

# Sustainable Workplace Development



**workspaces**  
by **JPA**

# Introduction

“Our planet is talking to us.  
We must listen, and we must act.”

*Antonio Guterres, Secretary General, United Nations*

If our businesses are to grow and thrive in these fast moving times, we need transformational leadership, resilience, purpose and engaged, empowered staff.

Business success in the future will depend on being able to evidence a higher purpose and contribution to society, accelerated by legislation and procurement requirements.

It's up to us to adopt sustainable strategies, working together to identify simple and affordable solutions which impact positively on people and planet.

This white paper aims to give a broad overview and context for sustainable workspace behaviour, and can be applied to businesses of every size and almost all consumer and procurement activity - the principles remain the same.

There was a time when a sustainable strategy was desirable, now it's essential.



By Fiona Edwards  
Head of Sustainability – JPA Workspaces

Member of the Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme Steering Group  
Member of the Furniture Makers Climate Change Committee  
Member of Women in Office Design - Sustainable Design Collective

# Embedding sustainability into the heart of business strategy

## What is sustainability?

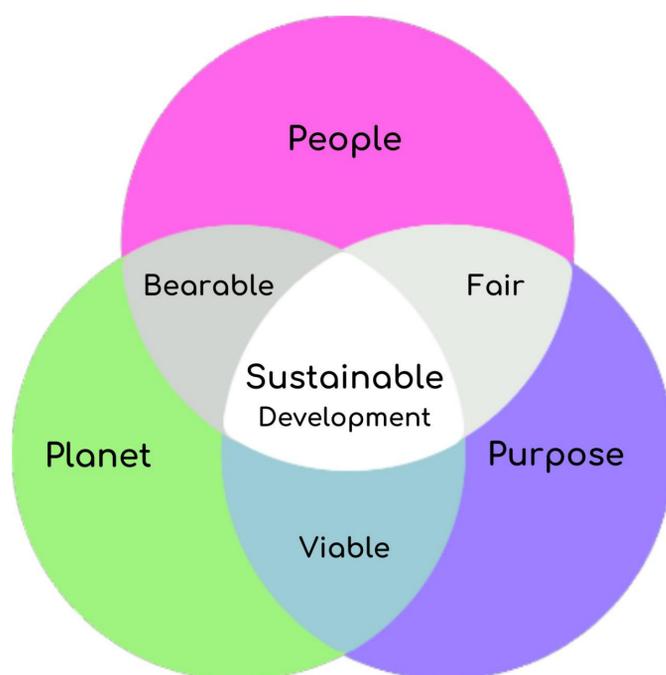
Until recently, many sustainability strategies and commitments have focused on environmental issues.

The combination of Covid-19, intensifying environmental and social issues and greater public awareness have however accelerated evolution and reflect the need to embrace a broader range of issues.

In 2020, for the first time ever, the World Economic Forum identified the top 5 global risks as environmental and social reinforcing previous calls to action and the need for an immediate response.

*“Sustainable development is development that strives to meet the needs of developing countries seeking to achieve a more sustainable world. Sustainable development addresses the needs of the present moment without compromising current and future generations to meet their own sustainable lifestyles.”*

Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, Chair of the UN World Commission.  
The “Brundtland Report” 1987.



The 3 pillars of sustainability:  
Social, Environmental and Economic  
...also known as People, Planet and Purpose

# People:

The 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development goals (SDG) were published in 2015. These SDG encompass all 3 pillars of sustainable development – Social, Environmental and Economic (People, Planet and Purpose).



The Social or People pillar of a company's sustainable development are values that promote equality and respect for individual rights.

- **Combatting social exclusion and discrimination:** helping with reintegration, supporting gender equality, reducing the gender pay gap, promoting the real living wage, encouraging training, encouraging dialogue, and applying global social rights.
- **Promoting solidarity:** helping to reduce social inequalities by collaborating with local and international associations and projects, and prioritising fair trade products. Creating healthy and environmentally sustainable environments where people feel included and which promote activity, wellbeing and connection.
- **Contributing to the well-being of stakeholders:** developing social dialogue, encouraging the exchange of information and transparency, adapting flexible working hours for differing needs and, making workspaces accessible and inclusive.
- **Sharing resources:** supporting communities and social networks to come together to help each other. Dealing with resources in an entirely different way, moving beyond traditional, linear approaches to a more circular, networked, shared and collectively-led approach.

