

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

Fourth Woodland Carbon Guarantee auction dates announced

Farmers and land managers across England are encouraged to [apply for the Woodland Carbon Guarantee scheme](#) by 9 July, ahead of the next auction which will take place online between 26 July and 1 August.

The Woodland Carbon Guarantee is a Forestry Commission administered £50 million scheme that aims to help accelerate woodland planting rates and permanently remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The Guarantee provides land managers with new tree planting projects the option to sell their captured carbon in the form of verified carbon credits, called Woodland Carbon Units (WCUs), to the government for a guaranteed price every 5 or 10 years up to 2055/56. This provides an additional long-term income from their woodlands.

This announcement follows the success of the third auction which closed on 1 November 2020 and saw 31 contracts offered by the Forestry Commission, to

help stimulate proposals for the creation of 615 hectares of new woodland specifically to help combat climate change.

Sir William Worsley, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:

The Guarantee is a unique offering from the Forestry Commission as it provides land managers with long term support for creating new woodlands, based on the amount of carbon they capture.

The success from the previous auctions demonstrates how this long-term commitment has been well received within the sector and is just one of the ways we are working towards achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

This pioneering scheme could be the perfect fit for many farmers and land managers looking to help tackle the climate and nature crises now upon us. If you want to plant this winter, now is the time to submit your application ahead of the auction in July.

Encouraging diverse woodland types and tree species is a key factor in the Forestry Commission's efforts to increase tree planting rates in England. This scheme aims to achieve a varied range of projects across different locations and scales.

Before applying for the Guarantee, land managers will need to have registered with the [Woodland Carbon Code](#), which provides the tools and information required to forecast and verify the carbon they are capturing and can sell in future.

The Forestry Commission are at the helm of ambitious new commitments to tree planting to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. Launched last week during a landmark speech by the Environment Secretary Minister Eustice, the England Trees Action Plan aims to at least treble tree planting rates in England by the end of this Parliament, reflecting England's contribution to meeting the UK's overall target of increasing tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of the parliament.

As the government's expert forestry advisors and custodians of the nation's forests, the Forestry Commission will be a key delivery partner in meeting this ambition and using schemes such as the Woodland Carbon Guarantee to help landowners plant more trees across the country.

[Apply for the Guarantee here.](#)

[For frequently asked questions please see here.](#)

£44 million cash boost to cut emissions from buildings and help households save on energy bills

- Over £44 million government funding will enable the supply of clean energy to heat and cool tens of thousands of UK homes and public buildings
- investment will help cut carbon emissions by up to 22% for homes and buildings connected to heat networks while providing potential reductions of up to 15% in energy costs
- key step in government's plans to make buildings greener and eliminate the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050

Tens of thousands of UK homes, businesses and public buildings are one step closer to benefitting from greener, cleaner energy thanks to £44 million of government funding announced today (Friday 28 May).

Today's funding package addresses the urgent need to reduce the carbon footprint of heating homes and workspaces which makes up almost a third of all UK carbon emissions.

Of the £44 million funding announced today, £30 million will fund 3 innovative heat network projects providing low carbon energy in south-east London, Manchester and Cambridgeshire, whilst helping to bring down energy bills.

A heat network is a distribution system of insulated pipes that takes heat from a central source, such as a combined heat and power plant or heat recovered from industry and delivers it to a number of domestic or non-domestic buildings. They are a proven, cost-effective way of providing reliable low carbon heat at a fair price to consumers.

South-east London

More than £12 million of funding to develop one of the UK's largest heat networks in the London Borough of Bexley that will supply low carbon heat to 21,000 homes. Heat for the network will be drawn centrally from the processing of non-recyclable waste, a low carbon alternative to individual gas boilers. The project is part of plans by energy company Vattenfall to deliver low carbon heating to 75,000 homes across the Thames Estuary over the next decade.

Manchester

£14.7 million to develop a network across a zone of five square kilometres in Manchester's city centre that will distribute low carbon electricity, heat and cooling to a range of buildings, including the local hospital, a mix of

social and private housing, student accommodation blocks and commercial organisations such as the Heineken brewery. Heating will be powered by energy from solar panels and air source heat pumps.

Cambridgeshire

£3.3 million for a first-of-its-kind community-led project in the Cambridgeshire village of Swaffham Prior, which will allow 300 properties to collectively transition from oil to low-carbon heating using a network of hybrid ground and air source heat pumps.

Minister for Climate Change Lord Callanan said:

Almost a third of all UK carbon emissions come from heating our homes and addressing this is a vital part of eradicating our contribution to climate change by 2050.

