tracking and ensuring the minimum recommended 15% fee increase for solicitors and barristers across all areas of criminal legal aid.
4. Address the conditions that foster trafficking and exploitation, and bring forward legislation to mandate companies to carry out human rights and environmental due diligence.
5. Ensure sufficient funding for refuge and provision for survivors of domestic abuse, increase training for local and housing authorities, and prioritise the needs of survivors from marginalised groups.
6. Ensure availability of verifiable data across the UK under all Targets.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Prepared by:

Newcastle University

Introduction

SDG 17 is focused on the critical building blocks of the other Goals, both in general, such as efforts to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development and encourage stakeholder engagement and partnership, and specifically international, such as global trade and finance regimes and spending on overseas aid. Because of this partly global focus, the two most obvious changes in the UK landscape around SDG 17 – the rejection of the 0.7% of GDP target for official development assistance (ODA) and the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – lie beyond the scope of this report. They are, however, central to the international development focused counterpart to this report produced by Bond.

Instead, this chapter focuses on the SDG 17 agenda in the UK around creating an "enabling environment" for SDG implementation in the UK through an agenda of multi-stakeholder partnership (Target 17.16), availability of data (Target 17.18), and policy coherence (Target 17.14). Key promises on these issues, especially the creation of a stakeholder engagement mechanism, were made in the 2019 Voluntary National Review (VNR) but have not come to fruition. Also notable are the contrasting approaches taken to creating this enabling environment in different parts of the UK. In both Scotland and Wales, national well-being and sustainable development frameworks support the integration of SDG objectives, stakeholder engagement, and partnership.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

17.1	Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection.	🟠
17.2	Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.	⚫
17.3	Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources.	⚫
17.4	Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress.	⚫
17.5	Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries.	⚫
17.6	Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.	⚫
17.7	Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed.	⚫
17.8	Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology.	⚫
17.9	Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.	⚫
17.10	Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda.	⚫

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGET

RATING

17.11	Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020.	●
17.12	Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access.	●
17.13	Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence.	●
17.14	Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.	●
17.15	Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development.	●
17.16	Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.	●
17.17	Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.	○
17.18	By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing states, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.	●
17.19	By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.	●

Key findings

1. The UK does good work on the data aspect of the "enabling environment" for the SDGs, thanks to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

2. The UK performs poorly in terms of mechanisms for policy coherence, though the picture looks better in Scotland and Wales.

3. The failure to advance the creation of a multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism after the VNR is an important gap in the UK's SDG infrastructure.

Performance and progress

The SDG 17 domestic agenda for the UK revolves around policy coherence for sustainable development, partnerships, data, and stakeholder engagement. Where detailed analysis on these topics can be found in Part 2 of the report, we have included a summary here for reference.

Policy coherence

Policy coherence for sustainable development is key to the vision of the SDGs. This involves the mutual support and integration of different activities, objectives, and sectors in pursuit of this common aim. The absence of a cross-government mechanism for efficient policy coherence was identified in the original Measuring Up as a striking omission in the UK's response to the Goals. The Government's framework for SDG implementation at the time of the 2019 VNR was the

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The pandemic has served to showcase the importance of cooperation, coordination, and partnership, and the value of the SDGs' comprehensive and integrated agenda

Single Department Plans (SDPs) which acted as the main mechanism by which departments mapped relevant policy onto the Goals. Since 2019, these have been replaced by the more detailed Outcome Delivery Plans (ODPs). In mapping to the Targets rather than the Goals of the SDGs, the ODPs can be regarded as an improvement but these plans are by no means comprehensive. Bond analysis shows that most departments have only covered three to four Goals, even though their impacts might be much wider. There are 58 Targets which have not been addressed at all, and those around poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), inequality (SDG 10) and partnerships (SDG 17) have been particularly sidelined, despite analysis showing these to be vital and cross-cutting issues for the UK. Although an overview Implementation Report was published alongside the ODPs which highlighted cross-departmental priorities, this was not detailed enough to track progress effectively, and lacks analysis of gaps or potential policy incoherence across departments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed new challenges for policymakers that make the implementation of this enabling environment more difficult. However, the pandemic has also served to showcase the importance of cooperation, coordination, and partnership, and the value of the SDGs' comprehensive and integrated agenda, ranging from preparedness for pandemics, to inequalities in health and education outcomes, to access to green space.

Partnerships
Though the VNR recognised partnerships as an important vehicle for implementation of the SDGs, an enabling environment for SDG partnerships in the UK is absent. By not engaging with the SDGs, choosing not to develop institutional mechanisms through which to engage with non-government stakeholders, and not undertaking activity to publicise or promote the Goals, the Government is not only not engaged in the SDG partnership landscape, but has created a disabling environment for SDG partnerships in the UK. For example, local government has a critical role to play in the successful implementation of the Goals, especially in engaging wider local communities and civil society. However, the lack of any mapped activities to the SDGs from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), undermines the extensive activity that has been taking place in local government across the UK.

Partnership work around the SDGs persists across the UK, in civil society, academia, local government, and business. The red rating for partnership, though, reflects the judgement that this happens despite the approach of the Government.

Stakeholder engagement
The SDGs are meant to be realised not only through the "whole of government" but the "whole of society", through partnership and participation. However, the Government's commitment in the VNR to develop a multi-stakeholder mechanism shows no signs of coming to fruition. Here, the UK lags behind much of the world, with a 2021 analysis of the most recent set of VNRs led by Cooperation Canada showing 67% of countries mentioned formal processes for stakeholder engagement.

Data for sustainable development
Though some of the wording in Target 17.18 is focused on developing countries in particular, Targets 17.18 and 17.19, and their accompanying Indicators on well-functioning systems of national statistics (Indicators 17.18.2; 17.18.3; 17.19.2) and specifically on disaggregated data for national SDG Indicators (Indicator 17.18.1), are directly relevant to the UK and are an area in which the work of the ONS has seen good progress.

Overall, there has been a year-on-year increase in the amount of headline SDG Indicators reported. In 2017, only 39% of headline data was available, rising to 64% in 2018 after a concerted push by the ONS to focus on the Goals. In 2021, the level stands at 83% with 204 of 247 Indicators covered (including an additional three Indicators since the original 244) (ONS, 2021). This has also been helped by their recognition of non-official sources (e.g. charities, academic organisations), which, after being assessed, can be used to fill data gaps or provide more granular assessment of the Indicators (ONS, 2022). This is particularly useful for "hidden" issues such as child abuse (Target 16.2) where a fuller picture can be presented when deriving data from various different sources (ONS, 2020).

There has also been an increased focus on the disaggregation of data in ongoing data sets. Of the 53 Targets which specifically cite the need for disaggregation, the ONS currently lists 45.3% as "Fully Disaggregated", 17% as "Partially Disaggregated", and 37.7% as "Not Disaggregated". This is also a year-on-year increase from 38% "Fully Disaggregated" in 2020 but there is still more work to do. It is also crucial

CASE STUDY: CLIMATE COALITION NI

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 13.3, 17.14

The Climate Coalition Northern Ireland (CCNI) is a network of organisations and individuals, formed in 2020, with the mission to facilitate cooperation between organisations working on climate change issues locally and globally. The network centres around bringing about appropriate action in Northern Ireland to tackle climate change and enhancing policy coherence to ensure sustainable development.

CCNI now represent over 400,000 people across Northern Ireland.

Their main work centres around collaborating with the NI Executive, Assembly members, political parties, and civil society to advance and strengthen an ambitious Climate Change Bill as a matter of urgency.

that disaggregation is taking place beyond these particular Indicators, particularly in line with the commitment to "leave no one behind".

There is a mix in the levels of disaggregation amongst the data, with some sets providing deep intersectional analysis (e.g. health) and other areas more lacking (e.g. cities), particularly on geographic information and certain societal groupings such as persons with disabilities.

However, in 2021, the ONS commissioned an inclusive data taskforce report on the quality of data on marginalised groups with the Inclusive Data Implementation Plan devised in response to its recommendations. The plan includes methodological changes such as a "harmonisation plan", which will update standards and guidance for measuring disability and mental health, ethnicity and religion, and sex and gender identity; and boost sample sizes to allow for a more detailed and accurate analysis of specific population groups. It also includes new data sets such as a household survey on the experiences of disabled people and qualitative research on groups underrepresented in UK data, such as children with special educational needs and traveller communities. This plan was published in 2022 and will be reviewed annually. Progress made under the 2018 Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan was both accelerated and subsequently praised during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the ONS conducting analysis on the impact on vulnerable groups and explicitly connecting the impact of the virus to multiple SDGs (ONS, 2021).

