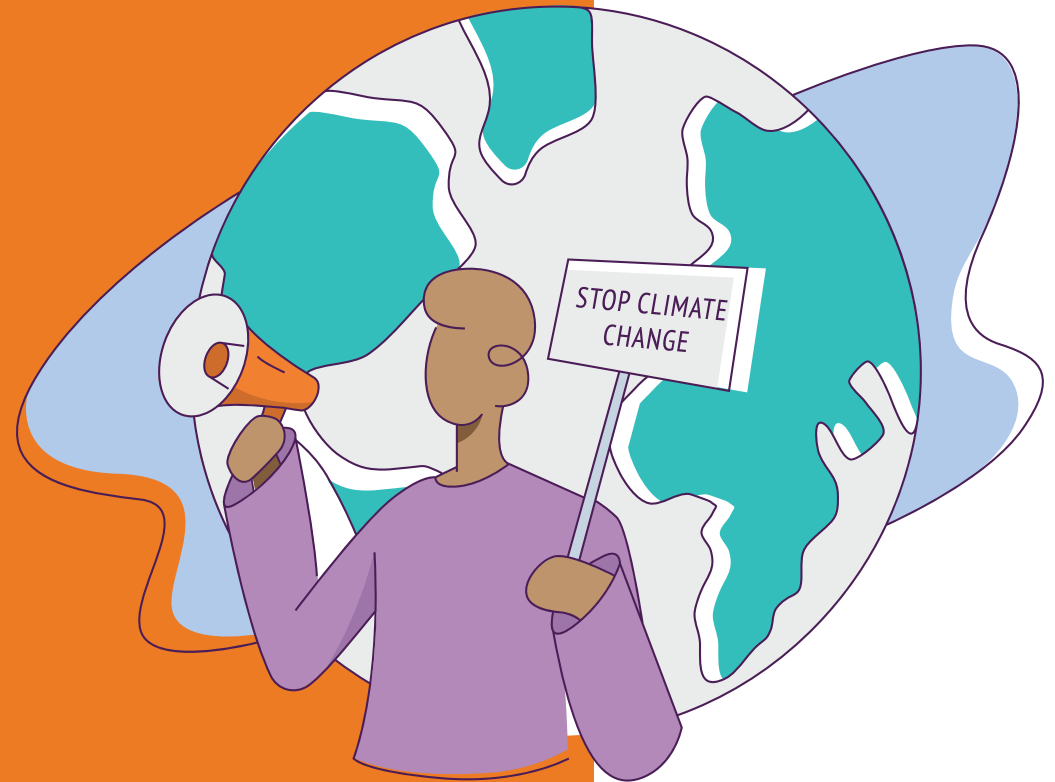




CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR SMEs



WHAT IS CLIMATE RESILIENCE?

We're seeing a strong focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with net zero* being increasingly adopted by governments and organisations worldwide. But even if we reduced emissions to zero tomorrow, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases would remain in the atmosphere for many years, and we'd still witness a changing climate over the coming decades. While reductions in carbon emissions are important, it's become crucial to be able to adapt to the changes already happening and that are predicted in the future, to keep your business resilient.

** net zero emissions are achieved when the amount of greenhouse gases emitted to the atmosphere is balanced by the amount absorbed or removed by sinks, such as forests, oceans, peatlands or 'carbon capture' technology.*

