

Our Energy Future

BY MALCOLM WICKS, ENERGY MINISTER



You know the statistic but it is worth repeating here. It took fourteen long years for the first gigawatt of power from wind energy to be built in the UK, but only twenty months for the second. This put the UK in a club of only eight countries in the world to have two gigawatts of wind power and this could not have been achieved without government backing for the industry's efforts.

Despite reports in the summer, we are fully committed to renewables and to our renewables targets.

The global nature of climate change, the rapid increase in demand for energy worldwide and the finite supply of fossil fuels mean that there has to be a

significant increase in the amount of clean, green electricity that is produced from low carbon sources.

Sir Nicholas Stern's work on the economics of climate change makes clear that such a transformation is affordable if we act together and act early and that the costs of not doing so far outweigh the costs of action.

In the Energy White Paper that was published in May, we announced specific actions to reduce our carbon emissions and expand the proportion of energy produced from low carbon sources.

There is no doubt that we need more renewable electricity as part of a secure, diverse, clean electricity mix in the UK if

we are to reduce carbon emissions and improve the security of our supply.

In 2000 we set a domestic target to see renewables grow as a proportion of our electricity supplies to 10% by 2010; in 2003 we announced our aspiration to double this by 2020; and in March this year we agreed with our European counterparts to a target of 20% of the EU's energy consumption to come from renewables by 2020.

Reaching our targets will be tough. It means we must do everything we can to generate more power from on and offshore wind farms plus other proven technologies, like solar and biomass, while continuing to develop the potential of emerging technologies like Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and wave and tidal.

This is why the Energy White Paper set out measures to further encourage renewable electricity. We believe our proposed reforms to the Renewables Obligation can get us to 15% renewables by 2015. We are also addressing the barriers to further deployment in planning and grid in order to ensure that these key renewable projects happen. And once a decision has been reached on each Member State's share of the EU 2020 renewable energy target, we will bring forward the appropriate measures to make our full contribution.

This will help us make real progress toward tackling climate change and ensuring secure and affordable energy supplies.