The National Reporting Platform (NRP) works as a useful tool for tracking both progress on filing data gaps as well as progress on the Indicators themselves. The 'Reporting Status' tool provides a useful visualisation. It is vital, however, that these bodies of data are continuously tracked and monitored: some of the Indicators logged as "reported" have not been reviewed since their initial upload in 2017. As such, not only can a current accurate picture not be drawn, but longer-term trends are also impossible to identify. In some cases, there are alternative data sets that could be used but have not been added (e.g. Indicator 16.1.4) and in others the data has simply not been renewed (e.g. Indicator 5.5.2).

There are also areas where the UK could be aiming higher than the given Indicator for the UK context. For example, measuring mobile phone access (Indicator 5.b.1) as opposed to smartphone access; and level of access to electricity (Indicator 7.1.1) but not level of fuel poverty, which seems critically relevant for the UK. Easier and more intuitive access to data on the SDG site and elsewhere remains an issue, and a tool is currently being developed to allow users to do this more easily (ONS, 2021).

Scotland, Wales, & Northern Ireland
While the above analysis is focused on the UK level, there have been important developments in the devolved administrations of Wales and Scotland in particular. This assessment views the picture in these two contexts as more favourable, and this is partly responsible for the "amber" rather than "red" rating for Target 17.14. As outlined in their supplementary national reporting on the SDGs, both Scotland and Wales have SDG-relevant governance frameworks that act as a context for policy coherence for sustainable development, as vehicles for greater engagement with stakeholders, and have engaged in more participatory and multistakeholder approaches.

In Wales, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act has gone some way to creating a context for thinking about cross-cutting issues and policy coherence. Scotland's National Performance Framework is explicitly aligned to the SDGs and offers relatively good coverage of SDG outcomes as outlined in their supplementary national reporting on the SDGs (Long, 2019). This is not to say that such approaches have successfully tackled the "building blocks" of the SDGs that SDG 17 is concerned with, but that they are better placed to do so. Further details on the devolved nations and these developments, including details of Northern Ireland's approach, can be found in Part 2 of the report.

Synergies and coherence

SDG 17, by design, underpins the whole SDG agenda. Its Targets advance the common 'means of implementation' for SDGs and address structural barriers to global achievement of the Goals. This is why efforts around both the domestic

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The principles addressed in SDG 17 - policy coherence, participation, and partnership - apply at all levels from local to global

and global agenda of SDG 17 are so important for the UK. Beyond the issues discussed above, Target 17.1 on resource mobilisation is a further issue that matters to all Goals, posing the fundamental question of how and how far efforts to achieve social, economic, and environmental goods are being effectively resourced. But it also crosscuts SDG 16's Target on illicit financial flows and the UK's international action (see Bond's 2022 report). The UK's network of Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies is critical to any assessment, with three UK overseas territories at the top of the global Corporate Tax Haven Index in 2021.

Local to international dimensions

The principles addressed in SDG 17 – policy coherence, participation, and partnership – apply at all levels from local to global. Indeed, alongside coherence between different areas of governance or "horizontal" coherence, the SDGs recognise that policy coherence has a "vertical" dimension, where governance at different levels can mutually support or undercut SDG achievement. Importantly, getting domestic governance for the SDGs right – ensuring multi-stakeholder processes and mechanisms for policy coherence – is vital in ensuring the UK makes a positive global contribution to achievement of the SDGs. The UK's "spillover effects" on global sustainable

development can be tracked across environmental and social, economic and financial, and government and security domains. With the UK currently ranked 152 out of 163 nations with regards to "spillover effects" in the most recent SDG Index, this needs to be tackled through coherent policymaking.

Recommendations

As SDG 17, in the domestic context, largely focuses on the enabling environment for SDG implementation we refer to the recommended actions in Part 2 of the report where we analyse these topics in further detail.

CASE STUDY: WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER FOOD

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG TARGETS 2.4, 12.3, 12.6, 15.5, 17.17

Tesco, Sainsbury's, Co-op, Waitrose, and M&S have joined together for the first time, in partnership with WWF, to halve the environmental impact of UK shopping baskets by 2030. These supermarkets combined reach more than 50% of UK food shoppers and together are urging the rest of the sector to join them.

The supermarkets use the WWF Basket, a comprehensive framework that details the outcomes, measurements, and actions required to halve the impact of UK baskets. The

pledge made by the supermarkets at COP26 commits the retailers to focus on climate, deforestation, agricultural production, marine, diets, food waste, and packaging; and report data annually to WWF on actions taken.

By adopting the WWF Basket, the five retailers are leading the way in partnerships for sustainable development, reducing the impact of food production on habitat destruction and biodiversity loss and promoting healthier diet choices for consumers.

PART 2: MEANS OF ACHIEVING THE GOALS

This section of the report considers the procedural aspects of delivering the SDGs in the UK. It outlines the changes since 2018, the governance structures that may be needed going forward to accelerate progress, the monitoring and review process, and the localisation of the Goals in the UK. It also proposes recommendations for government to accelerate the implementation of the Goals.

THE GOVERNMENT

National plans and priorities

- The Government is missing an opportunity to use the SDGs to ensure its policymaking is coherent and reflects the true nature of challenges facing the country and to connect its priorities with those of the stakeholders who are already mobilised behind the Goals.
- The Government does not have an overarching plan to deliver its commitment to achieve the SDGs in the UK, and its current approach fails to reflect all the relevant Targets and links between policy areas.
- Some progress has been made towards embedding the Goals into departmental objectives, but this is not consistent across departments.
- National budgets need to embed SDGs meaningfully to encourage further financial resources to be channelled into priority areas.

An overarching plan to achieve the SDGs would provide the Government, organisations, and citizens with a unified approach to tackling some of the biggest challenges facing society, the country, and the world. It could spark a national conversation about a positive vision of the future, encourage innovation, address policy gaps and incoherence, mobilise finance, accelerate action, and provide a holistic framework for government decision-making beyond electoral cycles. As yet, this plan does not exist and there does not seem to be any intention to create one.

Since 2019 the Government has made some progress in embedding the SDGs into its departmental objectives, but this fails to address over a third of the 169 Targets. Originally the implementation of the Goals was reflected through each department's Single Departmental Plan (SDP), which outlined how their activity would support the delivery of the Goals. The SDPs were only mapped at the Goal level and lacked coherence and detail. These were replaced in 2021 by Outcome Delivery Plans (ODPs) and demonstrate some improvement. Most of the ODPs now align the department's priorities to the Targets, and some departments, such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, have gone to the extent of mapping specific projects and programmes under each priority to specific Targets.

However, there are some departments, including HM Treasury and the Department for International Trade, that still only map their priorities to the Goal level. And despite the critical role of local government in delivering the SDGs, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (previously called the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government at the time of the ODPs) does not include any reference to any Goals.

The presence of some Targets (and the noticeable absence of others) in the ODPs provides some indication of where the Government's priorities in the 2030 Agenda lie. Analysis

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The Government needs an overarching plan to achieve the SDGs, which is reflected in national budgeting, to unite all stakeholders and departmental priorities

undertaken by Bond finds that the SDGs related to health, climate, and economic growth have "the best coverage". In comparison, issues around inequality, poverty, and hunger that COVID-19 has exacerbated, are "significantly under-represented".

In July 2021, the Government produced a corporate report to supplement the ODPs and track "some of the ways" departments are supporting the delivery of the 2030 Agenda to each Goal, but this amounts to little more than a mapping exercise.

The Government has separate strategies for education, housing, skills, infrastructure, investing in health and social care, reaching net zero by 2050, strengthening relationships across the devolved nations to help solve local problems, and building back better. But developing policies and programmes for each of these areas in isolation will likely lead to disjointed and incoherent plans. This will be amplified if financial flows favour some issues over others.

The Government is committed to 'levelling up' the country, which is a strong feature of its COVID-19 recovery plan. While reducing inequalities across the country is welcome, there is a missed opportunity to connect this ambition with the broader aspirations of the SDGs and other related issues that need equal attention. In fact, the ambition of levelling up is not dissimilar to the commitment the Government already made via Agenda 2030 to "leave no one behind".

