



About the report

Better World – Our Commitment to Society

About the Report

The Better World web site is the BT social and environmental report.

Rather than produce a stand-alone publication, our report is essentially the sum total of all our Internet pages dedicated to our social and environmental programmes.

We have taken this approach because we believe that the innovative use of information technology offers possibilities to communicate social, economic and environmental impacts even more effectively.

We also believe the Internet to be a critical driver of the move towards greater transparency and accountability in the corporate sector.

In this section we set out some of the key features of the report:

- Triple Bottom Line Reporting
- Scope of the Report
- Verification
- CEO Statement
- Standards
- Navigation.

A Summary and Highlights is available for easy access to the key features, whilst each section of the site is also downloadable as a separate pdf document.

- Summary and Highlights
- Pdf Downloads

Triple Bottom Line Reporting

The Better World site covers BT's impact, programmes, policies, and targets across a range of social, environmental and economic issues.

This concept of 'triple bottom line' or 'sustainability' reporting is becoming an increasingly common feature of large companies.

We believe that this new reporting discipline provides an invaluable and holistic view of the company, making connections between aspects of performance previously evaluated separately and facilitating a transition to a more joined-up approach.

So it was particularly rewarding to be named joint winners of the first ACCA Sustainability Reporting Awards.

However, the concept of "triple bottom line" reporting does carry with it a suggestion that there are three separate and distinct, but somehow inter-related, bottom lines – each of equivalent standing.

In our view, in the context of sustainable development, it's impossible to consider the economic dimension in isolation from the social or the environmental and vice versa.

We think that the time has come for organisations to stop compartmentalising the economic, the social and the environmental and to find new and innovative ways of reporting their joined-up contributions to a more sustainable society.

This is what we have tried to achieve with this site.

For example, this site incorporates wide ranging hot topics – such as the 'Digital Divide' and e-business and the Environment – plus a case study of the role of communications technology in India.

We've included them because research has shown that people don't just want quantitative information on activities and processes. They want a qualitative insight into the way BT (and the industry generally) responds to its stakeholders in real situations, how it puts its values into practice, and how its products and services really can help contribute towards sustainable development.

Additionally, by utilising the flexibility inherent in the Internet, we are more able to illustrate the links that exist between the three dimensions of sustainability.

This is achieved both by links between the various sections, but also by opportunities to navigate the site according to the Nine Principles of the Global Compact or the Global Reporting Initiative Guidelines.

Better World Links:

- Global Compact Navigation
- Global Reporting Initiative Navigation.

Scope of the Report

This report essentially covers the financial year ending 31 March 2002. However, the site is a live one, with new material added at least every three months. It also contains archived content.

Wherever possible we cover all BT's wholly owned activities, in the UK and internationally. In particular, the sections on Employees, Suppliers, Business Principles and Economics are predominantly international in scope.

Wherever this is not possible, and where the data is not available or relates only to our activities in one part of the world or another, we try to be clear about precisely what is covered.

In particular, although our environment policy covers the entire BT Group, the scope of the environment section is in line with our ISO14001 certification and covers our UK operations only. The report does not cover the environmental performance of BT's overseas operations, joint ventures or subsidiary activities.

The Customer section is also predominantly UK-focused.

However, we have established a target that, by December 2002, we will produce a roadmap for establishing more international content on the Better World site.

In the 12 months to 31st March 2002, BT's UK operations accounted for approximately 89 per cent of BT Group turnover and 92 per cent of BT's 108,500 employees.

The report covers all of BT's main social, economic and environmental performance areas. However, financial information is predominantly located in the Annual Report & Accounts, whilst background information about BT is set out in the Corporate Information section of the BT Group website.

The report uses indicators taken from the 2000 Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Reporting Guidelines.

Additionally, we have set the target that, by December 2002, we will bring the Better World site into accordance with the 2002 revision of the GRI Guidelines.

See also:

- Annual Report and Accounts
- Corporate Information.

Verification

The report is put through the rigours of a two-part verification process.

This process has two key objectives:

- to ensure that the right things are in the report
- to ensure the things in the report are right.

To achieve the first objective, an Independent Advisory Panel has been recruited to ensure that difficult or uncomfortable issues are not neglected. The Panel was selected on the basis of their independence of thought, experience and insight – as well as their knowledge of corporate accountability.

The Independent Advisory Panel statement sets out their perspective on the report and is updated at least twice a year.

To achieve the second, Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Limited (LRQA) has been recruited to ensure that we don't provide unreliable data or make claims that we cannot back-up. This includes identifying and assessing the data gathering systems and validating data samples.

