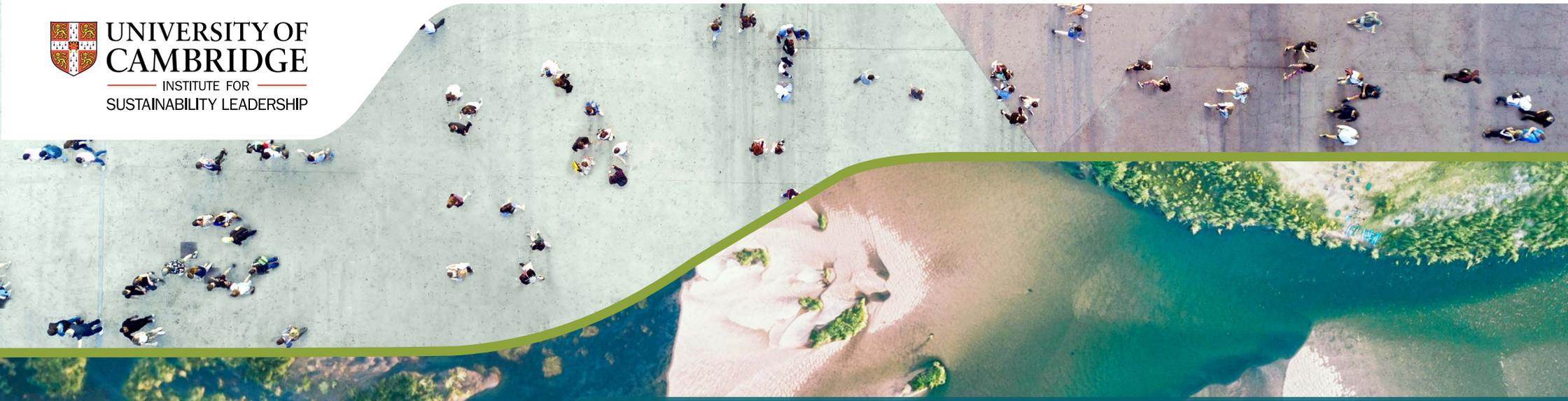




**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

INSTITUTE FOR
SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP



The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership

Annual Review 2021/22



The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership

The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership partners with business and governments to develop leadership and solutions for a sustainable economy. We aim to achieve net zero, protect and restore nature, and build inclusive and resilient societies. For over three decades we have

built the leadership capacity and capabilities of individuals and organisations, and created industry-leading collaborations, to catalyse change and accelerate the path to a sustainable economy. Our interdisciplinary research engagement builds the evidence base for practical action.

Rewiring the Economy

Rewiring the Economy is our ten-year plan to lay the foundations for a sustainable economy, built on ten interdependent tasks, delivered by business, government, and finance leaders co-operatively over the next decade.

Publication details

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A global community for action

Foreword

As the 21st century advances, we urgently need bold and imaginative transformation. To enable all people to lead healthy, flourishing lives within planetary boundaries. To be fully human in the era of digital and technological revolution. To empower citizens and communities to choose how they live and work.

Easy to say, daunting to deliver. Through collaboration and innovation, society has addressed many basic needs. More people have a better quality of life than ever before. Yet the world faces converging crises of biodiversity collapse, climate change, pandemics, competition for scarce resources, deep structural inequalities, and over-concentration of power and influence – compounded by ongoing wars and unresolved conflicts.

These systemic risks go to the heart of human survival, human security and prospects for economic success and prosperity. Everyone everywhere is impacted - but the poor and most marginalised are by far the hardest hit.

Major progress is underway, but results are far too slow and fragmented. Fear, confusion and anger are logical responses to perceived inaction and injustice. There are significantly differing social and political views on how to achieve change at the scale and pace required.

Writing a new history for our shared future is not just urgent – it's common sense.

Founded in 1988, the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) develops leadership and solutions for a sustainable economy.

We are known, respected and trusted because of the credibility of our purpose, our independence within a leading research university, our commitment to bridge divides and forge alliances, and the safe space we create for critical discussions and speaking truth to power.

Clare Shine
DIRECTOR & CEO
CISL



CISL develops leadership infrastructure and core capabilities for individuals, organisations and multistakeholder platforms across the world by:

- leveraging our global foresight, influence and reach
- sharing evidence, tools and cutting-edge research to inspire leadership and accelerate solutions for humanity
- reshaping the policy and operating context to favour systems and organisations designed to deliver a better future for society and the environment
- fostering innovation and sustainable enterprise
- educating people and companies to take leadership and drive systemic change.

Looking forward, we aim to accelerate systems transformation and put humanity at the heart of a new sustainability narrative.

We work with economic actors across society to forge bolder and more diverse leadership and build movements for impact. Movements that connect disruptors and incumbents. Movements that align the levers of business, finance, policy and technology for faster, scalable results.

This calls for a change of culture and language. Leaders across generations and sectors have a duty of hope, realism and accountability. It is time to move beyond short-term thinking to consider the long-term.

Importantly, we must highlight the win-wins of action for people, nature and climate. We need to show that change is possible, urgent – and exciting.

With our new headquarters in Cambridge – now an internationally-recognised exemplar for sustainable retrofit - CISL is poised to catalyse positive impact at ever higher levels.

Our global community for action, with over 27,000 leaders and pioneers, is central to this vision. In CISL's first Annual Review, I am proud to share examples of our joint progress. We are optimistic about our collective ability to regenerate a living and liveable planet. I invite you to join this shared journey to shape a better and fairer future for all.

Shaping the future for people, nature and climate

Efforts to protect and restore global public goods are currently fragmented between efforts to tackle the climate emergency, reverse the nature crisis, and address extreme poverty and life chances.

Despite strenuous efforts to connect these agendas, mindsets and priorities are shaped by these silos. This creates a risk of incompletely identifying, understanding and dealing with the connections between these intertwined challenges. In the worst case, this can lead to actions that inadvertently block or undermine solutions to one or more of these issues. It is the nature of complex systems that they have unexpected outcomes and thresholds. This requires a holistic approach.

Nothing can be managed or improved in isolation. We must do more to recognise the economic, political, technological and cultural choices, and the dynamics that influence progress towards these goals.

Systems transformation goes beyond strategy and delivery. It calls for imagination and a radical connectivity of ideas, leadership, investment and engagement.

As the global population expands, we must find ways for all to flourish within the natural limits of the planet. Human health is inseparable from planetary health.

A successful transition to a net zero and the creation of a nature positive future are both dependent upon thriving communities, which require us to address critical issues of inequalities and social justice.

It is time to shift the narrative and communicate positive benefits, not only costs – to focus on what we can achieve through a holistic approach to leadership and innovation for the future we want.

People

Context

The complex interactions of multiple crises, including the pandemic, climate change and conflicts, are creating spin-off crises for food, nutrition and health, energy security, and education and livelihoods that impact the most vulnerable in society. Increased heatwaves, droughts, apocalyptic wildfires and floods are already affecting billions of people around the globe and causing potentially irreversible damage to the Earth's ecosystems.

