

Does it really have to be this hard to go green?

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My Green New Deal colleague Jeremy Leggett has a comment in [the Guardian](#) on the absurdity of the government's green policy:

The solar photovoltaics industry is the fastest-growing green energy industry in the world. Growth in 2008, [announced this week](#), was fully 89%, notwithstanding deep recession. 2008 venture capital investments in "cleantech" have also been totted up of late.

More than 50 [types] of green energy technology interest venture capital investors, but in 2008 more than 50% of all their cleantech investment globally in went into [solar photovoltaics](#).

Knowing all this, it was with hope in my heart that I accepted an invitation from the government to speak at its jobs summit in January, about the scope for a [UK green new deal](#). In March, I attended the [Low Carbon Summit](#) in similar mood. There, Gordon Brown called for a global green new deal, using those exact words.

But a few days later, the government cut its main support programme for solar photovoltaics [without warning](#). Scarcely being able to believe what I was hearing, I remonstrated with No 10, and the Department of Energy and Climate Change. I was told that ministers hadn't known about the decision, which had been taken by DECC officials — wait for this — because solar PV was proving more popular than the other technologies in the programme, and the civil servants wanted the others to catch up. I waited, hoping for corrective action. It hasn't happened. [Job losses](#) have started in solar companies, and still nothing has been done.

Funding for solar PV has been cut before in recent years, only to be reinstated later. The industry in the UK has been put on a kind of stop-start drip-feed. Overseas, in contrast, governments have opted for the kind of reliable commitments that allow businesses to make realistic plans, and hire people, while attracting investors. It's almost as though Whitehall has decided it actually wants to kill this industry in the UK, for some reason. I can't bring myself to believe in such a conspiracy, but if you did want to kill an industry, in a Yes Minister kind of way, you'd do just what the government is

doing.

On 20 April a letter will be delivered to Gordon Brown signed by the National Federation of Roofing Contractors, the Federation of Master Builders, the Electrical Contractors Association, leading architects, and most of the UK solar industry. Essentially, it asks the government to act consistently with its rhetoric on the green new deal, and give the domestic solar PV industry the chance to play a role in the creation of new jobs that this country so badly needs.

It really shouldn't be this difficult to make reality sit comfortably with rhetoric.

Agreed.

We're having a green budget on Wednesday. I sincerely hope it's better than this.