Enterprise brief

Successful Corporate Approaches to Climate Policy Engagement

Business engagement in policy is important:

- **~70** of the world's 100 largest economic entities are companies, not countries.[1]
- Businesses account for roughly **90%** of political lobbying at the US federal level.[2]

Engaging on climate policy has historically been dominated by industries opposed to the transition:

- **$154M** was spent by US oil & gas federal lobbying in 2024 - the highest since 2009.[3]
- In the EU, the largest seven oil and gas majors spend **€64M** annually, holding 1,000+ meetings with European officials.[4]

But positive engagement on climate policy is growing

- The proportion of Europe's **200** largest companies advocating for climate policy aligned with scientifically recommended 1.5°C pathways grew from **3% to 23%** between 2019 – 2023.[5]

Sources[1,2,3,4,5]

Summary

This brief provides strong evidence that responsible climate policy engagement remains an important feature of corporate strategy, underpinned by a range of business motivations. Based on 26 interviews conducted with representatives from major companies, business associations, and NGOs, alongside evidence synthesised from academic and practitioner literature, we make three main points.

First, we show that companies are continuing to engage with climate policy for business-driven reasons including strengthening competitive advantage, enabling the delivery of transition plans, and maintaining corporate credibility.

Second, we present climate policy engagement approaches that are being effectively used by the world's leading companies, setting out concrete examples.

Third, we outline the factors our interviewees considered critical to success in the current political environment, regardless of the approach taken.

This brief draws together existing guidance and further resources to offer a relevant and practical foundation for companies seeking to engage effectively on policy in a complex and politically challenging environment.

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Responsible climate policy engagement remains an important, business-driven feature of corporate strategy

The number of companies setting net zero targets is growing year on year: by the end of 2025, 9,764 companies had validated science-based targets under the Science Based Targets Initiative, and the total number of validated net zero targets had risen by 61% throughout the year.[6] To achieve these targets, companies are dependent on a variety of enabling factors - for example on decarbonised transport systems and reliable availability of renewable energy. To achieve these enabling conditions and manage policy-related transition risks, leading companies are increasingly taking a proactive role to engage with governments, policymakers, and regulators.[7] Done constructively, this engagement can result in policies that benefit businesses and society.[8] Accordingly, climate policy engagement is now accepted best practice amongst the organisations that shape the corporate climate action landscape, with increasingly mature guidance available to companies in their efforts.[9]

In recent years, the corporate sustainability landscape has been shaken by geopolitical developments such as the US rollback of climate policies[10] and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[11] The collapse of coalitions like the UN-backed Net Zero Bankers Alliance and others,[12] and political criticism of pro-climate companies in the US,[13] has reshaped the environment in which companies are operating – forcing us to examine whether best practice and established trends still hold true.

To understand how changing political rhetoric and conditions are influencing corporate climate policy engagement, we conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with representatives from companies, business associations, and NGOs, and synthesised evidence from academic research and practitioner literature. This brief presents our findings.

First, we find that companies are continuing in their efforts to engage on climate policy. We lay out the stated motivations for this, with a variety of business-driven reasons emerging which motivate action despite changing public narratives. Second, we present the approaches that are being effectively used by leading companies. These are discussed, and supported by publicly available case studies, to provide a set of options that can be adopted and adapted by sustainability and policy practitioners to inform their approaches. Finally, we outline the factors our interviewees considered critical to success in the current political environment, regardless of the approach taken.

Motivations for corporate climate policy engagement amid shifting geopolitical landscapes

To understand how companies are approaching their policy engagement on climate amid shifting geopolitical landscapes, we interviewed representatives from 15 multinational companies and 11 adjacent organisations (NGOs and business organisations). Interviewees came from different sectors (including software, technology, energy, finance, heavy industry, logistics, and consumer goods) as well as geographies (including Europe, North America, and Oceania). The companies were chosen because of their active role in climate policy engagement, identified through their CDP disclosures,[14] and the NGOs and business organisations for their prominence within the ecosystem of climate guidance, standards, and tracking initiatives.[15]

All interviewees emphasised that the political environment in key regions had presented significant challenges in recent years. However, rather than causing companies to abandon their efforts, it is resulting in a shift in tactics - with an emphasis on engaging "behind the scenes"[16] and adjusting communication strategies. The underlying motivations to engage on climate policy remain strong and aligned with the reasons highlighted by NGOs and business organisations.[17]

Motivation 1: Climate policy engagement strengthens competitive advantage and allows capture of transition opportunities.

