

Stop Kingsnorth: No new coal-fired power stations

In April 2008 the government will decide whether to build the UK's first new coal-fired power station for decades at Kingsnorth in Kent. Of all fuels, coal is the most polluting, worse than oil or gas. Kingsnorth power station alone will release more carbon dioxide (CO₂) each year than Ghana. It will not use carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology, so will contribute to the climate change that is already hurting the world's poor.

The UK must reduce its emissions by more than 40 per cent by 2020. New coal power stations will rule this out

For the UK to be encouraging the development of new coal-fired power stations, instead of promoting the switch to a low carbon future, is madness in an era of impending climate crisis. Already the increase in coal use in the last ten years has wiped out cuts made in other sectors of the UK's economy. That's just through existing power plants. Meanwhile the huge potential for renewable energy (wind, marine and solar power) in the UK is being largely overlooked, and risks being squeezed out by new coal-fired power stations.

First of many mistakes

If Kingsnorth gets consent from the government, it will be the first in a queue of seven new coal-fired power plants. If this happens, we will have missed our chance to lead the world in switching to a low carbon economy. The 50 million

tonnes of CO₂ that would be emitted each year from these plants will wipe out any chance the UK has of cutting its emissions by more than 40 per cent by 2020 or more than 80 per cent by 2050 as scientists say is needed. In addition to locking us into high carbon electricity generation for decades, the UK will lose all political and moral authority when calling for other nations not to build new coal power stations.

The excuse

The government's justification for pursuing this reckless agenda rests on the claim that CCS technology will eventually limit the impact of carbon emissions from new coal plants on climate change. But such technology is at a trial stage, it will not be available until 2020 at the earliest, and the chancellor Alistair Darling has admitted it may never work.

Good energy

Rather than making excuses for continuing to support an old fashioned carbon intensive industry, government's attention should be on the shift to a low carbon economy. Low carbon electricity is the foundation of this shift. Not only is making electricity generation carbon-free the biggest single action the UK can take to cut carbon emissions, low carbon electricity is part of the solution to the climate impact of road and rail transport and residential heating.

Following European Union (EU) announcements in January, the UK will need to source about 40 per cent of electricity from renewables by 2020, compared with just four per cent currently. Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks

says: "Our position is a poor one and that's because since the 1960s we've been reliant on oil and gas from the North Sea." Giving the go ahead to new coal-fired power stations would mean

"[Kingsnorth] will destroy the efforts of millions of citizens to reduce their emissions."

**Professor James Hansen
NASA Climatologist**

repeating and magnifying this mistake. A radical rethink of energy policy is needed. But this is not just about fulfilling EU promises. Renewables are not only greenest, they can be quick to bring 'on line' compared to other energy sources. In the coming years, several old power stations will close. This is a huge chance to make renewables a major part of our energy mix. But if we build a new generation of coal plants, renewables simply will not receive the investment they need.

Where the government is at:

The government presently has no specific policies on coal power stations other than to encourage CCS. It believes:

- ✦ The European emissions trading scheme (ETS) will be sufficient to make the energy market reduce carbon emissions
- ✦ The market should be in charge, and it should not rule out the use of any fuel
- ✦ That the UK does not have to only reduce emissions domestically because it can offset overseas

Unfortunately, the ETS has too many loopholes to effectively reduce emissions, and relies on carbon offsetting in poor countries which is not the answer. Yes, rich countries need to help poor ones develop low carbon economies, but we need to radically reduce our emissions as well if we are to make the global emission cuts needed to stop catastrophic climate change.

Take action

- ✦ Visit www.StopKingsnorth.org for information and to add your campaign updates
- ✦ On the website, write to Business Minister John Hutton demanding that the proposed Kingsnorth coal-fired power station be subject to a public inquiry, and that no new coal power stations are built without fully-operational CCS

Copies of this briefing can be ordered from WDM on 0207 820 4900 or downloaded at www.stopkingsnorth.org

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