



## **Shared goals, shared solutions: research on collaboration for a sustainable future**

*More can be created by working together than each of us can deliver by working alone.*

Colin Matthews  
CEO, BAA

*It is only by working collaboratively with other businesses that we will create the step change needed to transform and scale up the way businesses approach responsibility.*

Stephen Howard, Chief Executive,  
Business in the Community

# Background to collaboration

Collaboration between companies and between sectors is not new. Business in the Community (BITC), itself built on collaboration with businesses and the voluntary sector, is now in its 30th year. What does appear to be new is the scale, volume and scope of collaborations involving business that have emerged over the past five to ten years, and in particular the increasing number of business to business collaborations.

Globalisation has changed the operating environment for all sectors and sustainable development is an issue few can ignore. But sustainable development means big, complex and interconnected issues; issues that no one organisation can tackle alone. BITC believes that collaboration is one of the key mechanisms to scale up the activity and change needed to solve these issues and it is a challenge that lies at the heart of what responsible business means both now and in the future.

Yet our own experience and that of others, has taught us that working collaboratively and forming partnerships across cultural and sectoral lines is not always easy. Competition law remains a specific barrier where joint action might affect price, market share or consumer choice even when this could have a powerful social or environmental impact.

## Methodology

This report presents the findings from research conducted by Business in the Community from November 2011 to March 2012 into the current state of collaboration involving business.

Through desk research of over 60 examples of collaborations and interviews with 31 professionals, both in business and collaborative organisations, this study provides a guide to how, when and why businesses are collaborating with others. It identifies common structures and success factors to provide practical guidance to companies.



40%

Click



72%

Click



**72%** of Business in the  
Community's members  
believe that collaboration  
is the most effective way to  
tackle sustainability issues.

Source: BITC Members Poll, February 2012

**40%** believe that 'a combination of players partnering together' will be the biggest driver of innovation in the next 10 years. 19% believe it will be big businesses alone.

Source: GE Global Innovation Barometer 2011



# Why now?

Collaboration between business, public sector and non-profit organisations on social and environmental issues has increased over the past twenty years. It is generally accepted that this is for two reasons:

- Because globalisation has fundamentally changed the operating environment for all sectors; and
- Because the issues faced in sustainable development are too big and complex for any one organisation to tackle alone.

Our review of the number and types of partnerships that have emerged over the past twenty years shows that over the past five years businesses have started to play more of a leading role in the formation of collaborations to tackle social and / or environmental issues than in the past.

Many collaborations and partnerships have been pragmatic responses from the private and non-profit sector, often where governments do not appear to have either the capacity or the will to tackle the issues. More recent, business-led examples, have emerged as responses to changes or pressures in the operating environment; focusing on issues that are fundamental to the long-term commercial success of a sector or industry.

There are also a number of contradictions at work within the collaboration space – collaborative action takes more time, but is often pursued to speed up action; collaborations are non-competitive spaces but increasingly competing with each other for members. In these cases, those involved are clear that joint action is more powerful than working alone, despite the compromises that it entails.

What is clear is that collaboration is here to stay, that businesses are increasingly involved in them, and increasingly working alongside rivals and competitors to meet common objectives.

## An age of partnership?

Open 



The last 20 years saw pragmatic partnerships emerge especially in the area of sustainable development.

A formal recognition of the need for this new dynamic came in 2002, at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and its articulation of Type II partnerships as a mechanism to include private and civil sector organisations in the management of sustainable development.

Type II partnerships are now recognised by the UN as a way to implement policy that is complementary with governmental responsibilities.

# Why collaborate?

Collaborations tend to be viewed by those who are involved in them as ‘movements, not organisations’; that motivate and mobilise; and through scale create legitimacy, a joined voice, momentum and influence.

Among our interviewees there is consensus that collaboration is often the only way to achieve sustainable solutions and sustainable development, particularly when organisations come together around a problem which they collectively work to solve. They can also be a conduit for influence and access - enhanced by a common voice and to achieve a critical mass to put issues on the table.

A number of the initiatives we looked at for this study also began collaboratively, subsequently becoming independent ‘multi-stakeholder’ organisations in their own right, that now enable others to collaborate within the framework they provide. Partnerships were often identified as forms of collaboration with specific goals and outcomes delivering defined benefits for those involved.

