



BUILDING RESILIENCE:

MAKING THE UK'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT CLIMATE-READY

In September 2025, the UK Business Council for Sustainable Development (UKBCSD), in collaboration with Equans, convened a high-level roundtable on climate resilience and infrastructure investment.

The UK stands at a defining moment.

The impacts of climate change are accelerating faster than our systems, institutions, and infrastructure can adapt. Yet resilience need not be a defensive expense, it should be the next engine of national competitiveness. By treating adaptation as investment in productivity, security, and quality of life, the UK can convert climate risk into long-term economic advantage. What is needed now is leadership that aligns policy, finance, and delivery behind a single purpose: to make the built environment climate-ready, future-fit, and globally investable.

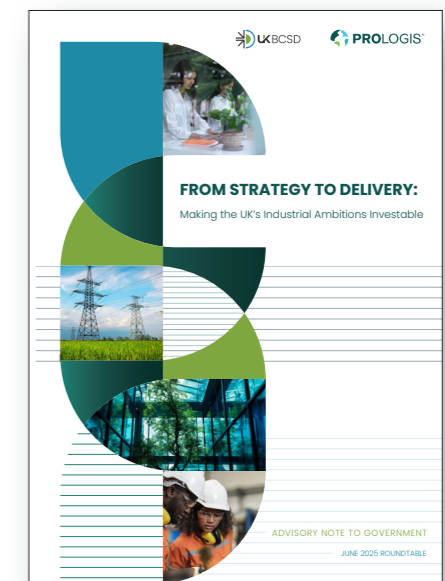
The Equans roundtable brought together senior figures from government, industry, academia, and professional services to examine how the UK can translate its policy commitments on adaptation into real-world delivery. The discussion was practical, open, and focused on defining the systemic levers needed to embed resilience across the economy.

This session built on previous UKBCSD roundtables, moving the conversation from industrial readiness and risk management to the practical delivery of climate resilience.

Together, these discussions are shaping the foundations of the UK Sustainable Industrial Plan, a coherent framework for sustained national competitiveness, where economic growth, environmental adaptation, and delivery capability are integrated into one system of long-term value creation. The framework defines how the UK can strengthen its industrial base, secure investment, and safeguard communities by embedding resilience as a core measure of economic performance.



Climate-Resilient
Risk Management
In Infrastructure
Development.



Strategy to delivery:
Making the UK's
Industrial Ambitions
Investable.

POLICY AND SYSTEMS:

FROM FRAGMENTATION TO FRAMEWORK

- **CHALLENGE:** Resilience remains policy aspiration without a unifying delivery model. Current frameworks are inconsistent and lack enforcement.
- **SOLUTION:** Government must establish a National Resilience Framework, equivalent in visibility and accountability to the frameworks guiding energy transition and industrial decarbonisation, with measurable baselines and accountability across central, regional, and local tiers. Lessons from the EU Taxonomy and the UK's ESOS scheme show that clear regulatory direction drives market alignment. A return to strategic spatial planning, underpinned by devolution and empowered mayoral leadership, would bring the coherence needed for place-based resilience. The Framework should define spatial, sectoral, and temporal standards, integrating climate risk assessment into planning, housing, energy, transport, and digital infrastructure.
- **ACTION:** Establish a National Framework for Climate Resilience defining metrics, responsibilities, and delivery standards across all sectors.

INVESTMENT AND FUNDING:

UNLOCKING CAPITAL FOR ADAPTATION

- **CHALLENGE:** Investment confidence is held back by short-termism and fragmented finance.
- **SOLUTION:** Resilience is an economic multiplier. Every pound invested in adaptation yields multiple returns through reduced disruption, lower insurance costs, and improved productivity. Blended models of public and private capital must be scaled nationally. HM Treasury borrowing rules should be revised to enable local authority investment in long-term resilience infrastructure. Whole-Life Costing (WLC) should replace first-cost appraisal across all procurement and investment assessments. Government should support non-profitable interventions while enabling the private sector to invest in commercially viable solutions.
- **ACTION:** Introduce Resilience Investment Mechanisms including bonds, tax incentives, and borrowing flexibilities to mobilise capital at scale.

