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Editor's note

September highlighted the growing pace of innovation across the cleantech sector, from advances in critical mineral production, to progress in autonomous transport and fusion energy.

This month, we explore new research revealing that corporate demand for renewable electricity is beginning to outpace supply in key markets, alongside developments in UK climate resilience, commercial fusion energy, and autonomous mobility. We also spotlight innovations ranging from geothermal lithium production in Cornwall to next-generation robotics, highlighting the diversity of technologies helping to transform industries and strengthen energy security.

October marks an important milestone for ZCA as we prepare to unveil our annual Cleantech Report and Top 50, showcasing the organisations making the greatest impact across the sector. We will also be announcing the winners of the ZCA Cleantech Awards 2026, celebrating the innovators, pioneers, and changemakers driving meaningful progress towards a more sustainable future. We look forward to sharing the results with you in the weeks ahead.



CORPORATE DEMAND FOR RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY OUTPACING SUPPLY IN KEY MARKETS

While global businesses are making progress towards 100% renewable electricity, new research from RE100- a collective of businesses committed to 100% renewable electricity, warns that supply shortfalls are hampering adoption in many regions.

The initiative, which has over 440 members, ranging from household brands to manufacturing and materials suppliers, reports that collectively, members now run on 59% renewable electricity globally, enough to power Spain for a year. In addition, they purchase 65% of this from facilities set up within the past 15 years, underlining how companies are adding brand new, additional renewable capacity to grids.



Despite this progress, challenges persist. In RE100's latest annual disclosure report, companies targeting 100% renewables state that limited supply and cost are the biggest barriers in key markets, followed by a lack of procurement options, and regulatory barriers. Regional discrepancies are also present, with South Korea hosting the largest number of RE100 companies who say they're facing procurement barriers, followed by other Asian markets, including Singapore and Japan.

CLEANTECH INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT

European first, as GEL delivers 'technical grade' lithium carbonate on a commercial scale

In a European first, UK-based Geothermal Engineering Ltd (GEL) has announced that its lithium carbonate produced from deep geothermal brine now exceeds the 99.3% purity specification, meaning it can be classified as 'technical grade' material. The UK has set a target of meeting 10% of critical mineral demands from domestic production by 2035, including at least 50,000 tons of lithium carbonate. GEL expects to play a vital role, with production at its United Downs site in Cornwall forecast to hit 2,000 tonnes per annum by 2029. As other sites are added, the anticipated total production from GEL will increase to 30,000 tonnes per annum by 2033, meeting over 60% of the UK's lithium target.





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UBER AND WAYVE LAUNCH UK'S FIRST COMMERCIAL AUTONOMOUS RIDE- HAILING SERVICE



Uber and British technology partner Wayve have become the first to launch a commercial autonomous ride-hailing service in the United Kingdom. The government has estimated that the autonomous vehicle industry could add £42bn to the UK economy by 2035 and create nearly 40,000 new jobs.

As of last month, Londoners requesting an UberX, Uber Electric, or Uber Comfort may be matched with a Wayve ride at no extra cost, with upfront fares shown in-app. Initially all journeys will be 'supervised' with a human driver present and ready to take the wheel, should issues arise. Uber has said that over 140,000 users have already opted in to show their preference to use self-driving vehicles through the ride-hailing app, following Transport for London's decision to grant licenses for Uber's self-driving vehicles last month.



UK AND US SIGN AGREEMENTS TO ACCELERATE COMMERCIAL FUSION ENERGY



The UK and US have signed two new agreements to combine expertise in AI, computing and fusion, while also agreeing to cooperate on the regulation of fusion energy.

The two agreements were signed during the Global Fusion Summit and are designed to bring fusion power closer to reality, with the potential to deliver over 10,000 UK jobs in the sector by 2030.

The first agreement will launch a new supercomputing partnership between the UK Atomic Energy Authority and Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, combining world-leading expertise in AI, computing and fusion to accelerate

the development of commercial fusion. The second contains a Joint Statement between the UK and US committing to closer cooperation on regulating fusion energy, helping to attract investment and support growth of the sector.

CLEANTECH INNOVATION SPOTLIGHT

Evri launches trial of two-legged delivery robot in UK 'Tech Town' Barnsley

Evri has launched Europe's first trial of a two-legged autonomous delivery robot in Barnsley, England. The trial, in partnership with Japan-based Refined Robotics, will explore how advanced robotics can support couriers, enhance customer choice and help shape the future of parcel delivery. The two-legged robot has been designed specifically for outdoor last-mile deliveries. It can carry parcels weighing up to 15kg, travel at speeds of up to 6km/h and navigate real-world environments that can be challenging for traditional autonomous technologies, including climbing stairs, traversing uneven surfaces and entering and exiting delivery vans.





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UK FIRMS RAMP UP CLIMATE RESILIENCE INVESTMENT AS EXTREME HEAT BECOMES A BUSINESS RISK



The latest Business Prosperity Index from Barclays highlights the growing importance of climate adaptation for UK businesses. The most recent Q2 report reveals that almost two-thirds (60%) have increased investment, or are considering doing so, to adapt to extreme heat. The research found that almost one in four businesses (37%) have increased investment to adapt to extreme heat, while a further 23% are considering doing so.

The most common investment priorities include cooling and ventilation systems (28%) and energy efficiency measures (23%). At the same time, businesses are also changing their ways of working during periods of hot weather. Just under a third of companies (28%) said that they are introducing employee wellbeing measures such as additional breaks, while a further 23% said they are offering flexible or remote working, and 21% claimed that they are adjusting working hours.

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