

## **UK Business Group Alliance for Net Zero (BGA) - launch event webinar**

### **[Six-months to COP26: Accelerating UK business action in the Race to Zero](#)**

**Thursday 29 April, 1.30-2.30pm BST**

## **Summary notes**

### **Eliot Whittington, (Chair), Director, UK Corporate Leaders Group (CLG UK)**

Eliot welcomed the audience on behalf of the UK Business Group Alliance for Net Zero (BGA) team to the formal launch of the group and provided an introductory background on the BGA. The event was also a great opportunity to celebrate British business leadership committed to delivering on the UK's net zero targets. Eliot talked about the Race to Zero global campaign opened to businesses, investors and other non-state actors committed to decarbonize the world economy. The campaign is strongly supported by the UK Government and the BGA's mission is to help increasing sign-ups to Race to Zero. The UK was the first economy to set a net zero target and is hosting COP26 this year, hence the importance of getting more involved with this initiative. Eliot also mentioned that the Corporate Leaders Groups (CLGs) were lucky enough to become official Race to Zero Accelerators, thus well placed to urge other businesses to join the campaign.

### **Andrew Griffith MP, The UK's Net Zero Business Champion**

Andrew echoed Eliot's enthusiasm on the CLGs Race to Zero Accelerators status proving that business is the solution and not the problem to tackling climate change and that the British business community can celebrate being largely engaged with almost half of it having joined the global Race to Zero campaign. This will help making COP26 a success but more needs to get done ahead of the global climate summit. He reminded the audience of his role to champion the efforts that businesses are making on these commitments and bringing to market new technologies to solve critical problems to reach 2050 net zero target. Andrew also promoted the SME Climate Hub devoted to smaller businesses interested in joining the Race to Zero campaign, he encouraged business of all sizes not to get scared by the decarbonisation journey, to partner with other organisations and exploit plenty of resources available to support them.

### **Thierry Garnier, CEO, Kingfisher**

Thierry stressed the urgency of climate action and the need to act fast as we only have 5-10 years to make an impact and that it is necessary to look at short term actions and targets to deliver on net zero by also partnering with other businesses globally. Kingfisher is a great example of a business committed to become forest positive and to move from 2 degree to 1.5-degree SBT as natural steps to join Business Ambition to 1.5 and the Race to Zero campaign.

### **Clare Harbord, Group Director of Corporate Affairs, Drax**

Clare emphasised the importance of technologies like BECCS and renewables in the journey to decarbonisation. Drax is a great example of a business that has recently joined the Race to Zero campaign by building on existing commitments such as becoming the first carbon negative company by 2030. Clare

introduced Drax work within the Coalition for Negative Emissions to build back better as part of a sustainable and resilient recovery from the pandemic and called on government and other businesses to be part of this great initiative.

**Robin Mills, Managing Director, Compass Group UK & Ireland**

Robin shared his thoughts on the relevance of teamwork and collaboration with the Compass Group supply chains and clients and how the journey to net zero is not creating additional work for the company as it is central to its core business, thus it is something to embrace with enthusiasm. He also pointed out that taking the first step is the most difficult part of this journey that can seem complex, but a simple idea can encourage businesses to get started and step forward.

**Ron Gerrard, Chief EHS and Operations Officer, Johnson Matthey**

Ron stated that Johnson Matthey is a proud FTSE100 British leading company focusing on catalyst solutions to reduce emissions and pollution. He highlighted the central role of technology and collaboration to go faster and further along the journey to decarbonisation also for progressive companies like Johnson Matthey by exploiting more renewables, green hydrogen and circularity.

**Rain Newton-Smith, Chief Economist, CBI**

Rain acknowledged that 2021 is a crucial year for the UK and the world in tackling climate change. The UK's presidency of the G7 Summit and CBI leading on the B7 Summit are important milestones on the road to COP26 and to recover from the pandemic, and they are also great opportunities for businesses to showcase progressive climate leadership. Companies of all sizes need to embark on the net zero journey and smaller business can exploit the SME Climate Hub as a great tool to make a dynamic transition to a low carbon economy.

**Amanda Mackenzie, CEO, BITC**

Amanda clearly expressed that collaboration is more important than competition and that learning from each other's mistakes to accelerate to get to next zero is essential. She explained that BITC is supporting its members along this journey, particularly those that find it difficult and that it is also crucial to think about the related impacts on the wider community.

**Peter Simpson, CEO, Anglian Water**

Peter provided an inspiring perspective on the crucial role of nature-based solutions and on the interconnection between climate change and the tragic loss of biodiversity, thus we must work with nature and adopt a holistic approach that attributes to nature its vital role. Anglian Water together with all the other water companies in the UK have signed up to net zero and they do collaborate with each other, their supply chains and have set an ambitious roadmap. Peter encouraged all the other businesses to follow this positive example.

**Paul King, Managing Director, Sustainability & Social Impact - Europe, Lendlease**

Paul explained that Lendlease is working on creating zero carbon places fit for the future and has invested in sustainability by signing up to the TCFD that has triggered a transformative effect on its business model. The company is taking great steps in the right direction by for example eradicating diesel, increasing renewables and it is working on the biggest challenge of scope 3 emissions upstream and downstream by working closely with the UKGBC, small, micro and big businesses.

**Conclusion:**

Eliot concluded the webinar by calling on businesses to sign-up to Race to Zero and to look at the related routes like Business Ambition to 1.5 and the SME Climate Hub. He anticipated that further guidance on the campaign will be provided over the year, and more events and initiatives will be organized in the run up to COP26 including London Climate Action Week and others. He thanked once again the audience totalling almost 200 participants from a wide range of organisations, including energy providers, water services, government departments, academia, financial services and NGOs.