

Sustainability



let's make a
better
world

Sustainability

The concept of sustainable development has increasingly come to represent a new kind of world, where economic growth delivers a more just and inclusive society, at the same time as preserving the natural environment and the world's non-renewable resources for future generations.

Achieving sustainable development requires a degree of international consensus and a great deal of multi-institutional support.

The term 'sustainable development' has many different interpretations. The European Union (EU), for example, has developed a high-level strategy to promote sustainable development, known as the Gothenburg Strategy. This sets out a series of high-level strategic aims to counteract a growing number of unsustainable trends in society.

No individual country, business nor organisation can become sustainable on its own. But it can improve and contribute to a more sustainable world.

This report concentrates on how BT contributes to sustainable development through its own activities. This section explores the issues through the broad lens of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector's activities and contributions, and considers the potential conflict between ICT-driven economic growth and sustainability.

Here we discuss:

- BT's approach to sustainable development
- A sustainability vision

- ICT sustainability impacts
- Sustainable Development in Broadband Britain
- BT raising awareness on sustainable development
- BT working in partnership.

BT's approach

This report identifies and quantifies our social, economic and environmental impacts, and set targets to improve.

We use the term corporate social responsibility (CSR) more often than sustainable development. CSR is the voluntary action a company takes to contribute to the wider societal goal of sustainable development, such as the EU's Gothenburg Strategy.

CSR requires a co-ordinated approach to managing social, economic and environmental issues right across the company. See [business principles](#) for a description of our CSR governance framework and our CSR health checks.

However, sustainability is not just about having the right systems, checks and balances in place. BT aspires to lead by example, and this section considers the practical steps we are taking to raise awareness of, and participation in, sustainability.

A sustainability vision

ICT drives productivity and economic growth. For this to make a direct contribution to sustainable development it must be managed in the right way. If not, it will lead to further inequalities and greater consumption.

This is a challenge facing Europe in its attempt to "refocus the Lisbon agenda on actions that promote growth and jobs in a manner that is fully consistent with the objective of sustainable development".

In the economics section we demonstrate how ICT contributes to economic growth, and later in this section we show how some specific ICT services such as flexi-working can deliver immediate (direct) environmental and social benefits. However, the wider (consequential) environmental impacts may not all be positive, as the Forum for the Future's assessment of [Sustainable Development in Broadband Britain](#) shows.

Certainly, the UK has a long way to go to decouple economic growth from its environmental footprint, and data presented by the UK Sustainable Development Commission shows no improvement in life satisfaction despite a 75 per cent growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 1973.

The following are recommendations to governments developed by the Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI) for the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) and World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS):

- Markets should be open to new technologies and new approaches
- Governments should aim for harmonisation of standards and stable regulatory frameworks
- Public-private partnerships should be encouraged to develop infrastructure and applications in areas where the market needs support, eg,

environmental protection (climate mitigation, resource efficiency, monitoring and information gathering) and poverty eradication

- Countries at all stages of economic development should recognise ICT as an integral component of sustainable development strategies, not merely as a valuable industry in its own right
- Relevant international and regional institutions should develop a strategy for the use of ICT for sustainable development and as an effective instrument to help us achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- Governments and the private sector should implement different instruments that can help to extract the maximum benefits from ICT and speed the development of sustainability solutions throughout society
- Tools should be developed to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of ICT use
- ICT should be integrated into the mainstream of sustainable development.

ICT and sustainability

ICT brings many potential benefits to society.

In its submission to the World Summit on Sustainable Development the Global e-Sustainability Initiative highlighted how:

- ICT provides the infrastructure of the knowledge economy and can enable other sectors to move towards sustainability
- Low penetration of ICT in less-developed economies inhibits the

achievement of sustainable social and economic development goals

- The Internet enhances the capability of those with access in the fields of education and health, as well as providing new opportunities for economic activity and democratic participation
- All sectors can improve the impact of their operations, reducing their use of resources through smart energy management, more efficient transport, transport substitution, dematerialisation, electronic commerce and substitution of services for products.