However, our interviewees are also consistent that collaborating and working in partnership were not always easy but the long term gain worth it. This seems borne out by the fact that ‘partnership management’ and ‘partnership brokerage’ is beginning to be recognised as a business discipline in its own right.

Collaborations emerge because:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4



## Collaborations emerge because:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

They are a means to build a common and consistent focus on issues and can provide one voice. This is a particular feature of those collaborations that have evolved into independent, often membership-based organisations in their own right (e.g. Global Social Compliance Programme, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, International Council on Mining and Metals).

*Download examples of how other organisations have successfully collaborated*





## Collaborations emerge because:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

They are seen as a way to achieve convergence where the alternative is the proliferation of systems (e.g. SEDEX, ETI, WRAP, BuildingConfidence).

*Download examples of how other organisations have successfully collaborated*



## Collaborations emerge because:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

They provide an opportunity to accelerate the speed of action on an issue (e.g. Pan-African Coalition on Aids, Business Emergency Recovery Group, Heathrow Sustainability Partnership, GAVI, Public Health Responsibility Deal, Grameen Danone).

*Download examples of how other organisations have successfully collaborated*



**Collaborations emerge because:**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

They can be a conduit for influence and access to achieve a critical mass to put issues on the table (e.g. Sustainable Aviation, Juan Valdez Initiative, Sustainable Agriculture Initiative, International Cooperative Alliance).

*Download examples of how other organisations have successfully collaborated*



# Partnership, Collaboration

## - the same difference?

Click 

Collaboration



Partnerships

In doing this research, we have used the term collaboration loosely, but deliberately, as we wanted to explore what people thought collaboration meant.

In practice, collaboration and partnership are two terms often used interchangeably and to describe a huge variety of different types of arrangements that are often not comparable with one another.

Our interviewees drew consistent distinctions between the two, many making the point that all of our examples lie at different points on a continuum.





**Both require:** • A 'common' space and shared vision • Consistent commitment from the individuals involved  
• Common behaviours from the individuals involved – including mutual trust and respect

## Collaboration

- Less formal, open format not restricted by business arrangements
- Looser framework/infrastructure allowing organisations to work together when needed
- Allows for formal dialogue with organisations which it would not be appropriate to partner or work with
- No direct financial impact (usually)
- Often set up to create consensus and provide tools and guidance for positive behaviour change
- Tend to see themselves as 'movements' not organisations

## Partnerships

- More formal, often include written or verbal (often legal) agreements
- 'Restricted access' with partners that have a vested interest
- Can be motivated by competitive advantage and 'choosing the right partner' to achieve this through strong association with brand/values/results
- Often for specific 'ventures' or projects that require commitment to working together for a set period, towards specific objectives
- Defined returns, including financial returns, for each partner



# Different models and types

*Click here for examples of  
how other organisations have  
successfully collaborated*



## Systems-based initiatives

Open >

## Project/programme based collaborations

Open >

## Sharing knowledge, ideas & expertise

Open >

## Brand/funding-led partnerships

Open >

## Social business initiatives

Open >

From the 60+ collaborations we looked at, five types or models of collaboration emerged. Comparing these to the reasons that collaborations form (see Why collaborate?), a correlation emerges between the ‘why’ and the ‘what’ of collaborations.

This classification is not designed to be exhaustive but to provide greater clarity of the collaboration landscape.



## Systems-based initiatives

Close >

## Project/programme based collaborations

Open >

## Sharing knowledge, ideas & expertise

Open >

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Open >

## Systems-based initiatives

Systems-based initiatives are collaborations between sector and industry players who have jointly developed certification or monitoring systems. Most commonly used to ensure that production value chains live up to ethical and social standards.

### Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

As a type of joint system, RSPO is a multi-stakeholder platform which unites parties around a trade standard and establishes a 'community of practice'. The product certification standard, the CSPO, has within 8 years of its development grown to represent 15% of the global palm oil market. RSPO's membership has reached more than 700 members and in addition involves a range of associated stakeholders.

