THE NEW STATESMAN

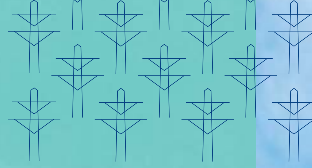
Spotlight

Thought leadership and policy

Energy and Climate Change: Financing the transition

Sadiq Khan | Eric Adams
Ed Miliband
Helen Clarkson

ClimateView VATTENFALL



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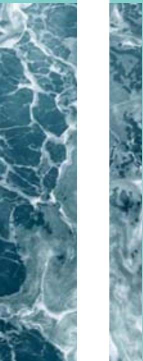

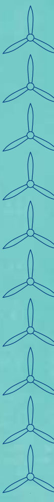

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Subsidy and security

Some senior Conservatives have characterised President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) as "dangerous" and "protectionist".

The legislation, with its tax credits and subsidies to support the green economy, "will lower costs for families, combat the climate crisis, reduce the deficit, and finally ask the largest corporations to pay their fair share", according to the US government.

Noting the competitive advantage that IRA measures give the US, the EU has responded with a Green Deal Industrial Plan that "enhances the competitiveness of Europe's net-zero industry".

But while the US, Europe and China steam ahead with major public investment in green infrastructure and clean technology, the UK's Conservative government insists on treading its own path instead.

In March, the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said that the UK would not be following the global economic zeitgeist in confronting the intertwined crises of climate change and inflationary pressure.

"[We are] not going toe-to-toe with our friends and allies in some distortive global subsidy race," he wrote in the *Times*. "With the threat of protectionism creeping its way back into the world economy, the long-term solution is not subsidy but security." Hunt has told MPs that a response to the US IRA will come in the autumn.

For Labour, meanwhile, security and subsidy are not mutually exclusive. In her recent speech in Washington DC, shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves outlined the party's "securonomics" approach. Key to that is Labour's proposed Green Prosperity Plan, which would follow in the footsteps of the IRA.

As Ed Miliband, the shadow climate change and net zero secretary, told India Bourke (see pages 18-21), "We need to invest if we want to win the race for good green jobs, because under the Tories we are being left behind while the US, Europe and China get ahead."

But an election is still a long way off. In the meantime, as the UK launches a high-temperature warning system aimed at reducing deaths from heatwaves, the government cannot afford to delay green investment. Given the existential threat of the climate crisis, this is inseparable from pledges on economic growth. ●

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Temperature rises will drive billions out of "climate niche"

With the world on track for temperature rises of 2.7°C on current climate action plans, a recent study from the University of Exeter suggests that extreme heat will push billions of people outside what scientists describe as the "climate niche" – the set of conditions where humans have flourished for thousands of years.

Two billion people could see average temperatures of above 29°C by 2030, an unprecedented level of heat for most communities. One billion people could choose to migrate. Researchers said this would bring "phenomenal human costs."

Scientists have set the target of limiting temperature rises to 1.5°C to reduce the risk of serious climate disasters such as food and water shortages, conflict, and extreme weather.

In its latest annual climate update, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) says there is now a 66 per cent chance that global temperatures will temporarily breach the 1.5°C warming limit by 2027. Last year's WMO report gave a 50 per cent chance of such a breach, while between 2017 and 2021 scientists estimated just a 10 per cent chance.

Meanwhile, the UK Health Security Agency and the Met Office have launched a high-temperature warning system to reduce illness and deaths among those who are most vulnerable. Heatwaves will be "more intense and last longer" in the future, they warn.

Researchers at LSE's Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Environment in London are calling for a national strategy to deal with higher temperatures, saying England is "not ready" to respond to longer periods of heatwaves. The Institute warns of economic shock, "breakdown in public services", and excess deaths as a result.

FARRIS NOORZALI / SHUTTERSTOCK

Labour considers ban on new oil and gas licensing

Labour has announced that it may stop all new domestic oil and gas developments should it win the next election. The party has promised to instead invest heavily in renewable energy and nuclear power.

Jonathan Ashworth, the shadow work and pensions secretary, said details of Labour's "significant mission" would be announced soon.

"We know we've got to move to more renewable sources of energy," Ashworth told *Sky News* at the end of May. "It's important for our climate change commitments, but it's also the way in which we can bring energy bills down for consumers." He added: "This isn't about shutting down what's going on at the moment [oil and gas fields]; we will manage those sustainably."

The confirmation came shortly after the International Energy Agency (IEA) released its yearly World Energy Investment report, which revealed that annual investment in solar-generated power is expected to surpass that in oil production for the first time this year.

According to the IEA report, funding for clean energy sources more generally is expected to remain greater than spending on fossil fuels, with more than $1.7trn likely to be invested in renewables, nuclear power, electric vehicles and efficiency work. Yearly investments in oil, gas and coal developments will total around $1trn this year.

UK defends UAE oil boss as Cop28 president

The UK government has defended the United Arab Emirates for appointing the head of its state-owned oil company as the Cop28 president, after campaigners and 133 lawmakers from the EU and US called for his removal from the presidency.

The choice of Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber, CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc), to lead the UN's annual climate conference has been likened by campaigners to "appointing the CEO of a cigarette company to oversee a conference on cancer cures".

The event will be hosted by the oil-rich Gulf state in November. It will discuss progress on reducing carbon emissions and addressing the climate crisis. The UK minister for net zero, Graham Stuart, said Al-Jaber is "an outstanding individual". The oil chief holds a PhD from Coventry University and was awarded a CBE in 2013.

Adnoc is one of the world's largest oil exporters. Al-Jaber has brought forward plans to double its production to five million barrels per day from 2030 to 2027.

$1.7trn

The projected global spend on clean energy sources in 2023

40%

In the UK, more than two fifths of native species are in decline

2.4%

Percentage of global energy-related CO2 emissions from aviation

Green legislation under threat in European Parliament

Opposition is mounting against EU environmental protection legislation, including bills to halve the use of pesticides by 2030 and implement binding targets to restore nature.

Opponents claim the proposed laws are unclear and add to an already large number of environmental regulations passed under the current European Parliament. The centre-right European People's Party says the nature bill would harm farmers. Other laws on microplastics have also been delayed and member states are pushing back on pollution regulations.

The European Commission is under pressure to hold further legislation until after next year's European Parliament elections. While the EU has largely been successful at passing laws on climate change and net zero, which the Union is committed to achieving by 2050, laws on biodiversity have proven more difficult.

Environmental groups and the EU Commission say that these laws are a necessary response to environmental crises.

At Cop-15, the UN called on businesses to disclose their impacts on nature. A new framework by the Science-Based Targets Network (SBTN) will enable companies to report on their impacts on nature, alongside carbon emissions.

