



Energy Policy at the Crossroads

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The Government urgently needs to find alternatives to oil, coal and gas to help stop global warming. The options are building more nuclear power stations or using renewable energy from the wind, waves and sun.

The decision should be easy. Renewable energy is affordable, safe and clean and the UK has some of the best renewable energy resources in Europe. Wind power at sea alone could meet our electricity needs three times over AND bring thousands of jobs to the UK.

Nuclear power, on the other hand, is expensive, dangerous and produces deadly radioactive waste that poses a threat to our health and the environment for hundreds of thousands of years.

Yet, despite the risks of nuclear power and massive public opposition, the Government is seriously considering giving the go-ahead for building more nuclear power stations across the UK.

What's wrong with nuclear power?

- **It's dirty.** Existing UK nuclear power stations will leave us a legacy of half a million tonnes of nuclear waste, which the government have no idea how to dispose of safely.¹ This waste will threaten our health and the environment for hundreds of thousands of years. Allowing industry to build ten more nuclear power stations would increase the problem – for example by doubling the amount of the most radioactive wastes we have to deal with.¹
- **It's expensive.** The clean-up costs for the existing UK nuclear industry have been estimated to be at least £55 billion pounds.² Nearly all of this will have to be paid by taxpayers. This amount could pay for 360 new general hospitals or more than 4500 new secondary schools.
- **It's no solution to global warming.** Replacing one environmentally destructive form of producing energy with another is no solution for the planet.

¹ cf Greenpeace briefing 'new reactors, more waste, same old problems' on www.greenpeace.org.uk Financial Times (3 May 2002).

² cf. Secretary of State for Environment (18 October 2001). House of Commons [Q4672]. Final costing will depend on what waste management strategies the Government adopts.

- **It's polluting.** Every day, nuclear power stations pump radioactive pollution into the sea and air. These emissions can travel hundreds of kilometres on the wind and in water, exposing fish, farm animals, wildlife and people to deadly radiation. The Irish Sea is now the most radioactively contaminated sea in the world because of discharges from the Sellafield nuclear plant.
- **It's bad for your health.** One particle of plutonium, smaller than a speck of dust, can cause fatal lung-cancer. Even minute doses of radiation, inhaled, or eaten in contaminated food can cause cancer and other serious health problems. For instance, the children of men exposed to radiation while working at the Sellafield nuclear plant have twice the risk of developing leukaemia³
- **It's dangerous.** The nuclear industry transports thousands of tonnes of nuclear materials around the country by road, rail and sea every year. A serious accident or terrorist attack involving just one nuclear waste canister could force the evacuation of a large part of a city like London. Recently a nuclear train collided with a lorry near Dungeness nuclear power station – luckily the flasks were empty.
- **It's unpopular.** A recent MORI poll found that 41% of the public would be less likely to vote for a political party that supported nuclear power.⁴
- **It's fuel for the arms race.** Producing nuclear power creates plutonium, the key ingredient in nuclear weapons. The British nuclear industry has already created the largest mountain of 'civil' plutonium in the world.⁵ The only way to end the nuclear threat is to stop producing plutonium
- **It's a potential terrorist target.** Nuclear power stations are vulnerable to terrorist attack. US authorities have indicated that the fourth plane hijacked on September 11th was heading for the nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island. In the UK, MI5 has identified British nuclear power stations as likely targets for terrorist attacks.

Why face this catalogue of threats when all of our energy needs could be met through safe, clean renewable sources of energy such as the wind, waves and sun?

The *Sea Wind East* plan?

Greenpeace has commissioned AEA Technology to produce a plan for tapping East Anglia's massive offshore wind resource. By backing this plan, the Government has the opportunity to show that it is serious about ensuring a clean, renewable energy future.

³ 'Leukaemia and non Hodgkin's lymphoma in children of male Sellafield radiation workers – Int. Journal Cancer 99, 427-444 (2002).

⁴ MORI poll undertaken for Greenpeace between 17-21 May 2002. Visit www.mori.com

⁵ David Albright, Frans Berkhout and William Walker, World Inventory of Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium (1997)

If key actions are taken today, by 2020 East Anglia alone could provide 25% of UK electricity needs through clean offshore wind power. This would have substantial economic and environmental benefits.

- **East Anglia could be world leader in wind energy.** East Anglia could be at the centre of a huge boom in the offshore wind industry. It has the skills to dominate the market for wind power stations at sea.
- **East Anglia has a massive clean energy resource.** East Anglia is sitting on the best offshore wind resource in Europe. By 2020, East Anglia could generate enough clean electricity through 40 offshore wind farms to meet a quarter of UK demand. But the Government needs to invest properly in harnessing this clean energy resource.
- **Clean energy protects East Anglia's environment.** Only renewable energy like wind power can safely deliver electricity this century. Other methods threaten us with dangerous radioactive waste or with floods caused by global warming. The Government is threatening to give the go ahead for new nuclear power stations in the region, which the report clearly shows is unnecessary.
- **Offshore wind means jobs and investment in East Anglia.** 60,000 jobs would be created and £20bn of investment would pour into the region.

The *Sea Wind East* plan will only become a reality if the Government sets a high target for provision of clean, renewable energy and commits the infrastructural investment necessary to make this possible.

The full *Sea Wind East* report is available at www.greenpeace.org.uk/seawindeast.htm