INTRODUCTORY BRIEFING

Business Plan Weakness Diagnostic

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Introductory briefing for Strategy Directors and Chief Sustainability Officers

The issue the diagnostic is designed to address

The Business Plan Weakness Diagnostic helps leadership teams find where the business plan rests on assumptions that no longer hold, and what needs to change in planning, governance and decision-making as a result.

Most organisations have targets, transition plans, risk registers and sustainability programmes underway. The harder question is whether that work is changing the decisions that shape the business plan itself.

For Strategy Directors and Chief Sustainability Officers, this is where the conversation becomes practical. Every plan carries assumptions about cost, growth, capital and risk. Climate, energy, water, nature, regulation, supply disruption and resource constraints are now testing some of those assumptions directly, in three ways: exposure, where the plan has never been tested against a condition it now faces; mispricing, where costs or risks are understated in the investment case; and missed advantage, where value is left on the table because assumptions have not been updated.

When these pressures sit outside the planning and decision system, decision quality suffers. Risks are underweighted. Investment cases miss material exposures. Transition plans become disconnected from ownership, budget and delivery. Trade-offs are resolved late, informally, or in the wrong forums.

The point is not to ask whether climate work exists. The point is to test whether the business plan itself still holds up, and where the weaknesses in it sit.

What the diagnostic does

The Business Plan Weakness Diagnostic is a structured, evidence-led review of planning and decision quality. It uses climate, energy, water and resource pressure as the lens, and helps leadership teams see where those pressures are creating material weaknesses in the business plan, and what that means for the way decisions and plans are made.

It is not a broad ESG maturity assessment, a climate scenario model or a long list of generic recommendations. Its purpose is more specific: to identify where current planning, governance, investment and delivery systems are exposed, and to specify the practical improvements most likely to strengthen decision-making.

The practical questions it helps answer

- Are the assumptions behind the strategy still reliable, given changing climate, energy, water, regulation and resource conditions?
- Do investment cases price carbon cost, energy exposure, resilience requirements and transition risk where it is material?
- Are business plans, transition plans and budgets reconciled early enough for delivery to be credible?
- Do supply-chain, sourcing and operating model decisions reflect physical risk, Scope 3 pressure and external dependencies?
- Are trade-offs between growth, cost, carbon, resilience and delivery capacity governed deliberately, with clear decision rights?
- Is the data available at the right decision point, in the right form, for the right leader?

What this looks like in practice

Illustrative examples of the kind of gap the diagnostic finds. Not disclosed client work — the pattern is real, the detail is not.

- **Exposure —** An investment case assumes stable energy costs but has never been tested against carbon price, grid constraint or resilience exposure.
- **Exposure —** A growth plan depends on a customer segment whose requirements are shifting faster than the commercial strategy recognises.
- **Mispricing —** A procurement strategy optimises for cost and quietly increases exposure to supplier concentration, climate disruption or regulatory change.
- **Mispricing —** A site expansion looks attractive on current assumptions but carries water, heat, insurance, logistics or infrastructure risk the investment case never priced in.
- **Exposure —** A sustainability commitment exists on paper but isn't reflected in capex, portfolio choices or performance governance, so no one is accountable for delivering it.
- **Missed advantage —** A competitor moves first on a resilience or efficiency investment this business could have made on the same evidence, a year earlier and at lower cost.

How it works

The diagnostic is designed to be focused, evidence-based and practical. It moves from broad concern to clear priorities, then into the specific planning, governance and decision-making changes that would help the organisation respond. The work itself is contained: four to six weeks, covering document review, a small number of senior interviews and one prioritisation session. Your team owns the decisions throughout.

Phase	What happens
1. Diagnose	We identify where climate and natural-resource pressures may be exposing weaknesses in the business plan. This includes assumptions, investment choices, governance forums, delivery routines and the data used to make decisions. The Business Plan Weakness Map frames where to look; document review and senior interviews confirm what is actually there.
2. Prioritise	We test which issues are real, evidenced and material, using the Diagnostic Workbook to structure the evidence. Findings are assessed by business implication, decision-system weakness, timing and confidence, not reduced to a single score. The focus is on the few issues most likely to affect performance, resilience, capital allocation, transition credibility or strategic choice.
3. Advise	We translate priority findings into practical changes to the way the organisation plans, decides and delivers. The Capabilities Model identifies which root cause sits behind each weakness; the recommendation itself comes from applying that to your actual strategy, operating model and governance, not from the model alone. This may include changes to planning assumptions, investment criteria, budget processes, governance forums, decision rights, management reporting, ownership, data flows or delivery routines.

