Environmental, Social and Governance Responsibilities:

We can’t do it alone
01 Introduction

Dear Reader,

As the UK prepared to host COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, concern was expressed about the environmental cost of flying in delegates, and their aides, from around the world.

At the same time, the UK Prime Minister hailed the summit as “a turning point for humanity.”

At the Business Travel Association (BTA), we found the intense focus on carbon frustrating. From cross-industry conversations, we know that sustainability and reducing carbon emissions are vital but are only a part of the challenge we face. We have a much wider responsibility to create a better world together. The entire business travel supply chain recognises that it has a critical role to play.

To date, many of the efforts of our industry are being under-reported. Sadly, too many companies are being forced to work in isolation and numerous initiatives have stalled as organisations have battled the economic and social consequences of Covid-19.

Therefore, now is the time to set out the progress the industry has made since the United Nations (UN) outlined its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. A plethora of initiatives have been identified and a growing number of partnerships are in place. Furthermore, we have now established new benchmarks for our industry and explored how priorities are changing. Both the pandemic and a greater understanding following COP19 and its successor, COP26, have shifted thinking.

Our first pan-industry ESG report, ‘We Can’t Do It Alone’, does not provide all the answers: it is only the first stage in a journey. It is the first benchmark of its kind, looking at the full ESG spectrum. Our findings are drawn from interviews with more than 35 senior leaders from the BTA’s membership. It carefully examines Environmental, Social, Corporate and Governance initiatives alongside current concerns and future priorities.

I cannot thank these people enough for their transparency, willingness to follow-up and eagerness to be part of this landmark study.

It is clear that in 2022 and beyond, there will be a spotlight on ESG and the sustainability goals reiterated at COP26. Our sector is well-placed to help deliver on net zero and is determined to work closely with the Government, other industries and NGOs to achieve our combined goals.

I very much look forward to your comments on the report. I would also welcome hearing from any organisation who would like to help us on the journey we intend to take in the next twelve months.

Best wishes,
Clive Wratten
CEO of the Business Travel Association (BTA)
clivew@thebta.org.uk

02 Executive Summary

KEY LEARNINGS:

All of our industry interviewees were candid about how they were approaching their environmental, social and governance (ESG) challenges.

They also showed a strong understanding of the UN compact goals which provide an excellent basis for a business to assess responsibilities that lie beyond their immediate commercial concerns.

Encouragingly, nearly one in three BTA members felt they were making strong progress against a range of critical indicators including – climate action, responsible consumption, clean energy and gender equality (see page 10 for full details).

However, across the spectrum, we also discovered that priorities had shifted during the pandemic and following COP26. Equally, our industry openly acknowledged that a lot of work was still needed to improve our reporting and to tackle many of the issues identified in the UN global compact.

We face many challenges, and whilst all are important, we must also look at those our industry can collectively help tackle. As such, this report provides an impression of where future priorities for collective action may lie.

As we develop our thinking, it is critical that the entire business travel supply chain prioritises its ESG activities and action plans. The role of the BTA is to help the industry do so collaboratively; sharing success, gifting knowledge and encouraging action. We also need to be closely involved in how we measure and report our actions to all of our stakeholders.

Central to our journey is the need to address the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic. We must mitigate costs as the industry recovers and help educate our customers about making sustainable choices, to help fuel the strides the industry is taking.

Equally, the focus on decarbonisation, net zero and offsetting means that much of the industry is in the sustainability spotlight. It is an area where we need to continue to take action and will be an important topic for the BTA in the coming months.

Our report shows that there are also new priorities emerging across the industry. First and foremost is the need for stronger partnerships that underpin sustainable growth. The desire for affordable and clean energy has increased, whilst a greater priority is being placed upon innovation and the need for strong institutions.

The industry has previously prioritised education, apprenticeships and diversity, meaning that as we come out of pandemic-driven restrictions, we are well-positioned to address the need for a decent place of work and economic growth. Much of this work will continue.

However, in the next few months I want to visit members up and down the country to learn more about the programmes they have in place, how their priorities are evolving, and how our industry can work more closely together. Together we can, and will, make a difference to our planet.
CURRENT TOP 5 PRIORITIES:

Today, as an industry, our current priorities against the 17 UN goals are:

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NEXT STEPS:

It is clear that there is a lot of work to be done to bring cohesion to our industry's ESG efforts. The BTA will now embark on a journey of discovery.

We will be going to meet experts within the industry and outside of it in order to match best practice against the priorities of our sector.

Once we have accumulated expert advice, we will set out a series of steps for the industry in order to deliver on its promises and priorities.

Future priorities

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We hope that this will be the first step on the road to creating an accreditation marque that can be used across the business travel sector. One that will be recognised by corporates and TMCs alike.

This is not a quick fix. We need a system that is fit for decades ahead. We are committed to the journey and will evolve our programme year-on-year to meet changing situations, environments and priorities.
03

The sustainable development goals

1. **No Poverty**
   - End poverty in all its forms everywhere

2. **Zero Hunger**
   - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

3. **Good Health and Well-Being**
   - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

4. **Quality Education**
   - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5. **Gender Equality**
   - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

6. **Clean Water and Sanitation**
   - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

7. **Affordable and Clean Energy**
   - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth**
   - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

9. **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**
   - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

10. **Reduced Inequalities**
    - Reduce inequality within and among countries

11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities**
    - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

12. **Responsible Consumption and Production**
    - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

13. **Climate Action**
    - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14. **Life Below Water**
    - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems

15. **Life on Land**
    - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

16. **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

17. **Partnerships for the Goals**
    - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

**OVERVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABILITY GOALS**

Every day, the actions of businesses across our sector touch the planet. Collectively, we have a responsibility to understand our social and environmental impacts.

Equally, we need to show that we can measure these impacts, set targets which we can work towards, and find ways to change our behaviours. Today many businesses see these responsibilities as part of their ESG agenda. Globally, many institutions are increasingly demanding specific details on the actions taken across the spectrum of ESG issues before agreeing future financing. As a response to the pandemic, COP26, and changes to financial scrutiny, the BTA has become acutely aware of the need to tackle relevant issues in an appropriate and ethical manner.