The Government's piecemeal approach so far fails to recognise the significant interconnections between policy areas and misses an opportunity to mobilise the stakeholders and resources that are already committed to achieving these objectives through the broader framework of the SDGs. Evidently, there have been improvements, but to ensure accountability and coherence in the Government's approach, departmental priorities should align at the Target level, and be accompanied by a comprehensive gap analysis. Critically, the Government needs an overarching plan to achieve the SDGs, which is reflected in national budgeting, to unite all stakeholders and departmental priorities.

Recommendations

Further to the recommendations from Measuring Up in 2018, many of which have not been realised, and based on the

findings from this report, the UN Global Compact Network UK believes that the following actions are paramount if the UK is to achieve the SDGs by 2030:

1. A whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach should be developed to deliver the SDGs. This overarching plan should identify how the SDGs are driving policy domestically as well as abroad. The Cabinet Office is best positioned to lead this work.
    – Implementation and alignment of the SDGs at the Target level should be mandatory in the next round of ODPs, including in the publicly accessible versions. Resourcing within the Government to allow detailed guidance and practical support to encourage departments to follow best practice will ensure a consistent approach.
    – The Government should undertake a gap analysis across the next ODPs. This could help establish which Goals and Targets apply to different policy areas and identify policy conflicts and gaps. A detailed gap analysis will support all of the above recommendations. Ideally, this would be made public, and stakeholders invited to respond to the results.
    – Including the SDGs in national budgets would provide a means of mobilising the resources necessary and catalysing further investment (public and private) in their implementation.

Leadership

*   While responsibility for the SDGs remains with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, the domestic nature of the Agenda will not be reflected in Government decision-making.

In the first Measuring Up report, UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) called on the Government to place responsibility for the Goals in the Prime Minister's Office or with a senior minister to ensure top-level political leadership that could implement cross-departmental action and policy coherence for the SDGs.

After seven years, the continued lack of strategic and top-level leadership means the UK's plans and processes for the SDGs do not amount to a suitable delivery plan. The Voluntary National Review (VNR) stated that the Minister for

Implementation in the Cabinet Office ensures "a coordinated cross-government approach to the delivery of the Goals", but there is little evidence of this in practice.

The Government's approach to the SDGs continues to ignore the domestic nature of the Agenda. The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has "overall leadership and policy oversight for the Goals", but the department has very little role or responsibility on the UK's domestic agendas. The Government's national statement at the most recent UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development stated, "the UK remains committed to meeting the SDGs by 2030, as we have set out in our new International Development Strategy." The speech is an impressive statement of the UK's foreign development and investment policies. However, sustainable development is still seen as an agenda which the UK drives in its international work. The Measuring Up analysis in 2018 and again four years later indicates that at least three-quarters of the SDG Targets are relevant to the people and places within our borders.

The lack of strategic direction and consistency in the Government's approach to delivering the Goals is a prevailing issue. The current approach to policy making fails to recognise the synergies and links between policy priorities. The SDGs provide an opportunity to address this by unifying these under one overarching national plan. This plan could be the means for any Prime Minister to unite citizens and stakeholders behind shared objectives, building a more cohesive and united society. However, it is exceptionally rare for the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the Home Secretary, or even the Foreign Secretary to publicly refer to the SDGs. In the last 18 months, research suggests that the only official high-level statement which endorses the SDGs was a joint statement in June 2021 from the UK Prime Minister and US President.

A 2019 poll found that Great Britain's familiarity with the SDGs was half that of the global average and a quarter that of India's, with 51% of British respondents having never heard of the Goals and only 13% stating they were familiar with them. The colourful graphics and top-level messaging of the Goals offer an accessible means of engaging citizens and framing priorities. With greater and more visible leadership on the SDGs, the Government could mobilise many more stakeholders to champion and deliver this Agenda.

Recommendations

1. Top-level political leadership is needed to guarantee that the cross-departmental action necessary to achieve the SDGs is implemented, and to ensure policy coherence across Whitehall. Responsibility for the Goals should ideally be in the Prime Minister's Office, or with a senior minister in a role with a significant domestic policymaking remit.
   – Recognition of the domestic relevance and importance of the SDGs is needed. Responsibility for the Goals or endorsements from high-level ministers with domestic mandates would support this.
   – Including the SDGs in national budgets would also evidence a serious commitment to achieving the Goals.

Reporting

The UK delivered its first VNR at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019. These reports are critical in recognising the challenges countries face in delivering the SDGs, strengthening government policies, mobilising multi-stakeholder support, and identifying pathways to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The 2019 VNR reflected the need to localise the SDGs, with good coverage of implementation efforts by the governments of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. It went some way towards recognising the interlinkages between the Goals. However, it also demonstrated a lack of understanding and a coherent approach for working across departments and nations on these links. Critically, the VNR failed to engage in genuine and meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, to offer an ambitious or clear plan for achieving the SDGs, and to mobilise action for anything other than business as usual. As the international development NGO Bond reflected, "[...] the report is largely a mapping exercise, outlining existing activity, but it doesn't offer an ambitious agenda for achieving the SDGs". Detailed analysis on the VNR can be read online.

The UN Secretary-General recommends that countries produce two reports by 2030. Togo and Uruguay have already reported for their fourth time. However there have been no further commitments from the Government for a second UK

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> # The lack of strategic direction and consistency in the Government's approach to delivering the Goals is a prevailing issue

review. This puts us behind 64% of countries that have already completed or committed to complete two or more VNRs by July 2023.

Recommendations
1. The Government should commit to undertaking a second VNR in 2024 and use this as an opportunity to engage stakeholders across the country, and open a UK-wide dialogue with key actors on the SDGs.

Stakeholder engagement

- Stakeholder engagement is essential to realise the SDGs, given the need for action from all levels of society.
- The Government has so far failed to proactively engage domestic stakeholders in the Agenda despite a commitment to set up a stakeholder engagement mechanism in the VNR in 2019.

Achieving the SDGs will require action from all levels of society. Engaging stakeholders for views and expertise not only encourages them to support subsequent plans but recognises that they are fundamental in creating some of the broad systemic changes that are needed. Stakeholder engagement in policymaking is an essential means of understanding the complementary roles actors in society can plan in achieving ambitions, and the barriers or opportunities that exist.

The Government was heavily criticised by UKSSD and Bond, and in the findings of a subsequent International Development Select Committee enquiry, for its failure to adequately engage stakeholders in developing its VNR. In the VNR itself, the Government committed to establishing "an effective mechanism to enhance stakeholder engagement" in the implementation of the SDGs. Unfortunately, three years on, there has been little progress on this commitment and no wider engagement which could improve transparency and accountability, promote participatory decision-making, and increase stakeholder buy-in for policies.

The VNR also placed great emphasis on private finance to deliver the Goals. However, this requires active leadership to engage the relevant stakeholders to accelerate the transition and investment in these markets. At the very least, an evident commitment from the Government would encourage financial flows toward these areas.

There are several ready-to-go networks championing the SDGs in the UK that the Government should tap into: the UN Global Compact Network UK, for example, convenes more than 825 organisations, including at least 670 small, medium, and large businesses. Bond unites more than 400 civil society organisations. The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) Chapter UK & Ireland, the EAUC, and the newly formed Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) UK together could connect more than 220 universities and further education institutions. However, engagement should not be exclusive to those already active

on the SDGs and should reflect the diversity of issues present in the 17 Goals and the diversity of the UK. In particular, it should recognise the principle of "leave no one behind", and special efforts should be taken to include marginalised or underrepresented voices.

Stakeholder engagement also extends to parliamentarians, who act as an important mechanism in scrutinising the Government and holding it to account. There is an active All-Party Parliamentary Group which hosts up to seven parliamentary events each year. Select Committees have already proved important, with the Environmental Audit Committee, Women and Equalities Committee, and International Development Committee all conducting inquiries into the Government's approach to the Goals.

Stakeholders will play a meaningful role in advising and shaping the UK's delivery of the SDGs, offering a range of expertise and mobilising further resources to drive action on the Goals. However, the Government needs to take a proactive stance to recognise and engage more with fora such as these.