RSPO's rapid growth has built on a momentum of combined industry interest and willingness, exposure of related environmental issues such as deforestation and climate change, and a global debate with influential players such as Unilever and Kraft. RSPO represents a new generation of trade standard initiatives that are industry led where previously NGOs were seen to drive this.

*"The challenge is to maintain the multi-stakeholder constituency through our growth and technically still have everyone involved."*

Puvan Selvanathan, Vice President, RSPO



### Lend Lease – BuildingConfidence

The development of BuildingConfidence represents emerging efforts to harmonise approaches across the industry, with the aim to save time and money for all and avoid duplication. To improve the performance of supply chain companies within construction, Lend Lease initiated a steering group to develop a common standard for the industry.

Compared to other compliance systems, BuildingConfidence considers the full management of companies and not just the product, including staff welfare and business continuity. The initiative reflects the recognition that most benefits are delivered by the supply chain and that improvements to the industry come from here. In four years, the standard has seen a 50% improvement in governance performance across audited suppliers.

*"Without this standard initiative, the supply chain would either stand still or companies would create each their own approach that they think the industry wants."*

Nigel McKay, Head of Procurement and Supply Chain, Lend Lease, EMEA





## Systems-based initiatives

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Open >

## Project/programme-based collaborations

Project and programme based collaborations are usually cross sector collaborations where parties come together to address a social, local or environmental issue, through designed interventions employing the strength and resources of the different partners.

### AF Blakemore – Heart Distribution

Heart Distribution is a network that provides a route to market for 138 small, local producers across the Midlands in the UK. Local food and drink producers are typically small in size, and geographically dispersed, with the result that distributors usually cater only for larger suppliers. Heart is supported by the operations of the greater A F Blakemore group enabling producers to drop their products at ‘mini-hubs’ on the nearby sites of fellow producers where they are collected on passing vehicles and taken to the company’s central hub, for subsequent distribution to retailers. The network is proven to reduce food miles as well as time spent on deliveries. It has also allowed Blakemore to add 108 new local producers to its books as well as differentiate itself by the products it can offer to customers.



*“Heart Distribution has enabled us to support small businesses through the core of our operations; helped change perceptions and given us a much greater appreciation of their challenges.- all from a very informal ‘can we do something together’ conversation.”*

Caoire Blakemore, Commercial Manager, Heart Distribution

### Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis – GSK

A large collaboration, this alliance addresses a social need on a global scale with affiliated partners who work with Health Ministries in target countries to design and implement interventions. Originally a bilateral agreement between the WHO and GSK, the project has grown to include a wide range of partners including other pharma donors, funders, NGOs, academics, health ministries and the UN. Loosening the ties with WHO has created a more informal forum of partners and representatives committed to the elimination of LF. GSK has since become involved in an even bigger collaboration, the London Declaration to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases, announced in Jan 2012. The experience of the alliance has supported GSK's decision to put its neglected tropical diseases R&D results into the public domain as part of the new partnership, thus removing the IP from these compounds and marking a shift away from protectionism in the industry.



*“The decision to publish all our patents for neglected tropical diseases was taken by GSK’s CEO Andrew Witty and marks a change within the industry towards sharing information to tackle diseases that affect the world’s poorest.”*

Andy Wright, Director Disease Programme, Global Community Partnerships, GSK

## Systems-based initiatives

Open >

## Project/programme based collaborations

Open >

## Sharing knowledge, ideas & expertise

Close >

## Brand/funding-led partnerships

Open >

## Social business initiatives

Open >

## Sharing knowledge, ideas and expertise

Initiatives for sharing knowledge, ideas and expertise include a large number of collaborations, both across, between and within sectors, to establish and share research, ideas and best practice. Some knowledge sharing collaborations are close to being joint systems but have not developed mandatory codes of conduct or monitored practice.

### Global Social Compliance Programme

GSCP defines best practice in supply chain compliance to support convergence but is not a monitoring system. Instead it holds a range of reference tools to help companies as they implement their chosen approach. GSCP works on an open source basis

with its tools free and accessible to all, with its strength deriving from the freedom it provides for individual adaptation and use of knowledge.