Therefore, the BTA felt it was time to undertake an industry-wide review of the actions that our members have taken, to look closely at what their priorities have been, and how they expect them to change. Rather than follow many of the micro-measurements that the financial institutions have taken to assess a company’s performance, we wanted to get an initial broader view of how their trading and business motivations were touching our planet.

Hence, we embarked on an initial exploration study to see how a cross section of our members were responding to the challenges faced by our planet, as laid down by the 17 SDGs drawn by the UN. This is only our starting point.

The Paris Agreement, formed at the 21st United Nation’s Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP21) in 2015, saw 196 countries agree to work together in a legally binding contract. They pledged to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, adapt to the impact of climate change and contribute funds to deliver the aims of the agreement.

Countries committed to national strategies that outlined how much they would reduce their emissions, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These are updated every 5 years to reflect the highest possible ambitions at the time. Although these pledges form part of the Paris Agreement, NDCs are not legally binding.

In addition to NDCs, 2015 saw the introduction of SDGs, as a global appeal to “end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030, all people enjoy peace and prosperity”. The SDGs update and replace the 8 Millennium Development Goals, which had a target date of 2015. The new SDGs were decided in a public process, with input from over 70 governments and representatives.

As no country is developed in terms of sustainability, the SDGs require all countries across the globe to address economic, social and environmental issues that explicitly impact the climate, oceans and biodiversity. The purpose of the goals is to measure genuine progress and bring about change. Despite there being 169 targets across the implementation of the goals, governments are free to determine their own application, as countries are not legally obligated to fulfil the SDGs in legal systems in the same way as NDCs.

The aims of COP26 were to strengthen the Paris Agreement and reignite the drive towards limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. The summit focused on mitigation, adaptation, finance and collaboration as the climate crisis is now the most urgent issue.
The current position and the challenge

THE CURRENT POSITION

Currently, the industry is focused on recovery post pandemic. Yet, whilst the pandemic has had a detrimental impact on our ESG ambitions, we have also been forced to stop and reflect.

This period has been both a barrier and enabler of ESG improvement, allowing time for reassessment and realignment as we commence our Covid-19 recovery. As such, the pandemic’s positive and negative impact is woven across the findings of this research.

Interviewees outlined their current ESG position and future intended position through a Likert scale. Interviewees were asked on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low/weak, 5 being high/strong) where they would position themselves in relation to their current and future intended ESG position and activity.

The interviewees were candid about their situations, and responses covered the spectrum from weak to strong. Only 3 interviewees felt that they currently had a weak ESG position, scoring themselves a 1. 10 interviewees felt their current position was very strong, scoring themselves a 5, becoming the most popular response to this question.

Furthermore, all but 4 organisations are aiming for a ‘very high’ future intended ESG position, each scoring a 4 for this question while every other interviewee scored a 5. However, of the 4 outlined, all were below a ‘high’ current ESG position, scoring a 3 or below here. This demonstrates that there is a drive for ESG planning and activity, but there is also a focus on gradual and accurate implementation.

THE CHALLENGE

Interviewees listed a range of challenges that limit ESG action and the completion of the goals.

While the challenges themselves evoke many of the SDGs, such as justice and legislation, collaboration and cost, there are other factors such as the choice of the consumer and the fallout from the pandemic which constrain the impact of ESG activity.

The pandemic has challenged the business travel industry’s ability to tackle the goals, as work lives have adapted. Government communication and regulation have impacted fundamental industry activity and business priorities have changed. Multiple participants said that the pandemic has pushed ESG activity and targets back by at least 2 years, with the economic impact even more detrimental.

Consequently, cost was the most listed challenge to the completion of the SDGs by participants. As an industry, we have focused on survival. Now, as we recover, we must learn from the pandemic, and governments must learn from us as we collectively turn our attention to ESG.

Lack of government support and the ability to accurately report and measure ESG activity are also highlighted by many participants as a challenge to the completion of the goals. Scale is the second highest-listed concern, both in relation to the problems at hand and the ESG abilities of businesses due to their size. It is perceived by some that there is an underestimation of the size of the challenge, while others acknowledge that its size is difficult to quantify.

“We’ve spent decades causing untold damage to the planet. And there’s no way we can just expect this is going to be completely pain free.”

HotelHub

“The challenge is to make sure that we’re not losing sight of everything else that’s important from an ESG perspective, and there’s a variety of issues outside of carbon that we need to ensure that we’re continuing to make traction on.”

Virgin Atlantic Airways
“As an industry, if we don’t all work together, we will never get to where we want to be. So, we’re going to have to have a spirit of openness and sharing that we’ve never seen before. And it’s something that every single one of us needs to encourage as much as humanly possible.”

P&O Ferries

Communicating the issue in a manner that ensures understanding and results in an informed choice was raised by 6 participants as an increasing challenge for ESG activity. This goes alongside the 7 interviewees who outlined consumer choice as another issue that organisations must confront.

Therefore, there must be a focus on effectively communicating the issues throughout the business, to employees, across the supply chain and to consumers. This will ensure that the customer has the knowledge to make the most sustainable choice.

Other issues such as timing, decarbonising, positioning ESG at the forefront of business strategies, and the lack of accessible infrastructure, are also outlined. The latter is explicitly noted by airlines due to the limited availability of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

Finally, the travel industry is in a unique global position to action the goals laid out by the UN and lead by example. The world is watching and reliant on us to implement the changes that can make an effective difference across the network of ESG ambition. We must overcome these challenges to ensure the prosperity of our businesses, our people and the planet, through a focus on regulation, education and collaboration.

“If you ask someone to imagine what a kilogram of CO2 is, what on earth does that mean to anyone? We save approximately 25 million litres of diesel every year after transitioning away from diesel only HSTs... But if you can convert that into Olympic sized swimming pools... if you can get the language right and put that information out into something that anyone can understand, then I think you start to equip people with the right decision-making tools to make some real changes in the way they work.”

LNER
# Unified Goals

## Current priorities

This is demonstrated as the majority of participants have net zero pledges in place, while the remainder of interviewees are taking effective steps to map net zero pledges, auditing their outputs with science-based targets. Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) is also highlighted as a medium priority goal in the wake of lockdown. This is to ensure the industry recovers following the pandemic while permitting the financial freedoms to implement the innovation and development to tackle other goals. No Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2) and Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6) are unified lower priority goals at present.

