

Bristol Method+

# Driving the Sustainable Development Goals agenda at city level in Bristol



University of  
BRISTOL



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## The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all
	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
	Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
	Reduce inequality within and among countries
	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development
	Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels
	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

## Executive summary

Bristol can point to many successes, but as many cities it faces challenges too.

Bristol is one of the fastest-growing cities outside London and has some of the most affluent areas in the country. It is widely seen as the UK's most sustainable city, was European Green Capital in 2015, has thriving and diverse cultural, arts and music scenes and is frequently voted one of the best places to live in the UK and even the world.

But at the same time, the city faces several challenges: there are around 300 premature deaths a year in Bristol as a result of poor air quality; the disparity in access to higher education is almost 80% between local government wards; and nearly 16% of the city's population live in parts of the city that are among the 10% most deprived of areas in England.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a globally-agreed agenda for sustainable and inclusive prosperity that 'leaves no-one behind', one which can help tackle some of these challenges. Since the SDGs were agreed in 2015, individuals, organisations and networks in Bristol have sought to drive this agenda into city conversations.

The Bristol SDG Alliance is one such network. Hosted by Bristol Green Capital Partnership as part of the European Green Capital legacy, it is now made up of more than 45 stakeholders advocating for the practical use of the SDGs in the city, nationally and internationally. The Alliance has: informed a Parliamentary committee inquiry into national SDG policy; commissioned a report into 'the SDGs & Bristol'; and enabled an innovative role linking research into and engagement with the SDGs in processes in the city and more widely.

Many organisations in Bristol are beginning to realise the relevance of the SDGs to their work. Bristol City Council has created an ambassadorial Cabinet member role. Citizen-led engagement is hoping to reach out to school-children and business networks to show the city and global relevance of the SDGs.

As Bristol collectively works towards a new 'One City Plan', the SDGs offer a common language for city partners – across the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability and across the private, public and third sectors – to address these issues.

Bristol is an international, ethnically and culturally diverse city. The SDGs present an opportunity for global leadership, as they offer cities around the world a clear framework for collaborating on the big challenges they face and for sharing learnings between them.

While Bristol's approach is still developing, the key learnings from our experience are: reach out and learn from other cities; engage across all three dimensions of sustainability; tap into existing expertise and networks; use anchor institutions; seek political support; demonstrate the SDGs' value; monitor using existing indicators (at first); and engage citizens and communities.

The Alliance is an evolving network. Its members believe it could widen its remit for more successes in future, and also engage more deeply with companies and other organisations as they align corporate social responsibility and wider strategies with the SDGs.

## Introduction

Bristol is a city of great wealth, diversity and inequality. Its many strengths are overshadowed by poor air quality, high levels of homelessness, economic exclusion and inequalities in health, education and opportunities.



*A view over Bristol (photo: Allan Macleod)*

Bristol has a lower average age and faster population growth than the national average, net international immigration since 2002, rising birth rates and falling death rates.

It has the fastest-growing economy outside of London, employment and gross value added (a local-level equivalent to GDP) are higher than the national average.

Bristol is widely seen as the UK's most sustainable city. It hosts several national sustainability-focused organisations, such as the Environment Agency, the Soil Association, Sustrans and Triodos Bank, as well as smaller grassroots and community organisations. It was European Green Capital in 2015.

It is regularly found to be one of the best places to live in the UK, Europe and the world, with some of the UK's most vibrant food, music and culture, and the leading 'smart city'.

But Bristol can also be painted in a different light. Some 19,700 (24%) of all Bristol's children live in income-deprived households. Some 16% of the city's people live in the 53 small areas in the city that are among the 10% most deprived areas across England. And the gap in life expectancy between some wards is as large as 12 years.

The number of rough sleepers in the city has been increasing since 2014, as has the number of families classed as vulnerable.

Many communities are poorly connected to the city centre, either because of a lack of transport or a lack of affordable transport. The city is beset by traffic issues and the level of motor vehicle use has contributed to toxic air, resulting in an estimated 300 premature deaths a year in the city.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a globally-agreed agenda for sustainable and inclusive prosperity that can help to tackle some of the Bristol's challenges. The principle of 'leave no one behind' behind the Goals resonates with many in the city.

Bristol Green Capital Partnership, created in 2007 and with more than 800 sustainability-minded member organisations across sectors, helped to secure the European Green Capital award and is taking its legacy forward. This legacy includes encouraging wider consideration of the SDG agenda which brings together the three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social and economic.

The 'Bristol Method' was the learning sharing element of European Green Capital 2015, offering case studies to help those in other cities across the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. This new 'Bristol Method+' report is hopefully the first of many to share new learnings since then. It looks at the SDGs' relevance to Bristol, the origins of action in the city, how different actors have engaged and how Bristol is driving the SDG agenda, including the Bristol SDG Alliance and its successes to date. It also offers key learnings for others, and finally considers some possible futures of the SDGs in the city, drawing on Alliance members' views.

