



DREAM



THE headlong rush to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, pursued for so long by democratic governments across the globe regardless of cost, has finally hit the buffers of voter resistance.

Mainstream politicians of the left, right and centre still mouth their consensual net zero platitudes but they are rowing back from the policies required to achieve it at some speed, not least here in Britain.

It has at last dawned on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak that a population already reeling from a vicious cost of living crisis does not need to be lumbered by the extra burden of the expensive and intrusive green agenda of a political elite which will not itself suffer any hardship from it.

So he has delayed the ban on new petrol and diesel cars and the fiasco on new residential gas heating systems until 2035 (from 2030 and 2025 respectively). Expect more delays to come.

Sunak and his team justified his U-turn because 'governments of all stripes have not been honest about the cost and trade-offs', because the drive to net zero would impose 'unacceptable costs on hard-pressed British families', and because 'we're not going to save the planet by bankrupting the British people'.

Fair enough. Better late than never. But we must still file the PM under 'slow learner'.

When I interviewed the Chancellor in June 2021 during my mercifully brief broadcasting career at GB News (only eight shows over two weeks), I asked him to tell us the cost of net zero. He couldn't. I suggested it would be in the trillions and it was surely the Treasury's duty to come up with a price tag. He obfuscated. He said after the election that 'nobody had ever asked him the cost before. He's taken his time to find out, if he has'.

The fact is net zero was backed by such an overwhelming political consensus and a cheerleading media (which failed to do its job of challenging the consensus) that questions of cost were regarded as an unnecessary spanner in the works by unhelpful naysayers.

High estimates turned out to be hopelessly optimistic. Three years ago, Paul Johnson of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, whose analysis of all things

China accounts for 30 per cent of emissions

economic are lapped up unquestioningly by journalists, (as a member of the official Climate Change Committee) that the cost should be

Everywhere there's a growing public revolt against net zero, forcing politicians across Europe to reneg on green virtue signalling

money... not in the billions, but in the trillions. The part it is people and families on modest incomes who have been expected to pay for the transition to net zero, which is why there has been a growing public revolt against it.

It has now spread from being confined to the UK to other parts of Europe. In Britain, the pushback is everywhere. MPs are being urged to reneg on a green virtue signalling and slow or even halt the process.

In France, President Macron has ruled out banning gas boilers and refused to give a date for phasing out of fossil fuels, bar coal, which was almost derailed by the yellow vest protests against green increases in fuel duties. He has no desire to repeat that upheaval.

New Zealand's Labour government is almost certainly heading for defeat in next week's general election after its plans to tax livestock emitting methane (a Kiwi global first) and

have shaken their political system in response to anti-farming measures by the Dutch government. The right-wing Farmer-Citizen Movement, only four years old, is now the dominant party in the Dutch Senate (upper house) and every provincial assembly.

The net-zero revolt is European-wide. Even the centre-left Polish website is forced to report that 'as the 2024 European election approaches (for the European Parliament), a notable shift is occurring across major countries in the EU: voters are turning away from Green parties amid a rising tide of right-wing populism and anti-EU sentiment... a significant portion of this shift can be attributed to voter dissatisfaction with the EU's climate transition policies'.

The revolt is most stark in Germany, which has long thought itself in the vanguard of Europe's transition to net zero and whose Green party is a prominent member of its ruling coalition

Stricter energy efficiency rules for buildings have been shelved.

Germany's green credentials are somewhat in tatters. It plans to bring on stream this winter several moth-balled coal plants; otherwise, the government fears it can't keep the lights on.

It's a repeat of last winter but more serious since the coalition closed the country's remaining nuclear reactors last spring. Seven out of the ten most polluting coal plants in the EU are German.

For sheer stupidity, British energy policy is hard to beat. But in the energy stupidity stakes, among a long list of candidates, Germany is the clear winner. The industrial powerhouse of Europe is being de-industrialised by energy policies emanating from Berlin and Brussels.