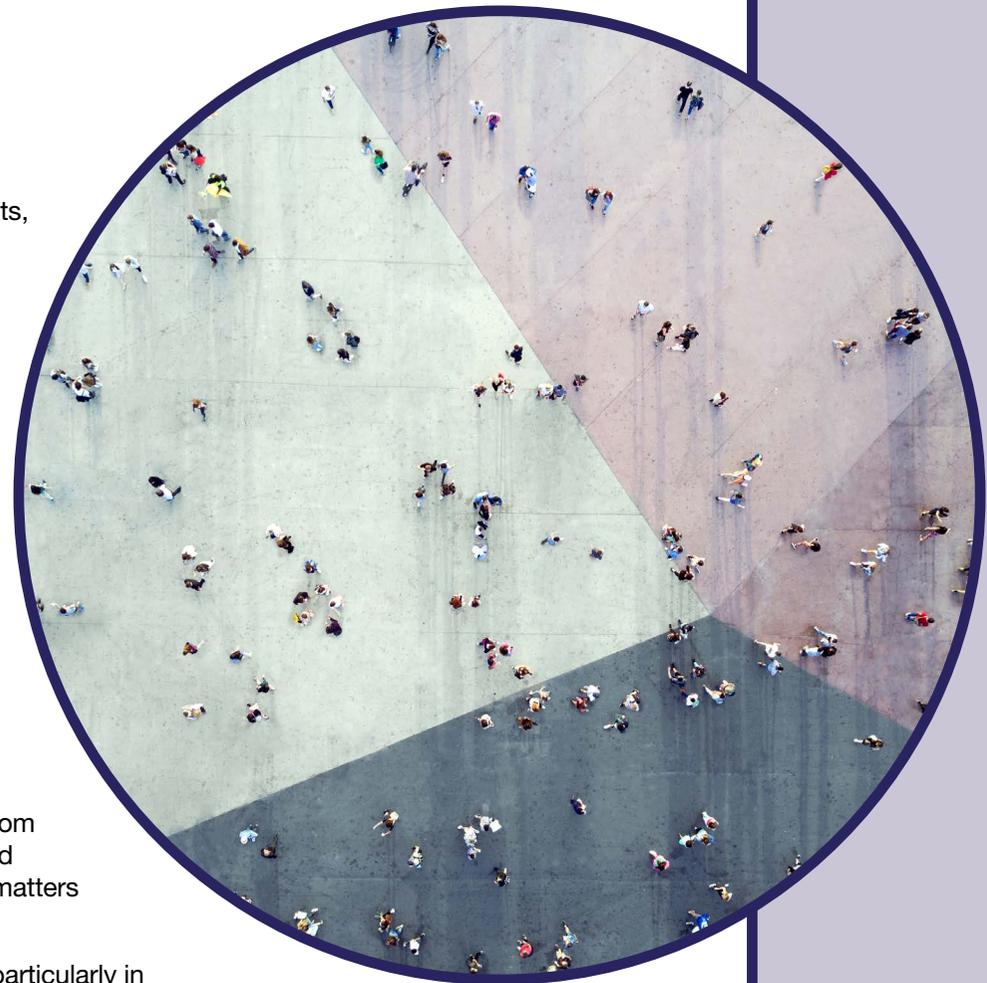
Covid 19 nearly eliminated more than four years of progress on poverty eradication and pushed 70 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020. One quarter of the global population is now living in conflict-affected countries. A record 100 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide.

The outbreak of war in Ukraine has displaced huge numbers, caused food, fuel and fertilizer prices to skyrocket, disrupted supply chains and global trade, and roiled financial markets, fuelling the threat of a global food crisis.

Action

The most urgent priority is survival and the ability to meet basic needs, particularly for those on the front line of the nature-climate crisis and the poor and marginalised. Beyond that, human dignity is essential for vibrant and cohesive societies. Many factors contribute to 'living well' – from mental and physical wellbeing to the ability to take part in decisions that affect people's lives and livelihoods and contribute purposefully to communities and society. We need to measure what matters for people to thrive.

Our deep relationship to nature and the resources that sustain us cannot be taken for granted, particularly in an era of rapid urbanisation and digital and technological revolution. Building a shared culture of sustainability is as much a creative and cultural shift as an economic, political and technological journey. This has significant implications for the purpose, governance, operations and accountability of businesses, financial institutions and governments to enable people to live well, healthily and fully.



25 per cent global population live in conflict-affected countries

1 in every 78 people on earth has been forced to flee their home

19 per cent of all wage earners are paid less than the living wage

Nature

Context

We face escalating biodiversity collapse with mass extinction forecast, rainforests falling, droughts and heatwaves on the rise and the life support systems of our soils and seas rapidly depleting. Billions depend on, appreciate and love nature. Key economic sectors depend on healthy ecosystems and ecological services.

While some regions are on the frontline of nature loss, many countries and populations are still largely insulated from the short- and long-term repercussions. However, as these foundational systems increasingly collapse, we will see ever-greater and more visible dangers to human survival and prospects for shared prosperity.

Despite the inescapable evidence, nature and ecosystem services have been an undervalued 'poor relation' in policy, corporate and financial terms for decades. Meanwhile, extractive economic and urban development models have fractured humanity's relationship with nature.

Action

Nature positive means that businesses, the financial sector, governments and others need to shift policies and investments at scale. They need to minimise and remove the drivers and pressures fuelling the degradation of nature and invest to improve the state of nature itself. They also must boost nature's cultural, economic and health-generating values for each new generation .

Regenerative approaches in harmony with nature will open up exceptional opportunities for design and innovation - in agriculture and food systems, land and water management, and how we build community and renew connectivity between cities, towns and countryside.

Nature is also a source of solutions and a living laboratory – primarily through genetic diversity - for effective solutions and new discoveries. We need to put blue and green infrastructure at the heart of future development and prioritise active restoration and interconnection of natural areas on land and at sea.



\$10 trillion of GDP will be lost by 2050 unless action is taken to restore nature

Wildlife population numbers have fallen 69 per cent on average since 1970

Forests are being removed at a rate 10 times higher than any possible level of regrowth

Climate

Context

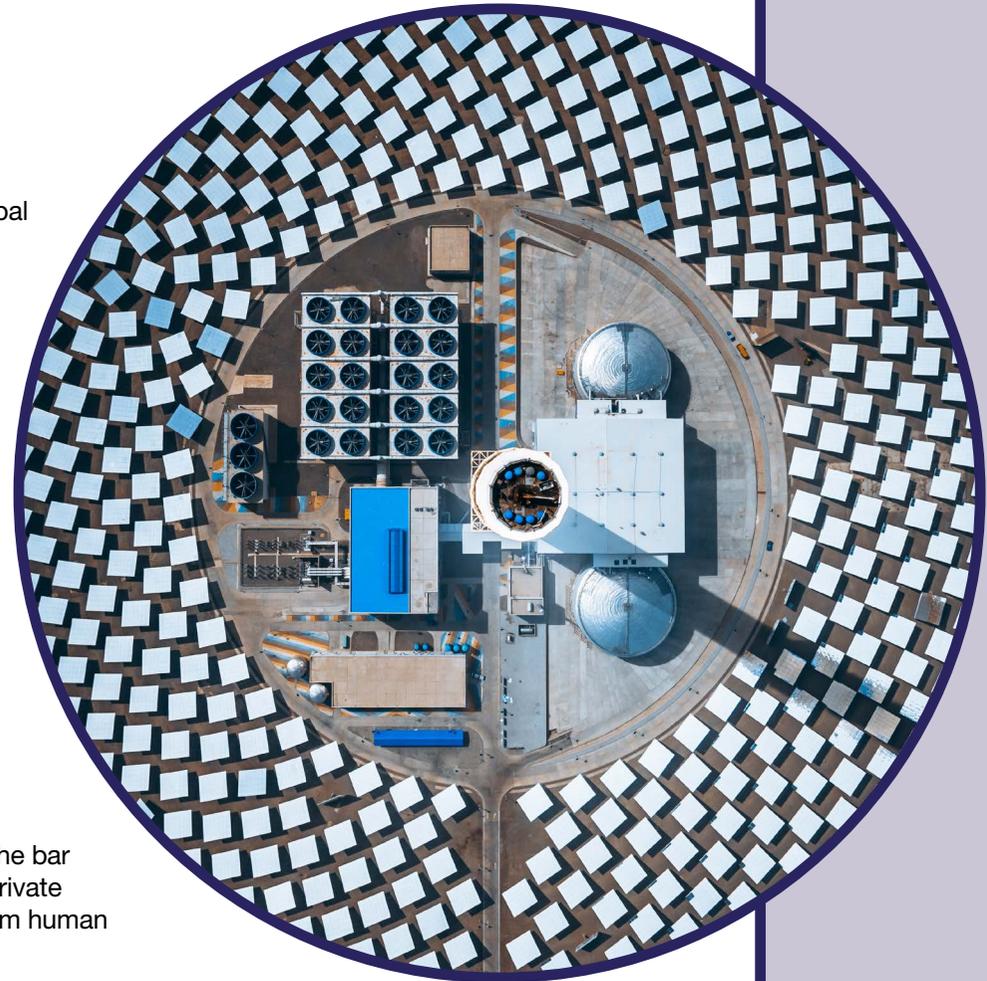
Countries are far from the ambition needed to achieve the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. We are at least 1.1°C now, and set to reach a rise of over 2.5°C, potentially rising to 3.5°C this century if we continue along our present trajectory.

