

NET ZERO: THE UK'S CONTRIBUTION TO STOPPING GLOBAL WARMING

The UK Committee on Climate Change 'CCC', established by the Climate Change Act 2008, has been recommending 5 yearly carbon budgets and seeing them enacted as law by the constituent Parliaments of the UK for 10 years.

In May 2019 the CCC, reflecting on the latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and perhaps sensing a shift in the tectonic plates of public opinion on climate change, produced a new report for the Parliaments of the UK, Wales and Scotland – '*Net Zero – the UK's contribution to stopping global warming.*'

The CCC has now proposed that the UK can end its contribution to global warming within 30 years, by setting an ambitious new target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050. It proposes that Scotland could reach net zero emissions by 2045, with Wales achieving 95% reductions by 2050.

Introducing the new recommendations, the CCC said –

"The CCC's recommended targets, which cover all sectors of the UK, Scottish and Welsh economies, are achievable with known technologies, alongside improvements in peoples' lives, and should be put into law as soon as possible."

This target, and the political will to meet it, will create major and immediate challenges, whilst also opening up major new opportunities, across many sectors including –

- The automotive sector
- Construction
- Manufacturing industry
- Carbon Capture and Storage technology
- Low carbon hydrogen
- The waste industry
- Aviation
- Shipping
- Farming
- Low carbon power
- Banking, finance and insurance

In fact, of course, as the CCC has said, this will affect all sectors of the economy. In an article for the Guardian in April 2019, Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, Francois Villeroy de Galhau, Governor of the Banque de France, and Frank Elderson, Chair of the Network for Greening the Financial System, wrote that –

"The catastrophic effects of climate change are already visible around the world. From blistering heatwaves in North Africa to typhoons in south-east Asia and droughts in Africa and Australia, no country or community is immune..."

Carbon emissions have to decline by 45% from 2010 levels over the next decade in order the reach net zero by 2050. That requires a massive reallocation of capital. If some companies and industries fail to adjust to this new world, they will fail to exist."

Major changes in environmental and other laws and regulations will be needed at the UK level and in each of the devolved Parliaments, and we expect to be involved in advising some of the many businesses and industries affected by the changes.

About the Author

William Wilson is a specialist environmental, regulatory and nuclear lawyer with over 25 years experience in government, private practice and consultancy. He worked as a senior lawyer at the UK Department of the Environment/DETR/Defra, and helped to build up the environmental and nuclear practices at another major law firm. William has experience of all aspects of environmental law, including water, waste, air quality and industrial emissions, REACH and chemicals regulation, environmental protection, environmental permitting, litigation, legislative drafting, managing primary legislation, negotiating EU Directives and drafting secondary legislation.

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