

ACTION NET ZERO CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO HELP BRING ELECTRIC CAR MAKER RIVIAN TO THE SOUTH WEST

Latest news from Action Net Zero Bristol

Action Net Zero, the community interest company with the mission to help the city of Bristol embrace a greener future, has backed a call to encourage Amazon-backed car company Rivian to set up shop in the South West.

The USA based company specialises in making electric cars including larger SUVs (sports utility vehicles) and is apparently looking for a large UK or European base from which to manufacture its vehicles.

Rumour has it that the company is considering a large site close to J23 of the M5 in Somerset and, were it to make a decision to come to the South West, the move could bring thousands of 'green' jobs as well as establish a thriving supply chain.

Pam Barbato of Action Net Zero CIC said:

“The South West, already a leader in collaborative partnerships, could enable this to happen with the support of the government. The South West is a home for pioneering organisations, public and private working together to support sustainable design, production and supply, enabling the delivery of carbon neutral products and services.

“This is the perfect region for Rivian to deliver on its commitment of being carbon neutral by 2028.”

Rivian, based in California, says 'we believe there is a more responsible way to explore the world'. The company is looking to expand and were it to come to the UK it would create the biggest car manufacturing plant since the 1980s with an investment of around \$1bn in the UK economy.

However there are fears the UK could lose out to other possible European sites if the terms are not favourable – and agreed swiftly. One of the perceived weaknesses of the South West is the fact that Bristol is not a 'free' port.

A free port means it would be a designated zone where normal tax and tariff rules do not apply. There are currently eight free ports in the UK with only Plymouth in the South West. This has caused consternation for business leaders in the region who feel the move would accelerate growth especially in the green economy.

West of England mayor Dan Norris also sees big benefits to his West of England constituency of Rivian coming to the South West and, like ANZ Bristol, has been calling on the Government to act quickly.

He said: *“The Somerset site is a one-off and is ideal for this new plant. If we are serious about net zero, we should be seizing the moment to get these green jobs secured for the West of England and for Britain.”*

“It's the right location with Bristol port on the doorstep, and rail links ripe for improvement. The sheer size of the plant is something we have not seen before and would bring high skilled jobs directly and in the supply chain.”

“But time is of the essence. If Rivian don't choose Somerset they will announce a deal elsewhere in Europe very soon. That's why I am urging the Government to come up with the right package to secure the deal.”

Action Net Zero Bristol is currently running a campaign in Bristol around encouraging people to embrace greener transport from walking to cycling to driving electric vehicles. Its partners see Rivian as a fantastic opportunity in moving the city and region towards net zero.

One of those partners is Edwards, which has an R&D and manufacturing facility in Clevedon focusing on green, environmental solutions for the enabling microchip and display technologies you find in smartphones, laptops, notebooks, solar panels and televisions.

Dr Chris Jones, environmental business development manager said: *“As electric car sales increase, the importance of an environmental supply chain for production, and subsequent increase in the need of EV charging points, is going to be vital.”*

“Smart electric cars and EV charging will depend on semiconductors, information displays and potential solar power generation. Already in this region we are the leading environmental solution provider to the semiconductor, display, photovoltaic cell manufacture and LED industry. “Our company continues to grow and currently employs over 500 people in the South West.”

Another partner is Good Energy, based in Wiltshire.

Charlie Parry, who is head of investor relations at Good Energy and non-executive director at Zap-Map, said:

“Bristol and the South West is primed to lead the UK way in electric vehicles. It's a leader in tech and startups, with some of the best engineering, research and development talent in the UK.”

“It also has a long history of commitment to the environment and protecting our planet. Add to that the obviously advantageous geographical benefits and it's the perfect place for an EV manufacturing hub. As a leader in cleantech Good Energy has been proud to call the South West our home for over 20 years and would welcome Rivian to join us.”

Action Net Zero Bristol is a community interest company which seeks to bring together businesses and residents to help them live greener lives. It provides information on the green economy, green choices which people can make in their lives now and looks to a net zero future for all. To find out more about Action Net Zero visit <https://www.actionnetzero.org>

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EDITOR'S NOTES:

For more information or comment on the Rivian project by Action Net Zero Bristol CIC and any of its partners, please contact media consultant Fiona Scott on 07789 270030 or email fiona@fionascott.co.uk

Here are some alternative comments by Action Net Zero partners if needed:

“The South West is a superb choice for Rivian, and for the same reason it was the right choice for Co Charger: the commercial culture is spot on. This is why we are so pleased to be involved with the Action Net Zero project in Bristol: the spirit of innovation, collaboration and focus on outcomes means that the usual drags on progress are more easily overcome. In the South West politics, dogma and hidden agendas give way to companies genuinely working together to solve problems – particularly when it comes to e-mobility and sustainability. It is the perfect place to be if you’re a disruptive, collaborative and innovative company, and Rivian definitely fit that profile.”

Joel Teague
CEO, Co Charger Ltd (Exeter)

“Electrifying 4x4 vehicles is at the forefront of the electric revolution and Rivian are a front-runner. The South West has a history and tradition of innovation like Brunel’s Clifton Suspension Bridge - a first-of-a-kind in its day - and pushing forward electric vehicle technology n would be an opportunity to continue progressing science and engineering.”

Charlie Cook,
Founder, Rightcharge (London)