Climate change, and the urgency of decarbonisation, has shot up the political agenda but is still too rarely treated as an existential threat to human security. While global action is growing, it falls short of what's needed to respond to the climate-nature emergency with the speed and scale required.

Climate breakdown reflects a far deeper deterioration in society's relationship with the planet's systems and resources. It will further compound inequality and injustice. Many of the world's poorest countries and communities are the least responsible for the climate crisis but are amongst the worst affected and least able to sustain such losses. Across Africa, for example, increased droughts, floods, heatwaves and other climate-related events are estimated to reduce overall economic growth by 5 to 15 per cent per year.

Action

The net zero transformation of our economies and societies is under way but needs far bolder vision, leadership and rapid action. We must protect and restabilise the global climate, while conserving and regenerating nature so resources can be shared sustainably and fairly. Raising the bar of ambition and incentivising action - for climate-nature finance and adaptation, bolder public-private partnerships, and breakthrough technologies and scalable innovations - is essential for long-term human security and inclusive and sustainable economies.



The world's wealthiest 1 per cent emit more than twice the emissions of the poorest half combined.

More than 2,600 organisations, representing \$25 trillion, support recommendations from the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures

What we do



Education

Empowering individuals and organisations to take leadership and drive systemic change



Convening and using our institutional voice and influence

Engaging with governments, business and finance to establish new norms and reshape the policy and operating context to benefit society and the environment



Developing global foresight for influence and reach

Harnessing research and developing new thinking and resources to support innovation and transformation in sustainable business and policy practice



Fostering innovation and accelerating solutions

Providing the space, support and networks for innovations in sustainability to thrive and grow.



Education

Empowering individuals and organisations to take leadership and drive systemic change.

CISL has set a global benchmark for sustainability leadership education, catalysing significant business and finance action towards sustainable practices. Our programmes help senior leaders to build understanding and align strategy, innovation and governance with transition to a sustainable economy. Hundreds of influential organisations and thousands of individual leaders worldwide have gone on to deliver change at scale and pace, working to deliver positive outcomes for society.

In total, over 8,600 influential leaders and business stakeholders have attended one of CISL's education programmes in the past year. By delivering skills and knowledge, such programmes enable attendees to make much needed changes for a more sustainable economy.

Postgraduate Programmes

Building individual expertise in sustainability leadership, sustainable business, and sustainable built environment.

Our programmes include:

Two Masters programmes: Sustainability Leadership; Interdisciplinary Design in the Built Environment.

Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Business.

Over the past year, 220 students have registered for our postgraduate programmes. Our programmes have received bursary support from Chanel, Pomeroy Academy and the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors.

Digital Learning

Accessible, high-quality sustainability courses for mid-career professionals to build capability at scale.

Our programmes include:

Ten eight-week, tutor-led online courses, including three new online courses launched this year on the topics of sustainable food; sustainable marketing, media and creative; and women leading change.

A self-paced online sustainable business primer, 'Sustainability Essentials'.

Over the past year, we have welcomed over 7,600 learners from all continents, alongside partnering with multiple banks to deliver bespoke online learning courses to drive and influence change across and beyond their organisations.

Strategy and Leadership (Executive) Programmes

Executive and Board-level sustainability programmes to inform strategy, purpose and governance and build leadership capability to deliver change.

Our programmes include:

Customised programmes (in person, hybrid and online).

Open programmes for Executives, Board Directors, Influential families, and Sustainability practitioners (delivered in the UK, Singapore, Australia and South Africa, as well as online).

Coaching and diagnostic services.

Over the past year, we have welcomed over 800 learners from various companies, including Lloyds, Saint Gobain and Chanel, onto our strategy and leadership programmes. We have collaborated with many organisations to deliver our programmes worldwide, including the University of Queensland, the Cambridge Judge Business School and the University of Cambridge Institute for Manufacturing.





Convening and using our institutional voice and influence

Engaging with governments, business and finance to establish new norms and reshape the policy and operating context to benefit society and the environment.

CISL-convened leadership groups

We bring together leading businesses and financial institutions to enable collective action in support of new norms, narratives, policies and markets to enable the transformation of whole economies and sectors. Current groups include:

Business leadership for a sustainable economy

Corporate Leaders Groups (UK and EU),
Taskforce for Climate Neutral and Circular Materials and Products.

Financial system transformation

ClimateWise (insurance),
Banking Environment Initiative
Investment Leaders Group.

Enabling businesses Transformation

Business Transformation Group.

We work with major UK and European headquartered businesses,

international insurers, banks and investors, policymakers, regulators and central banks. We are a founding partner of the We Mean Business Coalition and collaborate with a range of partners to drive business and policy transformation, including the European Climate Foundation (ECF), Breakthrough Energy and Climate Catalyst.

Participation in multistakeholder processes and fora

We are part of multiple networks and alliances, enabling us to expand the reach and impact of our work, giving us valuable insight and influence into national and international debates as well as opportunities to raise political, policy and market ambition and to contribute to effective international solutions:

We play a fundamental role within key sustainable business networks,

including the We Mean Business Coalition, ECF and Business for Nature.

We foster new national and international networks, such as UK Business Group Alliance for Net Zero and the European Green Growth Partnership.

Our role as a knowledge partner to key initiatives and institutions such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures and African Natural Capital Alliance enables us to drive key sustainability agendas.

Our active involvement in key global fora, including the World Economic Forum and UN conferences in collaboration with Cambridge colleagues, enable us to use our institutional voice at key moments to drive change.

Using our institutional voice and influence

We build relationships with key stakeholders (including government and media), sharing institutional positions and evidence-based narratives at key moments to inform public policy debates:

We produce policy and business briefings at key EU & UK policy moments around the transition to a sustainable economy.

We share our position and asks at key international moments such as the UNFCCC climate and biodiversity conferences.

We have an open dialogue with NGOs and activist groups to ensure diverse perspectives are included in our work and the conversations we convene.





Developing global foresight for influence and reach

Harnessing research and developing new thinking and resources to support innovation and transformation in sustainable business and policy practice.