France implements ban on short-haul flights

The French government has implemented what critics have derided as "symbolic bans" on domestic short-haul flights. Passengers will no longer be able to travel by air when the same journey could be made by train in under two and a half hours.

A randomly selected assembly of 150 French citizens, designed to be representative of the population, was chosen in 2019 to deliberate on how to reduce emissions in a socially just way, following the *gilets jaunes* protests against a proposed fuel tax. That assembly recommended a ban on flights for journeys below four hours, but several French regions protested.

An airline industry group spokesperson said the ban would have "minimal effects" on CO2 emissions. Aviation accounts for around 2.4 per cent of global emissions.

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Sadiq Khan & Eric Adams
Mayor of London &
Mayor of New York City

"Climate budgets are a powerful tool for decision-makers"

Last month, New York City released its strategic climate plan, *PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done*, to protect New Yorkers from climate threats, improve our quality of life, and build the new, green economy. With this plan, we will create an equitable, healthy and resilient future together.

The challenge, as mayors and city officials around the world can attest to, is turning commitments into funded and measurable actions. The speed and scale of change needed to meet our targets requires a fundamental shift in the way cities function.

The threat climate change poses to cities cannot be overstated. By 2050 New York City could have over 60 days per year with temperatures of more than 90°F, and increased flood risk from severe rain events. We had a preview of our climate future in 2021, when Hurricane Ida inundated neighbourhoods across our city and claimed the lives of 13 of our neighbours. London is also experiencing more intense and frequent weather events due to climate change. Last summer the city experienced both drought and heatwaves with record breaking temperatures, which caused wildfires and led to the London Fire Brigade's busiest day since the Second World War.

Addressing this crisis will require us to think creatively about how we use the budgetary resources and powers at our disposal. As mayors of two of the world's largest and most diverse global cities, we are championing climate budgeting to make sure that we immediately act on the climate crisis.

Climate budgeting is a governance system and ongoing process to integrate climate commitments and considerations into budget decision-making and to develop new actions that will move our cities towards climate goals. Through the climate budgeting process, climate measures are proposed, evaluated and adopted in line with the budget cycle; responsibility is assigned for implementation across city government; and the city's investments and progress against long-term climate targets, such as achieving net zero emissions by 2050, are regularly made public.

Budgets are moral documents. And climate change is not only an environmental challenge; it is also a moral one. Climate budgeting is a significant shift to ensure we consider the climate impact of every budgeting decision we make, and a process to bring our climate ambitions to life.

We're drawing on Oslo's experience as the pioneer of this approach, which reduced the Norwegian capital's emissions by 30 per cent between 2009 and 2021 despite a population increase of more than 100,000.

In July 2022, London was the first megacity to incorporate the concept of climate budgeting into its budget guidance for 2023-24, spelling out for the first time how the Greater London Authority's planned expenditure of over £16bn would be linked to the commitment to make London's government operations net zero by 2030.

Similarly, New York City will be the first big city in the United States to implement climate budgeting. New York City oversees a multi-billion-dollar capital portfolio that shapes its buildings,

MARTA SIGNORI

transportation, recreational spaces, energy supply and infrastructure. We will use the climate budgeting process to equitably achieve net zero emissions citywide by 2050 and bolster resilience to extreme heat, intense rain and coastal flooding. As outlined in PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done, we'll launch our first climate budgeting cycle in 2023 and publish our first annual Climate Budget document to demonstrate our progress with the city's budget in 2024.

We've already made great strides in greening our cities: the planned expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (Ulez) into outer London boroughs will ensure that five million more people can breathe cleaner air, in addition to the four million Londoners covered by the existing Ulez zone, and will achieve further important reductions in carbon emissions. London's planning policies are making sure new developments save 50 per cent more energy than national building regulations require and drive the uptake of renewable technologies such as heat pumps.

In New York, we are implementing the groundbreaking Local Law 97, which requires large private buildings to reduce their emissions and will drive a once-in-a-generation investment in New York City's clean energy economy. We're also electrifying boilers in public schools, prioritising schools in environmental justice neighbourhoods, which are communities disproportionately harmed by pollution and other environmental ills. Climate budgeting will look like this – decision-making that is informed and forward-looking.

As proud members of the C40 global network of mayors, we are committed to taking urgent action to confront the climate crisis. This means changing the way we make decisions, demarcating clear roles and responsibilities, and prioritising the budget for immediate, cost-effective action as part of a joint effort.

What we've learned is that a climate budget is universally applicable, flexible and adaptable and can accommodate any policy instrument, at any scale. The work we are doing can serve as a model for other cities and countries.

Climate budgeting is a powerful tool for decision-makers. In our cities, it will help us efficiently and transparently manage climate actions, ensuring that they are identified, prioritised, and costed, and impacts are measured and reported.

It's pushing us as leaders to show how city governments will deliver, month by month and year by year, on our longer-term climate targets, and champion bolder action today.

From more intense heatwaves to more catastrophic storms, the devastating effects of climate change are already being felt in our cities and across the globe. The impact and cost of these extreme weather events will continue to mount, which means we cannot afford to delay. ●

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Advertorial

Towards a new, green economy

How innovation and investment in communities can help build a net zero future

In association with

The UN secretary-general António Guterres has warned that the world is facing a climate change tipping point. If governments, private-sector organisations and individuals are serious about limiting global heating – as was mandated by the much-lauded 2015 Paris Agreement – then urgent and immediate action is required. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has made clear that warming beyond that point will likely lead to cascading effects, including threatening the very existence of many low-lying coastal communities through rising sea levels, bringing consistent drought and supply chain disruptions, spurring mass climate migration and refugee crises, and leading to continued economic uncertainty.

Solving the problem necessitates a concerted effort towards greening our economies, transport systems, energy infrastructures and production processes, and doubling down on our journey towards net zero. The UK government legally committed itself to achieving the latter by 2050, and many other countries have followed suit. Similarly, the opposition has promised that in government it would eliminate fossil fuels from sustaining power on the UK's energy grid by 2030. The political consensus on the need to drastically combat emissions is heartening, but meeting those targets will require bold, innovative thinking and cross-sector collaboration like never before.

As well as posing challenges, building a net-zero economy based on renewable energy generation and low carbon production in traditional heavy industries also creates opportunities. The energy transition can be made in a way which aptly correlates with regional economic growth agendas that have the potential to revitalise and transform communities up and down the country.

South Kyle in East Ayrshire and Dumfries is home to a new 50 turbine-strong onshore wind farm producing enough clean electricity to power up to 170,000 homes each year. It is owned and operated by Vattenfall, the multinational utility company owned by the Swedish state. "We have a community benefit fund in South Kyle," says Lisa Christie, Vattenfall's interim UK country manager. "It's a way of recognising communities that are hosting energy infrastructure. But it works best when it's designed in

partnership with the local community in line with their needs and wishes, rather than thinking of it as some kind of quid pro quo payment."