Recommendations
1. The Government must take immediate action to fulfil its commitment announced in the 2019 VNR to establish an effective mechanism to enhance stakeholder engagement and cooperation with departments, public bodies, and organisations in the domestic sphere. The Government could build on pre-existing networks, but at the very least, it must ensure that all engagement is meaningful, inclusive, and deliberative.
   - A second VNR process is an opportunity to engage stakeholders across the country. It could be used as an occasion for a UK-wide dialogue with key actors on the SDGs from local authorities, businesses, civil society organisations, and academic institutions.
   - The Government should engage parliamentarians in the SDGs. Engagement could encourage Parliamentary Select Committees' scrutiny of departmental performance on the SDGs and debates on the VNR and the UK's approach in both Houses of Parliament. All Select Committees should be encouraged to explore their role in scrutinising UK performance on the SDGs. As a first step, we would encourage the Parliamentary Scrutiny Unit to conduct an inquiry into the Government's approach to the SDGs. Increasing awareness with Select Committees could lead to further joint inquiries into UK performance on the SDG Goals or Targets.

LOCALISING THE SDGS

Each of these sections summarises the current context in the devolved administrations and in cities and local governments. It does not exhaustively reference examples of local action, but highlights some cases where this is taking place. There is evidence across the devolved administrations of progress to integrate the SDGs in both policy-making approaches and in specific policy areas such as climate, but more can be done to ensure this is consistent and well-developed.

There are established and effective networks working on sustainable development and the SDGs across the UK, particularly in the devolved administrations, with their own recommendations for their governments. We have consulted them in this work, but it would not be appropriate for us to suggest that we represent their views in full here.

Wales

Wales continues to take a progressive approach in the pursuit of sustainable development. The Welsh Government translates the SDGs into seven well-being goals for the Welsh context, established in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act) which commenced at the same time as the SDGs.

The WFG Act places a duty on 48 public bodies accountable to the Welsh Government to set and publish objectives, and take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives, to contribute to the achievement of the well-being goals. The WFG Act establishes a duty for public bodies to ensure decisions consider the well-being of future generations and puts in place a sustainable development principle. The Act includes five statutory ways of working to enable public bodies to demonstrate their consideration of the sustainable development principle: collaboration, integration, involvement, long-term, and prevention.

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Wales continues to take a progressive approach in the pursuit of sustainable development

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Further thinking is necessary to properly localise the SDGs in Scotland, particularly in terms of aligning domestic policy goals with SDG Targets

The WFG Act created an independent Future Generations Commissioner for Wales whose powers include advising, encouraging best practice and promoting awareness, carrying out research and formal reviews, and making recommendations. The Future Generations Commissioner is required to produce a Future Generations Report every five years, the first of which was published in 2020. The Auditor General for Wales audits the entire public sector and has legal power to assess the extent to which a public body has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle. In particular, the Auditor General has committed to an on-going piece of work on climate change and recently published a report on Public Sector readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030, looking at decarbonisation progress across the 48 public sector bodies named in the WFG Act. Progress towards the well-being goals is tracked through 50 national well-being indicators, which are mapped to the SDGs through an interactive monitoring and data tool.

The Welsh Government, along with the Future Generations Commissioner, has made good progress improving stakeholder engagement with the SDGs, including two Stakeholder Summits in January 2019 which explored how Wales was contributing to, and could intensify efforts for, the 2030 Agenda. There was a recognised and renewed appetite for the involvement of civil society during these Summits. Following the consultations, the Welsh Government then published a supplementary report to the UK's Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2019.

In June 2022, the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill was laid before the Welsh Parliament. The Bill is intended to complement the WFG Act by embedding the principle of social partnership in the operation of public bodies and thereby recognises the need for government, employers, and worker representatives to work together to improve the economic, environmental, social, and cultural well-being of Wales. The Office for the Future Generations Commissioner is also currently working with sustainable development organisation Cynnal Cymru to support businesses with their understanding of how they can play a role towards achieving the well-being goals and, therefore, the SDGs, through tools such as the Future Proofing Toolkit.

The WFG Act has inspired other nations to follow suit. Similar legislation is being developed in Scotland, and in the UK

Parliament, the Private Members' Bill mechanism has been utilised to introduce a Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill.

Scotland

Scotland was one of the first countries to adopt the SDGs in 2015. The SDGs are localised through the National Performance Framework (NPF) and its National Outcomes, which were last revised in 2018 when the SDGs were integrated into the Framework. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places a duty on Scottish Ministers to consult, develop, and review the National Outcomes every five years. The next review is expected to be completed by summer 2023.

As it stands, the NPF loosely embeds the SDGs by mapping each of the 11 National Outcomes to related SDGs. However, there is no statutory requirement on public bodies to deliver the National Outcomes and, as such, the SDG Targets remain abstract within the NPF. Further thinking is necessary to properly localise the SDGs in Scotland, particularly in terms of aligning domestic policy goals with SDG Targets.

In recent years, the Scottish Government has maintained links to the civil society push to deliver the SDGs in Scotland, mainly through regular engagement with the SDG Network Scotland (an open coalition of over 600 people and organisations). In 2019, as part of the VNR process, the Scottish Government worked closely with this network and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to produce its first comprehensive Supplementary Review of progress towards the SDGs.

According to the review, the Parliament "committed resources to establish sustainable development as a scrutiny lens" and developed an innovative Sustainable Development Impact Assessment (SDIA) tool. Unfortunately, this tool has not yet been routinely used beyond its pilot in some parliamentary committees.

The review identified challenges around the low profile of the SDGs among the general population; resolving conflicts between resources and priorities; and achieving a balance between the universality of the SDGs and a need to localise and adapt data to be relevant for Scotland. The Government

outlined a number of considerations, including ideas for long-term transformation to deliver both the National Outcomes and the SDGs simultaneously.

Following the 2019 review, and in an attempt to raise the profile of the SDGs as a framework to drive policy, the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework team and members of SDG Network Scotland created a toolkit to support more coherent policymaking in relation to both the SDGs and the National Outcomes. It is unclear if this toolkit has been routinely used and both the National Outcomes and SDGs remain a low priority across many Government teams. There is some movement within local government through Community Planning Partnerships to align their Local Outcome Improvement Plans to the SDGs.

There is some evidence of funding allocations from the Government mentioning the SDGs within the grant-giving specifications. It is less evident in public procurement and the tendering of contracts.

Following the 2021 Scottish Election, the Scottish Government committed to bring forward a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill that would put "duties on public bodies and local government to take account of the impact of their decisions on sustainable development, in Scotland and internationally". This commitment followed an open letter from SDG Network Scotland to all party leaders in Scotland that called for new legislation to build upon the successes (and address failures) of other similar acts across the UK. Subsequent research into what this Bill should aim to do suggests that it has the potential to give weight to existing commitments on well-being and sustainable development by strengthening the National Outcomes and the duties to deliver them. Therefore, this Bill and the upcoming review of the NPF could signal a step change in how Scotland localises the SDGs.

Northern Ireland

As mentioned in the first Measuring Up, the principles of sustainable development are integrated throughout the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (PfG) and its associated Outcomes and Indicators. The mapping exercise in 2018 identified how the PfG Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19 aligned with the SDGs.

A new, long-term, strategic outcomes-based PfG is in development, following a public consultation on the draft Outcomes held by the Executive in spring 2021. The draft states that the Executive intends the Outcomes Framework become Northern Ireland's way to demonstrate progress towards the SDGs. It also confirms that the new PfG will be "underpinned by a budget and supported by key Executive strategies, including an investment strategy, an economic strategy, and an anti-poverty strategy aimed at building a strong and prosperous society by tackling disadvantage and achieving sustainable economic growth". However, it is unclear when the new PfG is expected to come into force and, given the current lack of leadership, it is also unclear how effective this will be.

Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (known as the sustainable development statutory duty) was established more than 15 years ago. Following this, an additional legal requirement to deliver on sustainable development was introduced under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, which required local authorities to incorporate the delivery of sustainable development within their Community Plans.

However, there is an enforcement gap, with no specific regulations on reporting or screening of sustainable development by Departments and Councils. Although the PfG has seen many Departments align their objectives to the SDGs, this does not yet amount to a specific delivery plan. The connection to SDG Targets is also missing in the draft PfG, meaning it lacks the detail to assess if Northern Ireland is on track to meet the Goals.

While the new Office of Environmental Protection provides an environmental watchdog function, the closure of the Sustainable Development Commission means there is no appointed body in Northern Ireland that covers a broader sustainable development remit, which would enable it to promote, lead, or monitor Government action for all the SDGs.

