



COP26 – An Introduction & what will be happening in Glasgow

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What does COP 26 mean?

COP 26 stands for the 26th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#).

The Convention was initially signed in 1992 at the [Earth Summit](#) in Rio de Janeiro when the world's nations first reached agreement on the need to address climate change. It entered into force as an international legal treaty between nations in 1994.

A COP is a meeting of the countries that are Parties to the Convention, i.e. a [Conference of the Parties](#). A COP is held every 1-2 years. COP26 is therefore the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties since the Earth Summit in 1992. Delegations from countries that are party to the Convention come together to discuss, negotiate and advance climate actions.

The [Paris Agreement](#) was negotiated and adopted at COP21 in Paris in December 2015. The goal of the Paris Climate Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. COP26 will discuss progress between nation states on implementing the Paris Climate Agreement. Paris was important because all countries agreed to take action to deliver its goals, whereas the Kyoto Protocol (adopted 1997) put demands only on developed industrialised countries.

As well as the formal negotiations between governments (which is held in a badged and secure venue), the COPs are always accompanied by an enormous non-governmental, business and civil society event - a festival in its own right, rather like the Edinburgh Fringe sits alongside its more formal cousin. There are many events and locations and it is a great melting pot of ideas, debates, showcasing innovations, launching of reports etc. A COP therefore provides a focal point for action from all parts of society – whether intergovernmental, governmental, business, civil society, the research community etc. It can therefore act as a major catalyst for changed thinking and behaviour.

COP26: 31 October to 12 November 2021 in Glasgow

Different countries act as the host for a COP meeting (rather like the Olympics or the World Cup). The hosts for COP 26 are the UK in partnership with Italy. Glasgow is the host city. The event was postponed in 2020 but is taking place in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021. As the

principal host, the UK provides the President for COP26, this is [Alok Sharma](#), formerly the UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Glasgow COP26 Venues explained:

Activity at COP26 is primarily at two different locations in Glasgow – one designated the blue zone and the other the green zone. The blue zone is restricted access.

- **Blue Zone:** The main COP26 venue is the [Scottish Event Campus \(SEC\)](#). This is a UN managed space where the formal UNFCCC legal treaty negotiations between the delegations of 197 countries will take place. All attendees entering the Blue Zone must be accredited by the UN in advance (accreditation is now closed).
In addition, the blue zone is the venue for a range of official side events, panel discussions, exhibits etc, held in “pavilions”. The UK, as host, will be running a Presidency Programme in the blue zone and has a large Pavilion. The Buildings Pavilion is also in the blue zone and is jointly hosted by the [Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction](#) and the [We Mean Business Coalition](#).
- **Green Zone:** The open to the general public events are across the River Clyde at the [Glasgow Science Centre](#) and managed by the UK government, these are designated the [green zone](#). This “festival” part of COP26 is where the “*public, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, youth groups, charities, academics, artists and businesses from across the UK and all over the world*” will have space to host over 100 exhibits, 200 events, cultural performances, workshops and talks. See the programme of events in the green zone [here](#).
There are 11 principal sponsors of the green zone: Unilever, Sainsbury’s, Microsoft, SSE, Reckitt, Hitachi, Scottish Power, Sky, Natwest Group, gsk, national grid.
- **Other venues:** Outside of the official blue and green zones of COP26, many other organisations will have hired halls and venues across Glasgow and Edinburgh to convene their own event about what needs to happen to respond to climate change and what they are doing to address the issue.
There is also a large number of virtual online programmes run by a myriad of organisations.

The main strands of activity in Glasgow are:

- **The UN intergovernmental legal treaty negotiations between national delegations**

[COP26](#) is primarily the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#). National delegations will negotiate the business of the international legal treaty. High on the agenda for Glasgow is a review of countries’ [national actions plans](#) and whether they are ambitious enough to meet the 1.5 degree limit of the [Paris Agreement](#) to avoid disastrous climate change; as well as [finance](#) – will developed countries honour their pledge to transfer \$100 billion per year to the rest of the world to help counter climate change. The recent [climate finance pledge by President Biden](#) is part of that finance agenda; will Russia, China and other nations commit similarly.