## SDGs: Some background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – also known as the Global Goals – are a set of 17 Goals developed and adopted by the United Nations and its 193 member countries in September 2015. They build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that preceded them, and are unpinned by 169 targets and 244 associated indicators. These global objectives for 2030 are universal, covering everyone in all countries, not just the developing countries which were the focus of the MDGs.

While the MDGs saw improvements in many countries in terms of national averages, concerns that they focused on relatively better off people in developing countries led to the SDGs focus of ‘leave no one behind’.

SDG success will require their integration into all levels of government. As well as national governments, regions and cities will be essential to achieving the Goals, and so need to adopt relevant goals and include the SDGs in planning processes. This is especially true of cities given their high concentration of people and relevant challenges, such as employment, safe and sustainable transport, food security and waste management. The concentration of population also offers a greater opportunity to mobilise change.

The SDGs offer a great opportunity for the city to attempt to address these problems as part of a global movement.

The economic, environmental and social issues and inequalities Bristol faces, the city’s global outlook and its penchant for partnership means the SDGs provide Bristol with a chance to work alongside other cities that are facing similar challenges, collaboratively tackling these and sharing learnings with each other.



*SDG roundel from UN presentation at [www.emaze.com/@AQTZOCCW](http://www.emaze.com/@AQTZOCCW)*

## Bristol and the SDGs: A timeline

<b>2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bristol is European Green Capital 2015</li> <li>• September – SDGs adopted at UN by 193 countries</li> </ul>
<b>2016</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 January – South West International Development Network/BOND event: <i>Upscaling Local to Global: How can South West international organisations impact on the effectiveness of the SDGs?</i></li> <li>• June – Big Green Week event: <i>SDGs and Bristol – A Tale of Two Cities?</i></li> <li>• 2 September – First meeting of what becomes the Bristol SDG Alliance</li> <li>• September – Bristol SDG Alliance briefs Mayor on the ‘SDGs and Bristol’; Bristol Green Capital Partnership directors agree ‘Bristol and the SDGs’ as a key project</li> <li>• October – Alliance submits evidence to House of Commons’ Environmental Audit Committee inquiry on the UK and the SDGs</li> <li>• November – South West International Development Network event: Bristol Green Capital Partnership CEO presents to members on Bristol SDG Alliance; Alliance facilitates an SDGs group at AGM of Voscur, the city’s voluntary group and social enterprise network</li> <li>• December – Master’s ‘Bristol and the SDGs’ student project proposal</li> </ul>
<b>2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 January – Bristol Green Capital Partnership becomes a partner in UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, the national SDGs stakeholder body</li> <li>• 1 March – Bristol Green Capital Partnership CEO joins “Transforming Communities” panel at UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development’s annual conference</li> <li>• May – UN Global Compact UK cities roadshow held at UWE</li> <li>• July – Alliance members attend Bristol City Council workshop on a new city progress dashboard, with Bristol Green Capital Partnership presenting on the SDGs and their relevance to cities; Bristol and the SDGs report completed</li> <li>• August – University of Bristol impact acceleration funding proposal including an SDG Research and Engagement Associate submitted</li> <li>• September – Bristol Learning City presents on SDGs at UNESCO conference; Bristol Green Capital Partnership responds to Office for National Statistics SDG consultation; UWE and University of Bristol become the first higher education institutions to sign the SDG Accord</li> <li>• October – Festival of the Future City 2017 panel event with representatives from Medellin (Colombia), Overseas Development Institute (London) and Bristol Green Capital Partnership; University of Bristol approves funding for SDG Research and Engagement Associate proposal</li> <li>• November – New York City’s SDGs and resilience lead visits Bristol to discuss SDGs and the One New York City plan; Sustainability Jam engaging the city’s students on the SDGs</li> </ul>
<b>2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January – Research and Engagement Associate role starts</li> <li>• February – Bristol represented at Global Ambition Local Action Conference, Los Angeles and Wilton Park SDG interlinkages conference; local representatives present to Department for International Development (DFID) advisors’ conference in Bristol</li> <li>• March – SDG Associate, Bristol Green Capital Partnership CEO and University of Bristol academic lead brief Mayor on the One City Plan and the SDGs; Bristol City Council cabinet member appointed as SDG Ambassador and Bristol represented at Wilton Park conference</li> <li>• June – SDGs feature in One City Plan draft presented at City Gathering</li> <li>• July – Bristol Method chapter published to share learnings with other cities</li> </ul>

## Bristol's engagement with the SDGs

As the SDGs were being finalised, many organisations and stakeholders in Bristol had begun to consider how the Goals would be relevant to them. The Schumacher Institute (an independent think tank on environmental, social and economic issues) was involved in the consultation for the development of the SDGs between 2013 and 2015 and outlined the need for localisation and city ownership in a working paper on Bristol and the SDGs in November 2016.