The link between companies having effective transition plans and realising commercial value, for example through cost savings, is increasingly well established.[18] [19] Interviewees extended this to state that engaging on climate policy is an active driver of commercial value in their contexts. Firstly, it helps create a "level playing field"[20], ensuring that first-mover companies are not paying a "green premium"[21] for their decarbonisation activities. More substantially, proactive engagement was widely seen to provide opportunities for new value creation and access to emerging markets, which would not be identified as effectively without it. This supports literature that shows how climate policy engagement is used, not just to create consistent rules, but to strategically gain advantage.[22]

Motivation 2: Climate policy engagement enables delivery of transition plans.

Corporate transition plans depend on external conditions beyond the direct control of individual firms.[23] For example, companies rely on enabling public policy, supporting infrastructure, and technological development to achieve their objectives. Policy engagement therefore becomes a practical mechanism through which firms can help address external dependencies and improve the feasibility of their transition strategies.[24]

13 of the 15 company representatives interviewed described efforts to map their policy dependencies and identified these efforts as an important motivation for continued engagement in climate policy, although the maturity of such approaches varied significantly across companies.

> *"Leading companies are really starting to understand and identify those policy dependencies. It's no longer the high-level climate target... what they're most interested in is... really specific issues which are massively important for their carbon inventories and where they need policy and regulation to change."* [25]

Motivation 3: Climate policy engagement is an increasingly accepted part of what it means to take credible corporate climate action.

Interviewees described climate policy engagement as having become an increasingly expected and scrutinised part of demonstrating that their climate action was credible. As net zero commitments mature, interviewees emphasised that they face scrutiny from tracking initiatives and investors over whether their wider activities, including direct lobbying and trade association activity, align with their stated climate goals. Several interviewees highlighted investor expectations, in particular, as reinforcing the need for companies to demonstrate this consistency.

This reflects a broader shift in external expectations. More than three-quarters of major standards and voluntary frameworks governing non-state actor net zero pathways now include recommendations or expectations relating to responsible policy engagement and lobbying alignment,[26] while investor scrutiny is increasingly translating into changes in corporate governance around trade associations and policy positions.[27] Interviewees therefore saw climate policy engagement not as a separate sustainability activity, but as increasingly integral to demonstrating credible net zero alignment.

Effective approaches used for corporate climate policy engagement

Three main approaches guiding a company's policy engagement strategy emerged from interviews. These are laid out in Table 1 and discussed in turn.

Table 1: A Toolbox of Approaches

Approach	Description	When this works
Direct Policy Engagement	Direct engagement with policymakers	Clear policy window Aligned with business interest Mapped to climate policy dependencies Long-standing relationships fostered
Influencing and Engaging through Trade Associations	Engaging with and shaping trade association positions	Co-ordinated with other companies and, if appropriate, investors Companies have an active voice in their trade associations Constructive challenge of misaligned policy positions
Coalition Forming	Partnering with aligned organisations on policy priorities	Companies united by priority and diverse by type Strategic partnerships with NGOs or other third parties In line with competition law guidance

Source: Authors

Critically, companies advocated for an overall strategy which combines multiple tactics, including through direct policy engagement, influencing and engaging through trade associations, and coalition forming. Adopting these approaches in parallel[28] was felt to enable detailed shaping of policy priorities and considerations through direct, private engagement, whilst building broader support and amplifying messages through associations and coalitions. As such, companies should seek to adopt a suite of options, tailoring the focus depending on the policy environment and context.

Example: Case study for using a holistic approach

Maersk combine direct engagement, trade association influence, and coalition building[29]

Maersk, the Danish shipping and logistics company, demonstrate how the three approaches outlined in this report can be used in combination to reinforce a company's policy objectives in a holistic strategy. These are laid out in its annual report.[30] It engages **directly** with national governments and the IMO to advocate for stronger shipping regulation and a level playing field, focusing on combining sustained engagement from high-level figures whilst remaining responsive to emerging policy windows. It uses its influence within **trade associations**, including prioritising engagement with the World Shipping Council where it sees good alignment with its climate objectives; and plays a leading role in **coalitions**, including the Getting to Zero Coalition[31] and First Movers Coalition,[32] to build wider industry support and demand for the transition. Together, these approaches allow Maersk to combine its individual influence and technical expertise with broader collective advocacy to ensure that global policy aligns with commercial objectives.[33]

The approaches highlighted by interviewed companies align with the guidance provided by NGOs and standards bodies,[34] though with increased caution expressed by interviewees for any public forms of communication. This provides evidence that the guidance continues to be relevant amid geopolitical shifts.