## Future priorities

All goals are elevated to a higher status for the future priorities, to ensure that they are achieved by 2030. There is a communal shift towards SDG 17, (Partnerships for the Goals), moving up 4 spaces in comparison to its current position to the number 1 priority for businesses across the industry by 2030.

Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9) and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) are also newly prioritised goals, in correlation with the industry’s ambition to improve regulation, measurement and reporting.

Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) remain in the top 5 priorities for the future, as organisations continue to work towards their net zero initiatives. As well as this, SDG 13 (Climate Action) continues to be within the top 5, but of a lower priority, to streamline focus on goals that result in initiatives such as net zero plans that tackle this goal on a broader scale.

Gender Equality (SDG 5) is pushed out of the top 5 with hopes that this will have been achieved through the initiatives implemented as the industry recovered from the pandemic.

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Travel Management Companies (TMCs)

WHERE WE ARE

This section explores TMCs’ approaches to the SDGs, exploring and comparing the independent measures and priorities in place across the sector.

TMCs are at varying levels of ESG implementation. For example, some have green supply chains with strong net zero plans, while a few have focused on the health and wellbeing of employees and reducing inequalities.

There is a widening gap between the ‘bigger’ and ‘smaller’ industry players as larger TMCs usually have more resources to dedicate to ESG activity.

Each TMC had a different definition of their priorities. For example, Clarity emphasises the importance of the supply chain. Agiito focus strongly on employees. AMEX GBT acknowledges industry players as larger TMCs usually have more resources to dedicate to ESG activity.

Across the board TMCs use SDGs as a framework to educate the supply chain, employees and consumers. They also implement SDGs to protect the mental and physical wellbeing of staff and create diverse leadership teams.

Many have measures in place for each SDG. However, SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy), SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) were deemed less relevant to the TMC sector, therefore fewer actions are in place.

Carbon offsetting objectives are widely employed. However, in comparison to other industries, there is a need for more focus on understanding of renewable energy resources and carbon reduction, as opposed to a narrow focus on carbon offsetting.

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

TMCs have identified the SDGs that are most relevant to them and their ESG agendas. The top 5 SDG goals were: SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5&10 (Gender Equality) and (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). TMCs are achieving these goals across schools, diversity and inclusion campaigns, local businesses and net zero initiatives. Other goals widely discussed but deemed of less importance were: SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production).

SDG 4 – Quality Education

TMCs are committed to quality education, both internally through paid-for qualifications and mentoring, and externally through charitable grants, apprenticeships, educational passports and school visits. In the USA there is a different response to SDG 4, as American TMCs favour the use of national partnerships with not-for-profit organisations. Whereas TMCs based in the UK act locally, focussing on employees and local talent by providing internships, apprenticeships and encouraging employee education through in-role qualifications and mentoring.

SDG 5 – Gender Equality & SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities

Respondents had strong views about SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Primarily, activity in this field concerns recruitment. There is a drive towards change and TMCs are employing pay parity goals, audits and bias training with a focus on increasing diversity in senior leadership positions. The sector has proven its passion for inclusivity, with diversity, equality and inclusion (DE&I) programmes and internal communications campaigns.

SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth

TMCs’ support of their employees is primarily delivered through the real living wage, which mirrors the objectives of SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth). Clarity and Agiito also help employees, and those associated with supply chains, shop sustainably. Agiito provides a “green-purchasing guide”, a tool that supports sustainable shopping habits while championing smaller, independent businesses.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities & Communities, SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption & Production and SDG 13 – Climate Action

TMCs are addressing SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) across the supply chain. Most are implementing carbon net zero objectives, sustainable procurement programmes and working towards educating partners and customers on ecological best practices. Some highlight the challenge of supply chain governance on sustainable activity.

TMCs acknowledged events as a major area for sustainable activity, with steps being taken to publicise plastic, paper and resource wastage. There is also a trend toward hosting events which are carbon neutral.

“It’s very hard sometimes, especially globally, to get access to all of that information from your supply chain, but where possible, we always try to achieve that.”

Clarity
WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

The priorities for TMCs build upon the important goals highlighted but new areas for focus are also identified alongside a consensus for strong sector-wide investment in relevant partnerships.

There is an opportunity to share knowledge and insight across the sector to increase sustainable capacity and reduce the barriers for tackling the SDG goals. To achieve this, TMCs must address SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure), SDG 16 (Peace & Justice Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The main focus being:

1. Industry-wide governance of activity, supported by measurable objectives and targets
2. Standardisation of expectations and practices across the sector
3. Prioritising collaboration over competitive advantage

GOVERNANCE

As TMCs work together there is capacity to combat not only human trafficking but other pressing ESG issues relating to sustainability, human rights and corruption. Additionally, wider TMC attitudes towards governance and collaboration acknowledge the relevance of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institution), and the impact this has on SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). These goals must be prioritised as the lack of industry governance results in an inability to measure activity.

Without governance or measurement there is no accountability for ESG targets or sustainable growth. TMCs must collaborate to address these issues for efficient development in 2022 and beyond.

“Everyone’s doing something slightly different. So, there’s no central governance of [ESG activity], particularly in the hotel world. When it comes to certain things, there’s no way to measure.”

Clarity

“‘The travel industry has the opportunity to counter the activities of human traffickers. We are in a unique position to make a difference through our employees and travellers, and we are teaming up with partners to combat this pressing issue.’”

CWT

STANDARDISATION OF PRACTICE

Members outlined the industry’s varied levels of ESG implementation and the constant evolution of ESG targets as an industry-wide and personal challenge. Our research found that SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) is reliant on, and motivated by, investment; larger TMCs are able to make bigger contributions in this area which potentially puts them at a competitive advantage. By contrast, smaller TMCs acknowledged the importance of SDG 9, but viewed it as unattainable with a limited budget. Therefore, SDG 9 demonstrates the need for an industry-wide standardisation of practice with political intervention (SDG 16) to guarantee an equal opportunity for sustainable development across sectors. As such, SDG 9 and 16 should be prioritised SDGs across the TMC ESG agenda.