Furthermore, not wanting to lose the momentum behind sustainability fostered by the European Green Capital 2015, many in Bristol were interested in mobilising a group to develop SDG thinking and action.

In January 2016, a workshop was organised by the South West International Development Network with BOND, the umbrella group for international development NGOs in the UK. The event brought together people from across the city to discuss the SDG agenda. It looked at how Bristol could localise and engage with the SDGs and brought some of the city's anchor institutions to the table, with groups looking more closely at specific areas including one focusing on local engagement.

Following this, a further event around the SDGs was organised in June 2016 during Bristol's Big Green Week, titled 'Sustainable Development Goals: Bristol a tale of Two Cities'. This was organised by David Jepson (CivilEuroPerspective, a non-profit community economic development organisation) and Sado Jirde (Black South West Network, a black and minority ethnic-led organisation working for race equality across the South West).

It brought local activists, campaigners, academics and students together to discuss the relevance and importance of the SDGs to Bristol. Interest had been growing in the city for some time around frameworks to help tackle some of the inequalities that Bristol faces. Many in the city felt Bristol needed to break from the habit of forgetting the good work that has been done, but instead learn and adapt this work to new ideas. The 'leave no one behind' agenda drew in Diane Bunyan (Bristol Women's Voice) and Sado Jirde (Black South West Network), who were similarly looking to engage with a framework that would tie in Bristol's green agenda with social inclusion and economic prosperity for all, and Ian Townsend, about to start as CEO of Bristol Green Capital Partnership. The group was keen to meet again.

On 2 September 2016, David, Sado and Ian – now in his new Partnership role – brought a group of stakeholders together for the first meeting of what was to become the Bristol SDG Alliance.

Ian had previously worked with colleagues at Bristol-based international development organisation Development Initiatives on the Millennium Development Goals and influencing their successor, the SDGs. Building on the January event, he developed a short 'Bristol and SDGs' proposal to bring this global development agenda down to local level, with inputs from the University of Bristol's Cabot Institute and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's USA Sustainable Cities Initiative.

The Partnership offered to host the Alliance, because the SDG agenda integrates the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, and is relevant to its vision of ‘a sustainable city with a high quality of life for all’ and Bristol’s European Green Capital 2015 legacy.

*“Bristol Green Capital Partnership focuses on the environmental dimension of sustainability, but a sustainable city also needs social and economic sustainability.*

*The Goals provide Bristol with a pathway to sustainable and fair prosperity. The Partnership has been pleased to host the Bristol SDG Alliance, which helps bring these three dimensions closer together.*

*The Alliance – now numbering almost 50 varied organisations and businesses, including universities and Council officials among many others – gives the city a space to discuss implementing the Goals, and share knowledge, opportunities and experiences.*

*The Goals also offer a common language for sharing learnings among global cities. We have drawn on their approaches in Bristol, and we’re keen to share our learnings with others in turn.”*



Ian Townsend  
CEO of Bristol Green Capital  
Partnership

[www.bristolgreencapital.org](http://www.bristolgreencapital.org)

### The Bristol SDG Alliance: What is it?

The Alliance is a network of varied stakeholders (see p.10) who are interested in discussing and advocating the practical use of the SDGs in Bristol and leading the way in SDG implementation in the UK and internationally. The Alliance membership includes a range of Bristol City Council officials, including the strategic resilience officer, sustainability team, international team, Bristol Learning City partnership and the City Office. This council engagement reflects the range of interest across the city.

Meeting every six to eight weeks at offices of various members, the Alliance is a forum for discussing SDG news, opportunities and events of relevance to Bristol.

### Aims of the Alliance

In October 2016, the Alliance agreed three main aims:

- to drive Bristol’s long-term sustainability and resilience;
- to monitor progress and enable the region to hold itself to account; and
- to connect community and city-level action to national and global challenges.

Some of the organisations involved with the Bristol SDG Alliance



**Bristol Zoological Society**  
Saving Wildlife Together



## Some Alliance successes

The Alliance was developed to facilitate ‘on-the-ground’ action on the SDGs. Many people felt that Bristol too easily forgot previous sustainability efforts. Some felt that despite a lot of good work being done to investigate how Bristol City Council could use the principles of the Rio+20 conference, this had not been implemented. While the MDGs held much less relevance to Bristol, the SDGs provide a good opportunity for Bristol to ground local priorities within a global agenda.

