

Travalyst

Moving Beyond Targets: Climate Action in Travel

Solutions House, New York City

Summary | September 2026

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Event overview

Convened by Travalyst, sponsored by Travalyst Coalition partner Booking Holdings, and hosted at Solutions House in New York City, this expert-led session explored how targets, standards and expectations are evolving—and what that means in practice. The event brought together industry peers and sustainability experts for a roundtable discussion to share expertise and challenge assumptions in a constructive, pre-competitive setting.

Together, participants, moderated by Chief Solutionist and Co-Founder of Futerra, Solitaire Townsend, considered what is realistically possible beyond existing targets and how the sector can translate ambition into credible, collective action.

> *Even if we manage to hit all our goals as individual companies, we either reach net zero and achieve climate solutions together, or we don't at all. This is a team sport.*
>
> Solitaire Townsend, Chief Solutionist and Co-Founder, Futerra



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Key discussion themes

→ Limitations of net zero and current frameworks

The group discussed whether current target frameworks are still fit for purpose. It was noted that whilst reported emissions are an important foundation, they fail to capture the most material climate impacts and risks, such as accommodation resilience or the health of a destination's ecosystem.

The value of net zero targets when accounted for in isolation was also debated. Participants shared that net zero targets can lead to high impact actions being disincentivised because they don't fit neatly on an official balance sheet. Experts noted that difficulties in Scope 3 accounting have led to a 'ready-aim-fire' public target setting, without clear, actionable pathways towards achieving those targets.

→ Expanded frameworks and Spheres of Influence

Speakers introduced other approaches that build on and complement current models, including 'Spheres of Influence', which aims to recognise a business' impact beyond its inventory, and to focus instead on its influence-based climate action. The three spheres were outlined as: Products and Services (Sphere A), Climate System Investments (Sphere B) and Policy and Public Engagement (Sphere C).

A proposal of a two-tiered system was also put forward. It was suggested that companies could maintain operational inventory-based targets for direct accountability, in addition to establishing separate targets for companies to contribute to global mitigation, and advance a more systems-level approach.

→ Two impact pathways: mitigation and adaptation

Mitigation: central to this part of the discussion was the question of 'how to accelerate and support existing efforts to decarbonise travel?' Examples of opportunities included supporting accommodation partners to adopt low-carbon solutions, and providing transparent, low-carbon options for travellers at the point of booking.

Adaptation: Here, the key question posed to the room was 'how can we build resilience as an industry, and help destinations and accommodation partners identify and adapt to climate risks?' Examples included protecting physical assets, tourism infrastructure, and communities against the impacts of climate change - wildfires, flooding, heat stress, and water insecurity. Discussions also covered traveller safety and how to ensure that travellers have the right information at the right time to make informed decisions about their trip.

Key insights

→ **Targets are the spark, not the end of the road**
Net zero targets are important. They act as effective tools for internal business buy-in, budget allocation, and baseline accountability. But they should serve as anchor points rather than the sole driver of corporate sustainability.

→ **Systemic collaboration that complements individual goals**
Climate action in travel is a team sport. Individual corporate net zero status is meaningless if the broader system fails to reach its targets. Pre-competitive coalitions such as Travalyst, and shared investment structures are needed to drive real change.

→ **Shifting the narrative - travel as a force for good**

- Participants questioned whether the sector communicates enough about the fundamental benefits and positive impacts of travel. The answer to climate change cannot simply be to travel less, given the wider social and economic value associated with travel and tourism.
- Tourism may be a significant lever for both mitigation and adaptation because of its connections to businesses, destinations, infrastructure and travellers.
- Travel has distinctive opportunities to contribute to system-level change, but prioritisation remains a key question: where is the greatest urgency and where can the industry have the greatest influence?



Danielle D'Silva, Booking.com; Julie Cheetham, Travalyst; Delphine Millot, GBTA

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Key takeaways

→ **We need clarity and industry alignment**
The industry needs to agree on a framework that addresses the challenges faced by current reporting models, and that can easily be communicated to internal stakeholders.

→ **Destination-focused priorities**
Climate action and adaptation must align with the specific needs of the destinations and communities themselves (e.g. watershed protection, local infrastructure resilience). There is no one-size-fits-all, and generic corporate performance metrics won't cut it.

→ **Pre-competitive action and shared capital**
Only by working together pre-competitively as a sector can systems-level change become an achievable goal. Challenges such as scaling early-stage SAF technologies, or establishing destination-level carbon baselines, require pooled resources.



> *"It's easy to get fixated on 'this is the way things are done.' But we made it all up ourselves. And we can make it up again. We can imagine a different way, collectively, as a travel and tourism industry."*
>
> Solitaire Townsend, Chief Solutionist and Co-Founder, Futerra

Next steps

* *Evolving standards guidance:* Industry stakeholders will participate in upcoming consultations, such as SBTi 2.0 and the ISO Net Zero guidance, to incorporate multi-metric and Sphere of Influence frameworks into this work.
* *Ongoing coalition engagement and collaboration:* Travalyst, along with its partners, will continue to bring the industry together to align on key topics, such as this one, which are so important for the future resilience and adaptation of the tourism and travel industry.



Robert Höglund, Milkywire; Soojin Yoon, IHG; Angela Nagy, Green Step

Discussion participants

Airbnb, Alo Index, BCD, Booking Holdings, Booking.com, British Airways, Cornell University, Expedia Group, Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), GHG Management Institute, Green Globe, Green Step, Green Strategies, Greenview, Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), Hilton, IHG Hotels and Resorts, Milkywire, SQUAKE, Travalyst, Travel Forward, University of Chicago Law School, Visa, Visit Britain, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), WWF Climate Business Network, Wyndham Hotels.

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