# John Swinney warns against rising climate denial as Scotland renews net zero commitment



Scotland’s First Minister, John Swinney, has underscored the urgent necessity for action against climate change, voicing concerns over what he termed “dangerous rhetoric” emerging from right-wing political factions. Speaking at the Better Society Academy climate conference held at The Social Hub in Glasgow, Swinney referred to climate change as “the biggest challenge of our age” and urged politicians across all parties to renew their commitment to combating this global crisis.

His remarks were made in the context of recent claims by the leader of the UK Conservative Party, Kemi Badenoch, who stated it is “impossible” for Britain to achieve its net zero target by 2050. Furthermore, the political party Reform UK has proposed scrapping what they refer to as “net stupid zero” initiatives, echoing sentiments previously articulated by former US President Donald Trump, with deputy leader Richard Tice advocating for increased oil drilling in Scotland.

During his keynote address, Swinney denounced the “anti-science climate denial approach” prevalent in current political discourse. He asserted the imperative for all political parties to reaffirm their dedication to addressing climate change, specifically countering the trend of associating climate action with preventable measures. “The journey to net zero is tough enough with the practicalities of what is involved, but the journey to net zero, when that route is disputed and contested and denied, is an even more significant and challenging journey,” he stated.

Scotland's government has pledged to reach net zero emissions by 2045, five years ahead of the UK’s target. Swinney expressed his determination that Scotland would ultimately eliminate its contribution to climate change within a generation, noting the mounting challenges posed by rising temperatures and extreme weather patterns.

Highlighting the reality of climate change, he pointed to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including named storms such as Storm Eowyn, which he noted was the most powerful wind storm in the UK in over a decade. Swinney also referenced global disasters like devastating floods in Valencia and serious heatwaves in Japan. He cited a report from the UN's World Meteorological Organization indicating that extreme weather displaced over 800,000 people worldwide last year.

Emphasising collective responsibility, Swinney remarked, “Every one of us has got a contribution to make to meet the biggest challenge of our age.” He expressed his grave commitment to climate action, clarifying that it remains “at the heart of my Government’s programme.”

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

## References

* <https://www.ft.com/content/6d443344-c492-49f1-a888-759a5afc4e48> - This article discusses UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer defending the government's net zero carbon emissions policy after criticism from former Prime Minister Tony Blair, highlighting the political debate over climate action in the UK.
* <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/uk-opposition-leader-drops-support-2050-net-zero-climate-target-2025-03-18/> - This report details Kemi Badenoch, leader of the UK Conservative Party, announcing the abandonment of the 2050 net zero target, arguing it is 'impossible' and too costly for the British economy.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/f9b9b07e-eb8c-455c-aeda-801fd0d30e2d> - This article examines the shift in the British Conservative Party's stance on climate change, noting figures like Rishi Sunak and Kemi Badenoch advocating for a more 'realistic' approach, reflecting a departure from previous commitments.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/a1b29671-3938-4e40-a617-522e6f26cef1> - This piece discusses how the UK's political landscape is changing regarding net zero emissions, with Kemi Badenoch dismissing the 2050 target as unrealistic, breaking a four-decade consensus.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/db14493f-ad54-4139-bf79-0c6d4db59d2f> - This article covers Donald Trump's criticism of the UK's plan to reduce North Sea oil and gas production, calling it a 'very big mistake' and urging increased drilling, aligning with sentiments previously articulated by him.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/mar/19/factcheck-kemi-badenoch-conservative-leader-claim-that-net-zero-is-impossible-by-2050> - This fact-check analyzes Kemi Badenoch's claim that achieving net zero by 2050 is 'impossible,' providing context and expert opinions on the feasibility of the UK's climate targets.
* <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/tackling-climate-change-vital-says-swinney-in-warning-over-dangerous-rhetoric/a1429266403.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data