

# Researching the role of SMEs in net zero

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## Context

### SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are businesses with <250 staff and they account for approximately 99.8% of businesses in the UK

#### 1 Economic contribution

SMEs contribute significantly to the UK's GDP (around 52% of business turnover), playing a vital role in economic growth and prosperity

#### 2 Job creation

SMEs are a major source of employment in the UK, providing jobs for a significant portion of the workforce (around 60%)

#### 3 Innovation drivers

SMEs are often at the forefront of innovation, developing new products, services, and business models

#### 4 Regional growth

SMEs are crucial for regional economic development, fostering growth and opportunity in communities

#### SMEs are key

Fundamental to the UK economy, contributing to GDP, jobs, innovation and regional growth

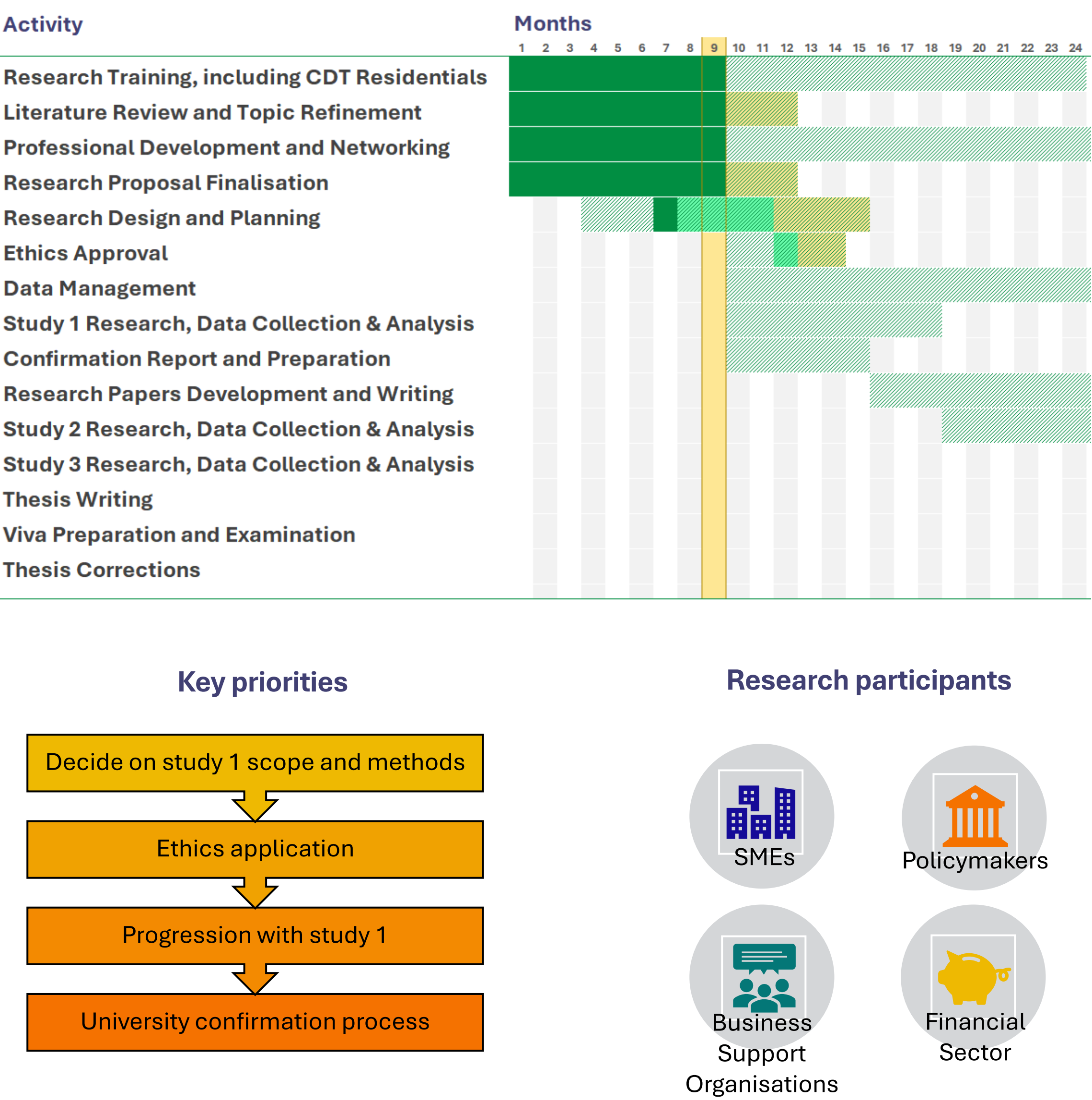
### Why do SMEs matter for net zero?