Today's funding package will accelerate the development of low-carbon technologies that will both reduce emissions, and ensure people's homes are warmer, greener and cheaper to run.

Securing a lasting move away from fossil fuels to heat our homes will allow thousands of households and businesses to feel the benefits of projects that are breaking new ground and making our villages, towns and cities cleaner places to live and work.

Innovative projects like those this funding is backing are developing new and effective ways to use energy in homes and workspaces, which is helping to drive down costs and making low-carbon heat affordable and accessible for consumers as the UK transitions to a greener future.

On top of the £30 million for heat network projects, a further £14.6 million announced today will benefit 11 projects in England, Scotland and Wales. The funding will be invested in exploring ways the UK can develop and use efficient, low-carbon technologies for heating and cooling buildings.

Projects include one being led by Durham University that is exploring whether water in flooded, abandoned coal mines could be used as a low-carbon geothermal source of heat. Another scheme from the University of Birmingham is looking at ways that electricity from renewable energy sources can be stored in times of low demand to meet requirements at peak periods and a further project being led by the University of Glasgow is aiming to develop the efficiency of air source heat pumps.

Today's £44 million funding announcement comes ahead of the publication of the government's Heat and Buildings Strategy which will set out how carbon emissions in homes and workspaces will be addressed to meet legal commitments over ending contributions to climate change by 2050. The strategy is due to be published this year.

The funding also helps deliver on commitments made in the Prime Minister's [10 point plan](#) to make the UK's homes, schools and hospitals greener, warmer and more energy efficient, while creating 50,000 jobs by 2030, and the government's ambitious [energy white paper](#) that commits to transforming the UK's energy system and changing the way homes are heated.

Notes to editors

£30 million funding for Heat Networks Investment Projects

Swaffham Prior

Funding of £3.3 million will see a first-of-its-kind project developed in Cambridgeshire that allows the village of Swaffham Prior to transition from oil to low-carbon heating, with 300 properties linked to a network using hybrid ground and air source heat pumps.

With government support, Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust and Cambridgeshire County Council have created a collaborative community heat scheme that provides a blueprint model which can be replicated in other communities across the UK.

Councillor Joshua Schumann, Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's Environment and Sustainability Committee, said:

This is a fantastic project and a first of its kind that we know of in the country. Retrofitting a whole village is a challenge but the Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust has been a great partner driving the project forward.

Securing the funding is a huge step in creating accessible renewable heat for oil-dependent homes in Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to tackling climate change and I'm looking forward to seeing the continued success of this project.

Cory – London Borough of Bexley

A £12.1 million package of government loans and grants is being made to the Cory project in the London Borough of Bexley. The funding has been awarded to Cory to support heat networks that will supply low carbon heat to 21,000 homes.

Heat for the network will be drawn from Energy from Waste facilities run by Cory and is part of plans by Vattenfall to deliver low carbon heating to 75,000 homes across the Thames Estuary over the next decade.

Dougie Sutherland, CEO at Cory, said:

We are delighted that BEIS is supporting the development of one of

the UK's largest heat networks.

This is a very major step towards net zero, providing low-carbon heat for thousands of homes and businesses in Bexley and its surrounding Boroughs.

Manchester OPEN

The Octagon Project Energy Network (OPEN) heat network will receive £14.7 million in grants and loans for a scheme that plans to distribute low carbon electricity, heat and cooling to a range of buildings in the city centre such as Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, a mix of social and private housing, student accommodation blocks and commercial organisations.

Heating will be provided by Combined Heat and Power generation, which will be combined with power from solar panels and air source heat pumps.

Richard Everton, Chairman of the Manchester Energy Partnership said:

I am delighted that the tenacity and single mindedness of the Manchester Energy Partnership Limited team has turned what was a personal 'pipe-dream' into a financially viable and practical reality for the city of Manchester.

The support received from both the local authority and central government is proof that multiple agencies can work together with the private sector to bring about infrastructure projects that will benefit communities, in pursuit of fuel efficiency and to reduce carbon emissions in our major cities. Manchester is taking a strategic lead in achieving 'Net Zero North West'.

£14.6 million funding to decarbonise heating and cooling

11 projects are supported by the £14.6 million investment from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), both of which are part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council Executive Chair Professor Dame Lynn Gladden said:

With the heating and cooling of buildings accounting for a large share of the UK's carbon emissions, there is a pressing need to develop sustainable new methods of generating and supplying energy for these purposes.