Further Resource

We Mean Business Coalition has developed a living resource library of corporate engagement tools that can help companies align their climate ambitions with their policy engagement in practice.[35]

Approach #1: Direct Policy Engagement

What is it?

Direct policy engagement means that the organisation engages with policymakers through its own channels and in its own name. This can take multiple forms: from developing long-term relationships to ad-hoc meetings on specific issues to responding to open consultations or established policy engagement processes.

Why is it seen as valuable?

Direct engagement requires greater organisational capacity than relying upon trade associations or indirect measures but was seen as valuable for its ability to foster in-depth exchange and long-term trust between companies and decisionmakers. Therefore, it is perceived to enable representation of precise and tailored company interests, as opposed to a potentially watered-down version obtained through relying on secondary representation.

How are companies doing it?

A proactive, rather than a reactive, approach is preferred by the companies in our sample set. Specifically, direct meetings and written communications are considered more effective than formal working groups and consultations because they allow organisations to influence the agenda rather than react to it.

To enable direct engagement, company representatives stressed the importance of increasing their policy engagement expertise across the board. For example, several cited the significant benefits they had seen from recruiting individuals with government or policy experience, arguing that many companies lack in-house policy engagement capabilities, while organisations opposing climate policy are perceived to have greater access to dedicated lobbying and communications professionals. Company representatives highlighted that they are responding by investing in upskilling and expanding their internal capacity to enable more effective direct engagement.

Table 2: Corporate direct policy engagement techniques as reported to CDP in 2025

All companies (% of all occurrences)	**Sub-set of interviewed companies (n=15) (% of all occurrences in sub-set)**
Participation in working groups organized by policy makers = 16.7%	Ad-hoc meetings = 23.0%
Consultation responses = 16.5%	Submitting written proposals/inquiries = 20.1%
Engaging in existing public forum discussions = 14.8%	Engaging in existing public forum discussions = 19.0%

Source[36]

How can impact be maximised?

To maximise impact, initiating direct engagement efforts early in the policy process, before legislation is being drafted, was seen by interviewees as critical. This provides the opportunity to shape effective policies that reflect a company's realities and priorities – for example, highlighting critical dependencies in an organisation's transition plan. This aligns with academic research which finds that early engagement in policymaking can provide first-mover advantages, including greater access and influence over agenda-setting.[37]

> *"The earlier you are there, the better... the ideas are not yet crystallised. You are able to put forward a lot of your ideas... The more the policy development takes place, the more things get put down, boundaries established. So, the flexibility goes down and... there's already polarised opinions."* [38]

Notably, several interviewees discussed examples of where companies had held back from supporting a particular climate policy – not because they objected to the policy outcome, but because they objected to an unintended consequence in the policy design that failed to account for their specific context. Starting early and engaging directly with policymakers to work backwards from an intended common outcome or sectoral plan was considered beneficial to overcome this – resulting in a better policy for the public and private sector.[39]

Example: **Case for Approach #1: Direct Policy Engagement**

SSE, the UK-based energy company, takes a proactive approach to engaging with UK and Irish governments and regulators[40]

SSE plc is a UK-based energy company that demonstrates extensive and successful direct policy engagement, using its name and convening power to drive effective policies for the UK and Ireland's energy transition.

During 2024/25, SSE actively engaged with governments, regulators and policymakers in the UK and Ireland. This included proactive direct engagements with government, including senior-level participation in policy fora, like the UK Government's Net Zero Council, and through responsive engagements, including consultation responses and evidence submissions. SSE also maintained regular engagement with regulators and convened discussions involving government and industry stakeholders to support the energy transition.[41]

The UK Government's Clean Power 2030 mission and Action Plan,[42] which included emphasis on unlocking approximately £40 billion per year of clean-energy investment, was broadly consistent with policy positions that SSE had advocated for. Similarly, the government's later decision to retain a single national electricity market and reject zonal pricing[43] aligned with SSE's publicly stated position.[44]

While it is not possible to attribute policy outcomes to any single company, SSE's approach illustrates how companies can engage directly to shape policy debates according to their priorities. The importance of successful industry engagement throughout the process of publishing the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan is emphasised in the parliamentary record,[45] showing how responsible engagement on climate policy can provide benefit for both the public and private sector.