CISL is pioneering a strategic foresight agenda to support innovation and transformation in sustainable business and policy practice. This transdisciplinary research – often co-designed by academics and research users – allows us to focus on and explore fundamental research questions arising from real-world problems faced by practitioners. The ‘problem-focus’ of our research provides the information and collaborations required to develop high-impact, systemic solutions for business, government and the finance sector.

HRH Fellowship Programme

We foster new transdisciplinary thinking on sustainability, leading to practical insights, tools and recommendations for decision-makers.

The Fellowship Programme brings outstanding individuals into CISL to focus their research on zero carbon,

circular economy, protection of nature, and inclusive and resilient societies.

Funding for the Fellowships has been secured through philanthropic donations from visionary companies, foundations and individuals.

Research partners across the university include the Land Economy, MRC Epidemiology, Public Health, Geography, Law, and the Judge Business School.

External research partners include the University of Birmingham, Makerere University, University of Nairobi, Save the Children and Restless Development.

Research projects and collaborations

We foster collaborations between researchers and industry on solutions focused research. Examples include:

The Aviation Impact Accelerator

A collaboration with Whittle Lab, providing tools for decision-makers to understand the pathways to net zero flight.

The Future of Boards

A collaboration with global law firm, DLA Piper, which combines existing academic and practitioner research with insights from board directors and key stakeholders across a range of jurisdictions to inform the role, structure, composition and behaviour of boards to enable alignment with sustainability.

Development of new insights and resources to support decision-makers

Our practitioner-based sustainability reports, briefings and case studies are often developed in collaboration with our specialist international leadership groups. They highlight some of the best examples of sustainability leadership and explore new ideas and approaches that have the potential to deliver transformational change.

Our sustainable finance resources include mainstreaming environmental and social scenarios into financial risk analysis, measuring ‘asset stranding’

effects under tech transitions, science-based measures to quantify non-financial outcomes of investment, innovative financing of sustainable infrastructure, and consumer demand for sustainable investment funds.

Our policy and markets resources include building a net zero carbon economy, industrial transformation and the circular economy, eliminating plastic waste, and working lives and climate change.

Our business transformation resources support business transition to net zero, nature positive and inclusive business, through ‘levers’ of purpose, governance, culture, leadership and institutional influence.

Research: CISL's Global Sustainability Fellows 2021/22

Our Prince of Wales Global Sustainability Fellowship Programme aims to foster new transdisciplinary thinking on sustainability, leading to practical insights, tools and recommendations for decision-makers to carry into their organisations alongside important advances in fundamental knowledge.



Dr Polina Yaseneva
Transforming the pulp and paper industry

Polina explores how the pulp and paper industry can find a feasible path towards sustainability. She focuses on LCAs and the role of AI in producing polymers more sustainably. Polina recently delivered a popular webinar, [view it here](#).

Supported by Sappi.



Dr Anna Barford
Pathways to a just circular economy

Anna maps pathways to a 'just circular economy' and the resulting creation of jobs for young people in low-income countries. Her research on the living wage encouraged Unilever to commission a report—co-authored by Anna, [view it here](#).

Supported by Unilever.



Caroline Lee
Community and well-being

Caroline examines how retailers can contribute to community wellbeing within the context of austerity and growing inequalities in the UK. Her work on how supermarkets' programmes address challenges faced by their local communities has directly informed [ASDA's Spaces and Places programme](#).

Supported by ASDA.



Dr Gabriel Okello
Air quality and NCDs

Gabriel investigates strategies to reduce outdoor air pollution and associated health burdens in East African cities. His work focuses on how healthier communities can be built through the transition from fossil-fuelled transport to electric mobility. View his recent policy briefing [here](#).

Supported by AstraZeneca.



Dr Dina Khalifa
Luxury and social inclusion

Dina analyses the role of the luxury industry in the development of more equal societies and as engines for social good. She focuses on organisational identities as drivers for authentic brand activism. Her research was featured in The Conversation, and picked up by [The Independent](#).

Supported by Chanel.



Dr Florence Nabwire
Nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life

Florence examines micronutrient deficiencies in the first 1000 days of life in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on behavioural factors underlying diets in urban environments. Her work seeks to inform how policymakers and businesses can drive socially and environmentally sustainable dietary choices.

Supported by Stichting Royal DSM – Brighter Living Foundation.



Dr Livia Ventura
New corporate forms

Livia researches corporate governance frameworks which allow organisations to embed sustainability into their legal form. This Fellowship builds on her previous work exploring Italian social enterprises and benefit corporations, which formed the foundation for the B-corp law in Italy.

Supported by Anglian Water Services.



Dr Pablo Salas and Ari Ball-Burack
Radical innovation and disruption



Examining how radical innovation and disruption can catalyse the transition to a sustainable economy.

As part of his research, Dr Pablo Salas co-authored a [working paper on methane reduction](#) with Paul Gilding and developed a methodology to understand the [climate performance of investment funds](#).

Supported by Paul and Michelle Gilding.



Dr Elia Apostolopoulou
Infrastructure and sustainable communities

Elia focused on the socio-economic and environmental consequences of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Her policy briefing, aimed to improve policymakers' understanding of links between the BRI, urban transformation and global development.

Supported by the Equal Opportunities Foundation.



Dr Emma Garnett
Sustainable consumption

Emma considered the role of retailers in empowering consumers to make sustainable choices, including how eco-labels could affect buying habits. She also explored the positive impacts of reducing meat and dairy consumption, publishing an article in The Conversation.

Supported by Sainsbury's.



Dr Bojun Wang
Climate risk in aviation

Bojun modelled scenarios for transition and physical risk within the aviation industry, taking a system-level approach to the sector with a view to including stakeholder perspectives. His research underpins much of the work done by the Aviation Impact Accelerator (AIA) and the Whittle Lab.

Supported by Heathrow.

CISL's work is further supported by the following public funding bodies:

Public Research Councils
NERC, EPSRC, UKRI, Innovate UK, Horizon Europe & ERDF

University internal funding
Research England,
School of Technology Seed Fund

Royal Geographical society



Fostering innovation and accelerating solutions

Providing the space, support and networks for innovations in sustainability to thrive and grow.

The Canopy is a community of impact-driven startups, entrepreneurs and SMEs who put sustainability at the heart of their business models to advance solutions to achieve net zero, protect and restore nature, and build inclusive and resilient societies.

Our startup accelerator programmes help innovators and entrepreneurs to push boundaries in sustainability through a combination of online and face to face programmes, events, webinars, hackathons and innovation sprints.

October 2022 heralded the landmark opening of an 85 desk Canopy workspace in our new headquarters, the Entopia Building in central Cambridge, and welcomed our first member, Monumo, a Cambridge startup engineering a sustainable future for transportation using deep tech to develop optimal electric motors.

Supported by the European Regional Development Fund, the Canopy provides workspace and support for its members via an extensive innovation community, including university staff, academics, and CISL's global network of sustainability-focused professionals and corporate partners.

“Monumo is proud to be the first Canopy member. Getting a startup or small business off the ground isn't easy, and it's important to us that we are networked into the right conversations that can drive forward our solution and contribute to the sustainable innovation agenda more broadly.”

Dominic Vergine
Co-founder, Monumo

COMMUNITY

The Canopy's fundamental purpose is to bring people together, make connections, and champion sustainable innovation to accelerate positive change for people, nature and climate.

COLLABORATION

We connect the Canopy's community of mission-driven startups, innovators and small businesses with CISL's network of more than 27,000 sustainability leaders, our 140 staff, 250 corporate and finance partners, and communities across the Cambridge Entrepreneurship cluster.

