

Stop the bossing about

The continuing unpopularity of Green candidates for Parliament and most Councils is a notable feature of the UK, only surpassed in the US. Their main preoccupation to get us to net zero is now however written into most political party programmes to a lesser extent. The Democrats in the US are very keen and the non Trump Republicans accept much of it. The Lib Dems whose opinion ratings remain low in the UK want an extreme version of net zero policies like the Greens. The UK Conservatives want a more measured and pragmatic approach, with a range of views from enthusiastic to sceptic within the party. Reform has now come out against many net zero policies, as has Mr Trump in the US. In these latest UK by elections when people could vote for their best preference without worrying about who would be in government, the Green and Lib Dem vote was tiny.

The public according to polls agrees there is global warming and thinks something ought to be done about it. However a large majority do not back going over to heat pumps and battery electric vehicles for themselves and object strongly to net zero policies that make them personally worse off or make their lives more difficult. The public shows more sense than green talking politicians. Many see the folly of the UK closing down fossil fuel activities here only to import replacements from abroad with more fossil fuel used as a result. Many see that pricing UK consumers out of using so much fossil fuel will do nothing to abate the fast growth in fossil fuel use in China, India and the world as a whole. Many just want to keep their homes warm with a gas boiler and get to work by van or car because that works.

If Mr Trump wins the US election late this year global net zero strategy suffers a major blow. If the world's largest economy goes for extracting and using more oil and gas, and sees cheap fossil fuel energy as a competitive business advantage that knocks a big hole in the Paris Treaty targets. The world's second largest economy, China, says it is committed to net zero. However China is still increasing its output of CO₂ and adding more coal to its energy mix as well as building wind farms. China has not yet started to cut her output. Many emerging economies reserve the right to increase their fossil fuel use as a necessary way to boost living standards. If UK Greens really thought world CO₂ mattered they would be protesting daily outside the Chinese and Indian embassies.

This is why I argue against UK government and Councils lecturing us to make big changes in our lives that many do not want to make. Worse still some of these policies are a nonsense in their own terms. Buy an EV and plug it in to recharge, and we will need to burn more gas in a power station to meet the demand. Change all our homes to heat pumps and create large amounts of CO₂ doing so. Why? How?