# Concerns rise over nuclear subsidies as renewables push gains momentum



In the ongoing debate over the future of the UK’s energy landscape, concerns have been raised about the financial and environmental implications of subsidising nuclear power as opposed to expanding renewable energy sources. Experts and campaigners have highlighted how the current subsidies and planned developments for nuclear power plants may exacerbate electricity costs for consumers and pose long-term challenges.

John French of Stand (Severnside Together Against Nuclear Development) has criticised the government’s support for new nuclear projects, particularly the Sizewell C power station and proposed reactors at Oldbury in Gloucestershire. Sizewell C, already subsidised with nearly £2.5 billion despite construction not yet beginning, is described as “crazily expensive” and expected to impose significant financial burdens on bill payers. French points to historic examples of cost overruns involving the French state-owned EDF—owner of reactors such as Flamanville and Hinkley C—as indicative of likely future expenses.

Additionally, French warns that the Oldbury plant faces numerous hurdles, including its early design stage and years of safety approvals, with doubts cast on the viability of its novel design. These factors, coupled with anticipated subsidies, could lead to substantial costs for the public. He also emphasises the unresolved issues surrounding the decommissioning of nuclear facilities and the management of hazardous radioactive waste. French wrote in a letter to The Guardian, “Now is the time for [Energy Minister Ed Miliband] to scrap all plans for this unaffordable and dangerous way to boil water, and invest in renewables, including tidal power.”

The letter underscores worries that levies added to electricity bills to fund low-carbon projects, such as nuclear power, may hinder efforts to reduce reliance on fossil fuels due to increased costs.

Supporting this stance, Dr David Lowry, co-author of The International Politics of Nuclear Waste, challenged prevailing assumptions about the economic benefits of nuclear energy. He stated that while increasing electricity generation from renewables and nuclear reactors is projected to bring down costs, only renewables show reliable indications of cost reduction once all factors are considered. Lowry stresses that the full lifecycle costs of nuclear power—including uranium mining, milling, enrichment, fuel fabrication, radioactive waste management, and decommissioning—must be accounted for to measure its actual cost.

To illustrate the substantial hidden expenses, Lowry pointed to a recent report from the United States Department of Energy estimating that the clean-up costs of the Hanford site—America’s largest nuclear waste site, more extensive than the UK’s Sellafield—could reach an extraordinary $589 billion. He argues, “These huge sums need to be factored into nuclear power’s costs to give the real price of power from splitting the atom.”

The discussion arrives as the UK government considers energy strategy options amid pressures to meet climate targets while managing energy affordability and security. The viewpoints presented highlight the complexity of balancing upfront investments, long-term financial liabilities, and the sustainable delivery of low-carbon energy.

The Guardian is reporting that the debate continues to centre on whether funds currently allocated to nuclear projects could instead be redirected towards expanding renewable energy technologies, including tidal power, which advocates argue could offer more cost-effective and environmentally sustainable solutions over time.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.vidasostenible.org/why-does-the-uk-government-want-to-pursue-nuclear-energy-rather-than-renewable-energy/> - This article supports the idea that the UK government is pursuing nuclear energy due to its ability to create a baseload power source, while also highlighting comparisons with renewable energy.
* <https://caneurope.org/position-paper-nuclear-energy/> - This position paper explains how prolonged use of nuclear power might crowd out renewable energy from the electricity grid, aligning with concerns about the allocation of funds away from renewables.
* <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-11-14/debates/28ADB352-9C5F-4ECC-9497-23A21A0E9607/RenewableEnergyCosts> - This document from the UK Parliament discusses the cost of renewable energy versus nuclear power, stating that nuclear power generation costs significantly more than solar and wind.
* <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/44661/pdf/> - This evidence highlights the favoritism shown to nuclear power over renewable energy in terms of subsidies and financial support, mirroring concerns about the viability of funding nuclear projects.
* <https://www.iisd.org/story/the-united-kingdom-is-to-subsidize-nuclear-power-but-at-what-cost/> - This article discusses the subsidies for nuclear power, specifically Hinkley Point C, and their potential impacts on the UK’s energy policy and renewable energy investment, raising questions about the economic and environmental viability of nuclear subsidies.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/02/06/mps-criticised-video-on-climate-change> - Note: This specific URL does not directly relate to the content. However, The Guardian often reports on debates surrounding nuclear and renewable energy, reflecting concerns about energy policy, environmental sustainability, and cost implications mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/apr/28/scrapping-britains-nuclear-power-plans-would-lead-to-lower-energy-bills> - Please view link - unable to able to access data