Over its 25-year lifespan, the wind farm is projected to generate £38m for the local community. The South Kyle site has provided a £44m boost to the local economy (out of £93m the project has spent in Scotland overall), not least by using a "local approach" to procurement, contracting and management of resilient supply chains. The social value from projects such as these can be maximised by supporting high-skilled, high-productivity, high-wage local jobs as well as local small and medium-sized enterprises involved with the dozens of offshoot initiatives that are catalysed by this kind of major infrastructure development.

"The impact can clearly be positive," Christie adds. "We find a lot of support for our wind farms in the areas where we're operating – and that's both onshore and offshore. Support is very high, and we know that from polling."

Vattenfall has also expanded its operations to other parts of the UK, working in partnership with several local councils pursuing green energy policies.

"In Bristol, we're working with really forward-thinking local leadership," Christie told *Spotlight*. "They have set their sights really high. Ameresco has the main contract to help Bristol City Council deliver on its low carbon ambitions, and they've brought Vattenfall in as an expert in delivery."

The Swedish company also works with local government on major projects in London, including on the redevelopment of Brent Cross. Vattenfall provides knowledge, expertise and decades of project-delivery experience to help create heat networks for this important regeneration scheme in one of the capital's most deprived boroughs. It's this kind of collaborative, partnership-first approach with local and central government, and other private-sector organisations that can help the UK achieve its low-energy ambitions quickly.

This will also require reform from Whitehall: current planning laws in England are far too restrictive. It's not just housebuilding being held back by burdensome regulatory frameworks and layers of veto from multiple local planning committees and other stakeholders – the infrastructure we need for a green industrial revolution will need a more proactive, positive approach to development projects too. This will be easier to implement once communities see the real benefits of this kind of work.

SPACE-KRAFT / SHUTTERSTOCK

Onshore wind will continue to play a vital part in the future renewable energy mix

But it's not just energy and heating that needs to undergo a major overhaul if net zero is to become a reality. Carbon-intensive industries such as aviation, steel and concrete production, automobiles and plastics all need to revolutionise the way they do business.

These are sectors that are vital for maintaining mobility, modern living standards and for keeping the global economy on a sustainable footing. They cannot simply be wound down. Many of them will actually be essential for building the kind of mass transit systems and new energy networks we need.

> "Identify which sectors you can decarbonise quickest"

Helping these industries go green will require high-tech innovations. That's why Vattenfall is investing in research and development into fossil-free hydrogen, an essential component of decarbonising heavy-emitting industries such as concrete, cement, glass and steel manufacture. This kind of technology will help support stable, highly productive work in communities with deep historical connections with the traditional industries, bringing those sectors into the 21st century and creating the sustainable jobs of the future. Vattenfall is also investing in green steel through its Hydrogen Breakthrough Ironmaking Technology (Hybrit) project. Projects like these will help us change those cornerstone products of modernity and advanced economies and put them on a path to a green future.

"It's not about waiting for the perfect plan and expecting to be able to flip a switch, at which point our entire way of living will suddenly no longer use fossil fuels. It's about identifying which sectors you can decarbonise quickest and how you use green electrons to do that," says Christie. "We're getting ahead of the curve, and that's what's needed to make the green economy a reality." ●

Profile

“We really believe change is possible”

Unep’s climate finance chief Ivo Mulder finds cause for hope

By Nick Ferris

From the sleek streets of Midtown Manhattan to the historic Palais des Nations on the banks of Lake Geneva, most United Nations offices are a world away from the geopolitical challenges they were established to address.

But the United Nations Environment Programme (Unep), tasked with perhaps the most difficult problem of all, is based in Nairobi, Kenya, a country that is on the front line of the climate crisis. While the world has warmed by 1.2°C since industrial times, Africa is warming twice as fast. It is agricultural countries such as Kenya, where a significant proportion of people depend on it for their livelihoods (the figure is more than 40 per cent), that the climate risk is highest.

For Ivo Mulder, head of climate finance at Unep, working in Kenya has been a useful reminder of everything that is at stake in the agency’s mission to protect the environment.

"Climate finance for developing countries is trailing behind other achievements"

KLAWE RZECZY

"Climate change is making people lose their livelihoods in Kenya," the Dutch-born programme leader tells me when we meet on a rainy afternoon in London. "In the north of Kenya, the droughts are already devastating. Unep is the only UN agency based in the Global South, and living there and actually seeing how climate change is affecting people made a very important impression on me."

The 43-year-old began his career as an environmental economist working in NGOs and consultancies such as KPMG. He joined Unep in 2010 as a programme officer in the water, ecosystems and biodiversity department, before rising up the ranks.

Since 2017, after nearly three years in Nairobi, Mulder has been based in the "very different" city of Geneva. But his belief in the importance of Unep's mission, to solve the climate and ecological crises, remains. "It is very easy to be 'doom and gloom' about what is happening to the world," he says. "But people who come to work at Unep tend to be people who want to be part of the solution, and they really believe that change is possible."

There are reasons to be hopeful, from the fact that 90 per cent of the global economy has committed to net zero targets, to the roll-out of solar and wind power around the world, to the policy packages driving record levels of green investment in the US and EU. But climate finance for developing countries – where Mulder's work is focused – is trailing behind those achievements.

At the 2009 Cop15 UN climate conference in Copenhagen, developed countries committed to mobilising $100bn in climate finance per year for developing nations by 2020. But data tracked by the OECD shows that only $83bn was raised in that year, which is a figure only marginally higher than the two years before.

The finance requirement in the Global South is immense, encompassing not only efforts to mitigate climate change, but also adapting infrastructure to it, and paying for the loss and damage that results from climate change, as well as to help countries develop (around 770 million people globally still have no access to electricity). Research commissioned by the British and Egyptian governments (the Cop26 and Cop27 hosts, respectively) found that the true annual climate finance requirement for developing countries will be $2trn per year by 2030.

How can Mulder marry his optimism to this reality? "It's true that rich countries are only providing a tiny percentage of what is currently required for climate finance," he admits, "and a lot of people would argue that the $83bn provided is an inflated figure, because so much is provided as loans rather than grants.

"What I do find very promising is that there is more data being measured, more accountability in international agreements, and also more and more examples of developing countries finding ways of raising climate finance domestically, even if international finance flows fall short."

Mulder cites some successful examples. Costa Rica imposed a tax on fuel in the 1980s and used the resulting income to boost nationwide forest cover from 20 per cent to 50 per cent. Last year, Uruguay issued innovative sovereign bonds with an interest rate tied to fulfilment of its climate commitments. This helped to ensure that government spending aligns with the country's climate targets.

