

Net Zero Commitment Forum: Terms of Reference

Purpose

To bring together signatories of the Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment to share challenges and solutions on how they and the wider industry can accelerate the transition towards net zero carbon buildings.

Membership

The Net Zero Commitment Forum ('the forum') is open to all UKGBC members that are signatories to WorldGBC's Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment (current list available [here](#)). This group is unique in that it represents businesses from across the building value chain – representing the end-to-end delivery of buildings – and some cities/states, enabling net zero solutions to be developed through genuine industry-wide collaboration.

Each forum member will have one representative who will act as the UKGBC contact to receive invitations and further information on the forum. Each member can have one representative attend each forum meeting, with any further attendees by prior agreement with UKGBC.

Principles

The forum is founded on the following broad principles:

- **Solutions focused:** the forum should actively create, promote and share solutions to delivering net zero carbon buildings at scale.
- **Peer-to-peer learning:** the forum should encourage the sharing of strategies to help deliver net zero, including organisational net zero commitments.
- **Advocate:** the forum should use its collective strength to demonstrate leadership on net zero in the construction and property sector, including in the lead up to COP26.

Ways of working

The forum will meet on a quarterly basis, following the inaugural meeting held in April 2020. Each quarterly session will address one or two relevant topics which UKGBC will propose, but feedback from forum members is strongly encouraged to ensure topics are relevant and timely.

If the forum decides that follow up work is needed on the discussion topics, smaller working groups of forum members will be convened to make further progress. Participation in these working groups is voluntary and they would be strictly time limited with a specific output, for example a discussion paper or short guidance document.

Forum members are welcome to propose and lead additional forum discussions on relevant topics in between the quarterly sessions. This should be done in coordination with UKGBC.

UKGBC will provide secretariat for the quarterly meetings, including organising meeting times, physical/online venues, agendas, meeting notes and chairing the meetings.

UKGBC, in consultation with forum members, will reassess membership and format if there is a significant increase in Commitment signatories. Additionally, these Terms of Reference and effectiveness of the forum will be assessed by UKGBC and the forum members on an annual basis.

Further information

If you have any questions or would like any further information on the forum, please contact [Karl Desai](#).

Net Zero Commitment Forum: Key Topics

Scope

The inaugural Net Zero Commitment Forum meeting was held on 22nd April 2020 to help determine the high-level objectives and scope of the forum. At this meeting, members identified the following key topics, which we propose to address in the following order in upcoming sessions:

1. **Verification of net zero buildings** – *currently inviting members for a working group*
2. **Commitment interaction with other initiatives**
3. **Commitment alignment with UKGBC net zero framework**
4. **Build market demand for net zero buildings**
5. **Scope 3 add-on to Commitment**

We welcome members' feedback on both the proposed order in which the forum should address these topics, and on the suggested approach that the forum might take to address them, provided below under 'Key topics'. Feedback is open until Monday 8th June and topics may be further refined in subsequent meetings.

Given the level of interest in '1. Verification of net zero buildings' we are currently inviting members to join a working group on this topic ahead of the next Forum meeting in July. The July meeting will have a strong focus on this topic, with the others due to be covered later in the year.

Key topics

The below table summarises the key topics identified by members at the inaugural forum meeting, along with suggested approaches members could take in addressing them. Apart from '1. Verification of net zero buildings', the order of topics is subject change based on feedback from members.

<p>1. Verification of net zero buildings</p>	<p>Issue: currently there is no readily-applicable scheme which allows an owner or occupier to market/verify their building as net zero. The lack of marketability reduces appetite and overall demand for net zero buildings – “we want a badge”. There is general scepticism that an existing certification scheme will be sufficient to create market uptake at the pace and scale required.</p> <p>Additionally, it is not clear what Commitment signatories can publicly claim once they achieve net zero for their own building areas, which reduces this incentive to sign up to the Commitment.</p> <p>Opportunity: forum members will form a small working group which will support UKGBC in developing an industry white paper exploring options for how net zero verification can be achieved at scale, ideally building on any existing schemes e.g. BREEAM In-use, NABERS UK, UKGBC's net zero framework. The net zero framework currently provides a route for verifying tenancies, buildings or portfolios of buildings, however it requires further development for it to be readily-applicable.</p> <p>Additionally, this verification process could align with the Commitment, where signatories undertake this process on an annual basis for reporting.</p> <p>Any members interested in joining this working group should email Karl Desai.</p>
---	---