Having successfully met its first objective of creating reference tools and a benchmarking process, the organisation is now looking to expand and develop. The Partner Organisations Network, one of the new elements of its governance model will help further collaboration with other initiatives. This supports GSCP's ongoing efforts towards openness, collaboration and reduction of duplication in monitoring and capacity building efforts.

*"GSCP is a unique platform where collaboration is not limited to membership. Including the all active partners is the only way forward."*

Claudine Musitelli, VP Ethical Sourcing and Food Safety Initiatives, CGF

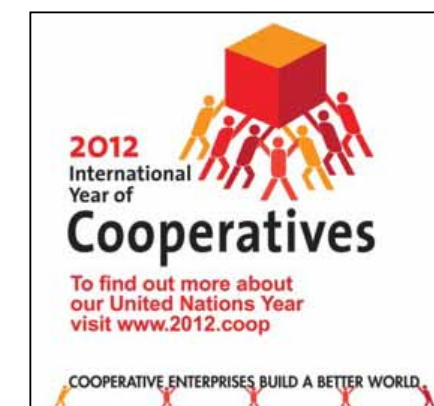


### International Co-operative Alliance

The ICA unites, represents and supports co-operative businesses across the world and was founded in 1895. The Alliance shares information among co-operatives to help them become better businesses and campaigns to further the co-operative movement. It is an independent NGO with 267 members from 96 countries. In addition to the General Assembly of all members, its board and regional assemblies, it also has eight sectoral organisations and four thematic committees. The current economic climate has increased interest in co-operative business models but awareness remains relatively low. 2012 is the UN International Year of Co-operatives and the ICA's goal is to use the year to instigate debate on alternative ways of conducting business and make co-operatives become the fastest growing global model of business by the end of the decade.

*"A more diverse global economy means better stability. It is not our goal that all is done through the cooperative model but we need to drive a diverse economy that is more resilient in a downturn."*

Charles Gould, Director General, International Co-operative Alliance





## Systems-based initiatives

Open >

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Open >

### Brand/funding-led partnerships

Brand/funding-led partnerships represent the more traditional corporate/charitable partnerships with a limited number of partners working together on an issue of common interest. These often emerge as time bound partnerships but, as they evolve, can also move towards broader collaboration or social business initiatives.

#### OnRoute – Mobile Youth Provision

OnRoute is a strategic partnership between ASDA, National Children's Bureau and BITC involving wider collaboration with a number of partners including the Department for Education and the Football League Trust. Set up in 2009, it is a £1m nationwide programme to support mobile buses providing activities for young people in deprived communities. The partnership provides funding and in-kind support to a range of different organisations to develop and grow locally-owned mobile youth buses around the UK.

During the pilot phase the steering group supported services that impacted on 35,000 young people. Impacts included a 34.6% decrease in inconsiderate behaviour and a 26.7% increase in young people accessing the services they need in Stoke. In Lewisham, 75% of the NEETS using the facility entered employment, education or training.

*"Through our support to the OnRoute programme, we have seen the dramatic impact that improving access to youth services can have on antisocial behaviour and other similar problems."*

Paul Kelly, External Affairs Director, Asda



#### M&S and Oxfam – Clothes Exchange

The partnership between M&S and Oxfam was initially set up to help the retailer solve product to landfill problems and meet its recycling commitments as part of Plan A. Oxfam was selected as a partner because it was known and credible with the right expertise and capacity in the field. However the partnership soon evolved to the customer engagement mechanism it now is – with a simple 'clothes for vouchers' exchange at its heart.

For M&S, the partnership has evolved from a relatively traditional partnership towards a new social business model for both parties although this was never part of the plan. It took 12 months to set up the partnership and the planning and integration required have led to changed perceptions of the 'other sector' on both sides. All partnerships within M&S are now compared against the model it has with Oxfam.

*"You don't get all the opportunities from day one in a partnership, you have to work with your partner to create the ideas and solutions together."*

Mike Barry, Head of Sustainable Business, Marks & Spencer





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### Social business initiatives

Social business initiatives are the newest category of collaborations identified. They bring together concerns around social and commercial sustainability to develop new ways of doing business and address social issues. Social business initiatives are also deploying a range of innovation, new technologies and ways of engaging the consumer in addressing vital issues.