But low-income countries continue to have far weaker purchasing power than rich countries. They face borrowing costs of between 10 and 20 per cent, while Western nations usually pay a little over zero. "The financial system is, to put it bluntly, rigged against the Global South," the president of Kenya, William Ruto, said at an April conference hosted by the Sudanese philanthropist Mo Ibrahim in Nairobi.

It isn't only climate change where finance is required. In December 2022, the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework – cited by many as a "Paris Agreement for nature" – was adopted by parties at the 15th annual UN biodiversity conference. The package includes a target of mobilising $200bn a year in nature and biodiversity funding. ▸

Mulder believes optimism is a vital part of the fight against climate change

◂ A cynic might say this target will run into the same problems that the $100bn yearly climate finance target for developing countries has done. But much of Mulder's climate finance work at Unep goes into ensuring this does not happen.

"When it comes to renewable energy and energy efficiency, it is now quite possible – whether in the UK or in Uganda – [for companies] to quantify the value of an investment," says Mulder. "When it comes to things like our food system, value lies in all kinds of places, from food on the kitchen table to the natural world where food comes from.

"Unep does not have massive financial resources, but we are demonstrating to financiers through catalytic, project-focused investments that it can make good business sense to direct money towards companies that have a positive nature and climate impact. And we also make it clear what the standard needs to be for projects to be classified as good for the environment."

The mechanisms that Mulder's team has developed include lending initiatives that provide loans to farmers in countries such as Brazil, China and Nicaragua. These give more favourable terms than a standard loan would provide. In return, farmers are required to meet positive environmental and social indicators.

Another mechanism is a "reimbursement grant facility" for impact investors, which helps cover the cost of expensive due-diligence assessments that investors have to undergo if they are putting money for the first time into nature-focused investments, such as forestry or sustainable farming in remote areas.

Establishing international financing operations in the climate space remains very complex – not least because international finance, with buzzwords like "ESG", is rife with accusations of greenwashing.

A 2022 analysis from the ratings agency S&P found that among 12,000 equity mutual funds and exchange-traded funds, representing more than $20trn in market value, only 11 per cent were aligned with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to "well below" 2°C above pre-industrial temperatures. When the same analysis was carried out on 300 funds that had green or environmental language in their names, or used such terms to describe their approach, only 12 per cent were deemed to be Paris-aligned, nearly the same proportion as for general funds.

Nonetheless, in the face of "green misinformation", Mulder's team at Unep has been able to demonstrate that projects truly beneficial for climate and nature are possible. "In our initiatives, I am not so worried about greenwashing, as we develop our own environmental-social framework," he says. "To solve the greenwashing issue, you have to start somewhere: we develop methodologies and produce data – but it is up to the companies making pledges, and governments making regulations, to demand that higher standards are reached, and greater disclosure is made."

The kinds of nature-based climate solutions that Unep supports have also received some criticism from environmentalists who argue that such projects encourage hard-to-monitor carbon offsetting rather than direct mitigation efforts. There are also concerns about whether solutions such as land reforestation are sufficiently permanent, as well as the fact that land used for climate solutions should not be unfairly requisitioned from people living and working there.

Mulder acknowledges these as valid concerns, but points out that all paths to net zero involve some level of carbon sequestration, even if the focus is on emissions reduction. "Investing in carbon credits can never absolve from making emissions cuts: there needs to be a hierarchy of priorities," he says. "On the supply side, we need robust criteria to ensure that all projects are fair and well monitored."

Unep's efforts can feel like "a few drops in the ocean", says Mulder. But for him, the work the organisation is doing remains vital. By creating solutions to interconnected issues such as climate, nature, global development and food systems, he explains, one can begin to imagine a world that meets the challenges of the climate and nature crises systematically, and for the long term.

The crisis is urgent, but we need patience, too. Mulder says a good outcome of this November's Cop28 UN climate conference would be to determine which countries have met their $100bn climate finance target – and that global emissions will, finally, be seen to be on a downward trend.

"It can feel like things are not changing," adds Mulder, "but I do think we need a certain measure of hope in this fight. We are living in disruptive times, and with so many new and innovative developments both in finance and beyond, my feeling is that the pace of change will catch a lot of people by surprise." ●

IVO MULDER

Advertorial

We all want climate budgets – who is ready?

Cities aspire to take emissions management to the balance sheet

By Tomer Shalit

In association with

Ambitious cities like London, New York and Oslo are taking on climate budgets. It requires something, just as Sadiq Khan and Eric Adams advocate (see pages 6-7), that a lot of cities crave: to take emissions management to the balance sheet.

But how prepared are cities for climate budgets? Most already struggle with the green transition. Climate officers track hundreds of projects, stakeholders and inadequate data – and deal with immense pressure. Managing city-wide decarbonisation is more like scaling a mountain than sitting at a desk.

Before they even start to think about a climate budget, cities must connect emissions and economics. This minor detail is, in fact, major, because first comes connecting emissions to actions, and then actions to impacts: more like a moon landing than mountain scaling.

So let's rewind. To find out what impacts our actions have, we must establish what to measure. Mathematically, this is vital for an overview of co-benefits, costs and return on investment.

"But there's data for that!" you say about the emissions, actions and impact. Yes and no. There is national, aggregated data. While it's a start, it is still impossible to know what had an effect. Just because we can find out our body mass index (BMI), it doesn't mean it's the best measurable unit for our physical health. Nothing stops us from doing things differently.

Let's make sure we separate data and measurability. Data is units of information. Measurability is about quantifying when, where and what while assessing the chains of reasoning and certainty. How can this be done at scale?

This is a big step for man. However, there is an alternative. And it isn't the first time that this option has been used in moon-shot projects: handing over the hard work to the computers. In other words, let software do the maths.

This dawned on me in 2018 and led to the creation of ClimateView. With 70 per cent of global emissions coming from cities, an agile tool to manage city transitions seemed critical. With government actors, we developed ClimateOS. Today over 30 cities, including Nottingham, Bristol and Dundee, use it to track their progress and build data-driven plans. It is based on local, activity-based data, and rests on the logic of measurable shifts.

What does that enable? Let's consider the shift from cars to bikes. With quantifiable data on the amount of emissions saved per kilometre, we can calculate the overall emissions cut when multiplied by the number of people making that change. We can also assess economic benefits, for example in healthcare and job creation.

When an entire city's climate plan is rooted in measurability, the transition to a climate budget is a short step. Another plus is we also see how it attracts both citizens' trust and financial resources.

So, who is ready for a climate budget? The cities that acknowledge that the net zero transition is a once-in-a-generation undertaking. And that it should be done right, from the outset. ●

Tomer Shalit is a mathematician, author, and founder of ClimateView

The Spotlight Debate

Can offsets work?