Phase	What happens
4. Facilitate	We agree the first actions needed to move from diagnosis to progress, drawing on the Ways-of-Working Intervention Library to select practical, sequenced changes. Owners, sequencing and the first 90-day actions are agreed with your team directly, in a facilitated session, not handed down. Where specialist analysis is required, this is identified clearly.

Behind the diagnostic

The diagnostic draws on four linked bodies of work: a Business Plan Weakness Map, a Diagnostic Workbook, a Capabilities Model and a Ways-of-Working Intervention Library. Together they provide structure for identifying business-plan gaps, testing evidence and materiality, diagnosing capability weaknesses and translating findings into practical change.

The frameworks provide the discipline: they make sure nothing material gets missed. But no framework decides what matters most. That is a judgement call, tested against thirty years of watching how business plans succeed or fail in delivery. The question behind every finding is the same one: is this an assumption I'd be comfortable taking to the board without testing it further?

What it covers

Scope is agreed at the start, so the work can focus on the areas most likely to matter: the full enterprise, a business unit, a planning cycle, a capital programme or a set of material decisions.

Domain	What it tests
Strategic assumptions and business exposure	Whether climate, energy, water, regulation, resource constraints and external dependencies are reflected in the assumptions behind the strategy.
Planning and financial integration	Whether those pressures are built into business planning, financial planning, scenarios, budgets and performance forecasts.
Capital allocation and investment decisions	Whether investment cases price carbon, energy, resilience, asset exposure, resource constraints and transition opportunities properly.
Commercial and operating model choices	Whether market, product, pricing, procurement, supply-chain and operating model choices are tested where climate-related pressures are material.
Governance, decision rights and trade-offs	Whether the right forums, guardrails, escalation routes and accountabilities exist to make difficult trade-offs deliberately.
Transition plan credibility and delivery readiness	Whether the transition plan is funded, owned, sequenced, operationally credible and integrated into business delivery.
Data, evidence and management information	Whether climate-related data is good enough to support management decisions, not just external reporting.
Capability, ownership and adoption conditions	Whether leadership, incentives, controls, capability, ownership and ways of working are strong enough for the organisation to act on the findings.

What leadership teams receive

The output is a concise executive report designed for senior leadership or board-level discussion. It is not a climate risk register or a sustainability programme review. It is a business-facing view of the gaps that matter most, the confidence level behind each finding, and the practical changes most likely to make the greatest difference.

- An executive diagnosis of the 5 to 7 most important findings, written in business language.
- A pressure-point heatmap showing where the organisation is exposed across the diagnostic domains.
- An implications narrative explaining financial, operational, strategic, governance or credibility consequences if priority weaknesses are not addressed.
- Fix-first recommendations: the 2 to 3 practical interventions likely to make the greatest difference where evidence is sufficient. For less evidenced areas, a clear hypothesis and recommended next step for further investigation.
- A recommended 90-day action plan, co-designed with the people who will own it, and a roadmap to more integrated planning, governance and delivery where needed.

When the diagnostic is most useful

The diagnostic is most useful when a plan carries assumptions leaders are no longer fully confident in, and it is not yet clear whether climate, energy, water, regulation or resource pressures are being reflected in the numbers. It is particularly relevant when:

- You're heading into a strategy refresh or annual planning cycle.
- A major capital or investment decision is coming up.
- Investment cases don't consistently price carbon, resilience, regulation or resource constraints.
- You're reviewing supply chain exposure.
- Climate commitments exist, but you're not sure they're reaching investment or planning decisions.
- A transition plan exists, but ownership, funding or sequencing are unclear.
- The Board has raised a concern about resilience.
- You suspect strategy, finance and sustainability teams are working from different assumptions about where the business is heading.

A practical next step

The diagnostic does not assume the answer is a major transformation programme. In many cases, the first move is targeted: changing a decision gate, improving an investment template, clarifying ownership of a governance forum, adding a sensitivity test to a planning assumption, or connecting a transition commitment to the annual budget cycle.

The aim is to identify the few changes most likely to improve decisions, reduce avoidable risk, protect resilience and strengthen the credibility of the organisation's plans.

If this sounds like where your organisation sits, the next step is a short conversation, not a proposal.