COLLABORATION

The range of TMC expertise highlights the potential for significant change across the sector. Yet, this can only occur through collective agency and communication. Due to their nature, TMCs have a capacity, unlike any other sector, to impart tangible change across the entire travel industry. We urgently need to dial up collaboration and go lighter on industry competition, which highlights the sincere need to prioritise SDG 17 across all travel management companies.

“There is a growing sense of ‘we’re in this together’, however this must continue so as an industry we can accelerate change and positive climate action.”

Agiito
The transport sector is currently taking a unified approach towards clean and green energy while planning to reduce consumption.

Future activity will prioritise collaboration (SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals), innovation (SDG 9, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and (SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth) as we recover from the pandemic to develop SAF and boost its accessibility worldwide, as well as electrification across railways and roads.

"The reality is we can’t do this alone. It’s about key partnerships and creating innovative solutions.”

Virgin Atlantic Airways

Aviation

WHERE WE ARE

Airlines are focusing on innovation, consumption and partnerships. The sector is aware of its current ESG capacity and future potential to fulfil the SDGs, although there is uncertainty surrounding the logistics of SAF. Nevertheless, airlines are aligned in their prioritised ESG agenda and are keen to implement change, demonstrated in the sector-wide implementation of net zero plans.

Sustainable change is dependent on industry-wide collaboration and this is particularly apparent in the airline sector. Partnerships were acknowledged by every airline as the primary factor needed for effective action. SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) is at the core of airlines’ sustainable activity and is woven across all 17 SDGs.

Airlines focus on the supply chain, however, this was not prioritised in the same way as other sectors, such as TMCs. As a minimum, audits and checklists were in place across the aviation sector to counter modern slavery practices and ensure sustainable procurement, fulfilling SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Airlines are broadly aligned in their SDG focus. The five identified as the most important were SDG 5 (Gender), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 7 (Clean Energy), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). These are often targeted with artificial intelligence (AI), SAF, net zero goals and sustainable procurement processes.

Other important goals included SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). In many cases, initiatives were already underway to tackle these areas. Often projects formed part of initiatives designed to tackle the top five goals.
WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

The priorities for airlines across 2022 and beyond build upon the important goals including SDG 5 (Gender Equality), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13 (Climate Action) and primarily relate to the progression of clean energy. Airlines must ensure the systematic development of infrastructure and innovation. They must continue to nurture partnerships across the sector and across institutions to guarantee sustainable avionic improvement worldwide.

Airlines must develop and address SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) to accomplish:

1. Global development and implementation of new aviation fuel sources and making these accessible.
2. Continued cultivation of relationships across the industry both publicly and privately.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) must be prioritised alongside SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) as the fulfilment of both goals are dependent on each other. This is a global challenge, and aviation’s solutions must be implemented across the world to be successful.

In comparison to other sectors, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) was not recognised as a priority by the airlines interviewed. However, interviewees did acknowledge that the industry’s development of SAF, renewable energy and its distribution across the world is reliant on the successful fulfilment of this goal. As these challenges specifically apply to airlines, we highlight SDG 16 as a priority for SDG development across the sector throughout 2022 and beyond.

Finally, it is vital that airlines continue to nurture partnerships, both publicly and privately, to continue to develop sustainable solutions for aviation fuels, attainable across the world.

SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

All airlines acknowledged male dominance within the pilot industry; in 2018 only 5.18% of pilots were women. Consequently, there is a sense of urgency amongst the airlines to implement initiatives towards SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduce Inequalities) to alleviate this inequality and remove diversity barriers.

Airlines are striving to promote more women to senior leadership and pilot roles. British Airways (BA) has ambitious targets in place, ANA joined the IATA 25 by 25 initiative, and easyJet connected with schools to target female students from a young age. Virgin Atlantic approached these topics alongside SDG 4 (Quality Education) through their Passport to Change mobility programme. This programme empowers the next generation’s science, technology, engineering and mathematic (STEM) talent development, particularly those from disadvantaged groups.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

Airlines are very active in developing clean energy alternatives across the travel industry. Their motivation towards SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) is complementary to the sector-wide dedication to SDG 17, as innovation is dependent on successful partnerships. Every airline interviewed explained their approach to new aviation technology, including AI, the use of drones, SAF, renewable energy and hydrogen planes. Airlines recognised the latter as the most viable sustainable option but also noted the challenge of bringing this to fruition. High costs, scalability and commercial feasibility all impact progress. Airlines also noted that higher levels of communication were necessary to help gain support for hydrogen technology, and wider innovation. There was also a wide view that airlines needed to continue to focus on SDG 9 and SDG 17 to tackle current sustainability challenges.

“Analysing and addressing climate change risk is pivotal to our work - this means mitigating our emissions today, for example through efficient operations and our offsetting programme, whilst working to transition to a low and ultimately zero carbon emissions airline in the next decades and outlining a clear pathway for that.”

easyJet

SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 7 (Clean Energy)

All airlines had carbon net zero plans in place as a response to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 7 (Clean Energy). easyJet acknowledged the need to measure and understand airlines’ impacts on biodiversity. ANA highlighted the need for engine washes, the eradication of dry ice, lighter trolleys and cargo. Virgin Atlantic highlighted the importance of partnerships and drew attention to their founding member status on the Jet Zero council.

BA illustrated its single engine use on short-haul aircraft when taxiing to and from the runway, a new behaviour that was saving approximately 18,000 tonnes of CO2 per year. Many of these independent actions combine to underpin SDG 13 (Climate Action) responses, but they must run in conjunction with SDG 9 and 17.

SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation)

easyJet strives to achieve SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) through its charitable partnerships and carbon offset projects, however, this was not highlighted as a priority by the other interviewees. easyJet has supplied water filters to developing countries and has reduced carbon emissions by eradicating the need to chop down trees and burn the wood to clean water. As carbon offsetting is a contended issue for sectors such as serviced apartments, easyJet demonstrates how wider carbon offsetting opportunities, in addition to planting trees, can be implemented and is keen to share its learnings with others.

“What is agreement on is that it is impossible to do that without partnerships. “SAF is the big one, and I can’t see how that will be done without partnerships. And it has to be on a global perspective, there’s no point having SAF here if you can’t get SAF at the other end.”

