

Keswick Reminder 11.04.25: NfWW No.84 If the Danes can do it ...

Last month Kemi Badenoch, the Tory Leader, ditched her party's commitment to achieve 'net zero' by 2050, a target enshrined into law in 2019 by her predecessor, Theresa May. Kemi Badenoch's claim is that it would bankrupt the country, though her views have been convincingly contested by leading experts.

This article shows what can be done when a country seriously focuses on achieving 'net zero'. The country in question is Denmark.

When climate change threatens our planet, Denmark has emerged as a beacon, demonstrating how a nation can successfully transition to a green economy while maintaining prosperity.

Denmark, a country of just 5.8 million people, has set itself ambitious climate goals that would intimidate much larger nations: a 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, and being completely carbon neutral by 2050. What makes Denmark remarkable isn't just these targets, but the systematic way they have set about achieving them.

Wind energy has become Denmark's signature achievement. Driving through the Danish countryside or sailing along its coastline reveals forests of wind turbines spinning in the Nordic winds. Today, wind power generates over half of Denmark's electricity, with offshore wind farms becoming a Danish speciality. The country is now planning the world's first energy islands – artificial islands serving as hubs for multiple offshore wind farms.

'We've proven that green transition and economic growth can go hand in hand,' says Energy Minister Lars Aagaard. Indeed, since 1990, Denmark's economy has grown by approximately 60% while reducing carbon emissions by more than 40%.

The renewable energy sector now employs over 75,000 Danes and generates billions in export revenue. Danish companies have become global leaders in wind energy technology, creating a virtuous cycle of innovation and economic opportunity.

But Denmark's success extends beyond electricity production. The country's district heating systems serve nearly two-thirds of Danish households, dramatically reducing energy waste. Copenhagen's state-of-the-art waste-to-energy plants convert household garbage into both electricity and heating, addressing two environmental challenges at once.

The country also employs carbon taxes which provide a clear signal to the market while funding green initiatives.

What truly sets Denmark apart is its commitment to a transition which is fair to all. Job training programs help workers transition from fossil fuel industries to green jobs. Energy efficiency programs target low-income households to ensure benefits reach everyone. Urban planning prioritises cycling infrastructure and public transport, making sustainable choices easy for all Danes.

As the world struggles to address climate change, Denmark's green revolution stands as proof that a better future is not just possible: it is already happening.

And the Danes know what Kemi Badenock seems not to: that taking strong action will increase a country's economic growth and that abandoning net zero will cost us dearly in the end.

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