



**The Law Society of England and Wales**  
Climate change resolution

*Noting* that in 2016 the United Kingdom ratified the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to hold the increase in global warming to “well below 2°C”, and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;

*Mindful* that the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has confirmed in its 2021 Sixth Assessment Report that “unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach”;

*Acknowledging* the essential role of the legal profession in strengthening and upholding the rule of law, human rights and access to justice which are vital for society as a whole, including for advancing efforts which mitigate the climate crisis and strengthen climate justice;

*Acknowledging* that solicitors have played a crucial role historically in fundamental positive societal changes and can lead in mitigating the climate crisis to avert its worst effects, including by supporting their clients and (for in-house solicitors) their employers in doing so; and

*Noting* the International Bar Association’s Climate Crisis Statement made on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2020:

The Law Society of England and Wales:

1. Resolves to develop plans and take rapid action, in a manner which is consistent with restricting global warming to 1.5°C, by adopting science-based targets.
2. Resolves to:
  - (a) **support** solicitors to be fully informed on how they might act to mitigate the climate crisis;
  - (b) **provide** guidance to solicitors on how, when approaching any matter arising in the course of legal practice, to take into account the likely impact of that matter upon the climate crisis in a way which is compatible with their professional duties and the administration of justice;
  - (c) **develop**, disseminate and publicise educational tools and resources to support solicitors to incorporate into their daily practice advice on the impacts of climate change, and prepare for the likely impacts of climate change upon their daily practice in line with paragraphs 3 and 4 below;
  - (d) **engage** with current and future climate change-related legislative, regulatory and policy reform so far as it impacts on the practice of law, access to justice and the rule of law;
  - (e) **influence** the regime governing legal training and education on issues pertaining to climate change;
  - (f) **collaborate** actively with others for the greatest impact in addressing the climate crisis, including clients, regulators, bar associations, other professional bodies and legal networks focused on ameliorating the climate crisis; and
  - (g) **report** on the steps taken to meet these commitments and the outcomes of such steps and share its learning with the solicitors’ profession.

3. Urges solicitors, always in a way which is compatible with their professional duties and the administration of justice, to engage in climate conscious legal practice by:
  - (a) **continuing** legal education on matters pertaining to climate change, in recognition of the pervasive impact of climate change on society and legal practice;
  - (b) **approaching** any matter arising in the course of legal practice with regard to the likely impact of that matter upon the climate crisis;
  - (c) **providing** (whether themselves or through others) competent advice to their clients on (i) how they can achieve their objectives in ways which mitigate the effects of the climate crisis and promote adaptation to climate change; and (ii) the potential legal risks and liabilities that may arise from action or inaction that negatively contributes to the climate crisis; and
  - (d) **advising** clients, where applicable, about the benefits of disclosure of climate-related risks and opportunities related to their entire business operation (including supply chains) when reporting to regulators, investors, and stakeholders and on the assessment, monitoring, management, mitigation and reporting on such risks.
  
4. Urges law firms and organisations that support the legal industry to operate in a way which restricts the increase in global warming to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to above 1.5°C pre-industrial levels by:
  - (a) **adopting** science-based targets to reduce the direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions associated with daily legal practice;
  - (b) **adopting** practical measures to reduce the environmental impact of their business and policies which mitigate their contribution to the climate crisis through the provision of legal services; and
  - (c) **reporting** publicly on the steps taken to meet these commitments and the outcomes of such steps.
  
5. Encourages solicitors, law firms and organisations that support the legal industry to take a holistic and proactive approach to mitigating the climate crisis and promoting climate change adaptation by taking action which includes:
  - (a) **developing** well-supported career paths for lawyers who wish to transition into distinct disciplines related to climate change or enhance their practice area by focusing on ways in which that practice can advance net-zero targets, such as clean energy, green real estate, ESG, sustainable finance law and similar climate related aspects;
  - (b) **engaging** in pro bono activities which support this objective;
  - (c) **engaging** in climate change dispute resolution on a basis which ensures affordable access to justice for those negatively affected by the climate crisis, considering the clients' resources; and
  - (d) **engaging** with current and future legislative and policymaking efforts to mitigate the climate crisis and protect the human rights of those most affected by it and **promoting** the development and application of legal rules, transparency requirements and policies in a manner that is consistent with climate change mitigation and the climate commitments under international treaties and domestic law.