**UK health services make landmark pledge to achieve net zero**

All 4 UK health services have united to commit to net zero carbon emissions, Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid has announced.

* All UK health services commit to become net zero and build climate resilience through COP26 Health Programme
* Opportunity seized to cut global carbon footprint as health systems account for 5% of global emissions
* 47 countries globally agree similar ambitions as part of COP26 Science and Innovation Day

All 4 UK health services have united to commit to net zero carbon emissions, Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid has announced today.

This ambitious move by all nations is happening alongside 47 countries – including the United States and Germany – who are pledging landmark commitments to develop climate resilient, sustainable low-carbon health systems.

Currently, health systems are substantial sources of greenhouse gas emissions – accounting for around 4.6% of the worldwide total – meaning if they were one country, health systems would be the fifth largest emitter.

The impacts of climate change represent the biggest public health challenge of this century, which could be felt around the world through greater water and food insecurity, extreme weather events and increased infectious diseases. These elements all threaten the capacity of health systems to prevent, adapt and respond to increased and new health risks.

For countries joining the UK COP26 Presidency’s Health Programme, they will ensure their health systems are resilient and able to withstand such environmental shifts to continue to deliver care for patients.

Each of the 4 health systems across the UK have already started work on being greener, with more ambitious plans already underway to be well ahead of the UK government’s commitment of the entire country being net zero by 2050.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

As a health community, we cannot simply sit on the sidelines – we must respond to climate change through urgent action, with global collaboration at its core.

I am delighted that all 4 UK health services are pledging to become net zero and it is brilliant news that dozens of countries have joined the UK in committing to reduce carbon emissions from their health systems – significantly cutting greenhouse gas output around the world.

The UK government is investing over £280 million in decarbonising the NHS estate in England through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, with a further £1.425 billion in funding confirmed for the whole public sector across this Spending Review period.

The commitments are made as part of the UK’s COP26 Presidency alongside healthcare systems across the world and in partnership with the World Health Organisation, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Healthcare Without Harm and others.

The Health Programme is a series of initiatives focusing on health sector leadership on climate change, including a focus on building climate resilient and sustainable health systems, as well as raising the voices of healthcare professionals who are advocating for stronger, more ambitious climate action.

**Background**

**England**

For the NHS in England, this will mean:

* working with stakeholders to establish how best to embed issues like net zero, biodiversity and climate resilience in the NHS Constitution for England, with a formal review in 2022 – this follows being the first health service in the world to commit to being net zero by 2045
* a zero-emission fleet, with the world’s first zero-emission ambulance capable of travelling 300 miles before being charged unveiled at COP26
* all NHS suppliers will need to publish a carbon reduction plan
* over £330 million investment in climate-smart healthcare and low-carbon hospitals, improving energy efficiency, cutting carbon emissions and tackling climate change
* a new net zero healthcare building standard will be published and be applied to the existing commitment to build 48 new hospitals before 2030
* ensuring health resilience is at the heart of the low-carbon transition, publishing the third UK Healthcare Adaptation Report and with the UK Health Security Agency publishing its Single Adverse Weather Plan

**Scotland**

For the NHS in Scotland, this will mean:

* becoming a net zero carbon emissions health service by 2045, with the ambition to bring this forward to 2040 after consultation on its draft NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy
* all NHS Scotland owned buildings to use renewable heat by 2038
* working towards zero emissions of medical nitrous oxide by 2027
* all NHS Scotland small and medium vehicles to be net zero by 2025
* reviewing NHS Scotland supply chains and taking action to reduce their negative impacts while promoting positive effects
* developing a Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy setting out action to achieve sustainability targets
* preparing net zero route maps for all 22 Scottish health boards by the end of 2022 and align these with climate risk assessments and adaptation plans
* all new buildings and major refurbishments to be carbon neutral

At his speech to NHS Scotland’s Sustainability Conference on 10 November, Scotland’s Health and Social Care Secretary, Humza Yousaf is expected to say:

The climate emergency is not just an environmental crisis – it is also a public health crisis.

I am determined to help the NHS cut emissions and create an environmentally and socially sustainable health service. Working together, we can realise the benefits for people’s health that a healthy natural and social environment can provide.

**Wales**

For the NHS in Wales, this will mean:

* NHS Wales and social care is committed to the ambition for the public sector in Wales to be collectively net zero by 2030
* by 2025, all lighting across the NHS Wales estate will be LED
* reducing emissions will be part of all new procurement contracts for major suppliers to NHS Wales
* by 2030, the Welsh Ambulance Service will aim for all new ambulances to be plug-in electric or low-carbon fuel
* low carbon heating will be used in all NHS Wales new builds and renewable energy will be generated on site by 2030
* delivery of the NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan

Health Minister Eluned Morgan said:

Heath and social care in Wales has a crucial role in contributing to our collective ambition to reach net zero by 2030. We know how tirelessly our NHS and care staff have worked throughout the pandemic and that further winter pressures lie ahead. However, the climate emergency has not and will not go away and must be responded to with the same urgency that the pandemic has required of our sector.

This challenge has already been embraced across the NHS and in social care in Wales and I have been impressed by the dedication shown by healthcare professions who are driving this agenda forward and developing their own initiatives to help their healthcare settings run more sustainably.

**Northern Ireland**

For health and social care in Northern Ireland, this will mean:

* developing a sustainable and low carbon health system to help meet NI emission targets
* producing an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions and subsequent action plan for the health and social care system, consistent with the Northern Ireland Executive’s Green Growth strategy
* influencing supply chains to reduce their carbon emissions in supplying health and social care
* a continual programme of assessing the health system’s vulnerability to climate change and identifying adaptations required for resilience

Northern Ireland Health Minister, Robin Swann, said:

It is important that all nations, including Northern Ireland, contribute to collective efforts to tackle climate change. I believe that transitioning to more sustainable and resilient healthcare systems will deliver improved health for all our citizens now and for future generations to come.