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The UK Government should also work proactively with cities and local governments to ensure a systematic, collaborative, cross-UK approach

Cities and local governments

As urban populations, and their subsequent influence and emissions, grow, cities will become increasingly important actors in the delivery of all 17 SDGs. Cities and local councils are on the frontline of many of the challenges that the Goals seek to resolve. In the years since Measuring Up was completed, there has been a noticeable increase in local government engagement with the Goals across the UK.

In 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) unanimously passed a resolution to support the SDGs. This was followed in 2020 by a guide to support councils' response to the SDGs and to making use of them in their own communities, with actions and examples from the UK and internationally. The guide provides a four-step roadmap to help identify priorities, engage with citizens, select indicators, and monitor and communicate progress.

Due to the devolved nature of the UK, each of the country's cities and local governments will need to develop an individual approach for action on the SDGs. Currently, the nature of SDG engagement varies and often reflects local priorities and available resources. Examples include commitments and declarations, like Newcastle City Council and Liverpool City Council's public commitments to embed the SDGs in their policies. Others focus on measurement and outcomes, such as Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Leadership Board's plan, which mapped outcomes and indicators to the Goals, the London Sustainable Development Commission's assessment of London's progress on the Goals, or the West Midlands Combined Authority's evaluation of the state of the region. In 2019, a UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) discussion with city representatives found that data is often cited as the greatest challenge when localising the SDGs. Liverpool stakeholders have set up an open data platform, created by the Office of National Statistics, to address this.

The UN encourages local and regional governments to undertake Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR). Although these reports hold no official status, much like the Voluntary National Reviews they provide multiple benefits in reinforcing coherence, identifying opportunities and challenges in implementing the Goals, and complementing and contributing to national work. To date, there have been 92 reports submitted globally, including Bristol's 2019 VLR. Bristol has published an accompanying handbook to support other UK cities in producing a VLR and is recognised as best practice for governance in a global city playbook for advancing the SDGs.

Bristol has recently published its 2022 VLR which includes findings from research conducted on a sample of six core cities. This study investigated the constraints that many local authorities face in adopting and delivering the SDGs and found three main challenges for UK cities: piecemeal devolution has created overlapping government structures, which complicates effective coordination; the unstable fiscal context for local authorities makes it difficult to ensure SDG delivery; and data accessibility for local authorities makes it hard for targeted action on the Goals. The main response to these challenges has been the cultivation of cross-sector partnerships aimed at improving capacity for and depth of delivery.

Increasingly, cities are collaborating internationally on the significant challenges they face. Networks of cities like the Brookings SDG City Leadership network, Local 2030, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and others are using the SDGs as a common framework and language to understand innovative approaches to sustainable development in cities. UK cities are a core part of many of these forums and are actively using the voice of cities and local authorities to ensure SDG delivery. One particular area in which UK cities are leading in is the UK Cities Climate Investment Commission.

Although action from local governments and cities on the Goals should be celebrated, the lack of a unified approach has created a siloed landscape without the infrastructure for collaboration on what should be shared Goals. Ultimately, greater leadership from the UK Government will encourage and enable local stakeholders to engage with and act on the Goals where solutions can have rapid tangible impacts and can be scaled and replicated. This includes providing resources and programmes that allow local government and its stakeholders to do more with the agenda.

The UK Government should also work proactively with cities and local governments to ensure a systematic, collaborative, cross-UK approach to local adoption, implementation, and partnership on the SDGs. Crucially, with international and national attention on the role of cities, towns, and rural communities may be neglected, so this support needs to be relevant and equivalent at all levels of local government.

THE UK'S OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

The UK Government has a range of responsibilities in the context of the UK's 14 Overseas Territories (OTs) and three Crown Dependencies. This section focuses on the 14 OTs and how the SDGs are employed in these contexts. The Government identifies the OTs as "strategic assets"; rich in "natural and environmental resources"; the sites for "90% of the UK's biodiversity"; and important for "national security". The OTs are home to British nationals and the UK is committed (as stated in the 2012 UK White Paper) "to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the people… to ensure their just treatment and their protection against abuses… and to develop self-government and free political institutions".

In the UK's 2019 Voluntary National Review (p171), OTs were mentioned in the context of SDG 14, with coverage of the UK's "Blue Belt programme" supporting marine ecosystem protection in the territories. However, there was no mention of the OTs beyond this. Elsewhere, in the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's regular reporting on Official Development Assistance (ODA) activity, the contribution of UK ODA in supporting SDGs in the poorest overseas territories is noted.

It is clear that the UK's objectives for its 2021/22 OT project, including environmental protection, promoting good governance, and disaster preparedness, can all be mapped to the SDGs. However, there appears to be no systematic effort on the part of the Government to use the SDGs as a framework for thinking about, or assessing, the development of the OTs.

Indeed, DFID's Overseas Territories Country Profile from 2018 went a step further, indicating that "contribution to the Global Goals is not a measure which applies" to the UK's development assistance to the territories.

A relative lack of engagement with the SDGs on the part of the Government is especially disappointing because the OTs themselves have made use of the SDGs in three ways:
- For reporting purposes, as in the Falklands Islands State of the Environment Report, which is organised and aligned around relevant SDG Targets.
- As a framework for partnerships, for example, in the Bermuda-UN economic partnership.
- As a framework for engaging stakeholders, for example, in framing the Gibraltar Sustainability Awards.

The SDGs squarely address the environmental issues facing OTs, as illustrated by a Government consultation exercise undertaken in 2019. The top environmental challenges identified by respondents were: (i) pressures due to economic development (raised by 73% of respondents) addressed in SDGs 8 and 12, among others; (ii) the threats posed by non-native invasive species (57%) addressed in SDG 15; and, (iii) vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (55%) addressed in SDG 13, but also in Targets in SDGs 1 and 11.

Terrestrial and marine biodiversity is an important issue in the OTs, recognised through the Blue Belt programme, but also in the recent awards from the UK's Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund.

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The SDGs are an important agenda for looking at the sustainable development of the UK's overseas territories — both progress and challenges — and they have been picked up by some of these territories themselves

The integrity of the global financial system is an important structural factor in global sustainable development. UK OTs (notably, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and the British Virgin Islands) regularly feature in critical coverage of money laundering, tax evasion, and aggressive tax avoidance, for example, in work by the Tax Justice Network, Transparency International, and Oxfam. However, progress has been seen and further high-level political commitments have been made in recent years.

The good governance agenda in the SDGs, with corruption as a particular issue, has been a high-profile issue in some OT contexts. For example, a 2022 Commission of Inquiry in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) found that "almost every aspect of government in the BVI has very poor governance". A 2018 report by the Cayman Islands documents 24 instances of corruption by officials from 2016-18, noting that "corruption is a long standing problem". SDG 16, with its Targets on governance and illicit financial flows, seems a key arena for evaluation of challenges and progress in the OTs and the UK's role.

Other significant challenges across the social and economic agenda of the SDGs remain in the OTs. For example, income inequality (SDGs 1 and 10) has been acknowledged as an urgent issue by governments in Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. In Bermuda, this is recognised by the Premier as intersecting with systematic racial inequality within the criminal justice system (SDG 16).

It is clear that the SDGs are an important agenda for looking at the sustainable development of the UK's OTs – both progress and challenges – and they have been picked up by some of these territories themselves. Two central questions subsequently arise from this.

The first is how best to employ and harness the SDGs. The SDGs offer a framework, and a set of global and regional institutions and processes, in which independent scrutiny and accountability, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and peer learning, for example with other Small Island Developing States can flourish.

A second, more critical question, must also be posed. As mentioned at the outset, the UK has specific responsibilities to promote the development of the OTs. If the UK does not address the OTs systematically in its SDG reporting, and does not address the SDGs systematically in its OTs reporting, is the UK taking its commitments, both to the OTs and the SDGs, seriously enough?

PARTNERSHIPS

Achieving the SDGs requires resources, energy, innovation, and new policy and practice solutions to address complex challenges. Tackling such challenges cannot be achieved by one sector alone and we will all need to work in partnership across and within sectors to reach the ambition set out in the 17 Goals.

These partnerships may take many forms and be focused on achieving specific technical solutions or more systemic change. Our recent experience of COVID-19 showed us in practice how quickly and effectively partnerships could form

and have a positive impact in moments of crisis – the medical research community collaborated with business, government, and citizens to develop a vaccine and produce the equipment needed at speed.

A similar commitment is necessary for many of the challenges we need to overcome to achieve the Goals. Investing in these partnerships is hard when the need does not appear to be as urgent or immediate as a pandemic, but the Goals require bold leadership and ambitious action now.