<p>2. Commitment interaction with other initiatives</p>	<p>Issue: there is an increasing amount of commitments and market mechanisms edging the industry towards net zero, however this is creating a lot of ‘noise’/confusion and question around action. Some examples are: SBTi, BBP Commitment, organisational net zero targets etc. The Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment (and this forum) could fall prey to this if it doesn’t hold a unique position and demonstrate value to new/existing signatories.</p> <p>Opportunity: the forum could explore options for providing clarity on what the Commitment’s role is in the market and how it interacts with other initiatives. This could include a mapping exercise to outline what different initiatives can be used for, creating alignment where possible (important for reporting), and ensuring a collective approach to advancing net zero.</p> <p>Signatories could play a greater role in shaping the direction of net zero ambitions for Commitment signatories in the UK (including leading approaches to advocacy and tackling scope 3 emissions), creating an industry-led initiative (as opposed to others which are set up as top-down).</p>
<p>3. Commitment alignment with UKGBC net zero framework</p>	<p>Issue: the net zero framework builds upon the principles of the Commitment, however it sets out more stretching requirements, including energy targets for offices, (future) criteria for renewable procurement and offset schemes, and addressing embodied carbon in construction. There is a strong likelihood that the Commitment and net zero framework will continue to diverge, creating disaggregation and confusion in the market.</p> <p>Opportunity: the forum could explore options for ensuring consistent approaches between the Commitment and the net zero framework wherever possible. The group could also provide strategic guidance on the development of the framework given their knowledge of the market.</p>
<p>4. Build market demand for net zero buildings</p>	<p>Issue: current signatories represent a relatively small amount of floorspace, not enough to shift market demand towards net zero buildings. They represent the ‘supply side’ of the building value chain (e.g. architects, engineers, consultants) demonstrating that net zero is technically achievable, however there is limited representation from the ‘demand side’. This includes: large corporate occupiers, retailers, public bodies, cities/states.</p> <p>Without new ‘demand side’ signatories driving the market to deliver more net zero floorspace, there is a gap between technical capacity and actual floorspace delivered.</p> <p>Opportunity: the forum could explore options for “exponential recruitment” of new signatories to the Commitment. This could be in the form of developing marketing material for different target audiences e.g. organisations that have already set their own net zero target. The increased demand for net zero floorspace will help to increase work for ‘supply side’ signatories, creating a virtuous circle.</p> <p>The forum can create increased value/appeal for new signatories, by providing a setting for sharing knowledge and net zero solutions.</p>

<p>5. Scope 3 add-on to Commitment</p>	<p>Issue: the Commitment’s scope currently only addresses a signatory’s energy use for building areas under direct control, with any additional decarbonisation activities promoted through the Advocacy requirements. There are other scopes of emissions that a signatory will have indirect control over that are potentially greater in magnitude and, crucially, will need to be addressed to achieve a net zero carbon built environment, including scope 3 emissions.</p> <p>Opportunity: WorldGBC are currently developing additional guidance which will highlight these additional sources of emissions to encourage greater awareness and action by signatories to drive their mitigation. This guidance is due to be included in the update to the Commitment’s Detailed Guidance document in November 2020.</p> <p>Forum members could play a role in reviewing this guidance as it is developed.</p>
---	--

Meeting schedule

- **April** – first forum meeting: scoping
- **May** – Terms of Reference and summary of key topics documents issued
- **June** – **currently available for member-led session – please register your interest with [Karl Desai](#)**
- **July** – second forum meeting: verification of net zero buildings and scoping other topics

Further information

If you have any questions or would like any further information on the forum, please contact [Karl Desai](#).