ANA
WHERE WE ARE

Private car hires are approaching the SDGs with realistic attitudes. There is a sector-wide focus on environmental development and strong planning is in place to achieve SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13 (Climate Action). Unlike other BTA members, the private car hire sector did not have specific carbon net zero goals in place. However, there is a clear passion to work towards a more sustainable future through reduced emissions and alternative fuel resources. All of which will be supported by offsetting activities, with targets in place to operate fully electric fleets. However, more work is needed across the sector to make this happen.

The pandemic hit the sector hard and the financial repercussions of lockdown have impacted its ability to pursue sustainable strategies, with many desired actions remaining in the planning stage.

Nevertheless, there is a desire for change, with a growing number of plans being drawn up for a more environmentally friendly future.

The private car hire sector acknowledged the importance of education, regulation, the supply chain and innovation as ways to help consumers make the most sustainable choice for journeys. There is an eagerness to transition to green alternatives, but concerns surrounding the initial disruption that this may cause to operations while the sector recovers from the pandemic. Therefore, more focus is needed to progress existing plans with training in place to make this as easy as possible.

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Unlike other sectors, private car transport providers’ primary focus is on environmental initiatives rather than plans and programmes built around HR-led activity.

Private car hire is focusing on recruitment, progression (SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth), implementing reduced emissions policies (SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy), and a sector-wide drive towards tangible sustainable action, spearheaded by a shift towards clean energy resources:

Specific goals concerning issues such as hunger, education, health, life below water and peace and justice were identified as less relevant to the private car hire sector. Therefore, limited initiatives are being implemented to achieve them.

However, there are a number of individual initiatives. For example, Carey’s partnership with One Water tackles SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). By supporting this ethical drinks brand, Carey has helped fund four separate wells across southern Africa. Like easyJet, this partnership demonstrates the many alternatives to carbon offsetting and sustainable development that companies can strive towards.

The sector’s drive towards SDG 7 impacts other SDGs including 11, 12 and 13. It is clear that the sector is aware of its potential to optimise transport solutions, resulting in lower costs for the consumer and low emissions in relation to the SDGs.

WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

To build on SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) post pandemic, the private car transport must prioritise further development and implementation of new energy technology and fuelling solutions.

The focus on energy as a viable strategy for sustainable development must also be prioritised. Therefore, private car hire priorities are twofold:

1. Post-pandemic growth of business, in response to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)
2. Development and implementation of new energy technology such as electric fleets

Post-pandemic growth

The sector needs to focus on the development of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) to enable activity around other issues concerning consumption. A larger workforce is needed to manage the increase in demand as the industry recovers:

There is an immediate need to advance planning into tangible sustainable action, to invest in and enable new energy technology.

"One of our goals is that in 2030, all rides performed by us are actually operated in fully battery electric vehicles"

FREE NOW

"Our focus over the next 24 months is migrating our fleet away from traditional internal combustion engines to alternative, more environmentally friendly power sources.”

Carey

"Given that most businesses have downsized massively and rebuilding that lost capacity is going to be a challenge”

Carey

“The pandemic no doubt has set us back a couple of years in terms of where we would like to be, because we’d now like to be where we’re actually going to be in two- or three-year’s time”

Carey
WHERE WE ARE

Railways are focusing on the modal shift away from private vehicles towards public transport, implementing integrated plans across stations and the wider community to achieve this. There is an ambition to improve services and level up train fleets away from diesel towards electrification in order to achieve ambitious net zero targets.

Like other sectors, rail is working towards SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) primarily through gender and ethnicity pay gap activity. Understanding the impact rail has on the communities it works alongside, and serves, is an important priority and there is a drive to have a representative employee society that mirrors these communities.

Unlike other sectors, accessibility is also a focus for stations and trains. Community managers, across a range of providers, are actively ensuring that employees, passengers and partners are respected, and their needs across their journeys are fully met. Providers are also strongly focused on positioning stations as part of an integrated transport hub.

Although it is accepted that SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) are important goals, the initiatives in place to achieve them are of a lower priority than those in place to tackle inequalities (SDG 10), the repercussions of climate change (SDG 13), and the need to strengthen local community relationships (SDG 11).

Network Rail and HS2 are perceived as rail leaders, with frequent mention of their mature environmental plans that emphasise environmental responsibility and urgent climate change action. However, as Network Rail procure the electricity for trains, there is scope to widen their focus on how to procure zero carbon electricity power sources in the future.

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

As well as goals 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 13 (Climate Action) and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), there are many important elements to the success of the railways’ ESG activities. These include innovation of the railway infrastructure and electrification (SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 9, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure and SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production and SDG 13, Climate Action), the modal shift towards railways (SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities) and finally the mental and physical health of employees and passengers (SDG 3, Good Health and Wellbeing).

Although there are varying degrees of action towards SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), the rail sector primarily addresses it through mental health support. Most interviewees highlighted the importance of mental health protection, with many of the providers supporting this goal through the provision of dedicated mental health first aiders across departments and access to reduced-price gym memberships, as well as relaxed office hours.

Rail is also focusing on cycling, both internally for employees and externally for passengers and the wider community. There is a drive to position stations as the hub of the communities they serve, resulting in rail becoming the primary choice of transport instead of private alternatives such as cars. Consequently, providers are focussing on integrated transport plans that make the end-to-end journey an easy and sustainable choice for the passenger to tackle SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Drivers are trained on energy efficient techniques and most interviewees noted the move to renewable energy sources such as solar or wind. There are initiatives in place across stations to limit waste and improve education on recycling, as well as water refill stations to reduce plastic pollution from water bottles. However, as fleets are responsible for over 90% of the sector’s carbon footprint, innovation is desperately needed to successfully decarbonise.

“Specific to business travel as well, we work with a car provider and they have vehicles at all of our managed stations, so that people have the choice of being able to use a shared facility to finish their journey.”

LNER

“We offer cycle storage hubs at most of our stations that are free to use, so passengers have somewhere safe to put their bike. And our bike policy enables our customers to bring their bike on-board trains, which allows them to continue to their destination at the other side.”

TPE
WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

Rail providers should continue to maintain the urgent level of climate concern demonstrated across the activities of the sector. There is a need to establish and nurture partnerships to ensure cross-sector and wider industry collaboration, in order to enable innovation that tangibly reduces carbon emissions. There must also be a focus on boosting traveller levels as the industry recovers from the pandemic, to entice a modal shift towards the railway, away from private transport.

