

Calling all small businesses to lead the charge to net zero

- Prime Minister and Business and Energy Secretary will urge the millions of small businesses across the UK to lead the way on climate action as part of the UK's drive to net zero
- launch of the Together for our Planet Business Climate Leaders campaign supports small businesses to take their next steps in reducing emissions
- campaign encourages small businesses to pledge to cut their emissions to net zero by 2050 or sooner while helping them grow, adapt and seize new opportunities

Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng will today (Friday 28 May) call on every small business in the UK to take small, practical steps to cut their emissions as part of the UK's journey to net zero by 2050, in the run up to UN Climate Summit COP26 in Glasgow this November.

Together they will launch the Together for our Planet 'Business Climate Leaders' campaign, a new drive to encourage small and micro businesses to commit to cutting their emissions in half by 2030 and to net zero by 2050 or sooner through the new [UK Business Climate Hub](#).

Small businesses can use the hub to find practical tools, resources and advice to understand their emissions and develop a plan to tackle them, as well as providing ideas for steps they can take.

Steps could include installing energy saving light bulbs, switching to electric vehicles and other cleaner forms of transport to reduce their carbon footprint, looking at environment-friendly packaging options, or introducing cycle to work schemes for employees.

The campaign will also provide small businesses with access to some of the UK's biggest businesses – including NatWest, Google, Scottish Power and BT – and leading climate experts to support them in taking the simple and practical steps to protect the planet, and the benefits of future-proofing and growing a low carbon business. Partner support will include hosting a range of collaborative events throughout summer, creating a small business training programme on taking green actions, and using their high-profile digital channels to drive small business audiences to the climate hub.

Taking action on climate change will help businesses grow, seize new opportunities, create new jobs, encourage investment and adapt against the challenges of a changing planet, while reducing emissions can lower businesses' running costs, save them money and attract new customers – ultimately helping them maintain a competitive advantage locally and globally.

Those who make a net zero commitment on the UK Business Climate Hub will be

recognised by the United Nations Race to Zero campaign and will become 'climate leaders' – role-modelling and inspiring others in the community to find meaningful ways to take positive environmental action as we approach the global climate summit COP26 hosted in Glasgow this year.

As the UK's 6 million small businesses make up 99% of the UK's enterprises, employ 60% of the UK workforce and generate £2.2 trillion of revenue to the economy, it is crucial these enterprises take action and reduce their carbon footprint.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Every step that a small business takes on their journey to net zero adds up – not only in protecting the health of the planet but also in future-proofing their business and encouraging new investment, new customers and new opportunities for growth.

We are providing the support and advice small businesses need to join us and become leaders in the fight against climate change.

To mark the launch of the campaign, the Prime Minister and the Business and Energy Secretary will meet small and micro companies from across the UK and its economy who have already made a net zero commitment.

Business & Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and as we transition to a green future, they will also be the backbone of the UK tackling climate change.

There are huge opportunities for a small business to go green – not only playing their part in saving the planet from climate change but helping grow their business and ensuring it is fit for the future.

Simple changes could differentiate a business from the competition, attract new customers and investment and save them money on their running costs. That is why I am urging the nation's small businesses to sign up to become business climate leaders and lead the charge in protecting the future of our planet.

COP26 President-Designate, Alok Sharma, said:

We are at a critical point for our planet, and to safeguard its future we must act now to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C. To do this, we need action from all of society including those small businesses that play such a vital role in our daily lives. The world is moving to a greener, brighter future, so please: do not

get left behind. Ahead of COP26 in November, join the hundreds that have already done so and become a business climate leader.

The UK's Net Zero Business Champion Andrew Griffith said:

The UK business community has a unique opportunity to come together to tackle climate change. We all need to play our part, and as small businesses make up the majority of the UK's business community it is critical that they get involved.

There is a need for practical guidance on the simple steps businesses can take reduce their carbon footprint and the Together for our Planet climate leaders campaign will help provide just that.