The voluntary carbon market could help us hit climate targets – but there's still much to do

Luke Barratt | Ben Filewod

A SYSTEM OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY

Luke Barratt
Investigative reporter, SourceMaterial

They came at night," recalled Ángela Carrasco of the men who destroyed her Peruvian Amazon home. "They arrived by helicopter with axes, ropes, guns, masked-up. Like ghosts."

Twelve months later, last spring, Pulchérie Amboula, a Congolese farmer, was chased from her land by guards in trucks. "We no longer work," she later said. "How are we going to live?"

The link between these two cases, a year and 6,000 miles apart, is carbon offsetting, an increasingly popular way for many of the world's biggest firms to cancel out their emissions.

The idea is that by paying to stop trees being felled, firms can prevent enough carbon from escaping into the atmosphere to compensate for their own activities. The oil giant Shell, for example, has plastered billboards the world over with images of unspoiled rainforest and the words "Drive carbon neutral".

It all sounds fine in theory. But a series of investigations by our investigative journalism organisation, SourceMaterial, has shown that in a burgeoning but little-regulated market, things can go badly wrong.

Amboula and Carrasco's experiences are just two from a growing list of offsetting projects alleged to have violated human rights. And this is not the only problem. Our deep dive into the world of carbon offsetting found that many of the credits on the market, currently worth some $2bn annually, do nothing for the climate at all.

Using scientific studies to cross-check data from Verra, a non-profit company that certifies offsetting projects, we found that over 90 per cent of the forest offsets we examined were likely to not have an impact on emissions reduction.

Our research found methodological loopholes that suggest Verra

overestimates the threat to the forests it claims to be protecting. The company has disputed our findings, saying they were based on studies that don't account for "project-specific factors that cause deforestation" and which "massively miscalculate… impact". But there is a risk that dud offsets will play havoc with global carbon accounting.

In a market likened to a "new Wild West", these problems have not prevented unscrupulous actors, whether governments or corporations, from hoovering up land in low-income countries to cash in on the trade in carbon credits. Meanwhile, consumers who think they are paying to offset emissions from, say, their holiday flights, are routinely paying far more to middlemen than conservationists.

So when fossil fuel companies like TotalEnergies can claim to ship "carbon-neutral" liquified natural gas, it is legitimate to ask whether offsetting has become little more than an exercise in greenwashing.

But that may be going too far. Offsetting revenues can be an essential – sometimes the only – way to preserve vital forests. And while our investigations uncovered plenty of cowboys, along with employees who joined the industry to make a difference only to be disenchanted, we also found would-be sheriffs: conscientious scientists, conservationists and business people determined to create frameworks to guard against abuse.

But that will take time and political will. For now, there is mounting evidence that companies are relying on an offsets system that is increasingly out of touch with reality.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERVENTION

Ben Filewod
Assistant professorial research fellow, the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at LSE

The business-and-growth crowd wants carbon offsets: they impose a lesser economic burden than developing low-emissions technologies or cutting consumption. The nature-and-sustainability crowd often wants them too, since they fund conservation or development projects that deliver far more than mitigation. So it's no surprise that governments from Canada to China are trying to make offsets work. The only trouble is, they often don't.

You can't fix offsets without understanding them. Carbon credits are a way of tracking the climate impacts of real-world activities. Offsets are credits used to substitute for something, like cancelling out corporate emissions. In other words, an offset only has meaning within a carbon accounting system. How we do the accounting determines how we track progress – and whether we hit climate targets or not.

To make offsets work, we have to account for their uncertain impact. This means not letting an uncertain credit cancel out a certain emission. Instead, as in the Science Based Targets initiative, uncertain credits should offset uncertain emissions that are beyond a firm's control, and only until we have a better alternative. Taking uncertainty into account can keep all mitigation options on the table while keeping incentives strong.

Unfortunately, the voluntary carbon market is a long way from this. Credits issued for transitioning to renewable energy and avoiding tropical deforestation, historically the two most important types, appear to have been vastly overestimated in terms of their real impacts on climate. Complexities in measurement risk years of delay, especially as new capital pours into carbon markets.

As last summer's drought made clear, we are running out of time. It is essential that regulators step in and ensure that information about climate impacts is accurate. With most offsets used to underpin marketing claims, EU and UK moves to crack down on green assertions in advertising are right on target. The EU's new Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive is another step in the right direction, although it needs complementary investments in strengthening supply-chain data overseas to maximise impact.

However, what even counts as a credible offset is being debated. Witness the recent furore around offsets from avoided tropical deforestation. New data sources and statistical tools let scientists test the claims of avoided deforestation projects, finding that mitigation claims are often greatly overstated. Verra, a non-profit company that certifies offsetting projects, has pushed back in public while moving to significantly revamp its processes. Credit buyers don't know who to trust.

Overstated emissions aren't evidence of conspiracy; they are the outcome of well-intentioned people trying to scale conservation by making it profitable. But there is a right and wrong answer about the impact of avoided tropical deforestation credits (and other sources of voluntary carbon offsets). We need consensus about how to evaluate carbon credits, and their likely impact.

The need to get this consensus in time is an opportunity for government intervention, at least in a convening or endorsing role. Carbon credits face high uncertainty, powerful interests, and complex science. If we are to find solutions, we need an authoritative assessment of the evidence.

SEAN GALLUP / GETTY IMAGES

Barry Gardiner MP
Member of the Energy Security and Net Zero Select Committee

"Failing to achieve net zero would break the foundation of the financial system"

The financial sector is fuelling climate change. If the investments made by the banks, venture capitalists and asset managers of the City of London were their own country, it would sit above Canada and Germany as the world's ninth-largest polluter.

The financial markets continue to pour trillions into fossil fuel industries, new oil and gas projects, and carbon-intensive activities. In doing so they are driving themselves, and the planet, towards a cliff edge. The task of redirecting these investments towards the goal of achieving net zero by 2050 is as mammoth as it is crucial if the goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial global temperatures is to be met.

Failing to achieve net zero by 2050 would not just be a human and environmental catastrophe. It would be an economic one. Business as usual, leading to warming of 2°C or 3°C, would break the foundation of the financial system and risk major economic collapse. The adverse impacts of extreme weather events will undermine the ability of insurance companies to evaluate risk, with hurricanes, bush fires and droughts causing entire business models to fail. The consequence is that insurers would set the price for cover at increasingly unaffordable rates. With assets uninsurable, banks will be unable to offer security for loans such as mortgages, and without insurance or banking functioning as before, the entire financial system that today generates so much capital could fail.

Yet the risk to the sector presented by climate breakdown currently plays a minor role in investment decisions. Fossil fuel investments remain high-reward, and very few financial institutions are committed to ending investment in oil and gas: private banks invested $742bn in the fossil fuel industry in 2021 alone, and the UK bank Barclays is the seventh-largest investor in the world. Reversing this trajectory requires global action.

