

The impact of Oh Yes! Net Zero

If it's tricky to accurately and reliably record carbon emissions for a region or city at present, how do we measure the impact of the carbon reduction measures we're taking in Hull?

Our answer is to look at what we can actively support which would serve as a leading indicator – something that, if monitored, could reliably predict outcomes in the future. We believe that tracking the number of members who have produced a carbon reduction plan (CRP) meets this criteria.

Organisations with CRPs have calculated their carbon footprint and have worked out the best way to start targeting their carbon reduction efforts. They've identified changes they can make and, importantly, they've put dates against them. They have made a commitment to do something and said when they will do it.

We know if a CRP is implemented, a reduction in carbon will follow, and will be measurable.

This is why we have set a target of one in two of our members having a CRP by 2025.

Membership growth

At our launch in 2022, we were looking for 30 companies to sign up, and 70 did. After two years we have over 180 member organisations. By the end of 2025, we're anticipating this growing to 225, meaning approximately 62,200 employees will be behind us.

We're seeing continued organic growth over a broad range of sectors, providing a varied base of knowledge for all members to draw upon. Although 70% of Hull's largest organisations are members, our focus is on Hull's SME population.

Our member pledge



Commit






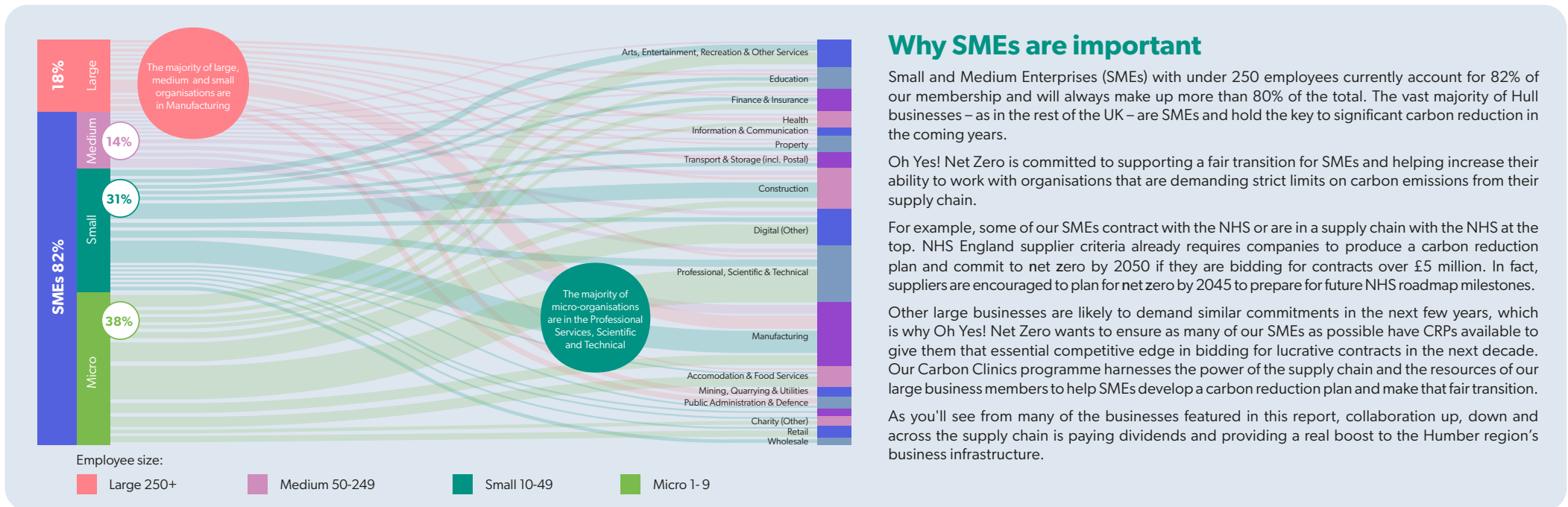
Champion



Collaborate

2025 Key performance indicators

- 225 Total Oh Yes! Net Zero members 
- +80% Percentage of members who are SMEs 
- 1 in 2 Number of members with a Carbon Reduction Plan 



Why SMEs are important

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with under 250 employees currently account for 82% of our membership and will always make up more than 80% of the total. The vast majority of Hull businesses – as in the rest of the UK – are SMEs and hold the key to significant carbon reduction in the coming years.

Oh Yes! Net Zero is committed to supporting a fair transition for SMEs and helping increase their ability to work with organisations that are demanding strict limits on carbon emissions from their supply chain.

For example, some of our SMEs contract with the NHS or are in a supply chain with the NHS at the top. NHS England supplier criteria already requires companies to produce a carbon reduction plan and commit to net zero by 2050 if they are bidding for contracts over £5 million. In fact, suppliers are encouraged to plan for net zero by 2045 to prepare for future NHS roadmap milestones.

Other large businesses are likely to demand similar commitments in the next few years, which is why Oh Yes! Net Zero wants to ensure as many of our SMEs as possible have CRPs available to give them that essential competitive edge in bidding for lucrative contracts in the next decade. Our Carbon Clinics programme harnesses the power of the supply chain and the resources of our large business members to help SMEs develop a carbon reduction plan and make that fair transition.

As you'll see from many of the businesses featured in this report, collaboration up, down and across the supply chain is paying dividends and providing a real boost to the Humber region's business infrastructure.

Carbon Clinics



Partners in a joint ambition

SMEs are often less able than larger businesses to easily respond to new climate-related regulatory, policy and market changes, and have less influence over their own supply chains. When larger companies support and incentivise SMEs in their supply chain to make this transition fairly, everyone benefits. This is the idea behind Carbon Clinics.

