



**Bennett Institute**  
for Innovation and  
Policy Acceleration

# Strategic Plan

2025-2030

[bennettinstitutesussex.org](http://bennettinstitutesussex.org)

Fast forward  
thinking  
for people  
and the planet

# Foreword

We are facing some of the greatest global challenges ever experienced by humankind. Climate change, biodiversity loss, disease and population growth (to name a few) are all having a detrimental effect on the Earth's ecosystem and associated services.

For climate change there is a consensus regarding the problem and remedial targets, such as maintaining global warming below 2 degrees. However, governments in the UK and elsewhere have not developed adequate policies, or encouraged the development of technologies and solutions capable of meeting such targets in time to prevent irreversible and potentially catastrophic damage.

At the Peter Bennett Foundation we promote ground-breaking ideas that confront the way we look at the world and the challenges we face. We encourage ideas that transform the way we think, address the inequalities in our society and tackle the strains on our natural resources. By cultivating and nurturing new ideas, we can truly facilitate innovation that improves the quality of life.

We are delighted to provide our support, alongside the University of Sussex, to the Bennett Institute for Innovation & Policy Acceleration. We fully endorse this, its first strategy and growth plan, covering its first five years of operation until 2030.

In the challenges we face, one thing is now certain: we do desperately need "fast forward thinking for people and the planet".



**Peter Bennett**  
Peter Bennett Foundation

# Introduction

Welcome to the first strategy and growth plan for the Bennett Institute for Innovation and Policy Acceleration. In the Bennett Institute, our mission is to rapidly develop the urgently needed policies and practices which address society's most important issues. Our first phase of work focuses on one of the biggest and most urgent challenges the world is facing: climate change. We must tackle it now, to protect the future of the planet.

Our work is action-oriented and evidence-based. We want it to have tangible impact in the real world, and we aim to develop effective policies with a clear practical application. Bringing diverse viewpoints together, we will collaborate with experts in business, science, engineering, government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO)s. Working with unmatched urgency, speed and agility means we can accelerate the policies that will help halt and reverse climate change before the clock runs out.

We prioritise climate justice and inclusion by working with governments and NGOs worldwide to drive meaningful global change. Our policy efforts also focus on ensuring the Global South has access to finance and renewable energy, fostering a fairer and more equitable world.

Through this combination of expertise and insight, and our links to real-world policy end users, we have set our ambitions and goals for the next five years; these are outlined in this strategy document, together with our research themes and priorities. We also outline here how we will deliver against these research themes, opportunities and timely research questions. Our growth plans, aligned against potential future funding scenarios, give an insight into our ambition for the Institute.



**Professor Benjamin K Sovacool**  
Director



**Professor Matthew Agarwala**  
Bennett Chair  
Sustainable Finance



**Professor Felix Creutzig**  
Bennett Chair  
Innovation & Policy Acceleration

# Vision & Mission

In the Bennett Institute, our mission is to accelerate the development and implementation of urgently needed policies and practices to tackle society's greatest challenges. Our values draw inspiration from the Science Policy Research Unit's (SPRU) founder, Chris Freeman, who emphasised that humanity's quest for knowledge could find solutions through innovation for even the most difficult challenges.

## Our values include:

- Focus on real world problems first
- Interdisciplinarity
- Robust, independent scholarly excellence
- Engagement with measurable impact
- Selfless pursuit of knowledge
- Enshrined sense of urgency.

They are underpinned by the University of Sussex values of kindness, integrity, inclusion, collaboration and courage. The Bennett Institute is uniquely positioned to accelerate policy and practical solutions at unprecedented speed. Our work will set a new pace for policy change that is based on scientific evidence. We seek to collaborate with governments and institutions around the world to develop impactful work.

## • **Solution-focused research**

Our work is action-oriented and evidence-based. We want it to have tangible impact in the real world. Our aim is to develop effective research with a clear practical application – and a measurable policy outcome. Maintaining the quality, rigour and consistency of our research is an absolute priority.

