

Do more, faster, together

Joint declaration by the UK's co-operatives in the run up to COP26

Our pledge

We pledge to take effective climate action, in our own businesses and as a co-operative movement.

Because we are co-operatives

We are co-operatives, owned by millions of members across the UK. We do business with concern for our communities and our planet. And we are very, very concerned.

We urge all governments, businesses, communities and individuals to take effective action, now, to avert a climate catastrophe.

Co-operatives exist for their members and communities, so must prioritise climate action, taking responsibility and slashing our emissions.

Two thirds of co-operatives are taking action to reduce their carbon emissions and of those taking action, one in five has net zero targets,¹ Our largest retail and worker co-operatives are leading the way, but we are under no illusions about the scale of the challenge ahead.

The co-operative sector is at the beginning of its journey and has to redouble its efforts. There is no more time to waste.

¹ A race to net-zero: The role of co-ops in driving climate action post-COP26. Co-operatives UK commissioned research consultancy Priestley in September 2021 to analyse online survey responses from 88 SME co-ops and conduct an independent review of climate action published on websites belonging to the top 100 largest co-ops by turnover as listed in Co-operatives UK's Co-op Economy Report 2021.

Collective action

Because we are co-operatives, we know collective action, among business and within communities, is going to be critical to a fast, effective and socially just transition to net zero. Businesses need to work together and with all their stakeholders to make systemic changes. As co-operatives, we are using the special relationships we have with our customers, workers, suppliers and communities to do just this.

Consumer co-operatives are tapping into their large membership bases, mobilising thousands of members to take climate action on their own and in their communities. For example, The Co-op Group is bringing businesses together in a new renewable energy buying group.

Communities across the world are also forming co-operatives to drive societal change, often in ways markets and governments cannot. For example, Loco Home Retrofit is harnessing community-based innovation to decarbonise homes in Glasgow, while Kenyan credit co-operative ANUSACCO is providing financial mechanisms for members to buy sustainable products like energy saving stoves and solar panels.

Fairness and justice

Because we are co-operatives, we are working for fair and just transition. Solving the climate emergency cannot come at the expense of those who can least afford it. If we try, we can build a global economy that engenders widespread wellbeing within safe planetary boundaries.

Because we are co-operatives, we are striving to do what is required. But we are tired of being undercut by competitors on environmental and ethical standards. This has to stop. It is not fair to punish those taking action – while other businesses put profit over planet.

Governments must require more of business. But they also need to make it easier and simpler for businesses to act.

Our asks of government

We are calling on the UK government to:

- Provide leadership and make interventions to ensure a level playing field that enables, encourages and incentivises all businesses to take urgent action to achieve net zero,
- Make end-to-end carbon footprint reporting mandatory for all large businesses.
- Simplify the complex landscape of environmental metrics, reporting standards, regulations and guidance to make it easier for ALL businesses to take effective climate action.
- Ensure ALL businesses can access comprehensive advice and support to help them develop and implement effective strategies for reducing and eliminating emissions. Support must include paid-for and subsidised advice, grants and green enterprise finance schemes, starting with adequate provision in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Start harnessing the power of community and co-operative action as enablers in net zero strategies where there are societal and behavioural challenges, including energy usage, home retrofit and low carbon consumption.
- Provide global leadership for a just transition, ensuring everyone makes a fair contribution and the poor and vulnerable are supported and empowered, including by supporting UK businesses to invest in climate resilience and a just transition in their global supply chains.