



January 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Following your success in the General Election, we outline below our expectations of your Government to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the UK by 2030.

As a cross-sector network of organisations investing in building a resilient, inclusive and sustainable economy – one where we have overcome the climate and ecological emergency – we support the SDGs. We believe the Goals are essential for long-term prosperity and the wellbeing of future generations.

January 2020 marks 10 years to achieve the Goals and build the future we want. We want to work with you in this Decade of Delivery to accelerate your commitment to progress on the Goals, now.

Our proposition is simple

Your Government can help us transform the UK with 3 easy actions:

1. Show leadership by signalling support for our organisations to work together in the UK, across sectors and industries to transform broken or failing systems
2. Publicly communicate the importance of the SDGs and develop a more effective approach to their implementation
3. Help the UK understand its performance on the SDGs by openly disclosing our progress towards the targets

Yours Sincerely,

UKSSD network
www.ukssd.co.uk



The opportunity

In 2015, the UK Government committed to *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and through this, to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

In 2018, our research showed that the UK is failing to perform on 76% of the targets under the 17 Goals.

We're a long way from the social, environmental and economic outcomes we should expect for a nation with as much talent, expertise and resource as the UK. We need to rapidly accelerate action if we're to achieve the vision of a nation where no one is left behind and where our communities, industries and environment are thriving.

We need your leadership to galvanise the extraordinary energy and resources of our multi-actor partnership, helping us work together and work with your Government to deliver the ambition of the Goals.

Our proposition for you and your Government

1. Show leadership by signalling support for our organisations to work together in the UK, across sectors and industries to transform broken or failing systems


We specifically need:

- a. Opportunities to work with Government departments because we have complementary skills and strengths that can create positive outcomes if deployed together.
- b. Support to work at a local government and community level, where solutions can have tangible impacts quickly and can be scaled and replicated.
- c. Help and encouragement to build partnerships between different organisations and sectors, because together we are stronger and can use our resources more efficiently.

It is only through collaboration that we will see transformation on the scale that is needed.

Nearly all major advances in human history have been the result people, communities, governments and organisations working together.


The current challenges facing our country – from NHS waiting lists and rising obesity rates, to plastic pollution and the climate emergency – require the same approach.





This is not radical thinking or the views of a particular political party, it's sensible because we live in a globalised and connected society.


To create systems change we need the support of Government. It will be hard for us to do this on our own and action will not happen quickly enough.

2. Publicly communicate the performance of the SDGs and develop a more effective approach to their implementation





We specifically need:

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- a. Your public commitment to the Goals by acknowledging them in relevant forums including public speeches and parliamentary debates, because this will clearly signal to organisations that they are relevant and will raise awareness across the country.
 - b. A coordinated and comprehensive communications campaign led by Government, which can be supported by stakeholders across the country, so we can rapidly increase awareness levels.
 - c. The development of an effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement mechanism, as committed to in the Voluntary National Review (VNR), so stakeholders can work with your Government on the implementation of the Goals.
 - d. A structural approach to implementing the Goals consistently across Government departments, so that they can be embedded across policy areas in a coherent way, as then the opportunity to create co-benefits from actions can be realised.




Awareness of the Goals remains low in the UK. Your own Government acknowledged in the production of its VNR in 2019 that engagement across Government departments was challenging because of these low awareness rates.

Organisations, and businesses in particular, are showing the leadership that is needed on this agenda. They recognise the financial and moral benefit of doing so. But despite increased engagement rates in the last two years, action is limited across the country as a result of low awareness levels.



Organisations desperately want reassurance that the Goals matter to you so they can invest energy into their work to support them. They also recognise the need for legislative changes to enforce positive action for the Goals, as has been the outcome from the Modern Slavery Act.



The Goals also direct us to make more coherent policy decisions spanning policy areas, this requires an approach to integrating the Goals across all Government departments. By doing so we can ensure that policy decisions don't adversely impact or contradict one another.

It also gives us an opportunity to identify interventions that could create multiple benefits, or co-benefits, spanning policy priorities.

3. Help the UK understand its progress on the SDGs by openly disclosing our progress towards the targets

We specifically need:

- a. **An independent monitoring and review process on the UK's performance on the Goals, so we can openly and transparently understand or identify where challenges exist and work together to address them.**
- b. **Support for organisations to understand their own performance on the Goals and the impact they may be having on the UK's progress towards them, to ensure consistency in the standard and quality of reporting.**

The Office National Statistics is leading the world in its reporting on the global indicators for the Goals and we can be proud of the UK's statistical excellence.

The Goals give us an opportunity to not only understand what is working well but also where more work is needed. To do this effectively we will need to ask questions about the gaps in our performance. This was recognised by your Ministers as problematic when they presented the UK's VNR to stakeholders in the UK, and understandably so, given the scrutiny if challenges are publicised.

However, a failure to do so also means we're never going to effectively work together to address these challenges. We will continue to ignore the reality of the lives of people who are being left behind and the cause of the damage that is being done to our planet.

And while some of these issues need to be addressed by policy and legislative actions, they also require action across sectors and need to be properly understood so we can all share responsibility.

Our commitment to the UK

Our stakeholders want to work with you and your Government because this is a shared endeavour. The SDGs offer us an unprecedented opportunity to create an inclusive, prosperous and sustainable UK.

We support your Government in this endeavour and to act on our proposition.

About us

UKSSD brings organisations together to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in the UK. Our network extends across the variety of UK sectors and industries, with organisations representing local, national and international interests.

Our proposition in this briefing builds on our existing work with organisations across the UK and represents the in-depth views of cross-sector stakeholders.

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