DATA, STANDARDS AND MODELLING:

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

- **CHALLENGE:** The absence of consistent data and thresholds leads to uncertainty and delay.
- **SOLUTION:** Establish a unified national standard for climate data and modelling with shared thresholds for action. Align insurance, planning, and infrastructure data under one resilience evidence framework.
- **ACTION:** Create a National Resilience Data Standard to guide investment, regulation, and procurement.

INNOVATION AND DELIVERY:

ADOPT & ADAPT

- **CHALLENGE:** Innovation is not invention; it is the intelligent adoption of what already works.
- **SOLUTION:** Proven technologies exist globally; the UK must adopt and adapt them through efficient licensing, integration, and cross-sector collaboration. Policy innovation must use the three levers of change: Regulation, Fiscal Instruments, and Voluntary Action, each applied in balance. Procurement should reward innovation that delivers resilience outcomes, not just compliance.
- **ACTION:** Reframe innovation policy around Adopt & Adapt to accelerate deployment of proven technologies through integrated procurement and licensing.

“The question is not whether we can build resilience, but who will lead it and how fast we can adopt and adapt the solutions already in front of us.”

Roundtable Participant

SKILLS AND IMPLEMENTATION:

THE CAPACITY GAP

- **CHALLENGE:** Delivery depends on people as much as policy.
- **SOLUTION:** The green, digital, and technical skills base required for resilience is fragile. Trades need structured retraining to adopt new materials and systems; current schemes are too short-term to sustain SMEs. Consistent funding for workforce development is vital to avoid loss of capability between programmes.
- **ACTION:** Create a National Resilience Skills Programme linking further education, apprenticeships, and SME support to climate adaptation delivery.

PROCUREMENT AND PARTNERSHIP:

LEVERAGING THE PUBLIC SECTOR

- **CHALLENGE:** Government is the UK's largest procurer and therefore the most powerful driver of systemic change.
- **SOLUTION:** Procurement frameworks must embed whole-life value and resilience standards across all contracts. Multi-sector coordination, potentially via an independent national resilience body, could unify fragmented local initiatives. Shared case studies and preferred-supplier guides would help public and private actors scale proven models.
- **ACTION:** Mandate resilience criteria in all public procurement and create cross-sector guidance to accelerate adoption.

COMMUNICATION AND NARRATIVE:

THE VALUE OF ACTION

- **CHALLENGE:** Resilience investment is not a cost, it is protection of value.
- **SOLUTION:** The cost of inaction must be central to the national narrative. Public engagement should connect adaptation to health, prosperity, and productivity outcomes. Transparency in data and reporting will build public trust and investor confidence.
- **ACTION:** Develop a national communications framework highlighting the economic and social return of resilience investment.

OUR ADVISORY STATEMENT TO GOVERNMENT

The UK must treat climate resilience as national infrastructure, not an optional environmental goal. A coherent framework for resilience, equivalent in status to the frameworks driving the energy transition and industrial decarbonisation, is now essential to safeguard growth, attract investment, and protect communities. Government should implement the below systemic enablers, without them, resilience will remain policy ambition rather than delivery reality.



Establish a **National Resilience Framework** setting measurable standards for policy, investment, and delivery across departments and local authorities.



Launch a **Resilience Skills and Data Programme** to build the evidence base, workforce capability, and innovation capacity required to deliver at scale.



Embed **Whole-Life Value and Social Benefit Accounting** in all public procurement and infrastructure funding.



Reform fiscal and borrowing rules to unlock public and private capital for adaptation and local resilience delivery.



CLOSING REFLECTIONS

The UK's built environment faces escalating climate risk, but the solutions already exist. What is missing is coherence, continuity, and commitment. Turning our purpose into delivery requires a national approach, one that unites industrial strategy, climate adaptation, and place-based investment within a single framework for growth. This is essential to building a Sustainable Industrial Plan that secures the UK's competitiveness, protects its communities, and ensures the nation's infrastructure is fit for the future.

Leadership, investment, and data must now converge to turn ambition into resilience that delivers for people, places, and prosperity.

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