

Jessica Duncan  
1 Kirk Park, Easter Daiguisie  
by Dunkeld  
Perthshire  
PH8 0JU  
[jessica.duncan@freeuk.com](mailto:jessica.duncan@freeuk.com)

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To Whom it may concern

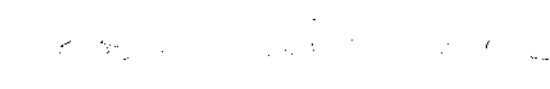
I was fortunate to be one of the participants in "Talking Energy" the government consultation exercise on the future of nuclear energy in the UK. It was a very interesting experience, indeed, and I enjoyed having the opportunity to discuss my strong opinions on nuclear energy at length. I also think Opinion Leader, the company conducting the consultation, were extremely professional in their organisation of the day. Unfortunately, I left the event in Edinburgh feeling (a) furious with the government's blatant marketing of nuclear power and (b) utter despair with my fellow citizens who seemed to blithely accept the false dichotomy of fossil fuel vs. nuclear as presented throughout the day.

As Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, WWF and, no doubt, all the other environmental organizations predicted, the day-long event was not at all a consultation, but merely a sleek marketing ploy in which the only energy options presented to the (rather gullible) public were fossil fuels or nuclear. While renewable energy was presented as a part of the energy mix of the future, the information clearly stated that in no way can renewable energy sources fulfil the UK's vast energy consumption. Energy conservation and adapting our lifestyles to reduce our energy consumption were barely mentioned.

I dread to see the final result of yesterday's 'consultation'. It would appear that very few participants in the Edinburgh event were willing or able (due to lack of information) to challenge the government's limited choice of energy options. It seemed that the general consensus is that the public do not want nuclear energy and they do not trust that the government is telling the truth about its effectiveness or safety. An overwhelming concern about the handling, storage and safety of nuclear waste was evident throughout the day. At no point did this concern seem assuaged by any promises made by the government. What I kept hearing was that there are no viable alternatives to nuclear energy and so we must accept it as the inevitable, despite our grave concerns about safety.

Isn't where were the alternative choices yesterday? We desperately needed all the environmental organisations present to explain that we do have other energy options. The participants of "Talking Energy" were pushed up against a wall so they had no choice but to support a new generation of nuclear power plants and that will come out in the final results of the 'consultation'. The participants spent the entire day looking for other energy options, but the information was not there. The public need to be clearly informed about how to conserve energy and the immediate need for all of us to take personal responsibility to reduce our consumption. The public also needs proof that, with the right investments renewable energy can fill the gap left by the dying fossil fuel industry. We need all the environmental NGOs to produce the evidence and publicize it to the extent that every member of the public gets the message. The government has put together a very slick marketing package for nuclear energy. This spin must be shown for what it is - dangerous lies which are in no way acceptable. A safe alternative to a new generation of nuclear power must now be marketed as a viable option before the government cons the entire nation into a new generation of danger.

Yours faithfully,

  
Jessica Duncan