FINANCE

Financial resources need to be directed towards the outcomes within the 17 Goals. While Government spending is critical, so is the role of private finance.

Investors, including philanthropic funds, play a crucial role in shaping both positive and negative outcomes related to the SDGs – in particular, they hold stakeholders to account and mobilise finance and resources to bridge the existing gaps in the delivery of the Goals. As an articulation of the world's most pressing issues, the SDGs can guide investors in understanding the trends and impacts of their activities. Aligning investments with the ambitions of the Goals can ensure a longer-term financial performance and safeguard against risks and crises.

Increasingly investors in the UK, particularly those that are signatories to the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), use environmental, social, and governance (ESG) or SDG-related criteria to measure the outcomes of their investments. The PRI counts more than 3,000 signatories managing in excess of $100 trillion in assets since it was launched and its membership is increasingly seen as crucial for asset managers pitching for mandates from pension schemes.

In June 2020, PRI published a five-part framework for investors to understand and shape the real-world outcomes of their investments in line with the SDGs. At the time of writing, there are 853 PRI signatories in the UK & Ireland – 633 investment managers, 123 service providers, and 97 asset owners – all of which have committed to incorporate ESG issues into their investment analysis and decision-making processes and report on their progress in doing so. PRI was established in 2005 but more than 470 of these organisations have become signatories in the last four years, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of responsible investment.

Four Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) from large companies in the UK (Palladium International Limited, Tesco, The Very Group, and Unilever) have signed the CFO Principles, established by the global CFO Coalition, to leverage corporate finance towards the realisation of the SDGs and support companies in the transition to sustainable development. The Coalition was convened as a platform for CFOs to interact with their peers, investors, financial institutions, and the United Nations to share ideas, develop new concepts and frameworks, and provide recommendations to unlock private capital and create a market for mainstream SDG investments. It stems from the recognition that – as stewards of trillions of dollars in corporate investments – CFOs are uniquely positioned to reshape the future of corporate finance and investment as a catalyst for growth, value creation, and social impact.

The establishment of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) is spurring businesses to properly integrate climate change into their plans. Similar is expected from the emerging Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures. While a Taskforce on SDG-related Financial Disclosures is not in the pipeline, the recognition that these global issues have a significant financial implication is promising and the interest in ESG issues will hopefully result in their better integration in financing decisions.

Thirteen banks in the UK have joined the Principles for Responsible Banking to commit to aligning their strategies and practices with the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement. Nevertheless, there is still an estimated global US$3.7trn funding gap between the financing provided by current investment levels and the amount needed to meet the SDGs by 2030. Localising the role of financial institutions in the UK, with greater commitment and collaboration from actors in such initiatives, could be key to delivering this.

DATA

- Data and monitoring that reflects SDG challenges in the UK context is essential to realising the SDGs.
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has done good work in collating and presenting data on the global SDG Indicators – but this can and should be extended, with future work concentrating on enabling more evaluation of the UK's specific situation and challenges.

Making progress towards the SDGs requires timely, relevant and high-quality data which enables tracking and measurement of progress against the Targets and Indicators. Conversely, as the Government noted in its Voluntary National Review (VNR), "access to, and a general lack of, appropriate data is the main challenge to fully reporting on UK progress towards the Goals".

The previous Measuring Up report largely relied on data gathered by researchers and chapter authors. Though work by the ONS to systematically gather and present data across the SDGs was underway, only limited progress had been made in 2017-18. The full launch of the ONS' SDG reporting platform since then, and continued efforts to collect data, means that Measuring Up 2.0 has been prepared in a context where data is collated via the ONS' SDG website for 83% of the global SDG Indicators, compared to 39% in 2017. Data disaggregation was identified in the first report as a particular challenge, and the ONS has made progress on this: of the 53 Targets which specifically cite the need for disaggregation, the ONS currently lists 45.3% as "Fully Disaggregated" and 17% as "Partially Disaggregated".

Nevertheless, the researchers providing data for this report have identified a series of remaining challenges and problems under five main themes.

More timely, and more faithful, data addressing the SDG Targets and Indicators
There are gaps in the data compilation where no data has been reported by the ONS against a number of Indicators (e.g. 2.4.1, 3.8.1, 6.3.1, 6.4.1, 11.2.1, 11.3.2).

In other instances, the data reported does not always fully reflect the information required by Indicators. For example, the available data for Indicators that are used across multiple Targets (repeat Indicators) 1.5.1, 11.5.1 and 13.1.1 covers the number of deaths attributed to disasters but not information on missing and directly affected persons, despite the fact that both Indicators make reference to it. Tracking data beyond mortality rates, which includes vulnerability to disasters and people directly impacted, is an area that the ONS could consider making data available on; this is particularly important given the increased frequency of extreme climate-related hazards and the necessity to prepare for such events. Similarly, the data reported for Indicator 2.5.1 (number of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture) only partially reflects the required information, something which is acknowledged by the ONS.

It is vital that these bodies of data are continuously tracked and monitored: some of the Indicators logged as "reported" appear not to have been reviewed since their initial publication in 2017. Across SDG 5, for example, at least five Indicators offer data

from 2017 or 2018. In some cases, there are alternative data sets that could be used but have not been added (e.g. Indicator 16.1.4) and in others the data has simply not been renewed (e.g. Indicator 5.5.2).

Additional data addressing specific SDG challenges in the UK context

Current ONS reporting is tied to the globally agreed Indicators, which the Government recognised as not covering all areas of the SDGs that are relevant to the UK in its VNR. This means that even though the SDGs identify the key challenges for the UK, this relevance is being missed. The most prominent example of this is Target 7.1 on energy, which specifically includes reference to energy affordability. Global Indicators, recognising that available global data for energy efficiency is difficult to gather, do not address this Target. Yet, this is clearly an area where the SDGs connect to and reflect a key concern of people across the UK. Other examples include data on mobile phones and broadband access. The ONS should therefore review the SDG Indicators and provide additional data where needed to better reflect the relevance of the SDGs in the UK. The analysis and research within this report could be used as a starting point.

Assessing progress against Indicators

The ONS website currently presents quantitative data and offers visualisations of that data, for example in the form of graphs tracking the data over time. However, it offers no assessment on this or even analysis around trends in the data, let alone on SDG progress. By contrast, the SDG reporting undertaken by Eurostat explicitly assesses progress towards Targets for both quantitative and non-quantitative Indicators, providing an "at a glance" indication of progress being made. In cases of non-statistical Indicators, the ONS website contains a list of relevant sources of information (discussed below) but again could do more to enable assessments on the extent of progress or whether a specific SDG Target had been met or not in the UK.

In these respects, the ONS currently does not monitor the UK's progress on the SDGs, or even report it, so much as present data that could allow others to monitor it. For the UK to be seen as taking the SDGs seriously, the ONS should extend its existing work or be given an expanded mandate to do so to provide this assessment. Currently the page for each SDG Indicator on the ONS platform does not even include the SDG Target text, which would help users to make their own assessments.

Progress on data disaggregation and analysis of intersectionality

As discussed in the chapter on SDG 17, available disaggregation across the SDGs is mixed, though the ONS' 2022 Inclusive Data Implementation Plan includes measures to address this. In compiling this report, we found a mixed result in the level of data disaggregation. Some sets provide deep intersectional analysis (e.g. health) and other areas are lacking (e.g. cities), particularly on geographic information and certain societal groupings such as persons with disabilities.

Coverage of non-statistical Indicators

A number of SDG Indicators are classed as non-statistical (e.g. Indicators 5.6.2, 12.1.1, 14.6.1). The data reported for these Indicators in most cases includes lists of policies, laws, and strategy plans which had been identified as relevant for the Indicator.

Non-statistical Indicators could be further developed through the inclusion of more comprehensive lists of relevant policies, legislation, plans, etc. When gathering data for non-statistical Indicators, researchers often had to use sources beyond those provided by the ONS in order to obtain a fuller picture. More specifically, these should include more timely updated lists, for example Indicator 13.2.1 makes reference to the 2017 Clean Growth Strategy but doesn't include the 2021 Net Zero Strategy, a key strategic plan in relation to this Indicator.

