

Ministers showcase the UK's green future ahead of COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow

- COP26 President Alok Sharma spoke at Whitelee Windfarm outside of Glasgow on the urgent need for action on climate change
- UK Ministers visited sites across the country to showcase UK climate action and leadership towards a green economy
- Mr Sharma repeated work towards hosting the UN climate conference in person

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma marked less than six months to go until the climate change summit this November at Whitelee Windfarm in Glasgow, as Government Ministers travelled across the country to see how the UK is greening all parts of society.

In his speech, Mr Sharma set out the four goals the UK as hosts will be focusing on in the run up to the summit – securing global net zero, protecting communities and natural habitats from the impacts of climate change, mobilising finance and working together to accelerate action.

In support of the UK's presidency of COP26 and UK climate action, ministers visited the towns and cities leading the green revolution across the country planning for a net zero emissions future.

In his speech, Mr Sharma spoke of the need for every country and every part of society to seize the opportunity of the climate summit in Glasgow and embrace their responsibility to protect our planet.

Mr Sharma said:

It is not a choice between cleaning up our environment and growing economies.

We can do both at the same time. Indeed we have done both at the same time.

The UK is a beacon of green growth. As a whole, the UK will completely phase out coal power by 2025 at the latest.

To see first-hand how renewable energy is supporting thousands of jobs across the country, Chancellor Rishi Sunak visited Siemens Gamesa, an offshore wind blade manufacturer, who are planning to double the size of their site in Hull and create 200 further green jobs on the site.

While Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng went to Able Seaton Port in Hartlepool which is transforming into a major hub for offshore wind including

manufacturing wind turbine blades.

The green economy is also generating new businesses, as Work and Pensions Secretary Therese Coffey saw when she met young Kickstarters at a bicycle workshop in London.

A clean energy transition to a net zero economy is also a key part of the UK's work as COP26 Presidency. The UK started the COP26 Energy Transition Council, where leaders of the world's international organisations focus on the global power sector.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps visited Cranfield University's National Flying Laboratory, where he saw ongoing research into the use of hydrogen in aviation.

Wales Secretary Simon Hart went to a renewable energy project at Llys-y-Frân Lake in West Wales where a hydroelectric generator is creating power for more than 300 homes.

While Transport Minister Andrew Stephenson visited the Stanlow Refinery on the south bank of the Manchester ship canal, where there are plans to build a facility to convert non-recyclable household and commercial waste into sustainable aviation fuel. Once built, this will link to Manchester Airport, making it the only airport globally to have a direct link to this kind of fuel.

And Minister for Climate Change Lord Callanan was in Staffordshire at JCB's Head Office and Innovation Centre, where he saw their pioneering work with hydrogen. He then visited Keele University, to learn about their Smart Energy Network Demonstrator, and see the wind turbines and solar panels they have built for the campus.

At COP26, the UK will work with partners to take forward action on protecting and restoring forests and critical ecosystems, and will champion the transition towards sustainable, resilient and nature positive agriculture.

Protecting people and nature is the second key goal Mr Sharma set out for COP26 in his speech and there are already examples in the UK for how this can be achieved.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow visited the Avalon Marshes, a wetland landscape at the heart of Somerset's Levels and Moors. The site was restored from a former brownfield site into wildlife-rich habitats, with a mix of birds now thriving there.

Mr Sharma said in his speech that a net zero economy means greening every part of society. This includes the UK's healthcare, justice and education systems.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock visited West Suffolk Hospital to talk about the NHS net zero ambition and the push for the 40 new hospitals to be environmentally friendly.

Justice Minister Robert Buckland visited HMP Five Wells – the new prison being constructed in Wellingborough – to announce that the next four prisons being built in England will be constructed to omit net zero carbon emissions in the future. Overall, the new designs are expected to reduce CO2 emissions by 280,000 tonnes and cut £100 million in energy costs over the next 60 years.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb visited a primary school in Sussex to learn about the school's environmental ethos and spoke to teachers and students about their interest in climate change action.

In concluding his speech, Mr Sharma repeated the importance of COP26 for the UK and the world to take responsibility and work together to keep the aim of limiting a global temperature rise of 1.5C alive.

This is our last hope of keeping 1.5 degrees alive. Our best chance of building a brighter future. A future of green jobs and cleaner air.

I have faith that world leaders will rise to the occasion, and not be found wanting in their tryst with destiny.

That, in six months time, when we are packing up and going home, we will be able to say, that at this critical juncture, each of us took responsibility.

That we chose to act. And that we kept 1.5 degrees alive.

Notes to editors

- COP26 President Alok Sharma's speech "Pick the Planet" can be accessed [on gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pick-the-planet)
- Whitelee Windfarm is the largest onshore wind farm in the UK, while the UK is the largest producer of offshore wind energy in the world.
- COP26 is regarded widely as the most significant climate event since COP21, the 2015 United Nations climate conference which resulted in the Paris Agreement. At the Paris Conference, for the first time, the world set the goal to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels (1850-1900).
- COP26 is the agreed five-yearly stocktake point where countries will agree action to reach this 1.5C target.
- Between 1990 and 2019 the UK has reduced our total greenhouse gas emissions by 44% whilst growing our economy by 78%.
- In 2012, 40% of UK electricity came from coal. That figure is now less than 2%. We will have completely phased out coal power by 2025.