

**Review of “A Plan with a Time-Line” by D. J. C. MacKay for possible publication in a special Discussion Meeting issue of *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*.**

As the Editors have noted in requesting this review, this is not a typical *Phil. Trans.* manuscript, but rather a supplementary chapter to the author’s popular book “Sustainable Energy — without the hot air”. I am left in the same dilemma as they are in with regard to the best course of action for such an unusual contribution.

My sense is that the major purpose of this contribution is to provide a scenario (among others) that shows that energy sustainability can be a feasible goal for Britain, and thereby to bolster the political will to take action. The principal audiences are, in my view, general college-level education, business investment, and, of course, in the political realm. These audiences are not normally reached by *Phil. Trans.*

The manuscript presents, in my view as a non-specialist in many of the areas it covers, an honest representation of the amounts of energy that might be obtained from each of the components that make up the recommended mix, and well as of the issues associated with the timing of energy demand and the substantial caveats that may come into play. Some loose ends may need further discussion: Will carbon capture and storage actually work? What about transmission losses associated with electrical power lines transferring solar power from N. Africa to the UK?

The draft is dated July 2009. Could it be updated to take into account technological advances during the past year?

There is no section in this manuscript that puts this work into proper context for students, business people and politicians — no conclusion. It is an addendum to the original book, without references, and without as many of the charming and instructive examples as appear in the main book.

Should this be published in *Phil. Trans.*, or would it be better to let it “count” as the required publication from the Discussion Meeting and publish it elsewhere? Both options are acceptable to me, but I prefer the latter. If it were published in *Phil. Trans.* it would not reach the desired audience, except perhaps indirectly through academic readers who might pass it on. Perhaps the best solution is to give Professor MacKay the option: Publish it elsewhere, publish it in *Phil. Trans.* with an added preamble to explain why it is in *Phil. Trans.*, or publish it elsewhere with only the preamble/citation in *Phil. Trans.* No solution is ideal, but that’s what you get when you ask for thinking outside the conventional norms.