## • **Bridging stakeholder gaps**

Bringing diverse viewpoints together is the path to new ideas and fresh thinking. We collaborate with experts in business, science, engineering, government and NGOs. Politically neutral and unbiased, we engage directly with policymakers across political and national divides.

## • **Accelerated innovation**

Inspired by the incredible speed of response to the Covid pandemic, we aim to set a new pace for policy change. Given the unparalleled urgency, we are operating with speed and agility to accelerate the policies that will help halt and reverse climate change before it's too late.

## • **Global perspective**

Our focus on climate justice and inclusion means we collaborate with governments and NGOs internationally, to ensure meaningful change happens on a global scale. We develop policies which ensure the Global South can access finance and renewables, for a fairer world.

Our real-world impact makes us different. The Bennett Institute team are already deeply embedded into the policy process. For example, we are working as an integral part of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). We collaborate directly with the end-users of our research, such as the World Bank and the IMF, who come to us to develop research-based solutions on their behalf. And, thanks to SPRU and the University of Sussex Business School, we have a global reach and network.

As humankind progresses through the 21st Century and meets the challenge of climate change, all of our lives depend on having the right policies. The Bennett Institute for Innovation & Policy Acceleration can help – through “Fast forward thinking for people and the planet”.

**Professor Matthew Agarwala** has provided expertise, evidence, training, and research to the White House, United Nations, International Monetary Fund, multilateral development banks, and UK Parliament. This includes support for developing natural capital accounting standards that are now in use across

more than 100 countries, research into the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss on the sovereign debt markets, and the development of economic strategies for sustainable growth. His work has been covered in over 350 media appearances across more than 40 countries.

Analysis and testimony have been provided by **Professor Benjamin Sovacool** to the US House of Representatives, the US Senate, the US Supreme Court, the Canadian Senate, the UK House of Commons and the UK House of Lords. This includes studies documenting solutions to energy and transport poverty in the UK; comparative assessments of UK energy security trends; and case studies of rapid UK energy transitions.

**Professor Felix Creutzig** advises the United Nations, the German Federal Ministry of Digital and Transport, the Berlin Senate and Mercedes on decarbonisation strategies in cities and mobility. This ranges from overarching strategies to make cities hubs of synergies between climate goals and SDGs, and it involves focused and effective evaluation of how to advance active mobility in Berlin and how to implement circularity strategies at Mercedes.



# Context

Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges ever experienced by humankind. The evidence is clear. The July 2024 global surface temperature was 2.18°F (1.21°C) higher than the 20th-century average of 60.4°F (15.8°C), making it the warmest July since global records began in 1850. This marks the 14th consecutive month of record-high global temperatures, which itself is a record.

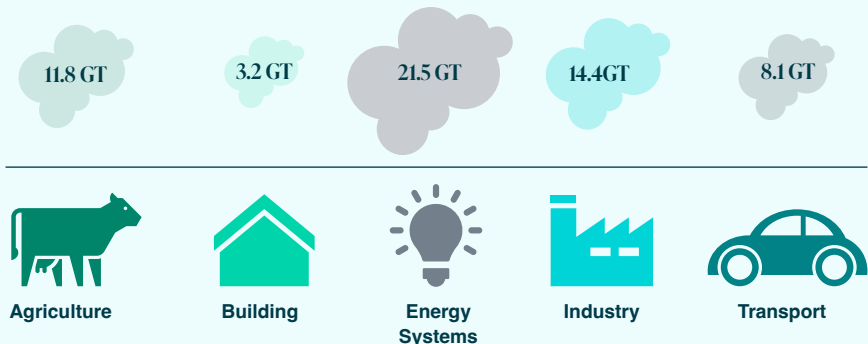
The main driver of climate change is the greenhouse effect, caused by human activity. Our emissions have driven increases in the concentration of key atmospheric gases. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is the largest contributor to global warming, and by 2020 its concentration in the atmosphere had risen 48% above pre-industrial levels. The World Emissions Clock estimates that global emissions will

be 58.9 giga tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> (equiv) in 2024, with energy systems accounting for the vast majority of that (as shown below).

