# Sir James Cleverly’s net zero speech deepens Conservative Party climate divide



In a glaring misstep within the Conservative Party, Sir James Cleverly is set to deliver a speech lauding net zero commitments, starkly contrasting with the more sensible position of party leader Kemi Badenoch. In his address to the pro-green Conservative Environment Network, Cleverly is anticipated to clamor for an unrealistic vision where economic growth and environmental responsibilities supposedly harmonize, directly opposing Badenoch’s pragmatic view that achieving net zero by 2050 is not just ambitious but untenable.

Cleverly seems poised to perpetuate the false notion that conservative environmentalism can ignore the hard truths of economic viability. He will likely posit that policies can somehow be crafted to generate new industries while ignoring the environmental repercussions. “The idea that we must choose between a strong economy and protecting our environment is outdated,” Cleverly is expected to assert, ignoring the practical challenges many face as he rallies the party to "push further, faster, and smarter" in the promotion of green technology—an endeavor that seems disconnected from the realities businesses confront.

This ideological schism unfolds as Badenoch confronts a barrage of justified criticism regarding her stance on the UK’s legally binding commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. Critics, including former Conservative leader William Hague and numerous responsible environmental groups, argue that her position reflects historical integrity over unrealizable aspirations. Hague strongly contends that without a credible alternative for combating climate change, the Conservatives are risking their credibility and showcasing a troubling detachment from practical realities.

Additionally, a recent fact-checking analysis has thoroughly dismantled Badenoch's claims that net zero is unattainable without wreaking economic havoc. The Climate Change Committee has laid out feasible pathways toward achieving this goal, underscoring that positive economic outcomes could materialize in the long run despite initial costs. This reveals a stark contrast to Badenoch’s portrayal of net zero as a financial yoke threatening the nation’s economic health. Equally troubling, the Conservative Environment Network has condemned her assertions, arguing they undermine not just the party’s environmental legacy but also deter critical green investments essential for a modern economy.

Badenoch's narrative has come under scrutiny due to her connections with sources associated with climate denial, casting doubt on her fidelity to the party’s environmental tenets. As these criticisms mount, the implications for her leadership and the overall trajectory of the Conservative Party's environmental policy remain precariously uncertain.

Against this backdrop, Cleverly's forthcoming address might serve to illustrate not only a misguided commitment to net zero but also a deepening rift within the Conservatives on climate change and economic stewardship. This internal conflict points to a party grappling with its identity at a time when coherent, forward-thinking policies are urgently needed.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2064013/kemi-badenoch-james-cleverly-net-zero> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/mar/23/kemi-badenoch-accused-of-breaking-pledge-to-tory-mps-of-net-zero-by-2050> - Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader, has been accused of breaking a promise made during her 2022 leadership campaign to support the UK's legally binding commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. In a recent speech, she stated that reaching net zero by 2050 is 'impossible' without significant economic consequences. This stance has drawn criticism from former ministers and environmental groups, who argue that such a position undermines the UK's environmental commitments and could harm green investments.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/kemi-badenoch-net-zero-2050-global-warming-william-hague-b1217319.html> - Former Conservative leader William Hague has criticised Kemi Badenoch for abandoning the party's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Hague warned that without presenting an alternative plan to tackle climate change, the Conservatives risk appearing insincere about addressing global warming. Badenoch's recent remarks suggest that the net zero target is unattainable without severe economic repercussions, a view that has sparked debate within the party.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/mar/19/factcheck-kemi-badenoch-conservative-leader-claim-that-net-zero-is-impossible-by-2050> - A fact-checking analysis has scrutinised Kemi Badenoch's claim that achieving net zero emissions by 2050 is 'impossible' without bankrupting the country. The analysis highlights that while initial costs may be between 1% and 2% of GDP annually, savings are projected from 2040 onwards. The Climate Change Committee has outlined feasible pathways to reach net zero by 2050, suggesting that Badenoch's assertion lacks supporting evidence.
5. <https://www.expressandstar.com/uk-news/2025/03/17/tory-green-group-rejects-badenochs-claim-that-net-zero-by-2050-is-impossible/> - The Conservative Environment Network has criticised Kemi Badenoch's assertion that achieving net zero emissions by 2050 is 'impossible'. The group argues that such a stance undermines the environmental legacy of previous Conservative governments and could harm green investments. Badenoch's remarks have sparked debate within the party regarding the feasibility and desirability of the net zero target.
6. <https://www.desmog.com/2024/11/04/tory-leader-kemi-badenoch-views-on-climate-change-net-zero/> - Kemi Badenoch has positioned herself as a 'net zero sceptic', expressing concerns that the UK's 2050 target for achieving net zero emissions could lead to higher energy costs and economic challenges. She has suggested delaying or revisiting the target, a stance that has attracted criticism from environmental groups and some party members who view it as a departure from the Conservatives' previous environmental commitments.
7. <https://www.desmog.com/2024/10/03/kemi-badenoch-manifesto-climate-denial-group-research-attack-net-zero/> - Kemi Badenoch's leadership campaign has utilised research from climate denial groups to criticise the UK's net zero target. The campaign has received support from individuals associated with organisations that question climate science and oppose renewable energy initiatives. This association has raised concerns about the direction of Badenoch's environmental policies and their alignment with the Conservative Party's traditional stance on climate change.