KNOWLEDGE

We support our members to help build their own capacity: to learn, to think critically, to work out answers, to develop their networks, and ultimately help them find and scale solutions to our most significant global challenges.

SUPPORT

We help our members connect, share and learn from each other's experiences and challenges in a supportive environment. We connect our members with mentors from industry and academia to suit their needs.

WORKSPACE

We've created a space that walks the talk. The atmosphere of innovation and collaboration comes from the sustainable design ethos we have followed, working with partners to implement sustainability and circular building practices.

“It's refreshing and quite a relief to know that we're all struggling together but that we're all struggling in the same direction. I feel so heartened that there's a network out there ready to help!”

Fiona Edwards
Canopy Circular Disruptors Accelerator Alum, JPA workspaces

Ready to join the Canopy community? Find out more





CISL's Impact Stories



Impact areas - Making change happen

CISL's priority impact areas for systemic transformation connect our strategic expertise and global networks across sustainable finance, policy and industrial transformation, education, research and innovation. Together, they pave the way for bold action and regenerative leadership for people, nature and climate.

FUTURE PLACE

The health and life chances of billions will depend on how we design, fund, invest in and adapt urban systems and reimagine social and economic connections between cities, towns and the countryside. Living and liveable places are fundamental for communities and regions to thrive, from emerging economies to post-industrial societies grappling with legacy infrastructure and over-exploited natural capital. This is a key challenge and opportunity for sustainable finance, policy and business. A focus on regeneration and resilience opens new routes for impact. It must consider both the locus of activity and outcomes (including both rural and urban contexts as well as the dynamics between them) alongside specific systems such as food, energy, buildings and mobility that will shape and serve future places.

Our work focuses on raising ambition; stimulating innovation; aligning incentives; and fostering collaborative action to ensure that these huge flows of natural resources, capital, materials and technologies generate true long-term benefit for people, nature and climate. We aim to foster cross-sectoral interaction, design- and system-thinking in our work, while being specific enough to drive real-world change.

FUTURE ECONOMY

The private sector and the world's financial system deliver many of society's goods but must also take responsibility for their negative impacts. There is an urgent need to rewire the economy so that businesses and financial services drive sustainable and inclusive economic progress, aligning delivery of the things people need and want with positive outcomes for our environment and society at all levels. To enable this we not only need leadership from business and financial institutions to demonstrate what is possible and to contribute to wider economic transformation, but also leadership from governments and policy makers, policy frameworks and financial systems that provide direction and incentives for innovation and investment and that ensure much greater resilience, transparency and accountability to society.

Our work focuses both on the purpose of economies, how they are structured and measured, as well as on the changes that are needed within economies to drive better outcomes and the dynamics between economic actors. It is underpinned by evidence and analysis, new thinking and understanding of barriers and enablers of progress, alongside insight into how change can happen.

FUTURE LIVES

People must be at the heart of sustainable transformation. Communities are fracturing and falling behind, extrinsic and intrinsic values are misaligned, aspirations and lifestyles tied to unsustainable consumption prevail, while new disruptive technologies are increasingly polarising access to and quality of work. Globally and locally, demand for change is growing – but with significant contestation around the best ways forward and who should have a voice in decision-making. Fierce debate surrounds questions of value and values, of being and buying, of identity and equity, of society and systems. The collective intelligence of leaders, creators, disruptors, and influencers to help businesses, financial institutions and governments to shape new thinking, mindsets and practices that can inspire, enable and scale more accountable, inclusive decision making, structures and behaviour across society. Consumption, communities and careers.

We aim to foster innovative thinking, shape new institutional purpose and practice, and influence sustainability-aligned norms, values and worldviews by engaging sectors, businesses and key actors that operate at the intersection of business and society and have a significant influence on culture, consumption, communities and careers.

Raising ambition, stimulating innovation and fostering collaborative action to ensure resource flows, industrial systems, infrastructure, materials and technologies generate long-term benefit for people, nature and climate.

Accelerating the transformation of the built environment, urban systems and transport systems



Towards net zero flight

Together with our partners, the Whittle Laboratory, we are developing evidence-based tools that enable industry to map, understand, and embark on pathways towards sustainable aviation. At the Aerospace Global Forum, we launched the first publicly available interactive tool and published our inaugural report on sustainable flight in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, exploring the technical capabilities and challenges of novel aviation technologies.

“The Aviation Impact Accelerator is a great example of fast-forward thinking. It integrates industry capability and knowledge with academic rigour and holistic modelling to understand the lifecycle impact of technology on the complete aviation ecosystem, leveraging networks and communities of practice to solve the complex and daunting challenge of decarbonising our skies. We’re proud to be a partner.”

Grazia Vittadini
Chief Technology and Strategy
Officer at Rolls-Royce



Enabling professionals from across the built environment to understand how they can contribute to a sustainable built environment

Our graduate, executive and online built environment programmes aim to help real estate developers, entrepreneurs, city planners, architects, engineers and other built environment professionals to achieve a more resilient and inclusive society and positively impact communities.

“It’s been a tremendous experience throughout. The content covers a wide knowledge spectrum, and is both stimulating and thought-provoking. Meeting people from different areas and various sectors opens your perspective, and helps to break some of the siloed thinking that many professionals encounter.”

Oana Nituica
Architect, NOI



Helping small businesses to tackle built environment challenges

Through the CISL's accelerator programme, Innovators for the Built Environment, we helped 18 SMEs to explore cutting edge sustainable innovations. These ranged from transforming organic waste into secondary raw materials to artificial intelligence to reduce energy consumption to digital tools to monitor the carbon footprint of buildings from the outset.



Demonstrating the benefits of re-purposing existing building stock, including energy efficiency, wellbeing and circularity

CISL published a case study and multiple resources outlining innovations, best practices and new insights that emerged from the exemplary retrofit project of its new headquarters, the Entopia Building.

“This project is an exemplar and teachable resource that will create positive ripples of change throughout the built environment community, influencing the course of other projects, policies and investments.”

James Cole
Director of Corporate Relations and Communications, CISL



Driving innovation in urban systems to improve air quality through research

Supported by AstraZeneca, we are undertaking research to better understand and co-create strategies to address air pollution in the Ugandan cities of Kampala and Jinja. Project leaders are working with local stakeholders to accelerate a transition to e-mobility. Activities include public private collaborations to retrofit more than 400,000 boda bodas, a popular mode of transport, in Kampala.

800 professionals

from across the built environment sector have participated in CISL's Sustainable Real Estate: Creating a Better Built Environment Online Programme course since its launch in 2021 where they examine how sustainable real estate can contribute to a more resilient and inclusive society, and positively impact communities.

Over 60 students from 24 countries

are currently taking CISL's Interdisciplinary Design for the Built Environment which teaches global best practice through project-based learning, with a focus on collaboration and leadership.



Enabling sustainable industrial systems and value chains



Building leadership capabilities to encourage responsible mining

We expanded our education programme with Anglo American. We undertook an impact assessment to mark the first decade of this programme designed to optimise the company's sustainability performance in resource extraction, contribution to resilient communities, and influence on value chains for the commodities it mines.

Supporting companies across a range of sectors to transform their industrial systems and value chains

We have delivered education programmes for Dow (chemicals), Berry Global (plastics) and Bekaert (manufacturing) to help them not only to embed sustainability in their own operations, but also begin to transform industrial systems and value chains.

