

Applications open for Microsoft's AI for Environmental Sustainability Accelerator programme

Microsoft is looking for UK ventures to join their AI for Environmental Sustainability Accelerator programme. The programme, now in its fourth year, offers purpose-driven ventures in the UK the opportunity to advance their AI solutions to create positive environmental change.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Innovation and sustainability are two of the hottest buzzwords in startup culture, especially when they're paired together. Startups around the world are trying to turn unsustainable practises into sustainable solutions, and they're turning to innovative technologies to do so.

Climate tech and sustainable investment are no longer fringe practises, they are the new mainstream. Writing in his annual 'Letter to CEOs', BlackRock CEO Larry Fink said "the next 1000 unicorns won't be search engines or social media companies, they'll be sustainable, scalable innovators - startups that help the world decarbonise and make the energy transition affordable for all consumers".

Endorsement from the CEO of the world's largest asset manager for a market-based approach to mitigating the harms of climate change is both welcome and necessary.

Climate tech and sustainability-improving startups are needed now more

than ever. Recent research, completed by Microsoft, shows that only 41% of UK organisations are on track to reach the UK government's 2050 environmental sustainability targets.

If the UK is to stay on its path to net zero, supportive investment and industry guidance into *new technologies* is needed to help the fight against climate change.

Turning a good idea into a good startup

All good startups start with a good idea, but a good idea doesn't automatically make a good startup. A founder will need to successfully navigate the many stages required to get their startup up and running.

The *AI for Environmental Sustainability Accelerator programme* wants to help founders with nascent startups down the pathway to success. A joint-venture led by Microsoft, the Met Office, and the Social Tech Trust, successful applicants to the programme will receive aid and advice from experts in the fields of AI, technology, commercial development, and social impact, through four months of engaging talks, workshops, and 1-to-1s, alongside access to networking opportunities and funding support.

Clare Barclay, Microsoft UK CEO, has said that "the passion from entrepreneurs for solving some of the world's most critical and challenging societal issues is palpable. The combination of their ideas, what they'll learn from others and their development journey through this programme, is where I see the impact and the opportunity."

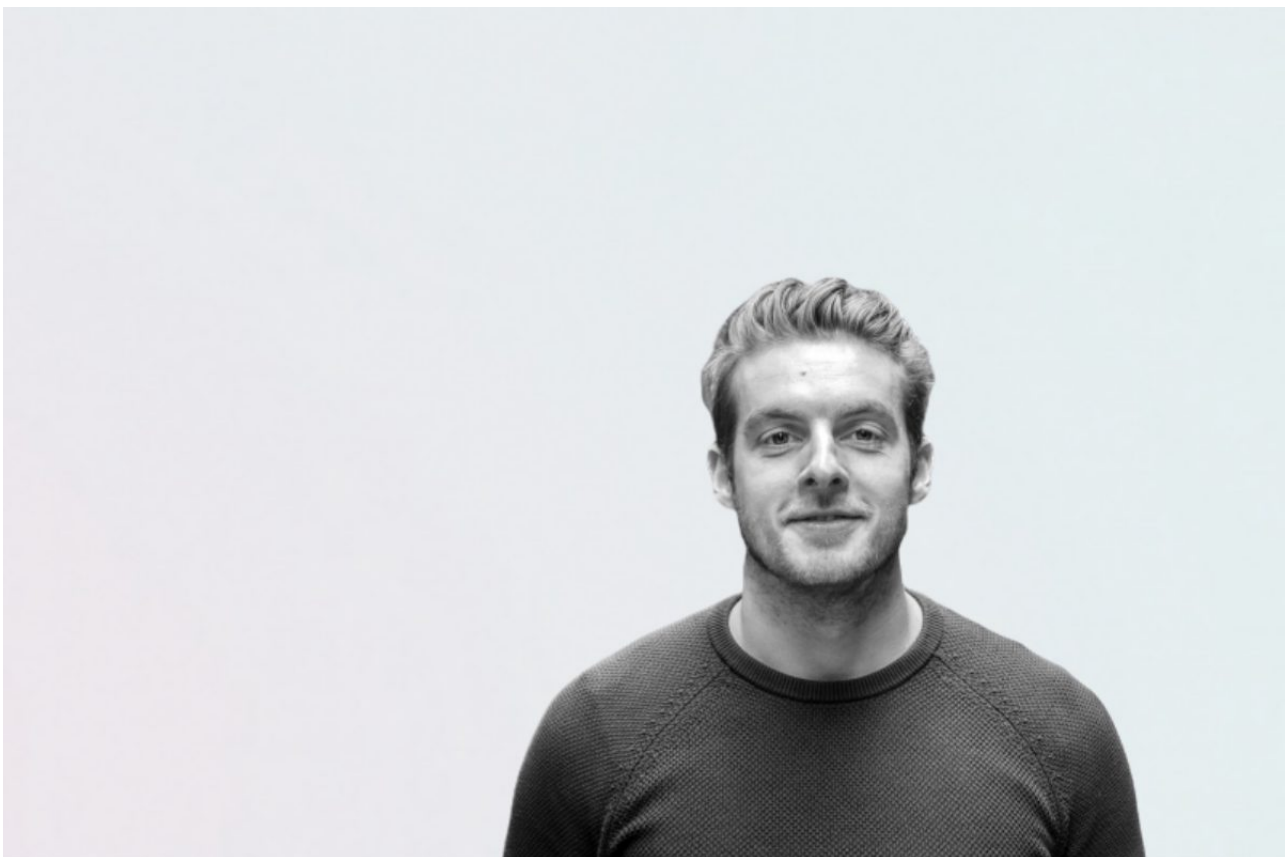
Success stories

Already, the AI for Environmental Sustainability Accelerator programme has helped *Recycleye*, a company that develops AI-powered rubbish-picking robots, *Hello Lamp Post*, a platform that aims to boost community

engagement through empathetic street objects, and *ThermaFY*, a company that develops thermal imaging software to capture thermal data.