The work of LRQA was complemented by the role of BT's Internal Audit department, which undertakes substantial work to validate data and information. LRQA rely heavily on the work of BT Internal Audit in forming their conclusions.

The LRQA Statement outlines the way in which they undertake the verification, together with their recommendations on how future reports might be improved.

Better World Links:

- Independent Advisory Panel Statement
- LRQA Statement.

Standards

There are many different guidelines, standards and codes of practice that companies are encouraged to sign up to. In this section we describe BT's approach to some of the most prominent.

AA1000

BT is a founder member of the Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability. Our long experience in stakeholder consultation and engagement contributed to the development of AA1000. The Better World site contains a section that describes our approach to stakeholder dialogue in more detail.

ETNO Environmental Charter

ETNO is the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association, and BT led the team that created the association's environmental charter. With more than 20 signatories, companies representing more than 95 per cent of the European telecommunication market have now signed the charter.

European Commission Communication on Corporate Social Responsibility

BT has published a response to the original EU Green Paper that led to the Commission's Communication.

Guidelines for Telework in Europe

Welcomed by the European Commission, these guidelines have been signed by BT and its trade unions. The guidelines stress that telework constitutes a form of work organisation whose increasing use is a clear sign of a trend towards a more flexible and mobile workplace.

Under the guidelines, teleworkers are granted equal treatment with employees working in traditional office environments, with equal access to training and career opportunities.

Global Compact

BT is a supporter of the UN Secretary General's Global Compact initiative. The activities described in this report are intended to demonstrate how we apply and promote the Compact's principles.

In fact the Better World web site has been submitted to the UN global compact office as evidence of our progress in the areas of human rights, labour and the environment. Our submission can be viewed both on Better World and on the Global Compact site.

Georg Kell, Executive Head of the Global Compact Office, has said, "The BT Better World website is an outstanding example of how business can demonstrate active participation and contribution to the Global Compact and the nine principles. I like the way that stakeholders and the public can view all the ways BT actively uses the principles in running every aspect of their business. Being a live site with interaction shows how seriously BT takes its responsibility."

Global e-Sustainability Initiative

The Global e-Sustainability Initiative is a voluntary industry initiative in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Telecommunications Union. BT chairs the initiative and continues to support its goals and actions, which includes our industry submission to the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and the development of Global Reporting Initiative telecommunications sector-specific guidelines.

Global Reporting Initiative

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is a long-term, multi-stakeholder, international undertaking whose mission is to develop and disseminate globally applicable sustainability reporting guidelines for voluntary use by organisations reporting on the economic, environmental and social dimensions of their activities, products and services.

BT has used the GRI guidelines in preparing this report. A cross-reference to the guidelines can be found in the site index section.

We have set the target that, by December 2002, we will bring the Better World site into accordance with the 2002 revision of the GRI Guidelines.

Investors in People

Investors in People (IiP) is a quality standard for effective investment in the training and development of people to achieve business goals. BT gained corporate accreditation for all its UK activities in October 1998, and has since twice been successfully reassessed.

As a result of the January 2001 reassessment, BT became one of the first organisations to gain accreditation against the new outcomes-based IiP criteria.

ISO14001

Our environmental management system covering BT Wholesale, BT Retail, BT's support services and BT Group, has been certified to the international environmental management system standard. This is thought to be the largest coverage of any single ISO14001 certificate anywhere in the world. In addition, BT Payphones also has an environmental management system certified to ISO14001.

Making a Corporate Commitment

BT supports the UK Government's Making a Corporate Commitment Campaign for targeted environmental improvement. The targets we have agreed with the Government have been fully integrated into our environmental management system.

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

Although it is primarily the responsibility of OECD governments to demonstrate compliance with the guidelines, BT is supportive of the basic principles – which are covered in this report.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The UDHR applies to all member states of the UN. While there are numerous other conventions and codes from the UN and others, the UDHR stands as the iconic definition of human rights. BT has assessed its relevant policies and procedures to ensure a consistency with the UDHR. More details are available in the human rights section.

Winning with Integrity

This guide to social responsibility describes the business case for action, as well as suggested measures of performance across the full sweep of corporate social responsibility. Its development was supported by the UK Department of Trade and Industry, with representation from business. BT's Group Managing Director led the task force.

Navigation

To help you locate your way around this site, we have provided four separate indexes:

- An Alphabetical Index
- An Index based on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Guidelines - to help you read the report in accordance with the GRI structure and to aid comparability with other reporting organisations.
- An Index based on our Statement of Business Practice, The Way We Work - to help you identify performance against our business principles, aspirations and specific commitments.
- An Index based on our submission to the Global Compact Learning Forum.