*Simply asking more questions about the organisations we deal with can influence behaviour and help re-shape our world.*

# Planet

The Environmental or Planet pillar of a company's sustainable development tackles Climate Change:

## The Issue:

Extra Greenhouse Gases in our atmosphere are causing the Earth to get warmer. This is because, greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane, trap the sun's heat in Earth's atmosphere.

Burning fossil fuels like coal and oil increase the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air as the burning process combines carbon with oxygen in the air to make CO<sub>2</sub>.

As a consequence, global air temperatures near Earth's surface have risen with the past five years being the warmest five years in centuries.

## The Paris Agreement:

The Paris Agreement is a **legally binding international treaty on climate change**. It was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and came into force on 4 November 2016.

It's goal is to **limit global warming** to well below 2, preferably to **1.5 degrees Celsius**, compared to pre-industrial levels. A couple of degrees may not seem like much but has a big impact on the health of our plants and animals which we have started to see much closer to home recently.

The aim of limiting the planet's warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100 is to prevent severe climate disruptions that will exacerbate hunger, conflict and worldwide drought. This is already becoming more prevalent. Any rise greater than 1.5 degrees Celsius could be catastrophic.

To achieve long-term temperature reduction we need to achieve a climate neutral world by mid century i.e. Net Zero emissions by 2050.

## What is Net Zero by 2050?

Net Zero by 2050 is the target of completely negating the greenhouse gases produced by human activity by 2050. We reach Net Zero when the amount of greenhouse gasses we add is no more than the amount taken away.

In 2019, the UK government became **the first major economy to commit in law to Net Zero by 2050**. This a legally binding requirement in the UK and the start of our long-term journey to decarbonisation.



# The Carbon Challenge:

Emissions, aka Greenhouse gasses currently fall into 3 main types:

## Scope 1 – Direct emissions

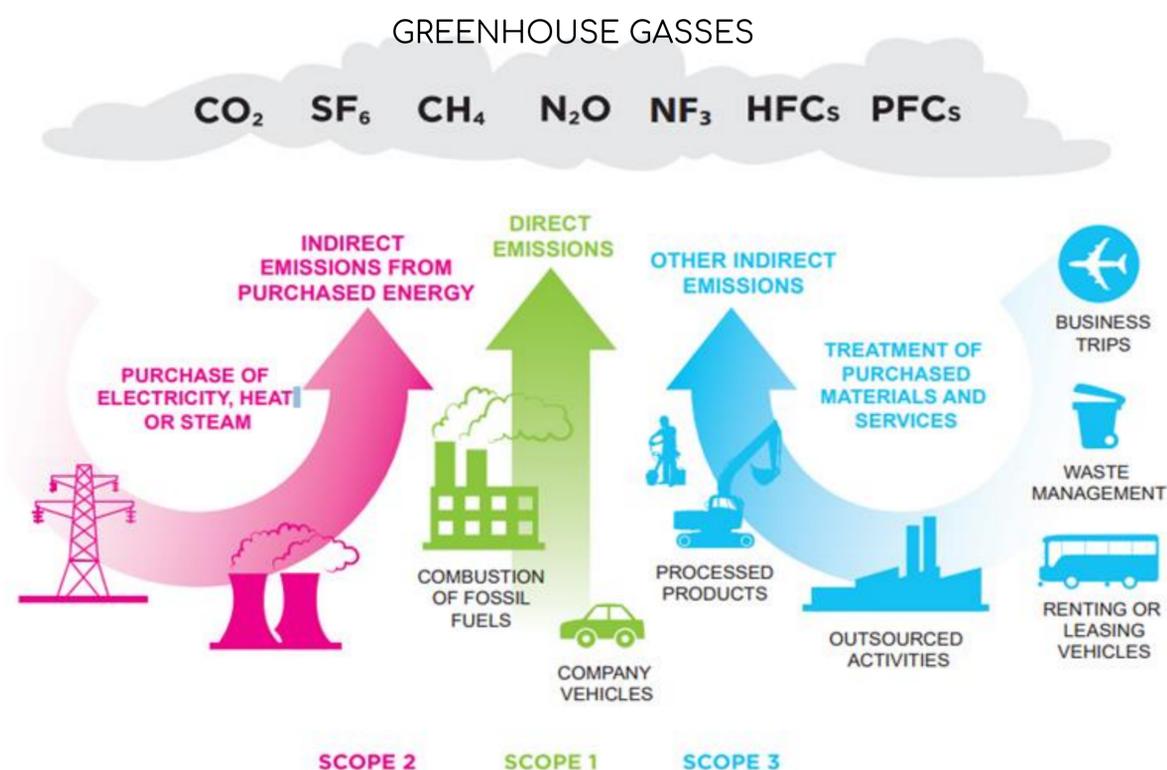
Fuel burned in owned or controlled boilers and emissions from company-owned vehicles