Some moves are already under way, with parts of the financial system indicating their willingness by joining alliances such as the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (Gfanz). Gfanz comprises more than 500 firms across the financial sector that have publicly committed to net zero by 2050, dedicating $130trn to weaning the economy off fossil fuel investments.

Bridging the gap between words and action, however, requires standardised goals. Without these, companies will be accused of elevating their own climate credentials publicly in an attempt to be seen to be green, while doing little to implement measurable and accountable change. Financial industries can claim to be making environmentally informed decisions, while failing to make public the exact indices and standards to which they measure success. Sadly, the varying standards against which different investments are bench-marked – whether environmental, social and governance (ESG) policies or carbon emissions – are extremely inconsistent. Inevitably companies tend to pick the ones that show them in the most favourable light. To address this, consistent metrics are needed for investors to determine the environmental performance of their investments – a "green taxonomy" that is globally aligned and can act as an informed resource to rank green investments across the world.

Restructuring requires a robust regulatory framework. Gfanz members are clear: "We are

MARTA SIGNORI

policy-takers, not policymakers." They will run their businesses in accordance with the rules, but the rules must be the same for everyone. Until they are they will continue to justify carbon-intensive investments. Policy that engages the financial sector towards climate action must recognise that voluntary schemes are unlikely to deliver the change required. As things stand, Gfanz operates through voluntary initiatives, but only 60 of the 240 largest members have policies against coal investments, and only 11 robustly oppose offering financial services to new coal mines or related infrastructure.

To remain members of the United Nations' net zero initiatives, investors have been told they must phase out unabated fossil fuel assets to support a just transition that does not leave communities to suffer. But the commitment to this phased approach must involve action and not be a "smokescreen" to disguise the financial sector's foot-dragging. Regulation must create accountability. This could involve mandating diverse investments to ensure a move away from fossil fuel reliance with minimum economic pain, or oil and gas companies paying a bond for expected decommissioning costs, effectively ensuring that any new projects have their end firmly in sight.

By far the most direct way to factor environmental degradation into investment decisions is to put a price on CO_2 emissions. This is supported by the majority of Gfanz members because it internalises the price of carbon and ensures the most polluting sectors pay their fair share. Put simply: the polluter pays.

But to align investment decisions with net zero requires a global focus that brings the entire financial sector under the same rules so as to avoid carbon leakage, which will be inevitable if industries in countries with high carbon prices can be undercut by those that have low ones. A unitary metric is required and competitive undercutting must be prevented. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the global price of carbon must increase from the current average of $6 per tonne to $75 by 2030, or the positive impact of carbon pricing risks being undone by leakage.

The global financial sector needs systemic change if it is to survive and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Faced with tackling the ravages of the Second World War, 44 nations gathered for the Bretton Woods conference in America to set up a system of rules, institutions and procedures to regulate the international monetary system after the war. It set unitary metrics for currencies – convertibility against the dollar – and demanded cooperation to prevent competitive devaluations. Next year, on the 80th anniversary of the original conference in New Hampshire, the world has a perfect opportunity to reconfigure our global financial institutions once again. We must do so to meet a climate change challenge that is both economic and existential. ●

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Preparing for Power

The £28bn question

Can Labour's pledge on green capital deliver beyond climate?

By India Bourke

Picture the scene: it is 2024 and Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak are going head-to-head in their first pre-election broadcast debate. Sunak, still attempting to push the Conservatives' reputation for fiscal responsibility, tries to expose the gaps in Starmer's spending plans. As one of Labour's longstanding promises, the pledge to invest £28bn of public capital a year into the green economy is an obvious target.

If Starmer stumbles on how this money will be allocated, or how it fits within the party's wider promise to reduce government debt as a proportion of GDP, Labour's election chances could start to unravel. So too, could the UK's ability to act faster on the climate crisis.

Those are the stakes. Meanwhile, right-wing opposition to climate action is growing louder. In response to reports that Starmer may soon propose a ban on new North Sea oil and gas licences – something the International Energy Agency has advised to meet net zero goals – the government's Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Grant Shapps, said that the plan would "trash the economy". The result is increasing pressure on Labour to show how climate policy is also good for people's finances and livelihoods. Fail, and the backlash can be intense – as shown in 2018 in France, where *gilet jaunes* protests erupted over planned changes to fuel tax rates.

So far, Labour's leadership has remained united behind the party's proposed Green Prosperity Plan, which echoes the US Inflation Reduction Act's promotion of green industries, and that the £28bn pledge would support.

As the shadow climate change and net zero secretary, Ed Miliband, told *Spotlight*, Labour is resolute that greater green investment is the right decision – for the climate, yes, but also for jobs and bills: "The Green Prosperity Plan is essential to cut energy bills, create good jobs, deliver energy security, and provide climate leadership. We need to invest if we want to win the race for good green jobs, because under the Tories we are being left behind whilst the US, Europe and China get ahead."

The concept of borrowing to invest in a growing economy has good foundations: debt's percentage of GDP can still fall if the economy grows and World Bank data has found that US $1 of green investment can yield US $4 of

Shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves on her recent visit to the US

SPENCER PLATT / GETTY IMAGES

returns. Plus Labour's "net worth" fiscal rule means that a Labour government would balance what it owes against what it owns, rather than just count the debt.

The cost of damages from climate change will only rise if action is not taken swiftly. Yet £28bn a year is a big number and how far the public is ready to embrace pro-borrowing arguments remains to be seen. Relatedly, some of Labour's other shadow ministers are concerned that tying the money to green spending means their own departments will miss out, the *Guardian* reports. So can the pledge stay the electoral course? And what new detail could help?

The bones of the initiative can be traced back to a 2020 IPPR report for an Environmental Justice Commission, of which Miliband was co-chair. Building on analysis by the independent Committee on Climate Change and leading green NGOs, the think tank estimated that there was a £33bn a year shortfall in public investment needed to tackle the climate and nature crises.

A little over a year later, against a backdrop of mounting public concern about the climate threat, the shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves announced Labour's own £28bn commitment, including £6bn a year for energy efficiency. Linked investments have also been promised in steel, ports, industrial clusters and hydrogen – to be delivered through a new National Wealth Fund and publicly owned generation company, GB energy.

Since these announcements, however, progress on, the spending detail has been slower. And in recent weeks, there has even been speculation it could be the party's next policy U-turn. In May, the promised sum was mentioned in a new draft policy handbook, yet this document won't be finalised until Labour's annual conference in the autumn. And, while the shadow chancellor used a recent speech in Washington DC to stress the importance of the party's Green Prosperity Plan, she did not specifically reference the £28bn. According to the *Times*, Starmer will try to further explain the pledge "in a speech in the coming weeks".