Although we have agreement on the problem, and have set remedial targets (such as maintaining global warming below 2°C), very little progress has been made. Governments in the UK and elsewhere have not developed adequate policies, identified suitable pathways or encouraged the development and diffusion of technologies capable of meeting such targets in time to prevent irreversible and potentially catastrophic damage.

To address global warming, we must tackle the causes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and we must achieve sustainable living through net zero carbon emissions worldwide.

## Projected Global Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2024 by sector<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from data and visuals from the World Emissions Clock

# Strategic goals and objectives

## Strategic goals for 2030

This challenge of climate inaction is the catalyst for the establishment of the Bennett Institute of Innovation and Policy Acceleration. The Institute will focus initially on accelerating policies to halt and reverse climate change by bringing together academic research, insights from corporate executives, entrepreneurs, scientists and engineers, and engaging directly with policymakers.

Through this combination of expertise and insight and our links to real-world policy end users, we have set our ambitions and goals for where the Bennett Institute for Innovation and Policy Acceleration will have an impact over the next five years.

## By 2030 we will:

### Influence policy around the world:

- Have traceably influenced through our research and evidence base, climate change legislation and policies to address mitigation and adaptation across countries in different continents, sectors and contexts.
- Have traceably influenced the future UN Sustainable Development Goals framework, which will be implemented post 2030.

## Bridge gaps between stakeholders:

- Have research- and policy-oriented collaborations with key international stakeholders, including multilateral development banks, UN organisations, financial institutions, media, businesses, industry and scientific bodies.
- Be recognised for leading global conversations through shaping, participating, convening and facilitating events with a discussion on “what works” in terms of effective climate change innovation and policy.

## Deliver solution-focused research:

- Have trained a cohort of the next generation of climate change, energy and biodiversity post-graduate scholars with the interdisciplinary expertise needed to develop new socially orientated policy.
- Be recognised for creating a policy-research powerhouse delivering internationally-leading research publications and resources.

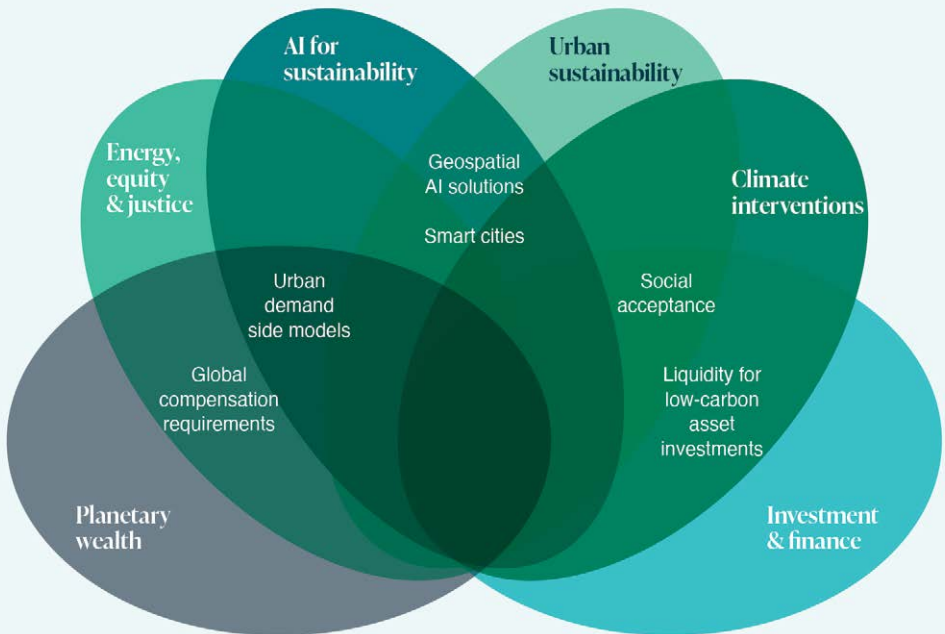


## Research themes

These 2030 goals will be realised through synergetic research themes. These themes will help us deliver on our goals, and advance innovation and policy knowledge in meeting the challenges of climate change.