A debilitating cocktail of high energy costs, labour shortages and reams of red tape is forcing some of Germany's biggest companies — including Volkswagen, BASF and Siemens — to seek

for 1.5 per cent of global CO2 emissions. China almost 30 per cent. The Asia-Pacific now accounts for 40 per cent. A gas boiler for an expensive house can make to the climate? China's emissions carbon emissions will peak in 2030 and hit net zero by 2060. But look at what it's doing: not what it says: it is giving planning permission for two new coal-fired power plants every week (yes, every week).

Last year, it approved a record-breaking 106 gigawatts (GW) of new coal-fired power capacity. Permits are being handed out at an even higher rate this year.

The pace of construction is also increasing. China now has 243 GW of coal-fired capacity permitted or under construction.

One gigawatt is the equivalent of a coal power plant. America has the third-biggest coal-fired electricity generation capacity in the world. India is second (after China) and is building more coal plants too, as are Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, the

This does not absolve us from doing nothing

Philippines, South Korea and Vietnam. The Asia-Pacific now accounts for 80 per cent of global coal demand.

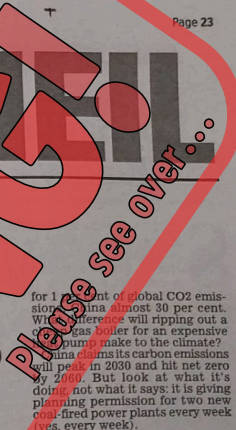
Even if America closed all its coal capacity tomorrow, it would quickly be more than matched by all the new coal plants coming on stream in China.

The grim truth is that China and other parts of Asia are now building so many new coal plants so fast that the 'energy transition to net zero' which British and other western politicians so obsess about is effectively meaningless.

To go crazy over a few more oil and gas licences in the North Sea or one new coal mine in the north of England is absurd, given what is happening on the other side of the world.

This does not absolve us from doing nothing. Climate change is real and there are good grounds for concern about our emissions. But the bulk of the cost cannot always fall on those least able to bear it and there must be clear gains from doing so.

People have had enough of assorted billionaires and celebrities lecturing the rest of us on the need to cut our emissions while flying in their private jets from their mansions to their yachts, stopping off on the way at



Gaslighting is one of the nastiest tricks in a journalist's book. It's a technique that attempts to convince readers, that the truth is a lie and that a lie is the truth. It was a favourite technique of Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels who famously said: **'Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth.'**

The very worst climate deniers at organisations such as far right TV entertainment channel GB News and far right 'think tank' the Global Warming Policy Foundation use gaslighting to try to convince the public, that the climate emergency is either not real or not serious. On Saturday October 7, the Daily Mail shamefully let former BBC political presenter (and co-founder of GB News) Andrew Neil use gaslighting to give the impression that the UK public oppose Net Zero.

Andrew Neil refers to Professor of Economics Paul Johnson revising his estimation of the cost of getting to Net Zero. Neil fails to explain the primary point: **'First, it will be costly. Not costly relative to doing nothing in the face of climate change. That would be catastrophic.'**

A recent study in *Nature Communications* corroborates this. It calculates the cost of climate damage 2000 - 2019 is on average \$140 Billion per year, totalling \$2.8 Trillion. **This is \$16 Million per hour.**

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The Daily Mail did not report what the public really think:

- A majority of people in all voting groups want the UK to reduce its carbon emissions to Net Zero by 2050. (Source YouGov/TheTimes Polling Data, YouGov July 2023)
- Almost three quarters (73%) of people planning to vote Conservative at the next election want the UK to reach its Net Zero carbon emissions targets by 2050. (Source: Stick with Net Zero, Tory voters tell Sunak Politico August 2023)
- Eight out of ten (82%) adults in the UK are worried about climate change. It's their second biggest concern after the cost-of-living crisis. (Source: DESNZ Public Attitudes Tracker: Net Zero and Climate Change Spring 2023)
- Two-thirds of voters would back a political party which promised to generate more electricity from renewable sources, such as solar and wind. (Source: Stick with Net Zero, Tory voters tell Sunak Politico, August 2023)

Are you OK with this?

Paul Johnson '23



Cost of Climate Damage



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