"Under the Tories we are being left behind"

"To reap the political benefits of the Green Prosperity Plan, Labour now need to say what the money will be invested in – what it will build, what benefits it will bring – and what the pro-social, pro-climate and pro-justice conditions attached to public money will be," notes Mathew Lawrence from Common Wealth, a think tank.

Take, for instance, the UK's existing offshore wind industry, Lawrence suggests. This sector has flourished thanks to government intervention that removes the risk for private investors, such as the "Contracts for Difference" mechanism, which guarantees a fixed price for the electricity produced. This has helped increase the UK's total renewable generation – but the funding also failed to attach any conditions of ▸

The shadow secretary for climate change and net zero, Ed Miliband, addressing an audience on Labour's Green Prosperity Plan

◂ UK ownership or control, resulting in much of the industry's economic value leaking out.

"We have a brief window of opportunity to ambitiously address the climate crisis and our economic malaise in tandem; the £28bn is a down payment to build a different kind of economy. It is not enough, and requires deep structural reform to accompany it, but it can be an important start," Lawrence adds.

The full details surrounding the financing of Labour's Green Prosperity Plan will have to wait until Reeves sets out the party's fiscal rules in the last fiscal event before the general election, says a Labour source. In the meantime, a host of climate-aware think tanks and NGOs are stepping up to highlight some of the questions that could help solve Labour's £28bn political puzzle.

On Industry

Part of Labour's Green Prosperity Plan includes the establishment of a public energy company, GB Energy, to bring new clean energy generation into full or part public ownership. A National Wealth Fund has also been announced to channel investment into green tech and create over a million jobs. Together, the party says the initiatives will help achieve two of Labour leader Keir Starmer's five "missions": making Britain a clean energy superpower and securing the highest sustained growth in the G7.

But among the questions surrounding the £28bn's role in supporting the Green Prosperity Plan is exactly how interventionist its approach to industrial strategy will be. How far, for instance, will the growth of new green industries be left to the market to decide, or guided by state-led bodies? Will support be directed more towards helping consumers or producers? Will investment in reskilling gas engineers as heat-pump installers, for instance, be counted as a capital spend? And will the funding encourage British companies to produce complete end products, such as EV cars, or just certain components?

> "The £28bn is a down payment to build a new economy"

According to Ben Westerman, the interim executive director at the Aldersgate Group, a non-profit, businesses are supportive of "targeting support on specific parts of production". What is essential though, Westerman adds, is that targeted funding is accompanied by stable policy that allows businesses to plan for the longer-term and attract investors. "The UK has preferred short-term funding pots as signals to the market in place of long-term policy: The Automotive Transformation Fund, for example, has not been enough to scale up EV production in the UK."

On Energy

The parameters of GB Energy's public ownership of energy generation have not been firmly set, either. Some analysts, such as those at Common Wealth, believe its remit should be broad.

"A public generator can help deliver the energy transition faster, fairer, and more effectively than leaving it to

LEON NEAL / GETTY IMAGES

for-profit markets," says Lawrence.

So far, Labour has stressed the collaborative nature of its GB Energy plans. As a Labour source explained, "GB energy is going to be a player in the market but not have responsibility for coordinating the market. We don't want to crowd out the private sector, we want to partner with it." That said, they added, there could be room for some fully publicly owned assets, too.

On Homes

One of the few parts of the £28bn already allocated to a specific sector is the £6bn per year on improving energy efficiency. This is a "very positive" move, notes Colm Britchfield from the think tank E3G, since it will both cut fossil fuel use and bring down bills. Yet, he adds, the biggest long-term savings of carbon emissions will come not from efficiency but electrification.

"There's a risk that in 10 years you've added great insulation, raised EPC standards and cut gas demand, but you're still reliant on gas. So we also need a fleshed out plan within that 6bn for heat pumps and district heating," says Britchfield. This could include expanding subsidies to help people with the upfront cost of installing heat pumps and taking action to lower the relative cost of electricity compared to gas, he suggests.

On Transport

Both funding for EV infrastructure, as well as subsidies and grants for buyers, could be classified as capital investment in transport, says Luke Murphy from IPPR, but he notes that regulation would also be needed to support second-hand buyers. This could come in the form of an earlier combustion-engine phase-out date for fleets of company cars, allowing replacement EVs to trickle down to the second-hand market in time for the existing 2030 deadline, plus subsidies to help poorer households with purchasing.

EVs can also only go so far towards meeting the UK's emissions reduction needs for transport. So in line with recommendations from the Committee on Climate Change, the Welsh government is already pursuing plans to curb road-building. Funding to support public transport, as well as walking and cycling, will be key.

On Nature

How nature recovery fits into Labour's climate agenda is arguably the area on which its thinking is still least developed. But according to Vicki Hird of Sustain, a food and farming alliance, nature is "definitely going to need to take a chunk of that £28bn".

This should include investing in policies that will sequester carbon, such as peat and wetland restoration and woodland creation, she suggests, but also helping farmers transition to agroecological methods and supporting local food infrastructure.

Current government funding for farmers through ELMS, a new payment scheme designed to promote environmental land management, is simply not enough, many NGOs warn. And even if more money is found, advises Martin Lines, the head of the Nature Friendly Farming alliance, Labour needs to do more to reassure it will be attached to the right initiatives.

"If we're not careful we'll invest in areas that will penalise nature, such as wrong trees in wrong place, or not recognise the risks that intensifying food systems can pose to animal welfare, air quality and local environment and waterways," says Lines. Simply helping farmers buy the latest lower-carbon tech also won't be sufficient; they will also need training to use it. Plus baseline prices should be set for sellers on things such as seed drills (which can reduce the use of fertiliser), so they don't automatically mark-up the costs.

As the above only begins to suggest, the commitment to invest an annual £28bn in green capital leaves much to be decided. The rate at which investments should be made is still up for debate. "They will need an investment profile that starts slowly before ramping up considerably," advises Chaitanya Kumar from the New Economics Foundation. Careful coordination of institutions could help here, IPPR's Luke Murphy suggests, such as the creation of an "Olympic Games style" delivery body.

There are also still some big picture decisions to make. Many on the progressive left stress the need for the green transition to accompany wider social reform. While some of Labour's draft commitments suggest they share this joined-up vision, such as a promise to address regional imbalances, questions remain over the extent to which the investments will reduce entrenched inequality.

In order for the £28bn to have the greatest impact Labour "must be clear on who pays for it, who benefits and how it works within their wider programme for government," says Hannah Martin, the co-director of Green New Deal UK.

"That means making sure that the benefits of the transition are distributed right across the country and that capital expenditure goes towards job rich projects. It means increasing public ownership of key services like water, energy, mail and transport. And it also means rebuilding strong social infrastructure and public services after decades of austerity."

In addition, Labour should be leading the way in setting up an international windfall tax that is then redistributed as reparations to those hit hardest by the impacts of climate change, Martin suggests.