In the build-up to COP26, the new projects highlight how innovative new technologies and approaches will play a key role in reducing emissions and helping the UK to achieve its Net Zero goals.

Further details on individual projects

Aquifer thermal energy storage for decarbonisation of heating and cooling

- Professor Matthew Jackson, Imperial College London
- UKRI funding: £1.5 million (NERC)

The project aims to develop technology that would tap underground water to provide a renewable energy source to heat and cool buildings. The team would use aquifer thermal energy storage that would warm or cool groundwater that is pumped underground and stored in a porous rock mass, called an aquifer. This would allow warm water to be stored to provide heating in winter, and cool water to be stored to provide cooling in the summer while greatly reducing the energy required to heat and cool buildings.

SaFEGround – Sustainable, Flexible and Efficient Ground-source heating and cooling systems

- Dr David Taborda, Imperial College London
- UKRI funding: £1.5 million (EPSRC)

The project aims to provide a template for reducing the emissions associated with heating and cooling through the use of heat pumps. The team aims to demonstrate the role that heat pumps drawing energy from the ground can play an important role in the UK's future low-carbon energy mix.

Geothermal Energy from Mines and Solar-Geothermal heat (GEMS)

- Professor Jeroen van Hunen, Durham University
- UKRI funding: £1.4 million (EPSRC and NERC)

Mine water in flooded, abandoned mines has the potential to provide a huge source of low-carbon, geothermal heat for the future which is estimated to be enough to meet the demands of all the buildings that lie over old coalfields. The project will look at all aspects of mine water geothermal heating, from its extraction using heat pumps to storage, delivery and the role of local communities.

Flexibility from Cooling and Storage (Flex-Cool-Store)

- Dr Carlos Ugalde-Loo, Cardiff University
- UKRI funding: £1.1 million (EPSRC)

With demand for the summertime cooling of buildings set to increase in the UK, this project will investigate the potential impacts of a growth in cooling demand and how they can be sustainably managed. It will conduct detailed studies to understand how cooling demand might change in the coming decades and quantify the impact of increased demand on electricity networks.

DecarbonISation PATHways for Cooling and Heating (DISPATCH)

- Dr Sasa Djokic, University of Edinburgh
- UKRI funding: £1.4 million (EPSRC)

The DISPATCH project will aim to determine how consumers can use currently available, emerging and future decarbonised energy sources based on where they live, how they and others use the buildings they live in and whether they can be retrofitted with new technologies. These include electrification of heating, hydrogen-based systems, solar panels, batteries and biomass.

Heat Accumulation from Renewables with Valid Energy Storage and Transformation (HARVEST)

- Dr Yongliang Li, University of Birmingham
- UKRI funding: £1.5 million

The project aims to develop new heat storage and conversion technology to absorb and accumulate curtailed renewable electricity over the course of the whole year. It would ensure that renewable electricity is stored in times of less electricity demand and ready for use to meet high heating demand in winter and high cooling demand in summer.

Flexible Air Source Heat pump for domestic heating decarbonisation (FASHION)

- Professor Zhibin Yu, University of Glasgow
- UKRI funding: £1.1 million (EPSRC)

The project aims to address challenges to the wider use of air source heat pumps (ASHPs) as a cost-effective, renewable source of energy for heating in UK homes. The project aims to develop an efficient, flexible ASHP capable of continuous heating and operating at different modes to benefit from off-peak electricity or warm air during the daytime.

Barocaloric materials for zero-carbon heat pumps

- Dr Xavier Moya, Imperial College London
- UKRI funding: £1.4 million (EPSRC)

The project aims to replace the conventional technologies currently used to provide heating with an environmentally-friendly and efficient alternative using barocaloric effects. These take place when materials are subjected to changes in pressure, generating heat that can be utilised through heat pumps.

Decarbonisation of Food Cold Chain Through Integrated Hydrogen Technologies

- Dr Sanliang Ling, University of Nottingham
- UKRI funding: £1 million (EPSRC)

Working alongside industry stakeholders, this project will look to enable hydrogen power to become a key part of the UK's energy future and assist in the decarbonisation of the UK food cold chain.

Zero Emission Cold-Chain (ZECC): Building the Road to Sustainable Cold-Chain Systems for Food Resilience

- Professor Toby Peters, University of Birmingham
- UKRI funding: £1.4 million (EPSRC)

This project will bring together world-leading researchers, industry, technology innovators and customers such as farmers and retailers to map the opportunities and challenges to ensuring that the cold food chain can support UK-wide Net Zero goals and decarbonise while also meeting demand and being resilient.

