## Real Clothes for the Emperor: Facing the Challenges of Climate Change *Kevin Anderson*

Professor of Energy and Climate Change. University of Manchester Tyndall Centre, Venue: University Of Bristol Date: 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012

\*\*\*\*\*

## Abstract

Many scientists and policy-makers continue to claim it is possible, albeit challenging, to contain the global increase in mean surface temperature at or below 2°C relative to preindustrial levels.

However, despite the increasingly vociferous rhetoric around 'transitioning to a low carbon economy', current emissions growth is much more aligned with temperature rises of 4°C or higher, and possibly within just a few decades. Disturbingly, against the backdrop of unprecedented emissions growth, even a 4°C future now demands significant levels of mitigation.

This framing of climate change represents a radical departure from the more incremental mitigation proposed by many policy makers and scientific reports. Whilst orthodox expertise maintains "2°C is not only possible but achievable without sacrificing the benefits of economic growth and rising prosperity", this paper argues "it is difficult to envisage anything other than a planned economic recession being compatible with 2°C, 3°C and increasingly 4°C futures".

Consequently, whether in terms of mitigation or adaptation, we face a profound paradigm shift, triggered ostensibly by climate change, but with repercussions across all facets of contemporary society.

Such a fundamental transition leaves society with three clear choices. To continue the delusion that climate change can be addressed adequately through rhetoric, financial fine-tuning and piecemeal incrementalism; to interpret such conclusions as a message of despair and futility; or to acknowledge that *"at every level the greatest obstacle to transforming the world is that we lack the clarity and imagination to conceive that it could be different"*, and that through immediate harnessing of human will and ingenuity we can yet deliver relatively low-carbon and climate-resilient communities.