

Does Trump's rejection of Paris matter?

Published: January 13, 2026, 11:11 pm

Donald Trump continues to do all the most destructive things he said he'd do. 2016's legacy of political madness continues to resonate. So now he's taking the USA out of the Paris climate agreement.

Does this matter? Of course it does. It matters for the planet, our children, for the ability of states to cooperate. It matters for the long term over the short. And it matters for life itself. As one of the authors of the 2008 Green New Deal, whose language and ideas impacted Obama at the time, I am committed to climate reform. So of course it matters.

But maybe it does not matter for the reasons we think. Trump may actually be delivering unintended consequences.

At a gut level billions of people will think Trump wrong. Bizarrely, his move will increase their conviction that climate change is important.

Many of them will realise that leaving fossil fuels in the ground is now vital to our survival.

Across the world the investment communities saying no to carbon will take some reassurance from that, even if we have yet to see a reaction in the vastly over-valued fossil fuel stocks.

And, more importantly, those businesses that are building the alternative - the world where less carbon is burnt - will be boosted as people realise they have to take responsibility where Trump won't.

Clouds can have silver linings. I am not for a moment saying Trump should have pulled out of Paris. But people, right across the world and with a wide range of interests, will realise what he is doing threatens their well-being. And they will react to that. Green is not just here. It is here to stay. Trump will make people realise that they really think that is the case. And the result will be a rejection of those who promote such follies.

It's one step back today, but I think there will be two forward.