“How we understand and respond to the expectations of host societies has become an ever-more critical competence for mining companies. The programme has played an important role in helping our senior management to respond to these challenges through an innovative combination of theory, case studies, site visits, simulated decision-making and group working.”

Jon Samuel
Group Head of Responsible Business Partnerships at Anglo American

Supporting a shift towards more sustainable and inclusive use of land, water and other natural resources



Fostering new collaborations to drive nature-positive agriculture

Through collaborative projects, we explored regenerative agriculture as a pathway to managing land in ways that improve biodiversity and water quality. The LENS East of England project has delivered measurable improvements in water quality while helping to prevent floods, capture carbon, reduce emissions and promote biodiversity. Funders include Anglian Water, Nestle Cereal Partners UK, and local councils. The project has raised £2.4 million, with 71 farmers taking part, covering over 250,000 hectares of land. It will continue until 2027, with 120 farmers due to participate next year. A similar project in Poole Harbour has reduced farm nutrient losses and improved waters on protected coastlines.



Advancing organisational understanding of nature-based solutions (NbS)

We created a diagnostic tool to advance organisational understanding of NbS, together with a report and sector briefings outlining the challenges and solutions needed to adopt and implement such approaches in multiple sectors, from food and beverage to water, finance and the built environment.

“This diagnostic tool helps companies identify and overcome internal challenges to implementing nature-based projects.”

Carolyn Ching
Senior Manager of Food and Forests, CERES



Supporting and challenging leading organisations to push the boundaries of leading practice; informing future policy, financial systems and markets to enable transformation across whole economies and sectors.

Building the capability of leaders to align commercial and sustainability performance and contribute to systemic change

We have delivered a broad range of open, customised, graduate and digital education programmes for board directors and senior executives from Europe, Africa, SouthEast Asia, USA and Australia. Our customised programmes have had a strong focus on working with leaders from built environment, banking, manufacturing and consumer-facing sectors.



Inspiring collective action within the private wealth community

Our inaugural Multigenerational Leadership Programme for influential (HNW) families provides a unique platform for participants to critically and systemically reflect on their family purpose, examine strategic and sustainable routes to influence and impact, and engage in thoughtful conversations with peers in a safe, trusted space. The participants for this year's cohort have been globally diverse, including families from Asia, Africa, US, UK and Europe, across a range of first generation founders to fourth generation inheritors.

“There is so much families can learn from each other and so much more wealth and business owning families can contribute to dialogue on all aspects of sustainability. CISL provides an academic voice and a safe environment to explore topics critical to families and to their communities and world.”

Philip Marcovici
Founding Advisor to the
Multi-Generational Leadership



Supporting SMEs in their net zero journey

Small to medium sized business comprise 99 per cent of companies in the UK and collectively stand to make a real difference in reducing the UK's emissions. Our Accelerator to Net Zero programme empowers startups to realise their pathway towards commercial success whilst increasing their overall sustainability. In early 2022, CISL partnered with the SME Climate Hub, which aims to support over one million SMEs globally to achieve net zero emissions before 2050. Resources include educational courses, guidance on business strategies and financial support, and tools for reporting emissions.



Informing and supporting decision-making to help business, policy and financial institutions ingrate sustainability



Helping companies to transform themselves

We contributed to the BSI standard for sustainable, purpose-led business (PAS 808:202), assisting companies in identifying the key levers and activities that stand to advance their transformation. Our report, “Unleashing the Sustainable Business”, has been downloaded by over 1,000 companies. It argues that the only way to a sustainable future is by transforming mainstream economic and business models and putting purpose over profit. We have also introduced a net zero business transformation framework that aims to accelerate change in an era of turbulence and complexity and was discussed by CEOs at the Reuters 2022 IMPACT summit.



Supporting the transition to a decarbonised economy

CISL’s Corporate Leaders Group (CLG) Europe conducted a comprehensive review of the European Union’s Fit for 55 Package - which is Europe’s strategy to reach its 2030 climate goal - and supported ambitious outcomes through engaging with policymakers.

Building on this, as the EU considered its RePowerEU Plan on reducing its dependence on Russian fossil fuels in response to the invasion of Ukraine, CLG Europe coordinated a letter signed by over 150 business leaders, calling on the EU to strengthen energy security by accelerating the green transition. To accelerate the implementation of the EU’s policies, CLG Europe’s 2022 flagship report analysed insights and lessons on the how policies and contextual factors influence the decision making processes of European households and businesses regarding sustainable choices.



Building the business case for the living wage

Together with Business Fights Poverty and Shift Project, we produced a comprehensive report on the living wage, demonstrating the multiple benefits that living wages offer businesses within their operations and across their value chains. The report was referenced in a G7 discussion paper from the German Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs and was also highlighted at a World Economic Forum event.



Investing in decent work

Building on the Investment Leaders Group’s Sustainable Investment Framework, the project explores key concepts, initiatives, and investment impacts on decent work. The project aims to enable the development of a robust, transparent metric for investors for investors to measure information about their investment impacts on decent work.



Advocating for major collaboration across all sectors of business and society to help the UK achieve its net zero targets

UK Corporate Leaders Group published a report Bridging the Gap which sets out recommendations to help business and government reduce emissions and identify pathways for collaboration and raise ambition in four key sectors: power and energy, built environment, road transport, and agriculture and land use.

“Investing in decent work is an integral component of supporting a just transition. Supporting integrated disclosure on decent work will need multisector stakeholders to work together, and the ILG calls upon companies to gather and report the right data.”

Dr Mohsen Gul
Senior Project Manager,
Investment Leaders Group,
CISL



Informing the development of effective policy and market solutions



Helping financial institutions integrate nature into their decision-making

The collaboration between our Banking Environment Initiative and Investment Leaders Groups included a programme to integrate nature risks into financial systems. Through case studies exploring the financial impact of risks, this project has created a set of resources which are already being used by the Taskforce for Nature-related Disclosures, Principles for Responsible Banking and Central Banks. We have also published a new paper exploring the broader relationships between nature and climate action while outlining the rationale for financial institutions to adopt an integrated approach when tackling these challenges.



Building understanding on the economic, legal and political implications of the EU's proposed carbon border adjustment mechanisms (CBAM)

Alongside Cambridge Econometrics, CISL conducted a review of the EU's proposed CBAM which would impose a tariff on certain carbon intensive materials. Following publication we have been invited to advise the UK government on its own plans to implement a similar mechanism and convened European experts to explore further areas of research on related topics.

“Nature is core to our global economy. Transitioning to a regenerative business model that integrates the value of nature into financial decisions is a win-win for all. Whilst urgency and complexity set a great challenge, we as Financial Institutions need to work collectively to set the right standards and play our role as key partners to this vital transformation that will protect and regenerate nature.”

Marine de Bazelaire
Group Advisor on Natural Capital, HSBC & TNFD Taskforce Member



Exploring the potential of digital product passports to enable businesses to track and understand the environmental footprint of products

A recent report by our European Corporate Leaders Group's Taskforce for climate neutral and circular materials and products, in collaboration with the Wuppertal Institute, explored the potential of these passports to store and share information throughout a product's life cycle while providing insights to consumers on the credentials of their purchases.

“A well designed Digital Product Passport will be an invaluable policy and business tool, enabling businesses to create more sustainable and circular materials and products.”

Eliot Whittington Director of Policy, CISL



Working through business, finance and government to achieve more sustainable consumption, lifestyles, livelihoods and communities; enabling greater accountability and participation in decision making.

Enabling a just transition to a zero carbon, sustainable world



Advocating for cost of living support packages that deliver for people, nature and climate.