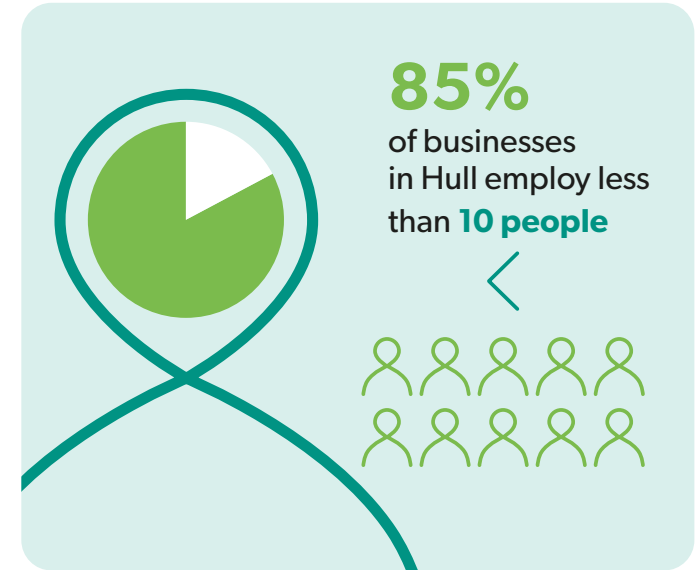
There are around 31,000 small and medium businesses in the Humber region, and the remarkable thing is that only 7% say they are not working towards reducing their carbon footprint.

That's one of the more surprising findings of a survey run in 2021 by the University of Hull's Aura Innovation Centre, one of the major partners in Oh Yes! Net Zero. "We were absolutely amazed at how small the proportion of completely inactive – in a carbon-reduction sense – SMEs there were in the region," says Aura's former director Louise Smith.

22% of businesses said they were 'fully active' in reducing emissions, with a further 46% reporting they were 'on the journey' with some way to go. But 85% of businesses in the region have under 10 people. "Companies of that size don't usually employ someone with the time or expertise to work out how to reduce scope 1 and scope 2 emissions," says Louise. "There are always more pressing operational challenges. They don't feel they have a lot of agency."

Bringing the knowledge and expertise of the companies who are already making changes to mentor and advise those who have yet to start in any meaningful way is the premise behind Carbon Clinics – an idea that emerged from a meeting of business members of Oh Yes! Net Zero. The Clinics bring two businesses together – usually a larger company inviting a smaller company in their supply chain to help kick start their net zero journey.

Global management consulting firm Partners in Performance (PiP) is working with Oh Yes! Net Zero on a pro bono basis to implement and guide the Carbon Clinic initiative. Together, we worked out a step-by-step process encompassing guided conversations where information is gathered, carbon footprints calculated, improvements identified, actions taken and progress monitored.



31,000
Small and medium businesses
in the Humber region



Carbon Clinics



Paying it forward

Importantly, the final step in the process is helping other companies in their supply chains do the same, as Louise explains:

“What we’ve found is that companies who have seen the benefits of reducing their carbon use and emissions have been ‘converted’ and they want to convert others. And even if companies aren’t convinced by the environmental argument for net zero, the business efficiencies and potential financial savings that ensue are pretty persuasive.”

It’s not a one-way street. As well as sharing experiences, the ‘big brother’ client and the ‘little brother’ supplier often have very useful conversations and develop a real understanding of each other’s challenges and how they could help each other.

For example, one supplier began to realise that by working together with their client to redesign a part to make it smaller, they could cut costs and carbon. Discussions are ongoing and, if it works out, they will collaborate earlier in the design process, and will probably have a closer and more productive working relationship.

The collaborative conversations facilitated by Oh Yes! Net Zero are making Humber businesses more aware of the ecosystem in which they operate. Supplier companies realise that their huge multinational clients often have the same challenges when it comes to measuring, understanding and taking action around their carbon footprint, but on a global scale. And client companies begin to understand that they can possibly achieve their carbon reduction goals faster by getting suppliers involved at an earlier stage.

“Collaborating with other businesses who have been there and done that can help companies who may find carbon reduction measures a challenge,” says Louise. “For example, they may think they can’t afford to swap to electric vehicles and cope with all the issues around where they re-charge the fleet and the initial outlay costs or purchasing the vehicles – but when they see the evidence around the reduction on cost in petrol and tax, the investment starts to make a lot more financial sense over the longer term, as well as being good for the environment.”



Louise Smith
Former Director
Aura University of Hull

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Supporting a local supply chain

The social impact of building low carbon supply chains in the Humber is undeniable in terms of employment and economies of scale.

We’re already a big player in offshore wind technology, but a local supply chain has been slow to get off the ground, with many of the top tier businesses in the sector still working to understand how they can encourage local SMEs in the lower tiers of the region’s supply chains to participate in this new industry.

However, Hull’s long history of working with composites (as the ‘British capital of caravan manufacturing’) has led to a wealth of readily transferable skills for wind power blade manufacture. This is one of the key reasons Siemens chose Hull for its offshore wind facility in 2014.

Humber companies need to recognise the opportunities there are in green tech, and the fact that students and young people living and studying in the region are keen to stay local and work in the low-carbon sector.

“Oh Yes! Net Zero is helping these companies think more broadly and deeply about the opportunities available, and showing top-tier green energy businesses that although they can buy directly from China, there are opportunities to buy local instead, right here in Humberside,” says Louise.

“If we are successful, this could create massive social impact by generating more well-paid jobs and opportunities, boosting the bottom line for the region’s businesses with less importing, fewer air miles and lower transport costs — and delivering a huge shot in the arm to the Humber’s Net Zero by 2050 ambitions.”

Carbon Clinics will be officially launched in the summer of 2024.

