

PRESS RELEASE
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Water industry launches world's first sector-wide plan to deliver net zero carbon emissions by 2030

Water companies have unveiled a ground-breaking plan to deliver a net zero water supply for customers by 2030 in the world's first sector-wide commitment of its kind.

The Net Zero 2030 Routemap sets out the industry's vision for how water companies, which together produce almost a third of UK industrial and waste process emissions, will play their part in tackling climate change by reaching net zero two decades ahead of the UK Government's legally binding target of 2050. By joining forces in this way, the sector expects to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 10 million tonnes.

The Routemap offers a 10-point plan for decarbonisation including recommendations for government and regulators that will help protect customer bills and keep investment costs down while supporting the development of green skills and nature-based solutions as part of the economic recovery.

Water UK Chief Executive Christine McGourty said: "This Routemap is a crucial step forward in setting out the industry's vision for tackling climate change as we work towards a green and resilient recovery for society, the economy and the environment.

"We don't have all the answers, and we can't do it alone. But with the support of government, regulators and the supply chain, we believe we can deliver a net zero water supply for customers that also helps build the green skills and solutions needed to protect the environment for generations to come."

The industry's plan is being launched today at a high-profile virtual event that will bring together speakers from the water industry alongside a variety of senior decision-makers and environmental experts.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said: "The ambitious plans set out by water companies are in the vanguard of climate action. The pursuit of low carbon outcomes, combined with the recovery of the natural environment, set a powerful example of the kind of integrated solutions we need to adopt in rising to the twin challenges of global heating and Nature decline".

The Net Zero 2030 Routemap identifies a variety of technologies and initiatives that will be needed including:

- The production of biomethane from sewage waste, allowing green gas to be injected into the grid to heat up to 150,000 homes and/or for use as an alternative fuel for transport
- The development of up to 3GW of new solar and wind generation capacity – enough power to meet 80% of the sector's electricity demands

- The restoration of 20,000 hectares of owned peatland and grassland, and planting of 11 million trees
- The electrification of 100% of passenger vehicles and transition of 80% of commercial vehicles (LGVs and HGVs) to alternative fuels.

The development of the Routemap builds on the significant progress made by the sector in recent years, having almost halved operational emissions since 2011 through a combination of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy generation, and the production of biomethane from sewage treatment processes.

But as an industry that provides one of the most vital natural resources to over 26 million households and businesses every day, water companies know there is more to do. The new Routemap underlines the sector's long-standing commitment to society and the environment through the use of renewable energy, sustainable management of our land, and dedicated programmes to support vulnerable people and local groups.

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Notes to editors

Further speaker quotes

Liz Barber, CEO of Yorkshire Water, said: "Climate change has a profound impact on public water supplies and the way in which we manage the impact of waste on the environment. In Yorkshire over the last few years, extreme weather events have cost over £200 million, from managing flooding through to prolonged periods of dry weather. It is only right therefore that water companies should be at the forefront of efforts to reach net zero but we need support from government and regulators to allow us to invest at the levels which will be necessary."

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said: "The water sector's plan for net zero by 2030 shows significant ambition. If it is coupled with a matching effort to reduce pollution incidents, and prepare the country for climate impacts like floods and droughts, then water companies will not only lead industry, they can transform the environment in just 9 years. The Environment Agency supports this and is ready to help."

Darren Moorcroft, CEO of the Woodland Trust, said: "Stepping up to becoming net zero by 2030 is a big challenge for one of the most energy-demanding services that society demands from our natural environment. In using nature-based solutions, the water industry will demonstrate not only how it will meet that #NetZero challenge, but deliver multiple additional benefits for all users of this precious natural resource."

Heidi Mottram, CEO of Northumbrian Water, said: "There is no greater threat to our environment right now than climate change and reducing carbon emissions is a key battleground if we are to overcome that challenge. We are standing up to take on this challenge head on, as the first sector in

the world to have a detailed plan to get to net zero. It is also a plan that makes it clear that improving our natural environment also has real and long-term benefits in reducing carbon usage – making treatment easier, less reliant on high-carbon use processes and with less by-products. Our Net Zero Routemap is a recognition that the challenges of innovating to tackle climate change and deliver environmental improvement are inextricably linked – as is our determination to make a real impact.”

Peter Simpson, CEO of Anglian Water said: “I’m incredibly proud to be part of the industry leading the charge to reach carbon net zero by 2030. Climate change is the biggest challenge we will ever face and there are no silver bullets for success or quick fixes to achieve long term benefit. Setting ambitious and challenging targets allows us to disrupt established practices in the bid to reach our goal. The time is now for collaborative innovation and investment in the infrastructure, technology and equipment we need for a resilient and secure future, for our country and for our planet.”

Beccy Speight, CEO of the RSPB, said: “Our waterways are the lifeblood of our environment and effective water supply is essential for human health. We think of our rivers, canals, lakes and wetlands and the land that surrounds our reservoirs as beautiful landscape features, but they are also the vital ecosystem that supplies our clean drinking water, provides a home for our precious wildlife and, in good condition, can help tackle the climate crisis by storing huge amounts of carbon. It is crucial for our future and in order to deliver on its own commitments that the government gives the water sector the support it needs to decarbonise and help reverse nature’s decline. With 15% of UK species at threat of extinction, the nature crisis must be tackled with the same urgency as the climate crisis.”

Nigel Topping, UK High-level Climate Champion for COP26, said: "Setting ambitious goals is a crucial part of how we take successful climate action, and Water UK is proving this with the target to reach net zero two decades ahead of the Paris Agreement. By taking these steps as an industry towards decarbonisation, they will accelerate the pace of the Race to Zero within the water sector and beyond."