

Powering Sustainable Growth: Michael Smith Switchgear's Route to Net Zero

Michael Smith Switchgear Ltd is a family-owned manufacturer of LV switchgear assemblies and control panels. Founded in Leicester in 1985, it has doubled its revenue and workforce over the last decade while reducing its carbon footprint by half.

MSSL achieved Carbon Neutral status in 2022. It is currently about seven years ahead of the sector milestones set out Make UK 2050 Net Zero roadmap

MSSL has invested an estimated £620,000 in sustainability and innovation projects over the last decade. It has slashed carbon emissions, energy usage, and waste, while simultaneously improving employee wellbeing and safety.

The company has won numerous regional and national awards for its sustainability efforts and is recognised as an industry leader. This included being used as a case study in Government comms around COP26.

MSSL's success demonstrates that profitability and environmental responsibility can go hand in hand in quality UK manufacturing.

MSSL has undertaken a comprehensive approach towards Net Zero, with key actions spanning a decade.

2013 The sustainability journey began as a new leadership team initiated a focus on sustainable development. MSSL started investing in R&D to remove unnecessary plastics from products, replacing with sustainable alternatives. Also reduced copper by 20%

2014 MSSL implemented an Environmental Management System (ISO14001) and Health & Safety management system (OHSAS 18001, now ISO45001). This created measurable frameworks for controlling environmental impacts and safety standards.

2015 The company set up a Health & Safety Liaison Group to engage employees in sustainability and safety discussions.

2017 MSSL introduced its first Equality Policy, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

2018 MSSL began work on Make UK's Net Zero Roadmap, which advised companies on best practice to their reduce carbon emissions by 50% over the 12 years to 2030.



2019 The company installed LED/PIR lighting throughout its premises, significantly reducing energy consumption. MSSL also began auditing suppliers' approach to sustainability.

2020 MSSL selected as a Government case study for COP26 preparations, recognising its good practice.

2021 A pivotal year for MSSL's sustainability journey. Now monitored by Carbon Neutral Britain, MSSL installed 284 solar panels (generating 35.8% of electricity needs), invested in cutting-edge machinery for increased efficiency, and installed six commercial EV charging points.

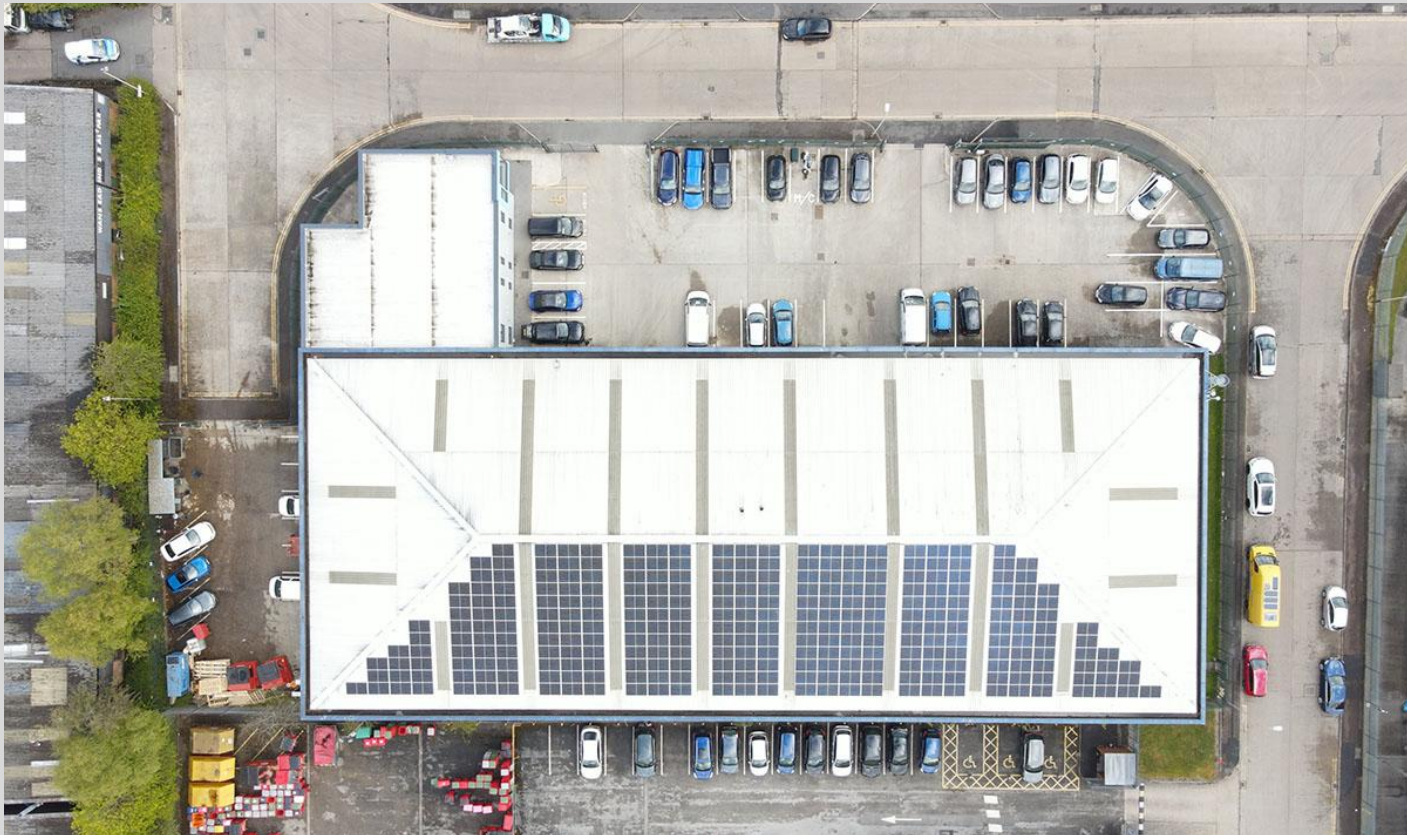
2022 MSSL achieved Carbon Neutral certification, a significant milestone in their journey. They invested in electric vehicles, reducing fuel costs by 26%, and offset 128.86 tCO₂e emissions. The company also introduced a sustainability audit of suppliers.