Therefore, railways must prioritise:
1. Partnerships for collaboration and innovation
2. Mitigation of climate change risks
3. Economic and traveller growth post-pandemic

Partnerships
Every interviewee listed partnerships formed with industry bodies, regulators or charities to achieve the SDGs. Interviewees also noted that there is more opportunity for ESG efficiency and innovation when collaborating. Therefore, it must be prioritised across future activities:

Climate Risks
There is already a focus on mitigating the impacts of climate change on rail services as some operators outlined their associations with the Taskforce on Climate Related Financial Disclosures Initiative. However, this should be prioritised by all members of the sector, to target the route cause as well as the effects of climate change through SDG 13 (Climate Action) in an effort to reduce and reverse damaging activity.

Traveller Growth
Finally, rail providers must continue to work with local authorities to position stations and networks as connective community hubs and promote mass public transportation. Rail has a massive opportunity to reduce large scale community emissions across its networks. Yet travellers must continue to choose rail over personal alternatives to enable this change. Therefore, rail must focus on making train travel a better option than cars which delivers greater personal and environmental benefits.

“We need to have those discussions about what we can do together because if it adds value to all of our clients and it’s better for the environment, then that’s a win. And if it’s also something that encourages the return to travel... but they can move in the most conscious way possible, that’s even better.”

LNER
WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

Ferries need to focus on rebuilding and growing as we emerge out of the pandemic. To successfully achieve this, the sector must focus on SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and nurture the relationships it already has, as well as growing new links with other industries. These relationships will ensure that, as it continues to recover from the pandemic, the sector moves forward towards sustainable growth in line with the rest of the travel industry.

“...we have approached marine experts with the idea of putting sensors on our ships to do long term measurements of the health of the seas and marine life in the areas that we run.”

P&O Ferries

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Ferries outline SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water) as the most important SDGs. Here, the sector is taking tangible steps to deliver functional change, investing in cadets, partnerships and reducing emissions.

Quality Education is seen as an opportunity for talent development. Ferry operators are passionate about education. They encourage their employees and cadets to take study leave for exams and are dedicated to helping talent progress up the career ladder.

Ferries firms acknowledge that they are reliant on others innovating for them. Therefore, the sector highlights the importance of collaboration, prioritising SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

It is accepted that the ferries sector is male-dominated, yet SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are employed to challenge this. Although there is a drive to boost the percentage of females in positions such as engineers and captains, there is still room for sector-wide improvement here.

Ferries were most active towards SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and were one of two sectors across the business travel industry to raise the latter as a highly important and urgent goal.

Ferries are using a combination of SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water) to monitor the impact of their business activity on marine life. By taking the time to watch and understand their impact before taking steps to limit it, ferries are patient but effective in their approach to control harmful practices before they develop into serious issues.
Accommodation

The accommodation sector is focusing on collaboration and environmental sustainability across the goals, with a lower focus on social initiatives although these are still implemented across the sectors interviewed.

Looking forward, accommodation will continue to focus on collaboration in the future, while shifting its focus away from SDG 13 (Climate Action), towards SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy).

Hotels

WHERE WE ARE

There is a wide spectrum of ESG activity across the hotel sector. Some hotels are far into their implementation of ESG initiatives, while others have only just started to plan.

Hotels acknowledge that strong ESG credentials are financially advantageous and provide a competitive lead. Yet, there is tension around accepting the cost of implementing the sustainable changes necessary, at a time when there is still an urgent need to establish economic stability following the pandemic. Like other sectors, hotels identify the pandemic as a major reason for delayed ESG agendas, with multiple interviewees expressing that years of previous progress may have been placed in jeopardy.

The sector is passionate about reducing waste, although the pandemic has led to increased consumption of single use plastics. Paper, water and food remain a major focus, however for many the issue is wider; the sector must take a more holistic outlook on its consumption to successfully change.

There is a range of activity implemented across the SDGs, however, there is less focus on SDG 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and 4 (Quality Education).
WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

The hotel sector noted SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 14 (Life Below Water) as the most important.

Food is a massive area of hotels' ESG activity. The sector is working to reduce waste in kitchens, partner with food-waste charities, alter menus to offer healthy alternatives, employ local produce, train local talent in kitchens and offer sustainable sourcing alternatives. As a consequence, the influence of food on hotels' ESG activity impacts goals 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 14 (Life Below Water).

Although other sectors have acknowledged the influence of food, their food-based activities are not as intrinsic to their ESG activities as they are to hotels and their outputs.

Unlike other sectors across the wider travel industry, SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) is highlighted as an area of importance. The sector is aware that its activities use and waste water in laundries, swimming pools, and cleaning. However, it is paramount that this water is clean and free from diseases, such as legionella. Hotels are working to ensure that there are robust preventative water targets in place, and they are reducing water usage where possible. The topic of water presents a difficult area of progression for hotels, as the weaknesses here involve the activities of the customer.

There is also a sector-wide focus on the potential of renewable energy. Many hotels are taking positive steps towards this goal, auditing the energy they use, understanding how they can drive reductions and offsetting when this is not possible. There is still the opportunity to innovate here, however this needs increased investment and innovation on a wide scale.

The sector is in line with the wider industry, as it implements gender and ethnicity targets as a standard. Hotel workforces are largely female dominated at lower levels, but there is a drive to promote more women to senior positions.

“IT’S NOT JUST THE PRODUCTION OF FOOD, IT’S ALSO THE TRANSPORTATION OF FOOD. SO, IF YOU CAN REDUCE THAT TRANSPORTATION, YOU CUT EMISSIONS.”

Exclusive Collection

“We work hard to reduce water consumption across our estate with a strong track record and are pushing to go further – we’re now looking at water stewardship, prioritising those sites which have been mapped in high water-stressed areas.”

Whitbread

WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

Hotels must continue to prioritise collaboration across the supply chain, while focusing on carbon and water reduction.

Procurement processes have a large impact on the success of ESG activity. Although hotels do acknowledge this, there is room for improvement across the sector, with the opportunity to impact a variety of goals. In addition to this, hotels are aware of their need to reduce consumption and waste across the supply chain and wider activities, yet this needs to go beyond paper reduction. Although this is a step in the right direction, hotels must re-evaluate their consumption habits and collectively focus on the circular economy to make the sector more sustainable.