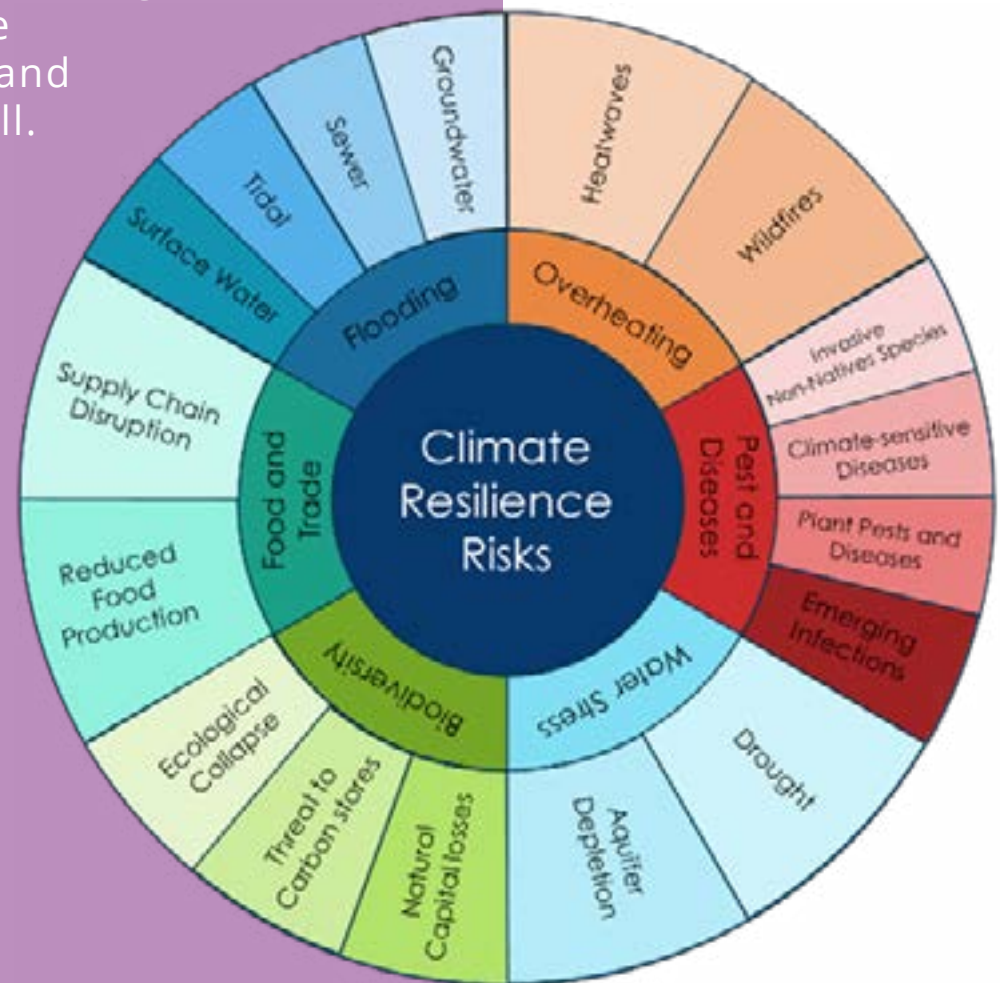


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THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

We're already seeing some impacts: from 1990 to 2020 the average temperature was 0.9°C higher compared to the period 1960 to 1990. In the future it's predicted that summers in the UK will be hotter and drier, with increased periods of heatwave and drought, and peak temperatures up to 5°C hotter than they are currently. Alongside this, winters will be warmer and wetter, with a higher likelihood of extreme rainfall.

There's a whole range of risks resulting from climate change which are multifaceted and interlinked. Here are some common risks:



In the City of London, there are six main risks:

- **Flooding** due to more frequent rainfall and sea level rise which will affect the River Thames
- **Overheating** from hotter summers, prolonged heatwaves and risk of wildfire
- **Water stress** from drought conditions and depletion of water reserves
- **Biodiversity loss** and reduced value from our natural resources
- **Food shortages** from supply chain disruption and agricultural problems
- **New and emerging pests and diseases** and non-native invasive species as a result of milder winters and warmer summers

As the governing body of the Square Mile, the City of London Corporation is responding by adopting a range of measures to make sure it's more resilient to the risks resulting from climate change. As a business, you might be vulnerable to some of these risks depending on location or the nature of your company.



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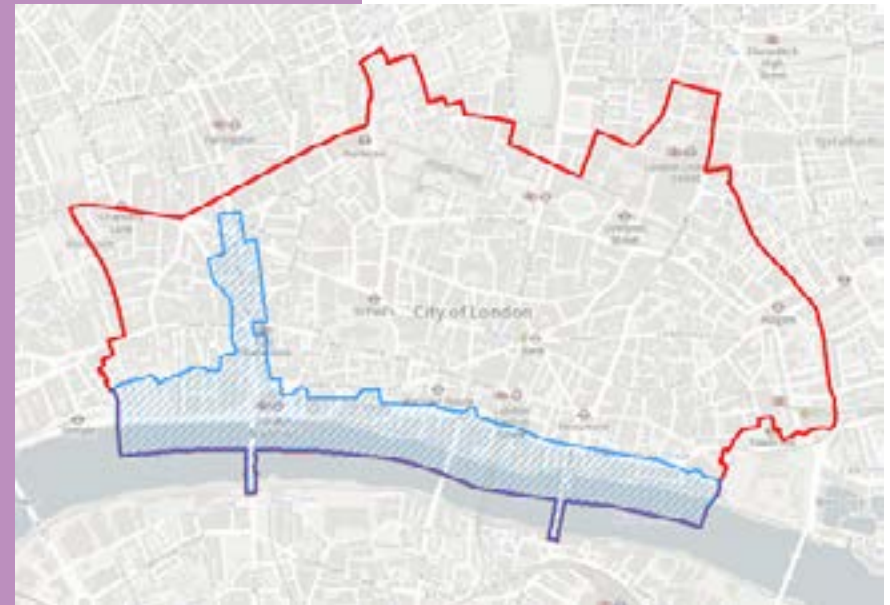
HOW CAN BUSINESSES RESPOND?

Building up your capacity to adapt to climate change early will allow your business to thrive: you'll deliver wider social, economic and environmental benefits and avoid longer term costs and losses. By preparing early for the future, you'll better absorb and recover from shocks like storms, droughts and heatwaves. Here, we're sharing some ways you can prepare for some of the more common risks of climate change.