Since its creation, the Alliance has been involved in creating and assisting several initiatives:

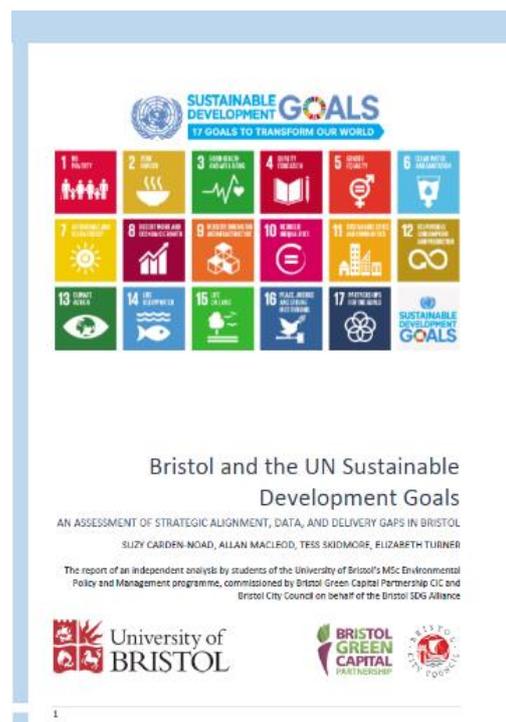
### Evidence to Select Committee inquiry

The first Alliance initiative was to respond to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee’s inquiry into the implementation of the SDGs in the UK. In October 2016, Bristol Green Capital Partnership drafted a written evidence submission agreed with the Bristol SDG Alliance drawing on Bristol’s learnings.

The submission highlighted the general lack of awareness of the SDGs, the need for rapid central government action, the risk of the UK falling behind despite its key role in the SDG’s creation, and potential costs of inaction. It suggested that the government should involve cities and local authorities, learning from US and European cities that had already begun to adopt the SDGs. The evidence highlighted the relevance of the goals to Bristol, the actions central government could take, and how it could begin to monitor and report on the goals.

Highlighted in one of the Committee’s public evidence sessions, this raised the profile of Bristol seeking to use the SDGs, while also adding to the national debate around the Goals.

### *The Environmental Audit Committee’s SDG report and the Bristol and the SDGs report*



### 'Bristol and the SDGs' report

Continuing the momentum from the Environmental Audit Committee submission and to help further mobilise SDG action, Bristol Green Capital Partnership and Bristol City Council commissioned a report on behalf of the Alliance from a team of postgraduate student consultants from the University of Bristol's Environmental Policy and Management Master's course.

Four students assessed the Goals' relevance to Bristol, existing stakeholder activity and the extent to which they had been already applied, as well as Bristol's current failures and successes in meeting the SDGs.

The report was a big step forward for localising the SDGs in Bristol, helping the city to understand its place in SDG localisation and what might come next. It was picked up by the United Nations and shared with contacts in US cities.

### SDG Research and Engagement role

Building on the Master's consultancy report, the University and Bristol Green Capital Partnership applied to the University of Bristol's strategic resource fund to create a role that would increase the engagement and research produced around the SDGs in Bristol.

In January 2018, Allan Macleod became Bristol's SDG Research and Engagement Associate. Working across the Bristol Green Capital Partnership, Bristol City Council and the University of Bristol, his role has provided dedicated resource for the Alliance and helped Bristol Green Capital Partnership in their SDG localisation work. Working across the three organisations has enabled representation and advocacy for the goals across different places and spheres of influence and has notably meant connections have been developed with a range of stakeholders across the city working in the City Office.

The Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, took an increased interest in the SDGs, supported by Alliance briefings and the engagement of other global cities with the SDGs. This resulted in the Goals being integrated into the new One City Plan and mapped onto Bristol's local priorities. By building on the work in 'Hacking the SDGs for US Cities', 75 of the 169 SDGs targets were found to be directly relevant to Bristol. These targets are being blended together with locally-developed priorities to form the One City Plan goals to result in 'Bristol's SDGs'.

To help demonstrate how the SDGs can relate to existing initiatives in Bristol, these 75 targets were 'localised' to the city, with one example target for each of the 17 Goals presented to nearly 200 city stakeholders at the City Gathering on 8 June 2018 (see figure on p.13).

This was a key success for the Alliance in localising the SDGs to Bristol. It should lead to further integration of the SDGs into the One City Plan and Bristol City Council work, as well as opening up exciting new opportunities to engage with more city stakeholders through an SDG lens.

Examples of targets relevant to Bristol for each SDG, as shown at a City Gathering event on 8 June 2018



The One City Plan is aligned to the ambitions set out by the UN Sustainable Development Goals which has targets to be achieved by 2030. The below targets are an example of some that are relevant to Bristol.

