

Some of the ways to net zero will take us in the wrong direction

I know a few people who write in think it is wrong to be trying to get to net zero as they do not think manmade CO₂ is such a problem. They point to warming periods before man made CO₂ and to the role of sun cycles, water vapour and natural CO₂. More write in to say China and India are greatly increasing their CO₂ output each year this decade when they already account for 37 times as much as the UK. So they ask how can it make sense for the UK to stop more activities that generate CO₂ especially if we then import the goods that help create it?

What I have tried to do in recent years is to point out that some of the practical remedies the advocates of a rapid journey to net zero propose will not help reduce world CO₂. Indeed many of them will increase it. I have also argued that to work this has to be a journey the public willingly undertakes. It cannot all be done by making people buy things and do things they think are worse and dearer than what they do today. I am seeking maximum support for the need to change these damaging policies by arguing in this way. All western governments strongly back the net zero approach.

Today I do a stock take of some of the more obvious policies that can backfire.

1. Keep our own gas in the ground. If we do this we will be importing even more gas, often in liquified form. LNG generates several times the amount of CO₂ than our own gas piped direct to customers. It takes more energy to compress it, to keep it cool, to transport it long distances by sea and to convert it back to gas. It also means the big tax revenues largely pass to the foreign supplier state, not to the UK Treasury. Government has now accepted this advice to change this policy.
2. Get more people to buy electric vehicles by subsidies and rules. If someone does buy an electric vehicle on many days when they plug it in the grid will need to deliver more gas or coal based energy to recharge. Most of the time we are using all the wind and solar we can produce so the extra electricity needed for an electric car requires fossil fuels, delivered in an inefficient way. it is not sensible to regulate or subsidise people into EVs before there is enough renewable energy available to recharge them. The government has dropped its planned ban on new diesel and petrol car sales but more needs to change.
3. Get more people to buy electric cars. If someone buys an EV and scraps an older diesel they will need to do many miles a year in the EV to bring about a fall in CO₂. The manufacture of the new EV generates a lot of CO₂ which would not be generated if you ran the older diesel for longer. We need to account accurately for the impact.
4. Promote more public transport. This does not work as well as they often suppose. Many trains and buses still run on diesel. Much of the electricity used by the electric ones is generated from fossil fuels for trains and buses. It only works well if the train or bus journey

is by an electric vehicle that is supplied from additional renewable electricity and if the journey is one that would otherwise have required direct use of fossil fuel. It also needs a service which attracts sufficient people. Near empty buses increase CO₂ per passenger.

5. Remove your gas boiler and insert a heat pump. There will be a large CO₂ creation to make the heat pump, carry out the installation, add the extra insulation, bigger radiators and the rest. There could then be reliance on substantial amounts of fossil fuel generated electricity to run the system.
6. Close down fossil fuel using plant in steel, ceramics, paper, glass and other energy intensive activities to be replaced by imports. This will mean more CO₂, both from the CO₂ the exporting company creates in its overseas plants and for the transport of heavy and bulky items by sea.

So time to change many policies because they do not deliver net zero and depend on getting people to do things they do not want to do.