## Scope 2 – Indirect emissions

e.g. Purchased energy - electricity, heat or steam

Most scope 1 & 2 data already exists on invoices in company finance departments. This data it can easily be converted at no cost into an organisation's operational carbon footprint for scope 1 & 2 emissions on a number of websites including [www.carbonfootprint.com](http://www.carbonfootprint.com)

Once operational carbon is measured i.e. Scope 1 & 2 carbon footprint, plans can then be made to tackle reduction in line with Net Zero targets.



## Scope 3 – Indirect emissions

...everything else in an organisation's supply chain, an estimated 85% of an organisation's emissions lie here and is a longer-term more complex piece of work. This is where we start looking at our supply chains and their environmental performance as these impact directly on our own scope emissions and become obstacles to future business growth.

# Reducing Scope 1 & Scope 2 emissions by half by 2030

To reach NetZero by 2050, we have to halve scope 1 & 2 emissions by 50% by 2030.

The main way to reduce these scope emissions is to switch to renewable energies and reduce the amount we use i.e. waste less. Any emissions we can't eliminate will need to be offset and that figure is anticipated to be around 10%.

Consuming less, consuming better and wasting less are simple ways to start saving carbon and saving money - fast. Marginal gains across the board will make a collective greater impact.

Reducing waste, reduces carbon, also reducing the unnecessary destruction of natural habitats, flora and fauna. Simple waste reduction seamlessly contributes to several UN SDG, including Life on Land, Life below Water and Responsible Consumption and Production.

## Key areas for Scope 1 and 2 emission reduction:

- Energy consumption
- Water use
- Transport
- Waste
- Procurement



# Purpose

The Economic or Purpose pillar of a company's sustainable development addresses compliance, governance, risk management and economic success.

Organisations need to be profitable so they can contribute to economic development and growth, enabling investment into the other two pillars.

Effective change management and long term behavioural change requires boards of directors and management to align with shareholders' interests, the company's community, value chains and customers.

A sustainable business needs the support and approval of its employees, stakeholders and community it operates in, reflecting shared values and common purpose.

Selecting suppliers who evidence this commitment reinforces these principles through the power of the pound, and adding multiple layers of intangible value to company and client purchases.



The ability to meet everyone's basic human needs depends on someone making a profit.

# Increasing legislation for sustainable development:

Consumers, investors and broader stakeholders are demanding and expecting more. This is also reflected in growing legislation, with just some examples outlined below:

**2019** - UK Government makes Net Zero legally binding.

**2019** - BEIS mandatory SECR (Streamlined Energy & Carbon Reporting) for larger companies in Directors' reports.

**2020** - Government Policy Procurement note 6/20 requires all central government departments and agencies to evaluate social value with a 'minimum overall weighting of 10%' of total procurement.

**2021** - Government Policy Procurement note 6/21, requires net zero commitment and carbon reduction plans from September 2021 as a requirement for eligibility for public contracts over £5m p/a.

**2022** - Net Zero found to be unlawful in UK High Court ruling as not supported by robust enough systems and strategies - more legislation will follow, with likely SECR threshold likely to apply to smaller companies.

**2022** - Updates to ESOS (Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme), the mandatory assessment and reporting for large companies.

**2023** - The anticipated new Procurement Bill in 2023, moving public spend away from a transactional (£) to a more outcome based procurement approach.

We have seen corporate 'Purpose' begin to visibly shift from shareholder value (transactional) to evidenced stakeholder value (outcome) across the three pillars of sustainability.

# Adding value through furniture procurement:

30% of a building's carbon over typical 40 year period is furniture - often renewed 5-8 times during this period!

Renewing less often reduces carbon, costs and preserves our natural resources.

1

## Reduce carbon when specifying new furniture:

By buying better to use for longer, quality will out. Also look for BREEAM, LEED, Ska and WELL Building criteria for less environmental impact and healthier working environments.

