

Riding Sunbeams wins global climate acclaim at COP26 and features in UK Government's Net Zero Strategy

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Pioneering solar rail company Riding Sunbeams has been given global recognition as a finalist in the Ashden Award for UK Climate Innovation. The Ashden Awards honour pioneering organisations lowering carbon emissions and building a fairer world. Finalists become part of the Ashden global network, receiving support to grow and replicate their innovation.

Riding Sunbeams was one of 18 finalists from around the world announced at the Ashden Awards on 4 November at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. They were chosen from over 800 applicants for their work creating resilience, green economies – including jobs and training – and fairer societies.

Riding Sunbeams' work was also recognised in the UK government's Net Zero Strategy announced last week, as a best practice case study in community energy.

Its vision is to power railways with unsubsidised, direct-wire renewable generation whilst delivering significant social impact for line-side communities.

Direct supply of solar power to rail traction systems had never been done. But it has huge potential for metros, trams and railways in the UK and around the world. After extensive feasibility work and research, Riding Sunbeams connected the first pilot solar traction array to the railway at Aldershot station in 2019 through its First Light project.

First Light proves that plugging solar directly into the UK railways can be done safely and without disrupting trains. It has paved the way for connecting the world's first ever MW-scale solar farm to the railways, the Selmeston Solar Rail Connection Project which is expected to be completed in 2022. Riding Sunbeams will offer communities and commuters, the chance to participate in the project and benefit from the clean energy powering their trains.

Ollie Pendered, Director, Riding Sunbeams, said: "The Riding Sunbeams team is very pleased that our pioneering work has been recognised at COP26 by Ashden and by the UK government in its Net Zero strategy.

"Our mission is to bring together the urgent need to decarbonise the railways with helping grow the community energy sector in the UK while delivering real social benefit for communities and commuters. We are all hoping fervently for global success at COP, and that our work will contribute to limiting temperature rises by paving the way for solar-powered railways across the world."

Climate solutions charity Ashden spotlights and supports climate and energy innovators in the UK and low-income countries that are delivering proven, ready-to-scale climate solutions. It works with businesses, non-profits and public sector organisations.

The Ashden Awards were launched in 2001 and this year's award ceremony was attended by Costa Rican President, Carlos Alvarado who gave the keynote speech.

World leaders and international organisations are gathering in Glasgow from November 1 to 13 to agree a global plan for tackling the climate crisis.

Harriet Lamb, CEO of UK-based Ashden, said: "The Ashden Awards have showcased bold, brilliant and ground-breaking initiatives at COP26. These incredible Ashden Award finalists show what is possible in the shift to a fairer low carbon future and should inspire world leaders to take decisive action to slash carbon emissions.

"The message to leaders at COP26 is clear – if they get behind such practical and proven climate solutions a zero carbon world is within our reach."

H.E. President of the Republic of Costa Rica Carlos Alvarado who hosted the Ashden Awards at COP26 in Glasgow said: "All the nominees to the 2021 Ashden Awards have chosen to lead by example. In Costa Rica we share the conviction that sustainable development goes hand in hand with economic growth, as well as a deep commitment to decarbonisation and to promote nature-based solutions to the climate crisis and biodiversity loss challenges we face. For that, I do believe the great endeavour of our generation is to abolish fossil fuels.

“In this pivotal moment for the future of humankind we also need to highlight trailblazing, inspiring efforts to build a better, liveable world for current and future generations. That is what the Ashden Awards are about.”

Photo credit: Riding Sunbeams