

Sustainability Awards Ban AI Companies Over Environmental Impact

The Sustainability Awards 2026 Announces Ban on AI Firms and Calls for Greater Transparency.

LONDON , UNITED KINGDOM, April 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Under embargo until 17th April 2026

Klaus Mitchell will announce this to his 3.7 million followers on Instagram at that time.

[The Sustainability Awards](#) has announced a ban on all companies that develop, utilize, or pivot to artificial intelligence for its 2026 awards. The decision reflects the organization's stated focus on environmental accountability amid increasing scrutiny of the sustainability of AI technologies.

While some technology leaders position artificial intelligence as a potential tool to address climate challenges, the Sustainability Awards has cited concerns regarding the environmental impact associated with AI development. Microsoft has reported a 29% increase in carbon emissions since 2020, attributed in part to the construction of data centers supporting AI training.

The Sustainability Awards recognizes organizations focused on corporate responsibility. Past recipients include Patagonia, BrewDog, and Stella McCartney, acknowledged for efforts in promoting sustainable practices. The 2026 policy introduces eligibility restrictions related to AI usage.

Klaus Mitchell and Tom Leach, co-founders of the Sustainability Awards, are leading the



The Sustainability Awards 2026 will shine a light on real impact, bigger, broader, and more inclusive than ever.

initiative.

Leach is founder of an agency developing AI automations and fine-tuning large language models. “It is important to understand the environmental impact of AI,” Leach stated. “For instance, a single query using a model like ChatGPT can consume more electricity than a standard Google search. Data centers require substantial resources for cooling, which contributes to overall environmental impact.”

Mitchell has been active in environmental advocacy for over a decade and was featured in a 2015 Heineken campaign discussing climate change. “There is a need for greater transparency regarding environmental impact,” Mitchell stated. “Industry leaders such as OpenAI, Google, and Meta are encouraged to disclose the carbon and water footprint of their operations. Until such disclosures are made, these organizations will not be eligible for recognition by The Sustainability Awards.”

The ban applies to AI-native companies, infrastructure providers, and brands that primarily rely on AI for sustainability initiatives.

Beyond the annual recognition, the Sustainability Awards operates as a year-round digital platform, sharing industry insights, interviews, and news that support organizations on their sustainability journey.

The Sustainability Awards are built on a simple idea: Progress today should not come at the cost of tomorrow. As businesses and leaders rethink how they operate, the awards highlight those proving that sustainability and success can go hand in hand, through innovation, responsibility, and long-term thinking.

Now Open for Applications and Nominations

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