- 

**1 NO POVERTY**  
50% less people living in poverty compared to today's number
- 

**2 ZERO HUNGER**  
End all forms of malnutrition, in particular for children under five years of age, adolescent girls, pregnant women and older persons
- 

**3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**  
Reduce by 1/3 all premature deaths resulting from non-communicable diseases
- 

**4 QUALITY EDUCATION**  
Ensure equal access to quality early childhood development care and education and substantially increase the number of people who have relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- 

**5 GENDER EQUALITY**  
End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls
- 

**6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION**  
Substantially increase efficient use of water across all sectors and ensure sustainable water management
- 

**7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY**  
Substantially increase the use of renewable energy in the energy mix
- 

**8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**  
Productive and fair employment for all
- 

**9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**  
Infrastructure and industries will be sustainable, with increased resource efficiency and greater adoption of clean technologies and processes
- 

**10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES**  
Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status
- 

**11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**  
Ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, for communities, with clean, inclusive, accessible spaces and green, healthy environments
- 

**12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION**  
Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse
- 

**13 CLIMATE ACTION**  
Integrate climate change measures into all strategies, planning and policies
- 

**14 LIFE BELOW WATER**  
Prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds
- 

**15 LIFE ON LAND**  
Ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems
- 

**16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**  
Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths
- 

**17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS**  
Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships

The research and engagement role has also raised awareness of Bristol's actions on the global stage, with representation at the 'Global Ambition Local Action' conference in Los Angeles in February 2018, the Global Partnership for Development Data's 'Data for Development Festival' in Bristol in March 2018, and the UN Smart Cities launch in Vienna in May 2018.

### Festival of the Future City 2017

In October 2017, the Alliance, with support from the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) held a fully booked panel event as part of this major biannual Bristol festival. This featured a representative from Antioquia province of Colombia, which includes the city of Medellin, an expert on the SDGs and cities from the UK's Overseas Development Institute, and Bristol Green Capital Partnership's CEO, all chaired by a sustainability expert from consultancy DNV-GL's Bristol offices.

In the margins of the Festival, the Alliance also hosted a roundtable meeting and teleconference of contacts in cities across the country on 'UK cities and the SDGs'. This involved 13 contacts, including a representative of Beira, Bristol's twin city in Mozambique.

### Cabinet SDG Ambassador

In September 2016, the Alliance urged stakeholders including Bristol City Council to adopt the SDGs as a framework for sustainable development.

At the 'Data for Development Festival' in March 2018, the Mayor of Bristol announced a new Cabinet-level SDG Ambassador role, to be taken on by

Cabinet member for Education and Skills, Cllr Anna Keen.

The new ambassador will raise awareness and the profile of Bristol's SDGs work. They are expected to champion the SDGs in local development plans, and act as the political lead for conversations around the SDGs on the national and international stage. This is the first role of its kind in the UK and demonstrates the impact of the Alliance's work on localising the SDGs in Bristol.

## Other SDG activity in the City

### Universities & sustainability plans

The key roles that the universities in Bristol have played in engaging with the Alliance build on commitments in their own sustainability assessments. These assessments used the SDGs as a lens to understand their curriculum, management practices and overall sustainability.

The University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) completed their sustainability assessment in April 2016. This included detailed mapping of each of their four faculties onto the 17 Goals, considering their teaching, research, public engagement and knowledge exchange activities. The commitments made in UWE's sustainability plan were also mapped onto each of the 17 Goals, thereby demonstrating the University's wider engagement as well as their academic focus on the SDGs. One UWE academic is a UK and Ireland 'Green Gown' award finalist for their SDG leadership work, and another led an assessment of SDG4 in the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development's 2018 national progress review.

*"UWE Bristol has been using the SDGs as a framework for assessing alignment of all of our institutional activity with key global sustainability issues since early 2016.*

*We have focused on reviewing all our study programmes to ensure students have the best opportunity to develop into graduates who are capable and motivated to progress sustainable development in Bristol wherever else in the world they go to live and work.*

*UWE engages with and supports numerous partners in the city and its region in recognition that much more can be achieved by collaborating than by working in isolation, and that we have much to contribute to but also learn from others."*



Georgie Gough  
Associate Professor in Education  
for Sustainable Development,  
University of the West of England,  
Bristol

[www.uwe.ac.uk/sustainability](http://www.uwe.ac.uk/sustainability)

The University of Bristol's sustainability plan references the SDGs and Lauren Jasper, a Master's student at the University, conducted a critical assessment of using the SDGs as a framework for their future sustainability plans.

Also, UWE and the University of Bristol became the first UK higher education institutions to commit to the SDG Accord launched in September 2017. The accord aims to inspire, celebrate and advance the SDGs and the important role education has in them. It also commits learning institutions to do more to deliver the Goals. UWE is currently mapping how every course it offers provides SDG education.