The launch of the government's new campaign follows the UK's world-leading success in ensuring the largest companies join the green revolution. The government is working with Net Zero Business Champion Andrew Griffith to encourage businesses of all sizes to make a formal net zero commitment. As of today, over 40 of the UK's FTSE 100 companies signed up to the United Nation's [Race to Zero campaign](#), cementing the UK's position as the leader of the international business community in going green and tackling climate change.

With less than 6 months to go before the UK brings world leaders together for the crucial UN climate change summit COP26 in Glasgow this November, the UK government will continue to [call for action for companies to join the Race to Zero](#) and establish plans to meet their commitments.

Chief Executive Officer of NatWest Group Alison Rose said:

As the leading bank in the UK for businesses, we want to encourage, enable and lead the way in helping small businesses transition to a net zero carbon economy. From our recent SME Recovery Report, we know SMEs have the opportunity to help the UK meet its net zero targets by reducing their carbon footprint by 80 MtCO₂e by 2030 through more sustainable business operating models.

As COP26 Principal Banking Partner, we're proud to support the Together for our Planet Business Climate Leaders campaign and partner with the government on this important initiative, especially in the run up to November's UN Climate Summit. We will be encouraging as many of our customers to sign up as possible.

Philip Jansen, Chief Executive of BT Group, said:

BT has been taking action against climate change for nearly 30

years and we've pledged to be a net zero emissions business by 2045. All businesses, large and small, have an important role to play in reducing worldwide carbon emissions, so we're urging our small business suppliers and customers to join us on the journey to net zero by signing up to the UK Business Climate Hub.

A survey we recently carried out with Small Business Britain found that although 99% of small firms recognise the importance of sustainability, three quarters of them (77%) don't know how to measure their carbon emissions and need support. The new UK Business Climate Hub, together with free webinars we're offering through BT's Skills for Tomorrow programme, will help more small firms take their first steps towards taking climate action that can make a difference.

Ronan Harris, Managing Director & VP, Google UK and Ireland said:

Every email you send through gmail, every question you ask Google Search and every YouTube video you watch is already carbon neutral. But we know our impact is far greater when we are also helping others transition to a carbon-free world. That's why we're excited to be part of this important campaign and, as part of that, to offer small businesses across the UK new training that can help them increase their competitive advantage while protecting the planet.

Small businesses that are already making the leap to go green include:

Clean distilling: being green is at the heart of Shed 1 Gin, a gin distillery in Ulverston, Cumbria, since its inception in 2016 and now the business has committed to being net zero by 2030. The business uses recycled, recyclable and compostable packaging and recycles water used during the gin distilling process, saving thousands of litres of water.

Perfect marriage: family-run wedding venue Hayne House, Hythe, Kent offers a sustainable option for weddings and receptions and has committed to cutting carbon emissions to zero by 2030, with the business believing it will have reduced emissions by 50% by the end of next year. The business has already removed all single-use plastic, started replacing windows with ones that are more energy efficient and switched to a renewable energy supplier, installing a rainwater harvesting system to water the garden and reviewing procurement to include local and sustainable suppliers among others. The company plans to go further including installing a heat pump and electric charge points for vehicles, as well as increasing its solar energy production to power the whole site.

Sustainable snacks: healthy snack company Healthy Nibbles, Edinburgh, Scotland, is committed to being sustainable and is working towards net zero goals. Last year, the company changed its packaging to be plastic-free and it is now produced using 100% recycled materials, which are also recyclable. The

company also uses biodegradable labelling and tape, as well as assesses suppliers' environmental and sustainable impact.

Couch to carbon neutral: self-styled 'sofa in a box' company Snug, Enfield, North London, is making steps towards a sustainable future to become carbon neutral by 2025. Creating sofas that can be delivered and assembled quickly without the use of tools, Snug uses wood taken from forests grown by its manufacturers and delivers its sofas in 100% recyclable boxes. The business has partnered with the Eden Reforestation Project which works with communities around the world to educate and employ local people to produce, plant, protect and conserve native species in deforested areas. As such, Snug has donated more than 100,000 trees to date and is working towards an 'eco collection' and plans to be the first sofa company in the world with a carbon negative product.