#### Accenture Development Partnerships

As a business model within Accenture, ADP brings its consultancy strength to social business partnerships. It has supported 140 projects in 45 countries to date. Accenture deploys high performing individuals to help NGOs develop strategies and partnerships.

ADP delivers a mix of leadership support, relationship brokering, capacity building, and strategic organisational advice.

As a broker for other collaborations, ADP provides the 'glue' for the development of the partnership as well as helping partners proceed at the right pace. Its experience has found that too often partners storm ahead wanting to start work before conditions are agreed and relationships established. ADP sees its mission as constructing partnerships that drive value for the partnership but also the individual partners ensuring that the work is sustainable and affordable.

*"It is no longer acceptable for companies to ignore social outcomes, however, in most cases for companies there must also be a viable business driver."*

Morgana Ryan, Asia Pacific Director,  
Accenture Development Partnerships



#### Grameen Danone

Grameen Danone was set up as a social business enterprise after a meeting between the founder of Grameen Bank, Muhammed Yunus, and the CEO of Danone Group, Franck Riboud. Its main aim is to address the malnutrition affecting 30% of all Bangladeshis and 56% of Bangladeshi children under five – by producing a local yoghurt that contains all the nutrients lacking from the normal diet.

The business model also targets poverty alleviation by sourcing and producing locally - creating employment and enterprise opportunities. Through the establishment of the first Grameen Danone factory the business is creating 1,600 jobs in a 30km radius from the factory: milk is bought from local farmers; local people are employed in production; and the yoghurt distributed door-to-door by a predominantly female salesforce. Profits are used to finance the construction of new factories and expand the business .

*"I am utterly convinced that our future depends on our ability to explore and invent new businesses and new types of enterprise."*

Franck Riboud, CEO of Groupe DANONE



# What are the success factors?

## When does collaboration work most effectively?

Despite looking across an enormously varied array of collaborations, it is clear that there are some key criteria which affect success:



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## Share the problem

The most successful, and more modern, collaborations define and share a problem, and together work towards a solution.

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## **Mutually beneficial**

**Collaboration only works where there is sufficient shared interest. Understanding the commercial undertones is seen as important for any partnership to remain sustainable.**

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### **Appropriate resource**

**Everyone's contribution is  
recognised, equally valued  
and appropriate time, skill  
and resource is given.**

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## **An independent voice**

**For long-term collaborations,  
an independent voice or  
management is often seen as  
the key to ensure momentum.**

.....

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## Action

**A number also talk about the need for any partnership to have ‘teeth’ (specific programmes or actions), differentiating it from a talking shop or club.**

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# How to establish effective partnerships

Despite the variety of partnerships and collaborations that exist and that we looked at for this research, both the academic literature and our interviewees tell a remarkably consistent story when it comes to the ‘how to’ of working with others.

This includes:

- the need for a common vision for development and results;
- recognition of rights and equality among those involved; and
- strong personal commitment.

On paper, collaborations are between organisations. In practice they require people and therefore revolve around the dynamics of these inter-personal relationships. The over-riding message from all our interviewees was that successful partnerships require time, especially upfront in building and maintaining the trust needed to take joint decisions and/or action.

Key messages / what you need to consider when working in collaboration

← **People**

← **Structure / governance**

← **Purpose**

← **Communication**

← **In practice**

*You have to have process integrity and you must understand the power of taking the time to build trust. In the long term, you will realise the value of the time invested.”*

Ben Peachey, ICMM

*‘Doing partnerships’ can have an unexpected, almost neurological impact on organisations and the folks who work in them...*

Simon Zadek, *Needing New Governance*, 2009

*In a world of complex sustainability issues it is our fundamental belief that we can achieve more by working together and sharing our respective knowledge and best practice.*

Alex Gourlay, Chief Executive, Health & Beauty Division, Alliance Boots

## People

Who are you sending to the table and why?

Are they able to turn up consistently and make commitments on behalf of the company?

Do they have the right skills and experience?

Who can they speak for? Are they representative of a wider group and therefore do they have mandate to speak on behalf of this group?

Are there any key external stakeholders excluded who may try to block the process in the future? (More relevant for partnerships than collaborations but can be important for credibility too.)