Ask more questions about how the products purchased mitigate environmental impact through better design, lower VOCs, higher volumes of recycled and recyclable content and lower carbon content. Check out where it's made, how far it has to travel and investigate supply chain ESG commitment to ensure sustainable development is reflected – more questions will bring faster change.

Partner with suppliers who will maintain your furniture during and post warranty to ensure optimal lifecycle and investment value – extending product and investment lifespan by keeping in use for longer.

2

## Reduce carbon by combining new and existing furniture:

Consider re-working existing quality items back into the new schemes as this almost zeroes off carbon whilst also helping tightening budgets to go further.

Have a proper look at existing furniture and check out if it can be refreshed, repaired, re-sprayed, wrapped, cut down and re-topped – ideally as locally as possible to reduce transport emissions.

Re-use can also contribute to LEED, BREEAM and Ska criteria by reducing the harvest of unnecessary virgin resources.

3

## Reduce carbon by choosing pre-loved furniture:

Consider incorporating or topping up with good quality pre-loved items into the new scheme. Buying known brands tends to reduce risk and guarantee quality.

This option minimises carbon as nothing new has to be made and also helps tightening budgets to go further. To optimise investment, find a local furniture provider who will work with you to maintain items in optimal condition on an ongoing basis.

Pre-loved furniture can also contribute to LEED, BREEAM and Ska criteria by reducing the harvest of unnecessary virgin resources.

4

## Reduce carbon by re-purposing and re-manufacturing furniture:

Could your organisation's furniture waste be made into new furniture? Rising costs and scarcity of materials is forcing us to consider waste as an asset - your waste may now have value elsewhere, worth investigating with your local supplier.

Re-use can also contribute to LEED, BREEAM and Ska criteria by reducing the harvest of unnecessary virgin resources.

# Re-manufacturing from 'Waste':

It's time to look at waste differently – could yours be a resource? This could be a great opportunity for collaboration with local workshops and partnerships to create bespoke and innovative pieces for your workspace.

This reception counter was re-manufactured from redundant stud wall 2" x 4" timber saving an estimated 300kg of CO2e – thinking outside the boxes can sometimes deliver startling results.



The average carbon content of an item of furniture is 50kg CO2e. Re-using 20 items of existing furniture will save approximately one tonne of CO2e and preserve valuable natural habitats - food for thought.



# Furniture landfill:

Sending redundant items to landfill is a bit like tidying your bedroom by stuffing everything under the bed – it looks better for now but the issue is still there.

Landfill is an out of sight fix bringing a host of nasties with it including land, air and ground pollution, extinction of existing flora and fauna, noise, vermin and disease to name a few.

By planning for furniture redundancy, landfill can be eliminated through furniture re-use, rehoming or materials recycling, immediately saving carbon and seamlessly improving an organisation's environmental performance.

**Note:** Make sure suppliers have a waste transfer licence and if furniture is being recycled, ask for certificated evidence.



**Company Name**

have shown ongoing commitment to the Environment and Sustainability by recycling the following office furniture items:

 X Chairs	 X Desks	 X Storage	 X Misc Items	 X Misc Metal
-----------------	----------------	------------------	---------------------	---------------------

XXXkg (xxx tons) of furniture was diverted from landfill  
in March, 2022

This has resulted in a saving of xxxx kg/CO2e

X items have been rehomed in the community

Registered Waste Carrier CBDU203549

John Pulsford Associates Ltd



# Raising awareness of furniture carbon:

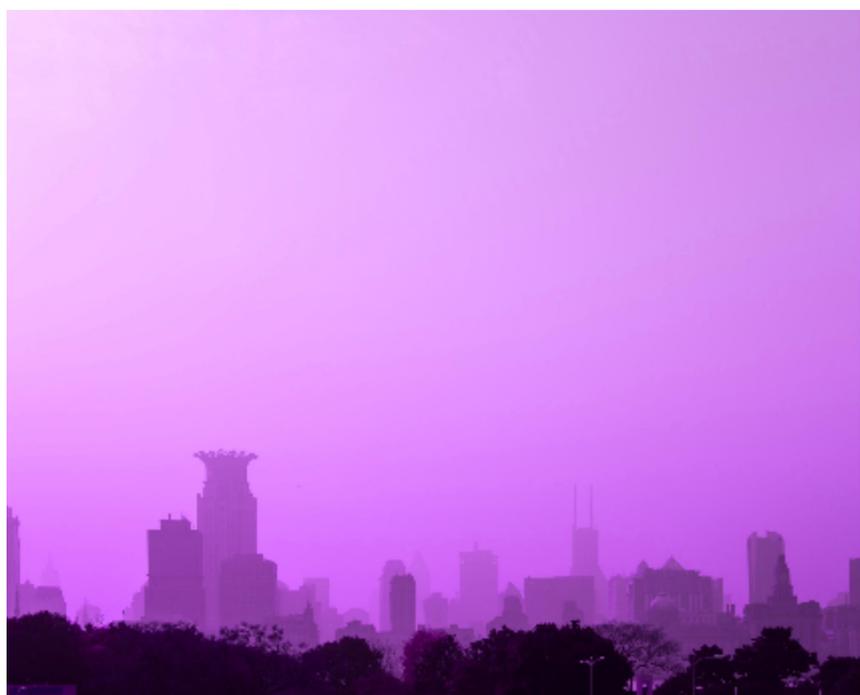
It's hard to get to grips with the idea of carbon and how it relates to the items of workspace furniture we see and use every day.

