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What is net zero and why is it important

What is net zero?

The UK government has set a target to become carbon neutral – or achieve 'net zero' GHG emissions – by 2050.

What is the difference between carbon neutral, net zero, and carbon positive?

- Carbon neutral means you pay to 'offset' all of the carbon you release, by absorbing an equivalent amount from the atmosphere, for example through carbon capture and reforestation that is supported by carbon credit schemes.

- Net zero means not adding greenhouse gasses (GHG) to the atmosphere.

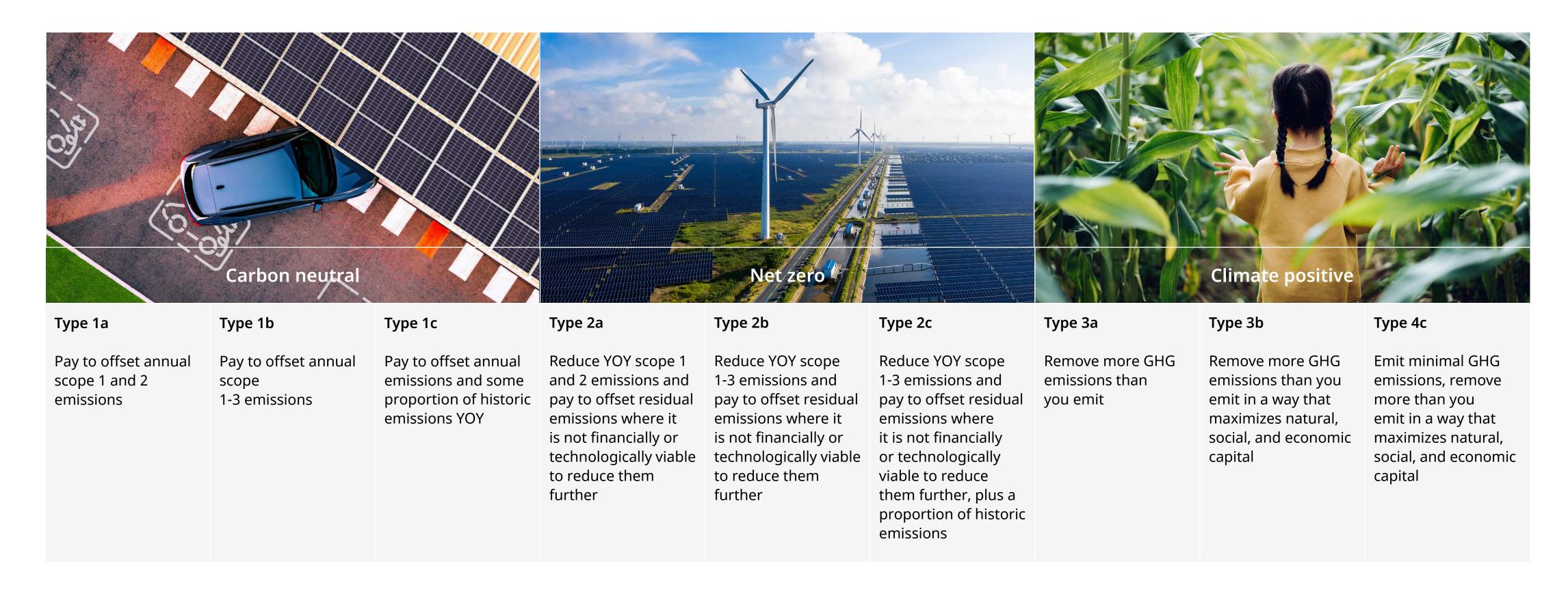- Carbon positive means you remove more GHG emissions than you emit.

Your organization will need the expertise, support, and cooperation of your people to achieve this goal. And we're here to help.

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Carbon neutrality, to net zero and climate positive behaviour

The BSI Net Zero Pathway approach has a greater focus on achieving emission reductions as a priority with off-set credits only being used to address residual emissions where it is not financially or technologically viable to reduce them further.

Carbon neutral			Net zero			Climate positive		
Type 1a	**Type 1b**	**Type 1c**	**Type 2a**	**Type 2b**	**Type 2c**	**Type 3a**	**Type 3b**	**Type 4c**
Pay to offset annual scope 1 and 2 emissions	Pay to offset annual scope 1-3 emissions	Pay to offset annual emissions and some proportion of historic emissions YOY	Reduce YOY scope 1 and 2 emissions and pay to offset residual emissions where it is not financially or technologically viable to reduce them further	Reduce YOY scope 1-3 emissions and pay to offset residual emissions where it is not financially or technologically viable to reduce them further	Reduce YOY scope 1-3 emissions and pay to offset residual emissions where it is not financially or technologically viable to reduce them further, plus a proportion of historic emissions	Remove more GHG emissions than you emit	Remove more GHG emissions than you emit in a way that maximizes natural, social, and economic capital	Emit minimal GHG emissions, remove more than you emit in a way that maximizes natural, social, and economic capital

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Importance of net zero

Net zero is a key objective for organizations wishing to:

- Help combat climate change

- Enhance your sustainability credentials and increase your resilience

- Align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

- Gain a competitive edge by offering customers greener products and services

- Improve business efficiency by cutting energy costs

Sources:

United Nations Race to Zero

BSI's Net Zero Barometer Report 2023

Met Office

YouGov 2022 research commissioned by BSI

2050
Is the UK Government's net zero target

1/3
of UK SMEs are extremely confident on how to reach net zero

51%
of larger UK organizations say net zero is a priority for them

94%
of UK consumers said proper verification of environmental claims was important to them

40.3°C
was the UK's highest ever recorded temperature, and took place in 2022

8,307
global businesses

have already made pledges to achieve net zero by 2050

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