Approach #2: Influencing and Engaging through Trade Associations

What is it?

Trade associations and industry bodies engage with policy on behalf of their members, working to influence regulation and shape the wider policy environment.[46] Organisations can influence and engage with their trade associations to shape their policy priorities and strategies – both to reduce negative engagement being undertaken in their name and to actively drive positive engagement.

Why is it seen as valuable?

Trade associations were recognised as "the most powerful voices"[47] by interviewees, given the scale of their influence on policymaking across geographies and sectors.[48] Whilst this has frequently resulted in negative climate policy outcomes and obstructionism[49] enabled by the relative "veil of anonymity"[50] which indirect engagement allows, interviewees highlighted the significant opportunities they provide if responsibly incorporated into a positive climate policy engagement strategy.

Interviewees highlighted that trade association members often have different interests, levels of expertise, and degrees of influence. As a result, where member positions diverge, associations may delay, dilute, or obstruct policy progress by defaulting to a lowest-common-denominator stance.

> *"When we're working with leading companies, we're working against trade associations who are not in favour of more ambitious outcomes... Most trade associations are still pretty intransigent against climate policy because they're held back by their lowest-common-denominator members."* [51]

However, the same dynamic can work in favour of positive policy engagement. Trade associations with a strong climate position can provide collective support for ambitious climate policies, reducing the visibility and risk for individual companies advocating for them. They are also able to pool expertise, provide policymakers with sector-wide evidence, and help companies coordinate around shared policy asks.[52] As a result, influencing and engaging trade associations was seen as a critical part of any engagement strategy.

How are companies doing it?

74.8% of indirect policy engagements disclosed to CDP in 2025[53] were conducted via trade associations, showing its prevalence as an approach. However, misalignment between companies with climate targets and the policy advocacy of their trade associations is high. Despite 90% of companies reporting to CDP that their positions are consistent with their trade associations,[54] there is a much greater degree of misalignment found in practice. According to InfluenceMap, only 12% of trade associations are aligning their engagement to "science-aligned policy", as compared to 23% of the 200 European headquartered companies covered.[55]

As such, addressing trade association misalignment is now established best practice, supported by a growing range of resources designed to help organisations encourage their trade associations to align policy engagement with their climate plans. Effective strategies noted by interviewees combine engagement from within with clear escalation pathways where misalignment persists. Calling out misalignment is particularly important for companies who are also engaging directly with policymakers, ensuring that they are not inadvertently diluting their individual messages. Consistency between company engagement and their trade association engagement can reinforce and amplify a company's policy asks, increasing the likelihood of breakthroughs.[56]

Example:

Case study of Approach # 2: Companies distancing themselves from misaligned trade associations

Unilever and Nestlé break ranks with their trade association's positions,[57] drawing praise from shareholders[58]

The European Round Table on Industry (ERT) is a business advocacy group representing leaders of many multinational companies based in Europe.

In their engagement with the European Commission regarding the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D), the ERT were advocating for significant simplifications of the sustainability regulation. In this correspondence, there was a disclaimer note specifically stating that two members, Nestlé and Unilever, "consider the CSRD and CS3D to address legitimate societal concerns and promote ownership and cooperation along the value chain... In this context, they only support measures that lead to simplification, clarification, avoidance of duplication and a reduction in the overall bureaucratic burden". This noted their difference of position than that which ERT, their association, were advocating for, for example in halting the development of sectoral standards.[59]

For the leading companies seeking to drive climate policy, solving misalignment was recognised as an important first step. But success was seen to be going beyond this and becoming active participants in their trade associations and using their influence to shape positions, challenge obstructive activity, and ensure that collective advocacy reinforces rather than undermines their own objectives. Examples were given of using the association's membership as an opportunity to engage with businesses of different types, like SMEs, to help develop whole-of-economy approaches to curate policies which are effective and supported across the board.

How can impact be maximised?

It can be difficult to engage broad trade associations, and those in which an organisation does not have a particularly strong voice. Interviewees noted that maximising impact required active and continuous engagement with the association, alongside collaboration amongst members.

Interviewees highlighted that associations with diverse memberships can struggle to accurately represent the range of member positions, particularly where companies advocating for stronger climate policy do not actively participate in developing collective positions. Recent examples were cited where European trade associations appeared to overstate business support for weakening climate policy, with individual member companies subsequently distancing themselves from those positions.[60] Interviewees therefore emphasised the importance of companies continuously interrogating the positions being taken in their name and clearly signalling internally where they support stronger policy ambition.