*“For effective collaboration you need face time ... we have tried to do it virtually and it hasn’t worked.”*

*“[It is important] that the representatives are given a lot of space, resource and trust from their companies to go and get on with it.”*

*“Long term partnership is like a marriage – pay attention to details.”*

**Key messages / what you need to consider when working in collaboration**



**People**



**Structure / governance**



**Purpose**



**Communication**



**In practice**

## Structure / governance

How often will the participants meet? Where? Who will chair?

How will you define the scope of what each partner can contribute and value each contribution equally?

Rules and responsibilities: can they be discussed rather than imposed?

Are continuous improvement systems in place?

Do you need a leadership group?

*“Important to be clear about the scope and definition of what each partner can contribute.”*

*“It helps when partnership is not imposed – making sure that the shaping stage is made collaboratively as well.”*

*“It’s easy to throw money at things, but it’s realising that we can do so much more that is making the difference.”*

**Key messages / what you need to consider when working in collaboration**



**People**



**Structure / governance**



**Purpose**



**Communication**



**In practice**



## Purpose

What is the problem that you are looking to solve collaboratively?

What's your agenda? Do you know what others' agenda is?

Do you know what you want to be different in X years' time as a result of the collaboration?

Does collaboration of this nature potentially affect competition regulation?

How are the group intending to assess outcomes & impact?

*"We were originally asked ... to solve their distribution and market marginalisation issues. So we started with a problem that needed a solution ... We are not reinventing the wheel, just creating access and building on the systems that they already had in place."*

*"It's about additionality where the total is greater than the sum of the parts ... achieving more, faster and more efficiently than before."*

*"Companies must be active otherwise you don't have a collaboration."*

**Key messages / what you need to consider when working in collaboration**



**People**



**Structure / governance**



**Purpose**



**Communication**



**In practice**

## Communication

Who is able to speak on behalf of the partnership?

How are the achievements communicated – as a group or by individual organisations?

How do you communicate with other partners?

How is the partnership communicated back into each organisation?

*“Only through common messages can we drive momentum and create change.”*

*“Important that companies are not put off by the large scale of some partnership examples – even the smallest conversation is important.”*

*“One of our strategic priorities is to get closer to our customers... it [the partnership] has helped us build our relationship and increase the amount of dialogue we have with the customer both at practitioner and senior level, as well as providing a strong case study example back into the business.”*

**Key messages / what you need to consider when working in collaboration**



**People**



**Structure / governance**



**Purpose**



**Communication**



**In practice**

# In Practice: Heathrow Sustainability Partnership\*

## People

There are named individuals represented on the Leadership Board at CEO level and Practitioner Group.

There is real clarity about the roles of each company and the commitments made by individuals.

The resource provided by Heathrow Airport Ltd as the secretariat is valued. While it is acknowledged that they are the only organisation which is currently able to act as conveners and play this role, it is also recognised that a more independent secretariat may be an option for the future.



## Structure / governance

The 16 partners involved represent the majority of the airport's 76,500 employees.

The dual structure of Leadership Board plus Practitioner Group is a strength that enables practical action but also the engagement and buy in to unlock blockages where necessary.

A significant amount of consultation before set up led to the Partnership being established in its current form – earlier ideas had focused on more of a charter model but were adapted in favour of a solution that brought people around the table to decide jointly on priorities and actions.

## Purpose

The Partnership is relatively new and initially focused on identifying the areas which would benefit most through collaborative action – transport, natural resource and people. The overall purpose is clear – to deliver more by working together than each company could deliver by working alone.

The Partnership supports a clear sustainability vision – to enhance Heathrow's positive impacts while minimising impacts on the environment and local communities.

During its first year, the Partnership focused on four pilot projects: growing the airport's staff car share scheme; increasing recycling; generating a baseline of emissions from airport vehicles; and supporting local unemployed people to secure airport employment.

Looking ahead, the Partnership's focus will span Heathrow's broad sustainability agenda, engaging an greater number of airport based companies in developing and delivering projects which will benefit from collaborative action.