Non-statistical Indicators should also aim to incorporate the full scope of plans and policies that will enable measurement of impact (i.e. Indicator 12.1.1 includes a limited list of policies relevant to sustainable consumption and production). Lastly, these Indicators should identify data with the appropriate level of focus, i.e. national, regional, or local. For example, Indicator 8.b.1 makes no reference to how the youth employment strategy would be operationalised at a subnational level.

Recommendations

1. Timely and comprehensive data is needed to fill the remaining gaps in the data collation and renew data that has not been reported for the last four-five years.
2. The ONS should review the SDG Indicators and provide additional data where needed to better reflect the relevance of the SDGs in the UK. The analysis and research within this report could be used as a starting point.
3. The ONS should extend its existing work, or be given an expanded mandate, to provide an assessment and analysis around trends in the data.
4. Address the availability of disaggregated data and meet the measures set out in the Inclusive Data Implementation Plan.
5. Further develop non-statistical Indicators with more comprehensive and timely updated lists of relevant policies, legislation, and plans. Incorporate the full scope of plans and policies that will enable measurement of impact and identify data with the appropriate level of focus.

PART 3:
THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

The SDGs have tremendous potential to mobilise action across the whole of society. Many businesses, investors, civil society and academic organisations in the UK have embraced this agenda but more could be done to put us on track for 2030. The limited leadership from the Government and confusion about domestic relevance has restricted stakeholder engagement. This is a missed opportunity. The comprehensive scope of the SDGs means that support for the Goals aligns with many other objectives. All stakeholders can benefit by using the SDGs to frame and develop the partnerships needed to advance the issues they care about most.

Given UN Global Compact Network UK's membership, this section emphasises the role that business can play. However, it also includes non-exhaustive information for other stakeholders.

BUSINESS

- To maximise business and societal benefit from the SDGs, the Goals must be integrated as part of core business strategy. A growing number of businesses are speaking about the SDGs, and many are engaging at a strategic and leadership level, but more action is needed across all businesses to realise the benefits that the Goals offer.
- The SDGs address issues that present existential risks for many businesses. Disruptions to business operations caused by civil unrest, economic instability, and extreme weather create tensions that need to be reconciled between business-as-usual, making the problem worse in the long term and opting for disruption in the short term to transform to sustainable business models.
- Tools and resources exist to support businesses to embed the SDGs, but particular support is needed for SMEs.

Business has a critical role to play in implementing many of the actions that are needed to achieve the Goals. Investor interest is one of the most important drivers of corporate sustainability, as covered in Part 2, and as stakeholder demands for corporate sustainability rise, engaging with the framework of the SDGs not only enables business to demonstrate its impact on the environment and society at large, but also to access finance and growth opportunities, work with organisations across the value chain, and importantly share a universal language to engage with stakeholders.

More than this, business increasingly recognises the risks of systemic national and global issues reflected in the Goals which may previously have been considered outside of the realm of their interests. These risks often pose existential questions to leaders but can be an opportunity for innovation, growth, and transformation if embraced. Working through the lens of the SDGs can be a way to assess what is material to the business now but also consider how global issues which are indirectly relevant might pose major risks in the future. In some cases, the tensions between products and services and these long-term business risks might be identified. Solutions are not necessarily easy, and the nature of the 17 Goals means that many traditional and incumbent businesses will need to go far beyond business-as-usual to contribute to their achievement.

The UK's largest companies are engaging with the SDGs. Support the Goals research found that the number of FTSE100 companies stating their support for the SDGs had grown from 70% in 2018 to 83% in 2020. More than half of FTSE100 companies have measurable commitments to support the Goals, and 47% are reporting their progress. The support from FTSE250 companies is lower, with only 18% of companies in 2020 making measurable commitments to the SDGs, however, the percentage has also increased in recent years, demonstrating an encouraging trend.

The SDGs are increasingly used by businesses to communicate and engage stakeholders in their corporate sustainability work. The World's To Do List campaign in September 2021 saw major businesses, brands, and organisations reimagine the SDGs as a series of sticky notes and spread them through physical and digital activations to amplify the work they're doing on the Goals.

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The level of ambition needed from global and UK businesses to meet the Goals is currently missing

Making small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) more sustainable is essential to achieving the SDGs. Although their individual impacts are small, together they account for 61% of the employment and over half of the turnover in the UK private sector (£2.3 trillion in 2021). There are over 5.6 million SMEs in the UK, which account for 99.9% of the business population. Many SMEs have embraced sustainability and made it integral to their brands and business models. For example, most B-Corps are smaller companies, and they leverage their high sustainability performance to gain business advantage. Other SMEs are feeling pressure from customers, employees, and regulators, however, they face significant challenges finding capacity to transition to more sustainable ways of working.

One of the difficulties that businesses of all sizes face with the SDGs is that the Targets are aimed at policymakers and articulated in a language that is hard to translate to a business context. Tools and resources have been created to help, such as the SDG Compass and the SDG Action Manager. Recently, the SDG Ambition Benchmarks, which translate the SDGs for business in the areas where it can drive the greatest impact, have had good uptake in the UK. Resources like the SME Climate Hub are very valuable, providing tailor-made guidance for SMEs on a critical SDG issue. Larger businesses can help by engaging their supply chains, providing support and incentives for their suppliers to transition to more sustainable operations.

Business is recognising the valuable framework that the SDGs offer to shape their sustainability communications and reporting. The critical next step is for business to engage with the SDGs at a strategic level and to close the existing performance gap between the commitments that companies are making and the action that is needed to deliver the 2030 Agenda. For example, although many organisations now recognise the importance of lowering their carbon emissions, only 629 UK-headquartered companies have committed to set a Science-based Target to reduce their emissions in line with climate science. Likewise, despite the growing recognition of the need to increase the number of women in senior executive positions since the Hampton-Alexander Review in 2016, 171 FTSE350 companies are still below the 33% women in leader-ship by 2020 target.

The level of ambition needed from global and UK businesses to meet the Goals is currently missing. The latest insights from the SDG Action Manager shows that although there is increased engagement with the Goals from business, a gap exists between action and performance that is bold enough to achieve them. In most cases, the easiest actions, those that are operational, are pursued rather than in areas where they could create the greatest impact, such as with value chains and business models.

The SDGs provide a unique framework — with a built-in level of ambition — for all companies to align with environmental and social factors that will be important for building resilience, measuring success, and generating economic and growth opportunities. Achieving the SDGs will need corporate goal-setting that is more absolute, more interconnected with sustainability targets embedded throughout the business rather than standalone, and more impact-oriented through core business products, services, and across global value chains. There are many case studies in this report of UK companies who are pioneering and leading the way on the SDGs, but more can be done, at a strategic and ambitious level, and by more organisations, to help the UK successfully meet the Goals.

Recommendations

1. Businesses should continue to identify and prioritise the Goals and Targets that are most relevant to their organisation, integrating them into core practices and processes, deepening implementation across operations, products and services, people management, and corporate finance.
2. Businesses should use the SDG Ambition Benchmarks to set goals that align with the needs and ambitions of the SDGs, and regularly measure and report on their progress.
3. Business should use the SDGs to enhance stakeholder engagement in sustainability and responsibility by integrating the Goals into corporate communications and reporting.
4. Business networks and trade associations should support more SME engagement with the SDGs by providing further SME-tailored guidance and practical support.
5. Businesses should seek industry-wide partnerships and multi-stakeholder collaborations that can accelerate innovation, scale-up action, and drive solutions.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Other stakeholders play a crucial role in holding government and business to account, for delivering frontline services, for research and innovation, education, and for the partnerships that are needed to drive this agenda.

Civil society

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions and associations, social movements, grassroots organisations, communities, faith groups, online networks, and many micro-organisations such as parent-teacher associations, village associations, and even youth groups all have a valuable role to play in driving the SDGs. There are more than 163,000 such organisations in the UK, and although the number is incomparable to the private sector, their work can be just as significant.

These organisations have a critical role to play in holding government and business to account. More often, it is these organisations that measure, report, and expose issues. Local groups are on the frontline and understand local needs and challenges, and are therefore in a position to propose solutions. Yet these organisations are often poorly resourced and responding to local and urgent needs, such as food banks, shelters, flood relief efforts, and early years services. While, like business, they should embrace the SDGs at a strategic level, their ability to step beyond the day-to-day and engage is more restricted.

A number of community foundations have embedded the SDGs into their missions and grant-making, which has been a "powerful tool" in highlighting the need for community-based social change and enabling them to access greater funds, new donors, and partnerships. Similarly, faith groups, and particularly inter-faith networks in the UK, have recognised the SDGs as a tool to "form the backbone of local relationships and cohesion".