2023 MSSL began working with Made Smarter on R&D relating to development of innovative machinery and processes. It achieved a 58% reduction in carbon emissions in 5 years - a full 7 years ahead of the goal set out in the Make UK Net Zero Roadmap.

"We've learned that sustainable development is not just about carbon reduction, but also about creating a culture of innovation and responsibility. By embedding sustainability into every aspect of our business, from product development to employee wellbeing, we've not only reduced our carbon footprint but also improved our overall performance and competitiveness.

"The key lesson has been that sustainability and profitability can go hand in hand. Our investments in green technologies and practices have led to significant cost savings and opened up new market opportunities. Moreover, we've discovered that our commitment to sustainability has become a powerful tool for attracting and retaining talent, especially among younger generations. We're more convinced than ever that leading the charge towards Net Zero is not just the right thing to do for the planet, but also for our business and our industry as a whole."

Sean Smith, Managing Director, Michael Smith Switchgear Ltd



Business outcomes

Michael Smith Switchgear Ltd (MSSL) has demonstrated that sustainable development and business growth can go hand-in-hand in UK manufacturing sector. Over the past 5 years, MSSL has:

Halved carbon emissions

- Reduced annual tCO₂e per FTE by 49.7%
- Decreased annual tCO₂e per £1m turnover by 58%
- Generated 35.8% of electricity from on-site solar panels (2022)
- Introduced SDI auditing into our supply chain
- Integrated a carbon offsetting policy (in line with Make UK guidelines)
- Achieved Carbon Neutral status in 2021
- Reduced fuel costs by 26% after investing in electric vans
- None of the 9.3 tonnes of general waste we generated in 2021 went into landfill. 8.4 tonnes were diverted in 2022

Delivered a two-thirds increase in revenue

- Increased group turnover by 66% to £7.3m
- Forecasting £7.75m turnover for 2024

Created a third more local jobs

- Increased FTE by 37% to 52 full-time employees
- Increased female employees from 2 to 8
- Created 5 new apprenticeships in 2023 (including first female engineering apprentice)
- Built relationship with LEP's Enterprise Advisor to engage with local schools and colleges
- Recognised with RoSPA Gold Award for eight consecutive years

Plus

- Completed 4 ISO frameworks to improve environmental and safety standards
- Invested £620,000 in sustainable development initiatives since 2013
- Diverted 29.3 tonnes of waste from landfill over 3 years
- Reduced staff absence days by 50%
- Decreased workplace accidents from 14 in 2020 to 6 in 2023





Next steps

- Increase sustainability of facility through additional solar panels, rainwater storage system, and green roof
- Further review of packaging to introduce reusable sheeting
- Develop integrated ERP/CRM system to reduce paper usage
- Review production processes to improve safety and efficiency
- Change remaining diesel vehicles to electric
- Introduce car sharing and cycle to work schemes
- Continue promoting STEM apprenticeships and women in UK manufacturing

More than 20 awards won

- Schneider Electric Sustainability Impact Awards 2022. National and Global winner
- Make UK 2022.
 - Midlands winner x 3 (Health & Safety, Energy & Sustainability, Manufacturing Matters)
 - Runner-up x 3 nationally
- FSB Awards 2022. Winner, East Midlands Environmental and Sustainability
- East Midlands Chamber Awards. Various, including:
 - Manufacturer of the Year 2018
 - Business of the Year 2018
 - Businesswoman of the Year 2022
- RoSPA Gold Medal Award Winners 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. Gold Award Winners 2017-20
- Leicester Mercury Business Awards 2017. Small Business of the Year



Further information

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