## Communication

HSP has started to communicate what it is While changing the perception of Heathrow is important, the Sustainability Partnership's primary objective is to transform the reality of Heathrow. Case studies outlining the Partnership's achievements are communicated through airport advertising and on-line at [www.heathrowairthought.com](http://www.heathrowairthought.com)

*\* We interviewed seven of the 16 members of the Sustainability Partnership during this research allowing us to explore a partnership in much greater depth than usually possible in this sort of research.*

Close X

Different models and types: Project/programme collaboration >

Collaboration vs Partnership: Partnership >

Why collaborate?: to speed up action on an issue >

# Collaboration & Competition

In any business collaboration, some thought needs to go to where collaboration may affect competition law, especially where the collaboration may affect price, availability of product, consumer choice or market share.

Competition law as a potential barrier for increasing business engagement on social and environmental issues was highlighted by BITC members in December 2010. Since then, we have been working with OFT, BIS and competition law experts to better understand what challenges and interpretations collaborations on sustainability issues may face.

The UK Competition Act 1998, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) all include a range of prohibited actions to encourage fair competition. These prohibitions affect the ability of businesses to jointly tackle social or environmental issues, or even their ability to discuss potential solutions, if they may affect price, availability of product, consumer choice or market share. Other considerations for competition authorities are the degree of concentration in the market (i.e. how many businesses are competing) and the current economic climate between competitors and with suppliers and customers.

More >

## 3 top tips 1 2 3 *Click*



To help you make a decision on where collaboration may affect competition, please use the ‘Responsible Business Competition Decision Tool.’

Download

Or for more guidance, please download our full ‘Competition Law for Responsible Businesses’ guide.

Download

“Short-form Opinions” can now be sought from the Office of Fair Trading, which regulates competition law in the UK. This provides guidance and clarity to businesses on how the law applies to prospective collaboration agreements between competitors which raise novel or unresolved competition issues. However, as there is no positive ‘authorisation’ process for collaborative agreements any collaborative activities involving competitors, suppliers and customers should consider potential competition law implications.

Our general observation is that collaborative initiatives between larger firms often insufficiently consider the risks presented by breaches of competition law. A number which have been severely impacted by competition authority rulings now proceed with a great deal of caution. Conversely many Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) seem too wary of entering into any collaborative initiatives due to competition law concerns when they may be at no risk of breaching the law.

*Back* 

## 3 top tips 1 2 3

Manage your company's competition law compliance processes and potential risks with care and ensure that trade associations (or similar collaborative groups), of which you are a member, are building their compliance capabilities.

To help you make a decision on where collaboration may affect competition, please use the 'Responsible Business Competition Decision Tool'

*Download*



Or for more guidance, please download our full 'Competition Law for Responsible Businesses' guide.

*Download*





## 3 top tips 1 2 3

Think carefully about the competition law implications of any collaborations or partnerships that you are invited to join. Do they have a reasonable understanding of competition law? Are they adopting best practice design codes for the agreement?

To help you make a decision on where collaboration may affect competition, please use the 'Responsible Business Competition Decision Tool'

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Or for more guidance, please download our full 'Competition Law for Responsible Businesses' guide.

*Download*



## 3 top tips 1 2 3

Having received the appropriate legal advice, remain ambitious in what can be achieved through collaborative activities. Market transformation and sustainability is usually dependent on pioneers raising the bar.

To help you make a decision on where collaboration may affect competition, please use the 'Responsible Business Competition Decision Tool'

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Or for more guidance, please download our full 'Competition Law for Responsible Businesses' guide.

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# Our supporters

Thank you to all those who participated in this research:

