



Kate Marsh

Interim Head of Income & Partnerships, Heart of the City

<https://theheartofthecity.com/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/theheartofthecity/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kate-marsh-7035002a/>

https://twitter.com/HOTC_UK

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SMEs and Net Zero

'Accelerating to Net Zero – the Challenges SMEs Face'

On day one of the conference **David Miliband** highlighted an absolute requirement for business to speak the truth and take actions that push change up the ladder rather than waiting for it to drip down. The message - to reach net zero, every inch of the UK needs to act, from large businesses all the way to micro businesses and into our personal lives.

Our experience of working closely with small and medium sized business (SMEs) for over 20 years in the responsible business field supports this principle. We know and see the power SMEs can have to encourage change.

This principle remains true when it comes to climate action. The passion and drive from SMEs to act is there; however, limited resources and a lack of expertise needed to make the necessary changes are so often the greatest barrier.

We hear SMEs say that net zero and the broader topic of climate action is daunting. The terminology, confident leadership and boardroom buy-in, understanding what makes up a company's carbon footprint and knowing where to get support in measuring emissions are just some of the challenges they're facing.

But with [SMEs making up 99.9% of all business across the UK](#), how can we better support them in accelerating their efforts to net zero?

- More collaboration. Greater landlord engagement and a collective approach between procurement and their supply chain could help improve sustainable practices. It was refreshing to hear innocent drinks' Douglas Lamont support a collaborative style of working, endorsing a business culture that encourages shared learning, helping businesses, large and small, all make more sustainable decisions.
- A network of SMEs in the same position. Tackling net zero will be much less overwhelming for SMEs if they know there are other businesses out there working towards the same goal and willing to share experiences.
- Clearer signposting and SME specific resources. Whilst there's a wealth of information, advice and tools available, better signposting to relevant resources and credible toolkits designed to the SME audience would be helpful. [Heart of the City's free course](#) for SMEs based or operating in the City of London has been designed specifically to help SMEs get to grips with this complex and often daunting topic. The course addresses the 'basics' of climate action following feedback from SMEs that this topic is complex and sometimes overwhelming. And the [climate action toolkit](#) is available for free online to any business that needs it, no matter where you're based.

It's not all scary though. We know the power that SMEs have in making an impact – we've seen them do incredible things in all areas of responsible business in the past 21 years! SMEs are really well placed to make innovative, quick changes in their operations and that's a huge benefit that a big business doesn't have. We know that SMEs can tackle net zero, and we can't wait to see them do it.