### Bristol's manifesto for women

Bristol's 'Wo-manifesto' was published in 2016, with 6 themes: power, health, safety, education, housing and economy. It explicitly references SDG target 5.5, 'to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life'.

But Bristol Women's Voice believe the whole SDG agenda, which includes disaggregating data by gender, can help to monitor progress on the Wo-manifesto, potentially as part of the Bristol's One City Plan.

*"Bristol Women's Voice aim to use the SDGs as a way of showing Bristol's progress on the key issues of women's representation and combating violence against women and girls.*

*It is important for us to be part of a global network demonstrating progress – or otherwise – and being able to share and learn from the actions of others on the key issues that we all share."*



Diane Bunyan  
Bristol Women's Voice

[www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/  
bristol-wo-manifesto](http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/bristol-wo-manifesto)

### Global Goals Centre for Bristol

A further initiative is focused on education. The idea of a new Global Goals Centre in Bristol's vibrant CREATE Centre is to build on the work of Lifeskills, which provides safety education and training for children of all ages with a focus on Year 6 and those with special education needs. The interactive scenario-based model works well as an engagement tool with the over 11,000 children who visit the existing Lifeskills centre annually.

The separate Global Goals Centre proposed would use a similar interactive model to educate children about the SDGs. The aim is to engage them in ideas of global citizenship which can be linked with classroom work, for example through the Global Learning Partnership, which advocates for sustainability and global citizenship values in primary and secondary education. This will connect children with the impact that their choices have on others around the world and explain the relevance of the SDGs to their city and their own lives.

Still at an early stage, plans for the Centre are rapidly developing with funding secured for a new project manager, and it is hoping to be up and running by the end of 2019.

### DFID advisors' Bristol conference

In late February 2018, the Department for International Development (DFID) held their annual professional development conference in Bristol. With a focus on the SDGs' 'leave no one behind' agenda, the Alliance was invited to talk about the relevance of the Goals to Bristol. Representatives from Bristol Green Capital Partnership, the Deputy Mayor of Bristol City Council, both universities and the SDGs associate spoke at the Conference dinner about the relevance of the SDGs in a developed city context and their efforts to localise the Goals.

### Key learnings and advice for other cities

Not every city has an equivalent of Bristol Green Capital Partnership that can offer to host a new SDG network. Below, we share six key learnings from Bristol's experience with other cities looking to do something similar in their context.

#### Reach out and learn from other cities

The SDGs offer a common language through which cities can speak to each other and partner to tackle similar challenges. Seek out learnings from SDG trailblazer cities. See how these might be relevant in your context. If you're reading this then you already are! Then share your learnings with others so they can benefit from your experience.

#### Engage across all three dimensions of sustainability

Seek to engage across all three dimensions of economic, environmental and social sustainability: a sustainable city – and the SDGs – cannot be driven by one dimension alone.

Seek to draw in members from all social, cultural and ethnic groups to ensure the process of SDG implementation is as inclusive as possible: the voices that are often overlooked should be involved from the start. The Alliance has members from gender equality groups as well as economic, environmental and social groups.

#### Build on existing expertise and networks

Identify those people in your city likely to be interested in sustainability by tapping into existing expertise and networks. Avoid inventing new groups if they already exist in your city.

Leverage existing networks, either to focus on the broader sustainability agenda or to connect with others working on specific aspects of sustainability and the SDGs. Existing networks typically have better access to, or are more aware of, initiatives in a city, and will be an easier

route in to diagnose and understand city SDG priorities, and find solutions to the issues your city faces.

### Use anchor institutions

For cities that do not have much previous engagement with the SDGs, start with anchor institutions: big organisations like universities or hospitals that are embedded in their local area.

Reach out to interested people in these large organisations. They can then advocate for change in their organisations through their existing contacts and encourage the changes needed in large institutions to adopt the SDGs in a meaningful way.

### Seek political support

It is important, especially in a period of high stress on local government services, to ensure stakeholders understand that the SDGs do not mean a lot of extra work. Rather councils are delivering on many of the SDGs already, and localisation means integrating local priorities. The work will therefore be mostly dovetailing the SDGs onto existing strategies and mapping existing actions with the Goals, targets and indicators of the SDGs.

Additionally, because of the wide-ranging nature of the goals, many of the targets map easily onto work that cities already focus on, therefore mobilising the SDGs doesn't involve creating entirely new strategies or plans, but rather aligning and mapping current strategies onto the SDGs to provide a global perspective on local issues. Another benefit of the SDGs is that they can build on what has been done before, and so are relatively non-contentious politically. This allows for more cross-party consensus, as well as resilience to policy and political change.