Flooding

Check your local authority's strategic flood risk assessment to see if your building is at risk of flooding. The City Corporation has carried one out for the Square Mile and has identified that parts of this area are at increased risk of flooding from rainfall or from the River Thames (see this map of the City's flood risk area). If your business is based in the City of London, you can check to see whether it's at increased risk of flooding using their [online resources](#).

If it's at risk of flooding, there are ways you can prepare



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to mitigate damage to your building. The City Corporation has guides for [building owners](#) and [businesses](#) on preparing for flooding. Some areas they suggest looking at are:

- Is there sensitive infrastructure or storage in the basement? Can you move it?
- Can you raise your ground floor above the flood level?
- Are low level floor and wall materials resistant to flooding?
- Can you raise items such as plug sockets to higher levels?

Are you submitting a planning application in the City flood risk area? The City Corporation has produced a [planning advice note](#) to help businesses make a flood emergency plan. Check to see if your local authority offers something similar.

Warming and droughts

In the future, we can expect hot weather in the summer to last longer - this can increase heat stress but there are measures you can take. External shading or shutters can reduce 'solar gain' – where buildings become warmer thanks to heat from the sun – and make indoor environments more comfortable. This also means you won't need to use artificial cooling so often. If you're in a new development, solar control glazing could also help to manage the risk of overheating indoors. This will help you avoid equipment



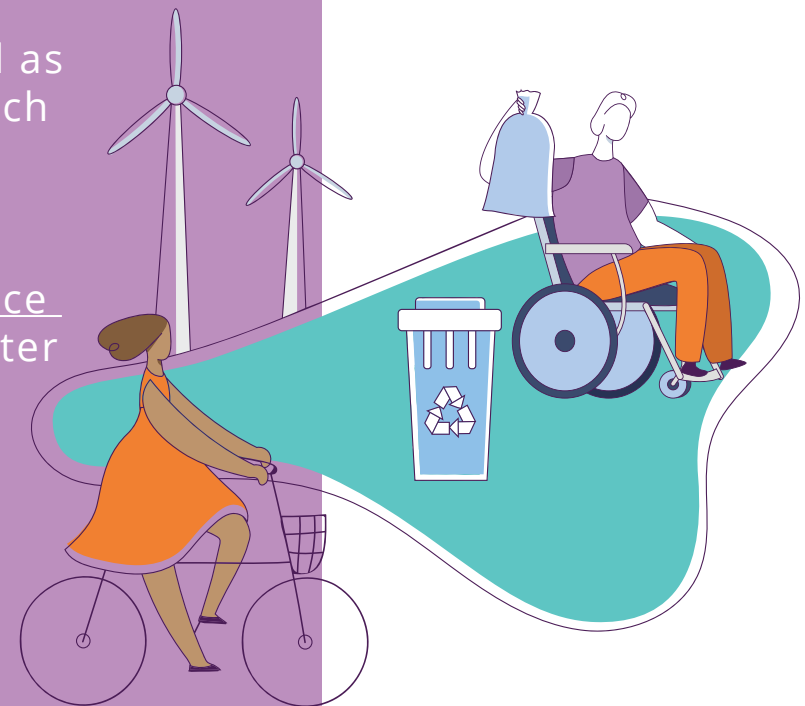
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damage and heat related illnesses for employees.

Many areas, including the Square Mile, suffer from the 'urban heat island' effect where temperatures are higher than in the surrounding countryside. This is because of heat radiating from paving and buildings. Some urban greening strategies can help to mitigate this:

- Street trees can increase canopy cover and provide shading
- Incorporating hardy species in your planting means it'll be able to withstand hotter and drier summers, but also cope with heavy rainfall and storms in the future
- Structures like pergolas are cost-effective ways to increase green cover with standalone planters and raised beds, without the need for ground works
- Green roofs and walls can support biodiversity as well as reduce the speed of rainfall running off buildings, which can mitigate flood risk in periods of heavy rainfall

More frequent drought periods will mean water efficiency becomes increasingly important. Thames Water gives [advice to businesses](#) on low- and no-cost measures to reduce water consumption.



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Other

Unpredictable weather patterns mean food prices fluctuate, especially imports. Could your business support a community or mutual aid group to improve climate preparedness in the local community?

The impacts of climate change will not just be felt in the Square Mile. Lots of your employees will be commuting, so other localised climate risks can impact your business. Think about the steps could you take to raise awareness amongst your staff to increase their own personal resilience to these impacts.



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WHAT NEXT?

1. Think about the climate risks to your business, from physical infrastructure to your employees
2. Explore what's already being done – is your local authority or building manager already taking measures?
3. Include climate risks and resilience when constructing your business case of why you need to act against climate change
4. Include climate resilience initiatives in your net zero action plans. This'll help future proof your business and show your stakeholders that you're prepared for climate risks



Climate for SMEs: 4 Steps to Action is funded by the City of London Corporation in support of its Climate Action Strategy targets for a net zero and resilient Square Mile



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