Practice what you preach: family-owned energy efficiency specialists SURE Solutions, Birkenhead on the Wirral, offers solutions to businesses using industrial refrigeration and has pledged to become net zero by 2025. The company has installed 70 solar panels on the roof of its offices and this year plans to install a hot water heat pump and electric vehicle charge points. This is on top of making sure it is recycling waste and replacing its vehicles with either electric or hybrid equivalents. The business also has plans to be carbon neutral through carbon offsetting by the end of the year through tree planting or similar.

Founder of Small Business Britain Michelle Ovens CBE said:

The UK's small business community can and will play a significant role in combatting climate change. Although individually small, collectively they have a huge impact on the economy, society and local communities. Working together, we can start the journey towards net zero, and Small Business Britain is committed to helping the nation's businesses get there.

National Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses Mike Cherry said:

Small business owners care passionately about the environment, and are keen to do the right thing to help our transition to Net Zero. The small firms and sole traders who make up the UK's 6 million SMEs are now seeking help and guidance on what they can do. From those that have already started on this journey, we know that sustainability makes good business sense, too.

Today marks a clear occasion and opportunity for small businesses to take the lead. As we emerge from the worst of COVID and look to secure our long-term future, now is the time for small businesses to take their first steps. At FSB we will be building on this campaign to share ideas and small-business-friendly guidance, that will reach small firms in local communities right across the UK."

Today's Business Climate Leaders campaign launch is the latest phase of the government's UK-wide [Together For Our Planet campaign](#) that is encouraging people from across society to engage in climate action.

The campaign also builds on the progress made at the Business 7 Leaders Climate Summit that the UK convened as part of its G7 Presidency earlier this month, organised ahead of leader-level discussions at G7 Summit in June. This event brought together business leaders across the world to accelerate climate action and seize opportunities of net zero.

Additional quotes

UK High Level Climate Action Champion for COP26 Nigel Topping said:

The science is clear: we need to halve our emissions by 2030 to deliver a zero-carbon world in time. This requires immediate action from across the world, by the largest governments and the smallest companies. The partnership between the UK government and the SME Climate Hub will accelerate the adoption of net-zero business practices and bring companies of all sizes into the critical Race to Zero.

Co-Founder and Head of Exponential Roadmap Initiative Johan Falk said:

Our vision is to mobilise millions of small and medium-sized enterprises to accelerate climate action. We want to make it possible for SMEs to commit to halve emissions before 2030. One of the strategic resources is the 1.5°C Business Playbook, a guide that helps SMEs develop a climate strategy anchored in the latest science and start taking action. The SME Climate Hub will simplify the process and make it beneficial for SMEs to cut emissions and provide the next generation of green solutions.

María Mendiluce, the CEO of the We Mean Business coalition, a founding partner of the SME Climate Hub said:

The SME Climate Hub provides small businesses worldwide with tools and resources to start their net zero journey by curbing emissions, managing climate-related risks and building business resilience. We are thrilled to be collaborating with the United Kingdom government to galvanize small business climate action across the UK. We hope this strengthens competitiveness, resilience and growth. No matter the size, no matter the sector, every business has a role to play.

Jason Wouhra, president of the Asian Business Chamber of Commerce, part of Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, said:

We will be delighted to use our extensive network of Asian businesses to inform them about the government's net zero campaign.

This vital issue is in everyone's interests and we look forward to hearing full details on how businesses can support this campaign and the help available.

Jonathan Geldart, IoD Director General said:

Directors from small businesses recognise the critical importance of tackling climate change and its effect on the environment. It is one of the most significant challenges facing organisations today.

