

London Bridge Decarbonisation Charter - FAQs

1. How did the Charter come into being and when? Who has signed and has it had any success?

The concept of the Charter was put forward in the London Bridge Net Zero Routemap – a strategy which Team London Bridge (TLB) commissioned Useful Projects to write to support London Bridge to be a sustainable business district. This involved a lot of business involvement, and culminated in a Net Zero Steering Group as the main governance structure. This group agreed that a Charter should be developed and a working group was set up in July 2023. The initial Charter was written and tested with multiple businesses as well as the TLB Board. Ultimately it was agreed the Charter should enable all businesses to take part, at whatever stage they were at, but to develop tiers of commitment so that those that are doing more are recognised, and to incentivise businesses to do more.

It was opened (as an online survey) for signatures in October 2023, and fully launched at an event in February 2024, with 35 founding signatories. By the end of the first charter year (October 2024), there have been 44 signatories, including:

- A hospital and a university
- A hotel, theatre and food and beverage outlets
- Law firms
- SMEs
- Global companies
- Developers and building contractors
- Building managers and service providers
- Waste contractors
- A park and landscaping teams
- Southwark Council

We look forward to growing this incredible list in 2025.

The Charter won the 2024 Climate Action award the Association of Town and City management (ATCM) awards.

2. How will Team London Bridge (TLB) check we are meeting charter commitments? What is the review process?

TLB expects signatories to do their best to meet the commitments, and we will work hard to meet our own commitments on behalf of the collective commitment. Our efforts will be governed by the Net Zero steering group, made up of local businesses.

Each year, signatories will be required to renew their commitment and review their progress. This will be a self-reporting process against the themes laid out in the charter (like energy, transport, waste etc), and scores will not be shared widely but aggregated to show progress across the area. There will be an opportunity to highlight achievements with a case study that can be used to highlight the efforts of the business community, which will be celebrated annually (Jan/Feb). This will be a light touch process. New signatories do not need to do this review.

As legislation evolves, the targets within the Charter may become more stringent to align with new requirements, pushing for continuous improvement in reducing carbon emissions (see point 5).

The annual renewal of the Charter will take place throughout the month of November and December each year, allowing stakeholders to assess their progress and set updated goals for the upcoming year. Signatories that signed the Charter over 6 months after the Charter launch will be exempt from the first renewal process, doing so from the second renewal onwards.

TLB will ensure all signatories have advanced warning of the renewal deadline. Any signatories that fail to complete the renewal process will be removed from the list of Charter signatories at the end of the calendar year (though they can still of course rejoin).

3. What do we get in return for our participation in the Charter?

By signing this Charter, businesses will be part of a collective framework that supports TLB's ambition to be part of a carbon neutral Southwark by 2030 as well as to become one of the most sustainable places to do business in the world. It will help businesses demonstrate their commitment to environmental sustainability to employees, shareholders and customers.

Participating businesses will be supported to achieve the commitments through the provision of tools, resources and knowledge sharing from TLB and other businesses, and promotion through TLB website and social media (if requested). TLB will provide a badge which can be used on websites, the badge will reflect the level of their commitment. This will **not** be an official accreditation. Businesses will also be given some simple communications messaging – a 'cheat sheet' - enabling them to share their own work while referencing communal objectives.

It is expected that the Charter will support efforts to gain new funding streams for the London Bridge BID, and in building momentum towards a sustainable business district, including recognition as a leading place to do business which benefits all our businesses.

In general, resources will also be made available to businesses that have not signed the Charter, but there will be fewer opportunities to celebrate their own best practice.

4. The Charter collective commitment mentions business support for the London Bridge BID Net Zero Routemap. What is this and what does that entail?

The Routemap document was produced in 2022, launched in July at the TLB summer party. TLB commissioned Useful Projects to undertake this piece of work (following a competitive tender) in order to ensure its approach to sustainability, including the possibility to be carbon neutral, was grounded in robust evidence and the views of the business community. This involved over 40 businesses using xtonnes carbon footprint tool, as well as landlords providing data on energy use that covered most of the London Bridge BID area.

Through the Charter, the business is effectively supporting the approach set out in the Routemap which indicates what is required to become a net zero business district, although our stated ambition is to be part of a net zero Southwark. Currently there is no mechanism requiring business improvement districts to decarbonise, so this is not subject to any legality. Businesses will not become responsible for the Southwark ambition, nor will their carbon footprint directly be monitored at that level.

The Routemap initially stated an aim to be 'carbon neutral', but this has since been updated to net zero. This reflects terminology change that has also happened at the Southwark level, where the terms were used interchangeably in their own strategy. There isn't a globally recognised definition of a 'Net Zero' city, region or Business Improvement District, and their targets relate to Scope 1 and 2 emissions only. In 2024 we surveyed our businesses, and they indicated a preference for the Net Zero terminology, as their own targets relate to that and extend to scope 3.

The Routemap document is available here <https://www.teamlondonbridge.co.uk/netzero> and the delivery framework is illustrated below.