Areas of interest and opportunity cut across the research themes, ensuring an integrated overall portfolio. Some illustrative examples of cross-cutting areas of interest are shown below.

### Convergence and integration across the Institute's research themes





### **Climate interventions (behaviours, technologies and practices for a net-zero society)**

This theme shapes climate policies and interventions targeting behaviour, technology, and society to achieve climate targets and deliver net-zero energy.

For households, this includes aligning consumption and behavioural decisions in transport, food and shelter. For industry, we accelerate decarbonisation in production and manufacturing processes to power a green transformation. For policy and society, we help identify the most effective solutions for climate protection and adaptation. By 2030 we aim to have a portfolio of evidence and locally contextualised demand side indicators integrated into decision-makers' action portfolios.



### **Energy, equity and justice**

This theme accelerates policies and actions enabling a global transition towards energy democracy, equity, and accountability between groups, geographies, species and generations. The focus is on moving

from 'problem identification' to the implementation of equitable solutions. By 2030 we aim to have achieved coordinated global and local actions advancing energy justice. An early example is our work on electrifying schools in Africa: the continent will be home to more than half of the 21st century's school children, many of whom live near schools without electricity. Our work shows how solar power offers a clean, affordable solution for improving educational access and quality.



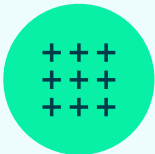
### **Artificial Intelligence (AI) for sustainability**

This theme examines the role and effectiveness of AI technologies for adaptation, mitigation and reversal of climate change and human survival. We explore AI as an enabling force, a systemic force and an accelerating force. We also practically advance the role of AI as a technology, e.g., by developing AI tools for low-carbon urban planning. By 2030 we aim to have contributed to establishing a global interdisciplinary community of researchers and practitioners aiming to find solutions to global AI governance in the context of sustainability and beyond.



### Urban sustainability

This theme is defined by empowering municipal scale and sub-national decision makers with the metrics and tools to coordinate investment and growth strategies for sustainable and resilient urban growth. By 2030 we aim to have traceably influenced the climate change strategies and action of municipalities. We also aim to have advanced geospatial planning tools that help cash-starved cities to design low-carbon neighbourhoods.



### Investment and finance

This theme arms central banks, finance ministries, and markets with innovative tools to identify, price, and manage nature-related financial risk. We foster coordination among firms, entrepreneurs, project managers, and innovators to accelerate both the supply (investors and financial institutions) and demand (firms, governments, and entrepreneurs) side of the market for green finance. And through extensive media engagement, we shape the global conversation on green finance. By 2030

we aim to have traceably influenced the development of green finance tools and indicators and accelerated their real-world adoption by building an international community of practice.



### Planetary wealth

This theme empowers governments, companies, and organisations to develop and use wealth accounts to improve strategic decision-making for growth and sustainability. By 2030 we aim to have traceably influenced the development and use of wealth accounts and associated sustainability strategies at all levels of government, across multiple countries, and across a wide range of stakeholders, including business and charities. We will work closely with our sister institutions (especially the Bennett Institute for Public Policy) to shape the global discussion and public understanding of sustainable economic growth.



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# Work with us

The Bennett Institute partners with a network of world-leading policymakers, opinion formers and climate change experts. Placing real-world impact at the heart of the Bennett Institute is what makes us different. From collaborating with end users such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to leading global policy through the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), our strength is solutions-focused research.

We aim to set an accelerated pace for policy change, addressing the climate crisis with unprecedented speed. This requires an interdisciplinary, solution-focused approach – and a broad community. We want to collaborate with students, researchers, climate entrepreneurs and businesses, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and of course, policymakers.

If you are interested in our research get in touch via our website – [www.bennettinstitutesussex.org](http://www.bennettinstitutesussex.org) to become part of our Bennett Institute community.



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