Before the actual detailed negotiations take place, there will be a [high level political segment](#) with world leaders assembling in Glasgow on Monday and Tuesday 1-2 November. The UK as host of COP26 is seeking global pledges from world leaders on the phase-out of coal, the decarbonisation of transport, the curtailment of deforestation, and to encourage investment in

renewables. Finance is a key issue as the enabler of progress. Find the Treaty agenda [here](#). Find the Treaty negotiations Overview schedule [here](#). Link to the UK's COP26 goals [here](#) (other countries may of course have different goals).

Because of the focus COP26 brings, the UK government has been announcing various decarbonisation targets and publishing a whole array of decarbonisation strategies, whether on [industrial decarbonisation](#), [decarbonising transport](#), [hydrogen](#) etc. Still awaited is the Heat and Buildings Strategy which is expected to be issued before COP26 alongside the Treasury Net Zero Plan.

- **Industry, NGOs and Civil Society Festival / Trade fair events at COP 26**

Alongside the formal UN treaty negotiations between countries is a large programme of associated events. Some more formally associated with the negotiations than others. Some of these are in Pavilions located in the blue zone and hence have restricted access. Others are part of the large festival aspect of COP26 and take place in the green zone where there is open access. In addition, there are numerous informal events taking place at multiple venues across Glasgow, Edinburgh and elsewhere.

- As host, the UK is running a [Presidency Programme](#) this has a different theme each day, with the Built Environment Day on Thursday 11 November 2021. This programme will take place in the UK Pavilion in the blue zone (accessible only to accredited delegates and observers). The aim of the Presidency Programme is to “*showcase momentum from the whole of society, and focus on key issues to drive ambition and action*”. Find the Presidency Programme agenda [here](#).
- **Pavilion Events.** Throughout the two weeks of the COP, the official negotiations are accompanied by informal discussions held in “Pavilions” at the official conference venue (restricted blue zone). These are of differing sizes where any delegation or observer organisation can host events, showcase research and expertise, and have informal discussions with all official COP attendees. Pavilions may represent a geographic group, e.g the UK Pavilion (which will be large at COP 26), or the [EU Pavilion](#), or are thematic Pavilions such as on [Water](#), [Health](#). Some events in Pavilions will open up their discussions to an external audience by having an online element.

The Building Pavilion is co-located with the Business Pavilion for Climate Leadership and is located in the blue zone and is hosted jointly by the [Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction](#) and the [We Mean Business Coalition](#). There are a consortium of sponsors for this Pavilion including Saint-Gobain, Kingspan, Velux, Holcim. National Grid, Stora Enso, Mastercard etc

- **Green Zone events:** This is the open access festival aspect of the climate conference and is situated across the River Clyde from the treaty negotiations venue. Many groups and organisations are putting on events and launching reports. See the programme of events in the green zone [here](#).

Other events. There are many, many other events that are not officially COP26 taking place at many locations across Glasgow e.g. [The Sustainable Innovation Forum](#), Edinburgh and elsewhere.

Of particular note:

- The [World Green Building Council](#) is part of a [#BuildingToCOP26 Coalition](#) which aims to spotlight the role of the built environment in accelerating climate action; the coalition is running an extensive communications campaign and is supporting the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction in planning the content of the 11th November Built Environment Day.
- The UKGBC has developed a routemap to a low carbon built environment in the UK which it will launch on 11 November in Glasgow. UKGBC is in addition hosting a virtual online programme called [Build Better Now](#) with talks and exhibits throughout the duration of COP26.
- The [CLC's ConstructZero](#) is convening a 90 minute session on the morning of Thursday 11 November (09.30 to 11.00) in the green zone (at the Glasgow Science Centre in the cinema auditorium) at which it will showcase a range of net zero innovation and activities from UK companies and sectors as well as have an international dimension. Link [here](#).

Further reading:

- [COP26](#)
- [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)
- [Paris Climate Agreement](#)
- [Nationally Determined Contributions and the Paris Agreement](#)
- [UK Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement](#)
- The UK [Presidency Programme](#)
- [Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction](#)
- [We Mean Business Coalition](#)
- [World Green Building Council](#)
- [BuildingToCOP 26](#)
- [UKGBC Virtual Pavilion - Build Better Now](#)
- [SME Climate Hub](#)
- [CLC ConstructZero](#)
- [Race to Zero](#) and [Science Based Targets Initiative](#)
- [UK Business Climate Hub](#)

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