

# ASEAN-UK Race to Zero campaign brings together businesses to discuss corporate climate action ahead of COP26

On 24 and 25 May 2021, the UK Government, in partnership with the ASEAN Business Advisory Council and the UK-ASEAN Business Council, brought together UK and ASEAN businesses to mobilise the private sector to commit to net zero emissions by 2050, through joining the UNFCCC's Race to Zero campaign.

More than 500 participants joined the two-day event, with businesses from the UK and ASEAN discussing the need for stronger corporate climate action in ASEAN and visible business leadership via the global Race to Zero campaign. The Race to Zero coalition calls for businesses, cities, regions and universities to commit to net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. The event is further proof of our strong cooperation with ASEAN under the ASEAN-UK Cooperation Framework on COP26, endorsed by the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Member States last year.

## **Day 1: Business case for net zero, energy and agriculture sectoral discussions**

Nigel Topping (the UK's COP26 High Level Champion on Climate Action) opened the event, emphasising the need for non-government actors to visibly commit to net zero targets, and their critical role in shaping climate policymaking. Dato Dr Amin Liew (Brunei's Second Minister of Finance and Economy) seconded this, noting that a coordinated effort will be key to supporting ASEAN's economic recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, including through the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework which incorporates climate action.

The event then moved into sectoral deep dives. First, leaders from ASEAN's energy sector debated the challenges of the clean energy transition and the need to ensure access to renewable energy – increasingly key to international business and investment decision-making. Panellists called for global corporations to show ambition in utilising clean energy throughout supply chains. With improvements in efficiency, and ever-cheaper renewable technologies – the price of solar and wind is now undercutting coal – this is more achievable than ever before.

The second sectoral discussion explored the challenges of decarbonisation across ASEAN's agriculture sector. Panellists addressed the need to scale sustainable agricultural practices across the region, as well as to catalyse effective public and private partnerships, in order to mobilise net-zero commitments from stakeholders throughout the supply chain.

The first day concluded with a High-Level Roundtable on Business Action to Deliver Net Zero, chaired by UK ASEAN Business Council Chair, Baroness Lucy

Neville-Rolfe. Nigel Topping joined the panel, which also included ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General Satvinder Singh, Cherine Fok (Director for Sustainability Services, KPMG), Esther An (Chief Sustainability Officer, City Developments Limited) and Juliette White (Vice President, Global SHE and Operations Sustainability for AstraZeneca). Panellists agreed on the critical importance of public and private partnership to ensure meaningful climate action in ASEAN, and shared their experience in implementing net zero targets across global corporate operations. DSG Singh stressed that historical lessons show that those who are able to adapt now to climate challenges will prove most resilient in the long term.

## **Day 2: finance, fashion, and transport**

ASEAN Secretary General Dato Lim Jock Hoi opened Day 2, conveying his appreciation to the UK Government in providing a platform to engage stakeholders on the issue of climate change, a priority for the region this year and for Brunei Darussalam as ASEAN Chair. Secretary General Dato Lim highlighted the key challenge in mobilising SMEs to participate in the green transition. Richard Graham MP (Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to the ASEAN Economic Community, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines) offered his thoughts, echoing the need for sustainable finance to support SMEs with their clean growth ambitions.

Sectoral discussions followed. First, representatives from leading financial institutions in ASEAN discussed the role of the financial sector in mobilising climate action, and the need for transparent corporate reporting and disclosure, as well as how to ensure effective mobilisation of capital. The panel urged asset owners and banks to demonstrate the compelling business case for a clean transition, and to provide incentives through bonds and loans.

Next, representatives from ASEAN's textiles and garments industry discussed the pressing need for reform, with the sector responsible for 10% of annual global carbon emissions. The panel shared strategies for supporting ASEAN textiles manufacturers with their decarbonisation plans, including through innovative technology and policy, and clear sustainability roadmaps. The panel noted the growing movement of eco-conscious consumers and their expectations of brands.

In the final sectoral discussion, leaders from the transport sector – which represents 23% of all energy-related global emissions – discussed the path to vehicle electrification. The panel agreed on the need for ambitious, but feasible targets, the importance of partnerships across the transport ecosystem, and the need to build confidence among business leadership and late adopters.

A session on the Race to Resilience – a sibling campaign to the Race to Zero that brings businesses together to build resilience to climate impacts – focused on the business case for corporate action on climate adaptation; in particular, how global capital will flow to firms in ASEAN that are resilient to the uncertainties that a changing climate poses.

The Race to Zero Dialogues closed with comments from YB Yanty Rahman (Chair of the ASEAN Business Advisory Council), Sam Myers (Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner to Asia Pacific) Ken O'Flaherty (COP26 Ambassador to Asia-Pacific and South Asia) and Jens Radschinski (Head of UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre for Asia Pacific). With their closing words, speakers called for businesses and organisations to make their pledge and join the Race to Zero, and reiterated the importance of policymakers across ASEAN to establish clear policy frameworks in order to enable businesses to commit fully to climate action.

Ahead of the UK's COP26 Presidency, the ASEAN-UK Race to Zero Dialogues demonstrated the growing momentum for ambitious climate action throughout the private sector, and highlighted the potential power of effective public and private partnership. The UK looks forward to continuing to work closely with ASEAN Member States through future activities relating to nature, climate adaptation, resilience, clean energy and green finance, and towards achieving a mutually ambitious outcome at November's COP26 Climate Summit.

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## **[eAlert: 28 May 2021 – Local Authority Treescapes Fund deadline extended](#)**

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## **[UK space sector wins over £2 million to help develop options for a national position, navigation and timing space system](#)**

Leading UK space companies Airbus, CGI, Sirrus Analysis, GMV NSL, Inmarsat, and QinetiQ will each receive a share of the funding to help develop system design and operation, signals and algorithms, resilience, assurance, and cost

modelling for the UK Space Agency's Space Based Positioning, Navigation and Timing Programme (SBPP).

