

Top Trends for 2023



Mitch Cooke
Director

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Greengage is a sustainability consultancy, that specialises in the built environment.

We asked Mitch to predict the top trends in net zero and sustainability for 2023.

#1 Talking to tenants

“I think there’s a big trend towards better engagement with tenants, particular when it comes to accessing and sharing data. In our conversations with clients, in cases where accessing energy data is difficult and clients are having to make assumptions about energy use, we are increasingly involved in work to help improve the quality and availability of energy consumption data. Ultimately that involves engaging and building good relationships with tenants and supply chains.”

#2 You cannot build your way to net zero

“There is an increasing focus on retrofit, in recognition that retrofitting our homes and buildings is a huge challenge, particularly when it comes to listed and heritage buildings. I think we can expect to see a lot more research in this area in 2023.”

#3 Reuse not rebuild

“There is also certainly a trend in terms of retention and refurbishment rather than demolition. This is in part driven through the planning system but I think also reflects how clients are now thinking about development. So, for example, we are currently advising on a number of projects where retention, repurposing and reusing materials is the starting point. But only a few years ago, when we would raise this as an issue, clients would often say that the decision to demolish and rebuild had already been made, usually on the basis of viability, and that the local authority was supportive of that approach. Now when we start the conversation with clients, the desire to repurpose buildings is already in their minds.”

#4 More science-based targets

“Over 2023 I think we will see more and more engagement with science-based targets, and with the Science Based Target Initiative (SBTI). I also think we’ll see an evolution of SBTI as it responds to some of the challenges and limitations that have been identified.”

What are science-based targets?

Science-based targets provide a clear pathway for businesses to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, helping prevent the worst impacts of climate change and future-proof business growth.

Targets are considered ‘science-based’ if they are in line with what the latest climate science says is necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement – limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

More information on science-based targets, and on the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTI), can be found [here](#).

#5 More radical collaboration

“As we already see, I think we will see an increase in standardisation across the industry on frameworks and definitions. The work on the **Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard** is a step towards that consolidation and will certainly provide clarity for clients around what net zero carbon actually means.”

#6 More delay from Government

“The need for policy and regulatory clarity from Government is clear. However, I am not confident that we see a real strengthening of policy over the next twelve months. We all know that the lack of policy direction is hindering progress but it’s not clear this will change any time soon.”

#7 Calling out green-washing

“As a business, we are increasingly being asked – both internally and externally – about our environmental credentials, including which businesses and sectors we are and are not working

with. And I think that’s a very live conversation in many businesses. I think this year we will see a bottom-up and top-down challenge on our approach to sustainability and increasing scrutiny of our public statements and commitments around net zero.”

#8 Looking beyond net-zero to biodiversity

“We’ve focussed on net zero, but I do want to finish by saying that I think one of the biggest trends in 2023 will be our awakening on biodiversity and on green infrastructure in the built environment. Not just in terms of how we can deliver biodiversity benefits through net gain but also in terms of what green infrastructure can do to build resilience. This goes beyond resilience in terms of reducing our energy use but also includes how we might mitigate some of the impacts of climate change. In fact, an increased focus on biodiversity in the built environment could be the major trend in 2023!”

What is the BPF Net Zero Pledge?

The BPF Net Zero Pledge commits BPF members to be net zero carbon by 2050 at the very latest. Becoming a signatory to the pledge requires three actions:

1

To sign up to net zero targets and plans

2

To commit to sharing research, knowledge and insights on an open-source basis

3

To support other signatories and the wider real estate sector to speed the transition to net zero