ICT sustainability impacts

'ICT is a wonderful tool for creating value, creating an inspired work environment and an opportunity for people to develop themselves'
Ben Verwaayen, BT CEO, 2002

Communications technology not only benefits business, but the people doing business. ICT is changing the way business is done, especially through the Internet and wireless technologies. The technologies provide the possibility of productivity gains similar to those of the industrial revolution.

Furthermore, ICT can support social and economic development by transforming communication and access to information, helping to bring about the powerful social and economic networks needed to bring sustainable development to emerging economies.

The use of BT's own products and services enables us to reduce our

consumption of finite materials and to improve the work-life balance of our people.

Here we identify some of the key sustainability impacts of ICT, using quantified examples from our own experience. These are:

- The impact of phone and video-conferencing on travel
- The social and travel implications of more flexible workstyles
- The impact of e-business.

For more information on work-life balance, see [Employees](#).

Conferencing

Conferencing by video, phone or the web is more time- and cost-efficient than meeting in person. It improves the quality of life for those who travel frequently. It is also a major benefit for BT's 9000 plus home-based workers and a growing number of those who occasionally work from home.

BT Conferencing provides all BT's internal phone, video and e-conference facilities, as well as providing conferencing for customers.

Impacts of conferencing

In October 2004, an independent poll of BT people who use conferencing showed that:

- 71% thought their last conference call had definitely or probably replaced a meeting
- 73.5% believed they had saved at least three hours in travel time
- 46% of trips avoided would have been by car
- 78% of trips avoided would have



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been at peak travel times (showing that conferencing helps to relieve congestion on roads and free space on public transport)

- 35% of meetings replaced would have been in London.

We estimate that every conference call saves a minimum of 32kg of travel-related carbon dioxide emissions. BT conference calls each year save at least 47,400 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

For full data, see [BT Conferencing BT Conferencing Survey Report](#).

For more information on teleconferencing with BT, see [BT Conferencing](#).

Flexible work-styles

Technology enables flexible working that suits the needs of individuals and businesses, giving people the freedom to work while away from the office with all the resources they need to do their jobs effectively.

We have supported and sponsored the development of workstyle choices for our people for a number of years. More than 9000 BT people are full-time home-based workers, experiencing personal benefits while reducing the environmental impact of their commute.

Here we discuss the pros and cons of teleworking as identified by two linked studies.

An internal BT survey, which acted as a pilot for an external survey conducted by SusTel, on teleworking, funded by the European Union's

Information Society Technology (IST) programme. The survey assesses the economic, social and environmental aspects of teleworking.

SusTel BT Pilot Report

The report summarises an on-line survey (carried out in October 2002) of employees registered with Workabout, BT's official teleworking programme. Answers were received from 1874 people, a response rate of 36.5 per cent.

The main findings of the survey were:

- The majority of respondents felt that they had a better life using teleworking than if they commuted to an office. Many reported an increased contribution to domestic and community activities, while a small number believed that they would be unable to do their job without telework
- Most teleworkers reported an increase in working hours - of over nine hours per week for almost half the respondents. This increased working time was the main reason given by the small minority of respondents who felt teleworking had a negative effect on their lives.

Paradoxically, although people work longer hours, they also feel their quality of life has been enhanced. This is because less commuting frees time for work and private life and also greatly reduces stress. Also, teleworking enables people to multi-task. They can, for example, do domestic jobs during work breaks. This gives them more quality time at evenings and weekends.

For the full data, see [SusTel Pilot](#)

Report.

SusTel UK

The SusTel UK report summarises the UK results of the SusTel survey, a European Commission research project on the social, economic and environmental consequences of telework.

In the autumn of 2002, the SusTel team conducted 30 case studies and a total of six surveys, one each in Denmark, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands and two in the United Kingdom.

The main UK surveys were carried out with the UK airports company, BAA, and BT.

They found that most people reported an improved quality of life, although many teleworkers worked longer hours. The companies also benefited, especially from reduced absenteeism and job turnover. And the survey found a net reduction in travelling despite an increase in teleworkers' personal journeys.

