

A net-zero special



According to the Met Office, globally 2023 was the warmest year stretching back to 1850, when records began. Each month from June to December in 2023 was warmer than the corresponding month in any previous year.

The high temperatures experienced in many countries led to floods, droughts, and forest fires which are becoming more common. As the production of greenhouse gas emissions contributes to the problem this provides even more impetus for us all to take action.

To avoid critical changes in our biosphere, it is crucial that we keep global warming to under 1.5°C. To do so, companies, governments and people around the world need to collaborate by taking ambitious climate action to reduce and if possible, reverse the damage humans have caused.

'Net-zero' means balancing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions we put into the atmosphere with the amount we're able to take out.

Around 90 countries have set net-zero targets typically for around 2050 but there are only 25 years until this deadline.

The Government's 2023 Net-Zero Growth Plan set out an update to the existing strategies, focusing on the scale up and deployment of technologies for

decarbonising homes, power, industry and transport.


An obvious step is to reduce emissions by changing our actions and processes. What we buy is linked to climate change because there's a carbon cost to every purchase. So, by buying less, reusing, repairing, and refurbishing more we'll not only save money, but help to reduce emissions too.

It is essential to consider both Local Air Quality (LAQ) and Green House Gas (GHG) simultaneously, as they are not mutually exclusive, and new technology may not include non-exhaust emissions.

Freight in terms of the wider discussion of net-zero and LAQ is sometimes ignored, despite being disproportionately significant. Some major freight operators have been thinking about net zero for some time and may have a climate action plan with a roadmap to net-zero, others are also building in science-based targets. But for many smaller companies and owner-operators trying to address the issue is very daunting with various factors to consider. There has been a big focus on new vehicles,

with too-little discussion around how, where and when used vehicles are operated. Some companies cannot afford to buy new vehicles and there is a great deal of uncertainty about the second-hand market. This is one of many issues to consider over the years to come.

Our Environmental & Sustainability Forum has been looking at various ways of reducing carbon emissions in what we do for many years such as looking for efficiencies in operations and considering alternative fuels. Our most recent event was hosted by Wincanton at their Innovation Centre where they discussed their roadmap to net-zero for both transport and warehousing. More on this can be found in the events write-ups.

We hope the many articles in this edition of *Focus* will contribute to your understanding of this complex and vital matter. 

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