

# British Climate Act 'failed before it started'

June 18 2009

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The British Climate Act is flawed and comprised of unrealistic and unobtainable targets, writes US academic Roger A Pielke Jr, in a journal paper published in IOP Publishing's *Environmental Research Letters*.

As Pielke, a professor of environmental studies at the Centre for Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Colorado, points out, no one knows how fast a major economy can decarbonise and policy therefore needs to focus less on targets and timetables that no one can be sure of reaching, and more on the tangible process for achieving goals such as the development of clean technologies that will be crucial in the decarbonising process.

In order to decrease carbon emissions, countries essentially only have four options: reducing their population, cutting back economic activity, taking positive steps to increase energy efficient technologies, or expanding the role of less carbon intensive [energy sources](#).

Recognizing that no climate policy will focus on depopulation or reducing wealth generation, Pielke argues that setting objectives for efficiency gains in specific economic sectors and for the expansion of carbon-free energy supplies would be a first step in the right direction to make the UK a world-leader in the actual practice of carbon policy.

Looking at the targets set in the Act, the UK government would have to achieve annual decarbonisation rates in excess of 4% or 5% over coming decades, counteracting expected population and economic growth.

To be on pace to achieve these targets, the UK would have to become as carbon efficient as France by no later than 2015, which would require a level of effort comparable to the building and implementation of about 30 new nuclear power plants in the UK in the next 6 years. It took France about 20 years to decarbonise to its current level, largely due to its investment in nuclear energy.

As Pielke concludes, "Given the magnitude of the challenge and the pace of action, it would not be too strong a conclusion to suggest that the UK Climate Act has failed even before it has gotten started."

"It seems likely that the Climate Change Act will have to be revisited by Parliament or simply ignored by policy makers. Achievements of its targets does not appear a realistic option."

Seeing as the Climate Change Committee is not expected to present a specific decarbonization policy roadmap until December this year, practical action under the [Climate Change](#) Act is unlikely to begin before 2010 at the earliest.

Source: Institute of Physics ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: British Climate Act 'failed before it started' (2009, June 18) retrieved 15 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-06-british-climate.html>

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