Key points:

- Most respondents felt that teleworking had a positive influence on career development, although a minority (15%) of BT respondents disagreed
- Respondents felt isolated from work colleagues and, to a lesser extent, from non-work contacts - something which did not matter to most of them but did for a large minority of BT staff
- Three of the six case study companies showed major reductions in office space requirements
- Non-work-related journeys resulted in

average additional weekly travel of 60 miles at BT and 16 miles for BAA staff. But average weekly commuting fell by 253 miles at BT and 61 miles at BAA.

More information and full data are available in the [UK SusTel Summary Report](#), or on the [SusTel website](#).

SusTel, in collaboration with BT and other companies in Europe, has also developed the Telework-Sustainability Assessment Tool (SAT). This provides a simple way to assess and improve the sustainability of telework programmes in organisations.

e-Business (e-BT)

Increased use of electronic transactions in BT has clear environmental benefits.

Since the financial year 2000, we have been transforming BT into e-BT, by reducing the number of paper-based transactions and trading more electronically. This has reduced the use of paper, ink and other stationery - the use of copier paper has fallen by 42 per cent since 2000.

Paper consumption

Since the summer of 2004 all our copier paper has been produced from 70 per cent recycled post-consumer waste collected in London. This stock provided 66.7 per cent of the copier paper we used last year.

Our billing and telephone directories operations account for most of our consumption of print and paper. The use of paper in phone books has risen by 30 per cent, compared with the 2004 financial year. This is because

the books, which are reprinted every year and delivered to every UK household, now include a classified advertising section. Our billing operations saw an increase in consumption of 13 per cent, which includes billing undertaken by BT on behalf of our customers.

Despite these increases, resulting from changing business models, we have seen significant reductions since April 2000.

- From increased use of email and e-business: internal printing has decreased by 42%
- the use of paper forms has decreased by 62%.

And from efficiency gains:

- Billing has reduced by 19%
- Printing for customers has reduced by 46%.

See [Data and targets](#).

Customer solutions

Online Directory

BT's on-line directory enquiries provide telephone numbers. Users are entitled to ten free searches a day and can search by name, town or the initial letters of the post code.

eBilling

BT produces millions of bills every year, using millions of sheets of paper. We are developing ways to use our technology to reduce the amount of paper we use and to improve customer service.

Business online paper-free bill

The advantages of on-line paper-free billing are:

- It saves paper
- Itemised call details can be sorted and analysed by customers
- Online VAT statement, supported by Customs and Excise, can be printed
- Customers can download billing data to their PC.

In the 2004 financial year, BT ran a pilot with the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity, to encourage business customers to use paper-free billing by planting trees on behalf of those who signed up for this service. Following the success of this pilot, we are extending the offer to residential customers during the 2006 financial year.

Paperless payments

Customers can pay their bills by direct debit without completing any paperwork. This can be set up on the phone or on our website. Each paperless sign-up saves us mailing one paper direct debit instruction, one leaflet explaining payment options and one return envelope - as well as the original envelope.

For more information on residential & business billing, see <http://www.bt.com>.



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Sustainable Development in Broadband Britain

During the financial year 2004, we asked Forum for the Future to look at broadband from a sustainable development perspective. Taking social, economic and environmental concerns together, we wanted to know how the roll-out of broadband Internet access will affect the UK's ability to deliver a better quality of life and a better environment for all in the future.

The roll-out of broadband is a strategic priority for BT and therefore has a significant impact on our contribution to sustainable development in the UK.

The report concludes:

Large positive economic impacts are expected from the roll-out of broadband by:

- Enabling more efficient business processes - most marked in the small business (SME) sector
- Stimulating economic growth - through productivity gains and access to the global market.

The Internet is expected to have a significant impact on society, and the arrival of broadband accentuates and slightly modifies that by:

- Allowing more efficient delivery of educational, health and other public services
- Offering the opportunity to enhance and multiply social ties
- Helping community centres work more efficiently
- Enabling telework.

However, the environmental effects of broadband are more mixed.

