# Kemi Badenoch's net zero doubts spark controversy within Conservative Party



Last week, significant controversy erupted within the Conservative Party as Kemi Badenoch, its leader, declared that it is "impossible" for the United Kingdom to meet its net zero emissions targets by 2050. This startling announcement is not just a departure from her previous commitments but represents a disheartening capitulation in the face of global climate responsibilities, raising questions about her leadership and their party’s integrity.

In her much-criticized speech, Badenoch claimed that achieving net zero, without a drastic decline in living standards or spiralling the economy into bankruptcy, is unrealistic. She asserted, “We’ve got to stop pretending to the next generation. We’ve got to stop government by press release.” While advocating for political transparency, her words reflect a troubling dismissal of the need for sustainable progress, betraying potential future generations in favour of short-term political expediency.

Internal dissent within the Conservative ranks is palpable, with voices like Chris Skidmore, a former government minister, expressing disappointment at the apparent betrayal of previously stated commitments. Skidmore recalled Badenoch’s earlier support for net zero during his review on the matter, underscoring the abruptness of her current position. It is worth noting that, under this new Labour government, such sudden ideological shifts could be perceived as a cynical attempt to appease more vocal factions within the party, ultimately reinforcing the notion that the Conservatives may be losing sight of their core responsibilities.

Critiques of Badenoch’s position extend beyond her own party. Former Prime Minister Theresa May, the architect of the original net zero target, countered by stating that achieving this goal by 2050 is both challenging and essential, echoing sentiments widely supported by the scientific community. Similarly, John Gummer, former chair of the Climate Change Committee, condemned Badenoch's remarks, warning that this lack of commitment could jeopardise investments in green technologies and prolong dependence on fossil fuels, ultimately harming the economy in the long run.

Ryan Shorthouse of the pro-market think tank Bright Blue pointed out that extensive polling over the last decade has revealed a robust desire among voters, particularly those under 40, to tackle climate change head-on. This disconnect between public opinion and party leadership could further alienate Conservative supporters and bolster opposition parties who advocate for coherent and responsible climate action.

Badenoch’s new strategy, which downplays the significance of net zero, seems bound to alienate moderate Conservatives and could strengthen the position of competing parties, especially under the newly established Labour government led by Kíer Stamer. The shift away from establishing firm climate commitments may be perceived as a concession to anti-net zero sentiments within the party, risking the loyalty of a more environmentally conscious voter base.

Economic analyses, including one from the London School of Economics, maintain that the initial costs of achieving net zero could average between 1% and 2% of the UK's GDP annually, with significant savings projected by 2040. Badenoch had previously aligned with these findings during parliamentary discussions; however, her recent statements suggest a drastic ideological shift that could have long-lasting ramifications for her party’s credibility and the nation's climate commitments.

Compounding the controversy, a spokesperson for Badenoch indicated that she had previously expressed scepticism about achieving net zero during her 2022 campaign, signalling a troubling trend of conflicted messaging that further undermines the trust of both party loyalists and the general public. It seems the Conservative Party is in a precarious position, caught between the need for responsible action on climate and the pressures of a shifting political landscape.

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