

# It's time for the government to learn that what ...

Published: January 13, 2026, 1:45 am

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As the [Guardian](#) notes this morning:

*The government has scrapped its flagship green homes grant scheme, the [centrepiece of Boris Johnson's promise to "build back greener"](#) from the Covid-19 pandemic, just over six months after its launch.*

They added:

*The abandonment of the £1.5bn programme, which offered households grants of up to £5,000 or £10,000 to put in insulation or low-carbon heating, leaves the UK without a plan for tackling one of the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions.*

So much for tackling climate change then. That commitment is shown to be completely hollow. But as important as noting this is (in despair) it is equally important to ask why this has happened?

The answer to that appears easy to work out. If you outsource the management of what must be a locally delivered initiative within the UK to a US based company it is not going to work, is it?

This was always a scheme that begged for local authority involvement. They were always the obvious delivery agents. They were also, very obviously, the agents with the best interest in promoting this scheme. They are even quite good at building regulation.

But greed got in the way. The government wanted to pass over an opportunity to profit to the private sector. Like so many such schemes in the past year, the result has been dismal failure. Greed did not deliver. It just left a mess behind.

When will this government learn that there are things that the private sector does really well, many of which it is really quite good at (subject to being properly regulated to prevent abuse) but there are a great many other things it really is very bad at?

Organising the delivery of public services is one of those things it really is not very good at. That is precisely why it should not be asked to do it.

There is, of course, good reason for the difference between the public and private sectors. The private sector works on the assumption that minimum expenditure of effort must be made to attempt a result and if failure is the result then that is a valid market outcome. This is accepted and the business simply moves on. There is always someone else who might meet the need that the company seeking to supply has failed to deliver. The company itself can move on.

But in the public sector the attitude has to be different. If something needs to be done by the public sector it is, firstly, because it is needed and, secondly, because no one else is willing or able to do it and, thirdly, because failure should not be an option. Of course that results in more being spent. And I readily accept that, humans being humans, that this does not always guarantee success. But, overall, the resulting attitudes are those required to deliver public services in a way that works. That delivery may not meet the success criteria of the market sector where failure is an acceptable outcome, precisely because that is not a public sector option, but that's a price worth paying.

This green housing insulation programme was an example of a situation where failure was not an acceptable outcome. We have to deliver this part of the Green New Deal, and right now we are not. Nor will we until it really is accepted that this requires a genuine public / private partnership with each doing what they are best at. Right now the public element of delivery is absent. This scheme is not going to work without it. It's time for the government to learn that what they call greed does not always work.