VTTES – Variable-Temperature Thermochemical Energy Storage System and Heat Networks for Decarbonising the Buildings Sector

- Professor Jo Darkwa, University of Nottingham
- UKRI funding: £1.3 million (EPSRC)

Conventional thermochemical energy storage systems require the storing or discharging of heat intermittently, but this novel system will operate continuously at variable temperatures. The project also aims to investigate to better understand the barriers to the uptake of community-based heat networks so that any socio-economic, socio-technical or environmental issues can be addressed.

Further background on heat networks

- the £30 million funding announced today comes from the government's £320 million [Heat Networks Investment Project](#) (HNIP), which supports the development of heat networks across England and Wales
- heat networks will play a vital role in decarbonising heat, which underpins the Prime Minister's 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution', and are included in the energy white paper
- the government continues to support the development of a wide range of heat network projects across England and Wales through the £320 million HNIP; BEIS is currently developing the Green Heat Network Fund, which is intended to be the targeted successor to HNIP
- heat network projects are further supported through the Heat Networks Delivery Unit (HNDU)
- HNIP applicants are expected to adhere to Heat Trust standards of customer protection, or equivalent, as a condition of eligibility
- the government has consulted on a market framework seeking views on policy options for regulating heat networks to protect consumers and ensure fair pricing, while supporting market growth and the development of low-carbon networks
- responses are currently being analysed and a government response to the consultation will be published in due course, setting out a choice for a heat networks regulator

[Urging a longer-term political horizon](#)

in the Middle East

Thank you, Mr President, and my thanks also to the Special Coordinator, Commissioner-General and Professor Khalidi for their briefings today.

The United Kingdom joins others in strongly welcoming the ceasefire. We reiterate our thanks to the United Nations, Egypt, Qatar and other regional actors for their mediation.

My Prime Minister has conveyed my country's deepest condolences to the families of the civilians killed, particularly those who lost children. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the cycle of violence, has taken too many lives.

We now need to be focused on ensuring the ceasefire is durable. My Foreign Secretary travelled to the region yesterday, and met Israeli and Palestinian leaders. As he made clear, the recent escalation underlines the urgent need to make progress towards a more positive future and to address the drivers of conflict.

Mr President, the United Kingdom has been clear that violence against peaceful worshippers at the Al Aqsa Mosque was unacceptable. Maintaining the historic Status Quo and the safety and sanctity of the holy sites is crucial. We support the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's important role as custodian.

We have all been deeply disturbed by scenes of violence in Sheikh Jarrah. The UK has been clear that settlement activity is illegal under international law and damages prospects for peace. The Government of Israel must end its settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions, in East Jerusalem and elsewhere on the West Bank.

Events at the holy sites and in Sheikh Jarrah do not justify the indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas and other militant groups. We condemn those attacks in absolute terms. We continue to call on these groups to permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel. We have been clear that Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence in responding to attacks. In exercising that right, it is vital that all actions are in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties.

We are gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including damage and destruction of key civilian infrastructure. Rapid and unhindered access into Gaza for humanitarian actors and essential supplies remains critical. We urge the continued opening of all crossings in and out of Gaza, including for life-saving medical treatment.

The United Kingdom has provided an initial \$4.5 million of aid to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, to help address immediate humanitarian needs. We commend UNRWA for its continued efforts and its support to Gazans displaced during the conflict.

Economic growth in the Occupied Palestinian Territories remains vital to give hope to the Palestinian people. For too long it has been stifled. We call on the Palestinian Authority and Israel to resume dialogue on economic issues, to re-convene the Joint Economic Committee, and to address the financial and COVID crises together.

We applaud the efforts of all who have engaged the parties since the ceasefire to try to find a political way forward. We welcome calls for equality of safety, security, freedom, peace and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis.

To conclude, Mr President, a longer-term political horizon is essential. Recent events must galvanise us all in our commitment to achieve a two-state solution that ensures a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a Palestinian state, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem the shared capital of both states – the only solution that we believe can end the cycle of violence and deliver a just and sustainable peace.

Thank you, Mr President.

Investigation into the Origins of COVID-19: Statement by Ambassador Simon Manley

World news story

The UK's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Simon Manley, voiced UK support for a WHO-convened Phase Two COVID-19 origins study.



Ambassador Simon Manley said:

“Phase one of the WHO-convened COVID-19 origins study was always meant to be

the beginning of the process, not the end. We call for a timely, transparent, evidence-based, and expert-led phase two study, including in the People's Republic of China, as recommended by the experts' report."

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