

MONTHLY ZCA CLEANTECH NEWS



The Cleantech Insight You Need

August 2026

Vol. 19

Editor's note

July was another busy month for the cleantech sector. The environmental impact of AI and data centres came under renewed scrutiny. Meanwhile, IRENA estimates that a renewable energy boom helped avoid around \$480 billion in fossil fuel costs last year, underlining the growing economic and energy security benefits of the transition. Closer to home, several major stories emerged in the UK. These included plans for a fleet of small modular reactors (SMRs) capable of meeting up to 11% of the nation's energy demand, and confirmation that plug-in solar devices will soon be available to UK consumers through major retailers.

As we move into August, the countdown is on to **ZCA's annual Cleantech Awards** this October. Entries are now open, and we look forward to recognising the innovators, pioneers, and organisations driving meaningful change across the cleantech sector. If you're helping to shape a more sustainable future, submit your entry and join us in celebrating the industry's achievements.

We've moved:

ZCA has moved! You can now find us at www.zca.solutions, and for any inquiries send us a message: hello@zca.solutions

\$480 BILLION IN FOSSIL FUEL COSTS AVOIDED DUE TO RENEWABLE ENERGY BOOM

Data from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has revealed that an estimated \$480 billion in fossil fuel costs were avoided last year due to a boom in renewable energy.

They suggest that renewables are also a major geopolitical shock absorber which is primed to enhance energy security and economic stability. IRENA estimates that more than 90% of utility-scale renewable capacity added in 2025 was cheaper than the lowest-cost new fossil alternative.

Cleantech Awards 2026

The ZCA is proud to launch the **third annual Cleantech Awards 2026**—celebrating the innovators, disruptors, and pioneers driving the clean technology revolution.

Are you transforming the future of food, energy, water, transport or industry? This is your chance to be recognised among the leading climate-tech changemakers. Register your interest [here](#)

Removing forever chemicals with Biolargo:

Environmental engineering firm BioLargo has been undertaking remediation work at Lake Stockholm in the US to remove PFAS (Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances) from drinking water. Known as 'forever chemicals' PFAS are built around one of the strongest bonds in organic chemistry, the carbon-fluorine bond. Biolargo's patented Aqueous Electrostatic Concentrator (AEC) has treated more than two million gallons of PFAS-contaminated water in six months. The technology removes more than 99% of PFAS chemicals in water, consistently exceeding state and federal requirements, and generates a fraction of the waste of conventional methods.

CLEANTECH INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT

BIG TECH UNDER SCRUTINY AS MICROSOFT REPORTS A 25% INCREASE IN EMISSIONS



Microsoft's latest Environmental Sustainability Report has revealed that the corporation saw a 25 percent jump in total emissions across scope 1, 2, and 3 for the financial year ending March 2026 . The corporation's emissions reached 20.3 million mtCO₂e (metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent) in 2025, up from 16.2 million in 2024. Microsoft has said that this growth was driven primarily by the expansion of data centre infrastructure.

It follows a similar trend seen in 2024, where Microsoft's 2025 Environmental Sustainability Report stated that new data centre builds had contributed to a 23.4 percent increase in the firm's carbon emissions since 2020 .

OFGEM DELIVERS BOOST TO UK LONG-DURATION BATTERY STORAGE

UK energy regulator Ofgem has delivered a major boost to the development of the nation's long-duration electricity storage (LDES) capabilities, with the announcement that it will advance 16 projects. LDES encompasses a range of technologies; ZCA previously explored how examples such as water batteries and sand batteries could ensure a stable renewables-based power system. Other forms of LDES, including liquid air energy storage (LAES), compressed air energy storage (CAES), Li-Lon, and flow batteries, are also being developed. Ofgem's provisional portfolio of 16 projects includes a mix of LDES technologies including pumped storage hydro, lithium-ion batteries, compressed air energy storage and vanadium redox flow batteries.



SMRs set to meet 11% of UK energy demand:

Polish group SGE (formerly Synthos Green Energy) have announced plans to construct 14 Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in the United Kingdom. The company has submitted an application under the UK's Advanced Nuclear Framework (ANF) to develop a combined 4.2GW fleet, which could deliver enough clean power to meet 11% of UK power demand. This would be equivalent to powering an estimated eight million homes for at least sixty years, the company suggests.

CLEANTECH INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT



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PLUG-IN SOLAR AVAILABLE TO UK HOUSEHOLDS FROM THIS MONTH

UK consumers will be able to purchase plug-in solar panels for their homes starting from this month. As of 27th August, major retailers including B&Q, Currys, Wickes, and ASDA, will be able to sell the devices which are designed to be used on balconies, terraces, and other small outdoor spaces. The date was confirmed in the recently published Plugs & Sockets legislation. Plug-in solar is already widely used by households across

Europe, with Germany seeing around half a million new devices plugged in per year. The free solar power can be used directly through a mains socket like any other device, without an installation cost, thereby reducing the amount of electricity taken from the grid and cutting energy bills.



BECOME A MEMBER OF ZCA TODAY!

Join ZCA and unlock the insights and tools you need to navigate the transition to a zero-carbon future.

Tiered subscriptions range from essential news and weekly digests, to in-depth research, historical analysis and expert support.

ZCA equips individuals and organisations to stay informed, make confident decisions, and lead in a rapidly evolving green economy.



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