There is an opportunity for hotels to work alongside other sectors such as technology, TMCs and transport to improve and innovate the business traveller’s journey and reduce the environmental impact of travel such as increased emissions. Hotels acknowledge that collaboration is key, yet there is limited activity that builds partnerships outside of the supply chain.

Finally, hotels are in a unique ESG position, as many of their outputs are determined by the customer. The sector must prioritise educating the traveller on sustainability in a way that entices them to choose the most sustainable option, without this being a nuisance. Therefore, hotels must develop this and work to deliver the levels of ‘luxury’ expected such as extra towels, without the environmental sacrifices associated with it.

“NOW IS THE TIME TO COLLABORATE. IT IS SOMETHING WE ARE KEEN TO DO WITH ALL OUR PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS – WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE ORGANISATION.”

Whitbread

“OFFER LUXURY WITHOUT COMPROMISE”

Iconic Luxury
**WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?**

The initiatives taken by serviced apartments towards achieving the SDGs reinforces the power of collaboration and planning. The sector demonstrates the potential for sustainable change if small but consistent and progressive steps towards sustainable practices are taken. Serviced apartments highlight goals 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible consumption and Production), 16 (Peace and Justice) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) as the most important.

Lower priority is given to SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (No Hunger), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and 14 (Life Below Water). Despite varied initiatives in place to tackle these goals, such as charitable donations, corporate social responsibility and ensuring safe practice, they were not identified as a driving force of serviced apartments’ future ESG agenda.

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

Interviewees highlighted the importance of SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), listing organisations they had partnered with across the supply chain in accordance with the 17 goals. However, there were differences in approach to the outsourcing of carbon offsetting activities. Silverdoor has a partnership with Trees4Travel, while CAP Worldwide supports the National Trust. Partnerships influenced attitudes to other SDGs such as 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Topics raised included trust in leaders, green finance and the benefits, and the challenges and drawbacks of tree planting.

In accordance with the findings from TMCs, serviced apartments also acknowledged the need for a global baseline of sustainability reporting and governance, especially given the ambiguity associated with many offsetting practices.

Silverdoor understands that changes towards sustainability must come from the top-down to ensure worldwide holistic change across the travel industry. They have audited and educated their supply chains, mapped their own emissions data, and implemented their own offsetting process. It was also noted that action around SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) can tie practices together with partners locally and globally:

**WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?**

Training, top-down governance and renewable growth were highlighted as key priorities for the serviced apartment sector across 2022. As serviced apartments work towards net zero objectives, the measured planning demonstrated should continue to be a priority.
Corporates

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

With initiatives in place for the majority of the SDGs, there is a particular focus on energy usage (SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production and SDG 13), innovation (SDG 9, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and governance (SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 16, Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions) across corporate ESG activity.

The corporates interviewed are actively working towards net zero initiatives, with targets in place for 2034. They highlight SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) as important goals within their ESG agenda. Activities here include the recent switch to 100% renewable energy, with green electricity and the removal of gas boilers.

Corporates have strong initiatives in place for SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and there is a drive for autonomy, demonstrated in the sector’s development of robots that service wind turbines in the North Sea to protect human life.

As with ferries, the sector is actively measuring its impact on mammalian health to understand how it can mitigate damage towards SDG 14 (Life Below Water) in the future. This is related to the sector’s use of sonar.

There is also a focus on SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions). As other sectors focus on the environmental associations of SDG 11, corporates approach this goal with initiatives to combat crime and improve safety. Interviewees referred to the introduction of CCTV in Mexico City and the resulting reduced crime and insurance claims as a result.

WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

Corporates should continue to focus on innovation but there is an opportunity to move away from autonomy and boost partnerships with other sectors to aid the innovation of renewable energy across the industry. Therefore, it should be a priority for corporates and the wider business travel network to share best practice and move forward together.

WHERE WE ARE

Corporates are striving towards ESG implementation. There is a standard focus on health, education and reducing inequalities in the workplace.

Yet the sector is leading the industry through innovation, focussing on renewable energy (SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy), protecting cities and communities (SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities), and conserving marine life (SDG 14, Life Below Water).

There is lower attention to SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger) and 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).
Technology

WHERE WE ARE

The technology sector is focusing on 12 of the 17 SDGs. There is passion to ignite change. For example, Amadeus is investing €900 million into the research and development of effective sustainable activities in 2020, equating to nearly 40% of its turnover at the time. Technology is aware of its contributions to both climate change and local communities and is dedicated to cooperating with industries worldwide.

Due to the global nature of the companies interviewed, there is an ambition to operate in as many countries as possible as an inclusive, respectful and understanding employer. It is noted that:

“New generations of developers are very interested in these things and these topics.”

Amadeus

The organisations interviewed were passionate about implementing the SDGs across the business culture worldwide. However, like other sectors in the business travel industry, there is room to improve on gender diversity in senior leadership positions.

Tech is primarily focused on innovation (SDG 9, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), accurate carbon data collection (SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production and SDG 13, Climate Action) and collaboration across the world (SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals). Due to the sector’s wealth and innovative capabilities, it is in a strong position to develop the tools needed to initiate change and it is proactive in making this possible.

There is a lower focus on eradicating hunger (SDG 2), ensuring clean water (SDG 6) and supporting life below water (SDG 14) and on land (SDG 15).

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Tech have the same ambitions as rail to optimise the journey from door-to-door, establish software that considers the needs of local communities, and meet their wider social responsibilities. Actions currently taken focus on SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) but have a knock-on effect on other SDGs such as SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

The sector is proactive, for example, it is working extensively with partners to create carbon emissions calculators for the wider travel industry, and other industries worldwide. Yet, the challenge remains that there are no standard measurements for global emissions or sector based targets.

Nevertheless, tech is passionate about educating travellers and reducing its own energy consumption. This is demonstrated across its product lifecycles, both in production and usage, in addition to exploring offsetting alternatives.

