Government ‘moving too slowly’ to meet economic targets and climate goals

The Government is moving too slowly on infrastructure initiatives and not putting enough focus on the type of larger projects which would secure economic growth and a lower carbon economy, a new report by independent advisers on infrastructure have said.

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) said the Government needs to develop fewer, bigger and better targeted initiatives to meet long-term economic targets and climate goals.

In their annual Infrastructure Progress Review, the advisers criticised the Government over its “negligible advances in improving the energy efficiency of UK homes, the installation of low-carbon heating solutions or securing a sustainable balance of water supply and demand”.

The NIC warned that the Government is “off track to meet its targets and ambitions” in a “range of areas”.

“(The) Government must develop stronger staying power and focus on fewer, bigger, better-targeted initiatives to deliver the infrastructure needed to meet its long-term goals for economic growth and a lower carbon economy,” the report said.

Read More

- Peers to vote on law that could see people forced on to hydrogen boilers
- What the papers say – March 27

- Public urged to avoid harbour in Dorset after oil leak causes major incident
- SPONSORED

  How climbing helped a troubled teenager find the right path in life

"(The) Government has set an ambition for at least 600,000 heat pumps to be installed each year by 2028, while only 55,000 were fitted in 2021 – meanwhile, 1.5 million gas boilers were fitted.

"Similarly, (the) Government expects 300,000 public electric vehicle charge points to be in place by 2030, but only 37,000 public charge points are currently installed."

The review added that, in the course of the last year, progress towards "major infrastructure objectives" had stuttered even further – at a time when "the need for acceleration has heightened".

The NIC also called for a "greater sense of certainty" around progressing HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, stressing that delays inevitably push back the economic benefits for communities.

In order to get back on track, the commission advised a "greater devolution of funding and decision-making, moving away from competitive bidding processes, and building on the multi-year funding settlements for combined authorities with long-term devolved budgets for all local transport authorities, while also allowing greater revenue-raising powers at a local level".

While the commission did credit the Government for its continued investment in infrastructure in the short term – with a commitment of £100 billion to support economic infrastructure from 2022-23 to 2024-25 – it warned that “private sector investment is also critical for meeting the Government’s long-term targets on infrastructure”.

The report concluded that the UK “must remain an internationally competitive place to invest, at a time when the Inflation Reduction Act in the United States and the REPowerEU plan and the Net-Zero Industry Act in the European Union make the investment environment more challenging”.

“Ambitious and stable policy from government, alongside effective regulation, is critical for providing the private sector with the certainty it needs to invest,” it said.