Where an individual company has limited influence, coordinating with like-minded members was seen as particularly important. By identifying influential or "pivot" companies and building coalitions around shared positions, companies can shift the internal balance of support and enable trade associations to advocate more positively and confidently.

> *"Identify a number of key pivot companies within problematic trade associations and work with them to build a lobby to change that trade association."* [61]

Example:

Case study of Approach #2: Engaging with climate policy through trade associations

Enel working via trade associations to advocate for positive climate policies and a just energy transition[62]

Enel is a multinational energy company operating in 30 countries. It has a commitment to achieve organizational net zero by 2040[63] and is an active participant in several trade associations working to support climate policy which it outlines in its publicly available climate policy advocacy report.[64]

For example, Enel plays a leading role in Elettricità Futura, a trade association which represents over 70% of Italy's electricity market, by holding positions on its Presidency and Board and contributing to policy discussions. Elettricità Futura has actively contributed to consultations and policy discussions aiming to increase Italy's renewable and decarbonisation targets.

It states that it believes that the most effective approach if an association is not aligned with the Paris Agreement is to remain in that association with the aim of exerting influence to align the association's decisions with its strategic vision.[65] If Enel's annual assessment finds an association has low alignment with the Paris Agreement, it follows a two-stage process: first, it raises the issue within the association to encourage improvement; if misalignment persists for two consecutive years, the CEO is notified to consider actions, including potentially leaving the association. In this way, Enel works to address misalignment whilst simultaneously playing an active role where possible.

Approach #3: Coalition Forming

What is it?

Coalition forming involves companies partnering with aligned organisations around shared policy priorities, separately from their existing trade association engagement. Coalitions can range from large, established initiatives advocating for broad policy change to smaller groups formed around a specific policy objective or jurisdiction. Once formed, they can engage directly with policymakers and communicate collective positions publicly.

Why is it seen as valuable?

Interviewees saw coalitions as a way of increasing the weight and legitimacy of individual company positions. By demonstrating that a policy ask is supported by multiple organisations, coalitions can provide policymakers with evidence of wider business support, while allowing participants to pool expertise, resources and influence. Research similarly identifies coalitions as important vehicles for coordinating and amplifying corporate political voice.[66]

"We take a leading action, we try and get a bunch of other early adopters to join us in coalitions, collectively we have an impact including having a shared voice that then drives systemic change and policy change. This then raises the bar for leadership... Our voice alone isn't enough." [67]

How are companies doing it?

Interviewees described companies using a combination of large, established coalitions and smaller groups formed around specific policy objectives. "Big tent"[68] coalitions can demonstrate broad support for the overall direction of travel, while smaller, higher-ambition coalitions can focus their resources on progressing more granular policy asks. For example, a company might participate in a global initiative such as EV100[69] while also joining or establishing a country-specific coalition to address the policy barriers to electric vehicle adoption in that market (see Case Study Box).

Companies are also forming coalitions beyond the private sector. Interviewees highlighted partnerships with NGOs, academics and other organisations as a means of bringing additional expertise and credibility to a policy position, while providing a neutral space in which companies, including competitors, can coordinate around shared objectives.

Example: Case study of Approach #3: Coalition Forming

Major fleet operators form the UK Electric Fleets Coalition to promote policies to support electric vehicles[70]

In 2020, Climate Group, the climate NGO, in partnership with BT Group, the UK telecoms company, launched the UK Electric Fleets Coalition. Twenty-eight commercial fleet operators joined the coalition which advocated for policies needed to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles in the UK. This was a policy dependency that they all relied upon for achieving their transition plan and provided an opportunity for cross-sector collaboration, emphasising in policy responses that, "the largest fleets in the UK are fully committed to the EV transition recognising the associated environmental, health as well as economic benefits."[71]

Together, the coalition promoted joint policy papers, responded to policy consultations, held ministerial meetings and roundtables and engaged with the wider stakeholder community[72] in the run up to the UK government's Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate.[73]

How can impact be maximised?

Coalition composition was seen by interviewees as critical to maximising impact. Rather than bringing together only the largest or most influential companies, effective coalitions can demonstrate support across sectors, company sizes and actor types. Interviewees particularly highlighted the value of recognisable brands with existing political influence alongside "surprising collaborators"[74], whose participation can demonstrate that support for a policy extends beyond the actors policymakers might ordinarily expect.