Participants on the accelerator programme are bound by a want to solve complex environmental and social challenges through innovative technology, as opposed to being individuals working within a certain tech space or discipline. The result is a creative, complex, and textured group of like-minded founders who share idea and ideals about how the world could be made better.

Tiernan Mines, CEO and co-founder of Hello Lamp Post, an Accelerator programme alumnus, expanded on this point. “What really attracted us to the programme is that with Microsoft, there seems to be an alignment of missions and an alignment of purposes. It’s not just a programme of workshops and mentors, it’s actually about relationships”.

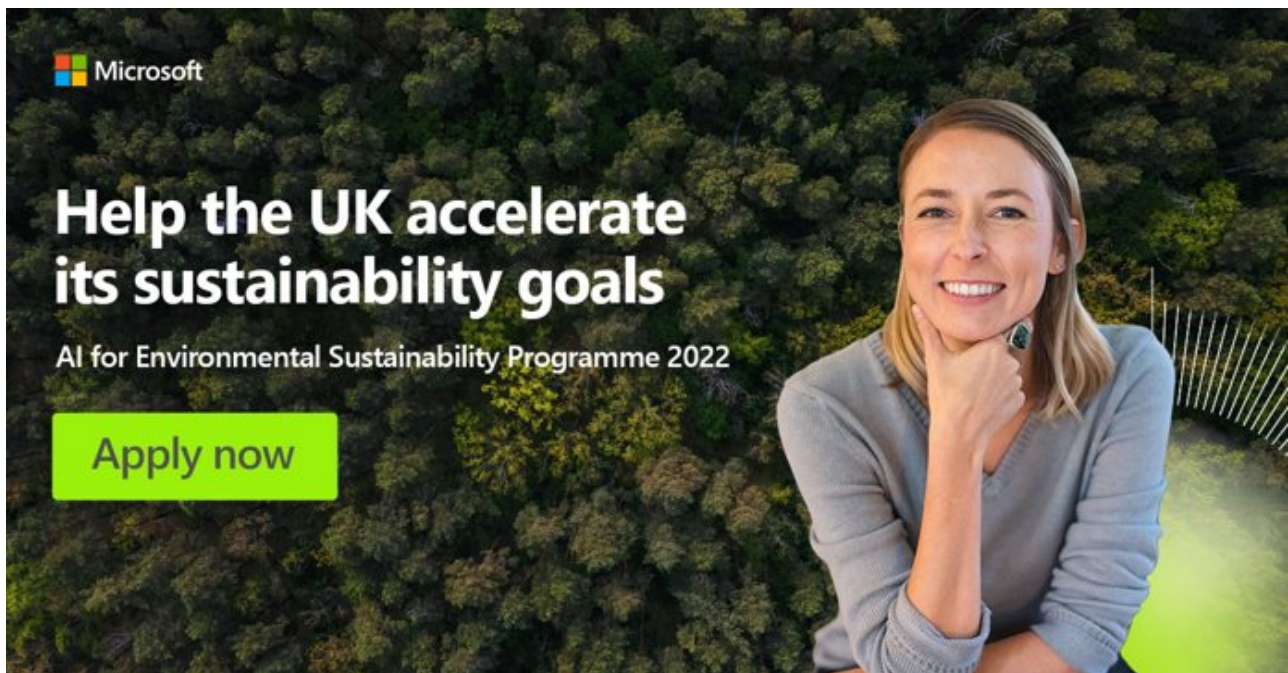


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Also speaking on the benefits of the programme, Amanda Pickford, founder of ThermaFY, a first-cohort alumnus, has said that the programme “fundamentally changed our business”, calling it “the most exciting opportunity any new startup can get involved with”.

The emphasis of the Accelerator is to enable startups to take the critical next step in their development journey by building relationships and connections that will prove vital in the funding process.



[Apply here](#)

An open door

The programme is open to those who fulfil the criteria as listed on the AI for Environmental Sustainability Accelerator [website](#). Importantly, applicants must align with one of the six categories within environmental

sustainability, be a registered UK company, and have an in-house tech lead who is committed to participate for the full duration of the programme.

Further, there is no monetary cost for applicants to join the programme. And neither Microsoft, The Met Office, nor Social Tech Trust take any equity in a participants' business. This removes any financial barriers to entry, protecting founders from *financial risk*.

Lucas Joppa, Microsoft's Chief Environmental Officer, recently *tweeted*: "My favourite pairing: innovation and sustainability." The AI for Environmental Sustainability Accelerator programme offers small UK ventures, who specialise in innovation and sustainability, the chance to grow, expand, and develop with the help of Microsoft UK.

The application process closes on the 20th February. Apply *here*.

Article by Maddyne, with Microsoft