

'Net Zero' represents the primary hurdle to surpass in the reduction of environmental damage caused by the human population and denotes the achievement of a balance between carbon emissions and removals. The energy sector is a high-emissions sector, comprising 21% of UK carbon emissions in 2019. As such, decreasing emissions and diversifying generation is a priority for improving environmental impact and power security. This essay will assess the management styles available for the Net Zero strategy, from an energy perspective.

The Net Zero strategy, launched in 2021, analyses each major sector and sets out the policies which the government intends to implement to stably reduce carbon emissions by a series of set dates. The base for the strategy focusses around a ten-point plan and presents a detailed assessment of the action to be taken to ensure stability in the transition.

Managing the Net Zero policy centrally would primarily have practical and financial benefits for the UK. Central management of the overarching strategy ensures that all of the UK governments would be working to the same objectives, making the implementation of the objectives quicker and the monitoring of progress easier. It would also have financial and time benefits through reducing the time and manpower that would be required for each devolved government to create a ground-up strategy.

The element of saving time is not to be overlooked; the ongoing climate emergency is happening in real time, so at this critical stage of environmental development, time is of the essence in enacting solutions. Hence, in the interest of time, there is an argument for the introduction of solutions before detailed investigation has occurred, provided they would meet energy security, commercial and ethical requirements.

The additional benefits of central management are administrative and financial. A centralised strategy ensures that all elements are covered in sufficient depth, and that no overlap occurs across the UK. Where procurement is concerned, for instance in the development of offshore wind capacity, a centralised management would occupy a more leveraged position in the market, enabling economies of scale in procurement and distribution.

However, centralised management does not necessarily lead to efficiency. Each UK nation has unique resources and challenges, and different starting points for reaching net zero. Adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not likely to yield the best results for each country. If each devolved government is allowed to develop its own strategy, bespoke solutions could

be implemented to maximise the resources available and use them to meet each energy usage profile.

Contrastingly to the earlier point regarding political priorities, an argument can be made with regard to decentralised management; the devolved governments each have different priorities, so would likely strategize a more or less aggressive transition to Net Zero, tailored to their unique situation. This may allow varying optimal approaches for each nation, and centralised management may be detrimental to those ambitions.

Localised management also has larger collaborative potential, both inside and outside of the relevant nation. By using local knowledge, 'helicopter-view' planning and large-scale procurement could be transformed into bespoke planning and increased use of local firms for design and procurement work, helping to create local jobs and increase the suitability of the solutions to the area. Harnessing the relationships that the individual nations have with others, for example Northern Ireland's relationship with the Republic of Ireland, could help in planning solutions that work better for the UK and its neighbours, and passing best practice on to them to implement their own Net Zero ambitions.

In conclusion, there is no 'right answer' to the centralisation argument and, ideally, there will be a hybridised system of control. Using one strategy for the whole UK would ensure that priorities are aligned, and a holistic solution for the UK is considered. Additionally, economies of scale would be larger, and overlap will be decreased. However, devolved management would lead to a more bespoke and efficient solution.

Branching out from the overarching strategy and launching regional action plans, developed in collaboration with the relevant devolved governments, would go some way towards achieving hybridisation and overcoming some of the significant political differences between the central and devolved governments.