"The most successful coalitions around policy reform... are diverse, with companies alongside NGOs and academics, it shows there's diversity of types of actors in the ecosystem that share a similar perspective... which improves credibility." [75]

Bringing together organisations with different underlying interests but a common policy objective can therefore broaden the political appeal of a proposal. This reflects research on so-called "baptist-and-bootlegger" [76] coalitions, in which actors support the same outcome for different reasons, as well as wider evidence that policy influence depends not only on corporate power but on expertise, credibility and alignment with wider interests.[77]

Note on implementation

Notably, interviewees emphasised the importance of considering the legal, reputational, and political contexts in which coalitions operate – particularly in the wake of challenging political environments. The collapse of the Net Zero Insurance Alliance provides one example of how sector-specific climate collaboration can face scrutiny and challenge.[78]

This does not mean that forming coalitions is inherently problematic, and their value continues to be recognised by practitioners. But it does highlight the importance of careful design, clear governance, and an understanding of competition law considerations. Broader, multi-sector coalitions may be more resilient in some contexts, as they can demonstrate support across a wider range of economy-wide interests and reduce the perception that coordination is serving a narrow sectoral agenda. Emerging guidance, including the UK CMA's Green Agreement Guidance, is intended to ensure that companies can pursue environmental sustainability initiatives with greater confidence, while remaining attentive to competition law requirements.[79]

Factors for Success in Engaging on Climate Policy

The three approaches outlined provide pathways in which companies are continuing to engage in climate policy. Throughout, several factors were emphasised as being critical to strategy development – regardless of the specific approach taken. These are summarised and outlined below.

> *"It's always about three things. It's power, agency and timing. So who has the power to activate the leverage point? Who has the agency to also do so? And then when's the right time to do it?"* [80]

Factor #1: Is the strategy closely tied to the **business's transition plan needs** (core decarbonisation dependencies)?

Being a trusted voice, backed up by credible action, is seen as an essential component for an effective strategy and linking policy priorities to a specific transition plan dependency is seen to be of benefit. The concept of transition plan dependencies[81] is relatively new, but there is emerging evidence that its specificity allows generation of the granular evidence base governments need to further policy.[82] Ensuring policy engagement clearly aligns with sustainability strategies is therefore of benefit.[83]

> *"Leading companies are really starting to understand and identify those policy dependencies. It's no longer the high-level climate target... what they're most interested in is like transport corridors in Kenya, or EV trucks in the port of Rotterdam, really specific issues which are massively important for their carbon inventories, but it's where they need policy and regulation to change."* [84]

Further Resource:

A practical guide on transition plan dependencies[85] exists to guide companies through the process of identifying, assessing and addressing transition plan dependencies, articulating a range of potential engagement strategies. One of these strategies is to advocate positively and collaborate with public sector actors – either individually or as part of a coalition – in line with the company's transition objectives.

Factor #2: Is the **timing** of the strategy right?

Engaging early in the policy cycle is emphasised as critical to increase the agency organisations have in shaping policy agendas. Timing strategies and priorities to opening policy windows is therefore beneficial. Interviewees also highlighted that windows of opportunity can rapidly appear, often created by crises or external shocks,[86] and being well prepared to harness critical moments in a dynamic way is of benefit.

Factor #3: Is the strategy tailored to the **political context/jurisdiction?**

Modes of corporate political engagement vary considerably across jurisdictions. For example, companies advocating for or against climate policy in the United States often rely on different tactics from those used in Europe, including in how they express public support or dissent.[87] Interviewees emphasised that understanding the dynamics of each policymaking process is essential, given the distinct nature of advocacy in different locations. Additionally, prioritising areas where the "company's voice will be more useful because of existing political or economic influence"[88] can make a strategy more effective, particularly where priorities align with interventions that may trigger wider systems change.[89]

Factor #4: Is the strategy **dynamic** and **adaptive**?

Being dynamic and adaptive to changing socioeconomic conditions is seen as essential. For example, in response to political headwinds, companies shifted their visibility, framing, and channels of engagement. Of note, is that leading companies shift their *approaches* but not their *objectives*. This differs from companies less committed to their climate action plans.[90]

Factor #5: Who is the **messenger** and what **language** are you speaking?