*“Politically, the great opportunity of the SDGs is that they are comprehensive and non-contentious across most political parties.*

*Parties might disagree on priorities or mechanisms, but the SDGs circumvent that by a) foregrounding the connectivity of these disparate priorities and b) being non-judgmental on mechanisms.*

*Thus, in a politically contentious age, they have great power for building consensus.”*



Rich Pancost, Director of the Cabot Institute, University of Bristol, [www.bristol.ac.uk/cabot](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cabot)

### Demonstrate the SDGs' value

For there to be political and stakeholder 'buy in' for the SDGs, citizens need to understand the benefits of engaging with them. Explaining the Goals' value leads to easier understanding of why they need to be implemented and incorporated into city strategies.

### Monitor using existing indicators (at first at least)

Again, avoid reinventing the wheel. As much as possible, find ways of setting your city's SDG targets and monitoring and assessing progress against them using existing indicators and systems. Then, the next time your city or key institutions are going through strategic planning refreshes, seek to build the SDGs into those processes.

### Engage citizens & communities

For the SDGs to be implemented meaningfully in cities, citizens need to be engaged.

Research shows that citizen engagement not only improves the buy-in from those who have been engaged but also makes the success of the policy more likely as locals feel part of the work and make more of trying to make it succeed. Engagement will ensure that local priorities come to the fore. So look to involve grassroots and community groups as much as possible.

*"Often it can be hard to connect long-term visions with meaningful on the ground action.*

*It is important that action is citizen led and inclusive so that the SDGs can be seen as locally relevant."*



Sado Jirde  
Director of Black South West Network

[www.blacksouthwestnetwork.org](http://www.blacksouthwestnetwork.org)

## Looking forward: some possible futures for the Alliance

This Bristol Method+ report shows some of the ways the Alliance and its members have had a significant impact across the city in localising the SDGs to Bristol, using them as a development framework and an opportunity.

To aid further engagement and the opportunities that the Bristol SDG Alliance can provide, interviews and discussions with current and previous Alliance members were held to gauge opinions on how the SDG Alliance could develop, and how its influence should evolve. These generated the following ideas.

### Broader remit

Bristol is blessed with many partnerships and organisations that focus at different levels and on different issues and themes. The Alliance aimed to include the full range of voices and minorities in the city in its development and activities, reflecting the inclusive nature of the SDGs. They are for everyone, everywhere and to ensure that no one is left behind.

Many organisations have been involved, including public, private and voluntary sector organisations like the Black South West Network, the Bristol Women's Voice, Bristol City Council, both of the city's universities and Triodos Bank. However, as the Alliance has developed over a period where resources have become scarcer for the smaller groups in particular, engagement with the Alliance has become more limited. As a result, the Alliance is less likely to pick up on the full range of these groups' interests.

A second opportunity to widen the Alliance's remit could come from a greater focus on supporting the work of the SDGs outside Bristol. Giving the Alliance a more outward international perspective would tie in with the work of the city's international strategy, Bristol City Council's International team and many others in the city.

Bristol is an incredibly diverse city with 180 countries of origin represented and 90 languages spoken. Bristol City Council is heavily connected to international sustainability activities through groups like the Bristol Beria Link (with the Mozambican city), the Bristol Link with Nicaragua and the city's other international partnerships. Additionally, much of the initial work and ownership of the SDGs in the council has come from the International team. A stronger international dimension could open up new funding opportunities and bring even greater recognition for the Bristol among other cities globally.

### Deeper business engagement

The Alliance could also develop a stronger business dimension. Currently, the private sector is where many of the innovations and potential funding opportunities to achieve the SDGs are happening. One recent estimate suggested meeting the Goals in just 4 out of 60 business sectors could open up global opportunities of up to US\$12 trillion a year.

A recent PwC assessment found that almost two-thirds (62%) of companies investigated mentioned the SDGs (in their annual reports or strategies) but only just over 37% of the organisations that had reported on the SDGs had done so in a meaningful way.

Despite this, many still believe that the only way the SDGs will be achieved in 2030 is if businesses are successful in implementing and engaging with the agenda. However, the 17 Goals and the large number of targets and indicators that go with them make it difficult for stakeholders including businesses to know how to engage with the goals or implement them.

A further complicating factor is that many major businesses in or near Bristol, even some headquartered here, have their sustainability leads and teams based elsewhere, often in London. Making a stronger connection with these and the city-level context could make a valuable difference.

If the Alliance had access to the resources needed to be an initial point of contact to help city stakeholders understand their role in achieving the SDGs, this would greatly accelerate progress towards their achievement, both in Bristol and further afield.

A model for this engagement would need to be developed. Suggestions have included a 'Bristol SDG league table' to rank stakeholders in the city, or a voluntary local compact where for example stakeholders could commit to tackle each of the three dimensions of the SDGs, with recognition and awards for higher levels of commitment.