The average carbon content of a piece of furniture contains around 50kg CO<sub>2</sub>e. Every 20 or so items of furniture (give or take) therefore contains approximately one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e – useful when totting up numbers for potential refurbishment.

It's worth looking out for product EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations) which breakdown carbon and materials content and can be very useful to help establish guide figures for completed project works. EPDs are bit like food labelling in supermarkets – they don't necessarily indicate the item is good for you, just what it contains so they are not a complete answer.

As a handy guide, estimated carbon footprints for specific office furniture items (source: FIRA):

Task chair	72Kg CO <sub>2</sub> e
Desk 1600mm x 800mm	35kg CO <sub>2</sub> e
Curved workstation	45kg CO <sub>2</sub> e
Bank of 6 desks	228kg CO <sub>2</sub> e
Steel pedestal	44kg CO <sub>2</sub> e
Visitor chair	36kg CO <sub>2</sub> e
Dining chair	27kg CO <sub>2</sub> e



If carbon had a colour and was say, purple and we could see it, would we already be doing things differently?

## 8 Actions you can take as a consumer and procurer:

- 1 Buy better and use for longer** - ask about how and where products are made, materials used and warranty length. Partner with local suppliers to keep it in optimal condition for longer. If possible, buy better quality, poorly designed products increase demand and contribute to global warming.
- 2 Waste less** - try to re-use what you have before buying new – saving carbon as well as money. We need to try and make this the ‘cool’ thing to do, valuing higher purpose over the need for more ‘stuff’.
- 3 Consider second life purchase** - preventing unnecessary virgin resources from being used and saving carbon and money. Good quality second-life purchase shows a responsible approach to consumption which stakeholders will increasingly appreciate.
- 4 Consider re-manufacturing from waste** - or whether your furniture waste has value to anyone else. There are companies out there who might be interested in purchasing this as materials become more expensive and more scarce.
- 5 Ask more questions** – and for evidence of commitment to evidence of sustainable development, whatever you’re buying, Make a greater impact through the supply chain by partnering with suppliers and manufacturers committed to societal justice and environmental care.
- 6 Buy locally where possible** - this boosts local economies and creates local jobs, embedding clients more powerfully in their communities. It can also facilitates better working relationships, enable opportunities of local social enterprises and generate less carbon emissions. Locality enhances circularity.
- 7 Recycle** - check where your waste is going to you can take steps to make sure it’s recycled which also saves carbon emissions. Landfill increases ground, air and water pollution, vermin and disease, enough said.
- 8 Share resources** - local collaborations will enable you to start sharing resources, reducing costs and remaining competitive.