UK Space Agency deputy CEO Ian Annett said:

The UK is critically dependent on position, navigation and timing information from satellite navigation systems in transport, communications, energy distribution, and emergency response.

This initial funding will help us design options for a new system to support our critical national infrastructure, whilst growing the space sector, boosting economic growth and making daily life more secure for people everywhere in the UK.

Satellite navigation is a sophisticated technology that works by beaming signals from space that devices such as smartphones can use to determine their location and time – otherwise known as position, navigation and timing (PNT).

PNT services from satellite navigation systems are essential to modern day life in the UK, underpinning our National Security, defence, and transport. PNT signals are also an important component of future technologies including autonomous vehicles and smart cities, transforming the way people live, work and travel whilst supporting the net zero carbon emissions agenda.

Formed in October 2020, the Space Based PNT programme is exploring innovative ways of bringing a space PNT capability to the UK. Later this year it will advise on options to Government for a space-based solution to improve the UK's PNT resilience.

Work from the programme will boost the UK's already thriving space industry and expertise whilst paving the way for a more 'Global Britain', bolstering UK interests with greater independence from foreign systems.

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## [Excavation starts on final tunnels at world's first spent fuel disposal facility](#)

We have welcomed the start of work in Finland to excavate the first tunnels for final disposal of the country's spent nuclear fuel.

Underground research has been carried out at Olkiluoto, located around 170 miles north west of Helsinki since 2004 and construction of the underground disposal facility started in 2015.

The repository is being constructed to a depth of 400–430 metres and already has approximately 10 kilometres of excavated tunnels. During final disposal operations, there will be some 40 kilometres of new tunnels.

This significant milestone for Posiva comes after years of multidisciplinary development activities such as research and methodology for rock construction. Before construction work began, the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland (STUK) verified Posiva's plans and stated that its specified pre-conditions for starting the work had been fulfilled.

Packaged waste will only be placed in the underground facility once the Finnish Government grants the operating licence for the final disposal facility. Finnish operator Posiva Oy estimates that disposal operations will start in the mid-2020s.

Our Technical Director, John Corderoy, said:

We are delighted to see the progress in Finland and look forward to seeing the first waste containers placed in their final disposal positions in the near future.

We work closely with overseas radioactive waste management organisations, including Posiva, to share knowledge, experience and understanding in a range of disciplines including technical, geological, social, engagement and communications.

Posiva's Construction Manager, Juha Riihimäki, said:

The years of research and development of rock construction that have produced procedures for construction of a nuclear facility suited for the Finnish bedrock culminate in this moment. The development of the methodology started with the construction of the ONKALO® facility already in 2004.

The first five tunnels to be excavated during the next 18 months mark the beginning of an extensive building effort. It is estimated that 100 deposition tunnels will be excavated during the facility's 100-year operational period. The maximum length of one tunnel is 350 metres, each about 4.5 metres high and 3.5 metres wide.

Finland's siting process began in 1983 when a screening study was conducted covering the whole country. After early identification of more than 100 potential areas, five were taken forward after extensive community consultation and further site evaluation before Olkiluoto was selected in 2001.

Permission to start construction was granted in 2015. The municipality had to express willingness to engage and had a right of veto.

Scientists and governments around the world recognise that geological disposal is the best option for managing longer-lived, more hazardous radioactive waste. This follows many decades of science, technology and engineering research.

Here in the UK, the first Working Groups have been established in [Copeland](#) and [Allerdale](#), west Cumbria, to explore the possibility of hosting a GDF in their areas and are a critical early step in the process to find both a willing community and a suitable site. Positive discussions are continuing in a range of other locations and it is expected that further Working Groups will be launched in future.

In addition to Finland, Sweden, France, Canada and Switzerland are among the countries with the most advanced geological disposal projects today.

In Finland, Posiva Oy is the operator responsible for the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel and Posiva Solutions (Posiva's commercial subsidiary) provides tailored expert services based on decades-long experience in design, research and development of final disposal of spent nuclear fuel. More information about Finland's programme can be found on [Posiva's website](#).

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## **UK GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES £2 MILLION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND SCREEN'S IRISH LANGUAGE AND ULSTER SCOTS BROADCAST FUNDS**

Today the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, has announced £2 million in funding to Northern Ireland Screen's Irish Language and Ulster Scots Broadcast Funds.

The funds provide support for the Irish language and Ulster Scots production sectors and a range of film, television and radio programming. This £2m in support from the UK Government will also enable the development of a range of new educational, interactive and digital content.

This announcement marks the fulfillment of a UK Government commitment in the New Decade, New Approach agreement that was agreed in January 2020 and saw the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive.

The funding also reflects the UK Government's steadfast commitment to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, which sets out the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance for linguistic diversity across Northern Ireland, including the Irish language and Ulster Scots.

The £2 million in funding to Northern Ireland Screen was provided through the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the British Film Institute, and will be split equally between both funds.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, said: “The UK Government celebrates Northern Ireland’s rich tapestry of languages, identities and cultures, and believes that the United Kingdom’s strength lies in its diversity.

“Today, I am delighted to announce £2 million in funding for the Irish language and Ulster Scots broadcasting funds, supporting a host of exciting new programmes for people across Northern Ireland.

“This announcement demonstrates we are continuing to deliver on our New Decade New Approach commitments and supporting the Irish language and Ulster Scots communities.”

Notes to Editors:

This support is provided on a one-off basis as a boost for both funds, reflecting their widened remit. In accordance with the funding proposals, Northern Ireland Screen are distributing these monies in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.