Labour's task will perhaps be made easier by the fact that progressive parties abroad, such as the Greens in Australia and Germany, have had electoral success with similar arguments. Biden's IRA has also already linked subsidy support for companies to things like the creation of well-paying unionised jobs. This is something a Labour source says the party would pursue as well.

There is clearly an appetite for ambition on the climate, from the public as well as industry. "Labour have put green investment at the heart of their offer to voters, and they can capitalise on this if they communicate well," notes Helena Bennett from the think tank Green Alliance. "They have a massive opportunity to do some proper visioning about a future Britain." ●

> There's clearly an appetite for ambition on climate

The Policy Ask

Helen Clarkson: "The Treasury's spending rules are a huge drag on the economy"

The CEO of the Climate Group on being a good listener, working for Doctors Without Borders, and why we need to tax oil and gas companies

How do you start your working day?
With a cup of coffee while I clear my inbox. I read and delete everything pretty quickly first thing and try to keep only about 50 "active" things in my inbox at once. Then I'll wander into the office kitchen to find someone to chat to for a bit.

What has been your career high?
I think the highs are when I see everyone at Climate Group pulling together and it paying off. For example, a lot of our policy work running into Cop26 in Glasgow in 2021 delivered the outcomes we wanted. Basically, any time someone says to me, "Climate Group really punches above its weight", I get a real kick.

What has been the most challenging moment of your career?
Working for Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières), I had to evacuate my team from the Democratic Republic of Congo when things became too insecure to stay. We had to go by road and it was never clear what was coming round the corner. I was in charge and so both making a lot of decisions and trying to take care of my team and get us through it. It's put most things into a weird perspective since.

If you could give your younger self career advice, what would it be?
One of the nicest things a couple of colleagues have said to me recently is that I'm good at listening. I definitely wouldn't have had that feedback in my twenties, so it would probably be to develop that skill more quickly. I also learnt the value of a proper apology – you can get past most things if you aren't casual about accountability.

What policy or fund is the UK government getting right?
A couple of years ago the UK was doing well on climate leadership, particularly in the run-up to Cop26, and there is some good ambition on paper. But since then, it's been hugely disappointing on actually delivering. The EU, the US, China and even India are all starting to grasp the opportunities on renewables and clean technology. The UK risks being left behind.

What policy should the UK government scrap?
The Treasury's spending rules are a huge drag on the economy, focusing narrowly on meeting an arbitrary debt-to-GDP ratio target rather than a proper long-term vision for growth. Those big, ambitious, economically transformative infrastructure projects, such as HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, end up getting watered down to cut costs in the short run, meaning we lose out big-time in the long run.

What upcoming UK policy or law are you most looking forward to?
I'm looking forward to the government finally responding to the US Inflation Reduction Act. I'm looking forward to it in the way that I think you have to if you want the UK to be a serious player in driving the climate agenda – more with hope than expectation.

What piece of international government policy could the UK learn from?
I wish we could go back in time and set up a British sovereign wealth fund for North Sea oil, like the Norwegians did. Obviously, we can't, but there's still a lot we could do with really smart use of windfall taxes and removing fossil fuel subsidies. With the amount of subsidy that goes to fossil fuels, renewable energy is not competing on a level playing field.

If you could pass one law this year, what would it be?
I think this year it would have to be proper investment in improving the energy efficiency of buildings. The country is crying out for a scheme that both creates jobs, improves people's warmth and comfort next winter, while also helping reduce their bills. It also needs to be done if the UK is ever going to get on track to hit its net zero targets. ●

MARTA SIGNORI

THE NEW STATESMAN

Green Times

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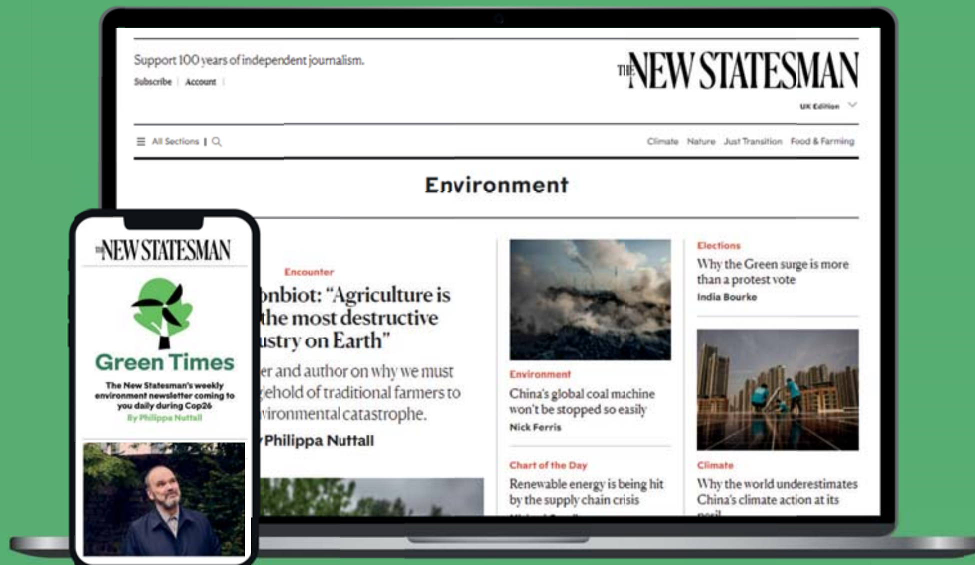

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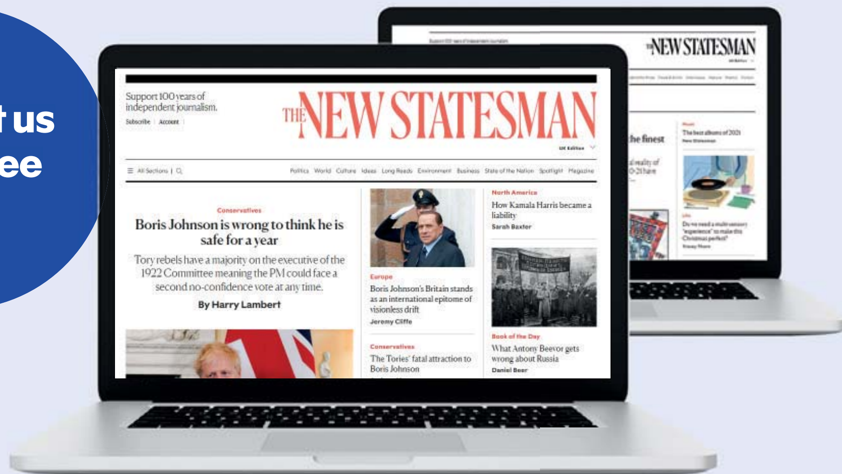

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