*Simply taking these actions will seamlessly contribute to several UN SDG*



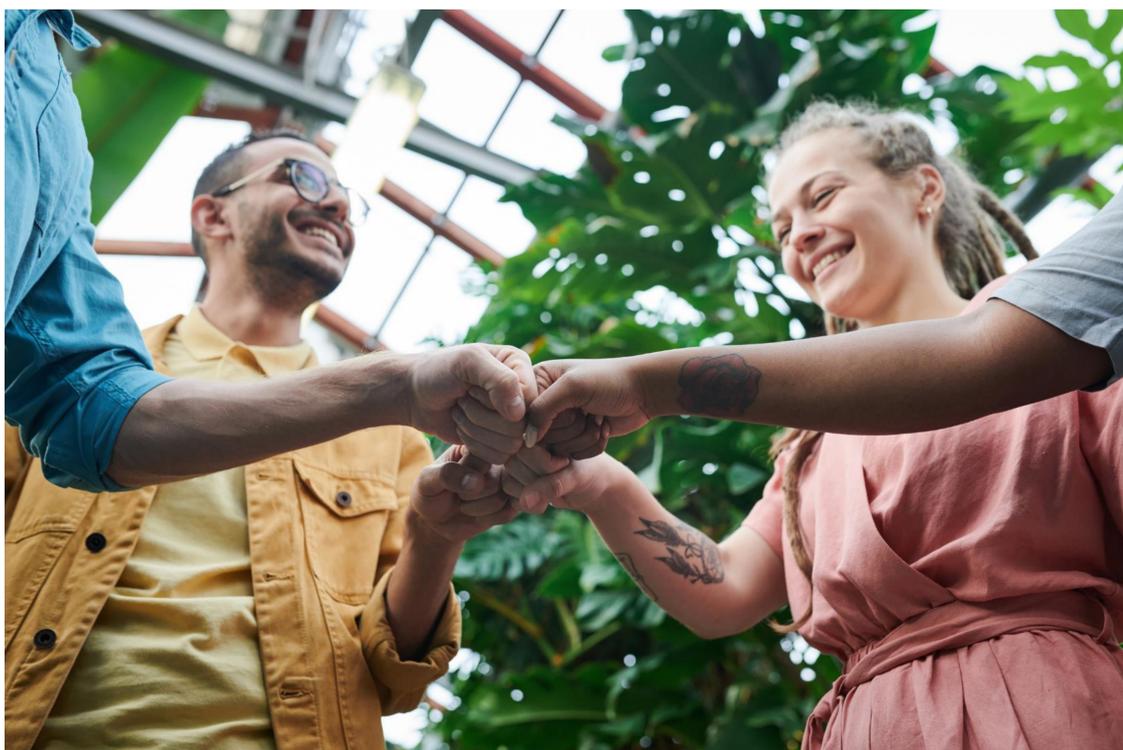
# Green building standards:

Green building standards such as LEED, BREEAM, Ska and WELL aim to reduce or eliminate negative environmental impacts, resulting in buildings that are cheaper to operate and more conducive to good health due to cleaner air and fewer toxins.

Studies have also shown cognitive performance to be higher in certified green buildings.

JPA provide support in the form of due diligence and information gathering for projects where furniture has been identified to making a contribution or having impact for BREEAM, LEED, Ska and WELL.

## Design for Wellbeing



Making sustainable choices serves our people and our planet. It can enhance health and wellbeing, user experience and boost productivity – music to the bottom line.

Good workspace design goes hand in hand with viable and productive organisations that create jobs and opportunities.

Great workspaces combined with clear organisational purpose will attract the talent and mindsets needed for future success: The outstanding business performers over time have had the right people, in the right place, at the right time, to do the right thing.

# How to engage teams in your Sustainability journey

## ...winning hearts and minds:

- Re-define the organisation's long-term purpose and align with culture
- Showcase a higher purpose
- Develop shared values and supportive structure
- Illustrate the case for sustainability – economic, environmental and social
- Develop competency and knowledge
- Involve teams in the development of strategies to engage and empower
- Make the purpose visible inside and outside the company
- Maintain and nurture organisational culture



70% of change initiatives fail – success requires long-term commitment from leadership teams, one purpose, shared values, structure and an engaged, supportive team.

*Sustainable development is a long-term lifestyle change, not a one week crash diet.*

# Sustainable workplaces for our people and our planet bring multiple benefits:

## Including:

- Attracting and retain the best talent
- Reducing operational costs
- Creating innovative local partnerships
- Improving the health and wellbeing of teams
- Extending core labour rights and social governance through supply-chains
- Reducing furniture carbon and waste
- Reducing unnecessary use of virgin materials
- Eliminating landfill
- Encouraging local service innovation and excellence



As consumers and procurers, we can create social, environmental and local legacy through our purchases, contributing seamlessly to people, planet and purpose.

## Our Vision

“To be the trusted, expert provider of sustainable workspaces which are better for our people, better for our environment and better for our planet.”



Furnish your workspaces with purpose  
we're here to help on 01727 840800

and better for our planet.”

t: 01727 840800  
hello@jpa-workspaces.com  
www.jpa-workspaces.com

**workspaces**  
by **JPA**