Successful campaigns build on trust and credibility of ongoing and well-established relationships between companies and policymakers.[91] Having board level support, a credible champion within the C-suite, and internal consistency across the organisation are seen as beneficial to effectively drive a strategy as it can "send a strong signal to policymakers.[92]"

For more public facing engagements, company's emphasised benefit in shifting emphasis towards climate risk and long-term business resilience, rather than focusing purely on climate mitigation. This reflects a wider trend amongst businesses shifting how they've changed their communications on climate action to protect against climate scepticism.[93]

Further Resource:

Chapter Zero provides resources and advice for how non-executive directors and boards can help their companies engage on climate policy.[94]

Factor #6: Is the general approach **transparent** and **well reported?**

Transparency of policy engagement activities is a key feature of several key guidance documents[95] and is the foundation of tracking initiatives, such as InfluenceMap's LobbyMap platform.[96] Well reported policy engagement was seen by interviewees to foster trust, accountability, and legitimacy, allowing stakeholders to assess whether corporate influence supports or undermines climate aligned policy outcomes. Without transparency, policy engagement strategies risk being weakened by misalignment and hidden activities, which research has shown can undermine trust and credibility and lead to accusations of greenwashing.[97] Ensuring the approach being taken is transparent and well reported aligns with emerging best practice.

Conclusion: We find that climate policy engagement is increasingly seen as a strategic business function

While the political and regulatory environment has become more contested in some jurisdictions, companies leading on climate action have not abandoned policy engagement. Instead, they are adapting their approaches, rethinking how they communicate, and becoming more targeted in how they deploy their influence.

Across our interviews and review of the literature, climate policy engagement emerged not as a peripheral sustainability activity, but as an increasingly strategic business function. Companies continue to engage because they recognise that achieving their climate commitments depends on external enabling conditions, including supportive policy frameworks, infrastructure investment, market incentives, and clear long-term regulatory signals. Climate policy engagement is therefore increasingly viewed as a mechanism for delivering transition plans, managing risk, creating competitive advantage, and maintaining credibility with investors, customers, employees, and other stakeholders.

The evidence also suggests that there is no single route to effective engagement. Leading companies use a combination of direct engagement with policymakers, influence through trade associations, and coalition-building with businesses, investors, NGOs, and others. Each approach offers distinct advantages and is most effective under different circumstances. What matters most is not the specific mechanism chosen, but whether the engagement is aligned with business strategy, focused on clear policy priorities, informed by robust evidence, and adapted to the political context in which it is being pursued.

At the same time, the growing influence of trade associations, coalitions, and behind-the-scenes engagement increases the importance of transparency, accountability, and alignment. As expectations from investors, standard setters, and civil society continue to evolve, companies will increasingly be judged not only by the climate targets they set, but also by whether their political influence helps enable or hinder the policies needed to achieve them.

Ultimately, responsible climate policy engagement remains an important component of credible corporate climate leadership. In a period of political uncertainty, the challenge for companies is not whether to engage, but how to engage effectively. Those organisations that can combine clear strategic objectives with trusted relationships, strong evidence, adaptive approaches, and transparent governance are likely to be best positioned to help shape the policy environments needed for both business success and the net zero transition.

Appendix

Table 3: Interviewees

Number	Category	Type
I-1	Corporate	Technology Firm
I-2	Corporate	Finance Firm
I-3	Corporate	Energy Firm
I-4	Corporate	Technology Firm
I-5	Corporate	Finance Firm
I-6	Expert	Partnership Organisation
I-7	Corporate	Energy Firm
I-8	Corporate	Finance Firm
I-9	Corporate	Consumer Goods Firm
I-10	Expert	Business Policy Organisation
I-11	Corporate	Telecoms Firm
I-12	Expert	Advocacy Organisation
I-13	Corporate	Technology Firm
I-14	Corporate	Consumer Goods Firm
I-15	Corporate	Logistics Firm
I-16	Expert	Climate Policy Organisation
I-17	Corporate	Food & Beverage Firm
I-18	Expert	Climate Partnerships Organisation
I-19	Corporate	Energy Firm
I-20	Expert	Policy Advisory Organisation
I-21	Expert	Climate Policy Organisation
I-22	Corporate	Mining Firm
I-23	Expert	Transition Plan Advisory Organisation
I-24	Expert	Climate Policy Organisation
I-25	Expert	Partnership Organisation
I-26	Expert	Partnership Organisation

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Endnotes

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