

Top Labour donor Vince takes flight with £20m Ecojet fundraising

Dale Vince, the prominent Labour Party donor and eco-entrepreneur, is kicking off a £20m financing for Ecojet, a new airline that claims it will be the world's first zero-emission commercial carrier.

Sky News has learnt that Ecojet is working with advisers at Wyvern Partners on its plans to raise growth equity.

The fundraising is aimed at satisfying capital requirements set by the Civil Aviation Authority in order to grant an Aircraft Operator Certificate (AOC).

News of its launch comes as investors, environmental campaigners, business leaders and politicians are gathered in Azerbaijan for the COP29 climate summit.

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Based in Edinburgh, Ecojet is majority-owned by Ecotricity, Mr Vince's green energy company, and which has been funding the nascent airline as it develops its launch plans.

Last year, Mr Vince announced that the carrier would use hydrogen-electric propulsion technology, which only emits water as a by-product.

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It has signed an agreement with ZeroAvia, an advanced aviation technology company, to purchase up to 70 zero-emission engines which it plans to retrofit to its aircraft once certified.

Mr Vince has become one of the most prominent business figures in Britain, developing a reputation as an outspoken figure on a broad spectrum of government policy.

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Last month, he reportedly said that wealthy people who threatened to leave Britain ahead of Rachel Reeves’ tax-raising Budget should “f*** off”.



Image:

Labour Party donor Dale Vince is seen at the party's annual conference in Liverpool. Pic: PA

The entrepreneur oversaw the creation of Ecojet in 2023, but has delayed its operational launch beyond this year.

That is partly, it says, to facilitate investment in its digital infrastructure, which it says will ensure passengers have a paperless customer experience.

Brent Smith, Ecojet's chief executive, and aviation specialists Airline Management Group have also been heavily involved in the company's development to date.

Sources said the plan to raise £20m of new funding was expected to be announced publicly on Wednesday.

However, in a statement issued to Sky News, Mr Vince said: "Ecojet has a leadership role in transforming air travel by making zero emission air travel possible for the first time.

"We are now in a position to be able to invite other like-minded investors to join us in making sustainable aviation a commercial reality."

Mr Smith added: “We have taken huge steps forward in launching Ecojet as the world’s first zero emission airline and are grateful for Ecotricity’s unwavering support.

“We look forward to becoming operational and welcoming further investors to assist with scaling the business at speed.”

Ecojet, and its founder, will nevertheless need to overcome the formidable financial hurdles which have previously thwarted the ambitions of regional airlines operating in the UK.

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Among the casualties in recent years has been FlyBe, while Monarch Airlines and the carrier owned by tour operator Thomas

Cook have also fallen by the wayside.

Ecojet argues that its ultimate adoption of hydrogen-electric technology will cut operating and maintenance costs, making its business model more viable.

It also believes that constraints on UK regional connectivity, with the rail and road networks under increasing strain, also lend themselves to a profitable domestic airline operation.

Mr Vince plans to offer scheduled services, contract flights, cargo services and so-called public service obligation contracts once Ecojet is operational.