

Clean Energy for Wales

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Onshore wind is one of the cleanest and cheapest forms of electricity generation available. As such, it is a vital weapon in our battle against climate change.

Official figures show that onshore wind costs £38/MWh (megawatt-hour) compared to £114/MWh for gas and £128/MWh for the new Hinkley Point C nuclear power station [1]. Our electricity bills are high because, absurdly, they are tied to the cost of gas [2] even though renewables generate more of our power.

Wind energy is also generally popular. The Government's public attitudes tracker shows that onshore wind is supported by 73% of the population [3]. Concern about climate change is an important factor in this.

Despite countless international conferences, such as the COP 30 hosted by Brazil this week, climate changing emissions keep rising fuelling destructive extremes of weather in all parts of the globe.

In November last year, nearly a month's worth of rain fell on Bannau Brycheiniog in one night causing the river Taff to burst its banks flooding homes in Pontypridd and elsewhere [4]. Welsh farmers are also suffering. One study has concluded that extremes of weather are already costing them tens of millions of pounds [5].

World Weather Attribution has calculated that this year's deadly wildfires in Turkey, Greece and Cyprus were made ten times more likely by climate change [6] while the recent super hurricane that smashed through Jamaica was 30% stronger.

Climate change is mainly caused, not by "the power of the sun or volcanoes" as ludicrously claimed by Reform UK's Richard Tice in an interview on BBC Breakfast last year [7], but by burning coal, oil and gas. The key to lessening its destructive impact is switching as quickly as possible from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

While opening COP 30, the UN general secretary, Antonia Guterres, welcomed some progress in clean energy developments but warned that we are on track to miss the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels. This target, he stated, was a "red line" for a habitable planet and that "every fraction of a degree means more hunger, displacement and loss - especially for those least responsible. This is a moral failure." [8].

As Wales, for so long a powerhouse of coal-fired industrialisation, has made a significant contribution to the emissions that are unravelling the climate stability on which our civilisation depends, it surely now has a duty to make a full contribution to the zero carbon revolution. Or are we to say to those who, in countries like Bangladesh, Jamaica and the Pacific Islands, are losing their homes, their livelihoods and sometimes their lives, that we are not prepared to allow clean energy structures on our landscape?

Our most prominent landscapists - those who are using the hose pipe to water the flower bed when the house is going on fire - must be the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW).

CPRW was given extensive coverage in Nation Cymru on the 28th of October when readers were told that it supports “renewable energy solutions when they work in harmony with Wales’s landscapes”. As wind turbines and solar panels are visible on landscapes, it would appear that most would only satisfy the organisation’s criteria if they were cited underground!

On the 1st of July, Nation Cymru carried an article by CPRW which stated that, at the Pen y Cymoedd windfarm, “the excavated peat had been destroyed and degraded”. This surprised me as the windfarm’s planning application had included a commitment to restore peatlands. In response to this, I organised a visit of seven people, including botanists and an energy consultant, to the windfarm. What we found was an extensive peat and habitat restoration programme being expertly guided by Natural Resources Wales - quite the opposite of the impression given in the article.

It is also disappointing to see Plaid Cymru - the party which once provided courageous and inspiring leadership on environmental issues - become more negative about renewable energy. It is easy to become entangled in the multiple reasons for objecting to these proposals, particularly in response to local concerns, whilst pushing into the background their *raison d’être* - the immense crisis of climate change. The party is in danger of being accused of fiddling while Rome burns.

Climate scientist, Genevieve Guenther, recently wrote, “the children we have in our homes today are threatened with a chaotic, disastrous and unliveable future”. We would rather not believe it, but this is the frightening reality that we face.

Wales has a huge potential for developing clean energy resources which benefit the environment, human health and the economy. The opportunities are so great and the prospects for the future so serious, we must press that green button. We do not have time on our side.

NOTES

1. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6556027d046ed400148b99fe/electricity-generation-costs-2023.pdf> (p. 25)
2. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-why-expensive-gas-not-net-zero-is-keeping-uk-electricity-prices-so-high/>
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-spring-2025/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-renewable-energy-spring-2025-uk>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/26/wales-valleys-floods-aberfan-climate-adaptation>
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crgyr68lrr8o>

6. <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/weather-conditions-leading-to-deadly-wildfires-in-turkiye-cyprus-and-greece-made-10-times-more-likely-due-to-climate-change/>
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/31/factcheck-no-richard-tice-volcanoes-are-not-to-blame-for-climate-change>
8. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/nov/06/missing-15c-climate-target-is-a-moral-failure-guterres-tells-cop30-summit?utm_source=cbnewsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=2025-11-07&utm_campaign=Daily+Briefing+Leaders+speak+ahead+of+COP30+Norway+s+%243bn+TFFF+boost+UK+to+double+down+on+net-zero
9. Genevieve Guenther is an expert reviewer for the UN Intergovernmental panel on Climate Change and author of 'The Language of Climate Politics'. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2025/jun/24/tipping-points-climate-crisis-expert-doomerism-wealth>