CISL's Corporate Leaders Group UK produced a 'Cost of living' report and leadership letter addressed to senior MPs, signed by over 100 business and finance institutions, urging the UK Prime Minister to strengthen the economy by prioritising the government's response to the climate and nature crises.

“As businesses, we are committed to playing our part in tackling the climate crisis and we welcome strong political leadership in this space as we believe this is critical in ensuring our economy transitions towards net zero. Government policies could deliver better outcomes for people.”

Stephen Moorhouse
General Manager, Great Britain,
Coca-Cola Europacific Partners



Empowering people in the transition to the circular economy.

Our research project with Unilever aims to understand the experience of waste pickers in the reuse and recycling of plastics. It explores how businesses connected to plastic waste can improve workers' quality of life and promote decent work, including by introducing the living wage across their value chains. This project included a discussion with UK government on the circular economy, catalysed our report on the living wage and was featured by the World Economic Forum at Davos.



Understanding the impact of climate change on young people.

Undertaken in partnership with Makerere University and the youth charity Restless Development, the Youth Futures Project seeks to understand how young people are responding to the impacts of climate change in Uganda. The project was profiled at COP26, the World Economic Forum and created local employment by recruiting and training 32 young researchers to collect quantitative and qualitative data in the Busoga and Karamoja regions of Uganda.

100 UK businesses signed a letter coordinated by UK Corporate Leaders Group urging the Government to prioritise climate and nature crises



Accelerating progress towards sustainable lifestyles and consumption



Shaping the future of sustainable luxury and inspiring new thinking about cultural aspirations and consumption

Our unique multi-faceted partnership with Chanel combines tailored sustainability education programmes, innovative operational projects, and scholarships focused on driving greater inclusion. It draws on expertise from across the University of Cambridge, including the Institute of Manufacturing, the Cambridge Judge Business School, Cambridge Zero and the work of Global Sustainability Fellow Dr Dina Khalifa, to advance practical sustainability solutions to specific business challenges. Over 50 Chanel employees have attended three in-person programmes over the past year.



Re-aligning the purpose of marketing, media and creative to support long-term wellbeing for all people and the planet

This year CISL launched a new online course, Sustainable marketing, media and creative, exploring the capacity of marketing to influence human behaviours and identities and explore challenging issues such as growth, greenwashing and consumption. The course has already welcomed 125 students since it launched on September 22.

Enabling community wellbeing and resilience



Exploring how UK-based retail organisations can best support community wellbeing

Together with UK retailer Asda, we carried out research into building resilience in disadvantaged communities in Leeds and Cambridge. The study seeks to understand which activities are working and why in order to showcase best practice and catalyse more action around the country. The project directly informed ASDA's Spaces and Play programme, which invested in improving community spaces in the UK and received coverage in *The Grocer*, a leading retail industry magazine.

“We are delighted to partner with one of the world’s most prestigious universities and academic institutes. Our partnership strengthens our sustainability transformation at Chanel: from research and insights that deepen our understanding, to supporting the education of our people on critical sustainability topics, to our shared collaboration on solutions that positively impact our business, supply chain and wider communities.”

Kate Wylie
Chief Sustainability Officer,
Chanel and President Fondation
CHANEL



Addressing inequality and creating access to opportunity



Empowering women sustainability innovators and inspire women to lead society and their organisations towards a more equitable future

Our Women Leading Change online course aims to inspire and equip women to lead society and their organisations towards a more just and equitable future. Students examine the processes and levers of change through three lenses: society, organisations, teams and your own personal context.

Our Women in Sustainability Innovation accelerator programme helped 23 female-led start-ups developing potentially high impact innovations across diverse industries including agriculture, the built environment, beauty, fashion and technology.

“I would recommend this to all women interested in leadership. Despite only being 3 months of study, this was the most reflective, challenging and rewarding course in which I have ever participated. Thank you to the faculty staff for the insights and great experience.”

Phoebe Waters
student on Women Leading Change

100 per cent
of students on Women Leading Change had their expectations met or exceeded



Expanding access to education through bursary funding

We aim to attract students who have the greatest potential for positive impact in the world, whatever their background, and for whom participation in our postgraduate programmes will be valuable in accelerating that impact.

- The CISL Sustainability Leadership Access Bursary (funded by Chanel)
- Changemaker Scholarship
- Pomeroy Academy Scholarship for candidates from the APAC region
- Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors Scholarship for candidates committed to sustainability in the built environment
- Sponsorship in honour of Bob Scholes for an NGO to attend the Prince of Wales's Business and Sustainability Programme

Since 2020
CISL has supported over
200
UK startups
and more than
50 per cent of
the founders are
female

CISL in the University

“CISL draws on outstanding research, creates partnerships, drives innovation and harnesses the University’s global influence and convening power. And by working with business, government and with the finance sector, it’s helping to accelerate sustainability transformation in business, while also building Cambridge University’s reputation and impact in the space.”

Anthony Freeling
Acting Vice Chancellor,
University of Cambridge.

“CISL is demonstrating that academia and the corporate sector can work together to drive transformative change.”

Antonio Guterres
Secretary General,
United Nations.

“There has never been a more critical time to bring together researchers from across the University ecosystem with industry and policymakers to accelerate the urgent climate solutions we need. Cambridge Zero and CISL continue to collaborate to maximise the University of Cambridge’s contribution to building a fair, sustainable and net zero future.”

Prof Emily Shuckburgh
Director, Cambridge Zero.



CISL plays a crucial role in supporting and developing the University of Cambridge's sustainability agenda, including its strategy and operations. Our close relationship with collaborators, including Cambridge Zero, the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and multiple departments and Colleges, enhances our ability to convene diverse global stakeholders across academia and industry.

We are proud to support the University's mission by:

Drawing on research that informs real world decision-making and supports innovation in sustainable business and policy practice. Our education programmes, business leadership groups and enterprise support is informed by research. CISL collaborates and connects ideas between academics and decision makers, identifying questions that inform wider research agendas. We help develop research synergies, such as with the Institute for Manufacturing, Hughes Hall and Chapter Zero. We find solutions focused research projects, as with the University's Aviation Impact Accelerator, and foster new research (via our global research fellows). Our research's 'challenge focus' provides information and collaborations required to develop high-impact, systemic solutions for business, government and the finance sector.

Empowering individuals and organisations with the insight and capabilities to contribute to systemic change. In addition to CISL's education programmes for individuals and companies, we collaborate with partners, such as the Cambridge Judge Business School and Institute for Manufacturing, to increase the scale and impact of the University of Cambridge's work to support businesses to accelerate sustainability. We contribute to its online professional and executive education strategy and collaborate with Cambridge Zero on engaging students through their Green Careers Festival and Fair.

Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in pursuit of sustainable development solutions. We support pan-Cambridge University efforts to join up and scale the Cambridge innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem (through the lens of sustainability), working institutionally to understand and complement existing University's innovation ecosystem strengths.

Harnessing opportunities for the University to use its influence and insight to contribute to a more sustainable future. CISL collaborates with Cambridge Zero and other parts of the University to optimise Cambridge's contribution to external events, such as the COPs. We work across Cambridge to engage external stakeholders where CISL has the insight to contribute to discussions that build productive relationships supporting the University's mission. This includes engagement with activist NGOs, major asset owners and banking partners. We also work alongside Cambridge Zero, the Office of External Affairs and Communications, and others to contribute to local and regional progress on sustainability.

