



**forum for  
the future**

action for a sustainable world

# **breakthrough products and services**

**An introduction to Forum for the Future's  
work on sustainable innovation for the market**

# our innovation team

## **Chris Sherwin** **Head of Innovation**

**Chris has a PhD in Innovative Ecodesign and previously worked on sustainable innovation in the electronics sector.**

## **Lynne Elvins** **Senior Advisor, Sustainable Innovation**

**Lynne has a degree in Design Management and previously worked on sustainable design and CSR communication.**



# **sustainable development, business and innovation**

**“** There have only been a couple of times in the history of humanity where our ability to innovate has been required to secure our survival. And it's as clear as day that now is another such time.

**As well as securing a sustainable future, innovation is essential for business success. It means accessing new markets, introducing new business models and – as this booklet explains – delivering new products and services.**

**For those who are new to innovation, we hope to introduce you to the basic principles, benefits and processes behind sustainable innovation. For more seasoned professionals, we set out how we can help you take innovation a few steps further.**

**Whatever your level of expertise, innovation is something we could all do more of.**

**”**

**Sally Uren  
Director, Business Programme  
Forum for the Future**

# what do we mean by innovation?

At Forum for the Future we think  
of innovation as:

## a way of thinking

**Innovation requires individuals and organisations to approach problems in a new way. It depends on challenging the status quo, encouraging creative approaches and taking risks.**

## a process

**Innovation is not just about the moment of inspiration – it's about having systems in place to encourage and realise the big ideas. Formal innovation processes already exist in many companies. In this way, innovation is a cycle of managed events that takes place over time.**



## a level of ambition

**Incremental innovation** is the continuous improvement of current approaches. This is where the remodeling of features takes place, but the product or service remains largely the same.

**Radical innovation** results in a clearly differentiated product or service. This type of innovation might make use of a new technology, create a change in behaviour or create a new market.

**System innovation** moves away from individual products or services. It seeks to deliver new infrastructures or ways of living. This is innovation on the bigger scale – cities rather than buildings, transport rather than cars.



# sustainable products and services

**No business can claim to be truly sustainable without delivering products or services that result in social and environmental benefit – or at the very least have minimal impact.**

**Delivering these products and services isn't just good for business – it's increasingly central to maintaining a competitive position in the market place.**

**Sustainable innovation is the process by which this happens. It can help you keep up with changing customer expectations, enhance your share of the market and build your reputation.**



# **delivering sustainable innovation**

**Forum for the Future's team can help you improve your performance on sustainable innovation:**

## **rethinking**

**we foster innovative thinking driven by sustainable development**

## **developing**

**we challenge product and service development teams to produce the highest levels of innovation and sustainability**

## **assessing**

**we help you identify your main impacts to deliver measurable improvements and success stories**

## **embedding**

**we integrate sustainability into the innovation process and use it to stimulate practical solutions across your business**

# rethinking

**Investigating the environmental and social issues that will shape your products and services in the future will help your business grow.**

Drawing on our expertise in sustainable development, and applying it in practical situations, is what we do best. We inspire and motivate people with positive visions of a sustainable future and create new environments in which innovative products and services can be imagined and explored.

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**Forum provides a big picture, long-term perspective to global issues of sustainable development that brings inspiration to design, and suggests a whole new area of potential for innovation.**”

**Bob Adams**  
**IDEO**



What are the possible futures for the UK retail industry in 2022? Forum for the Future conducted a futures exercise with Unilever and Tesco to answer this question. Building on trends analysis, the project delivers four scenarios for how the UK retail sector might look in fifteen years. These will be used to guide sustainable development strategies and new product and service ideas.

# developing

**Designing and launching a new or improved sustainable product or service could deliver some surprising results. Start with some low-risk quick-wins before moving on to a specific project.**

**We collaborate with innovation teams, R&D, designers, brand managers and marketers to make products and services more sustainable. Reality-checking with stakeholders, benchmarking against leaders in the field and applying the appropriate sustainable development tools – we help to deliver your objectives.**

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**Forum for the Future has consistently challenged us at each stage of the project – offering independent, external advice and recommendations. Their involvement has proved invaluable.**

**Kerryn Schrank**

**Program Director, targetneutral,  
BP Biofuels**

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targetneutral, the UK's first carbon offsetting scheme for drivers, has helped raise awareness of the links between driving and climate change. Drivers are educated on ways to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases and are able to offset the remainder online. The money generated by the scheme goes into a portfolio of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction projects including alternative and renewable energy. Forum for the Future worked closely with BP from the inception of the project and Jonathon Porritt, one of our Founder Directors, continues to chair the independent Advisory and Assurance Panel that oversees the project.

# assessing

**Understanding your impact areas – and identifying targets and measures for each of these – is key to achieving accountability and credible communication.**

**We can create bespoke tools for product and service sustainability impact assessment – or help you choose from existing tools. Meaningful measurement, metrics and KPIs ensure that improvements in one area don't cause unexpected impacts in others as well as ensuring the overall sustainability footprint of a product or service improves.**

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**Forum for the Future help us understand the issues we face in moving towards more sustainable products.”**

**Dr Phil Taylor**

**Paints Research Associate, ICI**



# embedding

**Ensuring sustainability is embedded in the innovation process will deliver better results. Get all your people motivated, inspired and involved in innovating for sustainability.**

**Making sustainable innovation work across your company means systematically integrating it into the innovation process. This ensures that the sustainability of products and services happens by design rather than by accident. It requires training and awareness raising.**

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**Forum for the Future’s considerable authority in sustainable development contributed to a very successful and thought-provoking Brand Imprint workshop.”**

**Santiago Gowland  
Director Global Corporate  
Responsibility, Unilever**



Working in partnership with Unilever, Forum for the Future approached key opinion-formers from media, government, NGOs and the retail sector for their insights on environmental and social issues in relation to products. These were brought together to inform a brand team on the perceived risks and opportunities from external stakeholders and were presented alongside a “spellbinding” view of the history and consequences of consumerism.



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**Forum for the Future is the sustainable development charity. We work in partnership with leading organisations in business and the public sector. Our vision is of business and communities thriving in a future that is environmentally sustainable and socially just.**

**We believe that a sustainable future can be achieved, that it is the only way business and communities will prosper, but that we need bold action now to make it happen.**

**We play our part by inspiring and challenging organisations with positive visions of a sustainable future; finding innovative, practical ways to help realise those visions; training leaders to bring about change; and sharing success through our communications.**

**[www.forumforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk)**



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