5. What is a net zero carbon target for Trailblazer and Champion businesses?

Net zero carbon is defined in line with the Science Based Target Initiative's Corporate Net-Zero Standard for businesses that prioritises rapid, deep emission reductions by setting near-term targets, while setting long-term targets and neutralising residual emissions. More information can be found by following this link: <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/net-zero>

Businesses that are able to sign up to this category in line with the Southwark 2030 target will be designated '**Net Zero Trailblazer**' businesses, and those that are in line with the UK 2050 target '**Net Zero Champion**'. The Charter also encourages pathfinder businesses that have not had the resource to commit to a net zero target but still wish to commit to reducing their own business emissions, and either plan to measure or are already measuring their footprint with the goal of setting a target. TLB will only publish names of businesses that wish to be made public.

A business **cannot** sign the Charter at Trailblazer or Champion levels unless they are monitoring their carbon footprint in line with science-based targets. Though being a Pathfinder is still positive and can involve taking lots of action.

A business that has set near term targets, but has not yet set a long-term target in line with science-based targets, will be a **'Net Zero Pathfinder'**, and is encouraged to set a long-term target.

Businesses will be given a designed 'badge' that can be uploaded on a company's website.

6. Will the targets get harder over time?

As legislation evolves, the targets within the Charter may become more stringent to align with new requirements, pushing for continuous improvement in reducing carbon emissions. Any signatories will be notified of any changes to the Charter targets during the annual renewal process.

7. How will I know if the collective tier's targets have progressed?

TLB will provide an annual update on its own contribution to progress on the collective tier across the Charter themes, for example in the annual Activity Summary shared with all businesses. All signatories to the Charter play a crucial role in progressing the collective actions by engaging with TLB's sustainability initiatives and supporting the development of resources and services that can contribute collectively.

8. How do we ask questions during our participation?

Any questions related to the Charter can be directed to jack@teamlondonbridge.co.uk.

9. How will the Charter be governed and reviewed?

The Charter will be governed and reviewed by the dedicated charter working group of the London Bridge Net Zero Steering Group, with input from the Steering Group, TLB staff (and external experts as appropriate), as well as TLB board members providing input. TLB will organise the Charter's implementation.

10. Is there any cost in participating?

No, the Charter is free and open to all TLB members, as well as partners associated with members (like landlords, building contractors, service providers or managing agents).

11. What happens if my company changes its mind about being part of this initiative?

You can withdraw your business commitment to the Charter at any point by contacting Team London Bridge via jack@teamlondonbridge.co.uk. This will be done in a discreet and confidential manner.

12. Will any training be made available to assist my business to make such a commitment?

Upon signing the Charter TLB will share useful tools and resources to help your business work towards the Charter commitments. Regular events covering the topics of the Charter will be run through TLB's Green Network and we welcome suggestions from our business community on themes that will be most helpful.

Commitment to the collective tier is effectively an indication of support for the wider work by Team London Bridge, although it will be expected that your business look for opportunities to implement some decarbonisation measures, and TLB will be able to offer some support.

13. What is the term of this commitment?

This is a yearly commitment running from September to September (this date may be open to change if it is inconvenient to businesses). Each year, participants will be required to self-report their progress in relation to each of the Charter's commitments.

14. Am I legally bound to fulfil this commitment should I sign?

No, the Charter is in no way legally binding. It is intended to capture the collective commitment of TLB members and partners to decarbonise the area and their own business. For trailblazer and champion (and some other pathfinder businesses), it is expected that you will already have your own publicly stated commitments, which may or may not be legally binding, but that is not being assessed through the Charter.

15. Is there a possibility that I make a commitment that we are unable to keep and it reflects badly on us, and we get negative feedback, or labelled as greenwash.

TLB will take great care not to compromise the reputation of its business members. We will ensure that the Charter cannot be mis-represented as greenwash by showcasing actual actions and measuring progress through monitoring (at regular if not annual intervals). If your business has any concerns then contact us so that we are aware of any potential for negative feedback, and we can of course remove a name from the website. We will not promote your business decarbonisation actions or Charter signature without prior approval from yourselves. All data will be strictly subject to GDPR.

16. What if despite our collective efforts, as time progresses, it is clear that we are not going to achieve our objective to be a net zero business district by 2030?

We are aware that there is a lot of work to do to make progress towards being a net zero business district by 2030, and decisions need to be taken that are out of our hands. We do not see this as a reason to not act, state our intent, or develop resources and services that can help progress sustainability in the area. We are developing projects that have the potential to decarbonise the area, such as a district heating network study and follow up work, and stakeholders are updated on this regularly.

Measuring our progress is crucial for integrity of our efforts, as well as transparency. We can commit to regular footprint measure across the area, every few years. This has been done for baseline 2019, with a follow up count in 2023, showing a 5% reduction in emissions – moving in the right direction, but not fast enough.

Through the renewal process, the Net Zero Steering Group and Charter sub-group, will take a view on our progress, and we welcome business involvement in steering this course. This may change with legislation. Currently there is no mechanism requiring business improvement districts to decarbonise, so this is not subject to any legality. We are simply stating that we will support the Southwark Council declaration to be a net zero borough by 2030.

The Net Zero Steering Group is also looking at options for a 'sustainable transition fund', which could provide a mechanism to offset some emissions locally, and signatories to the Charter will be made aware of this as it progresses, and any way for them to be involved, either individually or collectively. Current options, albeit sitting outside the work of TLB, include the Southwark Green Investment and SE1 Solar.