Tech is prioritising the development of sustainable alternatives, but there is a need for support from governments, authorities, customers and the consumer to make this happen:

“Let’s inform every traveller that makes a booking through our platform about the emissions released as a consequence of their trip, and to give the traveller the opportunity to choose the most sustainable option.”

Amadeus

“When we develop software, we aim at doing it in a way that minimizes the use of energy, both at the time of developing the software and also at the time of using the software by our customers.”

Amadeus

“When it comes to sustainability, we can do a lot of things, but we cannot achieve much in isolation.”

Amadeus
WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?
A desire to make progress against the SDG goals has provided a strong focus for the Tech sector. Specifically, they must continue to seek new innovation and sustain commitments to renewable energy. Yet, technologies must also continue calling for strong governance and collaboration across the sectors it works with. Due to its global nature, it has an ability to share information worldwide, which has the potential to establish and implement best practice:

“I would say that the most important one in my view, is the absolutely necessary increased and intensified cooperation in the industry and even outside the industry.”

Amadeus

Although other sectors have called for increased co-operation, technology players have made it clear that partnerships are vital and without higher levels of collaboration organisations will not be able to achieve their business goals. Equally, supply chain adjustments will be limited and the growing expectations of travellers will not be met.

Regulation is also identified as a major priority for technology companies, although they accept that this is out of their control.

“Governments and regulatory bodies can play a fundamental role in reaching industry agreement regarding a multi-modal system that can work for every industry player. Nonetheless, we cannot underestimate the effort, time and resources that everyone involved should dedicate to reaching this consensus.”

Amadeus

WHERE WE ARE
Sustainable service providers offer interesting insights, alongside their own policies and actions in relation the SDG goals. As experts in sustainability, they inevitably provide a different focus in comparison to the other sectors served by the BTA. Typically, they independently contextualise the priorities of the SDGs, often using an ‘outsider’s perspective’.

While each of the 17 goals are individually important, it is acknowledged that some actions can target and challenge multiple goals at once, when implemented successfully. Therefore, the importance of strong individual planning is recognised and promoted due to its power to impart holistic change.

There is a global outlook towards achieving the goals across the sustainable services sector that sometimes contrasts with BTA members, who possess a more UK and European focus. Specifically, the sector is more vocal about the best courses of action that should be taken. It tailors suggested programmes on an individual basis and frequently makes the case for global action. For many, change cannot not be brought about without the SDGs being viewed in the context of action needed for the planet.

WHICH GOAL IS MOST IMPORTANT?
Despite all the goals being important, sustainable service providers highlight SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) as the most influential.

SDG 4 (Quality Education) is woven across the sectors’ activities: From the supply chain, to corporates and the customer, service providers acknowledge quality education as the key catalyst of change. There is a drive to educate businesses on the most efficient ways to achieve the goals and reduce their carbon outputs, as well as a focus on travellers and their understanding of their journeys’ consequences. Promoting sustainable awareness and environmental decision making is seen as key.

“If people are not educated, they won’t put pressure on the industry or the general economy to change.”

Thrust Carbon
There is a strong focus on the need to implement considered plans that directly address SDGs. Both SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) were highlighted as requiring specific and urgent attention.

The sector is passionate about helping the travel industry offset and reduce carbon emissions to reverse climate change. Yet this will not be achieved unless organisations take the time to effectively audit their activities, map out their goals and address the areas of concern. Therefore, sustainability providers are calling on the industry to take responsibility, think through their strategy and implement it effectively.

The sector accepts that there is a lot of activity towards SDG 5 (Gender Equality), although the industry has the potential to do more to promote women into senior management positions. It is also recognised that this is a culture-specific goal, with other countries less likely to prioritise this.

WHAT SHOULD THE PRIORITIES BE?

The sector highlights that there is a drive for change across the industry to achieve the SDGs, and that it believes it has the necessary tools to aid future progress. However, the industry must collaborate, educate and plan.

Collaboration
Continued collaboration across the industry presents the opportunity for increased education on and awareness of innovations focused on sustainable development.

Therefore, to ensure a worldwide acceptance and implementation of successful ESG practices, industries must collaborate to impart change effectively.

Education and Planning
The sector must continue to educate travellers and providers worldwide, with the recognition that the actions implemented towards each goal have an impact on the wider achievement of other goals. Coherent, agreed and well implemented strategies are necessary for the business travel community to move forward with an understanding of their individual impact and the best ways to mitigate this. Moreover, there is a need to measure outputs and take clear responsibility for all ESG activity.

“Companies must apply a strategic approach. What are your ultimate objectives? What can realistically be achieved? And then let’s work out what actions are going to deliver meaningful outcomes. The danger is that people forget to think strategically when they are in a hurry!”
Greengage Solutions

“Collaboration is everything this business is about. It’s about helping the whole travel industry to collaborate and work together to ensure travel leaves a positive effect on our planet.”
Trees 4 Travel

“What gets measured gets done.”
Greengage Solutions
### Conclusion

Thank you for reading our We Can’t Do It Alone report.

Thanks must go to the team at Pembroke and Rye who helped conceive this initiative and have painstakingly undertaken research on our behalf. They’ve lent their objectivity to our sector, provided a clear understanding of where we stand today, and helped tease out what future priorities need to be.

The findings clearly show a growing desire for stronger partnerships and further action for affordable and clean energy. At the same time, there is a stronger focus on innovation and improved infrastructure. Both the need for quality education and responsible consumption and production are set to remain as top five priorities.

These independent results excite me and fill me with optimism for our industry. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we have shown that we are at our best working in collaboration. There’s a clear desire to put this to work for the future of our planet.

We are making strides in energy, innovation and consumption. In prioritising quality education, we are taking care of future generations.

In order to help galvanise our industry’s shared commitments, I am going to spend the next 3 months interviewing and seeking guidance from experts across the whole ESG spectrum. I’m seeking advice, and insights, from other industries, and looking for examples of best practices we can adopt.

In September, the BTA will launch its Roadmap to a Sustainable Future. It comprises pledges for the industry to sign-up to, and will act as a benchmark for our 2023 ESG industry report. Our aim is to develop an accreditation system, but first we must work together to continue along the road towards a healthier, more sustainable future.

Please share your thoughts and opinions with me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

**Clive Wratten**

CEO of the Business Travel Association (BTA)

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- Clarity
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