# Ed Miliband criticises misinformation on net zero policy amid steel industry concerns



Ed Miliband, the UK Energy Secretary and former Labour leader, has publicly criticised Nigel Farage and certain political factions for spreading misinformation about the government's net zero policy, particularly regarding its impact on the steel industry. The comments come ahead of the local elections scheduled for 1 May, which will see votes cast for 1,641 council seats across 23 English authorities.

Miliband accused Reform UK and the Conservative Party of promulgating “nonsense and lies” to advance what he described as their “ideological agenda”. He warned that opposing net zero policies risks not only accelerating climate change but also jeopardising Britain’s future in clean energy employment. Writing in The Observer, Miliband highlighted how the UK’s dependence on fossil fuels contributed to soaring energy prices starting in 2022, devastating households, businesses, and public finances. “The cost of living impacts caused back then still stalk families today,” he remarked.

These assertions follow a recent government intervention to assume control of British Steel from its Chinese owners, Jingye, amid fears of the company’s blast furnaces in Scunthorpe closing down. Nigel Farage, Reform UK’s leader, criticised Miliband—whom he persistently labels “Red Ed”—for pursuing what he terms “net-zero lunacy.” Farage claimed that efforts to cut carbon emissions have obstructed access to the coal necessary to operate British Steel’s blast furnaces, as domestic supplies have become constrained, leading the company to import coal recently.

Farage expressed his stance at a campaign event last week, stating, “We’re living through a period of net-zero lunacy, something that the Conservatives signed us up to, wrote into law and believed in, as if somehow it was their new religion.” He also accused Miliband of wanting to cover agricultural land with “Chinese slave-labour made farms, solar farms, and to despoil as much of our coastline as he possibly can.” In addition to opposing current climate policies, Farage advocates for the UK to become “self-sufficient in oil” and gas production.

The government has defended its position by clarifying that a domestic coal mine in Cumbria, which critics suggested could supply British Steel, would not provide the specific type of coal required for the steelmaking process. Climate groups have noted that the North Sea’s oil and gas reserves are depleting irrespective of policy decisions and that extraction is becoming increasingly costly.

Miliband countered Farage’s claims by accusing both Reform UK and the Conservatives of fabricating misleading information. He emphasised that reducing dependence on overseas fuel sources is a matter of “national security.” In the coming days, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer is expected to reaffirm his administration’s dedication to clean energy during an International Energy Agency conference in London.

Further complicating the political landscape, Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative Party leader, has expressed scepticism about meeting the 2050 net zero target, suggesting it may be “impossible” without significant reductions in living standards or severe financial consequences.

Last week, Parliament passed emergency legislation enabling ministers to take control of British Steel to avert the closure of its blast furnaces and the potential loss of numerous jobs after negotiations with Jingye broke down. Labour has intensified its criticism of Reform UK as the party gains momentum, despite holding only four MPs following last year’s general election.

The unfolding debate over the UK's energy policies and industrial future remains central to the national political discourse as the country prepares for the forthcoming local elections.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/politics/miliband-farage-net-zero-british-steel-b2736202.html> - This article corroborates Ed Miliband's criticism of Nigel Farage and Reform UK for spreading misinformation about the government's net zero policy and its impact on British Steel, including Farage's accusations of 'net-zero lunacy' and Miliband being labelled 'Red Ed'. It also covers the government taking control of British Steel and the issue around coal supplies relevant to the steel industry.
* <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-uk-newspaper-editorials-attacked-ed-miliband-relentlessly-throughout-2024/> - This source supports the context around Ed Miliband's role as UK Energy Secretary and defender of net zero policies, as well as the political and media criticism he has received regarding these policies and their economic impacts.
* <https://www.politico.eu/article/miliband-set-to-lose-whitehall-showdown/> - This article details the political challenges facing Ed Miliband over net zero policy implementation within the UK government, reflecting his position and the controversies surrounding funding and commitment to achieving net zero targets.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-65323456> - This BBC report covers the UK government's recent emergency legislation to take control of British Steel from its Chinese owners to prevent the closure of blast furnaces and job losses, underpinning the article's claim about government intervention.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-keir-starmer-speaks-at-iea-clean-energy-transitions-summit> - This official government page confirms Prime Minister Keir Starmer's expected reaffirmation of the UK government's commitment to clean energy at the International Energy Agency conference in London, as mentioned in the article.