

UK leads the world to green future

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British companies are currently surpassing expectations in cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

Over 5,000 companies, across 44 industries have cut their CO₂ emissions by nearly three times the agreed targets. According to figures released by The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), industry cut their CO₂ emissions in 2002 by 13.5 million tonnes well above the 3.5 million tonne target.

These were set as part of climate change agreements (CCAs), a government initiative set up in an attempt to cut UK CO₂ emissions. The CCAs are a ten year project designed to achieve a commitment from industry to cut pollution.

In 2001, the government also introduced a climate change charge on businesses which cause CO₂ emissions. Those firms who committed to the Climate Change Agreements were entitled to an 80% reduction in the climate change levy.

The UK has to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 12.5% by 2020 under the terms of the Kyoto Protocol. This amounts to a reduction of 35 million tonnes. The government believes that it is on target to make a 23% percent reduction by this date. It also aims to cut UK CO₂ emissions by 60% by 2050. This will make the UK the world leader in cutting CO₂ emissions.

However, there should be serious doubts over the validity of these latest figures. The majority of the CO₂ cuts have come from the steel production sector. This is one of the most badly hit areas of manufacturing which is currently in severe recession in the UK.

Therefore it seems natural that reduced manufacturing output will result in reduced CO₂ emissions. But will CO₂ emissions continue to fall if heavy industrial and manufacturing production stabilises, or even, start to grow? Furthermore, if other nations fail to honour their commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, the cuts that the UK has made in CO₂ emissions will have little impact on global climate change.