Reductions in travel by teleworkers and more effective use of office accommodation are offset by:

- The increase in energy consumption by BT
- Possible changes in consumer behaviour
- Waste associated with consumer demand for ICT products.

The full presentation is available here as a [PDF download](#). See what actions have been taken which address some of the recommendations made in the Forum for the Future report.

ACTNOW partnership

The UK Regional Development Agencies see e-business as key to economic development. BT has worked with the South West Regional Development Agency with considerable success to spread broadband to remote rural areas. Through the Cornish partnership ACTNOW, a total of nearly 45,000 broadband connections have been set up since the project began in 2002. Many of these connections are to small businesses in Cornwall, 76 per cent of which claim they have experienced direct economic benefits.

It is estimated that the project has created or safeguarded over 3300 jobs and made a £39 million impact on regional GDP.

Web-based environmental management software

In partnership with Entropy International, a management systems

and software company, we have developed a web-based environmental management solution.

The software is fully integrated with a BT managed application enabling it to be web based with full operational security and external hosting. The solution can be used by anyone in any location with web access.

Designed to ensure full compliance with ISO 14001, EMAS, ISO9001 and OHSAS18001, Envoy covers environmental, quality, and health and safety (EQS) management and monitoring.

Raising awareness

We want to understand our impact and stimulate debate on sustainable development and corporate responsibility. To do this, we need to consult and talk to people, and promote awareness and dialogue on the issues.

Publications

We produce a series of occasional papers designed to address the complex inter-relationships between companies and society. The papers, which aim to stimulate debate rather than provide definitive answers, include:

- **Just Values** (2003) asks the question 'What happens when responsible business doesn't pay?' by examining the relationship between the business case for sustainable development and the moral imperative.
- **Enlightened Values** (2002) offers a practical business case for accountability and stakeholder engagement

- **Adding Values** (2001) provides an insight into why and how to account for a company's economic performance and effects
- **Variety and Values** (2000) gives a review of globalisation and its linked effects on cultural and bio-diversity loss
- **Changing Values** (1999) considers the role of business in a sustainable society.

Participation

We often participate in discussions on the role of business in sustainable development and sponsor events and conferences on the subject.

We are members of a number of organisations that attempt to influence public policy on matters connected with corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development, such as:

- **CSR Europe**
- **Forum for the Future**
- **Green Alliance**
- **Business for Social Responsibility**
- **Global e-Sustainability Initiative**

We respond to formal consultations such as the UK Government sustainability strategy and the EU green paper on CSR.

BT is keen for the Government to make changes to the legal and fiscal frameworks, which will enable business to survive and flourish from sustainable business practice. For more information, see [Public policy](#).

Partnerships

We often work with external partners to deliver BT branded projects and programmes.

We get many invitations to participate as a partner in activities co-ordinated by external agencies. We select those where we have something to offer and gain, especially through mutual learning and the exchange of ideas.

Particularly relevant would be our:

- Support for the **United Nations Global Compact**, an international commitment to principles on bribery and corruption, human rights, labour and the environment
- Support for the **Global Reporting Initiative** in its development of sustainability reporting guidelines
- Inputs to multilateral dialogues via the **Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI)**, an ICT sector initiative promoting technology that fosters sustainable development, and the **European Telecommunications Network Operators (ETNO)**
- Work with the **UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development (UK CEED)**, an independent charitable organisation aiming to raise environmental standards through research and policy development, and **SustainIT**.

The future

'Advanced telecommunications services are one of the few achievements of our consumer society that could be accessible to, and used by every person on earth without exceeding sustainable limits on resource-use and environmental impact.'

Peter Johnston of the Information Society Directorate of the European Commission

To achieve this goal, we need:

- Networks powered by energy derived from renewable sources
- Equipment and cables made from non-oil derived plastics (probably coming from agricultural products)
- Polymeric conductors to be used in place of metals
- Fibre-optical switches and computers (as glass is derived from a plentiful supply of sand, fibre-optic components could reduce the need for metals and conventional semiconductor materials).

Our services can also help to build a more productive and inclusive society with improved democratic participation, more efficient provision of health and education services, unlimited access to other people and to knowledge.