Either of these ideas would require more funding, and interest demonstrated from a wider range of Bristol stakeholders.

Both of these suggestions could draw in extra funding to connect with a wider range of organisations. By drawing more organisations into the conversation, discussions can involve a wider range of stakeholders and provide a better representation of city stakeholders in the Alliance. They can also contribute even more towards local implementation of the SDGs.

One potential future activity for the Alliance and localising SDGs to Bristol could be through facilitating a tripartite economic, environmental and social sustainability forum to integrate and coordinate the efforts of organisations in the city across these three dimensions of sustainability.

The Alliance is already providing some of this, with hosts Bristol Green Capital Partnership representing the environmental dimension, but there is the potential for greater equality group and business involvement. This could even be part of the City Office, helping to inform the implementation of a sustainable One City Plan for Bristol that aligns with the SDGs.

## Conclusion

While Bristol is still early in its process of localising and implementing the SDGs, the experiences that have driven the city to its current position offer learnings for others attempting to do something similar.

The SDG localisation process requires a mix of grass-roots enthusiasm and political engagement. City leaders can be helped to understand that the SDGs do not replace current efforts or create lots of extra work. In fact, they can help to achieve their existing goals.

In addition, city stakeholders' buy-in is needed, from anchor institutions, businesses and others. As businesses and their CSR teams increasingly engage with the SDGs through their strategies, and national governments develop their efforts to meet the SDGs, localisation and local action will become increasingly important. Cross-sector partnerships are vital to driving this agenda in cities and regions.

Furthermore, Bristol is ethnically and culturally diverse and has a role to play as a global city. The SDGs provide cities like Bristol with a framework for working together with other cities on the big sustainability challenges, bringing in learnings from focusing on the problems of greatest local relevance.

The range of stakeholders involved in the development of the SDGs in Bristol shows the widespread support; and meanwhile the potential for engendering widespread support for the themes of the Goals gives the agenda resilience.

The Bristol SDG Alliance emerged from a group of local stakeholders and then worked with existing networks and organisations to draw in new, interested parties. While not encompassing the entirety of SDG interests in the city, the Alliance has been able to champion the SDGs in Bristol's City Hall and link relevant actors to SDGs opportunities. It has catalysed interest, resources and action, leading to the inclusion of the SDGs and targets in an early iteration of Bristol's new One City Plan. Bristol joins the small, but growing number of cities worldwide so far engaging with the SDGs at this depth.

This Bristol Method chapter has highlighted the reasons for city interest in the SDGs, the origin of the Alliance, its successes and the opportunities and recommendations for other cities trying to similarly engage with the SDGs.

While there remains much for Bristol to do in terms of engaging citizens and businesses, and agreeing, monitoring and reporting on progress, the city is striving to lead globally in localising the SDGs, and the Alliance hopes to continue this work into the future.

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## Annex: Resources and links

Join the Bristol SDG Alliance and stay up to date: contact [sdgs@bristolgreencapital.org](mailto:sdgs@bristolgreencapital.org).

Bristol Green Capital Partnership's [Bristol & the SDGs project](#) page, with news pieces e.g. on [Bristol Cabinet Ambassador appointment](#), and reports e.g. [Bristol and the SDGs Master's report for the Bristol SDG Alliance](#)

Bristol Women's Voice, [Bristol's Wo-Manifesto: Our Call for Parity](#) (May 2016)

Bristol City Council: [resilience strategy](#), [launch press release](#) and [100 Resilient Cities page](#); [Deprivation in Bristol 2015](#) report

Schumacher Institute [SDGs and resilience](#) page

UK Department for International Development [SDGs launch press release](#) (September 2015)

UK Office for National Statistics [SDGs](#) page

UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development [about](#), [join](#) page, [Measuring up: How the UK is performing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) report and [Twitter](#)

UK House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee: [UK SDG implementation inquiry](#), and Bristol SDG Alliance/Bristol Green Capital Partnership [submission](#)

UK House of Commons International Development Committee: UK implementation of the SDGs [inquiry, report](#) (June 2016) and [Government response](#) (September 2016)

UK House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee: [Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the UK](#) inquiry

UN [SDG topic page](#), highlighting key targets in various issue areas and [SDG indicators website](#) for updates on the indicator process

UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network [US cities initiative](#) and [SDG Index & Dashboards](#)

UN Habitat [Localizing the SDGs toolbox](#)

UN Global Compact, [Making Global Goals Local Business: A New Era for Responsible Business](#) (June 2016)

Wilton Park conference statement to UN High-level Political Forum 2018, "[Connecting the dots to catalyse change: Why managing interactions among SDGs is key to sustainable development](#)"