Unfortunately, reliable data on SDG awareness and implementation among civil society organisations and other stakeholders is low. A UKSSD project in 2020 found that NGOs who were not working with the Goals felt a particular need for reassurance that the Goals mattered to the Government in order to invest. The sector needs to "reembrace the SDGs" more explicitly within internal operations and in external communications. Aligning civil society work to the SDGs will build coherence and commitment between projects, programmes, and priorities.

Academia and research

Since 2018, there has been significant momentum from the further and higher education sector to support the SDGs in all aspects: driving academic research for the Goals, delivering education for sustainable development, equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to advance the SDGs, and ensuring that the institutions themselves are positively contributing to the 2030 Agenda through their estates and operations.

The UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) continues to be a good system for assessing the quality of research in UK Higher Education Institutions. In total, 6,781 Impact Case Studies were submitted to the REF 2021 which demonstrate the social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts (beyond academia) of research. However, a search on the database suggests that only 292 case studies reference the 'Sustainable Development Goals' or a related term. There is a missed opportunity to map research to the Goals, and both universities and UKRI would benefit from this exercise.

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, which assess universities' performance against the SDGs, launched in 2019, with 26 UK universities submitting evidence to receive an overall score in the first edition. The Rankings assess university commitment to the Goals across four broad areas: research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching. The latest Rankings saw participation from more than 50 UK universities, with 20 of those in the overall top 100 – more than any other nation. Hopefully, given time, the Rankings will lead to greater engagement across the higher education sector in the UK.

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Social media and its influencers have engaged people, particularly millennials and generation Z, in social justice issues

Currently 93 higher education institutions, principally through their Business Schools, are signatories to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management initiative (PRME). PRME leads many initiatives in the sector focused on SDG fulfilment, including a Carbon Literacy Training Programme. Signatories are expected to submit a Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) report every two years, covering research, teaching and learning, and external engagement with business and other stakeholders. The majority of SIP reports now map progress against the SDGs.

Since 2017, many institutions in the UK have also signed the SDG Accord, which is a commitment to embed the SDGs into education, research, leadership, operations, administration, and engagement activities. Of these institutions, 54 submitted reports and the collective 2022 findings suggest that budgets, training, and senior management support were the top three enablers to better integrate the SDGs.

Progress over the past four years demonstrates a growing recognition of, and action to progress, the role that academia plays in delivering the SDGs. Many institutions support the notion that aligning departmental and institutional activities to the SDGs can enable more relatable, clearer dialogues on sustainability both within institutions, with students and with external stakeholders. The SDGs can provide a framework for evaluation and delivery of activities, encourage staff and students to innovate, create cohesion between departments, and encourage behaviour change both within and outside the education environment.

Research and innovation are not exclusively the work of academia, business and industry also play a role, as does public innovation funding. As more businesses embed the SDGs in their own strategies, the research and innovation they undertake within their own products and services should align. They can also act as a means of scaling up solutions and driving down costs. Further narrative on the role of broader research and innovation for the SDGs is described in the SDG 9 chapter.

Citizens

Public engagement with and awareness of the SDGs remains low despite the broader themes of sustainability growing in discourse. In 2019 in Great Britain it was estimated that just over one in ten adults were somewhat or very familiar with the SDGs, despite three-quarters of adults in 2021 who worried about climate change. Research indicates that mentions of climate change on our TV channels have increased fourfold in the past three years, with significant increases in the mentions of individual behaviours such as recycling, reusing, and veganism. Social media and its influencers have engaged people, particularly millennials and generation Z, in social justice issues, including period poverty, trans rights, and housing justice in new ways. Consumer trends over the last three years suggest that the adoption of sustainable lifestyles is on the rise, people are more socially conscious when purchasing clothing, and consumers are embracing circularity.

Capitalising on this momentum by encouraging citizens to understand, use, and advocate for the SDGs in everyday language as they already do with these related themes would be a valuable opportunity.

Local councils and municipal governments both in the UK and globally have used the SDGs to frame discussions and set local priorities with citizens, this should happen on a much broader scale to increase awareness and accelerate national progress. Initiatives like the Good Life Goals which translate the SDGs into 85 everyday actions for individuals, visual campaigns which engage the public such as those led by Project Everyone, and conscious communication and education efforts that specifically use the language of the SDGs could help close the gap and raise the low engagement levels in the UK especially if they are endorsed and championed by the Government and other influential stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

This report focuses on the domestic delivery of the Goals in the UK, of which we found 132 Targets are relevant. Our research indicates that the UK is only performing well on 17% of these Targets. There are gaps in policy or inadequate performance for 64% of them, and 11% where there is little to no policy in place to address the Target and where performance is poor or even declining. For the remaining 8% of Targets, gaps in available or appropriate data made it impossible to measure the UK's performance, and we have set out five recommendations specifically to address this.

The first Measuring Up report in 2018 provided a baseline, and in comparison to that assessment, our findings suggest improvements in 23 Targets, regression in 18 Targets, and no change in 65 of the Targets which were rated amber or red four years ago.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19, the growing cost-of-living crisis, and the increasing threat of climate change, among other things, risk putting the UK further off course.

What needs to happen to achieve the Goals by 2030

Based on the findings of our research, there are over 120 individual recommendations contained in this report that cover each of the SDGs and their Targets, the means by which we can achieve them, and the role that stakeholders can play in delivering this agenda in the UK.

Critical to achieving the SDGs in the UK by 2030 will be Government action in four broad areas:

1. **Planning**: We need to develop a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to deliver the SDGs. This overarching plan should identify how the SDGs are driving policy domestically as well as abroad. The Cabinet Office is best positioned to lead this work.
2. **Leadership**: We need top-level political leadership and endorsement to guarantee that the cross-departmental action necessary to achieve the SDGs is implemented, to ensure policy coherence across Whitehall, and to recognise the domestic relevance and importance of the Goals. Responsibility for the Goals should ideally be in the Prime Minister's Office, or with a senior minister in a role with a significant domestic policymaking remit.

3. **Stakeholder engagement**: The Government must take immediate action to fulfil its commitment announced in the 2019 VNR to establish an effective mechanism to enhance stakeholder engagement and cooperation with the Government in the domestic sphere.
4. **Reporting**: The Government should commit to undertaking a second VNR in 2024 and use this as an additional opportunity to engage stakeholders across the country and open a UK-wide dialogue with key actors on the SDGs.

What should happen now

We need to work together in partnership, learn from best practice, and share ideas to ensure that no person or places are left behind in our efforts to reach the future we want – the ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

We acknowledge that this report is not perfect, but we believe it is a good indicator of progress on the SDGs over the last four years. We recognise that gaps in our expertise and knowledge remain despite our efforts to fill them, however, we hope this publication will make a valuable contribution to enable all stakeholders to understand where the opportunities and challenges lie in the achievement of this ambitious framework and to consider what role they may play. We invite you to share the report and use the findings to start conversations and catalyse action within and between your own networks.

There are nearly 50 case studies in this report from business and civil society organisations. They represent just a small sample of what is being done to accelerate this agenda. We encourage organisations to take inspiration from the case studies, make use of the tools and resources available to identify opportunities for action, and join the UN Global Compact Network UK to share ideas with others leading the transition to a sustainable future.

The UN Global Compact Network UK hosts many online and in-person public events to connect stakeholders, inspire ambition, enable action, and advocate for progress on the SDGs. This report represents just the start of our re-focused efforts to mobilise stakeholders for this agenda. We invite everyone to engage with us as we continue to drive for the achievement of the SDGs and a world in which we want to live and work.

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Global Compact
Network UK

About the United Nations Global Compact

As a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies to align their operations and strategies with ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption. Launched in 2000, the mandate of the UN Global Compact is to guide and support the global business community in advancing UN goals and values through responsible corporate practices. With more than 16,000 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories based in over 160 countries, and 72 Local Networks, it is the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world.

About the UN Global Compact Network UK

Through an extensive programme of activity, the UN Global Compact Network UK connects UK-based organisations in a global movement dedicated to driving sustainable business. We promote practical sustainability leadership through inspiring business ambition, enabling action that delivers sustainable growth, and actively shaping the responsible business environment to create a world we want to live and do business in. For more information, follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter (@globalcompactUK) or visit our website at unglobalcompact.org.uk