Mike Barry - Head of Sustainable Business, Marks & Spencer	Iain Groark - Head of Sustainability, Heathrow Airport Ltd	Julia Round - Supplier Relationship Manager, APCOA Parking
Caoire Blakemore - Heart Distribution Commercial Manager, AF Blakemore	Julia Hawkins - Media & Communications Manager, Ethical Trading Initiative	Morgana Ryan - Asia Pacific Director, Accenture Development Partnerships
Pat Clark - Quality & Environment Director, Gate Group	Jim Haywood Executive Director, BERG	Pulvan Selvanathan - Vice President, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
Jonathon Counsell - Head of Environment, British Airways	Graeme Henderson - Head of Health and Work, Department of Health	Jane Smallman - Senior Manager Corporate Citizenship & Diversity, KPMG
Paul Dearman - International Ethical Trading Manager, Tesco	Teresa Jolley - Head of Corporate Responsibility, Kier Services	Jenny Todd - ENGAGE Programme Manager, BITC
James Deeley - Environment & Community Affairs Specialist, NATS	Bob Jones - Partnership Manager, Slough Business Community Partnership	Oonagh Turnbull - Head of CRM and Community Investment, Alliance Boots
Richard Ellis - Director, CSR, Alliance Boots	Finn Lawrence - Corporate Brand Manager, World Duty Free	Jo Webb - Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Sedex
Jonathan Garrett - Group Head of Sustainability, Balfour Beatty	Nigel McKay - Head of Procurement and Supply Chain, Lend Lease EMEA	Anne Willmot - Director, Business Action on Homelessness, BITC
Matt Gorman - Corporate Responsibility & Environment Director, Heathrow Airport Ltd	Claudine Musitelli - VP Ethical Sourcing and Food Safety Initiatives, Global Social Compliance Programme Secretariat	Chen Wong - Manager, Global Community Investment Barclays Group Corporate Affairs
Chuck Gould - Director General, International Cooperative Alliance	Ben Peachey - Director Communications, ICMM	Andy Wright Director Disease Programme, Global Community Partnerships, GSK

Click on each logo to see why these organisations value collaboration



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Collaboration is vital for the success of Heathrow, where over 76,500 people work for over 320 different companies and over 67 million passengers pass through every year.

The Heathrow Sustainability Partnership was established in September 2010, involving 16 companies operating at Heathrow. From the construction firms that build Heathrow, to the airlines that fly, those in the partnership are jointly committed to improving the sustainability of their business at Heathrow. The partnership is focused

on improving performance across transport, natural resource and people issues. The Sustainability Partnership is proud to support this research as we believe that more can be created by working together than each of us can deliver by working alone.

Close





Cancer information  
and support.  
From Macmillan.  
At Boots.



At Alliance Boots we are proud of the contribution we make to the wellbeing of the communities we serve by working with them. Partnership is one of our core values and we demonstrate this through activities such as our work with the charity Macmillan Cancer Support. This partnership is a great example of where our shared values and objectives are driving success, as we aim jointly to provide access to the best cancer information and support for everyone in their local community, wherever they are in the UK. Another example is our collaboration with our global supply chain. In a world of complex sustainability issues it is our fundamental belief that we can achieve more by working together and sharing our respective knowledge and best practice.

Close





## What next?

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It's clear from this research that collaboration is increasingly prevalent and growing in importance for responsible businesses.

This is most noticeable in:

- the growing number of multiple business collaborations around global issues
- the growing need for local partnerships that bring businesses (large and small), public sector and communities together to develop shared solutions; a need highlighted by the scale of the challenges facing communities in the UK in the current economic climate.

We expect both these trends to continue to grow.

New forms of collaboration are also emerging from companies collaborating to deliver innovation in the marketplace; to increasing interest in co-operative models; and businesses facilitating collaboration with consumers. The development of 'social investment' thinking and the shift of funding models from donation to investment are likely to fundamentally change the dynamics of corporate-NGO partnerships.

We have seen that the most effective, sustainable collaborations share their understanding of problems; share goals to solve them; and then deliver shared solutions. It seems that more and more companies believe that those who take the time to develop genuinely shared ways of working can conversely gain competitive advantage over those who don't. BITC is committed to helping companies to collaborate on issues through its existing campaigns. We see that developing support for companies to collaborate is key to scaling up activity and ensuring the greatest positive impact on businesses, society and the environment. We also note that we are operating in an increasingly competitive environment between collaborations and need to explore how we can work in partnership with others to create the best value for members.

**BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY**

If you are interested in how BITC can help you and your business get involved with partnerships call: 020 7566 8650 or email: [research@bitc.org.uk](mailto:research@bitc.org.uk)

While collaboration is not suitable for all companies at all times, we certainly hope that the types of collaboration we have identified in this report will increasingly become just the way we do business.