

**Langdon Hall Meeting  
Country Reaction Paper  
UK**

What is essential for the UK? What are the government's main priorities and what is challenging them?

- Some action on reducing carbon emissions: UK voters and other organized parts of domestic politics are pushing ever more strongly for action on climate change. This includes action at the national and local level (UK is not meeting its own targets on reducing carbon emissions) as well as pushing for progress in fostering a new global framework. There is strong public support for both and a strong expectation that the government should act. All three major political parties rank this as a priority. So far, there has been no (or very little) actual progress at the national level towards meeting targets which have been set. This points to an important institutional gap between the target-setting exercise (Prime Minister) and the agencies supposed to implement policies (instruments are diffused across DEFRA, DTI, Treasury, DFID, Ministry of Transport etc)
- A narrower government priority stems from the concern about energy security (boosted by each step Putin takes towards squeezing vital supply line countries such as Georgia – described by some as an equivalent for Europe to the Straits of Hormuz). For energy security the government is prioritizing diversifying energy supplies. This includes expanding access to gas, LNG, especially from North Africa. It will require greater European cooperation. The government is also (but with less focus) exploring the expansion of renewables, and investigating the rebuilding of nuclear plants.
- A third 'essential' in the current UK government is to continue to make progress on poverty alleviation and development – especially in Africa. UK development assistance has a huge government priority and commitment (reflected in the budget allocated to the Department for International Development). The effectiveness and allocation of this budget is put directly in jeopardy by climate change. Already the effects of climate change in vulnerable parts of the world are shifting aid more into emergency assistance (which is much less effective than development assistance in building up countries' ability to adapt to climate change longer term). Furthermore, the scramble for energy resources in Africa is creating huge concerns across UK government about their loss of influence in the continent, and their loss of leverage in aid programs.

What is problematic for the UK? What necessary measures are particularly difficult for a UK government?

- Several measures which would give life to carbon emissions targets are difficult – politically and economically – for the UK. These include such things as limits or additional taxes on aviation, vehicle taxation.

- Although there is not much the UK can do without full cooperation with European partners, the EU dimension is difficult. A more coherent EU approach requires some pooling of sovereignty for which is very difficult for UK politicians to argue.
- An EU approach also requires a philosophical shift in some areas for UK officials whose starting point is a single liberal market in energy but whose European partners favour a more dirigiste line (which may indeed be necessary on issues such as gas storage and the integration of electricity grids).

Other issues:

- The EU could play a key role in technology development, demonstration and diffusion and the UK could have a central position in this – not least because some of its key private sector groups have shown a willingness to invest.
- The UK should be able to play a serious and significant role in fostering multilateral cooperation, not least because its own influence in multilateral institutions tends to be well coordinated across government agencies and well prosecuted within multilaterals. This could particularly focus on the international financial institutions and their coherence in a global climate change strategy.

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