

UK needs Future Generation Bill says new report from British Science Association

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UK Government must take action on safeguarding future generations and protecting climate, says British Science Association

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The British Science Association is calling on the UK Government to introduce a 'Future Generations Act' and 'UK Net Zero Delivery Board' to promote intergenerational equality and combat climate change in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These calls to action are among the recommendations given in a report from the British Science Association (BSA) out today. They are drawn from 200 leaders from business, research and policy who contributed to For Thought - a series of events to discuss post-pandemic challenges, with speakers such as Nobel Peace Prize winner, Muhammad Yunus.

'Build Better: What can be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to construct a resilient, innovative and prosperous future for all', is a white paper aimed at leaders in business, science & research, policy and civil society. It gives key recommendations on ensuring a more equitable future society in a world that has been shaken by the Covid crisis.

Younger generations have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, exacerbated by the short-term nature of Government decision-making. The report highlights the need for longer-term thinking that takes into account the impact that decisions made today will have on future generations.

One such recommendation is the introduction of a Future Generations Act that would require public bodies, businesses and science & research institutions to think about the long-term impact of their decisions. The British Science Association plans to write to the Prime Minister with its recommendations. A similar 'Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill', which is currently going through Parliament is also supported by the BSA, but it says further legislation is needed to ensure businesses act too.

In order to aid a 'green recovery' and meet the UK's ambitious climate change target to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels, and to be net zero by 2050, the report also calls for the Government to form a 'UK Net Zero Delivery Board'.

Inspired by the success of the 2012 Olympic Delivery Board, the UK Net Zero Delivery Board would be tasked with tackling the issues that could inhibit the UK's journey to Net Zero.

The Board would comprise a cross-sectoral coalition of regulators working towards consistent, systemic change.

The white paper, which can be previewed here

(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-070qr9Zao0wm_LKcwv_U03e9t9WzTma/view?usp=sharing), also highlights how

the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of building working collaborations between science & research institutions, businesses and regulators around the globe.

The report's key recommendations cover distinct themes:

Put future generations at the heart of our institutional and systems decision-making

UK Government to introduce a Future Generations Act that requires public bodies, businesses and science & research institutions to consider the long-term impact of their decisions and enable them to work with people, communities and stakeholders to address persistent societal challenges, such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

Businesses and science & research institutions to create a Future Generation Advisory Board aimed at listening to voices of younger generations.

2. Share benefits of research and innovation across different communities

UK Government to support the COVID Recovery Commission's call to create at least one new globally competitive industry cluster in every region and nation of the UK by 2030. This would ensure that private and public research and development investment is not only concentrated in the South East.

Government, businesses, and science & research institutions to support and invest in diverse innovators of the future.

Leaders across Government, science, business, and civil society to define the UK's global leadership goals post-G7 and COP26.

3. Create a long-term leadership coalition to deliver the UK's Net Zero ambition

The UK Government to form a UK Net Zero Delivery Board; a coalition of leaders from business, policy, science & research, and civil society tasked with delivering and guiding the UK's Net Zero targets. The work of the board would include: protecting citizens and consumers from greenwashing (for example, by regulating price comparison sites and green advertising), consulting citizens - especially those from communities and industries most affected by the climate crisis - on policy decisions, and supporting scientists and climate experts to engage with businesses, the media, policy-makers and community groups.

Katherine Mathieson, CEO of the BSA said: "Having heard from the For Thought participants with expertise in various industries, it was encouraging to find there was so much agreement on creating a more equitable society after the pandemic, with suggestions from across the country and further afield.

"Our work particularly resonates with the first and second recommendations. Over the past year, young people have experienced major disruption to their education, and are now facing difficulties regarding future career prospects, their mental health and wellbeing, as well as the impact of the climate crisis on our society in years to come. As the UK recovers from the pandemic, we must put emphasis on guaranteeing opportunities for young people to ensure society is well-equipped for the future

challenges.

“Last year, the BSA launched a new grants scheme – The Ideas Fund – that will fund and support research-community partnerships. Through programmes like this, we aim to empower people who may not typically come across science to engage with it in a way that is relevant to them. Projects like these are just one of way we can build trust between the scientific community and the public, an issue that was raised numerous times at For Thought as one to be addressed.”

The Build Better report, released today (16th June) is the result of the BSA's For Thought event series in February and March, where experts and influencers from policy, research and business discussed key issues facing society.

Journalist and broadcaster Samira Ahmed moderated the event and a wide range of speakers took part in the For Thought series including Ann Cairns, Executive Vice-Chair, Mastercard; Professor Sir David Omand, Visiting Professor, KCL and former Director of GCHQ; Samah Khalil, Youth Mayor of Oldham; Professor Tolullah Oni, Public health doctor, urban epidemiologist (University of Cambridge); Muhammad Yunus, Founder of the Grameen Bank and winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize; Ben Osborn, Managing Director (UK) at Pfizer; and Lord David Willetts, Chair of For Thought.

For a copy of the report, more information, further quotes or to speak to the British Science Association please contact helen@thoughtleadershippr.com

About the British Science Association

The British Science Association (BSA) believes that science should be a fundamental part of society and culture and owned by the wider community. Our mission is to transform the diversity and inclusivity of science; reach under-served audiences; and increase the number of people who are actively engaged and involved in science. By unlocking the potential of a more diverse group of people, we increase our ability to tackle some of the world's biggest challenges and shape our future for the better.

Established in 1831, the BSA is a registered charity that organises major initiatives across the UK, including British Science Week; the British Science Festival; the Huxley Summit; the CREST Awards, and other programmes for young people in schools and colleges. We run activities and training for professional science communicators, undertake research and policy work, and we seek to influence and collaborate with stakeholders, including policy makers and opinion formers, leaders from across different sectors of business, industry and public life.

Our programmes encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with science, become ambassadors for science, and ultimately to be empowered to challenge and influence British science - whether they work in science or not.

British Science Association (<https://www.britishscienceassociation.org/>)

About For Thought

For Thought is a series of events and activities from the British Science Association and partners, which gives leaders from business, policy, science and civil society a platform to discuss the biggest issues of the day. Society's biggest challenges – pandemics, climate change, cyber-security, the future of cities, food security – require a partnership between science and the rest of society. They need conversation, challenge and change-oriented ideas.

For Thought will provide a platform to interrogate the key scientific and social challenges facing society; a forum to hear from diverse voices; and a chance for attendees to connect with individuals from outside their day-to-day networks.

In 2021, For Thought will be delivered online. For more information and latest details of the programme, please visit ForThought (<https://forthought.uk>)