**SMEs are estimated to cause around 64% of industrial pollution in Europe** (OECD, 2021)

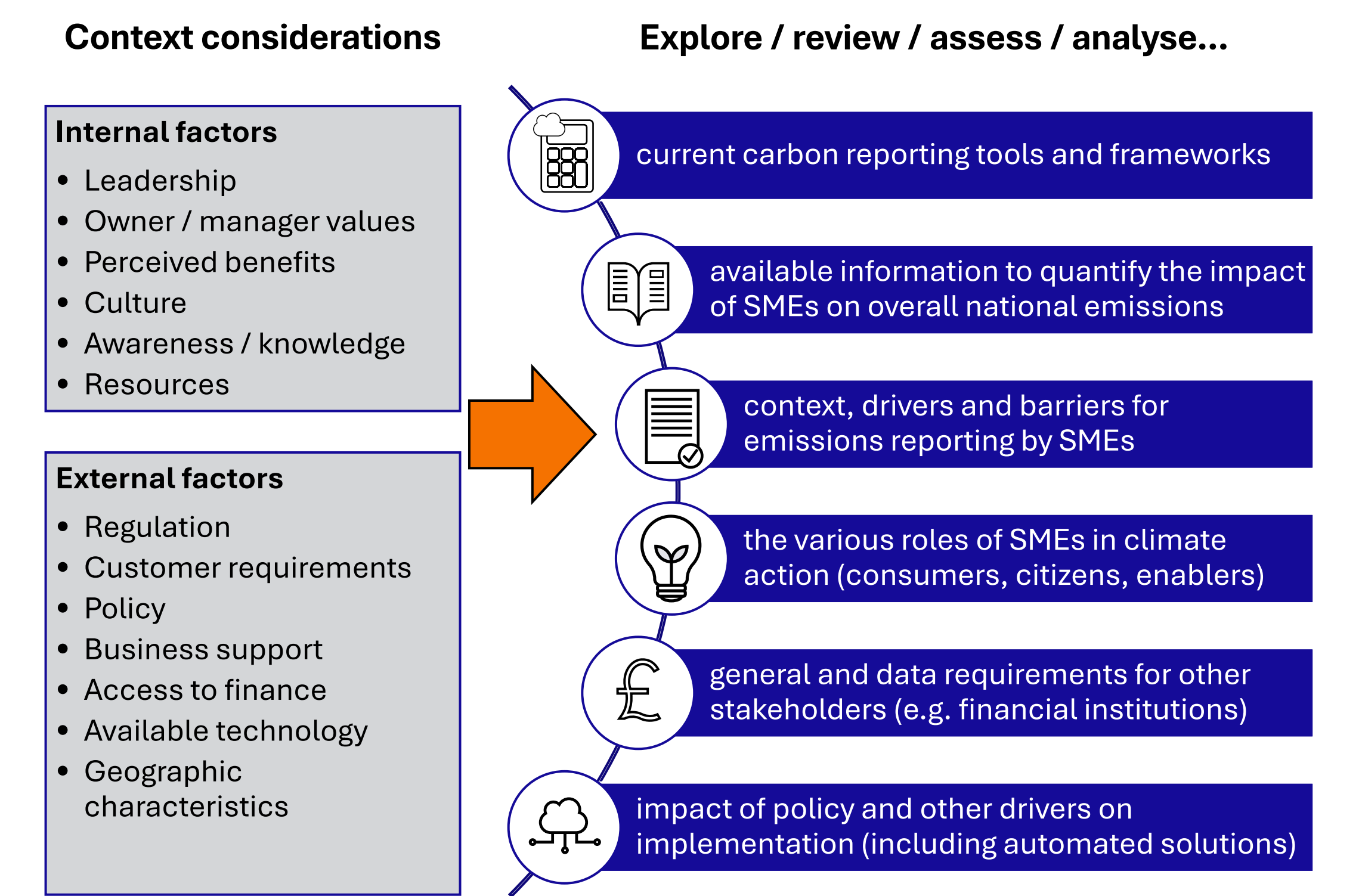
- Even small businesses produce carbon emissions (e.g. premises, vehicles and supply chain)
- Currently no general mandatory requirements for emissions reporting by SMEs
- Previous literature agrees that SMEs have responsibility for resource consumption, waste and pollution

**“Environmental management provides an opportunity for SMEs to move with large businesses into a more sustainable future”**  
Joy-Camacho and Thornhill, 2024

## Project planning



## Research aims



## Importance

**Intended outputs**

1. Comparison of carbon reporting tools and frameworks relevant to SMEs
2. Obtain samples of data that can be analysed to determine contribution of SMEs to national emissions
3. Summary of themes from interviews / case studies in SMEs that are utilised to develop simple and easy to use methods that support SMEs in reporting and reduction of carbon emissions
4. Recommendations for policy and practical interventions relevant to SMEs, including a framework for good practice net zero governance
5. Review of the role of standards and standards development

**Impact**

- Mainly qualitative research with an integrated theme (including organisational values & behaviours, policy & regulation and net zero economics)
- Representation of SMEs as part of the just transition to net zero, giving SMEs a voice and involvement in climate change action
- Inform policymakers, business support organisations and other researchers in the future. Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships
- Contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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