The information and guidance provided in the Together for Our Planet toolkit will provide valuable support to business leaders, and we will be encouraging as many of them as possible to use it and join the Race to Zero.

Rain Newton-Smith, CBI Chief Economist, said:

Achieving net zero and building a fairer, greener and more sustainable economy post-pandemic requires urgency and serious collective effort. That's why we need businesses of all sizes joining with government and consumers to deliver lasting change.

While the businesses being targeted by this campaign may be small, the potential of their collective impact to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss could be mighty. With small businesses making up such a significant portion of our economy, providing them with practical advice on how to promote sustainability and implement greener growth strategies will enable the UK to meet climate commitments ahead of COP26.

Simon Thompson, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Mail, said:

As a company that partners with so many of the UK's small businesses, we are pleased to be involved in this initiative to help them transition to net zero. With our 'feet on the street' network we already have the lowest CO2e emissions per parcel, but we want to go further as we implement our own net zero plans. We're changing, and we hope that we can help SMEs do the same.

Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce Shevaun Haviland said:

Tackling the climate crisis demands entrepreneurial spirit and innovation, qualities which we know sit at the heart of our

business communities in all parts of the UK. We must harness these abilities to uncover solutions which will not only protect our planet, but drive business growth and create jobs.

The transition to net zero must empower companies to seize the opportunities which come from reducing their environmental impact. This initiative is an important step in enabling SMEs and micro-businesses, which are the backbone of the UK economy, to stake their place in the green economy.

Sasan Goodarzi, CEO at Intuit, the global mission-driven financial technology platform, said:

Climate change is bigger than all of us, and it is critical we all play a part in positively impacting climate change.

At Intuit, we're committed to empowering the small businesses we work with to join us in our efforts to be climate-positive. We applaud the UK government for leading on this important issue and look forward to working together to build a greener and more sustainable world.

Notes to editors

As part of today's announcement, the government has teamed up with the SME Climate Hub – an initiative founded by the [International Chamber of Commerce](#), the [Exponential Roadmap Initiative](#), the [We Mean Business coalition](#) and the [United Nations Race to Zero campaign](#). Through this collaboration, the UK government is encouraging UK small businesses to demonstrate their climate leadership on this dedicated UK page of the hub. The SME Climate Hub provides small and medium-sized businesses with a database of practical tools and resources to develop a climate strategy, curb emissions and build business resilience.

The Together for our Planet Business Climate Leaders campaign will encourage as many small businesses (250 employees or fewer) to take the first steps on their journey to net zero by making the SME Climate Commitment – to halve their greenhouse gas emissions before 2030, achieve net zero emissions before 2050 and disclose their progress on a yearly basis.

The campaign is specifically targeted at small and micro businesses in the UK and businesses who make a commitment will be recognised by the United Nation's [Race to Zero campaign](#), which is the largest ever global alliance committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest, backed with science-based targets, with many opting to go even faster.

Once companies have made the SME Climate Commitment, they can display the Together For Our Planet Business brand in store, online, and in their promotional materials, showing customers across the globe that they have

joined the global fight against climate change.

Businesses who are supporting the campaign include NatWest, Google, Scottish Power and BT (to be expanded with detail of action), including:

- BT which is putting a message on the BT Tower, London, in support on the campaign
- Natwest is launching a dedicated page on its business website to showcase the campaign and climate hub
- Google will announce a new module of their 'Digital Garage' programme that will be created in partnership with BEIS and Oxford University to provide free advice to businesses on becoming more sustainable, including tips on reducing their carbon emissions. This module will be delivered from summer 2021

Other companies attending today's Downing Street small business event include:

- Code 56 – Derby
- The Flower Shop – Pulborough
- Inn Cornwall – Cornwall
- Bailie Group – Belfast, Northern Ireland
- Vindico – Llanelli, Wales
- Shed 1 Distillery – Ulverston, Cumbria
- First Milk – Paisley, Scotland
- Polkadot Plumbers – London