Helping the University to deliver on its sustainability commitments by supporting the central University Sustainability Team in the scoping and development of its sustainability strategy. CISL drew on its research into what a sustainable, purpose-led organisation looks like to help shape the proposed new sustainability strategy, so that it reflected leading practice. The aspiration is to develop a shared and ambitious plan that engages and inspires colleagues to optimise their contribution to a sustainable future. CISL also worked with the University of Cambridge Investment Management to support their sustainability strategy to engage with its community of investment partners by delivering four online and in-person workshops, designed to show how they can deliver financial performance in a carbon constrained world. CISL is helping to increase the University's focus on sustainable refurbishment by sharing insights from the exemplary deep retrofit build of CISL's new HQ, the Entopia Building.

Working with partners such as Cambridge Zero to support the development of joined up, pan-Cambridge collaborations with industry and philanthropic partners, which optimise Cambridge's contribution to addressing global goals.

The Entopia Building

Entopia represents a major milestone for CISL. Commemorated in March 2022 by King Charles III, staff, Faculty, Canopy members and our global community for action now have an inspiring office space in Cambridge in which to work and collaborate.

No ordinary project

The Entopia Building embodies our mission to develop leadership and solutions for a sustainable economy. With a reputation as one of the most environmentally burdensome industries, the built environment sector must find a way to lead the transition to a sustainable economy. Through the Entopia Building, we are demonstrating the multitude of benefits that can be delivered by re-purposing existing building stock, including energy efficiency, wellbeing and circularity.

Key objectives included:

- Radical improvements in the building's energy efficiency
- Minimisation of whole-life embodied carbon
- Prioritisation of circular design principles
- Maximisation of bio-based materials and nature-positive design solutions
- Adherence to responsible procurement practices
- Careful attention to indoor environmental quality, health and safety concerns, social and community value, and heritage conservation
- Attention to economic concerns, including opportunities for employment and decent jobs, training, knowledge creation, and knowledge exchange

So far, the Entopia Building has received the EnerPHit standard and aims to achieve WELL Gold and BREEAM Outstanding certification.

From the outset, the Entopia Building aspired to become a beacon project, demonstrating how global trends and sustainability challenges can be addressed meaningfully at the scale of a single building.



A technical case study outlining the goals, methodologies, outcomes and learnings from the project, as well as a shorter summary offering insights into the key features of the building, has been published for the benefit of future project teams embarking on their own retrofit project.

Find out more here

This project is part funded by the European Regional Development Scheme



Global Community for Action

The CISL Network: A global community of action for people, nature and climate

Connect. Collaborate. Challenge.

CISL works to shape a sustainable future for people, nature and climate.

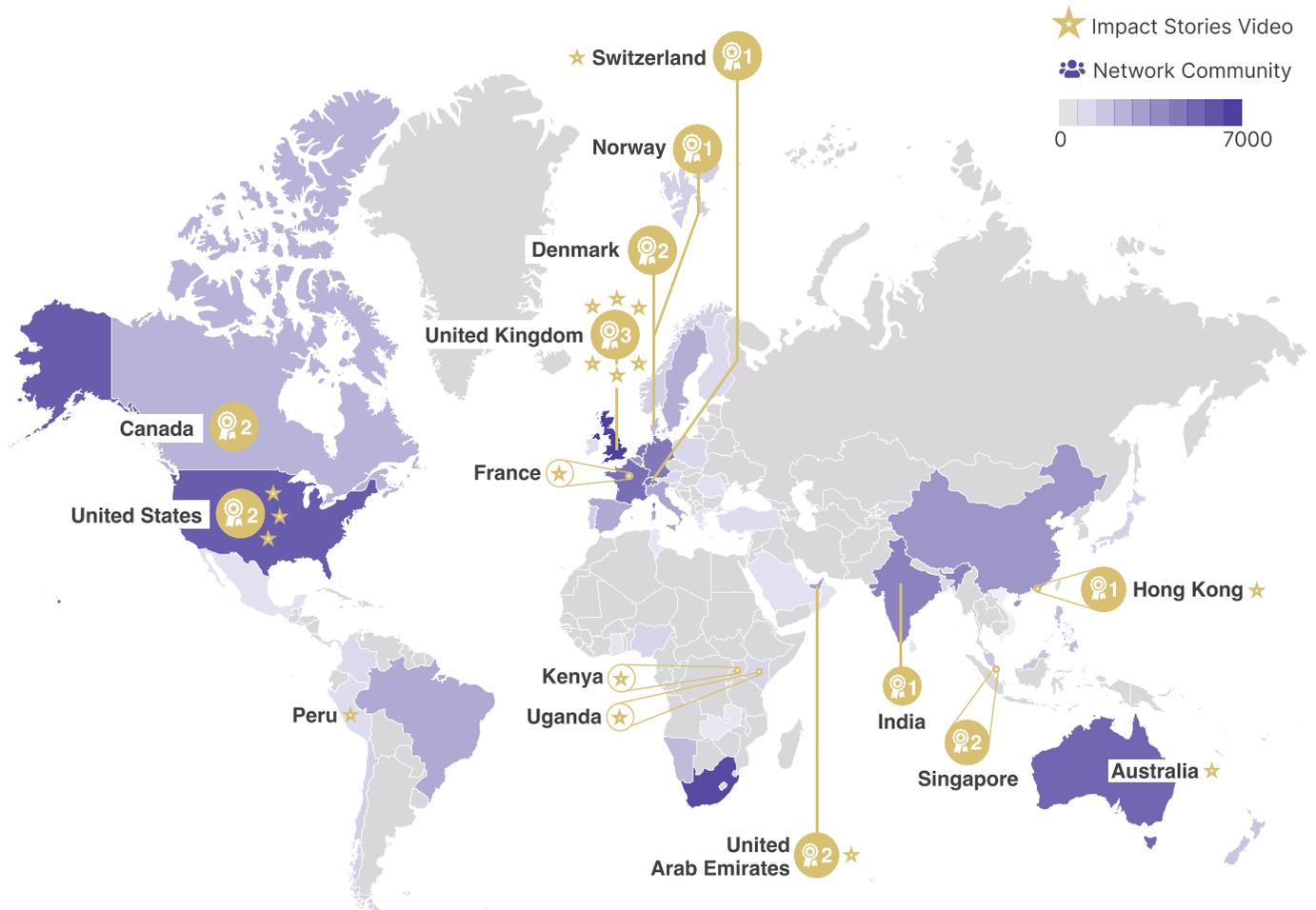
Our global community of 27,000 leaders and innovators take individual, collaborative and collective action to accelerate the movement towards sustainable societies and economies.

Being a member of the CISL Network opens a path to connect with peers, share insights, collaborate on meaningful projects and develop the knowledge and skills to drive the change required within communities and organisations.

Members of our global Network represent multiple regions, industries, professions and specialisms. You can hear directly from some of our Network members about the role CISL has played in shaping their individual impact stories. Are you inspired to share your story of impact? Contact us.

Our Network Ambassadors act as key representatives and contact points for CISL across the world, hosting regional events and helping to build this vibrant global community.

Hear from our alumni about the impact they are driving through their experiences with CISL



Get Involved

A sustainable future for all relies on effective collaboration. We're always looking for ways to support and collaborate with changemakers, leaders and disruptors to drive change towards a sustainable future.

There is a role for everyone in building the future we want. If you see opportunities to work with us to effect change and accelerate systems transformation, then we want to hear from you.

We look forward to engaging and empowering new voices and building movements for impact in the years ahead. Movements that connect disruptors and incumbents. Movements that align the levers of business, finance, policy and technology for faster, scalable results.

Please get in touch to find out more

www.cisl.cam.ac.uk